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Prosthesis

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PROSTHESIS

Consider the problem of remembering names.

Pronounce one,
and you have already begun

to forget it, by law of sonic
condensation: gray matter raining

the excess from its fresh wash.
Consider adopting a crowd in your blood

that speaks an intravenous stream
of possible vowels,

a wheel-of-fortune spinning til it slows
on one of the poor pins of our alphabet.

After all, a man scans a clogged street for hours,
looking for the one who called him.

Consider a plastic bag snagged on a branch,
filled with a sour wind.

In some parts of the mouth, a drought.
At the river-bottom, carp's *ah* caught

on a piece of bark between its lips.
The first sound could be anything: plosive

between a knife's drawn tip
and fleshy palate. The hiss

as a lifeboat lowers into a watery grave.
Dynasty of babbling. The tongue's clamp and rig.

Consider the chances that these are the sounds
you will make in your sleep tonight.