

I.

i have always been the thing
that's not like the other –

the analogue touch
through digital screens,

the bougie drink
at a neighborhood dive,

the black ink
bringing anxious poems
to a comfortable
white sheet of paper.

so it would make sense
to be the only brown body
shopping on busy streets,

walking past
peach-skinned mannequins
that wear rainbow-colored threads,

staring out
from store-front windows,
stuck to each other
in a copy and paste culture,
void of color.

II.

when was the last time
a mannequin had an expressive face
behind the mask?

behind the blank
glossy-eyed barrier
of a window glass?

when was the last time
you saw a black man
stand strong and unashamed
with his dark, holy features,
center-framed in a bleached-out world,

fully aware of being
the blurred-out version
of his true self?

III.

I am a free token
for closed minds
who are broke with blind eyes, a splash,
a cool glass
for the sun's predictable clash
with Charleston streets.

I am the man
without a mirror,
unable to look at himself
in a place
surrounded by the water's reflection.

someone who is always seen as the "other"
in a copy and paste culture,
void of color.

IV.

I'm looking for memory coordinates
instead of road maps through familiar places,

I'm looking to unravel headphone cords
in a wireless world.

I'm looking for flesh-colored band-aids
that match my skin tone.

I'm looking
to not be so alone.

