

Clos
ing
Melod
ies

With its ingenious orchestration of the archive and its sensitivity to both the depths and inadvertencies of the creative process, *Closing Melodies* maps the twin stories of the last days of Friedrich Nietzsche and Vincent van Gogh within a phantasmagoria of space, time, & vision. Rainer J. Hanshe has an unparalleled grasp of what might be called the analytics of genius.

— Nicholas Birns
New York University

Rainer J. Hanshe has assembled a truly uncanny and powerful text. In creatively intertwining the letters of Nietzsche and Van Gogh from their final productive years, the reader has the experience of a phantasmic perception into the possibilities of life offered by two of the most magnanimous, creative minds of the late 19th century, and which continue to find echoes today. Through this mosaic of texts, as well as his series of incantatory & disorienting intervals, Hanshe makes Nietzsche and Van Gogh speak to each other beyond the limits of space & time, and we find ourselves conversing with them too, intertwined in the feral threads of their incendiary lives. This is a book of artistic grace and gravity and makes for a truly thought-provoking & challenging experience.

— Keith Ansell-Pearson
Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, University of Warwick

Vincent
Gardner

Dionysos

Der Gekreuzigte

Who Gubernatorial

and

R Vincent
Bingard:

Nitrate Commission

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

Closing Melodies

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

RAINER J. HANSHE

Closing Melodies

INCLUDING ORIGINAL LETTERS BY

Friedrich Nietzsche

&

Vincent van Gogh



Contra Mundum Press New York · London · Melbourne

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

Closing Melodies
© 2023 Rainer J. Hanshe

—1st Contra Mundum Press
Edition

First Contra Mundum Press
Edition 2023.

836 pp., 6 × 9 in.

All Rights Reserved
under International &
Pan-American Copyright
Conventions.

ISBN 9781940625522

- I. Hanshe, Rainer J.
- II. Title.
- III. Nietzsche, Friedrich.
- IV. Letters.
- V. Van Gogh, Vincent.
- VI. Letters.

No part of this book may be
reproduced in any form or by
any electronic means, includ-
ing information storage and
retrieval systems, without
permission in writing from
the publisher, except by a
reviewer who may quote
brief passages in a review.

2023941664

Library of Congress
Cataloguing-in-Publication
Data

Hanshe, Rainer J.

Closing Melodies / Rainer J.
Hanshe

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

Dionysos strips mortals of all their conventions, of everything that makes them civilized, and hurls them into life which is intoxicated by death at those moments when it glows with its greatest vitality . . . until madness becomes a lowering storm and lets the frenzy of horror and destruction burst forth from the frenzy of ecstasy.

— Walter F. Otto, *Dionysos*

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

TABLE OF CONTENTS

II	SEMATIC BUOY
	1887
4	OPENING SALVO: NIZZA. The Magnum Opus & the Earthquake Letters: Nietzsche & Vincent in Nizza & Arles
	1888
14	INTERVAL: PARIS. Æsthetic Combat & Fleeing to Arles Letters: Nietzsche & Vincent in Nizza & Arles
33	INTERVAL: ARLES. Lifting the Volcanic Veil & the Pont de Langlais Letters: Nietzsche & Vincent in Nizza & Arles
44	INTERVAL: PARIS; PARAGUAY. The Icon of the Enlightenment; The Rebirth of Humanity, or Philosophy for Dear Cattle Letters: Nietzsche & Vincent in Nizza, Arles, & Torino
68	INTERVAL: COPENHAGEN. The Tremendous Ejaculation of Friedrich Nietzsche's Sperm Letters: Nietzsche & Vincent in Torino & Arles
96	INTERVAL: ARLES. Ceaseless Wandering & the Artistic Colony Letters: Nietzsche & Vincent in Torino, Arles, Saintes-Maries & Sils Maria
142	INTERVAL: FUKUSHIMA; PARAGUAY. Another Earthquake; Troubles in Nueva Germania Letters: Nietzsche & Vincent in Sils Maria & Arles
174	INTERVAL: PARIS. The Eiffel Tower & the Drive to Elevation Letters: Nietzsche & Vincent in Arles & Sils Maria

- 203 INTERVAL: PARAGUAY & LONDON. The Fall of Nueva
 Germania & Jack the Ripper
 Letters: Nietzsche & Vincent in Sils Maria, Arles,
 & Torino
- 234 INTERVAL: TORINO & ARLES. The Mole Antonelliana
 & Vincent's Bedroom
 Letters: Nietzsche, Vincent, & Gauguin in Arles
 & Torino
- 268 INTERVAL: ARLES. The Studio of the South: Dueling
 Perspectives
 Letters: Nietzsche, Vincent, & Gauguin in Arles
 & Torino
- 297 INTERVAL: ARLES, PARIS, TORINO. Christmas
 Celebrations
 Letters: Nietzsche, Vincent, Theo & Rey Fé in Torino,
 Paris, & Arles

1889

- 316 INTERVAL: AMERICA — To the Year 1889
 Letters: Nietzsche, Cæsar, Strindberg, The Crucified,
 Vincent, Rey Fé & Dionysos in Torino & Arles
- 348 INTERVAL: TORINO, BASEL, JENA — — The Final Dance
 Letters & Medical Reports: 'Nietzsche' & Vincent
 in Arles & Jena
- 397 INTERVAL: PARAGUAY; ARLES & ELSEWHERE.
 Knight, Death, & the Devil; The Shipwreck of Madness
 Letters & Medical Reports: 'Nietzsche,' Vincent,
 & Rey Fé in Jena & Arles
- 422 INTERVAL: ARLES. The Mayoral Petition
 Letters & Medical Reports: 'Nietzsche,' Vincent
 & Theo in Jena, Paris, & Arles

- 454 INTERVAL: ARLES, PARIS; PARAGUAY; JENA. The Artist
Suicided by Society; The Healer; La Tour Eiffel
Letters & Medical Reports: 'Nietzsche' & Vincent
in Arles & Jena
- 484 INTERVAL: TORINO, JENA; PARAGUAY; ARLES.
What Fun Machines! Over All Obstacles, Stand Your
Ground! Muted Flames
Letters & Medical Reports: 'Nietzsche,' Theo,
& Vincent in Jena & St. Rémy
- 513 INTERVAL: ST. RÉMY; PARAGUAY; DISTANT SPACE.
The Andromeda Nebula, the Stars via Death; The Birth of
a New Wagnerian Hero
Letters & Medical Reports: 'Nietzsche,' Vincent,
& Theo in St. Rémy, Jena, & Paris
- 545 INTERVAL: ST. RÉMY; PARAGUAY. Studies in Hysteria,
Studies in Particle Physics; The Myth of the Fallen Hero;
Blut und Boden!
Letters & Medical Reports: 'Nietzsche' & Vincent
in Jena & St. Rémy
- 592 INTERVAL: DEEP SPACE. Genetics, the Double Ego,
or — ? Minor Planets & Vacillating Souls
Letters & Medical Reports: 'Nietzsche' & Vincent
in Jena & St. Rémy
- 624 INTERVAL: MESSINA, SICILIA. The Will to Power
& Phagocytosis
Letters & Medical Reports: 'Nietzsche' & Vincent
in Jena & St. Rémy

0 **1890**

1
2 654 **INTERVAL: ST. RÉMY & JENA. The Heliomythic Allegory;**
3 **The Secret Emperor**
4 Letters & Medical Reports: 'Nietzsche,' Vincent, Peter
5 Gast & Franz Overbeck in Jena & St. Rémy

6
7 692 **INTERVAL: JENA & ST. RÉMY. To be mad, or not to be mad,**
8 **is that the question?**
9 Letters & Medical Reports: 'Nietzsche' & Vincent in
10 St. Rémy, Jena, & Naumburg

11 724 **INTERVAL: JENA, ST. RÉMY, & ELSEWHERE. The Head**
12 **of Dionysos, the Song-Filled Night. Rebirth?**
13 Letters & Medical Reports: 'Nietzsche' & Vincent in
14 Auvers-sur-Oise & Naumburg

15
16
17 775 **CLOSING PROLOGUE: AUVERS-SUR-OISE. Spells of**
18 **Madness, the Utopia of the Family, the Paintbrush Falls**

19
20
21 **1889-1900 ~**

22
23 782 **CLOSING PROLOGUE: NAUMBURG; PARAGUAY;**
24 **WEIMAR. The Specter & Simulacrum vs. the Female**
25 **Minotaur; the Open Horizon**
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

Sematic Buoy

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

Between the leaves of this book, the lives of Friedrich Nietzsche & Vincent van Gogh are intertwined, through letters and geographical markers, to carve out and etch in relief their proximity. In this combinatorial act, something akin to the apposition of complementary colors on a canvas is being enacted.

When speaking of the juxtaposition of two complementary colors of the same degree of brightness and light, Vincent explains in a letter to his brother Theo that their juxtaposition will raise both the one and the other to an intensity so violent that human eyes will scarcely be able to bear to look at it. And, he explains further, by way of a single phenomenon, THESE SAME COLORS, WHICH ARE HEIGHTENED BY BEING JUXTAPOSED, WILL DESTROY ONE ANOTHER BY BEING MIXED. Through this apposition of colors, the mixing destroys the two tones and *the result is an absolutely colorless grey*. But — if one mixes together two complementaries in unequal proportions, they only partially destroy one another, and you'll have A BROKEN TONE — which will be a variety of grey. That being so, new contrasts will emerge from the juxtaposition of two complementaries, one of which is pure and the other broken. The contest being unequal, one of these two colors triumphs, but the intensity of the dominant one doesn't prevent there being harmony between the two.

In its own way, this book is a kind of juxtaposition of two complementaries — if not many others — and the creation of a broken tone, or rather, *a series of partially destroyed broken tones*, which each reader creates in the end for, as the physicist Ogden Rood observed, it is the eye that blends the complementary colors together at the proper distance, which leads to true mixtures of colored light, the creation in fact of *new colors not physically present on the canvas*.

0 There is however no single and fixed triumph in this crossing
 1 of colors, but ever-shifting ones, for whichever color is dominant
 2 is always changing, as are its intensities. It is also a question of
 3 perception, of how one sees, of perspectival angles. Through the
 4 bringing together of similar colors in the pure state, but with
 5 differing degrees of energy, the painter, Van Gogh said, can
 6 strengthen, support, attenuate, or neutralize the effect of a color
 7 by touching what isn't the color itself.

8 From the onset of this book's opening salvo, there is no single
 9 authorial voice at rule, just as no single color ever rules; instead,
 10 this book exists beyond the anchor of a sole, unique self
 11 (or color), that solid and immutable subjectivity rooted in the
 12 long ago dismantled genealogy of the family tree, a phylogeny
 13 that has rotted to become rhizomatic. Think of the figure of the
 14 author as conductor and orchestra.

15 Disrupting and breaking apart the letters, like a vital scis-
 16 sional force, is an exploded conception of body and being, enacted
 17 through the series of intervals (what isn't the color itself)
 18 which move deliberately in and out of multiple voices and fields:
 19 from those of history to philosophy, science, and so on, the inter-
 20 vals also shift in and out of the voices of Nietzsche and Vincent,
 21 breathing thru the constellated narration like inhalations and
 22 exhalations, as well as a panoply of other elements and entities
 23 that incarnate the book. We are not only human, but other, and
 24 something else as well.

25 In this, there is an impulse to disorient, to create unstable
 26 ground, like the earthquakes, volcanoes, & other seismic events
 27 that occur throughout *Closing Melodies*, operating as a force
 28 to propel the reader to undergo internal oscillations similar to
 29 those of the philosopher and the painter, wherein a chorus of
 30 voices amalgamate and disperse, devoid of signaling quote marks,
 31 like the chaos of voices inside (and external to) the bodies of Herr
 32 Dynamite and the Horla, who themselves undergo various kinds
 33 of sparagmos, until ending in their final tearings: one with a
 34 bang, the other with a whimper.

35 *Closing Melodies* is thus not a work of fiction, but a 'history'
 36 that is phantomatic and which incorporates biography, philoso-
 37 phy, aesthetics, and so on. It stages and replays the final produc-

0 tive years (1888–1890) of the lives of a philosopher and an artist
 1 during La Belle Époque, lives that echo the fin-de-siècle itself,
 2 just as they echo and instigate aspects of an emerging century
 3 and its multitudinous energies and events.

4 To dis-incarnate and incarnate, to figure and dis-figure, as
 5 the body itself — *and this text* — becomes the stage of the world,
 6 a site of partially destroyed and broken tones, much like the
 7 physical locales traversed by the hermit of Sils Maria and the
 8 Dutch nomad, where the continuum of time sounds out and
 9 explodes and reality is continually *dis-* and *reconfigured*.

10
11
12
13 Rainer J. Hanshe

14 19 November 2021

15 Brooklyn, New York

16 6351 km from Naumburg

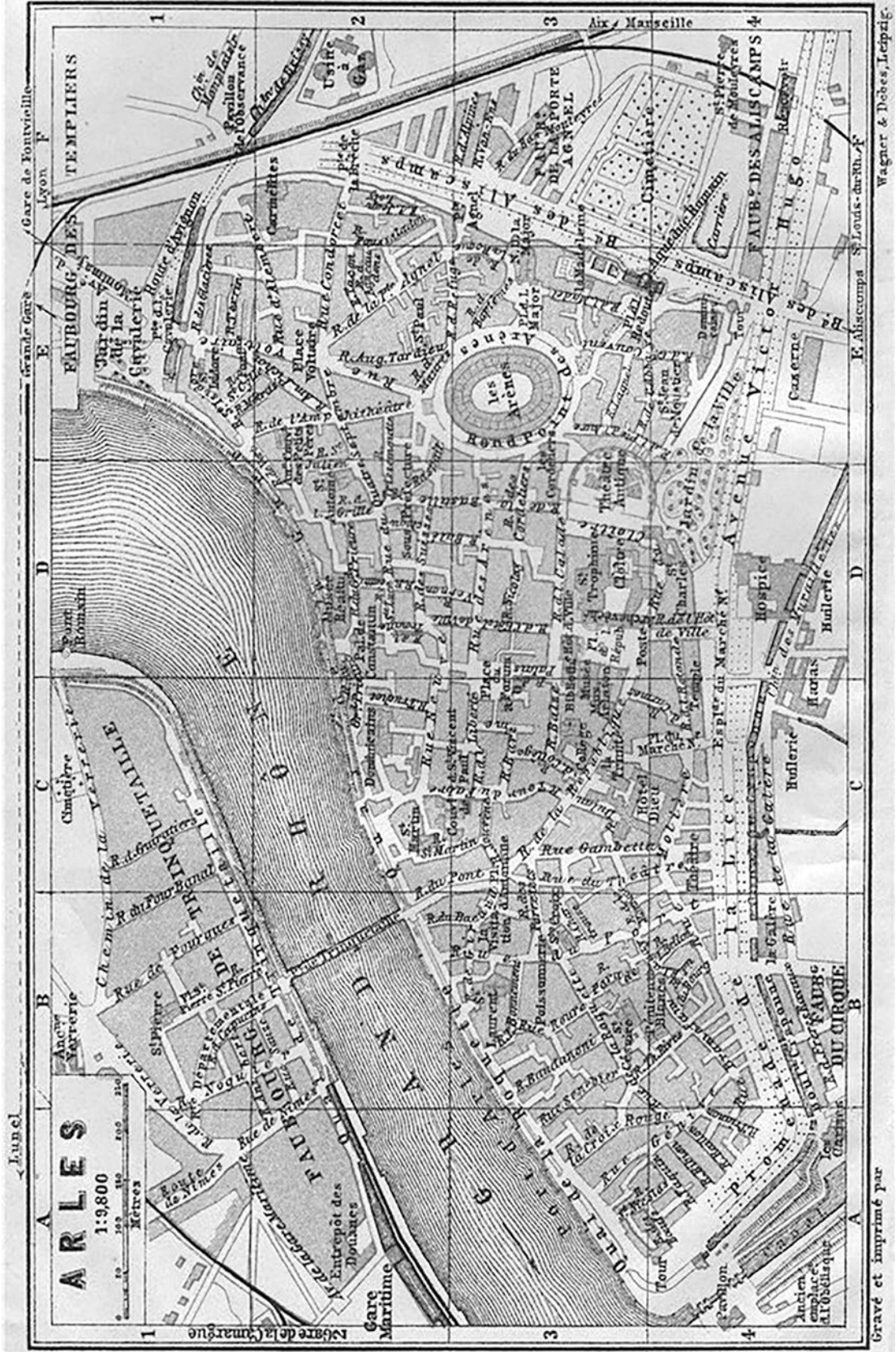
17 5814 km from Auvers-sur-Oise

18 121 ☺ 131 years later
 19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

