VI

THE UNDERWORLD

Reaching Italy

Aeneas wept while speaking, slackened the reins of his galley and glided ashore at length at Cumae, a port of Euboeans. Prows were turned seaward, anchors securing the ships fast with their bites, and the shoreline was bordered with rounded hulls. Men who'd yearned for Italian soil leaped out. One group searched for the fire-seed hidden in veins of flint while another collected wood near dens of beasts, finding and pointing to rivers. Aeneas, recalling his duty, made for the lofty heights where Apollo presided, close to the spacious and private cave of a feared Sybil through whom the Delian Prophet breathed his great mind and will, revealing the future.

Daedalus and the Labyrinth

Trojans went under the golden roof and grove of Diana. According to legend Daedalus fled from the kingdom of Minos, daring to trust himself to the sky on his rapid wingbeats, making his cold, unlikely way to the Arctic and finally touching down on this hilltop at Cumae. On first returning to land, Apollo, he offered his oar-like wings to you, and built a magnificent temple.

Androgeos’ death was carved on the doors, and the wretched Athenians, forced to pay by surrendering seven sons each year: an urn stood there, lots to be drawn out. The island of Crete rose from the sea on the portal
facing. Here was brutal love for a bull, Pasiphae furtively mounted, a two-formed fetus inside her—the Minotaur, man and beast, reminder of sexual outrage. Here was its home, a work of unwindable tangles. But Daedalus pitied the deep love of a queen, Ariadne, loosened the tricky knots of the building for Theseus, guiding his blind feet with thread. Icarus also would play a great part in this great work—if his father’s grief had allowed it: twice he tried to capture that downfall in gold and twice his hand failed him. Trojans were reading all this closely now when Achates (sent on before them) arrived with Diana’s priestess, the Sybil of Phoebus named Deiphobe—Glaucus’ daughter. She spoke to their leader: “Those are not the pictures you need at this moment. It’s proper to sacrifice now: seven bullocks that never were yoked and seven hand-picked ewes. It’s our custom.”

Aeneas’ friends followed the ritual order promptly. The priestess called them on high to her temple.

Apollo’s Arrival

A cave had been cut in a huge mass of Cumaean rock: a hundred wide paths converged on a hundred mouths where sounds could rush out—the Sybil’s responses. The men came to an entrance. The virgin commanded, “It’s time to demand the God’s word. Look—my Apollo!” Her face and color changed at once while she spoke at the entrance, her breasts heaved, her hair lost its arrangement and wild fury filled her heart: she seemed to be taller now that the God’s will gave her more than a human voice and breathed close. “You’re slow in your prayer? Aeneas of Troy,” she said, “slow to make vows? But before then the great mouth of our sky-struck house will not open.”

Will Troy’s Bad Luck Now End?

She fell silent. Cold tremors ran through the Trojans’ rugged bones. Their leader earnestly poured out a prayer: “Phoebus, you always pitied the hard labor of Trojans. You guided the hand and Trojan arrow of Paris straight for Achilles’ flesh. With you as my leader I entered seas bordering vast lands, the Massylian people’s far interiors, broad fields at the Syrtes. At last we cling to a fleeting Italian beachhead.
Let Troy's bad luck follow this far and no farther!
Every God and Goddess offended by Trojan
strength and glory: let it be right, now, that you pity
Troy's people. And you, most holy of seers
who know the future: I claim the kingdom that's owed by
the Fates: give us Latium, rest for the people
of Troy, for our wandering Gods' disquieted powers.
I'll found a temple of solid marble for Phoebus,
Diana as well. I'll name festal days for the Sun-God.
And priestess, majestic shrines wait in our kingdom
for you: I'll place your oracle told to my people
and all your mysteries there. I'll dedicate hand-picked
men to your service. But here don't trust incantations
to leaves—the rush of a playful wind may disturb them—
sing them yourself, please." He ended the prayer.

Apollo Speaks through the Sibyl

Now the seer, not yet yielding to Phoebus,
dashed through the large cave as if able to shake off
the great God from her chest. But all the more he oppressed her,
mastered her wild heart and mouth: he gripped and subdued her.
The hundred large doors of her cavern were swinging
wide by themselves and winds carried the Sybil's responses:
"At last are you done with extreme danger on water?
Worse remains on land. Trojans will enter
Lavinia's realm—drop that heartfelt anxiety—
but wish you'd never arrived. I see you in battle,
war's horror, foaming blood on the Tiber.
You won't be lacking a Simois River, a Xanthus,
Greek-like camps and a new Achilles emerging in Latium,
born himself of a Goddess. Juno will never
be far from you Trojans. How you'll scrape for advantage like
paupers,
pleading with every city and people in Italy!
A foreign wife again makes trouble for Trojans:
a marriage again to a foreigner.
Don't concede to the trouble. Fight it more boldly
wherever Luck permits. Your pathway to safety
first is cleared by a Greek city: you'd hardly expect it."

A Prayer for Reunion

So the Cumaean Sibyl chanted ambiguous,
frightening words in her shrine, wrapping truth in her darkness,
doubling the cave’s noise. Apollo had shaken
the reins and twisted a spur in her breast to incite her.
Soon as her wild, frenzied outcry diminished,
Aeneas, the leader, began: “None of that hardship,
virgin, is new in form or appears unexpected.
I’ve known it all: I’ve pondered or lived it beforehand.
I ask one thing. It’s said the gates of the Ruler of Darkness
are near, and a murky swamp from the Acheron River’s
overflow. Let me go down: see the face of the Father
I love: teach me the sacred path: open the portals.

