

Atonalism, Nietzsche and *Gravity's Rainbow*: Pynchon's Use of German Music History and Culture

Thomas Schaub*

Henry-Louis de la Grange, a scholar of Gustav Mahler's life and works, tells us that an "early plan of the *Fourth Symphony*, put together some time before that symphony was composed . . . contained a 'Scherzo in D major' entitled 'Die Welt ohne Schwere' ('The World Without Gravity')" (2.800). Given this suggestive title, any reader well trained by Pynchon to see connections and affiliations in the most trivial detail may recall the dialogue between Säure Bummer and Gustav Schlabone in *Gravity's Rainbow* and wonder whether Gustav's given name is meant to evoke Mahler's, and wonder also whether the song's words, if any exist, have some relevance to Pynchon's novel. Any account of the German dialectic in music that Schlabone trumpets would surely include Mahler, a contemporary of Strauss and a composer much admired by Schönberg for taking German music the first steps away from tonality, deploying dissonances first initiated by Wagner (Friedrich 167). La Grange describes the fruitful period in which Mahler wrote a series of songs including "Die Welt ohne Schwere," but he says nothing about the song's words. The instrumental music itself, according to La Grange, became the fourth movement of Mahler's *Fifth Symphony*.

Whether or not Schlabone's first name alludes to Mahler is much less significant than the use Pynchon makes of the sociology and politics of German music during the Weimar and National Socialist eras. Arguments of the sort carried on by Gustav and Säure did in fact occur in the 1920s. As in *Gravity's Rainbow*, the debates were provoked by Arnold Schönberg's atonality and his invention of the twelve-tone row, though they had begun earlier in response to the composer Frederico Busoni and the music critic Paul Bekker. Schönberg himself sounded a bit like Gustav when he declared in 1921 that his invention of the Row would "guarantee the supremacy of German music for the next hundred years" (qtd. in Friedrich 178). Similarly, Gustav praises the Row as the

*I wish to thank Mattias Rudolf for his help in the research for this essay, and for his translation of the Hans Pfitzner material.

culmination of “the German dialectic, the incorporation of more and more notes into the scale, culminating with dodecaphonic democracy, where all notes get an equal hearing” (440). With Webern, this dialectic had reached “the moment of maximum freedom” (441).

Gustav’s contempt for tonality (621) is a direct paraphrase of Schönberg’s own attack on tonality in his *Manual of Harmony* (1911), where he argues for an equality of all twelve tones of the chromatic scale. Whereas the notes in the standard eight-tone system always retain “a simple relationship to the ground note” or root, dissonance goes beyond this loyalty or obedience to the dominant tonic: “Every musical configuration,” Schönberg writes, “every movement of tones has to be comprehended as a mutual relation of sound” (qtd. in Friedrich 177). Gustav’s association of this music with freedom is a common theme in commentaries about Schönberg. William Austin, for example, writes:

Schönberg was fascinated equally by the infinite, ungraspable extent of the tonal realm and by its continuity, its absolute oneness. In nearly every composition he tried to suggest both. He was hardly interested at all in any alternative selection of the intervals—he wanted complete, continual freedom for all. (37)

As Marc A. Weiner points out in *Undertones of Insurrection: Music, Politics and the Social Sphere in the Modern German Narrative*, there was in the early Weimar period a “widespread association of sociopolitical issues with music” in German culture (56). Schönberg himself understood his attack on tonality in just such terms, describing the tonal system as a monarchy ruled by a dictator:

The fundamental tone . . . has a certain sovereignty over the structures emanating from it just because the most important components of these structures are, so to speak, its satraps, its advocates, since they derive from its splendor: Napoleon, who installs his relatives and friends on the European thrones. I think that would indeed be enough to explain why one is justified in obeying the will of the fundamental tone: gratefulness to the progenitor and dependence on him. He is Alpha and Omega. That is morally right, so long as no other moral code obtains. Yet, another can indeed prevail! (qtd. in Weiner 55)

Writing the sociology of this music in *Philosophie der neuen Musik* (1949), Theodor Adorno interpreted the attack on tonality as performing “from the very outset as the disguised representation of everything that has had to be sacrificed to the taboo of order. It

substitutes for the censored instinctual drive, and includes, as tension, a libidinal moment as well, in its lament over enforced renunciation" (qtd. in Jameson 21).

