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Franz Caucig's *Phaedrus**

Abstract: The article interprets Franz Caucig's *Socrates with a Disciple and Diotima?*, one of several paintings commissioned for Palais Auersperg in Vienna, now housed at the Slovenian National Gallery. Socrates and a young man are in a pastoral setting beneath a plane tree near a river. They are addressed by a woman, and a chariot with maidens can be seen in the background. The scene is from Plato's *Phaedrus*, since Socrates never leaves Athens, except for military service and in this scene from the *Phaedrus*. The woman addressing Socrates and *Phaedrus* in the painting cannot be Diotima because her chariot has two white horses, indicating a goddess. The most likely goddess would be the goddess in the poem of Parmenides of Elea, the source of the soul-chariot analogy in the *Phaedrus*. The setting of Caucig's Socrates painting bears a remarkable similarity to his Amnytus painting, which features political references to Napoleon's subjection of Gorizia, Caucig's homeland. Caucig's *Phaedrus* remarks upon Napoleon's conquests, Hegel's lectures on Parmenides, and David's idealized painting of Napoleon crossing the Alps.

Keywords: art history, Franz Caucig, Plato, Diotima, Parmenides, Hegel, Napoleon

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Introduction

Hanging at the National Gallery of Slovenia is a painting by the neoclassical artist Franz Kavčič/Francesco Caucig (Gorizia 1755–Vienna 1828),¹ with the cautious title *Socrates with a Disciple and Diotima* (?).² This is one of twelve Caucig paintings commissioned for Palais Auersperg in Vienna. Many of the paintings from Palais Auersperg are readily identifiable as scenes from classical literature, and several are known to be influenced by the *Idylls* of Salomon Gessner (1730–1788). A hallmark of neoclassical art, its aim is to accurately represent a literary source. Caucig's sources for paintings referring to Gessner's *Idylls* are clear enough,³ but some uncertainty surrounds Caucig's Socrates.

The Slovenian gallery description says the following:



F. Caucig, *Socrates with a Disciple and Diotima* (?) before 1810. Oil on canvas; NG S 3333, National Gallery of Slovenia, Ljubljana. Used with permission.

¹ For details of Caucig's life and career in English, see V.K. Kajfež, "Franc Kavčič/Franz Caucig and His Oeuvre D'egitto," [in:] *Crossroads of Egyptology: The Worlds of Jaroslav Cerny*, A. Macková, P. Onderka (eds.), Prague 2010, pp. 115–120; in Slovenian, K. Rozman, *Franc Kavčič/Caucig (1755–1828)*, Ljubljana 1978; in German, K. Rozman, U. Müller-Kaspar, *Franz Caucig. Ein Wiener Künstler der Goethe Zeit in Italien*, Dunaj 2004.

² Dated before 1810, oil, canvas, 121.5 x 173.5 cm.

³ Among the paintings derived from Gessner are: *The Tomb of Mycon*, *The Origin of Plucking Strings and of Singing*, *The First Boatman*, *Daphnis Introducing His Bride Phillis to His Father*, and *Amyntas, a Dryad and a Saved Oak*.

In the shade of a danse [sic!] tree Socrates is seated, talking with a disciple. A self-confident lady has joined the discussion. She and Socrates are evidently engaged in a heated debate, while the young man is somewhat restrained in wonder [sic!] in shy contradiction to the learned lady. A half-unrolled inscribed scroll lies on Socrates' knee. In the distance, a town is visible in the centre, with a domed central building at its outskirts. The lady came from the town or from the temple in a chariot, accompanied by two companions who are now patiently waiting for her and passing their time with a chat.⁴

Socrates is as always unmistakable, despite there being different depictions of him in neoclassical paintings. Indeed, another depiction of Socrates, entitled *Farewell to Socrates by His Wife Xanthippe*, housed at the Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Gorizia, was until recently wrongly attributed to Caucig. The painting, well-known enough to be referred to as Caucig's work by the classicist Emily Wilson,⁵ is no longer considered to be his, in part because of the difference in the way his facial features are presented.⁶ One feature of neoclassical art is the use of an ancient model to reproduce facial likenesses, in this case the bust of Socrates in the Museo Pio Clementino of Rome.⁷ The crisp lines and photographic realism of Caucig's Palais Auersperg Socrates are much more reminiscent of that most famous depiction of the death of Socrates by the French revolutionary painter Jacques-Louis David, now in the permanent collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The face of David's Socrates also appears to be based on the Pio Clementino Socrates, whereas Caucig's Socrates seems to have a different source, perhaps one of the many plaster casts acquired by the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts in the late 18th century. Caucig was deeply influenced by David, and many of Caucig's Palais Auersperg paintings display that influence.

