

VERSE IN PLACE

JULIA DE BURGOS

Presencia de amor en la isla

(En Trinidad, Cuba)

Aquí mi corazón dice “te amo”...
en la desenfrenada soledad de la isla
saliéndose en los ojos tranquilos del paisaje.

El mar asciende a veces la lápida del monte.
Es allá cielo verde, como queriendo auparse hasta mis manos.
La loma no ha crecido más alto que una espiga.
La tierra mira y crece.
Van detrás de los trinos saludando los pájaros
aquí mi corazón, cabalgando el paraje,
dice “te amo” en el verde lenguaje de los bosques.

Recuerdo que me hablarón una vez las estrellas
de un rincón enterrado, sin mirada y sin viaje,
algo así como un mundo detenido en su historia,
como un trino extraviado, como un ala sin ave.

Aquí quieren palomas detenerme el camino...
centinelas ardientes de un pasado inviolable.
Una paz retraída me columpia el espíritu,
y mis pasos se tumban, como muertos, al aire.
Entre el monte y el mar, por escala de estirpe.
¡Trinidad!, de leyenda me saludan tus calles.

Aquí mi corazón, desandándose el tiempo,
dice “te amo” en la sombra legendaria del valle.
Para mirarnos suben sus pupilas insomnes,
cuatro siglos de auroras tirándose al paisaje.

Presence of Love on the Island

(In Trinidad, Cuba)

Here my heart says “I love you”...
in the unbridled solitude of the island
coming through the tranquil eyes of the landscape.

The sea sometimes ascends the gravestone of the hills.
There it is green sky, as if wanting to rise to my hands.
The hill has not grown higher than a shoot.
The earth looks and grows.
They follow the warbles greeting the birds,
here my heart, galloping the area,
says “I love you” in the green language of the woods.

I remember that once the stars talked to me
from a buried corner, without a glance and without a voyage,
something like a world detained in its history,
like a trill astray, like a wing without a bird.

Here doves want to delay my walk ...
ardent sentinels of an inviolable past.
A returned peace swings my spirit,
and my steps fall, as if dead, to the air.
Between the hills and the sea, through levels of pedigree,
Trinidad!, your streets greet me from legends.

Here my heart retracing time
says “I love you” in the legendary shadow of the valley.
Four centuries of aurora leaping into the landscape
raise their sleepless pupils to see us.

(Translation: Jack Agüeros)

(more) ↓

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JULIA DE BURGOS (1914–1953) is one of Puerto Rico’s most famous and revered poets. Born into poverty, she attended the University of Puerto Rico, worked as a school teacher, and joined the movement for Puerto Rican independence. The poet briefly lived in Cuba and then moved to New York’s Harlem, where she became an intellectual leader of the Nyuorican poetry movement. She published her first poetry collection in 1938; “Presence of Love on the Island” (“Presencia de amor en la isla”) is from the bilingual collection of her poetry *Song of the Simple Truth* (1955), translated by Jack Agüeros.

