

Heavenly

by [Mark J. Mitchell](#) (September 2024)



Sea with Violet Clouds (Emil Nolde, 1936)

Heavenly

A Bach fugue has the Crucifixion in it. –György Kurtág

Some mornings, God sits at an old keyboard
and plays Bach. Of course, the instrument's
pretty. Notes fall and fly, ordered, and sent

by angels. Clouds change their color before
dawn, timed and keyed to the fugue. Every chord's
sublime as Eve. God plays for God's pleasure,
immersed in divinity no creature
could bear hearing. Even angels stop
their ears, but smile. They like watching notes drop
so neat. God's perfect and requires measure.

Picture Book

In memory of Robert Close and Liz Plummer

A display in a library:
an open book, no text.

It's a silver print
showing two large people
in an empty, pretty alley.

Most who see it
won't recall their voices,
know how they would sing.

They're fixed like freaks
in a cruel museum. Another artist
took this picture

but left their souls out—
an act of theft. So, you
are left to recall the arias

that brightened Maiden Lane
in San Francisco, Saturdays
and especially on Sundays.

And you never
learned their names.

Optical Promise

My glasses slip from my face
like truant children avoiding algebra.

Light bounces off lenses, up-
missing the floor, surprising my retina.

My pupil contracts sliding off this page.
Look but don't see—no lessons here.

Wiping the dust, smearing uncertain oils,
I put them back on and gaze through a rainbow.

Cherub House

A widow's walk tops the white
house past that broken church. The height
lets small angels watch
the wind. They're not babies, little,
plump and old, their wings are brittle
as a plaster cast.

The lower floors stay vacant.
You look through clear glass
at empty rooms where no events
take place. It's all past.

The tiny angels like their view,
used to looking down from above
in paintings. They're pink in too blue
skies. Too close to God.

Time is all playtime, fun for them.
No prayers to be said.
They toss light at the moon and send
kisses to the dead.

Confluence

Tragedy has exact limits that Hell cannot enclose. –Jack Spicer, Note to The Tragic Muse

An eighth grade atheist challenges nuns
but not the way he wants. Still, priests got called.
Class—all but him—are sent outside to run
off blasphemy. A rebellion followed,
with expulsions—not him. It's still a cool
memory for aging classmates, half-recalled.
He kept drawing things that weren't allowed—
comic book cosmologies. Not many
years later, a blond accomplice shoots pool
with his misplaced friend, betting on ennui
to win. She knows who he knows, keeps any
info close, secret as an undrawn card
to play later. She shoots well. He falls hard.
He's her vengeance plaything. He won't go free.

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R. Gerry Fabian is a published writer and poet from Doylestown, PA. He has published five books of poetry: *Parallels*, *Coming Out Of The Atlantic*, *Electronic Forecasts*, *Wildflower Women*, as well as his poetry baseball book, *Ball On The Mound*.

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