

SOULS AND SENSES

Poems by
Robert H. Deluty



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To
Barbara

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*Nothing can cure the soul but the senses,
just as nothing can cure the senses but the soul.*

Oscar Wilde

*As long as I am breathing, in my eyes,
I am just beginning.*

Criss Jami

explaining
to his child why, at *Starbucks*,
small is *tall*

in recovery . . .
wishing he could remember
the eighties, nineties

pre-weekend snowstorm . . .
their priest putting up the sign
Sure, take Sunday off

abused teen noting
why it is so exhausting
staying safe

disturbed teen noting
why it is so exhausting
staying sane

By accident? . . .

her four year-old responding

No, by purpose

post-game handshakes . . .

retiring Clemson trainer

slugging Duke's coach

Civil War scholar

calling Thomas Jackson's troops

Stonewallers

on Valentine's Day,

opting to get his wife's face

tattooed on his neck

the pool boy

portraying his work as

Skimming off the top

100th birthday . . .
learning his youngest grandson
is now a Grandpa

the dean describing
to his doctor the sharp pain
up my tushie

opting to name
their identical triplets
Chris, Kris and Krys

a child assuming
if *five* goes with *fifth*,
two goes with *tooth*

neighbor of the man
who bombed the church noting
He had issues

long-winded rabbi
loving the toon gorilla
named Magilla

campaign photo-op . . .
behind the smiling mayor,
a mooning vagrant

eloping couple
wanting to say *I do*
without the to-do

Easter dinner . . .
their granddaughter showing off
her latest piercings

the skater
regarding water as
potential ice

the card player
reading the word *pinnacle*,
seeing *pinochle*

their teen asserting
a black-and-white movie
cannot be funny

boy with celiac,
in a Queens deli, wanting
to utter *on rye*

a kindergartner
asking her teacher what makes
moly holy

the miller's son
opting to apply to Rice,
Cornell, Wheaton

at boot camp
the young recruit wishing
his name weren't Dove

Dad greeting
his teen's prom date at the door
with a butcher's knife

priest, atheist
agreeing never to say
God damn it

the chef referring
to his toques and aprons
as *cookwear*

in a lush garden,
on their smartphones, failing
to smell the roses

Legends of the Game

The little league coach
Informs his unsuspecting players
That five brothers played
Major league baseball
At the very same time:
Felipe Alou,
Matty Alou,
Jesus Alou,
Tude Alou &
Skip Toom Alou

convict Ed Woodcock
blaming all his misfortunes
on his last name

Great-Aunt Rosa
asking her brand-new neighbors
why they have no kids

born on leap day,
their eighty-year-old uncle
claiming he's twenty

a child defining
the national anthem
as *country music*

immigrant maid
telling her high school senior
Don't go to Butler

an anti-Semite
raging that he enjoys
Jewish comics most

Robert Nash Weaver,
a boxer, calling himself
Bob N. Weave

Willard Ling and wife,
Ava Bell, calling themselves
Will Ling & A. Bell

the old professor
telling students he prefers
curmudgeon to *crank*

the old professor
telling students she prefers
beldam to *crone*

Texan Randy King,
touring London, learning why
his name evokes laughs

a teen driver
shouting at the speeding cop
Hypocrite!

