

PRIAPEA – Ungaretti Translation Passage, 2003

[I]

Carminis incompti lusus lecture procaces,
conveniens Latio pone supercilium.
non soror hoc habitat Phoebi, non Vesta sacello,
nec quae de patrio vertice nata dea est,
sed ruber hortorum custos, membrorior aequo,
qui tectum nullis vestibus inguen habet.
aut igitur tunicam parti praetende tegendae,
aut quibus hanc oculis aspicias, ista lege.

[V]

Quam puero legem fertur dixisse Priapus,
versibus his infra scripta duobus erit:
'quod meus hortus habet sumas inpune licebit,
si dederis nobis quod tuos hortus habet.'

[X]

Insulsissima quid puella rides?
non me Praxiteles Scopasve fecit,
non sum Phidiaca manu politus;
sed lignum rude vilicus dolavit
et dixit mihi 'tu Priapus esto.'
spectas me tamen et subinde rides:
nimirum tibi salsa res videtur
adstans inguinibus columna nostris.

[XVI]

Qualibus Hippomenes rapuit Schoeneida pomis,
qualibus Hesperidum nobilis hortus erat,
qualia credibile est spatiantem rure paterno
Nausicaam pleno saepe tulisse sinu,
quale fuit malum, quod littera pinxit Aconti,
qua lecta est cupido pacta puella viro:
qualiacunque, pius dominus florentis agelli
imposuit mensae, nude Priape, tuae.

[XXV]

Hoc sceptrum, quod ab arbore est recisum
nulla et iam poterit virere fronde,
sceptrum, quod pathicae petunt puellae,
quod quidam cupiunt tenere reges,
quoi dant oscula nobiles cinaedi,
intra viscera furis ibit usque
ad pubem capulumque coleorum.

[XXXVI]

Notas habemus quisque corporis formas:
Phoebus comosus, Hercules lacertosus,
trahit figuram virginis tener Bacchus,
Minerva flava, lumine <est> Venus paeto,
fronte † crinitos Arcadas vides Faunos,
habet decentes nuntius deum plantas,
tutela Lemni dispares movet gressus,
intonsa semper Aesculapio barba est,
nemo est feroci pectorosior Marte:
quod si quis inter haec locus mihi restat,
deus Priapo mentulatio non est.

[XLVI]

O non candidior puella Mauro,
sed morbosior omnibus cinaedis,
pygmaeo brevior gruem timenti,
ursis asperior pilosiorque,
Medis laxior Indicisve braxis:
manes hinc, licet ut liberet, ires;
nam quamvis videar satis paratus,
erucarum opus est decem manipulis,
fossas inguinis ut teram dolemque
cunni vermiculos scaturientis.

[LXVII]

Penelopes primam Didonis prima sequatur
et primam Cadmi syllaba prima Remi,
quodque fit ex illis, tu mi deprensus in horto,
fur, dabis: hac poena culpa luenda tua est.

PRIAPEA – Kelli Stanley, 1st prize

I

(Dactylic hexameter)

Songs will be sung tonight: bare verse, bold rhyme, impudent meter.
Meet me in Latium – rear end. Hill, that is. Spread the word. He waits...
Not in the house of Apollo's prim twin; no maiden called Vesta
Dwells near. (Fire's out. Chapel of Chastity's closed.) No virgins
Born from the head of their sires need apply – no admittance is given.
Gardens of pleasure, not temples of stone, are protected by this god.
Ruddy-cheeked, always prepared, scout's honor. And standing up straighter –
Never a problem for him. On the contrary, he's always more lathered
Than limp. He doesn't hide what is his – privates made public –
Clothes only itch. So bring him a tunic if prudish and timid.
Better to gaze on in awestruck delight. Sing! Sacrifice! Read on.

V

(a limerick)

“On my garden gate please come and knock,”
Quoth Priapus, “Take flower and stock!
What I ask back from you
As it's only my due
Is that you leave your own gate unlocked.”

X

Laugh, if you must, you vapid young girl,
Praxiteles, 'tis true, did not make me;
Scopas' hand did not touch a burl,
And Phidias' never did shape me.
An up-country hick carved a rude piece of birch
And told me Priapus I'd be –
So now you make sport, as I stand on my perch –
You smirk at what once was a tree.
Too funny to you seems my inordinate size
A twelve-inch long strut thrust between wooden thighs.

XVI

(iambic pentameter)

With gleaming fruit was Atalanta won –
Hippomenes thus dazzled damsel fair;
While Western watchers wept in setting sun,
The demi-god left golden tree stripped bare;
Phaeacian Princess plucking apples red,
Through father's orchard, filling folds of cloth;
Like treat Acontius threw, to reap a bed;
By tempting taste was Cydippe betrothed.
Such prizes five the boy presents to you,
Priapus, lord of fertile fields, nude.

