Of wars across Emathian plains, worse than civil wars, and of legality conferred on crime we sing, and of a mighty people attacking its own guts with victorious sword-hand, of kin facing kin, and, once the pact of tyranny was broken, of conflict waged with all the forces of the shaken world for universal guilt, and of standards ranged in enmity against standards, of eagles matched and javelins threatening javelins.

What madness was this, O citizens? What this excessive freedom with the sword—to offer Latian blood to hated nations? And when proud Babylon was there to be stripped of Ausonian trophies and when Crassus wandered with his ghost unavenged, did you choose to wage wars which would bring no triumphs? A bitter thought—how much of earth and sea might have been won with this blood shed by the hands of fellow-citizens:

where Titan rises, where Night conceals the star,
where midday blazes with its scorching regions,
where winter, still and never eased by spring,
binds with Scythian chill the icy Pontus!

Beneath our yoke already the Seres and barbarian Araxes could have come and the race, if it exists, which knows Nile's birth.

If your love of an abominable war is so great, Rome, only when you have brought the entire world beneath the laws of Latium,
turn your hand against yourself; not yet are you without an enemy. But now the walls are tumbling in the towns of Italy, the houses half-destroyed, and, the defences collapsed, the huge stones lie; no guardian occupies the homes and in the ancient cities wanders only an occasional inhabitant; Hesperia bristles now with thorns, unploughed through many a year, lacking the hands for fields which demand them—

the author of such a great calamity will prove to be not you, fierce Pyrrhus, nor the Carthaginian; no foreign sword has ever penetrated
so: it is wounds inflicted by the hand of fellow-citizen that have sunk deep.

But if the Fates could find no other way for Nero's coming, if eternal kingdoms are purchased by the gods at great cost, if heaven could serve its Thunderer only after wars with the ferocious Giants, then we have no complaint, O gods; for this reward we accept even these crimes and guilt; though Pharsalia fill its dreadful plains, though the Carthaginian's shade with blood be sated; though the final battle be joined at fatal Munda; though added to these horrors, Caesar, be the famine of Perusia and the struggles of Mutina, the fleets overwhelmed near rugged Leucas, and the slave wars under burning Etna, yet Rome owes much to citizens' weapons, because it was for you that all was done.

You, when your duty is fulfilled and finally you seek the stars, will be received in your chosen palace of heaven, with the sky rejoicing. Whether you choose to wield the sceptre or to mount the flaming chariot of Phoebe and to circle with moving fire the earth entirely unperturbed by the transference of the sun, every deity will yield to you, to your decision nature will leave which god you wish to be, where to set your kingdom of the universe. But choose your seat neither in the northern sphere nor where the torrid sky of opposing south sinks down: from these positions you would view your Rome with star aslant. If you press on either side of the boundless ether, the sky will feel the weight: maintain the mass of heaven poised in the sphere's mid-point; let that part of the clear ether be wholly empty, let no clouds bar our view of Caesar. Then may humankind lay down its weapons and care for itself and every nation love one another; may Peace be sent throughout the world and close the iron temple-gates of warring Janus. But already to me you are deity, and if I as bard receive you in my breast, no wish have I to trouble the god who has control of Cirra's secrets or to distract Bacchus from Nysa: you are enough to give me strength for Roman song.

My spirit leads me to reveal the causes of such great events,

and an immense task is opened up—to tell what drove a maddened people to war, to tell what cast out peace from the world. It was the envious chain of destiny, impossibility of the very high standing long, huge collapses under too much weight, Rome's inability to bear herself. So, when the final hour brings to an end the long ages of the universe, its structure dissolved, reverting to primeval chaos, then fiery stars will plunge into the sea, the earth will be unwilling to stretch flat her shores and will shake the water off, Phoebe will confront her brother and for herself demand the day, resentful of driving her chariot along its slanting orbit, and the whole discordant mechanism of universe torn apart will disrupt its own laws. Mighty structures collapse on to themselves: for prosperity the powers have set this limit to growth. And not to any outside race does Fortune lend her spite against a people powerful by land and sea. You were the cause of ruin, Rome, made common property of masters three, and tyranny's ill-omened pact, never shared among a crowd. O you men, so evilly in union and blinded by excessive desire, why do you choose to combine your forces and rule the world in common? As long as earth supports the sea and air the earth, as long as Titan revolves in his lengthy toils and in the sky night follows day through all the constellations, there will be no loyalty between associates in tyranny and no power will tolerate a partner. Do not rely on any foreign races or seek examples of destiny afar: Rome's first walls were drenched with a brother's blood; nor were land and sea the prize of such great madness then: the small Asylum set at variance its masters.

For a narrow time discordant concord remained and there was peace, though not by the leaders' wish: the only check to future war was Crassus in between. Just as the slender Isthmus, which cuts the waves and separates twin seas and stops the waters meeting, if its land receded, would smash Ionian Sea against Aegean: such was Crassus—he kept apart the leaders' savage weapons. But when in lamentable death he stained Assyrian Carthae with Latian blood, the Parthian disaster unleashed Roman madness. More by that battle you achieved than you suppose, sons of Arsaces: to the conquered you gave civil war.
Power was divided by the sword, and a mighty people’s prosperity, holding land and sea, the entire world, was not big enough for two. For Julia, cut off by the cruel hand of the Parcae, took to the shades below the bond of joined blood, the wedding-torches doomed by grim omen. But if destiny had granted you a longer stay in the light, alone you could have here restrained your frenzied husband, here your frenzied father, thrown away their swords and joined their armed hands, as Sabine women in between joined fathers—with their sons-in-law. By your death the alliance was shattered and the leaders felt free to commence the war.

Rivalry in excellence spurs them on.

That fresh exploits will overshadow former triumphs and victory over pirates give place to Gallic conquests, this, Magnus, is your fear; Caesar, you are roused by your long chain of tasks, experience of toil and your fortune not enduring second place; Caesar cannot now bear anyone ahead nor Pompey any equal. Who more justly took up weapons is forbidden knowledge; each has on his side a great authority: the conquering cause the gods, the conquered Cato.

They met not equally matched. One with years declining towards old age and grown milder through long experience of civil life had now in peace learnt the general’s part, and, seeking fame, was generous to the crowd, wholly driven by the popular winds, rejoicing in applause in the theatre he had built, and without restoring his strength afresh, he relied chiefly on his former fortune. He stands, the shadow of a great name; like in a fruitful field a lofty oak, bearing the people’s spoils of old and generals’ hallowed dedications; clinging with roots no longer strong, by its own weight it stands firm, and spreading naked branches through the air, it makes shade with trunk, not foliage; and though it totters, ready to fall beneath the first Eurus, though all around so many trees upraise themselves with sturdy trunks, yet it alone is venerated. Contrast Caesar: he had not only a general’s name and reputation, but never-resting energy; his only shame was conquering without war;

fierce, indomitable, wherever hope and indignation called he moved to action, never shrank from defiling his sword, he followed up his own successes, pressed hard upon the deity’s favour, driving back all obstacles to his high ambitions and rejoicing to create his path by destruction. Just so flashes out the thunderbolt shot forth by the winds through clouds, accompanied by the crashing of the heavens and sound of shattered ether; it splits the sky and terrifies the panicked people, searing eyes with slanting flame; against its own precincts it rages, and, with nothing solid stopping its course, both as it falls and then returns great is the devastation dealt far and wide before it gathers again its scattered fires.

These were the leaders’ motives; but in the state there also lay the seeds of war, which always have engulfed powerful peoples. For when Rome had subdued the world and Fortune introduced excessive wealth, when morals gave way before prosperity, when booty and the plunder from the enemy urged luxurious life, then there was no limit to gold and houses, and hunger spurned the tables of former times; clothes hardly decent for young wives to wear were seized upon by men; warrior-bearing poverty they shun, and from all the world import the bane of every nation; next their fields’ boundaries they prolonged and joined, and under unknown tenant-farmers they stretched out far the lands once ploughed by the hard share of Camillus and worked by ancient spades of the Curii. This people could not take pleasure in tranquil peace or be satisfied by liberty with weapons untouched. That was the cause of passions quickly roused, of crime despicable urged by want; it was an honour great and to be sought by sword, to have more power than the state; the yardstick of legality was violence—hence the forcing through of laws and rulings of the plebs; tribunes, consuls alike disrupting justice; hence the Rods of office seized by bribery, the people selling its own votes, corruption bringing death to Rome, repeating annual contests on the mercenary Campus; hence ravenous money-lending, interest greedy for its appointed time, and credit shaken and war advantageous to many.
Now swiftly Caesar had surmounted the icy Alps and in his mind conceived immense upheavals, coming war. When he reached the water of the little Rubicon, clearly to the leader through the murky night appeared a mighty image of his country in distress, grief in her face, her white hair streaming from her tower-crowned head; with tresses torn and shoulders bare she stood before him and sighing said: 'Where further do you march? Where do you take my standards, warriors? If lawfully you come, if as citizens, this far only is allowed.' Then trembling struck the leader's limbs, his hair grew stiff, and weakness checked his progress, holding his feet at the river's edge.

At last he speaks: 'O Thunderer, surveying great Rome's walls from the Tarpeian Rock; O Phrygian house-gods of Iulus' clan and mysteries of Quirinus, who was carried off to heaven; O Jupiter of Latium, seated in lofty Alba, and hearths of Vesta; O Rome, the equal of the highest deity, favour my plans. Not with impious weapons do I pursue you—here am I, Caesar, conqueror by land and sea, your own soldier everywhere, now too if I am permitted. The man who makes me your enemy, it is he will be the guilty one.'

Then he broke the barriers of war and through the swollen river quickly took his standards. Just so in torrid Libya's barren fields the lion, on seeing his enemy at hand, crouches in hesitation till he has concentrated all his anger; next he goads himself with fiercely lashing tail, his mane is bristling, from his massive jaws deep he roars—then if a lance, hurled by a swift Moor, or hunting-spears pierce and stick in his broad chest, ignoring such a terrible wound he rushes onward, driving the weapon deeper.

The ruddy Rubicon flows forth from a tiny spring and in summer's burning heat moves with meagre waters; through the valley's depths it snakes and separates the Gallic fields from the farmers of Ausonia, a fixed boundary. But at that time winter was strengthening it, its waters had been swollen by rainy Cynthia with laden crescent for three nights running and by the Alpine snows melted in the moist blasts of Eurus. First the cavalry is drawn up aslant the stream to take the waters' force, then the remaining throng passes through the unresisting waters of the river broken now—an easy ford. When Caesar had crossed the flood and reached the opposite bank, on Hesperia's forbidden fields he took his stand and said: 'Here I abandon peace and desecrated law; Fortune, it is you I follow. Farewell to treaties from now on; I have relied on them for long enough; now war must be our referee.'

With these words, the leader pushed his army through night's darkness tirelessly, swifter than the whirled thong of Balearic sling or the Parthian's arrow shot over his shoulder: with menace he invaded Ariminum when the stars were fleeing the fires of the sun and only Lucifer was left. And now arose the day which would witness war's first turmoil, but clouds confined the mournful light, perhaps by wish of the gods, perhaps driven by the stormy Auster. In the captured forum the soldiers halted at the order to set down the standards, and strident clarion and shrill trumpet with raucous bugle sounded the impious alarm. The people's rest was broken, and summoned from their beds the menfolk tore down weapons hanging by the holy house-gods—such as they are after lengthy peace: the shields they grab are rotting now with frame exposed, the javelins' points are crooked and the swords are rough with bite of dark rust. When they recognized the gleam of Roman eagles, Roman standards and caught a sight of Caesar towering among his troops, they stiffened in fear, their icy limbs were seized by terror, and in their breasts they silently turned over unuttered complaints: 'O how unlucky are these city-walls, established next to Gauls, doomed by bitter position! Throughout all peoples deep peace reigns, tranquility, but we are madmen's victims, their first halt. Fortune, better you had granted us a home beneath the eastern sky or icy Arctos or wandering abodes than to guard the gate of Latium. We were the first to witness movements of Senones, the Cimbrian attack, the Libyan war-god, and the charge of frenzied Teuton: whenever Fortune challenges Rome, this is the path of war.' Thus each with stifled sigh, not daring to expose his fear; no utterance was entrusted to their grief, but deep the silence—so when winter checks the birds, the fields are hushed, and so mid-sea is mute,
unmurmuring.

Day had dissipated night’s chill shadows
and now the Fates put to his undecided mind the torch of war
and goads which urge to battle, so breaking
all the barriers of restraint; Fortune works to justify
the leader’s moves and finds pretexts for fighting.
The Senate-house had threatened and expelled the turbulent tribunes
from a Rome divided, violating their rights and bragging of the
Gracchi’s doom.
As they headed for their leader’s standards, now brought close to Rome,
with them came the reckless Curio and his mercenary tongue
—once the people’s voice, he dared to champion
liberty, to level with the people armed grandees.
And when he noticed Caesar turning in his breast conflicting
worries, he says: ‘While with my voice I could assist
your party, Caesar—when I had the right to hold
the Rostrum and bring over wavering citizens to your side,
I extended your command, against the Senate’s wish.
But now that laws are silent under war’s constraint,
we are driven from our ancestral homes and suffer exile,
willingly—your victory will make us citizens again.
While the other side in panic has not fortified its strength,
end delay! Procrastination always harms the men prepared for action.

