A Reading of Virgil's Aeneid Book 2

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The Fall of Troy

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For Laura

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PREFACE

This work provides something new for those studying Virgil in translation - a detailed and in-depth literary analysis of a single book of the *Aeneid*. For my investigation I chose one of the most famous and appealing parts of the whole poem, in the hope that people would be stimulated to move on to the rest of the epic and engage in a close reading of it themselves, applying the critical techniques employed here.

This monograph is aimed especially at Classical Civilization students taking courses in Virgil, epic and myth. The translation (of Mynors' Oxford Classical Text) is intended to be reliable and also readable, so that the poetry is readily accessible to the target audience. The comments are meant to enhance critical appreciation and plain enjoyment, making book 2 really come alive. At the end of each chapter exercises, topics for investigation and references to other scholars and Classical authors are included to extend the engagement with Virgil. An immense amount has been written about this poet, and I do provide direction to various works of criticism, but I deliberately do not erect the barrier of a mass of scholarship between the reader and the poetry. I avoid dry and dusty controversy, and I have chosen not to bog people down in argumentation supporting my views and attacking those of others, in the hope that the probability of my remarks being correct will be self-evident.

Lastly, I would like to thank Dr Ray Clark, a distinguished Virgilian and a good friend, who has been very supportive and most generous with the time that he has devoted to looking through my first draft. He examined it meticulously and has improved it substantially with his criticisms and suggestions. For any errors and infelicities that remain I alone am responsible.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this work is on a close reading of Aeneas' dramatic and moving account of the fall of Troy in book 2 of Virgil's renowned *Aeneid*, with the aim of enhancing your critical appreciation and plain enjoyment. So that you can get on to the poetry itself as soon as possible, I'll provide just brief background here. I'll also present material under headings to let readers skim, as some of it will already be familiar to some of you, and I'll suggest further reading for those in need of more detail (so in the bibliography at the end of this book see Gransden 1990 or Williams 2009 or Camps 1969 for a fuller introduction to the *Aeneid*).

Virgil's Life and Works

Virgil (ancient spelling: Vergil) was born in 70 BC near Mantua (a town in north Italy) and died in 19 BC. He was 21 when the civil war between Caesar and Pompey began and almost 40 when the battle of Actium took place (31 BC), in which Octavian (who later became the emperor Augustus) defeated Antony and Cleopatra in another civil war. So nearly 20 years of Virgil's adult life were passed in the shadow of the bloody battles for supremacy between leading Romans, which will have fostered in him an awareness of the tragedy and waste of war and a realization that the glory of Rome involved suffering and sacrifice. When Virgil came to Rome, his poetry attracted the attention of Maecenas (one of Augustus' ministers, who became the poet's patron) and of the emperor himself. His early works were the *Eclogues* (composed between 42 and 37 BC), ten poems on the lives and loves of herdsmen, and the *Georgics* (written between 37/36 and 30/29 BC), a poem of instruction on agriculture (for more on these works see Griffin 1986, 20ff. and 36ff.). From 29 BC until his death he worked on the *Aeneid*, which was not finished by the time he died. We are told that he set aside 3 years for a final revision, and that because it was incomplete he left instructions in his will for it to be burned, but Augustus intervened and had the epic published in its unrevised form. Even in that state it has had a massive

influence on literature, music and art down the ages (on this see Ziolkowski 1993, Hardie 2014 and Farrell & Putnam 2010, 121ff.). For more on the poet's life and on the unreliable stories about him that circulated in antiquity see Horsfall 2000, 1ff.

Definition of Epic

An epic was a lengthy narrative poem (one that told a story, gave an account of events), almost always written in a particular verse form (the hexameter). It celebrated the deeds (especially in combat) of mythical heroes, and also major historical happenings (wars in particular). Usually divinities figured, influencing the action, and the language and tone were solemn and elevated. (This is a simplified, working definition; for further discussion consult Toohey 1992, 1ff.)

This was a lofty and revered type of poetry, and lots of epic poems were written in antiquity. Two of them which are particularly relevant to the *Aeneid* can be used to give a fuller picture of the genre. The earliest surviving Classical epics are the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey,* which were composed by a Greek poet (or poets) known as Homer, probably between 750 and 700 BC. Both are connected with the Trojan War, in which a huge Greek army besieged the city of Troy for ten years to get back Helen (the Greek king Menelaus' wife, who had eloped with the Trojan prince Paris) and finally took the city thanks to the trick of the Trojan horse (on the Trojan War see further Cline 2013 or Thomas + Conant 2007). The *Iliad* centres around the quarrel between Agamemnon, the Greek commander-in-chief, and Achilles, the Greeks' greatest warrior. It is filled with fighting and death - the hardships in combat of the Greeks while the offended Achilles refused to take part in battle, and his unstoppable, deadly rampage culminating in the killing of the Trojan champion Hector when Achilles returned to the fray to get revenge for the death of his great friend Patroclus. The *Odyssey* revolves around wandering and revenge rather than a major war. It relates the various adventures of the Greek hero Odysseus, as he spent ten years trying to get home from Troy, struggling with gods and monsters, and then, when he did finally get home, re-established himself a king by slaughtering the numerous suitors who had pestered his wife during his absence, taking over his palace and trying to get her to marry one of them.

