

# *The Hand*

BRADY RHOADES

All winter my left hand has assumed  
The death grip, as if it knows something  
I do not know. The face smiles broadly.  
Robust arms unfasten locked altars.  
Muscled legs champion past dead flowers.  
But my hand curls into a small stone.

Mayans might have thrown this hand at sacrificial girls.  
King John tossed babes in the Thames with the likes of this hand  
tied to their necks. It could have been the final weight  
to press the life from Giles Corey of Salem. Did it slam  
the head bone of a Jew, or, carved to a point,  
rupture the eye of an African?

This hand is a stone and this hand is a family.  
Look how the fingers' bulbous heads bow in the soil of my palm.