

The Hand

Mary Ruefle (1996)

The teacher asks a question.

You know the answer, you suspect
you are the only one in the classroom
who knows the answer, because the person
in question is yourself, and on that
you are the greatest living authority,
but you don't raise your hand.

You raise the top of your desk
and take out an apple.

You look out the window.

You don't raise your hand and there is
some essential beauty in your fingers,
which aren't even drumming, but lie
flat and peaceful.

The teacher repeats the question.

Outside the window, on an overhanging branch,
a robin is ruffling its feathers
and spring is in the air.