

Bruce Smith

When I Take Up Weight

As if it were a crime for a man's body
to have weight. As if it were a crime
for the weight to be lifted up
and laid gently down. He built his guilty room
upon this hill where each morning
the trucks are working their purpose out,
miserere in first gear. All afternoon
beams shudder to those trucks' devotions.
The panes fall out of their bonds.
Better than asleep, he won't hear
their awful nocturne—the oily art
of braying past him down the hill.

But this is how his angels landed
like a squadron of crippled planes
returning to him in the war—
Dunkswell, Devon. He's on the ground.
Support forces. A working stiff to the end.
They bring him damaged mail from Dresden,
morphine, a life raft pierced with shrapnel,
and no thanks for the parachute—
silk wings he packed and folded and sewed.

Sometimes I have to touch my father
to understand I've visited this man.
And when I take up weight,
and fly in the night by sealed beam,
an ingrate whose money jingles,
then, in the midst of my racket, I'll know
the blessed wretchedness. I'll know
why he won't wrestle with me,
why he won't let this body rest.