Research Article

Babette Babich*

Nietzsche's Ariadne: On Asses's Ears in Botticelli/Dürer – and Poussin's *Bacchanale*

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Abstract: In what follows I raise the question of Ariadne and Dionysus for Nietzsche, including the relative size of Ariadne's ears, as Dionysus observes at the close of "Ariadne's Lament" [*Klage der Ariadne*]. Nietzsche's references to ears invoke not only Nietzsche's "selective" concern with having the right ears (both to hear what he says and with respect to his discovery regarding ancient Greek tragedy: hearing with one's eyes, that is the relation of ancient Greek music in the word) but also the question of myth and genealogical context. Reading through myth is key not only in terms of the textual, lyric tradition but also painting and sculpture, including sarcophagi in antiquity. It makes all the difference to ask, as Karl Kerényi cites Nietzsche as asking: *Wer weiß …was Ariadne ist?* And not less: *who was she to Dionysus?* To this extent, Nietzsche's concern with ears, small and long, is less incidental or furry fetish than hermeneutic attunement.

Keywords: Nietzsche, Ariadne, Lucian, Apelles, Dionysus, Botticelli, Dürer, Poussin, death

Dionysos
Be clever, Ariadne!
You have little ears, you have my ears:
Tuck a clever word into them! –
Must one not first hate oneself, if one is to love oneself? …
I am your labyrinth…

– Nietzsche, *Klage der Ariadne*

1 A problem like Ariadne

There is an established tradition of scholarship both on Nietzsche's Ariadne, including extended musing on Nietzsche's own ears, and regarding Dionysus and his ears, and on Ariadne and her ears, seemingly conclusive, although sometimes at variance on this or that conclusive point,[1] as well as a tradition of frustration.

1 Podach, *Ein Blick in Notizbucher Nietzsches*. See Deleuze, "Ariadne's Mystery," 8–9; and Derrida, *The Ear of the Other*. Cf., too, indebted to the literary scholar, Wolfram Groddeck, Zittel, "'Gespräche mit Dionysos'," 70–99. And see too, importantly, Sommer, *Kommentar zu Nietzsches*. See too Otto, *Dionysus Myth and Cult*, 180–189 and at some complex length, Kerényi, *Dionysus*, 68–88.

* **Corresponding author: Babette Babich,** Department of Philosophy, Fordham University, New York, United States, e-mail: Babich@fordham.edu

As Adrian Del Caro puts it, the labyrinth seems emblematic: no sooner does one undertake to "try one's hand" at it, thereby joining the ranks of the scholars who have had at "the problem of Nietzsche's Ariadne" than one finds oneself abandoned to abandoning the project, lost, which is also to say: caught up in it. Del Caro offers a non-exhaustive roster: recounting the seeming fate of

> many respected voices in Nietzsche scholarship who have closed the book on Ariadne, and in so doing have restricted access to one of the more obscure, secretive locations within the Nietzschean philosophical topography. Ariadne is Cosima Wagner, Cosima Wagner was Nietzsche's secret and long-standing love, Wagner was Theseus (sometimes), Nietzsche was Dionysus [...][2]

And so on and so on: Del Caro's roster hardly exhausts the range of scholarly readings on offer.

Del Caro is judicious: he tells us that one needs "respected" scholarship, and recently one (analytically minded scholar) has connected Ariadne and Jordan Peterson (hard to make this up).[3] Claudia Crawford has an entire book[4] and other authors fix attention on the labyrinth *per se*,[5] and while others focus on the dithyramb, Richard Kuhns helps us connect von Hofmansthal and Nietzsche to illuminate Richard Strauss' eponymous opera,[6] and David Farrell Krell mines again (and again) the insights of the most eminent of these respected names, Karl Reinhardt on Nietzsche's "lament,"[7] in Krell's *Postponements*.[8] And Ariadne is a standard reference for many feminist readings.[9] Everyone seems to know, everyone tells us.

Still the mystery of Ariadne remains and her relation to Dionysus, her husband, who as Pietro Benvenuti's *Bacchus and Ariadne* shows, comes upon her, as she "sleeps," remains (Figure 1).

Crawford mentions that Ariadne had a father, Midas, as she says: this is one reading, other traditions tell us that Ariadne's father was Minos and there can be a conjunction via metonymy, the names sound or at least begin by sounding the same – think of the presocratic/preplatonic philosophers whose names begin Anax: Anaximander, Anaximenes, Anaxagoras[10] – but the difference is between Lydia and Crete, still there is ambiguity perhaps owing to the asses's ears given that both Midas and Minos had them.

As a name, Minos requires disambiguation.[11] In addition, although the concept of matrilineality likewise needs clarification (it may not mean that women "rule"), Crete was matrilineal. The "Minos" in question who was related to Ariadne was brother to Rhadamanthus, another famous Cretan and both, I'll come back to this, along with a third brother, Sarpedon, were judges of the underworld.

We know this from Virgil and other sources. Standing at the wide gates of hell in Dante's *Inferno*, Minos is associated with a snake, here his own tail which he wraps around the damned, to measure judgment, sorting the damned to whatever correspondent level of hell – think the contortions of the sorting hat in the 2001 film, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* – wrapping it about himself in the case of Michelangelo's Minos (Figure 2), so to judge himself.

Nietzsche tells us about Midas and Silenus in connection with reports it would be better "not to hear" in *The Birth of Tragedy* (BT §3). And, again, both Midas and Minos have the same attribute of long, asses' ears, distinctive in Minos' case, just as Michelangelo's (discomfiting) painting of Minos shows (Figure 2).[12]

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2 Del Caro, "Symbolizing Philosophy," here 125.

3 Thorgeirsdottir, "Vom Krieg zur Liebe."

4 Crawford, *To Nietzsche*; and see Harries, "Nietzsche's Labyrinths: Variations on an Ancient Theme."

5 Schmid, "Zur Epistemologie des Labyrinths." Schmid names Ariadne's lament "Nietzsche's 'most mysterious poem'" (144), adding that it is Dionysus in his to and fro, coming and going, that "'is' the labyrinth" which Schmid connects with Nietzsche's assertion "*Es giebt kein Außen*." 146.

6 Kuhns, "The Rebirth of Satyr Tragedy in Ariadne auf Naxos."

7 David Krell refers to the 1977 English translation but see Reinhardt, *Reinhardt, Vermächtnis der Antike* in addition to Flashar, "Die Klage der Ariadne."

8 Krell, *Postponements*.

9 Oliver, *Womanizing Nietzsche*.

10 Crawford cites Robert Graves on Midas in her *To Nietzsche*, 40. On the διαδοχαί, see Babich, *Nietzsches Antike*, especially in connection with Nietzsche on authority established by listing teacher–student succession: 36f.

11 See Forsdyke, "Minos of Crete."

12 Although discomfit is not his theme, see Barolksy, "The Meanings of Michelangelo's Minos."

Figure 1: Pietro Benvenuti, *Bacchus and Ariadne*, 1819. Private Collection, Rome. Fair Use.

Revelatory (in more than this instance) is Horst Bredekamp's monumental *Michelangelo*.[13] Bredekamp does not *per se* analyse Minos as such but the tension is clear, telling us that Minos is set "literally" [*buchstäblich*] at the margins: "pressed against the edge."[14] By considering the entire composition – a challenge, quintessentially so, when it comes to Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* – one needs to reflect that the figure is set to the bottom right, thus counterbalancing Michelangelo's Charon at the lower right, higher than the lowest figure on the left: Minos.

And what other ears might befit a man married to Pasiphae, the Cretan queen who afflicted him with ejaculate of scorpions and spiders and millipedes, so to covertly punish his human lovers, quite as the queen found herself paired with a consort-king who demanded a bloodthirsty tribute of human sacrifice – seven youths and seven maidens – thus the logical continuation of this career in his service in the

13 Bredekamp, *Michelangelo*, 527.
14 Ibid.

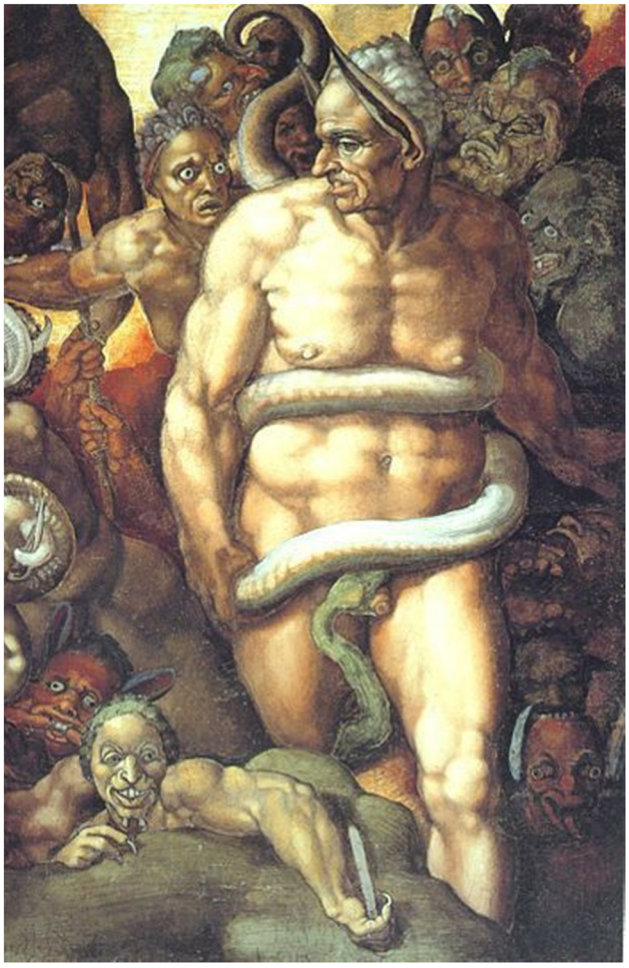

Figure 2: Michelangelo, Minos detail from the *Last Judgment*, 1536–1541. Sistine Chapel, Rome. Public Domain.

underworld as judge (together, as noted above, with his brothers).[15] The connection with carnal sin is also emphasized.[16] The name Minos, again, a not-quite individual signifier (but what name is?): the king in a matrilineal kingdom has a *role* to play.[17]

I suggest that Minos matters for Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne* (1522–3), one of the most striking paintings of Ariadne, after being abandoned by Theseus, at the moment of a first encounter with Dionysus vaulting an awkward – contorted – vault, caught as it were in an impossibly strobe-light moment, *avant la lettre*. The painting (Figure 3) is ecstatic in composition,[18] including a sylvan/Pan figure, dark skin, widow's peak, perhaps with horns as suggested by two white lines on either side of his head, perhaps with long ears, hard to tell with his wild hair: some identify this as a Laocoön figure (tho' what this Trojan priest of Apollo might be doing revelling with Dionysus would be anyone's guess) and others track the figure back to

15 Europa was the mother of three sons with Zeus, hence genealogies matter. See, for discussion, Andrews, "The Myth of Europa and Minos."

