

A MÃO DE DEUS: DIEGO MARADONA E A NATUREZA DIVINA DA TRAPAÇA NA ANTIGUIDADE CLÁSSICA.

THE HAND OF GOD: DIEGO MARADONA AND THE DIVINE NATURE OF CHEATING IN CLASSICAL ANTIQUITY

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RESUMO: *A trapaça heroica está entre as memórias mais persistentes da Copa do Mundo de Futebol de 1986. Enquanto o brilhante segundo gol de Diego Maradona contra a Inglaterra foi apelidada por jornalistas desportivos de todos os lugares de “o gol do século”, o seu primeiro, de mão, é diferentemente lembrado pelos jornalistas e outros escritores em Londres e em Buenos Aires. A trapaça de Maradona, testemunhada por milhões em todo o mundo, não foi observada nem pelo árbitro tunisiano e tampouco por seus assistentes durante o jogo. Na corrida dos jogos fúnebres de Pátroclo descrita na *Ilíada*, há até mesmo uma trapaça divina: a deusa Atena intervém, em resposta à oração de Odisseu, lançando Ajax, rosto ao chão, nos restos imundos dos sacrifícios de touros para impedi-lo de ganhar e assim, dar a vitória a Odisseu (*Ilíada* 23,768-784). Se os deuses trapaceiam para ajudar aos seus humanos favoritos, pode a própria trapaça ser totalmente inaceitável, mesmo em uma ocasião solene, que homenageia um guerreiro morto? Quando Ajax percebe o papel de Atena em sua derrota e reclama com seus companheiros, eles apenas riem dele. Este artigo analisa a representação da trapaça nas artes e nas poesias gregas e romanas e conclui que a “*mano de dios*” de Maradona é comparativamente trivial.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Homero, Odisseu, Maradona, Dolo.*

ABSTRACT: *Heroized cheating is among the most persistent memories of the 1986 Football World Cup. While*

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1. See (JOHANSEN, 1967);(JENSEN, 1980); (CARPENTER, 1991);(NAGY, 1996); (SHAPIRO, 2013).An earlier version of this paper was given at the Literary London Conference in July 2012.

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Disputes over what happened during a sporting event, historical or fictional, are hardly new. Nor is cheating. An early testament to such disputes is the so-called François Vase, found near Chiusi, Italy, but made in Attica, Greece. It is datable to the sixth century BC: to the same period and place to which scholars assign the earliest known written edition of the Homeric texts prepared on the orders of the Athenian tyrant Peisistratus.¹ The painter of the François vase, who signs his work with the name “Cleitas,” shows not only the tale of Troilus, that is not found in the *Iliad*, but a group of competitors for the chariot race at Patroclus’ funeral games almost entirely different from that given in *Iliad* 23. 257-650. Cleitas even inscribes the competitors’ names to make the identification clear. Cleitas names Odysseus, Automedon, Damasippus, Hippothoon, and Diomedes as the five competitors and omits Homer’s Eumelus, Menelaus, Antilochus, and Meriones. The two accounts have only Diomedes in common. So Cleitas may be suggesting things weren’t the way the new editions of Homer suggests.

We don’t know why the contestants in a mythic competition mattered so much to Cleitas. Indeed, we should also note that Homer’s account in *Iliad* 23 is itself a record of internal disputes.

Diego Maradona's brilliant second goal against England was dubbed by sportswriters everywhere "the goal of the century," his first, hand-propelled, is differently remembered by journalists and other writers in London and Buenos Aires. Maradona's cheating, witnessed by millions worldwide, was not observed by the Tunisian referee and other match officials during the game. In the footrace at funeral games for Patroclus in the *Iliad*, there is even some divine cheating: the goddess Athena intervenes, in response to Odysseus' prayer, and sends Salaminian Ajax sprawling face down in the filthy waste of sacrificial bulls to prevent him winning and thus give victory to Odysseus (*Iliad* 23.768-784). If the gods cheat to help human favorites, can cheating itself be wholly unacceptable even on a solemn occasion honoring a dead warrior? When Ajax detects Athena's role in his defeat and complains about it to his companions, they just laugh at him. This paper examines the depiction of cheating in Greek and Roman art and poetry and concludes that Maradona's *mano de dios* was trivial by comparison.