I saved him myself from fire and a thousand pursuing
enemy spears. He escaped from a mob on my shoulder.
My close partner at sea, in all of our travels
he bore each threat from the sky and water, exceeding
the strength and duties of age even when sickly.
The man prayed and gave commands in fact that I humbly
seek and approach your entrance. Pity a father
and son, I ask your indulgence. Your power is total:
Hecate gave you control of Avernian woodland
to use it. If Orpheus could summon Eurydice’s shadow,

trusting a Thracian lyre’s melodious strumming:
if Pollux could save a brother by dying another
way, descending and rising again—why should I mention
Hercules, Theseus? I’m of high Jupiter’s bloodline.”

The Golden Bough
He uttered that strong prayer while gripping the altar.
The seer answered, “You are of the bloodline of heaven,
Trojan son of Anchises. Going down to the Underworld’s easy:
the Hell-God’s dark door is open morning and evening.
The climb back to higher air, retracing your footsteps:
there’s the work, the struggle. A few have been able,

raised by fire-like courage to heaven, the son of some Sky-God,
or helped by Jupiter’s love. Woods are all intervening;
the River Cocytus glides and circles, a pitchy meandering.
Still if you love so much and intensely desire to
enter the Styx’s water twice, to witness the pallor
of Tartarus twice, if mad laborenthralls you,
listen and do this first. The leaves and the supple
bend of a golden bough hide in a shady
tree, a sacred prize of the Underworld’s Juno.
Forest completely obscures the bough in a shadowy valley.

No one’s allowed to enter the Underworld’s coverts
before pulling that gold-haired child from its tree-trunk: Proserpine's ordered the fine gift to be carried down to herself. Once you've broken the first off, a second golden bough will sprout similar leaflets. Look up high, therefore; soon as you find it, pull with your hands. The bough will easily follow if God's word has called you. Otherwise nothing will wrench it free, not the best muscle or iron.

**The Brashness of Misenum**

"But now your friend is dead. A body's unburied."

150 You could not know, sadly. The corpse dishonors your vessels while you seek guidance here and muse at our doorway. Carry the man to a tomb first. Bury him duly. Lead out black rams: make them your first expiation. Only then will you see the Styx River and forest, a realm uncrossed by the living." She sealed her mouth and was quiet.

Aeneas left the cave with a mournful expression. Eyes downcast, he mentally puzzled over this blind turn of events. A friend he trusted, Achates, walked along, side by side, sharing the worry.

160 Between themselves they exchanged a number of questions. What friend did the seer refer to? What corpse could be needing burial? Soon they arrived and regarded Misenum there on the dry beach, taken by death without pity. A son of the Wind-God, a standout at stirring companions with trumpet calls igniting the War-God, Misenum had joined with powerful Hector, gone into combat with Hector's group and excelled with spear as with bugle. But after Achilles victoriously stripped Hector of spirit Misenum gave what leadership, courage and friendship he could to Aeneas of Troy, following no one inferior.

Now by chance with a hollow conch he'd rumbled the seacoast, madly challenging Gods, calling and blaring. An envious Triton had seized the man (if the story deserved belief) and plunged him in surf among boulders.

**Another Burial**

So everyone circled now and wept for him loudly, Aeneas with special devotion. They followed the Sibyl's command promptly, still in tears: they erected a tomb and altar with timber, worked and raised it to heaven:
they went to an old pine-stand close to a mammal's
deep burrow, felled both pitch-pine and ash-tree.
Oaks grunted at axe-blows, wedges split up the oak-logs,
and huge cords of rowan tumbled down from the mountains.

Help from Two Doves
First indeed in all that work was Aeneas,
encouraging men, wielding tools that the men used.
He pondered it all himself sadly and deeply,
gazing at deep forest. He happened to pray there:
"If only that tree with the golden bough could appear here,
right in this vast forest! Clearly the Sibyl was honest,
Misenum: she spoke of your death too truthfully, sadly."

By chance a pair of doves appeared when Aeneas
had just finished: they veered from the sky and alighted
on green moss within view. The greatest of leaders
recognized Venus' birds and prayed to them gladly,
"Guide me, somehow: set a course through the air-flow,
find a way to the grove where that priceless bough overshadows
the rich earth. And you, my Goddess and Mother,
don't fail me in time of doubt." He stopped speaking and walking:
he noted a sign they made, the course they elected.
The doves kept feeding, only flying before him
so far as his eye could follow. He kept them in focus.
In time they reached the malodorous throat of Avernus,
they climbed quickly and glided down through the air-waves,
both perching high in the tree they had looked for:
a second color, gold brilliance, shone through the branches,
the way mistletoe blooms in woodland in winter
cold, its new foliage circling a slender
tree (not the parent) with berries of yellow.
Golden leaves appeared that way in the oaktree's
green. Metal tinkled softly in breezes.

Aeneas gripped it at once, eagerly pulling.
It gave slowly. He brought it back to the home of the Sybil.

Pyre and Memorial
Trojans meanwhile mourned on the shore for Misenum
nonetheless, going through last rites for ungrateful
ashes. First they built a huge pyre out of chopped-up
oak and tacky pine. They plaited the sides with a darker
wood, leaning the death-tree against them, the cypress.
Armor gleamed on top of the pyre in adornment.
Men heated cauldrons, fire bubbled the water; others washed the cold body and oiled it.

