

Οῖνος ἐπίκλοπος: WINE AND DECEIT IN ANCIENT GREEK MYTHOLOGY*

Wine is first and foremost associated with pleasure; and not only in ancient Greece, where this survey is focused on. As it is commonly known, it accompanied the famous symposia of men, where it played the primary role and it's not by chance that symposia received their name exactly from the drinking session of them, which actually contained only one kind of drink, i.e. wine (of course, mixed with water, the so-called *oἶνος κεκραμένος*, since it was offered to mortals and not to gods). Wine had (and still has) the property of bringing the person who drinks it in a state of joy and delight, relaxation and relief. But it was not only the comrade of men during their “convivia”. It's also detected in Greeks' offerings to their gods – mainly to the heavenward, not the chthonic ones; these offerings (i.e. to the Olympian gods) were called spondae (*σπονδαί*) and contained a variety of liquids, such as honey, olive oil and milk, but wine was in a way the protagonist among them, since it was its absence from (most of) the choae (*χοαι*) (the offerings to the chthonic gods), which differentiated the one kind of offerings from the other.¹

However, apart from these two main functions of wine, as means of pleasure in everyday life, on the one hand, and a basic component of ancient Greek religion, on the other, it could have another interesting, almost intriguing, role: by causing drunkenness it could become the perfect assistant of deception. *Oἶνος ἡμῶν τῷ φρονεῖν ἐπισκοτεῖ*, Eubulus seems to claim in an untitled fragment of his comedies,² which means that wine drops shadow and darkness over phronesis, namely the capability of mind to judge and make right decisions. Wine blurs the sight and alters the sentience, so the drunken is more easily persuaded by his aspiring cheater to do

Note: I am honestly grateful to my professors M. Christopoulos and A. Papachrysostomou for their constant support and their substantial feedback to my paper.

* This scientific paper was supported by the Onassis Foundation - Scholarship ID: G ZN 046-1/2017-2018.

¹ For more about the libations in ancient Greece see *OCD* s.v. libations, Burkert (1985) 70-73 and Gaifman (2018) *The Art of Libation in Classical Athens, passim*.

² *PCG*, fr.133 KA. I quote the part of the apparatus needed here: Athen. epit. II p. 43 F (π. ὕδατος) Εὕβουλος εὐρετικούς φησι τὸ ὕδωρ ποιεῖν τοὺς πίνοντας αὐτὸ μόνον, τὸ δ' οἶνον ἡμῶν τῷ φρονεῖν ἐπισκοτεῖν. τὰ αὐτὰ δ' ιαμβεῖα καὶ Ὀφελίων φησί (fr. 4 K.). “in postremis facile senarium agnoscas ὁ δ' οἶνος ἡμῶν τῷ φρονεῖν ἐπισκοτεῖ” Meineke.

things, mostly against his own benefit, or one is deceived without being aware at all. Another passage showing the deceitful aspect of wine derives from the partly surviving tragedy of Euripides *Rhesos*, where we find the hapax term *οίνοπλάνητος* in line 363,³ a verbal adjective which conveys the meaning of being (or being able to be) bewildered because of wine.

In this article I tried to gather all the possible cases of wine being used as means of deception in ancient Greek mythology. I chose to begin with the famous episode of Odysseus and the Cyclops Polyphemus, which, arguably, is the most known example of this kind of deception. Then I move on to Apollo in a discreet passage in Aeschylus *Eumenides* and the main core of my survey will be held by the god of wine himself; the god Dionysus. The aim of this article is to highlight the deceptive role that wine can play in ancient Greek mythology, by bringing together all these different cases, where wine has this particular function of deceit; sometimes explicitly, sometimes not so much.

Odysseus and Cyclops

The ninth rhapsody of *Odyssey* is mainly devoted to the adventures of Odysseus on the island of the Cyclopes, one of the characteristics of whom is that they do not cultivate the land at all. In lines 108-111 it's plainly described that every plant on this island grows thanks to Zeus' rain, not to the Cyclopes' intervention.⁴ Plausibly one can imply that wine does not exist on the Cyclopes' island, since it's a product of (human) processing and it cannot be found in nature springs. Therefore, the Cyclops Polyphemus could be acquainted neither with the taste nor with the effective power of

³ Euripides *Rhesos*, 363-364 κυλίκων οίνοπλανήτοις ὑποδεξίαις ἀμίλλαις.

⁴ *Odyssey*, 9 108-111

οὐτέ φυτεύοντιν χερσὶν φυτὸν οὔτ' ἀρόωσιν,
ἀλλὰ τά γ' ἄσπαρτα καὶ ἀνήροτα πάντα φύονται,
πυροὶ καὶ κριθαὶ ἡδ' ἄμπελοι, αἴ τε φέρουσιν
οἶνον ἐριστάφυλον, καὶ σφιν Διὸς ὅμβρος ἀέξει.

<*The Cyclopes*> plant nothing with their hands nor plough;
but all these things spring up for them without sowing or ploughing,
wheat, and barley, and vines, which bear
the rich clusters of wine, and the rain of Zeus gives them increase.

The translation I used for Homer's *Odyssey* is that of Murray (1998).

wine, when the king of Ithaca serves it to him.⁵ And Odysseus doesn't serve him just any kind of wine, but maybe the strongest and the best wine to be found, which Maron, priest of Apollo in Thrace, once gave to him as an exchange gift for having protected him and his family after the sack of Ismaros by the Achaeans.⁶ This special wine is described as deep red, almost black, very sweet, with a strong and marvelous odor, a divine drink (*θεῖον ποτόν*, 205) and it demanded a mixture of one part of it with twenty parts of water in order for it to be drinkable.

