

Watsu®



and
Earlier Poems
from the
San Francisco Renaissance

Harold Dull

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Some of the poems among the earlier poems have appeared in Poetry, Open Space, Synapse, Wild Dog and Cow.

The following books by Harold Dull have been published.

By the White Rabbit:

Bird Poems

The Wood Climb Down Out Of

The Night of the Perseids

The Star Year

By Open Space:

The Door

By Harbin Springs Publishing:

Bodywork Tantra

Watsu *Freeing the Body in Water* (first 2 editions)

By Watsu Publishing:

Watsu *Freeing the Body in Water* (Third edition)

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ON THE SOURCES OF WATSU

The Ecstatic in the Creative- Light in Water

Sitting in the house over a stream in which I sleep to the sound of running water, I look back on the sources of Watsu and see a child surrounded by water out on the tide flats of Whidbey Island, running up another flock of gulls, still following their flight up into that bright sky. I stoop over to scoop up another handful of sand to build another castle, knowing full well that, like all those before, it will soon disappear under the rising tide. Water takes so many shapes. Water has no shape.

I search my way through three college majors, Physics, Pre-Law, Philosophy, and finally find myself in the Creative Writing department at the University of Washington. I am a poet. And like most poets in 1957, on graduation, I head straight for San Francisco and, with great joy and great seriousness, dive headlong into the scene which us poets call the ‘San Francisco Renaissance.’

In the poems that come to me, water or the sea and its waves are as common as being in love:

Venus

How I am drawn back into that dark
once more
to stand on the shore
before the mystery at the prow of Venus’s bark

as it scrapes sand and foamy dress thrown off
she steps out.
How I am drawn back to that spot
I heard, running towards her new flowery dress, her cry and laugh

Oh beauty born in the deep of night
Oh beauty born of sexual delight.

I live on California's north coast, teach Pomo Indians in a one-room grade school and write. I cross another sea to Europe and immerse myself two years in its art and languages. I return to San Francisco... and the ocean at Stinson Beach:

The Wave

*Sanosa como la mar
esta la nina
Ay, Dios! Quien le hablaria?*

When she rode in on the wave and walked back smiling "It's beautiful. You really ride on top of the wave." I felt as good as if I had ridden in

and when after several failures trying as she said to 'get right there where the wave breaks' a wave carried me all the way in on top of it and I walked back to her she looked as happy as if she had ridden in

but when that 'right wave' I had waited so long for broke over me and the board broke under me against my balls and I jumped up in pain with only the top of the board in my hand in the froth beside me holding up the bottom she screamed
"You broke it and I never got my turn again! You hogged it! You're so selfish! You would never let me have my turn and now you broke it!"
and all the way up the shore
all the way up to the men's showers she ran after me waving the bottom shouting riding on top of the crest of the wave of her anger

Two years at Stinson Beach, three days a week I drive into San Francisco and study linguistics to complete my Masters in Teaching English as a Second Language. All year round, I go into the waves and bodysurf (without a board), without a wetsuit, though Northern California waters are cold. But there is such ecstasy riding on these waves. I focus on the brightness in each wave and my body does not feel the cold. And one day, sitting out on a log over the ocean, the brightness of each wave's breaking becomes words breaking out of my mouth in languages I had never heard before, over and over, until all my questions are answered in one clear statement: 'Your voice is everybody's voice.'

But that voice weakens- one year in Canada and three teaching at a University in Mexico City, the connection with that Ocean and the San Francisco Scene gradually dissolving. Without other poets to read and publish with, the poems come further and further apart. Returning to San Francisco, I feel even more isolated- North Beach emptied of its poets. I am not a flower child. I have always avoided psychedelics and psychotherapy and religion and whatever else might muddy the waters at the source of the poems, that clarity when the poem is writing itself with light. But that light is dim and those waters- more and more stagnant.

One day I discover that water comes in still another ecstatic form: hot springs. Out in the middle of the woods. How absolutely delicious to lie back in a pool of hot water naked under trees and sky, total peace. The next two years I scour the woods and mountains of California

seeking out the wild ones. One day I ask a woman in one of the pools I find if she would like a massage. I am forty years old and have never received a massage in my life, let alone given one. She says yes and I start working on her back. She notices I'm not very experienced and shows me how to lift the shoulder blade to work under it. She knows massage. We become friends and, over the next few months, she teaches me. Having just built a hot spring like pool in my backyard, instead of buying a table, I set up a padded board just under its surface and massage people in warm water. I call it 'Wassage'.

My friend takes a course in Zen Shiatsu and sits me on the floor to give me a sample. I love it. I study with Reuho Yamada at his Temple of the Lotus Flowers, and Wataru Ohashi. I love the connection we feel when we lean into a point at the bottom of the breath. It is not unlike the peace at the center of the ecstasy in Tantra.

Hot springs create spontaneous community. They are wonderful places to find people to practice on. An offer to share Zen Shiatsu is always welcome. My favorite is Skagg's Springs. It is wild again after the last vestiges of a resort that had been condemned to make way for a reservoir have disappeared. One morning, sleeping beside the pool, I have a dream that wakes me to write:

Snake

Snake shakes
its diamonds in the water

and all our loves
shine and come out to play

Snake shakes
its diamonds in the water

and all we have
shimmers and flows away

Snake shakes
its diamonds in the water

Another morning before dawn I wake and go down to the pool. A woman is in it. I give her a Shiatsu while she sits in the water. When I finish she turns her head from side to side and says she hasn't been able to move like that since she had been in an accident. She says she felt healing in my hands. I thank her. My joy at hearing that stays with me as I stride up the side of a mountain, in awe that something like this could happen through me. At the top the circle of trees are filled with light. God is here. I drop to my knees. He bends down and lifts me. Holding my arm, He walks at my side along the ridge. He guides me down a stream. The streambed below is tangled in brush. There is an easier path along the gully's side. "Which way do I go?" "Whichever way you go I am with you." -words that never leave me. I sit out on the bank over the pool - such brightness- the pool, the children splashing in the water, the trees, the birds singing in the branches, are all sitting in God's hand. We are all sitting in God's hand. I look down at my own, open to hold others.

