

OPENING
THE
DOORS
OF
PERCEPTION

Poems by

Robert H. Deluty



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To
Barbara



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Opening the Doors of Perception



*That baby sees the world with a completeness
that you and I will never know again. His doors
of perception have not yet been closed. He still
experiences the moment he lives in.*

Tom Wolfe



Assumptions

Traveling through rural Georgia,
Jacob and Rebecca Silverman
And their three- and five-year-old
Asian-born adopted daughters
Await being served in a diner
When they are approached by
A 350-pound, 6' 4" bearded man
In bib overalls with a Confederate flag
Tattooed on his right forearm.
The man stares at the girls and
Asks their mother in a thick drawl
KO-ree-yun?
When Rebecca nervously answers *Yes,*
The man replies *Thought so.*
Mine's from Vietnam.

pep squad members
dressing for Halloween as
Manny, Moe, and Jack

their priest referring
to the cicada outbreak
as *Swarmageddon*

principal's office . . .
the six year-old requesting
an attorney

Grandma Ruth
writing to *Fox News*:
Be nice!

Grandpa Al
writing to *NPR*:
Get real!

a firearm seller
trying to court women
with pink handguns

relieved child
learning *pharyngitis*
means *sore throat*

relieved teen
learning *contact dermatitis*
means *rash*

the evangelist
roaring that dusty bibles
lead to dirty lives

a four year-old
assuring her dolls, mid-storm,
they'll be O.K.

their grandson
assuming CPR stands
for cell phone repair

Little Italy . . .
a teen in a white prom dress
slurping spaghetti

reading the bottom
of the government form:

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wedding day . . . the Moms
of the bride and groom failing
to hide their contempt

turning ninety-three,
still dreaming of starting
for the Celtics

Aunt Miriam

wishing *Lava* could remove
her nephews' tattoos

8:00 a.m. class . . .

the Colgate freshman wearing
a bathrobe, slippers

realizing

half of Grandpa's comments
are insults

aged two, insisting

that *W* be pronounced

Gub-bub-goo

pre Ethics midterm . . .

staring at his palms inked
with crib notes

regretting deeply
calling his fiancée's Mom
Toots

sixtieth birthday . . .
cashing a five dollar check
from his grandmother

the private, shot twice
in the chest, overhearing
Man up!

