Thinking with the Body

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THINKING WITH THE BODY

At home inside your own skin,
As they say—while
Shielded by this paper cover
Lie the slow, tight coils of gut,
In sinuous unseen glitter
Of peristalsis, and the heart
Screaming outrage at the mile too swiftly
Run or the dismissive syllable.

Skin is the finishing touch, the sky-roof
Over this strangely autonomous
Realm and its sly imperfections
(Arrhythmia, or merely the stray
Kernel of corn tumbling towards
Some fecal light, evading alimentation's
Unrelenting sweep, or the organized
Ugliness of ear and elbow); skin is all

We see: the creases in the open
Hand, that spell one's destiny:
Etched in a darkness the eye's light
Cannot shape, the fetal fist clutched
Tight round the last eternal shreds.

Does soul live among the crackling
Sparkles, synapse to synapse,
Or in the coral memory,
Saline and submarine, like some
Sedentary beast, roiling gently
In the brain's convolutions—
Or in the cell's clever spirals,
Its geometries replicating the codes
Of immortality?
By your skins shall ye be known:
Life's sentence handed down
With shovel, brush, or in straining rope's
Indelible characters, and the paper
Tautens, wrinkles, glows in the spray of salt
Wind and the cold of early winter; skin,
Skin is all

We can know of another's mind, heart.
Ache and rejoicing, how well we love
Ourselves: skin is where

Our names are written:
We write our own lines there.