

Highness of Head

As an infant it was I
who had the head wrapped.

Hot black syrup from grasshopper spit
was spread on my brow by Mama, and Papa
wound strips of old rags dipped in paste
he made from sugar bark wax
around and around
the soft upper third
of my newly born head.

Worn then from birth until the age of ten,
each season my bandage brought tighter,
the top part of skull grows higher and back,
up and away from that place in behind
what used to be innocent eyes.

(And those are not easy years, friends)

And you live and you live
and you live in this way
until the day you call
The Unwinding Day comes.

When the day you call
The Unwinding Day comes,
all those who know you by name
gather and get you and take you away
to a place you've never seen.

And they sing and you drink
and you drink and they sing
and clap hands and you dance
and they dance and you drink
and you dance and clap hands
and you dance and you dance.

And you dance until the woozy overcomes you.

Then an Elder takes hold
the loose end of your wrap and pulls.
And you spin and you spin
like a top at the tip of the world you spin
until all the wrap has come off.
And you fall and you swoosh

and you stand and you fall.
You fall to the ground
and get up and you fall.
Like being born all over again you fall.

And you think for a moment
this will always be,
this swooshing this falling
and banging into trees,
until after who knows how many days
you realize you're standing quite still.

Your wrap is then gathered
by those gathered round
and given to children for play,
and they smile and laugh and mimic your dance
and take turns one by one touching their hands
to the highness of your head.

And you live from that day a holyman, boy,
with your brow rising up from the crowd.
And family and friends consider you blessed
for your's is the closest to the clouds.