SACRED & PROFANE

Velvet Jesus & neon nativity
our religion was plush
like the felt pair of dice
hanging from a rearview mirror
and electric like your sister's
Popsicle-colored bikini
(which you shouldn't be
looking at you sick
degenerate)
but the way your Uncle
was a bookmaker while
your father was a police
officer always marked your
family with a moral form
of incest

Misdemeanors
could always get fixed
like parking tickets
while felonies
could always "ambivalent"
in the church basement
bingo wheel

Forgive us if the sacred
was sometimes more
profane while it was
through profanity
we learned more
of our morality
and scripture

Eden was still
a garden
which meant that
without a little
shit
it would never flower
MIRACLES

Bleeding velvet paintings
or statues that cured anything
from impotence to migraine
the plaster or painted
representation of the Virgin Mary
sometimes manifested miracles
that put your clapboard pink
flamingo lawn neighborhood
in the tabloids

And the more your parish
priest attacked a Biblically dressed
big bosomed statue
that temporarily cured
every grandmother’s sciatica
and every grandfather’s arthritis

the more her statue went up
in the garden or got puckered
atop your car dashboard

And would your Jesus or Mary
Night light also perform miracles?

So long as the Old Country folks
were still around

a religious medallion
or a plastic crucifix
could sometimes make magic
because miracles

like the grandfathers and grandmothers
who believed in them

were stubborn enough
to happen
POEM FROM THE SPAGHETTI SCRAPBOOKS

MARY

God may have been the author of this one boxing arena of a town called New Britain
Connecticut but religion for folks like mine who prized fighting worshipped a peasant-hipped blossom breasted matriarch whose plaster lawn statue guarded the pink flamingos (she was even on the dashboard of the car where you were always trying to lose your virginity)

And though authors like Nietzsche would later bury Jehovah for me you would always love the Madonna like your own mother (who sometimes you would hurt who still found a way to forgive)

And if so many like you rejected the traditional catechism ~ never the woman (and only a woman)

who could create and give grace to religion

Kenneth DiMaggio has published in Quercus Review, Plainsongs, Willard A. Maple, and in The Outlaw Bible of American Poetry. He is working on a poetry series, The Spaghetti Scrapbooks, from which the three poems featured here were chosen. During the summer of 2009, DiMaggio visited the West African country of Benin, which is known for its voodoo, where he met the head voodoo chief. DiMaggio says, “He told me he had been expecting my visit all along (and probably my generous tip for the brief personal audience)”