My beloved Skagg's is disappearing under the waters of a reservoir. Someone there once told me about another. Harbin Hot Springs is not wild (though some find it so), but it is a New Age workshop/retreat center with many people to practice Zen Shiatsu on. I complete my studies

in Japan with my first two teachers' teacher, Shizuto Masunaga, and offer Zen Shiatsu workshops at Harbin. One night I float somebody in its warm pool and she floats me. My body starts to vibrate. I stand up and the vibrations are waves that rise up my back, all the way up into a world of light. I want to float others. I want to take others to that place. I float others and gradually incorporate stretches and moves from Zen Shiatsu, I call it Watsu.

The Water Dance

Full Moon, July, 1983

If you happen to find your way into the warm pool at Harbin Hot Springs
and an old man with a white beard drifts up to your side
and, casually mentioning he comes up every weekend to teach the Shiatsu classes,
asks if you would like some in the water - 'Watsu' he calls it "something I developed in
the pool here...I like to practice it every chance I get..."
accept
and you will find yourself being floated
your neck in the crook of his arm your sacrum in his hand
as he rocks you back and forth...back and around...back into a world without sound...back
into the waters of the womb
as he swirls and sways you the way dolphins play
as he stretches leg and arm and back every way water allows
or drapes your legs over his shoulders and lifts you clear of it
the way an old man plays with the daughters of creation
and sets you down astraddle his held out leg
so that the chakra in your perineum is held from below by his thigh
and your hara by one hand
and your lower back by the other
so that the energy locked in that bowl is free to rise all the way up your spine
and join that old man's
two intertwining dragons spiraling heavenward...
Or
refuse.
Maybe he is just another lecherous old man
coming on
to all the pretty girls in the pool
"Thank you
I just want to be by myself..."
He
will find another
and another
and another
The sky is filled with dragons

That was fifteen years ago, in Watsu's Dragon Days, but in the days since, as Watsu spreads out into the wider world, most of those dragons are left up there with their tails hanging out of the sky. And rightly so. Each person's experience takes that form in which Spirit is ready to take, and it might not be a dragon. I've had to learn a lot about boundaries (which, had I learned earlier would've stopped me from floating anybody. In the nineties I'm not comfortable going up to a stranger.) One of the first lessons I learned was that what I perceive as waves of energy rising up into light, is not necessarily perceived that way by others. I used to end each session holding my partner to share those waves rising up. Then one day I held someone who

had had a history of abuse. I quickly changed that ending to today's, where we leave a person in their own space against the wall and focus on the connection we still have without any physical contact. This is right. I had made that rising of light at the end a goal. Watsu has no goal.

There was little stillness in the Dragon Watus. There was no Water Breath Dance...no listening... no Follow Movement. These came later- the stillness that the other can drop deepest into and find where their own wave and rising begins. And if they do, it is then, resonating to that, being with the other, that our own wave can reach its highest. And if they don't, we stay in the stillness with them. This is right. Watus are still poems written in water, but they are poems we write together.

A footnote on the Body Wave

Those who see it or feel it in another without having experienced it in their own body, may interpret it as sexual or worse. In the Middle Ages, women who had these kinds of waves were burned as witches. In the 19th century Anton Mesmer had to cut short his pioneering work with energy in Paris because the medical establishment, seeing a woman he touched go into waves, made a law against it saying it was unhealthy for both the patient and the practitioner. Recently in India, a Yoga teacher known around the world for the control over the body he exhibits and demands, after repeatedly telling a student to stop her belly's vibrating when she went into a pose, walked up and kicked it.

The wave is a letting go of control; the wave that connects us to those we hold close to our heart, the wave that rises up out of the void we drop deepest into in meditation. Wherever control is let go of in the continuing creation that is this universe, a new order spontaneously arises. That wave or spiral up into light is that most basic principal of creation being actualized within us again and again- light in water. This is where Watsu began for me.

A footnote to the footnote

where Watsu began for me... and where does it stop? Where do the ripples sent out from that first pebble stop. Ripples? Hardly had that pebble hit the water and someone picked up someone in their arms and jumped in, and those in their arms picked up someone and jumped in- and at this moment, and at every moment, someone, somewhere around the world, is picking up someone in their arms and jumping in. So much light in the water. It never goes out. A wave that never breaks. A World Wave that we are all in the arms of- the whole Water Family.

AFTERWORD

There is no blue as blue as the sky is when you open your eyes floating on your back. This is the way to end a book. Floating. There is the freedom of movement, of flight. And there is the freedom of stillness. And the blue of the sky is that great bird Chuang Tzu saw the fish that is the dark of the northernmost sea rise up to become and fly over us on its way into the dark of the southernmost sea. It is a bird of a size that makes us tiny creatures floating below laugh. Laugh in waves, our bellies rising and falling with each breath. From dark to light to dark and back. And the ripples of our laughter spread across the surface, climb up onto the shore, and fly.

Chuang Tzu, you are our master of surprise and transformation. Your words weave every part of the void together with the joy and freedom of a body in water. And that butterfly you dream you are and wake up wondering if you are Chuang Tzu dreaming he is a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming he is Chuang Tzu, that butterfly is still fluttering among us watsuers, whispering "Keep it light. Keep it light. Keep it light."

WHERE UNDERCURRENT AND OVERCURRENT CROSS

The night
you tell us
you watsu the blind child
and the deaf
and sing to them
I watsu you
to the song of the wind
in still water.

WATSU AT ASSISI

An Endless Story

A very long time ago there was nothing. And then ... something. No one knows how this happened. No one was there. But we know it happened because now there is something. And there is still nothing because without nothing nothing could happen.

