



Traces

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Getting out of bed, I notice the traces I have left—
the valley in the pillow formed by the pressure of my head
and the bedspread twisted into the curves of my sleep.
I wonder what part of me, invisible though,
is still left in bed when I pad over to the bathroom
and thrust a toothbrush into my mouth.

All that up and down motion
makes me feel like the bristles have stolen
a share of my teeth's gleam.
When I stand under the showerhead
needled by hot water,
it is not just a mixture of dirt and sweat
that is washed away along with light green soap suds,
but something more—the liquid shape of myself.

The wet soles of my feet leave imprints on the tiles,
and I feel like turning around to look
at the face of my mysterious pursuer.
I find it unsettling that I am
scattering myself all over the house.
It's not just my reflection in the mirror,
which as soon as my face is turned,
must fleet to another dimension and lie in wait,
or the air I breathe out, which carries with it
the animal warmth of my interior.

Sitting at the table for my breakfast,
I lift a glass to my mouth,
and in the soft morning light,
see around it a girdle of fingerprints.
I take a few mousey nibbles at a banana
in my hurry to catch the train,
but when I look at it again—
half-eaten with the impression of my teeth—
a cannibalistic shiver runs down my spine.

When I lock the house and go out,
I am still thinking of these traces—
these orphaned bits of myself—
waiting to exit through the keyhole,
to follow me wherever I go.

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