

Vergil's Aeneid VI.98-211

- 98 Talibus ex adyto dictis Cumaea Sibylla
With such [words] having been spoken, the Cumaean Sibyl sings from the inner shrine
- 99 horrendas canit ambages antroque remugit,
the dire mysteries and roars in the cave,
- 100 obscuris vera involuens: ea frena furenti
enfolding the truths in dark [things]: Apollo
- 101 concutit et stimulos sub pectore vertit Apollo.
shakes the reins for the one raging and turns his spurs under her chest.
- 102 Ut primum cessit furor et rabida ora quierunt,
As at first the madness yielded and the raving mouths were quiet,
- 103 incipit Aeneas heros: "Non ulla laborum,
Aeneas the hero begins: "Oh maiden, not any new or unexpected face
- 104 o virgo, nova mi facies inopinave surgit;
of labors rises for me;
- 105 omnia praecepi atque animo mecum ante peregi.
I have anticipated all things and have finished [them] already with me in my mind.
- 106 Unum oro: quando hic inferni ianua regis
One thing I beg: since the door of the infernal king
- 107 dicitur et tenebrosa palus Acheronte refuso,
is said to be here and the shadowy swamp with the Acheron having been poured back,
- 108 ire ad conspectum cari genitoris et ora
to go to the sight of my dear father and that one may touch his face;
- 109 contingat; doceas iter et sacra ostia pandas.
may you teach the journey and open the sacred mouths [of Hades].
- 110 Illum ego per flammas et mille sequentia tela
I have snatched him through the flames and 1000 following weapons
- 111 eripui his umeris medioque ex hoste recepi;
with these shoulders and rescued him from the midst of the enemy;
- 112 ille meum comitatus iter maria omnia mecum
he having accompanied my journey [through] all the seas with me
- 113 atque omnes pelagique minas caelique ferebat,
and was bearing all the threats of both sea and sky,
- 114 invalidus, vires ultra sortemque senectae.
weak, beyond his strength and the portion of old age.
- 115 Quin, ut te supplex peterem et tua limina adirem,
Indeed, that I should seek you as a suppliant and come to your thresholds,
- 116 idem orans mandata dabat. Gnatique patrisque,

the same man beseeching used to give the orders.

- 117 alma, precor, miserere (potes namque omnia, nec te
Have pity on both the son and the father, kind one, I pray (for you are able [to do] all things, nor
- 118 nequiquam lucis Hecate praefecit Avernus),
did Hecate set you over the groves of Avernus in vain),
- 119 si potuit manes accersere coniugis Orpheus
if Orpheus was able to summon the soul[s] of his wife,
- 120 Threicia fretus cithara fidibusque canoris,
relying on the Thracian harp and the faithful tunes,
- 121 si fratrem Pollux alterna morte redemit
if Pollux redeemed his brother by alternating death
- 122 itque reditque viam totiens. Quid Thesea, magnum
and both goes and returns [on] the road as many times / the same amount of times. Why should I recall Theseus,
- 123 quid memorem Alciden? Et mi genus ab Iove summo.”
[or] great Hercules? The race from highest Jove is also to me / mine.”
- 124 Talibus orabat dictis arasque tenebat,
Having spoken such [words] he was begging and was holding the altars,
- 125 cum sic orsa loqui vates: “sate sanguine divum,
when thus the prophetess began to speak: “one born from the blood of gods,
- 126 Tros Anchisiade, facilis descensus Averno:
Trojan son of Anchises, the descent to Avernus is easy;
- 127 noctes atque dies patet atri ianua Ditis;
nights and days the door of black Dis lies open;
- 128 sed revocare gradum superasque evadere ad auras,
but to recall one’s step and to escape to the airs above,
- 129 hoc opus, hic labor est. Pauci, quos aequus amavit
this is the task, this is the labor. Few, whom
- 130 Iuppiter aut ardens evexit ad aethera virtus,
impartial Jupiter loved or burning valor bore aloft to the upper-airs,
- 131 dis geniti potuere. Tenent media omnia silvae,
begotten of the gods, have been able [to go and come back]. All the middle of the forests holds [it],
- 132 Cocytusque sinu labens circumvenit atro.
and the Cocytus gliding goes around [it] in a black bay.
- 133 Quod si tantus amor menti, si tanta cupido est
Which thing, if the love is so great to your mind, if the desire is so great,
- 134 bis Stygios innare lacus, bis nigra videre
to swim the Stygian lakes twice, twice to see black
- 135 Tartara, et insano iuvat indulgere labori,
Tartarus, and [if] it is pleasing to indulge in this insane labor,

