

Carilda, in her 95

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Last Thursday, the poetess celebrated her birthday in her house on Tirry Avenue, in Matanzas, with the affection and admiration of her city and her country...

Carilda Oliver Labra is known, even by those who haven't read her poetry, for a memorable verse, which has become heritage of our national wit: "Me desordeno, amor, me desordeno" (I go crazy, love, I go crazy). Notwithstanding it has been taken out of context a thousand times, it can still provide keys of an interesting lyrical voice: We're before a poetess who hasn't turned her back on popular expression, who does not fear to enter into fields that others may consider rough, arduous and even vulgar... when talking about life and love...

Carilda Oliver Labra has never asked for permission to write, nor has she sought the approval of academics or moralists. She's shown her poetic sensitivity that has a lot to do with her sensitivity as a woman, without paying attention to rules or prejudices. Nobody can question the frankness of that creation.

That, perhaps at this time, does not seem much merit. But, when Carilda excelled in the 1940s, not all women (or men) dared to talk frankly about love experiences, often marked by a determined eroticism.

Of course, Cuba had a long tradition of poetry written by women, which Carilda drank from. But she always bet on a freedom that not very few deem nerve, but that distinguished her in Cuban lyrical panorama over the years and with the refinement her expression.

A recurrent topic in Carilda's work has been the ups and downs, certainties, uncertainties and flings of love. Great topic, topic many times assumed. However, Carilda has insisted in approaching it without avant-garde pretensions, quite attached to the conversation. In fact,

there's certain melodramatic touch in many of her poems, which may have disturbed some, but that ultimately shapes the atmosphere of those works.

And we should also talk about her ludic, playful spirit, which reserves the reader points of unexpected turns, but definitively organic.

We must read Carilda Oliver Labra. Lovers who do not know her books should look for them, because they will be able to discover themselves in some other verse there. Nobody should fear a difficult reading, an inaccessible darkness, because these poems are lavished by their simplicity. The most experienced reader, of course, will find here and there compelling images, beautiful and very original metaphors.

Carilda Oliver Labra celebrated 95 years in her hometown, Matanzas, city of poets. She, in fact, is a living symbol of that city, has been chronicler and protagonist of many its artistic and literary milestones in the last century. And that's another edge of her lyrical itinerary: memory games, which are inhabited by facts, things and people, as well as friends, neighbors, lovers, family...

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