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# Emerson and Nietzsche: Appropriation, Translation, and Experimentation

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EMERSON AND NIETZSCHE: APPROPRIATION, TRANSLATION, AND  
EXPERIMENTATION

by

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## ABSTRACT

The relationship between Friedrich Nietzsche and Ralph Waldo Emerson has been a matter of rumor, surprise, and denial for over a century. This dissertation sets out to provide the first complete and concise account of Emerson's influence on Nietzsche's texts throughout the German's intellectual life. Additionally, it does not limit itself to just Nietzsche but places his readings of Emerson into the larger context of the American's German readership. The project's methodology uses 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century sources of Emerson's reception in Germany, such as newspaper reviews and journal essays, the German translations of Emerson's works, Nietzsche's personal copies of Emerson's texts, including his marginal notes, and Nietzsche's posthumously published private notes to reconstruct Emerson's reception in Germany and Nietzsche's incorporations of Emerson's texts into his own texts. As a result, this dissertation shows that Emerson's texts were appropriated by German authors and critics in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century in many, even contradictory ways, and that Nietzsche appropriates Emerson's texts throughout his life (1862-1888), while simultaneously masking this appropriation. Furthermore, appropriation itself is a key aspect of Emerson's texts, part of his "American" experimentalism, that Nietzsche takes over and forms into an integral part of his entire later body of thought, especially his *Gay Science* and *Zarathustra*. These findings indicate that Nietzsche's reliance on Emerson outweigh previous estimations by far and the need for a future critical writing of American-German intellectual history.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BAW .....	<i>Historisch-Kritische Gesamtausgabe</i> of Nietzsche's juvenile writings
CL .....	Emerson's <i>The Conduct of Life</i>
E .....	Emerson's <i>Essays</i>
FL .....	Emerson's <i>Führung des Lebens</i>
FW .....	Nietzsche's <i>Fröhliche Wissenschaft</i>
HN .....	Emerson's <i>Historic Notes of Life and Letters in Massachusetts</i>
JMN .....	Emerson's <i>Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks</i>
KGB .....	<i>Kritische Gesamtausgabe</i> of Nietzsche's letters
KSA .....	<i>Kritische Studienausgabe</i> of Nietzsche's works
LSA .....	Emerson's <i>Letters and Social Aims</i>
M .....	Nietzsche's <i>Morgenröthe</i>
MA .....	Nietzsche's <i>Menschliches, Allzumenschliches</i>
NE .....	Emerson's <i>Neue Essays</i>
RM .....	Emerson's <i>Representative Men</i>
SE .....	Nietzsche's <i>Schopenhauer als Erzieher</i>
V .....	Emerson's <i>Versuche</i>
VM .....	Nietzsche's <i>Vermischte Meinungen</i>
WS .....	Nietzsche's <i>Der Wanderer und sein Schatten</i>
Z .....	Nietzsche's <i>Also sprach Zarathustra</i>



## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

On a Monday in March 1865, towards the end of the semester, a young aspiring student of philology and theology, waiting to return home for the holidays, entered the halls of the academic Gustav-Adolf Verein<sup>1</sup> in Bonn to give an oration on “The Ecclesiastic Conditions of German Immigrants in North America” (BAW 3, 84-97).<sup>2</sup> This student’s name was Friedrich Nietzsche, who declared that “in the continuous flow of Germanic elements towards the West a world-historical mission takes place.” (84) In fact, these German “influences” (“Einflüsse”) will, “without a question, assert themselves in all aspects of North American life” so that “the mixture of American and German elements will raise auspicious hopes.” The American difference, its historical vantage point, our speaker continues, lies in its Protestant origins; as such it is the country of youth (“Jugendlichkeit”) and cultivability (“Bildungsfähigkeit”); the land of freedom (96-97); a practical, energetic, and venturesome nation of a reformed character (85-86). In one word, America is “the land of the future and of hope” (87).

This speech repeats many stereotypes Germans held about America, which appeared, often channeled through the literary imaginations of Fenimore Cooper’s adventurous novels, as the realization of the dreams and hopes of the democratic sentiments that had been crushed by Metternich’s restoration in the 1820s.<sup>3</sup> These imaginations had ignited a stream of German immigrants to the United States that continued to be significant in the aftermath of the failed 1848 revolution. On the other

side of the Atlantic, in fact 100 years earlier, Benjamin Franklin had already warned against the “alien” influence of German settlers, that they would soon “be so numerous as to Germanize us instead of our Anglifying them.” (Franklin 1755, 10) Fifty years after that, and one revolution later, Hegel had famously declared that “America is [...] the land of the future, where, in the ages that lie before us, the burden of the World’s History shall reveal itself [...]” (Hegel 46)<sup>4</sup>

In his writings, Nietzsche, however, often remains indifferent to non-European affairs. Thus, it is not surprising that his youthful speech has been completely forgotten. No scholar has so far shown any interest in it. There is no translation of it in English, and it is not mentioned in any of the articles or books on Nietzsche’s relation to America<sup>5</sup> or the Emerson/Nietzsche connection. The only author who discusses it briefly is Curt Paul Janz in his monumental biography where he calls Nietzsche’s text “a long, well-behaved, totally impersonal speech” (“einen längeren, braven, ganz unpersönlichen Vortrag”) (Janz 142), considering that this lecture coincided with the moment in which he had decided to dedicate his life to philology instead of theology. However, what is certain is that Nietzsche read Emerson during this time, and for the last three years continuously, mentioning him, alongside Poe on a list of books that he wants to bring on his holiday back home to Naumburg (BAW 3 99); all of which suggests his growing interest in the “New World.” It is an interest that is sustained till the end of Nietzsche’s life, rarely coming to the forefront for sure, but accompanying him in the figure of Emerson who looms in the background of his thinking from beginning to end.

As Nietzsche’s youthful speech indicates, however, his reading of Emerson did not occur in isolation but as part of the larger reception of Emerson, specifically as an

American author in Germany (not much different from a novelist such as Cooper), and in a larger imagination of “America.” In fact, as I will show, Nietzsche’s reading often overlaps surprisingly with that of other readers of Emerson in Germany in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, in this first chapter, I will provide a detailed discussion of Emerson’s reception in Germany and of the Emerson/Nietzsche connection in three steps: (1.) The early reception of Emerson’s texts beginning in the 1850s until 1880s, including prefaces and commentary that Nietzsche read, and Nietzsche’s own comments on Emerson as an author and on “America.” (2.) The zenith of Emerson’s reception around 1900, simultaneously with Nietzsche’s own. (3.) The post-1945 scholarship on the E/N connection until today. I do not consider my discussion of the post-1945 scholarship an end in itself but symptomatic of the Emerson reception prior. My basic argument is that Emerson’s reception is a history of various, even contradictory, appropriations. However, Emerson is not just another case of cultural appropriation because he himself encourages and invites appropriation on a theoretical and stylistic level, as does Nietzsche, allowing a myriad of different readers to turn both of their texts into multiple new texts. To positively imagine a text as a form of appropriation (and amalgam of influences) relies on or fuels a thinking about power in the plural. For Emerson, that is a uniquely American perspective that swings between confident self-affirmation and self-annihilation. This textual relation is at play in Nietzsche’s appropriations of Emerson’s text, justified by Emerson’s own valuation of appropriation. In fact, my argument is similar to a point that Paul Carus made a century earlier in a discussion of Nietzsche’s relation to Max Stirner, although I will insert “Emerson” where Carus named Stirner:

“Nietzsche has been blamed for appropriating [Emerson’s] thoughts and twisting them out of shape [...]; but we must concede that the common rules of literary ethics cannot apply to individualists who deny all and any moral authority. Why should Nietzsche give credit to the author from whom he drew his inspiration if neither acknowledges any rule which he feels obliged to observe? Nietzsche uses [Emerson] as [Emerson] declares that it is the good right of every ego to use his fellows, and Nietzsche shows us what the result would be [...].” (Carus 1914, 101)

But Nietzsche’s relation to Emerson is much more complex than his to Stirner’s. Additionally, appropriation is a recurring motif in the German image of America that simultaneously creates America as the land of the new (free of appropriation), the country of Western expansion (relying on appropriation) and the coming threat of an “Americanization” (overtaking German values) in which everything becomes “the same,” copied, lacking authenticity and newness.

Chapter 2 then begins proper with Nietzsche’s discovery of Emerson at his “Gymnasium” in 1862 when he wrote what are usually considered his first philosophical reflections, “Fatum und Geschichte” und “Fatum und Willensfreiheit,” under the influence of Emerson’s *The Conduct of Life* (1860). Instead of reading these early texts as indications of Nietzsche’s later thoughts and his predetermined genius, as did most commentators, I argue that Nietzsche not only appropriates Emerson’s texts but that all texts that show this influence are predominantly concerned about the very problem of influence itself, while Emerson weaves in questions of tragically real appropriation of human bodies, the reality of slavery. These texts include Nietzsche’s early essays on fate

and freedom (1862), championing an American Western rhetoric of rugged individualism, his essay *Über Stimmungen* (1864), and his essay on *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* (1874). Each essay shows, in a different way, how a writer, here Nietzsche himself, is subject to “fate” (1862), “moods” (1864), and the power of his “educators” (1874). For Nietzsche’s 1864 essay “On Moods” (“Über Stimmungen”), I consider Emerson’s emphasis on the power of moods as another indicator of the power of influence, and compare Emerson to Schopenhauer, the other dominant source of influence for Nietzsche, beginning in 1865. Afterwards, I discuss Nietzsche’s *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, written on his vacation in Bergün in the summer of 1874 to which he brought his edition of Emerson’s *Essays*. Although on the surface a dedication to his “educator” Schopenhauer, Nietzsche paraphrases and indeed appropriates Emerson throughout the essay, ironically passages that declare his intellectual independence. On the one hand, it is, for Nietzsche, Emerson’s “American” perspective to break all ties to a tradition (in texts like “Fate,” “Power,” “Circles,” and “Self-Reliance”), freeing itself from all influences, taking whatever fits him (in the spirit of the myth of the westward expansion displaced onto the treatment of texts). On the other hand, Nietzsche’s appropriation of Emerson in all three texts, while being simultaneously exposed to Emerson’s own valorization of appropriation in terms of power, and his additional masking of this influence and declaration of intellectual independence, keeps his author personae inevitably drawn to influences of all sorts, precisely in the movement of turning away from them.

Chapter 3 will first turn to March-April 1876 when Nietzsche acquires a new book by Emerson, *Letters and Social Aims* (1875) [*Neue Essays*, 1876], and reads while

on sick-leave from the university. Although the impact of this text on Nietzsche was not as strong as that of Emerson's first and second series, and thus being ignored by other scholars ever since, I argue that it provided Nietzsche nonetheless with powerful new impulses, especially regarding finding his new style as an author. In LSA, Emerson will shed light on his own style as a form of appropriation, and the importance of intuition, inspiration, and observation that lines up with Nietzsche's own aphoristic style in MA, while also anticipating important concepts such as "God's death" and the "Gay Science," that Nietzsche will feature at the end of his self-entitled free spirit trilogy. Then, I will discuss Nietzsche's shift in style towards the aphorism and contrast this genre with that of the essay and Emerson's essayistic style in particular. I make the argument that Nietzsche's "aphorisms" are different from usual genre conventions of the aphorism that are based on the French Moralists tradition. Similarly, Emerson's essays defy the traditional attributes of the essay. I hope to show that Nietzsche's and Emerson's styles are closer than one might suspect and that their styles are essential to their writing overall. Finally, I will turn to Nietzsche's *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* (MA), which he began to write in 1876. On the one hand, based on his personal notes, Nietzsche will borrow key motifs for MA from Emerson's essays, including "the wanderer," "the morning" or "dawning," and "nearness." On the other hand, I make the argument that these motifs only work in conjunction with Nietzsche's new style, the aphorism. Nietzsche's emphasis on observations, intuitions, suspicions, and textual patchworks is part of his larger concern for a renewed attention towards what he calls "the nearest things" ("die nächsten Dinge"), a concept introduced in the second part of MA. In "Experience," which Nietzsche reads precisely at the time of writing MA II, Emerson's

main concern is what he calls “the near” and its possible transformation. As with the German word “morgen,” that Nietzsche uses to describe his thinking in MA, simultaneously referring to the “morning” and “tomorrow,” so does the word “nächsten” signify what is closest to us and that which comes “next.” This double meaning, explicit in Emerson’s text and taken over by Nietzsche, anticipates Nietzsche’s future preoccupation with the present as a site for experimentation for the future as outlined in his *Fröhliche Wissenschaft*. As such, the reading of Emerson will reveal a striking consistency between the texts from 1876 until 1882, what Nietzsche called his “Free Spirit Trilogy.”

Chapter 4 turns then to Nietzsche’s “Gay Science,” written at the end of 1881 and beginning of 1882, his notes on the cover and back pages of his Emerson edition, marginal notes throughout the text, and excerpts from Emerson’s essays around the same time. I argue that Nietzsche’s self-entitled project of a “gay science” lines up with the thoughts that he develops or takes from Emerson’s essays, as revealed by the notes written on the cover and back pages of the Emerson edition, which Nietzsche integrates in the published text of FW. These passages and notes include Nietzsche’s campaign against European pessimism, a revaluation of pain as a stimulus for life, and a new appraisal of egoism or irresponsibility (the plan for a destruction of morality), all of which are joined together into the project of a gay science. Second, I argue that the gay science is a call for experimentation, in sync with Emerson’s own “experimentations” or “essays,” that is based on appropriation and power, and which leads Nietzsche to outline for the first time his attempt to “destroy morality.” While Emerson and Nietzsche revalue a certain kind of egoism (appropriation) and irresponsibility or immorality, they

simultaneously undermine the “ego” with their call for experimentation. Appropriation itself implies that whatever is appropriated and assimilated by an ego cannot, by definition, be part of the ego, but must remain “other.” Here, Nietzsche will, by reading Emerson, develop a vision of the self as a multitude of (other) selves. I will show this in my reading of Nietzsche’s excerpts from “History” and “Self-Reliance” with the fourth book of FW, “Sanctus Januarius,” where I interpret Nietzsche’s “thought of the eternal return” as the vision of the self as a site for experimentation by living through many selves. Appropriation of the past, of past experiments in living, are the means for increasing experimentation for the future of humanity, as Nietzsche will describe his project of a gay science.

The final chapter follows Nietzsche’s reading and incorporation of Emerson into *Also Sprach Zarathustra* during the years of 1883-1885 and *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*. Nietzsche intensely reads Emerson’s “Nature,” “Spiritual Laws,” “The Poet,” and essays like “Politics,” focusing on descriptions of the “wise man,” moments of lightness, and cosmological grandeur. I will show how Emerson’s appropriating and experimenting self, as used by Nietzsche in FW, underwrites Nietzsche’s Zarathustra text as a new myth. Emerson himself reinvents this mythic self from one of the founding myths of American culture, that of the Western frontier experience. This, often purely imaginative, experience considers American nature as a site for a (moral) renewal of the self, often in harsh opposition to the city, including a quasi-religious conversion. It accomplishes this continual reinvention of the self, in Emerson’s mythology, by appropriating, harnessing, and conquering the powers of nature. Emerson uses this American myth, however, as a critical tool against America itself: against the (democratic, bourgeois) state, against



(organized) religion, and against the marketplace (where individuals are reduced to economic participants). Nietzsche appropriates Emerson's mythic self (as already seen in FW), takes it out of the American context, and uses it for his own myth (Zarathustra) and a critique of modern life. He does that by reading and incorporating passages from Emerson's "Nature," "Politics," "Character," and again "Circles" into his Zarathustra text. Emerson's "wise man" or "character" turns into shades of Zarathustra and the "Übermensch," Emerson's critique of the American polity turns into Nietzsche's critique of the state as a new idol, the renewal of the American West and Emerson's praise of forgetfulness turns into an antidote against the spirit of revenge (Emerson's "Compensation") and modern morality. The critique of modern life around the center piece of the bourgeois individual is echoed by Emerson in his *Historic Notes of Life and Letters in Massachusetts* (1883), which was translated to Nietzsche by an American pastor in Nice in 1884. It shows how Emerson evaluates the new conditions of modern American life, in sync with the topics of Zarathustra and Nietzsche's other late works, as a capitalist and post-God era that simultaneously opens up the realm of possibilities for human life and threatens to devour its individual subjects, attacking one of the founding myths of American culture, that of the individual, by measuring its ideals to its shortcomings in the actual social and political life.

## 1.1 EMERSON IN GERMANY – IMAGES OF AND FROM AMERICA

The first reception of Emerson in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany is inevitably connected to two names: Gisela von Arnim (1827-1889), the daughter of Achim von Arnim, and Herman Grimm (1828-1901), the son of Wilhelm Grimm. As

other critics have noticed, Grimm is the most prominent and influential reader of Emerson in Germany at that time (see Friedl 2016, 139). Although Grimm consistently tried to create an audience for Emerson in Germany, Emerson remained almost unknown to the larger German public,<sup>6</sup> except for a small circle of enthusiasts including Joseph Joachim, E. S. von Mühlberg (as translator and commentator), Alex Thayer, Selma Mohricke, A. Fabricius, Friedrich Spielhagen, Karl Meyer (as publisher), Adolf Holtermann, and Karl Scholl (see Timpe, 1964, 62ff.).<sup>7</sup>

Gisela von Arnim's preface to the 1858 two-volume edition of Emerson's *Essays* (*Versuche*) is one of the first detailed discussions of Emerson's text, included in Nietzsche's edition. As an initiator of a literary salon that included members like Hans Christian Andersen, she also is one of the key figures of late German Romanticism. Unsurprisingly, she places Emerson in the same tradition. Emerson, she says, "bringt uns nur die Blüthen zurück, deren Samen er durch sein Studium des deutschen Volkes und seiner geistigen Producte einsammelte" ["brings us back the flowers, which he had collected in his studies of the German people"] (V 3), although these products have been "cleansed" and transfigured by him. Contrary to the German authors of her days, Emerson, as a prophet in these "profane times," belongs to those "healthy," "instinctual," and "natural" human beings, whose power springs from every word (V 3). Von Arnim also provides a few biographical notes about Emerson's school in Boston, his theological studies that he abandoned soon in favor of his literary activity and career as a lecturer, his travels to Europe, his indebtedness to Goethe, his life in a small village in Massachusetts, where he leads "a life in the midst of nature" surrounded by "few friends" (V 6), a happy life of tranquility and solitude.

Von Arnim paints an idyllic, highly romanticized, sacralized image of Emerson. The few biographical information she provides highlight his reclusiveness (while his profession portrays the image of a charismatic man), his life in a secluded natural paradise – a romantic hero. She contrasts this natural, instinctual, and healthy way of life with the profanity and “rusty” (“eingerosteteten”) life in Europe. At a time when German Romanticism had long been out of fashion, and positivism on the rise, von Arnim wishes Emerson to be the returning Romantic that breathes new life into the German nation by connecting it back to its roots.<sup>8</sup> This way of reading Emerson proved to be powerful and long-lasting.<sup>9</sup> Herwig Friedl had spoken of the janus-faced tendency of Emerson’s reception in Germany: “one articulates the impact of an innovative global, emancipatory thinker and another, unsubstantiated by textual evidence, celebrates Emerson as champion of Germanic hegemony.” (Friedl 2016, 141) The latter appropriation uses Emerson’s biography to place him in line with Luther, Leibniz, Kant, Goethe, and German Idealism.<sup>10</sup> This double tendency of Emerson’s early reception is also characteristic of the image of America in Romantic thought prior. James Ceasar argued that “it is with romanticism proper [...] that the image of America was constructed in German thought.” (Ceasar 167) On the one hand, it expressed a “longing for something new – for a release from the burdens of history and for a chance to start over.” (167) The most famous example of this sentiment is probably found in Goethe: “In America history might begin again [...]” (quote after Ceasar 168) The other picture, however, painted America as the anti-romantic realization of a calculating rationality and a universalistic Enlightenment that is opposed to the “völkisch” conception of the (German) nation rooted in historical, ethnic, and cultural characteristics (see Ceasar 168).

While von Arnim anchors Emerson strongly in the Romantic tradition, Grimm's reading of Emerson is more nuanced, emphasizing instead Emerson's American difference. In his afterword to "Goethe und Shakespeare" (1857, from *Representative Men*), he considers Emerson not to be a preacher or philosopher but a poet, an anti-systematic thinker whose sentences are unconnected "building blocks" ("Bausteine") (1857, 93). By rejecting typical comparisons of Emerson to Fichte, Deism, and Pantheism, Grimm sees in him the "free, in freedom born spirit [Geist]," who turns wherever he wants and who does not flinch from the possibility of misinterpretation (93-94).<sup>11</sup> Not worrying about misreading, Emerson takes whatever he needs from his "sources." For Emerson, Grimm says, "the entire world is an enormous arsenal from which he arms his thoughts," (93) which Grimm calls the "American standpoint." Grimm's vision of this America has little in common with von Arnim's romanticization. The American standpoint, in Grimm's eyes, had already anticipated the end of the historical period in which he lives— it is prophetic, all-encompassing, and yet excluding him and the German audience: "Emerson stands in the new world' the old one is far behind his back [...]" (94) For Grimm, Emerson's position in the new world is not only a geographical location, but an indication of the future, a position that had stripped off the past's burden and freely encounters the present:

Die Welt ist noch weit in Amerika; er braucht keinen Bau einzureissen, um Platz für den zu finden, den er aufführt. Er verneint nichts, er widerspricht, widerlegt nicht, er greift keinen an, drängt keinen zurück, sondern einfach und ruhig spricht er aus, was seine Meinung ist. Nirgends gibt er Lehren, Warnungen, Unterweisungen im gemein praktischen Sinn, sondern erfüllt von einer

aufbauenden, lichten Theorie berührt er das Chaos und es krystallisirt sich zu einfachen Formen. (94-95)

Grimm's evaluation echoes the classic attribution of optimistic values to the American population by Tocqueville. But even more so, Grimm anticipates here Nietzsche's own declaration in one of his most famous passages of FW: "Ich will nicht anklagen, ich will nicht einmal die Ankläger anklagen. Wegsehen sei meine einzige Verneinung! Und, Alles in Allem und Grossen: ich will irgendwann einmal nur noch ein Ja-sagender sein!" (FW §276) Emerson does not need to raze the buildings of the tradition, but he also does not feel the need to build new ones. Every word in Emerson's essays, Grimm says, becomes a *terminus technicus* (96), any word possibly becomes the object of essayistic reflection: "He turns the objects of the everyday poetic [...]. With one word he lifts us above the earth, and while he says that everything is beautiful, we believe him." (97) Again, we are inclined to hear an echo of these words in Nietzsche's praise to Sanctus Januarius: "Ich will immer mehr lernen, das Nothwendige an den Dingen als das Schöne sehen: — so werde ich Einer von Denen sein, welche die Dinge schön machen [to make things beautiful]." (FW §276)

Grimm says about Emerson, in conjunction with Goethe and Byron, that he has the ability to turn that which is usually "cast to the side" ("das Nebenherfallende") into a poem (Grimm 98-99). With this ability to transform the ordinary, Grimm clearly places Emerson in the line of the Romantics. However, Emerson himself did not consider this romantic: "I ask not for the great, the remote, the romantic; [...] I embrace the common. I explore and sit at the feet of the familiar, the low. Give me insight into to-day, and you may have the antique and future worlds." ("The American Scholar," 112) Grimm surely

had passages as this in mind when he wrote his commentary, and yet Emerson placed himself in opposition to “the romantic” quest for something beyond.

Grimm characterizes Emerson simultaneously as romantic anti-romantic and as an American anti-American in a “world-historical position” (100). Emerson’s humanistic theory of “great men” as representatives (not as exceptions),<sup>12</sup> aiming at the unrealized possibilities of every person, was needed in America because of “the ruthless energy of the ego” (“die rücksichtslose Energie des Einzelnen”) (100). For Grimm, Emerson fights against the “egoism” that originated in and took over America and then “floods the entire world” (“von da aus die ganze Welt überfluthet”) (100) – the other side of the romantic image of America. Grimm shows here a troubling image of what he calls Emerson’s “Gefühl der Race”: “England, Deutschland und Amerika beherrschen die Welt; die germanische Race fliegt über die Erde und fasst überall festen Fuss; ihre Politik, ihre Kunst, Wissenschaft, Literature tragen den Sieg davon.” (113) Grimm portrays Emerson as a champion of a Germanic imperialism which he oddly joins with Emerson’s speeches against slavery, and a piece on the emancipation of women (115). Either Grimm imagines America as place of an unchecked individualism that will colonize the world or as initial state before the victory of a cosmopolitanism under the guidance of the Germanic race.

Discounting these Germanic fantasies, Grimm’s America image is certainly in part also Nietzsche’s. While not discussing America or the American people very often, he replaces Grimm’s Germans with the Russians in the triumvirate that will become the “Herren der Welt” (M, 25, 137). Aside from his earlier rendezvous with “Germanic influences” in America, Nietzsche never evaluates Emerson’s “German” intellectual heritage positively. Similarly, he is extremely critical of the stereotypical “American”

perspective. Nietzsche refers to the “athemlose Hast der Arbeit” (“breathless haste of work”) which he calls the “actual sin of the new world” that now “infects” the “old Europe” causing a “wunderliche Geistlosigkeit” (FW, 329).<sup>13</sup> Just like Grimm, Nietzsche sees in the American “disease” a world-historical change taken place; an event that is still on the way but that had already encompassed Europe and turned it into a “gehetzte[n], machtdürstige[n] Gesellschaft” (M, 271).<sup>14</sup> It is interesting to note, however, that these ideas only appear after 1880 in Nietzsche’s notes.

There always exist two Americas – one is the actual America, or what Nietzsche and other German critics like Grimm and von Arnim think is the actual one, and the idea of America. We have already seen in Nietzsche’s 1865 speech on the American conditions and “Germanic influences” that he too, at least occasionally, imagines America to be the “land of the future and of hope,” a Protestant, tolerant, practical, energetic and youthful paradise. These remarks might be exaggerated, due to the special circumstances of the speech, but aspects of them remain present until the 1880’s and are not incongruent with the previous critical points against America (Grimm can use Emerson as a case for *and* against America). In another paragraph of FW, written in 1887, Nietzsche says:

Aber es giebt umgekehrte Zeitalter, die eigentlich demokratischen, wo man diesen Glauben mehr und mehr verlernt und ein gewisser kecker Glaube und Gesichtspunkt des Gegentheils in den Vordergrund tritt, jener Athener-Glaube, der in der Epoche des Perikles zuerst bemerkt wird, jener *Amerikaner*-Glaube von heute, der immer mehr auch Europäer-Glaube werden will: wo der Einzelne überzeugt ist, ungefähr Alles zu können, ungefähr jeder Rolle gewachsen zu sein,

wo Jeder mit sich versucht, improvisirt, neu versucht, mit Lust versucht, wo alle  
Natur aufhört und Kunst wird... (FW § 356)

Nietzsche connects here the 19<sup>th</sup> century American culture of the self with that of the Periclean era, which he calls the “actual democratic times,” when everyone believes to have the potential to accomplish and become anything, when individuals improvise, experiment, and turn nature into art. For Nietzsche, this development is simultaneously promising and dangerous, slowly eroding the foundations of any possible “society.” America becomes a symptom of decadence, of a transformational shift. In fact, Nietzsche considers the future *from* America much more positively in 1882. American readers were first showing an interest in Nietzsche’s writings abroad, sending him “fan mail.” On January 17, 1882, Nietzsche wrote to Heinrich Köselitz: “Das neue Jahr brachte ein Huldigungsschreiben aus *Amerika*, im Namen von 3 Personen (darunter ein Professor des Peabody-Instituts in Baltimore) — Ich bin Ihnen so nahe, Stunde für Stunde!” Shortly after this jubilant news, Nietzsche wrote a poem dedicated to the figure of Columbus:

Muth! Auf offnem Meer bin ich,  
Hinter mir liegt Genua.  
Und mit dir im Bund gewinn ich  
Goldland und Amerika. (KSA 10: 12)

America therefore is a sign, an image, an event or a prophecy, and Emerson is the representative but also critic of this prophecy. One of the most extensive and detailed discussions of Emerson before 1890 can be found in Julian Schmidt’s preface to the 1876 translation of *Letters and Social Aims (Neue Essays)*, which Nietzsche acquired and read immediately. Aside from the standard depictions of Emerson as hanging between



metaphysics and pragmatics, and his “constant, once conscious, then unconscious relationship to Goethe” (5), Schmidt says that Emerson follows only one task in his work: to preach the Ideal, “das er freilich nicht wie die Theologen jenseits der Welt sucht, sondern im steten Wirken und Schaffen innerhalb des Weltganzen, im Gemüth wie in der Natur.” (6) Schmidt positions Emerson’s texts between idealism and economically determined everyday affairs, for example in *The American Scholar*, which Schmidt mentions in the original. He calls, like Nietzsche, the “rastlose ungestüme Arbeit” and the “unerschütterliche Herrschaft der öffentlichen Meinung” the essential aspect of the American way of life (7). Schmidt contrasts Emerson’s “idealism” with Hegel’s and with that of the Unitarian movement, which Schmidt deems to be more radical than the German “Link[s]hegelianer” in their goal to dissolve all cultural forms (5). Emerson indeed frequently ridicules a certain radical form of idealism among his Transcendentalist friends. Emerson’s task, Schmidt says, is to fight the “Grundkrankheit” (“underlying/essential illness”) of the times, the lack of belief (“Mangel an Glauben”) (9).<sup>15</sup> Nietzsche too remarks on the back cover of his Emerson edition: “Viel Art von Glauben thut noth.” (V back cover)

In this context, Schmidt discusses Emerson’s relation to Carlyle, mentioning Emerson’s visits in 1833 and 1847 to Britain (Schmidt 5). He contrasts Carlyle’s preference for long studies on the French Revolution and Frederick the Great with Emerson’s “Essays, Versuche, Andeutungen und Winke” (11). Carlyle searches for a “rough reality” whereas Emerson tries to catch a glimpse of hopeful gleams like the “Ueberseele” (Schmidt’s words) which “sanctify and elevate life” (17). Schmidt’s words

curiously resemble Nietzsche's own comparison between Emerson and Carlyle in 1888 in *Götzen-Dämmerung* (§13):

Viel aufgeklärter, schweifender, vielfacher, raffinierter als Carlyle, vor Allem glücklicher... Ein Solcher, der sich instinktiv bloss von Ambrosia nährt, der das Unverdauliche in den Dingen zurücklässt. Gegen Carlyle gehalten ein Mann des Geschmacks. — [...] Sein Geist findet immer Gründe, zufrieden und selbst dankbar zu sein; und bisweilen streift er die heitere Transscendenz jenes Biedermanns, der von einem verliebten Stelldichein 'tamquam re bene gesta' [as a success] zurückkam. 'Ut desint vires,' sprach er dankbar, 'tamen est laudanda voluptas' [To lack strength, however, is to be praised]. (KSA 6: 120)

For Nietzsche, Carlyle wishes to give his readers something to "chew on," a contact with reality, implying that reality is hard to "swallow." Nietzsche added in his notes that Carlyle has two important qualities: the desire for a strong belief and the feeling of incapacity to believe. He is a typical Romantic in his worship of heroes, disingenuous, angry, an Atheist who does not want to be one (KSA 6: 119). Emerson, on the other hand, has *taste* (an important aspect for Nietzsche), he sifts what he needs from things to be cheerful, he is the one who "receives" (an important aspect for Emerson), and "thanks" life, who reverses the wheel of time, who becomes younger instead of older etc. Just like Schmidt argued, Emerson, for Nietzsche, is someone who strives for an ideal, but without feeling Carlyle's desire to believe in such; Emerson is no Romantic, no atheist against his own will. But mostly, Emerson and Carlyle differ in style. In contrast to Grimm, Schmidt sees Emerson neither as poet nor as philosopher – he lacks the pedagogical drive and argumentative rigorousness of the latter – Emerson simply delivers

himself to “the game of his thoughts” (“dem Spiel seiner Gedanken”) and to his moods (13). Only occasionally, Schmidt says, appears the central idea of his life, to be an apostle of and for the future: it is Emerson’s task, “der in Materialismus versunkenen Welt das Licht des idealen Lebens zu zeigen, oder vielmehr – denn er betrachtet seine Stellung nur als eine vorbereitende – das Bedürfnis darnach zu erwecken.” (13-14) Schmidt considers Emerson’s task the *preparation* of the future or the creation of desire for a future. It is Nietzsche’s Zarathustra whose task he defines as the preparation for the coming of the overman. And isn’t Zarathustra too a “lecturer,” a “preacher” or “prophet” (or their caricature)? Emerson’s task becomes visible in his style that is not the sermon, nor the lecture, nor a dialogue, but a “continuous conversation, which costs the lecturer bears alone.” (14) Emerson is the master of contradiction without refuting any standpoint (15). In this regard, Schmidt compares Emerson to Hamann, but unlike Hamann, Emerson never appears hermetic or esoteric. He uses only familiar elements and surprises with the combination of what we already know (27). In this way, Emerson’s essays do not move “anywhere,” do not “progress,” but move in “concentric circles.” (30) It is, indeed, difficult to say what an essay by Emerson is “about.”

Emerson was, although stylistically difficult, considered either influenced by German philosophy or genuinely American (see Timpe 1964, 69). However, this dualistic understanding of Emerson would simplify Grimm’s, Schmidt’s and Nietzsche’s remarks on Emerson. Indeed, it is remarkable how some of Grimm’s and Schmidt’s descriptions of Emerson fit passages found in Nietzsche’s texts that seem to appear entirely separate from his discussions of Emerson as a writer. By some, Emerson was regarded a late romantic or idealist philosopher, by others a poet (Grimm), and again by others neither

nor (Schmidt), maybe a preacher of modern life – these labels or the lack thereof point to the difficulty of categorizing Emerson’s texts, a major aspect in Emerson’s surging reception around 1900.

## 1.2 EMERSON/NIETZSCHE BETWEEN 1900 AND 1933

Richard Deming estimates that the rising interest in Emerson in the late 1890s was “fueled in large part by a burgeoning disillusionment with materialism and the premium put on rationalism, and by a frustration with perceived pessimism so prevalent across Europe at that time.” Logically, Emerson’s “philosophical idealism and optimism provided a welcome counterbalance for fin de siècle German-language writers.” (Deming 2015, 171)<sup>16</sup> Indeed, as others have noticed, Emerson’s reception surges between 1894 and 1907 (see Timpe, 1964, 62ff.). However, German readers could have found idealism and optimism in the German tradition as well, for instance in Hegel, who was virtually omnipresent in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. So why Emerson? Although Deming is certainly correct about Emerson’s supposed optimism and idealism, at least in the eyes of German readers, there must be more to it. In fact, I would argue that Emerson’s text is so popular around this time for various reasons, one of which is the protean nature of his text itself. The way in which German writers were able to read, make use of, or even appropriate Emerson for various, even contradictory uses, lies in the fact that Emerson’s text, as Nietzsche’s, invites and encourages its own abuses, or, to put it more diplomatic, creative (mis)interpretations. In more than one aspect, Emerson’s success around 1900 parallels Nietzsche’s.<sup>17</sup>

At the earliest stage, Emerson is read together with but separated from Nietzsche as one of the representative voices of the “Übermensch mania” around 1900 (See Wiecki 1903). Leo Berg, who not only began the reception of Nietzsche, calling him the greatest virtuoso of the German language (1889, 148ff., 168ff.),<sup>18</sup> included Emerson (next to Carlyle and Kierkegaard) in his study on the “Übermensch” (Berg 1897) which he analyses as the consequence of God’s death and Feuerbach’s anthropocentric materialism. Berg’s study belongs to those who bring Emerson and Nietzsche together thematically, but most often remain too general.<sup>19</sup> A more promising part of criticism around 1900 devotes much attention to Emerson’s style. For instance, Eduard Engel (1897) describes how Emerson’s essays are “in der Form abgerissen, wie durcheinander gewürfelte Mosaiksteinchen” (587) and connects this style to Emerson’s “optimistic philosophy.”<sup>20</sup> Engel’s discussion of Emerson is the beginning of a renewed interest in Emerson, the first major reception of his writings in Germany, supported by Karl Federn as the first translator and publisher of Emerson’s major works in one edition.<sup>21</sup>

Federn belongs to the group of critics that place Emerson in line with a humanistic tradition. Although he did not produce any essays on Emerson directly, his commitment to a renewal of the Renaissance and his vision of a unified Europe in terms of Goethe’s “Weltliteratur” reveal that he places Emerson into that tradition (1900, 1-34, 35-56). The Renaissance represents for Federn a reaction against the asceticism of Medieval Christianity, against the devaluation of life, a resurgence of the individual, especially in artistic expressions, and a general joy about life (1900, 14). All of these aspects can and were found in Emerson’s essays, letting Emerson join the “modern” writers from the Renaissance to Goethe, Byron, Nietzsche and Federn himself (1900, 29).

Similar to Federn's approach, Friedrich Lienhard interprets Emerson in his voluminous "Wege nach Weimar" (1910) among Shakespeare and Homer (in the second volume) as an after effect of German classicism. Nevertheless, Emerson as one of the "Ausläufer" of the Weimarian spirit is only a shadow of a movement that slowly petered out. Most interestingly, Lienhardt's idea of aesthetic culture is the exact opposite to Federn's Renaissance conception: it is ascetic, at its center lies the liberation from all "materiality and "den Belästigungen der Körperlichkeit, um sie aus einigem Abstand künstlerisch und geistig zu beherrschen." (1910, 5) Lienhardt turns Emerson into a practitioner of a strict ascesis (5) in which the spirit ("Geist") rules and leaves the heaviness of all earthly matters behind (6). Emerson is idealistic ammunition against Lienhardt's cultural enemies, the "cold" realists, naturalists, and materialists, and the "Literaturkrankheit": "Es ist unser Geistesleben mit einem Schimmelpilz überzogen worden und ist erkrankt. [Our spiritual life has been coated by a mold fungus]." (23) Emerson, as a representative of "geistiger Gesundheit" ("spiritual health") (177), becomes an antidote against modernity, that is "Americanism": "So bildet Emersons stille Kraft eine Gegenstimmung zum lauten Amerikanismus." (165) By mobilizing Emerson against his own culture, Lienhardt aligns Emerson with Goethe and a better, "German," time: "Emerson führt uns zu innerer Ruhe [und] will ich mich aus Zerfahrenheiten modernen Welt zurückrufen, sammeln und beruhigen [...]." (165) This imagined *vita contemplativa*, what Lienhardt also calls Emerson's "germanischen Individualismus" (170), seems to him a sign of the future (167). On the one hand, Lienhardt continues the side of reception that sees Emerson as an inheritor of classicism. On the other hand, this classicism is also elevated as a quintessential "German" heritage. Further, this German

heritage is now at the turn of the century in a crisis and Emerson's texts are activated to revive this tradition – by these means, Emerson's texts enter the discourse of decadence, degeneration, and cultural decay. It is indeed astonishing how many medical and hygienic metaphors Lienhardt, and other critics, use to describe the culture of their times, and the hopes they have for Emerson's text.

One of the most glaring examples of this practice is Kuno Francke, professor at Harvard, who wrote an article on "Emerson and German Personality" (1903, 1-15). Herwig Friedl has already sufficiently discussed Francke's "Germanization of Emerson," so I will limit my discussion to how Francke fits the overall trends of Emerson's reception. Just like Lienhardt, Francke laments the current state of German culture around 1900, the prevalent materialism, scientism, mindless positivism, and the loss of a genuine religious life (13). He also considers particularly German the emphasis on the "inner life," the spiritual unity of all things, and a healthy portion of personal conviction (3–6). Francke claims that Emerson is just an inferior version of Fichte and his philosophical foundation of the German nation, which makes, as Friedl puts it, "Emerson as praeceptor Americae appear as a minor copy of the powerful German original." (Friedl 2015, 10–12) Again, Emerson is reduced to a mere shadow or weak imitation of German philosophy, and he better "pay back to Germany what he owes her" (Francke 1903, 14). Later, Francke frames Emerson's "German" optimism as an antidote to the "decadent" pessimism of Nietzsche: "Less Nietzsche, more Emerson" (1907, 126).<sup>22</sup> In the same line of thought, yet reverse, Georg Biedenkapp, who called Emerson the "American Nietzsche" (thereby reversing the order of indebtedness), described Emerson as a

“Yankee” and “dollar-hunter,” who would not “be capable of writing even a single line of philosophy.” (1903, 246)<sup>23</sup>

Whether Emerson is a representative of a distinct Americanness or a bad copy of German thought, in both cases, he is used to criticize the “Americanization” of contemporary culture. Who could be a better antidote to Americanization than the voice who, in the words of Oliver Wendell Holmes, represented the literary declaration of independence for the United States?<sup>24</sup> Even in the cases in which Emerson is taken to be an antidote to the degenerating tendencies of the times, he is turned inferior. This also includes the first study on Emerson’s influence on Nietzsche by Charles Anders, who claimed that Nietzsche found “German reminiscences” in Emerson which led him to overestimate Emerson’s intellectual powers (1920, 340-370).

But writers did not necessarily go back to Emerson’s German influence to insert him into the grand discourse of sickness and health at the turn of the century. The publication of Emerson’s “Gesammelte Werke” in 1903, in honor of his centennial, was accompanied by reviews from the “*Illustrierte Zeitung*” that called Emerson a thinker and poet “an dem auch ein krankhaftes Gemütsleben gesunden kann [...]” (277) Otto Lohr (1902) wrote that Emerson and his visions of the “*Ueberschensch*” initiate a “spiritual healing” for the Western world and that the optimism in CL is a “*frohe Heilsbotschaft*.”<sup>25</sup> Quasi religiously, Carl von Gleichen-Russwurm (1907) thinks that Emerson’s love of nature bears a “hygiene of the soul” which “the modern, exhausted human appreciates and regards as a necessary remedy.” (33) Paul Scheurlen (1903) describes Emerson’s highest quality as his ability to “heal” his own people from the “fever of Americanism,” the distractions and hastiness of everyday life (564).



Other critics too use Emerson as an antidote against the “American” or capitalist tendencies of the times. In “Betrachtung zu einer Stelle aus Emersons ‘Die Kreise,’” Peter Altenberg contrasts the fast-paced life of the city, the rush of working life, the decadent consumption of champagne and perfume, and the ever-present advertisements, to the meditative dwelling in front of an Emersonian aperçu: “Sie [Emerson’s sentences] sind doch wichtiger als Champagner und Parfum!” (6)<sup>26</sup> It is quite ironic however that the passage Altenberg chose from Emerson’s “Circles” does not praise quiet reflection but uncertainty, appropriation, and destruction.<sup>27</sup> Such readings of Emerson, using him to paint a contrast to the modern city, happen to become an excellent opportunity to contrast Emerson and Nietzsche. Paul Scheurlen observes some similarities between them in the “manner of speaking between philosophy and poetry,” in the “aphoristic style” that comes close to that of an oracle, and even the content of their texts. However, it is Nietzsche’s destructive force and Emerson’s constructive affirmative style that makes the difference for Scheurlen: Nietzsche is an artist of language, Emerson an artist of life, the former surprises us with his lightning strikes,<sup>28</sup> the latter lets us watch the mild, warm beauty of the sunset: “wo jener [Nietzsche] – der Meister der modernen Feuilletonisten – nur zu witzeln und zu zerstören weiß, da redet Emerson mit stillem Ernst und “bringt, um mit seinen Worten zu reden, “Bausteine zusammen, damit andere bauen können.” (564)<sup>29</sup> Whether this characterization of Emerson is correct is beside the point (it is not). The point is that Scheurlen and others can use Emerson for their purposes because Emerson only provides “building blocks” for his readers – he encourages appropriation.

German critics, in one way or another, cherish this Emersonian “aphoristic style.” However, Emerson did not write aphorisms in the strict sense of the word. It was the

work of editors to select and publish the “best of” Emerson to read him bit by bit (something which Emerson’s style indeed encourages). In 1906, Egon Friedell published an anthology of Emerson’s “aphorisms” that are excerpts from his essays and journals. He arranges aphorisms grouped under themes and numbered in imitation of Nietzsche’s aphoristic works. Friedell portrays Emerson as a free spirit, someone who frees “imprisoned spirits and imprisoned thoughts.” (Friedell 1906, 19)<sup>30</sup> Friedell attempts to retrieve the “Urform” of Emerson’s essays by grouping the various paragraphs and aphoristic thinking, because he was familiar with Emerson’s method of composition.<sup>31</sup> And thus, his essays are just a “flowing text” of various observations and reflections that take on the form of a diary (22). Sophie von Harbou describes the result of Emerson’s method in similar ways as pearls on a string, forming a loosely connected chain of thoughts.<sup>32</sup> That is because Emerson would simply collect thousands of thoughts and group them loosely together in a “Zettelkasten” setup. When Emerson had to write a lecture, he revisited those notes and put them together under a topic resulting in a “resume der Gedankenarbeit vieler Jahre [...], deren starke Subjectivität von jeglicher Einseitigkeit frei blieb, weil die Ergebnisse der verschiedenartigsten Stimmungen und Beleuchtungen hier zusammentrafen.” (Von Harbou 4) This method explains the often-puzzling swift change of mood and topic in Emerson’s essays and the difficulty to read Emerson “objectively.” In 1907, Friedell declares: “Es ist nicht möglich, über Emerson objektiv zu reden. Man muss seine Bücher als Liebhaber lesen. Von anderen Denkern lässt sich beweisen, dass sie bedeutend waren und warum sie es waren. Von Emerson lässt sich gar nichts beweisen.” (1907, 871) Another critic wrote in “Der Kunstwart” that Emerson’s style, his essays, seem indeed quite “un-German,” not knowing whether that is

a compliment or a critique towards the Germans (1903, 217-235). To Friedell, Emerson's sentences appear suddenly without preparation, without connection, escaping any categorization. Who dislike Emerson will think that he simply contradicts himself or spurts out common sense truth. Indeed, Friedell insists that Emerson is not original (1907, 872) if that means saying something "new." Similarly, Knut Hamsun called Emerson's unoriginality his strength in a brief article in "Die Zeit" (1899, 51).<sup>33</sup> Friedell concurs by opposing Emerson to the modern technological progress: "Was ist denn "neu"? Neu ist der Auerbrenner, das Maschinengewehr, der Morsetelegraph. [...] Dagegen an der Ilias oder am Zarathustra ist gar nichts neu." (1907, 872)

Robert McFarlane argued in *Original Copy* that the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century experienced "the reappraisal of literary originality and plagiarism" (2007, 6); the idea of literary creation as "creatio ex nihilo" coming from the 18<sup>th</sup> century turned into an account of literary production as "inventio" among Victorian authors. These authors reinvented the concept of originality as a form of invention, that is the reassessment, reassembling of materials provided by the tradition. The beginning of this revaluation McFarlane identifies as the year 1859, the publication of Emerson's "Quotation and Originality," among others, and, at least in Britain, the prominence of an industry of "plagiarism hunters" (11). Emerson is one of the authors that revalue appropriation as a literary value, for instance Walter Pater, De Quincey, and of course Oscar Wilde. One possible explanation for the surge of Emerson readers at the turn of the century, including Oscar Wilde, could be Emerson's conviction that the best writers "steal."<sup>34</sup> Famously, Walter Raleigh says in his lecture on "Style" (1897):

“In the matter of language we lead a parasitical existence, and are always quoting. [...] the borrowings of good writers are never thus superfluous, their quotations are appropriations. [...] The words were once Shakespeare’s; if only you can feel them as he did, they are yours now no less than his. The best quotations, the best translations, the best thefts, are equally new and original works.” (Quote after McFarlane, 210-211)

It belongs to the many contradictions around 1900 that Max Nordau, the diagnostician and stimulator of “Degeneration,” saw in the atrophy of originality, the inability to “create truly new forms,” signs of decadence and decay. Is Emerson a representative of this sort of decadence because he is not “original,” as so many critics say, or is he a cure for this dying culture, the prophet of health and youth? Friedell in any case “appropriates” Emerson’s theory of appropriation:

aber jedes Genie ist ein Mensch, der stiehlt. Stehlen ist ja gar nicht so leicht. Zum Stehlen gehört Geschmack, Verständnis, weiter Horizont. Die Ilias lag auf der Strasse. Sie war nicht einmal gesetzlich geschützt. Aber stehlen konnte sie nur der eine Homer. Dagegen ist es bis heute noch keinem Nietzscheaner gelungen, Nietzsche zu plagieren. Sie können es nicht; es kommt niemals Nietzsche heraus, sondern immer nur der Nietzscheaner Herr Soundso. (1907, 872)<sup>35</sup>

Imitation or appropriation is inescapable, but appropriation well-done is not easy. The rise of mechanical means to copy everything in the blink of an eye opens space for a new distinction between “good” and “bad” appropriation. In this way, Friedell can play Emerson against an increasing mechanization of life, what he calls “Americanization.” Emerson, he says, “trat auf zu einer Zeit, da Amerika vor der Gefahr stand, vollkommen

amerikanisiert zu werden. Er trat auf und setzte gegen die Realität der Maschine die Realität des Herzens.” (874) Emerson does not belong to the “specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart” (Weber 124).

Emerson as a “philosopher of the new world” (Friedell 1907, 875) proves to be of prophetic power, because he was “ahead” of the European world. America is not just a geographical location but a glimpse of the future. Emerson’s audience are “ein Volk von selfmademen,” lacking scientific or aesthetic traditions, and thus Emerson writes under truly modern conditions that are yet to arrive in the “old world.” It is from this modern life that Emerson extracts his most poetic images, the frequently evoked iron strings, which makes Emerson neither “idealist” nor “transcendentalist.”<sup>36</sup> The appropriate style of this period can only be “aphoristic,” for Friedell; Emerson is an absolute “Impressionist” (876). All of Emerson’s flaws, his lack of originality, his jumpiness, his inconsequence, his lack of a system, his repetitions, are his strengths and signs of his “love of truth” (879) or “naturalness.” Consistency is a sign of disingenuousness. “Man kann,” Friedell concludes, “Emerson nicht widersprechen.” (878)<sup>37</sup>

As a review of Friedell’s Emerson anthology, Friedrich Gundelfinger, also known as Friedrich Gundolf, published another excellent commentary on Emerson’s style.<sup>38</sup> Gundolf became known for his participation in the George Kreis and his historical studies of “great men” in the style of Emerson’s “Representative Men,” on Goethe, Caesar, and Shakespeare. Interestingly, Walter Kaufmann mentions him as being influenced by Nietzsche’s essay on history (Kaufmann 1974, 142), without noticing Emerson’s presence in the background for both. Gundolf’s discussion of Emerson, like Friedell’s, circles around the problem of the new. He too thinks that Emerson does not present “new

thoughts” but rather a new temperament of the new (Gundolf 252). Emerson is forever “Vorläufer” (forerunner or precursor). Herwig Friedl correctly said that Gundolf presents Emerson, like Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, “as a precursor, a prophet of a future mode of thinking.” (Friedl 2015, 147)<sup>39</sup> Emerson moves with “fröhlicher Sicherheit” and practices a “heitere Vergeistigung” of everything around him in the chaos of this “Uebergangszeit” (Gundolf 252) or decadence. Gundolf firmly anchors Emerson in the American myth. Forever pointing towards the future, Gundolf continues, Emerson perceives the human being as a “Kompendium der Kräfte,” pure potentiality, because of the attempts to domesticate the vast nature of America. For Gundolf, Emerson only “plays” with concepts and their greatest possibilities, which causes his essays to seem repetitive while they in fact “flow” into each other. Emerson’s method reflects moreover his metaphysics, that the essence of the world is “movement,” “the relations, not that which relates.” (254) Emerson synthesizes the whole of America into one great “rhythm, “indem er der alten Welt das Material entnahm und es in sein eignes Temperament verwandelte.” (256) The European material, German idealism, Schelling’s attempt to represent nature as spirit, Hegel’s attempt to turn history into a dialectical process, turn in Emerson’s hands, according to Gundolf, into an undogmatic rhapsody of movement – influence turns into appropriation:

Die Begriffe von Gut und Bös, Gerechtigkeit, Unsterblichkeit, Schönheit, Gott, Mensch entnimmt er frank aus der geschichtlichen Reihe, deren Ergebnisse sie sind, presst ihnen den Gehalt aus, mit dem die Erfahrungen Europas sie erfüllt haben und spielt mit ihnen als den Formeln seiner eignen Frömmigkeit. [...]

Emerson ist zeitlos und raumlos, oder vielmehr, wir müssen uns erst an ein ganz

neues Dimensionsgefühl gewöhnen, wenn wir uns in seinem ‘moralischen Raum’ zurechtfinden wollen. (257)

This new dimension goes beyond good and evil and beyond discursive rationality. Emerson does not *have* any opinions, Gundolf affirms, he treats the Sphinx as his “playmate,” consciously being proteus (“er ist mit Bewusstsein Proteus.”), and we are unable to fully determine his “positions” (257). “Alles in Fluss zu verwandeln,” says Gundolf, “das ist sein Mittel, [...] die Sätze springen gegeneinander, deuten gegeneinander und enteilen sich fröhlich. [...] Emersons Beweglichkeit ist nie Unrast und Erregung, wie diejenige Nietzsches; er will ja nie ein Ziel; er ist nur voll lebendigen Behagens das sich äussern muss.” (258)

Gundolf notices that Emerson shares these aspects with Maeterlinck, who in fact was a reader of Emerson, but the latter is much too moralistic and “gutartig humanitär,” whereas Emerson often shows a directness and unscrupulousness that gives him the ability “immer Ja zu sagen.” (258) That is Emerson’s “‘ruchlosen’ Optimismus,”<sup>40</sup> unlike Hegel’s, not born from a denial of reality but from a heroic opposition to and acknowledgement of reality. Emerson is in this regard “modern,” but he is not a combatant, “kein geborner Widerspruchsgeist wie Nietzsche, dessen amor fati die Formel für einen Kampf und Sieg ist, ein düsterer blutiger Triumphruf.” (259) Nietzsche’s *amor fati* appears to Gundolf as the expression of a Bismarckian call to arms, while Emerson’s optimism does not seek a victory of one power over another but a balance of powers: “Die Lebensbewegung ist ihm kein Ringen und Rennen (wie für Nietzsche), kein Wallen und Tauchen (wie der Romantik), sondern ein Balanzieren.” (259) Emerson’s style is that of a tightrope dancer who suspends the laws of gravity (“Gesetze der Schwere”) (259). It

is questionable, of course, if Gundolf's contrasting of Emerson and Nietzsche works. Why does Gundolf compare Emerson to Nietzsche if not for the fact that they seem so similar? The spirit of gravity, the tight-rope dancer, the affirmative 'Yes,' the musical spirit, the emphasis on becoming, are all elements of Nietzsche's Zarathustra. It seems rather that Nietzsche and Emerson represent to Gundolf the two cultural forces of the time, turning Nietzsche into a representative of Bismarckian power politics and a destructive "Feuilletonist," and Emerson into the spiritual and optimistic American counterweight. But this is only possible because of Nietzsche's and Emerson's, as Gundolf says himself, protean qualities.

Even the best readings of Emerson, Friedell's and Gundolf's, cannot escape the cultural weight of Emerson's name. We could take Gundolf's term "Balanzieren", which comes from Emerson's "Compensation," one of the more influential essays at the turn of the century, and use it to paint Emerson as an American "dollar-hunter," who turns the world into a calculation table: "Always pay," he advises us, "for first or last you must pay your entire debt." (E 113) To some readers, this must seem quite fitting for an American writer who names Benjamin Franklin in the same breath as AEsop, Socrates, Cervantes, and Shakespeare (CL 261). To my mind comes here Max Weber who places a lengthy quote of Benjamin Franklin at the center of his *The Protestant Ethic* in the section on "The Spirit of Capitalism": "Remember, that *time* is money. [...]. Remember, that *credit* is money. [...] Remember, that money is of the prolific, generating nature. Money can beget money, and its offspring can beget more, and so on." (Weber 14-15)<sup>41</sup> Indeed, Emerson, in being attributed the founding father of American literature, cannot escape this myth of American Capitalism in Max Weber's sense. Oskar Dähnert, in his



introduction to Emerson's essays from 1895, remarks that "Der Amerikaner liebt das Kurze und Pointierte, er ist der krasseste Vertreter jener Theorie des time is money und hat auch der Literatur diesen seinen Geschmack aufgedrängt." (1) While Emerson's brevity was what attracted many readers to him,<sup>42</sup> for critics like Dähnert, even in his appreciative-condescending tone, Emerson is a decadent albeit "pioneer" of a "truly American poetry," a "Pizarro of the spirit, placed at the division of two ages." (Dähnert 5)

Let us return one more time to Weber to explore this connection between Emerson, the writer of the intellectual declaration of independence, and Franklin, the co-author of the political declaration via the myth of capitalism. Weber declares:

It is Benjamin Franklin who preaches to us in these sentences, the same which Ferdinand Kürnberger satirizes in his clever and malicious *Picture of American Culture* [*Der Amerikamüde*, 1835] as the supposed confession of faith of the Yankee. That it is the spirit of capitalism which here speaks in characteristic fashion, no one will doubt, [...] the philosophy of which Kürnberger sums up in the words, 'They make tallow out of cattle and money out of men'. (16)

It is without a doubt that the attribution of the phrase "time is money" to one of the founding fathers of the American constitution represents not so much a historical fact but the creation of a myth of a nation. Ray Billington<sup>43</sup> remarked how "German intellectuals saw aging Europe as a victim of unreversible weariness – Europamüdigkeit, they called it – while in America new societies were aborning and the winds of change blew strong." (34) This sentiment can even be seen in Goethe's 1831 remark: "Amerika, du hast es besser." Kürnberger's *Der Amerikamüde* (1835) presents therefore the reversal

of this projection. Based on Nikolaus Lenau's experiences in the US from 1832-1833 that radically changed his perception of "America," it became one of the most widely read novels of the times. When Lenau arrived, Toqueville left the US with the perception "that what appears to them [Americans] to be good to-day may be superseded by something better-to-morrow."<sup>44</sup> Lenau's judgements, however, are closer to Heinrich Heine's who saw America as a "gigantic prison of freedom": "This-wordly utility is the American's true religion, and money is his God, his only, almighty God." (Heine) [quote after Ceasar] Weber's "Protestant Ethic" was written before he visited the US, and thus America functions in this book as a signifier, transmitted via Kürnberger's novel. The entire essay is framed by this symbol of America; Franklin represents almost perfectly the ascetic protestant ethic Weber tries to genealogically extract from capitalism, even though Franklin's actual life was anything but ascetic. Weber treats Kürnberger's satire as an accurate description of the American spirit that he identifies, by usage of Franklin's text, with the spirit of capitalism itself. Towards the end of his essay, Weber asserts that the spirit of religious asceticism that gave birth to modern capitalism, now void of religious meaningfulness as an empty call for duty, finds "the field of its highest development, in the United States, the pursuit of wealth, stripped of its religious and ethical meaning." (124)

The imminent threat Weber sees as the future fate of Europe is what other critics have already named in the discussion of Emerson "Americanization." It is an event that is always just "on the way," a threat that is looming, that has not yet fully arrived. America is the place of its "highest development," as Weber says. America is "ahead of its time." In this way, Hegel's statement that America is the "land of the future" became a

prophecy. America represents the future of Europe, the coming “iron cage” (“eisernes Gehäuse”), its fate. Emerson himself thus becomes prophetic for the German critics because he wrote under conditions half a century ago that now “arrive” in Germany; at least, that’s how they perceive it. Emerson thus always arrives “late,” is “still arriving.” The same could be and was said about Nietzsche, even by himself, that his time has not come yet; a trope traceable all the way back to Leo Berg’s inaugurating study in 1889.<sup>45</sup>

In the various appropriations and uses Emerson’s text was subjected to, we have seen how Emerson can occupy simultaneously the American “difference,” “newness,” and be rendered to the status of a mere copy of a lost Germanic culture. We have also seen in glimpses that Nietzsche’s text was subject to similar appropriations. Bruno Hillebrand describes the early Nietzsche reception in the following words: “Man sah nicht die Widersprüchlichkeit in Nietzsches Denken, den Widerspruch als Denk-Prinzip, das Nicht-Festgelegte, den Widerstand gegen jede verkürzte Definition des Menschen, sei sie idealistisch oder materialistisch. Man nahm Nietzsche wörtlich. Man zitierte ihn nach Belieben.” (Hillebrand 2016, 9) We could replace the name “Nietzsche” here with Emerson and will receive almost the same description that Friedell gave a century earlier. “Why in the first place,” asks Steven Aschheim, “did Nietzsche exert such a unique protean fascination? Why was he able to attract so many generations of appropriators?”<sup>46</sup> (Aschheim 1992, 7) We could, and have, asked the same question about Emerson.

