

Body of Water

Fay Mtn

Body of Water

Acknowledgements

An earlier version of “called the screen,” entitled “called as I was to come running” was anthologized in *Saturnalia*.

©Fay Martin, 2022
All Rights Reserved
ISBN: 978-1-7923-8567-4

New Note Poetry
Noteworthy Chapbook Series #1

Body of Water

for two or more readers

ocean you person wave pearl
mm

your body is an ocean that crashes over me smoothing the jagged edges — a tumble in salt till our soft middle, the loam of my sole dream exclaims: we've found the ground for sowing once again. you are an ancient coral formation, historic organism, a living fossil of the sweetest memory I can imagine.

your body is a river I lie on my back. your body is a river I float on and on and on and on and on, a sacred saline drip in the river of your brainy folds.

your body is every body of water I've loved and lowered my lips to in anticipation need or desire. every body of water I've dipped my chin in to drink from the well of sustaining Being is you.

you, ecstatic, dip me in the water of anticipation for Being.

your body is every bath I've drawn to heal the day in a shroud of stolen shells crab legs rounded pebbles glass vials of sand fog. the lick of fizz across my neck is a nightmare echo of your breath, of the leaf I could be in your supporting palm — a ripple of folded fortunes we read in each other's cupped hands. 10 cup.

your body is every wave that guides the ocean in rumble and dance.

you are the ocean and every drop of Being at Once. I long to dissolve into every breath of fresh air every dribble of spittle that like a rainstorm becomes your body or like the dew part of every grass blade and every morning every crunchy plantasmic cell, head of lettuce. to be in you is all at once to be obliterated into Total Being.

blade

wave

pebble

scale

palm

water

your body is ocean, the force of immeasurable power, the force of unsurmountable power
crystalized in the softest pool I dip myself within, like the thousand kisses of an orchid's delta or
face or petal on my cheek. peal. overcome.

you are the fish the worm the water the line.

you are the letter and the word, the syllable caressing my mouth like a heavy stone. like a tongue.

you are every fish pulled by the line where we sit by the lake in folding chairs, a beaded beer on
the dock, bare toes done up with pine needles. you are the endless lunch every nibble and all
afternoon stretched under the sun. you are the nickel smell of the lake.

you are every fish, exotic, we allowed ourselves to admire through the glass or in every waking
dream of escape: pink, blue, golden-crowned. we eat from the river of your body and dress up in
your opalescent scales. you, fish, are how we make it home on the 111 bus every night. you are
also each starfish and each starfish's puckering pores.

you are every fish we allow ourselves to admire, now, in the bending imaginary of city markets
and the stalls of every food cart, curried stewed salted or raw. you are every canal we help ourselves
along in a rented boat every creek and every swamp we kayak through, skimming the bottom and
watching bubbles of methane rise from the bed of sunk leaves and burst looking at birds. you are
every bubble. you bust. open.

your smell is the shifting rise of tides an emptied bottle of wine in cool night. visible sift, silt.
invisible shift.

you are the coral every inch and each spore erupting laterally in synchronous broadcast. your deep
sea rolls cross polyp submersion.

your body is the single perfect pearl and every pearl I long to pull from the lips of an oyster —
saline, calcium, ooze. you are the celebration. the cerebrum. the hydration. you shimmer.

your body is all the water I drink from the tap with my head under the faucet always running over
mm
your body is every decorative fountain and every public potable fountain every time my tongue
mm
mm
has been under the copper hose made a kid dirty your water is all my tongue has been under each
mm
mm
mm
uncountable tap drip and all the sweat between my thighs. thank you water thank you body breach
mm
mm
mm
mm

Song-Portrait of a Patch of Ferns on Fire

“I’ll come with you.”

Fatally pacifist, sweet fingering strokes
droves of villi tickle-filter in fleeting
the throat
of the field’s breadth: the ground air gave
itself a body heaving cry, a vision peeling wave.
Ignite the swift fiber of being:
burn green.

Under the skin hear celestial scream,
static, the body exalting in hymn
as a drone of insects exalts into self
pulse crowd, fatten & skim—
yes, whisper whip rock through the window of my ribs.

