

PROPERTIUS IV

Stranger, all you can see that brought Rome fame
Was grass and hill before Aeneas came:
And there, where stands Apollo's Palatine,
Was where reposed exiled Evander's kine.
These golden shrines for earthen gods were placed
And ill-erected cottages disgraced
No-one. From his rock Tarpeian Jupiter
Thundered while Tiber, then a foreigner,
Was our defence. There Remus formerly
Was bred: and both those brothers' mastery 10
Was but one hearth. The Senate, way up there
In splendour, with its senators who wear
Their hem-frocked robes once held a company
Of rustic, pelt-clad Fathers who would be
Called by a horn, and often they'd convene,
A hundred strong, upon a field of green.
No drapes were hung in theatres; no-one smelt
The scent of solemn saffron. No-one felt
The need to seek out foreign gods: they thrilled
At their ancestral rites; bonfires were filled 20
With straw to honour Pales' holy day,
Just as purification is today
Renewed when steeds are docked. In poverty
Vesta would wreath her mules. The liturgy,
Led by lean cows, was paltry. Hardly wide
Were the roads the fatted porkers purified,

A sheep's entrails were offered, to the song
Of a pipe, by shepherds, and his shaggy thong
The pelt-clad ploughman waved, whence came the rite
On the Lupercal. No weapons sparkled bright, 30
Folk battled with fire-hardened stakes, and yet
Not armoured. The first captain's tent was set
By Lycmon, who a wolf-skin helmet wore,
While Tatius' wealth was sheep and little more.
Thence came the Tities, the staunch Ramnes
And, from Solonium, the Luceres,
Then Romulus with his white steeds. When we
Were few a small municipality
Bovillae was: Fidenae was a good
Long trip away. Then mighty Alba stood, 40
Thanks to the white sow's sign, and Gabii,
Now gone, once had a multiplicity
Of citizens. The Roman of today
Has but his forebears' name and will not say
A she-wolf caused the blood that courses through
His veins. It was a splendid thing that you
Have done, o Troy, to bring across the sea
Your exiled gods. A blessed augury
That here the arms of Troy would thrive once more.!
Your gods were welcomed by a joyful shore, 50
Julus. But even then the signs were food,
Because the belly of the horse of wood,
When opened, did not do them any harm.
For when Anchises, shaking with alarm,

Was draped about Aeneas' neck, the flame
 Dreaded to burn that pious man. Then came
 Brave Decius and Brutus, chosen for
 Consul; her Caesar's armour Venus bore,
 If the quaking Sibyl said the countryside
 Would be by Remus' body sanctified 60
 Or if the Trojan witch's prophecies
 Wee truly told to aged Priam: "These
 Are my true words:"Troy, you will tumble down
 But rise again as Trojan Rome! Renown
 You'll win in ruling over land and sea.
 Greeks, turn the horse! You'll rue your victory!
 For Troy will live again, since at her death
 Jove will re-arm her, giving her new breath."
 She-wolf of Mars, of nurses you're the best:
 From those two lads who suckled at your breast 70
 What walls have risen up! Let me rehearse
 Those very walls myself in duteous verse,
 Despite my feeble voice. What streams shall flow
 From me I'll use to serve my country. So
 Let Ennius place upon his poetry
 A ragged garland: Bacchus, furnish me
 With ivy so that Umbria, the home
 Of him known as he Callimachus of Rome,
 May swell with pride, and anybody who
 Can see our towering citadels may view 80
 Their merit through my verse. Rome, smile on me,
 I toil for you; give me fair augury.

You Romans; may a bird upon the wing
Bless me upon the right. For I shall sing
Of rites and gods and old place-names: I need
To reach the goal upon my sweating steed.

THE POET'S HOROSCOPE

Where are you hurrying so thoughtlessly?
Don't yearn to seek your fate. Your destiny,
Propertius, isn't bright. You'll only curse
Yourself with woe. Apollo is adverse: 90
You're asking of a lyre that's indisposed
To answer what you'd like to have disclosed.
Sure things I'll tell on sure authority,
Or I'm a prophet whose bronze orrery,,
Where Jove's and Mars's planets move around
And where the star of Saturn may be found,
Malign to all, I can't use. Babylon
Is where I'm from and I am Horops' son,
From Archytas's line, my family
Originating from the ancestry 100
Of Conon. All the gods will testify
I've not disgraced my kindred and that I
Put truth before all else in what I say.
Now people falsify the heavens for pay.
I once admonished Arria when she sent
Her sons to war against the god's consent
And said they'd not return: now they both lie

Beneath the earth and verify that I
 Was truthful. While Lupercus tried to shield
 His horse's wounded face while on the field 110
 Of battle, he fell down, now unaware
 Of the horse, and while Gallus was taking care
 Of the standards trusted to him, he bespattered
 His eagle with the blood that he had scattered
 As down he fell. A mother's greed incurred
 Their fate. It makes me sad, but there's no word
 That's truer. When childbirth caused agony
 In Cinara and her labour sluggishly
 Proceeded, I said, "Give a lasting vow
 To Juno." Then her child was born, and now 120
 My books show that success, and what Pisces,
 Leo and Capricorn, by western seas
 Made moist, prognosticate, are not made known
 By Jupiter Ammon's desert shrine or shown
 By studying entrails or by those who know
 The future through the flying of a crow
 Or dead shades that appear mysteriously
 In water. Heaven's pathways you must see
 And trace the road of truth the stars make clear
 And the five zones. A good example here 130
 Is Calchas: for the fleet that stubbornly
 Had clung to pious rocks he then set free
 From Aulis, slaughtering the royal girl
 So that King Agamemnon might unfurl
 His bloody sails. The Greeks did not return.

