

I could not set you in our country's earth."  
 Priam's son answered: "You neglected nothing.  
 You did your duty by my ghost and me. 510  
 Fate and the Spartan woman's fatal sin  
 Have plunged me in this torment—her memorial.  
 You know how we were duped, and celebrated  
 That last night?—no, there's no way to forget it.  
 The fatal horse, pregnant with infantry, 515  
 Leaped to our citadel, steep Pergama,  
 And Helen led around our Trojan women  
 In a sham of Bacchic rites and held a great torch  
 Herself: our tower signaled to the Greeks.  
 Anxiety had worn me into dull sleep 520  
 In my unlucky bed. A sweet, deep rest,  
 Peaceful as death, muffled me as I lay there.  
 Meanwhile my prize wife cleared the house of weapons—  
 Even the trusted sword beneath my pillow.  
 She opened up our door to Menelaus— 525  
 Hoping, I guess, this favor for her old flame  
 Would kill the stink of all her crimes before.  
 I'll make it brief: they burst in, with Ulysses,  
 Who's behind every crime. Gods, pay the Greeks back!  
 The mouth I ask this with does not speak evil. 530  
 But come—now you: what brought you here still living?  
 Off course in voyaging, were you driven down?  
 Did gods direct you? What tormenting fortune  
 Shows you this sunless town, this sea of darkness?"  
 Aurora's rosy chariot in the ether 535  
 Soared past the zenith while the two were talking.  
 They might have used up all the time permitted,  
 But Aeneas' guide, the Sibyl, curtly warned him.  
 "Night rushes in, and tears take up the hours.  
 The road divides here. This branch on the right, 540  
 Which stretches to the walls of powerful Dis,  
 Will take us to Elysium. The left one

Sends criminals to their due in Tartarus.  
 "Great priestess, don't be angry," said Deiphobus.  
 "I'll take my place again in that dark gathering. 545  
 Go on, Troy's glory—may your fate be better."  
 He turned his steps back as he finished speaking.  
 Aeneas turned, and right there, to his left,  
 Stood a fortress with three walls beneath a cliff.  
 A raging stream of flame called Phlegethon, 550  
 With crashing, whirling stones, encircled it.  
 This faced a massive gate and pure steel columns.  
 No human power, no power of gods at war  
 Themselves could tear it up. An iron tower soars. 555  
 Tisiphone, sleepless guard, sits in the entrance  
 Day and night in her hitched-up, bloody robe.  
 From this place echo savage blows and groans,  
 The shriek of iron and the drag of chains.  
 Terror transfixed Aeneas at the din.  
 "What crimes did they commit? Tell me, pure virgin! 560  
 And the punishments? Such howls go toward the sky!"  
 "Great leader of the Trojans," she began,  
 "No righteous man may cross this wicked threshold.  
 Yet Hecate, when she placed Avernus' woods  
 In my charge, showed the ways gods punish mortals. 565  
 Here Cretan Rhadamanthus rules, unyielding,  
 He puts each lie on trial, extracts confessions  
 Of sins not expiated there above,  
 Hidden with stupid relish, till it's too late.  
 Vengeful Tisiphone, ready with her whip, 570  
 Swoops, lashing. With the fierce snakes in her left hand,  
 She threatens, and calls the band of her cruel sisters.  
 Finally, with a grisly scream of hinges,  
 The holy doors fall open. Do you see  
 Her form that sits and guards the entranceway? 575  
 A fiercer monster lives inside, the Hydra,  
 With fifty black throats. Tartarus itself

Then plunges, twice as far beneath the shades  
 As the view up toward heavenly Olympus.  
 Titans, an ancient Earth-born race, struck down 580  
 By lightning long ago, writhe at the bottom.  
 Aloeus' giant twins are there—I've seen them.  
 They tried to wrench away the towering sky,  
 Attack the gods, and thrust Jove from his kingdom.  
 And there I saw Salmoneus cruelly punished— 585  
 He aped Jove's flames and the Olympian thunder.  
 Shaking a torch, he drove his chariot  
 In triumph through Greek nations, through his city  
 Of Elis, claiming honors that the gods have—  
 Fool: the inimitable thundercloud 590  
 Shammed by the beat of hooves on a bronze bridge!  
 Then the almighty father hurled his weapon—  
 Which was no guttering pine torch—through the cloudbanks  
 And drove him headlong in a monstrous whirlwind.  
 Tityon, reared by all-begetting Earth, 595  
 Was there to see, stretched over nine whole acres.  
 A giant vulture with its hooked beak browses  
 On his deathless liver. Through his pain-rich innards  
 It burrows, feeding—living in his torso;  
 And with no rest, his viscera grow back. 600  
 What about the Lapiths, Ixion, Pirithous?  
 A flint crag hangs above them, set to topple—  
 It seems—at any second. Banquet couches  
 Rear high, with shining gold posts. Splendid food  
 Is spread before their eyes. But the chief Fury, 605  
 The guest beside them, will not let them touch it.  
 She leaps up, thrusts her torch at them, and roars.  
 Those who while living hated brothers, struck  
 Their fathers, or wove fraud around dependents;  
 And those who crouched alone on newfound riches 610  
 (The largest crowd), not sharing with their families;  
 Adulterers killed when caught, and rebel warriors,

