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One O'clock Waltz

Bill Elgersma

Dordt College, bill.elgersma@dordt.edu

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The One O'clock Waltz

Bill Elgersma

Last night I danced
—in circles—
leaping and spinning

but lacking grace
for I am not a dancer.

Calvinist dutchman (my father)
with his accent—dance?
is uf de devil

and so I never have.

Perhaps the inhibitions
reflect a litany of social mores

—leads to sex—
—evrting shakes—
—look ridikilus—

impressed upon me
restrict this aging body,

but last night I danced.

Sleeping hard,
hearing nothing
but the rocketships in my dreams
take off and land.

I am drowning in the ocean of the stars when...

—Dad?...

—DAD?...

I flounder toward shore
and wallow on the beach.

A small voice
—There's a bird downstairs—

—A Bird—

Thought does not come easily at 1 a.m.,
but rising,

I ask myself

What bird would be up at 1 in the morning?
And then I know...

—A bat—

As I stagger down the stairs,
—they are dark and my toes feel their way—

I mumble “close the doors”
She does not know this bat revelation

Flooding the room with light

Whup, Whup, Whup, it flies in circles
searching for the exit from this odd cave.

Mindful of my receding hairline and pink skull cap,
though all know bats go for hair,
I am not worried

My weapon of choice—a towel
and we dance as partners in this brilliantly lit ballroom
in the early morning.

The bat circles, and I jump
Whup, Whup, Whup—the bat band plays on
While I the partner—
leap and dive.

And then it ends.

The towel, an effective net
for a tired, confused bat
Who lies on the floor,
dazed from this odd dance.

Later—
back in bed—
I begin to laugh.

Stories have been told
Stories I have heard
Nocturnal walkers, early morning lovers,
late bar inhabitants meandering home

Pass houses with blazing lights
in the wee hours.

The scene—

some middle aged man
—scantily clad—
spinning and whirling with tennis racquet
—fishing net—
—towel—
to some tune no one hears.

I too have been a partner
in the naked bat dance.