

February 2011

## AXIAL SKELETON

As in death, during sleep this skeletal frame is fairly useless;  
this aging frame that holds me ramrod straight back in grammar school, Circa 1962,  
Head Master screaming, “shoulders back, chest forward!”  
now bends under the fatigue of the day.

As in death, lying supine is a foretaste where this frame is off duty,  
allowing other anatomical parts, like joints, to ache and creak their way into awareness.

And lying prone as I did today, submitting my knotted spine to a massage,  
this frame is ignored as softer tissues surface to consciousness  
as they are plied under the deft compassionate hands of the therapist.

In this posture my eyes are closed and I have asked the muzik to be turned off,  
leaving only the sense of touch to remain acutely aware and fearful of the next locus of pain.

Without visual cues, reality takes on a different hue,  
and I lapse into a reverie, (when I’m not being kneaded, like a lump of dough or  
feel a conscience about this self-pampering).

I realize how rarely do I treat this body, care for it,  
listen to its aches and pains, and even venerate the 60 year old frame.

Mostly I am running, sitting for too long on airplanes and in cars,  
and falling half conscious into bed when the day is done.  
Even my exercise on the treadmill is frantic and frenetic despite its aching hip  
in a close to abusive use of this frame...  
in the vane hope it will help lose those extra pounds  
and thus reduce my blood sugar,  
despite my powerlessness over those evening cravings.

Most of all I marvel at this unique mammalian axial frame  
and the price we humans must pay for being *homo erectus* as we slowly decline.

This very frame archetypically inspired even kabbalists to use the frame as the sacred metaphor  
of something transcendent  
to represent the divine /human image  
that we somehow all aspire to.