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Celeste Ramos

A Poem

The danger of sighing while looking Up

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It intends to serve as a platform for testing, circulating, and debating new ideas and reflections on these topics, expanding beyond the geographical, cultural and linguistic boundaries of Latin America - Abya Yala. We hope to contribute to connecting ideas, and to provide a space for intellectual exchange and discussion for a nascent academic community of scholars, devoted to counterbalancing mainstream understandings of development.

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A POEM BY CELESTE RAMOS¹

The danger of sighing while looking up²

Storms
are born of sighs and
old curses
launched from the heel of a flat hand
pressed to a chin, chalky white
or serpent red

blowing spiteful powders

I hope whoever's broken heart
somewhere around the Lesser Antilles
was healed
eventually
'cuz I can see
whoever it was
standing where a strong drink and wind could find them

¹ CELESTE RAMOS is a London-based writer of fiction, poetry, short film and essays from New York City. www.celesteramoswriter.wordpress.com

² This article was originally published in <http://www.alternautas.net/blog/2018/12/7/the-danger-of-sighing-while-looking-up> on December 7th, 2018.

Oh...

mind your sighs

they become storms

By the time those terrible storms reach us in England
they're the soggy wet blankets over our long longed-for weekends
and it's easy to forget how the rain is really tears
and that the breeze that can now barely lift a leaf
was once a freight train only a week ago

Churning hatred with a name

The dim pane of grey we know so well was
once a mass of cloud choked with story
and when Maria got to Europe as rain I found myself listening to the sky
for news
asking what those clouds had seen
because where they'd been was the same trek of my ancestry
delivered to me 4,193 miles too late for me to do anything
but if I spin myself back
follow Maria's skyward steps
I go back-first toward New York
past where I was born
confused angry and alone

and if I were her
my breath would still taste of
wood
blood
and bone
breaking apart over the mid-Atlantic

and if I spin myself back even more
I'm a fresh-raw-wound on September 19, 2017
just like I was that day in London
having a shit day in a short skyscraper watching
YouTube, stacked beneath a Microsoft Word window
watching Weather Channel live
watching video after video of kids and viejitos
red-faced gringos who couldn't get home
wishing for bread
knowing there's prayers to be said, knowing
there's nothing
to be done
but watch...

If there's ever been another word for feeling guilty,
it's "watch".

The next day I'm still at work

in a short skyscraper
watching YouTube stacked under Microsoft Word
my eyes as agape as my mind
a lovelorn sigh that became a
land-dwarfing scream
called Maria
engulfed little Borinquen
WHOLE

And I watched.

I couldn't call my uncles
cousins
and see if – and see if –

I watched WhatsApp
I watched my half-sister's status go
unchanged day after day
“last seen
September 18”
I watched YouTube
stacked under Microsoft Word

I watched news under lunchtime chitchat
I watched video after water-logged video

I watched video after tragedia video
I watched beautiful David fucking Begnaud for hours,
David Begnaud of CBS News
the honorary Puerto Rican who seemed to be the only one telling us
what the fuck was going on

I watched video after video to see if – in fear, if –
I recognized
somebody

Oh the waist-deep lines of tired faces
and water-wrinkled feet
looking for survivors

for two weeks,
I watched.

I called my mom in Brooklyn
the little old lady that I look like
who told me
how annoying it was to wait in line
at the post office
but thank God she wasn't
waiting for water
to send water

batteries

a handwritten card of

Palante

and

Si se puede

Keep pushing forward and yesyoucan

I wish the broken heart somewhere
near the Lesser Antilles believed that:
that you keep going
that you believe you can

you don't
sigh into the wind
on tropics so used to witchcraft

Mind your sighs –
they catch momentum on your discontent
and become storms.