

Parkland College

A with Honors Projects

Honors Program

2019

Paintings Inspired by African American Literature

Erinn Dady
Parkland College

LIT 141-251W
Erinn Dady
Honors Project
4.28.2019
Dr. Lori Williams

Paintings Inspired by African American Literature

I created five paintings, all inspired by the coursework assigned from The Norton Anthology of African American Literature Third Edition Volume 1, in my African American Literature class, taught by Dr. Lori Williams at Parkland College. There is a huge body of African American Literature in the world for readers to choose from and my goal with this project is to encourage new readers to explore this genre. Reading African American authors is important because they offer a different perspective. Hearing from different voices is the best way to understand our society. I hope to spark curiosity in the viewers and interest them in reading works by diverse authors.

The paintings are based on the following pieces of literature:

To the Right Honorable William, Earl of Dartmouth by Phillis Wheatley, 1773

Bury Me in a Free Land by Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, 1872

Dinah Kneading Dough by Paul Laurence Dunbar, 1889

Good Morning, Blues by Jimmy Rushing, 1937

The Negro Speaks of Rivers by Langston Hughes, 1921

The paintings include my visual interpretations of the poems (including one song), as well as quotes from these works. I used bright colors, and the imagery that these poems inspired in my imagination while I was reading them. I painted specific scenes as I imagined them while reading the poems or the images that the works made me feel, and positioned the words in a way that reflected the movement of the poetry. I showed the artwork at Lincoln Square on Saturday, April 6th, in conjunction with the Common Ground Food Co-op's Edible Book Festival. Also the weekend of the local Boneyard Arts Festival, so overall a great chance to catch more passerby perhaps engaged in art and culture.

I displayed the paintings alongside my artist's statement (attached), and engaged as many folks in conversation as were willing to talk with me. Exhibiting the work while I was present gave me a wonderful opportunity to get feedback from people. Many people were very interested in the subject matter. I had requests for future showings of more of this type of work, and some good ideas for alternative showings. One viewer suggested I display the paintings at the Urbana Free Library, and another wondered if local schools would include more African American literature in the classroom if they had a final project where students got to paint their favorite poem. My favorite suggestion from a viewer was the recommendation that I contact the Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit Authority to try getting my work printed on 11" x 17" paper and installed on local busses in the space where ads usually go. She thought it would be a great opportunity to engage local school-age children who ride the bus home, not to mention the regular bus commuters. This could be a valuable strategy to get area youth to be inspired and empowered by African American literature.

I enjoyed this project because it gave me a chance to think about the words printed on the page in an entirely different light. I discussed it with co-workers while I was trying to figure out

how I would do the paintings, and this gave me a chance to encourage them to read works by these talented authors. Reading and re-reading these works made me understand them with more depth than if I had simply read them once. As I was deciding how to include the text, I moved the pieces around on the painted canvases until they seemed just right, then I secured them in place. I am glad I had the opportunity to explore these works on a deeper level, and I hope more people will dive into reading African American literature!



