

El Dia de los Muertos

by Joani Reese

"The path back to the living must not be made slippery by tears."
(Mexican proverb)

Marigolds blaze yellow under Oaxacan sun. ?
Their slender necks stretch above fern foliage.?
Stars of this late October hillside, they drape ?
their riches over the edges of terra cotta ?
like a beautiful woman lounging naked on a chaise,
?denying the time-bound limits of beauty.

They wear their bodies recklessly, these cempazuchitl,?
these flowers of the dead. Soon, an elder's hand ?
will pluck them from this life, mix their petals
?on the ofrenda, shrouded by the incense of copal,
?the backs of his descendants bent beneath a colder sun.

Subsuming their bright allotment on foreign soil, ?
the lost children of Mictecacihuatl dream of sugared skulls?
and warm hojaldra as they lie under a canopy of snow.?
Someday they, too, may return to wreath the fleshless grin?
of this country, the nexus of their souls. La Pelona is filled?
but never sated with the bodies of her dead.

1. ofrenda = altar ?
2. Mictecacihuatl = goddess of the underworld ?
3. hojaldra = Mexican puff pastry ?
4. La Pelona = The Grim Reaper

