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PROGRAMME RELATED CONTENT IN *THE JUDGMENT OF PARIS* BY HENRYK SIEMIRADZKI

The *Judgment of Paris*, also called by Jerzy Miziołek *The Triumph of Venus*, is not only one of the best paintings of this outstanding academic master, but also a work that stands out among rich European painting of that time, inspired by classical beauty, ancient archaeology and literature (fig. IV).¹

- 1] Stanisław LEWANDOWSKI, *Henryk Siemiradzki*, Gebethner & Wolff, Kraków 1904, pp. 106-107, fig. 105; Tadeusz DOBROWOLSKI, *Nowoczesne malarstwo polskie*, vol. 2, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław-Kraków 1960, p. 73; Halina ZAWILSKA, *Henryk Siemiradzki 1843-1902: obrazy i rysunki ze zbiorów polskich*, catalogue Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi 1968-1969, Łódź 1968; Janina ZIELIŃSKA, *Henryk Siemiradzki Sąd Parysa*, in: *Galeria malarstwa polskiego. Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie. Przewodnik*, eds. Elżbieta CHARAZIŃSKA, Ewa MICKE-BRONIAREK, Warszawa 1995, p. 134; Jerzy MIZIOŁEK, „Triumf Wenus” Henryka Hektora Siemiradzkiego w Muzeum Narodowym w Warszawie, in: Jerzy MIZIOŁEK, *Inspiracje śródziemnomorskie: o wizji antyku w sztuce Warszawy i innych ośrodków kultury dawnej Polski*, Neriton, Warszawa 2004, pp. 232-246; Jerzy MIZIOŁEK, *Henryka Hektora Siemiradzkiego wizja antyku: „Sąd Parysa” w Muzeum Narodowym w Warszawie*, „Biuletyn Historii Sztuki”, 2004, no.1-2, p. 89; Jerzy MIZIOŁEK, *Muse, Baccanti e Centauri. I capolavori della pittura pompeiana e la loro fortuna in Polonia*, Istituto di Archeologia dell’Universita di Varsavia, Istituto Italiano di Cultura di Varsavia, Varsavia 2010, pp. 73-77; Jerzy MIZIOŁEK, *I due capolavori di Henryk Siemiradzki: “Le torce di Nerone” e “Il Giudizio di Paride” ovvero “Il trionfo di Venere”, “Pegasus”, 2010, vol. 12, pp. 83-119; Ewa MICKE-BRONIAREK, Aneta BŁASZCZYK-BIAŁY, *Henryk Siemiradzki “The Judgement of Paris”*, in: *Gallery of Polish Painting. Guide*, eds. Ewa MICKE-BRONIAREK, transl. Joanna Holzman, National Museum in Warsaw, Warsaw 2006, p. 150; Claude ALBORE LIVADIE, Witold DOBROWOLSKI, *L’antica Baia in un’opera di Henryk Siemiradzki*, “Territori della Cultura” [Centro Universitario per i Beni Culturali Ravello], 2014, no. 14-15, pp. 11-25; Witold DOBROWOLSKI, „Triumf Wenus” Henryka Siemiradzkiego, „Sztuka Europy Wschodniej”, 2016, vol. IV, pp. 177-190; Татьяна Л.*

The painting, made in Rome in 1892, despite its high artistic quality, did not attract too much interest of critics and researchers, whose opinions were characterized by superficiality and blatant errors. Stanisław Lewandowski, Siemiradzki's first monographer, acknowledged the scene's tendency towards theatricality. His identification of Paris, although correct, was at the same time allusive, leading over time to the erroneous assumption that he was represented by the figure of a young man in a rose wreath, standing under the tree to the left side of the painting.² The mistake can be explained by the fact that the figure clearly stands out due to the use of light and the pointing gesture of the hand. In fact, the Paris group is visible in the background of the composition, between Venus and the defeated goddesses. The transfer of this group from the foreground allowed it to evoke the action of the preceding event, and added a special meaning to the expression of the whole painting.

In his work published in 2004, written already in the mood of an increased interest in the work of academic artists, Jerzy Miziołek corrected the recurring error.³ Placing Siemiradzki's composition in the context of other works, the Warsaw based researcher drew attention to the originality of the work, which depicts not the moment of making the verdict, but the subsequent triumph of Venus. Having received the golden apple, which was intended for the fairest one, from Paris, the goddess of love held it up and showed it to the onlookers, Graces and Horae surrounded her dancing in a circle and the defeated Juno and Minerva, leaving the stage, bluntly expressed their grief and indignation.

However, the most valuable contribution of this author to the history of research into the work was its connection with the text of *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius (ca. 125-170?).⁴ Even a superficial comparison of Apuleius's description with Siemiradzki's composition proves close interrelation. In the painting we find the wooden elevation with Paris,

Карпова, Фрина Генриха Семирадского – манифестация идеи Красоты в художественной атмосфере 1880-х годов (Tatiana L. KARPOVA, *Inspiration of Rome: genre of "antique idylls" in Henryk Siemiradzki's work*), "Sztuka Europy Wschodniej", 2016, vol. IV, pp. 173, 172, fig. 7.

