

FATHER, AGAIN

I think of you, having just
 smacked my son
for “acting like a goddamn monkey,”

the grandson you died a decade too soon
 to meet. When I was
his impish age, I believed it would take

so little for you to be someone
 I could wholly love,
and I’d go around stupefied

by your cruelty. Now it’s my own
 words I don’t understand
—how they dagger—or what might

ignite a fiery mood—the piss
 that missed the pot, the shoes
that can’t find their little feet

as we hurry to leave
 to put cut peonies on your grave.