

James Owens

To Galla, an Aging Bride

— *from the Latin of Ausonius*

I prodded: “Don’t despise
our youth. It goes to waste.
Spread those pretty thighs.
A hag’s forever chaste.”
You spurned desire, while years
crept up, as if we were blind,
and can’t redeem from arrears
those chances left behind.
You regret and pine because
you lagged at saying “yes,”
and now you note new flaws,
your beauty shining less.
But embrace me, just the same;
re-light our dampered fire.
Warm me, if not with flame,
by the embers of desire.

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Invocation to Priapus

— *from the Latin of Martial*

Cock-god, you who chase off men with that huge dick and scare
sissies with your sickle, give this lonely orchard some care.
Then may ugly, old apple thieves never come near,
but a pliant youth or a girl winsome with flowing hair.

The Forlorn Maid in Spring

— *anonymous Latin, c. 1000*

The west wind gusts softly;
the warming sun grows.
Now earth bares her breasts
and sweetness overflows.

Spring steps decked in purple,
wearing her royal gems.
She scatters flowers on the ground,
leaves on woodland limbs.

Beasts ready birthing lairs
and gentle birds their nests,
singing their rightful pleasure
from trees' flowering crests.

I've ears to hear such things,
and I still have eyes,
but, oh, in place of those joys,
I am racked with sighs.

I sit alone, brooding
and chilled and drear,
and if, by chance, I look up,
nothing I see or hear.

You, though, for the sake of spring,
go listen, go learn
from leaves, from blooms and meadows.
My spirit lags. I yearn.