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Sanguinary

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ROBERT FARNSWORTH

SANGUINARY

Perhaps they should seem precious
now, but how sick I am of looking
at my blunt-fingered hands.
I am unrecoverable now, locked inside
this wet machine, braiding my dreads.
Time's come to speak at last of what
it's like to operate the body, now
this finicky machine I toggle,
twist, and nudge toward working
order. Don't get me wrong—
this isn't suffering just yet, just
a sort of Cartesian estrangement
that every day wakes you up
to how Herculean and homuncular
existence always was, even before
you knew the thriving, over-sweetened
bloodstream was mixing chance
and choice so recklessly. Or was it *you*?
Rash, unlicensed operator, negligent
descendant, parent, accidental
creature inside the creature that idiom
cannot honestly (or can it?) blame:
It's in his blood...? Yes, to seek the sea,
to cherish flight, to fiddle with the lexicon,
but the little scarlet beads I draw each day
from deadened fingertips won't ooze
from any old smooth stone of metaphor.
Oh where is the fault? Not stars but selves,
of course-- inside the body's hot, red,
crowded cavities, but no more there
than in the mind that knows of them
the way Romans knew of distant, seething
provinces, and went on with their lives.