XXV

(alternating iambics)

This scepter, cut from mighty tree
Shall never bloom again;
This rod, sought out by randy girls
Some kings hope to obtain;
The well-born bugger'd boys would like
To kiss the weapon tall,
But up the hole of thieves it goes
Stopped only by its balls.

XXXVI

(a sonnet)

The sunlit hair of Phoebus shimmers gold –
Immortal god, known by his comely crown;
Like brawny Hercules with strength untold
Or Wisdom's goddess, grey-eyed, of renown.
Erotic Beauty, Venus, squints and stares
As smooth-cheek'd Bacchus lolls like tender maid,
His frisky fauns goatish in linden lairs;
The Mischief-God, in winged boots arrayed.
While Vulcan staggers, face and body bent –
Uneven steps he walks in shambling gait,
Apollo's son sprouts beard ever unkempt;
A giant's lungs are Mars the Warrior's trait.
Among these gods, what place, what mark to pick?
Priapus' choice: he boasts the largest prick.

XLVI

(with apologies!)

A girl no whiter than a Moor,
Diseased and pocked with putrid sore;
The kind that bugged boys will make
When they've had all their bums can take.

Shorter than a pygmy stork,
Shrinking from the carving fork;
In face, much like a great black bear
With tougher skin and much more hair.
She's open always, ready now,
Like Pasiphae, a false-front cow,
Wider than Mede harem pants
She needs a twelve-inch thickened lance.

Go ahead and bid me enter –
I shan't become a reg'lar renter;
For though I may seem up and able,
I'd rather penetrate a table.
For you a drug alone won't do,
I need a ton of potent brew
To plow the trench between your thighs
And try to make my member rise,
When all those grubs that I must hunt
Come crawling out your filthy cunt.

LXVII

First letters from Penelope
And Dido; ladies fair;
Then one from Theban Cadmus' name
And twins of Rome – the pair.
If you've read the puzzle right
And recognize the sign,
You know what lies in store, O thief –
Let the punishment fit the crime.

Priapea – Cameron Fitzsimmons, 2nd Prize

I

Upon these so shamelessly rude verses coming
Pray don't raise an eyebrow, o lector of Latin.
In this little chapel no Vesta, Diana,
Nor goddess who sprang from her father's great crown;
But ruddy protector of gardens, large-membered,
Who keeps his cock covered with nary a stitch.
So either with shirt-tail conceal your pudenda
Or with those same eyes that now read this, read on.

V

What Priapus offered a boy as a bargain
Set down in two verses right here you will find:
“What my garden holds you may have at your pleasure
If you give to me your own ‘garden’ to plow.”

X

What are you laughing at, you silly little cunt?
I'm not the creation of Praxiteles or Scopas,
Not polished, piss-elegant, by Phidias' hand,
But hewn by a steward straight out of the rough.
And he said to me “What a Priapus you'll be!”
Then you have a look and your laugh has a bite.
It's sharp though, this thing here, though funny it seems,
This salt-lick, this loin-chop, this column erect.

XVI

With apples like those that ensnared Atalanta
Or famously grew in Hesperides' garden
Or often Nausicaa, father's field crossing
did gather, we're told, in her bountiful bosom
Or fruit that Acontius painted with letters
in reading, was Cydippe joined to her man:
Five such as these a boy laid on your table
Priapus, tunicless, flow'ring field's lord.

XXV

This rod, my King Richard, cut down from a tree
Now never will flourish with foliage green:
This scepter which horny, insatiate sluts seek
Which certain great kings want to have and to hold
And booty boys infamous prime with their tongues:
Straight up the asses of thieves it'll go
All the way up to the hair on my balls.

XXXVI

Each of us has some distinguishing feature:
Phoebus his locks and great Hercules muscle;
Minerva's got grey eyes, or Venus long lashes,
and delicate Bacchus a maid's lovely figure.
Arcadian fauns appear goatish in visage,
th'Olympian messenger handsomely footed;
while the guardian of Lemnos takes unequal paces,
and Asclepius' beard is perpetual unshaven.
Than insolent Mars surely no one's more fierce;
but if among all these some space yet remains,
more well-hung than Priapus no god is – that's sure.

XXXXVI

Than Africa blacker are you, little lassie,
More ridden with clap than all queers put together;
Punier, too, than a terrified pygmy,
Ruder, more rough than some hairy old bear;
And broader in shoulder than Indian or Mede:
Go on now, get out, and for good, if you please.
Though I appear well-equipped enough here
Scads of Viagra I'd greedily need
To bump, grind and polish that trench 'tween your thighs
And bludgeon the grubworms that crawl in your twat.

LXVII

Of syllables first, take Penelope's, Dido's,
then Cadmus' and Remus', and that's what you'll get:
pedicure – pretty scar, eh, on your chiseled derriere,
price you'll pay, thief, with your hide, thief, for your plunder of my land.