My Father
by Scott Hightower

was a cowboy.
My father was a sugar man.
My father was a teamster.

My father was a Siberian
tiger; a corsair; a lamb,
a yellow dog, a horse's ass.

My father had a triple bi-pass.
My father was a rat
but he bought me my first hat.

My father believed in decency
and fair play. My father drove
the getaway. My father was a blue jay.

My father drove the boys away.
My father drove a Thunderbird,
a Skylark, a Firebird, an old pickup truck

with a rusty tool box, a Skybird,
a Sunray. My father drove hard bargains
every day; he was a force. My father

was mercurial. He was passive,
a little moody: rock... paper... scissors.
He loved me. He loved me not.

He stomps and hurls lightning bolts.
Has slipped away. Passed away.
My father was passé. My father

was a Texas Ranger. Taught me
to pray. Because of him, I hoard things
in an old shoe box. Because of him, I use

botox. Because of him, I look to clocks.
Because of my father, I know how
to oil the gate; don’t own a map.

Because of my father, I have no use for
similes. Because of my father, I hunger
for my own catalog of metaphors.

My Papa's Waltz
by Theodore Roethke

The whiskey on your breath
Could make a small boy dizzy;
But I hung on like death:
Such waltzing was not easy.

We romped until the pans
Slid from the kitchen shelf;
My mother's countenance
Could not unfrown itself.

The hand that held my wrist
Was battered on one knuckle;
At every step you missed
My right ear scraped a buckle.

You beat time on my head
With a palm caked hard by dirt,
Then waltzed me off to bed
Still clinging to your shirt.

Those Winter Sundays
by Robert Hayden

Sundays too my father got up early
and put his clothes on in the blueblack cold,
then with cracked hands that ached
from labor in the weekday weather made
banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.

I'd wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking.
When the rooms were warm, he'd call,
and slowly I would rise and dress,
fearing the chronic angers of that house,

Speaking indifferently to him,
who had driven out the cold
and polished my good shoes as well.
What did I know, what did I know
of love's austere and lonely offices?
my father moved through dooms of love
by e.e. cummings

my father moved through dooms of love
through sames of am through haves of give,
singing each morning out of each night
my father moved through depths of height

this motionless forgetful where
turned at his glance to shining here;
that if (so timid air is firm)
under his eyes would stir and squirm

newly as from unburied which
floats the first who, his april touch
drove sleeping selves to swarm their fates
woke dreamers to their ghostly roots

and should some why completely weep
my father’s fingers brought her sleep;
vainly no smallest voice might cry
for he could feel the mountains grow.

Lifting the valleys of the sea
my father moved through griefs of joy;
praising a forehead he called the moon
singing desire into begin

joy was his song and joy so pure
a heart of star by him could steer
and pure so now and now so yes
the wrists of twilight would rejoice

keen as midsummer’s keen beyond
conceiving mind of sun will stand,
so strictly over utmost him
so hugely stood my father’s dream

his flesh was flesh his blood was blood:
no hungry man but wished him food;
no cripple wouldn’t creep one mile
uphill to only see him smile.

Scorning the pomp of must and shall
my father moved through dooms of feel;
his anger was as right as rain
his pity was as green as grain

septembering arms of year extend
less humbly wealth to foe and friend
than he to foolish and to wise
offered immeasurable is

proudly and (by octobering flame
beckoned) as earth will downward climb,
so naked for immortal work
his shoulders marched against the dark

his sorrow was as true as bread:
no liar looked him in the head;
if every friend became his foe
he’d laugh and build a world with snow.

My father moved through theys of we,
singing each new leaf out of each tree
(and every child was sure that spring
danced when she heard my father sing)

then let men kill which cannot share,
let blood and flesh be mud and mire,
scheming imagine, passion willed,
freedom a drug that’s bought and sold

giving to steal and cruel kind,
a heart to fear, to doubt a mind,
to differ a disease of same,
conform the pinnacle of am

though dull were all we taste as bright,
bitter all utterly things sweet,
maggoty minus and dumb death
all we inherit, all bequeath

and nothing quite so least as truth
— i say though hate were why man breathe —
because my father lived his soul
love is the whole and more than al