Variation on the Idea of Crowds

Ed Skoog
I go into crowds, hoping for riot, 
and I know a crowd is an amalgam 
of the general crush, like prison

or an epic. I go into a crowd’s 
ontogeny, mark the move to grown 
from embryo, moving face to face.

Going into crowds, I hope a tyro 
will tutor me in what is still young, 
show me new divisions among the turks

preening, subscribers to an abstract cool. 
In the crowd my eyes dart from dirt to rain, 
picking out which brawlers would start a fight,

guessing who in the crowd presides, 
lead starling in a scarf of starlings 
wrapped around a river,

asteroidal revolutionaries, 
flying tories; or which gang plans to start 
fires under the dinner tables;

which clique’s old age will mostly be spent 
dusting silver nitrate under roses. 
There are groups in the crowd covered in sores.
In crowds are islands that seem oases. I go into crowds to learn how to move many as one, the latest pattern of bones going into the body, occipital tori, the many tendons of the wrist, inside the gala of ribs the salsa of organs red and moving like featured performers, riotous heart and lungs someone’s mama felt longing under a taut belly, or saw through the gamma broadcast clipped to the doctor’s light, curled baby bones, fetal catafalque, each facet and cleft fleshed out by the doctor’s pen, actual fetal development unimportant: there is the one projected skeleton featuring us, in the medical room, doctor rushing toward other patients, each of us trying to remain parental to this white sketch against a black faucet, a claque to fawn it into morning. And at the base of the X-rayed neck a solarium glows warm, the neckbones concatenating towards the face even now woven around a sucked thumb that must taste like sourballs, the kid’s wince transfers
to the transparency so terribly.

There must be something valuable in thumbs. They are crowded into so many mouths, cedilla for the chin, ladled by a fist.