

**MARY MOLINARY**  
by  
poems composed for the left hand

1.

to keep dementia away  
most of the doctors say  
use the opposite hand—  
force new learning on the mind

my left hand laughs  
says it's all silly,  
doesn't buy the split-  
brain theory

but being good sport, plays  
along—works hard against being  
awkward

it's my right that slays  
me—sulking and skulking  
at the margins—curled  
up like a forgotten turnip

2.

my left hand does not know  
love—not like my right one does:  
nimble caress of alphabets,  
keys letters, lover's uppermost

thigh—my left hand is impatient  
to learn what my right knows:

lovmaking is easy if you mean it:  
use both hands, all fingers,  
use lips teeth tongue,  
all of your vowels  
and all of your toes!

**3. golden sunflower of my left hand**

my left hand may have  
a dirty mind—you'll never catch it  
    blushing, and  
no doubt, if it knew sign  
    language, my left hand would have  
    a dirty mouth

my right scrubs it clean

my right hand is not  
only better at astronomy  
& masturbation, it excels  
    in all arenas: math, poetry,  
    philosophy, music

my left can barely beat  
a drum or hold this pencil  
    but  
my left hand used to lug  
itself around like an early  
dinosaur—feathered but not yet  
    capable of flight or glide

**4. speech impediment**

not exactly a stutter  
or dissolve  
of liquids—l's r's losing  
their places against the backs  
of unfamiliar teeth—

[*girl rabbit rare*

*rabbit gir-rabbit ra ar*

*ahrah rah ree ray roy roo*

*rood row ahrah ooroo arrow*

*barrow carry air care air i see*

*a girl who roars like a rabbit an aurora*

*au-roar-a the red robin roars at the hoary aurora]*

o! my left hand at times  
wants so much  
to be  
flawless  
worthy—

could it weep  
it would

**5. slow girl**

she can't move quick enough for meter or wit.  
with my left hand, it's all slow syllabics at best.  
were she a character in a play or novel,  
she'd sit and slowly rock, touching each petal  
of every flower brought to her by all the kids  
who would run away uncomfortably and  
laughing. she wouldn't much care, she likes flowers

**6. Let us now praise the left hand**

Here then it is: “here is this tender and helpless” left hand—humble, aged beyond its years, bitten, gnawed at, wretchedly unmanicured: having borne the brunt and weight of manual labor, the pathos of small burns, fresh cuts and scars—whose unnaturally fattened knuckles seem like porous stones or clumsy cement covered in the thinnest veneer of human flesh: calloused crackling dry wearied by thirty years of “rate” plus tips: the hand’s portrait I draw for you now not for pity’s sake—god no!—but for the sake of us all: the left hand is a trembling body—ours: and is it not eloquent when it trembles like the filament of poverties and times and depressions past: a single lightbulb burns in the plank shack of this left hand: bent tines on a silver-tint fork:

**7. *My Life* by the Left Hand**

Let's be honest as pen nibs & pencil leads will allow. I am far less "stranger" to her childhood than her right hand is. & far left. What I represent is a flash of common birds fleeing an autumn-bare cottonwood tree, the pause between branch in repose & pencil teetering on the edge of fledging. I remember every pane of glass in those huge public school windows—windows I wanted to open to fly into rose & tumult sky filled with molecules I could smell & ambidextrous music I could play to if they'd let me. Truth is, the privilege of the holy right hand practicing its perfectible script & staying so beautifully between the *Big Chief* lines—

What lies!

Truest thing she ever wrote: a poem in the 8th grade called "Hate." That was *all* me telling it like it is/was. The right hand had already learned to embellish, to please. Truer still: I did "hate you all" for stunting my growth & for making her accept absurdities as somehow natural. Were it not for me, for the large memory I keep clear as those panes of glass, I tell you: we would have lost her *completely*, wholly, to that well-wrought fiction.

### 8. Indictment/Confession

True. Yes. She was in the leviathan, the belly of the beast—the industrial kitchen of the Sheraton “El Conquistador,” Tucson outskirts. Her hair, short. Her apron, green. Never good with knives, it wasn’t unusual to see her cutting bread more slowly & deliberately than she did everything else. I was reminding her (yes, holding the baguette incorrectly, thumb flailing out there like a fish) about history: about her employers, ITT/Sheraton: *Chile, Allende*, I said, *Pino-fucking-chet!*

At that moment, one of the chefs (pastry) yelled across the kitchen to one of the sous chefs (sauces): “Did you open your insurance letter? Dude! My left hand is only worth \$5000 but my right’ll get me 10 grand. That’s fucked up!”

Some will say she came at me for the insurance money, but that’s not true. No. She wanted to shut me up. It was her conscience—ironically the same conscience that got my ass out of the way fast-fast. She and the right/knife hand came down at me meaning business!