Closing Melodies



ARLES
 1:9,800
 0 100 200 300
 Mètres

— Lunel —

Grand-Gare
 Lyon F
 Gare de Fontvieille

Grand-Gare
 Lyon F
 Gare de Fontvieille

Grand-Gare
 Lyon F
 Gare de Fontvieille

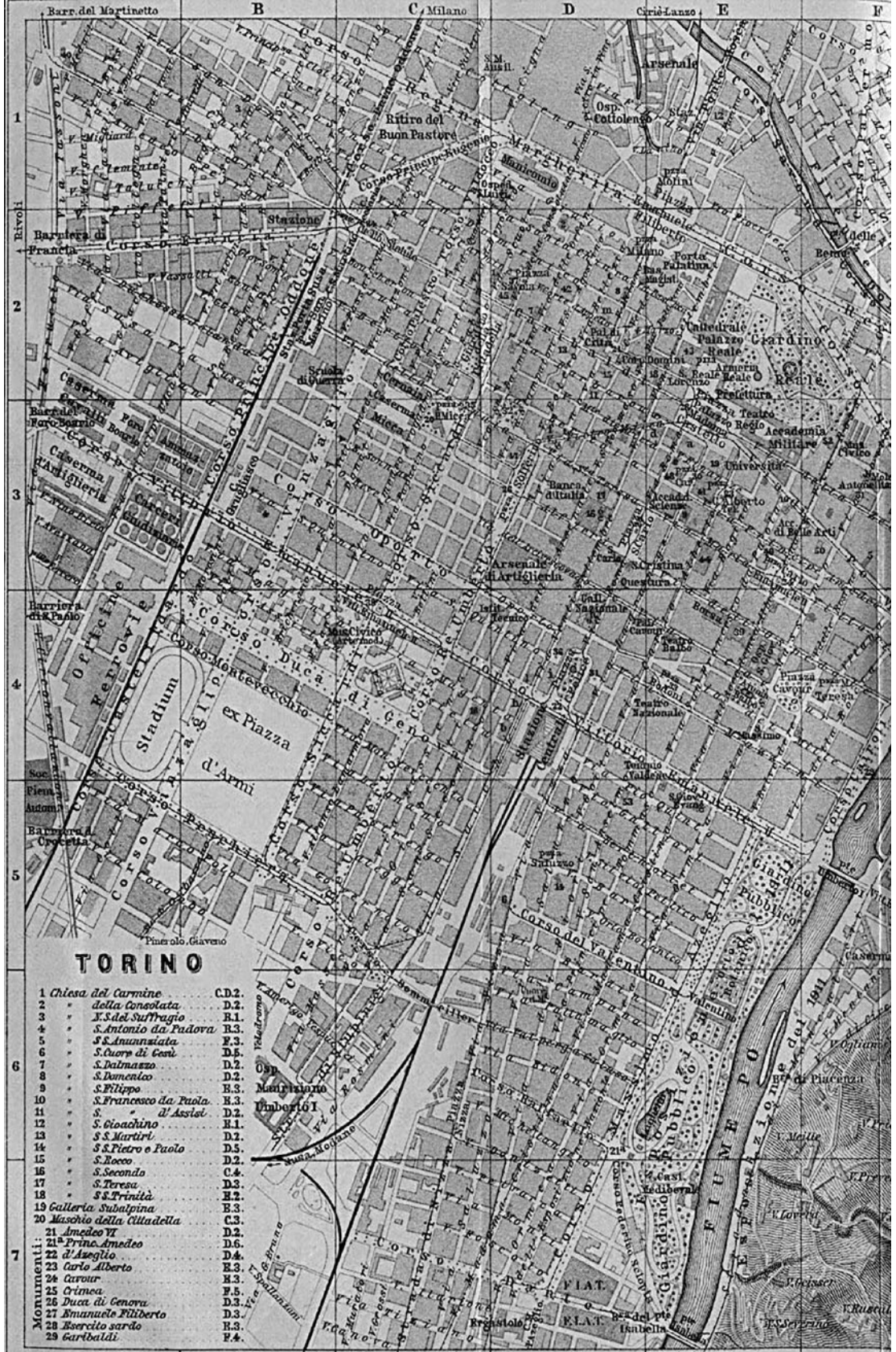
Grand-Gare
 Lyon F
 Gare de Fontvieille

Grand-Gare
 Lyon F
 Gare de Fontvieille

Grand-Gare
 Lyon F
 Gare de Fontvieille

Wagner & Debes, Leipzig.

Gravé et imprimé par



TORINO

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------|-------|
| 1 | Chiesa del Carmine | CD.2. |
| 2 | " della Consolata | D.2. |
| 3 | " S. del Suffragio | R.1. |
| 4 | " S. Antonio da Padova | R.3. |
| 5 | " S. Annunziata | F.3. |
| 6 | " S. cuore di Gesù | D.5. |
| 7 | " S. Dalmaso | D.2. |
| 8 | " S. Benedetto | D.2. |
| 9 | " S. Filippo | H.3. |
| 10 | " S. Francesco da Paola | H.3. |
| 11 | " S. d' Assist. | D.1. |
| 12 | " S. Gioachino | H.1. |
| 13 | " S. S. Martiri | D.1. |
| 14 | " S. S. Pietro e Paolo | D.5. |
| 15 | " S. Recco | D.2. |
| 16 | " S. Secondo | C.4. |
| 17 | " S. Teresa | D.3. |
| 18 | " S. S. Trinità | H.2. |
| 19 | Galleria Subalpina | E.3. |
| 20 | Maschio della Cittadella | C.3. |
| 21 | Medeo VI | D.2. |
| 22 | Primo Medeo | D.6. |
| 23 | d'Asoglio | D.4. |
| 24 | Carlo Alberto | E.3. |
| 25 | Carour | H.3. |
| 26 | Crimea | F.5. |
| 27 | Duca di Genova | D.3. |
| 28 | Emmanuel Filiberto | D.3. |
| 29 | Esercito sardo | R.3. |
| | Gartoldi | F.4. |

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

OPENING SALVO: NIZZA

The magnum opus & the earthquake
932.2 km from Paris

Early morning, 23 February 1887

As Friedrich Nietzsche is at work on plans for his magnum opus, a 6.5 magnitude Mercalli intensity X earthquake rocks the towns along the French–Italian Riviera: strike 71° , dip 85° , slip 90° , displacement 35 cm, length 45 km, width 10 km, fault center depth 10 km.

Does the strike, dip, slip, displacement, length, and fault center of the event equal in some way the same elements in the philosopher’s work itself? Is the sudden release of energy in the earth’s lithosphere and the concomitant seismic waves akin to the energy and seismic waves being released in his body? Are they primary body waves, powerful enough to move through liquid and solid rock, secondary body waves, vertically & horizontally rippling through the ground, or are they elliptical or parallel surface waves? What is the Mercalli intensity of *Nietzsche*?

The epicenter of the quake was located at the bottom of the continental slope, 20 km offshore from Imperia, Italia, triggering a 2 m-tsunami and killing more than 2000 people. It was the 13th tsunami in Nice–Cannes since 2000 BCE. The sea surface presented negative and positive displacements, with waveforms observed along 250 km of the Ligurian coast from Genoa to Cannes, with short intense wave trains being accompanied by long oscillatory tails. Meanwhile, in Paris, Vincent van Gogh was finishing work on his *Basket of Hyacinth Bulbs*, an extremely textural, tactile painting, made with short, sharp, elongated Neo-Impressionistic brushstrokes. The rough broken earth of the French–Italian Riviera was

0 echoed in Vincent's use of the rough untreated surface
 1 of the Japanese box panel on which he painted this work.
 2 *Hyákinthos!* What of Vincent's own body was echoed in
 3 his work? Were the short, sharp, elongated brushstrokes
 4 of the canvas not unlike the short, sharp, elongated emo-
 5 tions of the painter?

6 Writing to Reinhart von Seydlitz on 24 February,
 7 Nietzsche noted that Nizza had just had its long inter-
 8 national Carnival (with Spanish ladies at the forefront,
 9 incidentally), and hard on its heels, six hours after its
 10 final Girandola, still rarer and more novel existential
 11 excitements. For we are now living in the interesting
 12 expectation of *perishing* — thanks to a well-meaning
 13 earthquake that has everyone baying at the moon, and
 14 not just the hounds. What a pleasure it is when these
 15 ancient houses rattle over our heads like coffee grind-
 16 ers! when the inkwell suddenly becomes independent!
 17 when the streets fill with horrified half-clothed figures
 18 and shattered nervous systems!

19 That very night, between 2 and 3 AM, like the *gail-*
 20 *lard* that I am, I made my inspection tour throughout
 21 the various quarters of the city, in order to see where
 22 the consternation was greatest — for the population was
 23 camping out-of-doors day and night: there was some-
 24 thing refreshingly military about it. And then the hotels!
 25 where a great deal had simply collapsed, and full-scale
 26 panic prevailed as a consequence.

27 I located all my acquaintances, male and female,
 28 found them huddled miserably under green trees; they
 29 were wearing their flannels, for it was bitter cold, and
 30 with even the slightest tremor they were brooding on
 31 *The End*. I don't doubt that this will bring the season to a
 32 precipitate close! Everyone is thinking of departure (pro-
 33 vided one can get away, and that the railroad lines were
 34 not the very first things to be all "torn up").

35 Yesterday evening the guests at the hotel where I eat
 36 could not be coaxed to take their *table d'hôte* inside the
 37 building — they ate and drank outside; and apart from

0 an elderly & very pious woman who was convinced that
 1 Our Dear Lord *dare* not do her any harm, mine was the
 2 only cheerful countenance among the larvæ and 'sensi-
 3 tive hearts.'

4 Later, to another friend, the philosopher who would
 5 soon refer to himself as dynamite said I must confess
 6 that I was not even frightened and, for example, on that
 7 morning when the whole of Nizza fell into the open and
 8 was like a madhouse, I worked in the most undisturbed
 9 peace of mind in my room; it happened to me, in two let-
 10 ters that I wrote that day, to forget the event of the day!

11 On the first night afterwards, when everyone was
 12 camped out in the open, I slept quietly at home until
 13 2 o'clock: there came a stronger shock again, the dogs
 14 howled all around, I got dressed, and went on a hike
 15 through the various parts of Nizza to see to what follies
 16 fear can drive men. This was the most interesting hike
 17 I've done in Nizza so far: afterwards I slept as well as
 18 before. —

19 *

20
 21 Among the destroyed and partly destroyed buildings
 22 was the Pension de Genève, whose fourth floor had to
 23 be dismantled due to its suffering irreparable damage.
 24 Although the Genève was Nietzsche's usual port of call
 25 upon arriving in Nizza, the previous month he had rent-
 26 ed a room with southern exposure on the first floor of
 27 29 Rue des Ponchettes, thereby escaping destruction. A
 28 stroke of luck, or the shrewd instinct of self-preserva-
 29 tion, like an animal sensing some oncoming catastrophe
 30 with the thousand tendrils of its nervous system?

31 If to one friend the philosopher spoke of the tran-
 32 sience of things hurting him (the 4th floor of the Pen-
 33 sion de Genève was where the third and fourth parts of
 34 his *Zarathustra* were written), to another, he proclaimed
 35 that the demolition of the pension had this advantage
 36 — that posterity would have one less pilgrimage site to
 37 visit. Disaster and cataclysm function then not as nega-

NIZZA

248.9 km from Arles

as the sick animal crawls; la bête philosophe; my relentless & underground struggle against everything; the Faust of the 19th century; one must live in Nizza



0 12 February 1888

1
2 Dear Friend,

3
4 I closed my mouth to almost everyone; there was no “proud si-
5 lence” as some thought; it was much more — a humble silence,
6 that of a sufferer ashamed to betray how much he is suffering.
7 When an animal is sick, it retires to its lair; so does *la bête philos-*
8 *ophe!* Nowadays, a friendly voice seldom reaches me. I am alone
9 now, absurdly alone; and in the course of my relentless and un-
10 derground struggle against everything that humans beings till
11 now have revered & loved (my formula for this is the “transvalu-
12 ation of values”), I have imperceptibly become like a lair myself
13 — something hidden away, which people do not find, even if
14 they go out and look for it. *But people do not go out in search of*
15 *such things* . . . It is not inconceivable that I am the first philoso-
16 pher of the age, perhaps even a little more, something decisive
17 and fateful standing between two millennia. Such a peculiar po-
18 sition is *always* being forfeited — by an ever increasing, more
19 and more icy, more and more sharp isolation. Instead of being
20 reputed, I am ridiculed, told that I am eccentric, pathological,
21 psychiatric, inhuman, the Faust of the 19th century, even worthy
22 of being put on the gallows! No lack of bad and slanderous waves
23 assail me; an unrestrainedly hostile tone is paramount in the
24 periodicals — how is it that nobody protests against this? that
25 nobody ever feels hurt when I am censured? And in all the years
26 no solace, not a drop of humanity, not a breath of love —

27 In these circumstances, one must live in *Nizza*. This time too
28 it is seething with Idlers, *Greco*s and other philosophers, seething
29 with “my equals”; and God, with his own cynicism, lets his sun
30 shine down particularly upon *us* more beautifully than upon the
31 so much more reputable Europe of Herr von Bismarck (which
32 is working with feverish virtue at its armaments, and entirely
33 presents the aspect of a hedgehog with heroic inclinations). The
34 days pass here with an impudent beauty; never was there a more
35 perfect winter. And these colors of *Nizza* — I would like to send
36 them to you. All the colors permeated with a shining silver grey;
37 spiritual, witty colors; no residue at all of the brutality of the

0 fundamental tones. The advantage of this small piece of coast be-
 1 tween Alassio and Nizza is that it allows an Africanism, in color,
 2 vegetation, and in the dryness of the air — this does not occur
 3 elsewhere in Europe.

4 O, how I would like to sit together with you and your dear
 5 esteemed wife under some Homeric and Phæacian sky . . . but
 6 I *may* not go any farther south (my eyes will soon compel me
 7 to leave for more northern and more stupid landscapes). Write,
 8 please, again during your stay in Munich, & forgive me for this
 9 *gloomy* letter!

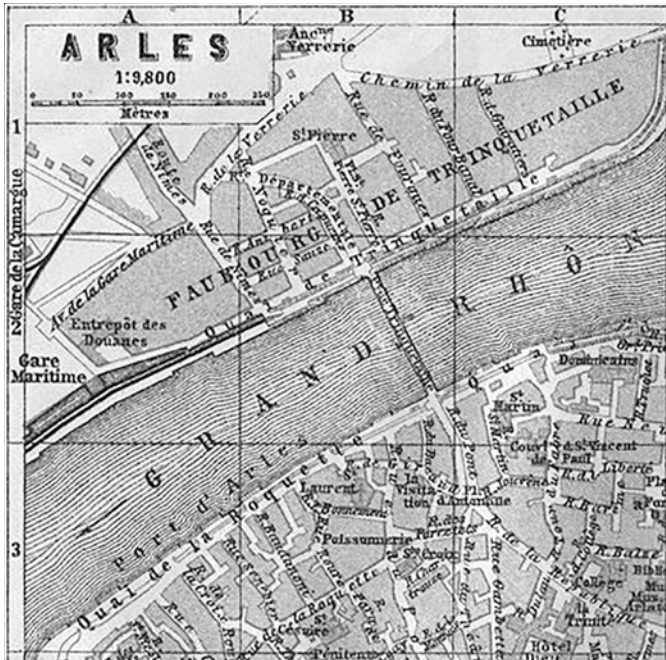
10
 11 Your devoted friend

12
 13 *Friedrich Nietzsche*
 14
 15
 16
 17
 18
 19
 20
 21
 22
 23
 24
 25
 26
 27
 28
 29
 30
 31
 32
 33
 34
 35
 36
 37

ARLES

248.9 km from Nizza

*the weather here is changeable, often windy with murky
skies; I have a touch of fever and no appetite; the future
success of this idea of a long sojourn in the Midi; if all is
not in vain*



0 17 February 1888

1
2 My dear Theo,

3
4 Thank you very much for your letter, which I had not dared to
5 expect so soon, as far as the 50-fr note which you added was
6 concerned.

