

***Horses of Heroes and Heroic Horses: Comparing the Role of the Horse in
Homer's Iliad and Virgil's Aeneid.***

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Abstract

Horses are an integral part of both the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*, being used to transport warriors into battle, they are given as gifts or prizes, stolen as plunder, and they enable their owners to display both their wealth and status as heroes and warriors. While there is scholarship that has examined horses in either one or the other epic poem, much of this recent work has focused on one specific area, for example as prizes in the funeral games in *Iliad* 23 or in the *lusus Troiae* in *Aeneid* 5. In addition, many of the more wide-ranging works, particularly on horses in the *Iliad* or horses in antiquity generally, were published over 40 years ago, and are therefore out of date. There also appears to be little scholarship that explores the personal relationship that the heroes of both these epics have with their horses, and none that compares the role of the horse in the *Iliad* to its role in the *Aeneid*.

This dissertation will attempt to explore the similarities in the role of the horse (and other equids) in the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*, such as the use of the animal in transport and warfare, as a status symbol, for display and entertainment, as well as being a prized companion to be lavished with attention and even spoken to as a friend, as demonstrated by both Antilochus in *Iliad* 23 and particularly Mezentius in *Aeneid* 10. It will also examine the differences, for instance, the horse is used mainly as a draught animal and never ridden in the *Iliad*, but is ridden frequently in the *Aeneid*; there are immortal horses in the *Iliad*, but not in the *Aeneid*; and that similes and epithets involving horses are more common in the *Iliad* than in the *Aeneid*.

The dissertation will conclude two things: that the use and importance of the horse in each epic poem also reflects the use of the horse in the societies that produced the poems, hence the differences and similarities; and that because of the structure and focus of each poem, horses are a more important part of the *Iliad* than the *Aeneid*. This is because the main emphasis in the *Iliad* is on warfare, in which the horse is an integral part, while the first part of the *Aeneid*

focuses on the wanderings of Aeneas and his people, and there is little time for horses here; it is only when the Trojans reach Italy and engage in warfare that horses become more important.

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Introduction

The relationship between human and equine is a long one. Originally hunted, they were not domesticated until long after animals such as dogs and sheep,¹ and probably not ridden until at least 3,500 BC by the steppe people of Eurasia.² In Greece, there is no evidence for horse domestication before 2000 BC, but by the Mycenaean period, it is obvious that people were comfortable with horses, as they appear on items from Mycenaean graves, particularly images of chariots: and chariots, horses, wheels and related items are all described on Linear B tablets from Knossos.³ Chariots and domesticated horses had probably been brought into Greece from the Near East, as they had already been of significant importance to cultures such as the Hittites and Babylonians before they appear in Mycenaean art.⁴ Chariots feature heavily in the *Iliad* (though less so in the *Aeneid*), and this evidence shows that chariots, and therefore horses, were important in Greek culture, from the Mycenaean period onwards.

In contrast, there is little evidence for horseback riding in Greece until later, in the eighth century BC, and although this is roughly the time period during which the *Iliad* was composed, the *Iliad* reflects the earlier practice of reliance on chariots, knowledge of their use perhaps handed down orally, and considered more suitable for tales of a heroic past. There is little included in the poem on horse riding, perhaps because it was considered less heroic, as it may have been more familiar by the time of composition. By the time the *Aeneid* was written, however, the situation is reversed, and Virgil seems more comfortable describing horse riding, though he still includes some chariots in emulation of the *Iliad*, and he would have been familiar with those as chariot racing was a common event in the games that took place in Rome and elsewhere in the empire. By Virgil's time, ridden cavalry were now used in battle, and he

¹ Willekes, 2016, 15.

² Charles, 2007, 3.

³ Charles, 2007, 3.

⁴ Griffith, 2006, 198.

would also have seen Roman youths performing manoeuvres on the Campus Martius. As a well-off Roman of the *equites* class, he probably also knew how to ride a horse himself.

Therefore, the societies that produced both these epics were intimately familiar with the horses, and their uses, even if the poorer parts of the audience may not have had a relationship with horses themselves. Horses were expensive to maintain, and therefore only available to the rich, making them a necessary part of a warrior's equipment as imagined in epic poetry. This means horses are everywhere in the *Iliad*, though slightly less so in the *Aeneid*. This is because the *Iliad* is set on a battlefield, while Aeneas and his people spend a significant part of the first half of the *Aeneid* travelling by sea. It is only when they reach Italy and enter into battle with the Latins and Rutulians that horses become important to the narrative. The prominence and ubiquitous nature of horses in the *Iliad* compared to the *Aeneid* means that it is easier to discuss and analyse the use of horses and their relationships with humans in the *Iliad*. This is reflected in the secondary literature, where there has been more written on horses in the *Iliad* and little on horses in the *Aeneid*.

For example, the use of chariots in the *Iliad* seems to be a popular topic for scholars, though often as a discussion in another work. Greenhalgh discusses the use of the chariot in the *Iliad* quite extensively,⁵ as does Anderson in several of his works,⁶ while other authors touch on it in their works,⁷ and one article focuses on chariots in Homer exclusively.⁸ Even very general works have a brief discussion on chariots in the *Iliad*.⁹ In contrast, there is nothing similar for the *Aeneid*, although admittedly there are fewer chariots in that poem. Riding is more common in the *Aeneid*, however, only the *lusus Troiae* of *Aeneid* 5 has been treated in any detail.¹⁰ There

⁵ Greenhalgh, 1972.

⁶ Anderson, 1961, 1965 & 1975

⁷ Bennett, 1997: Littauer and Crouwel, 1983: Bell and Willekes, 2014.

⁸ Raaflaub, 2011.

⁹ Hyland, 2003.

¹⁰ Dunkle, 2005: Willekes, 2016, who are both more concerned with Virgil's message than riding.

is also little written regarding riding in the *Iliad*, as there is only one main example of this in *Iliad* 10, where Odysseus and Diomedes steal the horses of Rhesus.¹¹

There is also a great deal of other secondary literature on horses in the *Iliad*, such as on horse similes,¹² and on horses as gifts and prestige items.¹³ They have also been a natural focus on Achilles' horses, due to their divine status and surprising vocalisation in *Iliad* 19.¹⁴ Obviously, there are no horses like this in the *Aeneid*. Instead, other than the *lusus Troiae*, discussions including horses of any kind have to be found elsewhere.¹⁵ The Funeral Games of both epics are also popular topics for secondary literature,¹⁶ although while there are many references to horses as prizes and competitors in the chariot race in the *Iliad*, in the *Aeneid*, other than the *lusus Troiae*, horses are only mentioned in a simile that indicates the boat race is a stand in for the chariot race in the *Iliad*.

This brief overview of the literature available therefore indicates that horse related topics have been of more interest to scholars of the *Iliad* rather than the *Aeneid*. This is not due to a lack of horse related material in the *Aeneid*, but indicates, perhaps, that the horse related material in the *Iliad* is more interesting, varied and significant.¹⁷ Horses are everywhere in the *Iliad*, while in the *Aeneid*, they have been pushed more into the background.¹⁸ Instead, Virgil uses horses often as an intertextual link to the *Iliad* or to promote Augustus, meaning while both epics interact with each other and have much to compare, the *Iliad* is the epic that holds most interest here.

¹¹ Griffith, 2006: Anderson, 1961 talks of this in more detail, especially the language and formulae used.

¹² Achity, 1978: Griffiths, 2006: Gregory, 2007: especially Fagan, 2001.

¹³ Griffiths, 2006: Gregory, 2007: Achity, 1978: Platte, 2017.

¹⁴ Schein, 2015: Johnson, 1992: Charles, 2007: Heath, 1992.

¹⁵ Gotoff, 1984 on Mezentius: Johnston, 2006 on Turnus: Gildenhard and Henderson, 2018 on Pallas and Camilla.

¹⁶ *Il.* Bell & Willekes, 2014: Kitchell 1998: *Aen.* Dunkle, 2005: Lindsay, 1991, Lowe, 2015: *both* Willcock, 1988.

¹⁷ E.g. the *Doloneia* of *Il.* 10, the divine horses Xanthos and Balios, the chariot race of *Il.* 23.

¹⁸ With some very notable exceptions, e.g. Mezentius and Rhaebus, *Aen.* 10.786-901 *Lusus Troiae*, *Aen.* 5.545-604.

This means that the role of horses in the *Aeneid* is more difficult to analyse than in the *Iliad*. Therefore, some of the techniques used to analyse the role of horse in the *Iliad* will be applied here to similar episodes in the *Aeneid*, as closely as possible, for example, Fagan's analysis of horse similes in the *Iliad* can be transferred to horse similes in the *Aeneid*.¹⁹ Other episodes can be discussed separately, such as those including Achilles' horses, or the *lusus Troiae*, as there is nothing comparable in the other epic.

The focus of the following work will therefore primarily examine the relationship between horses and the characters of the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*, whether male or female, mortal or divine. By scrutinizing the role of horses and other equines in both epics, how they can shed light on the characters of those who interact with them will be examined, as well as how similar or different this is when comparing the two epics. In addition, their position in epic society will be discussed, for what that can tell us about the values of that society, and those of the intended audiences of those poems. Special cases will also be explored, particularly that of Xanthos and Balios, and their relationship with both the gods and Achilles, including what their role and interaction tells us about his character. Finally, examining the role of horses in the *Aeneid* itself can also provide information on the intertextual relationship between the *Aeneid* and the *Iliad* as well as giving insight on Virgil's programme with regard to Roman history and the rule of Augustus.

¹⁹ Fagan, 2001.

Chariots

The main way in which horses are used in the *Iliad* is to draw chariots. Chariots are used to take warriors into, and away from, battle, they are used in the Funeral Games,²⁰ and they are used because the status of the character means they must travel by chariot. They are a necessity for the plot, and they are everywhere. In contrast, horses are rarely used to draw chariots in the *Aeneid*. Where they are, they are used in similar contexts, though only by the Latins, and never by the Trojans. In many ways their use emulates the way they are used the *Iliad*, highlighting *Aeneid*'s constant relationship with that text. It is far more common to find characters in the *Aeneid* riding their horses rather than driving them, indicating that Virgil was probably more familiar with riding in a battle context.

In battles in the *Iliad*, horses and chariots are used for two things: taking warriors to the battlefield, where they usually dismount and fight on foot: and taking the warriors out of battle, sometimes in chaotic flight. In between, the chariot and charioteer wait nearby in case they are needed. For example, Diomedes charges into battle on foot,²¹ yet when he is shot, his companion Sthenelus and his chariot are close, ready to assist.²² Soon after, Aeneas and Pandarus seek out Diomedes, and he tells Sthenelus he will dismount to confront them.²³ Pandarus, unusually, does not, as he is described as crashing out of his chariot when Diomedes kills him.²⁴ However, Aeneas does dismount for his (unsuccessful) confrontation.²⁵ Again, Sthenelus is nearby, in this case to take charge of Aeneas' horses, which he returns to the ships before returning to Diomedes' own chariot and going off in search of him to offer his continued support.²⁶ The example of Diomedes here is not unique, but it shows that a charioteer is vital

²⁰ // 23.255-897.

²¹ // 4.19-21.

²² // 5.111-13.

²³ // 5.254-256.

²⁴ // 5.293.

²⁵ // 5.297.

²⁶ // 5.320-330.

to the success of the heroic warrior in battle, and to saving his life and fleeing the battle when it turns against him.

Taking warriors into battle, having them fight on foot, then carrying them away again, seems like an ineffective way of using chariots. Griffith seems to think that this is because the poets and their audience no longer seem to understand how a chariot might be used in battle, as to the audience, chariots were no longer used in this way.²⁷ In this he agrees with earlier scholars, such as Greenhalgh, who states that massed chariot charges would have been the norm in the Late Bronze Age and by the time the *Iliad* was composed, this had been forgotten.²⁸ Instead, he proposes that the poet transferred the function of the ridden horse onto the chariot, consciously heroising and archaising the subject.²⁹ The oral composition of the poem kept the use of chariots alive, though perhaps without proper understanding. To the poets that formed the *Iliad* and the rest of the epic cycle, chariots were equipment used in the past, when the heroes of the epics were active, and so their use is suitable for them, and aggrandises them.

