

## **BkVI:1-55 The Temple at Cumae**

So Aeneas spoke, weeping, gave his fleet full rein, and glided  
at last to the shores of Euboean Cumae. They turned  
their prows to the sea, secured the ships' anchors,  
by the grip of their flukes, and the curved boats  
lined the beach. The youthful band leapt eagerly  
to the Hesperian shore: some sought the means of fire  
contained in veins of flint, some raided the woods  
the dense coverts of game, pointing out streams they found.  
But pious Aeneas sought the summits, where Apollo  
rules on high, and the vast cavern nearby, the secret place  
of the terrifying Sibyl, in whom the Delian prophet  
inspires greatness of mind and spirit, and reveals the future.  
Soon they entered the grove of Diana, and the golden house.  
Daedalus, so the story goes, fleeing from Minos's kingdom,  
dared to trust himself to the air on swift wings,  
and, gliding on unknown paths to the frozen North,  
hovered lightly at last above the Chalcidian hill.  
First returning to earth here, he dedicated his oar-like wings  
to you Phoebus, and built a gigantic temple.  
On the doors the Death of Androgeos: then the Athenians,  
Crecrops's descendants, commanded, sadly, to pay annual tribute  
of seven of their sons: there the urn stands with the lots drawn.  
Facing it, rising from the sea, the Cretan land is depicted:  
and here the bull's savage passion, Pasiphae's  
secret union, and the Minotaur, hybrid offspring,  
that mixture of species, proof of unnatural relations:  
the artwork here is that palace, and its inextricable maze:  
and yet Daedalus himself, pitying the noble princess  
Ariadne's love, unravelled the deceptive tangle of corridors,  
guiding Theseus's blind footsteps with the clue of thread.  
You'd have shared largely in such a work, Icarus, if grief  
had allowed, he'd twice attempted to fashion your fate  
in gold, twice your father's hands fell. Eyes would have read  
the whole continuously, if Achetes had not arrived  
from his errand, with Deiphobe, Glaucus's daughter,  
the priestess of Phoebus and Diana, who spoke to the leader:  
'This moment doesn't require your sightseeing: it would  
be better to sacrifice seven bullocks from a virgin herd,  
and as many carefully chosen two-year old sheep.'  
Having spoken to Aeneas in this way (without delay they sacrificed

as ordered) the priestess called the Trojans to her high shrine.  
The vast flank of the Euboean cliff is pitted with caves,  
from which a hundred wide tunnels, a hundred mouths lead,  
from which as many voices rush: the Sibyl's replies.  
They had come to the threshold, when the virgin cried out:  
'It is time to question the Oracle, behold, the god, the god!'  
As she so spoke in front of the doors, suddenly neither her face  
nor colour were the same, nor did her hair remain bound,  
but her chest heaved, her heart swelled with wild frenzy,  
she seemed taller, and sounded not-human, for now  
the power of the god is closer. 'Are you slow with your  
vows and prayers, Aeneas of Troy, are you slow?'  
she cried. 'The great lips of the House of Inspiration  
will not open without.' And so saying she fell silent.  
An icy shudder ran to the Trojans' very spines,  
and their leader poured out heartfelt prayers:

### **BkVI:56-97 The Sibyl's Prophecy**

'Phoebus, you who always pitied Troy's intense suffering,  
who guided the hand of Paris, and the Dardan arrow,  
against Achilles's body, with you as leader I entered  
all those seas, encircling vast lands, and penetrated  
the remote Massilian tribes and the fields edged by Syrtes:  
now at last we have the coast of elusive Italy in our grasp:  
Troy's ill fortune only followed us as far as here.  
You too with justice can spare the Trojan race, and all you gods  
and goddesses to whom the great glory of Ilium and Dardania  
was an offence. O most sacred of prophetesses,  
you who see the future, (I ask for no lands not owed me  
by my destiny) grant that we Trojans may settle Latium,  
with the exiled gods and storm-tossed powers of Troy.  
Then I'll dedicate a temple of solid marble to Phoebus  
and Diana Trivia, and sacred days in Phoebus's name.  
A noble inner shrine waits for you too in our kingdom.  
There, gracious one, I will place your oracles, and mystic  
utterances spoken to my people, and consecrate picked men.  
Only do not write your verses on the leaves, lest they fly,  
disordered playthings of the rushing winds: chant them  
from your own mouth.' He put an end to his mouth's speaking.  
But the wild prophetess raged in her cavern, not yet  
submitting to Phoebus, as if she might shake the great god

from her spirit: yet he exhausted her raving mouth  
all the more, taming her wild heart, shaping her by constraint.  
And now the shrine's hundred mighty lips have opened  
of themselves, and carry the seer's answer through the air:  
'Oh, you who are done with all the perils of the sea,  
(yet greater await you on land) the Trojans will come  
to the realm of Lavinium (put that care from your heart):  
but will not enjoy their coming. War, fierce war,  
I see: and the Tiber foaming with much blood.  
You will not lack a Simois, a Xanthus, a Greek camp:  
even now another Achilles is born in Latium,  
he too the son of a goddess: nor will Juno, the Trojans' bane,  
be ever far away, while you, humbled and destitute,  
what races and cities of Italy will you not beg in!  
Once again a foreign bride is the cause of all  
these Trojan ills, once more an alien marriage.  
Do not give way to misfortunes, meet them more bravely,  
as your destiny allows. The path of safety will open up  
for you from where you least imagine it, a Greek city.'

