

5 | Roman Reception of the Trojan War

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Roman reception of Greek cultural tradition was anything but passive or straightforward. After the first wave of translations and adaptations that took place in the third and second centuries BCE, remaking and rethinking Greek sources became the normal practice. This gradually led to their replacement by new literary production cast in the Latin language. Homer was superseded by Vergil; Hesiod by Ovid and Vergil again; Sappho, Pindar, and Callimachus by Catullus and Horace; Sophocles and Euripides by Seneca, and so on.

Still, even when approached against this background, Roman reception of Homer is a special case. On the one hand, it is highly symptomatic that the *Odyssea*, the translation of the Homeric *Odyssey* by Livius Andronicus (third century BCE), was the first literary epic to appear in Latin. On the other hand, at approximately the same time or perhaps even earlier,¹ the Romans, who aspired to acquire a prestigious past by securing a place within Greek heroic tradition, started to identify themselves as descendants of the defeated Trojans. This identification became especially prominent in the middle of the first century BCE, with the rise to power of Caesar and Augustus, who claimed to descend from Aeneas through his son Iulus. The silver denarius of Caesar showing Aeneas leaving Troy, minted in 47/46 BCE, is emblematic in this respect. Aeneas carries his father Anchises on his left shoulder and holds in his right hand the Palladium, the statue of armed Athena from the city of Troy. This was the first time when Aeneas replaced Romulus on a Roman coin. This also signalled the beginning of a new era in the reception of the Trojan War.

Romulus and Aeneas

The starting point of my discussion is an ode that Horace wrote in 27 BCE, the year of Augustus' rise to power. It is usually supposed that the poem refers to the plan of transferring the capital to the East, which was reportedly

¹ For the discussion see Gruen 1992: 6–51; Cornell 1995: 63–8; Wiseman 1995: 52–5; Jones 1999: 82–8; Erskine 2001: 16; Hornblower 2015: 97–8.

being considered at the time;² it seems, however, that the extensive building program launched by Augustus in the city of Ilion (Troy) just a few years later (more later) should also be taken into account here.

Romulus is being admitted to the circle of the Olympian gods. Juno welcomes a descendant of the 'Trojan priestess' (*Troica . . . sacerdos*, i.e. Rhea Sylvia), but she also issues a warning:³

*Dum longus inter saeviat Ilion
Romamque pontus, qualibet exules
in parte regnato beati;
dum Priami Paridisque busto
insultet armentum et catulos ferae
celent inultae, stet Capitolium
fulgens triumphatisque possit
Roma ferox dare iura Medis.*

'As long as the extensive sea rages between Troy and Rome, let them, exiles, reign happy in any other part of the world: as long as cattle trample upon the tomb of Priam and Paris, and wild beasts conceal their young ones there with impunity, may the Capitol remain in splendor, and may brave Rome be able to give laws to the conquered Medes'.

But if these admonitions were not heeded, the following will be fulfilled:

*Sed bellicosis fata Quiritibus
Hac lege dico, ne nimium pii
rebusque fidentes avitae
tecta velint reparare Troiae.
Troiae renascens alite lugubri
Fortuna tristi clade iterabitur,
Ducente victrices catervas
Coniuge me Iovis et sorore.
Ter si resurgat murus aeneus
auctore Phoebos, ter pereat meis
excisus Argivis, ter uxor
capta virum puerosque ploret.*

'But I pronounce this fate to the warlike Romans, upon this condition; that neither through an excess of piety, nor of confidence in their power, they become inclined to rebuild the houses of their ancestors' Troy. The fortune of Troy, reviving under unlucky auspices, shall be repeated with lamentable destruction, I, the wife and sister of Jupiter, leading on the

² Suet. *Jul. Caes.* 79. ³ Horace *Odes* 3.3.37–44, 57–68. Tr. C. Smart, slightly adapted.

victorious bands. Thrice, if a brazen wall should arise by means of its founder Phoebus, thrice should it fall, demolished by my Greeks; thrice should the captive wife bewail her husband and her children.’

Note that Horace both leaves room for the Romans’ self-identification as descendants of the Trojans and keeps the Greek tradition of the Trojan War intact. Troy had gotten what it deserved, but Rome inaugurated an entirely new beginning, represented by the figure of Romulus, and its affinity with Troy should not be overemphasized.

