

Fall 1976

On Gladys Cardiff

Rich Ives

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Ives, Rich (1976) "On Gladys Cardiff," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 7 , Article 34.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss7/34>

This Review is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in CutBank by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

To Frighten a Storm

Gladys Cardiff

Copper Canyon Press

Port Townsend, Washington, \$3.50 paperback

Gladys Cardiff is a poet of image worlds. Her poems are lyric, suggestive and visual. She is adept at creating a poetic scene through the use of carefully selected detail.

"I can see inside the door where the dim shapes
Of bellows and tongs, rings and ropes hang on the wall,
The place for fire, the floating anvil,
Snakes of railroad steel, wheels in heaps,
Piled like turtles in the dark corners."

In a few places the poems rely a bit too heavily on rather simple, nearly formulaic approaches, such as "Simple" which merely lists "cures", and "Balance Beam" which is about (you guessed it) writing poems, or on Indian heritage and background, such as "Prayer to Fix the Affections" in which the strongest lines are taken from *Sacred Formulas of the Cherokee* and the rest of the poem merely embellishes them. But even with these weaknesses the book remains strong. There is a long poem reminiscent of David Wagoner's "Guide to Dungeness Spit" that makes a love poem something more than a love poem, and a moving weave of a present day situation with a painting by Bruegel the Elder. And in "Leaves like Fish" there is a poetically successful philosophical meditation.

Leaves Like Fish

Cottonwood, willow and brier,
Night air billows in the dark grove,
Hauls the alders over, their leaves

Jumping, spilling silver-bellied on the lawn.
The lighted wind is running with a flood
of green fish, phosphorescent and wild

On the winter grass, breaking like struck matches,
Without warmth or place, random as green minnows.
Above the clouds the sky waits, one-celled,

Expanded over tides and winds, loving
the south wind as much as the north,
schooling the planets in discretion and form.

To Frighten a Storm is a promising first effort by a capable poet. Copper Canyon Press has again presented us with its standard of high quality work in producing the book. The Northwest is especially fortunate in having two excellent presses (Copper Canyon and Graywolf) which treat the process of producing books of poetry as the craft that it can and should be. That care combined with the talents of poets such as Gladys Cardiff gives the Northwest and the country a much needed view of books of poetry which are more than the token gestures of big business publishing.

Rich Ives