

ROCK PILES AND CATHEDRALS

Poems by
Robert H. Deluty



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In
memory of my mother,
Elise Deluty

In
honor of my new granddaughter,
Claire Elise Bauer

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Opening the Doors of Perception: Poems (2014)

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Rock Piles and Cathedrals

*A rock pile ceases to be a rock pile the moment
a single man contemplates it, bearing within him
the image of a cathedral.*

Antoine de Saint-Exupery

on her deathbed
the old lady whispering
Stand up straight

feeling righteous
for choosing the cheese croissant
over the doughnut

a Texas Baptist
assuming Ben LaVigne
is Jewish

a Maine Lutheran
assuming Jack Osherow
is Irish

midnight . . . a young girl
begging the spooky shadow
to leave her room

the vegan tourist
in Minnesota enters
the *Spam Museum*

a teen claiming
his favorite animal
is pepperoni

How's school? . . .
the first grader replying
I hate its guts

a Catholic boy
hoping someday to meet
the Holy Ghost

Your favorite vice? . . .
her husband responding
The Craftsman 6-inch

Reno, mid-summer . . .
attempting to chill out
watching *Fargo*

Duluth, mid-winter . . .
attempting to warm up
watching *Khartoum*

wondering why
there's a mammoth rubber duck
on his *Corvette's* roof

running back
into the burning building
for his lucky cap

her spouse wishing
ATMs dispensed coins
for candy machines

a rabbi hoping
the British royal baby
is named Yitzhak

a rocker hoping
the British royal baby
is named Prince

watching *Rambo III*,
a nine year-old exclaiming
Best movie ever!

the admiral,
in Annapolis for lunch,
ordering a sub

the bigot claiming
he's not anti-Semitic,
just anti-Jewish

a boy asserting
his favorite vegetables
are home fries

a girl noting
her favorite fruits
are berry *Skittles*

the teen driver
doing eighty to get home
three minutes sooner

exam day . . . a boy
watching it snow, screaming
Stick to the ground!

inexplicably,
two vegans christening
their baby, Hunter

her child describing
the Louvre's *Venus de Milo*
as *unarmed*

the policeman's son
sitting in the squad car
in handcuffs, weeping

claiming he likes
the concept, but not the taste,
of cauliflower

sole passing student
feeling overwhelmed by
survivor guilt

post in-law visit . . .
observing his Mom and Dad
counting the knives, forks

trying to impress
his Gentile girlfriend, Ben Weiss
orders shrimp and grits

trying to impress
her Jewish boyfriend, Gail Burke
holds the mayo

a prof writing
he supports his grad student
holeheartedly

the zookeeper
getting dizzy observing
two zebras tussling

I need roses . . .
the old florist questioning
How angry is she?

teaching his nephew
the fine points of sledding
down a staircase

Brandon Smith IV
telling children his last name
is not *Ivey*

for the thousandth time
their Mom responding *Don't ask*
to *How are you?*

Ruth and Jason Lark,
huge *Sopranos* fans, naming
their daughter, Meadow

Bill and Pam Susege,
avid *Mod Squad* fans, naming
their son, Linc

their sixteen year-old
stenciling her phone number
on a new T-shirt

the Bostonian
describing the Grand Canyon
as *tedious*

the New Yorker
noting the Himalayas
were *disappointing*

Christmas eve . . .
a would-be thief getting stuck
in their chimney

a med student
wondering whether Bill Gates
adopts adults

wine expert's daughter
swirling in a small tumbler
pink lemonade

wine expert's son
sniffing the glass of *Red Bull*,
judging it *Robust*

British musicians
referring to the new prince
as Boy George

morbidly obese,
describing herself
as *curvy*

hearing the grad
shouting *I'm free!*, a child
responds *I'm four*

Shirley Temple curls
cascading down the shoulders
of the tattooed teen

grad student's kitchen . . .
a square folding card table,
two old bean bag chairs

