

Interview with Katja Brunkhorst

by Angela C. Holzer

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Katja Brunkhorst was born in Germany but spent most of her academic life in London, England, where she specialized in European Languages, Literature and Thought.

She has dealt extensively with the cognitive value of art, especially poetry, addressing and bridging the divide between aesthetics, psychology, and philosophy that often inhibits scholarly research.

Her first book, *'Verwandt-Verwandelt' - Nietzsche's Presence in Rilke*, is exemplary of this continued effort by focusing on common themes in Friedrich Nietzsche's and Rainer Maria Rilke's poetic and philosophical oeuvres. It is based on the surprising and exhilarating discovery of two copies of *Also sprach Zarathustra* in the Rilke archive in Gernsbach, Germany. This discovery made it possible for the first time to base a study of Nietzsche and Rilke on textual evidence. Rilke—who had denied any Nietzschean influence—marked Zarathustra's words. Brunkhorst's study thus not only develops the story of these thematic influences but poses the theoretical question of influence and contributes to the discussion on the philosophical aspect of Rilke's poetry and the poetic quality of Nietzsche's philosophy.

Katja Brunkhorst was working on the electronic publication of Nietzsche's complete works for [HyperNietzsche](#) at the Institut des Textes et Manuscrits Modernes (CNRS/ENS) in Paris, in the context of the European project [DISCOVERY](#). She also continues to play in a [rock band](#), study the marginal notes Lou Andreas-Salomé made in her copy of *Also sprach Zarathustra*, and is involved in a large research project on Nietzsche and popular culture (a volume on Nietzsche Pop is in preparation together with Mattia Riccardi).

We were already engaged in the interview in August 2007—electronically—when we met in person at the conference of the *Nietzsche-Gesellschaft* in Naumburg and then, incidentally, both settled in Berlin and became neighbours in the quarter of Prenzlauer Berg. The [Naumburg conference](#) turned out to be extraordinarily inspiring. We both are now busy elaborating themes that turned up in conference discussions. Katja founded [ApoDio](#), which will be the driving force behind a series of concert-conference events, the first one to take place in Berlin on September 12-14, 2008. Our group, consisting of two young and extraordinarily interesting Nietzsche scholars, [Enrico Müller](#) and [Friederike Günther](#), and me, is preparing another conference, also in Berlin, on September 26-28, 2008, in order to confront the affinities and discrepancies between the sociologist Norbert Elias and Nietzsche.

Katja has been amazingly active and vibrant, engaged and engaging, and full of ideas, with which the interview reverberates. On March 28, 2008, she will be in New York City to participate in the Nietzsche Circle's first event of the season at NYU's Deutsches Haus, to discuss Nietzsche and Rilke.

AH: *Your dissertation on Nietzsche and Rilke, ‘Verwandt-Verwandelt.’ Nietzsche’s Presence in Rilke, is a study of possible influences and common themes in the work of both. You base your analysis on two copies of Zarathustra that, although partly torn, were found by Hella Sieber-Rilke and you in Rilke’s estate. They are marked and underlined and thus give credible evidence to Rilke’s knowledge and interest in this book. How did you make this exciting discovery and when did you first engage with this thematic complex?*

KB: First of all, thank you, Angela, for agreeing to read my book. Early on, I came to both Nietzsche and Rilke through the gut rather than the brain, if you will. Both got to me immediately on first contact, above all through the mastery and musicality of their style. Then, it was their sheer fervor for art, and life itself: each seemed to be on fire to me, constantly echoing each other’s uncompromising love of the earthly and enquiring deeply into their selves, at any cost. Instinctively, they had always struck me as very much kindred spirits, despite their seeming discrepancies—which to me seem largely only to be perceived by superficial readers of their texts.

