

Kate Sweeney

Platonic Idealism
for Alison

We took ballet lessons in a flat above a strip club
named “Monday’s” but once Miss Linda touched
the copper needle to her ancient record of *Tendu with Plié*,
we could hardly hear the bass of stereo-quality sex below.
At certain frequencies, however, our reflections
quivered in the barre-bound wall of mirrors,
turned watery and earthquaken
like people in time-travel films
just before they teleport into the future or the past.
All we knew of the postures and asymmetry
blooming from the bodies below us
we had gathered from a subversive babysitter
and her VHS copy of *Showgirls*:
how the dancer’s skin became a pallet
arching back from the pole,
splashed with an irregular rainbow of stage lights.
We started to see that movement everywhere—
a young birch in the throws of a storm,
the peel shedding the banana,
a repentant clutching the pastor as he baptizes her
back, deep under the dirty water.
When I learned, years later, about Plato and art
and how he believed everything was just a copy
of a copy of perfection, and how it all just slides its way
down heaven’s pole to our stationary perception,
I had trouble bearing the memory of their weight,
those women flipped upside-down on stage, suspended
by their ankles, as we, just feet of insulation above them,
mirrored the early allegory of their movements:
relevé, petit saut, perfect pointe.