7 I brought back a size 15 canvas today. It is a drawbridge with
8 a little cart going over it, outlined against a blue sky — the river
9 blue as well, the banks orange colored with green grass and a
10 group of women washing linen in smocks & multicolored caps.
11 And another landscape with a little country bridge and more
12 women washing linen.

13 Also an avenue of plane trees near the station. Altogether
14 12 studies since I've been here.

15 The weather here is changeable, often windy with murky
16 skies, but the almond trees are beginning to flower everywhere.
17 You are right to see Signac at his house. I was very glad to see
18 from your letter of today that he made a better impression on
19 you than he did the first time. In any case I am glad to know that
20 after today you will not be alone in the apartment.

21 Remember me kindly to Koning. Are you well? I am better
22 myself, except that eating is a real ordeal, as I have a touch of fe-
23 ver and no appetite, but it's only a question of time and patience.

24 Even though I'm vexed that just now expenses are heavy and
25 the pictures worthless — that's why I don't despair of the future
26 success of this idea of a long sojourn in the Midi.

27 Here I am seeing new things, I am learning, and if I take it
28 easy, my body doesn't refuse to function.

29 For many reasons I should like to get some sort of little re-
30 treat, where the poor cab horses of Paris — that is, you and sev-
31 eral of our friends, the poor impressionists — could go out to
32 pasture when they get too beat up.

33 I was present at the inquiry into a crime committed at the
34 door of a brothel here; two Italians killed two Zouaves. I seized
35 the opportunity to go into one of the brothels in a small street
36 called "des Ricolettes."
37

0 That is the extent of my amorous adventures among the Ar-
1 lésiennes. The mob *all but* (the Southerner, like Tartarin, being
2 more energetic in good intentions than in action) — the mob, I
3 repeat, all but lynched the murderers confined in the town hall,
4 but in retaliation all the Italians — men and women, the Savo-
5 yard monkeys included — have been forced to leave town.

6 I should not have told you about this, except that it means
7 I've seen the streets of this town full of excited crowds. And it
8 was indeed a fine sight.

9 I made my last three studies with the perspective frame I
10 told you about. I attach some importance to the use of the frame
11 because it seems not unlikely to me that in the near future many
12 artists will make use of it, just as the old German and Italian
13 painters certainly did, and, as I am inclined to think, the Flemish
14 too. The modern use of it may differ from the ancient practice,
15 but in the same way isn't it true that in the process of painting
16 in oils one gets very different effects today from those of the men
17 who invented the process, Jan and Hubert van Eyck? And the
18 moral of this is that it's my constant hope that I am not working
19 for myself alone. I believe in the absolute necessity of a new art
20 of color, of design, and — of the artistic life. And if we work in
21 that faith, it seems to me there is a chance that we do not hope
22 in vain.

23 I am deeply sorry for Gauguin's plight, especially because
24 now his health is shaken: he hasn't the kind of temperament that
25 profits from hardships — on the contrary, this will only exhaust
26 him from here on, and that will spoil him for his work. Goodbye
27 for the present.

28
29 Ever yours,

30 *Vincent*
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

INTERVAL: PARIS

Æsthetic combat & fleeing to Arles
932.2 km from Nizza

October 1887–February 1888

While Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, & Italy renewed their triple alliance treaty in February of 1887 in opposition to France, a year later, the triple alliance of Vincent, Theo, and the artists of Paris could not hold. If promises of mutual support existed between Theo and many of the artists Vincent had befriended, the same promises were slight between those artists and Vincent, whom many found irascible and unnerving. Just as in 1914 Italy would consider the Austro-Hungarian Empire an aggressor, many considered Vincent an aggressor and, if they did not declare war on him, shunned him as an uncouth and bestial if not almost monstrous figure, a kind of Sphinx whose riddles they must decipher in order to preserve their territory and, more urgently, protect themselves from, due to possible contagion, or death. Any allegiance to him was more feigned, an act of democratic politesse, for he was but a pathway to Theo and the promise of gallery support & art-world recognition.

Vincent's two years in Paris were beset with conflicts, tensions, and frequent disturbances, not unlike what occurs when a body wrestles with some strange metic force. Once, after returning from a day of plein air painting, the painter encountered Camille and Lucien Pissarro in the street. Keen to display his work to his fellow artists, the Dutchman cast his easel & other materials onto the middle of the sidewalk and began to frantically lean his still-wet canvases against a building wall, startling the genteel Pissarros, as well as the ever so discreet French passersby. Whether or not he would indulge in more

0 extreme behavior was always feared, for the Pissarros
1 recalled the time when, at the height of Chevreul's dis-
2 coveries about color and the ferment over color theo-
3 ries in Paris, Vincent once tore off all his clothes, fell to
4 his knees, and implored his fellow artists to accept his
5 counter viewpoints. Since the foreigner drank absinthe
6 in the afternoon, wine in the evening, beer at night, and
7 cognac whenever the mood struck him, for he believed
8 it stimulated his blood circulation, his explosive temper
9 often emerged unexpectedly, leading to volatile and dis-
10 turbing outbursts.

11 Despite a seeming divisiveness, the Dutchman in
12 fact sought unity, and his time in Paris was also a time of
13 pursuing the utopia of a colony of artists whose jealous-
14 ies he hoped could be superseded by a grander artistic
15 bond. Petitioning his fellow artists to unity and strength,
16 he believed that their common interests would enable
17 them to sacrifice any selfish motives, however greatly
18 such unified interests may have suffered the tyranny of
19 his own singular vision. He saw the clan in his midst as
20 the artists of *le petit boulevard*, a ragtag band of outsiders
21 who stood in opposition to the painters of *le grand*
22 *boulevard*. Like the members of the triple alliance, they
23 must stick together to defeat their opponent — out of
24 unification would come victory and triumph.

25 In October 1887, months before he would finally
26 depart for the south, the fervent utopian envisioned a
27 grand exhibition that would represent the artists of *le*
28 *petit boulevard* and position him as the pivotal figure
29 in the movement, all made possible by his brother Theo,
30 the Maecenas of Montmartre. The aim was to attract the
31 public, increase the visibility of their colony to artists
32 and critics in the city and beyond, and to be a gateway
33 to having their art presented at the entresol, the mez-
34 zanine at Goupil Gallery where the work of new, more
35 unorthodox painters was displayed to more adventurous
36 clientele. It was the cutting of a pathway to the future.

37 Although Theo supported the venture, he was dis-
pleased with his brother's choice of locale, a restaurant

0 called the Grand-Bouillon, hardly the place to impress
1 the ultra-formal cognoscenti of the City of Lights. The
2 exhibition was fraught with conflict, with some artists
3 refusing the inclusion of Signac and Seurat, Vincent re-
4 fusing the inclusion of Symbolists like Redon, and oth-
5 ers refusing to participate because of such exclusions, a
6 series of sectarian fractures not unlike those that would
7 later occur with the Surrealists. With only a limited
8 number of artists contributing works, the Dutchman
9 was left to fill the remaining empty spaces with his own
10 paintings. In the end, the exhibition was nothing less
11 than a mad misadventure — there was no catalogue, no
12 publicity, and no critics reviewed the so-called show. To
13 most, the restaurant's plat du jour was of more inter-
14 est than the paintings, which many patrons of the resto
15 found disconcerting, hardly conducive to their digestion.
16 The muses did not rule here, but Brillat-Savarin.

17 In Paris, the Dutchman was something of a *bête*
18 *noire*: in the short time he had been there, despite being
19 as close to the center of artistic activities as an outsider
20 could be, the foreigner had never been invited to par-
21 ticipate in any group exhibitions, Theo's colleagues did
22 not include him in their exhibits at other galleries, and
23 although Theo displayed the work of many of Vincent's
24 friends at Goupil's entresol, he did not display his own
25 brother's work there.

26 With this increasing isolation from his fellow artists,
27 and from the inner circles of the Parisian art world, the
28 City of Lights became more and more a place of con-
29 tempt and darkness for he who was in search of the sun.
30 Alienated, he hardly painted the last months of 1887 and,
31 because of his extreme and vehement outbursts, the po-
32 lice had banned him from painting in the streets. Even
33 seemingly close companions like Bernard were deeply
34 critical of the fevered one. To Bernard, the Dutchman's
35 paintings were none too different from the man himself
36 — he tortures the paint, Bernard wrote, and denies all
37 wisdom, all striving for perfection or harmony.

Burning like the stars he would later begin to depict, it was life's intensity the painter sought, & to his sister, he exulted, when one has fire within oneself, one cannot keep bottling it up — better to burn than to burst. What is in will out.

And so, driven as if by a force beyond his control, after another combative day in Paris, fed up with the sectarianism of his fellow artists, in a state of fury, his utopic ventures come to naught, it was out of Paris that the foreigner would go, journeying on the train rapide (the Paris-Lyon-Méditerranée) from the City of Lights to Marseille, leaving at 9:40 PM on 19 February 1888.

Adieu, Paris, *adieu!*

CHEMINS DE FER PARIS-LYON-MÉDITERRANÉE



COURSES DE NICE

Billets d'aller et retour spéciaux émis jusqu'au 22 avril 1914.

	1 ^{re} classe	2 ^e classe
PARIS à CANNES	Fr. 177 40	127 75
— à NICE.....	182 60	131 50
— à MONACO-MONTE-CARLO.....	185 45	133 55
— à MENTON.....	186 65	134 40

Validité : 20 jours à compter du départ (ou du dernier jour de la période d'émission, si le voyage est commencé après cette période), prolongeable deux fois de dix jours moyennant un supplément chaque fois de 10 0/0.

Deux arrêts en cours de route, tant à l'aller qu'au retour.

Admission, sans supplément de prix, des voyageurs de 1^{re} classe dans les trains Côte d'Azur Rapide et Extra-Rapide de Nuit. Toutefois, les voyageurs empruntant le Côte d'Azur Rapide ne peuvent s'arrêter en cours de route, à l'aller, qu'à partir de Marseille; aucun arrêt n'est autorisé au retour (Côte d'Azur Rapide et Extra-Rapide de nuit).

Consulter le Livret-Guide-Horaire P.-L.-M. vendu 0 fr. 60 dans toutes les gares, les bureaux de ville et les bibliothèques des gares de la Compagnie.

At 4:49 PM the following day, the painter arrived in Arles. He was in search of lighter colors, of youth & freshness, & eager to recover his physical strength, to be the first on the ground in the Mediterranean of Cézanne, Monticelli, & Zola, the one who would lead the southern faction of the avant-garde & forge a pathway toward new, unsuspected horizons.

Writing to their sister Wil, Theo noted that he never expected that he and his brother would grow so attached to one another, for now that I am alone in the apartment there is a decided emptiness about me.

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

NIZZA

248.9 km from Arles

looking down on the “modern”; the richest, most experienced, and most independent books; catching the Germans in flagranti; confessions about myself; I lived for years next door to death

0 19 February 1888

1
2 Verehrter Herr:

3
4 You have put me under a most pleasant obligation to you with
5 your contribution to the concept of “modernity”; for, this very
6 winter, I have been circling this most crucial value problem, very
7 much in the upper air, very much like a bird and with the best in-
8 tention of looking down on the “modern” in as unmodern a way
9 as possible . . . I admire — let me confess to you! — the tolerance
10 of your judgments as much as the restraint with which you make
11 them. How you suffer all these little children to come unto you!
12 Even Heyse! —

13 During my next journey to Germany I plan to study the
14 psychological problem of Kierkegaard, and also to renew my ac-
15 quaintance with your earlier writings. This will be, in the best
16 sense of the word, useful for me — and will serve to “bring home”
17 to me the severity and arrogance of my own judgments.

18 Yesterday my publisher sent me a telegram to say that the
19 books have been sent off to you. I will spare you and myself the
20 story of why there has been such a delay. Do, please, make the
21 best of a “bad job” — of these Nietzsche books, I mean.

22 I myself imagine that I have given to the “new” Germans
23 the richest, *most experienced*, and most independent books that
24 they have; likewise, that my own person represents a crucial oc-
25 currence in the crisis of value judgments. But that could be an
26 error; and stupid, too —: I want not to *have* to believe anything
27 about myself. A few remarks here about my first writings (— the
28 *Juvenilia* and *Juvenalia*):

29 The essay against Strauss, the wicked laughter of a “very free
30 thinker” at the expense of one who thought he was free, caused
31 an immense scandal: despite my 24 years, I was then already a
32 full professor, thus a kind of authority and something *substantial*.
33 The fairest account of this affair, in which almost every “person
34 of importance” took sides for or against me, and a ridiculous
35 mass of paper went through the press, is given in Karl Hille-
36 brand *Zeiten, Völker und Menschen*, Vol. 2. What mattered was
37 not my ridiculing the senile jottings of a remarkable critic but

0 my catching the Germans *in flagranti* with a compromising act of
 1 bad taste: German taste had unanimously admired Strauss's book
 2 *Der alte und der neue Glaube*, despite all religious and theologi-
 3 cal party factions, as a masterpiece of freedom and subtlety of
 4 thought (even of style!). My pamphlet was the first direct attack
 5 on German *Bildung* (— that *Bildung* which people were celebrat-
 6 ing as the conqueror of France —); the word I coined, "Bildungs-
 7 philister," survived the raging fluctuations of the polemics & has
 8 entered everyday language.

9 The two essays on Schopenhauer and Richard Wagner are, it
 10 seems to me now, confessions about myself — above all, they are
 11 avowals to myself, rather than, say, real psychological accounts
 12 of those two masters, to whom I felt as much kinship as I felt
 13 antagonism. (— I was the first person to distill a sort of unity
 14 out of both of them: this erroneous belief is now very much in
 15 the forefront of German culture: all Wagnerites are adherents
 16 of Schopenhauer. This was not true when I was young: in those
 17 days it was the last Hegelians who adhered to Wagner, and even
 18 in the fifties the slogan was "Wagner and Hegel.")

19 Between the *Untimely Meditations* and *Human, All Too Hu-*
 20 *man* come a crisis and a sloughing. Physically too: I lived for
 21 years next door to death. This was my great good fortune: I for-
 22 got myself, I survived myself . . . I have performed the same trick
 23 a second time. —

24 Well then, we have given each other presents, perhaps like
 25 a couple of travelers who are glad they met each other on the
 26 way? —

27 I remain your most devoted

28
 29 Nietzsche
 30
 31
 32
 33
 34
 35
 36
 37

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

ARLES

248.9 km from Nizza

Paris is impossible; magnificent scenery; the winter landscapes the Japanese did

0 21 February 1888

1
2 My dear Theo,

3
4 During the journey I thought at least as much about you as about
5 the new country I was seeing.

6 But I tell myself that you'll perhaps come here often yourself
7 later on. It seems to me almost impossible to be able to work in
8 Paris, unless you have a refuge in which to recover and regain
9 your peace of mind and self-composure. Without that, you'd be
10 bound to get utterly numbed.

11 Now I'll tell you that for a start, there's been a snowfall of
12 at least 60 centimeters all over, and it's still snowing.

13 Arles doesn't seem any bigger than Breda or Mons to me.

14 Before reaching Tarascon I noticed some magnificent scen-
15 ery — huge yellow rocks, oddly jumbled together, with the most
16 imposing shapes.