the elder learning
her granddaughter was named
Porn Star of the Year

three Bronx Zoo chimps,
during the tour guide's spiel,
yawning audibly

the wild-eyed man
offering his subway seat
to an old lady

NBA rookie
giggling uncontrollably
at his first paycheck

new fifth grade teacher
moaning softly while staring
at her first paycheck

D.C. teenager
suddenly giving birth
in L'Enfant Plaza

the hearse driver
for the dead racer getting
a speeding ticket

her child asking
whether any creatures lay
unbreakable eggs

leaving out the x ,
a South African mistypes
Welterweight Boer

leaving out the x ,
a Star Wars fan mistypes
The Sith Sense

Gramps confusing
Brzezinski, Lewinsky,
and Yastrzemski

observing her son
place a hunk of lasagna
between two burgers

observing her spouse
place a thick slice of ham
between two *Pop-Tarts*

their accountant
handing out business cards
for local bars

telling colleagues
his baby looks prettier
in photographs

Grandma describing
her children's lack of caring
to a *Kohl's* stock boy

Grandpa describing
his latest genital rash
to a *Sears* cashier

eight-year-old tyrant
noting his parents hate
confrontation

out of milk,
her son pouring grapefruit juice
on his cereal

out of milk,
her spouse putting cream cheese
in his coffee

after the bombing,
the legless man on morphine
noting *I'm good*

New Orleans Jew
placing three matzo balls
in her shrimp gumbo

Newark Baptist
spreading *Velveeta*
on his beef knish

a young attorney
advertising on the side
of a garbage truck

Detroit fisherman
catching a high-top sneaker
with a foot inside

the bodybuilder
refusing to wear a shirt
if it's not skintight

Describe your wife . . .
her husband responding
The usual

Christmas morning . . .
a child loving most the gift
of an hourglass

a poor woman
telling her five children
to take smaller bites

on his birthday
the historian receiving
a Nixon-shaped spud

the bantamweight
naming his boxer puppies
Tyson and Dempsey

ex-POW
fighting back tears watching
The Great Escape

ex-POW
fighting back rage watching
Hogan's Heroes

a young girl staring
at her father as he lies
about his job

a young boy glaring
at his mother as she lies
about her health

at *Walgreens*
Uncle Zeb curses seeing
an eyebrow waxing

rainy afternoon . . .
a child attempting to teach
an old cat to fetch

on Yom Kippur
Irv Schwartz confessing to God
I'm not your best work

Ford dealership . . .

the obese man requesting

a muscle car

Chevy dealership . . .

the old woman requesting

Something sexy

a toddler

at his Aunt Ginger's wedding

in top hat and tails

the colonel

insisting his child's fiancé

grow a mustache

centenarian

on her deathbed, whispering

So much still to do

bases loaded . . .
a minor leaguer attempts
to steal second

an eighth grader
confusing *minstrel*
with *menstrual*

irked blueblood noting
two of the world's best golfers
are Boo and Bubba

his wife
wearing blush and lipstick
on the *StairMaster*

her husband
wearing a jock strap strolling
on the treadmill

blocked poet hoping
that the family reunion
ignites some sparks

a Baton Rouge priest
pacing the floor fretfully . . .
Saints' preseason game

deceased man's home . . .
his stepsons discovering
six thousand stirrers

holding the cracked vase,
their twelve year-old admitting
Mistakes were made

Auschwitz survivor
beaming while rocking to sleep
her great-great-grandson

Pro-Am golf tourney . . .
Webb Simpson hoping to pair
with Mitt Romney

tanned, toned couple
staring at their stout teen
in a bikini

asking the hooker
whether she will accept
city bus tokens

still reeling
from his wife's sepsis, learning
their teen is pregnant

Go sit by the dog . . .
their two year-old assuming
by means on

baseball purist
hurling her McGwire jersey
into the dumpster

baseball purist
placing his Bonds-signed bat
atop the firewood

red cap and whiskers
on the six-pack of soda:
Fanta Claus

high hat and beard
on the red, white, and blue tuber:
Uncle Yam

an orphan girl
cuddling next to the mother
she chalked on the street

with aged Mom, Dad
living with her, relearning
how to parent brats

a law professor
deeming perfectionism
his great rescuer

a law student
deeming perfectionism
her worst tormentor

in a hospice bed,
uttering with his last breath
Yankees suck

the palsied boy
noting he was named Fred
after Astaire

One Morning in Academe

The sophomore and
His anxious, litigious parents
Are informed by
The judicial review board that
The *abandoned* laptop computer
He *discovered* in the library and
Then gave to his girlfriend was,
According to a surveillance camera,
Lost less than twenty seconds
Before he found it

You must learn to heed your senses. Humans use but a tiny percentage of theirs, They barely look, they rarely listen, they never smell, and they think that they can only experience feelings through their skin. But they talk, oh, do they talk.

