Richard Foss

Near Still Life, My Father with Telescope

Tonight after work you had slept through dinner
So you could dress now in the dark, measure
The creaks against your wife’s waking, and out, into

The moon-glossed dark, climb to the roof, catching
A satellite like god’s eye sailing past.
You see everything up here. You fill your eyes

With the moon’s blue light, light borrowed from the sun.
It looms, in the new eyepiece, large as this house
You built thirty years ago, evenings and Sundays.

You uncover the telescope – blue fiber glass
Cylinder, tripod screwed to the wood carriage
You made for ease of movement –

Sweet-talk Venus sitting low tonight
In the northern sky. With thumb and finger
You key her numbers and ease her into focus,

A moment, and she spins darkly away, stealing
Across the surface of your carpenter’s eye:
Her image, striking beauty, having traveled

A hundred thousand years to reach you here tonight;
And you, standing on the flat roof of your house
In Chicago, brown parka, your once night-black

Hair whitening under your Irish lid,
You, after all has been said and all has been done,
In this ghost light, lift toward everything.