### 1.3 EMERSON/NIETZSCHE AFTER 1945

The responses to the Emerson-Nietzsche connection have always been swinging between disbelief, perplexity and denial. Judith Shklar begins her essay on “Emerson and

the Inhibitions of Democracy” (1993) with the ironic yet all too typical reaction to Nietzsche’s intensive reading of Emerson, which practically frames the entire scholarship on their connection since 1945: “But he is not Nietzsche!” (Shklar 121) In the most recent work on this connection, Benedetta Zavatta (2019) concluded that Nietzsche’s “reading of his American elder, then, did not result in Nietzsche’s becoming a second Emerson; rather, it saw to it that Nietzsche became Nietzsche.” (200-201) Stanley Hubbard’s groundbreaking monography in German 60 years earlier concluded similarly: “Nietzsche war kein Emersonianer: er war Nietzsche.” (178) One is inclined to wonder what the cause of this, what Michael Lopez had called, “reflex gesture of denial” (1997, 2)<sup>47</sup> might be. “The depth of the connection between [Emerson and Nietzsche],” Stanley Cavell once asserted, “is unknown. [...] No matter how many people tell you the connection exists, you forget it, and you can’t believe it, and not until you begin to have both voices in your ears do you recognize what a transfiguration of an Emerson sentence sounds like when Nietzsche rewrites it.” (Cavell, 2003) Similarly, Quenton Anderson reminded us 30 years earlier that “*Emerson comes before Nietzsche* [...] but we keep forgetting that it was Nietzsche who read Emerson, not the other way around.” (Anderson 1971, 169)

Where does this abruptness in judgement, this, to borrow a well-known expression, anxiety of influence come from? One answer is given by Benedetta Zavatta, following the thoughts from others like Michael Lopez and Herwig Friedl, that the forgetfulness and denial of Emerson-Nietzsche “is not just a matter of chance but rather a symptom of a long-protracted cultural and political hostility between Germany and the United States [...]” (xv) No doubt, this is true. Emerson’s reception in Germany, as we

have seen, is inseparable from the “America”-discourse in 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe. Likewise, the reception of Nietzsche’s works by scholars in the United States after 1945 took place under the shadow of German Nazism. No Emerson studies mention Nietzsche. Likewise, it comes as no surprise that Nietzsche studies like Walter Kaufmann’s, Arthur Danto’s or Alexander Nehamas’ do not mention Emerson at all or reduce him to a single footnote. Emerson and Nietzsche, in their respective academic images, were opposites. No one would have wanted to let the “democratic” Emerson come near to what was still considered a nationalistic, megalomaniac Nietzsche.<sup>48</sup>

But what Zavatta calls a cultural hostility is as well a symptom of cultural self-identity. The Emerson scholarship in the English-speaking world especially cultivated and still cultivates an image of Emerson as the great “genteel” (Santayana), innocent, “transcendental,” optimistic, naïve idealist. Although it is today a common place judgement to regard Emerson as a predecessor of American pragmatism, Emerson’s work itself is deemed only worthy for the museum of past ideas, no longer useful, in fact forever out of fashion. Considering that this has been the dominant scholarly and public image of Emerson in the United States for the last 150 years, with a few exceptions, no wonder that Nietzsche scholars have reduced Nietzsche’s love for Emerson to a mere oddity in the history of ideas,<sup>49</sup> even after Nietzsche’s name got cleared off the fascist appropriations.<sup>50</sup> Lastly, we also must acknowledge that Nietzsche kept Emerson “a secret” aside from a few highly positive remarks strewn throughout his immense oeuvre. Nietzsche’s relation to Emerson was indeed silent, very different from his relation to Schopenhauer or Wagner, or even Plato, who he attacks again and again prominently in his writings.

However, this does not mean that the Emerson/Nietzsche connection, as a case of influence, had been entirely forgotten. I would like to discuss more in depth the milestones of this history. Charles Andler (1920) was the first scholar to carry out a systematic study of Nietzsche's sources or "précurseurs." Although not a dedicated study to Emerson's influence on Nietzsche, Andler set the tone of the scholarship to come by claiming that Emerson's influence was restricted to Nietzsche's youth till 1876, while also continuing common simplifications of Emerson's supposedly "German Romantic" heritage:

Emerson is a Platonist and a mystic. He abandoned himself so carelessly to the currents of German Romanticism that he found himself inevitably set adrift upon the waters of that revived Platonism in which the doctrine of a Fichte, a Novalis, or a Schopenhauer essentially consisted [...]. Exposing himself to Emerson, Nietzsche was sucked back, in his turn, into these bewitching waters. Around 1876 he had sworn no longer to believe in any metaphysical chimeras. But Emerson thrust him once again into this dark and shifting element. (Andler, 247)

Obviously, these remarks ignore entirely that Nietzsche continued to read Emerson after 1876, and that his most productive years of using Emerson were yet to come. This is precisely what Eduard Baumgarten tried to show in his groundbreaking study. If Andler is the first author who draws attention to Emerson's direct influence on Nietzsche, while still under the condition of a "misunderstanding," it is Eduard Baumgarten who disproved this claim and reconstructed, for the first time, the materials of Nietzsche's reading in the 30's and 40's. Baumgarten discovered Nietzsche's notes and annotations in his Emerson edition in the Nietzsche Archive in Weimar in 1937,

while having worked already on the history of American pragmatism during the 30's, after receiving his PhD under Max Weber in 1924, and teaching at the University of Wisconsin as an instructor and assistant professor from 1926 to 1931. This is extraordinary considering the anti-American atmosphere under the Nazi regime, the appropriation of Nietzsche by the Nazis, as well as the strict control Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche exerted over Nietzsche's posthumous notes in the archive (see Bauer 1997, 76ff.). During his work, Baumgarten even lost his position in Göttingen due to a letter by Heidegger, who not only dismissed Emerson's influence, but denounced Baumgarten as closely linked to the "Jude Fränkel" (Heidegger's colleague in Freiburg) and as an "Americanized" Weberian liberal democrat (see Bauer 1997, 77; Zavatta 2019, 13). Despite these obstacles, especially the lack of access to the archive, and the stop to the *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* under Karl Schlechta, Baumgarten published his findings independently in 1956. Despite Baumgarten's detailed report, being to date the most rigorous study of Nietzsche's reading, scholars were reluctant to engage with his findings; in fact, Baumgarten's research has been largely forgotten or ignored, especially in the US.

Baumgarten identifies three major periods in Nietzsche's reading: 1862-1863, 1872-1874, and 1881-1888, declaring 1881 the most significant. Baumgarten's interpretation show a clear pattern: Nietzsche radicalizes ("übertrieben," "gesteigert") Emerson by reading "through" the translation, "als habe Nietzsche durch den Übersetzungstext hindurch den radikalen Originaltext gehört, gespürt, rasch ergriffen und alsbald noch um einige Grade gesteigert)" (101).<sup>51</sup> George Stack's 1992 monography, the first in English on Emerson/Nietzsche, characterizes Nietzsche's use of Emerson's text in

a similar fashion. Stack had “concentrated on the major themes that first appear in Emerson’s prose and then reappear thinly disguised, but enhanced, embellished, raised to a higher power, in Nietzsche’s writings.” (X) Indeed, Baumgarten’s and Stack’s studies emphasize the continuous and pervasive influence of Emerson’s text. For Baumgarten, Emerson’s influence [“Einwirkung”] on Nietzsche was exclusively positive, taking place in secrecy, continuous throughout his life, influencing his critique of Christianity, of history, of his contemporaries, and the idea of the overman. Baumgarten goes even so far as to claim that Nietzsche “modeled” his life according to that of Emerson: “Nietzsche verwandelte sich insofern und insoweit in Emerson; indem er ihn in solcher Tiefe ergreift, verwandelt er zugleich Emerson in Nietzsche: positiv gesehen, er systematisiert Emerson, - negativ gesehen, er übertreibt und überspitzt Emerson. In bestimmten Punkten deutet er ihn radikal um.” (Baumgarten 152) Within this transformation, Baumgarten says, we can see the difference between Emerson “als Amerikaner” and Nietzsche “als Deutscher” (152). Again, Stack shows here similarities in Baumgarten’s evaluations when he declares that “Nietzsche, of course, was more of a philosopher than Emerson, and his thinking is sharper, deeper, more subtle, and more far-ranging than his,” (211) even though “Nietzsche could not have constructed this part of his philosophical edifice without Emersonian foundations” (211) – but what could that Nietzschean “philosophical edifice” be? Wasn’t Nietzsche rather constantly occupied with undermining, one of Nietzsche’s favorite metaphors for his work, any edifices of the tradition?<sup>52</sup> Did Emerson try to undermine the edifices of the tradition?<sup>53</sup> Stanley Cavell once said that from a European perspective (that of a someone in the tradition of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida) “the land of thought is fully occupied, as it were, by the finished edifice of



philosophy,” and the task is to make room. But “for an American the question persists whether the land of thought has as yet been discovered, whether it will be today, and whether it is at best occupied by fragments [...]” (Cavell 1996, 65)

Whenever critics assert Emerson’s difference as the “American difference” we must be cautious of course. Harold Bloom claimed that “Against Wordsworth, Coleridge, Carlyle, the seer Emerson celebrates the American difference of *discontinuity*.” (1975, 159) Emerson as the “American Orpheus” is “re-inscribing tradition as a perpetual breaking” (Bloom 1975, 168). Similarly, although less radical, Baumgarten describes Emerson’s American difference as “Tradition nur erneuernd,” and Nietzsche’s “Germanness” as “teils für teils gegen Deutschland” (Baumgarten 152). Although Baumgarten’s detailed analyses are intriguing and, for the most part, convincing, they also show limits. He never stops reading Emerson as a pragmatic, even pragmatist, thinker, less radical than Nietzsche, and more focused on “reform,” thus respecting a tradition, from which Nietzsche will wrest himself.<sup>54</sup>

Moving on in the history of scholarship, we see that Baumgarten’s findings not only informed the first English monograph on E/N but also directly informed the first monograph written on the Emerson/Nietzsche connection by Stanley Hubbard (1958). Hubbard, like Stack, places Nietzsche in the Existentialist movement (Hubbard’s teacher was Jaspers after all). But unlike Stack, he makes this the essential difference between the Nietzsche and Emerson. In the chapters that deal with Nietzsche’s and Emerson’s similar topics (which are about “the individual,” the pedagogical relationship, their friendship and solitude, amor fati and “existence and transcendence” [Existenz und Transzendenz]), the last one (149-176) stands out in which Hubbard develops E’s and N’s “philosophical

diversion” that culminates in contrasting Emerson’s “Geborgenheit” [state of comfort] (152) with Nietzsche’s “Ausgesetztsein” [exposedness] (173).

To illustrate this point, Hubbard quotes Nietzsche’s meditation on the back cover of his *Emerson-Exemplar* (KSA 9: 621-622). Here, Nietzsche declares that what is great should not be found *above* yourself but be conceived as a function *of* yourself: “Wir sind der Ozean, in den alle Flüsse des Großen fließen müssen. Wie gefährlich ist es, wenn der Glaube an die Universalität unserer selbst fehlt! Viel Art von Glauben thut noth.” (V, Back cover) Hubbard tries to deduce from Nietzsche’s remark “two diametrically opposed viewpoints” between Emerson and Nietzsche: “Denn der um eine Generation ältere Amerikaner lebt nicht einmal auf der systematischen Höhe der von Kant eröffneten kritischen Philosophie, geschweige denn in den entsetzlichen existentiellen Tiefen, die sein Zeitgenosse Kierkegaard oder sein Nachfolger Nietzsche aufgedeckt haben.” (Hubbard 151) However, Hubbard does not realize that Nietzsche takes these ideas from Emerson. For instance, in “Self-Reliance” Emerson famously declares that “To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men,—that is genius.” (E 46) Nietzsche’s “Glaube an die Universalität unserer selbst” is an interpretation of Emerson’s declaration. Hubbard’s insistence that Emerson in his “Geborgenheit” commits himself to transcendence or God is a misreading of Emerson. It seems that Hubbard got misled by the all-too slippery name of Emerson as a so-called “transcendentalist.” Emerson, Hubbard says, “mache es sich leicht, als er sich auf einen archimedischen Punkt beruft” (161), but it is Hubbard who chose the easy path to make the simple distinction between Emerson as believing in transcendence and Nietzsche being the more mature and “modern existentialist” who is “beyond” this belief. For

Hubbard, Emerson remains “eindeutig im Lager des Idealismus, den zu bekämpfen [...] Nietzsche sich zu seinem Lebenswerk gemacht hat.” (Hubbard 166) “Transcendentalism” and “Idealism” become empty words in this context.

In 2019, Benedetta Zavatta published the last monograph on the Emerson/Nietzsche connection to date. Curiously, as I have already mentioned, her and Hubbard’s conclusions uncannily resemble each other’s, exclaiming that Nietzsche was not Emerson.<sup>55</sup> Zavatta’s method to analyze Nietzsche’s “real reactions – manifestly and materially expressed in the form of his underlinings, crossing-out, exclamation points, and marginal comments appended to Emerson’s books” (Zavatta 2019, xv) was also adopted by Baumgarten and Hubbard already; although both remained unknown to the English-speaking world. Even in her final evaluations of Emerson and Nietzsche, it seems to me that she repeats some of Hubbard’s worst opinions. For instance, she insists that Emerson believes “in the intrinsic goodness of human nature and has confidence in mankind’s perfectibility,” echoing almost word for word Tocqueville’s impression that Americans “have all a lively faith in the perfectibility of man.” How can that be? Is Emerson simply the mouthpiece of a vaguely defined American temperament? Zavatta thinks that this “is only consistent with the strongly religious upbringing and education that he [Emerson] received” (200), but Nietzsche received a similarly strong religious upbringing. Further, Zavatta claims that Emerson “holds [human will] to be unconditionally free,” (200) whereas Nietzsche represents “a ruthlessly deterministic perspective on the question of the human individual’s capacity to change himself or herself and possibly thereby to achieve greatness.” (200) Again, without necessarily entering an argument here, I wonder whether this distinction, as in the case of Hubbard’s

“transcendental vs. existential” is not just a convenient escape clause for the underlying problem of difference between Emerson and Nietzsche. Why are these superficial contrasts necessary? Are they a last-minute reaction to the declaration that Nietzsche was not (could not be) Emerson? Hubbard indeed feels inclined to emphasize the following: “Im Einfluß Emersons auf Nietzsches Werk ist, ungeachtet der dünnen Scheidewände, die gelegentlich zwischen den beiden zu bestehen scheinen, keine Frage eines Plagiats.”

(178) But who suggested that it was a question of plagiarization in the first place?

Hubbard is all too eager to relegate Emerson to the role of a “Befreier” [liberator], who caused an acceleration of Nietzsche’s development that would have taken place either way (179). Similarly, Zavatta turns Emerson into an “educator,” in spirit of Nietzsche’s final tribute to his “educator” Schopenhauer:

In essence Emerson, like every genuine educator, pushed Nietzsche on down a road that was Nietzsche’s alone to travel. He urged him, as a true friend does, to seek and to become his own self. The younger thinker’s reading of his American elder, then, did not result in Nietzsche’s becoming a second Emerson; rather, it saw to it that Nietzsche became Nietzsche. (2019, 200-201)

Again, we are inclined to ask: Who suggested that Nietzsche was a “second Emerson”? No one has ever made such a claim, but it is an easy target to argue against. To conclude after all that two authors were “different” is an empty statement. Still, the pervasive nervousity about Nietzsche’s and Emerson’s closeness is symptomatic of something, I think, that we have seen in Emerson’s reception, and that was true of Nietzsche’s reception as well. Emerson’s texts, from the beginning, invited and encouraged appropriation on a thematic and stylistic level. As Grimm said in the earliest

commentaries on Emerson, he provides us with building blocks, fragments that we can put together, reassemble, and deconstruct anew. This style opened the various possibilities for readers to turn Emerson into virtually anything, the successor of German imperialism or the prophet of a future Henry Fordian capitalism, or the representative of a Renaissance humanism. For any reader Emerson offers textual evidence to support their interpretations. Can we not say something similar about Nietzsche's text? There is possibly no text in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that had been more appropriated by so many contradictory "Weltanschauungen" than that of Nietzsche's – from futurism to fascism, from anarchism to post-modernism. But this possibility to be appropriated is a feature of Nietzsche's style, a risk that he willingly took based on his views on interpretation. Is it then surprising that Nietzsche himself was often accused of plagiarism? Carl Jung claimed to have discovered a plagiarism in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.<sup>56</sup> Geoffrey Waite has argued that Nietzsche's celebrated essay on Hölderlin from 1861 is "a straightforward piece of plagiarism." (Quote after Lopez 1997, 20) And finally, Stack suggested that Nietzsche's use of Friedrich Lange's *History of Materialism* was "not a case of influence alone, but of direct appropriation." (Stack 1983, 6) But this appropriation might be, Stack continues, "a paradigm of [Nietzsche's] own theory that knowledge is a process of assimilation." (6) I concur with Stack here. In fact, Nietzsche himself famously declares in *Ecce Homo* when discussing the fate of his own writings among German readers: "Zuletzt kann Niemand aus den Dingen, die Bücher eingerechnet, mehr heraushören, als er bereits weiss." (KSA 6:299-300) However, this theory of assimilation or appropriation comes, so I argue, ironically from Emerson. Consider for example the following passage from "Spiritual Laws": "He may read what he writes. What can we see or acquire but

what we are? You have observed a skillful man reading Virgil. Well, that author is a thousand books to a thousand persons. Take the book into your two hands and read your eyes out, you will never find what I find.” (E 149) This is simultaneously a theory of “reading” (one that applies to Nietzsche as a reader) as well as a new conception of the self as a multiplicity of selves. Nietzsche thought that “a multiplicity of persons appears to participate in all [individual thinking]” (quote after Parkes 1997, 311), something he shared with Goethe and Emerson. In fact, Nietzsche at least encountered this conception in and developed further while working through Emerson’s texts. On the back page of Nietzsche’s edition of Emerson’s essays, Nietzsche notes: “Willst du ein allgemeines gerechtes Auge werden: So musst du es als einer, der durch viele Individuen gegangen ist und dessen letztes Individuum alle früheren als Funktionen braucht.” (V, back page) Emerson provided him with the theoretical background that justifies and revalues the appropriation as a practice of texts and as a site of experimentation of the self. In the following chapters, I will explore the implications of Emerson’s and Nietzsche’s theories of appropriation and assimilation.

## CHAPTER 2: 1862-1874

In this chapter, I will show how Nietzsche appropriates Emerson's texts between 1862 and 1874 while being simultaneously exposed to Emerson's own valorization of appropriation in terms of power. Emerson defines power as "transition from a past to a new state" (E 70), as influence, or translation. All the texts of Nietzsche's early writings that show signs of influence from Emerson directly problematize the power and inevitability of influences. These texts include Nietzsche's early essays on fate and freedom (1862), his essay *Über Stimmungen* (1864), and his essay on *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* (1874).

I will show how Nietzsche uses Emerson's texts, modifies them, and masks his reliance on Emerson, but that this textual engagement also corresponds directly to a thematical preoccupation with the threat of being influenced by others. At the same time, and in contrast to previous scholarship, I use the term "appropriation" not in its usual pejorative sense but as a creative textual technique for which I take Emerson as a prime example. Therefore, the question whether Nietzsche "(mis)understood" Emerson, whether Emerson "(mis)understood" Kant, Hegel, Goethe etc., and whether any of Emerson's German appropriators "(mis)understood" him, is not particularly relevant for my project. Appropriation, or more provocatively speaking "plagiarism," is a technique used by Emerson and then by Nietzsche (*after* reading Emerson), that attempts to deconstruct the literary tradition (and academic discourse about that tradition) by

disassembling and fragmentizing it while also inserting the appropriator into that very tradition by the practice of appropriation itself. Appropriation as a technique is in fact paradoxical because the author asserts herself in the very movement of undoing herself – claiming that which is not hers as “hers”. For Emerson, this paradox appears in several disguises, including America’s relation to the “old world.”<sup>57</sup>

Before we proceed, however, I would like to clarify appropriation is and why it might be called American. Appropriation generally refers to the act of taking something as one’s own or to one’s own use (something to which another makes a claim, too) – it is linked to the concept of private property. The most influential theory of property goes back to John Locke’s *Second Treatise* (chapter 5, § 27) in which he declares that property results from an act of appropriation from nature by labor of man’s body, which is “properly his.” (Locke 111) This straightforward definition, however, entails some difficulties that are apparent in Locke’s text. For instance, his conception of labor is not exclusively referring to one’s body but includes “the turfs my servant has cut ; and the ore I have digged in any place, where I have a right to them in common with others; become my property, without the assignation or consent of any body.” (Locke 112) How convenient that my servant’s labor is mine. Furthermore, it becomes clear that Locke’s theory takes place in the context of the increasing exploration and appropriation of non-European lands by Europeans. He speaks of “the wild Indian, who knows no enclosure,” – again, how convenient that the Indian does not know of property – and of the “vacant places of America” where “we shall find that the possessions he could make himself, upon the measures we have given, would not be very large, nor, even to this day, prejudice the rest of mankind, or give them reason to complain, or think themselves



injured by this man's encroachment [...]." (Locke 115) Locke's wordings are, whether he intended it or not, already anticipating (or perpetuating) the pervasive myth of the "blank slate" of the American continent, and that of the "premodern Indian," who, not knowing of property, could not lay claim to any land. As a supposedly nation from scratch, appropriation is part of the very identity of America itself.

In the realm of texts, Locke's theory also informed the first copyright laws in Britain in the eighteenth century (Boon 2010, 210). Marcus Boon further points out that the "valorization of the expressive power of the individual artist emerged around the same time as copyright laws, during the Romantic period." (Boon 2010, 204) But the actual relation between both events, however, is complicated, for the establishment of copy rights can protect but also harm individuals by monopolizing the rights of reproduction, which is why the first advocates of a strong copy right were publishing houses and not individual artists. Regardless, it seems intuitive to say that appropriation of texts (in contrast to Locke's example of nature that suggest nature to be simply there) requires texts to be considered property – the idea of a text as a unique, creative, and new expression in terms of a romantic subjectivity supports this idea. The difference therefore between appropriation and imitation, although related, is that the former "takes over" a text that seemed to belong to someone else. Boundaries are slippery, however. Imitative practices like memorization, translation, and paraphrase, although not attempting to erase the text's "proper belonging," necessarily displace it, like appropriation does.

Paradoxically, appropriation simultaneously presupposes and calls into question what is "proper," based on the very act of appropriation (displacement) itself. Emerson's affirmation of appropriation will bring this paradox to its extreme, ultimately

undermining any text's "proper" belonging – if every text is an inevitable product of appropriations and citations, as Emerson thinks it is (including the paradoxical appropriations from oneself!), no text can claim a fixed origin or be called property.

But Emerson was not alone in his interest in appropriations. While appropriation cannot be called a "new" technique, it did increase in usage in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when European nations expanded territorially, turned the globe into "property," and the writer entered the marketplace. This development, however, introduced a distinction between proper, institutionalized, and legalized appropriation and improper one (the latter having earned a bad reputation). At the same time, the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw a number of theorists that attacked the notion of property, like Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's famous *La propriété, c'est le vol!* from 1840, or Marx' attempt to reroute the right to appropriate away from capitalists. From the side of the arts, Marcus Boon also points out how several avant-garde movements have "constantly been built around a critique of notions of originality, identity, and property." (2011, 204-205) Emerson, while not part of any avant-garde, seeks to re-direct, like Proudhon and Marx, appropriation; Emerson affirms appropriate to such an extent that it threatens to dissolve the notion of property and the one who owns, the self. That is because Emerson is, in contrast to Proudhon and Marx, entangled in the new-world valorization of appropriation, conquest, and assimilation (glimpses of which were anticipated by Locke) – the mythic and violent American self, the carrier of Westward expansion, that is always caught between self-affirmation and self-destruction.

Emerson digests this mythology in a famous dream he wrote into his notebook: "I dreamed that I floated at will in the great Ether, and I saw this world floating also not far off, but diminished to the size of an apple. Then an angel took it in his hand and brought

it to me and said, ‘This must thou eat.’ And I ate the world.” (Quoted in Lopez 1982, 152) Visions as such, I claim, turn eventually into some of Nietzsche’s famous declarations about life itself, as he does here in JGB:

Leben selbst ist *wesentlich* [properly] Aneignung [appropriation], Verletzung, Überwältigung des Fremden und Schwächeren, Unterdrückung, Härte, Aufzwingung eigener Formen, Einverleibung [assimilation] und mindestens, mildestens, Ausbeutung, — aber wozu sollte man immer gerade solche Worte gebrauchen, denen von Alters her eine verleumderische Absicht eingeprägt ist? (KSA 5: 207)<sup>58</sup>

I argue that Nietzsche’s idea to bring appropriation “beyond good and evil” is prepared over a long period of his writings and in fact relies on Nietzsche’s own appropriations of Emerson’s texts, that go back to 1862; an appropriation of appropriation. For Emerson specifically, himself being a rather bookish type, and not the self-made man that often receives praise in his texts, appropriation refers to the way in which he “consumes” books and other texts, a textual practice that Nietzsche adopts when reading Emerson. In his younger years, however, appropriation appears more passively in terms of a strong worry about influence. Emerson simultaneously provides Nietzsche with the theoretical and textual justification for a practice of appropriation in his essays on “Fate,” “Power,” “Circles,” and “Self-Reliance” – on the one hand, it is, for Nietzsche, Emerson’s “American” perspective on the self who breaks all ties to a tradition, freeing himself from all influences, taking whatever fits him (in the spirit of the myth of the westward expansion displaced onto the treatment of texts); while on the other

hand, Nietzsche remains inevitably drawn to influences of all sorts precisely in the movement of turning away from them.

## 2.1 FATEFUL INFLUENCES

10 days before his 14<sup>th</sup> birthday, Nietzsche entered the halls of the prestigious boarding school Schulpforta close to Naumburg. Located in a monastery, Pforta was known as one of the first humanistic education institutions, established to produce the intellectual elite of the country. The humanistic focus of the studies allowed Nietzsche to develop his knowledge of the classical languages as well as German Classicism, while also becoming acquainted with Byron and Shakespeare. Here occurred what Curt Paul Janz influentially called Nietzsche's "first eruption of his very own spiritual being" that unfolds "like a program of his entire life and thinking." (Janz 98)<sup>59</sup> Janz refers here to two short essays which Nietzsche wrote in the Eastern holidays of 1862 (between 20<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> April) entitled *Fatum und Geschichte* and *Willensfreiheit und Fatum*, Nietzsche's "first proper philosophical writing" (Janz 98).<sup>60</sup> Like others,<sup>61</sup> Janz claimed that these essays contain a potpourri of Nietzsche's later and most influential ideas: a critique of Christianity, the reevaluation of all values, the relativity of morality, a philosophy of becoming, the eternal recurrence, the philosopher as historian, prophet, and lawgiver, *amor fati*, positivism, an aristocratic view of society, and the *Übermensch*, a word that appears for the first time in a speech on Byron given in December 1861 (BAW 2, 10).<sup>62</sup> Such projections suggest however a monolithic structure of Nietzsche's thought and call for caution.<sup>63</sup>

Nietzsche's essays bear extraordinary resemblances to Emerson's essay on "Fate" in *The Conduct of Life*, which had spurred other commentators to compare Nietzsche's and Emerson's different perspectives on the so called "paradox of fate and freedom." Stack, for instance, considers Emerson a fatalistic existentialist (Stack 179) for whom "fate" means that the individual is circumscribed and limited by circumstances and "conditions of existence," (191) developing a concept of "relative freedom."<sup>64</sup> Others have attributed a completely opposite view to Emerson, while claiming that Nietzsche, not Emerson, works out an account of human freedom as "agency."<sup>65</sup> Nietzsche considers "from the very beginning," Zavatta says, that "the 'free' action is the action that proceeds from a true volition [...]." (18) Emerson's theory of freedom, Zavatta says, is metaphysical and absolutistic (denying determinism), whereas Nietzsche's position is non- or anti-metaphysical and relativistic, and later a strong deterministic one.<sup>66</sup>

While these theoretical disputes have dominated the scholarship up to this date, I am not interested in solving them. However, I would like to point out some problems inherent to these approaches of comparison. The contradictory labels for Emerson, as an existentialist for some, and a metaphysician for others, already point to the difficulty of the matter. A possible explanation lies in the fact that it is not clear whether Emerson or Nietzsche propose any "theories" to begin with. Neither Emerson nor Nietzsche wrote conventional academic treatises and rarely provide arguments, at least for the most part. Additionally, if we assume that both hold certain positions, these positions most definitely change over time. Who is this Nietzsche who believes in "true volition," as Zavatta claims? Is it the author of JGB and GM who raises all kinds of suspicions about the existence of a "subject" and whether I can ever know that "my values" are truly "my

own”? Nietzsche’s “positions” are not always consistent, neither are Emerson’s, who famously praised inconsistency. Likewise, the words “fate” and “freedom,” although seemingly neutral, have a history and change meaning. The philosophical problem of fate and freedom has its modern origin in Kant’s *Critique*. But Emerson does not simply inherit this problem from Kant, although he references it. As Gundolf had described Emerson’s style in terms of appropriation, Emerson takes concepts such as “good and evil,” “justice,” “immortality,” “beauty,” “God,” and we might add “fate” and “freedom,” from the European tradition and “squeezes them out,” playing with them and returning them to us transformed. As I will show, Nietzsche now appropriates Emerson and displaces Emerson’s words back in the context of his own. These points lead to the textual relations and engagements, what I call appropriation, and not so much to the theoretical contents of Emerson’s and Nietzsche’s essays. Indeed, as I will try to show, it becomes a question whether the author who speaks in Nietzsche’s essay truly is “Nietzsche” based on his intensive appropriation of Emerson’s texts.

To begin this investigation, it is best to start with the hard evidence. There are two instances where Nietzsche cites Emerson in “Fatum und Willensfreiheit.”<sup>67</sup> But these quotations only mask how much of the entire essays is indeed appropriated from Emerson. First, there is the expression which Janz quoted as an instance of Nietzsche’s early erudition and “positivistic ideas” (Janz 104):

Was ist es, was die Seele sovieler Menschen mit Macht zu dem Gewöhnlichen niederzieht und einen höhern Ideenflug so erschwert? Ein fatalistischer Schädel- und Rückgratsbau, der Stand und die Natur ihrer Eltern [...]. Wir sind beeinflusst

worden, ohne die Kraft zu einer Gegenwirkung in uns zu tragen, ohne selbst zu erkennen, dass wir beeinflusst worden sind. (BAW 2, 58)

Putting side to side with Emerson's text and translation, it becomes apparent that

Nietzsche appropriates Emerson's text almost word for word:

The menagerie, or forms and powers of the spine, is a book of fate; the bill of the bird, the skull of the snake, determines tyrannically its limits." (CL 9-10)

"Die Structur, die Formen und die Stärke des Rückgrats sind fatalistisch: der Schnabel des Vogels oder der Hirnschädel der Schlange bestimmen tyrannisch seine Richtung. (FL 5)<sup>68</sup>

Another instance is found in "Willensfreiheit und Fatum" when juxtaposed with Emerson text:

Der Hindu sagt: Fatum ist nichts, als die Thaten, die wir in einem früheren Zustande unseres Seins begangen haben. (BAW 3, 61)

It was a poetic attempt to lift this mountain of Fate, to reconcile this despotism of race with liberty, which led the Hindoos to say, 'Fate is nothing but the deeds committed in a prior state of existence.' (CL 13)

These passages seem rather insignificant to the main essay, but Nietzsche takes central ideas directly from Emerson. Emerson's hazarding of the contradiction that "freedom is necessary," that "a part of Fate is the freedom of man," that "Intellect annuls Fate" and only so "far as a man thinks, he is free," (CL 24) Nietzsche turns into phrases like "der freie Wille [ist] nichts als die höchste Potenz des Fatums" (BAW 2, 59) and "Freiheit des Willens, in sich nichts anderes als Freiheit des Gedankens," (BAW 2, 60)

Aside from taking entire ideas from Emerson, Nietzsche also rearranges and recycles certain images. Here is one of Emerson's last passages in "Fate":

If we thought men were free in the sense that in a single exception one fantastical will could prevail over the law of things, it were all one as if a child's hand could pull down the sun. If in the least particular one could derange the order of nature,—who would accept the gift of life? (Fate, 49-50)<sup>69</sup>

Now, Nietzsche:

Denn der Mensch ist nie derselbe wieder; sobald es aber möglich wäre, durch einen starken Willen die ganze Weltvergangenheit umzustürzen, sofort träten wir in die Reihe unabhängiger Götter, und Weltgeschichte hieße dann für uns nicht[s] als ein träumerisches Selbstentrücktsein; der Vorhang fällt, und der Mensch findet sich wieder, wie ein Kind mit Welten spielend, wie ein Kind, das beim Morgenglühn aufwacht und sich lachend die furchtbaren Träume von der Stirne streicht. (BAW 2, 58-59)

In translation, Emerson says: "So verschwimmen die Umrisse des Fatums mit denen der Freiheit, und die der Freiheit mit denen des Fatums." (FL, 25) For Nietzsche, the presence of our unconsciousness, our "Sichleitenlassen," "dissolves the difference "von Fatum und freien Willen und beide Begriffe verschwimmen zu der Idee der Individualität." (BAW 2, 61)<sup>70</sup> Thus, considering that the two essays of Nietzsche's are only 9 pages long, it is almost difficult to attribute to Nietzsche the ownership of this text. Who speaks here? Is it Nietzsche or Emerson?<sup>71</sup>

Let us return for a second to the first appropriation on the fatalistic skull. Nietzsche says here that we are influenced ("beeinflusst"), without knowing that we are



(BAW 2, 58). Influence, or “fate” as influence, seems to be the topic of the entire essay – performatively as an appropriation of Emerson. Emerson himself offers this connection in “Fate”: “Read the description in medical books of the four temperaments and you will think you are reading your own thoughts which you had not yet told.” (CL 10)<sup>72</sup> Daniel Blue had argued that Nietzsche wrote his two essays specifically because he “was alarmed by the implication that the influence of one’s habitat could inhibit and even warp the expression of a supposedly autonomous self.” (Blue 2016, 5) Nietzsche’s two essays under the shadow of this Emersonian essay are then “patents of intellectual emancipation, which he could use to justify the journey he had already begun.” (ibid. 138) Ironically, these “patents of intellectual emancipation” are first-case studies in appropriation. I am not pointing this out for the satisfaction of exposing Nietzsche’s academic misdemeanors (after all, these essays were never published) but to show how the topic of Emerson’s essay, influence and appropriation, becomes a performance in Nietzsche’s text.

Alongside the problem of fate as influence comes the problem of inheriting a tradition for Nietzsche: the influence of religion, Christianity specifically (BAW 2, 54), the history of philosophy and its inherited “problems” appear to Nietzsche as a Babylonian tower (55). “Es ist vollends eine Vermessenheit,” he writes, “philosophische Probleme lösen zu wollen über die ein Meinungskampf seit mehrern Jahrtausenden geführt ist [...]” (54) Nietzsche’s word “lösen” is, knowingly or unknowingly, a callback to Emerson’s passage at the beginning of “Fate”: “To me, however, the question of the times resolved [aufgelöst] itself into a practical question of the conduct of life. How shall I live? We are incompetent to solve the times.” (CL 4)<sup>73</sup> Mühlberg mistranslates the last line’s “solve” as “begreifen” (comprehend), not catching Emerson’s play on words.<sup>74</sup> Nietzsche,

however, makes use of the same imagery of dissolvment or breaking. He seeks the breaking (“Bruch”) of a 200-year tradition, this high tower of Babel, the “dissolving” (Auflösung) of all forms of society (55).

As we have seen, the breaking of tradition has often been used as a metonymy for “America.” The metaphors Nietzsche uses seem to support this reading. He speaks of an “ocean of doubt” [Meer des Zweifels] or an unsurmountable “ocean of ideas” [Ideenozean] from which we yearn for solid foundations, and where only a few are successful in “discovering new countries” [nur sehr wenige entdecken neue Länder] (55) – ultimately, Nietzsche identifies the breaking of tradition with the discovery of a new world. Does Nietzsche have “America” in mind here? After all, Emerson is the only other author Nietzsche refers to in these essays. But Emerson does not conjure up the history of philosophy or Christianity and its 2000-year legacy.<sup>75</sup> Rather, Emerson’s way of dealing with philosophy is to shrug it off: “Why should we be afraid of Nature, which is no other than ‘philosophy and theology embodied’?” (CL 50) What Nietzsche considers “philosophical problems of several millennia” are for Emerson “questions of the times” that resolve to him into practical questions of life. Emerson does not see the need to dismantle or raze this Babylonian tower, as does Nietzsche: “o, niederreißen ist leicht, aber aufbauen! Und selbst niederreißen scheint leichter, als es ist;” (55) Is Emerson’s text even a contribution to this tradition and the inherited question of “fate and freedom” as Nietzsche had taken it to be and almost all the commentators after him? Or does it just appear as such after its translation: from Kant and German Idealism to Emerson to Nietzsche? Is Emerson’s “American” perspective lost in translation?

Emerson's text is indeed "American" in that it deals with a primary case of American appropriation, that of slavery. Emerson writes his essay in the aftermath of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 which demanded that slaves be returned to their owners, even if they were in a free state. In this context, the question of fate and liberty becomes a practical question of life.<sup>76</sup> "Well, now comes this conspiracy of Slavery," he writes into his journal of 1862, "—they call it an institution, I call it a destitution,—this stealing of men and setting them to work" (CW10, 403). The appropriation of human bodies in slavery is directly linked to the problem of fate and race. For instance, the word "temperament," which Nietzsche takes directly from Mühlberg's translation, and which turns in Nietzsche's text into an accumulation of habits, prejudices, education, and history, is for Emerson a figure of fate in a naturalistic sense (other words include "stock," "race," "herds," "spines," and "skulls"). Even Herder had called "temperament" the characteristics of a "Volk" according to climate and geography. In the racial science and statistics (Quetelet) of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, "temperament" turns into a figure of race. This fated American perspective into which Emerson inserts and transforms the "problem of fate and freedom" is lost in Nietzsche's text. This is because Emerson never mentions slavery by name and thereby takes away the concreteness of his own text, remaining theoretical and abstract, and allowing readers to appropriate his text freely.

"Fate" appears in Emerson's text "as natural history," but, Emerson tells us, "there is more than natural history. (CL 23) What is more than natural history are acts of credence, as John Lysaker (2017) put it.<sup>77</sup> By turning the Spirit of the Age into a practical question of credence or life, Emerson's essay performs this transposition by chancing it or risking it, essaying it (the beginning paragraph alludes no less than three times to

“chance”). Temperament, race, skulls are facts for Emerson. As signifiers of fate, they are fatal: “You have just dined, and however scrupulously the slaughter-house is concealed in the graceful distance of miles, there is complicity, expensive races,—race living at the expense of race.” (CL 8)<sup>78</sup> This is the American context, in which Emerson inserts the question of “fate” and “freedom.” The displacement or “raking” of language, as he says, is at the core of Emerson’s treatment of fate. “If any mention was made of homicide, madness, adultery, and intolerable tortures,” he writes in 1844, “we would let the church-bells ring louder, the church-organ swell its peal, and drown the hideous sound.” (CW 10, 315) But

the sugar they raised was excellent: nobody tasted blood in it. The coffee was fragrant; the tobacco was incense; the brandy made nations happy; the cotton clothed the world. What! all raised by these men, and no wages? Excellent! What a convenience! They seemed created by providence [or fate] to bear the heat and the whipping, and make these fine articles. (CW10, 315)

The central statement of the essay lies in Emerson’s attempt to “hazard the contradiction,—freedom is necessary. [...] Intellect annuls Fate. So far as a man thinks, he is free.” (CL 24)<sup>79</sup> Emerson conceptualizes thinking as hazarding, attempting, essaying, risking, dissolving. Nature (or fate) and thought are “two boys pushing each other on the curbstone of the pavement. Everything is pusher or pushed; [...] Every solid in the universe is ready to become fluid on the approach of the mind, and the power to flux it is the measure of the mind.” (CL 44) As such, freedom and thought are closely linked to power.<sup>80</sup> Here, it is important to note that Emerson’s essay on “Power” follows immediately “Fate” in *Conduct of Life*. In Emerson’s first and second series, as well as

*Conduct of Life*, the sequence of the essays forms a chain. As fate is followed by freedom or thinking, “Power” follows “Fate.”

“There is not yet any inventory of a man's faculties,” Emersons begins the essay: “Who shall set a limit to the influence of a human being?” (CL 54) Life, Emerson declares “is a search after power; and this is an element with which the world is so saturated,—there is no chink or crevice in which it is not lodged,—that no honest seeking goes unrewarded. [...] the education of the will is the flowering and result of all this geology and astronomy.” (CL 55) Emerson’s “power” thus emphasizes unattained possibilities and dormant potentialities. Mühlberg’s translation, however, turns life as “a search after power” into “ein Ringen um Macht” [struggling for power] and the act of seeking into “ehrliches Kämpfen” [honest fighting] (FL 35).<sup>81</sup> This transposition is significant, for Nietzsche’s essays contain many examples of struggle and fight. The power of habit and the desire for higher planes, he says, “kämpft einen unentschiedenen Kampf,” (BAW 2, 55), there is a “Kampf des Einzelwillens mit dem Gesamtwillen” (57), and under heavy “Kämpfen wird die Menschheit männlich” (63).<sup>82</sup> It is this mistranslation that explains why power is often misunderstood as personal achievement, accumulation or economic success, as if Emerson worships “powerful individuals.” On the contrary, in the introductory poem to “Compensation,” he says: “power to him who power exerts;” (E 93) in “Self-Reliance,” Emerson says: “Power ceases in the instant of repose; it resides in the moment of transition from a past to a new state, in the shooting of the gulf, in the darting to an aim.” (E 70) Power, therefore, is not the cause of transition, movement, aiming but its result.<sup>83</sup> Emerson does use images of power as appropriation, accumulation, and extraction but only to reverse their meaning. Emerson uses images of

“minerals,” “ores,” “gardens” from which we extract power, but only to show that power is everywhere and life itself is search after power. The result of this is “the education of the will” or that everything solid becomes “fluid.” In other words, power is not accumulation, meaning the accumulation of capital, or possession, but the preparation for something new, for creation. His favorite figures of power are influence, magnetism, attraction, causation (or compensation) and will.

Emerson provocatively states the following: “the key to all ages is—Imbecility; imbecility in the vast majority of men at all times, and even in heroes in all but certain eminent moments; victims of gravity, custom and fear. This gives force to the strong,—that the multitude have no habit of self-reliance or original action.” (CL 55)<sup>84</sup> Imbecility can mean stupidity or idiocy or, maybe better, narrowness. Mühlberg translates “imbecility” as “Unvermögen”, thus negating the earlier “Vermögen” (faculties) or “ability”. “Power” then is not an “attainment,” but a faculty, an ability, or the undeveloped dormant possibilities. The “Unvermögen”, this imbecility, as Emerson provokingly asserts, is simply then *not acting*, what Emerson calls falling victim to “gravity,” to the “Gesetz der Schwere,”<sup>85</sup> to conventions and fears – the only thing that prevents the majority to “use power” is that they do not believe in action, in self-reliance. Returning to Emerson’s “Fate,” we have already encountered this type of “strong” human being. Emerson mentioned the Spartan, the Turk, the Hindoo who all believe in determinism, each believing that his “doom is written on the iron leaf in the moment when he entered the world.” (“Fate”, 6) These types are “firm,” “strong,” they “have manned themselves to face it [the terrors of life]” (CL 6), just like Nietzsche attributes a strong masculinity to the struggle against fate (BAW2: 63). However, they “can only, like

invalids, act on the defensive” (CL 14), “only parrying and defence” (CL 26); they do not have “noble creative forces.” (CL 26). To accept fate is, for Emerson surely a “strong” act, just like it is “strong” to carry a heavy load for Zarathustra. But in the end, it is just a “reaction,” a “defence,” not an act, not a creation, not a belief in the faculties of man, in their “Vermögen” or “power.”<sup>86</sup> Nietzsche, however, in the early 1860’s stops exactly where critics of Emerson stop: at Emerson’s lines on masculinity, “acceptance of fate” and strength. This is unsurprising, considering the persistent myth of the Western hero in American mythology. We could say that the young Nietzsche might have been as well a fan of the sort of Fenimore Cooper and Karl May novels and other documents of the myth of the western hero, the rugged individualism of the Western expansion, that rides along the “Manifest Destiny” or Fate and needs to “man up” against the threatening natural forces. The Stoic, so to speak, was reborn in the American West.

Two conclusions we need to draw from this. First, Nietzsche’s supposedly inaugurating essay into the halls of philosophy, as it has been deemed by a long line of influential critics, is virtually a transcription of passages found in Emerson’s *Conduct of Life*. This does not invalidate of course the significance of this essay for Nietzsche biographically or intellectually. Indeed, the opposite seems true. But if we continue to hold Janz’ claim that Nietzsche developed here almost all his later important themes (Janz 98), we must acknowledge that most of his themes are not “Nietzsche’s.” We can also not agree with George Stack that Nietzsche’s transfigurations of Emerson’s phrases “raises them to a higher power.” Again, the opposite seems true, at least in this early case. By taking Emerson’s essay apart, and displacing it from its original American context, Nietzsche turns it into a weapon against the philosophical and theological tradition while

also sticking to platitudes about masculinity. The transformation, translation, and transliteration of a textual passage is itself, as Emerson might have said, power. That is, it allows for something to become different and new, which is a risky endeavor, and not always successful. The issue of fate, influence, and power will continue to accompany Nietzsche with Emerson in 1864 and beyond, when he meets the other 19<sup>th</sup> century philosopher of the will, Schopenhauer.

## 2.2 ANTAGONISTIC MOODS

Emerson's essays on fate and power provided Nietzsche with a first taste of the 19<sup>th</sup> century philosophies of will, while also sparking Nietzsche's critique of religion and Christianity.<sup>87</sup> Nonetheless, the standard view among Nietzsche scholars has been that Nietzsche's interest in Emerson had only been a youthful flirt in 1862 and that Schopenhauer (and Wagner) replaced Emerson as Nietzsche's teachers. However, Nietzsche will read Emerson intensely for the next three years from 1863-1865, when he discovered the other, most famous representative of a secular philosophy of the will, Schopenhauer's "Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung," in a bookshop in Leipzig. To me, it seems that it was Nietzsche's reading of Emerson that influenced his interest in Schopenhauer's book.

In a note from June 1863 entitled "Für die Ferien," Nietzsche claims to have written "short excerpts from all essays" of Emerson's for his friends, commenting about Emerson's "American" optimism: "Seine [Emerson's] Betrachtungsweise amerikanisch. 'das Gute bleibt, das Böse vergeht.' Ueber Reichthum. Schönheit. Kurze Auszüge aus allen Essays. Ueber Philosophie im Leben." (BAW 2, 221)<sup>88</sup> In July 1863, having



remained unnoticed by other scholars, he indeed writes several pages of excerpts into his notebooks from Emerson's essay on "Beauty" (BAW 2, 257-261).<sup>89</sup> Nietzsche excerpts faithfully from the German translation, but he rearranges some of the sentences, often leaving certain passages out and establishing connections between others. He even mixes excerpts from different essays, including Emerson's "Power," and groups them together.<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, in September 1863, Nietzsche writes an essay discussing the question "Kann der Neidische je wahrhaft glücklich sein?" where he uses these excerpts. For instance, "Alle Schönheit muss *organisch* sein, äussere Verschönerung ist nur Missgestalt" (BAW 2, 258, 261) from Emerson's "Beauty"<sup>91</sup> turns into: "Wie alle Schönheit organisch sein muss, wie äussere Verschönerung nur Missgestalt ist, so muss auch Glück und Ehre aus demselben Stamme hervordachsen, den sie nachher zieren [...]." (BAW 2, 270) In the same essay, Nietzsche also paraphrases a sentence from Emerson's "Worship." Emerson's "Strong men believe in cause and effect" (CL 221) becomes "Es ist ein Zeichen einer kräftigen Natur, in den Dingen eine unauflöslche Kette von Ursachen und Wirkungen zu erkennen, [...]." (BAW 2, 270)

Nietzsche therefore continued to be interested in Emerson's "strong men" and "fate" as a belief in causality. His growing interest in beauty and aesthetics however coincides with his dedication to music and the classical arts, even before he read Schopenhauer. Nietzsche excerpts and rearranges the following passage, which represents Emerson's main lesson in "Beauty" and forebodes Schopenhauer's view of the transitoriness of the world:

Nothing interests us which is stark or bounded, but only what streams with life, what is in act or endeavor to reach somewhat beyond. [...] Beauty is the moment

of transition [eine Uebergangsperiode], as if the form were just ready to flow into other forms. Any fixedness, heaping or concentration on one feature,—a long nose, a sharp chin, a hump-back,—is the reverse of the flowing, and therefore deformed [Jeder Stillstand, jede Ansammlung sind Gegensätze zum Fliessen]. (CL 293)<sup>92</sup>

Transition is not only the central aspect of power for Emerson, it also is a key motif in another of Nietzsche's essays written in April of 1864 (Eastern again), "Ueber Stimmungen" ["On Moods"] (BAW 2, 406-408), including many references to Emerson's first and second series from 1841 and 1844, which Nietzsche must have acquired around that time.<sup>93</sup> Nietzsche begins with a self-referential passage evocative of Descartes' *Meditations*: He sits alone at his desk, white writing paper in front of him, not knowing what to write because of the sheer number of thoughts that demand to be written down. These thoughts, the old and new, fight a battle that determines our mood: "Sagen wir es offen, unsre Gemütsverfassung ist durch den Streit jener alten und jungen Welt [America?] bestimmt, und wir nennen die jedesmalige Lage des Streites Stimmung oder auch, etwas veraechtlich, Laune." (BAW 2, 406) Nietzsche then confesses that he writes about moods [Stimmungen] because he is in the mood [gestimmt] for writing about them — although in this very moment, he is no longer in the same mood as in the beginning.<sup>94</sup> Nietzsche plays here with the ambiguity of "Stimmung" [mood] as describing my personal mood as well as the "voice" [Stimme] or "tempered" [gestimmt], as a musical instrument would be. Music, equally transitory and volatile, works as a leitmotif to represent the influence of our moods.<sup>95</sup> If am not mistaken, Nietzsche transliterates this passage from Emerson's "Circles":

Our moods do not believe in each other. To-day I am full of thoughts and can write what I please. I see no reason why I should not have the same thought, the same power of expression, to-morrow. What I write, whilst I write it, seems the most natural thing in the world; but yesterday I saw a dreary vacuity in this direction in which now I see so much; and a month hence, I doubt not, I shall wonder who he was that wrote so many continuous pages. Alas for this infirm faith, this will not strenuous, this vast ebb of a vast flow! (E 307-308)<sup>96</sup>

Emerson, like Nietzsche, comments on the fact that he is right now in the mood of writing, and therefore writes. The imagery of ebb, flow and ocean currents, Nietzsche makes use of on the very next page. He says that all “moods signify a succession (Fortschritt)” but it becomes unbearable for the spirit (“Geist”) to traverse the same steps (“dieselben Stufen”): “Seid mir gegrüsst, liebe Stimmungen, wundersame Wechsel einer stürmischen Seele, mannichfach wie die Natur ist, aber grossartiger als die Natur ist, da ihr ewig euch steigert, ewig aufstrebt.” (408) The motif of enhancement, ascension and extension appears in Nietzsche’s excerpts from “Beauty,” but also in Emerson’s “Circles”:

Step by step we scale this mysterious ladder; the steps are actions, the new prospect is power. Every several result is threatened and judged by that which follows. Every one seems to be contradicted by the new; it is only limited by the new. The new statement is always hated by the old, and, to those dwelling in the old, comes like an abyss of scepticism. (E 306-307)<sup>97</sup>

Emerson, like Nietzsche, speaks here of the overpowering influence of the new. Nietzsche imagined the old and new (world) to be entangled in battles, another leitmotif

throughout the essay: “Stimmungen kommen also entweder aus innern Kaempfen oder aus einem aeussern Druck auf die innere Welt.” (407) Like Emerson, Nietzsche considers here “Kampf” not as a purely negative event, but as the possible creation of something new: “Kampf,” says Nietzsche, “ist der Seele fortwaehrende Nahrung, und sie weiss sich aus ihm noch genug Süsses und Schönes herauszunehmen. Sie vernichtet und gebiert dabei neues, sie kaempft heftig und zieht den Gegner doch sanft auf ihre Seite zu inniger Vereinigung.” (408) Heraclitus’ “war as the father of all things” might be considered another source here, but Nietzsche’s formulation clearly represents Emerson’s vision of power as appropriation and what Nietzsche had called Emerson’s “American perspective.” “das Gute bleibt, das Böse vergeht.”

While Nietzsche appropriates these martial images, Emerson goes much beyond it. In his essay from 1844, “Experience,” Emerson describes life as “a train of moods like a string of beads, and as we pass through them they prove to be many-colored lenses which paint the world their own hue, and each shows only what lies in its focus.” (E 51) This is Emerson’s way of translating Kant’s transcendental deductions in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, ultimately drawing the consequences of Kant’s epistemological claim that the human mind structures or conditions the way in which the world appears. Emerson summarizes Kant’s *Critique*:

The secret of the illusoriness is in the necessity of a succession of moods or objects. Gladly we would anchor, but the anchorage is quicksand. This onward trick of nature is too strong for us: *Pero si muove*. When at night I look at the moon and stars, I seem stationary, and they to hurry. Our love of the real draws us

to permanence, but health of body consists in circulation, and sanity of mind in variety or facility of association. (E II 56)

Emerson not only references Galilei's famous insistence ("Peri si muove"), to which Kant's alludes in his preface, Kant's own description of his work as a "Copernican Revolution," but also the beginning of chapter 3 of the *Critique* in which Kant describes the famous ocean of illusion through which we must navigate. But Kant's warning for the adventurous ocean, the "region of illusion," is reversed in Emerson's text. What Kant sees as the pitiful fate of our epistemological condition, Emerson affirms as a recipe for health and sanity; it "depends on the mood of the man whether he shall see the sunset or the fine poem." (E 51)

More radical than Kant, but in the same line, Schopenhauer interprets Kant's own conclusion as a failure of or disappointment in human knowledge. In fact, this is the effect that Nietzsche ascribed to reading Schopenhauer. In a retrospective meditation from 1867 on his two years in Leipzig (October 17<sup>th</sup> 1865 – August 10<sup>th</sup> 1867), Nietzsche describes how he had found Schopenhauer in times of personal suffering.<sup>98</sup> According to his own account, he suffered from depression, glumness, loneliness, and uncertainty about his future, cutting all ties from his Bonner period. Schopenhauer's work provided Nietzsche with a sort of "mirror." With precision, he lists the key features of Schopenhauer's text: resignation, negation of life, asceticism, the uninterested eye of art (referencing book 3 of "Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung"), the need for salvation, the goal of self-knowledge.<sup>99</sup>

What is remarkable in Nietzsche's description of this time is its distance from his former self. Almost surprised at himself, he notes how this past self was subject to self-

contempt, self-loathing, “useless self-accusations,” bitterness, injustice, even to the point of physical self-torture. This distance already suggests that the common judgement of Nietzsche as Schopenhauerian for the next ten years (see Brobjer 29)<sup>100</sup> requires much more caution. Schopenhauer for Nietzsche is a writer “who evokes a particular mood” (Janaway 17) and from the start, he distinguishes between the author Schopenhauer and the philosophical system, which “should make us doubt whether Nietzsche ever seriously adhered to Schopenhauer's metaphysics of the will” (Janaway 19).<sup>101</sup> Indeed, Nietzsche criticizes Schopenhauer's thought strongly. Between 1867 and 1868, he says that Schopenhauer's attempt is “misslungen.” (BAW 3, 352) For Nietzsche, Schopenhauer stopped short when he shied away from his own thought and denied “das Dunkle Widersprechende” where individuals cease to be (352). Nietzsche is especially critical of Schopenhauer's solution of Kant's thing-in-itself, “the will.”<sup>102</sup> Nonetheless, he admires their mistakes,<sup>103</sup> less interested in the philosophical lucidness of a writer than in the personality, character, and mood such a writer has or is able to stir up.<sup>104</sup> The only reference to Emerson in 1867, a quotation from “Spiritual Laws” emphasizing the role of the writer, proves here to be in line with Nietzsche's reading of Schopenhauer: “Der der für sich selbst schreibt, schreibt für ein unsterbliches Publikum.” (V 114)

Emerson and Schopenhauer as writers share surprisingly many theoretical aspects. Both write in response to Kant, both adhere to what might be called a “philosophy of the will”, both consider life an “illusion” (in Emerson's terms) or “representation” [Vorstellung] (in Schopenhauer's words). Both were famously influenced by Buddhist and Hindu philosophy and literature. Both advocate for the rather uncommon concept of an “eternal justice” (“ewige Gerechtigkeit”, § 63) or immanent, compensating justice.

Finally, both resolve theoretical questions into “ethics.” For Emerson, the questions of the times turn into the one practical question “How shall I live?,” as he said at the beginning of *The Conduct of Life* (4).<sup>105</sup> In Schopenhauer’s case, the reader ascends in his magnum opus a staircase beginning in metaphysics and ending at ethics, the problem of how to live after realizing that the world is an objectification of the will.<sup>106</sup> Yet, it is not surprising that to date there has been no in depth comparison between the two, since Emerson is considered the “optimist” (his American perspective, as Nietzsche said) and Schopenhauer the “pessimist” of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

However, Emerson and Schopenhauer begin at similar foundations before interpreting these foundations in opposite ways. What appears to Schopenhauer as the ultimate failure of the world, its illusoriness and reliance on “the will,” is for Emerson a reason for its affirmation. If both take inspiration from Hindu and Buddhist philosophy, they also direct these concepts into two entirely different spectrums. For Schopenhauer, there exists a perfect balance between pain and guilt, for Emerson there is a balance between benefit and cost; indeed, benefit is, as Emerson says, the end of nature itself. What Schopenhauer’s view of justice amounts to is the absolute negation of the will, Emerson’s amounts to its absolute affirmation (but Emerson also does not think of “will” as “one” but many); the soul, he says, “is not a compensation, but a life. [...] Being is the vast affirmative [...]” (E 121-122) Emerson’s vision of a happy joint account between “his” and “mine” is not a natural equality but a world in flux: “It is the nature of the soul to appropriate all things. Jesus and Shakspeare are fragments of the soul, and by love I conquer and incorporate them in my own conscious domain. His virtue,—is not that mine? His wit,—if it cannot be made mine, it is not wit.” (E 125) In every conclusion,

Emerson and Schopenhauer appear as opposites. Both begin with the transitoriness of life, the power of moods (Schopenhauer's boredom), but where Schopenhauer preaches the asceticism of the self, Emerson advises us to affirm ourselves to the fullest. Where Schopenhauer demands compassion, Emerson asks: "Are they my poor?" In the US, Schopenhauer was even known as the "German Buddha," especially by Transcendentalists that followed Emerson. "Life," says Schopenhauer, "presents itself as a continued deception . . . If it has promised, it does not keep its word, unless to show us how little desirable the desired object was' (Schopenhauer, W-II, 573). For Emerson, "Life is an ecstasy," it "is sweet as nitrous oxide." (CL 312) The illusions of life that surround us everywhere are rather proof its exuberance than its poverty. In an almost audaciously banal, yet sublime tone, Emerson states: "Health and appetite impart the sweetness to sugar, bread and meat." (CL 312) Schopenhauer's sense of "deception" implies that we are tricked and cheated, that nature always cheats, as if we would deserve something else, as if our dependency on perception and our moods is an essential imperfection of the intellect; for Emerson, it is a sign of our sanity. While Schopenhauer claims to have uncovered the secret of the world, that nature never holds its promises, Emerson states that "nature converts itself into a vast promise, and will not be rashly explained." (EII 194) Every line of Emerson expresses this vastness and inexhaustibility of the world, that is for Schopenhauer indicative of the will's groundlessness and endless striving on the edge of boredom.