Bold criminals, betrayers of their lords:  
 Locked up, all wait for sentencing. Don't query  
 The kinds of torments Fortune's plunged them in. 615  
 Some roll immense rocks, some are splayed on wheel spokes.  
 Poor Theseus sits there, and will sit forever.  
 Phlegyas in his torture shrieks a warning  
 To everyone—his voice rings through the shadows:  
 "Learn justice from my fate—and fear the gods." 620  
 One sold his country and imposed a tyrant;  
 One, for a price, made laws and then remade them.  
 One stormed his daughter's room—a lawless marriage.  
 All of them dared great evil and succeeded.  
 A hundred tongues and mouths, a voice of iron 625  
 Would not allow me to describe the crimes  
 In all their forms, or list the punishments."  
 The ancient priestess of Apollo added,  
 "Come, hurry on. Finish the task you started.  
 Faster! I see the walls the Cyclopes 630  
 Have forged. There are the doors beneath the archway,  
 Where we must place our gifts, as we were told to."  
 They stepped along the dark route, side by side,  
 Crossed the gap quickly and approached the doors.  
 Aeneas shook fresh water on himself, 635  
 And faced the sill, and set the branch there, upright.  
 Their duty to the goddess done at last,  
 They came into a glad land: pleasant grounds  
 In forests of good fortune, blessed home.  
 A richer, shimmering air arrays these fields, 640  
 Which have their own familiar sun and stars.  
 Men exercised on grassy fields, competed  
 In games or wrestled in the tawny sand.  
 Some stamped their dancing feet and chanted songs.  
 And there the Thracian singer, in his long robe, 645  
 Played to the beat, through seven intervals,  
 Changing between his ivory pick and fingers.

Here was the ancient dynasty of Teucer,  
 Handsome, courageous, born in better years:  
 Ilus, Assaracus, Dardanus, Troy's founder. 650  
 Far off, Aeneas marveled at ghost chariots  
 And armor, planted spears, and scattered horses  
 Grazing untethered. The delight the living  
 Take in their arms and chariots, the appeal  
 Of pasturing shining beasts survives the tomb. 655  
 Aeneas looked from side to side: some heroes  
 Feasted and sang a joyous hymn of praise  
 On fields near fragrant laurel stands. Through these rolled  
 Mighty Eridanus to the world above.  
 This group was wounded fighting for their country; 660  
 These, while they lived, had been pure priests; these prophets  
 In their righteousness deserved to speak for Phoebus.  
 Some had enriched our life with their inventions,  
 Or left the memory of some great service.  
 All of them had white bands around their foreheads. 665  
 They poured around the Sibyl, and she spoke—  
 To Musaeus chiefly (all that huge crowd gazed up  
 As he towered, massive-shouldered, in the center):  
 "Tell me, you happy souls, and you, great singer,  
 Where can we find Anchises, in which region? 670  
 For him we sailed through Erebus' wide rivers."  
 With a few words the hero answered her:  
 "We have no houses. Dim woods are our homes,  
 Stream banks our couches, verdant flowing meadows  
 Our settlements. But if you speak your heart's will, 675  
 Come up this easy path to climb the ridge."  
 He stepped ahead and showed the shining plains  
 That stretched below, but soon they left the high ground.  
 Father Anchises, deep in a green valley,  
 Cherishingly surveyed the souls confined there 680  
 Before emerging to the light. He happened  
 Now to be tallying his dear descendants—

