RECONCILABLE DIFFERENCES: GREEKS AND TROJANS IN THE AENEID

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Introduction

Hera’s enmity towards the Trojans, which naturally leads her to support the Greeks, plays a key role in driving the action of Homer’s Iliad. Of course, Hera is not alone, as her attitude is shared among the gods by Athena and Poseidon and among mortals by Agamemnon, in particular. When we turn to Vergil’s Aeneid, we find that Hera, in her new incarnation as Juno, not only retains her hostility in the aftermath of Troy’s destruction, but with the help of her subalterns even incites groups of Italians to oppose the Trojan enterprise. But what are the attitudes towards Troy of the Aeneid’s other Romanized pro-Greek gods, surviving Greek heroes and other Greeks? Neptune, Diomedes and Evander, for example, exhibit a much different attitude from that of Juno—an attitude characterized by sympathy and respect for Troy and the Trojans. As we shall see, Vergil’s Greeks are carefully redrawn from the Iliad and Odyssey to evince new attitudes towards the Trojans based on their experiences during and after the Trojan War. In this article, I will trace the attitudes of pro-Greek gods and Greek characters towards Troy, the Trojan War, and individual Trojans in the Iliad, Odyssey and Aeneid to demonstrate that Vergil, developing material primarily from Homer, presents his readers with scenes of reconciliation between Greeks and Trojans in order to (1) ennoble the image of the defeated Trojans as they become Romans and (2) offer a possible model for Roman reconciliation in the aftermath of years of civil conflict.

1 Although other genres of literature—Greek and Roman tragedy, in particular—influenced Vergil’s treatment of the Trojan War and its aftermath, none of them appear to have had the pervasive and guiding influence of the Homeric epics for the theme of reconciliation. For the influence of Greco-Roman tragedy on the Aeneid, see most recently Philip Hardie, “Virgil and Tragedy,” in Charles Martindale, ed., The Cambridge Companion to Virgil (Cambridge, 1997): 312-26.

Vergilius 52 (2006) 96-107
The Background: Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*

Although approximately one-third of the *Iliad*’s narrative is devoted to battle scenes—replete with a commensurate level of hostility, especially in the form of battlefield taunts and insult—there are nevertheless many episodes characterized by civility and respect (if not outright reconciliation) between Greeks and Trojans. Such episodes include the exchange of armor between Diomedes and Glauclus in Book 6, the exchange of gifts between Ajax and Hector in Book 7, and the reconciliation of Priam and Achilles in Book 24. The fighting is also suspended for one-on-one combats between Menelaus and Paris in Book 3 and Ajax and Hector in Book 7, as well as for burying the dead in Books 7 and 24. In contrast to these moments of civility stands the implacable hostility of Hera and Athena who, in the words of Bernard Knox, “hate Troy and the Trojans with a bitter, merciless hatred.”

Among the *Iliad*’s immortals, the hostility of these goddesses is matched most closely by Poseidon and among mortals, by Agamemnon. To be sure, Menelaus hates Paris for taking up with Helen just as Achilles hates Hector for killing Patroclus, but neither of these heroes displays Agamemnon’s vitriol towards Troy and all its inhabitants.

In the *Odyssey*, we find that the gods by and large have turned their attention from the Trojan War to other matters, such as the death of Agamemnon and the plight of Odysseus. Among the Olympians mentioned in connection with the *Iliad*, Hera is absent, Athena is busy assisting Odysseus and his family, and Poseidon has redirected his

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4 Although he rescues Aeneas from Achilles (20.288-339) and, with Apollo, is usually credited with building Troy’s walls.