Michael Scott

Lose your mind and come to your senses.

Frederick Perls

bringing her toddler
to work . . . six profs singing
The wheels on the bus . . .

buying tight pumps
so as not to aggravate
the shoe salesman

South Bronx alley . . .
two rats scurrying under
the *Enquirer*

his wife battling
postpartum depression
after their pup's birth

Jewish wedding . . .
a Lutheran exclaiming
Molotov!

intending to write

My long-standing friend,

leaving out the *r*

intending to write

Four fluffy, black rabbits,

leaving out the *t*

intending to write

Most deadly organisms,

leaving out the *ni*

a little girl

asking the pet shop owner

what snakes dream of

a little boy

asking the pet shop owner

for his fiercest mouse

Low Finance

The elder

Enlightening

His ten-year-old

Great-grandson

That a six-figure salary

Most certainly

Does **not** include

The two figures

To the right of

The decimal point

late June . . . the poor Mom
of three school-aged sons longing
for free lunches

Godfather fan Katz
opting to name his firstborn
Santino

Godfather fan Katz
choosing against naming
his second, Fredo

pondering
how to treat her psychotic,
euphoric patient

How are your kids? . . .
Uncle Norman answering
Below average

depressed patient
claiming *Jersey Shore* beats
Prozac by a mile

the judge contorting
through a nightmare of a world
ruled by crack addicts

the scholar squirming
through a nightmare of a world
led by faith healers

the soldier struggling
through a nightmare of a world
governed by Quakers

the vet writhing
through a nightmare of a world
run by Chihuahuas

post-wedding . . .
the bride's father regretting
his toast's dirty jokes

post-wedding . . .
the groom's mother ruing
her toast's in-law barbs

at the mall, telling
her screaming child she'll belt him
in the minivan

gold-medal swimmer
confiding she's terrified
of waterfalls

Great-Gramps' face
suggesting to strangers
an old saddle

Begorra

Every year

On the seventeenth of March

Isaac Zsigmond Oberlander,

An elderly Jew born and

Raised in Hungary,

Dresses in green,

Adopts a brogue, and

Signs his last name with

An apostrophe and

A capital *B*

Aunt Syl apprising
her nieces why she fears
left-handers

Aunt Suz informing
her nephews why she loathes
vegetarians

thrilled scientists
tracing Norway's freakish waves
to Japan's earthquake

Why'd you shoot him? . . .
two Georgia teens replying
We was bored

3:00 a.m. . . .
completing the homework
of the class bully

during his act
the young sword swallower
starting to hiccup

Rockville twins painting
their houses 'Skins burgundy,
Ravens purple

buying at auction
a molar of John Lennon,
hoping to clone him

two scholars
fighting over the merits
of *Twix* vs. *Mounds*

seventh grade teacher
asking her students to rhyme
wolf, else, bulb, film, gulf

on the boss' desk
seeing two baby photos
of himself

their son inquiring
how long Methuselah
was a child

her boyfriend's home . . .
spotting Tolstoy novels stacked
in the bathtub

comedy writers
christening their newborn
Stefunny

the old prof grading
his student's essay exam
A scorching hot mess

the homeless addict
recalling beauty pageants
she won as a child

a Sphinx cat
hissing at the Rottweiler
tattooed on Dad's arm

post-stroke,
Aunt Maureen calling herself
Super Slo-Mo

a thirty year-old
ditching all pix of herself
pre contact lenses

vice admiral,
now retired, refusing
to wear shoes

after ten months
coming up with a title
for her first book

after nineteen years
finishing Chapter One
of her first book

Nature's perfect food? . . .
the renowned nutritionist
replying *Snickers*

post pep talk . . .
the fullback telling the coach
his speech was deranged

Great-Grandma claiming
she would have ruled the world
if she'd had big boobs

her Turkish uncle
regarding instant coffee
as laughable

