

Nietzsche *in nuce*: A note on the philologist's '*Crux, nux, lux*'

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Abstract: In *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, Nietzsche says that the ascetic ideal serves at once as "*Crux, nux, lux*" ("Cross, nut, light"). Scholars have been divided on the *nux* here, with a surprising number neglecting the obvious translation, and either glossing it as "kernel" or "core" (of an ascetic's existence?), or deciding that Nietzsche must have intended to write *nox* ("night") or a transliterated Greek νύξ ("night") instead; but a few accept "nut" and seem to imply that it is the proverbial "tough nut to crack," a riddle or problem. The purposes of this paper are: to establish more securely than before that Nietzsche's *nux* must be the metaphorical "nut" as riddle; and then to explore further evidence for Nietzsche's motivations in writing "*Crux, nux, lux*." While the triad smacks of mediaeval mysticism and is thus appropriate in its context, it seems to belong most immediately to more recent patterns of such wordplay, and Nietzsche's letters and notebooks reveal that the rhyming words were originally conceived as a sort of motto for his own life and work. This exercise in Nietzsche-philology is presented as a study, *in nuce*, of what Nietzsche was often willing to do with his philological training: something obscure, riddling, and idiosyncratic.

Keywords: Latin mottos; nut metaphors; rhyme; riddle.

Hard texts are nuts, (I will not call them cheaters,)

Whose shells do keep the kernel from the eaters:

Open the shells, and you shall have the meat;

They here are brought for you to crack and eat.

— Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*

— ich habe für seine Backen — eine derbe Nuß zu knacken.¹

— Friedrich Rückert

Unica nux prodest, nocet altera, tertia mors est.²

— *Regimen sanitatis Salernitanum*

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📖 *In memoriam avi mei, Caroli Henrici, quem etiam conquirunt sciuri.*

¹ Rückert 1826, 127: "— I have something for your snack / —it's a stubborn nut to crack." Translations (usually more literal than this) are my own unless noted otherwise. The source is Rückert's celebrated translation of the *Maqamat al-Hariri*, which is full of rhymes and riddles, but, so far as I can tell (from less poetical translations), there is no "nut" in the original. Nietzsche read Rückert and even set one of Rückert's original poems, "Aus der Jugendzeit," to music.

² "A single nut is beneficial, another harms, a third is death." This is used in Brentano's "Die drei Nüße."

IN FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE'S *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (GM), one encounters a strange fruit of his philological training at the end of the following passage:

[...] es muss wohl ein Interesse des Lebens selbst sein, dass ein solcher Typus des Selbstwiderspruchs nicht ausstirbt. Denn ein asketisches Leben ist ein Selbstwiderspruch: [...] am Missrathen, Verkümmern, am Schmerz, am Unfall, am Hässlichen, an der willkürlichen Einbusse, an der Entselbstung, Selbstgeißelung, Selbstopferung ein Wohlgefallen empfunden und gesucht wird. Dies ist Alles im höchsten Grade paradox: wir stehen hier vor einer Zwiespältigkeit, die sich selbst zwiespältig will, welche sich selbst in diesem Leiden genießt und in dem Maasse sogar immer selbstgewisser und triumphirender wird, als ihre eigne Voraussetzung, die physiologische Lebensfähigkeit, abnimmt. „Der Triumph gerade in der letzten Agonie“: unter diesem superlativischen Zeichen kämpfte von jeher das asketische Ideal; in diesem Räthsel von Verführung, in diesem Bilde von Entzücken und Qual erkannte es sein hellstes Licht, sein Heil, seinen endlichen Sieg. *Crux, nux, lux* — das gehört bei ihm in Eins. —³

Those three Latin words, as numerous scholars have noted, are most obviously translated as “Cross, nut, light.”⁴ No one has quibbled about the meaning here of *crux* or *lux*, but that *nux* has already caused some dribblets of ink to be spilled. A surprising number of readers—starting in fact with the first generation of Nietzsche’s translators—have declined to accept the obvious translation of *nux*, or indeed any established meaning of the word. Some have understood it not as “nut” but as “kernel” or “core,” which they perhaps understood as the “core” of the ascetic’s existence. Others have gone further afield, translating it as “night,” or asserting that it must be a mistake or misprint for *nox* (“night”) or a transliteration of Greek νύξ (also “night”). On the other hand, there are some who, having glossed it as “nut,” cite in support of this

³ GM III.II: “[...] it must be an interest of Life itself, that such a type of self-contradiction does not die out. For an ascetic life is a self-contradiction: [...] in failure, decline, in pain, in the accidental, in the ugly, in voluntary loss, in self-abrogation, self-mortification, self-sacrifice a pleasure is felt and sought. This is all in the highest degree a paradox: we stand here before a contradiction, which wills itself to be contradictory, which becomes ever more self-confident and triumphant to the extent that its own premise, physiological viability, declines. ‘Triumph exactly in the last agony’: under this superlative sign the ascetic ideal always fought; in this riddle of temptation, in this image of delight and torment, it recognized its brightest light, its salvation, its eventual victory. *Crux, nux, lux* — with it, these stand as one. —” See also the echo of this passage in the description of the ascetic’s triumph over himself in *Morgenröthe* (M, *Dawn*) 113. References to Nietzsche’s published writings are to titles and sections, which are standard across editions. For Nietzsche’s letters and notebooks, the following conventions are observed. Early writings are cited by volume and page from FS = Mette et al. (eds.) 1994. Letters are cited by volume and letter number from KGB = Colli and Montinari (eds.) 1975–2004. Notebooks are cited by volume and notebook number and, in brackets, the note number, from KGW = Colli and Montinari (eds.) 1967–2006.

⁴ See the notes in: Nietzsche 2014, 418; id. 1998a, 159–160; id. 1998b, 84 and 154–155; id. 1975, 137; id. 1967, 118.

definition certain passages where Nietzsche speaks of metaphorical “nutcracking.” The remaining editors and translators have neglected to comment.⁵

After a survey of prior scholarship on this *nux*, I will attempt to reinforce the verdict that it means “nut,” above all by arguing what no one has yet condescended to make explicit, namely that it means “nut” as in a “tough nut to crack” or, more specifically, a riddle. In that very passage and elsewhere, Nietzsche shows a special fondness for riddles and “nutcracking” that makes this conclusion incontrovertible. Then, building especially on Andreas Urs Sommer’s (2019) philological commentary on GM, I will explore Nietzsche’s further motivations in using that curious combination of Latin words. In situ, they perhaps evoke a mediaeval mystical milieu, where play upon these words was in fact common enough, as we will see. But a direct derivation from or specific reference to that tradition seems improbable, and two other contexts will prove more illuminating: first, the tradition of creative and often rhyming Latin mottos, including many that play upon the symbolism of *crux* and *lux* and, less often, *nux*; and secondly, Nietzsche’s own predilections for rhyme, mottos, foreign words, esoteric allusions, nuts both literal and metaphorical—and a personal attachment to this particular set of words. Most remarkably, we will see evidence that Nietzsche identified himself with the ascetic ideal precisely under this slogan, and that what began as a jocular personal motto was inserted into a polemical essay, in which that humorous personal connection is entirely obscured.



As far as I have been able to determine, the first to render it as anything other than “nut” was the German-Russian translator V. A. Weinstock, who wrote, “Крестъ, ядро, светъ” (“Cross, kernel, light”).⁶ “Kernel” or “core” certainly overlaps with the attested meanings of *nux*, and it makes some sense in context, presumably as indicating the “core” of the ascetic’s existence; in support of this, one could perhaps appeal to Nietzsche’s description of the will to truth as the “Kern” (“kernel”) of the ascetic ideal later in the same work (GM III.27).⁷ But, while some related words such as English “nut” and Spanish “nuez” are ambiguous, designating either a nut or only

⁵ So e.g. Williams in Nietzsche 1972, despite glossing other Latin terms in the useful student edition.

⁶ Nietzsche 1908, 63.

⁷ See the similar interpretation of Gustave Thibon reported by Edelmann 1980, 42: “Depuis Eschyle « par la douleur, la connaissance », à travers toute la tradition chrétienne jusqu’à Nietzsche qui dit que sans la douleur on passe à côté de l’essentiel et qui a ce jeu de mots : « crux, nux, lux » (croix, noyau, lumière). La croix illumine le fond de notre être noyau.”

its edible kernel of nutmeat, we will see good reasons why Weinstock should have chosen “*opexъ*” (“nut”) instead.⁸

A different route was taken soon after by Paul V. Cohn in the “Vocabulary of Foreign Phrases” appended to Oscar Levy’s edition of *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, wherein one reads, “Cross, night, light,”⁹ although the text had been printed with *nux* intact (in Vol. 18). A bolder editor, Peter Pütz, would later decide that the text had to be emended to “*Crux, nox, lux*.”¹⁰ Neither Cohn nor Pütz gave any reason for their choices, but the only conceivable ones were ultimately offered by the editor Keith Ansell-Pearson, who wrote in a footnote to Carol Diethe’s Cambridge translation, “Meaning unclear, unless ‘nux’ is a misprint for ‘nox’ (‘night’) or unless the Greek word ([*νύξ*]=‘night’) is intended.”¹¹ *Da Dios nueces*, as they say in Spain, *a quien no tiene dientes*.¹² A somewhat more cautious version of the same verdict was given in the notes to the Greek translation by Zisis Sarikas.¹³ It must be admitted that *nox* would smack more of somber abstraction—and of the narrative and symbolism of the resurrection of the Crucified.¹⁴ In context, too, “night” could

⁸ The problem must be to some extent one of translation: I have it on good authority that French, Italian, and Russian all lack a proverbial nut as problem or riddle.

⁹ Cohn 1913, 400. Cohn was perhaps the source for the Japanese translation, 十字架、夜、光 (“cross, night, light”), in Nietzsche 1923.