KEYWORDS: Homero, Odisseu, Maradona, Cheating.

Homer's Locrian Ajax, who watches the race and thinks victory will go to Eumelus (who actually comes in last), gets upset with what his companion Idomeneus' eyes identify: the impending victory of the Aetolian born Diomedes.² Irony runs rampant. Idomeneus, whose eyes put the lie to Ajax's certainty that Eumelus' horses will win the day, is a Cretan, and Cretans were, in ancient Greece, proverbial for prowess at lying.² Homer's Ajax and Idomeneus are about to come to blows when Achilles, who supervises the games, points out that their dispute is premature and pointless: the outcome of the race, not a fist-fight between two spectators, will establish who is right. But when the race is over, Achilles proceeds to distribute prizes that further confound the issue as to who the real winner is.

One of the most interesting features of the Homeric race occurs when the third-place finisher, Menelaus, accuses Antilochus, who came in second, of cutting him off unfairly, an accusation supported by the narrative itself.⁴ The earliest account of a chariot race in Western literature, then, is marked by cheating, though the incident is resolved amicably. Antilochus offers to yield up his prize to Menelaus, and Menelaus is so impressed by the youth's cour-

tesy, that he drops his protest. But in the footrace at the same Homeric games, there is even some divine cheating: the goddess Athena intervenes, in response to Odysseus' prayer for help, and sends Salaminian Ajax sprawling face down in the filthy waste of sacrificial bulls to prevent him winning and thus give victory to Odysseus (*Iliad* 23.768-784). If the gods cheat to help their human favorites, can cheating itself be wholly unacceptable even on a solemn occasion honoring a dead warrior? Ajax detects Athena's role in his defeat and complains about it to his companions, but they just laugh at him. And the third place competitor (the same man who cut off Menelaus in the chariot race) observes that Odysseus is of an older generation and that the gods respect seniority (*Iliad* 23.785-792).

Whoever put *Iliad* 23 into the shape it currently has knew, as did Cleitias, that there were conflicting versions in circulation which may perhaps reflect partisan disputes as to which city-state's heroes participated and who won, as was the case in Greek "real life." Pausanias, in his *Description of Greece* 6.2, mentions many instances of athletes and cities punished for wrongfully changing an athlete's affiliation. Now, since the Attic François vase has, among its other illustrations, Theseus' expedition against Crete and the Minotaur, Cleitias might, arguably, be using the medium of painting to present a version deliberately opposed to what was becoming, in Athens, the official version of various Homeric and other epic tales.

Winning is ultimately what matters in games and warfare, ancient and modern; and, in practical terms, winning has little to do with morality. While rules and conventions have been devised to make competition less brutal, victory and defeat establish innocence and guilt respectively, as Lucan's Julius Caesar cynically points out to his troops that the battle of Pharsalus will establish "who took up arms more justly; this battle will make the loser guilty: *quis iustius arma, / sumpserit; haec acies victum factura nocentem est.*" (*Pharsalia* 7.259-60). Success was routinely construed as evidence of divine favor by both ancient Greeks and ancient Romans. *Victrix causa deis placuit sed victa Catoni*, Lucan observes editorially of the Caesarian civil war (*Pharsalia*

2. See (PERADOTTO, 1990);(AHL, 2002).

3. See (AHL, 1996).

4. See (GAGARIN, 1983).

1.128): winning won the gods' approval, losing won (the good man) Cato's approval. Civil war in his eyes was a criminal activity and it was better to lose such a war than to win it. But Lucan's notion of "moral victory" has acquired over the centuries a curiously general currency. Even nowadays, when a person is said to have won the moral victory, in battle or on the playing field, he or she has generally lost whatever the contest is. It is the winner the gods approve. How he wins is less important.

