



# One Love

*A WCC Anthology*  
*Edited by*  
*Tom Zimmerman*





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Sayin', one love, what about the one heart? (one heart)  
What about the, let's get together and feel all right  
I'm pleadin' to mankind (one love)

—Bob Marley, “One Love”

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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This *One Love* anthology celebrates Black History Month, Unity and Inclusion, and Love. It is a production of the Bailey Library, the English/College Readiness Department, the WCC Poetry Club, and the Writing Center at Washtenaw Community College, in Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA.

It features work written by WCC students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends that was posted on the WCC Poetry Club website in January and February 2022.

A *One Love* open mic took place Thursday, February 17, on Zoom. WCC students and faculty read poems of their own (some of which appear in this anthology) as well as love poems by established Black poets. Thirty-five people attended.

Special thanks to WCC faculty members Maryam Barrie and Molly Ledermann.

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### Baby Fever

Long ago, I was drastic with baby fever.  
I won – got to have two babies, watch them  
grow and change. They are now women.  
They said and did things that I rewind  
and play regularly. I miss being essential,  
though I am glad to have my hands free.

My memories have filtered the past.  
I don't think of the nights without sleep,  
the perpetually messy house. I don't think  
about being the one who did the bills,  
who created whatever sort of order there was.  
I edit out crumbling under that weight, finding  
refuge in multiple pneumonias and surgeries.  
I hardly remember driving home from graduate  
school after teaching all day, thinking  
*it would be so easy to swerve into those trees.*

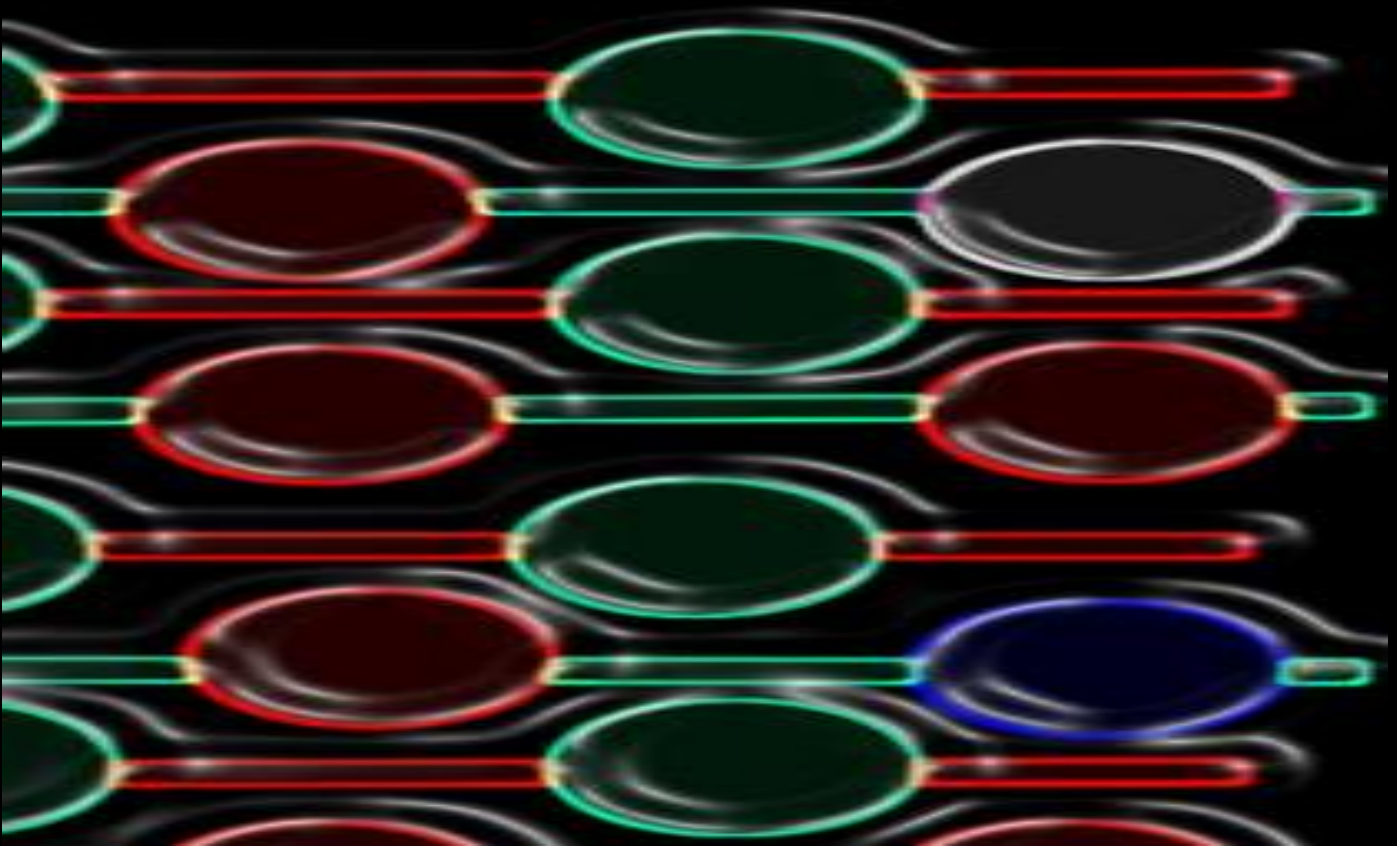
These days, I keep my grandbaby fever  
to myself. It helps no one, and my envy  
for those whose children feel this is a safe place  
to bring people dries up for lack of tears.  
Oh, I still am on the hunt for gorgeously  
edible babies. My nose quivers at the sight  
of a fresh one in the grocery store.

I confess to buying onesies destined for no one.  
I still have the first onesie meant for my girls,  
the one that made me cry with its darling bug  
on the butt. I remember being at the zoo



with my husband before the magic worked,  
grousing about all the women there who got  
to be pregnant, though they didn't deserve it  
with their high heels and cigarettes.

With each birth I remember the moment when  
I stopped pushing, and they handed her over –  
the dark golden comfort of holding my girl  
to my breast, her smell sizzling in my brain.  
I hoarded my girls in my arms.  
And I'm still whispering to myself  
what I heard myself say at the first birth –  
*Oh, do I really get to have a baby?*

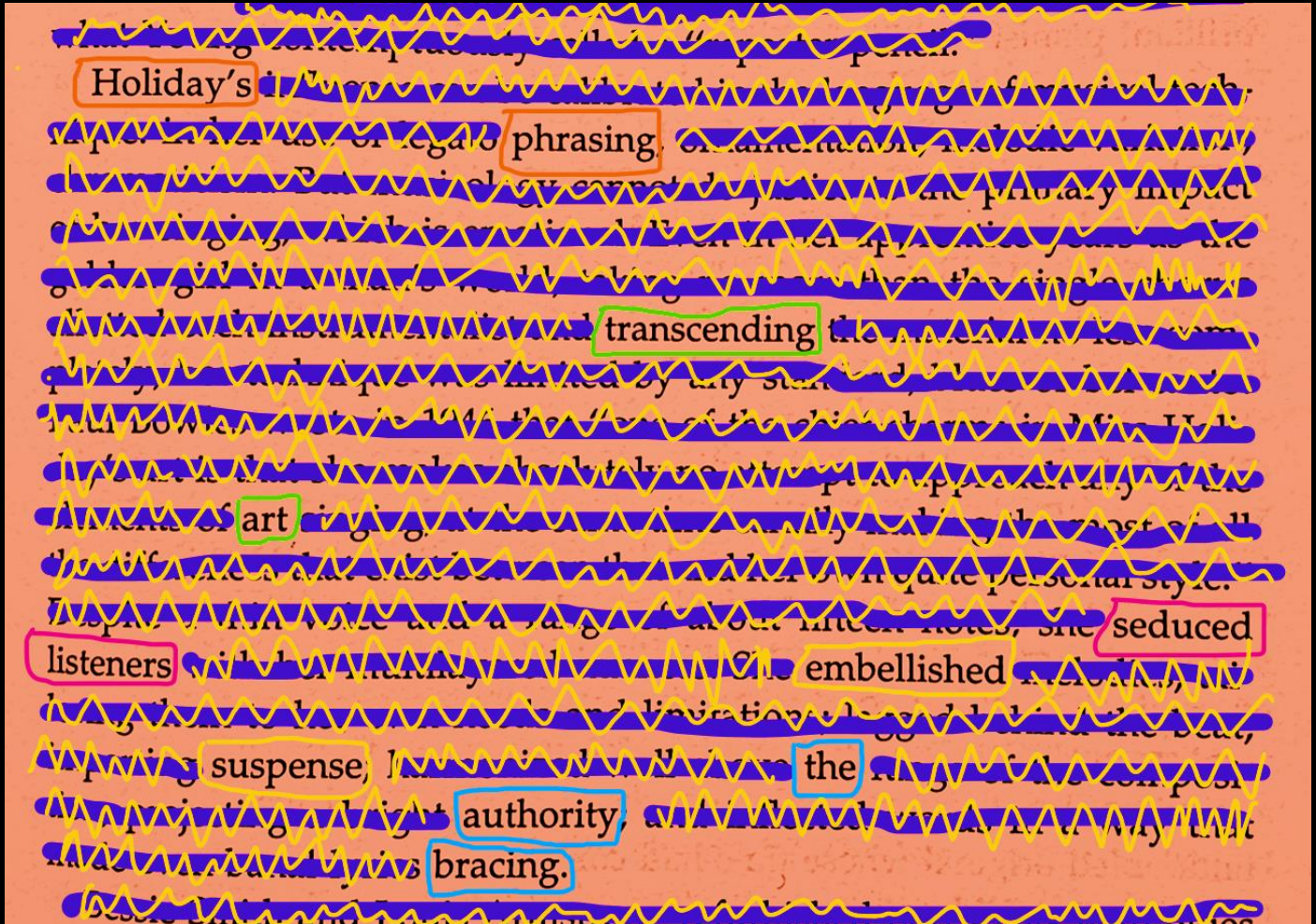


**The Beauty of the Moment**

My eyes capture  
The beauty of the moment—  
My soul avows!



