

I am

terrified I'll lose
you as a
lover even though
I keep you as
a wife mainly
because of my
body which I
am less ashamed of
than resigned to
but which keeps
me from reaching
to you when my

breath shortens and
head fills with way
after way of taking
from and giving
pleasure to you but
which people who
look like me learn
early to suppress
in particular when
who we desire is
the picture of who
we should consider
too beautiful

to attain as you
are despite your
over and over
assurance to me that
you are not; still I
gently withdraw my
hand reaching for
a small finger
of skin exposed
low on your waist
unknown to you just
above your pajama
bottom that could not

be any more charged
any more animal
empty of thought (do you
realize this?) any more
human laden with want still I
gently withdraw from
reach blaming myself for
blaming myself knowing you
more likely would
turn toward than turn
away still I
quietly breathe out
long breaths of release,

of relief at not having
to face which way
you'd turn or what
part must be played
by what you must
think of my body in that,
but left again still
on my side of
our bed assessing
unsexually what you
must think as
your hand slips across me
when it does or whether

you could possibly
feel nothing but taking
or giving of pleasure and not
whether or not
the body I inhabit as
your lover your husband
causes you to think only
about getting to an end of
what my reaching
out and slipping my
finger across your
soft skin mindlessly exposed
will have to lead to.

Paul T Hogan
From Inventories, 2012