Defeated Troy, hold back your tears and turn
 Your eyes to Euboea! Nauplius at nightfall
 Sends out his vengeful fires: Greece, loot and all,
 Is shipwrecked. Ajax, rape that prophetess,
 Who's clinging closely to Minerva's dress, 140
 By her kept safe! So much for history :
 Now to your horoscope: prepare to be
 Distressed anew. In Umbria were you bred,
 Of noble kin. You doubt what I have said?
 Or have I hit it right and that's where you
 Were born, where moist Mevania sheds its dew
 Upon its hollows, where the water's chill
 In summer and a wall ascends the hill,
 Known in your verse, where you – too soon, indeed! -
 Buried your father and, through urgent need, 150
 Moved to a humble home: your well-tilled land
 Suffered the rod held in the surveyor's hand.
 Soon from your neck the golden amulet
 They took that on your shoulders might be set
 The garb of manhood; this was celebrated
 Before his mother's gods. Phoebus dictated
 Part of his song, forbidding you to bellow
 Mad words directed at some other fellow-
 Lawyer. Write elegies, a tricky chore
 (This is your province!); be a model for 160
 All other bards. The tender soldiery
 Of Venus you will bear, an adversary

Of Cupid. For whatever are your gains
There'll be one girl who'll mock you for your pains:
It will be day or night by her decree:
You'll even *weep* by her authority,
And though you should dislodge with fish-hook caught
Fast in your chin, it yet will come to nought -
The barb's still there. So watch it all you will
And seal up all her doors – one chink will still 170
Help a deceiver. In mid-stream you go
Unarmed to fight against an armoured foe,
Although the earth may shake its roots and crack:
Yet you must fear the Crab's portentous back.

II

You're awed that I am multi-shaped? Hear me!
I am Vertumnus, born in Tuscany..
To leave Volsinii I felt no shame
In time of war when the Etruscans came
And crushed fierce Tatius, king of the Sabine race.
I saw the wavering ranks and the disgrace
Of arms abandoned as the enemy flew.
O Rome, my Tuscan kin received from you
Requital whereby to this very day
The Tuscan Street is named. Therefore, I pray 10
That Saturn shall decree eternally
That all of Rome shall pass in front of me.

Of fowlers. I'll catch fish once I've put on
 My angler's hat or maybe I will don
 A trailing tunic so that I may sell
 My merchandise from door to door. As well,
 I can become a shepherd and can bring
 Baskets of roses while I'm hustling
 Amid the dust, and yet my chief repute
 Is that I reap the gardens' choicest fruit.
 The first grape darkens on the vine for me;
 With milky grain the corn-ear bounteously 50
 Expands; sweet cherries, autumn plums you'll view,
 And in the summer blushing mulberries, too.
 Grafters fulfil their promise with a ring
 Of fruit after the pear-tree's offering
 Of its reluctant apples. The dark-green
 Cucumber and the swelling gourd are seen
 As mine; also the cabbage that is tied
 With a frail rush, while from the countryside,
 Drawn from my brow, all flowers shall fittingly
 Droop. But since I conVERT my Unity 60
 In oMNiformity, VERTUMNus I
 Became in my own language. But stand by -
 Eight lines remain. Now since you need your bail,
 I'll hurry: here's the last part of my tale:
 I WAS A MAPLE STUMP, HEWN HURRIEDLY
 IN A CITY THAT I HELD IN AMITY.
 IN POVERY I LIVED TILL NUMA'S REIGN.
 BUT MARK HOW THIS POOR GOD WOULD LIVE AGAIN:

MAMURRIUS, IN BRONZE YOU SCULPTED ME
AND CAST ME BY YOUR GREAT DEXTERITY
IN MANY ROLES: SO MAY THE OSCAN LANDS
NOT CAUSE A BRUISING IN YOUR EXPERT HANDS.

III

Lycotas, please receive these words from me
If, though you're often absent, you can be
Your Arethusa's. If some part's mislaid
Or smudged, the loss by my sad tears is made:
Or if some scrawl confusedly you've scanned
It is because of my now failing hand.
Brows drawn, the Bactrians saw you recently,
And on mailed steeds, the Persian enemy
The northern Getae and the Brits who ride
On painted chariots and, by the eastern tide 10
Pounded, the swart Ludi. What loyalty
Is this? What bridal gifts innocently
Promised that time I gave myself to you?
The wedding-torch its murky fire drew
From a dying funeral pyre. I am wet
With Stygian waters and a wreath is set
Awry upon my hair. Our oaths we swore
But Hymen wasn't there. On every door
My pledges hang which lead to injury.
This is the fourth cloak you'll receive from me, 20
Weaved by my hands. So perish that man who

Out of a guiltless tree a palisade dew
And shaped a trumpet whose cacophony
Sounds through a screeching bone. I should be he,
Not Ocnus, sitting at a slant to braid
A rope to feed his donkey. Aren't you made
Sore by your breastplate? Does the heavy spear
Not chafe your gentle hands? I'd rather fear
Such things for you than that you should be bitten
With love-marks by some girl so that I'm smitten 30
With woe! I hear you're also drawn and wan:
If so, the reason that I count upon
Is that you miss me. When the evening star
Brings bitter night for me, what arms there are
That you've left here I kiss, and I protest
The blankets are not smooth in our love-nest
And that the dawn's not greeted by the lark.
I'm even pleased to hear my Yappy's bark
(He's claimed your place beside me). Now I knit
On wintry nights, to swell your army kit, 40
With Tyrian wool. By diligence I know
Where the Araxes, river of our foe,
Is found, how many miles a Persian steed
Can cover without a drink. I feel the need
To study maps and climates which were planned
By our creator and to know which land
Is bound by frost, which land is sizzly,
Which wind will bring you back to Italy.
My sister sits with me: there's none else by.

