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**The Worried Well / Surgery /
Body Sounds at Night**

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The Worried Well

We are the worried well, whom illness will
Make prophets of, well before we die.

The arcs are several and slow.
The gains are laughable, the debits grow
And that great debt that will engross us all
Is being compounded yearly.

From now on we go on by letting go;
Not eagerly and no more than we must
But all the auscultations tell us so.

Now begins the fight in the stairwell: at every mossy turn
Some faculty or weapon clatters down
Some shimmer is ablated from the skin.
We go on by subtraction, from now on.

(Within the body's wiring did you dream
There was a spirit soldered crudely in?)

And suffering will leave us last of all,
The company
That ends and ables us,
The system that we are.

Surgery

Pry out the ribs and isolate the heart.
Possess it as a lamplit, hollow thing
Its machinations halted for an hour
And open to the gloved correcting hand.

Oh we are jackbuilt, built to breed and die.
What if we did not breed and will not die?
What if we all continue, stiffening?
Our wiring shoddy like a cottage's,
The tubes that we are built of, narrowing?

The body with its filters and its bags—
The flopping heart, the tramp and go of tide,
The hormones sneaking,
Ceaseless, sidelong, telling us the time;
The brain, that unrepeatable and golden braid
That in the skull is coiled . . .

And the self: strange compromise and shifting swarm
Of attitudes, tiny ignoble bargains,
Slant observations, and the sheer
Warm-bloodedness of things.

Have some affection for the excellent animal,
The edible portions slowly going bad,
The senses dimly leaping,
The remarkable meadow of sleep.

The risky organs continue to pump and bleed.

Body Sounds at Night

The noises that escape from sleep:
The processes imperfectly concealed
Of private factory and battlefield,
Great bellows, pumps where the dark liquids drive.
The night shift over, we return alive
And unembarrassed: we slept through it all.

About the Poet

John Hart is a poet living in San Rafael, California. First published in the Pitt Poetry Series, he edits the all-poetry journal Blue Unicorn.
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