ninth grade teacher
informing the teenager
genius tops goddess

eighty years later,
Rose Katz still talking about
her son's bris

Latvian boy
assuming that rigatoni
comes from Riga

one hour post *I do*,
the groom whispers to the bride
I misplaced my ring

trichotomizing
his students as entitled,
clueless, or both

Great-Aunt Gael
hating that her first name
is now trendy

faculty meeting . . .
two Yale profs screaming over
Dancing with the Stars

asking the rabbi
whether it's permissible
to sniff pork rinds

asking the imam
whether it's allowable
to hold a lobster

awards banquet . . .
the foreign-born dean stating
You are all weeners

a teen staring
at his nose in the mirror,
thinking *pelican*

a teen staring
at her legs in the mirror,
thinking *flamingo*

Senate candidate
asserting he's been endorsed
by Jesus Christ

the fifth grader, asked
to write a poem, responding
Everything's been said

revival meeting . . .
her husband longing
for silent prayer

denied a dog,
their son naming his turtle
Lassie

Auschwitz survivor
touching the barbed wire tattoo
of his granddaughter

during the final
their proctoring professor
checking stock quotes

staring at the flat,
Grandma telling the children
We change our own tires

eleventh birthday . . .
the school bully making him
wear a pink corsage

college visit . . .
his twelfth-grade daughter asking
about easy *A's*

college visit . . .
her twelfth-grade son inquiring
about beer access

the psycholinguist
pondering if one could be
a *total half-wit*

their sister-in-law
offering the seminar
Sex Dungeon Safety

scholars debating
who are tougher: Marines
or Jewish mothers

asked to describe
her fiancé, their daughter
responding *Twisted*

St. Louis elder
insists calling it *Loo-ee*
is disrespectful

oddly lit photo . . .
her husband's face looking
radioactive

Mrs. Wisniewski,
waltzing in Warsaw, claiming
she is Pole dancing

mid-earthquake . . .
in a tub, Grandma singing
Stormy Weather

mid-earthquake . . .
in a tub, Grandpa singing
Good Vibrations

her Dad's funeral . . .
a child at Arlington weeps
on the folded flag

Yom Kippur morning . . .
Stein, Blume hide from each other
at *Lifetime Fitness*

Yom Kippur morning . . .
Feldman wearing a disguise
at *The Waffle House*

their professor
responding to *Good morning*
with *Yeah, okay*

warning her daughters
to avoid men with thin wrists
and large thumbs

warning her sons
to avoid women who call
their mothers *Mother*

the sheep farmer
referring to his ranch
as *Ewe-topia*

claiming his son
has achieved perfection
only as a schmuck

asked how he survived
the fire, a child responding
I prayed like hell

Daytona Beach . . .
staring at the breasts tattooed
on the woman's back

a child addressing
her postcard to Francis
Pope, Italy

at his desk
the *Dell* CEO forming
a rubber band ball

at her desk
the *Merck* CFO making
a paper clip man

palsied child
imagining himself
slam-dunking

the Texan calling
all of South America
Faraguay

a Jewish girl
expressing sadness, anger
she can't be a saint

married twelve years,
still clueless what his wife
finds amusing

married twenty years,
still unsure what her husband
does for a living

reading the sign
in the diner's men's room:
Hot Water is Hot

300-pound teen
imagining herself
on a tightrope

legless man
imagining himself
saving the day

a couple ruing
their pre-wedding picnic
beside poison oak

Harvard deans debate
the relative strengths of
Mounds and *Snickers*

calling her grandkids
Jacob, Kate, Zac, Frank, and Jen
Hon

calling his grandkids
Ray, Ron, Rick, Rachel, and Russ
You

under fire,
a twenty-year-old soldier
crying for his Mom

In the beginning . . .

the Met fan in church hearing

In the big inning

her child pondering

a smart-ass response to

You want a beating?