¹⁰ Nietzsche 1992, 106; see also p. 226, where Pütz glosses the words as “Kreuz, Nacht, Licht.” Misled by Pütz, it seems, Smith in Nietzsche 1996b, 154 n. 97, reports that *Crux, nux, lux* “is the Colli-Montinari text; [whereas] earlier editions give ‘*crux, nox, lux*’ (cross, night, light).” I have seen no edition besides Pütz’s that prints *nox*.

¹¹ Nietzsche 1994, 91 n. 88. In the 3rd ed. of 2017, the footnote (now on p. 88) remains unchanged.

¹² “God gives nuts to those who have no teeth.”

¹³ But see Sarikas’ comment in Nietzsche 2008, 253 n. 215, which notes some of the strongest evidence in favor of translating it as *καρύδι* (“nut”): “Το νόημα του ρητού αυτού παραμένει ασαφές. Ίσως με τε λέξη «καρύδι» ο Νίτσε να μας παραπέμπει στη «ζωή σαν να είναι αυτή σπάσιμο καρυδιών» και στον σύγχρονο άνθρωπο ως «καρυσθραύστη της ψυχής», για τα οποία μίλησε λίγο πιο πάνω (9). Ίσως πάλι να πρόκειται για λάθος και να ήθελε να γράψει *nox* (= *νύχτα*).”

¹⁴ To be fair, it may be that *nox* is lurking somewhere behind this *nux*, perhaps along the lines suggested by Choulet and Blondel in Nietzsche 1996a, n. 87, who perceive a “*facétie*” in a pun on *nux/nox*, and say that the “*plaisanterie vise le mystique halluciné*.” The riddling *nux* is perhaps all the more amusing since one can easily think of *nox* or *νύξ* in contrast with *lux*, and especially after *crux*, as a result of the prominent light symbolism in three of the Gospel accounts of the crucifixion. After Jesus is crucified, *tenebrae* cover the land in the Vulgate (Marc. 15:33, Matt. 27:45, Luc. 23:44). There is no *nox* in those passages, but it is easy to find play upon *nox* and *lux* in later Christian authors; see e.g. Alanus ab Insulis *Anticlaudianus* 4.121.470 Bossuat: “Hic tenebre lucent, hic lux tenebrescit et illic / Nox cum luce nitet et lux cum nocte diescit”; Adam de Sancto Victore *Sequentia* 48.3 Grosfillier: “Sic dispensant uerbum Dei, / quod nox nocti lux diei / indicant scientiam.” Cf. also *Das Nachtlied* of *Also sprach Zarathustra*.

perhaps seem to be motivated as a symbol of decline, as the contradiction of light, as a hint that those enthralled by the ascetic ideal are thereby “benighted,” or kept *im Dunkeln*. Even so, one struggles to see how “Cross, night, light” would be appreciably clearer.

The basic significance of the more jarring “*Crux, nux, lux*”—all the more jarring for the heavy, monosyllabic rhyme—is readily explained, even from its immediate context. *Crux*, just as the German *Kreuz* that Nietzsche often uses,¹⁵ is of course a symbol of both extreme torment and salvation (cf. “der letzten Agonie” and “sein Heil, seinen endlichen Sieg”) as well as a “crucial” point or difficulty. *Lux*, needless to say, is one of enlightenment, etc. (cf. “sein hellstes Licht”). *Nux*, finally, can be nothing other than the familiar figure of the “tough nut to crack,” or a riddle,¹⁶ a dense source of pleasure but difficult of access, as suggested most immediately by the preceding “in diesem Räthsel von Verführung, in diesem Bilde von Entzücken und Qual.” From the rest of the excerpt quoted above, one can see that the ascetic ideal, in Nietzsche’s eyes, is a riddle at least insofar as it is a violent self-contradiction, yet one that continues to attract.¹⁷ Further evidence in support of this interpretation is found just pages prior: “Wir vergewaltigen uns jetzt selbst, es ist kein Zweifel, wir Nussknacker der Seele, wir Fragenden und Fragwürdigen, wie als ob Leben nichts Anderes sei, als Nüsseknacken.”¹⁸ Nutcrackers are naturally drawn to the nut, which promises both toil in the sharp shell’s cracking and joy in the eventual snacking. The complex of images was also anticipated by an earlier description of the ascetic ideal as

Even Varro, *De Lingua Latina* V.102, thought that *nux* derived from *nox*, on account of the dark dye derived from the walnut rind.

¹⁵ See esp. the likewise comically rhyming tricolon, KGB I.2, 591 (to Erwin Rohde, 1868): “die ethische Luft, der faustische Duft, Kreuz, Tod und Gruft etc” (“the ethical air, the Faustian scent, cross, death and crypt etc.”). See also the use of *crux* alone in KGW V.1, 4 [220] (1880).

¹⁶ For discussion of this idiom in English amid other metaphors for the riddle, see Cook 2006, 198–199.

¹⁷ See also *Der Antichrist* (AC) 40, where Christ’s death on the cross brings his followers “vor das eigentliche Räthsel: „wer war das? was war das?“” (“before the true riddle: ‘who was this? what was this?’”). This “true riddle” bears a resemblance, incidentally, to Nietzsche’s appropriations of the riddling Pindaric phrase (P. 2.72) as “Werde der, der du bist” (e.g., KGB III.1, 239 [to Lou von Salomé, 1882]) and “Wie man werd, was man ist” (e.g., as the subtitle of *Ecce Homo*).

¹⁸ GM III.9: “We are now violating ourselves, there is no doubt, we nutcrackers of the soul, we questioning and questionable ones, as if life were nothing other than nutcracking.” This passage was noted by Sommer 2019, 467 and Sarikas in Nietzsche 2008. For the emphasis on riddles in GM, see also I.1, III.23, III.24, and “Jenseitigkeits-Lösung seines Räthsels von Dasein” in III.25.

Etwas, das an verlockender, berausender, betäubender, verderbender Kraft jenem Symbol des „heiligen Kreuzes“ gleichkäme, jener schauerlichen Paradoxie eines „Gottes am Kreuze“, jenem Mysterium einer unausdenkbaren letzten äussersten Grausamkeit und Selbstkreuzigung Gottes zum Heile des Menschen?...¹⁹

So this ideal must also be an enticing paradox and mystery that promises some ultimate reward. Further implicit commentary on the notion of latent potentiality inherent in the nut metaphor comes later, when Nietzsche speaks of wanting to reveal not all the effects of the ascetic ideal so much as “was hinter ihm, unter ihm, in ihm versteckt liegt, wofür es der vorläufige, undeutliche, mit Fragezeichen und Missverständnissen überladne Ausdruck ist.”²⁰ A nut, like a riddle awaiting its explanation, contains hidden inside it a source of growth: and the kernel (or “Kern”) of this nut, as noted above, is later said to be nothing less than the will to truth (GM III.27), the growth and ramifications of which (as science, philosophy, etc.) are also analyzed in the book. The middle term, *nux*, thus unites in itself the meanings of the others, while adumbrating the riddling incongruity of the set. Lastly, the series forms a descending tricolon, proceeding from the more somber *crux*, to the ambivalent *nux*, to the positive *lux*; alternatively, the curious *nux* at the center may be regarded as enclosed, nut-like, by the pair of grander symbols.²¹ Their motivation within the text thus seems clear enough. Yet one might wonder whether there was any further reason why Nietzsche used these three Latin words together, which simply by being Latin suggest some traditional source.



¹⁹ GM I.8: “Something, which in its enticing, intoxicating, numbing, corrupting power could come close to that symbol of the ‘Holy Cross,’ to that terrible paradox of a ‘God on the Cross,’ to that mystery of the unimaginable last extreme cruelty and self-crucifixion of God for the salvation of mankind?...”

²⁰ GM III.23: “what behind it, under it, in it lies hidden, for which it is the provisional, indistinct, with question-marks and misunderstandings overladen expression.” Note again the tricolon, rhyming on “vorläufige/undeutliche/überladne.”

²¹ Nietzsche’s propensity for sets of three is also expressed earlier in “die drei grossen Prunkworte des asketischen Ideals sind: Armuth, Demuth, Keuschheit,” which are said to be reflected in the philosopher’s avoidance of “drei glänzenden und lauten Dingen [...], dem Ruhme, den Fürsten und den Frauen” (GM III.8). Despite that propensity and the fixation on mystery, there is no hint that Nietzsche was aware of the connection, discussed below, of *nux* with the mystery of the Trinity (a doctrine that, so far as I can see, is not mentioned in GM).

Although all three have related uses in classical Latin, including *nux* as a proverbial child's plaything and a sort of attractive problem,²² they are never combined, and so it seems that we must look to later sources. Considering the ample store of Judaeo-Christian nut-symbols such as the *hortus nucum* (or "garden of nuts") in a "notorious *crux*" in the Song of Songs,²³ one might hope to find some relevant passages in the Latin Church Fathers or other Christian literature, so that Nietzsche would be making an exceptionally apposite and erudite allusion.

