

Luna Moth

By Carl Phillips

No eye that sees could fail to remark you:
like any leaf the rain leaves fixed to and
flat against the barn's gray shingle. But

what leaf, this time of year, is so pale,
the pale of leaves when they've lost just
enough green to become the green that *means*

loss and more loss, approaching? Give up
the flesh enough times, and whatever is lost
gets forgotten: that was the thought that I

woke to, those words in my head. I rose,
I did not dress, I left no particular body
sleeping and, stepping into the hour, I saw

you, strange sign, at once transparent and
impossible to entirely see through. and how
still: the still of being unmoved, and then

the still of no longer being able to be
moved. If I think of a heart, his, as I've
found it.... If I think of, increasingly, my

own.... If I look at you now, as from above,
and see the diva when she is caught in mid-
triumph, arms half-raised, the body as if

set at last free of the green sheath that has—
how many nights?—held her, it is not
without remembering another I once saw:

like you, except that something, a bird, some
wild and necessary hunger, had gotten to it;
and like the diva, but now broken, splayed

and torn, the green torn piecemeal from her.
I remember the hands, and—how small they
seemed, bringing the small ripped thing to me.

Carl Phillips, "Luna Moth" from *From the Devotions*. Copyright © 1998 by Carl Phillips. Reprinted with the permission of Graywolf Press, St. Paul, Minnesota, www.graywolfpress.org.

Source: From the Devotions (Graywolf Press, 1998)



Carl Phillips was born in Everett, Washington. He attended Harvard, where he received a B.A., the University of Massachusetts, where he earned an M.A.T., and Boston University, where he earned an M.A. Before teaching English at the university level, Phillips taught Latin at several high schools. He is a member of the faculty at Washington University in St. Louis and was elected a chancellor of the Academy of American Poets in 2006.

[See More By This Poet](#)