fear what is utterly foreign. But now they were quite at ease,
delighted with their adopted home in the sparkling water.
But still they remember their earlier fear, and they often assist
storm-tossed ships and support with their hands the keels of
vessels
in trouble out there in the heavy weather—all but the Greeks',
for they share Aeneas' hatred of those who destroyed high Troy 560
and cannot be much concerned when Greeks get what they
deserve.
Therefore they watched in delight as Ulysses' ship broke up,
and again rejoiced to see how the vessel Alcinoüs gave him
turned from wood to stone in the mouth of Ithaca's harbor.
This transformation from ships to nymphs was an awesome
portent,
and many hoped that Turnus and all his Rutulian soldiers
might take it as omen and warning, and cease their fighting, but
no,
nothing remotely like that happened. The war continued,
with each side fighting, and gods assisting them both. They had
not only gods but courage, which sometimes is as good 570
as divine assistance (or may be another way of describing
the same natural force). The question was no longer that
of the girl, or territory, or power, but honor. Neither
side could yield or acknowledge the other as victor. The fighting
was therefore worse, or purer—depending on how you see it.
In the end, of course, the goddess Venus watched as her son
won, for Turnus fell and died by Aeneas' hand.
Ardea, Turnus' capital city, then fell, and the soldiers
set it ablaze. A terrible thing, as a powerful city
burns away into ashes. But out of the rubble, a bird 580
of a kind never before seen appeared in the air
to stir those still hot ashes with the flapping of its huge wings.
A gaunt and woeful bird with a mournful cry, the heron
(*ardea*, in Latin) keeps the city alive in its name
and the dismal tattoo of the death march its wings seem to be
beating.
At the end of a hero's life, what glory remains? Aeneas
had moved the gods—even Juno, who put her longstanding anger
aside at last. Iulus, his son, had grown to manhood,
and the son of Venus was ready to enter now into heaven.
Venus approached great Jupiter's throne, embraced his neck, 590
and asked of him: "O father and reverend lord, you have shown
me
constant kindness, but now I pray your special indulgence.

I ask, on behalf of my son Aeneas, who is your grandson,
whatever measure you think may be meet and right of godhood.
He has already gone to the ghastly kingdom across the Styx,
and once is enough, I think, for any mortal." The gods
all gave assent together, even Juno nodding her head
agreeably. Then Jove declared, "You both are worthy,
the mother who asks, and the son for whom she asks, and we
grant
this prayer of yours." He spoke, nodded, and Venus gave thanks
for his great gift. In the air, borne aloft by her team of doves,
she flew to the coast where Numicius' waters flow in its many
mouths in a delta of reeds. She ordered the god of the river
to lave the mortal part of her son, purifying, refining,
and carrying all the dross to the fathomless depths of the sea.
The river god did as she asked, flensing corruption away
and leaving only the godly. His mother aspersed him with
fragrant
attars, touched his lips with ambrosia mixed with nectar,
and made him a god—Iuppiter Indiges, native, for now
he was born again in the place destiny always had promised.
The joint state, both Latin and Alban, prospered and
flourished.
Ascanius ruled, then Silvius, then his son Latinus, then Alba.
Epytus next, and Capys, Capetus, and then Tiberinus. . . .
(He was the one who drowned in the river that bears his name.)
His sons were Remulus (perished, hit by lightning) and warlike
Acrota, who passed on the scepter to Aventinus (he's buried
on the hill where he reigned and that bears his name). Then Proca
followed.
It was during his time on the throne that the wood nymph
Pomona lived,
whose skill in the care of plants and trees has never been equaled,
which is why she was given that name. She hardly noticed the
rivers
and forests, but loved the fields and orchards with lines of fruit
trees,
each with its laden branches. These were her passion, her life.
She carried, instead of a javelin, one of those curved pruning
hooks,
with which she would trim dead branches or shape the growth of
a tree
to something pleasing and sound. She knew the secrets of
grafting,
how to make the incision in a tree's bark and implant

in the one stock a foreign branch that would bear its own
fruit. Wherever she went she would water trees so that thirsty
roots could absorb their fill. Venus, she didn't disdain
so much as ignore—the oafish satyrs and dancing Pans 630
only made her laugh. She kept aloof from their antics,
avoiding Silvanus' crudeness, or Priapus' even more
assertive suggestions. She shut herself up in her orchards and tended
her more congenial friends, the stately and bountiful trees.
There was, however, one suitor, the god of springtime, Vertumnus.
He was in love with her—more than all the rest. He adored her,
but not even he could attract her attention or get her to smile.
He used to disguise himself, would put on the clothes of a farm hand,
a reaper, and bring her a basket of barley ears. In his own
ears he would stick hay stalks, to look like some storybook yokel. 640
He held in his hand an ox goad to pass himself off as a drover
or plowman. Or else with a pruner, he'd try to look like a field hand
who tended the grapes in their arbors. He'd come next time with a ladder
and seem to be bound for some nearby orchard to gather apples.
With wigs, costumes, and make-up, he tricked himself out as a soldier
back from the wars, or again, with a fishing pole on his shoulder,
and a creel on his hip, he would play a fisherman back with his catch.
The point was just to be near her, stand there, and gaze at her beauty,
and maybe to wish her good morning, good afternoon, or good evening
before he plodded on by. He lived for these trivial moments! 650
One day he put on an old woman's dress and a wig on his head
with strands that peeped out from beneath a faded and ratty kerchief.
Limping along the road and using a staff that he leaned on,
he stopped to admire her orchard, let himself in at the gate,
and looked around at the trees. "Lovely," he said. "Truly lovely!
But you, miss, are lovelier still." Then, in a moment of boldness,
he put his arm around her and gave her a kiss no old woman
was likely to give. She was puzzled perhaps, but not frightened or spooked.
The bent and aged creature looked around then and remarked

