

I Know I'm Hard to Look At

Like many Americans I am trying

to learn a new word every day,
or maybe just an old word's first meaning,

as is the case with "geometry,"
which, when broken down, translates to "earth

measurement," something some of us might've known,
though I didn't internalize it until just now.

There was a time when I thought everything
could be measured. Standing against the wall

in my parents' apartment, I tracked my growth
with the seriousness of a child

with nowhere else to be. On the news,
they say there was two seconds between police arriving

and their shooting the twelve-year-old boy.
Twenty-seven inches between them

and a man they'd shoot a year and a half later.
My life is a garden full of unturned rocks.

I don't watch the videos that play even in diners
with brief warnings for violence. Everywhere I turn

people tell me Négritude was actually bad.
I am happiest in my garden, flipping over rocks. Or,

I am most afraid in my garden, flipping over rocks.
There is a word for this, I'm sure. My inability

to mail my saliva, discover once and for all
the measurements of my family. I learned today

an actual garden can grow potatoes of different
colors: brown, red, purple, blue. It's possible

to imagine someone whom the potatoes please
only in the moment they're pulled from the ground.

I couldn't describe it. I am still trying to love

Blackness without possessiveness. Pretending

to understand how a world without race is not
only possible but desirable,

like many Americans. I am usurped daily by sweetness.
The headline SANTA DELIVERED THE DRONE.

BUT NOT THE SAFETY AND SKILL TO FLY THEM.
delivering the word “drone” like a joke. I am most American

reading it. When, surveying my garden,
I understand, not for the first time,

how much my survival depends on death
and yet cannot stop living.