he had three hands I had none

where were my hands where were they

under the cotton sheet

his three loud hands shouted precise non-negotiable commands

his knife-blade hand. his hot blinding-flashlight hand. his granite-weight hand crushing my lips against gums and teeth

his hands stuttered filth in the eloquent language of power

look at hands

in uniform salute. waving from chandeliered balconies over town plazas. tossing benedictions. pushing round red buttons behind closed oak doors. pulling round red triggers. throwing darts at paper wall maps

manicured fingers snapping. snap snap snap
he knows who I am he sees parts of me I don’t see the back of my back the
top of my head in his surveillant camera eye whim he shoots me. from a
corner lamppost video. as a shadow pickpocket working the crowd

takes snapshots of my chickenscratch words on paper scraps. letters and
bills he microfiches before the postman plops my address in the box after
my name unseals in my hand

he knows he sees me he knows me he sees me and collects and files his
data. my every gesture procured in stealth. with whom does he confide
divide interpret his shares of conquest

cloaked he trails my patter he he he trails me until the morsels and paces I
talk and walk are sounded and shaped for his gleaning

he gleans gathers and from the remains of the remains of he shapes a whole
he assumes is the whole

I know what I don’t see. he is here and here and I have become the child
who swallows her precious gum before the teacher enters the classroom.
the cousin who doesn’t startle when her premature bra is snapped. the
woman who concedes her thoughts to no one and buries cognition in
impenetrable depths

he he he gleaned me. what’s left are leafless stalks too thin to catch a wind
materials for this story freeze in winter alleys
drown like telegraph lines under a pastel coral reef
float in the wind that winds your hair
dangle in Central Hardware on old pegboard hooks
squeeze tight against you in subway turnstiles
cram the last inch of elevator stinking sweat and out of breath
arrive cracked or water stained
stutter indecipherable words in the simplest language
materials are in the single-eye babies born in Fallujah
in their depleted uranium blood
materials are in the motherless sisterless fatherless aunt- uncle-
neighborless son- daughterless grandparentless ghosts of evaporated towns
the rat-a-tat-tat clicking locks on windows and doors
the walls of prison. the walls of open-air prison
the nasal snoring sleep that is never and can never be a let-go relaxed and
confident sleep
materials are shovels to find and claim the names buried under angled
light buried between blades of heat. materials are the pick-axes shivering
overuse
materials are every woman and everywoman
a fist is raised. a roar is born a rumble in the distance
material is the eclipsed sun behind a sudden drone
look at aggression’s lustful desire
find materials for this story in power fed with stolen land uprooted trees
suffocated springs
materials for this story haunt the margins. pores of skin. molecules of
metal. crack of stone
go to her wherever she is. on the rocky ridgeline with the view in all
directions. on the tarpaper roof feeding pigeons cooped in their cage. find
her above the sun spread like desolate roses on the snow. find her where
the sun shirks behind stone and brick before pigeons set out on their
missions after they have flown home

go to her though she doesn’t call ask beg or hint. go to her she doesn’t
know she is waiting

bring her a siren bring her a bell bullhorn megaphone microphone but
know she will choose to whisper. read the verbs on her lips the spittleless
nouns

it’s your hankering to talk don’t twist her arm. with a running start jump
over time’s chasm and land on her side intact, pockets stuffed with the
fractured present. remedial for you not for her

go to the place she calls home. find her hair permed or dyed. waist wider
or trimmer. wrinkles gnawing at her cheeks. she’ll answer to the very
same name in a recognizable let-go laugh—ha! yes it’s me you found,
now leave

you don’t leave

she’ll need bandages or a tourniquet to tamp down the reopened wound.
your dimestore first-aid kit too meager

Denise Bergman 2013