Lives, destinies, achievements, characters—  
 And when he saw Aeneas making toward him  
 Over the grass, he stretched his hands out, blissful. 685  
 The tears poured down his cheeks, and he exclaimed,  
 "You've come at last?—love made you take this hard road,  
 Just as I thought?—and can I see your face,  
 My child, hear your beloved voice, and answer?  
 Really, I counted on this, calculated 690  
 The time, and anxious hope did not deceive me.  
 Welcome! How many lands and wide seas sent you,  
 My son, and on what giant waves of danger!  
 And how I feared the Libyan realm would hurt you."  
 Aeneas answered, "Father, your sad image, 695  
 Which often meets me, called me to this realm.  
 My ships stand in the Tuscan sea. My hand—  
 Clasp it and don't retreat from my embrace."  
 The tears poured down his face. Three times he tried  
 To throw his arms around his father's neck, 700  
 Three times the form slid from his useless hands,  
 Like weightless wind or dreams that fly away.  
 The hero now saw, at the valley's end,  
 A sheltered woods. Wind murmured in its branches.  
 The river Lethe drifted past the still homes. 705  
 Above the water, souls from countless nations  
 Flitted, like bees in tranquil summer meadows  
 Who move from bud to vivid bud and stream  
 Around white lilies—the whole field whirs loudly.  
 The unexpected sight enthralled Aeneas. 710  
 He wished to learn about it—what the stream was,  
 And what men filled the banks in that great phalanx.  
 Father Anchises answered, "These are souls  
 Fate owes new bodies. Here at Lethe's river  
 They drink up long oblivion and peace. 715  
 All of this time, I've yearned to tell of them  
 And let you see them, counting my descendants,

To share my joy that you've reached Italy."  
 "Father, do some souls really soar back skyward  
 From here, returning into sluggish bodies? 720  
 What dreadful longing sends them toward the light?"  
 "I'll free you from suspense, my child," he answered,  
 And told it all, in detail and in order.  
 "Now first, the earth and sky and plains of water,  
 The moon's bright globe, the sun and stars are nurtured 725  
 By a spirit in them. Mind infuses each part  
 And animates the universe's whole mass.  
 So arise men and grazing beasts and creatures  
 That fly and monsters in the glittering ocean.  
 Their seeds have fiery force; they come from heaven. 730  
 And yet the noxious body slows them somewhat.  
 The earthly parts that perish make them numb.  
 Those parts bring fear, desire, joy, and sorrow.  
 Souls in dark dungeons cannot see the sky.  
 But when, on the last day, a life departs, 735  
 Not every evil sickness of the body  
 Wholly withdraws from that poor spirit—many  
 Are long grown in, mysteriously ingrained.  
 So souls are disciplined and pay the price  
 Of old wrongdoing. Some are splayed, exposed 740  
 To hollow winds; a flood submerges some,  
 Washing out wickedness; fire scorches some pure.  
 Each bears his own ghosts, then a few are sent  
 To live in broad Elysium's happy fields,  
 Till time's great circle is completed, freeing 745  
 The hardened stain so the ethereal mind,  
 The fire of pure air, is left unsullied.  
 When they have circled through a thousand years,  
 God calls them all in one long rank to Lethe,  
 To send them back forgetful to the sky's vault, 750  
 With a desire to go back into bodies."  
 Anchises finished, and he drew the two guests

Into the middle of the murmuring crowd.  
 He climbed a ridge that showed him every man  
 In the long line. He knew each face approaching. 755  
 "Come, hear your destiny, and the future glory  
 Of the stock of Dardanus, all the descendants  
 That we will have from the Italian race—  
 Great souls who will be born into our family.  
 That young man leaning on a headless spear 760  
 Will take the next turn in the airy light:  
 Your posthumous son Silvius (a name  
 From Alba), first of Troy's Italian bloodline.  
 Lavinia will raise him in the forest,  
 And he will be a king and father kings: 765  
 Our family that will reign at Alba Longa.  
 By him stands Procas, glory of Troy's race,  
 Then Capys, Numitor, and Aeneas Silvius,  
 Your namesake, irreproachable, high-hearted—  
 If ever he succeeds to Alba's kingship. 770  
 What fine young men! You see the strength in them.  
 Oak leaves of civic honor shade their temples.  
 They'll found Nomentum, Gabii, Fidena,  
 The fortress of Collatia on the mountains,  
 Pometii, Castrum Inui, Bola, Cora— 775  
 The famous names of places nameless now.  
 Romulus, child of Mars, and through his mother  
 A Trojan, will become her father's ally.  
 You see the twin crests? They're a special emblem  
 The father of the gods already gives him. 780  
 Under the omens this man saw, renowned Rome  
 Will rule the world and raise her heart to heaven—  
 Blessed in her sons, with seven citadels  
 In one wall: like the tower-crowned Great Mother  
 Driving her chariot through Phrygian cities, 785  
 Holding in blissful arms her hundred grandsons  
 From gods—all gods themselves, who live in heaven.