The gallery catalogue from the 2007 exhibition of the Palais Auersperg paintings, written by Ksenija Rozman, says the following about our Caucig Socrates:

Plato in his *Symposium* [sic!] described a conversation taking place under a tree outside the town between Socrates and his disciple Phaedrus, but Caucig's painting must be about something else. Socrates did indeed discuss the love of beauty—the philosophical eros—with Diotima, a learned priestess of Mantinea. This is what Plato, Socrates' disciple, recounts in his *Symposium*, but he could have invented the conversation himself [...] The composition is divided into two parts: in the shade of a dominating, dense tree on the left Socrates and his disciple sit beside a brook with two small cascades [...] The right half of the picture is occupied by an almost monumental figure of the teaching lady, finely dressed in

⁴ <https://www.ng-slo.si/en/permanent-collection/1800-1820/socrates-with-a-disciple-and-diotima-franc-kavcic-caucig?workId=1593> (accessed: 9.11.2018).

⁵ E. Wilson, *The Death of Socrates: Hero, Villain, Chatterbox, Saint*, London 2007, p. 208.

⁶ According to the Cariplo catalogue: "The scholar, furthermore, from a comparison with Socrates with a Disciple and Diotima, executed by the Gorizian painter for the Palace of Prince Auersperg in Vienna, has found substantial differences in the appearance of Socrates, 'from a much more pronounced baldness and the profile more like a caricature', which contribute to excluding the paternity of Caucig for the painting in question, conceivably attributable to an artist from Veneto active in the early decades of the nineteenth century for the softness of the chiaroscuro segments and the 'warm sense of colour'" (M. Malni Pascoletti, "La Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Gorizia come 'collezionista d'arte,'" [in:] *Rivelazioni. Quattro secoli di capolavori*, L. Caburlo, M.C. Cadore, R. Fabiani, M.M. Pascoletti (eds.), exhibition catalogue 2011, pp. 250–252).

⁷ E. Lissoni, *Neoclassical painter—Commiato di Socrate dalla moglie Santippe*, The Cariplo Foundation Artgate Project, <http://www.artgate-cariplo.it/en/works-on-show/tiepolo-carra/commiato-di-socrate-dalla-moglie-santippe.html> (accessed: 12.11.2018).

antique costume and with antique hairstyle, removed to the middle plan are the two waiting women and a pair of horses harnessed to an antique chariot [...] Illuminated are Socrates and the lady, while the youth is left in the shade, since he is only a secondary character.⁸

Socrates outside the City Walls of Athens

The conversation attributed by the catalogue to the *Symposium* is most likely a typographical error since there is no such scene described in Plato's *Symposium*. The claim that the painting must be about something other than the scene depicted in the *Phaedrus* would be problematic for the following reason⁹: the Socrates of Plato's dialogues is famous for rarely leaving Athens, yet here he is depicted outside Athens. In an imaginary conversation between Socrates and the Laws of Athens (*Crito* 52b), the Laws argue that Socrates must be satisfied with them because he never left Athens except for military service:

Socrates, we have strong evidence that we and the city pleased you; for you would never have stayed in it more than all other Athenians if you had not been better pleased with it than they; *you never went out from the city to a festival, or anywhere else, except on military service, and you never made any other journey, as other people do, and you had no wish to know any other city or other laws, but you were contented with us and our city.* (*Crito* 52b, transl. Fowler; emphasis added)

What I have italicized might seem to contradict the opening line of Plato's most famous work, the *Republic*:

I went down yesterday to the Piraeus with Glaucon, the son of Ariston, to pay my devotions to the Goddess, and also because I wished to see how they would conduct the festival since this was its inauguratio. (*Resp* 327a)

While it is true that Socrates is in the metropolis of Piraeus for the Festival of Bendis in Plato's *Republic*, this would have been inside the city walls enclosing Athens and Piraeus that were initiated by Themistocles and completed by 446.

The claim in the *Crito* that Socrates never left the city represents Plato's understanding of how Socrates thought of himself, since it is Socrates who utters these words about himself in the conversation with the Laws. Socrates may have been known to claim this himself, Plato could have heard it from Crito, or Socrates may simply have had a reputation for not leaving the city. The claim that Socrates dislikes leaving the city can also be found in the *Phaedrus* 230d–e:

Phaedrus: You don't go away from the city out over the border, and it seems to me you don't go outside the walls at all [οὐτ' ἔξω τείχους ἔμοιγε δοκεῖς τὸ παράπαν ἐξιέναι].

⁸ K. Rozman, U. Müller-Kaspar, op. cit., p. 8.

⁹ Further remarks by the same author on the gallery website pertaining to the 2007–2008 special exhibition entitled *Paintings for the Palais Auersperg in Vienna* are the following: "The question remains open about the literary source and the correct identification of the motif in the painting *Socrates with a Disciple and Diotima*," <https://www.ng-slo.si/en/exhibitions-and-projects/exhibition-or-project/franc-kavcic-caucig?id=1412> (accessed: 9.11.2018).

