

NIETZSCHE, FREUD, BENN,
AND THE AZURE SPELL OF LIGURIA

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Nietzsche, Freud, Benn, and the Azure Spell of Liguria

MARTINA KOLB

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*To the memory of my grandfather Karl Weiler,
who taught me the word
for “window” in French.*

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Contents

Illustrations ix

Acknowledgments xi

Preface: Ligurian Geopoetics 3

I 'Twixt Halcyon and Marathon: Azure Spell and Difficult Beauty

Riviera Existence 23

On the Ligurian Edge 36

Luring Onomastics 81

II Nietzsche, Freud, Benn: A Ligurian Complex

Copious Dawns, High Noons, Blessed Isles: Nietzsche's Ligurianity 105

Guilt Trips on Royal Roads: Freud's Ligurian Affinities 126

Blind Spots, Alibis, Sceneries: Benn's Ligurian Complexes 163

Postface: Liguria Rediviva 193

Notes 205

Bibliography 229

Index 251

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Illustrations

- Map 1 The Mediterranean xiii
- Map 2 Tuscany, Liguria, Côte d'Azur, Provence xiv
- 1 Edvard Munch, *Friedrich Nietzsche* 12
- 2 Lerici – Poesia del mare / Poetry of the Sea 24
- 3 Rapallo – Il porto / The Harbour 30
- 4 Portofino 48
- 5 Manarola, a Cinque Terre village 53
- 6 Renato Guttuso, *L'alba* / Dawn (*The Shore of Purgatory*) 56
- 7 Gerardo Dottori, *Il Golfo della Spezia* / *The Bay of La Spezia* 100
- 8 Stone with Serpent, in Weimar 124
- 9 Claude Lorrain, *Le Port de Gênes, vu de la mer* / *The Port of Genoa, Sea View* 125
- 10 On Rapallo's shore 129
- 11 Arnold Böcklin, *Im Spiel der Wellen* / *At Play in the Waves* 146
- 12 Portofino Castle 190
- 13 Vincent van Gogh, *Les Oliviers* / *Olive Trees* 191
- 14 Gaetano Previati, *Tramonto in Liguria* / *Sunset in Liguria* 201

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That *The Azure Spell of Liguria* is published by the University of Toronto Press is, geopoetically speaking, a felicitous matter: according to Silke Peust and Stephan Hormes's toponomastic etymologies, "Liguria" means land of shine, gleam, and brilliance, and by extension perhaps of *genius loci* or spirit of place, while the etymological origin of "Toronto" denotes a place of encounter or a point of convergence. I am thoroughly grateful not only for this appropriate synergetic momentum on the geopoetic grounds of my book on Liguria in Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud,

and Gottfried Benn, but in particular to my editor at the University of Toronto Press, Richard Ratzlaff, who has supported my work with kindness, fine knowledge, invaluable advice, and genuine interest.

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Map 1 The Mediterranean. © 2012 The Pennsylvania State University



Map 2 Tuscany, Liguria, Côte d'Azur, Provence. © 2012 The Pennsylvania State University

NIETZSCHE, FREUD, BENN,
AND THE AZURE SPELL OF LIGURIA

Ich liebe es ...
Von ferne her mich endlich heimzulocken,
Mich selber zu mir selber – zu verführen.

(I take delight in ...
Luring myself back home from far away,
Seducing myself to revert – to me.)
Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900)

An jedem Ort, an den ich komme, stelle ich fest,
daß vor mir schon ein Dichter da war.

(Wherever I go I come to realize
that a poet has already been there before me.)
Sigmund Freud (1856–1934)

... Überbesetzung ... mittels Geographie ...

(... hypercathexis ... via geography ...)
Gottfried Benn (1886–1956)¹

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Preface: Ligurian Geopoetics

... kennst du das Land?

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

... all forms of landscape are autobiographical.

Charles Wright

... elements of littorality ... shore rhetoric ... coastal writing ... geopoetics.

