Particulate

Rest after breakfast on the table like doves while salt, dashed and sprinkled, becomes the polish of centuries salt that settles into tiny patterns of aboriginal art round petroglyphs of bone and rock grinding into elbows and the chins of small children scrubbed clean by wind and rain salt diminishing columns of granite and steel the sound of salt sifting into shapes of silicon and light on the screen random neural firings of salt finger to finger, licking the salty sweat above the lip, licking the salt of labor, the salt of grievers, of old sailors, worth our weight in salt, salt licks square and red, and square and red in salt like snow, like stone statues those shakers and shakers of salt salt and squares of salt set out for deer, timid and invisible salt twirling through water, settling at the bottom of the glass of tepid water, sweating and feverish, smelling salts for the faint, for the fearsome, salt into wounds salt into tears salt like deadly weight carried to the streams salted highways of gray and melting salt, salt for the summer journey, salt for the pilgrimage to the sea for the sacrament of salt, weighed and measured and poured and tossed over the shoulder and then from our again water, again this journey salt distilled from the sea from the mines for salt, soap, glass, glaze, pots, grit, each grain of salt a particular of time salt we would die for, salt so close to ourselves we can taste it.

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"We Learn to Use Our Hands"

Sitting before us like lumps
we want them severed
useless hands without repertoire
or memory, without impulse
or reflex,

Hands that would reach into fire
now seem stuck on our bodies
by accident, curled like dry roots,
stiff and atrophic
like wings of dead birds,
we'd remove them ourselves
if we could
but you see the dilemma

Now who will wring hands
with worry or drop palms
in despair? Who will defend
us? Who will do the scratching
as only we know how? You cannot
count on feet; blistered
at the toe and heel,
they want to stay out of it.

The cruel among you suggest prayer
while our fists bang, knuckles spark
the open palm lifts skyward;
we learn the code of the clenched hand
while fists become paws to scrape
and dig for white grubs, for sweet larva
hands in their inadequacy suddenly
bloom and swell as in
the pale pink rose in spring

No one lets go, no one gives up
hands become hands in firm agreement
held in common with stubborn desire
a sudden rainstorm builds in applause
there is an overwhelming show of hands.

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