

SWIMMING HOLE, BUCK CREEK, SPRINGFIELD, OHIO

Like an echo,
it comes back,
the bend in the creek,
like a uterus's
bloodlike flow,

tangible again,
as memory revisits,
with unusual
concreteness,
territories of the past,

rebounding, circulating,
surging, repercussing,
panning our naked
bodies – some of us
in the water, loin-deep,

making animal sounds;
some of us out,
wistfully small,
under a depthless sky –
all of us boys still,

like blossoming buds,
bending under
the paw of some
hormonal energy
that lingers now

in memory's tunnel,
like an air prowling
around us, vaguely
ornery, urging:
“Begin what you are,”

though not intended
to belittle me
for my feminine grace,

but, instead,
to lift me up,

allowing new light
to enter in, its strong
broad rays in free fall
against my flesh,
as if through blades

of pungent grass,
piercing me
even deeper now, to say,
“Be kind to him,
stranger that he is.”

--Henri Cole--