

ODE TO BROWN CHILD ON AN AIRPLANE FOR THE FIRST TIME

I don't remember if I, too, was afraid,
but I do remember when the sky was
our thing — I could say the word: *flight*

and, in its stead, none would hear *fight*
spill from my jaw. The last time it took
a punch, I was in the boy's bathroom,

surrounded — by boys — as a boy
unleashed his fist into me. I returned
the favor into his gut, and ran. Moments

before, he had called me *gay*, but I wasn't
sure why I had to defend my glee — scarce
as it was. Hours later, a mess of tears

ran through me as I was pulled from gym
by the principal and suspended for defending
what little parts of myself I could still call

mine. I don't know why *this* is the story
I choose to tell, but I do know that I may
forget it once we take off; shedding the skin

that everyone fears of releasing
towards the sun. Beautiful,
isn't it, to be able to leave behind

this world, its lost and angry boys.