- 2] "Paris sitting on a platform, among [...] goats" ("Siedzący na podwyższeniu Parys, otoczony [...] kozami"). S. LEWANDOWSKI, op. cit., p. 106.
- 3] J. MIZIOŁEK, *Triumf Wenus...*, p. 235. Identification corrected in: E. MICKE-BRONIAREK, A. BŁASZCZYK-BIAŁY, op. cit., p. 150; Identification error mistakenly attributed to the authors: W. DOBROWOLSKI, *Triumf Wenus...*, p. 178, footnote 5.
- 4] J. MIZIOŁEK, *Triumf Wenus...*, pp. 241-243. APULEIUS, *Metamorphoseon, libri XI*, ed. Rudolf HELM, Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana 1055, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin 2008. English translation: APULEIUS, *Metamorphoses (The Golden Ass)*, transl. William Adlington (1566). Accessible online: <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1666>.

Mercury and goats, Venus in a windblown blue robe, surrounded by joyful Horae, Graces and Cupids, as well as Castors (the Dioskuri) with stars on their helmets, accompanying the defeated goddesses, who, quoting Apuleius, “angrily, shewing by their gesture, that they would revenge themselves on Paris”⁵ and an attempt to link the performances of the goddesses with a specific type of Greek music.⁶

Nevertheless, the originality of Siemiradzki’s work is not only due to its dependence on the spectacle described by the African writer, organized in the Roman Corinth on the occasion of the festival in honour of Venus-Aphrodite. Siemiradzki transformed this Greek public spectacle into a private performance, through which a Roman patrician added splendour to a feast thrown for his friends in his seaside villa.

The action of Siemiradzki’s painting takes place in the early summer afternoon. A feast was organised for the guests. To accommodate them, beds were placed in the *tablinum* and adjacent parts of the *domus*. A pilaster decorated passage connects the *tablinum* with the portico and the garden (*hortus*), with its trees, bushes of roses and papyruses and a fountain. The garden is situated one step lower and is open to the bay. Lying on their beds, being served by exotic slaves, the guests have just finished eating and at the beginning of the performance a half-nude black girl with a tray and wine crosses the *atrium*, flooded with sunlight, to pour wine to some of the feasters who are still engaged in conversation and drinking. Others get up from their beds and, standing in the airy and shady portico, watch the pantomime organized for them.

The space of the *hortus* was transformed into a kind of *theatrum*, by building in the background a wooden imitation of Mount Ida mentioned by Apuleius and using the wall with steps on the left side of the frame as a substitute for amphitheatre auditorium. Colourful carpets make the seats look like flowery meadows. In order to protect the actors from heat and expand the shaded zone, a large *velum*, was attached to the tree branches, decorated with the silhouette of Neptune with a trident, framed by the motifs of chasing waves and plant threads.⁷ The main decoration of this *theatrum* is still the fountain. Its central element is a niche with a statue of an angler and a conch in the shape of a *rostrum*, i.e. the bow of the ship. On the sides of the niche there are two large

5] APULEIUS, op. cit., Book: X, chapter 46, p. 435.

6] W. DOBROWOLSKI, *Triumpf Wenus...*, pp. 183-184, footnotes 21-24.

7] J. MIZIOLEK, *Triumpf Wenus...*, pp. 247-249; W. DOBROWOLSKI, *Triumpf Wenus...*, p. 183.

theatrical masks: tragic and comic. Water flows out of their open mouth into a low, round tank. The tank is shaded by a small gable roof supported by two Corinthian columns with shafts similar to candelabra, made partly of bronze and decorated at the bottom with battle scenes and higher with heads of lions (?) and bundles of acanthus.

In the middle of this improvised stage we can see the victorious Venus. The goddess, addressing viewers and admirers, raises her trophy with a wide gesture, and Cupids, Graces, and Charities surround her, dancing to the sounds of sweet Lydian music of the aulos, barbiton and tambourine, played by musician women sitting on the edge of the terrace. One of the Charities is throwing flowers under the goddess's feet. Another is raising a wreath to put it on her lady's head. At the same time the actors, playing a crowd of worshippers, welcome her triumph with joyful faces and enthusiastic gestures.

Looking at the joy of their rival, Juno and Minerva bluntly manifest their dissatisfaction and indignation with their gestures and facial expressions. The costumes and gestures of the goddesses accentuate the diversity of their natures, emphasizing also the differences between the Doric and Ionic orders. Just behind Minerva, and thus shifted from the Juno's procession, there are two Castors in helmets with stars on their heads and in decorative armour. They, too, break away from the general joyful atmosphere. No wonder. The sons of Jupiter (*Dioskuouroi*) and Helena's brothers had already once had to tear her out of the hands of an infatuated Theseus. The case with Paris will have a far worse conclusion – a ten-year-long murderous war.

