

From *Our Keen Blue House*, by Michael Trammell

The Property in Moonlight

How I would like to believe in tenderness--
but a green snake hovers around
the moon. The snake is no door, neither are my hands;
the moon is a cold and planetary mind.

I have been screaming at my tiny daughter
because she will not sleep alone
in the dark with the door closed.
The knob I hold tight has a Gothic shape.

The slash pines outside are the black trees
of the mind, ruthless. My words are
the claws of a circle of owls
sitting in the blue light in ash-white silence.

Clouds are flowering in the high branches,
hiding the owls, but not the moon.
The moon is a face in its own right,
pock-marked and scarred.

I reach for the green snake
now floating through the window,
ignore my daughter's screams.
From trees, through clouds, the halo of owls

transforms and flies to startle the sky,
me. This is the horrible moment,
to know I have swallowed whole
a black ring of light, a coil

of craters and seas, white as a knuckle.
But the moon is not my mother;
I am my daughter's father.
I release the knob.

The owls soberly screech, and the night sounds
grow warm. The door opens. I hold out my hand.
My daughter, her face white and terrible,
trembles as she leans her head against my hip.