LIT 141-251W

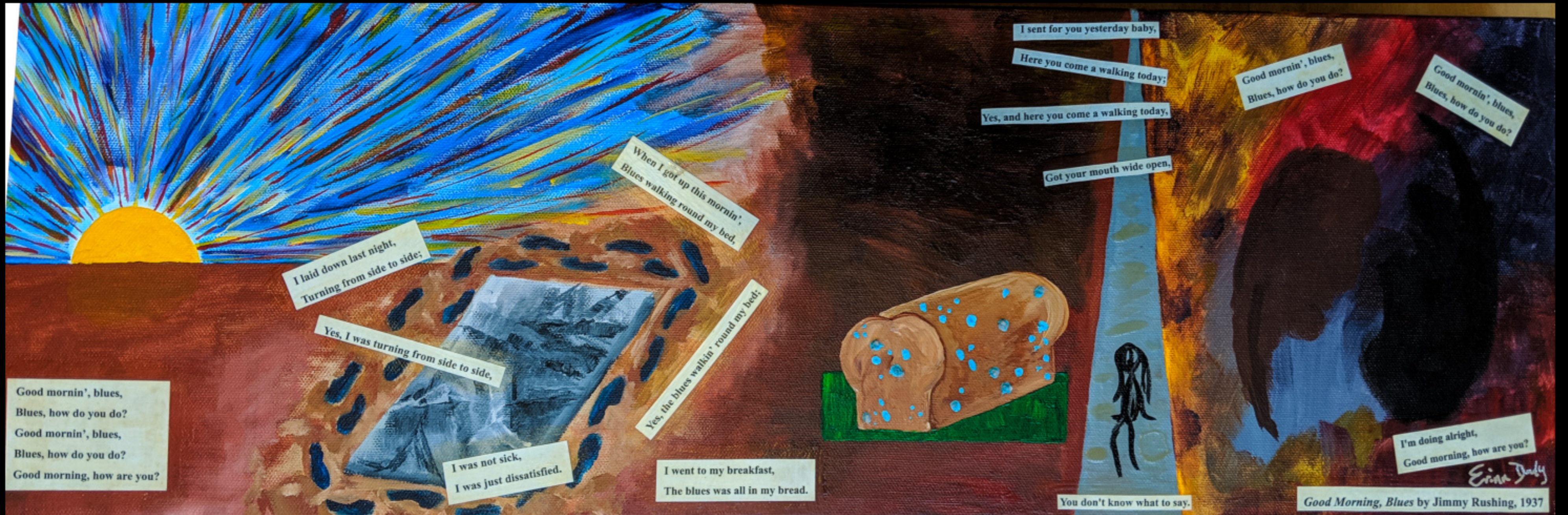
Erinn Dady

4.6.2019

Dr. Lori Williams

I am enrolled in an African American Literature class at Parkland College. This has made me realize just how poorly African American Literature is represented in many educational settings. This is a shame, because there is such a large cultural and historical value to reading it. Racism is still very widespread and systemic, but one of the best ways to combat it is to seek out different perspectives. There is such a large body of work that readers can enjoy, and I wanted to encourage people to experience it.

These paintings are inspired by a few of the selections that my class has been reading. I believe that literature enthusiasts should expand their horizons and read works written by different cultures. It will broaden your understanding of literature as a whole, as well as the world around us. I hope my art will encourage people to explore these authors!



Good mornin', blues,
Blues, how do you do?
Good mornin', blues,
Blues, how do you do?
Good morning, how are you?

I laid down last night,
Turning from side to side;

Yes, I was turning from side to side,

I was not sick,
I was just dissatisfied.

When I got up this mornin',
Blues walking round my bed,

Yes, the blues walkin' round my bed;

I went to my breakfast,
The blues was all in my bread.

I sent for you yesterday baby,
Here you come a walking today;
Yes, and here you come a walking today,
Got your mouth wide open,

Good mornin', blues,
Blues, how do you do?

