

MYSTERIES, VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE

Poems by

Robert H. Deluty



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To my beloved granddaughters
Ava, Claire, and Diana

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Mysteries, Visible and Invisible

*Composing is like driving down a foggy road
toward a house. Slowly you see more details
of the house - the color of the slates and bricks,
the shape of the windows. The notes are the bricks
and the mortar of the house.*

Benjamin Britten

downtown . . . noticing
the woman begging for cash
has manicured nails

faculty meeting . . .
rating his colleagues on
self-righteousness

their aunt revealing
Christ inked on her right arm,
Clooney on her left

post-cruise . . . trying
to repress memories of
four desserts at lunch

post-cruise . . . trying
to purge visions of sunburned,
tattooed torsos

Butte first grader
confusing North Korea
with North Dakota

poor Jamaican boy
daydreaming of, one day,
being a tourist

nicknaming
her childless-by-choice daughter
The Coward

her father-in-law
noting he loves animals:
They're so delicious

reading the obit
of her ex, hoping to see
the words *utter dolt*

in Bali,
Dutch tourists painting tulips
on an elephant

their teen assuming
Jerry Lewis wrote and sang
Great Balls of Fire

their teen assuming
Jerry Lee Lewis teamed
with Dean Martin

gun lovers debate
which U.S. state looks most
like a firearm

High Tops store owner
selling *Vans*, *Converse* sneakers
and ten gallon hats

six-year-old twins
wishing the Olympics
had hide-and-seek

Why'd you marry Pop? . . .
Mom noting *He was the best*
of the schmucks out there

track star, poet
asserting they're both experts
on meters and feet

five-year-old Texan
believing she's allergic
to penguins

seven-foot man,
his five-foot date discussing
geometry

on the stand . . .
stating to the jury
I'm kinda sorry

at sentencing . . .
stating to the judge
My lawyer sucks

post-Harvey . . .
returning home to find
gators in his den

the wordsmith
calling the bar of soap
a bathday cake

told to get in shape,
the obese teen responding
Circles are fine shapes

at 6:00 p.m.,
announcing to the barfly
Dinner is poured

waking her husband
to tell him how much she hates
her insomnia

his first grader
assuming that *footage* means
your shoe size

her first grader
assuming that *footage* means
how old your toes are

their math professor
describing the beauty
of zero

Who wrote "Hughie"? . . .

Penn State freshman replying

Hugh Gino Neill

Who wrote "Daisy Miller"? . . .

Kent State freshman answering

Jesse James

Who wrote "Vieux Carré"? . . .

Ball State freshman responding

Kentucky Williams

the car mechanic

boasting to neighbors about

his fine motor skills

holding a cracked vase,

her six-year-old son noting

To forgive, divine

fitness center . . .

Dad carrying in his bag
a flask of bourbon

fitness center . . .

Gramps carrying in his bag
a pinochle deck

her physician

asserting the narcissist
has an *I problem*

visualizing

a third piece of apple pie
while eating the first

centenarian,

sharp as a tack, visiting
her demented sons

young art student
believing Claude's last name
was Money

young music student
believing Monk's first name
was Felonious

Uncle Harold
describing piñatas as
party animals

a fourth grader
inquiring which dinosaurs
were the coolest

her brother-in-law
driving through an ice storm
for a cigarette

the male model
boasting that he is paid
handsomely

asked what they should name
the newborn, their three year-old
answering *Baby*

power couple's friends
calling Anne and Doug Carr
AC/DC

skydiving elder
telling his adult daughter
he's going bowling

the corn farmer,
eyeing his bumper crop,
grins from ear to ear

a young boy asking
the priest why Toledo, smoke,
and crap are holy

shocked West Texan
learning there's an Odessa
in Ukraine

the two year-old
fearing the squeaks made
by her new shoes

orthopedist
calling the prison riot
a joint flare-up

asked why she loves chess,
the Grandmaster responding
Queens can beat kings

Better than Prozac

After a workday
Filled with frustration,
Anger and disappointment,
He is met at the front door
By his three-year-old daughter,
Who offers him a huge hug
While shouting with delight,
I just sneezed and tooted
At the same time!