Socrates: Forgive me, my dear friend. You see, I am fond of learning. Now the country places and the trees won't teach me anything, and the people in the city do. But you seem to have found the charm to bring me out.

The claim is weaker here than in the *Crito*—it seems [ἔμοιγε δοκεῖς] to Phaedrus that Socrates never goes outside the walls at all (τὸ παράπαν). While Socrates does not contradict Phaedrus about this, the two are bantering as Socrates is trying to win Phaedrus' favour. The general sense, though, is that the claim is an appeal to the reputation that Socrates has for never leaving the city.

At the same time, a small problem remains in the *Crito* 52b passage, where Socrates' disdain for leaving the city is strongest. *Crito* 52b in the 1995 Oxford Classical Text edition reads:

καὶ οὐτ' ἐπὶ θεωρίαν πάποτε' ἐκ τῆς πόλεως ἐξῆλθες, ὅτι μὴ ἄπαξ εἰς Ἴσθμόν, οὔτε ἄλλοσε οὐδαμῶσε, εἰ μὴ ποι στρατευσόμενος, οὔτε ἄλλην ἀποδημίαν ἐποιήσω πάποτε ὥσπερ οἱ ἄλλοι ἄνθρωποι.

The bolded phrase “ὅτι μὴ ἄπαξ εἰς Ἴσθμόν” (found only in the Venetus T codex), has the Laws claiming Socrates did not leave the city except to attend the Isthmian games and for military service. The 1914 Fowler (Loeb) and 1997 Cooper (Hackett) do not translate the phrase; both Fowler and Cooper appear to follow Martin Schanz's claim that the phrase is an early interpolation.¹⁰ The reason to reject the interpolation placing Socrates outside the city walls and at the Isthmian games is that it can be found in the 10th-century Venetus T codex (at the Marciana Library in Venice), but is not to be found in the 9th-century manuscript from the Bodlean Library, or its 12th-century descendant from the Marciana.¹¹

The source of the interpolation is considered by Schanz to be the *Deipnosophists* of Athenaeus, a critic of Plato's accounts of the historical Socrates:

But in the *Crito*, Plato, that favourite of Memory, says that Socrates had never once gone out of Attica, except when he once went to the Isthmian games. ἐν δὲ τῷ Κρίτωνι ᾠ. 52 b' ὁ τῆς Μνημοσύνης φίλος Πλάτων οὐδὲ ποιεῖσθαι πάποτε ἀποδημίαν τὸν Σωκράτη ἐξω τῆς εἰς Ἴσθμόν θεωρίας εἴρηκε. (5. 55, 343)

It is most likely that Schanz believed that a scribe or translator who had read Athenaeus inserted the remark into the T codex. John Burnet's reasoning on the matter is more sage, however. He believes that the variants have to do with an omission in the 9th-century Bodlean ms. This reasoning would explain why it is also omitted from its 12th-century Marciana descendant. What is convincing about the authority of T is that whatever copy of the *Crito* Athenaeus was reading in the late 2nd early 3rd Century AD, that copy contained the claim that Socrates attended the Isthmian games, for Athenaeus is trying to point out certain inconsistencies in Plato's dialogues.¹²

¹⁰ Plato: *Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo. Phaedrus*, transl. and ed. H.N. Fowler, London 1914, p. 182; Plato: *Complete Works*, J. Cooper, D. Hutchison (eds.), Indianapolis 1997, p. 46.

¹¹ Cod. Ven. app. cl. 4.1; Cod. Bodl. MS E.D. Clarke 39; and Cod. Ven. gr. 185 respectively.

¹² J. Burnet claims: “The words ὅτι μὴ ἄπαξ εἰς Ἴσθμόν are in the text of T and in the margin of W from the first hand. Their omission in B and in the text of W is therefore accidental. They contain 18 letters and may have formed a single line in the archetype. Athenaeus [...] certainly read them where they stand” (*Plato's Euthyphro, Apology and Crito*, Oxford 1979, p. 285).

Either the T codex or the *Deipnosophists* would also be the source of the remark in the entry in *Harper's Dictionary of Classical Antiquities* on the Isthmian games: "The only occasion when Socrates was absent from Athens, except with the army, was to attend this festival."¹³ This is important, for while putting Socrates at the Isthmian games may seem baseless Schanz's opinion of the manuscript stemma mentioned above, it has had, and still has, popular and scholarly traction grounded in Burnet's claim for the authority of the T codex. Consider Timothy Mahoney's claim that

Socrates has never left Athens except for one trip to the Isthmian games and for military service (52b), even though Socrates deems some other cities such as Sparta and Crete well governed (52d-53a).¹⁴