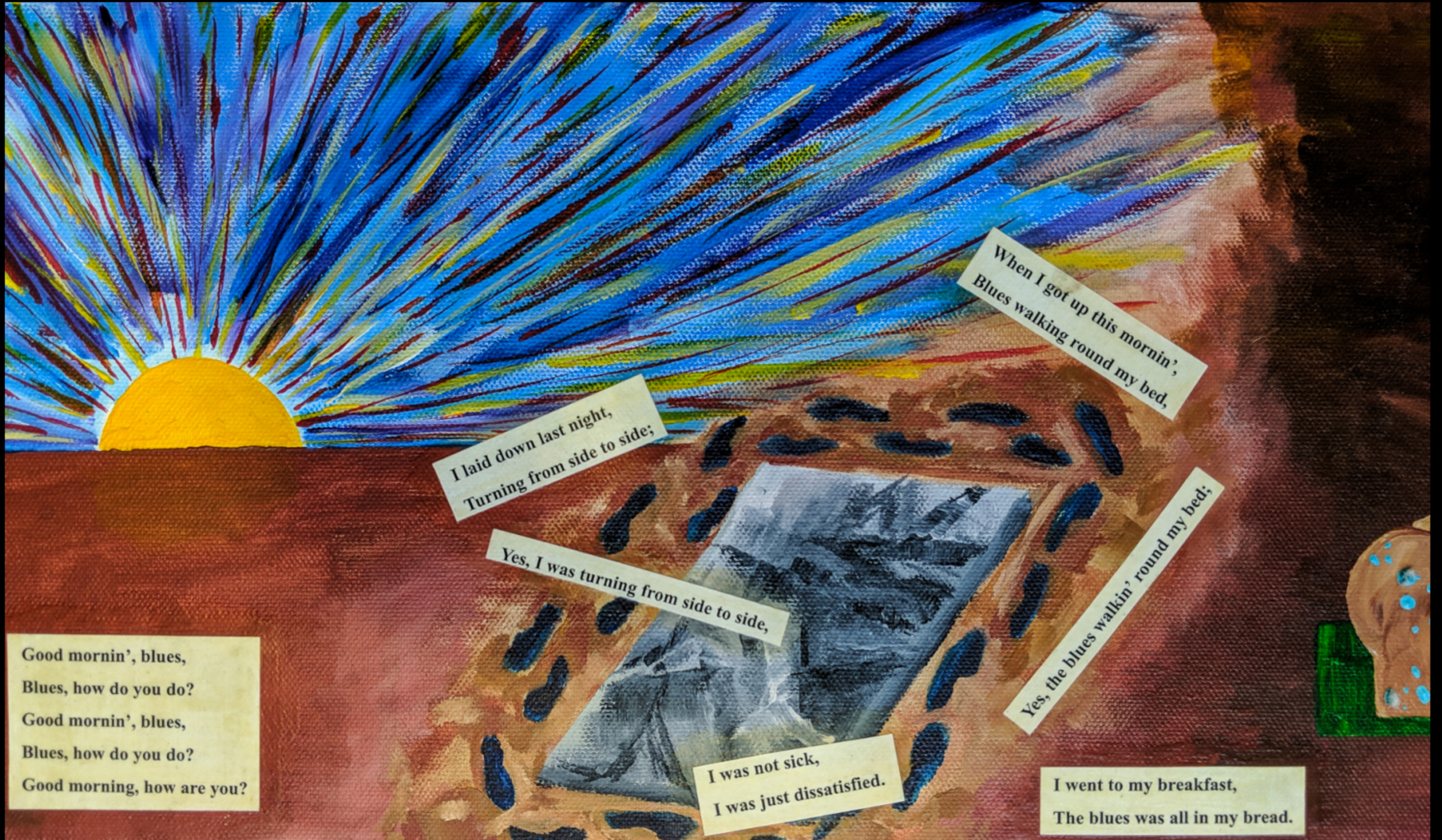
Good mornin', blues,
Blues, how do you do?

I'm doing alright,
Good morning, how are you?

You don't know what to say.

Good Morning, Blues by Jimmy Rushing, 1937

Erin Daly



Good mornin', blues,
Blues, how do you do?
Good mornin', blues,
Blues, how do you do?
Good morning, how are you?

