

THE UMBRELLA

...like people living in a country whose language they know so little that with all manner of beautiful and profound things to say, they are condemned to the banalities of the conversation manual.

Somerset Maugham, *The Moon and Sixpence*.

 afternoon.
the wife is in the garden

he has her umbrella.
 'here,' he says
 though it's not raining
 it might.

he looks up
 at the bellied clouds.

'I'm nearly done,' she says
 taking another lateral
 from the wisteria

pushing hair
 out of her face
 with the back of her wrist /

she sees him
 through the fall of dust and leaves,
 'thanks though.'

 'I was thinking,' he says,
'the garden really needs...'

but she had already
 returned
 to work
 in the undergrowth.

a splash of colour
 was what he
 was going to
 say.