

## **Commentary Aeneid 1 R.D. Williams**

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- Tale of arms and a man - immediate link with the Iliad (arms) and the Odyssey - much of this book of Od 5-8 Roman continuation of these 2 books

- fated – emphasising that Aeneas has a mission laid on him by fate, to found new city in a place he will be shown, and establish a new way of life which the gods plan for the civilised world (Difference between A + Odysseus)

Troy – Rome

- Juno's anger mythological reasons – the judgement of Paris and Jupiter's love for Ganymede

- Juno's support for Carthage, Rome's great rival for Mediterranean supremacy

- symbolic interpretation – Juno represents the forces of hostile circumstances (such as the storm she causes) which involve apparently inexplicable suffering and disaster.

Installing the gods of his race – the shade of Hector entrusted the gods of Troy (p.60) to Aeneas, and it was a major feature of his mission that he had to establish a continuity of religious worship between Troy and Rome.

- the gods (Penates) – or „household gods“ on whose safety the fortunes of the „house of Troy“ depended. A city, regarded as a large family, had its public „Penates“ just as each family had its private ones.

Invocation to the Muse - Virgil asks more than just the story, he asks for the reasons behind the story.

Samos - an island in the Aegean where there was a famous temple to Juno.

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- the Spinning fates – Clotho, Lachesis, Atropos

- the judgement of Paris – The shepherd Paris, son of Troy's king, was chosen to judge a contest between Juno, Venus and Minerva to choose which goddess was the most beautiful. He decided in favour of Venus, hence the „slight“ to Juno's beauty.

- jealous of the whole Trojan race – the Trojans were descendents of Dardanus, a son of Jupiter by Electra.

- Ganymede – Jupiter was so taken by the beauty of Ganymede, a Trojan prince, that he caused him to be snatched up from earth by an eagle to be his cup-bearer in heaven, displacing Hebe, Juno's daughter.

Ajax, son of Oileus – Ajax violated Cassandra in the temple of Minerva, who took vengeance on him and his companions by setting fire to the Greek fleet with a thunderbolt, and sinking it in a storm as it was returning home.

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- Etruscan Sea – the sea nearest to Rome meaning that the Trojans had almost reached their goal.

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- Diomedes – a Greek warrior, son of Tydeus; Aeneas was almost killed in a single combat with him.

- Sarpedon – a Lycian prince and ally of the Trojans, who was distinguished for his bravery. He was killed by Patroclus.

- Hector – the eldest son of Priam, king of Troy, and Troy's greatest warrior and hero. After killing Patroclus, he was himself killed by Achilles, and his body was dragged behind Achilles chariot.

- Achilles – son of the sea-nymph, Thetis and Peteus, king of the Myrmidons. Thetis foretold him that his fate was either to gain glory and die early, or to live a long but inglorious life. He chose the former. Lycians - allies of the Trojan, a small district on the southern side of Asia Minor. Orontes was the leader of the Lycian contingent which escaped Troy. But he and his companions are drowned in the storm.

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Ilioneus – the spokesman for the Trojans later in this book and again in Book 7.

Achates – Aeneas' right hand man.

Neptune – one of the sons of Saturn, along with Jupiter and Pluto. Their sister was Juno. The three brothers divided the world between them by lot.

Cymothoe - a sea nymph

Iriton – a sea god

It had been like a sudden riot – the first simile in the poem, striking because it illustrates the world of nature from the world of human behaviour.

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Scylla – a sea monster living in a cave in the straits of Messina. She devoured the crews of passing ships.

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Teucer – son of the river-god Scamander by the nymph, Idaca, the first king of Troy; hence the Trojans are sometimes called „Teuceri“

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Tythercan – a frequent epithet of Venus, from the seat of her warship in Cythera, an island just south of Greece.

Iulus – the name refers to Aeneas son, Ascanius – links with the name Ilium (Troy) and with the Iulian (Julian) gens in Rome, of which both Julius Caesar and Augustus were members. They were both interested in emphasising the alleged Trojan origins of their family.

Lavinium – Aeneas' first settlement in Italy, Iulus moved the seat to Alba Langa and later Romulus moved it to Rome.

Jupiter's Prophecy – emphasises the two elements in Aeneas' mission (i) to conquer (ii) to civilise - outlines the Roman mission of (i) conquest (ii) civilisation and peace.

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- the spoils of the east – reference to the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra at Actium in 31 BC.

Assaracus – the grandfather of Anchises, thus Aeneas' great grandfather.

Phthia, Mycenae, Argos – a reference to the defeat of Greece (became a Roman province in 2BC) which is expressed in terms appropriate to the time of the Trojan war; Phthia is the name of Achilles, Mycenae of Agamemnon, Argos of Dumedus.

The gates of war – were in the temple of Janus and were only closed in times of peace. They were closed in 29BC (for the first time since 235) and again in 25BC

Lust of Blood – Virgil uses the word „furar“ – here personifying the quality of mad strife seen especially in civil war.

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Spartan Girl – Spartan girls were well-known for the physical toughness in hunting and the like.

Harpalyce – from Thrace, devoted herself to the wild life of the woods.

