

Robert Kelly

THE LANGUAGE OF EDEN

**Metambesen
Annandale-on-Hudson
2014**

The Language of Eden is a poem for voices.
Analysts and analyzed
talk and talk,
their voices interweaving.

It was composed in October 2002
and waited till now, when Metambesen Online
seemed an auspicious and simple way of letting the
poem find the voices it desires.

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What you find out
in the darkened room
of so many recitations
twilight of the word
Achilles listens to the ocean
make this water mine
and no woman ever
walked the hallways of his dreams
my hand on the telephone
waiting for the word
so many heroines
stretched out to judgment
caress the curve

the lovely nothingness
that shapes your speech
self is hysteria
his story

Nihil is the resistant the Nothing
not the nothing but the not defined
it is all pervasive
it is what they try
to shape or shatter
with assertion
making meaning where before
was only the pure

the pure voice
you hear it walking in the woods
saying everything and specifying nothing
nihil

I love to hear herself talk
if I cannot be the father
I'll be his daughter
resist him all my days on earth
but the nights the wells

from which to gulp such water
pure without judgment

to lick
I only drink at night
to ease my throat
from so much day's coursing
the talking cure for the feeling sickness

we visited the country before the war

all our riverbeds were dry
and water had a strange voice
among the shiny pebbles
we lived on the Damascus road
sometimes rain would wash the stones away
and make the clay a sticky road no car could pass
that summer he was dying in London

my mother said she could hear the water's Russian
and I knew only I had no language
I wouldn't speak to anyone
they'd try to make me

but all I wanted
was to see the porcupine
climb up the pine tree the rattlesnake
lie sleepy in the morning sun
some deer gaze at me from the woodlot's edge
when you see an animal it means you're thinking

all summer I was thinking
and not a word I had to say
I watched the thermometer go up and down

rigid interpretation
sailing ships and steamers plunging
smokestacks like the valves of trumpets

holy trinity going far away
does music ever come back
but when an animal looks at you it means you're wrong

sometimes the bird can't tolerate
eerie smell of the closets
where the winter coats have talked too long

sometimes a coat never comes home
or cloth come back to the curve
never came home

just say a lady
or another
my brother touched me there
(pointing) and I resolved
to explore the ruined chapel

the old fountain so dry
looked as if sunlight broke it
not even lizards lived there
the roused sensation
and then the water came again
I bent to drink

but our resolutions
do not last the first week of the year
week means a turning
month means moon
what do years mean
yare means nimble
yore means being long gone ago

your means my desire
why don't I know what the little word says

it says what you almost remember
what the girl did in your dream

do you remember telling me
I wrote it down a long time ago
but I do not dream
it dreamed me

es träumte mir

or on my way another spoke
there is no end to this going in

you mean there is no in
beyond this door
no room in the in
every child heard that in church
but still we pry the door open
pray it opens
wedge our littlest body firm inside
but you've made mistakes too
haven't you, fallen asleep
while some poor heart
descanted on its grief
you too have awakened with anxiety
wondering what the patient said
wondering what you missed

and gone to bed with terror
am I alone in this bed

have I lived beyond my body
have I outlived my soul
when you say that what word comes to mind
a handkerchief used once let fall

Freud is the name of believing
you have a right to be
that things have a right to mean
that your life has a shape
and you can know it

you can go there

where the living is

how can I know

how can I even make my hand

do not do

what I want it to

my brother made a big issue how I couldn't whistle

I never really learned how I can't even now

but I do everything else

but do you ever drink the golden shadow

the later it is the more I want

and how did that make you feel about music

what music,

music is a pretty street that goes nowhere

twenty years of paychecks have done wonders for my disposition

but you don't outlive neurosis, understand

it changes its targets and its tunes

and in the novelty of that variety

you suppose yourself improved

but there are doctors hiding in the least of things

medicinal Balm in any random lap

because you don't have to believe you just have to remember

memory is the fertile lie that makes the future grow

stop touching me

especially there

I don't want to know what it feels like

I don't want to know how I feel

the bread on the table is soft and white

food is such an absent-minded friend

never finishes its consolation

a certain man left weltering at the side of the road

I need to look that word up

weltering, Pilgrim's Progress, stern god,
it has welt in it
which means a wound or bruise in English
but means a world in German

do you come often to this bus stop by the lake
you can see the Bavarian shore across the way
may I touch you now
where the fur falls back from the nape of your neck
o don't touch me there I feel too much
we come for the summer only
I have no affection for skiing
there is so much contingency already in my life
in all our lives
sliding on your bottom down the slope
yet isn't risk an element of pleasure
maybe it's the only pleasure
plaisir d'amour and all that slop

isn't it important to distinguish risk from pain
I didn't want to hurt her I wanted to hear her say Hurt me
there is a difference
there are rowboats approaching from the west

why do you interrupt yourself to tell me that
I don't know where we are
sun glare west bank of the Nile necropolis
this is the subway of the dead
I can't hardly hear a word you say
there is such roaring in the tunnel
people say it is the trains that make the rumble
I say it is the thousands of the dead
hurrying on their way
to where they go, they want me with them,
I hear their stormy voices, sometimes I hear my name
pronounced in their strange accent
doctor the terrible dialect of the dead

I think you speak it
I think you're speaking it now
you want to kill me doctor
to stuff me into your necropolis
like all the bric-a-brac on Freud's sideboard

museum of other people's lives

I'm sorry I don't mean to be such a bitch
I don't know why I say the things I do
why I see
the things I see
and saying
I say as much as the rose will bear

Do you think everyone is supposed to listen to your story
where do you think they'll get the patience to hear you
that's what my husband used to say
do you think I should care about everything you tell me
isn't it my business to forget what you so painfully remember

each of us has his job to do
yes I know you are a woman
entitled to a pronoun of your own

even though I'm listening I'm not sure you're talking
and you don't, you smoke and eat lozenges and mints
while I'm trying to talk
I'm trying to tell you the heart of me
and you eat peppermint

are you really trying, though, why does it matter to you,
do you think, that I smoke

smoking is doing something different from me
smoking is saving some part of your mind for you
I want all of your mind when I'm with you
I'm paying for it

stop fingering that Egyptian figurine too
it makes me uneasy

it's called shawabti, it's made of blue faience
what else makes you uneasy

touching, so much touching
I never said that even if you say I did
let's not get into a dance of denial

I love denial
it lets me live
it lets me love

they put them in the tomb
with the dead man
so the figurine could do the work
the dead man could not do
but needed to have done
on his way to the wherever
he was going, little blue men
to work for him

blue men at the bottom of the dream
there was a light at the bottom of the well
where a woman opportuned me
she was naked and she was old
then she was young and fire
was coming out of her hand
I went down until I woke
am I with her now and you
only seem to be you, you
with your mustache and cigars
you are too I think

isn't everyone a woman really
isn't everybody my mother

I can't believe you're not listening to me
you're fingering that stupid Chinese figurine
and I'm trying to tell you
it's so hard

are you hard now listening to me
not listening
are you staring at my thighs
what do your fingers think
while they fiddle with that thing
are they thinking of me
do you want to touch me
the way they did
they used to listen carefully to me
it's true they never gave me good advice
they wanted me right where I was
where I am
where they can get me
keep me in reach
keep me in my misery
so that I reach out to them
to make them touch me

touch me

are you some sort of broker of enlightenment
why don't you tell me what you really think of me

which one of us is speaking

don't answer it don't answer it
I don't think it's right to let the phone ring
the phone sound is someone else taking you away from me
am I just a cloth you put in bleach
to take my meaning out
so I could just be anybody
and you say Sorrow be gone

sorrow be out
the way we used to talk before the war

before the fall
Javel water, pale bleach in gallon flasks
saltpeter hospital
breathless surgeries of one time ago
I have lost my own history
trying to please you

anamnesis
trying to remember
trying to remember too much
the crowded tram that ran down to the beach
in my country
we wade far out then turn around
and the land we had come from seemed a shallow place
misty and low, it was hard to remember
there was a city there
and we lived there not far
hidden in the visual distance
all we see is all we mind
while the sand ran out between our toes

who would be there with you, your brother
sometimes I came alone
the sea gulls made me happy
one day a gull was hurt or wounded at my feet
and I felt it was my fault
though I had done nothing
just looked down and seen it there
twitching softly
maybe responsibility begins with what we see

I tried to pick it up or something
and it pecked my hand
it hurt and I remembered
my mother how she would heat a needle

and stick it under my skin
to work a splinter out I had
the bird made me bleed
but I wouldn't let it go
I brought it up and nestled it in a clump of sea grass

did you feel it was like your child
why are you talking about children
you know that upsets me
are you just trying to make me an ordinary person
well-adjusted mother of

tell me about what your children would be like if you had children
I never will I never will
but if you did
you never let me finish about the gull
and now our time is up
usually I mind it when you say that
but I'm glad not to talk about children
you're really fixated on my having them why
not on your having them just what you think about them

but the divan's empty now
I always want to know who cleans his office
his invisible wife his illegal immigrant au pair

