

IRENE O’GARDEN

I love words. I love their looks, their sounds, their meanings and their impact.

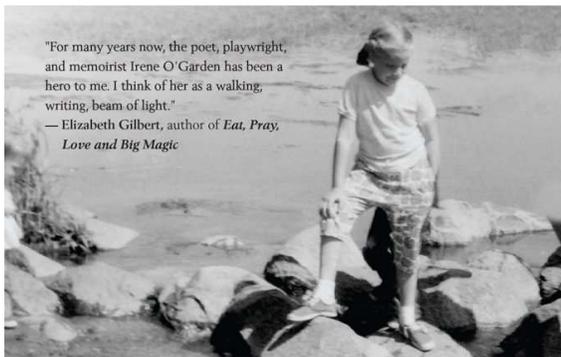
I constantly explore ways to share such pleasures through writing poetry, essays, and theatre pieces, by using my trained voice and body as a performer and using my trained hands as a professional calligrapher. Each of these arts helps clarify and amplify meaning, which is my ultimate job. – Irene O’Garden



BOOKS:

RISKING THE RAPIDS: How My Wilderness Adventure Healed My Childhood

Available on Amazon



“For many years now, the poet, playwright, and memoirist Irene O’Garden has been a hero to me. I think of her as a walking, writing, beam of light.”
— Elizabeth Gilbert, author of *Eat, Pray, Love* and *Big Magic*

RISKING THE RAPIDS

How My Wilderness Adventure
Healed My Childhood

IRENE O’GARDEN
Author of *Women on Fire*

I grew up in a repressed mid-century Midwest household with six other siblings, a TV-personality father, an icy mother and rivers of martinis. The shocking death of my problematic older brother in 2014 prompted me (at age 62) and other relatives to seek closure on a journey through the remotest spot in the lower forty-eight, Montana’s Bob Marshall Wilderness. What was described as a genial river “float” became a harrowing whitewater experience. That story, braided with the narrative of my corrosive upbringing and subsequent healing, is told in my forthcoming book, “Risking The Rapids: How My Wilderness Adventure Healed My Childhood.” (Mango, February 1, 2019)

I am eager to share that it is never too late to heal from family damage, that risk assists recovery and that being afraid is nothing to be afraid of.

In addition to Elizabeth Gilbert’s lovely words gracing the cover, here are some other responses to the book from people I deeply admire:

“RISKING THE RAPIDS is a deep and powerful memoir. Irene O’Garden sifts through her family’s shared pain (and shared joy!) with elegance and care — searching for nothing less than ultimate understanding and supreme forgiveness.”

-Martha Beck, author of *Finding Your Own North Star*

“Family is landscape,” writes Irene O’Garden in her breathtaking memoir, *Risking the Rapids*. She gives us a bold dose of both as she embarks on a remote river trip to help make sense of a family wild and dangerous. In her brave

eloquence, O’Garden adds a thoroughly welcome voice to the rich vein of American literature on the singular healing powers of wilderness.”

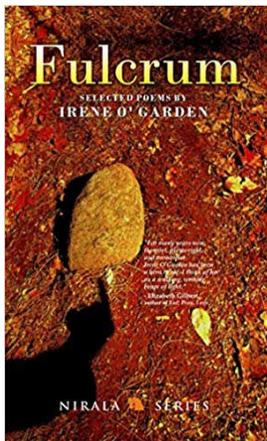
— Florence Williams, Author of *The Nature Fix*, LA Times Book Prize winner and editor at *Outside Magazine*

“Irene O’Garden’s memoir is riveting, fiercely honest, and graced with poetic insight. An imaginative child plagued by insecurities, O’Garden vied with six siblings for her parents’ approval and lived beneath the Damocles sword of Catholic doctrine. Her chronicle of growing up in what seemed then a normal Mid-western family in the 1950s and 60s asks, “Who were we, really?” in a far-ranging, haunting journey of discovery.”