When the crucial time of Odysseus' escape from the Cyclops' cave arrives, he serves the Ismarian wine to Polyphemus, just in the composition Maron gave it to him, i.e. unmixed (*ἀκηράσιον*, 205), which of course rendered the wine too strong to bear even for a divine giant as the Cyclops. Polyphemus could be described either as gluttonous or naïve, because he seems to follow Odysseus' proposal and taste the wine almost without a second thought. If he was a bit cleverer, he could have suspected that this unexpectedly kind offer from the tiny man, who had already lost some of his comrades and was obviously full of fear because of his future death, was quite weird. Why should he share his marvelous wine with the giant, who was ready to eat him? The Cyclops, on the contrary, does not have such hesitations. He asks for the name of his "guest", but Odysseus artfully avoids his question and offers him the deceptive wine, three times in total. Polyphemus characterizes this kind of wine as a pure extract from nectar and ambrosia, much better than that which Zeus' rain grows in their land (9, 357-359). He drinks it without considering anything (*ἀφραδίησιν*, 361) and finally he gets drunk; *αὐτὸρ ἐπεὶ Κύκλωπα περὶ φρένας ἥλυθεν οἶνος* (362). As a result, he cannot understand what Odysseus eventually answers to his question and heavy, as he feels, because of the divine drink, he falls asleep (*κὰδ δέ μιν ὕπνος ἥρει πανδαμάτωρ ... ό δ' ἐρεύγετο οίνοβαρείων*, 373-375).

⁵ However, according to the abovementioned lines and ll.357-358 (*καὶ γὰρ Κυκλώπεσσι φέρει ζείδωρος ἄρουρα οἴνον ἐριστάψυλον, / καὶ σφιν Διὸς ὅμβρος ἀέξει*) the earth and Zeus' rain are actually responsible for giving to the Cyclopes the wine of the rich clusters. What is implicated then is the fact that the Cyclopes, though they had no experience on cultivating the land at all, they were acquainted with wine. But how was it produced, if not by the Cyclopes themselves? How could the Cyclopes "produce" wine without even watering a grapevine? This sort of contradiction can be easily avoided, if one takes into account the comparison which Polyphemus wants to do, when he is served the Ismarian wine; and the only counterpart to it could be a sort of wine which he could have already tasted on his island, namely, a sort of wine deriving somehow from the earth and the rain of Zeus.

⁶ Wright (2012) s.v. Maron: "Because of his wine Maron came to be associated with Dionysus in the later tradition, and he was sometimes said to have been a son of Oenopion (a son of Dionysus) or even of Dionysus himself. He appears in the late Dionysian epic of Nonnus as an ageing and rather disreputable son of Silenus, who accompanied Dionysus to India".

The line 362 (quoted above) depicts very well what kind of impact the Ismarian wine had upon the Cyclops; it reached his *φρένας*, the home not only of feelings, but also of perception, of intellectual procedures, of mind. That's how Odysseus managed to cheat him; he deceived his mind, with a plan which made good use of his own famous cunning and the Cyclops' exemplary, as it was proved, naivety. It's also worth noting that (the personified) Sleep, who tames everything (*πανδαιμάτωρ ὕπνος*), accompanies the Cyclops' drunkenness and as we will find out in some following instances, wine, drunkenness and sleep create a group which often recurs.

Odysseus moves on to the next step; he must blind the Cyclops, as long as the sedation from the wine lasts and before the cruel giant gets up. In the metaphor Homer uses to compare the blinding of Polyphemus and his scream because of the pain, the word used for the iron which steams when it's immersed into the cold water (just as the giant "steams" from the immersing of the tool into his eye) is *φαρμάσσω*. In the frame of the Homeric metaphor the verb *φαρμάσσω* means "solidify", and it's used hapax in Homer with this meaning, but, in my opinion, it's not mere coincidence that such a verb, with connotations of poisoning or intoxicating and mainly through drinking, is used in a context of cheating and (or because of) drunkenness.

Deceit proves to be a consistent characteristic of this episode. The rest of the Cyclopes on the island, who heard Polyphemus' cries, ask him who caused this great wound to him, who tried to kill him by means of deception (*δόλῳ*) or with violence (*βίηφιν*). In his answer, the blind Cyclops repeats the couple *δόλῳ - βίηφιν* confessing at the same time that Nobody was culpable (406-408).⁷ A few lines later Polyphemus, in his famous and really moving speech to his ram, talks angrily about this Nobody, who damaged his eye (his one and only) having tamed his mind by wine (*δαμασσάμενος φρένας οἴνῳ*, 454). With a quite similar expression (*ἐπεὶ μ' ἐδαμάσσατο οἴνῳ*, 516) he will ascertain the prophecy which a seer once gave to him, admitting, however, that he expected a rather huge man to beat him, and not an *οὐτιδανόν*, who tamed/cheated him by wine.

⁷ *Od. 9, 406-408*

'ἡ μή τίς σ' ἀντὸν κτείνει δόλῳ ἡὲ βίηφιν;
τοὺς δ' αὖτ' ἐξ ἄντρου προσέφη κρατερὸς Πολύφημος:
'ὦ φίλοι, Οὗτίς με κτείνει δόλῳ οὐδὲ βίηφιν.'

"Can it be that some mortal man is slaying thee thyself by guile or by might?"

Then from out the cave the mighty Polyphemus answered them:

"My friends, it is Noman that is slaying me by guile and not by force."

A very similar account is found in the best surviving satyric drama, the *Cyclops* of Euripides. Odysseus has arrived to the island of the Cyclops, Sicily –against his plan and will to return to Ithaca–, and he is trapped, along with his comrades, in the giant’s cave. In order to escape, he hatches the following scheme; after inebriating Polyphemus and the old Silenus (who wasn’t as friendly as the chorus of satyrs was to the Greek foreigners) he will burn out the giant’s single eye with a poker.

Odysseus is convinced about the power of wine in both hurting the person who drinks it and taking revenge for the injustice, which he and his comrades are dealing with. And he insists on serving Polyphemus the one cup after the other, till the Cyclops gets totally drunk.

ἵσθέντα δ' αὐτὸν ὡς ἐπησθόμην ἔγά,
ἄλλην ἔδωκα κύλικα, γιγνώσκων ὅτι
τρώσει νιν οἶνος καὶ δίκην δώσει τάχα.
καὶ δὴ πρὸς φόδας εἰρπ'. ἔγὼ δ' ἐπεγχέων
ἄλλην ἐπ' ἄλλῃ σπλάγχν' ἐθέρμαινον ποτῷ.

*Seeing it had given him pleasure,
I gave him another cup, knowing that
wine would be his undoing and he would soon pay the penalty.
In due course he proceeded to sing, and I plied him
with one cup after another and heated his heart with drink.⁸*

According to the plan, he will try to persuade him to keep all the wine for himself, and not sharing it with the other Cyclopes on the island. When eventually the Cyclops fell asleep, because Dionysus, in other words wine, has defeated him (*ὅταν δ' ὑπνώσῃ Βακχίου νικώμενος*, 454), Odysseus executes the next phase of his plan, namely to blind Polyphemus’ eye. In l. 449 he explicitly characterizes his desire as cunning (*δόλιος ἡ προθυμία*); hence wine is associated with deceit in Euripides’ version of the myth, too.