on an elm that supported a grapevine that had twined up its sturdy trunk. 660
"Just look at that, would you?" he said, "and think how that tree
and vine complement each other, complete each other. . . . The tree
without the vine is just leaves, gives shade perhaps, but that's all.
And without the tree, the vine would be crawling along on the ground,
where its grapes would rot. But together, they're splendid, and each one profits.
There's a lesson in that, my dear, one that you might consider.
The way you've been keeping yourself to yourself is no good, a sad
violation of Nature, as well as a waste. A lover is all
you need to make you complete as a woman. You'd have many choices,
as many, I think, as Helen or Queen Hippodamia had, 670
or Ulysses' wife, around whom that ungainly mob once gathered.
But you don't care, you avoid them all, in their scores and hundreds,
who've seen you and long from afar to address you, the humans, the gods,
and those creatures in between, the demigods living in comfort
down in the Alban Hills. Take my advice, young lady,
and pick from among this gaggle a single mate who would love you,
the best, the most ardent and true. The one I mean is Vertumnus.
I know that young man as well as I know myself, and I warrant,
I guarantee, that he loves you, absolutely adores you.
His eyes are for you alone—he's blind to all others—and you 680
are his first, as you will be his last and his only, love.
Consider that he is young, attractive, healthy, and strong.
Your tastes, too, are the same, for he likes trees and gardens
almost as much as you do. Besides, he's fun and takes on
various guises, can pass himself off as whatever you choose. . . .
It's a game he likes to play. But more than such pranks, even more
than the gardens and arboreta he cultivates, he adores you.
There is nothing else he wants as much in the whole world.
Pity him, dear. Believe me, you may take these words that I speak
as if they were coming from his own mouth, not to say his heart. 690
I urge you to think of the gods to whom you may give offense,
for these are most vengeful spirits and punish whoever may cross them.
Venus, for one, is well known to detest indifference to lovers'

earnest and honest prayers. And Nemesis stands behind her
to punish those who are proud and those who, asserting their private
wills, display a contempt for the natural order of things.
You should worry about annoying such goddesses, darling. Believe me,
for I have lived a long time and have seen many things. Let me tell you
a story I heard in Cyprus. It has an instructive lesson.
"There once was a youth named Iphis, poor, as they say, but honest.
He happened to see and of course to fall in love with a princess— 700
Anaxarete, descended from Teucer's blue-blooded line.
He realized this was absurd, acknowledged the chasm between them,
and tried to get on with his life. . . . But reason goes only so far,
and beyond all reason, in spite of good judgment and common sense,
he adored this girl, he burned, yearned for her, just couldn't help it.
After a time, he gave in, confessed to himself he was crazy,
and might as well try. For what was there left to lose, if his mind
was gone? He approached the princess' nurse and explained his hopeless
and absolutely pointless passion. He asked for nothing 710
but pity. The love that he felt for her nursling was malapropos,
but surely she could understand how her darling's astonishing
beauty had driven him mad. . . . The lesser servants, he bribed
with gifts and small sums of money to deliver messages, trinkets,
and various tokens of love—corsages damp with his tears.
The princess was mildly amused, then mildly annoyed, and then not
so mildly. The man was a pest, a joke, and her heart was not
moved the least little bit. She spurned him, laughed at his love,
and then no longer laughed but looked away in disdain,
not even deigning to show him any reaction whatever. 720
What could the young man do? He waited until she passed by
and then called out, 'You win! I shall not trouble you ever
again. The triumph is yours, to enjoy or ignore as you choose.
I am undone. I die—which ought to afford you some small
satisfaction. How many girls whom you know can take credit
for the suicides of the suitors they spurned? Whatever you think
of me, the proof of my desperate love will be indisputable,

