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Babette Babich

# From Winckelmann's Apollo to Nietzsche's Dionysus

Es giebt keine schöne Fläche ohne eine schreckliche Tiefe.

(Friedrich Nietzsche, Nachlass 1870/1871)

## 1 Paradigms and Classics

Perhaps the most significant dissonance of several such regarding the Laocoön group Pliny famously reports seeing in the house of the Emperor Titus (NH 36.37–38)<sup>1</sup> is that the marble statue, presumably, so Bernard Andreae reasonably argues, modeled on a Greek bronze original, was said to have been hewn from a single stone.<sup>2</sup> Yet the Laocoön associated with Johann Joachim Winckelmann, unearthed in 1506, was not formed from a single block of marble (*ex uno lapide*).<sup>3</sup> – A second dissonance concerns color. I have elsewhere written on ancient Greek bronzes, specifically the life-size variety, calling attention to their abundance, likewise as cited in Pliny, reviewing the conditions of their manufacture in such abundance, and like statues of marble, wood, ceramic, etc., bronze was differently colored, depending on how it was made, as on its various constituents, given the overall phenomenon of polychromy. Thus the *Vergilius Vaticanus* (ca. 400 CE) depicts Laocoön with a bright red cape unfurling above the priest's head, standing erect with one knee on an altar. In this image, two green snakes encircle both arms raised in alarm, crossing his chest, the snakes entwine two baby sons dangling at either side, tinier than the boys we know (cf. Fig. 1, Fig. 2).<sup>4</sup> If Winckelmann is associated with the

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1 Scholars note that the location of the statue found does not fit Pliny's account. And the discussion on the issue of fixing the original site is far from closed. See Chrystina Häuber, *Il luogo del ritrovamento del gruppo del Laocoonte e la domus Titi imperatoris* (Plin. Nat. Hist. 36,37–38), in: F. Buranelli, P. Liverani, Alexander Nesselrath, eds., *Laocoonte. Alle origini dei Musei Vaticani, quinto centenario dei Musei Vaticani 1506–2006*, Rome 2006), 41–47, 201–217. And see too Cristoph Schmälzle, ed., *Marmor in Bewegung. Ansichten der Laokoon-Gruppe*, Frankfurt a.M. 2006.

2 See Bernard Andreae, *Laokoon und die Gründung Roms*, Mainz am Rhein 1988.

3 Ibid.

4 Folio 18v, Vat.Lat.3225, Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana. For the discussion of Greek bronze, see Babette Babich, *Die Naturkunde der Griechischen Bronze im Spiegel des Lebens: Betrachtungen über Heideggers ästhetische Phänomenologie und Nietzsches agonale Politik*, in: Günter Figal, ed., *Internationales Jahrbuch für Hermeneutik*, Tübingen 2008), 127–189. An expanded version of *Greek Bronze: Holding a Mirror to Life*, written for the late Irish Classicist, John Cleary (1949–2009), may be found here: [https://www.academia.edu/357663/Greek\\_Bronze\\_Holding\\_a\\_Mirror\\_to\\_Life](https://www.academia.edu/357663/Greek_Bronze_Holding_a_Mirror_to_Life).

white of the Laocoön and the even whiter Apollo Belvedere, not to mention, as in the case of his *Monumenta*, the black and white, of the plates executed by (the brother of the famous) Giacomo Casanova<sup>5</sup>, to illustrate his books, we also know, as Winckelmann himself knew very well, both Greek and Roman sculptures to have been richly colored.<sup>6</sup> This is not a new discovery yet in his 1870 lecture in Basel, also given privately in the presence of Richard Wagner, Nietzsche refers to the persistence of the belief in the colorless, arguably an allusion to Winckelmann as ‚hyper-Hellene‘, that ancient Greek statues were not a Winckelmannian shade of white but much rather brightly and even garishly colored, not always naked but clothed in tight-fitting, intricately patterned garb: „Was it not until recently seen to be an unconditional artistic axiom that all ideal plastic art had to be colorless, that ancient sculpture did not permit the application of color? Very slowly, and only under the strongest resistance of these same hyper-Hellenes, did the polychrome vision of ancient statues advance according to which these would no longer be naked but considered as clothed with a colorful overlay.“<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, in one of his latest notes, Nietzsche contrasts the material substance of the human being fashioned in marble with one of gold, naming the ‚golden‘ along with the October sun as „Goethean“ again, with a reference now to Weimar classicism, highlighting a contrast with marble (NL 24[10], KSA 13, 634). As this shining image of golden October illumination already makes plain, Nietzsche imagined such sculptural figures as so many reflective mirrors of life. To this extent, Nietzsche’s language in *The Gay Science* makes it clear he retains the radiance of the image of ‚shining marble‘ with which Nietzsche concludes his first book. Thus one can argue further that the colored and decorated life-sized statues among whom the Greeks lived and moved (be they statues of bronze or painted wood or of Nietzsche’s polychrome marble and gilded clay): „rings um sich feierlich schreitende oder zart bewegte Menschen“ (BT § 25), worked as a *musical* reprise, echoing, and that is the point that is relevant here, the painted and sculptured columns of the temple itself.

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5 Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Monumenti Antichi Inediti Spiegati ed Illustrata*, Rome (published by the author) 1767.

6 Vinzenz Brinkmann, Oliver Primavesi, Max Hollein, eds., *Circumlitio: The Polychromy of Antique and Mediaeval Sculpture*, München 2010.

7 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Das griechische Musikdrama* KSA 1, 518); Cf. Alfred Emerson, *Catalogue of a Polychrome Exhibition: Illustrating the Use of Color Particularly in Graeco-Roman Sculpture*, Chicago 1892; Gisela Richter, Lindsley F. Hall, *Polychromy in Greek Sculpture*, in: *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, 2, no. 8 (1944), 233–240; see too Richter, *Polychromy in Greek Sculpture with Special Reference to the Archaic Attic Gravestones in the Metropolitan Museum*, in: *American Journal of Archaeology*, 48, no. 4 (1944), 321–333. One scholar, not altogether persuasively, seeks to argue backwards on the basis of a reading of photographs, that the group may have originally shown traces of its color, François Queyrel, *Les couleurs du Laocoon*, in: *Revue Germanique Internationale, Le laocoon: histoire et reception*, 19 (2003), 57–70.

The language of color emphasizes this point: ancient experiences, Nietzsche tells us, were differently illuminated for the Greeks „because a god shone through them“ (GS, § 152). The allusion is to the statue within, the inner ideal of what Nietzsche here and elsewhere calls „ancient humanity“, articulated by way of „the colored splendor of that old master“ (ibid.).

The third dissonance, one that goes almost completely without notice or remark so committed do we remain to the classical ideal of antiquity to the present day, is the speculation offered by Lynn Catterson that the Laocoön itself may have been a 16<sup>th</sup> century forgery and not the ancient statue we very much need it to be.<sup>8</sup> Catterson's art historiographical argument takes off from the youthful Michelangelo's deliberate forgery of an antiquity – a sleeping cupid in 1496 – which he then artificially antiqued in order to pass off as a genuine discovery. Already well known because detailed in Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Artists* as a forgery crucial to Michelangelo's ultimate success<sup>9</sup>, the same story inspired Mark Twain who was charmed by the ironic subtext. Twain offers a variation in his short story *The Capitoline Venus*. For Twain, the fetish for a *genuine* antique, even a genuine fake antique as we may say, parallels David Hume's challenge to aesthetic judgment and I argue that Nietzsche includes, a little elliptically, the very same point in his inaugural lecture in Basel, declaring that „The epitome of aesthetic singularity which each scholar was capable of discerning with his own artistic gifts, he now named Homer“ (HL, KSA 1, 299).<sup>10</sup> For her own historiographical part, Catterson makes her case on the basis of written accounts, records of purchases, income and outgo, ergo positive or confirmable ‚facts‘ in opposition to aesthetic judgment: she asks how much a sculptor could earn for his work vs. what a new discovery would be worth, and so on. Historically, grounds such as these provide evidence but more is needed to change a paradigm. Predictably enough, the academic community has circled the wagons, uniformly seeming to refuse (and that means that they do not debate) Catterson's claims.

Note here that history does not deal with aesthetic claims, hence it is not enough to simply point out that the Laocoön looks a lot like „a Michelangelo“, as it surely

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**8** Lynn Catterson, *Michelangelo's Laocoon*, in: *Artibus et Historiae*, 26, Nr. 52 (2005), 29–56. See for discussion, Kathryn Shattuck, *An Ancient Masterpiece or a Master's Forgery*, in: *New York Times*, April 18, 2005. See too: Margarete Bieber, *Laocoon: The Influence of the Group since Its Rediscovery*, New York 1942.