All the pantomime actors: Paris with Mercury, Venus with the procession of the Graces and the Horae, Juno, Minerva, Castors and members of the "choir" (viewers) are young and beautiful. The audience are wearing white chitons and coloured coats and their heads are decorated with rose wreaths. The Horae and the Graces express enthusiasm with their dancing and the members of the "choir" look with amusement and approval at the goddess and her companions. The musicians, on the other hand, depending on the type of music they practice, respond to the judgment of Paris and the victory of Venus with satisfaction or disapproval.⁸ Despite differences in psychological reactions, they are restrained and their movements are full of distinction and elegance. Venus herself does not seem to triumph, her face is puzzlingly serious and the apple, held high, the gift of the goddess of

8] W. DOBROWOLSKI, *Triumph Venus...*, pp. 183-184.

strife (Discordia) seems more like a warning addressed to the audience in anticipation of future misfortunes, than a sign of her triumph. Also one of the Cupids, the one whose wings are rainbow coloured like those of Psyche, is markedly different because of his sad face.⁹

And how does Paris, the corrupt perpetrator of Venus' victory, behave? Dressed in an ornate eastern outfit, spread like a king on his throne, holding a shepherd's staff like a sceptre in his hand, he seems to be radiating satisfaction and self-confidence.

Focusing mainly on the part of the painting that is connected with the representation of the Greek myth, art critics and historians interested in the painting noticed in it mostly a joyful scene, proclaiming the praise of youthful feminine beauty, a source of love and awe-inspiring art.¹⁰ And indeed, the whole painting seems to emanate the painterly Renaissance admiration of feminine beauty, the Arcadian beauty of the landscape, the richness of architecture, the sophisticated elegance of object.¹¹ Especially the role of the latter in building the artistry of many of Siemiradzki's paintings led some critics to treat some of his works as elaborate still lifes, in which the boundary between people and objects was somehow blurred. Yet, the general situation of classical art and the role of archaeology in the process of creating the image of antiquity, ancient life and man with the help of discovered artefacts and works of art is largely forgotten. And it is those artefacts and works of art from the epoch that to archaeologists were, and still are, the basic and undistorted source of knowledge about the life of man centuries ago, a carrier of internal information about his tastes and feelings.

Even if the artist's concern for the harmony of poses and elegance of gestures strengthened by the appreciation of works of Greek art, treated as an element of the truth of imaging, sometimes influences the opinion of critics about the similarity of people to stone statues, this opinion in

9] Ibid., pp. 186-187.

10] There for example E. MICKE-BRONIAREK, A. BŁASZCZYK-BIAŁY, op. cit., p. 150, for whom this "motif is an excuse for showing exuberant joie de vivre". Т. КАРПОВА (op. cit., p. 168) juxtaposes admiration of the beauty of nature and the materially rich frame of the ancient world visible in Siemiradzki's painting *Pbryne* [and in *The Judgment of Paris* – WD] with the programme "paganism" of I. Repin, understood as the opposite of asceticism.

11] To some researchers the impression of material affluence of imperial Rome emanating from some of Siemiradzki's paintings was a reflection of his love of still lifes: Leila KHASIANOVA, „Siemiradzki z całego serca kochał naturę morte...”, „Sztuka Europy Wschodniej”, 2017, vol. V, pp. 77-91; others considered it to be 'fillers' enhancing *l'effet de réel* of the depicted scene: Agnieszka KLUCZEWSKA-WÓJCIK, *L'effet de réel. Fragmenty rzeczywistości w obrazach Henryka Siemiradzkiego*, „Sztuka Europy Wschodniej”, 2017, vol. V, pp. 45-50.

this case is mitigated not only by the dynamics of the dancing group of Venus and her companions or the basic role of the landscape and sunlight, shining through tree branches and throwing on the ground, the figures of the “choir”, the musicians and the viewers a busy mosaic of irregular, interwoven patches of shadows and light, saturating the canvas with the impression of variable mobility and dynamics.

Professor Miziołek proved the existence of close links between the content of *The Judgment of Paris* and the text of Book X of *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius. But in doing so, he paid attention only to the description of the stage performance that it contained. In order to understand the intentions of the writer, and undoubtedly also those of the painter, it is necessary to take into account the entire content of the book, compliant with the Platonic fascinations of the author of *Metamorphoses*,¹² who is also the author of a beautiful fable about Cupid and Psyche.¹³ Combining the fascination with classical beauty, instilled in him already at the St. Petersburg Academy and perpetuated in Rome, with the condemnation of sensual love characteristic of Apuleius, Siemiradzki bestowed the image of *The Judgement of Paris* or rather *The Triumph of Venus* with a delicately marked ambiguity, which corresponds not only to his erotic restraint or views on the subject of unchangeable beauty, but also to his own views on the civilization of the Roman empire, which he regarded as morally corrupt, decadent and falling, marked in art by the dominance of simplistic realism.¹⁴ An example of this corruption is Cupid – in the words of Apuleius: “rash enough and hardy, who by his evill manners contemning all publique justice and law, armed with fire and arrowes, running up and down in the nights from house to house, and corrupting the lawfull marriages of every person, doth nothing but that which is evill”.¹⁵

