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## Hymn to the Left Hand

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## HYMN TO THE LEFT HAND

I was born on the Barrer River  
And raised from Blue Ash, Ohio.  
Now I uproot myself, moving  
Where "Mystery Train" is my anthem  
And the state bird is a pig.

You know me by my birthmark:  
Three stripes of blood on either arm,  
A blazon of pain. Each nurse  
Would shriek and drop me in the crib  
Where I rocked all night like a fever.

I whistle the payment up beneath my heels;  
I grunt till the clouds pump rain.  
When the light vowels spring from my tongue  
Like the tip of a switchblade, the crows  
Blink and pull in their greasy wings.

This heartbeat is a warning, a footstep  
Over frozen ground. The blind veins  
Tunnel from neck to fingertip;  
The scrotum strokes back and forth,  
Keeping time between my slag-pile thighs.

The way I take a woman, I could  
Be coiled in chains and still  
Strike myself against her like a matchhead,  
The vows now spurting into smoke,  
The rings now fused around my wrists.

And here I will build my house of brick,  
Only a crack open for the traffic  
To gaze through at the new beast,  
For the cheap tours that would yearn and cancel  
The holidays of the left hand.