Nietzsche himself eventually attempts a synthesis between Emerson and Schopenhauer. In a letter to Carl von Gersdorff from April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1866, Nietzsche quotes the beginning of Emerson's "Nature":



Lieber Freund,

gelegentlich kommen Stunden jener ruhigen Betrachtung, wo man in Freude und Trauer gemischt über seinem Leben steht, ähnlich jenen schönen Sommertagen, die sich breit und behaglich über die Hügel hinlagern, wie *Emerson* sie so vortrefflich beschreibt: dann wird die Natur vollkommen, wie er sagt, und wir: dann sind frei wir vom Banne des immer wachenden Willens, dann sind wir reines, anschauendes, interesseloses Auge. In dieser vor allem anderen zu ersehnenen Stimmung nehme ich die Feder zur Hand, um Dir auf Deinen freundlichen und gedankenreichen Brief zu antworten. (BVN-1866,500)

While Nietzsche attributes to Emerson the release from the always waking will and the goal to become a pure, observing, and uninterested eye, which is a famous Schopenhauerian concept, he refers to Emerson's "there are days which occur in this climate, at almost any season of the year, wherein the world reaches its perfection" (EII 170), which could not be further from any of Schopenhauer's comments on the world. Where does this difference, while relying on similar sources, come from? Is it, as Nietzsche suggested, part of Emerson's "Americanness"? Indeed, Emerson's grandeur of nature, celebration of the new and succession of moods, "could only have been written in a context of anticlassicist bias, demographic mobility, fast-expanding borders, and vast underpopulated hinterland," says Lawrence Buell (272). However, as Buell remarks, this was not so much a conscious decision on Emerson's part, his investment in the idea of manifest destiny, but a result of Emerson's appropriating nature towards all sources from beyond the national borders. A "foreign mind . . . astonishes us with a new nature" and teaches us "that we have faculties which we have never used" (JMN 16: 208), he says in

one of his journal entries. Why indeed shall Emerson be ridiculed for his “optimism” as naïve? This rather seems to be a historical residue of the origin of the term “optimism” and “pessimism,” both invented to ridicule a metaphysical proposition first promoted by Leibniz.<sup>107</sup> However, while “optimism” lost this metaphysical meaning at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and turned into a mere “Stimmung,” a “vor allem Denken liegendes psychischen oder vitalen Befindens” (*Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Band 6, p. 1240), “pessimism” maintained its metaphysical origin and was quickly adopted by European Romantics at the turn of the century. Coleridge speaks of “the Dead Sea of pessimism” (Letter from 1794) and German Romanticism turns the mood of pessimism into a whole “Weltanschauung” of “Weltschmerz,” for instance Tieck, Klingemann (“Absage an das Leben”), Jean Paul, and Novalis. Ironically, Ferdinand Lenau uses the term pessimism in a cultural sense in his portrayal of the United States. With Schopenhauer, pessimism took on a philosophical dimension. With the reception of Schopenhauer in the 1850’s, pessimism became a whole “Mode Philosophie.” Eduard Hartmann continued Schopenhauer’s work into a “philosophy of the unconscious,” while others like Eugen Dühring attacked pessimism sharply. Dühring’s book *Der Werth des Lebens* had a profound effect on Nietzsche, and it has been one of the books with the most markings in Nietzsche’s library, with the exception of Emerson’s.<sup>108</sup> But why cannot Emerson’s “optimism” be considered as credible as Schopenhauer’s “pessimism”? In fact, considering that Emerson and Schopenhauer share an array of foundations, Schopenhauer’s claim that asceticism is the only, the necessary conclusion of his propositions, seems rather his idiosyncratic choice, determined by his character if anything else.

During the years of 1869 and 1873 at the university of Basel, Nietzsche did not seem to have read any Emerson. However, the problem of pessimism is found in all his major writings during these years: *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, *Sokrates und die Tragödie*, *Die Philosophie im Zeitalter der Griechen*. The mainstream philology of his day was at a turning point: the end of the classic-idealistic image of Greek culture. Nietzsche's colleague in Basel, Jacob Burckhardt called this idealistic image one of the greatest lies in the history of philology, a "'Schönfärberei' der Griechen,"<sup>109</sup> and wrote a history of Greek pessimism. Tendencies of pessimism now suddenly appeared at the origin of Western thought, in Heraclitus, Anaximander, Empedocles, the cult of Orpheus, the Sophists, and Plato and Socrates are judged to be the first optimistic antidote to these tendencies. Nietzsche attempts to rectify the common image of Greek optimistic culture, revealing its violent and brutal aspects, but also to interpret Greek culture as an attempt to make life bearable via exuberant creativity. This is roughly the argument in his *Birth of Tragedy*. It now appears as if Nietzsche attempted here a synthesis of Schopenhauer's need for salvation after discovering the absurdity of existence, and Emerson's celebration of life in its exuberance – is, what Nietzsche considered Greek, American after all?<sup>110</sup> Emerson's "optimism"<sup>111</sup> is much closer to Nietzsche's Dionysian ideal than we might expect. Emerson's poems, influenced by Hafiz (like Nietzsche), often contain extraordinary praises of drunkenness and pleasure. "Pour the wine! Pour the wine!," his poem *Bacchus* begins. Emerson's own wrote in his volume of poems reads "The man who is his own master knocks in vain at the doors of poetry." Emerson's writing constantly shifts between the ideal of autonomy and the desire to lose oneself in nature. One passage in "Circles," to which Nietzsche will return again and again, reads: "The one

thing which we seek with insatiable desire is to forget ourselves, to be surprised out of our propriety, to lose our sempiternal memory and to do something without knowing how or why; in short to draw a new circle.” (E 322) This essay will exert a strong influence on Nietzsche when he begins to settle his score with Schopenhauer in 1874, to which I turn now.

### 2.3 DECLARING INDEPENDENCE

It is certain that 1874 and the completion of *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* mark a new chapter in Nietzsche’s life. In terms of form, the essays seem to be partially inspired by Emerson’s *Representative Men* considering the resemblance between titles such as “David Strauss der Bekenner und der Schriftsteller,” “Schopenhauer als Erzieher” and Emerson’s “Goethe or the Writer” (translated as “Goethe oder der Schriftsteller”). Despite their “untimely” title, however, Nietzsche’s essays are quite conventional in style and topic. While others have compared Nietzsche’s and Emerson’s standpoints on “History” (see Zavatta 2014), I think that Nietzsche’s view on history at this time has little to do with Emerson’s and indeed there is little that suggests a direct link between them. On the other hand, when Nietzsche wrote his essay on Schopenhauer in Bergün, he specifically brought his edition of Emerson’s essays with him.

The fact that Emerson seemed to have played a significant role in the composition of this essay was one of the first and lasting subjects in the scholarship. However, no discussion has yet fully revealed how much of the essay Nietzsche owes to, or creatively appropriates from Emerson. Indeed, I argue that, since the topic of the essay is the question of how to appropriately pay respects to your “educators,” the text is a

performance of its own question. In Nietzsche's tribute to Schopenhauer, he is not so much interested in Schopenhauer's philosophy but in his character that embodies simplicity, instinctiveness ("Natürlichkeit"), rigorousness and truthfulness – but these virtues are in fact all prominently featured in Emerson's essays. Nietzsche's essay even end with a lengthy quote from Emerson's "Circles." But this quotation only masks the fact of how much the essay contains of Emersonian passages.

In the very beginning of the essay, Nietzsche quotes a certain "traveler" ["Reisender"] about the human tendency to laziness, comfort, and convenience – the tendency to hide under "conventions and opinions" ("Sitten und Meinungen") instead of realizing one's own uniqueness. However, "someone" corrects the traveler, it is not laziness but "fear" ["sie sind alle furchtsam"].<sup>112</sup> In "Power," Emerson saw the cause of hiding behind conventions in fear ["furchtsam"]. This someone in Nietzsche's text, who corrects the traveler, therefore seems to be none other than Emerson himself. In "Self-Reliance," Emerson famously declares that man is "clapped into jail by his consciousness": "As soon as he has once acted or spoken with *éclat* he is a committed person, watched by the sympathy or the hatred of hundreds, whose affections must now enter into his account. There is no *Lethe* for this." (E 50) Thus, in such a society, Emerson says, the "virtue in most request is conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion. It loves not realities and creators, but names and customs." (E 51)<sup>113</sup> Those who would attain a free, divine independence, an eternal youth, the nonchalance that young boys display, would be terrifying, fear-inducing, "furchterregend", says Fabricius in the German translation (V 36).<sup>114</sup> But at the center of this back and forth between fear and terror lies shame or timidity: "Man is timid and apologetic; he is no longer upright; he

dares not say 'I think,' 'I am,' but quotes some saint or sage. He is ashamed before the blade of grass or the blowing rose.” (E 68)<sup>115</sup> Nietzsche disagrees: “Schamhaftigkeit [Shame] vielleicht bei Einigen und Seltnen. Bei den Allermeisten ist es Bequemlichkeit [Laziness].” (KSA 1: 337) If I am correct in my intuition that Nietzsche competes here with Emerson, the saint who he quotes as “someone,” it seems as if Nietzsche tries to establish his “I think,” “I am,” to declare his independence from his greatest influencer. The declaration of one’s independence is exactly the topic of the essay.

Thus, we are inclined to ask: What does it mean that an essay bearing the title of Schopenhauer begins with a transfiguration and attempted correction of one of Emerson’s most famous passages from “Self-Reliance”? What do we make of the fact that the two qualities that Nietzsche highlights in the character of Schopenhauer, sincerity and cheerfulness [“Heiterkeit”] seem to derive from Emerson’s texts?<sup>116</sup> Should we go as far as to say that Nietzsche indeed imitates Emerson’s own tactic at the beginning of “Self-Reliance,” to quote a sage?<sup>117</sup>

Previous scholarship had focused on other aspects of these texts, mainly on the political synergy between what Stanley Cavell had called Emersonian moral perfectionism, Nietzsche’s more aristocratic ideals. Cavell’s students Russell B. Goodman and James Conant continued this line of approach. In his essay “Quoting and Saying” Conant however does admit that “Emerson’s sentences haunt [Nietzsche’s] *entire* essay.” (191) For instance, he identifies Nietzsche’s phrase “Wer war es, der den Satz aussprach: ‘ein Mann erhebt sich niemals höher als wenn er nicht weiss, wohin sein Weg ihn noch führen kann’?” (KSA 1, 340) as a transliteration of the ending of Emerson’s “Circles,” where Emerson quotes Cromwell: “‘A man,’ said Oliver Cromwell,

‘never rises so high as when he knows not whither he is going.’ (E 322)<sup>118</sup> J. R.

Hollingdale traces Nietzsche’s “Wer war es...” back to Cardinal de Retz, who quoted Cromwell in his *Memoirs*, but fails to notice that Nietzsche did not read that text and instead quotes Emerson’s quotation while intentionally obscuring the source (that is Cromwell).<sup>119</sup> This would just be a stylistic choice on Nietzsche’s part, if it would not also be reflective of Emerson’s sense of power as appropriation and self-reliance that simultaneously decries quotation and imitation as “suicide” (E 47) but affirms appropriation and reliance on something other than oneself.

It has been a common misunderstanding to read Emerson’s “self-reliance” as an expression of a hyper-individualistic doctrine that presupposes some sort of unchanging self.<sup>120</sup> In fact, nowhere does Emerson express any such belief. If we look at Emerson’s essay on “Self-Reliance,” we see that he proposes the opposite: “Life only avails, not the having lived. Power ceases in the instant of repose; it resides in the moment of transition from a past to a new state, in the shooting of the gulf, in the darting to an aim. This one fact the world hates; that the soul *becomes* [...].” (E 70-71)<sup>121</sup> This whole passage celebrates change, not a stable identity.<sup>122</sup> To say that self-reliance describes a stable, unchanging, essential self is “prating” for Emerson, “to talk of reliance is a poor external way of speaking.” (E 71) Power is the consequence of the moments of transition and change, not their cause. Becoming, as a form of power, is a form of “return,” “circular power returning into itself”, as Emerson says in “The American Scholar.”<sup>123</sup> In the beginning of “Self-Reliance,” Emerson turns this circular power into a practice of incorporating and appropriating materials from other texts: “In every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts: they come back to us with a certain alienated

majesty.” (46-47)<sup>124</sup> Emerson conceptualizes reading as a return of “our thoughts.” If we appropriate what is ours, even if we had rejected them, because they were ours, is it stolen? Emerson goes even further. In “Spiritual Laws,” he says: “Over all things that are agreeable to his nature and genius the man has the highest right. Everywhere he may take what belongs to his spiritual estate, nor can he take anything else though all doors were open, nor can all the force of men hinder him from taking so much.” (E 146)<sup>125</sup> Nietzsche extraordinarily highlighted the words “er kann gar nichts anderes nehmen” and “so viel zu nehmen als er will.”<sup>126</sup> Just like Friedell praised Emerson’s genius in declaring that the true genius is the one who knows how to steal, Nietzsche takes from Emerson the thought to take what belongs to himself. Emerson’s “genius” does not refer to another person, an especially talented writer for instance, but an impersonal force of thinking – thinking that, like power, returns to itself. The tension between assertion of one’s individuality and reliance on something other than oneself is the key to Emerson’s self-reliance. In this way, Emerson can define genius as the following: “To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men,—that is genius.” (E 46) The figure of “genius” indeed reappears throughout of Nietzsche’s essay on Schopenhauer.

In the translation of Emerson’s essays, however, Fabricius renders “genius” as “Genie”<sup>127</sup>, which refers to an extraordinarily talented individual. Nietzsche, on the one hand, uses “Genie” and “Genius” independently from each other in the essay, and the latter no less than thirty times. Why two different words? It is plausible that Nietzsche takes “Genius” not from Emerson but from the Latin original of “genius.” However, at the time when Nietzsche writes his essay, the word “Genius” is already antiquated.



“Genie”, coming from the French “le génie” in the sense of artistic, literary genius, became dominant in the German language with Wieland, Goethe and Baumgarten in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was only in the 18<sup>th</sup> century that the word “Genius” was used to signify a return to antiquity. Herder also used “Genius” to describe the “spirit” [Geist] of a people or of natural religions.<sup>128</sup> It is only this latter equation of “Genius” and “Geist” that shares some resemblance to Emerson’s “genius” because neither of them describe an individual but a concept that “works” within a person.<sup>129</sup> This is significant because Nietzsche’s “Genius” has most often been interpreted as an extraordinary individual, despite the fact that his use is either inconsistent or opposed to that.

In a recent article, Sebastian Kaufmann discusses the “Genie”-concept in Nietzsche’s thought (2022, 398-399). Among most commentators, the “Genie” has been an elitist representation of a higher human being as opposed to the masses and “Herdenmenschen.”<sup>130</sup> And while this image predominates the earlier writings of Nietzsche, Kaufmann agrees with Schmidt that the “Genie”-concept reappears in the later works under different names, like the “Übermensch” (Kaufmann 398-399).<sup>131</sup> Kaufmann himself says that Nietzsche’s early use of the “Genie”-concept is oriented towards Wagner and Schopenhauer, with Nietzsche referring to Wagner as the “Genie” in the sense of Schopenhauer’s philosophy (Kaufmann 400).<sup>132</sup> Schopenhauer opposes the “Genie” to the ordinary human, “diese Fabrikwaare der Natur” (WWV I, S. 220–1) and Nietzsche echoes this exact term in his essay: “Wenn der grosse Denker die Menschen verachtet, so verachtet er ihre Faulheit: denn ihrethalben erscheinen sie als Fabrikwaare [...]” (KSA 1: 338) Unfortunately, Kaufmann does not mention Emerson at all in his very detailed essay and also does not notice that “der grosse Denker” is a figure taken

from Emerson, as Nietzsche tells us himself in the only citation of Emerson in the entire essay: “Ein Amerikaner mag ihnen sagen, was ein grosser Denker, der auf diese Erde kommt, als neues Centrum ungeheurer Kräfte zu bedeuten hat. ‘Seht euch vor, sagt Emerson, wenn der grosse Gott einen Denker auf unsern Planeten kommen lässt. Alles ist dann in Gefahr.’” (KSA 1: 426) Thus, what Nietzsche does here is to use two types of “genius”, mixing Emerson and Schopenhauer. In another instance, Nietzsche combines Schopenhauer’s ideal of the individual genius as “das Auge des Philosophen auf dem Dasein ruhend” (KSA 1:360) with the ability to establish new values: “er will dessen Werth neu festsetzen. Denn das ist die eigenthümliche Arbeit aller grossen Denker gewesen, Gesetzgeber für Maass, Münze und Gewicht der Dinge zu sein.” (KSA 1:360) This ideal, however, is precisely Emerson’s characterization of the “royal spirit” in “Spiritual Laws”: **“ein königlicher Geist will den Dingen aus Gewohnheit einen neuen Werth beilegen – das ist Erhebung.”** (V 106)<sup>133</sup>

Whenever Nietzsche uses the term “Genius,” he refers to something that exists *within* every human being.<sup>134</sup> The genius “webt” [weaves] within you (KSA 1: 358); it calls [“ruft”] and is “called upon” (KSA 1: 363, 416). Schopenhauer, says Nietzsche, longs “nach dem Genius *in sich*” [my emphasis],<sup>135</sup> while the production [“Erzeugung”] of genius also represents the goal of culture (KSA 1: 403). Despite Mühlberg’s accurate mistranslations, Nietzsche retrieves Emerson’s original meaning of genius as that which is other than oneself. Emerson reiterates this concept throughout his essays and Nietzsche highlights many of these passages.<sup>136</sup> It is in this sense that the Schopenhauerian man, as praised by Nietzsche, desires to “forget himself”: “Seine Kraft liegt in seinem Sich selbst-Vergessen” (KSA 1:375). But this is again an appropriation from Emerson who says:

“The one thing which we seek with insatiable desire is to forget ourselves [“daß wir uns selbst vergessen”], to be surprised out of our propriety, to lose our sempiternal memory and to do something without knowing how or why; in short to draw a new circle.” (E 322)<sup>137</sup> Self-reliance indeed requires this aspect of ecstasy, of being other than oneself – to forget oneself means to forget the past and begin anew, to draw a new circle, to rely on what is other within oneself.

This “other” is topologically connected to height for Nietzsche, as in Emerson’s Cromwell citation. Nietzsche makes use of the family resemblances between “erziehen” (“educate”), “aufziehen” (“to pull upwards”), “abziehen” [to strip off, but also to pull downward]<sup>138</sup> and “krumm ziehen” [to twist something or ruin it].<sup>139</sup> As we have seen, Nietzsche considers the goal of culture the generation of genius, a project that requires the establishment of higher goals: “ist es möglich, jenes unglaublich hohe Ziel so in die Nähe zu rücken, dass es uns erzieht, während es uns aufwärts zieht?” (KSA 1:376)<sup>140</sup> As others have noticed, this praise of a higher self *above me* seems to be an idea coming from Emerson’s remark in “History” that “all that is said of the wise man by Stoic or Oriental or modern essayist, describes to each reader his own idea, describes his unattained but attainable self.” (E 7) Again, this statement is representative of Emerson’s theory of appropriation: looking at the thoughts in human history, you can only read what you “are,” or rather could become.

Nietzsche’s questions “Aber wie finden wir uns selbst wieder? Wie kann sich der Mensch kennen?” and responses that we are a “dark and veiled thing”, unable to say ““das bist du nun wirklich, das ist nicht mehr Schaaale.”” (KSA 1:340) resemble Emerson’s opening question in “Experience”: “*Where* do we find ourselves?” (EII 45)

But while Nietzsche's "how" implies an epistemological question, Emerson's phrasing describes a case of disorientation: "In a series of which we do not know the extremes, and believe that it has none. We wake and find ourselves on a stair; there are stairs below us, which we seem to have ascended; there are stairs above us, many a one, which go upward and out of sight." (EII 45) Nietzsche makes use of the same image of the staircase a few lines later:

Die junge Seele sehe auf das Leben zurück mit der Frage: was hast du bis jetzt wahrhaft geliebt, was hat deine Seele hinangezogen, was hat sie beherrscht und zugleich beglückt? Stelle dir die Reihe dieser verehrten Gegenstände vor dir auf, und vielleicht ergeben sie dir, durch ihr Wesen und ihre Folge, ein Gesetz, das Grundgesetz deines eigentlichen Selbst. Vergleiche diese Gegenstände, sieh, wie einer den andern ergänzt, erweitert, überbietet, verklärt, wie sie eine Stufenleiter bilden, auf welcher du bis jetzt zu dir selbst hingeklettert bist; denn dein wahres Wesen liegt nicht tief verborgen in dir, sondern unermesslich hoch über dir oder wenigstens über dem, was du gewöhnlich als dein Ich nimmst. (KSA 1:340-341)

Nietzsche's terms of succession, "Reihe," "Folge," "Stufenleiter," "hingeklettert" would be accurate translations of Emerson's "series", "stair", and "ascended," but are in fact different from the translation Nietzsche had read; as if Nietzsche's thoughts return Emerson's thoughts to him with an alienated majesty.<sup>141</sup> The figure of ascension and the higher self above oneself remains the same however and it reappears in other instances in Nietzsche's essay as well: "jene Begierde, über sich hinaus zu schauen und nach einem irgendwo noch verborgnen höheren Selbst mit allen Kräften zu suchen." (KSA 1:385) Nietzsche even seems to identify this higher self with the nonchalance of boys that

Emerson mentioned in “Self-Reliance.” Nietzsche wishes to reach the higher self, “damit endlich wieder der Mensch entstehe, welcher sich voll und unendlich fühlt im Erkennen und Lieben, im Schauen und Können, und mit aller seiner Ganzheit an und in der Natur hängt, als Richter und Werthmesser der Dinge.” (KSA 1:385) Emerson described the nonchalance of boys as “etwas Gesundes in der menschlichen Natur,” judging over everything he sees: “ohne Verantwortung sieht er von seiner Ecke aus auf alle Leute und Begebenheiten, die an ihm vorübergehen, hin, bringt sie vor Gericht, und erklärt sie kurzweg, wie Knaben es thun, für gut, schlecht, interessant, dumm, beredt oder langweilig.” (V 35)<sup>142</sup>

Nietzsche’s genius is “natural” or “instinctual”, who judges and determines values according to his own constitution. Nietzsche refers to Schopenhauer’s “Constitution” as the “core of his being” [“Kern seines Wesens”]. The word “Constitution” virtually was nonexistent in the German language. Indeed, everything points to the fact that Nietzsche took over this word from Emerson. Emerson says in “Self-Reliance” after discussing the nonchalance of boys: “‘if I am the Devil's child, I will live then from the Devil.’ No law can be sacred to me but that of my nature. Good and bad are but names very readily transferable to that or this; the only right is what is after my constitution; **the only wrong what is against it.**” (E 51) Nietzsche copied this passage into his 1882 notebook: “Kein Gesetz kann mir geheiligt sein als das meiner Natur. Einzig recht ist das, was mir naturgemäß ist, und allein unrecht, was gegen meine Natur ist.” (KSA 9: 17[26], see V 37) Although Fabricius translates “after my constitution” as “naturmäßig” [according to my nature], which is accurate considering that Emerson uses both words often synonymously, Fabricius does render Emerson’s constitution often literally as

“Constitution.”<sup>143</sup> To act according to one’s constitution is, Nietzsche now transliterates, to act naturally: “hier ist eine gewisse unnachahmliche Unbefangenheit und Natürlichkeit.” (KSA 1:347)<sup>144</sup> The discourse on “naturalness” then slides into Nietzsche’s analogy of human education and culture as a process of “cultivation” to produce the highest “exemplars” (KSA 1:383-384). A similar process of cultivation or reform exists in Emerson’s “Fate” and other essays.<sup>145</sup>

In the context of this production of genius, it seems natural for Nietzsche to discuss the role of the state. Nietzsche harshly criticizes the newly formed German state, its patriotism, and accompanying optimism. In Nietzsche’s perspective, the state is the epitome of anti-culture: “Dem Staat ist es nie an der Wahrheit gelegen, sondern immer nur an der ihm nützlichen Wahrheit [...], was gilt uns die Existenz eines Staates, die Förderung der Universitäten, [...] wenn so unsäglich mehr daran gelegen ist, dass ein Philosoph auf Erden entsteht als dass ein Staat oder eine Universität fortbesteht.” (KSA 1:422-425)<sup>146</sup> In “Politics,” Emerson says that every “actual State is corrupt” (E 208): “To educate the wise man the State exists, and with the appearance of the wise man the State expires. The appearance of character [aka “genius”] makes the State unnecessary. The wise man is the State.” (E 216) The disappearance of the state, its revolution, is a key theme in Emerson’s politics: “But the old statesman knows that society is fluid; there are no such roots and centres, but any particle may suddenly become the centre of the movement and compel the system to gyrate round it [...].” (E 200) In Emerson’s metaphysics of power, there is no center, no root, not because it is an impossibility but because any particle, any vessel of power might become one. The image of the center reappears in Nietzsche’s essay as well: Where do we find, asks Nietzsche, the

constitution that possesses “die zwingende und herrschende Uebergewalt dieses lebendigen Centrums” who could become a center and simultaneously a periphery, an entire planetary system?<sup>147</sup> The vision of man as a planetary system or a gravitational center, that will cause a revolution is in the very center of his final citation of Emerson:

Ein Amerikaner mag ihnen sagen, was ein grosser Denker, der auf diese Erde kommt, als neues Centrum ungeheurer Kräfte zu bedeuten hat. [...] Da ist nichts in der Wissenschaft, was nicht morgen eine Umdrehung erfahren haben möchte [...]. Ein neuer Grad der Kultur würde augenblicklich das ganze System menschlicher Bestrebungen einer Umwälzung unterwerfen.’ (KSA 1: 426)

Nietzsche’s half-condescending description of Emerson as “ein Amerikaner” underscores his appropriating modification of the text, leaving out an entire page to connect two sentences from Emerson,<sup>148</sup> while also identifying Emerson’s “American” perspective with a breaking, revision, or revolution of tradition.

In this chapter, I have shown how Nietzsche’s early texts from the 1860s are indebted to Emerson to an extent that was previously unknown. The goal of this study, however, was not to expose Nietzsche’s plagiarism but show how his textual practices are directly related to the content of his texts. In his early texts on fate and moods, Nietzsche shows a peculiar interest in the threat of outward and inward influences, the determination of one’s life by one’s geographical and cultural background, and one’s bodily constitution, and the struggle to free oneself from these influences. Ironically, Nietzsche explores this struggle by extensively paraphrasing Emerson’s texts or imitating his voice – the irony lies in the fact of quoting Emerson’s call for self-reliance, and thus performatively undermining itself (an irony Emerson’s embraces in his concept of

genius). This paradox continues in Nietzsche's 1874 text on Schopenhauer as educator. Nietzsche integrates several passages, figures, and motifs from Emerson into his text while simultaneously calling on Emerson and his "American" breaking of tradition, and therefore remaining inevitably drawn to influences of all sorts precisely in the move to turn away from them. Nietzsche's two educators also opened Nietzsche's eyes for the problem of pessimism; Schopenhauer as representative of a philosophy of pessimism, Emerson, while sharing many of Schopenhauer's presuppositions, representing an alternative that is not simply optimistic. This opposition is visible in other texts by Nietzsche in the early 70s on tragedy and Greek culture. Nietzsche identifies here Socrates and modern science as representatives of a certain optimism which he rejects. In the second half of 1870s, Nietzsche will explore this problem of science, pessimism, and optimism further while returning to Emerson, who will become a surprising ally in Nietzsche's so called "positivistic" phase.



## CHAPTER 3: 1876-1880

In between 1874 and 1876, Nietzsche performs what seems to many of his readers a radical shift in style. Having preferred the form of the essay, treatise, or even lecture in the early 70s, Nietzsche now decides to write what he himself calls “aphorisms.” This change in style raises questions. I had previously suggested that Nietzsche’s 1874 meditations resemble Emerson’s *Representative Men* (albeit only superficially), while Nietzsche also heavily relied on Emerson’s *Essays*, which he took on his holiday to Bergün. I will now suggest that Emerson plays another crucial role in Nietzsche’s shift towards the form of the aphorism. This might appear counterintuitive at first. After all, Emerson did not write aphorisms and Nietzsche turns precisely away from Emerson’s choice of genre, the essay. The fact that editors like Egon Friedell, however, could easily conceive an “aphorism collection” of Emerson’s gives us a hint that we should not judge prematurely. I make the argument that Nietzsche’s “aphorisms” are different from usual genre conventions of the aphorism that are based on the French Moralists tradition. Similarly, Emerson’s essays defy the traditional attributes of the essay. I hope to show, in three steps, that Nietzsche’s and Emerson’s styles are closer than one might suspect and that their styles are essential to their writing overall. (1.) On another holiday trip in between March and April 1876, Nietzsche will read Emerson’s new essay collections that had just been published, *Letters and Social Aims* (LSA), translated as *Neue Essays* (NE).

Although the impact of this text on Nietzsche was not as strong as that of Emerson's first and second series, and thus being ignored by other scholars ever since, I argue that it provided Nietzsche nonetheless with powerful new impulses, especially regarding finding his new style as an author. In LSA, Emerson will shed light on his own style including intuition, inspiration, and observation that lines up with Nietzsche's own aphoristic style in MA, while also anticipating important concepts such as "God's death" and the "Gay Science," that Nietzsche will feature at the end of his self-entitled free spirit trilogy. (2.) I will contrast Nietzsche's writing between 1876 and 1878 with the aphoristic genre conventions as well as offer a detailed account of Emerson's writing in contrast to the essayistic conventions and thereby show how close Nietzsche's and Emerson's styles are and that these styles are essential for the content of their texts as well. (3.) Finally, I will turn to what we might call the "content" of Nietzsche's *Menschliches*, *Allzumenschliches* (MA), which he began to write in 1876. On the one hand, based on his personal notes, Nietzsche will borrow key motifs for MA from Emerson's essays, including "the wanderer," "the morning" or "dawning," and "nearness." On the other hand, I make the argument that these motifs only work in conjunction with Nietzsche's new style, the aphorism. Nietzsche's emphasis on observations, intuitions, suspicions, and textual patchworks is part of his larger concern for a renewed attention towards what he calls "the nearest things" ("die nächsten Dinge"), a concept introduced in the second part of MA. In "Experience," which Nietzsche reads precisely at the time of writing MA II, Emerson's main concern is what he calls "the near" and its possible transformation. As with the German word "morgen," that Nietzsche uses to describe his philosophy in MA, simultaneously referring to the "morning" and "tomorrow," so does the word "nächsten"

signify what is closest to us and that which comes “next.” This double meaning, explicit in Emerson’s text and taken over by Nietzsche, anticipates Nietzsche’s future preoccupation with the present as a site for experimentation as outlined in his *Fröhliche Wissenschaft*. As such, the reading of Emerson will reveal a striking consistency between the texts from 1876 until 1882, what Nietzsche called his “Free Spirit Trilogy.”

### 3.1 NEW DEPARTURES

During the spring holidays of 1876, Nietzsche spent one month in Veytaux (Switzerland) and Geneva with his long-time friend and Emerson enthusiast Carl von Gersdorff. Nietzsche not only introduced Gersdorff to Emerson’s essays in the 1860s, but Gersdorff mentions Emerson in almost every letter to Nietzsche. After leaving Geneva before Nietzsche in April, Gersdorff writes to Nietzsche that 1876 he had discovered “das Allerneuste unseres herrlichen Freundes”<sup>149</sup> in a book shop window, referring to Emerson’s new book *Neue Essays*. Subsequently, Nietzsche bought Emerson’s *Neue Essays* on April 24<sup>th</sup>.<sup>150</sup> Nietzsche’s response to Emerson’s book is recorded in a letter to Gersdorff on May 26<sup>th</sup>, complaining that Emerson has become “old” and “too much in love with life.”<sup>151</sup> This has led scholars to put aside Emerson’s essay collection. Although it is true that Nietzsche did not annotate this edition as strongly as he did with Emerson’s *First and Second Series*, it would be precipitous to disregard Emerson’s text based on one statement by Nietzsche. Nietzsche’s statement moreover is puzzling. The “oldness” or repetitiveness of Emerson’s “Neue Essays” can be explained by the fact that Emerson was unable to write already in 1867 due to his advanced aphasia. The collection of essays is a compilation of essays written over a period of many years - his “new” essays are in

fact older. However, repetitiveness is also a central feature of Emerson's prose in general. The second statement, that Emerson is too much in love with life, however, seems more perplexing, since this has been one quality that Nietzsche admired in Emerson, not only in the 60s but even as late as 1888, as can be seen in his comparison between Emerson and Carlyle. Is Nietzsche deeming Emerson now, as did so many others, an "optimist"? This would certainly fit what many scholars consider Nietzsche's turn to the cold side of positivism around 1876. But right before acquiring Emerson's new book, Nietzsche repeats many Emersonian themes in his letters,<sup>152</sup> anticipating the topics of Emerson's new book, especially in those parts which Nietzsche annotated.<sup>153</sup> The annotations show that Nietzsche was especially interested in the essays "Poetry and Imagination," "Inspiration," "Greatness" (by far the most annotated essay), and "Immortality." I will first discuss Nietzsche's annotated pages in Emerson's *Neue Essays*, before coming to the text that Nietzsche wrote during this time: *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches I & II*.

One thing that needs to be noted is what pages Nietzsche did *not* annotate. The essay I have quoted previously, "Quotation and Originality" ["Zitate und Originalität"], is not annotated by Nietzsche at all, although it fits the issues that were so dominant in Nietzsche's essay on Schopenhauer from 1874. In all fairness, Emerson's essay is indeed more of an experiment in form than anything else. The essay's two epigraphs, however, echo Nietzsche's remark about the "new" and "old" Emerson: "Old and new put their stamp to everything in Nature. [...] Every book is a quotation; and every house is a quotation out of all forests and mines and stone-quarries; and every man is a quotation from all his ancestors." (LSA 176-177) Quite naturally then Emerson's book must have appeared "old" to Nietzsche. There is "no pure originality," says Emerson, "All minds

quote. Old and new make the warp and woof of every moment. [...] By necessity, by proclivity and by delight, we all quote.” (LSA 179-180) There is, Emerson admits, “something mortifying in this perpetual circle.” (LSA 180) Around the middle of the essay, Emerson writes an entire page of quotations traced back to other quotations<sup>154</sup> – a performance of Emerson’s theory of reading as return: “Original power is usually accompanied with assimilating power [...]” (LSA 191)

Ironically, and Emerson is aware of this irony, his theory of assimilating power is not original. Shortly before his death, on February 17, 1832, Goethe contemplated a similar thought:

Was habe ich denn gemacht? Ich sammelte und benutzte alles was mir vor Augen, vor Ohren, vor die Sinne kam. Zu meinen Werken haben Tausende von Einzelwesen das ihrige beigetragen, Toren und Weise, geistreiche Leute und Dummköpfe, Kinder, Männer und Greise, sie alle kamen und brachten mir ihre Gedanken, ihr Können, ihre Erfahrungen, ihr Leben und ihr Sein; so erntete ich oft, was andere gesäet; mein Lebenswerk ist das eines Kollektivwesens, und dies Werk trägt den Namen Goethe.<sup>155</sup>

Emerson quotes this exact sentence from Goethe about the inevitability of quoting.<sup>156</sup> For Kai Sina, Emerson seems to displace the “abendländischen *individual* [original in English] mit dem amerikanischen *inventor* [English in original]” (Sina 133), because Emerson then insists that “there remains the indefeasible persistency of the individual to be himself.” (LSA 200-201) As we have seen in “Self-Reliance,” Emerson entertains this double movement between reliance on something other than oneself and self-assertion.<sup>157</sup> For Emerson, the past exists always *for* us, ready to be appropriated and

used: “the sole terms on which it can become ours are its subordination to the Present. Only an inventor knows how to borrow, and every man is or should be an inventor.” (LSA 205)<sup>158</sup> The present moment, the opportunity of a possible transformation, outdoes the reliance on the past. In terms of reading, this means that in certain “hours of high mental activity we sometimes do the book too much honor, reading out of it better things than the author wrote,—reading, as we say, between the lines.” (LSA 197-198)

Emerson balances the reliance on the past, inspiration, with the call for invention and the creation of something new, intuition, a pervasive topic in the essays that Nietzsche annotated.<sup>159</sup> Nietzsche annotates only one page in Emerson's “Inspiration” (NE 269), which is basically a list of sources of inspiration: “How many sources of inspiration can we count?”, asks Emerson, “As many as our affinities.” (LSA 280) Emerson lists, among other things, conversation as a main source of inspiration, which Nietzsche annotates, and “which, when it is best, is a series of intoxications.” (LSA 293)<sup>160</sup> Conversation is , says Emerson, “where you learn what thoughts are, what powers lurk in those fugitive gleams, and what becomes of them,”<sup>161</sup> a game for the wise “to play upon others and to be played upon others.”<sup>162</sup> (LSA 293) Conversation is not an exchange of ideas but an appropriation of others as tools for thinking: “For provocation of thought, we use ourselves and use each other.” (LSA 293)<sup>163</sup> To obey these “fugitive gleams,” these sudden bursts of genius, is the goal of conversation.

Emerson's following essay on “Greatness” explores this obedience to moments of inspiration further. One passage Nietzsche annotates is where Emerson goes into more detail about these “fugitive gleams” by quoting Miss Mary Rotch of New Bedford

(without mentioning her name). Mary was an important Quaker figure who had an extraordinary effect on Emerson in 1834:

If you have ever known a good mind among the Quakers, you will have found that is the element of their faith. As they express it, it might be thus: 'I do not pretend to any commandment or large revelation, but if at any time I form some plan, propose a journey or a course of conduct, I perhaps find a silent obstacle in my mind that I cannot account for. Very well,—I let it lie, thinking it may pass away, but if it do not pass away I yield to it, obey it. You ask me to describe it. I cannot describe it. It is not an oracle, nor an angel, nor a dream, nor a law; it is too simple to be described, it is but a grain of mustard-seed, but such as it is, it is something which the contradiction of all mankind could not shake, and which the consent of all mankind could not confirm.' (LSA 309-310)

It is true, as often noted, that Emerson was influenced by Quakerism and its type of extreme trust in individual conscience. The individual voice and “light within” as a sole authority in matters of morality, which he admired in the theologies and practices of Quakers like George Fox, who spoke more than once truth to power, goes full circle in Emerson’s text, becoming a force beyond good and evil. Emerson is not interested in the theological or moralistic aspects of this “inner voice” but naturalizes. The voice’s original moral significance (its function as a moral conscious) becomes an amoral representation of potentiality and power.<sup>164</sup> As we have seen in “Self-Reliance,” Emerson does not care whether his intuitions come from “high” or “low” (from the devil). In this way, Emerson can praise Napoleon as someone “who was not generous nor just” but who “commands our respect by his enormous self-trust, the habit of seeing with his own eyes, never the

surface, [...] and by the speed and security of his action in the premises, always new.” (LSA 315) But Emerson also is not interested in political power – for him, Napoleon is simply a “representative,” a type whose “technics” and power can be easily “[translated] into all of mine,” (LSA 315-316) that is the area of writing. On the last two pages of the essay, which Nietzsche annotated, Emerson says:

Life is made of illusions, and a very common one is the opinion you hear expressed in every village: ‘O yes, if I lived in New York or Philadelphia, Cambridge or New Haven or Boston or Andover, there might be fit society; but it happens that there are no fine young men, no superior women in my town.’ You may hear this every day; but it is a shallow remark. Ah! have you yet to learn that the eye altering alters all; that “the world is an echo which returns to each of us what we say? [...] Do you not know that people are as those with whom they converse? And if all or any are heavy to me, that fact accuses me. [...] If men were equals, the waters would not move; but the difference of level which makes Niagara a cataract, makes eloquence, indignation, poetry, in him who finds there is much to communicate. (LSA 320-321)

The ubiquitous existence of power marks out every thing as a possible site of investigation, calling for a new way of seeing the world. Emerson’s self-reliance, the belief in one’s personal oracle and genius, paired with what he calls “facility” [“Leichtigkeit”] in our doing, are the two aspects of greatness (see NE 277, 282). This “facility” is opposed to “heaviness” of thoughts and objects, which is not innate to the things around me but to my perception of them. Furthermore, Emerson connects the possibility of transformation by perception to a belief in a “difference of level.” This is



not, as some commentators suggested, Emerson's "aristocratic" or "social Darwinistic" idea of society. On the contrary, Emerson says (again marked by Nietzsche), that the "day will come when no badge, uniform or medal will be worn; when the eye, which carries in it planetary influences [Einflüsse] from all the stars, will indicate rank fast enough by exerting power [schnell genug durch Machtäußerung den Rang bestimmen wird]." (LSA 313/NE 286)<sup>165</sup> In the 1886 preface to MA as well as in the text of 1878 (KSA 2: 362), Nietzsche will describe "Rangordnung" as "our problem" (speaking for all free spirits) (KSA 2: 22).<sup>166</sup>

Finally, in the last essay of the collection, "Immortality" ("Unsterblichkeit"), Emerson compares the belief in immortality between Egyptians, Greeks, and Christians. For the Egyptians the "end of man [was] to be buried well, the arts most in request were masonry and embalming, to give imperishability to the corpse." But the Greeks "loved life and delighted in beauty," they "drove away the embalmers;" they "looked at death only as the distributor of imperishable glory." (LSA 326) Greek graves are, according to Shelley, 'not so much hiding places of that which must decay, as voluptuous chambers for immortal spirits.' (LSA 326-327) But Christianity taught a different story, and death became "an affair of the body," which "was put into the walls of the church; and the churches of Europe are really sepulchres [und wirklich sind die Kirchen von Europa nur grosse Gräfte]." (LSA 327) The madman in Nietzsche's famous aphorism no. 125, where he announces the death of God, makes use of the same comparison: "Was sind denn diese Kirchen noch, wenn sie nicht die Gräfte und Grabmäler Gottes sind?" (KSA 3: 482) In fact, Emerson seems to refer to the same event, the death of God, anticipating a revolution in this history of immortality:

Sixty years ago, the books read, the sermons and prayers heard, the habits of thought of religious persons, were all directed on death. All were under the shadow of Calvinism and of the Roman Catholic purgatory, and death was dreadful. [...] We were all taught that we were born to die [...]. A great change has occurred. Death is seen as a natural event [...]. (LSA 329)

It is easy to guess that Emerson refers here to the rise of materialism and the impact of the natural sciences on modern culture. The naturalization of death, on the one hand, takes away the grandeur and significance of death. On the other hand, it reevaluates life, because death is no longer the end (of this life) but another stage of transformation.<sup>167</sup> Combining Swedenborg's idea of heaven as the continuation of earth and materialistic thought, life repeats itself eternally for Emerson. But not everyone draws the same consequence from this materialism, because it seems to render death less significant. "I was lately told," says Emerson,

of young children who feel a certain terror [gewissen Schreck] at the assurance of life without end [Leben ohne Ende]. 'What! will it never stop?' the child said; 'what! never die? never, never? It makes me feel so tired [müde].' [...] This disquietude only marks the transition. The healthy state of mind is the love of life. What is so good, let it endure.' ["Der gesunde Geisteszustand ist die Liebe zum Leben. (NE 303)] (LSA 331)

Did Nietzsche have a passage like this in mind when he commented in his letter to Gersdorff that Emerson seems to him "too much in love with life"? But is this not eerily similar to what Nietzsche will describe as the effect of the thought of the eternal return

and nihilism? Like Nietzsche, Emerson projects that this “disquietude” and tiredness, the consequence of the naturalization of life, is only transitional. Indeed, Emerson imagines it as a transitional sickness that will cause people to seek shelter in faith (or supplementary providers of some meaning) or simply grow tired and indifferent, when confronted with the fact that life never “ends,” that it does not strive towards an “end” or goal.

On a different page, which Nietzsche annotated, Emerson offers another example of the melancholy of his times due to the lack of transcendental solutions. Emerson tells a story about two US Senators who, although very practical in their daily life, loved to discuss philosophical issues like immortality and suffered from “a profound melancholy [Melancholie]” (LSA 332). After 25 years of not seeing each other (one moved away from Washington), they by chance met again and had a brief encounter of silence:

At last his friend said, ‘Any light, Albert?’ ‘None,’ replied Albert. ‘Any light, Lewis?’ ‘None,’ replied he. They looked in each other’s eyes silently, gave one more shake each to the hand he held, and thus parted for the last time. Now I should say that the impulse which drew these minds to this inquiry through so many years was a better affirmative evidence [eine Bejahung] than their failure to find a confirmation was negative [eine Verneinung]. (LSA 333)<sup>168</sup>

Emerson adds that both were “materialists” [Materialisten], but the lack of any “light,” which is obviously a religious or metaphysical metaphor, makes them melancholic. For Emerson, this very absence is an act of affirmation of life itself. That is what materialism is good for. But to most, materialism will come with a rising threat of “skepticism in the streets”, a “slaughter-house style of thinking,” from which Emerson

recoils. The skeptic's "laughter at man is bitter, and puts us out of good activity. [...] Our disgust is the protest of human nature against a lie." (LSA 333-334)<sup>169</sup>

In summary, Emerson presented in these three essays three separate yet connected thoughts: first, a preference for his "fugitive gleams" [flüchtige Blitzstrahlen] (NE 269)], his "reverence for the intuitions" that "communicate[s] nobleness" (LSA 343, NE 315), second his call for a new way of seeing or the transformative power of moods, and third the impact of materialism or naturalization on human culture, or what we might call the death of God, which Emerson affirms rather than denies. With the latter, it becomes clear that Emerson is not a "transcendentalist" in the sense of seeking "transcendence" but rather closer to a "materialist" seeking to understand the meaning of this new development of thought.

### 3.2 A CHANGE OF STYLE

In the afterword to the historical-critical edition to Nietzsche's *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* (MA), Giorgio Colli argued that Nietzsche developed at this time (1876) "eine Wissenschaft der Intuition" ("science of intuition") and had practiced "eine Vernunft in aufblitzenden Erkenntnissen [flashing insights]" (Colli, 709). As many scholars have pointed out, Nietzsche's new form seems to be connected to his interest in "science" or "materialism" (as did Emerson). But what is this "science"? The word "science" refers rather to a method than a system of thought based on logic and deduction. But the word "method" is even too strong. It is more of a style, because how could a science be built on aphorisms? It is well known that Nietzsche wrote MA in Basel and Sorrent in Fall and Winter of 1876-1877 while having conversations with Ree and

Isabelle von der Pahlen, reading together a list of authors Ree suggested, especially the French moralists like Voltaire and Diderot, but also Burckhardt, Ranke, Thukydides, Herodot, Lope de Vega, Calderon, Cervantes, Moreto, Michelet, Turgenev, and the New Testament. Logically, the aphoristic form is most often traced back to Nietzsche's reading of the French moralist tradition. But why not Emerson's essays? On the surface, it seems as if Nietzsche had abandoned the form of the essay (used in 1874) in favor of the aphoristic form. But what if Emerson's "essays" are much closer to what Nietzsche practices as aphorisms, consisting of brief remarks and phrases collected over a long period of time and then grouped together. What is called an Emersonian "essay" is in fact an arrangement, a collage, of individual "fugitive gleams" [flüchtige Blitzstrahlen] (NE 269)] that shall shock, stimulate, and provoke.<sup>170</sup>

What is Nietzsche's aphoristic style? Generally, scholars point out the influence of the French moralists on Nietzsche's style. Indeed, if not the style, Nietzsche shares with La Rochefoucauld the conviction that (at least one) function of the aphorism is to expose or unmask morality (see Fricke 1984, 46ff., Wuthenow 2016, 153), which Nietzsche says about his own work in the 1886 preface to MA. However, Wuthenow correctly points out that Nietzsche goes beyond that: "er denkt wohl in Fragmenten, aber oftmals weniger, um zu fragen und festzustellen, als – um zu verkündigen." (Wuthenow 2016, 153) Yet, even Wuthenow's "proclaiming" does limit Nietzsche's use of the aphorism because it assumes that Nietzsche has a "doctrine" that he wishes to proclaim. But the aphorism has more than one function, and so does style.

Nietzsche goes beyond the French moralists' preference for the one-sentence, witty remark. While he does produce such aphorisms, Nietzsche also writes aphoristic

texts that are much longer (more essayistic) or have a variety of other properties.

Nietzsche's aphorisms are often not aphoristic in the sense of the aphorisms of his contemporary Maria Ebner-Eschenbach and La Rochefoucauld (see Westerdale 2013, 18). Joel Westerdale has shown that Nietzsche makes the distinction between "Aphorismus" and "Sentenz," the latter referring to the French moralists, the former to his own work and, surprisingly, to Lichtenberg's texts (WS 109), which he read during this time intensively.<sup>171</sup> Westerdale shows furthermore that Nietzsche even appropriates certain aphorisms from Lichtenberg.<sup>172</sup> Like Nietzsche's aphoristic texts, Lichtenberg's writings show an incredible variety, from aphorisms that are only one word to several pages long. It therefore seems that Nietzsche places his aphoristic texts in the German rather than French tradition. While the French aphorism usually has a closed form, often as a brief maxim or sentence, presenting a sort of common-sense knowledge, the German aphorism seeks to provoke, to cast doubt on unquestioned beliefs, or, as is evident in Lichtenberg (the physicist), to experiment. This is where Lichtenberg's style convenes with Emerson's. Emerson too describes what he wishes from another author, and the effect he himself wishes to produce in his texts, as provocation: "Truly speaking, it is not instruction, but provocation, that I can receive from another soul." (*Nature addresses and lectures*, 127) If correct, that would leave Emerson as the closest influence on Nietzsche's style. It remains true however that Emerson wrote essays and that, apparently, Nietzsche abandons this exact form of writing, and that Emerson did not write aphorisms. Yet, as we have seen, Egon Friedell published Emerson's "aphorisms" around 1900. The question then is, what counts as an aphorism after all?

Influentially, Harald Fricke declared that the author's intention must be clear in terms of what should be called aphorisms. He had defined the aphorism as "ein kotextuell isoliertes Element einer Kette von schriftlichen Sachprosatexten, das in einem verweisungsfähigen Einzelsatz bzw. in konziser Weise formuliert oder auch sprachlich bzw. sachlich pointiert ist." (Fricke 1984, 18) In this definition Fricke includes necessary elements that all aphorisms need to fulfill (cotextual isolation, prose, non-fictionality) and optional elements of which an aphorism only must have one (consisting of only one sentence, conciseness, linguistic pointe, or subject matter pointe). For Fricke, an aphorism is a tool ("Gebrauchsgegenstand") meant to be used by a reader, it produces a "Leerstelle" (a word taken from Wolfgang Iser's reception theory) which the reader must fill in with interpretative work (this element Fricke calls "verweisungsfähig").<sup>173</sup> Fricke's term "cotextual isolation" means that an aphorism can only appear in a volume of aphorisms created by an author: aphorisms isolate each other, appearing in a multitude, in "chains," as he calls it (9), without being connected to each other like sentences and phrases in a text.<sup>174</sup> Aphorisms also often offer a new and nonconformist thought without an explanation or justification and thus ask the reader to do the work (Fricke 1984, 17) by writing less than would be necessary (16).

Fricke's definition is helpful but limited, especially for a writer like Nietzsche who, as Fricke admits, is "der Extremfall der Gattung" (120) because Nietzsche also includes short treatises, essays, apostils, or dialogues into his "aphoristic" works. However, for others like Westerdale, these deviations can be included in what Nietzsche calls "Aphorismus," because Nietzsche himself distinguishes between aphorism and "Sentenz," the latter being the conventional aphorism. When writing *about* aphorisms

and their desired effect, Nietzsche referred to them as forms of eternity.<sup>175</sup> They are “eternal” because they are incomplete by design. In MA, his first aphorism collection, Nietzsche points out that the incomplete representation of a thought or an entire philosophy is, occasionally, more effective than a complete one: “man überlässt der Arbeit des Beschauers mehr, er wird aufgeregt, das, was in so starkem Licht und Dunkel vor ihm sich abhebt, fortzubilden, zu Ende zu denken und jenes Hemmniss selber zu überwinden, welches ihrem völligen Heraustreten bis dahin hinderlich war.” (MA I 178) To his editor Schmeitzner, Nietzsche would also emphasize what Fricke had called cotextual isolation: “Als Norm für die Raum-Eintheilung betrachte ich ‘Menschliches Allzumenschliches’. Ja nicht eng zusammen drucken! Der Fehler des Buches ist so schon, daß die wesentlichsten Gedanken zu *dicht* sich folgen” (13 Mar 1881, KGB III/1:69, no. 89). Nietzsche wants his readers to read an aphorism, an incomplete thought, in isolation.<sup>176</sup> Ultimately, it is the reader’s fault not understanding Nietzsches’s text. In VM, he addresses his readers directly with a warning: “Gegen die Kurzsichtigen. – Meint ihr denn, es müsse Stückwerk sein, weil man es euch in Stücken giebt (und geben muss)?” (VM 127)

The aphorism’s incompleteness represents, as is well known, a challenge to “Systemphilosophie.” At the same time, it has a connection to the scientific method, as is visible in Lichtenberg’s use of the “Experiment,” the aphorism’s modern propagator, Francis Bacon, and Nietzsche’s own interest in the scientific method at that time (see Westerdale 82). Bacon valued the aphorism because of its open-endedness, allowing combinatorial experimentation, and inductive reasoning to express itself.<sup>177</sup> Kaufmann also argued that the aphoristic writing provides the key to Nietzsche’s “method,” with each aphoristic text constituting an “experiment” that does not lay claim to universal



validity, but rather allows for the continued introduction of new evidence and the abandonment of old, superseded positions. However, Bacon praises incompleteness as a scientific method only on the grounds that it is the preliminary step *towards* a scientific system, and Kaufmann's "progressive" description of experimentation tries to insert more rationality in Nietzsche's style than Nietzsche himself wants. Nietzsche's aphorism is not a method but a style.

Where does this leave Emerson and the essay? First of all, although the aphorism as a literary form is more reader-oriented than the conventional essay or treatise, they are related genres. Stylistically, essay and aphorism are both open forms, self-reflexive, and incomplete. The essay is a walk "bei dem die Bewegung wichtiger ist als das Erreichen eines Ziels" (Schlauffer 523). Additionally, like the aphorism, the essay expresses a *skepsis* towards systematic thought, the authority of truth, the tradition, and emphasizes individual experience and spontaneity.<sup>178</sup> It has become a commonplace to trace the origins of the essay to Montaigne for whom "essai" meant a "sample", "taster," "draft" or "exercise in style." (Schlauffer 1997, 522) But as with the aphorism, it was Bacon imitating Montaigne who again popularized the genre in Germany in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (he himself calling essays "delibationes" or grains of salt that incite one's appetite without feeding you) but now under the curious term "Versuch," signifying the experiment in the natural sciences.<sup>179</sup> The first German "essayists" included again none other than Lichtenberg, who travelled to England. It was, however, only with Emerson's *Essays* that the English word became more popular, although his essays were still translated as "Versuche" (the subtitle says "Essays"). And it was none other than Herman Grimm's "Essays" (1859), under the impact of Emerson's texts, that is not only the first "essay

collection” in German that has the title of the English genre but that also offers the first abridged history of the essay as a genre. Grimm says that it was not Montaigne nor Bacon who made him interested in the genre of the essay but Emerson: “Die früheren Essayisten waren Schriftsteller, Emerson war Prediger.” (VIII) He has given the essay a new meaning, a genre of texts “die an Jedermann gerichtet sind.” (VIII) Nonetheless, the essay never became a successful genre in Germany because of its status as a “Zwitterwesen” between a strict science and an autonomous poetry.<sup>180</sup>

But this affinity alone does not constitute a valid reason why Emerson would matter for Nietzsche’s aphorisms. It is Emerson’s very specific style that makes his essays “aphoristic.” Emerson found himself faced with his own style as a type of necessity for him: “My thoughts are too short,” Emerson states, “as they say my sentences are. I step along from stone to stone over the Lethe which gurgles around my path, but the odds are that my companion encounters me just as I leave one stone and before my foot has reached the other and down I tumble into Lethe water.” (quote after Richardson 2009, 54-55) Emerson himself was deeply conscious of his “incapacity of methodical writing,” and sometimes he seemed to feel hopeless in the face of such criticisms. As he writes in a letter to a colleague at Harvard, Henry Ware, “I could not give accounts of myself if challenged. I could not possibly give you one of the ‘arguments’ you cruelly hint at, on which any doctrine of mine stands. For I do not know what arguments mean, in reference to any expression of a thought.” This letter, written on October 8, 1838, documents Emerson’s awareness of the reception of his style and his struggles to make himself understood. His reactions to this line of criticisms, however, were not only helplessness but also defiance and scolding. Barbara Packer claims that

Emerson “deliberately” rejected the idea of writing systematic essays with introduction, argument, and conclusion, and that he intentionally eliminated the connection between sentences and paragraphs, or “between anything within the essay and the world outside it.” (Packer 1982, 7) In this view, the reader of Emerson is left with the risk of making the connection for herself but for which she would be rewarded with, what Hosseini called, “a certain electric tingle.” (Hosseini 2019, 371)<sup>181</sup>

Reading Emerson’s essays imitates the reading experience of an aphorism collection. Fricke’s contextual isolation, although not spatially present on the page, exists similarly within an Emersonian essay. There are many continuing thoughts in Emerson’s essays. But equally often, these continuing passages are broken off by a sentence that seems to come out of nowhere and stands alone and exposed. Accounting for this reading experience, Richardson argued that for Emerson “the sentence—not the paragraph and not the essay—is the main structural and formal unit.” (Richardson 2009, 53)<sup>182</sup>

Considering this parallel between Emerson’s writing based on sentences, it is surprising that Emerson never read Lichtenberg and only rarely quotes La Rochefoucauld or Chamfort. Similarly, his familiarity with the German romantic tradition, Schlegel<sup>183</sup> and Novalis in particular, is only mediated through Carlyle and Madame de Stael (see Rosenwald 1988). Emerson, like Carlyle, was not a fan of the Romantic fragment.<sup>184</sup> For Emerson, the aphoristic style was not so much a choice as a necessity, always swinging between enthusiasm for brief gleams of genius and a felt intellectual inferiority. The essayistic form gives Emerson’s texts the appearance of completeness that is undermined by the very building blocks that constitute the essay to begin with, its sentences. The essay hides explosive sentences ready to be found by a reader. An Emersonian essay, in

contrast to an aphorism collection, therefore requires even more work from the reader to “find” these sentences.

