

## Fairy Tale

Waking from his nap, he didn't recognize the forest,  
the woodsman who was lost,  
so he did what woodsmen know to do —  
raised his axe and struck a tree

which cried out at the blow  
in the voice of a beautiful girl  
who granted him a wish in exchange for being freed,  
and what comes after that I don't remember.

Forty years ago my mother  
in her voice like a beautiful black river  
perfumed with cigarettes and lamplight  
parked on the edge of the bed  
read me that story

which I recall tonight  
and I'm crying for myself  
and blowing my nose into a handkerchief  
for the romance of being read to  
and the dead nerves of the heart  
and my failure to become a human being.

If only I could say I'd been enchanted!  
But choices that I made  
before I knew what choices were  
took me off into the world

and like a fog without a word  
through years like trees  
comes age not speaking now,

and it is night.  
I strike my fist against my chest,  
hard, like a woodcutter.

Then I cry out in the voice  
of a beautiful girl.