When studying both more closely, I soon felt their relatedness to be much deeper than just a more or less accidental, joint tapping of the *Zeitgeist* of their epoch. Even though that word is not well-liked, indeed almost a taboo, in what is still rather poststructuralist-dominated literary criticism (which has us believe there are no authors who write texts, that “empiric evidence” does not matter, and that there are no truths), there had to have been a more or less *direct* influence of Nietzsche on Rilke. The latter, of course, had always denied such an influence, as had Freud due to priority issues, but still, I began searching. Finding very little of value in existing secondary sources (with the majority of critics merely echoing Rilke’s self-stylization), and nothing of adequate depth or even book length, I decided to go back to the horse’s mouth, or at least the closest I could get: I turned to Hella Sieber-Rilke. I am fortunate enough to have met her and her husband (and Rilke’s grandson), Christoph, through Irina Frowen, herself one of the most knowledgeable readers of both Nietzsche and Rilke. Hella has been managing the Rilke archive near Baden-Baden in Southwestern Germany for a long time and knows his reading and writing like no other. At first, she answered my inquiry as to any Nietzsche books in Rilke’s possession in the negative. She, too, said she didn’t believe he had been very interested in Nietzsche, let alone read him. Stubbornly, however, I persisted and soon had an excited phone call which prompted

me to return to the Gernsbach archive as soon as I could. And indeed, there were two *Zarathustra* copies, one of them in fragments, but both complete with handwritten notes and other reading traces. Even Hella Sieber-Rilke had all but forgotten about them and found them tucked away at the bottom of a chest. As she is a great admirer of Nietzsche herself, you can imagine our excitement that day as we immediately set to work attempting to decipher the faint pencil traces! I really cannot thank her, Christoph, and Irina often enough for their hospitality, help, and friendship.

AH: *It was a pleasure to read your book. Not only were you thus able to provide evidence for Rilke's engagement with, at least parts of, Zarathustra, by analyzing the themes that you claim might be inspired by Nietzsche, you also argue, against a number of previous studies, that the Nietzschean influence on Rilke was continuous, which Rilke himself would probably have denied. Can you summarize briefly the arguments for this view?*

KB: The key lies both in the concept of total affirmation of our earthly life as well as in the continuity of the Rilkean *œuvre* in general. Scholarship tends to divide it into three phases, which can of course at times be handy or even necessary for the critic's work, but it does no justice, as Görner has observed, to the complex processes of poetic creation, nor does it, as I have found, take into account Rilke's own, very explicit view. In a 1925 letter to his Polish translator, he testifies to the continuity of his *œuvre* a year before his death in what reads like his poetological testament: he does not seem to see a major break between the essential conditions created in the *Stunden-Buch* and the *Neue Gedichte* and the praise of totality thus achieved in the late phase; rather, he sees the *Elegien* as a mere 'weitere Ausgestaltung,' a *continuing* development, of those preconditions. Thereby, in a manner highly evocative of Nietzsche's definition of 'the thought of the eternal return, that highest form of *affirmation*,' as the 'basic concept' of *Zarathustra* [KSA 6, 335], Rilke himself attests the quality of 'final *affirmation*'—along with the rejection of a split between the here and the beyond—not only to his mature work, but to his work as a whole.

AH: *The book is divided into three parts. First you analyze the existing scholarship on the nexus between Rilke and Nietzsche. There is surprisingly little, and a lot of redundancy, which might partly be due to the fact that Rilke denied any influence by Nietzsche. Yet, obviously he wrote the "Marginalien zu Nietzsche" and was a friend of Lou Salomé, which, however, brings up other problems with regard to his relationship to Nietzsche. Second, you turn to available evidence on his knowledge of Nietzsche and you compare the biographical circumstances of Nietzsche's writing Zarathustra and Rilke's reading it. Finally, you analyze the marked passages in the Zarathustra copy and isolate themes that were of interest to Rilke. The central methodological problem that you had to confront, as I see it, is the stringent characterization of*

'influence,' since you can neither solely rely on biographical or psychological affinities or rejections, nor on direct quotations. Could you describe the basis on which you confront this problem, the method that you call "reader-response-poetics"? Also, it seems that you are not drawing extensively on poststructuralist textual theory, e.g., Kristeva or Gérard Genette, to legitimize your approach. Is there a specific reason for this?