17 In the small valleys between these rocks there were rows of
18 little round trees with olive-green or grey-green foliage, which
19 could well be lemon trees.

20 But here in Arles the land seems flat.

21 I noticed some magnificent plots of red earth planted with
22 vines, with mountains in the background of the most delicate
23 lilac. And the landscape under the snow with the white peaks
24 against a sky as bright as the snow was just like the winter land-
25 scapes the Japanese did.

26 Here's my address

27 Restaurant Carrel
28 30 rue Cavalerie
29 Arles

30 So far I've taken no more than a little walk round the town, as I
31 was more or less completely done in last night.

32 I'll write to you soon — an antique dealer whose shop I went
33 into yesterday in this very street was telling me he knew of a
34 Monticelli.

35 With a good handshake to you and the pals.

36 Yours truly,
37 Vincent

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

NIZZA

248.9 km from Arles

*gloomy weather, loneliness, and blue fingers; everything is
unsaid; the three-quarters lunatic; invaluable psychological
observations relating to décadence; half mad and slowly
going to ruin; I have vowed not to take anything seriously
for a while; polar-bear humanity*

0 Pension de Genève, 26 February 1888

1
2 Dear friend,

3
4 gloomy weather, Sunday afternoon, great loneliness: I can invent
5 no more pleasant occupation than talking a little to you and with
6 you. I have just noticed that my fingers are blue: my handwriting
7 will be decipherable only to him who deciphers my thoughts . . .

8 What you say of Wagner's style in your letter reminds me of
9 a remark I found somewhere in writing: that his "dramatic style"
10 was no more than a species of *bad style*, even of *non-style* in mu-
11 sic. But our musicians see *progress* in this . . .

12 Actually everything is unsaid, as I suspect, almost unthought
13 in *this* area of truths: Wagner himself, as a person, as an animal,
14 as God and artist, surpasses a thousand times the understand-
15 ing and the incomprehension of our Germans. Does he surpass
16 that of the French as well? — Today I had the pleasure of finding
17 the right answer, just when the question could seem extraordi-
18 narily hazardous: it is this — "who was most ready for Wagner?
19 who was most naturally and inwardly Wagnerian, in spite of and
20 without Wagner?" — For a long time I had been telling myself:
21 it was that bizarre, three-quarters lunatic *Baudelaire*, the poet
22 of *Les fleurs du Mal*. It had disappointed me that this kindred
23 spirit of W's had not during his lifetime discovered him; I have
24 underlined the passages in his poems in which there is a sort
25 of *Wagnerian sensibility* that has found no form anywhere else
26 in poetry (— Baudelaire is a libertine, mystical, "satanic," but,
27 above all, Wagnerian). And what did I find today! I was thumb-
28 ing through a recently published collection of *Œuvres posthumes*
29 by this genius — most deeply prized and even loved in France
30 — and there, among some invaluable psychological observations
31 relating to *décadence* (*Mon cœur mis à nu*, of the kind in which
32 Schopenhauer's and Byron's case has been burned), an unpub-
33 lished letter of *Wagner's* catches my eye, on an essay by Baude-
34 laire in the *Revue Européenne*, avril 1861. I'll copy it out for you:

0 Mon cher Monsieur Baudelaire,

1
2 J'étais plusieurs fois chez vous sans vous trouver. Vous croyez
3 bien, combien je suis désireux de vous dire quelle *immense satis-*
4 *faction* vous m'avez préparée par votre article qui m'honore et qui
5 m'encourage plus que tout ce qu'on a jamais dit sur mon pauvre
6 talent. Ne serait-il pas possible de vous dire bientôt, à haute voix,
7 comment je m'ai senti enivré en lisant ces belles pages qui me ra-
8 contaient — comme le fait le meilleur poème — les impressions
9 que je me dois vanter d'avoir produites sur une organisation si
10 supérieure que la vôtre? Soyez mille fois remercié de ce bienfait
11 que vous m'avez procuré, et croyez-moi bien fier de vous pouvoir
12 nommer ami. — A bientôt, n'est-ce pas? *Tout à vous*

13
14 Richard Wagner

15
16 (Wagner was at that time 48 years old, Baudelaire 40; the let-
17 ter is touching, though written in miserable French.)

18 In the same book there are sketches by Baudelaire in which
19 he passionately defends Heinrich *Heine* against French criticism
20 (Jules Janin). — Even during the last years of his life, when he
21 was half mad and slowly going to ruin, *Wagnerian* music was
22 played to him as a *medicine*; Wagner's name had only to be men-
23 tioned to him, and he would "*il a souri d'allégresse.*" — On only
24 one other occasion, unless everything deceives me, did Wagner
25 write a letter showing this sort of gratitude and even enthusiasm
26 — after receiving *The Birth of Tragedy*.)

27 — How are you now, dear friend? I have vowed not to take
28 anything seriously for a while. But you should not think that I
29 have been busy making "literature" again — this manuscript
30 was *for myself*; from now on, I intend to make a manuscript *for*
31 *myself* every winter — the idea of "making it public" is actually
32 *excluded*. — The Fritzsche question has been settled by a telegram.
33 — Herr Spitteler has written, not badly, apologizing for his "in-
34 solence" (— as he says). — The winter is hard; but at the moment
35 I am missing nothing except perhaps a divine and tranquil music
36 — *your* music, dear friend!

37 Your N.

0 There has not been a single reply from the newspapers and peri-
1 odicals among which Fritzsich circulated last autumn an offer of
2 my collected works for review —

3 Overbeck's father has died, at the age of 84. Overbeck has
4 gone to Dresden because of this — I fear, to the detriment of
5 his health, which is causing him difficulties again this winter. —
6 Snowstorms everywhere, polar-bear humanity.

7 From a letter of B's: "I dare not speak of W any more: people
8 have laughed at me too much. This music has been one of the
9 great joys of my life; for a good 15 years I have not experienced
10 such exaltation (or rather *enlèvement*)."

11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

ARLES

248.9 km from Nizza

*that wretch Voltaire; those who penetrate to the heart of
life; May bugs; overground existence, overground studies;
a painter has to make paintings*

0 24 February 1888

1
2 My dear sister,

3
4 For my part, I could just as well say that I'll stop writing to you
5 immediately at the moment you reply to me; the simplest thing
6 is not to write if it's too much trouble and one doesn't always
7 feel inclined.

8 But be this as it may, it's very good that you're starting by
9 finding out what sort of harm that wretch Voltaire has done —
10 and you'll certainly find this in *Candide*, that Voltaire dared to
11 laugh at the "highly serious life which we ought only to devote to
12 or spend on the best ends."

13 And I don't have to tell you that this crime is terrible enough
14 in itself.

15 I can't really write about Mauve, I think about him every
16 day, and that's all there is to it. It has affected me very badly but
17 personally, as a human being, he was perhaps very different from
18 what people sometimes said, that's to say deeper in life itself
19 than in art perhaps, and I loved him as a human being — now I
20 find it so hard to imagine that those who penetrate to the heart
21 of life, who by the way judge themselves as if it were another,
22 and deal with others with as little embarrassment as if they were
23 dealing with themselves, I find it so hard to imagine that such
24 people cease to exist.

25 Now I know that it's fairly impossible for the white potato or
26 salad grubs that turn into May bugs later to be capable of form-
27 ing credible ideas about their future overground existence.

28 And that it would be rash of them to undertake overground
29 studies to throw light on this question, since the gardener or oth-
30 ers interested in salad and vegetables would immediately tram-
31 ple them underfoot as being harmful insects.

32 But for parallel reasons I have little faith in the rightness
33 of our human ideas concerning our future life. We can no more
34 judge our own metamorphoses impartially and sagely than the
35 white salad grubs can theirs.

36 For the same reason that a salad grub has to eat salad roots
37 for its higher development —

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

NIZZA

248.9 km from Arles

winter of avalanches & railway disturbances; radical problems & decisions; stoves; a real ordeal for me; the fear of spring; the troubled troglodyte

0 3 March 1888

1
2 Pension de Genève

3
4 Dear friend,

5
6 Forgive me, that I, just in possession of your good letter, must
7 immediately bother you with my affairs again. *Lorenzen's* calcula-
8 tion is quite a cause for concern: I can only recognize one post.
9 I *paid* for the first six items on my last departure from Leipzig;
10 I neither received nor asked for the seventh and eighth (Dionys.
11 and Apollodor). But I want to negotiate about that with Lorenz
12 *myself*. —

13 On the other hand, it worries me that you have not reported
14 anything to me about the payment of my printing invoice to C.G.
15 *Naumann*. I enclosed the bill in my penultimate letter: — Do I
16 have to fear that the letter with the bill has been lost? — in this
17 winter of avalanches and railway disturbances, much seems to
18 be getting lost...

19 For weeks I have been amazed that C.G. Naumann does not
20 signal the receipt of the money. —

21 The printing costs of the *Genealogy* were: 588 Marks 65
22 Pfennigs.

23 As for the salary due toward the end of the month, I ask
24 for the same *here*. But I would be grateful for every day that it
25 comes earlier; basically, my time in Nizza *is up* — the shine of
26 the sun (in cold weather, by the way) is already too intense for
27 my eyes. — Otherwise, it is better again; nor am I badly satis-
28 fied with my winter, which was devoted to radical problems and
29 decisions. — Just send Basel paper, please. — The stove was de
30 rigueur, you're right. Namely for my north room. Incidentally, I
31 have absolutely no understanding of how I could endure a Nordic
32 winter: as much as I must *wish*, called into question for reasons
33 of the most extreme nature. But even *here* every really dark and
34 wintry day when the sun is missing is a real torture for me: I am
35 sick and depressed in an almost unbelievable way, physically and
36 mentally. There is something humiliating about this absurd de-
37 gree of dependence; but it doesn't help, I have to reckon with this

0 factor. Engadin and Nizza are no longer really to be *questioned*:
 1 they are the only things that have been *proven*. Spring scares me;
 2 it has hitherto failed me in every place. — The past *decade*, with
 3 my habitual weakness and irritability in my head and nerves,
 4 which created real catastrophes from the slightest chance and
 5 accidents, should absolutely be erased from my memory. But in
 6 the meantime I have to be content with days and weeks in which
 7 I forget. *This* degree of human *décrapitude*, which is as unsuit-
 8 able as possible for my whole way of thinking, has, since I do not
 9 hide from myself, somewhat exasperated my pride: bad enough,
 10 but the misery can only be endured at this price. — I feel like a
 11 troglodyte who has trouble believing in *light*; one becomes ex-
 12 tremely suspicious; one becomes problematic.

13 Dear friend, it does not seem impossible that I will greet you
 14 again in Basel this year: although I do not want to promise it to-
 15 day. With the warmest wishes for you and your dear wife

16
 17 Nietzsche

18
 19 (The street pet. rue St. Etienne is now renamed: rue Rossini)

INTERVAL: ARLES

Lifting the volcanic veil & the Pont de Langlais
248.9 km from Nizza

May–August 1883 / April–May 1888

Beginning in late May 1883, steam venting began to occur from Perboewatan, the northernmost cone of Krakatoa, Indonesia, with ash outbreaks hitting an altitude of nearly 6 km. Eruptions would continue in mid June, resulting in loud explosions of thick black clouds covering the islands for nearly one week.

In the coming days, earthquakes were experienced in Anyer, Banten, and in early August, major ash columns and steam plumes rose out of volcanic vents between Danan and Rakata.

Toward the end of the month, eruptions intensified, and on 26 August 1883, the volcano went into its paroxysmal phase, with eruptions and explosions occurring every 10 minutes, like the tympani drums of the center of the earth sounding off to presage its coming thermonuclear reaction.

The following day, the volcanic island of Krakatoa erupted, unleashing a concatenation of explosions that would reverberate throughout much of the world, circumnavigating the globe seven times over.

When most of the island buckled beneath the sea, a succession of lava, pumice, and ash flows along with immense tsunamis devastated proximate coastlines. Ash discharged 80 km into the atmosphere, swathing an area of 800,000 square km, plummeting the surrounding region into darkness for two-and-a-half days, like some nightmarish vision imaged by Goya.

The discharged ash, which wafted around the globe and beyond, produced Bishop's Rings around the moon and sun. The ash also acted as a solar-radiation filter, de-

0 creasing global temperatures by as much as 0.5° C in the
 1 year following the eruption, resulting in the reduction of
 2 the amount of sunlight reaching the surface of the earth.
 3 The world was darker than it had ever been before, and
 4 this darkness would envelop it for half a decade.

5 At twilight, a volcanic purple light encircled the sun.

6 For years afterwards, the moon appeared to be blue,
 7 sometimes green.

8 The final explosion of the volcano was so loud the
 9 pyroclastic surge resounded across more than 10% of the
 10 earth's surface, with witnesses in Perth and Rodrigues
 11 speaking of what sounded to them like distant cannon
 12 fire. At 310 dB, the sound ruptured the eardrums of sail-
 13 ors over 64 km away in the Sunda Strait.

14 As the island collapsed under the sea into the magma
 15 chamber, 5 cubic miles of rock fragments were jettisoned
 16 into the air. Just then, Nietzsche's publisher was reading
 17 the manuscript of part I of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* while
 18 the philosopher was relaxing in Roma. Waves estimated
 19 at 41 meters high battered nearby villages and settle-
 20 ments, and all vegetation on the islands was stripped
 21 bare, structures were completely destroyed, and tens of
 22 thousands of people in Java and Sumatra were taken out
 23 to sea, resulting in over 36,000 deaths. The energy re-
 24 leased from the explosion was equal to 200 megatons of
 25 TNT. To Nietzsche, whose philosophy itself was consid-
 26 ered a form of dynamite, it was a grand event: 2,000 hu-
 27 man beings annihilated at a stroke! he wrote his friend
 28 Lanzky. It's magnificent. This is how humanity should
 29 come to its end — how one day it will end. When Lanzky
 30 remarked that they too would be done away with, he
 31 who called for us to build our houses on the slopes of
 32 Vesuvius rejoined, what matter!

33 The cataclysm of Krakatoa led to fitful weather and
 34 hallucinatory sunsets throughout the world for months
 35 afterwards, due to sunlight reflected from suspended dust
 36 particles ejected by the volcano high into the earth's at-
 37 mosphere. Commercial & other vessels reported similar

0 spectacles, all of which were accompanied by explosive
 1 noises, churning black clouds, and incandescent pumice
 2 and ash. The sun was sometimes the color of purple lavender,
 3 and noctilucent clouds were visible for the first
 4 time in history. From earth to beyond, an immense milieu
 5 had been forever altered.

6 Over the next year, across the Indian Ocean, rafts of
 7 volcanic pumice were seen on which human skeletons
 8 were afloat, drifting so far that they also hit the shores of
 9 Africa's eastern coast. It was then that the third part of
 10 Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* was published, he was composing
 11 the fourth, and van Gogh was in Nuenen, intensely
 12 engaged in drawing and making watercolors and oil
 13 paintings. The apotheosis of an artist-philosopher; the
 14 development and refinement of a painter. How much of
 15 the ash, steam, lava, pumice, igneous fragments and sonic
 16 echoes of the pyroclastic surges, how much of the dust
 17 particles and black clouds, entered into the pores of Herr
 18 Dynamite and the Horla, changing thereby the composition
 19 of their bodies as they changed the world around
 20 them? Were they too not surges and seismic waves? Were
 21 they too not noctilucent clouds and fitful weather?

22 Five years after the explosion of Krakatoa, in 1888,
 23 as the philosopher and painter traversed various parts of
 24 Europe in search of perfect climates and locales suitable
 25 to their physiological conditions, temperatures would
 26 return to normal and the volcanic veil would at last dissipate.
 27 It was the very year that the sun would become
 28 for Vincent an incandescent beacon, a burning orb out
 29 of which a heliomythic imaginary would be created, the
 30 moment when, for the Dutchman, the sky became starry,
 31 a seething cosmos of vitality and brilliance where starlight
 32 eclipsed gaslight and distant space was as close as
 33 if as proximate as a volcanic cloud.