136 accipe quae peragenda prius. Latet arbore opaca
accept what things must be accomplished first. In a shady tree lies hidden

137 aureus et foliis et lento vimine ramus,
a bough, golden both in leaves and in flexible twig,

138 Iunoni infernae dictus sacer; hunc tegit omnis
said [to be] sacred to infernal Juno [i.e. Proserpina]; the whole grove protects this

139 lucus et obscuris claudunt convallibus umbrae.
and shadows enclose [it] with dark valleys.

140 Sed non ante datur telluris operta subire
But it is not given/ allowed to go beneath the mysteries of the earth before

141 auricomos quam quis decerpserit arbore fetus.
someone will have plucked the golden growth from the tree.

142 hoc sibi pulchra suum ferri Proserpina munus
This her gift beautiful Proserpina has established to be brought to her.

143 instituit. Primo avulso non deficit alter
With the first one torn off, another golden [bough] does not fail [to grow],

144 aureus, et simili frondescit virga metallo.
and a branch of similar metal sprouts.

145 ergo alte vestiga oculis et rite repertum
Therefore seize with the hand on high [the branch] having been sought out with eyes and properly found;

146 carpe manu; namque ipse volens facilisque sequetur,
for it will follow willing and easy,

147 si te fata vocant; aliter non viribus ullis
if the fates call you; otherwise you will not be able

148 vincere nec duro poteris convellere ferro.
to conquer it by any strenght nor to tear it off with hard iron.

149 Praeterea iacet exanimus tibi corpus amici
Besides, the lifeless body of your friend lies for you

150 (heu nescis) totamque incestat funere classem,
(alas, you do not know) and defiles the whole fleet with his death,

151 dum consulta petis nostroque in limine pendes.
while you seek the oracles and hang in our threshold.

152 Sedibus hunc refer ante suis et conde sepulcro.
Carry this one back first to his homes and hide him in a tomb.

153 Duc nigras pecudes; ea prima piacula sunt.
Lead black animals; let there be first expiations.

154 Sic demum lucos Stygis et regna invia vivis
Thus at last may you see the groves of the Styx and the kingdoms pathless for the living.”

155 aspicias.” Dixit, pressoque obmutuit ore.

She said [this], and became silent, her mouth having been controlled.

156 Aeneas maesto defixus lumina vultu

Aeneas having cast down his eyes with a sad face

157 ingreditur linquens antrum, caecosque volutat

goes forth leaving the cave, and turns over the dark

158 eventus animo secum. Cui fidus Achates

events with himself in his mind. To whom faithful Achates

159 it comes et paribus curis vestigia figit.

goes as a companion and fixes his footsteps with equal cares.

160 Multa inter sese vario sermone serebant,

They were discussing many things between themselves in different conversation,

161 quem socium exanimum vates, quod corpus humanum

[such as] who the dead companion was, what body unburied the prophetess was speaking about.

162 diceret. Atque illi Misenum in litore sicco,

And those [men] see Misenus on the dry shore,

163 ut venere, vident indigna morte peremptum,

as they came, destroyed by unworthy death,

164 Misenum Aeoliden, quo non praestantior alter

Misenus descendant of Aeolus, than whom no other was more outstanding

165 aere ciere viros Martemque accendere cantu.

[at] stirring up men with the trumpet and kindling Mars [war] with his song.

166 Hectoris hic magni fuerat comes, Hectora circum

This man had been the companion of great Hector,

167 et lituo pugnas insignis obibat et hasta.

and entered battles marked by his trumpet and the Hectorean spear.

168 Postquam illum vita victor spoliavit Achilles,

After the victor Achilles despoiled him [Hector] of his life,

169 Dardanio Aeneae sese fortissimus heros

he had added himself, a most brave hero, to Trojan Aeneas as a companion,

170 addiderat socium, non inferiora secutus.

having followed not inferior things.

171 Sed tum, forte cava dum personat aequora concha,

But then, when by chance he makes the seas resound with a hollow conch shell,

172 demens, et cantu vocat in certamina divos,

raving, and calls the gods into contests with song,

173 aemulus exceptum Triton, si credere dignum est,

jealous Triton, if it is worthy to believe,

174 inter saxa virum spumosa immerserat unda.

had drowned the man caught among the rocks in a foamy wave.

