

Talking to Jasper, in the garden

24 October 2012

This body,
lying in our dug grave,
draped in a deep blue sheet,
lightened with spring flowers,
recalls other bodies—
the brother with leukaemia ,
wanting to die,
the mother whose body
I never saw,
the father who was all-body,
his mind already elsewhere.
But the dog is also himself,
the four paws tucked under,
a leap on a frieze,
the golden head still beautiful
in its stillness,
while the eyes slowly recede
from the earth.
Just an hour before, he twitched
at a spider on his flanks,
now small gnats settle on his
face with impunity,
as will other creatures soon enough.
We can only hope for the quietness
of his ending under the plectranthus,
near the pond with its resident Buddha

and with the prayer flags in the syringa above
blessing our animal spirits
as they flutter away.

10 December 2012

I move the hose over your grave,
passing over the sandy soil
now exposed,
to the edges where the grass begins to grow again.
It is barely six weeks
but the garden is reclaiming you,
covering you over with greenness
in an unremarkable way.
Better by far to have planted a tree
whose roots would have reached the bones
of your body, winnowed down,
curling tendrils round your ribs,
shifting, infinitesimally, your immobilised tail.
I understand, now, those bereaved
who tend their departed's bones on feast days.
We could unearth your skull
and touch anew the outlines
of a beloved face,
place your skull on the mantelpiece
and thumb noses at impermanence.

Wendy Woodward