### **BkVI:98-155 Aeneas Asks Entry to Hades**

With such words, the Sibyl of Cumae chants fearful enigmas,  
from her shrine, echoing from the cave,  
tangling truths and mysteries: as she raves, Apollo  
thrashes the reins, and twists the spur under her breast.  
When the frenzy quietens, and the mad mouth hushes,  
Aeneas, the Hero, begins: 'O Virgin, no new, unexpected  
kind of suffering appears: I've foreseen them all  
and travelled them before, in my own spirit.  
One thing I ask: for they say the gate of the King of Darkness  
is here, and the shadowy marsh, Acheron's overflow:  
let me have sight of my dear father, his face: show me the way,  
open wide the sacred doors. I saved him, brought him  
out from the thick of the enemy, through the flames,  
on these shoulders, with a thousand spears behind me:  
companion on my journey, he endured with me  
all the seas, all the threats of sky and ocean, weak,  
beyond his power, and his allotted span of old age.  
He ordered me, with prayers, to seek you out, humbly,  
and approach your threshold: I ask you, kindly one,  
pity both father and son: since you are all power, not for

nothing has Hecate set you to rule the groves of Avernus.  
If Orpheus could summon the shade of his wife,  
relying on his Thracian lyre, its melodious strings:  
if Pollux, crossing that way, and returning, so often,  
could redeem his brother by dying in turn – and great Theseus,  
what of him, or Hercules? – well, my race too is Jupiter's on high.'  
With these words he prayed, and grasped the altar,  
as the priestess began to speak: 'Trojan son of Anchises,  
sprung from the blood of the gods, the path to hell is easy:  
black Dis's door is open night and day:  
but to retrace your steps, and go out to the air above,  
that is work, that is the task. Some sons of the gods have done it,  
whom favouring Jupiter loved, or whom burning virtue  
lifted to heaven. Woods cover all the middle part,  
and Cocytus is round it, sliding in dark coils.  
But if such desire is in your mind, such a longing  
to sail the Stygian lake twice, and twice see Tartarus,  
and if it delights you to indulge in insane effort,  
listen to what you must first undertake. Hidden in a dark tree  
is a golden bough, golden in leaves and pliant stem,  
sacred to Persephone, the underworld's Juno, all the groves  
shroud it, and shadows enclose the secret valleys.  
But only one who's taken a gold-leaved fruit from the tree  
is allowed to enter earth's hidden places.  
This lovely Proserpine has commanded to be brought to her  
as a gift: a second fruit of gold never fails to appear  
when the first one's picked, the twig's leafed with the same metal.  
So look for it up high, and when you've found it with your eyes,  
take it, of right, in your hand: since, if the Fates have chosen you,  
it will come away easily, freely of itself: otherwise you  
won't conquer it by any force, or cut it with the sharpest steel.  
And the inanimate body of your friend lies there  
(Ah! You do not know) and taints your whole fleet with death,  
while you seek advice and hang about our threshold.  
Carry him first to his place and bury him in the tomb.  
Lead black cattle there: let those be your first offerings of atonement.  
Only then can you look on the Stygian groves, and the realms  
forbidden to the living.' She spoke and with closed lips fell silent.

### **BkVI:236-263 The Sacrifice to Hecate**

This done, he quickly carried out the Sibyl's orders.

There was a deep stony cave, huge and gaping wide,  
sheltered by a dark lake and shadowy woods,  
over which nothing could extend its wings in safe flight,  
since such a breath flowed from those black jaws,  
and was carried to the over-arching sky, that the Greeks  
called it by the name Aornos, that is Avernus, or the Bird-less.  
Here the priestess first of all tethered four black heifers,  
poured wine over their foreheads, and placed  
the topmost bristles that she plucked, growing  
between their horns, in the sacred fire, as a first offering,  
calling aloud to Hecate, powerful in Heaven and Hell.  
Others slit the victim's throats and caught the warm blood  
in bowls. Aeneas himself sacrificed a black-fleeced lamb  
to Night, mother of the Furies, and Earth, her mighty sister,  
and a barren heifer to you, Persephone.  
Then he kindled the midnight altars for the Stygian King,  
and placed whole carcasses of bulls on the flames,  
pouring rich oil over the blazing entrails.  
See now, at the dawn light of the rising sun,  
the ground bellowed under their feet, the wooded hills began  
to move, and, at the coming of the Goddess, dogs seemed to howl  
in the shadows. 'Away, stand far away, O you profane ones,'  
the priestess cried, 'absent yourselves from all this grove:  
and you now, Aeneas, be on your way, and tear your sword  
from the sheathe: you need courage, and a firm mind, now.'  
So saying, she plunged wildly into the open cave:  
he, fearlessly, kept pace with his vanishing guide.

### **BkVI:264-294 The Entrance to Hades**

You gods, whose is the realm of spirits, and you, dumb shadows,  
and Chaos, Phlegethon, wide silent places of the night,  
let me tell what I have heard: by your power, let me  
reveal things buried in the deep earth, and the darkness.  
On they went, hidden in solitary night, through gloom,  
through Dis's empty halls, and insubstantial kingdom,  
like a path through a wood, in the faint light  
under a wavering moon, when Jupiter has buried the sky  
in shadow, and black night has stolen the colour from things.  
Right before the entrance, in the very jaws of Orcus,  
Grief and vengeful Care have made their beds,  
and pallid Sickness lives there, and sad Old Age,

and Fear, and persuasive Hunger, and vile Need,  
forms terrible to look on, and Death and Pain:  
then Death's brother Sleep, and Evil Pleasure of the mind,  
and, on the threshold opposite, death-dealing War,  
and the steel chambers of the Furies, and mad Discord,  
her snaky hair entwined with blood-wet ribbons.  
In the centre a vast shadowy elm spreads its aged trunks  
and branches: the seat, they say, that false Dreams hold,  
thronging, clinging beneath every leaf.  
And many other monstrous shapes of varied creatures,  
are stabled by the doors, Centaurs and bi-formed Scylla,  
and hundred-armed Briareus, and the Lernean Hydra,  
hissing fiercely, and the Chimaera armed with flame,  
Gorgons, and Harpies, and the triple bodied shade, Geryon.  
At this, trembling suddenly with terror, Aeneas grasped  
his sword, and set the naked blade against their approach:  
and, if his knowing companion had not warned him  
that these were tenuous bodiless lives flitting about  
with a hollow semblance of form, he would have rushed at them,  
and hacked at the shadows uselessly with his sword.

