

JOAN HOULIHAN

My Left Hand

I want to stop thinking
about where it goes, about
when it will come back.
I don't need you, I hiss to the dark.
My right hand finds it, touches it.
They have a language, a birthplace, together.
In the morning I'm shown the mirror.
I see it reflected and cry with relief.
It comes to my face to wipe the tears.

Corpus Glorification

In hospice, by moonlight,
part of him crawls nocturnal, cold,
through the smell of resin,
the pine-gods solemn and tall.
Part of him speaks to himself:

“Lay yourself down in the ground, Sir.”

Then comes floating a funeral,
which never touches the ground.
He stands to watch it go by.

The evening is a room.
Prepared and empty, he goes in.
From the clock he can hear a little death-talk.

Ghosts in profile, middle-aged and older,
their bottom halves trailing off,
walk into and out of the room,
lonely and stray. He asks:

“How can I be standing here, if I am in the ground?”

And the wall, and the nurse, and the clock,
all look, and the moon waves from every window
as they wrap him up from top to toe in a very fine veil.