# REDCEDAR REVIEW

# RED CEDAR REVIEW

2003

# RED CEDAR REVIEW




*Red Cedar Review* is an annual literary magazine published by Michigan State University undergraduates in collaboration with Michigan State University Press. Address all editorial correspondence to *Red Cedar Review*; 17C Morrill Hall; Department of English; Michigan State University; East Lansing, MI 48824; or email rcreview@msu.edu. Manuscripts are read between August and May only. For submission guidelines, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the address above, or visit our website, at http://www.msu.edu/~rcreview.

Subscriptions are available for $12 for one year, $23 for 2 years, or $30 for 3 years. For subscription information, please contact Michigan State University Press; 1405 S. Harrison Rd., ste. 25.; East Lansing, MI 48823-2545; 517-355-9543 x 130.

Artwork, including cover photo, by Robert Turney. Mr. Turney would like to dedicate his moonflower photographs to the memory of Jeanne Main, a neighbor and friend.

An excerpt from Jon Muzzall's "The River" previously appeared in *The Offbeat/1,* as "An Intimation of the End of the World."

Cover and text design: Michael J. Brooks




ISSN 0034-1967

REDCEDAR
REVIEW

# CONTENTS

# A History of Letters: An Introduction to the Issue

Meg Sparling

In 1983, *Red Cedar Review* published its twentieth-anniversary issue, entitled "An Accidentally All-Women's (Where are all the good male writers?) Prize Winning Issue." The editors of a review founded by Thomas McGuane, Jim Cash, and Walt Lockwood must have been struck by the irony.

Now another twenty years have passed, and the gender pendulum has swung back toward the center. In addition to the winners of the Jim Cash Writing Contest for 2002, and exciting new pieces from up-and-coming writers, this issue contains a special retrospective of *RCR* alumni, including reprints of two Stuart Dybek prose poems, originally published in 1972; two new poems by Dan Gerber, whom *RCR* published in 1973; a poem by Judith Minty, who appeared in a 1975 issue; and from Diane Wakoski, MSU Poet in Residence and former *RCR* Faculty Advisor, a poem about moonflowers, the image of this issue, which appeared in her collection *Argonaut Rose* in 1998.

Preparation for this fortieth-anniversary issue necessitated an archaeological dig of sorts, through old letters and files. A frazzled staff member, Scott Larner, sorted and catalogued a fire-hazard-sized collection of back issues. This process became, as archaeological digs do, a revelation. I still remember the day former General Editor Doug Dowland and I joyfully discovered a single surviving copy of an issue featuring an interview with Allen Ginsberg.

This dig also resulted in a new wallpaper for the *RCR* office: old letters by the dozens, some complimenting an issue, some responding to the rejection of a submission with frustration or outrage, even threats of legal action. This forty-year correspondence is full of pride, passion, and vitality: energies at the very heart of contemporary literature.

The history of *Red Cedar Review*, like its survival, is quite remarkable. It appears, with forty years' worth of hindsight, that the sixties was an important decade for the MSU Department of English. In addition to the creation of the new department-funded literary journal, the undergraduate program enrolled many students who would go on to successful careers as writers: in addition to Cash, McGuane, and Lockwood there was Jim Harrison, and

Dan Gerber. The names of writers published in the *Red Cedar Review* in subsequent years can make you starry-eyed: Margaret Atwood, Pablo Neruda, Allen Ginsberg, W.S. Merwin, Stuart Dybek, William Stafford, Diane Wakoski, Charles Baxter, Judith Minty, Carolyn Forché, and many more.

In preparing for this issue, I read through letters, memos, speeches, and press releases dating back to the founding of the journal. Though I had never seen this material before, some of it was dishearteningly familiar. The problems *RCR* faced in 1963 and 1983 it faces in 2003. To reach its fortieth anniversary, *RCR* has survived dry spells in which no issues were published, continuous underfunding (punctuated by reductions to no funding), and periods of apathy among the department, students, and even staff. Legend has it that co-founders McGuane, Cash, and Lockwood first called the journal *Tarot*, but decided the title seemed too esoteric. At times, *RCR* has been esoteric regardless.

Navigating the journal's history, however, I began to see *RCR*'s surroundings as an ecosystem, in which difficulties function as environmental conditions: conditions that may provide the necessary tension for the journal's vitality, its forwardness, its evolution. I would like to believe that *Red Cedar Review* has survived forty years of poverty amid rich poetry and prose because it is fundamental to the university and the liberal arts experience of its students. How a literary review digs a fundamental experience out of the potential apathy within a megaversity is not easily explained. But this *Red Cedar Review* does, and so it lives on.

Beginning with the issue you hold in your hand, *Red Cedar Review* has a new look, made possible by our alliance with Michigan State University Press. Much else remains the same. As it moves toward its sixtieth-anniversary issue, and its eightieth, *RCR* will continue to publish high-quality literature. It will continue to receive letters and submissions from all over the world. It will continue to be edited in the dark basement of Morrill Hall by passionate undergraduates who read through manuscripts that are submitted, pounds upon pounds of poetry and prose. Long after the present *RCR* staff has graduated, student editors will be asking other students, "Does this matter to you? Don't you think this is vital?"

They will not always be comforted by the answers, but they will learn that, at least for *Red Cedar Review*, there is life in the asking.

Meg Sparling
General Editor

# On Being an Editor and On Being a Scholar

Douglas Dowland

A report from a literature department somewhere in the American Midwest: there is much more to it than scholarship. There should be students in the hallways, classes (save from the occasional session at the pub) in the classrooms, and in the basement a literary magazine just lucky enough to occupy an office, like an inventoried but forgotten accessory of a machine, like something swept under the couch. In the few years since I've graduated from Michigan State and moved on in my career, I have come to believe that what has been swept under—swept aside, whichever, both are true—still exists, is barely alive because the literary magazine represents something that scholars can't quite rid themselves of.

Because the love of literature is a noble and savage love. Noble because those who love it can never quite read or listen in the same way as almost everyone else does, and therefore can't get along sociably with the world; and for that love one must generally decide between two futures: the savage path of being a writer, or the savage crypto-analytical career in which literature becomes just that.

There is the third way, of course. Editing *Red Cedar Review* provided me with a crux for my love, the commingling of passion with some objectivity; as close to equilibrium as the literary species can get without dying, where one can care and critique, where I could read the loved along with the ridiculous. Just like cracking the spine of a fresh book, I could not tell and I could not judge what was in the day's submissions until I opened their envelopes. It's that first time over and over again that makes it charming. And in such charm there is training, a truer training in literature than any other I've experienced. It has trained me in the simplest maxim of literature: that one must read in order to write, and write in order to read. To really edit, one must think of not only what is on the page, but what the author thinks is supposed to be on the page, and what you think is supposed to be on the page, and to relay *all* that back to the author. He or she will either scoff, or scoff and revise. And together, *literature happens*. To be more mystical: literature

takes work, literature makes work. That which we take, we must make back. And repeat.

For this lesson, I will always have love for and faith in *Red Cedar Review*. I have faith in its current and future editors and advisors (they are, simply put, damned-good people), and I know that even if it wanes and misses an issue or two—as it did under my own incommensurable tenure—that such waning will just lead to another renaissance and reemergence. *Red Cedar Review* will always be that locus of friends who like to read, patrons who remember their student days, departments that aim to educate, and a geography of loving people who sift back and forth, contributing, editing, delineating. And the occasional stranger who wanders in and proceeds to amaze.

Sometimes I wonder, in my becoming a scholar, what is lost being in the company of scholars and not knowing so many writers. I think of the institution I now reside at, and I ponder the slow split that has emerged in recent years between the writers and the scholars. And, having been an editor, I know that if such a split hatches, our department will end up ranking lower than it does now. It will probably attract less students. It will probably be laughed at even more by the medical and scientific and capitalist departments that dominate the university. It will rank worse because the faculty will know that their love—their vegetable love—isn't being nurtured in the next generation of closeted literary-lovers. Undergraduates will show up to orientations and job fairs and the various effluvia of undergraduateness looking for a literary magazine, an English club, and there will be none, and they will be tempted to go elsewhere. The medical and scientific and capitalist departments of the university will wonder why the liberal arts part of the engine isn't doing what they think it should be—even if they scoff at it when it actually does. The literature department will become more of a muttering retreat, where scholars presume themselves to be authors and there is no love. Inevitably, the department will *publish itself to perish*.

In my own work, I have tried to be less ashamed of my love.

When I was a boy my father worked day shift in a Flint factory, during the summers my grandparents took care of me. While I was struggling to breathe and struggling to sweat, I would sit inside before it was noontime and I would read. After noon, when lunch was through and my grandmother was decently assured that I wouldn't track mud in the house until suppertime, I'd run into the backyard and romp in the sandbox, building rivers, mountains, fortresses. But before then, I'd lay on the living room carpet, reading the newspaper, reading *Reader's Digest*, reading the books I'd been allowed to check out from the library. By the time the summer was

through, I had read twenty books, and when we drove up to the library, I was informed by a rather clammy woman that I'd won a pencil, stamped Clio Area Library, for reading that many books. (Had I read thirty, I would have received a notepad with the pencil, stamped same.) I didn't know I was entered in a contest and kindly declined, and was chastised on the trip back home for refusing a prize by my suddenly uncertain grandmother. The pencil didn't matter to me: what I'd read did. I'm sure I had read the various flotsam and jetsam a ten-year-old does, but who wants a prize when one loves the process? I didn't want to write, I wanted to read. And I still want to read.

# December Epithalamium

## Stuart Dybek

One winter night walking from a party, or maybe on our way to a wedding we'd yet to be invited to, we stopped in the middle of a rutted street to prop a bottle rocket in the wine bottle we'd just killed. Wind kept snuffing the matches so we huddled in a doorway and lit a cigarette. The flare of the match flickered on your wind-flushed face like a bride's blush. When I tapped the ash and touched the glowing tip to the wick, sparks like a just-lit sparkler crackled up the fuse, and we edged back watching the rocket hissing like a fragment of July in the middle of a cold, empty street, then whoosh, up through bare branches and wires, mirrored an instant on third story windows: an exploding bouquet over the roofs, red and green pinwheels and blue-violet petals parachuting down. Phosphorescent flakes fading to cinders. The scorched wine bottle smoldered with smoke. We left it smoldering in the middle of the street and walked away into a night whispering with winter. End on those whispers; only if this was rock and roll would I be allowed to say, I loved you like a bottle rocket in the snow.

# Spring

## Stuart Dybek

comes to the window like mist. And tattered sparrows twittering back laughter while the old woman children call "the witch" flings dry bread handfuls to the garage roof. And the earth soaks up wetness like bread, crusts turning penicillium green, sponging up drizzled rain. A butterfly blooms like a stemless four-petaled flower over the mushrooms and catpiss fungi. Feathery ferns, wispy as dill await lilacs; black branches like skeletal wings; grackles, crows, blackbirds returning like swallows, swooping low over wet angled roofs. Spring. Angels come to my window like mist.

# July 28th

## Dan Gerber

Nothing is sure
but the arc of the sunflower
and the distance a thing travels
to be somewhere else.

Suppose a woman walks past your table
and you never look up.
She is beautiful,
whatever we make of beauty,
willowy as the rain tree,
never seen in your lifetime.

What we gain, we lose by virtue
of, at least momentarily,
possessing what we couldn't possess.

Half-withered tree
that delights this day in seeing me.

# Then

## Dan Gerber

When I was seven, or maybe eight, I rode with my mother out to a farm where something I was told we wouldn't speak of had happened. A man and a woman, young, as I remember—though all adults were old to me then—met her in the yard of that unpainted house and received the gift of food she brought, a casserole with tuna and bread she had baked to a golden, nutty brown. I remember that I was made to stay in the back of our black '47 Chevrolet, and remember all this because of a worm on the mohair carpet, a worm squashed and glistening on the floor, and that the hair of the then young woman was curly, as if it had lately been in ringlets, and that her face was so pale and haunted that I loved her, loved at least the sadness of her life, and that the woman and the man—who had black hair, I remember—stood in the yard and watched as my mother backed the car in the dry autumn grass and said to me over her shoulder, with a look not unlike that of the woman who was watching, "Remember this, and how lucky you are," though I don't remember why, and the sad young woman, so pale I could smell her, like sleep or the must of old lilacs, still waving after the man turned away, and the unlucky worm, green and still glistening, as the shadows of trees swept the floor and the Chevrolet whined away through its gears.

# Windows

Judith Minty

1.
In Bangkok, in the hotel, she rises
early and stands at the window
at precisely the moment
that doors open on the street below
and so many monks in saffron robes,
bowls in hands, exit their dwellings.
—All that color in the half-light,
all that piety, that synchronicity.

2.
Another morning, another woman, this time
in Michigan: what she sees
is green lawn sprinkled with indigo buntings.
Two days later, they are gone.
It will take twenty years for her to learn
that lesson of coming and going.

3.
When George was still
two blocks away on Ruddiman Avenue,
JB, the dog, lying in the back hall,
would begin to growl.
Daddy was coming home!
And the house sprang alive
with trembling.

4.
With great "ahs" and "ohs",
the bed rocking, headboard
smacking against the wall, with grunts,

with hips heaving and sweat
sealing them together, at last they
fall into each other and only the moon
is left, watching.

5.
A mountain lion wails through Topanga Canyon
and we think it is a woman crying.
At the Yellow Dog, ravens
howl up and down the river all of May and June.
By August, they turn silent and moody.

6.
In Alaska, wolves
roam in packs after caribou.
They take the calves on the run, and blood
stains the snow. Snow
keeps falling.

# White as Sunday School Socks

Diane Wakoski

And when they are furled like umbrellas,
though white as Sunday socks,
and when they are not on the desert but growing out of a pot
placed near my front door, before they have turned
into the huge trumpeting blossoms
I call Moonflowers,
and when their fragrance
is unreleased during the hot summer days, but instead
steals out on to the steps at twilight,
as if they are giant moths who fly away from light
rather than towards it,
when their aroma is large but delicate
like that of a woman whose only perfume is
the soap she bathes with, when the scent
expands out to the driveway, and into the air
around the car, as the evening progresses
to darkness, then I am reminded that
each summer
some white flower
comes to dominate
my life. Last year the gardenia
that wouldn't stop flowering,
another summer the begonias, always
so unexpected, like
mushrooms.
It's always been ruby, emerald, sapphire, the colors
that have
drawn me, perhaps
because I myself was
so pale. And diamonds never
my stone, the bridal life never
mine. But summers I wear white like an

engagement ring, it seems. White
flowers, showing me possible destinations,
places
I never before thought
I could go,
inhabit my summers,
like stars that have landed
briefly, on my front yard,
or in the back,
stars, white as my
little girl
Sunday School socks.

The following photographs, part of a larger study by Robert Turney, are the subject of the previous poem and their companion essay, on pages 25–30.

Moonflower #1

Moonflower #2

Moonflower #3

Moonflower #4

Moonflower #5

Moonflower #6

# Evening Glories: Robert Turney's Moonflower Photographs

Steve Rachman

Robert J. Turney's moonflower studies are the photographic harvest of three years worth of summer evenings in East Lansing, Michigan. In the spring, Turney sowed his seeds in three large flowerpots (he is a casually accomplished gardener) and let the twining vines grow. Come July and August, the plants would blossom as the sun went down and the photographer would move his pots of moonflowers into his driveway, set up his lighting (two no-nonsense 500-watt quartz construction lamps), and get his Schneider 355mm f/9 G-Claron lens into position. In darkness, Turney shot them: singly, in pairs and groups, in bud stage or various phases of blossoming, and in full, trumpeting bloom. From 1999-2001, in this seasonal way, Turney pursued the flowers, under clouds, under stars, under the glowing coal of his cigarette. He used all the elements of light and dark, testing each photographic idea as it occurred to him, printing them, scrutinizing the results under the ground glass until his lens had nothing new to show him and he knew that he was done.

He winnowed the results to thirteen images, six of which have been selected and reformatted for presentation here. They are not especially enlarged, Turney assures me, but it would be easy enough to mistake them for gross enlargements. Taken from eighteen inches away and printed in a generous 13"x 10" format, the blossom in, say, Moonflower #1 is larger than a splayed hand. One feels slightly miniaturized before the magnified beauty of these flowers. It is subtle because one does not readily perceive it as magnification but as clarification. Each phase of the opening flower appears with the insight of fresh observation. One finds here a closed umbrella, there, a soft, almost molten pinwheel of petals, or an origami ear trumpet. Each marbled curl and vein in the heart-shaped leaves, each papery crease of a bud, each horned serif and curlicue at the tips of the white petals is on display

with a kind of tactile immediacy. There is a pleasing synesthesia of vision and touch here; every texture is made visible.

This is the case not only because the flowers are in bloom, but the plants are alive. In the alfresco studio of the driveway, the pots gave the photographer the freedom and flexibility to arrange and rearrange the living flowers—uncut and un-vased. Monet had to go into his gardens at Giverny to paint his lilies; Weston had to pick his pepper before he photographed it, but Turney's is a harvest of unpicked blossoms. A moveable garden opens up possibilities of balletic arrangement without destroying or delimiting the plant's existence, establishing working and living relationships among the photographer, camera, and subject. In this way the aura of the living plant is recorded and at the same time set free. Through the deep shadows and simple, strategic lighting, the photographic illusionist works his understated magic, the pale moonflowers are liberated from their root-bound condition and begin to swim, like the moon itself, in the velvet darkness.

It would be easy to misconstrue Turney's moonflowers as conventionally romantic. Summer nights, flowers, moons, and beauty suggest the props of romance, but they are not seeking sentimental associations. If they are romantic at all then they refer to the romance of ordinary beauty, sensuality, and sex. The beauty one finds in the back yard, in the middle of Michigan. In Moonflower #5, an insect or moth of some kind clings to the underside of a leaf; in another image (not shown here), a mosquito appears to be siphoning off a stamen. Small prosaic detail sits quietly hiding in plain view amid the evening luster. Romance would exaggerate the inconsistency between the sensual blossom and insect life, but nothing in these pictures calls for that, they are part of the life of the garden. "If one decides upon the medium of photography, why attempt to soar in the realm of imagination?" asked Imogen Cunningham, whose studies of magnolias from the 1920s are Turney's closest photographic cousins. "There are plenty of the subtleties of life right on earth, which need delicate interpretation." The felt need of delicate interpretation always urges the photographer to depress the shutter. In John Berger's words, a photograph always claims "that it is worth recording this particular event or this particular object has been seen." In the grandest philosophical terms, "Every photograph is in fact a means of testing, confirming and constructing a total view of reality."[1] So much of what counts today as important photography has a strong sociological bent to it. Perhaps the legacy of the photographic documentary tradition has created a bias toward a sociological aesthetic, especially as painting has grown more and more conventionally abstract (or, paradoxically, photo-realist) in

the last century. So many important American photographers of the last hundred or so years have forged an aesthetic out of the power of photography to capture new social realities, from the city to poverty, to labor, to war: Jacob Riis, Paul Strand, Lewis Hine, Margaret Bourke-White, Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans, and Robert Capa. In recent years, photo-portraiture has made the loudest claims. From Diane Arbus to Sally Mann, Richard Avedon to Robert Mapplethorpe, Nan Goldin to Cindy Sherman, the photograph becomes a vehicle of a social vision that, while important, has obscured the other genres vitally relevant to photography. Also, the ease and proliferation of digital imaging has obscured the subtleties and complexities of analog photography. The camera as an instrument of vision of ordinary objects, of the beautiful, of the still life, of the arrangement in black, white, and gray, has tended to be relegated to the past, to the falsifications of pictorialism, to the aestheticism of the early Alfred Steiglitz and the Photo-Secessionist of the turn-of-the-20th century, and the modernism of Edward Weston and Cunningham and Group f/64.

