

Poem for My Father

By Beatriz F. Fernández

Between us and the farthest star
light-laced green round hills
undulate like waves of the far ocean,
its faint salt taste tingeing the humid air.
I drive the same winding roads
you once roamed astride your white pony,
boyish face browned by the sun,
bare feet curled against the arc of his ribs—

Between us and the farthest star
lies a distance not even the laments
of the traceless Taino Indians
woven with the rooster's call
can traverse, echoing across
these dew-laden fields and valleys.
I arrive at the silent shell of your house,
its driveway of shattered cement,
and breathe in overripe mangoes
crushed into red clay earth.

Between us and the farthest star
nothing but moon-chained backyard dogs
howling to their ancestral wolves—
nothing but golden coqui choirs,

whose unending refrains remind us
even they, minute, almost invisible
presence in this world, can unite
to drown out a rainforest's roar,
and fill the night with their voices,
who can sing only on this island,
who can live only if they remember.