Nothing

Waits at the bottom of the breath
rises between the notes to sing our song
wraps around us
wrapping arms around each other.

Stone is the void forgotten

Water is the surface of the void
we float each other across.
Wherever you go
I am with you.

Free Flow

The more you surrender
the more you surrender your surrendering.
Creation spirals around and around and around.
I am following you following me following nothing.

In Every Work of Art

The more the whole is greater than the sum of the parts
the more nothing it contains.
And nothing speaks to us on a deeper level.

Saint Francis

The above came to me as I was walking down to the cave.
Nothing special
Trees and Birds

MY 2003 EUROPEAN WATSU TRIP DAYBOOK

5/31

I am writing because
someone dressed up as a railway employee
emptying the tiny trash bins under our windows
while someone outside, crazy, banged against mine
slipped my computer into the cart he pushed past me.
I am writing because
I want to be more attentive
to what is being slipped into the cart
pushed past me on the next train to hell.

6/1

99 starts stop
to make room for a hundredth
hundreds stop
to make room for a thousandth
thousands stop
to make room for a millionth
where where in this wide universe
does it finally stop?

6/2

Six weeks on a train without a computer
What else is there to do but write?
Write... write... write... write... write
all the poems that have been hiding behind the screen.
Write from one stop... to the next... to the last
where trains and everything on them sprout wings
and computers walk across the waters
to greet those who had poured so many ideas into them.

6/3

Everything was a mistake.
This train does not stop.
The stops just slip up alongside at the same speed
and if you step out of the station
the sidewalk slips alongside the street at the same speed.
The city does not stop for anyone.
I would love to hold you in my arms.

6/4

Why is that face still banging at my window?
Is my shirt too big for him?
My chocolate too bitter?
Isn't my hat keeping cancer off the top of his head
and my guidebook to Holland
leading him to the last Rembrandts
painted after everything had been taken from him?

6/5

The day I left home
I almost stepped
on a snake
on a rock
at the bottom of the steps
to the stream
and maybe it was a mistake
to climb up onto the deck over it
and drop a cement block
and miss
because it followed me onto the plane to Paris
and persuaded the employees at the Picasso Museum
to stay on strike while I was there.
But on my last day it fell asleep
and I finally got in.
Imagine its chagrin.
Exercising a snake's ability
to be in two places at the same time,
it rattles at my window
and waits for me
at the bottom of the steps.

6/6

Where was Watsu when it happened?
Where were all those I held in my arms
and those, they in turn, float across the pool?
as many as Picasso and Matisse combined
capture on paper or canvas or mold in clay to set in bronze.
When we look down into emptiness
no one is there.

6/7

Dis-traction
the track out the window
a one track mind
the traction pulling a head through water
off-track betting the lost will be found
and the dis in distraction
is the dis in dismay.
It happened this May
and who knows-
a way to what was lost
may still be found in words
may still be found inwards.

6/8

Behind every woman in a Matisse
a window
and behind those painted outside
water
which is to say
a window is water
and water is a window
and a woman is the way to both.
And in some neither inside nor outside
Matisse draws in one flowing line
woman window water

6/9

In the dream
I knew she was dead
when I saw the snake
split open on the bed.

6/10

Now it is the museum in Amsterdam that is closed
closed to strip asbestos out of the wall
behind the woman
reading her lover's letter in the Vermeer.
Now there is as little light
coming through her window to read it by
as there is sound
when a tree falls in an empty forest.

6/11

1

On exhibit in Munich
bodies plasticized
eyes wide open
windows
into what isn't.

2

Some windows are made to look out
and others to look in
that crystal window
in the church treasury reliquary today
bits of bone and hair.
And others are made to carry around
that window years ago
that woman still stepping out of her bathtub.

6/12

Outside the Coliseum
Gypsy children
circle a tourist
twice their size.
We don't see it
but the way we know
when there is a splash and widening circles
something dropped into a pool
when he lashes out to all sides
we know something has been taken.
And the oldest lifts her blouse
to show what she doesn't have
breasts barely large enough
to hold our eyes
while whatever it was
is passed around and away.

6/13

Ten thousand nudes
on a street in Barcelona
waves on the sea.

6/14

On the schedule we arrive at 7 O'clock
but four hours later
we are still pressed to the window
fields of wheat flow into farms
houses into buildings
more and more people at their windows
waiting to be floated in our arms.

6/15

I had a date with Duccio
and his Maesta
citizens so proudly
parade through the streets of Siena
centuries ago
but my train was too late...
But it isn't too late
to meet Max Ernst in Zurich
and his beloved Lop Lop
the bird of miraculous appearance
now caged
now soaring up
a forest of rubbings
as free as what is freed
in someone floating in our arms.

6/16

It is the knowing we can never know
what is inside someone in our arms
that frees us to be with them
as free as when we face beauty
and embrace its mystery
a mystery Courbet delves deep into
huge dark caves full of water
springs whose source always remain hidden
and in his *Source of the World*
the female genitalia stares us in the face
that mysterious opening
that is not quite open.

6/17

Rubens paints the body wave
we resonate to
floating someone in our arms.

6/18

Some tunnels trains go through
are longer than others
and darker.
Some are longer than a lifetime.
When my students in Italy
come up with the inevitable question
my only answer is to share their dismay
at my country's abuse of its power.
Mario's son is an exchange student in Ohio
whenever the subject is Iraq
all he hears is talk about kicking ass.
Where is the end of the kicking ass tunnel?
Where is the end of the kicking the earth tunnel?
Where is the bright pool of clear water
we can all float each other across?

6/19

Still,
this is a good year for the Water Family.
Everywhere I go
it is growing
spreading out
flowing into all the nooks and crannies of the world.