The colourful style of Apuleius could make us indulge in the antics of this rascal. However, the content of Book X of *Metamorphoses*, containing descriptions of crimes and degenerations caused by love passion, which is only a small step away from hatred, forces us to take these accusations seriously. And so we listen to a gloomy story about a stepmother, who, unable to win the love of her stepson, decides to poison him and, having mistakenly poisoned her own child instead,

12] W. DOBROWOLSKI, *Triumf Wenus...*, pp. 181-186.

13] APULEIUS, op. cit., Book [V]: *The Marring of Cupid and Psyche*, pp. 177-243.

14] W. DOBROWOLSKI, *Triumf Wenus...*, p. 181, footnote 11; W. DOBROWOLSKI, *Wazy greckie w twórczości Henryka Siemiradzkiego*, “Sztuka Europy Wschodniej”, 2017, vol. V, pp. 20-21, 38.

15] APULEIUS, op. cit., Book [V]: *The Marring of Cupid and Psyche*, chapter 22, pp. 181-182.

accuses her would-be victim of murder in front of her husband. The narrator of the story, a young man named Lucius, transformed by his lover into a donkey, adds a perverse account of a rich lady whom he had to satisfy sexually for many nights as a donkey. When the case is discovered, the officials organizing celebrations of the festival of Venus decide to make them more attractive with a public view of the sexual act between a donkey and the criminal, sentenced by the court for poisoning her husband, daughter and the doctor who was her accomplice in crime and his wife. How is it possible not to worry about what love passion can do to, and with, a man!

Apuleius's views on the issues of misfortunes and crimes that can result from impulsive and careless behaviour caused by human sensuality find a subtle, yet straightforward reflection in the psychological diversity of feelings displayed by the Greek actors and musicians participating in the pantomime. Their emotional reticence is motivated by Plato's conviction, taken over by Johann Joachim Winckelmann, that the excessive display of feelings distances beauty from its unchangeable ideal and that is why artistic manifestations of this ideal must come closer together and resemble each other. "Die Stille ist derjenige Zustand, welcher der Schönheit, so wie dem Meere, der eigentliche ist" as the father of modern day history of art wrote.¹⁶ Hence, a rational man remains calm and an artist striving for the ideal avoids presenting violent outbursts of anger or grief,¹⁷ believed, following the Greeks, in the strong influence of art on the human psyche and assumed that art depicting evil inclinations of man not only documents his bad character, but can also spoil this character.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that all Greek participants of the pantomime show their feelings in a mitigated way. Our painter, however, shows true mastery in the subtle depiction of these feelings. And so, the actions of Paris, who with his careless desire to win the most beautiful of all women, will doom himself, his loved ones and his hometown, found an unambiguous evaluation not only in Apuleius's work, but also in the work of our painter. On the same wooden platform on which Paris, content with himself, is sitting and Mercury is standing, we can also notice two Horae crowning a ram in the

16] Johann J. WINCKELMANN, *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*, vol. 1, Walther, Dresden 1764, p. 167. Accessible online: http://www.deutschestextarchiv.de/book/show/winckelmann_kunstgeschichte01_1764.

17] W. DOBROWOLSKI, *Wazy greckie...*, pp. 16-20.

background. A ram among goats? What is it doing there? Being crowned as if it was a winner? The Polish word for ram, *baran*, is commonly used to describe an obtuse, stupid man. We also have a saying: “jak baran prowadzony na rzeź” (like a ram led to a slaughter) to talk about a person who is unaware of the impending danger and so does not react. The knife is hidden from the sacrificial ram’s view, the animal is decorated and stroked so that it approaches the altar without resistance, and is killed there. Paris, spread on his throne, is exactly like this ram, unaware of his fate.¹⁸

The delicately and subtly depicted range of feelings of Greek pantomime participants, who separate Venus worshippers from the musicians and characters accompanying the defeated goddesses, are contrasted with the realistic and psychologically profound characters of the Romans watching the pantomime.¹⁹ Let’s try to describe the painting, drawing attention to those elements that bind it to imperial Rome and Roman society.

The real theme of the composition is a staging, organised by a Roman patrician in his seaside villa, of the triumph of Venus immediately after Paris has made his decision. The buildings of the villa, rising on a hill and opening with a column portico with a fountain to a spacious terrace, separated by a balustrade from the slope that falls steeply towards the bay, constitute the backdrop. Above the railing of the balustrade of the terrace, there are the upper parts of the buildings in the port district of the city, which are clearly visible in the sharp sunrays. Judging by the short southern shadows, the village is situated on the northern or west-northwest shore of the bay, dotted with small sails of ships, with the horizon closed by misty mountains of the opposite shore.