While the public was frustrated and outraged—not to say bored—by this new music, music critics engaged in tremendous public battles over this development, battles that are comic only in retrospect. As Walter Laqueur writes:

[T]he quarrels about the issues involved [in modern music] raged in Germany as bitterly as elsewhere. Arnold Schönberg was at the very centre of the storm. . . .

Among the most effective protagonists of the new music were the conductor Hermann Scherchen and Paul Bekker, author of a famous Beethoven biography and music critic of the influential *Frankfurter Zeitung*. A great deal of passion, indeed fanaticism, was injected into these disputes; there was slanging and vituperation of every sort. (158, 161)

Weiner describes the chief opponent of the new music, Hans Pfitzner, as a "German nationalist . . . composer and theorist whose patriotism informed his notion of the superiority of German art and his definition of legitimate music." Largely unknown today, he was "considered by many between 1900 and 1933 to be one of the most gifted of German composers working in the post-Wagnerian tradition" (Weiner 35). Pfitzner responded to the new music and its proponents with a 1920 essay titled *Die neue Ästhetik der musikalischen Impotenz: Ein Verwesungssymptom?* (*The New Aesthetic of Musical Impotence: A Symptom of Decay?*):¹ "[E]very measure" of such music "calls out 'nothing,' where a huge apparatus is put to use for four hours to proclaim 'nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing' with the pretension to be nourishment for mind, heart and soul" (7). The new music is a "catastrophic swindle" (22). Nor is Pfitzner afraid to name names: "it is the spirit of musical impotence that is going around. And Herr Bekker writes its aesthetics" (36); "whoever takes the nihilistic blarney of his *Frankfurter-Zeitung*-darlings for the legitimate succession of the works of Beethoven and Wagner cannot distinguish between shit and painting" (123). Alban Berg replied to Pfitzner in an essay later that year and then wrote to Schönberg, worried that he had not been harsh enough: "It's all much too mild! Instead of coming right out and saying: he's a fool, I speak of a 'composer of Pfitzner's stature.'" Berg wondered if the reader would perceive his tone: "all of it [the essay] dipped in the irony of the incredible *stupidity* of this 'master'" (Berg 281–82).

Those attacking the new music also defended their own version of German music's lineage. In this respect, Pfitzner directed vitriolic attacks against Busoni, a contemporary Italian composer living in Berlin and another advocate of the new music. Gustav Schlabone's point of view clearly echoes Busoni's and Schönberg's (and Adorno's, for that matter) in these exchanges. For Pfitzner the genius of music had migrated northward, where Bach, Beethoven and Wagner established the great tradition of German music. Like Schönberg, Busoni understood these composers to be only a "beginning. . . . [Music] is still so young, and is eternal: the day of its freedom will come" (qtd. in Weiner 39, 40), while for Pfitzner the age of great music had already culminated.

As Weiner shows, this debate over the tradition and aesthetics of music reproduced the social and political valences of these differing judgments. While Bekker believed "[t]he ideal audience for whom Beethoven wrote was a continuation of the powerful democratic movement that proceeded from the French Revolution to the German wars of independence," Pfitzner did not believe "all listeners are worthy of partaking in the musical experience." Pfitzner went so far as to write a letter of protest to the League of German Music Critics, dated 26 June 1920, "accus[ing] Bekker of hurling Beethoven from 'his throne,' an image symptomatic of his conservative position and of the feudal metaphors in his debates with Bekker and Busoni" (Weiner 55, 54).

This is the background to the Bummer-Schlabone dialogue in *Gravity's Rainbow*, but what is the dialogue's purpose? Further articulation of historical realism, the finely detailed recovery of a historical moment? Does this dialogue serve only as comic relief—another event in the novel's many scenes of mindlessness? Or does this dialogue perform a more embedded function within the novel, as discussion of Mozart does in Hesse's *Steppenwolf* and as Leverkühn—the Schönberg figure—does in Mann's *Dr. Faustus*? Perhaps the dialogue is a parody of such dialogues in German novels?

