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The Favorite Child

My mother cries because I am old in my time
and because I will never be old enough to be old in hers.
—Ceasar Vallejo

When your mother, in the pale moonlight,
bent down to your cradle and whispered
This child is my favorite.
you might have heard another voice
singing like a kettle of steam.

And I’ll caress him when he pleases me
and teach him everything I know; almost,
and make him love the things I love.

And he will be my longing
for a place I’ll never be,
and I will be the smile
of a woman he’ll never know.

And I will eat this child, and he will satisfy
the hunger in me. Maybe.
And I will eat him slowly, a little
at a time and make him last
my whole long life, and even a little longer
so that I can go on eating
even when I have no stomach.

Dan Gerber is the winner of The Michigan Author Award in 1992
and author of three novels, books of short stories and essays, and
six poetry volumes, most recently Trying to Catch the Horses. He read
his work as part of Poetry Night at Grand Valley State University in