

Self Portrait with a Mirror

soft flesh surrounding  
smoothed out bumps  
spiny-creature scar  
translucent skin stretched  
that bruises like old fruit  
skin that angers easily  
caged in ribs and meat  
arms that somehow  
folded in half, like an  
open book slammed shut  
hair, long and short  
like the mirror

bones like molded clay  
and rolls all tucked away  
across the middle  
like pastry dough, skin  
and takes years to heal  
steady-drum heartbeat  
tiny fingers and t-rex  
reach the toes when  
origami swan, like an  
corkscrew hair, full and flat  
hair, hair that shines  
it lives in

## Trinkets

I feel smooth ink flow across  
the page, like milk infusing my  
morning coffee. My words spill from

brain to arm to pen to paper. I  
inhale the smell of new notebooks,  
with their buttery leather doors to

other worlds — the more poetry I read,  
the less of it I understand. I tend to read  
at the speed of my thoughts. Which is to say,

too fast. I consume it and regurgitate it, like  
some kind of literary eating disorder. I've  
always liked the word *salt*, for instance,

and things that taste of salt and oil.  
And is that really how you spell “hoi  
polloi”? I've only ever heard it spoken aloud.

Keep your words close, or they might  
float away (they are just words after all, and mean  
nothing). Wear them as trinkets around your neck.

## White Contains All Colors

eggshells  
are so perfectly  
smooth, like the first  
snowfall on an abandoned  
countryside — as a child I always  
asked to crack the eggs, back when I  
wasn't afraid of breaking things — tap tap  
tap the egg on the side of the bowl — not so  
much that it spills all over and coats the counter  
in slime, but enough to crack the pristine shell —  
the first footprint on the snowy ground — when I grew  
up, I learned that eggshells can be brown too — and they  
usually taste better, the yolk bright like orange sun instead  
of pale-butter-yellow — a double yolk is good luck, though  
maybe not for the chicken — never put eggshells down the  
sink, they will muck up the Disposall — a favorite book when  
I was young was *Rachenka's Eggs* by Patricia Polacco — as a  
little Jewish girl, I missed out on painting pastel-colored Easter  
eggs and hiding them in the yard — but I always cracked the  
eggs when we made latkes for Hanukkah — do most people  
like their eggs the same way every time? — I can never  
make up my mind between scrambled and over easy —  
sometimes the eggs decide for me, if the yolk breaks  
halfway through the frying, turning the pearly-white  
sunrise over easy into a half-mixed-paint-color  
scramble — I learned to make fresh pasta from  
scratch using eggs and flour — we colored it  
with beets and spinach and turmeric — but  
it all tastes pretty much the same —  
eggshells are always described as  
so fragile, like bits of glass — but  
really they're armor — a cocoon  
protecting the caterpillar —  
until it's ready to  
fly away

## Moon Girl

blank-faced and crater-filled,  
you cannot see me when the sun is out  
except for sometimes, when I'm tired  
of hiding  
on those nights I grow full with pride  
and wolves howl at me  
praising me  
exalting me  
I am the brightest thing in the sky  
I am the glowing one everyone stares at  
until the dark takes a slice of me,  
and then another  
each day makes me smaller,  
each night the wolves find  
something else to howl about while  
the sky chips away at the bits of me  
but even when there is nothing left,  
I'm still here,  
invisible;  
waiting behind the curtain,  
peeking out sliver by sliver  
to see if it's safe to shine again

Transcend

*after Jericho Brown*

Of all the gifts I got from my mother,  
The best one was the ability to survive

The ability to survive is a gift  
In a year of burning, of hospitals, of fear

A year full of burning and hospitals and fear  
And things I never thought I'd live through

Things not everyone lived through  
This year, we learned to mourn

I never really learned to mourn  
But wore a mask of tears at funerals

This year tears fell behind masks at funerals  
But love can transcend physical distance

Love will always transcend physical distance  
This is the greatest gift my mother gave me