The earlier Christian authors already give us some tantalizing evidence. It was Augustine and other late antique authors who laid the foundation for the metaphor of the nut as riddle (or aenigma) by speaking of the nut as an allegory of mysteries or an allegory of allegoresis itself; sometimes they also allegorized certain nuts as references to the wooden cross.²⁴ So a *nux* could symbolize the *crux*. We know, moreover,

²² See Catullus 61.12.4: "Da nuces pueris" ("Give the nuts to the boys"); for ancient parallels to this, see Pejenaute Rubio 2000, 306. Plautus, whom Nietzsche studied closely with his teacher Ritschl, provides a relevant proverb at *Curculio* 55: "Qui e nuce nuculeum esse uolt, frangit nucem" ("He who wants to eat the nucleus from a nut, breaks the nut"); in Plautus the saying is applied to the situation of a frustrated lover contemplating the tough "nut" of his chaste beloved; breaking the nut in this instance corresponds to persuading her with kisses. For contextualization amid other metaphorical and proverbial *nuces* in classical antiquity, see Pejenaute Rubio 2000, 306–308, and Otto 1890, 2.48. The proverb had a long afterlife: see Macrobius *Saturnalia* III.14, Erasmus *Adagia* II.ix.35 (who even compares this proverbial nut to Homer's moly), Herhold 1887, 218, Pejenaute Rubio 2000, 304–305 n. 9. Eisler 1910, 521–523 cites remarkable passages in Kabbalists that present cosmic nut symbolism, and Hippolytus, *Haer.* 5.9.1, where the Phrygians are reported to believe τὸν πατέρα τῶν ὅλων εἶναι ἀμύγδαλον ("the father of all things to be an almond"); Eisler argues that this nut-imagery is reflected in Greek cosmology and natural philosophy back to the Orphics through Anaximander and Empedocles, but the evidence for nut symbolism proper, rather than comparable egg symbolism etc., does not seem to extend so far. Unbeknownst to Eisler, a character in Eupolis fr. 79 swears ναὶ τὴν ἀμυγδαλὴν ("by the almond"); but Storey 2003, 99 n. 11 asserts that this refers "to the sacred tree of Attis (Paus. 7. 17. 11)"; likewise Rusten 2011, 229. Aristophanes fr. 605 anticipates the intellectual nutcracking in the command that someone use his head to crack some almonds. (Both Eupolis and Ar. are quoted by Ath. II.53a.) It is surprising that the common pre-sympotic nuts did not give rise to such metaphors in antiquity.

²³ Cant. cantic. 6:11, which apparently furnished the main scriptural fodder for much later nut imagery (see the following note), with the comment by Exum 2005, 222. Besides the other examples cited below, see e.g. Philo *De Vita Mosis* II.3.4 and *The Cloud of Unknowing*, ch. 58, with the note ad loc. from McCann 1952, 81; for nut symbolism more generally see Pejenaute Rubio 2000, Pope 1977, 574–584, Venables 1880, and for some relevant artwork, Fricke 2020, Wetter and Scholten 2017, Impelluso 2003, 172–173 and 187–189.

²⁴ I have not seen any recognition of Augustine's anticipation by Greek authors, which is plain in Eusebius *In Cant. cantic.* 536 Pitra, who interprets the Septuagint's εἰς κήπον καρῦας ("into a garden of a nut-tree") as a reference to allegorical writings; this is repeated already by Athanasius, *Synopsis*

that Nietzsche was aware of related allegoresis, since he wrote of the Biblical interpreters who maintained that

überall sollte im alten Testament von Christus und nur von Christus die Rede sein, überall namentlich von seinem Kreuze, und wo nur ein Holz, eine Ruthe, eine Leiter, ein Zweig, ein Baum, eine Weide, ein Stab genannt wird, da bedeute diess eine Prophezeiung auf das Kreuzesholz: selbst die Aufrichtung des Einhorns und der ehernen Schlange, selbst Moses, wenn er die Arme zum Gebet ausbreitet, ja selbst die Spiesse, an denen das Passahlamm gebraten wird, — alles Anspielungen und gleichsam Vorspiele des Kreuzes!²⁵

scripturae sacrae (PL 28.356–357); see also Origen, *Scholia in Cant. cantic.* (PG 17.280.3), where *κατά τι παράδειγμα οἱ δίκαιοι καρύαι εἰσὶ* (“according to a certain paradigm the just are nuts”). The earliest Latin source I have found is the recently rediscovered Fortunatianus of Aquileia *Commentarii in evangelia* 100–107, 123–130 (CLES 103.114–115), who—discussing Aaron’s almond-bearing rod (Num. 17:8)—interprets the *nux* with its quadripartite inner division (therefore a walnut) as a symbol of the *crux* and of the gospels. Perhaps the most famous Augustinian passage is [Augustine] *Serm.* 31.2 (PG 39.1805–1806), now attributed to Caesarius, *Serm.* 111.2 (CCSL 103:439), where *nuces* are presented as symbolic in three regards, the third concerning the “secretum mysteriorum sapientiae et scientiae” (“secret of the mysteries of wisdom and knowledge”), and this allegoresis is linked to the *hortum nucum* of Cant. cantic. 6:10. Likewise Augustine *Serm.* 245.5 (PL 39.2198), where the tripartite *nux* unites the flesh of the Savior (= the rind), the *crux* (= the shell), and the sweetness of divinity (= the kernel). Further, in one of Augustine’s recently rediscovered sermons, *Serm.* 341.22 (Mainz 55), he compares the interpretation of difficult passages to the cautious weighing and cracking of nuts by boys, a comparison which perhaps provides the missing link between the classical *nux* (as a child’s plaything) and the *nux* of the Christian allegorists. Augustine is followed in this by Fulgentius, *Super Thebaiden*, who applies it to allegorical readings of poets in general in an extended comparison involving the *nux* as a child’s plaything and as a more substantial treat for the adult who can break it open more easily. Poetry in general is again analyzed in terms of a sweet kernel (*dulciorem nucleum*) and a shell (*cortice*) by Alanus ab Insulis, *De planctu naturae* (PL 210.451); see Robertson 1951, 671–677. See also Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen* XXVII.273–90 (CLES 30.274–275); Rabanus Maurus, *De universo* 19.6 (PL 111.514), where the *nux* stands for the *mysterium sanctae Trinitatis* etc.; and Honorius Augustodunensis, *In purificatione Sanctae Marie* (PL 172.850) and *Expositio in Cantica canticorum* 3.6, 7 (PL 172.453–454, 466), where the *nux* stands for the church, Christ, *sancta crux*, and *sacra Scriptura*. “Cryst” later becomes the “kinnelle” of a “walnot” in Langland, *Piers Plowman* B, XI.247–247 (= C, XIII.140–149); see Kaske 1959.

²⁵ M 84: “everywhere in the Old Testament there should be talk of Christ and only of Christ, everywhere especially about his cross, and where only a piece of wood, a rod, a ladder, a branch, a tree, a willow, a staff is mentioned, then this represents a prophecy of the wood of the cross: even the raising up of the unicorn and the bronze serpent, even Moses, when he spreads his arms in prayer, indeed even the spits on which the Passover lamb is roasted—all allusions and so to speak preludes to the cross!” The “Einhorn” (“unicorn”) must be an allusion to Psalm 92:10, where “mein Horn wird erhöht werden wie eines Einhorns” (“my horn will be raised up like a unicorn’s”), and perhaps also Deut. (=5 Mos.) 33:17, which in Luther’s translation speaks of “Einhornshörner.” For further discussion of Nietzsche’s sources here, see Schmidt 2015, 167–169, and for possible sources concerning the unicorn in particular, see Jung

In this impressive catalogue, no nut is mentioned: although Nietzsche may have encountered a *nux* as yet another prophecy of the *crux*, there is no direct evidence that he did. Furthermore, we would still lack any passage containing all three words: those early Christian authors were not given to the sort of rhyming wordplay that would bring *nux* into such close proximity with both *crux* and *lux*.²⁶

Yet we do find them all together at last among the rhymesters of mediaeval mysticism, a few examples of which deserve attention. Possibly the most vivid and delightful evidence comes in the following bits of a sequence²⁷ from the twelfth century by Adam of Saint Victor:

Frondis, floris, nucis, roris
pietati Saluatoris
congruunt mysteria.

Frons est Christus protegendo,
flos dulcore, nux pascendo,
ros celesti gratia. [...]

Contemplemur adhuc nucem
nam prolata nux in lucem
lucis est mysterium.

Trinam gerens unionem,
tria confert, unctionem,
lumen et edulium.

Nux est Christus, cortex nucis
circa carnem pena crucis,
testa corpus osseum. [...]

Lux est cecis et unguentum
Christus egris, et fomentum
piis animalibus.²⁸

1968, 439–447, who cites among others Tertullian and Justin Martyr for their interpretations of the unicorn as a symbol of Christ or the cross; Nietzsche read both (see Schmidt, *ibid.*, and n. 33 below).

²⁶ But on Augustine's role in the history of rhyme, see Gasparov 1996, 101.

²⁷ See *OED* s.v. "sequence," II.7.

²⁸ Adam de Sancto Victore *Sequentia* 5.35–40, 45–53, 57–59 Grosfillier: "Of frond, of flower, of nut, of dew / the mysteries accord with / the mercy of the Savior. / A frond is Christ by protecting, / a flower by sweetness, a nut by feeding, / dew by heavenly grace. [...] / Let us contemplate still the nut / for the nut brought forth into the light / is the mystery of the light. / Bearing threefold union, / three it brings together, anointment, / light and abundant food. / A nut is Christ, the husk of the nut / the punishment of the cross upon the flesh, / the shell the bony body. [...] / Light is for the blind both unguent, / as Christ is for the sick, and poultice / for pious animals."

Mediaeval symbolism thus easily saw in a humble *nux* both *crux* and *lux*. A briefer and more riddling comparandum, which replaces *crux* with *dux* (“leader”), is in a fourteenth-century poem by Christian of Lilienfeld, who addresses Christ as “dux, nux, lux mea munda.”²⁹

Such wordplay continued to flourish for centuries, sometimes in more distinctly playful functions. In the sixteenth century a German poet by the name of Tuppiss exploited even more of the Latin words ending in *ux* in this pair of poems:

In Præsulem Agrippinum Suita

Præsul Agrippinum Truces, cur hoc tibi nomen?
In promptu causa est: trux, dux, lux, nux, mala crux es.
Trux es Catholicis, dux schismaticis, mala lux es
Hæreticis, nux es male sana bonis, mala crux es
Tranquillis. En Nomen habes, nunc accipe & omen.
Trux dux vincetur: lux extinguetur & illa
Nux cito frangetur, crux auctori statuatur.

Pro Præsule Agrippinum Anti-Suita

Præsul Agrippinum Truces, cur hoc tibi nomen?
Causa bona in promptu: trux, dux, lux, nux, pia crux es.
Trux Papae & Monachis; pietati dux: bona lux es
Toti Orbi: nux esque infracta malis: pia crux es,
Quæ Christum sequitur. Hic nomen habes cape & omen:
Trux duce vive DEO; Lux fulge lucida; nux quæ
Nondum frangetur; cælo crux suscipietur.³⁰

²⁹ Christianus Campiliensis, *Carm.* 12.10–11 Zeichmeister: “Narraris funda David, in me, que bona, funda, / Me vicijs munda, spes, dux, nux, lux mea munda” (“You are called the sling of David: you, who are good, settle on to me [fasten on me?], / purify me of my vices, my hope, my leader, my nut, my pure light”).

