



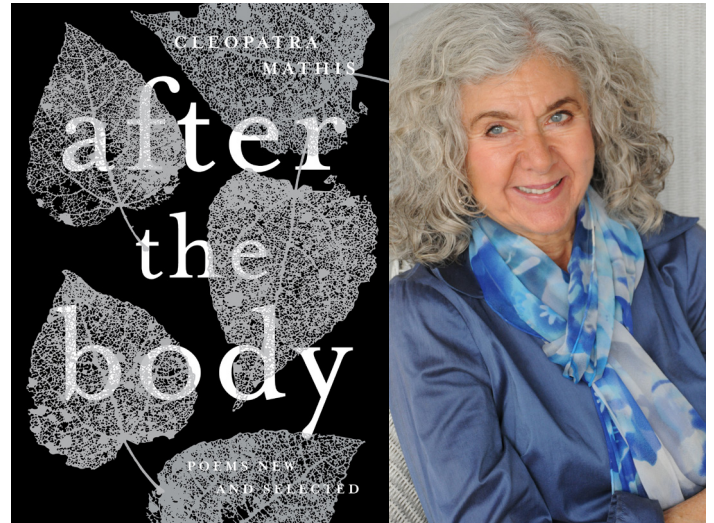
AFTER THE BODY

CLEOPATRA MATHIS

READER'S GUIDE

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Pain is a central subject in the new poems in *After the Body*. How does the speaker's sense of pain change? (Side question: Why is the nature of physical pain never truly discussed, either by medical professionals or the person suffering?)
2. What is the difference between mental and physical pain in the new poems? And in "real life," why is mental pain often given more gravitas than physical pain?
3. Is spiritual pain more valuable or interesting, or is that especially so because it is abstract?
4. Or is all pain abstract?
5. What is the intrinsic value of nature to the speaker of the new poems in *After the Body*?
6. How does the role of nature change or vary?
7. What overall subjects and obsessions develop over the course of more than forty years of writing that the poems in this book represent? How do those obsessions change?
8. The original meaning of the word "obsession" is to be haunted or possessed. How and why is that true for this writer?



WRITING EXERCISES

This writing prompt is a lesson in imitation. Imitate a poem closely, line by line, using your own emotional situation, narrative, or physical setting in the same syntax as the poem you are imitating. I often suggest using my very early poem "Ariel View of Louisiana."



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