6/20

Dear Mr. Dull,

You may not have heard of our planet, Water, but we have heard of yours, and your Watsu, though we must admit we are not interested in learning it- We get enough water as it is (and enough of your Body Wave). We are contacting you because our planet is at the same stage as yours. The corporate greed and the noise and fighting in Water are driving us crazy. We are ready for Earthsu®. Our meditation techniques have prepared us to breathe air on the few pieces of earth that break through the surface of Water. They are about the size of your swimming pools turned upside down. When we stretch out on them and someone sits on us we go into a Body Stillness and are one with everything. Can you advise us on how to form an Earth Family... and how to make enough money sitting on each other to support the family we leave behind in the water?

Yours, Llund Dlorah

6/21

Fit the Watsu Course Outline into an egg
the half below- Creation
the half above- Love.
Put Listening at the center
right there where up out of the Emptiness
Energy rises
our Story on one side
with all its disconnected dots
and on the other
the Wave.

6/22

We know now
it is her sweet smell
that draws the sperm to the egg.
We have found its olfactory sense.
But what makes her decide who to let in?
We know it is not necessarily the first to arrive.
Women can be at times hard to understand.
These are our first two states of being-
the one egg
is the prototype of all our subsequent oneness
and the other's wag of its tail
our wave.
And maybe it is
just the way he dances up to her
that gets him in.
And we have been dancing ever since.

6/23

In Rome
our walk around this masterpiece
pulled up from the bottom of the sea
is our dance around its dance.
From every side
the leg draws us up into this satyr's proud torso
up into the head thrown back in eternal ecstasy.
With the sea's crust stripped from its bronze
what was lost through the centuries
is unabashedly exposed
arms missing but not missed
like this city we love to walk around
dancing its thousands of years.

6/24

When I think of all the dancers painters paint
the first that dance into mind
are those that dance their own wild joy
Nolde's passionate red dancer in Munich.
Then cooler ones dance into mind
those that Degas watches from his balcony
and follows into their practice and dressing rooms
and baths where Bonnard too can be found
painting their beautiful beautiful bodies
a dance I too find hard to draw away from.
Yet still another dance dances into mind
that great circle of Matisse
whose dancers never step
outside the circle they dance.

6/25

The horrors of war
Goya
the dangers of dancing
in a world that cuts off its dancers' feet
that keeps
the newborn from mother
to make better soldiers
that subjects thousands of girls
to clyterectomies
so that the pleasure of lovemaking
they will never know
will never disrupt
their society's fixed order.

6/26

Be still my heart.
The pain you have known
is but a passing thing
a butterfly dancing in the wind.

THE DOOR POEM

He knelt
 wept into his stony hands for his soul
 a chinese lantern hanging in a house
 that is not Chinese
 was deep
 lost to him.
 But this is only a statue.
 In antiquity statues tried to be men.
 But this is only an image in the poem.
 What I mean is-
 where do we go from here?
 The door to my house
 is not trying to be a man.
 It does not turn over when I am asleep
 the way I turn over when I am asleep,
 but guards me
 the way only inanimate objects
 can guard us,
 close in on us,
 hold us to their inanimateness,
 the way the earth under our feet
 keeps us from falling.
 Last night I was alone in a boat.
 The boat was friendly, talked to me,
 told me we had reached land, another land,
 but when I stepped out
 it was the sea.
 I drowned.
 But that was only a dream
 not a real boat

not a real object
 like the table under my food
 or my chair
 or my bed

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I address myself to my door

495 Vermont

Door,
John Skelton and Christopher Smart
whose cat Tabby leaped upon, grabbed,
and greedily devoured John Skelton's
mistress's sparrow Philip Sparrow,
are still fighting for they have
no door between them as you are
between me and whatever is behind me.
Love, Harold.

BIRD POEMS

I

Imagine the poem
a gull
caught in your hair-
you shake your head
as if your hair were on fire-
Get out of my way
you anonymous one.
I am grey gull.

note: ordinarily there are two kinds of flight
1. the flight of the mind
2. the flight of the body
as there are two kinds of birdmen
1. the body of a man with the head of a bird
2. the body of a bird with the head of a man
but occasionally comes among us a goal that both
body and mind fly to. That goal engenders in man
the real bird which is truly a lovely bird.

II

As in the gull's heart
the fish echoes
the stone echoes
the sea echoes
as in the sea
the gull echoes
as in my house
many others have lived
sat in my chair
slept in my bed
as x sits by y
z sings softly
z₁ z₂ z₃ z₄ and others join

III

The great birdwatcher
stood so long over an egg
it hatched two birds
three birds
four birds
the sky covered with birds
that professors chase in black tophats
as if they ran through a Rene Clair film,
that professors chase
out of the sky
into the hall
across the classroom
"Stop that bird!".
The professor bends over it
and Leda raises her long white arm
and Helen smiles
and Apollo
while carving his name
on the fourth desk third row
says
"there is a tradition of pots".
Yeats Yeats Yeats
beware of the tall gravedigger
in his garden flowers grow downward
deeper and deeper into the earth.
Fly!

IV

The gull
that hung on the wind
outside my window
is gone.

Do you know what it means?

It's like while making love to suddenly
remember you're thirsty and while your
body goes on in your mind you walk down
the hall into the kitchen and turn on
the kitchen light and pour a glass of
water and drink it over and over.

If you don't understand that
I'll begin again.

Do you know what it means?

It's like tearing wings from a gull
until it becomes
a fish
a caterpillar
a stone.

If you don't understand that
I'll begin again.

I'm running out of paper.

Do you know what it means?

cut along dotted lines.

I enclose _____ dollars
for you to buy paper with which
I understand means as much to
you as the sea does to the gull
Signed _____

V

In Alberta

I heard a bird scream
from the throat of a frog.

Yes Freud

Yes Jung

Yes Madame Flora

labor it

belabor it to tears.

An accidental play
of light and shadow

enhances any object

like breaking legs arms heads off

might make a better statue

like Rilke

before the torso of an archaic Apollo

said

"you must change your life."