⁸ Translation by Kovacs (2001).

In the long following crosstalk (ll. 519-589) Odysseus sets his deception-plan against the Cyclops in motion. He even convinces him to stay at home when drunk, because that's what wise people do (l. 538):

ὅς δ' ἀν μεθυσθείς γ' ἐν δόμοις μείνῃ σοφός.

But he who's drunk and stays at home is wise.

Actually, by staying at his home (i.e. his cave) Polyphemus acts very stupidly, since he cannot avoid his blinding from Odysseus; but he could not know it in advance (not even suspect it due to his proverbial naivety). Later, Polyphemus characterizes the grapevine's wood as wise (*παπαῖ, σοφόν γε τὸ ξύλον τῆς ἀμπέλου*, 572), attributing unconsciously to it the power of deceiving people who taste its fruit, while in the end of the drama the chorus will claim the following, l. 678:

δεινὸς γὰρ οἶνος καὶ παλαιέσθαι βαρύς.

Yes, wine is a dangerous thing and hard to wrestle against.

The whole drama, with its intense Dionysian character, supports sufficiently the deceptive role of wine. The cunning king of Ithaca exploits the gift of Maron and transforms it to a means of deceit, not only of pleasure. In the end, Odysseus will save himself and his comrades, will reveal its true name and, similarly to the Homeric tradition, will pull on him the rage of the gods.

By studying together all these verses from the Cyclops' episode of *Odyssey* 9 and Euripides' satyric drama, a tight relation arises between wine (*οἶνος*), drunkenness or/and sleep (*ὕπνος* - *οἶνοβαρεῖων*), perception (*φρένας*) and deceit (*δόλος*). Odysseus acted with prudence and a dose of craftiness. He chose to exploit another aspect of wine usage, i.e. not for delight, but for deceit. He used this valuable gift of Maron –similar to divine nectar– in order to deceive the son of a god. And through Odysseus' example it has been shown how wine could affect the mind, the perceptive capability, not simply the mood of the person who drinks it. Now, one can be sure that deception through wine is possible. If you can't persuade somebody with your rhetorical skills, just get him drunk with a glass (or more, if needed) of wine.

As it will turn out, Odysseus is the only mortal hero who deceived someone by offering him wine. All the following examples concern gods: one has to do with

Apollo and the rest of them with the god of wine himself, i.e. Dionysus. They deceive either mortal women or immortal gods.

Apollo and Eumenides

The vengeful Erinyes, who constitute Aeschylean drama's chorus, appear, as the drama starts, to having fallen asleep and it's the furious ghost of Klytaemnestra, which wakes them up, in order to hunt Orestes. When they realize what sort of pathos they were suffering of (*ἐπάθομεν πάθος δυσαχές, ὡς πόποι, ἀφερτον κακόν: ἐξ ἀρκύων πέπτωκεν οἴχεται θ' ὁ θήρ*, 145-147), i.e. that they lost their prey, they put the blame on Sleep, by whom they were dominated (*ὕπνῳ κρατηθεῖσ' ἄγραν ὠλεσα,* 148). But why were the Erinyes sleeping? It seems like they didn't want to have fallen asleep, but as someone else has forced them – or deceived them – so as to sleep.

Exactly after their rage against Sleep – who has the power to tame everybody, as it was presented previously in *Odyssey* 9 – the Erinyes turn to the cunning son of Zeus (*ἰὼ παῖς Διός, ἐπίκλοπος πέλη,— νέος δὲ γραίας δαίμονας καθιππάσω,* 149-150), who is undoubtedly Apollo. He is their younger, but he has the capacity to have already deceived (*ἐπίκλοπος*) and offended (*καθιππάσω*) them. And the question plausibly arises; how did Apollo, the younger god, manage to deceive the old gods? How did he manage to put them to sleep? I believe that Aeschylus' text gives us the answer later. In l. 728 the Erinyes, angry against Apollo, blame him for having deceived ancient gods with wine (*οἴνῳ παρηπάτησας ἀρχαίας θεάς*). Therefore, we are having another case of wine deception, this time by a god towards another god in favour of a hero. Wine makes Erinyes fall asleep, and it has already been depicted in the case of the Cyclops an instance, where wine cooperates with Sleep in context of deceit.⁹ Last, but not least, the characterization of Apollo as *ἐπίκλοπος* is worth highlighting. The adjective in question is not very common in ancient Greek, but the most interesting fact is that among all its occurrences it is used (many centuries later) from Nonnus in his *Dionysiaka* as an adjective of wine (*οἶνον ἐπίκλοπον*, 48.865). To

⁹ Cf. now the passage from Hesiod's *Theogony*, where Sleep is referred to as son of Night (*Νόξ*) and brother of Deceit (*Ἄπάτη*): ll. 211-2 and 224-5 *Νὸξ δ' ἔτεκε στυγερόν τε Μόρον καὶ Κῆρα μέλαιναν / καὶ Θάνατον, τέκε δ' Ὑπνον, ἔτικτε δὲ φῦλον Όνείρων. / [...] μετὰ τὴν δ' Απάτην τέκε καὶ Φιλότητα / Γῆράς τ' οὐλόμενον, καὶ Ἔριν τέκε καρτερόθυμον.* That's how, I believe, we have the right to associate Sleep and Wine as means of deception both in the abovementioned and in the forthcoming examples.

my view, the fact that we find it in similar context of deception should not be neglected.

Dionysus and Hephaestus

The Erinyes, furious against Orestes, were deceived by Apollo in order to miss their hunt and stop following the matricide. Hephaestus, on the other hand, furious against his own mother, Hera, is finally persuaded (actually deceived) from Dionysus to return and save her from the trap he had made especially for her punishment.