At this juncture in the history of art, photography, and image-making, what could be more difficult to assess than the aesthetic status of the serious flower photograph? When one looks at photographs of flowers, especially ones of exacting seriousness like those of Robert Turney, many might be prompted to wonder: Beautiful, sure, but important? The vase of flowers has been forever linked to the decorative, a routine part of the backdrop of the conventional photographic portrait along with velvet curtain and the Greek pedestal. Like the bowl of fruit, the flower study, has always been a commonplace still-life subject, unavoidably evocative of the atelier and easel, or the art class assignment. The problem is compounded by the mass of literary and artistic history that has taken up flowers as its subject. Van Gogh had his sunflowers, Monet his lilies, and why confine ourselves to the famous? Old Quost had his roses and Jeanine his peonies. In poetry, Wordsworth had his daffodils and Plath her tulips.

In the history of photography, the flower photograph can hardly be avoided. One would have to ignore the legions of amateur and professional bouquets that filled the pages of Henry Peach Robinson's *Pictorial Photography*. One would have to ignore the botanical studies of Anna Atkins in the 1850s who made cyanotype impressions of flora, and Adolphe Braun's floral arrangements from the same decade, not to mention notable studies like Henry Troth's "Tulip Poplar" (ca. 1900), and the work of Heinrich Kühn and Albert Renger-Patzsch. Turney's approach to moonflowers resembles that of Imogen Cunningham's magnificent magnolias and Georgia O'Keefe's

photographically-influenced, oversized paintings of trumpet flowers: close-ups on single blooms or small groups of blossoms—perhaps the only style of serious flower photography that still has wide currency.

What makes the genre challenging, then, is its over-determined conventions. Caught between the clichés of pictorialism and the clichés of modernism, what is the photographer to do? What does it mean for Robert Turney to produce these photographs now? In the moonflower studies it became the photographer's task to restore what Walter Benjamin called "aura" to the floral portrait. This is perhaps no more or less than any successful artist might achieve in a given work. Benjamin describes photographic aura as "a strange web of time and space: the unique appearance of a distance, however close at hand. On a summer noon, resting, to follow the line of a mountain range on the horizon or a twig which throws its shadow on the observer, until the moment or hour begins to be a part of its appearance—that is to breathe the aura of those mountains, that twig."[2] Turney has captured the aura of the moonflower, that web of time and distance in which night and moonlight are parts of the flower's appearance. We scarcely know what it means to look at flowers anymore, no less to look at photographs of them, and so Turney freshens them for us by incorporating the night into what they are.

While his delicate buds and blossoms resemble Cunningham's magnolias, and for that matter, O'Keefe's, significant differences emerge. While aware of these precursors, no hint of belatedness lingers about Turney's images or any particular anxiety of influence. They are first and foremost expressions of his own life as a photographer, as a patient night owl in love with quiet evenings, as a gardener and an artist transforming and cultivating the field he has chosen. There will always be things calling out for, as Cunningham says, "delicate interpretation." He is not an impersonator and his moonflowers are not merely homages to modernist photography. Cunningham's images are forever bound up in the eroticism that preoccupied the modernists as they sought to counter the aesthetic pruderies of their own era. Turney's are quietly, inevitably erotic but no longer need to be concerned with prudery, and concern themselves with an on-going relationship to plant life and to what photographic vision can provide but we seldom trouble ourselves to see. Cunningham picked her flowers and worked her magic in the studio; Turney photographed his at night, outside. Turney has struck an elegant compromise between the needs of living plants and the exigencies of photographing them, weaving in this process a different web of distance and time, forging a quietly different relation to his subject.

For years, Turney has made portraits of authors, and he suggested to me that the great trouble with portraits (this, he said, was especially true of authors but may apply to anyone) is that nobody ever likes the way they look. Humans, it seems, want the camera to lie, a little, enough. But flowers seldom complain. One secret of the moonflower photos lies in that Turney has photographed flowers as if they were movie stars from the 1930s and 40s. Think of Marlene Dietrich, Greta Garbo, and Martha Graham rendered by Edward Steichen or Gloria Swanson by Nickolas Muray. Think of Peter Lorre lit from below. In Turney's hands moonflowers become heavenly bodies, achieving a kind of domestic glamour not associated with quiet Midwestern communities. Even in excerpt, a viewer can appreciate the grammar of Turney's sequence. The diagonal arrangement of Moonflower #1 moving from bottom left to top right is a profile; we see the moonflower's good side. In #2, we see a pair of blossoms wonderfully dynamic, one dilated and the other closed but about to open with the imminence of an organ's valves. As the eye travels from bottom right to left, the edges of leaves in the foreground appear strikingly crisp and gray, but in the background they become wispy curls of smoke. In a single image, the genre has subtly shifted from still-life to narrative. #3 takes us further into the realms of dilation. A ballet of three blossoms virtually crowds out the darkness. They are delicately lit from behind and below. The petals, full-blown, bend with a lover's touch, their translucent flesh as delicate as the skin of a pale wrist. #4 pulls back from this intimacy. Four blossoms form a stately, almost formal arrangement. The moonflowers have recomposed themselves as a blaring horn section, stalk and pollen sacs on display, white trumpets heralding the black night. Moonflower #5 returns to the profile of #1 but with less intimacy, surrounded by leaves and the gray cartouches of buds, one of these—a night or two away from opening—looks like a hand-rolled cigarette. Moonflower #6 shows two blossoms in three-quarter profile downstage with four buds surrounding them like back-up singers. The sequence goes on charting the course of a relationship or a series of relationships: enormous, almost phallic trumpet blossoms crossed like swords or the necks of swans; two blossoms full and perfectly centered, like two lovers who, having reached some equilibrium, have settled into friendship. There is one that Turney doesn't particularly care for (because the blossom appears more like a pansy than a moonflower) but might just as easily serve as an emblem of the study. It consists of a full frontal blossom. It is the moon almost full but for a petal edge bending into a deep shadow, the moon become a flower, a flower become the moon.

Sometimes when a photograph or more generally a work of art powerfully reveals the subtleties of ordinary objects and organic forms, as in Weston's pepper, the memorializing power of that vision has a tendency to confer special iconic status. The object is of course no more or less extraordinary than the vision that revealed it. It would be a mistake to think of the moonflower, after viewing Turney's photos, as some kind of vegetal may-fly. It is not a night-blooming cereus. It is neither rare nor poignantly ephemeral. It is a common plant, producing blossoms in abundance that open and stay open until they drop. The night blooming is simply part of its circadian rhythm; it is a morning glory that has reversed it hours, and therefore, as the old name has it, an evening glory.

Turney's photography—well, all photography, really—like his camera subjects, is a nocturnal form. A photograph begins in the dark chamber of the photographer's mind. By any possible source—a flash of inspiration, the glow of an abiding vision, the clear light of day, or a full moon—light enters the shuttered mind. Something clicks. Photons darken a silver nitrate emulsion in the same way they torque the cones and rods, firing the neurotransmitters, impressing retinal images upon consciousness. Or, often as not, the process flows in reverse. Consciousness creates an image that pleases the retina, or the mind's eye, and the camera seeks to record what the mind has seen. In a darkroom, by the dim illumination of a safe light, a photograph blooms in the chemical bath, like a moonflower.

## *Notes*

1. Imogene Cunningham quoted in *Photography from 1839 to Today: George Eastman House, Rochester, NY* (Köln: Taschen, 2000): 503. John Berger, "Understanding a Photograph" in Alan Trachtenberg (ed.), *Classic Essays on Photography* (New Haven: Leete's Island Books, 1980): 292, 294.

2. Trachtenberg, 209.

# Circles

Marcia Aldrich

*She was not liking pink—her mother was furious. Ignoring her hating pink, her mother decorated the room in pink. Not just a dash of pink here and there—a swirling pattern of pink roses on a white blanket, a pink bud vase she might have stomached. No. Every inch of wood was lacquered the pinkest pink. Pink hangers and pink liners for pink drawers, a pink shoe case to hang from a pink closet door, pink light switches and pink doorknobs, a pink mirror and pink lightbulbs to bathe her in a pink glow. Even at night from her window the stars seemed pink. She was avoiding her room, outside in the green as much as possible; her mother wondered where she was. Down the alley, furrowed in weeds, in the fields, by the river, dropping from trees, she was away; her mother was furious. She was not liking dolls, especially the expensive Madame Alexander dolls given to her on her birthdays; she was wanting to put them in the oven and set the timer, she was wanting to bury them face down in the dirt; her mother was furious. She was being sent down to the bench for unladylike behavior and she was having her hands tied to her chair, her mouth was being taped shut; her mother was pleased. Her mother was pleased with the measures being taken by the first-grade teacher. Yes, indeed, that was the appropriate response. She was always getting into trouble; her mother sent her away to camp. She was never wanting to come home, she was running away through the woods where no one could find her; her mother was furious and found her. She was being locked in the car for the ride home and locked in her room for the rest of the long summer; her mother was pleased. She was where she belonged. She was hating ballet, she was hating Mrs. Fink and pink tutus, she was clumsy at the bar and flatfooted. She was hating piano lessons, practicing "The Typewriter" for two years without improvement. She was punching boys, hanging upside down, tearing her fancy dresses; her mother was furious. She was loving horses—the smell of them, the dirt of them, wanting always to keep the dirt with her; her mother was furious. Her mother hated stables, the smell, the dirt, the fugitive life, females in stables, and stayed away. Her father funded her; her mother was furious. She was making good grades, which no one ever noticed, was secretly playing strip poker on the weekends in the old smokehouse, was shooting a copperhead in a neighbor's backyard with a gun she learned how to use, was being molested by a friend's*

*older brother. She was not telling anyone, was being shown pictures of nude women, was shooting a copperhead in the backyard, she was riding her bike down the driveway with her eyes closed. She was riding her bike down the driveway with her eyes closed and running into a tree. She was being shown pictures of nude women and she was always seeing the pictures of nude women even with her eyes closed and running into trees. She was being molested by a friend's older brother, she was breaking her leg and carrying her bike up the hill, she was not telling anyone; her mother was furious she had broken her leg. It would require attention she didn't want to give, explanations. When her father returned from business, he would take her to the hospital for X-rays. Things were always happening to her, she wasn't telling anyone. She was not always making good grades, but no one cared, her leg was not healing, more and more her mother was sending her away. Things were happening to her, things were being taken away from her against her will, she was not telling anyone. She was being silent, even when things were being taken away from her that wouldn't be hers again. She was being sent away. She was never wanting to go home again. She was having boyfriends whose names she was not remembering. She was pushing her plate away as her mother instructed, learning to live on less and less. She was getting involved. Someone told her parents. Her mother was furious. She was being raped by her friend's older brother, she was never telling anyone. Someone told her parents, they were not believing her. She was getting kicked out of college and she was getting married and moving away. She was being silent at the dinner table and other places; her husband was furious. Her husband was naming her. She was getting locked in her room. She was being threatened and she was being choked and she was breaking away. She was taking a long walk on the beach. She wanted home to be a phone booth on a beach in Ireland where she heard the sound of waves and smelled of sea grit. But home was never being there. She was leaving, moving farther away. Her mother was furious; her husband was furious. She took jobs and had many names. She lived in different cities and spoke from phone booths she called home. The authorities didn't know what to name her. She was gradually losing everything that had been given to her and she was glad. Her husband was having her annulled and she was glad. Her parents were having her annulled and she was glad. She was pleased with the measures being taken. Yes, indeed, that was the appropriate response. She went back to school, she paid for it. She changed her name to X. She paid for it. She did not have any more boyfriends whose names she did not remember. She said no all the time and she broke a lot of glasses, she was breaking a lot of dishes and it was feeling good. She was feeling angry. She was furious. She was telling people about it at dinner and other places. She loved feeling the anger come out of her even though many*

*people found it unpleasant. She was not stopping. She bought more pink glasses and more pink dishes; they were replaceable. She was working and she was telling people about it even when they did not want to hear. Her mother was furious, but she didn't care. And she didn't care. And she didn't care.*

# Any Other Name

## Evelyn Shakir

"I got me the only rose on the family tree," Mitch liked to say. When they were first married, Dolores took it as a compliment, and she'd color a bit, looking rosier than ever. But after a while, she caught on that Mitch was boasting about himself, not her. And, more than anything, was being mean about her sisters. "The thorns," he called them to her face, as if they weren't just as good as he was.

When the children came along, Mitch found a new twist on the joke. "Get ready, kids. Uncle Al and Thorn Selma are coming over—whatever you do, don't let her hug you!" Or—with a shake of the head—"Your Thorny Margaret, ain't she the sharp one!" Now that he'd got hold of it, he couldn't let it go. So if one of his daughters answered back or made a face, he'd say, "Uh oh, looks like we got a little sticker pushing out here!" And if the girl began to cry and carry on—"I'm not, I'm not!"—Mitch would laugh and say, "Where's my scissors?"

"Papa's just teasing," Dolores told them, angry at him for getting them worked up, and angry at them for taking it to heart. When it came to hurt feelings, her oldest was the worst, Miss Sensitive of America. "Barbara the barbarian," Mitch would mock her, his way to make her mind.

"How could you stick me with that ugly moniker?" she whined, blaming her mother. Other mothers thought about what they were doing, and named their girls something pretty, like Rita or Marilyn or Amy. Which just happened to be the names of the sisters in the yellow bungalow who wore matching *Polly Flinders* smocks to school, and *Danskin* tights, and black bands holding back their hair. Were they ever the lucky ones. Finally, Barbara made everyone she could (not her father or her teachers) call her Babs. "Oh, great," Mitch said, "the only Babs I ever heard of was a stripper."

Next in line was Theresa. "Saint Theresa, holy-moly, cut that out!" Mitch would yell though really she was the most obedient of the lot. "We could call you Terry," was Babs' suggestion. But Theresa said no, that could be a boy's name, like Terry Donlan, the dumb kid who sat in the back row and picked his nose when Miss Yeager wasn't looking. She guessed she was just stuck like a cat up a tree.

Babs shrugged. "Suit yourself, Saint Theresa," she said.

And then there was the youngest, Ellen. Mitch couldn't do much with her name. Except just for fun, to say it rapid-fire: "Ellen, -llen, -llen," like the yammering of an idiot.

Mitch had other things he said. Bewildering threats. "When your brother arrives on the scene, kiddo, he'll give you what for!" At first, they thought they really had a brother, off in the old country, where *sittoo* came from, or maybe in reform school. When they got old enough, they understood there was no brother, only the hope of one. But by then, Mitch had quit making those particular threats.

One time, on his day off, he came home hot and bothered from the *ahwe*, the coffee house where he hung out with other Lebanese. "Sons of bitches!" he exploded. "Think they're so big. Hey, one of my girls is worth a dozen of their retard sons." You'd think hearing that might give them a lift, but it didn't. How could it when he was so angry? Anyway, what did he mean "one" of his girls? Did he mean *any* one of them, or did he have a certain one in mind? With him, it was smart not to feel too good, too soon.

Dolores felt for her daughters. But they'd get over it. The first time some boy made cow eyes at them, they'd be all right about themselves. It was herself made her feel sad.

"You should take a baking class," advised her sister Selma, drying dishes after Babs' *sweet sixteen*. "Learn to frost a wedding cake, stretch those muscles in your brain. Or here's an idea, get yourself a job. Look at me, you never see me bored."

Dolores frowned. "Did I say I'm bored?"

"Me, I'm all set," said Selma, "'cause I got a place I got to be five days a week, rain or shine, cramps or no cramps. If I miss, the whole operation goes kaflooey." Selma answered the phone at her husband's re-upholstery shop and, between calls, re-shelved the fabric books and vacuumed up the lint. "Things are changing for us gals," she explained. "We got our rights to our careers."

Dolores couldn't think of a career and didn't want one. Or any class either. She knew the name for what she wanted—*flower power*. She loved the sound of it, loved the way it wrapped up two wishes of her heart. Once, at breakfast, she asked Mitch, "What's this flower children thing about?" She was at his shoulder, pouring him his second cup of coffee. "What's it take to be one anyways?"

As usual when she asked a perfectly good question, Mitch bugged his eyes out. "What's it take?" He twisted his head to look up at her. "You gotta apply! We got the forms down the post office."

"That's not what I mean," said Dolores, turning her back to set the coffeepot on the stove.

"And, oh yeah, better plan on dropping fifteen pounds, not to mention twenty years. They got their standards, doll."

"That's not what I mean."

He was laughing hard now, letting it out, choking almost on his toast and coffee.

"And don't call me doll," she muttered inside her head. On their first date ever, he'd called her Dolly, short for Dolores. "Please don't call me that," she'd asked him nicely.

"What's bugging you?"

"I just don't care for it, is all."

He'd sighed. After that, he called her "doll." Which was worse, of course. But Dolores didn't have another protest in her. Didn't want him to be mad. Same thing their next date, when he unbuttoned her blouse without so much as *mother-may-I* and got his tongue in there. She kept her mouth shut, trying not to breathe in the pomade on his hair. Only gasped once when he pulled her on his lap and began bouncing her, slamming her into his crotch, fast and frantic, until—his fingers digging hard into her shoulders —he let out a howl. When he was through, Dolores didn't know what she was supposed to say or do.

Silly to bother about that now. She bought herself a spiral notebook with a paisley cover and started pasting in pictures from the papers and *Time* magazine. The first was one Mitch himself came up with. "Here," he said, shoving the magazine under her nose, making a point. "See what the world's come to!" When he moved his thick forefinger off the page, she saw a girl, not much older than Babs, curled up on the grass, under a tree, picnicking with her boyfriend. The boyfriend, leaning on one elbow, was in shorts and bare to the waist. She was bare all the way but turned kitty corner from the camera, so you could just see the curve of her cheek, of one breast, the roundness of her ass up close. She was pretty all over. Like a healthy toddler, Dolores thought. Like her girls when they were babies, running into her arms, their cloth diapers slipping down 'round their knees.

Mitch's thumb nailed the spot again, blotting out the girl's flesh. "If I ever thought one of my girls . . .!"

"They won't," said Dolores.

"If you brought them up right!"

Later, with Mitch gone to work, Dolores scissored the picture out and scotch-taped it to the first page in her notebook. After that, she kept the

notebook hidden under halfslips in the top drawer of her dresser. She'd pull it out, when no one was around, to add another picture or just to turn the pages. For a long time, her favorite was a black and white shot of girls in thin summer dresses carrying handfuls of scraggly daisies. To one side, a row of soldiers were standing at attention while the girls poked the daisies in the muzzles of their rifles. "Imagine," Dolores whispered to herself, "just imagine!" She got the general idea—this was about wanting our boys home, not off firing those guns in Vietnam. Dolores didn't follow politics, but one thing was sure—those girls weren't 'fraidy cats. She could never be so bold.

