

## POETRY

### The Mind–Body Problem<sup>1</sup>

By Morris Berman

Sometimes, the mind races far ahead of the body.  
Most of my life has been like that.  
I've spent a lot of time  
being able to analyze that which I couldn't actually do.  
I remember some kid in college  
who was always relaxed,  
always at home in his own skin.  
He felt, to me, like an alien being;  
I would have killed to have what he had.  
There is such a thing as body genius:  
Wayne Gretzky on the ice, for example,  
anticipating an opening before it even shows up.  
An extreme unself-consciousness,  
like Jerry Seinfeld, or Steve Martin, say,  
in front of a mike, working the crowd.  
Sex is like that, of course,  
and also, giving birth.  
And once, for a brief moment, I had it  
when I took a game off my tennis instructor,  
a guy who had played professionally in his time.  
It never happened again.  
I mean, most of the time I'm just in my head  
sailing along the waters of some great intellectual sea.  
Nothing wrong with that.  
Except, as John Finley once wrote,  
there is always a pull within us,  
something that wants 'the clear signals of the senses,  
by which alone the world is made fresh and definite'.  
He was talking about the Homeric Greeks,  
the Greeks of *The Iliad*,  
who were able to see reality without filters.  
Later, a shadow fell across that perception;  
this happens to children as well, as they grow up.  
And yet the body always calls,  
always beckons,  
saying over and over again:  
I am your first love.

1 From *Counting Blessings* by Morris Berman; orig. publ. in 2011 by the Červená Barva Press, Somerville, Massachusetts.