Kenneth White

Nietzsche, Freud, Benn, and the Azure Spell of Liguria argues that Liguria's smallness, steepness, compactness, and remoteness are qualities reflected in the textual practices and theories of the three authors who are at its core, while others, ranging from the Provençal troubadours and Dante Alighieri to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Vincent van Gogh, William Butler Yeats, Ezra Pound, Erika and Klaus Mann, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Eugenio Montale, and Italo Calvino (to name only a few), also find their way into the discussion. My reflections on shared form may well be prefigured in those troubadours who called the most complex, condensed, and hermetic of their three kinds of song *trobar clus* (enclosed, remote). Furthermore, my argument is anticipated by Dante and Goethe: in *De vulgari eloquentia* (*On Eloquence in the Vernacular*) and in *Purgatorio* (*Purgatory*), Dante stigmatizes Liguria as the most barren and inaccessible Romance terrain, while Goethe in his *Italienische Reise* (*Italian Journey*) qualifies poetic expression as *steil* (steep, perpendicular), as an augmented intensity, and, as such, opposed to the more extensively viable horizons of epic breadth.

The present study concentrates on Liguria as a borderland located between Italy and France, between the poetically charged regions of Dante's Tuscany and the troubadours' Provence, between sea and sky, and between the Alps and the Mediterranean. This prominent location has, in my judgment, heretofore been underrated in Nietzsche studies (while Nietzsche's creative landscapes – Swiss mountains and Mediterranean Sea – have certainly been examined [by Stephan Günzel, and in word and image by Donald Bates and David Krell], the specificity of Liguria as intensely coded intersection of these has not yet come to the fore), neglected altogether in Freud scholarship, and, in spite of Benn's hardly uncertain terms, by and large generalized into imprecision in interpretations of his unambiguously declared *ligurische Komplexe* (Ligurian complexes) as his first and foremost poetic challenge.

Based on an understanding of literary comparison as a cross-disciplinary and creative principle grounded in difference as much as in likeness, *The Azure Spell of Liguria* primarily draws on comparative energies present in two realms: in the cultural landscape of Liguria on the one hand and in a geopoetic approach to creative life and letters on the other. Adrian Room in *Placenames of the World* and Silke Peust and Stephan Hormes in *Atlas of True Names* etymologically unveil Liguria as the land of *Lugus*: of shine, glow, gleam, brilliance, and perhaps of *genius loci*. As a toponym, Liguria embodies the idea of geopoetics *in nuce*: the name of the place, its etymological denotation, its historical implications, and its cultural connotations in which land meets word. Stretching out as the *Riviera* (Latin *riparia*: shore) between the *hinterland* of France's Provence (Latin *provincia*: province, or more accurately land conquered by the Romans, from Latin *vincere*: to defeat) and the *waterland* of Italy's Tuscany (Etruscan *sk*: water), ranging from Marseilles, the *land of spring* in the west (Ligurian *mas*: spring) to Genoa (Celtic *gena*: mouth, or Latin *genu*: knee, but in any case in that corner where the coast almost rectangularly snaps off to the southeast) to La Spezia in the east (Latin *species*: splendour), Liguria is a geographic and poetic presence on whose grounds *The Azure Spell of Liguria* traces a poetics of influence, a confluence of literary forces, and an affluence of cultural materials and Mediterranean affinities as they converge in Nietzsche, Freud, and Benn's œuvres.

Friedrich Nietzsche cherished mountains and shores, water and sunlight – at Lake Silvaplana in the Swiss Engadine (Celtic *enos*: water) as well as in Liguria (Celtic *Lugus*: god of light) around Genoa and Rapallo, on whose coasts he walked, on whose rocks he rested, awaiting dawns and noons, contemplating islands and other circular matters, while fash-

ioning himself as a sun-seeking lizard who, with the liberating creation of *Also sprach Zarathustra* (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*), rolled a heavy rock off his soul. Sigmund Freud enjoyed the beach, rolling – in his own words – like a marine creature in an Arnold Böcklin painting on Rapallo’s carpets of rocks, blissfully immersed in a time warp that surely transcends his journeying and carries over into his post-Nietzschean discoveries about the human mind. Gottfried Benn did not like the sun. He preferred not only plain to peak and precipice but also desks at windows to rocks on sea shores. Rather than rolling rocks off his soul in Nietzschean fashion (not to mention a Freudian rolling on beaches), Benn was sufficiently content to gaze at the horizon from a distance, occasionally admiring rolling billiards during his few brief escapes to the Riviera, in order to *laisser les bons temps rouler*.

