

AENEID II

Silent, all gazed on him. From his high seat
Aeneas said, "Queen, you'd have me repeat
Unspeakable grief, for the Greeks overthrew
Our wealth and woeful realm. I am one who
Saw piteous sights and was a major part
Of them myself. Who has so hard a heart
In telling them either Myrmidon,
Ulysses' soldier or Dolopian –
To keep from tears? Mist night is moving fast 10
Prompt sleep. But if your wish to hear our woe
And in a few words now Troy's final throe
Is so intense, though I'll be shuddering
In reminiscences and recoiling
In grief, I will begin. Dispirited
By war, repulsed by fate, the chiefs who led
The Greeks, so many years now passing by,
Construct a horse that stands mountainously high
Through Pallas' sacred art. Its ribs they weave
With planks of fir and leave us to receive 20
This false gift. Many know of this. Then those
Believed to be the choicest warriors they enclose
With stealth in its dark sides. Armed soldiery
Now lies in its huge paunch. There one can see
Tenedos, a very famous isle and, while
Priam yet ruled, a rich one' now this isle
Is but a bay, unsafe for ships to land.
Thither they sail and on its desert strand

They hide. We thought they'd gone and now were fleeing
 To Mycenae. So the Teucrian land was freeing 30
 Itself from its interminable woe.
 The gates are opened. What a joy to go
 And see the Doric camp, the lonely sands,
 Forsaken stations. The Dolopian bands
 Encamped here, and the savage Achilles.
 Here lay the fleet, here the hostilities
 Were undertaken. Some gaped at the maid
 Minerva's gift of death, and when they laid
 Eyes on the massive horse, they marvelled. Then
 Thymoetes was the first to urge the men 40
 To bring It in. Was this, then, treachery?
 Or the beginning of Troy's destiny?
 But Capys and the wiser men suggest
 That throwing it into the sea is best –
 This sly, suspicious gift – or else commit
 It to the flames or yet to puncture it
 And probe that hollow womb. Uncertainty
 Divided them. Laocoön ardently,
 Foremost and with a great throng, from on high
 Upon the citadel and with a cry 50
 Said: 'Wretched folk what is this lunacy?
 Our foe has left?? Do you not see that we
 Must never trust a Greek gift? Ulysses
 Is known to be a truthful man? Oh, please...!
 Either the Greeks hide in that wooden vault
 Or it's been fabricated to assault
 Our walls, spy on our homes or else descend

Upon the city. Or, you may depend,
Some other trick is there; don't trust that steed,
Whatever it is, my friends; the Greeks, indeed, 60
I'm fearful of, even when they're offering
A gift'. He spoke, then, with a mighty fling,
Hurled his great spear into the beast's arched frame
And through its belly. Then the weapons came
To a quivering stop. There was a hollow ring
Within that vault, the belly echoing.
A moan was heard. Now if the gods' decree
And our minds had not shown profligacy,
He would have made us mar the Argive band
Within their sanctum and Troy would now stand, 70
And Priam's citadel! But see,
Some Dardan shepherds meanwhile raucously
Were dragging a young man, whose hands were bound
Behind him. He, so that he might be found
By them, had stood before them so that he
Might open Troy to the Greek soldiery,
Set to deceive the Trojans or to bear
The brunt of certain death. From everywhere
The Trojan youth ran streaming eagerly,
Anxious to see him and make mockery. 80
Hear now their treachery and learn one crime
That led to all the others. He, meantime,
Among the gazing crowd stood there dismayed,
Unarmed, while all the Phrygian ranks he laid
His eyes. 'Alas,' he said, 'what land, what seas
Will take me now? What in my miseries

Shall be my fate? I have no place at all
 Among the Greeks; the Trojans wildly call
 For bloody vengeance.' Now at his lament
 Our mood was changed, n longer violent. 90
 We goaded him to tell to us his race,
 Give us his news, say what he hoped to face
 As prisoner. He set aside his fear
 At last and said: 'Whatever happens here
 I'll speak the truth, and I will not deny
 That I am of Argolic birth. If I,
 Sinon, am marked for grief by Fortune, she
 Will not for spite mould me with falsity.
 If you have heard of Palamedes, son
 Of Belus, and the glory that he won – 100
 Whom through false evidence the Pelasgi
 With wicked information, because he
 Was trying to stop the war, sent innocent
 To death and, now he breathes no more, lament
 Him – know that with him, being of my kin,
 My father, though not wealthy, sent me in
 My earliest years to arms. Now while he stood
 Secure in princely sovereignty and could
 Show strength in kingly gatherings, we too
 Acquired some fame and glory. But when, through 110
 Subtle Ulysses' sin – the tale I tell
 Is not unknown – descended into Hell,
 I passed my ruined life in agony,
 Wrathful at the unworthy destiny
 Of my good friend. I was demented now

