

ALOOF

I have a scene in mind
of a house I used to pass
when walking my son to the park,
the father of one of his friends outside
mowing or washing his car,

a guy so friendly his affability
made my lack of these qualities stand out.
I could tell that he wished
and wanted to say that he wished
I'd lighten up.

Approaching, I always felt like
I was lugging my nature along,
a big sign blaring
my quietness and disinclination to smile.
I couldn't just be myself

but had to remember
to try to break through
even as I saw in his eyes
that there was no breaking through,
which just made me awkward, false hearty,

though I never worried
he'd think this about me
because he already
had his word for me
and if it comes to that
you only get one shot.