

## Untamed

The tortoiseshell comb searches for the parting,  
finds some form of order that resists deep inspection,

each tress has a treasured past,  
measured future.

It reminds me of my grandfather  
fixing his hair as he watched a western in the back room,

trails of cigarette smoke stretched out  
above a crystal-cut tumbler of Bushmills,

as he would move those strands aside with hands  
leathered by a life of work on the farm.

I've never seen anyone since so content  
in their own company, as if silence

and conversation were two sides of the same coin,  
you compose yourself for the spin of both.

I also remember visiting him near the end, alone  
and wanting to ask him but not knowing what to ask.

Where to start? And what to do with the answer?  
Everything flailed between that chair and that bed.

Or perhaps because some memories were to remain his  
and I must live enough to find my own.

We stared out the window past the hospital car park  
towards the distant countryside,

and as I hug him and kiss him goodbye,  
in the distance a murmuration of starlings twist

one way then another in a sky above a field,  
where a wild horse could start to canter.