

## TO THE MOST DECORATED MAN, MASTER CHRISTOPHER CORNER

When mention is most often made of the Judgement of Paris in poets, which is not described anywhere absolutely, I think, my friend Corner, that I would make the matter not unpleasant to those who had handed themselves over to the reading<sup>1</sup> of poets, if I were to weave together this story in meter, just as is said in the dialogues of Lucian. And although the material is pleasant in and of itself, nevertheless it is also very fruitful, not only to understand poets, but also in order that from this fiction it is revealed how from a small flame, a great fire is kindled. For truly from this judgement a ten year war arose before the walls of Troy in which almost the whole of Asia also was destroyed, and many brave men died. Thus rightly, Homer wrote this about Eris:

At first, small from fear, soon it raises itself into the sky,  
and treads on the ground, and raises her head among the clouds.<sup>2</sup>

And if anyone were to consider the history of our times, he would notice that great tumults also have arisen from a trivial matter. I have wished to dedicate to you these first-fruits, who have been my leader and originator for me in this type of study. Therefore, receive this small gift, of whatever sort it is, of my grateful heart, for my teacher and think well and fairly of it. Be Well.

## JUDGEMENT OF PARIS

Whence the savage quarrel of the three goddesses arose, and the judgement of the Phrygian man, come now tell us Muse. The old man Nereus is said to have sired fifty flowing gods in a large strait, among whom was the most beautiful form of Thetis, such that she was often

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1 Manuscript reads "lectione," emended to "lectioni"

2 Vergil, *Aeneid*, 4.176-177

sought by many suitors. Jupiter felt not lukewarm flames in his chest, and the goddess<sup>3</sup> tortured him with great love. And if so dire a reason had not held back the thundering one, he would have often put on the horns of a snowy bull. For Proteus once had said to wet Thetis, you will bear an infant, who will be greater than your father, therefore, lest the world have anything greater than Jupiter, Peleus gained the great joys of the couch. Peleus, the wealthy father of great-spirited Achilles, in whose control was the Thessalian land, who immediately laid out a splendid banquet with regal luxuriance, happy with the love of the marine goddess. And he calls all the divinities of heaven and the wave sounding seas to such great wedding ceremonies, and all the Naiads and dell-nymphs, and indeed the holy divinities of Apollo's chorus. The famous house of Peleus resounded with happy applause, and they give very many signs of new joy. Here, they have a contest of the cups, there long-haired Apollo beats the sonorous threads of his gilded lyre. And even the gods sing about the sweet crimes of Jupiter with the cithara and a divine voice. But only the sister of stiff Mars was absent from here, sprinkling savage battles among great men. The common folk call her Eris, who, although small at first, soon she raises her head to the high stars. She gives birth to serious rage in an indignant mind, "why am I worthless? Why am I spurned, I ask? Therefore, should I be spurned in vain, I will mix sorrows with happiness, and I will sow the dire poisons of quarreling," she said, and she threw apple into the celebrating crowd, on which there was an inscription which she had affixed. Let the woman in this whole company who is said to be of the most supreme beauty by reputation, let her bear this Hesperian apple. Here Venus and Pallas, and with them Juno, daughter of Saturn, stir up great quarrels about their beauty immediately. And soon Juno addresses Jove with friendly words, and the other part of the

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3 Manuscript reads, "Deam," emended to "Dea"

crowd stand with ears pricked. “Oh you, great<sup>4</sup> king, who rejoice in the three-furrowed thunderbolts<sup>5</sup>, resolve our quarrels with your judgement. Now the excellence of our beauty comes into doubt, which I who have become the consort of your chaste bed, grey-eyed Athena tries to snatch as a prize, and Venus conspires against us, who seems to you now most beautiful, to this one you, greatest father, will be able to hand over the apple,” she had spoken. And from everyone, a great rumble arose. Jupiter gave these words from deep in his heart, “I cannot settle so great a matter, nor are such great cases under my purview: for I embrace you all equally with the greatest love, such that I would give the prizes of beauty deservedly to each of you. Therefore, Cyllenian offspring, with quick running, lead these frowning goddesses into Phrygia, my son. You will find Paris in the chilly veils of Ida, offering happy fodder to his cattle. Let him settle who is truly able to be called most beautiful, he is able to be an appropriate judge of beauty,” he said. And Golden Venus said with an alluring smile, “Dear father, I have no fear, even with Momus as a judge.” Here, Juno soon begins to rise into a sudden frenzy, and bears forth such sounds from her harsh mouth, “And we would not be afraid at all even with rigid Mars as the judge, who is often accustomed to lie with you alone.” And now Mercury ties his sandals to his feet, ordered to take the goddesses to the kingdom of Priam. And now as they approached the waves of the Phrygian Simois, Mercury spotted a handsome man, Behold Paris, who by chance was tending to his grazing heifers with a staff, lest they wander away through the rough mountain pasture. And once he had come to him, Mercury said, explaining the serious orders of highest Jupiter, “Greetings most handsome youth in your Dardanian fields, Greetings, do not be afraid, for I will explain a few things to you. Jupiter sent me to you from his Thessalian

