

**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.*