The story of Hephaestus and Hera is well known. According to Hesiod's version (*Theogony* 927-929), Hephaestus was born from Hera alone, as an answer to Athena's birth from Zeus. Unfortunately for him, he was born lame (how could it be different, since only the parthenogenesis from Zeus had to be perfect?) and Hera decided to throw her baby from Mount Olympus, in order to conceal him from the rest of the gods. Hephaestus never forgave his mother's mistreatment, so he sent her as a gift a magical throne, made by his own, with invisible cords, capable of holding fast immediately whoever sat on it. And the unsuspecting Hera had been captured on the throne. When the other gods realized that only Hephaestus could save her, they sent Ares to bring him back; albeit ineffectively. The god who had the power to persuade the angry and aching son of Hera was Dionysus. The source of his power was either the kind of relationship with his brother or wine.

Regarding wine especially, it has been supported that it is able to both psychologically liberate and dissolve barriers between people. As such, it is plausibly aroused the tendency of it and, of course, of its god, namely Dionysus, to create social integration. In this particular case a god was "expelled" out of Olympus because of his deformity, but thanks to Dionysus' intervention (precisely deception) he was reaccepted. The marginalized lame god could not be forced (by Ares, i.e. violence) to come back to the residence of the gods and release his mother; he should be persuaded differently.¹⁰

We are reading about this episode of Hephaestus' drunkenness in two different works. The first one is Pausanias' *Description of Greece*; the author remembers the

¹⁰ See Seaford (2006) 27-32.

relative story, when he sees two sculptures of Dionysus, one of whom has the following inscription on it: “Διόνυσός ἐστιν ἀνάγων Ἡφαιστον ἐς οὐρανόν”. The exegesis derives from what Greeks say about this episode, *Description of Greece* 1.20.3.3-9:

λέγεται δὲ καὶ τάδε ύπὸ Ἑλλήνων,
ώς Ἡρα ρίψαι γενόμενον Ἡφαιστον, ὁ δὲ οἱ μνησικακῶν
πέμψαι δῶρον χρυσοῦν θρόνον ἀφανεῖς δεσμοὺς ἔχοντα, καὶ
τὴν μὲν ἐπεὶ τε ἐκαθέζετο δεδέσθαι θεῶν δὲ τῶν μὲν
ἄλλων οὐδενὶ τὸν Ἡφαιστον ἐθέλειν πειθέσθαι, Διόνυσος
δὲ - μάλιστα γὰρ ἐς τοῦτον πιστὰ ἦν Ἡφαίστῳ - μεθύσας
αὐτὸν ἐς οὐρανὸν ἤγαγε.

*One of the Greek legends is that
Hephaestus, when he was born, was thrown down by Hera. In revenge
he sent as a gift a golden chair with invisible fetters.
When Hera sat down, she was held fast,
and Hephaestus refused to listen to any other of the gods save Dionysus –
in him he reposed the fullest trust – and after making him drunk
Dionysus brought him to heaven.*

The use of wine as a cheating method, which motivated Hephaestus' return to Olympus, is explicitly declared through the participle *μεθύσας*. Nobody else could change the mind of Hera's son, except from Dionysus (better say, except both him and his wine). Hephaestus' will to avenge his mother was (absolutely, one could say) right and he would not be persuaded to return and save her simply by rational arguments. He needed to be cheated, and in this case his fury had to be assuaged, to be sweetened; and wine managed to do all of them.

The Roman mythographer Hyginus, who lived almost a century after Pausanias, cites a very similar version in his *Fabulae*, 166.1-3:

*Vulcanus Iovi ceterisque diis †soleas aureas† ex adamante cum fecisset,
Iuno cum sedisset, subito in aere pendere coepit. Quod cum ad Vulcanum
missum esset ut matrem quam ligaverat solveret, iratus quod de caelo
praecipitatus erat negat se matrem ullam habere. Quem cum Liber pater
ebrium in concilio deorum adduxisset, pietati negare non potuit; tum
optionem a Iove accepit, si quid ab iis petiisset impetraret.*

When Vulcan made thrones out of gold and adamantine for Jupiter and the rest of the gods, and when Juno sat in hers, she was suddenly suspended in midair. When the order reached Vulcan telling him to free his mother, whom he had confined, he, still angry over having been thrown from heaven, said that he did not have a mother. When Father Liber got him drunk and led him back to the assembly of the gods, he could no longer disregard his duty as son. Then Jupiter offered him the choice of whatever he wanted from them.¹¹

Vulcanus (in other words Hephaestus) is depicted as furious (*iratus*) against his mother, unwilling to release her from the magical cords (*negat se matrem ullam habere*) and only after Dionysus' intervention and inebriation (*Quem cum Liber pater ebrium ... adduxisset*) he returns home and relents. To be more precise, he is persuaded to change his state of character as long as he is drunk, namely in an already corrupted state of mind.

This episode was very popular among the themes of attic vase-paintings, which conveyed the journey of the lame god back to Olympus, either on foot or mounted on an ass, accompanied by Dionysus and Satyrs or Silenoi.¹² I have chosen to include perhaps the most known among them, the so called François Vase, where Dionysus is depicted to lead Hephaestus mounted on an ithyfallic mule back to Olympus, while a Silen follows him bearing a skin full of wine and another Silen plays the flute.

¹¹ Translation by Trzaskoma, Smoth and Brunet (2004).

¹² For more depictions of this theme see *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, PL. 103-172.



Figure: Athenian black-figure volute-krater, 600-550 BC, ascribed to Ergotimos and Kleitias (by signature), currently found in Florence, Museo Archeologico Etrusco: 4209 (LIMC: IV, PL. 186 Hephaestos).¹³

Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/69716881@N02/8522743550>

Sleep here doesn't appear at all. Hephaestus, awake, though not sober, agrees to do something he wouldn't really want, something against his deep feelings for his mother; but thank to Dionysus he becomes a sort of victim, held firmly by the power of wine, as his mother is strongly held by the magical cords on her throne. Any different reaction than consent to Dionysus is not a feasible option for Hephaestus. Wine was totally effective. And his god, Dionysus, can be proud of having cheated not an unimportant mortal, but his own brother. Ironically, however, since he acted in favor of the goddess, who caused the death of his own mother, namely in favor of Hera. But this specific goddess due to Dionysus' magnanimity will accept him to the company of Olympian gods.¹⁴

¹³ For more about the François vase, see Beazley (1986) 24-34 (especially for the return of Hephaestus 28-29).

¹⁴ Leitao (2012) 94-95, note 101. It has also been supported that this was the subject of the first Homeric Hymn, which also acted as a model for the François vase (cf. note 20).