220 Moaning, weeping their last, they settled the body back on a couch. They draped it with purple, familiar clothes of the man. The large bier was supported (a somber task) and torches applied, in the way of their fathers, with eyes averted. Piled-up presents of incense, oil poured in bowls, and meal were cremated. After the ashes fell, the death-fire diminished, wine moistened the thirsty dust and the remnants. Corynaeus gathered the bones. A bronze jar would enclose them. Three times with clean water he circled the people, sprinkled them lightly with flowering branches of olive in ritual cleansing, and finally offered some verses. Aeneas conscientiously raised an enormous tomb enclosing the man's ears, weapons and trumpet. That windy hill is now known as Missenus, keeping a friend's name alive through the ages.

_prayers to the hell-gods_

With all that done they quickly followed the Sibyl's command: by a deep cave with enormous and jagged mouth, guarded by oil-black pools and a nighttime of forest, where hardly a single bird could navigate safely or fly overhead—such was the vapor that seeped from the dark mouth and rose to the dome of the heavens (Greeks called the place Aornos, "The Birdless")—the priestess stationed four of her black-backed heifers first and poured wine on their foreheads. Clasping hair near a horn she snipped off the topmost, placed it on ritual fire, the first of her offerings, and loudly called: "Hecate! In heaven and hell you have power."

240 Men cut the throats and caught the arterial gush in bowls. Aeneas slaughtered a black-wooled lamb himself for Night, the mother of Furies, and Earth, her great sister; a calfless cow for the Hell-Queen; then, for the Styx's King, he started an altar service at night, piling thick beef on the sacral fire and pouring fatty oil on the sizzling entrails.

_the hour to descend_

And see, under the first glare of the rising sun the ground lowed underfoot, forested ridges
began to move, dogs peered and whined at the shadows. "The Goddess is coming," the seer yelled, "you must leave us, all you men not purified, leave the forest completely!

260 Aeneas, take to the path, pull your sword from its scabbard: you'll need spirit now and steady emotion."
She broke off and wildly flung herself in the open cave. Aeneas, resolute, followed his leader.

Invocation to the Lower Powers

Lords of the spiritual empire! Shadow and Silence, Chaos, Phlegethon, mute stretches of Midnight, make it right to say what I've heard: give me the power to bare things deep in the earth covered in vapor.

Real and Unreal at the Entrance

They moved through obscure darkness, desolate shadow, past empty houses of Dis, unoccupied throne-rooms, the way a path moves through woods when moonlight is doubtful or sparse, when Jupiter hides the sky or obscures it, when black Night deprives the world of its color. Before the entrance, Grief and vindictive Anxiety smoothed their beds in the gullet itself of the Hell-God. Wan Disease was here with comfortless Aging and Fear. Crime-encouraging Hunger and grimy Poverty, forms frightful to witness. Death and the throes of Death. Lethargy, Death's brother, and sickly minds' Giddiness. War, the bringer of Death, on the threshold opposite. Furies on iron couches. Mad Revolution, her hair a tangle of blood-soaked fillets and serpents. A huge elm in the center extended shadowy branches like old arms. They say dozens of idle dreams are at home in all that foliage, clinging. More prodigies lay beyond it, a mélange: Centaurs at doors of stalls, Scyllas doubly contorted, the hundred-handed Briareus, the Hydra from Lyrna, fiercely hissing. Chimaera, armed with its flame-spears. Gorgons, Harpies, and Geryon's three-bodied shadow.

280 Suddenly clutching a sword, trembling in terror, Aeneas held out its fine edge to those that were nearest. Had not his well-taught friend told him the bodies were hollow forms of reality, tenuous flittings, the man would have mainly charged, blade swiping at shadows.
Book VI

Charon and the Styx River

A path led down from there to Acheron’s water
and Tartarus. Churning, seething with mud in a monstrous
vortex, a whirlpool dumped tons of sand in Cocytus.
A boatman guarded the river’s flow: Charon was frightful,
in dire filth, the beard on his chin like a jumble
of grey briars, the eyes like motionless fireshift.
A soiled and knotted coat hung from a shoulder.
He punted a ferry himself, took care of the canvas,
and carried people across in the rust-colored vessel.
Now old, he’d aged raw and green, as a God does.
A crowd came running and thronging the banks of the river:
men and mothers, the forms of great-hearted heroes
relieved of life, boys and unmarried daughters,
children placed on pyres before the eyes of their parents:
dense as leaves falling and drifting in forests
in autumn at first frost, or birds flocking to seashore
from whirlpools at sea when the cold season pursues them
over the waves and sends them to sun-loving country.
They stood there begging to ride first on the water.
Hands reached out, they longed for the opposite shoreline.
The dour boatman picked out this one and that one,
keeping many others far back on the gravel.
Aeneas, deeply moved and alarmed by the uproar,
spoke out: “Tell me, virgin, why is that crowd by the river?
What do the spirits want? What keeps that number away from
the bank while others move through the indigo water?”
The aging priestess briefly answered Aeneas:
“Son of Anchises, surely the son of a Goddess,
the deep marsh you see is a pond of the Styx and Cocytus.
Even Gods fear to swear and renge by its power.
The large crowd you see is helpless, unburied.
Charon, the boatman, takes on those who are buried.
No one may cross that grumbling stream from this anxious
side before his bones find rest in some death-mound.
Souls wander and flit about the bank for a hundred
years. Then Charon takes them. They ride the waves they had
longed for.”

Palinurus Reappears

Anchises’ son walked slower. He stopped there,
pondered all the unfair luck, pitying deeply.
He saw, in the crowd lacking burial honors,  
a sad Leucaspis, Orontes (the Lycian squadron commander),  
both borne from Troy on gusty sea till a Southwind  
tumbled their ships and men in the water, and swamped them.  
And look: Palinurus, the helmsman—guiding himself now.  
Checking stars on the recent voyage from Libya  
he’d dropped astern, got thrown, surrounded by water.  