5 For example, Agamemnon’s exhortation to Menelaus, as the latter considers sparing the Trojan suppliant Adrestus: “would that none of them [i.e., Trojans] escape utter destruction at our hands; not even a baby boy whom his mother carries in her belly, not even he escape, but all without exception disappear from Troy unmourned and without a trace” (6.58-60). On this passage, Edwards 201 comments that “the brutal episode serves to remind us of the Trojans’ responsibility for breaking the truce, and of the savagery… often apparent in Agamemnon. It also sets off the extreme civility of the coming encounter between Diomedes and Glauclus.” G. S. Kirk, *The Iliad: A Commentary. Vol. II: Books 5-8* (Cambridge 1990) ad 6.55-60: “Agamemnon’s rebuke is remarkable… for its ruthlessness.” Paolo Vivante, *Homer* (New Haven 1985) 79-84, adroitly describes Agamemnon’s behavior in the battle scenes as “particularly cruel and gruesome” (82).
hostility towards Odysseus for the blinding of Polyphemus. Among mortals, mention of the Trojan War elicits neither anger at the Trojans for inciting a war, nor joy at having won a war, but sadness for those who died or whose whereabouts are unknown. Among the heroes who fought at Troy, we see, for example, Nestor lamenting the loss of many prominent Greeks—including Ajax, Achilles and his own son, Antilochus (3.103-17)—and Menelaus the loss of Agamemnon and Odysseus (4.183-6). Other characters, too, such as Penelope (1.337-44) and Telemachus and Pisistratus (4.183-8), feel the pains of the war, as they all mourn for loved ones killed (or thought to have been killed) either at Troy or on the journey home.  

**Vergil’s Aeneid**

The *Aeneid*’s opening lines suggest among other things that Homer’s poetry will influence Vergil’s own and that Hera’s hostility towards the Trojans in the *Iliad* will be transferred to Juno and become a prominent leitmotif in the *Aeneid*. Not even Troy’s destruction is able to placate the wrath aroused in this goddess by the Judgment of Paris (1.23-7). Indeed, Juno’s hostility towards the Trojans, as evidenced by her speeches to Aeolus (1.65-75) and Allecto (7.293-322) and her manipulation of Aeolus, Iris, Allecto and Juturna to harass the Trojans in Books 1, 5, 7 and 12 respectively raise questions in turn about the attitudes of other pro-Greek gods, such as Athena and Poseidon. In the *Aeneid*, Athena (as Minerva, Pallas or Tritonia) “shows no hostility to the Trojans in their journey” and Poseidon (as Neptunus) speaks well of Aeneas generally.

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6 He also mentions the death of Agamemnon (3.193-8).


8 She is also painfully aware that Trojan success in Italy will one day lead to the destruction of Carthage, her most cherished city (1.12-22); other issues fueling her anger include the fact that the Trojans trace their ancestry back to Dardanus, son of Zeus with Electra (Juno’s rival), and the honors bestowed by Jupiter on the Trojan Ganymede (1.28). For a metaphorical interpretation of the *Aeneid*’s opening lines and Juno’s monologue, see Werner Kuehn, *Goetterszenen bei Vergil* (Heidelberg 1971) 11-14. On Juno’s characterization in the *Aeneid* (*contra* Kuehn), see D. C. Feeney, *The Gods in Epic: Poets and Critics of the Classical Tradition* (Oxford 1991) 129-87.

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and attends to Venus’ requests on his behalf in Book 5. Furthermore, the notion that Minerva and Neptune have abandoned their former attitude towards Troy is reinforced by their appearance with Venus on Vulcan’s shield in Book 8 in opposition to the gods of Egypt (8.698-701).