Summary of the Aeneid

Virgil's poem tells the inspiring story of Aeneas (the son of the Trojan hero Anchises and the goddess Venus) and other Trojan survivors, who after the fall of Troy journeyed to Italy to found a new city, and who had to fight a great war there on their arrival. In book 1, on what should be the last leg of their travels, they have sailed from Sicily (the island off the toe of Italy) and have nearly reached their promised land in Italy when their arch-enemy, the goddess Juno, engineers a massive storm, which drives their ships all the way to the coast of Africa near the rising city of Carthage. There the Carthaginian queen Dido gives them a kind welcome, but, to make sure of her goodwill, Venus gets her divine son Cupid to make the queen fall passionately in love with Aeneas. Dido puts on a sumptuous banquet for the Trojans and at it asks Aeneas for the story of his adventures so far. He describes in book 2 the poignant final hours of Troy and in book 3 the Trojans' wanderings far and wide in search of a new home and also the recent death of his father on Sicily. In book 4, thanks to Venus and Juno (who hopes to divert Aeneas from Italy), Aeneas and Dido start an affair, and he is in danger of forgetting his mission, until the king of the gods orders him to leave. In agony, and much against his will, he does leave, and the distraught queen then commits suicide. In book 5 bad weather drives the Trojans back to Sicily. There the hero holds funeral games to mark the anniversary of his father's death, and Anchises' ghost appears to him, telling him to come down to him in the Underworld for important information about his future. In book 6 Aeneas goes down to his father in that dread region and receives that information. In book 7 the Trojans sail on and reach their final destination (Latium, the part of Italy where Rome will eventually be built) and are initially welcomed by the local king Latinus, who believes that Aeneas is the stranger from abroad fated to marry his daughter Lavinia. But Juno intervenes again and causes a terrible war to break out between the Trojans and a confederacy of Italians, led by Turnus (a neighbouring prince who has a claim on the hand of Lavinia). The rest of the poem is largely taken up with fighting between the two sides, until finally Aeneas and Turnus meet in a duel, and the Trojan kills his adversary. (This is just a bare outline; for a more detailed summary of the books with some literary criticism see Anderson 1989 and, much more fully, Fratantuono 2007; those who want to read the whole poem should use the prose translation by West 2003 or the verse translation by Fagles 2006.)

That is the end of the *Aeneid*, but (as foretold in the epic) subsequently peace was made, Aeneas married Lavinia and founded a town in Latium

named Lavinium, where he ruled for three years (until he mounted to heaven and joined the gods). Then his son Ascanius succeeded him as king and moved the settlement to another place in Latium, called Alba Longa. There his descendants ruled for three hundred years until one of them (a priestess called Ilia or Rhea Silvia) was raped by the war god Mars and gave birth to the twins Romulus and Remus, who went on to found Rome.

Main Characteristics of the Aeneid

The *Aeneid* is a very dense type of epic, a work of many aspects, of various layers and levels, a complex and highly sophisticated piece of writing. It presents the tale of Aeneas. As such it is an adventure story, one that has lots of action and violence, and one that is by turns exciting, stirring, moving and so on. As such it also depicts a hero, a new kind of hero - a man of destiny, who is constantly guided by fate and the gods (obeying them because of his reverence), and who is a highly moral leader with real social responsibility, putting the wellbeing of his people ahead of winning glory for himself (on the characterization of Aeneas see further Williams 2009, 78ff. and Hardie 2014, 77ff.).

Although the poem is primarily about Trojans, it also contains much on the prehistory and history of Rome, and praise of Rome generally and of the emperor Augustus in particular. But there is a darker side too. Augustus had acted brutally in the recent civil war, and he could always turn into a tyrant, so his ancestor Aeneas, with his great sense of duty to family, friends, his people and the gods, does bring glory on Augustus but is also present in the poem as a role model for him, a leader for him to contemplate (on allusion to the emperor in the poem see Camps 1969,137ff. and Putnam in Anderson + Quartarone 2002, 114ff.). The *Aeneid* acknowledges the cost of Rome's rise as well - all the effort and hardships and destruction of innocent people (like Dido). There is depth of thought combined with breadth of vision here, as Virgil shows us both sides of the coin. We find a tension between optimism and pessimism, between the public voice praising Trojan and Roman exploits and the private voice of sympathy for the human suffering involved in all that (on the two voices see Parry in Quinn 2000, 155ff.). So there is another important facet - the deep feeling for the mortal condition (especially our doubts, trials and pains) and the many genuine insights into the human heart.

