Keturah Considers Abraham’s Hands

Robbie Taggart

—Genesis 25

as he sits across the room holding a pear in one and a knife in the other
She thinks of all the things those hands held and touched before they held and touched her
Unlike the hands of this child, her sixth son who nurses at her breast, which grasp tightly to all things as if everyone and everything could be taken away in a moment

there is something free and confident in Abraham’s old hands like the open sky which holds whatever God puts into it: sun, moon, cloud, stars, emptiness

This is what it means, he told her, that eternity is our covering We hold our hands palm up and receive all that the day places there We do not wonder about tomorrow

Now he cuts the pear, making small slices he will share with the small boys who gather around him like dogs around a wounded animal

Somewhere the second son sits alone in a field listening to the cypresses creak in the wind thinking of the way his mother’s voice walks the desert

Tell me about the time, she begins, but his fingers are so gentle These old supple hands like the water whose fluidity makes it stronger than the rocks it erodes
Hands turned downward and laid indiscriminately on all things
Benediction flung across vast spaces he cups each face to bless
all the families of the earth

There is a learned gentleness in these hands that will cease to hold her
and as she walks with her sons into the east country she yearns
to be held so completely in the hands of God