I imagine her sitting in his chair in the dark
then stretching out along the patient's couch
where she has no right
no right but the dark
maybe she masturbates there at midnight
fantasizing all the weird narratives soaked into the leather
leather is so cold
maybe she turns the lights on
and stares at the special ceiling
she wonders does he choose
each crack and stipple on the ceiling paint
his patients have to look at

maybe she should write a word up there
softly with her fingertip in dust
a word they won't be really sure they see
a word that will distract them all through the analytic hour
but will teach them something, what,
console them, yes,
but she can never think what the word should be

arcs of sameness
an idea not an experience
but can't I feel you thinking me

what do you do alone in the night
when your wife sleeps at your side
peaceful as a South Pacific isle
unDrake'd by discovery?

why think of Drake now
strange word that means a dragon or a duck
as if everybody is just like me
afraid of every living thing
the terrifying sparrows in the dust

but do you really feel me ever
when you are thinking
am I just an hour in your week
like church or not like that
are you devious enough to be holy
do other people steal from you
of course the famous ashtray
when you're tired do you sometimes
forget which one of us is speaking

when I wake up
there's always an invader at the door
I had a dream a long time ago
old dreams are they still valid

came again and again it scared me
I called it The Occupation of the House
there'd be a knock on the door I'd open
and someone would be there and come right in
and never leave and never leave
what can I do
to make them go

you'll have to tell me who it is
who comes in when you open
what kind of person comes through your door

if you look very hard you really can
read a word on the ceiling
what does it say?
I'm still trying but I think you have
words written, hidden written, all over the place
to test me or control me

every wall and furniture
begins to talk
and there is nothing left for me to do
but sit there sullen reading them
and never alone

isn't it stupid I come here so many times a month
and sit here with you
to be alone
I have to pay a man to sit with me
to be alone
and then the hour's up, you throw me out
so I can't even be alone that way
I have to be out there with the crazies
the other crazy people
I only want to be alone with you
it fucking sounds like some dumb fucking song
doctor
learned one father of wisdom

butcher of my soul
you filet me so neatly
in Scotland they call a butcher a flesher
did you know that
you take my flesh away and turn it into talk
you make me talk
instead of being healthy in my body

god damn it I am meat

there's always a camera working in my head
that shows me me
sometimes when I'm with you it stops
marry me doctor marry me we don't have to fuck
just stay with me
sty with me stable with me
let me be your animal
let me stay here forever
reading the word
I see your eyebrows write
shadow by shadow
on the wall of your face
why don't you ever tell me what you feel?

I go no further on this path
can go no
this path Maghada
do you understand
where the Buddha was
that's what I think
any little pathway through the woods
is where he went once
and now again
whenever I get really confused I think of him
there is a way
to go through all this natural
these trees this loving
this loving this wanting

to get to the other side of love

are you my little path?

is that what you think he did?

I think he did something I think he got somewhere

I need to follow

it cheers me up to think about it

the going in

through sunlight dappling the jungle trees

what does jungle mean to you

I mean I'm caught in my life

what can I do

but follow the footsteps that brought me here

keep going or stand still

maybe when I come to see you I stand still

I stand on the path and look ahead

you can't see much ahead in the jungle

the path is always turning

I see the light coming down

and the darkness waiting to interrupt it

sleep with it

the darkness wants to fuck me

I can't keep going

but sometimes I think of him going before me

every time

what somebody really does once

eventually everybody can do

alone or together

it's waiting so long
I can't go on any more this road
and yet someone else went all the way

did he?
what does it mean to go all the way?
where did he get to?

all the way to no end

do you hear what I'm saying are you listening to me
when I listen to myself
I hear myself saying things I won't understand for years

I mean I say the truth of what is coming
I mean I say more than I know

and you, you say less than you know
that's the difference
as if I pay you for your silence
doctor your fees are hush money

why are you saying that to me right now?

because I can't go on
I can't
every road is wrong
this stupid analysis these stupid questions your dumb Ikea
furniture
give me a break
everything I do is wrong
and I don't want to go on being wrong
I don't want to go on

do you hear me when I

are you threatening?

I'm threatening myself god damn it
can't you tell the difference
you're the one who's supposed to be clear about boundaries
which is you and which is me

I wanted to ask you a question
what does it mean in old books and movies
when they tie a broom to the mast of a ship
on the crow's nest above the sails
in my country they don't have that custom
or I don't know it, it must mean something
what do you think it means?

broom could be a woman
they always used to call ships she but
why a broom maybe it's the old word besom
looks like bosom
does it mean a wife's aboard

what would you mean if you put up a broom?
maybe I surrender
maybe my house is dirty
come clean me out
spit and polish and elbow grease
but flies come through the window

what do you feel then?
I feel invaded, weird people
fly around my room
they bring diseases polio and leprosy

are you afraid of them?
they make me uneasy
I have to chase them out or
kill them I hate them I hate to kill them
anything
come clean me out

I have always tried to help you
why do you think you thought of the broom today
the broom on the ship
I need your help
is it because there is a woman on board you
a woman you want me to help you clean out
do you think this woman is a part of you?

some people carve letters in their skin
initials of the one who doesn't love them right
initials of the departed lover
I don't have any letters on my arm
it just seems crazy to do that
but I feel as if I have them
I mean there are names written so deep in me
I'm shocked when I pass a mirror
to see their names are not written on my skin
shocked to see that I'm still me
and not them, the ones I think about
all the time, I can read them where they live inside,
maybe some day I'll turn into them

what do the names have to do with how you feel
do you sit at night mouthing their names
instead of calling them on the telephone or knocking on their doors
my women don't have doors
the women whose names I cherish
they have no doors and have no phones
I don't know where they live
sometimes they map themselves on living girls
that's strange that I say living
as if mine weren't
and they are, they really are,
but they live in me
does anybody live in you?

that's hard that question

nobody ever asked it
I'll have to think about it
but help me by telling
what it means when they live in you

I don't know, the names are clear
and what they want of me
and what they want me to do
I can't tell what they want from what I want
so I do nothing
I just remember
which is what you always want me to do anyhow isn't it

what is it you remember?
I remember a time before they came
when I was alone
and only water touched my skin
and now
after all my experience
I don't know

what touches your skin now?

o armor soap and ferryboats
and cats have whiskers
and their hands trail down my arm
they like to touch my hands
maybe someday I'll reach out of myself
and the rest of them will be there

but our time is spent
and the broken hour
loves you
again
do you understand?
you're coming back tomorrow

there's too many dreams between now and then

Hello I had a dream you have to guess
about this boy I know and what he did
can you guess?
did to you, you mean?
no, why do you say that
it wasn't that kind of dream
he taught me to whistle
and when I woke up I called him on the phone
and whistled when he answered
and I could
he must have thought I was out of my mind
he didn't even recognize me till I explained
do you think we somehow know
when we're in someone else's dream
they have such power over us
when they appear, I feel surrounded by him
he's out there at his desk
and also in my dreams and in my head
it's not fair, I wonder if he dreams of me
I wonder if he masturbates

did you ever ask him?
I mean thinking about me
did you?
do you?

but do you, thinking about him?
that's really not important
it doesn't count
what I decide to think about
only the dream matters
because he comes by himself
and stands there and looks at me
and then I begin to remember

I think my father killed my mother
I'll never know

I tried to warn her

all I want is to know what you want
how can you want what I want
what I want comes from me

menstrual blood or milk or semen
what I want is what stains the world
how can you want a world that smells like me

your world is odorless and full of books
that's why you fill it with tobacco smoke
to hide the smell of your patients

to hide the smell of what I want
if you want to know what I want
stop smoking stop reading stop talking

climb inside my body and try to find your way out
that's what I do all day long
and all night the devils make fun of me

and make me love what imprisons me
you sit there listening stuffed and rigid
is your cock stiff, is that the only part
of you that listens, what do you know
about wanting, want what I want
and you'd jump out the window, nobody
is there for me, nobody in the room for me
nobody outside to break my fall

about your father though, did other people
think he killed her, and the police?
look I am the principal evidence
the crime and the witness all in one frightened woman
if I didn't exist she'd still be alive
she died in childbirth but twenty years later
I broke my way out of her

I should have stayed inside
I think he killed her I know she died
I tried to warn her I slept beside her
so many nights to keep him from coming to her
to bother her to hurt her
he wanted to hurt her
she kept him from me
I used to lie beside her wanting him to come

but did he actually kill her
isn't it enough I'm here
and you bother me with your questions
just listen just listen, I don't know
I don't know but I'm telling
I wanted him to come of course doesn't everybody
wanted and wanted not like a fucking daisy
you pick the petals off one by one
pick want pick not want come to me
and be mine, she did because I wanted
you say you want to know what I want
what if what I want makes somebody die
do you still want my wanting then
do you know how terrible that is
I'll never know the truth but I do know what I wanted
and she's dead

and he?
he lives inside himself somewhere
and never calls
do other people think he killed her?

there are no other people
there are no papers
you've got to read the story in me
I am your pages
and you're not doing a good job
all this shit about desire
I'm alone

