

Poetry by Mary Mulvihill, Ph.D.

Dr. Mulvihill is a clinical psychologist in private practice, specializing in health-related issues, an advocate for preventive health practices in community mental health, and an Adjunct Professor in the Graduate School of Public Health at San Diego State University, where she teaches a course on the Brain & Behavior. Dr. Mulvihill is also a dedicated member of the San Diego Psychological Association and a poet.

Learning to Surf

The yellow board is taller
than she is. Her father
lugs it thru the water's
white lace, into
shallow shorebreak,
waist high. They shoulder
oncoming breakers. Wait
for a wave the right size.

Between sets, he flips
the board toward shore -
her signal. She flops on.
He pushes – the swell shoots
her forward. She skids
onto her knees. Lifts
her bum. Crouches, still

clutches the board's tip,
bent double. Slowly, stands

just as the board runs
aground In the soft sand,
out of ocean. This goes on
for an hour. She imagines
herself flying
through the tube. Slips.

Is whomped. Bobs up.
Fetches the board. After
a while, her body
takes over. Enjoys
the little glide so much,
she forgets clumsy. Is
lifted into flow. Balances.

Finally

rides all the way in. Leaps
off, elated. Dances
in the kelp. Her father shares
the joy. Poignantly
releases a little part of her. Knows
from this day forward
she's betrothed
to the sea.

Muse

I am the one who knows
why the chicken crossed
the road. I own
the moon & from there,
I arrange things
to my taste. I open
the latches to air out
the demons. I get
the absurdity of it all.

I am the love child
of Focus & Flow. I write
the lines on the back
of the cereal boxes & paint
them down the center
of the road. I will cook you
such a savory stew, it will
make your eyelashes grow.

While you sleep, I tattoo
your eclipsed heart
with luminous shapes.
When you awake, I embrace

you with just enough pressure
to glue you back together.
When you arise, I shower
you with moist kisses
till you finally glow.

I am the odor eliminator
of your soul. I insist
upon fresh
underwear & regular flossing
with rainbows. With me
in your corner, baby -
you're always
ready to rock'n roll !

The Hummingbird

That afternoon
you sat down on
the stone patio,
book open, seeking
sun, though
the day was grey,
who suspected,
after all that rain
such a tiny, winged
creature, buzzing
for nectar,
would find you
still sweet enough
to attract her ?

You could not know how
she was gliding
in on the monstrous
slow motion vibrations
from your own
great heart.
How she thrilled
to see her whole head,
minus the long, slender beak,
reflected in just one
of your enormous

green eyes, ringed with
its tiny dark leaves. Strange,

manic tree that moves
without wind, you extend
a bare, scented branch
on which
for one second,
tremulous, unflinching,
she comes to rest –

the acrobatics
all yours.