

The Memory of Fabric

Because she has taken a job
as a waiter in the new place
down the street,

she must dress like James Dean.

It is made up like a 50's drive-in,
and all of the staff must pretend to
be greasers and juvenile delinquents.

She must draw her hair back,
curl it and twist it in a
slick of gel so that it glistens
under the track lighting.

She must roll up
the cuffs of her jeans.

She must chew gum.

I want her to wear my white t-shirts,
though her arms are thicker than mine
and her back broader.

She says that she would,
but she must be crisp for this place.

Her shirts cannot have leaned cluelessly
over the dying entrails of my brother's car,
or spent hours soaking up the smells of the bodega
and the used book stores on 3rd Avenue.

So, I will buy fresh shirts for her,
and she will swirl her hair in the
peaks and canyons that they require.

I will watch from my place at
the kitchen table

as she laces up the black high-top sneakers,
and I will ignore her exhalations
and the crop of sweat that
sprouts fresh and glistens
on the back of her neck.