



# Compass Rose

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**Interview with Midge Goldberg:**

**Compass Rose:** *As you were developing as a writer, were there any artists you tried to emulate? How did that affect your work?*

**Midge Goldberg:** There were writers that I liked that got me into it when I first started. In a class that I took there was this table full of books and I just randomly picked up one, and it was by Rhina P. Espaillet and I loved it. I connected with it right away. So, I read more of her work and it felt like the kind of poetry I would write. She writes in form; sonnets and things. I don't know that I specifically analyzed it and said "I'm going to copy it" but I felt like if I were going to write it would be kind of like that anyway. I also like Edna St. Vincent Millay and B.H. Fairchild for some of the same reasons.

**CR:** *How do you approach a new piece?*

**Goldberg:** I think that's as varied as the poem. I've had ones where a few lines would come to me while I was standing in line or driving and I can't write it down, so I just keep repeating it over and over until I get somewhere I can write and it feels like the poem flows from that. Other times it's much more difficult. I'm going through a slow time right now and I'll just write anything on a piece of paper to see if something comes out of that. Sometimes it's easy, most of the time it's harder.

**CR:** *How do you think you handle criticism?*

**Goldberg:** I think I've dealt pretty well with criticism. [...] I've learned this, too, over the years, it's important to see what people are understanding from your poem and if they're not getting it then there has to be something in here that isn't leading them in that direction. So, what is it? But I belong to this workshop now in Newberry Port, the Powwow River Poets, and they're such a good

group of poets that I take their opinions very seriously, everything they say I really consider.

*CR: Do you have a history of writers in your family? If not, how did you know you wanted to become a writer?*

**Goldberg:** No. I came to it very late, I haven't been writing poetry for a long time. I on-and-off wrote little things. I tried to write short stories. That was where I was coming from when I started in that class I told you about, I wanted to write short fiction and it was a half fiction, half poetry class. I thought I wanted to do the fiction and the minute we switched to poetry I thought, oh yeah! This is it; this is easier. I feel more comfortable doing this. And that was only about seven years ago.

*CR: What reaction do you aim to extract from your readers?*

**Goldberg:** I'd say mostly a kind of recognition of like, "Oh yeah, I've felt like that." That's a main one. Or "I've felt like that but I've never put it into words. But now that you've said it I recognize that." Sometimes I may want a little more intrigue or humor for a reaction.

*CR: What's the strangest thing that you've done to help support your writing?*

**Goldberg:** I drove to Wells College in New York. It was about an eight to ten hour drive and three car loads of us drove there to give a reading for this anthology we were in. I think we might of sold two books and when we started dividing up all the gas and all the food and everything... nobody's in poetry for the money.

*CR: The theme of traveling comes up often in your collection "Flume Ride." How does traveling affect your writing?*

**Goldberg:** It's a combination of traveling and what it's like to be somebody in a different in environment, which I guess that fits in well to that traveling metaphor. Like when I say all the time when I give my readings, I grew up in Florida and now I live here in New Hampshire and it's always like being a little bit of an outsider and I notice things that people who are from here don't notice so much, and that's the same experience as when you're traveling. You notice all these things that to the people who live there that are just

normal. So, I suppose it's that underlying feeling of being an outsider sometimes is what the theme is.

**CR:** *You use a lot of form in you poetry. How does form help or hinder your poetic style?*

**Goldberg:** It just seems natural. I start to write and it just seems to start to naturally go towards that and some of them have a kind of logic underlying them. Like a sonnet is sort of a little argument, a little back-and-forth, with some kind of a surprising end. And sometimes I tend to do that anyway, I argue back-and-forth with myself. Sometimes it just comes out that way and I find it fits very nicely and I like working in the structure. I find that it's like an exercise because it forces you to condense and to look for exactly the right word, and sometimes in the process of looking for that metrical word I come up with a thought that I would not have had before hand and yet the thought is so much better than what I was trying to say, so that it actually pushes the poems to a better level.