34 In Paris, the painter wrestled with various techniques
 35 and styles, spurred by the different artists, scientists,
 36 and movements of his time, shifting from pointillist
 37 approaches to pastel-based palettes to monochromatic

0 ones to canvases of incandescent color & colliding com-
 1 plementaries. It was all an attempt to ingest and incor-
 2 porate through sheer will the ruling aesthetic principles
 3 of his time.

4 In Arles, abandoning the praxes of others and all
 5 external methods, the young artist turned back to his
 6 scientific-based investigations, as if seeking a multitude
 7 of ways from which to see, a kind of roving perspectival-
 8 ism born of his own tempestuous body.

9 Returning to use of a perspective frame he had con-
 10 structed in 1882 after reading of Albrecht Dürer's descrip-
 11 tion of such a device, his eye curved to the very realities
 12 before him, not theories — it was the world as experi-
 13 enced by his nerves that would become his technique.

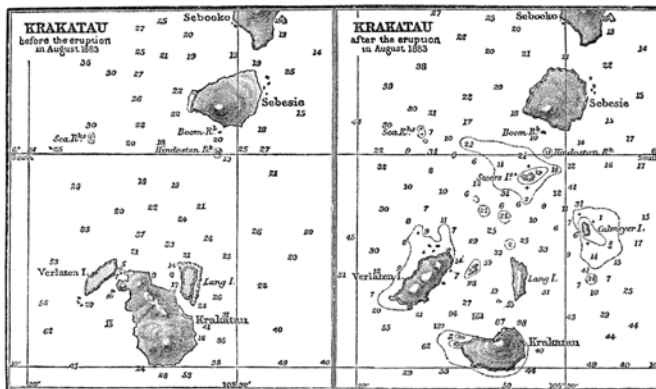
14 My brush stroke has no system at all, he wrote to
 15 Bernard. I hit the canvas with irregular touches of the
 16 brush, which I leave as they are. Patches of thickly laid-
 17 on color, spots of canvas left uncovered, here and there
 18 portions that are left absolutely unfinished, repetitions,
 19 savageries; in short, I am inclined to think that the re-
 20 sult is so disquieting and irritating as to be a godsend to
 21 those people who have fixed, preconceived ideas about
 22 technique.

23 Sitting here with my perspective frame, on the bank
 24 of the Arles-Bouc Canal, I think back to the sketches I
 25 did when on the shores of Scheveningen. Provence is like
 26 Holland in character yet as beautiful as Japan for the
 27 limpidity of the atmosphere and gay color effects. How
 28 can I not now also think of Hiroshige? If the Japanese
 29 are not making any progress in their own country, still
 30 it cannot be doubted that their art is being continued in
 31 France.

32 I have my pen, reed pen, ink, and graphite and am
 33 determined to capture something essential about the
 34 Langlais Bridge. I am drawing it, from different posi-
 35 tions, from different directions, viewing it from as many
 36 angles as possible, all with the aid of my perspective
 37 frame. Eventually, I will make some watercolors, and

0 other drawings — I want to show as many parts of the
 1 bridge as possible, its uprights and iron supports, its
 2 strong braces and chain pulleys, its diagonal frames. A
 3 multitude of technical aspects. To circle it like a bird.
 4 If I can emphasize the crossing diagonals by setting the
 5 bridge at the moment when I can lace together the di-
 6 agonal tether lines of the moving wings with the oppo-
 7 site diagonal of the iron cables that are attached to the
 8 upright supports, this will make for bold X's splayed out
 9 on both sides of the composition. Everything crystallizes
 10 through the perspective frame. Seeing all the images to-
 11 gether will be like encountering a series of different mo-
 12 ments in time, which will produce a comprehensive and
 13 total view of the bridge. The perspective frame allows
 14 me to compare the proportions of objects close at hand
 15 with those on a plane further away. I want to capture
 16 too how Arles projects the strange silhouette of its draw-
 17 bridge against a huge yellow sun.

18 Later that summer, to Theo, Vincent would declare
 19 to his brother that it is not the language of painters but
 20 the language of nature that one should listen to.



0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

NIZZA

248.9 km from Arles

*there are times when one is no longer in control of oneself;
delicate and morbid machinery; the tariff war; how good to
be in Europe and not in this astonishingly uncomely Para-
guay; my absurd health demands; the greatest distrust of
the German spring*

0 5 March 1888

1
2 My dear good mother,

3
4 I would have written you a little letter this morning without a
5 doubt, even if I hadn't received your heartfelt admonition. Ev-
6 erything was already prepared for it. In addition, my condition
7 has really improved and the bad weeks of melancholy are over
8 again. It saddens me that I have sent two such gloomy letters
9 to you: but there are times when one is no longer in control of
10 oneself and does things that one can hardly understand by the
11 light of day. Incidentally, the winter made the whole world hard
12 and sad: and all the more for such a delicate and morbid machin-
13 ery as I am. The news from San Remo has nothing therapeutic
14 in it either: this system of lies and arbitrary distortion of facts,
15 which this English woman, in league with a worthless English
16 doctor, perpetuates from one month to the next, has outraged
17 even the foreigners, not to mention the German doctor, the en-
18 tire imperial family, Bismarck. By chance I am very well, too well
19 informed about the *intima intimissima* of this gruesome story.
20 — Incidentally, since 1 March we have had the great *tariff* war
21 between Italy and France here: our province is hardest hit by it.
22 Nizza obtained *everything* that was necessary for food from Italy:
23 — meat, eggs, butter, vegetables, wine, oil. The tariff war, with its
24 *outrageous* taxes, simply creates a rift between the two countries:
25 so that the whole coast has to try to get its food from elsewhere.
26 They already want to establish a direct steamboat connection be-
27 tween Nizza and Algiers these days: 42 hours journey between
28 here and *Africa*. —

29 Nevertheless: how good to be in Europe, be it in Naumburg
30 or in Nizza — and *not* in this astonishingly uncomely Paraguay!
31 The report is very honest; I really don't think it's hiding any good
32 points. Obviously life in the capital and life in this forest and des-
33 ert wilderness are quite different; in the former one will still be-
34 lieve oneself to be in Europe. Nothing for us! my good mother! —

35 *Fritzs* put the matter in order by telegram; also sent an
36 apologetic letter. Thank you very much for the little high pres-
37 sure that your letter has performed.

0 Overbeck's father has since died in Dresden; likewise Köselit-
 1 zen's Leipzig sister. One has to carry on and overcome every-
 2 where. — Your kind and dear invitation to spend the spring in
 3 Naumburg unfortunately does not in any point match what my
 4 absurd health demands. First: I may not travel far; I can't endure
 5 it. Second: I have the greatest distrust of the German spring in
 6 particular and think with horror of the feeling of weakness and
 7 discouragement that last spring in Naumburg and Leipzig pro-
 8 duced in me. It's not yet clear where I'm going; but not very far,
 9 and somewhere in the mountains, where the air is strong; and so
 10 that I can keep an eye on the access to the Engadin (for mid-*June*:
 11 you can't go up sooner).

12 Finally, my dear mother, do you mind sending me the 96
 13 marks here in Nizza? Or do you have no money right now? I am
 14 in a bit of an embarrassment and would be grateful if I could
 15 get money sent *now*. If it doesn't suit you I would approach Mr.
 16 Kürbitz about it. (The simplest way is a 100-mark note. The let-
 17 ter *registers* but does *not* indicate the money in it. Or a 100-*franc*
 18 note (96 marks = 115 francs) is preferable.

19
 20 With heartfelt love and gratitude
 21 Your ancient creature
 22
 23
 24
 25
 26
 27
 28
 29
 30
 31
 32
 33
 34
 35
 36
 37

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

ARLES

248.9 km from Nizza

the sky was a hard blue with a great bright sun; the future is still difficult; a final victory; we don't deserve to be treated as though we were dead; poor Gauguin; blood that was real good blood

0 9 March 1888

1
2 My dear Theo,

3
4 Now at long last, this morning the weather has changed and has
5 turned milder — and I've already had an opportunity to find
6 out what this mistral's like too. I've been out on several hikes
7 round about here, but that wind always made it impossible to do
8 anything. The sky was a hard blue with a great bright sun that
9 melted just about all the snow — but the wind was so cold and
10 dry it gave you goose pimples. But even so I've seen lots of beau-
11 tiful things — a ruined abbey on a hill planted with hollies, pines,
12 and grey olive trees. We'll get down to that soon, I hope. Now I've
13 just finished a study like the one of mine Lucien Pissarro has, but
14 this time it's of oranges. That makes eight studies I have up to
15 now. But that doesn't count, as I haven't yet been able to work in
16 comfort and in the heat.

17 The letter from Gauguin that I had intended to send you but
18 which for a moment I thought I had burned with some other pa-
19 pers, I later found and enclose herewith. But I've already written
20 to him direct and I've sent him Russell's address as well as send-
21 ing Gauguin's to Russell, so that if they wish they can make direct
22 contact. But as for many of us — and surely we'll be among them
23 ourselves — the future is still difficult. I do believe in a final
24 victory, but will artists benefit from it, and will they see more
25 peaceful days?

26 I've bought some coarse canvas here & I've had it prepared
27 for matte effects, I can now get everything, more or less, at Paris
28 prices.

29 On Saturday evening I had a visit from two amateur painters,
30 one of whom is a grocer — and also sells painting materials —
31 and the other a justice of the peace who seems kind & intelligent.

32 Unfortunately I'm hardly managing to live more cheaply
33 than in Paris, I need to allow 5 francs a day.

34 For the moment I haven't found anything like a boarding-
35 house, but there must surely be some.

36 If the weather also gets milder in Paris it will do you good.
37 What a winter!

0 I daren't roll up my studies yet because they're hardly dry,
1 & there are some areas of impasto that won't dry for a while.

2 I've just read *Tartarin sur les Alpes*, which I greatly enjoyed.

3 Has that bloody man Tersteeg written to you? That'll do us
4 good anyway — don't worry.

5 If he doesn't reply, he'll hear people talking about us all the
6 same, and we'll make sure he has nothing to fault in what we
7 do. For example, we'll send Mrs. Mauve a painting in memory
8 of Mauve with a letter as well from us both in which, if Tersteeg
9 doesn't reply, we won't say a word against him but we'll make
10 it understood that we don't deserve to be treated as though we
11 were dead.

12 In fact, it's likely that Tersteeg won't be predisposed against
13 us after all.

14 That poor Gauguin has no luck; I do fear that in his case
15 convalescence will take longer than the fortnight he had to spend
16 in bed.

17 For Christ's sake, when are we going to see a generation of
18 artists with healthy bodies? Sometimes I'm really furious with
19 myself because it isn't good enough to be sicker or less sick than
20 others, the ideal thing would be to have a strong enough constitu-
21 tion to live for 80 years and along with that, blood that was real
22 good blood.

23 But we could take comfort if we felt that a generation of
24 more fortunate artists was going to come along.

25 I wanted to write to you straightaway that I'm hopeful win-
26 ter's over now and I hope it will be the same in Paris. Handshake.

27
28 Yours truly,
29 Vincent
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

INTERVAL: PARIS; PARAGUAY

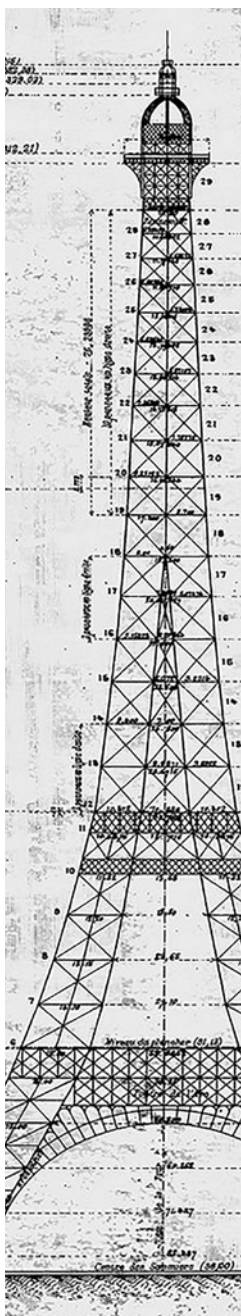
The icon of the Enlightenment;
the rebirth of humanity, or, philosophy for dear cattle
745.4 km from Arles; 932.2 km from Nizza
7967 nm from Arles; 8020 nm from Nizza

20 March 1888

The dawning of a new century is on the rise: as construction of the first stage of the Eiffel Tower, symbol of industrial, scientific, and artistic progress & icon of the Enlightenment is completed in Paris, Elisabeth Förster is in Paraguay with her husband Bernhard Förster, holding an inauguration ceremony for the founding of their utopian Aryan colony, *Nueva Germania*, which would achieve the preservation of human culture & purification & rebirth of the human race. All hail Völkisch ideals!

We arrived at our new homeland and made our entry like kings, Elisabeth declared. I rode like an ancient Norse goddess in a cart drawn by six oxen. The people, all in festive dress, exulted and offered us flowers and cigars and handed us their babies to bless. Suddenly, eight splendid horsemen appeared. They were our New Germans who had come to greet us; among them were Herr Erck and other leading colonists. They brought Bern's favorite horse, beautifully decorated with black, white, and red rosettes, and he mounted the animal at once. A procession formed behind us, including riders on horseback and a long train of people.

When we reached the Aguará-umí, we were not received with a cannon salute, but cheerful gunshots rang out as we approached and a charming small wagon appeared, decorated with palm leaves like a green arbor and carrying a small red throne, which I ascended.



0 Once the procession reached Aguará-Guazú, the com-
 1 mercial center of the colony, we saw that the first trium-
 2 phal arch had been erected & the official reception took
 3 place. The wives of the colonists who had been brought to-
 4 gether brewed coffee, and our New Germans sat together
 5 under a beautifully shady tree — they all had such open
 6 and honest German faces. Then HerrENZweiler, a very in-
 7 dustrious and capable colonist, made a speech of welcome,
 8 raised his glass and shouted, "*Long live the Mother of the*
 9 *Colony,*" which pleased my heart. Accompanied by the
 10 sounds of "*Deutschland, Deutschland über alles,*" we rode
 11 to the Försterhof, our magnificent mansion in the jungle.

12 A month earlier, he who claimed to have Polish no-
 13 blemens as ancestors stated to his friend Reinhart von
 14 Seydlitz, German politics are simply another kind of per-
 15 manent winter and bad weather. Water, mess, and filth
 16 everywhere — that is how it looks from the distance.
 17 For present-day Germany, however much it may bristle,
 18 hedgehog-like, with arms, I no longer have any respect.
 19 It represents the most stupid, the most depraved, the
 20 most mendacious form of the German spirit that has
 21 ever existed — and what absurdities has not this spirit
 22 dared to perpetrate! I forgive nobody who compromises
 23 with it, even if his name be Richard Wagner, particu-
 24 larly when this compromise is effected in the shamefully
 25 equivocal and cautious manner in which this shrewd, all-
 26 too-shrewd glorifier of "reine Torheit" has effected it in
 27 the latter years of his life. Here in our land of sunshine
 28 what different things we have in mind!

29 To another friend, the Good European confessed, I
 30 want nothing whatever to do with this anti-Semitic un-
 31 dertaking of my sister's, let alone to offer her any money,
 32 which she continues to request — 6000 Marks for land
 33 and cattle!! Before first disembarking upon her misad-
 34 venture she suggested that the portion of land be named
 35 Friedrichsheim were I to make a donation. The cattle
 36 are to be branded Eli, after Bernhard's pet name for
 37 her — and so the livestock are Jewish goddesses too??
 Laughing, I told her to call it Lamaland instead. Every

0 anti-Semite should be packed off to Paraguay; 10 horses
 1 would not drag me there. I do not underestimate the
 2 idyllic seclusion and the Voltairean cultivator son jardin
 3 at all, especially for a philosopher: but I do not want to
 4 do it in her way, which seems too much to be a 'return
 5 to nature,' philosophy 'for dear cattle.' Indeed, I too am
 6 already a sort of 'emigrant,' and who knows, I have my
 7 Gran Chaco too!

