

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.