But it was the soldier boys her eyes kept traveling back to. Especially the smooth-cheeked youngster closest to the camera. There was something touched her about the way he stood so still, letting the girl in front of him have her way. Probably he felt foolish, but he wasn't going to yell or make a scene. He had his orders, Dolores guessed. But what if the girl stuck her tongue out at him, what if she slapped his face, what if she kissed him on the mouth? "He looks like a nice boy," Dolores thought. Her mind went to her Uncle Sammy who'd married late and had a child when he was fifty. He'd let that little girl do anything she pleased. One day, when Dolores and her mother dropped in, Sammy answered the door with metal curlers in his wispy hair. "We're playing beauty parlor," he said and gave Dolores a big, fat wink.

Much later, when Dolores was grown up and a mother, she'd let her own girls brush her hair, curling it over their little fingers or bobby pinning it into a sloppy French twist. Sometimes they'd top off the "do" with dandelions or stick buttercups behind her ears, then hold up a hand mirror so she could see. "Look how beautiful!"

"Just call me Dorothy Lamour," she'd agree, which made them giggle.

Underneath the photo with the soldiers, the caption said "flower power." The first time she'd ever heard of such a thing. After that, she saw it everywhere.

For instance, there was this cartoon. A crowd of college kids (she guessed that's what they were) in beads and smocks and jeans, were parading down the street, looking happy and like they knew where they were going. One of them, a lanky fellow with a beard was smiling and waving a sign with that same "Flower Power." But there was this cop, too, in a phone booth calling headquarters. Drops of sweat were splashing off his face, and he was yelling, "Chief! They're armed with petunias, sweet william, marigolds, and roses!" It made Dolores smile to think a big tough cop could be so foolish.

Dolores kept staring at the parade in the cartoon, then in the mirror. Until one day she stopped curling her hair. Mitch knew something was different,

but he couldn't put his finger on it. Of course, it didn't take Selma two minutes to spot the trouble.

"You're not letting yourself go to pot, I hope," she warned.

"I'm not letting myself do anything."

"You don't want to let yourself go," Selma insisted.

"Go where?" Dolores asked, making a small joke. But it was true, she thought. Where was she heading? When she looked down the road, she saw just more of the same, only emptier because the girls would marry or go off to school and she'd be left inside the house with Mitch. A person needed something happy to look forward to. "Grandchildren," everyone said, but it didn't make her heart sing.

Every afternoon now, before the kids came home, she took her notebook to the kitchen table and set herself to studying the pictures, the same way she used to go at algebra problems, trying to crack the secret of x and y. Or the way she used to stare at models in *Seventeen* and *Mademoiselle*, to find out how to turn herself American-pretty. Her mother, who'd grown up in the old country, couldn't help her there, thought it was all nonsense anyway. "See how you worried for nothing," she gloated, when Mitch from a good family back home popped the question.

After letting her hair go straight, the next thing Dolores did, she went downtown and bought herself a pair of sandals. Not the pretty white ones with dainty crisscross straps and skinny heels—two pair like that already sitting in her closet. But Jesus sandals, brown and flat, with sturdy soles that could stand up to rain and take a person any place they got a yen to go. At first, not sure they suited her, Dolores kept the sandals tucked away, toe-to-heel in tissue paper. But pretty soon, except for church on Sunday, she was wearing them all day and everywhere. Now she could take the dirt shortcut to the mailbox without twisting a heel, could cut across the damp lawn and not leave divots, could stand at the kitchen sink and wiggle her toes.

Mitch didn't seem to mind what she had on her feet. Selma either, old eagle eye. Or if she did, she bit her tongue. Dolores felt good. As if someone had said, "I dare you," and she'd said, "I dare you back."

At the kitchen table, with her notebook open in front of her, Dolores was working on a list: "beads," "fishnet stockings," "tie-dyed shirt." She'd have to go gradual, so no one would notice. Like growing old, she thought. The folks who saw you every day didn't take it in, and then, before they knew it, you were dead. Except her plan was to go the opposite direction.

She was drawing a question mark next to "granny glasses" when Babs walked in on her. "Ma, I gotta get my ears pierced." Without looking up,

Dolores flipped the notebook shut. "Ma, I gotta. I'm the only one left in the whole class. I need ten bucks right now, they got a nurse at Woolworth's."

"You know what papa said."

"I don't care. I'm the only one in the whole damn . . ."

"Language!"

"Sorry. But Mama, if you don't give me the money,"—Dolores waited to hear the threat—"I'll steal it! And you know what else?"—here came the next threat—"I'll take Theresa and Ellen with me and get them done, too."

"Bring me my pocketbook," said Dolores. She didn't want to argue. Just wanted her kitchen to herself.

Babs reached over and ruffled her mother's hair. "Good old ma."

When Dolores heard the screen door slam, she went back to her list. It wasn't 'til later, with the lamb and okra simmering for supper, that she remembered what Babs had ahead of her. If she knew Mitch, he'd come to the table, take one gander, and bombs away! "You couldn't wait to cross me, could you?" he'd yell. "Didn't I say N-O, NO? But you had to go out and do it anyways, didn't you?" Babs would sit there in a pout, her hands in her lap, and—if she knew what was good for her—not say a word.

But that's not how it played. By six o'clock, Babs was in a mood, prancing around the house, her eyes shining, every few minutes waltzing into the kitchen and hugging her mother. When Mitch walked in the door, she sashayed right up to him, couldn't wait to show off the evidence, tiny gold studs that had come home to roost. She lifted her curtain of hair with her arms, turned her head this way and that. "Papa," she demanded, "don't I look pretty?"

"Ain't one hole in your head enough?" he grumbled. And let it drop. In bed that night, Dolores dreamed of young soldiers in granny glasses nibbling her ears.

The next morning she called Woolworth's, and the person who answered said, "Yup, 'til the end of the week. Come in any day." She grabbed her purse and headed out the door. When she hit the sidewalk, she took a right turn and looked up at the overcast sky. "Might rain," she thought, but she didn't turn back or wait for the bus.

Block after block, she was remembering things. When she was a girl, you wouldn't think to pierce your ears, not if you lived to be a hundred. Once, though, a new girl, as dark as Dolores and with little gold rings in her ears, came into second grade. She could hardly talk English, and her name was too long and too hard to say. Mrs. Conlon explained it was the name of a beautiful lady that a famous poet loved very much. "That was a long time

ago, children. Nobody alive today can even remember." She led the little girl to the front of the room and turned her around to face the class. "I don't think our new friend will mind if we just call her Frances," she said.

Dolores, hurrying toward Center Street, slowed down, shifted her purse from one arm to the other, then came to a stop in front of a bakery. She stared at the cupcakes and cream pies and then her reflection, trying to picture that little girl's face.

"What you got on your ears, Frances?" At recess, a fresh boy in the class came up close and pointed. Frances stood very still, her face red, her dark brown eyes ready to cry. "I said, what you got??" He was showing off for the big kids. Two fifth-grade girls shoved him out of the way. Then reached over and twisted Frances' ear lobes 'til the tears leaked down her cheeks.

"Ugh!" said one. "She got nails in her ears!"

"Oh, double-ugh!" said the other, scrunching her face up.

After that, only Mrs. Conlon and the principal called her Frances. In the schoolyard, she had a naughty new name. "Hey, Fannie," children would yell, running circles around her. "Hey, Fannie!" No matter which way she turned, they were wagging their ear lobes and laughing their heads off.

At Woolworth's, the lady behind the counter said, "Make yourself comfortable, a couple young girls are ahead of you." Dolores sat on a stool by the jewelry case and leaned over to look at the studs. Tiny crosses, tiny pearl shapes, teensy daisies. "The smaller the better," she thought. The only jewelry her mother ever wore was her wedding band, cutting into her flesh. But in the old country a gypsy woman had come 'round each spring, with needle and thread, to pierce the ears of the little ones. "Did it hurt?" Dolores asked. Her mother couldn't remember.

Dolores had known other women from the village, old enough even to be her grandmothers. All dead now, her mother dead, too. When she was small, those old ladies gave her the creeps, and any time they dropped by to drink Turkish coffee with her mother or to smoke a Philip Morris, she hid out in her room. But her mother always called her and made her kiss their damp cheeks and sit quiet while they gossiped in a mix of Arabic and English. Dolores would pleat her skirt, pull up her socks, untie her shoelaces and then tie them again. "Don't let them talk to me," she'd pray. She couldn't bear to look up at those ladies, to see the shiny vaccinations, big as silver dollars, on their upper arms; and their nylons rolled down to their ankles in summer; and the bedroom slippers they wore even to the super market; and especially their soft gray whiskers. Not to mention the holes in their ears. A long time ago, her mother's lobes had knit themselves closed. But these ladies must have

been dumb as dishwater once and put on stupid, heavy earrings every day. Dolores could tell because their ear lobes were droopy and yellowed, and showed gashes half an inch long. 'You could hang a camel from," her father used to say.

"You won't feel a thing," said the nurse. She was standing at a little wooden table behind a curtain, and on the table was a towel and on the towel a metal contraption that reminded Dolores of pap smears. "Don't worry about a thing, sweetie. I do this every day and nobody's sued me yet." The nurse poured alcohol on a cotton ball and dabbed at Dolores' left earlobe. Threw the cotton in a bucket and started again with a fresh one.

"Tell me what you're going to do," said Dolores.

"Well, see I make a mark here, just where the hole should be. And then I staple the stud in." She sounded matter-of-fact and cheerful.

"Make a mark?" repeated Dolores, needing to get one thing straight at a time.

"Unless you'd like to do it, yourself, hon. Some people are very particular—they want it just so, not too high, not too low, not here, not there." Her tone changed. "As if I don't know what I'm doing."

"Oh no, I trust you," said Dolores. "Then what did you say comes next?"

"Staple!" said the nurse, demonstrating with gusto. "The needle jabs right through here"—she kneaded one earlobe—"the soft, fleshy part. That's the trick, do you see?" She chuckled a bit. "We don't want to run into cartilage."

"It's not a big hole, is it?"

"Oh, no, dear." She was brandishing the contraption. "That's a good girl, try to relax."

"Does it scar?"

"Shouldn't."

"You mean it could?"

"You're a worrier, aren't you, hon? You know we could have been done by now."

"I'm afraid I'm not very well," said Dolores. "I felt it in my throat when I got up this morning. You know what? If I'm better, I'll come back tomorrow."

"Whatever you say, hon. But we got this far, it's a shame not to finish the job."

Riding home on the bus, Dolores was confused. Couldn't tell up from down, couldn't tell forwards from backwards. By the time she walked in the back door, she was feeling the way she used to after a killer math test, sure she'd gotten an F and scared what her parents would say. Of course, this

wasn't the same. If she didn't want her ears pierced, if she'd thought better of it, that was nobody else's business.

In the kitchen, she dropped her purse on the table, then went into the living room and curled up in a corner of the sofa. She'd forgotten about Mitch all day, but now she could hear him again in her head. From Day One of their marriage, he'd told her, "You're my wife. Be normal, you hear me? Don't call attention." And that's what she'd tried to do—what she'd always wanted even before Mitch came along. When she was a kid, she hated being almost dark as a colored and having a mother who laughed too loud and sometimes spit right in the street, and old ladies around who didn't know the difference between slippers and shoes, and a father who reeked of cigars and tipped his hat to her girlfriends. Nobody else's father did that, not even to grownup ladies. "Your father has a moustache," the lady at the corner store said to her one day. And then the woman laughed, her thin lips thick with lipstick. What was Dolores supposed to do? Laugh at her father, too?

But out of the blue, after all those years of not calling attention, she'd gotten this flower power bee in her bonnet. Wanted something those girls in the pictures had, though she didn't know how to name it. She'd thought—it sounded crazy now, even to Dolores—she'd thought that if she looked like them on the outside, she could turn into them on the inside. But she'd only been fooling herself. Because how could she be like those girls who knew where they were going and weren't under anyone's thumb? Forget they were so much younger and thinner and didn't have Mitch to answer to. It was something went deeper. No Old World in their head they were trying to get clear of. Maybe her girls could make it. "But not me," she said to herself.

"It's all for the best," she said finally, dragging herself up from the sofa and into the kitchen. When you came right down to it, she was lucky she'd gotten cold feet this morning. Now she wouldn't have to listen to Mitch say things that made her feel small. Lately he was learning he couldn't stop Babs from walking out the door in a mini-skirt, but last week when Dolores took a chance and raised the hem of her suit just two inches, he laughed. "Don't kid yourself, doll," he said.

Hungry for something sweet, Dolores rummaged in the cupboard over the fridge. The bag she wanted was right where she'd stashed it, but ripped open and cleaned out, except for broken bits of chocolate and a heap of crumbs. "Those were *my* cookies," she muttered, shaking the remains of the bag into her mouth. Her eye fell on a fresh jar of peanut butter, the girls' favorite brand, that she'd bought them just yesterday. She unscrewed the lid and scooped out a fingerful, then stuck her finger in her mouth and sucked

it clean. She experimented with thumb, forefinger, ring finger, but her pinkie seemed to work best. Scoop, suck, scoop, suck, 'til half the jar was gone and each breath she took tasted of peanuts.

Almost nauseous, she drew herself a glass of water from the tap to clear her throat and wash away the taste. Outside, the rain had finally come, a vicious downpour. Through the window over the sink, Dolores could just make out the shuddering clothesline and, in the border along the fence, the bowed heads of dahlias, mums, and late-summer roses. Could make out, too, where she'd gone wrong. Next time she'd print DOLORES in big, red letters on a sheet of paper and attach the paper to the bag with an elastic band. Or with a darning needle. Or with her mother's six-inch hat pin.

Mitch or the girls, it didn't matter. From now on, anyone poking where they didn't belong, better get ready for a surprise.

# Seven Views of a Circle

Barbara Van Noord

The orange on the window sill,
its beveled navel, the green sprigs
clinging to the plucked twig.

The whole moon on a batten of cloud,
scrimshaw presented on plush black nap,
the sky hinged open.

Your arms around me,
your earlobe, my nose.

Ezekiel's wheels, haloes, glories, sun spots,
a dewdrop dissecting the spectrum,
one day revolving into another.

Your forefinger touching your thumb,
a signal from the driveway that all's well.

That terrible painting called *The Scream.*
The sound of sound departing,
bubbles of agony.

History, the spiral of discard
and rediscovery, the thought
that there is nothing new under the sun.

# Middle

## Craig Shaw

Growing up the lone survivor of an Intrepid Airways jet that plunged thirteen thousand feet into waveless salt water only eight minutes after takeoff (dropping out of the sky like a bird perforated with buckshot and smacking the flat ocean so hard with its fuselage that the passengers, all wearing seatbelts, were torn in two at the waist), and surviving only because his mother's plump upper body was thrown against half of an equally fat passenger to cushion his infant body from the impact (pinioning him between them like the unborn fetus of Siamese twins, and later serving as grim buoys on which he lay afloat for hours in the gently rocking water until rescue boats arrived), left Trip Pfingsten the victim of an invisible disfigurement. He always needed to be in the middle of a crowd, never on its periphery. He could only drive in the middle lane of a highway; he could only rent apartments on a building's middle floors; he couldn't sit in aisle seats at movies or be first or last in a line. And he could only achieve orgasm with two women at once, one wrapped around his back and the other backed against his chest, preventing him from thrusting incrementally toward the edge of the bed, beyond which lay, in the half-awake state in which he spent most of his nights, the blood-dark water and debris of his childhood catastrophe.

Trip discovered his sexual penchant at a high-school dance. He rarely missed school, feeling at home in the overcrowded classrooms and halls, but his freakish stature (he had topped out, at age sixteen, at six-feet-eight-inches, as if the accident that had halved his parents had perversely doubled his dormant height gene) made him an outcast, and while a certain kind of woman—quiet, wily, a sexual experimenter—was attracted to him, Trip avoided romances, knowing since puberty that his penis was oblivious to stimuli. Trip blamed it on his infant genitalia's prolonged exposure to cold ocean water, and had decided long before the dance that sex, like parents, was a luxury he would have to live without. But as he danced the box step that night with a fellow outcast—he had steered his date to the most tightly packed part of the gymnasium—another couple's clumsy footwork left the second girl's shoulder pressed against Trip's spine with no space to sidestep. Trapped between the two women, Trip felt his penis, which had never before

stirred even at the most provocative pornography or heaviest petting, bound off his leg and test the strength of his zipper. By the time he reached the bathroom, doubled over to prevent a rupture, the erection was fading, but he got to look at it for a half-minute before it wilted. Sitting on the toilet seat, sex organ alive between his legs at long last, Trip began to envision a future for himself different from the one he had grudgingly grown to accept; this future had photographs propped on a mantelpiece and rumpled pillows at the head of a bed; and if the bed held three pillows instead of the standard two, and if his head in the portraits was framed by a pair of faces, that only meant there would be more love to go around.

It took several years before Trip realized his dream. After graduating high school, he moved to the nearest city, claimed what little of his parents' insurance settlement that hadn't been squandered by the wastrel relatives who had taken him in as a child, and spent the rest of the money experimenting with prostitutes, two at a time. The hookers willing to do "couples" were hard-bitten, often twice his age, and far more interested in sex with fellow prostitutes than with him, making Trip watch from a chair as they bit and fisted and finger-fucked one another. But before taking his thousand dollars, they'd let Trip climb in between them and dry-hump one's buttcheeks while the other played with his testicles, and in this way Trip experienced his first orgasm, his semen trailing stem-like up the hooker's backbone to end in a flower-blossom splotch. Lying between the two women afterward, smelling their tobacco-rank hair and over-perfumed vaginas, their watchbands scratching his skin as they checked the time, Trip even began to lose his fear of the edge of the bed, and his dreams of dogpaddling amid body parts gave way to the image of himself bobbing atop a buoyant suitcase beneath the shade of a wing flap as a fleet of rescue boats droned over the ocean to save him.

Once his insurance money ran out, Trip took to driving a taxicab for income. He worked the graveyard shift, haunting the streets outside nightclubs at closing time, seeking pairs of women stumbling drunkenly into one another. The first few times Trip gave rides to such women, he propositioned them directly, drawing reactions surprisingly virulent: one pair phoned in his badge number, forcing him to switch cab companies; another threatened him with tear gas. After that, Trip just took the long way to the women's apartments, letting them start the conversations; and once an appropriate question was left hanging in the air—say, "Is all of your family as tall as you?"—he would simply tell his story. By the time he had finished recounting how he had gone broke and forsaken the prostitutes—he left nothing out, having nothing to lose—some of the women would have alcohol-fueled

tears in their eyes, and others would be casting sidelong glances at their seatmate, sizing her up as a sexual partner, seeing the possibility not only of helping the lost soul behind the wheel, but of exploring an urge that had long gone unstated and might otherwise go unfulfilled.

These episodes were rarely consummated. Once the three were off the anonymous streets and sitting in a familiar living room, the situation was reduced to a series of stultifyingly practical questions: who first, whose bed, which side, how long, what method of birth control and how many would need it. Even if the women actually got in bed with him, something happened to ruin it: one of them would start crying, remembering God knew what trauma; the receiving one would pass out with his penis still inside her; the drunker one would have to go vomit. If they both fell asleep, Trip would lie quietly between them for a few hours, absorbing the pressure against all of his body parts; then, knowing the situation would explode into recrimination under hard sunlight, he'd slip out before dawn. Braking at each traffic light as he drove his taxicab home—coming back from these encounters, he always hit them all—Trip would feel a replication in his belly of the impact that had so crippled him; building speed, then stopping, building speed, then stopping; finding the cycle so nauseating that he often had to pull over outside an all-night diner and nap fitfully between two cars until rush hour, when the heavy traffic would let him creep home at a tolerable speed.