for his last lecture,
the prof wearing a top hat
and tight leather pants

convincing
a high school freshman Vassar
plays in the Big Ten

convincing
a high school junior Auburn
is the ninth Ivy

convincing
a high school senior Oxford
is in Miami

on his deathbed
whispering to the grandkids
Buy low, sell high

asked why he cheated
on the practice test, her son
states *Force of habit*

young Erica
boasting that her name is most
of *America*

young Neville
boasting that his name
contains *evil*

an awed boy watching
a man in the locker room
shaving his head

BYU prof
rejoicing seeing *Coke*
sold on campus

Baptist Bronx schoolboy
irked that, this year, Yom Kippur
falls on a weekend

Kansas couple
christening their new sheep farm
Ewetopia

the bride and groom
arriving at the church
on unicycles

their four year-old
stating why she wants no sibs:
Too 'spensive

the seer calling
tarot cards *futuristic*
observation decks

queried if she wants
earrings of silver or gold,
Mom writes *Either ore*

the teenaged rower
admitting that he lives
to make waves

Venus' closest star? . . .
the astronomy student
replies *Serena*

Uncle Butch calling
The Godfather trilogy
Sicilian Star Wars

Grandma noting
if quibbling Gramps were a fish,
he'd be a carp

the euphemist
describing *falling down* as
testing gravity

the euphemist
describing *jalopies* as
pre-loved vehicles

the euphemist
describing *death* as
post-retirement

nurse Jane Unger
naming her child Irene Claire
for the monogram

Give me a sentence . . .
the first grader responding
Twenty-five to life

her two year-old
explaining the toilet's clog:
Baby bear swimming

New York City street . . .
two pigeons fighting over
a kasha knish

the gardener
calling *genealogies*
systems of roots

April Fool's Day . . .
the grocer placing canned clams
amidst kosher foods

Take up a sport! . . .
his pre-teen responding
How about poker?

the zookeeper
naming the old porcupine
Slowpoke

hard-hatted Nana
swinging a crowbar at
her old kitchen wall

the minister
choosing the license plate
BKIND

the librarian
choosing the license plate
BQUIET

the oncologist
choosing the license plate
B9

calling Ma's Mom,
a world-class baker,
Grammuffin

asked what he wants
for his third birthday, their son
responding *More*

the scholar
describing Mensa as
a mental bloc

Great-Uncle Vin
claiming his name is short
for *Vintage*

classics prof
defining *thy* as
your of yore

Queens diner, at dawn . . .
three old ladies in a booth
singing *Twist and Shout*

psychotherapist
portraying OCD as
a routine problem

loving basketball,
the eight year-old stating *swish*
is the world's best sound

cosmetologist,
at the bar, noting her love
of blush wines

cosmetologist,
down south, expressing her love
for Baton Rouge

denied a cookie,
her two year-old screaming
Love you never!

anthropologists
Walter and Ruth Mann naming
their newborn Hugh

the third grader
asking if one trouser leg
is called a *pant*

her spouse getting
a thought bubble tattoo
on his shaved head

ornithologist
describing nests as
twitter sites

Dad and Grandpa,
both carpenters, regarding
sawdust as glitter

first grade twins' Mom
begging them to take judo
for the free uniforms

Boston sailor
viewing the swap for Kyrie
as a *trade win*

questioning
his girlfriend why she was named
Lyllyan

questioning
her boyfriend why he was named
Seymour Joe

watching her neighbor
slapping his young son for
walking on tiptoes

ogling accountant
admitting that he adores
checking figures

city councilman
calling the grocery stores
chambers of commerce

NHL's Devils
enjoying the irony
of playing on ice

demented man's spouse
recalling when he would read
three books per week

offensive guard
imagining the QB
is his Grandma

Austin Beaumont
christening his twin boys
Dallas and Houston

Raleigh barber
loving his town's anagram:
hair gel

Columbus wrestlers
loving their town's anagram:
sumo club

impoverished mime
describing his work as
nothing to speak of

*Even the details of a rifle, which are nothing
but mechanical, if they are made carefully,
with attention, become beautiful, satisfying.*

Michael Cimino

Constructive Feedback

The psychology professor
Is unsure whether to laugh,
Cry or scream as he reads
The end-of-semester evaluation
Written by a sophomore major:
*You look exactly like the guy
Who cleans our gutters, so
I couldn't take anything
You said seriously*

their server
describing tips as *things*
worth waiting for

after losing his glove,
the street hockey goalie using
a catcher's mitt

newspaperman
referring to wine as
a press release

on the interstate,
spotting in the middle lane
a bathroom scale

upon seasoning
the turkey, Aunt Lu noting
I've thyme on my hands

wiry Lech Nowak
claiming he's a natural
for Pole vaulting

lithe Maja Wojcik
claiming she's a natural
for Pole dancing

a twelfth grader
describing the prom as
a senior moment

two deans debating
whether Donald or Rudy
is the bigger douche

Aunt Rosita
urging her Type A grandson
to relax harder

fly fishermen
referring to their outing
as *a cast party*

pre-Thanksgiving meal . . .
young vegan Jews requesting
turkey-shaped latkes

Times editor
viewing herself as
a paper cutter

elderly patient
telling his doctor *shingles*
should be plural

job interviewer
asking if he'd prefer death
by jumping or drowning

Where is Managua? . . .