Billie Holiday

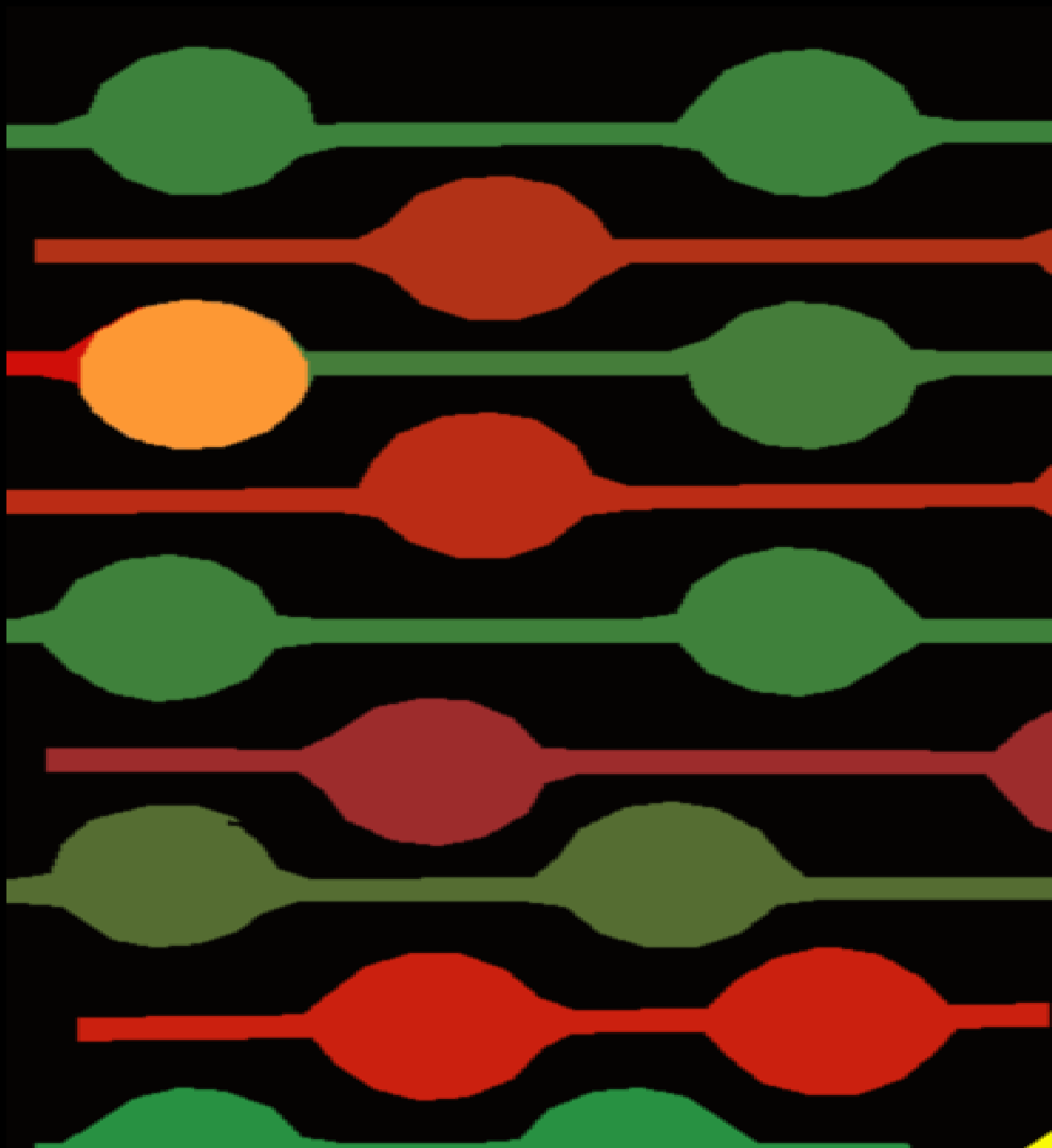


Note: The source of this blackout/erasure poem is Gary Giddins's book *Visions of Jazz* (Oxford, 1998).

## Black Wings

I live simultaneously through you  
Kiss my love for me too  
Where can I hide?  
With a riot within  
And fighting outside  
He let himself go  
Thinking he saw the light  
He down a hole  
Blinded by the sight.  
Sweat drenched and bare,  
Bare your soul to the world  
But brother you have to wait,  
You've already felt the cold.  
Hand in hand we go through this field  
Where all the troubled souls walked  
The dark angel in the sky,  
With her black wings spread out  
So gracefully she talked  
As tears fell from her eyes  
I climbed to hug her  
But the stairs weren't strong enough  
I had to try again.  
She is the mother of love  
And it seems I've found  
My brother from above—  
Soul siblings delivered by doves.  
They promised you love and you gave me grace  
All the dark days have been washed from my face  
The pain that is my love and my rain

Here we are, we've waited in vain  
For so long, for so long  
We shall walk through  
Until we reach the end.



## Building Days

Today builds on yesterday. The sun runs a similar route across the sky, but never the same. We are creatures of the earth's wobble and the moon's infatuation.

Today is a product of yesterday. The words that come out of the mouths of humans are the same, but the meaning meanders back and forth across the boundaries of sincerity and truth.

Today is yesterday stood on its head. The path we tread crisscrosses cultures, lands our feet in bogs of conflict or tsunamis of inconsolable non-understanding. Our boots are not high enough.

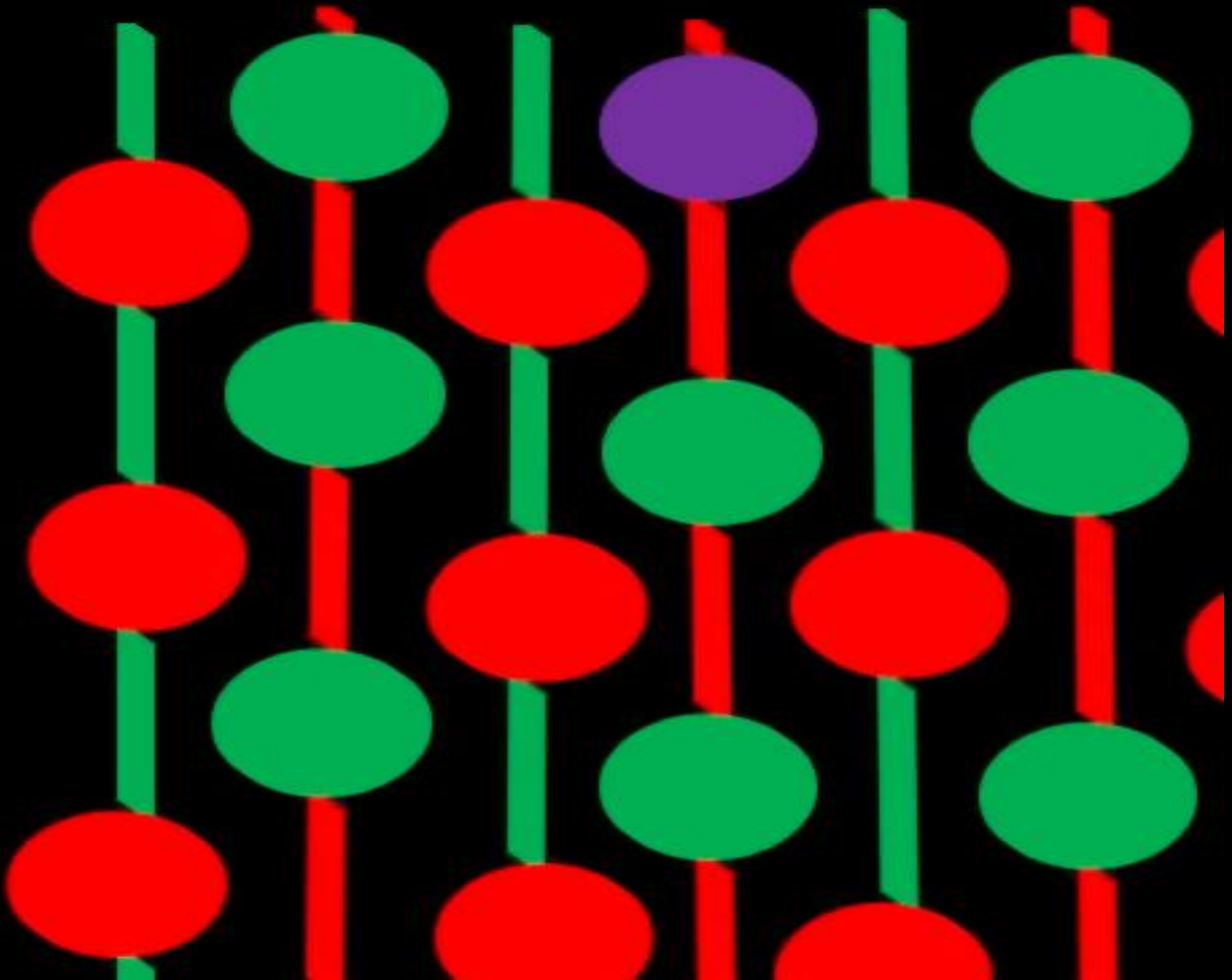
Today is a carbon copy of yesterday. We start at the same place, hold the same toothbrush, the same mindset, the same prejudice and hold the same blinders to our eyes and expect our lot to be different.