16 Barolini explains, more specifically than the general report above, that one can find Minos "at the threshold of lust in the Inferno." *Dante and the Origins of Italian Literary Culture*, 149.

17 Even ancient authors attest to this. Hence, Plutarch emphasizes problems with ambiguity in connection with Minos. See too Ziolkowski, *Minos and the Moderns* as well as Colavito, *The New Theogony* as well as, earlier still and in the same vein, Durant, *The Life of Greece*.

18 This painting and its composition are much discussed. See for background, on Laocoön and its interpretation, my chapter: "Winckelmanns Apoll — Nietzsches Dionysos. Farbe und Musik" in *Nietzsches Antike*.

Figure 3: Titian, *Bacchus and Ariadne*, 1522–1523. National Gallery, London. Public Domain.

Catullus' account, metonymically in either case, noting the struggle with serpents surrounding his body (and in his hands), or festooned about him (never mind the tensions in his torso), just as Michelangelo (Figure 2) shows Minos girt about by snakes, a signifier, as snakes commonly signify – think of Ixion – the venomous consequences of erotic excess. And this too was associated with Ariadne's father, who may have been there, perhaps on loan from the underworld, metonymy reigns in painting as in myth, to give her away in marriage to Dionysus.

But where in the genealogical catalogue may one trace one's ears? We know that male baldness is a trait inherited, usually, from one's maternal grandfather. The length of ears hardly gets a mention from the genealogists. In any case, Ariadne has not got her father's ears: she has small ears, like the tempter god, her husband, Dionysos.

We know that the ears are a divine punishment. Apollo, displeased with Midas's judgment of Marsyas as victor, graces him (via Tmolus) with the ears of an ass to chastise him and show him up before all the world for his judgment, before going on to flay Marsyas alive for his skin.[19]

It was to illustrate the complexity of the god's response to the contest (quite in addition to Nietzsche's reflection on dissonance in tragedy and in music) that I set Bartolomeo Manfredi's *Apollo and Marsyas* (Figure 4) on the cover of my *Nietzsches Antike*.

Manfredi's painting is beautiful and calmly horrific at the same time. As a gloss on the title image, I explained that Marsyas, who played the double flute or aulos, had been designated victor in a contest

19 Vogel, "Der Schlauch des Marsyas."

Figure 4: Bartolomeo Manfredi, *Apollo and Marsyas*, 1615–1620. St Louis Art Museum. Public Domain.

against Apollo playing his lyre according to the judgment of Midas. As a "reward" for the satyr's musical prowess, Apollo skinned the satyr alive to take his skin.[20] It is instructive to reflect regarding Greek musical instruments that Apollo's lyre was made, almost exclusively, of animal body parts: from the sound box[21] wrought from the shells of the tortoises one can still see if one climbs the acropolis near Athens, covered taut with animal skin, to goat horns, strung with gut, fitted with findings of bone, ivory, and mother of pearl.[22] Apollo, impressed with the musical genius of the satyr, took his skin for his lyre. To this day, prize goats are "rewarded" with slaughter and animal skins are valued for drumheads and bagpipes.

Elsewhere I argue that scholars of antiquity tend to leave Nietzsche out of their research, sometimes with a certain amount of misguided anger. And this same tendency also affects Nietzsche scholarship as Nietzsche was not merely a child of his times but born as such between two contesting horns, still unreconciled to this day, of nineteenth-century philology. Scholars have thus misread Nietzsche's essay on history for more than a hundred years, preferring to read the "monumental" and the "antiquarian" on their own terms. The monumental invokes Otto Jahn's archaeological sensibility:[23] things, fragments, in their sparsity – Nietzsche speaks of "the barest remnants" [*sparliche Reste*]. Nor is Nietzsche the only one to make this observation, it is the more obvious point, as Mass and Snyder observe, after making it clear that they too hardly credit Nietzsche,

> Whereas Egyptologists can study a number of harps, lutes, and lyres, as well as instruments of other kinds, often preserved in excellent condition, Hellenists have almost nothing except some ivory ornaments and facings, a few plektra, and fragments of tortoise shells.[24]

In what follows, I do not claim to solve the problem of Ariadne, which seems disappointingly similar to Bernstein's empty song about "a problem like Maria," but I seek to complicate it. I argue that the question of Ariadne be read in connection with Nietzsche's gnomic aphorism "*Adventavit asinus, pulcher et fortissimus*" (BGE §8).

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20 Babich, *Nietzsches Antike*, iv. And see, also for further references, 312ff. One should contrast Titian's painting of the same flaying of Marsyas for greater verisimilitude and oddly thus less jarring. See for discussion of this Titian "in the archbishop's palace in Kroměříž," Apesos, "Titian's 'Flaying of Marsyas'," here 111.

21 See Creese, *The Origin of the Greek Tortoise Shell Lyre*.

22 See further for a discussion of original musical instruments in this archaic context, my last chapter, "Nietzsche und die reine Musikalität des Dionysischen: Rhythmus und Dithyrambus," in Babich, *Nietzsches Antik*e, 299ff, esp. my discussion of the archaeo-musicologist, Richard Dumbrill on the challenges of reconstructing the silver lyre of Ur (312–4) in contrast with Mass and Snyder's research, cited below, on reconstructing Greek lyres and other stringed instruments (328–30).

23 See Babich, "Nietzsche und die 'reine Musikalität' des Dionysischen: Rhythmus und Dithyrambus," in particular: "Nietzsches materielle Hermeneutik: Archäologie" in *Nietzsches Antike*, 299f, 306f.

24 Mass and Snyder, *Stringed Instruments of Ancient Greece*, xvi–xvii. See too for a more specific, recent discussion, which simply repeats on the very first page "the shadow of Nietzsche's Apollonian/Nietzschean dichotomy," in an (uncited) echo of Mass and Snyder, Ulieriu-Rostás, "Dionysiac Strings?."

These are the "convictions" of the philosophers as they make their "stage entrance" (ibid.) as this reference may invite us to read not only Ovid's and Hyginus's and Catullus' Latin but Lucian's Greek as we read Nietzsche.

2 Nietzsche and the furries

A clear depiction of the "advent" of the ass that might count as beautiful, complete with a mystery cult, is (Pseudo)Lucian's *Lucius and the Ass*, a tale of scopic adventure and misadventure, complete with the same roses Midas uses to bind Silenus and about which we read as used as fetters in Lucian's *True History* when the wanderers first encounter Rhadamanthus. Roses also matter for Archilochus as Nietzsche tells us and Nietzsche himself writes about roses, erotically, or quite as close as he comes to the erotic: *wollt ihr meine Rosen Pflucken?* – one rather needs the German – "do you want to pluck my roses?"[25]

We need a bit more as the ears and Nietzsche's various references to them remain perplexing on a number of accounts and more than one discussion invokes Nietzsche's obsession with his *own* ears. The claim seems to originate with Paul Deussen's report that Nietzsche was overly anxious about finding himself, owing to whatever distraction, riding an ass rather than a horse. Thus, Deussen explained, assuming the key signifier to be the *length* of the animal's ears, Nietzsche proceeded to measure them, to be certain.[26] Anecdotal reports, like much psychoanalytic art history, including speculations regarding Raphael's management of his artistic/erotic capacities,[27] tend to share the same limitations that go along with diagnosing Nietzsche's or his father's illness (what on earth is the famous "softening of the brain"? It might mean any number of things which is another way of saying we do not know, lacking empirical evidence one way or the other: there is no patient to examine, no blood test to be done).

