rhizomathematics

EVIE SHOCKLEY

that bloody muscle
in my left chest
contains no numbers
of heartbeats or more
painful contractions
but it lives them
holds no bleak statistics
of black murders
but it bears them

what ever we are is
made of these inescapable
calls & our irrepressible
responses

#

where are the fresh
images to feed the elegies

the blood is never
blue but so old so
overexposed it isn't even red
just dried & cracked black

don't bother talking tears
we've eaten them all before
the righteous grief & anger
wrung out & laid flat
to dry under the sun
nothing new

#

we are numerous
loud with ancestors & fate
our flesh a thick lace
of tissue & memory
our bone as bond & precious
as a promise
& just as easily broken
we are richly bereft

do i contradict myself

very well
given no choice
many of us still choose
this collective illusion
over hallucinated freedom

black lives are
cobwebbed in cliché
& generative to the nth power
a contradiction in terms
which is to say poetry
About the author

Poet & literary scholar Evie Shockley thinks, creates, and writes with her eye on a Black feminist horizon. Her books of poetry include *suddenly we* (winner of the NAACP Image Award; National Book Award Finalist), *semiautomatic* (winner of the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award; Pulitzer Prize finalist), and *the new black* (winner of the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award). She publishes widely and has been translated into French, Polish, Slovenian, and Spanish. Among the honors for her body of work are the Shelley Memorial Award, the Lannan Literary Award for Poetry, the Holmes National Poetry Prize, and the Stephen Henderson Award. Her joys include participating in poetry communities such as Cave Canem and collaborating with artists working in various media. Shockley is the Zora Neale Hurston Distinguished Professor of English at Rutgers University.