Even more so, Rosenwald (1988) made the argument that Emerson’s journals, the dominant source of sentences for his essays, resemble the aphorism book: both consist of a series of independent discontinuous utterances (although the intended audience is different: the journal remains private). From his analysis of Emerson’s journals, trying to establish them as a literary text, Rosenwald develops a systematic description of all of Emerson’s works. Because Emerson would not just write down an observation into his journal and “use” it and be done with it when incorporated into an essay or lecture, but revisit it, even revise it, rewrite it (even taking passages from his essays, planting them in the journal and so on), Rosenwald says: “Of the Emersonian literary system as a whole, then, we can say that no passage can ever be considered as having attained its final form or arrived at its final context; that no passage is ever restricted to its initial context; that any passage can be reused; that no passage, by being reused, is ever exhausted.” (Rosenwald 1988, 68)

Although Rosenwald’s claim might be a little too much (certainly not “every” passage can be reused), it hits a mark and fits not only Emerson’s actual practice of writing but his expectations for his readers as well. “Every word we speak,” Emerson says, “is million-faced or convertible to an indefinite number of applications. If it were not so, we could read no book. Your remark would fit only your case not mine. And Dante who described his circumstance would be unintelligible now. But a thousand readers in a thousand different years shall read his story and find it a picture of their story by making of course a new application of every word.” (Quote after Richardson 2009,

13) Emerson knows about the powers of reading, which is why he simultaneously warns of too much reading, being an obsessive reader himself.

About Montaigne, the founder of the essay so to speak, Emerson says that it seemed to him as if he “had written the book [himself] in some former life,” and that Montaigne’s words, being cut, “would bleed” (RM 162, 168), like Zarathustra: “Von allem Geschriebenen liebe ich nur Das, was Einer mit seinem Blute schreibt.” (KSA 4: 48) Emerson’s statements are simultaneously an expression of admiration for the past writer and a comment about his own writing, since it is Emerson himself who writes essays, which, since Montaigne, is self-reflexive genre. Every (good) essay is also a commentary on itself. Montaigne’s essays are representative of the anti-dogmatic skeptical attitude: “I neither affirm nor deny. I stand here to try the case. I am here to consider, σκοπεῖν, to consider how it is.” (RM 156-157) Emerson admired this style of thinking, which he further contrasts with the universal doubt of Descartes (RM 160). Montaigne’s skepticism is that of reality, which “tastes every moment of the day; likes pain because it makes him feel himself and realize things; as we pinch ourselves to know that we are awake.” (RM 169-170) Emerson praises all of this in Montaigne and perceives the skeptical standpoint “as a natural weapon against the exaggeration and formalism of bigots and blockheads.” (RM 171) Skepticism is a tool we use against idiocy, to raise suspicions.<sup>185</sup> As such, skepticism can be placed aside when it has expired its use. Emerson cannot help himself: “We are natural believers. Truth, or the connection between cause and effect, alone interests us. We are persuaded that a thread runs through all things: all worlds are strung on it, as beads;” (RM 170) Does Emerson slide here into a

dogmatic Idealism? But Nietzsche too criticized the French branch of skepticism in 1882, represented by the aphorisms of La Rochefoucauld:

La Rochefoucauld blieb auf halbem Wege stehen: er leugnete die ‘guten’ Eigenschaften des Menschen – er hätte auch die ‘bösen’ leugnen sollen. Wenn der moralische Skeptiker beim Mißtrauen gegen die Moral angelangt ist, so bleibt ihm noch ein Schritt zu thun – die Skepsis gegen sein Mißtrauen. *Leugnen und Vertrauen* – das giebt einander die Hände. (KSA 10: 67–68)

Nietzsche was certainly no idealist either. The problem is that pinning down the essay as a genre of skepsis, of checks and balances, suspension of judgement etc. disarms the very potential of the essay. As Adorno attests in his famous essay on the essay: “Der geläufige Einwand gegen ihn [the essay], er sei stückhaft und zufällig [everything that was criticized about Emerson’s style!], postuliert selber die Gegebenheit von Totalität [...]. Der Essay aber will nicht das Ewige im Vergänglichen aufsuchen und abdestillieren, sondern eher das Vergängliche verewigen.” (Adorno 1958, 18) The essay does not simply accept uncertainty as a necessary evil (which always assumes it would be better to attain certainty and finality) but actively seeks it. Discontinuity, Adorno declares “ist dem Essay wesentlich [...]” (Adorno 1958, 25) According to Julie Ellison, Emerson’s essays are governed by repetition and disjunction: “There is no flow of argument or exposition, but rather a series of discrete acts of substitution.” (Ellison 1984, 10) As such, Emerson’s prose resists classifications: “It is almost impossible to determine the extent to which he is ironic, the precise degree of his tonal control. He invents fables of transcendence, transparency, fluidity; he also values concrete detail, palpable fact, the resistance of matter.” (Ellison 1984, 75) But this stylistic fluidity is not all roses and

sunshine, it is also a risk. “Mightn’t we say,” asks Hosseini, “that [Emerson’s] fragmentary prose is partly responsible for a wide range of irreconcilable readings?” (Hosseini 2019, 370) Emerson willingly opens his text up for all sorts of interpretations where, Ellison says, “any interpretation will find surface enough to stick.” (Ellison 1984, 77)

This leaves us with a problem. How are we supposed to read Emerson? Some of his readers have suggested different strategies. Considering that the Emersonian sentence seems to be the heart of the essay, and that we are often clueless how or if Emerson’s paragraphs or even the essays themselves hang together, Cavell had “adopted the strategy of isolating a few sentences, in pairs, torn from their contexts in that essay, in order to force us to stop over them.” (Cavell 2003, 21–22) If we adopt such a strategy, we are faced with the difficulty of deciding which statements are crucial in understanding the text and which ones can be bracketed. To do that, however, already presupposes an act of interpretation (before having begun the interpretation). Instead of wondering about our process of selection, we might equally ask ourselves how and why certain sentences catch our attention and stand out among the rest. Emerson’s style forces us to read selectively. He does not care if we “get” the whole essay (after all, misunderstanding is a sign of greatness) but asks us to make *use* of it. Take some of these sentences and make use of them, cast away the rest, or keep it there for another time.

This selective reading goes against all the proper ways of standard careful reading. No wonder that, for instance, George Kateb complained that in dealing with Emerson’s essays “one runs the risk of arbitrarily deciding which statements more nearly represent Emerson’s views, and which statements he is only trying out.” (Kateb 2002, 10)

But it is not as arbitrary as it sounds. At least, it makes transparent how any interpretation is guided by certain perceptions. So many critics have read Emerson as an Idealist, Transcendentalist, trying to explain the concepts of “Compensation,” “Self-Reliance” etc. and selected the quotations fitting their case. At least Emerson is honest enough to admit that all he ever reads is what agrees with his constitution, as he sometimes puts it, while others claim to speak with the truth in their hands. All that Emerson does in his writing is to force us making explicit what we all do in reading texts but now turning it into an active endeavor, to read selectively, to produce interesting readings (the reading of Emerson as an Idealist is not wrong, if that means that it would lack evidence, but it is boring).<sup>186</sup> After all, how do we read an aphorism collection like Nietzsche’s if not selectively? Furthermore, and most importantly, what good is a text if it does not serve us in the present and is otherwise banished to the museum of ideas? Emerson’s style, as Nietzsche’s, is an attempt to produce the condition under which any reader can make use of their texts. In their reader-oriented styles they attempt, we might say, to create the conditions of possibility of the future. As we will see, the question of the present, what it is and how it might be transformed, is one of the central aspects of Nietzsche’s MA and Emerson’s “Experience,” which Nietzsche read during the time of writing MA.

### 3.3 TRANSFORMATIVE POWERS

The issue of the present appears in Nietzsche’s often overlooked but central notion in the second part of MA: the idea of the nearest things or next things (“*der nächsten Dinge*”). In the 1886 preface to MA, Nietzsche writes:



Ein Schritt weiter in der Genesung: und der freie Geist nähert sich wieder dem Leben, langsam freilich, fast widerspänstig, fast misstrauisch. Es wird wieder wärmer um ihn, gelber gleichsam; Gefühl und Mitgefühl bekommen Tiefe, Thauwinde aller Art gehen über ihn weg. Fast ist ihm zu Muthe, als ob ihm jetzt erst die Augen für das Nahe aufgiengen. Er ist verwundert und sitzt stille: wo war er doch? Diese nahen und nächsten Dinge: wie scheinen sie ihm verwandelt!

(KSA 2: 19)

Nietzsche inserts his motif of the “free spirit” into a narrative of sickness and recovery, and presents the result of this recovery, the gaining of a new perspective (“Augen”), as a transformation of what is “near” or “next,” simple everyday matters like “feelings” such as compassion. These things gain “depth,” one of Nietzsche’s favorite ways to describe his mode of investigation into the “genealogies” of our morals. Despite being written almost 10 years after the publication of MA, this preface shows how Nietzsche views MA as a preparatory work to his later texts. Nietzsche describes the purpose of MA in its entirety, the “thawing” of our unquestioned beliefs and the preparation of a transformation of the present or near. However, Nietzsche does this by borrowing from Emerson. I selected the first and last pages of Nietzsche’s MA (including VM and WS) to interpret the central motifs of MA: the free spirit or wanderer, the dawn or morning, and the “nearest things,” which, as I claim, all derive from Emerson’s essays.

Nietzsche identifies the “free spirit,” to whom the entire book is dedicated, with the figure of the wanderer or nomad. In VM (211), Nietzsche writes that “we free spirits” see “our ideal” in “einem geistigen Nomadenthum” (KSA 2: 469). It has been noted by

others that Emerson speaks of such “intellectual nomadism” in the first edition of “History,” which Nietzsche excerpts in 1882:

The intellectual nomadism is the faculty of objectiveness, or of eyes which everywhere feed themselves [Das geistige Nomadenthum ist die Gabe der Objectivität oder die Gabe überall Augenweide zu finden]. [...] Every man, every thing, is a prize, a study, a property to him, and this love smooths his brow, joins him to men, and makes him beautiful and beloved in their sight. (E 24)<sup>187</sup>

Zavatta for instance emphasizes how the spiritual nomad is “constantly changing his own vision of the world and the things around him” (93), which is generally plausible, while also a notch too extreme. In fact, it seems that the passage From Emerson’s “History” contradicts this ideal by calling the spiritual nomadism a “faculty of objectiveness” and “eyes which feed themselves everywhere.” Emerson seems to think objectivity and individual perception together, in terms of absorption, assimilation, and appropriation.<sup>188</sup> The central image of the observing eye also appears in one of Nietzsche’s notes around the same time: “*Emerson*, p. 328 ‘das Auge des abrundenden Geistes.’” (KSA 8: 538) In the passage that Nietzsche refers to, Emerson says: “People forget that it is the eye which makes the horizon, and the rounding mind’s eye which makes this or that man a type or representative of humanity [...]” (EII 77)<sup>189</sup> It seems that Emerson and Nietzsche in general combine an epistemological project with an ethos or type; a certain way of seeing (for instance objectivity) constitutes a certain ethos.

Arguing against the common conception of Nietzsche’s “positivistic phase,” Ruth Abbey has called the underlying method of Nietzsche’s MA an “epistemology-plus,” an

epistemology that serves an ethos. Others, like Zavatta, have tried to fill in the ethos by linking Nietzsche's text to the ancient tradition of skepticism. However, as with Emerson, Nietzsche constantly criticizes the skeptic's austerity, *epoché* or suspension of judgment. Nietzsche even goes so far as to identify the wanderer in MA (no. 638, the last entry of the book) with a search for certainty, the opposite of the skeptic. Although the wanderer does not have a final goal (knowledge does not necessarily entail a final end), Nietzsche says, he must have open eyes for the world: "es muss in ihm selber etwas Wanderndes sein, das seine Freude [joy, pleasure, delight] an dem Wechsel und der Vergänglichkeit habe." (KSA 2: 363) The wanderer *delights* in transitions and changes, welcomes them, but does not practice an active capricious change of opinions.

To further strengthen this emphasis on transition, Nietzsche introduces central matutinal imagery to describe the wanderer's hardships and hopes: the night represents the wanderer's exhaustion, while the rising morning sun ("Morgensonne"), glowing like the god of wrath, simultaneously signals hope and prolonged struggle: "der Tag ist fast schlimmer, als die Nacht." (KSA 2: 363) Following these melancholic episodes, the wanderer experiences a different kind of morning:

So mag es wohl einmal dem Wanderer ergehen; aber dann kommen, als Entgelt,  
die wonnevollen Morgen anderer Gegenden und Tage, wo er schon im Grauen  
des Lichtes die Musenschwärme im Nebel des Gebirges nahe an sich  
vorübertanzen sieht, wo ihm nachher, wenn er still, in dem Gleichmaass der  
Vormittagsseele, unter Bäumen sich ergeht, aus deren Wipfeln und  
Laubverstecken heraus lauter gute und helle Dinge zugeworfen werden, die  
Geschenke aller jener freien Geister, die in Berg, Wald und Einsamkeit zu Hause

sind und welche, gleich ihm, in ihrer bald fröhlichen bald nachdenklichen Weise, Wanderer und Philosophen sind. Geboren aus den Geheimnissen der Frühe, sinnen sie darüber nach, wie der Tag zwischen dem zehnten und zwölften Glockenschlage ein so reines, durchleuchtetes, verklärt-heiteres Gesicht haben könne: — sie suchen die Philosophie des Vormittages. (KSA 2:362-363)

The German “Morgen” refers simultaneously to the “daybreak” and “tomorrow,” indicating that the wanderer waits for the uncertain coming of this dawn. The wanderers or free spirits [“freie Geister”] are born from the “secrets of earliness” [“Geheimnissen der Frühe”] and search for the philosophy of daybreak [“Vormittages”]. What is this “Philosophie des Vormittages” that Nietzsche did not mention throughout the entire text until the end? The image of the daybreak suggests transformation, a change of perspective, hope for the new. In VM, Nietzsche even calls the morning (“Vormittag”) one of the “Lehrmeister” [mentors] of a philosophy of health and recovery (VM, no. 356, KSA 2: 522).<sup>190</sup> Emerson makes frequent use of the same imagery. The best example of this is found in Emerson’s “Circles”: “Our life is an apprenticeship to the truth that around every circle another can be drawn; that there is no end in nature, but every end is a beginning; that there is always another dawn [Tagesanbruch] risen on mid-noon [zu jeder Tageszeit], and under every deep a lower deep opens.” (E 302)<sup>191</sup> Fabricius’ translation of “on mid-noon” as “zu jeder Tageszeit” highlights quite well the potentiality of Emerson’s image – at any point of the day, a dawn or morning presents itself as a possibility. A possibility once, is a necessity forever. In another instance, Fabricius’ translation adds another important feature to Emerson’s original. Emerson says: “In the thought of to-morrow there is a power to upheave all thy creed, all the creeds, all the

literatures of the nations,” (E 306) which Fabricius renders as: “In dem Gedanken des morgen, da liegt eine Kraft verborgen, [...]” (V 223) Not only the thought that *occurs* tomorrow, the thought that has not been thought yet, has the potential power to undermine the past and today, but the act of thinking about tomorrow, about an alternative to the present has it.

Nietzsche makes use of the double meaning of “morgen” when he calls in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (JGB) for the philosopher as a “Mensch des Morgens und Übermorgens,” a person of the morning, who must be in aversion to the ideal of his “today” (KSA 5:145). The “über”-prefix in “übermorgen” also plays on Nietzsche’s figure of the “Übermensch.” In the fall of 1878, Nietzsche notes on Emerson’s “Higher Soul,” which was translated as “Überseele,” the following: “*Emerson* p. 201 die ‘Überseele’ ist das eigentlich höchste Cultur-Resultat, ein Phantasma an dem alle Guten und Großen gearbeitet haben.” (KSA 8: 562)<sup>192</sup> In MA I, Nietzsche also speaks of the search for a “höheres Selbst” which he, like Emerson, conceives as a sudden vision that might appear or vanish any day: “Ein Jeder hat seinen guten Tag, wo er sein höheres Selbst findet;” (KSA 2:351) The suddenness but also the waiting for a “good day” to put thought into practice is representative of Emerson’s “Circles” and “Experience.”<sup>193</sup> In a note on the latter around the same time (summer of 1878), Nietzsche directly attributes the “mood of the wanderer” to Emerson:

*Emerson* meint, ‘der Werth des Lebens läge in den unergründlichen Fähigkeiten desselben: in der Thatsache, daß ich niemals weiß, wenn ich mich zu einem neuen Individuum wende, was mir widerfahren mag.’ Das ist die Stimmung des Wanderers. p. 311 bei Emerson wichtig, die Angst vor der sogenannten

Wissenschaft — der Schöpfer geht durch eine Thür hinein bei jedem Individuum.  
(Herbst 1878. KSA 8: 32[15])<sup>194</sup>

What Nietzsche calls the “mood of the wanderer” seems to be a combination of “moods” from Emerson’s “Circles” and “Experience.” The former entertaining the anticipation of transformation, “Life is a series of surprises.” (E 321, EII 68), the latter representing disillusionment when facing the fact that change has not occurred, especially the disappointment with promise and reality of the new sciences, or as we have seen in LSA, “materialism.” Nietzsche’s comment about Emerson’s “Angst vor der sogenannten Wissenschaft” (“fear of the so-called science”) must be understood in the context of the larger passage of Emerson’s text. Emerson criticizes the science of his day, the physicians, “the chuckle of the phrenologist,” the “Theoretic kidnappers and slave-drivers” (EII 54), and their use of the familiar racial figure of “temperament.” 19<sup>th</sup> century racial science, celebrating its heyday in the mid-century United States, justifies atrocities after the fact (President Jackson’s Removal Act, countless massacres against Native Americans, the race that was supposed to “vanish naturally,” and of course slavery), supposedly reading the fate and potential of a person based on the color of their beard (or the color of their skin?) (EII 54). To Emerson, “grossest ignorance does not disgust like this impudent knowingness.” (E II 54)<sup>195</sup> The Westward expansion, another fatal strategy, on which part of Emerson’s rhetoric of renewal and onward movement is built, shows its ugly side in (our) “Experience.”<sup>196</sup>

As an effect of this “knowledge, our “relations to each other are oblique and casual” (EII 51), and casual turns into casualties; it mortifies others. The people on the street, Emerson says, “we look at them, they seem alive” (EII 51) but, in his darkest

hours, he cannot shake off the feeling that they too are victims of their temperament: We “resist the conclusion in the morning, but adopt it as the evening wears on.” (E 53) In our best moods, life appears endlessly powerful, “Life is a train of moods like a string of beads” (EII 53), in our worst life and those who live it seem dead to us. That is the context of the passage Nietzsche quoted in his notebook:

I saw a gracious gentleman who adapts his conversation to the form of the head of the man he talks with! I had fancied that the value of life lay in its inscrutable possibilities; in the fact that I never know, in addressing myself to a new individual, what may befall me. [...] Temperament is the veto or limitation-power in the constitution, [...] I see not, if one be once caught in this trap of so-called sciences, any escape for the man from the links of the chain of physical necessity. Given such an embryo, such a history must follow. On this platform one lives in a sty of sensualism, and would soon come to suicide. But it is impossible that the creative power [schaffende Macht] should exclude itself. Into every intelligence there is a door which is never closed, through which the creator passes. [two exclamation points inserted by Nietzsche] (EII 54-56) (V 310-311)

The effect of this science is a mortification of life, whereas the mood of the wanderer considers the value of life in its inscrutable possibilities, a philosophy of the morning. Two years later, Nietzsche begins VM or MAII with the following words: “An die Enttäuschten der Philosophie. — Wenn ihr bisher an den höchsten Werth des Lebens [highest value of life] geglaubt habt und euch nun enttäuscht seht, müsst ihr es denn jetzt gleich zum niedrigsten Preise losschlagen?” (KSA 2:382)<sup>197</sup> But such a disappointment seems to be part of what Emerson calls the “life of truth,” which Nietzsche excerpts in

1878 as well: “*Emerson* p. 331 Essays ‘das Leben der Wahrheit ist kalt und insofern traurig, aber es ist nicht der Sklave usw.’” (KSA 8: 540) The sentence ends with “von Thränen, Zerknirschungen und Leidenschaftlichkeit.” (V 331) In Emerson’s full passage, he speaks of the muses and the chemist as two opposed sides that can be united: “Und dennoch ist diesen kalten Felsen das Ideal eingeboren.” (V 331) The chemist is also the figure at the beginning of MA (“Chemie der Begriffe und Empfindungen;” KSA 2: 23) and the muses appeared in the wanderer-aphorism, the end of MA, as if Nietzsche attempted a unification of the cold spirit of science and the warming glow of the ideal.

So far, MA seemed not to be a declaration of Nietzsche’s positivism but a transitional text that champions transitions in the hope for something new, a new way of thinking. The second part of MA, VM and WS, continue this interest in transitions. For instance, VM features a ride to hell, the river Lethe representing the value of forgetting (KSA 2: 532), and WS of course places the “shadow” at the very center of the text. Lethe also plays a central role in Emerson’s “Experience” where genius, who “gives us the lethe to drink, that we may tell no tales, mixed the cup too strongly, and we cannot shake off the lethargy now at noonday.” (EII 46) Instead of revitalizing us, as in “Circles,” Lethe’s waters paralyzed us at noon, turning the moment of transition into an everlasting night: “Sleep lingers all our lifetime about our eyes, as night hovers all day in the boughs of the fir-tree. All things swim and glitter. Our life is not so much threatened as our perception. Ghostlike we glide through nature, and should not know our place again.” (EII 46)

Ghosts are another figure of transition that appears in Nietzsche’s text. The German “Geist” has the intriguing double-meaning of “ghost” and “spirit.” When



Emerson complained about the pseudo-science of his day, he explicitly mentioned how these characters reduce spirit, which Fabricius renders as “Geist,” to a thin layer of material. When Nietzsche poetically described the scene in nature where the wanderer encounters the dancing muses, he also remarks that the wanderer receives “lauter gute und helle Dinge [...], die Geschenke aller jener freien Geister [...].” (KSA 2: 363) “Geister” is Nietzsche’s word for “free spirits” (or ghosts?) the addressee of the book. But in the preface to the 1886 edition, Nietzsche also reveals that these free spirits do not exist; in fact, he says he had to “invent” them as “tapfere Gesellen und Gespenster” (“ghosts”) (KSA 2: 15). This lack of reality is present throughout Nietzsche’s text; death and the undead make up the last entry in VM, no. 408, where Nietzsche reports from his personal travel into the underworld and his attitude towards “the living” who appear to him at times like “shadows” desiring life (KSA 2: 534).

These shadows form then a transition to the last part of MA, *Der Wanderer und sein Schatten* (WS), a dialogue between the two characters in the title. In the beginning, the shadow speaks of the shadow which all things reveal when the “sunshine of knowledge” falls upon them – this includes the wanderer’s (the knowledge seeker’s) shadow which will vanish at the end of the book when night falls (KSA 2: 538).<sup>198</sup> What does this mean? Knowledge and shadows (death, illusion?) are linked together. “Every evil and every good thing,” Emerson says in “Experience,” “is a shadow which we cast” (E II 77). Knowledge, judgment (evil, good), does not necessarily reveal the world “as it is,” does not bring it closer to us but occasionally distances it from us (case in point, the knowingness of Emerson’s phrenologists). Shadows do not exist without the light of knowledge. If knowledge is not the primary path to reality, what is? At the end of the

book, the wanderer's shadow praises one idea in particular: "Von Allem, was du vorgebracht hast, hat mir Nichts mehr gefallen, als eine Verheissung: ihr wollt wieder gute Nachbarn der nächsten Dinge werden." (KSA 2: 703) The formula to become a good neighbor to the nearest things is, I think, most central to the entire book.<sup>199</sup>

As we have already noted, the slipperiness and evanescence of reality, of that which is closest or next to us, plays an integral role in Emerson's "Experience." Emerson's strategy, it seems, is to ground the epistemological question of experiencing reality in his own experiences or moods. One of the beginning paragraphs of Emerson's essay features the impact of his son's death on him in 1842:<sup>200</sup>

There are moods in which we court suffering, in the hope that here at least we shall find reality, sharp peaks and edges of truth. But it turns out to be scene-painting and counterfeit. The only thing grief has taught me is to know how shallow it is. That, like all the rest, plays about the surface, and never introduces me into the reality, for contact with which we would even pay the costly price of sons and lovers. Was it Boscovich who found out that bodies never come in contact? Well, souls never touch their objects. An innavigable sea washes with silent waves between us and the things we aim at and converse with. Grief too will make us idealists. In the death of my son, now more than two years ago, I seem to have lost a beautiful estate,—no more. I cannot get it nearer to me. (E 49-50)<sup>201</sup>

Emerson's lost son is that which is "nearest to him" and simultaneously vanished forever. Stanley Cavell had interpreted Emerson's opening of "Experience" as a

transfiguration of Kant's concept of experience as appearance in the *Critique of Pure Reason* by which there exists a world of experience for us (as appearance) but simultaneously vanishes or eludes our grasp (as appearance), because it promises us a world beyond what we can possibly experience (Cavell 2003, 115).<sup>202</sup> When Kant investigated the conditions of our experience, Emerson might say, he took for granted that we *have* experiences. But Emerson describes a condition in which we *desire* contact with reality, experiences, but are unable to make them. Emerson investigates not the conditions of possibility of experience (as if we constantly "experience") but of *having* experiences at all, which he grounds in moods like disappointment and grief.

Nietzsche's task that we should become good neighbors to the nearest things *again* also suggests that we are *currently* not in the position of experiencing these objects, and that, in order to regain that position, we must "neighbor" these objects, exist *next* to them.<sup>203</sup> The German "Nächsten" not only points to what is nearest spatially but also to what comes *next*, making use of a similar ambiguity as the beginning chapter of MA on the "first and last things" (questions like: why existence? What comes after death? How do we gain God's grace?). In an important passage, Nietzsche gives as examples of "the nearest things" activities such as "eating," "sexual activity," "dwelling," "dressing," "socializing with others." (KSA 2: 541) These seemingly banal activities have been neglected, despite being the most crucial things in life, providing the conditions for any life projects at all, for any experiences at all.<sup>204</sup> Emerson and Nietzsche share here the sense that their own traditions were, as it seems, repulsed by the trivialities and vulgarities of ordinary life. Emerson subsumes this part of his thinking into the following phrase, which Nietzsche sets apart from the rest of the text: "**Everything good is on the**

**highway** [**Alles Gute ist auf der Heerstraße**].” (E II 62) (V 317) In colloquial sparseness, Emerson takes “the good,” so often imagined as being beyond anything earthly (Plato!), down to earth, threatening the very distinction between ideal and practice, while also placing the good into a horizontal and not vertical direction. This is not so different from Worl Wondratschek’s declaration 100 years later that the post-WWII youth of Germany, after being “swallowed up by a thousand different America things, [...] philosophized on asphalt-covered earth [...]” (Wondratschek 1987, 273) Like Emerson and Nietzsche, Wondratschek speaks of the desire to reclaim the ordinary as something that should not be shunned by writers, literature, and philosophers.

In the final passage of “Experience,” Emerson too notices that we “eat our dinners, discuss the household with our wives, and these things make no impression, [...] but, in the solitude to which every man is always returning, he has a sanity and revelations which in his passage into new worlds he will carry with him.” (E II 87) In a passage from MA (no. 627), in the section “Der Mensch mit sich allein,” Nietzsche contrasts “Leben” (life) and “Erleben” (experience), how different people treat their experiences or simply let them pass by: “ja man trifft auf jene umgekehrten Hexenmeister, welche, anstatt die Welt aus Nichts, aus der Welt ein Nichts schaffen.” (KSA 2: 353) Like Emerson, Nietzsche wonders about our ability to “make a world” out of nothing, or to turn a world into nothing: “I know,” says Emerson “that the world I converse with in the city and in the farms,” Emerson declares “is not the world I *think*.” (E II 85)

But Emerson’s discrepancy between thought and practice, ideal and real, is not that which leads us away from the fabric of our everyday lives because it does not project

a world “beyond” ours but asks for an experimentation with and transformation of this very same world,<sup>205</sup> the success of which lies in its succession<sup>206</sup>: “never mind the defeat; up again, old heart!—it seems to say,—there is victory yet for all justice; and the true romance which the world exists to realize will be the transformation of genius [Verwandlung des Genius] into practical power [ausübende Macht].” (E II 86-87)<sup>207</sup> This is not the kind of “idealism” that led us away from our lives, the promises of “higher things” by priests, metaphysicians, doctors, teachers, and ministers, as Nietzsche says (KSA 2: 541). Yet, Emerson’s praise of success curiously echoes the Anglo-Saxon bourgeois Puritan equation of success and salvation or success as sign of salvation, as does his believe in compensation in the here and now (virtue must be rewarded in this world).

Over long periods of time, we have learnt to despise the present, neighboring, life, and ourselves, “und wir, wir Bewohner der lichtereren Gefilde der Natur und des Geistes, bekommen jetzt noch, durch Erbschaft, Etwas von diesem Gift der Verachtung gegen das Nächste in unser Blut mit.” (KSA 2: 550-551) Nietzsche points to the history of our ethical and religious “Empfindungen,” showing how we have carried the ideas of guilt and (eternal) punishment into every aspect of life (KSA 2: 550). The appraisal of the first and last things implies a devaluation of the nearest things.<sup>208</sup> Our moral, religious, metaphysical errors are chains that have turned man into a milder, more spiritual, happier and more reasonable being, but also less free, says Nietzsche in the last passage of WS. The release from this “chain-sickness” [Ketten-Krankheit] would separate man from animal and be the attainment of the first great goal, he says. This transformation would be a “Erleichterung des Lebens,” to live for the sake of “Freudigkeit” and for no other goal.

This human being would have the motto: “Frieden um mich und ein Wohlgefallen an allen nächsten Dingen.” (KSA 2: 702) These final words of Nietzsche’s MAII anticipate the motto for the 1882 edition of FW that Nietzsche had taken from Emerson’s “History”: “Dem Dichter und Weisen sind alle Dinge befreundet und geweiht, alle Erlebnisse nützlich, alle Tage heilig, alle Menschen göttlich.” (KSA 3: 343)

## CHAPTER 4: 1881-1882

After publishing *Morgenröthe* (M) in 1881, Nietzsche began to work on 4 additional books to complete what he called the “Free spirit trilogy,” MA, M, and *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* (FW). The fall and winter of 1881/1882, when Nietzsche wrote the bulk of FW, constitutes one if not the most intensive period of Nietzsche’s Emerson reading. After Nietzsche’s previous edition of Emerson’s essays had been stolen at a train station in 1874, he immediately purchased another copy, which is the volume present at the Nietzsche Archive in Weimar. While we have analyzed some parts of Nietzsche’s copy already, there are certain indications that Nietzsche must have read the essays again specifically in 1881. At the bottom of page 344 (part of the essay on *Character*), Nietzsche notes: “Was habe ich gelernt, bis heute (15. Okt. 1881)? Mir selber aus allen Lagen heraus wohlzuthun und Anderer nicht zu bedürfen.” (V 344) This day marks Nietzsche’s 37<sup>th</sup> birthday. Additionally, Nietzsche began to fill an entire notebook just for quotations and paraphrases from Emerson’s “History” and “Self-Reliance” in January 1882, when he completed the fourth and last book of FW, “Sanctus Januarius.” It is astonishing that Nietzsche’s FW has not been really discussed in the previous scholarship.<sup>209</sup> This is even more puzzling considering that the motto of the 1882 edition is a modified quotation from Emerson’s “History,” and that the title of the work itself in its latinized form, “gaya scienza,” appears slightly differently in Emerson’s LSA.

In this chapter, I will first discuss the notes on the cover and back pages of Nietzsche's Emerson edition, which he most likely wrote during the same period in which he annotated Emerson's "Character" (end of 1881-beginning of 1882), in conjunction with the first three books of FW. These notes have never been fully analyzed before, especially not in connection to FW. From Nietzsche's notes on these pages, we can extract several key motifs for the entirety of FW, including Nietzsche's campaign against European pessimism, a revaluation of pain as a stimulus for life, and a new appraisal of egoism or irresponsibility (the plan for a destruction of morality), all of which are joined together into the project of a "Gay Science." Second, I argue that the gay science is a call for experimentation, in sync with Emerson's own "experimentations" or "essays," that is based on appropriation and power, and which leads Nietzsche to outline for the first time his attempt to "destroy morality." While Emerson and Nietzsche revalue a certain kind of egoism (appropriation) and irresponsibility or immorality, they simultaneously undermine the "ego" with their call for experimentation. Appropriation itself implies that whatever is appropriated and assimilated by an ego cannot, by definition, be part of the ego, but must remain "other." Here, Nietzsche will, in reading Emerson, develop a vision of the self as a multitude of (other) selves. I will show this in my reading of Nietzsche's excerpts from "History" and "Self-Reliance" with the fourth book of FW, "Sanctus Januarius," where I interpret Nietzsche's "thought of the eternal return" as the vision of the self as a site for experimentation by living through many selves. Appropriation of the past, of past experiments in living, are the means for increasing experimentation for the future of humanity, as Nietzsche will describe his project of a gay science.



#### 4.1 UNKNOWN PLEASURES AND POWERS

The origin of Nietzsche's "gay science" has been a topic of speculation ever since its publication. Walter Kaufmann discusses Emerson as a possible source for Nietzsche's term "gaya scienza," but not because of Emerson's LSA. He mentions that Emerson calls himself "a professor of the Joyous Science" (Kaufmann 1974, 7-17) in the lecture "Prospects." However, because Nietzsche did not have access to this lecture, Kaufmann rules out Emerson as a possible source. He instead thinks that Nietzsche derived the original term "La gaya scienza" from the twelfth century Provençal troubadours' art of love poetry. Nietzsche does refer to these poets in one of his notes during summer 1881 (KSA 9: 681).<sup>210</sup> But Nietzsche had already encountered this term in Emerson's "Poetry and Imagination" in 1876, where Emerson explicitly refers to the same troubadour tradition of 12<sup>th</sup> century Provençal poets, specifically Pons Capdueil ("the old Minnesingers"):

Poetry is the *gai science* [heitere Wissenschaft]. The trait and test of the poet is that he builds, adds and affirms. The critic destroys: the poet says nothing but what helps somebody; let others be distracted with cares, he is exempt. All their pleasures are tinged with pain. All his pains are edged with pleasure. The gladness he imparts he shares. As one of the old Minnesingers sung,— 'Oft have I heard, and now believe it true, Whom man delights in, God delights in too.' (LSA 38)<sup>211</sup>

The key phrase in Emerson's description is the chiasmus in the center: "their pleasures are tinged with pain. All his pains are edged with pleasure." While others are unable to affirm, maybe feeling guilt about their pleasures, the gay poet has a tendency for masochism and affirms even pain as part of his pleasure. The "gaiety" does not

simply mean “happiness” but “joia,” an ideal of love that is very much physical.

Emerson, like Nietzsche, growing up in a Protestant environment, contrast the male North-European, Atlantic, Anglo-Saxon Puritan and bourgeois ethics with the Mediterranean, Catholic, aristocratic, medieval love of the feminine principle (like Goethe’s eternal feminine). This principle is present at key moments of Nietzsche’s later works, the question whether “truth is a woman” (beginning of JGB) and the entire third essay in GM on ascetic ideals. But even earlier, the revaluation of pain is one of the fundamental motifs in Nietzsche’s FW.<sup>212</sup> On the title page of his edition of Emerson’s *Essays*, Nietzsche reflects on pain and its usefulness for life: “Die Fähigkeit zum Schmerz ist ein ausgezeichnete Erhalter, eine Art von Versicherung des Lebens: *dies ist es, was der Schmerz erhalten hat*: er ist so nützlich als die Lust—um nicht zu viel zu sagen.” (V Title page) This reflection appears again in FW 48, when Nietzsche thinks how pain had been a necessary means for preservation in prior times: “Uebung des Schmerzes, ein ihm [every person] nothwendiges Mittel seiner Erhaltung; damals erzog man seine Umgebung zum Ertragen des Schmerzes, damals fügte man gern Schmerz zu und sah das Furchtbarste dieser Art über Andere ergehen, ohne ein anderes Gefühl, als das der eigenen Sicherheit.” (KSA 3: 413) But in modern times, Nietzsche continues, the mere thought of pain is unbearable and easily turns into an accusation against life as a whole: “man [...] macht dem gesammten Dasein eine Gewissenssache und einen Vorwurf daraus.” (KSA 3: 414) The overall lack of real experiences of pain Nietzsche considers one of the main reasons for the rise of “pessimistic philosophies,” “das Fragezeichen am Werthe alles Lebens” (KSA 3: 414). Interestingly, these philosophies are precisely what Nietzsche attacks in his reflection on the front-page of Emerson’s *Essays*:

Ich lache über die Aufzählungen des Schmerzes und Elends, wodurch sich der Pessimismus zurecht beweisen will—Hamlet und Schopenhauer und Voltaire und Leopardi und Byron. ‘Das Leben ist etwas, das nicht sein sollte, wenn es sich nur so erhalten kann!’—sagt ihr. Ich lache über dies “Sollte” und stelle mich zum Leben hin, um zu helfen, daß aus dem Schmerze so reich wie möglich Leben wachse— Sicherheit, Vorsicht, Geduld, Weisheit, Abwechslung, alle feinen Farben von hell und dunkel, bitter und süß—in allem sind wir dem Schmerz verschuldet, und ein ganzer Kanon von Schönheit Erhebung Göttlichkeit ist erst recht möglich in einer Welt tiefer und wechselnder und mannigfaltiger Schmerzen. Das, was euch über das Leben richten heißt, kann nicht Gerechtigkeit sein—denn die Gerechtigkeit würde wissen, daß der Schmerz und das Übel— — —Freunde! Wir müssen den Schmerz in der Welt mehrten, wenn wir die Lust und die Weisheit mehrten wollen. (V Title page)

The pessimistic argument that life “should not be” is the other side of the “tragedy of life,” as Nietzsche outlines in the very beginning of FW, the need for a justification of life.<sup>213</sup> Nietzsche’s call for an increase in pain, in order to increase pleasure (“Lust”) and wisdom, appears again in no. 12 of FW, entitled “Vom Ziele der Wissenschaft.” Nietzsche criticizes here modern science that attempts to create as much pleasure as possible, while likewise reducing pain (“Unlust”). The problem here is that Nietzsche, like the Stoics, thinks that an increase in pleasure might also increase pain (less familiarization with pain causes over-sensitive bodies). But for the Stoics too the ideal remains a reduction of pain, only the other way around: Instead of producing more pleasure, the Stoics simply desire not to feel anything (turning human beings into

statues). Nietzsche on the contrary fantasizes about a science that might be “die grosse Schmerzbringerin” that might discover unlimited new worlds of pleasure: “Und dann würde vielleicht zugleich ihre Gegenkraft entdeckt sein, ihr ungeheures Vermögen, neue Sternenwelten der Freude aufleuchten zu lassen!” (KSA 3: 383-384)

In FW no.4, Nietzsche claims that the strongest and most evil (“bösesten”) people pushed humanity forward, they “entzündeten immer wieder die einschlafenden Leidenschaften — alle geordnete Gesellschaft schläfert die Leidenschaften ein —, sie weckten immer wieder den Sinn der Vergleichung, des Widerspruchs, der Lust am Neuen, Gewagten, Unerprobten [...]” (KSA 3:376) The same “evil” exists “in jedem Lehrer und Prediger des N e u e n [...]” (KSA 3:376) What is new is declared evil, evil is what is new, because it contradicts, stimulates, provokes – the key Emersonian virtues. Emerson makes use of the same metaphor of sleep, while seemingly reversing it: “Higher [Erhabnere] natures overpower lower ones [niedrigere] by affecting them with a certain sleep [einschläfern]. The faculties are locked up, and offer no resistance. [...] When the high [das Hohe] cannot bring up the low to itself, it benumbs it, [...]” (E 95) (V 340) But what makes a character higher? For Emerson, that is the increase of power, next to which Nietzsche writes “Großartig!” in the margins: “The wise man not only leaves out of his thought the many, but leaves out the few. Fountains, the self-moved, the absorbed, the commander because he is commanded, the assured, the primary,—they are good; for these announce the instant presence of supreme power.” (VII 100-101)<sup>214</sup> The new, the first, the original, change and transformation is considered “evil” by others, but for Emerson, they are “good” – they are not power itself but power at work.

In another line, next to which Nietzsche writes “1881” and “ego,” Emerson says that when your friends “stand with uncertain timid looks of respect [Ehrfurcht] and half-dislike [halb voll Verdruß], and must suspend their judgment for years to come, **you may begin to hope**. Those who live to the future must always appear selfish to those who live to the present.” (EII 104)<sup>215</sup> Nietzsche’s “ego” seems to refer to Emerson’s revaluation of selfishness. Although one’s friends’ disapproval is a treacherous criterion for the goodness of one’s actions in most cases, Emerson’s provocative statement is clear enough. That which is done for the future, that which is new, must appear to those who live in the present (or the past) as immoral because it contradicts their foundation. In another passage, Emerson makes this even clearer by saying that the “hero” “is again on his road, adding new powers and honors to his domain [durch neue Macht und Ehre seine Herrschaft zu vergrößern].” (EII 103-104) The hero creates new actions, new values<sup>216</sup> which “are usually received with ill-will, because they are new [...]” (EII 108-109)<sup>217</sup> This type of character, one “must either worship or hate [anbeten oder hassen muß]”; character “puts America and Europe in the wrong [Unrecht] [...] by illuminating the untried [das Unversuchte] and unknown [Unbekannte].” (100-101) (V 344-345) This central idea, immorality as the necessary condition of those who attempt new things, new projects and experiments, underlies Nietzsche’s own project of a gay science. On the very first pages of the book, Nietzsche drops the title of the book and describes his project:

Ueber sich selber lachen, wie man lachen müsste, um aus der ganzen Wahrheit heraus zu lachen, — dazu hatten bisher die Besten nicht genug Wahrheitssinn und die Begabtesten viel zu wenig Genie! Es giebt vielleicht auch für das Lachen noch eine Zukunft! Dann, wenn der Satz ‘die Art ist Alles, Einer ist immer Keiner’ —

sich der Menschheit einverleibt hat und Jedem jederzeit der Zugang zu dieser letzten Befreiung und Unverantwortlichkeit offen steht. Vielleicht wird sich dann das Lachen mit der Weisheit verbündet haben, vielleicht giebt es dann nur noch ‘fröhliche Wissenschaft’. (KSA 3: 370)

The possible conjunction of laughter and wisdom Nietzsche calls “gay science.” This laughter is about oneself. It is the consequence of a hypothetical assimilation (“Einverleibung”) of the phrase that “the species is everything and the individual nobody” into human nature. This assimilation Nietzsche calls the “final liberation” and “final irresponsibility.” Nietzsche also calls this state the psychological realization of the comedy of existence in contrast to the tragedies of morality and religion, whose teachers do not want us to laugh (KSA 3: 371). The teachers of ethics provide the human species with “reasons to live,” a “shall” (Soll’s) and “because” (Denn’s), adding a second or third plane of existence that unhinges “dieses alte gemeine Dasein [...]” (KSA 3: 371) As we have seen in MA, the implicit devaluation of carnal existence by inventing a transcendental life was at the root of Nietzsche’s term to become good neighbors to the nearest things again.

But does not the phrase that the species is everything contradict what we had just argued that Emerson and Nietzsche reevaluate selfishness and egoism? No, because Nietzsche’s idea is that of a series of experiments by the self with itself. Previous moralities restrict the self’s powers and turn limitation itself into a virtue. To liberate the self, Nietzsche and Emerson make use of a provoking sense of immorality. But they do not stop there. Once a new way of living has been established, it must be cast aside and make room for new ones. The problem for Nietzsche is that the tragic world views, their

heroes, new moralities and religions, were indeed creating something “new,” ending the laughter, and making life “interesting,” (KSA 3: 372) but in the end bringing human nature to a dead end: “der Mensch *muss* von Zeit zu Zeit glauben, zu wissen, *warum* er existirt, seine Gattung kann nicht gedeihen ohne ein periodisches Zutrauen zu dem Leben! Ohne Glauben an die *Vernunft im Leben!* Und immer wieder wird von Zeit zu Zeit das menschliche Geschlecht decretiren: ‘es giebt Etwas, über das absolut nicht mehr gelacht werden darf!’” (KSA 3: 372) Nietzsche’s mission, and the task of a gay science, would then be to cultivate a sense in which life will not be justified, and instead affirms the comedy of existence. This new interpretation of life must first appear as a new tragedy; to learn to laugh with it would turn it into a tragicomedy. To accomplish this, to laugh about oneself, Nietzsche views existence from “above,” from the perspective of the species. In “Intellect” Emerson says that the intellect must move beyond the *I* and *mine*, for “he who is immersed in what concerns person or place cannot see the problem of existence.” (E 327) A gay wisdom or science is the combination of truth (naturalized existence) and laughter, presenting nature as “wasteful” and “foolish,” as experimenting in countless ways. Human values do not fit here. “In nature,” says Emerson in “Character,” “there are no false valuations [In der Natur gibt es keine falschen Werthbestimmungen].” (E 102, V 345) Nature and life is “incessant growth [unaufhörliches Wachsthum]” (E 103, V 346). Nietzsche’s gay science would return to a view of nature free of any human values, of humanity as part of this value-free world, and instead of seeing morality, it sees the power, appropriation, assimilation and transformation.

An essential part of Nietzsche's gay science is a campaign against morality and responsibility. To live to the future is to live immorally (but not any kind of immorality is for the future). At the bottom of page three of his Emerson edition, Nietzsche exclaimed: "Wir ehren und schützen alle *Machtansammlungen*, weil wir sie einst zu *erben* hoffen—die *Weisen*. Wir wollen ebenso die Erben der Moralität sein, nachdem wir die Moral zerstört haben" (V 3). What Nietzsche proposes here for the first time, at the bottom of a page of Emerson's, is not only a critique of morality but the *destruction* of morality. He views morality or the history of morality as a series of aggregations of power ("Machtansammlungen") – morality itself *is* a form of power, for Nietzsche, not a neutral system of values and principles about right or wrong. He further claims that we praise morality, not because we are morally good, but because we hope to "inherit" ("erben") the powers underlying that morality. This is consistent with Emerson's overall point of "History," that the present individual attempts to appropriate history for themselves. Power is played out in terms of possession and appropriation but is not itself something to be accumulated for its own sake. The lives under a moral system, represent the powers, paths and potentialities hidden in human beings that Nietzsche and Emerson imagine to harvest for themselves. The passage, to which Nietzsche's remark about the destruction of morality refers to, makes this clear: "Der Besitz irdischer Güter ist hemmend für den Geist und läßt große Thaten, die tief im Menschen verborgen liegen, nie an's Tageslicht kommen, und dennoch behaupten wir diese Güter mit dem Schwert und dem Gesetz und breiten verwickelten Kombinationen." (V 3) The other passage, which Nietzsche highlights, on this page also emphasizes to appropriate and to use every idea or theory around oneself as a "mask": "Jedes neue Gesetz und jede politische Bewegung hat eine



Bedeutung für dich. Betrachte es von jeglicher Seite und sage ‘Hier ist einer meiner Schlupfwinkel. Hinter dieser phantastischen oder abscheulichen oder reizenden Maske verbarg sich der natürliche Mensch in mir.’” (V 3)

In FW 13, Nietzsche connects “possession” (“Besitz”) to the idea of a “feeling of power” as value criterion behind any action. This is crucial for his critique of altruistic actions that, in his opinion, either sustain or increase our feeling of power. Harmful actions against others, maybe even against ourselves, increase the feeling of power, and so does the “possessing of truth”: “Wer da empfindet ‘ich bin im Besitz der Wahrheit’, wie viel Besitzthümer lässt der nicht fahren, um diese Empfindung zu retten! Was wirft er nicht Alles über Bord, um sich ‘oben’ zu erhalten, — das heisst über den Andern, welche der ‘Wahrheit’ ermangeln!” (KSA 3:385) The difference in these actions is not the lack of egoism, but a different quality of egoism – every action is now judged according to its increase in power: “Es ist in der Grossmuth der selbe Grad von Egoismus wie in der Rache, aber eine andere Qualität des Egoismus.” (KSA 3: 415) While altruistic actions are representative of a weak egoism, an egoism that can only increase its power by the simplest actions (showing sympathy is simple because it only depends on what *I* do), actions that create opposition and even “war,” as Emerson called it, show a certain “nobility” – this difference is a difference of “taste” (Geschmack): “Es kommt darauf an, wie man gewöhnt ist, sein Leben zu würzen; es ist eine Sache des Geschmacks, ob man lieber den langsamen oder den plötzlichen, den sicheren oder den gefährlichen und verwegenen Machtzuwachs haben will, — man sucht diese oder jene Würze immer nach seinem Temperamente.” (KSA 2:385) The terms “Machtzuwachs,” “Krieg”, “Egoism” derive from the passages Nietzsche had read and marked in Emerson’s “Character”

(Nietzsche will write “ego” several times into the margins). As we have seen earlier as well, the term “Temperament” is also extremely prominent in Emerson’s entire oeuvre and functions as a figure of fate or nature, that is each person’s specific “constitution.” Nietzsche also refers to the same idea as our “physis.” In fact, he considers our “physis” to be the cause of our taste. Difference in taste has its cause “in einer Absonderlichkeit ihrer Lebensweise, Ernährung, Verdauung, [...] kurz in der Physis: sie haben aber den Muth, sich zu ihrer Physis zu bekennen [...]” (KSA 3: 406-407) Some people have the courage to acknowledge their own nature, echoing the phrase from Emerson’s “History.”

*Physis* in Greek can have several meanings, including “nature” and, as Michael Ure had pointed out, refers to the sophists’ challenge of *nomos* (law or convention) (Ure 2019, 62ff.), but it also fits Emerson characterization of “character.” When Emerson declares that “Character is nature in the highest form [Charakter ist Natur in höchster Form]” (E 107), Nietzsche writes at the bottom of the page: “Charakter = Organism” (V 348). “Organism” not only refers to nature but to the “organization” of the body. The appearance of singular human beings, as Nietzsche describes, who have the courage to acknowledge their own physis and who assert their judgments and taste without shame appear in Emerson’s “Character” as well. “There is a class of men,” he writes, “individuals of which appear at long intervals, [...] who seem to be an accumulation of that power [Anhäufung der Macht] we consider. Divine persons are character born, or, to borrow a phrase from Napoleon, they are victory organized [sie sind organisirt zum Siege].” (E 108-109, V 350) What is crucial here is that Emerson does not try to “worship great men.” Emerson is not interested in great individuals per se, but only as an indication of how power works. A great individual does not “have” power, and does not accumulate

power. It is the other way around: wherever there is power, there is character.

Nonetheless, Nietzsche's and Emerson's naturalized idea of power presupposes a hierarchical organization or difference. Character, Emerson says, "is a natural power [Charakter ist eine natürliche Macht], [...]. All individual natures stand in a scale [Reihenfolge], according to the purity of this element in them. The will of the pure runs down from them into other natures, as water runs down from a higher into a lower vessel." (E 96-97, V 341) In the 1886 preface to MA, Nietzsche called "Rangordnung" the problem of all free spirits (KSA 2: 21). But again we see that this problem of a scale is voiced in the context of the will to experiment and absorb different styles of living, thinking, feeling etc. The free spirit, Nietzsche writes, is a sailor of the "inner world" of man,

überallhin dringend, fast ohne Furcht, nichts verschmähend, nichts verlierend, alles auskostend [...]: 'Hier – ein neues Problem! Hier eine lange Leiter, auf deren Sprossen wir selbst gesessen und gestiegen sind, - die wir selbst irgendwann gewesen sind! Hier ein Höher, ein Tiefer, ein Unter-uns, eine ungeheure lange Ordnung, eine Rangordnung, die wir sehen: hier – unser Problem!' (KSA 2: 21-22)

All the different ways in which human beings have lived differently, have constructed cultures, moralities, behaviors add to the reservoir of human life. From a historical perspective, we realize that "nature" is created by countless acts, habits, practices, as Nietzsche described on the very first pages of FW. "Giebt es eine Philosophie der Ernährung?", Nietzsche asks,

Sind die Erfahrungen über das Zusammenleben, zum Beispiel die Erfahrungen der Klöster, schon gesammelt? Ist die Dialektik der Ehe und Freundschaft schon dargestellt? Die Sitten der Gelehrten, der Kaufleute, Künstler, Handwerker, — haben sie schon ihre Denker gefunden? Es ist so viel daran zu denken! Alles, was bis jetzt die Menschen als ihre ‘Existenz-Bedingungen’ betrachtet haben, und alle Vernunft, Leidenschaft und Aberglauben an dieser Betrachtung, — ist diess schon zu Ende erforscht? [...] Gesetzt, alle diese Arbeiten seien gethan, so träte die heikeligste aller Fragen in den Vordergrund, ob die Wissenschaft im Stande sei, Ziele des Handelns zu geben, nachdem sie bewiesen hat, dass sie solche nehmen und vernichten kann — und dann würde ein Experimentiren am Platze sein, an dem jede Art von Heroismus sich befriedigen könnte, ein Jahrhunderte langes Experimentiren, welches alle grossen Arbeiten und Aufopferungen der bisherigen Geschichte in Schatten stellen könnte. (KSA 3: 378-380)

This unbound experimenting with human life, the production of new pleasures, and the liberation of new powers is, in some sense, the task that Nietzsche presents as his “gay science.”

#### 4.2 UNBOUND EXPERIMENTATION

Nietzsche previously praised the Stoics and Epicureans in MA and M but now places them among the same trends of his days, that is a pessimistic, sedative, impoverished life. Epicurus, just like the Stoics and the ancient Skeptics (Pyrrhonians), sees the ideal life in “ataraxia,” a calm sea (see FW 45) – but this is what Nietzsche opposes now. Michael Ure (2019, 56) argued, with good reasons, that Nietzsche sketches

in FW an “experimental skepticism” that is very much opposed to the Ancient Pyrrhonian skepticism that, like Stoicism and Epicureanism, sets “tranquility” as the goal in life.

Keith Ansell-Pearson, for instance, argued that Nietzsche underwent a shift from the first volume of MA to the second one, negotiating “the competing claims of the positivist goal of science and eudemonistic philosophy by aligning himself with the former [...]”

(Ansell-Pearson 2018, 18) Ansell-Pearson, like Ure, argues that Nietzsche tries “to renovate the ancient model of philosophy in the light of the new naturalism” (quote after Ansell-Pearson, 2018, 31), by which they mean the ancient model of philosophy as a spiritual practice à la Pierre Hadot and the late Foucault. Ansell-Pearson specifically sees this in Nietzsche’s renewed interest and praise for Epicurus. And this is not wrong.

Indeed, Epicurus’ care for the self and joyful attitude resonated with Nietzsche deeply.

But what can this tell us? We do not want to claim that Nietzsche was an Epicurean.

Rather, he tells us himself that he simply uses these ancient forms of philosophy as an experiment:

Was die Praxis betrifft: so betrachte ich die einzelnen moralischen Schulen als Stätten des Experiments, wo eine Anzahl von Kunstgriffen der Lebensklugheit gründlich geübt und zu Ende gedacht wurden: die Resultate aller dieser Schulen und aller ihrer Erfahrungen gehören uns, wir nehmen einen stoischen Kunstgriff deshalb nicht weniger gern an, weil wir schon epikureische uns zu eigen gemacht haben. Jene Einseitigkeit der Schulen war sehr nützlich, ja sie war für die Feststellung dieser Experimente unentbehrlich. Der Stoicism z.B. zeigte, daß der Mensch sich willkürlich eine härtere Haut und gleichsam eine Art Nesselsucht zu geben vermöge: von ihm lernte ich mitten in der Noth und im Sturm sagen: ‘was

liegt daran?’ ‘was liegt an mir?’ Vom Epikureism nahm ich die Bereitwilligkeit zum Genießen und das Auge dafür, wo alles uns die Natur den Tisch gedeckt hat. (KSA 9: 15[59])

Nietzsche views the Ancient philosophical schools as laboratories for “experiments” of life (see NF-1881,15[59]) – as indication of what life can do – from which he takes what he needs, in the spirit of Emerson’s appropriation. In the fall of 1880 Nietzsche notes as well: “Skepticismus! Ja, aber ein Scepticismus der Experimente! nicht die Trägheit der Verzweiflung” (KSA 9 6 [356]) As we have already seen in MA, Nietzsche’s and Emerson’s “skepticism” is not the suspension of beliefs and the desire for a comforting balance, but disruptive, stimulating, and provocative acts of experimentation, which becomes one of the dominant topics in M and FW.<sup>218</sup> In M, Nietzsche sees the ideal of tranquility as an illness, a flight from transformation, growth, potentiality etc. (KSA 3: 477), and instead champions courage and danger.<sup>219</sup> “Wir sind Experimente,” declares Nietzsche: “wollen wir es auch sein!” (KSA 3: 453) In FW, he says: “Wir selber wollen unsere Experimente und Versuchs-Thiere sein.” (FW 319) Whenever Nietzsche praises “skepticism,” it is a specific type of experimentation: “Ich lobe mir eine jede Skepsis, auf welche mir erlaubt ist zu antworten: ‘Versuchen wir’s!’ Aber ich mag von allen Dingen und allen Fragen, welche das Experiment nicht zulassen, Nichts mehr hören.” (KSA 3: 415-416) This importance of experimentation or “Versuche,” the title of Emerson’s German *Essays*, I suggest, comes from Nietzsche’s reading of Emerson. Emerson calls himself an “experimenter” [ein Experimentierender]: “I unsettle all things. No facts are to me sacred; none are profane; I simply experiment

[experimentiere], an endless seeker with no Past at my back.” (E 319)<sup>220</sup> “Seeker” is also another term for “skeptical,” coming from the Greek word for “searching” (“scopein”).

Mason Golden argued that “Nietzsche saw Emerson not as a sage, as was for so long the American trend, but as a skeptic.” (2013, 104) Golden refers here to Nietzsche’s remarks in an early draft of *Ecce Homo*: “Emerson, with his Essays, has been a good friend and someone who has cheered me up even in dark times: he possesses so much skepticism, so many ‘possibilities,’ that with him even virtue becomes full of wit” (KSA 14: 476). Although this observation is left out of the published version of the book, Nietzsche declares the skeptics “the only honorable type among the equivocal, quinquivocal [zwei- bis fünfdeutigen] tribe of philosophers!” (KSA 6: 285). In both instances, skepticism is characterized by the capacity to entertain and convey multiple possibilities, not by the sedative effects of its ancient equivalent. In fact, Nietzsche connects the task of experimentation to the motif of irresponsibility, which we have encountered in the opening pages of FW. In a note from 1881, he says: “Ein Versuchen und Experimentieren, ein Gefühl der Unverantwortlichkeit, die Lust an der Anarchie!” (KSA 9: 200) In FW, he writes in a short aphorism: “Der Denker sieht in seinen eigenen Handlungen Versuche und Fragen, irgend worüber Aufschluss zu erhalten: Erfolg und Misserfolg sind ihm zu allererst Antworten.” (FW 41) This experimentation goes “beyond good and evil” (KSA 9, 13[21])

In another note from this time, dated “Anfang August 1881 in Sils-Maria” (KSA 9: 494), when Nietzsche develops the idea of a “Wiederkunft des Gleichen,” he outlines a new book with that title (1881, 11[141]) and one chapter in particular called “Der Unschuldige. Der Einzelne als Experiment. Die Erleichterung des Lebens, Erniedrigung,

Abschwächung — Übergang.” (KSA 9: 494) Nietzsche’s sense of “experimentation” includes innocence, irresponsibility, an alleviation (and allevation) of life as transitioning. Experiments essentially are “Versuche,” “Würfe,” rolls of dice.<sup>221</sup> As we had seen earlier in the very beginning of FW, to consider the individual as an experiment means to “deny the individual” because it affirms becoming: “Unser Streben des Ernstes ist aber alles als werdend zu verstehen, uns als Individuum zu verleugnen, möglichst aus vielen Augen in die Welt sehen [...]” (KSA 9: 494)

Furthermore, on the cover page of his Emerson edition, Nietzsche denounces the belief in “necessity” [Nothwendigkeit] and instead praises “chance” and “irrationality” as explanations for the course of human history. The ideals [“Glauben”] of any historical period, Nietzsche contends, usually intended as remedies, are contingent and they can easily turn into a sickness, especially when they become compulsory.<sup>222</sup> Instead of holding onto these “necessities,” Nietzsche suggests the following: “Saugt eure Lebenslagen und Zufälle *aus*—und geht dann in andere über! Es genügt nicht, *Ein* Mensch zu sein! Das hieße euch auffordern, beschränkt zu werden! Aber von Einem zum Andern!” (V, Cover Page) The backside of the title page seems to continue this thought: “Willst du ein allgemeines gerechtes Auge werden? So musst du es als einer, der durch *vielen* Individuen gegangen ist und dessen letztes Individuum alle früheren als Funktionen *braucht*. Sei eine Platte von Gold—so werden sich die Dinge auf dir in goldner Schrift einzeichnen.” (V, Back of Title Page) In all three instances, Nietzsche describes a process of assimilation, appropriation, and experimentation in an active sense (to exhaust your circumstances, to use your prior selves as functions of yourself) or in a passive sense (to receive imprints on you as a plate of gold). The second demand, to become a just eye,



also seems to respond to the pessimistic vision of “justice” on the page prior. In another marginal note, this time at the bottom to a page of Emerson’s “Higher Souls,” Nietzsche again thinks of assimilation: Warum ziehen die entgegengesetzten Naturen mich am heftigsten an? Sie lassen mich das Voll werden müssen fühlen, sie gehören in mich hinein” (V 203) This is not, as Zavatta claimed, a jab at Emerson but an affirmation of Emerson’s and Nietzsche’s thought that the self is multiple and that the self incorporates, assimilates, appropriates other selves selves.