Yet Horace, with his characteristically Republican emphasis on Romulus rather than Aeneas⁴ and his idea of a single Graeco-Roman civilization, clearly implied in Juno’s warning, was far behind his time. The same can be said of his contemporary Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who also worked in Augustan Rome.⁵ In his *Roman Antiquities* Dionysius not only tried to defend the idea of Greek origins of the Romans but also argued that the Trojans were in fact Greeks. This idea, however, obviously did not seem appealing enough to become universally accepted.

When Horace wrote his ode, Vergil was already working on the *Aeneid*, a poem destined radically to transform the Romans’ attitude toward the tradition of the Trojan War. Vergil was much better attuned to the spirit of the epoch than Horace or Dionysius. Rather than downplaying the Romans’ identification with the Trojans as Horace did or claiming, together with Dionysius, that the Trojans and through them the Romans were in fact Greeks, Vergil chose to present the Greeks as inferior to the Trojans and, by all too obvious extrapolation, to the Romans as well. Consider, for example, the reaction of the ghosts of the Greek participants in the Trojan War at Aeneas’ appearance in the Underworld:⁶

*at Danaum proceres Agamemnoniaeque phalanges
ut videre virum fulgentiaque arma per umbras,
ingenti trepidare metu; pars vertere terga,
ceu quondam petiere rates, pars tollere vocem
exiguam: inceptus clamor frustratur hiantis.*

But the Greek chieftains, and the massed ranks whom Agamemnon had led, trembled in violent panic at the sight of their foe with his armour glittering amid the shadows. Some turned to flee as before they had fled to

⁴ On the difference between the Republican and the Augustan attitude, see Erskine 2001: 30–6. In *Carmen Saeculare* (17 BCE), Horace pays lavish tribute to the myth of Aeneas and the Trojan descent of Augustus, by whom the ode was commissioned (ll. 40–7, 53–4), without at the same time losing sight of Romulus (48–52).

⁵ See Gabba 1991: 212–13. ⁶ *Aen.* 6.489–93. Tr. W. F. Jackson Knight.

their ships, while others raised a whispering voice; but their attempt at a battle-cry left their mouths idly gaping.

Greek leaders trembling before a Trojan – such was the perspective on the Troy–Greece relationship that Vergil established.

Above all, however, Vergil's strategies concerning this relationship are revealed in two prophecies that he puts into the mouths of Jupiter and of the ghost of Anchises, respectively:⁷

*Veniet lustris labentibus aetas,
cum domus Assaraci Phthiam clarasque Mycenae
servitio premet, ac victis dominabitur Argis.*

'Time in its five-year spans shall slip by till an age shall come when the House of Assaracus shall crush to subjection even Phthia and illustrious Mycenae, and conquer Argos, and hold mastery there.'

*Ille triumphata Capitolia ad alta Corintho
victor aget currum caesis insignis Achiuis.
eruet ille Argos Agamemnoniasque Mycenae
ipsumque Aeaciden, genus armipotentis Achilli,
ultus avos Troiae templa et temerata Mineruae.*

'Over there is one who shall triumph over Corinth and drive his chariot to the towering Capitol in glorious victory after the slaying of Greeks. And another, there, shall uproot Argos and Mycenae, Agamemnon's own city, and the Aeacid himself, the descendant of Achilles the mighty in arms; so he shall avenge his Trojan ancestors and Trojan Minerva's desecrated shrine.'⁸

The change of emphasis in the approach to the Trojan myth that these quotations demonstrate found its expression not only in poetry but also in the very topography of the Greek city of Ilion, founded on the site of Troy somewhere at the beginning of the first millennium BCE. Let us dwell briefly on its history.

The Background: Ilion (ca. 670–20 BCE)

Horace's picture of Troy, as well as his plea not to restore the city, may create the impression that Troy had lain in ruins since Priam's times.

⁷ *Aen.* 1.283–8, 6.836–40.

⁸ The references are to Assaracus son of Tros, grandfather of Anchises, to Mummius the conqueror of Corinth (146 BCE), to Aemilius Paulus the conqueror of Macedonia (168 BCE), and to Perseus, its last Hellenistic ruler.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. The topos of the everlasting ruins of Troy, persistent in both Greek and Latin literary tradition,⁹ finds no corroboration in the historical and archaeological record.

