

HOLLYWOOD FOREVER: EXPLORING THE DIGITAL AFRICAN DIASPORA IN POETRY

by

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Harmony Holiday is an experimental poet with a background in performing arts and a passion for social justice. As a thriving poet and performance artist, she initially received her BA in rhetoric from UC Berkeley and her MFA from Columbia University. Some of her published works include poetry collections, short stories, and essays. Her first published book of poems, *N**** League Baseball* in 2010, won the Motherwell Prize and is about how to navigate life while being critical of race. Her collection of poems *Go Find your Father/A Famous Blues* was published in 2013 and is composed of letters dedicated to her father who passed away when she was a child. Holiday's collection of poems, *Hollywood Forever*, was published in 2017 in both an e-book and printed format. This essay exclusively examines Holiday's ebook *Hollywood Forever*. The e-book is non-traditional and includes a variety of media and performative elements that might otherwise be experienced in art exhibits or installations. The e-book is uniquely crafted to display a blend of visual and auditory features like posters, news reports, and podcasts. Moreover, the multimedia production adds layers of meaning, complexity, and emotion to the text. Holiday's inclusion of historical materials from American Black culture is a recreation of the Black diaspora archives. Through the unity of old and new media, Holiday weaves together a complex narrative that combines past historical oppression, racial injustice, and intergenerational trauma to recontextualized contemporary social issues. The e-book embodies afropresentism, the combination of digital archival materials, to empower the Black voice. By reshaping history to create space for Black identities, digital texts can participate in the making of their own social and archival construction. The process of rememory uses archival material to reconstruct the narrative of a previously marginalized group. Holiday's text uses rememory to investigate cultural biases and rearticulate the reader's approach to racial injustices.

Holiday is the daughter of the soul singer, Jimmy Holiday, who passed away in 1987 due to heart failure, only five years after Harmony was born. His passion for music was a centerfold of the family, and Harmony Holiday delineates her connection to her father through music. Throughout her texts, Holiday explores the meaning of her father's absence in relation to her identity as a Black woman living in America. Her poetry, particularly *Hollywood Forever*, engrosses the reader as she navigates through her family history and her role as a daughter. While trying to understand her own identity, Holiday negotiates her reality and further depicts how race mutates her experiences both within the home and the broader social landscape.

Her writing integrates her family history and the intergenerational trauma she carries as a Black woman within the African diaspora. Her father and their relationship played a large role in her life and continues to be a focused interest in her poetry. She says, "I'm waiting for the sun to unravel like a black father addicted to music listening himself into tears in a fit of silence cause that's more natural" (12). Music was deeply important to her father and was used to vocalize the anger and sadness he felt as a response to racial segregation. Jimmy Holiday was born in Sallis, Mississippi, in 1934 in a small town in segregated rural America (Erlewine). He was born during the Great Depression, an era that greatly impacted racialized communities in America. The economic disparity and recession in the 1930s caused further violence towards minorities, as resources and jobs became scarce. Jimmy Holiday navigated his adolescence during an incredibly challenging decade, and like many Black elders, likely faced covert and overt forms of violence and brutality.

While the experiences her father endured throughout his life are not explicitly addressed, the generational hardships he encountered are documented through archival materials and media.

The uniqueness of Harmony Holiday's writing and the multiple forms of media she uses creates an emotional sensory experience for the reader. Ultimately, the delivery pushes the reader to also be critical of racist rhetoric and the disconnection between historical events and the present. By adding elements beyond her own writing, she is contextualizing cultural phenomena and mediatized images to give depth to this era of postwar racial transformation. The archival material establishes a foundation for Holiday's exploration of Black identity and legitimizes her claims by using the media to capture life in the past. The images, videos, and songs Holiday includes interrogates ideologies surrounding race and white supremacy. Archival representation enables viewers, or in this case, Holiday's readers, to understand cultural contexts for race and its subtle and overt enforcements through white dominant forms of cultural and social power. The exposure to archival material allows the reader to re-evaluate the criteria that determine historical truths, often truths that are framed through white eurocentricity.

Historical information is presented and blurred with whiteness, and minority communities struggle to present and frame their own history within a dominant white culture. Holiday's archival material scrapbooking method allows her to gain control of a narrative that has historically been regulated by white colonizers. Not only have minority communities traditionally been excluded from the documentation of their own culture but have suffered additional consequences from this debar. Furthermore, "the narratives of culture framing the history of the individual frequently marginalize certain communities as 'other' and that this, in turn, has often led to their victimization" (Giannachi 94). The process of ostracization from the archives creates a feedback loop that continues to maintain white focus and prevent minorities from entering scholarship.

Cultural and historical truths are mediated traditionally through white entitlement and control and in turn obscure marginalized perspectives. The white perspective monopolizes American history and determines what is socially and epistemologically considered *truth*. Unfortunately, the normalization of white history as the empirical and factual “truth” suppresses alternative narratives and limits the comprehensive construction of events. Scholar Gabriella Giannachi argues that *point of view* has been largely neglected in the analysis of archival material. Particularly when observing materials produced under the reign of British colonialism. Biases of the informants, archivists, and scholars can distort the reality of the circumstances. The majority of Black archival work was appropriated by colonialism, and therefore the majority of Black history is “*about* rather than *of* the communities' ” (99). Black culture and people have been documented and recorded through white fascination and interest rather than celebration or appreciation. This presents a multitude of issues, largely stemming from the objectification, dehumanization, and sexualization of Black bodies. The display of Black bodies as a focal point of the white gaze reduces the cultural identity, practices, traditions, and ways of being that make up the Black culture. For instance, Giannachi observes:

“Diasporic archives are to be considered not only as sites, or contents, but technologies and practices preserving individual points of view, or first voices, and the contexts from which they emerge, which are both, as yet, still frequently absent from the archive. This has meant that diasporic archives, or even, nowadays, archives more broadly, have frequently had to adopt innovative methods for the capture, preservation, and exhibition of individual points of view including contextual information about their emergence.”

(Giannachi 100)

The gatekeeping in the archives further disconnects Black people from their historicized culture and identity, thus perpetuating the Black diaspora and limiting Black-identifying participation in the archives. The archives were often curated by white scholars for other white scholars and the exclusion of Black voices and perspectives within the archives is a persistent issue.

Historically, marginalized individuals have also been excluded from scholarly participation and discussion, so interactivity with archival material has had to occur beyond traditional boundaries of academia. Black communities needed to adopt innovative forms of expression to facilitate discussion on their own cultural material. Enriching conversations surrounding Black history by African-American people has taken place through art and media, where there are fewer barriers to participation. The marriage of poetry and media to recreate the archives is a purposeful combination of Holiday's knowledge and desire to provide accessibility to non-academic communities. Her text makes archival material that would be taught and shared through an academic setting, accessible to a non-scholarly demographic. Her work transcends traditional boundaries to include media scholarship while cultivating outlooks that critique social issues and popular culture.

By using mediums that allow for more creative freedom, the inclusion of archival material in the text is a form of resistance and rebuilding of the archives. Creative spaces outside of academic spaces allow for the emergence of digital humanities and digital remaking. The benefit of non-traditional forms of scholarship, "lay bare the emergence of scholarly and activist approaches where digital praxes arise organically from their local cultural, scholarly, and historical contexts, beholden to the white dominant conceptualization of digital humanities for institutional recognition but existing independently of it" (Joseph and Risam 12). Holiday's ebook participates in the Black Atlantic digital space, and the text includes scholarly insight

about the archives but exists independently from institutional recognition. *Hollywood Forever's* inclusion of archival material co-exists with the scholarly approach one might identify in the humanities. However, the delivery used to express Holiday's perspective is performed through a method that allows for more creative freedom and engagement from a wider audience.