On the title page of Emerson’s first essay, “History,” Nietzsche picks up this train of thought with the following remark:

Oh über unsre Habsucht! Ich fühle Nichts von Selbstlosigkeit, vielmehr ein Alles begehrendes Selbst, welches durch viele Individuen—wie durch seine Augen sieht und wie mit seinen Händen greift, ein auch die ganze Vergangenheit zurückholendes Selbst, welches nichts verlieren will, was ihm überhaupt gehören *könnte*. (V 1)

This note is incorporated into one of the final passages of book 3 of FW (no. 249) almost word for word, entitled “Der Seufzer des Erkennenden”:

Oh über meine Habsucht! In dieser Seele wohnt keine Selbstlosigkeit, — vielmehr ein Alles begehrendes Selbst, welches durch viele Individuen wie durch seine Augen sehen und wie mit seinen Händen greifen möchte, — ein auch die ganze Vergangenheit noch zurückholendes Selbst, welches Nichts verlieren will, was ihm überhaupt gehören könnte! Oh über diese Flamme meiner Habsucht! Oh, dass ich in hundert Wesen wiedergeboren würde!’ — Wer diesen Seufzer nicht

aus Erfahrung kennt, kennt auch die Leidenschaft des Erkennenden nicht. (KSA 9:515)

The passion of knowledge has been placed at the very center of Nietzsche's FW by many scholars (for instance, Ansell-Pearson 2018), without noticing however that he develops this exact thought in his reading of Emerson namely as a figure of appropriation. On the very first pages of FW and in his notes to the eternal return, Nietzsche imagines that the successful assimilation ("einverleiben") of this passion for knowledge into human behavior would cause a radical change in human nature. Here, the passion for knowledge is, in Nietzsche's words, the will to be "reborn" again in a hundred different beings, a will to incorporate, appropriate, experiment, and absorb and ultimately become a multitude. Later in book 4 Nietzsche calls the thought that life shall be "ein Experiment des Erkennenden" his "grosse Befreier" that allows one to "fröhlich leben und fröhlich lachen" (KSA 3: 552-553).

This is not the only case where a reflection in the margins of Emerson's book appears in FW. On the cover page, between the denunciation of necessity and the advice to exhaust your circumstances, Nietzsche wrote: "Ihr lebt wie Betrunkene durchs Leben, besinnungslos—und mitunter fallt ihr die Treppe hinab und zerbrecht euch *nicht* die Glieder, *wegen* eurer Betrunkenheit und Besinnungslosigkeit.—Hier liegt **unsere** Gefahr! Unsere Muskeln sind nicht matt und leiden furchtbar viel *mehr* als eure!" (V, Cover Page) Nietzsche worked this note into two separate entries in book 1 (no. 28) of FW and book 3 (no. 154). The effect of strong human beings on humanity might only cause harm, Nietzsche imagines, because others are overwhelmed and drunk after having "gulped down" ("aufgetrunken") their influence.<sup>223</sup> Again, Nietzsche thinks here in terms of

appropriation or assimilation. Nietzsche continues this thought on our drunkenness, copying the note from Emerson's cover page, and adding: "[...] eure Muskeln sind zu matt und euer Kopf zu dunkel, als dass ihr die Steine dieser Treppe so hart fändet, wie wir Anderen! Für uns ist das Leben eine grössere Gefahr: wir sind von Glas — wehe, wenn wir uns stossen! Und Alles ist verloren, wenn wir fallen!" (KSA 3: 496) Danger ("Gefährlichkeit") appears again in book 4 no. 283, where Nietzsche described "vorbereitende Menschen" ("propaedeutic humans"):

[...] das Geheimniss, um die grösste Fruchtbarkeit und den grössten Genuss vom Dasein einzuernten, heisst: gefährlich leben! Baut eure Städte an den Vesuv! Schickt eure Schiffe in unerforschte Meere! Lebt im Kriege mit Euresgleichen und mit euch selber! Seid Räuber und Eroberer, so lange ihr nicht Herrscher und Besitzer sein könnt, ihr Erkennenden! (KSA 3: 526-527)

Those propaedeutic humans acquire knowledge ("Erkenntnis") by living dangerously, by experimenting, by appropriating (stealing, conquering), to become, someday, sovereigns and proprietors. Nietzsche hopes from this the highest amount of pleasure ("Genuss"). One thing must be clear however, Nietzsche does not imagine these human types as scholars, scientists and researchers – his "science" is different from the social institution we know of. Nietzsche is not interested in "truth" as separated from life. On the contrary, he says that "die Kraft der Erkenntnisse liegt nicht in ihrem Grade von Wahrheit, sondern in ihrem Alter, ihrer Einverleibtheit [assimilation, annexation], ihrem Charakter als Lebensbedingung." (KSA 3: 469) Truth, however, is important as the historical emergence of a *desire* for truth, its possession or its denial as an expression of power. For Nietzsche, Eleatic philosophy was the first to have established truth as a

condition for life, imagining what a life for the truth would look like: “Inwieweit verträgt die Wahrheit die Einverleibung? — das ist die Frage, das ist das Experiment.” (KSA 3: 471) So this is the experiment Nietzsche proposes: Can truth be incorporated, embodied, so that it creates a new form of life, so that it sustains and enhances life? Can, as Spinoza put it, who Nietzsche comments on in the fall of 1881, knowledge be the most powerful passion (see KSA 9:517)? In the fall of 1881, Nietzsche reflects on this problem of a new form of life devoted to knowledge constantly in the context of his new idea of the recurrence of the same.

In two drafts for a new book, Nietzsche for the first time mentions the idea of “Die Wiederkunft des Gleichen” (the recurrence of the same) as the title of the book. The first draft, dated to the beginning of August 1881 in Sils-Maria, mentions the following chapters:

Die Einverleibung der Grundirrthümer.” “Die Einverleibung der Leidenschaften.”  
“Die Einverleibung des Wissens und des verzichtenden Wissens. (Leidenschaft der Erkenntniss)” “Der Unschuldige. Der Einzelne als Experiment. Die Erleichterung des Lebens, Erniedrigung, Abschwächung — Übergang.” “Das neue Schwergewicht: die ewige Wiederkunft des Gleichen. [...] Wir lehren die Lehre — es ist das stärkste Mittel, sie uns selber einzuverleiben. Unsre Art Seligkeit, als Lehrer der grössten Lehre. (KSA 9: 494)

In another note around the same time, Nietzsche writes another plan for a book entitled “Zum Entwurf einer neuen Art zu leben” (KSA 9: 519),<sup>224</sup> reiterating many of the same themes. The fourth chapter of this book would be a “dithyrambic” text on the

“Annulus aeternitatis. Begierde, alles noch einmal und ewige Male zu erleben.” (KSA 9: 520) This is, of course, a reformulation of the thought of the eternal recurrence. But Nietzsche explains what he means: “Die unablässige Verwandlung — du musst in einem kurzen Zeitraume durch viele Individuen hindurch. Das Mittel ist der unablässige Kampf. Sils-Maria 26. August 1881” (KSA 9: 520) This exact formula or imperative, to move through many individuals as an all-appetent self or ego, was what Nietzsche wrote on the back of the title page and the first page of Emerson’s “History”, finally rewritten in FW no. 249 (see also KSA 9: 547). The thought of the eternal recurrence then appears to be part of this experiment of life or the experiment itself: the revaluation of the individual as a site for experimentation, and simultaneously annihilation of the individual *as* an experiment.<sup>225</sup> This double-movement is what governs Emerson’s essays in many different forms, most famously in “Self-Reliance.”

#### 4.3 UNHINGED APPROPRIATION

We have seen how Nietzsche incorporates his marginal note on the title page of Emerson’s “History” into the final pages of book 3 of FW. Nietzsche imagined himself as an all-appetent self that practices the passion for knowledge by incorporating many selves within himself. This vision of himself is surprisingly congruent with Emerson’s own. In a famous note, Emerson describes a dream he had the other night: “I dreamed that I floated at will in the great Ether, and I saw this world floating also not far off, but diminished to the size of an apple. Then an angel took it in his hand and brought it to me and said, ‘This must thou eat.’ And I ate the world.” (Quoted in Lopez 1982, 152) For Emerson specifically, this vision refers to the way in which he “consumes” books and other texts, a

textual practice that Nietzsche adopts when reading Emerson. Nietzsche's note about his devouring self on the title page is marked as "1)," indicating that this is the first of many phrases and notes that he wanted to collect from Emerson's essays. Indications of Nietzsche's plan to devise the Emerson notebook exist already several months prior to January 1882. Around the 26<sup>th</sup> of October 1881, Nietzsche writes down, what we have referenced already, the following: "Emerson – Ich habe mich nie in einem Buch so zu Hause und in meinem Hause gefühlt als — ich darf es nicht loben, es steht mir zu nahe." (KSA 9: 588) He calls Emerson the "gedankenreichsten Autor dieses Jahr[hunderts]" (KSA 9: 602) and advises himself to collect "Stellen des Glückes" ["passages of happiness"] in Emerson's texts (KSA 9: 616). Indeed, throughout the essays "History" and "Self-Reliance" Nietzsche numbers up to 22 passages in Emerson's text and excerpted them into a separate notebook in January 1882. At the same time, he wrote the fourth and final book of the 1882 edition of FW, which begins with Nietzsche's much discussed "amor fati" and ends with the thought of the eternal recurrence and the appearance of Zarathustra. Furthermore, since this is the only book with its own title, "Sanctus Januarius," it stands out from the rest.

Sanctus Januarius is the name of the Catholic martyr Gennaro, the patron saint of Naples, victim of the last Roman persecutions of Christians, whose blood, contained in a relict, is said to liquefy three times a year. As Michael Ure had noted (2018, 161), Nietzsche's use of this "miracle" as title indicates that the book represents for Nietzsche a conversion in form of a resurrection, a return to life. At the midpoint of his life at 37, after he had taken up Emerson again on his birthday, Nietzsche declares that life has not disappointed him. On the contrary, life, he says in "In Media vitae," appears to him

“wahrer, begehrenswerther und geheimnisvoller” and he continues to tell us the exact time of his conversion: “von jenem Tage an, wo der grosse Befreier über mich kam, jener Gedanke, dass das Leben ein Experiment des Erkennenden sein dürfe — und nicht eine Pflicht, nicht ein Verhängniss, nicht eine Betrügerei!” Life becomes for him a means to knowledge, which is “eine Welt der Gefahren und Siege, in der auch die heroischen Gefühle ihre Tanz- und Tummelplätze haben. ‘Das Leben ein Mittel der Erkenntnis’ — mit diesem Grundsatz im Herzen kann man nicht nur tapfer, sondern sogar fröhlich leben und fröhlich lachen! Und wer verstünde überhaupt gut zu lachen und zu leben, der sich nicht vorerst auf Krieg und Sieg gut verstünde?” (KSA 3: 552-553) On the page of Emerson’s “Character,” where Nietzsche marked his 37<sup>th</sup> birthday, Emerson said that there “is nothing real or useful that is not a seat of war. Our houses ring with laughter [...]” (E II 100-101).<sup>226</sup>

From these motifs, we can already see that this fourth book belongs to Nietzsche’s “happier” ones. Here, Nietzsche continues his attack on a specific type of morality that forbids, demands, generalizes, judges, shames, and denies:

Im Grunde sind mir alle jene Moralen zuwider, welche sagen: ‘Thue diess nicht! Entsage! Ueberwinde dich!’ — ich bin dagegen jenen Moralen gut, welche mich antreiben, Etwas zu thun und wieder zu thun und von früh bis Abend, und Nachts davon zu träumen, und an gar Nichts zu denken als: diess g u t zu thun, so gut als es eben m i r allein möglich ist! [...] ‘Unser Thun soll bestimmen, was wir lassen: indem wir thun, lassen wir’ — so gefällt es mir, so lautet m e i n placitum. Aber ich will nicht mit offenen Augen meine Verarmung anstreben, ich mag alle

negativen Tugenden nicht, — Tugenden, deren Wesen das Verneinen und Sichversagen selber ist. (KSA 3: 542-543)

The task to overcome shame had already been announced at the end of the third book. In a parallel question and answer game, Nietzsche writes: “Wo liegen deine grössten Gefahren? — Im Mitleiden. [...] Was liebst du an Anderen? — Meine Hoffnungen. [...] Wen nennst du schlecht? — Den, der immer beschämen will. [...] Was ist dir das Menschlichste? — Jemandem Scham ersparen. [...] Was ist das Siegel der erreichten Freiheit? — Sich nicht mehr vor sich selber schämen.” (KSA 3: 519) These brief self-inquiring aphorisms prepare the experiment of the fourth book. All these themes are already familiar to us from Nietzsche’s meditation on Schopenhauer and take on a central place in Emerson’s “Self-Reliance.” How is this desire to overcome shame, the last thought of the third book, and Nietzsche’s “amor fati,” the first thought of the fourth, connected?

Nietzsche himself tells us about his task for the future at the end of the third book: “Woran glaubst du? – Daran: dass die Gewichte aller Dinge neu bestimmt werden müssen.” (KSA 3: 519) All things require a revaluation. At the beginning of “Sanctus Januarius,” Nietzsche welcomes the new year, fitting the tone of this anticipated revaluation, and declares his love, quite redundantly, for “amor fati.” If we translate and understand “amor fati,” as most scholars have, as “love of fate” in a Stoic sense, it would be hardly comprehensible why Nietzsche, after having criticized Stoicism throughout FW, introduces this concept in the fourth book. “To love fate” as a Stoic principle would mean not to reevaluate all things but to accept all things as they are. However, amor fati is not a new concept but consistent with what Nietzsche had written all along in FW, M



and in WS. “Fati,” as becomes clear from Nietzsche’s notes, means “necessities,” “das Nothwendige” or “Nöthige,” similarly to what he called the “nearest things,” the neglected necessities for life. We have already discussed how Nietzsche’s thought of the eternal recurrence incorporates experimentation with and assimilation of a multitude of lives that Nietzsche developed in his reading of Emerson. Nietzsche’s amor fati expresses the same sense of assimilation but related to the necessities for life. Part of Nietzsche’s famous description of “amor fati”<sup>227</sup> can be found in a note from fall 1881 where it is Zarathustra, not Nietzsche, who says: ““ich klage nicht an, ich will selbst die Ankläger nicht anklagen”” (KSA 9:616) Below this note, we can find Nietzsche’s advice to himself to collect “passages of happiness” in Emerson’s texts. Furthermore, amor fati is a callback to the motto Nietzsche took from Emerson’s “History” and rewrote for the 1882 edition: “Dem Dichter und Weisen sind alle Dinge befreundet und geweiht, alle Erlebnisse nützlich, alle Tage heilig, alle Menschen göttlich.”<sup>228</sup> Here, Emerson words his often-repeated thought that all things, experiences, days, and people are potential sources of appropriation, usage, or assimilation. But the point of Emerson’s statement is that these things are usually neglected, and that it therefore requires a new perspective, or revaluation. Nietzsche had written on the title page of Emerson *Essays* and in FW that we walk through life intoxicated, unaware of our life, unharmed because of our intoxication. In the Fall of 1881, Nietzsche repeatedly complains that humanity had always attributed a lower value [“Werth”] to the “ordinary” [allem Gewöhnlichen]: “So wurde alles, was *nöthig* ist und alles, was *üblich* ist, zum Geringen: alles *Fatum* wurde Gemeinheit.” (KSA 9: 627-628) We see here that the word “Fatum” simply describes that which is necessary or ordinary, now reduced to what is “base.” This evaluation was the result of a judgment

from “higher” human beings, the result of an aristocratic taste that set “values.” In the long term, this resulted in a complete change of human nature:

der Boden unseres Lebens und unserer ganzen Lebensart — das ist und bleibt doch immer das Nöthige und Gewohnheitsmäßige — von den höheren Empfindungen entkleidet worden! Essen und Wohnen und Zeugen, der Handel, der Erwerb, das Geschäft ja selbst das gesellschaftliche Leben hat sich vom Ideale *abgetrennt* — und die Sorge für sich selber, selbst in ihrer feinsten Form, ist mit einem Makel behaftet, welchen der Tadel des Egoismus und das Lob der Selbstlosigkeit zu verstehen giebt. (KSA 9: 627-628)

Egoism became a reprimand for everyone who cares for themselves; self-denial and compassion on the other hand was praised. Later, Nietzsche even brings together “das Nöthige” and “amor fati” as his “morality.” (KSA 9: 643) Thus, Nietzsche’s amor fati has very little to do with a “theory of fate or determination” and all with a revaluation of all things present and of our values. Instead of looming over the past or the inevitability of the future, as all theories of “fate” must do, Nietzsche’s “amor fati” describes a conversion towards the present. It is in this context that Nietzsche draws on Emerson’s “History.”

Despite its title, Emerson’s “History” has very little to do with a theory of history. On the contrary, the entire essay entertains a single thought: the dissolvment of history, or the question of history’s usefulness to the present, that is, as Nietzsche had put it, the uses and abuses of history for life. “All inquiry into antiquity,” Emerson says, “is the desire to do away this wild, savage, and preposterous There or Then, and introduce in its

place the Here and the Now.” (E 11) History, however, is not the accumulation of past facts but a text: “This human mind wrote history, and this must read it. The Sphinx must solve her own riddle. If the whole of history is in one man, it is all to be explained from individual experience.” (E 4)<sup>229</sup> What are we supposed to do with this text? What constitutes a reading in Emerson’s sense? Read selectively and appropriately, will be Emerson’s answer. To understand this practice, let us consider Nietzsche’s selective reading (transcription) of Emerson’s text on the reading of history in his Emerson notebook. One of the most fascinating textual practices Nietzsche uses is to “personalize” the excerpts, changing the third-person pronoun in Emerson’s text into a first-person (see Golden 2013). This is evident in the following successive entries in Nietzsche’s notebook:

Ich höre wohl die Lobpreisungen der Welt, aber sie sind nicht für mich: ich höre in ihnen nur das meinem Ohre viel lieblicher tönende Lob des Charakters, dem ich nachstrebe, und das ich in jedem Wort, in jedem Faktum vernehme—im dahineilenden Flusse und im wogenden Korne. (Nietzsche’s transcription)

A true aspirant, therefore never needs look for allusions personal and laudatory in discourse. He hears the commendation, not of himself, but more sweet, of that character he seeks, in every word that is said concerning character, yea, further, in every fact and circumstance, in the running river and the rustling corn. (E 8; V 5, Emerson’s original)<sup>230</sup>

Das, was ich heute thue, hat eine so tiefe Bedeutung als irgend etwas Vergangenes.”<sup>231</sup> (Nietzsche’s transcription)

I have no expectation that any man will read history aright, who thinks that what was done in a remote age, by men whose names have resounded far, has any deeper sense than what he is doing to-day. (*E* 9; *V* 5 Emerson's original)

Ich will die ganze Geschichte in eigener Person durchleben und alle Macht und Gewalt mir zu eigen machen, mich weder vor Königen noch irgend einer Größe beugen. (Nietzsche's transcription)

He should see that he can live all history in his own person. He must sit solidly at home, and not suffer himself to be bullied by kings or empires. (*E* 9; *V* 5 Emerson's original)

We see that Nietzsche increases the force of Emerson's text ("Ich will" replaces "He should"), but more importantly Nietzsche's textual practice, the act of selection and rewriting, fits with the very topic of Emerson's sentences that he had selected: assimilation, "Aneignung," appropriation. In another instance, Nietzsche rewrites Emerson's "The man must be so much, that he must make all circumstances indifferent" (*E* 62) in "Self-Reliance" into "Der rechte Mann ist der Mittelpunkt der Dinge: er nimmt von der ganzen Schöpfung Besitz [...]," (*KSA* 9: 671) literally turning Emerson's passage into an apology of appropriation. But as we have seen earlier, Emerson's idea of appropriation entails a sort of double-movement: on the one hand, the self-assertion and recognition that lies in every act of appropriation (this is "mine"!), on the other hand a deconstruction of the individual self. Since for Emerson there is only "one mind," all of history technically "belongs" to every one of its readers – which also means it does not belong to anyone in particular. Nietzsche's act of appropriation of Emerson raises a

peculiar question that we had encountered already in his earliest writings: who speaks here? Who is the Sphinx to his Ulysses? Are both the same, as Emerson suggested?

Interestingly, Nietzsche makes use of the sphinx on the back cover of his Emerson edition: “Here you sit, relentless as the curiosity which compelled me to you: well then, Sphinx, I am, like you, a questioner: we have this abyss in common—is it possible we spoke with one voice?” (KSA 9: 622).<sup>232</sup> But to whom is Nietzsche speaking here?<sup>233</sup> Nietzsche’s identification as a questioner resembles Emerson own self-stylization in “Circles,” reminding his reader that he is “only an experimenter,” and warning them: “Do not set the least value on what I do, or the least discredit on what I do not, as if I pretended to settle any thing as true or false. I unsettle all things. No facts are to me sacred; none are profane; I simply experiment, an endless seeker with no Past at my back.” (E 319) Emerson and Nietzsche both are prolific questioners, seekers, experimenters, and essayists.<sup>234</sup>

Nietzsche further complicates the question of speaking when he transcribes and modifies this passage, which is itself a transcription from Emerson’s original statement, in his Emerson notebook: “Es ist *viel*, zu antworten, wenn ein solches Räthsel aufgegeben wird: und es ist viel, zu *glauben*, solch ein Räthsel gelöst zu haben. Schon bei dem *Muthe* der Antwort auf das Räthsel des Lebens stürzt sich die Sphinx hinab (ego).” The enigma of life, as Nietzsche seems to say here, does not require a solution; the courage alone to *attempt* an answer is already sufficient to beat the sphinx; the voicing of an answer is not required and the content of the answer does not matter. But we *are* the sphinx too (as Emerson said), since we have turned life into a problem in the first place, as Nietzsche had described in the very beginning of FW – maybe we do not want an answer after all.

Moreover, Nietzsche assimilating technique informs the very beginning of FW, its paratextual motto from Emerson's "History": "Dem Dichter und Weisen sind alle Dinge befreundet und geweiht, alle Erlebnisse nützlich, alle Tage heilig, alle Menschen göttlich." (KSA 3:343) Here, Nietzsche transcribes "Ereignisse" (events) in the original translation into "Erlebnisse" (experiences), thus subjectifying, personalizing Emerson's text, while also replacing the "philosopher" and "saint" ("Heiligen") with the "wise man" ("Weisen") (V 9).<sup>235</sup>

As we have seen in Nietzsche's critique of morality in "Sanctus Januarius," the presumed devaluation of the "nearest things" resulted in a denunciation of egoistic actions, and a valorization of actions that deny one's own desires (e.g. compassionate acts). Fascinatingly, Nietzsche adds to several entries in his Emerson edition the word "ego." For instance, Nietzsche excerpts: "In jeder Handlung ist die abgekürzte Geschichte alles Werdens. ego." (E 239; V 5–6)<sup>236</sup> As Mason Golden notes, "the appended 'ego' is not present in either the original or in the Fabricius translation." Golden then juxtaposes to this entry a note of Nietzsche's from the autumn 1878. There, Nietzsche writes, "History wants to overcome strangeness [Befremden], humans resist the past, everything ought to be 'ego' 'biography' and 'long-since-known'" (KSA 8: 563). But even more so, Nietzsche's ego appears in another form in the excerpts from Emerson's essay: "Ich will die ganze Geschichte in eigener Person durchleben und alle Macht und Gewalt mir zu eigen machen, mich weder vor Königen noch irgend einer Grösse beugen." (KSA 9: 666)<sup>237</sup> This excerpt was then worked into the fourth book of FW (no. 337):

In der That: [...] wer die Geschichte der Menschen insgesamt als *eigene Geschichte* zu fühlen weiss, [...] diess Alles endlich in Einer Seele haben und in Ein Gefühl zusammendrängen: — diess müsste doch ein Glück ergeben, das bisher der Mensch noch nicht kannte, — eines Gottes Glück voller Macht und Liebe, voller Thränen und voll Lachens, [...]. Dieses göttliche Gefühl hiesse dann — Menschlichkeit! (KSA 3: 565)

In a separate note from around the same time, Nietzsche remarked: “In dem, was *Zarathustra*, Moses, Muhamed Jesus Plato Brutus Spinoza Mirabeau bewegte, lebe ich auch schon, und in manchen Dingen kommt in mir erst reif an’s Tageslicht, was embryonisch ein paar Jahrtausende brauchte.” (KSA 9: 642) No wonder that Emerson’s “History” includes a passage that sounds awfully like the note above: “How easily these old worships of Moses, of Zoroaster, of Menu, of Socrates, domesticate themselves in the mind. I cannot find any antiquity in them. They are mine as much as theirs.” (E 29) We have noted earlier how Nietzsche attributes his amor fati to the literary character “Zarathustra” (before publishing it as his own formula). This back and forth is completely intelligible considering the Nietzsche’s and Emerson’s identification with (and appropriation of) these historical figures. When Zarathustra appears again in Nietzsche’s notes, he attributes to him one of the core thoughts of Emerson’s “Self-Reliance”: “Du widersprichst heute dem, was du gestern gelehrt hast — Aber dafür ist gestern nicht heute, sagte Zarathustra.” (KSA 9:598) Emerson infamously said:

Suppose you should contradict yourself; what then? [...] A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. He may as well

concern himself with his shadow on the wall. Speak what you think now in hard words and to-morrow speak what to-morrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict every thing you said to-day.—'Ah, so you shall be sure to be misunderstood.'—Is it so bad then to be misunderstood? Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo, and Newton, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstood. (E 58-59)

Emerson even references Zarathustra or Zoroaster in this essay as well, which Nietzsche highlighted very strongly,<sup>238</sup> and we have seen how Nietzsche connects the figure of Zarathustra directly to the “eternal return” and the idea of assimilation or appropriation of other selves. All these aspects are, of course, prominent topics in Emerson’s “Self-Reliance.” The first two passages that Nietzsche excerpted into his notebook introduce the central concept of “return”:

To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men, that is genius. (E 259)<sup>239</sup>

In every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts: they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty. (E 259)<sup>240</sup>

The idea of genius, which Nietzsche already made use of in 1874, combines two movements for Emerson: first, to believe your own thought, regardless of the thought’s content, is simultaneously universally true. But how can my thought be the thought of everyone else, let alone of another? This is Emerson’s unique way to eradicate any clear distinction between the subject and the other. But the second movement is even more



important. We recognize our own thoughts in the works of genius. It is a movement of return of that which is ours. And yet, it is not ours, since we have discarded it because it was ours. Again, Emerson undermines the distinction between what is “ours” and what is someone else’s. This thought is always underlying his positive evaluation of appropriation. Emerson tells us that we receive our own thoughts from another, and at the same time he tells us that “imitation is suicide,” another passage Nietzsche transcribed. Fabricius translates “suicide” with “Meuchelmord,” turning it into a killing of another and not of ourselves, thus bringing the confusion between “me” and the other to another level. Emerson combines both opposites: a radical sense of subjectivity and a claim to universality.

On the back of his Emerson edition, Nietzsche seems to comment and approve this contradiction of the self as appropriator:

Das neue Große nicht über sich, nicht ausser sich sehen, sondern aus ihm eine neue Funktion unserer selbst machen. Wir sind der Ozean, in den alle Flüsse des Großen fließen müssen. Wie gefährlich ist es, wenn der Glaube an die Universalität unserer selbst fehlt! Viel Art von Glauben thut noth. (V, back page)

The second to last sentence is virtually a rephrasing of Emerson’s description of genius. Both Emerson’s and Nietzsche’s formulas sound suspiciously familiar – did not Kant speak of the universal law within me? Emerson too mentions the ability to give oneself a law: “The world,” he says, “has been instructed by its kings, who have so magnetized the eyes of nations. [...] The joyful loyalty with which men have everywhere suffered the king, the noble, or the great proprietor to walk among them by a law of his

own, make his own scale of men and things, and reverse theirs, [...] and represent the law in his person.” (E 268; V 47)<sup>241</sup> Except, Emerson does not speak here of “reason” and more of a hierarchy of values that one person, a king, had instructed others. In Nietzsche’s transcription, he turns the “scale of men and things,” translated as “scala” by Fabricius, into a table of values (“Werthtafel”). To give laws is an act of evaluation for judgement implies the creation of difference. But this evaluation does not follow universal standards, since Emerson already said that “No law can be sacred to me but that of my nature,” (E 262; V 37) a statement Nietzsche transcribed as well.<sup>242</sup> For Emerson and Nietzsche, there is no such thing as “the law,” no such thing as “the law of reason,” but only laws according to one’s particular, individual, unique nature, if one has the courage to give them to oneself. Nietzsche executes this critique of Kant towards the end of FW in no. 335, one of the longest aphorisms of the entire book:

Wie? Du bewunderst den kategorischen Imperativ in dir? Diese ‘Festigkeit’  
deines sogenannten moralischen Urtheils? Diese ‘Unbedingtheit’ des Gefühls ‘so  
wie ich, müssen hierin Alle urtheilen’? Bewundere vielmehr deine *Selbstsucht*  
darin! Und die Blindheit, Kleinlichkeit und Anspruchslosigkeit deiner  
Selbstsucht! Selbstsucht nämlich ist es, *sein* Urtheil als Allgemeingesetz zu  
empfinden; und eine blinde, kleinliche und anspruchslose Selbstsucht  
hinwiederum, weil sie verräth, dass du dich selber noch nicht entdeckt, dir selber  
noch kein eigenes, eigenstes Ideal geschaffen hast: — diess nämlich könnte  
niemals das eines Anderen sein, geschweige denn Aller, Aller! (KSA 3: 562)

Nietzsche mentions here the need to “discover” oneself or rather to create one’s own unique ideal. Again, on the back page of his Emerson edition, Nietzsche designs a

plan for creating such an ideal in a new experiment of living “Vom Kleinsten Nächsten auszugehen”: starting with the analysis of one’s dependencies into which one is born, one’s rhythms of thinking, feelings, intellectual and nutritional needs, and then slowly attempting to break with these habits and diets, and to “digest” one’s experiences in these experiments. Finally, these experiments culminate in “Versuche der Idealdichtung und später des Ideal – lebens. (see KSA 9: 621-622). The outline for a new way of living also frequently appears in Nietzsche’s notes on the “eternal return.” When discussing the “eternal return” for the first time in his notes, in conjunction with Zarathustra, Nietzsche records the following book title: “Mittag und Ewigkeit – Fingerzeige zu einem neuen Leben” (KSA 9: 519). Noon and eternity are not only frequently used motifs circulating around the “eternal return” but also present in those passages from Emerson’s essays that Nietzsche highlighted or excerpted. In “History,” Nietzsche approvingly wrote “Ja!” next to the following lines of Emerson: “I admire the love of nature in the Philoctetes. In reading those fine apostrophes to sleep, to the stars, rocks, mountains and waves, I feel time passing away as an ebbing sea. I feel the eternity of man, the identity of his thought.” (V 20) From “Self-Reliance,” Nietzsche excerpted the following passage:

History is an impertinence and an injury, if it be any thing more than a cheerful apologue or parable of my being and becoming. [ . . . ] But man postpones or remembers; he does not live in the present, but with reverted eye laments the past, or, heedless of the riches that surround him, stands on tiptoe to foresee the future. He cannot be happy and strong until he too lives with nature in the present, above time. (*E* 270; *V* 50)<sup>243</sup>

When Nietzsche finally introduces the thought of the eternal return of FW (no. 341), he admits that the mere thought of living your life again and again would crush anyone under normal circumstances. There is only one exception: “Oder hast du einmal einen ungeheuren Augenblick erlebt, wo du ihm [the demon] antworten würdest: ‘du bist ein Gott und nie hörte ich Göttlicheres!’ Wenn jener Gedanke über dich Gewalt bekäme, er würde dich, wie du bist, verwandeln und vielleicht zermalmen [...]” (KSA 3: 570)

What I want to highlight here, and which almost all commentators ignore, is Nietzsche’s emphasis on these singular, tremendous (monstrous?) moments in which the thought of the “eternal return” becomes bearable. As with all moments, they pass. In return, this means that the thought of the “eternal return” does not seem to be a theory nor a “thought experiment” or a test but a catalyst for a conversion. Emerson speaks of these conversions or “returns” frequently. Emerson describes in “Nature” what equates Nietzsche’s “Augenblick”: “There are days which occur in this climate, at almost any season of the year, wherein the world reaches its perfection;” a day that seems “immeasurably long,” and to “have lived through all its sunny hours, seems longevity enough.” (E 169) These diurnal poetic imagery of nature will take on a special role in Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, who closes the final book of FW in 1882.

## CHAPTER 5: 1883-1884

In this chapter, I will analyze Nietzsche's reading of Emerson during the composition of *Z*, showing how Emerson's appropriating and experimenting self underwrites Nietzsche's text as a new myth. Emerson himself reinvents this mythic self from one of the founding myths of American culture, that of the Western frontier experience. This, often purely imaginative, experience considers American nature as a site for a (moral) renewal of the self, often in harsh opposition to the city, including a quasi-religious conversion. It accomplishes this continual reinvention of the self, in Emerson's mythology, by appropriating, harnessing, and conquering the powers of nature. Emerson uses this American myth, however, as a critical tool against America itself: against the (democratic, bourgeois) state, against (organized) religion, and against the marketplace (where individuals are reduced to economic participants). Nietzsche appropriates Emerson's mythic self (as already seen in *FW*), takes it out of the American context, and uses it for his own myth (*Zarathustra*) and a critique of modern life. He does that by reading and incorporating passages from Emerson's "Nature," "Politics," "Character," and again "Circles" into his *Zarathustra* text. Emerson's "wise man" or "character" turns into shades of *Zarathustra* and the "Übermensch," Emerson's critique of the American polity turns into Nietzsche's critique of the state as a new idol, the renewal of the American West and Emerson's praise of forgetfulness turns into an antidote against the spirit of revenge (Emerson's "Compensation") and modern morality.

The critique of modern life around the center piece of the bourgeois individual is echoed by Emerson in his *Historic Notes of Life and Letters in Massachusetts* (1883), which was translated to Nietzsche by an American pastor in Nice in 1884. It shows how Emerson evaluates the new conditions of modern American life, in sync with the topics of Zarathustra and Nietzsche's other late works, as a capitalist and post-God era that simultaneously opens up the realm of possibilities for human life and threatens to devour its individual subjects, attacking one of the founding myths of American culture, that of the individual, by measuring its ideals to its shortcomings in the actual social and political life.

## 5.1 MYTHS AGAINST MYTHS

Nietzsche read Emerson during the writing process of *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (Z). In spring and summer of 1883, Nietzsche references passages from Emerson's "Nature", "Spiritual Laws," and "Circles." In fall of 1883, he reads Emerson's "Politics," "Manners," and "The Poet," seeking descriptions of the "wise man." At the same time, 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1883, Nietzsche wrote a letter to Franz Overbeck, ending with the words: "Sage Deiner lieben Frau, daß ich Emerson wie eine Bruder-**Seele** empfinde (aber sein Geist ist schlecht gebildet.) Alles Gute uns Dreien!" (BVN-1883,477) Nietzsche seemed to have hoped to restart a long-distance Emerson reading group between Overbeck, his wife, and himself. On April 7<sup>th</sup> 1884, Nietzsche writes again to Overbeck, reporting that he had made the acquaintance with an old American minister, who translates to him 2 hours daily, including Emerson's "Historic Notes of Life and Letters in Massachusetts," as Nietzsche reveals in a letter later that year (December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1884):

Ich lasse mir einen größeren Aufsatz Emerson's, der einige Klarheit über seine eigene Entwicklung giebt, in's Deutsche übersetzen (schriftlich); beliebt es, so steht er Dir und Deiner lieben Frau zu Gebote. Ich weiß nicht, wie viel ich darum gäbe, wenn ich nachträglich bewirken könnte, daß eine solche herrliche große Natur, reich an Seele und Geist, eine strenge Zucht, eine wirkliche wissenschaftliche Cultur durchmachte. So wie es steht, ist uns in Emerson ein Philosoph **verloren** gegangen! (BVN-1884,566)

Because of these remarks, most commentators were led to think that Nietzsche considers Emerson not a “philosophical” equal. However, we must also consider that Nietzsche puts his own “philosophy” into quotation marks in the letter from April to Overbeck, where he outlines his plan for the next five years.<sup>244</sup> In fact, David Farrell Krell rightly pointed out that Nietzsche's critical notes on Emerson's lack of “schooling” and “strict education” was the same Nietzsche experienced from Wilamowitz and other philosophers and classicists: “Whenever Nietzsche chastises Emerson, it is always a note to self.” (Krell 2015 11). Indeed, it was Nietzsche who went through a rigorous philological training and then rejected that training – it would make Emerson more *like* Nietzsche, not less. Nietzsche's Zarathustra, which Nietzsche views as a sort of “entrance” into his “philosophy,” considering the shocking reception by Nietzsche's fellow philologists, could be seen as the final break with his former profession.<sup>245</sup>

In the same April letter, Nietzsche constructs a reverse history of his own texts, claiming that M and FW are a commentary to Z, while also mentioning Emerson: “Es ist eine Thatsache, daß ich den Commentar vor dem Text gemacht habe — — Wie geht es Emerson und Deiner verehrten Frau?” (BVN-1884, 504) This connection is then taken

up by Zarathustra himself in his “Grablied”: “Also sprach zur guten Stunde einst meine Reinheit: ‘göttlich sollen mir alle Wesen sein.’ [...] ‘Alle Tage sollen mir Heilig sein’ – so redete einst die Weisheit meiner Jugend: wahrlich, einer fröhlichen Weisheit Rede!” (KSA 4: 143) These quotations are of course taken from the motto of Nietzsche’s FW, blurring the lines between Nietzsche, his character Zarathustra, and Emerson, because the motto was originally a quotation from Emerson’s “History.”

The connection between Nietzsche’s Z and Emerson was not left unnoticed. In fact, it has become the standard view, propagated by Montinari in the 15<sup>th</sup> volume of the KSA, that Nietzsche might have been inspired by a passage in Emerson’s “Character” to use the figure of Zarathustra:

**We require that a man should be so large and columnar in the landscape, that it should deserve to be recorded that he arose, and girded up his loins, and departed to such a place.** The most credible pictures are those of majestic men who prevailed at their entrance, and convinced the senses; as happened to the eastern magician who was sent to test the merits of Zertusht or Zoroaster [Zarathustra oder Zoroaster]. (EII 110) (V 351)<sup>246</sup>

Next to the first line, Nietzsche emphatically wrote “Das ist es!” Nietzsche also marked Zarathustra’s name with an “N-shaped” sign. Whether this passage marks the moment when Nietzsche had the idea for Zarathustra remains unknowable. But images from Emerson’s essays can be found in all four books of Z.<sup>247</sup>

In her study on the imagery of Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, Vivetta Vivarella (2013) has shown how Nietzsche reuses several of Emerson’s motifs in his work. For instance,



Emerson's remark in "History" that the Greek "eye-sockets are so formed that it would be impossible for such eyes to squint, and take furtive glances on this side and on that, but they must turn the whole head." (E 248; V 18), which Nietzsche excerpts into his Emerson notebook, again in the first-person singular,<sup>248</sup> appears in the section "Von der unbefleckten Erkenntnis," with the same connection of virility and childlike innocence. Based on findings like these, Vivarella extracts two important aspects of Emerson's prose for Nietzsche: first an active, affirmative disposition towards life that simultaneously acknowledges the limits of reality and trusts in one's own abilities for transformation. Second, an antidote to philosophical pessimism (Schopenhauer and Wagner) and figures of overcoming that point towards the "Übermensch." (Vivarella 2013, 338)<sup>249</sup>

Although Emerson does not advocate for the overcoming of "humanity," he does note that humanity has not reached its fullest potential, for example in "Character": "we have never seen a man: that divine form we do not yet know, but only the dream and prophecy of such." (EII, 114) In the essay "The Over-Soul," translated as "Die Höhere Seele" (but including the original title as a footnote on the same page), Emerson says that the "philosophy of six thousand years has not searched the chambers and magazines of the soul." (E 268-269)<sup>250</sup> It might seem that this talk of latent human possibilities and souls is rather uncharacteristic of Nietzsche; yet, we can find passages like the following from the beginning of the third part of JGB: "Die menschliche Seele und ihre Grenzen, der bisher überhaupt erreichte Umfang menschlicher innerer Erfahrungen, die Höhen, Tiefen und Fernen dieser Erfahrungen, die ganze bisherige Geschichte der Seele und ihre noch unausgetrunkenen Möglichkeiten [...]." (KSA 5: 65) In his notes, Nietzsche also calls the overman "die höchste Seele" ("the highest soul").<sup>251</sup> What is clear to me is that

Nietzsche and Emerson share the sense that humanity has not fully discovered its own potentialities and that countless experiments in living are yet to be attempted.

This desire for new opportunities, possibilities, and limitlessness is *the* Emersonian, and we might say, American ideal. It is present from the very beginning in the famous prologue, in which Zarathustra ascends to humanity and meets the hermit who has not heard yet that God is dead. What appears as a threat, the threat of nihilism, seems to Zarathustra a chance, a newly attained freedom. In “Vor Sonnen-Aufgang” (“Before Dawn”), Zarathustra describes this new condition of purposelessness: “Das aber ist mein Segnen: über jedwedem Ding als sein eigener Himmel stehn, als sein rundes Dach, seine azurne Glocke und ewige Sicherheit [...]. Diese Freiheit und Himmels-Heiterkeit stellte ich gleich azurner Glocke über alle Dinge, als ich lehrte, dass über ihnen und durch sie kein 'ewiger Wille' – will” (KSA 4: 209). There is no eternal will (Schopenhauer), no rationality but a countless variety of individual wills.

Vivarella (2013, 344) notes however that this exact image of an azure glass bell appears in Emerson’s CL, describing the childish belief in a protective, metaphysical shroud and the subsequent disappointment when realizing that protective bell is nothing but infinite void. “In childhood, Emerson says,

we fancied ourselves walled in by the horizon, as by a glass bell, and doubted not by distant travel we should reach the baths of the descending sun and stars. On experiment the horizon flies before us and leaves us on an endless common, sheltered by no glass bell. Yet it is strange how tenaciously we cling to that bell-astronomy of a protecting domestic horizon. (CL 268)<sup>252</sup>

The point of this image is Emerson's desire for unprecedented opportunities and unlimited possibilities and that any metaphysical, eternal, protective narrative of meaning would limit these possibilities. This was the lesson from "Circles," that the "only sin is limitation." (E 308) The expression of that limitlessness Emerson does not find in religion but in nature. Curiously, in spring and summer of 1883, Nietzsche quotes two passages from Emerson's "Nature," the essay in the second edition, that speak to this apotheosized nature:

Die ganze *Ehrfurcht*, die wir bisher in die *Natur* gelegt haben, müssen wir auch empfinden lernen bei der Betrachtung des *Leibes*: es ist erbärmlich, sich von 'groß' und 'klein' so tyrannisiren zu lassen! Was der Wald, das Gebirge uns zu sagen hätten — und die fernen Himmelskörper 'die uns in die Einsamkeit rufen' (Emerson) — 'diese Entzückungen sind heilsam, sie machen uns nüchtern'. (KSA 10: 290)

As we had observed earlier, Nietzsche quoted the first page back in 1866 in a letter to von Gersdorff, where he mixes Emerson's vision of nature with the metaphysics of Schopenhauer. Emerson describes the effect of entering nature as leaving behind all business and trivial matters of the city, as well as apotheosizing nature into a replacement for religion. The entrance into nature entrances us: "Here we find Nature to be the circumstance which dwarfs every other circumstance, **and judges like a god all men that come to her.** [...] The tempered light of the woods is like a **perpetual morning**, and is stimulating and heroic." (E II 170-172)<sup>253</sup> Emerson makes use of the oldest and one of the most powerful myths of America, that of the frontier experience, its everlasting progression forward (away from the city and the marketplace), and its capacity to morally

transform the individual who dives into the vast landscapes of the West. However, Emerson's usage of this myth is not, as Cornel West had pointed out, identical to its ideological content as a national foundation, albeit converging with it (West 1989, 20). Its Emersonian version is indeed anarchic and, in principle, revolutionary. This can be seen in the other part of Nietzsche's note that refers to the following passage from "Nature":

**Here no history, or church, or state, is interpolated on the divine sky and the immortal year.** How easily we might walk onward into the opening landscape, absorbed by new pictures and by thoughts fast succeeding each other, until by degrees the recollection of home was crowded out of the mind, all memory obliterated by the tyranny of the present, and we were led in triumph by nature. **These enchantments are medicinal, they sober and heal us.** These are plain pleasures, kindly and native to us. **We come to our own, and make friends with matter** [Nietzsche writes: Ja!], **which the ambitious chatter of the schools would persuade us to despise.** (E II 172)<sup>254</sup>

What is healing and what makes us sober is the tyranny of the present, the obliteration of memory (the most pervasive Emersonian myth), the ability to forget. On a cultural plain, that means the wiping away of the church, the state, and history in large. Emerson further imagines this healing process to be a return to one's own, or as Nietzsche reads it: a return to what we had learned to despise, our "Leib," our very own "property," the "Urstoff", to which Nietzsche enthusiastically adds "Ja!". As such, the return to "nature" is a return to ourselves. Thus, Nietzsche emphasizes that our body, our "Leib," is part of nature and deserves the same reverence ["Ehrfurcht"] that we have for the sublime images of nature. Fabricius translation of "our own" as "property," together

with Emerson's idea that we are "absorbed" by nature continues the trend of appropriation and assimilation images that we have discovered frequently in Nietzsche's readings of Emerson. The frontier experience implies simultaneously the eradication of the individual (as a historical and cultural entity) by natural forces and the continual beginning of a new, mythic individual. Thus, the myth of nature and the West includes, and must include for Emerson, a corresponding mythic self, that of the individual as appropriator, assimilator, and, although only implicitly, conqueror. This mythic self exists continually at the beginning of a new time, reinventing itself, always pushing the frontier "onward."<sup>255</sup> That is why Emerson had earlier written in "Experience" that he was "ready to die out of nature and be born again into this new yet unapproachable America" (E II 72). Nietzsche's insistence that the body ("Leib") is part of that nature, a force among forces, seems like a naturalistic reduction of humanity. However, in the section on the despisers of the body (KSA 4: 39-41), Zarathustra, although reducing concepts like reason, the ego and the soul to parts of the body, rewrites the body into :das Selbst" (the self) which "vergleicht, bezwingt, erobert, zerstört," (KSA 4: 40). These are the attributes of the mythic self in Emerson's text.

Singing this praise of nature and perpetuating the myth of the West justifies one the one hand American exceptionalism. However, it also offers Emerson a tool of immanent critique against this very exceptionalist thinking. This critique is immanent because it uses the ideal of an exceptional individual as the end (purpose and termination) of America as a nation, measuring America's realities (keeping humans in forced bondage) against its own ideology (freedom and power), using America's myths against itself. In this way, Emerson contrasts "romance" and "reality" in the final sentence of

“Experience” (the true romance which the world exists to realize will be the transformation of genius [Verwandlung des Genius] into practical power [ausübende Macht].) (E II 86-87)) and a utopian nature against the realities of his culture: “We nestle in nature, and draw our living as parasites from her roots and grains, and we receive glances from the heavenly bodies, which call us to solitude and foretell the remotest future. The blue zenith is the point in which romance and reality meet.” (E II 171-172)

Like Zarathustra’s azure bell above every object (and person), the blue zenith is the expression of a promise realized. This is the other dimension of nature in the second quotation in Nietzsche’s notes, a few pages later: “‘Für den Weisen verwandelt sich die Natur in ein ungeheures Versprechen’ *Emerson*. Nun, du selber bist Natur und versprichst mit ihr das Ungeheure und hütest dich wohl, dein eignes Geheimniß vorschnell auszukundschaften!” (KSA 10: 294) The entire passage to which Nietzsche refers here goes like this:

**Must we not suppose somewhere in the universe a slight treachery and derision?** Are we not engaged to a serious resentment of this use that is made of us? Are we tickled trout, and fools of nature? One look at the face of heaven and earth lays all petulance at rest, and soothes us to wiser convictions. To the intelligent, nature converts itself into a vast promise, and will not be rashly explained. Her secret is untold. Many and many an Oedipus arrives; he has the whole mystery teeming in his brain. (EII 194-195)<sup>256</sup>

As before, Nietzsche wants to make sure that we count ourselves as part of nature; nature’s secret becomes our own. Interestingly, Nietzsche also turns the word

“Verständigen” (the intelligent) into “den Weisen” (the wise man). Like “character,” these are representatives of Emerson’s mythic individual that is yet to be born. In fall of that year, Nietzsche specifically notes Emerson’s description of the wise man in “Politics.” While working on the second book of Zarathustra, Nietzsche notes:

Zarathustra erkennt, daß er auch nicht für seine Freunde da ist ‘Wer sind meine Freunde!’ Weder fürs Volk, noch für Einzelne! Weder für Viele noch für Wenige! Die Freundschaft zu überwinden! Zeichen seiner Selbst-Überwindung im Anfang von III Emerson p. 426 Schilderung des Weisen. (KSA 10: 512)

The page number refers to Emerson’s “Politics,” which follows the essay on “Nature” in the second volume of his essays. For Emerson, this succession makes sense thematically. Emerson’s description of the wise man, the mythic individual that renews itself in nature and wipes away the history and institutions, puts him in harsh opposition to the state:

Das was alle Dinge darstellen wollen, was Freiheit, Bildung, Verkehr, Revolutionen gestalten und äussern wollen, das ist der Charakter: es ist der Endzweck der Natur, diese Krönung ihres Königs zu Erlangen. Den weisen Mann zu erziehen, dazu existirt der Staat; und mit dem Erscheinen des Weisen ist das Ende des Staates da. Das Auftreten des Charakters macht den Staat unnöthig. Der weise Mann ist der Staat. (V 426)

Nietzsche virtually copies this thought into the first book, where Zarathustra declares:

Dort, wo der Staat aufhört, da beginnt erst der Mensch, der nicht überflüssig ist:  
da beginnt das Lied des Nothwendigen, die einmalige und unersetzliche Weise.  
Dort, wo der Staat *aufhört*,—so seht mir doch hin, meine Brüder! Seht ihr ihn  
nicht, den Regenbogen und die Brücken des Übermenschen?— (KSA 4: 63)

The “wise man” turns in Zarathustra’s discourse into the bridges for the  
“Übermensch.” Emerson uses the promise of the American myth of the West, one of the  
foundational myths of the States, to judge the (democratic) state; democracy and freedom  
itself is a myth, maybe *the* myth of America, and Emerson uses this myth, not to  
apotheosize the state but to point out that, fulfilling the promise of this myth, the creation  
of actually free individuals, would be the end of the so-called “democratic” state. A  
fundamental and powerful critique to use the words of America against itself, to tell  
America about itself. Emerson still heralds the idea of America, but not its execution.  
Emerson used this critique throughout his life. In late October 1850, as a reaction to the  
Fugitive Slave Law, Emerson noted, “My own quarrel with America, of course, was that  
the geography is sublime, but the men are not” (Quoted in Allen 1982, 545).

Nietzsche takes over Emerson’s critique, outside of the American context, and  
uses it in Z for his own critique of 19<sup>th</sup> century culture. The state appears in Z as one of  
the shadows of God, the new idol that fills in the void that God had left behind. It is the  
site for the preachers of death, producing “superfluous” human beings (not exceptional  
ones) and a slow collective suicide. “Every actual State.” Emerson says, “is corrupt.” (E  
II 208) To Zarathustra, the state is corrupt or deceitful in every way: “was er auch redet,  
er lügt – und was er auch hat, gestohlen hat er’s. Falsch is Alles an ihm; mit gestohlenen  
Zähnen beisst er, der Bissige. Falsch sind selbst seine Eingeweide.” (KSA 4: 61) Even



more, Nietzsche maintains the utopian moment of Emerson's critique. "We think our civilization near its meridian," says Emerson "but we are yet only at the cock-crowing and the morning star. In our barbarous society the influence of character is in its infancy." (E II 217-218)<sup>257</sup> In the very last words from the first book, under the section "Von der schenkenden Tugend," Zarathustra calls for the great meridian and the path to a new morning:

Und das ist der grosse Mittag, da der Mensch auf der Mitte seiner Bahn steht zwischen Thier und Übermensch und seinen Weg zum Abende als seine höchste Hoffnung feiert: denn es ist der Weg zu einem neuen Morgen. [...] „Todt sind alle Götter: nun wollen wir, dass der Übermensch lebe.“ — diess sei einst am grossen Mittage unser letzter Wille! (KSA 4:102)

The termination of the state (of all Gods), for Zarathustra, would be the beginning of the bridges to the exceptional individual which exists purely as a myth, like the character Zarathustra himself. Like Zarathustra, the wise man in Emerson's description in "Politics" is a prophet, a lawbreaker and giver, a value creator, someone who desires friends, but does not have any, and loves humanity (in abstractum, the myth of the exceptional individual is egalitarian, in practice not so much). It is striking how this description fits Zarathustra's self-characterization.<sup>258</sup>

In fact, in the note on Emerson's "Politics," Nietzsche had spoken of Zarathustra's "Selbst-Überwindung," which is of course the title of the chapter in the second book that follows immediately the "Grablied" section that quoted Emerson's motto from FW. Zarathustra introduces here the idea that every living thing is "obedient"

and that the act of commanding itself is “obedience.”<sup>259</sup> In “Self-Reliance,” Emerson also equates obedience with mastering or commanding: “Who has more obedience than I masters me [...]” (E 71) But what or who commands? It is, Zarathustra says, “Willen zur Macht” (147). Will to power as a feature of life, what Nietzsche calls life’s “secret,” means that life must always overcome itself (148), an act that Nietzsche also describes as “Versuch,” “Wagniss,” “Gefahr,” or “Würfelspielen.” (148) Will to power lies in all acts of evaluation (“schätzen”), in declaring something “evil” or “good,” in destroying old values to create new ones: “Also gehört das höchste Böse zur höchsten Güte: diese aber ist die schöpferische.” (149) In his description of the wise man, Emerson says that “Fountains, the self-moved, the absorbed, the commander because he is commanded, the assured, the primary,—they are good; for these announce the instant presence of supreme power.”<sup>260</sup> (E II 100-101) Next to the last line of the paragraph, Nietzsche writes: “Großartig!”

The praise and heralding of power are part of the American frontier myths of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The powers that Emerson finds in the natures of the American continent, the transformative forces of wilderness, are remarkably consistent his descriptions of power in the essays. For instance, in “Self-Reliance,” right before equating obedience and mastering, he says that “Power ceases in the instant of repose; it resides in the moment of transition from a past to a new state, in the shooting of the gulf, in the darting to an aim. This one fact the world hates; that the soul *becomes*,” (E 70) The aspect of life’s self-overcoming reappears then in “Von der Erlösung,” where Zarathustra says that the will, although a liberator for humans, is also a captive by the “it was” (“es war”):

Also wurde der Wille, der Befreier, ein Wehethäter: und an Allem, was leiden kann, nimmt er Rache dafür, dass er nicht zurück kann. Diess, ja diess allein ist Rache selber: des Willens Widerwille gegen die Zeit und ihr ‘Es war.’ [...] Der Geist der Rache: meine Freunde, das war bisher der Menschen bestes Nachdenken; und wo Leid war, da sollte immer Strafe sein. (KSA 4: 179-180)

## 5.2 THE ONLY SIN IS LIMITATION

Revenge is one of the key concepts for Zarathustra. In the chapter on “Von den Taranteln,” he speaks of the so called “preachers of equality” who, while preaching the virtues of forgiveness, compassion, equality and justice, are ultimately driven by revenge against the powerful. But for Zarathustra, “justice” means difference:

Gut und Böse, und Reich und Arm, und Hoch und Gering, und alle Namen der Werthe: Waffen sollen es sein und klirrende Merkmale davon, dass das Leben sich immer wieder selber überwinden muss! In die Höhe will es sich bauen mit Pfeilern und Stufen, das Leben selber: in weite Fernen will es blicken und hinaus nach seligen Schönheiten, — darum braucht es Höhe! Und weil es Höhe braucht, braucht es Stufen und Widerspruch der Stufen und Steigenden! Steigen will das Leben und steigend sich überwinden. (KSA 4: 130)

In “Self-Reliance,” Emerson states: “We do not yet see that **virtue is Height**, and that a man or a company of men, plastic and permeable to principles, by the law of nature must overpower [überwältigen] and ride all cities, nations, kings, rich men, poets, who are not.” (E 71)<sup>261</sup> Zarathustra characterization of life is an expression of experimentation; difference is required to have change, to have life overcome itself. We

should not speak around the bush here and be honest, this vision is violent. Like Emerson's use of the frontier experience can be used to justify atrocities committed against Native Americans (despite being appalled by the Indian removal act in the 1830's) and other groups. Nietzsche and Emerson are willing to pay the price. In some sense, any conversion experience, being plastic and permeable does violence, mostly to oneself. Power is conversion.

At this point, we might wonder that Emerson does not speak of revenge. However, another word for revenge is "retribution" or "Vergeltung," which is the German translation for Emerson's "Compensation" (the essay following "Self-Reliance"). In Fall 1881, Nietzsche remarked: "der gedankenreichste Autor dieses Jahrh<underts> ist bisher ein Amerikaner gewesen (leider durch deutsche Philosophie verdunkelt — *Milchglas*) Drei Irrthümer 1) die Vergeltung — — —" (KSA 9: 602) Many commentators concluded that Nietzsche attacks here Emerson's essay on "Compensation" ("Vergeltung"). This is, of course, a valid standpoint.<sup>262</sup> However, I would argue that the opposite is true: Emerson's "Compensation" or "Vergeltung" is a harsh critique of "revenge." First, it must be said that "Vergeltung" is an unfortunate mistranslation for "compensation" (whether this translation error influenced Nietzsche, I cannot tell). This becomes abundantly clear on the very first page of the essay. If Zarathustra presents himself as the teacher of the eternal recurrence, Emerson presents himself, or his auto-fictional persona, as the teacher of the doctrine of compensation, which he opposes to the Christian teachings of his day, the desire for transcendence as an act of revenge of the weak against the strong. The entire introductory paragraphs of the

essay have the goal to distinguish Emerson's "compensation" from the compensation imagined in the "doctrine of the Last Judgement" from the moral preacher:

He [the preacher] assumed that judgment is not executed in this world; that the wicked are successful [or that the successful are wicked?]; that the good are miserable; and then urged from reason and from Scripture a compensation to be made to both parties in the next life. [...] Yet what was the import of this teaching? What did the preacher mean by saying that the good are miserable in the present life? Was it that houses and lands, offices, wine, horses, dress, luxury, are had by unprincipled men, whilst the saints are poor and despised; and that a compensation is to be made to these last hereafter, by giving them the like gratifications another day,—bank-stock and doubloons, venison and champagne? This must be the compensation intended; for what else? Is it that they are to have leave to pray and praise? to love and serve men? Why, that they can do now. The legitimate inference the disciple would draw was,—'We are to have *such* a good time as the sinners have now;'—or, to push it to its extreme import,—'You sin now, we shall sin by and by; we would sin now, if we could; not being successful we expect our revenge to-morrow.' (E 95-96)

Emerson identifies with psychological precision that the Christian doctrine of "compensation" is in fact a fantasy act of revenge: the "good," miserable today, unable to act, expect their revenge to come. The preacher says that the good are miserable, but in fact his judgement says the reverse, that, whoever is miserable is good. Likewise, he says that the wicked are successful, but the actual meaning of this doctrine is that the successful are miserable: 'Whoever is more successful than me, stronger than me, is evil.'

