

You aren't alone. All of the continents used to be
one body. You aren't alone. Go to sleep.

Astronomy says: the sun will rise tomorrow,
Zoology says: on rainbow-fish and lithe gazelle,
Psychology says: but first it has to be night, so
Biology says: the body-clocks are stopped all over town
and
History says: here are the blankets, layer on layer, down and down.

THE EARLIEST PUNCTUATION

*occurs around 364 BC—a mark
between words, to indicate separation*

it's like the midwife's knife

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Later, at the departure gate, she
waved to him—her hand
against the distance now
an apostrophe giving
up possession.

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Morgan says her ritzy pal hired a Guatemalan maid who didn't know English: when she returned, she found the maid—who admittedly wore a puzzled expression—scouring out the tub with a can of parmesan cheese. / When Kendall was still in junior high, she appeared on a Baptist Radio Network whiz kids quiz show: she'd been studying art, and when they asked her what building appeared in the back of Woods's "American Gothic" she knew, she answered out loud in front of her parents and God: "A whorehouse" and the emcee, who couldn't believe his ears, asked again, so she repeated it: slowly. / Lisa tells me her birthday is the first

day of deer hunting season: her father was always torn, would always opt for trekking to the woods with his gun and equipment, and every year returned with sweetness and guilt washing over his face, and a card starting “Deer Deer Lisa. . . .” / “How com” Carlos asks in his thick South American accent, “de whorss don’ kees on de mout”? I see tham een Gormany, een Eenglan’, here een de States—dey do *ebrayteeng*, but no kees on de mout’!” I try to tell him that’s their last refuge of intimacy, the one thing they can truly save for their private-life lovers. And later I think how right it is: the mouth, where stories come from. You can pay all you want, for the openest sex, but you can’t buy anything close to that honest afterwards sharing of mumbled revelation. What we’re meant to be to each other is stories—the meat of it, the narrative, what’s larger than rule-marks of usage.

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All that night he was awake,
alone in the bed. (And she . . . ?
was maybe telling her life
to somebody else now.)
The ceilingfan turned overhead.
An asterisk.
An asterisk and the notation below it,
calling for someone’s attention.