The strategic use of archival material and blend of multimedia in Holiday's ebook educates and informs the reader on the difficulties the African-American community encountered but also how the past plays a defining role in the issues the Black community faces in the present. Strategically, the inclusion of different media acts as evidence for her voice. The emotional writing, combined with historical records, creates a balance between pathos, ethos, and logos. Through these rhetorical tactics, the reader is engaged and invested in Holiday's personal insight and her testimony. Her identity provides her voice with the authority to speak about the hardships of racism and the impacts of generational trauma. Further, her first-hand knowledge of racism and systemic oppression gives her authorship credibility and builds trust with the reader. Her story and argument, to decolonize the Black diaspora, raises itself organically from the trauma she has experienced through her own life and her family.

The recreating of the past through archival material allows Holiday to reconstruct social reality and cultural practices. The "diasporic archive can therefore operate as a tool for cultural orientation" which allows a person of colour to represent their culture (Giannachi 94). The diaspora archive has a transformative power that influences how viewers perceive the relationship between the past and present. Archival practices serve to form cultural identity and community through the painful but cathartic practice of exposing the oppression and racism within America. Further, "the diasporic archive has the potential to transform our reading of such processes of marginalization, making it possible for oppressed cultures to be brought to light and

their histories to be rewritten” (Giannachi 95). Holiday focuses on the process of marginalization for Black communities and exposes the impacts that various institutions and laws had in controlling the African-American population. The delivery of the archives through her voice and perspective allows Holiday to rewrite part of the past. *Hollywood Forever* renegotiates history that has been hidden, concealed, or inaccurately represented. For many minorities, the violence and oppression caused by colonialism are suppressed and subjected to superficial victimization. As a result, the minority culture is not empowered, uplifted, and granted the benefit of complexity that all cultures embody.

The benefit of digitization is that the medium allows frameworks that can decenter whiteness and criticize eurocentricity. Moreover, digitization has provided the tools to open new avenues for community building and involvement. The creation of media like films, exhibits, art, images, and animations allows Black voices to express their culture and history to an audience. The digital Black diaspora participates in archives beyond the traditional boundaries. The intersection of Blackness and digital culture offers a new approach to the humanities that allows for transnationality and cross-temporality. The inclusion of the “Black Atlantic perspective on the digital opens up the possibilities of a model for incorporating underrepresented voices and histories within a framework of digital humanities while resisting colonizing them, as digital humanities has a tendency to do” (Joseph and Risam 11). Digital spaces open up opportunities for voices to be heard and power to be shifted to marginalized groups. The opportunity to create and participate in the making of culture is extremely powerful and the digital Black Atlantic landscape allows for Black communities to produce their own cultural legacy. The *digital Black Atlantic* is a term that intended to capture broader African-American discourses outside of the subject of traditional academic scholarship. The digital Black Atlantic “offers a challenge to a

Eurocentric periodization of history by connecting past, present, and future through the legacies and ongoing conditions of racism, enslavement, and colonialism” (5). Holiday’s work uses the digital Black Atlantic as a medium to incorporate cross-temporality by bringing together the past and the present through media. The mediatization of archival material in her e-book creates a space outside of traditional archival institutions. The alternative space mediates historical timelines to project the notion that time is interconnected. By using media to display archival material, Holiday is exploring Black culture and the issues derived from systemic racism with the reader.

Holiday’s Writing - Grammar, Tempo, Craft

The breathless tempo of Holiday’s poetry is produced through unconventional grammar and punctuation. Like the necessity of movement and composition in dance, she uses literary vernacular and non-standard techniques to challenge the racialized speech assumptions of the reader. Her lines are composed of run-on sentences with unconventional breaks or stops, therefore leaving the reader to reinterpret the tone of the words and their delivery. Holiday’s experimental approach to writing and language is a way of transforming the colonial roots of the English language. The English language was historically forced onto enslaved African-Americans with prescriptions of grammar and regulation. Language was a form of control to immobilize the Black body under white regulation (Dai). Grey Gundaker says, “weighing in against the ascription of cultural distinctness, at least in much European-oriented thought, are supposed universals that "make us all human." Not surprisingly, these often serve the interests of economically and politically dominant groups” (128). However, Holiday adaptation to grammatical rules is breaking the boundaries and limitations that sustain colonialism. In her

poem “And fetish objects will fight you” Holiday writes, “But to teach the monotonous silhouette of morals that it does not matter that all gates open on one witness who is the same witness and the grapes beg you to eat them before they rot in the symmetry of obedience or sever in their distracted beauty and turn into the part of you opening some logo window” (11). Her lack of punctuation creates a sense of breathlessness, but the white spacing between words forces the reader to pause. The gaps between certain letters serve as a way to regulate the tempo of the poem.

The use of phonology and lyricism creates harmony between text and sound, contributing to the performativity of her poetry. Holiday’s language is crafted to be resistant to eurocentricity while also utilizing language to create a performance and experience for the reader. Fred Moten, a scholar in Black and performance studies, explores how performance elements can engage an audience. The experimental form of writing is disruptive and “new grammar can emerge from conventional writing as another writing infused with another sensuality, where the visual might expand toward hieroglyphic, from purely phonetic, meaning and where aurality further serves to disrupt and trouble meaning toward- content” (Moten 3). The breath manipulation in Holiday’s written component is one of the many performative elements that she uses to convey emotion.

Introduction to Music

Harmony Holiday was immersed in music from an early age and later found expression through dance and performance. Her artistic sport subsequently translated into poetry, as she manipulates rhythm and storytelling through words and language. As a dancer, she brought musicality and performance features to her writing. Her artistic background and knowledge of engaging the audience elevates the affectivity of her poetry. Musical features are central elements to her poetry, both through her writing as well as the presentation of her texts. The

music and audio clips in Harmony text are multifaceted and layered with meaning, as they unite centuries of musical tradition with modern adaptations. In *Hollywood Forever* she says “I wake up thinking about music, true to my own code, true to my own code” (18). She includes music throughout the decades as sounds have transformed, including newer electronic adaptations such as Afrobeats. Holiday is also a producer of Afrobeats, which is a combination of West African styles with American jazz, funk, vocals, and fuji music. Similar to the combination of new media to readapt the archival material, she presents new music that uses musical elements from the past.

Jazz Music is the Sound of Black America

During the time of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade when Black people were immobilized and stripped of their identity and freedom, music was one of the only forms of self-expression and creativity (Jones). Music and musical practices are deeply ingrained into African-American history and culture as a way of building opportunity, relationships, and connection. Musical spaces and practices were inherently, by nature of existence, countering white oppression and control. The limitations put in place to restrict communication between slaves meant that reading and writing were forbidden practices. Music was a type of oral tradition that allowed African-American’s to participate in storytelling and the sharing of information. Moreover, music and song allowed Black slaves to memorialize traditions, create culture, and practice collective resilience. The songs sung by slaves on plantations, particularly in the south, paved the way for Blues music that was later urbanized at the beginning of the 20th century. As free slaves migrated towards city centers, the birth of Jazz music and key musical elements “blossomed on unprecedented scales. Key features include African-based rhythmic foundations, prevalence of improvisation in individual and collective formats, blues roots, highly personalized expression

amidst rich collective interaction, self-transcending connections, and spirituality.” (Sarath 3). Harlem was a predominantly Black neighborhood in New York that became dense during the great migration and produced a space where Black culture erupted with cultural richness.

