

Milk Sickness: A Mother Worries as Her Children Sleep

sometimes I see snakes in a milk pail
noisy tumbles of coils & scales
I lie awake steeled vigilant
absorb the discord of writhing
bodies in my opaque world

I wonder if they know they swim in sacrifice

maybe they think it's water edged by meadow
maybe they dream the spinning of their skins
will loose them to catch the scent
of mouse or egg
in a dreamscape of venom & froth

or is it panic
black thick rich like cream
panic that weighs them down
roiling blind only to find they're trapped
and soused in humors

maybe the milk's a mirror
a mother-of-pearl shine that splashes
the black snake hole in my eye
if I stare at the waves the sloshes of nacre
maybe my tongue will smell a way out
lift me with a swell as the vipers sink
like weighted calcite beneath the tide
black pearls lost at sea

maybe then stillness will claim me
a silence only I can taste like stolen butter