My nurse, pallid with care, gives me the lie 50
 That your return's blocked by the winter's cold.
 Happy Hippolyta! Bare-breasted, bold,
 A helmet over her soft hair, she fought
 In battle. Would our military had sought
 Out Roman girls! I'd be your faithful bag
 And baggage, were that so. I would not lag
 On Scythian peaks, when even the deep sea
 Is turned to solid ice. The potency
 Of Love is greater still when one is banned
 From one's own spouse. Passion like this is found 60
 By Venus herself. For now what use is there
 To dress in eastern crimson silks or wear
 My crystal rings? All's hushed: occasionally
 On the Kalends the Lares' shrine will be
 Unlocked by just one girl. I with a chain
 Of flowers deck the chaplets, and vervain
 Around the crossroad altars I enwrap;
 With marjoram ancient hearths crackle and snap
 If an owl has hooted on a roof nearby
 Or a lamp has sputtered, signalling a cry 70
 For wine, when this year's lambs for death are set
 And aproned acolytes bustle to get
 Fresh gains. Let not the price of clambering
 The walls of Bactra or of capturing
 Some chieftain's linen robes be not too high
 When leaden missiles whirl up in the sky,
 When treacherous arrows zing from a steed that flees.

But (thus after your Parthian victories
May a headless spear be with you as you ride
Upon your chariot) I beg you, abide 80
By your love-pledge! This wish I stipulate,
Nine other. When upon the Capene Gate
I place your arms, I'll write THESE THANKS ARE FOR
MY SPOUSE'S SAFE HOMECOMING FROM THE WAR.

IV

Tarpeia's crime and her inglorious fate
And how Jove was betrayed I shall relate.
What then was Rome when the Sabine trumpeter's blare
Shook Jove's cliffs lingeringly? No war was there -
Just hills. Where now the Senate House is staked
About, there from the spring the war-horse slaked
His thirst, and where our foreign policy
Is made, once javelins stood. Once one could see
A lush grove in an ivy-mantled glen,
And there were many trees that rustled then 10
By natural rills, Silvanus' dwelling, where
The shepherd, sheltering from the steamy air,
Guided his sheep, by playing tunefully
Upon his pipe, to drink there; vis-à-vis
Tatius fenced off his camp with a stockade
Of maple and, with piles of earth, he made
A further wall. Tarpeia took from there
Water for Vesta, which she placed four-square

In an urn upon her head, and she caught sight
Of Tatius, with his armour shining bright, 20
Riding a tawny horse. His kingly mien
And armour stupefied her, and between
Her hands she dropped the urn. Time and again
She's feign some aspect of the moon and then
Say she must wash her tresses in the brook,
And to the winsome Nymphs she often took
Silvery lilies so no injury
Might alter Tatius' countenance; when she
Would climb the Capitol in evening's shade,
Her arms were torn with brambles as she made 30
Her way back home; she wept in lamentation
For her love-pangs which caused exasperation
In Jove: "Campfires and Tatius' command-tent
And Sabine armour, so magnificent,
May Tatius take me captive that I might
Sit at his hearth and revel at the sight
Of him I love! Rome's hills, and Rome as well,
And Vesta, whom I've mortified, farewell!
Why marvel that King Nisus' hair was sheared
By Scylla, who accordingly appeared 40
With wild dogs where her nether parts used to be?
Why marvel at Minos' monstrosity
Betrayed by Ariadne when she led
King Theseus by a piece of twisted thread
Out of the labyrinth? I'll bring such shame
To Roman gods, keeping the virgin flame!

Pallas's fires are out? It's no surprise:
Her shrine is drowned with moisture from my eyes.
Tomorrow is a holiday, they say:
Then climb this moist, thorn-covered hill. The way 50
Is slick and treacherous, the grassy heath
Concealing waters lying underneath.
If I'd known spells, the magic I'd have made
Would to my handsome hero have brought aid.
The royal robe suits you, not that motherless child
Who was nursed by a she-wolf in the wild.
Shall I be queen within your court? Just see
What you've been given by my treachery,
Or else avenge the Sabine rape – decide
The matter by raping me! OFor, as your bride, 60
I'll part the troops. Make of my wedding-dress
A treaty recognizing peacefulness!
Hymen, strike up! And, trumpeter, be mum!
For once I'm married, peace will surely come.
Now the fourth bugle meets the morning light;
The weary stars are sinking out of sight.
I'll venture sleep and look for dreams of you:
Come, then, a kindly shade, into my view."
She fell to fitful slumber, unaware
That she was couched with further demons there. 70
For Venus, the propitious paladin
Of the embers left in Troy, now fed her sin
With yet more firebrands. Then she became

Delirious just like some Thracian dame
 Upon the Thermodon, her naked breast
 Seen through her torn clothes. It was a day of rest
 To celebrate the walls of Rome each year,
 The shepherds' feast, a time of urban cheer
 When village dishes flow abundantly,
 When heaps of hay are burned and drunkenly 80
 The revellers dance, and Romulus' decrees
 Allowed the sentinels to take their ease;
 No trumpet blared inside the camp. Then she,
 Judging it time, approached the enemy:
 She sealed a pact, and she would be a share
 Of the arrangement. People everywhere
 Were sleeping – all but Jupiter, who stayed
 Awake to see the penance duly paid.
 The hill had now been climbed, through revelry
 And feasting now unguarded. Instantly 90
 She stilled the watchdogs' barking with her blade:
 The gate and her poor country she betrayed.
 She said, "Now name our wedding-day." But he
 (For he did not approve of treachery)
 Said, "Marry me." and then he crushed the maid
 Beneath his soldiers' shields. Thus was she paid
 The dowry for the wicked deeds she'd done.
 And yet she merited not only one
 Death for betraying Vesta's sacred flame.
 Thus from that guide the hill received the name 100

'Tarpeian', though unjustly. Jupiter, Lord,
Thus for this deed you've earned your just reward.