³⁰ “Suite against the Patron Agrippinum: Patron Agrippinum Truces, why is this your name? / The cause is at hand: harsh, leader, light, nut, bad cross are you. / Harsh are you to Catholics, leader to schismatics, bad light are you / For heretics, a nut are you, not at all healthy for the good, bad cross are you / For the tranquil. Lo! you have [this] *nomen*, now accept also [this] omen. / The harsh leader will be conquered: the light will be extinguished and that / Nut will quickly be broken, a cross will be erected for the author. “Anti-Suite for the Patron Agrippinum: Patron Agrippinum Truces, why is this your name? / A good cause is at hand: harsh, leader, light, nut, pious cross are you. / Harsh to Pope and Monks; leader for piety; good light are you / To the whole World: and a nut are you unbroken by the bad: a pious cross are you, / Which follows Christ. You have this nomen, take also [this] omen: / Live harsh with GOD as leader; shine as a bright light; a nut which / Will not yet be broken; a cross will be received by heaven.” The poems are printed in Fechtius 1684, 903; a third follows, with the

Here the sustained wordplay goes well beyond what we find in Nietzsche, but, I would argue, it still belongs to the same rich tradition.³¹ Nietzsche, too, as we will see, included *dux* in another, more obviously humorous application. At the same time, it is noteworthy that these more playful texts do not use *nux* to mean “riddle,” although we can see it still approaching that meaning in Adam of St. Victor’s description of the *nux* as a *mysterium*. Surprisingly enough, the nut as playful riddle seems to have taken hold in the Aesopic tradition, and without play upon *nux* with *lux* and *crux*.³²

As delightful and as appropriate as it may be, an allusion to any such text seems improbable, given the absence of any obvious candidate or any corroborating evidence.³³ Still, it must be emphasized that these Latin words definitely evoke the ec-

name Tuppis inscribed below it; and the set is followed by a letter from one Joh. Mappus addressed “*Clarissimo D. Laurentio Tuppio*.” The author must therefore be Laurence Tuppis, a noted Professor of Law, discussed by e.g. Bayle 1738, 414–415. The poems’ addressee would seem to be Otto Truchseß von Waldburg, prince and cleric; but I have not been able to find any reason for him to be addressed as “Agrippinum,” which is also a strange form for what must be a masculine vocative (cf. the first line of each poem).

³¹ For two later examples, see “DUX, mea lux, mea fax” (Schäl 1750, 47v) and “Sit mea crux Christi VIS ... / ... Christus / Sit mihi dux, mea lux ...” (Schäl 1751, 13).

³² After the allegorists discussed above (n. 24), the earliest evidence I have seen for the semantic shift to “(playful) riddle” is found in Gualterus Anglicus (12th c.), *Romuleæ Fabule*, Prologus 11–12 Hervieux: “Verborum leuitas morum fert pondus honestum, / Ut nucleum celat arida testa bonum” (“The levity of fools’ words bears an honorable weight, / as the dry shell hides the good nutmeat”). Its role in vernacular literature seems to have begun with Robert Henryson (15th c.), *The Morall Fabillis of Esope the Phrygian*, “The Prolog,” 15–21: “The nuttis schell, thocht it be hard and teuch, / [H]aldis the kirmill and is delectabill; / Sa lyis thair ane doctrine wyse aneuch / And full of frute under ane fenyeyt fabill; / And clerkis sayis it is richt profitabill / Amangis ernist to ming ane merie sport, / To light the spreit and gar the tyme be schort”; see Moses 2007. Presumably it was from that tradition primarily that Bunyan got his image in the first epigraph above. There is also a noteworthy riddle recorded by Crux de Telcz, in which the title gives the solution: “Nux. / Ligneus est lectus, nulla tamen arbore sectus, / in cuius cella residet pulcra puella” (“Nut. / A couch is wooden, yet cut from no tree, / in the chamber of which resides a beautiful girl”); see Doležalová 2021, 121, who compares an arguably metapoetic variant in which the second line reads “Solvere qui poterit solvat, et ejus erit” (“Let whoever is able to loosen/open it, loosen/open it, and it will be his”), printed in Wright and Orchard Halliwell 1841, 110.

³³ Although features of GM in particular, above all the extended Latin quote from Tertullian (GM I.15), as well as other passages like M 84 (cited above), may seem to indicate a sufficiently close study of ancient and mediaeval Christianity, his engagement in other regards suggests little interest in anything so obscure. Cf. his offhand dismissal of the Church Fathers in GM III.22. Consider also e.g. the phrase *unio mystica*, used twice in rather anachronistic, comparative discussions of mysticism (GM I.6, III.16). This Latin term, so far as I have been able to determine, came into usage within the Protestant tradi-

clesiastical tradition. One can find memorable uses of *crux*, *lux*, and even *nux* in the Vulgate,³⁴ and even authors less inclined to wordplay than Tuppis, such as Luther, can easily be found discussing and employing at least some of the words individually and in partial combination.³⁵ Likewise we read “*nux Christus*” and “*dux, mea lux*” in two of the thirteenth-century *Carmina Burana*,³⁶ which were rediscovered in 1803. While I would not propose, therefore, that Nietzsche had any particular text in mind, it may well be that he was aware of some such play upon *nux* etc., and, in any event, the pertinent symbolism of all three words can be assumed to have been so familiar for someone with Nietzsche’s pious upbringing and classical education that the grouping could have suggested itself readily enough. That said, there are some further considerations that may better reveal why he combined them.

At the most general level, one would be remiss to neglect the phenomenon embracing all such groupings: their rhyme, and with it the fact that these Latin words, being among a very few with the word-end *ux* (gen. *ucis*), have been lumped to-

tion (in which Nietzsche was raised), starting with Calvin’s “*mystica ... unio*” (*Institutiones Christianae Religionis* 3.11.10), although drawing on the tradition of similar ideas expressed by synonyms such as *unitas*. On this topic see McGinn 2012, 200–210, who says nothing directly however about the history of the titular phrase; for a more direct remark, see id. 1996, 122. In this case, then, Nietzsche’s use of the particular Latin phrase is probably evidence of his Protestant education more than anything else, and certainly not of specific consideration of mediaeval texts.

³⁴ See, e.g., “... tollat crucem suam, et sequatur me” (Matt. 16:24, Marc. 8:34); “*Dominus lux mea est*” (Mich. 7:8); “*lux sum mundi*” (Joan. 9:5); “*Descendi in hortum nucum*” (Cant. cantic. 6:10), mentioned above. For *dux*, e.g.: “*Deus [...] ipse sapientiae dux est*” (Sap. 7:15); “*Jesus [...] factus est dux in Israel*” (1 Mach. 2:55).

³⁵ The most remarkable passages I found in Luther (*Tischr.* 94 and 133 Preger) contain the ungrammatical remark that someone died “*sine crux et sine lux*” (“without cross and without light”); although this phrase was attributed to Luther by Eiselein 1838, 109, it was evidently conventional: Erasmus 1913, ep. 950, 552, had reported some Dominicans’ use of it in a false rumor of his death. Sometimes this bad Latin was even made macaronic, as in “*sine crux, sine lux et non sine tinkling* [i.e. of bells],” quoted in Brokaw 2016, 102. But the grammar did not go entirely uncorrected: one reads “SINE CRUCE SINE LUCE” among the Latin inscriptions on the outside of the tower called Aylmer’s Folly, on the Hill of Allen, Co. Kildare, Ireland. See also Luther’s discussion of Cant. cantic. 6:10 in *Dictata super Psalterium* III.310 Weimar, and *De votis monasticis iudicium* 298 Clemen: “*solus Christus nobis lux et dux praeficitur, et, quicquid est ab hominibus inuentum, damnatur. Ipse igitur dulcis dux et lux nostra Ihesus Christus illustret et roboret cor nostrum*” (“only Christ is said by us to be light and leader, and, whatever has been invented by man, is damned. Let him himself therefore, our sweet leader and light, Jesus Christ, illuminate and strengthen our heart”).

³⁶ *Carmina Burana* 227.2 and 98.3.1 Vollman, respectively. See also Augustine as “*lux et dux doctorum, / malleus haereticorum*” (“light and leader of the learned, / hammer of heretics”) in Herder, *Hymn* 815, quoted in Mone 1885.

gether by grammarians since antiquity.³⁷ Curiously, one even finds these three alone in the same non-alphabetical order in the sixteenth-century grammatical treatise of Johannes Murmellius: "*In Vx, Feminina sunt: ut, crux, nux, lux.*"³⁸ The student, mediaeval or modern, may be easily impressed by such a forceful jingle or clang amid the drudgery of grammatical study. For anyone inclined to rhyme, and acquainted with some Latin, they present themselves as easy and conspicuous quarry,³⁹ and Nietzsche's writings leave no doubt as to his fondness for rhyme.⁴⁰

One comparandum, tangentially connected by way of *nux*, may be illuminating: the alphabetical series *nex, nix, nox, nux* ("death, snow, night, nut"). These four words have also been lumped together in grammatical treatises since antiquity,⁴¹ but they were first alphabetized in the Venerable Bede's influential eighth-century *De arte metrica* (3.122–123), which lists them, after *fax* ("torch"), as examples of syllables long by position (as a result of the final *x*, rather than the length of the vowel). That alphabetical series took on a life of its own starting in the Renaissance, appearing in an elementary textbook as "Nax, nex, nix, nox, nux" (where "Nax," like most of the other syllables listed there for handwriting practice, is nonsense),⁴² and then in a small explosion of literary uses, in which one's wit is exercised to make sense of the set. So we find, for example, "Fornax, nex, nix, nox, nux"⁴³; "Pax, nex, nix,

³⁷ So e.g. Charisius, *Ars Grammatica* I.31 Barwick, and Phocas, *Ars de nomine et verbo* 421 Keil.