The Harlem Renaissance was a period when African-Americans fostered their musical culture; the making of Jazz music laid the foundation for Black Atlantic Rhythm. As southern slaves migrated north to New York, differing African-Americans across the United States came together. Blues music later turned into jazz, when spaces like Harlem brought together the lower, middle and upper class, granting access to different perspectives, ideas, and technology. Jazz music inherently signifies the emancipation and unity of freed slaves. Jazz music was a point of pride from the African American community. Soul modeled its communal approach to the church by focalizing virtuosic Black resilience on a national scale. Further, the music was not “simply a genre of music, it was a logic constituted through a network of strategic performances... meant to promote Black thriving, if not liberation” (5). Soul music is not only encompassed by the music, but also the ideology, politics, subjectivity, and spirituality that its practices produce. Further, soul has performative details that make it much larger and more meaningful than the music itself. Post-emancipation, soul became a word that was synonymous with the Black condition: the pride, anger, and sentiment of Black identity. The gospel, blues, jazz, and soul music playing in Holiday’s e-book symbolizes African-American history through the voice and perspective of African-Americans.

In *Hollywood Forever*, her lyrics also speak to her passion and appreciation for music as a way for self-expression. In the poem “is that you? Is Stevie Wonder still alive?” She expresses the importance of music for the African American community. She says,

“See the blues man of course, or the blues woman, is someone who begins with the catastrophic. The blues is an autobiographical chronicle of a personal catastrophe expressed lyrically. It's a lyrical response to the Monstrous.... The blues respond to the catastrophic with compassion, without drinking from the cup of bitterness, not with revenge but with Justice. The blues sensibility. You let that love inside you be expressed even though it's hard for it to be translated into love

Her poem is describing how music is so deeply ingrained into Black identity and expression.

Despite the many challenges that prevented Black people from flourishing independently during the post-emancipation era, music provided relief and happiness. Holiday further says, “without drinking from the cup of bitterness” meaning that music was not produced with bitterness, resentment or violence. Blues music acted as a form of retaliation and beautiful justice, which speaks to the ability of the Black community to turn negative experiences into positive art and culture. Music allowed people of color to battle racial stereotypes and form control of their identity.

Music was an outlet for people of color to share their experiences and express their feelings. Holiday's poems are overlaid with a variety of music, but the dominating genre is jazz. The poem “TheBlackEntertainer'sLove-CalledBlues” is introduced with the song titled “Just A Closer Walk With Thee” by the African-American Jazz artist Hampton Hawes. Hawes was known as one of the best jazz pianists of his time but also struggles with racism in Southern America. The poem “TheBlackEntertainer'sLove-CalledBlues” speaks to how important music is in Holiday's text. Similarly, the song “Still Water” by the Four Tops (Holiday 18) is a quartet that sang soul music in Detroit, Michigan. The song sounds like gospel singing and has very powerful vocals with a jazz background. Techniques for soul music lent themselves from the

Black Baptist church, which was described as being the foundation to the spiritual essences that soul music sought to capture. According to Emily Lordi in her book *The Meaning of Soul: Black Music and Resilience since the 1960s* soul symbolizes independence and strength. Unlike the church, soul music represented spirituality without religion, a kind of racial-spirituality that gave faith to Black people to remain resilient. The music enriches the experience of the e-book because with each song, clip, and chorus, the intertextual references deepen. All the African-American singers featured in her ebook have complex histories of battling racism and using music as an escape from oppression.

In the poem “The City Admits no Wrongdoing” Harmony Holiday talks about Billie Holiday, the famous blues singer, and her experience as a young girl being put on a train in the 1920s, “headed north towards a better life” (23). The music playing over the poem is “How Long Blues” by Leroy Carr, the lyrics sing “How long, baby how long, Has that evening train been gone?... Went to the station, didn't see no train. Down in my heart, I have an aching pain” (23). The song is fitting to the text because the train signifies the great migration and the movement of freed slaves up to North-East metropolitan areas. Billie Holiday began performing in Harlem as a teenager after suffering from mental and economic instability, financial hardships, and sexual assault in her youth. During her career, she was frequently racially targeted by the police because of her drinking and drug addictions. Even on her deathbed, she was criminalized; she had her fingerprints and mugshot taken while sick in a hospital bed, shortly before her death (Hari Politico). Billie Holiday faced the tangible consequences of racism in America until her last breath on this earth. The experiences of these artists are memorialized through their music, ultimately contributing to the collection of archival material curated by Harmony Holiday.

Many of the singers and artists used music to gain financial security and develop a career, a challenge in a world where African-Americans were systematically impoverished and routinely denied opportunities. Music provided many African-Americans with economic stability, income, and therefore limited forms of power in white society. People of color were put in positions where their voices could be amplified. In the poem “Medicine for SoftTimes” a clip from Nina Simone’s song “I Think It’s Going to Rain Today” is played on repeat. The lyrics of the song are, “Human kindness is overflowing and I think it’s going to rain today” (Holiday 24). Simone was a singer, songwriter, and musician, but also a civil rights activist. During the civil rights era, she used her fame and popularity to address racial inequality, discrimination, and the disproportionately higher rates of violence towards the Black community. Simone was also friends with many of the prominent civil rights leaders like Malcom X and Langston Hughes, and took part in demonstrations like the Selma to Montgomery marches. Her music, like the speeches that provide context and evidence of African-American history, demonstrate to the reader the struggle against oppression that the Black community has had to face in the past. Holiday’s appreciation for Black civil rights leaders is apparent in her selection of media and the prominent musical artists are no exception. The artists Holiday chose to include in her ebook are figures that can provide the audience with a further developed narrative of Black leadership. Their testimony, produced through art, allows Holiday to further uplift Black voices and experiences.

The music, while representing archival material, is more complex and further connected than at first glance. The music serves the purpose of illuminating Black voices and providing a deeper narrative to Holiday’s text. The selection of music is specific and thoughtful, and has a direct connection to the message presented in her poetry. *Hollywood Forever* is a collection of

poems that speak on Black history and culture, but also her personal life as the daughter of Jimmy Holiday. Holiday writes in her poem titled “What Jimmy Taught me” that “to be born into a yellowhousehold where the Black man rules with his fists... watching your Black father beat your white mother empowers you”. The poem exposes Holiday’s personal experience with her father abusing her mother while the song “He Hit Me and It Felt Like A Kiss” by The Crystals plays in the background. The song has been subject to criticism, arguably because the lyrics glamorize domestic violence. The lyrics express that women who are webbed in domestic violence are made to believe that the abuse stems from a place of affection. In this example, the choice of music is still from a group composed of Black artists, but the song also connects to Holiday’s family life. The choice of music throughout the collections of poems is deliberate, pointing to how Holiday chose to curate the e-book experience for the reader. The inclusion of jazz music in Holiday’s work is a connection between elements from the historical musical landscapes to the music of the present.

Holiday’s use of music is not limited to Blues, jazz, and soul, but she also includes afrobeats in her ebook. The afrobeats music, like the other genres, overlays her poetry and media to create an experience for the reader. Afrobeats is a production that combines elements from West Africa with other musical styles, like Jazz, soul, and funk. Afrobeats is a modern rendition and reinvention of music from the past. Moreover, Afrobeats as a genre is a tool for reclaiming Black identity and connecting Black people back to African culture, particularly as a way of negotiating the effects of the Black diaspora. The musical genre allows Black people who have been displaced because of colonialism to reconnect with a part of their African heritage and foster culture in the present. The production of Afrobeats is a space for creativity and freedom

because the genre is broadly defined and accommodating to a variety of intersecting identities across the Black diaspora.