340 Aeneas could just make out the somber man in that heavy  
gloom. He spoke up first: “Which of the Gods, Palinurus,  
tore you from friends and plunged you deep into water?  
Tell me! We never found Phoebus deceptive  
before that time, when he mocked my heart with his answer,  
saying you’d reach the coast of Italy safely,  
unharmed at sea. How could that promise be truthful?”

**Desperate Cries for Help**

The other: “Phoebus’ oracle never deceived you,  
son of Anchises, my leader: no God plunged me in water.  
Sharp and random violence broke off the tiller.  

350 Charged with holding our course, I clung to the steering  
and flew off, dragging it with me. I swear by the bitter  
sea, Aeneas, I feared much less for my body  
than yours, the steerage gone, an overboard helmsman—  
your ship could capsize in deep, gathering white-caps.  
For three wintry nights a violent Southwind  
rushed me along on huge waves. From high on a roller’s  
crest on the fourth dawn I recognized Italy.  
Swimming ashore gradually, reaching for safety,  
I hooked my hands on the jagged ledge of a sea-cliff,  
clothes heavy and drenched—when barbarous people  
struck me with daggers, foolishly thinking of booty.  
Wind and wave toss and keep me there on that shoreline.  
I beg you, by all the breath and light of the precious  
sky, your father, your rising hope in Iulus:  
save me from all this wrong. You can, you’re unconquered:  
look for Velia harbor and throw soil on my body!  
Or, if a way exists for the Goddess, your Mother,  
to show you—I’m sure you’re ready to enter the Styx’s  
broad river and marsh with power from heaven—  
370 give your hand to a wretch: take me over that water!  
Help me to rest in peace at least as a dead man.”
Book VI

Underworld Law

The seer began to speak as he begged in that manner, "Why such painful desire, Palinurus, such longing to see the grim Styx's flow? You are unburied: how can you pass to the Furies' banks before you are asked to? Stop hoping to bend the Gods' law with your begging. Take this word to console you—your fall was a hard one—people far and wide in neighboring cities, urged by signs from the sky, will atone for your death by erecting a tomb and offering gifts each year at the death-mound. The place will have a permanent name—Palinurus." Her promise relieved his hurt for a time and diminished his heart's gloom. He smiled to hear of the place-name.

Charon's Challenge

Aeneas, pursuing the course he'd started, came to the river. Soon as the ferryman saw him there from the Styx's water, passing mute scrub and close to the streambank, Charon aggressively shouted, challenging quickly: "Whoever you are, approaching our river in armor, stop walking there: say why you should visit a land of Shadow, languid Midnight and Nightmare. To carry living flesh in my Styx ferry is sinful. I hardly enjoyed taking Hercules over the water, or Theseus, no, or Pirithous—though Gods bore them and men could not beat them. One of them wanted to chain Tartarus' watchdog, drag him trembling away from the throne itself of our Ruler; the others tried to escort our Queen from the bed of her husband!"

Acknowledging the Golden Bough

The seer of Amphiysian Phoebus answered him shortly, "Don't be troubled. No one here is deceitful. Our weapons have no force. Your monster-like watchdog may bark in his cave forever to terrify bloodless ghosts. Your queen will remain chaste at the door of her uncle. Aeneas of Troy, known for filial love and for war-work, wants to meet his father's shade in Erebus' darkness. If no one sign of his great devotion will move you, here's a bough you'll know." She opened a vestment, revealing the gold. Charon's puffed-up rancor subsided. Protesting no more, amazed at that venerable offering—
an ominous branch no one had seen in a long time—

410 he swung the coal-blue ferry around to the bank and approached them.

First he dislodged from the long benches the other souls who'd sat there. Clearing the boat's gangplanks, he took on the bulk of Aeneas. The ferry groaned under the living weight—swampwater spurted through stitches and fissures. At length he safely ferried the man and the priestess across the river to grey sedge and featureless mudflat.

The Watchdog Subdued

Cerberus shook this place with three-throated barking, a huge beast crouched in a cavern that faced them. The Sibyl, seeing his necks already bristling with serpents,

420 threw some scraps of fruit, drugged and honeyed to make him sleep. Savagely hungry he gaped and snapped at the pieces with all three mouths. The large hindquarters buckled; he sprawled on the ground, immensely stretched through the cavern.

Aeneas passed the entrance, the watchdog unconscious, and quickly left the riverbank no one re-crosses.

Pain and Judgment in the Underworld

They soon heard voices, a deafening outcry of spirits weeping, children deprived of joy on the very threshold of life by Luck, removed on a darkling day from their mothers' breasts and plunged in some bitter death. Nearby were spirits condemned to die through the charges of perjurors, given their true place by lot or by judgment now: Minos presided, shaking the urn at the head of a silent court. He studied each life and its evil.

Other places were held by innocent, downcast people who'd caused their own deaths, hating the sunlight, ditching their lives. How they were willing to labor hard now in higher air and suffer as paupers! Gods' laws blocked them. Dreary, unlovable water constrained them: the nine-coiled Styx intervened and enclosed them.

Dido Once More

440 Not far from there, spread out in every direction, appeared Fields of Mourning (the name they were known by), where people consumed by love's ruthless infection
kept to themselves on footpaths covered by myrtle woods. In death too their anxiety lingered.
Here were seen Phaedra, Procris, wretched Eriphyle,
showing the wound her son had cruelly inflicted.
Evadne and Pasiphae walked with a friend, Laodamia.
The Nymph Caeneus, once a boy, now was a woman
again, changed by the Fates back to her earlier figure.