According to Prof. Claude Albore Livadie of the University of Naples, the characteristic appearance of the opposite bank of the bay allows us to identify it, in an approximate way, as the south-eastern coast of the Gulf of Naples, i.e. with the shore of the Sorrentine Peninsula from Capo d’Orlando, through the low terrace of Vico Equense, to Cape Punta Campanella.²⁰

18] W. DOBROWOLSKI, *Triumf Wenus...*, p. 186.

19] *Ibid.*, p. 183.

20] C. ALBORE LIVADIE, W. DOBROWOLSKI, *Wazy greckie...*, p. 22; W. DOBROWOLSKI, *Triumf Wenus...*, p. 182.

This identification has enabled us to hypothetically locate the villa painted by Siemiradzki in or near Baiae, and is the basis for the currently presented interpretation of the painting.

War-marine and fishing elements appearing in the decoration of the fountain, as well as the presence in the painting of a *velum*, allow us to assume that the owner of the villa may have been some officer serving in the Roman war fleet, stationed in the nearby Misenum. If this assumption were to be accepted, there would be one more parallel, between the text of Apuleius and our painting. Lucius, transformed into a donkey, was, at the beginning of the same Book X of *Metamorphoses*, led by a soldier to the house of an officer, “who had the charge of a thousand men”.²¹ And it was there, in this officer’s house that the gloomy story of the wife, the quadruple poisoner, took place.

The group of Romans looking at the spectacle is presented in a much different way than the actors in the pantomime. The characters of the citizens differ in age and appearance. They were painted much more realistically. One of them – a skinny, frail old man in a tunic and coat, supporting himself against a column of the portico, is observing the performances of the actors, as if sunk in memories from his youth. Another, with an ordinary face of a common fifty-year-old, can be seen almost lying on the protrusion of the wall and, with his mouth open in excitement, is absorbing the sight of beautiful female bodies. Next to him a handsome twenty-year-old with black, curly hair, kneeling on the same wall seems to be almost devouring the naked goddess with his eyes. An old man with a worn-out face of a lecher standing next to him is observing beautiful actresses with a reserve, more interested in the proximity of the handsome young man.²²

This psychological characteristic of Roman patricians, including elements of their negative moral evaluation, corresponds to Siemiradzki’s views on the decadent character of the society of the Roman Empire²³ and provides an additional argument for accepting the hypothesis that the villa from the painting is situated in Baiae, a major spa and holiday resort

21] APULEIUS, op. cit., Book X, chapter 44, p. 392.

22] W. DOBROWOLSKI, *Triumpf Wenus...*, p. 183.

23] On Thomas Couture’s painting *Romans in their Decadence* shown at the Salon in 1847: Théophile GAUTIER, *Salon de 1847* (“La Presse”, 30.03.1847), J. Hetzel, Warnod et Cie, Paris 1847; Albert BOIME, *Thomas Couture and the Eclectic Vision*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1980, p. 131; Ekaterini KEPETZIS, *Transformationen der Phryne. Jean-Léon Gérôme’s antikische Gattungshybriden zwischen Missverständnis und Provokation*, in: *Imagination und Evidenz. Transformationen der Antike im ästhetischen Historismus*, eds. Ernst OSTERKAMP, Thorsten VALK, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin-Boston 2011, pp. 291-292.

for rich Romans. According to Pliny no other place in the world could compare with the Baiae in terms of the abundance of thermal waters with healing properties, the beauty of the landscape or the mild climate.²⁴ No wonder that along the waters of the bay full of Homeric references (Baiae derived its name from the helmsman of Odysseus, Baios) between the 2nd and 3rd centuries BC near the golden beach of the blessed Venus²⁵ there were many *villae marittimae* of the late republican rich: Marcus Antonius, Licinius Crassus, Julius Caesar, Lucius Licinius Lucullus. And with the advent of the Empire, August, Tiberius Caligula, Nero and their successors competed with each other in beautifying the residences, making them ever more grandiose and magnificent.²⁶

The one who was particularly strongly associated with Baiae was Nero, the negative hero of two monumental, important for the artist's views, paintings by Siemiradzki: *Nero's Torches* and *Christian Dirce*.²⁷ It was Nero, who having taken over the villas of his mother Agrippina and aunt Domitia Lepidia, murdered there on his order, and

