

Estelle Haan

Pious Aeneas

I

He turned; he left his Dido,
his Dido, wounded doe, to die.
He sailed for Italy:
new home, new bride, new wars,
and with a curse
from burning citadel,
from burning love turned suicide;
from wound and flame
to wars and fire and pious fury
Aeneas turned — his Dido left.

II

He saw her shade, silent and cold;
he saw her shade her anger
or grief. A lunar ghostly beauty
but now no blood flows,
only memories that do not die.
No Lethe, no oblivion for Dido,
for lethal destiny prevails here.
Even her former husband
will not do — pretend she may,
Sychaeus is not Aeneas.
No embrace for this shade.

III

She to former husband;
he to future wife.
Stony silence in Hades
speaks loudly to the pious hero;
speaks to the heart of the faithful traitor,
who wept and turned;
who turned and wept
but left those shores
for gods who do not care.