

# clear

*"Let's make one thing clear . . . water."  
That's what he said,  
at the Iowa State Fair.  
Seated among the others--  
men and women . . .  
some with families in tow . . .  
each comprehending how  
Iowa's fallopian borders  
could mean  
more life than death . . . here.  
Learn here: a river without water is an empty bed.  
Taste here: the sweetest raspberries picked in childhood are wild at the river.  
Awaken here: on a sun-speckled sandbar, all the senses begin to make sense.  
Remain here: like the father whose father  
ushered his young son toward Turkey Creek and a willow grove.  
The family's whetstone had prepared their knife.  
A willow stick was culled, then experienced hands  
tapped, tapped the bark--coaxing it forward  
to reveal fresh wood and the spot to cut the notch.  
Resetting its yellow sleeve,  
a new willow whistle was handed to the boy.  
Amid the applause of poplar leaves and cottonwood confetti,  
the instrument was steadied on eager lips  
as branch and breath, together,  
trickled a small gift toward the creek . . . a note;  
and it was clear.*