Mahoney uses the older 1981 version of *Plato: Five Dialogues*, whereas the revised 2002 edition of the same excises the phrase about Socrates attending the Isthmian games. Instead we have: "You have never left the city, even to see a festival, nor for any other reason except military service," excising the interpolation in the T codex.¹⁵

While all of this may seem a long way from our concern with Caucig, it is important. Given that the T codex has the authority of an ancient witness in the *Deipnosophists*, Caucig might be depicting Socrates on the way to the Isthmian games. In the background, chariots on their way into Corinth can be seen. The Isthmian games are said to be renowned for horse and chariot races.¹⁶ The disciple would then be an unknown person, as Rozman thinks he is, based on the fact that his figure is darker than Socrates and the lady; the lady speaking would also be unknown, which would render the darkness representing anonymity problematic. More importantly, if *Socrates making his way to Corinth* correctly identifies the painting, it suggests that Caucig was aware of the critique of Plato by Athenaeus, and is making a philological claim that Socrates left Athens for reasons other than war—not a very prominent theme for the painting. Even if this were so (dubious as it would be), given that, except for the chariot, visual cues for the Isthmian games are absent, a much better account can be provided.

The times Socrates is mentioned in a setting outside of the center of Athens are: 1. military service; 2. at the Isthmian Games (in one version of the *Crito* and in the *Deipnosophists* that refers to it); 3. the walk to Piraeus; and 4. the dialogue *Phaedrus*. 1. The painting is not martial in any way but depicts a scene of pastoral leisure. 2. Socrates travelling to the Isthmian games as a subject of the painting is dubious. What can we say about 3? Since he would have left Athens behind on the walk to Piraeus mentioned at the beginning of the *Republic*, we might con-

¹³ "Isthmia," [in:] H.T. Peck, *Harper's Dictionary of Classical Antiquities*, New York 1898, p. 890.

¹⁴ T.A. Mahoney, "Socrates' Loyalty to Athens and His Radical Critique of the Athenians," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 15 (1998), p. 3; cf. p. 8.

¹⁵ Mahoney uses the translation of *Crito* 52b from Plato, *Five Dialogues* transl. G.M.A. Grube, Indianapolis 1981. The translation changes in Plato, *Five Dialogues*, 2nd ed., transl. G.M.A. Grube, J. Cooper (rev.), Indianapolis 2002.

¹⁶ *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, S. Hornblower, A. Spawforth (eds.), New York 1996, p. 772.

ceive of the painting as depicting Socrates leaving the center of Athens but not the boundaries of the long walls of Themistocles that encompass both. We would expect these to be depicted as an important part of the setting, whereas a river and a plane tree are prominent in Caucig's painting. This leads to 4. The *Phaedrus* is the only reasonable literary source for the scene in Caucig's painting, since it is the only other time that Socrates is depicted outside the city walls of Athens.¹⁷ In other words, Rozman was on the right track when she discussed the possibility of a reference to the *Phaedrus*, but dismissed the idea too quickly.

Diotima

The reason for Rozman to dismiss the painting as a depiction of the *Phaedrus*, or rather to suggest that the painting must be about something else, is the presence of a lady, which she believes to be Diotima. There is, of course, no lady engaged in discussion in Plato's *Phaedrus*. In the *Phaedrus*, under a plane tree, with thick grass, next to a stream, Socrates and Phaedrus sit, and Phaedrus proffers a scroll written by the orator Lysias, a discourse on love. Lysias is the brother of Polemarchos, the second speaker on justice in Book I of the *Republic*, a metic who was executed by the Thirty Tyrants in Athens¹⁸; Lysias himself is present but silent in the dinner conversation that forms Plato's *Republic*, and ironically in the *Phaedrus* he is absent yet speechful, in the sense that his words are read from a scroll in Plato's dialogue.¹⁹ As well as being an orator of high repute (though disdained as sophistical by Socrates), Lysias supported the exiled democrats that finally drove the dictatorship out of Athens, leading to the restoration of the democracy that would in just a few short years preside over Socrates' trial and execution.²⁰ In Caucig's painting, we should assume that *Phaedrus* has finished reading Lysias' speech on love, since now Socrates is holding it. In Plato's *Phaedrus*, Socrates makes an attempt to outdo Lysias' speech by employing rhetorical speech similar to that of Lysias. Socrates stops halfway through and offers a palinode to

¹⁷ It is worth noting that the location of the conversation of the *Phaedrus* was of much interest in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Leon Robin presents a hand-drawn map of the place outside Athens where it occurs in his 1933 edition of the *Phaedrus*, indicating the route taken by Socrates and Phaedrus to get there. Platon, *Oeuvres complètes*, IV.3—*Phèdre*, L. Robin (ed.), Paris 1933, p. x. Robin's designation for the site of the *Phaedrus* conversation corresponds—by coincidence—to the location of the Agia Fotini Ilissos Church, so named for the fact that that it was built on the banks of where the Ilissos river used to be. This church was built much later, in 1872, on the remains of a monument to Hekate, and is a reasonable approximation to that which Robin chooses. The Ilissos—what remains of it today—is mostly underground, and cannot be observed. At the same time, Thompson's richly annotated 1868 *Phaedrus* remarks about the setting that "The spot in question is easily discovered by the visitor [to Athens] at the present day; there is indeed but one place answering the conditions, and it answers them perfectly."