V

Bawd, may the earth heap thorns upon your grave,
And may your shade feel thirst and ever crave
Repose, and may avenging Cerberus
Fright your vile bones with barking ravenous!
Even Hippolytus, the puritan,
She might seduce (a happy union
She'd never bless) and force Penelope
To wed the lewd Antinous. Should she
Thus wish, a magnet would refuse to act
As any magnet should and not attract, 10
And birds would prove stepmothers, furthermore
If Colline herbs to the magic trench she bore,
Crops would dissolve; the moon she'd captivate
And with a night-prowling wolf's form obfuscate
Her shape; she'd gouge a raven's eyes to blind
A husband, and a screech-owl she would find
To plot my death; hippomanes she'd take
From pregnant mares; her magic she would make
At night, just like the bookworm burrowing
Through papyrus and the busy mole tunnelling 20
Into the earth: "If crysolite you like well
That comes from eastern shores, or the purple shell,
From Tyre or Coan silk or cloth-of-gold

Or wares that in palm-bearing Thebes are sold
 Or Parthian glass cups, tear up guarantees,
 Cat down the gods, deal in mendacities
 And break chastity's laws. Adopt men's ways:
 Accompany him if he his voice should raise
 In song. He's pulled your hair? Well, let that bring
 You profit: make him pay by purchasing 30
 Concord between you. Finally, when he
 Has brought you kisses and intimacy
 Is pledged, the ritual of Isis feign
 And say that after all you must abstain.
 Let Crystal say that April's on its way
 And Pearl remind him that the first of May
 Is your birthday. He begs – sit down and pen
 Something. If he should quake, you've got him then!
 Always have fresh neck-bites – he'll think they came
 To be imprinted by another flame. 40
 Don't choose Medea's method (for she learned
 Her forwardness led to her being spurned).
 Choose pricy Thais in Menander's play
 Who dupes the cunning slave. If you should say
 You have a lover and your price will rise:
 Invent excuses! If you temporize
 For one night, he'll be passionate all the more.
 And let the guard be watchful at the door
 For those with presents, but with those who bring
 Nothing, let him continue slumbering 50

Against the lock. Don't spurn a soldier, who
Is not for passion made; a sailor, too,
Accept, if he has money in his hand,
Or take a slave brought from a foreign land,
Whose chalky feet, to prove agility,
Have danced within the marketplace. Just see
The gold and not the hand that gives it you!
You hear their poems – what else is there to do?
They're empty words! Whoever brings you verse,
Not Coan silk, his lyre's without a purse 60
And tuneless. While you're youthful and not wracked
With wrinkles, take advantage of the fact
Lest by tomorrow your good looks will die!
I've seen rose-beds of fragrant Paestum lie
Dried by the morning South Wind." Thus did she
Work on my sweetheart's mind, while easily
The ones beneath my shrunken skin showed through
And one could count them. Venus, I beg of you,
Accept a ring-dove's threat that's been cut through
Before your shrine so that I might from you 70
Receive my wish. I've seen her wrinkled throat
Clotted with phlegm, and I have lived to note
The bloody spittle coughed up in between
Her rotten teeth; her last rank breath I've seen
Her breathe out on her heirloom rags inside
Her sagging, fireless shack. Filched bands they tied,
At her funeral, around the scanty hair

And a cap that had grown dull with disrepair,
Her dog still wide-awake, to my chagrin,
When I attempted slyly to get in. 80
Her tomb should be a broken, old wine-jar,
A wild fig-tree above it. You who are
In love, pelt it with jagged stones and cast,
Along with these, your curses' icy blast.

VI

The rites begin: hush! Let a calf fall down
Before my shrine. Along with the ivy crown
Of Philitas set the Roman garland. See
That the urn pours out pure water. Furnish me
With tender nard and incense. Thrice go round
The hearth where the woollen fillets must be bound.
Splash me with water; on the shrine, new-made,
Let the ivory pipe pour forth a serenade.
Deceit, begone, and, mischief, stay away:
The priest's new path is eased by spotless bay. 10
I'll tell, o Muse, of Phoebus' sanctuary
Upon the Palatine. Calliope,
This theme you've earned. I sing of Caesar's glory:
I beg you, Jupiter, to heed my story.
There is upon the Athamanian shore
A port of Phoebus quieting the roar
Of the Ionian Sea, and people call
It Actian Leucas, monument of all

Augustus's armada, sanctuary
 For sailors. Hither came the soldiery 20
 Of all the world: a giant mass of pine
 Stood on the sea, but fortune did not shine
 On all alike. A fleet stood in one place,
 By Romulus cursed, and javelins, in disgrace
 Held by a woman's hand; this enemy
 Now faced Augustus' flagship: unfavourably
 Her billows swelled, her standards skilled to gain
 The victory for their country. On the main,
 Nereus at last had curved the battle-line
 Into two crescents, mirroring the shine 30
 Of weapons while the ocean swirled about.
 Phoebus left Delos, which is standing stout
 In his protection (once a wandering
 Island, it could not combat with the sting
 Of winds); over the ship Augustus led
 He stood: a sudden flame flashed in a zed
 Of lightning thrice. But Phoebus was not there
 With streaming locks or piping out an air
 Upon a peaceful lyre – rather, though, as he
 Appeared to Agamemnon – angrily - 40
 Or with the Greeks the greedy pyre supplied
 Or slew the serpent that had terrified
 The peaceful Muses; he spoke presently:
 "Augustus, saviour of humanity,
 Who's from the walls of Alba Longa sprung,

