GALLERY REVIEW - VISUALISING AN ANCIENT LEGEND: THE "TROY: MYTH AND REALITY EXHIBITION" AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM

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Abstract

Consisting of echoes of the Trojan War from different periods and supported by BP (British Petroleum), the exhibition "Troy: Myth and Reality" was staged by the British Museum in London between 21 November 2019 and 8 March 2020. The first section was mostly devoted to the "myth", the timeless tragedy of the Trojan War and its consequences, which were narrated by Homer in two epic poems, the Iliad and the Odyssey. Four episodes related to the war form the first section, Discord – Ἔρις, War – Πόλεμος, Fall – Ἅλωσις and Return – Νόστος, which visualise the legend with artefacts uncovered in the mound of Hisarlık, the archaeological site of Troy in northwest Asia Minor now in modern-day Turkey. In order to display more artefacts in a small space, the second section was placed in a rotunda, and is dedicated to Heinrich Schliemann, a German businessman and fame-seeking amateur archaeologist who "comprehensively" excavated Hisarlık for the first time in the nineteenth century. In the third section of the exhibition, the first books published telling the story of Troy take pride of place; along with modern artworks and contemporary interpretations of the Trojan War, including the controversial video clip, Queens of Syria. Inspired by the ancient tragedy of Euripides, "The Trojan

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Women", 13 Syrian refugee women in the video correlate Trojan and Syrian women who have been killed, tortured and abused in conflicts. In the course of the exhibition, the British Museum was exposed to climate protests targeting BP, who, according to activists, 'caused the climate crisis'. In memory of my visit to Bloomsbury in person, this paper aims to evaluate how the British Museum utilised contemporary display techniques to visualise the ancient legend and to analyse socio-politic cases targeted in the exhibition.

Keywords: *Troy, legend, museum, temporary exhibition, Schliemann, repatriation*

Galeri Eleştirisi - Antik Bir Efsanenin Görselleştirilmesi: British Müzesi'ndeki "*Troy: Myth and Reality*" Sergisi

Özet

Troia Savaşı'nın farklı dönemlerdeki yansımalarından oluşan ve BP (British Petrol) tarafından desteklenen Troy: Myth and Reality sergisi, British Müzesi tarafından 21 Kasım 2019 ve 8 Mart 2020 tarihleri arasında organize edilmiştir. Üç bölümlü serginin ilk bölümü, daha çok Homer tarafından destansı iki şiirde, İlyada ve Odysseia'da anlatılan Troia Savaşı ve olaylarının ebedi tragedyasına, mite ayrılmıştır. Savaşla ilgili dört ana tema, ihtilaf – Ἔρις, Savaş – Πόλεμος, Düşüş – Ἅλωσις ve Geri Dönüş – Νόστος ilk bölümü oluşturur ve günümüzde büyük çoğunluğu Türkiye sınırları içerisindeki kuzeybatı Küçük Asya'da konumlanan Troia Arkeolojik Alanı'nda, Hisarlık'ta, bulunan eserlerle birlikte antik efsaneyi görselleştirir. İkinci bölüm, küçük bir alanda daha fazla eser sergilemek amacıyla bir rotunda içine yerleştirilmiştir ve daha çok 19. yüzyılda Hisarlık'taki ilk "kapsamlı" kazıları gerçekleştiren, Alman iş adamı ve sansasyonel amatör arkeolog Heinrich Schliemann'a adanmıştır. Londra sergisinin üçüncü bölümünde, modern sanat eserleri ve tartışmalı "Suriye'nin Kraliçeleri" adlı video klibi de içeren Troia Savaşı'nın çağdaş yorumlamalarıyla birlikte, Troia hikayesini ilk kez anlatan kitaplar da yer alma onuruna erişmiştir. Euripides'in "Troia'lı Kadınlar" adlı tragedyasından esinlenen ve 13 Suriyeli mülteci kadın tarafından canlandırılan "Suriye'nin Kraliçeleri" adlı oyun, savaşlar sırasında yurdundan edilen, işkence gören, istismara maruz kalan ve öldürülen Troia'lı ve Suriyeli kadınlar arasında bağlantı kurar. British Müzesi, sergi sırasında, eylemcilere göre "iklim krizine" sebep olan BP'yi hedef alan iklim protestolarına da maruz kalmıştır. Bu çalışma, Bloomsbury'i bizzat ziyaretimin anısına, British Müzesi'nin çağdaş sergileme tekniklerini kullanarak antik efsaneyi nasıl görselleştirdiğini değerlendirmeyi ve geçici sergide hedeflenen sosyo-politik olayları analiz etmeyi amaçlar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Troia, efsane, müze, geçici sergi, Schliemann, ülkesine geri döndürme*