For twice five years Gaul kept you fighting
—such a tiny part of the world! If you wage a few battles
with favourable outcome, yours will be the world subdued by Rome.
But as it is, when you return, no long triumphant march awaits you,
the consecrated laurel crown is not required by the Capitol:
devouring spite denies you everything, and for subduing foreign races
you will scarcely escape punishment. To thrust from power his
father-in-law
is the son-in-law's decision; share the world with him you cannot,
rule alone you can.’ By these words he much inflamed
his general and increased his indignation, though Caesar anyway
was keen for war—as much as the Elean race-horse
is aroused by the shouting, and though enclosed in starting-gate
he already reaches for the door and pressing forward loosens the bars.

Immediately he summons his armed companies to the standards

and, once the agitated uproar of assembling throng was quelled
sufficiently by his look and silence ordered by his hand, he said:
‘O comrades in battle, veterans with me of warfare’s
thousand perils, for ten years now victorious,
is this your prize for blood poured out in northern fields
and wounds and death and winters spent beneath the Alps?
By warfare’s vast commotion Rome is shaken
just as though the Carthaginian were crossing the Alps,
Hannibal: the cohorts are filled to strength with recruits,
every wood is felled for the fleet, the order has gone out:
‘By land and sea go after Caesar.’ What would they do if my standards
lay subdued in defeat and the fierce Gallic peoples
were charging at our backs? It is now I am assailed, now
when Fortune grants prosperity to me and gods are summoning me
to the heights. Let them come to war—their leader, weakened
by long peace, with makeshift troops, his civilian partisans,
verbose Marcellus and those empty names, the Catios.
I ask you—shall Pompey’s lowest minions, bought,
bestow on him his fill of power unbroken through so many years?
Shall Pompey guide triumphal chariots although his age does not
allow it?

Shall Pompey never yield the privileges he once usurped?
Why need I now bemoan his limitation of grain through all the world
and famine made his slave? Who does not know how soldiers
infiltrated the trembling Forum, when the dreadful glitter of swords
ringed the frightened court, not the usual audience,
when soldiers dared break through the rule of law,
when Pompey’s standards hemmed in Milo the accused?
Now too, afraid that obscure old age will confine him in his weariness,
impious battles he plans, accustomed to civil war,
—Sulla’s pupil, he surpasses his instructor in crime.
And as the wild tigers in the Hyrcanian forest
traversing their mothers’ haunts, fed deep on blood
of cattle slain, never cease from slaughter,
so too, Magnus, grown accustomed to licking Sulla’s sword,
your thirst endures. Blood, once tasted,
ever lets the defiled throat return to gentle ways.
What end will such long tyranny yet find?
What limit is there to his crimes? Presumptuous man, now let
your Sulla at least teach you to step down from this reign.
After wandering Cilicians and Pontic battles with the war-worn king with difficulty finished off by barbaric poison, shall Caesar be the ultimate task of Pompey, because I did not obey his order to lay down my victorious eagles? If I am robbed of my reward for toil, then let my men at least be granted recompense of lengthy warfare, without their leader; under whatever general let these troops have their triumph. And after war what refuge will they have in feeble age? What home for their retirement? What fields will be given for my veterans to plough? What city—walls for men worn out? Or will your pirates, Magnus, make better farmers? Men, raise your standards long victorious, raise them; the strength we have created we must now deploy. The person who denies the warrior his due surrenders everything. Nor will the gods abandon us, since with my weapons I seek neither plunder nor power: we are ridding of its masters a Rome prepared for slavery.'

He ceased; but the wavering mass with inarticulate murmur mutters indistinctly. Their swelling minds and spirits made fierce in slaughter are crushed by love of country and ancestral gods, but they are recalled by their hideous love of the sword and by their terror of their leader. Then Laelius—he held the post of first centurion and wore the decoration of the merited prize, the oak-leaves which declare the reward for a Roman life preserved—exclaimed: 'Greatest helmsman of the Roman race, if I may and if it is right to utter words of truth, our complaint is that your forbearance so prolonged has checked your strength. Was it confidence in us you lacked? Will you endure dishonourable peace and the Senate's tyranny, while still these bodies breathe and move with hot blood and arms are sturdy still to hurl the javelin? Is victory in civil war so very terrible? Come, lead us through the Scythian peoples, through Sytris' inhospitable shores, through parched Libya's burning sands: to leave a conquered world behind as it marched on, this army subdued with oar the Ocean's swollen waves and curbed the northern whirlpools of the foaming Rhine: to carry out your orders the necessary power and will I have. For no fellow-citizen of mine is the man against whom your trumpets, Caesar, sound. By your standards prosperous in ten campaigns, by your triumphs over all your enemies, I swear that, if you bid me plunge my sword in brother's breast or parent's throat or womb of wife great with child, I will do it all, though with unwilling hand; that if you bid me rob the gods and fire their temples, the flame of our military mint will melt the deities down; that if you bid me pitch my camp by the waters of Etruscan Tiber, boldly will I enter the fields of Hesperia to mark the lines; that if you want any walk levelled to the ground, these arms of mine will drive the ram to scatter stones, even though the city whose annihilation you command be Rome.' With these words all the cohorts agreed together, and they pledged their hands, lifted high, to fight wherever he summoned them. Their mighty shout travels to the ether, as loud as the noise of forest bowed down with its trunks bent low or springing back towards the sky, when Thracian Boreas pounces on the pine-clad rocks of Ossa.

When Caesar sees his soldiers welcome war so eagerly and destiny proceeding onward, to avoid impeding Fortune by any apathy, he summons cohorts scattered through the Gallic fields and advancing standards from every region he heads for Rome. His men abandoned tents which they had pitched by deep Leman and encampments high above Vosgus' curving rock controlling the aggressive Lingones with their painted weapons. Others left Isara's fords, a river that through many shallows runs with his own stream and flows into a river of greater fame and does not convey his own name to the waters of the sea. The blond Ruteni are released from lengthy occupation; placid Atax rejoices that he does not carry Latian ships; likewise Varus, now Hesperia's boundary, the frontier advanced, and the harbour sacred under the name of Hercules which with its hollowed cliff encroaches on the sea: over it neither Corus has control nor Zephyr; its master, Circius, alone disturbs its shores and bars the ships from Monoecus' safe anchorage; the stretch of changing shore rejoices too,
claimed by land and sea alternately when the mighty Ocean
floows in or with receding waves withdraws.
Does the wind from furthest zone thus forward roll the sea
and while bearing it abandon it? Or are restless Tethys' waters
set in motion by the lesser star and do they ebb and flow with
lunar hours?
Or does flaming Titan lift the Ocean and draw his billows
towards the stars, to drink the waves which feed him?
Inquire, you students of the workings of the universe; but for me,
stay for ever hidden, as the gods have wished, whatever you are
that causes movements so regular. Then the troops who hold the
fields
of the Nemetes and banks of the Atyrus, where with curving shore
the Tarbelli enclose the sea as it approaches gently,
shift their standards, and at the enemy's withdrawal the Santoni,
Bituriges, and Suessones nimble with their lengthy weapons rejoice;
the Leuci and the Remi who excel in throwing,
the Sequani who excel in wheeling horses with the rein;
the Belgae, skilled drivers of the chariot with scythes;
the Arverni venturing to claim brotherhood with Rome
as a people come from Trojan blood; the Nervii, excessively
rebellious, polluted by the treachery of Cotta's murder;
the Vangiones copying your loose-worn breeches,
Sarmatians; the fierce Batavi, incited by the shriek of war-trumpets
curving bronze. They too rejoice where Cirta's stream
wanders, where the Rhône with rapid waters sweeps
the Arar to the sea, where high on mountain-peaks
there lives a nation on Cebennae's snowy and precipitous crag.
Transferal of the warfare pleased you too, Treviri,
and you, Ligures, now shorn of hair but once in all of Long-Haired
Gaul unrivalled for your tresses flowing gracefully over your necks;
and the people who with grim blood-offering placate
Teutates the merciless and Esus dread with savage altars
and the slab of Taranis, no kinder than Diana of the Scythians.
The Bards too—you poets who with praise send forth
into eternity the valiant spirits cut off in war—
then free from worry you poured out a multitude of songs.
And Druids, you laid down your weapons and returned
to your barbaric rites and weird manner of ceremonial.
To you alone is granted total knowledge of the gods and heaven's
powers—or total ignorance. Inhabiting deep groves
in remote woods, you teach that ghosts do not head
for Erebus' silent home or for the colourless realm
of Dis below, but that the self-same spirit rules the limbs
in another sphere. If what you sing is known for fact, then death
is the mid-point in prolonged life. Without a doubt the people
overlooked
by Arctos are fortunate in their mistake, not to be oppressed
by that greatest terror, fear of death. This explains their warriors'
williness to rush upon the sword, their spirits keen for death,
and their belief that it is cowardly to spare a life which will return.
And you, the soldiers posted to keep the curly-haired Cauci
from war, you head for Rome, leaving the savage
banks of Rhine, leaving the world exposed to foreign nations.

Caesar's massive forces with their gathered might
made him confident to venture higher: he extends
through all of Italy; he occupies the nearest towns.
And empty rumour, speedy messenger of quickening
war, augmented genuine fears; it invaded
people's minds with pictures of calamity to come
and unlocked countless tongues to utter false assertions.
One man there is who tells that brazen squadrons
charge to combat where Mevania spreads into the plains
which breed the bulls, that brutal Caesar's barbaric troops
are ranging where the Nar flows into Tiber River;
that he advances all his eagles and his standards in a mass
and marches on with many a column and dense-packed camp.
They picture him not as they remember him: in their thoughts
he seems greater, wilder, more pitiful from the conquest of the
enemy.

Then follow close behind, they say, the peoples
from between the Rhine and Elbe, uprooted from ancestral home
in northern lands; fierce foreign races are ordered to sack Rome—
with a Roman looking on. So by his panic each
gives strength to rumour, and they fear ungrounded evils
of their own invention.

The multitude is not alone in panicking,
struck by empty terror, but the Senate, too, yes even
the Fathers leapt up from their seats, and as they flee assign to the consuls the dreaded declaration of war. Then, uncertain where to go for safety, where to run from danger, wherever impulse of flight sweeps them on, they drive the people rushing headlong, breaking out in hordes who stick together in a long chain. You might suppose that impious fire-brands had ignited houses, that homes were swaying, tottering, shaken by imminent collapse: so the throng rushed through the city heedlessly, frantic with headlong pace, as if the sole salvation for their battered fortunes were to leave the ancestral walls. When stormy Auster has driven back the mighty sea from Libyan Syrtes and when the broken weight of the mast has crashed down with its sails, the captain and the crew abandon ship and leap into the waves, and each, before the vessel's frame is smashed, creates his own shipwreck—just so, they abandon Rome and flee towards war. Now none could be detained by his father weak with age, nor a husband by his wife's laments, nor by ancestral Gods for long enough to utter prayers for preservation so uncertain; none lingered on the threshold and then left, after looking his fill maybe for the last time on beloved Rome: the multitude raced on, unstoppable.

O gods, you are so ready to bestow supremacy, but to preserve it so reluctant! Rome, a city teeming with peoples and with conquered nations, large enough (should the masses gather) for all of humankind, was abandoned at Caesar's coming by cowardly throngs, easy prey. In furthest lands the Roman soldier, when hemmed in hard by his enemy, escapes the dangers of the night with a flimsy stockade; a turf-made rampart torn up quickly for defence gives him untroubled sleep inside his tent: but, Rome, as soon as the word 'war' is heard, you are deserted, your walls not trusted for a single night. Yet such great panic we must pardon, we must pardon: they fear since Pompey flees.

Then preventing any hope even for the future lifting up their frightened minds, came proof manifest of fate still worse to come, and menacing gods filled earth and sky and sea with prodigies. Dark nights witnessed unfamiliar stars, the sky ablaze with flames, meteors flying aslant through heaven's empty space, the tail of fear-inspiring star, the comet, herald of a shift in power on earth. Lightning flashed repeatedly in the deceptive cloudless sky, its fire presenting different shapes in the dense air, now, with lengthened light, a spear, now, with light spread out, a torch.