In addition, the poem presents a view of the nature of the universe and our position in it which is frequently disquieting and bleak, with man often at the mercy of the whims of the gods and in the grip of an inexorable fate.

Finally, there is the intellectual appeal of this highly literary epic - the sound and rhythm of Virgil's Latin, his subtle and sensitive use of language, the effective structure, stylistic skills, deft characterization, rhetorical power, vivid description, highly suggestive imagery, advanced narrative techniques and all the erudite allusions to earlier writers, as he adopts and creatively adapts earlier epic (especially Homer), tragedy and other poetry as well as philosophers and historians.

Introduction to Book Two

This is one of the most famous and popular books of the whole *Aeneid*, centred on the awful day and night that witnessed the fall of Troy. There is majestic poetry here, and the lines are full of incident, drama and especially tragedy. This is a dark book, with its stress on reversal of fortune, mortal blindness and anguish, death and the destruction of one of the great cities of antiquity, conveyed with some truly apocalyptic scenes; but human dignity is also in evidence, and there are some glimmers of hope among all the gloom. A scholar called Bowra described this as “the poetry of defeat, from the point of view of the defeated”, and as Aeneas describes the final hours of his beloved Troy to Dido, we seem to have a brand new vision here: this is the first surviving continuous account of the end of the city on the lips of a Trojan, apparently providing a novel focus, and certainly investing the events with deep feeling, because Aeneas was so very much involved himself.

Typically for epic, book 2 handles some big issues. For example, it makes us think about the impact on our lives of fate and our relationship with the gods, presenting an initially dispiriting and disturbing picture, but one which subsequently becomes more positive, as we glimpse a divine plan for the Trojans. Book 2 also invites us to ponder the real nature and best form of heroism. In it we see the beginning of the end of the old (Homeric) code. Initially (at 315ff.), when he awakes and learns that Troy is being taken by the Greeks, Aeneas goes off to fight seeking glory, as all Homeric heroes did, and also driven by frenzy and rage, like Achilles in Homer's *Iliad*. Later on he is warned by his mother Venus to take care of his family all alone back in his home, and he starts to see that there are responsibilities beyond personal honour and renown (and such *pietas*, dutifulness, is extended beyond his family and becomes even more central to his heroic code when he assumes command of and becomes devoted to a large number of Trojan survivors). Aeneas thus becomes a less glamorous and swashbuckling figure, but a sober and responsible family man and leader.

This is an effectively structured book. The first 249 lines concern the Trojan Horse; then 250-558 cover the actual sack of Troy; and finally 559-804 recount the escape of Aeneas and his family. The sack is the most intense segment, and so it is the longest section and is assigned an important central position.

For more overview on the second book see Heinze 1993, 3ff. and Austin 1964, ix ff. For other ancient literary versions of the fall of Troy to compare and contrast with Virgil's narrative see Appendix A. For this episode in early Greek art see Gantz 1993, 654ff.

CHAPTER TWO

THE TROJAN HORSE (1-56)

In book 1 of the *Aeneid* Dido, queen of Carthage, showed warm hospitality to the storm-tossed Trojans who had landed on her coast and put on a magnificent banquet for them. There Cupid breathed into her an intense passion for Aeneas, and she kept on asking the man she now loved for information about the Trojan War, and ended up by requesting the full story of the fall of Troy (and his subsequent wanderings) from the beginning. At the start of book 2 he reluctantly agrees, despite the pain it will cause him to relive an episode so terrible that it would move to tears even his Greek enemies - the soldiers of Ulysses, and those of Achilles (called Myrmidons) and his son Pyrrhus (the Dolopians).

Picture the scene (as described in book 1): the sumptuous banquet with purple coverlets, silver plate, golden goblets and an abundance of fine food and drink; the Trojan and Carthaginian heroes, who have just been loudly applauding a superb minstrel's song; and the beautiful queen, enamoured and asking Aeneas question after question. The splendour of this setting contrasts with the horrors of the last hours of Troy, increasing their impact.

They all fell silent, and kept their gaze fixed intently on him.
Then from his lofty couch father Aeneas began:
“Your majesty, you're asking me to live through a pain beyond words
all over again, to tell how the Greeks destroyed Troy's riches and
much-lamented realm, the tragedy which I saw with my own eyes
and in which I was greatly involved. Not even a Myrmidon or a
Dolopian or one of pitiless Ulysses' men could speak of such things
without weeping. And the dewy night is already speeding
from the sky, and the setting stars are urging us to sleep.
But if you long so much to learn of our troubles
and to hear a brief account of Troy's final agony,
although I shudder at the memory and recoil in grief,
I will try.