Holiday uses Afrobeats to experiment with sound and to create a visceral experience for the reader. For example, in her poem, “Is that you? Is Stevie Wonder Alive?,” the song “Natural Melanin Being” by Ras G is playing (12). The tune has R&B singing in the background with chiming and sharp sounds. The music combines various sounds including high pitched electronic instruments and static makes the experience alarming and unusual for the reader. The music does not follow a consistent rhythm, but rather uses auditory elements that are unlikely to be heard in music. Afrobeats like Ras G’s music allows artists to take sounds, clips, and samples from previous music and add a new twist. The remaking of music using old clips allows modern artists to identify their music with the feeling and ideology from another culture, time, or genre. The inclusion of jazz music to Afrobeats allows Black artists to incorporate the history of Black resilience and unity into their music while also grounding the tune in the present. Holiday’s use of old music, like soul, Jazz, gospel, and R&B with new music like afrobeats to demonstrate to the readers cross-temporality.

Including music from the past into the experience of the text, allows readers to gain a sense of lyrical communicability (Moten and Lerner). Music has affectivity that is felt within the body as a sonic and phenomenological experience. Music is more than just music, it is history, community and spirituality; it is a form of communication that is intangible to the experience of the subjective. Rhythm or lack thereof, expresses much more than vibrations themselves but rather provides an embodied experience that speaks to feeling and emotion. Holiday says, “our collective oppression becomes both more and less trivial, all of the rap albums are employing gospel hymns, praise songs, chants against their own flimsy benediction” (58). Even rap music in

the present is used to channel the live experience of oppression in the same respect as gospel and jazz. Musical lyricism transcends the mind and expresses meaning to the reader. Communication through sound relies on the subjective interpretation of the listener. Music, like many art forms, depends on aesthetic pleasure and the possibility of sharing that pleasure with others. The communicability of art and beauty separates itself from cognitive judgement by becoming communicability without direct communication. Music has a plethora of cultural associations but as an aesthetic experience it serves to move the listener from within as a bodily reaction. It can allow for core sensory pleasure and an associative emotional connection to the self beyond the bodily experience. Further, “the condition of the African diaspora is a manifestation of strife and oppression, and music allows for the Black reality to be translated into a felt experience” (Moten 90). The music memorializes historical events and cultural sentiment within the Black community by physically manifesting the voice of those experiencing the hardships.

Holiday uses sound effects to diversify and deepen the soundscape of her e-book. While music does comprise the majority of her audio components, she does use sounds in some of her poems to add acoustic variety and add a contemporary feel to the historical material. One of the sound clips she includes is a man’s voices singing “that n***** came running back” (34). Initially, the voice begins as something melodic but as you listen, the sound then becomes layered with the same snippet to produce a distorted echo effect. The sound then becomes blurry and disorienting, as the separate tracks are fading in and out while playing at the same time. Similarly, she uses the same sound effects at the very end of her book, on the last page the audio is saying “Black Survivor “ (Holiday 94). The words fade in and out while the volume changes from loud to soft. The audio also becomes blurry and more difficult to hear as the words fluctuate. In both examples, the audio is disorienting and chaotic. The use of sound is used as

though the e-book is an exhibit, the text draws on audio techniques used to engage the audience by interfering with the reader's auditory perception. The altering of sound effects adds perspective and tone to the language that is being used and the words that are being said. The reader, who is experiencing the e-book, is subjected to embodied listening. The audience then engages with the emotion, thoughts, and experience the music or narrative provides in conjunction with the text.

Mediatization: Narration, Commentary, and Sound Effects

Holiday includes speeches and narration from different media outlets to further contextualise the archival material. Holiday overlays narration from news outlets, speeches, and interviews. Speeches and narration are used to memorialize the fight for Black rights and freedom, as well as document cultural commentary on socio-political change. Holiday includes an audio clip where a man with a raspy voice says, “we didn't have Dr. King and the boujie folks and role models, our role models were pimps and players” (Holiday 13). The audio clip crackles and is a little blurry, as the man explains that prior to the civil rights era there were few strong Black leaders that the community could look up to. The absences of role models within the Black community demonstrate how slavery and later governmental policies effectively immobilized the African-American population. Similarly, Holiday uses old audio from the civil rights era to expose the reader to realia that demonstrates the severity of segregation and discrimination. In Lorraine Hansberry, in a speech on the Black Revolution in 1964 says, “I am of a generation of n**** that comes after a whole lot of other generations, my father was a real type of American, a successful businessman and civil minded... he moved his family in a restricted area where no n****s is supposed to live and he fought in the courts” (Holiday 43). The Hansberry family moved to a white neighbourhood in Chicago in 1937 and went to court to defend their right to

buy property in a white restricted area. Her speech is testimony to the struggle that African-Americans faced with acquiring land and property. The audio provides the reader with contextual evidence of the repressive social norms and judicial system that were pitted against African-Americans. Further, the material demonstrates how eurocentric structures and racist systems were enforced to ensure that Black people continued to be marginalized and not granted equal opportunity after emancipation.

Holiday also married the audio from the past with narration and media outlets from the present. She included commentary from media sources as a way of incorporating the present into her digital collage of artifacts. Holiday includes audio of a woman saying “so am I going to expose these down-low racist ass fetishize ass white dudes that be on Tinder that be on Facebook, that be on the sugar daddy sites like trying to get some Black pussy cause i'm just tired of these dudes trying to use Black woman as some type of little fetish type shit okay don't, don't tell me that you like Black girls... because you watched Black girls in porn” (Holiday 45). Black women are frequently fetishized and eroticised by the media. The issue of intersectionality raises concerns about feminism and race, and representation of Black femininity in the sex industry. Further, Holiday adds the commentary of a man who addresses Black representation in mainstream media. He says, “Little wayne, Jada Kiss listening motherfuckers, motherfucking all you stupid ass loving Hip Hop listening mother fuckers... Chris borwn versus Soulja Boy playing that motherfuckers, after all that, guess what you got after that? Fifty four thousand of your own people are missing” (Holiday 31). He makes the critique that despite the success that a handful of Black artists have seen, the Black population is still not considered a socio-political priority and therefore still suffers great injustices. The speaker in the audio further argues that

regardless of a few Black people experiencing upwards social mobility, the Black majority continues to face obstacles that prevent them from receiving basic care and consideration.

Including contemporary critical commentary in *Hollywood Forever* on topics like race, bind together the content from the past to the identity of African-Americans today. Some of the commentary goes as far as to make direct reference to historical artifacts and therefore directly address how history implicates the narrative of Black identity. Holiday overlays a page with audio from a lecture, the woman giving the lecture is talking about how slave women were raped by their white male owners (46). The speaker in the audio is referring to the documents that were used to delegitimize white men who said they were in love with a Black woman. The speaker poses the question about reconstructing the information available through artifacts and historical documents. The speaker prompts the reader to think about engaging with the historical material differently. Alternatively, attempting to build other narratives by putting the text in dialog with the perceived empowered identity of Black people today. Moreover, Holiday quotes a comedian who says, “Is there a train near that train? There is something about being Black n****, you hear a train and you be like ‘I got to go’ I just wanna run away”. There are audible laughs in the background and the audio then changes the sound by fading into a blues song and the lyrics sing “Riding the rails to ease my pain” (Holiday 17). Holiday very specifically crafted the audio to demonstrate the connection between the past and present by focusing on the symbolism of trains in Black culture.

