

Friends and Readers: On David B. Allison's *Reading the New Nietzsche*

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In 1977 David Allison published *The New Nietzsche*. This was an event in the anglophone reception, criticism, and interpretation of its subject. A few scholars who were close to the European scene knew the work of Klossowski, Deleuze, and others but even fewer were familiar with the range of thinkers, themes, and questions that Allison brought together in this wonderful collection. Now those thinkers, so haunted by Nietzsche in his posthumous life, could enter into the anglophone conversation and classroom. This book, unlike so many sets of edited essays, was not a heap; the selections were acutely organized around major themes, from questions of language and meaning to issues of happiness and eternity. *The New Nietzsche* was a touchstone for my own thinking and teaching. I am delighted to have the opportunity to thank David Allison for having helped me and many others in our struggles and ecstasies with the new Nietzsche. Now he has invited us to join him in *Reading the New Nietzsche*.

"The new Nietzsche": this phrase can be understood in several ways. There was indeed a "new Nietzsche" on the European philosophical horizon in 1977, one who had just begun to penetrate the resistant air of the American academy through the writings of a few foreign agents like Paul de Man and Jacques Derrida. A few knew Foucault's writing and sensed the crucial role that Nietzsche held for him, beyond the fact that they shared a birthday. This was a Nietzsche who had emerged from the political controversies of the World War II era, and from tendencies to see him as a reductive vitalist or a confused quasi-pragmatist. Nietzsche's style or, better, styles had received no careful appreciation in English. As Allison astutely remarks in the apparatus to *Reading the New Nietzsche*, even efforts to rescue Nietzsche from association with the Nazis, like Walter Kaufmann's, heroic as they were at the time, still unwittingly kept the theme alive by devoting so much energy to rejecting it (Allison, 250 n. 9). One might ask: Can the new Nietzsche of 1977 still be our contemporary? It is not easy to determine the half-life of philosophical orientations and scholarly fashions, even if things in philosophy move at a glacial pace in comparison with the speed of trends in literary and cultural studies. Is the new Nietzsche *still* new or is he an artifact of the 1970s, a time that still lingers on in the American "community" of Continental philosophy? Are there newer Nietzsches emerging, Nietzsches who speak presciently of globalization and multiculturalism, green or geophilosophical Nietzsches who sing songs of the earth and ask what its *Sinn* or direction shall be, Nietzsches who are not only musical but visual, and so speak to our

culture's increasing dependence on the image? Nietzsches who rethink the relation of human and animal, domestication and brutality? Nietzsches whose thought anticipates genetic biology? CyberNietzsches whose conception of the posthuman can embrace the extended body of technology? Are there newer Nietzsches whom we encounter when we read the texts that Nietzsche was reading, like those behemoth philosophical systems of Spencer and Comte which he both scorned and sought to rival (in his plans for the *Transvaluation*)? Nietzsches who know their neoplatonism? These Nietzsches are appearing or will appear, appropriately enough, in *New Nietzsche Studies* as well as in a host of books.¹

These newer Nietzsches, Nietzsche's children we might call them, even if he would have trouble recognizing them, and might have disowned them, continue to proliferate, including in the pages of *Reading the New Nietzsche*. Allison was quite clear in 1977 that the new Nietzsche he presented was a renewable resource, a self-sustaining source of novelty, a machine like the eternal recurrence that was temporally open, and necessarily in communication with friends and enemies yet unborn. The "new Nietzsche," like Heraclitus's sun, is new every day, at least every readerly day. This is all very clear in the Introduction to the 1977 *New Nietzsche* volume, and so I want to recall that important text before moving on to its successor, *Reading the New Nietzsche*. In 1977 Allison explains how the new Nietzsche emerges in a process of reading. At the beginning of that Introduction, he reminds us that Nietzsche saw himself as "a posthumous writer, one who writes for the future, one who will live only in the future—as a ghost."² He quotes a passage from *The Gay Science* 365, where Nietzsche so describes himself. The aphorism appears in the fifth section of the book, added in 1887, a renewal of this book whose very motif is self-renewal, a book standing under the sign of Sanctus Januarius, and whose new edition sings the fresh and breezy songs of Prinz Vogelfrei. Let us, who seek ever new Nietzsches, read this entire ghost story. As we do so, let us keep in mind what Allison says about the aphorism form just a few pages later, when he explains that the aphorism is the stylistic form of futurity itself, that it is "alive and animate." It is so, he argues, because it "demands that an operation be performed upon itself for its very intelligibility, that it be inserted into new contexts, that it be related to ever new referential sets."³ Reading this aphorism today, we see Allison's acuity in 1977, demonstrated by the fact that the reading both confirms and goes beyond what it seemed to say then. It is, shall we say, the site of a seance with Nietzsche, in which the ghost shows up not to drag us back into the past, but only when he has something new to say. We come to find that one of our best friends is dead, but alive.