Whose warrior's ability that's sung
 Bests that of your ancestral family
 Who fought at Troy, be conqueror at sea
 (The land is yours already). It's for you
 My bow and arrows battle. Now rescue 50
 All Rome from fear, because by you she swears;
 Upon your ship are placed a nation's prayers.
 For Romulus, seeking an augury,
 Beheld the Palatine birds ominously
 If you should fail. They dare a monstrous deed!
 O shameful that, while you their galleys lead,
 The Latian Sea should hold a royal fleet!
 Although their countless oars the waters beat,
 Fear not: the sea dislikes them. Threatening
 Centaurs upon their prows, all poised to fling 60
 Great rocks, will prove but planks, fears merely drawn.
 His cause will make or break a soldier's brawn:
 Shame shatters his arms if the cause is not right.
 The time has come, engage now in the fight.
 I fixed the hour and, laurelled, I will steer
 Your fleet!" He shot his arrows: Caesar's spear
 Flew next. Rome was in Phoebus' warranty
 Assured: that woman paid he penalty,
 Her shattered sceptre now afloat. Meanwhile
 Augustus' father looks on with a smile 70
 From Venus' star."I am a god," says he:
 "That victory proves you're of my pedigree."
 Triton strikes up a fanfare; the marine

Goddesses clap their hands that they have seen
 Freedom reclaimed. Within her scuttling boat
 She seeks the Nile while trying to stay afloat
 And save herself. That's fine! How trifling
 Would her triumph have been while travelling
 The rote Jugurtha took! Thus Phoebus gained
 His Actian temple, since each dart he rained 80
 On them sank ten ships. I sufficiently
 Have sung of conflicts: in his victory
 Phoebus demands the lyre; he doffs his bow
 For peaceful dances. Let the banqueters go
 Into the leafy grove, all dressed in white.
 Deck me with roses (such a charming sight!).
 Pour out Falernian wine and then infuse
 My locks with Cilician saffron. For the Muse
 Inspires a bard who's drunk; similarly
 Bacchus incites Phoebus' ability. 90
 Sing, someone, how the Sygambri folk who dwelling
 In marshland were the victims of our quell.
 Sing, someone else, of swarthy Meroë,
 And let a third sing of the tardily
 Repenting Parthians, saying: "Let him give back
 Rome's standards, for his own he soon shall lack.
 Should Augustus spare the East, then it will be
 For his grandsons to claim the victory.
 Crassus, rejoice if you feel anymore
 Where you were laid upon the dusky shore. 100
 Now the Euphrates we may cross to see

Your tomb". And so with wine and revelry
I plan to spend the night until the day
Upon my empty cups shall spread its ray.

VII

Ghosts do exist;; death's not the end: a shade
Is destined to survive and thus evade
The pyre. I dreamt that Cynthia, recently
Interred to a trumpet's funeral threnody,
Leaned on my bed while fitfully I cried
How cold I was with no-one by my side
Her tresses and her eyes were just the same
As when they buried her: the pyre's flame
Showed on her dress; the beryl she'd display
Upon her finger was quite worn away 10
By fire, and her lips were withered, too,
With Lethe's waves. It was the voice I knew
In life, however, though how hideously
Her brittle fingers snapped! "Oh treachery,
No worse exists than you! And do you now
So soon succumb to sleep and yield your vow
To stand guard by my corpse? Have you so soon
Forgotten the joys we had beneath the moon
In the Subura? Or how we would wear
My window out with our covert affair? 20
How I'd let fall a rope and then climb down
To kiss you? Sometimes at the edge of town

We'd lie and warm the roadway, breast to breast.
 So much, then, for the oath that you professed,
 Dashed by the wind, which did not wish to hear
 Your cheating words! And yet, when death was near,
 No-one cried out my name: I might have bought
 Another day on earth if you had fought
 Off sleep and called me back: and for my sake
 No watchman cared a rattling sound to make 30
 On his cleft reed. The jagged tile below
 My unprotected head gave me a blow.
 In short, who saw you bowed with wretchedness,
 In mourning clothes warmed with tears of distress?
 If going beyond the gates had rankled you,
 Yet nonetheless the least that you could do
 Was bid the mourners choose a slower gait
 Just at that point. Why did you, you ingrate,
 Not call upon the winds that they might blow
 Upon the fire or perfume it? Oh no, 40
 It was too much, I guess, at little cost
 Upon my corpse some hyacinths to have tossed
 Or blessed my grave with wine from a shattered urn!
 Now let the branding-iron glow white and burn
 Your minion Lygdamus, for it was he
 Who spiked my pallid wine clandestinely.
 Let sly Nomas her secret drugs conceal -
 The red-hot potsherd will her guilt reveal.
 She who but lately whored herself downtown
 Now sweeps the ground in a gold-embroidered gown; 50

You let her melt my bust of gold and pitch
It on the flames so that she might be rich.
With heavier baskets of wool, an extra duty
She gives whoever chats about my beauty;
Because aged Petale on my grave
Placed a bouquet of flowers, that poor slave
Was bound to a log of wood; my Lalage
Was hung up by her hair and viciously
Beaten. The reason? She had dared to ask
A favour in my name. I do not task 60
You, though, although I would be justified.
For a long time I reigned supreme inside
Your books. By the Fates' immutable songs I vow -
May Cerberus give the gentlest bow-wow
To me if I speak true! - I have been staunch.
But if I lie, may a hissing viper launch
Itself into my grave and breed among
My bones. Two dwellings have been placed along
The Styx; hither and thither the whole host rows.
One way the adulterous Clytaemnestra goes, 70
And, as a wooden cow, Pasiphaë.
But see the group that goes the other way!
Inside a garlanded vessel on they come
While on the roses of Elysium
The happy breeze blows soft. The harmony
Of lutes and the clashing tones of Cybele
And the Lydian lyres struck in the turbanned dance
Can all be heard, while, further to enhance