Mediatization: Visual Elements and Archival Material

Holiday’s poetry includes visual archival material and images that are presented like a collage. Parts of the visual imagery such as posters, newspapers, and photographs are cut, overlaid, and faded to create a blending of materials. The pages are crafted to incorporate

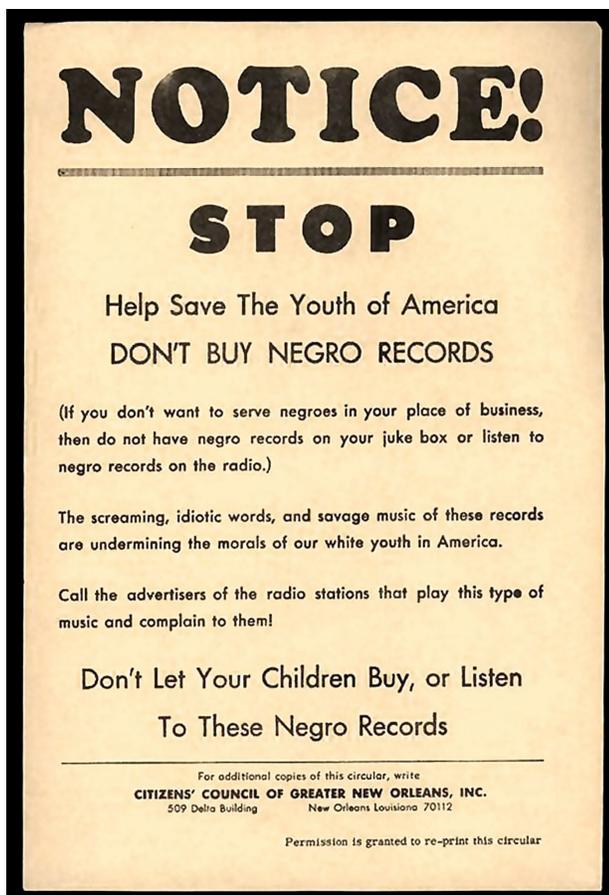
different sources of information and to project an overarching message that is specific to the poem and/or page. The materials are combined together to create one cohesive art piece. Holiday displays historical images to provide context to the reality of the African-American lived experience. The visual media provides the readers with a different way of contextualizing the narrative of Black culture and identity. Holiday says, “there is beauty aloof from struggle, but there is also this need in me to call out radios and videotape” (Holiday 2). She identifies in her poetry how valuable images can be in expressing ideas, concepts, and feelings. The images act as proof to demonstrate racist measures manifested through physical products.

Holiday uses a variety of historical posters that might have been posted and circulated during segregation to advocate for the separation of Black and white people. Unfortunately, these posters also exemplify the social norms and the cultural values that were held during after emancipation. Further, many of these posters were printed by racist institutions and white supremacy groups. The posters reflect the cultural attitudes that perpetuated violence and hatred towards Black people. The blatant dehumanization and discrimination normalized the mistreatment and continued brutality. At the time they were produced, the posters were informative and influential forms of media. The information provided on these posters were seen as factual and legitimate. The posters also set a standard of expectation for how white people should interact with the Black community. They were circulated as a way of teaching Black people how to behave and therefore were also used as a means for regulating Black bodies. The oppression worked in two folds, to discourage Black people from gaining power and to validate white privilege and supremacy. The posters worked to enforce social norms and ideals that

directly benefited white people. The media that was produced with the intention of demonizing, ridiculing, and reducing Black people.

Holiday uses one poster in particular multiple times throughout her collections of poems. The poster is a mustard yellow and has printed in big Black bolded letters the message “NOTICE! STOP Help Save The Youth of America, DON’T BUY N**** RECORDS” (Holiday 1). The image of the poster is altered and reposed on a few different pages, its image chopped or collaged to only show a part of the poster or words. The poster effectively demonizes Black music and culture by implying that Black culture is harmful to the minds of young white people. Not only did these posters discourage buyers from purchasing products or being interested in

Black music but they also implied that the music was damaging. The pamphlet was originally circulated by the Citizens Council of America, a group that vocally advocated against racial integration. The group strived to boycott Black people by reducing their opportunity to find work and earn an income. This kind of language was frequently used to oppress people of color by framing them as a danger to society, further dehumanizing them through the stereotype that they are uncontrollable and violent. The image of the poster evidently connects to Holiday on a deeper, personal level. Holiday’s father, whose



income supported their family by selling records and producing jazz music, was likely a victim

of this racist rhetoric. Like many artists of his time, it's possible his personhood and family suffered from the spread of discriminatory misinformation. The poster used fear to take advantage of white ignorance and foster hate and distrust towards African-Americans.

These posters served as a way to regulate the Black body by promoting surveillance and by ensuring that the Black community could continue to be controlled after emancipation. A similar styled poster in mustard yellow reads, "N**** beware do not attend communist meetings... the Ku Klux Klan is watching you TAKE HEED". After the emancipation of the slaves, tensions were high between previous plantation owners and newly freed slaves, ultimately telling us as readers that Black people were not safe in the south if they didn't migrate to communities like Harlem. The KKK, a terrorist group, was later formed in response to the abolition slavery. The group perpetuated violence and fear amongst the Black community, and used posters much like this one, to continue to control people of color with threats of punishment. The posters were a tactic used to prevent people of color from fighting back against the discrimination. This fear was undoubtedly stressful for Black people, having to be constantly afraid of violence while knowing that the judicial system was in place to favor the white voice. After the abolishment of slavery, the Black community was extremely vulnerable, despite not being physically controlled they were regulated through rhetoric and social constructs. Further, the term "communist" was broadly used to define groups or individuals who were advocating for social rights, regardless of their political standing. Communism was a term that was loosely thrown around to further instill fear into the white community and demonize people of color. The tactic was used to maintain segregation, prevent African-Americans from gathering, unifying, and ultimately gaining power. Holiday's combination of different types of visual media curates a narrative and provides the reader with a deeper grasp of the socio-historical context in different

geographical regions. On the same page as this poster a newspaper clipping reads “Alabama is a good place for good n****s to live in, but it is a bad place for n***** that believe in SOCIAL EQUALITY”. The poster blatantly states that Black people should not be fighting for equal rights or equality, at the core implying that Black people are not human and do not deserve basic, humanitarian, equal rights. Holiday’s focus the past allows her to expose the injustices of slavery and post emancipation, while also displaying how the Black community came together and lead the battle for social justice.

The History of Black Leadership

The material Holiday includes demonstrates the scrutiny that the Black community faced in the past. Regardless of a Black person's social standing, they continued to be stereotyped and judged based on their race. In the poem titled “that’s entertainment” Holiday says, “you know when you’re watching a favourite movie and keep rewinding to before your hero is killed. That’s Black American immortality. MLK is dangling his spirit in one hand” (Holiday 10). This idea of “Black

American mortality” stems from Black lives not being considered as valuable and respected as white lives. Even great leaders like Martin Luther King are mortal and vulnerable, despite being a nationally known, recognized politician and religious figure. King’s mortality, and later his death demonstrates that even the most loved and respected Black members are not safe. By



putting himself on display to the public and becoming the face of the civil rights movement, he became a target. Ultimately, his stature and position in the community is what later led to his murder. A front cover from the "The Atlanta Constitution" newspaper reads, "Dr. King Shot Died in Memphis" (Holiday 20). A photo of King sits below the title and Holiday's poetry overlaps the collage of newspaper clippings and a magazine cover with a Black model selling face cream. Martin Luther King is an example of a man who was judged and criticized harshly because of the power his voice wielded. As a Black politician, he represented the Black community and connected people all across America. As a figure, he symbolized the Black voice and experience.