I laid down last night,
Turning from side to side;

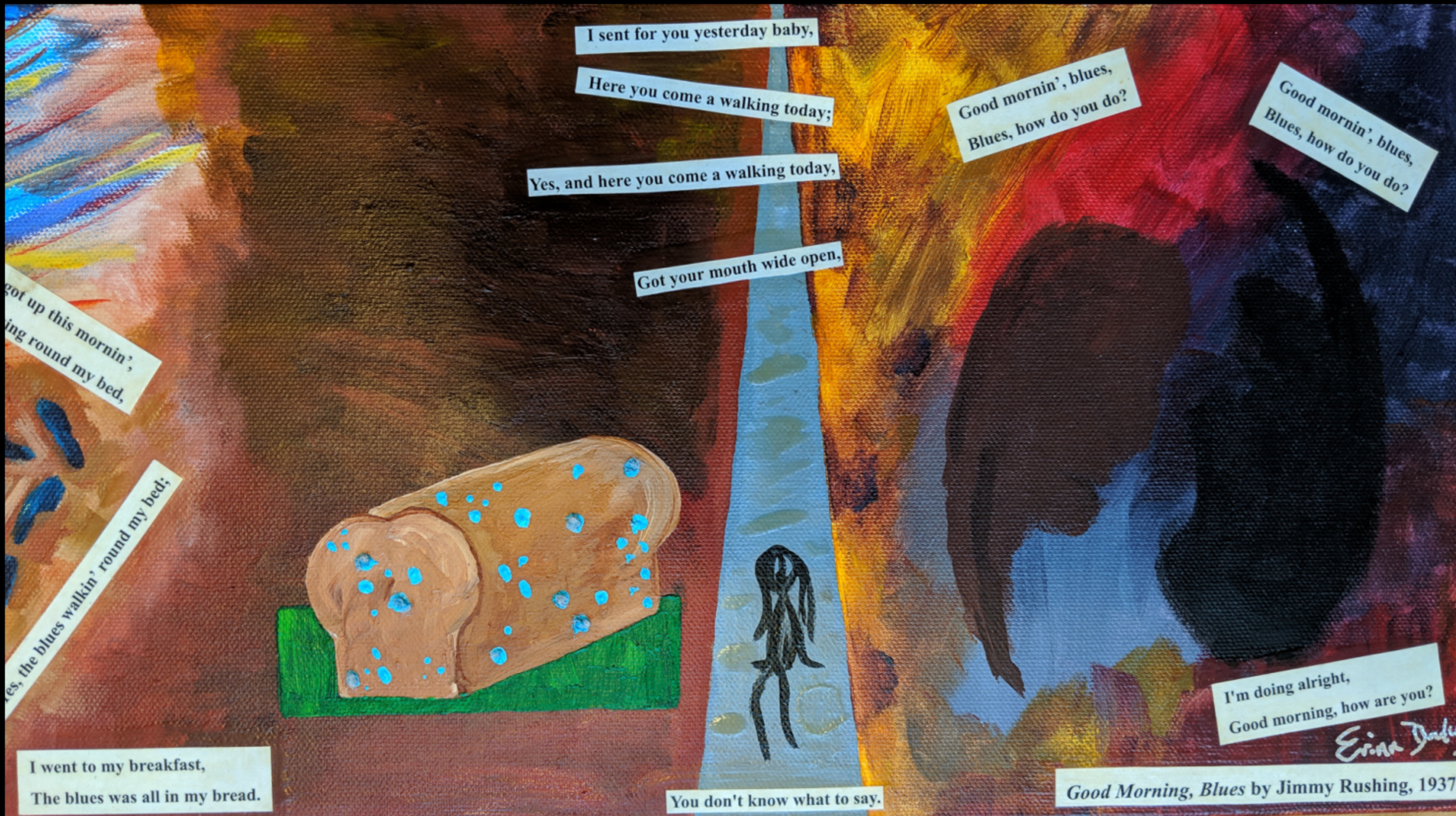
Yes, I was turning from side to side,

I was not sick,
I was just dissatisfied.

When I got up this mornin',
Blues walking round my bed,

Yes, the blues walkin' round my bed;

I went to my breakfast,
The blues was all in my bread.



I sent for you yesterday baby,

Here you come a walking today;

Yes, and here you come a walking today,

Got your mouth wide open,

Good mornin', blues,
Blues, how do you do?