### **BkVI:295-336 The Shores of Acheron**

From here there is a road that leads to the waters  
of Tartarean Acheron. Here thick with mud a whirlpool seethes  
in the vast depths, and spews all its sands into Cocytus.  
A grim ferryman watches over the rivers and streams,  
Charon, dreadful in his squalor, with a mass of unkempt  
white hair straggling from his chin: flames glow in his eyes,  
a dirty garment hangs, knotted from his shoulders.  
He poles the boat and trims the sails himself,  
and ferries the dead in his dark skiff,  
old now, but a god's old age is fresh and green.  
Here all the crowd streams, hurrying to the shores,  
women and men, the lifeless bodies of noble heroes,  
boys and unmarried girls, sons laid on the pyre  
in front of their father's eyes: as many as the leaves that fall  
in the woods at the first frost of autumn, as many as the birds  
that flock to land from ocean deeps, when the cold of the year  
drives them abroad and despatches them to sunnier countries.  
They stood there, pleading to be first to make the crossing,  
stretching out their hands in longing for the far shore.

But the dismal boatman accepts now these, now those,  
but driving others away, keeps them far from the sand.  
Then Aeneas, stirred and astonished at the tumult, said:  
‘O virgin, tell me, what does this crowding to the river mean?  
What do the souls want? And by what criterion do these leave  
the bank, and those sweep off with the oars on the leaden stream?  
The ancient priestess spoke briefly to him, so:  
‘Son of Anchises, true child of the gods, you see  
the deep pools of Cocytus, and the Marsh of Styx,  
by whose name the gods fear to swear falsely.  
All this crowd, you see, were destitute and unburied:  
that ferryman is Charon: those the waves carry were buried:  
he may not carry them from the fearful shore on the harsh waters  
before their bones are at rest in the earth. They roam  
for a hundred years and flit around these shores: only then  
are they admitted, and revisit the pools they long for.’  
The son of Anchises halted, and checked his footsteps,  
thinking deeply, and pitying their sad fate in his heart.  
He saw Leucaspis and Orontes, captain of the Lycian fleet,  
there, grieving and lacking honour in death, whom a Southerly  
overwhelmed, as they sailed together from Troy on the windswept  
waters, engulfing both the ship and crew in the waves.

### **BkVI:337-383 The Shade of Palinurus**

Behold, there came the helmsman, Palinurus,  
who fell from the stern on the Libyan passage,  
flung into the midst of the waves, as he watched the stars.  
When Aeneas had recognised him with difficulty  
sorrowing among the deep shadows, he spoke first, saying:  
‘What god tore you from us, Palinurus, and drowned you  
mid-ocean? For in this one prophecy Apollo has misled me,  
he whom I never found false before, he said that you would be safe  
at sea and reach Ausonia’s shores. Is this the truth of his promise?’  
But he replied: ‘Phoebus’s tripod did not fail you, Aeneas,  
my captain, nor did a god drown me in the deep.  
By chance the helm was torn from me with violence,  
as I clung there, on duty as ordered, steering our course,  
and I dragged it headlong with me. I swear by the cruel sea  
that I feared less for myself than for your ship,  
lest robbed of its gear, and cleared of its helmsman,  
it might founder among such surging waves.

The Southerly drove me violently through the vast seas  
for three stormy nights: high on the crest of a wave,  
in the fourth dawn, I could just make out Italy.  
Gradually I swam to shore: grasped now at safety,  
but as I caught at the sharp tips of the rocks, weighed down  
by my water-soaked clothes, the savage people  
attacked me with knives, ignorantly thinking me a prize.  
Now the waves have me, and the winds roll me along the shore.  
Unconquered one, I beg you, by the sweet light and air of heaven,  
by your father, and your hopes in Iulus to come,  
save me from this evil: either find Velia's harbour again  
(for you can) and sprinkle earth on me, or if there is some way,  
if your divine mother shows you one (since you'd not attempt to sail  
such waters, and the Stygian marsh, without a god's will, I think)  
then give this wretch your hand and take me with you through the waves  
that at least I might rest in some quiet place in death.'  
So he spoke, and the priestess began to reply like this:  
'Where does this dire longing of yours come from, O Palinurus?  
Can you see the Stygian waters, unburied, or the grim  
river of the Furies, Cocytus, or come unasked to the shore?  
Cease to hope that divine fate can be tempered by prayer.  
But hold my words in your memory, as a comfort in your hardship:  
the nearby peoples, from cities far and wide, will be moved  
by divine omens to worship your bones, and build a tomb,  
and send offerings to the tomb, and the place will have  
Palinurus as its everlasting name.' His anxiety was quelled  
by her words, and, for a little while, grief was banished  
from his sad heart: he delighted in the land being so named.