The hermit speaks once more.— We, too, associate with 'people';

we, too, modestly don the dress in which (*as which*) others know us, respect us, look for us—and then we appear in company, meaning among people who are disguised without having to admit it. We, too, do what all prudent masks do and in response to every curiosity that does not concern our 'dress' we politely place a chair against the door. But there are also other ways and tricks when it comes to associating with or passing among men—for example, as a ghost, which is altogether advisable if one wants to get rid of them quickly and make them afraid. Example: One reaches for us but gets no hold of us. That is frightening. Or we enter through a closed door. Or after all lights have been extinguished. Or after we have died.

The last is the trick of *posthumous* people par excellence. ('What did you think?' one of them once asked impatiently; 'would we feel like enduring the estrangement, the cold and quiet of the grave around us—this whole subterranean, concealed, mute, undiscovered solitude that among us is called life but might just as well be called death—if we did not know what will *become* of us, and that it is only after death that we shall enter *our* life and become alive, oh, very much alive, we posthumous people!') (*GS*, sec. 365, p. 321).

We might hear this as one of Nietzsche's most Kierkegaardian passages. While Nietzsche did not need Kierkegaard to speak of masks, self-concealment, and indirection, the aphorism reads newly once we know, as we did not until recently, that Nietzsche probably knew much more of Kierkegaard than he let on, since Peter Gast read to him from Georg Brandes's massive series on nineteenth-century thought.⁴ In any case, this aphorism presents itself as the speech of a hermit, one who by definition, it seems, lives in the greatest possible solitude. The solitude is maintained by masks, disguises, and dress even when venturing out into company. The hermit is alone even in society. We readers might think that the "we" with which the aphorism begins ("We, too, associate with 'people'...") is the royal we. Yet as the aphorism continues, not only is the "we" repeated, but it becomes clear that the speaker understands himself to be one of a group, or a set, if not a community of those who pass among men like ghosts, who manifest themselves at odd and surprising moments. There are a number of "posthumous people," and the hermit knows what they say, for he quotes "one of them," who could, of course, be himself. In that parenthetical quotation that closes the aphorism, the posthumous person says that "we know what will *become* of us." This does *not* suggest that he (if we must give the *Mensch* a gender) knows what his future will be. He does not know, if he is Nietzsche, what will be said of his writings, what new contexts will illuminate them, what scraps of his notebooks will be found, what will be censored and altered by the infernal machine of his sister and her partners,

or if wars are fought in his name, how that name will be used and abused. His knowledge of his becoming is not a knowing of *what* future he has, but rather *that* he has a future, a future that he describes—again speaking in the first person plural—as becoming alive, “oh very much alive.” The posthumous person is not burying a secret to be dug up intact, nor is he encrypting a determinate message to future generations; he is preparing the conditions of his own futurity.

Allison’s Introduction to *The New Nietzsche* makes it very clear how this operation works in the Nietzschean text. In lapidary fashion he demonstrates the necessarily metaphorical and metamorphic character of writing that does not look back to an origin or ahead to a final aim, which would simply displace the origin into the future, but engages the reader in a process of transformation and becoming, in which both text and reader are, as Allison says, to be “transformed and transfigured.”⁵ This is a haunting which transforms the ghost, a haunting by a restless spirit who wants neither revenge nor proper burial, but simply to get out and play, to experience his becoming. This is a Nietzsche who is always and necessarily ahead of us, the friend who awaits us in our future. “Whether he chooses it or not,” Allison says, “the reader is necessarily implicated in the text,” for the text itself is a “system of exchanges” between author and reader. A system of exchanges: like the gift, the thing that circulates, subject to explicit and implicit negotiations, the thing that grows in meaning as it circulates, so it is also possibly the poisoned gift, the fundamentally ambivalent *Gift/gift*, poison or present. The text is the location of these exchanges. Such exchanges are what constitute friendship and rescue us from a monotonous theism of meaning. The economy of exchanges keeps the text and its Nietzsche alive; it is a process in motion, whose vectors and points of reference are flexible, floating, and interrelated. We might gather from Zarathustra’s speech “Of the Friend”:

‘One is always one too many around me’—thus speaks the hermit.
 ‘Always once one—in the long run that makes two!’
 I and Me are always too earnestly in conversation with one another:
 how could it be endured, if there were not a friend.... [T]he third
 person is the cork that prevents the conversation of the other two
 from sinking to the depths (Z, p. 82).

