

To Remus

Long after Troy was conquered
and all held their breath
at the new eclipse, we fell
from the sky and hoped that
our father Mars would be merciful.

For this moment I recall
ancient kings and jealousy.
How we were left for dead—
the mighty afraid of two
infants, twins, brothers, heroes.

In the cold water of Tiber
we must have basked, unafraid,
somehow knowing the she-wolf
would become our mother—
the wandering herdsman, our father.

You were there with me, brother,
when we discovered the vast, holy hills.
For the first time since the day we
were born you abandoned me.
I—Palatine. You to Aventine.

You provoked, then, my heart to rage,
brother, rent down my wall
with your mocking, ignored
the augury, and forsook your blood
with the blow of my spade.

Oh, but it is no sleeping babe
that lies before me now—no
child that cries for the Capitoline.
You are still my kin—very near.
Within my soul I shall hold your honor.

I cannot look back, brother,
for the glory of the gods is behind me,
the world and the whirlwind before me.