

# theslowdown\_20200618\_20200618\_128

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

poem, flowers, hanif, write, dandelion, adorno, poetry, slow, dire, thought, looked, barbarism, live, outrage, dredged, routinely, burial, people, american public, relative safety

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00:06

I'm Tracy k Smith, and this is the slow down.

00:24

Have you heard the quote, there can be no poetry after Auschwitz. It comes from a passage and Theodor adorno. His book prisms, which is far more nuanced than the soundbite, most of us have heard, so nuanced, in fact, that I don't even feel like I can do it justice, other than to say that some have argued the quote to be something like this, to participate in a culture capable of such barbarism and injustice. Even in doing something like writing a poem is itself a source of barbarism. adorno thought and rethought about his own assertion, he revised it more than once later in his career. But for most of us, it's been dredged up as a reason why poetry is insufficient to the task of confronting the awful realities of the world. A line of thinking with which most poets disagree. If you live in a world that routinely hurts people, writing a poem won't necessarily stop that from happening. But it offers a record of dissent of outrage, of the desire for help in turning the tide. When you are one of the people the world has routinely hurt, reading a poem that seems to recognize your plight, can offer consolation. If you are someone who lives in relative safety, a poem like that can remind you of the price of your comfort. Today's poem is Hanif, Abdur keeps, how can black people write about flowers at a time like this? I love it, because it acknowledges the dire state into which American culture has thrust black people. It acknowledges that this is a time in which we must be vigilant in which we must defend one another in which we must care about the safety and the dignity of others. But there's also a dandelion in the poems first sentence. defiantly. The poem answers the question of its own title by saying, we can write about flowers if we choose to, we can do so as a way of seeking respite from the psychic battlefield. Or we can do so and also be writing about the dire nature of our existence. We can write about flowers in such a way as to make anyone willing to ask how can black people write about flowers at a time like this?

No, that that is the wrong question. How can black people write about flowers at a time like this? By Hanif Abdurraqib. Dear reader, with our heels digging into the good mud at a swamps edge, you might tell me something about the dandelion, and how it is not a flower itself. But a plant made up of several small flowers at its crown. And Lord knows, I have been called by what I look like more than I've been called, by what I actually am. And I wish to return the favor for the purpose of this exercise. Which two is an attempt at fashioning something pretty out of seeds, refusing to make anything worthwhile of their burial. Size Me Up and skip whatever semantics arrived to the tongue first. Say that boy he looked like a hollowed out grandfather clock. He looked like a million dollar God with a two cent heaven. Like all it takes is one kiss. And before morning, you could scatter his whole mind across a field.

04:36

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