Every morning I switch on my screen. You appear before me. I have read your name a hundred times have read your words you exist for me I know you. It is 1993 and the Net is my tie to the world. With you I communicate it is safe I can logout save delete anytime all day all night.

One hundred messages this morning on the screen do I want to read? delete? logout? My finger rests on the return button eyes accustomed to scanning I look for your words the ones that touch my heart. Your name does not appear this morning I cannot find you you are not a Sender today you are a Subject. I read words written about you. They say that you are dead. How can you die? Words cannot die.

One hundred messages this morning one hundred messages about you. Your death reaches me reaches all of us continents apart we feel the silence of the Net missing your words. I want to touch you my body is disappearing what is this medium that allows us to be so close with only words and names to identify us?

I print out the comments my printer grudgingly spewing your death. I want to keep you alive I will not stop writing I will hold on to you trace your outline on my body recreate you reach for you behind this screen.

I read a piece you wrote the night of your death a piece about bodies-without-organs you who dies so suddenly
body ravaged by diabetes. You write about the concern that our being-in-the-world will be replaced by being-in/being-with/being-one-with the machine... I need the machine I need it to reach to you to heal my broken body I need your words on my screen every morning I write with you. Your words are imprinted on my mind dancing behind my eyes you are reading, deleting, saving, replying, harvesting. We need to speak. The Net is our medium our body-without-organs.

I wonder about the irony of discussing embodiment by e-mail I wonder what you look like did you suffer? We must not abandon the body.

Your words. “At the limits of the body, speech is abandoned, death sinks in, the Net is hidden speech. And at the limits, cries and murmurs are heard. Broken, disconnected, this is all we have to offer.”

***

I see you behind my screen I see the reflection of myself. Today I wear the watch my talisman around my neck and keep time that is my own. Your presence gone leaves a crease in my heart. I do not have an iron I cannot iron it out smooth the pain. I hear the ticking of my watch. Time is passing.

You appear and disappear on my screen. I have saved many pieces of you I can print out your body your words alive in front of me months of yours are mine I have saved them copied them rewritten them.

My floor is dirty spotted with paint it will not come off it is the witness of my creation this morning I paint for you these colours the curve of the paintbrush the agility of my fingers on the keys this is for you for me.

***