Come to view, continue come to view, continue
come to view, continue come to view, continue
come to view, continue come to view, continue
bear the light burning through skeletal leaves
a bed on fire, candle-wick fern-sway, sole vision of glow
and haunting “I can’t leave,” but her body floating
cease strangle & slow rise: breathe.

My own body is a black box to me

I offer each parcel to a professional

examiner you must understand:

I am not doing this

I am not making—am dizzy

I am not doing this

I must offer each parcel

professionally I am parceled

I am not doing this well

On the road on the side of the road
of the highway I prayed for a boot

up down across over
up down across over

prayed for a scrap of rubber tire
a blur ritualized before recognizing

I prayed for a dead raccoon
purposely sacred and peacefully whole

so deceptively a cross
a million tiny crosses

explode across
the field of vision

it could have been
up down across over

me afraid of my own blood
up down across over

afraid of being entered through the skin
pumping within me ironically

threatening not to come out (we are all afraid of being entered
(an aside)) but as I said:

the raccoon looked wholly terrifying
a haunting vision

up yes, down even dotted with feasting flies,
even while I am afraid to keep breathing in

Estuary

I grew up on Island
sort of

I learned that ‘ ’
is a slur

recently
I don't say it

the estuary is filled with jellyfish
cross the mud suck

surfaces
toes push deeper

into the flesh
of warm silt

over the lip
of my sandal

a protected set of plovers
and the lapping edge

seagulls call
out of creeping hunger

what I call
islands I grew up on

I grow skeptical
of poetry

sort of
I grew up on slur

slurping of poetry mud
across toe suck surfaces

in the estuary I grow islands
skeptically

recently I am filled
with warm flesh silt

I grow skeptical
of sandals, lip, set, push

protected lap or puff
creeping hungrily

at the calling edge
of slip

slipping I learned
I shouldn't say

I grew up on
what I don't call

Something Borrowed from Bhanu Kapil with interest

for any chorus of readers

I have dreams in which
my skull is smashed against the rocks

by itself and splatters:
the shape of vertigo is the rocking

of a ship in its slip in a storm
as the bits of brain

(lying on a hard dirt road
spinning) drip along the window

a mess of plasma collagen roots and bulbs
fibers or a basket blown apart on the rocks

by a pistol ball – a famous image, mind you,
which is to say: rocks smash brain

|||||
|||||

spinning out of my basket-casing
lying on a hard dirt road

(look straight ahead while reading
if you can to stop the rocking

and feel if you, the accordion, can the organ
is a lump in your throat)

lie strands of vegetation like radioactive hair in the jetty
mesmerizing silken green imagination alien

growing weeds under my fingernails
and befeeling fiber stone bulb blown bask

seagulls are screaming as I scratch
this line in the dirt with teeth

you've made me seed of perpetual dirt

a matter of merely shape

called to screen

when I see a mountain I come to it

called to mountainous by the screen door screech
imagined memory of boyishness
gather in the spring (just in new symbol for the end)
times like these I crawl to the screen of sound-
scream regenerative
of forgetting our names or the name of forests
we ran through or crawled dragged
 time is an atomic dot dapple-stretched across
revisit and how the bed of wet leaves felt firm spread
like peat flammable beneath our feet

in damp sneakers the timedot dewy flesh underfolds future
vivisection spread belly soil-sound oily metallic flame rusted leaf
touch rustic soiled sound of flame leaving the body:

all at once I think of the border
all at once I think strand I think papyrus
scroll pulp squeeze accordion
pull screen all at once I think pedagogy
public library's bust of Ben Franklin
I think: Ben Franklin's taint, bramble
(I'm sorry but it's important to say these things)

in damp sneakers her fleshy power
the strength of softness is – for example –
an elastic buoyancy not snap (not never); is patience
is forgiveness is pedagogy, taint is sap; all at once I think
paint *hear her listening* making space for soil tint across
degenerate clear the brush for sneakers boyish run dampness bed
of leaves come to the screen softly made for citizenry made again
all at once I think pull all at once

listening which dissipates in the spring fog
we're kids again in an exhausting memory
of a film we've never seen
engendering remembrance incantation
incapacitate, that is: thin stillness, headlessness