Nor would be silent, and I made a vow
 That, if I could, that if I ever came
 Victorious back to Argos, I would name
 Myself as his avenger. Enmity
 I viciously expressed. This was for me 120
 The first blemish of wrong. Time after time
 Ulysses frightened me with some new crime
 And sowed dark rumours and sought weaponry
 As conspired and didn't rest till he,
 With Calchas as his helper – why should I,
 Though, vainly tell this dreadful story? Why
 Delay you? If we're all alike to you,
 We Greeks, and if to hear this tale will do,
 Punish me now: for that would satisfy
 The lord of Ithaca; the Atridae 130
 Would pay much for it.' Then indeed we burned
 To know the causes, for we'd not yet learned
 Such evil, the Pelasgian trickery
 Unknown to us. Then, all aquiver, he
 Took up the tale: "often the Trojans – for
 They were exhausted by the endless war –
 Longed to depart from Troy. O would that they
 Had done so! But some tempest blocked their way
 So often, and the South Wind's gales would lead
 To fear of leaving. Chiefly, when that steed
 Of maple-beams stood here, storm-clouds now sounded 140
 Throughout the air. At this we were dumbfounded
 And so to Phoebus' oracle we sent
 Eurypylus to ask advice. He went

And brought back gloomy words: "A maid you slew,
You Greeks, to still the tempest's wrath when you
First went to Troy: an Argive life must win
Your safe return." When they had taken in
This news, the crowd was dazed. Cold tremors ran
Deep in the very soul of every man. 150

Fate chooses whom? Whom does Apollo claim?
Amid a loud uproar the Ithacan came,
Dragging the seer Calchas and questioning
Him whom the gods chose. Many were reckoning
The schemer's cruel crime was meant for me
And silently foresaw what was to be.
Ten days the seer sat silent in his tent
And would not with a single word consent
To damn and doom one man. At last, compelled
By Ulysses' loud clamour, he withheld 160

His voice no longer, dooming me to death
Upon the shrine. Agreement with one breath
Was given by all. What everyone had feared
Each for himself they bore, for now it veered
To someone else's ruin. Now the day
Of horror is at hand, and so they lay
The salt meat out, the fillets I will wear
About my head – the rites they thus prepare.
I snatched myself from death: the chains I break
And in the muddy sedges of a lake 170

I hide all night in hopes that they would sail
Back home. For me, though, there was no avail,
No hope to reach my ancient land or see

My sweet babes, longed-for father. But maybe
They'll answer for my flight and expiate
My crime by suffering the wretched fate
Of death. By all the gods and powers that see
The truth, by any faith mortality
May have, unstained, pity such great distress,
Pity such undeserved unhappiness.' 180

His tears we pity and we grant that he
May live. Priam himself gave his decree
To cast off his tight fetters, speaking thus
With warmth: 'Whoever you are, you'll be with us –
Forget the absent Greeks. Now tell me true:
Why did they build that massive horse, and who
Contrived it? With what aim? What sacrifice
Does it exemplify? Or what device
Of war is it?' Schooled in the trickery
Of Pelasgia, he raised his hands, now free 190

Of chains: "Eternal fires," the man said,
"Take note, with your invincible godhead;
You altars, and you dreadful swords which I
Escaped, you fillets of the gods on high,
Which as a sacrifice I wore: for me
It's only right to break my guarantee
Made with the Greeks, to hate them and to bring
To light whatever's hidden, labouring
Beneath no laws of Greece. But you must stand
By what you vowed, you of the Trojan land. 200

Be faithful if what I tell you is true,
If I shall make a large return to you.

All hope and confidence the Greeks maintained
 In waging this war always was sustained
 By Pallas' help. But ever since that time
 The son of Tydeus and that man of crime,
 Ulysses, from its hallowed shrine dared to
 Tear down the sad Palladium, then slew
 The guards of the high citadel, and then
 Laid hands upon the sacred image when 210
 They snatched the fillets of the goddess-maid
 With bloody hands – since then their hopes were stayed,
 Receding backwards; they were broken men,
 The goddess' heart estranged from them, for then
 Minerva by her portents clarified
 The case – scarce was the image placed inside
 The camp when flickering flames of fire shot out
 Above her upraised eyes and all about
 Her limbs a salt sweat coursed. Then (marvellous
 To tell!) her very self appeared to us 220
 Up from the ground, a shield and quivering spear
 Held in her hand. Immediately the seer
 Calchas foresaw that they should put to sea
 In flight and that the Argive weaponry
 Would not demolish Troy unless they sought
 New auguries at Argos and then brought
 The deity back, whom they had snatched away
 In their curved ships. Now that it was the day
 To sail and seek their Mycenaean land,
 It was to furnish them with weapons and 230
 Attendant gods. Thus Calchas analyzed

The auguries. This image they, advised
 By him, set up so as to compensate
 For the sad Palladium and expiate
 The woeful sacrilege and to repay
 The injured deity. He stressed that they
 Should bring out this huge, timber-tangled mass
 And build it up so high it could not pass
 Between the gates, unable to succeed
 In aiding Trojans in their ancient creed. 240
 For if your hand should wrong the offering
 Of Minerva, utter gloom (may the gods sting
 Me with that augury!) would surely face
 Both Priam and the he entire Phrygian race,
 But if within the city-gates you brought
 That horse, a mighty conflict would be wrought
 BY Asia on your walls; such destiny
 Would also fall upon your progeny.
 The perjured Sinon's trickery we took
 For truth - his wiles and forced tears framed a hook 250
 To bait us – we who neither Achilles
 Nor Tydeus' son had brought us to our knees,
 Not with a thousand ships, not in ten years.
 But now another portent fed our fears:
 Unlooked-for, much more grim, it fell upon
 Us all. The priest of Neptune, Laocoön,
 As drawn by lot, a massive bull was slaying
 Upon the usual shrines when (merely saying
 These words causes convulsions!), side by side
 Two snakes with mighty coils swam through the tide 260