Great-Grandpa smiling
as he dreams about drinking
Bardot's bath water

two Dems loving
the bridge bidding convention
forcing notrump

their toddler weeping
as Mom stops her from licking
the toilet plunger

a drunkard reading
river mouth, not noticing
the *ri*

the cop's baby
refusing to take her nap,
resisting a rest

his sons asserting
they know how to make money,
not how to keep it

from a distance,
picking up Granddad's scent:
whiskey, shoe polish

from a distance,
picking up Grandma's scent:
Chanel, Bengay

immigrant baker
inquiring how can you ice
a hockey puck

school's shortest boy
choosing to apply only
to Coe, Yale, Bard

ESL student
assuming *toiletries*
are BM attempts

the linguist
defining *burlesque theater*
as *bawdy building*

Yom Kippur, midday . . .
Jewish basketball player
on a fast break

in his dream, hitting
a World Series home run
with a wiffle bat

in her dream, nailing
a quadruple axel jump
on a mud puddle

as police close in,
two amorous bank robbers
stealing kisses

class roster, first day . . .
eyeing one Roy, two Rogers,
one Dale, two Evans

the chief surgeon
slowly removing the core
of his *Fig Newton*

orphaned joey
snuggling under the shirt
of his human Dad

a nine year-old
attempting to get high
sniffing mothballs

a ten year-old
attempting to get drunk
drinking *Purell*

the gentleman
with a full-body tattoo
seeking a judgeship

Go on the potty! . . .
two year-old pooping upon
the closed toilet seat

depressed player
requesting for his jersey
the number 0

St. Patrick's Day . . .
law partners calling themselves
McBlum & O'Katz

the number cruncher
loving that *math* is part
of *Uma Thurman*

post-sneeze . . .
their three year-old responding
God help you

law school prof
hoping that Judge Judy
replaces Scalia

the fifth grader
defining *ancient* as
pre-1900

the little leaguer
taking a mighty swing at
baseball-sized hail

a six year-old
asking the vet what ants
dream about

an eight year-old
asking the vet if gerbils
have souls

a twelve year-old
asking the vet whether cats
can empathize

the postman
defining *Aloha*
as a *HI hi*

midnight . . . hearing
their mother, on the phone,
selling vibrators

missing the midterm,
asserting *I got real drunk*
and misplaced my car

missing the final,
claiming *I got on a plane*
accidentally

toddler's fearlessness
terrifying Mom and Dad,
elating Grandpa

DiMaggio fan
describing decaf as
Joltless Joe

his writing tutor
explaining that *havoc*
is not *wrecked*

Jehovah's Witness
nearing the home of Baptists
with anger issues

the diplomat
calling their au pair
foreign aide

Grandma explaining
why pink, furry handcuffs
are in her hat box

Can I count on you? . . .

her five year-old answering

No, count with me

Alabama prof,

born in Brooklyn, revealing

he dreams in Yiddish

procrastinators

choosing to name their baby

Tamara

observing

his Grandma eating *Cheetos*

with a fork

at the zoo . . .

eyeing a poisonous snake,

feeling rattled

the architect
concurring with his client:
Sounds like a plan

the traffic court judge
agreeing with her colleague:
Suits me just fine

Kansas first graders
learning there's a Manhattan
in New York

the candidate
reading *Sigh* off
a teleprompter

Marshmallow Madness . . .
building a pink basketball
out of *Peeps*

ophthalmologist
referring to eyes as
bedroom shutters

centenarian
denying that he's old . . .
I'm vintage

young psychologist
realizing her patients
are saner than she

card-playing gardener
displaying for customers
a case of spades

wondering why
his angry child is reading
about living wills

while jogging,
the Texas debutante
adjusting her pearls

three CBers
referring to themselves as
radio-active

their four year-old
trying to grill sliced cheese
via the toaster

on his CV
the Princeton grad noting
Summa Cum Loud

waking up at dawn,
car wash employee claiming
he must rise and shine

baseball player
confusing the Fords:
Whitey and Henry

basketball player
confusing the Bradleys:
Bill and Milton

the ice skater
telling her accountant
she's good at figures

laughing too hard
at his wife's MVA pic
to offer a quip

arm wrestler
winning the match
hands down

fourth grader asking
what's the number just before
infinity

sixth grader asking
if she can add new letters
right after Z

the preschooler
watering a yardstick,
hoping it will grow

their English teacher
defining the word *trip* as
hit the ground running

city bus . . . a teen
reading the book titled
Penile Enhancement

April Fool's Day . . .
Tom and Susan Kerr naming
their newborn, Jo

How're you doing? . . .
the janitor answering
Drunk with power

behind closed doors,
the Stanford dean taking out
her Barbie dolls

behind closed doors,
the Tufts provost taking out
his pacifier

I'm curvaceous . . .
her husband replying
No, just fat

*Nothing carries meaning. People carry meaning.
We are the porters of importance.*

Jarod Kintz

*Every one of us is, in the cosmic perspective,
precious. If a human disagrees with you,
let him live. In a hundred billion galaxies,
you will not find another.*

Carl Sagan

first grader singing

Jump, Jump For My Love

in the gym

third grader singing

We're Not Gonna Take It

in the lunchroom

fifth grader singing

Devil With A Blue Dress On

in detention

ESL teacher

describing *praying*

as *speaking up*

April fifteenth . . .

finding a nickel outside

the post office

Baltimore, springtime . . .
her parked car camouflaged
by cherry blossoms

Brooklyn, summertime . . .
his parked car camouflaged
by pigeon droppings

Irv and Lee Casper
nicknaming each other
Boo

drill sergeant
defining the word *mess* as
private dining room

drill sergeant
defining *latrine* as
head of the army

Name some h words . . .

her grandmother offering

hatred, heartbreak

Name some v words . . .

her grandfather offering

vice, venereal

Iranian girl

wishing her first name

were not Zeka

stay-at-home Mom

rejoicing in her success:

I took a shower

stay-at-home Dad

rejoicing in his success:

Kept the kids alive

Dining with Earl

Their three-year-old son
Stands under the kitchen table
Chomping ravenously
On uncooked broccoli
Trying to convince
Five dinner guests
He's a Stegosaurus
Devouring a tree

her Aunt Mary
insisting that skorts
are unchristian

his Uncle Chaim
insisting that sweet pickles
are too Christian

the Freudian prof
teaching smirking teens about
anal fixations

the Freudian prof
teaching sneering teens about
penis envy

young Isabella
learning how truly awful
the Spanish Queen was

paranoid man
refusing to give his name
at *Starbucks*

the ambassador
describing *détente* as
global warming

Valentine's Day . . .
informing his girlfriend
I'm in lust with you

reclusive neighbor
referring to himself as
a soloist

new immigrant
learning the difference between
lie with and *lie to*

informing
her daughter's date to shun films
with sex, love, beaches

informing
his daughter's date he's got guns,
acreage, a shovel

nurses nicknaming
hairless Dr. Pennington
Bald Point Pen

his new patient
insisting she's allergic
to all vitamins

Your haircut's nice . . .
their six year-old responding
I beg to differ

Who saved Noah? . . .

a Catholic School child

writing *Ark Angels*

a scholar seeking

links between The Three Stooges

and mob violence

Grandma Edith

regretting her decision

to play *Twister*

during Passover,

Chez Paul offering matzo

with its escargot

holding a toy gun,

her deranged uncle choosing

suicide by cop

Grandpa avowing
he despises the concept
of *nougat*

husband and wife
requiring a safe word when
discussing Trump

Jewish baseball fan
feeling perturbed rooting
for the Padres

Muslim baseball fan
feeling unsettled rooting
for the Cardinals

psychotic math prof
teaching his granddaughters
Crazy Eights

a pacifist
named Zev wishing his name
didn't mean *wolf*

a therapist
named Amos wishing his name
didn't mean *troubled*

art school commencement . . .
old prof sporting a homburg
instead of a tam

art school commencement . . .
young prof wearing a red cape
instead of a hood

algebra teacher
chastising his students
for their infractions

a vet battling
PTSD, opening
a flower shop

nine-year-old Ivan
asking teachers not to add
the Terrible

in the ICU . . .
Grandpa, with his final breath,
cursing the doctors

the physician
noting why he wouldn't want
X-ray vision

hundred-year-old man
dreaming he's sixteen, dating
the head cheerleader

pulled over . . .
combing her long, blond hair
as the cop nears

his Mom and Dad
driving the ten year-old
to drug rehab

at Dartmouth
a fearful historian
studying Vikings

at Stanford
a depressed biologist
studying bluebirds

pointing at an eel,
the Italian man noting
That's a moray

Grandma believing
heaven's filled with music played
by Bach, Liszt, Hendrix

Gramps imagining
hell is filled with bagpipes played
badly, forever

best friends chatting . . .
Angel from Barcelona,
Dev from Mumbai

at commencement . . .
describing the streaking grad
as *quite cheeky*

famed psychiatrist
informing the child's parents
His wiring's screwy

the English tutor
defining the word *hives* as
colonial homes

vegan girl
viewing *Teddy Grahams*
as borderline

red meat loving boy
regarding chicken and fish
as vegetables

toddler removing
her pacifier to taste
an anchovy

beloved patriarch
teaching his oldest grandson
how to roll a joint

an eight-year-old boy
peering through a microscope,
feeling like a god

crime boss responding
to *Which son tried to ice you?*
with *All of them*

Grandma slapping
the male nurse for stating
You've gained weight

Grandpa punching
the maître d' for asking
Was it yum-yum?

the therapist
bragging to colleagues about
her 4-pawed children

changing the diaper
of the demented father
who abused him

tallest sixth grader,
surnamed Petit, learning what
it means in French

their great-uncle
noting he prejudges
because it's faster

after giving birth,
Charlotte Baer rejoicing
being called Mama

Yom Kippur . . .
a hungry woman praying
for the day to end

the baker thinking
Gene Hackman's film is titled
The French Confection

the digger thinking
Russell Crowe's film is titled
A Beautiful Mine

arachnologist
regarding only spiders
as webmasters

choosing to give
their newborn the name Doctor,
hoping it might help

watching a western,
mishearing the sheriff say
Kettle rustling

pen and pad in hand,
their three year-old makes believe
he's a waiter

earphones inserted,
their four year-old makes believe
she's a physician

Officer Walker
wishing his parents had not
christened him Jay

Ma and Pa
insisting that their teens
not smoke in bed

Gramps waking up
without pain, wondering
if he's still alive

Uncle Sid calling
the identical twin girls
redundant

Biggest continent? . . .
young contestant responding
Texas

Capital of Chad? . . .
old contestant replying
Jeremy

the baker,
icing his child's wedding cake,
tiering up

young Honoria
screaming *It doesn't rhyme*
with gonorrhea!