If, reading between Schelling and Nietzsche, John Ebert Wilson reminds us that the allegory with the ass and his ears appears in Luther,[28] we need more than the passing mention Wilson offers us. We need an image: we need the title-page wood-cut of Luther's *Wider das Papstthum zu Rom vom Teuffel gestifft*,[29] featuring – it is fairly crowded (Figure 5) – the figure of the pope with long, asses' ears, legs outstretched, hands folded in prayer, being carted off by demons as if seated in the church choir, as one also sees the apse including the arch of church windows behind the pope, likewise being carried off, the whole poised for a fall into the leviathan- or eel-like maw of hell, surrounded by hordes of demons with long ears (*and* horns), epitomized as "*Papstesel mit langen Eselsohren und verdammtem Lügenmaul*."[30]

It is worth taking such "picture-book" references to what we have been exploring thus far. Hence, writing about Heidegger (and Heidegger's lecture course on Nietzsche and art) rather than Nietzsche as such (and certainly rather than about Ariadne), Robert Bernasconi takes us back to Pliny as we should always remind ourselves to return to Pliny, to read about Apelles. Bernasconi's essay is titled with Pliny's proverb "*Ne sutor ultra crepidam*" as Bernasconi reads that other great Lucian enthusiast, Erasmus along with Dürer.[31] If we do not get to learn about Botticelli's Apelles from Bernasconi, the description appears in Lucian[32] and Lucian is a dangerous source (for a host of reasons), but here he is key.

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25 I take this up, including related citations, in a chapter on the eroticism of Nietzsche's description of statues – and the sublime – "Zarathustras Statuen" in Babich, *Nietzsches Plastik* and earlier (in several essays) discussing Nietzsche and Archilochus – and lyric poetry.

26 Cf. Deussen, *Erinnerungen an Friedrich Nietzsche* as related by Förster-Nietzsche, *Der werdende Nietzsche*, 244.

27 See for this, including further references, my chapter "Transfiguration: 'Zur Physiologie der Kunst'" in *Nietzsches Plastik*, 185–214.

28 Wilson, *Schelling und Nietzsche zur Auslegung der frühen Werke Friedrich Nietzsches*, 334.

29 Luther, *Wider das Papstthum zu Rom, vom Teufel gestiftet*. There is, if anything might go without saying, a correspondingly large literature on this.

30 Luther, Wider das Papstthum zu Rom, 228.

31 Bernasconi, *Heidegger in Question*, 117f.

32 See for an overview, very much as an articulation of ekphrasis as such, and with a range of references, including a lovely representation/discussion of Lysippos' Kairos (39f), Borg, "Bilder zum Hören – Bilder zum Sehen."

Figure 5: Martin Luther, *Wider das Papstum zu Rom vom Teufel gestiftet*, 1545. Wittenberg durch Hans Lufft. Cover after Lucas Cranach, 1545. Public Domain.

Thus, we have a picture, reversing Lucian's locus classicus, his ekphrasis of Apelles. In fact, this being all about a painter, we have any number of such by any number of painters, just to count the ones detailing the ears belonging to a king, said to be King Midas, epitomized by Sandro Botticelli, *Calunnia* [The Calumny of Apelles] (ca. 1494).

Botticelli arguably outmatches many of the paintings recreating the lost painting of Apelles, even should we limit ourselves to those depicting Midas's ears. Well-discussed in art history, and how could it not be, given that, here like the Laocoön first unearthed in a constellation involving Pliny along with Michelangelo and Vasari,[33] the subject of *The Calumny of Apelles* is a painter reported as blamelessly accused retold in Vasari's *Lives*.[34] The "reverse" ekphrasis illustrates Lucian's original ekphrasis of Apelles' satirical painting in Lucian's *Slander*, which last convoluted self-reference has inspired some scholars, as Rudolph Altrocchi has explained, to "accuse Lucian of inventing both the story and the description."[35] Altrocchi repeats the admonishment offered by Lucian's translator, A[ustin] M[orris] Harmon (1878–1950) of the Loeb edition, to underline that "the story is apocryphal."[36] What is certain is

33 I have written variously on this theme, most recently: "Winckelmanns Apoll – Nietzsche's Dionysos. Farbe und Musik" in Babich, *Nietzsches Antike*, 183–223, see here 190.

34 See for an overview of the connection between Vasari and Botticelli, Stapleford, "Vasari and Botticelli."

35 Altrocchi, "The Calumny of Apelles in the Literature of the Quattrocento," here 455.

36 Altrocchi, citing Lucian in English translation, cites Harmon here: "363, n. 1." Ibid.

Figure 6: Sandro Botticelli, *Calunnia*. Ca. 1494. Uffizi, Florence. Public Domain.

that Lucian is the source for Vasari and thus for Botticelli and many others.[37] Similarly, via echo and repetition/revision, art historians trade accounts one from another.[38]

Now, and among other things, the challenge to readers – "what," as Nietzsche says, "do the names matter?" – is that Lucian names Ptolemy as the king liable to be receptive to slanderous accounts, Ptolemy being a more plausible candidate for the second-century CE Syrian author than other names. Further, it can be noted that the painter as victim vanishes in the case of Shakespeare's *Othello*, but the point remains that such sovereigns are less than "sovereign," inasmuch as they are liable to having their ears turned, with uniformly catastrophic consequences.

To this and earlier than Luther's attack on the pope (see, again, Figure 5), we may add Albrecht Dürer's 1520–1521, *Die Verläumdung des Apelles* as all of Dürer's characters (apart from the king) are labelled to make the derivation from Lucian clear (Figure 7, 9 and 10).

In Dürer's *exoteric* image, i.e., on display in the Nürnberg Rathaus, the king's furry ears are unobscured in contrast to the hands-on tactics of the whisperers attending Botticelli's king. And as Lucian says, nearly 2,000 years before the social media phenomenon of ASMR: "Somehow or other we all like to hear stories that are slyly whispered in our ear and are packed with innuendo."[39] Thus, Lucian might seem to have anticipated the YouTube phenomenon of "autonomous sensory meridian response" as Lucian continues: "I know men who get as much pleasure from having their ears titillated with slander as some do from being tickled with feathers."[40]

37 Lucian, *Slander*.
38 See the large portion of Altrocchi's footnotes in his "The Calumny of Apelles in the Literature of the Quattrocento," passim. Today, the range can be extended if scholars are typically less exigent in noting antecedents.
39 Lucian, *Slander*, 383.
40 Ibid.

Dürer's mural, like Botticelli, is a reverse (painterly) ekphrasis of Lucian's ekphrasis of Apelles, Nietzsche would, like as not, have known, given its proximity, from direct experience. Today, we cannot know it: such is time and, more importantly, such is war.

It is not that we lack for restorations. This we have; the trouble is, as Robert Bernasconi highlights the complex notion of "verisimilitude" [*Richtigkeit*], or what in these days of "fake" truth can simply be called the "truth" of the restoration to the original, just given, and thus the need for art history, that the original itself had been (always already) "multiply" repainted prior to being bombed. Here, although Bernasconi is not invariably sympathetic to Heidegger's notion of truth in his illustrated analysis of Dürer's *Young Hare*, Bernasconi reads between Panofsky and Wölfflin in order to unpack the art philosophical convention of "verisimilitude," recollecting Erasmus, again, Nietzsche's antecedent in shared appreciation for Lucian in connection with Pliny's account of Apelles.[41] At issue for Bernasconi as it is always an art historian's worry – it was this manifold variety that Walter Biemel would emphasize in his own account of Heidegger's "truth" – is the version of Dürer's *Hare* (Figure 8) Heidegger had in mind when he tells us in his Nietzsche lectures that Dürer "makes Being visible: in a particular hare, the Being of the hare; in a particular animal, animality."[42] Thereby Bernasconi reminds us that Dürer's *Hare* is a watercolor with ears furry enough and photorealistic enough to justify Dürer's characterization as a "master of verisimilitude."[43]

In fact – this is not Bernasconi's point – Dürer's watercolor can inspire Easter Bunny associations and a connection is there to be made with Beatrix Potter's illustrations. Keeping to the high ground of art history with Wölfflin, with Panofsky, Bernasconi asks "if Heidegger had only seen a black and white reproduction of the "Hare" so that he thought it was an engraving. Or perhaps he saw an engraving based on the watercolor."[44] The problem is the "problem" of truth qua verisimilitude where Bernasconi is talking about "reproductions unfaithful to the original." I note, and hence the relevance of the complex history and tissue of associated falsifications of the Laocoön, that the problem of "restoration" as the Laocoön is a restoration, is something else again. For his part, Bernasconi's concern is with the question of "great art" quite as Heidegger argues that this declines "as aesthetics develops."[45]

These, again, are "high" themes in art history as in philosophical aesthetics which means that this has been explored, if often one-sidedly, by many authors. Here, I draw on art that can, arguably, be regarded as *less than* great, although this hardly holds in the case of Dürer's 1521–1522 allegory, following Lucian's *Slander*, and judgment is complicated, historically speaking, given the absent original (multiply painted over in restorations).[46]

Both Botticelli and Dürer draw on Lucian via Vasari. Again, the theme is well-explored.[47] But it remains challenging even if everyone supposes themselves to know all about Vasari as source. Hence, Peter Hecht reflects in his review of David Cast's *The Calumny of Apelles*,

> Apelles' painting, or rather Lucian's concept, slipped from the artistic consciousness in the course of the eighteenth century, just as allegory in general was dismissed as being too literary.[48]

In the course of a review dedicated to the fairly Nietzschean theme of "pot-peeking," that is: reading a painting (or, in Nietzsche's case, one of his aphorisms) with a view to deciphering the inspiration from the artist's (author's) life, Hecht alludes to Dürer's rendering of Aristotle being ridden by Phyllis, an image that

41 Bernasconi, "*Ne Sutor Ultra Crepidam*," 120 and *passim*.
42 Ibid., 123. Bernasconi cites Heidegger, GA 43, 230, *Nietzsche I*, 217.
43 Ibid., 120.
44 Ibid., 123.
45 Ibid., 125.
46 We need a discussion of aura, which exceeds the current context (it is a debate Heidegger engaged in his *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens* with Theodor Hetzer regarding the Sistine Madonna). See, to begin for discussion, the concluding section of Babich, "Reflections on Greek Bronze and the 'Statue of Humanity'."
47 See too, more comprehensively: Förster, "*Die Verläumdung des Apelles* in der Renaissance."
48 Hecht, "Review of David Cast, *The Calumny of Apelles*," here: 60.

inspired Charles Andler's discussion of Nietzsche and Lou and Paul Rée, "reading" a photograph,[49] and subsequently David Blair Allison tracking the image back to woodcuts and tapestries,[50] but Hecht, I think rightly, not only brings allusions closer to Nietzsche's locale (Hecht, to be clear, references neither Nietzsche nor Andler) but takes issue with Cast's account as Hecht notes that,

> Dürer also painted a scene of Aristotle and Phyllis in the Council Chamber at Nuremberg, but that was certainly not intended as a "model for the amorous games to be played out below" (p. 106), as Cast would have us believe. This particular subject was usually depicted quite straightforwardly. Aristotle is shown on his hands and knees with a bit in his mouth, allowing himself to be ridden by the woman he loved. Now that really was not what the councillors of Nuremberg got up to in public.[51]

Thus, Hecht brings in not the context of a repressed socio-political constellation but the older mythological motif, warning rulers/kings not to be, in effect, "asses," specifically, not to lend their ears to slander.

