

## *Hands*

Moya Cannon

*For Eamon and Kathleen*

It was somewhere over the north-eastern coast of Brazil,  
over Fortaleza, a city of which I knew nothing,  
except that it is full of people –  
the life of each one a mystery  
greater than the Amazon –  
it was there, as the toy plane on the flight monitor  
nudged over the equator  
and veered east towards Marrakech,  
that I started to think again of hands,  
of how strange it is that our lives –  
the life of the red-haired French girl to my left,  
the life of the Argentinian boy to my right,  
my life, and the lives of the dozing passengers,  
who are being carried fast in the dark  
over the darkened Atlantic –  
all of these lives are now being held  
in the hands of the pilot,  
in the consciousness of the pilot,  
and I think of other hands which can now hold our lives,  
the hands of the surgeon  
whom I will meet again when I return home,  
the hands of the intelligent, black-haired nurse  
who unwound the birth-cord from my neck,  
the soft hands of my mother,  
the hands of those others who have loved me,  
until it seems almost  
as though this is what a human life is:  
to be passed from hand to hand,  
to be borne up, improbably over an ocean.

Hands, 2011

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