Heroized cheating is among the most persistent memories of the 1986 Football World Cup. While Diego Maradona's brilliant second goal against England was dubbed by sportswriters everywhere "the goal of the century," his first, hand-propelled, goal a few minutes earlier, is very differently remembered by journalists and other writers in, say, London and Buenos Aires. Maradona's cheating, though witnessed by millions worldwide, was not observed, however, by the only witnesses that mattered at the only time: the Tunisian referee and other match officials during the game on June 22 1986.⁵ As in the chariot races of Homer and Cleitias, the writer or artist's opinion may be affected by personal and political considerations.

Maradona successfully elevated his officially undetected but universally recognized cheating to the status of a divine intervention for which his hand was the appointed instrument: *la mano de Dios*. In his own words, it was "*un poco con la cabeza de Maradona y otro poco con la mano de Dios*."⁶ He attributed the clever "head" that thought up the play not to god, but to himself (he tried to make it look like a "header"); but the hand that carried out the dubious play he credited not to himself, but to god. In short, he reversed the religious notion that humans act as agents of divine will and posited god as the agent of human will.

This "divine" interpretation was widely approved by Argentinian writers, who could thus construe (and heroize) Maradona and his goal, as he himself heroized it, as a payback of sorts for Britain's defeat of Argentina in the Falklands War where the equivalent of the divine hand was, in some Argentinian eyes, Ronald Reagan's.⁷ And God's hand came back into the news again on the thirtieth anniversary of

the Falklands War as Argentina renewed its claims in what her most famous writer, Jorge Luis Borges, called (admittedly before the Falklands' oil resources were generally known) the dispute of "two bald men fighting over a comb": "*deux chauves se battant pour un peigne*," as it was cited in *Le Monde*, where the remark was first reported. One early Spanish version, translating an English article endowed the struggle with an ironic nobility: *dos hombres calvos luchando por un peine*. Later versions have generally settled for a verb used of children's squabbles as well as of more serious fights: *pelearse: dos hombres calvos peleandose por un peine*. Tomás Cuesta, the Spanish journalist, downgraded the struggle further: "*El viejo Borges*," he observed, "*used to say that Malvinas business was dos calvos riñendo por un peine*."⁸

Maradona was not the first, and far from the only, footballer to score a goal with his hand. A similar, though less direct, incident eliminated Ireland from the final rounds of the 2010 World cup. Thierry Henry admitted his hand-ball, not seen by the referee, led to France's decisive goal the July 2009 play-off. Henry made no claim, however, to divine agency: "It would have been better to do it in another way, but as I said, I'm not the ref."⁹ Not quite the polite apology Homer's Antilochus gives to Menelaus, but not an attempt to heroize himself. Ghana's team was also eliminated that same year as the result of an illegally handled ball: Luis Suárez punched away what would have been a certain goal for the Ghanaians. The referee saw what happened, sent Suárez off, and awarded the Ghanaians a penalty, which they missed. Suárez cast himself as Maradona's successor: "The Hand of God now belongs to me. Mine is the real Hand of God...I made the best save of the tournament. Sometimes in training I play as a goalkeeper so it was worth it. There was no alternative but for me to do that and when they missed the penalty I thought 'It is a miracle and we are alive in the tournament.'"¹⁰

As Plato's Socrates implied long ago, the assertion of divine intervention is a way of making fraud respectable. The poetic reciter Ion, demolished by Socrates' rhetoric, is asked to choose whether he wants to be reckoned a cheat or a man divinely inspired: "Choose whether you want us to reckon

5. It can be viewed on www.youtube.com/watch?v=_FMkLulKJ8

6. See (LACEY, 2002); See also (MARADONA, 2000); (BURNS, 2010).

7. Wrongly so; it has become increasingly clear that Reagan did not approve of Thatcher's surprisingly forceful military response to the Argentinian invasion; see (ALDOUS, 2012) especially p. 71-96.