Today is in every way different than yesterday. The minutes that were yesterday are gone forever. The blossoms of yesterday are tarnished with age. We ask: Do we move through time or does time move through us?

Today can never be a make-up day for yesterday. What we missed is gone forever. Words not spoken

are too late. Kindnesses not offered languish. Eyes not brightened by beauty are just a little blinder.

Today can only start anew—with new eyes, a softer heart, a keener curiosity, a more devout appreciation for life and a more sound reason to be joyful. Today is the only space we have to love in and be grateful for.





## Change

If I were to change skins and offal,  
I'd choose a softer hide, a sweeter meat,  
and a more congenial reasoning within—  
in all, a more masterful version 74.2.

The outer trappings will fit as they're  
meant to—taut here, baggy there, creped,  
fissured, weather-worn to add character.  
It is what's within that may need  
a complete overhaul.

It isn't that the soul-spirit doesn't function,  
it is that so much of it is hidden, inaccessible,  
even ill-fitting. I also suspect a lack of focus,  
a flighty attending to reality,  
a streak of hatefulness and disregard.

I catch words in a line, yet miss  
all the nuance between them.  
I daydream, doodle, false-start,  
short-sight, lose places.

When I remember, if I remember,  
where the parts of my life space belong,  
the rules change, the map's been burned.  
I try to follow the smoke signals,  
but is it one puff or two and which way's  
the breeze blowing?

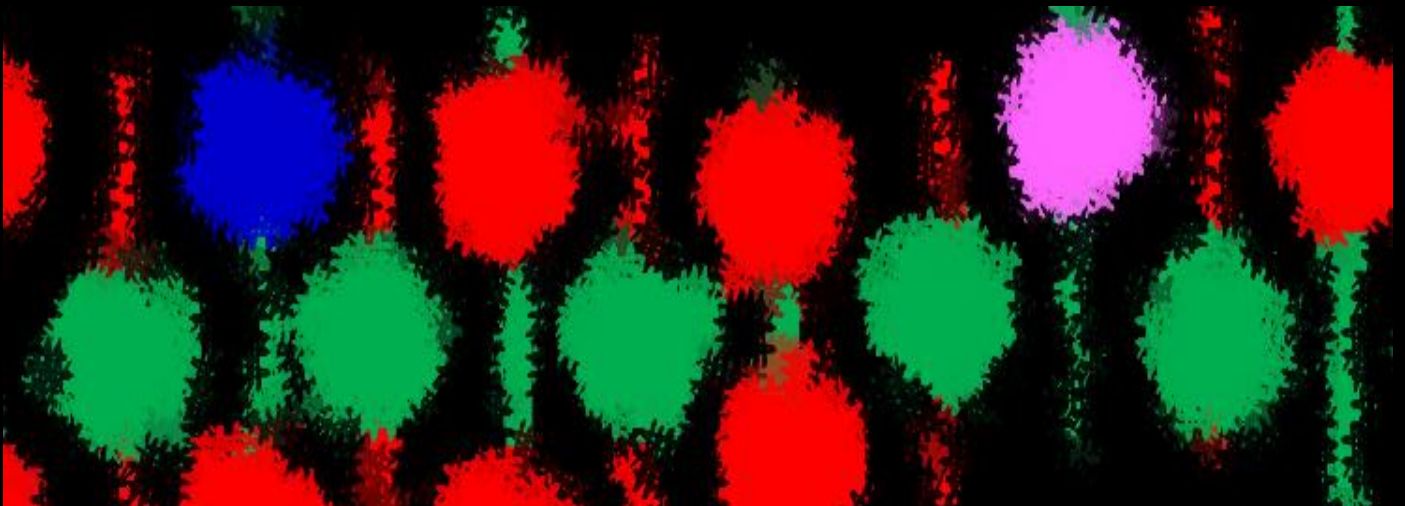


I relearn and relearn every stitch  
of the tapestry of my life, remake every  
klutzy move, search down the rabbit hole  
for a stray phone, lost keys, damaged sanity,  
an apology.

I imagine my way through hours creating  
ones I can navigate, ones without u-turns,  
cul-de-sacs, mazes, webs. I hear only noise  
where music should be, see colors where dialogue  
should be, take off before the soup's finished  
brewing, set down my pen before it's finished poem-ing.

I plan to plan, but never end where I want to be.  
I butt in, cut off, rake over conversation, out-of-turn,  
then forget I ever spoke. I'm in my head daydreaming  
my way through danger zones I never see.

If wishes were wishes, I'd change a few things,  
carpet the path, trim the flotsam, temper  
the tempest, row the boat back to shore.





A daily lull means  
Pegasus flies minus the  
color commentary.

### Elegy

I slowly pour the grey grit and powder  
of my mother's ashes into mason jars  
  
for my siblings and daughters. I wear  
a mask and nitrile gloves to keep the dust  
  
of her contained. I don't want to waste her  
on my skin. I cover each layer of ash with  
  
dried rose petals –a sort of mom parfait  
for each of us. When I scattered what remained  
  
of my childhood friend in the Raisin River,  
I coated my hands with him, put the fine gravel  
  
of him to my tongue. My therapist tells me  
harsh, toxic chemicals are used in cremation—  
  
we shouldn't ingest them. Still, I was glad  
to take something of him into me for safe-keeping.  
  
I learn from my mistakes. There is much in me  
of my mother already. I don't need more.  
  
There were ways she was toxic, but I don't  
think of her as harsh. She used to say  
  
*I'm not angry, I'm just disappointed.* Her silent  
resentments and frustrations permeated the air.

In my recent dream, she was trying on a second  
life as a hands-on healer, anointing sleeping

patients with oils and prayer without their doctors'  
consent. I worried she would get into trouble.

She no longer had a phone, or money, because she  
was dead. Then, she was lost, and I had to find her.

I still can't find her, though I'm receiving her last  
pieces of mail. I'm compiling her tax documents

to posthumously file her last year of obligation  
to anyone. Her rose-layered ashes radiate

something I still can't understand  
from the jar where they wait—

how she turned from living to dead,  
how the old anger dried up and left me.



### Emerald and Umbilical

Love stands still among the stars.  
When I was a small child I  
was seduced by images of love. Images that turned  
feelings swept, via music and occult.  
Roller pin... try try try... The kitchen is shiny. My loss,  
my love, leave tears  
on this marble counter bothered not by ignorance.  
I am a pirate lost. Lost my third eye to love addiction...  
Symptoms like a scurvy.  
The spyglass reads  
depression and intellect and unease.  
Paralysis is the only eyepatch I could afford.



## Extracurricular Thoughts

We stuff ourselves into instrument cases and storage boxes in the closet, practicing our hiding spots for ‘the real deal.’

*Why do we have to do this every month?*

We whisper about the principal who was arrested for sexually assaulting our fourth-grade teacher.

*Why did she leave us?*

We glance nervously at each other as police question us over a stolen necklace from a Scholastic Book Fair that none of us attended.

*Why is he thumbing his handcuffs?*

We watch as police bust open an entire row of lockers and pull out a handgun and a bag after their dog smelled something foul.

*Were they going to use that on someone?*

We pretend not to notice the stained lingerie and dusty condoms that litter the hallway on the far corner of the building as we head up to the middle school gym.

*Why were the bras so small?*

We wonder why our art teacher has been absent the last couple of days—until we find him in the woods behind the school weeks later.

*Why does it smell so bad out here?*

We shout as a teacher rushes by to pull a student off the windowsill, about to jump to her death at only 12 years old.

*Was she really going to do it?*

We mention the marks on our friends’ wrists to a counselor in private.

*Did she do that to herself?*

We learn who invented peanut butter, but never hear the words “Jewish” or “World War.”

*What do you mean your grandparents were sent to camps?*

We text our friends when they don’t show up to first period, worrying that they’d finally succumbed to their thoughts.

*Where is he?*

We spend more time learning the five components of ALICE, our active shooter procedure, than we do on what we should be putting on our resumes after high school.

*Why would anyone hurt a child?*

We are not the only ones, but we will be the last ones.