### **BkVI:384-416 Charon the Ferryman**

So they pursued their former journey, and drew near the river.  
Now when the Boatman saw them from the Stygian wave  
walking through the silent wood, and directing their footsteps  
towards its bank, he attacked them verbally, first, and unprompted,  
rebuking them: 'Whoever you are, who come armed to my river,  
tell me, from over there, why you're here, and halt your steps.  
This is a place of shadows, of Sleep and drowsy Night:  
I'm not allowed to carry living bodies in the Stygian boat.  
Truly it was no pleasure for me to take Hercules on his journey  
over the lake, nor Theseus and Pirithous, though they may  
have been children of gods, unrivalled in strength.



The first came for Cerberus the watchdog of Tartarus,  
and dragged him away quivering from under the king's throne:  
the others were after snatching our Queen from Dis's chamber.'  
To this the prophetess of Amphrysian Apollo briefly answered:  
'There's no such trickery here (don't be disturbed),  
our weapons offer no affront: your huge guard-dog  
can terrify the bloodless shades with his eternal howling:  
chaste Proserpine can keep to her uncle's threshold.  
Aeneas the Trojan, renowned in piety and warfare,  
goes down to the deepest shadows of Erebus, to his father.  
If the idea of such affection does not move you, still you  
must recognise this bough.' (She showed the branch, hidden  
in her robes.) Then the anger in his swollen breast subsided.  
No more was said. Marvelling at the revered offering,  
of fateful twigs, seen again after so long, he turned the stern  
of the dark skiff towards them and neared the bank.  
Then he turned off the other souls who sat on the long benches,  
cleared the gangways: and received mighty Aeneas  
on board. The seamed skiff groaned with the weight  
and let in quantities of marsh-water through the chinks.  
At last, the river crossed, he landed the prophetess and the hero  
safe, on the unstable mud, among the blue-grey sedge.

### **BkVI:417-439 Beyond the Acheron**

Huge Cerberus sets these regions echoing with his triple-throated  
howling, crouching monstrously in a cave opposite.  
Seeing the snakes rearing round his neck, the prophetess  
threw him a pellet, a soporific of honey and drugged wheat.  
Opening his three throats, in rabid hunger, he seized  
what she threw and, flexing his massive spine, sank to earth  
spreading his giant bulk over the whole cave-floor.  
With the guard unconscious Aeneas won to the entrance,  
and quickly escaped the bank of the river of no return.  
Immediately a loud crying of voices was heard, the spirits  
of weeping infants, whom a dark day stole at the first  
threshold of this sweet life, those chosen to be torn  
from the breast, and drowned in bitter death.  
Nearby are those condemned to die on false charges.  
Yet their place is not ordained without the allotted jury:  
Minos, the judge, shakes the urn: he convenes the voiceless court,  
and hears their lives and sins. Then the next place

is held by those gloomy spirits who, innocent of crime,  
died by their own hand, and, hating the light, threw away  
their lives. How willingly now they'd endure  
poverty and harsh suffering, in the air above!  
Divine Law prevents it, and the sad marsh and its hateful  
waters binds them, and nine-fold Styx confines them.

### **BkVI:440-476 The Shade of Dido**

Not far from there the Fields of Mourning are revealed,  
spread out on all sides: so they name them.  
There, those whom harsh love devours with cruel pining  
are concealed in secret walkways, encircled by a myrtle grove:  
even in death their troubles do not leave them.  
Here Aeneas saw Phaedra, and Procris, and sad Eriphyle,  
displaying the wounds made by her cruel son,  
Evadne, and Pasiphae: with them walked Laodamia,  
and Caeneus, now a woman, once a young man,  
returned by her fate to her own form again.  
Among them Phoenician Dido wandered, in the great wood,  
her wound still fresh. As soon as the Trojan hero stood near her  
and knew her, shadowy among the shadows, like a man who sees,  
or thinks he sees, the new moon rising through a cloud, as its month  
begins, he wept tears and spoke to her with tender affection:  
'Dido, unhappy spirit, was the news, that came to me  
of your death, true then, taking your life with a blade?  
Alas, was I the cause of your dying? I swear by the stars,  
by the gods above, by whatever truth may be in the depths  
of the earth, I left your shores unwillingly, my queen.  
I was commanded by gods, who drove me by their decrees,  
that now force me to go among the shades, through places  
thorny with neglect, and deepest night: nor did I think  
my leaving there would ever bring such grief to you.  
Halt your footsteps and do not take yourself from my sight.  
What do you flee? This is the last speech with you that fate allows.'  
With such words Aeneas would have calmed  
her fiery spirit and wild looks, and provoked her tears.  
She turned away, her eyes fixed on the ground,  
no more altered in expression by the speech he had begun  
than if hard flint stood there, or a cliff of Parian marble.  
At the last she tore herself away, and, hostile to him,  
fled to the shadowy grove where Sychaeus, her husband

in former times, responded to her suffering, and gave her love for love. Aeneas, no less shaken by the injustice of fate, followed her, far off, with his tears, and pitied her as she went.

