

Audrey O'Heir
Hunter College High School, New York, NY
FINALIST, 17th Annual Poetry Prize For High School Girls in New England and New York

& Holy Ghost

Your childhood is like the china doll
in the secondhand store, old and pale now, wavering,
obscured not by dirt but by the fabric's thinning.
I tried to point her out to you sitting on the shelf-
you looked for a leather wallet-
I didn't know porcelain could erode, I said,
but look at the soles of her feet.

I often forget you were a children's-choir altar-boy
honest-to-goodness fish-on-fridays Massachusetts-mill-town-Irish Catholic,
all-boys-Catholic-school Catholic,
I forgot until the funeral when the priest forgot your father's name
as you went up for the sacrament,
as I sat, wondering if I had been baptized.
You told me you went into cathedrals once you left for college
but you didn't stay for mass; you looked at the windows,
you lit a candle, maybe you prayed,
remembering the rosary clinking in your hands.

In between arguments you tell me about cream-of-mushroom chocolate cake, grandma's pierogi,
all the weight the city stole from you, nineteen, hungry,
I don't ask, on purpose? An experiment in running from the bases? The bats?
Did you flinch when he screamed at the Red Sox?
When we're in the front of your father's car, eyes on the road, you confess, easily:
I used to drive straight into the sun.