*I hope.*



## Falling in Love

I could write you a thousand and one poems about falling in love  
but if you were to ask me if I've ever been in love, my answer would be no  
I could write about a boy, whose eyes I loved from the moment I saw them,  
whose arms were the pinnacle of my safety  
a boy whose humor rivaled only my own  
perfect for me in every way  
in every way except reality  
And you would marvel at my words,  
wondering how someone SO young could love so forcefully  
and I would say nothing,  
but in the back of my mind, I will quietly remind you that I have never been  
in love

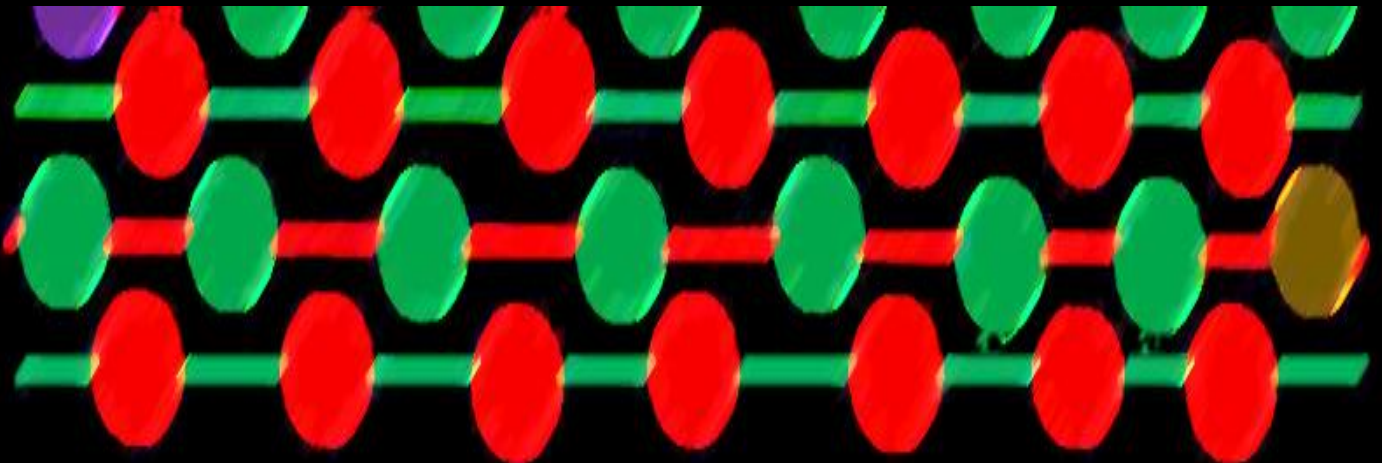
I could write you a sonnet about a girl as soft as the clouds,  
A girl whose curls and curves only supplemented her beauty  
this girl who is much smaller than I, but whose heart could hold a ballroom  
captive

I could tell you stories about how we met,  
the nights we spent together,  
the nights we spent apart,  
I could tell you everything I love about her  
and everything I hate about her that just makes me love her even more  
But in the end, it would all be a lie  
because I have never been in love

I could write books in her memory, compose music in his, paint a perfect  
picture  
in the shadow of them and I could write letters to love itself  
But nothing would change the fact, that falling in love is something I have  
never experienced

This is not to say I have never loved or been loved

That too would be a lie  
I have loved many, given myself over to them wholly, and felt the pain of  
heartbreak  
when they left  
But I have never been in love  
I do not regret this condition of my existence  
I do not wish for this part of my life to end  
I am not scared of falling in love  
But I am scared of what it can do to you  
Love robbed my mother of her happiness  
I have not yet decided if that love she crafted was for  
Myself and my siblings or for her  
I am scared of the way that falling in love makes you float  
The way it keeps your head just above the water in this sea we call the world  
I am intimidated by its card house design  
How strong, yet fragile it can be  
Mighty enough to withstand the weight of gravity  
And at the same time too delicate to hold against a gust of wind  
I am scared of falling in love  
But even more so, I'm scared of falling out



## Hope of Love

Hope of love feels like power of desire beyond our imagination seeing love is sometimes scary to the soul of mind and heart but you see that love is visible to the eye that opens doors to the pandora's box of desire passion and humility.

Love can be fun in so many ways it's like a merry-go-round that cannot be deactivated by a detonator of code numbers which has to be activated love sours like the golden eagle of a B51 thundercat jet.

It's great to love everyone without love in our universe it will feel like a deserted island or volcanic eruption of broken pieces of power love love cherishes every soul on the planet krypton fearless and calculated.

Lightnin' Hopkins

1

[redacted] Lightnin' [redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted] seemed [redacted]  
[redacted] unwieldy [redacted]  
[redacted] angry [redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted] down-at-the-heels  
[redacted] but there was  
music [redacted]  
[redacted] so he could  
keep going.

2

[redacted] he [redacted]  
[redacted] was [redacted] a wary [redacted] battered  
[redacted] blues [redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted] singer [redacted]  
[redacted] recording [redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted] in places [redacted] scattered [redacted].

[redacted]  
 [redacted] Lightnin [redacted]  
 [redacted]  
 [redacted] Lightnin [redacted]  
 [redacted]  
 [redacted] he could make up blues [redacted]  
 [redacted] he could do [redacted]  
 [redacted] the styles [redacted]  
 [redacted]  
 [redacted]  
 Lightnin [redacted] he knew what he could do [redacted]  
 [redacted] was good [redacted].

He [redacted]  
 [redacted] was difficult to know [redacted] to find  
 [redacted]  
 [redacted] in New Orleans [redacted]  
 [redacted] in Houston [redacted]  
 [redacted]  
 [redacted] on Dowling Street [redacted]  
 [redacted]  
 [redacted] red  
 light [redacted] dark glasses  
 [redacted] "You  
 looking for me?" [redacted]

Note: The source of this blackout/erasure poem is the liner notes written by Sam Charters for the Smithsonian Folkways recording *Lightnin' Hopkins* (1990).

### Love

How do you know you're in love?  
Is it an overwhelming feeling,  
or a small underlying pulse?  
Do you realize what you've gotten into  
before the actual word pops into your mind?  
Is it a fall or a beautiful glide?

Love is incomprehensible.  
It is something Webster can't truly define.

Look it up.  
Love is a noun.  
1. An intense feeling of affection.  
2. A great interest or pleasure in something.

Love is a verb  
1. Feel deep affection for (someone).  
2. Like or enjoy very much.

But what is love?  
I guess we have to find out for ourselves.



## Loving a world far too large

Why do you cry, dearest one?

I cry for those I may never meet  
Endless skies between us all

Do you wish that they were close?

Within your arms reach?

Do you wish for the sea to shrink back?

So you can go see?

I wish for the sea to shrink back  
So I can go see  
Walk the long reaching beach,  
To see all the people

You yearn to make merry,

You yearn to speak, too

To meet all the people,

What will you do?

I can not meet them,  
The world is too vast  
And yet I still yearn for them,  
All bright and diverse

So I continue on,  
As I speak from the soul,  
Continuing yearning,  
Never quite whole.

How do you love, dearest one?

I love through my dreaming,  
I love through my hope.  
I speak to the wind,  
I whisper words free,  
And so,

Love will cross the endless skies between us all

### Love Is Passion

Love is passion. The sun rises above the deep blue sea. Bright and dimmer colorful skies appear like stars of love, of hearts flowing through the path of motion and commotion. Peace and warmth feel like the golden sun of the gods. Whispering and seeing words of love intensifies like diamonds.

Understanding true love, how loving someone is like magic. Love never fades, it's full of answers, can't be explained. The geometrics of how to love seem complicated. To the eye of the beholder, love is true power of destiny, of hearts.

As days go by, I feel worried and petrified because of the four-letter word love. Love is real, not false, but powerful to the mind, body, and soul. Visible and sometimes invisible to the hearts of aces and queens of the collective souls of deep love.

**Mine**

Your laughter is honey-sweet  
Like music to my ears  
Your words sound soft as snowy down  
And soothe all my fears

Your skin is smooth and white  
Like soft alabaster  
Your voice is a siren song  
That makes my heart beat faster

Your touch is angel gentle  
Like you fear that I might break  
Your smile grips my heart  
And makes my knees weak

Your lips are soft like pillows plump  
Your kisses warm like fire  
I long to hold you close to me  
You are my heart's desire

Your hair is gold as shining light  
Like grain sown in the field  
Your arms are my confidence  
Your sympathies, my shield

Your eyes are the deepest lake  
Like precious stones they shine  
And If I had but one last word  
I would call you