Just as Minerva and Neptune’s hostility towards Troy in the Iliad has subsided in the Aeneid, so too has the hostility of Greek characters who fought at Troy, such as Teucer and Diomedes, as well as those who did not participate in the war, but who have Greek ties, such as Dido and Evander. In Book 1, for example, we see Dido welcoming the Trojans upon their arrival at Carthage (1.562-78), praising Trojan uirtus (1.566), and even inviting them to live in Carthage as equals (1.573-4). She also recalls for Aeneas the kind words of the exiled Greek hero Teucer, who once sought help from Dido’s father, Belus, in establishing a second Salamis on Cyprus:

ipse hostis Teucros insigni laude ferebat
sequer ordit antiqua Teucrorum a stirpe uolebat.14 (Aen. 1.625-6)

10 Nicholas Horsfall, ed., A Companion to the Study of Vergil (Leiden 1995) 141-2. Coleman 43: “The Trojans are after all the seafarers of the story and Neptune’s element is the sea. Moreover, as the Latin equivalent of Poseidon he easily assumes Poseidon’s Homeric role of Trojan patron. Laocoon was his priest at Troy (2.201) and, although his old anger at Laomedon’s treachery finally prompted him (2.610, 5.810-11) to overthrow the walls he himself had built, he continues to be honoured by the Trojans and favourable to their voyage.” For a survey of Neptune’s appearances, see Bailey 118-21.
11 For a comparison of the Roman and Egyptian gods on Aeneas’ shield, see P. Hardie, Virgil’s Aeneid: Cosmos and Imperium (Oxford 1986) 97-103.
12 Achaemenides, Ulysses’ comrade left on the Cyclops’ island, welcomes the sight of the Trojans (3.599-606), but one suspects that given his precarious situation he would have welcomed just about anyone with more than one eye. E. L. Harrison, “Achaemenides’ Unfinished Account: Vergil Aeneid 3.588-691,” CP 81.2 (1986) 146 observes: “Vergil’s lines are designed as a kind of a replay of the Simon episode (2.57-198), except that now the tone is reversed: Achaemenides’ despair is genuine, and thisGreek helps the Trojans to escape from danger instead of treacherously exposing them to it. Doubtless Vergil is already moving away from the anti-Greek atmosphere of Aeneid 2, and toward the reconciliation that will gather pace later in the epic.”
13 Admittedly, influenced by Mercury (1.302-4).
14 The Greek Teucer was the son of Telamon and Hesione (daughter of King Laomedon of Troy), who claims to have been named after Teucer, one of the founders of the Trojan line. According to Timothy Gantz, Early Greek Myth: A Guide to Literary and Artistic
(Their enemy himself lauded the Trojans with conspicuous praise and claimed that he was sprung from the Teucrians’ ancient stock.)

The reference to Teucer’s foundation of a new Salamis in Cyprus accords with the mythological tradition, but Vergil seems to have invented Teucer’s journey to Sidon. The addition of this seemingly minor detail is significant for several reasons: (1) it gives Dido a link, however tenuous, between the Trojans and her own family, which adds plausibility to her treatment of Aeneas, and (2) it is an artful way to introduce praise for the Trojans from a hero who fought against them.

In Book 8, following the advice of the Sibyl, Aeneas travels to Pallanteum and attempts to forge an alliance with Evander and his Arcadians based on common ties of kinship through the line of Atlas. As it turns out, Evander welcomes Aeneas not necessarily because of a shared distant relative, but because Aeneas reminds him of Anchises, whom he met in Arcadia as a young man (8.154-6). In his reply, Evander fondly recalls his meeting with Priam and the Trojans, Anchises in particular:

mirabarque duces Teucros, mirabar et ipsum
Laomedontiaden; sed cunctis altior ibat
Anchises. mihi mens iuuenali ardebit amore
compellare uirum et dextrae coniungere dextram. (Aen. 8.161-4)

Sources (Baltimore 1993) 694, in Sophocles’ (lost) Teukros Odysseus accuses Teukros (the Greek Teucer) of likely treachery against the Greeks because of his Trojan ties.

Gantz 694-5.


18 S. F. Wiltshire, Public and Private in Virgil’s Aeneid (Amherst 1989) 96-8 observes that this episode underscores the importance of inherited hospitality in the Aeneid. R. A. Smith, The Primacy of Vision in Virgil’s Aeneid (Austin 2005) 147-8, stresses the significance of Aeneas’ physical appearance in this encounter.
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(I wondered at the Trojan leaders, I wondered at the son of Laomedon himself; but taller than all strode Anchises. My mind burned with a youthful desire to embrace the man and to join his right hand with mine.)