Holiday's focus on media about Black Civil rights leaders exemplifies how rhetoric was used to vilify Black role models. The poem "Is This Tomorrow" says, "That's our King! Those sirens his baffle cheering, all vague and precise like an unmarked grave that might be his own" (Holiday 8). Overlaid with the poem is a clipping of a newspaper from the 3rd of July in 1963. "The Augusta Courier" wrote the headline: "Martin Luther King... A communist Training School" with a Black and white image of Black students sitting at his school. The language used in the newspaper frames King as anti-nationalist and a traitor. The language that was used to characterize and describe Black leaders fighting for equality was made to be perceived by the public as threatening and a danger to white civility. Further, this newspaper clipping demonstrated how Black bodies and communities were targeted by the media and institutions. The newspaper clippings contextualize the deeply ingrained bias within American media.

Martin Luther King was an admired leader, public figure, and under the national gaze. He fought for African-Americans and advocated for racial integration, fairness, and justice. Like many celebrities we know of today, his life was actively reported on and the members of his

family, like his mother, were no exception. Holiday includes a newspaper clipping from the Guardian that reads “Martin Luther King’s Mother Slain in Church” (Holiday 2). The newspaper headline attempts to deface his mother publicly, targeting his family with derogatory remarks that strive to ruin King’s credibility. Holiday is demonstrating the slander and defamation Black leaders faced in her poem “Adultery”. On the same page she adds in another clipping by “Brotherhood Records” magazine. The magazine posted an obituary for Martin Luther King after his death and there is an image of King and next to it the title “Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. FUNERAL SERVICES Ebenezer Baptist Church, April 9, 1968 Plus Great Speeches” (7). Holiday writes in her poem “Even MLK. He stepped out on the balcony for a private cigarette after sex with a woman who was not his wife (so what) (does that make him) when they shot him in the heart” (Holiday 7). King was scrutinized by white supremacy groups and the government, who were constantly tasked with attempting to discredit his social standing. He was killed in a moment where he was most vulnerable and exposed.

Holiday explores Black culture through material from the 1950s and 60s Civil Rights movement. She also includes narration from newscasts, interviews, podcasts, and videos, overlaying the narration and sounds with the images and text. She draws from public media that was widely circulated and available during those eras to contextualize politics, culture, and people. Holiday uses material that focuses on Black civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. The moving picture and the use of the audio allows the audience to be stimulated through multiple senses. Video’s give life to pictures and events through movement and breath, and it allows the viewer to see the reality of the situation unfolding rather than having to use their imagination. Holiday uses video to memorialize events and people from the civil right movement. She includes a 20-second-long clip of Malcolm X shaking hands with a group

of other Black men wearing suits (28). The video does not have the original audio but is overlaid with audio patched together by Holiday. The first five seconds start with a jazz song then they transition into the news broadcasters narrating the incident from when Malcom X was shot. The combination of media is used to create a performance and experience for the reader. The film allows the audience to experience for themselves the presence of these transformative Black leaders, like Malcom X. Malcom X was also targeted by the media and institutions, and was also assassinated, like King. The deaths of Black leaders point to the extent in which the Black community faced social immobilization.

White Fascination in the Media

Unlike the previous newspaper and poster examples, these mediums are less political, in the sense that they didn't have an overt social agenda. Holiday adds the cover of the magazine "Blackstone Legacy" and the heading reads in bold, capital letters "WHO ARE THE REAL BLACK SUPERSTARS? You've got a white chauffeur, a yacht and a key to the executive washroom! You've got it made right? Wrong! – A NEW LOOK AT BLACKS AT THE TOP". Black leaders, celebrities, and people of power were made to question their position and authority, as well as their credibility. Holiday's poetry below reads "Flat fiction of a race trapped in the stupor of transcendence" Black people in influential positions that were traditionally white, like popular artists, celebrities, and stars were actively delegitimized through pop culture media. Further, Holiday includes the magazine cover of "Jet" that has a Black woman in a swimsuit with a the caption that says "Why Hollywood won't Glamorize N****r Girls" (3). The language being used in the headline demonstrates that Black women were not given the credit, fame, or adoration that their white counterpart likely received from the media. The media was promoting

white supremacy by creating the narrative that Black people cannot attain the similar social prestige.

Newspapers, similar to the posters, were used to disseminate information and create social realities. Similar to the headlines about Martin Luther King, the media was used to frame Black culture as entertainment for the white gaze. The objectification of Black culture created by the dichotomy of white fascination, where Black identity is mocked and ridiculed but also

considered dangerous. Holiday adds a

historical newspaper where the headline

reads “Deceased Man’s Wife and

Girlfriend both post Obituaries in

Newspaper” with captures of both the

newspaper posting, from the girlfriend

and from the wife. The Black man here is

ridiculed and the headline is presented as

entertainment. However, another

screenshot over it is from a conversation,

the speaker “JB: one of the dangers of

being Black in America is being schizophrenic, and I mean schizophrenic in the most literal

sense. To be a Black American is in some ways the desire to be white. It’s part of the price you

pay for being born here, and it affects every Black person” (Holiday 68). The conversation

exposes how stereotyping the Black body as dangerous has serious consequences on Black

personhood. These two perceptions of Black identity are contrary to one another and yet

consume the dialog in the media.

The image shows two newspaper obituary notices for Leroy Black. The top notice is titled "BLACK, LEROY BILL" and reports his death on August 2, 2016, at age 55. It lists his family members and funeral services. The bottom notice is titled "BLACK, LEROY Blast" and reports his death on August 2, 2016, from cancer of the lungs. It also lists his family members and funeral services. Both notices include a small portrait of Leroy Black in a suit and tie.

Holiday positions the digital images next to the historical artifacts to create contrast. The collaging of new and old media demonstrates how the ideologies and conversation of the past have influenced and impacted the narrative within media today. The historical media shaped the social constructions of race and racial identity that society is familiar with now. Holiday examines the shift in the cultural conversation surrounding Black identity and African-American communities. Further, she includes an image of a protest that has happened recently, where the police are dressed wearing their bright green neon vests and shields in hand. The police uniform and the quality of the image shows the reader how recently the image was photographed. In the image the protesting crowd is pressed up against one another and pushing against the police (Holiday 38). The police are standing in their uniform with large transparent shields facing the angry protestors. The majority of the protestors are people of colour, and from communities that have historically been targeted by police violence. The civil rights era was a pivotal time for Black rights, but the injustices faced by the African-American community continue. That is to say, that the fight for equal rights is not over. Though society has progressed, Black people continue to be underrepresented in government, targeted by authority, and confronted with a plethora of racist and race-based issues. Understandably, protests and outcry continue to sweep the streets of many large metropolitan areas. Holiday also includes images that act as memorabilia for slavery and plantations. She includes a photograph of a United States highway sign, an unseemly innocent object that bears the title of “plantation”, the sign reads “To 5 James River plantation on the next right” (Holiday 12). Plantations were the confinements of many slaves brought to America, particularly during the south. For the Black community plantations represent powerlessness, loss, and trauma. Regardless of the years that have passed, signs like

these act as reminders of the slave trade and the institutions that were built on the basis of injustice.

Holiday also includes images from the internet through the form of screenshots, which is a type of documentation used in the 21st century. The style of the media has changed from archives to digital receipts, but the underlying messages and ideologies that are embedded into the images continue to be one of racial bias. Holiday included a screenshot of the Google search bar, and written inside the search bar is the question “are there still.” Below the search bar is the top recommended questions and one of the suggestions listed is, “are there still slaves” (Holiday 53). The screenshot proves that users are frequently searching for this question. The screenshot demonstrates a connection between the archival material she shares and the present. In the poem “The City Admits No Wrongdoing” Holiday included a magazine cover that reads “Will the Hollywood N**** make love” with an image of a man pressing his face intimately against a woman. Overlaid with the image is a screenshot from Urban Dictionary that reads “You Did That” with the definition that says, “basically means good job, giving someone props on something” (Holiday 23). The clashing of old and new media further emphasizes the purpose of the e-book, to bring together the past and the present through the collaging of materials.

