

Avital Ronell - Testing Your Love, or, Breaking Up: European Graduate School. A lecture by Avital Ronell, *August 2002*

Schirmacher: In this circle we have no need to introduce one of our principal professors here. Without her this program would not exist, I would not be here, you would not be here, and so every year again we are waiting to hear in our face what is happening.

Ronell: Thank you very much, you must be high on chocolate. Of course I wouldn't be here without you either. I tried to pull out some things that might speak to us from a book I'm trying to complete called "The Test Drive", which is on modalities of testing in our modernity. One of the things that I'm going to rely on is something that I've developed earlier in this manuscript, which is the concept of rescindability, how you rescind or retract according to exigencies of testing. This is something Nietzsche develops in *The Gay Science*. My lecture is organized around trying to work through some ethical stances through Nietzsche. So try to consider what I might be meaning by retraction or rescindability, when any solution that might be offered needs to be attacked. I want to look at Nietzsche's attack mode with you. I want to go over a politics of breaking-up that I think Nietzsche tried to teach us, and I hope you'll see something that addresses what many of our thinkers have brought and are continuing to bring to us. One thing I'm going to address is Nietzsche's attack on the concept of fidelity, or loyalty. He thinks we overestimate the dependable person, or the person of conviction, who is unchanging. He matches Flaubert on this kind of busting-up of the logic of conviction. He will posit the notion of a noble traitor, someone who needs to betray. It's important that this is noble and is not some usual disappointing human being. I'm interested in the necessary politics of betrayal in Nietzsche, and the extent to which his betrayals were commissioned by a notion of loyalty. Here he goes up against Wagner's pathological and aberrant loyalty tests. In Nietzsche disloyalty is what deserves and is in need of support. In literature, loyalty's great test case would be *King Lear*. You might remember that Cordelia's word "is nothing". Nietzsche's favorite Shakespearean text, however, is *Julius Caesar*. Nietzsche says that Hamlet's melancholy is nothing, is silly compared to the sublimity of Brutus, and what Brutus had to go through. He says that Shakespeare was on his knees with love and admiration for Brutus, and the proof for Nietzsche is that he hid his adoration for Brutus by calling the play "*Julius Caesar*". So today I want to track the energy of warrior pride and broken-hearted resolve when Nietzsche had to break-up with his beloved Wagner. Supposing I were in love. Or let us say, I am deeply transferentially engaged. Now suppose the transference went sour, well, not sour, I am still transferred onto this other, unavoidably, but I feel betrayed. At some level I don't care about the schoolboyish ideologies of betrayal, my middle name is betrayal. That's another story. I am in love, I am betrayed, the other is my fate. I am also in love with the other's partner, but that too is another story. I keep skidding off the other's desire track. I am amorously caught on an object, demobilized. The loner and loser Friedrich Nietzsche spins out a story that catches me by surprise. Hitchcock caught a spark off the transference machine that Nietzsche installed — He called it "*Rope*". Hitchcock's "*Rope*" thematizes the temptation of tying to Nietzsche to reference. The same rope that strangles a student is used to tie up the books that are returned, if I recall correctly, to the dead student's father. The purloined rope is meant to name in the end, well, I know one shouldn't skip to the end when

discussing film, I can't help it, precipitating towards the end, whether of art or the relationship. It is meant to name in the end the way we are roped in by Nietzsche, transferentially duped, told to get lost. Zarathustra does it, Nietzsche does it, they sever transference, thereby tightening the bind. For Hitchcock, the Nietzschean love story captures the pedagogical ordeal. It stages the drama of reference, for the murderous students, the perps, read Nietzsche with a passion for the literal. Out of love for the teacher, the students want to translate Nietzsche into a referential act. It is an offer of love to the teacher, a postcard from the classroom. Jimmy Stewart didn't mean for the students to take Nietzsche as a blueprint for historical action. He takes a swig of whisky. An exemplary pedagogy, Stewart's teaching of Nietzsche will have prepared the crime scene. A commencement feast in which a corpse is buried. The students, one senses that the two men are a gay couple, are in the school of transference and translation. They triangulate Nietzsche onto the teacher. Stewart, as emissary and purveyor of Nietzsche, is appalled, defeated. His teaching produced a corpse. A term paper that in the end understood everything the teacher had tried convey, the perfect crime, this was to be the final exam that the ever-transferring students wrote for the teacher. Now they have to transfer the body. Another swig of whisky. Nietzsche — transference — love — sirens. Maybe the students had understood something, or at least their homework assignment was to redraw the boundary of the pedagogical reach. Who's to say that the passion of the literal can be controlled? That gaping and scarring will not break through to the real at any given moment? Who can patrol symbolic territory and assure secure frontiers among levels and systems of transfer? Where Nietzsche teaches severance, Hitchcock refuses the suture, suspends the edit as the long-shot of the film goes on, making it to the end of its thematic rope without a marking cut. That is the shot of transference, the shot of whisky that burns the teacher's throat in the film experiment induced by Nietzsche's text. Hitchcock's refusal to cut trails the unbreakable corridor of transference. At the end of the day, at the end of the semester, the students refuse to mourn. They create an unmournable corpse, a sign of gratitude for the teaching instigated by Jimmy Stewart, who, befuddled and scholarly, has been presented with the mutilated telegraph messages that are represented as notes during his seminar. The question the film leaves us concerns the Nietzschean concept of gratitude. How can one thank the beloved teacher? I mean, without bringing a dead mouse to the door as if one were a cat. Nietzsche was the most thankful of philosophers, and yet his gratitude, to become what it is, often took the form of violence. There were moments of pause, episodes of recollection, when Nietzsche would take the time to thank and affirm his life. At such moments he gave thanks to his own life, or to the life which so often dispossessed him of himself, made him sick, gave him headaches. He begins his most autobiographical text, *Ecce Homo*, by offering thanks and preparing on his birthday to bury his past. On this perfect day, he looks ahead, he looks back, he offers thanks, before revving up the engine of critical self-review. That he loses the self in the process is now undisputed among Nietzsche scholars. Maybe he shouldn't have been so thankful, or maybe it is only due to the thankfulness which starts up the autobiographical gamble that Nietzsche can get over himself, drop himself dead and move on without dialectical assistance. The paradoxes of Nietzschean gratitude are legion. Gratitude, often in excess, is linked in his work to revenge, very possibly recalling the way we say in American English "thank you very much" with decisive intonation given over to "fuck you very much." This could be a quote from Nietzsche, remastered. Yet, however torqued and disfigured, gratitude henceforth belongs to the very possibility of thinking. Mining prayer, it holds thought. Nietzsche signals a change of address when he thanks his life, instead of say, God. Thanking thinks, we could say, nearing Heidegger, where thanking as thinking puts out a special call. Nietzsche's act of thanking draws close to Heidegger's conjoining of *danken* and *denken*, only if one remembers that the kind of mindfulness implied by thanking also involves remembrance, in other words, a certain experience of mourning. The fellows in Hitchcock's film refuse to mourn. Their thank-you note is of another order than the one Nietzsche plays out here. They are still students. For Nietzsche saying thank you involves the experience of letting go without disavowing that history which has run its course. Thanking sends it on its way, thus allowing it to have arrived. The send-off is crucial here for it can