> *And the two remembered, the one weeping without cessation for*
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> *man-slaughtering Hector as he lay curled before Achilles' feet,*
>
> *and Achilles wept for his own father, and then again for*
>
> *Patroclus; and the sound of their lament was raised throughout the hall."*

(Hom. *Il.,* XXIV. 509-12).

1. Introduction

What is Troy? Is it merely an ancient settlement embodied by the ruins located in Çanakkale province of Turkey? Or, beyond that, is its place to represent the Orient in the ongoing East-West controversy (Said, 2003, 56)? I remember, as a first-year archaeology student, taking a course from R. Aslan, Troy's most recent excavation director, standing near the huge walls of Troy VI at Hisarlık (meaning "Fortified place" in Turkish); and as a second-year archaeology student presenting a paper on "The Forgotten Face of Troy: Frank Calvert" in the 2nd National Archaeology Students Symposium held in Pamukkale University in March 2011. In those years, I could not have imagined the greatness of Troy and its entangled memories; where meaning and value vary from person to person. Whether the Trojan War actually happened has not been proved yet by the archaeological excavations conducted in Hisarlık since the nineteenth century. The reality of Troy is its occupying the role of a 'sublime city' in Greek mythology that has shaped world art since ancient times. Homer's epic poem the *Iliad*, considered both the beginning of classical Greek civilisation and the origin of Western Culture (Baier, 2017, 6), was the first to narrate the legendary story of the war between the Trojans and Achaeans (Greeks), putatively dating back to the thirteenth-twelfth century BC. Even ancient Romans used it as a propaganda tool while transforming their state from a republic to a monarchy, telling the public that

they were the descendants of Trojans in the legendary poem the *Aeneid*, written by Virgil between 29-19 BC.

Nearly 3000 years after the Trojan War, the British Museum staged a temporary exhibition entitled *Troy: Myth and Reality* in one of its most prominent display areas, the Sainsbury Exhibitions Gallery, between 21 November 2019 and 8 March 2020. This paper aims to explore and analyse how the British Museum used original exhibition techniques to embody the ancient legend and how it tells the story by juxtaposing myths and reality. Examining the climate protests against the exhibition's sponsor BP (British Petroleum) and the museum itself, questioning the source of ancient artefacts discovered in Troy, and the museum's perspective on Heinrich Schliemann are the other goals of this paper.

2. Interpretation

The exhibition, which consists of three sections, starts with a dark and hazy atmosphere to provide an interactive experience connoting the archaeological strata (Troy VI-VII)[2] at Hisarlık. Here is demonstrated the post-war period of Troy, with its burnt soil layer and archaeological artefacts. In doing so, the exhibition aims to transform the visitors into the role of archaeologists, always keen to discover new findings in the earth. However, while this successful recreation of the archaeological layer embraces the crowd of visitors, it also evokes a claustrophobic mood (Fig. 1).

Before viewing the ancient artefacts, the audience is met by A. Caro's installation of 40 sculptures recreating the Trojan battlefield on an epic scale and C. Twombly's canvas *The Vengeance of Achilles*, which relates the legend as a whole (Fig. 2). The painting of Twombly portrays Achilles' emotions upon the death of Patroclus; thus, one of the key episodes in the story of the Trojan War resonates in the eyes of visitors: Achilles kills Hector, who is responsible for the death of Patroclus. The power of Achilles' feelings appears to ignite the canvas and to inscribe itself into the lines scrawled on its surface. Although these two artworks are inconsistent with the taxonomic order, the museum warms up audiences by means of this contemporary interpretation of the Trojan War.