Moreover, Holiday adds a screenshot where the title reads “15 women who died from butt injections” on the site “Bossip”, underneath it says “deadly butt injections, butt shots, booty shots, fatal injections, cosmetic surgery, Kardashian complex, donk sorcery, vanity kills.... For centuries Black women were ashamed of their butts now they are” (Holiday 11). Black women, whose bodies have been hypersexualized and eroticized for centuries, is now the body that women are risking their lives to achieve. The caption of the article implies that because more women are getting plastic surgery to have a larger butt and smaller waist, Black women are not

as ashamed of their own bodies. The relationship surrounding body alterations, feminine sexuality, and race are complex but the article points to an issue that plagues culture today. The appropriation of Black beauty and bodies by mainstream culture has altered the conception of Black identity. Twerking, for example, came from Black women dancing and the movement found its way into popular culture. Holiday includes an image of a Black man holding up a sign that says “Twerk for Justice” (Holiday 50). Unfortunately, Black bodies need to fight the stereotype that Black bodies are entertainment. These images are presented to the reader to demonstrate the dichotomy of Black bodies as either entertainment or threatening to the white existence.

Holiday’s Message: Investigating History - The Making of the Diaspora

Holiday investigates the fruition of the African diaspora by addressing the consequences of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade in her poems. In the poem “The Black Entertainer’s Love- Called Blues” Holiday writes “settlers wanted to disappear because tribesmen N**** wanted to reappear and settle again land was never meant to be owned or handled like currency” (14). In the poem she is referring to the colonial way of “owning” and the belief that white settlers can own the land “like currency”. The concept of ownership was applied to land as well as people. Further, Holiday describes that the slave trade produced the objectification and commodification of Black bodies. Holiday’s poem titled “And fetished objects will fight you” refers to the colonial way of objectifying. As demonstrated through the hypersexualization of Black bodies and dancing, the objectification of Black bodies allows for white fascination and gaze.

Holiday says, “ships have always been difficult for us and the water they lean on, the Atlantic be tossing in it’s own nightmares” (24). Holiday expresses the emotional turmoil that still arise from the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, writing, “The Atlantic be tossing in it’s own

nightmares”, meaning the Atlantic signifies fear. The slaves that crossed the Atlantic under treacherous conditions were then sold to slave owners for free labour. Many slaves perished and lost their lives on these ships and plantations, working under unspeakable conditions, as Holiday acknowledges when she says, “more slaves died for sugar than n***** die from one another more slaves went under for sugar than for cotton... safety is a pathetic notion to a black body” (60). This quote exemplifies that the Black body was treated like an object rather than a living being worthy of safety. In the poem “Plantation hopping” Holiday says, “Plantations were large townships run by Black slaves... No one knows your slave name. Angry beautiful regal black African slaves were the fabric holding the economy of the American South in place, and they were killing their pathetic captors in acts of brilliant retaliation far before the Civil War” (54). As Holiday notes “no one knows your slave name,” implying that the slaves were not even recognized as people but rather vessels for free labour. She refers to the anonymity of the slaves; their reduction to objects removed the qualities that made them human, like their names. The plantations were environments of control and oppression that allowed white slave owners to regulate the Black body.

Moreover, Holiday adds, “Lincoln freed them, not n*****, not slaves and black saviours.... And as soon as black people left the plantation, the police force and the prison system, sports, and Hollywood were established to replace its aims. The goal has always been free labour without backlash” (54). In this quote Holiday is making a comparison between plantations and prisons. Holiday says, “We (still) ship to prisons” (57), meaning that even today, in the present, the issue of over policing in Black communities persists. Holiday is connecting the movement and relocation of Black bodies to the symbol of “ships” from the Trans-Atlantic ship trade to the idea of streamlining Black communities to prisons. Prisons and police force

became, and currently are, the method of control that allows institutions to mask the discrimination towards Black people as a community service. Furthermore, “the goal of the prison system and the police force and television is quickly shifting from the holding captive of free black able bodied laborers, to genocide” (54). The goal of containing and controlling the Black population with over policing has excused police brutality and violence.

For Holiday, the effects of police brutality continue to impact Black communities and cause further trauma. In the poem “for dreamers, for drummers” Holiday says “I can still see the cops.. beating him on the head with sticks... when he got home I didn’t know if I was going to get a little beating or made love to” (Holiday 34). In this quote, Holiday speaks about the cycle of abuse that was initiated by police brutality. The abuse that was suffered by the judicial system sustained, supported, and perpetuated the trauma that was brought back into the privacy of the family. The concern surrounding the misuse of power by police and authority continues to be raised as police brutality disproportionately murders more unarmed Black Americans. The imbalanced power dynamic between Black individuals and the police stems from decades, if not centuries, of judicial authority using violence to silence the Black community.

Holiday published *Hollywood Forever* in 2017, the year following the deaths of three Black Florida girls. The three young teenagers had stolen a vehicle and were driving around when they were signaled by police to pull over. The three girls then fled the scene and drove into a pond where the trio later sank and drowned. Holiday includes their story in her poetry, saying, “They’ve been dubbed the Holy Outlaws, The three black female teenagers chased into a night/rover by police officers in St. Petersburg, Florida and left there to drown on the thirty-first day of March in the year 2016 AD. Dominique Battle, 16, and 15-year old Ashanti Butler and LaNiya Miller” (18). These young Black girls were more afraid of getting caught by the police

than the possibility of dying. The circumstance demonstrates how young Black teenagers are criminalized, as well as the harmful relationship the Black community has with the police. The distrust and fear the young Black girls had in the police is what prevented them from pulling over. Less than few months later, “Jasmine Richards, a young black activist from Pasadena, California has been charged with felony lynching” (32). The Black Lives Matter activist was sentenced to 90 days in jail after interfering with an arrest of another Black woman. Holiday comments politically on the circumstance, “That’s almost funny. But no. I caress my throat checking for rope.... They wanted to see us fly like star leaves , collectors items us black kites of the empire/even your daughter is a runaway slave, even me!” (32). The police force does not represent security to the Black community, but rather are seen as a tool used to suppress minority rights. Holiday’s mentioning of “runaway slaves” makes the connection for the reader to consider the past in the present.

Holiday’s poems explore the meaning of the Black body as violent and the recipient of violence. She draws a connection between the historical violence against the Black body and the manifestations of these deep rooted racial biases and systems in the present. She says, “And the black objects, though solid, have no shadows. And it is this violence from within that protects us from violence without” (36). She refers to Black bodies as “Black objects” identifying the continued issues of dehumanization towards Black people. She adds, “A n****r stands in a garden with a toothpick and is the too easy overlap between saint and sociopath where he falls into a skin of words, is blind, murdered, healed” (48). Again, Holiday is emphasizing the harmful stereotype of the Black body as violent and sociopathic. *Hollywood Forever* is connecting to racist constructions in the present and showing the reader that the ideas that exist today stem from centuries of deep-rooted oppression.