follow the trajectory of a missile or a missive, not so smart always, not securely on target, making the violence of destination a matter of concern for Nietzsche, of destinal concern. Whom is one addressing when giving thanks? To the extent that one is giving, or given to thanks, does the offering imply sacrifice, a sacrificial offering, or perhaps the gift of death as Derrida offers? For Nietzsche, bestowing thanks, something he never lets up on, comes at great cost, even though it cannot be subsumed under any economy, but breaks the bank in the spirit of potlatch. It's the great giveaway that lets one start from scratch, detach. It belongs to the repertory of Nietzschean violence. The violence skips over the boundaries of what normally fastens a text down. Even so, I am less interested in Nietzsche's violence as something that was programmed by his work, or carried out by his different animals and readers, ideologues, editors, disciples, than, for the moment, I am in the violence to which Nietzsche submitted himself. As if in the act of thanking he were continually testing himself. My study of *The Gay Science* tries to locate the test drive in Nietzsche's work, and link it to the problem of the test site and the bold experiments, the unprecedented improvisational dimensions that open up this space. Now let me consider more closely, Nietzsche posits himself as the test site, putting himself continually at risk, obeying the provisional logic of the test. Even though he dismisses them largely as regressive formations, there are no convictions that will not be put to the test. In the previous sections I tried to develop the concept of rescindability, a concept Nietzsche uses to attack, among other things, racism, because it can't be tested out and proven, and all unproven hypotheses concerning determinations of the human and its possible mutations. Nietzsche installs a concept of rescindability in everything he stands for, and falls for. We could say that Nietzsche fell for Wagner, that he fell hard, but to quote Holderlin, he "fell upwards". This is the fall or pitch that language makes us associate with love. One's fall is pitched upwards, if we fall the chart of Nietzsche's fateful involvement with Wagner. Still, no matter how exalted or in fact enduring, there was something unbreakable about this relation that kept relating itself. It was not spared the hard test of rescindability. Now it turns out that rescindability is more subtle than we could have imagined. It does not amount to mere dismissal nor does it participate in the assuring restorations of *Aufhebung*, the Hegelian recall of which sublation consists. Something is taken back, disqualified, without leaving the scene. It is rescinded with a decisive gesture but nonetheless has a long and prominent shelf life. The temporal agonies of the Nietzschean duration are well-known. For Nietzsche everything will have to stand the test of time — this is one meaning of the eternal return. But in the case of Wagner the test of time takes a victory lap, extending beyond its official time. The test of time will have been untimeliness, a standard to which Nietzsche holds himself as well. For his part, Wagner, held back by disheartening attachments and embarrassing compromises, was too glutinated to his time, Nietzsche felt. There was no resistance, finally, to Wagner from the Germans. Wagner melted into his time, which was a time clocked by Nietzsche in terms of decadence, weariness, impoverishment. The Wagnerian meltdown was so total, the only thing total about Wagner, even the *Gesamtkunswerk*, was an aggregate of little parts, which Wagner managed like a special-effects engineer — that he lost the startup quality of being human. The great friend says that he was not a human being but, in the end, a sickness. When Nietzsche takes on Wagner, he loads up on gratitude. In fact, his attack is backed by thankfulness, which has in a sense forced his hand. On the side of Wagner, Nietzsche feels obligated to take him apart. This is part of the transferential duty, the price he estimates he has to pay for the teacher, friend, love, surrogate father, envied husband and intensely demanding mother, Wagner. But I should back down, take some distance and measure, as he everywhere counsels, because I have so quickly found myself in the target zone of the Nietzschean attack. With Nietzsche one needs to locate oneself on the map of utterance that he has drawn up. Following his writing habits one is enjoined scrupulously to ascertain for whom and from where one speaks. In sum, one needs to stay aware of the temptation to attack, particularly when it slips into the fast-paced rhythm of a rant, a rant being a double and other of the Wagnerian sound-off. What does it mean when one's attack is directed by Nietzschean command systems? Such an attack differs from the sniper-shots, turkey shoots, or savage polemics that abound in academia. The Nietzschean attack, the