³⁸ Murmellius 1574, 141r: "In ux, there are feminine [nouns]: as *crux, nux, lux.*" Cf. id. 1518, Tabulae XLIII, XXXVIII: "Crux, quod apud veteres etiam masculinum fuit / Nux, frux, / lux"; "In ux faciunt uis pe. cor. Crux, nux, dux, redux, tradux, volux, trux / Excipiunt ¶ Lux lucis pe. longa Pollux pollucis pe. longa / frux frugis, pe. lon." Likewise Anon. Bobiensis *Excerpta Bobiensia* 544.10 Keil: "in ux masculina, Pollux, feminina tria, lux crux nux, commune unum, trux"; and Philipps 1731, 138: "Nouns in ux, make *ucis* short; as, *Dux, ducis; Crux, crucis; Nux, nucis.* But, *Lux*, makes long, *lucis*; and *Pollux, pollucis.*"

³⁹ Cf. e.g. the hexameter couplet rhyming in [...] *Lux, Laus*, / [...] *Crux, Fraus* ("[...] Light, Praise, / [...] Cross, Fraud"), discussed by Leibniz 2020, 232, and the similar play on *Dux* and *Lux* in the single hexameter that Leibniz discusses on the prior page.

⁴⁰ In addition to the other evidence cited in this paper, see e.g. the "Vorspiel in deutschen Reimen" to *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, and the remark in AC 58 on the rhyming of *Christ* and *Nihilist*.

⁴¹ Phocas, *Ars de nomine et verbo* 412 Keil, lists "nux nix nex nox" among feminine monosyllables; Charisius, *Ars grammatica* I.49 Barwick, lists "nix {{χίων nivis}}, nox {{νύξ noctis}}, nux {{κάρπυον nucis}}, nex {{πνιγμός σφαγή necis}}"; and Bonifatius, *Ars grammatica* 275 Gebauer and Löfstedt, has "nox nex nix nux" among a long list of monosyllables.

⁴² Anonymous 1570, A31r.

⁴³ Praetorius 1663, 328: "Stove, death, snow, night, nut."

nox, nux, det meliora Deus"⁴⁴; and a curious little riddle.⁴⁵ The obscure and somber *nex* was dropped for a proverb about the dismal weather of Würzburg (see below), which in turn seems to have inspired two especially comical uses: first, in a satire of littérateurs, as part of the title of a chapter of a (fictional) unpublished novel by Victor Hugo, "Naxos, nix, nox, nux"⁴⁶; and then, as late as 1903, in the hilarious exclamation, "Nix, nox, nux, nebulae! Zum Kuckuck!"⁴⁷ In this way the tedious lists of grammar books ultimately proved to be fertile ground for the same sort of wordplay that I propose we should see in "*Crux, nux, lux*"—in addition, that is, to its motivation through the importance of those symbols.⁴⁸

Also relevant is a form of *nux* that was much more commonly used in Nietzsche's day (as it is now), due to the profusion of the set phrase *in nuce*. Derived from an ancient anecdote about a microscopic copy of the *Iliad* enclosed in a nut,⁴⁹ this phrase became a fixed expression only in the seventeenth century, when it was first applied primarily to pedagogical and reference works, including numerous texts under the

⁴⁴ Cäsar 1788, 362, quoting an elegiac distich from a certain Fritsch: "Peace, death, snow, night, nut, may god grant better things."

⁴⁵ Reeve 1866, 94: "Quem nive, nocte peto, nucis hic me stipite laedit; / Sic mihi nix, nox, nux, nex fuit ante diem." ("Whom in snow, at night I seek, this one pains me by the stump of a nut [or walnut tree]; / Thus there was snow, night, nut, death for me before dawn.").

⁴⁶ Lindau 1869, 617; the author then mocks an accusation of forgery against him on the basis of that satire, playing also on vulgar German *nix* = *nicht*, in Lindau 1870, 495; see also the translation of the latter by Müller-Casenov 1892, 300, who inserts the "Naxos, nix, nox, nux" from the first installment.

⁴⁷ Bierbaum 1903, 51: "Snow, night, nut, clouds! For crying out loud!" See also the exuberant little ode to snow-capped mountains from Schäl 1750, 64v: "Über die Schnee-Koppe in Schlesien: Te semper blanda signat NIX alba figura / Te NOX nulla premat, NOXIA nulla terant / NUX dura en jaceat, semper NEX dira recedat / CRUX in Te taceat, LUX pia semper ovet" ("Concerning the Schneekoppe in Silesia: A soft white SNOW always covers you with its figure / Let no NIGHT press upon you, no NOXIOUS things wear you down / Let a hard NUT lie, let harsh DEATH always recede / Let TORMENT be silent in you, let pious LIGHT always exult").

⁴⁸ Cf. also wordplay of *lux, dux, lex, rex* (sometimes with *pax* instead of *dux*): see Longfellow 1855, title page and 211, along with Didron 1843, 408, and Favreau 2003.

⁴⁹ The anecdote is attributed to Cicero, and reported among evidence for exceptional keenness of vision by Pliny *NH* 7.21.85. The only other extant classical instance of *in nuce* appears in Horace's puzzling "Nil intra est oleam, nil extra est in nuce duri" ("There is nothing [hard] inside an olive, nothing hard on the outside in a nut," *Ep.* II.1.31), which surprisingly seems never to have entered the tradition of riddling nut metaphors, becoming instead a proverb by way of Erasmus and others who take it as being directed at those who deny obvious truths, rather than those who make false analogies; see Erasmus 2017, 207 [317], Browne 1763, 6, and, in support of following the MSS with Erasmus, see Kayachev 2018.

title *Ilias in nuce*,⁵⁰ as well as one outstanding *Logica in nuce cum luce et duce*, in which—despite the sportive title—it is evident that *nuce* is not meant to advertise a puzzling approach to the topic.⁵¹ With the renewed interest in the riddle in the eighteenth century that would lead to the Romantic exaltation of it, another prominent *nux* again anticipated Nietzsche's: in Johann Georg Hamann's *Aesthetica in nuce*, which Nietzsche likely saw, the titular *nux* is most certainly not a figure of simplification so much as one of aenigmatic condensation.⁵² Nietzsche himself repeatedly uses *in nuce* in a manner distinctly similar to Hamann's, as when remarking that his earlier work *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* (MA, *Human, All too Human*) represents his "Philosophia in nuce" (KGB II.5, 727, to Erwin Rohde, 1878); the early work does not present his philosophy in a notably simple or brief manner, so it would seem that he is thinking of the nut as both aenigmatic and embryonic. And in that very work we read: "Historia in nuce. — Die ernsthafteste Parodie, die ich je hörte, ist diese: 'im Anfang war der Unsinn, und der Unsinn war, bei Gott! und Gott (göttlich) war der Unsinn.'"⁵³ This nut is undeniably the stuff of riddling parody, an ostensibly profound sort of jest in a Romantic mode.

The foregoing discussion has touched upon another topic of primary importance for our considerations here: the unruly tradition of appropriations of old Latin quotes and the creation of new Latin mottos, a tradition still flourishing in Nietzsche's day far more than now, and one in which Nietzsche himself eagerly participated throughout his life. Within that tradition, the more loaded *crux* and *lux* were regular features. So for example *Crux mea lux* and *Crux mea, lux mea* are

⁵⁰ See e.g. the *Ilias in nuce* of Canossa 1653, Suárez 1681, Otto 1685; Alard's *Græcia in nuce* 1628; Alsted's *Latinum in nuce* 1635; Ole Borch's *Parnassus in nuce* 1690. For recent evidence of this longlived convention, see Hawking 2001, which makes brilliant use of walnut images throughout.

⁵¹ Hartmann 1699.

⁵² Hamann 1873 [1762], Vol. II, esp. 105, 124, 141; Hamann also makes use of [Ovid] *Nux*. On the intense German and primarily Romantic interest in riddles in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and esp. on Hamann's challenging nut, see Tucker 2011, esp. 32–33; for a broader perspective on the history of riddles, see Cook 2006. On Nietzsche's appreciation of Hamann, see Brobjer 2008, 60, who reports that in 1873 Nietzsche borrowed Vol. I of Hamann 1872–1873; *Aesthetica in nuce* appears in Vol. II.

⁵³ MA II, VM 22: "History in a nutshell.—The most serious parody that I have heard, is this: 'in the beginning was Nonsense, and the Nonsense was, by God! and God (divine) was the Nonsense.'" Perhaps cf. the opening lines of Byron's translation of *Morgante Maggiore*.

found,⁵⁴ as well as *Non crux, sed lux*,⁵⁵ *Lux et dux*,⁵⁶ etc.⁵⁷ Sometimes these phrases were the object of gentle humor. The *dux mea lux* that we saw from the *Carmina Burana* appears again when a popular ornithologist remarks about migrating swallows, which do not seem to follow the seasons, that “‘*Dux mea lux*’ is not their motto.”⁵⁸ *Nux*, on the other hand, is not found on any crest that I have seen, nor in any motto, except in a farce and for occasional “mottos” in records of anonymous charitable acts.⁵⁹ So “*Nix, nox, nux etc.*” is given as the motto distinguishing some anonymous donors (among many with more obviously pious mottos) in lists of donations to the needy in the *Würzburger Abendblatt* (1852, 128 and 132); in the same context we also find “*nix, nux, nebulae etc.*” (“snow, nut, clouds, etc.” id., 380). The full sentence, which shows that the intent of those “mottos” was to sympathetically acknowledge the natural poverty of the region, is a melancholy adage about the unproductivity of Würzburg and its environs: “*Nix, nox, nux, nebulae sunt optima munera Rhonae.*”⁶⁰ A more comical *nux* features in a bit of fiction from 1868, upon the recently fabricated crest of a pretentious character named Nightshade, who “has *nux vomica*”⁶¹ for motto because somebody has told him it was the Latin of his name” (presumably punning on Greek νύξ).⁶² It was not altogether uncommon for such mottos, including what may seem to us to be fatuous rhymes, to find their way into the work of even the most ambitious authors.⁶³ Finally, Nietzsche himself, as noted

⁵⁴ See below, n. 53.

