

Quietus, Quiet Us

You asked me what I remember, and I told you:
I am cradling a dead bird to my chest, her neck
bent and mangled, eyes weepy
like the Virgin Mary when they crucified my Lord. (*Were you there?*)
She is plump, feathered, crushed between my child body
and the hard red clay of the Earth; beneath there is an imprint
marking where she left

this world was a primordial sea
until the lands were shaped from soft mud and dried
down under the wind from the wings of Grandfather Buzzard.
It seems almost holy, doesn't it?
A creature smoke signaling death and decay
setting the ground solid for life;
and then we arrived, born of dust or bone, remnants.
We're all atoms. With each inhale
I choke down the breath of Earth's first man. Hear me
because I am you and you are me and we
summon the sound to shout

out with it. Tell me your doubts, your fears. Confide in me
how they circle overhead, waiting for you
to stumble and fall, to crush and destroy, and
when my mind harkens back, seeing
life pass, her eyes were not filled with emptiness;
her soul was spilling over, squeezed to the surface by my weight.
I could only feel the fire stirring in my chest, and I know
you feel the same flame in yours

too often, we spill blood like milk. You
can't win for losing. Assimilate
and give away pieces of yourself,
even the universe is incomplete, so it only feels natural
to strike the carbon chord and sing with all creation. We forget:
How can death be unexpected when He waits for us all? To this day,
I pray over my dead bird and carry the burden
of flightless wings.

Meleah Treadaway

Meleah Treadaway



Meleah is a fiction writer and poet from south Alabama. Her writings explore God, the natural world, and the living entity that is the South. She remains rooted in Alabama, where she works in pursuit of justice, advocacy, and empowerment for children and families in her community.