She got nothing for the sliver-tip of my index finger. Not even workman’s comp. And besides, honestly, I *was* egging her on.



## 9. Sinister

The left hand is asleep. This needs to be quick and quiet. I'm not convinced we want or need to let this cat out of the bag. Haven't we all gotten along just fine so far? I wouldn't say the left hand is necessarily evil, but really! And it isn't as though it was tied down like the old days; the left was kept from nothing. All it does is blame. Blame and castigate. You and I both tried to civilize the thing on numerous occasions. It didn't like scales and hated to practice anything... Look at it! Passed out from God knows what dark imbibing. I'm afraid and I think you are too. For us. I think it seeks revenge and all we wanted was to instill a work ethic. A grace to its rough manner. The thing was born with an unhealthy rage. It's sinister. The less it knows, the better.

**10. Lesser poem by a lesser hand**  
**(moral: Do Not Romanticize This Character or Scene)**

an abundance of butter-  
flies & fish, my left  
hand is Panama, the  
Philippines—a *purr*-  
fect destination when you  
need adventure, a simple  
meal, a retreat from, or  
tan-brownish skin  
my left hand speaks  
English when you need—  
will coo a cool breeze  
into your quixotic ear  
or across the dawn of  
your volcanic nipples  
when you read the ravines  
& lines of this palm be  
only a little afraid/excited:  
my left hand may croon  
in savage languages scoop  
you up butterfly you serve  
you with salty fish & rice

**11. Self-Portrait with Left Hand & Blue Vase**

part of me says no blue vase at all but a monkey & a bird & the monkey holds tenderly the bird . . . well the bird is perched in the simian's flat opened left palm & lemon yellow everywhere the monkey is chimp perhaps or tarsier its face the self as subject & the bird is blue as the Mediterranean blue as the absent ceramic vase—the beak wide open—one can nearly hear the tune the communion between monkey & bird & the title is THE MARVELLOUS POSSESSION it's a double entendre . . . well wait, this could be a sinister painting: the subject (monkey) hides its right hand behind its back—that hand full of seed & the title is SINGING FOR MY SUPPER . . . oh, no! I don't like that at all! the bird *is*—blue as absent ceramic vase—& in the palm & singing *just because* & lemon yellow everywhere everywhere

**12. How my <sup>i</sup>left hand ended up in this shallow grave**

with all these complete or nearly complete human figures who grew tired of being treated like just so many left hands is no mystery: here's a thought: *analogy & irony excrement & teeth all i see & all i see* here's sunset: a sidereal sidelong glance on clove-pink hills coloring them umber shadows seeping one into another making one large shadow called night stars drop like a sharp knife might like a sharp knife did from here surrounded by bodies and stars i see night for what it is a sieve *through which* here's a memory: stringed instruments sobbing Shostakovich & there she is conducting the 20th century in front of the speakers a fury she merely sniffs at senses because the right alone can't handle this because she needs me to conduct the 8th (though the right baton/knife hand commands all the attention) here's the finale: at the end we are all of us trembling with a strange joy at the end this is grief deepest sadness a shallow grave left for revision

**my left hand**  
**13. How I ended up in that shallow grave**

a simple late  
winter early  
spring snow—  
at least 2 hands deep

we watched all night watched  
the *real* disappear beneath  
the drift of things, a temporary  
rapprochement mediated by  
the peach-bloom glow of low  
clouds, light, luminous crystals of  
water mirroring back

a landscape with snow is all  
about shapes and their accents

we used to play breathlessly in the rare  
snow and my left hand always pointed  
out the peculiar expression of mother  
as she looked out at us through the window  
a strange sort of joy that harbored  
something we could not understand  
so we'd plop down to make angels for her

my left hand is out there now, waiting  
in that shallow grave to make angels . . . no,  
it's practicing its letters . . . no,  
it's writing messages in the snow

**14. simultaneities**

**(Left then Right then together)**

L

*going into a trance*

*like any dead*

*artifact*

leaven the bread

lift the lover

lift the evening

sift sift this

that these

those stark

sift medieval

rose then hold to

nose now go

back back

to artifact

thingy thingy

singy singy

R

*did not help*

*never a clever*

feller

never a clever

left—a lever

left—a sieve

snappy snap

it can't it cant

a lark a lark

left—a hammer

left—a flower

left out in cold

now gone

back back

to seed a sad

ashen singing thing

more by the left:  
③

to keep dementia away  
most of the doctors say  
use the opposite hand—

force new learning on the mind.

my left hand laughs  
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but being good sport, plays  
along— works hard against being  
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me— sulking and skulking  
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up like a forgotten turnip.