- 24] PLINY the ELDER, *Natural History* (PLINIUS MAIOR, *Naturalis Historia*), transl. John Bostock (1893), Book II, chapter 106: 15-17. Accessible online <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>; Franciscis, Alfonso de: "Baiae", in: *Enciclopedia dell'Arte Antica, Supplement*, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, Roma 1979, pp. 133-134; Angelika DIERICH, *Am goldenen Strand der Venus*, in: *Luxus und Dekadenz*, eds., Rudolf ASSKAMP, Jörn CHRISTIANSEN et al, Philipp von Zabern, Mainz 2007, pp. 31-41.
- 25] "Litus beatae Veneris aureum Baias"; MARTIALIS, *Epigrammata*, Book 11, LXXX. Accessible online: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>
- 26] Beloch JULIUS, *Campania. Storia e topografia della Napoli antica e dei suoi dintorni*, eds. & transl. Claudio FERONE, Franco PUGLIESE CARRATELLI, Bibliopolis, Napoli 1989 (*Campanien. Geschichte und Topographie des antiken Neapel und seiner Umgebung*, Morgenstern, Breslau 1890), pp. 209-211; John H. D'ARMS, *Romans on the Bay of Naples*, Cambridge, Mass Harvard University Press, 1970; Museo Archeologico dei Campi Flegrei. *Catalogo generale, Castello di Baia 3: Litternum, Baia, Miseno*, eds. Paola MINIERO, Fausto ZEVI, Electa, Napoli 2008, pp. 56-171; W. DOBROWOLSKI, *Triumpf Wenus...*, p. 185.
- 27] Katarzyna NOWAKOWSKA-SITO, *Wokół „Pochodni Nerona” Henryka Siemiradzkiego*, "Rocznik Krakowski", 1992, vol. 58, pp. 105-119; Krzysztof JĘCKI, "Pochodnie Nerona" Henryka Siemiradzkiego, "Modus. Prace z historii sztuki", 2009, no. 8/9, pp. 129-191; J. MIZIOLEK, *Muse, Baccanti e Centauri...*, pp. 83-119; Jerzy MIZIOLEK, *Lux in tenebris. Neronee i primi cristiani nelle opere di Enrico Siemiradzki e Jan Styka* in: *Nerone. Roma – Colosseo, Foro romano, Palatino*, eds. Maria Antonietta TOMEI, Rosella REA, catalogue, Electa, Milano 2011, pp. 44-61; Jerzy MIZIOLEK, "Le Torce di Nerone" e altri capolavori di Henryk Siemiradzki, un pittore polacco a Roma, "Atti dell'Accademia", 2012, vol. I, pp. 135-154; Dorota GORZELANY, *Zabytki rzymskie źródłem inspiracji malarskiej w „Pochodniach Nerona” Henryka Siemiradzkiego*, "Rozprawy Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie", 2013, vol. VI, pp. 165-180; Dominika SARKOWICZ, Marzena SIEKLUCKA, "Pochodnie Nerona" – nowe spojrzenie na dzieło Henryka Siemiradzkiego. *Warsztat malarza akademika*, "Sztuka Europy Wschodniej", 2016, vol. IV, pp. 95-104; Jerzy MIZIOLEK, "Dirke chrześcijańska" i inne tematy all'antica w twórczości Henryka Siemiradzkiego. *Uwagi i rozważania*, "Sztuka Europy Wschodniej", 2016, vol. IV, pp. 21-54.

confiscated the villa of the Piso conspiring against him, extended the city *Palatium* to such an extent that it resembled the capital's *Domus Aurea*. And on Capri, on a rocky promontory protruding towards the Sorrentine Peninsula in the arcadian harmony of the sky and land in the waters of the same bay, the palace of the grim Tiberius, who first moved our painter with his barbaric cruelty²⁸ played out against the backdrop of the most beautiful scenery possible.

In this most fashionable Roman spa located at the 'golden beach of the blessed Venus', various carnal pleasures were sought and great freedom of decency prevailed, causing offence among the capital city moralists. In Martial's epigram it was there that the virtuous like Laevin's Sabine Women of yore, "*Penelope venit abit Helene*" (arriving as Penelope she left as Helena).²⁹ Varro adds: staying there "*non solum innubae fiunt communis sed etiam veteres repuerascunt et multi pueri puellascunt*" (not only do virgins become a common good, but also the elderly become young, and many boys make themselves similar to girls).³⁰ Siemiradzki seems to remember and echo Varro's words painting an old man by the column and a kneeling ephebe with his old companion, watching the exciting pantomime.

The theme of a young, naked woman, surrounded by a crowd of admirers, being de facto the source or personification of beauty, became the cause of heated polemics when Jean-Léon Gérôme exhibited his *Phryne before the Areopagus* at the Paris Salon in 1861 (fig. 32).³¹ Famous for her beauty, the heterai Phryne, who served as a model for the *Aphrodite of Knidos* by Praxiteles (fig. 33) and Apelles' *Venus Anadyomene*, during the celebrations of the festival of Poseidon in Eleusis, undressed and entered the sea in front of the gathered believers. And then she came out of water, probably playing the role of Aphrodite Anadyomene, born of the sea foam. Accused of godlessness, she was saved from being sentenced to death by the famous orator Hypereides, who unexpectedly took her robe off the heterai. Her beauty, worthy of

28] The painting *Capri at the Time of Tiberius* (1881, State Tretyakov Gallery); S. LEWANDOWSKI, op. cit., p. 48.

