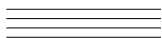


# F R O N T F L I P H A L F T W I S T



C L I V E J A M E S

In the video from Wales, my granddaughter  
Steps to the wall's edge. Just a yard below  
The beach begins, a long way from the water.  
A pause for thought. She then proceeds to throw  
A cartwheel through the air, and, when she lands,  
Stand upright on the sand, all done no hands.

She came to her miraculous mastery  
Of this maneuver by a strict process –  
She still insists it was no mystery –  
Of more and more to reach down less and less  
Until, one day, the finished thing was there,  
Made manifest entirely in mid-air.

I, who no longer fly, feel I am flying  
When I watch her describe that graceful arc,  
So perfectly alive. I can't be dying  
If I see this. The sky will not grow dark  
While she spins through it, setting it alight,  
Making my day by staving off the night.

Play it again. A poem that has taken  
Its final form is radiant like this.  
Beginnings left behind, but not forsaken,  
Its history beyond analysis,  
What starts by growing slowly, like a pearl,  
Takes off and turns into a whirling girl.