

**in the morning**

before the graying structured underwear  
before the faceless costly uniform  
before the requisite powder  
                  mascara  
                  blush

i ponder the way my hair tousles  
          that curl near my collar bone that seems to come in the night  
the depth in my eyes  
          that begins to fade when my well trained smile is on for the day  
the natural color of my lips  
          an imperfect mottled rose I find alluring  
my hands skip over my stomach and  
          almost imperceptibly  
lift each breast  
          feeling the newness of their shape  
          after sleeping and before the ill fitting bra presses them

i remind myself that underneath the demanded  
                                  daily  
                                  layering

                                  i still exist  
as wondrous as ever  
and when i have appreciated all these things and my alarm rings again  
i dress.

## **Worship**

alone in a room  
of the articulate  
and educated  
separated by my  
perception of their pretension  
and their own  
knowledge of each other

I  
outside the circle of their enlightenment

each of us here  
a parishioner

united in praise of  
the same mortal  
god

## Standing at my Kitchen Sink Doing Dishes—

again.

They insist on getting dirty and one of us has to wash them. Well, we don't have to— I know this to be true because I have a crazy great-aunt who doesn't wash any dishes; she buys everything disposable. Some people say this is bad for the environment but I say

she is not so crazy because

I

hate

doing

dishes.

The hot water tap groans if you set it too low, and the cold water tap shrieks, too. This is backwards, I thought hot would shriek and cold would groan

...wouldn't the world make more sense that way?

The chlorine steams up from the drain like a chemical peel and I reminded again of where I am which is not my home in the country, which is not my lovers home in the mountains, which is not my home at school. It is my friend's apartment where I sleep in the living room

because I am poor. I shouldn't be poor because I work...but I am also a student and the latter is not the lesser...

Under this hot water, I can feel my nails getting soft and there is a dried on speck of hard on food, on this bowl of course it would be hard on there like a stupid man you can't get rid of no matter how many times a week you hate him. I slam the bowl on the counter and smash my fingers and curse.

My mother taught me not to curse.

## **I Told You So**

the power is out  
went out at four  
I lit a candle  
set the white pillar  
on the deeper windowsill  
I began to read  
laughing at what  
I called aloud a  
“ pioneer moment ”  
I read and read,  
feeling the warmth  
of the story fill me  
surprised at how my  
eyes adjusted to the  
light more and more each  
moment

They seemed surprised when I arrived. Said it wasn't supposed to be my time to go. I was meant to blow the candle out. My late mother held me near and laughed - “ I told you so ”

## The daily strip down

When I walk into my room  
finally really enter it  
[not to retrieve my water bottle]  
[not to deposit my shopping bag before running up stairs again]  
[not to change my shoes for an errand]

but when I finally *enter* it  
close the door

to that cavernous solitude  
that I lie myself down in [too deep]  
a slinky drift of expensive fabric  
a cerulean pool of privacy

(enjoying the loneliness  
the vast sense of nothing but  
self and whatever self wants)

I find that it is required of me to strip down  
to remove *the things of the world*

[i say ironically remembering sunday school lessons]

they adorn my shoulders  
a bulky concealment to my angles  
a requisite burden

I unfasten dress pants  
which are tight at the waist and uncomfortable to bend or sit or breathe in  
I peel down knee high stockings

which I own in dozens

finagle my way out of a polyester blouse  
unhook and drop the stiff bra

and I stand there  
naked in my room  
pausing to enjoy the cooler air on my skin  
the lack of urgency

while I search for the  
perfect t-shirt

stripping off the day  
a physical clocking out  
a relieving revert

*nude in my room*

something that sounds like an advert  
for perfume or chocolate [or condoms]

and is instead  
my cheap, basement sanctuary  
with discolored paint  
and thin walls

and everything i love  
about living *here*