And made for shore. Above the surge their breasts
Were raised up high; the waved their blood-red crests
Surmounted, while the rest skimmed on behind;
Their bulky backs with many a twist they'd wind;
The foaming seas made noise. They'd almost gained
The fields by now, their blazing eyes all stained
With blood and fire and, with their tongues aquiver,
They licked their hissing mouths. It made us shiver
As we all fled. Unswervingly they race
Towards Laocoön. In its embrace 270
Each takes one of his two sons, fastening
Upon their wretched limbs and swallowing
Them both. In aid now comes Laocoön
With weapons, but the serpents seize upon
The man. Then twice about his waist they wound
And then their scaly backs they closed around
His throat, their heads and high necks towering
Above him. He sets to unravelling
Those knots, his fillets stained with butchery
And poison of the blackest hue, while he 280
Roared hideously to Heaven, bellowing
Just like an injured bull that's scampering
From the altar, as the ill-aimed axe he shakes
Away. But, gliding forward, these twin snakes
Up to the lofty citadel now fled
And under fierce Tritonia's tower their bed
They made and underneath her feet and shield
They lay. Indeed a new fear they revealed
Itself and we there trembled and, they say,

Laocoön the price he had to pay, 290
 And rightly so – into the sacred tree
 Of oak he had, in great profanity,
 Vast his accursed spear. They all agreed
 That to her house the image he had need
 To bring to supplicate her sanctity.
 We part the walls, lay bare for all to see
 Our battlements. Prepared for work, the men
 Place smooth wheels underneath its feet and then
 Loop hemp-bands round its neck. The ominous
 Machine climbs up our walls (unknown to us, 300
 Brim-full of arms). Both boys and maidens sing
 Religious melodies while revelling
 In handling the cables; up it glides
 Menacingly and in the midst resides.
 Troy-land, the gods' home, Dardan walls whose fame
 In war's extensive! Four times when it came
 Up to the gates' threshold, it made a halt;
 Four times did armour clash inside that vault:
 But, heedless, blind with frenzy, on we pressed
 Until that fateful monster came to rest 310
 Upon our hallowed citadel. Even then
 Cassandra began to speak our doom: our men,
 Though, never listened to this prophetess..
 Doomed from that day, we in our haplessness
 Wreathed all the shrines with festal boughs throughout
 The town. The sky revolves and in a rout
 Comes from the ocean, in its mighty shade
 Wrapping the earth, the heaven, the intrigues made

By the Myrmidons. The Trojans silent lay
Spread out throughout the town of Troy, for they 320
For weariness in slumber were embraced.
And now the Greek host, ships all duly placed,
Were leaving Tenedos, endeavouring
To reach the well-know shores and reckoning
Upon the friendly moon that silent night,
Just as the royal galley raised its light –
Defended by the gods' iniquitous doom,
Sinon with stealth freed from that piney womb
The Greeks. The horse restored them to the light,
And from that hollow wood with great delight 330
Came Thessandrus and Sthenelus, who led
The host, and dread Ulysses who now sped
Straight down the lowered cable, and Thoas
And Neoptolemus and Acamas,
Menelaus, Machaon the leader and
Epeus, the trickster who this fraud had planned.
The town, which was in sleep and wine submerged,
They stormed, they killed the watchmen and then surged
On to the open gates where they would shower
With welcome friends and allies. Now the hour 340
Had come when weary men take their first rest,
Which is most sweet because it has been blessed
By the gods. In sleep there comes before my eyes
The wretched Hector who immense tears cries,
Torn by the chariot, as in former time
He was, and black with gory dust and grime,
His swollen feet pierced through with thongs. A sight

So pitiful! A Hector transformed quite
From him who comes back with Achilles' spoils
About his body and delivers coils 350
Of flame upon the Danaan ships! His hair
Was matted with his blood as he stood there;
His beard was ragged and the wounds he bore
Were those so many wounds that in the war
He got around Troy's walls. Tears I, too, shed,
I thought. I was the first to speak. I said
In sadness: "O light of the Trojan nation,
To all of Troy the surest aspiration,
What great delay has held you? Long awaited,
Whence have you come? After so many fated 360
Deaths of your kin and labours of both men
And city, *now* we see you! Tell me, then,
Why is your cloudless face marred shamefully?
Why do I see those wounds of yours?' But he
Said nothing: thus I questioned him in vain,
But, drawing from his soul deep sighs of pain,
He cried: 'From these flames, goddess-born, now flee.
Our walls are captured by the enemy.
Enough is paid to Troy and to our lord:
If any human power could afford 370
To save her, I'd have done it. Troy to you
Commits her household gods, her sacraments, too:
Take them to share your fortune" make your quest
To found the mighty city to the West
For them, once you have roamed across the sea.'
Then from the inner shrine he brought to me