Nevertheless, Griffith's and Greenhalgh's theories are not universally agreed upon. Littauer and Crouwel point out that, as there is no evidence from Late Mycenaean pottery of bows being used from chariots,³⁰ and that it is difficult to accurately throw a spear from a chariot bouncing across the battlefield,³¹ it is possible that chariots were, in fact, used to transport warriors in and out of battle, where they would dismount to fight, just as is described in the *Iliad*. However, the authors do point out that there is no evidence from the Mycenaean period at all on how chariots were used in battle,³² so it remains unclear whether the *Iliad*'s descriptions, as passed down orally, are accurate or not.

²⁷ Griffith, 2006, p.199.

²⁸ Greenhalgh, 1973, 10.

²⁹ Greenhalgh, 1973, 43.

³⁰ Littauer and Crouwel, 1983, 190.

³¹ Littauer and Crouwel, 1983, 188.

³² Littauer and Crowell, 1983, 191.

Even though chariots used in battle in the *Iliad* always have a charioteer, in other contexts the hero himself also proves to be an excellent driver. This is shown in the Funeral Games,³³ where prominent heroes that have become familiar from earlier books, together with some less prominent ones, compete in the chariot race, and none use a charioteer here.³⁴ In the *Iliad*, driving the chariot themselves gives them a chance to be even more “heroic,” and also provides an exciting interlude for the poem’s audience, as when Diomedes, with the help of Athena, dramatically avoids the wreckage of Eumelus’ chariot and sweeps to victory.³⁵ Elsewhere, Nestor drives his own horses to rescue the injured Machaon from the battlefield,³⁶ but as an old man who does not fight, he doesn’t need a charioteer, though it does, however, show his skill as the “Gerenian charioteer”.³⁷ Nestor also demonstrates extensive knowledge elsewhere of how to drive a chariot, shown by his advice in *Iliad* 4,³⁸ and particularly his advice to his son Antilochus before the chariot race.³⁹ This is even though, when after the chariot race he is recounting his victories as a younger man at the Funeral Games of Amarynceus, the chariot race was the only event where he was not successful.⁴⁰ As Boyd points out, Nestor has learned his skill with the chariot through experience that he is now passing on to his son.⁴¹

Whoever drives the horses, the relationship is always between the hero and the team, not necessarily the person who holds the reins and controls the animals. Firstly, the team are always described as belonging to the hero. This relationship is reinforced by the communication between the hero and the horses, without reference to the charioteer. For example, in *Iliad* 8,⁴²

³³ // 23.257-897.

³⁴ This is unlike the Panhellenic games later Greeks would be familiar with, where chariots were owned by wealthy or aristocratic men, but driven by charioteers who were usually slaves.

³⁵ // 23.399-400. Using Aeneas’ stolen horses, 10.

³⁶ // 11.511-520.

³⁷ // 2.601.

³⁸ // 4.292-309.

³⁹ // 23.301-348.

⁴⁰ // 23.638-642.

⁴¹ Boyd, 2017, 128.

⁴² // 8.312-315.

Hector's charioteer is killed. He swiftly finds another one, and it seems that anyone will do.⁴³ However, it is Hector who speaks to the horses, reminding them of all the loving care given to them by Andromache, and urging them on.⁴⁴ Similarly, Achilles' horses, normally driven for Achilles by Patroclus⁴⁵ are always Achilles' horses, and share a more intimate relationship with him, as shown during their unexpected conversation at the end of *Iliad* 19.⁴⁶

The final way horses and chariots are used in the *Iliad* is to designate status. The status of the heroes in the *Iliad* requires that they must travel to and from battle in a chariot, however, non-combatants also use them as their status demands it. Perhaps the best example of this is the gods and their chariots. The gods do not need them: Iris appears to travel wherever she is needed with her messages: in *Iliad* 1 Apollo "descends like nightfall," to bring plague to the Greeks: and Athene appears to Achilles instantaneously to prevent him killing Agamemnon.⁴⁷ There are many other examples of this type of "fast travel." But at other times the gods use chariots. In *Iliad* 8, both Zeus and Hera use chariots. Zeus drives his chariot himself to Mount Ida to watch over the Greeks and Trojans,⁴⁸ driving it back again at the end of the Book, where the horses are cared for by Poseidon.⁴⁹ In the same Book, Hera readies her chariot, and acts as charioteer for the now well-armed Athene in order to intervene in the battle on behalf of the Greeks.⁵⁰ Both these goddesses have demonstrated that they do not need a chariot to interfere, but on this occasion, as they intend to join battle as if they are mortal male warriors. And in *Iliad* 13,⁵¹ Poseidon harnesses his horses, "with their hooves of bronze and flowing manes of gold," driving them out of the sea in order to visit the Greek camp. Their special colouring is

⁴³ // 8.116-121.

⁴⁴ // 8.184-195.

⁴⁵ // 23.297-280.

⁴⁶ // 19.397-424. See 39.

⁴⁷ // 1.194-197.

⁴⁸ // 8.39-52.

⁴⁹ // 8.438-441.

⁵⁰ // 8.381-396.

⁵¹ // 13.23-31.

the only time the appearance of the gods' horses are ever described, and denotes how special they are compared to mortal horses. In one final example, Zeus is surprised that Hera is travelling without her chariot, showing again that none of the gods need one for travel, but that Zeus expects Hera, because of her status, to use one.⁵² It seems, then, it is the senior gods of Olympus who choose, at least some on some occasions, to drive chariots as a sign of their status.

This also applies to certain mortals, most particularly Priam. In *Iliad* 3,⁵³ Priam travels to the battlefield by chariot, driven by a charioteer, in order to witness the oath that seals the terms of the duel between Menelaus and Paris. Obviously, it is partly his age that requires him to do this. At the other end of the poem, when Priam sets out to ransom Hector's body, he could easily travel in the mule cart with Idaeus, but instead he travels by chariot, and he travels in that, because his status demands it, though he does drive it himself, a ruler handling the reins like a god.⁵⁴

While horses in the *Aeneid* are mostly ridden, chariots are used in similar ways, though usually to emulate their use in the *Iliad*. As in the *Iliad*, chariots are used in a war context by the Latins, with Turnus calling for horses and chariots and the whole army then moving off across the plain.⁵⁵ Occasionally, individual warriors are described driving their chariots, such as Virbius, the son of Hippolytus,⁵⁶ and in *Aeneid* 10, Aeneas attacks several warriors in chariots, even though he is on foot, most notably Lucagus and Liger.⁵⁷ Although neither of these jumps down from their chariot as warriors do in the *Iliad*, the way Aeneas kills the charioteer Lucagus is reminiscent of how many charioteers are killed in the *Iliad* especially Hector's two charioteers

⁵² *Il.* 14.298-299.

⁵³ *Il.* 3.261-263.

⁵⁴ *Il.* 24.322-328.

⁵⁵ *Aen.* 9.12-26.

⁵⁶ *Aen.* 7.781-782.

⁵⁷ *Aen.* 10.575-600.

in *Iliad* 8.⁵⁸ However, these descriptions of chariots being used in battle are few, without much of the detail included in similar descriptions in the *Iliad*. It appears that Virgil, although probably familiar with chariots by observing the sport of chariot racing, commonly performed in the Circus Maximus in Rome, was uncomfortable with their use in battle, so they are kept to a minimum, with more prominence being given to the ridden horse in this context.

Nevertheless, Virgil sees the ownership of a chariot and horses as a necessity for the epic warrior in the Homeric style. The heroes of the past that Aeneas sees during his journey through the underworld are accompanied by their chariots and horses, though the horses are not harnessed and crop contentedly at the grass instead.⁵⁹ Later, Latinus gifts horses and a chariot to Aeneas, a high-status gift, though no space is given to describing the chariot itself, only the horses.⁶⁰ This chariot and team of horses are never seen again within the rest of the poem, and Aeneas himself never sets foot in a chariot, nor do his own warriors. Instead, as Polk points out, riding in chariots is exclusive to the Italians. She further states that Turnus appears in a chariot more often than any other Latin leader, making Turnus deeply associated with the chariot.⁶¹ Latinus also mounts a chariot to attend the oath swearing before the duel in *Aeneid* 12,⁶² in imitation of Priam's journey in *Iliad* 3⁶³ before the duel there, with Latinus being analogous to Priam himself in this situation, his increased status compared to Turnus denoted by the increased number of horses harnessed to his chariot, Latinus having four to Turnus' two.

In contrast to the *Iliad*, gods in the *Aeneid* rarely travel by chariot. In *Aeneid* 1,⁶⁴ Neptune calms the storm by driving his chariot across the waves,⁶⁵ and Juno is described as keeping her chariot

⁵⁸ *Il.* 8.116-121 & 8.310-315.

⁵⁹ *Aen.* 6.562-565.

⁶⁰ *Aen.* 7.280-283.

⁶¹ Polk, 2013, 2.

⁶² *Aen.* 12.161-165.

⁶³ *Aen.* 3.261-263.

⁶⁴ *Aen.* 1.154-156.

⁶⁵ This gives Virgil the opportunity to include a simile where Neptune is likened to a man calming an angry mob, a comment on the recent violence in Rome that Augustus, like Neptune, has calmed.

in Carthage,⁶⁶ though she is never described using it. Jupiter, who appears regularly in his chariot as Zeus in the *Iliad*, does not appear here in a chariot, even though he was represented as driving a four horse chariot on the roof of the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus in Rome, and would therefore be closely associated with the chariot in the minds of the audience. That he is largely static serves to increase his distance from the action, as Virgil does seem to want him to be as involved here as his counterpart was in the *Iliad*.

Finally, though there are funeral games for Anchises in *Aeneid* 5,⁶⁷ in imitation of those in the *Iliad*, there is no chariot race.⁶⁸ Instead, a ship race is the substitute, something made clear by the simile at the start of the race comparing the ships directly to chariots.⁶⁹ As Lindsay notes, this is probably because they had no chariots on board their ships, and as ships were their main mode of transport, a ship race makes more sense, as well as, according to Lindsay, possibly doing honour to the naval successes of Augustus.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ *Aen.* 1.17.

⁶⁷ *Aen.* 5.104-603.

⁶⁸ See also 51-52.

⁶⁹ *Aen.* 5.144-147.

⁷⁰ Lindsay, 1991, 7.

Horse riding

When it comes to the ridden horse, the situation is reversed: there are few examples of horseback riding in the *Iliad*, while there are many more in the *Aeneid*. Here, horses are not only ridden into battle, they are used for hunting, for display, and for simple transport. In the *Iliad*, this is very different. There is reference to display, or “trick riding” in a one simile in *Iliad* 15,⁷¹ and Diomedes and Odysseus ride the stolen horses of Rhesus in *Iliad* 10,⁷² though what Homer is actually referring to here is up for debate.

The most common use of the ridden horse in the *Aeneid* is in battle, used instead of the chariot, which is referred to less frequently. In addition, the ridden horse in battle is used more effectively in the *Aeneid* as proper cavalry, unlike the way chariots are used in the *Iliad* as mere transportation to and from the battlefield. Further, when warriors are featured riding horses, they usually stay mounted and fight from those horses. As Quint discusses, this is an intrusion of contemporary military tactics on the Homeric model.⁷³

The use of ridden horses as cavalry can be seen in *Aeneid* 11,⁷⁴ where Turnus tells Camilla to engage the Etruscan cavalry, while he waits in ambush for Aeneas. Later, as battle begins, the cavalry is drawn up on both sides, and they gallop towards one another, holding spears.⁷⁵ Two riders, named Tyrrhenus and Aconteus smash their warhorses against one another, with Aconteus thrown forward, an obvious risk for riders who rode before the invention of stirrups.⁷⁶ Further, as the ranks of horses meet for the third time, half-dead horses are described as entangled with the bodies of men.⁷⁷

⁷¹ *Il.* 15.679-684.