KB: You are quite right, the problem of "influence" detained me far too long as it is a highly contested field within literary studies, as I had to experience. It seems a most personal matter to many scholars: I was amused during my viva when my examiners said they were impressed with the textual interpretation of the findings but suggested I could have done without nearly the entire methodology chapter. That chapter, however, was what my internal examiners at the pre-viva, both of them poststructuralists, wanted me to focus on, to the exclusion of nearly everything else. Having considered Bloom, Barthes, Foucault, and Jauss already, they suggested Bakhtin, Baudrillard, and many others; but luckily, I did not heed their advice. The viva examiners probably would have let me fail if I had! So I hope this answers your question on what you perceive a comparative lack of poststructuralist theory: as far as I am concerned, there is too much of it already, at the expense of simply telling the story of Rilke's reading of Nietzsche. I would do that differently today. So I guess the matter of influence is one of the most subjective areas in our "Geisteswissenschaft" and it all depends on by whom one is—influenced.

As far as my "reader-response-poetics" are concerned, I simply read what the subjects of my study had to say on matters of influence and criticism—and heeded their voices. As I found to my surprise, that is something which cannot be taken for granted from some of those important names in the theory of influence: a key passage of Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence*, for example, is based on Bloom's own mistranslation of a paragraph from the second *Untimely Meditation*, in which he represents "Kritik" as "critic" rather than "criticism." Contrary to Bloom's construction, in that *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtung*, Nietzsche really speaks with disdain about the ineffectivity of criticism, disapproving of its perceived lack of performativity.

Similarly, Rilke held that there is nothing by means of which one is less able to touch a work of art than critical words. He spoke of the delicately floating quality of the poetic image as untouchable by systematic interpretation, and that it was prone to imprint a different "edge of its precision" into each "understander." Interestingly, elsewhere he uses the same word, "Schwebe," also to describe Nietzsche's quality of floating lightness and warns of attempts at tying him down to meanings.

Therefore, his influence can be best described in musical terms, and has indeed been seen as a song of sentence-ideas by Roland Barthes, and as the

unfinished melody of his, Nietzsche's, looking by Oswald Spengler. Nietzsche, the music-making artist-metaphysician, of course, was aware of having created a most effective intellectual and poetic echo chamber in *Zarathustra*. What one needs to ask is where Rilke immersed himself into this chamber and how he produced echoes in his own work. Certain Zarathustrian motifs indeed resound more or less directly in the poet's writings, whilst others have undergone a poetic transformation.

AH: *The third part of the book is the substantial analysis of themes that influenced Rilke. The markings that you have to rely on, however, are few. There are, if this is correct, 15 meaningful marks in Salomé's copy and merely eight underlined or otherwise marked passages in Rilke's copy, of which not all point to an engagement by Rilke (e.g., the drawing inserted into the Vorreden, which is probably by Clara Westhoff, or the photograph of Paula Modersohn-Becker in the chapter "Von der Nächstenliebe," or the pressed cyclamen). How sure can we be that the pencil underlinings stem from Rilke himself?*

KB: Fairly sure; according to Hella Sieber-Rilke, they are typical of him in their tidy execution—Clara, in contrast, "did everything on a whim" and apparently, that showed.

AH: *And what, again, do we do with the manner in which he might have taken up but certainly transformed Nietzschean themes? The themes that you identify are emotional ones. Thus, in comparing Nietzsche's chapters "Von der Nächstenliebe" and "Von Kind und Ehe" with Rilke's "Requiem," Duineser Elegien, and Sonette an Orpheus, you conclude that both work toward redefining or re-evaluating the notion of love. You also see the theme of loneliness dominant in both. At times, it seems to me, the psychologization of Nietzsche is very direct, e.g., when you write on the Übermensch, which you consider a frightful spectre out of reach, engendered by unfulfilled love: "Herein, the impossibility of ever achieving the elusive goal of turning into the perfection that is the Übermensch is demonstrated vividly. All this suggests that Nietzsche actually despised himself for his imperfection, manifested most clearly by the Salomé/Rée episode" (90). You state that Nietzsche became an Übermensch, a type of inhuman and isolated "Gespenst" after his descent into insanity, which is a "price for his dangerous submission ... of the free and unbounded divine" (93). You state that his thinking and his isolation resulted in this mental decline.*

