

AND I AM ALSO THINKING ABOUT TOMORROW

-SUZANNE CÈSAIRE

I encounter dead birds
on walks through tunnels
crape myrtle juniper ash they are almost never
starched just explosions
plumage on sidewalks
sometimes cradled
beneath shade of bush

I am not sure why I so often notice
bodies except I frequently stare
at the ground as if it is going to dissolve
under my feet and devour me
I do not trust the earth
she eats everything I love

I stop to memorialize posture of a crow
mourned by a soapberry
a pigeon shrouded inside burst of buffalo grass
and once a dove I kneeled next to
kissed a gutter delicately
arranged like a rose bought in the old souks of Tripoli

petals pinned between thighs
of a book I carried through Customs
to give to a woman who told me
she had a lot to say about dead birds
and then said nothing more

I waited
for an explanation
studying the remains of a blue jay
at the foot of a magnolia

I think about what sort of woman I fall in love with
I should fall in love with the kind that chases after
a snake with a machete
not the kind that kills it
not the kind who knows
what a dead bird means
and replaces an answer with an absence

4.

I wonder if my memories might become obituaries
if I could condense an entire life into one paragraph
perhaps plant it under one of the paved alleyways
there near a sepulcher inside the necropolis
I try to delete you

5.

I dream of dragging the ocean
in search of the entrance to the underworld
you tell me you prefer space cowboys and that I should stop looking for you
in your dreams but in my dreams
I ascend into shadows of Patagonia
to sleep
where the wind
a tempest
taunts me

*IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO CHANGE THE BOURGEOIS STATE ...
YOU HAVE TO BRING IT DOWN*

-DIONNE BRAND, from *Ossuary II*

ask for trumpets
finale of first world
concupiscent eyes
prepare for a parade
where polar caps melt
and the emperor of ice cream
just
 became
 king

call this age the Anthropocene
paleteros kept peasants
poets wear gucci shoes to perform and
sing of palaces while workers
cultivate lakes of lithium
poppy fields smother our faces
our feet protrude from sediment
cockroaches come out at last
let radiation affix its beam
here he comes
here comes our king
 the last emperor
is the emperor of ice cream

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Mónica Teresa Ortiz was born and raised in Texas. Her first poetry collection, *Muted Blood*, was published by Black Radish Books in 2018, and her chapbook, winner of the inaugural Host Publications Prize, *Autobiography of a Semiromantic Anarchist*, was published in 2019.