29] MARTIALIS, *Epigrammata*, Book 1, LXII. Accessible online : <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>.

30] Marcus Terentius, VARRO, *Saturae Menippeae*, Fragmentum XLV, 154. Accessible on line : http://www.intratext.com/IXT/LAT0404/_PB.HTM.

31] Joachim HEUSINGER VON WALDEGG, *Jean-Léon Gérôme "Phryné vor den Richtern"*, "Jahrbuch der Hamburger Kunstsammlungen", 1972, vol. 17, pp. 122-142; Laurence DES CARS, Dominique de FONT-RÉAULX, Édouard PAPET, *The spectacular art of Jean-Léon Gérôme: 1824-1904*, catalogue J. Paul Getty Museum, Musée d'Orsay & Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Skira-Flammarion, Paris 2010, no. 45, pp. 104-107; E. KEPETZIS, op. cit., 2011, pp. 291-311.

a goddess, moved the judges so much that they could not deprive the divinely beautiful heterai of her life.³²

Gérôme, whose talent showed evidence of great and original independence, had already a few years earlier, deliberately provoked an opinion of blurring the boundary between historical and genre painting with his painting *The Cock Fight*.³³ He applied the same procedure this time as well. His Phryne was judged in the austere interior of the Areopagus, whose architecture repeated the interior of the Etruscan *Tomb del Cardinale*³⁴ after Smuglewicz's drawing and the walls were decorated with figures taken from a frieze decorating a tomb from Ruvo and from a mosaic from the Pompeian Casa del Fauno, depicting the *Battle of Issos*. Critics and viewers were accustomed to such concern for the truth of the scenery. The outrage and protests were triggered by the fact that the judges, despite old age and classical features, as if taken from vases, surprised by the sight of naked beauty with their poses and gestures show astonishment, admiration, arousal, internal and external erotic excitement, both completely alien to the classical aesthetics. And in addition, the in fact rich, thanks to the impression her body made on men, heterai Phryne, just as surprised as the judges, in an ambiguous gesture of shame, raised her hands up to cover her face, as it was said, the only part of the body that she did not have to cover! *Grand Dictionnaire universel du XIX siècle* under the word *Phryne* published in 1874 accused the painter that his Phryne did not correspond to the type of beauty that the Greeks considered to be an ideal, but rather to the type of modern Parisian courtesan.³⁵ The sharpest criticism was that of Emil Zola, who not only accused the painter of flattering the currently popular taste for commercial purposes, but also of a significant historical falsehood. "Mr Gérôme",

32] Craig COOPER, *Hypereides and the Trial of Phryne*, "Phoenix", 1995, 49/4, p. 303-318; Michael WEISSENBERGER, *Hypereides*, in: *Der Neue Pauly. Enzyklopädie der Antike*, eds. Hubert Cancik, Helmuth SCHNEIDER, vol. 5, Verlag J. P. Metzler, Stuttgart 1998, pp. 804-806.

33] Édouard PAPET, *Phryné au XIXe siècle: la plus jolie femme de Paris?* in: *Praxitèle: Un maître de la sculpture antique*, eds. Alain PASQUIER, Jean Luc MARTINEZ, catalogue Musée du Louvre, Louvre Éditions, Paris 2007, no. 101, pp. 384-385; L. DES CARS, D. de FONT-RÉAULX, É. PAPET, op. cit., no. 10, pp. 42-44; E. KEPETZIS, op. cit., pp. 292-294.

34] L. DES CARS, D. de FONT-RÉAULX, É. PAPET, op. cit., p. 104. (Authors quote identification by colleagues from the Louvre).

35] *Dictionnaire* repeats the opinion of Gautier from 1861: Théophile GAUTIER, *Abécédaire du Salon de 1861*, E. Dentu, Paris 1961, pp. 178-179. Gérôme indeed used for his character of Phryne a photograph made by Nadar of a model called Roux (Marie-Christine Leroux), who also posed for other artists as well, and who belonged to the underworld of Parisian courtesans: É. PAPET, *Phryné...*, p. 369, fig. 263.

he wrote in 1867, “travaille pour tout les goûts. [...] pour dissimuler le vide complet de son imagination, il s’est jeté dans l’antiquaille. [...] Phryné devant le trybunale, par exemple. [...] Ce corps de femme, posé gentiment, fera bien au milieu du tableau. Mais cela ne suffit pas, il faut aggraver en quelque sorte cette nudité en donnat à la hétaire un mouvement de pudeur, un geste de petite maîtresse moderne surprise en changeant de chemise. Cela ne suffit pas encore ; le succès sera complet, si le dessinateur parvient à mettre sur les visages des juges des expressions variées d’admiration, d’étonnement, de concupiscence [...]. Dès lors l’oeuvre [...] se vendra cinquante ou soixante mille francs”.³⁶

