

Cissy Worswick Dances

My first teacher, you seemed so very old;
 Your hair up in a French roll, your gold
 Rimmed glasses flashing, your thin, long,
 Chalky fingers and your icy lashing tongue.

I feared you Miss Worswick, your bony clutch,
 Your slap, your razor voice, your needle eyes;
 And yet, long after you were dead, I met in church
 A woman who had known you in those times.

She told me how you spinstered round the house
 Skivvying for ageing parents. Daughter, slave;
 No time for dancing or for walking out,
 Your job: to serve them on their journey to the grave.

And yet, each Sunday after the roast, when they
 Were fast asleep, upstairs taking their Sabbath nap;
 You closed the curtains poured yourself a sherry
 And stripped stark naked in the damask dark. Merry

And electric you waltzed around the house
 Feeling, you told this old friend, 'Somehow
 Deliciously wicked.' And in this way
 You found your sole delight in those cold days.

So dance Miss Worswick dance
 Let the soft light in the room hold you in his arms,
 Let the warm summer shadows waltz you faster,
 Naked past the aspidistra, brass coal scuttle, lace antimacassars.

Another glass of sherry, Cissy, let it warm
 You like the sun whose long tongue creeps through a curtain crack,
 Searching through the gloom
 To lick your unkissed breasts
 And flash across your creamy thighs,
 Your soft downed back,
 As you sashay round the summer-dark room.

Dance until the stars come out, Miss Worswick,
 Dance until the barren desert blooms,

Or until the shuffling footsteps overhead
Tell you that it's time for you to dress again,
To let the light in from the summer street,
Lay out the plates and scald the pot for tea.

Mike Harding

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