

## PRAISE

You hear about those  
who withhold it  
to constructive effect,  
aloof fathers and schoolmasters  
breeding little strivers  
turned high achievers,  
how a child saturated with it when young  
will turn out complacent,  
nothing to work toward.

I have had it both ways  
and done it both ways  
to the point where  
if you convey that  
I have disappointed,  
I mobilize, but I also  
mobilize if you convey  
that I have surpassed,

which makes it more  
a light onto my self-loathing  
and desperation for grandeur  
than a gauge. Even now,  
possessed of the credentials and language  
to apply it to myself,  
I contract it out:  
my fantasy in your words  
that I beg you to broadcast back.