⁷² *Il.* 10.512-514.

⁷³ Quint, 1989, 32.

⁷⁴ *Aen.* 11.517-519.

⁷⁵ *Aen.* 11.595-602.

⁷⁶ *Aen.* 11.512-517.

⁷⁷ *Aen.* 11.613-635.

The use of horses in battle is highlighted by Mezentius and Camilla. Mezentius, intending to fight Aeneas, has his horse brought to him, and rides in circles around Aeneas, throwing spears at him to try to bring him down.⁷⁸ In order to attempt this, he is obviously a well-trained warrior with a well-trained warhorse.⁷⁹ Later, Camilla and her companions are compared to “Amazons of Thrace, whose horses hooves drum on the frozen waters of the river Thermodon.”⁸⁰ Camilla demonstrates her skills on horseback, killing many men, such as Liris, who has been thrown by his horse:⁸¹ Ornytus on his horse Iapyx;⁸² and Butes, also mounted.⁸³ She also demonstrates her skill in taking out mounted warriors while on foot, after being tricked by Aunus into dismounting: she catches up with him and grabs the reins while his horse is still galloping.⁸⁴ This is an extraordinary feat, but Camilla is characterised as being very familiar with horses from the start of her life, where she suckles horse-milk from the udder as a baby.⁸⁵ Gildenhard and Henderson argue that this programmes her to be a natural rider.⁸⁶ At the same time this, along with her other traits, helps characterise her as “other” and the audience will immediately question whether she will be allowed to survive the episode.

The use of the ridden horse for hunting can be seen in *Aeneid* 4,⁸⁷ where Aeneas, Dido, Ascanius and companions set off to hunt in Carthage. Most are mounted, Dido on a “high-mettled” horse dressed in purple and gold, an outfit more suitable for a leader than a hunter.⁸⁸ Presumably, Aeneas is also mounted, though the description of him focuses on his appearance, comparing him to Apollo. Finally, Ascanius is charmingly described enjoying himself

⁷⁸ *Aen.* 10.882-891.

⁷⁹ See also 28-29.

⁸⁰ *Aen.* 11.668-669.

⁸¹ *Aen.* 11.669.

⁸² *Aen.* 11.677-682.

⁸³ *Aen.* 11.691-693.

⁸⁴ *Aen.* 11.7002-724.

⁸⁵ *Aen.* 11.570-572.

⁸⁶ Gildenhard and Henderson, 2018, 449.

⁸⁷ *Aen.* 4.129-159.

⁸⁸ See also 25.

galloping a lively horse past the deer and hoping excitedly for more dangerous prey. As Willekes indicates, hunting would prepare a boy like Ascanius for the rigours of being on horseback for long periods, essential for preparing horse and rider for the battlefield, as well as being a “fun” activity, as demonstrated by Ascanius’ demeanour.⁸⁹ Obviously, hunting dangerous game is also not without its possible risks, again acting in preparation for facing the hazards of the battlefield.

There is nothing at all like this in the *Iliad*. No-one rides into battle, goes hunting, or even uses horses as simple transport. Few seem to have any skills in horseback riding. The only example of extreme skill in riding comes in the simile in 15.679-684, where Ajax, who is jumping from the deck of one ship to another, is likened to a horseman who has harnessed four horses together and jumps from one to the other as people look on admiringly. This shows that horse training did exist, and was incredibly advanced, and some men could be exceptionally skilled in this area. However, this is not really riding as such, and does not exist within the narrative of the poem.

The only example of horseback riding within the narrative is in *Iliad* 10, within the *Doloneia*.⁹⁰ When Odysseus and Diomedes steal the horses of Rhesus, Odysseus ties them together, and gallops them out of the way, before alerting Diomedes. Presumably, he is mounted as he does this. It can also be assumed that he has fashioned a rough bridle or halter out of whatever they were tied up with earlier, as it would be difficult to control them otherwise, though this is unclear. Diomedes mounts, and they gallop the horses back to the Greek camp.

There has been some discussion about exactly what is going on here. Delabeque appears to think that the poet does not seem comfortable with this episode, using formulae that belong to charioteering, while Greenhalgh echoes this, adding that there may have been some

⁸⁹ Willekes, 2016, p.118: *Aen.* 4.156-159: see 25.

⁹⁰ *Il.* 10.469-579.

“embarrassment” concerned with including the mounted horse in the narrative, shown in the amount of detail that is left out.⁹¹ Anderson’s theory is that “men rarely performed on horseback deeds worth commemorating by artists and poets,” and, therefore, poets had no formulae at hand to use when riding needed to be described.⁹² To Anderson, this explains both the lack of detail in the description and the use of formulae more suited to the chariot. Anderson goes on to say that Odysseus and Diomedes are not really riding properly here anyway, merely using the horses as conveyances, and that there is nothing exceptional in riding horses bareback in a halter.⁹³ I disagree. It takes a reasonable amount of skill for a person to balance themselves properly on a bareback horse. In addition, riding in a makeshift halter without a bit or bridle is also not easy as there will be less control over the horse, particularly if the horse is not used to being ridden in this way, a possibility if these are usually chariot horses. Further, they are riding horses that they do not know, in the dark, through the enemy, after the hue and cry has been raised.⁹⁴ Odysseus and Diomedes must be excellent riders in order to accomplish this, with a great deal of experience on horseback, as well as courage and daring. The theft of these magnificent horses and the way they ride them back to the Greek camp would certainly serve to increase their *kleos*, the aim of the theft.

However, even in antiquity questions were being asked about the validity of the *Doloneia*. Nothing in the first nine books foreshadows it, and nothing in the last fourteen look back to it, and it could easily be taken out of the epic without leaving a trace. The style, language and composition do not fit with the rest of the poem. And of course, the horses of Rhesus are never mentioned again, with Diomedes using Aeneas’ stolen horses for the chariot race.⁹⁵ This means

⁹¹ Delabeque in Anderson, 1975, 182; Greenhalgh, 1973, 56-57.

⁹² Anderson, 1975, 182.

⁹³ Anderson, 1975, 183.

⁹⁴ // 10.515-522.

⁹⁵ West, 2011, 233.

that, other than the simile in *Iliad* 15, there would have been no account of horseback riding in the *Iliad* at all, and it would also explain the awkwardness with which the episode is described.

Riding the Labyrinth: the *Lusus Troiae*

Another example of accomplished riding used for training boys for the cavalry are the manoeuvres known as the “Troy Games” or *lusus Troiae*, performed in *Aeneid* 5⁹⁶ as the finalé of the Funeral Games in honour of Anchises. Ascanius and his troop of boys enter, all mounted, into the circus area that Aeneas has had cleared so the boys can use the level ground, which would be important in order to perform the complex exercises. The horses and riders are described as beautifully turned out, each headed by a boy of note, one being Ascanius. Most boys are riding local Sicilian horses, but one of the squadron leaders, young Priam, notably rides a piebald Thracian horse, while Ascanius rides a horse given to him by Dido.⁹⁷ These last two must have come across on the ships of Aeneas’ fleet.

The movements of the Game are complex, with the boys described as making the pattern of the labyrinth as they ride. Willekes states that this would have taken a considerable amount of time to learn, as well as proficiency on horseback.⁹⁸ The manoeuvres would train boys of means for roles in the cavalry. That this is the intention is further shown by the description of the troop turning and charging, wheeling and fleeing, as well as riding side by side, “the very image of a battle.”⁹⁹ However, the *lusus Troiae* seem to have been performed in Rome as a spectacle of celebration, or occasionally in a funerary context, as here.¹⁰⁰

Several ancient historians mention the *lusus Troiae* as being performed in the Late Republic/early Empire, for example, Suetonius, *Augustus* 43.2: Dio Cassius 54.26.1: Plutarch, *Cato* 3 (where Cato takes part): and Suetonius, *Nero* 7 (where Nero takes part), but as some scholars have pointed out, Virgil’s description is the most detailed.¹⁰¹ However, there is little

⁹⁶ *Aen.* 5.545-604.

⁹⁷ Perhaps the one he rode hunting. See 19.

⁹⁸ Willekes, 2016, 116.

⁹⁹ *Aen.* 5.584-585.

¹⁰⁰ Willekes, 2016, 117.

¹⁰¹ Lindsay, 1991, 14.

evidence that the *lusus Troiae* were performed before the late Republican period, even though Virgil describes Ascanius teaching it to the Latins.¹⁰² This is another way of Virgil linking his present with the mythical past, and highlighting the future glory of Rome in the hands of the youth of Troy, led by the Acanius/Iulus, the ancestor of the First Man of Rome, Augustus, with whom the glory lies now.

¹⁰² *Aen.* 5.596-599.

Horses as prestige items and status symbols

It seems clear from the above that horses are prestige items, and that their use enhances the status of the user. To this end, horses are given as gifts from one high status person to another and they are also stolen. Particular targets for theft are horses that are unusual in some way, either because of their colour or their lineage, which is normally divine or semi-divine. The same type of horses are also given as gifts, or ridden/used on special occasions, their unusualness being complementary to the possessors' stature.

There are many instances of horse-theft in the *Iliad*. The two best examples are the stealing of Aeneas' horses by Diomedes,¹⁰³ and the theft of Rhesus' horses.¹⁰⁴ Here, Rhesus' horses are targeted because of their colour, as Dolon describes them as "whiter than snow." They are also very large and fast, and therefore perfect targets for two heroes intent on gaining *kleos*.¹⁰⁵ Aeneas' horses are also targeted because they are special. Diomedes explains to Sthenelus that Aeneas' horses are descended from horses given by Zeus to Tros in compensation for taking Ganymede and describes them as "the best in the world."¹⁰⁶ Aeneas' father Anchises had stolen some of the breed by putting mares to them, keeping four foals for himself and giving two to Aeneas. In this way, the junior branch of the Trojan royal family has horses worthy of them, as does Aeneas as the son of a goddess. However, Diomedes takes Aeneas' horses easily,¹⁰⁷ as befits his status as the superior warrior. Later, Diomedes drives them in the chariot race, and wins.¹⁰⁸ In both cases, Diomedes is acting as a substitute for Achilles. In *Iliad* 4 and 5, Diomedes' in his *aristeia* takes the place of Achilles, who has withdrawn. In the chariot race,

¹⁰³ *Il.* 5.318-327. See 10.

¹⁰⁴ *Il.* 10.496-579.

¹⁰⁵ See 19.

¹⁰⁶ *Il.* 5.259-273.

¹⁰⁷ *Il.* 5.321-327. See 10.

¹⁰⁸ *Il.* 23.290-292.

using these horses, Diomedes is victorious, instead of Achilles, who surely would have won had he entered.

The stealing of horses is not a feature of the *Aeneid*. However, horses are given as gifts such as to Aeneas' men, for example, by Evander,¹⁰⁹ and Latinus gifts also horses to them,¹¹⁰ presumably as they have brought none of their own aboard ship. Ironically, Latinus' gift of horses will be used against his people when war breaks out. They are also outfitted in purple and gold, more precisely, triple gold. Polk points out that triple gold trappings always appear before instances of death, for example, Dido has triple gold trappings as she rides out hunting with Aeneas in *Aeneid* 4,¹¹¹ and Chloreus also wears triple gold, making him a target for Camilla in *Aeneid* 11, leading to her own death.¹¹² Therefore, Latinus' gift is particularly ominous, foreshadowing the death of many of his own people.