**9** Of Michelangelo, Vasari writes that after making a little figure of St. John for Lorenzo di Pier Francesco de Medici, „he immediately began to carve a life-size figure of a sleeping Cupid. When this was completed, Baldassari del Milanese showed it as beautiful piece of work to Pierfrancesco who agreed with Baldassari's judgement and declared to Michelangelo: ‚If you buried it I am convinced it would earn much more than by selling it here‘“ (Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*, Oxford 2008, 423).

**10** See for a discussion, including the connection with David Hume: Babette Babich, *On Nietzsche's Judgment of Style and Hume's Quixotic Taste: On the Science of Aesthetics and ‚Playing‘ the Satyr*, in: *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 43.2 (2012), 240–259.

does. The claim by analogy rather than aesthetics does not fare much better, recall the above example of those who point out that Michelangelo forged sculptures in his youth (quite apart from his easy replication of the statue's missing arm – what better way to show his skills as restorer? – in answer to the pope's desire for a complete restoration), or indeed, as Thierry Lenain has shown more recently in a general study of what he calls our „obsession“ with originality, that Michelangelo also habitually copied from other painters.<sup>11</sup> Beyond Lenain's argument, our modern notion of originals especially in a world of copies, be it for teaching or other purposes (and many university galleries feature such copies), seems to persist in the face of all such questions and alongside our search, in the case of Nietzsche, for ‚sources‘.

What is certain, apart from all these disputes, is that the Laocoön is a pastiche: a restoration, the canon for a history of contestation. In his book, *My Laocoön: Alternative Claims in the Interpretation of Artworks*, Richard Brilliant reports upon the confusion, when noticed by tourists at all, elicited by the circumstance of seeing two copies of the Laocoön on display in the Belvedere courtyard (Fig. 1). What we see in the plates reproduced in Fig. 1, matter for Brilliant's tourists (intriguingly, perhaps writing themselves into their own objectivity, art historians and scholars exclude themselves from the company of tourists *in situ*), as Brilliant observes that they „responded to the recent cast of the old, still authoritative version of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, then on display as the authentic original, because that was the image familiar to them from school, or from tired reproductions.“<sup>12</sup>

Reconstructions are to be distinguished from copies wrongly attributed. Hence in 1980, Alex Potts begins an essay on Anton Mengs by reminding the reader that „Statues once singled out as models of artistic excellence, such as the Apollo Belvedere and the Venus de Medici, are now judged to be copies and imitations.“<sup>13</sup> As Potts continues: „Only very few of the ancient works most admired in the eighteenth century – the Laocoon, the Borghese Warrior, the Belvedere Torso, the Barberini Faun – are now regarded as displaying something of the quality of execution one would expect of original Greek work.“<sup>14</sup> But beyond our valuation of the originality of the Laocoön group there is also the question of its interpretation.

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<sup>11</sup> See Thierry Lenain, *Art Forgery: The History of the Modern Obsession*, London 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Brilliant, *My Laocoön: Alternative Claims in the Interpretation of Artworks*, Berkeley 2000; Cf. Salvatore Settis, *Laocoonte, Fama e stile*, Rome 1999; Tonio Hölscher, *Laokoon und das Schicksal des Tiberius*, in: *Antike Welt* 31.3 (2000), 321–323.

<sup>13</sup> A. D. Potts, *Greek Sculpture and Roman Copies I: Anton Raphael Mengs and the Eighteenth Century*, in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 43 (1980), 150.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

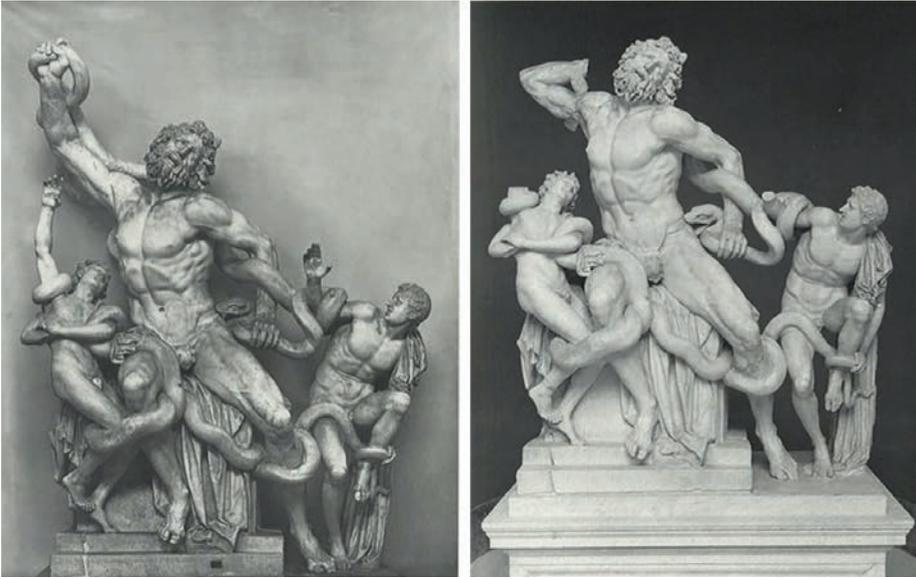


Fig. 1: *Vatican Laocoön*, 16th Century to 1960 VIII. 5.23 and the Marble, since 1960, Musei Vaticani, XIII.10.21. Photos from Musei Vaticani, Archivio Fotografico no. VIII.5.23 (left) and no. XIII.10.21 (right). Source: Richard Brilliant, *My Laocoön* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 2 f.

## 2 Thoughts on Imitation

At issue here is the Platonic notion of imitation likewise associated with Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's reflection on the complex limits of painting and poetry<sup>15</sup>, exemplar, archetype, ideal. Can any form be described on the terms of another form? With this come the limitations of the medium. Lessing foregrounds the unheard scream, pointing to the problems of representing voice at its most agonized, the pitch of expression, in a painting or plastic form. To represent a cry in painting or sculpture cannot but be unappealingly unaesthetic: a hole, a blackness in paint, a cavity in a sculpture. Nietzsche himself echoes Schlegel's own citation of Winckelmann in his comparison of Greek tragedy and sculpture, noting the ideal of beauty in balance, as tragic proportion.<sup>16</sup> For August Wilhelm Schlegel, Aeschylus and Sophocles highlight the balance of tension between bodily dynamic poise and spiritual suffering in the case of the Laocoön group, where the boys to either side of the central figure draw the gaze back to the father: the very snakes themselves seemingly only arrayed likewise

<sup>15</sup> Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoön. A Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, Baltimore 1962.

<sup>16</sup> „Winckelmann sagt, die Schönheit sei bei den Alten die Zunge an der Wage des Ausdrucks gewesen“ (NL 1[82], KSA 7, 36).



Fig. 2: *Vergilius Vaticanus*, Death of Laocöon, XVIIIv. Illuminated parchment. 400 CE. Wiki Commons.

to focus attention on the struggle of the priest, „his eyes seemingly turned in vain to the gods“.<sup>17</sup>

To turn now to the celebrated founder of art history, what can be striking in a discipline often marked by criticism, and sometimes named for this, Winckelmann tends to draw praise. It is not as if scholars do not notice his limitations, rather that limitations that might lead one to dismiss a lesser figure, rightfully forgotten to history, seem in Winckelmann’s case to elicit scholarly indulgence or fondness. This is often explained by his status as founder, as Walter Pater emphasizes, citing no less authority than Hegel’s *Lectures on Art*, Winckelmann occasions a new beginning: „initiating a new organ for the human spirit.“<sup>18</sup> And Nietzsche praises Winckelmann as well, noting his innovation, almost as Hegel does, speaking of him parallel to Goethe and Schiller, as pendant to Lessing.

But there is a limit for Nietzsche and that limit is nothing other than Dionysian knowledge: the heart of *The Birth of Tragedy*, as Nietzsche asks, cleanly moving away from Aristotle, „how can the ugly and the disharmonious, the content of the tragic myth, stimulate aesthetic pleasure?“ (BT, § 24). For Nietzsche: „The Dionysian, with its primordial joy experienced even in pain, is the common source of music and tragic myth“ (ibid.).

<sup>17</sup> August Wilhelm von Schlegel, *Sämmtliche Werke*, Eduard Böding, ed., 5. Band, Leipzig 1846, 85.

<sup>18</sup> Walter Pater, *The Renaissance*, Oxford 1986, 114.

