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# Getting a Drunk out of the Cab

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The music speeds . . . retreats . . .  
& I am Robert Schumann,  
Mad & done,  
Yet must, a little time, go on.

*Now  
At the hour we lately lie awake,  
Give us that surety  
On which our fragile art depends.  
I am Robert Schumann,  
Bewildered, woken  
By a strange sonata in a foreign bed  
Give me a little time,  
Eternity,  
& I will mend.*

## Getting a Drunk out of the Cab / David McElroy

It is my head in the guts  
and my arm growing out of the crotch  
hooking the limp legs in,  
and my left hand holding nearly its own  
as I carry home without fare my older  
brother, the body out of its mind.

I

The ritual spilling on the curb  
with its coins, the fixing stare  
and bog breath of a mastodon thawing,  
the mushy fingers flexing in the rain  
like gillslits pumping up a desert.  
So smashed, I could tie a blue ribbon  
around his cock, scot free.

Inside the weight and heat  
I become the center beginning to move,

off balance enough for progress  
past neon names, dancers kicking,  
tits that blink on and on,  
a target, a mermaid in a goblet  
on a street beat by Rio or Hong Kong.  
The address tied around the neck  
is a hotel blurring into brick.

We move up in darkness native  
to this stairs. The blind roaches memorize  
chocolates old codgers leave on purpose  
in the corridor. A foot hooks  
the spindle railings at the landings.  
I could chop it off or mother it out  
without a scream or thank you.  
The hibernating brain, washed clean  
with wine, pisses rivers down my sleeve.

I shove the head against the doorknob  
and open the lock with the necklace key,  
enter, flop the body into bed. I strip him,  
like I did my father once,  
down the belly to the boar bear we are.

## II

Of all the liquids dripping  
from the holes of a man  
in bed, the pastes and puddings,  
the snot bubbling green  
over the lip onto the lower gum  
of a toothless grin whispering "more  
more," of all the waxy blood in the ear,  
mucus in the pubic hair,  
a busted boil oozing pus—  
and the rags, a handy sock, the pants cuff  
I mush him clean with—of all  
the meanest is the cider in the eyes.

Kindness is waking up next week  
naked in a bed with complete linen

in a hotel without one woman in it.  
It will be nearly daylight and already  
late winter in this room. Coming to,  
looking down along his life ending  
in hairy legs, feet, and then a window,  
forgetting scar by scar, he may wonder  
when and what it was took his toe off.

I seldom dream of women now.  
I dream of the limbs and liquids  
of men beginning to glow in loneliness  
like St. Elmo's fire on propellers  
in a storm. In the midwest, my father  
has checked the shed for new lambs  
before eating his breakfast alone.  
I feel him looking out the window  
at fields of the blue drifted snow  
I used to walk on  
calling it the ground on Pluto.

## The Aging Ballerina / Christine Zawadiwsky

The entrance to the body is red.  
I never learned to dance.  
I learned to turn around, and to wear  
leotards that made me resemble a dancer;  
I learned to shed my black pearls  
the way petals are shed from a begonia;  
and to live between my breasts,  
and to surface like my mind.  
I learned to steal peaches: and when  
the others fed me, I stumbled like a madman  
who had been shot in both arms, like  
a deer about to rise only to fall  
once more. I stumbled till I was large enough  
to keep myself warm.