

i. cold cut rainbow

red

everyone needs blood, some
raw meat less pale than you,
in powdered iron tables or
another easily digested form.

orange

You awoke warm, to a room aglow.
The camera was focused on the dawn.
You were not on fire; in fact, nothing was.
You sat there alone, and nothing changed.

yellow

love is
sunlight is
measured is
always spilling
over in constellations on the sheets.

green

behind a palm-shaded wall,
that low grove of trees.

blue

is a window to the sky
is a cloud sleepless on the wrong end of a cold front
is mulling over old bluster
is drowning the way rain was caught in lakes

indigoviolet

the ashy men holding hands
the puckering pink of
the frozen meats
the colour undisplayable
the colour untrue
the colour that speaks no name
the colour we cannot but name

ii. copulatives

am: before noon, but after midnight; the self, present and tense.

who I	am	
(who)	am	(I)
who I	am	
(who)	am	(I)
I	(am?)	remains

is: this thing working? ; the third person, indicatively singular.

the mirror	is	a bowl
the soul	is	something
a thought	is	tough
mist	is	a problem
this	is	not a problem
deviation	is	too slow
sunlight	is	not fast
love	is	sunlight
sunlight	is	measured
love	is	unmeasured
store bought	is	fine
love	is	denied
	is	denied
	is	denied (377 times)
a flutter of bats in a jacket	is	worth moral consideration
no video	is	recording
the phone	is	an undiscovered grave
he	's	always drawing someone's
		blood
he	(is)	always drawing someone's
		blood

it, there: the subject as empty, artificial; the pronoun pleonastic, expletive.

It	's	not flight
It	(is)	not flight
There	is	a vampire
There	is	a vampire
There	is	a new vampire
There	is	a ghost
There	is	a ghost
There	is	a vampire
There	is	a ghost
There	are	two housewives
It	was	a persistent drift
It	was	turning over
It	was	neverending

time: the seventh and the flattened third; indefinite and continued progress

Dents	were	your fault
Dents	were	not your fault
Dents	were	sometimes teeth
She	wo	n't be able
She	(will)	(not) be able
(We)	(will)	(not be)
		(able)

iii. (dis)simile

as if you were sharp again
 (un)like a whetstone turning itself
 over in your mouth until your bones
 had ground themselves to fine points
as if you (were not) dead again
 like an iPhone hanging glossy
 amongst the hell money, readier
 to burn than your friends found comfortable
as if you felt like you could (not)
 drift off into nothingness again
 the air at your feet at your back
 at your half-open mouth with its teeth
as if you felt like a staking
 was called for as if you were
 (un)called for as if you knew
 what was at stake as if you
 knew what it meant to feel.

iv. locatives

<i>above.the.bed</i>	he held your hands and you thought that meant he loved you.
<i>against.the.night</i>	he held your skin and you thought that meant he saw through you.
<i>alongside.a.trolley</i>	he held your hands and you thought that meant you'd lost him.
<i>atop.a.reservoir</i>	he held you and you thought that meant he'd run dry.
<i>before.a.palm.shaded.wall</i>	he held your hands and you thought that meant he loved you.
<i>before.the.earth</i>	he held your hands and you thought that meant he loved you.
<i>behind.a.smartphone.camera</i>	he held your hands and you thought that meant he loved you.
<i>behind.a.parent's.tail.lights</i>	he held your skin and you thought that meant it was legal.
<i>behind.that.low.grove.of.trees</i>	he held your hands and you thought that meant it was natural.
<i>behind.the.shade.of.a.coffee.shop</i>	he held you and you thought that meant he'd consume you.
<i>between.the.curtains</i>	he held your hands and you thought that meant he loved you.
<i>by.the.freezer</i>	he held your skin and you thought that meant he was warm.
<i>floating.off</i>	he held your hands and you thought that meant you would fly too.
<i>floating.off</i>	he held your hands though you couldn't fly and you thought that meant he loved you.
<i>in.front.of.a.mirror</i>	he held your hands and you thought that meant he loved you.
<i>in.a.jacket</i>	he held your hands and you thought that meant it was healthy.
<i>in.flight</i>	he held your hands and you thought that meant he loved you.
<i>in.a.mirror</i>	he held your hands and you thought that meant he saw you.
<i>in.its.frame</i>	his eyes caught your hands and you thought that meant he could see you.
<i>in.its.still.chill</i>	his eyes caught your skin and you thought that meant he could hold you.
<i>in.lakes</i>	he held your hands and you thought your inability to swim was romantic.
<i>in.mid.air</i>	he held your hands and you thought your inability to fly was romantic.
<i>in.the.dark</i>	he held your hands and you thought that meant he loved you.
<i>in.the.way</i>	he held your hands you thought he meant he loved you.
<i>in.their.phones</i>	your parents saw your hands and you thought that meant they approved.
<i>in.your.face</i>	your parents said nothing about your skin and you thought you were intact.