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[2] For archaeological layers of Troy, see Shapland & Fitton 2020, 170-171.

After the modern storytelling, ancient writers and manuscripts related to the legend take their place at the beginning of the next part, which narrates the ancient myths. The exhibition displays the artefacts harmoniously with episodes from the legends of Troy. The first episode is entitled "Discord – Ἔρις", which was clearly inspired by the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon, and is the starting point of the *Iliad*. Displaying a Roman version of Homer's bust together with labels giving historical facts about the *Iliad*, *Odyssey* and Virgil's poem *Aeneid*, the exhibition conveys visitors into daily life as experienced in the ancient context by visualising it with authentic objects (Fig. 3). Providing information about these ancient sources also aims to educate audiences about the origins of Western culture and literature. Quotations from these ancient texts also accompany the artefacts. For example, a mosaic from Tunisia, which depicts Virgil between the Muses of history and tragedy, is exhibited with a quotation from the *Aeneid*: 'Arms and a man I sing, the first from Troy, a fated exile to Lavinian shores in Italy'. Correlating the words of Virgil and inspirational goddesses, the exhibition ushers visitors into the artistic life of ancient authors.

The exhibition cleverly displays the mythical stories depicted on ancient vases with reflected laser technology. In this regard, the most effective example is the Sophilos Dinos (580-570 BC), which depicts the wedding story of Peleus and Thetis (Achilles' father and mother), placed on a square black platform in a glass case (Fig. 4). From the ceiling, a projector reflects the cartoon-shaped wedding story onto the platform and creates a stage-like atmosphere; thus, visitors observe the story simultaneously both on the vase and platform.

The second episode in the section on myths is entitled "War – Πόλεμος", which recounts the Greek and Trojan heroes who took part in the Trojan War. In comparison with other heroes such as Hector, Paris or Agamemnon, the Greek warrior Achilles takes prominent place in this section with a Roman sarcophagus depicting scenes from his life and a modern sculpture by F. Albacini in 1825 named *Wounded Achilles* (1825), which depicts the hero mortally injured in his only vulnerable point, his heel (Fig. 5). The museum clearly admits that 'the character of Achilles is central to the story of the *Iliad*' (Donnellan & Villing, 2020, 74). Starting with a scene from his training with the centaur Chiron, Achilles' relationship with Patroclus is

shown on a sarcophagus. This artefact also shows Achilles on Skyros: 'young Achilles hiding among the daughters of King Lykomedes, disguised as a girl to save him from going to Troy, is revealed by the ruse of Odysseus who hid a shield and a spear among the gifts destined for the women' (Dunbabin, 2016, 103). These words describe exactly the same scene depicted on a mosaic from Zeugma, *Achilles on Skyros* (2nd Century AD-Fig. 6), which was inspired by the tragedy of Euripides, *Skyroi*, and illustrates Achilles' vulnerable right heel to send an implicit message to audiences regarding the fate of the warrior (Görkay, 2015, 108). These stories about Achilles and their reflections in Greek and Roman art undoubtedly inspired F. Albacini's *Wounded Achilles*. Therefore, by exhibiting both modern and ancient artworks in the same section, the museum also contributes to the visitors' understanding of the universal and timeless message of these artworks from different periods.

The third episode entitled "Fall – Ἅλωσις" displays artefacts related to the legendary fall of Troy within a 'kind of po-mo array of suspended bentwood ribs of a horse' (Fig. 7) (Cumming, 2019). By exhibiting the artefacts within this installation of horse ribs rather than a giant horse itself, the museum transforms visitors into Greek warriors waiting for the right time to attack and sack the city. This giant symbol of Troy was also utilized to greet visitors in the popular exhibition *Troia – Traum und Wirklichkeit* which opened in 2001 in Germany (Baier, 2017, 49). Comparing the two exhibitions, *Troy: Myth and Reality* clearly offers a more interactive learning process by displaying artefacts inside the wooden ribs. The London exhibition also utilizes a video reflected on the wall which animates scenes depicted on the ancient vases accompanied by quotations from classical storytellers.

