

## **I want to meet my mother**

I want to meet my mother,  
not as she stands now  
hand carved to be the most pleasant thing in every room,  
perceived only when needed.

I want to meet my mother,  
before she trained her anger away.  
Before she sanded her stubborn smile  
into a beautiful piece of wall art.

I want to meet my mother,  
unafraid to take up space  
happy to eat later than 8  
blissfully unaware of the shackles looming on the horizon.

I am so sorry, mother.  
For all the times father and I laughed or rolled our eyes  
for all the times I made you smaller.

I want to meet my mother  
before she met me.  
Before she buried everything she was  
for a child who grew up to laugh at her.

## **My Mother was Raised Hurt**

My mother was raised hurt,  
taught she didn't matter nearly as much  
as her brothers.  
She was raised a doll,  
dressed and undressed.  
Hair pretty, legs crossed, no ma'am, yes sir.  
*It was never no sir.*

My mother raised me hurt,  
taught me I didn't matter as much  
as what I provided her.  
I was raised a resume,  
Bragged about and disciplined  
Straight A's, honor roll, varsity captain.

Mother liked me best when I was pliable  
A piece of clay ready to be molded into what suited her.

My mother told me I could be anything  
I wanted to be when I grew up.  
Mother never mentioned the conditions.  
Mother never mentioned there were things I shouldn't be.  
Now, mother never mentions me.

## Boyfriends' moms

All my boyfriends moms could tell  
Something was  
Not quite right?  
A little strange?  
A little *queer*?

They would smile of course,  
Hug me,  
Offer me a homemade cookie or a glass of sweet tea.  
Sugar coating my tongue so thick  
I cannot speak.

I've spent Alabama summer evenings  
Swinging on a screened in porch  
Watching fireflies illuminate the faces  
Of boyfriends moms.

I've put on my sunday best  
Tied my hair back and sang the hymns  
Swaying in the pews next to boyfriends moms.  
Boyfriends moms are satiated  
for now.

Boyfriends moms get nervous though,  
When boyfriends girlfriend gains a little weight.  
Colors her hair  
Pierces her nose  
Tattoos her skin.

Boyfriends moms have not seen a woman  
Take up space  
The way I've decided to.

Boyfriends moms say  
That's not how we pictured it  
That's not how we want our grandchildren  
mother to look.

Its too  
Not quite right?  
Strange?  
Queer?

Ex boyfriends moms smile  
Hug him  
Say "We knew she wasn't the one  
She wasn't quite right.  
She was strange  
She was queer."

## Watch

Mother watched her baby go off to college.  
Mother watched her darling cut her hair.  
Mother watched her child get a piercing.  
Mother watched her get tattooed.  
Mother looked away when I started dating girls  
and mother hasn't seen me since.

But sister sees me.  
Sister asks how my girlfriend is.  
Sister traces the drawings on my arms.  
Sister likes the hoop more than the stud.  
Sister asks to help me cut bangs.  
Sister watches with mothers eyes.  
and sister sees me  
and sister doesn't look away.