

# **It's All About Water**

Selected Poems 2007 - 2022

Ry Southard

## Accelerating Water

I accelerate water

pushing

I transpose light into fabric breathing

ahaahh

I evaporate time and can't help it

All this when you stood in my doorway

We lie together kissing skin to joy

hearts pulse new seconds

Christmas' full moon was my first clue

Radiant between the clouds we asked for guidance

clarity and direction from a number of Greek gods

Picking by history, making up the rest

Cherishing touch

Belief is a stalk a leaf some bark

Scoop the earth and praise crawly things

and loam and

rhapsody of texture soil between my fingers

melting into my thumb prints

You whisk our lives together yum

palm to palm

thighs pounding singing essence

voices from the trees in counterpoint

You give life where it wasn't

sculpting joy from a spot of nothing

embodiments of chanson

Ma cherie we will go to Paris for you to give them words

Another walk together making time love

memories to the forever river

Along the boulevard gazing across a centuries old bridge

keystones elevating dreams to now

## Amelia and Shaesta

I am Amelia  
for freedom  
deliciously resting upon clouds  
savoring all heavens  
soaring recumbent buffet

Tasting aurora joy  
advancing past time  
another lift off  
I always fly to the east

Waves glare and flare flavoring perspective  
but not impetuosity  
purposeful as when a child reaching  
grasping solitude dreams of flight fulfilled

Venture with me to Atlantis  
Poseidon be damned  
I am albatross  
I am what you never deemed possible

I am Shaesta  
flying in the dream  
because I have to

## Archimedes was here

Archimedes was a bather  
a man of true aqua math  
Grinning, he floated amidst secrets of physics and flotsam  
Foggy distant future shores beckoning

The discipline of science so long to be accepted  
before and after we knew the sun was our center  
when Galileo enlightened Padua  
You know that garden my love  
awash in floral compass  
testimony to learnedness

Today I sat on a very uncomfortable bench  
watching a parade and its cold resistance  
babbling, trumpeting a dystopian inverted atlas

I struggle with regression and charade  
A shivering over-the-shoulder gaze toward  
what the past today did not warm or embrace

Tirades and facades will not stop discovery  
or the motion of questioning

Waves lapping knowledge disdaining griffons of inertia  
A figure drifts by on a raft of reason  
ignoring power and disbelievers  
I'm sure it was him

chittenden locks

i go down to the locks each day  
searching for my key  
reveling at the doors holding back  
salt from salmon bay  
but still allowing passage  
were i to have that hope

the sutures that string me to you  
are loosened by the tide  
despite wanting to be calm  
eddies of enigma

raindrops  
fragrant with perspective  
dripping onto the hard deck  
splashing over boundaries of trust  
were i to have that flowery promise

superstition and remembrance  
not for this equation  
emotive islands become  
risk i don't want anymore

i go to the market  
for lush fruit and color  
vibrating the texture of wanting  
were i to be fulfilled

the passion i dream  
is only today when life is about today

i want pungent and sweetness  
to taste your tangy crisp air  
a belly full of aroma  
were i to experience the relish of permanence

## Coral

The story of coral  
coloring history  
the birth of pomegranate

Memories wave curtain folds  
undulations below the horizon  
aqua songs dazzling

Play that piano sing briny lullabies  
Tides wash the keys in fifth tones  
another poem tossed over the reef swept to shore

When will you join me ocean  
swimming together  
ignoring submerged skeletons

Our purpose churning in sea's starlight  
tie dyed real  
eddies swirl us

discombobulated

where is up  
when you get down  
swimming in an imaginarium  
round and round

looking out of my fishbowl  
with a big ol' concave lens  
making sense of nothing  
as my cat cheshire grins

stretching the truth to include  
reality  
making sure to obscure any  
futility

glancing to the right  
glaring toward the left  
which way is is  
and gives reason to this mess

writing in rhymes  
is it really a fix  
to heal my jumbled-aya  
with a poultice of papaya  
i'll get back to ya

## Flying over the Finger Lakes

first finger tantalizes  
oblong feather circles  
tip tickle ahs  
soft slide shivers desire

second finger curls  
under your rhythm  
dancing, sensing, flickering

third finger floats  
downy caresses  
can a kiss be softer

fourth finger joins  
in a shimmy  
magnifying the pleasure of touch

thumb and uplifted palm  
ask for your hand



floating

words float and swim  
sworn to believe in our horizon  
looking up through the twinkles  
kissing coral with bubbles  
joyful dolphins submerge and leap in concert

walking in tall grass exclaiming mystery  
wandering trails through dense hemlock valleys  
winds grant gregorian solace  
sharing a blanket in the desert  
i do not pine about chances never taken

mountainous dunes mesmerize every disbelief  
treasures of still water quiet steps  
dreams of riding camels in the bush  
listening to their snorts and gargles  
a drama of articulation  
truth where least expected  
every playwright's first imagination

## Gargantuan

An oh so very big mollusk by any other name  
clamored onto the shore  
rattling sand and shells in its wake

Clumsily it flopped  
and flipped and plopped forward  
tremors with each cycle

“Oh my,” they cried  
from the shadows of  
the tall trees

Are you here to save us or kill us?