The friend announces the future. When Nietzsche writes of his inspiration, as in describing the composition of *Zarathustra*, we need to hear that not as a harking back to a source preceding the writing, but to a future calling it forth. Posthumous writers are those who are always arriving, who have yet to arrive; their writing is always on the horizon, always to come. It is not simply deferred, but renewed. Their friendship with their readers is

always ahead of them and ahead of the readers. The posthumous person has friends who are not yet born, and Nietzsche’s readers—like us, like Allison—are friends of a ghost, one who turns up surprisingly alive in the texts that are their meeting places. Yet we must also remember that “Our faith in others betrays in what respect we would like to have faith in ourselves. Our longing for a friend is our betrayer” (Z, p. 82). We must not turn Nietzsche into a prophet.

Beyond Good and Evil—which does not make it into the canon of the four books Allison discusses intensively—is subtitled “Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future.” As we readers have come to note, the genitive can be taken in two ways, analogous to the double sense of “the new Nietzsche.” We might read the subtitle as a prelude to some future philosophy, a philosophy that is not yet, but will be, soon or eventually, stated and established. Or we could hear it as a prelude to a philosophy of futurity, of the *Zu-kunft*, of that which is always to arrive. It would then be a philosophy of the event, of that which must be futural. Toward the end of his Introduction and again in the recent book, Allison aptly quotes *The Gay Science* 337 on “The ‘humaneness’ of the future” (Allison, 108). It is a beautiful aphorism, that speaks eloquently of “a very powerful future feeling,” which I take to be, again, not a determinate feeling waiting to come to light, but a feeling of and about futurity, a “new feeling” that will mark those heroes who will be “the most aristocratic of old nobles and at the same time the first of a new nobility.”

The Gay Science 365, with which Allison begins his Introduction to *The New Nietzsche*, is then to be heard as speaking uncannily in several different voices. The “hermit,” one of Nietzsche’s masks, speaks first to us of his masking itself, of his drawing a line at the issues of “dress” or appearance. He claims to be letting us in behind the scenes, telling us how the *persona* (or mask) is fashioned and deployed, how it wards off the approaches and curiosity of “people” in company. While Allison questions the simplistic biographical approach to Nietzsche, he frequently reads certain aspects of his texts as *personal*. He does not explain this usage of the word or explicitly distinguish the personal and the biographical. If we recall that the *persona* is a created or constructed figure, something akin to the mask, then we can read these discussions of the personal in a way consistent with Nietzsche’s way of being. Above all, we should not assume that the *persona* is something that can be stripped away to reveal the naked self, as if there were a self not engaged in the construction of the mask. It is only his contemporaries who, paradoxically, fail to be contemporary with the posthumous man, and so cannot be his friends. The hermit betrays his own jealously guarded solitude in order to explain this solitude to us. This confession is followed by an even more esoteric one: not only is it possible to appear masked, in a disguise that will be undetected by

those who are themselves unconsciously masked, but one could also appear as a ghost. As Derrida says, it is part of the nature of writing to signify after the death of the writer. A certain logocentric tradition would say that writing is dead; our best hope is to reanimate the writer, to discover the original author, the authentic source of these words. Interpretation would have the job of virtually resurrecting Shakespeare, making him live in order to make sense of his words. This kind of necromancy is practiced by what Deleuze calls the paranoid signifying regime, which seeks the centrality of face and voice in its all-consuming desire both to ground and to expand the circle of meaning. But this is not the posthumous life envisioned by the hermit or by the parenthetical speaker. It is not the image of life, the waxworks figure of the writer that emerges in order to give us a firm hold on his writings. No, the life is there in the writing and does not require the reconstruction of the author who launched it. He is "very much alive" now in his posthumous life, in his text which we readers help to constitute and whose life we see in its metamorphoses of meaning. The posthumous man quoted in the parentheses suggests all of this to us. At the same time we realize that we are listening to Nietzsche, speaking from beyond the grave, and to the hermit and the parenthetical speaker, all of whom not only tell us of the mechanism by which such things are possible; they are themselves "very much alive" in this text. The voices enact what they describe—with our help. The more Nietzsche is read, the more alive he becomes. He is beyond the measure of time, *unzeitgemäss*. This is something that could not easily be said of some of his contemporaries like Eduard von Hartmann, David Friedrich Strauss, Herbert Spencer, or Ernest Renan. This is not unconnected with the philosophy of time and history that links these nineteenth-century figures together, namely the Hegelian thought (in a very broad sense of "Hegelian") that history can come to an end, perhaps has done so in all essentials. The philosophy of the future requires a sense of futurity.