—Victoria Riskin, Former President, Writers Guild of America, West , Author of *Fay Wray* and *Robert Riskin: A Hollywood Memoir*

FULCRUM: Selected Poems

My first book of poetry, ***Fulcrum: Selected Poems***, published by Nirala Press, is available in hardcover at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/8182500869>



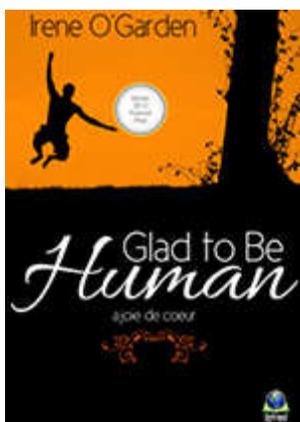
FULCRUM -Sparkling musicality, deep emotion and discerning reflection distinguish O’ Garden’s poems. Here is a fine intelligence at work-and at play-revealing a tonic perspective in a range of poetic expression, including lyric, narrative and her own innovative “fulcrum” forms. Her close observation and sensual delight in language make “Fulcrum” an experience both grounding and uplifting.

Several writers I respect have shared gratifying words about this collection. Read them at <http://ireneogarden.com/fulcrum-reviews> .

GLAD TO BE HUMAN

Available here: Untreed Reads

https://www.untreedreads.com/store/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=80&products_id=904

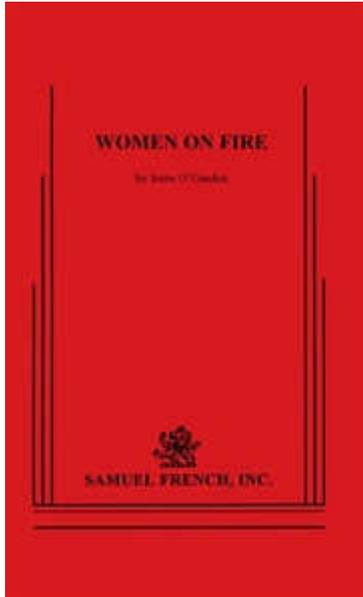


“For many years now, the poet, playwright, and memoirist Irene O’Garden has been a hero to me. I think of her as a walking, writing, beam of light. It is my hope that with the release of ‘***Glad to be Human***’ numberless others will come to know her gifts and, most of all, her captivating talent for wonder and marvel.” Elizabeth Gilbert author of *Eat, Pray, Love and other works*.

Winner of a 2012 Pushcart Prize, *Glad to Be Human* is a lyric and passionate outburst of appreciation for our lives in the 21st century. In rhythmic and sensual language this joie de vivre returns us to the daily beauties and bounties of human life: its pleasures, its relationships, its diversity, its creativity and the poignant cycle of life itself. It is a rare

and affirming piece of work that throws wide and loving arms around our world.

WOMEN ON FIRE



Order here: Women On Fire

<https://www.samuelfrench.com/p/4594/women-on-fire>

“Bewitching ... astounding ... heartbreaking.” – *The New York Times*

“Heartwarming, riveting drama.” – *NYTheatre.com*

“Fresh, spirited ... plumbing the secret depths of ordinary women.” – *Backstage*

“Hot pick.” – *New York Post*

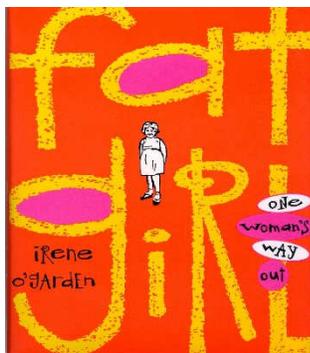
Nominated! Lucille Lortel Award, Outstanding Solo Show

This evening of twelve emotionally charged monologues starred Judith Ivey Off Broadway, where its run was extended twice.

From ad exec to Midwest mom to care-giver to construction worker, each character is on fire in her own way – with passion, fear, self-discovery, even shopping! Exploring the breadth of women’s issues with humor and wisdom, the monologues offer excellent roles for one or more mature actresses. *Women on Fire* earned the highest rating for audience satisfaction from the *Wall Street Journal/Zagat Theatre Survey*.