One night Trip went to an all-ages concert headlined by the band Fuck Your Cousin. Trip was a few years too old for punk music and didn't like it much anyway, but punk concerts were the only ones where the crowd would forget itself enough to totally enclose a stranger, even one distastefully out of place. The jostling and shoving and jockeying for the best views of stage, the breasts and palms pressed against his backside, stirred Trip to erection just like the incident at the dance, and nobody in the hopped-up crowd knew the difference. Sometimes he'd crouch down, letting the crowd close above him in a canopy, and rub his thighs together nearly to the point of orgasm, his palms propped in beer puddles as he inhaled crotch sweat and leather. He was in such a position that night when Fuck Your Cousin took the stage. The crowd surged forward at the band's appearance, and Trip stood up just in time to avoid being trampled, but he was still swept to the edge of the stage and slammed against it. Gasping for breath, he looked up at the lead singer, who loomed at least six feet tall. Instead of punk clothing, she wore an expensive business suit, a knee-high skirt baring bruised calves that balanced on dan-

gerously tapered shoe heels. She didn't deign to look at the crowd, instead staring over their heads at some imagined horizon line as she impassively sang lyrics exhorting them to rape their schoolteachers and strangle their parents and torch charity headquarters. Busy working his way back into the center of the crowd, Trip didn't notice the singer again until the set break, when he spotted her at a table flanked by leather-clad biker types and holding hands with a much younger woman. Admirers waited in line to gush compliments to the singer, none of them receiving more than a lift of her chin in response, although the younger girl stared open-mouthed at each fan's approach like an aquarium visitor observing exotic fish. Intrigued, Trip left the club during the band's last set to position his cab out front. The two women left together a half-hour later, trailed by the same bikers, and sauntered for a block or two holding hands before Trip swung to the curb and asked if they needed a taxi. The singer looked back at the bikers, now jogging toward Trip's cab while donning leather knuckle gloves.

"We'll have company," she said.

"I can outrun them," said Trip.

"They have motorcycles."

The two women climbed in. At the first traffic light, true to the singer's word, a half-dozen choppers pulled up alongside the taxi, the biker closest to the driver's side pressing his middle finger against Trip's window.

"They're harmless," said the singer. "They're only making sure my sister and I get home safely."

As she'd said, the choppers, instead of attacking, formed a flanking escort, and Trip drove along undisturbed. Watching the two women in the rear-view mirror, Trip saw the family resemblance, though at least a decade separated them. The older sister, the singer, stared straight ahead expressionless. But the younger girl's eyes followed every streetlamp that streaked by as if watching aerial combatants perform tricks in hyperdrive.

"I like riding in a taxicab," said the younger sister.

"You do?" said the singer, putting her arm around her. "Tomorrow we'll hire him to drive us around all day. Would that be fun, sweetie?"

They didn't talk again until Trip reached the sisters' loft apartment, the bikers peeling off with horns honking. The singer paid with a hundred, and when Trip didn't have enough change, she took his crumpled tens and fives without comment.

"Do you want him to come up?" the singer asked her sister.

"Okay," the younger girl said, busy picking stuffing from the seat cushion.

She followed Trip and the singer docilely up the stairs, hands hung at her sides as though carrying suitcases of shoes. Although the singer handled all the subsequent preparations—stripping Trip's clothes off, shoving him back on the bed, bringing him to erection with her hand—it was the younger sister who mounted him. She fucked him with eyes wide and mouth round while the singer sat on the bed holding one of each of their hands. The energy passing between the lovers sent increasingly strong twitches into the singer's body, until, just as her sister and Trip were about to reach orgasm, she sagged forward into their arms, exhaustion bowing her body, and they all three slept that way until daybreak.

The trio shared a bed from then on, and all that was required to begin the arrangement was that Trip slide in between them, for the sisters had slept in one another's arms since girlhood; Kimberly, the younger of the two, climbing down from the top bunk to receive from her sister Cecilia the affection and encouragement their parents had withheld. From birth Cecilia had been the pariah of the shabby river town where they had grown up, and where their father was a midnight-shift UPS worker and their mother a cocktail waitress. At age two Cecilia had calculated pi to thirty decimal points using a child's math toy; at age three she had copied the concluding sentence of Descartes' *Meditation on First Philosophy* with refrigerator magnets; at age four she had completed an IQ test in a quarter of the allotted time and spent the rest of the session beating the child psychologist at chess. Her precocity horrified her parents, neither of whom had finished high school, and, encouraged by their pastor, her father had a vasectomy and her mother a tubal ligation to ensure they wouldn't spawn any more abnormalities. Cecilia lived in their house as an orphan, fixing her own meals, sewing her clothes from pattern books. Figuring she'd done something terribly wrong to draw such antipathy, she developed a withering self-scrutiny, passing through her childhood sternly and soberly, never indulging a wish, taking pains to please her rundown school's idiot teachers, working nights alongside migrant children at a pork-packing plant and slipping her paychecks under her parents' locked bedroom door. Then, when Cecilia was ten, her mother became pregnant. Mistaking the swelling for a beer belly, her mother didn't realize the truth until she was past the point where any hospital would perform an abortion, and when she tried to perform one herself drunk using a vacuum-cleaner attachment, she only succeeded in giving the fetus brain damage. Cecilia's father moved out of the house and spent all his free time taking correspondence law courses so

he could someday sue the doctors who had botched their sterilizations. Meanwhile, Kimberly was born a slack and languid baby, and her mother turned the infant's care over to Cecilia before plunging into a bottomless alcoholism. Cecilia added her new sister to her list of penitential projects, taking Kimberly into bed with her at night and telling her how smart and pretty she was and how successful she was sure to someday be and how nothing bad would ever happen to her because they would never be apart for long. Growing up, Cecilia did all Kimberly's schoolwork to keep her out of slow classes; while away at college on scholarship, Cecilia wrote her every night; when she got her first job as a benefit planner for a fund-raising company, Cecilia paid to move Kimberly to the city, buying a king-size bed so the sisters could resume their childhood habit of sleeping cuddled together.

Cecilia, busy these days with charity campaigns and band practice—her only outlet was the violent lyrics she composed for Fuck Your Cousin, which she had joined by answering a newspaper ad—had little waking contact with Trip, although she occasionally brought him as a date to the benefits she arranged, introducing him to the gaggle of aging executives who followed her around the banquet halls as her sister's boyfriend. It was Kimberly with whom Trip spent most of his time, for she didn't work and occupied all her waking hours watching TV. Cecilia would leave for work at five o'clock in the morning, dutifully kissing Trip and her sister goodbye with minted breath and balmed lips, her executive outfits creasing smartly as she bent over the bed; Trip would rise a few hours later to drive a half-shift in his cab, feeling obligated to make some contribution to the household beyond Cecilia's six-figure salary; but Kimberly would just take her pillows and blankets with her to the couch at some point during the day and stay there until bedtime. Trip would join her under the blankets when he got home, and they'd watch TV together, kissing during the commercials. Kimberly never initiated the kissing, but never cut one short, her mouth hanging lax for a minute after each kiss ended as if she were waiting for someone to take her temperature. Trip didn't achieve erections during these sessions; it took Cecilia's return, usually after midnight, for Trip and Kimberly to have intercourse, and the position never varied: Trip pinioned on his back; Kimberly squatting above him, lifting and dropping her hips in a sleepy rhythm; and Cecilia beside them, stroking her sister's arm, putting Trip's finger on Kimberly's clitoris, speaking words of encouragement—"That's good, sweetie. That feels really good, right?"—for Cecilia knew sex was the one thing Kimberly understood. Kimberly experienced most of the world like a pilot flying through heavy flak. Even the characters on her soap operas bewildered her, although she liked them because they

always appeared at the same time of day and never looked into her eyes. But sex made sense: you diddled yourself with a boy's dick and your body got all warm. She first had sex at age eight, when her father, looking for a doctor's bill to use as evidence in his still-unfiled lawsuit, broke into the house, and, seeing Kimberly half-asleep on the couch, raped her out of long-bottled rage. After that Kimberly couldn't get enough, lying down with any boy or man who offered the least provocation, and in any setting: in cars, on bridges, in tool sheds, even inside a concrete drainpipe at a construction site. Cecilia's biker escort had provided the service since Kimberly had moved to the city, but now that Trip was living with them, it became his job, one he grew to relish, learning from Kimberly's guileless face which movements pleased her most and guiding her hips and buttocks that way. In bed with the sisters, he felt consummated like he never had with the prostitutes or nightclub-goers, even though the three rarely spoke; and falling asleep between them, his dreams, for the first time, ranged back beyond the accident to place him face down in his mother's lap just before the panicked voice crackled over the airplane intercom, dozing to the hum of the wing engines and the click of fingertips on keyboards, the last protected moment he'd known.

One day Cecilia took a rare afternoon off and the three housemates drove Trip's cab to a secluded beach an hour from the city. Trip gladly relinquished the wheel to sit between the two sisters, Cecilia weaving through traffic impatiently, Kimberly staring out the window at the oil drums and transmission towers, once sticking her face into the wind like the dog in a passing car, her rarely washed hair trailing to the tailpipe. At the beach, they walked barefoot along the waterline in the same arrangement, Trip's arms locked into the crook of each sister's elbow.

"Have you been to the ocean before?" Trip asked Kimberly. The surf streaming over her bare feet had produced a worried expression, as if she were being tapped on the back by a figure she couldn't crane her neck enough to see.

"She's on sensory overload, that's why she didn't answer you," said Cecilia. "Other people assimilate new environments more easily."

"You and I could talk," Trip said after a while.

"I don't have very much to say to you," Cecilia said, "and I'd really rather just enjoy my thoughts."

Trip wasn't offended. He thought of those parasitic fish that thrive off the backs of larger sea creatures, yet transmit essential nutrients into the host's

bloodstream. Trip knew he would never say anything Cecilia would find stimulating, nor appear in Kimberly's eyes as other than one in a series of startling objects. Yet he saw ways in which both sisters had profited by knowing him. A few nights earlier, he'd come home to find the TV volume turned down and Kimberly cooking—she usually ate take-out meals that Cecilia ordered delivered—and if it was only plain rice, and if it ended up burnt, and if she ate it straight from the pot and forgot to offer him any, Trip still considered it progress. And while Cecilia would never admit affection for anyone, he had noticed a change in the lyrics she wrote for Fuck Your Cousin, a shift from exhortations toward violent crime to anthems about couples committing it themselves; and even if all the new songs ended with the couples maimed in gasoline fires, Trip felt that the possibility of love had at least been acknowledged.

Kimberly picked up a sharp shell fragment and pressed it against a fingertip until the skin broke, oozing a teardrop of blood. She looked at Trip with no sign of pain in her face. Then she grabbed his hand in a surprisingly strong grip and lanced it the same way, pressing their red-tipped fingers together. Trip wondered if she had seen a blood-oath scene in some children's TV show. He looked to Cecilia to see if she approved, but she was busy jotting new lyrics in her notebook, whispering them out loud to test them: "And the fire felt like hands, like no one's hands ever had, getting under her skin, doing all the right things, and the scream she let out was sweeter than sweet singing."

A week later Trip and Kimberly were kissing on the couch, cushions askew beneath them and an evening soap opera building to its climax on TV, when Trip felt his penis stir. He ran to the bathroom, where he studied the erection, now tick-tocking toward its most extreme angle, the washcloth he'd applied to it hanging ineffectually like the curtain of a canopy bed. It must be a mistake, he decided, since Cecilia wasn't due home for two hours yet; his body must be out of whack somehow. He was considering a cold shower when Kimberly opened the bathroom door, her sweatpants gone. She walked to Trip and straddled the toilet, her perpetually wet vagina sheathing his penis. She sat and stood in a vigorous rhythm that had him on the verge of orgasm in minutes. He ejaculated explosively, buttocks arched off the toilet seat, imagining his spinal fluid and bone marrow draining out with the semen. Kimberly gave him a mouth kiss—she sometimes kissed first now—and wandered back to the living room, Trip's penis still fully erect, even if his body felt boneless.

And like a disease that begins with baffling, intermittent episodes but soon hardens into a chronic condition, Trip's sexual health slowly returned to normal; rather, became newly normal, for his body had never before behaved in this way. Unleashed, his penis acted like an adolescent's, bounding to erection at the least provocation and remaining hard for hours, forcing him to wear Kimberly's sweatpants instead of jeans to prevent groin-aches. He felt dizzy and powerful; high-flown images of things he might now achieve crowded his mind, intermingled with orgiastic fantasies; on his wildest flights of fancy, he thought of how he could now have a child himself, one he could curl his lanky body around and protect from the world's vagaries and accidents. He and Kimberly made love until her vagina was chafed raw and Trip thought he would be sick from sex smells. Trip explained the wounds to Cecilia by saying the biker escort had paid Kimberly a visit. He was afraid if he told her the truth, she'd eject him from their bed, judging the new Trip too pedestrian to service her sister any longer; and he began skipping his couch sessions with Kimberly altogether to work long hours in the cab, using the extra income to return to the prostitutes, now one at a time. A new crop of young runaways were working for the outcall agencies, and Trip fucked them with limitless energy, staying on top the whole time, but failing to drain his overactive sex glands, for no matter how vigorous the sex, or how many times he ejaculated, his penis would be erect again by the time he climbed back into his cab. He was so rough with one prostitute that, after she left, her pimp came to Trip's motel room, knocked him semi-conscious with a stun gun, took his wallet and watch, and held the tip of a knife blade inside his urethra, saying, "Call one of my girls again and I'll circumcise you, you freak." Trip lay on the floor for a while after the pimp left, cockroaches tickling his bare feet, wondering what to do. It was only a matter of time, he knew, before Cecilia saw his condition had changed, spelling the end to his idyll. Fantasies aside, he didn't think he could face going back to his old life, even with a sex organ that worked. Loving two women at once had ruined him for anything less. Between Cecilia and Kimberly, he was hardly ever alone, and what one sister lacked, he could always find in the other, Cecilia's skewering intelligence and severity with herself balanced by Kimberly's sloe-eyed stupefaction at everything. Together, the sisters formed for him one indivisible, utterly lovable whole, one that his body's betrayal would soon steal from him, leaving him to plummet again nightly toward water strewn with limb stumps and baby strollers.

Trip's relationship with the sisters ended two weeks later when he and Kimberly surprised Cecilia at a Fuck Your Cousin concert. It was Trip's idea; he'd been cooped up in the loft since the pimp had attacked him, his penis' restlessness infecting the rest of his body; he couldn't stand lying around anymore under Kimberly's smelly blankets. So he dressed her and drove her to the nightclub where Cecilia's band was playing. The band was riding an unexpected wave of popularity—a cover story in *Psycho Sounds* had spawned a half-dozen copycat bands with lead singers in business suits—and this club was their biggest venue yet, featuring cocktail waitresses and call drinks instead of canned beer in ice buckets. The band's first set had begun by the time Trip and Kimberly arrived, and Cecilia spotted them from the stage, acknowledging them not with a wave or wink, but by launching into her latest song, "A Sip From Sis," about a disfigured girl who poisons her pretty sister's dates with spiked soda pop. All the tables were taken, so Trip and Kimberly leaned against a wall, frenzied punkers careening past them. Trip stood Kimberly before him so he could dry-hump her backbone undetected, but the friction only amplified his need. He saw an unattached punker girl nearby, shorn scalp and lip rings clashing with her Chanel pantsuit, and when she went to the restroom, Trip followed. He surprised her in a stall, her pants around her ankles and a methamphetamine bindle raised to her face.

"I'm the singer's boyfriend," Trip said.

"Cecilia Scimitar's?" the girl said wide-eyed. "Don't just stand there."

Cecilia discovered them moments later with the girl's arms wrapped baboonlike around Trip's neck and his thrusts nearly lifting the toilet from its floor bolts. "Join us?" gasped the punker. Cecilia did, pressing herself to Trip's backside just as the prostitutes used to, guiding his hips with her hands, whispering encouragements in his ear: "How's her twat?" "You like that angle, sweetie?" "Go deeper, go more." When Trip came, his body bucked so hard that the punker girl lost her hold and slid off the toilet. Cecilia cupped her palm in front of Trip to stop his ejaculate from spraying the girl's face. Then she went to the sink and washed it off her hand and said, "Meet me out back."

Trip found Cecilia by the alley dumpster blowing cigarette smoke at a streetlamp. "You know you can't be my sister's boyfriend anymore," she said.

"I know, but why?"

"It's no longer equitable," she said. "You can have anyone now. She can't."

"Anyone?"

"Not me," said Cecilia. "I find you undeveloped. Besides, I'm betrothed."

Cecilia revealed she'd consented that week to marry the chairman emeritus of the spinal-cord disorder foundation for which she had captained a ten-million-dollar fund-raising campaign; a wealthy, seventy-two-year-old widower who had been so smitten with Cecilia's grudging acknowledgment of his presence at brainstorming meetings that he had pursued her relentlessly with the most extravagant marriage proposals imaginable, finally winning her consent by confiding to her the chronic liver cirrhosis that would kill him within eighteen months and leave her sole beneficiary of his fortune. She'd be moving in with him the next month, and Kimberly would be joining them, occupying a guesthouse on the mansion grounds, where she'd be provided with a fully stocked kitchen, a wide-screen TV, and a "personal trainer" who would visit twice a day for sessions.

"What will you do?" Cecilia asked Trip.

"I don't know," Trip said. "I might look for a job driving an airport limo. I'm tired of the taxi."

"If you want a baby someday, I'll have it," Cecilia said. "I won't help you raise it. That'll be up to you."

"You'd do that?" Trip said. "Why?"

"Say goodbye to my sister now."

"How do I explain things?"

"Tell her you're going to live under the riverbed. That's where she thinks our parents are."

When Trip delivered the news, Kimberly's expression didn't change, but she kicked the wall once with her heel, the same reaction she showed whenever the cable TV service went out.

"Why does everyone go there?" Kimberly asked.

"It's dry," Trip thought up.

Back in his cab, Trip started toward his old apartment, abandoned for months now, but decided instead to drive around a while. He switched on his roof light, thinking that taking a few fares might distract him from the sadness stirring inside him, but it was late and people in that neighborhood rarely hailed taxicabs. Trip started running traffic lights, afraid a series of stops and starts might unbalance the sadness, wrenching it free of its barnacles like rescue balloons inflated beneath a shipwreck; whereas if he kept up a steady movement, he thought he might be able to keep the feeling at bay, or even begin thinking his way toward a new start. Then he heard chopper engines. Cecilia's biker escort pulled up on both sides, wind-beaten faces regretful but intent. Two choppers accelerated past him and two fell in behind, leaving his taxicab surrounded. When Trip pushed past the speed

limit, so did they, honking their horns to clear intersections. Trip shot down the center lane, gas pedal approaching the floorboards, but comforted somewhat by the kaleidoscope of lights streaking by him. Driving that fast, Trip, for the first time in his life, had the desire to fly. He had no destination in mind; he simply wanted to see the view. From an airplane window, the city might appear as an explosion of such lights, spreading to every horizon, packed closer than a galaxy, a conflagration in the middle of which one would never again need to feel alone.

