

It lingered
 like bath salts in the still warm waters
 in ancient baths as they await the emerging bodies
 young strong soiled bodies of the long dead
 art deco as a backdrop, tiles below naked feet, a chilled walk
 journey disrobed pure as in birth, clean skin to be reborn
 washed into reemergence from the soils
 and perspired fluids of a day

it lingered
 the image of my grandfather
 dead, lost, settled gently into the soil, into the earth
 forever unclean infinitely unwashed
 the entire cycle of life's cleanliness
 lost, ended, halted, the instant
 of the closing of his tired eyes

at that moment he was no longer clean
 death is dirty
 the very word soils our conversation
 clouds our thoughts
 like the disintegration of a lump of dirt
 thrown into water an instant shock
 and then the slow dissolve
 and spread as it evens out and widens
 shock and impact fading as realization

a life's baths couldn't keep him clean
 can't keep anybody clean

the instant is in the future it will come
 in every clean day we approach
 in every washed and dressed moment
 we walk toward it

washed, bathed, showered, and ready we
will scrub as hard as we can
no matter how big the hurry no matter how late
it is not because of commercials we don't breathe
fresh breath we don't impress
we don't groom or sculpt

we scrub as hard as we can to get it off, to keep it away
the soils, the wear, the decay, the antievolution, the residue
my grandfather saw it
as for the last time his eyes closed
and the lashes became rows of tombstones

lines of objects in the soil
anchored in the earth to linger
then dissolve
until nothing remains
but the soil