

Mi'Lady / What I left for River Muma

Two poems

Jacqueline Bishop

Traduzione italiana di Federica Messulam

Introduction to the author by Michela Calderaro

Jacqueline Bishop is an award-winning writer, academic, and visual artist, born and raised in Jamaica, who now lives between Miami and New York City. She has had exhibitions in Belgium, Morocco, Italy, Cape Verde, Niger, USA, and Jamaica. In addition to her role as clinical full professor at New York University, Jacqueline Bishop was a Dora Maar/Brown Foundation Fellow in France; a UNESCO/Fulbright Fellow in Paris; and a Fulbright Fellow in Morocco.

Bishop has received several awards, including the OCM Bocas Prize for Non-Fiction for her book *The Gymnast and Other Positions: Stories, Essays, Interviews*, The Canute A. Brodhurst Prize for short story writing, the Arthur Schomburg Award for Excellence in the Humanities from New York University, a James Michener Creative Writing Fellowship, as well as several awards from the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission. Jacqueline Bishop's recent ceramic work consists of brightly colored bone china plates, such as are often used symbolically in Caribbean homes, and explores how their designs hid the violent legacy of slavery and colonialism in the Atlantic world.



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Mi'Lady

On the island of Jamaica
there is a spiritual being who moves easily
between this world and others. This half fish/

half woman mythical creature
is not one thing or another.
At midday Mi'Lady surfaces

in the bluest parts
of the Nonsuch river.
If you catch a glimpse, you will see:

tangled moss green hair, sharp white teeth,
her fused sex, and iridescent
scales covering her plump dark body.

What I left for River Muma

A brand-new handheld mirror.
Half dozen yellow palm-sized rose apples
picked from my grandmother's garden.
A bouquet of thickly-veined croton leaves,
pink and white old garden roses,
fat stalks of red ginger and heliconia ---
all scented with Florida cologne and Kanaga Waters.
One blue, one black, one thick green candle.
A small rum-bottle filled with honey,
four white eggs, a dragon stout
and two bottles of cream soda.
The last thing I added was shiny silver
and copper-colored coins
collected in England, Jamaica, and Ghana.

Mi'Lady

Sull'isola di Giamaica
una presenza spirituale fluttua leggera
tra questa e le altre realtà. Mitica creatura

per metà pesce /per metà donna
senza essere questo né quella.
E a mezzodì Mi'Lady affiora

dalle più profonde acque
del fiume Nonsuch.
Se riesci a scorgerla, allora vedrai:

intricate chiome verde muschio, bianchi denti aguzzi,
il suo sesso impenetrabile, squame
cangianti che ne ricoprono le curve del corpo scuro.

Cosa ho lasciato per River Muma

Uno specchio tascabile nuovo di zecca.
Una mezza dozzina di gialli frutti di melarosa grossi quanto un
palmo
colti dal giardino di nonna.
Un mazzo con foglie di croton dalle fitte venature,
rose antiche bianche e rosa,
opulenti fiori di zenzero rosso e di eliconia -
spruzzato con acqua di Florida e colonia Kanaga Waters.
Una candela blu, una nera, una di un verde cupo.
Una bottiglietta da rum colma di miele,
quattro uova dal guscio bianco, birra scura
e due bottiglie di gazzosa dolce.
Da ultimo ho aggiunto le luccicanti monete
color argento e rame
raccolte in Inghilterra, in Giamaica, e in Ghana.

