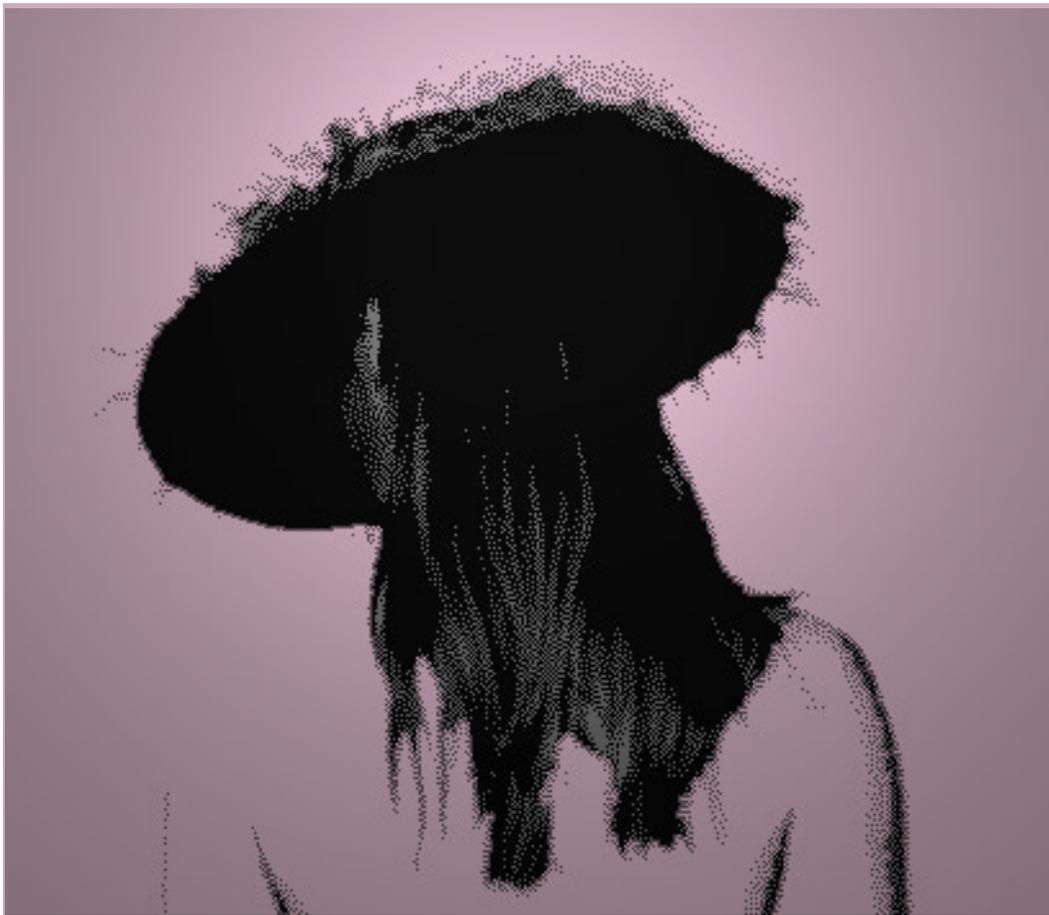


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Fragments (Excerpt)

By

Diane Oatley

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Fragments of a Body in Movement

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Diane Oatley (born 1960, Greenwich, Conn.) has lived in Oslo Norway since 1982 and works with literature and dance in a number of capacities, among these as a poet, freelance writer, dance critic, translator and teacher/performer of Oriental Dance. Expressions of the (feminine) body has been an ongoing focus in her dance practice and writing – the latter in the form of both essays, criticism and poetry published in newspapers, periodicals and in book form in Scandinavia, USA and Great Britain. She holds a Masters Degree in Comparative Literature from the University of Oslo.

Photo: Kari Løvaas

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Fragments of a Body in Movement

and

It's not over till the fat lady sings

Two poetic works on the body and desire

By Diane Oatley

Atonement

I didn't expect to find you here, with the wind rising like a dry voice shivering, music drawn long and sliding in layer upon layer across the sands shifting. It was enough, the feeling of my feet blistered and worn, digging step by step into the sand burning, enough the unfamiliar scent let loose from the wind - the hot dry ache of my throat hammering in clean acquiescence with the sun: it was thus I should walk humbly through the muscle of a surrender given in a constant state of collapse.

I shouldered my resistance and bared my face to the sun, for fire became me. This was not escape; it was the backing down through the rhythm of heat expanding into the tight space of my own private hallway.

But when the earth opened its mouth to admit me, you were released as its offering. Face broken and body taut you rolled up out of the sand as if you were but one of the peoples of my own silent tribe in keeping, bred of the restless thrust and stumble of my feet kicking their way through the sand. I expected ancient lizards moving with all the solemn encumbrance only an eternity could grant. Or a single desert rose smiling with hard bright resistance into a wasteland. But instead space opened only to complete repentance with the shudder of a body engendered and reclaimed as its own.

Openings

The openings I find are incidental. My body forces
 a release in sleep or
 expels fluids
 through my skin, as if in a silent ebb and flow
 it would communicate
 all that I can not say. My ovaries -
 poised like planets
 fallen out of rotation
 or Japanese blossoms frozen in a broken state
 of almost rapture - ache their own
 private rhythm between themselves.
 They send messages back and forth that keep me rocking
 in time: they tick out a politic I can sense, but follow
 blindly, reaching deeply with the conviction of two hands
 digging into the earth in darkness, in search of that point
 those points of ovaries stemming out of time
 of fluids washing in and out
 of the cavern of their keeping.

I discover the moon like an oval
 pearl
 cool and throbbing
 between my own two legs.

My mother's voice speeds me. I resist, tying myself slyly to that cord
 in her side, and then run wild, calling out, summoning anyone who will
 attend for whatever reason and then offering my body. Wholly, as that
 fruit sumptuous they'd been dreaming. Offering it without question or
 explanation. Letting myself be eaten into ecstasy, eaten alive into the
 rapture of blindness, becoming cake speaking eat me, in the moment of
 reckoning, and telling no more. Not wanting to know more than moist
 enclosures and the inside of a mouth, with a tongue seeking to taste me,
 calling forth all those unwritten scenarios and granting them sonata.

Here is the collision of spirits meeting body, in a shadowed forest
 where a gale suddenly finds me and breathes with mighty sighs into the
 instrument regained: silent currents visible before only in shudders and
 moans expand and throb, splitting open and spilling me out, me their
 insides, the slippery juice of reeds grown long and thin beneath the sun,
 bursting now on an impatience justified, bursting without pre-judgment,
 bursting as need to forget and spread evenly across the flatness of your
 abdomen, the warm stickiness of every betrayal absorbed and dispelled
 as ash in the milk. Clean for the burning and dry, dry, dry.

Sanctified.

Have no fear

Why are you so afraid? It's just your body raging:
 your body, primitive as an eagle's claw. Here the wilderness
 opens its jaws, snapping with a ferocity
 both eager and cruel. Your body
 raw, your body only yours.