By the early archaic period we already find the Greek settlement of the Troad firmly established. The settlers were Aeolian Greeks, who formed the first wave of Greek colonization in Asia Minor. The new settlement incorporated within its precincts what had remained of the Bronze Age Troy.¹⁰ These were the monuments seen by the poets responsible for the formative stage of the Homeric tradition. The new landmarks of the Archaic Troad included the city of Ilion itself (Troy VIII), probably with the temple of Athena Ilias (anachronistically introduced in *Iliad* 6), and the seaport Sigeum, which in the course of the seventh and sixth centuries BCE several times changed hands between the Aeolians from nearby Lesbos and the encroaching Athenians, who sought to establish control over the grain supply from the Black Sea. It is in the context of the fight over Sigeum that the Aeolian settlement of the Troad first emerges in the historical record:

Sigeum, which city Pisistratus had taken by force of arms from the Mytilenaeans. . . . during very many years there had been war between the Athenians of Sigeum and the Mytilenaeans of the city called Achilleum. They of Mytilene insisted on having the place restored to them: but the Athenians refused, since they argued that the Aeolians had no better claim to the Trojan territory than themselves, or than any of the other Greeks who helped Menelaus on occasion of the rape of Helen.¹¹

The Athenian political rhetoric aside, note the double perspective on Troy and the Troad that transpires from this episode. For the Asiatic Aeolians, the Troad was first and foremost the place where they had lived for generations now; for the Athenians, it was a theatre of the Trojan War and, therefore, a Panhellenic domain. This early politicization of the Trojan space was highly symptomatic. As we shall see immediately, the Iron Age city of Ilion continued to serve as a playground of competing ideologies in the subsequent centuries as well.

In the Persian Wars the ideological aspect of the site of Troy became even more pronounced. As Xerxes' visit to Ilion on his way to Greece (480

⁹ See esp. Lycurgus *Against Leocrates* 62 (ca. 330 BCE): 'Who has not heard how, after being the greatest city of her time and ruling the whole of Asia, she was deserted forever when once the Greeks had razed her?' Tr. J. O. Burt. At the time of Lycurgus' speech, the city of Ilion had been part of the Greek political scene for about four hundred years (see subsequently). Cf. also Aesch. *Ag.* 818–20; Eur. *Tro.* 1317.24 and below, with n. 19.

¹⁰ Hertel 2003: 186–213. ¹¹ Hdt. 5.94. Tr. G. Rawlinson.

BCE) shows, by treating the sack of Troy as Greek trespass on the territory of Asia, the King of Persia symbolically represented the war that he initiated as an act of just retribution for past wrongs – or at least this is how Herodotus saw it. The visit was accompanied by a magnificent sacrifice to Trojan Athena.¹²

At the time of the Peloponnesian War, Ilion was a tribute-paying member of the Delian League,¹³ and it was definitely involved in the naval campaign in the Aegean.¹⁴ After the defeat of Athens, Ilion, along with the other Greek cities of Asia Minor, became Persian as a result of the King's Peace (387 BCE).

The year 334 BCE was a turning point in the history of Ilion. The entry of Alexander's army into the Troad, staged as a symbolic re-enactment of the Trojan War,¹⁵ not only provided a powerful theme for Macedonian imperial propaganda but also inaugurated an unprecedented surge of urban development in the city of Ilion (Troy IX). All of a sudden, Ilion became important. The reason is clear: its existence legitimized Alexander's campaign against Persia, helping to represent it as a new Trojan War, that is, another Panhellenic enterprise aiming to avenge the injury inflicted upon the Greeks by the barbarians of Asia. The subsequent growth and prosperity of Hellenistic Ilion was a direct result of its ideological importance in the eyes of Alexander and his successors.

