

Jeffrey Greene

The Sunken Cathedral

She worries about Abram's
troubles in white kids' school
and rages inside against his teacher
who also worries like an insult.

It is almost too quiet.

A plate stands on the bureau,
a moon, a rose
glazed into it,
and an oval frame contains
a god she hardly
remembers to think about.

What should she say to Abram?
That she loved school herself?

That she loved to watch
for the bus as it

arrived down Avenue H
she thought to save her?

And what should she say about school?
About love and encouragement?

How she studied
in the empty music room

Debussy's "The Sunken Cathedral"
on a cheap cassette,

and the cathedral would rise
out of the waters of the lost

(those afternoons), the bells
and then the vespers.

She loved Bartok's
"4th String Quartet"

because she understood it,
the night sounds.

What is discipline if not

the love of approval
or devotion in poverty,
hours of practicing
her instrument in a closet
against the muted acoustics
of her mother's dresses.
She watches Abram run
in the small fenced yard
and knows how children love
to run. She remembers
running herself, mindlessly
over hard ground.