one in which one finds oneself inscribed as soon as one as one tries to say thank you, displays a peculiar learning curve. Attack for Nietzsche is more often than not an indication of gratitude. One wants to express gratitude, among other things, for having withstood the hardest tests, for having held one's ground, more or less, and survived, more or less, an experience of merger. The extreme experience of attachment, even attachment to a virtue, easily escalates into a debilitating dependency, as he writes in *Beyond Good and Evil*. Here he gives an inventory of ten of the hardest tests, it's a counter-ten commandments, and they all require you to detach, even from your greatest virtue. One's thankfulness goes to the ability to mourn, assuming true mourning to be possible, when letting go, a dreadful gift, occurs or arrives or happens without arriving, thanks are given to mark an almost historical ability to split off from a powerful, a once necessary convergence of forces that held you to the tyranny of the promise. It is important to climb into the think tank with him in order to have a sense of what Nietzsche is aiming for, and how he orchestrates the offensive. Nietzsche, most thankful and most ballistic of philosophers, obeys a restraining order. As unique and shattering as it was and in some ways continues to be, his assault was raised traditionally, trained on a certain relation to truth-telling. His attack and gratitude converge in a figure who says something dangerous, putting himself at risk when addressing the powerful yet deeply troubling other. This is a figure that Foucault spoke about in his last lectures at Berkeley, he started talking about testing, and this Greek figure of someone who takes a risk in speaking his truth "since the tyrant may become angry, may punish him, may exile him, may kill him." Even though Nietzsche self-gathers enough to address Wagner, Christianity, the Germans and other short-listed culprits without end, he is not so 'New-Age' as to think that he could elicit an enlightened response or initiate a healing, and yet he proceeds as if healing were not entirely out of the question and the response could come from the future. Even Wagner's response might come from the future. When he stands his ground, Nietzsche mostly attacks only those causes that are victorious. I'm trying to show you the Nietzschean attack mode. His statement is "I attack only when I stand alone." He firms up the warrior stance, he's taking risks and testing himself, constantly. Nietzsche does not go for the jugular of a person or a human being, however. See, I'm trying to build up to his attack on Wagner, but first I'm trying to see what his tactical sciences are, he calls it a science, his military advances are very clearly mapped out. He does not go for the jugular of a person, after their aloneness or destitution or even after their singularity. He pounces where they begin to generalize and dominate. Where they blow up as an idea or harden as a cultural icon, in contrast to the sprawling tendencies of the other, Nietzsche refrains from seducing or conscripting new recruits to serve his cause, which remains unsupported by any generality. "I attack only when I stand alone, and I never attack persons." This sums up the Nietzschean code of ethics for attack. Wagner becomes the sign for Nietzsche of that which compels an unavoidable cannonade of gratitude. One could say also that Wagner demanded gratitude from the disciple Nietzsche and this is what he got. He moves in on Wagner deliberately, preparing to rush a particular stage of history and its undocumented events. Still, when he says 'I never attack persons', you may be inclined to suppose Wagner to be a person. Nietzsche's several post-scripts to "The case of Wagner", his conclusive inability to finish with finishing off Wagner, are meant to serve as reminders that despite his abiding love for Wagner he is bound by duty to attack his case. Wagner's a case, and this is what Nietzsche is going to attack. Nietzsche, who fell hard, loved Wagner. This point needs to be hammered home. He had to give him up. "To turn my back on Wagner was for me a fate. To like anything at all after that a triumph." Nietzsche loved Wagner, and that is what interests me — what led him to break the friendship of ten years was not intersubjective but ethical. It was not a whim, a mood, an episode, a sense of harm, or an account of the other's wrongdoing that instantiated the break. It almost had nothing to do with Mr. Richard Wagner — for what do we care about Herr Wagner and his messy little opinions? Wagner, and Nietzsche is emphatic on this point, has become a double of himself. He produces his alias as a sickness, a hysterical actor, a sign of the times with which he unrestrainedly coincides. But what should we make of the assertion that he attacks only when standing alone? In Nietzsche's vocabulary standing

alone suggests that the attack is already preceded by all sorts of breaks. He has taken and dealt the cuts that has him standing alone, positing himself as alien without allowing for the complacencies of saying "I am the other, I am the sufferer to which something is owed." Nietzsche wants nothing from Wagner, at most he wants to thank him. Let us slow down to a Nietzsche pace in order to consider what defines necessary secession, and how it might be bound up with gratitude. When I say Nietzschean pace, I am by the way still caught up in the attack on Wagner to the extent that Wagner, it is claimed, has shown no respect for the pace, the measure, the step, features that Nietzsche assimilates to style. What does this imputation encode? Heidegger reminds us by looping back to Holderlin how Nietzsche means by the censure that Wagner was lawless — the law being precisely that which in Holderlin's notion of sacred sobriety prescribes measure, the considered step or gait, the dance of distance. In Wagner, one swims or floats. In Nietzsche, you're walking, you're dancing, the measure honoring the step. You move in accordance with the frolicking *Wissenschaft*. Thus Nietzsche took measure, he took steps, where Wagner sought dissolution, the sheer exaltation of the Dionysian. Nietzsche on the contrary concentrated his gaze on *Bendigung* and *Geschaltung* — boundness and figuration, taking a step beyond dissolution and in so doing anticipating Blanchot's mildly interdictory 'step beyond', or the "not-step." When Nietzsche was on Wagner's case he was decidedly into the French, behind him and ahead of him, preferring even the can-can to Wagner's 'can't-can't' — this is neither here nor there, and Blanchot would be appalled, although that has never stopped me before. But let me adopt some of that sobriety. This would be something to consider, how Nietzsche uses the French against Wagner, even to the point of preferring the can-can to Wagner. To the extent that Wagner refused to keep pace, to hold to the fundamental disposition that Holderlin had recognized as Western sobriety, in other words the Apollonian, the rupture between them, says Heidegger, was inscribed in their relationship from the very start. Nietzsche's break attests to this aspect of their divide. He positioned himself as the resistance to Dionysian complacency and affective abandon. Interestingly, the charges that Nietzsche pressed against his teacher and friend have not been dropped or seriously refuted in the philosophical follow-ups that we have at our disposal. Heidegger retains Nietzsche's principal grief against Wagner. Even where Heidegger criticizes Nietzsche, he agrees that Wagner failed us with his absence of style. We know from Derrida and subsequent other readings of the styles of Nietzsche, including those of Lacoue-Labarthe and more recently Susan Bernstein, that when a man is caught short on style there is an indication of trouble, female trouble. A man without a style, or *stylus*, is in Lacoue-Labarthe's words a 'penetrated being', turned back on himself into the sappy feminine. So for these guys being penetrated is not good news. In fact, Nietzsche's reflections set up sexual markings, because as you see the absence of style is feminized, and Nietzsche sets up action vs. passivity, virility vs. the feminine and so on. These reflections sound the first and last words of Western philosophy on the subject of music, notes Lacoue-Labarthe. From Plato to Nietzsche, the case is closed. Music is rediscovered each time to be unmanned. There is a terror behind the musical note and what it performs on the invaginated receptive ear. The fear of passive identification, of imitation by identification, these feminine attributes scoped by Plato, rediscovered by Nietzsche, finally admit only virile and warrior music. What compels interest for us at this point is the fact that the philosophical lexicon of musical anxiety is the same principle that governs the break-up. Wagner is associated with a quality of frazzled nerves, torpor, narcosis, submission, feminine passivity. To fend off Wagner, Nietzsche shows Rossini and Bizet to mark the allegro, intensification of life, energy, joy and pride of standing. Quickening the step, respecting the walk, they overturn Schopenhauer's definition of art as a tranquilizer as they convert music into a light stimulate. This overturning implies nothing less than the transformation of the determination of art in its essence, which is to say, a historical explication and a prefiguration of the future. Such a decision, according to Heidegger, offers the affirmation of style against Wagner, because in style is staked what governs all of history. This is why the stakes are so high when Nietzsche rips into Wagner for lacking style and thus failing art. History depends on art in a crucial way. Art is not only subject to rules or subordinate to other concerns, it is the lawgiver, ever enacting the giving that is

