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## THE ICONOGRAPHY AND DATING OF THREE MYTHOLOGICAL DRAWINGS BY ALEXANDRE UBELESKI

The artistic legacy left by Alexandre Ubeleski (1649/1651–1718) covers paintings and drawings made with various techniques, including interesting red chalk drawings (Fig. 1 and 2), which have not yet been discussed in detail.<sup>1</sup> The attribution of the drawings to Ubeleski has been verified by the analysis of a signature visible on the reverse of the first sheet (Fig. 3), the works' history, their style, and comparative studies of the painter's oeuvre.<sup>2</sup> This article presents new findings based on an in-depth analysis of the form and iconography of the drawings, which allow for their grouping, the identification of their subject matter and potential sources of inspiration, their dating, and the discovery of their ideological meaning. The analysis of the drawings treated as a series offers an insight into the nature of Ubeleski's work, and places it in a broader context of not only the arts but also the literature and music created within the culture of King Louis XIV's court.

<sup>1</sup> This article is a separate analysis, the starting point of which was indicated in the monograph: B. HRYSZKO, *Le Peintre du Roi. Aleksander Ubeleski (1649/1651–1718) – malarz polskiego pochodzenia we Francji i jego dzieła*, Kraków, 2016. I would like to express my gratitude for assistance in my research to Prof. Pierre Rosenberg and Lutz Riestler.

<sup>2</sup> Ubeleski's signature: *Alexandre pinx.* is one of the five variants I found during my research. An identical signature, from an unknown work, was published in: E. BÉNÉZIT, *Dictionnaire critique et documentaire des peintres, sculpteurs, dessinateurs et graveurs*, vol. 13, Paris, 1999, p. 886. The artist's similar signatures can be found in the following works: *The Peasant Dance*, *The Marriage of the Virgin*, *Christ Healing the Sick*; see B. HRYSZKO, 'Alexandre Ubeleski (Ubelesqui): The Oeuvre of the Painter and Definition of his Style', *Artibus et Historiae*, 71/37, 2015, pp. 235, 279–280, figs. 21, 23, 24.

The drawings were part of the collection of Gilbert Paignon-Dijonval (1708–1792).<sup>3</sup> Among the drawings belonging to the *École Française*, the catalogue of this collection lists three red chalk drawings on paper, each 5 inches high and 8 inches wide, assigned to 'Alexandre Ubeliski' (sic). The subject of the first work was described as *Apollo kissing the shepherdess' hand, in the background Cupid is shown holding a mask* (Fig. 1), and the titles of the other two were *Diana leaving the heavens to visit Endymion* (Fig. 2) and *Bacchus consoling Ariadne*.<sup>4</sup> Two of these drawings have been preserved to this day. The first of them appeared at auction on 25 April 1979 in the Danish Bruun Rasmussen Auctioneers in Copenhagen (Fig. 1),<sup>5</sup> while the other was put up for sale in Kunsthandel Dr. Moeller in Hamburg in 1991 (Fig. 2).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> It was one of the biggest private collections of drawings and prints created between 1724 and 1792, and included fourteen works by Alexandre Ubeleski. They are listed in a catalogue published in 1810 by the collector's heir and grandson, Charles-Gilbert-Terray, vicomte de Morel-Vindé (1759–1842). *Cabinet de M. Paignon Dijonval. Etat détaillé et raisonné des dessins et estampes dont il est composé*, ed. by [P. M.] Bénard, Paris, 1810, pp. VI and 126.

<sup>4</sup> *Cabinet de M. Paignon Dijonval*, p. 126 (as in note 3): '2911. Apollon baisant la main d'une bergère; on voit dans le fond l'Amour tenant un masque: d. à la sanguine; l.[arge] 8 po.[uce] sur 5 po.[uce]. ... 2915. Diane quittant le ciel pour visiter Endymion. Bacchus consolant Ariane: deux dessins à la sanguine sur papier blanc; l.[arge] 8 po.[uce] sur 5 po.[uce]'.

<sup>5</sup> Drawing no. 556 in the sales catalogue of Bruun Rasmussen de Copenhague – see P. ROSENBERG, 'Un émule polonais de Le Brun: Alexandre Ubelesqui', *Artibus et Historiae*, 22/11, 1990, p. 186, note 62.

<sup>6</sup> M. MOELLER, *Meisterzeichnungen*, Hamburg, 1991, p. 25.





