

Her Mother's Daughter

My mother always said that cleanliness
Is next to godliness. My mother said
Spring cleaning was far and away for her the best
Time of her year. Not Christmas spreads
Or birthday feasts, or friendly teacups' steam
Could bring that simple joy, that new release
Of cleanness. My mother said that if you deem
A woman's good, go to her mantelpiece:
Is there dust behind the clock or does it gleam?

I am my mother's daughter; am I like her in this?
Would I have worshipped at my mops' reliquaries?
Made splashing soap my creed? My litany the list
Of ornaments to wash? Or when I died, when last she kissed
My cold clean lips, ashes to ashes, dust to dusty death,
Did her truth die? Did false guilt whisper godliness
Was gone past hope, so settle for second best?