

Resolution

In the first dream
my guidance counselor
makes a clerical error
and I do not have enough credits.
So in middle life
I go back to high school.
But I forget to show up for class,
and I don't know how to study any more,
so I never graduate.
This dream repeats.

When I was a kid I was mad
my mother treated me like an adult,
blaming me for her lost chances.
But now I'm mad
that as a kid
I did not act like an adult
and take the wheel
or just speak up.

When I was in college and my mother called, drunk again,
stereo throbbing behind her,
Jimmy Jay?
The most I did then was say,
Listen, old lady, if you don't knock this off,
we will lock you up. Hear me?
Lock you up.
For years
she stopped calling
but kept on drinking.
What if I had honked the horn,
pulled the car over,
told her to stop

what really needed stopping?

She is gone now,
I even threw away her thank you note,
her gratitude for my older sister's attention,
Vickie and her girls
have been wonderful.
What comes after?
I'll always be circling back.

In the other dream
I am still living at home
with all my sisters and brother,
under her roof. Once I get a job,
or once I save money,
or once I make a decision,
I can move out.
But that will never happen.
And I'm middle-aged and fearful,
holding my knees to my chin
on my old bunk bed,
waiting for her to crash
through the door.



Photo: William Reichard

James Cihlar's book of poems, *Undoing*, is available from Little Pear Press. His poems have appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *Bloom*, *Minnesota Monthly*, *Northeast*, *The James White Review*, *Wisconsin River Valley Journal*, *Water~Stone Review*, *Mankato Poetry Review*, *Briar Cliff Review*, *Plain Songs*, and in the anthologies *Aunties* (Ballantine 2004), edited by Ingrid Sturgis, and *Regrets Only* (Little Pear Press), edited by Martha Manno. The recipient of a Minnesota State Arts Board Fellowship for Poetry, a Glenna Luschei Award from *Prairie Schooner*, and a collegiate award from the Academy of American Poets, Cihlar lives in St. Paul, Minnesota, with his partner.