In addition, Aeneas is the target of the gift of special horses, as befitting his position, or at least ones that are finely outfitted. The one that he receives from Evander is specially chosen and dressed in a lion skin to extend the link Aeneas has with Hercules, the Arcadians patron god, with whom he shares a father and the enmity of Juno. When he rides it back to the Trojan camp, this is the only time he rides in Italy. The horses given by Latinus are even more impressive.¹¹³ These are descended from the horses of Helios, and appropriately "breathe fire from their nostrils."¹¹⁴ Their divine descent mirrors Aeneas' own, matching those he drives in the *Iliad*, and are therefore a fitting gift. Use of these horses and chariot would have put him on a par with Achilles and Xanthos and Balios, however, Virgil has Aeneas achieve his victory without the help of divine horses.

¹⁰⁹ *Aen.* 8.551-553.

¹¹⁰ *Aen.* 7.274-279.

¹¹¹ *Aen.* 4.138. See 22-23.

¹¹² *Aen.* 11.774: Polk, 2013, 240: see 18.

¹¹³ See also 43.

¹¹⁴ *Aen.* 7.279-283.

In the *Iliad*, other than the horses given by Achilles as prizes in *Iliad* 23, Achilles is the only person to receive a gift of horses, and it is a gift he does not want. In *Iliad* 9,¹¹⁵ Agamemnon offers him many things of great value if only he will return and fight. Amongst them, not one, but twelve prize-winning racehorses. Status of giver and receiver mean that there must be many. Achilles refuses. Later,¹¹⁶ when Achilles wants to return to battle, Agamemnon insists that he receives them, as well as the rest of the goods promised earlier, in order to settle their quarrel. As the leader of the Greeks, he must be seen to have kept his promise to Achilles or his men will lose confidence in him, although by this time Achilles is no longer interested in anything except avenging the death of Patroclus.

As Aeneas, son of a goddess requires horses worthy of him (even though he quickly loses them), Achilles, also the son of a goddess and the best warrior at Troy, needs horses to complement his status. These are Xanthos and Balios, described in *Iliad* 2 as the best horses amongst the Greeks.¹¹⁷ As well as his status as “the best,” they also share divine blood with Achilles, being the foals of Podarge, the Storm-filly, and the Western Gale. As Charles puts it, they separate Achilles from the other warriors, and confirm his heroic stature. Their status also means they are coveted by others.¹¹⁸ In *Iliad* 10, Dolon asks for these horses if his mission is successful and the Greeks are defeated.¹¹⁹ However, Odysseus knows that Xanthos and Balios could only be controlled by someone greater than an ordinary mortal, and that Dolon is deceiving himself in thinking he could profit from such a prize.¹²⁰

Those of the highest status of all in both poems also have associations with horses, namely, the senior Olympians, described above.¹²¹ That these senior Olympians handle, harness and

¹¹⁵ *Il.* 9.123-124.

¹¹⁶ *Il.* 19.238-265.

¹¹⁷ *Aen.* 2.769-770.

¹¹⁸ Charles, 2007, 13.

¹¹⁹ *Il.* 10.321-323.

¹²⁰ *Il.* 10.401-404: Charles, 2007, 45: See also 34.

¹²¹ Described at 13.

unharness their horses themselves indicates that horses are such high status and valuable possessions that it is important for their owners to tend to them personally and doing to is apparently in no way denigrating.¹²²

As the most accomplished fighter on the Trojan side, it should be expected that Hector would have horses commensurate with his status, but he does not, his horses are perfectly ordinary, highlighting the inequality between himself and Achilles and that he achieves so much with so little. In the *Aeneid*, though, while Aeneas fights on foot, not needing horses to demonstrate his superiority, Turnus does have special horses. In *Aeneid* 9¹²³ he rides a piebald charger, coloured horses being given special attention in the *Aeneid*.¹²⁴ In *Aeneid* 12,¹²⁵ Turnus' chariot is drawn by two white horses, given to his father by Orithyia, wife of Boreas, and who are said to be "swifter than the winds." These horses form a direct parallel with Rhesus' horses, who are described in a very similar way, foreshadowing Turnus' fate later in that Book.

¹²² There is little to compare with this in the *Aeneid*. See 16 for how the gods travel in the *Aeneid*.

¹²³ *Il.* 9.49.

¹²⁴ Young Priam rides one in the *Iusus Troiae* as described above 22-23.

¹²⁵ *Aen.* 12.81-86.

Horse care

As prestige items connected to a warrior's status, it is very important that these animals are properly taken care of, as fit and well cared for horses will perform better on the battlefield and contribute to the warrior's status. There are many references, particularly in the *Iliad*, to the care and treatment of horses, even the ones that serve the gods. There are several accounts of them being fed and cared for: Iris tends to the horses of Ares, giving them ambrosial fodder,¹²⁶ after driving an injured Aphrodite back to Olympus. Similarly, the Seasons care for Hera's horses after Hera is forced to return to Olympus by Zeus,¹²⁷ and Poseidon does the same for Zeus' horses later.¹²⁸ Sometimes they care for their own, as Poseidon does.¹²⁹ As Fagan puts it, horses are precious items deserving of excellent care, and this care cannot be left to underlings or slaves.¹³⁰ So the gods tend to their own. In the mortal world, Andromache feeds Hector's horses, even before Hector himself,¹³¹ and even Priam feeds his own horses.¹³² Gregory states that this treatment is often more suitable for humans, as when Andromache gives Hector's horses wine mixed into their grain, and Achilles' horses have their manes oiled, similarly to their master's hair.¹³³ Achity adds that there are times horses seem even more important than men, as in *Iliad* 8,¹³⁴ where the horses must be fed before the men can look after themselves.¹³⁵ It is also with the welfare of his horses in mind that Pandarus does not bring them to Troy, fearing that they would not have enough to eat,¹³⁶ recognizing at the same time

¹²⁶ *Il.* 5.368-369.

¹²⁷ *Il.* 8.437.

¹²⁸ *Il.* 8.440-441.

¹²⁹ *Il.* 13.32-38.

¹³⁰ Fagan, 2001, 57.

¹³¹ *Il.* 8.185-190.

¹³² *Il.* 24.279-280.

¹³³ Gregory, 2007, 198.

¹³⁴ *Il.* 8.500-504.

¹³⁵ Achity, 1978, 300.

¹³⁶ *Il.* 5.201-204.

that this action has left him at a disadvantage, and even lowered his status, as he now needs to rely on his bow.

While there are fewer examples in the *Aeneid*, this kind of treatment of horses does still occur. The Trojans and Etrurians care for their horses before themselves as they make camp,¹³⁷ and Turnus' horses have well-combed manes.¹³⁸ Both these examples are extremely similar to some of those in the *Iliad*. There is an interesting addition in the *Aeneid*, though. As Aeneas travels through the underworld, he sees the heroes of the past relaxing while their horses graze, having taken “the same care to feed their sleek horses” as they had when alive.¹³⁹ Life in this part of the underworld goes on much as it did in the world above and horses still need to be fed and cared for, as symbols of their status.

¹³⁷ *Aen.* 8.607.

¹³⁸ *Aen.* 12.85.

¹³⁹ *Aen.* 6.655. See also 15.

Emotional attachments

It is clear that many of these heroes are emotionally attached to their horses, as most horse owners are today. Griffiths states that humans need animals for psychological support, and they are an integral part of most American and British families.¹⁴⁰ One way this is demonstrated is in giving animals names, a sign of affection, not only for simple identification. In the *Iliad*, many horses have been named by their owners. A common name appears to be Xanthos, as both Hector and Achilles have a horse with this name. This name probably refers to the bright or yellowish colour of the horses' coat, perhaps a bright bay, chestnut, or even a dun or palomino. Likewise, Achilles' other horse, Balios, is also named after the colour of his coat, which may be dappled or piebald. It is very common, even today, to name a horse after the colour of its coat, or for some other physical attribute. Another example would be Achilles' mortal trace horse Pedasos, whose name may refer to a physical talent, perhaps "jumper," or "dancer." Either would imply lightness of foot. Other names referring to physical talents include Menelaus' horse Podargos "Swift-foot," and perhaps Agamemnon's mare Aethe, meaning "blazer," or "shining," which could refer to her abilities, or alternatively to the red-brown/chestnut colour of her coat. While not all horses in the *Iliad* are named (none of the gods' horses appear to have names), that many do show the affection and pride of their owners.

In the *Aeneid*, only two horses have names. One is Pallas' horse, Aethon, the meaning of whose name is the same as that of Agamemnon's mare Aethe, as described above. The affection he shares with his master is shown through the tears he sheds at Pallas' funeral procession.¹⁴¹ The other is Rhaebus, whose name seems to mean "crooked" especially in the legs, though it is hard to see how a warhorse could be effective with crooked legs. As his owner, Mezentius, is

¹⁴⁰ Griffiths, 2006, 190.

¹⁴¹ *Aen.* 11.89-90.

portrayed as a cruel scorner of the gods,¹⁴² and as a hideous tyrant,¹⁴³ perhaps Rhaebus name complements Mezentius' crooked values.

The relationship between Mezentius and Rhaebus is a particularly affectionate and emotional one.¹⁴⁴ Due to Mezentius' background and description of his behaviour, it is also unexpected. By this point,¹⁴⁵ Mezentius has lost everything. He has been driven out of his kingdom due to his cruelty, and Aeneas has killed his son, Lausus. He knows that his behaviour means that he cannot appeal to the gods. The last thing left to him is his warhorse, who he turns to for consolation in his darkest moment, as "his glory and his comfort."¹⁴⁶ His words to his horse are very poignant: they have been partners in war for many years, and Mezentius intends that they will die together. Knowing his mount as he does, Mezentius thinks that he would rather die than take a Trojan master.

Though his horse might strengthen him emotionally, it turns out Rhaebus is his weakness in his battle with Aeneas. At first, it is the skill of horse and rider that keeps Aeneas at bay, but Aeneas soon realizes that to defeat the rider he must defeat the horse, and kills Rhaebus with a thrown spear, straight through the horses' head. Then, as Burke puts it: "the tragedy of Mezentius reaches its pathetic conclusion: the Etruscan king is not to die heroically but is dispatched by Aeneas as he lies helpless beneath his dead war-horse."¹⁴⁷ Yet in his relationship with Rhaebus, Mezentius is redeemed. The death of his son has made him reflect on his past choices. Those choices have led to this point, where his isolation means that, according to Gotoff, when he needs to reach out to someone, all he has left is Rhaebus.¹⁴⁸ His speech to Rhaebus, and his death beneath the horses' body engages the readers' sympathy: to love a son,

¹⁴² *Aen.* 7.648.

¹⁴³ *Aen.* 8.481-494.

¹⁴⁴ See also 18.

¹⁴⁵ *Aen.* 10.833.

¹⁴⁶ *Aen.* 10.858-859.

¹⁴⁷ Burke, 1974, 208.

¹⁴⁸ Gotoff, 1984, 203.

to love an animal, to regret his actions¹⁴⁹ and to exhibit acceptance and nobility in going to such a pathetic death must mean that there was more to his character than simple evil and cruelty.¹⁵⁰

There are no other examples of such feeling by a man towards a horse in the *Aeneid*, but there are a few similar examples in the *Iliad*. Talking to horses, in order to encourage them, is a common sign of affection, even though the person talking knows full well that the horse cannot understand the words. In *Iliad* 8,¹⁵¹ Hector speaks to his horses in the midst of battle, reminding them of the care they receive and expecting them to repay it.¹⁵² He then goes on to give them extra motivation in the possible capture of Nestor's shield, or the armour of Diomedes, motivations that the horses cannot understand or even care about. Obviously, capturing these items would increase his own *kleos*, and to Hector his horses are a vital part of this process, and therefore he shares his aims with them.