After this preamble, Emerson outlines his own concept of compensation before bringing the essay to a close with a return to the problem of revenge. Here, Emerson calls himself and his contemporaries “idolaters of the old,” sitting and weeping among the ruins of the past: “The voice of the Almighty saith, ‘Up and onward for evermore!’ We cannot stay amid the ruins. Neither will we rely on the new; and so we walk ever with reverted eyes, like those monsters who look backwards.” (E 126-127) Time moves on, but we are unable to take off our eyes from the past. Fantasy of revenge and fixation on the past frame Emerson’s essay, they are his adversaries. Where does revenge come from? In the preacher’s speech, it was envy, grudges, jealousy, the inability to forget. The religion of forgiveness and compassion, Emerson tries to show, relies on a foundation of revenge, the very inability to forgive. As Emerson said in “Self-Reliance,” this one fact the world hates; that the soul *becomes*” (E 70), or as Zarathustra described the will’s revengeful desire against itself because of its own inability to act in the face of time’s “it was.”

The inability to *act* is at the very center of Emerson’s reading of Christian psychology: “we would sin now, if we *could*” – but this is already Emerson’s translation. The listener of the sermon thinks instead to himself: ‘we could sin now, but those who do are sinners, they are evil. I am good; therefore, I shall not join them in their deeds,’ as if there has been a choice made. This morality praises a good action as an action *not* done, an action *wanted* but not committed, an act of self-restraint and denial – inability turned into a virtue. Emerson translates this language and thereby reveals it as a fantasy of revenge and resentment: ‘we envy those who sin, we would act like them, if we could, but we cannot, we are unable to do it, we are not strong enough, and instead we imagine a

revenge that will take place in another life,' "not being successful we expect our revenge to-morrow." (E 95-96)

Emerson's theory of compensation, so often misunderstood, must be understood as a reversal of this Christian morality. Emerson could not be clearer about it. Emerson's mythic individual of the Western expansion that experiences conversion after conversion, absorbs all dormant powers in the West, and represents limitlessness, is in the background of his critique of Christianity. The American branches of Christianity, the reiteration of the needs for religious awakenings, conversions, and spiritual purifications among Puritans, Mormons, Christian "Scientists," Seventh-day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and so on, calling for the avoidance of all types of pleasure (the overlap of Stoicism and Puritanism), could give no better source of critique for Emerson. These American experiments are more radical than any European forms of Christianity that Nietzsche would have directly encountered, based on the radicalized Puritans (sic!) that had to move across the Atlantic to exercise their faith. Emerson plays out again America against America. Yet, this entire essay of Emerson's is either neglected or ridiculed for its theory of compensation.<sup>263</sup> It is not surprising to see that only one commentator, David Jacobson, connected Emerson's opening analysis of revenge to Nietzsche's concept of the spirit of revenge. Indeed, Jacobson claims interestingly that "both Emerson and Nietzsche build their own theory of value in opposition to the spirit of revenge. (David Jacobson 1987, 111).<sup>264</sup>

One way to understand Emerson's and Nietzsche's critique of Christianity, is to think in terms of power, appropriation, experimentation, and, ultimately, in terms of the mythic self that they construct. One must ask: what are the conditions of possibility for

experimentation? A culture determined by Christian values, a desire for revenge and compassion, limits the possibility for experimentation of any of its members. Limitation is the key Christian virtue, opposed to Emerson's magic formula that the "only sin is limitation." (E 308) Emerson takes the idea of conversion from the Christian tradition and turns it against itself, making it a trope of power and limitlessness, not moral (restraining, self-chastening) purity.

Christian morality in Emerson's description, and Nietzsche's, however, entails a double trap. Not only does it limit those who adhere to its values and turn resentment towards others (those who act on their desires) into a virtue, it also slowly erodes the very foundation of those who act by the introduction of guilt. What happens if you act on your desires? You begin to feel sinful, weak; you internalize your guilt for simply doing what you wanted to do. If such a psychological structure begins to take hold on a culture, there are very limited ways to imagine different human projects and experiments. It automatically blocks countless different ways in which you could have acted. No more Greek "excellence" (lying and cheating to get what you wanted). Self-reliance, the value of forgetfulness and spontaneity, is Emerson's counter to that Christian ethics. Nowhere does Nietzsche give a clearer explanation of the spirit of revenge than in his *Genealogie der Moral*, essay 1, section 15:

Im Glauben woran? In der Liebe wozu? In der Hoffnung worauf? — Diese Schwachen — irgendwann einmal nämlich wollen auch sie die Starken sein, es ist kein Zweifel, irgendwann soll auch ihr 'Reich' kommen — 'das Reich Gottes' heisst es schlechtweg bei ihnen, wie gesagt: man ist ja in Allem so demüthig! [...]  
Denn was ist die Seligkeit jenes Paradieses?... Wir würden es vielleicht schon



errathen; aber besser ist es, dass es uns eine in solchen Dingen nicht zu unterschätzende Autorität ausdrücklich bezeugt, Thomas von Aquino, der grosse Lehrer und Heilige. ‘Beati in regno coelesti’, sagt er sanft wie ein Lamm, ‘videbunt poenas damnatorum, ut beatitudo illis magis complaceat.’ (KSA 5: 293-284)<sup>265</sup>

Emerson speaks of the same act of revenge that Nietzsche discusses as a revaluation of values by the priests: “einen Akt der geistigsten Rache” (KSA 5: 267), “nämlich ‘die Elenden sind allein die Guten, die Leidenden, Entbehrenden, Kranken, Hässlichen’” (KSA 5: 267). The doctrine of love is in fact a doctrine of revenge and hate, an act of resentment. And most importantly for Emerson, its *raison d’être* is limitation, which is firmly opposed to the American self that Emerson imagines.

When we take another look at the back cover of Nietzsche’s Emerson edition, we will find above Nietzsche’s internal dialogue with his sphinx the following thought: “Jenseits von Liebe und Haß, auch von Gut und Böse, ein Betrüger mit gutem Gewissen, grausam bis zur Selbstverstümmelung, unentdeckt und vor aller Augen, ein Versucher, vom Blut jeder Seele lebt, der die Tugend als ein Experiment liebt, wie das Laster.” (V Back Cover) It is unclear who this person is that Nietzsche talks about, but since he addresses then the sphinx with “Hier sitztest du” in the very next line, it is likely that it is the sphinx, the questioner. To go beyond good and evil means, as it seems, to love virtue as an experiment. But in this context virtue cannot refer to “good deeds” but a whole life or several lives. The person who attempts (“versucht”) these experiments (“Versuche”) in living is a “Versucher” simultaneously an experimenter and a seducer. We know very well that Emerson had described himself as an “experimenter” and “endless seeker” or

“Sucher” (E 318-319, V 233-234). The conjunction of “Versucher” and “Sucher” appears in Nietzsche’s Zarathustra occasionally, either as a positive denominator of those who live dangerously (see KSA 4: 197ff.) or as a feature of life itself, the great “Binderin, Umwinderin, Versucherin, Sucherin, Finderin! Wer liebte dich nicht, dich unschuldige, ungeduldige, windseilige, kindsäugige Sünderin!” (KSA 4: 283) Life itself as experimenting must already be “beyond good and evil,” beyond the belief of the opposition of values, of true and false, because these oppositions do not exist outside of human inventions of these value systems. From the perspective of life, what is “good” is what creates (as Emerson said).

These thoughts anticipate Nietzsche’s *Beyond Good and Evil* (BGE), which itself anticipates the coming of a new species of philosophers whom he calls “Versucher,” although this name itself will remain only an attempt (“Versuch”) or, if you will, a temptation (“Versuchung”) (KSA 5: 59). In fact, the opening section of BGE on the philosophers’ prejudices begins with the image of another familiar “Versucher,” that of the Sphinx.<sup>266</sup> One of the prejudices of philosophers in the beginning of JGB is the belief in the evidence of “Ich will” (Nietzsche’s target is here Schopenhauer). Here, Nietzsche lays doubt on this supposed self-evident statement and instead suggests that maybe it is not “I” who thinks but “it” based on the fact “das sein Gedanke kommt, wenn ‘er’ will, und nicht wenn ‘ich’ will” (KSA 5: 31), a thought familiar to Emerson, who said in “Intellect”: “We have little control over our thoughts. We are the prisoners of ideas.” (E 329)<sup>267</sup> Nietzsche indeed excerpts a similar passage from Emerson’s “Spiritual Laws:” “Viel weniger Absicht in unseren Thaten als wir vorgeben (Eitelkeit in der Annahme von Zwecken!). Emerson, p. 99.” (KSA 10: 323) The entire passage is illuminating:

Die Leute stellen die Tugend als einen Kampf dar, und bilden sich auf ihre Geistesgaben sehr viel ein, und wenn edle Natur gerühmt wird, so wird über die Frage breit ausgesponnen, ob der Mensch nicht besser sei, der gegen die Versuchung streitet? [...]. Je weniger ein Mensch seine Tugend kennt und an sie denkt, desto mehr lieben wir ihn. [...]. Wenn wir eine Seele erblicken, deren Handlungen alle königlich, anmuthig und lieblich sind wie Rosen, so müssen wir Gott danken, daß so etwas sein kann und ist, und nicht sauer auf jenen Engel hinsehen und fragen: ‘Der Lahme, der murrend allen seinen ihm von Natur innewohnenden Teufeln Gehör giebt, ist ein besserer Mann.’ (V 99)<sup>268</sup>

Here, Emerson contrasts two ideas of virtue: First, virtue as a struggle against oneself and one’s desires. This type of virtue judges an action as good if it resists a temptation [“Versuchung”]. It praises an action as good if it is passive and self-denying. “Good” is the “crump” who listens to his “natural devils” and then “resists” them. This type of virtue is what Emerson opposes: the more a person does not know or forgets his “virtue,” the better he is. A virtuous person is “impulsive and spontaneous” or “selbstthätig” – as Fabricius translates – creative.

In summer-fall 1883, Nietzsche referred in a note to Emerson’s “Circles” and the notion to forget oneself: “Zarathustra — ich verlernte das Mitgefühl mit mir. das Selbst vergessen. Emerson p. 237. Zarathustra 3 der Schenkende der Schaffende der Lehrende — das sind Vorspiele des Herrschenden.” (KSA 10: 486) Here, Nietzsche connects the overcoming of compassion to Emerson’s idea of forgetting the self.<sup>269</sup> But this “selflessness” is different from “selfless actions.” Virtue or “Tugend” is of course a prominent motif in Zarathustra as well. Zarathustra too wishes that we would stop saying

“that a good action is that it is selfless” (KSA 4:123) and instead say the following: “Dass euer Selbst in der Handlung sei, wie die Mutter im Kinde ist: das sei mir euer Wort von Tugend.” (KSA 4:123) In this type of virtue, there is no sense of “Lohn”, “Vergeltung” “Strafe”, or “Rache.” (KSA 4: 123) Virtue is the opposite of shame: “Scham, Scham, Scham – das ist die Geschichte des Menschen!” (KSA 4: 113). Creating (“Schaffen”) and judging (“schätzen”) is virtuous, the “great redemption from suffering and life’s becoming light.” (KSA 4: 110) But “Schätzen ist Schaffen” (KSA 4: 75). The type of virtue Emerson decries is part of what Zarathustra calls the preachers of death, whose virtue lies in the imperative “du sollst dich selber tödten!” (KSA 4: 56) To these preachers of death belong those who want to refute life, who see compassion as the highest value: “Ihr flüchtet zum Nächsten vor euch selber und möchtet euch daraus eine Tugend machen: aber ich durchschaue euer ‘Selbstloses’.” But also, those who consider life continuous “work” and “restlessness” (“Unruhe”), the virtues Nietzsche and others most commonly attribute to “America,” those who love the “new,” “fast,” and “foreign” – “ihr ertragt euch schlecht, euer Fleiss ist Flucht und Wille, sich selber zu vergessen.” (KSA 4: 56) This type of virtue is a flight from oneself, praising selflessness, or combatting one’s self and its desires. But Nietzsche’s critique of those “American” values are not inconsistent with Emerson’s own, since he too contrasts these urban values with those of the frontier.

As there are two types of “forgetting the self,” so are there two types of “selfishness” (“Selbstsucht”). The one Zarathustra praises is the one who “gives”, “den Schenkenden,” who he places among those who “rule” or act royally. In another note, Nietzsche seems to find this gifting personality in Emerson’s texts: “§ den

Armen reich machen Emerson p. 383. § Seligkeit im größten Umfang der Seele, größte Leiter auf und nieder gegen den steifen ‘Weisen’ erlösend. Die Welt — eines Gottes Ausgelassenheit Sünde als Selbst-Aufhebungs-Genuß.” (KSA 10: 551) We note here that the “wise man” indeed sometimes appears as an opponent to Zarathustra in the text, for example in the section on “Von den Lehrstühlen der Tugend,” preaching an anesthetic and quietist virtue. Similarly, in book three, Zarathustra speaks of the “steifen Weisen” (“stiff wise men”) which he groups together with gravediggers (scientists) and whose values include, above all, compassion. The passage to which Nietzsche refers in his notes from Emerson’s “Manners,” as usual, paints a different picture of the wise man: “This is the royal blood, this the fire, which, in all countries and contingencies, will work after its kind and conquer and expand all that approaches it. This gives new meanings to every fact. This impoverishes the rich, suffering no grandeur but its own. What *is* rich? Are you rich enough to help anybody?” (EII 154) The poor also appear in another lengthy note towards the end of 1883 in reference to Emerson’s “Poet”: “Chor der Armen d.h. der Geringen Überflüssigen. Deren Joch leicht ist. – Emerson p. 283.” (KSA 10: 614) Nietzsche deliberately picks those passages from Emerson that either emphasize the conquering, expanding, devouring individual or those in which Emerson speaks of “superfluous” and poor people (as Nietzsche did in response to the modern state). These two sides come together in the following passage from Z:

Oh meine Freunde! So spricht der Erkennende: Scham, Scham, Scham – das ist die Geschichte des Menschen! [...] Seit es Menschen giebt, hat der Mensch sich zu wenig gefreut: Das allein, meine Brüder, ist unsere Erbsünde! [...] Ich aber bin ein Schenkender: gerne schenke ich, als Freund den Freunden. [...] Bettler aber

sollte man ganz abschaffen! Wahrlich, man ärgert sich ihnen zu geben und ärgert sich ihnen nicht zu geben. (KSA 4: 112-113).

Shame (or limitation) as the original sin is Emerson's motto of "Self-Reliance" that is directly linked to his rejection of charity. "Then again," he says, "do not tell me, as a good man did to-day, of my obligation to put all poor men in good situations. Are they my poor? I tell thee, thou foolish philanthropist, that I grudge the dollar, the dime, the cent I give to such men as do not belong to me and to whom I do not belong." (E 53) In favor of a society of charity, Emerson and Nietzsche (or Zarathustra) imagine a community of friends. "In seinem Freunde," Zarathustra declares, "soll man seinen besten Feind haben." (KSA 4:71) Emerson says we should "defy" ("zum Kampf herausfordern") our friends: "Who are you? Unhand me: I will be dependent no more." (E 214)<sup>270</sup> And to the following passage, Nietzsche emphatically concurred "Bravo!" in the margins: "The only joy I have in his being mine, is that the *not mine is mine*. I hate, where I looked for a manly furtherance or at least a manly resistance, to find a mush of concession. Better be a nettle in the side of your friend than his echo." (E 209)<sup>271</sup>

For Emerson, as Cornel West asserts, "Mutual provocation and reciprocal stimulation are the ideal for Emersonian human relations." (West 1989, 27) These are the two effects that Emerson seeks in reading and to produce in his prose, and which are consistent with the creation of his mythic self, transformed in the battle of the frontier and desiring to absorb all powers: Who hears me, who understands me, becomes mine,—a possession for all time." (E 195)<sup>272</sup> This ideal relationship is based on equality, antihierarchical and democratic, at least in the abstract.<sup>273</sup> A friend for Emerson is "so real and equal that I may drop even those undermost garments of dissimulation, courtesy,

and second thought, which men never put off, and **may deal with him with the simplicity and wholeness with which one chemical atom meets another.**” (E 203)<sup>274</sup>

Nietzsche noted about this passage at the bottom of the page: “Dies ist die Sache und nicht nur das Gleichniß. Mein Verdienst, daß wir eine Sprache für chemische Thatsachen haben.” (V 149) This sense of equality is almost utopian. A few pages later, Emerson describes, in his imagination, “**a circle of god-like men and women variously related to each other and between whom subsists a lofty intelligence**” (E 207)<sup>275</sup>, to which Nietzsche writes in the margins: “Dies ist das Wesen der Dinge.” (V 153) This community of friends, who provoke and stimulate each other, “without requiring any stipulation on my part” (ohne auch nur einen Augenblick zu verlangen, daß ich irgendwie ihm nachgeben [Nietzsch writes „Ja“] [...] sollte.”), is “a sort of paradox in nature.” (E 204-205) (V 150-151). In fact, Emerson admits that “Friends such as we desire are dreams and fables.” (E 214) They are part of Emerson’s mythology of the self.

### 5.3 AMERICAN INDIVIDUALISM

One of the last reading traces for Nietzsche’s Emerson reading can be found in spring 1884: “‘Das Paradies ist unter dem Schatten der Schwerter.’ Orient<alisch>.” (KSA 11: 10) This proverb, originally from the Islamic prophet Muhammad, hence Nietzsche’s attribution of the phrase to the “Orient,” is the motto to Emerson’s “Heroism.”<sup>276</sup> Curiously, however, Fabricius left this phrase untranslated in Nietzsche’s edition of Emerson’s *Essays*, meaning that Nietzsche must have translated it himself.<sup>277</sup> The expression appears several times, albeit sometimes modified, in Nietzsche’s notes between 1884 and 1889, even in *Ecce Homo*. In draft notes to the fourth Zarathustra

book, later worked into the chapters “Vom höheren Menschen” and “Gespräch mit den Königen,” Zarathustra says: “eures Friedens Sonne dünkt immer mich zu schwül: lieber noch sitze ich im Schatten meiner *Schwerter*.” (KSA 11: 31[44]) Nietzsche associated with Emerson’s motto the characteristics of noble (“vornehm”) and martial (“kriegerisch”) souls.<sup>278</sup> Zarathustra is suspicious of the modern ideal of peacefulness considers peace, which appears to him as a sign of decline, a sedative for the masses, blinding like the sun, paralyzing like the summer humidity. Thus, he contrasts this ideal with his own, the shadows of his swords, a declaration of war, floating above his head – an image fitting Nietzsche’s and Emerson’s Heraclitean conviction that war is the father of all things.

In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche uses the motto (as a quotation) while recounting the extraordinary, “unschätzbar[en],” impact of his untimely meditations on the German public and him as a writer. Nietzsche uses Emerson’s (or Muhammad’s) motto to describe his own relation to the German public, lamenting being largely ignored because of his “unconditional honesty” to which none other in the “Reich” has had the courage:

Mein *Paradies* ist ‘unter dem Schatten meines Schwertes’... Im Grunde hatte ich eine Maxime Stendhals praktiziert: er rät an, seinen Eintritt in die Gesellschaft mit einem Duell zu machen. Und wie ich mir meinen Gegner gewählt hatte! [...] bis heute ist mir Nichts fremder und unverwandter als die ganze europäische und amerikanische Species von ‘libres penseurs.’ Mit ihnen als mit unverbesserlichen Flachköpfen und Hanswürsten der ‘modernen Ideen’ befinde ich mich sogar in einem tieferen Zwiespalt als mit Irgendwem von ihren Gegnern. Sie wollen auch, auf ihre Art, die Menschheit ‘verbessern,’ nach ihrem Bilde, sie würden gegen



das, was ich bin, was ich will, einen unversöhnlichen Krieg machen, gesetzt dass sie es verstünden, — sie glauben allesammt noch ans ‘Ideal’ ... Ich bin der erste Immoralist — (KSA 6: 318-319)

Nietzsche does not mention Emerson, modifying and thereby appropriating the motto as “mein,” while also seeking an ally in Stendhal against his enemy, the German “Reich” and all other representative “modern” idea(l)s. But is Emerson really not present? Nietzsche desires to separate himself from the “free thinkers” in Europe and America, from “modern ideas” and (political or social) attempts to “reform” (“verbessern”) humanity according to their own image. Emerson however was well known to be invested in several reform movements in the States. Why does Nietzsche not name Emerson and Stendhal instead? Maybe because it does not fit Nietzsche’s self-characterization as the “first” immoralist. Emerson’s mythic self, extracted from the American myths of the frontier, is indeed closer to a truly immoral “ideal” than most ideals, for better or worse. By moving the foundations of America’s identity to their limits, he forms a critique of America from within, against the modern state and (Christian) morality. But he never gives up the possibility of “reform” (although he sometimes envisions it as a revolution) of the structures of society and economy, always keeping one eye towards the discrepancy between theory and thought, which remains one aspect that we have not yet dealt with: How does Emerson’s mythic individual relate to capitalist society, the fundamental aspect of modern society? How does his fictional self support or undermine the most essential myth of America, that of bourgeois individualism, and of America as an “experiment” itself?

The last text that Nietzsche read from Emerson offers here a unique perspective. That is the 1884 translation of Emerson's *Historic Notes of Life and Letters in Massachusetts*, which Nietzsche had asked an old American pastor to translate to him while residing in Nice. Emerson's essay was published only a few months earlier in October 1883 in the *Atlantic Monthly* and it precisely features the question of "reform" and the impact of "modern ideas" that Nietzsche picks out in *Ecce Homo*. It was only in 1980 that the German translation was published by Sander Gilman in *Nietzsche-Studien* (Gilman 1980, 408-431) and Gilman is the first and, to my knowledge, the only commentator to date on what he called the most important source for Nietzsche's late interest in Emerson (Gilman 407).<sup>279</sup> Gilman identifies the conflict between individualism and collectivism and, like many others, presents Emerson, and to some extent Nietzsche, as an "individualist," speaking of Emerson's "transzendentelem Individualismus." (Gilman 407) However, this is problematic (although not wrong), because in this very essay, as in "The Transcendentalist" and "New England Reformers," Emerson not only separates himself from the so called "transcendentalist movement," but shows how it was no movement at all but an accumulation of solitary readers and conversationalists holding informal meetings: "I suppose," he says, "all of them were surprised at this rumor of a school or sect, and certainly at the name of Transcendentalism, given nobody knows by whom, or when it was first applied." (*Historic Notes* (HN), 344) This statement is symptomatic of Emerson's lifelong discomfort to join any reform movements, although sympathetic to their causes, that would always threaten his sense of individuality and independence, and his equally

troubled relationship to the public – including his late status as arguably *the* public intellectual of the United States during the 1870s.

Ironically, during the 1840's, when Emerson was most intensely invested in the so-called Transcendental movement, his writings are the least reformistic, more abstract and individualistic. Later, in CL, we had noticed the presence of “reform” in the very first paragraph and interpreted “Fate” as a text in which Emerson pulls the question of freedom and fate back to the issue of slavery – and the abolition of slavery was, by far, Emerson's biggest hope in reforming American society – while at the same time choosing to not make the issue of slavery explicit in the essay.<sup>280</sup> This ambiguity allows Emerson's readers of course to happily label him either as an idealist, a reformist, or individualist.<sup>281</sup> But in what way is Emerson “individualist”? Emerson's HN shows that he uses his own biography as a vantage point for a historical analysis of the individual as an idea. From the very beginning of the essay, Emerson makes a historical claim that “ancient manners were giving way,” (HN 529) and critical philosophy and the philological method caused a “schism” between past and future, old and new, as he calls it, the thought behind revolutions, the rise of the modern “spirit”: “das Individuum wird zur Welt” (409) (the individual is the world. [HN 529]). Emerson wishes to estimate the impact of these modern ideas.

The idea of the individual is however inextricably tied to the era that we call modernity. By that I do not mean an abstract set of concepts and ideas but an identifiable period in history that has been dictated by the rise of capitalism and the bourgeois class (itself allied with the rise of Protestantism) and the subsequent effects of this development. Emerson, who does not often talk about capital, picks out one of these

effects that is closer to his interests and what he calls the “German erudition” (the rise of the critical and philological method) in his journal.<sup>282</sup> Emerson recounts the enthusiastic impact of German philology on American students: “The novelty of the learning lost nothing in the skill and genius of his relation, and the rudest undergraduate found a new morning opened to him in the lecture-room of Harvard Hall.” (331)<sup>283</sup> The historicization of literary texts, above all the disintegration of the Bible and the classics makes that which used to seem “superhuman,” exposed as a cheap trick, written by ordinary minds.<sup>284</sup> Whether this is an exaggeration on Emerson’s part or simply an exemplary case for a larger shift in modern culture is up for debate. Nietzsche at least put great significance to the rise of the historical spirit, simultaneously pointing out its dangers and opportunities; but so did Emerson and his favorite student, Thoreau. In her study on Emerson’s *Romantic Style*, Julie Ellison estimates that, for Emerson, “the possibilities of doing away with the illusion of originality outweigh the disappointments.” (Ellison 1984, 80) It is, Emerson writes, as if “modern society was composed of the debris of the foregone structures of religion & politics a mixed composite bronze just as the soil we till is made up of the degraded mountains of the elder world” (JMN VII, 304).<sup>285</sup> But this situation is not undesirable to Emerson. As Ellison rightly points out, “Once a work has been disintegrated into its sources, it can be absorbed into the self, [...]. Interpretation is taking possession; the reader is ‘a principle of selection & gathers only what is like him as unerringly as a sparrow builds her nest’ (JMN VI, 222)” (quote after Ellison 81). Emerson’s appropriating and selective reader becomes possible in the modern era. The myths of old have been destroyed via the methods of philology and opening up the field of interpretation. The issue no longer is to separate the original text from interpretation

but bad interpretation from good ones (that which is new and creative). “Make your own Bible,” he says, “Select & Collect all those words & sentences that in all your reading have been to you like the blast of trumpet out of Shakespear, Seneca, Moses, John, & Paul” (JMN V, 186). What is left to do is the invention of new myths, new games, new festivals from the rubbles of the past, which is one way to characterize Nietzsche’s Zarathustra. In a letter to Heinrich Köselitz, Nietzsche in fact called his Zarathustra his “holy book,” a challenge to all religions (BVN-1883, 405), without actually specifying what type of text it really is.<sup>286</sup>

Modern life simultaneously presents a dire situation and the opportunity for new experiments. It is only under these modern conditions that, on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, Thoreau can attempt his own “experiment in living” at Walden Pond and declare that “man's capacities have never been measured; nor are we to judge of what he can do by any precedents, so little has been tried.” (Thoreau 10) Emerson’s (and his disciples,’ Nietzsche’s and Thoreau’s) spirit of experimentation, worked out in their styles and hopes for humanity, relies on the very concept of individuality while also criticizing this very foundation. The modern individual, after all, despite its revolutionary powers that destroy the previous ties of society, is a product of the bourgeoisie, the individual of the marketplace. Emerson is fully aware of this process: “The nobles shall not any longer, as feudal lords,” he describes, “have power of life and death over the churls, but now, in another shape, as capitalists, shall in all love and peace eat them up as before. Nay, government itself becomes the resort of those whom government was invented to restrain.” (HN 530) Capital has replaced the nobles with merchants who,

under the guise of love, peace, freedom, equality, rationality, and law, devour the lower classes. Nietzsche suspected this modern “soft power” in the passage from *Ecce Homo*.<sup>287</sup>

As is obvious now, Emerson welcomes some of the effects of the capitalist economy, the undermining of authority and tradition, the (in principle) disappearance of moral self-restraint, the unlimited release of new permeable forces, and never seen before production. Capitalist development and the desire for expansion and growth fits Emerson’s self eerily well. As Cornel West pointed out, the “Emersonian self – much like the protean, mobile, performative self promoted by market forces – literally feeds off other people.” (West 1989, 27) Emerson self-reportedly dreamed being this all-devouring self himself, as we had noted earlier. The wiping away of the past, of social relations (as an individualist paradise), in favor of a clashing of individual wills, of friends that meet eye to eye, now appears as a twisted version of Emerson’s and Nietzsche’s mythologies. But abstract correlations are one thing, economic realities another. Emerson’s key goals, in his texts and most human relations – provocation, stimulation, and appropriation – sustain the self in an environment that is, economically, out of the individual’s control, and which functions as the very condition of possibility for these goals to begin with. As a result, Emerson’s self sustains the economic relations (competition among every one of society’s members) it was, partially, designed to resist. Neither nostalgic, nor uncritical of the present, Emerson’s “excessively prospective perspective and exorbitantly parochial preoccupation with America enabled him to adopt the major tropes of the market culture and attempt to turn them against certain aspects of this culture.” (West 26) Thus, West concluded, Emerson’s mythic self “converges yet never fully coincides with the instrumental self engendered by market forces.” (West 27-28) Capitalist society is for

Emerson, as was for Marx, simultaneously a liberation of the self, its drives, powers, and productive forces, and threatening this very self. As such, Emerson describes capitalist economy, especially in the aftermath of the depression (1837-1843), as “a system of selfishness [...] of distrust, of concealment, of superior keenness, not of giving but of taking advantage.” (Quoted in Gilmore 1982, 67) Emerson can criticize the realities of the market economy *and* ask, in “Self-Reliance,” “Are they my poor?” because the latter is not an argument or advice but a provocation itself. The same is true for Nietzsche’s often “scandalous” remarks.

But the highpoint of Emerson’s HN is his discussion of a utopian community called Brook Far, an anarchistic experiment in communal living based on Charles Fourier’s philosophy in 1841 (when Emerson published *Self-Reliance*) with around 80 to 90 people (one of which was Nathaniel Hawthorne, who turned his experiences into his novel *The Blithedale Romance*). As a matter of fact, this is not just an interesting social experiment that Emerson picks out, but he thought about joining the community himself, frequently contributing to the community’s journal, but ultimately deciding against it, and remaining “a parasite, with all the parasites on this rotten system of property” (Quoted in Allen, 365). Now in retrospect, Emerson considered it a “noble and generous movement,” “an experiment of better living,” while also remarking ironically: “It was a perpetual picnic, a French Revolution in small, an Age of Reason in a patty-pan” (HN 361, 365) by “happy, hapless anarchists.” (HN 369) Although the experiment ended after 6 or 7 years, it was for Emerson “symptomatic of the times” and representative of a larger spirit of experimentation:

I please myself with the thought that our American mind is not now eccentric or rude in its strength, but is beginning to show a quiet power, drawn from wide and abundant sources, proper to a Continent and to an educated people. [...] [Our] genius is not a lucky accident, but normal, and with broad foundation of culture, and so inspires the hope of steady strength advancing on itself, and a day without night. (HN 370-371)

These remarks have become part of America's mythological identity as an ongoing experiment.<sup>288</sup> But they also reflect the real tendencies of Emerson's times. Emerson's seemingly extreme individualism or anarchic lines of thought were not out of the ordinary among other American thinkers. For instance, Josiah Warren, often called the first American anarchist and an American Proudhon (after the famous French Anarchist philosopher), established several utopian anarchist communities between 1833 and 1860, called the "Modern City" or the "Village of Equity" (which proved to be the first anarchic society of any modern country), some of which lasted several decades, and published the first Anarchic periodical, *The Peaceful Revolutionist*. Warren believed the "individual is by nature a law unto himself," that "every man his own church" and that laws by the state are violations. These principles impressed John Stuart Mill who took the phrase "the sovereignty of the individual" from Warren.<sup>289</sup>

In this way, Emerson's own anarchic tendencies, his "self-reliance," are expressions of the spirit of the times.<sup>290</sup> Yet, at the same time, he remains skeptical at the experiments of figures like Warren and prefers instead the individual experiments of a Thoreau. Charles Fourier, for instance, whose philosophy provided the blueprint for the Brook Farm planned community, Emerson says, "treats man as a plastic thing, something



that may be put up or down, ripened or retarded, moulded, polished, made into solid or fluid or gas, at the will of the leader;" (HN 353) but in doing so, Fourier "skips the faculty of life, which spawns and scorns system and system-makers; which eludes all conditions; which makes or supplants a thousand phalanxes and New Harmonies with each pulsation." (HN 354) This spontaneity and anarchism Emerson sees personified in Thoreau, who brought "every day a new proposition," and whose "independence made all others look like slaves." (HN 357-358) Thus, Emerson always seems to bring his critique of society back to the individual as the sole author of its own experiments.

But the individual itself requires a critique and Emerson attempts it. The cultural fact that the individual became "the world," Emerson says, "is a sword such as was never drawn before. It divides and detaches bone and marrow, soul and body, yea, almost the man from himself. It is the age of severance, of dissociation, of freedom, of analysis, of detachment. Every man for himself." (HN 529) Emerson's final remark is a clean and unpretentious summary of the era of free enterprise, which Max Horkheimer called the "so-called era of individualism" (Horkheimer 1947, 138) where individuality, subordinated to self-preserving reason, shakes itself loose from metaphysical trappings and becomes merely a synthesis of the individual's material interests. As such, individualism "is the very heart of the theory and practice of bourgeois liberalism" (Horkheimer 1947, 138), coupled with modern rationality ("think for yourself" as in "what do I get out of it?") and a society as progressing through the automatic interaction of divergent interests in a free market. There has never been a period in which more things were produced, including new needs and desires. But Emerson's individual is not identical to the bourgeois liberalism, because it would contradict his idea that "sin is the

only limitation.” Bourgeois liberalism, promising to liberate the individual, limits it. What kind of ways of life, projects and experiments can humans conceive in an environment where all powers are used to pursue a small array of goals or self-interests, limiting the options for new experiments instead of multiplying them?

For Horkheimer, “Thoreau's escape to the woods was conceived by a student of the Greek polis rather than by a peasant.” (Horkheimer 1947, 131) The Greek hero, a prelude to the modern individual and a fitting description of the Emersonian self, is “daring and self-reliant, he triumphs in the struggle for survival and emancipates himself from tradition as well as from the tribe.” (Horkheimer 1947, 130) But as such, he appears to us as a “naïve egoism,” a “boundless ego;” while being clever, cheating, and acting on his desire, he is almost childlike and innocent (the very innocence that Emerson and Nietzsche within Emerson’s text continue to praise as self-reliance, often alluding to the Greeks). The modern individual does not adhere to Emerson’s self-reliance but to conformity by structural necessity. In a culture of commodities and consumerism, “the principle of conformity emancipates itself from its individualistic veil, is openly proclaimed, and raised to the rank of an ideal per se.” (Horkheimer 139) Modern culture becomes inherently conservative.<sup>291</sup> Ironically, Horkheimer, in his history of the individual, selects American pragmatism, especially Dewey, as the formidable symptom of capitalist society: “Pragmatism reflects a society that has no time to remember and meditate.” (Horkheimer 1947, 44) For pragmatism, “there is only one kind of experience that counts, namely, the experiment” (Horkheimer 49).<sup>292</sup> Emerson, often taken to be a precursor of American pragmatism, however, uses the notion of experiment and

individuality differently. Emerson's declaration of war against limitation is taking the promise of individualism and freedom literally and using it as a form of critique.

From this point of view of the Emersonian devourer, it makes sense why Nietzsche describes himself as an "immoralist" and attacks modern morality. For Kant and Mill, the two representatives of moral theory till today, the question of an ethical theory is no longer what a good life is but whether a singular action is morally right. This micrological account is representative of a society that apotheosizes bourgeois individuality, "choices" and "responsibility" (especially when it makes us feel better about the misery of others). The other side of modern morality, represented by Schopenhauer, which apotheosizes compassion, in some sense a counterreaction against the other two, has the same outcome: limitation without attacking the roots of the social and cultural problems. Furthermore, it is easy to see how the latter continues the Christian value of compassion. For Nietzsche, however, Kant is similarly entangled in Christian (Protestant) ethics. Again, the American context provides us with an excellent case in vitro. The more radical individualism in Puritan theology also increased the burden of moral conscience and accountability – liberty and guilt go hand in hand in the new world. Protestantism's stress on an unmediated, direct, relation between a person and God (who was declared "unknowable"), without the authority of the church, is fertile soil for capitalistic ventures, the bourgeois class, and a sort of instrumentalization of Kant's "Sapere Aude." God had lost the power to bind society, churches, as Emerson said in LSA and Nietzsche echoed in FW, have become the tombs and the sepulchers of God. Protestant individualism, especially the more extreme forms of Puritanism that migrated to the United States, more "secular" than other forms of Christianity, became one "of the

most fundamental moments of American culture” (Langman & Lundskow 2016, 29). Tocqueville, after all, was the first to have used the term “individualism” systematically in his observations of American life. But Protestant individualism historically made a similar turn since it “facilitated self-interested economic behavior that eventually became detached from its religious roots such that consumerism replaced asceticism.” (Langman & Lundskow 2016, 230)<sup>293</sup>

The immoral experimentalism that Nietzsche claims for himself and that simultaneously decries the limitation of the bourgeois individual, society and morality, and designs a new, mythic, all-devouring self, is Emerson’s American anti-American self. Bourgeois liberalism, capitalist ventures, the individual as liberated marketplace competitor, and Protestant work ethics form the cultural fabric of Emerson’s America, creating the myths of its own founding as a nation. These myths contribute to what Robert Bellah had called a “civil religion” that “has its own prophets and its own martyrs, its own sacred events and sacred places, its own solemn rituals and symbols” (Bellah 1988, 115), including for instance the Declaration of Independence, revered as a holy document, and enshrined in a vitreous sarcophagus in the National Archives Museum. But as Emerson reminds us, most people make “the flippant mistaking for freedom of some paper preamble like a Declaration of Independence” (CL 24) which, instead of liberating, imprisons society. But freedom is still, for Emerson, albeit not in its name but as a reality, the goal. “Every thought,” he says, “is also a prison; every heaven is also a prison. Therefore we love the poet, the inventor, who [...] has yielded us a new thought. He unlocks our chains and admits us to a new scene.” (EII 34)

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The first and last chapter dealt with the larger issue of America in 19<sup>th</sup> century German thinking, in Nietzsche's, and in Emerson's works. We have seen how, on the one hand, Emerson's texts are subject to appropriation by German authors, integrated into the German romantic movement, German idealism, and aestheticism around the turn of the century. Even in appreciative readings of Emerson, he was either "Germanized," stressing the influence from the German romanticism or idealism, or criticized for not being "German" enough, emphasizing his "Americanness" (again this was used as an argument for and against him). However, on the other hand, Emerson himself makes use of appropriation and indeed champions it as one of his most fundamental textual techniques. The best readings of Emerson, in fact, affirmed not only that he can be appropriated with ease, but that his style invites such appropriation or theft. In the last chapter, we have seen how Emerson's sense of appropriation mirrors, although without being identical to, one of the founding myths of America, that of the Western frontier. We have also seen how aspects of this Emersonianized myth entered Nietzsche's Zarathustra: the transformative and renewing qualities of nature, the praising of power (found in nature), the critique of the modern state, economy, and, of course, religion and morality.

Nietzsche's appropriating readings of Emerson, however, began at the very beginning of his journey as a writer in 1862, outlasted, even stimulated his flirtation with

Schopenhauer as well as his break with his intellectual mentor. From the very beginning, Emerson's influence manifested itself in Nietzsche's texts in a metatextual manner. Nietzsche's early texts (and that is true of Emerson's own writings) were predominantly concerned with the power of influence, whether in the form of "fate," "moods," or "educators." This established a curious and paradoxical relationship between Emerson and Nietzsche, the simultaneous influence *and* desire not to be influenced. It was, for Nietzsche, Emerson's "American" perspective to break all ties to a tradition, to free itself from all influences by means of appropriation that simultaneously declares some sort of independence while remaining inevitably drawn to influences of all sorts precisely in the movement of turning away from them. Writing in this entrapment in some way provided the conditions for Nietzsche's experiments in style that began in 1876. Nietzsche's aphoristic experiments, like Emerson's texts, are open-ended and reader-oriented, aiming at provocation and stimulation. The lack of a fixed doctrine, argument, or thesis can be considered the foundation of Nietzsche's project that begins in the mid-70s. His central project in MA, albeit vague at times, works textually on the possibility of a future transformation of what he calls the "nearest things" or what we might call the ordinary world. To pursue this project, we have shown, Nietzsche takes almost all of the key motifs from Emerson, "the wanderer" as a figure of the "free spirit" or philosopher, Nietzsche's imagined and imaginary readers, "the morning" or "dawning" as a figure of transition and transformation, and "nearness" as that which requires such a transformation. The central essay that Nietzsche used in this context was Emerson's "Experience," where Emerson simultaneously laments the inability to change the world, to converse thought (writing) into practical power, and entertains the hope for that

very event. In this way, Nietzsche's and Emerson's unique styles demand nearly everything from their readers, who, Nietzsche admits, do not (yet) exist. But it is only through readers that their texts can converse into practical power.

The importance of experimentation, transformation, and appropriation then only increases in Nietzsche's later works with a renewed intensity of reading Emerson. The entire project of Nietzsche's FW could be described as a call for experimentation with humanity and to reveal and remove all limitations for human possibilities. Here we saw how Nietzsche begins his attempt to "destroy morality" with Emerson's help, which includes a revaluation of egoism, of immorality and power, a new conception of the self as multiple, a naturalization of humanity by reinscribing nature as innocent and pain as a stimulus for life (against the "pessimism" that Nietzsche and Emerson diagnose in their times). On a textual level, Nietzsche puts into practice what Emerson preaches by appropriating several phrases of Emerson's into his own voice, blurring the distinction between himself and Emerson. This forgetting of the self is consistent with their revaluation of egoism. While Emerson and Nietzsche revalue the value of egoism and irresponsibility (affirmation of appropriation), they simultaneously undermine the "ego" with their call for experimentation. Appropriation itself implies that whatever is appropriated and assimilated by an ego cannot, by definition, be part of the ego, but must remain "other" and will be open to further appropriation by others. Nietzsche's "thought of the eternal return" imagines the self as a site for experimentation by living through many selves. Appropriation of the past, of past experiments in living, are the means for increasing experimentation for the future of humanity, which corresponds with Emerson's repeated call for the desire to forget oneself and begin anew. These utopian

moments, some may say, do not fit the standard image of Nietzsche as a “master of suspicion” (as Paul Ricoeur called him), a master critic, and psychologist. But we precisely tried to show that, through the practice of appropriation, Nietzsche always remains something other than “Nietzsche,” always elusive. In the end, we might even be tempted to declare that Nietzsche has been Emerson all along.



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## APPENDIX A: NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> This organization still exists today. Originally founded by Prof. Christian Großmann in memory of Gustav Adolf II. of Sweden, the protestant king who died in the Thirty-Year War, the trust's mission is to address the Protestant diaspora in and outside of Germany. Today it is known as the "Gustav-Adolf-Werk e.V.", a trust fund of the Protestant Church in Germany to support Protestants in exile and under the threat of persecution.

<sup>2</sup> Since no translation of this text exist to date, all translations into English are my own.

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed discussion of Cooper's reception, see Karlheinz Rossbacher's *Lederstrumpf in Deutschland* (1972).

<sup>4</sup> Hegel makes these remarks of course under the condition that, "as a Land of the Future, it has no interest for us here, for, as regards History, our concern must be with that which has been and that which is. Regarding Philosophy, on the other hand, we have to do with that which (strictly speaking) is neither past nor future, but with that which is, which has an eternal existence — with Reason; and this is quite sufficient to occupy us." (46)

<sup>5</sup> The only texts dealing with this topic in fact are Seidler's brief article (1975) and Ratner-Rosenhagen's book (2012), but none of them mentions this document.

<sup>6</sup> Timpe offers the explanation that Emerson did not appeal to the general public, because Emerson's style was not that of a narrative: "he [Emerson] was not concerned with the frontier or the wild west, he was not offering novel material to the Germans" (Timpe

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1964, 70). Thus, in terms of the “Lederstrumpf”-imaginary of the States, Emerson did not fulfill the stereotypical beliefs about American life.

<sup>7</sup> The articles on and reviews of Emerson’s work in the 40s and 50s are few. The first discussion of Emerson calls him “Ein Philosoph auf Massachusetts” (*Magazin*, November 5, 1841) and the first discussion of his essays was published in the late Romantic journal “Athenäum” (October 23, 1841). Aside from Grimm’s enthusiastic essays, the most noteworthy articles include a review of Emerson’s *English Traits* in which the reviewer contends that Emerson brings us almost nothing that German literature and art did not already offer. Emerson’s texts are inorganic, without structure, “a genuine boiling and fermenting, an impetuous urging and driving, a luxuriant exuberance which is in danger of smothering in its own fullness” (quote after Hewett-Thayer 1958, 50). In another review, “Transatlantische Philosophen” (*Magazin*, July 21, 1861), E. S. von Mühlberg picks Emerson as representative of America as “the land from which the message of freedom of thought, word, and deed, transplanted into practical life, resounded over Europe.”

<sup>8</sup> This rather romantic-nationalistic tendency does not exclude but rather fits von Arnim’s other tendency to emphasize Emerson’s dedication to “humanity” (“Menschheit”) as a whole.

<sup>9</sup> In one of the first anonymous reviews of Emerson’s *Essays* in German, the reviewer wrote: “Wie Carlyle deutsch und geistig gross für gleichbedeutende Begriffe erklärt so ertheilt auch Emerson unsrer Nation das ehrenvolle Zeugnis, dass von ihr das Tiefste und das Höchste auf geistigem Gebiet geleistet sei und geleistet werde.” (Anonymous 1858, 100)

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<sup>10</sup> For instance, a 1896 edition of three Emersonian essays translates “Over-Soul” in the spirit of German Idealism as “Weltseele” and Wilhelm Weigand writes in his introduction: “Sein [Emerson’s] ausgesprochener Idealismus, den er dem Studium der klassischen deutschen Philosophie verdankt, kennt keine Nachgiebigkeit oder Zwitterstellung; aber dabei steht Emerson mit festen Füßen in einer ganz bestimmten jungen Welt, auf dem Boden seines Heimatlandes, dem er die Unbefangenheit seines Blickes verdanken mag.” (Weigand 1896, 3-4)

<sup>11</sup> “[...] der sich hinwendet, wohin er will, und auch nicht einmal ahnt, dass man sich vor Unterdrückung zu scheuen oder vor Missdeutung zu hüten hätte.” (Grimm 1857, 93-94)

<sup>12</sup> Although Grimm notices Emerson’s cosmopolitan, humanistic tendencies, he also wishes to fix Emerson to an American identity, and vice versa a German national identity that cannot, so he says, understand Emerson without translation: Emerson speaks as an American to Americans, and his messages need to be said differently to Germans. What he means with that becomes more concrete when discussing the term “representative” in Emerson’s title. Grimm mentions all of Emerson’s essays on the chosen representative men (101f.), Plato (the philosopher), Swedenborg (the mystic), Montaigne (der Skeptiker), Shakespeare (der Dichter), Napoleon (der Weltmann), the man of the world, und Goethe (der Schriftsteller). “Representative,” Grimm says, has a distinct political meaning, referencing the unique democratic culture of the United States: “Wo überhaupt Menschen sind, da bilden sie einen Wahlkörper, aus Vielen geht Einer hervor, der die andern repräsentiert, und so [...] gleichsam zum Urthypus eines geistigen Staates wird, der ihm nachfolgt.” (102) These great men, Grimm paraphrases Emerson, make the world



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“healthy” or “sound” or “well” (“gesund”). Life is sweet and bearable alone in the belief that such a community exist, to live with those who are greater than us, says Grimm.

<sup>13</sup> Nietzsche calls the English “dumb” and Americans “necessarily superficial (hastiness)” (KGB 25, 112).

<sup>14</sup> In another note from 1880, Nietzsche remarks that for Americans the beautiful is “das Ruhig-Rührende” (quietly heart-warming); the beautiful is identical to a sleeping pill, whatever anesthetizes the audience. Nietzsche sees this as the consequence of the American “business seriousness” and “pragmatism,” the hunting for dollars, and thus the need for recuperation (KGB 7, 194).

<sup>15</sup> To support this claim, Schmidt quotes, without marking it as a quote, Emerson’s *Experience* in a quite free translation: “Wir sind es müde, gespensterhaft durch die Welt zu huschen...” (“We are tired to hush ghostlike through the world...”). The original text says: “Ghostlike we glide through nature, and should not know our place again.” (E 46) Schmidt deliberately adds the “we are tired.”

<sup>16</sup> See also Julius Simon, *Emerson in Deutschland*, 1851–1932, Junker und Dünhaupt, 1937, 146–65.

<sup>17</sup> “The decades between 1890 and 1910 were witness to the most varied, intense, and original analyses of Emerson’s writings by German literary and cultural critics, theologians, and philosophers. Within that time span, the Emerson Centennial of 1903 occasioned at least thirty mostly appreciative essays in journals and newspapers all over Germany and Austria.” (Friedl 2015, 136) Although these essays knew Emerson’s relation to Kant and Goethe, they highlighted Emerson’s religious mysticism (Meister Eckhart), and skepticism (Montaigne). Major studies appeared throughout the 20s. For

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example, Paul Sakmann's book-length study which sees "Emerson as the ultimate and necessary product of Protestant nonconformity, as skeptical mystic, as a philosopher of nature who integrates Spinoza, Rousseau, Goethe, and Schelling and prepares the way for Nietzsche and modern naturalism." (Friedl 137)

<sup>18</sup> See Leo Berg, Friedrich Nietzsche. Studie. Deutschland Nr. 9, Berlin, 1889, p.148ff., 168ff.

<sup>19</sup> Berg, for instance, does not even distinguish between Emerson and Carlyle who he sees as "verzweifelte Realisten, für die der Erfolg Recht hat und gerechtfertigt werden muss." (Berg 1889, 33)

<sup>20</sup> Although he too overestimates Carlyle's influence on Emerson (while also arguing for a German "origin" of transcendentalism), he notes their main difference in their "Weltanschauung": "Carlyle schreibt fast immer aus dem Gefühl heraus: die Welt geht über kurz oder lang zum Teufel; Emerson erklärt in einem Briefe an Carlyle: 'Meine ganze Philosophie, die sehr wirklich ist, lehrt Selbstbescheidung und Optimismus.'" (Engel, 589)

<sup>21</sup> It was only around Emerson's centennial in 1903 that a "Gesammelte Werke" were published in Germany by the Eugen Diederichs Verlag.

<sup>22</sup> For that same tendency, see Michaud 1924 (1910), 414-421.

<sup>23</sup> Biedenkapp published several such essays in a short amount of time: Biedenkapp, Georg. "Ein Amerikanischer Denker," *Deutsche Zeitung* (Berlin), no. 26, 1903. Biedenkapp, Georg. "Emerson über Erziehung," *Pädagogische Zeitung* (Berlin), XXXII (1903), 67-69. Biedenkapp, Georg. "Emerson's Politische Anschauungen," *Berliner Tageblatt. Beilage Der Zeitgeist*, no. 12 (Mar. 2, 1903).

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<sup>24</sup> Indeed, Emerson's status in these words from Holmes was already known among German critics as August Weiss reported in 1889 that Emerson's "American Scholar" represented "eine geistige Unabhängigkeitserklärung Amerikas" (420) The two most famous addresses that brought Emerson this status of a cultural icon, "The American Scholar," and the "Divinity School Address," were both available in German at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century [see Ralph Waldo Emerson. *Essays, Erster Teil, übersetzt und mit einer einleitenden Studie versehen von Dr. Karl Federn, Halle an der Saale, Otto Hendel*, year not given.] The "Kunstwart" quotes the DVS with the words: "Wir können von einem andern Geiste nimmermehr belehrt, wir können von ihm nur angeregt werden" (1903, 218) The author comments: "Der Persönlichkeitskultus steht für Emerson auch im Mittelpunkt der Gedanken. Er ist Mystiker, der in allem Seelischen und Körperlichen nur Offenbarungen des grossen Geistes sieht, in nichts aber eine gewissere, als in den tiefsten und geheimsten Regungen der eigenen Seele, die ihm deshalb von allen Autoritäten für den Einzelnen als die höchste erscheint [...] Er ist durchaus Aristokrat..." (1903, 218)

<sup>25</sup> Similarly, see Geiger, Albert. 'Eine Philosophie des Optimismus R. W. Emerson,' *Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung* (München), no. 79 (1903), pp. 49-52, no. 80, pp. 60-62.

<sup>26</sup> Peter Altenberg. Emerson: Betrachtung zu einer Stelle aus Emersons "Die Kreise", *Kunst: Halbmonatsschrift für Kunst und alles andere. Zeitschrift für Kunstschaffen und Kunstleben*, Nr. 1, Wien, 1903, Seite 6.

<sup>27</sup> "Die Menschen möchten gesichert sein! Wehe den Gesicherten! Nur insoweit sie es NICHT sind, ist einige Hoffnung vorhanden für sie - - Menschen zu werden!" The other passage Altenberg discusses, is representative of Emerson's appropriative self, but it *can* be read as a call for meditation, if taken out of context: "Nur das was wir IN UNS haben,

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können wir auch AUSSER UNS erblicken!” Thus, a passage that seems revolutionary and destructive, turns into a reflective and meditative moment.

<sup>28</sup> Wilhelm Weigand, who commented on Emerson previously, described the experience of reading Nietzsche with similar words: Nietzsche’s aphorisms “schlugen wie der Blitz in meine Seele, und aus der knappen Sprache klang mir ein Rhythmus entgegen, den ich noch vor keinem deutschen Buch empfunden hatte.” (Weigand 1940, 14f.)

<sup>29</sup> Carl von Gleichen-Russwurm agrees: “Emerson zieht aus der Welt des Glaubens einen ernsten, starken Optimismus, der niemals die ästhetische Höhe des wahren Philosophen verlässt und in dem Wort gipfelt: “Die Welt gehört dem, der in ihr mit Heiterkeit wandelt und nach hohen Zielen strebt.” Während der Pessimismus des grossen Slaven wie eine drohende Wetterwolke niederdrückend wirkt und nur apathische, kulturlose Ruhe schaffen könnte, ist Emersons Lehre über Gott und Natur ebenso anregend wie stärkend und enthält ein fortschrittliches Kulturprinzip.” (37)

<sup>30</sup> Friedell references here Emerson’s “Poet:” “Every thought is also a prison; every heaven is also a prison.”

<sup>31</sup> “Das Material, aus dem Emerson seine Essays und Reden zusammenstellt, bestand aus kurzen Tagebuchnotizen, die er auf lose Blätter schrieb. Als lose Blätter erscheinen seine Gedanken nun wieder vor den Augen des Lesers.” (Friedell 1906, 21-22)

<sup>32</sup> The essays feature “das überraschende Nebeneinander einer Fülle von Einzelaussprüchen, die zwar innerlich ein einheitlicher Geist, äusserlich nur der gemeinsame Titel lose zusammenzuhalten scheint, erklärt sich aus der ungewöhnlichen Methode von Emersons Arbeiten.” (Von Harbou 3) Von Harbou describes in detail:

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“Er war keiner von den Schriftstellern, die Sklaven ihrer Stimmungen sind und dieser harren, um ihnen zu gehorsamen, wenn sie rufen. Vielmehr wusste er sich die Stimmung jeder Stunde zu nutze zu machen und derselben ihren Segen zu entlocken. Er hatte die Gewohnheit, jeden Gedanken, der sich in ihm abklärte, jede Gesprächswendung, die ihn überraschend und wertvoll dünkte, jedes Citat, das ihm neu war, auf einem Zettel oder in einem Merkbüchlein niederzuschreiben, um es gelegentlich für seine Arbeiten zu verwerten. [...] Die so gesammelten Einzelschätze pflegte Emerson gelegentlich zu sichten und übersichtlich zu ordnen.” (Von Harbou 3)

<sup>33</sup> Hamsun says, like Nietzsche in 1888, that Emerson “ist ein Mann von Geschmack.” (151) “Seine Schriften wimmeln von jenen feinen, kurzen Sätzen, die nichts auf das Thema Bezügliche enthalten, die in sich aber etwas enthalten und zu seinem Werk gehören, etwas Besonderes, etwas Wohlgelungenes, Zusammenstellungen, Hindeutungen, crasse Dinge, einen Schuss, ein Fächeln, ein Wort; etwas, was nicht ein jeder so sagen könnte, was aber ein jeder vortrefflich gesagt findet.” (Hamsun 151)

<sup>34</sup> With this revaluation came also a preference for quality over priority (and origin), and a reinterpretation of the individual or, as I like to say, a new concept of the self. Theories of literary originality and literary property rely on the uniqueness and definability of the individual mind. McFarlane quotes Emerson’s *History* to show that Emerson, like Pater, often represented as a high “individualist”, considers each individual to share the same mind: “Every man is an inlet to the same...” – the revaluation of appropriation in turn involves a revaluation of the individual, not as a unique substance, but as commonality of all individual men.

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<sup>35</sup> Other wonderful aperçus from Friedell include the two following: “Die ganze Geistesgeschichte der Menschheit ist eine Geschichte von Diebstählen.” and “Das Genie ist der grosse Plagiator.” (Friedell 1907, 873)

<sup>36</sup> “Wir modernen Europäer stehen den modernen technischen Einrichtungen noch immer mit halb parvenühaften, halb misstrauischen Gefühlen gegenüber. Aber Emerson holt gerade aus diesen Gebieten seine poetischsten und treffendsten Vergleiche. [...] Es ist schwer zu sagen, ob Emerson mehr Idealist oder mehr Naturalist war.” (Friedell 1907, 875) Emerson cannot be compared to Kant, because he is not interested in the same questions of knowledge as Kant – when Emerson and Kant speak of “perception,” they mean completely different things. When Emerson remarks that, and Friedell quotes here Emerson’s “Experience,” “dass die ‘Realität’ für den Menschen etwas Unerreichbares ist” (876) and that pain “lehrt uns die Idealität der Dinge,” Emerson speaks here of our individual human experience, and not of “experience” as an epistemological category.

<sup>37</sup> Emerson is “too sincere to be consequential. Too universal: because he understands all points of view and therefore possesses all points of view.” (877)

<sup>38</sup> Friedrich Gundelfinger, “Emerson,” *Preussische Jahrbücher* 131 (Berlin: Georg Stilke, 1908), 252-259.

<sup>39</sup> In contrast to Gundolf’s interpretation of Emerson, consider Ernst Robert Curtius’ evaluation of Emerson. Although both contrast Emerson and Nietzsche, for Curtius, at a time when the fascist movement in Germany began to become more and more threatening, Nietzsche represents a thought that moves “forward” while Emerson’s is directed upward (see Curtius 1924, 201)

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<sup>40</sup> Wilhelm Weigand comments on Emerson's optimism: "Sein Optimismus, den ein Pessimist vielleicht ruchlos nennen wird, ist über alle Anfechtungen erhaben. In der Welt herrscht die Gerechtigkeit, mag es auch dem blöden Auge anders scheinen. Wir leben und weben im ewigen Werden des Geistes, der göttlicher Natur ist." (Weigand 1896, 5)

<sup>41</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Translated by Talcott Parsons, With an introduction by Anthony Giddens, Routledge 1992 (1930). [The final passage is from *Necessary Hints to Those That would Be Rich* (written 1736, Works, Sparks edition, II, p. 80), the rest from *Advice to a Young Tradesman* (written 1748, Sparks edition, II, pp. 87 ff.). The italics in the text are Franklin's.]

