

Annual Rite

She wears a pink smock with a pink ribbon pin,
jokes that today is 10/10/10—
how often does that happen?
I register only how her practiced hands
lift my breast
 up and away from my ribcage like it is
 not connected to me
arrange it on the metal shelf of the machine,
then a clear plate rolls down mashing the tit
 like a veal patty
stay still hold your breath don't move
she intones stepping behind a shielded display—
long buzz *you can breathe now*
and release.

I put my bare arm into the flowered johnnie,
take out the other arm,
she shuffles me around,
positions the other breast,
repeats the ritual.
So close I can smell her mouthwash.
She compliments my fragrance—
Euphoria I say
like strangers forced close but not

close. Air in the small room cool
and processed my nakedness
detached.
I register
 skin prickle
 nipples tingle
 heart heart heart

I am
in and out
of my body wanting
to be thankful for this sacrament of detection,
furious with the epidemic
decimating my friends—

She examines the scans,
noncommittally approves the quality.
I am dismissed to await a letter, a phone call,
my legs motor automatically
 tears
 boiling fiercely over.