Evander’s praise of Anchises is lavish and, as the context makes clear, thoroughly genuine.¹⁹ Equally significant is the reason given a few lines earlier by Evander for the Trojans’ visit:

nam memini Hesionae uisentem regna sororis
Laomedontiaden Priamum Salamina petentem
protinus Arcadiae gelidos iuisere finis. (Aen.8.157-9)

(For I recall how Laomedon’s son, Priam, when heading to Salamis to see his sister’s realms, continued on to visit Arcadia’s cold territory.)

Priam’s sister is Hesione, who lives in Salamis with her husband Telamon, the father of Teucer. Evander’s mention of the Trojan Laomedon and his Greek progeny in Book 8 is reminiscent of Dido’s recollection of Teucer in Book 1—a fact further underscored by Evander’s address of Aeneas as fortissime Teucrum (“bravest of the Teucrians,” Aen. 8.154). Taken together, these complementary episodes reinforce the image of reconciliation between Greeks and Trojans.²⁰

Finally, in Book 11, we have the opportunity to hear the words (and wisdom) of Diomedes, a Greek hero who confronted Aeneas on the battlefield at Troy in Homer’s Iliad. Vergil has created an atmosphere of suspense for this speech by referring to Diomedes throughout the first half of the Aeneid in terms that recall his considerable exploits at Troy as detailed in the Iliad. As W. W. de Grummond demonstrates, Vergil augments Diomedes’ role in the destruction of Troy and, at times, elevates him even above Achilles: for example, Aeneas’ desperate wish in Book 1 to have been killed at Troy by the “bravest of the Danaan race,

²⁰ The parallelism of the two scenes is noted by Williams and Conington ad 8.157. The more vexing question is why Priam and the Trojans went out of their way to visit Arcadia in the first place. Conington ad 8.157 points out that, “Anchises was connected with Arcadia in legend, his tomb being shown at Mount Anchisia near Orchomenos, Pausanias 8.12”; Servius ad 3.167 recalls a tradition that makes Dardanus an Arcadian.
Tydeus’ son” (o Danaum fortissime gentis / Tydide, 1.96-7), even though Aeneas had also fought Achilles (Iliad 20).21

In the midst of a dispute, Latin envoys sent by Turnus in Book 8 (8.9-10) return with the unfortunate news that Diomedes has refused to join the fight (Aen. 11.252-95).22 As we shall see, like Nestor, Menelaus and Odysseus in the Odyssey, Vergil’s Diomedes does not look back to the events at Troy and their aftermath with satisfaction or joy,23 but with sorrow, and instead recalls the Greek transgressions and violations that have caused them no end of suffering (Aen. 11.255-60).24 Nicholas Horsfall summarizes Diomedes’ response as reported to the Latin assembly by Venulus, the leader of the envoys: “to Venulus, Diomedes offers not troops but tragedy.”25 Diomedes emphasizes the misfortunes of the Greeks by citing seven examples of difficult or disastrous nostoi: those of Menelaus, Ulysses, Neoptolemus, Idomeneus, Oilean Ajax, Agamemnon, and finally that of Diomedes himself, who is bereft of home, family and companions (Aen. 11.261-74).26 Diomedes traces his own misfortune to his wounding of Venus and intimates that he will not now take up arms against her son, whom he fought in single combat:

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\text{stetimus tela aspera contra}
\]
\[
\text{contulimusque manus: experto credite quantus}
\]
\[
\text{in clipeum adsurgat, quo turbine torqueat hastam.}
\]
\[
\text{si duo praeterea talis Idaea tulisset}
\]
\[
\text{terra uiros, ultro Inachius uenisset ad urbes}
\]
\[
\text{Dardanus, et uersis lugeret Graecia fatis.}
\]

(We stood against his bristling weapons, we came to blows: trust one who knows from experience how high he rises up with shield outstretched, with what force he hurls his spear. If Ida’s land had produced two other such men, the Trojans would on their

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22 For a rhetorical analysis of Diomedes’ speech, see Highet 56-7.

