To the Father of Quick Silver Girl

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Why hello
i can see you’ve been
neutralized as of late
acid and acid and acid and
no base to stand on
go on- debase me, dethrone me
coming from a puppet dangling on strings
and without the tugging
you are merely dancing to distant
balkan melodies
(how is she these days, still tasting almonds?)
we can all hear you singing—give me love
give me power
the kind of power i can muster up myself
at least one of us can combine the proper parts of
steel and foresight and mercury
and i breathe your stench of honor
and those silly games you play with voices
oliver, please
burn your brand onto another neck

Gang Signs
Rachel Stern

it comes in bruises
and black eyes
and crooked noses
long slashes down the arm
gunshots and bullet holes
where there should be fabric
and empty beds
where there should be brothers and sons
colored bandanas littering the city downtown
opportunities never taken
half scribbled spray paint initials
the twisting of hands into warding signs
hoodies and flat brimmed hats
crowds and warehouse beat-downs
something cliché like tears
something real like pitted anger
and fathers who were never there
to show their boys how to make do
and mothers who drugged up at the crack house
down the street
and the adults who wouldn’t listen when
they said someday, someday i’ll show you
i won’t need a proper education
and looking down the police report in the sunday paper
and reading the obituaries in the sunday paper
maybe they were right
maybe they were right