their priest insisting

that exposure to the Son

prevents burning

old basketball fan

rooting against college teams

with widespread tattoos

despised professor

dreaming about giving

each student an *A*

Memorial Day . . .
three disabled Nam vets
watching *Patton*

Describe your husband . . .
his longtime wife replying
Lacking nuance

Describe your wife . . .
her longtime spouse answering
Saintly to a fault

college lacrosse teams
wishing that their tournament
eclipsed March Madness

informing his child
what's meant by *Jesus saves*,
Moses invests

in a twilight state
overhearing her surgeon
utter *Oy, Gevalt!*

in a twilight state
overhearing his surgeon
sing *Bad to the Bone*

Uncle Ed seeing
all tattoos on women
as turn-ons

Aunt Viv seeing
all tattoos on women
as skin cancers

a Bible student
asking why no one today
is named Lot

her swim coach
noting she's much less ugly
under water

Wrigley, third inning . . .
Cousin Cordelia working
on her fourth *Coors*

physics professor
valuing knock-knock jokes
over puns

math professor
valuing chalkboard screeches
over puns

at the buffet
the obese man shutting up
his conscience with pie

asking his shrink
which is better: deranged
or demented

the Yankees' GM
hiring Spanish translators
for his star players

their daughter planning
a zombie-themed wedding
for Halloween night

Aunt Gia fretting
Pope Francis looks too much like
Junior Soprano

singles bar . . .
the short, fat man boasting he's
Brad Pitt's accountant

a blonde, blue-eyed teen
from Lawrence, Kansas speaking
flawless Swahili

bartending trainee
confounding the *gimlet*
with the *giblet*

drunken slugger,
leaving the batter's box,
heading for third base

young Republican
using the word *urban*
to mean *black*

a sixth grader
losing the spelling bee prize
with *sequestration*

telling his grandkids
with great pride he's never
eaten pizza

telling her grandkids
with greater pride she's never
tooted in public

Baltimore, late May . . .
elders wishing spring lasted
more than three weeks

the beer vendors
entertaining the fans more
than the woeful team

his Mom considering
the highest compliment to be
You're looking thin

the Indian boy
named Harshit telling bullies
it means *joyous*

fiftyish woman
asserting *I'm still hot, but*
it comes in flashes

Cinco de Mayo . . .
a Texas sheriff viewing
The Alamo

describing
his maniacal daughter
as *edgy*

describing
her sociopathic son
as *controversial*



*The world is full of magic things, patiently
waiting for our senses to grow sharper.*

William Butler Yeats

*It is only in appearance that time is a river.
It is rather a vast landscape and it is the
eye of the beholder that moves.*

Thornton Wilder



the seventh grader
telling the principal
I may have cursed

Aunt Gladys
explaining why midget jokes
are not offensive

Uncle Walter
noting why sick humor
brings him joy

the new graduate
pouring cheap malt liquor
on his math notebook

skinhead's attorney
looking past the swastikas
on her client's face

visiting Scotland,
the African tribal chief
donning a kilt

visiting Scotland,
the Klezmer clarinetist
attempting bagpipes

visiting Scotland,
the robed Saudi sheikh
Highland dancing

the scholar
punching a peer for saying
Irregardless

Grandma Celeste,
after swatting the gnat,
crossing herself

obese Kate McCoy
wondering how she'd look
in a burqa

pimpled Greta Schulz
pondering how she'd look
in a niqab

Granddad responding
to *At this point in time* with
*Do you mean **now**?*

vintners named Lowe
christening their daughter
Merle

a plumber pleading
with his son, the activist,
to get a job

economics prof
sharing with undergrads
his stock market woes

science fair . . .
a first grader presenting
her *Slinky*

post-war wedding . . .
his three uncles comparing
their prostheses

What's after death? . . .
Great-Aunt Martha replying
Jesus, wings, and harps

What's after death? . . .
Great-Uncle Earl responding
You're food for worms

Rate My Professors . . .

a Princeton freshman typing

Deeply evil

Rate My Professors . . .

a Drake sophomore claiming

Deranged but fun

Rate My Professors . . .

a Penn State junior noting

Mean. Bitter. Nice legs.

Rate My Professors . . .

a Tufts senior suggesting

Try fifth grade P.E.

Rate My Professors . . .

