

Rezensionen: **Nietzsche-Studien**

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The more sensuous and bodily aspects of the aesthetics of thought in Nietzsche are explored at length in Tobias Brücker's impressive monograph on *The Wanderer and His Shadow* (1880) and the biographical conditions of its composition. As a work of textual biography it breaks new ground through its detailed micro-historical approach to what he refers to as the "materiale Entstehungsweise von Philosophie" (2), using both textual and social-historical archives. He compares himself to sociologists of science who explore the conditions for scientific discoveries by examining laboratories, institutions, and living conditions as well as letters and manuscripts, down to the details of the manual writing process. This approach is affiliated with a media-theoretical approach in German letters generally, and in Nietzsche research in particular, from Friedrich Kittler onward. But Brücker's consistent application of this methodological framework and the detailed attention to Nietzsche's biographical situation at the time of writing *The Wanderer* makes his study a unique and valuable contribution to Nietzsche scholarship, especially for anyone with a particular interest in this early phase when Nietzsche first steps forth as a free scholar and writer after his forced retirement. Brücker also has a wider philosophical agenda: to convey how during the particular phase of writing *The Wanderer* Nietzsche was more favourably disposed towards modern democratic political ideals. He traces this partly from the inspiration of English writers, notably from Jonathan Swift and Laurence Sterne. They are said to have inspired him to a more open, "lockeren" style, a looser and more light-minded form of writing. His basic idea is that *The Wanderer*, more than the previous *Human, All Too Human* (1878) of which it was later made an integral part, mirrors this new attitude that is also connected to a care for the self through diets and exercise.

In his use of the *Nachlass*, Brücker makes an important methodological point criticising Colli's and Montinari's established classification of the material from the note books. They claimed to be able to draw a clear line between what was considered as working notes for published entries and independent fragments on the one hand and practical matters on the other that concerned diet, travels, health, etc., thus concealing their standing as "Arbeitsmanuskripte im Kontext einer mobilen Schreibsituation und eines persönlichen Alltags" (18 f.).¹ As an example of how this can play out, Brücker makes the point that the concrete background of the "Lehren der letzten Dinge" can in fact be traced to what can be found in the so-called *Kurortsliteratur* on diet and exercise that Nietzsche was also studying at this time (179). Another important and fascinating aspect of the study concerns the nature of the Swiss Engadin at the time of Nietzsche's visit and the writing of the book. Within a few decades it had been transformed from a valley region with isolated mountain villages into a set of geographical nodes within a cosmopolitan modern culture of health tourism of which Nietzsche himself was also a part. In St. Moritz, Nietzsche found a landscape that suited his bodily and spiritual needs and permitted him to

¹ Brücker does not mention it here, but the general point was already made by Derrida in his famous elaboration of the note about how Nietzsche had forgotten his umbrella and how it illustrates the difficulty closing a textual corpus (Jacques Derrida, *Épérons*, Paris 1978).

retrieve his voice as a writer; this was not just an eternal archaic mountain wilderness above and beyond contemporary civilization, but a cultural site on the critical fringe of what Brücker speaks of as a “Casino-Panorama” in an age of emergent mass-tourism.

Brücker adopts an intentionally profane attitude with regard to the myth of Nietzsche as the prophet and seer in the mountains. The overall purpose is not just a critical stance, but it seeks to bring the reader closer to the actual process of Nietzsche’s unique writing under these specific circumstances. Whereas the neo-materialist penchant for minute practical detail sometimes tends to lead back only to old-fashioned biographical research, it proves its relevance here not least through the careful attention to the literal composition of the texts. Brücker makes a point of how Nietzsche integrates an inner dialogical structure and how he compensates for a lack of sensual gestures and tone through a creative use of diacritical graphic markers. He also makes a point of the fact that these texts are really composed in motion, during long walks, and how they seek to free themselves from the more stable style of the philosophical treatise, highlighting the genuine significance of Nietzsche’s own frequent references to how his books have been written “mit meinem ganzen Leib und Leben” (103) and in an “experimental” spirit.

An important part of the argument concerns the earlier mentioned question concerning Nietzsche’s politics during the time of *The Wanderer*. From its remarks on democracy as being a condition for a step towards peace and even a protection against tyranny and a dismantling of a hierarchical class society, Brücker makes the point that Nietzsche’s interest in health and diet and his aspiration to find a lighter and more open aphoristic style inspired by English-language writers can be connected to a shift of political inclination at this particular moment in his life. This question revolves around our reading and interpretation of the many remarks on democracy and modern social existence generally in *The Wanderer*. Brücker’s assessment highlights an ambiguity in Nietzsche’s position at this point that is not so much that of a philosopher-legislator, but rather that of an observer and interpreter of modern cultural-political forms. Arguing against Henning Ottmann and others, Brücker claims that at least during 1879 Nietzsche displayed a genuine interest in a “Sicherung der bürgerlichen Freiheit und Gleichheit,” even if yet based on a cultural-political agenda rather than a genuinely democratic one (207). Even if the text may not fully support the claim that this particular period contains such a distinct political agenda, the discussion is important as it invites a careful reading of these sections from *Der Wanderer*. Among the book’s merits should also be noted its many fascinating illustrations from photographs, facsimiles, and brochures that convey the atmosphere and situation of *The Wanderer*.