Great Vesta and her fillets and the fire
Which never dies. Meanwhile a storm of dire
Anguish spread through the town on every side,
And more and more sweeps on the war's dread tide, 380
The sounds much clearer, though the residence
Of my father Anchises is screened by dense
Trees far away. I shake myself from sleep;
I climb up to the rooftop where I keep
My ears pricked: just as when a fire yields
To raging winds and falls on some cornfields,
Or when a rushing mountain-torrent drops
Upon the fields and lays waste the glad crops
And all the oxen's labour, and the sound
The shepherd catches as he stands spellbound 390
Upon a rocky peak. Our judgment sealed,
We saw the trickery of the Greeks revealed.
Deiphobus' house was toppled to the ground
By Vulcan and Ucalegon's, too, was found
Ablaze. The broad Sigeian straits laid bare
The flames. The blare of trumpets filled the air,
The cries of men arose. Delirious,
I seize some arms – but arms are meaningless.
I long to muster men and run pell-mell
With all my comrades to the citadel; 400
Rage drives me on – how glorious to die
In arms! That was my feeling then. But I
See Panthus dodging Grecian weaponry,
A priest of Phoebus and the progeny
Of Othrys. He is holding in his hand

The holy sacrament, the lost gods, and
 Dragging his smack grandchild. Delirious,
 He rushes to my doors. 'Tell me, Panthus,
 How is the state? What stronghold should we seize?'
 I'd barely said this when his words were these, 410
 Said with a groan: 'It's here – our destiny,
 Our final hour. Once men of Troy were we;
 The mighty fame of Troy exists no more;
 All things have been diverted to the shore
 Of Greece by Jupiter's wrath. The Greeks indeed
 Rule in our burning city. That tall steed
 There in our midst pours forth a company
 Of armed men, while Sinn disdainfully
 In victory scatters flames. While some men stand
 At the open gates, a multitudinous band 420
 Such as from great Mycenae ever sailed;
 Some with confronting weapons have prevailed
 And bar the narrow ways. Flashing point bared,
 A battle-line of steel stands there, prepared
 For slaughter. The gates' first watchmen hardly dare
 To fight and to resist in blind warfare.
 These words and holy will drive me to be
 Among the flames, among the weaponry.
 And baleful Fury, where into the air
 The shouts and clamours rise. Joining me there 430
 Was Ripheus and Epytus, staunch in fight,
 To be my allies in the moon's bright light,
 Hypanis, Dymas, Coroebus as well,
 Young son of Mygdon. Under Cupid's spell,

Mad for Cassandra, he had come to Troy
And, as a son of Priam, this young boy
Was aiding him and Phrygia – heedless lad
To spurn what his inspired partner had
Uttered! When I saw how they eagerly
Closed ranks, I said :‘Young comrades, bootlessly 440
Courageous, if you have an appetite
To join my final venture in this fight,
You see the reason for our destiny.
The gods on whom our state’s stability
Relied have left our altar and our shrine.
You aid a burning Troy. Into the line
Of fight let’s rush and meet our final day.
One refuge for the vanquished is that they
Have none.’ Thus the young man, to fury spurred,
Just as in a black mist a ravening herd 450
Of wolves is driven blindly on because
Of hunger’s heartless rage, while, with dry jaws,
The young ones wait at home, we, through the foe
And through their weapons venture on and go
To certain death straight through the town. Black night
Hovered with sheltering shade. Whoever might
Be able to describe the carnage there?
Or who cold with our labours make compare
With tears? The ancient city falls, so long
A queen. Now many corpses lie among 460
The streets, the homes, the shrines. The penalty
Is paid by others, too. Occasionally
Valour will fill once more a Trojan heart

And then a Grecian victor will depart
This life. Dismay abounds, and stark despair,
And countless shapes of death are everywhere,
Androgeus, with a great company
Of Greeks first meets us, reckoning that we
Are allies and at once, with welcoming
Words, he said: 'Why this long dawdling? 470
Quick, comrades! Others devastate and sack
Troy as she burns. Have you just now come back
From the tall ships?' He spoke. Immediately
He saw that there was no reply that he
Could trust and knew that these were foes. He tried
To check his words and movements, petrified.
As one who's crushed a snake unknowingly
In some rough briars while stepping solidly
Upon the ground and shrinks back in his dread –
It rises in its wrath, its purple head 480
Puffed out – just so, in fear, he stepped away.
Surrounding him and in a close array
We charged. Being unfamiliar with the ground
And overcome with panic, all around
They were cut down. In our first labour we
Were blessed by Fortune. Flushed with victory
And courage, then to us Coraebus cries:
"Where luck shows where the road to safety lies,
And shows her timely self, let's follow on;
Let's trade our shields and Grecian emblems don, 490
My friends. In war who'd question trickery
Or pluck? Our foes will give us weaponry.'