I am also sometimes surprised by your application of Rilkean utterings to describe Nietzsche's situation (93), or by your recurrence to Nietzsche's own ideas at argumentative cross-roads. Does your biographical approach allow for a clean separation of work and life, or would you consider this separation invalid? And, aside, did Nietzsche really die of brain cancer (93)?

KB: To answer your last question first, while the precise nature of his insanity

is of course still debated and probably will remain so, I would maintain that, whatever the medical reason, Nietzsche's excessive 'Denken am Abgrund,' along with his human isolation, cannot have furthered his mental health. By convincingly reassessing Nietzsche's symptoms, however, the latest research shows that the organic part of the cause of his decline was not, as customarily assumed, syphilis; but that the philosopher almost certainly died of brain cancer.

Secondly, there cannot ever be a 'clean separation' of life and work. I believe the bad reputation biographical elements encounter when it comes to methodological choices needs to be re-thought still. After deconstructivism, we not only can but must dare to engage with the personal history behind the work again, which is, as Montinari has observed, following Nietzsche himself, inextricably linked to it, anyway. I am not saying that is all there is to a Nietzschean text, but it is part of it, and a very important one! That is what I realized when I studied the circumstances of the conception and the birth of *Zarathustra*. Importantly, as I state in my methodology chapter, all this of course implies a redefinition of the term 'the author,' as it is often misleadingly believed to be a monolithic concept when, in fact, it is a composition of many voices and many selves. A composite, then, but nonetheless with delimiting boundaries.

As for the 'direct psychologization' of Nietzsche: indeed, the trinity of Nietzsche, Zarathustra, and the *Übermensch* is not always an easy one to split up into its constituent parts. My choice of this word from Christian theology is not accidental, for *Zarathustra* is of course not purely to be seen from a biographical angle, but also, among various other things, as the attempt at a 'philosophically religious and morally prophetic substitute for religion and morals,' as his friend Ida Overbeck put it. Nietzsche apparently heeded his own advice of 'unablässige *Verwandlung*,' 'incessant *transformation*' (KSA 9, 519), and forced himself through many different personae in a short space of time in order to get closer to that ever elusive goal of throwing off all his ballast and becoming the ideal version of himself.

Lastly, I have been reading Nietzsche on a daily basis for a living for a year now and never cease to be amazed at how much he saw himself as a psychologist, prefigured Freud, and regarded a philosopher's work as his 'stammered memoirs.' Only yesterday I came across this amazing statement in the 1883 fragments:

But this innocence also exists in the great philosophers: they are not conscious of the fact **that they are talking about themselves**—they are convinced it is "about the truth"—but basically, it is all about themselves.

AH: *Do you consider the relationship between Nietzsche's published writings, his notebooks, letters, and his personal psychology as transparent as it partly*

appears in your book? Do you draw on these sources without making a distinction of status? After all, there is the discussion, initiated among others by Werner Stegmaier, on the relationship between and the handling of private and published works by Nietzsche.

KB: Firstly, I never draw on a source without making a distinction of status. However, that status is in itself a matter in need of investigation. Letters in particular are strange hybrids of poetological statements, records of life, and works of art. They are neither always unadulterated testimony to a writer's experience, as some if not all are certainly written with the possibility of publication in mind (in his will, Rilke [envisages] their publication [...] as works of art in themselves'), nor can they automatically be included in his literary work, as some surely do not transcend and transform the personal enough to be quite that.