These questions become especially pressing once we realize that Säure and Gustav's dialogue may be anachronistic, at least from the standpoint of music history. By 1932, according to Pamela Potter, "Schönberg and his school" were being typified as "zealots whose time had passed"; for even "before the Nazis came to power," Potter writes, "musicologists were losing interest in the burning issues of modern music" (38–39). Furthermore, under the Nazi regime, an exhibition of 1938 titled "Degenerate Music" included atonal music, "described as the Jewish 'poison' that was destroying German music" (217).

Thus the conversation between Gustav and Säure would seem to be about twelve to fifteen years too late. In one respect, however, their dialogue is perfectly in synch with historical developments: this

concerns their disagreement over the significance of Beethoven. Beethoven has meant many things to many people at different times, but Gustav's conviction that Beethoven was a democratic composer who "'was one of the architects of musical freedom'" (GR 440) precisely echoes the way Beethoven was described by Bekker. As the music critic Julius Nitsche recalled, "Every political party and every sort of confession counted [Beethoven] as one of their own; all of them were fighting tooth and nail to demonstrate that he belonged exclusively to their circle of life" (qtd. in Dennis 142). The Left in Weimar saw Beethoven as a revolutionary; the Center embraced him as a democrat; the Right argued "that if Beethoven still lived he would have admired Mussolini just as he had respected Napoleon," and some "rightists perceived in the composer's character the kind of Führer they sought in lieu of a restored monarch" (Dennis 120).

Under National Socialism, Beethoven's music was brought into the service of the Third Reich. "The most conspicuous use of Beethoven in the liturgical events of the National Socialist religion was the playing of his music on Hitler's birthday, both live and on the radio. In 1937, at Göbbels' request, [Wilhelm] Furtwängler conducted the *Ninth Symphony* [with its 'Ode to Joy'] to honor the Führer" (Dennis 162). Dennis continues, "As Nazi aggression intensified, justification via Beethoven became more explicit. . . . When Nazi Germany marched, Beethoven's music accompanied" (165). Claims against Austria and Czechoslovakia were accompanied by references to Beethoven; and on the day of Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland, 1 September 1939, "Hitler personally requested that Furtwängler lead a performance of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* prior to a speech he was to give" (166). No wonder, then, that Säure tells Gustav, "'All you feel like listening to Beethoven is going out and invading Poland. Ode to Joy indeed'" (GR 440).

These historical correlations in themselves are of interest, for they contribute to our understanding of *Gravity's Rainbow*, of Pynchon's knowledge of German culture and of the uses to which he puts that culture. But their significance is still more thoroughgoing, for reading in the sociology of music during the Weimar and Nazi eras inevitably calls attention to the roots of atonalism in Wagner. By the 1830s, according to Carl Dahlhaus, the formula "Bach and Beethoven" was taken to represent a tradition of great music and was already common in London and Berlin; but Wagner gave the combination of Bach and Beethoven a nationalistic accent in the essay "What is German?" (1865, 1878):

From the formula "Bach and Beethoven," originally a grouping of classicists of keyboard music, there evolved the "myth of German music" to which

Arnold Schönberg still adhered when, in 1923, he declared that the discovery of the dodecapronic system had secured the supremacy of German music for the time being. (Schönberg considered himself an heir to Bach and Beethoven.) (Dahlhaus 119)

Any number of selected combinations of composers were adduced, but in all such combinations the idea of a German music was always latent and "intended to justify nothing less than a philosophy of music history" (119).

In this history, Beethoven was considered "an intermediate step in a dialectic process" (22). His late quartets especially were considered "thought music" with "metaphysical intimations" and "revelations of the absolute" (17). Just as Gustav says he is not "'so much for Beethoven qua Beethoven [. . .] but as he represents the German dialectic'" and "'submitted to the demands of history'" (GR 440), Wagner wrote of Beethoven, "there could and had to be a Beethoven; the genius of music necessarily demanded him, and he appeared without delay" (qtd. in Dahlhaus 22).