Towards the end of the poem, there is another instance of a hero talking to his horses in order to encourage them. This is Antilochus, in the chariot race, driving horses belonging to his father, Nestor. At a crucial point in the race,¹⁵³ Antilochus encourages them to run flat out to catch up with and overtake Menelaus' pair, saying that his mare Aethe will "pour scorn all over you" if she beats them to a greater prize, ascribing very human actions to these animals, further stating "and she a mare!" as if they will be shamed by being beaten by a female, as a human man might. In this passage, he also threatens them with death if they do not increase their speed, the threat sounds cruel, but it is undoubtedly empty as Nestor would not like to lose such a valuable animal. Though the horses cannot possibly understand the words, they do respond

¹⁴⁹ *Aen.* 10.846-856.

¹⁵⁰ This conversation emulates that of Polyphemus and the ram in *Od.* 9.446-461, which also invokes sympathy for Polyphemus, even after he has eaten many of Odysseus' crew mates.

¹⁵¹ *Il.* 8.184-197.

¹⁵² See 13.

¹⁵³ *Il.* 23.403-416.

with an extra turn of speed, meaning that they understand the tone. Like Hector, Antilochus is sharing his desire for *kleos* with his horses, feeling that they will share it. These threats to kill, though, do not sound like affection for horses by a man. However, after the race, Antilochus is asked by Menelaus to swear on his horses that he did not commit a deliberate foul on him during the race.¹⁵⁴ This Antilochus refuses to do, for fear of losing the horses to the wrath of Poseidon, to whom he is asked to swear as the god of horses. This therefore demonstrates that his threat to have the horses killed earlier if they did not perform was an empty one, and he does care for the animals.

¹⁵⁴ // 23.580-585.

Xanthos and Balios and other divine horses

Of course, the most notable example of a warrior talking to his horses is that of Achilles talking to Xanthos and Balios, notable because Xanthos talks back. The poem introduces the two early on in *Iliad* 2,¹⁵⁵ where the Muse is invoked to tell of the best men and the best horses, after the Catalogue of Ships. The mares of Admetus, driven by Eumelus, are said to be the best and Ajax the best warrior, but only while Achilles and his horses have withdrawn from the fighting, as he is the best warrior and his horses the best horses otherwise. They are heard of again in *Iliad* 10¹⁵⁶ where Dolon asks Hector if the horses of Achilles can be his if his spying mission is a success and the Trojans are victorious. Later, when Odysseus is told of this, he calls them “the big prize,” and demonstrates he understands how hard these horses would be to handle for anyone save Achilles, because of their nature.¹⁵⁷ They are still, so far, nameless, and are not named in the poem until *Iliad* 16.¹⁵⁸ Here they are revealed as divine horses,¹⁵⁹ but despite being immortal, their names, Xanthos and Balios, are very normal, named as they are after the colour of their coats.¹⁶⁰

Their appearance here is brief, and they simply form part of Achilles panoply that Patroclus borrows as part of his disguise. It is only after the death of Patroclus that it becomes clear that these horses are more than just excellent and immortal horses. They are part of Achilles’ inner circle of loved ones that include Patroclus, his mother, and his father, who is actually the owner of the horses. This is shown in several ways. In *Iliad* 17,¹⁶¹ Xanthos and Balios weep for Patroclus and refuse to move despite coaxing, threats or being lashed by Automedon. Automedon is treating them as he might treat normal, non-divine horses – or even worse, as no

¹⁵⁵ *Il.* 2.761-779.

¹⁵⁶ *Il.* 10.319-327.

¹⁵⁷ See also 26.

¹⁵⁸ *Il.* 16.148-151.

¹⁵⁹ See 26.

¹⁶⁰ See 30.

¹⁶¹ *Il.* 17.423-434.

other horses in the *Iliad* are lashed as much as these. Their tears, and the dirtying of their manes in the dust as a sign of their mourning, should demonstrate that they are not normal horses, and share a humanlike approach to mourning, but he does not pick up on this. They do not obey him, partly because he is not part of the inner circle and does not understand them, like Patroclus or Achilles do. Instead, it takes Zeus to breathe energy in them in order to move them on and out of danger.¹⁶² Later, Achilles demonstrates that unlike Automedon, he does understand his horses, as when he begins the chariot race, he boasts how excellent his horses are, but says he will not compete, as they continue to grieve Patroclus.¹⁶³ Achilles leaves them alone in their grief, as he understands and shares it. He has empathy for them, considering he has had little empathy for his fellow men until this point. He also describes how kind Patroclus was to them, which is why they grieve so greatly, demonstrating the bond of affection between Patroclus and Xanthos and Balios that also exists between Achilles and these horses.¹⁶⁴

This relationship is shown clearly throughout the poem. Theirs is a relationship between man and animal like no other in the *Iliad* or the *Aeneid*. As Achilles is the pre-eminent warrior in Troy, he needs horses to match this status. Although he is not the only semi-divine warrior at Troy, his horses are unmatched by either side and serve to set him apart from all others present.¹⁶⁵ While others have horses of divine descent, for example, Aeneas',¹⁶⁶ they cannot be compared favourably with Xanthos and Balios. Aeneas' horses are not named, their bloodline was stolen by Anchises, and they easily pass from one hand to another.¹⁶⁷ In comparison, though Xanthos and Balios have quite straightforward names, they are fully divine, and have been given by the gods to Peleus, though Achilles now has charge of them. In addition, they

¹⁶² *Il.* 17.456.

¹⁶³ *Il.* 23.274-286.

¹⁶⁴ *Il.* 19.295-300, part of Briseis' lament, also signifies how kind Patroclus is, contrasting with Achilles' inhumanity throughout most of the poem.

¹⁶⁵ Charles, 2007, 13.

¹⁶⁶ *Il.* 5.265-274.

¹⁶⁷ See 34.

are not easily handled¹⁶⁸ and would be unwilling to pass easily from one to another as Aeneas' horses do.

Xanthos and Balios are so special, no other horses can be allowed to come close, and some horses that should be present are excised completely, or almost completely. After meeting on the battlefield, Glaucus relates his lineage to Diomedes.¹⁶⁹ Glaucus is the grandson of Bellerophon, and Glaucus spends some time relating the deeds of his grandfather to Diomedes, including the killing of the Chimera and his battles with the Amazons and the Solymi. He also mentions that Bellerophon angered the gods and lived out the rest of his life in solitude. What he does not describe is Bellerophon's winged horse Pegasus, son of Medusa, born from her blood when slain by Perseus, and who helped him slay the Chimera and other enemies. While the vagueness concerning Bellerophon angering the gods could be embarrassment on the part of Glaucus for his grandfather, it also omits Pegasus' role. In Euripides' *Bellerophon*, which exists only in fragmentary form, Bellerophon rides Pegasus to challenge the gods for reasons that are unclear.¹⁷⁰ The ride ends in disaster, Bellerophon is seriously injured for his hubris and Pegasus is taken in by Zeus.

Euripides' play is obviously much later than the *Iliad*, however, Pegasus would clearly have been known as Bellerophon's companion to the audience. Hesiod, who composed his poems in a comparable time frame to Homer, mentions Pegasus as Bellerophon's steed in the *Theogony* in the killing of the Chimera.¹⁷¹ Pindar, though later, adds more detail as though this myth was common knowledge. Pindar describes how Athena gave Bellerophon a special bridle in order to tame Pegasus, who then helped him in his adventures.¹⁷² He also tells of how Bellerophon is thrown from Pegasus when he tries to enter the company of the gods, which

¹⁶⁸ *Il.* 10.401-404. See 20. Also *Il.* 17.423-434. See 34.

¹⁶⁹ *Il.* 6.144-211.

¹⁷⁰ Eur. *Bell.* Frags. 305-311.

¹⁷¹ Hes. *Theog.* 319-325.

¹⁷² Pind. *Ol.* 13.60-93.

compares well with Euripides' play.¹⁷³ Therefore, the complete omission of Pegasus from the *Iliad* when Glaucus tells the tale of his grandfather Bellerophon is a surprise. As Charles argues, the omission of Pegasus is purposeful, in order to increase the importance of Xanthos and Balios.¹⁷⁴ No other divine horses are allowed to overshadow them.

The role of the other divine horse mentioned in the *Iliad* is also seriously diminished, though at least he is named. This is Arion, mentioned by Nestor when he is encouraging his son just before the chariot race in the Funeral Games.¹⁷⁵ He says that if Antilochus follows his advice, no one could catch up with him, not even Adrastus' horse Arion. Presumably, the audience would know who this was from this brief reference.¹⁷⁶ Pausanias discusses Arion's parentage, stating that Poseidon was his father, and his mother either Demeter Erinys or Gaia, the Earth,¹⁷⁷ giving him a very prestigious lineage, similar to Xanthos and Balios, who were given to Peleus by Poseidon (though not fathered by him).¹⁷⁸ In addition, he was previously owned by Herakles, who gave him to Adrastus. However, although all these references would have been known to the audience when Arion's name is mentioned, Arion is not allowed to compete with Xanthos and Balios.

Like his divine status, his divine armour, and the favour he receives from the gods, his divine horses separate Achilles from the rest of the warriors at Troy. And, like Achilles, they grieve excessively for Patroclus, in a way that is similar to how humans grieve. When Achilles is told of Patroclus' death,¹⁷⁹ he pours dirt on himself and sobs. When Priam hears of Hector's death,

¹⁷³ Pind. *Isth.* 7.43-48.

¹⁷⁴ Charles, 2007, 47.

¹⁷⁵ *Il.* 23.345-47. See 12

¹⁷⁶ Adrastus was one of the Seven Against Thebes who fought with Diomedes and Sthenelus' father in support of Polyneices' aim to recapture Thebes from his brother, Eteocles. An epic poem, the *Thebaid*, now lost, was composed in regard to this, and a brief quote from this poem is included in Pausanias' *Description of Greece* 8.25.8 where Adrastus flees from Thebes with Arion.

¹⁷⁷ Paus. *Description of Greece* 8.25.5-10.

¹⁷⁸ *Il.* 23.277-278. See 26 for Xanthos and Balios' parentage.

¹⁷⁹ *Il.* 18.22-34.

he throws himself down and cries aloud.¹⁸⁰ Likewise, Xanthos and Balios, who witness Patroclus' death, weep and defile their manes in the dirt.¹⁸¹ Later, after they have accompanied Achilles into battle, they are described by him as continuing to do this.¹⁸² These actions are very human and anthropomorphises the horses to a high degree. No other horses in the *Iliad* behave like this, though there is one similar episode in the *Aeneid*, where Pallas' horse Aethon weeps for him as he walks in Pallas' funeral procession.¹⁸³ However, little more is said about this: Aethon is never described as immortal, or special in any other way, and his grief is not as extreme as Xanthos' and Balios'.

In this way, their grief marks them out as a cut above the normal horse, demonstrating that they not only feel emotions like humans do, but display them in the same way. Further, their emotions are so strong, they do not obey humans as other horses would. Achilles doesn't enter them into the chariot race, as he says, in their grief, they are refusing to move. He understands and respects this, unlike Automedon when they do the same to him on the battlefield.¹⁸⁴ But in this case their extreme grief and refusal to move puts them in danger, so Zeus feels that he must intervene.¹⁸⁵ He does this due to their immortality, something that they share with him. He regrets that he has given creatures like himself into the service of humans, so that they now find themselves both grieving for a mortal, and in danger through this grief. This danger, as Zeus sees it, is capture by Hector. Zeus does not want this to happen and breathes energy into them so that they carry Automedon away. Here, Zeus admits that though he regrets giving the horses to Peleus, he has given them, and their proper place is with Achilles.¹⁸⁶ Ironically,

¹⁸⁰ *Il.* 23.408-415.

¹⁸¹ *Il.* 17.423-440.

¹⁸² *Il.* 23.283-284: see 44 & 55-56.

¹⁸³ *Aen.* 11.89-90: see 30, 44 & 56.

¹⁸⁴ See 48.

¹⁸⁵ *Il.* 17.441-458.