truly art. The Gestalt, missing in action in Wagner's opus, is understood as the presentation of the law. Art articulates the relation of fisis, the inexhaustible earth, and techne, the creatable, to-be-created world. This law is historicity itself. Which in Heidegger-speak means that this law is the opening of history in its possibility. That's what Wagner is stifling. All this, the drama of historial opening, the preeminent rule of law in art, genuine pride and the affirmation of life is what Nietzsche decisively marked when he broke with Wagner. This was not a private squabble but reached beyond its apparent contingency to inflect the way we think about and live relation to history and the future. Heidegger considers this break decisive for all of us. The breakup that Nietzsche endured but also continues to provoke is worked by effects of textural fissuring. His text relentlessly administers the hardest tests. The claim that Nietzsche's life and works makes on us to this day involves this installation of something like a breakup machine, a textual apparatus that still needs to be reviewed according to different and uncompromising perspectives. One would be mistaken to try to locate the fissuring apparatus strictly in what might be considered the "work". Nietzsche led the way by marking the breach within and outside the boundary parameters of writing. Where his writing lands and whom it seduces or repels is quite another story with which we are still dealing. He was thrown by the breaks that befell him, even if he initiated them. Yet he threw himself into them, enacting and embracing the break. This is Nietzsche's thrownness, I'm saying, the break. It is not an exaggeration to state that Nietzsche broke like no one before or after him. The severance policy was unyielding, infiltrating the terms of every possible equation. What we understand by life gets broken up. Who can measure Nietzsche's lifespan? And despite the excellent editions available to us, the work remains to this day uncontained. The experience of breach proliferates in what he know of his life, which was quite a bit. Regardless of minor thematic divergences, the narrations agree without really making a case of it that Friedrich Nietzsche broke with everyone and everything that tried to have a substantial hold on him. In his life and his afterlife Nietzsche broke the code of every program that tried to hold him to its truth. The list of his break-ups remains, I think, impressive. Moving to Basel and then on to Italy, he broke with the German areas of the world map. Insisting that his origins were Polish, he broke with a racially codified contract with national identity. He scrambles the codes of origins even as he speaks of origin. In his first book, he broke with philology, his official academic discipline and job description. As a philosopher, he refused to provide for his posterity, and as a teacher, he told his disciples to lose him. In his work he broke with the human and tried to figure the transhuman, in his time he broke with his time. There are no doubt more examples and themes to explore there. He relation to the break is perhaps equally significant, however. Not one to hide behind the overturning momentum of events, Nietzsche announced and explained the break. He did not slither away or forget. He was responsible for his breaks, more often than not he initiated them, and he took responsibility for them. The break was itself a contract. It did not escape the confines of an ethical assignment, but exerted quasi-legal pressures on the sensitive philosopher who paced and posed its stipulations at every juncture. In the part of the life that became indistinguishable from the work, these themes and lacerations were perhaps most dramatically played out in relation to Wagner. The case of Wagner did not come from or happen to someone for whom friendship was foreign or remote. His title is not "In case of Wagner", and what I mean by this is his friendship was not a contingency for Nietzsche, his work something you could take or leave, something you could blow off or restrict, like limiting the phone calls you make, or deciding to go out only two evenings a week. Nietzsche knew friendship. He understood and nurtured it, articulated it, lived it, which is why his politics of breaking-up is so poignant. The end was written into friendship as its ownmost possibility and its finite ground. Nietzsche recognized that friendship itself was not a stable substance but split into so many hetero and homogeneities, occupied by a multitude of persona and sub-personalities, a gift that life offers which is dealt significant blows and revised itineraries by time. In the case of his Wagner it was often a mimetic hideaway for the philosopher who fancied himself a musical composer. Unfortunately I can't get into with you the lamentable imitations that Nietzsche made of Wagner as a musician. If the temptation to merge hadn't been so great,

Nietzsche would not have had to devise a test and install a fissuring machine to get himself out of the mess. So identified was he with Wagner that for a long while he wanted to draw Cosima close — he was of course in love with Wagner's partner. He drafted musical compositions in her honor, and he took several other routes of Richard Wagner's desire. Becoming a Richard Wagner he began the labor of breaking off. So it's from this intensity of intimacy that the break-up machine starts rolling for Nietzsche. If Nietzsche proved capable of wrenching apart from Wagner, as well as from that part of himself that was cleaved to Richard Wagner, Wagner for his part was to be designated henceforth as a restorer, a unifier, who tried like no other to produce a unity of the arts. So this is a temporary opposition, right, Wagner is the restorer, the unifier, and Nietzsche now has to start his chopping machine. Nietzsche, he would no longer stand for any theater of reunification. In addition to what was noted by Heidegger and considered by Lacoue-Labarthe, style means something else as well: it involves the ability to end. When Nietzsche charges Wagner with lacking style, I think he also means what he says he means: "Absence of style points not only to the inability to figure, but also crucially means the failure of rhythm to meet or make its end." In Nietzsche's vocabulary, bad rhythm can interfere in matters concerning the walk, the step, and cadence. Cadence, Nietzsche reminds us, together with the walk and the step, is a matter regarding man, if not outright the ends of man. The man who knows truly how to live the cadence does yet not exist, however. He is not even the last man, perhaps no longer a man. In principle, this is what makes or breaks a man, given a situation where breaking is no longer bound to a structure opposed to making, but can break into another form. So breaking is also to break into a new form. There should be something like the art of the cadence, Nietzsche's text advises, in calling for a realm to secure the ending that is linked to helpfulness. Not any break, for a bad break could mean decadence, or pity, or resentment. In Nietzsche Contra Wagner, Nietzsche lists Heinrich Von Kleist among several authors martyred by such a break in need of healing. So it can't be a bad break — this is what I want to thank Nietzsche for today, for teaching how to break, for initiating the break from so many oppressive holds including the stranglehold of man, for letting us translate his thought in congruence with the word and work Daybreak, for the unprecedented breaking free that he accomplishes in the preface of Human, All Too-Human. I want to express my gratitude to Nietzsche for thinking the necessity of a break that would dodge what he diagnosed as decadence. The debilitating expiration, the end decreed by life impoverished, the will to the end, the great weariness, these qualities, effects of depletion, lie beneath morality under its most sacred names and values. Alright then, a break-up that would not be decadent. What would this look like? What's he talking about here? Splitting up in the style of Nietzsche would entail a break-up without resentment, on the one hand. A break with resentment is 'It's your fault'. On the other hand, it would have to be accomplished without the excess called bad conscience, 'It's my fault.' For Nietzsche breaking up would be and was an engagement, a commitment, a vow that does not restrict itself to the acknowledgment of a fact but which firmly invokes a responsibility. Breaking up has to assert itself as actual, as a commitment that requires the affirmation of breakage by submitting itself to the test of the eternal return. The Nietzschean break does not indulge a regression in the sense of falling back or returning to a prior unity to the relation. That would be Wagnerian. Nietzschean never finishes his explications with Wagner. He never finishes affirming the break, returning to it or turning it on the axis of its many facets. 'The Case of Wagner' cannot be closed, performing as it does a closure without end. Textually, it is trailed by two postscripts and an epilogue holding in place a structure of continuance that appears to belie a will to termination. See, Nietzsche couldn't stop breaking-up with Wagner. Posing an interminable end, it takes up where it leaves off, never really abandoning Wagner but over and over renewing the commitment to the break. As our language insists, the break charts an upward fall, it's a break-up, sketching a movement of ascendancy that is carried forward only to return eternally, each time marking that the past is passing, making a passage through you, time and again, and so it comes to pass. The first postscript to the case study, "The price we are paying for Wagner", reclaims Wagner by reminding the resentful readers of the master's irreplaceability. Now try to follow