23 E.g., nec veterum memini laetorue malorum (11.280).

24 Scelerum (258); uiolauimus (255), uiolauri (277).


26 For Diomedes’ experiences after the Trojan War, see Gantz 699-700; Horsfall (1995) 187-8 (with n. 11); and Wiltshire 98-100. For the nostoi of other heroes, see Malcolm Davies, The Greek Epic Cycle (Bristol Classical Press 2001), and Gantz 657-717.
In this passage, Vergil has Diomedes recall his encounter with Aeneas in greatly exaggerated terms, as Aeneas needs to be rescued from certain death by two gods, Aphrodite and Apollo, after being struck with a rock hurled by a previously-wounded Diomedes. Vergil assigns this “rewritten” version of the Homeric episode to the Greek hero in order to demonstrate Diomedes’ earnest commitment to peace, for the sake of which he will even downplay his own heroism and fighting prowess. According to Horsfall, Diomedes has “meditated upon his glory and learned how little he has in the end won by it. His record as a hero now matters less than peace in Italy and to that end he rewrites ‘what happened’.” Diomedes then closes his speech by stressing the role played in the defense of Troy by Hector and Aeneas:

\[
\text{quidquid apud durae cessatum est moenia Troiae,} \\
\text{Hectoris Aeneaeque manu uictoria Graium} \\
\text{haesit et in decimum uestigia retulit annum.} \\
\text{ambo animis, ambo insignes praestantibus armis,} \\
\text{hic pietate prior. coeant in foedera dextrae,} \\
\text{qua datur; ast armis concurrant arma caeute. } (\text{Aen. 11.288-93})
\]

\[
(\text{Whatever delay there was before the walls of enduring Troy,} \\
\text{Greek victory was checked by the hand of Hector and Aeneas} \\
\text{and was caused to revert until the tenth year. Both were} \\
\text{distinguished in courage, both in excellence in arms, the latter} \\
\text{foremost in piety. Let their right hands join in treaty as is} \\
\text{permitted; beware of clashing arms against arms.)}
\]

Once again, Diomedes elevates Aeneas’ role for the sake of persuading the Latins to avoid war at all costs. Furthermore, in recognizing Aeneas’ pietas, Diomedes has exchanged (what has apparently become for him) outmoded Homeric ideals that emphasize

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28 Horsfall 2003 ad 11.243-95. Wiltshire 103: “far from having clearly bested Aeneas on the plains of Troy, Diomedes presents himself as if he had been the loser rather than victor in that confrontation.”
excellence in arms for a new understanding of humanity that emphasizes
excellence in character. As Susan Ford Wiltshire remarks: “Vergil has
introduced a new category of consciousness into the poem. Hector and
Aeneas were equally skilled in arms…but Aeneas is superior as a human
being... War can no longer be waged along purely Homeric lines.”

Diomedes’ attitude towards Troy and the Trojans has a poignant
precedent in *Odyssey* 8 that deepens our understanding of his decision.
After Alcinous declares his intentions to assist the as-yet unnamed
Odysseus, the blind bard Demodocus launches into a song about the
Trojan War that features a quarrel between Odysseus and Achilles (8.75-
82) to which Odysseus reacts by hiding his face and weeping (8.83-6). Later,
prompted by Odysseus himself, Demodocus sings about the Wooden Horse,
the sack of Troy and Odysseus’ defeat of Deiphobus; this time Odysseus
“melts into tears” and weeps like a captive woman weeping for her dead husband (8.521-35). On this arresting scene, the
Oxford commentators observe: “weeping in Homer is the expression of a
very wide range of emotion (fear, relief, vexation, pity, sense of loss,
failure or helplessness), but none exactly fit the case of a man who weeps
at the recollection of victory.” The pain that Odysseus feels in recalling
even victorious moments from the Trojan War is shared by Vergil’s
Diomedes, and taken together these scenes are a reminder of the
consequences of war, which can blur even the ostensibly obvious
distinction between victors and vanquished.

