These Hands of Mine

The fingers crooked like a hen’s
foot, the knuckles as big as the karidia
on this tree from holding on to
children’s hands, washing, wringing
out clothes and floor rags. Closing
around the wrist of my man, lifting yet
another glass of wine.
What good are these hands to me now,
barely fitting around the teats
to milk this goat.

If only the rain came—
I would stand behind this shed
stretch out my hands to catch
the first drop, watch the rain
opening them up, my fingers grow
smooth and straight again, I would grasp
its strings to pull me high up
toward the sky, leaving behind this goat,
this house of my son-in-law with the red-
painted plaster peeling like a scab
off a wound. My hair, black once more,
 flyer behind me like a flock of black ravens,
I would watch this island, that bent my spine
into a scythe till it resembled its own,
getting smaller, smaller and shout
to the boy down below whom I have watched
for thirty years measuring
with a stick the shadow cast
by a cypress: throw away your stick,
look up to the sky and wish too for the rain!

LALA HEINE-KOEHN