If the majority of Nietzsche's readers manage to overlook the reference to music – perhaps already anticipating a Winckelmannian solution of emphatically silent classicism – Nietzsche foregrounds music and desire, claiming that in musical tragedy „the Apollinian receives wings from the spirit of music and soars“ (ibid.). A little later he explains that the „joy aroused by the tragic myth has the same origin as the joyous sensation of dissonance in music“ (ibid.). The reference includes an emphasis on „primordial joy even in pain“ and this for Nietzsche connects music and tragedy. Thus „referring to the artistically employed dissonances, we should have to characterize the corresponding state by saying that we desire to hear and at the same time to get beyond all hearing. That striving for the infinite, the wing-beat of longing that accompanies the highest delight in clearly perceived reality, reminds us that in both states we must recognize a Dionysian phenomenon: again and again it reveals to us the playful construction and destruction of the individual world as the overflow of a primordial delight“ (ibid.). The section goes on to allude to the dark Heraclitus, and his world child, playing on the beach. Perhaps that is why Nietzsche experts continue to be perplexed by this book wondering, at the end, what he might have been on about?<sup>19</sup>

To be sure, Nietzsche's express concern was tragedy: writing about its birth, as about its death (by suicide as he explains). To count the voices from the literature, we are told that this was his concern less because he meant to connect tragedy and music than owing to the fact that, fatherless as he was, Nietzsche was in thrall to Wagner and wrote his first book in association with Wagner. And scholars will also know that Nietzsche would get over his book and even go on to write a preface apparently retracting that first book, content and style („an impossible book“), and go on to write all the other works scholars continue to prefer to this, his first work, to this day.

But what if, instead of confirming all the things we suppose ourselves already to know, we were to take the force of the array of questions he includes in the very first section of that „attempt at self-critique“, foregrounding the subject of his first book „as a question“, and so writing in 1886, his miracle year of prefaces and re-publishing, this literally punctuated sentence of thought slashes and question-marks: „*The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* – out of music? Music and tragedy? Greeks and the music of tragedy? Greeks and the art form of pessimism? The best turned out, the most beautiful, the most envied type of humanity to date, those most apt to seduce us to life, the Greeks – how now. They of all people should have needed tragedy? Even more – art? For what – Greek art?“ (BT, Attempt at a Self-Critique, § 1). In his notes, we read that what is at issue is the very complex notion of beauty and, to be sure, this is also his thematic from the first sentence of *The Birth of Tragedy* and throughout. Thus Nietzsche emphasizes the *musical* notion of dissonances and of counterpoint, to clarify what he goes on to name the *Menschwerdung der Dissonanz*, the „becom-

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<sup>19</sup> Paul Raimund Daniels puts this question, in what I am sure is rhetorical mode, in his *Nietzsche and the Birth of Tragedy*, Durham 2013.

ing-human of dissonance.“ For Nietzsche, „Music and tragic myth are equally expressions of the Dionysian capacity of a people, and they are inseparable. Both derive from a sphere of art that lies beyond the Apollinian; both transfigure a region in whose joyous chords dissonance as well as the terrible image of the world fade away charmingly; both play with the sting of displeasure, trusting in their exceedingly powerful magic arts; and by means of this play both justify the existence of even the ‚worst world“ (BT, § 25). Thus in his writings from the early 1870s, he invites us to „think of the reality of dissonance as opposed to the ideality of consonance. What is productive, then, is the pain which creates the beautiful as a related counter-color – out of that point of indifference“ (NL7 [116], KSA 7, 164).

I have been trying to bring Nietzsche’s questions and his attention to the ‚spirit‘ of music, including ‚the becoming-human of dissonance‘ to our attention as scholars. My efforts include a fairly multifarious monograph, with segues into popular culture and drawing upon some of the more recondite deployments of critical theory (Adorno) laying out the workings of popular culture – the ‚effect‘ of *The Hallelujah Effect* – in a contemporary parallel with Nietzsche’s 19<sup>th</sup> century (Leonard Cohen, k.d. lang) to highlight what might be meant by the ‚spirit‘ of music. In this sense what is to be detailed in Nietzsche’s own 19<sup>th</sup> century, is the counterpoint of which Nietzsche speaks. But parallels at this juncture become misleading rather than helpful as the notion of dissonance is not to be heard as we, post Arnold Schoenberg and indeed post Theodor W. Adorno as we are, might tend to hear or to read this. Much rather, I suggest we advert to the way that Nietzsche himself heard this theoretical notion of counterpoint (echoed as it was in his correspondence with von Hans von Bülow not less) from Allbrechtsberger as authority, i. e., as Nietzsche supposed: directly from Beethoven himself for the sake of an expression of „the art form of pessimism“ that is „the music of tragedy“ (NL 7 [116], KSA 7, 164). To just this extent, the ‚point of indifference‘ from which Nietzsche speaks is a musical point: one that only makes sense in the dynamic posed between consonance and dissonance. This is the challenge of bringing the musical work of art into being. How, are we to understand that point of indifference? And if one can find that point, can one not perhaps also find ecstasy? Although I cannot but think most of us, as non-composers, will have lost him here, just as few of us will have noticed the salience of Nietzsche’s insistent comparison of Homer and Archilochus repeated across two sections of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche contends with reference to what in his first book he names „the problem of the subject“, „The subjectivity of the world is not an anthropomorphic subjectivity but a subjectivity of the world itself: we are the characters in the dream of the god who guesses how he is dreaming“ (ibid.). Nietzsche continues to explain art as directed toward „overcoming dissonance: thus the world of the beautiful originating from the point of indifference strives to draw dissonance as the disruptive element itself into the work of art. Hence the gradual delight in the minor key and dissonance. The means is that of delusion [*Wahnvorstellung* – B. B.], indeed any kind of ‚representation‘, withal the foundation that a pain-free intuition of things will be brought forth“ (NL 7[117], KSA 7, 166). To

understand this, we need both music and the cult of antiquity. As Nietzsche reminds us, this is the mystery cult of the Greeks. And if our theme is Winckelmann, the religion of the Greeks is central to our concern: in Sophocles, Laocoön is a priest of Apollo (not Neptune as in Vergil's account) and Laocoön's offense – this is the salacious element, for this reason, perhaps, the red cape in the *Vergilius Vaticanus* (Fig. 2) has the form of a shell – violated that same divine service, as we read in various accounts, a human-all-too-human transgression: having sex with his wife in the sanctuary of the god, from which congress his sons were born.

Those are details, details with variants just where the history of mythology, nowhere more evident perhaps than in the story of Laocoön, is a history of variant accounts of these same details.<sup>20</sup> For Nietzsche, what is also at issue is science and not less what Nietzsche names, in an echo of Goethe, „the mothers of being“ (BT, § 16). This is the truth beyond seeming, the truth we would have everything we could do to just begin to endure – and this is likewise an allusion to Faust's spirit of the earth and that spirit's remonstrance with Faust's pretensions to being an „Übermensch“ while being in truth, and Nietzsche was charmed by the literality of the comparison, a „worm“.<sup>21</sup> Nietzsche will tell us that these are the insights of Dionysian ‚knowledge‘ which cannot be apart from the Apollinian. Nietzsche reminds us of the cruelty of Apollo, as we have also learned after Marcel Detienne, the same Apollo who brings pestilence on the Greeks during their siege of Troy, the same god who will surprise the Trojans in Laocoön's presentiment of doom, both for himself and for Troy.

### 3 So many details ...

Nietzsche explains: „And thus runs alongside that same veiled Apollinian mystery order a Dionysian, the symbol of a world revealed only for a few individuals, but of which may be spoken for the many through a language of images. The ecstatic intoxication of the Dionysian orgies spun itself at the same time into the mysteries: it is the same drive that reigns here and there, the same wisdom that is expressed here and there. Who would wish to deny this underground of the Hellenic essence in its artistic monuments. That quiet simplicity and noble grandeur which inspired Winckelmann remains something inexplicable when one leaves the metaphysical mysteries which

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<sup>20</sup> An information beginning reflection on these various accounts may be found in Richmond Y. Hathorn, *Greek Mythology*, Beirut 1977.