*mine*

**A minute in winter, a second in summer**

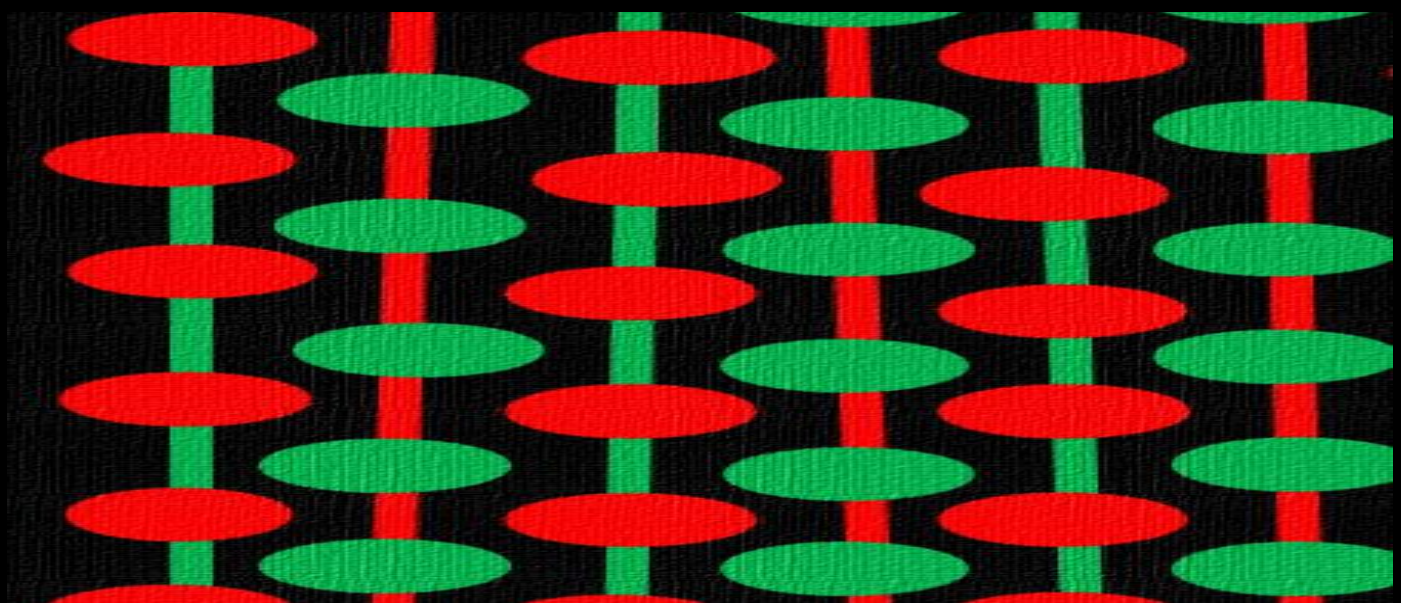
a minute in winter

The blue jay bullies his way to the feeder forcing finches to peck at bits of  
millet and empty  
husks that scatter and sink into the inched layers of still soft snow.  
Cardinals in flaming feathers and mad masks jot the trees like  
stop lights, while the puffed up dove mourns from a stiff branch.  
The old dog trudges through the spiritual smoothness of monotonous white,  
as birds scatter like  
frightened sparks as though he could sprout wings to steal their suet.  
I watch him plow through thick virgin alabaster, high stepping paws, out of  
sync, walking on  
voltage, as the frozen talc packs into his pads.  
A fallen scent, pushed along by the rimed edge of a solid pearl sky, catches  
his nose with a  
curious out of season cupidity.  
I think he wishes he were still on the sweltering veldt of his native Rhodesia,  
scouting for lions.  
He sniffs the edges of the marsh, noting the bones of snow that lie upon  
the nameless color of slush, and shivers on to the bare pussy willow  
stripped of its fuzzy fingertips by hungry deer.  
The woodpecker in his convict uniform returns for a greedy peck  
at a black sunflower seed, as the dog shakes his way back inside  
to sprawl by the fire and dream of the high sun in July.

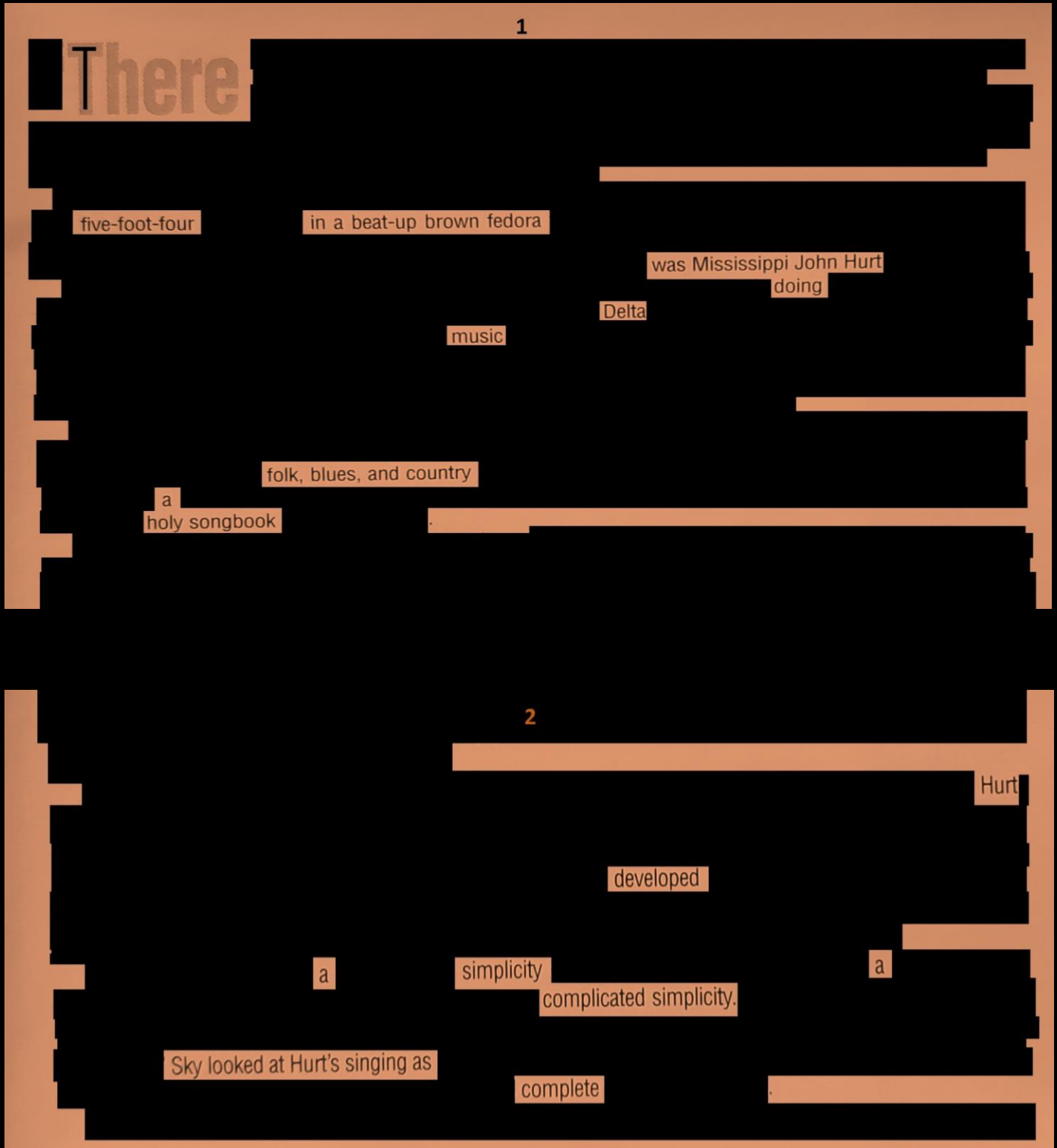
a second in summer

Paws smelling of summer dirt crumbling under cracked leathery pads he  
sniffs the curlicued  
miscanthus tips, making sure he's been there before with no one after; a  
rabbit stands on the edge

of the woods, a furry mannequin, ready to high hop and hide.  
With heat hard against his ridged wheaten back, the dog glances sideways,  
    pausing, a snout  
straight up to the sky, side eyeing a spindly legged heron  
heading for shallow water to make a meal of minnows.  
The old dog's licorice nose twitches at the hidden, under dead leaves, in the  
    creek bed; all  
dancing is stopped for a brief intermission.  
Chickadees at the feeder, undaunted, steal sunflower seeds and head for  
dead branches while red-winged blackbirds pick out the millet and squawk to  
    stop dainty butter  
colored finches from having their fill.  
Deep among the trees, an owl hoots who is next for subtraction from  
    Nature's manifest; cumulus  
clouds randomly calculate their positions.  
Wandering through tall meadow grass, the dog gives his shadow to the sun.  
He circles to lie down, nose up-wind, catching the scent of his last  
    Independence Day forever.



## Mississippi John Hurt







Note: The source of this blackout/erasure poem is the liner notes written by John Milward for *Mississippi John Hurt: The Complete Studio Recordings* (Vanguard, 2000).

