

## 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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