I Have to Tell You, Mamma

What is missing, in the silent street
just after dusk or in daylight
that keeps to itself or comes
just so far, is the hand
that looks like mine, the
ear that does not hear
difference, the voice that says
those peculiar things that need
no translation out of themselves.

I hold on to the fading voice,
will not let it slip over time's edge,
haunt it in the old branches
of trees gone down long ago. It is
my morsel of plenty, my bread trail
to the steady continent that floats
from Cape to Cairo and the anchorage
of my head, the holding pen of my tongue
in whatever port I am driven to.

Yvette Christianse

from ‘Letters from a Dutiful Granddaughter’,
in Castaway, a sequence in progress