Thus Pynchon's Gustav seems to be the vehicle for a common understanding of Germany's music history and of the nationalist politics of that history. This connection is further substantiated by Wagner's contempt for Rossini. As Dahlhaus tells us, "Wagner characterized Rossini's operatic style as 'absolute melody,' music with its roots in the air. . . . Wagner drew a sneering parallel between the 'absolute monarchy' of Metternich's state and 'absolute melody'"—anticipating Schönberg's association of tonality with Napoleonic aggression—and "deriding [Rossini's] opera aria," which he lambasted as "lifeless, spiritless trifles of fashion," "repulsive" and "indescribably hideous" (21). Gustav's invective is in the same vein:

"They're all listening to Rossini! Sitting there drooling away to some medley of predictable little tunes, leaning forward elbows on knees muttering, 'C'mon, c'mon then Rossini, let's get all this pretentious fanfare stuff out of the way, let's get on to the *real good tunes!*' Behavior as shameless as eating a whole jar of peanut butter at one sitting. On comes the sprightly *Tancredi* tarantella, and they stamp their feet in delight, they pop their teeth and pound their canes—'Ah, ah! *that's* more like it!'" (GR 441)

Wagner is important to the reading of *Gravity's Rainbow* because he establishes the tradition of nationalizing German music history, an association of music with nation that was appropriated for Nazi propaganda and militarism. This association is so widely known that

Francis Ford Coppola was able to draw on it in *Apocalypse Now*, playing Wagner's "Die Walkyrie" behind the depiction of U.S. helicopters decimating Vietnamese villages. Wagner is also important because the atonalism which Gustav worships has its origin in Wagner's last two operas, *Tristan und Isolde* and *Parsifal*. William Berger writes of this origin:

At the beginning of the second complete measure [of the Prelude] the oboes, supported by bassoons and English horn, join in to make a strange harmony. This is the celebrated *Tristan* chord, about which tomes have been written. Wagner fans nod in ecstatic comprehension at the mere mention of "The Chord." It is Western music's most noted example of "unresolved dissonance," . . . [and] struck many of its original listeners as being as shocking as a bomb blast. . . . Musicologists name these four notes [of the chord] as the basis of all twentieth-century explorations of atonality. (132)

These allusions to German music history and culture help situate Gustav's position in that history. But what of Säure and his love of Rossini and the Italians? For the answer to this we must turn to Nietzsche and *The Case of Wagner: A Musician's Problem* (1888), in which Nietzsche turned his back on Wagner, the man to whom he had dedicated his first great work, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1871). When Wagner is still the rage in Germany, France and Russia, Nietzsche accuses Wagner of decadence: "He makes sick whatever he touches—*he has made music sick*" (620). Here Nietzsche subjects Wagner to coruscating irony:

People will give credit to our spirit if our tones seem to pose many riddles. Let us agitate the nerves, let us slay them, let us handle lightning and thunder—that will throw them. . . . The hunt for low excitement of the senses, for so-called beauty, has enervated the Italians: let us remain German! . . . Let us never admit that music "serves recreation"; that it "exhilarates"; that it "gives pleasure." *Let us never give pleasure!* (624–25)

In Nietzsche's attack on German music, then, we have the possible origins of Säure's love of the Italians and an inkling of how deeply Nietzschean *Gravity's Rainbow* may be. Like Säure, Nietzsche argued that "music should be Mediterraneanized" (615), for one must

dream of the redemption of music from the north, and in his ears he must have the prelude of a more profound, more powerful, perhaps more evil and mysterious music, a supra-German music that does not fade away at

the sight of the voluptuous blue sea and the brightness of the Mediterranean sky . . . a music whose soul is related to palm trees and feels at home and knows how to roam among great, beautiful, lonely beasts of prey. . . . I could imagine a music whose rarest magic would consist in its no longer knowing anything of good and evil. (385)

Such music must emerge on the other side of modern decadence, however, “for one no longer has the presupposition in one’s body” to produce “the overflowing animal vitality of a Rossini” (644).

Wagner thus comes to typify for Nietzsche the German love of the “idea” — “which is to say, something that is obscure, uncertain, full of intimations; that among Germans clarity is an objection, logic a refutation” (633). In the “Epilogue,” Nietzsche associates Wagner with the Christian need for redemption, self-denial, the desire to be rid of oneself — the opposite of “noble morality” that “is rooted in a triumphant Yes to *oneself* — it is self-affirmation, self-glorification of life” (647).