As Allison points out in his Introduction, one of the great obstacles to reading Nietzsche has been the misplacement of *life*: too many readers have been fascinated by his biography, the reconstruction of the waxworks Nietzsche, the tailor's dummy who is clothed in the costumes of anecdote. To all those fashionistas, Nietzsche's texts—like *GS*, 365 and indeed *Ecce Homo*—declare: "How wise you are, how clever! So you think you know what a life is. But if you don't participate in the life of the text, you remain one of those idling readers, unaware of the unconscious persona that walls her off from the life bursting from the page. You fail to see how your own dress is operating as defensive armor, displacing the intimations of the life of thought onto a conventional biographical reconstruction." In the Introduction Allison reads Nietzsche's declarations that his works issue from his life by warning us against a biographical conception of life; we should rather

be concerned with a rhythm of affects and intensities, a movement that forms the music of Nietzsche's words, a music that requires the reader as performer. This is one of the lessons that Nietzsche was constantly learning and trying to learn from the Greeks and Romans: how to embody the music of affect.

This leads me at last to my subject: Allison's *Reading the New Nietzsche*. The strategy of the book seems straightforward: to identify and comment on four canonical, landmark books: *The Birth of Tragedy*, *The Gay Science*, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Yet how could Allison resist writing at several different levels, how could he resist constructing his own persona? Part of this persona is the exemplary reader: Why four books? Why these four? Why organize around individual books? For a writer who disturbs our notions of reading and writing these questions are unavoidable. Certainly the case can be made that these writings are, as Allison says, "Nietzsche's most celebrated and widely read texts," although one could argue about the omission of *Beyond Good and Evil*, which Nietzsche tells us is the other face of *Zarathustra*. Allison indicates that there is a further reason for his organizing his new reading of the ever new Nietzsche around these four: "their style of composition differs significantly" (Allison, x). Nietzsche reappears, he is a *revenant*, in many ways, many guises. He was, he tells us, he *is*, the greatest master of style, and so to engage with these four different forms of composition is not only to live with the four Nietzsches who emerge from the texts, but to be involved in the life that goes on among them and in their interstices.

Let me try, then, to restate some of the different compositional strategies that Allison detects in these books. They seek out different readers and they seek them out in different ways. They lie in wait, cleverly biding their time, until the appropriate reader comes along, and then they flirt, seduce, and fascinate. But in this reading they do not remain unchanged, but enter into the play. *The Birth of Tragedy* aimed at being a book for and against its time, a book for the Germans, written under the spell of Wagner, to whom it is dedicated, and addressed, so it seems, to a strange, hybrid, mixed audience of classicists and music lovers, close readers ("old philologists"), and those who could share in the musical raptures evoked by the book. This was an audience yet to appear. The *Birth* borrowed the concepts of Kant and Schopenhauer to seduce these readers. We now know that Nietzsche was writing for Nietzscheans, but these could be created only retroactively by his own writings. One of the striking aspects of Allison's reading of the *Birth* is his careful analysis of Nietzsche's distinction between *Gefühle* and *Affekte*, feelings and affects. The latter are nonrepresentational, disindividuating, close to what Freud called primary process. Allison situates the theory of affects between Helmholtz's work on tone sensation (which Nietzsche knew) and his own reading of recent

psychological research on musical temporality. Nietzsche becomes a contemporary researcher into the power of tone, music, gesture, movement, and dance to produce endorphins and ecstasy (Allison, 65–8). Beneath the Wagnerian publicist is the psychologist, the one who as late as 1887 was announcing his forthcoming book on the physiology of aesthetics, and who may still have been conducting experiments on musical erotics when he was spied dancing naked in his room in Turin in January, 1889.

As Allison says, Nietzsche makes each of us think that he is writing only for him or her. I can recount one of my own seductions, stimulated by the rhetoric of friendship. Some years ago, I was asked to write about Nietzsche and the Greeks, and naturally turned once more to *The Birth of Tragedy*. I had been immersed in thinking about visual art and the strange chiasms of image and text, reading Derrida, Foucault, and Lyotard with an eye to such themes. I heard Nietzsche speaking to a *friend* in one of those passages where he imagines an other, here, one sensitive to musical tragedy (*BT*, sec. 22). You, the reader, are asked to put yourself in the condition of this friend. You are the one educated by Nietzsche. Of this “attentive friend,” Nietzsche says, “I think I have so portrayed the phenomenon of this effect in both its phases so he can now interpret his own experiences.” The warning is that you, reader, had better be a good student, here, where Nietzsche has first introduced a friend into the text. The friend so educated will be exalted,

... as if now the visual faculty of his eyes were no longer merely a surface faculty but capable of penetrating into the interior, and as if he now saw before him, with the aid of music, the waves of the will, the conflict of motives, and the swelling flood of the passions, sensuously visible like a multitude of lively moving lines and figures.