this logic. Nietzsche has been bashing Wagner all along, now he is writing “The price we are paying for Wagner” and he’s attacking the resentful reader. “Anyone who thinks that Wagner belongs to the drama of exchange value has understood nothing. In essence unmournable, Wagner can never be substituted.” To the suggestion that he might of gleeful substituted Wagner with Brahms, Nietzsche retorts “When in this essay I declare war on Wagner, and incidentally on Germans’ so-called ‘taste’, the last thing I want to do is start a celebration of. any other musicians. Other musicians don’t count compared to Wagner.” “I admire ‘Parsifal’. I wish I had written myself.” “The case of Wagner is a windfall for the philosopher. This essay is inspired, you hear, by gratitude.” This is why we need to stay close to the ground of gratitude, especially where it is linked to war. Even though Nietzsche himself proposed Bizet in lieu of Wagner, or railed against the embarrassment called ‘Parsifal’, probity requires that he keep Wagner strictly out of the range of a resentful politics to prove that ‘the case of Wagner’ was not produced in the heat of passion, as uncontrollable anger, resentment, as an act of malice. Nietzsche later writes, renewing his vows, the book Nietzsche Contra Wagner. His final effort, it was finished in 1888, only a few days before his total collapse. ‘The Case of Wagner’ was the last book whose publication he himself experienced. Nietzsche continually exposes himself to the end without however accomplishing this end. Another was of seeing this is that Nietzsche proceeded without benefit of a dialectical apparatus that would at once sublimate and exalt the end. Dialectics re-absorbs what it separates and cuts, what it holds on to, changes its character, accommodating the severance as part of its unfolding. Nietzsche stares severance in the face, takes it straight so to speak, without transforming Wagner into something more tasteful or dialectically assimilable. Nietzschean, the great vomiter, can’t even throw him up, which would be the reverse of dialectics, as we discussed in class. The loss stays with him. The multiplication of texts around him tells us that Wagner is here to stay, if only as the pressure point of loss. Nietzsche cannot simply write off this loss but continues henceforth to count the losses. Other musicians ‘don’t count’ compared to Wagner. Driving him into his own abysses, Nietzsche somehow still holds on to Wagner. The friendship has to be surrendered on historical demand. Only weakness and a lacking integrity would vote to keep it, but there’s no question as to which of the two might be seen as having survived the friendship in the sense of overcoming it. Nietzsche stays with the departed friend, the way he kept the memory of his father close. The circuitry of mourning is displaced with the canceled friendship. In the case of the father death took the beloved other away. The hardest test, though, is self-administered, so to speak, implying resolve, a supplement of determination, it is something you do to yourself. Nietzsche had a hand in calling Wagner off, and everywhere suggests that he has lost the rights to the melancholic sheltering by which he guarded his father’s phantom. Sometimes he hallucinated his father crouching behind him as he wrote. So here I’m swerving into another place that I can’t develop with you but I would like your input, on when you stop a friendship, what type of mourning do you go into? Freud doesn’t name the cancellation of friendship as cause for mourning, though as we discussed in Mourning and Melancholia, what creates the state of mourning can be the lost of a country, an ideal, then death, but now I’m trying to see what means to lose a friend, because Nietzsche gives up the right to melancholy, since he had a hand in calling it off, graduating early or too late from the apprenticeship, he is still paying heavily, he says, for being a Wagner disciple. Nietzsche creates the disturbingly arid circumstances of the other’s deathless death, which inhibits friendly or stark phantasmatisations and introduces another site on the fringe of mourning, where one is called upon to liquidate the transference. Dissolving the Wagner account while maintaining the debt, Nietzsche embarks on what Goethe famously calls, with regard to the suffering, a “long insomnia.” Like all of us here, I think. No reality testing controls the sensibility of one who has had to call off the friendship. The lost friend still travels the surface of a world that is meant to wound or trouble the decision that continues to be negotiated in some backroom of last hope, even where the decision to shred the already interjected image has been announced and partially enacted. The friendship taken off the agenda, Nietzsche refines the experience of the break. With Wagner he made it a clean break to the extent that it can never be done with, but offers residue and return. It is a clean