IN THE BEGINNING OF OUR THIRD YEAR TOGETHER

In the beginning of our third year together
while hunting mushrooms we find a sheep, a
lamb's head half out of its cunt. I think
"this is Dora's (a woman's) business, not mine".
Dora says "it's dead, it cant kick itself out
(and all the while the sheep staring at me,
agreeing with her) try to pull it out", So I
kneel on the wet grass, grab the lamb's
cheekbones and pull... but nothing happens...
I stand up. Dora says "did you pull as hard
as you could?" I say "of course I did",
I didn't.

ALL YOUR LOVE MY LOVE

green needle
 tree
brown needle
 ground
all year
 round
all your love
 my love
can't stop
 that

THE SCHOOLBUS

It has taken to the habit of sitting outside my house waiting for me and when I go out it makes faces at me. Yes. I agreed to carry a secondary load to the ocean each morning and bring back a primary load. But they didn't tell me about its sitting outside my house making faces at me. And yesterday the society for the prevention of cruelty to machines sent me a nasty letter: Mr. Dull, you grind from 2nd to 3rd and back again, you lug. SPCM. With such forces against me, with the power behind the power against me, what can I do? Last night I went out, lifted its hood, and whispered- I've got something to tell you. You're not so big. You're just the tool of bigger machinery,

As they get on I look into their faces and see the misuse their bodies have fallen into. The sign of the ocean is not found in the ocean but over the ocean. And their only beauty is in the occasional movement, the thigh lifting the leg (and so the mother's league sent me a list of things I must not look at or think about while driving), the hips straining, stretching to step down. And-so-I'm-not-driving I'm just sitting here, unloading the tool of bigger machinery.

In the morning steel is steel, is stop here, stop here. The doors open- more bodies, more bodies. And I remind it its capacity is 31. And it reminds me I am the 31st, the odd one, and struggles against me all the way down the hill. And behind me the voices rise and fall, the clatter of bodies falling into misuse. But I remain calm for I am learning patience. And when I get there, the face over the ocean hardening, I remain calm and wait for them to get off, and wait for the occasional movements of beauty.

When I get there with my secondary load the
ocean gives me its primary load- fish, mollusk,
shrimp, whose heads are not separate from, but
a tapering off, a gradual unfolding of their bodies,
-fish squirming in the corner, -mollusk who,
when she smiles, her whole body smiles, -shrimp
so small the bus charges back up the hill as
if nobody were in it which is in a sense true.
But nobody gonna become somebody someday
-fish gonna become face, gonna have three bodies,
one on the end of a string, one in a lunch pail,
and the third- it went someplace else
and face is embarrassed: eyes nose mouth
aint gonna go noplac, aint gonna get lost like
that third body did.

I heard strange sounds, got out of bed, saw
Sirius banging the school bus right outside
my house, mounting it like a dog. It cried
against, struggled to get out from under
Sirius who gripped it tighter and tighter.
It screamed. Sirius stepped back, put on his
long white robe and ascended, leaving it
trembling in a pale yellow light. As they
got on I looked into their faces to see
if they saw it. They didn't. Then someone
said, "there's a pool of white light on the
floor back here". I turned, "are you serious?"
He blushed, said yes, put on his long white
robe, and ascended. And they didn't even see that.

AUTUN EVE

Her body is,
 before, behind,
trees curving round,
 lovely in all ways.
Her body is a river that flows
 neither into nor out of, but through,
a garden wherein all things grow.

THE WOOD CLIMB DOWN OUT OF

The wood climb down out of
(and almost dark) footing
nearly lost leafmeal and cones
leaves underfoot turned
(almost lost) the

The climb down
to the sea
across
not straight down
but across
the up-from-the-sea-
tree-tilled-ravines
(and almost dark)

The climb down
to the sea
not straight down
but across
the up-from-the-sea
tree-tilled-ravines
(and almost dark)

It was the behind from the sea

Following the trail
b
Following the trail
the road ending
we began climbing
w

Following the trail
the road ending
we began climbing
up the hills
behind the sea
open country
through woods

open country
out of the woods

Over and over
open country
behind the

Steep country
up and down
these hills behind the sea
trees come up the ravines between
and bareness over the top of each

Steep
the hills behind the sea
trees up ravines between
bareness over each

Steep
the hills behind the sea
trees up the ravines between
bareness over their tops
we walk together
nothing separates up
and the sea lies flat below

Steep
the hills behind the sea
trees up the ravines between

as if seven years
we have lived
like this
tried
nothing but
to cross
and climb down
to the sea

as if seven years
we cross
and climb down
to the sea
across the ravines

we cross
and climb down
to
across ravines
my heart
grows trees so straight
they cut the sky
into a thousand pieces
we climb
not up
but down
and stumble

clumsily (fearful) almost clumsily
almost dark
and my footing
is not so sure

and stumble
clumsily
for it is almost dark
the footing
not so sure

a thousand pieces
and

bareness over
the sea flat below
we come to

we come down to
not straight
but across
(so steep
it could not be otherwise)
the ravines
(and almost dark)
filled with trees
almost invisible
the sea
is a thousand miles
below us

a thousand miles
below
half open
and half filled

half open
half filled
with trees so straight
they cut its surface
into a thousand lines

they cut
a thousand lines
seven years
we have lived together

as if seven years
we have lived
like this

to try
nothing but
to cross
and climb down
to the sea

my footing
is not so sure
and the trail

the trail
though down now
disappears up
into the tree's straight bare branches

disappears up
into trees
the hills between
stand out ou

stand out over the sea

stand out over sea
so bare
I can see all of the sea

I can see all of the sea
darkly

I can see all of the sea
and there is no way down

and no way down
but across
these hills
and ravines

the ravines
each darker with trees
than the one before
the sea
is no light
but the bottom
what I mean is
to get down to it

