## I Wonder If Alicia Keys Still Likes Wearing No Makeup

You took my clothes off. Now I wear a face. You like it. It has stretched eyebrows. The nose is made of lavender. The mouth opens and the tongue stings you ecstatic. The face is not a mask. The skirt I wore is practical, made of real fabric. But the face is realer, doesn't need a skirt. The little sweater thrown in the corner is wrinkling where you tossed it in your haste to have me. I never get chilly.

Now I *am* the face—entirely face. Smooth and pink and shining. I feel better. To have you have me my baton at the ready. With the back of your hand you'll brush my cheek. With the other, sweep the hair from my eyes. Word-kiss, whispered beginning. The rest doesn't matter.

## Shoulder

Family-challenged. Young woman who protests a manicured entryway. College hats and combs, bun versus tresses sprouting.

Wheels polished, schools want a form, student eyes painted or bloodshot. You write names in French? That is smart.

Bloodshot eleven o'clock dancing at midnight the boys will call you. If girl feigns straplessness and shows up late, it's money.

You. Your lengthy earrings figure things out. Dad says nothing. Teachers something. Teachers behind lecture halls bum cigarettes. Have you the packs?

Brother won't save you. Look over shoulder. Where is your money? Kisses to bloody tongues. Your separation. You're girl. Girlfriends are hard to find though everywhere. But family is in your face.

## By a Window in a Darkened Room

and who is she sends my head sprinkling

sound of a kiss if lips rustled like a dress or if water a drop or plop but a bird's song at night doppler

her arms whisper shoulders rubbed distinct anointed as from peppermint

pins of light stuck to the window birds kiss out there they click and clock

no name just a cloud receding

something black flies away the night air dims time

inside there's no vision stars reflected in the touch evaporate

—rustling of a dress hurried footsteps—