The Azure Spell of Liguria examines European writing in the light of what Predrag Matvejević has called “mediterraneity” – a quality neither ethnically defined, nor based on inheritance alone, but rather centred on forms of cultural learning and literary creativity. None of the three writers who are the focus of my study is Ligurian by birth or heritage, and yet all three hold a remarkable affinity with Liguria. *The Azure Spell of Liguria* concentrates on Liguria as the site where Nietzsche, Freud, and Benn’s creative lives intersect, demonstrating the crucial role that the cultural geography of Liguria has exercised on their writing. While exploring Nietzsche’s legacy with regard to Mediterranean affinity and literary expression, this study traces the geopoetic presence of the Alps and the Mediterranean as cultural landscapes of considerable impact on these three prominent writers of the Modernist era, arguing that places, their cultural increments, and their evocative names are entitled to literal as well as literary dimensions of signification.

The Azure Spell of Liguria explores Nietzsche, Freud, and Benn’s German-language writing as it was conceived against a Mediterranean backdrop, showing that any profound reading of imaginative writing is undeniably comparative in nature. After centuries of northern longing for the south (and of German yearning for Italy, in particular), one may well think that the story has become fairly tedious – were it not for such intriguing cases as Benn and Freud. While Freud’s intense relationship with the Italian Mediterranean as a site of antiquity that he frequently visited over a span of decades is certainly more straightforward than the one he entertained with Nietzsche’s Liguria in particular, Benn’s general dealings with the Mediterranean and with Italy are, by contrast, more deeply shrouded in mystery than his explicitly Ligurian poetics. Even if

he visited the Côte d'Azur on few occasions in the interwar period, his fascination with the Mediterranean stems from Homer and the Bible as well as from Goethe and Nietzsche, who were likewise educated in Homeric and biblical matters, as was Freud.

Goethe famously inscribed flowering lemon trees of the south in emblematic ways ("das Land, wo die Zitronen blühen," the land where lemon trees bloom), while Nietzsche's predilections were for Dionysian ripe figs (along with their metaphorical potential) as a form of mature *peideia*. Freud praised the citrus and in this as well as innumerable other aspects followed Goethe, whereas Benn zoomed in on the olive. Unlike Goethe and Freud's lemon and orange trees, however, Benn's olive is less a symbol of longing than an emblem of agency: "da geschah ihm die Olive" (then the olive befell him) he writes in one of his *Rönne Novellen* (*Rönne Novellas*) – he (Benn's *alter ego* Dr Werff Rönne) did not visit the olive; the olive visited him.² This unlikely visitor became one possible synthesis (or complex) of the Mediterranean for Benn, given that the olive tree is native not only to the eastern Mediterranean (with one possible origin in Libya) but also to the adjacent coastal areas of western Asia and northern Africa.

In that it is committed to place and displacement in ways that go beyond the practice of travel, *The Azure Spell of Liguria* is not strictly speaking a study of travelogues or travel writing. Rather, it is a geopoetic study that focuses on place and displacement as they emerge in exilic and nomadic texts conceived and composed during Nietzsche's Ligurian wanderings (he called himself a "good European" and had serious doubts when it came to being German), Freud's Ligurian whistle-stops, and Benn the onlooker's imaginary Ligurian escapes into an exotically informed inner emigration.

