

**"There Are Two  
Countries"**

**By Julia Álvarez**

(after the maestro, nuestro  
Pedro Mir)

There are two countries in the  
world

in the same path  
of the sun.

Natives of the night  
in a colonized archipelago  
of tourists  
and free zones.

Simply light  
like the kisses of children  
raised together  
who do not yet know  
how to hate each other.

Simply nestled  
on one small island  
like twins  
in the womb of Quisqueya,  
"Mother of all the Islands."

Simply and tragically  
torn asunder,  
by history,  
greed

for sugar to sweeten  
the porcelain cups  
of the rich,  
leaving the dregs  
of bitterness behind  
in our mouths.

Greed of kings  
for gold and more gold,  
for nectar of alcohol  
to dull the ache  
in their souls.

Greed of Spain,  
greed of France,  
each pulling an end  
until the land tore,

and the river flowed  
blood

at the place  
where the two  
come together.

A river  
named massacre,  
which today we rename  
"mother, "  
meeting place,  
temple and tabernacle  
of a new holy communion  
by the sons and daughters  
of one island.

Quisqueya,  
with hilly Haiti  
to the west,  
four central cordilleras,  
immense bays,  
eroded hills  
where poverty meets  
necessity,  
and the trees give up  
their throats to the knife  
like sacrificial lambs  
on the altars of power.

Quisqueya,  
where nothing thrives  
like the dream of allá,  
the nightmare of parting  
brother  
from sister,  
father  
from daughter,  
son from  
mother and lover-  
another massacre  
for the green parsley  
of the dollar.

We are two countries in the  
world  
located in the path of hope,

victims of the same history,  
sharing the same ghosts:  
the blood of our Taíno  
grandfathers,  
the sweat of our African  
grandmothers,  
soaked in our soils  
and our souls;  
sharing the sad regress  
of progress,  
like the shuttle of a loom  
weaving our common  
narrative  
rarely given voice.  
We are simply  
brothers and sisters,  
not meant to be divided  
or set one against the other  
by wars  
or the rumors of wars,  
by comparisons  
from the richer neighbor  
to the north.  
Here at the border of  
massacre  
we create a new border  
of hope;  
here in the killing fields  
we sow the seeds of the  
future  
and await  
the flowering of peace. ...