

HAIRCUTS

MICHAEL BROWN, JR.

How I hated my father
When he'd get to trying to cut my hair

His bald head
Beaming like the moon guiding
His hands unsteadily over my scalp

Made me hate sharp things
Though I'd stick my mama's straight pins beneath my fingers
Hiding under where she sat at her table till he passed

With his clippers droning like hunting dogs
For scraps of his son's nappy hair
While my mother boogied to the Singer's beat

Quickly stepping one foot from floor to pedal
In time to the machine's thrum moving
The needle like a partner filigreeing fear

With love and while she hummed along
I hid until I heard him pass out
The apartment door disguised as the moon

Believing I'd just fled Death disguised as my father
Till I stood on the block smoking blunts with Death

Watching my father's ghost come back from the crackhouse
Feeling nice for the night looking to cut my hair