¹⁸ J.B. Bury, *A History of Greece*, London 1959, p. 508.

¹⁹ Lysias' speech is *Phaedrus* 230e–234c. Some commentators have taken it to be an actual speech of Lysias, whereas the majority believe it to be an imitation of his style. See D. Nails, *The People of Plato*, Indianapolis 2002, p. 193.

²⁰ D. Nails, op. cit., p. 192.

Love for speaking so falsely, after which he draws an analogy comparing the soul to a chariot with horses.

This much of the iconography of the painting is clear and accurate—the plane tree, the grass, the stream, the scroll, Socrates and a young man who must be *Phaedrus*, since there is no other depiction of Socrates with a young man outside the city walls in such circumstances. There are some discordant elements of the painting that must be considered. Socrates and *Phaedrus* are both wearing sandals, although much is made of the fact that in the *Phaedrus* both are walking barefoot.²¹ The dialogue mentions statues and votive offerings to Achelous (a wind god) and some of the Nymphs,²² but no such items are present in Caucig's painting. These seem minor details which one might ignore—perhaps Caucig simply did not note or care to take note of it.

The grand discrepancy is that, unlike in the *Phaedrus*, in Caucig's painting a woman is addressing them both. The largest variance is the lady and the attendant maidens at the chariot. This is where the message of the painting must lie, for it is not part of the *Phaedrus* narrative. As she is at the optical center of the painting, Caucig asks us to focus here in order to grasp his intention.²³ Beyond this, to the back/right of the scene, is a chariot affixed to two white horses and two young women in repose. While they are not part of the narrative of the *Phaedrus*, they are part of one of the most famous fragments of world literature that happens to be found in the *Phaedrus*, namely the use of a chariot with horses as an analogy for the soul in Socrates' second speech.²⁴

Both the chariot and the figure of Diotima are connected to the figure of *Phaedrus*, albeit in different ways. Diotima is the priestess of Mantinea whose words on love are expressed by Socrates in the *Symposium*, at the behest of *Phaedrus*' desire of a series of encomia on Love.²⁵ Diotima's themes of eros and ascent to Beauty are evocative of the ascent of the chariot in the *Phaedrus*. In the *Phaedrus*'s soul-chariot analogy, the souls of gods are akin to a chariot with two noble white horses; the gods have seen reality and truth beyond heaven, the reality and this truth of beauty is what Diotima claims to be the *telos* of love in the *Symposium*²⁶:

²¹ *Phaedrus* 229a.

²² *Ibid.*, 230b.

²³ It is worth noting that David also introduces great discrepancies among great accuracy and attention to detail in his *Death of Socrates*, placing Plato asleep at the foot of the bed in the scene derived from Plato's *Phaedo*—Plato is said to be ill and not present at Socrates' execution (*Phaedo* 59b). Moreover, Socrates pointing upwards with his left hand in the *Death of Socrates* seems a distinct reference to Raphael's *School of Athens*, where Plato makes the same gesture with his left, indicating that truth and reality are beyond space and time, in contrast with Aristotle, who is gesturing downward, indicating disagreement with Plato's mimetic dualism, and implying that sub-lunar entities are not separate from their substantial forms and engage rather in kinetic mimesis (see G.S. Bove, "Thaumata in Aristotle's 'Metaphysics' A," *Acta Classica* 60 (2017), p. 64 ff.). The space limit does not allow for a discussion of Raphael but only to mention that he too introduces grand discrepancies with messages—for example he includes a number of Islamic philosophers among the Greeks, has Socrates in conversation with Alexander the Great, and dresses Heraclitus, modelled on Michelangelo, in Renaissance clothing.

²⁴ *Phaedrus* 246ff.

²⁵ *Symposium* 177a; *Phaedrus*' own speech is at 178a–180c.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 211c–d.