<sup>21</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust, Volume 1 and 2*, New York 2012, 19. It is in just this parodic Goethean spirit that I argue that we should read the notion of the Übermensch Nietzsche takes over from the second century CE, Lucian. See Babette Babich, *Le Zarathoustra de Nietzsche et le style parodique. A propos de l'hyperanthropos de Lucien et du surhomme de Nietzsche*, in: *Diogène. Revue internationale des sciences humaines*, 232 (October 2010), 70–93.

penetrate into the depths out of our consideration. Here the Greek had an unshakable certainty, just where he related to his Olympic deities in freer fashion, now playfully, now skeptically. For just this reason, the real cardinal offence would be the desecration of the Mysteries, which seemed to the Greek even more terrible than the dissolution of the demos“ (NL 7[122], KSA 7, 176). There is an enormous amount in this and we could likewise seek to analyze preceding passages or revisit the texts cited above. Here we limit attention to two points, one left out, despite the length of the citation, namely, the prelude Nietzsche includes concerning the particular position or ‚role‘ of women in Greek tragedy, the other an especially relevant point concerning language, speech, or and once again, although as already noted we do persist in overhearing it, what Nietzsche called ‚the spirit of music.‘

The problem to Nietzsche’s mind was of a piece with the profession of philology. And this highlights the question of comparison, rather on the order of Lessing’s comparative question between poetry and painting. Classical Philology is the study of the ancients, particularly the Greeks themselves. How, Nietzsche begs us to ask, could a professor of ancient Greek measure up to his subject and, perhaps more importantly, how could he not? To be sure, we recognize such questions as the questions of the ‚untimely‘ Nietzsche, the Nietzsche who reflected on the future of our educational institutions and went on to repeat the sentiment in his *Gay Science* aphorism, a „Remark for Philologists“, musing that his own profession’s dedication to the constitution of accurate classical texts was founded on the presupposition „that there is no lack of such rare human beings (even if one does not see them) who really know how to use such books“ (GS, § 102). For Nietzsche, these and similar questions also bore on the estimation of modern poets and modern theorists with respect to others, how could one take Goethe’s estimation of Winckelmann he asked, where Goethe perhaps overestimated Winckelmann’s pagan spirit (NL 5[135], KSA 8, 75) and where both Goethe and Nietzsche would be referring – as does Walter Pater – to Winckelmann’s infamous conversion to Catholicism and not less his association with Jesuits (as if gaining access to the particular treasures of the Vatican would be afforded in any other fashion).<sup>22</sup>

Criticizing Winckelmann in this way is also to praise him as he is in good company together with Goethe who, for Nietzsche, likewise fails to comprehend the depths of the Dionysian orgiastic and to this extent, precisely „in consequence Goethe failed to understand the Greeks“ (TI, *What I Owe the Ancients*, § 4). In a not dissimilar fashion, Nietzsche refers to „Winckelmann’s judgment of Laocoön“ (NL 7[8], KSA 10, 240) reminding us that in the end, with a similarly respectable comparison to Wagner, Winckelmann ultimately derived his sense of antiquity on the basis of the Laocoön

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<sup>22</sup> Nor is that as relevant as the conviction that Catholicism is a religion of heathens. The same prejudices would surround, still surround, another convert, the Silesian angel, Johannes Scheffler, the Cherrubinic Wanderer. Anti-Catholicism remains the only prejudice with a scholarly good conscience nor can we talk about Winckelmann without it.

(NL 26[19], KSA 11, 154). Hence if Nietzsche set Goethe and Winckelmann together he was ultimately directing his criticism to his contemporaries. By contrast, Nietzsche thought that his perception of the Greeks did not have, perhaps because it could not have, an audience. „It would appear that the Greek world is a hundred times more concealed and more foreign than the intrusive nature of modern scholars would desire it. If anything is ever grasped here it will certainly only be like via like [*das Gleiche durch das Gleiche*]“ (NL 34[4], KSA 11, 424). At issue would be the project of developing ‚an eye‘ with an affinity for that same ‚like‘ in the world of antiquity.

Nietzsche will never be reconciled to the high demands of this prospect in the course of his reflections, if he also names it a „comedy“.<sup>23</sup> We think we know our Greeks, our Orientals, our ‚Norsemen.“<sup>24</sup> And we can add that perhaps we only think we know our Winckelmann and our Nietzsche too. Scholarship must be dedicated, this is what scholarship is for, to challenging convictions concerning what we take ourselves to know. If we have yet to offer a philological science of history of the sort that might meet Nietzsche's rigor, perhaps there is room as well for a philological science of art history. But if so, Nietzsche can help to remind us that we need not only to highlight our statues as paradigms or exemplars, this was Winckelmann's greatest inception, but and even more elusively, to bring our texts to voice.

Simon Richter in his discussion of Winckelmann in his critically insightful *Laocoon's Body and the Aesthetics of Pain*, notes the relevance of a missing fountain, now displaced.<sup>25</sup> Richter's point is to be repeated here inasmuch as the very locus of the Laocoön inspiring Winckelmann's influential expression of nobility and grandeur and silent grace was not quiet. There was noise: the gurgling of a spring and Richter tells that the Belvedere courtyard once featured an „immense porphyry fountain“.<sup>26</sup> Citing Friedrich von Ramdohr's description of the fountain as Goethe, Karl Philip Moritz, and Johann Gottfried Herder would have seen it before it was moved in 1792,

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23 I cite for instance: „Es ist eine heitere Comödie, über die erst jetzt wir lachen lernen, die wir jetzt erst sehen: daß die Zeitgenossen Herders, Winckelmanns, Goethes und Hegels in Anspruch nahmen, *das klassische Ideal wieder entdeckt zu haben* ... Und zu gleicher Zeit Shakespeare! – und dasselbe Geschlecht hatte sich von der klassischen Schule der Franzosen auf schnöde Art losgesagt! – als ob nicht das Wesentliche so gut hier wie dorthier hätte gelernt werden können! [...] Aber man wollte die ‚Natur‘, die ‚Natürlichkeit‘: oh Stumpfsinn! man glaubte, die Classicität sei eine Art Natürlichkeit!“ (NL 11[312], KSA 13, 132).

24 Thus Nietzsche writes: „Winckelmanns und Goethes Griechen, V. Hugo's Orientalen, Wagners Edda-Personnagen, W. Scotts Engländer des 13. Jahrhunderts – irgend wann wird man die ganze Komödie entdecken: es war Alles über alle Maaßen historisch falsch, *aber* – modern, wahr!“ (NL 11[330], KSA 13, 140).

25 The history of antiquity is nothing if not the history of antique sources in every sense and I have elsewhere written of the poetic fortunes of the Arethusan spring. See, in connection with Hölderlin but not less Milton and in connection with very modern efforts to trace the paths, the directions, the sources of rivers, in this case the Ister, the Danube. Babette Babich, *The Ister: Between the Documentary and Heidegger's Lecture Course Politics, Geographies, and Rivers*, in: *Divinatio*, 24/32 (2010), 7–32.

26 Simon Richter, *Laocoon's Body and the Aesthetics of Pain*, 29.

Richter writes that even in the absence of the now displaced fountain and to this day: the „sound of water, however, is still to be heard [...] The sound of gurgling, splashing water has been there since antiquity“.<sup>27</sup> In von Ramdohr’s description of what Richter thus describes as the „acoustic space of the courtyard“, we can be struck by the metaphor: „The imagination ascends on the easiest ladder from the surrounding gods to the upper regions and then back down to their probable inhabitants; and the monotone sound of the constantly ascending, constantly descending water of the fountain sustains the soul in the enjoyment of the beautiful.“<sup>28</sup>

In addition to the gurgling water, Richter’s study of pain and the body includes a reflection on the medical role of pain in the experimental lectures published by Albrecht von Haller in 1753 *De partibus corporis humani sensibilis et irritabilibus* – nor, please note, just because this is ethically grievous, has modern physiology left off such experiments to this day – designed „to determine how all the different body parts react to pain“.<sup>29</sup> Richter notes that „Haller’s achievement has been described as accomplishing for physiology what Copernicus, Newton, and Huygens accomplished for their fields“.<sup>30</sup>

Note further that the more respectable science of physiology (unfeeling as pain-research continues to be unfeeling despite involving massive repetitions of experiments with ‚stimuli‘, as the term is used, after Haller’s use of the term ‚Reiz‘ as Richter notes here<sup>31</sup>) grew out of a complex tradition of anatomical representation, often connected with evolutionary variation, stylized with comparative arrays of figuration, and physiognomy, this last a science that has fallen into even more disfavor than, say, phrenology. Thus in addition to Giambattista della Porta’s 1602 publication of a print catalogue of this science: *De humana physiognomia* and the various prints of the allegorical master, Charles Le Brun (such as his 1671 pen and ink sketch *Three lion-like heads*, Fig. 3), we might add Le Brun’s influential 1682 study, *Méthode pour apprendre à dessiner les passions*.<sup>32</sup>

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27 Ibid.