FAT GIRL

Available on Amazon



“A poetic, funny, deeply touching look at the problem of overeating...O’Garden’s poetry glistens.” —*The Denver Post*

“Ohmigod this book rules! Her story is so compelling and soulfully written that it almost made me cry. I love books like that.” — *Sassy Magazine*

“Very moving. I couldn’t put down. I was impressed with the writing and the way O’Garden was able to write from inside addiction and make the mechanics of addiction clear. I know this is one of the books

I’ll be buying by the dozen to give to people.” — Ellen Burstyn

“The pain and anger of overweight is clearly delineated, and the struggle over power and powerlessness is presented in a quite poetic, dramatic way. O’Garden teaches us about addiction without being preachy or seeking converts. Her simple statements arise from secret thoughts and deceptions and thus show the crisis of personal integrity that a fat person suffers.” — Judi Hollis, author of *FAT AS A FAMILY AFFAIR* and *FAT & FURIOUS*, and director of Hollis Institute

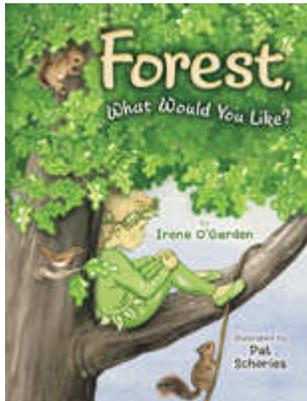
“..a painfully honest little book, illustrated by the author and told in prose, poetry, aphorisms and no small amount of anguish.” — *The Oregonian*

For every woman who’s ever felt sad, bad, blue and mad about “overweight,” here’s a sharp Lily-Tomlinesque monologue on one woman’s triumph over guilt. *FAT GIRL: One Woman’s Way Out* (Harper San Francisco) chronicles my struggle and subsequent victory over a lifelong compulsive eating problem.

FAT GIRL is an artist’s approach to a problem that has been sciented to death. It focuses on feelings. The story is told in vivid images and emotions which involve the reader deeply, helping her face her own feelings about food and herself. In poetic prose and over fifty sensitive drawings, Irene O’Garden traces her journey from childhood through maturity, from guilt and self-loathing to discovery and joy. *FAT GIRL* is a fresh perspective on a common problem, and above all, a very loving book.

FOREST, WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE?

Available from [Barnes and Noble](#) [Amazon](#) [Powell’s Books](#)



“This book is a vibrant answer to Richard Louv’s call for parents and children to return to nature for the ‘rebirth of wonder and joy.’” — John Adams, founder of Natural Resources Defense Council, recipient of Congressional Medal of Honor.

Kirkus Reviews said: “Performer and poet O’Garden’s jubilant dialogue between sweet-natured children and a personified forest offers an apt blend of lush imagery and bare-bones kid-ness, set to a read-aloud rhythm.

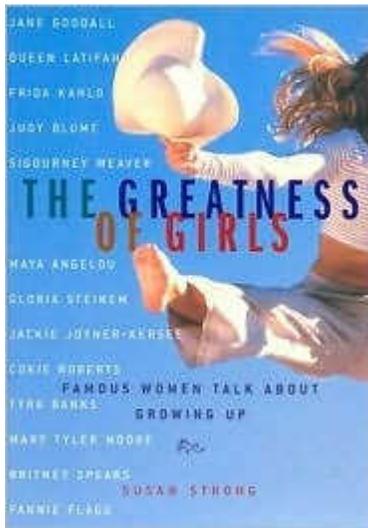
On the book’s final page, O’Garden’s author’s note explains how the idea for the book blossomed in Garrison, N.Y. “Gowned as Mother Nature, I asked each child to tell me how the forest might answer the question: Forest, what would you like? From their four hundred responses, to which I added answers of my own, I distilled a ten-page poem,” melding the voices of the children with her own. The effect is a seamless grassy green ribbon of fun with flora and fauna. “Forest, what would you like? / I would like friendship, fruit, song, / and all the spicy smells of Fall: / acorns, seeds, and crispy needles. / I would like my leaves to turn different

colors / and a whole bunch of birds to fly through me.” Schories expertly captures the conversation between children and nature. She sets the forest scenes in large, full-bleed panels that occupy whole pages or most of a spread, representing the children’s voices with a multiethnic group of tots who populate the white space. A green-clad, elfin child personifies the forest, romping in the trees or sitting contemplatively by a wintry river.