Among them, roaming that far-flung woodland, was Dido,
Phoenicia’s woman, her wound fresh. Soon as the Trojan
leader stood up close and saw through the shadows
her dusky form (as a man, when the month is beginning,
sees or thinks he sees the moon rising through cloud-trail),
he shed some tears. He spoke fondly and gently:
“Unhappy Dido, the story I heard was correct then?
I heard you had died, sought out death with a sword-thrust.
And I—my God—I caused your death? I swear by the starlight,
by Gods in the sky, the Power in Earth’s depths, if there’s any:

I never wished, my queen, to sail from your seacoast.
Gods compelled me—just as I’m driven to travel
now through Night’s depths, through briar and shadow.
They drive by their own rules. How could I figure
my leaving would bring such deep distress to your spirit?
Please don’t go—don’t walk from where I can see you—
what do you run from? The last words I’m permitted to tell you—”
Aeneas tried, in tears, to calm and subdue her.
She looked grim. Her womanly spirit was burning.
She turned and kept her gaze fixed on the stubble.

Her face had changed, once he began to address her,
no more than flint would, or hard Marpesian rock-stands.
She finally tore herself away like an enemy,
running for shadowy woods where Sychaeus, her husband
at Tyre, could match her love and respond to her caring.
Aeneas remained stunned by her death’s unfairness. He followed
a long way, pitying. He wept when she moved off.

**Fields of Warriors**

He trudged back to the way provided. Soon he was reaching
far fields arranged for people famous in battle.
He met Tydæus here, Parthenopaeus

(in well known armor), the pale form of Adrastus.
Trojans were here, killed in war and deeply lamented
above on earth. Aeneas watched them all in a drawn-out
line and sighed. Thersilochus, Medon and Glaucus
(Antenor’s three sons). Ceres’ priest, Polyboetes. Idaeus, still tending weapons and chariot. They stood around, left and right, spirits in clusters. Unsatisfied now with merely a glimpse of Aeneas, they gladly walked along, stopped him and asked his reason for coming.

But Greek princes and cordons of King Agamemnon, seeing the man’s weapons gleam through the shadows, trembled, acutely afraid. They moved off—as they’d headed once for their ships—or tried projecting their voices feebly, the shouts they started belied by their gaping.

War’s Atrocity

Aeneas could see a son of Priam, Deiphobus, totally mangled here. Lips viciously cut off, lips and both hands, the ears ripped from their temples and torn off, nose cropped: a scandalous maiming. Aeneas could hardly recognize the man as he shivered, covering ghastly wounds. He spoke up first as a friend would:

“Deiphobus, strong in war, from the high bloodline of Teucer, what person chose to inflict such barbarous torture? Who could allow it—on you? They told me a rumor that last night: weary of slaughter and killing Pelasgians, you fell on top of a mixed-up litter of corpses. Later I built an empty tomb on Rhoeteum’s coast myself. I called aloud three times to your spirit. Your name and weapons guard the place. But I never discovered your body, my friend, or gave you rest in the land I was leaving.”

Priam’s son: “My friend, nothing’s neglected: you settled it all for the dead shade of Deiphobus. My own bad luck and the capital crimes of a Spartan woman plunged me in pain: Helen left these mementoes. Remember, we wasted ourselves in trivial pleasure that last night—we cannot help but remember—after the fatal horse came running and leaping up Troy’s heights, its belly loaded with weapons and soldiers. That female pretended to dance. Leading some Trojan women and shouting, ‘Euhoe,’ holding the largest torch in their midst, she actually signaled Greeks from our fortress.

Exhausted from worry, meanwhile, heavy and drowsy,
I lay on my wretched bed. Deep and pleasureable stillness covered my body, resembling the stillness of dead men. My prize wife had earlier cleared arms from the building, even pulling a sword I trusted from under my pillow. She opened the house doors and hailed Menelaus, hoping of course that here was a fine gift for her lover, that talk of the old mistakes now would be smothered. Why delay it? They rushed in the bedroom, adding a single crime-mongering friend, Ulysses. God, if you let me demand rightful vengeance, turn on the Greeks with my torment! But you—it's your turn—tell me what happenings brought you alive here. Did seas force or confuse you? Some God's warning or will? What luck has oppressed you, to come to a place of disquiet, sunless and dismal?"

_The Sibyl Hurries Aeneas_

During their talk Aurora had driven already across the zenith, coursing through sky in her rose-colored chariot.

All the allotted time might have gone in that manner had not the Sibyl spoken briefly—her warning was friendly: "Night comes on, Aeneas. We lose hours to your sorrow."

_Here's the place where the road divides into two paths: the right one leads to the walls of powerful Pluto—our path to Elysium; the left one leads to the ruthless Tartarus' depths—criminals' pains are incurred there."

Deiphobus told her, "Don't be harsh, magisterial priestess. I'll go—and re-fill the number of shades back in that darkness. Go and enjoy better luck, you pride of the Trojans!"

He said that much, turned while speaking, and left him.

_Tartarus and its Punishments_

Aeneas abruptly noticed a cliff on the left side. He saw a thick wall, three belts of fortification,

_ringed by a river whose rapids were burning and boiling—the Underworld's Phlegethon, rolling a clatter of boulders. Enormous gates were in front, solid columns of iron. No human force, no Sky-God himself in a battle could wreck them. Against the sky stood a tower of iron; a Fury, Tisiphone, sat on top, wrapped in a bloody coat. Day and night she guarded the courtyard. Groans were audible now and cracks of relentless whips, dragged chains, the grating of metal._
Aeneas paused in terror, gripped by the uproar.