Music—at least musical tragedy—is visual; vision is a part of it. The attentive friend will *see* that and perhaps begin to ponder why Nietzsche framed this very German, very musical, book by summoning up two images, Raphael’s *Transfiguration* (in which Christ is refigured in Greek style as Apollo) and Dürer’s *Knight, Death, and the Devil* (in which Schopenhauer appears as a solitary, heroic, and tragic figure). The *Birth* should be read by the friend as an analysis of theater, *theoria*, spectacle, phantasm. If you follow out this reading, as I have attempted to do, you will notice that the intricate section 8 explains the architectural structure of the Greek theater—*skene*, orchestra, circular rows of seats—as a machine for producing multiple, at least double, perspectives. Tragedy is a way of producing and managing double vision, overcome by the “one great Cyclops eye of Socrates” (*BT*, sec. 14). Call this an Apollonian reading if you will, but recall that Nietzsche tells the “attentive friend” that the test of his musical

sensitivity is what he sees.⁶

The Gay Science, Allison tell us, is “probably” Nietzsche’s “most important” book because it is his most medial, the one in which Nietzsche said that he had crossed his own tropic. Also, as Allison reminds us, because all of the central thoughts are there: the analysis of religion, fear, and the gods; the death of God and the questioning of his shadows (including positivist science); the project of destroying the “and” in “man and nature”; and the affirmation of this life in the thought of eternal return. Nietzsche sometimes seemed to make such claims of importance among his writings for “his son *Zarathustra*,” but Allison sees that book as Nietzsche’s most personal and esoteric, a reading that certainly has a good bit of force. Nietzsche also implies in his last year of writing that the most important book is the one to come, the *Umwertung*, the book of the future, versions of which will doubtless be produced indefinitely by his many friends. In any case, *The Gay Science* exemplifies, best of all Nietzsche’s writings, the metamorphic character of the aphorism, the form in which, as Allison helps so well to show us, the reader enters into the process of making meaning—and in which, as Nietzsche insinuates, we will find him “very much alive.” Allison is a great friend of *The Gay Science* and it finds in him one of its great readers. Yet in some ways he reads *The Gay Science* against the aphorism form rather than through it, using key passages to ground a dazzling reconstruction and overview of Nietzsche’s thought.

God’s appeal is the assurance of meaning in a world of suffering and uncertainty. Allison speaks of the archaic need to find a higher cause for volcanic eruptions, firestorms, outbursts of disease and plague (Allison, 86). He also writes that the “moment of greatest deceit,” when human beings accept the religious story that produces meaning in their lives, is “like the civil servant or the corporate executive who attains recognition and self-respect according to his position in the managerial hierarchy, our own personal existence *now*, for the *first time*, is understood to be objectively meaningful.” Allison reconstructs the history of humanity’s social practices and work habits embedded in the analyses of *The Gay Science*, which must lead to the question: “Why maintain *this* system? Why not another?” (Allison, 88; alluding to *GS*, sec. 51, 319, 324). The death of God, which Allison understands in its absolute generality, the loss of any grounding center of meaning, contributes to the possibility of experimentation. This is a historical event, and he helps us piece together the cultural history of Europe that is that slow death. Two strands come from within Christianity: Luther’s individualism, with its conception of private dialogue with God, and Christianity’s Athenian impetus to the truth. Allison gives us a brilliant two-page summation of the medieval dialectic among realism, nominalism, and the doctrine of analogy, showing us how even within the church the choice was an extreme Gnosticism and negative theology or a reduction of God to

