

THE HANDS

walking down the street he is afraid
of all the things that move, and mostly
he is afraid of time, whose movement

involves hands, for instance
the hand of death. also,
years before there were
the fearful, sociable hands stretching out

like torn instruments from the deep
friendliness of salesmen,
and now, each morning, forever,
the life insurance comes up with the sun.

he asks the sidewalks, is this real?
this morning i get up, my wife
is warm, asleep, massaged
but not by my hands, if these are hands.

she is soothed
by good luck and dull machinery
and nothing flows from her hands but sleep.
my hands are hands, only

sometimes they grow outward and then they
are everything, the re-enactment
of the wrong, extended craziness of flesh
and what it covers, our risked valuables,

the fast clocks, the back seats
of cars loading up on death and semen,
the nights that force us
into practically death and always
the choked out hands of my wife
in the bed, still sleeping.