

Commentary Aeneid II

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Myrmidon or a Dolopian - the Myrmidons, from Therssaly, were Ulysses special soldiers

The Dolopians, also from Therssaly, were the special soldiers of Achilles" son of Pymbus (Neoptolemuo)

Ulysses (Odysseys) – was responsible for the stratagem of the Trojan horse. Thuro from the Trojan point of view, he is a particularly hateful character, unscrupulous and cruel

Divinely inspired by Minerva – the horse was Ulysses" idea, and Epeus made it with the help pf the goddess Minerva (Athera)

Tenedos – an island a few miles off the coast of Troy

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Thymaetes - "perhaps out of treason" – Thymoetes" wife and son had been put to death by the Trojan King Priam. Thus he had a motive for treachery

Capys – one of the Trojans who reaches Italy with Aeneas

Laocoon – the son of Priam and priest of Apollo. Virgil is the first to make him a central character in the story of the wooden horse

I still fear the Greeks, even when they offer gifts (gifts are to Minerva. Goddess of Troy)– a famous line which has become proverbial

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Young stranger – Sinon, a Greek who lets himself be captured, pretending to be a deserter in order to fool the Trojans with a false story about the wood horse. This story of Greek treachery is treated so as to contrast the friendly and humane attitude of the Trojans who are taken in by it.

Note also Sinon"s masterly use of rhetoric – he commands despair, subtlety, humility, anger and appeals to pity

Palamedes – Ulysses, angry because Palamedes had uncovered the trick by which he had tried to avoid going to Troy, forged a letter in which Palamedes promised to betray the Greeks, and hid gold in his tent. Palamedes was executed

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Calches – the Greek priest and chief seer

The man from Dhaca – Ulysses

The sons of Atreus – Agamemnon and Menelaus

Sacrificed a maiden – Agamemnon had sacrificed his own daughter, Iphigencia, in order to gain fair winds for the voyage to Troy

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Troy's talisman, the image of Minerva – Minerva (Pallas Athena), the goddess who supported the Greeks, also had a temple in Troy containing her sacred image (called the Palladium) upon which the safety of Troy depended. Sinon suggests that the theft of this image by Diomedes and Ulysses was a sin against Athena which the Greeks hoped to expiate by the offering of the wooden horse

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Rampart of Pelops – the grandfather of Agamemnon, who gave his name to the Peloponnese. Sinon suggests that the Trojans would not merely repel the Greek invaders, but themselves make a counter attack against the Greeks

Tydeus' son – Diomedes

Larsonian Achilles – Achilles came from Pthia in Thessaly, near Larissa

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Cassandra – daughter of Priam, to whom Apollo gave the power to but also imposed the condition that her prophesies would never be believed

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Neoptolemus of Peleus – Neoptolemus (Pyrrhus) was the son of Achilles, and grandson of Peleus
Hector – son Priam, the greatest of the Trojan heroes, who was killed by Achilles and his body was dragged around the walls of Troy

Spoils of Achilles – this refers to Hector's greatest triumph when he killed Patroclus, who had borrowed Achilles' armour, and stripped him of it. This was the climax of the Trojan successes when they besieged the Greek ships in the absence of Achilles who was sulking in his tent

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Her sanctities and her guardians of the home – this is the first indication which Aeneas received of his destiny: all he learns here is that it is his task to leave Troy, taking with him the sacred emblems, and found a new city far away

Vesta – the goddess of the hearth, strongly associated with the safety of the home, and the home-gods (Penates) – there was undying fire of Vesta's altar in Rome

It was like fire catching a cornfield – the main point of the comparison in this simile is that Aeneas and the shepherd both helplessly watch and listen from a height while destruction is caused all round

Deiphobus – the Trojan, who had married Helen after the death of Paris

Out of my senses – here Aeneas shows the typical characteristics of the Homeric hero courting a brave death; thoughts of valour drive out rational control (ratio), and he is a victim of mad fury (furor) and ira (rage). He yields to the heroic impulse without any regard to the divinely sent duty which Hector had described to him

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Coroebus – son of Mygdon, King of Pyrgia

Like wolves out of prey – the effect of this simile is to reinforce the concept of “furor” and to suggest the wild and violent anger of the Trojans in this moment of the final destruction of the city

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Ajax the most furious of them all – Ajax, son of Oileus, was the man who seized Cassandra and violated her in the temple of Pallas Athena

Agamemnon - After the fall of Troy, Cassandra became Agamemnon’s slave-girl

Nereus - a marine god, the wise and unerring old man of the sea

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I never shrank from any risk of combat – again Aeneas is driven by the heroic impulse. Virgil emphasises Aeneas’ reckless bravery and his disregard of the message Hector’s ghost had brought him

Andromache – wife of Hector, son of Priam and Hecuba

Astyanax – son of Hector and Andromache (thrown from walls of Troy)

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Pyrrhus – also called Neoptolemus (p.59); the son of Achilles – name in Greek means „red-haired“ – description of light and glitter hints at this

The company from Scyros – Pyrrhus was born in the island of Scyros

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Hecuba – the wife of Priam; Queen of Troy

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Achilles, who you falsely claim to be your father – Homer in Iliad 24 tells the story of how Priam visited Achilles in his tent to plead for the return of Hector’s body; Achilles granted the request and Priam returned safely back to Troy. Here Priam is implying that Pyrrhus cannot be Achilles’ son because he shows none of Achilles’ better qualities

My messenger to Achilles my father – i.e. I shall kill you and you can speak to Achilles in the Underworld

Creusa - daughter of Priam; wife of Aeneas

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My gentle mother - the goddess Venus

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It was the gods who showed no mercy – this is the strongest statement of the theme which runs all through the book, that the fall of Troy was fated and could not be prevented by Aeneas or anyone else

Supreme Father – Jupiter

Like an ancient rowan-tree – the points of comparison in Virgil's simile are (i) the tree, like Troy, is old; (ii) like Troy it is mighty; (iii) like Troy it has resisted for some time. The effect of the simile is tremendous: it marks the actual moment of Troy's destruction and it gives a certain distance and inevitability to the events which until now Aeneas could not accept. He has felt till now that he ought to have been able to prevent the chopping down of the tree of Troy: now he sees it as a fait accompli

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I have already once seen Troy sacked – Anchises refers to the sack of Troy by Hercules when Lasrredon cheated him of the promise of his famous horses

Blasted my with the winds of his thunder-stroke – the story was that Anchises boasted Venus' love for him, for which Jupiter resolved to punish him with a thunderbolt; Venus however diverted it so that he was scorched but not killed

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Phoenix – the tutor of Achilles

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Part of the divine plan - Again, the emphasis on fate is repeated – Hector's prophecy repeated. Aeneas begins to realise that not only Troy but the whole heroic age must be left behind and a new age learned

Western Land – Hesperia; a term commonly applied to Italy

Lydian Tiber – the river upon which Rome stands; it is called Lydian because the Etruscans, through

whose territory it flowed, were supposed to have come from Lydia in Asia Minor

A queen for you to marry this is Lavinia, King Latinus' daughter; the struggle for her hand between Turnus and Aeneas is described in the second half of the poem

The blood of Dardanus - Dardanus was the founder of the dynasty of Priam, Creusa's father

Great mother of the Gods – Cybele, worshipped especially on Mt Ida near Troy

In resignation Aeneas finally yields to fate