

Twelve Ways of Looking at Darkness

after Wallace Stevens

1.

I was bred in the darkness
out of pant stank & memory

Papa held the keys to the x-y
while Momma flowered
like a child under the moon

2.

I slid out of her darkness
head first with bloodshot eyes
& skin that wouldn't take in the light

3.

like candlelight
we learned to count our days
in darkness

4.

the blacker the berry—Momma would say
is the dark-darker-darkness
the kind whose outer flesh does not respond
to anything less than magenta

5.

I've known the whites of too many
eyes in passion & flame

those whose souls eternalize everything
even the darkness

6.

when Papa was away
Momma's roost wasn't the wiser
so (of course) the two could not be reconciled
& neither could our dark nest

7.

we admire everything brilliant
star & moon
flame & angel

never once have I heard one say
how lovely the dark is

8.

I adorn the head of Cushitic
thick-napped necks Afros
du-rags & wave caps

even Alexander turned his face
toward Egypt when he saw our multitudes
layered in the darkness

9.

God said *let there be light* & there was light
& God saw that the light was good

& they would have believed us—
if only I hadn't coveted your light & you
my darkness

10.

even if I left this section blank
(which I am considering)
the em dash would still spill dark
onto the page

11.

eleven ways to say darkness:

aphotic / obscure / ill-intended / inhumane / indistinguishable /
somber / murky / nothingness / Cimmerian / after the earth has been cast out
or swallowed / nebulous—if anyone or anything else remains

12.

my shadow is a child