

## BALANCE

*Elizabeth Bartlett*

My head has no affinity with my feet.  
When I stand on one heel and lean  
on my axis spine, I reel to the floor;  
I can not turn on a fixed orbit.  
My shadow divides me by day and escapes  
me at night, a trait apparently made  
to confuse me, since I follow a course  
without regularity or recurrence, my cosmos  
inclined to alternation at moments  
evident to no one, not even myself.

Who is reasonable? A tightrope walker,  
perhaps, builders of bridges, sailors,  
mountain climbers—those whose direction  
is indicated by their opposition  
and held in a careful equilibrium  
like a golden pendulum, its means,  
each according to some counter force.  
Lacking such moderation, I look for  
wisdom in safety and safety  
in wisdom—and dangle between.

A two-legged creature, whose symmetry  
goes paired from ear to foot, I find  
duality a natural condition, a Chang  
and Eng existence united in fact  
but separate in fulfillment. Parted,  
we die, and together compromise  
our right and left, depending which has  
the stronger influence. Made as I am,  
the wonder is not that I sway or spin,  
but manage to stay inside my skin.