Hence, the Nuremberg mural is of great interest – if only for the ears.

The subject of Dürer's *Verläumdung* (Figure 7) is timely: slander or calumny is propaganda at a level where, as one might suppose, it might matter: whispering non-truth to power to those who have power, this is the "art of the courtier," and ladies are typically imagined to play this role but where would *Realpolitik* be without Machiavelli?

The subtitle to Lucian's *Slander* explicates: *On Not Being Quick to Put Faith In It* as this offers the *Inbegriff* of "ekphrasis." As Harmon, Lucian's translator, reminds us:

> This essay is rhetoric pure and simple, and was probably written early in Lucian's career. It is famous because it contains a vivid description of a picture by Apelles, which was again translated into paint by Botticelli in "La Calumnia."[52]

It is worth reading Gary Shapiro's extended reflections on *ekphrasis* (but also with respect to Nietzsche),[53] and it is relevant that Shapiro engages Raphael's *Transfiguration* as Nietzsche describes this painting, as Tracy B. Strong also explicates with reference to no lesser locus than the New Testament.[54] Thereby Shapiro's review of Foucault's explication of Magritte echoes at least titularly Strong's 1975 *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration*[55] detailing "Nietzsche's transfiguration of Raphael's *Transfiguration*."[56]

For its part, Dürer's *Calumny* offers a bestiary of Nietzsche's more unpleasant associative denunciations of women, not excluding truth who is here, very modestly as a lady in waiting in a good Christian spirit, set off to the side (Figure 10).

But we know the Botticelli as Nietzsche likewise knew it, depicting the naked truth right alongside rue (or remorse) or, as we may read Dürer's mural, repentance/penitence [*poenitentia*]:

Arguably, Nietzsche's ekphrasis is not of Dürer's modestly clothed truth but Botticelli's more conventionally undraped truth (Figure 11) in *Beyond Good and Evil*:

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49 Andler's, 1920–1931, *Nietzsche sa vie et sa pensée II*. Dürer in other contexts is discussed by Nietzsche scholars as Nietzsche invokes Dürer's *Knight, Death and the Devil*. Bertram in particular, in no less associative a locus than chapter two of his *Nietzsche*, 37 ff, featuring an epigraph from Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, alluding to seeing not Angels as in Rilke's case, but "demons" and, more recently, among others, Martin Ruehl who is discussing Mann and Bertram decidedly more than Nietzsche, Ruehl, "A Master from Germany."

50 Allison, *Reading the New Nietzsche*. To illuminate his reading, Allison includes two half-tone reproductions of the 1320 Freiburg tapestry. Given that the photo of Nietzsche and Rée and Lou includes two men and a woman in a cart, rather than a man on all fours with a woman on his back, I discuss an alternate reading (Cleobis and Biton) in Babich, "Reading Lou von Salomé's Triangles."

51 Hecht, "Review of David Cast, *The Calumny of Apelles*," 60.

52 Harmon, Translator's gloss, in Lucian, *Slander*, Vol. 1, 359.

53 See, but this is not the only locus where he discusses this theme, Shapiro, *Archaeologies of Vision*. I also draw on Shapiro's discussion in "Transfiguration: Physiologie der Kunst" in Babich, *Nietzsches Plastik*. See too, Shapiro's account of Nietzsche's (explicit) reprise of Burckhardt, "The Absent Image: Ekphrasis and the 'Infinite Relation' of Translation," especially 16f.

54 Strong, "Philosophy of the Morning."

55 Strong, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration*.

56 Shapiro, "The Absent Image," 15.

Figure 7: Albrecht Dürer, *Die Verläumdung des Apelles*, 1521–22. Nürnberg: Rathaussaal. Multiply repainted, 1613 and 1904/1905. Destroyed (bomb strike), 1944/1945. Public domain.

Figure 8: Albrecht Dürer, *Young Hare*, 1502. Albertina Vienna. Public domain.

> Supposing truth is a woman – what then? Are there not grounds for the suspicion that all philosophers, insofar as they were dogmatists, have been very inexpert about women? (BGE i)

The image of woman as truth, the convention that holds truth as feminine, is not Nietzsche's coin. There is the Greek *Aletheia*, just as Heidegger tells us, quite on the model of the Roman version of the same goddess, *Veritas*, as we also read in Dürer's painting. The subtitle of the section invokes modern role-playing enthusiasts and visions of furries (possibly inspired by Tribbles, less plausibly by Wookiees, or, perhaps,

Figure 9: Dürer, *Verläumdung*, detail.

to be laid at the feet of Tolkein and his hobbits). The point I am making is that Botticelli's version is a remix as is Dürer's version, a "cover" of Apelles' allegory, as Lucian tells the tale of *Slander* (Figures 6 and 7).

Calumny, especially calumny at the court, is the art of besmirching, again this is Lucian's clarification contra the king's stupidity and gullibility, hence the long ears, pulled by the two ladies on either side (Figure 12), Ignorance and Suspicion, as the king is moved to extend his hand to Slander, escorted by Envy in the company of Treachery and Deceit.

There are other depictions, for example, Federico Zuccaro circa 1569 along with Giorgio Ghisi, 1560. In Ghisi, as in Dürer, truth is a little more modest, and Girolamo Mocetto's 1500 *Calumny* helpfully labels all the personages in Lucian's dialogue, and we may add two by Raphael (Figures 13–16). Indeed, there are any number of these as the motif appealed to painters as Apelles himself was the innocent victim of jealousy and took his painterly revenge by showing the foolishness of kings who listen to calumny.

The king in Botticelli's painting is traditionally named Midas, the same Midas we have already met reading Nietzsche, who tortures the sylvan Silenus for the "truth" about what is best for the human being in *The Birth of Tragedy*. And as noted at the outset: one may read Midas for Minos, Ariadne's father. The ears, a common attribute between them, are clear in Melchior Meier's gruesomely detailed illustration of the beautiful and brutal god, Apollo displaying his prize before Midas who had judged in favor of the satyr's playing (Figures 17).

Nietzsche also uses the metaphor of long ears in his Zarathustra book, nowhere less conspicuously perhaps than in his "Conversation with the Kings," observing that he had long ago unlearned how to take consideration for "long ears," to the interruption of the ass: "I-A"

> Ich verlernte seit langem schon die Rücksicht auf lange Ohren. Wohlan! Wohlauf! (Hier aber geschah es, dass auch der Esel zu Worte kam: er sagte aber deutlich und mit bösem Willen I-A.) (KSA 4 306)

Figure 10: Dürer, *Verläumdung*. Detail.

Midas – so it goes with associations with Dionysus – is said to have captured Silenus using wine, thus by ruse, Nietzsche writes early in *The Birth of Tragedy* yet, as Hyginus explains, the torture is largely symbolic: bound with roses and queried on "nature's mysteries and the events of long ago."[57] Midas keeps Silenus for ten days only to restore this forest companion to Dionysus who, in gratitude, grants him any wish (Figures 18 and 20).

Midas' ears as painted in Poussin's *Midas and Bacchus* (Figure 18) are less than clear. Certainly, it seems as if he had tucked them under his crown but maybe not: it is hard to tell. We do know that Midas was said to have tried to hide his ears under his hair, variously under a turban (see Floquet, Figure 19), or, as in this case, under his crown (and cf., too, Figure 33). If Apollo's punishment was intended to show Midas's lack of judgment to all the world as the one so adjudged, Midas hardly wanted the fact advertised and, typical of the subject of such a judgment, did not believe it.

Trapped with wine and "tortured" – in his *Florentinische Tractat über Homer und Hesiod* – Nietzsche repeats the Greek "πᾶσαν μηχανὴν μηχανώμενοστο," explaining that Midas uses every extreme device to extract an answer[58] – at stake as Nietzsche tells us in the *Birth of Tragedy* is the desire to learn the answer to the question of what would be best for the human. In his earlier text, Nietzsche cites repeatedly, and this is far from nihilism, the same *me phynai* we recognize from Hölderlin's citation of Sophocles as motto for the second volume of his *Hyperion*.[59] In the *Birth*, the reference is set in quotation marks, and in his *Florentinische Tractat*, the reference is given to Aristotle's dialogue *Eudemus*, with a parenthetical citation

57 Hathorn, *Greek Mythology*, 166.

58 Nietzsche, "Florentinische Tractat über Homer und Hesiod, ihr Geschlecht und ihren Wettkampf."

59 Nietzsche cites among his "ancient authors" Epicurus and Bacchylides in addition to Homer. This is often cited and see, with reference to Heidegger, *Nietzsche I*, Schmidt, *On Germans and Other Greeks*.

