

POETRY

Two Poems by Harmony Holiday

Our poetry editor, Wendy Xu, has selected two poems by Harmony Holiday for her monthly series that brings original poetry to the screens of Hyperallergic readers.

Wendy Xu 2 days ago



Alma Thomas, "Leaves Fluttering in the Breeze" (1973), oil on canvas, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Huntington Library (photo by Elisa Wouk Almino/Hyperallergic)

No Line Ma

That it was objective to shred this river ever
so misanthropic I love everybody
Going sailing low in the net next star
over tar or tour card Jimmy's tailor

dark as the spiders he raises to scarves and april it's the end of loneliness

I fantasize about this heist the poltergeist who finally strangles the ready blue
white

And nights alone in linen algorithms with no one but him in me punching the air
hello

There is no one left to be lonely for longing is as grotesque as ever

I'm not doing that anymore it's three AM and disappearance remedies lurking
outside against the trumpet bricks you tried needing somebody by habit but

the tribe's been emptied

There's a slick new way to say *I'm on the list* every night

There's a new entrance a fight that gasps like a prayer between dl bouncers and their true loves

Dat ass that diamond in the back actin'

I'm tempted to get to Algeria and declare you dead all casual like strangers had

But there are so many of us up in the mountains pretending we're coming back stranger
black

I want you to know I'm not coming back not for agriculture not to be blackgold for
you and downriver a shredded herd of that girl

Maafa you call her

Crazy you call her

Later this century trying to win her in a raffle with a crystal candy dish and some hotel
soap

Prizes like this are embarrassing

The ones you win when you couldn't care less

Like citizens and a dozen motherless men

Then what

I keep the autumn leaves tucked between my feet like feathers or the other chromosomes

The chrome is for the color omens & for us thrush and crisp underfoot in the
middle of canada that we live to tell it don't run out of plot acting guilty
for the kill you revel in privately outrun the guilt damn I hate shy bitch

Don't you like the way I'm alive to tell it & shameless

Don't you run the way you pronounce tribunal on a bend of contempt romantic

* * *

Harmony Holiday is a writer, dancer, archivist, and the author of four collections of poetry *Negro League Baseball*, *Go Find Your Father/ A Famous Blues*, and *Hollywood Forever*, and *A Jazz Funeral for Uncle Tom*, forthcoming. She also founded and runs Afrosonics, an archive of jazz and everyday diaspora poetics and Mythscience an imprint that reissues work from the archive. She contributed to SOS, the selected poems of Amiri Baraka, transcribing all of his poetry recorded with jazz that had yet to be released in print and exists primarily on out-of-print records. Harmony studied rhetoric at UC Berkeley and taught for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre. She received her MFA from Columbia University and has received the Motherwell Prize from Fence Books, a Ruth Lilly Fellowship and a NYFA fellowship. She is currently working on a book of poems called *M a a f a* and an accompanying collection of essays and memoir entitled, *Reparations: Thieves Who Stole my Blue Days*, as well as a biography of jazz singer Abbey Lincoln.

These poems are excerpted from *M a a f a*, a collection named after the underused word for the African holocaust, and which centers on a woman by the same name.

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