Give it to me straight. Give it to me ugly,
flopping, a half-dead fish, or forged
in the Devil’s drunken hand. Let me know

how it is—Misfortune with no chaser,
no lemon, no salt, no rounded numbers
or mulled words. Give me your loose-lipped

sutra, your honeypot cudgel, your pleasant
discord, and crystallized twang. Enter the room
with atonal swag and admit that the cancer

crackles in me like a bonfire at twilight.
Tell me I’m sick. Knot the G clef
‘round my neck and slick back my hair

in mortal preparation. For weeks,
I’ve prayed for delicious recidivism, the night-
flower has tip-toed to my window,

heavy with whispers and a sibilance
that tickles the ear, slows the blood.
Mr. Monk, I’m all mixed-up, shaken

by your thump, and love has been
squeezed from the mind’s organ grinder.
Outlandish, enamored, drunk on your

wobbly odyssey, your lumbering elephant
grace, I place myself on your ivory altar
and wait to be hammered home.

Diagnosis: Thelonius Monk

ANTHONY BORRUSO