the level of human understanding that would indeed kill him. He then situates Nicholas of Cusa, who reasoned that "if God is what exceeds our knowledge, then it is sufficient for us to apprehend the greatest possible extent of our own finite, human knowledge" (Allison, 96). This movement of humanization sets the stage for modernity. Allison guides us through *The Gay Science*, articulating its argument that we are now in an intermediate state, the long era of dealing with God's shadow and the consequences of his death. The world must be thought so far as possible outside that shadow, and that means questioning the position of positivistic science, in which "the individual human subject is necessarily pitted against the world and occupies a place that could only be termed unnatural" (Allison, 105). The natural order will then be understood as a finite but open economy that is continually in the process of transforming itself. "Its economy," Allison says, "demands continual reinvestment and churning" (Allison, 104). (Part of what makes Allison's book both very contemporary and faithful to Nietzsche is his sensitivity to and updating of Nietzsche's too frequently neglected economic language.) Having destroyed the *and* of "man and nature," "nature for once becomes our human dominion." How best to think this, to live this? Eternal return: which Allison expressly tells us is an "image or metaphor" that "infinetizes humanity and makes it aware of its newly found infinitizing destiny" (Allison, 106). Rather than think of ourselves as mere reconfigurations or "crypto-incarnations" of our own "sub-particulate matter," the return means thinking of ourselves "as if nature, world, history, humanity *became us*, became transformed and included—introjected—into *our* history, as if *they* constituted precisely what *we* are!" (Allison, 107–8).

"Probably Nietzsche's most important book," Allison says of *The Gay Science*. If all reading is metamorphic, then this "most important" could be read as most meaningful *to him*, the site of the most productive exchanges with friend Nietzsche. Allison's relatively brief chapter on *The Gay Science* that I have just gestured at is for me one of the highlights of *his* book. In addition to the line of thought that he traces so well in his reading, there are many others, including a number of meditations on friendship. Prefiguring the more thorough, later analysis of the ascetic mechanisms that make life into a continuous struggle to pay off debts, literal and metaphorical, Nietzsche writes in *GS*, 329 that the colonization of daily life (inspired in part by American lust for wealth) leads to our thinking with watches in hand, "even as one eats one's midday meal while reading the latest news of the stock market." Or now in front of television with cell phone handy. It is a passage that casts light on what the *tolle Mensch* means when he says that the people in the marketplace have not understood the death of God. There is a demand for "*gross obviousness*" in human relations, including our relations with friends. One such sign of the obtrusive obviousness of the times is the sloppiness of letters (epistolary),

which are no longer subtle, careful exchanges, but telegraphic communications or thoughtless and tasteless self-revelations (like the email extremes of business communique and computer dating). Thus the need for a more genuine exchange, a "*vita contemplativa*" involving "a walk with ideas and friends." Under the rule of the despot, as the Greeks knew (and as Deleuze and Guattari remind us), there is no place for friendship, for the ultimate relation is to that supreme authority. The point is made in *Zarathustra's* "Of the Friend": "Are you a slave? If so, you cannot be a friend. Are you a tyrant? If so, you cannot have friends." At this point Nietzsche introduces the "example" of woman: "In woman, a slave and a tyrant have all too long been concealed. For that reason, woman is not yet capable of friendship: she knows only love" (*Z*, p. 83). It is the case or example of woman that arrests us, but what if we hear this both as a report of Nietzsche's personal experience and as an attempt to enlist the reader's understanding by appeal to a common misogyny? Like the flirtations with antisemitism in the *Genealogy* that nevertheless lead the Christian reader to face the question whether he is more Jewish than the Jews, this quickly prepares the male reader for acknowledging the more general point that one can be human yet incapable of friendship, and even more specifically that *he* may very well be so incapable. "But tell me, you men, which of you is yet capable of friendship?" (*Z*, p. 84).

When the central organizing principle is God, or the religion of work and productivity that replaces him at the cost of dehumanizing time, friendship becomes impossible. But it is friendship, with all its risks, I have been insisting, that is required for reading Nietzsche, for allowing him a place to emerge as "very much alive." *The Gay Science*, then, enacts or embodies science as a different sort of pursuit, one that takes place not only beyond the man/nature dichotomy, but beyond technocracy and a time of infinite debt. The science is many things, but Nietzsche emphasizes here that it involves a human relationship that reinstates *otium* (he needs to employ the Latin word, since moderns can conceive of "leisure" only as recreation justified on utilitarian grounds). For friendship we require a zone of indeterminacy that allows the risks and rewards of common pursuit. Nietzsche tells us that friendship is a higher continuation of love based on "a new desire and lust for possession—a *shared* higher thirst for an ideal above them" (*GS*, sec. 14, p. 89). Those struck by a Nietzschean aphorism enter into this friendship with the author, the ideal being that transformation of humanity to which the writings point. Friendship is, of course, a very risky business, something that Nietzsche certainly learned from the ancients, but also from Emerson, whose pages he read as we might read him.⁷ Friendship, we hear in one of the prefatory rhymes from "*Scherz, List, und Rache*," ought not to be glued; it cannot endure any restrictive bond. Friendship is always at risk, as Nietzsche shows in "*Over the footbridge*"