final, and absolute. No one can shrug it off,
not even you, my lady! You'll see with those lovely eyes
my corpse, their terrible trophy. And the world will know how your beauty 73
must have been splendid and awful to drive a young man to prefer
death to a life without you as his reason to keep on breathing.
What I lose in length of days, I shall gain in fame, for my story
will move lovers' hearts for generations, not for my sake
but for yours and that of your beauty as well. And we shall be joined
forever in the minds of those who hear my story.' He stopped
speaking and looked above him at the frame of the door where he'd loitered,
on which he had hung his notes, presents, and bunches of flowers,
and he threw a rope over the crossbeam and made it fast
with a noose at one end, through which he stuck his head. 'It's my last 7
garland,' he said, 'and I hope it pleases you more than the others.'
Having contrived this extravagant show, he was bound to continue.
He kicked away the stool on which he'd been standing. He hung there,
jerking and twitching a while, as his feet, kicking in spasm,
banged on the door and seemed to ask one last time for admittance.
Then he was still, and the servants, horrified, cut him down
and carried him home to his widowed mother. She cradled the stone-
cold body, and wept and wailed. . . . She did all the things that bereaved
mothers do. But at length she acknowledged the truth of his death.
A funeral then was arranged, a modest cortege to deliver
the corpse to its pyre. The route passed Anaxarete's street
and her house, and the sounds of the chanting and wailing floated up
to the hard-hearted princess' window. 'Whose funeral is it?'
she asked. 'Let us look down and see!' She went to stand at her room's
high window and peer through the curtain and down to the street,
where the bier was at that moment passing below her, and there
was Iphis, stretched out in his shroud, cold and white, and her eyes

were frozen, her face was frozen, her voice and her sight were gone.
She tried to step back, but her powers of movement were also gone.
She attempted to turn her face, but her neck was stiff as if 760
the muscles were stone, as her heart had been hard as any stone,
and the rest of her now was transformed in that terrible petrification. . . .
They say one can see it still, in Salamis, there in a temple,
a marble statue that is no mere excellent likeness
but the princess herself, now changed and worshiped, a holy image
people invoke in despair. They call it, because of its gaze,
the Prospicient Venus. I urge you, think of these things and consider
how you should order your life. Do not be so hard, like her,
but yield to your lover's passion. The gods will be pleased, and Nature,
and no late frosts will come to bother the delicate buds 770
of the trees you adore, and the winds will be gentle on all their blossoms."

But that story got Vertumnus nowhere. The god then put by
his crone costume, and stood revealed in his own true form,
as handsome a youth as ever a maiden beheld. He dazzled,
as the sun after a storm can amaze the world by recalling
its true splendor, which we and it had all but forgotten.
He was ready to rape her, but there was no need—for his beauty ravished
the nymph, whose passion for him was now a match for his own.

But back to the list of kings. The false Amulius rules;
then Numitor and his grandson regain the Ausonian kingdom; 780
and the walls of Rome are built. They start the work on the feast
that shepherds offer to Pales, the goddess of herds and flocks.
Tatius and the Sabine fathers, out for revenge
after the rape of their women, now make war on the city.
Tarpeia betrays her people, throwing open the gate,
but her payment is more than she'd hoped—instead of the soldier's bracelets,
they pile up their heavy shields on her body and crush her to death.
The men of Cures, that Sabine city, attempt a foray
at night through the gates that Romulus checked and secured. . . .
But Juno

herself has undone one gate, and even greased the hinges 790
to let them open in silence. Venus has seen this, would lock
the gate that the other unbarred, but gods cannot cancel actions
of brother and sister divinities. All she can do is consult
with the water nymphs who preside over a spring near the temple
of Janus, not far from that gate. It isn't a geyser or torrent
but only a trivial bubbling up of innocuous water.
The nymphs, however, put sulfur into the spring, and pitch,
and now what comes up is live steam that reeks with a chemical stench.
The posts of the gate are smoking with hot fumes, and the gate
opens now onto a cauldron of bubbling pitch no human 800
could ever attempt to wade through. The Sabines stand there dismayed,
and the Romans have time to sound the alarm, put on their armor,
grab their weapons, and seize the offensive advantage. The fighting
is fierce, and the Roman plain is thick with the corpses of Sabines
and Romans, too, as the blood of friends and foes runs together,
making a gory lake. At length, a truce is arranged,
and a joint reign is decreed, with Romulus sharing the power
with Tatius—who dies, so Romulus then rules alone,
handing down laws and meting out justice to both the tribes.
It is in this time of peace that Mars takes off his shining 810
helmet and comes to address the father of gods and men.
"The time has arrived," he announces, "when Rome can stand on its own
strong foundations. The fate of the city is now assured
and no longer depends on the force of a single hero.
Grant, therefore, the reward that was promised to me and your grandson
long ago. Let us take up this man from the earth and install him
here in the heights of heaven. Thus shall we see fulfilled
the words we all remember hearing you pronounce.
Jupiter nodded his head in assent as the sky grew dark,
lightning flashed, and thunder crashed in evident portent, 820
confirming that this would be done, and the god's promise fulfilled.
Mars mounted his splendid car and, lashing his great
steeds, hurried down through the air to the top of the Palatine Hill,
where Romulus held his court, dispensing right and justice.
Mars caught up his son in a father's embrace, and the mortal