In the Hellenistic period Ilion greatly gained in political importance. It became an autonomous polis and the religious and administrative centre of a koinon.¹⁶ The temple of Athena Ilias, built under Lysimachus and the Seleucids (the end of the fourth to the third century BCE) is representative of the new status of the city. In material, in structure, in the subjects of the reliefs on the metopes this magnificent edifice deliberately evoked the Parthenon and aimed to establish a meaningful correlation, sanctioned

¹² Hdt. 7.43: 'On reaching the Scamander . . . Xerxes ascended into the Pergamus of Priam, since he had a longing to behold the place. When he had seen everything, and inquired into all particulars, he made an offering of a thousand oxen to the Trojan Athena, while the Magians poured libations to the heroes who were slain at Troy.'

¹³ It appears in the Athenian Tribute Lists for the year 425–424 BCE; see further Bryce 2006: 157 and 205 n. 9.

¹⁴ See Xen. *Hell.* 1.1.4: 'Meanwhile Mindarus [a Spartan admiral], while sacrificing to Athena at Ilion, had observed the battle. He at once hastened to the sea.' The context is the Battle of Abydos, 410 BCE.

¹⁵ Cf. Arr. *Anab.* 1.11: 'It is also said that he went up to Ilion and offered sacrifice to the Trojan Athena; that he set up his own panoply in the temple as a votive offering, and in exchange for it took away some of the consecrated arms which had been preserved from the time of the Trojan war. It is also said that the shield-bearing guards used to carry these arms in front of him into the battles.' Tr. J. Chinnock.

¹⁶ Hertel 2003: 237–59; cf. Bryce 2006: 159–65.

by the tradition of the Trojan War at least since the time of Homer, between Athena Ilias and Athena Polias of Athens. Both temples delivered the same message of an epoch-making confrontation between the Greeks and the barbarians and the eventual triumph of the former. This, however, was not destined to last. A new power arose in the Mediterranean, and it was about to present the Trojan landscape and the Trojan War itself in an entirely new light.

The Transformation: Ilium (20 BCE–ca. 500 CE)

The Roman tendency to approach the site of Troy in the perspective of the Aeneas myth can be traced back to the first entry of Roman troops into Asia at the beginning of the second century BCE.¹⁷ Yet it was not before 27 BCE, the year of Augustus' rise to power, that Ilium was placed in the focus of public attention. As we saw, it is in this same year that Horace wrote the ode in which he pleaded not to rebuild Troy. It is not out of the question that while writing these lines Horace also had in mind the events of the First Mithridatic War, in the course of which Ilium had been heavily damaged by the rebellious Roman legate Fimbria (85 BCE). The destruction, however, was apparently not as devastating as some of our sources would have it.¹⁸ Moreover, the ruins of Troy were evoked in similar terms also by Ovid in 8 CE, after Troy had already been rebuilt on a large scale by Augustus:

*nunc humilis veteres tantummodo Troia ruinas
Et pro divitiis tumulos ostendit avorum.*

[Troy was great in wealth and men . . . now humbled to the dust, she can but point to her ancient ruins, ancestral tombs are all her wealth.]¹⁹

That is to say, just like their Greek predecessors, Roman poets glorified the imagined ruins of Troy, ignoring the real city that existed in their place.²⁰

¹⁷ See Erskine 2001: 234–7; Bryce 2006: 164–5.

¹⁸ See the excellent discussion by Erskine in Erskine 2001: 237–45; cf. Bryce 2006: 165.

¹⁹ Ov. *Met.* 15. 424–5. Tr. Mary M. Innes.

²⁰ See n. 9. It is not out of the question that this double perspective of the contemporary Troy was in the background of a scholarly theory according to which there were in fact two Iliums rather than one. The initiator of the theory, which had for centuries hindered the correct identification of the site of Troy, seems to have been Hestiaea of Alexandria, of whom almost nothing is known, but its most influential exponent was the grammarian and commentator of Homer Demetrius of Scepsis (second century BCE). Demetrius was a native resident of the Troad, a fact that invested his discussion of the Trojan landscape with special authority. He was lavishly quoted by Strabo (see esp. 13.1.35, 40), which accounts for the influence of his theory in the modern period. The theory was conclusively refuted only in the 1870s, as a result of

Politicians were, however, a different matter. In 20 BCE, in the course of his visit to the provinces of Asia and Bithynia, Augustus arrived in Ilium. He stayed in the house of one of the citizens, Melanippides, with whom he had been connected by bonds of ceremonial friendship. A telling testimony of this event is provided by inscriptions on the eastern architrave of the temple of Athena and by the basis of a column representing Augustus' stay in Ilium and bearing an inscription which styles him a 'relative' (*suggenês*) and 'protector' (*patrôn*) of its citizens. (Let me note in passing that the 'Trojans' whom Augustus encountered were of course Greeks, descendants of the Greek colonists who had settled in the Troad at the beginning of the first millennium BCE.) However that may be, the ambitious building program launched in the subsequent years was the direct outcome of Augustus' visit.