⁵⁵ Washbourne 1841, under *Non crux, sed lux*, since the book is not paginated.

⁵⁶ Herhold 1887, 141. Since the nineteenth century, the Leuven publishing house of Charles Peeters (now Peeters Publishers) has used a logo of a ship with a book on its prow and the rising sun behind it, and below the legend *Scientia lux et dux*.

⁵⁷ For others see e.g. Herhold 1887, 1, 53, 77, 141, 201, 202, and Washbourne 1841, s.vv. *crux, dux, lux*.

⁵⁸ Morris 1880, 76. Incidentally, current Italian news articles report that *dux mea lux* is now a common fascist graffito. It is clearly calculated to sound old, building on the use of *dux* for “il duce” in Mussolini’s own lifetime. But I have found no trace of *dux mea lux* in that connection before the twenty-first century, so it would seem to be an instance of this fabricated-Latin-motto-tradition being renewed for contemporary ideological purposes.

⁵⁹ But see n. 85 below for the heraldic use of images of nuts being held by squirrels.

⁶⁰ “Snow, night, nut, clouds are the best gifts of the Rhône.” See Diruf 1880, 277, Lehnies 1843, 165.

⁶¹ The “noisome nut,” or the source of strychnine, now termed *Strychnos nux-vomica*.

⁶² Irish Bohemian 1868, 139–140.

⁶³ So e.g. *Ardens sed virens* (“Burning but blooming”), the motto of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland since the nineteenth century, was also used e.g. as the title of a short song by Bertolt Brecht; likewise *Numen lumen* (“Divinity [is our] light”), which still serves (now rather uncomfortably) as the motto of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, was given to a poem of Emily Dickinson’s by her editor Higginson, and augmented by Victor Hugo for the title of a poem, “Nomen, numen, lumen” (“Name, divinity, light”).

above, showed a persistent interest in mottos, often in Latin or Greek, often with a humorous touch, often rhyming.⁶⁴ For example, concerning the fourth part of his *Also sprach Zarathustra*, which prominently features a donkey, Nietzsche remarked to a friend: "Ein schönes Motto aus einem alten Mysterium ist mir eingefallen:

'adventabat asinus
pulcher et fortissimus.'⁶⁵

With all of this in mind, it is perhaps easier for us to comprehend how steeped people in Nietzsche's day were in such mottos, and how readily his first readers could have recognized "*Crux, nux, lux*" as a semi-serious instance of that tradition.

From what we have studied so far, it is not difficult to see what prevented some scholars from comprehending the meaning of "*Crux, nux, lux*." The phrase presents a threefold obstacle for twentieth- and twenty-first-century readers, on account of our lesser familiarity with Latin and especially with the more diffuse forms of the neo-Latin tradition, combined with our biases against both rhyme and riddle. As Leo Spitzer (1944, 80) observed, interpretations of older strata of riddle traditions may be easily mistaken now because "the riddle has lost its seriousness in modern civilization where it has become either a game for children or a social pastime for their bored elders." The seemingly silly image of a nut, when encountered in a serious, philosophical context, has likewise become baffling for some readers, just as rhyme has also become associated so distinctly with children's literature (at least for

⁶⁴ See KGB I.2, 512 (to Carl von Gersdorff, 1866), at the end of which he provides their "mutual motto," a rhyming couplet from Theognis (255–256), and signs "Dein Freund F. W. N. / philologischer Lumpensammler" ("philological rag-picker"); KGB I.2, 554 (to Carl von Gersdorff, 1867), in which he refers to Pindar's γένοι' ὁλος ἔσσι as his motto, used as epigraph to his prize-winning essay on Diogenes; KGB II.3, 280 (to Erwin Rohde, 1872), in which he offers as "Motto" of an enclosed photograph of himself the Latin "in otio tumultuaris, in tumultu es otiosus," adding, "Wo stehts? Bei Cornificius"; KGB II.5, 833 (to Heinrich Köselitz, 1879), in which he gives as the "Devise meiner Wünsche" (motto of my wishes) the acronym "RGS das bedeutet Ruhe Grösse Sonnenlicht" ("PHS that means Peace Height Sunlight"); KGW V.1, 6[71] (1880): "Allein sein! abseits leben! war immer meine Devise" ("To be alone! to live far away! was always my motto"; KGW VIII.2, 11[341] (1887): "Das Nothwendige allein ist nothwendig, das soll die Devise des Erdballs von jetzt ab sein" ("The inevitable alone is inevitable, that should be the motto of the globe from now on").

⁶⁵ KGB III.3, 601 (to Carl von Gersdorff, 1885): "A beautiful motto from an old mystery occurred to me: 'The donkey was arriving / beautiful and most strong.'" Note how Nietzsche here altered the perfect *adventavit* of the original, which he preserved elsewhere, at KGW 1884, 26[466] and JGB 8; and how in the latter passage this "motto," which in the letter was applied humorously to his own work, is now applied to "jeder Philosophie," without a clear hint of self-consciousness. For further discussion of Nietzsche's relationship with this *asinus*, see Grätz 2024, 783–784, and Sommer 2016, 112–114.

some anglophone philosophy scholars) that Nietzsche's poetry could be classed as "nursery rhymes"—even in an attempt to defend their merit.⁶⁶ In what remains, we will see further proof that Nietzsche did not share these biases.



"*Crux, nux, lux*" must have presented two other difficulties even for its earliest readers. First, the sense demanded of *nux* is, as we saw, somewhat unusual: although it aligns precisely with the idiomatic usage of *Nuß* (and English "nut") as *Rätsel* (or "riddle"), it is a bit of a semantic stretch even for Hamann's *in nuce*, and anyway that usage in German (and English) was and is still not universally known, to judge from Weinstock and the rest. Second, what almost all of his contemporaries would have failed to recognize in it was a distinctly personal attachment to the words. In both regards, there are valuable clues in Nietzsche's notebooks and letters, which reveal a more idiosyncratic use and a more personal motivation.⁶⁷

The earliest is from a notebook entry from 1881, which combines only *lux* and *crux*, but in a revealing way:

Friedrich Nietzsche
am Ende seines zweiten
Aufenthalts in Genua
[lux mea crux]
[crux mea lux]⁶⁸

The Latin phrases here smack especially of mottos and heraldry, and may make us wonder whether Nietzsche had encountered one or both of them in such a context.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ So the otherwise commendable Higgins 2000 and 1995, who argues that Nietzsche's "nursery rhymes" offer "counterformulas to the ones we actually learned as toddlers" and "urge us to assume the stance of openness that children have when learning nursery rhymes" (2000, 39). Higgins relies on the impression—untested by reference to nineteenth-century canons of poetry—that his silly rhymes recall nursery rhymes.

⁶⁷ Most of the passages discussed here were noted by Sommer 2019, 466–467.

⁶⁸ KGW V.2, 12[231] (from 1881): "Friedrich Nietzsche / at the end of his second / stay in Genoa / [light my cross] / [cross my light]." This is the only passage to which Colli and Montanari 1988, 381 refer in commenting on GM III.11.

⁶⁹ See e.g.: the use of *Crux mea lux* as a motto, documented in Brockett 1905, 221, 224, 226; *Crux mea, lux mea* used by a noble family of Doetinchem in their device, according to Herhold 1887, 53, 141; Chassant and Tausin 1878, 59–60, 186; see also *Christi crux est mea lux* in Washbourne 1841. On this topic, note also Nietzsche's use (GM I.8) of *Sub hoc signo* ("Under this sign"), which seems not to be Nietzsche's own variation on the more standard *In hoc signo [vincis]*, but a well-attested variant that

The connection with Genoa may also bring to mind more personal reasons for the phrases: the sunniness of the place and Nietzsche's debilitating migraines and concomitant light-sensitivity, from which he was seeking relief in his sojourn there.⁷⁰ Yet their significance for Nietzsche becomes clearer from a passage in *Morgenröthe*, which was written during that stay in Genoa: under the heading "Von der Erkenntniss des Leidenden," it speaks of the sort of "Aufklärung" that perhaps occurred to "dem Stifter des Christenthums am Kreuze" as well as Don Quixote (!), when, as the mind strains through the intense pain, everything "in einem neuen Lichte leuchtet."⁷¹

Nux appears again in a notebook entry of 1885 (two years prior to the publication of GM), featuring the humorous title, "Nux et crux / Eine Philosophie für gute Zähne."⁷² The subtitle is some of our clearest proof for what Nietzsche intended with *nux*; in combination with *crux*, it promises an excruciatingly tough nut to crack. In the same period he was toying with other playful and sometimes rhyming Latin titles and *noms de plume*, for instance:

Wissen und Gewissen
Eine Moral für Moralisten.
Von
Felix Fallax⁷³

was common in mottos. *Sub hoc signo vinces* has been used as a motto: by the Viscount de Vesci of Ireland, according to Thom 1873, 879; by other families, as noted by Fox-Davies 1895, 755, and Crompton 1868, 34; and on the reverse of a medal from 1798 celebrating Lord Nelson's victory in the Battle of the Nile, a copy of which is in the collection of the British Museum, catalogue number MB₃ (Brown 1) (109) (450) (109). The further variation *Sub hoc signo militamus* has long been used on coins and medals from Malta; see Schweitzer 1861, 55–56.

⁷⁰ See e.g. *Ecce Homo*, "Morgenröthe" I, and KGB III.1, 84. Cf. the interpretation of this note given by Choulet and Blondel in Nietzsche 1996a, n. 87.

⁷¹ MIL.114: "On the Knowledge of the Sufferer. [...] the founder of Christianity on the cross [...] shines in a new light."