<sup>42</sup> See Emerson, Aufzeichnungen [Tagebuchnotizen], Deutsch von Carl Federn, in Wiener Rundschau, herausgegeben von Constantin Christomanos und Felix Rappaport, 5 Jahrgang, Nummer 11, (1. Juni) 1901, 225-227.

<sup>43</sup> Billington, Ray Allen. "The Image-Makers; Land of Savagery," "The Image-Makers: Land of Promise." *Land of Savagery – Land of Promise. The European Image of the American Frontier in the Nineteenth Century*. Norton, 1981, pp. 29-58, 59-78.

<sup>44</sup> Compare to this Emerson's "Circles": "We do not guess to-day the mood, the pleasure, the power of to-morrow, when we are building up our being." (E 320) Is it difficult to see how Emerson differs from, say a capitalist self-help industry and guide to increased productivity, like James T. McCay's *The Management of Time* (1959): "Tomorrow you promise yourself will be different, yet tomorrow is too often a repetition of today."?

<sup>45</sup> See Hillebrand 2016, 4.

<sup>46</sup> Aschheim, Steven. *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany 1890-1990*, University of California Press, Berkley and Los Angeles, 1992.

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<sup>47</sup> In the special issue dedicated to the Emerson/Nietzsche connection, Michael Lopez also speaks of a “collective amnesia” (Lopez 1997, 4-5)

<sup>48</sup> Shklar herself draws a line of contrast between Emerson as committed to a democratic man and Nietzsche’s anti-democratic position. This is indeed the main contrast often drawn by scholars. But let us not forget that Hitler and German Nazism admired the other darker side of America, the implementation of race-based laws, the systematic genocide of Native Americans in the romanticized Westward expansion. Both of these aspects however, are not Emerson’s.

<sup>49</sup> Lopez shows that Crane Brinton’s important “Nietzsche” (1941) lists a current bibliography, but intentionally excludes any materials related to Emerson, most importantly, Baumgarten’s work from the late 1930’s.

<sup>50</sup> Another often overlooked reason for the forgetfulness about the Emerson/Nietzsche connection might lie in the simple fact Emerson and Nietzsche inhabit often two different university departments at US and German institutions.

<sup>51</sup> At several passages, Baumgarten describes the uncanny way in which Nietzsche’s paraphrases of Emerson’s text bring it closer to the English original: „Der Text, wie er ihn in der Übersetzung las, regte zu dieser Korrektur an; die Nietzschesche Korrektur aber tut nichts anderes, als daß sie den weiteren Textzusammenhang bei Emerson richtig las, seinem eigentlichen Sinn vollauf zustimmte - und das eine Wort der Übersetzung, an das sie sich anschloß, verwarf. Die ganze Stelle enthielt denn auch eine vollständige Verkehrung des englischen Originals. Ein weiteres schönes Beispiel dafür, wie Nietzsche Emerson bis auf den Grund zu lesen verstand.“ (Baumgarten 118) This uncanniness is also noticed by Mason Golden, who in 2013 translated Nietzsche’s Emerson excerpts for



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the first time into English: “Nietzsche instinctively brings us closer to Emerson as we know him” (Golden 2013, 404)

<sup>52</sup> Stack’s remarks are all the more confusing as he places Nietzsche and Emerson in the movement of existentialist philosophy. Emerson’s surprisingly radical thought entered, Stack says, “directly into the bloodstream of this [the existential philosophical movement in Europe] by way of Nietzsche.” (VII) He says that existentialism is “indebted to Emerson’s assertive and demanding morality of sovereign individuality.” (9) Emerson is America’s “own domestic brand of existential thinker” (11) Stack’s interpretive approach is, from the beginning, artificially limited.

<sup>53</sup> Another problem with Stack’s study is his method: He identifies key themes in Nietzsche and compares them to Emerson, based on textual similarities. However, he does not consider the German translation of Emerson, nor does he truly consider other sources for Nietzsche’s themes and ideas, and he reads the texts out of their order and jumping back and forth. For him, the themes given to Nietzsche by Emerson, and often transformed by Nietzsche, transcend the individual texts – so he will jump from the *Gay Science*, to *Genealogy of Morals*, back to HH etc. He never reads a text completely, never really goes to any length to attempt an interpretation. Once having pointed out one “definite” influence, he goes to the next textual “evidence” or theme. Stack’s study is invaluable, without a doubt, but most of his “conclusions” are jumpy and hasty. The material he collects is overwhelming, and this is the major argument he comes back to again and again – he wishes to convince by presenting overwhelming evidence.

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<sup>54</sup> For example, Baumgarten says: “Emerson konnte Kritik des Christentums ohne Höhnen betreiben – [...]; zur ‚Selbst-befreiung‘ ein Buch „Menschliches-Allzumenschliches“ zu schreiben hatte er keinen Anlaß.” (Baumgarten 138)

<sup>55</sup> Hubbard: “Nietzsche war kein Emersonianer: er war Nietzsche. (1958, 178) Zavatta: “Ultimately, then, it would be inexact to speak of the effect of Nietzsche’s reading of Emerson in terms of the latter’s having exerted an “influence” on the former. Because these readings in Emerson did not, in fact, lead to Nietzsche’s adopting Emerson’s point of view. Rather, they led him to elaborate a philosophy authentically his own – that is to say, to free himself from every kind of influence. In essence Emerson, like every genuine educator, pushed Nietzsche on down a road that was Nietzsche’s alone to travel. He urged him, as a true friend does, to seek and to become his own self. The younger thinker’s reading of his American elder, then, did not result in Nietzsche’s becoming a second Emerson; rather, it saw to it that Nietzsche became Nietzsche.” (2019, 200-201)

<sup>56</sup> Jung speaks of “the psychology of so-called occult phenomena” and “cryptomnesia,” cited in Parkes (1996, 255-56, 441, no. 21).

<sup>57</sup> An example of this surprisingly productive aesthetic can be found in another German’s appropriation of American texts, Rolf Dieter Brinkmann, who found in the American poets of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, especially Frank O’Hara, a new post-modern attitude to texts: “Misunderstandings,” Brinkmann writes, “are none, but expand the comprehension of a thing, which has been ‘mis’-understood – they are directed aberrations, a striking-through of common associations” (Brinkmann 1982, 262-263) The goal is “to create something different than what had been intended out of what is available [...], to expand oneself [...].” (Brinkmann 1982, 211, 213). For a discussion of Brinkmann’s use of

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American poets of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, see Agnes C. Mueller's *Lyrik "made in USA": Vermittlung und Rezeption in der Bundesrepublik* (pp .101-152).

<sup>58</sup> Appropriation as an essential or proper feature of life is, of course, paradoxical, since by definition appropriation refers to the act of taking, incorporating, consuming which did *not* belong to oneself prior, and therefore cannot be part of any essence.

Appropriation therefore defies any essence. I am confident that Nietzsche knows this.

<sup>59</sup> "erste Eruption seines eigenen geistigen Wesens [...] wie ein Programm seines ganzen Lebens und Denkens." (Janz 98)

<sup>60</sup> "erste im eigentlichen Sinne philosophische Niederschrift"

<sup>61</sup> See Stack (180) and Zavatta who wants to "demonstrate that Nietzsche's redefinition of freedom as agency and his compatibilist approach to the problem of the will were already basically sketched out in the very earliest of his philosophical writings, set to paper when he was a 17-year-old Gymnasium pupil," referencing also MA and JGB (2019, 18).

<sup>62</sup> Ironically, Janz uses the image of the concentric circles from Emerson's essays without being aware of Emerson's influence: "Fast alle wichtigen Themen werden hier schon angeschlagen, und er wird von nun an nur aus immer weiter gespannten Kreisen und von immer grösseren Entdeckungsfahrten mit immer grösserer Leidenschaft und immer gewichtigerer Fracht von Einsichten stets wieder zu ihnen zurückkehren." (Janz 98) Janz never attributes to Emerson any significance, and describes Nietzsche's work as a whole as a "heftigen Streitgesprächs" with the "Haupt-Partner" Schopenhauer, Wagner, christliche Dogmatik, romantische Ästhetik und Geniegläubigkeit, aber auch politische Aktualität." (Janz 812)

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<sup>63</sup> For instance, the term “Übermensch” in this early lecture refers to Byron’s *Manfred*, who Nietzsche describes as a “Monolog eines Sterbenden” (BAW 2, 10), the expression of the “unglückliche Poesie des Weltschmerzes” (9). But weltschmerz will later be the exact opposites of whatever *Übermensch* means.

<sup>64</sup> Stack diplomatically puts it the following way: “Man is acted upon by the physical, historical, social, and cultural factors without and by the physiological and psychological factors within the self. Neither hold that man is absolutely free or absolutely unfree.” (Stack 191) This is spoken in such a general tone that it becomes an empty statement.

<sup>65</sup> Nietzsche, she says, “denied the existence of a “free will” understood as an unconditioned and undetermined will [causa sui] [...] while on the other hand redefining the concept of “freedom,” understanding it in terms of agency: for Nietzsche, from the very beginning, the “free” action is the action that proceeds from a true volition, that is to say, from a deliberate choice that is guided by values that are truly the agent’s own.” (Zavatta 2019, 18) But what is the difference between a “causa sui” and a “true volition”?

<sup>66</sup> Nietzsche’s encounter with Schopenhauer in 1965 presented to Nietzsche a first strong theory of causal determinism, which he adopts, and “which he was to persist in professing throughout all the rest of his life.” (Zavatta 2019, 30) Such absolute statements must be read with a pinch of skepticism.

<sup>67</sup> “Frage geistreiche Mediziner, sagt Emerson, wie viel Temperament nicht entscheidet und was es überhaupt nicht entscheidet? (BAW 2, 58) Again in “Willensfreiheit und Fatum”: “Auch Emmerson sagt: Immer ist der Gedanke vereint Mit dem Ding, das als sein Ausdruck erscheint.” (BAW 3, 61) The German translation of Emerson reads: “Die Menschen stecken im Körper wie in einer ledernen Scheide. Fragt Spurzheim, fragt die

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Doctoren, fragt Quetelet, ob die Temperamente *nichts* entscheiden? oder ob sie etwas *nicht* entscheiden?” (Highlighted in original) (FL 6)

<sup>68</sup> Emerson in translation: “Die Structur, die Formen und die Stärke des Rückgrats sind fatalistisch: der Schnabel des Vogels oder der Hirnschädel der Schlange bestimmen tyrannisch seine Richtung. So zwingt die Verschiedenheit der Rassen, der Temperamente, der Geschlechter, der Klimaten, der Aufschwung des Talentes, die Lebenskraft in gewissen Richtungen, es baut sich jeder Geist sein Haus, aber später beschränkt auch das Haus den Geist.” (FL 5-6)

<sup>69</sup> The German translation reads: “Lass tuns der schönen Nothwendigkeit Altäre bauen. Wenn wir dächten, die Menschen wären frei in dem Sinne, dass in einem einzigen Ausnahmefalle ein phantastischer Wille über das Gesetz der Dinge triumphiren sollte, so wäre es ganz eben so, als ob eines Kindes Hand die Sonne niederreißen könnte.” (FL 34)

<sup>70</sup> Nietzsche also seems to paraphrase the beginning of “Fate”: “Die Tätigkeit des Menschen aber beginnt nicht erst mit der Geburt, sondern schon im Embryon und vielleicht – wer kann hier entscheiden – schon in Eltern und Voreltern.” (BAW 2, 61)

Emerson: “We are fired with the hope to reform men. After many experiments we find that we must begin earlier,—at school. But the boys and girls are not docile; we can make nothing of them. We decide that they are not of good stock. We must begin our reform earlier still,—at generation: that is to say, there is Fate, or laws of the world.” (CL 5) The embryo as a figure of fate also appears in “Experience”: “Given such an embryo, such a history must follow.” (EII 55)

<sup>71</sup> The same problem applies to Emerson’s text. Emerson structured “Fate” into two distinct parts: one considers “fate” the determining factor, the other “freedom” to cancel

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out fate. In the first part, Emerson quotes the popular scientific theories of the times, phrenology, race science, statistics, Spurzheim and Quetelet, without allowing us to see whether he agrees or disapproves these theories. He clouds the reader's ability to determine his position.

<sup>72</sup> "Leset in guten medicinischen Werken die Charakteristik der vier Temperamente, und es wird euch scheinen, als ob ihr eure eignen, nicht ausgesprochenen, Gedanken vor euch hättet." (FL 6) In "Considerations by the Way," Emerson says similarly: "So much fate, so much irresistible dictation from temperament and unknown inspiration enters into it [life], that we doubt we can say anything out of our own experience whereby to help each other." (EII 246)

<sup>73</sup> "Mir hat sich die Frage der Zeiten in eine praktische Frage von der Lebensführung aufgelöst: Wie soll ich leben? Da wir nicht im Stande sind, die Zeiten zu begreifen, da unsere Messkunst die ungeheuren Schwingungskreise der herrschenden Ideen nicht berechnen noch ihre Rückkehr feststellen oder ihre Grundsätze versöhnen kann, da wir immer nur unserer eigenen Polarität zu gehorchen vermögen, so ist es menschlich schön für uns, unsere Laufbahn zu erwählen und zu berechnen, während wir ihre Richtung als einen unabänderlichen Rathschluss annehmen müssen." (FL 1-2)

<sup>74</sup> Nietzsche elaborates however on Emerson's "Schwingungskreise" found here at the beginning of Emerson's essay, which Nietzsche places in the middle of his essay: "Alles bewegt sich in ungeheuren immer weiter werdenden Kreisen um einander; der Mensch ist einer der innersten Kreise. Will er die Schwingungen der äußern ermessen, so muß er von sich und den nächst weitem Kreise[n] auf noch umfassendere abstrahieren. Diese nächst weitem sind Völker-, Gesellschaft- und Menschheitsgeschichte. Das

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gemeinsame Centrum aller Schwingungen, den unendlich kleinen Kreis zu suchen, ist Aufgabe der Naturwissenschaft; jetzt erkennen wir, da der Mensch zugleich in sich und für sich jenes Centrum sucht, welche einzige Bedeutsamkeit Geschichte und Naturwissenschaft für uns haben müssen.” (BAW 2, 57) Nietzsche therefore seems to take Emerson “apart.”

<sup>75</sup> Emerson only mentions religion as a sign of weakness for a society: “The one serious and formidable thing in nature is a will. Society is servile from want of will, and therefore the world wants saviours and religions.” (CL 31) And Nietzsche concurs: “Ueberhaupt sind ‘Ergebung in Gottes Willen’ und ‘Demut’ oft nichts als Deckmäntel für feige Furchtsamkeit, dem Geschick mit Entschiedenheit entgegenzutreten.” (BAW 2, 60)

<sup>76</sup> Stanley Cavell asked: “Could it be that the founder of American thinking, writing this essay in 1850, just months after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, whose support by Daniel Webster we know Emerson to have been unforgettably, unforgivingly horrified by, was in this essay, not thinking about the American institution of slavery? I think it cannot be” (Cavell 2003, 194)

<sup>77</sup> John Lysaker (2017) offers the most recent and detailed discussion of this trope in Emerson’s works (which dates back to 1961 and Philip Nicoloff’s *Emerson on Race and History*). He writes that “According to Emerson, temperament names a kind of native outlook on the world, even a kind of genius, a standpoint of view and value that renders certain worldly features conspicuous, others murky, even opaque. In Emerson’s terms, therefore, one’s race provides dispositionally operative ways of conducting life.” (Lysaker, 96) Thus, Emerson is a racialist in that he believes that races are real: “Not only are they part of nature and thus real in biological sense, they also carry a first- person

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reality, insofar as they institute temperaments that influence self- relations.” (Lysaker 100) However, other forces counter this “play of race” (90), that are civilization and credence: “Credence modulates race according to Emerson because it involves, recurringly, the ways in which we interpret and respond to what befalls us, to how I, for example, respond to being raced [...]. As a site of reception and response, credence is a site of possible transformation. Unhappy with what my race and civilization provide, I might disavow or at least countermand both and try to revise some or much of what they bequeath.” (Lysaker 91) Emerson’s essay performs this transposition by turning the Spirit of the Age into a practical question of credence or life, it chances it or risks it, essays it.

<sup>78</sup> In 1844, in “An Address on the Emancipation of the Negroes in the British West Indies,” Emerson had already demanded: “Language must be raked, the secrets of slaughter-houses and infamous holes that cannot front the day, must be ransacked, to tell what negro-slavery has been” (CW 10, 303). Emerson in 1844: “It is the objection of an inferiority of race. They who say it and they who hear it, think it the voice of nature and fate pronouncing against the Abolitionist and the Philanthropist” (ibid.).

<sup>79</sup> However, there still remains the troubling aspect of Emerson’s discourse: “And though nothing is more disgusting than the crowing about liberty by slaves, as most men are, and the flippant mistaking for freedom of some paper preamble like a Declaration of Independence or the statute right to vote, by those who have never dared to think or to act,—[...].” (CL 24)

<sup>80</sup> The link between freedom and power has of course been observed by others. Zavatta states that “Emerson’s claim is that whoever views themselves free will thereby become powerful. [...] For Nietzsche, Zavatta says, it is the powerful individual who feels



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himself or herself to be free; [...].” (2019, 66) But this cannot be true because Emerson says straightforwardly “power to him who power exerts” [introductory poem to “Compensation”] which is exactly what Zavatta attributes to Nietzsche. Furthermore, Zavatta misunderstands the concept of power, which is not “a feeling of personal attainment and achievement,” (Zavatta 2019, 66) but, as Emerson says in “Self-Reliance,” residing “in the moment of transition from a past to a new state, in the shooting of the gulf, in the darting to an aim.” (E 70) This is precisely the opposite of “personal attainment,” namely abandonment.

<sup>81</sup> “Ein vollkommener Mensch, stark in Kenntnissen und kühn in Thaten, ist das Ziel, nach welchem die Natur hinstrebt, und die Erziehung des Willens ist die Blüthe und Frucht all’ dieser Geologie und Astronomie.” (FL 36)

<sup>82</sup> This also seems a paraphrase from Emerson’s view of fatalism: “Our America has a bad name for superficialness. Great men, great nations, have not been boasters and buffoons, but perceivers of the terror of life, and have manned themselves to face it.” (CL 6)

<sup>83</sup> This reversal causes much confusion among commentators. For instance, Zavatta thinks that for Emerson “powerful” means to find “oneself capable of interpreting necessity to one’s own advantage” (Zavatta 2019, 66).

<sup>84</sup> “Der Schlüssel zu unserem Zeitalter mag dieser oder jener, oder ein anderer sein, wie die jungen Redner es auslegen; der Schlüssel zu allen Zeiten ist – Unvermögen; fortdauerndes Unvermögen bei der ungeheuren Mehrzahl der Menschen und selbst bei Helden, welche, mit Ausnahme einiger weniger leuchtenden Momente, in allen übrigen, wie die Anderen, Opfer des Gesetzes der Schwere, der Gewohnheiten und Furcht sind.

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Des Starken Stärke ist, dass die Menge nicht an Selbstvertrauen und selbstbewusste Thaten gewöhnt ist.” (FL 36)

<sup>85</sup> Zarathustra declares: “Und als ich meinen Teufel sah, da fand ich ihn ernst, gründlich, tief, feierlich: es war der Geist der Schwere, — durch ihn fallen alle Dinge.” (KSA 4: 49)

Zarathustra suggests instead to become light, to love oneself: “Für seinen Eigener ist nämlich alles Eigene gut versteckt; und von allen Schatzgruben wird die eigne am spätesten ausgegraben, — also schafft es der Geist der Schwere.” (KSA4: 242) Notice here the metaphoric use of treasures, minerals, and mining. In Emerson’s text we read: “A man should prize events and possessions as the ore in which this fine mineral is found; and he can well afford to let events and possessions and the breath of the body go, if their value has been added to him in the shape of power.” (CL 54) But what is essential here is that Zarathustra contrasts the love for oneself with guilt (induced by the words “good” and “evil”), and most importantly, a type of “strong” man: “Aber der Mensch nur ist sich schwer zu tragen! Das macht, er schleppt zu vieles Fremde auf seinen Schultern. Dem Kameele gleich kniet er nieder und lässt sich gut aufladen. [...] nun dünkt das Leben ihm eine Wüste!” (KSA4: 243)

<sup>86</sup> The early Nietzsche, on the other hand, seemed to have preferred these “fatalistic” beliefs over Christianity: “Wir finden, dass die an ein Fatum glaubenden Völker sich durch Kraft und Willensstärke auszeichnen” (BAW 2, 60) as opposed to people believing in God: “Nur die christliche Anschauungsweise vermag derartigen Weltschmerz hervorzubringen, einer fatalistischen liegt er sehr fern.” (BAW 2, 63)

<sup>87</sup> Emerson wrote, for instance: “The one serious and formidable thing in nature is a will. Society is servile from want of will, and therefore the world wants saviours and

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religions.” (CL 31) “Wille ist eine ernste und furchtbare Naturkraft. Die Gesellschaft ist kriechend, unterthänig, weil sie keinen eignen Willen hat, und deshalb braucht die Welt Erlöser und Religionen.” (FL 20)

<sup>88</sup> Nietzsche must also have recommended Emerson to his friends. In a letter from December 18<sup>th</sup>, 1864, Nietzsche’s life-long friend Carl von Gersdorff thanked Nietzsche for his recommendation of Emerson remarking that he plans to memorize entire passages from “Friendship” and other essays (Von Gersdorff 1934, 7).

<sup>89</sup> The first entry reads: “Alle unsre Wissenschaft entbehrt der menschlichen Seele. Das menschliche Herz interessirt uns mehr als die Wunder des Mikroskops. Grundgedanke der Wissenschaft Erweiterung des Menschen nach allen Seiten hin [...]” (BAW 2, 257-258) [All our science lacks a human side. The tenant is more than the house. Bugs and stamens and spores, on which we lavish so many years, are not finalities; and man, when his powers unfold in order, will take nature along with him, and emit light into all her recesses. The human heart concerns us more than the poring into microscopes, and is larger than can be measured by the pompous figures of the astronomer.” (CL 283)]

<sup>90</sup> “Alle erfolgreichen Leute waren in einem Dinge einig: sie waren Causalisten.” (BAW 2, 271) [“All successful men have agreed in one thing,—they were causationists.” (CL 55)] “Der erste Reichthum ist Gesundheit.” (BAW 2, 271) [“The first wealth is health.” (CL 57)] “Der Geist, dessen Richtung mit den Naturgesetzen parallel geht, befindet sich im Strome der Ereignisse und ist stark mit ihrer Kraft.” (BAW 2, 271) [“The mind that is parallel with the laws of nature will be in the current of events and strong with their strength.” (CL 57)]

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<sup>91</sup> Here is the English original next to the German translation by Mühlberg: “The lesson taught by the study of Greek and of Gothic art, of antique and of Pre-Raphaelite painting, was worth all the research,—namely, that all beauty must be organic; that outside embellishment is deformity.” (CL 291) [“Was wir aus dem Studium der griechischen und mittelalterlichen Kunst, der vor-Raphaelischen Malerei lernen, ist wohl des Forschens werth; nämlich, dass alle Schönheit organisch sein muss, dass äussere Verschönerung nur Missgestalt ist.” (FL 199)]

<sup>92</sup> Nietzsche excerpts this paragraph but leaving out the middle and shortening it: “Nichts was vollkommen oder starr, unveränderlich, ist, kann Interesse für uns haben, sondern nur, was mit dem Leben strömt, was im Bestreben ist, etwas Höheres zu erreichen. Schönheit ist eine Uebergangsperiode, wie wenn die Form eben bereit wäre, in andre Gestalten überzufließen. Jeder Stillstand, jede Ansammlung sind Gegensätze zum Fließen.” (BAW 2, 258)

<sup>93</sup> In that same year, Nietzsche claims that he has read Emerson “am meisten” (BAW 2, 333-334), next to Shakespeare, Plato’s *Symposion*, Nibelungen, Literaturgeschichte, Aeschylus, and Plutus.

<sup>94</sup> “Gestehn wir es, ich schreibe über Stimmungen, indem ich eben jetzt gestimmt bin; und es ist ein Glück, dass ich gerade zum Beschreiben der Stimmungen gestimmt bin [...], ich bin in diesem Augenblick nicht mehr so gestimmt, wie ich es beim Beginn des Schreibens war.” (BAW 2, 406-408)

<sup>95</sup> Nietzsche refers to the way in which the “sounds” [Töne] penetrate him (BAW 2, 406), how music, like friends, enter his house or soul (407), and how events can only affect the soul if they hit the right chord or string [Saite] (407). Nietzsche’s imagination of the soul

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as a house into which a friend enters, seems to echo Emerson's passage in "Spiritual Laws": "Over all things that are agreeable to his nature and genius the man has the highest right. Everywhere he may take what belongs to his spiritual estate, nor can he take anything else though all doors were open, nor can all the force of men hinder him from taking so much. It is vain to attempt to keep a secret from one who has a right to know it. It will tell itself. That mood into which a friend can bring us is his dominion over us." (E 146)

<sup>96</sup> The German text makes it apparent that Nietzsche rewrote this passage in his own voice: "Unsere Gesinnungen sind nicht immer dieselben. Heute bin ich von einem Gedankenreichthum, der mir erlaubt, über jeden beliebigen Gegenstand zu schreiben. Ich sehe keinen Grund ein, warum mir nicht morgen dieselben Gedanken, dieselbe Ausdrucksweise zu Gebote stehen sollte. In dem Augenblick des Schreibens scheint mir das was ich schreibe die natürlichste Sache von der Welt: dennoch sah ich gestern nur eine öde Leere da, wo ich heute so viel sehe; und es ist mir gar nicht zweifelhaft, ob ich nicht vielleicht nach einem Monate schon voll Erstaunen denken werde, wer da war, der so ununterbrochen viele Seiten hinter einander schrieb." (V 224-225)

<sup>97</sup> Here is another passage of Nietzsche's which sounds extremely close to Emerson's: "Das was jetzt vielleicht dein ganzes Glück oder dein ganzes Herzeleid ist, wird vielleicht in Kurzem nur noch das Gewand eines noch tiefern Gefühls sein und wird darum in sich verschwinden, wenn das Höhere kommt. Und so vertiefen sich immer mehr unsre Stimmungen, keine einzige gleicht einer andern genau, sondern jede ist unergründlich jung und die Geburt eines Augenblicks." (BAW 2: 408)

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<sup>98</sup>“Ich hieng damals gerade mit einigen schmerzlichen Erfahrungen und Enttäuschungen ohne Beihülfe einsam in der Luft, ohne Grundsätze, ohne Hoffnungen und ohne eine freundliche Erinnerung.” (BAW 3, 297)

<sup>99</sup> Referencing the subtitle to book 4 of Schopenhauer’s magnum opus: “Bei erreichter Selbsterkenntnis, Bejahung und Verneinung des Willens zum Leben”). Nietzsche narrates: “Ich weiss nicht welcher Dämon mir zuflüsterte: ‘Nimm dir dies Buch mit nach Hause’ [...]. Hier war jede Zeile, die Entsagung, Verneinung, Resignation schrie, hier sah ich einen Spiegel, in dem ich Welt Leben und eigen Gemüth in entsetzlicher Grossartigkeit erblickte. Hier sah mich das volle interesselose Sonnenaug der Kunst an, hier sah ich Krankheit und Heilung, Verbannung und Zufluchtsort, Hölle und Himmel. Das Bedürfniss nach Selbsterkenntniss, ja Selbstzernagung packte mich gewaltsam; [...] Indem ich alle meine Eigenschaften und Bestrebungen vor das Forum einer düsteren Selbstverachtung zog, war ich bitter, ungerecht und zügellos in dem gegen mich selbst gerichteten Hass. Auch leibliche Peinigungen fehlten nicht. So zwang ich mich 14 Tage hintereinander immer erst um 2 Uhr Nachts zu Bett zu gehen und es genau um 6 Uhr wieder zu verlassen. Eine nervöse Aufgeregtheit bemächtigte sich meiner und wer weiss bis zu welchem Grade von Thorheit ich vorgeschritten wäre wenn nicht die Lockungen des Lebens, der Eitelkeit und der Zwang zu regelmässigen Studien dagegen gewirkt hätten.” (BAW 3, 298)

<sup>100</sup> Thomas Brobjer writes in 2008: “His [Nietzsche’s] relation to Schopenhauer in 1865–69 was one of extreme enthusiasm.” (Brobjer 2008, 29)

<sup>101</sup> He refers here to Nietzsche's letter to von Gersdorff, 16. January, 1867. Nietzsche says: “Der Schmerzerfüllte kann und darf allein über solche Dinge ein entscheidendes

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Wort sagen [...]” (BVN 1867: 536) He also defends Schopenhauer in a letter to Deussen, Oct.-Nov. 1867: “Weltanschauungen werden weder durch Logik geschaffen, noch vernichtet.” (BVN 1867: 551)

<sup>102</sup> During this time, Nietzsche thinks a lot about Schopenhauer, Kant, and the teleology of nature.

<sup>103</sup> “Die Irrthümer grosser Männer sind verehrungswürdig weil sie fruchtbarer sind als die Wahrheiten der kleinen.” (BAW 3, 353)

<sup>104</sup> When he occasionally defends Schopenhauer in letters to his acquaintances, he does so by not engaging in any arguments: “world-views are neither created nor destroyed by logic,” he says in a letter to Deussen in the fall of 1867.

<sup>105</sup> “Mir hat sich die Frage der Zeiten in eine praktische Frage von der Lebensführung aufgelöst: Wie soll ich leben?” (FL 1-2)

<sup>106</sup> We know that Nietzsche admired this aspect of Emerson’s work already in 1863 when he wrote short excerpts from Emerson’s essays for his friends and titled them “Ueber Philosophie im Leben.” (BAW 2, 221) And Schopenhauer himself says in the passage that Nietzsche alluded to earlier (375, § 53): “Denn hier, wo es den Wert oder Unwert eines Daseins, wo es Heil oder Verdammnis gilt, geben nicht ihre [philosophy’s] toten Begriffe den Ausschlag, sondern das innerste Wesen des Menschen selbst, der Dämon, der ihn leitet [...]” (375, § 53)

<sup>107</sup> In fact, the term “l’optimisme” had been introduced by 17th century French Jesuits in February 1737 to ridicule Leibniz’ Theodicy. Leibniz himself never used the word (see *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Band 6, p. 1240-1246). The term “pessimism” then served as a twin-category.

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<sup>108</sup> For Dühring's attack on pessimism, see Dühring 1881, 181ff., 198ff.).

<sup>109</sup> See Burckhardt 1931, 343-392.

<sup>110</sup> Of course, the idea of a "strong pessimism" had already been around and was later attributed to Heraclitus: "Heraklit als Pessimist aus 'Überstärke der Seele'" (Joel 1921, 292).

<sup>111</sup> It must be noted that Nietzsche is skeptical of any optimistic ideals, which he sees embodied in Socrates and Plato's dialectic, as well as modern scientism. But Emerson is not such an "optimist."

<sup>112</sup> "Aus Furcht vor dem Nachbar, welcher die Convention fordert und sich selbst mit ihr verhüllt. Aber was ist es, was den Einzelnen zwingt, den Nachbar zu fürchten, heerdenmässig zu denken und zu handeln und seiner selbst nicht froh zu sein?" (KSA 1: 337)

<sup>113</sup> Although Fabricius' translation is extremely awkward: "Die Tugend ist in den meisten Fällen nur eine Uebereinstimmung mit der Form. Dann ist Selbstvertrauen ihre Aversion. Dann liebt sie nicht das Wesen einer Sache und den Schaffenden, sondern allein Namen und Gewohnheiten." (V 36)

<sup>114</sup> Nietzsche excerpts and transliterates this passage into his 1882 notebook: "Immer wieder von Neuem aus demselben unbestechlichen, unerschrockenen Standpunkte der Unschuld aus seine Wahrnehmungen machen—das ist furchterregend: die Macht solcher unsterblichen Jugend wird gefühlt." (KSA 9: 17[25])

<sup>115</sup> ("Der Mensch ist schüchtern und apologetisch. Er geht nicht mehr aufrecht. Er wagt nicht zu sagen: 'Ich denke', 'ich bin', sondern befragt einen Heiligen oder einen Weisen. Er steht beschämt da vor dem Grashalm oder vor der blühenden Rose." (V 50)



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<sup>116</sup> Sincerity is one of the major qualities Emerson attributes to the friend, which Nietzsche underlined heavily: “A friend is a person with whom I may be sincere. [...] Every man alone is sincere. At the entrance of a second person, **hypocrisy** begins.” (E 203) “Ein Freund ist ein Wesen mit dem ich wohl aufrichtig sein kann. Vor ihm kann ich laut denken [...]. Jeder Mensch ist wahr, so langer er mit sich allein ist. So wie aber eine zweite Person dazu kommt, beginnt eine Art **Heuchelei**. [...].” (V 149-150) For following quotations from Emerson’s text, underlined passages and bold print represent the intensity of markings in Nietzsche’s own edition.

<sup>117</sup> Emerson’s essay begins with the words: “I read the other day some verses written by an eminent painter which were original and not conventional.” (E 46)

<sup>118</sup> Nietzsche marked the German translation in his edition with seven vertical lines: “‘Ein Mann,’ sagte Oliver Cromwell, ‘erhebt sich niemals höher, als wenn er nicht weiss, wohin sein Weg ihn noch führen kann.’” (V 237)

<sup>119</sup> Although Conant does not continue with his analysis of Nietzsche’s essay, he brings forth a crucial question: “The words of a Nietzschean/Emersonian essay are misunderstood, turned against their own ambition, the instant they are invoked as authority, the instant they are *merely* quoted. How then does one *claim* the words of another as one’s own (as opposed to *merely* repeating them?” (2001, 195) The difference between quotation and *mere* quotation, repetition and *mere* repetition, conventionality and originality are crucial for Nietzsche’s essay.

<sup>120</sup> Zavatta thinks that “Emerson considered each individual to be endowed with an original essence” (2019, 34), that this essence is “present right from the moment of the birth of each individual even if it remains unknown to him or her up until the moment

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when he or she gains control of it and brings it to manifestation.” (36) This “true self,” she says, is a “regulative ideal toward which one’s effort constantly tend but which is never fully brought to realization.” (36) – here she makes a reference to Conant (2001) and the tradition of perfectionism. On the other hand, for Nietzsche, Zavatta claims, there is no “metaphysical essence” which pushes the individual forward (2019, 36) but “the tendency of every living form to adapt itself to its environment, or rather to try to dominate its environment.” (36) Unfortunately, Zavatta does not provide any textual evidence for these claims.

<sup>121</sup> “Leben nützt allein, nicht das gelebt haben. Die Macht hört auf in dem Augenblick der Ruhe; sie ist herrschend in dem Augenblick des Ueberganges aus der Vergangenheit in einen neuen Zustand; in dem Aufwirbeln des Strudels, in dem Streben nach einem Ziele hin [marked with two thick vertical lines]. Die Welt hasst die eine Thatsache, nämlich dass der Geist wird; denn dieser Umstand setzt für immer die Vergangenheit herunter; verlehrt allen Reichthum in Armuth; stellt den Heiligen mit dem Schuft in eine Reihe; macht Jesus und Judas einander gleich. Was reden wir denn von Selbstvertrauen? In so weit wie die Seele gegenwärtig ist, wird immer eine nicht vertrauende, sondern handelnde Macht da sein. Von Vertrauen zu sprechen, ist nur einen armselige äussere Sprachweise. Sprich lieber von dem, was vertraut, weil das allein arbeitet und wirklich ist.” (V 52)

<sup>122</sup> Russell B. Goodman (1997) in his essay on Emerson, Cavell, and Nietzsche also draws attention to the overlaps between Nietzsche’s idea of “self-overcoming” and Emerson’s “self-reliance.”

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<sup>123</sup> “What is nature to him [the scholar]? There is never a beginning, there is never an end, to the inexplicable continuity of this web of God, but always circular power returning into itself. Therein it resembles his own spirit, whose beginning, whose ending, he never can find,—so entire, so boundless. Far too as her splendors shine, system on system shooting like rays, upward, downward, without centre, without circumference [...]” (*Addresses and Lectures*, 85)

<sup>124</sup> Nietzsche copies this beginning into his 1882 notebook faithfully: “In jedem Werke des Genies erkennen wir unsere eignen verstoßenen Gedanken wieder: sie kommen zurück zu uns mit einer gewissen entfremdenden Majestät.” (KSA 9: 17[21]) (see V 33)

<sup>125</sup> “What can we see, read, acquire,” he asks, “but ourselves?” (JMN 3:327)

<sup>126</sup> The German translation of the latter half with Nietzsche highlights: “Allenthalben mag er sich nehmen, was zu seinem geistigen Vermögen gehört, er kann gar nichts anderes nehmen, und wenn ihm alle Thüren geöffnet wären, noch kann eine menschliche Macht ihn hindern, so viel zu nehmen wie er will.” (V 109) in 1875, Nietzsche wrote into his notes that we are a “*Multiplication* vieler Vergangenheiten (KSA 8: 3[69]).

<sup>127</sup> “In jedem Werke des Genies erkennen wir unsere eigenen verstossenen Gedanken wieder: sie kommen zurück zu uns mit einer gewissen entfremdeten Majestät.” (V 33)  
Marked and separated from the rest of the text with vertical lines by Nietzsche.

<sup>128</sup> Herder says that “bei den wilden von Nordamerika ist noch alles belebt, jede sache hat ihren genius, ihren geist, und dass es bei den Griechen und Morgenländern eben so gewesen, zeugt ihr wörterbuch u. s. w.” [quote after Grimm dictionary “Genie”].

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<sup>129</sup> “Genius” can also be the “böse Genius” as a devil [Goethe’s Werther] or as a “Schutzgeist,” a “Dämon” in the sense of “daimon.”

<sup>130</sup> See Schmidt 2004, 139.

<sup>131</sup> The other piece discussed by Kaufmann, Sommer 2011, 190-219, does not add anything further to the discussion.

<sup>132</sup> Nietzsche writes to Erwin Rohde on December 9<sup>th</sup>, 1868: “Wagner, wie ich ihn jetzt kenne, aus seiner Musik, seinen Dichtungen seiner Aesthetik, zum nicht geringsten Theile aus jenem glücklichen Zusammensein mit ihm, ist die leibhaftigste Illustration dessen, was Schopenhauer ein Genie nennt: ja die Ähnlichkeit all der einzelnen Züge ist in die Augen springend.” (BVN-1868, 604)

<sup>133</sup> Nietzsche marked this passage heavily and wrote next to it “ja.”

<sup>134</sup> “Es giebt kein öderes und widrigeres Geschöpf in der Natur als den Menschen, welcher seinem Genius ausgewichen ist und nun nach rechts und nach links, nach rückwärts und überallhin schießt.” (KSA 1: 338)

<sup>135</sup> “Hier ist die Wurzel aller wahren Cultur; und wenn ich unter dieser die Sehnsucht der Menschen verstehe, als Heiliger und als Genius wiedergeboren zu werden, so weiss ich, dass man nicht erst Buddhaist sein muss, um diesen Mythos zu verstehen.” (KSA 1: 358)

<sup>136</sup> Here are a couple of examples from Nietzsche’s Emerson edition: “**Der Genius** betrachtet ~~den~~ Monaden in jeder Maske, die er annimmt, wenn er die Seelenwanderung der Natur vollzieht. **Der Genius** sieht in der Fliege, der Raupe, in der Larve des Käfers wie im Ei nur den beständigen Typus des Individuums; [...] „Durch die Vorzüglichkeit dieser unvermeidlichen Natur ist der Eigenwille überwältigt, und ungeachtet unserer Anstrengungen oder unserer Unvollkommenheiten, wird dein Genius aus dir und der

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meine aus mir sprechen.“ (E 287, V 210) “Träume und Trunkenheit, der Gebrauch des Opiums wie des Alkohols sind die äußere Gestalt und das Ebenbild von diesem Orakel sprechenden Genius, [...].” (V 237)

**“The largest part of their power [Kraft] was latent [verborgen].** This is that which we call Character,—a reserved force [eine zurückgehaltene Kraft], which acts directly by presence [Gegenwärtigsein] and without means [ohne Hilfsmittel]. It is conceived of as a certain undemonstrable force [Kraft], a Familiar [Vertrauten] or Genius [Genius], by whose impulses the man is guided, but whose counsels he cannot impart; which is company for him, so that such men are often solitary [einsam], or if they chance to be social, do not need society but can entertain themselves very well alone [allein unterhalten].” (V 337)

<sup>137</sup> **“Das Eine, was wir mit unersättlichem Verlangen erstreben ist, daß wir uns selbst vergessen, über uns selbst erstaunt sind, unser ewiges Gedächtnis los werden, und etwas thun ohne recht zu wissen wie oder warum; kurz, daß wir einen neuen Kreis ziehen.**

Nichts Großes wäre jemals ohne Enthusiasmus vollbracht worden. Der Weg des Lebens ist wundervoll. Er ist es durch ein völliges Dahingeben. Die großen Momente in der Geschichte wie die Werke, die im Genie oder in der Religion ihren Ursprung gefunden haben, sind die Leichtigkeit in der Ausführung durch die Kraft des Gedanken.” (V 237)

<sup>138</sup> “Wie, wenn dieser Stossseufzer eben die Absicht des Staates wäre und die ‘Erziehung zur Philosophie’ nur eine Abziehung von der Philosophie?” (KSA 1: 418) Whenever Nietzsche uses the word “abziehen”, it either refers to the mistaken belief that every human being possesses a “true self” or genius within, or that the state “ruins” its citizens.

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<sup>139</sup> “wenn man auf die zahlreichen Exemplare Acht giebt, welche durch eine gedankenlose und allzu frühzeitige Hingebung an die Wissenschaft krumm gezogen und mit einem Höcker ausgezeichnet worden sind.” (KSA 1: 344)

<sup>140</sup> “...that it would educate us while pulling us upward?”

<sup>141</sup> The German translation renders Emerson’s “series” as “Wege” and his “staircase” faithfully as “Treppe”: “Wo begegnen wir uns selbst? Auf einem Wege, dessen Endpunkte wir nicht kennen, und von dem wir glauben, dass er keine hat. Wir erwachen, und erblicken uns auf einer Treppe: da sind Treppen hinter uns, die wir herauf gestiegen zu sein scheinen; da sind Treppen über uns, manche, die hoch gehen und die wir aus dem Gesichte verlieren.” (V 336)

<sup>142</sup> “independent, irresponsible, looking out from his corner on such people and facts as pass by, he tries and sentences them on their merits, in the swift, summary way of boys, as good, bad, interesting, silly, eloquent, troublesome.” (E 49-50)

<sup>143</sup> For instance, in “Heroism/Heroismus”: “Es gibt keine Schwachheit oder Bloßstellung, für die wir nicht in dem Gedanken Trost finden können – dies lag theilweise in meiner Constitution, wie in dem Verhältnis und der Stellung zu meinen Nebenmenschen.”

[“There is no weakness or exposure for which we cannot find consolation in the thought—this is a part of my constitution, part of my relation and office to my fellow-creature.”] (V 193/E 262) Nietzsche wrote next to this passage “Nota bene.” Sometimes he translates the word as “Beschaffenheit.” In “Spiritual Laws,” Emerson says consistently: “But that which I call right or goodness, is the **choice of my constitution** [**Wahl meiner Beschaffenheit**]; and that which I call heaven, and inwardly aspire after, is the state or circumstance desirable to my constitution; and the action which I in all my

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years tend to do, is the work for my faculties.” (E 140) Nietzsche writes here “gut” next to “Wahl meiner Beschaffenheit” (V 104)

<sup>144</sup> This “natürlich” is also present in Emerson’s translation: “Die Furcht soll niemals etwas Consistentes in dir, wohl aber sollst du selbst consequent in allen deinen, auch den verschiedensten Handlungen sein, falls sie in der Stunde, wo du sie begehst, redliche und natürliche sind.” (V 43)

<sup>145</sup> In “New England Reformers,” an essay not included in Nietzsche’s edition, Emerson says: “This has been several times repeated: it was excellent when it was done the first time, but of course loses all value when it is copied. Every project in the history of reform, no matter how violent and surprising, is good when it is the dictate of a man’s genius and constitution, but very dull and suspicious when adopted from another.” (E 254)

<sup>146</sup> Nietzsche’s critique of the state remained important for him all the way to Zarathustra. In the chapter “Vom neuen Götzen”, Zarathustra declares even more evocative of Emerson: “Dort, wo der Staat aufhört, da beginnt erst der Mensch, der nicht überflüssig ist [...]. Dort, wo der Staat aufhört, [...] Seht ihr ihn nicht, den Regenbogen und die Brücken des Übermenschen?” (KSA 4: 63-64)

<sup>147</sup> “Jener erziehende Philosoph, den ich mir träumte, würde wohl nicht nur die Centrakraft entdecken, sondern auch zu verhüten wissen, dass sie gegen die andern Kräfte zerstörend wirke: vielmehr wäre die Aufgabe seiner Erziehung, wie mich dünkte, den ganzen Menschen zu einem lebendig bewegten Sonnen- und Planetensysteme umzubilden und das Gesetz seiner höheren Mechanik zu erkennen.” (KSA 1: 343)

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<sup>148</sup> “Beware when the great God lets loose a thinker on this planet. Then all things are at risk. It is as when a conflagration has broken out in a great city, and no man knows what is safe, or where it will end. There is not a piece of science but its flank may be turned [Umdrehung] to-morrow; there is not any literary reputation, not the so-called eternal names of fame, that may not be revised [Revision] and condemned. The very hopes of man, the thoughts of his heart, the religion of nations, the manners and morals of mankind are all at the mercy of a new generalization. Generalization is always a new influx of the divinity into the mind. Hence the thrill that attends it. [...] **The things which are dear to men at this hour are so on account of the ideas which have emerged on their mental horizon, and which cause the present order of things, as a tree bears its apples. A new degree of culture would instantly revolutionize [Umwälzung] the entire system of human pursuits.**” (E 309-310) (V 226)

<sup>149</sup> Gersdorff writes: “Hier liegt in einem Schaufenster R. W. Emersons ‘Neue Essays’, übersetzt von Julian Schmidt, 1876; also das Allerneuste unseres herrlichen Freundes, dessen ‘Führung des Lebens’ ich hierher mitnahm und auf der Reise mir vorhielt, um mich daran zu stärken.” Gersdorff, like Nietzsche and many others, uses Emerson for some sort of personal therapy, a means to strengthen his spirit, see Von Gersdorff 1934, 46.

<sup>150</sup> See *Nietzsche persönliche Bibliothek* 2003, 211.

<sup>151</sup> Basel den 26 Mai 1876.

Der neue *Emerson* ist etwas alt geworden, kommt es Dir nicht auch so vor? Die früheren Essays sind viel reicher, jetzt wiederholt er sich, und schliesslich ist er mir gar zu sehr in das Leben verliebt. —



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Lebe wohl, behalte mich lieb,

ich bin Dein

alter Getreuer

F N. (BVN-1876, 529)

<sup>152</sup> Like Gersdorff, who used Emerson's text therapeutically (see letter above), Nietzsche experiences a sort of personal recovery at this time. To Malwida von Meysenbug, Nietzsche speaks of "ein höheres Selbst" ["a higher self"] (BVN-1876, 518; April 14th), and to Heinrich Romundt he writes that he had found himself again ["habe mich selbst wieder gefunden"] (BVN-1876, 521; April 15th): "Das heißt nämlich das Vertrauen auf meine Ziele, das Verpflichtetsein auf meine Aufgaben und den Muth der Gesundheit."

<sup>153</sup> Although Nietzsche's copy is lost, we have documented his annotations in the Nietzsche Archive in Weimar. For instance, Emerson gives the advice in one of the essays that Nietzsche annotated: "Für Heute genügen die heutigen Pflichten. Verschwendet das Leben nicht mit Furcht und Zweifeln, sondern gebt euch dem Werke hin, das vor euch liegt, und seid überzeugt, dass die richtige Erfüllung der Pflichten dieser Stunde die beste Vorbereitung für die künftige Stunde und für alle folgenden Zeiten ist [...]." (NE, 329)

<sup>154</sup> "Rabelais's dying words, 'I am going to see the great Perhaps' (*le grand Peut-être*), only repeats the "IF" inscribed on the portal of the temple at Delphi. [\[1\]](#) Goethe's favorite phrase, "the open secret," translates Aristotle's answer to Alexander, "These books are published and not published." Madame de Staël's "Architecture is frozen music" is borrowed from Goethe's "dumb music," which is Vitruvius's rule, that "the architect must not only understand drawing, but music." Wordsworth's hero acting "on the plan which

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pleased his childish thought," is Schiller's "Tell him to reverence the dreams of his youth," and earlier, Bacon's "*Consilia juventutis plus divinitatis habent.*" (LSA 186)

<sup>155</sup> Quote after Kai Sina (2019) who also notes that Emerson borrowed this translation of Goethe ("Characteristics of Goethe") in February 1834 from the "Boston Athenaeum," see JMN VI, 113.

<sup>156</sup> "Our knowledge is the amassed thought and experience of innumerable minds: [...]. Goethe frankly said, 'What would remain to me if this art of appropriation were derogatory to genius? Every one of my writings has been furnished to me by a thousand different persons, a thousand things: [...].'" (LSA 200)

<sup>157</sup> Sina correctly states that "Emerson besteht vielmehr darauf, dass Apperzeption und Appropriation die Eigenständigkeit des Subjekts nicht behindern, sondern anregen, befördern, befeuern sollen" (2019, 143) and that Emerson had found a confirmation of his own writing poetic in Goethe (144), turning the paradox of originality into a "produktives Wechselverhältnis" (144); self-reliance is not possible without the appropriation of past materials. However, I do not agree with Sina who thinks that Emerson is "bemüht sich [...] um eine Vermittlung" (144). Emerson is not a dialectician. I also do not see the necessity in Sina's attempt to see in Emerson a "Konkretisierung des von Thomas Jefferson in der Declaration of Independence formulierten amerikanischen Grundrechts auf 'Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness' [...]." (144) Sina also leaves out Nietzsche because he does not fit his project of a "Literatur der offenen Gesellschaft," therefore focusing more on the democratic Whitman and then Thomas Mann. In other words, Sina's choice of following Emerson's traces in the likes of Thomas Mann without discussing Nietzsche perpetuates the common idea of Nietzsche as anti-democratic

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thinker and Emerson as democratic thinker. What about Nietzsche's influence on Mann? Was Mann not subject to a double-inheritance of two Emersons via Whitman and Nietzsche?

<sup>158</sup> George Stack (1983) had remarked in case of Nietzsche's use of Lange's "History of Materialism," that it might be "a paradigm of [Nietzsche's] own theory that knowledge is a process of assimilation." (6) But, as we have now seen, this thought goes all the way back to Goethe and Emerson.

<sup>159</sup> In the first essay that Nietzsche annotated, "Poetry and Imagination," Emerson describes poetry as the "gai science" ["heitere Wissenschaft", NE 36]. For Emerson, poetry is affirmative ["bejahend", NE 36], it is representative of our search for a new power ["neue Kraft", NE 36], our "explosive power" ["Explosionskraft", NE 36] of the mind. In a word, poetry for Emerson is the gospel of the new, always yet to come; our life shall be our future poetry (LSA 74). All these ideas are consistent with and indeed appear in Emerson's earlier essays. Emerson also praises the poetry of Zarathustra that is, like nature, "üppig, ruhig, zusammenhängend," (LSA 64) and uplifting (LSA 64-65).

<sup>160</sup> "Gespräch, das, wenn es den Höhepunkt erreicht, ein fortgesetzter Rausch ist." (NE 269)

<sup>161</sup> "Die Unterhaltung ist die wahre Schule der Philosophie, sie ist das Colleg, wo man lernt was Gedanken eigentlich sind, was für Kräfte in diesen flüchtigen Blitzstrahlen schlummern [...]" (NE 269)

<sup>162</sup> [mit den Andern zu spielen und mit sich spielen zu lassen [...]] (NE 269)]

<sup>163</sup> ["Wir gebrauchen uns selbst und gebrauchen einander gegenseitig als Reizmittel für Gedanken." (NE 269)] In the last paragraph of "Inspiration," Emerson repeats another

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common theme in his essays: obedience. “These are some hints towards what is in all education a chief necessity,—the right government, or, shall I not say? the right obedience to the powers of the human soul [den strengen Gehorsam gegen sie]. Itself is the dictator; the mind itself the awful oracle [Der Geist selbst ist der Diktator, das hehre Orakel.]. All our power, all our happiness consists in our reception of its hints, which ever become clearer and grander as they are obeyed.” (LSA 298)

<sup>164</sup> “Meantime we hate sniveling. I do not wish you to surpass others in any narrow or professional or monkish way. We like the natural greatness of health and wild power.” (LSA 317) [“Wir lieben die natürliche Grösse der Gesundheit und wilden Kraft.” (NE 290)]

<sup>165</sup> “Es wird eine Zeit kommen, wo man kein Abzeichen, keine Uniform, keine Medaille mehr tragen wird, wo das Auge, das planetarische Einflüsse von allen Sternen in sich trägt, schnell genug durch Machtäußerung den Rang bestimmen wird.” (NE 286)

<sup>166</sup> Life is multiplicity, infinity, difference (or rank) (see LSA 334). Compare here Nietzsche’s FW no. 120: “Gesundheit der Seele. — Die beliebte medicinische Moralformel (deren Urheber Ariston von Chios ist): „Tugend ist die Gesundheit der Seele“ — müsste wenigstens, um brauchbar zu sein, dahin abgeändert werden: „deine Tugend ist die Gesundheit deiner Seele“. Denn eine Gesundheit an sich giebt es nicht, und alle Versuche, ein Ding derart zu definiren, sind kläglich missrathen. Es kommt auf dein Ziel, deinen Horizont, deine Kräfte, deine Antriebe, deine Irrthümer und namentlich auf die Ideale und Phantasmen deiner Seele an, um zu bestimmen, was selbst für deinen Leib Gesundheit zu bedeuten habe. Somit giebt es unzählige Gesundheitsen des Leibes; und je mehr man dem Einzelnen und Unvergleichlichen wieder erlaubt, sein Haupt zu

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erheben, je mehr man das Dogma von der „Gleichheit der Menschen“ verlernt, um so mehr muss auch der Begriff einer Normal-Gesundheit, nebst Normal-Diät, Normal-Verlauf der Erkrankung unsern Medicinern abhanden kommen.” (KSA 3: 477)

<sup>167</sup> In FW, Nietzsche will count the “naturalization of humanity” as one of his main tasks: “Hüten wir uns, zu sagen, dass Tod dem Leben entgegengesetzt sei. Das Lebende ist nur eine Art des Todten, und eine sehr seltene Art. [...] Wann werden wir anfangen dürfen, uns Menschen mit der reinen, neu gefundenen, neu erlösten Natur zu vernatürlichen!” (KSA 3:469)

<sup>168</sup> The light as a metaphor for God is again reminiscent of Nietzsche’s madman: “Habt ihr nicht von jenem tollen Menschen gehört, der am hellen Vormittage eine Laterne anzündete, auf den Markt lief und unaufhörlich schrie: ‘Ich suche Gott! Ich suche Gott!’ [...] Endlich warf er seine Laterne auf den Boden, dass sie in Stücke sprang und erlosch. ‘Ich komme zu früh, sagte er dann, ich bin noch nicht an der Zeit. Diess ungeheure Ereigniss ist noch unterwegs und wandert, [...]’” (KSA 3: 480)

<sup>169</sup> “Unser Abscheu ist nichts anderes als der Protest der menschlichen Natur gegen eine Lüge.” (NE 305)

<sup>170</sup> As Emerson said in LSA, our “knowledge is the amassed thought and experience of innumerable minds,” an art of appropriation, including from one’s past self. “What is Originality?” asks Emerson, “It is being, being one’s self, and reporting accurately what we see and are.” (LSA, 201) Genius is as much creating as it is receiving. In no. 521 in the ninth book of MA, Nietzsche, echoing Emerson’s essay on “Greatness,” defines greatness as “Richtung-geben” (to provide direction) by which Nietzsche means that greatness relies on the ability to absorb confluences and direct them; in other words, self-

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trust (KSA 2: 324). To be and think “einartig” (one-dimensional), to think “consistent” provides us with respect from others but is ultimately a comical attribute (KSA 2:345).

On the contrary, Nietzsche repeatedly claims that the individual should not be treated as an inflexible, consistent matter, not as “one” but “many” (see KSA 2: 349).

<sup>171</sup> Brobjer, Nietzsche’s Philosophical Context, 63

“A Sentenz, akin to the French sentence, is precisely the kind of short, poignant, easily remembered statement that pretends to universal validity (English retains this sense in the term “sententious”). Sentenz is, for instance, the term Paul Rée used to describe his own *Psychologische Beobachtungen*, which largely limit themselves to brief texts and lack the variety to be found in Nietzsche’s aphoristic works. In other words, a Sentenz is what in English we commonly call an aphorism.” (Westerdale 22)

<sup>172</sup> Nietzsche “polishes” an aphorism of Lichtenberg’s in WS 317. Here is Lichtenberg:

“Wenn ich ehemals in meinem Kopfe nach Gedanken oder Einfällen fischte, so fing ich immer etwas; jetzt kommen die Fische nicht mehr so. Sie fangen an sich auf dem Grunde zu versteinern, und ich muß sie heraushauen. Zuweilen bekomme ich sie auch nur stückweise heraus, wie die Versteinerungen von Monte Bolca, ich flicke daraus etwas zusammen” (Sudel—KII 33). Westerdale identifies another case of appropriation in JGB: “es [ist] ein Fä l s c h u n g des Thatbestandes ist, zu sagen: das Subjekt ‘ich’ ist die Bedingung des Prädikats ‘denke’. Es denkt: aber dass dies ‘es’ gerade jenes alte berühmte ‘Ich’ sei, ist, milde geredet, nur eine Annahme, eine Behauptung, vor Allem kein ‘unmittelbare Gewissheit’” (JGB 17). Lichtenberg: “Wir werden uns gewisser Vorstellungen bewußt, die nicht von uns abhängen; Andere glauben, wir wenigstens hingen von uns ab; wo ist die Grenze? Wir kennen nur allein die Existenz unserer

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Empfindungen, Vorstellungen und Gedanken. Es denkt, sollte man sagen, so wie man sagt es blitzt. Zu sagen cogito, ist schon zu viel, so bald man es durch Ich denke übersetzt.

Das Ich anzunehmen, zu postulieren, ist praktisches Bedürfnis” (Sudel-KII 76).

Westerdale correctly assesses: “Again Nietzsche appropriates Lichtenberg’s observation, repurposing it to his own ends.” (2013, 30)

<sup>173</sup> A text is “verweisungsfähig” when the usually necessary context is not given: who speaks and to whom and about what? This communicative or verbal context is not provided by the aphorism, and this enables us to read and interpret an aphorism in the first place. Equally, we do not have a situational context (a poem often also does not have one).

<sup>174</sup> That aphorisms need to be written like that by an author means that editorial extractions of “the best gems” or “Blütenlesen” of an author published after their death by other editors is not an aphorism, for Fricke. This happened to Emerson especially around 1900: collections of quotes and the best “phrases.”

<sup>175</sup> “Der Aphorismus, die Sentenz, in denen ich als der Erste unter Deutschen Meister bin, sind die Formen der ‘Ewigkeit’” (KSA 6: 153).

<sup>176</sup> In a later note, Nietzsche refers to his works as “Aphorismenbüchern” while also using the myth of the Sphinx and Odysseus that appears frequently in Nietzsche’s reading of Emerson: “In Aphorismenbüchern gleich den meinigen stehen zwischen und hinter kurzen Aphorismen lauter verbotene lange Dinge und Gedanken-Ketten; und Manches darunter, das für Oedipus und seine Sphinx fragwürdig genug sein mag. Abhandlungen schreibe ich nicht: die sind für Esel und Zeitschriften-Leser” (KSA 11: 579).

