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## Reflection of a Student: Hand Casting

by Leah Nero

When I chose to cast my hand, I decided to create a form of the back of my hand—fingers slightly curled, the way I might reach out to clasp someone’s hand. I chose this position because this is the perspective I see, it is the view of myself rubbing an ill person’s edematous arm, or feeling their furrowed brow for telltale clammy skin. I chose my right hand, my dominant one, putting my best hand forward.

I thought of the expression for when a place or a person is particularly etched in our mind: “I know it like the back of my hand.” I have watched these hands with wonder, as they have aged and grasped and let go, as they have reached out to the new and waved goodbye alike. I have seen these hands go from a girl’s, to a young woman’s (vain with polish), and now they are nearly my mother’s, as I first remember them, reaching for me. I have marveled that they are both so common and known to me, and so ephemeral—how what we know and who we are can shift so gradually until we have transcended, again and again. I remember my grandmother’s hands, so vividly, and wonder if one day I might unknowingly wake up with those hands. I wonder if it will be like knowing her again, even in her absence.

The feeling of having my hands wrapped in cool, wet plaster was soothing. It made me feel grounded, calm within my skin, as if casting oneself is a way of marking, I’m here today. The plasters forming guard felt secure and connected. I became assured that all my sinews had finally met in the middle somewhere. It reminded me of a yoga class, where our final meditation was “I inhabit my littlest toe.” There was a whole landscape to our physical and emotional planes that we were habitually neglecting. During the hand casting, I took deep breaths, and I inhabited my littlest finger. It wasn’t too enthralling there, but it was tranquil. For one hour of the fall semester, we deviated from the well-traveled path of frantic intellectual pursuit. We took the mind-body equivalent of the scenic route—a quiet escape from inhabiting a crowded mind.

I have not yet painted my cast “hand,” and I’m reluctant to do so. I don’t want it to really pass for my hand, (my hand does all its own stunts.) I don’t want to assign it a color, or a level of gloss. I like it scratchy, a little undone, unfinished. It both espouses the elementary idea of my sincerest intentions, and leaves me room to grow, to transcend. I’m a little unfinished you see, sometimes I unravel a bit at the edges, or get shaky in areas of transition, but all and all I am here, reaching out and held together. ☺