

## 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