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POETRY OF ALEXANDRIA MICHELLE RED

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won't you touch the dead?

the dead hover on ceilings
remain close to fireplaces
sit next to heat vents
wishing for warmth to inhabit
the cold body-less forms

they want
to feel the fire-sun- human body
they rattle windows, scratch doors, crack mirrors,
can anyone see them
there at all?

they seek, the ones who have it
the voodoo child with
grandma's sixth sense, the pastor's
daughter who dreams the future
six months in advance,

shaman children feel the crowds
of spirits fluttering around:
won't you touch the dead?

the ghost's of new orleans'
dead sense thirst
a newborn cried in death's sleep,
trapped with her mama on the roof top
above flooded streets

they watch sakinah, six screaming
for her baby-sitter neighbor to stop
fondling her privates
she waits for rescue on the floor of the city's
super dome

they hear the jazz trumpeter wail in lament
the city, our city, is gone,
i seek
to know my fore-fathers and mothers
i want to know what they expect of me

i want to remember what was lost,
forgotten
i want to talk, speak their (our) languages,
can't you see- i want to touch my dead.

grace

james refused to leave
his bed six weeks ago,
he gave up living life

decided the doc was right,
pill popping was his answer
to fight night sweats and crying fits

f.e.m.a. was happy
to fund
his post katrina trailer parked life (where his house once stood)

his doc feared
the dwindle of patients
and "practice" revenues

healer turned hawker of pills
any color, size or flavor,
do you want up- or down-town? orange, pinks, blues,

his doc was drowning,

the disappearance of his mostly black patients
meant no more dinners
at commander's or galatoire's

or white party's art walks

his doc missed his former welfare
patients, poor people
he complained bitterly about their lazy lifestyles

james showered
dressed
and walked

to st. anne's noon day mass
asking
the grace of god to fill his aching head.

Superdome #2

winds clock
one hundred fifty miles per hour
rains hammer
the city for eight hours,
blow out windows,
down power lines,
snap trees,
boats learn flight

waters slaughter bernard
parrish's levee,
katrina mangles
the ponchtrain bridge
into twisted ruins

thousands hide and huddle
in the superdome,
watching winds rip
holes in the domed

rooftop leaving
tears cracks leaks
in elevators, walls, stairwells

thousands wait for cyclone
winds to blow the domed
roof off

power gone,
air conditioning done,
few generated lights
hide crowds growing angrier
as poop overflows
sinks, toilets, garbage cans

we are locked up barn
animals

trapped- it grows muggier,
stench uglier,
we wait

rescue

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Alexandria Michelle Red, a Seattle-based poet, graduated from Xavier University of Louisiana with a degree in Chemistry and from Seattle University with a Masters in teaching. One of seven founding members of the Oratrix Spoken Word group, she was featured on the 2003 "Oratrix" CD., and traveled as a featured artist on the 2004 *All Girl. All Word.* Oratrix tour. She performed nationally in theaters, festivals, cafes, bookstores and on university campuses. She has one self-published collection of poetry, "She's The Truth." For seven years she taught high school Chemistry. Currently she is completing a full-length poetry collection, *Yellow Shotgun: An American Story*, and her M.F.A. in creative writing at Goddard College. Her work is forthcoming in *Quay*.