1. Alexandre Ubeleski, *Apollo and Issa*, 1697 or after, red chalk on light paper, 14,6 × 23,8 cm, Paris, Private Collection

The technique, the description of the scenes, and the size given in the catalogue of the Paignon-Dijonval collection in inches, according to the French metric scale in use in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, all correspond to the extant drawings.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, their composition is similar: the figures are depicted in the foreground, a girl (Fig. 1) and Endymion (Fig. 2) bow their heads in corresponding poses, and they rest on the edge of a cliff against some scrub in front of an open area on the right. The couples, cupids, dogs and some objects scattered on the ground are shown in comparable landscape scenery. Both scenes are framed from below by a corrugated bow-like shape. Despite these similarities and their provenance, the drawings have not been linked so far. Yet they are analogous and certainly used to belong to one series. What is more, on account of the information from the catalogue of the eighteenth-century collection, it is reasonable to think that a lost, or not yet identified, drawing of *Bacchus consoling Ariadne* belonged to this series as well. The meticulously drawn scenes and the characteristic frame in the lower part of the drawings suggest that they might have been the designs of paintings intended as a series. However, as of today, the purpose of these works is unknown.

<sup>7</sup> One French inch equalled approximately 2,71 cm., see H. DOURTHER, *Dictionnaire universel des poids et mesures anciens et modernes contenant des tables des monnaies de tous les pays*, Amsterdam, 1976, p. 441.

#### IDENTIFICATION OF THE SUBJECT MATTER

The catalogue mentions the first of the drawings under the title *Apollo kissing the shepherdess' hand* (Fig. 1). This title was also repeated by Pierre Rosenberg.<sup>8</sup> The elements presented in the drawing, i.e. a lyre, a bow, and a radial glow around the man's head, allow us to recognize the figure as the god of the Sun. Dressed in scanty attire, Apollo kneels next to a girl, holding her hand with both of his. A cupid is flying above the couple. He points at Apollo with his right hand and simultaneously removes a mask from his face with his other hand. A dog sleeps by the bare feet of the woman, and a shepherd's staff is lying in front of Apollo, while some sheep graze on the plain.

Apollo's presence points at mythology as the source of the theme of the drawing. Thus, the question arises what mythological story featuring him the imaginary scene depicts. Who is the girl? Is she really a shepherdess? Why is Apollo kissing her hand? Furthermore, what is the symbolism of the particular motifs of the scene, e.g. a cupid with a mask?

The poem *Metamorphoses d'Ovide en rondeaux*, written by Isaac de Benserade (1613-1691) on King Louis XIV's commission,<sup>9</sup> might prove helpful in answering

<sup>8</sup> P. ROSENBERG, 'Un émule polonais de Le Brun', p. 182, fig. 30 (as in note 5).

<sup>9</sup> [I. DE BENSERADE], *Metamorphoses d'Ovide en rondeaux imprimées et enrichies de figures par ordre de Sa Majesté, et dédiées*





2. Alexandre Ubeleski, *Diana as Luna visiting Endymion*, 1697 or after, red chalk on light paper, 14,7 × 23,5 cm, Freiburg, Private Collection

these questions. The volume contains a print by François Chauveau (1613–1676) presenting a similar scene, featuring Apollo kneeling in front of a sitting girl and holding her hand (Fig. 4).<sup>10</sup> A cupid with a mask flies between the figures and a flock of sheep appears in a similarly composed landscape. An inscription below the image reads: ‘APOLLON épris des beautez de la jeune Nimphe Issé, l’abusa sous la forme d’ un jeune Berger’.<sup>11</sup> At the bottom of the page there is a fragment of verse 124 from Book 6 of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*<sup>12</sup>, which refers to a love affair shown on the tapestry Arachne wove for a contest with

Minerva for pre-eminence in the art of weaving.<sup>13</sup> An Ovidian theme of minor importance – Apollo’s adventure, disguised as a shepherd, with Issa, a daughter of Macareus<sup>14</sup> – became a source for the sonnet accompanying François Chauveau’s print, entitled *APOLLON en Berger*.<sup>15</sup> The poem, almost a paean in honour of the nymph

à Monseigneur Le Dauphin, Paris, 1676, p. 176. At the court of Louis XIV Issac de Benserade created poems and librettos to Jean-Baptiste Lully’s works, among others see J. GORTON, *A General Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 1, London, 1851, unnumbered pages.

<sup>10</sup> The composition is signed lower left: *F. Chauveau jn et fec.* Bibliothèque nationale de France, Cabinet des Estampes, inv. No. Sa18; M53826. On François Chauveau’s oeuvre see *Mémoire sur la vie de François Chauveau, peintre et graveur, et de ses fils, Évrard Chauveau, peintre, et René Chauveau, sculpteur, par Jean Michel Papillon*, Paris, 1738, pp. 11–13 and R.-A. WEIGERT, *Inventaire du fonds français, graveurs du XVIIe siècle*, vol. 2, Boulanger (Jean) – Chauveau (François), pp. 393–395 and 411.

