

A.M. JUSTER

Rejection Note for *Paradise Regained*

Loved that first book—it's got no equal—
but, Johnny, we don't love your sequel.
If you would only take a chance
on self-help or a gay romance,
we'd let you keep your last advance.
Phony conspiracies would do
if you could find a hook or two—
like someone famous who won't sue.
Marketing knows you'll see the light,
and thinks Da Vinci is just right.

—*May 2006*

Horace's *Satires* I:VI

When I am in the mood, I go explore
entirely alone and ascertain
the prices set for vegetables and grain.
As evening falls, I often wander through
the sketchy Circus and the Forum too.
I stand beside astrologers, then troop
back home to have some leek and chickpea soup.
Three slaveboys serve my meals, and polished stone
supports the ladle and two cups I own.
Beside these items is some bric-a-brac
made in Campania: a cheap knick-knack,
an oil-flask with its dish. When supper's done,
I sleep unworried that I'll need to run
out for an early meeting or appear
in front of Marsyas (who is quite clear