28 Ibid., 29 f. Richter is quoting Ramdohr, *Über Malerei und Bildhauerkunst in Rom für Liebhaber des Schönen in der Kunst* (1787).

29 Ibid., 32.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid., 33.

32 See, for a reprint edition of the 1702 Amsterdam publication, Charles Le Brun, *Méthode pour apprendre à dessiner les passions proposée dans une conférence sur l’expression général et particulière*, Hildesheim 1982. See Morel d’Arleux, Louis-Marie-Joseph, Madeleine Pinault Sørensen, *De la physionomie humaine et animale: dessins de Charles Le Brun gravés pour la Chalcographie du musée Napoléon en 1806: [avec la réédition du texte de Louis-Marie-Joseph Morel d’Arleux pour la Dissertation sur un traité de Charles Le Brun, concernant le rapport de la physionomie humaine avec celle des animaux; ouvrage enrichi de la gravure des dessins tracés pour la démonstration de ce système, Paris, 1806 (Paris 2000).*



Fig. 3: Charles Le Brun, *Trois têtes d'hommes en relation avec le lion* [Three lion-like heads], 1671, Louvre (Public domain)

In England, this physiognomic analysis found expression in the satirical yet quite earnest moral types depicted in the works of William Hogarth. More formulaically and with grave social consequences for what came to be known as social Darwinism and found terrible expressions, widespread in many lands, and not only in Germany under the Nazis, this notion of physiognomic type found expression in the legislated consequences of supposed 'eugenic science'. The very idea of the traits of character to be discerned in the face of a human being, such that the marks of dissolution may be seen, in the studies of moral physiognomy of Johann Caspar Lavater (1775)<sup>33</sup> must be matched by Charles White's comparative anatomy of 1799.<sup>34</sup> And it remains important to note, our museums of natural history are organized in this spirit to this day, that the comparative anatomy to be seen in Lavater and White recurs in Alfred Romer's 1933 *Vertebrate Paleontology*, a textbook still in use in Anglo-American college instruction.<sup>35</sup>

The noble ideal is the other side of this argument of bestial elements and decline. And Winckelmann places the Greek above the Roman, and the ideal of imitating the Greek as the path to the same self-improvement and perfection that continues to inspire the ideal of a classical education. At issue is whether it is seemly to imagine that Laocoön might be screaming through compressed lips, caught as he is in the torsion of the two snakes. According to Winckelmann, he does not scream, and in this Lessing is in agreement because there is no seemly or suitable way to depict a scream in a plastic image or a painting.

<sup>33</sup> See for an English translation, John Caspar Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy, Designed to Promote the Knowledge and the Love of Mankind* (London: John Murray, 1789). For discussions the contributions to Ellis Shookman, ed., *The Faces of Physiognomy: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Johann Caspar Lavater*, Columbia 1993.

<sup>34</sup> Charles White, *An Account of the Regular Gradation in Man, and in Different Animals and Vegetables; and from the Former to the Latter. Illustrated with Engravings Adapted to the Subject*, London 1799.

<sup>35</sup> Alfred Romer, *Vertebrate Paleontology*, Chicago 1933, 2nd ed. 1945; 3rd ed. 1966.



Fig. 4: Marco Dente, *Laocoön and his two sons standing on a pedestal and being attacked by serpents*, set before a decaying wall, ca. Etching 1520. Metropolitan Museum, NYC; The Elisha Whittelsey Collection, The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 1949 (public domain)

Elsewhere I have argued that we cannot but pay attention to what can go unadverted to more easily than ever in our day of media-rich research resources and our expectation of what would and would not have been seen in person, namely works of art as experienced in books and plates<sup>36</sup> – and not less under very different physical conditions than we might encounter them today. And Marco Dente's illustrative sketch of Laocoön and his two sons can be seen to include at least a sigh or an agonized groan (Fig. 4) The body as a whole is what attests to constraint or control. Richter

<sup>36</sup> Babette Babich, *Die Naturkunde der Griechischen Bronze im Spiegel des Lebens*, especially the latter section where I discuss Winckelmann in some detail.

also reminds us that Winckelmann never had the opportunity to see the Laocoön or the Apollo Belvedere about which he writes so rhapsodically much less the Belvedere Torso in the light of day. The statues had been for centuries, as of 1595, kept „enclosed in wooden boxes as a form of protection against ignorant and vandalous visitors“.<sup>37</sup> If Winckelmann died two years before these statues were removed from the boxes in 1770, Goethe, by contrast, in 1786, would be just in time to see them in sunlight. However, one has to think that it was not merely for reasons of tradition (as Richter seems to suggest), as much as for dynamic contrast that „Goethe recommends seeing the statue at night by torchlight“.<sup>38</sup> The best images of the statue, not excluding the Laocoön that graces Richter's own book cover, are made against a black background. This too belongs among the virtues of white marble.

Alex Potts argues for a specifically frozen political ideal of what he nonetheless names „political freedom“ as inhering in and „informing the basis of the beauty of Greek art“<sup>39</sup> for Winckelmann. It is impossible to separate this notion from the material formality of Winckelmann's catalogue plates and the stone of antiquity as well as the whiteness not merely of substance (marble) but time. Some part of this has to do with the contours of sexuality, some elements of which would be unspoken, hinted at, known but occluded, and other elements of which would be as conspicuous as the nudity of the statues themselves. Potts himself attributes to Hegel the insight that Winckelmann introduced a systematic accounting of Greek antiquity which subsequent historical efforts do not fulfill as much as exemplify just to the extent that one could now speak of a „total history“<sup>40</sup> where the Hegelian impetus could only expect to collide with an unhappy detritus of detail: „So poised at a moment of rupture, Winckelmann's enterprise would become radically incoherent, with bits of one world-view existing alongside another quite at odds with it“.<sup>41</sup>

With Winckelmann, one learns to look at statues and at the same time one also learns to find oneself regarded by them, call this the Rainer Maria Rilke *effect*, owing more to the tension of Winckelmann's approach than its coherent systematicity. For Potts, this corresponds to the homoerotic tonal shading of Winckelmann's readings. Nor is Potts the only scholar to make this observation. Yet what is essential is quite apart from this aspect in connection with Nietzsche: rather than dividing, as Potts

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37 Simon Richter, *Laocoon's Body and the Aesthetics of Pain*, 24.

38 Ibid.

39 Alex Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994). Renate Reschke speaks of this as „Winckelmann's own antiquity“ that is, as she writes: exemplifying „das Bild von freien, gesitteten, und schönen Polisbürger“ (Renate Reschke, *Idealische, vernünftige Schönheit. Johann Joachim Winckelmanns Antikebild zwischen Aufklärung und Klassizismus: Das Beispiel Apollon* in: Konstantin Broese, Andreas Hütig, Oliver Immel, Renate Reschke, eds., *Vernunft der Aufklärung, Aufklärung der Vernunft*, Berlin 2006, 106.

40 Alex Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal*, 21.

41 Ibid., 23.



Fig. 5: Anton Raphael Mengs (and Giacomo Casanova), *Zeus Kisses Ganymede*, fresco, c. 1758. Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Palazzo Corsini, Rome

puts it, „the different registers of response between a male and a female spectator“, it seems patent that one can only be speaking of Winckelmann’s Apollo, in this case, the Apollo Belvedere as Potts cites Winckelmann’s description: „The evocations of bodily form are constantly shifting between vividly contrasting polarities of beauty and power. Thus you have ‚the soft tenderness ... of an eternal springtime‘ playing upon ‚the proud build of his limbs‘. The image of the mouth is both that of the angry unyielding god who has effortlessly annihilated his foe – ‚disdain sits on his lips‘ – and ‚a mouth shaped as one from which voluptuous desire flowed to the beloved Branchus‘.“<sup>42</sup> As Potts helpfully adds for his readers, „Branchus incidentally was one of Apollo’s boy lovers who became so obsessed with the god that he became his oracle, and soon after died, like most of Apollo’s mortal male lovers“.<sup>43</sup> (Fig. 5)

It is not that there is no difference between male and female spectators. To the contrary, what is at stake is just how far this difference should be taken. Thus what is relevant for art history today is the extent to which it is the male that is both object *and* subject as in the case of Winckelmann’s Apollo Belvedere. Both historian and commentator look with male rather than female eyes. These are Winckelmann’s eyes, Alex Pott’s eyes, Walter Pater’s eyes, John Ruskin’s eyes, Bernard Andreae’s eyes – if

<sup>42</sup> Alex Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal*, 123 ff. Citing Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Geschichte*, 393. The same citation of ‚disdain‘ comes to light in James Porter’s chapter *After Philology*, in his *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future*, 258.