8 When Elisabeth continued to pester her brother for
 9 money, my position, the retired professor wrote his sister,
 10 is financially insecure, and yours has not been proven. But
 11 above all our wishes and our interests do not coincide
 12 insofar as your project is an anti-Semitic one. The gulf be-
 13 tween them is as great as the expanse of seas and oceans
 14 that separate us. If Dr. Förster's project succeeds, then I
 15 will be happy on your behalf and as far as I can, I will
 16 ignore the fact that it is the triumph of a movement that
 17 I reject. If it fails, I shall rejoice in the death of an anti-
 18 Semitic project Your reception is worthy of a priest.

19 The whole project of Nueva Germania, if not Bern-
 20 hard and Elisabeth Förster themselves, were like arche-
 21 typical incarnations of the very slave morality Nietzsche
 22 had just outlined in his recently published *Genealogy of*
 23 *Morality*. It was as if he had before him living embodi-
 24 ments of the dreaded forces he dissected & most feared
 25 as detrimental to the development of the species and the
 26 arrival of the Übermensch. Was then he himself not in
 27 danger of contagion, too proximate to inhaling elements
 28 devoid of the positive transformative power of steam,
 29 lava, and igneous fragments?



0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

NIZZA

248.9 km from Arles

I must hold on to Nizza; the proximity and expectation of death; tea & biscuits; the greatest regularity in my mode of living and in my diet; a long letter from Lama; a very North German ambiance

0 20 March 1888

1
2 My dear mother:

3
4 The money you sent and your accompanying letter brought me
5 great pleasure — almost as if you had made me a present. My fi-
6 nances were in rather a bad way; and perhaps I have already told
7 you that my hotel fees have been increased this winter.

8 Nevertheless, my circumstances here are significantly less
9 costly than those of the average hotel guest; and, moreover, this
10 winter I have what I did not have before — a room which I like, a
11 high one, with excellent light for my eyes, freshly decorated, with
12 a large, heavy table, chaise longue, bookcase, and dark reddish-
13 brown wallpaper, which I chose myself. It still seems to me that
14 I must hold on to Nizza: the climate has a better influence on me
15 than any other. Precisely here I can use my eyes twice as much
16 as anywhere else.

17 Under this sky my head has become more free, year by year;
18 here the uncanny consequences of being ill for years on end, in
19 the proximity and expectation of death, are more mild in their
20 effects. I would also mention that my digestion is better here
21 than elsewhere; but above all, my *mind* feels more alert here, and
22 carries its burden more easily — I mean the burden of a fate
23 to which a *philosopher* is inevitably condemned. I walk for an
24 hour every morning, in the afternoon for an average of three
25 hours, and at a rapid pace — the same walk day after day — it is
26 beautiful enough for that. After supper, I sit until 9 o'clock in the
27 dining room, in company mainly with Englishmen and English
28 ladies, with a lamp, which has a shade, at my table. I get up at
29 6:30 in the morning and make my own tea and also have a few
30 biscuits. At 12 noon I have breakfast; at 18h, the main meal of the
31 day. No wine, no beer, no spirits, no coffee — the greatest regu-
32 larity in my mode of living and in my diet. Since last summer I
33 have accustomed myself to drinking water — a good sign, a step
34 forward. It happens that I have just been ill for three days; today
35 everything is all right again. I am thinking of leaving Nizza at the
36 end of March; the light is already too strong for me, and the air
37 is too soft, too springlike.

0 It is possible that I shall have a visitor before I leave: *Seydlitz*,
 1 who is on his way back from Egypt with most of his household in
 2 tow, and who means to come and see me. My old friend *Gersdorff*
 3 also wrote in a good mood; he has just completed his month of
 4 service in Berlin (— he is chamberlain to the old empress). But
 5 the best thing was a long letter from Lama: eight pages of cordial
 6 and very sensible things. She wrote it while still in Asunción, but
 7 in very good spirits (“certainly I have a fate which suits me, and
 8 that is a good thing” —).

9 Yet she expresses anxiety that there will be too much to do in
 10 the months to come, because a mass of new colonists are regis-
 11 tered and perhaps the preparations for them are not yet adequate.
 12 — I forgot to tell you that an old school friend (my “junior”),
 13 Lieutenant *Geest*, is here being treated by the Red Cross sisters; I
 14 sometimes visit him. A very North German ambiance: Frau von
 15 Münchow, Frä. von Diethfurth, and so on. My table companion
 16 this winter is once again Baroness *Pläncker*, née Seckendorf, and,
 17 as such, she is very intimate with all the Seckendorfs at court
 18 and in the army (for example, with the Graf Seckendorf, who, as
 19 you know, is the new empress’s “right hand”). She is also a close
 20 friend of Geheimrat von *Bergmann*, and is herself having treat-
 21 ment from him, so that I was very well informed about affairs
 22 in San Remo. I have even had in my hands some pages that the
 23 crown prince wrote, a few days before his departure. — — —

24 No more now, my dear good mother. Grateful embraces from

25
 26 Your old creature
 27
 28
 29
 30
 31
 32
 33
 34
 35
 36
 37

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

ARLES

248.9 km from Nizza

*as if we were dead or outlaws; the variety of human ills;
colors like stained glass; talent is long patience; a Chinese
nightmare; absinthe drinkers; creatures from another
world; create a permanent exhibition of the Impressionists;
the funny side of everything*

0 21 March 1888

1
2 My dear Theo,

3
4 Here's a short note for Bernard and Lautrec, to whom I'd solemnly
5 promised to write. I'm sending it to you so that you can
6 give it to them sometime, it's not in the least urgent and it will
7 be a reason for you to see what they're doing and to hear what
8 they're saying, if you want.

9 But what's Tersteeg doing? Nothing? If you haven't had a reply,
10 I'd drop him a line if I were you, very short and very calm,
11 but stating that you're astonished that he hasn't replied to you. I
12 say 'personally,' because even though he doesn't reply to me — to
13 you — HE MUST reply, and you must insist on getting a reply. If
14 you don't, you'll lose your self-confidence, and on the contrary,
15 this is an excellent opportunity to gain more. I don't believe we
16 should press the point in a new letter explaining things again.
17 We have to be careful with him — but what we have to avoid is
18 to let ourselves be treated as if we were dead or outlaws. Enough.
19 Let's hope that you've received his reply in the meantime.

20 I've had a line from Gauguin, who complains about the bad
21 weather, is still unwell, and says nothing vexes him more than
22 lack of money among the variety of human ills, and yet he feels
23 doomed to be broke for ever.

24 Rain & wind these past few days, I've worked at home on the
25 study of which I've made a croquis in Bernard's letter. My aim was
26 to give it colors like stained glass, and a design of solid outlines.

27 Am reading *Pierre et Jean* by Guy de Maupassant. It's beautiful —
28 have you read the preface explaining the freedom the
29 artist has to exaggerate, to create in a novel a more beautiful,
30 simpler, more consoling nature, and explaining what Flaubert's
31 phrase might have meant, "talent is long patience" — and originality
32 and effort of will and intense observation?

33 There's a Gothic porch here that I'm beginning to think is admirable,
34 the porch of St. Trophime, but it's so cruel, so monstrous,
35 like a Chinese nightmare, that even this beautiful monument in so
36 grand a style seems to me to belong to another world, to which I'm
37 as glad not to belong as to the glorious world of Nero the Roman.

0 Must I tell the truth and add that the Zouaves, the brothels,
1 the adorable little Arlésiennes going off to make their first com-
2 munion, the priest in his surplice who looks like a dangerous
3 rhinoceros, the absinthe drinkers, also seem to me like creatures
4 from another world? This doesn't mean I'd feel at home in an
5 artistic world, but it means I prefer to make fun of myself than
6 to feel lonely. And I think I'd feel sad if I didn't see the funny side
7 of everything.

8 You've had plenty of snow in Paris, from what our friend
9 *L'Intransigeant* tells us. However, it's not a bad idea for a journal-
10 ist to advise General Boulanger to put the secret police off the
11 scent by henceforth wearing rose-tinted spectacles, which in his
12 opinion would go better with the General's beard. Perhaps this
13 will have the favorable influence we've been wanting for so long
14 — on the picture trade.

15 But nevertheless we're going to see something of what there
16 is in this famous Mr. Tersteeg. He'll have to come to a decision —
17 really — in the interests of our pals we are, it seems to me, under
18 some obligation not to let ourselves be thought of as dead men. It's
19 not about us but it's about the question of the Impressionists in
20 general, so as he has been approached by us, we must have his reply.

21 You must feel like me that we can't move forward without
22 having positive information about his intentions.

23 If we think it's a good idea to create a permanent exhibition
24 of the Impressionists in London and Marseille, it goes without
25 saying that we'll try to establish them. So it remains to be seen,
26 will Tersteeg be part of it? Yes or no?

27 And if not, what are his intentions as regards an offensive,
28 do they exist, yes or no? And has he calculated, like us, the ef-
29 fect of a fall on paintings that are highly priced at present, a fall
30 which, it seems to me, will probably come about as soon as the
31 Impressionists rise.

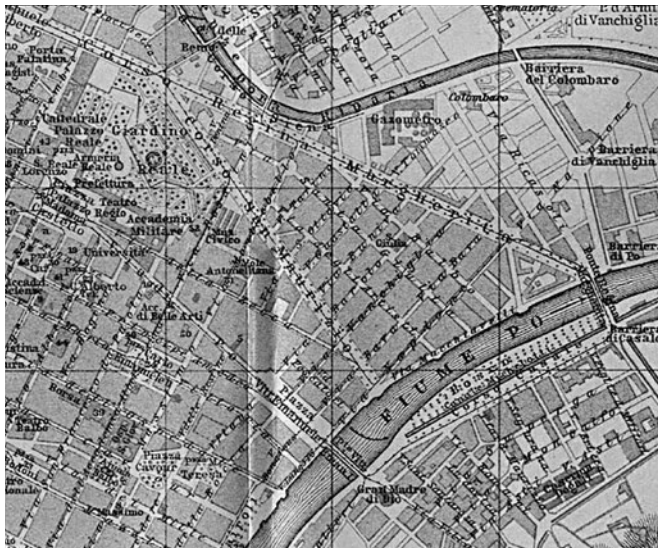
32 Look at the way those who sell highly priced paintings are
33 harming themselves by opposing, for political reasons, the advent
34 of a school that for years has shown an energy and a persever-
35 ance worthy of Millet, Daubigny, and others. But let me know if
36 Tersteeg has written to you and what he may have said. I'll do
37 nothing about this without you. Good luck and a handshake.

Ever yours,
Vincent

TORINO

416.4 km from Arles

when privately one sanctions one's life by works; a very stormy journey; I do stupid things; the pale noblesse of Genoa; miserable rainy weather; the court and the noblesse of Torino; a princely residence of the 17th century; the most beautiful cafés I have ever seen



0 7 April 1888, Saturday

1
2 Dear friend:

3
4 How good it was to hear from you! The first greeting I received
5 here came from you; and the last to reach me in Nizza was also
6 from you. And what good and curious things you announced!
7 That your quartet lies before you in a state of some calligraphic
8 perfection, and that you now, on account of this, bless this last
9 winter also! One certainly does become a very demanding sort of
10 person when privately one sanctions one's life by works; it makes
11 one forget, especially, to please people. One is too serious — you
12 feel this — there is a devilish seriousness at the back of a man
13 who wants to have his work respected. . . .

14 Dear friend, I am using the first calm after a very stormy
15 journey to write you a letter. Perhaps this will give me some
16 peace and composure, for until now I was all in pieces and never
17 have I traveled under such unfavorable circumstances. Is it pos-
18 sible to have so many absurd experiences between Monday and
19 Saturday!

20 Everything went wrong, from the very start. I was sick for
21 two days — where? In Sampierdarena. Do not think I was want-
22 ing to travel there. Only my luggage held fast to the original
23 course, to Torino; we others — that is, my hand luggage and I —
24 dispersed in various directions. And how expensive the journey
25 was! How rich my poverty will have made some people! I really
26 am not fit for traveling alone any more; I get so worked up that
27 I do stupid things. Here too, at the start everything was every
28 which way. I spent a sleepless night, amazed, not comprehending
29 all the things the day had brought. When I see you again, I shall
30 describe to you a scene in Savona that might have come straight
31 out of the *Fliegende Blätter*. Only it made me ill.

32 In Genoa I walked around like a mere shadow among memo-
33 ries. Five or six special places there which I loved appealed to me
34 even more strongly; it seemed to me to have an incomparable
35 pale *noblesse*, and to be vastly superior to everything else the
36 Riviera offers. I thank my destiny for condemning me to live in
37 this hard and gloomy city during the years of *décadence*; every

0 time one leaves it, one has also left oneself behind — the will
 1 expands again, and one no longer has the courage to be pusil-
 2 lanimous. I never felt more grateful than during this pilgrimage
 3 through Genoa.

4 But Torino! Dear friend, I congratulate you! Your advice met
 5 my deepest wishes! This is really the city that I can now use! This
 6 is palpably for me, and was so almost from the start, however
 7 horrible the situation was for the first days. Above all, miserable
 8 rainy weather, icy, changeable, oppressive to the nerves, with hu-
 9 mid, warm half hours between. But what a dignified and serious
 10 city! Not at all a metropolis, not at all modern, as I had feared,
 11 but a princely residence of the 17th century, one that had only a
 12 *single* commanding taste in all things — the court and the *no-*
 13 *blesse*. Everywhere the aristocratic calm has been kept: there are
 14 no petty suburbs; a unity of taste even in matters of color (the
 15 whole city is yellow or reddish-brown). And a classical place for
 16 the feet as for the eyes! What robustness, what sidewalks, not
 17 to mention the horse-drawn omnibuses and trams, the organi-
 18 zation of which verges on the marvelous here! One can live, it
 19 seems, more cheaply here than in the other large Italian cities
 20 I know; also, nobody has swindled me so far. I am regarded as
 21 an *ufficiale tedesco* (whereas I figured last winter in the official
 22 aliens' register of Nizza *comme Polonais*). Incredible — what seri-
 23 ous and solemn palaces! And the style of the palaces, without any
 24 pretentiousness; the streets clean and serious — and everything
 25 far more dignified than I had expected! The most beautiful cafés
 26 I have ever seen.

27 These arcades are somewhat necessary when the climate is
 28 so changeable, but they are spacious — they do not oppress one.
 29 The evening on the Po Bridge — glorious! Beyond good and evil!

30 The problem remains the weather in Torino. I have suffered
 31 from it so far extraordinarily — I could hardly recognize myself.

32
 33 With greetings & thanks,
 34 your devoted friend Nietzsche
 35
 36
 37

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

ARLES

416.4 km from Torino

The air here is definitely doing me good; I hope to make real progress this year; yesterday I saw a bullfight; this rage to paint orchards; a constant fever for work; fits of faintness; the blood's restoring itself; we have a chance of selling or exchanging; you can't be at the pole and the equator at the same time

0 Monday, 9 April 1888

1
2 My dear Theo,

3
4 Thanks for your letter and for the 100-franc note it contained.
5 I've sent you croquis of the paintings intended for Holland. Goes
6 without saying that the painted studies are more brilliant in col-
7 or. Am hard at work again, still orchards in blossom.

8 The air here is definitely doing me good, I could wish you
9 deep lungfuls of it. One of its effects is quite funny, one small
10 glass of cognac goes to my head down here, so without having
11 recourse to stimulants to get my blood circulating, my constitu-
12 tion won't be taxed so much all the same.

13 But I've had a terribly weak stomach since I've been here,
14 well, that's probably a matter of a lot of patience.

15 I hope to make real progress this year, which I really need
16 to do too.

17 I've got a new orchard that's as good as the pink peach trees
18 — some very pale pink apricot trees. At present I'm working on
19 some yellow-white plum trees with thousands of black branches.