break only in the transvaluated sense. Nietzsche is not so naive that he thinks he could walk away under the promise of erasure. Cleanliness means staying in touch with the history and pain from which you've bolted, particularly where it transcends your own particularity. In the passionate but finite moment when Nietzsche was a Wagnerian, in the Fourth Untimely Meditation, become the ticketmaster for Bayreuth, extolling the virtues of Wagner's insight, Nietzsche claimed that he was able to distill Wagner to one concept, to one name. So I'm going to skip this part, I'll just tell you something, a secret. Nietzsche, even when he's on the side of Wagner, loving him, adoring him, he's already setting up the attack, because he's inside of Wagner, and there's one secret code or password to Wagner's entire and essential being, and that word is *Treue*, which links loyalty to truth. So everything depends on Nietzsche's dismantling of loyalty, in a sense. Here let me just say what he was doing with Bayreuth, and then bring this baby in for a landing. Just to get the true flavor of Bayreuth's historicity, some of you don't know what this meant for Nietzsche, what this means for everyone and still means for us, one would have to imagine a teenaged Friedrich Nietzsche, on the eve of an Ur-Woodstock, explaining to the nation the meaning of an ecstatic musical event. The altogether-unprecedented Bayreuth-Woodstock would imply social revolution, peace, love and was bound to rock the stagnant music scene. The bourgeois thought police were put on alert. Let us flash back momentarily with Nietzsche to the moment of greatest accord. Nietzsche's untimely meditation announces what is to come. The future has a name, he writes, it's Richard Wagner. Eventually Nietzsche will come to see this future as a false one, a mere detention of the present. When it's about to be initiated on the grounds of Bayreuth, Wagner's music promises to fight the power. It will slam the philistines, Nietzsche argues, and break up the bourgeois monotony of quiet, easy listening, or what Adorno will call 'regressive listening'. Adorno includes Wagner in this genre and later changes his mind. The abundance of texts produced around them, from the meditation to subsequent tracts, books and articles on Wagner and Bayreuth leaves no doubt that this was the first media-technical event — that's why it's important for us here, I think. It was the first music event with special effects, people coming from miles around high on ecstasy and other drugs. Nietzsche will later come clean and denounce Wagner as a bad drug, a warping hallucinogen. Nietzsche's essay "Richard Wagner and Bayreuth" was scheduled to appear a few weeks before the opening of the Bayreuth festival. Wagner represented for Nietzsche at this point a courageous outcast, a solitary genius, who having been exiled from the German domains by the forces of resentment was coming back to make serious trouble. As far as a future genealogy of landmark concerts goes, Bayreuth was a bust, to the extent that it became a tremendous success. Politically and philosophically it folded in on itself, co-opted by the meanest ideological orders of the day, something Wagner welcomed and for which he was without a doubt himself somewhat responsible. Wagner would supply the death knell of background music, not only to political movements but also to film. The deception and disappointment that Nietzsche recorded at the time is related to the fact that it became an institution, an excuse for national complacency, and a launching-pad for self-congratulatory mythologemes. Bayreuth quickly became the appropriated site for the Reich, Nietzsche contended in bitter disappointment. Bayreuth's one cheerleader found himself run over by crowds of conservative nationalists, happy to see their views mirrored and mythologized. This vulgar nationalism occurs, of course, after Nietzsche's announcement of the good news of Bayreuth's inaugural performance, which he had offered before the ring was recycled into the loop of another contract. Still, to the extent that Nietzsche infiltrates the Wagner compound it becomes difficult to put a date on the true beginnings of Nietzsche's war effort. The war too was to precede itself because the young philosopher gets on Wagner's case from the minute he starts writing about him. So he's always ambivalent and he's always ready to turn. Maybe the writing ran ahead on kind of an unconscious reconnaissance mission. But whatever one says, however one measures the proximities and scopes, and the love, which are not being disputed, Nietzsche's writing was already there, ready to take on Wagner from the start. Nietzsche sounds the war cry early on, even before he openly declared war on Wagner. He prepares his rhetorical forces when he has Wagner in his sights, and just because he gives his word on avoiding a

ressentimental payback does not mean that Nietzsche's revenge will not be devastating. Nietzsche famously ends *Human, All Too Human* with the figure of "the wanderer", who is propelled by the effects of breakup, an early generation of nomad, who travels by shifts and ruptures, intellectually torn from any lasting habitat by a homelessness tied to time. To the extent that time is, the wanderer moves on, moving away from positions grazed or occupied, and he's driven by the intellect from opinion to opinion, through the change of sides, as a "noble traitor to all things that can ever be betrayed and yet with no feeling of guilt." The figure of the noble traitor brought into the picture at the end of this work is not introduced by Nietzsche simply as a common coward or weakling. Nietzsche says and appears to mean a noble traitor, indicating someone or something capable of sustaining a high sensibility for betrayal, not just a reactive and resentful someone who lets you down with a decadent and degenerate thud. By no means resuscitating the flake or disappointment we have all known and may have been at one time or another, he points out the figure of the noble traitor as the wanderer who knows when to fold and when to leave. Thank you.

Schirmacher: This was a very important and timely call for becoming noble traitors ourselves. That is as we all know one of the key problems, that we taken in, that we admire other philosophers, how to get out of this? How to get a clean break with Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Derrida, for example? I heard just the other day from one of our professors, "When we really meet a criticism of Derrida by his own students?" Is there a clean breakup, is there a noble traitor among them? Personally I believe that our professors, like you and Jean-Luc, you are already in this position of the noble traitor, you're just not so open, you can still be confused, be followers, but you still go your own way, by keeping the lesson and thus still by loving Derrida or Nietzsche, you have no problem with departing and doing things they wouldn't accept. I believe this lesson, how to follow, how to understand and get into another thinker, but still have the courage to leave on your own journey, is one the key lessons of education. My question would be, do you need to be a disciple in the first place in order to have this need for being a traitor? We all become followers or disciples in some way, but in some way. There are people among us who by design can never be followers, with their first writing they already anticipate "I can't stay here, I have to go my own way." The people who just follow Nietzsche, Derrida and Heidegger, we know them, they're really an obnoxious crowd, and if they break-up with later, it's quite a mess, and it's never noble. Being noble means you have to be noble from the beginning, that you're just not built to be a follower — you can love, appreciate and admire, but you'll never be somebody else's servant, not even when you're young and ignorant. So is this not a condition of a noble traitor, that you have never been, from the beginning, someone who has been taken in?

Ronell: I wish I could have gone over with you the extreme masochistic submission that he performed for Wagner, the notes that Wagner shot to him which said *Do the Christmas shopping for me, and I want the packages here a few days early, and while you're downtown, get me some underwear and while you're at it rewrite "Schopenhauer as Educator" because it's fucked-up, my name isn't in there.* So Nietzsche's submission was so severe that this would not be an issue for us. Once I took a walk with Gadamer, who said to me *you have to totally submit yourself to a master, otherwise you'll never understand what thinking is.* So the question of pedagogy that you raise, when Lacan says "language is a body" where does this body enter your body? Where does pedagogy begin or end? Let's say learning can only be accomplished, if it's ever accomplished, through trauma. Then something has to really, severely risk and threaten the subject. A devastation and destruction has to be risked if we're following the Nietzsche channel here. I didn't get to go over the extreme masochistic submission that even makes break-up an issue for him. If you're already broken up before you enter the body of the other, then you're not risking your own disillusion and destruction. You know how you treat the kids, Wolfgang, there is something very brutal, devastating and threatening before even the break-up can be considered. The break-up was never desired, it's something that had to happen, it remains ambivalent and complicated. If you think you were built to break-up, then what's the big deal? This guy was not built

to break-up, which is why he had a breakdown.

Schirmacher: But it's not a choice, you are open to the other, you are open to masochism or you are not, I don't see there's a choice. But let's go on.