the sea
is no light
but the bottom
to get down

we must cross
these open hills
and these ravines

these ravines
not straight down
as trees grow straight up
from the soil
but across
the heart
does not know how
to change its direction
we love
like some trail
that is hardly passable
but still holds
beneath it
where it is dropping to
in the only way possible

the heart
does not know how
to change its direction
the trail
is hardly passable
but still
it is the only way possible

the heart
does not know how
to change direction
is hardly passable
but still
the only way possible
trees fall
the sea flattens
trees fall
the sea rises
the hills smooth out
and move closer
to the sea the trees

rising up what is left
between them the ravines
we must cross in the almost dark
scrambling from left
to get down not right
but the only way
tired but the only way
the only way

to get down to the sea
over these steep hills
is across

trees fall
the sea rises
the hills smooth out
and move closer
to the sea the trees
rise up
between
cross
the only way
down to the sea
is across

and down that way
the trail ends
not in the sea
but in the dark
they are not in the same
though they are as close together
and as often
as bare hills
and tree filled ravines
we cross

the trail's end
is not the dark
but the sea
they are not the same

though they seem so now

MARRIAGE BEACH

In the fire
I built up
with the biggest logs
I could carry up the dark beach
was another fire.
In
the great
jagged imperfect
star throwing flame
was another
so whole
I don't know how
I could have thought
it went out
when the sea rose
smacking and cracking
the last glowing embers.

NEW YEAR'S MORNING

New York City

I will write no more poems
that pull down what is already in front of me
and love a little harder than I did last year.
She has red hair of all things
and skin red is always just under,
but where I touch, it flees.
Did you have a good breakfast?
Everyone should New Years. I did.
I ate at a red table
that had a red tablecloth
and a red napkin. God
how my drolleries
must have bored my friends last night
and R said "The way you make language move,
you should be able to write a really good poem."
I should. A man taught to dogpaddle
and sidestroke and crawl and foxtrot
and never given a sight of the sea
would end up not believing in anything.

IN THE NEWNESS OF OUR LOVE

The stars move
actually move
some rise as others set
sink into the sea
invisible
as the barnacle crested rocks
the tide covers in front of the house where I lived as a child
as others rise. "Now.
Now in the newness of our love
there is so much to learn..."
and taking the star chart
the former occupant left in the house
hand in hand we step out onto the porch
"to learn the names of the stars"
and with my arm around her waist I point out
what I am only just now beginning to learn myself
the Zodiac - how it is the path of the sun
the animals the sun must pass through
how it is a wheel that turns
each animal rising and setting
and holding the star chart over us
its stars glowing too
the big dipper on it matched
to the bigger dipper in the sky above
handle to handle
we begin to move through the sky
cautiously at first
ARCTURUS
certain because Bootes the kite the herdsman follows
and Corona Borealis appears as suddenly as if it had been dropped on our heads
and the head of the serpent Serpens Caput is before us
'in the newness of our love'
and below it Scorpio
the scorpion rising on the horizon the hour I was born
recognizable now claws head body but the rest?
and as I try to follow out the vagaries of the long tail
she becomes restless
complains of the cold night
of how I am holding the chart
in front of what I am trying to point out to her
but I don't stop to answer
still trying to find the end of that tail
that seems to be hanging half out of the sky
and she goes inside
"...to bed"
and I follow.
They move.
They rise and they set

and once begun
we can return again

*The lovers also can sit on the terrace of the mansion
and converse softly together in the clear bright
moonlight. With his mistress lying on his knees,
her face turned towards the moon, the citizen should
show her the different planets, the Morning star,
the North Star, the Seven Rishis and the Great Bear.
This is the ideal end to sexual intercourse.*

THE NIGHT OF THE PERSEIDS

The night of the perseids
we take a blanket
into the garden
and lay back
the better
to see
that meteor shower's
short swift paths
that last hardly long enough
to point them out to each other,
a word or a sigh,
and they are gone.
And they are said
to be matter
thrown out from the sun,
Or bits of rock,
shrapnel, scraps,
the trail
of a long exploded planet
we pass through each year.
Or they are snakes
on the head
Perseus
holds out
to keep the sea monster below
from Andromeda
who, because her mother, the queen
leaning back
in her starry chair above
boasted
her more beautiful than the sea nymphs,
is chained to a rock,
the Great Square,
Pegasus,
a ship,
or the horse's head
whose forelock and hoof
stretched out like the tail
or string of a kite
strikes the first spring
on a mountainside.
Or this is the horse
that leaped out of the sea
to strike down Hippolytus
on his love-struck stepmother's shore.
Or this horse,
the ship or rock
the two long lines of her body

swing out over the sea from,
is the winged horse
that sprouted from the blood
dripping from the head
Perseus cut
in his hard mirror shield
who, flying upside down,
lost his rider in the sea below,
as we, too, become lost
in the stories' turning,
the pattern too intricate.

And as my horse,
Sagittarius
strikes his hoof
on the hard line of the sea
I sense more
than a seasonal unease
as Capricorn, Aquarius, and Pisces,
the year's three last signs, rise
Pisces,
the sign of my twin daughters
I have not seen for a year,
Aquarius,
the sign of their mother,
Capricorn,
the ex-friend...
a year ago...
but this
is a coincidence
too merely personal
to notice.
Capricorn,
half-fish
half-goat,
is
gate of the dead returning
because
it is the first to rise
when the sun
begins to drop
in the fall,
and Aquarius,
Water Pouter
because
in November,
the first rains
about to fall,
he turns towards us three stars,
the mouth of his water jar

or three bright blades
of a water wheel turning,
a faint and crooked stream
trickling into a sea below
where Pisces,
two circlets,
is two fish
tied to a single point
and the year's last
because
it rises to its highest
as the old sun
sinks to its lowest
and the new
has not yet begun.

And as each day
the sun swings lower
over a sea
that, treacherous now,
tears back the sand
where the summer's bathers lay,
each night
these three signs' stars,
planets
and visiting moon arch
higher over
this sea
where many fish
and dark whale swim by.