A silent thunderbolt flashed out in the cloudless heaven and, gathering fire from northern parts, it struck the head of Latium. Lesser stars which usually proceed on course through the empty hours of the night appeared at noon. Phoebus, her crescent full and now with all her orb reflecting her brother Sun, was struck by the sudden shadow of the earth, and dimmed. Titan himself, while lifting up his head in mid-Olympus, hid his blazing chariot in a black cloud, enveloping his sphere in darkness, making mortals despair of day; just such a night came on at Mycenae of Thystes when the sun fled eastwards. Fierce Mulciber unclosed Sicilian Etna's mouths—not skywards shot the fire's flames but eddying sideways they fell on to Hesperia's flank. Black Charybdis wrenched from the depths a blood-red sea and the savage dogs howled dolefully. From Vesta's altar fire was stolen. The flame which marks the Latin Festival's completion is split in two and rises with twin tongues, resembling the Theban funeral-pyre. Then the earth sank down its pivot, shaking ancient snows from swaying Alpine ridges; with waves increased, Tethys covered western Calpe and Atlas' heights. They say the Native Gods shed tears, the hearth-gods by their sweat confirmed Rome's hardship, offerings tumbled in their temples, ill-omened birds darkened the day, and wild beasts boldly left their woods at night's approach and made their dens in the midst of Rome. Then tongues of animals took readily to human sounds,
and people’s offspring were unnatural in shape of limbs
and number—the mother was terrified by her own baby—
grim verses of Cumae’s prophetess are spread abroad
among the people. Then those inspired by fierce Bellona
slash their arms and chant the gods’ intent; the Galli whirl
their bloodied locks and howl dread omens to the people.
Urns full of bones laid to rest emitted groans.
Then through pathless forests was heard the crash of weapons,
loud cries, and the clash of ghosts in battle.
And inhabitants of fields near the outmost city-walls
disperse in flight: a huge Eriny was circling Rome,
shaking hissing locks and a pine-tree with its blazing
top turned downwards—like the Eumenis who drove
Agave of Thebes and hurled the weapons
of fierce Lycurgus; like Megaera, who on resentful Juno’s order
caused Alcides to shudder, though he already had seen Dis.
Trumpets of war resounded; black night gave a shout
as loud as cohorts clashing, though the breeze
was still. From the Campus the shade of Sulla
was seen to rise and uttered dreadful oracles,
and the farmers fled as Marius burst his tomb
and raised his head by Anio’s chill waters.

Hence their decision in accord with ancient custom,
to send for prophets from Erruria. Of these, the eldest,
Arruns, lived in empty Luca’s city-walls,
expert in the movement of the thunderbolt, in the warm pulse
of entrails, and in warning of the wing which fits in air.
First he orders the destruction of the freaks produced
by riotous nature from no seed, incineration in accursed
flames of the abominable progeny of barren womb.
Next he orders a procession of the frightened citizens
all round Rome: the chief priests, who are permitted to perform
the rite, purify the city-walls with solemn ceremony,
and move around the furthest limit of Rome’s long Pomerium.
Behind them comes the lesser throng, clothes hitched up in Gabine
manner,
and the priestess wearing chaplets leads the Vestal band
—she alone may rightly look on Troy’s Minerva.
Next come the keepers of the gods’ decrees and mystic verses,

the priests who reinstate Cybele when she has bathed in little Almo,
the augur skilled at spotting lucky birds,
the Seven festive at the banquets, the Titian brethren,
and the Salians rejoicing to bear the sacred shields on their shoulders
and the Flamens who raise aloft the pointed cap on noble head.
And while with long and wheeling path they circle Rome’s
great spread, Arruns collects the scattered fires
of the thunderbolt, with gloomy mutter buries them in the earth,
and declares them holy places. Then he guides towards the sacred
altars
the bull with chosen neck, had now begun to pour
Bacchus and sprinkle with the slanting knife the salted grains.
The victim long resisted the ritual displeasing to the gods,
and only when the belted attendants pushed down its fierce horns
did it sink upon its knee and offer its defeated neck.
And no blood as usual spurted out, but black slime
instead of red gore spread from the gaping wound.
Arruns blanched, appalled by the ill-omened rites,
and seized the entrails to seek the cause of divine wrath.
Their very colour terrifies the prophet; the pale guts
were tinged with foul blotches, darkened with concealed gore,
and chequered with grey stains and bloodspots.
He sees the liver dripping with decay and, in its hostile half,
defiant veins. The lobe of gasping lung
lies still and a crooked line divides the organs.
The heart is invisible, through yawning cracks the guts exude
corrupted blood and the cauld betrays its hidden things.
And look, he sees a portent which never occurs in entrails
unthreateningly. On the liver’s head there grows the lump
of a second head: one part droops, weak and flabby,
the other throbs, and boisterously it moves the pulse with rapid beat.
When from these signs he understood the prophecy of great disaster,
he exclaims: ‘It is hardly right for me, gods, to reveal to the peoples
all the turmoil which you plan; and, greatest Jupiter, I have not
appeased
you with this offering, but infernal gods have come into
the slain bull’s breast. Unutterable are the things we fear, but soon
our fears will be exceeded. May the gods make these sights prosperous,
or may the entrails prove unreliable, a mere invention of Tages,
founder of the art.’ So the Etruscan prophesied, and wrapped
and veiled the omens in obscure ambiguity.

Then spoke Figulus, keen student of the gods and secrets of the sky, unequalled by Egyptian Memphis in stellar observation and in calculations following the stars: 'It may be that this universe for ever drifts ungoverned and the stars range at random. But if the Fates are in control, imminent destruction is planned for Rome and humankind. Will the earth yawn wide and cities downwards sink? Or will the scorching air destroy the mild climate? Will faithless soil withhold the crops? Or will all water be infected by streams of poison? What kind of disaster do you plan, O gods? What instrument of doom for your cruelty? At a single time the final days of many have converged. If at the height of heaven Saturn's cold and harmful star were lighting his black fires, then Aquarius would have poured down rains rivalling Deucalion's and all the earth would lie hidden beneath the flood's wide spread. If with your rays you, Phoebus, now were overwhelming the fierce Nemean Lion, then through all the world would conflagration flow and ether blaze, ignited by your chariot. Such fires are nowhere to be found. But what are your dread plans, Gradivus, as you set fire to Scorpio, so menacing with blazing tail, and scorch his claws? For kindly Jupiter is sunk deep in the west and Venus' beneficial star is dim and swift Cyllenius is retarded on his course and Mars is sole lord of the sky. Why have the constellations left their paths to move obscurely through the universe? And why does sword-girt Orion's side so intensely shine? Because war's frenzy is upon us: the power of the sword shall overthrow legality by might, and impious crime shall bear the name of heroism, and this madness shall extend for many a year. And what use is it to ask the gods to end it? The peace we long for brings a master. Rome, prolong your chain of disaster without a break and protract calamity for lengthy ages: only now in civil war are you free.'

These portents greatly terrified the people into panic, but they are overwhelmed by worse. As the Bacchante races down from Pindus' summit, filled with Lyaeus of Ogygia,

so a matron sweeps through stunned Rome, revealing with these words that Phoebus is harrying her breast: 'O Paean, where are you taking me? You whisk me over the ether; where do you set me down? I see Pangaea white with snow-clad ridges and broad Philippi under Haemus' crag. What madness this, O Phoebus, tell: why do Roman battle-lines contend with hands and weapons? Why war without an enemy? Where else now are you taking me? You lead me eastwards, where sea is dyed by Egyptian Nile's flood: him I recognize, lying on the river sands, an unsightly headless corpse. I am taken over seas to shifting Syrtes and to parched Libya: this is where grim Enyo has shifted Emathia's battle-lines. Now I am hurried over mountains of the cloud-capped Alps and soaring Pyrenees. Back I come to the abodes of my native Rome, to impious war waged in the Senate's midst. The factions rise again, again I travel through all the world. Let me gaze on different sea-shores, different land: already have I seen Philippi, Phoebus.' So she spoke and then collapsed, abandoned by exhausted frenzy.
Between these mountains which sink down in a valley,
the fields once lay hid beneath continuous swamps
while plains held back the rivers, and no access to the sea
was given yet by Tempe's passage and, as they fill a pool,
their only course was to rise. And after the weight of Ossa
was split from Olympus by Hercules' hand and Nereus felt
a rush of sudden water, then Emathian Pharsalus, sea-born
Achilles' realm—better had it stayed beneath the waves—
protrudes; and Phylace, whose ship was first to touch
Rhoecean shores, and Pteleos, and Dodon lamenting
thanks to anger of the Pierides; Trachis, and Melloboa strong
with Hercules' quiver, the reward of the abominable torch,
and Larisa, once mighty; and there where now they plough
over Argos once renowned, where legend points out
ancient Thebes of Echion, where once Agave, exiled,
bearing Pentheus' neck and head committed them to the final fire,
complaining that she had seized this only of her son.
So the swamp was burst apart and split into many rivers.
Aeas, clear but of tiny stream, flows from there
westward to the Ionian Sea, with no stronger waters,
kidnapped Isis' father glides, and, almost your son-in-law,
Oeneus, who with muddy waters silts up the Echinenes;
and stained with Nessus' blood Evenus who cleaves
the Calydon of Meleager. Spercheus with hurried stream
strikes Malian waters, and with his clear river
Amphrysus waters fields where Phoebus was a slave.
Asopus takes his course, Phoenix and Melas too
and Anaurus breathing out no moistening mists
nor dew-drenched air nor breezes faint;
and any river which not known by the sea in its own right
presents its waters to Peneus: Apidanus goes
robbed of his flood and Enipeus never swift till mingled;
only Titaresus, when entering the other stream's name,
defends his waters and, gliding above,
treats the flood of Peneus like dry fields.
The runt is, this river flows from the Stygian swamps
and, remembering its source, shrins contact with
a humble stream, keeps to itself its terror for the gods.
As soon as the rivers had drained off and fields appeared,
the rich furrow was split by the Bebrycian ploughshare; then

sank the plough, pressed by the Leleges' right hands;
Acolian and Dolopian farmers broke the soil,
and Magnetes well known for their horses, Minyans for their oars.
There the pregnant cloud brought forth in Pelethronian
caves the half-beast Centaurs, sons of Ixion:
you, Monychus, shattering the jagged rocks of Pholöè,
and you, fierce Rhoeus, under Oeta's summit
hurling torn-up ash-trees which Boreas could hardly topple,
and Pholus, host of great Alcides, and you, the presumptuous
ferryman across the river, soon to suffer the Lernaean arrows,
and you, old Chiron, gleaming with your chilly constellation
and attacking greater Scorpio with your Haemonian bow.
In this land did seeds of savage warfare spring to life.
First from the rocks struck by the trident of the sea
leapt forth the Thessalian steed, the portent
of fatal wars; first he champed the steel bit
and foamed at the unfamiliar reins of his Lapith tamer.
First cleaving sea from Pagasean shore did a ship fling
human beings, creatures of the land, on to the unknown waves.
Ionos, ruler of the Thessalian land, was the first
to beat the lumps of heated ore in shape,
melt silver in the flames and strike gold
with a stamp and in vast furnaces to smelt copper.
There to count one's wealth became possible, and this drove
the people into wicked warfare. From here the Python, the
enormous
snake, came down and glided into the lands of Cirrha,
—and that is why Thessalian laurels come to the Pythian games.
From here the wicked Aloeus launched his sons against the gods,
when Pelion nearly thrust himself among the lofty stars
and Ossa, by encroaching on the constellations, stopped their course.