¹⁸⁶ Charles, 2007, 25.

however, their refreshed ability to move puts them straight into Hector's path, as Automedon and Alcimedon face Hector, Aeneas and others.¹⁸⁷

The grief of Xanthos and Balios and Zeus' intervention highlight several issues. Zeus takes pity on them because he feels that they are closer to the gods than to humans because of their immortality. However, these horses live amongst humans, and their grief shows that they feel closer to their human companions than they do to the gods. They are more upset over Patroclus than any god becomes over the death of any mortal, even their own offspring. Though they share the immortality of the gods, they are more human, even though they are animals.

While they grieve and feel emotions like humans do, they also possess another human trait that is demonstrated in one of the most remarkable episodes in the *Iliad*, the ability to speak. While this is only demonstrated by Xanthos, it is possible that Balios might also be able to speak. Although these two horses have been marked out as different, and a cut above other horses in the *Iliad* from their introduction,¹⁸⁸ this interaction between Achilles and Xanthos and the end of *Iliad* 19¹⁸⁹ is unexpected. Like Hector previously and Antilochus in the Funeral Games, Achilles addresses his horses before he goes into battle, which is not unusual. However, his words are a reproach to the horses for failing to bring Patroclus back alive, rather than an encouragement to run faster, or go swiftly into battle to increase their owners' *kleos*. Achilles, in his grief, blames them for not returning Patroclus alive, and expresses the hope that they will return him alive. Given Achilles' state of mind here, the words and the tone are not unexpected. It is that Xanthos replies, and his words when he does, that is. There is nothing that has previously prepared the audience for this. Though the Olympians can perform miracles such as bring plague as Apollo does,¹⁹⁰ or send bloody rain, as Zeus does,¹⁹¹ these are few and far

¹⁸⁷ *Il.* 17.488-539.

¹⁸⁸ *Il.* 2.770.

¹⁸⁹ *Il.* 19.399-424.

¹⁹⁰ *Il.* 1.43-52.

¹⁹¹ *Il.* 16.458-561.

between, as the poet prefers to focus on the human story, avoiding unnecessary supernatural events. Yet Xanthos speaks, something that immediately stands out.

Their extreme mourning, similar to Achilles' own, has previously given something of a clue that they have more in common with humans than the other horses in the *Iliad*. However, immediately before Achilles speaks, the poet has emphasised their ordinariness, by describing their harnessing, as all horses are harnessed, so the speech of Xanthos becomes more unexpected. Not only does Xanthos refute Achilles' accusation that it was their fault Patroclus died, he has several other things to say. Firstly, he knows it was Apollo that killed Patroclus, though Hector struck the final blow. This suggests that it is due to their link to the divine that gives them this knowledge regarding Apollo's involvement, as mortals would not have been able to see him. Secondly, and more importantly, Xanthos tells Achilles that his own death is near, and again they will not be responsible for it, as they were not responsible for Patroclus'. Xanthos assures him it will not be today, but soon, and he cannot escape it. Xanthos also draws the parallel between Patroclus' and Achilles' death: after describing Patroclus' death at the hands of Apollo and Hector, Xanthos tells Achilles that his death will also be at the hands of a god and a man. Though the audience would know that Achilles dies at the hands of Apollo and Paris, this is the first time the poet hints at this, through the words of a horse.

Before the speech of Xanthos, Homer states that Hera has endowed him with speech,¹⁹² though it is not clear whether he has always been able to speak, or whether he was endowed with speech for this occasion. In addition, why it was Hera who did this is not apparent. Johnston states that Homer may have been drawing on a number of traditions regarding a talking horse named Xanthos, and one of these traditions may have included Hera bestowing speech on a horse with this name.¹⁹³ On the other side of Xanthos' speech, the Erinyes strike him dumb,

¹⁹² *Il.* 19.407-10.

¹⁹³ Johnston, 1992, 86.

preventing him from speaking further. Again, Johnston has a theory about this.¹⁹⁴ She discounts the theory that the Erinyes stop Xanthos speaking because it is unnatural as firstly, if this is their purpose, they have already failed, as Xanthos has already spoken. Secondly, a talking horse in epic poetry is not contrary to the world of myth. Finally, there is no evidence anywhere else that the Erinyes guard against unnatural acts. Instead, she suggests that the Erinyes stop Xanthos because he has delivered the prophecy of Achilles death, and he is not required to speak any further, something Charles agrees with.¹⁹⁵

Johnston also includes another theory that it is possible Homer was drawing on the story of Arion, who may have prophesied to Adrastus, or at least was well known for prophesying.¹⁹⁶ Arion as the child of Demeter Erinys, may have been inspired to speak by the Erinyes, which may explain the involvement of them in this passage from the *Iliad*, if Homer was being influenced by this poem.¹⁹⁷ By drawing on all these traditions, Xanthos is being made one of the great horses of myth, just as Achilles is being made one of the great heroes.¹⁹⁸ However, what is seen in the *Iliad* is a reduced version of these traditions that lack clarity, but for an ancient audience who were more familiar with other poems of the epic cycle now lost, Xanthos was acting within the expected parameters of how a great hero's horse should behave.¹⁹⁹

What is of further interest is Achilles' reaction to Xanthos' speech. He is not surprised that his horse speaks and expresses no wonder. Instead, he asks Xanthos why he is bothering to predict his death, as he knows it is coming soon anyway. He also says nothing about Apollo's role in killing Patroclus, or about the god's role in his own death, probably because he does not care: he is determined to go into battle anyway. Therefore, in one sense, there is no point to Xanthos'

¹⁹⁴ Johnston, 1992, 90-91.

¹⁹⁵ Johnston, 1992, 95; Charles, 2007, 37.

¹⁹⁶ Johnston, 1992, 96.

¹⁹⁷ See 36.

¹⁹⁸ Johnston, 1992, 95.

¹⁹⁹ Johnston, 1992, 98.

speech. However, Achilles' possession of immortal horses who not only display human emotions, but also speak and prophesy, single Achilles out even further, separating him even more from the rest of the warriors at Troy, making him an even more lonely figure now he has lost Patroclus. The conversation is also intimate, and full of foreshadowing. The team might bring Achilles home this time, but the audience is now secure in the knowledge that at some point soon they will not. And if their grief was extreme for Patroclus, it makes the audience wonder what it might be like when Achilles dies.

There is nothing comparable in the *Aeneid*. While Turnus is very proud of his horses in *Aeneid* 12,²⁰⁰ who are divine or semi-divine as they were given by Orithyia to Turnus' grandfather, they act only as horses.²⁰¹ Again, it is a shame that Virgil did not make more of the fire-breathing horses given by Latinus to Aeneas,²⁰² though it is difficult to gauge how such supernatural animals would have fitted in with his narrative.

The final category of divine horses are those of the gods. However, they do nothing particularly remarkable. They are fed ambrosia,²⁰³ they travel to and from Olympus, presumably through the air,²⁰⁴ or across the sea.²⁰⁵ But there seems to be no intimate relationship between the gods and their horses in either poem, they do not speak or do anything unexpected, and they are not even given names. They are not much more than modes of transport, there to complete their divine owner's image.

²⁰⁰ *Aen.* 12.81-86

²⁰¹ See 27.

²⁰² *Aen.* 7.280-284.

²⁰³ *Il.* 5.369 & 8.434.

²⁰⁴ *Il.* 8.432 & 8.438-439.

²⁰⁵ *Il.* 13.27 & *Aen.* 1.156.

Anthropomorphism of horses

It is very common for humans to ascribe human qualities to animals, in particular to anthropomorphise those animals who are close to them. This is no less true of the way horses are presented in the *Iliad* and *Aeneid*. The way heroes talk to their horses as if they can understand them has been discussed.²⁰⁶ However, there are also other ways in which horses are anthropomorphised that are perhaps more subtle. Platte discusses how horses are unique in the animal world for sharing with humans, especially heroic humans, the capacity of divine lineage and semi-divine identity.²⁰⁷ Aeneas' horses are described as descended from horses given by Zeus to Aeneas' ancestor.²⁰⁸ Their lineage shows that these horses have their own fame, just as the heroes do, and just as part of a warrior's fame is his lineage, this also applies to horses. Capturing these horses means capturing their fame, adding to Diomedes own.

The horses of Tros were given to him by Zeus, but otherwise seem to be normal horses. The horses of Achilles obviously need a more exalted lineage, and this is what they are given.²⁰⁹ It is probably no coincidence that Diomedes, the "echo" of Achilles in the first half of the *Iliad* is given horses who do not quite compare, just like Diomedes himself. In the *Aeneid*, something similar happens. The horses given by Latinus²¹⁰ have a lineage that goes back to the horses of Helios, his daughter Circe having stolen their breed much as Anchises did the horses of Tros.²¹¹ Here, Virgil is probably imitating the treatment of horses in the *Iliad*. Notable, though, is the involvement of the gods in these stories, similar to outstanding human heroes who also have lineages connected to the gods in some way.

²⁰⁶ See 30-31.

²⁰⁷ Platte, 2007, online.

²⁰⁸ *Il.* 5.264-273. See 30.

²⁰⁹ *Il.* 23.277-278. See 23.

²¹⁰ *Aen.* 7.280-284.

²¹¹ See 25.

Horses are also ascribed human emotions. In *Iliad* 5, Pandarus refuses to drive Aeneas' horses, saying that they might be afraid and not obey him, if they miss Aeneas' voice.²¹² This might be anthropomorphising them but is also not unreasonable to assume. Horses are also described as missing their charioteers who have died and have fallen out of their chariots,²¹³ though it is more likely that they are missing their guiding, calming hand.²¹⁴ However, the most obvious example of horses experiencing human emotions is that of Xanthos and Balios at the death of Patroclus.²¹⁵ They refuse to move, their equine job of drawing a chariot ignored for very human-like grief.²¹⁶ Charles points out that the word used for mourning here, κλαίω, refers specifically to human mourning.²¹⁷ Here, they are more human than animal, making Automedon's treatment of them seem more severe. Later, Achilles describes them in the same way, but gives them more understanding by leaving them alone.²¹⁸

Horses, like the humans they serve, also have their own "arming" scenes. Most notable is that of Xanthos and Balios of course.²¹⁹ First, Achilles' own arming is described. It is a lengthy passage as befits him, particularly as he is putting on the divine armour made by Hephaestus at the behest of Achilles' mother Thetis, although the final item Achilles reaches for is the spear given to Peleus by Cheiron. Immediately after this comes the arming of the horses. The parallel is obvious. Achilles now has the gifts of both his mother and his father, the armour made by Hephaestus and the immortal horses given by Poseidon, with the spear forming the link. He has the backing of both his parents, and the approval of the gods. And, like their owner, the horses here are armed and ready for battle.

²¹² *Il.* 5.229-238.

²¹³ *Il.* 11.159-162.

²¹⁴ See also Aethon, *Aen.* 11.159-160.

²¹⁵ *Il.* 17.426-440.

²¹⁶ See 34-35 & 52-53.

²¹⁷ Charles, 2007, 17.

²¹⁸ *Il.* 23.283-284.

²¹⁹ *Il.* 19.365-394.

This is not the only place horses or other equines are armed. Priam's mules and their waggon and his horses and chariot are also prepared with care in order for him to fight his own "battle" with Achilles to retrieve Hector's body.²²⁰ Even the horses of the gods have their arming scenes when their owners decide to visit the battlefield.²²¹

As well as making horses seem more human, there are times where humans are also made more horse-like. Heroes in the *Iliad* wear horse-hair crests, giving them "manes" like their mounts. As Platte also points out, Achilles in particular is horse-like, his epithet "swift-footed",²²² shared with many horses.²²³ This blurs the boundaries between Achilles and the horse, perhaps identifying him with Xanthos and Balios even more closely, making his conversation with Xanthos and his understanding of them, less surprising.

²²⁰ *Il.* 24.265-280. See also 14.

²²¹ E.g. *Il.* 8.41, 8.382, 13.23-28.

²²² *Il.* 2.687, 6.419, 11.398, 18.180 etc.