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<sup>177</sup> Bacon: “knowledge, while it is in aphorisms and observations, [...] is in growth; but when it once is comprehended in exact methods, it may perchance be further polished and illustrated, and accommodated for use and practice, but it increaseth no more in bulk and substance.”

<sup>178</sup> Wuthenow, too, considers the aphorism and essay related literary genres as rebellious types of thinking (2016, 13). Spicker calls the essay the “big brother” of the aphorism (2004, 8). Whether Nietzsche writes one-sentence aphorism or essayistic aphorism, Wuthenow contests, they all are “fragend, experimentierend und erkundend” (2016, 142). Spicker summarizes: “Gerade in der Moderne, in der das Grenzgebiet von Aphorismus und Kurz- und Kürzestessay in stärkerem Masse literarisch bebaut wird, ist der Grenzstrich immer weniger zu ziehen.” (8) Essay and aphorism form “eine feste Einheit” (Spicker 2004, 736)

<sup>179</sup> The notion of the essay as an experiment however is apparent in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, for instance in Max Bense’s famous essay on the essay: “So unterscheidet sich also ein Essay von einer Abhandlung. Essayistisch schreibt, wer experimentierend verfaßt, wer also seinen Gegenstand hin und her wälzt, befragt, betastet, prüft, durchreflektiert,” (Bense 1947, 418.)

<sup>180</sup> Schlaffer points out that Nietzsche meant the most important step in the German essay tradition: “Den folgenreichsten Einschnitt in der Geschichte des deutschen Essays bewirkte Nietzsche: zum einen durch seine Kritik am bildungsbürgerlichen Behagen, das die Essayistik des 19. Jhs. verbreitet hatte [Nietzsche vs. David Strauss] [...], zum anderen durch das Vorbild, das Nietzsches polemischer, poetischer und prophetischer Stil für die deutsche Essayistik des 20. Jhs. abgeben sollte.” (Schlaffer 1997, 524)



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<sup>181</sup> Hosseini also makes the valid point that, as a lecturer, Emerson had more freedom in writing fragmentary and repetitively, and that Emerson's journal, which included more than two and a half million words, functioned as a kind of quarry for Emerson's thoughts (Hosseini 2019, 372).

<sup>182</sup> Richardson argues that "Emerson's lifelong interest in sentences pushed him toward epigram and proverb, and steered him away from narrative, from logic, from continuity, from formal arrangement and effect." (Richardson 2009, 54)

<sup>183</sup> Interestingly, Schlegel and Emerson however describe the essay as a genre in similar terms. Schlegel defines the essay in 1798 (unpublished until 1963): "Der Essay ist so zu schreiben, wie wir denken, sprechen, für uns schreiben oder im Zusammenhng frei reden, Briefe schreiben – über einen Gegenstand, aus reinem Interesse daran, nicht philosophisch und nicht poetisch" (quote after Schlaffer 523) Emersons similarly says about Montaigne: "The sincerity and marrow of the man reaches to his sentences. I know not anywhere the book that seems less written. It is the language of conversation transferred to a book. Cut these words, and they would bleed; they are vascular and alive." (169)

<sup>184</sup> Carlyle said about Novalis that his work are simply fragments of a great scheme he did not live to realize; Emerson said about Bacon that to make his works complete, he must live to the end of the world: "Many fragments remain to us among his works by which we may see the manner in which all his works were written. Works of this sort which consist of detached observations and to which the mind has not imparted a system of its own, are never ended. . . . [T]o make [his] works complete, he must live to the end of the world." (EL.I.335)

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<sup>185</sup> “Society does not like to have any breath of question blown on the existing order. But the interrogation of custom at all points is an inevitable stage in the growth of every superior mind, and is the evidence of its perception of the flowing power which remains itself in all changes.” (172)

<sup>186</sup> Joel Porte made a provoking yet honest remark about the long history of Emerson’s reception: “What I am prepared to state categorically is that the familiar rubrics of Emersonian thought, the stock in trade of much Emerson criticism, though undeniably there, can be a positive hindrance to the enjoyment of Emerson’s writing. [...] They make Emerson seem awfully remote, abstract, and—yes—academic.” (Porte 2004, 36.)

<sup>187</sup> “Das geistige Nomadenthum ist die Gabe der Objectivität oder die Gabe überall Augenweide zu finden. Wem dies gegeben ist, der ist überall zu Hause. Jeder Mensch, jedes Ding ist ein Fund, ein Studium für ihn, ja gleichsam sein Eigenthum, und die Liebe, die ihn so für Alles gleich beseelt, glättet seine Stirn, zieht in zu den Menschen hin, und läßt ihn in ihren Augen schön und liebenswürdig erscheinen.” [V 17] In his notebook, Nietzsche turns the third person into a first-person perspective, “ein Fund, sein Eigenthum” becomes “mein Fund, mein Eigenthum” (KSA 9: 17 [13]).

<sup>188</sup> On the other hand, intellect, he says, “is void of affection and sees an object as it stands in the light of science, cool and disengaged. The intellect goes out of the individual, floats over its own personality, and regards it as a fact, and not as *I* and *mine*.” (E 327) And thus, the object of the intellect becomes “disentangled from the web of our unconsciousness, becomes an object impersonal and immortal. It is the past restored, but embalmed. A better art than that of Egypt has taken fear and corruption out of it. It is eviscerated of care. It is offered for science. What is addressed to us for contemplation

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does not threaten us but makes us intellectual beings.” (E 328) [“Sie ist die wiederhergestellte aber einbalsamirte Vergangenheit. Eine bessereunst wie die ägyptische hat Furcht und Verderben von ihr genommen. Die Sorge um sie ist verschwunden. Sie ist [Nietzsche adds here “nicht”] für die Wissenschaft da. Was unserer Betrachtung zur Verfügung gestellt ist, das droht uns nicht, sondern macht uns zu intellektuellen Wesen.” (V 240)]

<sup>189</sup> “Die Leute vergessen immer, dass es das Auge ist, welches den Horizont bildet, und dass das Auge des abrundenden Geistes, welches diesen oder jenen Menschen zu einem Vorbild oder Vertreter der Humanität macht [...]” (V 328)

<sup>190</sup> Nietzsche uses this image again in later texts. For instance, in the already mentioned no. 125 of FW, the madman ignites his lantern “am hellen Vormittage”: “Ist es nicht kälter geworden? Kommt nicht immerfort die Nacht und mehr Nacht? Müssen nicht Laternen am Vormittage angezündet werden?” (FW no. 125, KSA 3: 480-481) The epilogue of the fifth book of FW, written in 1887, says: “Ist es nicht rings heller *Vormittag* um uns? Und grüner weicher Grund und Rasen, das Königreich des Tanzes? Gab es je eine bessere Stunde, um fröhlich zu sein? Wer singt uns ein Lied, ein *Vormittagslied*, so sonnig, so leicht, so flügge, dass es die Grillen n i c h t verscheucht, — dass es die Grillen vielmehr einlädt, mit zu singen, mit zu tanzen?” (KSA 3: 637-638)

<sup>191</sup> Fabricius translates the entire second half as following: “dass jede Tageszeit nur immer ein neuer Tagesanbruch ist und unter jeder Tief eine noch tiefere Tiefe sich aufthut.”

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<sup>192</sup> Paul Carus already made this connection in 1914, albeit without knowing that

Nietzsche read Emerson: When discussing a proper translation of Nietzsche's

"Übermensch," Carus comes to Emerson: "Emerson in a similar vein, when attempting to characterize that which is higher than the soul, invented the term "oversoul," and I can see no objection to the word "overman." (Carus 1914, 41)

<sup>193</sup> Nietzsche's demand that "wir müssen Verräther werden, Untreue üben, unsere Ideale immer wieder preisgeben," (KSA 2: 355) Emerson echoes in "Experience": "Our love of the real draws us to permanence, but health of body consists in circulation, and sanity of mind in variety or facility of association. We need change of objects. Dedication to one thought is quickly odious." (EII 56) "Unsere Liebe für das Wesentliche führt uns zur Permanenz, aber die Gesundheit des Körpers besteht in der Circulation, und die Gesundheit des Geistes in der Verschiedenheit oder Leichtigkeit der Verbindung. Es ist nothwendig für uns, dass die Gegenstände dem Wechsel unterliegen. Das ausschliessliche sich Hingeben an einen Gedanken ist etwas durchaus Hassenswerthes." (V 312)]

<sup>194</sup> Nietzsche faithfully copies the German translation: "Ich habe immer geglaubt, daß der Werth des Lebens in den unergründlichen Fähigkeiten desselben läge; in der Thatsache, daß ich niemals weiß, wenn ich mich zu einem neuen Individuum wende, was mir widerfahren mag." (V 310)

<sup>195</sup> "Die grösste Unwissenheit erregt kein solches Missfallen wie dieses unverschämte Wissen." (V 310)

<sup>196</sup> "I am ready to die out of nature and be born again into this new yet unapproachable America I have found in the West" (E II 73) says Emerson.

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<sup>197</sup> Emerson makes a similar remark about the disappointment in life in “Experience”: “I compared notes with one of my friends who expects everything of the universe and is disappointed when anything is less than the best, and I found that I begin at the other extreme, expecting nothing, and am always full of thanks for moderate goods.” (E 62-63)

<sup>198</sup> It is important to note that, in a dramatic way, the rest of the book is the result of the conversation between wanderer and shadow (but not the conversation itself) – it is a book of silence.

<sup>199</sup> Who are the wanderer and his shadow? The wanderer, as has been shown so far, seems to be synonymous with Nietzsche’s description of the “free-spirit,” the “philosopher of tomorrow/the morning,” as Nietzsche said in the concluding passage of MA. Nietzsche even identified the mood of the wanderer with Emerson’s in his personal notes on “Experience.” Jeremy Fortier also argued that the wanderer is revealed to be the author of the book in the last passage of WS (Fortier 2016, 211). I think this is correct, because the shadow directly attributes the idea of the “nearest things” to the wanderer as its author. However, as we have seen, the wanderer is simultaneously a figure for Nietzsche’s readers, a group of readers to be precise, that does not yet exist or, which seems to mean the same, does not know of each other – they are isolated, they can only converse with their shadows. But who is the shadow exactly? Ruth Abbey argues that the shadow represents “embodiment” (see Abbey 2012, 114-134 and 2020, 191) while other authors have argued the shadow represents “death” (Young 2006, 79) or that which the wanderer neglects about himself (see Fortier 2016, 211). These readings are plausible since the shadow directly complains that they, the shadows, have been neglected for far too long by “you” (KSA 2: 703-704). However, the shadow mentions this neglect in

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conjunction with and result of a neglect of the nearest things just like the wanderer, the shadow can be more than one thing, and we can understand it best if we pair it with the other key concept that the shadow explicitly calls upon in this passage (KSA 2: 703-704). Thus, the shadow cannot just be referencing a relationship to oneself, although that is important, but includes a relationship to the nearest things. To be more precise, the neighboring of the nearest things is a precondition for a renewed relationship to one's shadow, not the other way around.

<sup>200</sup> At the end of Emerson's "Compensation," written in 1841 before his son's Waldo's death, but having experienced the death of his first wife in 1831 and of his brother, he writes the following: "[...] a loss of friends, seems at the moment unpaid loss, and unpayable. [...] The death of a dear friend, wife, brother, lover, which seemed nothing but privation, somewhat later assumes the aspect of a guide [Lenkers] or genius [Schutzgeistes];" (E 127, strongly highlighted by Nietzsche) This essay was Emerson's first enduring reflection on pain, loss, and suffering, formulating its aim to overcome a fixation on the past, despite how cruel and violent the solution may sound: "We cannot stay amid the ruins. Neither will we rely on the new; and so we walk ever with reverted eyes, like those monsters who look backwards." (E 127) Emerson's desired, maybe even desperate, call to turn forward is diminished in "Experience."

<sup>201</sup> "Die beweinen und bejammern sich, aber es ist nicht halb so schlimm mit ihnen als wie sie sagen. Es giebt Stimmungen, in denen wir uns nach dem Leiden sehen, in der Hoffnung, daß wir hier wenigstens Realität, scharfe Spitzen und eine Idee von Wahrheit finden werden. Aber es erweist sich, daß es nur Decorationsmalerei und etwas Verfälschtes ist. **Das einzige, was mich der Schmerz gelehrt hat, ist das, daß ich weiß,**

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**wie einfältig er ist. Das spielt wie alles Uebrige auf der Oberfläche, und führt mich niemals zur Wahrheit, wenn auch, um in Berührung mit ihr zu kommen, selbst**

**Söhnen und Geliebte kein zu hoher Preis für uns sein würden.** War es Boscovich, der ermittelte, daß Körper niemals in Berührung mit einander kommen? Nun, die Seelen berühren niemals ihre Gegenstände. Eine unbeschiffbare See fließt mit ihren stillen Wellen zwischen uns und den Dingen nach denen wir streben und mit denen wir verkehren. Der Schmerz wird uns ebenfalls zu Idealisten machen. Der Tod meines Sohnes, nun schon länger als zwei Jahre her, scheint mich um ein schönes Besitzthum ärmer gemacht zu haben, - nichts weiter. Ich kann es mir nicht näher bringen.” (V 306-307)

<sup>202</sup> The Kantian tone is also present in Emerson’s line: “I take this evanescence and lubricity of all objects, which lets them slip through our fingers then when we clutch hardest, to be the most unhandsome part of our condition.” (E II 50) “Condition” referring to Kant’s attempt to ground human experience in the necessary conditions of experience which he calls transcendental. For Emerson, however, moods are the transcendental conditions under which we experience the world as a whole. We do not experience the world by Kantian categories: Quantity, Quality (reality, negation, limitation), relation, modality (possibility, existence, necessity).

<sup>203</sup> “Neighbor”, “neighboring,” and “nextness” are central concepts for Thoreau, one of Emerson’s best readers. For instance, Thoreau declares that “The present was my next experiment of this kind, which I purpose to describe more at length; for convenience, putting the experience of two years into one. As I have said, I do not propose to write an

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ode to dejection, but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up.” (Thoreau 81)

<sup>204</sup> The central idea to become good neighbors to the nearest things has often been noted but rarely analyzed in depth (see Ure 2008, Young 2010, 281-285). Fortier also correctly notes that this turn to the closest things is “unique to this book – and to this moment in [Nietzsche’s] life.” (2016, 212) Most recently, Ruth Abbey (2020, 195ff.) has linked this attention to the nearest things to the Foucauldian concept of a “care of the self.” This has also been discussed by Ansell-Pearson (2018, 87ff.) while not discussing WS or the idea of the closest things. I think this interpretation, together with Abbey’s idea of an epistemology-plus, is closer to what I have in mind here as well. But Fortier’s idea that the attention to the nearest things “displaces [Nietzsche’s] interest in history or science” (2016, 210-11) can also be correct, as long as we are able to see how Nietzsche’s concept of science is part of this new attention to the nearest things. I agree with Abbey (2020, 203f.) that Nietzsche’s text cannot be classified as positivistic, nor can it be classified as purely eudaemonistically oriented.

<sup>205</sup> Regarding this aspect of transfiguration, Tracy B. Strong makes the point “that while transfiguration—as in tragedy—is of the highest kind of experience, it is also something that is available in everyday life, in the ordering, the insignificant.” (Strong 2010, 58) To illustrate this point, she refers to Emerson’s American Scholar. However, she argues that Nietzsche cultivates this exact idea as well. To her, “it is clear that Nietzsche thinks that it can characterize what one might call the ordinary or everyday.” (Strong 2010, 58)

<sup>206</sup> “Every man,” says Emerson, “is an impossibility until he is born; every thing impossible until we see a success.” (E 70)



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“Jeder Mensch ist eine Unmöglichkeit, bis er geboren ist; jedes Ding ist unmöglich, bis wir einen Erfolg sehen.” (V 322) The double meaning of “success” and “succession” is lost in translation.

<sup>207</sup> [vertical line] Beachte nicht das Lächerliche, beachte nicht die Niederlage: erhebe dich wieder, altes Herz! – scheint es zu sagen, – es giebt noch einen Sieg für alles was Gerecht ist; [vertical line here] und der wahre Roman, zu dessen Realisierung die Welt existirt, wird die Verwandlung des Genius in die ausübende Macht sein.]” (V 335)

<sup>208</sup> “Der Glaube an die Krankheit, als Krankheit. — Erst das Christenthum hat den Teufel an die Wand der Welt gemalt; erst das Christenthum hat die Sünde in die Welt gebracht. Der Glaube an die Heilmittel, welche es dagegen anbot, ist nun allmählich bis in die tiefsten Wurzeln hinein erschüttert: aber immer noch besteht der Glaube an die Krankheit, welchen es gelehrt und verbreitet hat.” (KSA 2: 587)

<sup>209</sup> Zavatta (2019) only dedicates 10 pages of almost 300 to FW and compares Emerson’s “Compensation” to the book as a whole, especially the idea of “amor fati” (55-65). The rest of scholarship entirely excludes FW from discussion, although Baumgarten already declared the end of 1881 to be one of the most significant periods for Nietzsche’s Emerson reading. But even Baumgarten himself never discusses FW.

<sup>210</sup> In January 1880, Nietzsche acquired a tourist guide to southern France by Theodor Gsell-Fels (1878), who described poetry as an activity done by the entire population in 12<sup>th</sup> century Provence, accompanied by music (canzoni). The canzoni praised values of knightly virtues and excellences Nietzsche would call later “Herrenmoral”: war, adventure, hunting, dancing, happy free action (see FW 17). Nietzsche read this book at least until autumn of 1881 (see Campioni 2010, 15-37, and D’Iorio 2013). Additionally,

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Nietzsche also read Stendhal during this time, for whom medieval Provençal culture was characterized by “the absence of any religion or sad legislation” [l’absence de toute religion ou législation triste] (Stendhal 1876, 165-166; see D’Iorio 2013)

See “Friedrich Nietzsche.” In *Méditerranée: Les porteurs de rêve*, edited by Th. Fabre and C. Portevin, 102-117. Paris: Textuel et MuCEM.

<sup>211</sup> “Poesie ist die *heitere Wissenschaft*. Die Eigenthümlichkeit des Dichters ist, dass er aufbaut und bejaht. Während der Kritiker zerstört, sind die Worte des Dichters immer für irgend Jemand von Nutzen, und die Sorgen, die Andere drücken, berühren ihn nicht. Alle ihre Freuden sind mit Leid durchtränkt, all’ seine Leiden mit Freuden umsäumt. Er theilt das Vergnügen, das er einflösst. Wie einer der alten Minnesänger sang: ‘Jetzt wird er mir erst des Spruches Sinn bewusst: Des Menschen Freude ist auch Gottes Lust.’” (NE 36)

<sup>212</sup> In another passage from Emerson’s lecture on “The Scholar,” he again refers to the Medieval poets as professors of the Joyous Science who affirm the one law in music and dancing: “I think the peculiar office of scholars in a careful and gloomy generation is to be (as the poets were called in the Middle Ages) Professors of the Joyous Science, detectors and delineators of occult symmetries and unpublished beauties; heralds of civility, nobility, learning and wisdom; affirmers of the one law, yet as those who should affirm it in music and dancing; expressors themselves of that firm and cheerful temper, infinitely removed from sadness, which reigns through the kingdoms of chemistry, vegetation and animal life.” (*Lectures and Biographical Sketches*, 262-263)

<sup>213</sup> It is worth considering here that Nietzsche names Voltaire among these pessimists, next to the Romantic poets Leopardi and Byron, Schopenhauer of course, and Hamlet. From this, we can not only conclude that this reflection was written after 1978, because

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of the publication of MA in which Nietzsche praises Voltaire as a “free spirit,” but also that the skeptic attitude of Voltaire, that seemed so healing for Nietzsche, now appears to him as another devaluation of life.

<sup>214</sup> “**Der Weise bekümmert sich weder um die Vielen noch um die Wenigen. Quellen, die aus einem Antriebe Handelnden, die in Gedanken Versunkenen, der Gebietende, weil ihm geboten wird, die Kühnen, die Ersten, - sie sind gut**; denn sie verkündigen die unmittelbare Gegenwart der **höchsten Macht**.” (V 344-345)

<sup>215</sup> “; aber wenn sie mit ungewissen scheuen Blicken voll Ehrfurcht und halb voll Verdruss dastehen, und ihr Urtheil noch für Jahre hinausschieben müssen, dann **magst du zu hoffen anfangen**. Diejenigen, die der Zukunft leben, müssen immer denen egoistisch erscheinen, die der Gegenwart leben.” (V 347)

<sup>216</sup> “New actions are the only apologies and explanations of old ones which the noble can bear to offer or to receive (EII 103-104) **Neue Thaten** sind die **einzigste Apologie** und Erklärung für **alte**, die der **Edle verstatten kann zu geben** oder zu empfangen.” (V 346)

<sup>217</sup> “Gewöhnlich werden sie mit Abneigung empfangen, weil sie neu sind [...]” (V 350)

<sup>218</sup> Berry (2010, 67) also shows that Nietzsche expressed very little interest in ancient skepticism, and views Phyrrho and Epicurus as representatives of decadence.

<sup>219</sup> “Von der Skepsis erlöst. — A: ‘Andre kommen misslaunig und schwach, zernagt, wurmstichig, ja halb zerfressen aus einer allgemeinen moralischen Skepsis heraus, — ich aber muthiger und gesünder als je, mit wiedererworbenen Instincten. Wo scharfer Wind weht, die See hoch geht und keine kleine Gefahr zu bestehen ist, da wird mir wohl. Zum Wurm bin ich nicht geworden, ob ich gleich oftmals wie ein Wurm habe arbeiten und

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graben müssen.’ — B: Du hast eben aufgehört, Skeptiker zu sein! Denn du verneinst! —

A: ‘Und damit habe ich wieder Ja-sagen gelernt.’” (M 477)

<sup>220</sup> [...ich für mich thue weiter nichts, als dass ich experimentire, ein endloser Sucher, mit keiner Vergangenheit auf meinem Rücken].” (E 318-319) (V 233-234) Nietzsche writes next to this last sentence: “Ja??” – Fabricius seems to translate “at my back” too literally as “auf meinem Rücken,” missing the point of Emerson’s expression that the past cannot support him in his experiments, it does not “have his back,” but that is also does not haunt him “behind his back.” He does not say that the past does not exist for him.

<sup>221</sup> “alle unsere Zwecke nehmen sich, aus einer gewissen Ferne gesehen, als Versuche und Würfe aus — es wird experimentirt” (KSA 10: 313)

<sup>222</sup> “Jene Irrthümer waren bei jener Stufe nothwendig als Heilmittel: die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts als *Kur* hat einen nothwendig-vernünftigen Verlauf.— So sagt ihr. In diesem Sinne leugne ich die Nothwendigkeit. Es ist zufällig, daß dieser und jener Glaubensartikel siegte—dieselbe Heilwirkung wäre von einem *anderen* auch ausgegangen. Und vor allem! die *Folge* der Heilwirkung ist sehr beliebig, sehr *unvernünftig*! Fast immer ist eine tiefe Erkrankung die Folge des neuen Glaubens und nicht eine *Kur*!” (V, Cover Page)

<sup>223</sup> “Ja es kann der Fall vorkommen, dass sie [die Starken oder grossen Menschen, unsere Stärken], im Ganzen gerechnet, nur schaden, weil ihr Bestes allein von Solchen angenommen und gleichsam aufgetrunken wird, welche an ihm, wie an einem zu starken Getränke, ihren Verstand und ihre Selbstsucht verlieren: sie werden so berauscht, dass sie ihre Glieder auf allen den Irrwegen brechen müssen, wohin sie der Rausch treibt.” (KSA 3: 401)

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<sup>224</sup> The first chapter discusses “Chaos sive natura: ‘von der Entmenschlichung der Natur’” after following with a skeptical reflection on the “Einverleibung der Erfahrungen. Erkenntniss = Irrthum, der organisch wird und organisirt.” The third chapter covers “Das Innigste und über den Himmeln Schwebendste, was je geschrieben wird: ‘vom letzten Glück des Einsamen’ — das ist der, welcher aus dem ‘Zugehörigen’ zum ‘Selbsteignen’ des höchsten Grades geworden ist: das vollkommene ego [...]” (KSA 9: 519-520)

<sup>225</sup> A key entry here is FW 143 in which Nietzsche discusses the utility of “polytheism”: “Hier erlaubte man sich zuerst Individuen, hier ehrte man zuerst das Recht von Individuen. Die Erfindung von Göttern, Heroen und Uebermenschen aller Art, sowie von Neben- und Untermenschen, von Zwergen, Feen, Centauren, Satyrn, Dämonen und Teufeln, war die unschätzbare Vorübung zur Rechtfertigung der Selbstsucht und Selbstherrlichkeit des Einzelnen” (KSA 3: 490-491). What Nietzsche sees in polytheism is the artistic, creative, ability of humanity to experiment, the “Vielgeisterei”, the infinite possibilities that “man” still has.

<sup>226</sup> “Es giebt nichts Reelles und Nützliches, das nicht ein Kriegsschauplatz wäre. Unsere Häuser hallen von Gelächter wieder [...]” (V 344)

<sup>227</sup> “Ich will immer mehr lernen, das Nothwendige an den Dingen als das Schöne sehen: [...] Ich will keinen Krieg gegen das Hässliche führen. Ich will nicht anklagen, ich will nicht einmal die Ankläger anklagen. *Wegsehen* sei meine einzige Verneinung! Und, Alles in Allem und Grossen: ich will irgendwann einmal nur noch ein Ja-sagender sein!” (KSA 3: 521)

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<sup>228</sup> “To the poet, to the philosopher, to the saint, all things are friendly and sacred, all events profitable, all days holy, all men divine. For the eye is fastened on the life, and slights the circumstance.” (E 13)

<sup>229</sup> Emerson returns to the image of the Sphinx towards the end of the essay: “As near and proper to us is also that old fable of the Sphinx, who was said to sit in the road-side and put riddles to every passenger. If the man could not answer, she swallowed him alive. If he could solve the riddle, the Sphinx was slain. What is our life but an endless flight of winged facts or events? In splendid variety these changes come, all putting questions to the human spirit. Those men who cannot answer by a superior wisdom these facts or questions of time, serve them. Facts encumber them, tyrannize over them, and make the men of routine, the men of sense, in whom a literal obedience to facts has extinguished every spark of that light by which man is truly man.” (E 32-33)

<sup>230</sup> That to which the aspirant aspires is what Emerson calls “his unattained but attainable self” [“unerreichtes, aber doch erreichbares Ich”] (E 8; V 4).

<sup>231</sup> This passage seems to have been rewritten for FW 233 at the end of book 3:

“Gefährlichster Gesichtspunct. — Was ich jetzt thue oder lasse, ist für alles Kommende so wichtig, als das grösste Ereigniss der Vergangenheit: in dieser ungeheuren Perspective der Wirkung sind alle Handlungen gleich gross und klein.” (KSA 3:512)

<sup>232</sup> “Hier sitzt du, unerbittlich wie meine Neubegier, die mich zu dir zwang: wohlan, Sphinx, ich bin ein Fragender, gleich dir: dieser Abgrund ist uns gemeinsam — es wäre möglich, daß wir mit Einem Munde redeten?”

<sup>233</sup> Similarly, Emerson commented on the effect that Montaigne’s essays had on him: “It seemed to me as if I had myself written the book, in some former life, so sincerely it

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spoke to my thought and experience.” (RM 163) A few lines later, he says: “Cut these words, and they would bleed; they are vascular and alive.” (RM 169) Nietzsche’s Zarathustra will say: “Von allem Geschriebenen liebe ich nur Das, was Einer mit seinem Blute schreibt.” (KSA 4: 48)

<sup>234</sup>Mason Golden similarly comments on the uncanny effect of Nietzsche’s transcriptions that come closer to Emerson’s original: “This is compelling, not only for what he appropriates but for what he leaves behind.” (Golden 2013, 404) For instance, Golden explains that “Emerson’s terse “But keep thy state; come not into their confusion. The power men possess to annoy me, I give them by a weak curiosity” (“Self-Reliance”) is in *Versuche* a meditation in which the reader is counseled not to “throw your soul away on the earthly” and “remain in your own heaven,” and in which “dreary darkness” contends with light (E 59; V 54). These flourishes, which, like “the gift of objectivity,” Nietzsche would not have known were ultimately excised by Emerson, are precisely what he excises in crafting his abridgment (KSA 9: 672). Nietzsche instinctively brings us closer to Emerson as we know him. Similarly, in excerpt 25 (KSA 9: 669), Nietzsche trims a sentence, not inconsequentially, at the point where Fabricius departs from Emerson. Straying from Emerson’s unpretentious praise of youthful “neutrality” and intellectual self-reliance, Fabricius asserts such a youth would “win the respect of a poet as of a man” (V 36). The sentiment is a misreading of Emerson’s original and Nietzsche leaves it out of his transcription.” (Golden 2013, 404)

<sup>235</sup> **“Dem Poeten, dem Philosophen wie dem Heiligen sind alle Dinge befreundet und geweiht, alle Ereignisse nützlich, alle Tage heilig, alle Menschen göttlich.”** (V 9)

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<sup>236</sup> “Every thing tends in a wonderful manner to abbreviate itself and yield its own virtue to him. He should see that he can live all history in his own person.”

<sup>237</sup> “Der schaffende Instinkt der Seele zeigt sich in dem Nutzen, den wir aus der Geschichte zu ziehn wissen: es giebt *nur* Biographie. Jeder Mensch muß *seine* ganze Aufgabe erkennen.—Dieses planlose rohe widersinnige Dort und Damals soll verschwinden und an seine Stelle das Jetzt und Hier treten.” (V 6)

“The instinct of the mind, the purpose of nature, betrays itself in the use we make of the signal narrations of history [. . .] there is properly no history; only biography. Every mind must know the whole lesson [. . .] do away this wild, savage, and preposterous There or Then, and introduce in its place the Here and the Now.” (E 240–41)

<sup>238</sup> “**‘To the persevering mortal,’ said Zoroaster, ‘the blessed Immortals are swift.’** (E 79-80) “‘Dem ausharrenden Sterblichen,’ sagte Zoroaster, ‘sind die Götter zu helfen bereit.’” (V 60)

<sup>239</sup> “Deinem eignen Gedanken Glauben schenken—glauben, daß was für dich in deinem innersten Herzen wahr ist, auch für alle Menschen wahr sei: das ist Genie.” (V 32)

<sup>240</sup> “In jedem Werke des Genies erkennen wir unsere eignen verstoßenen Gedanken wieder: sie kommen zurück zu uns mit einer gewissen entfremdenden Majestät.” (V 33)

<sup>241</sup> “17[33] Die Handlungen der Könige haben die Welt unterrichtet: sie handeln aus einem weiten Gesichtspunkt: sie lehren durch kolossale Symbolik, welche Achtung ein Mensch dem Menschen schuldet: Es gab immer freudige Anhänglichkeit an den, der sich nach selbstgeschaffenen Gesetzen bewegte, sich seine Werthtafel von Menschen und Dingen machte und die vorhandene umstieß und das *Gesetz in seiner Person darstellte*.”



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<sup>242</sup> For a similar aphorism, see the following transcription: “17[27] Daß ich allein an das denke, was mir als mein Rechtes erscheint, aber nicht an das, was die Leute dazu denken—bezeichnet den Unterschied zwischen Erhabenheit und Niedrigkeit. Dies ist um so härter, weil du solche, die deine Pflicht besser zu kennen glauben als du selbst, überall finden wirst. Groß ist der, der mitten im Gewühl der Welt mit vollkommener Klarheit die Freiheit, die uns die Einsamkeit gewährt, festhält.”

“What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think. This rule, equally arduous in actual and in intellectual life, may serve for the whole distinction between greatness and meanness. It is the harder, because you will always find those who think they know what is your duty better than you know it. It is easy in the world to live after the world’s opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after your own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.” (*E* 263; *V* 39)

<sup>243</sup> “17[34] Die Geschichte ist eine Ungereimtheit und Injurie, wenn sie mehr sein will als eine erheiternde Erzählung und Parabel meines Seins und Werdens.—Mit rückgewandtem Auge bejammert er die Vergangenheit oder steht auf den Spitzen der Zehen, etwas von der Zukunft zu erspähen. Aber er sollte mit der Natur in der Gegenwart leben, *erhaben über die Zeit*.”

<sup>244</sup> “[...] ich habe mich nunmehr entschlossen, die nächsten fünf Jahre zur Ausarbeitung meiner “Philosophie” zu verwenden, für welche ich mir, durch meinen Zarathustra, eine Vorhalle gebaut habe.

<sup>245</sup> We can see this in one of Nietzsche’s letters to his publisher Heinrich Köselitz: “Mit „*Zarathustra*“ gerathe ich nun gar noch unter die „Litteraten“ und

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„Schriftsteller“, und das Band, das mich mit der Wissenschaft verknüpfte, wird als zerrissen erscheinen.” (BVN-1883, 402) Similarly, Vivarelli argued that, opposed to the previous use of the aphorism, the Zarathustra text does not just undermine philosophical argumentation, by giving the end product of a long chain of thoughts (the aphorism) but replaces it with an expressionistic directness: “Das metaphorische Gewebe dieses Werks ist eine Art Herausforderung, jeweils den gebildeten Verweis oder den hinter der Oberfläche aufscheinenden Gedanken zu fassen.” (Vivarelli 2013, 340)

<sup>246</sup> **“Wir verlangen, daß ein Mensch so groß und säulenförmig in der Landschaft dastehe, daß es berichtet zu werden verdiente wenn er aufstünde und seine Lenden gürtete und einem andern solchen Orte zueilte** [N. writes next to this line emphatically „Das ist es!“] Die glaubwürdigsten Bilder scheinen uns die von großen Menschen zu sein, die bei ihrem ersten Erscheinen schon die Oberhand hatten, und die Sinne überführten, wie es dem morgenländischen Weisen erging, der gesandt war, die Verdienste des Zarathustra oder Zoroaster zu erproben.“ (V 351)

<sup>247</sup> In the notebooks for the first book of *Also sprach Zarathustra* (Z I) from November 1882-Februar 1883, Nietzsche reworks some of the passages that he had earlier extracted from Emerson’s essays, for instance the imperative to “move through many individuals” as well as the thought of the eternal return. “Man muss vergehen wollen, um wieder entstehen zu können,” Nietzsche asserts evocatively of Zarathustra’s return (“Untergang”) to humanity, “– von einem Tage zum anderen. *Verwandlung* durch hundert Seelen – das sei dein Leben, dein Schicksal: Und dann zuletzt: diese ganze Reihe noch einmal wollen!” (KSA 10: 213) Here we see again that the thought of the eternal

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return does not mean a repetition of “one life” but a transformation of that life within a series of lives. Right below this remark, Nietzsche wrote down what seems to be an image from Emerson’s “Spiritual Laws,” transformed into what will become part of the famous preface to Z I “Ja, ich erkenne Zarathustra. Rein ist sein Auge, und an seinem Munde birgt sich kein Ekel. Geht er nicht daher wie ein Tänzer? Verwandelt ist Zarathustra, zum Kind ward Zarathustra, ein Erwachter ist Zarathustra: was willst du nun bei den Schlafenden?” (KSA 10: 213) The image of a “pure eyeball” are frequently found in Emerson’s essays, for instance in “Spiritual Laws:” “When a man speaks the truth in the spirit of truth, his eye is as clear as the heavens. When he has base ends and speaks falsely, the eye is muddy and sometimes asquint [schielend].” (E 157)

„Wenn ein Mensch die Wahrheit im Geiste der Wahrheit spricht, so ist sein Auge so klar wie der Himmel. Wenn er schlechte Absichten im Schilde führt, und seine Reden voll Falsch sind, so ist das Auge trübe und zuweilen schielend.“ (V 116) From Emerson’s “Experience”: “Eine sympathetische Person ist in das Dilemma eines Schwimmers unter ertrinkenden Menschen versetzt, die sich alle an ihm anhängen wollen, und wenn er ihnen so viel wie ein Bein oder einen Finger hinhält, so ziehen sie ihn mit hinunter” (V 331 f.). (“A sympathetic person is placed in the dilemma of a swimmer among drowning men, who all catch at him, and if he give so much as a leg or a finger they will drown him.” (E 82))

Draft of *Die Begrüßung* (in Part IV): “Von Ertrinkenden spricht mir heimlich meine Schlange: das Meer zieht sie hinab – da möchte sie sich gern an einen starken Schwimmer anklammern. Und wahrlich, so blind und wild greifen Ertrinkende mit Armen und Beinen nach einem Retter und Gutwilligen, daß sie den Stärksten mit in ihre

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Tiefe hinabziehn. [...] Den kleinen Finger strecke ich euch schon entgegen” (KSA 11: 391). In the actual passage from Z, Nietzsche had compressed the passage (see KSA 4: 348).

<sup>248</sup> “17[14] Es muß meinem Auge unmöglich sein, mit schielenden Blicken hin und dahin zu sehen: sondern immer muß ich den ganzen Kopf mit drehen—so ist es vornehm.“

<sup>249</sup> Vivarella comments: “Emerson verbindet eine weite europäische und insbesondere deutsche Kultur mit einer frischen Vorurteilslosigkeit und einem optimistischen Pioniergeist, die typisch für den neuen Kontinent sind. In seinen Schriften stößt man häufig auf anscheinend zufällige und harmlose Überlegungen oder Urteile, die näher besehen schwindelerregende Perspektiven eröffnen, die jedoch durch einen Grundton heiterer oder gutmütiger Gelassenheit verdeckt oder entschärft werden. Solche ‘abgründigen’ Perspektiven konnten Nietzsche nicht entgehen, der sich deren explosives Potential in seinem Kampf gegen die alten Gewißheiten zu eigen zu machen wußte.” (Vivarella 2013, 333)

<sup>250</sup> “Die Philosophie von sechstausend Jahren hat nicht die Kammern und Magazine der Seele untersucht. [...] **Der genaueste Berechner hat kein solches Vorherwissen, daß nicht etwas Unberechenbares grade den nächsten Moment ändern könnte.**” (V 197)

<sup>251</sup> “§ [Zarathustra] 4 die höchste Seele Schilderung des Übermenschen” (KSA 10: 551)  
“Letzte Scene: Schilderung der hoechsten Seele [...] die ins Werden verliebt” (KSA 10: 593)

<sup>252</sup> “Als Kinder glaubten wir uns vom Horizonte wie von einer Glasglocke umschlossen und zweifelten nicht, daß wir durch fortgesetztes Wandern an den Ort gelangen müßten, wo Sonnen und Sterne ins Bad hinabstiegen. Beim Versuche flieht der Himmel vor uns

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und lässt uns in einer unendlichen Leere, die durch keine Glasglocke geschützt wird.

Aber es ist sonderbar, wie fest wir an dieser Glocken-Astronomie von einem schützenden, umschließenden häuslichen Horizonte festhalten” (FL 185-186).

<sup>253</sup> “Hier finden wir, dass die Natur der Umstand ist, der jeden andern Umstand klein für uns macht, und **dass sie einem Gotte gleich alle Menschen richtet, die zu ihr kommen.**

[...] Das mildere Licht der Wälder ist wie ein **immerwährender Morgen**, und ist anspornend und heroisch.” (V 392)

<sup>254</sup> “Die Bäume, die unfähig sind sich mitzutheilen, fangen an uns zu überreden, dass wir **mit ihnen** leben sollen, und unser Leben voll feierlicher Kleinigkeiten verlassen. **Hier liegt keine Geschichte, keine Kirche, kein Staat zwischen dem erhabenen Himmel und den unsterblichen Jahr.** Wie leicht könnten wir weiter hinein schreiten in die Landschaft, die sich vor unsern Blicken aufthut, vertieft in neue Bilder und in Gedanken, die schnell auf einander folgen bis nach und nach die Erinnerung an das Haus von uns genommen wäre, unser Gedächtniss verwischt durch die Tyrannei des Gegenwärtigen [tyranny of the present], und wir so im Triumph von der Natur geleitet würden. **Diese Entzückungen sind heilsam, sie machen uns nüchtern**, und tragen zu unserer Genesung bei. Dies sind reine Freuden, die wohltätig für uns und uns verwandt sind. **Wir kommen unserm Eigenthum näher**, und **befreunden uns mit dem Urstoff [Ja!], den zu verachten** uns das ehrfürchtige Geschnatter der Schulen überreden will.” (V 392-393)

<sup>255</sup> The context of the former quote, which Nietzsche put before this longer passage but actually comes after it in the original text, helps us understand this connection more clearly: “We nestle in nature, and draw our living as parasites from her roots and grains, and **we receive glances from the heavenly bodies, which call us to solitude and**

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**foretell the remotest future.** The blue zenith is the point in which romance and reality meet.” (EII 172-173) We are of the same stuff that nature is, and when we enter nature we become parasites who draw their life from it. Fabricius translation of “romance and reality” as “Dichtung und Wahrheit,” Goethe’s famous autobiography, seems interesting to say the least. There is nothing here of a “reines, anschauendes, interessseloses Auge” that Nietzsche had previously attributed to Emerson in 1866 – we are not simple observers but appropriators and assimilators Without referencing Nietzsche’s notes, Vivarelli made the same connection between the beginning of Emerson’s “Nature” and Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, but in book 4: “Heisser Mittag,” Zarathustra speaks, “schläft auf den Fluren. Singe nicht! Still! Die Welt ist vollkommen.” (KSA 4: 343) Vivarelli comes to the same conclusion, that Nietzsche must use Emerson now against Schopenhauer: “Die lange Strecke, die Emersons Satz in den Schriften Nietzsches zurücklegt, beweist die Kontinuität eines dialogischen Verhältnisses, das unangefochten die verschiedenen Phasen dieses Lebenswerks durchlaufen sollte.” (Vivarelli 2013, 343)

<sup>256</sup> **“Müssen wir nicht irgendwo im Universum eine wenn auch nur geringe Falschheit und einen Hohn vermuthen?”** Empfinden wir nicht ernstlichen Unwillen über diese Art und Weise, wie man sich unserer bedient? Sind wir eine schwache ehrliche Haut, und müssen wir uns von der Natur zum Besten haben lassen? **Ein Blick auf den Himmel und die Erde vernichtet den Gedanken an Hohnneckerei, und lässt uns zu besserer Ueberzeugung gelangen. Für den Verständigen verkehrt sich die Natur in ein ungeheures Versprechen, und will nicht vorschnell erklärt sein. Ihr Geheimniß ist unausgesprochen. Wieder und wieder kommt ein Oedipus: das ganze Mysterium zwingt sich in sein Hirn hinein.**” (V 409-410)

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<sup>257</sup> “Wir sind der Meinung, dass unsere Civilisation nun bald **ihre Mittagshöhe erreicht habe, aber wir sind noch beim Hahnenschrei und beim Morgenstern.** In unserer barbarischen Gesellschaft ist der Einfluss des Charakters noch in der Kindheit.” (V 426)

<sup>258</sup> “He [the wise man] needs no army, fort, or navy,—he loves men too well [Er liebt die Menschen zu sehr]; no bribe, or feast, or palace, to draw friends to him; no vantage ground, no favorable circumstance. He needs no library, for he has not done thinking [denn er hört nicht auf zu denken]; no church, for he is a prophet; no statute-book, for he has the lawgiver; no money, for he is value; no road, for he is at home where he is; no experience, for the life of the creator shoots through him, and looks from his eyes. **He has no personal friends, for he who has the spell to draw the prayer and piety of all men unto him needs not husband and educate a few to share with him a select and poetic life.** His relation to men is angelic; his memory is myrrh to them; his presence, frankincense and flowers.” (EII 216-217)

“er [the wise man] **liebt dazu die Menschen zu sehr; keine Geschenke, oder Feste, oder einen Palast, um sich Freunde zu erwerben: keine Ueberlegenheit, keinen günstigen Umstand. Er braucht keine Bibliothek, denn er ist ein Prophet; kein Gesetzbuch, denn er hat den Gesetzgeber, kein Geld, denn er ist der Werth desselben; [...].** Er hat keine persönlichen Freunde, denn der, welcher den Zauber besitzt, dass er sich das Gebet und die Liebe aller Menschen erwerben kann, braucht nicht einige Wenige zu leiten und zu erziehen, dass sie mit ihm ein auserwähltes und poetischen Leben führen. Die Beziehung, in der er zu den Menschen

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steht, ist eine engelgleich; sein Gedenken ist Myrrhen für sie; seine Gegenwart  
Weihrauch und Blumen.” (V 426)

<sup>259</sup> Zarathustra says: “Was überredet das Lebendige, dass es gehorcht und befiehlt und  
befehlend noch Gehorsam übt?” (KSA 4: 147) In “Vom Krieg und Kriegsvolke,”  
Zarathustra makes a similar comment: „Auflehnung — das ist die Vornehmheit am  
Sclaven. Eure Vornehmheit sei Gehorsam! Euer Befehlen selber sei ein Gehorchen!”  
(KSA 4: 59)

<sup>260</sup> **“Der Weise bekümmert sich weder um die Vielen noch um die Wenigen. Quellen,  
die aus einem Antriebe Handelnden, die in Gedanken Versunkenen, der Gebietende,  
weil ihm geboten wird, die Kühnen, die Ersten, - sie sind gut;** denn sie verkündigen  
die unmittelbare Gegenwart der **höchsten Macht.**” (V 344-345)

<sup>261</sup> In “Vom Krieg und Kriegsvolke,” Zarathustra demands: “Eure Vornehmheit sei  
Gehorsam! Euer Befehlen selber sei ein Gehorchen!” (KSA 4: 59)

<sup>262</sup> However, we must also point out that Nietzsche’s note breaks off mid-sentence and  
remains vague. Additionally, the note appears in a context when Nietzsche entertained a  
variety of thoughts on Zarathustra; for instance the following note: “Du widersprichst  
heute dem, was du gestern gelehrt hast – Aber dafür ist gestern nicht heute, sagte  
Zarathustra” (KSA 9: 598-599), which is a clear transcription of Emerson’s “Self-  
Reliance”: “Speak what you think now in hard words and to-morrow speak what to-  
morrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict every thing you said to-day.—  
'Ah, so you shall be sure to be misunderstood.'—Is it so bad then to be misunderstood?”  
(E 58)



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<sup>263</sup> Zavatta discusses Emerson's essay on compensation in conjunction with the *Gay Science*, but completely overlooks this connection. For her, Emerson's theory of compensation either represents "the naïve worldview of an incurable idealist", thereby joining a long line of critics' judgement, or, which Zavatta ultimately prefers and sees in line of Nietzsche's own thinking, "our capacity to interpret all that befalls us in a way that works ultimately to our own advantage" (2019, 57-58). But this latter reading, which Zavatta sees in tune with Nietzsche's, overlooks the very explicit statements made by Emerson that the law of compensation is "real" and not just an interpretative tool. The same is true for Nietzsche. Although he praises (and also warns against) our power to interpret the events of our lives, he also makes explicit statements about nature as "innocent" etc. that tend toward a metaphysical view – and why not?

<sup>264</sup> Nietzsche, if anything, does simply think this formula further in terms of guilt (those who do what they want to do are trained to feel guilty about it). But the importance of shame and guilt is already featured in Emerson's "Self-Reliance" – which is the essay preceding the one on compensation – both must be read together.

<sup>265</sup> The Latin spells out the following: "The blessed in the kingdom of heaven will see the punishments of the damned, so that happiness will please them more."

<sup>266</sup> The will to truth, the sphinx that poses the questions, now turns against itself:

"Was Wunder, wenn wir endlich einmal misstrauisch werden, die Geduld verlieren, uns ungeduldig umdrehn? Dass wir von dieser Sphinx auch unsererseits das Fragen lernen? Wer ist das eigentlich, der uns hier Fragen stellt? Was in uns will eigentlich 'zur Wahrheit'? [...] Gesetzt, wir wollen Wahrheit: warum nicht lieber Unwahrheit? Und Ungewissheit? Selbst Unwissenheit? — Das Problem vom Werthe der Wahrheit trat vor

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uns hin, — oder waren wir's, die vor das Problem hin traten? Wer von uns ist hier Oedipus? Wer Sphinx?" (KSA 5: 15)

<sup>267</sup> "How wearisome the grammarian, the phrenologist, the political or religious fanatic, or indeed any possessed mortal whose balance is lost by the exaggeration of a single topic. It is incipient insanity. Every thought is a prison also. I cannot see what you see, because I am caught up by a strong wind and blown so far in one direction that I am out of the hoop of your horizon." (E 340)

<sup>268</sup> "In like manner our moral nature is vitiated by any interference of our will. People represent virtue as a struggle, and take to themselves great airs upon their attainments, and the question is everywhere vexed when a noble nature is commended, whether the man is not better who strives with temptation. But there is no merit in the matter. Either God is there or he is not there. We love characters in proportion as they are impulsive and spontaneous. **The less a man thinks or knows about his virtues the better we like him.** Timoleon's victories are the best victories, which ran and flowed like Homer's verses, Plutarch said. When we see a soul whose acts are all regal, graceful and pleasant as [135] roses, we must thank God **that such things can be and are, and not turn sourly on the angel and say 'Crump is a better man with his grunting resistance to all his native devils.'**" (E 134-135) (V 99)

<sup>269</sup> In that very passage, Emerson declares that "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm [Tapferkeit]." (E 322) Zarathustra similarly says: "Der Krieg und der Muth haben mehr grosse Dinge gethan, als die Nächstenliebe. Nicht euer Mitleiden, sondern eure Tapferkeit rettete bisher die Verunglückten." (KSA 4: 59)

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<sup>270</sup> “Laßt uns selbst unsern liebsten Freunden Lebewohl sagen und sie zum Kampf [V160] herausfordern indem wir sagen: ‘Wer seid ihr? Laßt mich los: ich will nicht mehr abhängig sein.’” (V 160)

<sup>271</sup> “Die einzige Freude, die mir sein Besitz gewährt, ist die, daß das nicht mein mein ist. **Es kehrt mir das Innerste um, und verdunkelt mir das Tageslicht, wenn ich da, wo ich nach einer edlen Aufmunterung suchte, oder wenigstens einen männlichen Widerstand zu finden hoffte, einen Brei von Zugeständnissen hören muß** [Nietzsch writes again „bravo“]. **Besser für dich, du findest einen Nesselstrauch in deinem Freunde, als daß er dein Echo ist.**” (V 155)

<sup>272</sup> “Wer mich hört, wer mich versteht, der wird mein, ein Eigenthum für alle Zeiten.” (V 142)

<sup>273</sup> West also makes an excellent point here: “In the abstract, this ideal is antihierarchical, egalitarian, and democratic, for it pertains to personal relations. In the concrete, it virtually evaporates because it cannot but relate to marginal persons on the edges of dominant classes, groups, or elites.” (West 27)

<sup>274</sup> “Ein Freund ist ein Wesen mit dem ich wohl aufrichtig sein kann. Vor ihm kann ich laut denken. Ich befinde mich endlich einem so wahren und mir gleichgesinnten Menschen gegenüber, daß ich [...] so einfach und in solcher Ungetheiltheit **zu ihm stellen kann, wie ein chemisches Atom sich zum andern stellt.**” (V 149-150)

<sup>275</sup> “Meine Einbildungskraft gefällt sich mehr darin, sich **einen Kreis von im höchsten Grade vortrefflichen Männern und Frauen zu denken,** die in verschiedenen Beziehungen zu einander stehen, und zwischen denen ein **erhabenes Einverständnis** stattfindet. Aber ich finde **dies Gesetz von Einem zu Einem** peremptorisch für die

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Unterhaltung, die doch am Ende das Praktische und der Consum der Freundschaft ist.“

(V 153)

<sup>276</sup> Thematically, the essay continues aspects that Nietzsche included into his Zarathustra.

For instance, Emerson's line "The world is only to the wise a festival." (E 249-250)

Fabricius translates in the spirit of Nietzsche: "Das Leben ist nur für den Weisen ein Festtag." (V 183)

<sup>277</sup> The essay begins with a lengthy fictional dialogue between Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe, which Fabricius also leaves untranslated in the main text, although providing the German translation in the footnotes.

<sup>278</sup> "“Das *Paradies* ist unter dem Schatten der Schwerter' — auch ein Symbolon und Kerbholz-Wort, an dem sich Seelen vornehmer und kriegerischer Abkunft verrathen und errathen. —" (KSA 12: 2 [19])

<sup>279</sup> Gilman summarizes Emerson's text as "die retrospektive Analyse seiner eigenen Entwicklung zwischen 1820 und dem Zusammenbruch der utopischen Gemeinde von Brook Farm in der Mitte der 40er Jahre." (Gilman 407) I wonder if Gilman is led here by Nietzsche's own remark that this essay should shed some light on Emerson's personal "Entwicklung." (BVN-1884, 566) To me, it rather seems that Nietzsche's assumption is not entirely accurate. Although Emerson makes use of biographical details and elements, the topic of the essay is a historical and cultural analysis of the times, which, to be fair, Gilman notices too.

<sup>280</sup> Having traditionally been taken to be a proof of Emerson's "late-life retreat from celebration of the power of Self-Reliance to acquiescence in the dominance of sociohistorical forces," as Lawrence Buell put it (2003, 282), the essay in fact performs a

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strong affirmation of freedom because it grants the social, natural, and bodily forces all their power. Emerson did speak out against slavery many times publicly, so why not now? One answer would be that he wants the reader to make the connection (if the reader does not get it, what can he do?). Another, more satisfying answer lies in Emerson's perception of himself as a writer turned public intellectual. Emerson was always ambivalent about his place in public, as Lawrence Buell argues: the "persuasiveness [of Emerson's essays and lectures] depended on presenting himself as a scholar rather than a reform professional—a scholar whose descent to an arena in which he did not belong was in and of itself proof of the lamentable state of things." (Buell 2003, 279-280) Emerson's frequent complaints about being dragged into the public arena are not signs of his ivory tower style of thinking but a rhetorical strategy: if he, who portrays himself as a skeptic of any reform activity, becomes active in the abolition movement, so should his listener. It is a risky tactic, because Emerson's generalizations and abstractions run the risk of being missed by an inattentive reader, the risk of losing its radical form of dissent (with the institution of slavery) and being turned into some common place croaking about American individualism. If a reader does not get it, it is not Emerson's problem – to be great, after all, is to be misunderstood.

<sup>281</sup> A similar problem appears in Emerson's *Historic Notes* and Gilman's reading of it in conjunction with Nietzsche. Nietzsche, Gilman says, was attracted to Emerson's autobiographical style: "Die Idee des Individuums, als Philosoph und Dichter, in der Betrachtung seiner eigenen Entwicklung und seines eigenen Potentials musste Nietzsche wie ein vertrautes Mittel zur Einführung des höchst radikalen Moments der Selbstanalyse in die philosophische Abhandlung erschienen sein." (Gilman 1980, 407)

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<sup>282</sup> “The poem, the oration, the book are superhuman, but the wonder is out when you see the manuscript. Homer how wonderful until the German erudition discovered a cyclus of homeric poems. It is all one; a trick of cards, a juggler's sleight, an astronomical result, an algebraic formula, amazing when we see only the result, cheap when we are shown the means.” (JMN. IV. 284-85)

<sup>283</sup> Of course, Gilman notices that too: “die Ansicht, dass der Mensch seiner Zeit in einer im Zerfall begriffenen Gesellschaft lebe, dass Goethes ‘Faust’ ein Zeichen dieses Zerfalls sei, dass mit der kritischen Methode der klassischen Philologie eine Werkzeug zur Hand sei, mit dem die Stimmung der Zeit analysiert werden könne und vieles mehr.” (Gilman 1980, 407)

<sup>284</sup> Similarly in the realms of science, “there was, in the first quarter of our nineteenth century, a certain sharpness of criticism, an eagerness for reform, which showed itself in every quarter. It appeared in the popularity of Lavater's Physiognomy, now almost forgotten. Gall and Spurzheim's Phrenology laid a rough hand on the mysteries of animal and spiritual nature, dragging down every sacred secret to a street show.” (HN 530)

<sup>285</sup> Ellison quotes Thoreau's letter to Emerson, in which the former says: “Is it not singular that, while the religious world is gradually picking to pieces its old testaments, here are some coming slowly after, on the seashore, picking up the durable relics of perhaps older books, and putting them together again.” (Ellison 1984, 80) She comments: “For when integral works are fragmented, we perceive the value of fragments. As modern texts are found to be collections of old “debris,” discontinuity becomes desirable.” (Ellison 80-81)

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<sup>286</sup> This also includes the disappearance or disintegration of “the human.” Zarathustra himself says: “Wahrlich, meine Freunde, ich wandle unter den Menschen wie unter den Bruchstücken und Gliedmaassen von Menschen!” (KSA 4: 178) This image is taken from Hölderlin, *Hyperion*, last letter to Bellarmin. It sounds like Emerson’s *American Scholar*, but Nietzsche did not have that text.

<sup>287</sup> This is an even more accurate assessment in the United States (the American revolution was a revolution of merchants), where there never was a proper aristocratic class to begin with – the closest the US came to have an “aristocratic class” is the sort of imitation of nobility that many southern plantation owners delighted in by playing lords and ladies. Kant’s “Sapere Aude” (the conjunction of Protestantism and Enlightenment) is also a Bourgeois style of thinking – after all, who benefits from thinking for oneself? Those who oppose the aristocracy and prefer a “free market” (of ideas).

<sup>288</sup> In this way, David Axelrod, campaign strategist for Barrack Obama in 2007 said “I think that, you know, we are a remarkable experiment, an ongoing project in self-governance...we are and should be a beacon to the world.” (Quote after David A. Bell 2022, 22)

<sup>289</sup> Quotes are taken from Peter Marshall’s *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (2010, 384-387).

<sup>290</sup> Another American anarchist, Benjamin Tucker, editor of the influential anarchist journal *Liberty*, in which Nietzsche’s writings seem to have appeared in translation for the first time in the US (McElroy 1981), also hoped to appropriate Nietzsche for the anarchist cause. However, Nietzsche, like Emerson, entails anarchic elements, but is no anarchist.

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<sup>291</sup> In an industrial culture with commercials and advertising reduplicates endlessly the surface of reality, over and over again the same scenes of banal life: “This is our groove, this is the rut of the great and the would-be great – this is reality as it is and should be and will be, [...] “and the realization of the infinite potentialities inherent in man has been relegated to the status of a luxury.” (Horkheimer, 142-143) Of course, these descriptions fit the United States of the 20<sup>th</sup>, from which Horkheimer drew his observations, and not the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But Emerson and Nietzsche seem in this regard prophetic in their attempts to activate a sense of experimentation in human life again, that even might go beyond the human.

<sup>292</sup> American pragmatism functions as “the counterpart of modern industrialism, for which the factory is the prototype of human existence, and which models all branches of culture after production on the conveyor belt, or after the rationalized front office.” (Horkheimer 50)

<sup>293</sup> One of these morphs turned work into a “calling,” a moral obligation. Emerson makes use of this idea of “calling” and Puritan determinism, “the chosen people,” in “Spiritual Laws”: “I say, do not choose; but that is a figure of speech by which I would distinguish what is commonly called choice among men, and which is a partial act, the choice of the hands, of the eyes, of the appetites, and not a whole act of the man. [...] We must hold a man amenable to reason for the choice of his daily craft or profession. It is not an excuse any longer for his deeds that they are the custom of his trade. What business has he with an evil trade? Has he not a calling in his character?” (E 141) Here it seems that Emerson seeks a constant interrogation of our choices in life, whether these choices are in tune with “our calling.” But what is the authority of this calling? Usually our moral



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conscience. Not so for Emerson: “But that which I call right or goodness, is the choice of my constitution; and that which I call heaven, and inwardly aspire after, is the state or circumstance desirable to my constitution; and the action which I in all my years tend to do, is the work for my faculties.” (E 141) Again, Emerson takes the concepts at his disposal, the very fabric of his own culture, and turns it against itself. Often, Emerson also takes the cultural relicts of other times to counter the culture of his day, for instance the Greeks (as did Nietzsche).