into·a·milo·dinosaur you placed your sorrows and their floating made you think yourself afloat.
into·shapes you placed your skin and its resilience made you think yourself tough.
into·nothing you placed your hands and you thought that meant you loved him.

on·a·bathroom·floor he held your hands and you thought that meant he still loved you.
on·your·throat he held your skin and you thought that meant you could still breathe.
on·the·sheets he held your hands and you thought that meant he could still love you.
on·the·dawn he held your skin and you thought that meant you were still there.

on·your·limbs he left his handprints and you thought that meant he loved you.
on·your·shadow he left his handprints and you thought that meant you loved him.

over·old·bluster he held your hands and you thought that meant he was sincere.
over·the·blankets he held your skin and you thought that meant he was sensitive.
over·the·footage he held your hands and you thought that meant he would stop.
over·the·seams he held your skin and you thought that meant you were safe.

through·each·shaded·day he held your hands and you thought that meant it was natural.
through·the·cloth·of·a·cloud he held you and you thought that meant he'd consume you.

at·the·abattoir he held your hands and you thought that meant he loved you.

v. spared parts

if the jugular vein is to be seized today
if the all-night disco is the apocalypse
going cold

as promised

if I am worth something this way
(the way I always have been)

if the mirror doesn't make me flinch
and held in there

I

do not

flinch

and held in there I find trapped
an echo

no not now not now not today

vi. conditional clauses

if the mirror is a bowl for the soul
if the soul is something like saliva
if everyone else can spit God from
 between their shining teeth

if your teeth are in your way again
if there is no way to overcome teeth
if my teeth scrape against your skin
 just the way he used to like it

if I look in the mirror and see nothing
if I look in the mirror and see myself
if I don't look in the mirror anymore
 telling myself it will be empty

if these eyes are the opening window
if this breeze hails the next monsoon
if that frangipani tree is only a tree and
 no one is wearing her perfume

(if a boy in the skin of a girl sits there)
(if his eyes open to the falling leaves)
(if a nonhuman in the skin of a human
 sits there with him and smiles)

if I called my lovers over the threshold
if I called my lovers over telephone wire
if I called them lovers and they believed
 I had a heart and it could beat

if love is you looking through windows
if love is you spitting goldenrod spit
if love is you covering the mirror so
 as to shield the shining sun

(if a boy molts on the bathroom floor)
(if the boy counts every shred of skin)
(if the boy denies it three times and
 never once hears a rooster)

if I have no blood to feel running cold
if I have no heart to feel icing over
if I have no reflection to see growing
 older than those I left behind

if there are too many stars to count
if there is only wide, illiberal sky
if there is nothing written up there
 you consider worth reading

(if a boy cracks his own ribs apart)
(if he lies in the dark and counts)
(if he watches his own open heart
 in someone else's hands)

if she asked me if I had finished
if she herself had no plans to finish
if all she felt was his teeth and not
 my thirstfilled open mouth

if the stakes are too high this time
if my parents sharpen their stakes
if they never put away their blessed
 medallions, my old medals

if I say the word love enough times
if I say the mirror won't be empty
if I say the window is open and don't
 count the closed doorways

if it was really an accident this time
if they never needed that exorcist
if there's no body to find because
 I'm still here, goddammit

if there is room for me on this earth
if there is room for me in this body
if there is room where my heart is
 for things that hearts hold

if my ribs stay intact just this once
if I am no longer holding their cage
if I look in the mirror and no longer
 flinch at what looks back

(if a boy puts on the skin of a poet)
(if a boy puts on another poet's skin)
(if a boy puts down a condition and
 then another and another and another and an other)