

The Gargoyle

All through another long winter afternoon
her teacher, Mr. Standfast, evades his topic,
the history of the subjunctive mood,
by talking about sex: he loves to describe
a Roman garden statue of Priapus,
whose penis was so long he was depicted
hoisting it over his shoulder. Mr. Standfast
likes to mime that with an imaginary heave.
Drifting into daydream as he snickers on,
she recalls the fat and dirty hired-man
at the farm, hiking a leaky old garden hose
over his shoulder as he carried it to the rubbish pile.

BERT ALMON