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# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Anita Pulier: Four Poems

Anita Pulier · Thursday, October 18th, 2018

### The Butcher's Diamond

Aunt Freda got the diamond from her lover,  
the butcher who refused to marry her  
because his wife was in an institution.

After many ruinous years,  
she left him and gave the diamond  
to my mother, Ida.

Gentle Ida, who, at twenty  
fell in love with Freda's brother  
after seeing him raise clenched fist

from a soapbox at Brooklyn college  
reciting Marxist dicta against  
the unequal distribution of wealth.

Ida, a shopkeeper's daughter,  
unfamiliar with jewels,  
liberated the little diamond

from its ringed prison to  
a thin gold necklace  
looped around her neck.

At her death, I unclasped the lock,  
slid it off and held it  
in my clenched fist.

It had so little to recommend it,  
the butcher's diamond.  
And I believe

it carries Freda's disappointment  
and Ida's ambivalence.  
Yet, I choose to wear it daily

as even with its flaws  
it sparkles when the light is right.

*(First published in The Lovely Mundane)*

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## Contempt of Court

The first day of Torts we read a case  
of justice denied to somebody's Auntie  
who fell on her ass.

A few years later I nailed  
my diploma to the wall,  
scattered magazines

in the waiting room, interviewed  
a desperate, weeping woman  
and with the intensity of a novice

adopted her angst, grasped her hand,  
put on my sneakers and rushed her  
to the court that had just tossed her out.

The weeping woman watched as I carved  
a moment from empty space,  
arguing, advocating, quoting, and citing,

until the judge cut off my lofty plea:  
"Counselor," he barked,  
"you cannot come into my courtroom in sneakers."

At that moment, I remembered poor dear  
Auntie and understood  
justice denied.

"Your Honor," I stuttered softly,  
"We are here as a matter of right, not at your invitation."  
The courtroom din stopped.

The weeping woman stopped.  
A lifetime of seconds passed.  
"Fine," the judge growled, "next time show more respect,  
now get to the point."

That was the point, I thought.

*(First published in Askew Poetry Journal)*

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## The Art of Revision: A Lament

*for my teachers*

Never title your poem  
 before it is written,  
 try switching  
 the penultimate stanza  
 with the first or maybe the second,  
 despite the urge to chat it up,  
 show, don't tell,  
 sure, trust your reader but  
 if caught  
 harboring a despicable cliché,  
 try a robust defense, after all,  
 who knows whom you might convince that this  
 is the One overused trite expression allowed in a lifetime,  
 check if your feminine endings  
 outweigh  
 your masculine endings,  
 but please,  
 employ that anaphoric opening with  
 caution, traumatic memory  
 so often dismantles  
 a well-intentioned metaphor when  
 one singular sensation kicks off an avalanche  
 of unintended associations  
 never dreamt of in your philosophy,  
 re-group, enjoy the brief respite  
 and charm of your fricative consonants,  
 breathe relief and delight into  
 the brilliant pauses  
 your line breaks have  
 unintentionally created,  
 nota bene:  
 trochees, anapests, dactyls, spondees,  
 commas, colons, em dashes,  
 and, if you really must, italics,  
 sip your lukewarm coffee  
 until you reach the dregs, then print, fold,  
 tuck your newly-hatched creation,  
 into an overstuffed desk drawer or  
 wherever cracker crumbs and  
 fragments of old cookies might lure  
 ants and flippety-winged pantry moths  
 to examine  
 half-baked stanzas while  
 indulging in a tasty nibble  
 to sustain their tiny selves

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for the long journey to a puzzling conclusion.

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## Only Dinner

Grandma Rose's cooking pot is too large  
to have been carried in steerage from Belarus  
and a few years after she arrived it was dented when  
it fell off a fire escape on the Lower East Side,

still I have kept it for years  
as the only heirloom from Rose.  
I see it perched on the rusted tenement fire escape  
cooling soup with boiled scraps of meat

waiting to feed her hungry family,  
my mother Ida, the only girl child  
helping in the kitchen, her brothers, much older,  
out on the street, her father a day laborer, not yet home.

And Rose, exhausted, homesick,  
grieving the child lost in the old country,  
lifts the peeling window sash to reach the fire escape  
and carry the pot inside but discovers

it has fallen to the street below,  
soup splattered everywhere.  
She lumbers several flights down the steep airless stairs  
to reclaim her empty pot and in Yiddish mutters to herself:

it's only dinner  
we will survive.

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*(Author photo by Alexis Rhone Fancher)*

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