I'm alone
I'm alone
do you get the idea now
alive is the same word as alone
with different letters
I wanted to warn her
I wanted us to be alone together
who?
don't you understand anything
maybe I do maybe I just want you to say it
my kiss is a judas kiss
nobody who matters is alive
he wanted to hurt her
to get at me I wanted
him to hurt me
as if I were a doorstep
and never a real house
she was the house
I lay beside her
my arms around her
and all the things I wanted
happened, happened
but when you get what you want
it doesn't feel like what you wanted
I wanted another thing
and this thing came
pretending that it came
from what I wanted but it lied
they all lied
she died from my desire he said
I can't say it any clearer
a woman gets out of a car when it's moving
she falls on the side of the road
her dress flies over her face
another car goes over her
this is my mother
who can say where all the bruises were born
where she got the wounds that kill her

from the fall or from the second car
the innocent fool who killed her
or still inside the first car with her husband
with her daughter
who knows where she got her wound
or why she tried to get out of the vehicle
nobody can say but you keep asking me questions
don't ask any more I feel you itching to ask me
did she fall or did he push her
was she crazy don't you dare ask me
if my mother was insane, I lay beside her
so many nights the thoughts along
the curves of our body
fitted together and we breathed together
we protected each other from him
from wanting him
a long time it was easy, I said
I was frightened I needed to be with her
I pretended to be a little neurotic
to be afraid of alone in the dark
she let me be with her she understood
what we both were afraid of
she knew I was her clever little actress
just like her and we were safe together
though in the daytime sometimes she complained
or pretended that I should learn to sleep alone
well now I sleep alone

how long did you both live that way?
I told you I told you not to ask
it was a summer really only
after my freshman year and he
was home all that summer too the three of us
in the place we had in the mountains
no room for a horse
I hated my room the wasps in the window
I felt them crawl over me at night
saying nothing, I know they really didn't

but I felt them touch me
the room was too small it smelled of wood
that made it easier for me to sleep with her
and he slept on a daybed for weeks
he didn't seem to mind he never said
he cooked breakfast every morning and looked at her
but everything was ok
but I knew what was going on beneath
I could feel his mind at night
working its way between her body and my body
and I could feel him wanting us both
I got confused I think I wanted him

I'm trying to understand the sensations that dissolve in me
that make me what I am
how can so much depend on sensation
water on my skin
and not on will, not on what I want
or what is really good for me
just what I feel
so I keep coming back to the same situations

situation of the body
who lets me feel
so riverbeds are full of fire
why do you say that
the same place happens to me again
can you cure me
or help me keep sensation rational
there are people who want to be hurt

why is that, do you think?
maybe hurt means something new
a kind of orthodox religion
excitement of finally feeling feeling
from the skin all the way in
the tree of the nervous system

a tree on fire

to be the object of immense attention
the way the sun must feel
the burning burning
center of the universe my burning skin

your skin?
that's how I think about it
the alarm is broken so the fear can sleep
finally someone totally pays attention to me
I become the object of their strenuous exertion
I had a friend who liked to go to doctors
getting that attention she was never sick
never healthy she liked them to examine her
especially when they suggested drastic courses of action
she could think about for months afterwards
one time she sued one because he touched her
isn't everything we do about getting attention?

how do you feel when you ask that question?
I feel as if I'm close to the gutter
if I'm not careful I'll be rolling in it
do you mean attention is like filth?
I don't know what it's like I just want it
just want to wallow in it
till I've had enough
I've never had enough
it is healthy of you to recognize this, you know

I don't know anything
all I am is wanting
I hear you say that but I wonder
I wonder what wanting really means to you
if a man is sitting by a river
and says he's thirsty
and doesn't try the water
does he really want to drink

or does he somehow take pleasure
in the sense of longing
or even in the feeling of deprivation?

for one thing I'm not a man
I'm not a metaphor either
and my life is spent among your waters
everything is a river
I have thirst but I have no mouth
do you understand?
I am not made like the others
I don't want to have a child I am a child
I want the precise articulate attention
a very bright and talented and attractive child
gets from her mother and her father
who know that she's a little bit beyond them
I want that from anyone I value
and what's wrong with that
I scorn them if they do not feel me
and they don't answer me
with discernment and palpable affection
touch me
get out of your chair and touch me
here which can be anywhere
the voice decides

Speaking an unknown language
I come in here talking
and you pretend to understand

there is understanding someone's language
and understanding what someone's saying
they are not the same things
where does language come from in us
is it just a long agony
a left over wound of childhood, birth,
language is trauma

is every word a cry
outcry outrage
I want to get out of this room
you know smoking is a filthy habit
we both do it
if you smoke to make me feel at home
I'm not at home and I know it
I'm somewhere else
in your willing clutches

willing? you mean it's your will
that you're in my clutches?

I think it's raining now
I love rain sometimes I want to go and see
why don't you have windows in this room
there are window but the drapes obscure the light
the way stories that we tell conceal the truth
so you think everything I say is a lie?
not at all, I think it is a little like you say
what you tell me is an outcry
beyond which the truth will lie
like the echo after the shout in the deep woods
and then the silence after

did you say truth lies?
I mean truth is to be found
I wish someone would find me
find me and treat me as I deserve
the love that longs to me
belongs belongs
I am trying to find you now
isn't that what we're always doing?
I don't know what we do
I come into the room speaking in an unknown language
and you ask me questions
in a language you try to make sound like mine
I grant you that, you try

and then the time is up
and I take myself and my stories my poor dreams
my lies you call them
back out into the rain

have you ever thought of asking me
what you want me to tell you?

sometimes I fall asleep at night talking to you
calling your name sometimes instead of the telephone
terrorphone it's so humiliating
arguing with you till I fall asleep
and then I'm supposed to save all my dreams for you
all those hours wasted talking to you inside me

what do you want me to say
it would be all right if you told me now

of course I want to give you what you think you need
tell me now
and tell me true
there's plenty of time
how many miles in an hour
honestly I don't know what to say
I want you to want me best
most, I want to be your best
patient, the one you look forward to all week
the one who is your challenge and your consolation
I want you to go home to wherever you live and dream about me
I want you to lust for me in your easy chair
and when you stretch out beside your sleeping wife
but I don't know what I want you to say

Do this now please close your eyes
and see yourself right here sitting with me
and you see me opening my mouth to speak
you see my tongue and teeth
I look at you openly and I begin to talk: now quick

tell me what I say

I think you say I don't have to pay you anymore
that would be the sign

the sign of what
that you are you and I am me
and we are actual
it would be the sign of love I think I need to hear
and why do you think I would say that?
because you finally began to feel me
feel something for me
not just this ersatz empathy you feed me
feed me feel me
that's what I'm saying
can't you understand?
I'm different
and my difference is wonderful
and you should cherish every hour
I come to spill out my guts to you, you shit

it's interesting that you bring this up now
at the end of the hour there is always money
a check also is a sign
maybe? a sign of hearing

I didn't think I'd ever let myself talk this way
I'm sorry for the bad word I called you
it just slipped out
it's all right you know
what you call me
is part of my name
the name you call me in your head

Don't remind me of those nights
it's getting dark outside now and I bet it really is raining
you can go to the window and look

do you want to watch my body moving
do you want me to watch you, is that what you're saying,
I don't care if it's raining
I love rain sometimes especially
just when the lights come on
and all the phony colors look so pretty on the wet streets
like paintings or movies
Singin' in the Rain did you ever see that
a long time ago on black and white tv
an upstairs guest room I had to sleep there
one night because my aunt was sick
and had to use my room downstairs
and now the time is really up
and you leave me up here in the attic
where can I go
out into the beautiful wet light
tail lights tail lights
who will really listen to me
and really understand
I'm so tired of this you listen you say nothing
you never tell me what to do
not a fucking thing here's your check
I hope you dream of me all night
You went to school in Europe, right,
well did they ever make you study poetry in school
did the teacher stand in front of the class
reciting a poem the way they do
big false voice
the way they read it makes you never want to read it
it's so insincere
it hurts the words

what's insincere
the man the poem
the one who wrote it
all the words
if you can do that to
the words are sick

the words stink
all words do

why do you bring that up right now at the start
did you read some poem?

you're being obtuse deliberately obtuse aren't you
I'm not talking about poems
I'm talking about the way people talk
when I come in here we talk like poems
the words are supposed to be terribly significant
charged with meaning, every slip of the tongue
is a big deal, something you get all excited about
even if you don't say anything I see you squirming with
satisfaction
that I've made some mistake that gives me away

not you, it's not you
it gives away
but the desire that lives inside you
that needs a voice
that takes any chance it gets

whatever, you pounce on me, it's like
a kabbalah of a conversation

but you know our talk is not exactly a conversation
well it should be, what is it then
what is it like to talk
the words come out of my mouth
but am I speaking?

sometimes I think I come in here
and it's the only time in the week I tell the truth
other times I think it's just a game
an expensive fifty minute poem I have to make up
some women go to spas but I come here
can I confess that I rehearse our meetings

can I confess I think up things to say and love to say them?

many patients tell me that, do you think
you prepare for our meetings
to keep from telling me something else
isn't rehearsal an ultimate form of control
you come in here with a script

but you do too, the whole line that doctors have
they must teach you in shrink school
so we're just exchanging cues and shtick
is that how it feels to you, our conversation
whatever it is, how does it feel to you

no you're right it doesn't feel like that
most times it feels as if we're really talking
you know, I've been meaning to ask
we're both men but you have women too
I've been wondering is there a kind of analysis
where people touch each other
cause sometimes all I really want is contact
a hand on me my hand on
whoever it might be
is there a school that goes that way?

