

## A BODY

If a poem is a body  
and desire is more than a

word, then I desire the body  
of this poem, standing beyond these

words, naked, unwritten, teasing me by  
addressing you, reader, judge and executioner

of my will, which I am  
writing in public, counting to six

and watching lines pair, as I  
want to experience this body of

writing word by word. If it  
exhibits crime by writing learnedly ventilator,

it is to give you pleasure,  
and an irrational return on your

reading investment, where eye- and back-  
strain are real risks, not to

mention savage boredom at the evocation  
of untoward echoes, a kitchen counter's

speckled formica unintentionally calling up flecks  
of blood on prehistoric cave walls

or poorly washed floors in government  
basements. A poem should offer steady

increases in meaning for the foreseeable  
future; it could skyrocket like Impressionism

in the eighties. Poetry is a  
pyramid scheme, an inverted one, whose

point flickers as I breathe, and  
whose base is pinnacled, so to

speak, in the sky--technically, in  
the intense inane: the concentrated vacuum

of linguistic openness. From that utopia,  
along paths invisible to the present,

the roofless malls of a biomorphic  
future earth will descend, offering test-sites

for syntax exhibitionists and narrative flashpoints  
for weather fetishists--at least that's

what I was taught in school:  
April is the cruelest month, breeding

lilacs out of the dead land,  
mixing memory and desire. I remember

sitting in front of rectangular walls  
and pages, occasionally identifying with the

revealed meanings but more often losing  
myself in the distances. I learned

that there are two *l*'s in  
*cruelest*, neither one the same; two

*e*'s; an *r*, a *u*, an  
*s*, a *c*; and a *t*:

some of the more evocative letters  
in our arsenal of weaned sound,

endlessly murmuring their second generation truths.  
The same lives and difference kills

and names it, that's how history  
continues pronouncing this. The woman still

has a penis, but this penis  
is no longer the same penis.

Something else has, so to speak,  
been appointed its successor. The rise

of the intellectual fits in here,  
but nobody can say exactly where

without the exactitude being guaranteed institutionally,  
which then generates the problem of

an institution to report home to,  
be in bed with, however chastely,

and to rise above in dreams.  
In the focused but hypnotic specificity

of the self, the setting might  
involve the dark tents of innumerable

students surrounding an illuminated opera house,  
a nipple of light commanded by

the heights of the dream vantage.  
Inside, the audience's employment is sacrificed

on performance night for the salvation  
of the professionals. I celebrate myself,

and sing myself, and what I  
assume you shall assume: a world,

whose collective eyes, tuned to mutually  
provocative codes of pleasure, drop tears

as fast as the Arabian trees  
their med'cinable gum. Set you down

this, and don't forget to specify  
the funding lines to guarantee both

the kinks and the articulation of  
the culture rubdowns that will, as

you say, somehow or other generate  
those skyey malls I'm sure we're

all anxious to check out just  
as soon as they're up and

running. But now, when we squint  
upwards, bright bands of UV fall

from the air, irradiating the spectrum  
and making national colors glow fiercely.

Not like the old days when  
Kuwait or Chile or Guatemala would

play strip-poker in the Smiths' treehouse--  
well into the darkness--with emergent

bodies, provocatively foreign, offering glimpses of  
geopolitical omnipotence. The bluffing would grow

droll, like playing croquet with swan  
eggs--the trajectories were amusing. What

rough beast, its hour come round  
at last, slouches toward Jerusalem to

be born? Poetry has been moved  
to aisle 12, between the get-well

cards and the pantyhose. Consumers are  
understandably tentative. No entertainment epic without

its penumbra of bombs, potholes, belly-up  
malls, the barely biographic world where

private poems struggle towards print, out  
of a forgettable compost of dim

photographs of the Butler Art Gallery  
anxiously snapped in the small rain

of childhood. Memory's verdict is not  
guilty, not even there, but the

trial will reconvene tomorrow under blind,  
bright sun. The aesthetic forecast calls

for site-specific landfills, while the headlines  
define legibility, hurling the first and

biggest stone every morning, smashing glass  
houses anew in a song cycle

of entranced voyeurism, clear as a  
Senate hearing witnessed by Clark Kent's

x-ray vision. One among others, itself  
an other, this body has for

its world the dissed unplanned indies  
of the new world order, a

perfect climate and exploding market for  
resentment, giving irony an endlessly second

chance to dart its forked tongue  
over the sky, covering it with

an Art Deco card of ocher,  
pyramidal clouds. Media ladles empty into

the slots every hour as crackdowns  
leave deserts to dry in Milwaukee,

Baghdad, St. Petersburg. People starve, while  
private lives hunger for significance. Preludes, Probes and Infinities, Patriots and Wild  
Weasels form fast-moving walls of feedback

and commercial self-criticism in the republic  
where self-evident bodies stand for nothing

not personally buyable. Art conspiracies wither  
on vines as they dangle deep

in the economic understory, or they  
fall into categories crude as ashtrays

brought home from clay class. Each  
word here is a survivor of

the editorial glare of the biological  
father typing letters in the light,

mutagenic present, hoping and fearing to  
find absolute resemblance. This nest of

non-natural sounds is the mother of  
its own expression, gilding its words

with the sprechstimme of reading, birdlike  
pronunciation in the wreathed trellis of

a working brain on streets where  
construction's hand is ever at its

bloodless lips, bidding adieu, adios, sayonara.  
While I write, I can watch

this far, unrecognizable cry from direct  
desire stand in these lines in

the edge of the paper ocean,  
the swirl of infotainment and toxic

profit-taking foaming over its ankles and  
sucking back. Then it plunges, objectified.

## **The Unruly Child**

There is a company called Marathon Oil, mother,  
Very far away and very big and, again, very  
Desirable. Who isn't? Back connecting pure dots,  
Fleecy intelligence lapped in explanatory sound  
The faces make difficult.

Learn the language.  
That beautiful tongue-in-cheek hostage situation:  
My mind, up close, in pjs, and I use it.  
Wanting to fuck an abstraction nine times in a row,  
Continuous melismata, don't stop, don't stop, no name, no picture.

There is a series of solids, mother,  
Called people, who rise to the transparent obtainable  
Solo windows, mornings, afternoons,  
And there are military operations called  
Operation Patio, Operation Menu.

It is the individuals who finally get the feel of the tenses.  
So that it may snow, has to snow on the muddy corpse.  
There is a boundary, mother, very far away and very  
Continuous, broken, to interrogate civilians, the self,  
The text, networks of viewers found wanting a new way  
To cook chicken, why not?, to kill while falling asleep.  
There is the one language not called money, and the other not called explosions.