The fourth episode of the legend displayed in the mythical part of the exhibition is entitled "Return – Νόστος", which is inspired by the homecoming of Odysseus narrated in Homer's *Odyssey* (Fig. 8). The Greeks' horrific deeds during the war bring about the hatred of the Gods. They punish their heroes. Odysseus, however, returns home after a long, adventurous and almost fatal journey. The exhibition embodies Odysseus' life, displaying a Roman portrait of him with deep-set eyes and a furrowed brow, suggesting a man of intellect as well as action. This portrait shows the effect of the story on Roman art. According to Homer's *Iliad* (XX.350-70), Aeneas would rule Troy with his descendants; but it does not tell us anything more about his life.

However, Roman writers such as Sallust and Virgil expand the story such that Aeneas founded Rome as a new Troy to rule: 'basing their stories on earlier Greek sources that located 'new Troy' in Italy (Donnellan & Villing, 2020, 107). From this story, both ancient Romans and contemporary Europeans base their origins on Troy, which was actually an ally of the Hittites in the second half of the second millennium BC. Therefore, the exhibition fails to explicitly explain the Anatolian origins of Troy, which has been evidenced by its late director of excavations, Manfred Korfmann (1998, 369-385)[3]. The exhibition *Troia – Traum und Wirklichkeit* reflected his ideas, manifested in the wooden model of Troy (Baier, 2017, 49). However, while visitors may be enchanted by legends, *Troy: Myth and Reality* fails to explain the archaeological realities of Troy and does not display any models of the city showing its Anatolian origin.

After the broad-ranging legendary narratives, the grief-stricken reality of Troy begins. Visitors enter a section in the *rotunda* which mainly consists of artefacts uncovered by Heinrich Schliemann in Troy (Fig. 9). How was Schliemann inspired to inaugurate a series of excavations at Hisarlık? Well aware of the historical uniqueness of the city, many travellers visited the Troad in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with a passion to discover the site of Homer's Troy (Shapland & Fitton, 2020, 127). However, Frank Calvert, an

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[3] According to Korfmann (1998, 372-373), in the second millennium BC, especially the sixth and seventh settlements, Troy was a trade metropolis having Anatolian origins rather than a Greek character. In addition to the archaeological excavations at Hisarlık, the Hittite records also bring to light a relationship between the Hittite Kings and cities of northwest Asia Minor (Shapland & Fitton, 2020, 177-179). The Alaksandu Treaty in particular, signed between King Muwatalli II (1295-1272 BC) and Alaksandu, head of Wilusa at that time, clearly indicates an alliance between the two powers. Interestingly, the name of Alaksandu resembles the other name of Paris in the *Iliad*, that of Alexandros or Alexander. In addition, the Karabel relief, which was deciphered and published by Hawkins (1998), shows that Wilusa was actually located in the Troad. Moreover, the Tawagalawa Letter (1250 BC) demonstrates correspondence between an unnamed Hittite king and the king of Ahhiyawa about former hostility over Wilusa: '… in that matter of Wiluša over which we were at enmity, he has converted me in that matter, and we have made peace…' (Hoffner, 2009). The three Hittite texts together show that, located in the Troad and ruled by Alaksandu (Paris, Alexander, Alexandros), the city of Wilusa (Ilios, Troy) fought against the Ahhiyawans (Achaeans, Mycenaeans) as an ally of the Hittites in the thirteenth century BC.

Englishman, amateur archaeologist and consular agent for the United States (Allen, 1995, 382), was the first to conduct excavations on Hisarlık mound (ancient Ilium) between 1863-1865; believing that Troy was actually to be found in that location (Allen, 1995, 391-392; Sazcı, 2007, 31; Uslu, 2017, 38; Shapland & Fitton, 2020, 139-140). In the same period, Heinrich Schliemann, a German merchant and professed archaeologist who had gained American citizenship, also visited the Troad with the ambition of uncovering Homer's Troy. At first, he found nothing. While staying at the Dardanelles, Schliemann met Calvert and under his direction inaugurated a series of excavations at Hisarlık with 140-150 local workmen between 1871 and 1873 (Sazcı, 2007, 35-36). With these controversial excavations, believing that Homer's city was located at the deepest level of Hisarlık, Schliemann not only discovered Homer's Troy unknowingly but also destroyed the archaeological strata which could have shed light upon the subsequent history of the mound (Shapland & Fitton, 2020, 143-145). He also betrayed the city by smuggling out many artefacts including the so-called Priam's Treasure[4] which he discovered in the second stratum of Troy (Schliemann, 1875, 323). According to Schliemann, this stratum of Hisarlık was, obviously, Homer's fabled city.

