

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