

AUNT HELEN'S HAND

“But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:20)

Skin has a sweetness, even papery
vine-veined hands cold to touch.
When I hold Aunt Helen's hand
to my cheek, I can believe
it's fruiting elsewhere,
that the purple bruises from needles
and the raw redness of her radiated flesh
will bloom in another light.

Sometimes, looking at my own veins
so prominent and blue now, veins like hers
that ached from needle jabs, skin that burned
under the beam—and when I think
of everyone like me, maimed and pulled away
by time, I dream of hands that hold us fast,
reaching through flame and frost for us,
the beautiful fruit of his wounds.