When the leaders had pitched their camps in this land
doomed by the Fate's, each mind is troubled by a sense
of future war, and it is clear that the hideous hour of greatest
crisis is approaching, that now the Fate's draw ever nearer.
Base spirits tremble, pondering the worst;
a few fortify themselves ahead and rehearse both hope and fear
to face uncertainty. But mingled with the timid multitude
was Sextus, a son unworthy of his parent Magnus,
who later, prowling as an exile in Scylla’s waves, as a Sicilian pirate stained his father’s triumphs at sea. Fear goaded him to know ahead of time Fate’s course: impatient of delay and sick at heart at all to come, he consults not Delos’ tripods, not Pythonian caves nor does he wish to ask what sound Dodona, nurse of humankind with earliest fruits, makes from the bronze of Jupiter; nor did he ask who knows the Fates from entrails, who explains the birds, who watches lightning-flashes in the sky and with Assyrian zeal examines stars, or anything secret yet permitted. He knew about the mysteries of savage magicians, detested by the gods above, and altars grim with dreadful rites, proof of the truth that Dis and ghosts exist; it was clear to the unfortunate that the gods above know too little. His foolish, cruel frenzy is fostered by the place itself with cities of Thessalian witches near the camp: they can be surpassed by no invented horror of a free imagination; their art is the unbelievable. And on its crags the land of Thessaly produced both harmful herbs and stones which hear magicians chanting dreadful secrets. There arises many a substance which puts constraint upon the gods: and in Haemonian lands the Colchian stranger gathered herbs she had not brought with her. That hideous race’s wicked spells affect the ears of heaven-dwellers deaf to all the peoples, all the races. Alone that utterance passes through the ether’s far-off parts and delivers words which can compel the reluctant deity who can never be distracted by care of sky and spinning heaven. When her monstrous muttering has touched the stars, then the Thessalian witch will force the gods from others’ altars, though Babylon of Perseus and secret Memphis open up every shrine of their magicians of old. By the witches’ spells love not brought by Fate glides into hardened hearts: austere old men blaze with illicit flames. And there is power not only in their harmful cups or when they steal the promise, swelling with the forehead’s juice, of mother’s love: minds polluted by no decay of drawn-off poison are destroyed, charmed out by spells. Those not bound by union of marriage-bed or by alluring beauty’s power are drawn by magic whirling of the twisted thread. Natural changes cease; postponed by lengthened night the day comes to a halt; the ether does not obey the law; the racing universe is paralysed once the spell is heard; and as Jupiter drives on the sky on its speedy axles, he is amazed that it does not move. Sometimes they drench everywhere with rains and muffle burning Phoebus with clouds, and heaven thunders without Jupiter knowing: with these same words they shake out mists damping far and wide and rain-clouds with their strands undone. Though winds are still, the sea swells up; again, forbidden to feel the gales, it falls silent though Notus runs amuck and ship-speeding sails swell out against the wind. The rigid torrent hangs from precipitous cliff and the river runs, but not downhill. Nile does not rise in summer, Maeander straightens his course, and Rhône as he delays is swept along by Arar. Mountains dip their peaks, smooth their ridges out; from below Olympus looks up at clouds, and snows of Scythia melt away without the sun while winter freezes. When Tethys by the moon is driven forward, a Haemonian spell thrusts her back, defending the shore. Earth too shakes the axis of her unmoved weight, the thrust which tends towards the centre of the world falters. The weight of such a mighty mass is shattered by the voice and it recedes to give a view of Olympus gliding round. Every deadly beast and creature born to injure fears Haemonian experts and gives them means of killing. Hungry tigers and the high-born wrath of lions fawn on them with gentle mouth; for them the snake unfolds his chilly circles and stretches out on frosty field, and vipers’ knots are wrenched apart and joined again, and serpent dies when breathed upon by human poison. Why do the gods take trouble to obey the spells and drugs, not daring to despise them? What kind of link holds the gods bound fast? Is their obedience necessary or by choice? Do the witches win so much merit by loyalty unknown or do they prevail by secret threats? Do they have this power
over all the gods, or have these spells authority
over one particular deity, who can force the universe to do
whatever he himself is forced to do? By them the stars
were first drawn down from the racing sky and Phoebe clear,
assailed by dreadful poisonous words, grew dim
and burnt with black and earthy fires, just as if the
Earth kept her from her brother's image
and intruded its shadows between the flames of heaven,
and, forced down by incantation, she suffers these great hardships
till she discharges foam on to the grasses close below.

These rites of wickedness, these crimes of savage race
beastly Erichtho had condemned for their excessive holiness
and had applied her filthy skill to unknown rites.
For her it is wrong to rest her deathly head
beneath a city's roof or home, so in abandoned tombs she lives
and, driving out the ghosts, is mistress of the graves, the darling
of the gods of Erebus. To hear the meetings of the silent dead,
to know the Stygian homes and mysteries of hidden Dis
is not prevented by the gods or life. The blasphemer's face
is gaunt and loathsome with decay: unknown to cloudless sky
and terrifying, by Stygian pallor it is tainted,
matted with uncombed hair: if rain and black
clouds obscure the stars, then out comes the Thessalian woman
from bare tombs and catches at night's thunderbolts.
She tramples and she scorches up the seeds of fertile corn
and with her breath corrupts the breezes not fatal before.
She does not pray to gods above nor with suppliant chant
ask help of heaven nor does she know of propitiating
entrails: it is her joy to place on altars
funeral flames with incense she has stolen from the kindled pyre.
The gods above grant every wickedness to her at her first
utterance of prayer: they dread to hear a second spell.
Souls living, still in charge of their own limbs,
she has buried in the tomb and, while the Fates yet owe them years,
unwillingly death steals on; funerals she has brought back from the
grave,
reversing the procession; corpses have escaped from death.
Smoking ashes of the young and blazing bones
she grabs from the middle of the pyre and even the torch
held by the parents; she gathers fragments of the funeral bier which fly about in black smoke, and clothes
crumbling into cinders, and ashes with the smell of limbs.
But when dead bodies are preserved in stone, which draws the inmost
moisture off, and once the marrow's fluid is absorbed and they
grow hard,
then greedily she vents her rage on the entire corpse:
she sinks her hands into the eyes, she gleefully digs out
the cold eyeballs and gnaws the palp'd nails
on withered hand. With her own mouth has she burst
the noose and knots of the criminal, mangled bodies as they hung,
scraped clean the crosses, torn at guts beaten
by the rains, at marrows exposed and baked by the sun.
She has stolen the iron driven into hands, the black and putrid
liquid trickling through the limbs and the congealed slime
and, if muscle resisted her bite, she has tugged with all her weight.
And if any corpse lies on the naked earth, she camps
before the beasts and birds come; she does not want to tear
the limbs with knife or her own hands, but awaits
the bites of wolves, to grab the bodies from their dry throats.
Nor do her hands refrain from murder, if she needs
some living blood which first bursts out when throat is slit
and if her funeral feast demands still-quivering organs.
So through a wound in the belly, not nature's exit,
the foetus is extracted to be put on burning altars.
And whenever she has need of cruel, determined spirits,
herself she creates ghosts. Every human death is to her advantage.
She plucks from young men's faces the bloom of cheek
and from a dying boy cuts off a lock of hair with her left hand.
Often, even at a kinsman's funeral, the hideous Thessalian
bends over well-loved limbs and, while planting kisses, mutilates
the head and with her teeth she opens up the tight-closed
mouth and, biting off the tip of tongue which sticks
to parched throat, pours mumbles into icy lips
and sends a secret outrage to the Stygian shades.

When local rumour revealed her to Pompey, in the sky's
deep night—the time when Titan ushers in
midday beneath our earth—through deserted fields
he picks his way. His usual, loyal aides in wickedness
roamed round the broken-open graves and tombs
and spotted her, sitting far away on a precipitous crag
where Haemus slopes down, stretching out Pharsalian ridges.
She was trying out words unknown to wizards and the gods
of wizardry and shaping a spell for novel purposes.
Because she feared that wandering war might pass into another
sphere and the Emathian land lose such abundant bloodshed,
the witch forbade Philippi—defiled by spells
and by dreadful juices spattered—to shift the warfare,
soon to claim for herself so many deaths, soon to enjoy
the world's blood; she hopes to mingle corpses of slain
kings, to steal the ashes of the Hesperian race
and bones of noblemen and to acquire such mighty shades.
This is her passion and her sole concern: what can she grab from
Magnus' outstretched body? on which of Caesar's limbs swoop down?

Her Pompey's coward son addresses first:
'O glory of Haemonian witches, you have the power to reveal
Fate to the people and divert from their course events to come;
I beg that I may know for sure the end
prepared by the fortune of war. Not the lowest part
of the Roman multitude am I, Magnus' most illustrious son,
either master of the world or heir to ruin so immense.
Struck by doubts, my mind is frightened, but again is ready
to endure inevitable terrors. Take from events the power
to swoop down suddenly unseen. Either rack the deities
or spare the gods and from the shades evert the truth yourself.
Unbar the Elysian abodes and summon Death
herself: make her confess to me which ones of us she seeks.
Not unimportant is this task: it is worth your while to ask, even
for yourself, which way the gamble of such great destiny inclines.'
The wicked witch of Thessaly delighted in her fame's renown
so widely spread and in reply she said: 'If you were stirring
lesser fates, young man, it would be easy to compel the unwilling
gods to any course you chose. To my craft it is allowed,
when with their rays the constellations doom a single death,
to introduce delay; and though every star decree
old age, with drugs we cut in half the years.
But when from the world's first start has come down

a chain of causes, when all the Fates are troubled
if you want to make a change, and when humankind stands beneath
a single blow, then—we the throng of Thessaly admit it—
Fortune is the stronger. But if you are content to learn
events in advance, paths to truth both many and easy
will open up: for us the earth, ether, Chaos,
seas, plains, and rocks of Rhodope will speak.
But it is simple, in such abundance of fresh death,
to raise a single body from Emathian plains,
so the lips of a corpse just dead and warm
can speak out loud and clear, and no gloomy ghost
with sun-scorched limbs his indistinctly to our ears.'

She ceased and, with night's darkness doubled by her craft,
her dismal head concealed in a murky cloud, she wanders
through the corpses of the slain, thrown out, denied a grave.
Fast fled the wolves, fast fled the carrion birds, unfed,
tearing free their talons, while the witch of Thessaly
selects her prophet, and by examining innards chill
with death she finds a stiff lung's lobes, entire,
without a wound, and in a corpse she seeks a voice.
Many a dead warrior's fate now hangs in the balance:
whom does she wish to summon back to life above? If she had tried
to raise whole armies on the fields and restore them to the battle,
the laws of Erebus had given way, a multitude
had fought, drawn by her unnatural power from Stygian Avernus.
The corpse at last is chosen, one with pierced breast,
and is dragged along; a hook sunk in the dead man's rope,
the poor cadaver over rocks and stones is hauled to live
again, and it is placed below the high cliff of the hollow
mountain which ghastly Erichtho had condemned to her rites.

Sinking almost to the dark and hidden caves of Dis
the ground falls steep, a place oppressed by a forest
colourless with drooping leaves and shaded by the yew
impenetrable to Phoebus and with no crown facing heaven.
Within, the withered darkness and the colourless decay
from long night cavern-bound have no light unless
spell-conjured: the air stands stagnant not like this
in the jaws of Taenarus; grim limit of the unseen world
and ours, thus far the kings of Tartarus would not fear to allow the ghosts. For though the seer of Thessaly can force the Fates, who knows if she sees Stygian shades by dragging them to her or making the descent herself? With a Fury's crazy robes of many hues she garbs herself, uncovered is her face with locks pulled back, her bristling hair is bound with wreaths of vipers.

When she saw his comrades fearful and the youth himself trembling with his gaze transfixed and lifeless face, she says: 'Suppress the terrors conceived in anxious minds: so soon new life, soon life in genuine form will be restored, so all, however fearful, may hear him speak. Truly if I could you Stygian lakes and the river-bank which sounds with fires, if I could make appear the Eumenides and Cerberus shaking his neck shaggy with serpents, and the Giants with their hands bound back, what cause for fear, you cowards, is the sight of timid ghosts?'

Then first she opens up the corpse's chest with fresh wounds, and with boiling blood she fills it, from the innards washes off the gore and applies generous doses of lunar poison. With this is mixed whatever nature spawns misbegotten. Here is the froth of rabid dogs, here entrails of the lynx, here the hump of dire hyena and the marrow of the snake-fed stag; here is the remora, detainer of the ship mid-sea though Eurus strain the rigging, and dragons' eyes, and stones which sound when warmed beneath a breeding bird: here is the Arabs' flying serpent and the viper born in the Red Sea, the guardian of the precious oyster-shell, the cast skin of still-living horned snake of Libya and ashes of the phoenix burnt upon the eastern altar. To this she added common poisons with names, then put in leaves drenched in spells unspeakable, and herbs her foul mouth spat on at their birth, and venoms of her own creation.

Last comes her voice, bewitching the gods of Lethe more potently than any drug, first composed of jumbled noises, jarring, utterly discordant with human speech: the bark of dogs and howl of wolves, the owl's cry of alarm, the screech-owl's night-time moan, the wild beasts' shriek and wail, the serpent's hiss; it utters too the beating of the cliff-smashed wave, the sound of forests, and the thunderings of the fissured cloud; of so many noises was one voice the source. Then she speaks in Haemonian incantation and pierces Tartarus with utterance thus: 'I invoke the Eumenides, Hell's horror, and the Avengers; I invoke Chaos, eager to disorder countless worlds; I invoke the ruler of the earth, tormented for long future ages by the drawn-out death of the gods; I invoke the Styx, and the Elysian fields no witch of Thessaly may reach; I invoke Persephone, loathing sky and mother, and the lowest form of our Hecate, through whom the shades and I in silent utterance may commune; I invoke the porter of the wide abode, who tosses human entrails to the savage hound; I invoke the Sisters soon to spin a second thread of life, and you, O ferryman of the blazing water, old man already tired out by shades returning to me: heed my prayers. Do I summon you with mouth sufficiently abominable and polluted? Do I ever chant these spells without consuming human entrails? How many times have I cut out breasts filled by deity and washed them with warm brains? Are there no babes, about to enter life, who laid their head and heart upon your dishes? Then obey my prayer. A soul I ask for, not one lying hid in the cave of Tartarus and long accustomed to the darkness, but a soul on its way down, life's light just fled, a soul still hesitating at the door to pallid Orcus' chasm, a soul which, though he drain these drugs, will join the dead once only. Let the ghost of a soldier with us recently foretell all Pompey's future to the leader's son, if civil wars have earned your gratitude.'