At HyperNietzsche, we make visible the web of connections of different stages of a thought. You can follow genetic paths from drafts to notebooks to manuscripts to the printed text. The web is of course the ideal place to do this and will probably change the way we look at the canon of texts in the future.

AH: *I was struck by two major choices in your book. First, you focus on emotional themes and on the possibility of the cognizance of emotions in Nietzsche's and Rilke's works, which is, as you explained, preconditioned by Rilke's reading of Nietzsche. Frequently, you resort to biographical or psychological information in order to clarify the correlation of the works and the personal situations of Nietzsche and Rilke. In both cases you draw attention to their existential loneliness in later years and their inability to love. I really applaud and admire your recourse to other sources, e.g., Otto Modersohn's diary, to elucidate the biographical background and the problematic—selfish—behavior that Nietzsche might have inspired in amorous contexts. Also, Lou Andreas-Salomé, her elusiveness for both and their glorification of her play a crucial role here. She also functions as an intellectual relay between Nietzsche and Rilke and as inspiration for both. In fact, you even argue that her absence ultimately inspired creativity. Secondly, you also, subtly and rarely, refer to feminist theory and the 'object' role that Salome was often ascribed to in scholarship. This is also expressed in the tendency to jovially refer to her as 'Lou,' which you consciously avoid. How else do you think your study avoids that 'objectification' of Salome? She mainly appears as muse or as mirror.*

KB: My book started out as project on Freud and Salomé as well as Rilke and Nietzsche, and I soon realized maybe that would be a good idea if I had 50 rather than five years to write it! Hence, the focus needed to be narrowed and I decided to concentrate solely on the Nietzsche/Rilke nexus—for now. Therefore, Salomé can necessarily merely feature in her mediating role between the two here. There are plans, however, to dedicate a future project

entirely to her writing, which in turn is inextricably linked to the way she read Nietzsche—as evident in her working copy of *Zarathustra* I found which remains unevaluated as of yet—mirroring the brief but utterly intense dialogue they were engaged in in life. For, as much as she was muse and mirror to Nietzsche, he was to her! They were “sister brains” *to each other*, after all.

AH: *This leads me to another question. What role, do you think, does or should Feminism play in an engagement with Nietzsche today? Would you argue that ‘women,’ if that category can be used here for heuristic purposes, have read or should read Nietzsche differently? Do you think there is a striking imbalance in Nietzsche scholarship? Have you ever seen it as male dominated?*

KB: I am not an expert in Feminist theory. Nor do I, in fact, believe in a category “women.” Again, the poststructuralist Nietzsche interpreters (especially Derrida in *Spurs*, as Carol Diethe has pointed out in her book on Nietzsche and women, *Beyond the Whip*) and their casting of “woman” into the restraining yet hollow corset of a pure metaphor have merely hardened patriarchal perspectives. To me, Nietzsche still is not recognized enough as and for doing away with -isms and stereotypes of all sorts. Of course there are bitter and, indeed, misogynist remarks about women in his texts and I do not wish to apologize them away, but they have to be read in context-like everything in Nietzsche.

This brings me back to my defense of biographical information: many of those remarks may be understood much better knowing what he experienced in his personal life at the time. And most can probably be deduced back to the unpleasant personalities of the “Naumburg virtue”: his mother and sister, who were to him the only objection against his concept of the eternal return. On the other hand, there are his numerous deep friendships with women such as Malwida von Meysenbug, for whom he had the greatest respect and admiration. Not to mention Salomé, whom he called the most intelligent human being he ever met—that is, before she turned him down as a lover, which sadly marks the start point of his bitter onslaught on “women,” including the infamous whip statement in *Zarathustra*, which can be traced back to a photograph Nietzsche himself had staged, showing Salomé brandishing a makeshift whip over him and Paul Réé.

As to your suggestion of an imbalance in Nietzsche scholarship: I would agree, and add that it simply mirrors the general situation in our society, which remains male dominated still.