The increasing tendency to see Troy as the antecedent of Rome exerted a visible influence on the city and its surroundings. The myth of Trojan origins of Rome reshaped Ilium into *Romana Pergama*²¹ and resulted in a thorough reinterpretation not only of the Trojan saga but also of the Trojan landscape itself. The Greek participants in the Trojan War and the monuments associated with them came to be seen in a negative light, whereas the palaces of Assarakos and Priam, the house and the tomb of Hector became firmly established as new landmarks of Roman Ilium. These changes emphasized the image of Troy as the starting point in the history of Rome and legitimized Roman presence in Asia. For all practical purposes, Troy was reborn.

The dramatic turn in the reception of the Trojan landscape that took place in the Roman period is epitomized in an epigram on the tomb of Hector at Ophryneion, composed by Germanicus on the occasion of his visit to the city in 18 CE. The epigram, addressed to Hector, is concluded with the following words:

*Ilios en surgit rursus inclita, gens colit illam
Te Marte inferior, Martis amica tamen.
Myrmidonas periisse omnes dic Hector Achilli,
Thessaliam et magnis esse sub Aeneadis.*

Schliemann's excavations of Troy. On the travellers who were looking for Troy before Schliemann, see Cook 1973: 14–38; on the history of Schliemann's identification, see Traill 1995: 35–58, esp. 53.

²¹ The expression was coined by Lucan, see Luc. 9.998–9: *restituam populos; grata vice moenia reddent | Ausonidae Phrygibus, Romanaque Pergama surgent* (spoken by Caesar).

Look, the glorious Ilios is raised up again, and though the race that inhabits it is not equal to you in the matters of war, it is still a friend of Mars. Hector, tell Achilles that all the Myrmidons have perished, and Thessaly is subject to the great descendants of Aeneas.²²

In 53 CE, on the occasion of his marriage to Octavia, the sixteen-year-old Nero delivered an oration whose main subject was Troy:

Anxious to distinguish himself by noble pursuits, and the reputation of an orator, he advocated the cause of the people of Ilium, and having eloquently recounted how Rome was the offspring of Troy, and Aeneas the founder of the Julian line, with other old traditions akin to myths, he gained for his clients exemption from all public burdens.²³

Ilium had never been more popular than in the three subsequent centuries. Emperors visited it; it became a major tourist attraction issuing souvenir coins with Trojan heroes and scenes from the Trojan War.²⁴ And yet, since the fourth century CE, probably because the Christianization of the empire stripped the city of its ideological importance, Ilium's name disappears from the record. This was a signal of its decline. In the middle of the fifth century, the agora began to be used as a cemetery, and after a series of earthquakes circa 500 CE the city was abandoned.²⁵ Troy returned to what it had always been in the imagination of the poets – a city in ruins. With time, even the ruins disappeared, not to be seen again till the end of the nineteenth century. Yet the image of the Trojan War carved out by poets and politicians of the Augustan era survived much longer.

Rome and Beyond

One of the results of the revision of the Trojan tradition initiated in Augustan Rome was that the Greek participants in the Trojan War came to be presented as inferior to the Trojans not only in Latin but also in Imperial Greek literature. Thus, in his *Trojan Oration*, addressed to the citizens of Ilium, Dio of Prusa (ca. 40 – ca. 115 CE) could already afford to represent Homer as a liar and the Trojans as the victors in the Trojan War. According to the *Trojan Oration*, Troy had never been sacked by the Greeks: in fact, it is the Greeks who had lost the war because of their unprovoked attack on Troy. Dio repeatedly praises the Trojans (read:

²² *Anth. Lat.* 708. My translation. ²³ Tac. *Annales* 12.58.1. Tr. A. J. Church and W. J. Brodribb.

²⁴ Vermeule 1995; Minchin 2012. ²⁵ Rose 2011: 904.