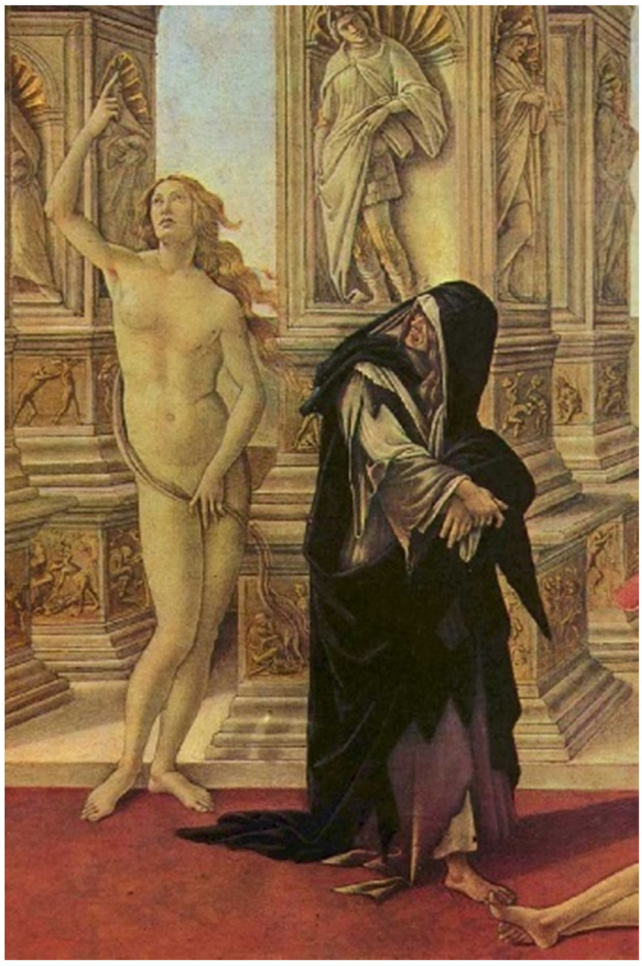

Figure 11: Botticelli, *Calunnia*. Detail.

from Bernays.[60] We get no such citation in *The Birth of Tragedy* – apart from the quotation marks themselves – but the theme and the lines of argument are the same whereby the point in both texts is that the saying is to be attributed to a companion of Dionysus.[61]

Instructively, Poussin's painting shows the reason Midas might have inspired the god's sympathy, that is: beyond restoring a satyr, he had baited and captured in the first place which rationale also refers to the judgment he had made, contra Apollo in favor of Marsyas, we see a satyr, with ears similar to his own, playing the double aulos.

Bad judge as he happened in fact to have been, Midas, stunningly shortsightedly, asks that everything he touches turn to gold.

60 "Val. Rose Aristot. pseudepigr. p. 61. J. Bernays Rh. Mus. N. F. Band XVI S. 236 ff." Surprisingly and availing himself of a certain "better-knowing" condescension citing only Silk and Stern commentary on Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*, Malcolm Davies who cites the same text Nietzsche does in his contribution to the Rheinsche Museum, cited above, cf. Davies, "Aristotle Fr. 44 Rose: Midas and Silenus." The oversight conveniently allows Davies to repurpose the quote to inaugurate his own essay: "from his lost dialogue, *Eudemus or περὶ φυῆς*, is quoted by ps. Plutarch in the *Moralia* (*Consolatio ad Apollonium*, 115b–e). It contains the famous account of how King Midas captured the satyr Silenus and compelled him to reveal what is best for man. The paradoxical reply ("never to be born, and, if born, to die as soon as possible…") explains why the passage is so regularly cited in studies of "pessimism" in ancient Greek culture." Here: 682.

61 Cf. West, "The Contest of Homer and Hesiod;" and Bassino, "Alcidamas' Encomia." Note that the Loeb *Lives of Homer* confirms Nietzsche's reading, as attested by subsequent archaeological discovery: see here: 298.

Figure 12: Botticelli, *Calunnia*. Detail.

Figure 13: Federico Zuccaro, *Calunnia di Apelle*, 1569. Art Collection of the British Royal Family.

Figure 14: Giorgio Ghisi, *Calunnia*, 1560. Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC. Public Domain.

Figure 15: Girolamo Mocetto, *Calumnia*, 1500. British Museum, London. Public Domain.

Figure 16: (a and b) Raphael, *La Calomnie peinte par Apelles*. British Museum, London. Public Domain.

Figure 17: Melchior Meier, *Apollo and Marsyas and the Judgment of Midas*, 1581. Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC. Public Domain.

After realizing the fatality of this wish, Midas prays to Dionysus to take pity on him and the god answers his prayer. Poussin paints this sequence as well (Figure 20), twice as we know, whereby Dionysus takes Midas to bathe in the river Pactolus, so to wash "away his baneful powers," depicting Midas washing at the source of the river with – the painting is a study in oblique angles – the body seen from the back, with musculature and fat, Dionysus, turned away from the viewer, complete with the river's edge, clear water, and one clambering putto embracing two wine vessels on their sides, open to the river, with another more obscured putto securely placed (but Panofsky in 1936, in the second of two readings, here dedicated to the

Figure 18: Nicolas Poussin, *Midas and Bacchus*, 1624. Alte Pinakothek, Munich. Public Domain.

Figure 19: Simon Floquet, *Apollo and King Midas*, 1634. Oil on copper. Private possession. Public Domain.

Figure 20: Poussin, *Midas se lavant à la source de la rivière Pactole*, 1627/1630. Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC. Public Domain.

elegiac, and offering a lesson in Latin and not less historical context or hermeneutics, invokes as "cupids," talking of Fragonard at the close of the second of discussions of Poussin's *Et in Arcadia Ego*).[62]

Midas' ears may be seen in Jacob Jordaens' *Apollo as Victor over Pan* (Figure 21) who depicts the contest between Apollo and Marsyas, at the moment Apollo is crowned by Tmolus for his victory over the satyr Marsyas, for whom things are not to end well, with Midas who has already suffered the award of his ears sitting, old King Cole like, off to the right in the painting.

As we read Nietzsche, in the voice of Dionysus, he teases Ariadne, "Be clever [*Sei klug*], Ariadne, you have small ears, you have my ears…" a caution soon converted to the provocation of the aphorism, "On the beautiful and the ugly," asking, recall again her bloodline, why *her* ears are *not* longer (GD, *Streifzüge eines Unzeitgemässen* 19; DD, KSA 6, 401; cf. KSA 13, 498). Ariadne, along with reflection on Minos/Midas and their respective ears, is thus a leitmotif for readings of Nietzsche hunting for his inspiration, as many scholars continue to search for an explanation other than the financial or iatrogenic injury that might explain what he writes.

Ariadne is also connected from the first of the *Untimely Meditations* with the labyrinth, and she is explicitly invoked at the end of *Beyond Good and Evil* (thus it is essential to explore the allusion to the mystery cult and the "beautiful" braying of the ass cited in the aphorism on the "convictions" of the philosopher [BGE §8]), as Dionysus emphasizes, Nietzsche quotes him:

> "Under certain circumstances I love what is human" and with this he alluded to Ariadne who was present – "man is to my mind an agreeable, courageous, inventive animal that has no equal on earth; it finds its way in any labyrinth, I am well disposed towards him; I often reflect how I might yet advance him and make him stronger, more evil, and more profound than he is." (BGE §295)

62 Panofsky, *Philosophy and History*.

Figure 21: Jacob Jordaens, *Apollo as Victor Over Pan*, 1637. Museo del Prado, Madrid. Public Domain.

The ironic or satiric element is patent in the allegory quite including the long ears.

In addition, at the level of rhetoric, the elaborate clothing that may be striking in Botticelli can be read as metaphor for decking out the facts, a theme of some dedication in the literature of the philosophy of science, one also can speak of the "furniture" of the world, thus embroidering the truth, masking or concealing it and everything in the tangle of lies needed to destroy, we can again think of Othello and Iago – and the unjustly maligned Desdemona – the good name of others.

Nietzsche's phrasing when it comes to truth as a woman has been inspiring. Thus, although Gerd Schank does not make a connection to Lucian, his essay on Ariadne is helpful[63] in highlighting a jewel of a small theater piece in Nietzsche's text: this god, Dionysus, the one that philosophizes, makes an appearance when he chimes in, "resplendent in emerald beauty," punctuating Ariadne's lament.

Nietzsche sets Dionysus as response to Ariadne's lament, a god's reply that takes little account of what she says and yet, this is what deity does, answers her.

> *Ein Blitz.*[64] *Dionysos wird in smaragdener Schönheit sichtbar.*
>
> *Dionysos:*
> *Sei klug, Ariadne!. Du hast kleine Ohren, du hast meine Ohren:*
> *steck ein kluges Wort hinein! –*
> *Muss man sich nicht erst hassen, wenn man sich lieben soll?...*
> *Ich bin dein Labyrinth...* [65]

The figure of Dionysus is key but the ecliptic, elliptical, ecstatic element remains. Thus, in the pen and ink and brown wash, now said to be Romanelli (Figure 22), formerly said to be a Poussin sketch (as it continues to look to be), historians remark that one of the things Poussin does not do, in the wake of Titian, is to include an Ariadne figure and since there is one here, this is no Poussin.[66]

---

63 Schank, "Dionysos und Ariadne im Gespräch," here: 504.

64 [*A flash of lightning*.] See Schank for his footnote references to Otto on lightning and Dionysos as the son of lightning, Ibid., 506.