But this sea in the sky is more
than a mirror of the sea below,
and here
it is as if
the Zodiac
were the cowl
of a hood
or the edge
of a lid
lifted
to show us all
underneath
for here,
I read,
is
The Face of the Deep
the place
where the first men
down from the caves

to drain swamp and tidal marsh
said
all life began
*Where sweet
and bitter waters mingle*
And that whale, Cetus/
her body now one vague circle
and now/ another,
is no mere whale,
but Leviathan
or Tiamet
from whose monstrous brood's blood
man first sprung.
And this
is *Chaos*

"What
is my sign?"
And I point out to her
Aries,
the year's first,
the ram
climbing behind the hill
or headland as if to look
for Sagittarius
sinking behind the sea.
She seems disappointed-
the two not too bright stars
and the third hardly visible,
"I thought
it would be more than that."

What it is
is hard to see.
His -
the Golden Fleece
hidden
in a serpent guarded grove
Or this -
the ram
whose underside Odysseus clung to
to pass the blind Cyclops' searching hand.
And this -
the ram
Zeus, himself,
hid in
the day
Titans strode out
from the Chaos below
as Pan panicked

and leaped into the water,
half in fish,
half out goat,
and all powerful Aphrodite
and Eros after,
two fish
tied together,
as the rational Greeks
stepped out
to look at the stars
and delight
in the confusion
the gods were put to
in their youth
as we,
even closer
to that Chaos,
delight
in finding
layer upon layer
of the old stories' truth.

At the end of each year
the old sun dies in Sagittarius
and enters the *gate of the dead returning*
and the ram
stands directly over us,
as out on a precipice
over that sea where
it is said of the two riders on his back
one falls
and one crosses,
and crosses,
as if to meet,
as it will next spring,
the new sun
beginning
to climb up over
that dark sea now.
And that
may be why
that not so bright ram
is the first
of all the year's
zodiacal signs,
in whose yearly
turning
we, too,
are involved,
and why

the long horned bull
wearing his jeweled Pleiades
and Gemini
and the crab
in his own dark pool
and the lion
and Virgo and Libra
and Scorpio and Sagittarius
and the rabbit and the bear
and the plow and the dogs
and all the animals of the starry field
and Orion, hunter
or Marduk standing in the living boat
casting his net over the Chaos in the sea before,
all follow the ram,
why he is the leader of the dance.

POEM FOR GEORGE STANLEY

I wish
every year
in June when the moon is full,
these, or their successors, would come
with wine and food and sleeping bags
and make love in the garden
and dance in the living room
and sleep all over the house,
so many cocoons or great birds roosting in a tree,
and you and I
could sit up and drink and talk
of how they do,
or do not, change and we change,
of how,
in our poems for them,
we are immortal,
though everything changes,
and, before dawn,
before they awake
and turn to each other for a last embrace
or crawl out of their sleeping bags to make coffee,
you and I could walk through the garden,
the moon's light fading.

IN A DREAM I SEE AN ORANGE AND YELLOW BUTTERFLY AND DREAM I WRITE DOWN WHAT I SEE

I see its wings folded up over its head
I write *Its wings are spread into a fan*

I see it sitting on a curled geranium leaf
I write *It is as round as the chrysanthemum it sits on*

I see the blue sea behind it
I write the sun
 all night
 hides behind the sea

BUTTERFLY AND RAVEN

I read Raven is Butterfly's friend and goes with him wherever he goes
and see in the darkness as a lone butterfly flutters by- wings
and hear a rush of feathers not unlike what sometimes suddenly startles me as I make love.
But that butterfly is not me.

The week Jack Spicer died monarchs crawled out of the hillside
and when I saw a butterfly on a flower in a dream I thought of Jack
and when I found a butterfly on the wet sand I had been walking along the beach with Jack on
my mind.

I read Raven takes Butterfly with him as he plays his tricks on the world
and see that half-breed Blackfoot American poet perched up on his barstool- his bitterness and
the sweetness it hid
and know that if he is with one he is with the other.
In the evening the daughter of the chief who keeps the sun and moon locked up in his hut goes
down to the river to drink.
One flutters down through the dark forest cover-
The other drops unnoticed a pine needle on the water she holds up
and born again whines and wheedles until his new grandfather finally gives in and he stands with
what is to become our sun and moon under his wings-
The other flutters up the dark smoke hole.
He takes him with him wherever he goes.

But now I read Raven turns to play a trick on his old friend-
tells him to walk across the abyss on a piece of kelp and twists it
and when he falls on his back he stands over him and eats his insides out.

OUR ENTRY IN THE WORLD ALMANAC

PACIFIC NATION *Area:* Not available. No way has yet been found to measure both the parts visible and the invisible. *Population:* Likewise. A mere handful and/or legion. *Language:* Poetry. *Capital:* San Francisco was once thought to be but I doubt it now. *Principal Product:* Poetry. *Longest Rivers:* Yes. *Highest Mountains:* Yes. *Deepest lakes:* Yes. *System of Government:* No. Or at least no one likes to think there is. This is one of the sources of confusion. *Religion:* Likewise. *Additional Information:* See **IMAGINATION**. See **JACK SPICER** See **FOG** See **OIL SPILLS**. See **LONELINESS**

IMPRINT

My bird is the gull
and the joy
of my childhood
running out onto the sand
the tide left
different each day
as
one by one
they float up
in wider
and wider circles...
But one day
I ran out
and found a wing
reaching up out of the wet sand...
And I still remember the day-
a fine rain
falling like silk

