Aeneas in the Twenty-First Century

for Samuel and Thomas Nouwen-Cooper

In early dark or morning light
those prayers the ancients offered
might seem true: how like sunset
the burning of a boar's entrails
in darkness. Spilt blood in bowls,
those rich vermilion rays
that bless us from the East. And us
supposed to be superior to this
with our analysis – though we still
stand bemused, shields lax
by our sides, before the threat
of night or a fresh day. We still
long for rhyme and rhythm
though we fear their certainty, those
songs that echo down the centuries.
Ours a hell the prophets could not utter,
not *apothenin thelo* but everything
bathed in the false light of figures –
not knowing, just learning and always
misunderstanding.
Watch them pass
through those onyx and ivory gates,
the ages melding as they journey
to a world where sign and symbol
are the same, nature untamed
and fabulous, unrestrained
by the ruinous tick of clock or chip.
Tonight we sail for Elysium: ready the ships.

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