<sup>43</sup> Alex Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal*, 125.

only because these are the only eyes whose witness has been transmitted to us, and who, in the case of the Vatican, in the case of the famous exclusion of female witness, a diremption that was, and still is to be sure, hardly an incidental exclusion. The shock, the dissonance, is that Winckelmann brings to the attention of the viewer – here because this is a historically catalogued account, the viewer is also the reader – the notion that the god, here Apollo, is an object of desire himself with desires of a subject-annihilating kind. That incidental reference is the kind that makes the art historian or art enthusiast – who else is reading art history? – gape with shock and fascination: the boy was mesmerized; the boy, like Zeus' Ganymede, would have to die as a result of this dalliance.

Thus to raise the complex question of the subject of desire, one part of the several points explored in *The Hallelujah Effect*, which was also a study of performance practice, doing it, as it were, is performing or effecting the effect of the effect: bringing off a song, a cover, accomplishing a hit, and not sparing the criticisms of such an artful artistry of the kind Adorno heaped on the popular process, i. e., without assuming that that critique was without purchase or that such achievements were not to be understood apart from being manufactured or made, calculated and automated, as well as the complicated question of desire as such. Thus, talking about a singer, the late Canadian poet-monk-thinker, Leonard Cohen (1935–2016), who wrote a song repeated or „covered“ by so many that the very phenomenon of Cohen's *Hallelujah* transcended cliché as a music history event of its own<sup>44</sup>, I sought to raise the question of voice and desire, male and female, by invoking a lesbian singer, one k.d. lang, another Canadian, not herself a monk but also a Buddhist, with her own set of fans, but also, and this I did not expect, a singer who was the recipient of a popular tendency to discount her in favor of other pop-rock star style saints, like Jeff Buckley, Rufus Wainwright, or John Cale, etc. My concern went beyond contests between favorite pop stars: holding no torch of fandom for this or that singer, I drew attention to the desire spoken in the poet's song, „her beauty on the roof“, the male subject captured, „she tied you to a kitchen chair“ and undone „she broke your throne and cut your hair“ all before being suitably cut down to size, „Baby, I've been here before“, „Our love is not a victory march“. No indeed.

But that *subject* was male. Where, I sought to ask, could one find the female subject of desire? Was there one? Not as such it seemed, or not obviously, as certain nuances can be lost in an unread text that may be available in a video of a performance of Leonard Cohen's song about King David's *Hallelujah*. In the case of k.d. lang, one might ask about women's desire, about female desire but to go beyond k.d. lang, what about men as objects of this same desire? With Winckelmann, the male object of

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<sup>44</sup> Babette Babich, *The Hallelujah Effect*, London 2016 [2013]. Here it is worth referring as I do in my book, to Bryan Appleyard's reflections in an article written on the song in *The Sunday Times* (UK), 9 January 2005.

desire corresponds to the male sculptures, the frieze, the most perfect painting as he speaks of it, the prints as he commissions them. Writing about a poet-minstrel song composed about a poet-singer-composer-king, David, I found myself talking about Cohen's song and John Cale's orchestration but needing to address the question of desire by speaking of paintings, photography, and dance in order to point out the elusive quality of female desire, and the challenge of representing the male object of desire for any subject other than the male himself. It is even more of a challenge to pose the question of desire in connection with Nietzsche's Beethoven, since the default is given as Wagner. And how, now, to connect it with Winckelmann, or with marble whiteness, or with red capes on parchment, with silence, or with pain?

At issue is the tension of classicism, usually discussed in counterpoint with the enlightenment ideal, as this can be taken as equivalent to the classical ideal. Thus if it is common, all too common, to cite the key passage from Winckelmann's 1755 *Thoughts on the Imitation of the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks*, we can call attention as we do so to the metaphor of the sea and the depths: „The universal and predominant characteristic of the Greek masterpiece is a noble simplicity and tranquil grandeur both in posture and expression. Just as the depths of the sea remain forever calm, however much the surface may rage, so does the expression of the Greek figures in the throes of their strongest passion [*bei allen Leidenschaften* – B. B.], reveal a great and dignified soul. Such a soul is depicted in the face of the Laocoon, and not only in his face but also in the throes evident in his every muscle and sinew, and which, disregarding, his face and other parts of his body, we can almost feel ourselves simply by looking at his painfully contracting abdomen – this pain, I maintain, nevertheless causes no violent distortion of his face or to his general posture.“<sup>45</sup>

Wilhelm von Humboldt manifestly points the theme that Nietzsche would appear to make his own in *The Birth of Tragedy*: the Greeks have a trick – the late David Allison will use the language of „alchemy“ as Nietzsche uses the term in a letter he writes from Rapallo to Franz Overbeck on Christmas Day, 1882 in order to speak of the devastation of a psychic pain<sup>46</sup>, the fatal consequences of festering ‚ressentiment‘ with respect to his own disappointments with Lou von Salomé and not only Lou but everything in connection with his association with Wagner and Bayreuth.

Nietzsche's personal challenges of transfiguring psychic damages to one side, Humboldt highlights what Nietzsche takes over as his own perspective on the singularity that was Greece, what Eliza Butler singles out as the very element that constitutes if any one thing does the *Tyranny of Greece over Germany*: not Roman Stoicism, but sublimation, that is again: an alchemy of melancholy itself. One can contemplate the *Gedankentafel* that is Albrecht Dürer's 1514 *Melencholia I* just to see this in its

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<sup>45</sup> Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Thoughts on the Imitation of the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks*, 1755.

<sup>46</sup> David B. Allison, *Reading the New Nietzsche*, Lanham 2001, 115.

hermetic outlining of antiquity and its relevance for the day, for our times still. As Humboldt writes: „No people has known how to intensify the feeling of melancholy as did the Greeks, because in the most vivid depiction of pain they did not deny the most luxurious kind of pleasure its rightful due, and because they even knew how to obtain serenity [*Heiterkeit* – B. B.] and grandeur [*Grösse* – B. B.] from pain.“<sup>47</sup>

## 4 Second verse, Same as the First: Winckelmann's Apollo

The Apollo Belvedere simply is the classic ideal. It is, for Winckelmann, unparalleled as such: „The statue of Apollo is the highest ideal of art among all the works of antiquity that have escaped its destruction.“<sup>48</sup> Essential to this paragon is the same smoothness that moves Richter to emphasize Winckelmann's foregrounding of the ‚Spiegel‘, the ‚mirror‘ or plane in the small of the back of the boy Ganymede, which, Richter argues, is modeled on Winckelmann's own beloved 14 year-old castrato, as he argues that this favorite served as the model for Anton Mengs' boy Ganymede in the embrace of Zeus. It is yet another detail that this is itself a famous falsification, an idealized ideal of antiquity presented as if it were derived from antiquity.<sup>49</sup>

For Winckelmann, these smooth lines are to be prized above all, the perceived softness of the limbs, the youth of the limbs matters: „An eternal springtime, like that of the blissful Elysian Fields, clothes the alluring virility of mature years with a pleasing youth and plays with soft tenderness upon the lofty structure of his limbs. Go with thy spirit into the realm of incorporeal beauties and seek to become a creator of a heavenly nature, so that the spirit might be filled with beauties that rise above nature – for here there is nothing mortal, nothing that betokens miserable humanity. No veins or sinews heat and move this body, but rather a heavenly spirit that, flowing like a gentle stream, has saturated, as it were, every contour of this figure.“<sup>50</sup> (Fig. 6)

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<sup>47</sup> Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Latium und Hellas oder Betrachtungen über das klassische Alterthum* (1807/07), in: *Werke in fünf Bänden*, Vol. 3, Darmstadt 1969, 153. Cited after Porter, *Nietzsche and the Philology*, Stanford 2000, 259. It can be argued, though this is not Porter's point, that some of this derives from Schiller.

<sup>48</sup> Johann Joachim Winckelmann, 333. And see, too, again, for a powerful discussion of this Appolinian ideal: Renate Reschke, *Idealische, vernünftige Schönheit*.

<sup>49</sup> Thomas Pelzel, *Winckelmann, Mengs and Casanova: A Reappraisal of a Famous Eighteenth-Century Forgery*, in: *The Art Bulletin*, 54, 3 (1972), 300–315. In her account, Wendy Wassyngge Roworth suggests that such fakery was commonplace but also committed, as it would have been in ancient Rome, as a kind of a joke in Winckelmann's Rome. See Roworth, *Pulling Parhassius's Curtain: Trickery and Fakery in the Roman Art World*, in: Richard Wrigley, ed., *Regarding Romantic Rome*, Bern 2007, 17–38.

