

## Routine

Me gusta lavar la ropa. I like doing the laundry.  
Me ayuda a pasar el día. It helps me get through the day.

Guatemalan woman in a shelter after hurricane Mitch  
devastated her country.  
November, 1998

She takes  
the paper cup full of water  
to her lips,

savors the liquid's coolness  
as her tongue slowly  
awakes to the clean taste.

To her back, she hears the morning  
breeze. The change of clothing  
she washed earlier  
flaps on the clothesline.

Tomorrow, she'll go through  
it again: One pail of water  
to wash the family clothes.

Then she'll hang them  
on the clothesline stretching between  
a surviving tree and the building

housing the displaced families.  
Task accomplished, she'll walk  
to the line

of orange and red  
plastic barrels and ask for  
a glass of water.

She'll drink it in small  
sips, feeling the tingling  
sensation on her tongue

sending a wake up call  
to the rest of the body.  
For now, only her hands

respond. The change of clothes  
needs to be dry by the  
following morning.

As her hands  
scrub blouses and skirts,  
shirts and pants

she studies the  
river's water slowly  
receding.