560 "Tell me, virgin priestess, what forms of evil are driven
to punishment here? The rising din is outrageous."
The seer began, "Famed leader of Trojans,
by Law no pure spirit may cross that criminals’ threshold.
When Hecate made me rule the groves of Avernus,
she taught me the Gods’ vengeance herself and led me through all
this.
Rhadamanthus of Crete governs that hardest of kingdoms.
He hears out tricksters, checks them, and forces confessions.
Each one sinned in the world above with a furtive and empty
pleasure, delaying regret too late, till the death-hour.

570 Instantly straddling the guilty spirit is vengeful
Tisiphone, armed with a stinging whip: while her left hand
waves fierce snakes, she calls for a horde of her sisters.
At length a feared gate opens on screeching
sockets and hinges. Imagine what sort of a watchman
sits at the entrance, that form guarding the doorway:
fifty black and monstrous mouths of the Hydra—
it holds a fiercer place inside. Then Tartarus opens
itself, a headlong plunge far down into darkness,
twice as far as your view to the sky or the air on Olympus.

580 Titans are there, Earth’s primordial children,
downed by thunderbolts, rolling around in the deepest
holes. I saw twin giants, the sons of Aloeus,
who strove to demolish the breadth of Jupiter’s heaven
by hand, to thrust him down from the heights of his kingdom.
I saw Salmoreus too paying a brutal
price for copying Jupiter’s fire and the sound of Olympus:
drawn in a four-horse chariot, shaking some torches,
borne in triumph through Greek crowds and the city
at Elis’ center, he’d claimed for himself Olympian worship.

590 Madman! To mimic a stormcloud’s inimitable lightning
with brass wheels and the stamp of horn-footed horses!
The all-powerful Father hurled a fire-spear
from massed cloud—not some torch or a luminous, smoking
pine—its violent whirlwind twisted him headlong.
I saw Tityus also, foster child of everyone’s Mother,
the Earth. He lay outstretched, the body extended
nine full acres. A vulture, monstrous and hook-beaked,
skimmed his ageless liver, tissue ripe for the torment
constantly: the bird grubbed deep in his ribcage

600 for meat, giving no rest to the flesh: it always recovered.
Why mention the Lapithae, Pirithous, Ixion, threatened by black granite apparently tilting and falling right now? Or men on high festival couches with gold-gleaming legs, with dishes arranged for a monarch's delight before their eyes? An elderly Fury lounging nearby stops their hands from touching the table: she leaps up, cocking a torch, her outcry like thunder. Here are those who hated a brother while living, struck a father, or tangled dependents in hoaxes.

More—the largest crowd—came upon riches, lived alone and shared no wealth with their children. Some were killed for adultery, or followed a traitor in battle, daring to break faith with a master. Now they're jailed and waiting punishment. Don't be too curious how they're punished, what form or fate overwhelms them. They roll great stones or hang from the turning spokes of wheels. Theseus miserably sits there: he'll sit forever. Phlegyas, saddest of all men, reminds everyone, loudly calling through shadows:

'BE WARNED: LEARN JUSTICE: STOP SCORNING THE SKY-GODS.'

One man sold his country for gold and inflicted despotic rule. Another rigged laws for a price, or unrigged them. One man forced forbidden sex on a daughter. They all dared to offend grossly, and did as they dared to. If I had a hundred mouths and tongues and a hundred iron voices I could not number all of the evil forms or cite the name of everyone's sentence."

The Presentation of the Golden Bough

Having said all this the aging priestess of Phoebus added, "But come now. Take to the road. Finish the labor you started. Hurry—I see a wall raised by the Cyclops' forges ahead—an arched portal confronts us. There we'll place the gift we were told to beforehand." She ended. They walked the dim roadway together, covered the ground intervening and came to the portal. There at the entrance Aeneas sprinkled his body with fresh water. He set the bough at the doorway that faced him.

Entering the Elysian Fields

Done, finally, the office performed for the Goddess,
they came to a joyful place, green and delightful
groves of contented people, the homes of Elysium.

640 Headier air was here; a lilac color appareled
fields that knew their own starlight and sunlight.
Men on the grass trained their bodies for wrestling
or grappled on tawny sand, competing in matches.
One group sang songs, tapping their feet to a dance-time.
A Thracian priest in a long garment was keeping
time as well on the seven clear tones of his lyre-strings,
plucking now with a finger, now with an ivory plectrum.
Teucer’s old nation was here, a beautiful people,
great spirits of leaders born in a better

650 age, like Ilus, Assaracus; Troy’s patriarch, Dardanus.
Aeneas admired from a distance the armor and empty
chariots, upright spears in the ground, and the scattered,
loose-reined horses cropping fieldgrass. The credit
a man might take for sword or horse-team while living,
for careful shining and feeding, followed him down into earth-
depths.

Left and right Aeneas saw on the fieldgrass
men feasting while singing, enjoying a paean in chorus
under a scented laurel. From there the Eridanus
River’s fullness rolled above them through forest.

Musaeus Helps the Sibyl

660 Some had suffered wounds in war for their country.
Some were devoted priests during their lifetime.
A few were sacred prophets who’d sung things worthy of Phoebus.
A few had worked to discover a way of enhancing
life anew, and deserved remembrance for service.
A white headband circled everyone’s temples.
The Sibyl spoke up now when they crowded around her,
Musaeus above them all—he stood in the center,
the large crowd noting his out-standing shoulders.
“Tell us, you glad spirits, and you, exceptional seer:

what part of your world holds Anchises? We came here,
crossing wide Underworld water, to see him.”
Musaeus made a brief response to the Sibyl.
“No one’s home is fixed. We live in the shaded
groves, on couches of stream-banks, or occupy meadows
freshened by brooks. But you, if will and heart will support you,
climb this hill. I’ll find you the readiest footpath.”
He finished and walked before them. Higher, he showed them
fields of light. They left the hilltop behind them.

