

Thursday, March 18

Salt

All those years I went the way of grief,
turning my stony eye on disorder, something to be cleaned
and fixed. I was lost, scrubbing away at the hidden,

hating the vase where the fruit flies nested,
the artful bowl that held ruined fruit.

Throw away the rot, I said, making myself saint

of the immaculate, not knowing a thing about the soul.

Meanwhile, little spirit, essence, psyche, anima,
the forever-alive-but-unpinnable one

turned its gaze away, claimed a crack,
found a rusty needle, curled up in the eye of it.
In the pine floors alone, a million crevices,

a million particles of grit, pinch, and crumb.
What sea in my bucket could wash the world clean?
And who knew the soul

was right at home in dust, passing
through every incarnation: the tiny breathing
mite it entered in the gray swirl under the stove,

expelling itself into a draft that carried it
into the filmy grease so lightly pocked
on the cabinet glass. Releasing, floating down,

the soul finding the one grain of salt
lying there under my nose. Me at the sink,
scouring the porcelain, not seeing.

Cleopatra Mathis