And then he dons the helmet of horse-hair
Of Androgeus, his shield, too, with its fair
Device, and then the Argive sword he strung
To his side. Ripheus, Dymas and all the young
Men copied him, all laughing with delight,
Each now with new-won spoils. In many a fight
We mingle with the Greeks till break of day
And have to many a soul disclosed the way 500
To Orcus. Some flee to the ships and race
To the safe shores, while others with a base
Terror ascend the massive horse to go
Once more into the womb that they well know.
But trusting the gods against their will is wrong.
See Priam's daughter being dragged along
By her lank hair out of Minerva's shrine
And temple. See Cassandra's bright eyes shine
As she lifts them – in vain, for she's confined,
Her tender hands bound tight. With maddened mind, 510
Coroebus cannot bear this sight and flies
Into the middle of these guards – and dies.
We follow, all of us, and, serried tight,
We charge. At first, though, from the temple's height
Our friends attack us and a piteous
Slaughter arises as they look at us,
Confused by those Greek crests. Then with a shout
Of rage at the maid's rescue, in a rout
They fall on us – Ajax most savagely,
The sons of Atreus, all the Dolopi. 520

As sometimes when a hurricane will crash,

Inciting diverse winds which then will clash,
West, South and East, proud of her steeds, even thus
The forests groan and foamy Nereus
Storms with his trident and stirs up the sea.
Appearing there as well were those whom we
Had routed in the night by stratagem
And harried through the city. All of them
Now knew our shields and arms were not our own
And that our voices had a different tone.
At once we were outnumbered; first to die,
Slain by Peneleus and left to lie
By the warrior-goddess's shrine was Coroebus,
The Ripheus, foremost in judiciousness
And (though the gods deemed otherwise) in right –
Hypanis, Dymas; nor could your virtue
Nor Phoebus' fillet, Panthus, shelter you
From death. O Trojan ashes! Butchery
Of all my kindred! In your destiny
Greek arms and answering blows I did not shun,
And, if the Fates had willed it, I had won
My death by my own warrior-work, I swear.
Peleus, Iphitus and I were torn from there.
Iphitus was burdened by the gravities
Of age and, by a wound from Ulysses,
Slow-footed; now at once a clamour brought
Us all to Priam's house. Here there were fought
Great battles, as if all hostilities

Elsewhere had no importance – only these –
And no-one else was perishing throughout

540

550

The city. We see Greeks rush in a rout
Up to the roofs, unbridled. Now we see
The doors packed with a superfluity
Of shields. Ladders hug the walls. Men force their way
To the rungs right there and with their left hands they
Hold up their shields to dodge the spears that fall
Upon them; with their right they clutch the wall.
The towers and palace-roof now, in their turn,
The Trojans tear down and – because they learn 560
That death is near – use them as arms. Their end
Is close, yet they are ready to defend
Themselves; the gilded rafters are all rolled
Down, splendours of their ancestors of old.
Swords drawn, some reach the doors below and throng
To guard them. We're enlivened, for we long
To aid the palace and to bring fresh might
To the men of Troy, now vanquished in the fight.
There was an entrance that had secret doors
Within the palace, running through the floors, 570
A gate apart, by which, when sovereignty
Existed, did wretched Andromache,
Alone, visit her in-laws with her lad,
Little Astyanax, that his granddad
Might see him. The roof's topmost heights I gain
Whence the poor Trojans threw their spears in vain.
A tower stood there, reaching to the sky,
Whence all Troy could be seen and one could spy
The Greek ships and their camp. This we attacked
With iron where all the topmost storeys lacked 580

Strong joints. We wrenched it from its apogee
And pushed it forward. Dropping suddenly,
It trailed a thunderous ruin and fell upon
The columns of the Trojans hither and yon.
Yet more appear: no surcease do we see
Of stones or any kind of weaponry.
Now Pyrrhus at the very entrance there
Stood proudly, gleaming in his armour's glare,
Just like a snake that comes into the light,
Having fed on poisonous herbs (cold winter's bite 590
Has kept him swollen underneath the earth),
His slough cast off, with fresh and glittering girth;
He rises, rolls his slippery length and starts
Towards the sun and from his mouth he darts
A three-forked tongue. With him Automedon,
His armour-bearer and the urger-on
Of Achilles' horses and huge Periphas;
With him, too, all the Scyrian youth amass
And hurl flames from the roof ad, with a burst,
His battle-axe in hand, among the first, 600
Pyrrhus breaks through the stubborn gate and reams
The hinge from the brass doors; one of the beams
He heaves out, piercing through the hard oak-wood
And makes a large, wide gap. There the house stood
Open to view, its lengthy halls exposed,
While Priam's inner chambers were disclosed
As well as those of Trojan kings of old,
And armed men could be seen at the threshold.
But inside there were shrieks and great uproar:

The house was in confusion; at its core 610

The vaulted halls with women's wailing rang,

The golden stars belaboured by that clang

Of voices. Through the great halls wandering,

The frightened matrons strayed, all fastening

Upon the doors and kissing them. But on

Pressed Pyrrhus with his father's might, and none

Could stay him, neither bar nor sentinel.

The gate through frequent battering now fell,

Each door wrenched from its hinge. Force finds a way:

The Greeks burst through; the foremost men they slay 620

And fill the whole wide space with soldiery.