²²³ *Il.* 8.314, 12.50, 10.567, 16.368 etc: Platte, 2017 online.

Horses as human analogues

Horses can also be used as human analogues in the *Iliad*. As well as being of a similar value to human beings (Agamemnon offers Achilles both racehorses and women,²²⁴ and horses and women are given as prizes in the funeral games²²⁵), there is a particular example in *Iliad* 23.²²⁶ Antilochus has won the prize of a mare pregnant with a mule. Initially, Achilles wants to give this prize to Eumelus as a consolation for having his chariot smashed, but Antilochus steadfastly refuses. Then Menelaus challenges Antilochus due to his behaviour during the race. Antilochus, who knows his behaviour was not fair, offers to give Menelaus the mare. Menelaus is pleased by this gesture of submission, and with some words of admonishment to Antilochus, hands the mare back. This is how quarrels should be settled, unlike the quarrel in *Iliad* 1. However, the parallel runs deeper than this. Kitchell states that the words used by Antilochus are virtual quotes of lines spoken by Agamemnon and Achilles while arguing over their women in *Iliad* 1.²²⁷ Antilochus states “I will not give up this mare,”²²⁸ almost identical words to Agamemnon’s “the girl I will not give up,”²²⁹ which he speaks to Chryses, father of Chryseis. Antilochus also says “you are proposing to rob me of my prize,”²³⁰ words that are again similar to Achilles’ when talking of Briseis to Agamemnon.²³¹ That argument ends badly for the Greeks. But the argument over the mare is settled amicably. Achilles sees it isn’t fair to Antilochus to give the mare to Eumelus, and backs down, as it costs him little to do so. Antilochus then sees his behaviour towards Menelaus is not fair, and also backs down, though

²²⁴ *Il.* 9.123-130.

²²⁵ *Il.* 23.262-270.

²²⁶ *Il.* 23.534-611.

²²⁷ Kitchell, 1998, 167.

²²⁸ *Il.* 23.553.

²²⁹ *Il.* 1.29.

²³⁰ *Il.* 23.544.

²³¹ *Il.* 1.161.

it means having to do so in front of everyone. Finally, Menelaus is magnanimous in his victory. While horses and women might hold a similar value, the events in *Iliad* 23 end very differently.

Funerary role

As well as images on stelai and other funerary markers, horses had important roles to play in the funerals, as demonstrated in both epics. In the *Iliad*, Achilles encourages his Myrmidons not to unyoke their horses yet, but to drive them three times around Patroclus and mourn loudly.²³² This provides an outlet for their grief, as well as a display for the Trojans and the rest of the Greeks. Without the horses and chariots, it would be a lesser display, and not as notable. Achilles particularly says that “that is the honour due to the dead.” Without the horses, the honour would be diminished. Similarly, Aethon, the horse of Pallas, walks in his funeral procession in the *Aeneid*.²³³ He walks, stripped of his trappings, indicating that his master has no need of him anymore. The tears of Aethon here parallel those of Pallas’ companion Acoetes.²³⁴ As Gildenhard and Henderson state, both experience a loss of agency: “Acoetes does not walk on his on his own accord – he is being led; others move the chariots: Aethon walks behind them.”²³⁵ This deepens the pathos, and emphasises how loved Pallas was by all, even by his horse, though it is clear that an ordinary horse cannot cry through sadness. And while many accompany the procession of Pallas back to his father,²³⁶ the impression given here is that the event is more subdued and dignified than the funeral of Patroclus, but horses are still an integral part of it.

Horses are also sacrificed on Patroclus’ funeral pyre, along with two of Patroclus’ pet dogs and twelve Trojan captives.²³⁷ The poet describes the latter as a “murderous plan,” expressing disapproval of the act, indicating that this was not normal practice. The horses and dogs might have been more acceptable, however. Though horses were not routinely sacrificed in Classical

²³² *Il.* 23.5-18.

²³³ *Aen.* 11.89-90.

²³⁴ *Aen.* 11.85-87.

²³⁵ Gildenhard and Henderson, 2018, 272.

²³⁶ *Aen.* 11.88.

²³⁷ *Il.* 23.171-178.

times, they were occasionally interred in graves from the Mycenaean period onwards.²³⁸ Though this is a cremation rather than a burial, the original audience would have understood the concept of sending horses and goods to accompany their master into the afterlife. The human sacrifices are more shocking but represent the captives Patroclus will now never be able to take, as well as the extremity of Achilles' grief. In the *Aeneid*, too, Aeneas sends captives and horses to be sacrificed on Pallas' funeral pyre in emulation of the honour given to Patroclus.²³⁹

In the Funeral Games of both epics, prominence is given to equestrian events. In the *Iliad*, the chariot race is the most prestigious.²⁴⁰ It takes up the greater part of *Iliad* 23, and has the most valuable and the greatest number of prizes. It also gives the heroes a chance to show off, and for the audience to understand their characters and values when they are not fighting. Similarly, the Funeral Games of Anchises end on a memorable note with the *lusus Troiae*.²⁴¹ However, this is not a contest, and there are no prizes. Unlike the *Iliad*, where the chariot race honours the dead, amongst other things, the *lusus Troiae* is part of Virgil's programme of linking past with present and glorifying Augustus and his family.

²³⁸ Fagan, 2001, 62; Griffith, 2006, 199: For example, at Lefkandi, c. 900 BC.

²³⁹ *Aen.* 11.81-84.

²⁴⁰ *Il.* 23.262-650. See also 24 & 32.

²⁴¹ *Aen.* 5.545-603: see also 22-23.

Equine similes

Similes that feature animals are a hallmark of both poems. Warriors are compared to lions, bulls and sometimes to horses. A good example occurs at the end of *Iliad* 6,²⁴² where Paris, making his way back to the battlefield, is compared to a horse who has broken free, his mane streaming in the wind as he gallops delightedly to the pasture. In comparison, Paris is described as “laughing as he ran.” The simile seems very appropriate, highlighting Paris’ vanity and light-heartedness. He is going into battle, where he will kill others and perhaps die himself, yet he is glorying in his own good looks and laughing, as if he is not taking the matter seriously. It seems to fit with what Homer has already revealed about his character: showing off in front of the armies in his leopard skin, until Menelaus challenges him, whereupon he retreats into the Trojan ranks,²⁴³ needing rescue by Aphrodite, the least warlike of goddesses, and placed back into his perfumed bedroom,²⁴⁴ to where Aphrodite summons Helen in order that he might have sex with her, something in which he succeeds, unlike in his battle with Menelaus.²⁴⁵ Later, he is seen in his bedroom surrounded by women, polishing his armour, instead of on the battlefield, where men should be. His wife shows her disdain for this, and Hector has to remind him that he shouldn’t be there.²⁴⁶ He is made to appear weak, vain and shallow. His wife doesn’t like him, and his brother doesn’t understand him. He is a lover, not a fighter. The simile of the escaped horse seems to fit perfectly with this view.

However, the same simile is also applied to Hector later.²⁴⁷ Hector has been put out of action by Ajax, who has thrown a great stone at him and hit him in the chest.²⁴⁸ Apollo is directed by

²⁴² *Il.* 6.506-511.

²⁴³ *Il.* 3.15-37.

²⁴⁴ *Il.* 3.379-382.

²⁴⁵ *Il.* 3.437-448.

²⁴⁶ *Il.* 6.321-341.

²⁴⁷ *Il.* 15.263-268.

²⁴⁸ *Il.* 14.409-432.

Zeus to help him, so he breathes energy into him,²⁴⁹ and the simile follows as Hector returns to battle. At first sight, it does not seem to suit Hector as well as it suits Paris. Hector is not light-hearted or shallow, and he does not revel in his own good looks. It also appears to suit Hector less, as it has already been applied so seemingly effectively to Paris earlier. Gregory suggests, therefore, that the simile is less about characterisation, and more concerned with “conveying pent-up strength and vigour.”²⁵⁰ Fagan offers a more in depth and useful analysis, discussing the parallels between the settings of the simile, which has five parts. First, both Paris and Hector experience possible defeat and death in a fight with a prominent Greek enemy. Each are then rescued from the battlefield, following which they are urged to return to the fighting. They then return, denoted by the horse simile. Following their return, they achieve success in battle.²⁵¹ Fagan argues that both the warrior and the horse are breaking away from the safe space to return to the plain and therefore their proper places. Fagan continues that the “image of the horse, with its implication of luxury and non-utility, is an appropriate image for the warrior because it reveals the warrior’s status as a figure outside of the world of utility and inside the world of free striving for glory.”²⁵² In looking at the wider context, and using Fagan’s analysis, the application of this simile to Hector therefore makes better sense.

A very similar simile also makes its appearance in the *Aeneid*.²⁵³ Here, Turnus arms for battle and runs down from the citadel, eager to engage the enemy. Then follows the simile of an escaped horse who runs to the field to his mares and the bathing places, tossing his mane and exulting in his beauty and freedom. The simile itself may be similar to those in the *Iliad*, but the wider context, as outlined by Fagan, is not. There is no near-death encounter where Turnus needs to be rescued, no urging to return, etc. Instead, the Latins have been considering laying

²⁴⁹ *Il.* 15.220-262.

²⁵⁰ Gregory, 2007, 197.

²⁵¹ Fagan, 2001, 104.

²⁵² Fagan, 2001, 120.

²⁵³ *Aen.* 11.486-497.

down their weapons,²⁵⁴ though Turnus has argued otherwise.²⁵⁵ Aeneas then moves his troops, triggering the Latins into arming themselves once more.²⁵⁶ However, though the context may be different, the message being conveyed by the simile is the same. Rather than highlighting any vanity or light-heartedness on the part of Turnus, both horse and Turnus are returning to their proper places and experiencing delight and excitement at doing so. In addition, the simile also serves to further identify Turnus with Hector.

Another simile in the *Iliad* also conveys a similar message. In *Iliad* 22,²⁵⁷ Achilles is compared to a “prize-winning horse galloping effortlessly at speed over the plain with its chariot.” As already noted, Achilles shares the epithet “swift-footed” with horses throughout the poem.²⁵⁸ Here is a more direct comparison. Immediately prior to this simile, Achilles has been lured away from the fighting by Apollo, and when Achilles learns of this, he heads back to the battlefield, marked by this simile. Though it doesn’t follow the pattern laid out by Fagan, Achilles is returning to his proper place on the battlefield. There is also no description of the tossing of the mane or the beauty of the horse. In this simile, the horse is attached to a chariot, and travelling very quickly. The chariot is associated with the high-status warrior, heading into battle. Therefore, the impression given by the simile is one of focus on the battle ahead, the eagerness to reach it, and the speed being travelled to do so.

Another simile that has been mentioned previously in the context of the ridden horse is the simile featuring Ajax.²⁵⁹ Here Ajax is defending the ships, carrying a huge pike, jumping from ship to ship, and is compared to an expert trainer, jumping from horse to horse as they gallop along, watched with admiration by spectators.²⁶⁰ Although the ships are not moving, the simile

²⁵⁴ *Aen.* 11.302-375.

²⁵⁵ *Aen.* 11.376-467.

²⁵⁶ *Aen.* 11.468-485.

²⁵⁷ *Il.* 22.22.

²⁵⁸ See 45.

²⁵⁹ See 19.

²⁶⁰ *Il.* 15.679-684.

emphasises the skill of Ajax in jumping between them, and the admiration he must be receiving from those who watch, even as they are engaged in fighting him. Jumping from ship to ship like this is not something that an ordinary person could do, just as jumping from galloping horse to galloping horse could only be done by an expert. What this also shows is that there was a high level of skill in horse training available, at least by the time of composition, and the audience would have knowledge of this in order to understand the simile.