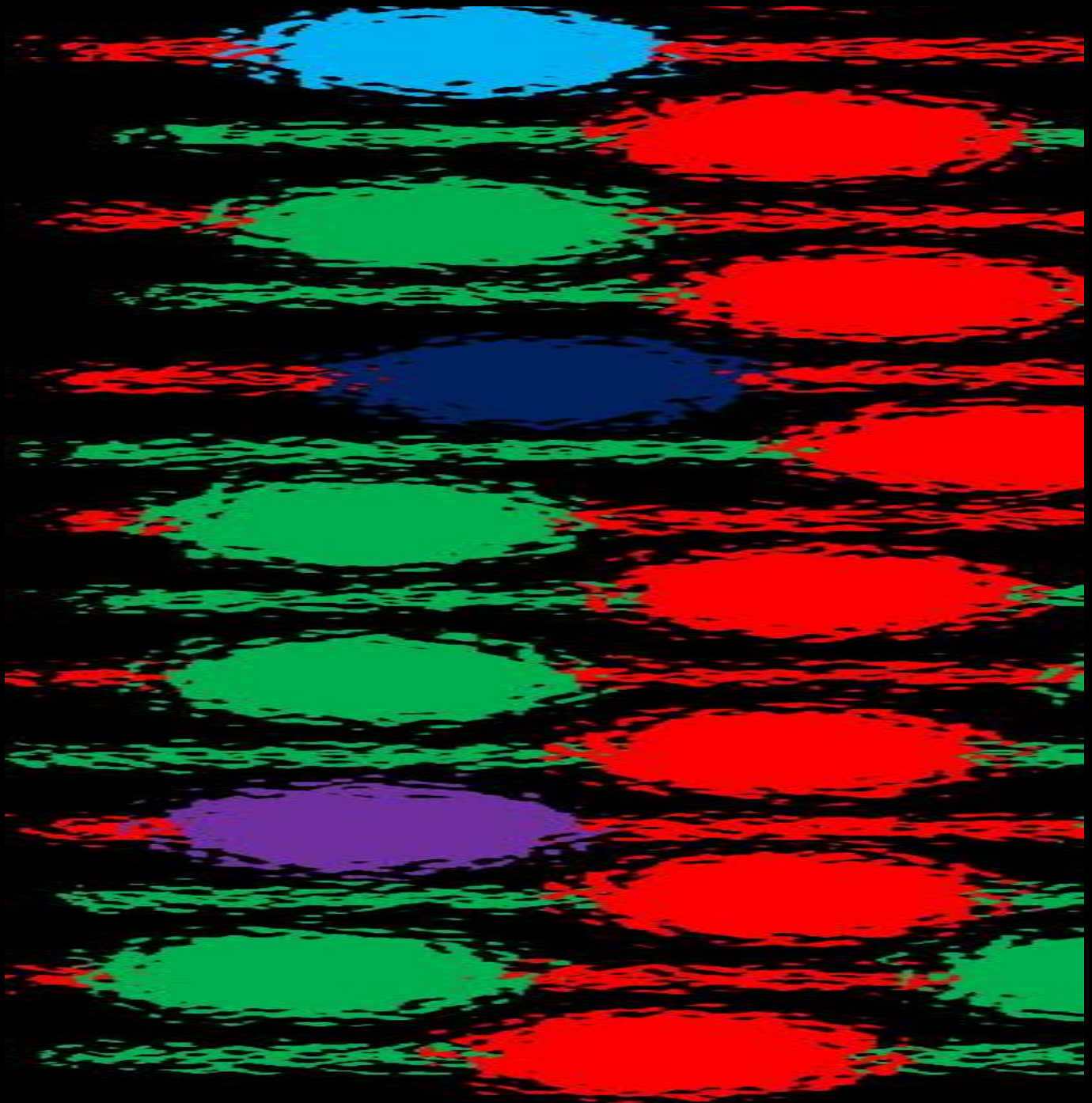
## My Lover, the Necromancer

I watch him resurrect an old woman  
with long hair  
in our bed in the early morning.  
He has to move her limbs to free them  
from rigor mortis.  
She is confused about being alive again  
and then about her long hair  
(which I read grows after you die).  
I tell her it will be ok,  
not believing it myself.

I ask my lover why he raises the dead.  
He says he's found the cure to dying:  
"The secret to staying alive  
is keeping everyone too busy to die."  
He has a simple plan: to give this woman  
a part time job at McDonald's.  
I try to stop him.  
He is not the man I fell in love with—  
He has become consumed by his work.  
In the McDonald's parking lot, I ask him,  
"What's the real reason?"  
He says, "I'm a necromancer,  
duh. I need bodies for my skeleton army!"  
He says it like it's the most obvious thing  
in the world.  
It is now I start to wonder  
if I have always been alive.

I tell him I get visions that he will die

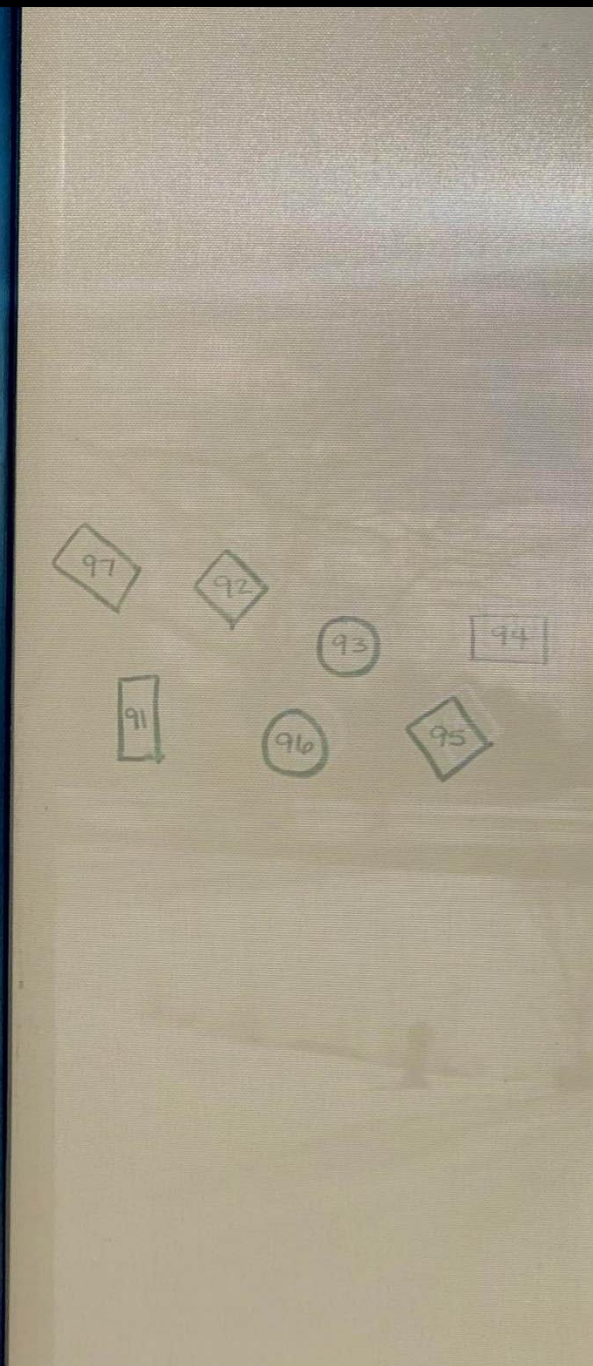
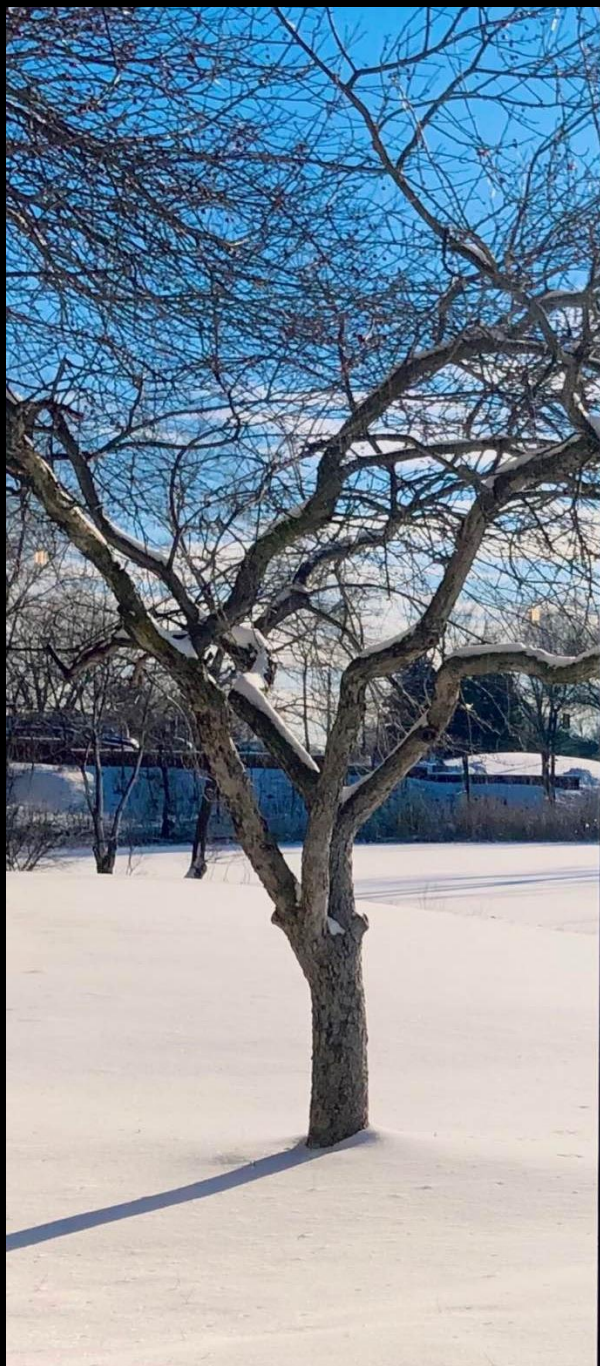
and no one will know how to make him rise again.  
“My dear,” he says, “you could not  
be rid of me that easily.”



## Rapture

Among the heavy heads of wheat,  
a twitch. A snagged stitch  
in the ripened field that stretches  
like a quilt ten acres on a side.  
One fruited head jerks  
against the wind, and the falcon's gaze zooms in.  
There— a tail one fraction browner  
than the ash-brown waves,  
one millimeter thicker  
than the stems of winter wheat.  
The mouse gorges on fat, fallen seeds  
flicking its tail, enraptured.  
The falcon doesn't hear  
the tiny teeth nibbling through  
to the soft core of the sweet, moist kernel;  
the mouse doesn't see the shadow.  
Would that every last act  
were as sure and swift,  
every last meal as satisfying,  
every death as merciful.