Romans) and elevates Aeneas, a hero virtually ignored by other Greek authors. Even if the speech was meant as a rhetorical exercise rather than a serious treatment of the Trojan theme, Dio's pro-Roman orientation is unmistakable, and it is made explicit at the end of the oration, when he asserts that the truth about the Trojan War can now be told because 'the situation has changed . . . for Greece is subject to others and so is Asia'.²⁶

The *Trojan Oration* was part of a trend.²⁷ The latter produced not only such acknowledged masterpieces as Lucian's *True Stories* and Philostratus' *Heroicus* but also two accounts of the Trojan War written in Greek prose somewhere between the first and the third centuries CE: the *History of the Destruction of Troy* by 'Dares the Phrygian' and the *Journal of the Trojan War* by 'Dictys of Crete'. Although far from masterpieces, these two compositions were to become the foremost sources on the Trojan War for a millennium and a half. Both are presented as eyewitness accounts and therefore as far superior to Homer. The image of the Greek participants that they communicate, although not invariably negative, is far from flattering.²⁸ This is especially true of Dictys' *Journal* where, for example, Achilles kills Hector in a night ambush (3.15) and kills Memnon when the latter is already wounded by Ajax (4.6). But it is the Latin translations of Dictys and Dares, apparently made in the fourth and fifth centuries CE, that became overwhelmingly influential in the subsequent centuries.

It is true, of course, that such post-Augustan epics as Statius' *Achilleid* (96 CE) and the *Posthomerica* by Quintus of Smyrna (fourth century CE) displayed an attitude to the Trojan War that did not essentially differ from the tradition bequeathed by Homer.²⁹ Yet in the late antique, medieval, and early modern West it was Dictys and Dares rather than Statius and Quintus who became, as one scholar put it, 'the foundational texts of Trojan historiography'.³⁰ The fact that Homer was no longer available was far from being the only reason for the enormous popularity these two texts enjoyed.

More than anything else, the popularity of Dictys and Dares was an outcome of the lasting dialogue with the Roman past that ran deeply in the veins of Western tradition. This dialogue involved both identification with Rome and challenge to its authority: the first found its expression in the myth of Trojan ancestry, the second in the adoption of Hector rather than

²⁶ *Orationes* 11.150.

²⁷ Merkle 1996: 578–9; Zeitlin 2001; Kim 2010: 179–81; Whitmarsh 2010c: 398–9.

²⁸ See further King 1987: 140–1, Merkle 1996. ²⁹ King 1987: 129–38.

³⁰ Patterson 1991: 114.

Aeneas as a model hero (more later).³¹ The earliest attribution of Trojan origins to a northern European people is attested as early as the mid seventh century CE: the people in question were the Franks, with the Britons following them one hundred and fifty years later.³² Throughout the Middle Ages, more and more peoples, states and dynasties lay claim to Trojan ancestry: Venice, Sicily, Tuscany, Naples, Calabria, the Danes, the Normans, Belgium, the Saxons, the German Emperors, the Capetians, and this is just a partial list.³³

It should also be taken into account that the idea of the Trojan War promulgated by Dictys and Dares went very well indeed with what could be found in Vergil's *Aeneid* (see aforementioned), and the *Aeneid* continued to be read and imitated throughout the Middle Ages.³⁴ Last but not least, as Katherine King put it, 'the Trojans were considered to be the ancestors of most European peoples, while Achilles and Odysseus were the representatives of the somewhat untrustworthy Eastern half of Christendom'³⁵ – so much so that the myth of Trojan ancestry was even mobilized to justify the Latin conquest of Constantinople (1204).³⁶

All these created a suitable background for Dictys' and Dares' revisionist attitude towards Homer's picture of the Trojan War not only to be perpetuated but also to be taken further. In 1160, Benoît de Sainte-Maure made the account of Dares and, to a lesser degree, of Dictys the basis for his 30,000-verse-long *Le Roman de Troie*. The poem consistently presented Hector as a supreme hero and the Trojans as unambiguously superior to the Greeks; Achilles, on the other hand, became an object of vilification.³⁷ The popularity of *Le Roman de Troie* was overwhelming. It was soon translated into Spanish and German, adapted into French prose, and used as the basis for Italian poems. In the East it was translated into Greek as *The War of Troy* (*Ὁ Πόλεμος τῆς Τρωάδος*), by far the longest medieval Greek romance. Since the early thirteenth century, *Historia destructionis Troiae*, the Latin version of *Le Roman de Troie* by Guido delle Colonne, became no less popular and was adapted as frequently.³⁸ In

³¹ On two conflicting tendencies entrenched in the medieval myth of Trojan origins, see Waswo 1995; on the medieval attitudes to Aeneas and Hector, see Engels 1998a and 1998b, respectively.

