The Aging Ballerina

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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.
The purpose of the body is symmetry. Hiding in bed at night with all my clothes on, in a room with colored pictures of birds on the walls, a thread of black perfume hung around my shoulders, I need to dance as many dances as I can. I need to dance with you: take my misery away. I need to think of myself as an aging dancer; the only wrinkles I will see will be those of my body, that the waves will wash the smell of dead fish away. That I’ve performed gracefully more than one time at the cinema and on a battlefield of tears.

Because the heart is complex and filled with many rooms. And now that I’ve excused my existence once more, over and over and over again I will say my name, like the marsh bird that calls to his brother to feed him, like the molecule that dies in the tenth of a second and is only remembered for its uniform structure. I need classical form, I need exemplary moves that I myself have invented to harbor my mind with the ease of a happy sleeping child in the hull of a ship that makes a pretty noise. I’m a vehicle of faith. Give me your word.

In Porlock / John Woods

“He was unfortunately called out by a person on business from Porlock . . . and on his return to his room, found . . . that though he still retained some vague and dim recollection of the . . . vision . . . all the rest had passed away like the images on the surface of a stream into which a stone had been cast . . .”

Coleridge, Preface to Kubla Khan