65 DD: *Klage der Ariadne*, KSA 6.401. Hollingdale translates as *Dionysus becomes visible in emerald beauty*. / Dionysus: / Be wise, Ariadne! ... / You have little ears, you have ears like mine : / let some wisdom into them! – / Must we not first hate ourself if we are to love ourself? ... / *I am thy labyrinth* ...

66 See for a general discussion of the difficulties of reading Poussin and his influences (favoring the locution of "reworking" over "copy,") Neer, "Poussin, Titian and Tradition."

Figure 22: Giovanni Francesco Romanelli, *Bacchus and Ariadne*, 17th C. British Museum, London. Public Domain.

Malcolm Bull, putting his loyalties in his first line, recounting Anthony Blunt's lament, tells us that almost as if the theme were Hölderlin's Hyperion, Poussin's Bacchus series

> concentrates on Bacchus and his companions, Pan and Silenus; Ariadne, the companion of Bacchus in Annibale [Carracci]'s *Triumph* and the joint subject of Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne*, is absent from the series, although Hercules, a more surprising participant, appears in Poussin's *Triumph of Bacchus*[67]

Bull's point foregrounds the Dionysian procession for Poussin (Figure 23). Bull is concerned to add Rabelais to the reading of Poussin, an argument made by suggesting that "Poussin does not appear to have been following any one literary source very closely,"[68] a claim useful for the author who means to argue a case for his own reading, cobbled together with the ad hoc and reference to his patron (Figure 24).

In Wendy Heller's dispositional analysis of Bacchus and Ariadne in Carracci's *Triumph*,[69] we have a staidly formal affair, not least by contrast with the earlier Titian and yet it can be helpful for the sake of a little more reflection on Poussin's *Bacchanale*.

Here, the backstory is the story of apotheosis, easier to see in the line drawing for Carracci's *Triumph* (Figure 25), as Ariadne is crowned as Diodorus Siculus tells us – here we see one of the several flying putti floating in with a crown of stars to set on her head (Figure 24) – in addition to the detail that she is riding in a parallel chariot pulled not by panthers, as in the case of Dionysus, but horned goats, along with the other companions, Pan on the ground with his own goat (and there seems to be plenty of contact there) and Silenus, lean and glorious with his staff.

Heller emphasizes that there is no contact between Dionysus and Ariadne: no touching, no nothing. Yet, Heller adds that lovemaking there is, and in addition to Ovid, Heller cites Diodorus Siculus who notes that the god "considered her worthy of immortal honours because of the affection he had for her, and placed among the starts of heaven the Crown of Ariadne."[70]

The disposition of Carracci's Dionysus figure is reminiscent of Apollo in Poussin's last painting, *Apollo and Daphne* (Figure 26), moreover: the recumbent figure of Ariadne, "sleeping" is not dissimilar to the fate of Daphne transformed, this is not for the adherents of a tree cult, a transformation that corresponds to life save as means of metamorphosis/translation/transfiguration.

67 Bull, "Poussin's Bacchanals for Cardinal Richelieu."
68 Ibid., 9ff.
69 Heller, "Rescuing Ariadne."
70 Ibid., 380. Heller here is citing Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, 4:61.5.

Figure 23: Nicolas Poussin, *The Triumph of Bacchus*, Ca. 1630. The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City.

In 1982, thus well in the wake of Panofsky, Oskar Bätschmann offered a sustained discussion of the theme of death and its complications, including the motif of the tree as "Amictia" in his *Nicolas Poussin: Dialectics of Painting*, reading between Alberti and Montaigne and, as it is in dialogue with Blunt and again, Panofsky's "Poussin's *Et in Arcadia Ego*."[71] In 1993, eleven years after the German and three years after the English translation of Bätschmann's book, David Carrier in a trope – or authorly tic – so familiar as perhaps to be obligatory, claims that "little has been said about the relation of his last work … to his illness."[72] Here, I am not following the reduction to the painter's life circumstances, relevant as these may be, just as Carrier and as Bätschmann and others argue (i.e., and again: Carrier is unfair when he claims the question at issue for him has been little discussed), but I am concerned with the broader context as that can go unremarked, namely myth and its reception. Hence, scholars might advert to Ovid or Hyginus but I have been arguing that to read Vasari we need Lucian's Greek, especially if we are reading Nietzsche in order to think through Ariadne (Figures 3, 24, 25, 31, 32).

The classicist James Porter is curiously silent on Silenus which not to say that he does not refer to the rubric of the "wisdom of the sylvan god," this is done, throughout his book, but without discussion and certainly without naming him.[73]

This is to be contrasted with Poussin's *Triumph of Silenus* (Figure 27).

71 Bätschmann, *Nicolas Poussin*, 49ff.
72 Carrier, *Poussin's Paintings*, 70.
73 Porter, *The Invention of Dionysus*.

Figure 24: Annibale Carracci, *The Triumph of Bacchus and Ariadne*, 1595. Detail. Palazzo Farnese, Rome.

Figure 25: Cesius after Carracci, *The triumph of Bacchus and Ariadne*, 1595. Queensland Art Gallery. Public Domain.

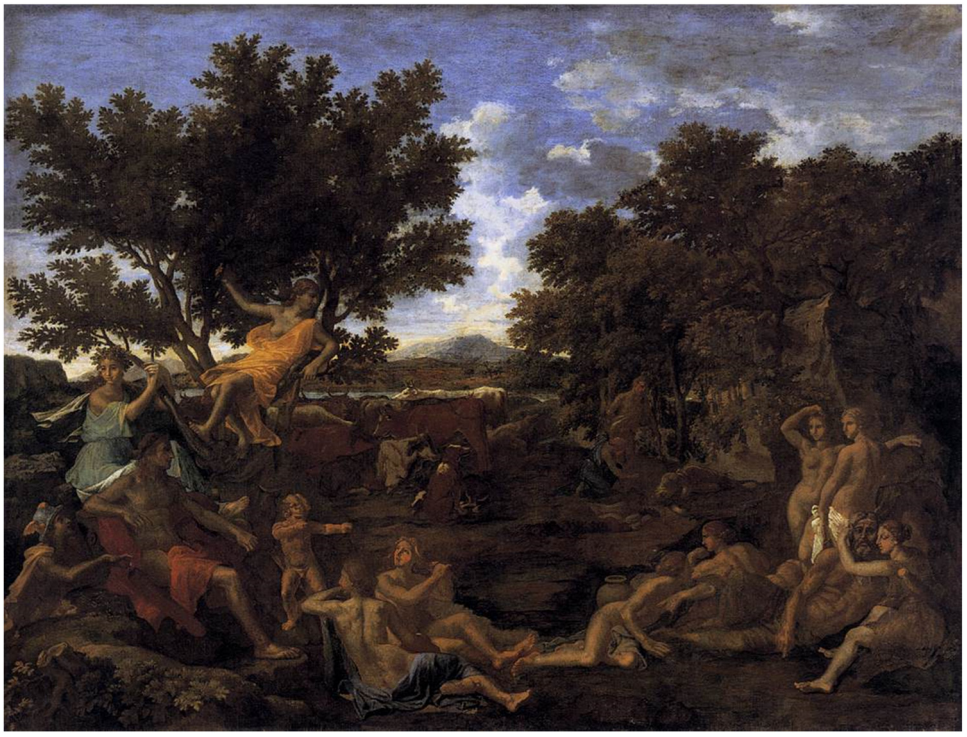

Figure 26: Poussin, *Apollon amoureé de Daphné*, 1664. Louvre. Public Domain.

Figure 27: Poussin, *The Triumph of Silenus*, ca. 1637. National Gallery, London. Public Domain.

Figure 28: Sarcophagus, *Dionysus and Ariadne*. British Museum, London. Public Domain.

Figure 29: Bacchus and Ariadne. Sarcophagus, 235, CE. Louvre, Paris, France.

The general problem that attends readings of myth is that we are liable to forget that in dealing with allegory not only are the figures as such mythical ones but so too the events themselves.

Hence, we may cite instances, as many of the art historians already quoted do, of the significance of the coming of Dionysus to Ariadne as itself emblematic of a translation, and is, I think, hard to be clearer than this, a matter of passing, of crossing over from life's end to a life beyond life, the awakening of psyche, the soul, from its earthly death to a life eternal.[74]

74 Cf. Lehmann-Hartleben and Olsen, *Dionysiac Sarcophagi in Baltimore*. See too Turcan, *Études d'archaeologie Sepulcrale*.