Let us then liken the soul to the natural union of a team of winged horses and their charioteer. The gods have horses and charioteers that are themselves all good and come from good stock besides, while everyone else has a mixture. To begin with our driver is in charge of a pair of horses; second, one of his horses. One of his horses is beautiful and good and from stock of the same sort, while the other is opposite and has the opposite sort of bloodline. This means that chariot driving in our case is inevitably a painfully difficult business.²⁷

Again, however, if we attend to the details of the chariot analogy in the *Phaedrus*, we note that human souls are analogous to a chariot with one obedient white horse and an unruly dark one.²⁸ If we assume, as we should, that the chariot belongs to the woman speaking, we must also assume that she is divine rather than a priestess, and hence she is not Diotima. As a priestess, Diotima would actually be much further down the equestrian ladder in the *Phaedrus* soul-chariot analogy, and would possess a white horse and a dark one, for it is said that souls with horses of mixed breed struggle in the ascent to the truth and become weighed down to greater or lesser degrees; first in rank of fallen souls will be the philosopher, second a lawful king or warlike commander, third a financier or household manager, fourth a trainer or doctor, and fifth a prophet or priest.²⁹ If Diotima is featured in the painting, her horses should not be white, for the presence of two white horses indicates the soul and carriage of a goddess. Moreover, a priestess or seer—as she is referred to in the *Symposium*,³⁰ would not be so well groomed or well dressed as the woman in the painting. If the chariot with the maidens is indeed a divine chariot, and it does not belong to Diotima, then who is the woman addressing Socrates and Phaedrus? Moreover, who are the attending maidens?

Parmenides

We have seen such a chariot with maidens elsewhere; it is not in the soul-chariot myth of the *Phaedrus*, but rather in the most likely source and inspiration for Plato's employment of it, namely the poem of Parmenides of Elea, whose proem or introduction is preserved for us by Simplicius, Sextus Empiricus and Diogenes Laertius. Parmenides' proem begins like this:

The mares which bear me as far as my desires might reach
were conveying me, when they led me into the many-voiced way
of the deity, who leads the knowing mortal straight on through all things.
By this way was I borne, for by this way the well-discerning mares bore me
as they drew the chariot, and the maidens guided the way.
And the axle in the naves would screech like a pipe
as it blazed (for it was driven by two whirling
wheels, one on each side), when the maiden daughters of the Sun
hastened to escort me, having left the House of Night

²⁷ *Phaedrus* 246a–b.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 246a–b; 253d–254e.

²⁹ *Symposium* 248d–e. The ninth place, with the most unruly soul is that of a tyrant—could Caucig have been thinking of Napoleon?

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 201d.

for the light, having pushed back their veils from their faces with their hands.
There stand the gates of the paths of Night and Day [...]³¹

In Parmenides' proem we have a chariot guided by maidens who take Parmenides beyond the gates of night and day to a goddess who reveals the metaphysical Truth to Parmenides. While this is obviously not the location depicted in Caucig's painting, we are still beyond important gates, those of the walls of Athens, its wars, politics and lawsuits. While Socrates came to know himself in the city, as he says in the *Phaedrus* 230d–e, he came to know the Truth about love that transcends Lysias' rhetoric outside the city walls.³² It is important to remember that the maidens are in the background; they are not the subject of the painting, but they are being referred to by the main subject.³³ In other words, it is Parmenides' proem that is being recalled and referred to in the background by Caucig. I note that one of the maidens is pointing the way down the road, which is what they do in the proem. Now it is true that in Parmenides' poem Parmenides is the passenger in the chariot that takes him beyond the gates of night, whereas in Caucig's painting, the woman addressing Socrates and Phaedrus seems to have come to them. But again, we should remember that the chariot is merely evocative of Parmenides' proem, and is hence in the background. We are merely reminded of a chariot story in which Parmenides' goddess reveals the Truth about being. The goddess steps into the optical center of Caucig's painting, for that is the main issue. She reveals the Truth. We may also note how Parmenides' goddess receives him:

And me the goddess graciously welcomed, took my right hand in hers,
and addressing me said,
"O youth, companion to immortal charioteers,
and to mares which bear you, as you arrive at our abode,
hail! since no evil fate sent you forth to travel
this way (for indeed it is far from the track of men),
but Right and Justice. It is right for you to learn all things,
both the unshaken heart of persuasive Truth,
and the opinions of mortals, in which there is no true reliance."³⁴

In Caucig's painting, Socrates' right hand is extended, as is the female figure's. A step further and she would be able to grasp the hand of Socrates and reveal to

³¹ Sextus, "Against the Professors," 7.III, 1–11, [in:] *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy*, transl. and ed. D. Graham, Cambridge 2010, p. 211.

³² "Forgive me, my friend. I am devoted to learning; landscapes and trees have nothing to teach me—only the people in the city can do that. But you, I think, have found a potion to charm me into leaving. For just as people lead hungry animals forward by shaking branches of fruit before them, you can lead me all over Attica or anywhere else you like simply by waving in front of me the leaves of a book containing a speech" (*Phaedrus* 230d–e).