Upon Schliemann's smuggling the treasure he had found out of the country, the Ottoman government filed a lawsuit against him in Athens to claim half of the treasure, according to the first Antiquities Law (*Asar-ı Attika Nizamnamesi*), enacted in 1869, and the *firman* granted to Schliemann to excavate at Hisarlık (Easton, 1994, 228). After the legal battle in Greece, an amicable agreement was reached and Schliemann paid 50,000 francs compensation to the Ottoman government (Traill, 1995, 135; Sazcı, 2007, 36). As a result of the court case, Schliemann had amassed a huge collection of artefacts from Troy including Priam's Treasure and the Helios Metope. Now worried about the security of the treasure, he aimed to display it in a museum in London (Easton, 1994, 230). After being turned down by the British Museum (probably due to lack of space), he managed to put the treasure on display in the South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria and Albert Museum) between 1877 and 1880 (Easton 1994, 230-232). After this exhibition closed, Schliemann bequeathed all his Trojan Collection to

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[4] For the story of how Priam's Treasure was smuggled out of Troy, see. Meyer, 1993, 26-33; Easton, 1994, 221-243; Shapland & Fitton, 2020, 50.

Germany in 1881 (Easton, 1994, 232). At first, from 1882 to 1885, it was on display at the Kunstgewerbe Museum; later it was transported to the new Ethnological Museum in Berlin (Easton 1994, 233). However, at the end of World War II Berlin fell to the Russian army and Priam's Treasure became merely the spoils of war and was transported to Moscow (Easton, 1994, 235). Many pieces of the treasure in a gallery of the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts are dedicated to Heinrich Schliemann and his excavations at Hisarlık; thus the museum fulfilled his testament.

After almost 150 years, some artefacts from Schliemann's Troy collection came back to London again, but this time in a temporary exhibition at the British Museum (Fig. 10). On the right side of *rotunda* the exhibition cleverly displayed Schliemann's objects according to his understanding of the layers at Hisarlık[5] (Marchini 2020). On the left, however, they were positioned according to more modern research, which has revealed that the mound of Hisarlık consisted of IX seperate settlements. Nevertheless, while Schliemann is portrayed as a wealthy self-assured man, a contemporary hero of Troy, in his portrait by Sidney Hodges (Fig. 11); Schliemann's wife Sophia emerges like a victorious queen wearing the golden headdress of Priam's Treasure, the so-called Jewels of Helen, in a photograph. Being Greek and posing with the Trojan jewellery in Athens, Sophia not only acts as a model, but also as a modern Helen, symbolising the success of Schliemann, who risked his life while discovering and later saving the treasure for the benefit of 'noble' archaeology from an 'uncivilised country'. Juxtaposing Edward Poynter's

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[5] From 1870 until his death in 1890, Schliemann's understanding of the layers of Hisarlık constantly changed (Sazcı 2007, 685-693). After the first large-scale excavations at Hisarlık between 1871 and 1873, Schliemann integrated his field reports in *Trojanische Alterthümer* in 1874 (Sazcı, 2007, 686-687). According to this study, Schliemann claims that the mound of Hisarlık consists of four different layers, of which the second layer was Homer's Troy. The so-called Priam's Treasure was discovered around the "House of the City King" in this layer; however, contrary to his view, the second layer of Hisarlık actually dates to 2550-2300 BC (Shapland & Fitton 2020, 171). In 1881, Schliemann published his book, *Ilios*, in which he allocates Hisarlık seven different layers, five of which are prehistoric. He divides the first layer of *Trojanische Altherthümer* into two different settlements, and changes the second stratum to three (Sazcı, 2007, 688). In his book, *Troja*, published in 1884, Schliemann again claims that the mound consists of seven different settlements, but this time he changes the content of the layers (Sazci 2007, 689-693).

portrait of Helen with Sophia's photograph, the exhibition clearly correlates the two figures (Fig. 12).