So she spoke; then raised her head and foaming lips, and saw the ghost of an unburied corpse standing there, fearing the lifeless frame and hated cage of its old prison. It dreads to enter the opened breast and innards and the entrails ruptured by a fatal wound. What misery! The final gift of death is snatched from him unfairly
—to be beyond the reach of death. Amazed at this delay
allowed to Fate, enraged at death, Erichtho
lashes the unmoving corpse with a live snake,
and through earth’s hollow cracks, bored by her spells,
she barks at the dead and shatters the silence of their realm:

‘Tisiphone and Megaera, untroubled by my voice,
do you not drive with your cruel lashes this unlucky soul
through Erebus’ void? Now by your real names I will call you,
you Stygian she-dogs, and in this upper light
maroon you; through pyres, through burials I will chase you, vigilant;
I will banish you from graves and drive you off from funeral urns.
And Hecate, wan and wasted, I will show you to the gods as you are,
not as you usually visit them, false with different face,
and I will forbid you change your look of Erebus.
And girl of Henna, I will disclose the feast which holds you
underneath the earth’s enormous weight, your lovers’ bond
with night’s gloomy king and the pollution you have suffered,
so foul that Ceres will not call you back. And you, the lowest
ruler of the world, your caverns I will burst and unleash Titan
and you will be struck by sudden daylight. Do you obey? Or
to Him must I appeal, at whose name the shaken earth
never fails to tremble, Him who can look upon uncovered Gorgon,
who can chastise the cringing Erinyes with her own lashes,
Him who occupies a Tartarus to you unfathomable, Him in whose
power are you upper gods, Him who by the waters of the Styx can falsely
swear?'

At once the frozen blood grew hot and warmed the blackened
wounds and ran into the veins and limbs’ extremities.
At its pulse, the lungs beneath the chill breast quiver,
and into marrow disaccustomed steals new life,
mixed with death. Then all his frame pulsates, the muscles
strained; and the corpse lifts himself up from the ground
not gradually, limb by limb, but thrust away from the earth
and raised erect at one go. Uncovered are his eyes with gaping
stare: there was in him the look of someone not yet living,
already dying; the pallor and the stiffness both remain;
and he is stunned by his arrival in the world. But his sealed
lips sound with no muttering: voice and tongue are given him

only to reply. ‘Speak’, says the Thessalian witch,
what I command and great will be your reward; for if you speak
the truth, I shall make you safe for all the world’s eternity
from Haemonian craft; on such a pyre and with such wood
will I burn your limbs with Stygian spell
that no magicians will bewitch and make your ghost obey.
Think this worth the cost of second life: neither words nor drugs
will dare destroy your sleep of lengthy Lethe, once death
is given by me. The tripod and the prophets of the gods
are graced with obscure answers; he who seeks the truth
from ghosts and approaches bravely the oracles of relentless death,
let him leave certain. Do not hold back, I pray: give events their
names,
give the places, give a voice through which the Fates can talk to me.’
A spell she added also to empower the shade to know
whatever she asks.

With flowing tears the mournful corpse
said: ‘Recalled from the silent river-bank,
myself I have not seen the grim threads of the Parcae,
yet this from all the ghosts I learnt,
that wild discord disturbs the Roman shades
and wicked war has shattered the underworld’s repose.
Latian generals variously have left the Elysian abodes
and gloomy Tartarus: these have made plain
the intentions of the Fates. Grim were the faces
of the blessed ghosts: I saw the Decii, both son and father,
lives given to expiate war, and Camillus weeping,
and the Curii and Sulla complaining, Fortune, of you;
Scipio laments for his unlucky posterity, doomed to die
on Libyan lands; a greater enemy of Carthage,
Cato mourns the fate of his descendant who refuses slavery.
You alone among the holy shades I saw rejoicing,
Brutus, first consul when the tyrants were expelled.
Threatening Catiline exults, his fetters burst
and shattered, and savage Marii and bare Cethegii;
mystelf I saw rejoice those radical names:
the Drusi with their laws excessive, the Gracchi of enormous
daring.
Their hands applauded, though eternal knots of iron
and Dis’s prison confined them, and the guilty multitude
demands the fields of the blest. The lord of the stagnant
realm opens wide his pale abodes, he sharpens broken rocks
and hard steel for shackles and prepares the punishment
for the conqueror. Take back with you this consolation,
O young man, that in a calm retreat the shades await
both your father and your house, and in a cloudless region of the
realm
keep a place for the Pompeys. And be not troubled by the glory
of a short life: the hour will come which levels
all the leaders. Make haste to die; exultant
in your mighty spirit, go down from tombs however small
and trample on the shades of the gods of Rome.
The question is, whose grave Nile and whose Tiber will lap
with waves: for the leaders, the battle concerns their burial alone.
Ask not about your own fate: though I keep silent,
the Parcae will grant you knowledge; a surer prophet will foretell
all to you in the fields of Sicily, your father Pompey, himself,
even he uncertain where to summon you or drive you back,
which zones, which regions of the world to bid you shun.
Unhappy men! Be in dread of Europe, Libya, Asia:
Fortune has distributed your graves between your triumphs.
O pitiable house, in all the world you will see nothing
safer than Emathia.’

After so recounting destiny,
he mournful stands with silent face and asks for death once more.
Magic spells and drugs are needed for the corpse to die:
the Fates cannot regain his soul, their power
over him exhausted already at one go. Then the witch heaps up
a pyre with plenteous timber; the dead man comes to the fire.
Once the youth was laid upon the kindled heap, Erichtho left him,
finally permitting him to die, and goes as Sextus’ companion
to his father’s camp, and though the sky was taking on day’s colour,
until they safely brought their steps within the tents,
night was told to hold back the day and gave them shadows thick.

Rising from the Ocean more slowly than eternal law summoned him,
grief-bringing Titan never drove his horses harder against the ether
and reversed his course, though the sky hurried him onwards;
he preferred to undergo eclipses and the toils of stolen
light, and he drew the clouds towards him, not as fodder for his flames
but to stop him shining clear on a Thessalian world.
But the night—the final part of happy life for Magnus—
deceived his troubled sleep with an empty apparition:
he dreamt that, as he sat in his own theatre, he saw
the innumerable likeness of the Roman plebs,
and his name was raised to the stars by joyful
voices and the resounding tiers competed in applause;
such was the appearance and applause of the admiring people
long ago, when as a young man, at the time of his first triumph,
after conquering the tribes encircled by torrential Hiberus
and all the troops driven onwards by elusive Sertorius,
with the west pacified, revered in his plain toga as much
as in the one that adorns the chariot, with the Senate clapping
he sat, still a Roman knight. Perhaps at the end of success
his mind, distressed by troubles, fled back to happy times;
perhaps, through its usual obscurity, his repose foretold
the opposite of what he saw, bringing omen of great lamentation;
perhaps, when you were forbidden any more to see your ancestral
abodes,
Fortune gave you Rome like this. Do not break his sleep,
watchmen of the camp, let no bugle strike his ears at all.
Tomorrow’s repose, hideous and gloomy with the image of the day,
from every side will bring him deadly battles, war from every side.
How will the people have such sleep and such a joyous night?
O blessed would your Rome be, if she could see you even like this!
If only the gods above had granted to your fatherland and you,
Magnus, a single day when both of you, certain of your fate,
could have snatched the final pleasure of your love so great.
You proceed as if destined to die in Ausonia’s city;
and it rejoices in the portents, and thinks its mental turmoil and its sudden madness is an omen of their wickedness.

What wonder is it, if mankind has been given a mind foreboding ill, that people whose last day was waiting trembled with distracted fear? The Roman visitor who lies by Tyrian Gades, who drinks Armenian Araxes, beneath whatever sky, whatever stars of universe, he mourns, knows not the reason and rebukes his aching mind, unaware of what he is losing on the fields of Emathia.

If those who tell can truly be believed, the augur sitting on the Euganean hill, where Aponus emerges steaming from the earth and wave of Antenor's Timavus is split, said: 'The final day has come, the greatest issue is fought, the wicked armies of Pompey and of Caesar clash'; perhaps he noted thunder and the ominous weapons of Jupiter, perhaps he saw all either and the poles resisting the discordant sky, perhaps the gloomy deity in the ether indicated battle in the sun's dark dimness.

Without a doubt the day of Thessaly was quite unlike all the days that Nature unfolds; if through an expert augur every human mind had noted the sky's strange signs, Pharsalia could have been observed in all the world.

O mightiest of men—your fortune gave displays throughout the world, on your destiny the entire sky was intent! Even among later races and the people of posterity, these events—whether they come down to future ages by their own fame alone or whether my devotion also and my toil can do anything for mighty names—will stir both hopes and fears together and useless prayers when the battle is read; all will be stunned as they read the destinies, as if to come, not past and, Magnus, still they will side with you.

The troops, as they descended, radiant from Phoebus' beams facing them, flooded all the hills with light and not randomly were launched upon the plains: the doomed ranks stood in set array. Charge of the left wing was given to you, Lentulus, with the fourth legion and the first, then the best for war. To you, Domitius, keen to fight though the deity is hostile, is granted the front of battle on the right.

But the central fighting strength was packed with bravest troops brought from Cilician lands by their general Scipio, in this region a soldier, but in Libya chief commander. But next to the streams and pools of surging Enippeus went the Cappadocians' mountain cohort and Pontic horsemen, generous with the rein. But most of the dry ground is held by tetrarchs and by kings and mighty tyrants and by all the purple subject to the Latian sword.

There Libya sent Numidians and Crete Cydonians, from there Ituraean arrows took their course, there you, fierce Gauls, advanced against your usual enemy, there Iberia moved its aggressive shields.

Snatch the nations from the victor, Magnus, and, by shedding the world's blood all at once, put an end to all his triumphs.

It happened on that day that Caesar left his station, on the point of moving troops to plunder crops, when suddenly he sees the enemy descending to the level plains; the moment he had prayed for a thousand times is presented, when he can throw everything into the final hazard.

For he, sick of delay and blazing with desire for power, had begun to condemn a civil war of brief extent as a crime prolonged. When he saw the final battle and the test between the leaders drawing near and felt the destined downfall start to totter, even his frenzy, so ready for the sword, for a short time flagged and his mind so bold to guarantee success stopped in doubt: his own destiny does not permit him fear; Magnus' destiny does not permit him hope. He suppressed his dread, and confidence springs forth, better for encouraging the host:

'O soldiers, conquerors of the world, essence of my fortune, the chance to fight so often longed for is here.

There is no need of prayers—now summon fate with sword.

How great will Caesar be?—in your hands it lies.

This is the day which I remember you promised me by the waters of the Rubicon, the day we hoped for when we went to war, the day for which we have postponed our return in triumph, the day which must prove on the evidence of destiny which of us more justly
took up weapons: this is a battle bound to make the loser guilty.

If it was for me that you attacked your land with weapon and with flames, fight fiercely now and with the sword put an end to blame:

once the judge of war is changed, no hand is clean.

Not for my sake is conflict waged, but so that you, I pray, may be a free people and may hold power over all nations.

Personally I desire to return to ordinary life

and in plebeian garb to act the undistinguished citizen,

but provided that your power is universal, there is nothing I refuse to be.

Rule, and let me take the blame. And with no great bloodshed
do you realize your hope of the world: you will meet an army chosen from Greek gymnasium, sluggish from devotion to the wrestling-floor and with difficulty carrying their weapons, or barbaric babble of a jumbled mob which cannot stand the trumpets, cannot stand its own shout when the troops advance. Few hands of yours will wage war against fellow Romans; most of the fight will rid the world of these peoples and will crush the enemy of Rome.

Advance through cowardly races and infamous tyrannies and with your sword's first stroke lay low the world; let it be known that all the races led by Pompey's chariot into Rome do not make up a single triumph.

Does it affect the Armenians which general holds sway at Rome? Is there any barbarian who wants to put Hesperia into Magnus' hands if it costs him any blood?

They hate all Romans and resent their masters, those they know the more. By contrast, Fortune has entrusted me to my own men's hands—witnessed by me in so many wars in Gaul. Which soldier's sword shall I not recognize? And when the quivering lance flies through the sky, without mistake I shall declare whose arm propelled it.

But if I see the signs which never mislead your leader—fierce looks and threatening eyes—then you have won. I seem to look at streams of blood and kings trampled on together and the Senate's mangled body and nations swimming in an endless slaughter.

But I delay my destiny by detaining you with these words when you are raging for the fight. Forgive me for putting off the battle;

I tremble with hope; never have I seen the gods so close to me,
without their leader’s tactics; everything they leave to Fate.
If in the deadly warfare you had placed so many fathers-in-law of Magnus, so many seeking power over their own Rome, they would not be rushing into battle with such headlong speed.