Dionysus and Erigone

The following myth could be indicative of how wine, although it can be the reason of drunkenness and corruption of consciousness, isn't always on purpose deceitful. Ikarios, an Athenian countryman of humble birth, offered hospitality to Dionysus, and the god as an exchange gift taught him the craft of viticulture and wine-producing. Ikarios wanted to share this gift with the rest of the Athenians, but he couldn't predict the outcome of his generosity. Some shepherds, who tasted the wine, but without having diluted it with water first, thought that Ikarios tried to intoxicate them and so they killed him. Apollodorus (*Library* 3.14.7) writes briefly the story down:

Διόνυσον <ύπεδέξατο> Ἰκάριος, ὃς λαμβάνει παρ' αὐτοῦ κλῆμα ἀμπέλου καὶ τὰ περὶ τὴν οἰνοποιίαν μανθάνει. Καὶ τὰς τοῦ θεοῦ δωρήσασθαι θέλων χάριτας ἀνθρώποις, ἀφικνεῖται περὶ τινας ποιμένας, οἵ γενσάμενοι τοῦ ποτοῦ καὶ χωρίς ὕδατος δι' ἡδονὴν ἀφειδῶς ἐλκύσαντες, πεφαρμάχθαι νομίζοντες ἀπέκτειναν αὐτὸν.

Dionysus <was welcomed> by Icarius, who received from him a branch of a vine and learned the process of making wine. And wishing to bestow the god's boons on men, Icarius went to some shepherds, who having tested the beverage and quaffed it copiously without water for the pleasure of it, imagined that they were bewitched and killed him.

The shepherds believed that Ikarios wished to *φαρμάσσειν* them, to bewitch or poison or generally cheat and do them harm through wine, but the reality was much the opposite. Ikarios just wanted to be a benefactor for the Athenian tribe, since his fellow citizens didn't know the existence of wine till then.

Dionysus in the relative narration of Nonnus (*Dionysiaka*) insists that Ikarios should accept his gift, because this would give both him and his daughter, Erigone, *kleos*, i.e. great glory among the humans (47.45-48):

*Δέξο, γέρον, τόδε δῶρον, ὃ μὴ δεδάσσων Ἀθῆναι.
Ω γέρον, ὀλβίζω σε· σὲ γὰρ μέλψουσι πολῖται*

*τοῖον ἔπος βοοῶντες, ὅτι κλέος εὗρεν ἐλέγχαι
Ίκαριος Κελεοῖο καὶ Ἡριγόνη Μετανείρης.*

Accept this gift, Sir, which Athens knows not.

*Sir, I deem you happy, for your fellow-citizens will celebrate you
proclaiming aloud that Icarus had found fame
to obscure Celeos, and Erigone to outdo Metaneira.*

However, some of Ikarios' fellow citizens didn't really help to this direction. They drank from the wine, unmixed, as it was said before, and they started having a series of symptoms, like increase of body temperature and of course headache, 47.106-111:

*ἀγρονόμοι δ' ἀρύοντες ἐπασσυτέροισι κυπέλλοις
πάντες ἐβακχεύθησαν ἀμερσινόῳ φρένας οἴνῳ ·
οἵματα δ' ἐπλάζοντο, φιλακρήτοις δὲ κυπέλλοις
ἄργυρα πορφύροντο παρήια, γειοπόνων δὲ
στήθεα θερμαίνοντο, ποτῷ δ' ἐβαρύνετο κόρση,
καὶ φλέβες οἰδαίνοντος ἐκυμαίνοντο καρήνου.*

*So the countrymen quaffed cup after cup
and made a wild revel about the wine which dazed their wits.
Their eyes rolled, their pale cheeks grew red,
for they drank their liquor neat, their peasant
breasts grew hot, their heads grew heavy with the drink,
the veins were swollen upon their foreheads.*

The wine is characterized as depriving the *νοῦν* – in other words the ability to think and judge right – from someone (*ἀμερσίνοος*). When Dionysus offered his sweet wine to Ikarios, he had characterized it as mind-awakening (*ἐγερσίνοος*), 47.56-57:

*τοῖον ἔπος κατέλεξε, φιλοξείνῳ δὲ γεραιῶ
ἀβρὸν ἐγερσινόοιο δέπας πόρεν ἔμπλεον οἴνου.*

*Such were the words he spoke, as he offered to the hospitable old man
a handsome cup full of mind-awakening wine.*

Which is the real impact of drinking wine, then? It surely seems to motivate the drunken to do things more daring than before.

The result of the drunkenness of the shepherds was the unexpected murder of Ikarius. After their violent deed, the shepherds felt asleep, drunk as they were (47.140-141),

*νήδυμον ὅπνον ἵανον ὑπὲρ δαπέδοιο φονῆς
οἴνοβαρεῖς, νεκύεσσιν ἐοικότες.*

*His murderers slumbered careless on the ground
heavy with wine, like dead men.*

and when they got up and realized what they have done, they tried to bury Ikarios as better as they could. Ikarios' ghost appeared to Erigone and their dog Maera drove her to the point he was buried. She buried him properly and then she hanged herself from a tree. Dionysus felt really sorry for what has happened and he transferred both of them to the sky as constellations: Virgo and Bootes, as the daughter and father respectively, as well as Sirius resembling their dog Maera.

The Athenian shepherds had formed a wrong belief about what wine could do and what the intentions of Ikarios were. He had a very good purpose on his mind, but a seemingly unimportant omission (the dilution of wine with water) proved to be fatal for him. A short comparison with *Odyssey* here inevitably emerges. Wine in the case of Odysseus saved his life, while in the case of Ikarios caused (unexpectedly) his death and, as if it was not enough, it drove Erigone to suicide. The expression that Nonnus uses to describe the power of wine resembles that of Apollodorus, (*Dionysiaka* 47.118):

*οἴά τε φαρμακόεντα κερασσαμένου δόλον οἴνον
As if the wine were mixed with a deceiving drug*

The shepherds thought that Ikarios served them a wine deceit (*οἴνου κερασσαμένου δόλον*), which had the ability to intoxicate them (*φαρμακόεντα* – see *πεφαρμάχθαι* in Apollodorus). They observed the change in their physical and mental state, when they started to feel weird, to behave like the Bacchae, and their wit was dazed due to wine (*ἀμερσινόω οἴνῳ* - *Dionysiaka* 47.107). They were sure, even they were not sober anymore, that Ikarios tried to hurt them, to cheat them or even kill them by a poisoning drink.¹⁵

Despite the generous intentions of Ikarios and despite the kind offer of the god Dionysus to his host, wine managed to cause problems once again. It was (falsely) believed to be a means of deception and it's very interesting that Ovid says that Erigone, not the shepherds, was the person who was deceived by an untrue grape (*Metamorphoses* 6.125):

Liber ut Erigonem falsa deceperit uva.