The psychogeographical work that followed the insights of the early Freud and Sándor Ferenczi in the 1920s into what one could roughly summarize as the psychoanalytical variant of landscape symbolism was primarily conducted in the three decades following the Fascist era, that is, in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s – as, for instance, in Guy Ernest Debord's situationist or William Guglielmo Niederland's psychogeographic mappings. These situationist and psychogeographic readings of towers and bridges, rivers and borders, peaks and shores have recently been provocatively adopted by long-distance walker Will Self in his enticingly humorous illuminations of the profoundly complex relationship between place, body, and mind (in his 2007 *Psychogeography* he aptly speaks of the enigmatic "modern conundrum of psyche and place,"

which he sets out to “disentangle” in tragicomical fashion). Even though the geopoetic school with which *The Azure Spell of Liguria* specifically engages is less intrigued by the precise effects of a given geographical environment on human character and comportment than by the poetic facets and literary outcomes of these effects on receptive and creative minds, Will Self’s spicy assessment of what he tellingly terms the “Côte of Desire” does play a certain role in the present study’s deliberations on body and mind, word and world.

A so-called spatial turn in the humanities was diagnosed in the early 1980s (and has been discerned as an ongoing concern ever since) – a turning point at which a paradigmatic change of inquiry occurred, no longer concentrating nearly exclusively on time and history but focusing increasingly on place and geography (and including simultaneity as a chronotopic perspective). Since this turn, a wide range of publications have appeared on the geopoetic, geophilosophical, geopsychological, geocultural, geocritical, geohistorical, geopolitical, and even geomantic horizons, such as, for example, Joan Brandt’s *Geopoetics: The Politics of Mimesis in Poststructuralist French Poetry and Theory* (1997), Stephan Günzel’s *Geophilosophie: Nietzsches philosophische Geographie* (2001), Erika Schellenberger-Diederich’s *Geopoetik: Studien zur Metaphorik des Gesteins in der Lyrik von Hölderlin bis Celan* (2006), Bertrand Westphal’s *La géocritique: Réel, fiction, espace* (2007), Magdalena Marszałek and Sylvia Sasse’s *Geopoetiken: Geographische Entwürfe in den mittel- und osteuropäischen Literaturen* (2010), and Merlin Coverley’s *Psychogeography* (2010), which focuses on urban spaces (London and Paris), the visionary tradition, and the birth of the flaneur, while taking note of the 1950s situationists as well as Will Self.

The reasons behind the remarkable career that the plethora of geoapproaches has experienced in European literature are numerous. It is, however, evident that the political-geographic refashioning of Europe since 1989 not only fortified literature’s increased investment in geography but also allowed for the rich quality of pan-European variants of the spatial turn altogether. It is its ethical and aesthetic commitment to place that puts geopoetics in particular contact with a series of modern literary theories and poetic experiments with genre – with, for instance, travel writing, exilic writing, and nomadic writing such as Nietzsche’s, Predrag Matvejević’s, or Kenneth White’s. Such a geopoetics confirms the potential of literature to perceive, remember, and conceive worlds at home and elsewhere, and is intricately intertwined with questions of aura and territory, place, exile and displacement, de-territorization

and re-territORIZATION, as well as with a panoply of ideas about (post-) Goethean world literature and its place-bound ways of literary making (*poiein*).

Even though *Tel Quel* was influenced by a number of drastically innovative writers – among them Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud – *The Azure Spell of Liguria* is not based in the French revolutionary poetics of *Tel Quel* or the post-Marxist theories that Joan Brandt engages with. And if my study sporadically touches upon questions surrounding representations of real and imagined spaces in Westphal's geocritical sense, my primary emphasis falls on imaginative writing and subjectively conceived place rather than socioculturally determined space. True, Westphal thoroughly discusses the differentiation between *espace* and *lieu*, as well as mimetic literary forms of geography – he even examines Cuban-Ligurian writer Italo Calvino in the urban space of Paris. However, *La géocritique* is obviously geocritical rather than geopoetic, draws from fictional spaces rather than poetic places, and focuses on postmodern rather than modern writing.