Reunion of Father and Son

Anchises now like a father was earnestly gazing

at souls confined in a deep green valley and destined
for higher light. By chance he reviewed and considered
a whole line of dear people—descendants’
future luck (and bad luck), customs and art-work—
just when he saw Aeneas approaching directly
there on the grass. He raised both hands in excitement,
words fell out, tears dropped from his cheekbones,
“You finally came? The love a father had hoped for
survived your hard road? Am I favored to witness
my son’s face, to hear and respond to familiar language?

I really thought so—my heart knew of this future!
I marked our time. All my care did not fail me.
To welcome you here, my son, from such wide lands and such

driving
seas! What country expelled you, what desperate danger?
How worried I was the Libyan kingdom might harm you!”
Aeneas answered, “Father, your sad apparition
often met me and urged me to strive for this region.
Our fleet stands in the Etruscan Sea. But give me your right hand,
please, Father—don’t withdraw—let me embrace you.”
Large tears wetted his face while he pleaded.

Three times he reached for the figure’s neck to embrace him:
the image eluded his grasp each time. Reaching was futile—
he moved like a dream with wings or a stirring of breezes.

Gathering at the Lethe River

In time Aeneas could see in a separate valley
a grove apart where forest and copses were rustling.
The Lethe River flowed by peaceable homes there
and large masses of people came running and circling,
just as bees in clear summer might settle
on various blooms in a meadow, swarming and circling
white lilies, making a whole countryside murmur.

The sudden, unexplained vision was causing
Aeneas to shudder; he asked what waters were those in the
distance,

who the men were, filling the banks like an army.
His father Anchises: “Spirits destined for other
bodies by Law: they’ve come to that river, the Lethe,
for carefree water, a long drink of oblivion.
In fact I’ve wanted to tell you, to show you in person
now for a long time our line of descendants,
to celebrate fully together your sighting of Italy.”
“But Father, must we think some spirits go soaring
upward from here, again reverting to heavy
flesh? Why such mad desire for daylight and sadness?”
“I won’t keep you uncertain, my son. I will tell you.”

The Great Wheel of Life and Death

Anchises began to reveal each phase of a cycle.
“First a Spirit inside them nourishes heaven
and earth’s marshy plains, the luminous orbits
of moon, stars and sun: Mind streams through their members
completely, stirs their mass, and unites with voluminous Body.
Then come species of birds, animals, people,
prodigies borne on the marbled surface of ocean.

That Force is fire-like: the source of that seed is celestial,
until weights of bodily sickness retard it:
earth-bound joints and death-bound members can dull it.
So people fear and crave, they grieve or they’re giddy,
they see no higher air, confined in jails of their darkness.
Even when life’s last glimmer has left them,
harm can still remain: not all the body’s contagion
leaves their wretched selves entirely: things which are deeply
wound together for years must grow mysteriously grafted.
Therefore they work off old wrongs. They are punished,

paying debts by hanging exposed in the empty
wind. Others are washed in a violent whirlpool.
Some are purged by fire of the last of their malice.
We all endure our own spirit’s correction.
Then we’re sent through wide Elysium, many remaining
in glad fields for long days till they finish a cycle
of time that frees them of hard imperfection, leaving awareness
pure as the highest air and simple as firelight.
All the others roll the wheel of a thousand
years. A God then calls them in long lines to the Lethe,
clearly to help them start forgetting and want a return to
the arched sky, to turn back to the body.”
Future Kings of Rome

Anchises finished and drew his son and the Sibyl
together right through the crowd’s boisterous center.
He climbed a mound from where he could scan all of the spirits’
long lines and study the men’s faces approaching.
“Come, now. Honor at last will follow the children
of Troy. Descendants remain for Italy’s people:
brilliant spirits to come with our own reputation!
Let my words present them. I’ll teach you your future.

760 See that youth who leans on a spear with no spear-point?
He holds by lot the place closest to daylight: he rises
to higher air first from our mix with Italian bloodlines:
Silvius, surname of Alban kings, and the last-born
son your wife Lavinia rears in the forest
when you are old. But a ruler, and father of rulers:
at Alba Longa he’ll help our people to conquer.
Next is Procas, whom Troy's descendents will honor;
Capys and Numitor; Silvius Aeneas, reviving
your own name—and just as outstanding in honor
and battle—if Alba will ever yield to his power.
Look at those men! What youth and strength they’re displaying,
their shaded temples carrying citizens’ oak-leaves!
Some will build Nomentum, Gabii, the town of Fidenae;
some, citadels high on the hills of Collatia,
Pometia, Camp Inuus, Bola and Cora.
Names will appear where land is nameless at present.

The Glory of Rome Itself

“Even Mars’ child will join his grandfather-comrade:
Romulus, Ilia’s boy, born of Assaracus’
blood. See that standing double crest on his helmet?