Gobs of clam drool slickened the hard pan  
Marking the past of its progress

Many knelt to pray  
to be saved from the unknown  
Others scurried to safe harbors  
A few took aim  
stones harmlessly careening

A child watches in wonder  
just another day to be forgotten  
or maybe remembered like no other

The next day the “thing” found  
a pond to hydrate its mussel mass and  
slid wistfully  
into its brink

The people found another distraction  
The ground shook no more  
except in an occasional childhood memory

hatteras

they rolled in like inconsistent octaves  
a chorus with one voice  
symphonic thunder singing in the tide  
white tops crescendo spraying  
memory  
scattered

the piper skitters across parabolas  
receding foamy broth  
knowing exactly the next moment  
a time I wish

grasses race up the dunes  
weaving waves and wind  
grappling clouds  
shouting for godliness  
footprints tied to granules  
laughing at fate

fluffy philosophers clap their hands over hatteras  
wringing down cocktails of the sea

the tide was irreverent and independent  
the sideways crabs have long disappeared  
burrowing down magical rabbit holes

how long has the sand been here  
why is there sand  
dunes in the empty quarter  
shadows cross the full moon  
knowing borders that never existed  
cousins from a distant shore  
bones and tent poles that will never be discovered

## Hudson

A cloud of new champions descended  
History made it look so easy and current  
The river thought we were ready  
Flowing in assuredness

Or so it seemed  
Their promises were convictions turned butter soft  
Spines laid out like asparagus  
Hugging the past

I want you on moss  
Dreaming free

How is it that conflict  
measures success  
I win you lose orgasm

Stifling anything is not the way  
Swimming up the Hudson  
Will always set things straight

## I am Dunedin

the place we ventured  
the end of the earth  
the fountain we shared  
Forever this juncture

Before we knew what forever  
fate's talons clutch our palette  
parallel paintings sum affection

Brushes like Hokusai  
umbrellas on our beach  
honor the rain

Washing the tide one wave at a time  
across sandy corduroy  
Laundering memories in preparation for journey  
to the place we first adventured  
the beginning of us

## i survived by walking

my heart was broken at an early age  
maybe when I was two  
an island halved  
if not for the lack of memory  
i knew no remorse as a three-year old refugee

soul bred schism  
redemption from what I will never know  
or withdrawal from what I will never know  
sutures were irrelevant in those primary years  
dragged around from shelter to shelter  
my wound festered dormant too young for a heart attack  
desperate to purloin healing or inoculation

at the age when I claimed freedom  
it was only the start of a marathon  
i learned how to run and the safety of motion  
i survived by walking  
like so many others new to the hope of we

road, path, rue, trail, track, ditch  
dust and dirt and dry and drenched  
carrying possessions that we can  
victory and defeat were left behind as faulty souvenirs  
caravans merge to migration  
a walk becomes a march of too many deaths  
a revolution of exhaustion, without weapons or vengeance

where was the conquistadors' warrant to declare a kingdom  
as true patriots and god's only disciples  
and enslave all others

i've tasted love and surrender  
and cherished and dismissed miracles  
each day is a summons to disbelieve cruelty  
the anti-pilgrimage of living without belief  
luck is my occasional friend wanting to share another roll  
an imperfect champion oh well  
another mile searching for a heart wanting like mine, we to us

another 40 years have passed  
you healed my soul at our late young age  
love suddenly became sunsets shared and painted dreams  
of destination desire when home is always the chorus  
and flags matter no more

memory

i can only remember a couple  
of thousand years  
as an etruscan stable boy  
on a hunt

you were gathering nuts and tubers  
for the neighbor tribe  
there were more than glances

i stole away that night to  
find you in the distant meadow  
awaiting

carelessly we loved in the shadows  
and parted longingly before dawn

i awoke on a scaffold with a brush  
so close to the ceiling and harsh words  
to focus on the glory of creation  
as we painted an interpretation  
that i didn't understand  
but i only did what i was told  
as an apprentice always does

my bed was the lowest platform  
i must have dreamed of you as i awoke  
in a panic to being alone  
in the sky drifting with god

does your memory include that time in marseille  
on the wharf before i sailed to a place  
so much glory and lust and death  
i never returned

or the mystery of blue and grey  
endless suffering  
a hero only to the dead  
a colorless casualty  
you washed my wounds  
and bandaged my soul  
until the guard separated us  
from your healing caress  
and threw me back in the stockade