If
(as Lorenz
has shown us)
a man can
if he
gets down
on hands and knees
imprint himself
as goose-mother
on the young gosling's instinct
why can't
some bird or animal
imprint itself on ours?
And what's more
why can't a land?
I know a place
that draws me so...
But
the day
I took my first wife
to see it
that tide
didn't seem to go out
as far as I remembered...
But that first night
crouched
under the logs
I piled up
to keep the rain out

we watched
it come back in-
sandpipers
flocking
to the last
piece of sand
two
four
six
deep
until
it too
is covered
and like one great bird
they rise up
and
in a single turn of their wings
flash the sun
set under a now
full sea.
The image remains.
And in its light
others
equally imprinted-
a girl
pulling a dress up
over her head
the leaves
still wet
on the bushes
we hide behind...
the light in the lantern
my stepfather holds up
flickering across the water
and dark seaweed...
a crab
scurrying
around and around
the inside
of a washtub...
I can still feel the wet rope
it is tied to my waist with
for what imprints us
more than what we see
or hear or feel alone
gives us
the whole shape of our lives.
And what's more
even that which has no shape
can

so imprint us
but little did I know
the first time
I let the oars
slip down the oarlocks
to sit back
and drift
that it was for all time
that it would be what I'd feel again one day
alone on a park bench
or barstool
setting a half full drink down-

*a fine rain
falling like silk*

NUESTROS VIDAS SON PENDULOS

from Ramon Lopez Velarde

Wonder
what became
of the girl
I picked up
one night
in a small town
dance hall
who talked
of all the places
she wanted to go
and told me
she was afraid
she'd already learned
what tedium was...
I still hear
those saxes wail
the way
her soft brown hair
fell down her back
as she lay in my arms
languidness itself
and danced...

Whether you
remember me
and that night
or not
When you talked
about tedium
to me
you talked
to a pendulum
wherever you are
whatever ear
you whisper
those secrets
into now
(or not)
our two lives
are two pendulums
that still oscillate together
no matter how great the distance
or dark the night between...

FOR MERCE CUNNINGHAM

Quick walk
set out
a man
must know
where he is going
but stop
he stops
he is looking
for something...
a pin?
a mushroom?
a smile?
No
he's just woken up
in a strange bed
and doesn't even know
if it's light
or not
if there is someone
beside him
or not
and goes on
about his business...
but now
under
all those quick steps-
a longer
more solitary
rhythm
what
I think
must be under
each of our lives
not periodic
like our heart-beat
breath
or desire
nor reciprocal
like youth
and age
the one
decreasing
as the other
increases
but another
kind of rhythm
that seems
given

in each
of our lives
beginning
to end
lone
and self-completing
like the stroke
of a tennis racket
or the long flight
of an arrow

THE PHASES OF VENUS

Love
is anything but easy.
Look
at her go down
She
who appears
so suddenly-
the first bright light
in the night sky.
And all her nights
are like that
appearance
and descent
-but so growing in brightness
as she descends
that we
who watch the sky
to find our own lives
in its rhythms
are made to wonder.

One morning
on a bus into Mexico
I wake
and she
is just outside the window
the bus
drops into a valley
she hasn't quiet risen over yet
and the light
that is her own dawn
dances
on the hilltop
so bright
is her rising.

But the higher she goes
the dimmer she grows
her brightness
slips off
to be gathered up by the sun
rising
over the flat and endless desert.

Love
doesn't really end-
it just
goes under
for a while.
Days and nights on end
she journeys through the underworld
to light
to fill the lives
of the dead
with her bright smile
and smooth flesh.
The night
Jack stands
at the end of our bed
Ila sits up in her sleep
slips off her nightgown
but he turns away...

and
she has
to crawl
through Hell
backwards
widdershins
against the sun
and all the stars
buttocks
to the wind
toothless
and bald
with all
that light
she rose to the morning
or broke through the night sky with
out
without
even the memory of it.

THE LAKE

Mexico City

There is nothing quite like that lake in the mind
whose water
I need more clue
Gee I wish I really knew if I was happy here with my wife and children
The shore
I thought I was drawing the hole in the roof of one of those Anatolian town houses twice as old
as anything in Sumer or Egypt
but what I have
is a lake
with a ladder
sticking up out of it

THE TOUCH

Inner said to Outer
"You are mine forever ..."
Outer to Inner
"I will never forget you..."
But the day came
Inner got thinner and thinner
and Outer
became a great pouter
and when Inner
finally came in to dinner
Outer ran out
with a shout
Everyone can see
what has become of you and me.
To touch is to know.
To not is a field of snow.

SHIATSU

I lay my hand
on your belly
and know by what power
fish hold in the current...

There's a flow
from head to toe and back
and one from center to end
and where our bodies bend
ripples and tides
swell and subside...

THE WATER PEOPLE

The water people drift by
wave hello and goodbye
they never stop longer than a smile
"We have tied our ropes to the water"

and our hearts go out to them
for there are some dreams that float
and bob on the dark night
like corks on a sea of wine

A KNOT IN WOOD

A knot in wood
would not
stop you
from sawing me
in two

HEARTWOOD

The wood in my heart
in 'my heart would if it could'

is heartwood
the oldest part of a tree

where the red is reddest in a redwood
and years are read in rings

or cut against the grain bled
the clear blood that hardens in the air

tears or drops of rain
never forgotten

A TREE FOR CREELEY

If you were a tree
what kind of tree would you be?

Tall and straight
without one thought of hate?

Or twisted and bent
snarling at everyone you met?

And would you honor us with nuts and fruit
and a shade under which we could do it?

Or would you be all spikes and thorns
where even the wind mourns?

Oh tree of light
or tree of night

whichever way you turn
in whatever fire you burn

remember me
who would also be a tree

THE SALMON

Between the armchair
and the coffee table
I caught a salmon
as big as my arm

and no matter how many times
it wrapped my line
around the leg of this and that
it couldn't get away

but when I toss
that proud catch on the bed
you lay asleep
deep in our house

DANCE

Dance with one leg short of the dance
and one long longing for you

and the longer
's one step 'head of the music

and the other
follows when it stops

but following longing for you
becomes the longer of the two

until the music stops again
and the other follows longing for you

Dance one step short of the dance
and one longer longing for you