

Joan Colby

Ars Poetica Redux

What is it about fingers,
How they can point
Or make obscene gestures,
Close on the fellowship of handshake,
Perform the qwerty of letters
Thumbing the space bar. Michaelangelo

Could place a flaming sword in the hand of Michael
The Archangel. A study of the way fingers
Grasp weapons less mighty than letters.
This is the point.
The earth is primed to be shaken
By even the most innocent gesture.

All art might be viewed as jest.
You're free to mock Michaelangelo
As Elliot did. Shallow women shaking
With snide amusement. Shellacked fingers
Pointing
At the impotence of letters.

Proving only that the unlettered
Resent a culture that devalues gesture,
Who as children learned it's rude to point.
Admired how Michaelangelo
Reclined for hours on the scaffold. Fingers
Grasping the brush to shake

The hand of god from the quaking
Heavens. Bestowing or letting
A single-celled creature churn gills into fingers

To cross the heart. A gesture
Sharp as the spire of St. Michaels.
And really what was the point.

If art is said to have a point
Which MacLeish denied shaking
His head. *Not mean, but be* Michaelangelo
Imagined David: the marble let
Him free. Free as a gesture,
A wave, a beckon, a glad motion of fingers.

When his fingers let art
Shake from Michaelangelo's inspired
Gesture, that was the point.

Miscarriage

This would have been our child,
This clump of matter
But could never be our child,
Stuck in the globular phase
Of production. A woman on the line
Discards these irregularities.
They splash into a pail
Or, in this case, a toilet.
Finale to something
Unresolved, not yet desired.
We didn't grieve. It wasn't the time
Of reproduction, of the wanted.
Of the crib in place, the dressing table
Where the child is laid for changing.
Nothing changed the day
That incompleteness justified
The waste
We had not accounted.
But blood accompanied its passage
Like an artless baptism.
I can't imagine it as more than
Tissue, clotted, Rorschachian
In the guessing stage.

Joan Colby's *Selected Poems* received the 2013 FutureCycle Prize and *Ribcage* was awarded the 2015 Kithara Book Prize. Her recent books include *Carnival* from FutureCycle Press and *The Seven Heavenly Virtues* from Kelsay Books. Her latest book *Her Heartstrings* was published by Presa Press in 2018.