

## Aunt Margy's Hands

### I

Her wiggly voice, her shrunken frame,  
these I managed. It was her hands  
that scared me.

### II

She greeted me holding my hands  
in her icy palms.

### III

Her pale sienna nails were deeply  
ridged. They scraped  
the egg carton scooping for pills  
in psychedelic portions.

### IV

Pale translucent skin, blue  
night-crawler veins, always shifting  
across bone.

### V

I could tell the type of trees  
in her paintings by the bark:  
striped birch, peeling eucalyptus.  
How did she remove  
the tiny lids  
from tubes of oils?

### VI

Her sister's finger mangled  
in the wringer. Her own, severed  
then sewn.

### VII

She pulled a pair of button up shoes  
from the cedar chest and handed them  
to my sister.  
Keep them, she said.

### VIII

Her crooked finger would push  
the tip of her cat-eyed glasses,  
or miss it altogether.

### IX

Sometimes she'd stroke my hands.  
She'd say they were so long  
and straight and smooth.

X

No two cups were alike and each  
had a chip or line of glue.  
I'd choose one from the cabinet  
and her trembling hands would slowly  
bring it down.

XI

I went away. When I came back  
she stayed seated, repeated  
undecipherable phrases,  
her hands resting in her lap.

XII

One day she stopped speaking,  
but her nails scratched at her skin  
and her hands rubbed each other.

XIII

Her hands taught me  
what I know of relevance,  
how to weigh  
the integrity of skeleton and skin  
versus marrow.