The Swan

Notes on the poem by LP
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- TREE/REFLECTION OF TREE IN WATER
  - basic technique, ASL poetic technique
  - When the tree moves, the water moves in a different rhythm, she’s marveling at the reflection. She’s the admiring narrator

- TREE COMES DOWN
  - Rennie uses the same handshape to establish the body of water. Rennie is always interested in the natural flow of signing, the use of persistent handshapes. This is a good example of that.

- SWAN’S WINGS COMING DOWN/THE SWAN LANDS
  - Who is she at these two points, the poet? She begins as the narrator, looking at the wings in her hands, but then she becomes the swan, as the energy moves to her body.
  - She’s the narrator up until the point where the swan settles on the water, then she needs her whole body (and face) to show the poem
    - As in many Valli poems, this is a transfer of energy from the objective to the subjective. It’s a basic principle of sign narrative, storytelling, performance.
  - There is a consistent rhythmic motion throughout poem, the wind, the swan’s wings.

- The whole poem has been moving downward, and now it’s full body. Same two beats: her face is now contemplative, looking at the water. We’re now watching the swan,

- When the wings beat the the water surface, she becomes the narrator again, when the water ripples.

- “I can’t be the water, and if I’m the swan, I can’t tell you about it.”

- The movement of the water starts to ascend, and is followed and becomes the wings: seamless energy and perspectival transfer.

- At the end she’s the narrator, it’s a picture of the swan. She moves back into the narrator role, admiring the swan.

- Hardly any signs in this poem anywhere except for tree, bird, one or two others.

- Show this to as an experiment to a non-signer? What do they see? Can a non-signer interpret it, figure out the perspective(s). Don’t really need to know ASL to understand this poem.

- The entire poem ends up in space where it started, pendulum form of the piece. Good idea to trace it as a kind of picture in time? A 3D map of the piece, maybe for both hands.
  - This may be an important idea, is there some simple technology that could simply look at the movement in time?

- Note how when she hits the water, there is an elision of form, even though that’s a cadential point, it’s a smooth transition
  - This poem has constant morphing, no pauses.
ASL poetry would normally use time to pause and demarcate. Rennie doesn’t use it quite like that. What is a “line” in an ASL poem? How do the gestural principles help us see these poems (repetition? difference? The gestalt principle of “common fate”?)

Why does she say the word “swan”? To specify what type of big bird?

The end is a classifier. An invented two-handed one. The classifier doesn’t make sense unless it’s named first (usually, although it’s like a pronoun, you could use it first, e.g. “She came in thru the bathroom window…”) without naming the person. But she wants us to know it’s a swan, so that the classifier at the end makes a lot of sense.

This poem is purely naturalistic, purely musical. It’s “program music.”