8. See (CUESTA, 2012).

9. See (YOUNG, 2009).

10. <http://www.theguardian.com/football/2010/jul/03/world-cup-2010-hand-god-suarez>

you an unjust man or a divinely inspired man” (*Ion* 542a).¹¹ This point is of special interest here since an athlete is, in ancient Greek terms, *athletes*, a person who competes for prizes at *aethla*, “competitions.” Indeed, *aethla* can indicate the struggles and toils required to win the prize, like the famous labors of Heracles achieving impossible feats, even if this involves devious means. But the term *aethla* was not restricted to the struggles and prizes in what we now designate physical activities. At many ancient games there were also competitions in poetic recitation. In Plato’s *Ion*, Ion tells Socrates that he won τὰ πρῶτα τῶν ἄλλων (PLATO, *Ion*, 530b).

Ion chooses, as Maradona and Suárez did, to be considered divinely inspired rather than a fraud; and Socrates sarcastically, and rather smugly, concedes him the consolation of this option (*Ion* 542B). Thierry Henry more honestly but less wisely accepted the charge of fraud. For surely Ion is right when he observes that there is a big difference between claiming divine inspiration and admitting fraud when you are sportsman with millions of fans who see your successes as their own. Admission of cheating abases those millions not just yourself and allows consolation to those who identify with the victims of your fraud. But when you claim god is on your side, you are putting god on the fans’ side too. And the fans may indeed make you a god, as they did Maradona, as we see in excerpts from the famous song about him by Rodrigo Alejandro Bueno:

*En una villa nació, fue deseo de Dios,
 crecer y sobrevivir a la humilde expresión.
 Enfrentar la adversidad
 con afán de ganarse a cada paso la vida.
 En un potrero forjó una zurda inmortal
 con experiencia sedienta ambición de llegar.
 De cebollita soñaba jugar un Mundial
 y consagrarse en Primera,
 tal vez jugando pudiera a su familia ayudar...
 A poco que debutó
 “Maradó, Maradó,”
 la dose fue quien coreó
 “Maradó, Maradó.”
 Su sueño tenía una estrella
 llena de gol y gambetas...*

*y todo el pueblo cantó:
 “Maradó, Maradó,”
 nació la mano de Dios,
 “Maradó, Maradó.” Sembró alegría en el pueblo,
 regó de gloria este suelo...
 Carga una cruz en los hombros por ser el mejor,
 por no venderse jamás al poder enfrentó.
 Curiosa debilidad, si Jesús tropezó,
 por qué él no habría de hacerlo.*

The “hand of god” is what makes Maradona divine.

Shrewd fouls and sheer luck larger loom larger in soccer than in most other sports because a single score can decide a game, and because a foul, until recently, has counted only if seen live by officials. Besides, fouling is permitted in most team sports; it is penalized within the event itself, as it is not in, say, track and field events. A single minor and clearly unintentional violation of rules eliminates a competitor in a modern footrace – though little could be done with a divine intervention such as Athena’s. Members of a soccer team, however, commit numerous fouls in a match; and even the most flagrant leads to the removal of an individual player not the team as a whole. The football culture in which players live and work is one of routine fouling and pretended fouls to secure (or frustrate) crucial scoring opportunities. Such “professional fouling” requires practice to elude detection; it is a darker area in a player’s repertoire of footballing skills.

Since 1986, and in the wake of doping tests and scandals, cheating in athletic contests, and, to a lesser extent, in professional team sports, has been penalized, selectively, self-righteously, often retroactively, with increasing frequency, and with dubious benefits to the sports most affected. The media often react as if cheating were new, the modern corruption of an activity once pristine and noble. For, as we know, early champions of the Olympic movement, notably Pierre Coubertin, idealized the origins and practices at the Olympic games and of other similar contests, real or fictional, along with their competing athletes, in conformity with their equally idealized notions of the ancient Greeks themselves. Contemporary Olympian en-

11. ἐλοοῦν πρότερα βούλεινομίζεσθαι ὑπὸ ἡμῶν ἄδικοσάνηρ εἶναι ἢ θεῖος.

thusiasts often do the same. But such idealization misrepresents how ancient Greeks (and Romans) envisaged and described such competitions among city-states. From the epic narratives of games in Homer and Virgil to the sculptures once adorning the Temple of Zeus at Olympia, the ancients not only tell of cheating by athletes, sponsors, and participating “nations,” but also memorialize it prominently on the very site where the ancient Olympics were held.