Zizek: I liked your talk very much. You talked at the end of your gratitude towards Nietzsche — What is your betrayal of Nietzsche, which gives you the right to be grateful? It would be interesting to follow how the contemporary scene relates to betrayal. People close to me who are usually considered Lacanians, we are usually accused of not being able to break with Lacan. To put it in extremely naive terms, it doesn't fit with vulgar, empirical truth. I almost don't know a Lacanian today whose central thesis is not that Lacan ended in a definite deadlock and we have to get out. Show me one. Nonetheless we are supposed to be "Ha ha, you Lacanians, you can't break-up." I would like to make a couple of points. You mention how Wagner became an institution, but wait a minute, as you know I'm sure better than me, even before he died Nietzsche was nothing if not an institution in Germany. He was kind a freakshow, an incredible public success, far he being a loner or a loser, he became part of the ruling ideology. So isn't it that there are nonetheless betrayals, and betrayals. Brutus' betrayal is that you betray the empirical person for the very principle this the person stood for but was not able to live up to. So this is basically the Aristotelian position. Paradoxically, you can make the Hegelian point that through this betrayal, Caesar, as the name used for a person, became Caesar, the name as it is understood today, Caesar salad or whatever. I don't think Nietzsche had this in mind, he had a stronger notion. You can argue that basically Christ gave to Judas the order to betray him, which was essential. Without Judas there wouldn't be Christ. Nonetheless we find the Kierkegaardian betrayal which is much stronger. Not that you betray the person for the principle, but that you betray the principle for a higher singular point. Also isn't it that the highest form of betrayal then in the Bible is that the only way I can prove I love you is to betray you? So again, where is your betrayal?

Ronell: Thank you very much for what you say, you understand gratitude and attack. It's not as though everything needs to be betrayed, I hope you don't betray Lacan, because I appreciate the way that you think you're not betraying him every time you're writing on him. It is true that for Nietzsche there's a transvaluing machine on, so there would be a good and a bad betrayal. I don't think it would be something automatic or random. In fact, Nietzsche resisted betrayal which is why it was such a difficult and devastating thing to do. One would have to see how within the intricacies of the warring texts each one stages his criticisms of the other. In one passage Nietzsche claims that one of his names is Wagner, so by cutting Wagner out he's also cutting out one of his names and one of his destinies. There's so much to be said and I think this is too quickly responded to. As for the Derrida betrayal that everyone dreams of, it's an interesting symptom, because of course if you ask Jacques he thinks he's being betrayed all the time by everyone. I don't know if according to the Nietzschean protocols a text that relentlessly destroys itself and questions itself and does its own noble level of betrayal requires outside agents or instigators.

Zizek: Basically there's a prohibited dimension, "why should you betray him, he already did it for himself?"

Ronell: But what would it look like to betray Derrida, for example? I'm not sure what your dream is.

Zizek: You can't even imagine...

Ronell: No I can't, it's a psychotic idea...

Weber: What about the eternal return in relation to what you describe? It is described by Nietzsche himself as a tremendous traumatic break, but not by one subject to another, by one proper name to another proper name. It would be very interested to rethink, in light of what you've been describing, the ramifications to the description of the trauma of the eternal return.

Ronell: Certainly the eternal return of the nuclear test sites that I'm working with under the name of Nietzsche is the exemplary test for inscribing and creating the break, and also the relation to time. It is a complicated itinerary I don't want to go into it now but I do think it is the crucial and central problem I'm working with here.

Audience: You mentioned closure without end, is this Nietzsche's idea of becoming?

Ronell: Yes, and I think that's what Nietzsche compels us to reflect on and consider, because there were so many different kinds of cessations and endings. So closure is something altogether different than an end, and I'm trying to figure out the different temporal implications of that, I'm also trying to read Jean-Luc Nancy's essay on Nietzsche's death, because his death, which is linked by him to the death of God, also preceded itself. He calls it an event of absolute precession, which is to say something is closed without ending, when Nietzsche went into his *umnachtum*, or nocturnal turn of so-called madness. I'm trying to work with different types of closural moves that Nietzsche's text puts on us and on all of his so-called objects. So you're right to point to that as a very delicate moment.

Zizek: Relating to your previous statement, according to Nietzsche, Wagner's decadence is precisely that Wagner doesn't know how to end. These two different kinds of endings, so is Wagner without closure, or what?

Ronell: That's a fine observation. I think the stakes are a little different, but I don't at all object to that insight. What I would say provisionally is that there's a struggle with cadence, and according to Nietzsche everything depends on it. When he says that Wagner doesn't know how to end, and then says in the next paragraph that he's Wagner, there's also not a real clear delimitation. He constantly traverses Wagner's body and corpus so that there's a contamination of similar issues. To set it out today this evening I had to make it seem like the difference was very clear-cut, but I do think there's a lot of moments where Nietzsche is looping back on himself.

Zizek: When Nietzsche says that Wagner doesn't know how to end, it's not that he doesn't end, but that he ends but in the wrong way. The big final sublime is perhaps the point of musical falsity. Nietzsche doesn't mean Wagner goes on and on...he ends, but in the wrong way.

Ronell: Yes, I think it can be read that way, I think you're absolutely right.

Audience: Is the break what you were calling the deathless death?

Ronell: I'm trying to think in a lot of textual situations about the death of death, which is to say the symbolicity of death no longer marks death. What I meant by deathless death was something else. This is what I'm trying to think about, this fringe mourning, when you ax a friend or cancel a friendship. Something is dead but still troubling and painful. By deathless death in this particular moment I mean that something is dead but it's not dead, at the same time it creates a space and a site for a different experience of mourning and remembrance. In general I am tracking different types of endings, cadences, cessations, not all of which qualify with prestige and dignity, as Hegel might say, as death.

Audience: It seems to me that the rescindability of retraction engages the notion of the breaking of the reciprocity of the gift. One never knows when the gift is going to be given, and reciprocity is always a question of loyalty, and rescinding is that part of the break, which is implicit.

Ronell: This is very helpful, because if loyalty belongs to an economy where one can expect return, then it's no longer a gift. To the extent that there's an economy, exchange values, it's no longer a gift. The gift might even be imperceptible. It busts the economy and that's why I try to introduce potlatch, because it's this kind of delirious giving. The break endeavors to be an affirmative break but it never breaks with itself. There was a slight and condensed wordplay, perhaps, he never ends relating to the break, so it's a relationship, it's a commitment, a responsibility and a contract. In that regard you're

quite right to point out that there are different economies, and to the extent that it might fall or lapse with a decadent thud into an economy of reciprocity, it's no longer a gift. That's why I begin with gratitude, war, all of these kind of excessive gifts, of death, in a sense.

Schirmacher: We have with us Professor Badiou, who is obviously also a case of the noble traitor when it comes to Deleuze. Would you care to comment?