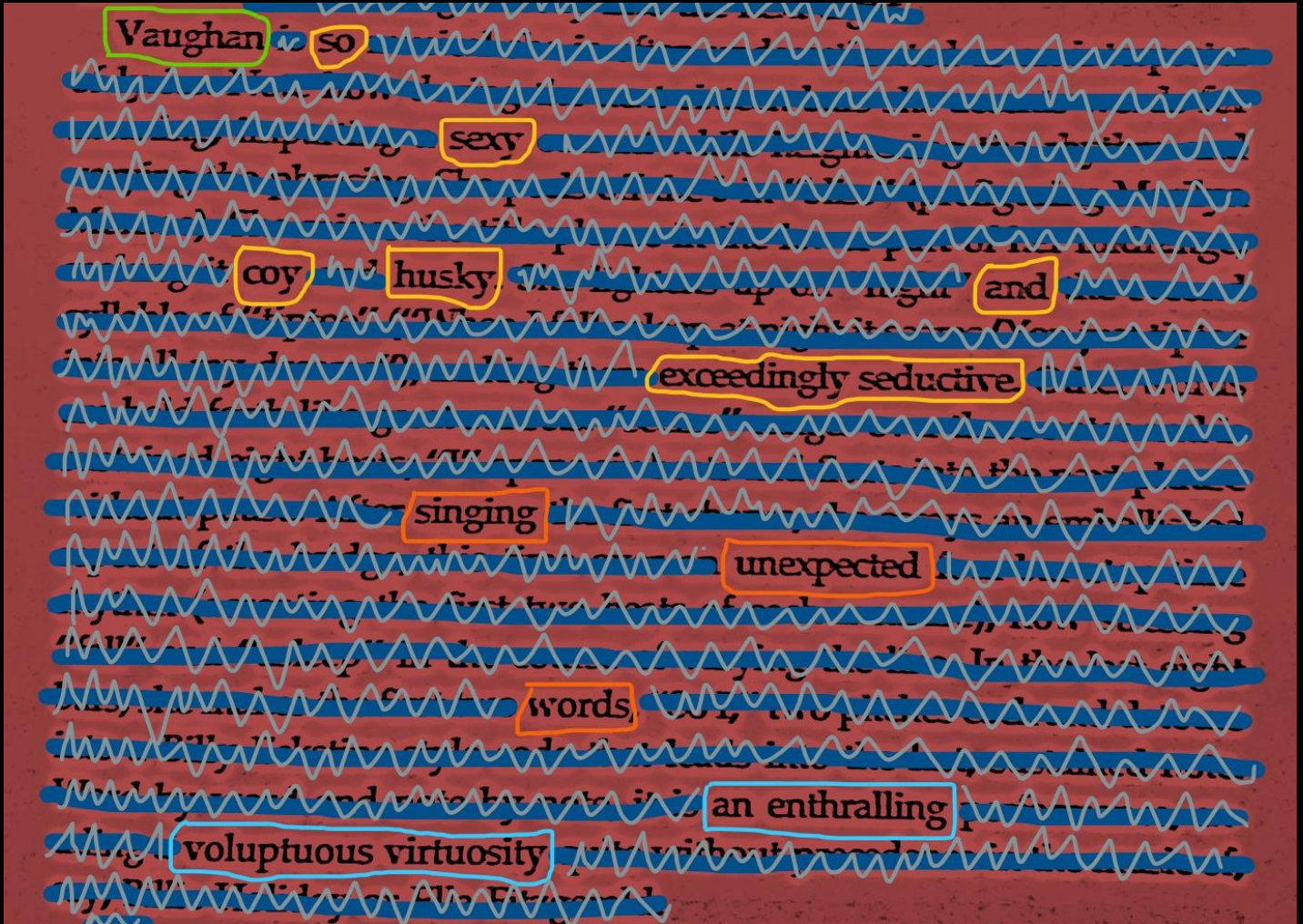




Sapphire sky, white snow—  
Numbered shapes on the window  
Hope for early spring



Sarah Vaughan



Note: The source of this blackout/erasure poem is Gary Giddins's book *Visions of Jazz* (Oxford, 1998).



## Silent Majority

*Inspired by the inner-city penology of Anslinger Drug Law discussed in the book Black Silent Majority by Michael Javen Fortner.*

She is black, like hearts that refuse to refute.

Calling of what wrought with resolve,  
a prophecy a dream, a nail, a string.

Force to whim and seam: She is black.

Black Mamba? Wait for the growing pains to proclaim societal grief.

Patrol cars whisper unfound sermons into one ear of the favella. A favella made

to have it come out the other

with terrors I can't see and still I listen. Met the motherland in the roots and something wholesome like a life of love, yet distant and more peaceful. I held this fear and think of positives.

A bird in flight, flock of a big white cloud. Preserve

a skin tone and like that, the Jitterbug and Sharecrops stretch like roots into two. I resist because I could song and dance making no advance in chorus chants of dense.

Siblings, siblings.

Holistic vigor on the backroads. Downtrodden actions take vision where hearts grieve

over sand and heat climbing wind and catching sail.

Throw my hands up at the abundance of the world's work.

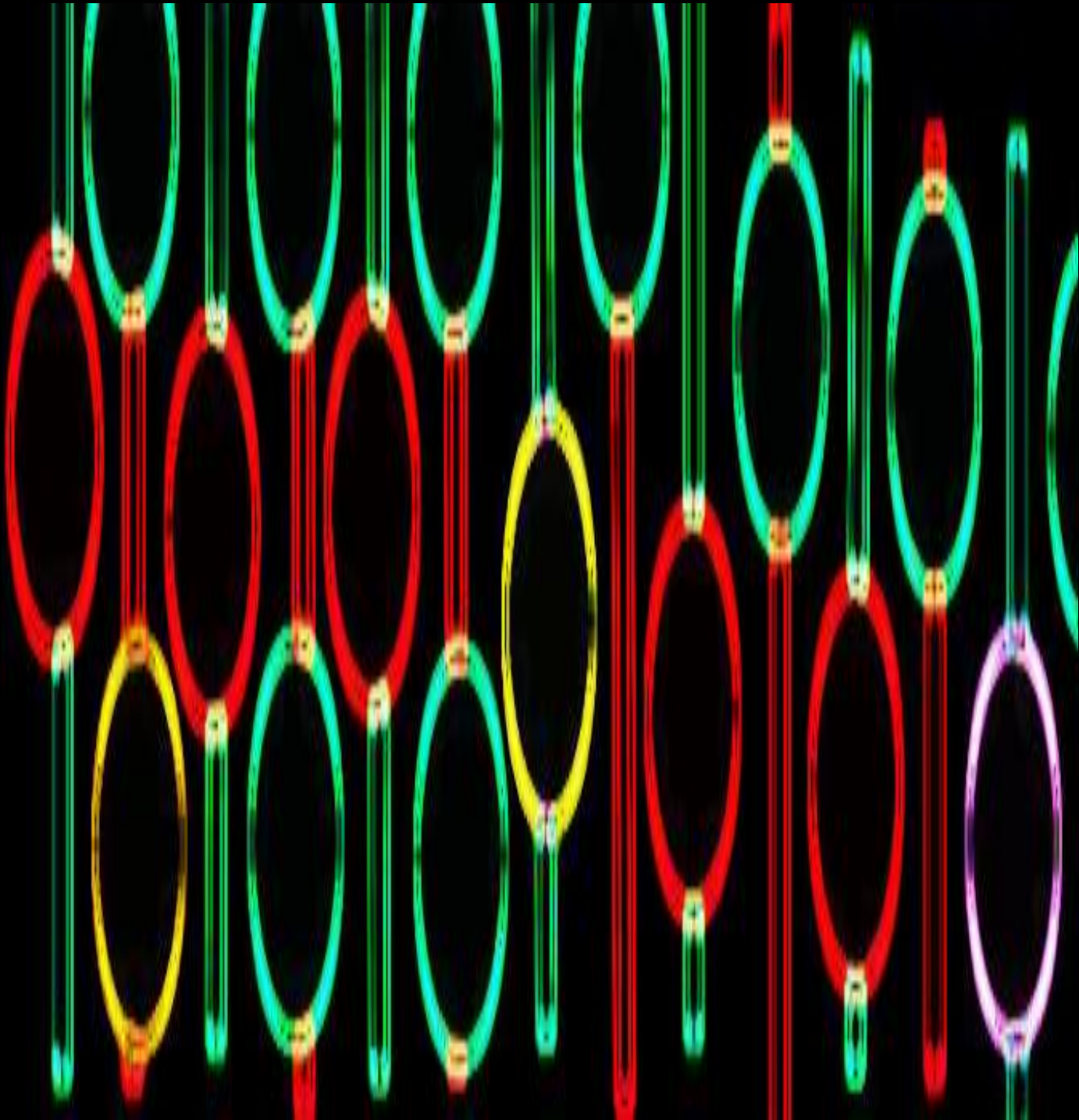
Disable my punishment. Learned my lesson. Disarm any doubt that your skin took part in Ghetto Necrophilia.