Such hostility to Christianity is one of the central themes of *The Birth of Tragedy*, for in the Christian mode of thought Nietzsche saw a life-denying morality (negate, judge and damn), a relegation of “every art to the realm of *lies*. . . . Behind this mode of thought and valuation, which must be hostile to art if it is at all genuine, I never failed to sense a *hostility to life* — a furious, vengeful antipathy to life itself” (23).

In his “Attempt at Self-Criticism,” which he wrote for a new edition of *The Birth of Tragedy* in 1886, Nietzsche recalls that the instinct to write against morality led him to write the book: “an instinct that aligned itself with life and that discovered for itself a fundamentally opposite doctrine and valuation of life,” which he “baptized” “in the name of a Greek god: I called it Dionysian” (24). Readers of *Gravity’s Rainbow* cannot read these sentences without thinking of the great Freudian drama of life and death which Lawrence Wolfley, among others, has argued informs the novel’s vision, or of the description of life before man “too violently pitched alive in constant flow ever to be seen by men directly” (GR 720). Nor, having realized that Gustav and Säure are a comic treatment of that conflict and its significance in the history of ideas, can we read of the conflict between Wagner and Nietzsche without wondering whether Nietzsche’s ideas play a larger, more thoroughgoing role in the novel.

In his original argument about the birth of Attic tragedy, Nietzsche clearly intends to argue that tragedy emerges from “two interwoven artistic impulses” — “parallel” but “antagonistic” tendencies operating together (81). He distinguishes them as “separate art worlds of *dreams* and *intoxication*” (33). Apollo is the god of appearance, of illusion and light: “This joyous necessity of the dream experience has been

embodied by the Greeks in their Apollo: Apollo, the god of all plastic energies, is at the same time the soothsaying god . . . a deity of light . . . also ruler over the beautiful illusion of the inner world of fantasy” (35). He is the god of restraint, of measure and form. Apollo is also the “glorious divine image of the *principium individuationis*, through whose gestures and eyes all the joy and wisdom of ‘illusion,’ together with its beauty, speak to us” (36). Dionysus, on the other hand, is the god of ecstasies, of rapture, of primal unity with nature, of wild festivals of dance; he is the god of music. Furthermore, distinct from Apollo, Dionysus is the god of that tendency in which man “feels himself not only united, reconciled, and fused with his neighbor, but as one with him, as if the veil of *maya* had been torn aside and were now merely fluttering in tatters before the mysterious primal unity” (37). Apollo is “absorbed in the pure contemplation of images,” while Dionysus is “without any images, himself pure primordial pain and its primordial re-echoing” (50). Even before the “Attempt at Self-Criticism,” Nietzsche seems to give priority to the Dionysian, for

the Greek man of culture felt himself nullified in the presence of the satyric chorus; and this is the most immediate effect of the Dionysian tragedy, that the state and society and, quite generally, the gulfs between man and man give way to an overwhelming feeling of unity leading back to the very heart of nature. The metaphysical comfort—with which, I am suggesting even now, every true tragedy leaves us—that life is at the bottom of things, despite all the changes of appearances, indestructibly powerful and pleasurable—this comfort appears in incarnate clarity in the chorus of the satyrs. (59)

Thus the Apollonian appears as a film of images over the essence of things into which tragedy—through the power of Apollo—permits us a glimpse (143).

The idea thus suggests itself that, in *Gravity’s Rainbow*, Pynchon has aligned characters such as Säure and Slothrop and Geli Tripping with the Dionysian forces of life, and the dreamers of transcendence, notably Captain Weissmann, with the Apollonian. This idea would commit us to thinking that Pynchon read Nietzsche somewhat reductively; nevertheless, evidence supports it. The first is Slothrop’s loss of ego, instrument of restraint, and his apparently rapturous unification with nature (see, for example, GR 622–26). But there are also other passages which a Wagner–Nietzsche reading helps to clarify. Consider the odd fragment titled “LISTENING TO THE TOILET,” which reminds readers how dependent we are on “Them” because They

control the supply of water: “shutting the water off interdicts the toilet.”