These lines form an introduction to Aeneas' tale of Troy's end which is arresting and heightens expectation (of a really sad tale) and colours our view of the event in advance, inclining us to see it through Trojan rather than Greek eyes, as a supreme tragedy, not a glorious triumph. This passage also brings out the dismal irony in Dido getting Aeneas to tell her about pain and misery, when he will later inflict all that on her, by leaving her and ending their love affair, obedient to the commands of the gods, in book 4.

The first line focuses the attention of the reader too on the Trojan, as he secures from his audience rapt silence, which stands out in contrast to all the preceding din, and as everyone's gaze is fixed on him, so that there is a zoom-in, and we can picture him with all faces turned expectantly to him, highlighting him. The designation in 2 of Aeneas as “father” (a term of respect, reflecting a leader's loving concern for his people) and the emphasis on his personal involvement in the catastrophe at 5f. ensure that his version of events will have authority. His stress on the tragic nature of the episode at 3ff. represents an implicit appeal to the queen (this will upset me, and you). So does his comment on the lateness of the hour at 8f., where the drowsy sound of the Latin (*suadentque cadentia sidera somnos*, with the frequency of s and weary repetition of *-ent*) seems intended to make Dido feel sleepy, and to reflect the poor man's own exhaustion after all he has been through (on the great importance of sound, and rhythm and style, in Virgil see O'Hara in Martindale 1997, 241ff.). Perhaps we are to imagine a pregnant pause after 9, as the hero waits hoping that she will withdraw her request for that night. At any rate even after the appeals don't work he still holds back for another three lines before he can get himself to start his tale, and his continued reluctance shows that sadly the scars have not healed even seven years after the destruction of Troy. One last point: the fact that Aeneas in line 8 calls an account that extends for almost 800 lines “brief” means that, chillingly, there were many more things, awful things, that happened on the last night of that great city.

We can imagine another effective pause, in 13, after “I will try”, as Aeneas overcomes his unwillingness and gathers his thoughts, before getting on to the narrative proper. Traditionally Ulysses came up with the idea of the Trojan Horse in the tenth year of the war, and it was built by a Greek called Epeius, with the assistance of the goddess Minerva, who gave him advice on how to construct it or actually helped him put it together.

Broken by war and forced back by fate,
the Greek commanders, as so many years were now slipping by,
built a horse like a mountain (with the help of Minerva's
divine skill), weaving planks of pine into its sides;
they pretended it was an offering for their return; that story spread.
They select their most able-bodied men and secretly
insert them into its dark flanks, filling with armed
warriors the massive, cavernous womb deep inside it.
Within sight of Troy lies the very famous island of Tenedos;
it was rich and prosperous while Priam's kingdom stood,
but now there's just a bay, where it's not safe for ships to anchor.
They sailed there and concealed themselves on a lonely shore.

There is a dramatic and emotive opening here, as Aeneas gets straight into the story and straight on to the all-important Horse, Greek trickery and a deity working against his people, in the first of many instances in book 2 of divine hostility to Troy (on the gods in the *Aeneid* generally see Camps 1969, 41ff. or Coleman in McAuslan + Walcot,1990, 39ff.). There is further drama in the skimming of detail, so that within a few lines the Wooden Horse is built, explained and filled. This also suggests an ominous drive and efficiency on the part of the Greeks.

It is touching to see the hero start his account by showing pride in the Trojans' prolonged resistance, and implying that the enemy couldn't beat them fairly but had to resort to an underhand ruse. In 15 the first reference to the Trojan Horse invests it with menace: like a mountain it is huge, dwarfing and looming, which makes it awesomely and unnaturally massive for a horse. There is sinister cunning in 17, where the Greeks spread a rumour that they will go back to Greece and the wooden structure is an offering to the gods in connection with that, thereby providing a feasible explanation for it, and using it not only to get troops into the city but also to make the Trojans believe that they will soon be sailing back home. There is bleak irony there too, as the “offering” does in fact facilitate their return to Greece. At 18ff. the menace of the Wooden Horse is increased: it would take lots of men to fill such an enormous interior, and the men are physically outstanding, and have weapons; also the (masculine) Horse is said to have a womb, a weird and monstrous touch, which means that it is pregnant with and will give birth to armed warriors! At 21ff. Aeneas dwells on Tenedos because of its importance, as the place where the enemy hid, and where the snakes originated which will soon kill Laocoon. There is a gloomy touch in the utter decline of Tenedos, which matches that of nearby Troy. With depressing irony the isle provides

unreliable anchorage now, but was safe enough then for the Greek ships. There is a restrained pathos in connection with Priam's kingdom in 22, and Aeneas is calm and matter-of-fact about the deadly deception in 24. It looks as if, movingly, he is controlling himself and being detached and informative rather than emotional.

