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.

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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