⁷² KGW VII.3, 34 [172] (1885): "Nut and Cross / A Philosophy for Good Teeth." The note, which was already quoted by Kaufmann in his footnote to the passage in GM, reveals nothing more. But Podach 1963, 163, cited by Kaufmann, associates it with another notebook entry from the same year, KGW VII.3, 34 [240]: "Das Problem „Mensch“ / von / Friedrich Nietzsche" ("The Problem "Man" / by / Friedrich Nietzsche").

⁷³ "Science and Conscience/ A Morality for Moralists. /by / Chipper Fibber." More straightforwardly: "Happy Deceptive" or, taking "Fallax" as a substantive, "Happy Liar."

The same bookish—even monkish—humor and taste for jingling assonance in titles and aliases is found again and again, but perhaps most strikingly in “Felix Fallax” and “Nux et Crux.”⁷⁴

Nietzsche remained particularly fond of the rhyme in *ux* for labelling his philosophical writings: in a letter to his friend Reinhart von Seydlitz from 1888 (the year after *GM* was published), he wrote, “Ende des Jahres wird eine andre Sache von mir veröffentlicht, welche meine Philosophie in ihrer dreifachen Eigenschaft, als *lux*, als *nux* und als *crux*, zur Erscheinung bringt,”⁷⁵ and it becomes clear from the context that the thing in question is *Götzen-Dämmerung* (*GD*, *Twilight of the Idols*). The order of the words in *GM* has been inverted into a subtly ascending tricolon, the emphasis falling on *crux*: the work is supposed to be illumination, riddle, and most emphatically, a source of torment, presumably for *die Götzen* and their worshippers. One of those “idols,” incidentally, is the “Ding an sich,” which Nietzsche mocks as the “horrendum pudendum der Metaphysiker.”⁷⁶ That tauntingly rhyming Latin phrase is again Nietzsche’s own invention.⁷⁷ Further supporting the identification

⁷⁴ See also KGW VIII.1, 1 [45] (again from 1885): “Sapientia victrix / Vorspiel zu einer Philosophie der Zukunft” (“Wisdom the Conqueress / Prelude to a Philosophie of the Future”). Echoes of the notion in *nux* may be seen in two notes from 1888, KGW VIII.3, 19[3]: “Magnum in parvo. / Eine Philosophie / im Auszug” (“A Great Thing in a Little Thing. / A Philosophy / in Extract.”); and 19[5]: “Multum in parvo. / Meine Philosophie / im Auszug. / Von / Friedrich Nietzsche” (“A lot in a little. / My Philosophy / in Extract. / by / Friedrich Nietzsche”). Note finally the combination of rhyming Greek and Latin phrases in a note from 1886, KGW VIII.1, 5 [93]: “Dionysos philosophos. / Eine / Satura Menippea. / Von / Friedrich Nietzsche” (“Dionysos philosopher. / A / Menippean Satire / by / Friedrich Nietzsche”). These and others are studied by Podach 1963, 158.

⁷⁵ KGB III.5, 1110: “At the end of the year another thing will be published by me, which brings to light my philosophy in its threefold quality, as *lux*, as *nux* and as *crux*.” Nietzsche then adds, “Sie heißt, mit aller Anmuth und Tugend: „Müßiggang eines Psychologen” (“It is called, with every grace and virtue: ‘Idleness of a Philosopher’”). This was the provisional title of *Götzen-Dämmerung* or *Twilight of the Idols*; see Diethe 2012, 321. How this book was supposed to be *lux*, *nux* and *crux* is not elucidated in the letter, but it was perhaps this troubling, threefold nature that he had in mind when suggesting, earlier in the letter, that “die Toleranz Europa’s” would invent the following measures to deal with him: “eigens ein kleines Sibirien mit künstlicher Eis- (und gelato-) Bildung construieren, um mich nach Sibirien verbanne zu können” (“to construct specially for this purpose a little Siberia with an artificial ice- (and gelato-) formation, in order to banish me to Siberia”). On his friendship with Reinhart and Irene von Seydlitz, see D’Iorio 2016, 64–67 and 89–95. One might also note the coincidental correspondence between this description of *GD*, which was subtitled “or How to Philosophize with a Hammer,” and the description of Augustine as *lux*, *dux*, and *malleus* (above, n. 36).

⁷⁶ *GD*, “Irrthümer,” 3: the “thing in itself” is the “horrendous pudendum of the metaphysicians.”

⁷⁷ The only parallels I have found involve *horrendum* and *pudendum* both being used as adjectives, as in “monstrum horrendum, pudendum, imo & execrandum” (von Hessen 1651, 230).

of the work in question as GD are two other letters from the same year in which Nietzsche writes of how it contains him "in nuce" as well as his "Philosophie in nuce—radikal bis zum Verbrechen . . ."⁷⁸

It would seem that the rhymes in *nux* were already something of an in-joke between Nietzsche and von Seydlitz and his wife Irene: the most playful use of them is found in a letter of 1886 addressed to the latter. In a prior missive that year, Irene seems to have written about the efforts to find a "good, but rich" wife for Nietzsche.⁷⁹ "Dies hat mich sehr lachen machen," Nietzsche related in a letter to his mother. "Sie wünscht zu wissen, wie viel Geld die bewußte „gute Frau“ haben müßte: als ob ich das wüßte! Dies, mein gutes Mutterchen, zu Deiner Ergötzung! Aber „unter uns“!"⁸⁰ Nietzsche's own delight evidently lasted well through his response to Frau von Seydlitz, which concludes with this ridiculous salutation:

Seien wir guter Dinge! (Erste Bedingung des ewig-Weiblichen nach meiner façon:
lachen-können, im Kopfe lauter dummes Zeug.)
Dankbar und ergeben
Ihr
Fridericus Nux Crux
Lux Dux etc.⁸¹

Having comically rhymed on his own Latinized name years prior,⁸² Nietzsche here tacks onto it those three rhyming words, capped off by *dux*. In this earliest preserved

⁷⁸ KGB III.5, 1134: after announcing the title of GD, he remarks, "Diese Schrift ist meine Philosophie in nuce—radikal bis zum Verbrechen ..." ("This writing is my philosophy in a nutshell—radical to the point of crime ..."). In the prior month he wrote (KGB III.5, 1130), "In der That hat man mich mit dieser Schrift in nuce : sehr Viel auf kleinem Raum" ("In fact, with this writing one has me in a nutshell: a great deal in a little space").

⁷⁹ Nietzsche attributes the phrase "gute, aber reich" to Malwida von Meysenbug in a letter to his sister (KGB II.5, 609 [1877]).

⁸⁰ KGB III.3, 674 (1886): "This made me laugh a lot. [...] She wishes to know how much money the understanding 'good woman' must have: as if I knew that! This, my dear Mommy, for your delight! But 'between us'!"

⁸¹ KGB III.3, 699 (1886): "May there be good things for us! (First condition of the Eternal Feminine according to my façon: to be able to laugh, in the head nothing but pure nonsense.) / Thankfully and devotedly / your / Fridericus Nut Cross / Light Leader etc."

⁸² The first instance is KGB II.5, 440 (to Elisabeth Nietzsche, 1875): "Dein Bruder Fridericus Intempetivus" ("Your brother untimely Fridericus"), which seems both to playfully acknowledge the inopportune request in the letter (for his sister to buy him a suit and overcoat and bring it all to Basel) and his complaints about a summer full of "Arbeit, nichts als Arbeit!"—and to allude to his *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*, the fourth of which he reports that he is working on. Later that year, Nietzsche signs a very affectionate letter to Gustav Krug, KGB II.5, 464, with "immerdar Dein / Fridericus amicus"

instance in which *crux*, *nux*, and *lux* are combined by him, they label Nietzsche himself—starting this time with *nux*, which strikes an initial comical note, the total effect being clearly calculated to cast the bachelor author in an even more laughably eccentric light. In this jest for Irene and her husband, the concluding *dux* may allude to an old plan (and something of a running joke) between them, about Nietzsche founding a freethinkers' *Kloster* or monastery in Italy.⁸³ More remarkably, Nietzsche's evocation here of the ecclesiastical tradition and the representation of its *dux* and the *lux* that he brought into the world in large part through his *crux*, suggests an irreverent identification not only with an abbot, but also with Jesus Christ himself—perhaps foreshadowing how in his final descent into madness Nietzsche signed many of his letters as “Der Gekreuzigte,” or “The Crucified.”⁸⁴ In sum, the phrase would seem to have been of considerable personal significance, albeit a personal significance that only Irene and Reinhart von Seydlitz would have been at all prepared to recognize, if we can judge from the one letter addressed to Irene before the publication of GM. The personal subtext displayed in these letters and scribbles highlights the ironical and idiosyncratic humor of the jingling words, even in their less obviously humorous employment.

Furthermore, from his correspondence we also learn that Nietzsche always cherished a special fondness for nuts: as a schoolboy he made special requests and tendered special thanks for them,⁸⁵ and as an adult he still claimed to rely on them.⁸⁶ That he should have taken to the Latin *nux* in this way was therefore all the more a symptom of personal tastes.

(“forever your / friend Fridericus”). Perhaps less humorous is the alliterative “Dein getreuer Frater Fridericus” (“Your true brother Fridericus”) that concludes a letter to Rohde, KGB II.1, 113 (1870).

⁸³ See KGB II.5, 554 (to Reinhart von Seydlitz, 1876), and D'Iorio 2016, 24–54.

⁸⁴ See e.g. KGB III.5, 1255 (to Umberto I König von Italien, 1889).

⁸⁵ He thanks both his mother and his aunt Rosalie for nuts. KGB I.1, 61 (to Franziska Nietzsche, 1859): “Für die schönen Nüsse danke ich Dir viele mal” (“For the lovely nuts I thank you very much”). KGB I.1, 109 (to Rosalie Nietzsche, 1859): “Der Kuchen und die Nüsse haben trefflich den Magen, Humboldts Biographie dem Geiste gemundet” (“The cake and the nuts tasted excellent to my stomach, Humboldt's biography to my mind”).