The most famous *lethal*, the Olympics, were further notable for the several fierce struggles between the two small and otherwise unimportant cities in the Western Peloponnesus that sought to control and manage those games in antiquity: Elis and Pisa. Not surprisingly, there were two major foundation myths: the Eleans favored the tradition that Heracles from Thebes, far away in central Greece, founded the games; the Pisatans linked their foundation with Pelops, eponymous hero of the Peloponnese. And the games were, like the Iliadic games, in honor of a dead hero, in this case Pelops’ father-in-law, Oenomaus.¹² Curiously enough, it is a fifth century BC Theban poet, Pindar, who, in his poem *Olympian* 1. 24-88, narrates a version of the second, Pisatan, tradition three centuries after the traditional foundation date of the Olympics in 776 BC.

This second version of the foundation myth is also commemorated in the famous sculptures on the Temple of Zeus at the site of the games, ancient Olympia, a building completed at the time Pindar was writing and probably, therefore, during Pisatan domination. Hardly less notably, this first Olympian victor, Pelops, not only wins by trickery but had also himself been an instrument of trickery. He was butchered and famously served as a main dish at a banquet for the gods by his father Tantalus, but reconstituted and revived by Zeus, once the trickery was discovered. Although control of the games reverted to Elis shortly after the completion of the Temple of Zeus, the Pisatan version, with its trickery, was permanently enshrined in the iconography of the Temple of Zeus. The connection with Pelops in the Pisatan version is important for several major reasons, not least because the name of Pelops and the House of Tantalus dominates the political

mythology of southern Greece, which is, after all, the island of Pelops. For Pelops’ sons Atreus and Thyestes contested the kingship of Mycenae, and Atreus’ sons, Menelaus and Agamemnon, dominate Greek myths of Mycenaean, Argive, and Spartan power. The ancient tale of Olympia is as much the tale of powerful dynasties, wars, politics, cheating, and treachery, as it is of athletics.¹³ And in dynastic politics and war, winning is the only thing. You win by any means you can.

The ancient Greek visitor to the site of the Olympic games in the province of Elis, would have seen the many representations of cheating that are less obvious to the modern visitor, since most illustrative artworks are now housed in the site’s museum (or in other more distant collections) rather than in their original locations. The east pediment on the massive Temple of Zeus itself, which dominates the enclosure, depicted the chariot race between Pelops and Oenomaus with Zeus standing in the center.¹⁴ Also represented were other major figures in the myth: Hippodameia, Oenomaus’ daughter, and Myrtilus, Oenomaus’ charioteer. We know, in fact, rather more about the ancient Olympic cheats than about the honest competitors. Bronze statues of Zeus (called *Zanes*, i.e. “Zeuses” by the locals), some of whose bases are still in place, were also set up on the roadway leading from the heart of the enclosure to the vault that leads to the stadium, not coincidentally the path athletes took as they entered to compete to commemorate not past victors, but those who had been caught cheating or bribing.¹⁵

Classical scholars often sanitize ancient accounts of criminal activity and cheating at the games, much as Coubertin did. Donald Kyle, for example, talks of “hustling and gamesmanship” rather than of “cheating” and describes Antilocheus’ foul on Menelaus as “dangerous driving.”¹⁶ Even the great Sir Richard Jebb claimed just two years before the modern revival of the Olympics in Athens in 1896 that Pindar’s version of the Pisatan tradition is “the *older* and *nobler* form of the myth” (italics mine). Many still assume the priority of some nobler version.¹⁷ But there are problems with Jebb’s claims. First, Pindar’s own words about Pelops announce that his opposition to an older version: “Son of

12. See (KYLE, 2007, p. 101-104) and the sources cited.

13. So too in the modern Olympics, most notably those of 1936. See (MANDELL, 1987); (McSMITH, 2008).

14. Pausanias 5.10.6. See also (KYLE, 2007, p. 130-132).

15. See (FORBES, 1952); See also Pausanias 6.2.2, who notes that the images were made from the fines imposed on athletes who violated the rules and carried warnings against cheating.

