

Hand Song

for C.T.

I was going to sleep one night; I couldn't conceive of the person with my hands.
I could conceive of the hands, of them doing things—washing dishes, for instance, or tracing the
coils of an old garden hose.
But I couldn't imagine having the hands; it was too much.
Hands that move things around in a house, that prefigure the geometry of emotional attachment—
two emptinesses entwining.
Alchemical hands of a cook.

All names became impossible, for I have no hands.
All hands become impossible, for I have no have, no am—

Did you think you would stay each way you were forever?
No, there it was, between, and you sensed it.
To put it this way or that way would not be to know it, but to simply move it about.
You would stay put, wouldn't you, if you could?
Ah, but you're mistaken.
About life.
About finishing and putting things aside: devotions, cities, poems.
It can only be like throwing yourself, throwing the idea of self, that spheric tangled dreamlife of
flesh and star thistle, let it be "hurled into infinite space" with no arc of return.

In the twelfth century, "understanding" was simply attention, listening.
What do you hear?
A heater, winter, the body breathing.
Sunrise humming the bridge of a song to make today.
The idea of holding a song in one's hand: what would that be, to hear a hand, singing?

by Kate Asche