How Bacchus deceived Erigone with the false bunch of grapes.

The means towards deception, i.e. the grapes (metonymy for wine), are characterized themselves deceptive or fraudulent (*falsa*). Ovid seems to focus on Erigone more than Ikarios here; that girl, who was indirectly deceived by Dionysus. It was the god's gift to her father – a gift promising great glory – that brought both of them to an unexpected and violent death (murder on the one hand, suicide on the other). In conclusion, the feature of deceit in this mythological case is primarily to be found in wine, the gift of Dionysus, and accidentally in Ikarius, whose intentions were other than deceitful.

An observation about the nature of the deceptive wine is also worthy. Till now, wine had to be drunken undiluted in order to affect the targets of deceit. The Cyclops tasted a very strong wine, the Erinyes and Hephaestus have been obviously served from Apollo and Dionysus respectively divine (i.e. unmixed) wine, and the Athenian shepherds drunk undiluted wine, too. This remark about wine's constitution will be confirmed in two more mythological examples, which follow.

¹⁵ Noteworthy is also the fact that even Ikarios gets drunk by the wine Dionysus gave to him. But he does not deceive anybody at all.

Dionysus and Althaea

Another occasion, where wine was given as hospitality present by Dionysus to a generous mortal, can be found in the myth of Althaea. She was the wife of king of Calydon, Oeneus; mother of Meleager and Deianira. According to Hyginus (*Fabulae* 129.1-7), who is the only source for the following version, Dionysus, once a visitor to Calydon, had fallen in love with the king's wife, namely Althaea (*Althaeam Thestii filiam uxorem Oenei adamauit*, 129.2), and Oeneus, in order to please the god, left tactfully the city, pretending that he had some rites to perform (*uoluntate sua ex urbe excessit simulatque se sacra facere*, 129.3). Dionysus slept with Althaea and showed his gratitude to her “generous” husband by gifting him the vine, teaching him how to cultivate it and finally applying his name to the wine itself, which is thereon called *oīvoς*, (129.4-7):

at Liber cum Althaea concubuit, ex qua nata est Deianira, Oeneo autem ob hospitium liberale muneri uitem dedit monstrauitque quomodo sereret, fructumque eius ex nomine hospitis oīvov ut uocaretur instituit.

And Liber slept with Althaea, and she gave birth to Deianira. In return for Oeneus' generous hospitality, he gave him the gift of the vine, showed him how to plant it, and ordained that its fruit should be called oenos (Greek “wine”) after his host.¹⁶

Dionysus' gift is named *liberale munus*, taking its qualifier by the Latin name of the god (*Liber*).¹⁷ And the choice of this adjective was not just inevitable by the author due to the name of the god among Romans; it may ascribe very well the ability of

¹⁶ Translation by Trzaskoma, Smoth and Brunet (2004).

¹⁷ Dionysus was much easier identified with the Italian agricultural deity Liber (for *liber* means “free” in Latin) due to his association with liberation in general; he liberates himself in *Bacchae*, while slaves were getting free during festivals, like City Dionysia - Seaford (2006) 29.

wine to liberate humans' powers to do seeming impossible things, when drunk; so this characterization could have been chosen consciously, too.¹⁸

Althaea is not actually deceived by Dionysus nor is she drinking any wine in order to have sex with him. Oeneus' *voluntas* cancels the deceptive role that wine could have here. And it's interesting exactly this part of the myth: the fact that the wine is not offered to the woman who Dionysus has fallen in love with, but to her generous husband, as a gift for his act of sharing. Wine will unfold its deceptive power regarding woman seduction in the two following examples.

Dionysus and Nicaea and Aura

Nicaea and Aura were both nymphs, loyal to Artemis and unwilling to have any love-affair at all. Unexpectedly, and without being able to avoid it, they were both deceived by Dionysus, who had intercourse with them and in the end the two nymphs gave birth to a daughter and a son to him (Telete and Iacchos respectively).

To begin with, the method of deception Dionysus chose is exactly the same for both nymphs. They drank from a source, whose water was magically transformed into wine;¹⁹ they didn't perceive any change in its taste and after drinking it, they started to feel dazed and in the end they fell asleep. Nonnus writes about Nicaea (16.252-255):

καὶ δόλον ἀγνώσσουσα γυναιμανέος Διονύσου
ξανθὸν ὕδωρ ἐνόησε φιλακρήτου ποταμοῖο,
καὶ πίεν ἡδὺ ρέεθρον, ὅθεν πίον αἴθοπες Ἰνδοί·
καὶ φρένα δινηθεῖσα μέθῃ βακχεύετο κούρη.

*And knowing not the trick of womanmad Dionysus
she noticed the brown water of the trippers' river*

¹⁸ Cf. *PCG*, Amphis fr. 33 KA, where the unknown comic persona claims that φρόνησις thanks to wine is able to do something matching to the youth and daring (ll. 7-10 ἡ δὲ διὰ τὸ μὴ σαφῶς τί ποτ' ἀφ' ἔκαστου πράγματος συμβήσεται διαδελογίσθαι δρᾶ τι καὶ νεανικὸν καὶ θερμόν).

¹⁹ Probably, the wine was perfectly pure and undiluted.