780 The Gods’ Father himself marks him now with distinction.
Look, my son: Rome’s glory comes from that omen.
Matching the world in rule, Olympus in spirit,
Rome will surround her seven hills with a single
wall, proud of her men and children—recalling our Mother
Cybele riding her chariot, crowned with her turret, through
Phrygian
towns, exulting in son-Gods, embracing her hundred
grandsons, all Sky-Gods holding heights on Olympus.
Look there, focus your eyes now on our people,
your own Romans: Caesar and all of Iulus’

790 lineage under the great axle-tree of the heavens.
Augustus

“And this man, a man you’ve heard promised so often,
Caesar Augustus: a God’s own son who will settle
a Golden Age once more on Latium’s meadows,
ruled by Saturn before. He’ll open the empire
to India, Africa, lands lying beyond the ecliptic,
beyond the sun’s annual journey, where Atlas
turns the world wheel on his back while it’s burning with inlaid
stars. Already Caspian kingdoms dread his arrival,
Scythian land shudders at answers from heaven—
seven mouths of the Nile are anxiously foaming!
Even Hercules never covered such country
transfixing the bronze-hoofed deer, quieting forests
on Mount Erymanthus, and scaring the Hydra with arrows—
no, not Bacchus in triumph, vine-shoots for reins on his chariot,
driving tigresses down from the high ridges of Nysa.
And we’re still slow extending our power through action?
Fear prevents us from settling Ausonian country?

Other Rulers to Come

“Who’s in the distance, crowned with tendrils of olive
and carrying relics? The grey beard and hair of a Roman
king, I’m sure. With laws he’ll strengthen the infant
city, though sent from the poor district of little
Cures to rule an empire. Next in succession,
disrupting the country’s leisure, goading inactive
men to war, comes Tullus—his army still unaccustomed
to winning. Ancus, a braggart, follows behind him—
too pleased already with breezes of popular feeling.
Want to see the Tarquin kings? And the vengeful,
proud spirit of Brutus? The man who’ll recover the fasces,
first to receive Consular power, the Lictor’s
brutal axe? Sons will wage war on that father:
wretched, he’ll cause their punishment—all for the beauty
of freedom. Whatever the future makes of his action,
love of the land prevails and intense longing for honor.

Caesar will War with Pompey

“Here are the Decius and Drusus families. Look at Torquatus’
grim axe. And Camillus, recovering standards.
But those two men you see matched in glittering armor,
of one mind now with the death-world around them,
my God, what war between themselves when they make it
to life's light, what slaughter of ranks they will foster!

830 The father comes down from Alpine redoubts, a fort at Monoecus;
the son-in-law marshals Eastern forces against him.
No, my children: don't get used to such conflict:
don't turn such fighting force on your fatherland's entrails.
You stop first—you come from a race on Olympus—
throw down your spear, my grandchild.

_Rome's Obligation to Govern_

"A man known for killing Greeks will be Corinth's
conqueror, driving a winner's chariot high up the Capitoline.
There's the wrecker of Argos and Agamemnon's Mycenae:
he'll kill the seed itself of war-strong Achilles,
avenging Troy's fathers and outraged shrines of Minerva.
Who'd leave your greatness, Cossus and Cato, in silence?
Or Gracchus' family? The twin Scipios—lightnings
of war demolishing Carthage! Fabricius, little
but strong. Serranus, planting seed in a furrow.
And where do you take my tired spirit, you Fabians?
Only Maximus saves our state by delaying.
Others may hammer bronze into delicate breathing,
drawing—I'm sure it's true—life-signs from marble.
Some plead causes well; some track with a stylus
paths in the sky and predict what stars will be rising.
Ah, but you Romans, remember to rule people, to govern,
there's your art—to make peace like a custom,
to spare humble men and war on the pompous."

_Loss of the Young Marcellus_

Anchises told them (both were amazed) more, like a father:
"Watch Marcellus, known for exceptional war-wealth,
marching in triumph, a man taller than all men.
He'll shore up Rome at a time of noise and confusion,
a horseman who'll trample Carthage and Gaul in rebellion.
He'll hang captured weapons three times for his father Quirinus."

860 Aeneas now caught sight of a beautiful youngster
in brilliant armor, walking along with Marcellus.
His face lacked joy, however; his glances were downcast.
"Father, who's that person attending Marcellus?
A son? Some other eminent family member?
What loud friends are around him! His form itself like a painting!
But night-like dark and sad shade have enclosed him."
Anchises, a father, began to weep when he answered.
"My son, don’t press for such deep family sorrow.
The Fates will merely show this boy to our nation—beyond that
allowing nothing. You Gods, Roman expansion
must seem too strong if a gift like this one should linger.
What loud mourning of people will move from the Campus
of Mars through the whole city! What funeral sorrow
the Tiber will see gliding past the still-recent death-mound!
No one child from a Trojan clan will encourage
so much hope in Latin grandfathers. Romulus’ country
will never pride itself in such a descendent.
Ah, for the old trust and goodness, hands undefeated
in battle! No one man could have met him in armor
safely, whether he’d face the enemy walking,
or digging spurs in the sweated flanks of a stallion.
Sad, pitiful boy. If hard Fates can be broken,
you’ll be Marcellus. Fill my hands with some lilies:
I’ll scatter violet blossoms at least for a grandson,
heap up gifts for that spirit, and offer a futile
service.” So they roamed through all of the aery,
wide fields of that world, regarding each subject.

The Coming War in Italy

Anchises led Aeneas through every particular,
firing his heart with love for future distinction.

Then he informed the man of battle approaching,
he told of Laurentian people, the town of Latinus,
and how to escape or endure hardship that faced him.

Leaving the Underworld

Two gates of Sleep are there: according to legend,
the one of horn offers an easy exit to actual
spirits; the one of ivory, polished and shining,
sends to the sky elusive Underworld fancies.
When done speaking Anchises walked his son and the Sibyl
together and saw them out through the ivory gateway.

Reunion with Friends

Aeneas cut a trail to the ships. Rejoining companions,
he soon sailed straight up the coast to the port of Caieta.
Anchors were thrown from prows. The ships stood on the beach-