**Traduzione in inglese: “Atalanta and Hippomenes” by Guido Reni. Audiodescription (1.609 words)**

**Introduction**

Good morning! Welcome to the Section of Studies of Modern Languages for Interpreters and Translators of the University of Trieste. At this moment you are in a room that contains support material on the second floor of the building. You are sitting in front of a table, on which there is a relief. It is the three-dimensional reproduction of a painting by Guido Reni, a famous Bolognese painter of the 17th century. The name of the work is “Atalanta and Hippomenes”.

This audioguide lasts about --- minutes and is divided into three parts. The first part introduces the work’s iconography and explains the Greek myth by which the artist was inspired. The second part is about the actual description of the masterpiece and provides instructions for the tactile exploration of the relief. You can either listen to the audioguide without touching the relief, or explore it with your hands following the instructions given by the audio. The final part will give you information about the life and the style of the artist, Guido Reni.

If you want to touch the relief while listening, make sure you are sitting comfortably. You can check the distance from the relief by stretching your arms in front of you to see if your hands can reach the surface without problems.

[*If pauses are integrated in the track*] Some pauses were introduced in the audioguide. They have an average duration of 10/20 seconds. These pauses will give you more time to make particular movements during the tactile exploration or to focus on some details of the work and appreciate them more.

The audioguide will start in a few seconds. Enjoy your visit!

**Iconography**

The iconography of “Atlanta and Hippomenes” goes back to classic antiquity. The Greek myth tells the story of Atalanta, a nymph who was abandoned by her father as a baby and became an excellent runner, and Hippomenes, a brave young man. Thanks to a stratagem of Venus he manages to win the race that the girl organised as a response to her father’s will to marry her. In fact, following the prediction of an oracle, Atalanta knows that after the marriage she will lose her racing abilities forever. Hippomenes is deeply in love with Atalanta and with the help of Venus’ three golden apples he wins and marries the nymph, fulfilling his dream of love.

However, the end of the myth is tragic. The two lovers are discovered while profaning the temple of Cybele with improper love and Aphrodite angrily punishes them: they are turned into lions, which according to the classic tradition couldn’t mate. This myth can be interpreted in many different ways, both psychological and moral. The metaphor of a passionate sacrilege driven by carnal instincts and its consequences as well as Atalanta’s fear of giving herself are the main and most evident interpretations.

**Description of the work**

The relief is on a smaller scale compared to the original masterpiece of Guido Reni, which portrays the crucial moment of the race between Atalanta and Hippomenes according to the Greek myth. The relief is the result of a complex work of translation of painting values into relief values.

First of all it is advisable to touch the perimeter of the bas-relief, successively moving the hands towards the centre in order to begin the tactile exploration. The exploration should be made with soft and light movements on the surface and the shapes, in order to maintain the idea of lightness expressed in the scene.

To start the exploration the synchronic use of the hands is recommended. The left hand discovers the stooped body of Atalanta, who is picking up the second golden apple, while the right hand explores the body of Hippomenes, who is running. The left hand follows Atalanta’s profile: first of all it analyses her left arm bent toward the side and her hand holding the first apple. Later it proceeds towards the head, reaching the right arm that stretches to the ground to gracefully pick up the apple. In this way the reader can notice the elegance of her movements and the sinuosity of her body. At the same time the right hand follows Hippomenes’ body. The tension in the muscles and tendons of his body caused by the effort of running is clear to the touch. If the reader lingers over his left leg stretched forward, the surge of the body can be imagined, as well as the shift of weight caused by the surge itself. The author puts in contrast the dynamism of Hippomenes with the graceful movements of Atalanta magnificently. In fact, Hippomenes is portrayed while overtaking the girl, whose weight moves to the right foot as she bends to pick up the golden apple. These particular shifts of weight in both protagonists communicate a search for balance. Following the right leg of Hippomenes and the left leg of Atalanta, the reader’s hands can reunite at the heart of the scene, that is the crossing of the lovers’ legs. It symbolises the strong interdependence between their bodies, one strong and virile and the other elegant and light. The suspended legs are a symbol themselves of the uncertain balance of their bodies and the border between life and death, between giving oneself and retreating.

Going back along the legs, the reader can feel to the touch of the two veils that cover the nudities of the lovers with delicacy and decorum. Atalanta’s veil is very thin and sometimes transparent, it is light blue and wraps the girl’s bust with extreme delicacy. As she bends to pick up the apple, the veil rises into the air and hovers lightly over the nymph’s back. Hippomenes’ veil is red and thicker, like a cloth. The friction between the air and the body caused by the young man’s quick surge makes the cloth forming a wavy line in the air, cleverly hiding his nudity.

If the reader focuses on the lovers’ faces, s/he can sense their soft and gentle features, as well as their expressions, which are focused and at the same time slightly surprised. One can touch Atalanta’s dense and wavy hair, which is blonde and light. She has a ponytail, which seems to follow the bending bust and gives the impression of blending with the nymph’s veil. Hippomenes’ hair is darker, shorter and curlier. It is the direction of his gaze, however, that is worth considering. In fact, Hippomenes turns his head from the left to the right and looks at Atalanta. He wants to make sure that Venus’ stratagem of the apples is really working and that the nymph will not regain advantage. While he is checking this, he makes a quick leap forward, overtaking the nymph. This is the crucial moment thanks to which he will win the race and marriage the young girl.

The direction of the race goes from left to right, according to the Western tradition. It is defined by the horizontal line, which divides the ground from the sky. Indeed, Hippomenes runs from the left to the right, but if the reader analyses the scene carefully, it is clear to the touch that this direction is interrupted by Atalanta’s movements. She stops to pick up the apple, turning from the right to the left. She ends up in a reflected position compared to Hippomenes.

Their skin is pearly pale, lunar. Atalanta’s skin is fairer than Hippomenes’. Both bodies contrast with the dark landscape around them. The ground is bleak, clearly stony to the touch. The sky is covered by a dense mantle of clouds. The colours are nocturnal, from dark brown to deep blue. They create a dense atmosphere with a sense of suspension, in which the bright and light figures of Atalanta and Hippomenes stand out magnificently. The composition is well balanced and harmonious. At the sides in the background there are people, who are following the competition between life and death.

**Author and style**

Guido Reni is considered one of the greatest representatives of the Italian 17th century and one of the best Bolognese painters. He was born in Bologna on 4 November 1575. He developed a passion for art already in his early years. He was apprenticed to the studio of Calvaert, a Flemish artist. After that he became a member of a painting school funded by the Carracci brothers, called *Accademia del Naturale*. He established himself as a painter and took part in the most important artistic projects in Bologna. In 1601 he travelled to Rome, where he painted many masterpieces, such as *The Martyrdom of Saint Cecily* and the decoration of two rooms of the Vatican Palace. From the beginning of his career, he studied Raphael’s 16th century classicism and conducted the search for ideal beauty with the study of Caravaggio and the Carracci. Reni is able to find his own language by putting together specific elements of each trend. His style is characterized by a cultured idea of the classical style, by expressivity and decorum and by a calm and balanced composition of lines, volumes and colours that leads to harmony even when there is tragedy. In his last active period the artist painted with a different style: the palette was so lightened that the tones were mixed with silver, becoming colder. The tones vary from light blue to pink and create an effect of lightness and hues, thanks to which the painting seems to be impalpable. The brush strokes became wide, quick and summary. It seems that the artist suffered a lot during the last period of his life, maybe even from depression. Guido Reni died on 18 August 1642 after a brief illness.