# The River

## Jon Muzzall

"I couldn't fix it," she thinks to herself, shaking her head. "I tried so hard, but she's still bleeding all over the place. I thought I could do it, but I can't. No one can. Look at the blood—in the air, on the trees, everywhere. Look how it clots everywhere but on the wound! Maybe if I could have gotten the leaves from the trees we could have made a tourniquet to stop the bleeding. But there aren't any leaves. The span is too great, anyway. It's not my fault, is it? No one helped me. I'm not strong enough and I'm not fast enough. I'm just one person! It's fate, right? Nobody's fault. But I tried so hard. I got to work as soon as I saw what was happening, but as soon as I closed it in one place it opened up in another. Look at my hands! Oh, God! They're quick, but I just couldn't fix it. What more do they want from me? Why didn't anyone help me? Oh God—it's all my fault. It's too late. Now what will we do?" She sobs. Tears land mutely in her lap. She stops making the sewing motion. She tears her stocking cap from her head and sways.

The boy pulled his cap down over his ears against the wind, the cold, and the gray. These things assaulted him everywhere. He tossed a coin into the air again and again as he walked along, hoping to come upon something that would bring him out of himself. He started on the north side of Grand Avenue and made his way south. Once he got onto campus, he walked past the Union, past Beaumont Tower, past the library. As he walked over the bridge behind the library, he stopped to look at the Red Cedar River and its tree-lined banks. He stopped tossing the coin and stared first at the river and then wildly into the air. Something finally got his attention. He dropped the coin from his left hand and made a motion with his right. It looked as if he were working a needle in and out. His knuckles clenched white, his face the color of untraveled snow.

I've always got to be doing something—chewing the end of a pencil, whistling, jingling the keys in my pocket. One day last winter as I walked

along clad in cap and glove I threw a quarter again and again into the air, concentrating on catching it. I was walking on campus, not going anywhere, just walking. As I walked over the bridge behind the library I stopped everything—I stopped walking, I stopped tossing, I stopped breathing. There were no birds. Ice covered the trees. I looked to my left and the world had burst open—a wound was exposed in the earth, long and narrow, and gray mist bled into the air. The shifting gray oozing from the breach intermingled with the gray of the clouds, growing heavier and darker as the seconds slipped by. I had to do what I could. I jumped down from the bridge (which was gray, too, everything was gray) with a giant needle and extra-strength thread. I was about to close the wound when the quarter I had been tossing as I walked fell from my hand. The tinkling sound it made as it hit the pavement ruined everything.

"It's just a goddamn river, and a dirty river at that," Steven said as he stepped onto the bridge after Lisa, pulling his jacket tight around his body.

"But look at it, Steven; use your imagination. Doesn't it look like it's bleeding?" Lisa had recently been wondering why she even bothered, and Steven's reaction didn't help.

"No, Lisa, it doesn't. It's just a dirty river that's a little warmer than the air above it. Can we get the fuck out of here now? I'm cold." He held his collar closed over his neck.

"Can't you get out of your little box for just one instant? I know you can do more than swear and complain." This is it, Lisa thought. This is really it.

"For Christ's sake, Lisa. This bullshit you think up sometimes is ridiculous. Things are what they are."

"I can't take these attacks anymore. You and I are done. Don't call me, ever."

We'll talk about it along the way. Come on. Maybe your eyes, bright and gray like those of someone I once knew, will see something I didn't. We're walking onto campus from Grand Avenue. We're walking past Beaumont Tower, due south, past the library. There's the bridge—it's cold and gray. Do you see it? Feel how cold it is, pressing in on us everywhere. Look at the clouds—gray! The trees are trapped in clotted blood. I hope it's not too late. I'll hold your arm as you step onto the bridge with me. Be careful—there are some icy patches. Now, to your left, look! The earth is open and bleeding.

The gray blood is seeping into the air. I hope it's not too late. What do you think? I think we're too late, but we have to try, anyway. If we don't close the wound she'll die. Maybe there *is* still hope. Jump down with me—I've got surgical needles and extra-strength thread. Jump down. It's her only chance. Come on.

Jump.

OK. Take my hand and we'll go together. Are you ready?

You are confused. You were out for a walk when you came upon the sitting, crying figure. You wonder what evil could have smashed such innocent beauty. You want to help her. You step onto the bridge. You walk to the heaving woman. You grab her shoulder and she looks up; you wipe away a tear, you ask her, "What's the matter?" Her pale eyes stare into yours (eyes not peaceful, eyes not calm—she's not upset, she's terrified) and you begin to understand. You look east and the enigma is revealed in gut-wrenching crispness. The earth is bleeding. The entire scab has broken open and crimson blood gushes from the breach over the edges of the wound. Some of it spurts into the air where it simply hangs. Your breath hitches. Your stomach turns. The smell is stifling, it flattens you; you barely stop yourself from vomiting. Still nauseous, you turn to the woman and try to comfort her. You tell her that there is still hope. She smiles but her sobs do not cease. She does not believe you, and why should she? Do you really know what to do?

Lying next to the woman is a needle, silver tarnished with blood. Attached to the needle is a great length of what looks like fishing line, knotted at the end. You aren't sure if it will work but you have to try. You have to close the wound. She tells you it's hopeless, she says that she already tried that. She says maybe if you had gotten there earlier, but now the blood is flowing too fast. You don't listen. You tell her: "Hush, child. Cease." You climb down from the bridge, strip off your clothes, and wade into the wound. The heat is stinging and sweat pours from your body into the swelling flow. You jam your needle into what's left of the scab on the north bank. You swim across the wound as best you can, fighting the current as it ebbs downstream. You climb onto the south bank and jam your needle into the earth there and pull the thread tight.

One stitch.

And as you kneel there on the bank catching your breath, feeling the blood on your body, you think that this will stop the bleeding. You think this because of all of the books you read, because of all the murders you saw

solved in an hour on television, because of all the ninety-minute films you saw end with a man riding off into the sunset.

But the bleeding doesn't stop, and you must continue. You repeat the process a second time. A third. A dozen times, twenty-five, fifty, but to little effect. You stop in the middle of the wound, chest deep in crimson. She's bleeding faster, now faster, it's a deluge and you don't think that you can stop it.

Crows fly overhead, heavy black on heavy gray. They heckle you, they want you to miscarry, they know you will. You try not to listen to them but your concentration fails. You bobble the needle, nearly dropping it. Your knuckles whiten. The crimson is escaping outward so quickly—who knew that there could be so much? You lose your balance and fall into sweet, sensual death. You shut your mouth and eyes tight. You feel like you are weighed down and the quickening current makes it hard to get up, too. You finally plant your feet and stand, gasping for air. You stumble out of the wound and look back toward the bridge. The woman holds her hands out to you in an appeal. Her face is serene, but her hands, palms up with fingers spread, are shaking.

"What are you doing?" she shouts, "You're only on the surface. It's bleeding from below, from behind, or underneath. You can't fix it from here. You can't!"

The child was lost, separated from his mother. He walked from building to building, sniffling and crying. He was terrified, as he should have been, since being alone is terrifying. When he got to the bridge and saw how badly she was bleeding, the sobs really started. The child heaved back and forth, clutching the railing of the bridge. He didn't understand what was happening, really, but he knew it was bad, like an animal that knows what disease smells like without recourse to conscious thought. He saw the gray everywhere and it crushed him. He clambered over the railing and jumped in without knowing why. The body didn't turn up for two months.

What else could I have done? I tried to put the blood back in her with my hand, but it didn't work. I didn't know that there could be so much blood in such a little baby. I told her to stay here. She always listened to me she

never cried she was perfect my God how dare you? My tears fell on her torn body like salty raindrops. I told her to stay here. Why didn't we build a fence when did this become inevitable why didn't I watch closer why is it my fault?

Because it is. It's my fault that I didn't watch her and she didn't stay in the yard and now she's dead. Once the blood gets out you can't put it back in.

Victor Woods are in south Lansing, right by the house I grew up in. We did all kinds of things in the woods when we were kids—fought with sticks, played tag, built lean-tos. We lived there. We loved it. The place my friends liked best was simply known as "the V," a giant gorge about a mile back in the woods. The trick was to get up enough speed on your BMX bike to ride all the way down to the bottom and back up to the top on the other side. Doing this terrified me, but I had to do it anyway, since I couldn't back down in front of my friends. One day a giant downpour started while we were playing on the far side of the V. The rain came down in great gray sheets and thunder crashed all around. We had to go back—back over the V. When we got to the breach we could see how quickly and how hard it was raining. Water rushed down the sides of the gorge, turning the mud into a waterfall of crimson. The earth was bleeding. My friends took no notice and had already swum down one side of the wound and up the other.

They waited.

I decided I would do what I could. As I retreated into the woods to make enough room to gather the necessary speed I imagined myself to be a knight armed with a surgical needle and thread knotted at the end. I was going to close the wound in one tremendous pull, run the needle right through the earth and close her up tight. I got three-quarters of the way up the home-bound side before I fell down to the bottom. I cried as I sat in the mud at the bottom of the V. The two other boys hauled my bike up and then they hauled me up. I cleaned the mud off in the bath but I had nightmares for weeks.

Finally realizing what the woman meant, you attach a fresh length of thread to your needle and run in the direction where it seems the blood is coming from. It has spread three times as wide since you started and you are afraid that time is growing short. The woman was right—the part you were trying to fix wasn't bleeding at all. It was just a natural groove, a wrinkle in the earth that the blood was flowing in. The breach itself must be to the east, upstream of the bridge.

You run as fast as you can, still sweating. You don't make it very far upstream when you begin to hear a low, rumbling sound. As you get closer you can see that the sound is coming from the wound itself. Here, the chasm is at its widest—more a shallow, shuddering lake than a slicing river. The pool of crimson gurgles and oozes, flowing back the way you came and to the south. Now and then the earth spews blood into the air, like a geyser.

Here is the source.

You know that you have to try something else, but you aren't yet sure what it is. The blood begins seeping over your feet as you stand in deliberate contemplation, and as it rises over your ankles you come to realize that there is really only one choice. You wade into the wound, and when you are waist-deep in it you take a breath and dive in. You kick with your legs; you pull with your arms; down, down, down.

It should have gotten darker as you went deeper but you open your eyes into bloody luminescence. You stop swimming for a moment to try to look around, but you can't let yourself drift for long. The current is trying to push you up and out, and if you are forced out you may not have the strength to get back in and get to the source of the bleeding. So you fight. You head toward the bottom, eyes open, and you see it. You actually see it. All of this crimson, all of this horror, emerged from one jagged crack not even as long as your arm. It must have been bleeding for years, unnoticed. Perhaps it had always been bleeding, but if you close it here, close it tight, you can still save her, and by saving her save yourself. You ready your needle to make the first stitch, and something calls your name.

You turn to look, and it is beautiful. It has a pale face framed by flowing hair, and a strong, lean body. It watches you, trying to discern your reaction, and calls your name again. Such longing is in the voice, such ecstasy, such sickening charisma that you let go of the needle, which hangs there, motionless. You have forgotten everything except the voice and your name. It's grinning as if you are the only human being in the entire world, as if it only exists for you. You swim toward it and put your arms around it. You open your mouth to kiss it but before you can the acerbic crimson death of the river comes in through your mouth, filling you again with terror. The creature laughs diabolically for a moment, but the laughter ends abruptly. It's almost over, it says. All corporeal sensations will cease and you will finally find rest, it says as it readies its knife.

You almost abandon yourself to the quiet it promises, but part of you still wants to live. You have to.

You fight to get at the opening, desperate to do what you came here to do, but whatever that creature is that wants you, that creature clawing at your back, trying to hold you, is too strong and too beautiful. Simply resisting its promise is terrifically difficult, and you aren't sure how much longer you can keep it up.

So you escape, tears from your eyes mingling with the blood of the wound. You close your mouth and eyes against the horror, close your ears against the voice calling for you, kicking and pulling, and finally you tear yourself away from what you found and from its guardian. You break through the surface into a wet snowstorm, whose flakes disappear as they land in the river. The woman on the bridge is gone. She can help you, if you can convince her that there's still hope. You have to find her, and then find others, so you can work together to stop it.

You pull yourself from the thick and flowing blood and stagger to a safe distance. You begin to shiver as you watch the river in the deepening cold of evening. Your ears are filled with the sound of its roaring. You breathe, your chest rising up and down.

Now. Stop standing there, stop listening, stop watching, and stop thinking.

Go for help.

# nigredo

## boog

sing it loud
sing it la la la la
sing it because i know you can

what you dont know
what you dont remember
i was in your bathroom
i heard you singing in the shower
you were naked you were in the shower
you were not there but i was and
your voice left shadows like tattered

in drainpipes and in showerheads
and i heard you

i remember (as in dream) the memory
the echo the shadow of voice
and it went la la la la
as in song for the sake of songing
as in the froth of sheets overturning our bodies
as in if wallace stevens had been a buddhist he would have been
dismissed for heresy

as in excommunication (if buddhists were catholics)

the doctrine: not the thing itself, but ideas of the thing
the notion of ownership
the notion of light as an image
not metaphorically but literally
as in silence as in light as in gravity as in
gravity of light as in magnetic field as in
magnetics are silent and dont care about light

as in lead is not magnetic
gold is not magnetic
in this way is this an argument
if both are subject to gravity
and they are

as in the only thing you want to hear
is the absence

# The Great White

## Bayard

I was thirty eight. I'd been to sea for a year. What a great year it had been. I'd been swallowed by a great white whale, circled by great white sharks but spent most of my time staring at the great white clouds and thinking to myself, "Gee, that great white cloud looks just like a great white cloud."

And, "Gee, that great white cloud looks just like a great white cloud."

And, "Gee, that great white cloud looks just like a great white cloud. I wish it would rain."

In the year I'd been to sea it had not rained. Not a single drop and I was dry. Awfully dry. More than rescued I wanted a crisp, clear glass of cool, refreshing water like Robespierre's Water, the crisp, clear, cool, refreshing water Robespierre Caruso, the tenor terror, endorsed on Robespierre Caruso's Softsoap Comedic Opera Hour. My throat sang just thinking about Robespierre's Water just like Robespierre Caruso sang it would.

"Some may sing for their supper,
some may sing for a song.
But none will sing as loud and as long,
as those whose throats taste Robespierre's Water."

I couldn't really sing so my singing was make-believe.

I could hum and for the better part of my thirty eighth year at sea I'd hum The Ballad Of Giuliani's Island. While I hummed I'd pray for deliverance, as my personal god and hero Giuliani prayed each week on his classic, highly rated, masterpiece of a program Giuliani's Island, for deliverance. Giuliani, lisping through his dialogue, would pray to be delivered, or shipwrecked upon an uncharted desert isle. Once there, using cunning, wile, craft, and every dirty, underhanded, double dealing, backstabbing trick he knew, he'd pray the happy, hapless natives were as happy and hapless as he hoped and would accept his presumptuous offer of twenty nine dollars in glass beads for possession of the island and their souls deliverable to Giuliani's personal god and great white father Disney.

There were words to the song I hummed. Words with great meaning and even greater depth.

*Oh, this is a tale of our castaway*
*he's here for a long, long trip,*
*he's ugly,*
*opinionated,*
*lisps,*
*wants to be a movie star,*
*a millionaire,*
*he's learned to strip,*
*here on Giuliani's Island.*

Humming The Ballad Of Giuliani's Island was a great comfort to me floating around out there in the great white ocean with no one to keep me company but the seagulls. As comforting as the words to The Ballad Of Giuliani's Island were, they didn't hold a candle to the comfort a flock of seagulls gave.

I got to know the seagulls personally. I got to know them well. Knew each of them by name. Strangely, like Henry David Seagull on the extremely popular Henry David Seagull show I used to watch as a child, the seagulls were named the same. Henry David Seagull.

Henry David Seagull and I engaged in the most amazing conversations about things both pertinent and im. The state of the union. The state of the world. The price of soybeans. The price of fossil fuels. God, Nietzsche, Giuliani, and Disney, not necessarily in that order.

Unable to speak, Henry David Seagull and I held these amazing conversations in my head. Our conversations were as funny and one dimensional as I remember, if only I could remember, the Henry David Seagull program to be.

Like everything else in that great boiling ocean Henry David Seagull, every Henry David Seagull, was white. White like the great white whales. White like the great white sharks. White like the great white clouds. White like the great white sea.

As lost as I was at sea, afloat upon a great white adult strength pampering diaper, I wasn't as lost as I could have been because I was lost in a great white ghetto. Like all the great white programming I'd embraced and dearly loved all the days of my great white programming life, being adrift in a great white ghetto was as boring as life had been watching all that great white programming.

As a child, later as a voyeur, I'd had no choice but to watch all the great white programming on the great white e-box day in, day out, night in, night

out. As much a product of my environment as the products pushed across the vast vacuous screen, I had but one choice and that one choice was no choice at all.

Embracing my choice I lay on my great white raft and conversed with great white seagulls spinning in the great white sky as great white whales circled great white sharks circling me in the great white sea.

To break the monotony like a welcoming wholesome advertisement for breath freshener, underarm deodorant, or genital spray, Henry David Seagull, swooping out of the great white sky, would attempt to peck out my eyes. Who could blame them? If my eyes had ever learned to speak and decided to tell what they had seen what kind of programming would it have been?

Better to be blinded than to see the truth of one's life.

As Henry David Seagull swooped out of the great white sky, greedy for my eyes, I should have been terribly frightened the way Tipsy Headrum was terrifically terrified each week on every episode of Planet Of The Seagulls. How that woman could pose and scream, scream and pose, as vicious seagulls swooped out of the sky greedy for her eyeballs was a mystery only a master of suspense like each week's guest director could muster.

Every week Tipsy Headrum was viciously pecked to death by seagulls and was able to get up and do it again the following week. What a great actress. So talented. So brave.

Each week during the second half of the program after the big hurdle of hefty advertisements when Tipsy Headrum would visit the Statue Of Liberty, fall to her knees posing and screaming, screaming and posing, and scream, "It's a madhouse, a madhouse," a bolt of electricity like lightning would shoot up my spine as I subliminally remembered I needed breath freshener, underarm deodorant, and genital spray.

Taking direction from Tipsy Headrum I'd pose and scream, scream and pose when Henry David Seagull attacked. To a filthy outsider it would appear I was horribly frightened but like Tipsy Headrum I wasn't really. I was just pretending.

I'd pretend I saw the Statue Of Liberty and pose and scream, scream and pose, and scream inside my head, "It's a madhouse, a madhouse," and imagine I knew what the Statue of Liberty stood for.

Pretending to be afraid, pretending to have emotions like all the heroes on the e-box was a far better experience than actually having emotions of my own.

Adrift as I was I never thought I'd ever see land again. Especially when the weather began acting up. In the year I had been to sea it had not rained one

drop but there had been fierce wind coming at me and from me. There had been horrible hurricanes. Terrible typhoons. Very bad volcanoes. Terrifying tidal waves. And astounding asteroid showers.