No foaming river with such savagery

Has ever burst its dam and in its gush

Poured over the resisting banks to rush

On to the fields ferociously to sweep

Away the cattle and the folds that keep

Them safe. Upon the threshold there I spy

Neoptolemus, slaughter-mad, and the Atreidae,

Hecuba, her hundred daughters and the king,

Who lay among the altars, sullyng 630

The flames himself had hallowed. By the foe

Those fifty famous chambers were laid low –

The splendid hope of future progeny;

And the doors, proud of their golden treasury

Of foreign spoils; wherever there was no fire,

The Greeks held sway. Perhaps you will inquire

How Priam fared. When he had seen Troy's fall,

The doors wrenched off and in the very hall

The enemy, though many years had passed,
His armour, long disused, he vainly cast 640
Across his trembling back; his useless sword
He girded on then our sovereign lord
Rushed to his death. Beneath the open air
And in the house's very centre there
Was a large shrine and an ancient laurel-tree,
Which hugged the shrine and in its shadowy
Embrace clasped all of the household gods, and here
Hecuba and her daughters crouched in fear –
In vain! – all huddled close, just like a pack
Of doves that are swept forward by a black 650
Tornado, as they held the effigies,
As there they sat, of their divinities.
But Hecuba, when she espied the king,
The armour of his youth encircling
His frame, cried: 'Wretched husband, what mad plan
Urged you to don this armour, poor, poor man?
Where are you rushing to? Against the foe
Such aid we do not need – no, even though
My own Hector were with us here today.
Come here: this altar shall be our mainstay 660
Or you shall die with us.' With this she drew
The old man to her and upon a pew
She placed him. Lo! Through spears, through enemies
One of the sons of Priam, Polites,
Escaped the death that Pyrrhus would have brought
And, wounded, down long corridors he sought
Some safety through the empty halls. Pyrrhus

Pursued him eagerly, solicitous
To strike. He caught him, spearing him, and when
At last he came before his parents, then 670
He fell and, streaming blood, drew his last breath.
Priam, though he was closely grasped by death,
Did not hold back his voice as angrily
He cried: 'If Heaven possesses piety
To mark such misdeeds, may the gods remit
Due thanks to you and payment that is fit
For your foul sins, for you in front of me
Butchered my son and in impurity
Blemished a father's face. Not even so
Did famed Achilles use me as his foe - 680
Achilles who you falsely claim to be
Your father; he had the integrity
To reverence my rights and trust and gave
Me Hector's lifeless frame back from the grave
And sent me to my realm again. And here
The old man threw his weak and harmless spear,
Which from the clanging brass immediately
Recoiled and from the shield's boss bootlessly
Drooped down. Then Pyrrhus answered: 'You shall go
To Peleus' son, my father; let him know, 690
Indeed, my wicked deeds; and tell him, too,
Of vicious Neoptolemus. Now you
Shall die!' With this he dragged the trembling king,
Who in his poor son's gore was slithering,
Straight to the altar-stones; he grabbed his hair
With his left hand, then raised high in the air

With his right hand his bright sword, plunging fast
 Into his side. Thus Priam's die was cast.
 Thus was he doomed to see his city blaze,
 He who was Asia's king in better days, 700
 Who ruled many a nation, many a land.
 He lay, a massive trunk, upon the sand,
 Beheaded, just a nameless entity.
 A awful horror now encompassed me.
 I stood aghast as, right before my eyes,
 Appeared an apparition in the guise
 Of my dear father as I saw this king
 Of like age, cruelly wounded, exhaling
 His final breath; Creusa, too, forlorn,
 Appeared before me, then the house, now torn 710
 Of all it held, and little Iulus – dead.
 I look round and see all the forces spread
 About me. All had left me and, pell-mell,
 They flung their bodies to the ground and fell
 Into the flames, prostrate with lethargy.
 Now all alone near Venus' shrine I see
 Helen in hiding; bright fires give me light
 As there I roam and cast my wandering sight
 Upon the scene. In fear of Trojan gall 720
 And her forsaken husband's wrath – for she
 Was cursed by Troy *and* Greece – this misery
 Was crouching by the altars there, unseen.
 My heart was all a-flame and, in my spleen,
 I longed to avenge her sins and to requite
 The fall of Troy. Indeed, can it be right

That Sparta and Mycenae she should see
 Unscathed and, as a queen, triumphantly
 Go forth? And should she also see her house,
 Her parents and her children and her spouse? 730
 Shall Ilian maids and Phrygian pages tend
 To her? Shall King Priam have met his end
 By sword? Shall Troy have burned? The Dardan shore
 Be ever soaked in butchery? No! For,
 Though punishing a woman cannot be
 A glorious thing and such a victory
 Brings no renown, some praise my deeds will bring –
 For blotting out a stain and issuing
 Due recompense and some joy I shall find
 That with a burning vengeance has my mind 740
 Been filled and that I've forged indemnity
 That pays the ashes of my family.'
 These were my frenzied words just as my eyes
 Beheld my gracious mother in the guise
 Of the goddess as she's wont to be seen
 By Heaven in charm and stature) for she's been
 Never so radiant as through the night
 She now appeared). My hand she clutches tight
 And says through rosy lips: 'Son, tell me true,
 What is this bitterness that's stirring you? 750
 What is this rage? Where has your care of me
 Retired? Will you not first attempt to see
 Where you have left the aged Anchises,
 Your father, whether your wife Creusa sees
 The light yet and Ascanius, your boy?

