

## A Fairly Small Patch of Lawn

I bring out the old manual mower.  
My son, four months,  
sits on the porch  
on his mother's lap.  
The mower clanks and whooshes.  
The blades are dull.  
I push three feet forward,  
two feet back,  
three forward.  
My son furrows  
his infant brow.  
He shouts.  
A baby bark.  
I smile at him.  
He shouts again.  
I say, Hello!  
Then he wails.  
He is afraid of the mower.  
It is the first time  
he has shown fear.

He will dream of this one day.  
I have dreamt it.  
Something horrifying,  
your father behind a machine  
that does not slash but rips  
with dull and incessant blades.  
You shout to stop it

but your father just smiles.  
Or your son crawling  
into the surge of the nighttime sea,  
or your dog ignoring  
your command to come in  
and then your plea,  
staring into the darkness of the yard  
then walking into it  
and in the morning there is nothing  
but grass.  
Your shouts do nothing.  
You do not have the word Stop  
or any other word  
to stop anything.  
This, son, will happen often.

The lawns will not be green for long  
but no one believes it.  
When you have water you think  
I will always have water.  
It's right here  
and there's more in the pipes  
and the pipes have always run.  
Run is what pipes do.  
Once, asleep, I hoped:  
I am sleeping now,  
I know I am,  
and if I am sleeping now  
maybe I always will.  
This in the back  
of my grandfather's Oldsmobile  
as I was being driven to be dropped off  
someplace awful.  
Maybe the ride will just go on.  
An eternal Now,  
the stars like pins holding up  
the drooping black upholstery of night.  
But it was only ten minutes  
and then I had to get out.  
It was as bad  
as I expected.  
The Olds is gone, and the old folks too.  
I got some money out of that  
and for a while I thought

now I've finally got money.  
*Got. Got. Got.*  
That's what water is,  
like money:  
you finally have it and think  
how could I have ever not?  
Look at me affording things.  
Look at me water the lawn.  
Then it's all  
gone again.  
*Tapped out*, ha.  
Water is like money.  
I say *money* because  
I was recently broke  
and still fear it.  
But what I mean is,  
like everything.