16. See (KYLE, 2007, p.130; 59).

17. See (JEBB, 1894).

Tantalus, I will speak of you *in opposition to earlier stories.*" Second, even as Pindar declares: "it is proper for a man to talk nicely about gods, that way one gets less censure," he tells how Poseidon, god of the sea and of horses, abducted Pelops in a chariot from a "well-arranged" banquet for the gods hosted by Pelops' father Tantalus much as Zeus had abducted Ganymede (45-46). Poseidon was wildly aroused, Pindar says, "when Clotho took Pelops from the pure cauldron, equipped with a shoulder of shining ivory" (26).¹⁸

Pindar's narrative further shows the poet knows the usual (and prior) mythical reason Pelops was taken from a cauldron and had an ivory shoulder: that the gods had restored his life after his father Tantalus cut him up and served him at that very banquet for Olympians. Demeter, deceived, ate the shoulder, and an ivory replacement was made when the boy was reassembled.

Pindar includes these details in *Olympian 1* but calls them malicious gossip to explain Pelops' disappearance upon his abduction by Poseidon. "When ... people did not bring you back to your mother, for all their searching ... some envious neighbor whispered that they sliced you limb from limb into the rolling boil of water over fire ... and divided and ate your flesh." The poet's narrative, with conscious irony, records the myth he declares it his intent to displace: the horrendous butchery by a human father, Tantalus, who kills and cooks his son Pelops, and of the goddess Demeter's unintentional eating of human flesh. In Pindar's nobler and allegedly prior myth, the god Poseidon rapes Pelops after he is produced, for no clear reason at all, complete with ivory shoulder, by Clotho, from a cauldron at Tantalus' banquet. Pindar's "nobler" version has, in fact, shifted the mythic focus from human murder to rape committed by a god.

According to *Epitome 2.3* of the *Library of Greek Mythology* attributed to Apollodorus, Pelops, after being butchered and boiled, was returned to life more beautiful than ever and consequently seduced by Poseidon who gave him, as a compensatory prize for rape, a winged chariot that could run through the sea without wetting its axles. Pindar, however, defers Poseidon's award of the winged

chariot to a specific request made by Pelops to his abductor from the past to the time when Pelops wants to compete against Oenomaus, king of Pisa, in a chariot race to win the hand of the king's daughter Hippodameia ("Horse-Tamer"). Pindar says Pelops called Poseidon to come to his aid by reminding the god of his passion. And Poseidon duly supplied a golden chariot with winged horses that enabled him to win the race. In Pindar, then, the founding myth of the games at Olympia begins with divine intervention, if not, specifically, a divine hand. But Pindar also recalls the horrific details of the tradition. Pelops and the chariot race at Olympia make outrages on the modern football field trifling.

Winged horses, of course, belong not to real equestrian competition but to the world of the imaginary and of the symbolic, and often the politically symbolic. One recalls Pindar's account of Pelops' two winged horses as one reads Pausanias' observation that in the shrine of Hera in Olympia there was a chest (*larnax*) dedicated by Cypselus, tyrant of Corinth, showing Pelops driving a chariot with two such winged horses (*Description of Greece* 5.17.5). With the Corinthian connection, the winged horses of Pelops assume a different and more overtly political perspective. For the winged horse Pegasus is a frequent figure on Corinthian coins. It is, par excellence, the symbol of Corinth, its hero Bellerophon, and of some of Corinth's colonies, including Syracuse, home to Pindar's tyrannical dedicatee Hieron I.¹⁹ And in the Apollodorus *Epitome* 2.5 the race Hippodameia's suitors had to run against Oenomaus is from Olympia to Corinth (a distance of over 180 kilometers) from west to east along a line that would separate the whole of Achaea, most of Elis and parts of Arcadia and Corinth from the rest of the Peloponnesus. Failure to beat Oenomaus was punished by death; and as many as twelve had died by the time Pelops made his challenge.