isn't there plenty of time in the week for touch
why do you need the touch in here
because this house would be different then
the real question would get answered
where is my body

that is a very interesting question, tell me more
answer me first, is there a school that touches
is there a school
where the sun comes up
and a girl comes down the stairs
and stretches her body over mine
and she lies on top of me

presses her mouth to my mouth
and breathes me
and her body is blue with bruises
blue with love
like the summernight sky
and she covers me like that
sky over earth
and tells me the truth
and never leaves?
that's what your science should set out to find
find the stairs that she comes down
the little teeth that give such kisses
lovebites the stars are
and I am outstretched waiting

why is she bruised?
maybe I am bruised
and the color is reflected
onto her skin from mine
anyhow I know the stars
are on her and they press on me

why are you waiting for her
don't the stairs go up also
like Jacob's angels going up and down
why down you go up and find her

I never understood that story
my father's name was Jacob, did I ever tell you that,
I used to wonder where he kept his ladder
I heard about all that in Hebrew school
why could he see angels
and all I had was the Brady Bunch
I asked him once
and he looked at me like I was crazy
the way he did and I said no more
the way you look at me right now

you never told me why you want to hurt the girl

Here I come to tell you all the truth
so listen hard you gospel-hungry Viennese
says the first measures of the first Brahms concerto
but by the end after all the noise and portent
the truth is what any body says
here I am, alone and shivering

nightfall hurries inside me
can you help me now
when all the dying is
inside me, when my desire
faileth and man — I am a man —
goeth to his long
home I think this means the grave
the music buries me
I am buried in my lost desires
though in my will I ask to be cremated
help me
I am a muscle in spasm
I can't let go of what I can't take hold

is silence only in heaven
don't you ever get bored with us
the wailing of your empty children
our fantasies our vague dream life
we half remember and half make up
don't you get tired of our lies
our sudden insights our brilliant truths
we forget by next time, don't you
ever get tired of money

a word renews itself
by coming out of a fresh mouth
no two mouths
can say the same word

ever, no two people tell the same story
and that is why we value the dream so much
not just what you see in the night
but how you tell it
the dream man and the telling man
so that's why you send me your dreams when you're on vacation
because a dream is the soul's fingerprint
an absolute, a distinctness, a special
song only you can sing
your dream

we kept getting lost in the old house
lost from each other
then you'd find me again
do you ever dream of me
does the dream tell you your desire
does it speak your difference
each one of us
master of our own desire
and only each can say what that is

only they never say it
go to the grave with that
necessary secret warm in their mouths
and all my work is to encourage you to know
to know it even if you never tell me
each man has to guess his own secret before he dies
that is all that folklore means
that is what all the stories tell
learn the word your body will not tell
learn it and speak it to me

but actually you haven't finished the dream

there were birds in the room as there so often are
but big ones, bigger than gulls but from the sea
small eagles too and a thing like a white raven
one of them came flying hard against me

and actually crashed through my ribs
and embedded herself completely inside my chest

tell me more about what bird was it that came in
I only saw the shadow of it coming
I think the white one
because when I close my eyes I see white inside me
pale like a winter morning
like the Baltic like Berlin I don't know why
winter is supposed to be dark
but there is a special light at ten a.m.
on a snowy day in Germany
not like anything else in the world
you can smell wine on everybody's breath
from the Christmas market and

how did you come to visit Berlin
I lived there for eight months
I had a fellowship to study
before the Wall came down
I was in the east
I love those huge empty streets
open city
morning winter help me
I lost something there

what did you study?
how the big insurance companies
weathered the changes
from Prussia to German Empire
to Weimar Republic to Third Reich
to the DDR, always
through all that horror people were insured,
bought policies, paid premiums,
died and left widows to collect
we never think of that in history
but things are always going on
markets and documents and income tax

sometimes we break our heart with living
what does anybody know
how long we have to dream

Is the bird still sitting in your belly?
not down there, it feels
as if some pale music
had replaced my heart
that winter morning lives in me now
but why a bird
what do you associate with a white raven?

the living death
do you feel that way now?
something in me is always dying
just like this clock is running
and all the running is losing, is fleeing,
running from no one to nowhere,
and I know my time's already up
but that's all right
I feel better now that I've told you
something but I don't know what
birds or death or life insurance
I feel relieved at least
relived
something maybe in the air
maybe I just wanted you to know
a little bit about my life outside this room
our room, about me
that I was trained as an economist
here's for today and last time
thank you for waiting
and thanks for not making such a fuss
about my forgetting my checkbook last week

and even he I sometimes want to cherish
hold him to my heart
and answer his stifled questions

child of my process
with glorious half-truths and thrilling reinforcement
sometimes I hold him in my mouth
to taste the difference
what I wouldn't give to give away what I keep so hard
always holding on
teach me to let go
it sounds like a nice thing to say but do you want to
I want to stop clutching
I clutch at everything
and then it clutches back

wouldn't growing older be letting go?
the more you are the more you have
more have more hold
and there are habits like the salt in food
and I forget who I'm talking to
then the truth comes out
looks around and goes back in
who are you talking to now
is there a doctor in the house
blues comes from blue devils
there were pills made from mercury
to cure syphilis cure
the madness came from syphilis
love sickness all
madness comes from sex
that's true isn't it doctor
whatever they tell you outside
it's true isn't it
sex makes you crazy
whether you do it or hold it in
love is just a complication in that disease
do you have a family, doctor
do you go home at night to a standard life
I am a telephone did you know that
I don't know don't care to know
whose voices speak and where they're from

what does it matter who screws the bulb in
the lamp comes on and we all see
I think the light is like a single word
someone out there knows how to pronounce
did you ever read about Kabbalah
how god is a face and his name
is the same as someone else
and we sit all night playing bingo in the temple
to shift around the letters and the numbers
do you know every number means something
and when she gets a certain set of numbers
the old woman cries Bingo and gets her prize
but young mystical boys with long black hair
sneak in and steal her winning card
then they know the word
the absolute word of that relative night
this is a fact I've seen it
they take it home and study it
and make computer programs to work it out
because every winning card contains a secret
the name of a powerful angel who rules tomorrow
an angel that could bring them princesses and gold
or all the beautiful silky carpets of Isfahan
or tell you things that even you don't know
when they decode the card they'll know
who finally will love them and take them in
that's all the world is ever waiting for isn't it
doctor that's what sex also only is about
that someone stands with a smile with an open door
and says yes you're the one I'm waiting for
now come in and stay as long as you like
because my body is forever and I am yours
that's what the young boys are after their hair their dirty
fingernails
cut to the quick, their beautiful dark eyes their fleshy lips
I've seen them pick the cards up off the folding tables in the hall
seen them steal their grandmothers blind, steal the cards the words
that come down from the mother of the world

and sneak away with them to read them all night long
like naughty French boys reading Genet by flashlight
only the mystics study on sturdy dirty wooden tables
under naked bulbs, all night they'd work
then days later I'd see them these so-called religious students
hollow-eyed but driving big Lexuses
and I knew they had worked the numbers out
and called out the pure names of power
just at the going up of the dawn
and the world heard them
and made things fall into the places they called out
the places they made by calling out their names
don't you think we do that when we talk
we're just rearranging dictionary words
everything we'll ever say is in that book
I notice you keep one on your desk
do you ever open it at random and see what the day says
when I came in today I looked up at your building
as I always do and there was a seagull perched on your window
I wanted to tell you when I came in but I forgot
I think it was a sign of something a sort of sign

is it language? is it languish?
and this languishing
is only a long grieving
a mirror for a lost sheen
like when the rain dries on the pavement
and all the swift red lights are gone

tail lights? tail lights?

bracket me
to understand
I keep all my doubts to myself
what good are they to you
whoever you are
no value to the other
serene alterity "I" postulates

when spoken in an empty crowded room
empty of you
the one I really
want to talk to
is there only one
in the gimcrack luster of our common room
this poster of Joris Ivens
this bronze rhinoceros
when space has to dream itself open
dream an opening into itself
so you can come in
please come in and let me talk to you
the one I really mean
it's really weak and low of me to want it I want it
I want the lustrous ear of your attention
your rich hair curled around your hearing
you who are the other pole of me
negative ion that lets me breathe
free in the crowded emptiness of my life
never mind your money

masturbation is the next step up from sex
she said and I confess it startled me
as if you could go alone
to that holy mountain Noah landed on
Mount Marriage Mount Ararat propagation
each according to her kind
and no me needed to that complex sacred you

as if you could enter the Sabbath
you and God taking turns in the dark

I confess her statement startled me wordless
I confess I left it and her unresponded to
so once more she drifted out dissatisfied
I confess I wonder how much longer she'll keep coming
how long she will accept the deferral of her desires
I confess I push the envelope

I confess I frustrate her more often than I need to
because I want to see what she will do
I confess I'm a little bit afraid of losing her
I am not afraid of using her
we are here in Eden to be used
I confess I'm looking for a way to bring it up again
the word she said
just in case she was when she said it
standing on some giant shoulders
and could see for a moment over the actual wall
and could see what sex really was about
and what it was and how it moved and where how far it could go
and what would be there when we got there
and she wasn't just being clever
my gut feeling is she was just being clever and she is clever
I don't want to take a chance though
of missing vistas her sick eyes might see

a car flashing in and out of sunlight
shadow road
shallow go
I dreamed it again
the boy with the guitar
this time he came out and put the guitar
down flat on the road
then he lay down beside it
and cars had to swerve around him
some drivers swore out the window
some just swerve as if he and his guitar
were roadkill or a dumb old dog
the weird thing is that though he didn't touch it
at all the guitar was playing
I still can hear it
music I didn't like actually
I don't know what it was some sentimental folk song
I could see the guitar strings pluck themselves
I began to get uneasy almost scared
something was coming