Greek battle-lines encompass all of Troy.
The flames, but for the care that I afford,
Had swept them all away, the hostile sword
Drinking their blood. Tyndareus' progeny,
Helen, the object of your enmity, 760
Is not to blame; nor Paris either; no,
It is the pitiless gods that overthrow
Our wealth and topple Troy (for I will clear
The clouds away that in your eyes now blear
Your mortal vision; do not fear to heed
The orders of a mother – you have need
To mark her counsels), right here, where you see
Rocks torn from rocks and shattered masonry,
Where Neptune shakes the walls and each foundation,
Heaved by his mighty trident; devastation 770
Upsets the city. Here primarily
Fierce Juno holds the Skaian Gates as she,
Girded with steel, calls from the ships her band
Of allies. See Tritonian Pallas stand
Atop the citadel, her storm-cloud bright,
With her grim Gorgon, while auspicious might
And courage Jupiter gives the Greeks. The gods
Against the Trojan soldiery he prods.
Flee, son. Finish your toil. I'll not forsake
You ever and back to your home I'll take 780
You.' Thus she spoke. In the thick shades of night
She vanished. Dire visions filled my sight –
Great gods opposing Troy. All Ilium burned,
It seemed, and Neptune's Troy was overturned;

Just as on mountain-tops some woodsmen strain
 To topple an ancient ash, time and again
 Hacked at with steel and iron; threatening
 Ever to fall, its leafage trembling,
 It nods with rocking crest till, gradually
 Conquered by wounds, it falls eventually 790
 With one loud groan, torn from its roots, I go,
 Led by a god, and make my way through foe
 And fire; the flames recede, the arms succumb.
 Now when to the door of my father's house I'd come,
 My dear old home, my father whom I sought
 Primarily and whom I first had thought
 To take up the mountains, did not care
 To live, now Troy was vanquished, or to bear
 Exile. He cried out: "You whose blood flows free
 With youth an strength of native vigour, flee. 800
 If the gods had wished me to live longer, they
 Would have preserved my house. I've seen today
 Too much destruction. I have lived to know
 The fall of Troy. Bid me farewell and go
 And leave me to my grave. My end shall be
 By my own hand. The foe shall pity me
 And seek my spoils. The loss of burial
 Is trifling. I am dispensable,
 Spurned by the gods, and an eternity
 I've lived since Jupiter breathed upon me 810
 With his bolt's winds and burned me.' Thus he kept
 On speaking, quite unshaken. We all wept,
 My wife Creüsa and Ascanius

And all the house, begging that he'd heed us
And not bring all to nought with his demise
And add weight to our sore doom. He denies
To change, remaining where he lay. Then I
Rushed back into the fray, prepared to die
In my great grief. What chance, what strategy
Was left me now? 'Could you think this of me, 820
Father, that I could leave you? Could that thought,
That monstrous thought fall from your lips? If naught
Must stay in splendid Troy according to
The gods and if this purpose stays with you
To add to its demise yourself and all
Your kin, the gate is open for your fall.
Then will come Pyrrhus, steeped in Priam's gore,
The man who slaughtered Hector right before
His father's eyes and then his father, too,
There at the altars. Was it for this that you, 830
My gracious mother, through the weaponry
And fired saved me just that I may see
The foe in Ilium's centre and my son,
My father and my wife, in unison
Slain in each other's blood? Bring weapons, men.
Life's last light calls the vanquished. Give me, then,
Back to the Greeks; let me renew the fray.
Not unrequited shall we die today.'
I took my sword once more and clasped my shield
And, as I hurried to the battlefield, 840
Creüsa clung to the threshold as she
Grasped both my feet while holding out to me

Little Iulus, saying: 'If you still insist
 On dying, take us with you – we'll resist
 No fate. But if through past experience
 You have some hope in arms, provide defence
 First for this house. To whom shall we be left –
 Our boy, your father, I, who'll be bereft
 Of him I once called husband?' Weeping, she
 Filled all the house with moaning Suddenly 850
 A wondrous portent rose. Lo, in between
 The grieving parents, casting forth a sheen,
 A slender tongue of flame above the head
 Of Iulus could be seen; harmless, it fed
 Upon his temples, licking his soft hair.
 Trembling with fear, as it was blazing there,
 We quickly tried to shake it from the boy
 And quench the holy fire. Bit, with joy,
 Anchises raised his eyes up to the sky,
 Lifting his arms, and said: 'Lord Jove on high, 860
 If prayers can move you, this is my one plea –
 Look upon us and, if our piety
 Earns it, then ratify this portent.' He
 Had barely said these words when suddenly
 It thundered on the left and then from high
 Above there fell a star out of the sky
 Straight through the gloom amid a flood of light
 And drew a fiery trail There in our sight
 It slid across the palace-roof and hid
 In the Idaean forest; as it did, 870
 It marked a path; the long track shed a glare;