Through studied self-reflection, Diomedes has come to regret the
actions of the Greeks at Troy and, as a result—like Aeneas in Book 2—
presents the sack of Troy as “an act of moral outrage,” deliberately
juxtaposing the piety of Aeneas with the impiety of the Greeks. Vergil’s
Diomedes achieves a level of insight into the human condition
comparable to that of, say, Achilles in *Iliad* 24—with one important
difference: Diomedes (like Achilles) may have suffered irreversible

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29 Wiltshire 103-4.
30 Heubeck et al. *ad* 8.522.
31 Feeney 143 observes: “The *Aeneid* reflects the tragic insights into the guilt and
suffering of victory which the sack of Troy is capable of representing in the
*Odyssey*, and especially in Athenian tragedy.” P. A. Perotti, “La Rivincita dei Troiani,”
*Latomus* 61.3 (2002) 628-42 considers how Vergil makes clear that the Greeks, while apparently
victorious in the Trojan War, in fact gained only a superficial victory, equivalent to a
moral defeat.
32 K. W. Gransden, *Vergil’s Aeneid: An Essay on Epic Narrative* (Cambridge 1984) 175-
6.
losses, but he (unlike Achilles) will live long enough to put what he has learned into practice by declining to fight against Aeneas. Diomedes is proof that attitudes can change and that reconciliation is indeed possible, if one is willing to reflect honestly on and learn from past experiences. In the words of Wiltshire again, Vergil’s Diomedes has been “shown to convert from the Homeric ideal of war to the Augustan ideal of peace.”

**Conclusion**

In his discussion of Daedalus in Book 6, Viktor Pöschl observes:

> “Daedalus, like so many others in the poem, like Antenor, Diomedes, Andromache and Helenus, Dido and Evander, is an exile. This alone relates him to Aeneas and connects his fate most intimately with the main theme of the poem—the search for a new home.”

It is worth noting that the subjects of this study, too—all of whom (with the exception of Teucer) appear on Pöschl’s list—are exiles, which may explain why characters such as Dido, Teucer, Evander, and Diomedes are able to sympathize with the plight of Aeneas and the Trojans. The experience of exile explains, in particular, Diomedes’ attitude towards Aeneas, as it certainly would have been in keeping with his Homeric persona to have been eager to resume his former hostilities. In the final analysis, however, just as Juno’s reconciliation with Jupiter in Book 12 is a problematic resolution of the *Aeneid*’s divine discord, the scenes of reconciliation between Greeks and Trojans likewise present a problematic model of success for the mortal characters, as even the pleas for peace of a respected Greek hero like Diomedes will ultimately fall on deaf ears and fail to prevent further

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33 Wiltshire 100.


35 De Grummond 40.

36 D. C. Feeney, “The Reconciliations of Juno,” in S. J. Harrison, ed., *Oxford Readings in Vergil’s Aeneid* (Oxford 1990) 362, for example, asserts: “In the *Aeneid* Juno moves some considerable distance from her original stance of total opposition to Rome. At the end of the epic the forces represented by Juno nudge closer to those of Jupiter, and rest there for the while, in tension.”
bloodshed between Trojans and Latins. Unlike Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the *Aeneid*’s sudden and powerful ending does not leave us with a clear image of reconciliation, but only with an invitation to speculate as to what happens next—an appropriate sentiment given the shifting social and political climate in the years after Actium.

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**Works Cited:**