Genevieve Burns
fighting the urge to name
her infant Cole

the new classmate
telling the fifth grade bully
Don't be uncivil

his language tutor
defining *No mas* as
a Spanish Uncle

the polymath
imagining heaven as
endless libraries

gravely ill . . . calling
the *Returns* phone number
of *L.L. Bean*

their Dad requesting
only one Father's Day gift:
to be left alone

inside *Walmart*
a Lubbock man lassoing
the would-be robber

I love you . . .
her nine year-old replying
Tell me later

I love you . . .
her twelve year-old answering
Seriously?

I love you . . .
her husband responding
Don't kid yourself

Cousin Myrna
asking to be called *ample*
rather than *obese*

Cousin Morton
asking to be called *frenzied*
rather than *deranged*

Dr. Anne Factor
naming her child Ruth Helen
for the initials

high school junior
confusing Marvin Gaye with
Malcolm X

high school freshman
mistaking the Pep Boys for
the Three Musketeers

lottery winner
pondering how he blew through
two mil in nine months

eighth grader Jay Fitch
boasting that his name rhymes
with *très rich*

tenth grader Wayne Kuhl
claiming his first name's *n,e*
are silent

raging at his wife
after he dreams of her
with another man

Best chip material? . . .
Intel worker responding
Potatoes

*If a man cannot understand the beauty of life,
it is probably because life never understood
the beauty in him.*

Criss Jami

*Each contact with a human being is so rare,
so precious, one should preserve it.*

Anais Nin

Notre Dame starters . . .
five black basketball players
wearing IRISH tees

the ad man
calling Mr. Peanut
a shelled shill

his teenager
assuming James Brown
played for Cleveland

her teenager
assuming Jim Brown
sang *I Feel Good*

Grandpa believing
he's not drinking alone
if his dog's nearby

his Sikh in-laws
calling Chase Hoolihan
Base Hooligan

grad student driving
to her doctoral defense
mid panic attack

Compton fifth grader
winning his school's spelling bee
with *yachting*

Harlem fifth grader
winning her school's spelling bee
with *arbitrage*

Aspen fifth grader
losing his school's spelling bee
with *paucity*

TP-ing their neighbor
for trimming his hedges
at 6:00 a.m.

egging their neighbor
for power-washing his deck
at 5:00 a.m.

Dad declaring
he intends to age
disgracefully

approaching
The Elephants, belting out
Hello, Dali!

Christmastime . . . singing,
while looking at *The Bathers*,
'Tis the Cezanne

their father's obit
focusing on his talent
for hot dog eating

at the beach
three teens horrified by
Grandma's nip slip

Solve these problems . . .
her pupil balking, noting
I only create them

Aunt Giulia
pinching her niece for calling
pesto sauce, *gravy*

Aunt Golda
punching her niece for calling
challah, *twisty bread*

ophiologist

choosing the vanity plate

SSS

ecdysiast

choosing the vanity plate

XXX

philosopher

choosing the vanity plate

YYY

hypersomniac

choosing the vanity plate

ZZZ

the op-ed writer

describing his efforts

as *leaning columns*

flower child's daughter
changing her first name from
Moonlight to Martha

flower child's son
changing his first name from
Peace to Victor

old weatherman
fearing the gorgeous intern
will steal his thunder

Independence Day . . .
the math tutor calling *J*
a fourth of July

the three year-old
regarding her midday nap
as a long time-out

Psych major
pronouncing *Freud* as if
it rhymed with *prude*

English major
pronouncing *Thoreau* as if
it rhymed with *pursue*

Fine Arts major
pronouncing *Gauguin* as if
it rhymed with *noggin*

offering big bucks
to his porcelain-skinned teen
to eschew tattoos

his grandmother
referring to giblets
as *gravy gifts*

anti-monarchist
loving the sports-page headline
Pirates Rout Royals

anti-communist
hating the sports-page headline
Reds Vanquish Yankees

a boy assuming
bipolar means you've got
two Polish parents

a girl assuming
bipolar means you've lived
way up north and south

Top Ten Most Hated . . .
seeing Bieber listed first,
Hitler second

in arm and leg casts,
Great-Gramps trying to find
ounces of humor

ravaged by cancer,
Great-Gran trying to maintain
shreds of dignity

teenaged rebel
loving the flag of Nepal:
Not rectangular!

the seven year-old
asking his Mom which is worse:
a twit or a twat

the eight year-old
asking her Dad what's better:
gorgeous or dazzling

her kindergartner
calling pancakes and waffles
syrup food

their twenty year-old
daydreaming of becoming
a trophy husband

new haircut/color . . .
the young Mom terrifying
her two month-old

NBA center
referring to the slam dunk
as his finesse shot

anorectic teen
answering *What's your weight?*
with *Far too much*

Granddad's funeral . . .
pondering how do you mourn
a backstabbing schmuck

You're the best! . . .
his five year-old responding
At what?