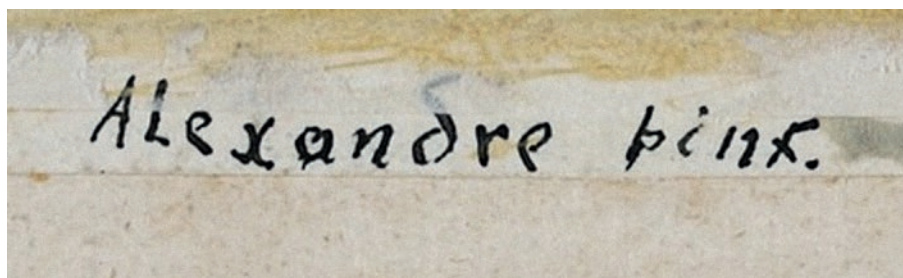
<sup>11</sup> [I. DE BENSERADE], *Metamorphoses d’Ovide en rondeaux*, p. 176 (as in note 9): ‘APOLLON épris des beautez de la jeune Nimphe Issé, l’abusa sous la forme d’un jeune Berger’.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*: ‘ut pastor Macareida luserit Issen’.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. P. Ovidii Nasonis *Metamorphoseon, id est transformationu[m] libri XV. Cum indice*, Lugduni, 1533, p. 141. The work, written in Latin, was also translated into French, see *Les Metamorphoses d’Ovide, traduites en prose françoise et de nouveau soigneusement reuenës, corrigees en infinis endroits, et enrichies de figures à chacune Fable. Avec XV. Discours contenans l’explication Morale et historique*, Paris, 1651, p. 157; *Les Metamorphoses d’Ovide, traduittes de nouveau en prose Françoise, soigneusement reveuës & corrigées avec XV. Discours contenans l’explication Morale des Fables*, Lyon, 1666, p. 225.

<sup>14</sup> On Issa see P. CHOMPRÉ, *Dictionnaire abrégé de la fable, pour l’intelligence des poètes, des tableaux & des statues, dont les sujets sont tirés de l’histoire poétique*, Paris, 1775, p. 227; *Stephani Byzantii Ethnicorum quae supersunt, ex recensione Augusti Meinekii*, vol. 1, Berolini, 1849, p. 339; J. D. REID, *The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts, 1300–1990s*, vol. 1, New York, 1993, p. 182.

<sup>15</sup> [I. de BENSERADE], *Metamorphoses d’Ovide en rondeaux*, p. 177 (as in note 9): ‘APOLLON en Berger. / Quelle merveille est la Beauté naissante! / Issé parut à Phébus ravissante, / Depuis la chaste & farouche Daphné / Il n’avoit point esté mieux enchaîné, / Mais celle-cy devint plus caressante. / Du Ciel pour elle il fit une descente, / Sa Deïté fut trop embarrassante, / Il en quitta son Char illuminé./ Quelle merveille. / Elle estoit douce, elle estoit innocente, / Et ne crût



3. Signature *Alexandre pinx.* overlaid on the drawing *Apollo and Issa* by Alexandre Ubeleski

whose beauty enchanted Apollo, explains the content of Chauveau's engraving, which is presented on the following page (Fig. 4). Issa, in contrast to Daphne, proved to be susceptible to the god's charms and reciprocated his feelings. According to Benserade's work, it was not Issa who was a shepherdess, but Apollo who disguised himself as a shepherd, as stated already in the poem's title. Thus, the title *Apollo kissing the shepherdess' hand* is erroneous and should be formulated afresh as *Apollo and Issa* (Fig. 1). The sonnet accentuates the reciprocal, equal emotional involvement of both the god and the nymph, which is symbolized by the cupid flying over the couple. He is holding a mask in his hand which refers to the camouflage that Apollo assumed, as his intimidating godly image was an impediment in his amorous conquests.

The subject matter of the second drawing, containing the names *Diana and Endymion* in its title, also needs some clarification. As was the case with the first drawing, Benserade's poem with Chauveau's illustration of the myth of Endymion (Fig. 6)<sup>16</sup> can shed some light on the issue discussed here. The inscription on the print can be translated as: 'Luna/Moon fell in love with shepherd Endymion when she found him sleeping on Mount Karia'.<sup>17</sup> Thus, we learn that the female figure in the illustration is Luna, the personification of the Moon.<sup>18</sup> Ubeleski's drawing also contains references to her: the chariot in the clouds, harnessed to a pair of horses, which accompanies the goddess of the moon<sup>19</sup> is an obvious one. However, the artist also depicted Endymion's mistress holding a bow in

her hand, and the bow is an attribute of Diana, the goddess of hunting (Fig. 6). As a result, the drawing seems to mix various motifs and to refer simultaneously to Luna and Diana. The two figures were often equated with each other, as is evidenced by numerous representations of this love affair.<sup>20</sup> In order to emphasize the reference to the Moon and night (which will be discussed later), it might seem justified to modify the title of the drawing to *Diana as Luna visiting Endymion*, as more clearly expressing its subject matter.