(*GS*, sec. 16, p. 90), which describes that crucial moment when crossing or not crossing a small bridge, taking a small step—affectively, intellectually—would have taken a friendship to a new level. But the step was not taken. “*Star friendship*” (*GS*, sec. 279, p. 225), like the aphorism just cited, describes the parting of friends in earthly terms, that is, geologically and meteorologically. Friendship is a matter of this earth, impossible in a world seen as subject to a transcendent being or principle. It is plurality and becoming that render it both possible and intrinsically fragile, susceptible to the differential forces of multiple seas and suns. *The Gay Science* is also a site for friendship, philosophical friendship in reading, and also for acknowledging the risks, the tiny cracks that can send friends off on different seas. *The Gay Science* is a friendly science, a science of friends, if we can learn to say this without thinking and sounding like Pollyanna. “You should honor even the enemy in your friend,” and “In your friend one should possess your best enemy” (*Z*, p. 83).

Allison reads *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as Nietzsche’s allegory of his personal crisis, the story of his having to overcome or “work through” terrible feelings of depression, loneliness, rage, and revenge. It is not only humanity’s millenia-long glorification of revenge that he must come to terms with, as the chapter “On Redemption” makes clear in its capsule history of the madness of philosophy from Anaximander to Schopenhauer. It is also the churning feelings and waves of affect, the new lows that Nietzsche had experienced during 1882 in connection with philosophy’s most notorious triangle of himself, Lou Salomé and Paul Rée. Love, friendship, jealousy, and betrayal were the materials for a self-overcoming.

Allison takes the risk of reading the secret transmitted by several levels of indirection in “Of Old and Young Women,” which, we must recall, occurs in double quotation marks, the old woman’s secret, repeated by Zarathustra (as secrets are always repeated and revealed): “Are you visiting women? Do not forget your whip!” (*Z*, p. 93). Allison, a true scholarly friend of Nietzsche, wants to make sure that we get Nietzsche’s joke at Rée’s expense, however belatedly. The famous photo of the three of them with cart and flowered whip is, he suggests, an elaborate set-up, a *tableau vivant* based on the medieval legend of Alexander and Phyllis’s humiliation of Aristotle when the latter was tutor to Alexander. Tricked into playing horsy by Phyllis, and exposed to the ridicule of Philip’s court, Aristotle flees in disgrace, leaving Alexander to enjoy Phyllis and conquer the world. Allison points out that this little bit of revenge should have been felt as especially telling since Rée could have been expected to know the legend and his Aristotle. If this trio had once been the possible model for a renewal of a certain friendship discouraged by the work practices of modernity, and if Aristotle stood for a high theorization of the possibilities of friendship, then the *tableau* and its esoteric reminder in “Of Old and Young Women”

would indeed be a way of venting at Rée and not falling into the merely imagined revenge of the slave. I wonder if Allison’s reading of *Zarathustra* as a highly personal book is sometimes in tension with his warnings against an excessively biographical approach, which are strongly stated in his introduction to *The New Nietzsche*. The very notions of the “person” or “character”—words deriving from the mask and from a written testimonial by another—should be suspect in the Nietzschean context. Allison argues convincingly that Nietzsche made a conscious, vigilant, and disciplined effort to see his own experience of illness and convalescence as a model for the universal problem of confronting the tyranny of the “it was.” If Nietzsche’s joke is finally revealed for what it was, this carries the complications of friendship and reading to a new level.

For Allison, there is no system in *Zarathustra*—which, I suppose, means no significant narrative, no architecture of concepts, no esoteric secret (other than the personal sort) to be unearthed. It is a *practical philosophy* in dialogue form, the dialogue that we readers must engage in with Nietzsche and the conceptual personae, notably Zarathustra, that inhabit or haunt his text. This reading allows Allison to de-ontologize many of the celebrated ideas of the book. This is especially clear in his treatment of eternal return. Building on his analysis of *The Gay Science*, he distinguishes two views of the enigmatic teaching: a teaching, as he rightly points out, that appears in the published writings only as a conditional question, and in *Zarathustra* as a frequently and intensely invoked thought that is never articulated; or, as I like to formulate it, a teaching never spoken in declarative sentences by a human voice, unless you count the contorted stuttering of the Ugliest Man, whose voice sounds like water gurgling in noisy pipes.⁸ On one view, it is specific things, subjects, and agents that must be subject to exact repetition. On what Allison terms Nietzsche’s “more considered view,” which is “far more plausible,” the world is an eternal, infinite play; the return is the general return of the play of force; every moment is seen as simultaneously a birth and a death (Allison, 122–3). “The eternal return is nothing other than the natural order itself: bereft of God, wholly immanent, radically finite” (Allison, 125). In reading this most personal of Nietzsche’s books, Allison opts for the less personal reading of eternal return, the one indifferent to the recurrence of specific individuals. In any case, as he shows himself, even if one were to begin by taking the return very personally, that is, as having to do with the repetition of one’s own life, then the very conditions of the return would undermine the presumed unity and stability of the person considering it. Because I must affirm the forgetting of the thought, it weakens the sense of individuality. This reading is elegantly formulated by Pierre Klossowski in the pages Allison astutely includes in *The New Nietzsche*. At a conference devoted to observing the one hundredth anniversary of the thought of