20 I'm using vast quantities of canvases and colors but all the
21 same I hope not to waste money.

22 Out of 4 canvases perhaps there'll scarcely be one that would
23 make a *painting* like Tersteeg's or Mauve's, but we'll be able to
24 use the studies for exchanges, I hope. When will I be able to send
25 you something? I'd so much like to do two of Tersteeg's, because
26 it's better than the Asnières studies.

27 Yesterday I saw a bullfight where five men were working the
28 ox with banderillas and rosettes. A toreador crushed one of his
29 balls jumping over the barrier. He was a blond man with grey
30 eyes and a lot of sangfroid; they said he'd feel it for a long time.
31 He was dressed in sky-blue and gold, just like the little horseman
32 in our Monticelli with the 3 figures in a wood. The bullring looks
33 so beautiful when there's sunshine and a crowd.

34 Bravo for Pissarro, he's right, I think. I hope he'll do an ex-
35 change with us one day.

36 The same for Seurat, it would be a good thing to have a paint-
37 ed study by him.

0 Anyway, I'm working hard, hoping we'll be able to do things
1 of this kind.

2 The month will be hard for you and me, but nevertheless, if
3 you can manage it, it's to our advantage to do as many orchards
4 in blossom as we can. I'm now well under way and I need 10
5 more, I think, same subject.

6 You know I'm changeable in my work, and this rage to paint
7 orchards won't last for ever. After that it may be bullrings. And
8 I have an ENORMOUS amount of drawing to do, because I'd like
9 to do drawings in the style of Japanese prints. I can't do anything
10 but strike while the iron's hot. Will be worn out after the or-
11 chards, because they're no. 25 and 30 and 20 canvases.

12 We wouldn't have too many if I could knock off twice the
13 number. Because I believe that could perhaps melt the ice in Hol-
14 land once and for all. Mauve's death was a rude shock for me.
15 You'll easily see that the pink peach trees were painted with a
16 certain passion. I also need a *starry night* with *Cypresses* or —
17 perhaps above a field of ripe wheat, there are some really beauti-
18 ful nights here. I have a constant fever for work.

19 Am quite curious to know what the results will be after a
20 year, I hope by then I'll be less troubled by fits of faintness. At
21 the moment I suffer a lot some days, but that doesn't worry me in
22 the least because it's nothing but the reaction to this past winter,
23 which wasn't normal. And the blood's restoring itself, that's the
24 main thing.

25 We must reach the point where my paintings are worth what
26 I spend and even exceed that, seeing that so much has been spent
27 already. Ah well, we'll get there. Not everything I do is a success,
28 of course, but the work's getting along. Up to now you haven't
29 complained about what I spend here, but let me warn you that if
30 I continue my work at the same rate I'll find it hard to manage.
31 But the work's excessive.

32 If a month or a fortnight comes when you feel hard up let me
33 know — then I'll turn my hand to doing drawings and that will
34 cost us less. This is to tell you that you shouldn't force yourself
35 for no reason — there's so much to do here, all sorts of studies,
36 that it's not the same as in Paris, where you can't sit down wher-
37 ever you please.

0 If it's possible to manage a bit of a steep month, so much
 1 the better, because orchards in blossom are subjects we have a
 2 chance of selling or exchanging. But I thought about the fact that
 3 you'll have the rent to pay, and that's why you must let me know
 4 if you're too hard up.

5 I'm still going about with the Danish painter, but he's going
 6 home soon. He's an intelligent boy, and fine as far as loyalty and
 7 manners go, but his painting is still very poor. You'll probably see
 8 him when he passes through Paris.

9 It was kind of you to go & see Bernard. If he does his service
 10 in Algeria, who knows, perhaps I'll go and keep him company.

11 Has winter come to an end in Paris at long last?

12 I think what Kahn says is quite true, that I haven't paid
 13 enough attention to values, but it'll be quite another thing they'll
 14 say later — and no less true.

15 It's not possible to do both values and color.

16 Théodore Rousseau has done it better than anyone else, by
 17 mixing his colors the darkness caused by time has increased, and
 18 now his paintings are hardly recognizable.

19 You can't be at the pole and the equator at the same time. You
 20 have to choose. And I have high hopes of doing that, too, and
 21 it will probably be color.

22 More soon, handshake from me to you, to Koning and to
 23 the pals.

24
 25 Vincent
 26
 27
 28
 29
 30
 31
 32
 33
 34
 35
 36
 37

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

TORINO

416.4 km from Arles

A vir obscurissimus! I enclose a small vita, the first I have written; the basic scheme according to which I have so far lived (a rigorous promise); the greatest physical elasticity and fullness; the loveliest sidewalks in the world; my forebears were Polish aristocrats; I had to give up my German citizenship; I am versed in the use of two weapons: saber and cannon — and, perhaps, one other; I became indescribably intimate with Richard and Cosima Wagner; 200 days of pain; I have never had any symptoms of mental disturbance; a few climatic and meteorological conditions are indispensable; I am, by instinct, a courageous animal, even a military one; Am I a philosopher? What does that matter!

0 *Torino (Italia) ferma in posta*

1
2 10 April 1888

3
4 But, verehrter Herr, what a surprise! — Where did you find the
5 courage to consider speaking in public about a *vir obscurissimus!*
6 . . . Do you perhaps believe that I am known in my own dear
7 country? I am treated there as if I were something way-out and
8 absurd, something that one need not for the time being *take seri-*
9 *ously* . . . Obviously you sense that I do not take my compatriots
10 seriously either: and how could I today, now that German Geist
11 has become a *contradictio in adjecto!* —

12 I am most grateful to you for the photograph. Unfortunately
13 nothing of the kind is to be had from my side: the last pictures I
14 had are in the possession of my married sister in South America.

15 I enclose a small vita, the first I have written. As regards the
16 chronology of the particular books, you will find it on the back
17 flyleaf of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*. Perhaps you no longer have
18 that page.

19 *Die Geburt der Tragödie* was written between the summer of
20 1870 and the winter of 1871 (finished in Lugano, where I was liv-
21 ing with Field Marshal Moltke's family).

22 The *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*, between 1872 and summer
23 1875 (there should have been 13 of these; my health fortunately
24 said No!).

25 — What you say about *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* gives me
26 pleasure. This little essay serves me as a signal of recognition:
27 the man to whom it says nothing *personal* will probably not be
28 further interested in me. It contains the basic scheme according
29 to which I have so far lived; it is a rigorous *promise*.

30 *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* with its two continuations,
31 summer, 1876–79. *Morgenröte*, 1880. The *fröhliche Wissenschaft*,
32 January 1882. *Zarathustra*, 1883–85 (each part in about ten days.
33 Perfect state of a “man inspired.” All parts conceived on strenu-
34 ous marches; absolute certainty, as if every thought were being
35 called out to me. At the same time as the writing, the greatest
36 physical elasticity and fullness —).

37 *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, summer 1885 in the Oberengadin
and the foll. winter in Nizza.

0 The *Genealogie* resolved on, written down, and the clean
1 copy sent to the Leipzig printer between 10 and 30 July 1887. (Of
2 course there are *philologica* by me too. But that does not concern
3 either of *us* anymore.)

4 I am at the moment giving *Torino* a trial; I mean to stay here
5 until 5 June, and then go to the Engadin. Weather so far hard and
6 bad as in winter. But the city superbly quiet and flattering to my
7 instincts. The loveliest sidewalks in the world.

8
9 Greetings from your grateful and devoted

10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
Nietzsche

A wretched pity that I do not understand either Danish or Swedish.

Vita. — I was born on 15 Oct. 1844, on the battlefield of *Lützen*. The first *name* I heard was that of Gustav Adolf. My forebears were Polish aristocrats (Niëzky); it seems that the type has been well preserved, despite three German “mothers.” Abroad, I am usually taken for a Pole; even this last winter the aliens’ register in Nizza had me inscribed *comme Polonais*. I have been told that my head and features appear in paintings by Matejko. My grandmother was associated with the Goethe-Schiller circle in Weimar; her brother became Herder’s successor as superintendent general of the churches in the duchy of Weimar. I had the good fortune to be a pupil at the distinguished *Schulpforta*, which produced so many men of note (Klopstock, Fichte, Schlegel, Ranke, and so on, and so on) in German literature. We had teachers who would have done honor to any University (or have done so —) I was a student at Bonn, and later in Leipzig; in his old age, *Ritschl*, in those days the foremost classical scholar in Germany, picked me out almost from the start. At the age of 22 I was contributing to the *Literarisches Zentralblatt* (*Zarncke*). The establishment of a classical society at Leipzig, which exists to this day, was my doing. In the winter of 1868–69 the University of Basel offered me a professorship; I did not even have my doctorate. *Subsequently* the University of Leipzig gave me the doctorate, in a very honorable fashion, without any examination, without even a dissertation. From Easter, 1869–1879, I was at Basel; I had

0 to give up my German citizenship, because as an officer (*mounted*
 1 *artillery*) I would have been drafted too frequently and disturbed
 2 in my academic duties. Nevertheless, I am versed in the use of
 3 two weapons: saber and cannon — and, perhaps, one other . . .
 4 At Basel everything went very well, in spite of my youth; it hap-
 5 pened, especially with examinations for the doctorate, that the
 6 examinee was older than the examiner. It was my great good
 7 fortune that friendly relations developed between Jakob *Burck-*
 8 *hardt* and myself, a very unusual thing for this very hermetic and
 9 aloof thinker. An even greater good fortune that, from the be-
 10 ginning of my life at Basel, I became indescribably intimate with
 11 Richard and Cosima *Wagner*, who were then living on the estate
 12 at Tribschen near Luzern, as on an island cut off from all their
 13 earlier associations. For several years we shared all our great and
 14 small experiences — there was limitless confidence between us.
 15 (In *Wagner, Collected Writings*, Vol. 7, you will find an “*epistle*”
 16 from him to me, written when the *Geburt der Tragödie* appeared.)
 17 Through this relationship I met a wide circle of interesting men
 18 (and “man-esses”) actually almost everyone sprouting between
 19 Paris and Petersburg. Around 1876 my health grew worse. I spent
 20 a winter in Sorrento then, with my old friend Baroness Meysen-
 21 bug (*Memoirs of an Idealist*) and the congenial Dr. Rée. My health
 22 did not improve. There were extremely painful and obstinate
 23 headaches that exhausted all my strength. They increased over
 24 long years, to reach a climax at which pain was habitual, so that
 25 any given year contained for me 200 days of pain. The malaise
 26 must have had an entirely *local* cause — there was no neuro-
 27 pathological basis for it at all. I have never had any symptoms
 28 of mental disturbance — not even fever, no fainting. My pulse
 29 was as slow as that of the first Napoleon (= 60). My *specialty* was
 30 to endure the extremity of pain, *cru, vert*, with complete lucidity
 31 for two or three days in succession, with continuous vomiting
 32 of mucus. Rumors have gone around that I am in a madhouse
 33 (have even died there). Nothing could be further from the truth.
 34 During this terrible period my mind even attained *maturity*: as
 35 testimony, the *Morgenröte*, which I wrote in 1881 during a win-
 36 ter of unbelievable misery in Genoa, far from doctors, friends,
 37 and relatives. The book is, for me, a kind of “dynamometer” — I

0 wrote it when my strength and health were at a *minimum*. From
1 1882 on, *very* slowly to be sure, my health was in the ascendant
2 again: the crisis was passed (— my father died very young, at ex-
3 actly the age at which I myself was nearest to death). Even today I
4 have to be extremely cautious; a few climatic and meteorological
5 conditions are indispensable. It is not by choice, it is by *necessity*,
6 that I spend the summers in the Oberengadin, the winters on the
7 Riviera . . . Recently my sickness has done me the *greatest service*:
8 it *has liberated* me, it has restored to me the courage to be myself
9 . . . Also I am, by instinct, a courageous animal, even a military
10 one. The long resistance has exasperated my pride a little. —
11 Am I a *philosopher*? What does that matter! . . .

12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

ARLES

416.4 km from Torino

sunshine that made all the little white flowers sparkle; at risk and peril I carried on painting; since I'm spending so much we mustn't lose sight of the fact that we've got to try to get some back; not to find oneself in real life; what's in people's hearts is also the heart of business; this victory that's almost guaranteed in advance; all the colors that Impressionism has made fashionable are unstable

0 Wednesday, 11 April 1888

1
2 My dear Theo,

3
4 It's awfully good of you to have sent me the complete order of
5 colors, I've just received them but haven't yet had the time to
6 check them. I'm so pleased about it. Today has been a good day
7 too. This morning I worked on an orchard of plum trees in blos-
8 som — suddenly a tremendous wind began to blow, an effect I'd
9 only ever seen here — and came back again at intervals. In the
10 intervals, sunshine that made all the little white flowers sparkle.
11 It was so beautiful! My friend the Dane came to join me, and at
12 risk and peril every moment of seeing the whole lot of it on the
13 ground I carried on painting — in this white effect there's a lot
14 of yellow with blue and lilac, the sky is white and blue. But as
15 for the execution of what we do out of doors like this, what will
16 they say? Well, let's wait & see.

17 So, after supper I started on the same painting I intend for
18 Tersteeg, *The Langlais Bridge*, for you. And I'd really like to make a
19 repetition of that one for Jet Mauve too, because since I'm spend-
20 ing so much we mustn't lose sight of the fact that we've got to try
21 to get some back, of this money that's quickly slipping away.

22 Afterwards I was sorry I hadn't asked for the colors from
23 *père* Tanguy anyway, although there isn't the least advantage in
24 that — on the contrary — but he's such a funny fellow and I
25 still think of him often. Don't forget to say hello to him for me
26 if you see him, and tell him that if he'd like any paintings for his
27 shop window he can have some from here, and the best. Ah, it
28 seems to me more and more that *people* are the root of every-
29 thing, and although it remains for ever a melancholy feeling not
30 to find oneself in real life, in the sense that it would be better
31 to work in flesh itself than color or plaster, in the sense that it
32 would be better to make children than to make paintings or to do
33 business, at the same time you feel you're living when you con-
34 sider that you have friends among those who themselves aren't
35 in real life either.

36 But precisely because what's in people's hearts is also the
37 heart of business, we have to conquer friendships in Holland, or
rather, revive them. All the more so since, as far as the cause of

0 Impressionism goes, we have little to fear at the moment of not
1 winning through. And it's because of this victory that's almost
2 guaranteed in advance that for our part we have to have good
3 manners and do everything calmly.

4 I would really like to have seen the embodiment of *Marat* you
5 spoke about the other day. That would certainly interest me very
6 much. Unwittingly, I imagine *Marat* as the — moral — equiva-
7 lent (but more powerful) of *Xanthippe* — the woman whose love
8 turned sour. Who nevertheless is still touching — but in the end
9 it's not as jolly as *Maupassant's La Maison Tellier*.

10 Has Lautrec finished his painting of a woman leaning on a
11 little café table?

12 If I manage to learn how to work up the studies I've done
13 from life on another canvas, we'd gain in terms of possible sales.
14 I hope to succeed in doing it here — and that's why I'm making
15 a trial effort with the two paintings that will go to Holland, and
16 on the other hand, you'll have them too, and in this way there's
17 nothing reckless.

18 You were right to tell Tasset that the geranium lake should
19 be included after all, he sent it, I've just checked — *all the col-*
20 *ors that Impressionism has made fashionable are unstable*, all the
21 more reason boldly to use them too raw, time will only soften
22 them too much. So the whole order I made up, in other words
23 the 3 chromes (the orange, the yellow, the lemon), the Prussian
24 blue, the emerald, the madder lakes, the Veronese green, the or-
25 ange lead, all of that is hardly found in the Dutch palette, Maris,
26 Mauve, and Israëls. But it's found in that of Delacroix, who had a
27 passion for the two colors most disapproved of, and for the best
28 of reasons, lemon and Prussian blue. All the same, I think he did
29 superb things with them, blues and lemon yellows. Handshake to
30 you, to Koning, and once again many thanks for the colors.

