

Ode to Stegosaurus

That magnificent cascade of convenient paired plates—
not only were they his central heating and cooling, Jurassic
to mid-Cretaceous, but countless 20th Century kids passed
their lengthy laughing hour in museums great or small
or in parks verdant or bare, sequestered snugly there.
How many of the adults they've become must still possess
their bronze or plastic replica, once boon companion
that shared bed and board and primal fear (of Allosaurus,
T. rex—those implacable, giant-thighed, flesh-devourers,
stalactite- and stalagmite-teeth ready to tear the instant
Mom turned out the lights).

O Roof Lizard, stalwart
walnut-brained ten-ton friend, rotund muncher of fronds
and leaves, state fossil of Colorado, what hath they wrought,
these paleontologists bent on revision? They've made you
more sleek, as if you'd been subjected to serial diet fads
and they all took. They've shrunk your plates, wiped out
your stolid symmetry fore and aft by raising your hind legs,
jacking up your underbelly from the soft green ground.
We've lost the promise of your familiar body: *Come, ride me
into darkness, I will carry you and protect you with my many-spiked tail
and lick your wounds clean with my grass-loving tongue.*