a Rice grad student stating

Likely from Neptune

a seven year-old
questioning Great-Grandma
on being *ancient*

noting the film
was directed by Ed Wood,
produced by mistake

noting the film
starred Sylvester Stallone,
allegedly

old physics teacher
mocking his high school's twelve
valedictorians

Mr. Schmuckler
offering his sympathy
to Mrs. Lifshitz

Abnormal Psych prof
urging her students to stop
diagnosing

Clinical Psych prof
urging his students to stop
doing therapy

joyful candidate
observing his opponent
doing the perp walk

at *Dunkin' Donuts* . . .
two OCD teens trying
to choose a dozen

Lubbock-born actor . . .
his hometown accent returning
after three drinks

Dad wishing peers
would describe his research as
a work of genius

Mom wishing peers
would describe her poems as
achingly sublime

mental hospital . . .
the wild-eyed woman wearing
a shirt labeled *Staff*

her Grandma begging
the pregnant sixteen year-old
to stop drinking beer

her Grandpa paying
the pregnant fifteen year-old
to stop smoking crack

the Don believing
hell is for pedophiles,
sadists and Semites

the provost teaching
a young professor how
that and *which* differ

mid-snowstorm . . .
holding a broken umbrella
under each arm

told *reek* means *smell*,
a third grade student penning
The flowers reek nice

sobering up,
a Muslim teen shows his folks
the tattooed cross

calling the sad dog
sniffing the honeydews
melon collie

backyard seesaw . . .
an obese man on one end
facing four children

at *Taco Bell* . . .
spotting the trainee licking
a tall stack of shells

centenarian
boasting that for sixty years
he smoked *Luckies*

centenarian
boasting that for ninety years
she's eaten knockwurst

Halloween morning . . .
a young woman giving birth
to two sets of twins

pre-ceremony . . .
two Nobel laureates
playing tic-tac-toe

linguists debating
which first name is better:
Gaylord or Hortense

linguists debating
which last name is worst:
Pitts, Potts, or Putts

telling his parents
he's writing a thesis
about nipples

Drs. Moeller, Shemple
asking not to be nicknamed
Moe and Shemp

Deans Fleming, Pushkin
pleading not to be nicknamed
Flem and Pus

film credits . . . clapping
upon seeing their son's name
next to *Short Thug*

telling her young niece
the washing of hands requires
getting them wet

turning 100,
boasting he's not owned a tie
since 1930

questioning the prof
if sports team psychologists
get free passes

Dr. Ben Lazar,
a physicist, pronouncing
his surname *LAY-zer*

a four-year-old girl
asking God whether He likes
her new shoes

Royal Farms, midnight . . .
the pregnant nineteen year-old
in her wedding gown

Royal Farms, midnight . . .
the groom in a pale blue tux
holding a six-pack

freshman art student . . .
her hand quivering too much
to draw the male nude

a teen querying
could he retire after
five years of work

behind closed doors
the neurosurgeon playing
with *Silly Putty*

informing their son
opening a science book
isn't *reading*

informing their son
worrying about a test
isn't *studying*

a drill sergeant
shocking himself by weeping
at his child's wedding

a fourth grader
asking the mother of twins
if she had sex twice

avowing his love
for lesbians as long as
they're cute, naked

the army recruit
claiming he's been persuaded
to love pushups

the chief surgeon
stunning the med students
by saying *Beats me*

Bronx mugger
stealing from an old woman
her bible, glasses

Detroit mugger
refusing to accept
Canadian coins

Chicago mugger
regretting trying to rob
an ex-Navy SEAL

Great-Grams claiming
she's not looked in a mirror
for the past eight years

Great-Gramps claiming
he's not reached for a check
for the past twelve years

their artist son
designing a coloring book
that's pornographic

the renowned chef
describing himself as
Just a panhandler

Father's Day . . .
in a prison cell, holding
grandchild photos

her husband
finding women with three breasts
the most alluring

toupeed poker ace
rubbing his wig on the chips
for good luck

Wedding Plans

An exquisite young woman
Discusses with her fiancé
A long-held desire
To amputate her right leg,
Mangled in a car crash
Fourteen years earlier, and
Replace it with an artificial limb
So that she will not limp
Walking down the aisle

retired Marine's sons
stating all of their heroes
are veterans

19 over par . . .
the Tasmanian golfer
feeling bedeviled

French prof explaining
why he said *No* to Princeton:
Smoking restrictions

the hunter asking
to be cremated, then placed
in a moose-shaped urn

hiding Gramps' false teeth
so he won't go out and vote
for Republicans

watching her spouse
burn the hair out of his nose
with a lighted match

asked her line of work,
their son's girlfriend replying
Licensed psychic

the law student
confusing *vitriol*
with *victrola*

urging her child
to use the word *sofa* since
only boors say *couch*

neighbors
noting that the murderer
was a great dancer

telling her niece,
prone to harsh panic attacks,
to try chamomile

telling her nephew,
battling hallucinations,
to drink kale juice

the CEO
explaining why he loathes
underdogs

viewing on TV
the young Art Garfunkel,
thinking *Larry Fine*

viewing on TV
the old Don Rickles,
thinking *Yoda*

the bride's Mom praying
all of the ninety year-olds
survive the wedding

asking Rabbi Weiss
whether there are any Jews
named Bo or Bubba

from her hospice bed,
teaching the great-grandkids how
to make pierogies

from his hospice bed,
teaching the great-grandkids how
to eat artichokes

from their hospice beds,
Great-Grams and Great-Gramps glaring
at one another

Wall Street titan

recalling his first paying job:

birdcage cleaner

the child answering

Why'd you bring the knife to school?

