

WHEN YOU WATCH US SLEEPING

When you see us lying scented
in our nightclothes, the patchwork
quilt wadded at our feet, coverlet
kicked aside, when you see us still
at midnight, our bare arms covered
with the moon-shadows of the hemlock
by the window, our hands latent
and half-open on the pillows by our heads;

When you come upon any of us buried
but breathing, close to the earth,
motionless as oak leaves beneath drifts
of oak leaves or curled inside silk
body-vases hanging from greasewood
and vetch or sprawled, languid
under the broad branches
of the baobab in summer heat,
when you hear us humming hoarsely
sometimes, scarcely wheezing, murmuring
like white hens at their roost;

When you watch the green anole
on the banyan, cool and slender
as a pod, the onyx grain of his eye
closed deep in green sunlight,
when you can see how he obviously
possesses in his body, even in the slack
scaly skin of rose beneath his jaw,
even in the posing net of his ribs,
even in the corpuscle of blood
at the tip of his tail,
how he possesses in his body alone
all the power he needs to rise
and declare, not merely truth,
but rapture;

The living body asleep, so great
a sum of beauty that a billion
zeroes follow it, the eyes
sealing the head so tightly
during those moments
that the infinity of possible
heavens inside can be clearly
perceived by anyone;

when you watch us sleeping,
when you see the purest
architecture of the ear,
the explicit faith of the knee,
the old guiltless unforgiving adoring
sweet momentary tremble of claim
in the breast . . .

Aren't you sorry?
Don't you love us?