175 Ergo omnes magno circum clamore fremebant,
Therefore they all were lamenting around [him] with a great uproar,

176 praecipue pius Aeneas. Tum iussa Sibyllae,
especially dutiful Aeneas. Then, with hardly a delay,

177 haud mora, festinant flentes aramque sepulcri
they hurry weeping [to perform] the orders of the Sibyl, and to heap up an altar of a tomb,

178 congerere arboribus caeloque educere certant.
and they struggle to lead out with trees to the sky.

179 Itur in antiquam silvam, stabula alta ferarum;
It is gone into the old forest, the high lairs of wild beasts;

180 procumbunt piceae, sonat icta securibus ilex
pitch-pines fall, the holm-oak resounds its strikes with axes

181 fraxineaeque trabes cuneis et fissile robur
and ashen beams in blocks and cleavable oak

182 scinditur, advolvunt ingentes montibus ornos.
is cut, they turn the huge ash-trees to the mountains.

183 Nec non Aeneas opera inter talia primus
Nor does Aeneas foremost among such works fail

184 hortatur socios paribusque accingitur armis.
to urge his companions and is girded with equal weapons.

185 Atque haec ipse suo tristi cum corde volutat
And he himself rolls these things over with his sad heart,

186 aspectans silvam immensam, et sic forte precatur:
looking at the huge forest, and thus by chance he prays:

187 “Si nunc se nobis ille aureus arbore ramus
If now that golden bough might show itself to us in the tree,

188 ostendat nemore in tanto! Quando omnia vere
in such a great grove! Since the priestess

189 heu nimium de te vates, Misene, locuta est.”
alas spoke too truly all things about you, Misenus.”

190 Vix ea fatus erat, geminae cum forte columbae
Scarcely had he said these things, when by chance twin doves

191 ipsa sub ora viri caelo venere volantes,
came flying under the mouths themselves of the man in the sky,

192 et viridi sedere solo. Tum maximus heros
and sat on the green ground. Then the very great hero

193 maternas agnovit aves laetusque precatur:
recognized the maternal birds and, happy, prays,

194 “Este duces, o, si qua via est, cursumque per auras
May you be the leaders, oh, if there is any way, and guide my course through

- 195 derigite in lucos ubi pinguem dives opacat
in the groves where the rich branch shades the fertile ground.
- 196 ramus humum. Tuque, o, dubiis ne defice rebus,
And you, oh, divine parent, do not fail in doubtful things."
- 197 diva parens." Sic effatus vestigia pressit
Thus having spoken he presses his footsteps
- 198 observans quae signa ferant, quo tendere pergant.
observing what signs they bring, to hold [his course] where they proceed.
- 199 Pascentes illae tantum prodire volando
The feeding ones were able to advance by flying
- 200 quantum acie possent oculi servare sequentum.
only so far as the following one [could] maintain [them] in sight of his eye.
- 201 Inde ubi venere ad fauces grave olentis Averni,
Thence when they came to the jaws of Avernus stinking foully,
- 202 tollunt se celeres liquidumque per aera lapsae
they lift themselves swift and having glided through the clear air
- 203 sedibus optatis gemina super arbore sidunt,
settle on the chosen seats above the double tree,
- 204 discolor unde auri per ramos aura refulsit.
whence the different colored air shone through the branches of gold.
- 205 Quale solet silvis brumali frigore viscum
What sort of mistletoe is accustomed in the forests in frozen winter
- 206 fronde virere nova, quod non sua seminat arbos,
to flourish with new leaf, which the tree does not produce from its own [seed],
- 207 et croceo fetu teretes circumdare truncos,
and by the yellow shoot to encircle the smooth trunks,
- 208 talis erat species auri frondentis opaca
such was the sight of the golden frond in the shady
- 209 ilice, sic leni crepitabat brattea vento.
holm-oak, thus did the foil rustle in the gentle wind.
- 210 Corripit Aeneas extemplo avidusque refringit
Aeneas grabs it immediately and, eager, breaks off
- 211 cunctantem, et vatis portat sub tecta Sibyllae.
the delaying thing, and carries it under the roofs of the prophetess Sibyl.