**A Dialogue between the Soul and the Body**

*Soul*

O who shall, from this dungeon, raise

A soul inslaved so many ways?

With bolts of bones, that fettered stands

In feet; and manacled in hands.

Here blinded with an eye; and there

Deaf with the drumming of an ear.

A soul hung up, as ’twere, in chains

Of nerves, and arteries, and veins.

Tortured, besides each other part,

In a vain head, and double heart.

*Body*

O who shall me deliver whole

From bonds of this tyrannic soul?

Which, stretched upright, impales me so

That mine own precipice I go;

And warms and moves this needless frame,

(A fever could but do the same).

And, wanting where its spite to try,

Has made me live to let me die.

A body that could never rest,

Since this ill spirit it possessed.

*Soul*

What magic could me thus confine

Within another’s grief to pine?

Where whatsoever it complain,

I feel, that cannot feel, the pain.

And all my care itself employs,

That to preserve, which me destroys:

Constraind not only to endure

Diseases, but, what’s worse, the cure;

And ready oft the port to gain,

Am shipwracked into health again.

*Body*

But physic yet could never reach

The maladies thou me dost teach;

Whom first the cramp of Hope does tear:

And then the palsy shakes of Fear.

The pestilence of Love does heat:

Or Hatred’s hidden ulcer eat.

Joy’s cheerful madness does perplex:

Or Sorrow’s other madness vex.

Which Knowledge forces me to know;

And Memory will not forego.

What but a soul could have the wit

To build me up for sin so fit?

So architects do square and hew

Green trees that in the forest grew.

—Andrew Marvell

**Song of Myself (section 11)**

Twenty-eight young men bathe by the shore,

Twenty-eight young men and all so friendly;

Twenty-eight years of womanly life and all so lonesome.

She owns the fine house by the rise of the bank,

She hides handsome and richly drest aft the blinds of the window.

Which of the young men does she like the best?

Ah the homeliest of them is beautiful to her.

Where are you off to, lady? for I see you,

You splash in the water there, yet stay stock still in your room.

Dancing and laughing along the beach came the twenty-ninth bather,

The rest did not see her, but she saw them and loved them.

The beards of the young men glisten’d with wet, it ran from their long hair,

Little streams pass’d all over their bodies.

An unseen hand also pass’d over their bodies,

It descended tremblingly from their temples and ribs.

The young men float on their backs, their white bellies bulge to the sun, they do not

ask who seizes fast to them,

They do not know who puffs and declines with pendant and bending arch,

They do not think whom they souse with spray.

—Walt Whitman

**The Grauballe Man**

As if he had been poured

in tar, he lies

on a pillow of turf

and seems to weep

the black river of himself.

The grain of his wrists

is like bog oak,

the ball of his heel

like a basalt egg.

His instep has shrunk

cold as a swan’s foot

or a wet swamp root.

His hips are the ridge

and purse of a mussel,

his spine an eel arrested

under a glisten of mud.

The head lifts,

the chin is a visor

raised above the vent

of his slashed throat

that has tanned and toughened.

The cured wound

opens inwards to a dark

elderberry place.

Who will say ‘corpse’

to his vivid cast?

Who will say ‘body’

to his opaque repose?

And his rusted hair,

a mat unlikely

as a foetus’s.

I first saw his twisted face

in a photograph,

a head and shoulder

out of the peat,

bruised like a forceps baby,

but now he lies

perfected in my memory,

down to the red horn

of his nails,

hung in the scales

with beauty and atrocity:

with the Dying Gaul

too strictly compassed

on his shield,

with the actual weight

of each hooded victim,

slashed and dumped.

—Seamus Heaney

**b o d y**

Look closely at the letters. Can you see,

entering (stage right), then floating full,

then heading off—so soon—

how like a little kohl-rimmed moon

*o* plots her course from *b* to *d*

—as *y*, unanswered, knocks at the stage door?

Looked at too long, words fail,

phase out. Ask, now that *body* shines

no longer, by what light you learn these lines

and what the *b* and *d* stood for.

—James Merrill

**Body**

This is what happened

the dead were settling in under their mud roof

and something was shuffling overhead

it was a badger treading on the thin partition

bewildered were the dead

going about their days and nights in the dark

putting their feet down carefully and ﬁnding themselves ﬂoating

but that badger

still with the simple heavy box of his body needing to be lifted

was shuffling away alive

hard at work

with the living shovel of himself

into the lane he dropped

         not once looking up

and missed the sight of his own corpse falling like a suitcase towards him

with the grin like an opened zip

         (as I found it this morning)

and went on running with that bindweed will of his

went on running along the hedge and into the earth again

trembling

as if in a broken jug for one backwards moment

               water might keep its shape

—Alice Oswald