

**JOHN HODGEN**

**High Tide**

A man I know named Waters commanded riverboats during  
the war in Vietnam.  
He drilled through the heart of the Mekong. Now he teaches  
peace studies to wide-eyed kids,  
the arc of his life having turned him this way, as if by design.  
They stare at him,  
silent as fish. He says he is casting his nets on different waters.  
He says power corrupts,  
peace through strength. He says MIRV, SEATO, NATO, MAD. He  
says new submarines,  
launching platforms, multiple warhead killing machines, Ohio  
Class (Ohio so centered, so far  
from the sea, except in the Ice Age, the glacial moraine), the new  
Ohios under icecaps again,  
circling the world predictably, again and again, smoothly, almost  
silently. He says there are  
some things he cannot say. He says *expiate*. His eyes fill up. He  
turns away. And this man  
with whom I am comfortable kayaks in the summer all over  
the world, in Alaska,  
the Aleutians, where Inuits since the Ice Age have hunted whales  
the size of submarines.  
And now he has married a woman from Ohio. And he loves her  
more than he can say,  
even loving her name, Edith, a name that doesn't sit well among  
the popular women's names,  
a name she herself doesn't like, but the one that he loves just  
because it is her name. I tell  
him he is the only man I know who can have his kayak and  
Edith too. Like a fish out of water  
I tell him, like Onitsura's haiku. He smiles. He says sometimes  
he flips his kayak deliberately  
over and over in the Bay of Fundy, turning the world on its axis  
again and again, predictably,  
world into water, water into light from the sea.