

Fall 1980

Hymn to the Left Hand

Elton Glaser

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank>

 Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Glaser, Elton (1980) "Hymn to the Left Hand," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 15 , Article 30.
Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss15/30>

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in CutBank by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

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.