³³ Again, one is reminded of Xanthippe and her children in the background of David's *Death of Socrates*, who are not the focal point, but rather an indication that this part of the story is done; Socrates' last moments, spent with his male friends and disciples mark a dismissal of heterosexual love and its offspring and the ultimate dying in the embrace of Platonic Love. For an extended treatment of homo-eroticism in the *Death of Socrates*, see S. Padiyar, "Who Is Socrates? Desire and Subversion in David's *Death of Socrates* (1787)," *Representations* 102 (2008), pp. 27–52.

³⁴ Sextus, "Against the Professors," 7.III, 23–30, [in:] *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy*, p. 211.

him the truth, as she did in Parmenides' proem. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates first attempts to imitate the rhetorical style of Lysias, without giving regard to the truth about love. He is stopped by his daimon, issues a palinode, and draws an analogy comparing the soul to the chariot that is reminiscent of Parmenides' proem. What is key for Caucig's painting is that a divine chariot's ascent to a region of truth is intimated by the background image of a chariot with maidens and white horses. Now, the overlap of themes of ascent to truth and beauty in the Diotima speech and the *Phaedrus* explain why one would identify Caucig's woman with Diotima in the first place. However if the "unknown disciple" so labelled by Rozman is not Phaedrus, the linkage required to connect the scene with love and Diotima is absent. It is more correct to say that Socrates is speaking to Phaedrus because of the neoclassical artist's attention to a literary landscape that is unmistakably the *Phaedrus*.

Hegel, Parmenides, Napoleon, and Gorizia

The connection between Plato and Parmenides is of course well known, not only because of Plato's dialogue that bears Parmenides' name, but also because of the soul-chariot analogies that both philosophers employ. The connection between Plato and Parmenides is marked by Raphael's employment of the figure of the young Leonardo da Vinci as Parmenides and the figure of the old Leonardo as Plato in his *School of Athens* fresco in the Vatican in the early 16th century. As an artist deeply influenced by Raphael, this is something of which Caucig would have been aware, but there may be other things happening in his own time that play a role in his employment of the Parmenides-Plato soul-chariot connection. Parmenides' proem was reproduced in whole in Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, published in the years 1833–1836. It is worth considering that in 1806, around the presumed date of Caucig's Palais Auersperg paintings, Hegel would have given his first lectures on what was to become his *History of Philosophy* at Jena. According to legend, it was on the day that Hegel completed his draft of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that Napoleon entered Jena on a white horse and defeated the Prussian army there. This defeat resulted in the subjection of Prussia to the French empire; Hegel departed to Bamberg to work as a newspaper editor. He was nonetheless impressed by Napoleon as an "embodiment Of the World Spirit"³⁵—a notion commemorated some 90 years later in a *Harper's Magazine* illustration depicting Hegel in Jena tipping his hat to the conquering Napoleon entitled *Two Philosophers Meet at Jena*.³⁶ In the article that it accompanies, Poultney Bigelow says the following: "Let us not judge Hegel too

³⁵ In a letter to Friedrich Niethammer dated 13 October 1806, Hegel writes: "I saw the Emperor—this world—soul—riding out of the city on reconnaissance. It is indeed a wonderful sensation to see such an individual, who, concentrated here at a single point, astride a horse, reaches out over the world and masters it" (*Hegel: The Letters*, transl. C. Butler, C. Seiler, Bloomington 1984, p. 114).

³⁶ P. Bigelow, "The German Struggle for Liberty," *Harper's Magazine* 91 (1895), p. 209.

harshly [...] Germans who pretend to elegance in social matters, had been brought up to regard patriotism as savouring of bad taste, if not positive vulgarity.”³⁷

Caucig's connections with intellectual circles, both in Rome at the time of David's second sojourn there and during his time as a professor at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts, means that he may have been aware of Hegel's lectures. It is also worth noting that David painted a triumphant and idealized portrait of Napoleon's 1800 crossing of the Alps on a white horse (in reality he travelled in a horse-drawn cart), an expedition that led to the subjection of Caucig's homeland Gorizia.

Recent commentators have noted that the infusion of depictions of ancient scenes with symbols of contemporary concerns and events can be seen in David's paintings of the 1780s and can be seen in 17th-century works such as Nicholas Poussin's *Les Bergers d'Arcadie and Landscape with Orpheus*, and even earlier in Piero della Francesca's *Flagellazione di Cristo*, which has been interpreted allegorically as a reference to Baci's 1440 trip to Constantinople to make Basilios Bessarion, the scholar of Plato and Aristotle, a cardinal.³⁸ When we see something discordant in history paintings, especially neoclassical ones, we should be cognizant of the fact that such paintings often contain commentary on contemporary events. Indeed it is important to note that when no obvious literary scene can be determined for a neoclassical painting, we should look to contemporary, often political, concerns. Consider David Carrier's account of Edgar Wind's 1941 discussion of David's *Oath of the Horatii* (1784):

