**Hoodie**  
*January Gill O’Neil, 2015*

A gray hoodie will not protect my son from rain, from the New England cold.

I see the partial eclipse of his face as his head sinks into the half-dark and shades his eyes. Even in our quiet suburb with its unlocked doors,

I fear for his safety — the darkest child on our street in the empire of blocks.

Sometimes I don’t know who he is anymore traveling the back roads between boy and man.

He strides a deep stride, pounds a basketball into wet pavement. Will he take his shot or is he waiting for the open-mouthed orange rim to take a chance on him? I sing his name to the night, ask for safe passage from this borrowed body into the next and wonder who could mistake him for anything but good.