his Cajun aunt
regarding instant grits
as sacrilege

a wine merchant
calling disgruntled buyers
the gripevine

tanning salon . . .
his wife noting she prefers
crispy to pasty

the hangman whispers
Bless you to the condemned man
who sneezed

terrifying Dad
by putting a fake horse head
under the covers

terrifying Mom
by placing a fake shark fin
in the toilet

their youngest grandson
stating *My name is Neville,*
it rhymes with devil

five days pre-wedding . . .
learning that her fiancé
hates Sikhs, Quakers

the celeb wishing
she did not have the title
Most Airbrushed Star

the interviewee
confusing good eye contact
with glaring

clarifying why
they've not canned the inept temp:
His jokes are killer

ninth-grade dropout
adds Brown to his collection
of Ivy League tees

a Bible student
assuming Glocca Morra
burned with Sodom

death certificate . . .
the old coroner wanting
to write *Broken heart*

expressing concern
his child wants to attend
Sid's School of Judo

expressing concern
her teen wants to enroll in
Fast Fred's Drivers Ed

obsessive woman
hugging, kissing her young son
for being tidy

a smoker naming
each cig in his pack after
a type of cancer

Rose Weisman aglow
hearing the Chinese waitress
say *Shanah Tovah*

seeing nothing wrong
with one man, one apartment,
seven Great Danes

in Minnesota
spotting a vending machine
selling live bait

in Minnesota
approaching the state fair stand,
Big Fat Bacon

in Minnesota
reading about teens stealing
frozen gopher feet

Sister Agnes
admitting she was born
Dixie LaRue

Superman quiz . . .
a contestant confusing
Jor-El and *Purell*

Finnish extrovert
staring at strangers' shoes
rather than his own

deeply regretting
defending her thesis on
Friday, March 13th

realizing in Butte
her turn signal has been on
since Spokane

the grandchildren
of the sad old man noting
his cheeks are salty

looking at the hair
on the man's back, wondering
Bear or gorilla?

Bel Air Jews learning
their Israeli uncles, aunts
are buying gas masks

career counselor
questioning his young colleague
Crush some dreams today?

the pacifist
feeling ill-at-ease dating
a man named Goering

still patronizing
the diner with awful food . . .
kind, old waitresses

backyard football game . . .
their five-year-old grandson
dressed as Spiderman

three profs debating
which first name is most macho:
Brock, Spike, Vlad or Rip

three teens agreeing
the most badass moniker
is Axl Jett Steele

waiting for his wife
to give birth before asking
for a divorce

office manager
chiding the new employee:
You're too polite

ruing watching
the stark anti-smoking ad
over pancakes

her son feeling irked
his college ID number
has two letters

eccentric dean
thinking his colleagues find him
adorable

creepy professor
thinking his students find him
warm and sensitive

asked how he's doing,
the old teacher responding
Bitter . . . and you?

learning at his wake
the world-renowned chemist
taught ballroom dancing

illiterate man,
now ninety, hoping to read
Shakespeare in heaven

career criminal,
now ninety, hoping to meet
Capone in hell

middle manager
wishing someone would call him
memorable

in Provo, Utah
an agnostic Democrat
biting her tongue

Grandpa
blaming all his meanness
on Nam and Grandma

Nurse Gautier begging
colleagues to nickname her
anything but *Gout*

their dog sleeping
on the hardwood floor beside
her plush new bed

asking the doctor
whether there's a remedy
for post-navel drip

first class . . . the prof
arrives sporting a monocle,
carrying a whip

*All we have to believe is our senses: the tools we use
to perceive the world, our sight, our touch, our memory.
If they lie to us, then nothing can be trusted.*

Neil Gaiman

*And when I gaze at a televised picture of the moon,
I want to detect, from a distance of 239,000 miles,
the aroma of fresh mozzarella.*