AH: *A striking situation considering the fact that more female than male students take up a humanities curriculum at German and British universities. With regard to Nietzsche, he certainly also objected to the ‘idealist’ Meysenbug, and at times he displayed an extraordinary attachment to both*

mother and sister. Another point that I would now like to bring up, however, is your interpretation of Nietzsche's poems, especially 'Einsiedlers Sehnsucht.' Nietzsche's poems, it seems, are today largely absent in engagements with his work. What status do you accord to them?

KB: While it is true that Nietzsche objected to the idealist Meysenbug, as Rainer Hanshe reminded me, he also was in awe of her and her book and wrote a fascinating letter to her about it on 14 April 1876. An example:



You walked before me as a higher self, as a *much* higher self—but encouraging me rather than shaming me; thus you soared in my imagination, and I measured my life against your example and asked myself about the many qualities I lack. I thank you for so much more than a book.

Concerning the absence of Nietzsche's poems from engagements with his work, I very much agree with your observation, and find it deplorable that what was very much part of his work to Nietzsche is virtually ignored by his interpreters. The problem seems to be that of a hierarchy of discourses, with thought still thought to represent truth, and literature, and especially poetry, "just" beauty or emotion. At any rate, poetry is regarded as philosophy's little discourse sister. The tendency towards blinkered compartmentalization within the academy I spoke about answering an earlier question worsens those issues. There needs to be more work on the cognitive value of art; especially in the case of Nietzsche. As Rilke puts it in the wonderful fourteenth chapter of his only novel, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*:



Alas, but writing verse amounts to so little if one does it too early. One ought to wait and gather sense and sweetness for an entire lifetime, and possibly a long one, and then, at the very end, maybe one could write ten good lines. For verse is not, as people believe, emotion (that, one has early enough in life),—it is experience.

AH: *Will the book be available in both English and German?*

KB: It is based on my PhD dissertation, which I wrote in English, as that is usually required at a British university. I quoted from the original German, however, as I was able to work more accurately in that manner, given the lyrical quality of much of Nietzsche's writing—not to mention Rilke's, of course.

Still, I regret not having gone with other publishers' offers at times—as they would have required me to translate all of the book into English (or German, respectively), it probably would have reached a much wider audience. As time was of the essence, however, I signed with Iudicium, who were happy to include the bilingual book in Erich Kleinschmidt's CURSUS series. An entirely monolingual and possibly partly re-written edition is something I would love to do at some point; not least because I find my style too dry and stilted in places and the description of methodology, etc., excessive. I would focus on matters of interpretation much more now given a chance. There is so much material I have not yet been able to evaluate adequately. Sadly, just at the moment such plans will have to remain dreams due to an acute lack of both time and money. I am still struggling to pay my publisher for *Verwandt-Verwandelt* and I think it is an unfortunate situation to be in for us budding writers, and quite telling of the society we live in, to have to shoulder the printing cost for dissertations solely by ourselves, even for books that sell well (as, luckily, does mine).

AH: *You studied, for the most part, in London. Were you born in Germany and will you continue your work in both countries or do you have a preference? I am asking also in conjunction with the question regarding the situation of Nietzsche studies in both countries. Do you recognize a perceptible difference with regard to diverging interests in Nietzsche in both countries and their academic and institutional Nietzsche-Forschung?*

KB: Yes, I am German born and bred but lived in London for a decade. I studied as well as taught at universities in both countries and have indeed noticed considerable differences. At the University of London I was lucky enough to encounter an intangible possibility of truly original thinking in the air. Students were being encouraged to transgress boundaries, both disciplinary and hierarchical, and genuinely develop their own opinions. Above all, they were not afraid to express them, rather than just rattle off thoughtlessly whatever they could copy from their professors. By comparison, in a *Germanistik* seminar in Germany, for example, one hardly understands a single word that is being said for all the jargon. Also, structures are still more rigid, and one is compartmentalized according to strict subject divides. I am not sure it would be possible to attend classes on Freud in an English department here! Moreover, speaking as someone who studied first English and German, then European literature and thought, to go on to write a thesis on a German philosopher and a poet in English, it confuses people. Neither the *Germanisten* nor the *Anglisten*, or, of course, the “philosophers,” tend to accept one as one of them. In England, things are somewhat freer than that, at least in my experience. One thing comes to mind already, however, which is tipping the scales for Germany again: Nietzsche scholars can usually read the original texts. I just find it amazing how many self-proclaimed “experts” out there cannot even do that! Just now I am thinking of the Bloomian “misunderstanding” of Nietzsche I spoke of earlier, on which he based an

