

Deer Hunters

he taught me to move silently
over thick carpets of drying, fading leaves,
through frost-stiffened underbrush,
beneath a pale October dawn

to scout for antler-scuffed bark,
sleep-flattened grass,
hoof-cut impressions
in muddy creek banks

lingering suggestions

those were all I ever found
in the perfunctory pretense of kinship,
when the privilege of “father”
was too difficult a concept,
too exacting a choice.