### **BkVI:477-534 The Shade of Deiphobus**

From there he laboured on the way that was granted them.  
And soon they reached the most distant fields,  
the remote places where those famous in war  
crowd together. Here Tydeus met him, Parthenopaeus  
glorious in arms, and the pale form of Adrastus:  
here were the Trojans, wept for deeply above, fallen in war,  
whom, seeing them all in their long ranks, he groaned at,  
Glaucus, Medon and Thersilochus, the three sons of Antenor,  
Polyboetes, the priest of Ceres, and Idaeus  
still with his chariot, and his weapons.  
The spirits stand there in crowds to left and right.  
They are not satisfied with seeing him only once:  
they delight in lingering on, walking beside him,  
and learning the reason for his coming.  
But the Greek princes and Agamemnon's phalanxes,  
trembled with great fear, when they saw the hero,  
and his gleaming weapons, among the shades:  
some turned to run, as they once sought their ships: some raised  
a faint cry, the noise they made belying their gaping mouths.  
And he saw Deiphobus there, Priam's son, his whole body  
mutilated, his face brutally torn, his face and hands both, the ears  
ripped from his ruined head, his nostrils sheared by an ugly wound.  
Indeed Aeneas barely recognised the quivering form, hiding its dire  
punishment, even as he called to him, unprompted, in familiar tones:  
'Deiphobus, powerful in war, born of Teucer's noble blood,  
who chose to work such brutal punishment on you?  
Who was allowed to treat you so? Rumour has it  
that on that final night, wearied by endless killing of Greeks,  
you sank down on a pile of the slaughtered.  
Then I set up an empty tomb on the Rhoetean shore,  
and called on your spirit three times in a loud voice.  
Your name and weapons watch over the site: I could not  
see you, friend, to set you, as I left, in your native soil.'  
To this Priam's son replied: 'O my friend, you've neglected  
nothing: you've paid all that's due to Deiphobus  
and a dead man's spirit. My own destiny,

and that Spartan woman's deadly crime, drowned me  
in these sorrows: she left me these memorials.  
You know how we passed that last night in illusory joy:  
and you must remember it only too well.  
When the fateful Horse came leaping the walls of Troy,  
pregnant with the armed warriors it carried in its womb,  
she led the Trojan women about, wailing in dance,  
aping the Bacchic rites: she held a huge torch in their midst,  
signalling to the Greeks from the heights of the citadel.  
I was then in our unlucky marriage-chamber, worn out with care,  
and heavy with sleep, a sweet deep slumber weighing on me  
as I lay there, the very semblance of peaceful death.  
Meanwhile that illustrious wife of mine removed every weapon  
from the house, even stealing my faithful sword from under my head:  
she calls Menelaus into the house and throws open the doors,  
hoping I suppose it would prove a great gift for her lover,  
and in that way the infamy of her past sins might be erased.  
Why drag out the tale? They burst into the room, and with them  
Ulysses the Aeolid, their co-inciter to wickedness. Gods, so repay  
the Greeks, if these lips I pray for vengeance with are virtuous.  
But you, in turn, tell what fate has brought you here, living.  
Do you come here, driven by your wandering on the sea,  
or exhorted by the gods? If not, what misfortune torments you,  
that you enter these sad sunless houses, this troubled place?'

### **BkVI:535-627 The Sibyl Describes Tartarus**

While they spoke Aurora and her rosy chariot had passed  
the zenith of her ethereal path, and they might perhaps  
have spent all the time allowed in such talk, but the Sibyl,  
his companion, warned him briefly saying:  
'Night approaches, Aeneas: we waste the hours with weeping.  
This is the place where the path splits itself in two:  
there on the right is our road to Elysium, that runs beneath  
the walls of mighty Dis: but the left works punishment  
on the wicked, and sends them on to godless Tartarus.'  
Deiophobus replied: 'Do not be angry, great priestess:  
I will leave: I will make up the numbers, and return to the darkness.  
Go now glory of our race: enjoy a better fate.'  
So he spoke, and in speaking turned away.  
Aeneas suddenly looked back, and, below the left hand cliff,  
he saw wide battlements, surrounded by a triple wall,

and encircled by a swift river of red-hot flames,  
the Tartarean Phlegethon, churning with echoing rocks.  
A gate fronts it, vast, with pillars of solid steel,  
that no human force, not the heavenly gods themselves,  
can overturn by war: an iron tower rises into the air,  
and seated before it, Tisiphone, clothed in a blood-wet dress,  
keeps guard of the doorway, sleeplessly, night and day.  
Groans came from there, and the cruel sound of the lash,  
then the clank of iron, and dragging chains.  
Aeneas halted, and stood rooted, terrified by the noise.  
‘What evil is practised here? O Virgin, tell me: by what torments  
are they oppressed? Why are there such sounds in the air?’  
Then the prophetess began to speak as follows: ‘Famous leader  
of the Trojans, it is forbidden for the pure to cross the evil threshold:  
but when Hecate appointed me to the wood of Avernus,  
she taught me the divine torments, and guided me through them all.  
Cretan Rhadamanthus rules this harshest of kingdoms,  
and hears their guilt, extracts confessions, and punishes  
whoever has deferred atonement for their sins too long  
till death, delighting in useless concealment, in the world above.  
Tisiphone the avenger, armed with her whip, leaps on the guilty immediately,  
lashes them, and threatening them with the fierce  
snakes in her left hand, calls to her savage troop of sisters.  
Then at last the accursed doors open, screeching on jarring hinges.  
You comprehend what guardian sits at the door, what shape watches  
the threshold? Well still fiercer is the monstrous Hydra inside,  
with her fifty black gaping jaws. There Tartarus itself  
falls sheer, and stretches down into the darkness:  
twice as far as we gaze upwards to heavenly Olympus.  
Here the Titanic race, the ancient sons of Earth,  
hurled down by the lightning-bolt, writhe in the depths.  
And here I saw the two sons of Aloeus, giant forms,  
who tried to tear down the heavens with their hands,  
and topple Jupiter from his high kingdom.  
And I saw Salmoneus paying a savage penalty  
for imitating Jove’s lightning, and the Olympian thunder.  
Brandishing a torch, and drawn by four horses  
he rode in triumph among the Greeks, through Elis’s city,  
claiming the gods’ honours as his own, a fool,  
who mimicked the storm-clouds and the inimitable thunderbolt  
with bronze cymbals and the sound of horses’ hoof-beats.  
But the all-powerful father hurled his lightning from dense cloud,  
not for him fiery torches, or pine-branches’ smoky light