Good mornin', blues,
Blues, how do you do?

got up this mornin',
ing round my bed,

es, the blues walkin' round my bed;

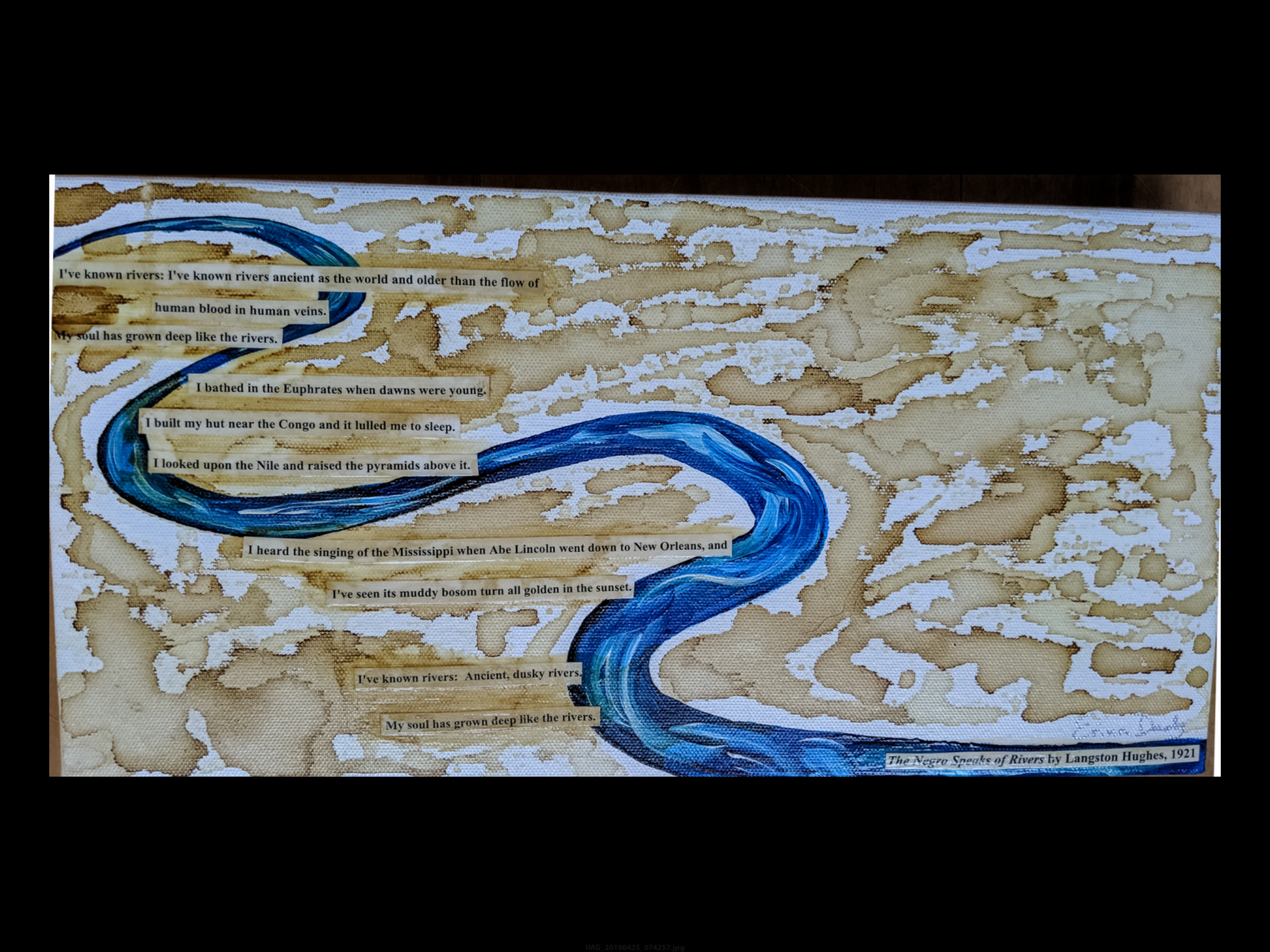
I went to my breakfast,
The blues was all in my bread.