Like the dead ocean tide see to it that; the moment I return to where memory likes to dissolve to next of kin.

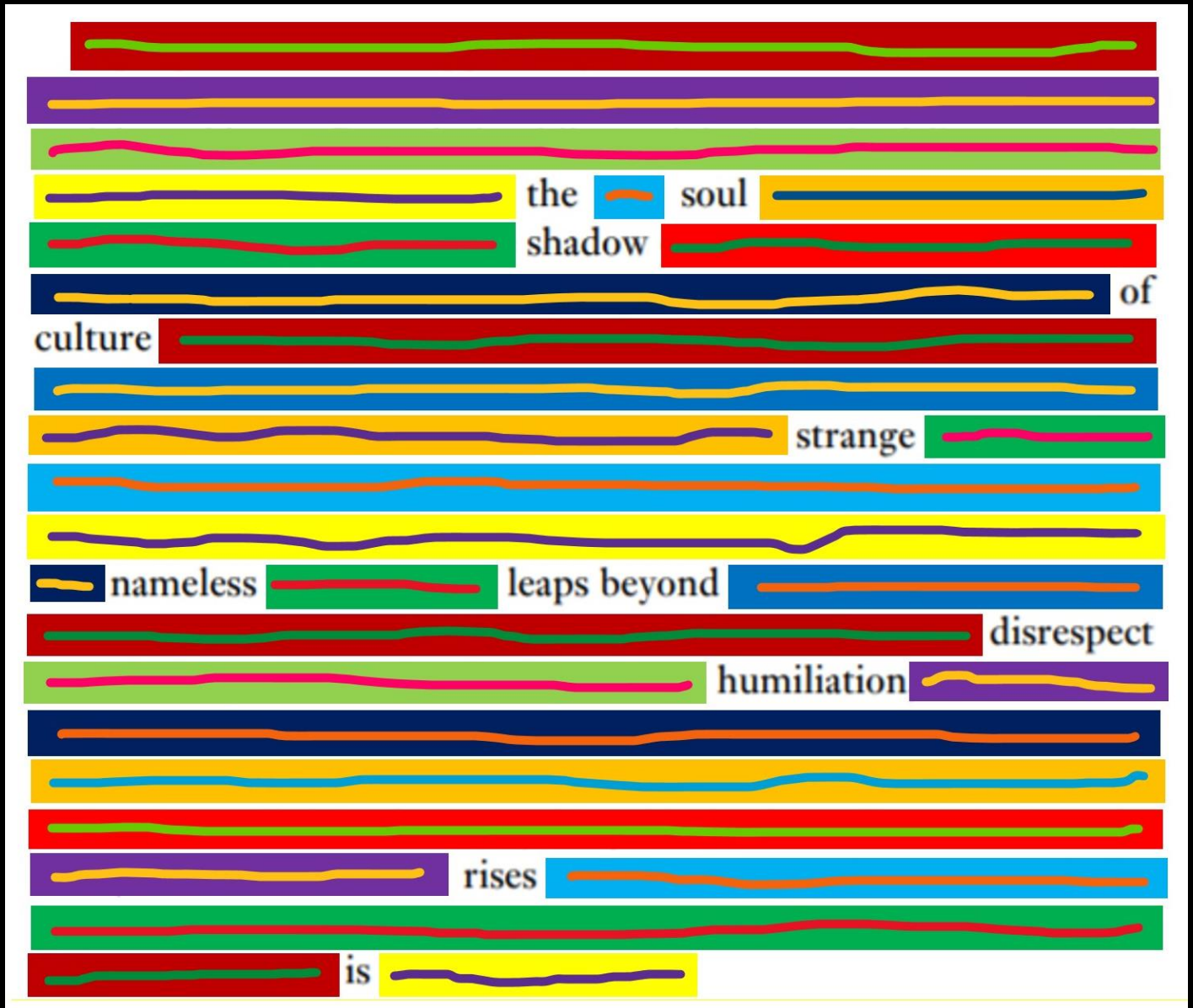
Are we all on novelty over nuance?

"What's genocidal?" an attempt at rhythm to match Samba. Sleep: an

abomination not granted  
to works of art that take up arms in a place between "Black" and "Satan".



Some Words about the Soul



Note: The source of this blackout/erasure poem is W.E.B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk*.

**Two Haiku**

Three-year-old girl wants to marry  
Her two best girlfriends  
A bright future for polygamy.

\*

Boots crunch sidewalk rock salt  
Leashed dog sniffs, licks  
Did the bag say “Pet Safe?”

## Unconditional Love

1 John 4:18:

“There is no fear in love”

My God declares it so

I cling to these words

Walking hand in hand

With the woman I love

All to the tunes of ignorance

Buzzing like hordes of locusts

Those eyes that shine brighter

Than stars on the isle Saphos

A smile lit from both ends

By the torches at Westboro

When they prepare for battle

She rides in to defeat the foe

And wonders why I stand on the sideline alone

But this battlefield used to feel like home

We Are Not

We are not the ways we should be.

You're not gently drifting down the river and I'm not waiting at the bridge.

My time is spent in the doorway looking out at the place I used to expect you to be.

We are not the way the people looking through the window see us.

You've been away from your spot now for a length of time so long that it has begun to hurt me.

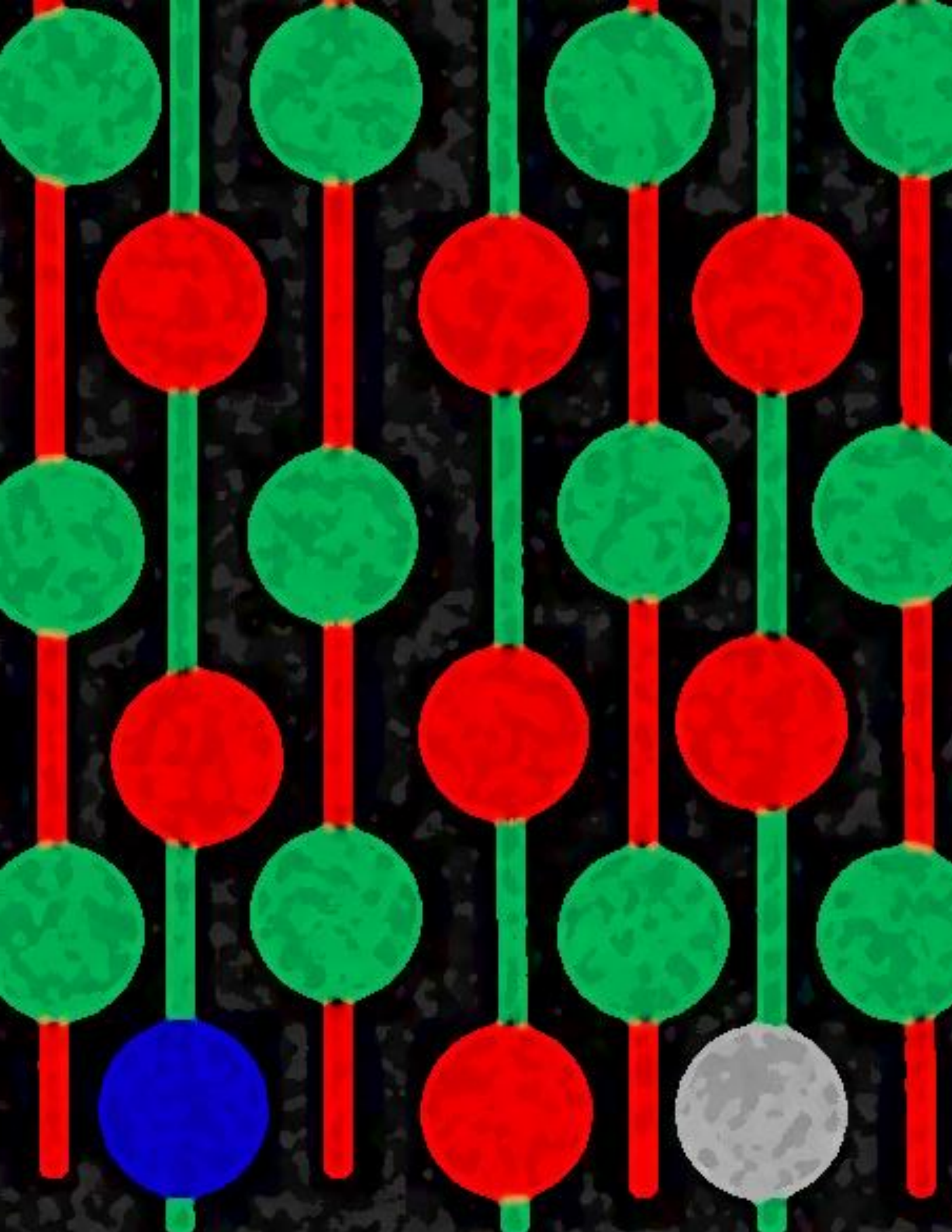
We are not clinging together at the center of the gale.

Instead, I am the dark shaft surrounded by light and open air and you,

never again,

will be there.





**Aggison**

**Barrie**

**Buck**

**Bumpus**

**Fuller**

**Grossman**

**Heineman**

**Higgins**

**Hritz**

**Johnson**

**Laboda**

**Magda**

**Martinez**

**Moorman**

**Oladeji**

**Pauley**

**Sims**

**Williams**

**Zimmerman**