

## Ritual for Sickness

I am ill again. Grandmother  
warms milk and sugar on the stove,

pours it into a small teacup, tips  
an egg yolk onto the white skin

that formed while she cracked  
the shell in two. I down it all

in one hot swallow. *Here, she says,  
follow the river that drowns eggs*

*in the night.* She traces a path  
down my throat, my chest,

across my rib. My haggard breaths  
fog the windowpane by my bed.

I imagine the yellow globe  
sloshing around in my gut.

*Wait for the sac to burst, she says,  
to coat the lining of your stomach.*

But my breaths remain jagged.  
I slip into a haze, drift

from one current of blanket  
to another. Still, the final step:

to change my name, confuse  
the spirits who bring sickness.

*Come inside this newly invented light.*  
So I pull on my wool socks, stagger

to the mirror, lock eyes with the girl I see.  
Her black hair clings to sallow skin.

*I am not who I am, she intones.  
I am like you: ghostly, a specter.*

Soon after, I retch the cream  
into the toilet bowl. The acid

of curdled liquid soaks my tongue  
as my belly is emptied and cleansed.