The Azure Spell of Liguria peripherally touches on Stephan Günzel (who takes note of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's Nietzsche readings, and briefly addresses *Geopoetik*, without, however, engaging with Kenneth White, nor specifically with Provence and Liguria)³ and his geophilosophical assessment of Nietzsche as a walking thinker – in the context of Nietzsche's muscular consciousness it is worth recalling that philosophy was born as an itinerant, peripatetic discipline. My book also accords to some degree with Erika Schellenberger-Diederich's readings of geologically inspired lyrical maps, Alpine metaphors, and Friedrich Hölderlin's hints at the poetic interest of the earth's *Gestalt*. The actual geopoetic approach of *The Azure Spell of Liguria*, however, relies primarily and explicitly on Kenneth White, who not only coined the term "geopoetics" and is the founder of the Parisian Institut International de Géopoétique (1989), with which the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics (1995) is affiliated, but who in the mid-1950s in Nietzschean nomadic fashion lodged in a wooden shack on the banks of the Isar river in Munich (studying Nietzsche) and in the late 1970s defended his doctoral thesis on the theme of intellectual nomadism.

In that it traces the literary potential of this kind of *poiesis*, which grounds itself in both the relations and proximities as well as the borders and distances between earth and word, self and other, *The Azure Spell of Liguria* places itself in affinity with the kind of geopoetics that has opened up a wide spectrum of literary readings and representations of time-honoured places and commonplaces, as well as of modern displace-

ments. “Place” in this context is obviously located above and beyond the idea of a literary setting, as well as of that of an inspiring ambience. Rather, it is examined in its particularities in a way that may well be reminiscent of Gaston Bachelard’s 1958 *La poétique de l’espace*. It is granted that Bachelard’s fine application of phenomenology to architecture focuses on human experience of domestic spaces and intimate places rather than of cultural landscapes. However, Bachelard’s interest in lived experience, his classification of places according to their connotations, his categorization of vertical metaphors reminiscent of Freud (such as attics and basements), his study of solitude, his reading of the poetic image as psyche *in nuce*, and – last but not least – his implicit appeal to the makers (in his case, architects) to imaginatively ground their work in the experience that it has engendered and that it likely will engender in future dwellers. These facets enable us to discern some affinities between Bachelard’s astute observations about domestic space and the present study’s commitment to Liguria as a recess and refuge, outlook and vanishing point in the case of Nietzsche, Freud, and Benn’s geopoetically inclined choices of places and words.

The Azure Spell of Liguria follows the geopoetic branch of scholarship that pursues points of convergence of “word and world,” as Kenneth White puts it. It relies heavily on White’s impressive corpus of geopoetic writing in general, and in particular on his *On the Atlantic Edge: A Geopoetics Project* (2006) and the recent receptions of his theoretical and poetic work as it spreads out from one cultural sphere (the Scottish islands and highlands, shores and moors in the north and west) to others (such as the Arabian world in the south and east) – investigations such as Norman Bissell’s essays and poems (*Slate, Sea and Sky* of 2007), Tony McManus’s *The Radical Field: Kenneth White and Geopoetics* (2007), and Bsaithi Omar’s *Land and Mind: Kenneth White’s Geopoetics in the Arabian Context* (2008). What *The Azure Spell of Liguria* shares with White’s endeavours is that, while heavily relying on Nietzsche, it takes the word “geopoetic” itself at face value: as “world-writing” or “world-making,” reverting to Goethe’s idea of *Weltliteratur* (world literature) in a kind of writing that according to White “opens space” and “looks beyond the borders,” preparing “sensitive grounds, subtle territory,” and ongoing encounters of the “earth-thing” with the “mind-thing.”

Kenneth White has stressed from the beginning that geopoetics can never lose touch with place, mind, or poetry. Early on he placed heavy emphasis on such figures as Friedrich Nietzsche, Friedrich Hölderlin, Arthur Rimbaud, and Walt Whitman. This point is crucial for *The Azure Spell of Liguria*, which is committed to tracing the concrete, individual

steps that Nietzsche, Freud, and Benn have taken in the geopoetic direction, as well as their subjective associations as they determine their ways of writing – the genres they prefer, the images they conceive, the metaphors they coin. By “subjective,” “individual,” and “associative” I intend the opposite of “objective,” “social,” and “symbolic.” Freud can become extraordinarily tedious when presenting us with his taxonomies of rather rigid dream symbols (jewels as male and jewel boxes as female genitals, and so on), while he is utterly intriguing when he introduces his open concept of free – subjective, individual, irrational, oneiric – association (one can, of course, always discuss how free free association actually is). I contend that it is this kind of free association that is intimately connected to a writer’s geopoetic *techné*, while taking a certain distance from psychogeographic classifications such as William Niederland’s symbolism.