Reconstructing Memories of the Past in the Present

Holiday seeks to uncover and portray how constructions of Blackness have changed over the centuries and how they impact the cultural understanding of Black identity today. Another author, Toni Morrison, was also interested in using texts to negotiate the audience's conception of Blackness. She was an American novelist, essayist and college professor. She was most well known for her contributions to discussion surrounding gender, race, and intersectionality. In 1987 her fiction novel *Beloved* was published and its focus was on the circumstances and atrocities of the slave trade. The character, Sethe, within the novel refers to “rememory” as the retelling of the history as a way to heal from trauma of the past. The term “rememory” has transformed into a keyword used within the literary sphere as the act of empowering African-Americans to reframe historical artifacts and narratives by re-remembering and re-crafting memories from the past. Rememory is the practice of remembering a memory and actively reconstructing the realities of the past through the present. The memories of past events are not only evoked but also the new adaptations and remediations, linking the previous memories to the present and therefore changing cultural truths. The act of reconfiguring cultural artifacts and historical events from the past with the authority that African-Americans have in the present allows the community to gain control over their own identity and culture. Rememory serves as a framework for resisting the history of the white civilization and its continuation of the oppression of people of color. Morrison’s critical contributions on rememory worked by “retrieving and appropriating history, texts in this genre” and that rememory “give witness to what has been historically unspeakable, and in some ways, unimaginable. Importantly, the idea of rememory, which entails ‘both anamnesis and construction’ (Tabone 193). The African diaspora effectively

removes African-Americans from their history and the reconstruction of the past can provide autonomy to parts of the community that were stolen from colonization.

The act of rememory is used by many Black artists like Harmony Holiday to re-configure the African diaspora and cultural truths. The purpose of rememory for many texts is to encourage the reader to engage with the artifacts and historical material differently, to allow the voices of the minority communities to be heard and recognized. Mark Tabone observes that rememory is “the text’s preoccupation with the past” and that the text “invites readers to examine the ways in which the historical legacy of racial slavery continues to inhabit the present” (Tabone 193). Holiday’s work also encourages the reader to examine the past through the media and materials that she adds to her collection of poetry. Holiday creates her own digital archive through her ebook and memorializes Black culture through the perspective of the combination of Black artists. *Hollywood Forever*, like many Black-written texts, relies on rememory as a tactic to rebuild community and identity. Further, rememory in *Hollywood Forever* validates the African-American struggle and the lingering effects of racism that are embedded in the systems, institutions, and structures we are familiar with today. While the process of reframing Black culture, the text is conducive to the healing of the African-American community. Rememory allows the text to build a rapport with the reader and non-Black readers to re-examine their understanding of Black history within America. Holiday’s poetry is used to connect but also enlighten the reader on the power, voice, and craft of Black culture.

Media collaging, music, and digital art are tools frequently used by Black artists to participate in the diasporic archives and to encourage others to re-evaluate the circumstances of the past. The combination of emotional, persuasive media allows readers to understand the

capacity at which inequality is exercised and promotes change. According to Giannachi, archives enable self-transformation. He writes,

“To operate effectively, the diasporic archive has therefore had to, and increasingly so, adopt experimental tools to capture changes in the subjects’ points of view, map their transformed contexts, and form them into trails and histories that link the object of the archive to its user, bridging between the past and the present. These tools are...not only what we use to form the archive but also what we use to re-form ourselves, socially and politically, within the archive.” (Giannachi 100)

The text *Hollywood Forever* is contributing to the re-making of the archive by adding elements of media, like screenshots, from the present that exemplify the injustices that continue to face the community today. The consequences from slavery linger far beyond the physical enslavement of African-American and the impacts have ripples through modern society, playing a key role in the systems that continue to oppress people of color today.

Holiday’s poetry is the binding between the muffled voices of Black ancestors and the community and family she is surrounded by in the present. Holiday takes a dialectical approach, by comparing the old with the new, and pushing the reader to consider how issues of racism that were obviously present during the post-emancipation and civil rights era continue to pervade society today. Readers need to question how their own beliefs and understanding of the past influence the world today, for as Holiday acknowledges, “No one wants to hear that the American dream murders... We zoom in a young black or yellow child soldier, son of a n**** (they would have called his father then, with disaffected sophistication, general). He’s inherited his parents’ stress” (Holiday 74).

The reclaiming of archival materials through the process of rememory in *Hollywood Forever* is done so by collaging historical media with new media. The unifying of different materials allows readers to draw connections between the social ideologies, norms, and context from the past to the circumstances of the future. By delivering the content through her e-book, the collection of poems allows the reader to approach the memory of slavery, segregation, and the civil rights era through her own experience as a member of the African-American community. The reader experiences the oppression and racism in America historically through exposure to material that documents how poorly people of colour were treated. The media is a testimony to the mistreatment and trauma that generations of African-Americans needed to endure, and the culture that was produced as a consequence to white supremacy. Holiday recreates the Black identity and culture as one of art, community, and expression through music, despite the horrifying reality of the inhumanity her ancestors endured.

Holiday's text reshapes memory through afropresentism, an ideology and emerging concept borrowed from Neema Githere, a student in African Studies at Yale University. Her focus of interest is on the Afro Diasporic culture in the digital age. She coined the term as "a digital genre-fusing archival, fine art, documentary practices on and through new media, in the expression of an Afrofuturist lived reality" (Presentism2020). The interweaving of artistic beauty, storytelling, and education in Holiday's poetry shows the reader the impact the past has on the present through American society and her generational trauma. She employs afropresentism by using an ebook format that allows her to play music and video, and display materials that would otherwise not be possible in a traditional book format. The digital material allows Holiday to elevate her writing into a performance that is experienced and felt by the reader. The text, *Hollywood Forever*, is putting the past and the issues of the present in dialogue

to express to the reader how the past influences the present. The text, *Hollywood Forever*, is written with the intention of healing the Black diaspora. The text is an appreciation of the power, beauty, and resilience of African-American culture. Holiday writes,

“To heal the black/diasporic imagination with counter histories that destabilize the West and make room for a way of life that serves us here or lets us go elsewhere in peace...

These souls force us to ask whether the very root of our thinking and feeling is being manipulated by a pathological desire to belong in structures that will always be intended to dislodge or misuse us until we learn to misuse ourselves in their service.” (Holiday 71)

The collaging of historical artifacts to create an image of Black culture and history in America is composed with the purpose of countering colonial narratives. Holiday is effectively asking the reader to decolonize their perception of the past and to reconsider how “our thinking and feeling is being manipulated” to believe in “structures” that demonize, criminalize, and oppress the Black body.

Hollywood Forever is written to alter the Black Collective memory by contributing new media to the material from archives. The e-book contributes to the larger discussion on race and racism through forms of memorabilia. While demonstrating the strife that occurred in the past, she frames the history of African Americans as powerful and capable of rebellion and change. The people of the African-American community have consistently had their rights and humanity stripped away through legislature, authority, and racist ideology. Yet, they counter fear and numerous obstacles to reach for equality and justice. The rememory of the atrocities of slavery and segregation allows the past to exist but to be framed through passion and strength. The challenge with distinguishing the differences between history and collective memory boils down to *history* as being something factual, unbiased, and accurate. However, the nature of white

supremacy in the past and the white centered control of the broader cultural narrative also means that the distinction of Black collective memory is important. The Black collective memory focuses on the experience of the Black community and the individuals who were impacted by the African diaspora. Changing the Black collective memory is powerful and an act of resistance, and the e-book illuminates the voices and lives of those within the community who have demonstrated a desire to empower African-Americans. Black Americans are grieving for the deaths of their brothers and sisters at the hands of the government. To say that anti-Blackness exists only in the past would be to neglect the struggles and racism, police brutality, a racist structures of the present.

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