You're the best! . . .
his ten-year-old responding
Not with girls

at *Target*
six different Moms pleading
Just listen to me

at *Target*
three different Dads screaming
Never again!

the prof explaining
why he prefers nebbishes
to nudniks

third grade student
asserting that I and L
are way too plain

fifth grade student
suggesting that X and Z
should be vowels

in the ER
honeymooners still raging
after their fight

old Jewish woman
describing her stout husband
as *zaftig*

Nobel laureate
telling his wife he still feels
like an imposter

How've you been? . . .

Great-Aunt Myrna replying
What's your point?

How've you been? . . .

Great-Uncle Floyd replying
Thanks very much

his wife inquiring
if all plaster of Paris
is made in France

suicidal teen
unable to see beyond
this evening

Have you room for cake? . . .
her young son points to his chest,
saying *Down here*

hair-braiding experts
referring to themselves
as headliners

the seventh grader
suggesting *less overwhelmed*
be written as *whelmed*

the eighth grader
preferring *uniqueliest*
to *one-of-a-kind*

elderly priest
describing his sermons as
fatherly advice

the three year-old
calling *Visa, Amex* cards
Mommy money

in Vietnam
the dared French tourist eating
a beating snake heart

mother of six
sporting neon pink short shorts
with *FLIRT* on the seat

grandmother of four
wearing a plus-size tube top
and stripper heels

staring at his plate . . .
half the peas are ice cold,
half piping hot

five-year-old Texan
assuming the earth has
only one Main Street

asking her pastor
whether Jesus Christ
ever ate bacon

eighteenth birthday . . .
their nephew changing his name
from Will to Chill

at the state fair
a centenarian trying
deep-fried butter

Sal the debater
asserting he's *provolone*
but *antipasto*

striving for balance,
Luther and Dolores Downs
naming their child Joy

striving for mercy,
Preston and Bertha Kuntz
naming their child Grace

suggesting his wife
nix *peabrain* and *numbnuts* as
terms of endearment

her grandchild musing
which came first: memo pads
or xylophones

Sunday School student
inquiring why did God kill
Sodom's babies

reading the last words
of the renowned prof's obit:
no survivors

her Chihuahua
yapping into submission
his Doberman

the salesman
promising the chic sandals
will knock her socks off

the merchant
showcasing radial tires
at his blowout sale

teenage misfit
noting he's a *Froot Loop*
among *Cheerios*

a mile from the pen
entrepreneurs opening
The Jailbreak Bar

the preacher
describing Noah's Ark as
a couples cruise ship

firmly believing
his roommate's guinea pig
wants to kill him

a young boy shouting
That's Impossible! seeing
his first sunshower

the bodybuilder
using his three-year-old twins
as free weights

JetBlue passenger
asking the flight attendant
for dental floss

Southwest passenger
asking the flight attendant
if she'd like to dance

rubbing Limburger
on the prof's bumper sticker
Choose Civility

sailor Charles Cruz
stating he much prefers C
to Chuck or Charlie

Honda owner
calling his auto loan
Civic duty

the first grader
asking his teacher if snakes
can be taught to sing

the third grader
asking her teacher if bats
ever have nightmares

Cause of inflation? . . .
young Economics student
replying *Air*

eighty-year-old man
wedding a same-aged woman:
Had to . . . she's pregnant

George and Jeb
describing safaris as
Bush campaigns

Burger King bender . . .
ninth-place Olympic gymnast
gorging on *Whoppers*

John and Helene Lew
giving their fraternal twins
the names Lou, Lulu

portly, sweaty man
in a tight shirt, appearing
to be lactating

her young grandson
attempting to give himself
a chin dimple

Poli Sci prof
referring to sadness
as *a blue state*

the firefighter
admitting his folks did time
for arson

Boston actors
performing *Julius Caesar*
as a comedy

Berkeley actors
performing *West Side Story*
without music, dance

Bayonne actors
performing *Guys and Dolls*
in *Star Wars* costumes

the allergist
describing sneezes
as *blessed events*

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 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. *Souls and Senses* is his fifty-second book.