eternal return, I opened a fortune cookie at a Chinese restaurant that read "News of the past will change your future." It might have been rewritten to say, "it will change what it means to have a future, what it means for it to be 'your' future."

The *Übermensch*, which Allison translates as "overman," is something that the reader must invent in his dialogue with the book. In that sense, it is a direct challenge to see what it would be like for each of us to overcome his darkest shame and his deepest fixation on the "it was," as Nietzsche had to come to terms with that very painful "it was" of a lost love. For my part, I would like to underline the experimental dimension of the *Übermensch*, translating the term (if we must), as the "posthuman" or "transhuman." When Zarathustra says, early in the book, let your will say that the *Übermensch* shall be the *Sinn der Erde*, I would like to translate *Sinn* as "direction," so that Nietzsche would be asking us very directly to think beyond even the great convalescence from humanity's long life of shame. He would be encouraging us to take part in the great dice throw of existence. Allison stresses this experimental aspect of Nietzsche's project throughout, as in his discussion of how the "Great Liberation" passage in Nietzsche's 1886 Preface to *Human, All Too Human* speaks to the sense of the *event* that consists in recognizing one's having overcome custom and tradition.

It is here that Allison becomes explicit in his account of Nietzsche's reaching out for "imaginary companions," like the Wanderer who could look at moralities of good and evil from a trans-European perspective, or the many variations on the "free spirit," "shadow," or "good European" so frequently invoked (Allison, 175–6). Nietzsche needs these figures, conceptual personae, and imaginary friends in order to produce the plurality of perspectives needed to make perspectives concrete, to see the limits of one's own perspective. Allison quotes this wonderful sentence from the *HAH* Preface to describe these ghosts, figures, and friends; they are words we might use for describing our own constant return to Nietzsche (and through him, to all of them):

I had need of them at that time if I was to keep in good spirits while surrounded by ills (sickness, solitude, unfamiliar places, torpor, inactivity): as brave companions and familiars with whom one can laugh and chatter when one feels like laughing and chattering, and whom one can send to the devil when they become tedious—as compensation for the friends I lacked (*HAH* Preface, sec. 2).

We might say: he lacked actual, living friends, in the colloquial sense. He had a number of friends (he often gives us lists): those he imagined or constructed as the writers of a small number of favorite books. David Allison

helps to teach us—and I mean to include "us," we readers and writers of the new, ever new Nietzsche—to see Nietzsche as a friend, a friend who becomes "very much alive" in our reading.

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Notes

1. Among many works that could be seen as offering such new Nietzsches, I mention a few, limiting myself to those in English: Daniel Conway, *Nietzsche and the Political* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Robert Gooding Williams, *Zarathustra's Dionysian Modernism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); Keith Ansell Pearson, *Viroid Life: Perspectives on Nietzsche and the Transhuman Condition* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Christa Acampora and Ralph Acampora, eds. *A Nietzschean Bestiary* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003); Robin Small, *Nietzsche in Contexts* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001); Gary Shapiro, *Archaeologies of Vision: Foucault and Nietzsche on Seeing and Saying* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).
2. David Allison, "Introduction," *The New Nietzsche*, xii.
3. *Ibid.*, xiv.
4. See Thomas Brobjer, "Nietzsche's Knowledge of Kierkegaard," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* vol. 41, no. 2, April 2003.
5. Allison, "Introduction," xxiv.
6. I have developed this visual dimension of *The Birth of Tragedy* in *Archaeologies of Vision*, Chapter 4, "Übersehern: Architecture and Excess in the Theater of Dionysus," 127–56.
7. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Friendship," in *Essays: First and Second Series* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 109–24. Consider, for example, Emerson's account of friendship as loving one's enemies: "Let [the friend] be to thee for ever a sort of beautiful enemy, untamable, devoutly revered, and not a trivial conveniency to be soon outgrown and cast aside" (121).
8. See Gary Shapiro, *Alcyone: Nietzsche on Gifts, Noise, and Women* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 95.