Blountstown

Lightsey Darst

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BLOUNTSTOWN

Glorious in ash, phoenix
feathered, upheaval is now our queen: she spreads her reign

even to this little town you barely
stop to fill
   your gas tank in: the man's on his ass,

wife sweeps their savings out the door,
   sets a match-stick idol
up in place
   of his mother's spotty photograph—
   The pretty girls

get pox while the homely ones scratch
their names into the face
of Baldman Mountain—And

believe me, that teacher knows
her long year is over when
the students burn her down like a red barn

in a field nobody owns.
   Nobody owns these hands
or what they make or do: I rend,

I reform. I make the kings
   kneel knee-deep in mud, stretch

to the beggars for a branch.