In the lines that follow the Trojans fall for the trick, think that the Greeks have actually gone home and go to look at their abandoned camp on the shore, noting where their greatest enemies used to have their tents (Achilles and his son Pyrrhus with his Dolopians). They disagree over what to do with the Horse, and the fact that Thymoetes urges them to take it into the city may reflect a story found elsewhere that king Priam had put to death the man's wife and son (which would give him grounds for treason).

We thought they'd gone, made for Greece with a favouring wind.
So the whole Trojan land let go its long sorrow.
The gates were opened, and people enjoyed going to look at
the Greek camp with its empty spaces and the abandoned beach.
Here the Dolopian contingent camped, here cruel Achilles;
their ships were drawn up here, they used to meet us in battle here.
Some were amazed at the deadly offering to virgin Minerva
and marvelled at the mass of the Horse. First of all Thymoetes
urged us to take it within our walls and place it on the citadel
(was this treachery, or was Troy's fate already set on that course?).
But Capys and those who had sounder views told us
either to hurl into the sea this suspect offering, this
Greek snare, or to torch it and burn it to ashes,
or to pierce and probe the enveloping lair within the womb.
The people were unsure and split into opposing sides.

Aeneas continues with his low-key approach, when describing poignant actions by his countrymen. Again he seems to be deliberately mastering his emotions; and Virgil will be making him do that because much more harrowing material is to follow and the poet doesn't want to lessen the impact of that by arousing too much pity here. But these lines are still affecting enough. In the tenth year of the siege the poor Trojans are understandably keen to believe that the enemy has gone. In 25 a single sentence on Trojan naivety occupies the line of verse, as a single sentence on Greek trickery occupied line 24, so that the salient qualities of the opponents at this point are juxtaposed (set right next to each other) and thrown into relief. In the Latin 26 has lots of long syllables and is therefore

a slow-moving line (I have tried to catch the effect in my translation), suggesting a gradual release from grief. Then the Trojans' city-gates are opened (symbolizing their defencelessness now), and there is a realistic picture of people going on a sightseeing tour, with misplaced joy, which will soon be succeeded by even greater sorrow than that felt so far. Line 28 highlights the illusory emptiness, and also conjures up the coming desolation of Troy itself. On the innocent pleasure in the recollection at 29f. see Seider 2013, 196ff.

At 31ff. the focus shifts to the fatal Horse. The first response to it, by Thymoetes at 32-4, foreshadows (looks forward to) the actual admittance of it into the city, and depicts the higher powers as hostile to Troy for a second time. At 35-8 Aeneas devotes more lines to those who wanted to destroy the wooden structure or expose the hiding place, dwelling wistfully on what he wishes *had* been done. Those people hit on the true purpose of the Trojan Horse, and there was common sense in their suspicion, but sadly not everybody could see that (because of naivety and/or divine influence?). Also sad is the irony in the reference to them piercing and torching the artefact, as their own walls will later be penetrated and their own city will be burnt down.

At this point a noble (and a priest) called Laocoon makes a powerful intervention, urgently warning of danger.

Then in front of the large crowd with him, ahead of them all,
Laocoon ran blazing down from the top of the citadel, shouting
from afar: 'You poor Trojans, are you completely mad?
Do you think the enemy's gone? Or any Greek gift
isn't a trap? Is this how well you know Ulysses?
Either Greeks are hiding here, shut up inside this wood,
or this is a contraption built for use against our walls,
to spy into our houses, to bear down on the city, or there's
some other trick we can't see. Trojans, don't trust the horse!
Whatever it is, I fear the Greeks even when they offer gifts.'
So saying, with great force he hurled a huge spear
into its side, into the curved framework of the beast's
belly. The spear stood there quivering; the womb vibrated,
and its cavernous cavity clanged and rang with a groan.
If the will and decrees of the gods hadn't been against us,
he would have driven us to hack their hiding-place with our swords,
and Priam's Troy would now survive and its lofty citadel still stand.

It seems that Virgil was the first to give Laocoon a major role in the fall of Troy (see Austin 1964, 44). His Laocoon is a memorable and tragic figure, who really reaches us (so here his patriotism and perceptiveness achieve nothing and he cannot stave off doom, for all his valiant efforts to do so). There is drama and emotional impact in his sudden appearance and vehement speech (on speeches in Virgil see Thomas+Ziolkowski 2014, 1204ff.). Our gaze is drawn to him (if we picture the scene) and he has prominence thanks to his swift movement down from a height, the large crowd accompanying him and the literal and metaphorical lead that he takes. He begins his speech forcefully with a flurry of curt and incredulous questions, where he gets it right about the actual situation. There (speaking as a priest) he refuses to accept the rumour that the Horse is a religious offering and refers to it sarcastically as a "gift", i.e. something the Greeks have left behind for them. Especially acute is his suspicion in 44 that Ulysses is somehow involved, and also in 45 his first choice of explanations of the real nature of the artefact, where he deflates the impressiveness of this "offering" by referring to it as a mere piece of wood. When he moves on to his alternative explanation, he assigns to the Trojan Horse a sinister intelligence in 47, making it into something frighteningly malignant and uncanny. He ends strongly, with a brusque command in 48 and with the simple and direct 49, a quotable line often echoed now in the expression "beware of Greeks bearing gifts".

