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Registering bliss

by Jendi Reiter

As dessert follows
the carved roast, the appliances of love are ready
to follow love, inevitable as laundry.
Every good play surely transcends
the backstage machinery, the paint and porcelain
mocked up as stone, but how many

good plays are there? Not many
who get this far anticipate how time follows
like an abandoned dog, who breaks the blushing porcelain
and chews the used wrapping paper you're not ready
to throw away—as if memory could transcend
their torn state, like rags you still wash as laundry.

You choose your straight roof and the design of your laundry.
After this time the choices aren't as many
as their consequences, though the cups transcend
their pattern as they're chipped and kissed, and the mattress follows
the rises and depressions of particular bodies. Who'd be ready
to smash a whole set of porcelain

just to choose anew a different pattern of porcelain?
Things are made fresh but never new, like laundry
washed and worn, scented with personality already.
In the yard every year, many fallen seeds sprout and many
blow elsewhere. The lost ones that don't follow
their generative pattern still won't transcend

being in one place and not another. No one transcends
this law of bodies. Whether cups are porcelain
or self-conscious ascetic tin, someone must follow
the feast with washing-up. After passion, laundry
writhes in the machine's many
predictable cycles, emerging pure and ready

as the next white page of the story. No one's ready
to see the bottom of the box of paper, till one transcends
the need to transcend things, which is just one of many
manifestations of the need for things. The porcelain
you chose and the tablecloth fresh from the laundry
wait in the belief that another day follows.

✦ *Jendi Reiter*

Jendi Reiter's poems have been published in *Poetry*, *First Things*, and *The Lyric*.

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