

It's Important I Remember That *Darkness* and  
*Blackness* Aren't Perfect Synonyms—

but the Venn diagram is a perfect circle.

I poke my neck through the hole of comparison like a hula-hoop  
hoping, under no circumstance, that it ever cuts as close

as the collar of the dress shirt hanging in my closet  
feeding moths a feast in lean times.

It is the dead center of summer.

We are centering the dead.

The dead are everywhere,

surround me.

There is the virus and the viral video  
and they are not the same,

yet the Venn diagram is a perfect circle.

A question is what a ventilator would've done for Mr. Floyd.

An answer is what it means to have mercy to be able to give.

A question is why the Lord put his knee on my cousin's neck.

An answer is what happens when mercy is not received.

A stethoscope and a handcuff  
both have a radius;

they are circles that overlap perfectly  
around darkness.

Nine minutes and twenty-nine seconds  
is not enough time  
to say hundreds of thousands of names  
scratched out in less than a year.

The great hoax is the thing that kills us:  
the pathogen is just an accomplice,  
the officer is just an accomplice.

Blackness encircles  
my circle.

*Systemic, systematic, symptom:* the syllables slush in my mouth,  
spike my sugar skyward.

They say the sitting president is not the disease but of the disease;  
they say the disease is not of the president but is the president's:

the Venn diagram is a perfect circle.

My body overlaps hers in bed, both in common need  
of touch to turn away from ethereal existence.

Our aims and anxieties are always  
in between us, a commonality like our bed.

There isn't a crisis I know of that isn't existential  
and therefore something beyond what *exhausting* can describe.

The person that feels everything  
and the person that feels nothing:

the Venn Diagram is a perfect circle.

What they look like isn't what they are,  
but they are indeed what they look like.