

Ode to washing my hands

M.E. Carnes

Grabbing ahold of the metal knob
I pull it towards me,
unleashing a torrent of water—
tiny droplets bounce off of the enamel
and thud against the skin of my arms
 as if the water can sense
 the fire that has taken root
 inside of me.

I move my hands under the faucet
and allow the water to coat them.
I watch as the steam rises, and
like a burner on an old stove
my hands turn an angry red;
the water searing through my skin
 the pain ignited in my hands
 a distraction from the bruise
 that hugs my left eye,

I take hold of the bar of soap
twisting it between my hands
until bubbles are overflowing;
I rub my hands against each other,
coating them in the silky white silt—
scrubbing every inch of skin that stretches
from my fingertips to my wrists
 as if I could wash away
 the purple bracelets
 his hands left on me.

Once more I move my hands
under the faucet. The water removing
the residual bubbles—they swirl around
the drain and disappear,
 and for the moment
 so do all of my worries.

Repeat.