with *I'm short and fat*

offering to give

his millions to anyone

proving there's a soul

questioning his date

whether she is laughing

or clearing her throat

sixth grader Dennis

delighting that his name,

backwards, is *Sinned*



*We can only be said to be alive in those
moments when our hearts are conscious
of our treasures.*

Thornton Wilder

*Look at everything as though you are seeing it
either for the first or last time, then your time
on earth will be filled with glory.*

Betty Smith



writhing through a dream
featuring three hundred nuns
and their rulers

called *Smelly Pants*,
six-year-old Shelly Lantz
dialing 9-1-1

called *Weasel Face*,
twelve-year-old Liesel Chase
requesting God's wrath

the lesbian bride
dancing with her brother,
letting him lead

the gay groom
not knowing what to make
of his Dad crying

asking the pastor
how come there aren't any
great Amish comics

Margaret Simpson
wishing she could name her son
Oliver Jeffrey

the female mime,
off-duty, speaking
with a stutter

the male mime,
off-duty, attempting
stand-up comedy

their Mom expressing
deep displeasure that *smother*
is mostly *mother*

Jane Auberjonois,
post-wedding, sadly taking
Bill Smith's last name

the taxidermist
daydreaming about life as
a lion tamer

the high-wire artist
daydreaming about life as
a CPA

Gramps serving himself
Cherry Gas-X Chewables
for dessert

watching in awe
as their Dad juggles a pear,
prune and cantaloupe

on the questionnaire
next to *Born*, their son writing
Of course!

on the questionnaire,
next to *Born*, their niece writing
Again, last year

jump rope contest . . .
a finalist's Dad betting
a month's salary

after drinking
skim milk, the stout man claiming
he feels skinnier

Sopranos fan
grieving Gandolfini's death
more than her brother's

the third grader
describing long division
as *unfriendly*

the twelfth grader
describing calculus
as *outright cruel*

the judge's ex-wife
on trial for poisoning
her divorce lawyer

Talbot Niles Furman
hating his given nickname
Tall 'n Furry

three burn victims
showing each other photos
of their old faces

Feedback

Told by a colleague

That his latest poem is

Brilliant,

Elegant,

Evocative,

Profound and

Inspiring,

The old professor responds

That he was aiming for

Funny

midway
through the best man's toast,
the bride starts texting

at the newsstand . . .
a preteen, Alfred Neuman,
purchasing *People*

at the coffee shop . . .
a teenager, Juan Valdez,
choosing *Tazo* tea

at the liquor store . . .
a middle-aged man, Bert Piels,
opting for *Schlitz*

at the market . . .
an elder, George Whipple,
buying *Scott* tissue

Hollywood star
informing her children
critics are vermin

Hollywood star
informing his children
fans are sheep

at commencement . . .
the retiring instructor
mooning graduates

getting married
for the first time the same day
as his grandson

a co-worker
asserting that her vain spouse
can strut while sitting

Dale Cook and Sid Frye
wishing that they could partner
with a Boyle or Broyles

Stanford dean's daughter
enraging Dad by wedding
a Boise State prof

a terrified child,
asked where is her *happy place*,
replying *The mall*

a frightened woman,
asked where is her *happy place*,
stating *McDuff's Bar*

drunken truck driver,
swerving on the expressway,
transporting mirrors

characterizing
their youngest son's fiancée
as *dumb, but morose*

the grad seeking
a work environment that's
T-shirt friendly

Zev Cohn opening
Oliver Twist, stunned by
Fagin's descriptions

the newsman noting
three gang-related murders
on Peach Blossom Lane

screaming
at her spouse, in a coma,
Now what?!

learning the first name
of the trial judge is Milo,
meaning *merciful*

learning the surname
of the D.A. is Cadman,
meaning *warrior*

Any questions? . . .
the job candidate asking
Where's your toilet?