At 50ff. he reinforces his words with action. The *hurling* of the *huge* spear with *great* force is a powerful visual image of vigorous opposition, and he directs the weapon at the belly, as if trying to kill the beast and its brood. At 52f. the vividness is enhanced by the echoing sound of the Latin, to convey the reverberation - *insonuere cavae gemitumque dedere cavernae* (the translation tries to do some justice to the repetition of *-ere, cav-* and *-ae*). The groan there is an effective detail: it represents the wooden thing as a living creature again, making a noise of pain when speared, and it foreshadows the groans of the Trojans during the fall of their city. Aeneas provides a melancholy close to this section at 54ff., as he intrudes to show how close his fellow citizens came to escaping death and destruction and how great his longing is for his beloved Troy to have survived. It would have been saved, but for the appearance of the hateful Sinon (see the next chapter), who immediately intervenes to undermine Laocoon's influence; and line 54 suggests that Sinon was acting in accordance with the will of heaven. Again we see divine enmity towards Troy, and we are left wondering why are the gods so against the Trojans, and where are their immortal supporters Venus and Apollo. This is engaging and disturbing.

What exactly might Thymoetes and Capys have said in support of their stances? Compose speeches for those debating what to do with the Trojan Horse in lines 32-8.

Produce your own drawing or painting of the Horse (if you want to see some other artistic representations of it, Google images for Trojan Horse in myth).

For more on the Wooden Horse in Greek and Latin literature see Austin 1964, 34ff. and Horsfall 2008, 56f. and 59. According to Quintus Smyrnaeus 12.138ff. it was so lifelike that it seemed to neigh. According to an ancient commentator on Virgil called Servius its knees, tail and eyes moved. But the fullest description of the creature is found in the late Greek author Tryphiodorus (*The Capture of Troy* 57ff.), who alludes to the Greek goddess Athena (= Minerva) in the first line and to Ares (= Mars, god of war) in the final line below.

Now, as instructed by the goddess, her servant Epeius made
the effigy that was Troy's enemy - the monstrous horse.
Wood was cut and brought down to the plain from
Mount Ida itself, whose trees were used earlier by Phereclus
to construct for Paris the ships that started all the trouble.
Epeius fitted the belly to the extensive sides,
making it hollow and as big as a curved ship
which a carpenter rounds off true to his line.
He attached the neck to the finely-finished chest,
sprinkling yellow gold on the purple-fringed mane,
which rippled over the arching neck on high
and was fixed to the top of the head by a crested band.
The jewelled eyes that he gave it were two
circles of green beryls and blood-red amethysts.
With that combination two colours glittered in the eyes,
whose red centre was ringed by green jewels.
In its jaws he placed sharp, silvery-white teeth,
eager to champ the ends of a well-twisted bridle.
He opened up secret passages in its massive mouth,
so the men hidden inside could keep breathing in and out,
and life-giving air also flowed in through its nostrils.
On top of its temples were fixed ears, pricked
right up, awaiting a trumpet-blast in constant readiness.
He fitted the back and supple back-bone to the flanks
and joined the hip-joints to the polished buttocks.
The flowing tail hung down to the soles of its feet,

like a vine, and was weighed down by twisted tassels.
The feet, propelled by the swift knees, seemed on the
point of preparing for a wing-swift race - they were
so eager for it, but were forced to hold back.
Bronze hooves projected from the ends of the legs
and were firmly attached by spirals of gleaming tortoise-shell.
Those powerful hooves of bronze scarcely touched the ground.
He also placed in it a door that closed and a sturdy ladder.
The door was set in the side invisibly, to allow the secret
company of Greek warriors to enter and leave this famous horse;
the ladder was to be unfolded and to be firmly
joined together, to enable them to rush up or down.
Round about, on the horse's white neck
and cheeks, he placed purple-flowered reins
and a curbing bridle with coiling spirals,
inlaid with ivory, bronze and eddies of silver.
When he had finished the steadfast warhorse,
he placed under each of its feet a wheel with stout spokes,
so it could be dragged over the plain, obedient to the reins,
and moving easily without the need for force.
So the broad, towering horse was resplendent with terror
and great beauty. If it was alive, as he came across it,
not even Ares, lord of horses, would refuse to ride it.

