It's Important I Remember That Enslaved People Married Here—

scaled the summit of ovation in one leap
over that solemn broom, swept demons
away, were swept up and into a scheme
of tender mercies, salve for souls frayed
like a singular allowance of cloth
by field labor under sun and overseer.
In those days, if death parted you
from your beloved, then *you*
were blessed beyond belief
being that license for the ceremony was
recorded on a cloud that came close
enough to the earth to stain with fingertips.

When he parted you, you were parted.

When the white man of white men
spoke the words it was
as if the continents split,
the countenance split,
an ocean's worth of salt water spilled
into every sort of separation
now surfacing on the human face:
a man's, a woman's, a child's
like both and like neither.
But one point to make
in favor of advancement
is that we can say goodbye
on our own terms now,
on good terms or bad,
though you and I hold out hope
that our magical evening will be
when the shaky ground beneath us
is reconciled for good
like the broken bond of a bone.

Contracts have been signed,
checks have been cut and hard-
earned cash withdrawn
damn near out of my ice-cold hands:
all that's left is to vow
continuance in the face
of every conflict and
challenge that confronts us,
contorts us into knots inside
that mock the one we tied before God.

Love, I'm as hefty as a sparrow can be
and still be able to defy the law of gravity,
soaring at the prospect of a promise,
the dress I haven't laid eyes on delicately
resting in a garment box in our closet
next to the clutter of modern domesticity.
I'm reflecting on all the bygones

that I favor phenotypically when your own
father's face crosses my mind like
analog noise and I anxiously twist
my finger where a precious band is
soon to be, easing back into the heaven
we purchased on sale from West Elm
and turning on the TV—cable news—
the white man of white men on-screen
where I left him the night before
every night for years now.

When he parts you, *you are parted.*

That's what all the journalists say,
partly why some friends claim kids
would be a particularly irrational decision.
Yet I've insisted. And we've decided
on first names even if not a firm number,

as we are descendants of dreamers
who never saw black as black. We—
an abundance they feared and abhorred.
I love you, in light of that dark past,
is so insufficient, so light
on how we save each other each day,
but it's all that I have to say:
this is my singular allowance,
a simple sleeve to wear on
what might be called feelings
but more faithfully should be called
faith.