entire, and very influential, book. At least at a German university, if you study English, you are required to understand, speak, and write the language in class. Although that has been slipping lately, now that German universities are becoming self-marketed companies too who need to focus on their turnover.

AH: *Where lie, according to you, interesting aspects of a contemporary or future engagement with Nietzsche's work?*

KB: I would spontaneously argue for taking Nietzsche more seriously, and that can mean to be allowed to laugh with him again, for example: "And may each truth be false to us which didn't involve laughter!" ("Und falsch heisse uns jede Wahrheit, bei der es nicht Ein Gelächter gab!") In general, he can help with the much-needed rehabilitation of the emotions within a science-dominated academic discourse. Mostly, however, for letting his writing be what he intended: dynamite. Something which has an actual, immediate *effect* on those who read it critically and attentively, and which has the power to help bridge the huge gap we have, in this country at least, between our "high" and "low" cultures. (On a side note, I have even founded a literary society akin to the Nietzsche Circle to that end which will be online very soon at www.apodio.de.)

That, however, would entail the death of the critic (as described in the second *Untimely Meditation*) and the re-birth of the author, the *human being*, behind any given text. The philologists have had their way with Nietzsche to the point of fragmenting him to death, as have the philosophical interpreters—especially those coming from his postmodern appropriation by Heidegger, Derrida, and Foucault. Mostly, those discourses have very much remained incestuously within the ivory towers. Let people re-appropriate their own Nietzsches, with the focus on the richly performative, artistic and literary qualities of his texts, and above all: let the focus be on *Nietzsche* more. Maybe especially on those of his writings that have been most neglected so far, for their refusal to be categorized or compartmentalized: *Zarathustra*, today clearly a book for no-one, out of scholarly fashion, is an obvious choice—as is *The Gay Science*, which is so vibrantly hopeful and possibly shows Nietzsche at his sanest.

AH: *What are you currently working on?*

KB: OK, here comes a generous helping of URLs with a side dish of shameless self-promotion! I have been a postdoc for the ITEM (CNRS/ENS, Paris), working on the Discovery project (www.discovery-project.eu/), as well as HyperNietzsche.org, for the past year. At HyperNietzsche, I worked on an electronic edition of Nietzsche's works, which is an important project as it will be the first truly complete Nietzsche edition ever—we are co-operating with the Klassik-Stiftung Weimar on it. Currently, I am searching for a teaching and research job, as I have realised I need to be working alongside other people. Too much of the *vita contemplativa* is not for me!

That is also why my “leisure time” is devoted to making music with my band, and to my research, which I pursue with a group of friends. Right now, it focuses on Nietzsche and popular culture with a series of talks and events at Naumburg, Weimar, and a big concert/conference in Berlin to take place from 12-14 September 2008. Planning is under way and the call for papers, songs, and pictures is available in English and German on www.nietzschepop.org—a website still very much work in progress. The organization behind it is ApoDio, which generally encourages the cross-fertilization of “high” and “sub” cultures and will stage a similar event each year from now on.

Meanwhile, my mid- to long-term goal is still that book about Salomé, if not (that really would be a dream come true!) a long-overdue critical edition of her works. I’ll probably get round to that by the time I’m 80! Before that, though, I will come to New York City in late March to answer any remaining questions in person. I am much looking forward to that and hope the Nietzsche Circle won’t regret their invitation!

AH: *Good luck with your future undertakings, and thank you for this rich and engaging interview!*