and drove him headlong with the mighty whirlwind.  
And Tityus was to be seen as well, the foster-child  
of Earth, our universal mother, whose body stretches  
over nine acres, and a great vulture with hooked beak  
feeds on his indestructible liver, and his entrails ripe  
for punishment, lodged deep inside the chest, groping  
for his feast, no respite given to the ever-renewing tissue.  
Shall I speak of the Lapiths, Ixion, Pirithous,  
over whom hangs a dark crag that seems to slip and fall?  
High couches for their feast gleam with golden frames,  
and a banquet of royal luxury is spread before their eyes:  
nearby the eldest Fury, crouching, prevents their fingers touching  
the table: rising up, and brandishing her torch, with a voice of thunder.  
Here are those who hated their brothers, in life,  
or struck a parent, or contrived to defraud a client,  
or who crouched alone over the riches they'd made,  
without setting any aside for their kin (their crowd is largest),  
those who were killed for adultery, or pursued civil war,  
not fearing to break their pledges to their masters:  
shut in they see their punishment. Don't ask to know  
that punishment, or what kind of suffering drowns them.  
Some roll huge stones, or hang spread-eagled  
on wheel-spokes: wretched Theseus sits still, and will sit  
for eternity: Phlegyas, the most unfortunate, warns them all  
and bears witness in a loud voice among the shades:  
"Learn justice: be warned, and don't despise the gods."  
Here's one who sold his country for gold, and set up  
a despotic lord: this one made law and remade it for a price:  
he entered his daughter's bed and a forbidden marriage:  
all of them dared monstrous sin, and did what they dared.  
Not if I had a hundred tongues, a hundred mouths,  
a voice of iron, could I tell all the forms of wickedness  
or spell out the names of every torment.'

### **BkVI:628-678 The Fields of Elysium**

When she had spoken of this, the aged priestess of Apollo said:  
'But come now, travel the road, and complete the task set for you:  
let us hurry, I see the battlements that were forged  
in the Cyclopean fires, and the gates in the arch opposite us  
where we are told to set down the gifts as ordered.'  
She spoke and keeping step they hastened along the dark path

crossing the space between and arriving near the doors.  
Aeneas gained the entrance, sprinkled fresh water  
over his body, and set up the branch on the threshold before him.  
Having at last achieved this, the goddess's task fulfilled,  
they came to the pleasant places, the delightful grassy turf  
of the Fortunate Groves, and the homes of the blessed.  
Here freer air and radiant light clothe the plain,  
and these have their own sun, and their own stars.  
Some exercise their bodies in a grassy gymnasium,  
compete in sports and wrestle on the yellow sand:  
others tread out the steps of a dance, and sing songs.  
There Orpheus too, the long-robed priest of Thrace,  
accompanies their voices with the seven-note scale,  
playing now with fingers, now with the ivory quill.  
Here are Teucer's ancient people, loveliest of children,  
great-hearted heroes, born in happier years,  
Ilus, Assaracus, and Dardanus founder of Troy.  
Aeneas marvels from a distance at their idle chariots  
and their weapons: their spears fixed in the ground,  
and their horses scattered freely browsing over the plain:  
the pleasure they took in chariots and armour while alive,  
the care in tending shining horses, follows them below the earth.  
Look, he sees others on the grass to right and left, feasting,  
and singing a joyful paean in chorus, among the fragrant  
groves of laurel, out of which the Eridanus's broad river  
flows through the woodlands to the world above.  
Here is the company of those who suffered wounds fighting  
for their country: and those who were pure priests, while they lived,  
and those who were faithful poets, singers worthy of Apollo,  
and those who improved life, with discoveries in Art or Science,  
and those who by merit caused others to remember them:  
the brows of all these were bound with white headbands.  
As they crowded round, the Sibyl addressed them,  
Musaeus above all: since he holds the centre of the vast crowd,  
all looking up to him, his tall shoulders towering above:  
'Blessed spirits, and you, greatest of Poets,  
say what region or place contains Anchises. We have  
come here, crossing the great rivers of Erebus, for him.'  
And the hero replied to her briefly in these words:  
'None of us have a fixed abode: we live in the shadowy woods,  
and make couches of river-banks, and inhabit fresh-water meadows.  
But climb this ridge, if your hearts-wish so inclines,  
and I will soon set you on an easy path.'

He spoke and went on before them, and showed them  
the bright plains below: then they left the mountain heights.

### **BkVI:679-702 The Meeting with Anchises**

But deep in a green valley his father Anchises  
was surveying the spirits enclosed there, destined  
for the light above, thinking carefully, and was reviewing  
as it chanced the numbers of his own folk, his dear grandsons,  
and their fate and fortunes as men, and their ways and works.  
And when he saw Aeneas heading towards him over the grass  
he stretched out both his hands eagerly, his face  
streaming with tears, and a cry issued from his lips:  
'Have you come at last, and has the loyalty your father expected  
conquered the harsh road? Is it granted me to see your face,  
my son, and hear and speak in familiar tones?  
I calculated it in my mind, and thought it would be so,  
counting off the hours, nor has my trouble failed me.  
From travel over what lands and seas, do I receive you!  
What dangers have hurled you about, my son!  
How I feared the realms of Libya might harm you!'  
He answered: 'Father, your image, yours, appearing to me  
so often, drove me to reach this threshold:  
My ships ride the Etruscan waves. Father, let me clasp  
your hand, let me, and do not draw away from my embrace.'  
So speaking, his face was also drowned in a flood of tears.  
Three times he tries to throw his arms round his father's neck,  
three times, clasped in vain, that semblance slips though his hands,  
like the light breeze, most of all like a winged dream.