*and drank the sweet liquid, whence the skin-scorched Indians had drunk;
With her brain on fire, the girl reveled in her intoxication.*

The word *δόλος* concerning wine will be often repeated in the narration in question. Another similar citation in Nicaea's story is the following: 16.321-322,

*Αἴθε πατήρ με δίδαξε τελεσσιγάμου δόλον οἶνου ·
αἴθε νοοσφαλέος σταφυλῆς, ἀτε Βάκχος, ἀνάσσω ·*

*I wish my father had taught me the trick of that matchmaking wine;
I wish I could be lord of the mindtripping grape, like Bacchus;*

where Pan wishes to have been taught by Dionysus the trick of this wine, which arranges marriage between couples, and to could have been the lord of the grape that corrupts perception. He then continues to address Dionysus, whom characterizes as shepherd of the bridal intoxication (*νυμφιδίης μέθης ... ποιμήν – O Dionysus, shepherd of the bridal intoxication*, 16.336), the god who knows how to take advantage of the wine's power to adorn marriage (16.338):

*εὗρες ἀοσσητῆρα γαμοστόλον οἶνον Ἐρώτων
You found out wine, love's helper to deck out marriage.*

The wine which Dionysus “served” to Nicaea is characterized as

- a) *ἀπατήλιον ὕδωρ* (deceiving water) in 16.364,
- b) *δολόεν ποτόν* (cunning drink) in Aura's narration in 48.568,

*πῶς ἐρατὴν δολόεντι ποτῷ νυμφεύσατο κούρην
How he had wooed the lovely nymph with a cunning potion*

and c) *οἶνος ἐπίκλοπος* (deceitful wine) in 48.876-878,

*οὐ μούνη πίες οἶνον ἐπίκλοπον ἄρπαγα μίτρης·
ἀλλὰ νέης ἄγνωστος ἀνοιγομένης ἀπὸ πηγῆς
νυμφοκόμος πάλιν οἶνος ἀνέβλυε, καὶ πίεν Αἴρη*

*Not you alone drank deceitful wine which stole your maiden girdle;
but once more a fountain of nuptial wine has burst
from a new opening rock unrecognized, and Aura drank*

where Nicaea mourns about Aura's fate, which was proved to be so common with hers.

Sleep is loudly present in both occasions. He is some kind of Dionysus' assistant. Nicaea is drawn under the wing of Sleep, who was not far away (*εἰς πτερὸν* ... *ἐσύρετο γείτονος* "Υπνου, 16.261), so deceitful (*δολόεις*) Dionysus could fulfill his sexual desire. Nicaea is using similar words, when she addresses to Aura, in 48.871 onwards, by naming the intercourse between them as *ἐπίκλοπον εύνήν* (a stolen marriage-bed) and revealing to the young nymph that she was not the only one who had sweet sleep as guide to Love (48.875):

*οὐ μούνη γλυκὺν ὕπνον ἐδέξαο πομπόν Ἐρώτων
Not you alone had sweet sleep as a guide to love.*

The lovestruck (or just erotic) god, exploiting the unconsciousness of both nymphs, corrupted their maidenhood, impregnated them and then just left. Their unwilling and unconscious "weddings" are qualified by wine and drunkenness, in both narrations (16.305 and 48.568), as *ἱμέναιοι μεθυσφαλεῖς*, i.e. nuptial songs which fault because of drunkenness.

When the drunkenness retreated and the nymphs woke up, realizing what has happened, they despaired. Nicaea shouts (16.354-359):

*ὤμοι παρθενίης, τὴν ἥρπασεν Εὔιον ὕδωρ·
ὤμοι παρθενίης, τὴν ἥρπασεν ὕπνος Ἐρώτων·
ὤμοι παρθενίης, τὴν ἥρπασεν Βάκχος ἀλήτης.
Ἐρρέτω Υδριάδων δολόεν ποτόν, ἐρρέτω εύνή·*

*Νύμφαι Άμαδρνάδες, τίνα μέμψομαι; Ἡμετέρην γὰρ
ὕπνος, Ἔρως, δόλος, οἶνος ἐληίσσαντο κορείην.*

*Alas for maidenhead, stolen by the Euian water!
alas for maidenhead, stolen by the sleep of love!
alas for maidenhead, stolen by that vagabond Bacchos!
A curse on that deceitful water of the Hydriads, a curse on that bed!
Hamadryad nymphs, whom shall I blame?
For Sleep, Love, trickery and wine are the robbers of my maiden state!*

Euian water, sleep of love and wandering Bacchus grabbed her maidenhood. When she finds out Aura's similar deceit by Dionysus, she asks her (48.818-823):

*καὶ σύ πόθεν πίες οἶνον, ἐμῆς συλήτορα μίτρης;
Καὶ σύ πόθεν πίες οἶνον, ἔως πέλες ἔγκυος, Αὔρη;
Καὶ σύ πάθες, φυγόδεμνε, τά περ πάθον ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὴ
μέμφεο νυμφοκόμου ἀπατήλιον ὕπνον Ἐρώτων.
Εἰς δόλος ἀμφοτέραις γάμον ἥρμοσεν, εἰς πόσις Αὔρης
παρθενικὴν Νίκαιαν ἐθήκατο μητέρα παιδῶν .*

*Why did you also drink wine, which robbed me of my girdle?
Why did you also drink wine, Aura, until you were with child?
You also suffered what I suffered, you enemy of marriage. Then you also
have to blame a deceitful sleep sent by the Loves, who are friends of
marriage. One fraud fitted marriage on us both, one husband was Aura's
and made virgin Nicaea the mother of children.*

One and the same god cheated on them; one and the same deceit stole their virginity (*εἰς πόσις, εἰς δόλος*). The verse 16.359 epitomizes so meaningfully all the factors of Dionysus' action: Sleep, Love, deceit, wine. All these had to cooperate, so Dionysus could rape the nymphs. Sleep was his assistant, Love his motive (in the case of the god of Love, another assistant to his desire), deceit his method and wine the means of deceit. One can deduce the emphasis which is given to the deceitful power of wine in these narrations by counting how many times wine is called deceitful.

Maybe it sounds excessive, but nowhere else is wine so closely and plainly connected with the meaning of *δόλος*, which may have been implied in different cases, but it's not said in that way. The adjective *ἐπίκλοπος* is also rare enough, but we have seen it once before, in Aeschylus' tragedy, 149, where Apollo was characterized by the Eumenides as *παῖς Διός, ἐπίκλοπος*. Now it's the wine itself to which this feature is applied. Thus, wine obtains the quality of his very own god, in other words the quality of deceiver.

Dionysus in Thebes

Arguably, there is no better way to make a synopsis of the deceitful power of wine than referring to the god of wine himself. Many different mythological cases, where Dionysus is the protagonist of deceit, have been preceded, but one is still missing. And it concerns the visit of Dionysus at Thebes, in order to avenge his mother's death, as it was perceived in the admittedly magnificent tragedy of Euripides *Bacchae*.

