

Three Poems by John Grey

Center

Fourteen and six-foot three,
what else was he ever going to
be but tall. Kids couldn't look
at him without thinking,

get that boy the basketball.
He stopped being a writer
at five foot six, a doctor
three inches taller.

Even the teachers who don't
care for basketball
are shunting him out of
the class-room and onto the court.

And the coach has been salivating
since the school year began.
He knows the cliché's drill.
You can't teach height.

What's it matter if he's
as clumsy as his drunken father,
that he'd rather learn history
than drive to the basket.

By his senior year,
he could be six foot nine.
And the War Of Independence

will have shrunk by then.

The Women of the Morning Lake

In light that shivers
like laughter long after the joke,
pale shapes nestle
on indistinct surfaces.
In the middle of the lake,
effect becomes woman,
mist exuding from her body,
blue-yellow simulacrum,
muffled part sun, part water.
The world refracts gently.
buckles here and there,
mutes the vagueness into
cold Autumn morning brushwork.
As day matures,
she is never the same thing twice.
You're behind me,
your breath a blob
of morning heat,
your face clear and electric lit.
I could turn and see
exactly what you are.
But across the lake,
the scenery becomes more in my mind
than of itself.
The moment an image
trembles into focus,
it is overlaid
by more vagueness.
My thoughts are rapid interruptions

of themselves.
Who is she? What is she?
You rest your hand on my right shoulder.
I turn to kiss you.
With all this right, this touch,
I'll never know
how mysterious you could be.

Disco Ball

This is the last time I dance beneath a disco ball,
its lights thrumming my face.
striking a silver vein in my partner's green eyes.
The seventies are leaving us, those slithery
fluid years, all the bodies, all the rhythms,
one glistening metallic orbit from extinction.
No more will competing couples
knock me sideways
under cover of those intoxicating rays.
Nor will this music pulsate,
thrust my poor heart up and down like pistons,
electronic drum my brain to mush.
No more stopping for another sip of beer
in plastic cups,
me wiping the sweat, the stars, off my brow,
she dipping into her spangled pocket book
for a Kleenex,
Who knows, one day I might even take
the woman in my arms,
swing her, sway her, begin the beguine,
a few band numbers for Fred and Ginger lite
across, around, the polished dance floor.
We could even slow waltz, so romantic,

planting the sensual flag of love
in the unsuspecting eighties.
We could even stop the dancing altogether
as the nineties clear the room.
And then there's the new century.
Can anybody hear the music?
Do their fake knees even want
to take that punishment?
This is the last time I'm the one
who's John Travolta in his head,
a boogieing hair-slicked hopeful on his feet.
Still, it's part of the inescapable bump
and grind of growing.
And it does take the Village People to raise a child.

John Grey is an Australian born poet. Recently published in *International Poetry Review*, *Sanskrit* and the science fiction anthology, *Futuredaze* with work upcoming in *Clackamas Literary Review*, *New Orphic Review* and *Nerve Cowboy*.