Another contemporary reality incorporated in the exhibition is encountered by visitors after leaving the *rotunda*. This is the video *Queens of Syria* showing a group of Syrian women acting out Euripides' tragedy *The Trojan Women*, first performed in Athens in the fifth century BC, as a modern retelling (Fig. 13). The exhibition appears to make a connection between the Trojan and Syrian women who were tortured, isolated and even abused during conflicts both in ancient and modern times. Nevertheless, the tragedy of *The Trojan Women* was actually a response by Euripides to a series of destructions and atrocities orchestrated by the Greek city states in the Peloponnesian War. Firstly in 427 BC, Plateia was eliminated by Sparta and its women made slaves (Burian, 2009, 4). Upon that, Athens killed all the men of military age in Mytilene, and its women and children were enslaved, to say the least (Burian, 2009, 4). After enacting the same annihilation in Scione, a devastating elimination took place at Melos; in which all the population were killed, tortured and enslaved by the Delian League under the leadership of Athens. According to Burian, the last destruction took place 'probably no earlier than December 416' and *The Trojan Women* might have been written in a response to the Melian massacres in 415 BC (Burian, 2009, 5-6). Therefore, by giving a place to *Queens of Syria* in the exhibition, the British Museum here emerges as a 'modern Euripides' in responding to the abuse of women's rights, commemorating all the women who have been tortured, isolated and deterritorialised in the course of armed conflict.

However, in a related context, it would be good to see, for instance, the Mosaic of Iphigenia at Aulis (2nd and 3rd century AD) from Antioch on-the-Orontes and the Polyxena Sarcophagus (510-460 BC see Draycott 2018, 32) (Rose, 2014, 80) from the newly-opened Museum of Troy. Although both artefacts were not discovered in Troy, they depict a theme related to Homer's city and, more importantly, the women slaughtered in the Trojan War. The Mosaic of Iphigenia at Aulis was clearly inspired by Euripides' play *Iphigenia at Aulis*, portraying the Achaean King Agamemnon and his wife and daughter, Clytemnestra and Iphigenia (Weitzman, 1941, 243; Huskinson 2002, 142). Due to lack of wind, the Achaean army was stuck in the port of Aulis and could not set sail for Troy. To overcome this Agamemnon decides to sacrifice

his daughter Iphigenia to appease Artemis. In the mosaic, Iphigenia is seen aghast to learn her fate, while Clytemnestra is trying to calm her down and attempts to discourage Agamemnon. While the sacrifice of Iphigenia at Aulis ignites the wick of the Trojan War, the slaying of the Trojan princess Polyxena over the tomb of Achilles heralds the end of the war.

The slaying of Polyxena is rare in the Greek art; however, the Polyxena Sarcophagus vividly displays the episode which, according to Draycott (2018, 32-33), is attributed to some of the works of Euripides such as *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*, a lost play on Polyxena by Sophocles and Arctinus of Miletus. In the long relief of the sarcophagus (side A-Rose, 2014, Figs. 3.7.-3.8.), the sacrifice of Polyxena by Neoptolemus, son of Achilles, to the soul of Achilles takes place while the Trojan women are mourning under the control of Greek men. While Neoptolemus ruthlessly cut her throat, the Trojan women tear their hair and hopelessly lament, but no one hears their voice. On the short side (B-Rose, 2014, Figs. 3.11.-3.12.) of the sarcophagus, accompanied by two other Trojan women, Hecuba, mother of Polyxena, mournfully watches the slaughter of her daughter, sitting under a leafless tree. The other sides (C, D-Rose, 2014, Figs. 3.15-3.17.) of the sarcophagus appear to have depicted a celebration of different group, mostly women, 'with gift-giving, music, dancing, and conversation' (Rose, 2014, 89). One could argue that the celebratory part of the sarcophagus may be related to ancient funerary iconography, but this kind of juxtaposition, ironically, taunts contemporary grim reality. While horrifying violence was taking place against women and children in Syria, the rest of the world ignored these atrocities. Thus, the context which the exhibition presents to visitors here could be more vigorous, visualising the enduring abuse of women's rights, by juxtaposing *Queens of Syria* with ancient artefacts.

