

Launderette

And they of course not knowing
that dreams were being rinsed out beside them
sat waiting for red lights and signs
and cups of soap powder.
While the sheets I had held you in
had you washed out
silently, while more lights flashed.
I began to know the rhythms
of the clothes as embryolike, they
wound into each other, became
a hot snowball of cloth, slithering
round behind glass, round
like falling angels or
dancing couples.
Second cupfuls brought the sea
waves dashing high against
the window, spray reaching the
glass beach.
And for us, no sea.
Bubbles continued
into a white wall hiding
the clothes from me.
Blankness all washed out
and hidden.
The small you inside the window
was disappearing.
It's too late to drag them out and ask for my
money and dirt back, for wanting the hot white
sheets and our electric moments.
Tenderly I dried them in the cabinet
and took them home,
warm like new bread,

leaving the others to watch their dreams
slowly murdered into whiteness
for new surgical beds.

Pat Jourdan