## INSPIRATIONS FOR THE DRAWINGS

The compositions of both of Ubeleski's drawings (Fig. 1 and 2) resemble Chauveau's prints (Fig. 4 and 6), although they are reversed as in a mirror reflection. Similarities can be found in the landscape arrangement: the background is covered by several trees on one side and an open area on the other, and in the arrangement of the lovers and their poses: Apollo is kneeling in front of the sitting nymph and holding her hand (Fig. 1 and 4), while Luna, shown in profile, is kneeling in front of Endymion and looking at him. His head, shown *en trois quarts*, is leaning towards her, with one arm drooping toward the ground (Fig. 2 and 6). Other elements shared by the engraving and the drawing include the drapery characteristically flying over Luna's head, the dog placed next to the sleeping Endymion, which is craning its neck to look at the goddess who has just arrived, and a spear that lies on the ground.

From the number of similarities between them, it can be inferred that Ubeleski was inspired by illustrations of Benserade's work. It is likely that the renown of the splendid visual setting for Benserade's poem made it famous in the circle of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture; the artist surely knew it as well. The prestige of the poem's sumptuous, partially coloured and gilded engravings is evidenced by the fact that King Louis XIV had assigned the impressive sum of one thousand louis d'ors for this work.<sup>21</sup>

*pas faire chose indécente / D'aimer quelqu'un à luy plaire adonné, / Il estoit beau, tendre, passionné, / Lardeur entr'eux fut égale & pressante. / Quelle merveille.'*

<sup>16</sup> The monogram on the engraving, *F. C. jn. fc.*, confirms its authorship as that of François Chauveau. See [I. de BENSERADE], *Metamorphoses d'Ovide en rondeaux*, p. 366 (as in note 9).

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem: 'La Lune devint éprise du Berger Endymion, l'ayant trouvé endormi sur une Montagne de la Carie'. The word „La Lune” signifies both the moon and the goddess Luna.

<sup>18</sup> A. PIGLER, *Barockthemen. Eine Auswahl von Verzeichnissen zur Ikonographie des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts*, vol. 2, *Profane Darstellungen*, p. 153; P. GRIMAL, *Słownik mitologii greckiej i rzymskiej*, transl. M. Bronarska, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków, 1990, p. 212.

<sup>19</sup> A. PIGLER, *Barockthemen*, vol. 2, p. 153 (as in note 18); P. GRIMAL, *Słownik mitologii*, p. 318 (as in note 18); W. KOPALIŃSKI, *Słownik mitów i tradycji kultury*, Warszawa, 1997, p. 1052.

<sup>20</sup> See A. PIGLER, *Barockthemen*, vol. 2, pp. 151–155 (as in note 18); J.D. REID, *The Oxford Guide*, vol. 1, pp. 373–382 (as in note 14).

<sup>21</sup> [L.-M. CHAUDON], *Nouveau dictionnaire historique-portaif, ou, Histoire abrégée de tous les hommes qui se sont fai un nom par des Talens, des Vertus, des Forfaits, des Erreurs, &c. &c. depuis*





4. François Chauveau, *Apollon épris des beautés de la jeune Nimphe Issé, l'abusa sous la forme d'un jeune Berger*, copperplate engraving, Gent, Universiteitsbibliotheek

The layout of the scenes in the engravings suggests that Ubeleski used not the prints, but the sketches for them. Undoubtedly, Chauveau's drawings were carefully preserved in the royal collection (since the prints were so generously paid for by the king) and known to Parisian academicians including Ubeleski.

It should be stressed, however, that the poses of Ubeleski's figures are more interesting, more artistically accomplished, and more vivid, and their gestures are more meaningful, than their corresponding elements on the prints. Innovations in Ubeleski's works include the hand-kissing, a sleeping dog, a bow, and a lyre (Fig. 1) and the absence of a creek, present in the engraving. In the drawing Luna is depicted in the clouds, along with a chariot, horses, and cupids; a sleeping dog, a bow and a horn appear on the ground (Fig. 2).

The sources of Ubeleski's two extant drawings and their similarities to the engravings from the book by Benserade

allow for formulating the hypothesis that the third drawing, *Bacchus consoling Ariadne*, may resemble the illustrations to the sonnets entitled *Bacchus et Ariane* and *Couronne d'Ariane en astre* in Benserade's work.<sup>22</sup> However, at present only the subject of the work is known, which then can be compared with the iconography of extant drawings showing couples of lovers in idyllic love scenes.

## SUGGESTED DATING

It is noteworthy that the subject matter discussed here was especially popular in operas composed at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. For example, *Ariane et Bacchus* – an opera by Marin Marais with lyrics by Saint-Jean based on Ovid's *Metamorphoses* – was published in 1696.<sup>23</sup> It was staged on 8 March in the same year at the *Académie Royale de Musique* in Paris.<sup>24</sup> The pastorale héroïque entitled *Issé*,

*le commencement du monde jusqu'à nos jours*, Paris, vol. 1, 1772, pp. 276–278; J. GORTON, *A General Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 1, unnumbered pages (as in note 9). Along with François Chauveau, Jean Le Pautre and Sébastien Le Clerc took part in the enterprise. The latter engraved the frontispiece based on a drawing by Charles Le Brun; this information is included in a letter of 1 November 1674 from the *Premier peintre du Roi* to the poet, published in the introduction to Benserade's poem.