Ajax is also the subject of a simile that includes the only mention of a donkey in the *Iliad*.²⁶¹ Ajax is guarding the Trojan retreat, and is likened to a donkey who has broken into a field of corn, and although the boys in charge of him hit and abuse him, he ignores them and eats his fill, though eventually he is driven out, just as the Trojans eventually drive Ajax into retreat. As Gregory point out, the simile highlights Ajax's stubbornness and constancy in defence of the Greeks, while at the same time casting the Trojans as ineffectual and incompetent boys.²⁶² She also indicates that this simile could be read as one of a pair, together with the preceding simile.²⁶³ This one compares Ajax to a lion who is keen to break into a farm to attack the cattle but is driven back by the farmhands. At first, this seems more appropriate, as warriors are often compared to lions throughout the poem. This is then immediately contrasted with him being compared to the humblest of the equine family, the donkey. However, both similes tell the same story. As a lion, Ajax is frightened away and cannot achieve his purpose, and as a donkey, he retreats when he chooses, but is compared to the humblest and least noble of the equines in the process.²⁶⁴

The simile also reveals the relationship between donkeys and humans. Donkeys then, as now, were considered stubborn, and were mistreated as a matter of course, being beaten routinely in

²⁶¹ *Il.* 11.558-565.

²⁶² Gregory, 2007, 201.

²⁶³ Gregory, 2007, 200-201: *Il.* 11.548-557.

²⁶⁴ Gregory, 2007, 202.

order to make them do their tasks by those in charge of them. They are far from being noble animals like their cousins, the horses, who would never be left in the charge of boys with sticks.

The donkey simile can also be read in the light of other horse similes in the *Iliad*, particularly the simile applied to both Paris and Hector.²⁶⁵ The similes of the horse and that of the donkey show equines under the control of humans making a break for freedom. But they also show the contrast between the prized, spoiled horse and the poor, mistreated donkey. The horse is beautiful, tossing his mane and running lightly through the pasture, while the donkey is beaten and abused, and his reluctance to leave the field of corn demonstrates that he not getting enough to eat, and the beating is worth the stealing of the corn.²⁶⁶

Mules also make an appearance in one simile.²⁶⁷ While the two Ajaxes hold back the Trojans, Menelaus and Meriones carry off Patroclus' body, back to the ships, and are compared to mules, sweating to pull a log from the mountains, wearing themselves out with their exertions. Menelaus and Meriones are reliable and steadfast warriors, though not amongst the most brilliant, so their comparison to mules is appropriate, as mules are in the middle of the equine hierarchy, being both horse and donkey. The simile also shows how mules are regarded. They work in pairs, like horses in chariots, and unlike donkeys, who work alone. However, their work is different. They do not take warriors to the battlefield, but work in hauling loads for a noble purpose, such as bringing timber for the building of a ship, and they put every effort into their work. Unlike the donkey, they are respected, but unlike the horse, they are valued for their utility rather than as prestige possessions.²⁶⁸

The *Aeneid* has far fewer similes involving equines than the *Iliad*. The only one worthy of note occurs in the Funeral Games of *Aeneid* 5, where the ships of the opening competition are

²⁶⁵ *Il.* 6.506-11 & 15.263-268.

²⁶⁶ Gregory, 2007, 202.

²⁶⁷ *Il.* 17.742-745.

²⁶⁸ Griffith, 2006, 241.

compared to a chariot race involving two-horse chariots being encouraged by charioteers.²⁶⁹ As the Funeral Games themselves have an intertextual relationship with the Funeral Games of the *Iliad* as a whole, so the boat race of the *Aeneid* also holds a similar intertextual relationship. In a straightforward reading, Aeneas holds a boat race as he currently has no chariots, and the simile is one way of indicating early on that this race corresponds to the chariot race of the *Iliad*.²⁷⁰ Virgil goes on to include other parallels with the *Iliad*'s chariot race, such as Mnesteus encouraging his rowers²⁷¹ as Antilochus does his horses, and Sergestus' grounded boat²⁷² echoing Eumelus shattered chariot. However, the inclusion of a boat race, though it is the first boat race included in epic, would have been a familiar contest to a Roman audience, as Augustus had staged his own boating contest in a lake excavated from the Tiber,²⁷³ and the parallels with a chariot race, also familiar to the Roman audience from contests in the Circus Maximus, would have been apparent. Comparing ships to chariots also occurs in the *Odyssey*,²⁷⁴ so Virgil is possibly alluding to that here as well. Finally, Farrell sees the simile as a symbol of the competition between the *Aeneid* and the *Iliad* and readies the audience of the poem for the rest of the contests, many of them also modelled on the ones in the *Iliad*.²⁷⁵

As well as being included in similes, occasionally horses are the subject of them. There are many instances of simple similes of this kind (for example, horses "white as snow,"²⁷⁶), but the most notable again concerns Xanthos and Balios.²⁷⁷ Mourning for Patroclus, they are compared to a gravestone on a barrow of a dead man or woman. Achity points out that the simile is very appropriate, as it foreshadows the funeral games of Patroclus, where horses will play a central

²⁶⁹ *Aen.* 5.144-149. See 14.

²⁷⁰ Another is the "turning post," a rock that Aeneas marks with a branch of oak, *Aen.* 5.124-131.

²⁷¹ *Aen.* 5.188-201.

²⁷² *Aen.* 5.201-209.

²⁷³ Suet. *Aug.* 43.1.

²⁷⁴ *Od.* 13.81-85.

²⁷⁵ Farrell in Lowe, 2015, 22.

²⁷⁶ *Aen.* 3.538 & *Il.* 10.437.

²⁷⁷ *Il.* 17.432-437.

role in the opening event, though not Xanthos and Balios, who will still be mourning.²⁷⁸ It also calls to mind the mound that will be raised over Patroclus' remains, which will also eventually include Achilles. Schein discusses the similarity between the horses and their refusal to move, even right in the middle of the tumult of battle, and the frozen image of the stone funeral stele.²⁷⁹ He further suggests that the "stillness and longing for Patroklos seems to preserve his memory, just as a stele was meant to preserve the memory of a dead man or woman." A stele is also mentioned earlier in the poem,²⁸⁰ so it seems that Homer's audience would be familiar with them. Further, according to Fagan, horses were a common image on funerary markers from the Bronze Age to the Archaic period.²⁸¹ This makes the simile even more appropriate, as Xanthos and Balios become the image on the stele that may be erected on the tomb-mound containing Patroclus and Achilles.

²⁷⁸ Achity, 1978, 307.

²⁷⁹ Schein, 2015, 15.

²⁸⁰ *Il.* 13.434-439.

²⁸¹ Fagan, 2001, 62.

Conclusion

To a pre-industrial society, as is reflected by the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*, horses and other equines were a vital part of everyday life. They were a necessity for transport and as draught animals. However, though donkeys and mules were available to the lower end of society, horses in particular were expensive to buy and maintain. This means that horses and their equipment were only available to the top tier of society. Consequently, horses become a necessary part of a Homeric and Virgilian heroes' equipment in his quest for fame and glory. Naturally, they are indispensable in getting the Homeric hero to and from the battlefield, and for a Virgilian hero to fight from in many cases. But they are more than simple transport. Warriors in the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid* value their horses as symbols of their status amongst other warriors. They are given as gifts to each other, as exemplified by Latinus to Aeneas, or Dido to Ascanius in the *Aeneid*, or by the gods to Peleus/Achilles in the *Iliad*. They are given as prizes in the Funeral Games in the *Iliad*, and they are coveted and stolen, such as by Diomedes, who takes both Aeneas' and Rhesus' horses, or Dolon who covets Achilles' and Nisus who desires Turnus'. Even the gods, who have no need of horses to transport them, use horses and chariots, particularly in the *Iliad*, highlighting their necessity as status symbols. And for the most prominent heroes, no ordinary horses will do. Aeneas in the *Aeneid* is given horses of divine descent and drives similar horses in the *Iliad*. Diomedes later takes those from him, as they are also fitting for his status, perhaps more so. And of course, the pre-eminent hero Achilles has the best horses of all, being fully immortal.

However, both epics demonstrate a relationship between human and horse that is more than this, as they are also objects of care and affection. Of course, horses do need proper care and attention or they will not be able to function as transport or status symbols, and even the horses of the gods are given ambrosial fodder in their mangers. But unlike the horses of the gods, who remain nameless and unidentifiable, the horses of the mortals are given names, which not only

identifies them, but individualises them, and sometimes allows characters to talk to them, as Hector does to his horses, Mezentius to Rhaebus, and Antilochus to Aethe. The way in which these heroes talk to their horses highlights not only the close relationship between them, but also that they expect their horses to share the same motivations and ideals as they do, which further highlights the character traits of the speaker, Virgil being particularly adept in this in his treatment of Mezentius and Rhaebus.

The talking to horses and the sharing of aims with them anthropomorphises horses. However, such anthropomorphism in both epics goes further than this: they may be given arming scenes like humans (Xanthos and Balios), assigned emotions like humans (Xanthos and Balios and Aethon in the *Aeneid*), and given lineages that link them to the gods, like the most heroic of humans (Xanthos and Balios, Aeneas' horses in the *Iliad* and his gifts in the *Aeneid*). This lifts them away from other animals and puts some of them on a par with the most outstanding characters of both poems, demonstrating how closely linked they are. However, there is also a reflection of real life, with breeding lines for horses being almost as important as aristocratic lineages for the highest status Greek or Roman. Breeding lines for horses are still important to this day.

While horses are abundant in both epics, some horses are more special than others. Xanthos and Balios have no parallel in the *Aeneid*, and no parallel within the *Iliad* either. In fact, mention of other immortal horses seems to be deliberately suppressed so Xanthos and Balios and their relationship with Achilles can shine. As Achilles stands out, so do they, their status matching his. They share a very intimate relationship with Achilles, far more so than any other horse/human relationship (with perhaps the exception of Mezentius and Rhaebus). They display very human traits, such as the ability to speak and the ability to mourn. Like humans, they attract the favour of the gods, though it is for their divine nature rather than for any other reasons, and they have a better understanding of what it means to be human than the gods do.

Their presence in the poem also serves to accentuate the characters of those who interact with them. They advise Achilles, but also serve him, and are even willing to obey him when he drags Hector's body around Troy, a sign that they agree with him in the treatment of the corpse. Their relationship with Patroclus also helps to understand his character, as they are willing to serve him, and they consider him worth mourning for his treatment of them. They even highlight the character of Automedon, who abuses them when they do not want to move. He is shown not to understand them in the way Patroclus and Achilles understand them. And they have a simile of their own, highlighting their uniqueness, as well as adding to the literary message Homer wished to convey.

Horses are also an important part of this literary message, for both authors. The similes of the *Iliad* that include horses and other equines highlight that character traits of their subjects, such as the stubbornness and skill of Ajax, the swiftness of Achilles, and the natures of Paris and Hector returning to the battlefield. The similes here also provide information on how horses and other equines are treated and understood by the audience. For Virgil, his horse similes have an intertextual relationship with the *Iliad*, his simile of Turnus reflecting that referring to Hector and Paris, his chariot racing simile linking his boat race with Homer's chariot race. Virgil also uses horses to fit in with his programme of glorifying Augustus and his regime. This is particularly true of the *lusus Troiae*, which demonstrates the value of horses to Aeneas and his people, as well as to the Roman audience, and its performance in the *Aeneid* links with its apparent "revival" by Julius Caesar and its continued performance under Augustus, as a link to his mythic past and Ascanius, Aeneas and Venus as his ancestors.

In short, horses have a prominent role to play in both epics, though this role is somewhat greater in the *Iliad*. As a whole, the *Iliad* does have more to say about the relationship between horse and human, and the role of the horse and other equines in epic society, while shedding light on characters at the same time. In the *Aeneid*, however, horses are present far less, and can

therefore provide less information on these same areas, though when it does, it is often elegant and engaging. Instead, Virgil uses horses often as an intertextual link to the *Iliad* or to promote Augustus, meaning while both epics interact with each other and have much to compare, the *Iliad* is the epic that holds most interest here.

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