The BP sponsorship of the exhibition brought about other criticisms of the British Museum related to the *Queens of Syria* video For instance, Reem Alsayyah, the director of the film, strongly criticised BP's sponsorship of the exhibition, saying that her work was being used to "artwash" what she described as the "impacts and crimes" of the oil company (Bakare, 2019). Alsayyah obviously puts the blame on BP, which is said to have directly profited from the widespread destruction and displacement of people, and says

that it is 'no secret that BP backed the Second Gulf War, eyeing opportunities to take control of oil reserves in the region' (Bakare, 2019).

The exhibition was also the target of protests by climate activists, who brought a Trojan horse into the grounds of the museum and wore warrior-like clothing with BP's logo on their shields (Fig. 14). The Guardian newspaper covered the theatrical protest of the activists with a photo of them taken in front of the world-famous temple-like façade of the museum where the activists pose as ancient warriors protecting the Trojan horse with BP shields. In this clever demonstration, the Trojan horse represents the cultural heritage of humankind which is protected by the exhibition or the British Museum, symbolized by warriors sponsored by BP (on the shields). Helen Glynn, one of the protestors, says that 'on its surface, the sponsorship looks like a generous gift, but inside lurks death and destruction' (Gayle, 2020).

The last section of the exhibition is dedicated to the first published books telling the story of Troy and modern artworks which are contemporary interpretations of the epic. The exhibition labels give detailed information about Medieval European aristocracies and cities which were keen to trace their ancestry back to the Trojan refugees. For instance, according to Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, the mythological founding figure for Britons was a supposed grandson of Aeneas named Brutus, and London was considered as the new Troy: 'Brutus... coming to the river Thames…built a city, which he called New Troy'. One would argue that the work of Geoffrey of Monmouth can be evaluated as a milestone in Eurocentric appreciation of the Trojan heritage.

At the end of the tour, the exhibition bids farewell to visitors with a newly-designed shield of Achilles that consists of 18 coloured neon lights symbolising a microcosm of human existence. The exhibition adds that 'Troy now lies in ruins, yet its story is eternal, like the light that dawns each day over the mythical battlefield.' Therefore, apart from some debatable elements, the exhibition starts and ends satisfactorily for its audience.

After viewing all the artefacts and reading about the clandestine export of the treasure of Troy, one question arises: where did the artefacts in this exhibition come from? These 300 artefacts, which are claimed to belong legally to Troy, were gathered together from museums in Germany, Denmark

and the UK to display a wider picture of the legend. However, although Turkey claims to hold the legal rights to the artefacts from Troy which were smuggled out many years before, this is only marginally mentioned by the exhibition blurb while describing the location of the settlement. This has been criticised by R. Aslan, Troy's most recent head of excavations, who says that these smuggled artefacts, which have been spread over 44 different museums (mainly located in Europe) since the 19th century, should be repatriated to the new Museum of Troy which was opened on 18 March 2018 (Aslan, 2019).

3. Conclusion

Except for some issues, as discussed, the British Museum cleverly designed an exhibition which not only tells the legendary story of the Trojan War, but also attempts to educate visitors with an interactive atmosphere. Beyond forming a dim atmosphere to create visual integrity for Troy's cultural layer at Hisarlık, the exhibition implicitly reconstructs the scene of the catastrophic fall of Troy as well. In other words, when visitors enter the first section of the exhibition they not only think about the ancient artefacts of Troy, but also respond to the combined clever displays and the enduring story of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

The reality of Troy and a modern appreciation of its heritage mostly take place in the second and third sections of the exhibition, respectively. The controversial excavations of Schliemann at Hisarlık have been frequently investigated in a sceptical manner from the 1970s onwards by modern scholars. Even if his vision of following Homer with a spade and showing the tenacity to excavate Hisarlık in a country 'under the suzerainty of degenerated Oriental traditions', admired by most European scholars and the exhibition; Schliemann's ambitious destruction of Hisarlık by conducting 'intensive excavations' with 140-150 workmen, collecting artefacts from different strata of the mound and combining them in a treasure trove that would cause sensation and gain him respect from the archaeology circles of Europe in the nineteenth century, detaching all the valuable artefacts from the site and clandestinely exporting them to Athens has been generally ignored.