<sup>22</sup> [I. de BENSERADE], *Metamorphoses d'Ovide en rondeaux*, pp. 270 and 272 (as in note 9).

<sup>23</sup> *Anecdotes dramatiques*, Paris, 1775, vol. 1, p. 90 and vol. 3, pp. 320 and 456; A. de LERIS, *Dictionnaire portatif historique et littéraire des theatres contenant l'origine des differens theatres de Paris*, Paris, 1763, pp. 631 and 681.

<sup>24</sup> A. de LERIS, *Dictionnaire portatif historique*, pp. 48–49 (as in note 23); *Ballets, opéra et autres ouvrages lyriques, par ordre*





5. Franz Ertinger, *Apollon changé en Berger*, copperplate engraving, Salins les Bains, Bibliothèque

composed by André Cardinal Destouches (1672–1749) with lyrics by Antoine Houdar de La Motte (1672–1731),<sup>25</sup> premiered on 7 October 1697 in the apartments of Louis XIV in Fontainebleau,<sup>26</sup> and performances were repeated there on 19 and 20 October.<sup>27</sup> The king chose it in order to add splendour to his grandson Louis de Bourgogne's and

*chronologique, depuis leur origine; avec une table alphabétique des ouvrages et des auteurs*, Paris, 1760, pp. 116–117.

<sup>25</sup> The opera script: *Issé, pastorale héroïque en musique, représentée devant sa Majesté à Trianon le 17 décembre 1697 par l'Académie royale de musique*, Paris, 1697; libretto: [A. H. DE LA MOTTE], *Issé, pastorale héroïque, représentée pour la première fois devant Sa Majesté à Trianon le 17 décembre 1697 par l'Académie royale de musique, remise au Théâtre, augmentée de deux Actes, le Dimanche quatorzième jour d'Octobre 1708*, Paris, 1708; A. de LERIS, *Dictionnaire portatif historique*, pp. 261 and 703 (as in note 23).

<sup>26</sup> According to Philippe de Courcillon, Marquis de Dangeau's report: *Journal du marquis de Dangeau publié en entier pour la première fois par MM. Soulié, Dussieux, de Chennevières, Mantz, de Montaiglon*, vol. 6, (1696–1698), Paris, 1856, p. 204.

<sup>27</sup> Information provided by: R. FAJON, 'Introduction', in A.-C. DESTOUCHES, *Issé, pastorale héroïque*, New York 1984 (*French Opera in the 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, vol. 14), p. XXIII.

Marie-Adelaïde de Savoie's wedding ceremony. The *pastorale héroïque*, extended with a prologue and the final *feste* on the monarch's order,<sup>28</sup> was officially staged on 17 December 1697<sup>29</sup> in the presence of the king and his court in the Salle de la Comédie in the north wing of the Grand Trianon in Versailles. The play was performed again on 30 December 1697 at the Académie Royale de Musique in Paris.<sup>30</sup> A year later an opera in three acts entitled *Diane et Endymion* with music composed by Anne Danican Philidor (1681–1728) was published and performed at the Château de Marly.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. XIX.

<sup>29</sup> *Issé, pastorale héroïque en musique* (as in note 25); [A. H. de LA MOTTE], *Issé, pastorale héroïque* (as in note 25); A. de LERIS, *Dictionnaire portatif historique*, pp. 261, 703 (as in note 23); J. D. REID, *The Oxford Guide*, vol. 1, p. 183 (as in note 14); R. FAJON, 'Introduction', p. XXV (as in note 27). The *Anecdotes dramatiques*, vol. 1, p. 468 (as in note 23), give a mistaken year of the staging, 1698.

<sup>30</sup> A. de LERIS, *Dictionnaire portatif historique*, pp. 261, 703 (as in note 23); J. D. REID, *The Oxford Guide*, vol. 1, p. 183 (as in note 14).

<sup>31</sup> The King ordered 100 livres to be paid to the composer for a copy of the work. This information can be found on the second page of the opera script copy that used to belong to the royal library.

Operas based on mythological love stories were highly popular at the end of the seventeenth century. The exceptional position of *Issé* among other such operas is confirmed not only by the fact that it was staged five times in 1697, but also that the Sun King – to whom the divine Apollo obviously referred – appreciated this work. After the performances both at Fontainebleau and at the Trianon, His Majesty deigned to praise the work, saying that since the death of Jean-Baptiste Lully he had not heard any piece of music he could enjoy more. He granted 200 louis d'or to Destouches.<sup>32</sup>

