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The Phaninetai (He Seems to Me) Fragment

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THE PHAINETAI (HE SEEMS TO ME)
FRAGMENT

*He strikes me as godlike
who up close before you
sits and intent upon your sweet
voice listens to the bay of Naples
of tears of smoke
and passengers
from a journey starting here
the imagination a line
that slowly moves
between the blackened temples
towers
uneven rise
on unsure footing I go
following
crusted edge
to the sea
I was there once within
spear's throw
dangling
from this buckled loop
close to love
stepping in from the height
of a tower
O vision
but not a sound from their lips
I heard and in my ears not a single word,
and as your charm fills his eyes
with longing, yes, it
makes the heart in my lungs shake;
for when I look at you, no
longer thereupon
am I able to speak.*

a breastwork opens
an aching spirit
 beyond the crossblades
of passion sings
a seat soaked in wine
 the wishbone cracking arc
 of man's life
the green grass growing paler
 without speech
 listening

*but now my tongue is rent, subtle
flame races gently over skin,
and in my eyes no sight; there is
a ringing in my ears, for it is planted
and fastened*

 we are told
not in organs of the thorax
and abdomen
but folded inside
 the oil marrow
 the breath-soul refrains

a voice thrown
with trumpets and timpani, *and down me
the sweat ran, and a trembling
wholly overtook me, paler than grass
I was, and I am dead just short of that
it seems to me, it is,*
is this the cold sweat
that holds

 and shakes after living
love? Still gold bracelets
for my youth and sweet voice
before death's winding sheet
 first hung
 Pindar's bar across the eyes
to crust with a salt cloak
a seeming that cannot mean end.