

Absent Father

It has become the
or at least one of the

motifs of my adult life:
pining for him.

I play it out
in conversations and letters,

bending everyone's ears,
shabbily basking in pity.

I can't deny that
if this particular thorn were removed

my life would be a little less
dramatic and a lot less defined.

I used to favor
the longing, lonely,

unappreciated father angle,
but now that he's grown

it's all fatherhood missed,
chance at relationship lost.

I remember walking him to kindergarten
before the divorce,

an issue with a kid he walked with
bullying another kid's younger brother,

and later chaperoning a dance
on one of my weekend visits,

standing under strobe lights
against a cafeteria wall.

The thing is,
these are exotic memories to me,

like another's man's horseback ride
across the Mongolian plain.

They may have some emotional teeth
for that reason

but if they didn't,
if they were as common

as a present father's
quotidian memories,

I'd have other memories
to offer in their stead.

I don't. I have these,
doled out like little identities

before you know
what they'll be used for

or what previous identity
they'll replace.