You don't know what to say.

I'm doing alright,
Good morning, how are you?

Erian Dady

Good Morning, Blues by Jimmy Rushing, 1937



I've known rivers: I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of
human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.

I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.

I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.

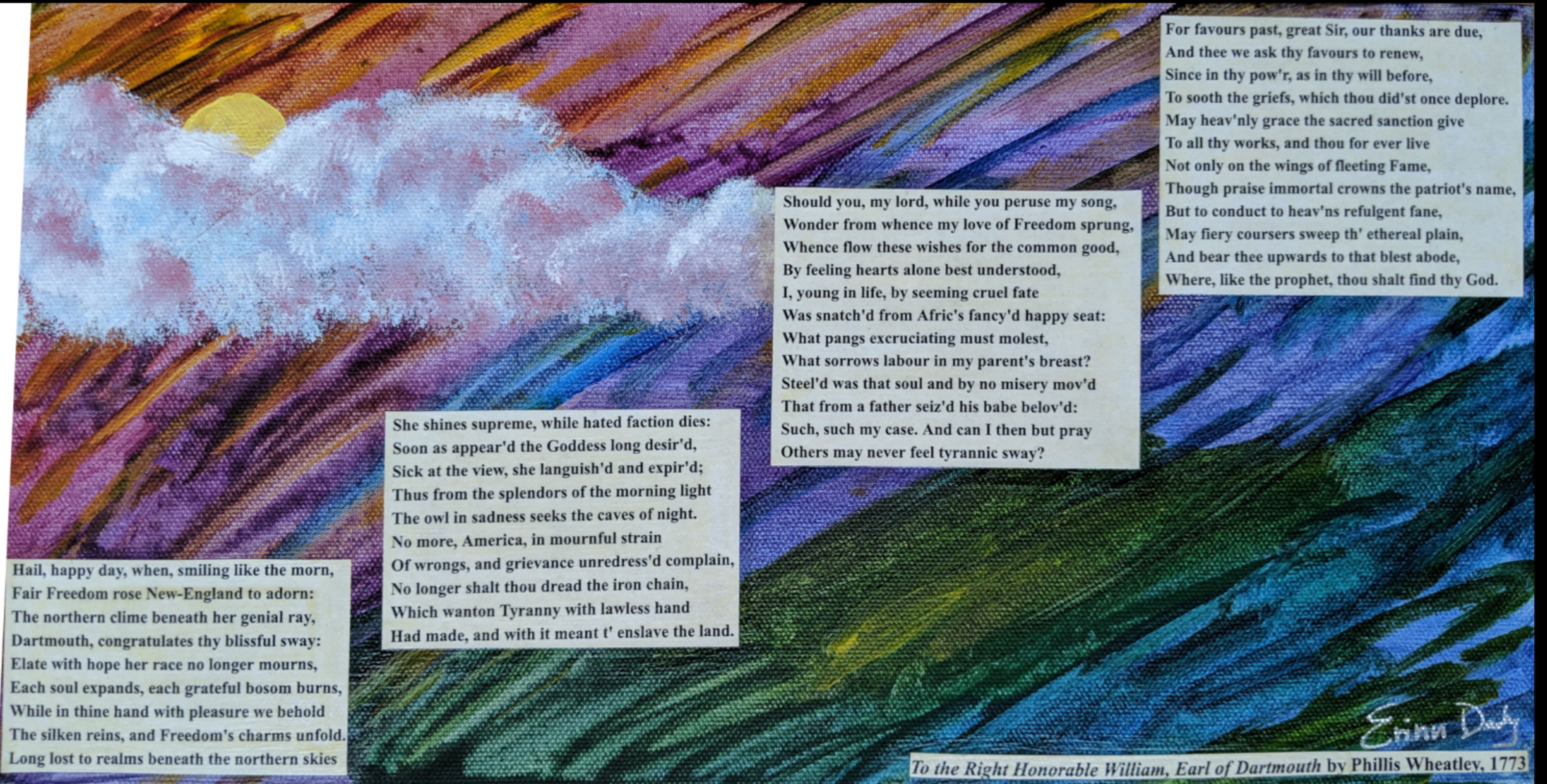
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went down to New Orleans, and