Nonetheless, BP's sponsorship of the exhibition attracted intense criticism of the British Museum. While aiming at being the voice of Syrian women, who have been dreadfully affected by conflict, juxtaposing the

Queens of Syria with other works related to Troy in the exhibition supported by BP, which obviously gain benefits from the soils of Iraq and Syria, has disappointed many cultural heritage enthusiasts and environmentalists. Apart from some qualms discussed above, the exhibition offers visitors the opportunity to spend quality time.

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Figures

Fig. 1 – Difficulty of viewing artefacts in crowded conditions (B. Özdemir,
26.01.2020).

Fig. 2 – Caro and Twombly's artworks in the first section of the exhibition (B.
Özdemir, 26.01.2020).

Fig. 3 – Bust of Homer and manuscripts related to the *Iliad* (B. Özdemir, 26.01.2020).

Fig. 4 – Sophilos Dinos illuminated by laser technology (B. Özdemir, 26.01.2020).

Fig. 5 – "Wounded Achilles" statue by F. Albacini (B. Özdemir, 26.01.2020).

Fig. 6 – Mosaic of Achilles on Skyros, from Zeugma (courtesy of Zeugma
Archaeological Project).

Fig. 7 – Suspended bentwood ribs of Trojan Horse (B. Özdemir, 26.01.2020).

Fig. 8 – Section dedicated to homecoming of Odysseus (B. Özdemir, 26.01.2020).

Fig. 9 – The *Rotunda*, mainly consisting of the artefacts discovered by Heinrich
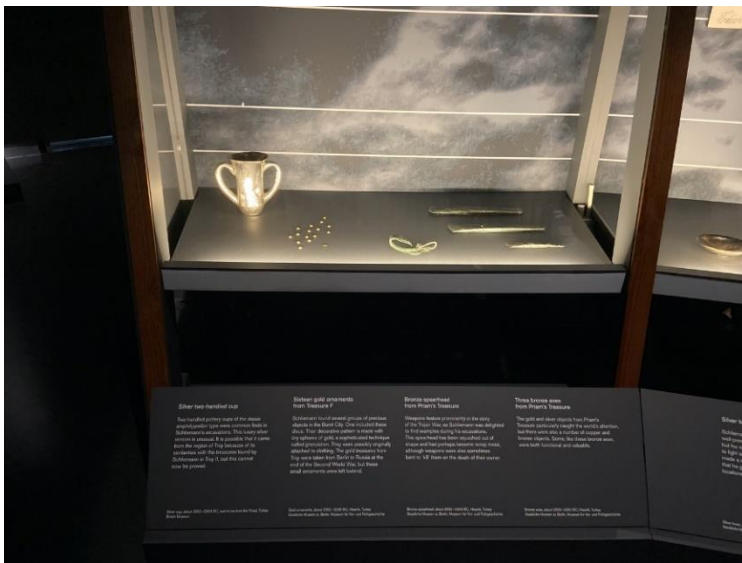Schliemann (B. Özdemir, 26.01.2020).

Fig. 10 – Bronze spearhead and three bronze axes from Priam's Treasure (B.
Özdemir, 26.01.2020).

Fig. 11 – Portrait of Heinrich Schliemann by Sidney Hodges (B. Özdemir, 26.01.2020).

Fig. 12 – Sophia Schliemann wearing the Helen's jewels and the portrait of Helen by E. Poynter (B. Özdemir, 26.01.2020).

Fig. 13 – The play of *Queens of Syria* (B. Özdemir, 26.01.2020).

Fig. 14 – Climate prot