

## Prior to the Flight Stage

Throughout nature there are fascinating occurrences of many kinds.

hand shaking

I plunge the needle

into my thigh and sigh...

*This is not natural.*

Throughout the larval stage a caterpillar has to shed its skin several times in order to accommodate further growth.

vocal chords stretch

and yawn greet the dawn

with new depth

deep vibration

in my chest

*How can you mess with god's design?*

Immediately upon shedding its old skin the larva fills with air. This allows the new skin to take on that size giving the caterpillar as much room as possible to grow into this new size.

I run finger

along first freshly

shaven upper lip

*What are you?*

The caterpillar hangs itself from a branch using silk that it excretes from the end of its body.

I stand in front

of the mirror

awestruck

definition of muscle

where there wasn't

before

*You freak.*

The caterpillar forms a hard case around itself and turns into a pupa or chrysalis.

stretching arms

in awkward positions

1 inch body

into compression

*Are you a boy or a girl?*

Actually what occurs prior to the flight stage of development is by far more intriguing and captivating.

## **He Hides His Breasts**

baggy jeans hang off her waist  
and he hides his breasts  
in flannel button up shirts  
she's made of the earth  
so he praises the dirt  
digs his hands in it and  
learns how to pull out food  
she feels tough and secure  
when his hair is long and  
hanging in his face  
her place is on a farm  
he does not look into mirrors  
instead he finds her reflection  
in the gardens she grows or  
the big open sky  
he prefers to be quiet  
but her laugh  
is a roar  
she can take back space and  
sound when she wants it  
when you least expect it  
his words are granite  
ancient like the scars  
carved into his family tree  
at an early age she learned  
to survive in a box

now his ambition is  
to create a new circle of motion  
an expansion beyond biology

He is the one who stands  
in the center  
of the circle and outside it  
stitching together words  
she create poems by moving  
in and out  
he is a needle  
poking at her old skin

**Uncle Dave**

When I go home

to Mount Vernon,

Washington

He is the only

man who really

looks me in

the eyes

His are brown

Deep as the sound

of him singing

*Hallelujah*

on his guitar

**Beautiful boy who bleeds**

I am searching for a lullaby  
the kind my mother never  
sang to me even though she tried,  
*you are my sunshine,*  
*my only sunshine-you make me*  
*happy when skies are gray...*

the day I left for college  
mom squeezed me  
leaned in close and whispered  
*don't change*

I am searching for a lullaby  
the kind my mother never sang to me  
because she couldn't see me  
she wanted a good little girl  
so she dressed me in skirts and curls  
on Halloween  
I dressed myself  
as any kind of boy I could be  
once a year I dressed as me

as I got older  
it got worse  
periods  
prom

mom  
still curled my hair  
but I combed it back  
when she wasn't looking  
tucked it away  
inside my brother's white  
*Georgetown Hoyas* cap

I am searching for a lullaby  
the kind my mother  
doesn't know  
the kind of lullaby  
that could wake me up  
not with the beeping of an alarm  
but the rising of a sun

I am ready for my own son  
to slowly rise and  
light the inside of my skin  
so that I may find the words  
that hide there

for too long  
I have wandered your alleyways  
in search of my image  
for too long  
I have asked for your permission

to be me

but not today

my legs are shaking

but the dirt

cradles my feet

my words lift

my voice so that I

may sing this lullaby

that needed to come

from me

I am not wrong

I am a beautiful boy

who bleeds

when the bloodshed stops

the facial hair breaks through

skin the sun will still back me up

the dirt will still hold me up

and I will keep singing myself

awake



## **Fear Tells Me**

Don't sit too close

He might notice

The shape of my face

The smallness of my hands

The strain in my voice