the eighth grader responding

Guacamola

Where is Jakarta? . . .

the ninth grader answering

Indamnesia

the teen with OCD

explaining why sloppy joes

are sinful

Juneau native

noting she resides in

a detached state

dentist, lawyer

comparing how they work

on retainers

young chef believing
no one before him thought of
Go take a leek

hitchhiker
and his lift . . . both hoping
the other's not nuts

his girlfriend
telling her folks he's not fat,
just *really round*

Bermuda tour guides . . .
polite, funny, providing
opposite info

poor elder
telling his grandkids to sing
when they're hungry

her friend Norm
asserting he's just
an average guy

hog selling spouses
describing themselves as
squealer dealers

the old scientist
worrying that heaven
won't be challenging

the old soldier
worrying that heaven
will be too serene

Nashville singer
calling the world atlas
a country album

policemen
referring to themselves
as *booking agents*

the farmer watching
his malfunctioning baler
go haywire

2:00 p.m. . . . the shrink
noting his new outpatient
is wearing p.j.'s

advertising
the poetry slam final
as *verse vs. verse*

writing *hedge maze*,
grudge match, *orange marmalade*,
she sees hidden *gems*

To Each Their Own

A five year-old approaches
With his father the restroom section
Of the medical office building.
Upon learning the signs on the doors
Read *Men*, *Women*, and *Janitor*,
The puzzled child inquires
In what special ways
Do janitors pee and poop.

tired Mom eyeing
her twin three year-olds bolt from
the mall Santa's lap

miserable teen
hoping to be, someday,
merely glum

Alaskans calling
the Cronkite/Brinkley era
Anchor Age

musicians calling
the tribute band era
Cover Age

therapists calling
the Freud/Adler era
Shrink Age

hugging their grandson
for shouting at his mother
her piercings are vile

EMTs staring
at the unconscious man's chest:
a *DNR* tattoo

How was your birthday? . . .
the five year-old answering
Underwhelming

co-workers praising
the software developer
for his *app-titude*

aged six . . . foster child
learning his birth Mom set
his birth Dad on fire

the mythologist
describing King Midas
as *gilt-ridden*

math tutor
noting arcs don't come
full circle

nicknaming
his clumsy pal, Ken Glass,
Bro

pre-med student
confusing *osteopath*
with *sociopath*

Marxist parents
insisting their PTA
be class conscious

How do I look? . . .

her moronic new husband

replying *So-so*

high school's coolest kid

voicing to friends his terror

of losing status

moonshiners calling

paintings of their equipment

still lifes

Pastor Simms warning

a fireman that *Stop, Drop, Roll*

won't work in hell

their nine year-old

announcing *I'm not designed*

to be happy

Intro Psych exam . . .

a freshman answering

Edifice Complex

World Lit exam . . .