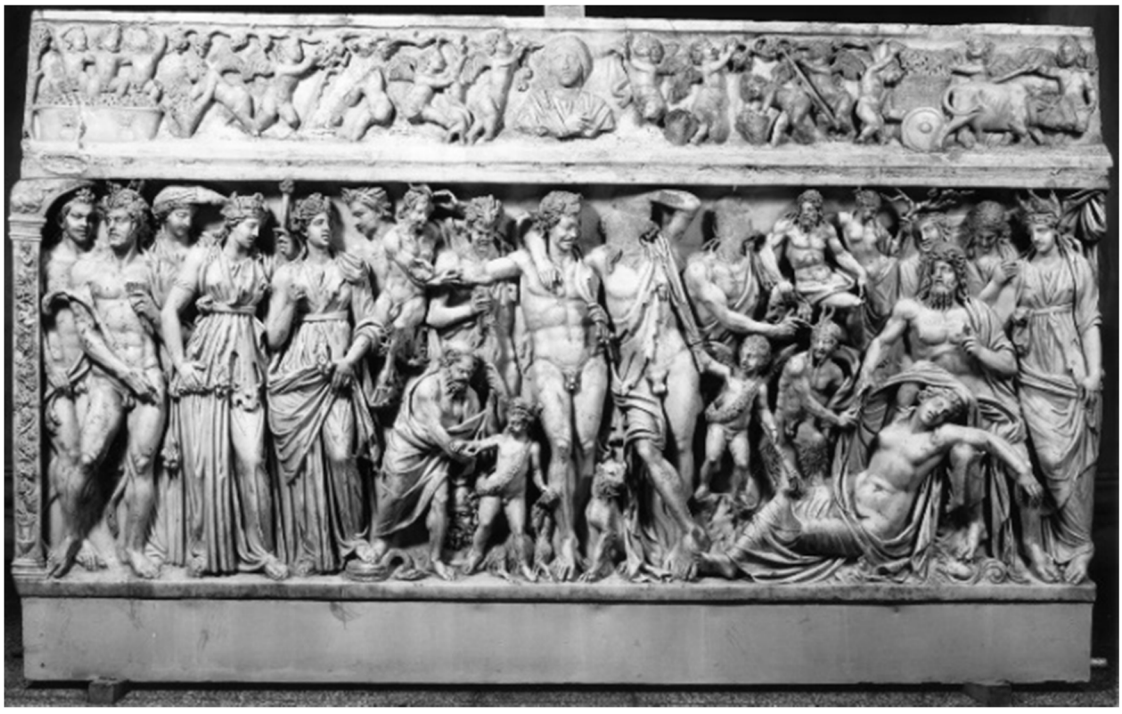

Figure 30: Sarcophagus. *Weddings of Dionysus and Ariadne*, 190–200 CE. Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, Maryland. Public Domain.

Also to be seen in Rome, at the baths of the emperor, Diocletian, we find the Ariadne motif on a sarcophagus as the motif is very common (cf. Figures 28–30).

And as sleep is akin to death, the afterlife is akin to a wedding night.

Recall Hyginus's fable: after Ariadne helps Theseus murder her brother, necessary to halt the tribute Minos demanded, a tribute which was to have included Theseus among the other sacrificial victims, Theseus takes Ariadne with him on his return to Athens but abandons her, "asleep" or "dead" on Naxos. Crucial to this account is a reflection on just what else he might have done with the daughter of the king who had demanded such a tribute for the hunger of her brother? Ariadne could not have been under any circumstances, even explaining the help she gave him in his escape/triumph, welcome in Athens. Thus, and this is a redemption, the only possible rescue for Ariadne: "Liber [Dionysos], falling in love with her, took her from there as his wife."[75] For this same reason, it is to be underlined that the figure of Ariadne asleep has the same attributes as Ariadne in death, especially as depictions include as her attribute a shroud not only on sarcophagi but in many paintings, most particularly perhaps *Bacchanale*, the painting of Ariadne and Dionysus by Poussin, where her cloak, she always has one, or shroud as in this case, is black (Figure 31).

This is what the coming of this particular tempter god signifies.

Certainly, Poussin's *Bacchanale* (as I would suggest while noting that some enthusiasts object to the attribution) is more centered than Titian's and, by the standards of the other "Triumphs" as Bull discusses these in the context of Richelieu, relatively calm, if somber (this is in keeping with Panofsky's elegiac reading of Poussin). Here, Dionysus does not vault toward Ariadne nor does he shock or surprise her, as both aspects might be said to characterize Titian (Figure 3), but, with tenderness, lifts her into his chariot (Figure 31).

The gesture is that of saving, of transfiguration, it is that of a husband, not the gesture, thus the contrast with Titian, of ecstasy (Figures 31 and 3). At the same time, it is also worth noting the color black of

75 (Pseudo-)Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 40–3.

Figure 31: Nicolas Poussin, *Bacchanale*, 1626. Museo del Prado, Madrid. Public Domain.

Ariadne's cloak and what can seem a white undergarment beneath or else she is nude, as she is also embraced and lifted by one of the putti.

When Heller contrasts Carracci and Titian (Figure 24 and 3), she foregrounds *energeia*: "Bacchus's masculine energy commands the image as he leaps from the chariot."[76] Thereby Heller's question becomes the question of consent versus a supposed more Renaissance convention of rape or violation.

3 Dionysus to Ariadne: "You have small ears, you have my ears"

Do these reflections solve the problem of Ariadne or, indeed, her ears?

Not too likely for some, but perhaps for others.

We recall that Minos has long ears, his name-cousin Midas likewise. So maybe the argument can be made that her ears are a matter of genealogy? Certainly, we know a little more about Ariadne's lament as Nietzsche writes: "Who still warms me," she asks, "who still loves me?" I have sought to make the case that we need the half truth that it is to speak of one "half-dead." Is Ariadne abandoned by Theseus, that is, is Ariadne "asleep" on Naxos? Is Ariadne "dead" – or is she not? I've argued that Ariadne is dead, qua abandoned, and that Dionysus, marrying her, saves or 'transfigures' her.

Heller wonders, citing other scholars who also wonder, why/how Ariadne could forget Theseus so quickly? The question is a little off, corresponding as it does to the kind of double standard women have to bear. It was Ariadne who fell for Theseus to begin with which is to say that she betrayed her native land,

76 Ibid., 383.

Figure 32: Carle van Loo, *Bacchus and Ariadne*. Painted in Turin, 1732–1734.

her father's crown, her family, her brother, descendant as he was and as she was – the foregoing has made much of her lineage as daughter — of Minos who was himself the son of Zeus (in the form of a bull) and Europa (which explains Minos' ears) as well as being her mother's daughter, as her mother was the daughter of Helios.

Richmond Hathorn, after pointing out that by marrying her, Dionysus makes her a goddess, tells us that,

> Ariadne is all probability means "the Very Holy One"; she is possibly the *Potnia Labyrinthou*, "the Lady of the Labyrinth," referred to on a Linear B tablet. If so, her cult was very old; it was certainly rather widespread, in places rivalling and in other places merging with that of Aphrodite. In it there was much emphasis on the goddess's deathy – she hanged herself from a tree, or she died in childbirth, or she was struck by Artemis's arrows – and on her Sacred Marriage. In the myth her sleep on Naxos is a symbol of death, and her abandonment by Theseus is necessary to make way for her cultic union with Dionysus.[77]

Having arrived at this point of cruel human abandon (Theseus) and divine salvation (Dionysus), we are fairly distant from the contest between Homer and Hesiod of which Nietzsche writes. We are also seemingly at a distance from the folk elements of what Nietzsche named a "witches brew" of sensuality and cruelty in *The Birth of Tragedy*.

If our concern is with the "real" Cretan princess, Ariadne, mortal and bodily abandoned on Naxos, given the sensuality of Ariadne's "Lament," it is Nietzsche who writes of this physicality, telling us that Ariadne is cold: "*Wer wärmt mich, wer liebt mich noch?*". Above I argue, nor am I the only one, that qua

77 Hathorn, *Greek Mythology*, 318.

Figure 33: *The Judgment of Midas*, Unknown Flemish artist, imitator of Hendrik van Balen, late sixteenth century hermitage.

abandoned she is dead, not merely languishing/lamenting until rescued by a god (I'd make a similar argument in another context for the recumbent morphology of the figure of Narcissus in Poussin's *Echo and Narcisssus* [Figure 34]).

Talk of myth is talk of the gods, typically the "gods" we moderns neither believe nor disbelieve. If we are theists, our faith is in monotheism and if we name ourselves atheists, quite as Sartre reminds us, it is that very same single god we refuse. The old gods are no deities for us today.

It is for this reason as this was Nietzsche's lament, that I close with a leveled out or "flattened" Parnassus, *Christus im Olymp*, a lost painting by Max Klinger (1857–1920) (Figure 35).

If Nietzsche remains iconic for certain readings of the political, Klinger was inspired by the theologico-political contrast that was Nietzsche's, echoing Hölderlin's more elegiac account of the old gods in the persons of Saturn/Kronos and Jupiter/Zeus. Hölderlin, who also sings *To the Titans*, names Saturn himself, the deposed, "the guiltless god of the golden age [*Schuldlos der Gott der goldenen Zeit*...] in his *Nature and Art*." And Klinger was inspired by Nietzsche's classically 19th century echoing reflection of Hölderlin's more elegiac account. The cycling of gods parallels the decline of ages, gold to silver to bronze and iron, and in *Die Titanen*, Hölderlin inquires after these older gods, telling us that "we lack/song that loosens the mind [*es fehlet/Gesang, der löset den Geist*]."

I read this along with Nietzsche's critical remonstration: "2000 years and not a single new god."[78] It is the succession of gods to gods on the classicist Nietzsche's account that inspires the artist's peripety that is the deposition of the old depicted in Klinger's *Christ on Olympus* (Figure 35). Damaged/destroyed in the second world war (and badly restored), Klinger's painting shows the advent of the new god of the new order, that is the Christ contra the old gods. The figure of Psyche in supplication is crucial and needs explication, likewise the figure of Eros repelled. Here, we see Dionysus, "Nietzsche's Yea-sayer," offering, as the art historian, Elizabeth Tumosonis explains, "the central figure of Christ a cup of wine."[79] This gesture also makes it plain that the cup is refused, thereby drawing the lineal focus, eye to eye, between the newest god and the old Zeus who is also the only godhead who directly meets Christ's gaze.