the longshoreman
describing his teenaged son
as *dainty*

Gramps trying to buy
Britney Spears' used chewing gum
on eBay

tenement boy
dreaming of, one day, owning
a Great Dane

tenement girl
dreaming of, one day, starting
a garden club

explaining
to his wife how *self-righteous*
and *righteous* differ

a student asking
if Peter's Mom and Dad
called him *the Great*

a student asking
if Ivan got sore when called
the Terrible

How's your daughter? . . .

with a sigh, her Mom replies

Deeply closeted

opening the gifts . . .

learning how stunningly cheap

the groom's side is

the new grandfathers

exchanging punches over

who's called *Pop-Pop*

complaining

his daughters see him only

as an ATM

asked by his wife

what's on television,

responding *Dust*

old bicyclist . . .
a red helmet resting
on his porkpie hat

roadside diner . . .
their child asks which animal
is in the meatloaf

a Palermo boy
wishing the new pope chooses
the name Vito

a Kilkenny teen
hoping the new pope selects
the name Cormac

a Biloxi man
dreaming the new pope takes
the name Buford

a second grader
asking if any countries
are all ocean

mother of five
expressing thanks her children
are bad liars

a soused woman
kissing on the nose
the arresting cop

at *Denny's*, staring
at the boy ordering beets
instead of fries

at *Denny's*, staring
at the girl asking whether
they have Swiss chard

a child eyeing
an ant, musing should he be
a saint or sinner

Greek Jewish lawyer
bemoaning that he's the butt
of three sets of jokes

their teen looking
in the dress shop for something
semi-slutty

Wrigley Field bleachers . . .
two old ladies, in late June,
holding parasols

an Idaho child
unhappy there's a Moscow
in Russia

famed chef confessing
his favorite place to dine
is Queens' *Knish Nosh*

pre-wedding . . .
the bride's Mom ranking the guests
in entitlement

post-wedding . . .
the bride's Dad ranking the guests
in gluttony

her son-in-law
assuming an oligarch
makes margarine

the old African
wishing they had not changed
Gold Coast to Ghana

discovering
their neighbors' rock band is named
Two Cow Garage

a twig-thin woman
showing off to co-workers
her new leaf tattoos

linguists studying
collective nouns, enjoying
a labor of moles

linguists studying
collective nouns, tickled by
a peep of chickens

linguists studying
collective nouns, adoring
a charm of finches

a reporter
wishing she could interview
Adam and Eve

a journalist
wishing he could interview
Jesus and Judas

Care to dance? . . .
his immigrant Dad replies
I be careful

Care to dance? . . .
his immigrant Mom responds
I'd be delightful

a Jewish teen
complaining his Gentile friends
are too hopeful

the team doctor
asking the sacked QB if
he has an *owie*

Ohio State fan
naming his brain tumor
Michigan

the prof describing
his toddler's play behavior
as *undisciplined*

in his apartment
observing their son washing
paper plates

an eighth grader
informing the principal
A brick was thrown

Orthodox rabbi
asking the Anglican priest
if ham beats shrimp

a Kentucky judge
named George Costanza
despising *Seinfeld*

an old black Lab
saving the new goldfish from
three uncivil cats

two youngsters
playing tic-tac-toe in
Xenia, Ohio

Grandpa regarding
Cheerios as *Alpha-Bits*
with one letter

elderly patient
believing that rage and spite
have kept him alive

on a gun-racked truck,
seeing the bumper sticker
Choose Civility

the Sikh child asking
a Jew whether he recalls
his circumcision

LSU freshman
referring to poor people
as *indignant*

a young girl wishing
they'd change police car sirens
to ice cream truck bells

Inpatient Unit

Twenty minutes

Into their first session,

A clinical psychology intern –

Observing her patient

Pulling out a lighter and

Setting his beard on fire –

Mutters to herself

I wish we'd covered this in

Graduate School



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 a granddaughter, Ava. 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*, and many other newspapers, journals, and anthologies. *Opening the Doors of Perception* is his forty-third book.