Badiou: In the wanderer as the connection between the noble traitor on one side and the nomadic figure on the other, it is initially a Wagnerian character. Tannhauser is also the noble traitor and the wanderer, so the relationship is very complex. The figure of Nietzsche is also inside the Wagnerian disposition, there is something in Wagner which anticipates Nietzsche, then. In my opinion the question of Wagner is not closed at all. You say that all philosophers agree with Nietzsche about Wagner, but this is not the case. For example, I don't agree. Wagner is a very modern figure, for example in Levi-Strauss there are very interesting developments on Wagner. The question of Wagner is not closed is in my opinion, because the Nietzschean appreciation of Wagner, is not a judgment on Wagner, but of the Nietzschean determination itself. Wagner is one of the names used as a mythological construction by Nietzsche. Certainly there is something true in the examination of Wagner by Nietzsche, but the question of Wagner is nowadays open, I think. There is the necessity of a great re-examination of the Wagnerian question in new terms, and we should happen to close the Nietzschean sequence on Wagner and open the non-Nietzschean of Wagner.

Ronell: It is true that Nietzsche performs guerrilla raids on Wagner's corpus, in fact that's why the attack began even before he was attacking. What he does is go into the Wagner compound and purloin Wagner topoi and themes to build up his attack on Wagner. You're right to point out that these figures are really stolen in certain ways, but this is part of his tactical war on Wagner. So you're asking to close down the Nietzschean shop here, which is perplexing for me because I'm precisely trying to show that it won't close down, it couldn't close for Nietzsche, even, much less for us. It's something that we'd love to lock down but it continues to have effects, and it's like a permanent insurrection, it seems to me, still in dialogue with you, because given the test of the eternal return it's not clear to me that Nietzsche wrote this in the past.

Audience: At point you said that Nietzsche wants nothing from Wagner. Don't you think that it would be more appropriate to say that Nietzsche wants to want nothing from Wagner? To put it in context, it seems that, apropos of what Professor Badiou said, it is at least as difficult to keep the problematic of recension at a one-to-one level between Nietzsche and Wagner as it is for Zarathustra to keep the problem of his own desires for the higher man in check. By the end of the book Zarathustra can almost triumphantly say I'm not concerned so much about happiness, I just want my work. I don't know whether to believe him at this point, and I'm not sure whether Nietzsche succeeds any more or less than Zarathustra does in placing himself in that dialogical relationship with his others. It seems like there's a crisis of desire, a wanting not to want. A crisis in the loop of desire that is played out between Nietzsche and Wagner, which has some similarities with Zarathustra and the higher man.

Ronell: One might want to ask, what kind of an act these texts constitute at all, are they betrayal texts, killer texts, or great loyal texts, when Nietzsche persistently writes about Wagner? Your question I would translated into a different idiom, which is "whom is he addressing?", which makes your question quite compelling. Is Nietzsche addressing Wagner, or as he claims himself, he's not on speaking terms with Wagner, so that would be a way to try to read this crisis of desire. It's not clear to me that he does want anything from Wagner at all at this point, but is trying to name and stay with this history of pain for which Wagner becomes a cipher, a mythological name for a kind of historical pain.

Audience: This is more of an observation. In all the betrayals you've mentioned, there's an inversion of betrayal — it might not even be a betrayal of the person you've mentioned. In the case of Brutus,

Brutus is being true to the value of Caesar by killing him. In the case of Nietzsche, once Wagner became the institution, lost his step and his cadence, that seems the student who is built for betrayal is subservient to the master until the master betrays the value that the student is being loyal to, so they're not betraying at all, they're being true to what they see and love in the person, in that way the love stays, so the mourning at the end of the friendship is not for who they is now but for who they were, and perhaps that's the real break.

Ronell: You know, loyalty works that way for Nietzsche, so there's the question of "When did you offer a vow of loyalty, or pledge allegiance to the other?" The minute there's time and change and so on, it's not even a question of betrayal anymore, it's time itself that pulls you away from the delirium and madness of a commitment of loyalty that you've made. You're still in the Platonic invariability of a principle — we'd have to complicate this itinerary considerably, this would be a program for parasitical gratitude: "you're no longer who you were when I started to follow you, so you're dead". Except the nature of becoming is that you weren't even who you were when you thought you were following them, so there's always-already all sorts of fissures, dismantlings and splits at play from the beginning. That's why I've tried to trace the path of the break-up. Heidegger says it starts from the beginning, that even when Nietzsche is promoting Wagner he's already taking him down. So in your reading of Brutus and Caesar, you're right, that's the ruling interpretation, the question is, can you peg a person to a principle in the first place? How do you know you read it correctly? There's all sorts of interferences and noises we would have to tap into.....I just want to complicate it.

Audience: For me, dealing with the traumatic break has always been associated with the idea of the nostalgic. Could you explain how you see this interplay, this tension of nostalgia in the relationship between Wagner and Nietzsche, is "The Case of Wagner" an exercise of falling into that nostalgia which he himself despises?

Ronell: Nostalgia I would like to say would be off-key here. I could leave you with an image, which is that when Nietzsche lost it, he would play "Tristan and Isolde" all the time on the piano. I don't know what we can call that. Nostalgia implies all sorts of interiorities and another protocol of reading which would be a pathology here, an aberration. If he were nostalgic he would not have been able to cut to the betrayal the way he did. A noble traitor has to unload the nostalgic trope, I think.

Audience: I'm a firm believer in what I could call the skeptical position for experimentation. I'm quite intrigued by this notion of a reversal of pedagogy, a preparing to lose what you love. What I'm wondering is that is there something to the effect of an exposure to ideas that can have this kind of feeling of being like a new technology, where there's a rupture that creates a new context anyway. Wagner reaches this level that is taken up by the dominant ideology, and it spoils it for Nietzsche. That in itself causes a break, and it's not just that he has to reconfigure his relationship, it's also literally a subjective shift for him.

Ronell: I was trying not to read it as subjective histories, I'm trying to say that given the temporality of the eternal return it's still happening to us.

Zizek: Just one point. Isn't that this idea of break, this moment of liberation for Nietzsche, it's not this tragical break, it's a merry break, a good riddance.

Ronell: It's good riddance, but he can't do it, at the same time, that's why I agree with you agreeing with me. There's something out of Nietzsche's control, it's not nostalgia, there's something going on that there's an excess that can't be accounted for. I don't know what to call it, I don't want to call it nostalgia but I can understand why.

Zizek: I think that closing the chapter Nietzsche on Wagner it means opening Nietzsche in a new way. It doesn't mean that Nietzsche is off. Point two, I think we all agree that many things that he says as

simple observation are pathbreaking — for example, his big thesis is that what is greatest in Wagner is not the big, bombastic movements. He discovered in a way the French Wagner, in the sense of French miniaturism, and so on. So, the horizon of our discussion of Wagner should no longer be determined exclusively by Nietzsche.

Schirmacher: The point is she's not really interested in the historical path, but how this defines the noble traitor and the break-up. Nietzsche and Wagner are just a test case, it's not about Nietzsche and Wagner. It's about what happened there that can tell us how to deal in our lives and with our teachers.