



Fingers Remember

BY MARILYN NELSON

Long fing- ers, how
signals flow up them
from tip and finger-
print all the way
up the arm and
the neck to what
ever magic light takes
flame so touch ignites
as the palm smooths warm
from one person to another, passes
sunlight one skin has taken in, which
the other receives like thirsty soil gulps
rain and infinite generations of ancestors
yawn awake asking if it's time for the line
to miracle up a new life. They were so young,
and innocence is a birth gift intended all along
to be opened with love, promises, and blessing
as you enter the future that only exists if you live
into it. His name was John. His moving muscles
formed shapes she had not met before. Green
time laid its fragranced landscape before them.
So they entered. Married. Irene came soon.
At eighteen, Gussie was widowed, with a
toddler older than her youngest siblings.
The family's hand opened and closed
in welcome. But fingers remember.