Which do you think is more effective - the long, detailed and elaborate description in Tryphiodorus or the stark and simple depiction in Virgil (with uncanny touches), which leaves you to get involved and fill out the picture yourself?

In books 2 and 3 Virgil is echoing his epic predecessor Homer (on Homer's extensive influence on our poet see Williams 1972, 12ff. or Gransden 1990, 24ff.). In the *Odyssey* his hero Odysseus (= Ulysses) is similarly caught in a severe storm and then given hospitality by royalty (the king and queen of the Phaeacians), and he is also invited at a banquet to tell of his adventures so far, and does so at length (in books 9-12). Typically there is a creative interaction with Homer, as Virgil builds on his model and makes enlivening variations. So Aeneas' addressee has an erotic motive and asks for his story because she wants to learn more about the man she loves (not out of polite interest); and unlike Odysseus Aeneas includes the fall of Troy in his account, and in fact begins with that major catastrophe, instead of the relatively minor setback of Odysseus' battle with the Cicones. Compare and contrast the introductions to the two

narratives, and see how Virgil makes Aeneas at 1-13 top Odysseus at *Odyssey* 9.12ff. in terms of pain and suffering and reluctance.

CHAPTER THREE

SINON (57-194)

Sinon is a Greek who has stayed on in the vicinity of Troy, pretending to be a deserter, so he can persuade the Trojans to take the Horse into their city. His sudden appearance here is a second surprise, counteracting the first one (the abrupt arrival of Laocoon) and outweighing it. Aptly (because he prevails) the Greek gets more lines than Laocoon and (as his influence is negated) the latter drops out of the narrative for now. Like Laocoon, Virgil's Sinon is a memorable creation, but this time one who arouses a very negative reaction in us. There is a stark and dispiriting contrast with Laocoon: unlike him, Sinon is a play-actor, full of fake emotion, who conceals the truth, and an underhand enemy of Troy, who succeeds in his mission and lives on.

Austin 1964, 52 says of him: "he is a devil, in the guise of an unhappy waif, taking risks at every turn, playing upon all the Trojans' emotions, leading them on from jeering to curiosity, from curiosity to kindness and pity, from pity to trust, his luck holding to the end. It is a masterly scene; and all this time, there the Horse stands, with Laocoon's spear fast in its flank." Williams 1972, 221 adds: "Two points stand out in Virgil's brilliant treatment of this episode; first the contrast between the guile and cold deception of Sinon and the warm hearts of the Trojans who are moved to pity; and secondly the masterly rhetoric which Sinon commands in all its moods, despair, subtlety, humility, anger, appeals to pity." Actually there are some flaws and holes in the Greek's story, but sadly the Trojans miss them, because they are ingenuous and, as they are being expertly stirred up and manipulated, they do not have the time to sit back and probe his generally very convincing performance.

Sinon makes his first move at 57ff. In that passage 66 is an unfinished line, which Virgil would have completed when he gave the *Aeneid* its final revision, and 76 is omitted because it is a line mistakenly added by some scribes (it is found in book three of the poem, where it fits perfectly, and, more importantly, it seems out of place here).

Meanwhile, look, with loud shouts Trojan shepherds were
dragging to the king a young stranger with his hands bound
behind his back. To achieve just that, and open up Troy to the
Greeks, he had voluntarily given himself up when they
came upon him, confident in his courage and equally prepared
either to keep up his deception or to meet certain death.
Keen to see him, young Trojans rushed up around the captive
from all sides, and tried to outdo each other in jeering at him.
Let me now tell you about the trickery of the Greeks. This one man's
crime shows what all of them are like.
He stood there, with every eye upon him, worried,
defenceless, gazed round at the crowd of Trojans
and said: 'Ah, what land, what sea can now take
me in? What's left for me after all I've gone through?
There's no place for me among the Greeks anywhere, and, on top of that,
even the Trojans are hostile and vengefully call for my blood.'
When he groaned that out, our mood changed and we checked all our
aggression. We urged him to say who his family was, what news
he had and what treatment he was counting on now that he was caught.

Sinon plays his part well from the very start. With his initial appearance - bound, outnumbered, defenceless, worried - he ensures that he comes across as entirely unthreatening; but there is a horrible irony in that. The gaze in 68 makes him seem wary; but he is also sizing up his prey there and making sure that they are paying attention. His crafty speech at 69-72 is groaned out pitifully, and is not too long, so it seems off the cuff rather than prepared. It is clearly aimed at arousing sympathy. He begins with two helpless questions, which represent him as at a loss and devoid of ideas (rather than calculating and cunning). Then he depicts himself, early on, as totally rejected by the Greeks (not their agent). He also claims that he is menaced by the Trojans (not a danger to them himself), insidiously putting them on the defensive by making them appear vindictive towards a figure of pathos. His speech is also aimed at arousing curiosity: so he does not give his name or explain how he came to be in such a position. His ploys work perfectly. We see Trojan generosity of spirit, and also naivety, at 73ff. in their immediate change of heart and interested questions. The sinister Sinon is drawing them in, so that he can build a relationship with them.