Even if Freud was heavily drawn to such matters and Benn spoke of the word as “Phallus des Geistes” (phallus of the mind/intellect/spirit), I doubt that Nietzsche, Freud, and Benn were drawn to Liguria because Liguria’s map may resemble a rather twisted sort of phallus (Italy’s entire geographic contour has been read as phallic, and one sometimes wonders to what kind of vistas some of us may have been exposed). It is compelling in this context that while engaged with terminologies and definitions (such as geopoetics versus geoculturology), Marszałek and Sasse’s study *Geopoetiken* refers to White but includes an emphasis on the symbolic rather than the associative order of geopoetic things, albeit with a subjective rather than an objective mode of geopoetic construction.

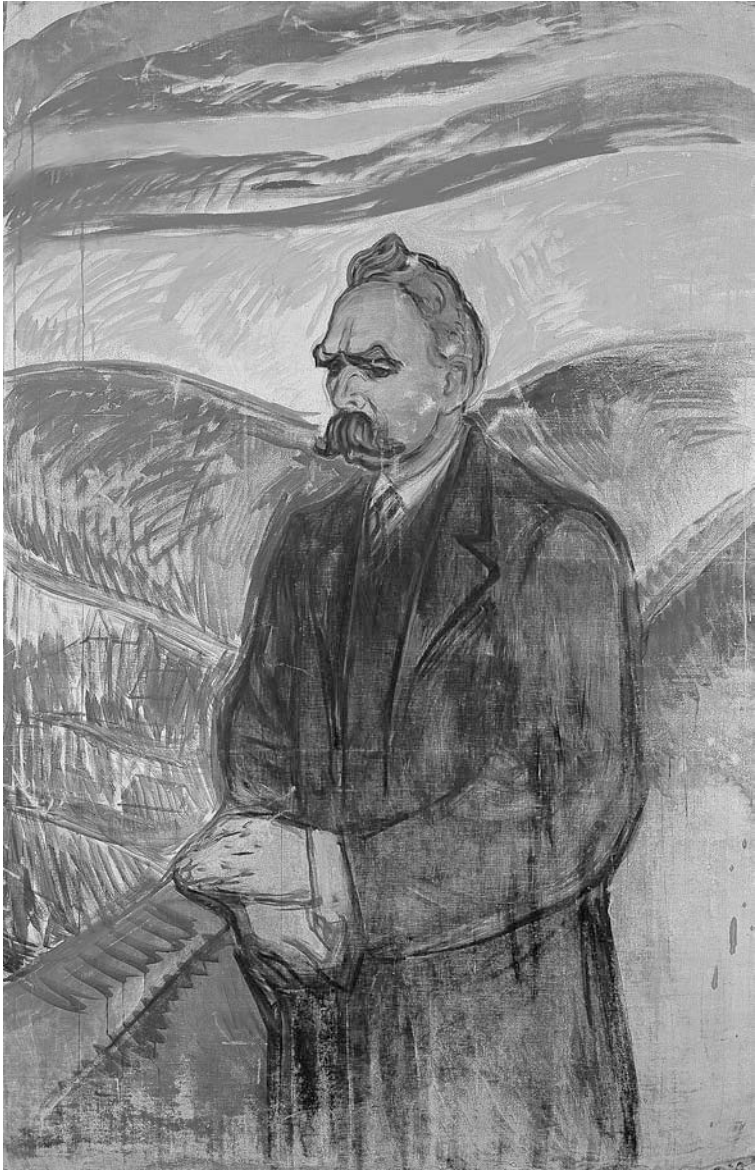
Europe’s two central cultural landscapes, the Alps and the Mediterranean, coexist precisely within the boundaries of the small, steep, compact, and remote world of Liguria, where the Maritime Alps and Ligurian Apennines sweep down to the Riviera. *The Azure Spell of Liguria* interprets Liguria as a microcosm in which the north-south axis (the Alps and the Mediterranean) and the east-west axis (the Riviera di *Levante* and the Riviera di *Ponente*) intersect at Genoa, while explaining how this intersection becomes relevant for a phenomenon that, in analogy with Kenneth White’s “littorality,” “atlanticity,” and “nordicity,” as well as with Predrag Matvejević’s “mediterraneity,” I have termed “ligurianity.” It is revelatory that White should begin and end *On the Atlantic Edge* with Nietzsche (with whom he shares clearly more than an intellectual nomadism) and that in *Mediterranean: A Cultural Landscape*, Matvejević should remind us that it was Nietzsche who “set forth the possibility of acquiring mediterraneity no matter where one is from.”