I wanted to warn him
but I felt paralyzed the way you do
before I could do anything anyhow the truck was there
a big white oil truck with a cartoon of a bee on it
and it didn't even try to miss them
it crushed the guitar in the middle of the music
you could see splinters and flinders flying out from under the
wheels
but when the truck was gone the boy was still there
he didn't seem hurt
he was just lying there on his back
looking up into the sky
and he looked not shocked, just a little surprised
and a voice in my head said
he wonders where the music went

how did you feel then did you wake right up?
I lay there wondering about it the way you do
I had been so afraid before the truck
but now nothing seemed so bad
all that fear and anxiety
had suddenly come and just as suddenly was gone
and I lay there wondering what it would be like to be free

free?
really free, not worrying about guitars or people
just taking things as they come

is that what you think the dream was saying?
I don't know, maybe I'm the guitar
and he'll miss me when I'm gone

you think you are the guitar?
I can't stand the monotony of being in love
always worrying about him and what he's thinking
instead of what I'm thinking
always wrapped up in my feelings

it's so sentimental it's degrading
see the guitar was playing all by herself
and he doesn't really care
maybe the boy isn't even listening
maybe that voice in my head is a lie
or just my voice consoling myself
love is so boring
so I think it was a dream of suicide

and here the mind is loath to follow
how can the therapist
protect the patient from her own insight
how can he push her
out of the snug house of interpretation
into an affirmation
false as it might be
just to keep her going keep her living
false it would be
but false only to the moment
we live by moments
till the night comes
when the moments slay us

there is a land beyond your feelings

but how can she be told it's there and how to get there
he can't find it himself
maybe they could go there together
physician heal thyself
go with her hand in hand
the oldest mistake
the ark the Ararat
growing old together stifled in one room
you think plaster walls are some far horizon
and sleep like Fafnir on a heap of feelings
you'll never feel again

horror of being with the one you want

he has to say something about suicide
where she stopped her recitation
and how she's waiting and what will he say
what will he ever say
live, live for me
if you won't live for yourself
you fool, do you need me
even to adjust the will to live
in you, must I reach in
so deep and touch that valve?

suicide is such a self-important word
the little threat that threads its way
through so much discourse
love me or I'll leave you alone in the world
leave you crippled ever after
you will grieve for me forever you will be paralyzed
by closing down your feelings so you don't feel me
sneering at you from the gates of death
mocking you for the wicked thing you made me do
making me leave the room forever

there are so many forevers in this conversation
yet the word is a sort of safety
when people start thinking of forever
nothing can ever happen now

and Now is safe from all that rhetoric
Suicide, you think? that's interesting
had you been thinking consciously of it that day
I always do, but thinking about it is so boring
so humiliating, killing myself for love,
it's just another shitty part of love
of bad relationships
has he been treating you badly lately
it's not about him it's about me
I feel humiliated by wanting him so much
it doesn't matter what he does

sometimes he's just exactly what I want and sometimes not
but it's the non-stop wanting that makes me sick
sometimes I'm just a rolled up ball of neediness
whimpering in the corner of the bed
that's why I feel I'm the guitar

the orderly unfolding of her career
is distasteful to her friends
she works hard at self-promotion
so you know when you meet her
you're only a rung on some ladder
her biggest dream is to leave you behind
and always want her still and want her more

I have to cherish the unspeakable
the least thing
the leaf says

the wormhole in the woodwork
through which another universe sneaks in
or we fall out
sometimes I'm nowhere
but what I hear

and have no place to stand
but the words I say

Other things worry me
there is a kind of gnawing
at the root
other problems
besides sexual identity
but those have experts of their own
handling them my broker
my dentist my gynecologist
and you beside me in the wilderness
a joke you know the poem
I want to fuck them back

that's what I think about
no matter what I say or do
when I'm with them
I want to rip them open with my hips
hammer them the way they hammer me
so those two things are happening together
the body moves and the mind's reciprocal
and when I come I hardly notice
what he's doing to me I'm so focused
on what I do to him, plunging and being
plunged at once, otherwise I couldn't bear it
but as it is I'm nice enough in bed
even docile sometimes smug around my secret
so naturally I dream of screwing you too
how could I not if I feel attracted
or even interested and that way also
I don't have to look at their faces
and I love to fuck experts like you
because of how armored your bodies are
with fat or muscle it doesn't matter
armored and rigid with self-protection
I guess you have to, you're with lunatics all day
but there's a special pleasure to crack you open
drive into that tough scared meat of them
and split them open with my phantom phallus
slow rise and fall of all their conversation
and I pass my body through them through all their words
the sad beautiful language of Eden
when all my lovers and attempted lovers and ex-lovers
think the words they mumble describe real actions
think that talking changes anything
think that truth is in their reach
like the scarlet poison oleander sacred flower
when all that happens is my body
drives through their bodies drive through mine
o god if I could only reach you
and you could know me
knowing you, knowing you all the way through

so a word could be
sacred as the mouth that speaks it
against my ear, wet on my cheek
in the bushes by the country station
when I overhear the foolish plans of travelers
who think there is a going and a coming
something to be done and a report to be made
bitter destiny of talking men
in a universe where no one listens
of course language changes nothing
of course you're sick as your patients
but you comfort and lighten a little
the long burden of seeming to be someone
it doesn't help but it helps
it doesn't answer
but it keeps talking
its ears are deaf but its eyes are tender
it almost has no body left
only the sense of caring cares
the sense of being heard finally hears
I could talk to you forever
a dream about a dream about a dream.

Lancelot and Guinevere
are all about not being me

a bird calls I hear it distinctly
what is a bird doing here

everything turns out to be
a suburb of a lost city

deep below the riverbed I hear
the lawnmowers of Atlantis
that time when I still had feelings
and every touch was in the dialect of truth
in that country where I truly lived

there was no neutral thing no vague
indeterminate perception
and that is what Plato must have meant
by the sunken island
when everything that was fresh and new
was inundated with the ordinary

but in my country we were scientists
were profligate and bold
we were as much animal as man
sign of the centaur
as much tree or rock as animal
all the categories knew how to speak

can't you speak now
aren't you saying everything you mean?

o meaning, meaning
doesn't mean very much

back then the smallest piece of lead or chalk
knew how to talk
and more than that
we knew how to listen
and there was no need for all this talk of meaning
because we were with each other and with things
and there was no distance

language is distance
isn't that the answer
why we talk three times a week
and never get any closer
any clearer never
close to where the goal's supposed to be
not ever close to one another
I call you doctor and you
call me hardly ever by my name
sometimes I think you forget it

because all of us are pretty much the same to you
the talking sofa and the listening chair

I never send letters because the time of arrival
I mean when she gets the letter later
who knows what I'll be thinking
even e-mail is better since there's a chance
she'll be waiting at her monitor to receive me
right then when I need her I mean need to tell her
when I need her hear me
later I might mean different
and then it would be a lie I told her
god I have to tell enough lies
without doing it by accident you know
what I mean, are you a knower
do you know
how hard it is to say something
and then put it back into writing
because I know you'll think I'm crazy
but I think everything we say
everything we feel
is just something we read inside us
some screen never stops scrolling
these words I'm telling you now
I'm reading off the wall inside
why don't we just leave them there inside
not copy them out on pieces of paper
clay whatever, isn't it bad enough
to think in the first place
that that's what people mean by thinking
this recitation of what somebody writes inside you
whoever made language up
language is never me is never mine
and they call this thinking, reading these
words that never stop passing
isn't it bad enough that we feel?

what about people who don't know how to read?

that's a racist lie an elitist lie
everybody knows how to read
everybody knows how to read the words I mean
every tribe no matter how 'primitive'
every person is reading all the time inside
they don't all use our alphabet
that semitic conspiracy
maybe the letters were a big mistake
to make us read those little marks
instead of the glorious signs inside
the real words we see of the world

that's very beautiful, how you say that,
but let me ask you by your own terms
what are you yourself reading or translating
when you say what you've just been saying
how does it connect you with the letters
I mean the letters you don't write on paper
to the women you don't want to tell lies to

you don't have to remind me
I was listening while I was speaking
I admit sometimes I'm not
but now I was, language
is so after the fact
by the time you get around to listening
even though that's your job
no Freud never said it is the listening treatment it is the talking
cure
you do it I am the witness
the dumb monument to your discoveries
well anyhow you listen
and by the time the words get to you
even though my lips are still
wet with saying them
licking them
by that time I'm thinking something else
and everything is full of lying

