

Mike Chasar

SOMEWHERE TONIGHT AS THE TRAIN

Somewhere tonight as the train stitches East  
from the mountains, a priest is preparing the Mass,  
shining the chalice and holding the un-blessed bread  
and un-blessed wine, the not-yet-body and not-yet-blood,  
and as he prepares, the mystery of his faith is summoned  
and stretches before him. And only because no one is  
watching, and only because his church is a tomb  
and the altar a block of Italian marble, he  
holds up the bread and holds up the  
wine and whispers *this is my  
body and blood* as he's  
blankly promised  
from Sunday  
to Sunday  
for years  
and all  
of a  
sud-  
den,  
with no  
eyes upon him,  
his body is suddenly rocked.



Somewhere tonight as the train stitches East,  
 men in painted bodies, men in painted faces,  
 men with bones in their cheeks,  
 circle a cauldron and chant. Inside a ring  
 they simmer the stew and stoke the flames,  
 their bodies are movement and shadow, their spears  
 propped at the rim are a series of rays from the sun.  
 The elders are eager and hungry,  
 the women and children are eager and hungry —;  
 the ladle is lifted and bowls are passed,  
 the stew is poured and they relish the heat as it passes  
 their lips and they feel it descend through their throats  
 and into their guts which recoil and slowly recover.  
 So the body is eaten, dispersed, and destroyed;  
 So it lives on.



Some  
 where tonight  
 as the train stitches  
 East through Montana  
 an elderly man is  
 explain-  
 ing how  
 every dawn the bodies of Japanese soldiers were tied to the bumpers  
 of jeeps and dragged on the rocks on top of the ridge  
 till their features wore  
 off. Every dawn  
 this post-mortem  
 hanging, a body  
 selected at ran-  
 dom from a  
 wet pile. A  
 body to stand  
 for all bodies.  
 A body may  
 look like a  
 body, he  
 says, but not  
 be a body.



I'm afraid of the body.

As the train stitches East and the drugs help you sleep,  
more than ever before I'm afraid.

I'm telling you *this*,

that I left while you slept and I fled  
the darkness of sitting beside you.

Only the train —

as I swayed down the aisle past rows  
of people asleep with their gorgeous mouths open,

their ugly mouths open,  
their skinny and fat mouths open —

only the train was alive. And I wondered why we  
can't leave 'em behind,

make ourselves hoops  
of stars in a painting or trees entwined in a tale;

Certainly Ovid  
feared the body as I.



I will tell you some day how I met,  
in the lounge car,  
a man with a six-string he said

he'd restored.  
A year and a half of rebuilding

he said, *and the body will never be perfect.*

*Temperature changes its sound*  
*altitude changes its sound*  
and the trainride from Portland, up

through the mountains and over the buttes of Montana,

*has it singing the blues.* Oh how I wish you could see  
his practiced caress and the way  
its hourglass fit on his thigh. . . .

But look,

its body was hollow. He kept it like something  
whose body is hollow,  
so surely, so easy, I fled.

One day I'll tell you I re-found my seat next to you  
in the dark. I want you to know I was holding  
your hand and touching your cheek,

afraid for us both as the train,  
back to the world from the mountains and buttes,

flatlined into Chicago.