### **BkVI:703-723 The Souls Due for Re-birth**

And now Aeneas saw a secluded grove  
in a receding valley, with rustling woodland thickets,  
and the river of Lethe gliding past those peaceful places.  
Innumerable tribes and peoples hovered round it:  
just as, in the meadows, on a cloudless summer's day,  
the bees settle on the multifarious flowers, and stream  
round the bright lilies, and all the fields hum with their buzzing.  
Aeneas was thrilled by the sudden sight, and, in ignorance,  
asked the cause: what the river is in the distance,



who the men are crowding the banks in such numbers.  
Then his father Anchises answered: 'They are spirits,  
owed a second body by destiny, and they drink  
the happy waters, and a last forgetting, at Lethe's stream.  
Indeed, for a long time I've wished to tell you of them,  
and show you them face to face, to enumerate my children's  
descendants, so you might joy with me more at finding Italy.'  
'O father, is it to be thought that any spirits go from here  
to the sky above, returning again to dull matter?'  
'Indeed I'll tell you, son, not keep you in doubt,'  
Anchises answered, and revealed each thing in order.

### **BkVI:724-751 The Transmigration of Souls**

'Firstly, a spirit within them nourishes the sky and earth,  
the watery plains, the shining orb of the moon,  
and Titan's star, and Mind, flowing through matter,  
vivifies the whole mass, and mingles with its vast frame.  
From it come the species of man and beast, and winged lives,  
and the monsters the sea contains beneath its marbled waves.  
The power of those seeds is fiery, and their origin divine,  
so long as harmful matter doesn't impede them  
and terrestrial bodies and mortal limbs don't dull them.  
Through those they fear and desire, and grieve and joy,  
and enclosed in night and a dark dungeon, can't see the light.  
Why, when life leaves them at the final hour,  
still all of the evil, all the plagues of the flesh, alas,  
have not completely vanished, and many things, long hardened  
deep within, must of necessity be ingrained, in strange ways.  
So they are scourged by torments, and pay the price  
for former sins: some are hung, stretched out,  
to the hollow winds, the taint of wickedness is cleansed  
for others in vast gulfs, or burned away with fire:  
each spirit suffers its own: then we are sent  
through wide Elysium, and we few stay in the joyous fields,  
for a length of days, till the cycle of time,  
complete, removes the hardened stain, and leaves  
pure ethereal thought, and the brightness of natural air.  
All these others the god calls in a great crowd to the river Lethe,  
after they have turned the wheel for a thousand years,  
so that, truly forgetting, they can revisit the vault above,  
and begin with a desire to return to the flesh.'

## **BkVI:752-776 The Future Race – The Alban Kings**

Anchises had spoken, and he drew the Sibyl and his son, both together, into the middle of the gathering and the murmuring crowd, and chose a hill from which he could see all the long ranks opposite, and watch their faces as they came by him.

‘Come, I will now explain what glory will pursue the children of Dardanus, what descendants await you of the Italian race, illustrious spirits to march onwards in our name, and I will teach you your destiny. See that boy, who leans on a headless spear, he is fated to hold a place nearest the light, first to rise to the upper air, sharing Italian blood, Silvius, of Alban name, your last-born son, who your wife Lavinia, late in your old age, will give birth to in the wood, a king and the father of kings, through whom our race will rule in Alba Longa.

Next to him is Procas, glory of the Trojan people, and Capys and Numitor, and he who’ll revive your name, Silvius Aeneas, outstanding like you in virtue and arms, if he might at last achieve the Alban throne.

What men! See what authority they display, their foreheads shaded by the civic oak-leaf crown!

They will build Nomentum, Gabii, and Fidenae’s city: Collatia’s fortress in the hills, Pometii and the Fort of Inus, and Bola, and Cora.

Those will be names that are now nameless land.

## **BkVI:777-807 The Future Race – Romulus and the Caesars**

Yes, and a child of Mars will join his grandfather to accompany him, Romulus, whom his mother Ilia will bear, of Assaracus’s line.

See how Mars’s twin plumes stand on his crest, and his father marks him out for the world above with his own emblems?

Behold, my son, under his command glorious Rome will match earth’s power and heaven’s will, and encircle seven hills with a single wall, happy in her race of men: as Cybele, the Berecynthian ‘Great Mother’, crowned with turrets, rides through the Phrygian cities, delighting in her divine children, clasping a hundred descendants, all gods, all dwelling in the heights above.

Now direct your eyes here, gaze at this people,

your own Romans. Here is Caesar, and all the offspring  
of Iulus destined to live under the pole of heaven.  
This is the man, this is him, whom you so often hear  
promised you, Augustus Caesar, son of the Deified,  
who will make a Golden Age again in the fields  
where Saturn once reigned, and extend the empire beyond  
the Libyans and the Indians (to a land that lies outside the zodiac's belt,  
beyond the sun's ecliptic and the year's, where sky-carrying Atlas  
turns the sphere, inset with gleaming stars, on his shoulders):  
Even now the Caspian realms, and Maeotian earth,  
tremble at divine prophecies of his coming, and  
the restless mouths of the seven-branched Nile are troubled.  
Truly, Hercules never crossed so much of the earth,  
though he shot the bronze-footed Arcadian deer, brought peace  
to the woods of Erymanthus, made Lerna tremble at his bow:  
nor did Bacchus, who steers his chariot, in triumph, with reins  
made of vines, guiding his tigers down from Nysa's high peak.  
Do we really hesitate still to extend our power by our actions,  
and does fear prevent us settling the Italian lands?