When Pompey saw the enemy’s squadrons march out straight ahead, allowing battle no delay—the day appointed by the gods—he stood still with frozen heart, stunned; and for a general so great to dread the fight like that was ominous. Then he stilled his fears and, riding on a lofty horse all along the line, he says: ‘The day your valour clamsours for, the end of civil warfare you demanded—it is here. Pour forth all your strength; the final task of the sword remains and a single hour drags down the nations. Whoever desires his land and house—gods dear, his children, marriage-chamber, the ties he has left behind, must win them by the sword: the god has set all prizes in the field in between us. The better cause tells us to hope for favouring gods: they themselves will steer the weapons through Caesar’s guts, they themselves will want to sanction Roman statues with his blood. If they planned to give my father-in-law world rule, they could have hurried my old age to an end: to preserve Pompey as leader is not the act of gods angered with the people and with Rome. We have assembled every capability of victory. Willingly have famous heroes submitted to dangers; our soldiery is that of old, in its sacred image. If to these times the Fates restored the Curii, Camilli and the Decii vowing their lives to fate, on our side they would stand. The races and innumerable cities of the furthest east have assembled and stirred to battle hordes in number never seen before: at a single moment all the world is ours to use.

All we races enclosed by the boundary of the zodiac, as far as Notos and Boreas—we wield weapons.
Shall we not surround the dense-packed enemy by pouring round our wings? Few are the sword-hands victory requires, and of our squadrons most will wage war with shouting only: for our army Caesar is not enough. Imagine that your mothers, leaning from Rome’s highest

city-walls with hair streaming, are urging you to battle; imagine that the aged senators, prevented by their years from joining the army, are laying at your feet their white and hallowed hair; that Rome herself, in fear of a master, is coming to meet you; imagine that the people now and the people of the future bring their prayers combined: to be born in freedom is one throng’s wish; to die in freedom the other’s. If after appeals so great, there is a place for Pompey, a suppliant, with child and wife, I would throw myself before your feet if I could do so with the dignity of high office intact. Unless you conquer, Magnus will be an exile, his father-in-law’s laughing-stock and your disgrace: I pray that I escape the worst destiny and degrading years at life’s final pivot—may I not in old age learn to be a slave.’ At their general’s words so gloomy, their spirits blaze and Roman valour is excited and they resolved to die in case his fears were true.

So from both sides the troops run forward with equal impetus of anger: fear of tyranny arouses these, those the hope. These sword-hands will achieve things that no future age can make good nor humankind repair in all the years, though it be free from warfare. That fight will crush the future races, and it will rob of birth and sweep away the people of the generation entering the world. Then all the Latin name will be a fable: Gabii, Veii, Cora hardly will be indicated by their dust-covered ruins, the heart of Alba and the house—gods of Laurentum, an empty country which no senator inhabits except unwillingly on night ordained, complains of the decree of Numa. It is not devouring time which has eroded and abandoned in decay these memorials of the past: it is the crime of civil war we see, so many empty cities. To what has the multitude of humankind been reduced! We peoples born in all the world are not enough to fill with men the town-walls and fields; a single city holds us all. The cornlands of Hesperia are worked by chained labourer, the house with its ancestral roof decaying stands, about to fall on no one; and Rome, crowded by no citizen of her own but filled with the dregs of the world,
we have consigned to such a depth of ruin that in a body so immense
civil war cannot now be waged. The cause of such a great catastrophe
is Pharsalia. The fatal names of Cannae and of Allia,
long cursed in the Roman calendar, must yield their place.
The dates of lighter disasters Rome has marked;
this day she wanted to ignore. O bitter Fates!
Air noxious to inhale, putrefying diseases,
maddening famine, cities given up to fires,
quakes which bring the walls of crowded cities tumbling—all
could be made good by these men who are dragged from
everywhere to a pitiable death by Fortune: as she deploys
and takes away the offerings of long ages, she stations on the plains
the peoples and the generals through whom to show you in your fall,
Romie, how mighty was your fall. What city held a wider sway
over the world or advanced more swiftly through prosperity?3
Every war gave you nations, every year
Titan saw you advance towards twin poles
so that—because not much space of the eastern land remained—for
you the night, for you entire day, for you the ether sped,
and everything the wandering stars saw was Roman.
But the fatal day of Emathia, equivalent to all the years,
carried backwards your destiny. Thanks to that bloody day
India does not tremble at the Rods of Latium,
the girded consul does not lead the Dahae, forbidden to wander,
inside city-walls or lean on a Sarmatian plough,
and Parthia owes you savage retribution still and for ever,
and Liberty, in flight from the crime of civil warfare, has withdrawn
beyond Tigris and Rhine, never to return,
and wanders on, after so many murderous attacks,
a blessing on Germany and Scythia, no longer mindful
of Ausonia—how I wish our people had never known her!
When Romulus first founded the city with the vulture’s left-hand
flight and filled its walls from the notorious grove
until the ruins of Thessaly, you should have stayed in slavery, Rome.
Fortune, I complain about the Bruti. Why did we have
times of legality or years which took their names from consuls?
Fortunate are the Arabs and the Medes and eastern earth,
kept by the Fates beneath continuous despots.
Of all the peoples who endure tyranny, our situation is the worst:
we are slaves, and ashamed. Without a doubt, we have no
deities: since human life is swept along by blind chance,
we lie that Jupiter is king. Will he watch Thessalian
bloodshed from the lofty ether even though he holds his
thunderbolts?
Will Jupiter, then, aim his fires at Phoebus, at Oeta,
at the grove of innocent Rhodope, at the pines of Mimas,
and let Cassius strike this head? He brought the stars
upon Thyestes, he doomed Argos to a sudden night:
for wielding swords which are alike, so many swords of brothers
and of fathers, will Thessaly be granted daylight by him? Human
affairs are cared for by no deity. Yet we have revenge
for this disaster, as much as gods may give to mortals:
the civil wars will create divinities equal to those above;
thunderbolts and rays and stars Rome will adorn
the dead and in the temples of the gods will swear by ghosts.

With rapid charge they had reduced the space delaying
the fateful crisis and now, divided by a little strip of land,
they look to see where their javelins will fall or what hands
threaten death to them. That they might profoundly know
what horrors they would commit, they saw their parents
with opposing faces, their brothers’ weapons close at hand—and
did not choose to change position. Yet numbness froze
every breast and icy blood congeals in their guts,
their piety is smitten, and entire companies
long held their javelins poised with arms outstretched.
May the gods give to you, Crastinus, not death—a penalty
awaiting everyone—but feeling in your corpse after death:
your hand hurled the lance which started fighting
and was the first to stain Thessaly with Roman blood.
O impetuous frenzy! When Caesar wielded weapons,
was there found a hand to act before his? Then air resounded,
shattered by the trumpets, the call to war declared by horns,
then bugles dared to give the signal, then the clamour reaches
the ether and bursts into the dome of furthermost Olympus
—from there the clouds keep far away, no thunders reach so far.
Haemus in re-echoing valleys took up the noise
and gave it back to caves of Pelion to reduplicate,
Pindus drives the roar, Pangaean rocks reverberate,
the crags of Oeta groan: men took fright at the utterances
of their own madness repeated by the entire earth.

Innumerable missiles are discharged with conflicting prayers:
some long to wound, some long to stick their weapons in the ground
and keep their hands undetiled. Chance swirls everything along
and Fortune, unpredictable, makes anyone she wishes guilty.

Then Ituraeans, Medes, and loose-clothed Arabs,
with their bows a threatening throng, steered their arrows at no target
but only at the air which hung poised above the plain;
from there falls death. But they stain their foreign steel
with no charge of wickedness; all the wrong stood condensed
around the Roman spears. The ether is screened by steel
and a night of weapons joined together hung above the plain.

But how little of the destruction was performed by javelins
and flying steel! For civil hatred the sword alone
suffices and leads sword-hands into Roman guts.
Pompey's army, massed in dense-packed squadrons,
had joined their shields in a chain with shield-bosses side by side
and had taken up position with hardly space to wield hands
and weapons: crushed together, it feared its own swords.
With headlong onrush Caesar's frenzied army
 attacks the dense formations; through weapons, through the enemy
it seeks a path. Where twisted coat of mail presents
its heavy chains, and breast lies safely hidden under covering,
even here they reach the guts: it is the furthest object
through so much armour that each blow reaches. Civil war
one line endures, the other wages; here chilled
the sword stands still, but every guilty blade on Caesar's side is hot.
And Fortune, not for long swaying the balance of so many issues,
swept away the wide-scale wreckage as Fate was racing on.

As soon as Pompey's cavalry deployed its wings
over all the plain and extended them along the battle's edge,
his light-armed troops, spread among the outer companies,
follow close and launch their savage bands against the enemy:
there every nation joins the battle with its distinctive weapon,
but all are seeking Roman blood; from here fly arrows,
firebrands, and rocks and slingstones melted by their passage
through the air, turned to liquid with their heated mass;
then Caesar, fearing his front line might waver
under this attack, keeps his cohorts sideways on behind the standards
and into the battle's flank where the enemy haphazardly was ranging
suddenly launches a column, his wings unmoved.
Forgetful of the battle, not embarrassed by their fear,
with headlong flight they made it clear that civil war
is never happily entrusted to barbarian hordes.

When first the charger, pierced by steel in his breast,
threw his rider on his head and trampled on his limbs,
all the cavalry left the plain and, with their bridles turned about,
they headlong charged at their own troops, a concentrated cloud.
Then the slaughter passed all limit and what followed was no combat
but war on one side waged with throats, with weapons on the other;
the one battle-line is not strong enough to slaughter all those
who can perish on the other side. I wish, Pharsalia,
that that gore which barbarian breasts shed may satisfy
your plains, that your springs may be dyed by no others' blood,
that this mass may cover all your fields with their bones.
Or if you prefer to be glutted with Roman blood,
then, I pray, spare these men: let the Galatians live. Syrians,
Cappadocians, Gauls, Iberians from the world's edge,
Armenians, Cilicians, for after civil war
these will be the Roman people. Once arisen, panic
spreads to everyone and destiny was granted speed for Caesar.

They came to Magnus' strength, his central squadrons.
The fighting which had flooded in random course across
all the fields halted here and Caesar's fortune came to a standstill.
Here the soldiers waging war were not assembled from the royal
auxiliaries but wielded weapons in their hands unasked:
that place contained their brothers and their fathers.

Here is your madness, your frenzy, your wickedness, Caesar.
Mind of mine, shun this part of battle and leave it to darkness
and from my words let no age learn of horrors
so immense, of how much is licensed in civil war.

Better that these tears and protests go unheard:
whatever you did in this battle, Rome, I shall not tell.

Here Caesar, maddening the people and goading them to frenzy,
goes ranging round the troops, adding fires to spirits already blazing:
wickedness must not be missing in any section of his army.
He inspects their swords too, to see which wholly drip with blood,
which glitter, stained only at the very point,  
which hand trembles as it grasps the sword, who wields his weapons  
slack or taut, who supplies fighting at command,  
who loves to fight, and whose expression alters when a fellow citizen  
is killed. He visits bodies stretched upon the wide fields;  
with the pressure of his hand he personally staunches many a wound,  
which would have poured out all the blood. Wherever he goes  
round—
like Bellona brandishing her blood-stained lash  
or like Mars, rousing the Bistonians, if with savage whips  
he goads his steeds maddened by Pallas’ Aegis—  
there is a vast night of wickedness; slaughter follows  
and the groans as of a voice immeasurable, and armour clatters  
with the weight of falling breast, and swords on swords are shattered.  
In person he supplies fresh swords, hands them weapons,  
and orders them to mangle with their steel the faces of the enemy,  
in person he advances the line, onward drives his army from behind,  
with blow of inverted spear he rouses the reluctant,  
forbids them to strike the masses and indicates the Senate;  
well he knows which is the empire’s blood, which are the guts  
of the state,  
he knows the starting-point of his course to Rome, the spot to strike  
as the Liberty of the world makes her final stand. Nobility mingled  
with the Second Order and venerable persons are overwhelmed  
by the sword; they slaughter Lepidi, Metelli,  
Corvini along with famed Torquati, often leaders  
of the state and greatest of men, with you excepted, Magnus.

There, covering your face with a plebeian helmet  
and unknown to the enemy, what a weapon, Brutus, did you hold!  
O glory of the state, O final hope of the Senate,  
the last name of a family so great throughout the ages,  
do not race too reckless through the enemy’s midst,  
do not hasten deadly Philippi upon yourself before its time,  
doomed to die in a Thessaly of your own. Nothing do you  
achieve here,  
intent on Caesar’s throat: he has not yet reached the citadel  
or gone beyond the peak of human law controlling everything;  
he has not yet earned from Fate a death so distinguished.  
Let him live and let him rule, so he may tumble, Brutus’ victim.

