

July 2014

Life Lines

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Recommended Citation

Bertman, Sarah (2014) "Life Lines," *The Laureate*: Vol. 11 , Article 22.
Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/laureate/vol11/iss1/22>

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LIFE LINES

by Sarah Bertman

People are in their hands.
Fat folds of flesh
are a baby's first grasp of world.
Innocent as their minds,
soft as stork feathers. Born empty.

Starry vines of life carve out niches
and hands become books of history,
shake a critic's reading.

Hands of a pianist are nimble and thin.
We watch spider fingers move sound.
Hands of a farmer are thickened by work,
blackened by soil.
Hands of a mother are not soft.

Age is not time, not space.
Age is life which pours from the years
like a giant mosaic of fire,
etching its path across naked skin.

A great-grandfather points to each crease.
Each life line a story, he says.
This one's my war.
This one's my fall.
This one's my baby.