Do you change your meaning so often?
I'm not talking about meaning
meaning is a distraction from desire
that's all I'm talking about, wanting
the want that burns beneath the words
those ashy letters that you leave
language is the ash of desire

my enemies in the moon
have done this, thrown down this tree
so that it cracks my head open
and lets my dreams spill out
and you who stand there
are of their party, you stand there
and know nothing,
you think it was just a ray of sunshine
bright hot afternoon autumn light
slicing through the trees that hit my head
I say it was a tree
thrown down from heaven
and the tree was on fire
so that you just saw light
you saw it cut across my face
and you thought nothing
but what pretty eyes I have
when the light catches them
just that way all amber
you don't see the broken topaz
smashed in my heart
the dark blood fading as it dries
my so-called eyes

for I have few friends on earth
and none in heaven
I have done battle with the princes of the air
and now I pay the price
but in my wrath is my reward

when you see anger
you remember me

see how my dreams spill and soak the general ground
already I've told you more than anyone
do you think I'm coming to trust you
is it your silence throws a switch in me
and I, like nature, abhor a vacuum
and so hurry to fill it
with the only thing I have to tell
the truth of such as me
that's why I'm talking so much today
and also you looked tired when I came
I thought I'd help you out today
and do my share of telling
and carry us, then you asked about the cut above my eyes
where something fell and hit me
and I knew my hour had come at last
and all my challenges were finally answered
and I was a marked man
struck by a tree branch hurled from heaven
specifically from the moon
where the sneaking solar spirits of authority and revenge
skulk at night and drench their weapons
with the blood of dreams, the venom they distill
from the saliva of sleeping women
and with such elfshot arrowheads
my brow is wounded doctor
thank you for noticing
my wound and no one does
you know that mostly I'm invisible
only my heart shows up on x-ray
a lump of coral from the Philippines

If I could sit down just once in your chair
I could fly the way you do
only I don't think you know you're flying

you just sit there saying what and why
but meantime you're sailing over me
like an asinine Chagall rabbi over
all the countries I am
do you know how big I am
how really important I am
you've been flying for an hour
and all you see down there is me
I am the lake that looks so pretty in the Minnesota sun
I am the field of red cattle shuffling along
I am the well a man bends to drink from
you get the picture but you just think
you're talking to some girl in trouble
if I could get in that chair for an hour
I could show you something
I'd make the world listen to me
make them eat my shit for a change
you too for a change, I wonder
what part of Poland did your mother come from
was she Jewish

She still is
I'm glad

to know when something's over
is not the same as finish it
I think it's time for me to go
I'm not getting anything from you anymore
I come in and tell you my dreams
but I know them already, they're mine
and you don't explain them any more
what good is that
you never tell me yours
you sit in your flying chair
and I get to watch your shadow on the ceiling
it's as if there are two of you
the one in the chair pretending to listen
but really just waiting for the moment to slip the knife in

and that other one on the ceiling
pretending to be just a shadow
of a man in an armchair
but it shows the truth the real thing
huge and hovering and dark and always above me
your little desk lamp shows the whole thing
ogre doctor over me

did you know the original language was Hebrew
not the Hebrew that Jews speak now
but something before that, and every language
comes from it and all of them distort the original
meanings God gave to the words
but Hebrew keeps more of the pure meanings
did you know that? there is a website
that explains this, and that's what we should be studying
instead of going to the moon and attacking each other
and fussing over crazy dreams, the real meaning of words!
because God said the words first
and the things came forth out of nothingness
just by his words and were there
suddenly, all the things and all the words,
just as he said them
like a man saying the name of his friend
and opening his eyes and the friend is right there
standing beside him to comfort him and touch
the words come first
and I read somewhere there was a rabbi once
who thought the words came even before God
and God too suddenly was just there
when someone spoke his name
but who said the word then
by whom is it we are spoken
that's what we should be trying to find out

Don't you think we actually do this a little
when we talk about what you remember
and what you dream

aren't we trying to find the original words
that spoke you, that's a nice way of putting it
or that you spoke, or that you heard
when you were very young
because there's not so much difference is there
between speaking and hearing
it's the same word isn't it
no matter who is speaking?
so this is the question of who we are
or being defined by what we hear

Did I tell you my new dream yet
no we've just been talking about language since you came
well all I remember is the end
I was or someone was
doing some work beside my house
and a few inches down below topsoil
we ran into something hard
so we cleared the dirt away
and there was this strange thing
a long wide tray like a baking pan
six feet long and three feet wide
blackened but not corroded
we took it up and it was empty
except for a notebook at the northern end
a school notebook the pages still clear
the book was dry and we could read it
but most of the pages were blank
a few scattered here and there through the book
had texts or formulas written on them
in different color inks some pages red some
black some blue but most were empty
only with those faint blue lines
what do you think it means?

how did you feel about it when you found the book
I leafed through it surprised that it was still dry and not rotten
the pages slipped open easily

and there was no smell

but how did you feel

I feel it's what the patient says that counts
I mean what is written down or declared
not all the empty pages
the doctor should be satisfied with what we tell

you felt that in the dream?
no I think that now

but what did you feel?

I felt an obligation
I didn't like the feeling
I felt an obligation
to take the book with me
for the rest of my life
fill all the empty pages
I didn't like the feeling
something is in the world
that won't let me alone
I had to fill the book with writing
and I have nothing to say
why do you think the book was underground
it was buried by a former tenant
part of a religious ritual
no I mean why do you think you dreamed about it under ground
if all your feelings were about the obligation
the book could have been found lying on a table
or come in the mail, why under the ground
I guess because we had to dig to get it
we? I don't know who was with me
but someone was maybe it was you, maybe
What was it you lost in Berlin
why do you ask how do you know about that

you mentioned it in passing the way we do
another slip you mean? a night without a day?
I don't remember telling you
it's not important
but what was it?

on the little blue bridge in Charlottenburg
I was standing staring at the official swans
it was a blue morning though with crows
shouting in the palace grounds by the Belvedere
I was leaning on the railing looking down
and suddenly I was conscious I let something go
not meaning to, conscious of having been unconscious
it was just a little paper bag I carried
stuff from the drugstore a box of band-aids
I saw it floating in a circle down below
and one of the swans came nosing at it
pecked it and the bag got wet and sank
I felt terribly bereft I don't know why
I didn't need the bandages I bought them
just to be on the safe side I felt so sad so powerless
I can still feel it as we're talking
the feeling of my fingers letting go of the bag
all by themselves, why, why
do such things have to happen
am I so little in control of what I do
that my fingers have a life of their own
I was so scared I trembled, what else might
my body decide to do all by itself
while I'm busy with some swans
What was going on in your life that day?
nothing just stuff at the university
wandering around a lot, I had just come back
from a weekend in Poland
one of those cities where they still speak German
but the vegetables were better than Berlin
I walked a lot in the woods and farms
I remember stumbling and falling over a tree root

in a forest full of sunlight and I sprawled
on moss and mushrooms and loved the smell
of where I had fallen I just stayed there a while
and when I got tired of the ground I faced the sky
little patches up there blue and gold
I think it's a good thing to lie on the ground
it's like recharging your batteries
plus you can never fall any further
there you are precisely balanced
between heaven and earth at peace
what did you think about as you were lying there?
all kinds of things, strange you should ask that
my mother, I thought I heard her voice
telling me not to work so hard
and I wasn't doing anything all that time
just doing the minimum and having fun
but still she spoke, I mean I thought her voice
I don't know what else I thought about
does it matter, I was just so comfortable
sometimes I wonder why I ever got up again
it felt as if I had found my place
I could grow like mushrooms in the woods
so why do you think the lost band-aids led you here today?
I guess I expected to be wounded and they fell by themselves
so there's no way I could protect myself from getting hurt
rose petals don't cure slit wrists
that's something my mother used to say
what does that expression mean I never heard it
I think it means you can't heal real wounds with sweet talk
I mean I guess wrists are self-inflicted wounds
and rose petals are lover's sentiments
people are in pain and lovers try to bullshit them
nobody can know somebody else's pain
so it's up to us to keep from getting hurt
do you feel that what you've said is a critique
of psychoanalysis and me in particular
are the clarifying words we use, the insights won through to
are they just bullshit that doesn't touch the pain?

maybe it does mean that but I didn't mean it consciously
I do think I get some benefit from all this
it doesn't take the pain away
but it gives me things to think with
Did you see anybody in Berlin those days?
see o you mean sleep with, no actually
just an old friend from home who came for a few days
just a weekend on the Baltic
up in Rostock one hot summer
it was fun while it lasted
but we both had other things to think about
all I can say is what I see around me
when I close my eyes the words stop coming
it's so hard to talk in the dark
the words I say are like power leaking out
like that passage in the gospels where Jesus says
I felt my virtue go out of me
virtue once meant power once
but when I close my eyes my power grows
nothing is gained by talking
maybe I misunderstand this process or your motives
but I come to hear you not to talk
I want this to be what it says on the door
Come In & I Will Talk To You
I want you to analyze my psyche
I don't want to waste
my soul's strength
in talking, Christ
all these words
there's never an end to it
isn't it all right if I just listen
I promise I'll tell you the truth
and listen hard and take your guidance
just let me listen to you talk to me
Looking at the hand as it's in the act of writing
staring at your lips
those rare moments when you let me see you
and you are talking

tes yeux tes voix your eyes your voices
because I don't know who's listening or who speaks
I don't know anything about you
just the world

