

I hope the cat's revenge is merciless.  
I think I could turn and live with vegetables,  
they are so savory and unperplexed.

## READING AQUINAS

Maybe what Thomas means when he says grace  
is its own prerequisite, or words to that effect,  
has something to do with these sweet tides of joy  
one feels now and then in the bottom of the breast  
while crossing the street against the light  
or watching children at play or cats copulating  
or birds leaving the branches quivering under them  
and the stillness of the branches afterwards.  
Maybe it's times like these that Thomas means,  
though I'm in doubt on this and other issues,  
including the one correlative idea  
about how the Divine Essence cannot be known  
to a person who is still in the body, except  
"in dreams or alienations of the senses,"  
which is a truly wonderful consideration  
coming from a corpulent 13th-Century Dominican—  
and grace again is an explicit component here:  
"the images in the imagination are divinely formed,"  
involving "the infusion of gratuitous light,"  
Thomas having elsewhere carefully explained  
how it takes grace to prepare oneself for grace,  
as in that sudden shower one afternoon last summer,  
like a sparkling airy essence of divine light,  
I found a portly African in a Hawaiian shirt  
baptising himself in the street and marveling:  
"I couldn't help myself! This rain is exquisite!"—  
the two of us finally standing face to face,  
one of us an angel in a shirt of flowers,  
the other blessed as he could be because of that.