

CALLING

The pile of coins in front of me
arches toward my fingers,
summoning voices out of drunkenness
blurring the carved numbers

each piece of silver a syllable
measured and bitten
under my finger tips, the glittering
faces swirling into place.

The fire in my blood burns
along the black canals—
the fish of fire and the body trembling
in its murdered prayers.

The cold flesh beaded with water
moves from the shower;
my whiskey mumbling rain
through the line, through the long spirals—

The swan-like neck
the cold power of her eyes—
through these hands shaking
in the smeared light of hangovers

the receiver, clumsier than my tongue
held like a hurt right fist
or the flaming sword of dreams.
Operator says “return, return.”

Friends are passing the phone booth
and I hold it up,
the black cup of the sour breaths.
Embarrassed, they turn aside and will not answer.