It is poetry set to the life cycle of nature—through the words of children.”

***THE GREATNESS OF GIRLS* (anthology)**

Available on Amazon



Behind almost every inspiring woman is the tale of the shy, fearful or searching girl she once was and what transformed her life. In *The Greatness of Girls*, author Susan Strong captures these poignant moments from women of all walks of life. An excerpt from my book *Fat Girl* appears in *The Greatness of Girls*.

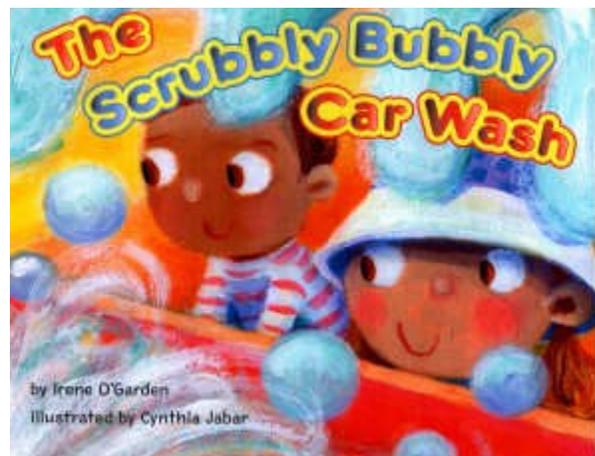
I am in excellent company, as the list of the women featured in this book include:

Katharine Graham, Gloria Steinem, Maya Angelou, Margaret Mead, Nina Totenburg, Eleanor Roosevelt, Mary Tyler Moore, Jane Goodall, Queen Latifah, Sigourney Weaver, Sheryl Swoopes, Cybil Shepherd, Ellen Goodman, Zora Neale Hurston, Fannie Flagg, Carol Burnett, Marian Anderson, Beverly Cleary, Doris Kearns Goodwin, Margaret Bourke-White, Candace Bergen, Esmerelda Santiago, Firda Kahlo, Cokie Roberts, Judy Blume, Tyra Banks, Jackie Joyner-Kersey, Britney Spears, Irene O’Garden, Phoebe Eng, Rita Dove, Wendy Wasserstein, Anne Frank, Babe Didrickson Zaharias, Helen Keller, Patricia Polacco, Mary Chapin Carpenter, Sylvia Earle, Alison Townsend, Judith Ortiz Cofer, Kim Ng, Golda Meier.

THE SCRUBBLY BUBBLY CAR WASH

Available on <http://ireneogarden.com/contact>

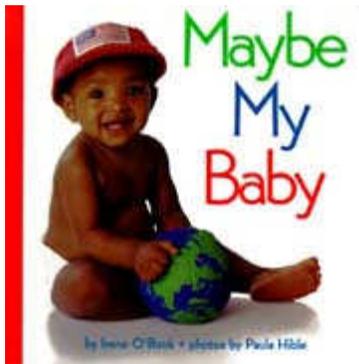
The Scrubbly Bubbly Car Wash, was released by Harper in March 2003. What can I say: I simply love going through the car wash! *The Scrubbly Bubbly Car Wash* has been honored with The Gold Oppenheim Toy Portfolio Best Book Award, which was founded in 1989 as the only independent consumer review of children’s media. This award is given out annually to



honor the creators of excellent children's toys, books, video and software. I am thrilled to have received a nod from the Oppenheims, who are contributors to *The Today Show*. Find out more at Toy Portfolio. <http://www.toyportfolio.com/>

MAYBE MY BABY

Available on Amazon



Maybe My Baby (Harper, 1998) is a book for newborns. It was featured on *The Today Show* and has sold over 90,000 copies.

“This cute board book is filled with photographs of sunny, smiling babies wearing hats and holding accessories that represent several professions. The charming poem that accompanies the photos muse on what the baby will grow up to be, adding that no matter what it is, his or her parents will love her just the same.” —

Manchester Ct. Journal Inquirer

“A sweet, well-intentioned book that will find a home in libraries with large toddler collections”
—*School Library Journal*

“Fosters an environment of early book sharing with a text that’s meaningful to adults.” —*Chapel Hill News*