There was the reek of sulphur everywhere.
 My father rose then, vanquished by this sight,
 Greeted the gods and to this holy light
 Made worship. 'No delay! I follow you.
 Gods of my fathers, save my home, save, too,
 My grandson. By this you have shown direction.
 Thus Troy is standing under your protection.
 I yield, son, and go with you.' This to me
 He said. Through Troy by now more thunderously 880
 The blaze was heard, the fiery flood of red
 Yet closer. 'Climb upon my back, ' I said,
 'Dear father. I'll sustain you. I shall bear
 This labour easily. We both shall share
 A common threat, however things may be.
 Let little Iulus come along with me,
 My wife afar behind us in our wake.
 Servants, heed what I tell you – as you make
 Your way out of our Ilium, a mound
 And forlorn old Ceres' shrine will be found 890
 And, close by this, an ancient cypress-tree
 Long kept by our ancestors' piety.
 For this goal we shall make by diverse ways.
 You, father, take in hand the Penates
 And sacred things; for me it is not right
 To touch them, fresh from such a slaughterous fight,
 Till in a running stream I'm purified.'
 A tawny lion's pelt across my wide
 Shoulders and on my lowered neck I spanned,
 Then took my burden. Into my right hand 900

Little Iulus clasped his own and followed me
With his small steps, my wife behind us. We
Passed through the shadows, I, who until now
Was not afraid of weapons nor of how
The Greeks attacked me, now was terrified
By every breeze, the noises on each side
Of us, feared for the burden that I carried,
Young Iulus and the lady I had married.
Nearing the gates, I thought that I had gone
The whole way when a noise crowded upon 910
My ears – of marching feet. Trying to peer
Through all the gloom my father said: “They’re near.
Flee, son. Bright shields and glowing brass I see.’
When he said this, some hostile agency
Snatched my distracted wits. For as I go
Down byways and down paths I do not know,
Does Creüsa, through some unhappy fate,
Just stop or wander from the path, prostrate?
I do not know, but never again was she
Restored to us. I never turn to see 920
Where she has gone or give her any thought
Until we come up to the mound we sought
And ancient Ceres’ hallowed home. There she
Alone was missing from our company.
Whom in my frenzy of all gods and men
Did I not blame for lost Creüsa then?
In vanquished Troy what was more piteous
To see? Commending now Ascanius,
Anchises, and the household gods as well,

To my companions, in a wooded dell 930

I hid them; back to Troy I go once more

And don my glistening arms, prepared for war,

Resolved for every danger and to face

Each threat throughout the city. First, I trace

My steps back to the walls and dark gateway

Which I had left and closely I survey

The in the darkness. Everywhere my heart

Feels panic – even the silence makes me start!

Homeward I turn to see if possibly

She had returned there. But the Danaï 940

Have filled the house. A ravening fire, blown by

The wind, rolls to the rooftops, towering high.

The hot blast roars above. Then on I roam

To see the citadel and Priam's home

Once more. But in the empty sanctuary

Of Juno I can see the custody

Of booty is left to fierce Ulysses

And Phoenix. Here the Trojan treasures,

Torn from the blazing shrines, the dishes wrought

Of solid gold, the gown that plunder bought, 950

The tables of the gods were there amassed.

Trembling dames and boys stood in a vast

Array. I dared to shout down every lane

Into the darkness: again and again

In vain I sadly called upon my spouse.

But as I madly went from house to house,

Her ghost appeared before me, though in shape

Larger than I had known. I stood agape,

My hair on end, helpless to speak. Thus she
Addressed me, salving my anxiety: 960
“What use, sweet spouse, is it to give in thus
To this mad grief? What has befallen us
The gods decided. In your company
To take Creüsa simply must not be.
Lord Jupiter forbids it. A long exile
Waits for you: you must plough through many a mile
Of ocean. Then Hesperia you’ll find,
Where you may see the Lydian Tiber wind
With gentle sweep through fertile meadowland.
You’re promised happy days, dominion and 970
A regal wife. Please do not weep for me.
For the proud houses of the Dolopi
And Myrmidons I’ll not see nor shall go
To be the slave of Grecian matrons. No,
A Trojan dame am I and, furthermore,
Queen Venus’ daughter-in-law. Upon this shore
The mighty mother of the gods holds me.
Farewell. Cherish our child.’ She spoke to me,
Then left me as I wept and longed to say
So many things. But she had drawn away 980
Into thin air. Three times I tried to throw
My arms about her neck, and those three times
Her image, vainly clasped, eluded me,
Just like light winds and swift dreams. Finally
At dawn I go back to my friends and here
I am surprised to see new friends appear –
Both men and mothers, a sad, streaming tide,

Gathered for exile, drawn from every side,
With hearts and fortunes set to sail where I
Would take them. Now the day-star in the sky
On Ida's topmost ridge brought in the day.
The Greeks had blocked the gates and barred our way.
There was no hope of help. Relenting, I
Resumed my load and sought the peaks up high.