Again, the discussion focuses on the deceptive disposition of the god. His target: the new (and young) king of Thebes, Pentheus, who refused to adopt Dionysus' worship. The god, who travelled from East, is now to be found in Thebes. The prologue starts describing among others Semele's tomb, covered in vines, (*Bacchae* 6-12):

όρῳ δὲ μητρὸς μνῆμα τῆς κεραυνίας
τόδ' ἐγγὺς οἴκων καὶ δόμων ἐρείπια
τυφόμενα Δίου πυρὸς ἔτι ζῶσαν φλόγα,
ἀθάνατον Ἡρας μητέρ' εἰς ἐμὴν ὕβριν.
αἰνῷ δὲ Κάδμον, ἄβατον δὲς πέδον τόδε
τίθησι, θυγατρὸς σηκόν· ἀμπέλου δέ νιν
πέριξ ἐγὼ ‘κάλυψα βοτρυώδει χλόῃ.

*I see here by the house the tomb of my thunderbolt-struck mother
and the ruins of the house smouldering
with the still-living flame of Zeus,*

*Hera's immortal outrage against my mother.
But I praise Kadmos, who has made this ground not to be trodden,
a precinct of his daughter. And it is I who covered it
around with the grapeclustering verdure of the vine.*²⁰

The god wants to establish his rites at his birthplace and everybody obeys to his will, except Pentheus. The god appears in the city disguised as a mortal, but he will get imprisoned by the king. And the deception is already functioning, because Dionysus is not actually imprisoned; he puts a bull in his place.²¹ He then decides to punish Pentheus by sending him to spy on the maenads, while they were worshipping the new god on the mountain Kithairon. And he persuades Pentheus to dress up like a woman, so he would not be recognizable. Of course, the young king couldn't avoid the women's fury and ended up dismembered, with his head as a trophy in his mother's hands.

It is noteworthy that Dionysus didn't need to use any wine as means of deception in the case of Pentheus. He just persuaded him. On the other hand, he is the god of wine; as to wine, apart from offering pleasure, it can play a substantial role to cheating, as it was finely proved by the previous examples. Thus, Dionysus could perfectly be the god not only of delight (one of the aspects wine has), but also of deceit. And we have seen the god many times to play this role – and satisfactorily enough.

²⁰ Translation for *Bacchae*: Seaford (1996).

²¹ *Bacchae* 616-622,

ταῦτα καὶ καθύβρισ' αὐτὸν, ὅτι με δεσμεύειν δοκῶν
οὐτ' ἔθιγεν οὐθ' ἥψαθ' ἡμᾶν, ἐλπίσιν δ' ἐβόσκετο.
Πρὸς φάτναις δὲ ταῦρον εὑρών, οὗ κάθειρξ' ἡμᾶς ἄγων,
τῷδε περὶ βρόχους ἔβαλλε γόνασι καὶ χηλαῖς ποδῶν,
θυμὸν ἐκπνέων, ἰδρῶτα σώματος στάζων ἄπο,
χείλεσιν διδοὺς ὀδόντας· πλησίον δ' ἐγὼ παρὼν
ἥσυχος θάσσων ἔλλευσον.

*This was just how I humiliated him, in that in thinking that he was binding me
he neither touched me nor got hold of me, but fed on hopes.
And finding a bull at the manger, where he led me and imprisoned me,
around its knees and hoofed feet he cast knots,
panting out his wrath, dripping sweat from his body,
biting his lips. But I calmly sat close by and watched.*

In a way, the feature of deceit is inherent in Dionysus, since his mother was deceived by Hera before giving birth to him.²² Semele was naively deceived; Zeus then “deceived” Hera by hiding the fetus inside his thigh and saving it from premature death.²³ Dionysus finally became a deceiver himself, of both mortals and immortals. He was born in an environment of deep love and jealousy, by the father of gods and a beautiful mortal woman. His father, however, had previously swallowed Metis, the personification of cunning intelligence; a weird “intercourse” by which Athena emerged, literally out of Zeus’ head. The second child that Zeus carried inside him, till it was born, is Dionysus. These are the only two Greek myths of male pregnancy. Dionysus’ case however is very different from that of Athena, because his mother conceived him normally and she would give birth to him if it was not Hera’s deceitful intervention, but the fact that he needed to pass the last months as a fetus inside his father, like Athena, could maybe support an association of Dionysus’ cunning with what Zeus hid inside him; namely Metis.²⁴ In any case, the deceptive skills of Dionysus and the respective power of wine are uncontroversial.

❧

In conclusion, wine admittedly bears the qualities of his god, as means of both pleasure and deceit. It is indeed ἐπίκλοπος. For it “steals” and removes what makes people feel sorrow or pain, but even what could protect them and keep them safe, i.e. awareness of what is right and what is wrong, which are the intentions of other people, how one should act in order to benefit both himself and the others. Wine corrupts human consciousness, in some way it puts it to sleep. And that’s how one can be cheated when drunk.

²² For further detail about this episode, see Wright (2012) s.v. Semele.

²³ Diodorus, *Library* 3.66.3 σὲ δ' ἔτικτε πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε πολλὸν ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων κρύπτων λευκάλενον Ἡρῆν – The sire of men and gods brought thee to light, unknown to white-armed Hera, far from men (Translation by Oldfather (1935), Loeb).

²⁴ Dionysus completes his life as fetus in the thigh of his father possibly on purpose. Note also that he does not come out of his father’s head, like Athena. The association of the god of wine with pleasure and of Zeus’ thigh with the inferior part of the human body and soul concerning desires would be probably too platonic for the period, in which this aspect of the Dionysian myth emerged, namely the end of 6th or more possibly the beginning of 5th century. However, an extended explanatory argument about the connotations of Dionysus’ birth out of Zeus is deployed by Leitao (2012).

The common feature in all these cases is that wine undoubtedly causes, apart from pleasure, distraction and forgetfulness, too. Hence the quote should be not only “In vino veritas ($\alpha\lambda\eta\thetaεια$)”, but also “In vino oblivium ($\lambda\eta\thetaη$)”. Wine, Sleep (actually of consciousness), Love and Deceit, as they appear together in the abovementioned mythical accounts, prove sufficiently capable of “spoiling” the object of deception (whatever it is) in favor of the cunning god or hero, who has more or less dangerous dispositions.

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