V. MODERN LAYER

and each time the boi dies
the black word is left to the air again
cry
new kindling in every mouth /    love harder
new dances for all the dust.

IV. 2013 – 2017

their fingertips cartographers of the land
meet red clay in the jaw /
flame death
slate lining the ribcage /
anoint altars with honest touch.

III. 2006 – 2012

throat a cavern of infinity
hair of pitch-pine smoke
and hands content with emptiness
the black word became the boi

II. 1995 – 2005

and so this black word spoke itself anew.
declared itself a body / a beating fire /
goa off, nigga.
a burning heart /
a brown skin etiology.

I. 1994

in the beginning there was the word.       oh word?
and that word was black.
but this primordial black lacked a glyph;
a phoneme with no flesh equivalent./        ayyyyyye.

pour one out for ‘em.
whole hailstorms.
love harder
all the living done together.

play the dozens with the devil.
mans be for everybody.
funny box run right over.

water
nappy as a briar patch.
for every breath

yo, that’s lit.

damn, that’s cold.