### **BkVI:808-853 The Future Race – Republic and Beyond**

Who is he, though, over there, distinguished by his olive branches,  
carrying offerings? I know the hair and the white-bearded chin  
of a king of Rome, Numa, called to supreme authority  
from little Cures's poverty-stricken earth, who will secure  
our first city under the rule of law. Then Tullus  
will succeed him who will shatter the country's peace,  
and call to arms sedentary men, ranks now unused to triumphs.  
The over-boastful Ancus follows him closely,  
delighting too much even now in the people's opinion.  
Will you look too at Tarquin's dynasty, and the proud spirit  
of Brutus the avenger, the rods of office reclaimed?  
He'll be the first to win a consul's powers and the savage axes,  
and when the sons foment a new civil war, the father  
will call them to account, for lovely freedom's sake:  
ah, to be pitied, whatever posterity says of his actions:  
his love of country will prevail, and great appetite for glory.  
Ah, see over there, the Decii and Drusi, and Torquatus  
brutal with the axe, and Camillus rescuing the standards.  
But those others, you can discern, shining in matching armour,  
souls in harmony now, while they are cloaked in darkness,

ah, if they reach the light of the living, what civil war  
what battle and slaughter, they'll cause, Julius Caesar,  
the father-in-law, down from the Alpine ramparts, from the fortress  
of Monoecus: Pompey, the son-in-law, opposing with Eastern forces.  
My sons, don't inure your spirits to such wars,  
never turn the powerful forces of your country on itself:  
You be the first to halt, you, who derive your race from heaven:  
hurl the sword from your hand, who are of my blood!  
There's Mummius: triumphing over Corinth, he'll drive his chariot,  
victorious, to the high Capitol, famed for the Greeks he's killed:  
and Aemilius Paulus, who, avenging his Trojan ancestors, and Minerva's  
desecrated shrine, will destroy Agamemnon's Mycenae, and Argos,  
and Perseus the Aeacid himself, descendant of war-mighty Achilles.  
Who would pass over you in silence, great Cato, or you Cossus,  
or the Gracchus's race, or the two Scipios, war's lightning bolts,  
the scourges of Libya, or you Fabricius, powerful in poverty,  
or you, Regulus Serranus, sowing your furrow with seed?  
Fabii, where do you hurry my weary steps? You, Fabius  
Maximus, the Delayer, are he who alone renew our State.  
Others (I can well believe) will hammer out bronze that breathes  
with more delicacy than us, draw out living features  
from the marble: plead their causes better, trace with instruments  
the movement of the skies, and tell the rising of the constellations:  
remember, Roman, it is for you to rule the nations with your power,  
(that will be your skill) to crown peace with law,  
to spare the conquered, and subdue the proud.'

### **BkVI:854-885 The Future Race – Marcellus**

So father Anchises spoke, and while they marvelled, added:  
'See, how Claudius Marcellus, distinguished by the Supreme Prize,  
comes forward, and towers, victorious, over other men.  
As a knight, he'll support the Roman State, turbulent  
with fierce confusion, strike the Cathaginians and rebellious Gauls,  
and dedicate captured weapons, a third time, to father Quirinus.'  
And, at this, Aeneas said (since he saw a youth of outstanding  
beauty with shining armour, walking with Marcellus,  
but his face lacking in joy, and his eyes downcast):  
'Father, who is this who accompanies him on his way?  
His son: or another of his long line of descendants?  
What murmuring round them! What presence he has!  
But dark night, with its sad shadows, hovers round his head.'

Then his father Aeneas, with welling tears, replied:  
‘O, do not ask about your people’s great sorrow, my son.  
The Fates will only show him to the world, not allow him  
to stay longer. The Roman people would seem  
too powerful to you gods, if this gift were lasting.  
What mourning from mankind that Field of Mars will  
deliver to the mighty city! And what funeral processions  
you, Tiber, will see, as you glide past his new-made tomb!  
No boy of the line of Ilius shall so exalt his Latin  
ancestors by his show of promise, nor will Romulus’s  
land ever take more pride in one of its sons.  
Alas for virtue, alas for the honour of ancient times,  
and a hand invincible in war! No one might have attacked him  
safely when armed, whether he met the enemy on foot,  
or dug his spurs into the flank of his foaming charger.  
Ah, boy to be pitied, if only you may shatter harsh fate,  
you’ll be a Marcellus! Give me handfuls of white lilies,  
let me scatter radiant flowers, let me load my scion’s spirit  
with those gifts at least, in discharging that poor duty.’

### **BkVI:886-901 The Gates of Sleep**

So they wander here and there through the whole region,  
over the wide airy plain, and gaze at everything.  
And when Anchises has led his son through each place,  
and inflamed his spirit with love of the glory that is to come,  
he tells him then of the wars he must soon fight,  
and teaches him about the Laurentine peoples,  
and the city of Latinus, and how to avoid or face each trial.  
There are two gates of Sleep: one of which is said to be of horn,  
through which an easy passage is given to true shades, the other  
gleams with the whiteness of polished ivory, but through it  
the Gods of the Dead send false dreams to the world above.  
After his words, Anchises accompanies his son there, and,  
frees him, together with the Sibyl, through the ivory gate.  
Aeneas makes his way to the ships and rejoins his friends:  
then coasts straight to Caieta’s harbour along the shore.  
The anchors are thrown from the prows: on the shore the sterns rest.

### **End of Book VI**

