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F Train Woman

She is sitting across
from me on the F train
heading towards Manhattan,

a girl, really, much younger

than me, with a prettier face,
high cheekbones, healthy skin,
stylish hairstyle, a girl

who is busily

and with great method,
care, focus, and what I guess
could be called craft,

maybe even talent—what,

with all those tools
she is using, all that paraphernalia,
powders and colors and

pencils and brushes—

her eyes strained
into the miniature mirror
her manicured hand keeps

steady even

in the wobbling subway car;
she is composing herself
as I would compose a

sonata, were I a composer,

or a poem,
were I a poet.
But I'm neither.

I floss everyday;

shave my armpits,
wax my bikini line. Today
I'm going to a yoga class,

the late morning one—

one of the few privileges of the
underemployed—then, sweaty and spent,
I will walk over to Union Square,

buy the organic vegetables

I can't really afford, check
my cell phone every five minutes for
absolutely no reason at all.

But whatever I do, I know

I could never transform myself
the way this F train girl has just
morphed herself in front of me,

from sleepy head

to a super tidy business woman
now entirely focused on reading
loose sheets of paper she neatly

stapled together

this morning, as she prepared herself
for some important meeting,
unlike me, the 40 + old woman

who gets off at Fourteenth Street,

shoves her unread magazine
in her bag, spills coffee on her jeans,
and heads out into the world,

unprepared, and still unmade.