

RICHARD SCHIFFMAN

### **Fate of Vapors**

What if ten thousand fingers in the sky  
were tugging you this way and that  
stretching you like salt water taffy  
and carding you like wool.

What if all the mamas of the world  
were pinching your rosy cheeks,  
stroking your calves and patting your buttocks,  
tousling your cotton-candy hair. What if  
some clenched fist in the belly were swelling,  
your arms and legs severed, eyes popping  
from their sockets, ears swiveling,  
then sailing off like saucers into light.

What if the funhouse mirror of the sun  
flattened your vapor face like pizza dough,  
then pinched your torso thinner  
than a shrike's gullet.

Would you recognize yourself even then?  
Would you tell the other clouds in the sky  
that they were made for this: to leak  
like loose change from all the pockets  
of the air, to spend themselves in winds  
and rains, to fray at every extant edge  
of their self-cherishing shapefullness  
until nothing remains but vanishing.