a sophomore responding

Platypus Rex

young sprinter

dreaming of Olympic gold

while fast asleep

the math prof seeing

a map of Utah, thinking

Concave hexagon

the poet seeing

a map of Utah, thinking

Six-sided staid state

eager musician,
out fishing, hoping to catch
a bass soon

trick-or-treating girl,
dressed as a pirate, holding
her eye-patched cat

their teen ignoring
the sign *Heads Up! Cross the Street,*
Then Update Facebook

Granddad
defining *isn't* as
ain't right

January 1st . . .
meeting his fraternal twin
born the prior year

the homophobe
disliking the term
gentleman

the homophobe
despising the term
dress pants

the roofer
asserting his best work
is on the house

questioned
What are baseball and softball?,
the coach stating *Orbs*

at *Baskin Robbins* . . .
the rare coin collector
requesting mint chip

Moscow miler
calling her early years
Russian past

Prague racer
calling his country's banner
Czechered flag

Helsinki skier
calling her facial wrinkle
Finnish line

arm wrestler's folks
gleeful their son has the match
well in hand

the reverend
referring to *Amen* as
a service call

his girlfriend driving
while applying eye makeup
with both hands

fluish family,
wearing surgical masks,
open Christmas gifts

Lipton exec
displaying vanity plates
T 4 2

settling for par,
the old golfer singing
Bye Bye Birdie

Might you kill yourself? . . .
her teenaged patient replies
No, only others

out of hot dogs,
the ballpark vendor making
a concession speech

math teacher
calling medians and modes
mean relatives

twin babies kissing
Grandma's cheeks with binkies
in their mouths

her blind date
scraping mud from his boots
with a diner's spoon

Your favorite things? . . .
the job candidate responds
Beer, airports, group sex

toddler believing
Gramps' ever-present toothpick
is part of his face

her attorney
calling the estate tax
a passing concern

their teenager
asserting confidence
beats expertise

Describe your mother . . .
his new patient answering
Devil incarnate

Describe your father . . .
his new patient answering
Pass

young Rick Kleiner
feeling he's destined to sell
large, plush chairs

young Ophelia Payne
feeling she's destined to work
with trauma victims

French Antilles guide
noting that *enchant* is part
of his islands

kindergartner
referring to kebabs
as *sticky food*

their third grader boasts
he knows how to say *shit*
in twelve languages

The word you like most? . . .

Aunt Margaret responding

Serendipity

The word you like most? . . .

Uncle Edmund responding

Testicular

her three-year-old son

running through the house naked

except for earmuffs

calling his classes

following geometry

the aftermath

deaf man's wife

claiming he's simply

not listening

a boy mishearing
Maurice Chevalier as
Maury's Chevrolet

diamond merchant
telling shoppers a story
that doesn't ring true

young math student
creating the indoor sport
times table tennis

aged two . . . fingering
his lunch while holding aloft
an unused fork

Stop the madness! . . .
her grandson replying
But I'm not angry

*The details are not the details.
They make the design.*

Charles Eames

No-Brainer

After announcing,
At age fifty-eight, his retirement
As a senior partner in an elite
Washington DC law firm
To care for his MS-stricken spouse,
Ailing parents and depressed son,
He is asked by a colleague
How do you go from
Being a somebody to
A nobody?