Tom Robbins

the chef daydreaming
of pummeling whoever
invented *Cheez Whiz*

Granddad describing
the scent of Irish whiskey
as *my fragrance*

flyweight Rey Cruz
refusing a title match
on Rosh Hashanah

six-week-old boy
attempting to suck
the old cat's ear

Uncle Nick swearing
his nickname is short for
Nickelodeon

in the hospice
Gramps fretting about heaven:
I hate harps

mid-performance . . .
the contortionist prompting
awe and revulsion

high school teacher
reading a student's e-mail:
Whats sychology?

after twelve years,
learning his best friend's accent
is not real

a third grader
choosing to dot each letter
except *i*

teaching his sons
to distrust anyone
who plays keno

teaching his sons
to despise anyone
who plays polo

post-flood . . .
a Gulf Coast street swarming
with looters, lizards

early fall . . . spotting
a dead wasp lying beside
the *Marlboro* box

for no good reason,
young Irwin Goldfarb asking
to be called *Hoss*

in church
a boy imploring God
to explain girls

drummer Ed Penny
introducing his first-born
Tim

four star restaurant . . .
Granddad glaring at two teens
wearing hoodies

four star restaurant . . .
table of twelve requesting
separate checks

on the bumper
of his in-laws' old truck:
Dole/Kemp '96

an agnostic
worrying his beard makes him
look rabbinic

Great-Gran wondering
when she was last called
pretty

Great-Gramps pondering
whether he was ever called
charming

anti-communist
feeling queasy rooting for
Cincinnati's Reds

warning students
not to sleep in his class:
I'll steal your stuff

fearing she'll offend
her dentist if she requests
more Novocain

fearing she'll anger
her doctor if she asks for
clarification

Dad suggesting
their inept band be named
The Beatless

mid-vow . . . the priest
scolding two photographers
for nearing the bride

French 101 class . . .
an offended teen learning
retard means *delay*

a child asks her folks,
Bea and Jay, why they have
letters, not names

informing Grandpa
finger-snapping's way cooler
than clapping

Mom responding
to Uncle Carl's *May I smoke?*
with *Are you on fire?*

for his last class
the old professor bringing
a pink hula hoop

cursing *Spell Check*
for not catching, correcting
whole groin oats

querying
her great nephew what is meant
by *shovel the funk*

questioning
his great aunt if you could have
one *heebie-jeebie*

sacked quarterback,
lying motionless, missing
the game-winning catch

punching her husband
for saying *These are the folks*
about whom I care

the sixty year-old
ruing showing his grandsons
how to do cartwheels

Aunt Grace referring
to her new son-in-law as
the malignant dwarf

mid-visit . . .
her dentist confiding
he hates tongues

Richard Merchant
begging friends to call him
Rich, not Dick

first minute . . . asking
his date to lower the pitch
of her laugh

urging the grandkids
to avoid folks who call
their Moms, *Mother*

an *A* student
wishing her exam's proctor
would stop snoring

a *D* student
wishing his exam's proctor
would keep snoring

Karen Leopold
feeling peculiar dating
a man named Loeb

his mother-in-law
purchasing cashmere sweaters
for their five month-old

an elder weeps
touching the neck tattoo
of her grandson

Mr. Marcellus
telling pupils it's pronounced

Merciless

a three year-old
stopping Mom and Pop's fight
by flinging custard

college lecturer
brooding that his undergrads
drive much nicer cars

a man on the street
re-ignites with his *Zippo*
the Olympic flame

a linguist carping
that *The Late, Late Show*
airs in the morning

the gym teacher
pointing out that a *squat thrust*
is not obscene

the wrestling coach
explicating the nature
of a *high crotch*

a teen spackling
the kitchen wall holes after
her Mom's last tantrum

mixed marriage . . .
a Dad presenting his kids
Chris and Sean Cohen

mixed marriage . . .
a Mom presenting her kids
Zev and Pinchas Hwang

the dying man
hoping he doesn't come back
as a mosquito

Psych of Humor class . . .
seventeen students sitting
stone-faced, unamused

rollercoaster peak . . .
wide-eyed daughter giggling,
closed-eyed Dad praying

Halloween party . . .
his wife, nine months pregnant,
dressed as Tinker Bell

Halloween party . . .
Gramps, pushing a walker,
dressed as The Flash

a poor Welsh girl
wanting to buy a binkie
for the baby prince

handed a squeak toy,
their toddler and pug puppy
learning to share

nervous prostitute
despising her given name,
Hortense

summer afternoon . . .
an Irish wolfhound walking
their three-year-old son

Capture my good side . . .
her photographer feeling
bewildered, hopeless

pondering why
their prof said *Good morning*
at 6:00 p.m.