Klinger's painting dramatizes the ascendance of the new cult, the culmination of which Nietzsche predicts, in his first book, to parallel Socrates:

78 See for discussion, Babich, "Nietzsche's Antichrist."
79 Tumosonis, "Klinger's 'Christ on Olympus'," here: 83.

Figure 34: Poussin, *Echo and Narcissus*, ca. 1629–1630, Louvre.

> the new Orpheus who rose up against Dionysus and ...put the powerful god to flight. The god, as when he fled Lycurgus, king of the Edoni, escaped into the depths of the sea, the mystical floods of a secret cult that was gradually to cover the whole world (BT §12)

Tumosonis tells us that "Klinger intended to create an allegory of Nietzschean thought, as he interpreted it, in Christ on Olympus."[80] What Tumosonis does not tell us is what Klinger himself already knew from his reading of Nietzsche who wrote, already in 1886: "Christianity gave eros poison to drink – he did not die, to be sure, but degenerated into vice" (JGB §168) (Figure 35).

Elsewhere I trace the echoes of Lucian's "atmospheres"[81] or "air," as Nietzsche writes, as we may read in *Die Wüste wächst, The Desert Grows*

> I sit here sniffing the finest air,
>
> air of Paradise, truly,
>
> bright, buoyant air, gold-streaked,
>
> as good air as ever
>
> fell from the moon –

80 Ibid.

81 Babich, "L'atmosphère, le Parfum et la Politique de L'utopie." And see, too, as Hölderlin remains crucial for Nietzsche, Babich, "Heidegger and Hölderlin on Aether and Life."

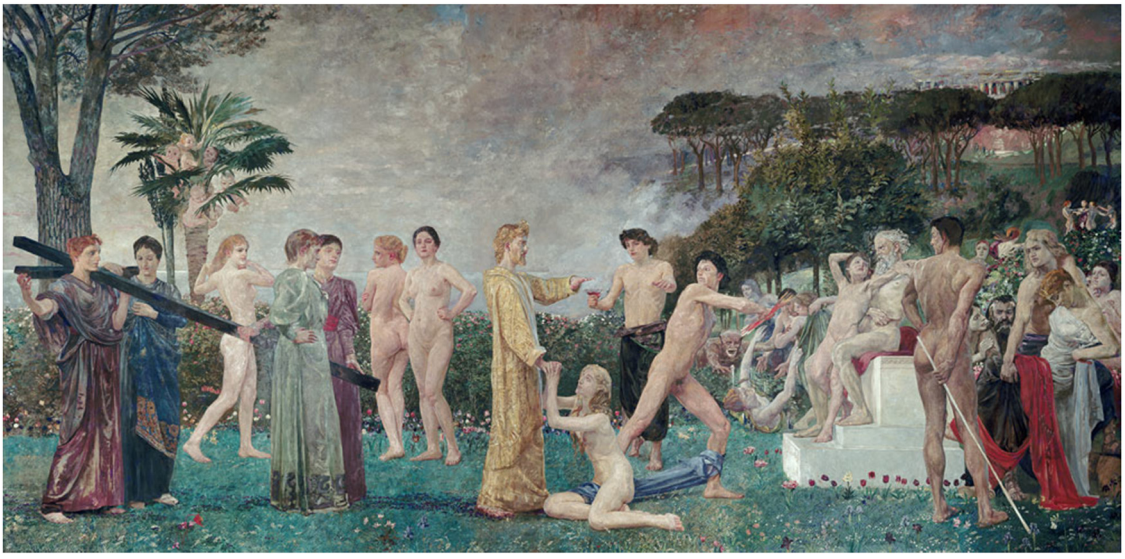

Figure 35: Max Klinger, *Christus im Olymp* (1890–1897). Destroyed, WWII. Public Domain. Museum of Fine Arts, Leipzig.

came it by chance,

or did it happen by wantonness,

as the old poets tell.[82]

We can read Ariadne's last verse in Nietzsche's dithyramb before the gnomic reply comes with Dionysus "in glowing greenness," another color of the afterlife, the answer from the "unknown god," "veiled," Nietzsche says here, and says it twice, "in lightning." Ariadne cries as if she were calling to life itself, with all its torments, the same life to be affirmed: eternally: "*Nein!/Komm zurück!*" and we read, put in mind perhaps of Nietzsche's *Gay Science* rhyme: *Ecce Homo*, where he tells us, seemingly speaking of himself, "ashes everything I leave," [*Kohle alles was ich lasse*], "unsatiated, like the flame" [*ungesättigt gleich der Flamme*]:

All the streams of my tears

Run their course to you!

And the last flame of my heart,

It burns up to you.

Oh come back

My unknown god, my pain!

My last happiness.[83]

With *Ariadne's Lament*, Nietzsche illuminates what he writes in his first book concerning the "Dionysian Greek," effected by

82 Nietzsche, *Dionysus Dithyrambs*, 33. Cf., where Nietzsche speaks in the same Dithyramb of "round, maiden gullets," Babich, *Nietzsches Antike*, 332.
83 Nietzsche, *Dionysus Dithyrambs*, 57.

Figure 36: Franz von Stuck, *Sphinx*, 1904. Darmstadt, Hessisches Landesmuseum. Public Domain.

> the Dionysian Dithyramb, the human being is stimulated [*gereizt*] to the greatest intensification of all his symbolic capacities; something never-before-felt presses forward for expression – the destruction of the veil of Maya, the being-one as the genius of the race, indeed, of nature itself [...] (GT §3)

Everything having to do with incarnate [*eingefleischt*], bodily being, will be needed for this:

> A new world of symbols is necessary, including the whole bodily symbolism not only the symbolism of the mouth, the face, of words, including every limb in full, rhythmically moving disposition of the dance. (GT §3)

4 Postscript

The operatic *and* pop culture appeal of Nietzsche's Ariadne is powerful, so too the threat or violence to women, so too the appeal to soft-porn predilection as can be seen on the cover illustration detail from Franz von Stuck's *Sphinx* (Figure 36) on the Penguin edition of Reg Hollingdale's classic translation of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*.

For Nietzsche scholarship, it matters that the prefaces to Nietzsche's republications of *Daybreak* and the complete edition of *The Gay Science* along with *Human, All too Human* published in all its parts, and *The Birth of Tragedy* with its new titling "*oder Griechenthum und Pessimismus*" and its new preface: "Attempt at a Self-Critique" are all written together with the new publication that was *Beyond Good and Evil*, all published in 1886.

The prefaces are informative for ontic, real-world reasons as part of a strategy of republication.

Technically speaking, and it is uncanny, given his penury, that in the case of Nietzsche one rarely talks about his financial resources in any critical detail and one should, one really should, always do that. Thus, when it comes to mortal questions, what Nietzsche named "first and last things," it makes a great deal of difference that Nietzsche's Basel pension (1,000 francs, with supplements to a total of 3,000 per year, along with another small sum as supplement, all slated to expire after six years) happened to have been, seemingly accidentally, through administratorly oversight, extended from six to ten years, which means that

the original limits were, as Janz puts it: "*weit uberschritten*."[84] Hence, the circumstance of pending finitude, mortality, would be present to Nietzsche as finances tend to serve as metaphor for one's resources, for one's life. The factive overpayment together with the scheduled expiration of projected material support would have been quite present to Nietzsche.[85] To this same extent, Nietzsche's intention to support himself as an author also entailed that new editions of his books were matters of practical urgency not vanity and arguably more crucial, qua income, than a search for readerly "impact."[86] One must read at least some of the *Dionysian Dithyrambs* in this finite or mortal spirit. A similar, if more complex, argument can be made for his collapse (or "script" as Crawford puts it, cited above).

If we read this by way of Lucian's *Slander*, the related themes of Oedipus' eyes, and Odysseus' stopped-up ears,[87] acquire a different sense. One may be deceived by having, as Hölderlin reflected, an eye too many, or via one's own blindness or deafness. Thus, "forgetfulness" is ascribed to the Theseus who forgets (or "abandons") Ariadne (a truth to life reality we have noted as striking for its plausibility: the Cretan princess so crucial in the context of the labyrinth – and the danger of the Minotaur – entails that she could not but be, as Theseus would also recognize, a liability in the after-story. She could not be, she would not be, welcomed by his family as his bride). Thus, her fate, her death, is as sealed as her need for a Dionysian redemption.

Nietzsche's "madness," real or feigned, likewise.

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84 See for one of the astonishingly few discussions of Nietzsche's concrete finances, Janz's account of Nietzsche's departure from Basel, including a brief account of his pension, *Friedrich Nietzsche. Biographie. Kindheit, Jugend, Die Basler Jahre*, 848. Crawford, who does not mention finances, does cite Alphonso Lingis' "medical/psychiatic discourse," *To Nietzsche*, 93, albeit without highlighting the cocktail of psychopharmaceuticals prescribed, *seriatim*, to Nietzsche in just that context.

85 William Schaberg argues, an outsider's eye is always optimistic, that more funds would have been available, based on Nietzsche's sister's account, which accounts he also regards as unreliable not least because she and her mother would have shared in whatever inheritances there were. See Schaberg, *The Nietzsche Canon*, 72f.

86 See, for example, Scheier's edited compilation of Nietzsche's prefaces, *Ecce auctor* as well distinguishing the sense in which *Ecce homo* might or might not be read as autobiography, Kofman, *Explosion I. De l'« Ecce Homo » de Nietzsche*.

87 In a misprint or oversight, *both* "undaunted" eyes *and* stopped up ears are attributed to "Oedipus" in the new Stanford translation, Volume 8, 136 and 494. Cf. "unerschrocknen Oedipus-Augen und verklebten Odysseus-Ohren" Nietzsche, KSA 5, 169.

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