you remind me of amelia  
courage toward the unknown  
who flew off into the sunrise  
and never returned

i rosined the strings for pablo's cello  
you turned the pages of his score  
we basked in the resonance of bach  
toes touching

there have been stretches of peace  
one is now  
favoring us to become us

we chance a reunion today  
shunning time  
beckoning next tuesday's sunrise

we venture a kiss  
in the tall grasses like before  
but so much more  
the earth's fragrance mingles  
dappling our bodies with permanence

we are born in eternity  
and for a moment  
spring ahead of history



mistake

I poured absinthe over the coals  
what a mistake

Anguish went up in smoke  
suffocating dreams of liberty  
Residuals of delirium fester  
Sanctity is not relevant  
A time of peace beyond the playground  
gone

The fires that smolder beneath our fluffy lawns  
I wonder for rain so naïve  
to brave another storm

How do I become strong to protect my family  
I am old but not frail and ready to die

Has is come to this  
That time when fear dissipates like vapor  
becoming each breath of courage

Vapid dispossessed gods seem to have destiny  
and I curse myself for having these words  
When bellows are required to douse the burning  
fear of drowning

## Our Creek

Our creek meanders mindful in peace  
Around every slow bend we drift  
Quiet paddles faint echoes rippling  
There are no rapids or dams requiring a portage

We've become this creek together  
Beneath the monastery's smiling eyes  
Paddles in sync when necessary  
Bow and stern as one

Floating on clarity, small eddies attest  
Mesmerized by peace and bubbling love  
humbled with watery abundance

When we meander mindful in peace  
Stern and bow as one love smiling  
Grateful for every new mile of this life  
Timelessness measured for a moment

## Playing in the Waves

Playing in the waves, laughing  
Chair surfing the afternoon tide

a quintet of synchronicity  
    and their clouds  
moving, colors, fluidity, winds, us  
    and always clouds  
mesmerizing the earth, floating in its rhythm  
five octaves ascending above the sea  
winnowing forever

Each riff and rolling drum  
Be bop hip hop shimmy sham sham  
Let's make love on every latitude and  
    defy the imagination of composition

The second movement begins the change of tide  
Pipers skitter in receding waves  
    feasting after foamy wakes  
Legs flicker fast retreat as the ocean takes a fresh breath  
    and sighs

Hatteras never sings the blues  
She floats a ballad of peace and abundance  
    over each sandbar  
    under every cloud and sun and wind  
    and cleansing rain that can be dreamed

Tossing about musical whimsy as shore winds tease dune grasses  
Storms are just a watery crescendo

Today will never end  
Our kite's poems sewn on a ten-foot tail  
    whispering to the horizon  
    beckoning us to kiss and remember the sea and peace  
Pelican magic cavorting above the swells

## Ravel

When ocean's twilight rhythm  
just isn't enough  
Ravel calls  
and you listen

Absorbing melodies  
droplets of clarity through fog  
somniaulant drips ripple  
your rain barrel of peace  
Each note memorized  
then reunited  
fluid stanzas of contentment

Oh yes you purr  
eyes closed  
reclining yet not andante  
new life feathers each score  
The conductor smiles  
as waves wash you away

Come to the shore  
my seashore  
hands reach for yours  
as you leave the soft surf

Walking side by side  
hearing your Ravel  
osmosis of your freedom  
I'll bathe you in fresh sonnets of reverie

the dunes have new meaning  
and reasons to remember  
for what we yearn

## scrambled

scrambling for words  
pushing rocks aside for surreptitious adjectives  
scraping dry hard soil from nouns

a rambling day searching for pockets of turbulence  
that just might match  
my desire

buoyant and bouncy  
even blustery  
reverie is all about that

happy with happenstance  
blissful with anticipation  
my past never carries remorse  
i never chase storms

hope is an illusion of foam  
prayers flamboyantly whisked  
into a cumulus froth  
a dish to be served by candlelight  
or any minute of a Parisian dawn

we touch amidst the tall pond reeds  
frogs a flutter dancing across lotus pads  
you know what I mean  
we are beyond circumstance  
mirrored into a pond of acceptance

drifting across future memories of Monet's Garden  
we know some truth  
maybe a lot of truth  
our creation is not so complicated

then you got on a plane  
we knew the downside  
without saying so

two people sit on comfy chairs  
in different states  
typing purpose and want  
tying strings of reality  
guiding us together

strands of discovery  
like your hair  
cover me in joy

## Summit

The cleansing reason of rain  
Resonance that timbres rest and comfort  
Patter on the roof tap tap  
tap on the persistent dry oak leaves

Our shoes mesmerized by lingering sienna  
and golds, umbers and yellows  
In the upheaval of hurricane season all bets are off