I mean what the world means
I mean I know what it knows
nomina numeri that's all
just names and numbers
no essences at all
we have no essences or
somehow float above them
drunk on difference
on what we think we are
eventually we pull ourselves together and go on
into the swampland of excuses
where your grandmother's run-down plantation
still keeps its catalogue of slaves
in the shack behind the rows of beehives
where someone manages to grow
what nowadays would be called natural remedies
coneflowers and burdock old people pluck
people trust their lives to you
you have no conversation for
since all we are at all is functions
with no essences, I keep talking
because I would be no one if I stopped

tell me more about the floating the going over
I mean we don't connect with what we do
a man gets there
gets out of his car locks the door goes away
do you understand
the machine is there but the man is gone
we move things around and they stay moved
but we are missing from this picture
I can't connect with anything I've done

so people hate me because I won't commit
but they don't commit either, they too
wear blue one day and red another
they too are footloose and flee the deed they do
or else commitment is a mood
a minute when you decide that time
is something you objectify
can spill your moment's will
out over all the years to come
but this is nonsense because we can't
remember what we ate last Saturday
because we are nobody in particular
and wear ourselves out grieving for an identity
our own, that cannot logically exist
we have no essence, we are not what we do
all we are is going on, to the next situation
all we are is going
I don't know why people have to call it running away

Tell me more about those people
the ones who say you run away
the ones who talk about commitment
it's so romantic to pin yourself down
like a corsage you wore to the prom
you have to hang around your neck ever after
withered and dry and smelling weird
a dead gardenia on a living breast
and won't death slowly sink into the skin
from all the withered flowers we love to flaunt
ya vas lyubil and all that love crap
o god they want to tattoo the mind itself
the soul too if we had a soul
the wrongest book I ever heard of was *Noble Essences*
there are no essences and they are not noble
I think I'm not answering your question am I
I hate to be pinned down of course that's what I'm saying
but you deserve an answer
this is a transaction after all between us

I mean we're in our separate cars
side by side on a no account road
and we're talking through the windows as we drive
neck and neck, drag race for a meager hour
you know what I mean, then the cars
will go their separate ways and be parked at Target
or snug in your girlfriend's underground garage
or are you married, strange I never asked
sometimes I forgot the simplest things
like what is the capital city of the moon

maybe you're just afraid of marriage
evidently, and I'm afraid of you too of course
which is why I keep talking
and imagine all my palaver is a kind of answer
or at least to someone like you skilled at listening
wise interpreter of what I don't know I'm saying

I feel you're trying to flatter me instead of talking to me
so I ask again about the people in your life right now
right now the ones who bother you about commitment
and yes by the way I am married
though I enjoyed the symbolism of the underground garage
so who is bothering you now?

it's not so simple as who
it's all of them
I see it in their eyes around me
the terrible bleak faded soccer moms
smug conservationists urban missionaries
they all want me to approve their fantasy
of permanence and values
house and heart and family and god
the drunks want it at 4 a.m.
stumbling back to the home they hate
and still they credit somewhere something's fine
the flypaper singing to the fly
it frightens me if you must know

because I only really feel like I'm myself
when I'm on the go, I am who I am
because I can leave the room at will
someday I suppose I'll be a suicide
just to keep moving

Do you do sports or athletics?
Christ that's an obtuse question almost insulting
you haven't understood a thing I said
what has sport got to do with it
when I'm on the move I don't mean movement
you don't have to leap through the door to leave the room
I feel you left me long ago
and just left your ears here to console me
but for Christ's sake come up with better questions than that
but if you really want to know I run (of course)
and ride when I can, I like the movement
and being up there but I don't like horses much
they're too big and too present if you know what I mean
but you'll never tell me what you know and what I mean
you'll never answer anything I ask you make me beg like a child

I notice you said Christ twice -- is he a presence too?
one time he was, like everybody else
I had to go through childhood
and childhood had churches in it
so I heard a lot about Jesus
and mostly liked what I heard
because he was always on the go
had no use for family, kept moving
wouldn't even stay dead in the tomb
not even the earth could hold him
wandered away into the sky at the end
leaving us all down here making up rules as fast as we can
while he was free
so if I were Christian it would be to imitate
the gypsy Jesus that I know, the prince of being gone

and that's a nice name for you too I'll think of you that way
and we're really near the end of our time
so I'll ask you one more time
about the people in your life right now
I want you to tell me the next time
I'll tell you the next time
and I warn you I'm going to keep asking
I don't have many answers but
my questions will go on forever

He died this morning
my friend a pianist
in Boston this morning
thirty years I knew him
was so good to me
he died alone I think
but we all die alone
when it comes down to that
nobody does it for me
I keep hearing in my head
the way he played
Satie's Three Fanfares
of the Rosy Cross
on my old piano
flame mahogany
so long ago he played
it slower than anybody else's
he played the true
sound of that mystical
celebration what sort of thing
I never knew it's been years
since I saw him what can I do
what can you do with a dying
with a dead friend you can remember
is that enough the whole
business of memorial
remember me I wish I could
hear him playing that

so many things I want to hear
Homer on the seashore
reciting the death of Hector
to a crowd of drunken men
I want to have a tape of
Milton dictating to his daughters
or Freud why couldn't it be Freud
he was alive when the Germans
were developing tape recordings
maybe somewhere there's a tape
of a session with Dr Freud
in London in actual English
you could hear him talking to the patient
you could hear him listening
maybe they did record him
maybe his voice got lost
when the war began this friend
of mine was from Texas
he hadn't seen his family in fifty years
he was the black sheep
too much music

I can't get over these losses these arrows
where are they coming from
so many seizures
swept away the long brown leaves of the willow
the glossy thick leaf fall of the maple

had you seen him recently?
no, not for several years, he was shy
and didn't travel, his condition
first arthritis then cancer
kept him from moving
much out of his apartment
and I didn't often get there
of course I feel guilty I always
feel guilty that's what guilt is for

to feel it, and he didn't want
the young to see him old and feeble
the strange shame of the dying
as if death itself were somehow shameful
the last indignity after all the others

the 'distinguished thing' happens
and people sit around
uncomfortable with what's missing
and with what remains
I do wish I could hear him playing
Satie or Scriabin he was great at
or Ben Weber nobody plays him now

Not getting there before you do
insights I barter my soul for
Vienna paradox
the doctor is a devil
and vice versa both
think about all the great painters
and not one ever could find his own soul
only project it that means cast it out
onto the coarse cloth or the plaster
so it is found in what is vile
the squeezed out the discarded fecal image
what is left when he's finished and passes by
achorei the backparts of God

Do you think I am a devil and want your soul
for some purpose of my own?
well do you think at the heart of every conversation
there's a secret transaction
by which the world is changed
I go out of this room
somewhat diminished
some part of what I am is lost
left behind even though
some other thing is rattling around inside me

some coin of insight, some clever idea
you gave me or elicited (your word)
from my poor brain
what have I lost and what have I gained
is it just a flushing out and slow
seeping back in of my neurotic passions
you give me to think about
while the sickness runs my life

that's the strongest critique of what I do
I think I've heard anybody make
do you think it's the truth
is that how you regularly feel
or is it just now at the end of the day
low blood sugar and maybe we should meet in the morning

but answer me how can I get my life
to run a different way, I want to meet
a different kind of woman I want to stand
unabashed before my own desires
I want to walk out in the morning
and know that I am good
and have nothing more to fear than all men have
sickness poverty old age and death
I want to feel that I can choose
who I talk to and where I go
not wake up stifled with desire
for some random person suddenly catexed
with preposterous significance
not walk the sidewalks all too sure
the shadows point which way to walk
and the birds are critics as they mock my choices
your dirty pigeons my Flatbush parrots
everything mocks what I decide
there is no certainty in me
and my power fades

Can you hear my music from so far

the brief interludes
of living with your feelings
I mean my feelings mean live with me
we'll be together
along a smoky river
Florida or Alabama
in summer mist or after
swim among the crocodiles
there's always an Egypt everywhere
to scare me or enlighten
then mummify the glory that it wakes
sins of oil and cinnamon
the lust that shapes itself to every limb
gold gloss underground
buried for five thousand years
and mean nothing
except your hips are dripping wet
when you come up from the river
and I hold you to me
sharing the waters
of what is suddenly a beast called us
and we believe in that moment
that bright deception
us and what we think we are
only it's me saying this, only me
my reverie and no answer from you
a lonely song of northern weirdness
while the doctor listens
as if I were a gypsy with a guitar
and he an indolent landowner
enjoying the music but keeping an eye on me
to pass along my physical details
to the police in the next town
in case I stole
o god how I would love to steal
but there is nothing worth the pilfering
I look around his office or my life
and suddenly I have no hands

or those I have are all about just feeling
just a pair of palms for you to read
nothing for me to take hold with
just a text for you to read
I let myself want nothing in the world
I listen to you fill me with your wisdom
verbose enough to last till next time
and so I live from appointment to appointment
turning the empty hours to rehearsal
of what I think will make you talk to me
and praying for great dreams to come
the coins I pay as entrance to your circus

But there were so many of them going
all the machines I couldn't see the people
but every now and then a car would pass me slowly
and we'd see each other's faces
and all that going would for a moment have eyes
that never looked at me, I could do all the seeing
I could understand the highway with my hands
while my eyes could find them and decode them
as they passed on their way to their private infinity
I'd look at them then look away fast
afraid I'd see a face I'd want so much I'd never
want to live without, a face I'd need
do you understand what I mean, a face so true
that life would be false and shabby without it
I'm terrified of wanting what I can't have
that isn't even there to be had
fugitive face a memory before it's even here
I'd have to live alone with its goneness
I can't stand that, it happens so often
can't you understand how terrible it is
to lose someone the instant you find her?