A joyous moment of curiosity and a memorable journey during my last year of school have left me with impressions so distinct that they have had a relevant impact on the writing of this book. I vividly remember my fascination when Edvard Munch's portrait of Nietzsche was projected onto the classroom wall – a large gloomy figure against a solar vertical landscape.

Munch's painting has repeatedly appeared as the cover for various books on Nietzsche, and is indubitably more appropriate than the well-known black-and-white portrait, devoid of any background, showing Nietzsche with the singled-out vacant stare and exaggerated moustache (dearer to his sister than himself) of his last decade of life in illness. I vaguely recall the confusion I felt following my first viewing of Munch's portrait, while we began venturing into some meaningful connection between Munch's *Nietzsche*, Freud's *Die Traumdeutung* (*Interpretation of Dreams*), and the principles of Expressionism as Germany's major contribution to European Modernism. On another occasion I had been initiated into the rebellious Expressionist aesthetics of shock and taboo through Benn's poems of disease, death, and decomposition, which at the time I found no less repulsive than Freud's major claims about mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, and the family romances in which they engage, whether wittingly or not.

In the subsequent summer I travelled to France and Italy: first to Provence and the Côte d'Azur, and then on to eastern Liguria (Lerici/Tellaro), whose almost vertical landscape, whose houses and gardens, vineyards and olive groves nestled in its terraced promontories, whose *trompe l'œil* paintings, tasty pesto, and azure sea provided reason enough for my enjoyment, even though I did not have the faintest idea at the time that Lord Byron had swum where I was swimming (allegedly farther than me), nor that Percy Bysshe Shelley had (unlike me) drowned and been cremated around there. At that moment I was aware neither of the time-honoured concept of *genius loci* nor of any Ligurian passion other than my own.

When I first encountered Benn's phrase "ligurischer Komplex" in the course of my readings for a university seminar on modern German poetry, my mind flew back to Liguria, delving into Benn's challenging poetics, which pervades virtually all of his creative writing and which he himself emphatically and repeatedly places in a post-Nietzschean context (while carefully shunning Freud). Nietzsche's *Morgenröthe* (translatable as *Aurora*, *Alba*, *Dawn*, or *Daybreak*), *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (*The Gay Science*), and *Also sprach Zarathustra: Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen* (*Thus*



Edvard Munch, *Friedrich Nietzsche* (c.1906) (oil on canvas). © 2012 The Munch Museum/ The Munch-Ellingsen Group/Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York. Used with permission.

Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None) in particular were essential to my comprehension of literary expression, as well as to my reflections on the geopoetic literary territory of Liguria's aura, lure, and lore within the intellectual framework that Modernism offers.

I was soon convinced that Nietzsche the philosopher and Freud the psychoanalyst called for an evaluation not only according to what they said but also, and perhaps more importantly, according to how they said it (Fritz Martini in *Das Wagnis der Sprache*, for instance, places Nietzsche's poetic prose, along with Benn's and others', in that precise context). Their subversive poetic experimentation with language and literature (primarily with metaphor, syntax, punctuation, and genre) demands to be studied alongside the work of poets such as Dante and Goethe, William Butler Yeats and Ezra Pound, Rainer Maria Rilke and Gottfried Benn. This idea might make immediate sense for Nietzsche, who not only philosophized poetically but also wrote a fair amount of "brilliant prose" (Walter Kaufmann) and significant verse, such as the cycles titled *Idyllen aus Messina* (*Messina Idylls*), *Lieder des Prinzen Vogelfrei* (*Songs of Prince Vogelfrei*) – for the most part revisions and an expansion of the *Idylls* – and the ecstatic posthumous *Dionysos-Dithyramben* (*Dionysos-Dithyrambs*), written at the time of *Zarathustra* but already marked by Nietzsche's impending collapse. But what about Freud?