31
32 Ever yours,
33 Vincent
34
35
36
37

INTERVAL: COPENHAGEN

The tremendous ejaculation of Friedrich Nietzsche's sperm
1553.7 km from Torino, 1786.8 km from Arles

April 1888

When Georges Brandes gave the first public lectures on the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche, Rodin's *The Poet* (later to be reconfigured as *The Thinker*) was displayed in Copenhagen as part of a major exhibition of French art, including Delacroix, Courbet, Puvis de Chavannes and others. Amongst the attendees was the 25-year old artist Edvard Munch, whose later 1893 painting *The Scream* would include a depiction of the infernal sky of 1883, the terrifying twilights of Krakatoa, which the painter witnessed that season when he felt a great, unending scream piercing through nature.

Originally fashioned after Dante, who used to sit and think on a rock in Firenze, Rodin's *Poet* symbolizes the creative genius that creates the seething world depicted below him in *The Gates of Hell*. Ugolino, Francesca, Paolo, and all the characters of the *Divina Commedia* flower forth from the poet's mind, a scintillating projection made flesh-stone. It is a world born of thought; a materialization of images; a genesis of form rising out of chaos, like inchoate lava rising from a magma chamber and being given more definitive shape through its main and secondary vents.

Broken free from the circumscribing bond to Dante, Rodin's *Poet* becomes *The Thinker*, not a specific individual, but an archetypal figure crouched on a rock against which his feet are contracted, fist pressed against his teeth, right elbow pressed tautly upon his left leg. The sheer concentrated force & gravity of thinking is embodied in this tense, pressurized geometry. The figure sits

0 in profound contemplation, fertile thoughts slowly un-
 1 furling in its body, thoughts that it will transform into
 2 a new reality — from the Proterozoic to fully formed
 3 life. He is not a passive dreamer; he is an active creator
 4 with a strong will to power. Symbol of the potency of
 5 thought and of mental creativity, the artist-philosopher,
 6 the visionary who peers from its elevated perch into the
 7 dark heart of humanity, like Nietzsche in Nizza survey-
 8 ing eons of time, one critic saw Michelangelo's *terribilità*
 9 in Rodin's *Thinker* and called the sculpture a true son
 10 of the 19th century. Was it an unconscious vision of the
 11 philosopher?

12 During his first lecture, the hall, Brandes told the
 13 thinker, was not quite full, an audience of perhaps 150.
 14 However, after a newspaper reported on the lecture,
 15 and following an article written by Brandes himself, the
 16 number of Nietzsche's listeners expanded exponentially
 17 — for the second lecture, the hall was full to bursting.
 18 Brandes spoke of Nietzsche's philosophy as a form of
 19 aristocratic radicalism and elsewhere referred to him as
 20 a diviner, a seer, and an artist less fascinating by what he
 21 does than what he is. Some 300 people listened, Brandes
 22 noted, with the greatest attention to my exposition of
 23 your works.

24 The lectures ended in the form of an ovation — the
 25 seeds of a new thought had been disseminated. A fitting
 26 *musical reception* for a philosopher who believed that he
 27 should have sung, not spoken!

28 If not a direct attendee, August Strindberg read of
 29 the lectures in a local paper & spoke of them to a friend,
 30 stating that everything is there! Don't deny yourself this
 31 pleasure! N. is a poet as well.

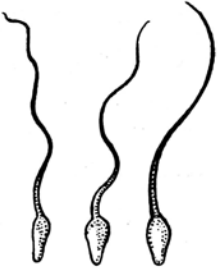
32 More wildly, to Brandes' brother, Strindberg wrote,
 33 the uterus of my mental world has received a tremen-
 34 dous ejaculation of the sperm from Friedrich Nietzsche,
 35 so that I feel like a bitch with a full belly. He's the man
 36 for me!
 37

0 What zygotes could be born of this strange union?
 1 How many others would imbibe a tremendous ejacu-
 2 lation of the sperm from Friedrich Nietzsche till their
 3 bellies were full to bursting, too? And not only women,
 4 but also men, for, as Strindberg proved, even the male
 5 species could be impregnated by Herr Dynamite. Who
 6 didn't want to be a bitch full to bursting with Nietzsche's
 7 explosive sperm?

8 Later, to Brandes, the impregnator replied, what a
 9 great share you have had in my first successful spring.
 10 The history of my springs, for the last 15 years at least,
 11 has been, I must tell you, a tale of horror, a fatality of
 12 decadence and infirmity. Places made no difference; it
 13 was as though no prescription, no diet, no climate could
 14 change the essentially depressing character of this time
 15 of year. But behold, Torino! And the first good news,
 16 your news, my dear Sir, which proved to me that I am
 17 alive.... For I am sometimes apt to forget that I am alive.

18 Albeit gratifying, there is danger in being under-
 19 stood, as the hermit of Sils himself knew, if understand-
 20 ing is ever at all possible. Did not the masked one repeat-
 21 edly ask, questioning those who did not read him with
 22 their bodies, questioning those who did not read him
 23 musically, contrapuntally, synesthetically, *Have I been*
 24 *understood?* Have I been *heard?* And yet, there are times
 25 when one wishes just as surely not to be understood.
 26 When one erects walls to protect oneself from those
 27 whom one does not want to communicate with, from
 28 those who may one day pronounce one holy, from those
 29 for whom one is a calamity. *En garde!!!*

30 In an early letter to the philosopher, the impreg-
 31 nated one himself warned, knowing full well the danger
 32 of being understood by just anybody, the moment you
 33 are known and understood, your stature will be dimin-
 34 ished. And the sacred and revered rabble will address
 35 you with familiarity as their equal. Better to preserve
 36 your diminished solitude, and allow us 10,000 other elite
 37 spirits to make a secret pilgrimage to your sanctuary in



order to imbibe at our pleasure. Let us protect your esoteric teaching by keeping it pure and inviolate, and not divulge it except through the medium of your devoted catechumens, among whom I sign myself.

From the high elevation of the Upper Engadine to the lower elevation of Nizza & Torino, with the aid of a Danish Jew as midwife, the hermit of Sils Maria was moving from a desert of readers and a predominately celibate life to impregnating the uterus of men as world-reaching as Strindberg. O what distances word-sperm can travel! O what an intellectual orgy! O what wild seeds! This world is the will to power — and nothing besides! And you yourselves are also this will to power — and nothing besides!

In his dreams that night, Nietzsche asked, who else of you would like to sleep with me? I want to impregnate!



- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23
- 24
- 25
- 26
- 27
- 28
- 29
- 30
- 31
- 32
- 33
- 34
- 35
- 36
- 37

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

COLOPHON



CLOSING MELODIES
was handset in InDesign CC.

The text font is *Lapture*.
The display font is *Louvette*.

Book design & typesetting: Alessandro Segalini
Cover design: Alessandro Segalini

CLOSING MELODIES
is published by Contra Mundum Press.



Contra Mundum Press New York · London · Melbourne

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

CONTRA MUNDUM PRESS

Dedicated to the value & the indispensable importance of the individual voice, to works that test the boundaries of thought & experience.

The primary aim of Contra Mundum is to publish translations of writers who in their use of form and style are à rebours, or who deviate significantly from more programmatic & spurious forms of experimentation. Such writing attests to the volatile nature of modernism. Our preference is for works that have not yet been translated into English, are out of print, or are poorly translated, for writers whose thinking & aesthetics are in opposition to timely or mainstream currents of thought, value systems, or moralities. We also reprint obscure and out-of-print works we consider significant but which have been forgotten, neglected, or overshadowed.

There are many works of fundamental significance to *Weltliteratur* (& *Weltkultur*) that still remain in relative oblivion, works that alter and disrupt standard circuits of thought — these warrant being encountered by the world at large. It is our aim to render them more visible.

For the complete list of forthcoming publications, please visit our website. To be added to our mailing list, send your name and email address to: info@contramundum.net



Contra Mundum Press
P.O. Box 1326
New York, NY 10276
USA

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

OTHER CONTRA MUNDUM PRESS TITLES

- 0
1
2 **2012** *Gilgamesh*
3 Ghérasim Luca, *Self-Shadowing Prey*
4 Rainer J. Hanshe, *The Abdication*
5 Walter Jackson Bate, *Negative Capability*
6 Miklós Szentkuthy, *Marginalia on Casanova*
7 Fernando Pessoa, *Philosophical Essays*
8 **2013** Elio Petri, *Writings on Cinema & Life*
9 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Greek Music Drama*
10 Richard Foreman, *Plays with Films*
11 Louis-Auguste Blanqui, *Eternity by the Stars*
12 Miklós Szentkuthy, *Towards the One & Only Metaphor*
13 Josef Winkler, *When the Time Comes*
14 **2014** William Wordsworth, *Fragments*
15 Josef Winkler, *Natura Morta*
16 Fernando Pessoa, *The Transformation Book*
17 Emilio Villa, *The Selected Poetry of Emilio Villa*
18 Robert Kelly, *A Voice Full of Cities*
19 Pier Paolo Pasolini, *The Divine Mimesis*
20 Miklós Szentkuthy, *Prae, Vol. 1*
21 **2015** Federico Fellini, *Making a Film*
22 Robert Musil, *Thought Flights*
23 Sándor Tar, *Our Street*
24 Lorand Gaspar, *Earth Absolute*
25 Josef Winkler, *The Graveyard of Bitter Oranges*
26 Ferit Edgü, *Noone*
27 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Narcissus*
28 Ahmad Shamlu, *Born Upon the Dark Spear*
29 **2016** Jean-Luc Godard, *Phrases*
30 Otto Dix, *Letters, Vol. 1*
31 Maura Del Serra, *Ladder of Oaths*
32 Pierre Senges, *The Major Refutation*
33 Charles Baudelaire, *My Heart Laid Bare & Other Texts*
34
35
36
37

- 0 **2017** Joseph Kessel, *Army of Shadows*
1 Rainer J. Hanshe & Federico Gori, *Shattering the Muses*
2 Gérard Depardieu, *Innocent*
3 Claude Mouchard, *Entangled — Papers! — Notes*
4 **2018** Miklós Szentkuthy, *Black Renaissance*
5 Adonis & Pierre Joris, *Conversations in the Pyrenees*
6 **2019** Charles Baudelaire, *Belgium Stripped Bare*
7 Robert Musil, *Unions*
8 Iceberg Slim, *Night Train to Sugar Hill*
9 Marquis de Sade, *Aline & Valcour*
10 **2020** *A City Full of Voices: Essays on the Work of Robert Kelly*
11 Rédoine Faïd, *Outlaw*
12 Carmelo Bene, *I Appeared to the Madonna*
13 Paul Celan, *Microliths They Are, Little Stones*
14 Zsuzsa Selyem, *It's Raining in Moscow*
15 Bérengère Viennot, *Trumpspeak*
16 Robert Musil, *Theater Symptoms*
17 Miklós Szentkuthy, *Chapter on Love*
18 Charles Baudelaire, *Paris Spleen*
19 **2021** Marguerite Duras, *The Darkroom*
20 Andrew Dickos, *Honor Among Thieves*
21 Pierre Senges, *Ahab (Sequels)*
22 Carmelo Bene, *Our Lady of the Turks*
23 Fernando Pessoa, *Writings on Art & Poetical Theory*
24 **2022** Miklós Szentkuthy, *Prae, Vol. 2*
25 Blixa Bargeld, *Europe Crosswise: A Litany*
26 Pierre Joris, *Always the Many, Never the One*
27 Robert Musil, *Theater Symptoms*
28 **2023** Pierre Joris, *Interglacial Narrows*
29 Gabriele Tinti, *Bleedings — Incipit Tragædia*
30 Évelyne Grossman, *The Creativity of the Crisis*
31
32
33
34
35

SOME FORTHCOMING TITLES

- 36
37 Léon-Paul Fargue, *High Solitude*
Sara Whym, *Dreamscapes*

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

AGRODOLCE SERIES

AD



2020 Dejan Lukić, *The Oyster*
2022 Ugo Tognazzi, *The Injeſter*

HYPERION

On the Future of Aesthetics

2006–2023

To read samples and order current & back issues of *Hyperion*,
visit contramundumpress.com/hyperion

Edited by Rainer J. Hanshe & Erika Mihálycsa (2014 ~)



CONTRA MUNDUM PRESS

is published by Rainer J. Hanshe

Typography & Design: Alessandro Segalini

Publicity & Marketing: Alexandra Gold

0 THE FUTURE OF KULCHUR
1
2 A PATRONAGE PROJECT
3
4
5

6 LEND CONTRA MUNDUM PRESS (CMP) YOUR SUPPORT
7

8 With bookstores and presses around the world struggling to sur-
9 vive, and many actually closing, we are forming this patronage
10 project as a means for establishing a continuous & stable founda-
11 tion to safeguard our longevity. Through this patronage project
12 we would be able to remain free of having to rely upon govern-
13 ment support &/or other official funding bodies, not to speak
14 of their timelines & impositions. It would also free CMP from
15 suffering the vagaries of the publishing industry, as well as the
16 risk of submitting to commercial pressures in order to persist,
17 thereby potentially compromising the integrity of our catalog.
18
19
20

21 CAN YOU SACRIFICE \$10 A WEEK FOR KULCHUR?
22

23 For the equivalent of merely 2–3 coffees a week, you can help
24 sustain CMP and contribute to the future of kulchur. To partici-
25 pate in our patronage program we are asking individuals to do-
26 nate \$500 per year, which amounts to \$42/month, or \$10/week.
27 Larger donations are of course welcome and beneficial. All do-
28 nations are tax-deductible through our fiscal sponsor Fractured
29 Atlas. If preferred, donations can be made in two installments.
30 We are seeking a minimum of 300 patrons per year and would
31 like for them to commit to giving the above amount for a period
32 of three years.
33
34
35
36
37

0 WHAT WE OFFER

1 Part tax-deductible donation, part exchange, for your contri-
2 bution you will receive every CMP book published during the
3 patronage period as well as 20 books from our back catalog.
4 When possible, signed or limited editions of books will be
5 offered as well.
6

7
8
9 WHAT WILL CMP DO WITH YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS?

10 Your contribution will help with basic general operating ex-
11 penses, yearly production expenses (book printing, warehouse
12 & catalog fees, etc.), advertising and outreach, and editorial,
13 proofreading, translation, typography, design and copyright
14 fees. Funds may also be used for participating in book fairs and
15 staging events. Additionally, we hope to rebuild the *Hyperion*
16 section of the website in order to modernize it.
17

18
19 From Pericles to Mæcenas & the Renaissance patrons, it is the
20 magnanimity of such individuals that have helped the arts to
21 flourish. Be a part of helping your kulchur flourish; be a part
22 of history.
23

24
25 HOW

26
27 To lend your support & become a patron, please visit the sub-
28 scription page of our website: contramundum.net/subscription
29

30 For any questions, write us at: info@contramundum.net
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

As the 19th century comes to a close, Friedrich Nietzsche & Vincent van Gogh unknowingly traverse proximate geographical terrain, nearly circling one another like close but distant stars as the philosopher wanders between Nizza, Sils Maria, and Torino, and the painter wanders between Paris, Arles, & Saint-Rémy. In the midst of their philosophical & artistic pursuits, simultaneously, the Eiffel Tower, symbol of artistic progress and industrialization, begins to rise in Paris amidst clamors of protest and praise.

Through intertwining letters written to (& sometimes by) friends, family, and others, the philosopher and painter are brought into ever-greater proximity as we witness their daily personal and artistic struggles. Woven between and interrupting this panoply of voices are a series of intervals, short illuminating blasts, like a camera's exploding flash powder, of artistic, scientific, political, and other events spanning 1888 to 1890, drawing Nietzsche and Van Gogh in and out of the wider expanses of history.

As construction of the Eiffel Tower comes to completion in Paris and Elisabeth Förster, the sister of the philosopher of the will to power, tries to found a utopic race colony in South America, the lives of Nietzsche and Van Gogh come to their terrible denouements. Her brother now a full-fledged zombie, the former queen of Nueva Germania seizes the reins of his living corpse & rides him into the future.

With no *deus ex machina* in sight, and none possible, WWI and the terrors and the beauties of the 20th century crack the horizon.

