

## *Cultivating Mass*

Let the peaceful young men work  
their *bis* and *tris*.

Let's not begrudge  
them their beach muscle.

This is not bitterness. Please, let them  
never imagine their Clean and Press

is a casualty raised  
up and over  
a Humvee's up-armor.

Let them never know a body  
weighs more unconscious

or consider that barbells are built  
to be lifted, our bodies  
to lie down.

Today I can deadlift four-oh-five.  
When I can move four-ten

that will not stop a bullet  
or  
the overpressure of a bomb

flooding some tightened space,  
never mind  
the shrapnel and heat careening  
through that rapid bloat  
ripping—

But if lifting is not a prayer  
why do my knees hurt?

Why lunge genuflections  
in fifty-yard intervals  
if not to make less fragile these legs

I beg to keep?  
If the consecration of chalk buckets  
is not a blessing

then the measured  
tearing down of my tissue, the shallow

scarring of its muscle,  
is not teaching this body reverence

to whatever  
is in it that tells it—*cohere*.

But I say this is faith,  
I am learning  
to tighten myself together

and knowing  
the little good it will do.

Let the peaceful young men believe  
for awhile longer  
anything otherwise.