Their neglect is your freedom. But when They do come on it's like society-gig Apollos, striking the lyre

ZONGGG

Everything freezes. The sweet, icky chord hangs in the air . . . there is no way to be at ease with it. (694)

What chord can this be but Wagner's Tristan chord, associated here—as Nietzsche would in *The Case of Wagner*—with culture, the world of illusion and light, the drive for transfiguration and transcendence that is the source of modern sickness. Appropriately, Apollo plays a lyre rather than the people's harmonica.

This passage must be intertwined with the earlier fragment “SHIT 'N' SHINOLA,” in which Pynchon puns on the brand of shoeshine: .

As for Shinola, we pass to universitarians Franz Pökler, Kurt Mondaugen, Bert Fibel, Horst Achtfaden and others, their Schein-Aula is a shimmering Albert Speer-style alabaster open-air stadium[. . .] It has a talent, this Seeming-Hall, for posing up there in attractive profiles, in front of noble clouds, to suggest persistence, through returns of spring, hopes for love, meltings of snow and ice. (687)

This is the world in denial of shit and death, perhaps in denial of Dionysian terrors and ecstasies. The narrator wonders if Jack Kennedy ever saw through this shine, the world as image, to the world of fate and history (688). This reading may even help explain the meaning of the scene in the novel's immediately preceding fragment in which a two-year-old baby stands at the window exclaiming “Sunshine!” and the narrator provides the odd italicized confirmation “*exactly*” (687)—that is, in sharp contrast to the Seeming-Hall of Western civilization.

The god Apollo appears in *Gravity's Rainbow* in only one other passage, in the fifth fragment from the end, “STRUNG INTO THE APOLLONIAN DREAM . . .” (754). This fragment describes Gottfried's entombment in Weissmann's dream of transcendence and transfiguration, the kind of dream that is the provenance of Nietzsche's Apollo. How fitting the fragment's title: not only are the characters in Mondaugen's story of Foppl's Siege Party (V 229–79) “‘on the dream’” (GR 697), but also in Marx's *German Ideology*, as Althusser argues, “[i]deology is conceived as a pure illusion, a pure dream” (Althusser 85). Pynchon literalizes the metaphor, placing Gottfried within the

Apollonian plastic of the Impolex shroud. I have argued elsewhere that the motivation for Pynchon's focus on plastic had its origins in the culture of environmental dissent during the 1960s and early 1970s, in which—to be brief—plastic came to represent everything false and non-biodegradable. Nixon himself was called “plastic.” Without having to dismiss this earlier argument, we can argue as well that Pynchon's appropriation of environmental discourse participated—can be said to coincide—with his use of Nietzsche's Apollo, god of the plastic arts, for his critique of Western civilization. Perhaps Pynchon thinks Western man has overstepped the “delicate boundary” Nietzsche warned that “the dream image must not overstep lest it have a pathological effect (in which case mere appearance would deceive us as if it were crude reality)” (35).

This reading may help to explain the cryptic passage of the “ASCENT” section in which we are told that Gottfried is “[m]oving now toward the kind of light where at last the apple is apple-colored. The knife cuts through the apple like a knife cutting an apple. Everything is where it is, no clearer than usual, but certainly more present” (GR 758). In the Apollonian dream fragment, Gottfried has been “remembering the skin of an apple, bursting with nebulae, a look into curved reddening space” (754); perhaps Gottfried here dreams an image from childhood, which, the later passage suggests, will become real, united in death with what is represented. The fragment does close with Nietzschean suggestiveness: In childhood, the narrator tells us, Gottfried “began to dream. Now it is time to wake, into the breath of what was always real. Come, wake. All is well” (754).