⁸⁶ KGB III.3, 676 (to Elisabeth Förster, 1886): “Mein Mittag besteht aus Milch, Grahambrod, Käse und Nüssen — ich glaube, man heißt dies, mit einiger Freiheit des Ausdrucks, Vegetarianismus. Mein altes liebes Lama, verzeih die Dummheiten dieses Briefs, hoffentlich werde ich wieder vernünftiger” (“My lunch consists of milk, graham bread, cheese and nuts — I believe one calls this, with a certain freedom of expression, vegetarianism. My dear old Lama, forgive the stupidity of this letter, hopefully I will again become more reasonable”).

There is also an intriguing childhood story told by Nietzsche's sister, Elisabeth, about a porcelain figurine of a red squirrel that they had dubbed "König Eichhorn der Erste":

Alle Bauten meines Bruders waren König Eichhorn zu Ehren errichtet, alle musikalischen Produktionen verherrlichten ihn; zu seinem Geburtstag gab es großartige Ausführungen: Gedichte wurden vorgetragen, Theaterstücke gespielt, alles von meinem Bruder verfaßt. König Eichhorn war kunstliebend, er mußte eine Gemäldegalerie haben, — Fritz malte sie: Madonnen, Landschaften usw. usw. Besonders schön gelang ein alter Klosterraum; in der Nische brannte eine altmodische Lamp und verbreitete ein eigenes, rötliches Licht. Der Effekt war so großartig, daß ein Schuldfreund meinem Bruder einen Sechser dafür geben wollte; Großmütterchen überbot diesen jugendlichen Kunstliebhaber und zahlte einen Groschen, so blieb das Kunstwerk in der Familie, ist aber leider doch verloren gegangen.⁸⁷

A letter from Nietzsche to his sister in 1885 (the year prior to his letter to Irene von Seydlitz) suggests that he continued to cherish the memory too, since he signed it, "Prinz Eichhorn."⁸⁸ More speculatively, one notes that the regal nut-eater, who owns a painting of a lamp-lit monastery room, seems to prefigure both "*Crux, nux, lux*" and "*Nux Crux / Lux Dux etc.*" But it is probably only a coincidence that Royal Dux, a Bohemian porcelain manufacturer founded in 1853 in Duchcov (German *Dux*), used to make red squirrel figurines.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Förster-Nietzsche 1912a, 50–51 translated by Ludovici in Förster-Nietzsche 1912b, 46: "Everything my brother made was in honour of King Squirrel; all his musical productions were to glorify His Majesty; on his birthday performances took place; poems were recited and plays acted, all of which were written by my brother. King Squirrel was a patron of art; he must have a picture gallery. Fritz painted one hung round with Madonnas, landscapes, etc, etc. A particularly beautiful picture represented a room in an old monastery in which an old-fashioned lamp burnt in a niche and filled the whole apartment with a quaint red glow. The effect was so splendid that a friend of my brother's offered him a halfpenny for the picture. Grandmamma, however, outbid this young connoisseur and paid a penny for the work of art which thus remained in the family; unfortunately, however, it got lost after all." Förster-Nietzsche's uncertainty (not quoted) as to why a squirrel would have been considered regal may have some partial answer in the common use of squirrels in heraldry—esp. of the squirrel "sejant," cracking a nut: see e.g. Siebmacher, 1884, 42 and 46, and Parker, 1847, 293.

⁸⁸ KGB III.3, 644. Note also the superlative praise of Laurence Stern in MA II, VM 113, which includes the statement that "seine Eichhorn-Seele sprang mit unbändiger Unruhe vom Zweig zu Zweig" ("his squirrel-soul sprang with unbridled restlessness from branch to branch"); cf. the "Eichhörnchen" with a "Nuß zu knacken," the animal identified with the poet's ego that finds its freedom in the trees, in Goethe's poem "Lili's Park."

⁸⁹ I cannot find any evidence that the company (which was not originally named Royal Dux, but seems to have used the German place-name Dux even in early brand markings) made their squirrels so early, or that they made any that were as small as Förster-Nietzsche specifies (see *ibid.*). It is possible that answers can be found in Everils 2005, which I have regrettably not been able to consult.

More to the point, however, is that metaphorical nuts are stashed, as if with a squirrel's resourcefulness, throughout Nietzsche's texts. In the history of philology, Nietzsche laments, "Alle fast kauen mit stumpfen Zähnen an der Schale [viz. der Nuss] herum."⁹⁰ Alas, "auch die hohlste Nuss will noch geknackt sein."⁹¹ At one point the character Zarathustra, apparently channeling Nietzsche's bitterness about his frustrated career as a philologist, defiantly proclaims:

Denn diess ist die Wahrheit: ausgezogen bin ich aus dem Hause der Gelehrten: und die Thür habe ich noch hinter mir zugeworfen.
Zu lange sass meine Seele hungrig an ihrem Tische; nicht, gleich ihnen, bin ich auf das Erkennen abgerichtet wie auf das Nüsseknacken.⁹²

In a less petulant mood, Zarathustra describes to his guests what sort of provisions are in store for their meal: "Und auch an Wurzeln und Früchten fehlt es nicht [...]; noch an Nüssen und andern Räthseln zum Knacken."⁹³ The reader will also recall Nietzsche's statement quoted above, about how "wir Nussknacker der Seele" behave "wie als ob Leben nichts Anderes sei, als Nüsseknacken." In a letter to Burckhardt he remarked, "Man sollte mit solcher Nußknackerei hübsch bei sich bleiben und nur die eignen Zähne in Gefahr bringen."⁹⁴ One could multiply instances *ad nauseam*.⁹⁵



In his fondness for the metaphorical *nux*, Nietzsche is, as we have seen, far from alone.⁹⁶ Jonathan Swift, to cite just one more toothsome example, wrote that "*Wis-*

⁹⁰ FS 3,369: "Almost everyone is chewing away on the shell [viz. of the nut] with dull teeth."

⁹¹ Za I, *Vom freien Tode*: "even the hollowest nut still wants to be cracked." Cf. Luther *Tischr.* 452 Clemen: "Ich hab ser vil nuss ausgebissen, die lochert [i.e. hohl] warden, und ich meindt, sie weren gut. Zinglius, Erasmus sind eitel locherte nuß, die eim ins maul scheissen."

⁹² Za II, *Von den Gelehrten*: "For this is the truth: I have moved out of the House of the Learned: and I have even slammed the door behind me. / Too long my soul sat hungry at their table; not like them am I trained for seeking knowledge as if for nut-cracking."

⁹³ Za IV, *Das Abendmahl*: "And there is also no lack of roots and fruits [...]; nor of nuts and other riddles to crack."

⁹⁴ KGB III,5, 952 (1887): "With such nutcrackery one should stay well and alone and risk only one's own teeth."

⁹⁵ But see also Za III, *Auf dem Oelberge*, on "die klügeren Misstrauer und Nussknacker" ("the cleverer doubters and nutcrackers"), Za IV, *Der hässlichste Mensch*, where Zarathustra is addressed as "du harter Nüsseknacker," and Za IV, *Unter de Töchtern der Wüste*, for "bebänderte Räthsel, wie Nachtisch-Nüsse" ("beribboned riddles, like after-dinner-nuts"); and Grätz 2024, 151 and 563.

⁹⁶ See also Pejenaute Rubio 2000, 310–318, on the often idiosyncratic "trivialización de la simbolización cristiana de la nuez." For a somewhat more recent example of unique play on the cliché of the

dom [. . .] 'tis a *Nut*, which unless you chuse with Judgment, may cost you a Tooth, and pay you with nothing but a *Worm*."⁹⁷ Nietzsche's special contribution, it seems, was to draw at the same time upon the proverbial nut as riddle, the rich tradition of play on those rhyming words, and the Romantic exaltation of the riddle as both the most playful and the most serious mode of contemplation—while also cultivating a highly particular resonance for that *nux* within his own life and thought. From the survey of parallels from other authors such as Hamann and from Nietzsche's own letters and notebooks, we can now see more clearly how his "*Crux, nux, lux*" emerged from its historical context, and how it could have been perceived especially by its earliest readers—including the *nux* that would have been transparent enough to some at least, but which hints at a personal and more playful subtext that was originally detectable only to a small circle of his friends. Nietzsche's usage thus belongs less to a scientifically trained philologist, although he was one, than to an author with a penchant for the esoteric, playing with the semi-scholarly tradition of creative reworking and repurposing of classical Greek and Latin for titles, mottos and idiosyncratic terminology. This study is submitted as an illustration, *in nuce*, of the sort of thing that Nietzsche was often willing to do with his classical education, and of the sort of philological nutcracking that can be necessary to understand his deliberately riddling writings. But it is left to the reader to decide whether the "*ephexis* in interpretation"—or philological *caution*—required in this instance, as in many instances of Nietzsche-interpretation, can possibly repay one with something more than what Nietzsche himself terms the philologist's "Freude ob des erbeuteten Wurms."⁹⁸

"nutshell" of *in nuce*, see Bramah 1922, 19: "That is not so simple as to be contained within the hollow of an acorn sheath."

⁹⁷ *A Tale of a Tub*, Introduction (italics in original).

⁹⁸ KGB I.2, 601 (to Rohde, 1868), where the phrase is worth reading in its immediate context: "Mein lieber Freund, jetzt wo ich wieder das wimmelnde Philologengezücht unserer Tage aus der Nähe sehe, wo ich das ganze Maulwurfstreiben, die vollen Backentaschen und die blinden Augen, die Freude ob des erbeuteten Wurms" ("My dear friend, now when I again see the teeming philologist-rabble of our day up close, when I [see] all the mole-activities, the full cheek-pouches and the blind eyes, the joy over the captured worm"). For "*ephexis* in interpretation," see AC 52 and Wash (forthcoming). Hearty thanks are due, finally, to Ethan Blass, Branden Kosch, Boris Maslov, Krista Nelson, Antoine Pageau-St-Hilaire, Jeremy Thompson, Berkan Uze, the two anonymous readers, the editor and the copyeditor for crucial help; any remaining errors are my own.

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