

MEREDITH HALL

Pownal, ME

Literary GOF Recipient 2004 for Creative NonFiction

EXCERPTED FROM VARIOUS ESSAYS

I feel the press of time. I started to write seriously two years ago, at the age of fifty-two. In fact, I started very late to do a lot of things most people do much earlier in their lives. After being financially devastated by a divorce when my sons were in late elementary school, I was suddenly the sole provider for my children. I found myself reduced to cleaning houses to make a living. I had to return to school to gain a way of supporting my family. . . I graduated *summa cum laude* when I was forty-five years old. . .

I think that my story is compelling. I have never spoken out loud about these events in my life, or their effect on me. As my experiences are given voice, I become bound to all girls, to all women who have experienced devastating loss in their lives. Given light, my stories become a reclamation of what has been lost, and a psalm to personal strength, to love. They become the warp and weft of grief and happiness. I am defined in many ways by the events of my girlhood. I have discovered great freedom—both creative and spiritual—as a result of such profound loss and the gratitude that comes from finding ways to live a rich life no matter what. Women carry forbidden stories and secret shames. . .

I am playing catch-up in my life, compressing into my remaining time all the writing inside me which is begging for expression. . .

Writing is an entirely selfish act. In order to write, I must remove myself from the world. I must claim a universe of solitude around me like a silent star roaming in unbounded space. I can be in relation to no one. No one can be waiting for me, no one can be kindly staying quiet downstairs while I enter my place, the secret and mysterious place where my stories live. I waited all those years, the unwritten gathering force like a swelling river behind the dam. Now, my children no longer live here. Now, I am a writer. . .