<sup>50</sup> Johann Joachim Winckelmann, 333.



Fig. 6: *Apollo Belvedere*, ca. 140-120 CE. Pio-Clementino Inv 1015. Vatican Museum (Wiki Commons)

If one can be perturbed by the veins and musculature of the Belvedere torso (never mind the heavy modeling of other depictions of Hercules' overburdened musculature), or unnerved by the more entangled representations of Dionysus who is usually held to be a feminine god, or as much female as male in aspect, certainly wreathed with flowers as he is, the god of dissolution and immeasure, the god of wine, the Apollo Belvedere is *classically* feminine in aspect. Not Dionysus, for Winckelmann, it is Apollo's hair that can be compared to the „tendrils of a noble vine“. Clearly this Apollo is an object of desire yet it does not seem to correspond to the stirrings of which Nietzsche speaks when he talks of the „heart-beat of longing“, a longing that wishes at once to see and not to see, at once to hear and not to hear. Winckelmann's description of Belvedere Apollo, quite by contrast with Zeus and Ganymede, does not speak to that kind of ecstasy. This is a purely scopic enjoyment: a voyeur's enjoyment. Thus Winckelmann continues to describe the head of the Belvedere Apollo: „A brow of Jupiter, gravid with the goddess of wisdom, and eyebrows whose motions declare his will; eyes of the queen of the gods, arched with grandeur, and a mouth whose shape infused desire in the beloved Branchos. His soft hair plays about this divine head like the tender, waving tendrils of the noble grapevine stirred, as it were, by a gentle breeze: it seems anointed with the oil of the gods and bound at the crown of his head with lovely splendor by the Graces. In gazing upon this masterpiece of art, I forget all else, and I myself adopt an elevated stance, in order to be worthy of gazing upon it.“<sup>51</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 334.



Fig. 7: *Apollo Belvedere*, head and pectoral detail (Wiki Commons)

Thus, and this is the great secret of classicism: we have a very Platonic contemplation of beauty: one who loses himself in such a rapture seems very nearly divine. Captivated, transported as Winckelmann says to the god's birthplace, „to Delos and to the Lycian groves, places Apollo honored with his presence“, Winckelmann here would seem to be asking Lessing's question: „How is it possible to paint and describe it! Art herself must advise me and guide my hand to convey henceforth the main features that I have sketched here.“ In and to this extent, the *Apollo Belvedere* is the test and the occasion for Winckelmann's own apotheosis. (Fig. 7)

We have already quoted the ‚scorn‘ or ‚disdain of the lip‘, the sensuous turn and this has been the subject of informed reflection on the homoerotic element of Winckelmann's milieu and insight. But how are we to read this together with Nietzsche? Who, we might ask, is Nietzsche's Apollo? In the *Dawn*, Nietzsche explains that, just as Xenophon would remind us, beauties are relative to a people and an era. „*Beauty appropriate to the age*. – If our sculptors, painters, and musicians want to hit off the spirit of an age they must depict beauty as bloated, gigantic and nervous, just as the Greeks under the spell of their morality of moderation, saw and depicted beauty as the *Apollo Belvedere*. We ought really to call him ugly? But our stupid ‚classicists‘ have robbed us of all honesty!“ (*Dawn*, § 161).

In the very first section of *The Birth of Tragedy*, which, as argued, may be read with profit as a palimpsest of the entire work, Nietzsche tells us that Apollo is to be

seen in inevitably Winckelmannian light: illuminated by „the dream experience“ but much more as the god of sculpture itself. As Nietzsche writes, „Apollo, the god of all plastic energies is at the same time the soothsaying god. He, who (as the etymology of the name indicates) is the ‚shining one‘, the deity of light is also ruler over the beautiful illusion of the inner world of fantasy“ (BT, § 1).

And we listen just a little to Nietzsche’s description of what can seem to be the same Apollo Belvedere: „that measured restraint, that freedom from the wilder emotions, that calm of the sculptor god. His eye must be ‚sunlike‘, as befits his origin, even when it is angry and distempered it is still hallowed by beautiful illusion“ (ibid.). This recalls the contrast that many commentators note in Winckelmann, and we quote again, just because matched with Nietzsche’s description, we can see Winckelmann’s as a complete description of the god reposing in this one statue: „His sublime gaze, as if peering into infinity, reaches out from the height of his contentment to far beyond his victory. Scorn sits upon his lips, and the displeasure that he contains within swells the nostrils of his nose and spreads upward to his proud brow. But the tranquility that hovers over him in a blissful stillness remains undisturbed, and his eyes are full of sweetness, as if he were among the Muses as they seek to embrace him.“<sup>52</sup>

The focus on disdain or scorn and „the displeasure that he contains within“ is also echoed in Nietzsche, where he presents Apollo seemingly on the model of Benvenuto Cellini’s *Perseus* (cast, let us not forget, in bronze, and Nietzsche was taken by this statue, elsewhere using it to epitomize the „statue of humanity“) where, as he writes in his first book, this „Apollo rising full of pride, held out the Gorgon’s head“, as Nietzsche writes in this apotropaic gesture against „this grotesquely uncouth Dionysian power“. As Nietzsche summarizes Winckelmann’s Apollinian scorn: „It is in Doric art that this majestically rejecting attitude of Apollo is immortalized“ (BT, § 2). The whole complex that begins requires the dismantling in almost literal effect of verbal frieze as Nietzsche uses this image to outline the start of the third section, speaking of the need „to level the artistic structure of Apollinian culture, as it were, stone by stone, till the foundations on which it rests become visible“ (BT § 3). Thus Nietzsche finds Apollo ranged above all the other gods. As Winckelmann writes: „the father of the gods does not approach the greatness in which he manifested himself to the mind of the divine poet, seen here in the countenance of his son, and the individual beauties of the other gods are here mingled together, as they were in Pandora.“<sup>53</sup> For Nietzsche, „the same impulse that embodied itself in Apollo gave birth to this entire Olympian world, and in this sense Apollo is its father“ (ibid.). Where many commentators will compare Nietzsche with Winckelmann it will be in the parallel to be drawn with Raphael’s *Transfiguration*, where it seems most evident that a figural dynamic allows one to trace the erotic cum exoteric, the world below, and the higher world, the esoteric, elevated

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52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

world above. There are problems with this reading despite its overall or general appeal for commentators: we can read Apollo as the guide to Raphael's *Transfiguration*, the dream insight carrying us to see the transfigured world above and to retain the unsludged vision of what Nietzsche here names the „apothecosis of individuation“ which as he says „knows but one law – the individual“ (BT, § 4). And this seems precisely right: „delimiting the boundaries of the individual“, and exacting nothing but measure, like the god flaying Marsyas: „Apollo, as ethical deity, exacts measure of his disciples, and, to be able to maintain it, he requires self-knowledge“ (ibid.). The Dionysian festival – let us not forget and this will be the source of the permanent strife between these two artistic deities – is not only immoderate but and above all perhaps, it is anything but silent: „in these strains all of nature's excess in pleasure, grief, and knowledge became audible, even in piercing screams: and let us ask ourselves what the psalmodizing artist of Apollo, with his phantom harp sound, could mean in the face of this demonic folk-song! The muses of the arts of ‚illusion‘ paled before an art that, in its intoxication, spoke the truth. The wisdom of Silenus cried ‚Woe! Woe!‘ to the serene Olympians. [...] Contradiction, the bliss born of pain, spoke out from the very heart of nature“ (ibid.). And later in his text he tells us, as we might have guessed from the start, „I see Apollo as the transfiguring genius of the *principium individuationis* through which alone the redemption of illusion is truly to be obtained; while by the mystical triumphant cry of Dionysus the spell of individuation is broken, and the way lies open to the Mothers of Being, to the innermost heart of things. This extraordinary contrast, which stretches like a yawning gulf between plastic art as the Apollinian, and music as the Dionysian art, has revealed itself to only one of the great thinkers, to such an extent that [...] he conceded to music a character and an origin different from all the other arts“ (BT, § 16). Nietzsche is referring to Arthur Schopenhauer but to keep to the comparison with Winckelmann, Apollo for Nietzsche, is a very specific art god. Indeed, as he writes in the *Dionysian World View*, „If music is also an Apollinian art, is more exactly taken, only the rhythm whose formative power was developed for the representation of Apollinian states: the music of Apollos is architecture in tones, still more in only indicative tones such as those proper to the cithara. The very element that forms character of Dionysian music, that is music altogether, is excluded, the shattering power of tone and the utterly incomparable world of harmony“ (DW, KSA 1, 557).