All that world weary weather had happened, not to me, but to the cast and crew of one of my all time favorite programs, The Perfect Weather. There was a program with punch. There was a program with tooth. There was a program with extremely high ratings and overpaid actors.

When I wasn't reliving the daring, death inducing exploits of the cast and crew of The Perfect Weather I happily floated around on my raft. Great white sharks would be circling. Henry David Seagulls would be diving for my eyes. In the distance great white whales were licking their great white lips ready to swallow me whole.

I hoped, like in the bi-weekly, Sunday episodes of Pistachio, another great white kid, that when the great white whale finally swallowed me, like Pistachio, I'd find my great white father had become a real white boy.

I didn't understand much. And as often as I discussed it with Henry David Seagull I would never understand what kind of a boy Pistachio's father had been before he'd been swallowed by the great white whale and become a real white boy.

And what was all that stuff about Pistachio's father playing with great white wood? Was he playing with Pistachio's great white wood? Or his own? Or was he playing with both? I was awfully confused but allowed my confusion to wash over me knowing after the great white whale had swallowed me and I found my great white father playing with his great white wood, using cunning, wile, craft, and every dirty, underhanded, double dealing, backstabbing trick we knew, we'd escape the great white belly of the great white whale, my father holding tight to our great white wood and live happily every after with the blue fairy.

I have always been a big fairy fan. Always will be. Given the opportunity to be someone beside myself like all the guests on Make Over who can be anyone but themselves for a day, I'd be a big fairy. Big fairies have got it all. They are magical. They can flit and fly. Sometimes even flame. And like Tinkerbelly, the world's most famous fairy, they've got a boy all their own. So whether a fairy is blue or not they have more to look forward to than the average slob upon this huge, as I've discovered, wet rock.

In my stiflingly great white environment a touch of magical fairy lavender would have helped turn a great white day into an all right day.

One bright white day while suffering the perfect weather, preparing to pose and scream, scream and pose as Henry David Seagull dove for my eyes,

the biggest, baddest, greatest, whitest, great white shark circling me leapt like a lizard from the great white boiling sea and swallowed Henry David Seagull whole.

What an amazingly beautiful sight. Having covered my eyes with my hands I'd missed the entire scene. Uncovering my eyes, seeing the biggest, baddest, greatest, whitest, great white shark licking his great white lips I was moved to applaud loudly. The great white shark bowing, glowing with accepted praise, congratulations and thanks, flushed pink after fourteen curtain calls and my eager urging for encore upon encore.

There was no dearth of Henry David Seagulls requiring consumption.

Applauding loudly I thought to myself, "Goodbye, Henry David Seagull. Goodbye," as my imagination, if I had an imagination, ran away with itself. I knew my imagination and itself would be very happy together.

I imagined Henry David Seagull met his great white father inside the great white belly of the great white shark playing with his great white wood and they'd live happily every after in great white hell.

It wasn't long after the great white shark had swallowed Henry David Seagull whole and was taking his fifteenth or sixteenth curtain call that the great white shark started looking green.

Had Henry David Seagull met his great white father or had Henry David Seagull simply been bad? I don't know. Whatever Henry David Seagull had been and whatever had happened once he'd been swallowed whole is immaterial because Henry David Seagull hadn't agreed with the great white shark at all. And after all I'd heard, and all I'd been told, it appears seagull isn't the other white meat after all.

I worried, as I was programmed to do, that Henry David Seagull would be the end of the great white shark, the end of me and the end of civilization as I'd grown to know it out there in the great white ocean. I worried and worried and worried and worried and would have worried much, much more if I hadn't suddenly been distracted by the great white clouds that looked so much like great white clouds.

Keeping my hands over my eyes to keep Henry David Seagull out of them I said, "Look Henry David Seagull that great white cloud looks just like a great white cloud."

And, "Look Henry David Seagull that great white cloud looks just like a great white cloud."

And, "Look Henry David Seagull that great white cloud looks just like a great white cloud. I wish it would rain."

Henry David Seagull sensing my momentary weakness swooped for my eyes. Posing and screaming, screaming and posing, as I liked to do, instead of being terrified or having Henry David Seagull eaten whole by the great white sharks I wanted a crisp, clear glass of cool, refreshing water like Robespierre's Water, the crisp, clear, cool, refreshing water Robespierre Caruso, the tenor terror, endorsed on Robespierre Caruso's Softsoap Comedic Opera Hour. My throat sang just thinking about Robespierre's Water just like Robespierre Caruso sang it would.

"Some may sing for their supper,
some may sing for a song.
But none will sing as loud and as long,
as those whose throats taste Robespierre's Water."

Like most viewers lost at sea in a great white ghetto I had no choice. I had to put up and shut up with what I was given. Not Robespierre's Water but the hyper polluted salinated brand sea water surrounding me.

Which reminded me of two of my heroes.

Giuliani and Pistachio.

Giuliani and Pistachio shared a mantra.

When Pistachio having been swallowed by the great white whale discovers his great white father in the belly of the great white whale playing with his great white wood his great white father, extremely discouraged, is given hope when Pistachio says, "Gee, Dad if life deals you lemons make lemonade." Handing his great white son his great white wood Pistachio's great white father said, "So where's the lemons?"

Giuliani having been shipwrecked on Giuliani's Island with nothing but trunk upon trunk upon trunk of ladies undergarments and glass beads discovering Donna, the bane of his life, his Boswell, his man Friday, cheers her by saying, "Gee, bitch, if life deals you shit make shitade," before making the desert island safe for Disney his great white god to spread like a virus across the land. Whereupon Donna, hoping to get her hands on some great white wood says, "So where's the shit? Never mind. I got eyes. I ain't blind."

Which was heartwarming in an award winning way, knowing Henry David Seagull hadn't gotten to her yet.

# Diane Glancy: A Hunger for Many Voices

## Interviewed by Laura Tisdel

Before I met Diane Glancy, the pictures of her on the jackets of her books struck me—she sat straight and wore a somber, concentrated smile—and I thought I knew what to expect. She looked stoic with well-rooted wisdom. It seemed obvious that she could wield tradition and the Native American culture with authority and ease. I thought she would be a tall, imposing force that would rigidly structure the space in a room, like a mountain or tree. I thought she would be a mythic or ritual force. But I was wrong. Unlike her poetry, drama, or fiction, Diane Glancy the person is an unstructured energy. In her speech she establishes "myth" through a youthful curiosity, always surprised and excited by what is right in front of her. She pursues the unseen potential in everything. As she often says of her work, she too seems to move in the dream world. Instead of dictating what is there, she waits for something to show itself, to tell her. I met her in the lobby of her hotel, and on the walk from the hotel to the *Red Cedar Review* office, where I would interview her, I told her about a dream I had the night before: that she had come to my house and given me a puppy and that we spent a long time trying to name it. During the five-block walk from the hotel to the office we stopped twice so she could write down the dream and scraps of our conversation. Even in five blocks, her myth or logic was revealing itself, and she respected it. She wrote it down.

**RCR:** What writers or styles influenced you to become a writer or shaped the style that you first had?

**DG:** I think your basic shyness. I never liked to speak very much and it was a hunger for words. And when I wrote, and this is when I was a child, and even writing in the margins of my book, and getting in trouble for it, by the way, there was something solid, there was a foundation in those words that I put on the page. So it was a hunger for words. My mother was German and English and she did all the talking. She could go on and on. My father, of

course, was Cherokee and that side was very quiet, never said anything. And it was the longing for the missing words also from that part of the family.

**RCR:** In more and more literature, including and focusing on poetry, inspiration seems to be drawn from ethnicity or cultural background. How integral and in what ways is your Native American background indispensable from your work?

**DG:** Since it shows up all the time I guess it's very important. I mean you write what you are. You write what you know and you write what you don't know also, and it was a hunger to know that part of my heritage that had been suppressed or denied or put in the background or was a great distance from the world I had access to. As I said, my mother's German-English family was very outgoing. They were all blonde and blue-eyed and talked all the time. And my Indian Grandmother would come sometimes, and my father and they would be very quiet and morose. What was the heritage that I did not know, that I could not touch, that I couldn't really hold and that my mother did not like? I could just see her stiffen up when they came or when we went down there. So again it is the hunger to know the other part of my identity. The hunger to know.

**RCR:** So for you it is not so much what it is, but how to negotiate it too.

**DG:** That's exactly what it is. It's bringing together the different fragments, the unequal fragments, the unknown. And I think we get that most of our lives. We're just presented with a lot of things that don't make sense. Or something here or something there and we have to make the connections between them and that is also what my writing has been.

**RCR:** And to build on that a little bit, one of the things that I noticed in a lot of your writing, especially in *Claiming Breath*, is that sometimes you focus not so much on what you're saying, but the structure of how you're saying it. In *Claiming Breath* you talk so much about sort of the linguistic structure of things. Where does this attention to structure come from? Do you have a background in any kind of linguistics or theory? Did you focus on any of this academically?

**DG:** Not at all. It was being from a background in which, now this is my father's side, and I guess my mother's too—they were very practical people,

those German-English farmers in Kansas. You know there was a "practicable-ness" or whatever that word is, a determination, a punctuality, a physicality. And so the language, there was an erased language. I sort of remember little pieces of it, and you had to tell a story, it had to be something concrete. And yet I loved the abstraction. There was something about the brokenness of my heritage that was very abstract, and contemporary poetry is so abstract too. So how do you, how can you be rooted in story and yet yearn for this abstract life? And I think that structure, that linguistic structure, it just pulled apart and I loved to experiment, as you can tell in my work—the little squares and the slashes and the long pieces—because that's the way I experienced language.

**RCR:** Another part that fascinated me about your work is the way you play with slang and different dialects; specifically in *The Relief of America* you seem to vacillate between two voices. One of them uses a lot of slang and the voice manifests itself very phonetically. Where did that voice come from? How did you research it or bring it into being?

**DG:** A lot of it comes from within, and there have also been various mentors. I guess one of them is John Ashbery, whose poetry is wonderful and abstract and a mix of profound philosophy and Donald Duck. You know, it's Donald Duck—it's fun but it's deep, it's back and forth… I wish I could be like John Ashbery, who had a sustained vision his whole life. I have trouble reading him. Why do I admire him so much? Because of what he does, walking the worlds between the academic and the dialectic, and just the way he does it over and over again. In fact, I heard him read once. If you've ever heard him, he kind of buries himself down in the page and he never looks up at the audience and he's got this big white hair. I mean people were leaving the reading because it was so dull. And he never seemed connected with anything and I wrote down in my margins "uncle snowball," and that appears in one of my stories. I'm always taking notes. This margin writing, this deconstructing. It was also people like John Ashbery and Jorie Graham that I like very much, and I cannot get through the whole book, either one of them without stopping and having to come away and come back because it doesn't seem to hold your concentration. But somehow on a deep, subconscious dream level, where your stories move, just the natural way that we work and then reading people like John Ashbery and wishing that I could do what he did. But I cannot. I have my own way to do things. I do this in a different way in my new book, *The Mask Maker*. It is the story of Edith who

is a mask maker, and then, kind of in the margins in little squares are different thoughts or epigraphs or something that adds a new structure to the story.

**RCR:** When you perform your work, how does that change the piece? How do pieces evolve as you read? Do they become more performance-oriented or are there pieces you think are best read from the page in a book? How do you choose what you are going to read?

**DG:** When I read out loud I always mark things out because there's too much imagery or something, and I want to pare it down and get to that Native American storytelling: use the basic words, the least words possible. And then when you read the book later, you can see the parts that I left out. And again that is because you need to tell a story. And, by the way, I wish I was a performance poet or a slam poet because when you tell a story you tell it as minimally as you can and the words become the performers. You say a word and it enters the ear and the ear is like a womb and it gives birth to thought. So that's another reason I go to readings: because I get ideas and I don't perform a lot, so hopefully the words will make a migration to the listeners and become another world inside their own head by what they add to it. I have students who love to do slam poetry, but I could never do that because I know the silence of my heritage, the Grandmother never speaking. The words themselves that are delivered plainly and then they do what they do inside your ear.

**RCR:** Did you publish a lot before you became such a frequent performer? Did reading your work aloud change the writing process for you?

**DG:** I always have students give a final writing project in all of my classes because you have to get up in front of everybody. And even in the writing class, in the writing workshop, you have to read out loud and a lot of students don't like to. And I remember when I didn't like to do that either. But when you give it voice, that brings it into a new world. You know another Native belief is that when you write you kill the voice. The voice is very important, it's an energy field and when you put it down on paper it's like a coffin, it's like nailing the voice down on the page and then when you speak it again you bring it alive. And so I think reading aloud is one of the most important things that you do. I think I wrote for a long time, remember because I was shy, and then finally I began giving readings. And I remember

being absolutely terrified. But the more I did it the stronger I think my words became and now I love to give readings. I travel all the time. And often I will read from works in progress because it gives me the structure that I need. And in the back of my books I have started putting, and I know I did this with *The Mask Maker,* first reading at, you know, wherever I first spoke it into being. And I've even said that before: "This is a manuscript I'm still working on, I have never read it before, I am speaking it into being." And I give it a reading and it has a new authority and then I go back and rewrite and reorder. Speaking creates a reality.

**RCR:** When you teach, do you try to give to your students a love of performance? Is that something that's really important to you in how you teach? What direction do you try to give your students?

**DG:** I try to give them a stage on which they can be what they're supposed to be. We always start off with a reading list—you have to read before you can write. And then I give writing exercises and then we workshop them and then we go home and rewrite and bring them back and we continue to write and continue to read and continue to workshop. I don't know any other way. We talk about issues sometimes, but it's mainly in the doing it and the presenting it.

**RCR:** Has being part of student workshops and being more of the leader than a participator changed the way you write? Has your writing evolved differently because of the role that you are playing as a teacher?

**DG:** The biggest change that still comes for me is in the public readings, in connecting with the audience. But yes, in the class because I read so many good works—*The Best American Poetry* of a given year or *The Best American Essays*, I know I can always rely on those books. In giving writing workshops, and sometimes I even write in class, and in pruning and going over the students' work. I think it does help build my interior editor. Although, during the writing process that's exactly what you have to get rid of because you will take a risk and that editor will say "that's stupid, that doesn't mean anything, what do you think you're doing." You know we're always so hard on ourselves, most of us maybe. And to get that out of the way during the writing and then to bring it in during the rewriting, I think that's one thing I've learned from teaching.

**RCR:** You experiment with so many different types of writing—drama, novels, short stories, poetry, non-fiction. Does writing in one form spark another? Do you handle specific ideas in each genre or form? What kinds of relationships grow between the different levels of your writing?

**DG:** I started out in poetry and from there I moved to drama, because it was a hunger for those lost voices. I began writing Native plays with real people—the people that I was not allowed to meet, many of them were dead anyway by the time I came along—and from there I think I moved into short story and then novel and then after that to one of my very favorite forms, which is creative non-fiction. I've talked about this before, but for me the poetic rational is kind of an umbrella over all of it. I've given many readings where I read from all the different genres and someone eventually says, you know, they all sound alike. It has that same spark of the poetic rational in all of them. It's just the basics: the ideas that go into your head come through your mouth—the way you speak. We have natural rhythms, iambic pentameter; I'm almost talking in without realizing it. It's that heart beat rhythm and when that and the idea in the head and through the mouth meet on the page and there's some sort of alignment, that's when the stuff gets good. Writing is such an adventure. Sometimes something is a gift and it just comes, that's how I wish it would happen more often. And other times you struggle. You get an image and the reason for it being there… I don't know, something just sticks to you and then you kind of weed it out. You sweep up the clutter and the fragments and you find something: that is so much the way I write. In writing you find little shapes that are all somehow connected. Like a ladder with a missing rung and if I keep looking the structure will complete itself. It's trusting that inner voice.

**RCR:** In examining all of the poetry you've written I tried to look for an arc or sort of an evolution in form and I was struck by the fact that there didn't seem to be one. Even your first collection, *One Age in a Dream*, is so packed. It seems to have a part of everything—dialects, prose poems, traditional forms of poetry. Do you see your poetry evolving along a certain trajectory in some way?

**DG:** I don't know, it's just always come forth like a herd of cattle, stampeding cattle. I guess not. It just comes and I have followed it. Again, that many voices. It takes many voices to tell a story and I have certainly heard many voices inside myself. They are just out there ahead of me running and I am

just trying to keep up. I wish I could say that yes, I see this arc. I guess I see a thrust more than an arc. The writing just comes.

**RCR:** How important do you think it is for people to investigate their own culture or to create a specific history? A lot of people or students, including myself, don't have a very lengthy family tree or culture to fall back on and feel sort of lost in this society that seems to focus so much on having and knowing a specific foundation of culture or tradition. How important do you think that is to writing?

**DG:** I think you're very lucky because that is the genesis of writing, of creative life. When I grew up, back in the late 40s early 50s, it was what was called the melting pot days. Everyone came together, all of these different nationalities and became one people. Well, the one people that we were all to become had blonde hair and blue eyes and were very outspoken, just like my mother, and so I thought, I'm nothing. I looked down and I was half my mother and half my father and I looked down and there was nothing there. So I began to try to bring my halves together and create something out of nothing. That's exactly where I started and to this day when I write a poem I am looking at the great nothing and creating something out of it. You face a blank page as a writer and you put words on it. So I think it's great that people feel like they are starting with nothing. You just start—I feel like I am nothing, I don't know who I am. That's what I mean when I say "claiming breath." I did not have breath, I did not have space, and I claimed breath and I claimed space. This is what I am.

**RCR:** Do you think you would have been a writer had you not been Native American?

**DG:** Oh, definitely yes. If I had just been my mother I would have been again, still finding out who I was. Where does writing come from? It comes from a hunger, it comes from a need. And it just depends on how long that nagging remains. I just love moving words around; writing is having a very active, imaginative life. I hope I would have always been a writer. Words move where dreams move, and that's where I move.

Diane Glancy is the author of several collections of poetry and short stories, novels, non-fiction, and drama, including:

*The Iron Woman* (1990)
*Claiming Breath* (1992)
*The Relief of America* (2000)
*The Mask Maker* (2002)
*Pushing the Bear: A Novel of the Trail of Tears* (1996)
*(Ado)ration* (1999)
*The Cold-and-Hunger Dance* (1998)
*One Age In A Dream* (1986)
*The Only Piece of Furniture in the House* (1996)
*American Gypsy: Six Native American Plays* (2002)

# My Mother Looks Down When She Prays

Angela Vasquez-Giroux

I. My Mother's Mexico

The stories are legendary, almost, and they all
start the same way: Abuelito shaving before
working the third shift. He is always half-through,
the snow of the shaving cream still frozen to half
his face—wearing a white undershirt, the brown
of his skin coloring the shirt from beneath.
Almost brown itself.

I always knew Abuelito by his scent, the pine of
his Old Spice aftershave. Abuelito who watched
us building a snowman in the backyard of the house
on Fairmont, shaving and then drinking coffee.

Christmas had been dead three months before
Abuelito went with it, napping on the couch
that Tuesday, the scent of old brown pine in
his nostrils. I don't remember seeing white
at all, not heaven or cloud when I finally arrived
at home, finally sat in the kitchen swallowing coffee
with my mother. All she knows of Mexico are

the gifts Abuelito brought her: beaten gold earrings, a
fired clay donkey laden with small bottles of Kahlua.
She holds them in her hands, warming them to the
temperature of the cream stirred into her coffee, waiting
for the ground to color the snow brown from beneath.