26

The scene, Andromeda and Hypermnestra, bride
 Unstained by treachery, tell, side by side, 80
 Their glorious tales: the former maid complains
 Her arms show bruises from her mother's chains;
 The latter tells of her sister's cruelty
 (For she herself for such iniquity
 Had not the heart), and thus we ratify
 With tears the love we gave on earth, while I
 Keep mum about your many treacheries.
 Now, if you can be moved, hear my decrees,
 Lest Chloris' potions have not totally
 Enraptured you. In her senility 90
 Indulge my nurse Parthenia's every need:
 Although she could have done, she showed no greed
 Toward you. And Latris, my darling lass
 (So aptly named) – let her not hold a glass
 Up to another mistress. I desire
 That you consign these verses to the fire
 You wrote of me. Plant ivy all about
 My grave so that its swelling tendrils sprout
 About my bones, and where the apples grow
 By virtue of the foaming Anio 100
 And, favouring Hercules' divinity.
 The ivory never yellow. Ther, for me,
 Inscribe an epitaph, but see you write
 A brief one that a hasty traveller might
 Read it while leaving Rome: BY TIBER LIES

FAIR CYNTHIA. ANIO, A FURTHER PRIZE

GRACES YOUR BANKS. Dreams through The Righteous Gate

Don't spurn, for righteous dreams possess the weight

Of truth. At night we're unrestrained and stray

About. Even Cerberus casts his chains away 110

And wanders. Then at dawn we must go back

To Lethe, and old Charon counts his pack

Of shades. You may have others now: however,

You'll soon be mine alone, whom none can sever,

Our bones enmeshed. She ceased her string of spite

And, baffling my embraces, left my sight.

VIII

Hear what occurred on the Esquiline last night

Which caused those near New Gardens to take flight:

In a backstreet inn a shameful brawl broke out

Which slurred my name, though I was not about.

Lanuvium long has held an ancient snake

(An hour's visit there's worthwhile to make).

The sacred path slopes to obscurity:

It thither goes (virgin, tread warily

Such paths!) that he might take his annual right

Of food while hissing in the dark. A bite 10

He snatches from a virgin. In her hand

The basket trembles. Facing such demands,

Maids pale when brushed against its lips. If they

Are chaste, they go back home and farmers say,

"We'll have a bumper crop." My Cynthia came
 Hither upon na pony-trap to claim
 The rites of Juno: they resembled, though,
 The rites of Venus. You who saw her go,
 O Appian Way, say now triumphantly
 She clattered on your stones. A sight to see 20
 Was she as on the shaft she leaned and dared
 To ply the reins, as smutty jokes were shared
 By standers-by. I won't say anything
 About the beardless spendthrift rattling
 Along, O in a carriage hung with coverlets
 Of silk, and by his side his canine pets
 From then Molossi, bracelets glittering
 Around their necks. When he begins to bring
 A razor to his face, then will he learn
 To live on crumbs that gladiators earn. 30
 Since she has often wronged the bed we share,
 I plan to change and pitch my camp elsewhere.
 Close by Diana of the Aventine,
 One Phyllis charms all men when drunk on wine,
 Though tiresome when sober. Teia, who
 Dwells in Tarpeia's groves, is pretty too,
 But when she's drunk she must be satisfied
 By more than one, and this made me decide
 To invite them to beguile the night with me
 That to my amorous feats some piquancy 40
 Might be appended, and so, screened from view,
 A couch was set for three this time, not two,

Upon the grass. How were we placed, you ask?
 I was between them. Lygdamus had the task
 Of serving wine, poured in fine summer glass -
 A Lesbian wine whose vintage was first-class.
 Miletus was our piper, Byblis played
 The castanets (an elegant, artless maid
 Quite happy that our roses all were cast
 In her direction). Even Mr. Vast, 50
 Despite his twisted limbs, clapped hands to suit
 The rhythm coming from the boxwood flute.
 Although the lamps had been filled full, the flame
 Would keep on flickering, and the table came
 Toppling down. I waited hopelessly
 For lucky Venus, but repeatedly
 The blasted Dogs turned up. I didn't hear
 The singing, and their naked breasts, I fear,
 I didn't see. I stood – o silly me! -
 At the gates of Lanuvium, when suddenly 60
 The gates were opened with a grating sound
 And a new hubbub started up around
 The front of the house Then Cynthia straightaway
 Flung back the door, her hair in disarray,
 But lovely in her fury. I let go
 My cup through slackened fingers and, although
 Wine-steeped, my lips turned pale. Her eyes flashed fire
 In typical female rage: the scene was dire -
 Just like a captive town. Then angrily

She went for Phyllis' face, and fearfully 70
 Cried Teia, "Water, neighbours!" Lights bestirred
 All sleepers; angry voices could be heard
 Throughout the street. The girls, their clothing ripped,
 Their hair all torn, took refuge as they slipped
 Into the first inn they could see. Then she,
 Rejoicing in her spoils, now came at me
 With a backhand blow. She bruised my neck and bit
 Me, too, but chiefly (and I merited it!)
 She poked my eyes. When she became breathless
 With aiming blows against me, Lygdamus, 80
 Who'd hid behind the couch, was then hauled out:
 He begged my aid, although there was no doubt
 That I was captive, too! Then, finally,
 I begged and reached a form of harmony,
 Although she scarcely let me place a hand
 Upon her feet. She said, "Here's my command
 If you would be forgiven. Don't parade,
 Dressed in your best, in Pompey's colonnade,
 Nor visit the sand-strewn Forum. And beware
 Of girls who crane their necks that they might stare 90
 At galleries in the theatre. Specially,
 Lygdamus, cause of every injury
 Against me, should be shackled and displayed
 Upon the market." To the rules she made
 I agreed. Thus gaining power over me,
 She laughed, then fumigated thoroughly
 Each spot the girls had touched and then washed clean

The threshold; all the oil that there had been
In all the lamps she bade me change anew;
She touched my head with burning sulphur, too -
Thrice! All the sheets were changed, my vow was said
And we made peace upon that well-known bed.

