

Lucy Ferriss

an excerpt from

*Being Real in Fiction**

Sincerity in the short story—how hard it is to achieve! We have all become clever, and we admire cleverness: the truth missed by the unreliable narrator, the epiphany no one saw coming. We may still call it “craft,” or “style,” but increasingly what we mean is an intricately wrought “Gotcha!” Large-heartedness is old-fashioned, a trait best left to the clunkier machinery of the novel; the few short-fiction practitioners who manage it, such as Alice Munro, stand apart by virtue of that difference. The four fiction collections reviewed here all wrestle with the tension between irony and sincerity, handling the multiple voices with which they speak as if the knowing wink is the writer’s first, and greatest, temptation.

*An essay-review of

CARRYING THE TORCH. By Brock Clarke. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005. 170 pp. \$22.95.

SOMEWHERE GEESE ARE FLYING: NEW AND SELECTED STORIES. By Gary Gildner. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2004. 240 pp. \$19.95, paper.

SOMETHING FOR THE JOURNEY. By Richard Cortez Day. Spokane: Eastern Washington University Press, 2005. 240 pp. \$17.95, paper.

YOUR LOLITA. By D. B. Wells. Livingston, AL: Livingston Press, 2005. 152 pp. \$14.95, paper.