ten-year-old Joe West
insisting that his first name
be pronounced *Go*

the farmer
describing *hens* as
feathered layers

trying to convince
his Jewish girlfriend
scrapple is kosher

subway riders
studying the young man
clipping his toenails

ESL student
confusing *semen*
with *sermon*

Adeline Moore
considering a career
in screenwriting

Robin Holmes
considering a career
in burglary

Alonso Greene
considering a career
in gardening

Minnie Brewer
considering a career
in beer making

Sue M. Aull
considering a career
in civil law

Turkish man cursing
as he learns how to pronounce
though, through, thought

traveling oarsmen
going back home after
a long rowed trip

at the door, striking
two Jehovah's Witnesses
with her rosary

mathematician
defining *area* as
side by side

the punster
regarding a deep groan as
the perfect reward

old, blind woman
singing to her ailing Peke
Jump, jump for my love

the body artist
learning *Edinburgh Tattoos*
involve drums, bagpipes

history teacher
defining the word *castle*
as *knight 'hood*

Aunt Rose asserting
blessing a sneezing stranger
is simply wrong

How did it go? . . .
driver's ed student replying
Great - I hit nothing

her demented Dad
placing his house keys
in the microwave

basketball fan
calling obscene language
foul lines

basketball fan
calling a bowled gutterball
alley oops

basketball fan
calling rugs bestowed gratis
free throws

six-year-old Jun Zhao
asking Paul O'Toole if O
is his middle name

therapy session . . .
the sailing couple noting
they're drifting apart

the grocer
defining the word *eat* as
make a fast stop

the teen feeling
her prom date's tuxedo
is not suitable

the five year-old
regarding bagels as
real plain donuts

Dr. Brad Pfister
deeming his last name's P
simply obnoxious

a prof persuading
his students that *Karlo*
was a Marx Brother

outraged janitors
demanding from management
sweeping reforms

calling in sick . . .
the tool salesman noting
he wrenched his neck

calling in sick . . .
the house builder noting
his head is pounding

after a big lunch,
their young son rubs his belly,
stating *I'm fed up*

jailed dental student
misunderstanding the term
cavity search

the clairvoyant
describing ESP as
medium power

hopelessness waning . . .
their suicidal neighbor
torching his rope

a geographer
working on the perfect pun
with Turkey and Greece

deaf, palsied child
hoping for a better deal
in the afterlife

a third grader
asking Siri how come
boys don't like her

hating being viewed
as *obsessive-compulsive*
by fellow surgeons

the maitre d'
noting that the house salad
is dressed for dinner

mortician Beth Ames
naming her son Dale Owen
for the initials

Grandpa admitting
only cigarettes and Scotch
make him happy

the hypnotist
defining the word *trance* as
a Pacific state

father of five
learning the meaning
of *dad bod*

Limans loving
that Peru's anagram
is *pure*

Taizis hating
that Yemen's anagram
is *enemy*

the prof avowing
he plans on retiring
the day he's buried

What shall we do? . . .

seafaring poet responding

Write of passage

at her husband's wake,

requesting that his brother

stop hitting on her

closing early . . .

the watchmaker explaining

Out of hour hands

asked what

he'd like to become, her son

replying *Pope Jake*

asked what

she'd like to become, his niece

replying *Saint Sue*

tourists terming
a London market's walkways
the British aisles

her child inquiring
why Scott and balls of fire
are so great

his child inquiring
which is holier: a cow
or a mackerel

all passengers gone . . .
renaming their ocean liner
The Crew's Ship

the classicist
calling dental hygienists
modern flossifers

asking the vet
if cats in Maine and Texas
meow differently

asking the vet
if dogs in France eat better
than those in Britain

on the cover
of *Rolling Stone*, spotting
Elisabeth Moss

defining
as *major talking point*
the word *lectern*

defining
as *baseball stadium player*
the word *organist*

confused third grader
hearing his teacher's skirt
called *very smart*

nine-year-old writer
beginning her poem with
On the other hand

nine-year-old writer
beginning his poem with
I hate doing this

a teen screaming
at her Mom to stop being
so understanding

the bird watcher
deeming spotted and barn owls
fly-by-night types

in bed with strep . . .
the painter texts co-workers,
seeking coverage

dieting exec
describing to colleagues
his *downsizing*

Mom hoping
for more than an air kiss
from her cherished son

golf course cafe
charging for the side salad
a *greens fee*

middle-aged man
asking which are worse: *dad jeans*
or *dad jokes*

In the Academy

Midway through
An utterly abysmal job talk
By a full professor candidate,
The department chair
Turns to the junior colleague
Sitting to her right and
Whispers *I can't believe*
I shaved my legs for this

the cashier
regarding UPCs as
checkout lines

a teen informing
his young sibs *Jesus loves you,*
but me much more

Oahuan dancers
describing their leis
as *hula hoops*

the shopaholic
explaining she always
has time to spend

asking his swim coach
whether unshaved eyebrows
will slow him down

her child asserting
any lunch that makes him smile
is a *Happy Meal*

the CPA
noting his favorite snake
is the adder

telling her father,
a mohel, she's marrying
a sushi chef

the capo
describing Lucifer as
the underworld boss

deeply regretting
gifting her four-year-old son
a brass whistle

French restaurant . . .
calling her spouse a traitor
for declining dessert

rabbis debating
which last name is worse:
Kunstler or Dickman

her child declaring
the number after fourteen
should be fiveteen

his child declaring
the spelling of Wednesday
ought to be shortened

buying a treadmill
on-line while devouring
a mammoth éclair

It's the Thought that Counts

As a Father's Day gift,
An angry, sullen twelve year-old
Takes two bags of modeling clay
And sculpts a ten-pound octopus,
Taking care that each of its limbs
Ends with a raised middle finger

Sweden's capital? . . .

a fifth grader responding

Stockholder

Finland's capital? . . .

a sixth grader responding

Hellskitchen

gas station's john . . .

the guy at the urinal

singing *Waterfalls*

Muslim heretic

eating hot cross buns

during Ramadan

Jewish heretic

touring the Spam Museum

on Yom Kippur

gasoline dealer
calling taco stands
Shell stations

the young dentist
discussing with her banker
a bridge loan

What's a GPA? . . .
the Registrar answering
Big mean on campus

visiting New York,
a circus sword swallower
is mugged at knifepoint

ailurophile Katz
naming her newborn triplets
Tom, Bob, and Kitty

Author's Note

Dr. Robert H. Deluty is Associate Dean Emeritus of the Graduate School at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. A psychology professor at UMBC from 1980 to 2016, he 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 three granddaughters, Ava, Claire, and Diana. 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. *Mysteries, Visible and Invisible* is his fifty-fifth book.