Even more suggestive, the later Nietzsche was used by both Herbert Marcuse, in *Eros and Civilization*, and Norman O. Brown, in *Life Against Death*, two books that became bibles for an entire generation and likely grist for Pynchon's imagination. Both Marcuse and Brown associate Nietzsche's Apollo with repression and sublimation. Dionysus, on the other hand, represents “the total affirmation of the life instincts, repelling all escape and negation” (Marcuse 111). “Man comes to himself only when the transcendence has been conquered—when eternity has become present in the here and now”—“not progress, but the ‘eternal return’” (110–11). For Brown, as well, Dionysus “*does not negate anymore*. This, says Nietzsche, is the essence of the Dionysian faith. Instead of negating, he affirms the dialectical unity of the great instinctual opposites: Dionysus reunifies male and female, Self and Other, life and death” (175). In another assertion, which may anticipate Slothrop's disappearance, Brown writes, “As long as the structure of the ego is Apollonian, Dionysian experience can only be bought at the

price of ego-dissolution. . . . Hence, the later Nietzsche preaches Dionysus” (175).

These conclusions are not entirely new, for they confirm and overlap with what others—especially Lawrence Wolfley, in “Repression’s Rainbow”—have said about Pynchon’s novel. But the basic argument set forth above is conclusive: the dialogue between Gustav and Säure is more than realism, more than comedy; rather than incidental, it is a miniature (for Pynchon) of the argument at the heart of modern history—social, psychoanalytical and political.

One other detail needs to be mentioned before closing: in rereading *The Birth of Tragedy*, I was struck by Nietzsche’s discussion in section 6 of Archilochus’s introduction of the folk song into literature. For proof of an argument he is making, he writes, “[a]nyone who in accordance with this theory examines a collection of folk songs, such as *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, will find innumerable instances of the way the continuously generating melody scatters image sparks all around” (53). *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* is none other than the collection which roused Gustav Mahler from his lethargy and led directly to his composition of “Die Welt ohne Schwere.”

—University of Wisconsin–Madison

Note

¹All quotations from this work translated by Mattias Rudolf.

Works Cited

- Althusser, Louis. “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses.” 1970. Trans. Ben Brewster. 1971. *Contemporary Critical Theory*. Ed. Dan Latimer. San Diego: Harcourt, 1989. 60–102.
- Austin, William W. *Music in the 20th Century, from Debussy Through Stravinsky*. New York: Norton, 1966.
- Berg, Alban and Arnold Schönberg. *The Berg–Schönberg Correspondence: Selected Letters*. Ed. Juliane Brand, Christopher Hailey and Donald Harris. New York: Norton, 1987.
- Berger, William. *Wagner Without Fear: Learning to Love—and Even Enjoy—Opera’s Most Demanding Genius*. New York: Vintage, 1998.
- Brown, Norman O. *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 1959.
- Dahlhaus, Carl. *The Idea of Absolute Music*. 1978. Trans. Roger Lustig. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1989.
- Dennis, David B. *Beethoven in German Politics, 1870–1989*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1996.

- Friedrich, Otto. *Before the Deluge: A Portrait of Berlin in the 1920's*. New York: Harper & Row, 1972.
- Jameson, Fredric. *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1971.
- La Grange, Henry-Louis de. *Gustav Mahler*. 3 vols. 1979–1984. New York: Oxford UP, 1995.
- Laqueur, Walter. *Weimar: A Cultural History, 1918–1933*. New York: Putnam, 1974.
- Marcuse, Herbert. *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*. 1955. New York: Vintage, 1962.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*. Trans. and ed., with commentaries, Walter Kaufmann. 1968. New York: Modern Library, 1992.
- Pfützner, Hans Erich. *Die neue Aesthetik der musikalischen Impotenz: Ein Verwesungssymptom?* München: Suddeutsche Monatshefte, 1920.
- Potter, Pamela M. *Most German of the Arts: Musicology and Society from the Weimar Republic to the End of Hitler's Reich*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1998.
- Pynchon, Thomas. *Gravity's Rainbow*. New York: Viking, 1973.
- . V. 1963. New York: Perennial, 1986.
- Schaub, Thomas. "The Environmental Pynchon: *Gravity's Rainbow* and the Ecological Context." *Pynchon Notes* 42–43 (1998): 59–72.
- Weiner, Marc A. *Undertones of Insurrection: Music, Politics and the Social Sphere in the Modern German Narrative*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1993.
- Wolfley, Lawrence C. "Repression's Rainbow: The Presence of Norman O. Brown in Pynchon's Big Novel." 1977. *Critical Essays on Thomas Pynchon*. Ed. Richard Pearce. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1981. 99–123.