Here perished all the glory of the fatherland: on the plains  
in an enormous heap patrician corpses lie, with no plebeians among  
them.
Yet in the slaughter of famous men stood out the death  
of battling Domitius, a man led by Fate through every  
calamity: nowhere did Magnus’ fortune collapse  
without him. So often defeated by Caesar, he died  
with his liberty intact: now happily he falls beneath  
a thousand wounds, rejoicing not to have a second pardon.  
Caesar saw him thrashing around in thick  
blood and, taunting, said: ‘Now, Domitius, my successor,  
you abandon Magnus’ army; the war is waged  
without you now.’ But the breath hammering at Domitius’ breast  
was strong enough for speech and he unlocked his dying lips:  
‘Caesar, because I see you not the master of the deadly  
wage of wickedness but uncertain of your fate and lesser  
than your son-in-law, I go free and peaceful to the Stygian shades  
with Pompey still my leader: though I die, I can hope  
that you will be subdued in savage war and pay  
a heavy penalty to Pompey and to me.’ No more said he;  
life left him and thick darkness closed his eyes.

When the world is dying I feel shame to spend my tears  
on the innumerable deaths and to follow individuals’ destinies,  
questioning, whose guts did the fatal wound  
pass through? who trampled on his vital's spilling on the ground?  
who faced the enemy and, dying, forced out with his breath  
the sword thrust into throat? who collapsed when struck?  
who stood firm while his limbs fell about him? who lets the  
weapons pass  
right through the breast? or who was pinned by spear to the plain?  
whose veins were drained of blood which split the air  
and falls upon the armour of his enemy? who strikes his brother’s  
breast, cuts off the head and throws it far away  
so he can plunder the familiar corpse? who mangles  
his father’s face and proves to those who watch by his excessive wrath  
that the man he slaughters is not his father? No death deserves  
its own lament; we have no space to grieve for individuals.  
Pharsalia did not have those elements of battle  
which other calamities had: there, Rome was ruined by the destinies
of warriors, here by entire peoples; a soldier’s death there was here a nation’s death; here streamed Achaean blood, Pontic and Assyrian—all that gore is stopped from sticking and coagulating on the plain by a torrent of Roman gore. From this battle the peoples receive a mightier wound than their own time could bear; more was lost than life and safety: for all the world’s eternity we are prostrated. Every age which will suffer slavery is conquered by these swords. How did the next generation and the next deserve to be born into tyranny? Did we wield weapons or shield our throats in fear and trembling? The punishment of others’ fear sits heavy on our necks. If, Fortune, you intended to give a master to those born after battle, you should have also given us a chance to fight.

Now Magnus had realized that the gods and Roman destiny had changed allegiance, unlucky man, reluctantly compelled by the whole calamity to condemn his own fortune. He stood upon a mound in the plain from a distance to gaze at all the destruction scattered through the fields of Thessaly, otherwise hidden from view by warfare. He saw so many weapons aimed at his own death, so many bodies laid low and himself dying in so much blood. But he does not choose—as is the custom of the doomed—to drag down everything with him and plunge it into ruin and embroil the nations in his fall: even now he persisted in believing the heaven-dwellers worthy of his prayers that most of Latium’s multitude would live on after him and cherished this as consolation for his defeat. ‘Refrain, gods,’ he says, ‘from overthrowing all the peoples. With the world still standing and with Rome surviving, Magnus can be ruined. If you choose to wound me more, I have a wife and sons: so many hostages have I given to the Fates. Is it not enough for civil war to crush both me and mine? Are we a trivial disaster without the inclusion of the world? Why mangle everything? Why work for universal ruin? Now, Fortune, is nothing mine?’ So he speaks and visits all his troops, his standards, and his squadrons shattered now in every part, and calls them back from racing into early death, saying he is not worth so much. The general did not lack resolve to go to face the swords and suffer death in throat or breast, but he feared that, if Magnus’ body lay prostrate, his soldiers would not flee and that the world would crash down on its leader; or else he wished to take away his death from Caesar’s eyes, uselessly, unlucky man! When your father-in-law wants to look at it, your head must be presented, wherever in the world it is. But you too, wife, were a reason for his flight, your face and the Fates’ refusal that he should die with part of himself missing. Then a steed is spurred to carry Magnus from the battle, not fearing weapons from the rear but going to meet his final destiny with enormous courage. No sorrowing, no tears were there; his grief deserves respect, with dignity maintained, a grief exactly fitting for you to show in Roman hardships, Magnus. With unchanged face you gaze upon Emathia: success in war never saw you proud, adversity will never see you broken; as far beneath him as faithless Fortune was in his happy days of three triumphs, so is she in his days of misery. Now you have put aside the weight of destiny, and you depart, free from care; now you have leisure to look back on happy times; hope has vanished, never to be fulfilled; now you may understand what you were. Escape the hideous battles, call the gods to witness that none who stays to fight now dies for your sake, Magnus. Like Africa, lamentable for her losses, like guilty Munda and the calamity by Pharian flood, so too, most of the Thessalian battle, after you, will be inspired no longer now by Pompey’s name so popular throughout the world or eagerness for war, but by that pair of rivals always with us—Liberty and Caesar; and once you had left the battle, the Senate showed by dying that it was fighting for itself. Does it not delight you to retire defeated from battle and not watch this horror to the end? Look back at the squadrons covered in foaming gore, at rivers muddied by the influx of blood, and take pity on your father-in-law. With what heart will he enter Rome, his luck the richer by those battlefields? Whatever you suffer in unknown lands, an exile alone,
provide kindred hands and fend off foreign horrors, if Magnus by his name so famous has earned to be the gall of Caesar. Ptolemy, do you not dread the downfall of a name so great, do you dare intrude your unclean hands while heaven thunders, you vile eunuch? Had he not been the conqueror of the world, had he not ridden three times to the Capitol, were he not the lord of kings and champion of the Senate and the victor’s son-in-law, he was Roman, which might have been enough for the Pharian tyrant: why probe our guts with the sword? You do not know, presumptuous boy, you do not know the situation of your fortune: now you hold the sceptre of the Nile illegally; he who gave you power has fallen in civil war.

Now had Magnus denied his sails the wind and with the help of oars was making for accursed shores; conveyed not far to meet him in a two-oared ship, the wicked band hail him and, pretending that the realm of Pharos was open to Magnus, they bid him come from the lofty vessel’s stern into their small boat, complaining of the hostile shore and tides of two seas broken in the shallows which stops the foreign fleets from touching land. But if the laws of Fate and the approach of miserable death, directed by decree of the eternal Order, were not dragging Magnus, doomed to death, towards the shore, not one of his companions lacked forebodings of the crime, because had loyalty been pure, had the palace with devotion true been opened up to Magnus, the bestower of the sceptre, then Pharos’ tyrant would have come with all his fleet. But he yields to Fate and, when bidden leave his fleet, obeys and chooses to prefer death to fear. Cornelia headlong rushed towards the enemy boat, the less prepared to be apart from her husband as he left because she feared disaster. ‘Stay behind, my reckless wife, you too, my son, I pray, and watch my fortunes far from shore, and on this neck put to the test the tyrant’s loyalty,’ he said. But, deaf to his injunction, frantically Cornelia stretched out both her hands: ‘Where are you going without me, cruel man? Am I deserted a second time, kept away from Thessaly’s disaster? Never with a happy omen are we pulled apart, unhappy both. When you fled across the deep, you need not have turned aside your ship, you could have left me in my hiding-place in Lesbos, if it was your intent to keep me away from every land. Or am I a satisfactory companion only on the waves? When in vain she has poured out these words, yet anxiously she hangs over the vessel’s end and in stunned terror cannot turn her gaze away; she cannot look at Magnus. The fleet lay at anchor, anxious about their general’s fate, not fearing crime or weapons, but afraid that with grovelling prayers Pompey would kneel before the sceptre given by his own hand. As he prepared to step across, a Roman soldier greets him from the Pharian boat, Septimius, who—shame upon the gods!—had put aside the javelin and was bearing the degrading weapons of the king, as his minion, brutal, savage, cruel and no less fierce for bloodshed than any wild beast. Who would not have thought that you took pity on the peoples, Fortune, since this sword-hand had no part in war and you had banished far from Thessaly his weapons so guilty? You station far and wide your swords, so that in every part of the world—alas!—a crime of civil war may be done for you. A dishonour to the very conquerors, a story which will always shame the gods: a Roman sword obeyed the king like this and the boy of Pella cut your head off, Magnus, with your own sword. With what reputation will posterity send Septimius into the centuries? What name will this wickedness have from those who call what Brutus did a crime?

Now the limit of his final hour had come and, carried off into the Pharian boat, he was not now his own master. Then the monsters of the king prepare to bear the weapon. When he saw the swords close by, he covered up his face and head, disdaining to present them bare to Fortune; then he closed his eyes and held his breath to stop himself from breaking
into speech and marring his eternal fame with tears.
But after murderous Achilles stabbed his side
with sword-point, with not a groan did he acknowledge
the blow and did not heed the crime, but keeps his body motionless, 620
and as he dies he tests himself, and in his breast he turns these
thoughts:
‘Future ages which never will be silent about the toils of Rome
are watching now, and time to come observes from all the world
the boat and loyalty of Pharos: think now of your fame.
For you the fates of lengthy life have flowed successful;
the people cannot know, unless in death you prove it,
whether you know how to endure adversity. Do not give way to
shame
or resent the author of your fate: whatever hand strikes you,
think it your father-in-law’s. Though they tear and mangle me,
still fortunate am I, O gods above, and no deity has the power
to deprive me of this. In life prosperity is changed:
death does not make a man unhappy. Cornelia sees this murder,
my Pompey too: with all the more endurance, pain of mine,
I beg, suppress your groans; my son and wife, if they admire
me in death, love me.’ Such control of mind
had Magnus, he exercised this power over his dying spirit.
But Cornelia found it harder to behold the brutal crime
than suffer it and with pitiable words she fills
the ether: ‘O husband, it is I have killed you, wicked I:
630 distant Lesbos was the cause of delay fatal to you,
and Caesar has reached the shores of Nile first;
for who else has the right to do this crime? But whoever you are,
sent by the gods against that life, acting for Caesar’s anger
or for yourself, you do not know, cruel man, where Magnus’
very guts are; you hurry and you rain down blows
where he, defeated, prays them fall. Let him pay a penalty
no less than death by witnessing my death first. Not free from blame
in war am I, because alone of matrons, his companion
through the waves and through the camps, deterred by no defeats,
I welcomed him when conquered—which even kings feared to do. 640
And this is my reward, my husband, to be left in the safety of the
ship?
Traitor, were you being kind? As you approached your final destiny,
did I deserve to live? I shall die, and not by the favour of the king.

Allow me, sailors, to make a headlong leap or fit
the noose and twisted ropes around my neck, or let some comrade,
truly worthy of Magnus, drive the sword right through.
For Pompey he can do a service which he may then credit to Caesar’s
weapons. O cruel men, do you restrain me as I race towards my
destiny?
You still live, my husband, and Cornelia already is not
her own mistress. Magnus: they prevent me from summoning death; 660
for the viclor I am saved.’ So she spoke and fell among
her companions’ arms and is carried off, as the ship in panic races off.

But, as the weapons sound on Magnus’ back and breast,
the majestic beauty of his sacred features lasted,
his expression reconciled with the gods; and utmost death
changed nothing of the hero’s bearing and his face: so say those
who saw the severed head. For cruel Septimius
in the very act of crime discovered a greater crime:
670 he rips away the covering, lays bare the sacred face
of Magnus, half-alive, he grabs the head still breathing
and puts the drooping neck across a bench.
Then he severs muscles, veins; and long he takes to break the knotty
bones; not yet was it an art to send heads rolling with the sword.
But after the severed neck was separated from the torso,
the Pharian minion claims this right, to carry it in his hand.
Roman soldier, contemptible and playing a supporting role,
do you with hideous sword cut off the sacred head of Pompey
not to carry it yourself? O destiny of deepest shame!
So that the ungrateful boy can recognize Magnus, that shaggy
hair by kings revered and locks which graced his noble
680 brow were grasped and on a Pharian spear—
while features are alive and sob of breath impel
the mouth to murmur, while unenclosed eyes are stiffening—
the head is fixed: when it commanded war, never
was there peace; it swayed the laws, the Campus and the Rostra;
with this face you stood proud, Roman Fortune.
And the sight of it was not enough for the monstrous tyrant:
he wants proof of his wickedness to survive. Then by their hideous
art
the fluid is taken from the head, the brain removed
and skin dried out, and rotten moisture flowed away from deep
within, and the features were solidified by drugs instilled.

Last offspring, soon to perish, of the stock of Lagus,
degenerate and soon to yield the sceptre to your impure sister,
though you preserve the Macedonian in consecrated cave,
and the ashes of the kings find rest beneath a piled-up mountain,
though shades of Ptolemies and their disgraceful line
are enclosed in Pyramids and Mausoleums too good for them,
the shores strike Pompey, and his headless corpse is tossed
this way and that by shallow waters. Was it such a nuisance
to keep his body whole for his father-in-law?
With this good faith Fortune to the end maintained the destiny
so prosperous of Magnus, with this she summoned him in death
from the highest peak, and brutally in a single day she made him pay
for all the disasters from which she gave him so many years of
freedom;

Pompey was a man who never saw joy and hardship
mixed: when fortunate he was disturbed by none of the gods,
when miserable spared by none; at one go Fortune knocked him
down
with the hand she had so long restrained. He is battered on the sands,
torn to pieces on the rocks while drinking in the water through his
wounds,
the plaything of the sea, and when no distinctive shape remains
the single mark of Magnus is the absence of the torn-off head.

