

## Body

By Caroline Rothstein

The thing about body, that I am knee deep in this vessel;  
my soul, swimming lifetimes of oceans encapsulated in  
this visage, this brick and mortar, this gift.

And what of this *גוף* in this religion?

And what of this *גוף* in this world that has murdered our bodies  
made our bodies blankets for torture and shame, made our bodies  
hunted game, made our bodies joke, made this nose joke, I make  
my own jokes about my Jewish face, how the smell of Ashkenazi  
fumes from my curls and what of this world, where our  
families comment on our weight it's always our weight, it's always  
just wait for more food, for second helpings, for leftovers, for this  
celebration, this food, this take my leftovers have you had enough  
to eat, have you had enough, do you have enough, have you ever  
had a Jewish mother shovel nurture in a big bag of Tupperware, feed  
you abundance of warmth and plump you full with food and body  
those bodies, the images of those bodies, in the unspeakable  
places that they shoved our bodies, our beautiful Jewish ancestors' bodies,  
what internalization can we otherwise avoid when we are told we grow  
horns from our heads when our bodies are stacks of genocide deaths.

So what of this *נשמה*, no distinction made between body and soul in  
life, this breath of overcoming the endless deaths, and judgments, and  
struggles, and targets, and scars, and doubts, this soul of perseverance,  
this unwavering faith of universe, wasn't this *נשמה* our answer all along.

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When

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When the BBC News says Jewish bodies found in medieval well in Norwich,  
when we do not embalm our dead,  
when we do not cremate our dead,  
when we do not view our dead,  
when we must quickly bury our dead,  
when our dead have been stacked on top of one another in open mud pits,  
when we do not tattoo our skin,  
when the New York Times says with tattoos, young Israelis bear Holocaust scars of relatives,  
when Fox News says Gaza man shot dead by Israeli forces on border fence was mentally ill,  
when the Torah says our bodies are dust from the ground, a breath of life,  
when the law begs us regimen of diet and exercise,  
when the magazines tell us to change,  
when the world passes judgment,  
when our bodies are targets,  
when our targets are sacred,

how are we supposed to understand these gifts?

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