the flowers I ask every year and every year I forget
autumn sedum's one of them and who knows better
than a person who forgets the names of things

a world with nothing in it

this man he moves in a wordless trance
of simple beauty will you tell me
is that neurosis or great bliss
doctor to pass through situations
without names just holding on
to the feelings of things they make on me
I'm talking about me, this is all
such a translation I don't think in words

tell me what you know
about me about all of me
how can this be
all day I walk alone
not a word in my head
and then I come to you
in here with iron bands
around my chest it feels
but talk comes out
from nowhere, where
do words come from doctor

tell me what it's like as you walk
around the world
with no words
what goes on in your head?
I see the images of what I see
redoubled on themselves
stronger bluer wetter
intensified by holding on
I hold on to what I see
to what's just passing
and I make it still, make it stop
inside me while I touch it
image stays with image
they do things with each other
fly or build or dance

make love to one another or to me
but I don't know their names
and they say nothing
it's full of sounds
my world but not the sound of words
I think the words I say right now must come from you
you have the wrong desires that's all it is
you try to fulfill them I try to change them
you hear no words because you aren't listening
all you are is wanting
and wanting never understands
Eros is dressed in rags and ignorant
he has one trick
and one intention
how harsh you are, my tender wishes
are all I have to go on
some of what I want I get
and some I don't get but trying
for them keeps me happy
do you want me to go collect stamps

indolent landau
the landlord's reward
those are what come to mind
when you say hello
from what I've been reading
since I try not to think
of what happens only
what I'm reading
this helps me understand
what I really feel
about what happens around me
the world around the book
am I right in thinking
you don't approve of all my reading

who rides in an indolent landau?
I thought it was a kind of dance

slow and sensual or is it sensuous
no it is a kind of carriage
don't you look up the words you use
I thought you were going to say
look up the skirts of words
I usually don't bother I just know
or know enough to make sense
anyhow we all make mistakes
I thought it was a dance
and how she moved
within it was so slow
the birds caught up
with their shadows
and the wind went home

so who was dancing in that dance you imagined
I saw two women in long white dresses
twirling slow around a standing woman dressed in green
the green one was drunk, a wedding in the woods
she stood there swaying with her eyes closed
while the two white ones moved around her
how did you feel about what you saw
I wanted to embrace the drunken woman
and have the other two dance around us
it was a wonderful feeling to be at the center
exciting to be with a woman who couldn't say no

were you afraid of her?
only a little
she represented I think
a burst of freedom in me
I'm afraid of going there
but it was nice in my dream
to be with her in this condition
and still be part of the dance
so the words you read are just triggers
isn't that what words are
do some people just read a word

and get a single picture from it
the same for everybody
all over the world
how could that be

most people don't read
the real question is how you do
you spend your life reading

I sit by the well
drawing out
pictures from the water
some people stare into the fire
I gaze into the water and see faces there
so many are my mother
and also places, faces and places
strange capital cities with statues
and snow sifting down on still-green grass
it is strange to see it snowing underwater
but that's what I see

Do the faces ever talk to you, what do they say?
I am a child of the child I was
I can't grow out of needing them
no, they don't talk I talk to them
I tell them things I don't tell you
because they are my mother and my father
because they are my woman too

I wonder what she really thinks of me
we've been together so long I'm not really sure
forgive me but wouldn't it be more practical
for us to consider what you think of her
because you never told me why you are together
it's just the way things happen, they fall together
and they stay till they're finished or something else comes up
all this bullshit about motivation and commitment
no meaning, we're just molecules in motion

but I still wonder what she thinks about me
deep down does she care about me?

if it's molecules in motion there is no deep down
and why should she care for one molecule more than some other
and you do you care about her
is she just another molecule to you
and the girl next door would do as well?
the girl next door happens to be fantastic
peaches and cream
I was speaking generally
yes and I think we all love that way too
someone like you
you're just a speaking part
in a complicated play
a ballet, you say good stuff
but you don't change anything
nobody can though, nothing changes
I like to hear you
the way I like to hear the news
what's happening
a way to think about myself
but nothing changes
words are just costumes
doctor you're just entertainment

The there is here now as the bluebird fell
somehow wounded through local air
oriole in willows, seabreeze upsetting my dreams
because once I met her I wanted
to tell her everything
you're the one
I want no secrets from
I told her and it sounded like a song
but all my songs have no music
and by now I keep secrets from her too
in fact it gives a certain pleasure
to hide things from her when she calls

no matter what I'm doing I say something else
I love to lie to her who was my truth
what does it mean I used to show her now I hide?

What do you think it means yourself?
I want to fold myself inside and die
once on the ocean once on land
a brilliant interlude between lives
like a hot wet dream in a boring week
the pity of it is
the pity
do you believe in incarnation doctor
life after life
I have thought both ways about it
and both seem sensible so I don't know
tell me about what you believe

a warden in a prison told me once
he sees the same man over and over
maybe we don't incarnate maybe it's even worse
maybe there is a limited number of patterns
for human life but an infinity of persons to fill them
so we are born or grow into old roles
and the face comes to resemble its mask
and the warden gets to walk down the hall
over and over with the same man, sweating
the same sweat, to the gas chamber
hearing and answering the same babble
maybe we do incarnate, I don't know
if so though who am I now
if I could be the one that I should be
would it be all better
is that what I should do
find the original man I am
and be him more, or be him again
king or leper or just me
do you think I could find her again
in the next life and make it up to her

for all the lies and all the doubts
and we could finally be together
or is my thinking here shaped
by what I inherit from the form I fill
whoever it is I am, the me before me
and the me before him
do you think that I will live again?

your whole question of reincarnation
is a way isn't it of bringing into question
your sense of your actual identity now
do you think people with happy lives
wonder about who they were or who they will be?

maybe they should doctor
maybe happy people are the saddest of all
how about you are you happy or sad
I'm just about ready to give up asking and just be
a beautiful little blessing she called to give me
I answered as I was cleaning a fish
she knew I was in the mountains cellphones are wonderful
she just wanted to make sure I was happy
and make me happy if I was not
why isn't everybody like that
just wishing well and calling

my mind fills with variations
what kind of fish and pennies in a wishing well
and what she looks like and which mountains
but what I know enough to ask is Why
do you think she called
to make you close or keep you far
some people use caresses to repel

I never thought of that she's always so nice
so welcoming when I am with her

have you ever seen a spider in her web

she wants you caught in the strands
but not necessarily at the center
not necessarily near her, until she wants you
and comes to get you
people like to keep people
stationary in the network of their connection
people like to keep people on the shelf
just in case they're needed someday
I've never heard you so cynical
not cynical, accurate, realistic
haven't you yourself ever tried
to cherish someone in the middle distance
to keep her far away but still keep her yours

it's terrible to think about but I think it's true
we all do this you think, now I feel dumb
about that mountain phone call
maybe she's like all the rest of us
really wants me, wants me but not too close
why are we like that
why can't we let people go
or really be with them
why is it always in between
a midday terror, a fear
of losing and a fear of having
I feel depressed now

it's not bad to feel that way if you know why
help me to feel better, I don't know what to do about her
maybe the little gestures of love along the way
mean just as much as all the marriages
maybe we need only little moments and acknowledgements
a quick serenade and a night together
a postcard from Seville a phone call
while I'm filleting a trout, my god
we live from fix to fix, always needing
something new and never giving up the old
isn't it enough to be happy just this moment

with the fish in my hand and her voice in my ear

and we need both
the touch and the let go
live together work alone
opus solum work alone
the work you can only do
by yourself but here
in this room we do it together
a doctor is someone you can be
alone with and learn the ways
to interrogate the silences
and make being alone
turn into sudden sciences
till you know all
all we're ever going
to know about ourselves
doctor help me be alone

aristos means best the best one
but what is good is agathos
as if bad were gathos and good
the deprivation of some evil
quality as truth is aletheia
the deprivation of letheia
forgetting, truth is what won't
let you forget, then what is gathos
what is bad, we are led by bad friends
to waste all the time of day
rapping and ecstasy and crime
and all for what, for age and herpes and good night
no benefit, I take a medicine
keeps me from talking this way
I'm sorry I ever went to college
too many words, tip of my tongue
is dark with foreign customs
spook me into speech
then nobody knows what I mean or

even who I am, your turn, turn me off
and talk to me I am a pirate of attention
the world is sick because I am
and guys like me control the Pentagon
war is just a nervous conversation
of sick old men that children die for
only when a certain number of deaths are tallied
can the old sick chatterers fall silent
war is neurosis isn't it that's all
even I so often have the urge to kill
everyone has in the measure of their sickness
it is not politics it is sick minds in control
of everything but themselves, can you cure them doctor
before it's too late, is there hope for the lunatics
who rule us and the lunatics we are who choose them
sickness everywhere and no one crazier
than the admirals and journalists and judges on their thrones
stop me from knowing so much about the world
if I can't do anything about it help me to forget
do you think I really need this medication
sometimes I deliberately don't take it
forgive me do you ever not take yours?