IX

From Erythea Hercules drove his kine
To that unconquered, sheep-grazed Palatine;
He halted his weary cattle wearily
Where Velabrum once was flooded and a sea
Was seen within the city. On that mount
There lived Cacus, a man of no account;
He stole the cattle and thus disobeyed
Jove's law; from his dread cave raid after raid
He made. He had three mouths! So that no sign
Might be detected, Cacus dragged the kine 10
By the tails. Jove saw this, though, and there were roars
Of 'Thief' from the beasts, and his implacable doors
Were smashed by anger. Cacus there lay dead -
An Arcadian mace had done for each forehead!
"Go, steers, my final labour, twice my quest,
So that the Fields of Cattle may be blest
With your long-drawn-out mooings. Where you graze,"
Said Hercules. "will be in future days
Rome's famous Forum." Now his mouth had dried
And tortured him: the earth, though well-supplied 20

With water, offered him none. And now the sound
 Of laughing girls he heard, who'd gathered round
 In a circled , shady grove, the secret sphere
 Of Bona Dea, to which no man comes near
 Unpunished. Crimson garlands could be seen
 Around its hidden portal, and a sheen
 Of scented fire around a filthy shed
 Glimmered; across the shrine a poplar spread
 With grey-green leaves; beneath a wealth of shade
 Were hidden birds chirping a serenade. 30
 Hither, dust caking his parched beard, he sped
 And at the threshold of the shrine he said
 These words unfitting for a god: "You, who
 Sport in this sacred bower, I beg of you,
 Open your shrine to one who's traipsed around
 Glens echoing with water but has found
 Not one drop. All I need is one small task -
 Enough to fill my palm, that's all I ask,
 Are you familiar with the one who bore
 The globe upon his back? I'm he, and for 40
 That reason I'm 'Alcides'. Who has not
 Heard of my arrows accurately shot
 At beasts or of my cudgel valiantly
 Employed and how for me – and only me! -
 The Styx glowed bright? I'm spent, in need of cheer
 In this precinct and scarcely welcome here.
 Though you praise cruel Juno, even she,

My stepmother, would not deny to me
 Her waters. Please do not be terrified
 By my aspect or lion's mane, now fried 50
 By Libyan sun. I've been a lackey, too,
 In female clothes, and duly forced to do
 Distaff work and, although my hands were rough,
 A breastband on my chest was quite enough
 To show a girl." The kind priestess replied,
 Her white locks with a ribbon tied:
 "Stranger, avert your gaze; leave while you can.
 A dreaded law prohibits every man
 From this secluded hovel's sanctity.
 Tiresias without impunity 60
 Did not on Pallas cast a heedless eye,
 When she her Gorgon aegis had put by
 To bathe her valiant limbs. May Heaven bestow
 Other springs upon you, for these waters flow
 For maids alone from this sequestered brook."
 Thus spoke the crone, but Hercules then took
 The door down with his shoulders, so extreme
 Was his thirst. After he had droned the stream
 To slake his throat, he uttered this stern decree:
 "Let the Greatest Altar, sanctified by me, 70
 For the recovery of my cattle, from this day
 By not one maid be worshipped: that will pay
 For my great thirst," and thus he consecrated
 And cleansed the whole world, and then he created
 The town of Cures, when King Tatius reigned,

And in the temple Hercules attained
The name of 'Sanctifier'. Hercules,,
Our sainted father, here I pray you'll be
A happy dweller in my poetry. 80

X

I'll tell of Feretrian Jupiter's origin
And how three sets of arms he came to win.
I scale a great height since I hop for fame
By doing so, for pleasure never came
By scaling easy ones. Such a prize you gained,
Romulus, when from Acron you attained
Much booty when he aimed at Rome: you hurled
Your spear and from his fallen steed he whirled.
Acron's sprung from Caeninian Hercules
Who terrorized the Roman territories. 10
He hoped for spoils but yielded up instead
His own, drenched in his blood, and Romulus said,
Vowing success, a vow abided by,
When at the hollow towers way up high
His javelin Acron brandished, "Jove, today
Acron shall fall, your victim." Straightaway
This came about. Our founder Romulus,
Bravery's father, was accustomed thus
To conquer: coming from a poor abode,
He learned to undergo the heavy load 20
Of camp life; as a horseman, he knew how

To curb a steed and to cope with a plough,
 Around his brows his plumed, wolfskin headwear;
 No gaudy, shining, bronze shield did he bear -
 He wore a cowhide belt. Next comes Cossus
 Who slew old Veii's Tolumnius -
 It took such toil to conquer Veii;
 Beyond the Tiber war's cacophony
 Had not been heard at all until that day,
 For Nomentum had been Rome's farthest prey 30
 And Cora's triple acres. Such a shame
 For ancient Veii! Her kingdom's fame
 Was great: within her marketplace a throne
 Of gold was set. Her walls now hear the moan
 Of shepherds' horns, and where her fallen lie
 Men reap cornfields. Tolumnius stood on high
 Above the fray and parleyed fearlessly,
 The siege-works hidden by sheds. Cossus cried out:
 "The brave should fight in the open," and, without 40
 Further ado, both stood on the level plain.
 In victory Tolumnius was slain,
 Rome's steeds bathed in his neck's red blood. And so
 Across the Rhine Claudius beat back the foe.
 The Belgic shield of the chief Viridomarus,
 A giant, was brought back. He from Brennus
 Boasted decent. And he was masterly, too,
 In hurling his spear from his chariot as it flew
 Along. His striped trousers now were stained
 With blood, and the twisted necklace he had gained 50

