

I SING THE BODY ECLECTIC  
OR  
What if Whitman Had Had a Grumpy Day?

Kevin Cook

1

I sing the body eclectic,  
That army of fans of mine bugs me and I bug them,  
They will not let me off till I act daring, break some rules,  
And scandalize them, and charge them by the line for my endless  
counting-off of stuff.

Was it doubted that a guy who gets paid by the volume would be less than  
voluminous?  
And if those who file fluffy fillers are as bad as those who pad dime  
novels?  
And is it not proof of my clairvoyance that I can do a "Book of Lists" a  
hundred years before David Whatsisname?

2

Does any of this make any sense to you, O common man?  
Ask me if I care.

The male is perfect. The female is perfect. It's when they get together  
that's disgusting.  
The sprawl and fullness of two babes around my arms, the bosoms and  
folds of their dresses, the zowie curves of their bods downwards,  
The swimmer naked seen through my binoculars, all this is my subject  
matter, and you may ask,  
What make you any different from another dirty old man, Walt  
Whitman?

And I may wrestle with the sinews of your eyes and say,  
Blow it out your ear, fathead.

3

I have perceiv'd that to be with those I like, if you know what I mean, is  
enough for an old geezer like me,  
To be surrounded by beautiful, curious, breathing, laughing flesh is  
enough,

To pass among these hangers-on, these literary groupies, and rest my  
arm ever so lightly round his or her neck for a moment, what is this  
then?

I do not ask any more delight, I swim in it as in a sea. I'm not as young as  
I used to be.

There is something in being close to sweating horselike men and women  
and looking on their heaving forms, and in the contact and odor of  
them, that makes you want to throw up.

But these things please the fans, and so I put them in.

4

I'm skipping this verse.  
You want to make something of it?

5

A woman's body at auction,  
That line ought to sell a million copies right there.  
She too is not only herself, she is the teeming mother of mothers, she is  
you, she is me, she carries all of us inside her. She must be very  
uncomfortable.

She is the bearer of them that shall grow and be mates to more mothers.  
More dirty stuff.

Have you ever loved the body of a woman?  
Have you ever loved the body of a man?  
Have you ever loved the body of a cactus?  
Very carefully.

If any thing is sacred the human body is sacred,  
 For any thing I put in my poems is either sacred or monotonous,  
 And the human body is not monotonous.  
 And in man or woman a clean, strong, rippling form-fitted body, is more  
 beautiful than the most beautiful face.  
 Except maybe for Farrah Fawcett. Or Redford.  
 Wowee.

Have you seen the fool that corrupted his own live body? Or the fool that  
 corrupted her own live body?  
 For they do not conceal themselves, and cannot conceal themselves. And  
 for two twenties. . .

6

O my body! You may not be much to look at, but who cares when you're a  
 literary giant?  
 I believe that you are the source of my work,  
 I believe the likes of you shall stand or fall with my poems, and they are  
 my poems, anyone else would be ashamed of them but not me, no  
 sir, and here we go again,

Man's, woman's, child's, yours, mine and ours, Tom's, Dick's, and  
 Harry's, Moe's, Larry's and Curly Joe's, and even Shemp's,  
 Head, neck, eyebrows, earlobes, toenails, that indentation between your  
 nose and your upper lip that doesn't have a name, headbone,  
 thighbone, connected to the anklebone, anklebone connected to  
 the footbone, footbone connected to the toebone,  
 Hale and hearty, Laurel and Hardy, Gilligan, the Captain, Marianne,  
 the Professor, Mr. and Mrs. Thurston Howell III, Tinker, Evers,  
 Chance, Martin and Lewis, Sinclair and Lewis, Lewis and Clark,  
 Clark and Bar, Rogers and Hart, Rogers and Hammerstein,  
 Rogers and Dale, Annette and Cubby, Gilda and Garrett and John  
 and Danny and the new guy and Chevy, and Chris and Jimmy and  
 Burt and Dinah and Elvis and Bing,  
 Heart valves, palate-valves, bivalves, sexuality, maternity, modernity,  
 fraternity, sorority, topography, monopoly, sorry, password,  
 scrabble,  
 Food, drink, swallow, pulse, digest, burp,

The beauty of the waist, and thence of the hips, and thence downward toward and past the knees. The beauty of the floor. The beauty of the basement. The beauty of China.

The thin red jellies within you and me, the bones and marrow in the bones, the strawberry jam on your shirt and the peanut butter stuck between my teeth. Yuk.

The exquisite realization of health, or in my case the sublime sensibility of senility;

O wow, this is the stuff of my poems, the yellow pages of the nineteenth century,

This is the stuff that made me famous, so I can put down anything I damn please and people will buy it and put it in English textbooks for God's sake,

O I say now every one of my poems is a Whitman Sampler, and I was the first one to go in big for Blood, Sweat, and Tears, and I like Chicago too, but that's another poem by another guy.

