

Dove

after 'White Turtleneck' by painter Amaoka Boafa

Before he stepped
out the house
Before his sneaks
smacked the sidewalk
Before he glided
up the stairwell
Before he trombone slid
onto a Daly City train
Before he threw a poem &
a lyric upside a brick wall

He knew he was somebody, damn right, he was somebody.

Before he held a blazing
then lilac sunset in the palms of his hands
Before he both became
and defied the night
Before before before
his debut onto this fog city backdrop,

He rapped at his grandmother's door with soft knuckles & awaited her welcome. He kissed her forehead & pulled the medicine vial from his back pocket. He poured up a golden teaspoon of the brown syrup. He titled it to her quaking lips and she drank. He wrapped arms strong with song around her and planted one more forehead kiss.

Before he lifted his entire weight up
onto the BART handlebars and suspended
upside-down in a God-kissed levitation

He see-sawed two little sisters clung to each arm, turning and turning as a
sprinkler or record does, pirouetting as a dancer does, as their laughs & screams
echoed throughout the house

Before he held every kick & every snare & every bass
inside his fluid ecstatic, electric shouting body

He clad himself in the full moon. He robed his body with a lily. He wrapped
himself in snow (call him icy). He sprouted dove wings outta his feet. He became
a cloud. He danced onto tongues of white light.

Before he rounded his shoulders & two-stepped outta the house

His mama stepped behind him, as she does,
to watch him bob down the hill & out of view,
mouthing the same daily prayer:

Return, son, return.