I wish I understood why some reason is not  
even close to mine  
It's not about kindness or the tides or the moon  
Dim in the misty aftermath  
My path is the same  
Switch back up the mountain  
scrambling the boulder field to the Summit

always a new perspective  
always a new joy  
starting at the top of the mountain  
imagines where we want to be  
and how to get there  
thank the rain

## Synopsis of

Life was well underway when we were born  
The seasons changed as always welcomed  
Warmth happened when it should  
allowing time to catch up

There was no reason for our birth other than the usual  
A quest for love shattered tore our younger years  
No one really knows why one survives and fails  
and another finds meaning or believes enough to move beyond

ruins and hope, which came first or  
does it circle beyond generations  
wavy and sublime and often indistinguishable  
or visible as a volcano's wrath  
a wreath of questions

your shadow box of kisses

the sky tripped over itself confusing clouds between  
pauses of daylight  
there was no compass that could save me  
bright objects in the night sky  
played hopscotch over bewildered tides

it came down to a matter of walking  
not ambling for pleasure  
not long fast strides toward purpose  
just the motion of moving one foot in any direction  
and following it with its reverse twin  
toes leading each other  
heels happy to be heels

mystery prevailed about why  
and sometimes it wasn't so pleasant  
it was hard not to perjure myself  
with stories of past shards and pastels  
and conflict without remedy  
or self-inflicted joy empty of nurture

paintings of expectation  
chalk dreams on every wall



my feet seemed to know more than I did  
longboats with tread sporting a pedestrian prow  
arms rowed and circled windmills  
islands begat islands craving bridges and peninsulas and quiet canals  
a voyage of 60 years condensed into sea kissed dunes  
washing noise head first

we met walking between waves  
idyllic oh yes fate that brushed our shores together  
gazing past storms soft cumulus exhales trade winds  
breezy savior or another goddess to guide us  
in worship of meaning

pray for our prayers to be true  
I write resting in your embrace  
we prepare for home

## Tangled Akimbo

Wood tangled leaves akimbo  
rust colored forests overseeing waterfalls' green fragrance

Nature in any moment is peace

Autumn along a blue ridge

Buoyant fantasies clairvoyant you know  
Listing shadows memories reserve ripples  
our reservoir lusts tomorrow fragrant with delicacy  
wafts of this and that  
flavors from your favorite farmer's market  
We remember such times with joy, speechless without verse

Photographs plunge us to today  
Sodden with beach reverie  
pliant dunes embrace us and mesmerize hugs  
So simple pleasures

Tossed like a starry rainbow laughing at calamities  
We pester the dawn with irreverence  
Playing word games until bleary and noon naps beckon

## The last treaty

50 years later we learned  
no treaty remained unbroken  
Why bother now to scribe pompous dialogue  
and flutter about ceremonial plumage and pipes and fog  
smoke clouding our eyes and skies

bathe me now in clear water  
so that I might be true  
as one imagines god would want  
me to be truth blue

After all it was only land that possession had confused  
How it came to be owned was so tangled  
when first there was no owner  
Only the spiders and muskrats knew and they are now dead  
Someone determined the river was a boundary  
The camelback hill to the north another  
The wind weighed in and buffalo snorted

Caress our earth now clear water  
so that our us might be true  
as you imagine rivers can only do  
flowing truth blue

Parties gathered assuming a treatise mattered to the other  
but one knew the exact number of grains  
Falling through the glass of pain  
The future value of blood shed  
How many winters before a blink betrayed in the rain

bathe us now in clear water  
so that we might be true  
as we imagine each other would want  
us to be truth blue

So here we are on the plains caressing tall grass  
Circling and wondering and posturing and knowing  
Why we think this earth is so important  
Why we shan't destroy it

Wash over this land clear water  
so that we might be true  
as we imagine you and our children would want  
simple and truth blue

Please let the river choose to flow in peace  
It will live and nourish meandering with purpose  
long after our great grand children  
bear theirs in truth to blue waters

Save us this place clear river  
so that our children might be true  
as we imagine the horizon would want  
peaceful and blue

the pier

sitting on the pier dangling dreams  
even at my age I'll swing my legs and gaze  
sparkles fluttering over ripples

i'll wait for you dear  
dallying about in measured patience  
kindly nurturing plants as you do  
gently passing time until you appear  
another dimension of legs and gaze

we doze mesmerized by soft drizzle  
and breathy swirls dripping bouncing  
caressing weathered pilings

placating silence with wet rhythms  
spanning gaps in the waves  
that only exist when we think too long

With and Without

Without fire  
We will not seed

Without water  
We will not breathe

With sand  
We walk the beach  
fickle about  
the shells we pick

With stars  
We imagine and hope  
ten light years of imagination

With water  
We breathe the forests  
and choose the fires to quench

With love  
We trace along our thighs  
Embracing the elements

as if we were the  
Gods to replace them  
When mortals did not