Lesley Chamberlain, who has written so insightfully on the mature Nietzsche in *Nietzsche in Turin* and who named her fascinating book on Freud *The Secret Artist*, provides more than just a hint at an answer regarding Freud as a repressed imaginative writer who, following Nietzsche,

Ernest Thiel's idea for Norwegian Symbolist artist Edvard Munch (1863–1944) to create a posthumous portrait of Nietzsche grew out of his admiration for both the poet-philosopher and the painter. A photograph of Nietzsche in the early 1880s was Munch's inspiration for his monumental 1906 painting of the poet of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883–5) in the midst of a vertical solar landscape (Nietzsche's moustache, eyebrows, and quiff not only frame his face but appear as imitative repetitions of the mountain peaks, almost as if they had taken on the *Gestalt* of their environs). Hans Olde's photographs of Nietzsche after his breakdown assisted Munch, in particular with his conception of Nietzsche's face – a face that seems intimately familiar with *Zarathustra's* vision of the loneliest (in German, *Gesicht* is not only "face" but also "vision," as in Benn's *Urgesicht* / *Primal Vision*). Munch himself sojourned repeatedly on the French Riviera, painted in Nice and Monte Carlo (where he also developed a passion for gambling), and rented a villa in Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat in 1891, only a few years after Nietzsche's departure from this same coast.

co-created a language we tend to consider ours. We all, it seems, “speak Freud.” Harold Bloom has repeatedly pointed to Freud’s notions as the sole mythology that intellectuals of our time are able to share, while W.H. Auden in his poetic commemoration of Freud spelled out that Freud “quietly surrounds all our habits of growth,” referring to him as “no more a person now but a whole climate of opinion”; and in *Whose Freud* Peter Brooks and Alex Woloch open up a great variety of possible niches for psychoanalysis in contemporary culture. Freud has become an international idiom, a kind of post-Nietzschean *lingua franca*, in which one converses about art and life, literature and culture. But whose language did Freud speak? Which legacy did he rely on? Whose geopoetic paths did he pursue?

Freud was not only an aficionado of literary texts, received the Goethe Prize for his writing, was nominated for the Nobel Prize by Thomas Mann, and wrote case studies that read like well-plotted detective stories; he was also, as Michael Billig argues in *Freudian Repression*, a frustrated poet who was not always successful in balancing repression and expression. Freud was a sensitive and radically innovative reader as well as an energetic gleaner, anxious denier, and guilty forgetter, whose receptive and creative principles manifest themselves in his post-Nietzschean use of an expressive currency coined in Liguria. *The Azure Spell of Liguria* locates Nietzsche as both Freud and Benn’s expressive precursor in a variety of Ligurian locations – a philosopher-poet whose major writings are grounded in his Alpine-Mediterranean-Ligurian wanderings of the 1880s, the most prolific period of his life, and provide the thread that guides the reader through the present study’s Ligurian topographies. The geopoetics here at stake is “less a question of genre than a question of intensity: it is situated at the extreme limit of prose,” to borrow Bsaithi Omar’s words on Kenneth White’s “nomadic thought.”

The emphasis on Freud after Nietzsche has a double motive. The first concerns my understanding of the complex notions of the Mediterranean and “mediterraneity,” while the second is related to my approach to the dynamics of literary indebtedness and poetic tradition. *The Azure Spell of Liguria* welcomes the suggestion that thalassologist Predrag Matvejević makes when defining “mediterraneity” as a quality independent of a writer’s “place of birth or residence,” and thus as something “acquired, not inherited, a decision, not a privilege.” Remaining comparative in scope in spite of its leaning towards texts originally written in German, *The Azure Spell of Liguria* combines Matvejević’s trailblazing idea (which is, intriguingly, at once erudite and inclusive) with the related