

No Word For Light

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There is no word for light
in your language.

This island knows it,
each blind grain of sand, each blade of grass
shot through with God's own viridian.

The mountain will not be painted,
nor the river hold still for the poet
to find the right words.

But whether I find the words or not,
light will enter the room each morning
like an outstretched arm,
fill the cracks between floorboards
and greying filaments of hair.

I learned to pray in the language
of light and running water
before the yearning and the poems
and the cracked spines of books,

for this island has its own tongue,
holy whisper of bamboo in the valley,
hiss of water through gritted
rock teeth at Galera.

So what does it mean to go home
when the tributary heaped with flowers
sounds all the bells in my body,
when the smell of the Atlantic
wings the salt from my eyes
and calls me *daughter*?

Here has always been home,
my mother's home,
mother land,
mother.

There is no word for this light.

There is only the praise song of parrots
in gold September rain,

only the shadow of some forgotten house
worn down to bone by years of footfall and sun,

only names of plants and trees,
true names, ones they answer to in the dark,
in the fierce, secret heat of growing things.