In the Apollodorus account of this race at Olympia (*Epitome* 2.6-9), Hippodameia went mad for the beautiful Pelops and persuaded Myrtilus, Oenomaus' charioteer, to help her. Since Myrtilus was himself in love with, and wished to please, Hippodameia, he did not insert linchpins in Oenomaus' chariot wheels.²⁰ So Oenomaus lost the race,

18. Pindar *Olympian* 1. 87 ἔδωκε νόδιφροντεχνύσειονπτεροίσιντ'ἀκἀμαντασίππου.

19. See (HEAD, 1889). See also Walter Pater's comments on the chest of Cypselus, first published in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1880, in Pater, W. 1922 *Greek Studies: A Series of Essays* London: Macmillan: 224-235.

20. The scholiast on Apollonius of Rhodes *Argonautica* 1.752 says Myrtilus inserted wax linch pins.

21. *Argonautica* 1. 753-759

22. The boat race (*Aeneid* 5.114-285), Aeneas' substitute for the traditional chariot race, has even more complex literary and historical resonances. See (AHL, 2007, p. 355-358).

23. See (AHL, 2007, p. 356-366). The translation that follows is on p. 110-111.

got tangled in the reins, and was either dragged to his death or killed by Pelops.²¹ As he died Oenomaus prayed Myrtilus might perish by Pelops' hand. In some versions of the tale, Pelops offered to let Myrtilus have sex with Hippodameia as a reward, a promise he never intended to fulfill: Catullus in 64. 346 calls him "perjured Pelops." Myrtilus then attempted to rape Hippodameia but was thrown into the sea by Pelops. In sum, the notion that the Olympic games were established by Pelops to honor Oenomaus, then, is at best paradoxical.

Pelops is, ultimately, a political figure who, Socrates argues in Plato *Cratylus* 395C, brought little good to the world by his success at the games: he is rightly named "Pelops" because he never anticipated the evil his killing of Myrtilus would bring on his whole people in later times, but saw only "what was near (*pelas*)" in his eagerness to win Hippodameia for his bride any way he could. And considering that Pelops was father of the criminal sons Atreus and Thyestes, who in turn fathered Agamemnon, Menelaus, and Aegisthus whose crimes and war are at the heart of Greek epic and tragedy from Homer onwards, Socrates surely has a point.

The sculptures that once adorned the Temple of Zeus at Olympia remind us that winning is all important and cheating part and parcel of competition. Ancient writers make it clear that many factors human and divine are involved in the outcome of a sporting event. The best-qualified competitor often fails to win. So what is one to do with a contest whose outcome is distorted by cheating or other factors? Statius offers one logical solution in *Thebaid* 6.550-645. Parthenopaeus has his long hair tugged by his rival Idas in the footrace. Idas wins, the crowd protests, the race is rerun, and Parthenopaeus wins. But in *Iliad* 23, when Odysseus wins because Athena trips Ajax, the race is not rerun; and in Virgil's *Aeneid* 5. 327-361, the most complex footrace narrative of all, what begins as an idealized contest among youths becomes a dishonest scramble for honors in a field sodden with sacrificial blood and waste (5.327-360).²²

Virgil's narrative underscores the way games and warfare are interwoven in thought and tradition.

As it helps, I think, to view Diego Maradona's hand of god in the context of the Falklands War, so it helps to view Virgil's footrace in the context of Aeneas' military activities in the *Aeneid* and, though this is not the place to discuss it, Augustus' military activities in the Roman civil wars²³ :

Now they're approaching the final stretch, they're exhausted, but nearly

There at the finish. Then Nisus slips in a thin pool of liquid

Blood, hopes unfulfilled. They'd been slaughtering bulls here, it happened:

*Blood spilled over the ground, left the green grass
330 utterly sodden.*

That's where the youth, thinking victory his, celebrating his triumph,

Lost footing just as his feet hit the patch, couldn't get back his balance,

Fell face first in that unclean sludge -- in that blood consecrated.

