

HOMO CORPULOS

St. Francis called it 'brother ass,'
was on good speaking terms with it.
Swift thought of it as a defecation machine,
with *anima*.
Delmore Schwartz called it the 'heavy bear,'
that's 'clumsy and lumbering,'
a 'swollen shadow,' a 'crazy factotum.'

For us agnostic evolutionists,
we *are* our bodies.
St. Thomas Aquinas philosophized
on the nature of the risen, glorified body,
and his report was glowing.
Dylan Thomas was comforted
by our persisting in daisies we push up,
part of the landscape, so to speak.
But do I die, wake up somewhere
else and say 'I made it, I persisted'?
If not, don't console me with pantheism
or reincarnation or other fables
that make me think the body is reusable,
a thing we drag around waiting for the second
feature to begin, an old B movie. So,
we end up as folded bones in some neighborhood
Christian graveyard, or a 'Memorial Garden'
somewhere off a busy city street, gas fumes
heavy in the ironic, pollen-laden air.

Still, sometimes it does feel like
it's a thing I inhabit, like
a loose sleeve or a limp pelt
I put on and zip up and animate.
After all, we do say 'my hand,' 'my heart,'
as if there were a *me* in charge of *them*,

the body's parts snuggled together
to make one multiple thing.

I blame it all
on St. Paul. And Plato,
whose philosophy of the air Nietzsche
called 'the higher swindle,' and
it was, the best shell game in town,
until Jesus raised mouldering Lazarus
whose stench blew through mainstream Christianity
like a bad fix, a jolt to stiffen the veins.

That's why a statue is a soothing thing,
why we pray to them and erect them in cemeteries
and put them on courthouse lawns, all the juices
that make us go, frozen on the spot,
the same each time we pass.

I could watch a great piece
of sculpture all day, planted root-like
on a concrete bench, my blood slowing
and turning to sand, my eyes smoothing, I
commanding the mutable world, a stone sword
at my side, my stallion caught bolt
upright, for at least a thousand years.

ST. THERESA'S

Stuffed into layers of wool,
we sledded in lucky winters over the hills
to the school that lay at the bottom
of a small scooped-out valley,
enclosed by a Cyclone fence, with no horizons
to give children's minds their drift and dream.
It just sat in against the land,
dirty windows and a hard geometry of bricks.
It had a cinder playground where once I skinned