II. Making Tamales

This year, they will wait until days before Christmas
to start it. I go with my mother, with my Abuelita,
and the three of us drive to the small Mexican store
in downtown Pontiac.

Abuelita has been going there for years,
since she was first married. Now that
she is a widow, we walk her into the store,
slowly; she has been ill.

The store is so small that it almost doesn't exist:
even Abuelita, thinning to a ghost this winter, fills
the aisles of cilantro and chiles. She gives us
instructions: forty packages of flour tortillas, twenty
corn. Hot chocolate and sweet bread for New Year's
morning, his birthday. A bag of some green spice

I know by scent, but not name—something that
boiled in the water with the meat on the stove
of the old house on Fairmont. Years ago, before
he dissolved into the water's vapor.

Three days later, my mother leaves me early
in the morning to make tamales. Her ceramic
cup of chocolate cools, half finished, on the kitchen
table; I save it there for her.

My sister, home for the first Christmas in years, comes to the house.
We spend the day together baking the cookies our mother makes
every Christmas, small balls of dough coated in the snow of the
powdered sugar. They bake, the whole kitchen warms; my sister is
solid to me for the first time in months, is thicker than her buttery voice
on the phone.

Our mother spends the whole day with her sisters, her mother—
she is trying to make them exist: she is trying to remember the
voice of her father, the scent of his cologne; she smells him in
the boiling meat, its green spice, the steam shrouding her mother
in fog—flattening the corn husks until they are gauze, spreading
the masa, filling it with the boiled pork. Wrapping them, folding
them until they are so heavy in the pot on the stove that they cannot
rise from it like the water of the steam, my mother saying "Stay."

# Pulling Away

Jessi Phillips

Philip used to love driving when the rest of the car's passengers were asleep. He would feel like a fearless navigator, the one in complete control. But now he just felt like the one doing all the work.

The sun streamed in the car, making the back of his neck sweat, but despite the warmth in the car, it was unseasonably cool for late August. The weather reports they had been diligently watching before their departure said fall-like temperatures and rain were to be expected for the next week, the worst weather they'd ever had in all their annual trips up to Cedar Lake.

He looked over at his wife, Mary, her back towards him. She stirred and for a moment he thought she might wake up and keep him company.

But she just rolled over, turning towards him, and kept dozing. She hadn't slept much since her mother's funeral, maybe a few hours a night for a few weeks, and he knew he should be glad she was finally resting. Instead he wished she would wake up and keep him company—listen to NPR with him, look at the map, worry about the upcoming weather spoiling their trip, anything. He turned the radio up in hopes that it would wake her. He wondered if she was pretending to be asleep.

He looked in the rear-view mirror at his daughter sleeping in the back seat with her head on her boyfriend Tommy's lap. He didn't like her riding without a seat belt, or blatantly laying her head near his boyfriend's crotch, but now wasn't the time to harp on her, his wife had reminded him before they left.

"We never have harped on her," he had commented. "She does whatever the hell she wants."

"We said we weren't going to raise her with a lot of bullshit rules. Is trusting your kids such a bad thing?"

He wondered sometimes if Amanda had been cloned from her mother instead of created between the two of them. A new, renovated model of the same make.

Mary hadn't even told him that Tommy was coming along until the day before they left. He'd objected, but it was too late, Mary had already given it the go-ahead. A week ago he had seen a condom wrapper in the wastebasket

of his daughter's bathroom. He hadn't yet told Mary. He figured he'd wait until everything had returned back to normal. She probably knew what was going on anyway, he thought. He was generally the last to know.

The beat-up pickup truck that had been behind him for at least a half hour pulled off onto a dirt road, leaving them alone in their rented car on this desolate two-lane highway. He grabbed the map out off his wife's lap. A few more hours. He hoped another car would follow them soon.

The cottage was still filled with a damp, musty, by-the-lake smell, a combination of wet towels and cigar smoke that Philip had always enjoyed. He imagined the many toddlers that had tracked sand onto the wood floors and adults that had played cards and drank beer at the kitchen table.

"Can Tommy and I have the two bedrooms upstairs, Mom?" Amanda asked as she walked into the kitchen, Tommy hiding behind her.

Phil looked at his wife objectionably but she returned to wiping down the counter.

"Sure, honey."

"What?" Philip countered. "No." Mary kept on wiping, ignoring him.

"You're sleeping in one of the bedrooms upstairs and we'll take the other one," Philip said. "Tommy can take the one down here."

"That doesn't make sense, Dad," Amanda objected. "The one down here is a double bed. The beds upstairs are both twin beds."

"It makes perfect sense to me."

Amanda left the kitchen in a huff, Tommy trailing behind her.

Mary kept on wiping the counter.

"She's sixteen, Mary, Jesus Christ."

Mary stared at him for several moments before looking down at the ground.

"Yes," she said. "You're probably right." She headed up the stairs.

He walked across the kitchen to the sliding doors overlooking the lake, pressing his forehead against the glass. The lake was a dark steel gray, and the wind was already beginning to send the branches of the trees swaying worriedly.

He ascended softly up the stairs, trying not to make them creak. His daughter's bedroom door was closed and he could hear she and Tommy talking and laughing. He opened the door to his bedroom to find Mary there, laying curled up on top of the bedspread.

He grabbed the car keys off the bedside stand and left.

Philip had been driving around for about an hour when he saw him. He'd went to a local gas station and bought some provisions for the cottage, choosing the most unhealthy items he could find—beef jerky, Coke, cigarettes, salt and vinegar potato chips, beer, and chocolate ice cream that was starting to melt and drip out of its container on the floor of the car. It had started to downpour, and Philip had just been driving, getting lost, testing the car around tight curves, when the boy's yellow jacket had caught his eye through the steam building up on the inside of his windshield.

"Do you need a ride?" Philip asked him, rolling down the window, rain droplets falling on the leather seats.

"Yeah! Thanks, man!" The boy entered the car. He smelled like cigarettes and rain.

"Where you headed?"

"To Brimley, it's about 20 miles from here, but as far as you're going is cool," the boy said. Philip merged onto the road and started driving.

"This is great. Thanks a lot. Usually only sketchy people pick me up."

"Oh?"

"Yeah, most people just let me get in the back of their pickup trucks. No heaters," the boy said, rubbing his hands in front of the vent.

"Oh, I always try to pick people up," Philip lied. He had never picked anyone up before. "Especially if they're young. I have a daughter about your age, I think. I wouldn't want her to be out hitchhiking, though. So what's in Brimley?"

"Oh, you know, my family actually. I was staying with some friends a little ways from here, working."

"Oh, what do you do?"

"Oh, I work for this canoe trip company. We give tours of the river Ernest Hemingway used to canoe on. You know who that is right?"

"Yes."

"I really like him. I just drive the canoes back and forth now, I don't give the tours yet. But anyway, my friends, their car is broken down and the next bus doesn't come until Tuesday, so I just thought I'd try my luck." He laughed.

Philip thought about the conversation he and Mary would have if Amanda's boyfriend looked like this boy instead of the clean-cut Tommy. Would he have been so eagerly welcomed? His long hair hung down to his shoulders, straight and greasy, and his jeans were tattered at the knees.

"So your daughter, is she in college or something?"

"High school."

"Oh. Around here?"

"No, we're on vacation, a little cottage at Cedar Lake."

"Well at least you got good weather for it." The boy laughed. "And it's still summertime! Someday I'm going to move somewhere it never gets cold. I think people pick up hitchhikers a little easier when it's warm."

"Why?"

"I don't know. Everyone's more cheerful I guess. Accessible. I don't know."

"Are you still in high school?" Philip asked him.

"No, I graduated in May. I'm just kind of hanging out for awhile, you know. I don't really want to go to college. At least not now."

"Actually, I don't know that I'll ever be going now," the boy said, staring out the window.

"Oh? Why is that?" A silence filled the car for a few moments.

"Well, my girlfriend. She's pregnant."

"Oh," Philip said awkwardly. "Well…"

"She's not even really my girlfriend actually," the boy said. "Just sort of a friend. It wasn't serious. I haven't told my parents yet. Actually I'm going home to get money from them."

"Has she decided what she's going to do?"

"No, not really. That's what I need money for. I mean, I feel like I should give her money for whatever she decides."

"That's good of you. It's a tough situation."

"Yeah," the boy said, half-smiling gratefully. "I mean, I was freaked out at first, but it will work out. Whatever happens. It's harder for her you know?

"Yeah."

"And my parents, god!" The boy put his hand to his forehead. "I think they'll be way more freaked out than I was. This isn't an uncommon occurrence, you know up here, unfortunately. Small town thinking and what not. But my parents, they're not really like that. But my parents, they're not from here. 'This kind of thing doesn't happen in our family,' I know that's what they'll say." He shook his head. "I'm in some deep shit, aren't I?" He laughed a little.

"Yeah, you sort of are," Philip told him. They both laughed.

"But everybody gets in deep shit now and then," Philip told him. "Sometimes it seems like the more you try to avoid it the more there is. You'd be surprised," he went on, "how many great things come from being in deep shit. Revelations. I mean sometimes deep shit can make you realize what you were in before wasn't really that much better than the deep shit you're in

now. Or it can end up turning itself around and you can have something so much better than if you'd just let things go on, business as usual."

Philip wasn't sure where his outpouring of wisdom had come from, but the boy slowly nodded, contemplating, and smiled. "I hope you're right," he said.

Philip thought about taking him back to the cottage for dinner, a way to cut through the stilted silence he'd been avoiding going home to. He wondered what everyone would say, him bringing a hitchhiker into their house, in this day and age, honey, with the kids here, what were you thinking?

But instead, they talked for the half hour it took to get to Brimley, about the number of Christian talk radio stations in the Upper Peninsula, about hiking trails around here, and how the boy had heard the rain was only supposed to last through tonight. He gave Philip directions until they were in front of his house, a respectable one story on the main street of a little town.

"Well, thanks, man. For the heater," the boy told him.

"You're welcome. Thanks for the conversation."

"Anytime. And tell your daughter I said hello."

He watched the boy enter his house and a light go on before pulling away. He turned up the radio, and drove back to the cottage.

# How to Fall in Love with Ariats When No One is Looking

Paige Warren

Those elongated women
whose boots found stirrup whose calves found air whose breeches found leather
so softly, they redefined how you thought of quick and slow

Surely they were made after the leather
They stepped downward, and the boots grew up their ankles like ivy
black from the soles, and wound
at the pinnacle with bay
Wedded to the saddle by that band

Isabel crouched, fourteen
nosing the fetlocks of the lesson ponies
and watched these women glide
gauze in her hand
wrapping and rewrapping beneath the knees

# The Girl My Grandfather Never Met

Greg Wright

My wife was too swollen. Her pregnant belly threatened to expand into the next county, and her ankles were inflated beyond recognition. So, needless to say, when I asked if she'd like to fly across the country to visit my ailing grandfather, she respectfully declined. "Matt, darling, they'd charge me for two seats. I can see it now: 'In the event of a water landing, please use the giant pregnant woman as a floatation device.'" Jodi said she loved me but she wasn't going anywhere. The neighbors agreed to feed her and take care of her while I was gone, as if she were a pet. I was grateful that they helped out, though, because I hadn't been thinking too clearly since I'd heard that a major heart attack had hospitalized my grandfather.

Throughout my childhood, Grandpa Chuck looked after me when things were too hectic for my parents. Typically, life was too hectic whenever my parents were home at the same time, and so I saw a lot of Grandpa Chuck. By the time I was ten, the sound of my dad grinding his teeth had become my cue to go to Grandpa Chuck's house. Grandpa Chuck lived only a few blocks away from us, so the two of us were pretty close.

Grandpa Chuck's was a fun place, full of scary, dusty rooms to explore, and Grandpa Chuck was a fun guy, always ready to play or tell me a story. He instinctively knew when I wanted more candy, and even through college, I'd never seen his candy dish empty. On the plane, I chuckled at the image of him pulling a candy dish out from behind his heart monitor at the hospital. "Well, looky here, Matty. I bought too many caramels, and I need somebody to eat them right away. Can you help me out?"

The thought of a heart monitor scared me. Grandpa Chuck was always a hale and hearty old man, and I didn't know how I'd react when I saw him weak and feeble. It was a vain hope of mine that my grandfather would outlive me, achieving biblical old age birthday after birthday. I'd always imagined the Grim Reaper arm-wrestling Grandpa Chuck, and Grandpa Chuck winning. While I ate my airline peanuts, I was shocked more than saddened to think that after all these years, his own heart attacked him.

I called Jodi from the airport as soon as we touched down. "How you feelin', honey?" "Pregnant and sweaty." Probably hungry, too, I thought but had the tact not to say aloud. I told her I was nervous about Grandpa Chuck. She told me some comforting cliché that frustrated me. All the same, I told her I was grateful for her support.

While I waited in the car rental line, I felt incredibly antsy. My trip's whole purpose was to see my grandfather, and I believed I was racing against time to see him alive. My parents said that they could pick me up, but I wanted my own car so I could be free to leave at any time. I was too old to ask my dad for the keys. From the airport, I dropped my luggage off at my old house, only saying hello to my mom and dad, and I drove over to the hospital, hurrying into the setting sun before visiting hours ended.

They had the same flowers in the hospital gift shop that they have in hospital gift shops everywhere. Still, I bought a big bouquet in hopes of fighting off the hospital's antiseptic smell. My parents had given me Grandpa Chuck's room number on a scrap of paper, and I followed the hospital map to the right floor. I didn't know what to expect in his room. I held my breath and stepped in.

Grandpa Chuck wasn't in the room. There was only a shriveled old man with tubes coming out of his nose and arm. Through half-closed eyelids, a flicker of recognition shimmered across his eyes. He gestured for me to come closer.

"How you doin'?" he asked. This old man had miraculously stolen Grandpa Chuck's voice. "How are you, Matty, my boy?"

"Doin' fine," I replied. "Jodi's pregnant. You knew that, didn't you?"

"I did. I did," the old man said, the muscles in his neck bulging as he nodded. "Congratulations. Heh heh. Knew you had it in you, Matty."

I felt my cheeks redden. "Thanks. Uh, I brought you flowers." My eyes darted around the room, overwhelmed by all the equipment designed to keep my grandfather alive. Even though I told myself I wouldn't ask, my nervousness overcame me and I blurted: "But how're you doing? Are you okay? They take good care of you here?"

Bleary old eyes that I hardly recognized looked up at me. "I was in surgery Thursday. Heh heh. I've done better than I'm doin' now. Can't say I'm feelin' my best. But you didn't come to hear that. Let's talk about something else. Conversations about old men's health always depress me. Especially when the old man is me. Heh heh."

"Well … life has been pretty busy during the pregnancy. We've been reading a lot of books about babies, decorating a room for the baby, that sort of

thing. Nothing much really to report." I fumbled through my mind, searching for conversation topics.

Our silence dragged out. I shifted my weight from foot to foot awkwardly, and finally decided to sit down. He yawned and it made me yawn. After a few minutes, the old man closed his eyes out of what looked like pain. He licked his lips, and said: "Did I ever tell you about a girl named Lynn?" I realized it was not pain but nostalgia that closed his eyes. After the pain of a heart attack, he was entitled to let his heart ache for a while, and nothing does the trick like nostalgia. "Did I? Have you heard about Lynn?"

Now I'd heard the story about Lynn dozens of times, mostly with my teeth glued together by caramels, but I was not about to remind the old man. After all, I knew that a heart attack at his age could conceivably push him right into his grave, and if this was my last opportunity to listen to one of Grandpa Chuck's stories, I didn't want to stop his train of thought. I didn't want to lie to him, either, though, so I just said, "Mmmm," and let his momentum carry him. The story wanted to come out, so I let it.

"It was when I was just a kid. Me and my buddies used to tear all over the place, into trouble everywhere. Harmless stuff, now that I think about it. But we thought we were hotshots back then, yessir. Heh heh. Well, there was this old geezer at the end of my block, Mr. Wardinski, and he was the most ornery old man you'd ever hope to meet. Ornery and cheap. All the rest of the neighborhood had switched over to indoor plumbing, but this old cuss was so stubborn he kept his outhouse since plumbing cost too much. People'd give him a hard time, and he'd just say, 'I don't want to crap in my own house. I ain't no animal.' But we knew it was 'cause he was too cheap." He shook his head at the frugality of someone long since dead.

"And Wardinski had this yippy guard dog, an annoying little mutt named Arrow or something. That thing would run after us kids all the way down the street, nippin' at our heels. It had every right to hate us, though, 'cause we tortured that dog nonstop." He always smiled when he got to the dog part. "We'd say, 'Come here, Arrow. Wanna treat?' and then – ZING! – one of us would nail that stupid dog with a slingshot. It'd yipe and run away. But I swear, every time you said 'Wanna treat?' that damn-fool dog would come a-runnin'. Heh heh. 'Wanna treat?' Heh heh heh." This time, the laughter was too much for the old man, and he put his hand gently on his chest and winced.

"You okay?" I asked.

"Heh. Yeah, I'm fine. Arrow's revenge, I guess. Heh heh." These laughs were gingerly executed. "Where was I?"

"Torturing Wardinski's dog."

"Yeah. So anyways, if Old Man Wardinski caught you messin' with his dog, he'd run out and holler at you, waving a shotgun. He always said he'd teach us a lesson, but the only lesson we learned was that we had to be quick so Wardinski wouldn't catch us. Heh heh." The old man ripped a long fart. "Ouch! Woo, Matty, I don't know where that one came from. It's not like I *eat* anything. All they ever give me around here is ice chips." In spite of my somber attitude, I couldn't help but snicker. He smiled at me. "Don't you laugh now. Don't laugh. Dammit, don't you laugh." Of course, I laughed all the harder at him telling me not to, just like when I was a kid. The dangerously old man who'd replaced Grandpa Chuck sighed and continued on with his story.

"Old Wardinski had a niece. He was old enough to be her grandfather. Hell, he was old enough to be *dead*, but he had this niece who'd come and visit every summer. She never came out to play, and we knew it was 'cause the old man never let her. When us boys were little, we didn't care. One less girl to ignore. But 'round about … age thirteen or so, we started taking a keen interest in the pretty girl locked away by her mean old uncle. Sometimes we'd go past Wardinski's house and we'd see her on the porch, reading or drawing. But the minute that damn dog started barking, Wardinski'd peer through the window, see us, and call his niece inside.

"As me and the gang got older, we got bolder. And as Wardinski's niece got older, she got prettier. In the summertime heat, tryin' to keep boys' minds offa pretty girls is like trying to keep flies offa honey. And just like flies, us boys were never far from the Wardinski house, tryin' to see this pretty girl. I think all us boys were a little in love with her. Keepin' her locked away was a crime, we always said. But if it made her uncle a villain, it made her a princess in a tower to us boys. We'd always talk about her and what we thought she was doin'.