Harlem street corner . . .
homeless man begs for money
from a blind elder

Uncle Leonard
losing the ten dollar bet
that it's *Morris Code*

Intro Psych final . . .
a traumatized student
dissociating

married six months,
her husband bragging to friends
he's had no affairs

at Fenway, his date
queries whether the home team
must wear red sox

at Fenway, his date
inquires if any pitcher
is a switch-thrower

at Fenway, his date
questions who make more money:
catchers or umpires

pompous French vintner
claiming Napa winemakers
produce *deadly Zins*

her dachshund,
his Doberman expressing
opposing views

Halloween night. . .
on the couch, Gramps as a spud,
the grandkids as chips

Aunt Flo insisting
it's better to be polite
than accurate

Aunt Gert insisting
it's better to be feared
than well-liked

born on V-J Day,
their Granddad explaining why
he was named Victor

post-mastectomy . . .
the tattoo artist turning
scars into flowers

her Persian cat
evincing terror watching
corn pop

paranoid lawyer
claiming no podiatrist
can be trusted

their fifteen year-old
noting his best attributes
are all dangerous

Uncle Irwin
loving company as long
as it's silent

Holocaust Museum . . .
a nun weeping in the room
filled with shoes

first day of school . . .
the new prof asking his wife
if he owns a tie

pregnant woman
decking the burly stranger
patting her belly

Yale biochemist
bragging to friends he's working
on the perfect tan

a vegan,
driving on a country road,
hitting a skunk

the linguistics prof
loving that *Elvis, lives*
are anagrams

the dieter
feeling virtuous eating
no-carb pork rinds

her boyfriend's garden . . .
three toilets and one bathtub
serving as planters

Joint Chiefs meeting . . .
Admiral Winnefeld humming
the *Popeye* theme song

Mom asking the vet
to rank order dog breeds
by sense of humor

Dad asking the vet
to rank order cat breeds
by self-centeredness

after the crash . . .
elderly spouses die,
holding hands

Al and Nancy Hedd,
marathon runners, naming
their newborn Miles A.

opting to ignore
the freshman who addressed him
as *Hey, Dude!*

their black Lab
halting the baby's crying
by chasing its tail

explaining
to his student it's not
egotesticle

the new patient
insisting that only
his analyst talk

her seven month-old
and pet mastiff slobbering
on the same toy duck

their son assuming
there are at least three typos
in *Geoffrey*

married thirty years,
still not permitting her
to borrow his comb

bipolar woman
introducing her twins
Joy and Dolores

first date . . .

sporting a mauve sweatshirt

stating *Mr. Right*

discovering

in Great-Granddad's attic

twelve Victrola cranks

their niece responding

to *How's your pet hamster?*

with *Life-altering*

organ donor's Mom

feeling her daughter's heartbeat

in a stranger's chest

the old plumber

pointing out he's the child

in *Morris & Son*

Author's Note

Dr. Robert H. Deluty is the Associate Dean of the Graduate School at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. He has been a psychology professor at UMBC since 1980, and was named Presidential Teaching Professor in 2002. He and his wife, Barbara (a clinical psychologist), live in Ellicott City, Maryland and have two children, Laura and David, and two granddaughters, Ava and Claire. Dr. Deluty's poems and essays have been published in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Baltimore Sun*, *The Pegasus Review*, *Modern Haiku*, *Voices: The Art and Science of Psychotherapy*, *Psychiatric Times*, *Jewish Currents*, *the Journal of Poetry Therapy*, *Welcome Home*, *Muse of Fire*, *Maryland Family Magazine*, *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture*, *The Faculty Voice*, and many other newspapers, journals, and anthologies. *Rock Piles and Cathedrals* is his forty-fourth book.