At this point he starts a made-up story to explain his presence at Troy. He maintains that he was sent there as squire to his illustrious relative Palamedes, who was executed on a trumped up charge of treason thanks to

Ulysses. (Other authors tell us that Ulysses hated Palamedes either because he was jealous of him or because when Ulysses tried to avoid going to the war by pretending to be mad, Palamedes exposed this as a trick; and so Ulysses at Troy forged a letter supposedly from Priam concerning Palamedes' betrayal of the Greeks and hid gold in his tent, which looked like payment for his treachery.) Sinon says that he was so upset over Palamedes' death that he unwisely vowed to get revenge, and that brought down Ulysses on him.

He said: 'Your majesty, I'll tell you the whole truth,
come what may. First of all, I won't deny I'm Greek.
Malicious Fortune may have made Sinon a pitiful
creature, but she won't make me a cheat and a liar too.
You may perhaps have heard some mention of the name
of Palamedes, son of Belus, and his glorious renown.
He was innocent, but because he opposed the war he was
wrongfully charged with treason and put to death on the basis of
infamous evidence. Now that he's dead they mourn for him.
He was a relative, and my impoverished father sent me to the war
here as a squire to him when I was very young.
So long as he stood secure in power and had influence in the
councils of the kings, I too enjoyed a certain distinction
and renown. Thanks to the malice of glib Ulysses (you
know all about that) he left the land of the living;
I was crushed, and dragged out my life in darkness and grief,
inwardly indignant at my innocent friend's fate.
But I was mad enough to speak out and promise that
if chance brought it about that I returned victorious to my country,
I'd get revenge. Saying that made me bitterly hated.
That was the start of my slide to disaster. That made Ulysses
constantly intimidate me with new accusations and spread double-edged
rumours among the troops and look for help for his conspiracy against me.
In fact he never rested until with his henchman Calchas -
but you don't want to hear this, it's pointless to go back over it.
Why hold you back? If you think all Greeks are the same,
and it's enough to hear I'm one, it's high time for your revenge on me.
The Ithacan would want this, the sons of Atreus would pay a lot for it.'

This is a very crafty speech, building on the first one and going now for extensive pity. The insidious Sinon packs in various types of appeal, constantly manipulating his audience. He mixes truth with plausible lies,

and he represents himself to the Trojans as a victim of their arch-enemy Ulysses, so they will identify with him and get on his side (when in fact the Trojans are the victims of Sinon).

At 77-80 his preamble smoothly combines deference with attempts to win sympathy and (outrageous) assurances of truthfulness. At 81ff. he begins his story about Palamedes by stressing the hero's innocence and his fall from great eminence, to get the Trojans emotionally involved. His indignation at the execution of such a fine man by the Greeks would help justify his coming “betrayal” of them by telling them the “truth” about the Horse. He also makes a point of depicting the leader he so respects as opposed to the Trojan War, so his listeners could easily infer that he too was against the war (as if!). At 86ff. he goes for further pity by mentioning his father's poverty and by bringing out the closeness of his connection to Palamedes and his own decline from a position of some importance. He also presents himself as a squire (not a warrior), who only went to war because his father sent him.

He artfully delays revelation of the person behind Palamedes' death until 90, so that it has a powerful impact. At 92f. his great grief and indignation portray him as a man of feeling, and would tug at Trojan heart-strings, and also explain why he went on to openly promise to get vengeance. That promise would win from his hearers admiration for him as a loyal and brave man quite correctly eager to exact revenge for his relative and friend, and it would arouse anxiety for him as well. That anxiety is immediately increased at 97ff., as Ulysses gets involved again, and comes across as dangerous, devious and relentless, so that we hate him and feel sorry for Sinon. Then in 100 with a masterstroke he cuts short his narrative at a very tense point, when the Trojans would be keen to hear more, after allusion to Ulysses' formidable ally Calchas, the chief prophet of the Greeks. Sinon ends his speech with the poignant resignation at 101ff., where he also challenges the Trojans to show humanity and an absence of prejudice, and cunningly claims that harming him is just what his (and their) great enemies would want, naming Ulysses (king of the island of Ithaca) and the sons of Atreus (Agamemnon, the commander-in-chief of the Greek forces, and his brother Menelaus). Note than Sinon has said nothing about the Wooden Horse so far: he wants to win over the Trojans completely first and establish himself properly as someone with good grounds for revealing its secrets.

When the Trojans fall for his ploy and ask him for more, Sinon continues with his story. He claims that the Greeks wanted to leave Troy, and an oracle of Apollo (god of prophecy) told them they had to sacrifice