

*Julia de Burgos, born in Carolina, Puerto Rico, is widely regarded as her country's greatest poet, and along with the Chilean Gabriela Mistral, as one of the two greatest female poets in Latin American history. Her life had all the intensity and tragedy associated in the popular imagination with the greatest poets, culminating in her anonymous death at age 39 in a New York City street and burial in potter's field.*

### **I Myself Was My Route**

I wanted to be as men wanted  
that I was: an attempt at life;  
a game of hide-and-seek with myself.  
But I was made of presents,  
and my feet, flat on the promising land  
they couldn't resist walking backwards,  
And they kept going, going,  
mocking the ashes  
to reach the kiss of the new paths.

At every step forward on my way to the front  
the desperate flapping of wings tore my back  
of the old logs.

But the branch was broken forever,  
and with each new lash my gaze grew further apart  
and more and more of the distant horizons learned:  
and my face was taking the expression that came  
from within, the defined expression that appeared  
a feeling of intimate liberation;  
a feeling that arose from the sustained balance  
between my life and the truth of the kiss of the new paths.

Already defined my course in the present,  
I felt myself sprout from all the soils of the earth,  
of soils without history, of soils without a future,  
from the ground always ground without edges  
of all men and of all times.

And I was all in me as life was in me...  
I want to be as men wanted me to be:  
an attempt at life; a game of hide-and-seek with myself.  
But I was made of presents;

when the heralds announced me  
in the royal parade of old trunks, my  
desire to follow men,  
and the tribute was waiting for me.

## **I Was The Quietest**

I was the quietest  
of all those who made the journey to your port.

They did not announce lubricious social ceremonies to me,  
nor the deaf bells of ancestral reflections;  
my route was the wild music of the birds  
that released my goodness into the air in a stir.

Heavy ships of opulence did not load me,  
nor oriental rugs supported my body;  
above the ships my face appeared  
whistling in the round simplicity of the winds.

I did not weigh the harmony of trivial ambitions  
that promised your hand full of sparkles:  
I only weighed on the ground of my agile spirit  
the tragic abandonment that concealed your gesture.

Your perennial duality was marked by my avid thirst.  
You resembled the sea, resonant and discreet.  
About you I was passing my lost schedules.  
Above me you followed like the sun in the petals.

And I walked in the breeze of your fallen pain  
with the naive sadness of knowing that I am right:  
your life was a deep beating of restless sources  
in an immense white river running towards the desert.