I've seen its muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers: Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

The Negro Speaks of Rivers by Langston Hughes, 1921



Hail, happy day, when, smiling like the morn,
Fair Freedom rose New-England to adorn:
The northern clime beneath her genial ray,
Dartmouth, congratulates thy blissful sway:
Elate with hope her race no longer mourns,
Each soul expands, each grateful bosom burns,
While in thine hand with pleasure we behold
The silken reins, and Freedom's charms unfold.
Long lost to realms beneath the northern skies

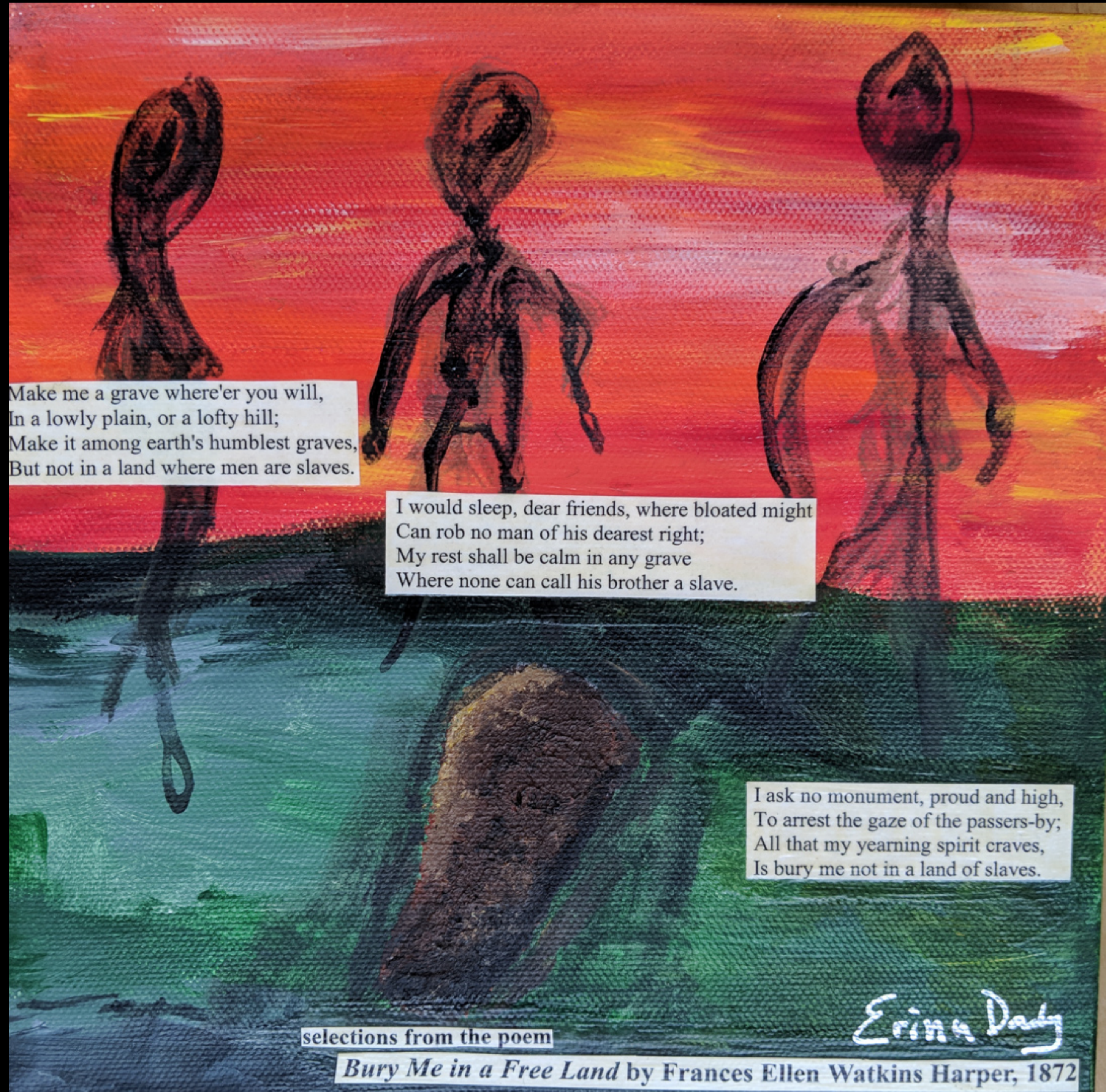
She shines supreme, while hated faction dies:
Soon as appear'd the Goddess long desir'd,
Sick at the view, she languish'd and expir'd;
Thus from the splendors of the morning light
The owl in sadness seeks the caves of night.
No more, America, in mournful strain
Of wrongs, and grievance unredress'd complain,
No longer shalt thou dread the iron chain,
Which wanton Tyranny with lawless hand
Had made, and with it meant t' enslave the land.