Yet it is Apollo, the sculptor god, the god of form, as Nietzsche reminds us of the mythic account, who in a world transfigured with milk and the reconciliation of humanity and everything in nature, is said to have put the sundered pieces of Zagreus together again, to form Dionysus (ibid., 559). We need, as Nietzsche repeats, both gods in a brother's bond in order to give birth to the artwork that is tragedy.

## 5 Apollo and Dionysus: Singing Archilochus

Where Winckelmann's Apollo embodies disdainful silence (lips curled in withholding scorn), Nietzsche's Dionysus cries out in jubilation, as Nietzsche repeats this and I argue that this Dionysus is best understood on the complex modeling of Nietzsche's invocation of Archilochus and the lyric form as opposed to Homer's epic. Apollo is, as Nietzsche says, effectively epic, akin to Homer and the Homeric tradition, Dionysus, related to the lyric, at once equal to and foreign to, Nietzsche will even say *older* than, the epic, and there we hear again the name: Archilochus. It is, Nietzsche says, a matter of repeating an equivalence made by the ancients who set the images of the two side by side, back to back on herms, as he suggests with a sculptural image, or on gems and coins, an image he claims as going back, but as he also claims, *misidentified* as such, to Friedrich Gottlob Welcker. Today's experts, rather all too quick to repeat conventional claims, simply take Nietzsche's published work without noting the attribution to Welcker in his lecture courses, and insist that Nietzsche is just wrong.<sup>54</sup> And there are so many details for Nietzsche to be wrong about. But I argue that it is unclear that Nietzsche is wrong in this case as in the context of a discussion of Greek lyric poetry, folk song, and tragedy, one can make comparisons between poets and Archilochus there takes pride of place, at least for the ancients. Today we need to ask about this primacy especially given that Archilochus violates almost all ideals prized in antiquity: he throws away his shield and tells us about it (this is the point that Nietzsche finds most significant: we have our information about Archilochus *from* Archilochus), just as he also tells us that he esteems the less-than-ideal figure of a soldier over the more noble aspect, that he seduces the younger sister of a girl who spurns him, and humiliates both sisters along with their father by telling details of the despoiling. There seems nothing admirable about the subjective persona of Archilochus. Like the content of tragedy, we might ask why we are pleased by the reports Archilochus relates of his life in his poetry?

But contrasting Winckelmann's Apollo with Nietzsche's Dionysus, it is perhaps in the whiteness of the classical ideal, its noble simplicity, its quiet grandeur [*edle Einfalt, stille Größe* – B. B.] that Winckelmann's Greek deity occludes the key historical dimensionality that is Nietzsche's Dionysus, if we consider this god by way of the poet Nietzsche calls his „shaggy votary“, Archilochus is not characteristically silent.

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<sup>54</sup> M. S. Silk & J. P. Stern argue, per contra, that „there seems to be no evidence in *any* visual medium of *any* certain portrait of Archilochus in company with Homer“ (*Nietzsche on Tragedy*, Cambridge 1981, 135). In a forthcoming essay, I remind the reader that it will help to look at Nietzsche's lectures given during his time in Basel. In his lecture course on Greek Lyric, Nietzsche cites a particular Vatican bust described, but he adds, not indeed recognized as such, depicting Homer and Archilochus by Welcker (KGW II/2, 405). See for further discussion and references, Babette Babich, *Nietzsche's Archilochus: The Identity of the Lyric Poet and Musician in The Birth of Tragedy*, in: Charles Bambach and Theodore George, eds., *Philosophy and Poetry*, Albany 2017.

But it is not bellowing poet contra Winckelmann's god that will make the difference when it comes to Nietzsche's Dionysus: for what is at stake is the difference between a god whose music is only sounded with a plectrum, punctuating the Doric in all its wonderfully Platonic measure, and a god whose music is the dithyramb, and includes among the satyrs, the aulos and the kithara and, among the dancers, the equivalent of what we today think of as castanets on the fingers – *krotala* – and not less on the feet, as part of performative ecstasy, which same dance and ecstatic abandon is also part of his worship.<sup>55</sup> It is to help us grasp the folk song as „*perpetuum vestigium* of a union of the Apollinian and the Dionysian“ (BT, § 6) that Nietzsche tells us about Archilochus, such that „language is strained to its utmost that it may imitate music; and with Archilochus begins a new world of poetry, basically opposed to the Homeric. And in saying this we have indicated the only possible relation between poetry and music, between word and tone: the word, the image, the concept here seeks an expression analogous to music and now feels itself in the power of music“ (ibid.).

As Plutarch tells us in his *de Musica*, Archilochus could lay claim to an astonishing range of innovations: „the trimeter, the combination of unlike measures, the recitative or rhythmical recitation of poetry to music, and the style of music to which recitative was set. To him also are ascribed the epode, the tetrameter, the cretic, the prosodiac, and the lengthening of the ‚heroic‘ or dactylic hexameter; and some authorities would add the elegiac, and not only that, but the combination of the epibatic paeon with the iambic, and that of the lengthened ‚heroic‘ with the prosodiac and the cretic. He is also credited with the device of reciting some of a number of iambic lines to music and singing the others, a device afterwards employed by the tragic poets and introduced by Cræxus into the dithyramb.“<sup>56</sup>

No wonder Nietzsche would include two sections in *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* to this same poet, without whom, seemingly, one could not understand the dithyramb and certainly not Dionysus much less the question of the subject. Where, and this is also where we scholars favor the notion of Nietzsche's *agon*, the Homeric ideal seems to sit more cleanly with us, it is Archilochus who gives us color

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<sup>55</sup> See Michael Ewans importantly subtitled (and for me, this is to be underlined): *Opera from the Greek: Studies in the Poetics of Appropriation*, Surrey 2008. One image of Dionysus with instrument depicts him, head thrown back in abandon, his fingers playing a barbitos. Although it can be commonly assumed that Dionysus' own instrument is the flute, as a distinct instrument in analogy to Apollo's lyre, Dionysus does not play the flute, satyrs do, as they also play the kithara, and flute playing, in the context of ecstatic or frenzied abandon, was part of his worship. For a recent discussion of representations of Greek instruments, see Sheramy Bundrick, *Music and Image in Classical Athens*, Cambridge 2005.

<sup>56</sup> Plutarch, *De Musica*, 28; Cf. Rudolf Georg Hermann Westphal, *Die musik des griechischen alterthums: Nach den alten quellen neu bearbeitet* (Veit & comp., 1883, 170), contends that Plutarch takes this observation from Aristoxenus and adverting to the fact that Archilochus predates Terpander. See too, *Handbuch der Musikgeschichte*, Band 1, von Hugo Riemann, Alfred Einstein, Leipzig 1919), 117.

(probably a little too much) as well as the very lyric tradition. In addition, and we need this in order to understand the ‚birth‘ of tragedy, there is what Nietzsche says we must learn to hear. This is not the agon or contest but it is the agony of someone who might not win in that contest, someone who might not only lose but lose everything: and this one cannot but cry out. This is suffering, dissonance, this one needs to find a way to transfigure and just this is done in tragedy, as Friedrich Hölderlin’s beautiful *Sophocles* expresses this and just this is done, as Nietzsche argues, in Beethoven’s music.

For Nietzsche, music is the key, as Hölderlin learned from Archilochus the secret to changing tone in the keynote, sprung in rhythm, interior to the line itself [*Wechsel der Töne* – B. B.]. It is this rhythm of dissonance transformed – music – that makes sense, Nietzsche says, as an aesthetic phenomenon. This is immediately manifest, demonstrated (that is what it means for Schopenhauer to speak of the „phenomenon“) in „the wonderful significance of musical dissonance“ as Nietzsche argues that we cannot grasp the enjoyment we can take in „the ugly and the disharmonic“ (BT, § 24), in pain, in the becoming-human of dissonance, except that we understand it as music.

The Greek, Nietzsche tells us, knew the lyric poem in song, only as sung. The same would be true for Aeschylus and Sophocles, and that singing had faded by the time it came to Euripides and not less to that uncomprehending *spectator* of the Apollinian ideal, that is the saving remedy of reason – Apollo, we remember is a healing god – and thus it is that Socrates, who also saves antiquity by means of rationality. Tragedy would die at its own hand, forced to bloom once again, and thus to be destroyed by the same effort. We have lost the music of antiquity, to this same extent, Nietzsche called for a rebirth.