The opera suited the taste of both Louis XIV and the entire court. A historical record notes that Françoise Marie de Bourbon (1677–1749) – the Duchesse d'Orléans, an illegitimate daughter of the king and Marquise de Montespan, and the wife of Philippe d'Orléans, the monarch's nephew and future regent – expressed her delight and pleasure at watching the opera.<sup>33</sup> The composer was congratulated by the courtiers as well, and the work was commonly considered a masterpiece.<sup>34</sup> It was this piece of art that gained Destouches his reputation and fortune – he

was appointed the Royal Superintendent and Inspector General of Académie Royale de Musique with a salary of 4000 louis d'or.<sup>35</sup> La Motte's lyrics received equal recognition with the music by Destouches, being praised for their exceptional qualities as poetry, and the elegance and sweetness of expression.<sup>36</sup> The libretto was even described as an unequalled paragon of the pastorale héroïque.<sup>37</sup>

Undoubtedly, it was this opera that made the so far little-known mythological love story between the god and the nymph recognisable and disseminated it among the public. It should be stressed that it is the only case when the story of Apollo and Issa became a theme for an opera whose success made this rare topic fashionable. Moreover, in the same year of 1697, a poem by Thomas Corneille (1625–1709) was published in Paris<sup>38</sup> and a year later in Liège.<sup>39</sup> It contained a verse chapter about the affair between Apollo and the nymph along with a print by Franz Ertinger (Fig. 5) based on Chauveau's composition.<sup>40</sup> It may be inferred from these facts that Ubeleski's series of drawings could have been created at the time of the opera's popularity, that is, in or shortly after 1697. The possibility is strengthened by the stylistic features of the works (Figs. 1 and 2).<sup>41</sup>

## AN ATTEMPT TO DISCOVER THE IDEOLOGICAL MEANING OF THE DRAWINGS

The artist prepared three drawings as sketches for paintings presenting mythological lovers: Apollo and Issa, Diana as Luna and Endymion, and Bacchus and Ariadne. The artist's signature on the reverse of the first of them may signify its superior role in the series (Fig. 3). This conclusion is supported by the iconography of this work which stresses both the importance of Apollo in comparison to the other gods depicted in the drawings, and also by the exceptional renown of the opera *Issé*.

Thanks to the opera libretto, the content of Ubeleski's drawing can be understood more fully (Fig. 1). The

Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département Musique, RES-922, *Diane et Endimion. Pastorale Heroïque, Mise en Musique par le Fils de Philidor l'aîné ordinaire de la Musique du Roy, 1698*, p. 2: 'Le roi ordonna de verser 100 liv.[res] à Philidor l'aîné pour faire la copie de cet opéra : le présent exemplaire est cette copie qui entre dans la bibliothèque royale ainsi que l'atteste l'exlibris posé à la page 44. Cet exlibris est celui de la Bibl.[iothèque] royale de musique'. See also *Ballets, opéra et autres ouvrages lyriques*, p. 121 (as in note 24); A. de LERIS, *Dictionnaire portatif historique*, pp. 145 and 655 (as in note 23); *Anecdotes dramatiques*, vol. 2, pp. 356–357 and vol. 3, p. 390 (as in note 23) (it is not known why the first name of the composer is given as François here); J. D. REID, *The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology*, vol. 1, p. 376 (as in note 14).

<sup>32</sup> *Anecdotes dramatiques*, vol. 1, pp. 467–468 (as in note 23): 'S.[a] M.[ajesté] fit donner au Musicien une bourse de deux cents louis, l'assurant que depuis la mort de Lully elle n'avoit point entendu de musique qui lui plût davantage'. Ibidem, vol. 3, p. 154: 'Opéra d'Issé, qui parut, pour la première fois à Trianon, & dont Louis XIV fut si content, qu'il dit à Destouches, qu'il étoit le seul qui ne lui eût point fait regretter Lully'. Also the marquis de Dangeau wrote on 7 October 1697 in *Journal du marquis de Dangeau*, pp. 204 and 248 (as in note 26): '...le roi et les courtisans conviennent qu'elle est aussi bonne que celle de Lully et qu'elle n'est point volée'; and on 17 December he made the following note: '...l'opéra d'Issé, dont le roi fut fort content' and 'Le spectacle fut fort beau ; il n'y avoit que des gens de condition ; cependant la foule ne laissa pas d'y être fort grande'.

<sup>33</sup> *Anecdotes dramatiques*, vol. 1, p. 468 (as in note 23): 'Quelques jours après que la Pastorale d'Issé fut chantée à la Cour, Destouche alla faire sa cour à Mde. la Duchesse d'Orléans. Elle lui témoigna le plaisir que son Opéra lui avoit causé'.

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem: 'Quelques Seigneurs qui étoient présents, ne manquèrent pas de lui en faire compliment'. About the great success of the opera see *Ballets, opéra et autres ouvrages lyriques*, p. 119 (as in note 24); *Anecdotes dramatiques*, vol. 3, pp. 154 and 263–268 (as in note 23).

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem, vol. 3, p. 154.

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem, vol. 3, p. 266: '...cette molle élégance, cette douceur d'expression si essentielle à ce genre'.

<sup>37</sup> Ibidem, vol. 3, pp. 263–268.