Yet before the victor could touch the sands of Pharos,
Fortune hurriedly prepared a grave for Pompey
so he should not lie without a tomb—or with a better one:
frightened Cordus ran down from his hiding-place towards the sea.
As quaestor he had been an ill-starred companion of Magnus
from the Idalian shore of Cinyrean Cyprus. Through the shadows
he dared advance and forced his fear, now overcome
by loyalty, to seek the corpse amidst the waves
and draw it to the land and drag Magnus on to the shore.
A mournful Cynthia offered too little light through the thick clouds; but the torso, differing in colour from the whitened water,
is visible. He holds his general in a tight embrace
as the sea snatches him away; then, overcome by such a massive
burden,

he awaits the waves and with the sea’s assistance pushes forward
the corpse. When now it sat upon the dry sea-shore,
he bent over Magnus, poured tears into every
wound, and to the gods and stars obscure he says:
‘Your Pompey, Fortune, does not ask for costly pyre
heaped high with frankincense; he does not ask that smoke enriched
should carry eastern perfumes from his body to the stars;
or that the loyal necks of Romans should bear their Parent;
or that his funeral procession should display his ancient triumphs;
or that the Fora should resound with mournful song; that all the army,
grieving and with weapons cast down, should pass around the fires.
Give Magnus the lowly coffin of a plebeian funeral
to tip the mangled body into dry fires;
let the miserable man not be without timber or a lowly burner.
Let it be enough, O gods, that Cornelia does not lie
with loosened hair and, as she embraces her husband, does not
command

the torch to be placed beneath, but that she, unhappy wife, is missing
from the final tribute of the pyre, though she is not yet far from shore.’
So the young man speaks and sees off some tiny fires
without a guard cremating a body worthless to its kin.
From there he seizes flames and draws from underneath the limbs
the half-burnt timbers. ‘Whoever you are,’ he said, ‘uncared-for ghost
and dear to kinsman none, but luckier than Pompey,
grant pardon that a stranger’s hand disturbs your pyre
once it is built; if any feeling after death remains, then willingly
you give up your pyre and allow these losses from your grave,
and feel ashamed that you are burnt when Pompey’s remains are scattered.’
So he speaks and filling up his cloak with burning ashes
flies back to the torso which, almost carried off by the waves,
was hanging on the edge of the shore. The topmost sand he
moved aside
and, trembling, placed in tiny trench the fragments of a broken vessel
he had gathered at a distance. No timber rests upon
the noble corpse, the limbs lie on no pile:
Magnus is received by fire laid beside, not underneath, him.
Sitting near the flames, he said: ‘O mightiest
commander, crowning majesty of the Hesperian name,
if this pyre is more repulsive to you than tossing on the sea
or than unburied body, then turn aside your shade
and mighty spirit from my ceremonial; Fate's injustice
directs that this be right; to prevent any outrage
by monster of the sea, by beast, by birds, by savage Caesar's
rage, accept all that you can, a tiny flame,
kindled by a Roman hand. If Fortune grant return
to Hesperia, ashes so sacred will not rest
in this spot, but Cornelia will receive you,
Magnus, and pour you from my hand into the urn.
Meanwhile let me mark the shore with a little rock,
to be a signal of your grave; if anyone by chance should want
to placate you slain and give in full the honours of death,
let him find the ashes of your torso and let him recognize the sands
to which he must restore your head, Magnus.' After saying this,
he stirs the feeble flames by adding fuel.
Magnus is consumed and into the slow fire he drips,
feeding pyre with melting flesh. But now the daylight sent ahead
of dawn had struck the stars: he breaks the sequence
of the funeral and, stunned, he seeks his hiding-place upon the shore. 770
What punishment do you dread, you fool, for this crime?
For this, loquacious fame has welcomed you for all the years to come.
The burial of Magnus' bones his wicked father-in-law will praise:
just go, confident of pardon, and confess his burial,
demand the head.—Devotion forces him to complete
the ceremonial. He grabs the bones, half-burnt and not yet
separated enough from the muscles and full of scorched marrow;
he quenches them in sea-water and, heaped together, covered them
with a little earth. Then to stop a gentle breeze uncovering
and carrying off the ashes, with a rock he presses down the sand,
and to prevent a sailor's interfering with the grave by fastening
a mooring-rope, he inscribed the sacred name with half-burnt stick:
'Here lies Magnus.'

Are you happy, Fortune, to call this
Pompey's tomb, in which his father-in-law preferred
he should be buried rather than have no funeral at all? Reckless hand,
why do you thrust a grave on Magnus and confine his roaming
shade? He is buried where farthest earth floats
on Ocean flowing back; the name of Rome and all its empire
is the limit of his grave for Magnus; cover up the rock: it is brimming
with reproach against the gods. If all of Oeta belongs to Hercules
and all of Nysa's ridges make room for Bromius, then why
has Magnus a single stone in Egypt? He can occupy
all the fields of Lagus if his name is fixed
to no turf. Let us peoples be in doubt and tread on none
of Nile's sands in terror of your ashes, Magnus.
But if you think the rock is worthy of such a sacred name,
then list his exploits so immense, memorials of his mightiest deeds,
fierce Lepidus' upheavals and the Alpine war,
the conquered army of Sertorius when the consul was recalled,
the chariots he drove while still a knight, trade secure
for the nations and Cilicians frightened of the sea; the conquest
of the barbarian world and nomad races and all the realms
which lie in the east and in the north. Say that always after warfare
he returned to the toga of the citizen, that, content with driving
chariots
three times, he waived his claim to many triumphs for his fatherland.
What grave can hold all this? A pitiable tomb arises,
not full of any honours or the sequence of his annals
so immense; and Pompey's name, which people were accustomed
to read
above the lofty roof-tops of the gods and arches built
with enemy's plunder, is not far from the lowest sand, placed so low
upon the grave that stranger may not read it standing upright,
that Roman visitor would pass it by if it were not pointed out.

Land of Egypt, guilty in civil war's destiny,
not without cause for sure did the song of Cumae's prophet
warn that the soldier of Hesperia was not to touch
Pelusian shores of Nile and the banks swollen in summer.
Brutal land, for a crime so terrible what should I ask for you in prayer?
May Nile be detained in the region where he rises and turn back
his waters, and may barren fields be in need of winter rains,
and may you disintegrate entirely into crumbling sands of Ethiopia. 830
We have admitted into Roman temples your Isis
and half-divine dogs and rattle bidding grief
and Osiris, whose mortality you prove by mourning him:
but you, Egypt, keep our shades in your dust.

You, too, O Rome, though already you have given a temple
to the savage tyrant, have not yet fetched Pompey's ashes.
Simois' waters, Rhoeteum renowned for its Greek tomb
and the ghosts that owe so much to bards.
He walks around a memorable name—burnt-out Troy—
and seeks the mighty traces of the wall of Phoebus.
Now barren woods and trunks with rotting timber
have submerged Assaracus' houses and, with roots now weary,
occupy the temples of the gods, and all of Pergamum
is veiled by thickets: even the ruins suffered oblivion.
He sees Hesione's rock and Anchises' marriage-chamber hiding
in the woods; the cave where the adjudicator sat; the place
from which the boy was snatched to heaven; the peak
where Naiad Oenone grieved; no stone is without a story.
Unwittingly, he had crossed a stream creeping
in dry dust—this was Xanthus. Oblivious, he placed
his footsteps in the deep grass; the Phrygian local tells him
not to tread upon the shade of Hector. Scattered stones
were lying there, preserving no appearance of anything sacred:
the guide says: 'Have you no respect for the Hercean altars?'
O how sacred and immense the task of bards! You snatch everything
from death and to mortals you give immortality.
Caesar, do not be touched by envy of their sacred fame;
since, if for Latian Muses it is right to promise anything,
as long as honours of the Smyrnaean bard endure,
the future ages will read me and you; our Pharsalia
shall live and we shall be condemned to darkness by no era.
When revered antiquity had filled the leader's sight,
he raised a sudden altar with a heap of turf and poured
into the incense-burning fires prayers not unfulfilled:
'Gods of the ashes, you who live in Phrygian ruins,
and household gods of my Aeneas, now preserved
in Lavinian abodes and Alba and on whose altars
the Phrygian fire still shines; and Pallas looked upon
by no male, the memorable guarantee in the hidden temple:
upon your altars the most glorious descendant of the Julian clan
offers holy incense and he solemnly invokes you in your
former home. Grant me a prosperous passage for the future:
I shall restore the people; in gratitude the Ausonians will give back
their walls to the Phrygians, and Pergamum will rise Roman.'

So he spoke, returned to his fleet and opened all his sails.
to Corus following, and with the gale impelling him
he was keen to compensate for his delays at Ilium and he sails
past mighty Asia and leaves behind him Rhodes with foaming sea.
With Zephyr never slackening the ropes, the seventh night
reveals the shores of Egypt by the flames of Pharos.
But day arose and hid the night-time lamp
before he entered calm waters. There he finds the sea-shore
full of uproar, voices jumbled up in murmur indistinct,
and, fearing to entrust himself to a suspect power,
he kept his ships away from land. But a minion of the king,
bearing a dreadful gift, sailed out into the mid-sea:
he brings the head of Magnus, wrapped in Pharian cloth,
and first he justifies the crime with utterance unspeakable:
‘Conqueror of the earth and greatest of the Roman race, and safe—
although you do not know it yet—with your son-in-law killed,
the Pellaean king lets you off the toils of battle
and of sea and shows the one thing missing from Emathian
warfare. In your absence, civil war has been accomplished for you:
Magnus, as he sought to repair the ruins of Thessaly,
lies low by our sword. With a pledge so mighty, Caesar,
we have bought you; by this blood our pact with you was struck.
Receive the realms of Pharos, gained without slaughter;
receive power over Nile’s flood; keep for yourself whatever
you would give for Magnus’ neck; and consider as a vassal
worthy of your camp the one who has been given by the Fates
such mighty power against your son-in-law. And do not think this
service
worthless because it was accomplished with an easy killing.
He was his grandfather’s guest-friend; he restored the sceptre
to his banished father. Why say more? For such a mighty deed
you will find a name, or else, you may consult the world’s opinion.
If it is a crime, then you admit your debt to us is greater
because you do not commit this crime yourself.’ So he spoke, exposed
and held aloft the covered head. Already his appearance, drooping
in death, had altered the form of the familiar face.

Caesar at the first sight did not condemn the gift
and turn away his eyes; he lingered till he could believe the face;
and when he saw the confirmation of the crime and thought it now
was safe to be the loving father-in-law, he poured out tears which fell
not of their own accord, and squeezed out groans from his happy
breast, not able to conceal his mind’s conspicuous joy
except by tears, and he destroys the tyrant’s savage
service, preferring to lament his son-in-law’s torn-off head
than be in debt for it. The man who trampled on the Senate’s
limbs with face unmoved, who saw the fields of Emathia
with dry eye, to you alone, Magnus, does not dare
refuse laments. O harshest share of destiny!
Did you, Caesar, chase this man with wicked warfare,
a man for whom you had to weep? Does the pact of families united
touch you now? Do your daughter and your grandson bid you
grieve now?
Do you believe that this benefits your camp among the people
who love the name of Pompey? You are touched perhaps
by envy of the tyrant, and feel pain that another had such power
over captive Magnus’ guts, and you complain that warfare’s
revenge has vanished and your son-in-law has been taken
from the power of his proud conqueror. Whatever impulse made
you weep, it was far removed from true affection.
With these feelings, I suppose, you scour the lands and seas,
that your son-in-law should nowhere die in hiding. O how happy
that his death has been removed from your control! How great
the crimes which cruel Fortune spared our Roman shame
in not allowing you, you traitor, to show mercy to Magnus
while he was still alive! Yet with these words he dares to deceive,
and by his brow gains credence for the pretended grief:
‘Minion, from my sight remove your king’s
disgusting gift. Your crime deserves worse
from Caesar than from Pompey; the one reward
of civil war—to grant survival to the conquered—
we have lost. But if his sister were not hated
by the Pharian tyrant, to the king I could have given back
what he deserves, and in return for such a present to your brother,
Cleopatra, could have sent your head. Why did he wield the secret
sword and thrust his weapons into our struggle?
Did we then create authority for the Pellaean sword
on the fields of Thessaly? Was freedom for your realms my aim?
I could not bear Magnus ruling the world of Rome with me:
Ptolemy, shall I bear you, then? Uselessly have we embroiled
the nations in civil warfare if in this world there is

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Book Nine