History paintings were traditionally understood by tracing their source, some picture or text explaining their puzzling visual features. Recent discussion of *Le Serment des Horaces* began with a revealing false start. In 1941 Edgar Wind noted that David's springboard could not be one seemingly obvious potential source, Corneille's *Horace*, for that play contains no appropriate scene.³⁹

Carrier's own conclusion is that the painting contains “allegories about conflict between family and the French state.”⁴⁰ I suspect that Rozman encounters or alludes to a similar “false start” in her tentative identification of what I would now call Caucig's *Phaedrus*. The solution would be to look not to a literary source for a complete understanding of the painting. It is true that Caucig, by calling upon Parmenides and Phaedrus, is emphasizing the metaphysical insight at which Platonic love aims, but at the same time the discordant elements suggest something more. It has been suggested that another of Caucig's paintings for Palais Auerberg inspired by Gessner's *Idylls*, entitled *Amyntas Being Rewarded by the Dryad Saving the Oak*, contains a reference to Napoleon's annexing of Gorizia.⁴¹

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

³⁸ ID. Carrier, “The Political Art of Jacques Louis David and his Modern-Day American Successors,” *Art History* 26 (2003), pp. 734–736.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 737.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 739.

⁴¹ B.D. Fenkl, “The Storied History of Francesco Caucig's *Amyntas Being Rewarded by the Dryad Saving the Oak*,” *Off the Wall* 15.11.2017, <https://pages.vassar.edu/flaceducation/the-storied-history-of-francesco-caucigs-amyntas-being-rewarded-by-the-dryad-saving-the-oak/> (accessed: 14.11.2018). The



F. Caucig, *Amyntas Rewarded by the Dryad Saving the Oak*, c. 1809 Oil on canvas; Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center AN 200.13.2. Used with permission.

The landscape in the *Amyntas* painting bears a striking resemblance to the landscape in the *Phaedrus* painting; the plane tree is nearly identical, and there is a river to the left, and mountains to the right. The river Illisos, where Socrates and Phaedo sat, stands metaphorically for Gorizia's Soča (in Italian, the Isonzo) and the mountains are the Julian Alps. Caucig's homeland Gorizia, located at the foot of the Julian Alps, was subject to Napoleonic rule in the years 1805–1813, and the Palais Auersperg paintings were executed around 1809. The Auersperg family, with roots in Slovenia, despised Napoleon, and it has been suggested that “there could be a message of protest in this work,”⁴² where the tree roots represent Gorizia, and the river the sweeping away of its identity by Napoleonic forces. Not only was the Auersperg family an enemy of Napoleon, Hegel—despite his apparent awe of Napoleon—was forced out of Jena as a result of Napoleon's conquest in 1806, around the time he began lecturing on Parmenides.

style is so evocative of David, that it had been misidentified as the work of David's student Gottlieb Schlick, until it was correctly identified as one of the Palais Auersperg paintings.

⁴² Ibid.

Conclusion

The conjecture, an admittedly very loose one, is that Caucig in the Socrates painting, against the backdrop of Napoleon's conquests, brings the reflections of Hegel on Parmenides into the scene with Socrates and Phaedrus. It is as if Caucig is saying to David, who idealizes Napoleon on a horse, that the divine soul-chariot of truth in Parmenides' proem and Plato's *Phaedrus* are much preferable to the fictional horse of Napoleon. The white horses of Parmenides' poem, like those of Socrates' second speech in the *Phaedrus*, bring us to a more divine and true understanding. It is as if Caucig is saying to Hegel, who described Napoleon as the world spirit made manifest—that Bonaparte's horsemanship is no match for the divine equestrian feats of the Greek gods in the soul-chariots of the Greek philosophers. David's famous *Death of Socrates* might also be considered in this context. Caucig's *Phaedrus* displays a great deal of influence, if not reference, to the *Death of Socrates*, both stylistically and thematically. In a recent analysis of the painting, Satish Padiyar offers an in-depth discussion of the homo-erotic symbolism in the painting, an illustration of the euphemistic "L'Amour Socratique" in 18th-century France, by which pederasty and sodomy became associated with Socrates:

David's painting could be seen to problematize the figure of Socrates not just as an ancient classical subject of desire but also as a modern sodomitic or pederastic subject of sexuality: and it is this that renders the image urgent within its historical moment.⁴³

Caucig, like Voltaire, read Plato rightly, seeing in Socrates the representative of Platonic Love, love which transcends sensual and ephemeral concerns and seeks true transcendent beauty and truth. Caucig's more pressing concern, in any case, is not with "L'Amour Socratique" and its perceived unnaturalness in French society, but rather with Napoleon's unnatural impact on Caucig's own Gorizian society. By stressing the metaphysical and divine *telos* of love in his depiction of Socrates and Phaedrus by the banks of the Illisos, Caucig thus remarks on David, Hegel and Napoleon.

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