<sup>38</sup> [T. CORNEILLE], *Les metamorphoses d'Ovide, mises en vers françois*, Paris 1697.

<sup>39</sup> Idem, *Les metamorphoses d'Ovide, mises en vers françois*, Liège 1698.

<sup>40</sup> The inscription under the engraving reads: 'APOLLON CHANGÉ EN BERGER. FABLE VIII', see idem, *Les metamorphoses d'Ovide*, vol. 2, p. 20 (as in note 39). Corneille's work was richly illustrated with engravings modelled on the illustrations from de Bense-rade's book.

<sup>41</sup> They were discussed in: B. HRYSZKO, 'Alexandre Ubeleski', pp. 240–246 (as in note 2); eadem, *Le Peintre du Roi*, p. 97 (as in note 1).





6. François Chauveau, *La Lune devint éprise du Berger Endymion, l'ayant trouvé endormi sur une Montagne de la Carie*, copperplate engraving, Gent, Universiteitsbibliotheek

composition presents the climax of the heroic idyll, when Apollo reveals his true divine nature to the nymph. This is indicated not only by the beams around his head, and the attributes of the god of the Sun, the bow and lyre, but above all by a cupid pointing to the young man and removing a mask from his face. The mask symbolises the disguise of Apollo as a shepherd and the fact that he has hidden his divinity.<sup>42</sup> It is the cupid – the god of love – who is holding the mask in his hand, as Apollo deceived the nymph in the name of love. The connection between the plot of the opera and the drawing enables us to explain Apollo's pose and gestures. He is kneeling in front of the nymph and bringing her hand closer to his lips. He is apparently going to kiss her in order to ask for her forgiveness. It is also a way to illustrate the heat of the god's love for the nymph who, regardless of who he was, proved to be faithful. This feature of Issa's character is twice referred to in the opera libretto<sup>43</sup> and her faithfulness is symbolised

in the drawing by a dog sleeping at her feet. The cupid flying over the couple symbolises the love that united Apollo and his chosen one. The opera's heroes, who belong to different categories of beings, were united by the power of love. Thus the god of love, breaking down all divisions, takes control over the whole world. The opera ends with the triumph of love and a joyful ballet by personifications of the four continents as representatives of the universe.<sup>44</sup>

Apollo – the god of light and sun, and thus also of bright day – is depicted in a daytime scene (Fig. 1), while the portrayal of Diana/Luna, the goddess of the night, is a nocturne (Fig. 2). In this way, the two compositions can be treated as allegories of love in the two parts of the twenty-four hour day.<sup>45</sup> Unfortunately, we do not know how Ubeleski presented the scene of *Bacchus consol-ing Ariadne*. In keeping with the iconographic tradition,

<sup>44</sup> Ibidem, pp. 46–47.

<sup>45</sup> Another example of the allegories of the times of day is a set of garden sculptures at Versailles, where four parts of the twenty-four hours have been associated with the following goddesses: the Morning is Aurora, the Noonday is Venus, the Evening is Diana and the Night is Proserpine. Compare: A. MARAL, *La Grande Commende de 1674. Chefs-d'oeuvre sculptés des jardins de Versailles sous Louis XIV*, Versailles, 2013, passim.

<sup>42</sup> On the symbolism of a mask, see G. de TERVARENT, *Attributs et symboles dans l'art profane, 1450–1600, Dictionnaire d'un langage perdu*, Genève, 1958, pp. 261–264.

<sup>43</sup> [A. H. de La MOTTE], *Issé, pastorale héroïque*, p. 45 (as in note 25): 'Nymphes trop fidelle' and 'Vous Mortels, accourez, célébrez la Beauté / La plus tendre & la plus fidele.'



it would possibly have been lit by the warm glow of the setting sun;<sup>46</sup> it can be assumed that he also depicted it as an evening scene. This topic is described in mythology in the story of Bacchus presenting to his chosen one a golden crown made by Hephaestus as a wedding gift. This was afterwards transferred into the sky as a constellation known as the Northern Crown (*Corona Borealis*).

Comparing this topic with the scenes that included Apollo, the god of the Sun, and Diana/Luna, the goddess of the moon, we may wonder whether the series of paintings planned by Ubeleski can be linked with the celestial bodies: the sun, the moon, and *Corona Borealis*.<sup>47</sup> Can they be linked with the times of day? Was there a fourth drawing that could have completed the meaning of the series, i.e. the representation of the patroness of the Morning Star, that is, Aurora, the goddess of dawn who, at this particular time of day, seduced the hunter Cephalus?<sup>48</sup> At present these questions remain unanswered.