Still, he did not fail to think of Euryalus and of his passion.

*For as he rose from the slime, he positioned himself so
335 that Salius,*

Tripped, spinning head over heels to the blood-clotted sand, where he lay sprawled.

Flashing to victory now is Euryalus, thanks to his lover's Sacrifice. First place is his, and he flies amid cheering and clapping.

Helymus follows and now, for the third palm frond, comes Diore.

*This is when Salius fills the whole gathering in the
340 enormous*

Hollow with ringing complaints made straight in the faces of front row

Elders, demanding return of his prize, so dishonestly stolen.

Sentiment favours Euryalus, though; his tears so become him.

Virtue is much more appealing when found in a beautiful body.

*Strongly supporting his cause, at the top of his lungs,
345 is Diore.*

He has sneaked in for a palm, and has thus qualified

for the last prize

All to no end, if they're then to restore prime honours to Salius.

Father Aeneas now speaks: "Your rewards have been set, and they'll stay fixed,

Boys. You can keep them. There's been no change in the order of palm fronds.

Still, you'll permit me to pity the fall of an innocent comrade."

350 This said, he offers to Salius the monstrous hide of a Libyan

Lion – a quite enormous weight with its mane and its gilt claws.

Nisus reacts: "If the losers," he says, "get such wonderful prizes,

If those who fall win your pity, what worthy gift will you offer

Nisus? I've earned top honours on merit, and I would possess them

355 Right now if Fortune had not turned vicious on me, as on Salius."

He, as he spoke, made sure they observed both his face and his body

Filthy with wet slime; this brought a laugh from the excellent father.

Bidding them bring him a shield, fine work by the skilled Didymaon,

Stolen by Greeks from the entrance of Neptune's shrine. He presented

360 This to the youth who stood out from the flock: an outstanding donation.

Virgil briefly deludes us here into thinking he approves of Nisus' cheating, since he intrudes no negative moralizing. Yet Nisus, who cheats, is given a prize which has come, for some unknown reason, into the possession of Trojan Aeneas after being stolen by Greeks from (and never returned to) a shrine of Neptune (i.e. Poseidon), god of horses and of the sea, who had saved Aeneas from a storm at sea in *Aeneid* 1, and who rode upon the surface of the water in just such a chariot as he gave to Pelops in Pindar. And death at sea was something Aeneas, like Homer's Odysseus, would rather not endure: "better to have been killed by Diomedes at Troy!" Aeneas cries (*Aeneid* 1. 94-97). This was not the

first time Aeneas was saved by Poseidon/Neptune. The same god had rescued him from certain death under Achilles' sword in *Iliad* 20.318-335, by literally raising him in his hand and carrying him away.

With these words in mind, we return to the Iliadic chariot race. For the chariot team with which Diomedes wins the disputed contest in the *Iliad* is the one, Homer notes (*Iliad* 23. 290-291), that he captured from Aeneas in *Iliad* 5.311-362, when first his mother Aphrodite then Apollo rescue Aeneas from being killed by Diomedes. And in this context it is the god, or should we say the goddess, whose hand is wounded by the mortal Diomedes (*Iliad* 5.329-351). This experience seems to have traumatized not only Aphrodite but also, in Virgil's construction, Aeneas. For Aeneas holds no traditional chariot race at the funeral games for his father Anchises and never fights either from a chariot or on horseback in the *Aeneid* as all his major opponents in Italy do. Luckily for Aeneas, in Virgil's account, Diomedes, his old adversary from Troy, who has also migrated to Italy, declines to fight Aeneas and the Trojans again. From Aeneas' perspective this is just as well. Given his encounter with Diomedes in *Iliad* 5, Aeneas' chances of victory in the rematch of such a contest in Italy are not high. Whether the same will hold true of the Falklands or Malvinas is yet to be seen.

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