As a prize fell from his severed throat, and now
Three spoils are laid up in a shrine, a vow
To Jove in Smiter's name, for with the gracelessly
Of Heaven two warrior-chiefs clashed face-to-face;
Or maybe it's because the victors 'bore'
The arms of those they vanquished in the war.

XI

Paullus, don't load my grave with tears: these shores,
Unmoved, will soak u these teardrops of yours.
Prayers move the gods; once Chaon has his fee,
We travel just one path inexorably.
Although the gods of darkness hear you plead,
The doors are deaf to prayers. Once we proceed
Into the world below, a pallid gate
Locks ou the fallen pyre. For thus of late
The mournful trumpets sounded, and below
The bier the cruel torch was placed, and so 10
They hailed me off. What good's it now to me
That we were wed? What good's my ancestry,
So glorious? The pledges of my fame,
Our lovely brood? Even so, the final flame
Did not evade Cornelia. I am just
A sprinkling, a mere handful of dust.
You sluggish shallows, cursed with darkness, o
You sedge entangled round my feet, although
I'm here before my time, I'm innocent;

I don't expect you to be lenient 20
 Towards my shade. If an Aeacus takes his place
 Beside his urn to judge me, may I face
 An honest fate, and may his brothers share
 Assessment and, beside King Minos' chair,
 There sits the stern band of the Eumenides,
 While, keen to hear the technicalities,
 The court is hushed. Rest, Sisyphus, from your boulder.,
 May Ixion's wheel not creak against his shoulder.
 Down, Tantalus! And let fierce Cerberus
 Rush at no shades today and, pendulous, 30
 May his chain upon a silent bolt be mute.
 I'll be my own attorney in my suit.
 If I speak falsely, may the penalty
 Of those three sisters weigh most heavily
 Upon me. If one's gained ennobling fame
 From his ancestral trophies, we can claim
 Our kin once took Numantia, as you see
 From our bronze spoils. My mother's family tree
 From Libo's blood has equal claims. Once wed,
 Another band's tied round a maiden's head. 40
 Paullus, I shared your bed and on this stone
 One will read I wed but one man alone.
 By the shes of my forebears who command-tent
 Rome's reverence, through whom the desert sand
 Hides Africa, and him who, when Perses
 By the spirit of his forebear Achilles
 Was spurred on, crushed that house, I solemnly state

That I have never tried to mitigate
 The censor's law, nor any crime of mine
 Has caused my house to blush. These trophies shine, 50
 By me untarnished: nay, I am indeed
 A pattern that this noble house should heed.
 I did not change, quite free of accusation,
 Between two torches winning approbation -
 Those of wedlock and death. Nature gave me
 Ancestral mandates, and through probity
 I fear no judge. No matter how severe
 The scrutiny of me, no maid will fear
 The shame of sitting by me, whether it be
 The peerless acolyte of Cybele 60
 Who, when the goddess' ship had run aground,
 Shifted it, or, in peril of being found
 Corrupt, Aemilia, who her white robe threw
 Into the fire and flames flared up anew.
 Mother, I've never harmed you, dearest heart:
 You'd not change me, except that I departed
 This earth. My mother's sighs, the city's groans
 Praise me while Caesar vindicates my bones
 In grief. His daughter;s sister in his woe
 He mourned, and we could see a god's tears flow. 70
 Twice aedile was my brother; when he became
 Consul, I was devoured by the flame
 Of death. And yet I earned the right to don
 The matron's robe of honour: I passed on
 Leaving no childless home. I had no call

To mourn my children: at my funeral all
 Were present. Lepidus and Paullus, who
 Ar now my consolation, it was you
 Who closed my eyes. My daughter, born to be
 Your censor father's champion, cleave, like me, 80
 To one man. For acclaim in the extreme
 For women is the liberal esteem
 Of her full married life. Now I command
 To you our pledges: even at the end
 Such is my care. Now be a mother, too:
 A double parent's role now falls to you.
 So as you kiss each tearful face, in turn
 Kiss them for me as well, for your concern
 Is that of all the house. Now when you grieve,
 Do it in private! When they're there, deceive 90
 Them with dry cheeks. With thoughts and dreams of me
 Weary yourself at night: when secretly
 You speak to me, suppose that I respond.
 But should there be a second marriage-bond,
 And a wry stepmother sits in my chair,
 Children, accept your father's choice! Be fair!
 You'll win her round. But do not overdo
 Your praise: spontaneous words she hears from you
 She'll turn to slights. If he remembers me
 Kindly, however, and decidedly 100
 Regards my ashes, you must ascertain
 How you may soothe his old age: let no lane
 Be open for a widower's distress.

May the time snatched from me bring happiness
By augmenting *your* years: through my offspring
May Paullus then enjoy his journeying
Through later life. With a line of progeny
Support the house, and I will happily
Traverse the Styx. Thus ends my case. Arise,
Who weep my loss, while kindly Earth supplies 110
The verdict that my life upon her rates.
To virtue Heaven itself unbars its gates:
And may my merits qualify my shade
To be to my great-grandfathers conveyed.