"One day, I sez to those punks: 'You boys are all chicken. All day long you just talk about that girl. "I bet she's doin' this. I bet she's doin' that." Phooey! You babies are all talk.' So then they say to me: 'Oh yeah? What're you gonna do besides talk? You gonna waltz up there and invite yourself to dinner?' Well, I hiked my britches up and I sez right back to 'em: 'I ain't goin' in there,' I sez, 'but I *did* write her a letter.'" The old man just beamed when he said this. "Those kids's jaws fell right to the ground. They were real sore about it, but when I asked 'em to help me deliver the letter, they had to. Because we were a team, y'know. They had to.

"We watched the Wardinski house like hawks, hiding behind bushes across the street. We just needed a chance, one chance. Early one Saturday

morning we saw it. From our angle, we could see Wardinski's backyard, and that morning he went there with a newspaper under his arm. He was headed to his infamous outhouse for nice long crap! We had plenty of time to deliver my letter. Heh heh. Don't even remember what it said now. Somethin' like: 'I think it's real bad that your uncle is so mean. What's your name?' Somethin' embarrassing like that. Longer than that, but I can't remember what it said. Oh yeah, I signed it 'Charles' instead of 'Chuck' just to show her how dignified I was." I gave him a courtesy chuckle. He'd told me that detail innumerable times and I'd never thought it was funny, but I chuckled because I knew he thought it was funny.

"While Old Man Wardinski was dropping bombs in the backyard, us boys snuck up to the door. The letter was tremblin' in my hand. I crouched down and slipped it under the door. When I stood up again, I saw that pretty girl lookin' back at me through the window. I was so shocked, I backed up and knocked over a pot fulla dead flowers. The noise alerted Arrow inside, and he started barkin' like hell. We all took off runnin'. When we were halfway down the street, I looked back and saw Old Man Wardinski runnin', tryin' to hold up his britches and his shotgun at the same time. He was shoutin' and swearin' up a storm. 'If I catch you damn kids around my place again, I'm gonna kill you!' Then he raised the shotgun up to fire a warning shot … and his pants fell down! Heh heh heh!" I laughed at this image, a genuine laugh too, even though I know the story by heart. The old man survived his laugh, maybe even survived because of his laugh.

"We kept up our watch faithfully, day after day, to see how she'd respond. One afternoon, she came and read on the porch. We knew she knew we were watchin' her. I kept tellin' them how I was gonna steal her heart, but by the end of the afternoon, we'd all but given up hope. Then Old Wardinski called her in for supper, so she closed her book and went in. The other boys whined about goin' home themselves, saying there wasn't any more to see. Then I spotted the paper. She left a piece of paper on the porch!

"Quietly, we crawled across Wardinski's crabgrass lawn. Even though we needed to sneak away, I read that paper right there by the porch. It was a letter. I may not remember my letter, but her letter, her letter I'll never forget. It said: 'Dear Charles, I loved your letter. That was so sweet of you to think of me. I hate being cooped up in this house all day long with nobody to talk to but the dog. So you're the one with black hair?' I musta told her that in my letter, even though I don't remember. 'Well, I think you're a handsome young man, and brave too, to risk your life delivering a letter to me. Alas!' She musta had a flair for the dramatic. 'We can never be together because of

my uncle. I would like to meet you, though, at least once before I go home at the end of the summer. I want to get to know you. Tomorrow night, meet me in my room. Wait until after dark, so that Uncle Horace will be asleep.' Horace. His name was Horace Wardinski. Can you believe it? Heh heh. 'My room is on the second floor in the back. There is a trellis you can climb to get up there. I'll see you tomorrow, Charles. Love, Lynn.'

"Let me tell you, Matty boy, I didn't know what to do with myself. She signed it 'Love, Lynn' and I just did not know what to do." The old man's smile was bigger than it had been all night. I reciprocated. "The boys in my gang went nuts. They gave me the hardest time, punchin' my arms and pinchin' my cheeks, and I took it all with a smile. When I got home, though, I almost got sick in bed while I was thinkin' about her, I was so nervous. I don't remember what I did the next day, but I was a nervous wreck.

"All my buddies wanted to come along with me the next night, but I told them to go fly a kite. I didn't know exactly how I was going to execute this romantic adventure, but I'd be damned if those boneheads were gonna screw it up. Those guys were pretty sore at me about it, but I didn't want them anywhere near me when I climbed up that trellis. No two ways about it. After dusk, I went to my room, and I slunk out the first-floor window, hopin' my parents wouldn't notice. The night air only made me more nervous, and I kept giggling and shivering to myself. A pretty girl waiting in her bedroom for me! I didn't know what to expect. I paced up and down the street, part of me wishin' time would go faster and part of me hopin' it would stop altogether.

"When I figured Old Man Wardinski was asleep, I slipped to the back of the house. As I slowly and silently grabbed hold of the trellis, I peered into the first floor window. It was Wardinski's! I had to climb right past his window to get up to Lynn's. My heart was poundin' in my ears. Quietly, I took a deep breath and held it, and I carefully climbed up the trellis. That thing was old and rickety. Wasn't even attached to the wall, just lyin' against it. Up through Lynn's window, I saw a light on. I wanted to rush right up there, but was too scared about makin' noise. So I climbed one horrible, slow step at a time. I laid one hand on the windowsill—I was almost there—when I heard the sound at the front of the house.

"Somebody rattled the door knocker like crazy! It was a real racket, and the damn dog started barking and snarling. I heard Wardinski swearing below me. I didn't know where to go. If I went up, he could catch me in Lynn's room, but if I went down, he'd see me go past. To tell you the truth, Matty, I don't know if I coulda moved anywhere. I was frozen, my ass hangin' in the breeze.

"Wardinski, he ran up to the front door, and Arrow took off down the street, barkin' up a storm. I looked up and saw Lynn's worried face lookin' back at me. She tried to help me up, but Wardinski came back to his room and saw the trellis wigglin'. So he stuck his head out the window and looked up at me. I about pissed myself right then and there. 'Aha! You little bastard. Gotcha treed now!' the old man shouted as he grabbed holda the trellis. Then he gave the trellis a shove, and I fell ass over teakettle down to the ground. I heard the bone in my arm crunch when I hit the ground, but I couldn't feel it 'til I got to the bushes in the back of Wardinski's yard." He stopped to grab his right arm, as if the memory of his broken arm hurt more than his chest pains.

"My parents went right through the roof. They were furious I snuck out, and they were furious I had to go to the hospital in the middle of the night. I told them the entire story while the doctor fixed me up, cryin' the whole time. They grounded me for the rest of the summer, and my dad woulda tanned my hide if the doctor hadn't been there. My parents were ready to kill me, Wardinski was ready to kill me, and, worst of all, I never got to see Lynn and had no way of contacting her." A nurse poked her head in to check on how the old man was doing, and he gave her the high sign. She brought in more ice chips, and I had to hold back a laugh. She said it was good to see "Charles" so animated. I smiled and agreed. He just wanted to keep telling his story. He was excited to get to his favorite part.

"For the next few days," he started up again, "I just sulked around the house, too busy feelin' sorry for myself to wanna do anything. Then, late one night, the boys tapped on my window. Petey told me that they were the ones who'd rattled on Wardinski's door. He said it was because they were sore at me not lettin' 'em come. This made my blood boil. Right away, Petey started apologizin' for everybody in a hushed whisper. I coulda killed alla them right then and there. Petey just kept apologizin' like a sap. Then he hit me with the sad news." The old man crunched a few ice chips, grinding his teeth before continuing. "Wardinski had sent Lynn away for the rest of the summer."

My heart always sinks at that part, even though Grandpa Chuck has more story to tell. "That broke my heart. I'd imagined us kissin', fallin' in love, even gettin' married some day. Heh heh. Didn't know any better. And you know what? She never came back. Never found out the details of it all, but I guess her parents didn't want to send her where hooligans'd try to sneak into her room. When I heard this, I almost started bawlin'. Instead, I hit my cast on the windowsill, but it just made me mad and hurt.

"The boys, my so-called buddies, said they'd do anything to make it up to me. Like I said, I was frustrated and confused and didn't know what to do. What first popped into my head was revenge. I didn't care about the consequences, and those turkeys couldn't back down after they'd said they'd do anything for me. If I woulda waited another five minutes, I woulda lost my nerve. Instead, wearing my pajamas, I hopped out my window, ready for anything. Some of those punks tried to back down, but I grabbed 'em and reminded 'em that their stupid stunt had cost me my right arm. They didn't know what to say to that, so they just followed along in silence.

"I didn't know what we were gonna do. But as we got close to Wardinski's, I suddenly got an idea. We'd tip over that bastard's outhouse! Heh heh heh. This got their spirits up. An outhouse for an arm. It seemed like justice to us.

"We crept through the bushes in the back, tryin' not to wake up the dog or the old man. Everything was silent in the moonlight. We walked out onto the grass cautiously. I was glad to have the whole gang there to help, because with the cast on my right arm, I couldn'ta done nothin' by myself. If we had any hope of not gettin' caught, we'd hafta get that outhouse over in one shove. So we all put our backs into it, and knocked it over in one fell swoop.

"As the outhouse crashed, we heard Old Man Wardinski shoutin' at the top of his lungs. How could he know so fast? We all ran for the bushes. 'Wait!' I whispered. We all listened. The yelling was coming from *inside* the outhouse. And since we'd pushed it from behind, the outhouse door faced the ground and he was trapped. The adrenaline made me laugh like a girl. I sat there, out of breath, laughin' my head off. All us boys started laughin' like madmen. Old Man Wardinski just kept shoutin' and swearin'.

"Then the strangest thing happened. The old man's head popped outta the hole at the bottom of the outhouse! He tried to crane his head so he could see us. 'Hey, you kids,' he shouted, 'I can *see* you, you little bastards!' But we knew he couldn't see us through the bushes, so we just sat there and kept laughin' at him.

"Us laughin' just made that old codger even madder. He didn't know what to do. He was stuck in the outhouse, with his head where his ass oughta be! So he yelled to his dog: 'Arrow! Attack, Arrow, attack! Yah! Kill, boy!' But the dog was just yipin' and barkin' at the back door. Then, heh heh, then he shouted: 'If you attack those boys, Arrow, I'll give you a treat.' Well, when that stupid mutt heard the word treat, he came a-runnin'. 'Cept he didn't run after us, he ran yippin' to the old man for his treat. He ran right across that yard and – SPLOOP! – he fell into the outhouse pit in the ground. Now us

boys were rollin' on the ground with laughter. Oh, the look on Wardinski's face when his dog fell into that cesspool. The dog, he just kept yippin' and splashin' down in there. Heh heh heh heh!" At the end, Grandpa Chuck wiped the tears from his eyes, just like always. I had teared up too.

"He never could pin that little prank on us. I was still grounded the rest of the summer, but I always had that night to laugh at. I'd won in the end, even if I didn't get to meet Lynn. And, like I said, she never came to our neighborhood again. At least, not that I know of. Ever since, I've always wished that I coulda gotten to meet her."

It is always at this endpoint, at this closing of Grandpa Chuck's story, that I add my own after-comment. In the hospital, though, as I looked at an old man who'd be lucky to last the night, I said it with a lump in my throat. "Maybe you still will meet her, Grandpa Chuck. You never know."

"I guess you're right," he said. "She's probably still out there somewhere."

We talked a little more, yammering about this and that. Visiting hours had long since been over, but it wasn't until late at night that the nurse kicked me out. I still consider that night's goodbye to really be my final goodbye, even though I came to see him the next day with my parents. Small talk with my parents around didn't have the same emotional impact as the story we shared. At the end of the weekend, I had to catch the plane back home. I would have liked to have stayed around through his recovery, but they needed me at work and the neighbors couldn't take care of Jodi forever. A month after I came home, Jodi went to the hospital in the middle of the night and gave birth to our daughter, Katy. There was a window of opportunity for us to take her to see Grandpa Chuck. Things were too hectic for us, though, and we figured he would make it until our visit at Christmas. He had made it through his stay at the hospital okay, after all. All the same, he died about three months after Katy was born, without ever having seen her.

I think about that story a lot. I'd heard that one about Wardinski's niece so many times. Why did hearing it that last time mean so much to me? It was just a goofy story about kids acting crazy, yet I was so glad I'd heard it. Maybe I like it because it's about what we're all doing: trying to connect with somebody and things getting messed up and twisted into something completely different. Now that the old man is gone, thinking about that story makes me want to cry as much as laugh because it fills me up with so much nostalgia. To keep them all fresh in my mind, I tell my daughter stories about her Grandpa Chuck when I tuck her into bed. And when I feel especially full of nostalgia, I call her by her middle name, Lynn.

# Notes on the Persian Word for Amber, *Kahrobaa*

Sarah Sword

Even holding a quarter-sized violin,
I knew the real pleasure was in the loose hair
brushing the ties
of my halter
top, and past the ties
to the small of my back.
My hair,
always French braided,
fishbone braids
rods stiff as horse's ribs
and forbidden
to run down my back.
My hair, hair I knew
was as soft as the horsehair
on my bow, hair I was
forbidden to touch,
forbidden to unbraid,
forbidden to feel. Days
it was washed, days I was put in the sun to dry
in a golden halter

I learned to tilt
my head just slightly,
just enough to feel a thousand fingers
smoothing the skin of my shoulder blades,
the back of my waist,

just enough to know the translucent seduction of hair
as the sun dissolved it into amber,

whose Persian word is *kahrobaa*,
that which steals hay.

I know the sound of amber stealing
hay must be the sound of rosin
on horsehair, must be the sound
of hair brushing my skin, the sound of secrets

almost revealed, the slow
ache of the stifle joint,
the horse's thigh
just
before it stretches
into a lope.
Turn, turn my back into an unfretted
finger board,

the moth-light fingers on the strings,
the untangling of ribbons
from the mane,
the stealing of gold
from the horse's mouth.

To seduce the insects in a breath

how perfect she must be, flecked with wings,
ancient and permanent, something that could lift hay
from the ground, something that could almost float

a fossil resin,
skimmed from the intestines of sperm whales
into perfume, like ambergris, the gray amber.
Believe me, I want to be as delicate as the white moths,
I want to be one of the white moths clustered
under the light -

and doesn't every woman want to be a paper lantern
mothed with rice paper, a phalenopsis petal,
something worthy of the tawny Persian calligraphy?
Doesn't every woman long to be the stone
whose secret
is magnetism -
long to be the thief of hay?

# About the Contributors

**Marcia Aldrich** is the author of *Girl Rearing*, published by W. W. Norton. Aldrich currently teaches creative writing at Michigan State University and serves as Faculty Advisor to *Red Cedar Review*.

**Bayard** is at work on his nineteenth novel and actively seeking literary representation.

**Boog** was born in the Upper Peninsula, and is a recent graduate of Michigan State University.

**Douglas Dowland** is currently in his second year of graduate study at The University of Iowa. He is currently revising his senior honors thesis—on the later works of John Steinbeck—for publication. Dowland was General Editor of *Red Cedar Review* from 2000-2001.

**Stuart Dybek** is the author of two collections of short stories, a collection of poems, and a chapbook of short short fiction and prose poems. His fiction, poetry, and nonfiction have been published in numerous magazines including *The New Yorker, Atlantic, Harper's, DoubleTake,* and *Poetry*. He has received numerous awards, including: the 1995 PEN/Bernard Malamud Prize; an Academy Institute Award in Fiction from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1994; a Guggenheim Fellowship; and four O. Henry Prizes, including an O. Henry first prize for his story, "Hot Ice." Currently, Dybek is Professor of English at Western Michigan University and a member of the permanent faculty for the Prague Summer Writers Seminars.

In addition to three novels, a book of short stories, a collection of essays, and six collections of poems, **Dan Gerber**'s work has been published in: *The Nation*, *The New Yorker*, *Poetry*, and *Best American Poetry 1999*. Nominated for *Pushcart* prizes in poetry and nonfiction, he received The Michigan Author Award in 1992 and The Mark Twain Award for distinguished contributions to midwestern literature in 2001. His most recent collection of poems, *Trying to Catch the Horses,* won the 1999 first prize for poetry from *Forward Magazine*.

**Angela Vasquez-Giroux** is an English and Art History undergraduate at Michigan State University. She is a student of Diane Wakoski and a member of the Alchemists.

**Diane Glancy** is author of a great number of plays, novels, poems, and non-fiction pieces. She received her undergraduate degree in English from the University of Missouri, her M.A. from Central State University in Edmond, Oklahoma, and her M.F.A. at the Iowa Writers' Workshop. Glancy was also Artist-in-Residence for the State Arts Council of Oklahoma, and is now a faculty member of Macalester College in Saint Paul, Minnesota, where she teaches Native American literature and creative writing courses.

**Judith Minty** is the author of five full-length collections of poetry and three chapbooks. Her first book, *Lake Songs and Other Fears*, was recipient of the US Award of the International Poetry Forum. Her work has appeared in over fifty anthologies and in numerous literary journals. She directed the Creative Writing Program at Humboldt State University in California and most recently taught at University of Alaska, Anchorage. Minty presently lives along the Lake Michigan shoreline with her Yellow Dog named River and spends part of the year hermitizing at an old fishing shack in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

**Jon Muzzall** lives in Detroit, Michigan.

**Jessi Phillips** graduated from Michigan State University in May, with a Bachelor's Degree of English. She hopes to enter an M.F.A. program within a year after graduation; in the meantime she plans on traveling. Her dream is to someday write and teach writing for a living. "Pulling Away" received third place in the 2002 Jim Cash Fiction Contest.

**Stephen Rachman** is Associate Professor of English at Michigan State University and Director of the American Studies Program. He writes on Nineteenth-Century American literature and culture, medicine and literature, and various documentary forms.

**Evelyn Shakir** is the author of *Bint Arab: Arab and Arab American Women in the United States*. She has also written a number of essays on Arab American literature, produced a radio documentary on Lebanese and Syrians in Massachusetts, and reviewed books for The Arabic Hour television pro-

gram, produced in Boston. "Any Other Name" is one of a series of stories she is writing that are set in the Arab American community. Other stories in the series have appeared in the collection *Post-Gibran: New Arab American Writers* and in the journal *Flyway*.

**Craig Shaw** has worked as a newspaper reporter and editor in Chicago and Los Angeles. He has written two novels and a short-story collection. His work is forthcoming in *Fiction International*.

**Sarah Sword** is a Ph.D. student in Pure Mathematics, writing her thesis under the direction of Christel Rotthaus, and studying poetry under the direction of Diane Wakoski.

**Barbara Van Noord** has published in a number of literary journals, including: *The American Scholar*, *The Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Kalliope*, *Cottonwood*, *The Minnesota Review*, *The Seattle Review*, *Nimrod*, and *The Widener Review.* She is also the author of a full-length book of poems, *The Three Hands of God*, Amherst and Writers Press.

**Diane Wakoski**, who has published more than 20 collections of poetry, is Poet in Residence at Michigan State University. Her most recent book is a selection of poems concerning food and drink, *The Butcher's Apron*, published by Black Sparrow Press, 2000. She is the 2003 recipient of the Michigan Library Center for the Book Author of the Year Award.

**Paige Warren** graduated from Michigan State University in December with a degree in English. She plans to go on to graduate school in the fall, and in the meantime continues to write, substitute teach, guest lecture and sell Victoria's secrets to the greater Lansing area. She would like to dedicate this poem to her mother and father, who keep her in Ariats and in the saddle, regardless the ride.

**Greg Wright** is a Ph.D. candidate in English at Michigan State University. He advocates peace, especially with those who would threaten to harm him.