



American Idols

Joyce Peseroff

University of Massachusetts Boston

joyce.peseroff@umb.edu

(The Antikythera Mechanism, discovered more than 100 years ago in a Roman shipwreck, was used by ancient Greeks to display astronomical cycles. Its system of gears and cogs never appeared in a machine or weapon.)

For ancient Greeks
gears creaked

not in machines but toys.
They cared

who danced hardest,
who played best,

who told the old
story with a twist—

gods lofty
on a pulley.

Beautiful youth
still engage

agora and stage
as their white teeth

approach, retreat,
in tabloids racked

by Lex High juniors
for minimum wage.

Javelins they hurl
on practice fields

beside the Town Pool
wobble and prick

fresh turf. Those old
Greeks didn't

labor-save: slaves
in harness hauled

Achilles' entourage
to war without a cog.

Joyce Peseroff is distinguished lecturer of English and director of the MFA Program at UMass Boston. Her four books of poems are *The Hardness Scale*, *A Dog in the Lifeboat*, *Mortal Education*, and *Eastern Mountain Time*. She has been managing editor and associate poetry editor of *Ploughshares*, and edited *The Ploughshares Poetry Reader*, *Robert Bly: When Sleepers Awake*, and *Simply Lasting: Writers on Jane Kenyon*. Her poems and reviews appear in the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Southern Review*, *New York Times Book Review*, *The Women's Review of Books*, and the online journal *Slate*.