Siemiradzki was of the same opinion as Zola, although he also did not completely resist the typical for the Second Empire sensual alexandrisism of art of that period. And so, in 1886 when he took up work on his *Phryne at the Festival of Poseidon in Eleusis*³⁷ (fig. III) starting the obvious polemics with Gérôme’s painting, he gave her an obvious charm but deprived her completely of the sexual ambiguity of a woman from the underworld, merging her with the goddess who personifies beauty, to which the heteira was, according to Apelles and Praxiteles, similar, not partly, but with her whole body, a reflection of an ideal immortal beauty. In our painter’s work, the harmonious beauty of the heteira, who remains dignified and calm despite the gaze of the surprised and full of admiration crowd of Poseidon’s worshippers, is to emphasize the typical, according to the artist, attitude of the Greeks towards beauty – an attitude full of adoration and admiration but natural, without ambiguity and without sexual excitement. A relationship that was abstracted from works of Greek classical art.

In *The Judgment of Paris*, which was realized only a little later, the painter took up the same theme of a naked beautiful woman surrounded by a crowd reacting to her beauty. This time it was not the goddess-like heteira Phryne, but the goddess herself, and was surrounded not by Greeks but by Greeks and Romans, representing two distinct ways of understanding and imagining beauty: Greek – idealistic and rational, and Roman – realistic and sensual (psychological-

36] Émile ZOLA, *Nos peintres au Champ-de-Mars* (1867), in: idem, *Écrits sur l’art*, ed. Jean-Pierre Leduc-Adine, Gallimard, Paris 1991, p. 184.

37] S. LEWANDOWSKI, op. cit., pp. 89-95; Katarzyna Anna CZAJKOWSKA, *Wizja antycznej Grecji w obrazie Henryka Hektora Siemiradzkiego „Fryne na święcie Posejdon w Eleuzis”*, “Sztuka Europy Wschodniej”, 2016, vol. V, pp. 155-164; T. *Kapnoba*, op. cit., pp. 165-176; W. DOBROWOLSKI, *Wazy greckie...*, pp. 15-20.

optical). Both of these ways of understanding and experiencing beauty are evaluated from the point of view of ethics and morality. The Roman way of portraying reality and perceiving beauty is traditionally condemned for its link with the time of moral decline and decadence, i.e. the period of the empire.

In the end, I would like to touch upon one more aspect that we believe is important for understanding the additional symbolic subtext of the painting. It is known that in the battles for Troy, glorified by Homer, Venus supported the Trojans in their fight against the Greeks. Just as before she decided that Helena, in love with Paris, would abandon her husband, which became the cause of the murderous fighting and extermination of the city. Only the son of Venus, Aeneas, together with his closest family, escaped from the burning *polis* to found the Roman Empire. Caesar and the Emperors of the Julio-Claudian dynasty boasted a kinship with the goddess, who in this way became the great-mother of the Romans. On the other hand, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, equally important to the painter as classical antiquity, Eve (fig. 34) was the great-mother of all people. In both traditions, the apple associated with the great-mothers became a symbol of an act, tragic in effect, which violated the established moral order. However, in our painting, the goddess Venus, in accordance with the intention of the artist, is rather a Platonic personification of beauty, appealing to the reason and instinct of goodness. Showing to her hedonistic and superficial Roman devotees a serious and rather sad face, Venus seems to announce to them the existence of beauty other than sensual. The apple held up, a gift from the goddess of strife (Eris-Discordia), heralds the advent of times in which this symbol would become a symbol of values different from those associated with the biblical Eve and the Homeric Aphrodite. Taking into consideration the dominant in the painting atmosphere of joyful adoration of the goddess – the image of beauty, and the importance of both traditions, Roman and early Christian, to the Polish painter, they seem to anticipate the times of Cupid with colourful heavenly wings and covered genitals, who disapproves of uncontrolled sensual passion in human life. We suppose, therefore, that the gesture of Venus would be a foreshadowing of adoration of a mother other than Venus (fig. 35), also often portrayed with an apple. The cult of Mary freed from original sin by her sacrificial and dedicated love leading to participation in the sacrifice of her Son.



32. Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Phryne before the Areopagus*, 1861, oil on canvas, 80.5 × 128 cm, Hamburg, Hamburger Kunsthalle. Photo in public domain.



33. Praxiteles, *Aphrodite of Knidos* (*Aphrodite of Cnidus*), circa 364 – 361 BC. Roman copy called Venus Colonna. Vatican, Museo Pio-Clementino. Photo in public domain.

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34. Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Adam and Eve*, 1525 – 1530, tempera and oil on panel, 17 × 27 cm, Warsaw, The Royal Castle. Photo in public domain.



35. Painter from the circle of the Master of Triptych from Warta, *Mary with Child and Saints Felicity and Perpetua*, ca. 1520, tempera on wood, 163 × 132 cm, National Museum, Warsaw. Photo Museum.