Should you, my lord, while you peruse my song,
Wonder from whence my love of Freedom sprung,
Whence flow these wishes for the common good,
By feeling hearts alone best understood,
I, young in life, by seeming cruel fate
Was snatch'd from Afric's fancy'd happy seat:
What pangs excruciating must molest,
What sorrows labour in my parent's breast?
Steel'd was that soul and by no misery mov'd
That from a father seiz'd his babe lov'd:
Such, such my case. And can I then but pray
Others may never feel tyrannic sway?

For favours past, great Sir, our thanks are due,
And thee we ask thy favours to renew,
Since in thy pow'r, as in thy will before,
To sooth the griefs, which thou did'st once deplore.
May heav'nly grace the sacred sanction give
To all thy works, and thou for ever live
Not only on the wings of fleeting Fame,
Though praise immortal crowns the patriot's name,
But to conduct to heav'ns refulgent fane,
May fiery coursers sweep th' ethereal plain,
And bear thee upwards to that blest abode,
Where, like the prophet, thou shalt find thy God.

Phillis Wheatley

To the Right Honorable William, Earl of Dartmouth by Phillis Wheatley, 1773



Make me a grave where'er you will,
In a lowly plain, or a lofty hill;
Make it among earth's humblest graves,
But not in a land where men are slaves.

I would sleep, dear friends, where bloated might
Can rob no man of his dearest right;
My rest shall be calm in any grave
Where none can call his brother a slave.

I ask no monument, proud and high,
To arrest the gaze of the passers-by;
All that my yearning spirit craves,
Is bury me not in a land of slaves.

selections from the poem

Bury Me in a Free Land by Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, 1872

Erina Day

I have seen full many a sight
Born of day or drawn by night:
Sunlight on a silver stream,
Golden lilies all a-dream,
Lofty mountains, bold and proud,
Veiled beneath the lacelike cloud;
But no lovely sight I know
Equals Dinah kneading dough.

Brown arms buried elbow-deep
Their domestic rhythm keep,
As with steady sweep they go
Through the gently yielding dough.
Maids may vaunt their finer charms--
Naught to me like Dinah's arms;
Girls may draw, or paint, or sew--
I love Dinah kneading dough.

Eyes of jet and teeth of pearl,
Hair, some say, too tight a-curl;
But the dainty maid I deem
Very near perfection's dream.
Swift she works, and only flings
Me a glance--the least of things.
And I wonder, does she know
That my heart is in the dough?



Dinah Kneading Dough by Paul Laurence Dunbar, 1889