Applo – his own sister – Diana, goddess of hunting

Agenor – one of Dido’s ancestors in Tyre

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Within a bull’s – the legend is that the hide was out into one very long thin strip

Sychacus – Dido’s husband, who was murdered by her brother Pygmalion because of his great wealth. After she learned of her husband’s murder, Dido fled Tyre taking many companions with her and eventually reached Africa where she built the city of Carthage.

Swans – the twelve swans correspond to Aeneas’s 12 lost ships – swans are sacred to Venus so are appropriate for this omen.

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Ah you are too cruel – pathos – after the death of Anchises, Aeneas has no family comfort; he cannot even embrace his goddess mother, and his son is too young to help yet.

pA was like the work – smile was nature to illustrate human activity

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The head of the spirited horse – the story goes that when Dido and her followers fled from Tyre they received an oracle from Juno, as a result of which they dug in the ground on the selected site for their new city. They found an ox’s head, but as this indicated servitude, they moved to another site and this time found a horse’s head, taken of victory in war as well as of peaceful prosperity.

Agamemnon – son of Atreus, and leader of the Greek host which came Troy, King of Mycenae

Menelaus – brother of Agamemnon, king of Sparta, husband of Helen of Troy who was seized by Paris where Latona gave birth to Apollo and Diana

Priam – the last king of Troy, husband of Hecuba, father of Hector, Paris, Cassandra, Helenus, Deiphobus, Troilus and many others

Achilles, merciless alike to all three – Achilles was merciless to Priam because he dragged Hector’s body behind his chariot and only returned it when Priam himself as a suppliant

- he was merciless to Agamemnon and Menelaus when, in anger against Agamemnon, he withdraw from the fighting. (Agamemnon had taken the girl Briseis from Achilles).

Rhesus's encampment, betrayed to Diomedes – Iliad Bk 10 – Rhesus was a Thracian who came to help the Trojans, and Diomedes and Odysseus made a night attack on his camp immediately after his arrival, killing him and many of his followers. There was an oracle that if his horses cropped the grass of Troy and drank from the river Xanthus, Troy would not fall: hence the Greek attack and the removal of the horses to the Greek camp.

Xanthus – (also called Scamander) and Simois were the rivers of Troy

Troilus – the young son of Priam, who was ambushed by Achilles when unarmed; there was an attack about the fate of Troy which said that if Troilus had lived to the age of twenty, Troy would not have been taken.

Memnon – son of Aurora (Dawn) came to Troy late in the war to help the Trojans – he was Aethiopian  
Penthesilea – queen of the Amazons, a race of warrior maidens, also came to Troy late in the war  
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Eurotas - the river on which Sparta stood

Cynthus – a ridge in Delos, a Mediterranean island where Latona gave birth to Apollo and Diana  
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Hesperia – means the Western Land, and is frequently by Virgil of Italy

Oenotrians – a term first applied to the inhabitants of Southern Italy and then the Italians generally.

Tradition held that a king of the Oenotrians called Italus gave his name to the country.

Orion – star of the storms – the setting of Orion in the autumn was associated with storms; thus the constellation itself was regarded as hostile to sailors

Aeneas - was our king – Ilioneus tribute to his leader conveys a warm picture of Aeneas, describing the respect and affection of his followers for Aeneas

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Nor is the sun when – Dido is emphasising that they are not remote from the civilised world

The land which Saturn ruled – After he was deposed by Jupiter, Saturn fled to Latium and ruled there bringing about the so-called “Golden Age”

Eryx – a town and mountain in Sicily which derived their names from Aeneas's half brother, Eryx

Acestes – a chieftain of Trojan descent who settled in Sicily before Aeneas arrived there

Only one friend is missing – ie Orontes

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Teucer – a Greek, the brother of Ajax. On his return from the Trojan War to Salamis, Teucer was forced to leave his home, he founded a new Salamis in Cyprus

According to Virgil he went to Sidon to get help from Dido's father, Belus who was waging a successful War in Italy

Teucric stock – through his mother, Hesione, Teucer was descended from the same ancestry as the Trojans

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The god's joyous gift of wine – refers to Bacchus, the god of wine

Ilione – the eldest of Priam's daughters. According to legend she became the wife of Polymnestor of Thrace – she receives no mention in Homer

Leda – Helen was the daughter of Leda by Jupiter in the guise of a swan

Phoenician duplicity – proverbially Carthage was associated with bad faith

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Typhoean – the term „typhoean“ is used for Jupiter's thunderbolt because Jupiter used it against the giant Typhoeus, burning him to ashes

Idalium – a town in Cyprus where worship of Venus was very strong

Cythera – see note for P.35

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The unhappy Phoenician Dido – the first of many anticipatory comments in Virgil's own voice about Dido's fate

The Cyprian – a reference to Venus

Belus – the early founder of the Trojan dynasty. Also the name of Dido's father

Atlas – the giant who held the earth and sky apart. His mountain was in north-west Africa so he could easily tutor the minstrel Iapetus

Arcturus – „the Bear Watcher“ – a bright star near the Great Bear

Hyads – „the Ramers“ – the name of nymphs forming a group of 7 stars in the constellation of Taurus. They rose at the time of the spring rains

The two Bears – Ursa Major – the Great Bear and Ursa Minor – the little Bear

Son of the Dawn – a reference to Memnon – see note on P.42

Diomedes's horses – the horses of Diomedes were famous, but they were the horses which Diomedes had taken from Aeneas himself so this question is somewhat tactless