

The View from the Body

poems

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Black
Lawrence
Press

For Arthur Earl Jones—How's it lookin' from that side?—and for Jack, on this side

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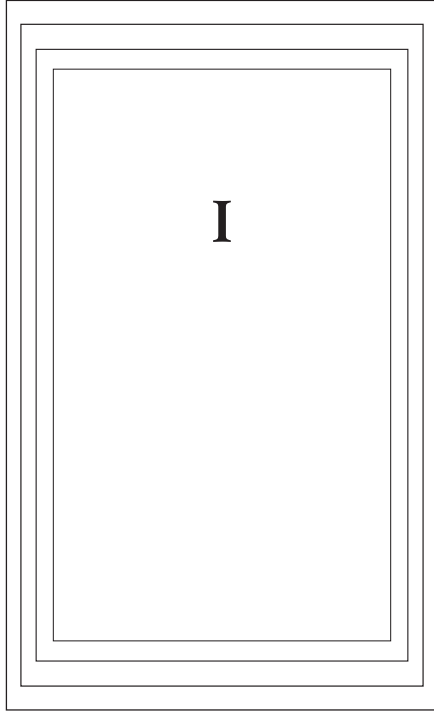
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“Body, maybe, is the only word the body knows.”

—Paul-Victor Winters



CAME HOME, I

The body: deluded, distressed, its incontestable world loose in the other world. (Pins to pull it together, props

to truss it up.) And bunkered. And drugged (hey, hey). Opening the windows, inviting fire in—come

view the two-headed girl. Rent on a back street, two rooms and nothing but noise—the eye-squinting, brain-

breaking din (the loud gods whoop inside her: splutter brass horns with one mouth, shout with another: *We*

are not here!) So came home, I, divided and dancing that steel-shoed dance, with instructions: *Fall silent.*

OR, I SAW SOMEONE LEAVING THE WORLD

A dozen blank-faced ghosts are rising; their fat crow's
barking in my ear—such an ark-ark-ark to it. Now

a shade comes down with a clatter I can barely
bear. It is dangerous to listen. Better to scarcely

notice; better to sleep through the bother—salt
the bird, *mea culpa, felix culpa*. (Happily.

Happily.) I am my own damn fault. I am a barn door
flown closed. Or, I saw someone leaving the world

—my hand is a trail of sighing glass; my fingers,
slammed shut. The writing: It's wonderful, nothing.

NOT WHAT SHE HAD IN MIND

She is trying to get out of her body,
its strong tethers to the soil, its gravid
aspirations, trying to shed breasts and

belly, the great broad barrel of her torso
—some natural shift in accommodations,
something spacious, airy, something un-

hindered by bulk and bone. The yeasty
dead rise and toss out suggestions, but
they're not what she had in mind. Rather,

something gauzy, something joy might
be eager to inhabit, the smallest open point
of absence ready to live easily in the world.

IF THE BODY

If the body is an object? cracked
like a pot that cannot hold

its swill? Consider the ties to
matter. (*Begin the poem with a*

predicament. Write what you
know.) Have a little fall-down

—plenty of space and no one to tell
the neighbors. A nifty room and

a view of the dead who have a view
of you. We are riding an island.

East wind is a cleaner of houses;
old ships bring back bad news.

HAMMER AND NAIL

Head of both hammer and nail,
the blunt, blunt, blunt un-

attributable strike, an altered
line in the midst of the banging.

It's beginning to show. The crack
quickened by contact, by fleet

and nasty (oh need), by burn.
By stifle. The jangling taste

of metal in the mouth. The teeth
too heavy to raise—so the break

in the breath in the bowels in the
center that sorts your moments.

I consider the devils I own:
They wear women's clothes.

SHE'S LOSING HER HIGH NOTES

And a half-click from a room
in the asylum. Somewhere she's

left her records, somewhere left her
—and all the waves bye: littoral

whimsy and the other half-click.
Just having a little fall-apart.

Wrens bleat. Intellect's a busted
berry. Doesn't occur too often

and no she wouldn't want to love
them again, no. Apart. Apart.

CHEMICAL DITTY

Oh cheap date! A purple pill and
I'm bright stuff. How weaselly—

such a *me* (and happy to be)—and
what lucky bastard found the faith

I almost had then lost? The heat
of certainty, that's what I've got:

the knowing of the nothing. Ah, two
eyes wide open—a mind that's not.

WHAT IS NOT A WHITE DEER RUNNING

And lo! she was wacky as a toad and
would not move from her bed,

blinked a lightless room, shades
down like blades, o! weeks, she

thought in couplets, two burps:
The world folds up again—set

the awful world away—it lived
in a place beneath the bed, it

lived in a place above the bed,
her lines, when she had lines,

when she had poems—she had
no poems—black ducks running,

stoats and swine, so down she'd never
rise, o! ask, help anything me