

Father

It is morning my father
before you leave in the gray light
to drive the mountain roads.
It is this autumn that I remember
as you creaked the carpet
dressing in the dark
until your descent on the worn stairs
to the breakfast room still
cool above the blue Formica table.
The clink of your spoon in the cup
as you lit your first cigarette and blew
the smoke through your nose is
an intimacy,
I've grown used to...
an image from the lake's surface
when you told me to jump
into the deep water or
that first hunt when I killed
the rabbit beside the purple briars
after you had walked there
to flush it out.
This holy incense is what redeems me
from the light broken
by clouds and that loss
that growing brings,
when what moves
through this privacy
is but a shadow sinking
through the membrane of memory,
a failing at the heart of things to stay.
Now, as I watch
my son moving
through the afternoon,
silent and alone
disappearing before me,
a rustle I listen for
in the leaves.
It is this wet scent of morning
I long for,
the road winding
through the mountains
in that fine gray light.

C. Hood Frazier