

When the Angel Left

I have to believe the angel has left
before it can come back.
I have to know I do not want to be
here alone where the angel is not.
I have to know
that if I go fishing
I may pull up anything from the sea
including your face
which my memory does not want to love.

I never say the words
that you heard then
I do not want to know you heard them.
I cry instead at what I fled to —
beautiful lines inked on a page.
But when the words rise up between the lines —
cock sucker, cunt —
and in my dreams the little girl
struts red-lipped in her high heels,
I wake to you.

You tell me I am selfish
I've come before only to leave
as free as him to come or go
leaving you alone with so much shame.
You warn me not to come back
unless I want to stay
unless I want to hear the story.
I call you *sweet marrow*
but you know I want you to shut up.
You keep on ranting. You tell me
your fierceness kept me alive,
I would have stayed a drunk or died
without you and so you rant
and so I have to listen

to how you hate the angel
who left you then.

But as I listen
I hear you say *I hate you*
and know you must be talking
to something you think is there
when I had remembered
there was nothing. I see
that for all you say you hate,
for all you think you should be punished
the angel does not strike you
and then I know that it is me
who thinks you should be punished
the angel who does not.