All three love stories depicted in the drawings present the unification of opposites: a god of poetry and a nymph,<sup>49</sup> a goddess of hunting and a shepherd<sup>50</sup> (or hunter),<sup>51</sup> and a god of wine and a girl abandoned by Theseus. They can be interpreted as an indication that love depends on neither the time of day nor the rank or position of the beings touched by it. Love as a superior value

is more precious than splendours and privileges. The rules of love are obeyed by mortals and powerful gods alike. In Ubeleski's drawings it is gods who are kneeling in front of sitting mortals. In the name of love, the inhabitants of Olympus, forsaking their own sublimity and majesty, do not choose lovers equal to their rank but instead commit mythological "mésalliances" with beautiful yet mortal creatures.<sup>52</sup> Maybe this series of drawings, particularly the one based on the myth of Apollo and Issa, could be read as an allusion to morganatic marriage of the Sun King and Madame de Maintenon.

<sup>46</sup> For example, a painting ascribed to Nicolas Poussin, *Bacchus et Ariane*, Madrid, the Prado Museum, dated by Pierre Rosenberg to the years 1625–26: A. MÉROT, *Poussin, Paris, 1990*, p. 275.

<sup>47</sup> The astronomical aspect of Apollo and Issa's story is confirmed by a certain event connected with the reception of the opera *Issé*. In *Anecdotes dramatiques* one can read that a few days after the staging of the pastoral at Trianon one of the courtiers noticed that it had been cloudy for the two previous days and there had been no sunshine. This remark was met with an immediate retort uttered by the Duchesse d'Orléans who said that the sun was with Issa. *Anecdotes dramatiques*, vol. 1, pp. 467–468 (as in note 23): '...il y en eut un qui fit remarquer que depuis deux jours, le tem[p]s étoit très-obscur, & que le Soleil n'avoit point paru; sur quoi Madame répartit dans le moment: c'est qu'il est avec Issé.' This message demonstrates that the sun as a planet illuminating the earth was strongly associated with the theme of this opera, whose main protagonist is Apollo.

<sup>48</sup> Cephalus was not the only mortal lover of the goddess of the dawn. However, due to the early time of day when Cephalus was seduced, such a scene may be thought most appropriate. It should be noted that there are two other drawings referring to the love of Aurora and Cephalus in Ubeleski's *oeuvre*. See B. HRYSZKO, 'Alexandre Ubeleski', p. 233, figs. 29, 30 (as in note 2); eadem, *Le Peintre du Roi*, pp. 171–172 (as in note 1).

<sup>49</sup> Both in the opera and Corneille's poem, she is mortal because she flees from a bear: [T. CORNEILLE], *Les metamorphoses d'Ovide*, vol. 2, pp. 20–21 (as in note 39).

<sup>50</sup> In the inscription under the engraving, Endymion is referred to as a shepherd: cf. note 17.

<sup>51</sup> This is indicated by the attributes in Ubeleski's drawing (Fig. 2) and iconographic tradition, see note 20.

<sup>52</sup> Information about the wedding, see P. CHOMPRÉ, *Dictionnaire abrégé de la fable*, p. 227 (as in note 14): 'ISSÉ, une des femmes d'Apollon, qui se déguisa en berger pour l'épouser' and see [I. de BENSERADE], *Metamorphoses d'Ovide en rondeaux*, p. 270 (as in note 9): 'Bachus ayant trouvé Ariane dans un desert, en devient amoureux, et l'épouse'.

## SUMMARY

Barbara Hryszko

THE ICONOGRAPHY AND DATING  
OF THREE MYTHOLOGICAL DRAWINGS  
BY ALEXANDRE UBELESKI

The in-depth analysis of the form and iconography of three drawings by Alexandre Ubeleski (1649/1651–1718) allow for their grouping, the identification of their subject matter and potential sources of inspiration, their dating, and the discovery of their ideological meaning. The drawings are the designs of paintings presenting mythological lovers: Apollo and Issa (Fig. 1), Diana as Luna and Endymion (Fig. 2), and Bacchus and Ariadne (lost). Most probably, the artist prepared these scenes using François Chauveau's drawings as a model. These drawings were designs of prints (Fig. 4 and 6) used to illustrating the poem of Isaac de Benserade entitled *Metamorphoses d'Ovide en rondeaux* (1676). Ubeleski's drawings are related to the themes of operas composed in the second half of the 1690s, including *Ariane et Bacchus* (1696), *Issé* (1697), and *Diane et Endymion* (1698). *Issé* was particularly popular at that time and greatly contributed to popularising this rare Ovid's theme. This allows us to put forward the hypothesis that a series of Ubeleski's drawings could have been created at the same time. All three love stories depicted in the drawings present the unification of opposites: a god of sun and a nymph, a goddess of moon/hunting and a shepherd/hunter, and a god of wine and a girl abandoned by Theseus, and they also depict peculiar mythological "mésalliances" that link the immortal gods with beautiful yet mortal creatures. The question remains open whether the series of paintings planned by Ubeleski can be linked with the celestial bodies: the sun, the moon, and Corona Borealis, into which Ariadne's diadem - a wedding gift from Bacchus - was transformed. The analysis of the drawings treated as a series offers an insight into the nature of Ubeleski's work, and places it in a broader context of not only the arts but also the literature and music created within the culture of King Louis XIV's court.