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4 Manuscript reads “magnae,” emended to “magne”

5 Manuscript reads “fluminibus,” emended to “fulminibus”

shores, where the king has given great celebrations of marriage, and the women whom you see were not born of mortal seed, but they are, here before you, Juno, Minerva, and Venus. And among them, today, a great dispute arose, which beauty alone could conquer the others. And since they cannot resolve the argument of the gods, by the order of Jupiter, you ought to be the judge. Therefore, the one whose form appears most beautiful, you can signify her by giving the apple. When winged Mercury had spoken these words, Paris barely spoke these sounds with a trembling mouth, "Miserable me, what are you saying, this is a matter of great danger, that the goddesses tolerate my judgement of their beauty. Because I see no fault, indeed nothing displeases me: with me as the judge, any one of them can be the victor. O now if only I had a hundred eyes like Argus, so that I could see each of you with a provident mind. But since the mandates of the highest thunderer urge us, I must tend to this matter circumspectly. Therefore, now, take off your clothes; for my eyes must see each one of you with a nude body. Let the others depart, let Saturnine Juno remain, this will be the greatest concern of my judgement. So he spoke, they places their clothes in the soft grass, and Juno spoke to Paris with such words, "If now, Paris, my beauty should be victorious, you would take away great gifts for such a duty. Indeed the kingdom of Asia will be under your control. Your fame will transcend the rutilated poles." The shepherd responded, "Your gifts pervert my mind, your offerings must not direct the matter." After her, Minerva, born from highest Jupiter, and she offered such words from her alluring mouth, "If your opinion should favour my beauty, you will always wage wars with Mars in your favour. You will always bring back victorious banners from your enemies, destroying anything in your way with your swords." Smiling, he said likewise, "I do not care for battles at all, but rather I love the gifts of placid peace. And after her, the mother of bow-bearing Cupid approached, who spoke such words with such a voice, "If my beauty should stand most beautiful in your words, I will give you

neither a kingdom nor wars, for such things are joined with countless dangers, but I will make it such that a beautiful woman lies with you. Do not waste your youthful age so poorly, or let the blossom of your age die before its time. The gifts of Venus are more safe than the gifts of Mars, and the feminine bedchamber brings many celebrations. Therefore, embrace Helen sweetly in your arms, who will wage war with you with her nude body, who was born when Jupiter, who assumed the wings of a swan, crept into your bed, bright Leda. But now she is joined in marriage to ferocious Menelaus, who lives happily with such a beautiful wife. But nevertheless, I will make it such that she cross the sea with you, all the way to the fertile fields of Phrygian land. And he himself will be present, my dear Cupid, so that the brazen ship steers the swollen sails. Have no doubt, I swear by the witnessing stars and the Styx, which all the gods and goddesses fear. Here, hesitating, Paris mulled it over with a down-cast heart. Finally, he said, "Take this apple, gorgeous Venus." But Juno boils with hot waves of wrath, and nurtures a great wound in her remembering heart. Thus she says, "Oh what fires you throw upon Troy, oh soon you will give the Trojan kingdom to ruin. Their leaders will come with a sail-flying fleet of Greeks, stirring up savage battles with a mighty hand. Then the Simois, the Xanthus, the most famous rivers in the Trojan land will flow, stained with the colour of blood." She spoke, and departed with Minerva to the Thessalian shores, who was never calm in regard to this Trojan alone. Indeed each and every misfortune was warned to the Trojan, but the mother of winged Cupid was happy, whom the Graces and blinding Cupid soon celebrate, and give the victorious goddess woven myrtle.

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