

Lesson One

JANET PROULX

All winter long
Sister Mary Julian would enter the classroom,
a man's white handkerchief pressed against a nose
perpetually wrinkled with distaste.

Rosary beads clicking against her hip,
she would hurry to the windows,
open every one with precision,
using a wooden pole with a hook to unlatch the top row.

As we shivered, she would reach into
the voluminous pocket of her habit for a silver atomizer,
which she'd aim in our direction,
spritz, spritz, spritz.

And then, from a sufficiently safe distance behind her desk,
begin the second lesson of the day.