(I'm sorry but it's important to say these things)

roll by could be a field if scroll pulp left
stretched to float against the grain or pull:
could be a field could be a field if let to see
peer through fog leaf smoke wisp spring
a summit of being to see through:
transparent prophecy of a queer imaginary: why not?
see something in the tea leaves—
the forest through the trees

when I see a mountain I come to it

dapple spread I write out of shit dandruff hair fingernails

I write out of confusion for your fingernails in my hair
write in the woods the name of forest slips my mind mind
us slipping to the woods the fort of leaves twigs hair nails
braid us

I could write a sonnet if you want
out of twigs

we're out of twigs

twig sonnet come screaming to the screen of
transparent spread
spring-bound again called to the woods
dapple-called as I was to the woods to come
with you soft constancy as in a recurring dream
 buoyant *busted*

braid us into the wind, mountain I come to

Checkpoint

What is a checkpoint? Murderous nucleus of a line.
Take off your hat at the edge of exhaustion;

the natural intercourse of men is division.
Cleave to your skin. Cleave from the branch of history,

pinned down by the first form of property: Alien Power.
Pedagogy. Something taken.

What is a checkpoint? Murderous nucleus of a line.
Influenza, like history, in the mouths of babes in the basement. Pulpy tongues.

Crisis Caused Mass Hysterectomies.
Influenza under a star-crossed disaster:

California is Mars.
Poetry is a bad joke. Poetry is a

What is a checkpoint? Murderous nucleus of a line.
Accomplish one thing today and another tomorrow.

Do not become a sphere, volunteer
to become a branch.

Avoid criticizing after dinner in order never to become a Critic.
Lochia: discharged nucleus in the gloved hands of a murderous state.

State your
Here is the checkpoint.

is my slow death a form of reparations

for every spider I've pinched

between my fingers in a scrap of toilet paper

is my slow death a form of reparations

for every spider is a question that implies

spiderjoy and singularity

is my slow death a scrap of toilet

paper pinching

is my slow death a form of reparations

for every spider is a question that could otherwise imply

a collective under-and-through-the-skin joy at whole dissolution

is my slow death

a reparative form

Lucy

I hold your name sacred as marbles in my mouth
letting the full coolness roll between my cheek and
gums, over my tongue: try not to swallow your whole
being Lucy

I hold your name sacred as marbles in my mouth
letting the full coolness rest at the back of my tongue,
as a pearl on a pillow and my head is a cave — is a
balloon inflated with fear of forgetting the taste of
your whole being, Lucy

I hold your name sacred as marbles in my mouth
letting the fullness roll through me, a balloon inflated
with fear, with longing to recapture the taste of your
being Lucy, whole

I let slip your name, sometimes, failing to keep
sacred the fullness of your being gone, to savor it,
whole

I reached home that
night but you
remained every bird.

You erode you are a
murder of crows you
are every moth
every murder is you
and every moth is
you eroding.

a flock of blackbirds for you is a murmuration for you is a murmuration for you murmuration of
blackbirds flock for you is a murmuration for you is a murmuration of blackbirds for you
murmuration murmuration of blackbirds for you for you is a flock for you is a flock of blackbirds
for you is a murmuration flock of you flock of you is a murmuration for you blackbirds for you Lu

murmur of Lucy

could a field be if it left could be be behind or not not not a field of being be field be fled by—

where we used to sled, frankly, I dream of it: the cold breath in the lungfold was air was oxygen
(this is a statement of fact)

Do you remember climbing the wooded hill? we do, we recall, call back, declare to the climb-
burning our springing off the contorted determination to still play

ice pelted &

fled by to the field we sled down, shed the sheer memory of falling fast into some cream-colored
dream of winter imaginary landscape

from the top, try again:

call quickly to climb through the stick covered woods wooded now under a layer of thin ice, grass
ever-crowning or cropping up to a secret spot for spinning out under the cold white sun

 seemed endless
 seemed expanse
 seemed breathless

the field of vision expanded into the city from where we stood, centrally, sounding out
in song *Do you remember the opening?* buoyantly wooded & disappointed begin again

shift get skinless sink in the grass, slink thinly, think slender, slim in the skinless grass

from the top:

edging up to the wild we imagined as the peak of play: to become field, not field; shift open;
quick: get soft. don't be afraid to get skinless, soft, be made a busted-out version

come again, call out
come again, call out
come again, call out

come again, fall out, out of field out of field out of field

be +

Bust.