³² Waswo 1995: 269–74; cf. Engels 1998b: 140.

³³ Patterson 1991: 90–1; Waswo 1995: 286–7; Engels 1998b: 140. See also Patterson 1991: 84, on the myth of Trojan origins as 'the founding myth of Western history in the Middle Ages'.

³⁴ On the foundation myths of Trojan origins as 'quite remarkably Virgilian', see esp. Waswo 1995: 272; see also Patterson 1991: 90, 114; Ingledeu 1994; Simpson 1998.

³⁵ King 2011: 721. ³⁶ Patterson 1991: 93; Engels 1998b: 140.

³⁷ See King 1987: 160–70; Engels 1998b.

³⁸ On Guido delle Colonne and his influence on the treatment of the Trojan theme in the late medieval and early modern period, see Simpson 1998; Engels 1998b, 140–1.

the subsequent centuries, the picture of the Trojan War established in *Le Roman de Troie* and *Historia destructionis Troiae* prevailed in both high and popular culture. It influenced Dante, Chaucer and Shakespeare. The popular medieval list of the Nine Worthies featured Hector as one of the three foremost heroes of pagan antiquity, the other two being Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar.³⁹

To recapitulate, Vergil's idea of the inferiority of Greece before Rome and its imaginary antecedent Troy enjoyed a much longer life than Horace's and Dionysius' vision of a single Graeco-Roman civilization, a vision which happens also to be our own. The latter re-emerged only in the wake of the cultural transformation effected by the Renaissance and was not firmly established until the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries.⁴⁰ The same would also be true of the picture of the Trojan War found in the poems of Homer, whose authority was re-established at approximately the same period.⁴¹

Conclusions

Whatever its historical and cultural background, by the time of its being reinvigorated in the mid first century BCE the myth of Trojan origins of the Romans had been universally taken for granted. There was more than one way to negotiate the convoluted relationship between Greece and Rome that it implied. One way was to continue privileging Romulus and the old foundational legend by marginalizing the myth of Trojan origins along with the antagonism between Greece and Rome that inevitably followed from it: this was the way Horace followed. Another way was to neutralize the antagonism by claiming that the Trojans and, consequently, the Romans were in fact of Greek descent: this was what Dionysius tried to accomplish. But it was also possible, rather than avoiding the antagonism, to bring it to the fore by presenting the Trojans and, by implication, the Romans as superior to the Greeks. This was what Vergil did.

On the face of it, Vergil's solution was the least obvious of the three. But it was the one that suited best the new geopolitical reality and the imperial

³⁹ A useful survey of the medieval literary production focused on the Trojan War can be found in Ingledew 1994: 666 n. 6; on the Nine Worthies, see Engels 1998b: 144–5 (I am grateful to Josef Geiger for drawing my attention to the latter).

⁴⁰ As late as 1714, the French scholar Nicolas Fréret was imprisoned in the Bastille for presenting the argument according to which the Franks were of South German rather than Trojan origin.

⁴¹ On the problems by which the re-establishment of Homer was accompanied, see Finkelberg 2012.

ambitions of Rome. This transpires not only from the *Aeneid* references to Roman military victories over Greeks or the epigram of Germanicus amounting to much the same but, especially, from those imperial Greek authors who, similarly to Dio of Prusa, overtly recognized that the old narrative of the Trojan War did not suit any longer the world in which they lived. The revised Trojan narrative they promulgated fit to perfection the distribution of power within the Roman Empire. To quote Dio again, 'the situation has changed . . . for Greece is subject to others and so is Asia'. It was this change of situation that was above all responsible for the thorough revision of the Trojan tradition that took place in the Imperial Period.