

# POETS PAY TRIBUTE

## פֿון יענער זײַט ליד

פֿון יענער זײַט ליד איז אַ סאָד פֿאַראַן  
און אין סאָד איז אַ הויז מיט אַ שטרױענעם דאָך —  
עס שטייען דרייַ סאַסנעס און שווינגן זיך אויס,  
דרייַ שומרים אויף שטענדיקער וואַך.

פֿון יענער זײַט ליד איז אַ פֿויגל פֿאַראַן.  
אַ פֿויגל ברוין-געל מיט אַ רױטלעכער ברוסט,  
ער קומט דאָרט צו פֿליען יעדן ווינטער אויף סיני  
און הענגט, ווי אַ קנאַספּ אויף דעם נאַקעטן קוסט.

פֿון יענער זײַט ליד איז אַ סטעזשקע פֿאַראַן.  
אַזוי שמאַל און שאַרף, ווי דער דיין-דינסטער שניט,  
און עמעץ, וואָס האָט זיך פֿאַרבלאַנדזשעט אין צײַט,  
גײט דאָרט אום מיט שטילע און באַרוועסע טריט.

פֿון יענער זײַט ליד קענען ווונדער געשען  
נאָך היינט, אין אַ טאָג, וואָס איז כּמאַרנע און גראַ  
ווען ער דופֿקט אַרײַן אין דעם גלאַז פֿון דער שױב  
די צעפֿיבערטע בענקשאַפֿט פֿון אַ ווונדיקער שעה.

פֿון יענער זײַט ליד קען מיין מאַמע אַרויס,  
אין שטיין אויף דער שוועל אַ ווײַלע פֿאַרטראַכט  
און מיך רופֿן אַהײַם, ווי אַ מאַל, ווי אַ מאַל:  
— גענוג זיך געשפּילט שוין, דו זעסט נישט? סײַז נאַכט.

## Oyf yener zayt lid On the Poem's Other Side

by Rokhl Korn

trans. Irena Klepfisz (c) 1995

On the poem's other side there's a secret:  
An orchard and a house, its roof of thatch —  
Three pines stand there in silence  
Three sentinels posted on an eternal watch.

On the poem's other side there's a bird  
With yellow-brown feathers, a bright red breast.  
Every winter it flies to this orchard  
And sits like a bud on the barren nest.

On the poem's other side there's a road  
Sliced narrow, thin, so razorsharp fine  
And there someone wanders barefoot and mute  
A ghost lost along the passage of time.

On the poem's other side wondrous things can occur  
Even now in this hour clouded and gray,  
As it presses against the pane of the glass  
The feverish longing of a wounded day.

On the poem's other side my mother stands rapt  
In the doorway a moment in the fading light  
And calls me home, like long ago, long ago:  
Enough play now, don't you see? It's night.

The *People's Poetry Gathering* is pleased to offer a forum for poets to pay tribute to other poets and to their poetic inspirations.

Irena Klepfisz pays tribute to Yiddish women poets from the early twentieth century.

Eugene Redmond, Robert Pinsky and others pay tribute to Henry Dumas (1934-1968), the blues activist poet who was slain by a transit policeman in a New York City subway.

Robert Bly and Martín Espada pay tribute to Pablo Neruda, celebrating the Chilean poet-activist's work which has profoundly influenced 20th century poetry in all languages. Neruda (1904-1973) was the winner of the 1971 Nobel Prize for Literature.

Galway Kinnell pays tribute to Federico García Lorca, reading his "*Llanto por Ignacio Sanche Meijias*." Spain's greatest modern poet was murdered by the Fascist partisans. His *Poet in New York* sequence makes him one of the great observers of our city.

Charlie Morrow and friends host a banquet and performances in honor of poet, performer and translator Armand Schwerner who died February 4, 1999 (Sunday, April 11, reservations required, \$18).

Victor Hernández Cruz pays tribute to William Carlos Williams (1883-1963), the great modernist poet.

## Play Ebony Play Ivory

by Henry Dumas

play ebony play ivory  
play chords that  
speak primeval  
play ebony play ivory  
play notes that  
speak my people...

play ebony play ivory  
play til air explodes  
play til it subsides  
play ebony play ivory.

for the songless, the dead  
who rot the earth  
all these dead,  
whose muted sour tongues  
speak broken chords,  
all these aging people  
poison the heart of earth.

they cannot sing  
they cannot play  
they cannot breathe the early rhythm  
they never heard the pulse of womb

so up! you bursting lungs  
you spirits of morning breath  
up! and make fingers  
and play long and play soft  
play ebony play ivory.

play my people  
all my people who breathe  
the breath of earth  
all my people who are keys and chords...

now touch  
and hear and see  
let your lungs scream  
til they explode  
til blood subsides  
and flesh vibrates...  
make chords that speak  
play long play soft  
play ebony play ivory  
play ebony  
play ivory

(Used with permission of the Dumas estate. From Henry Dumas, *Play Ebony Play Ivory*, ed. Eugene B. Redmond. New York: Random House, 1974.)

## New York

(Oficina y denuncia)

Debajo de las multiplicaciones  
hay una gota de sangre de pato.  
Debajo de las divisiones  
hay una gota de sangre de marinero.  
Debajo de las sumas, un río de sangre tierna;  
un río que viene cantando  
por los dormitorios de los arrabales,  
y es plata, cemento o brisa  
en el alba mentida de New York.  
Existen las montañas, lo sé.  
Y los anteojos para la sabiduría,  
lo sé. Pero yo no he venido a ver el cielo.  
He venido para ver la turbia sangre,  
la sangre que lleva las maquinas a las cataratas  
y el espíritu a la lengua de la cobra.  
Todos los días se matan en New York  
cuatro millones de patos,  
cinco millones de cerdos,  
dos mil palomas para el gusto de los agonizantes,  
un millón de vacas,  
un millón de corderos  
y dos millones de gallos,  
que dejan los cielos hechos añicos.  
Más vale sollozar afilando la navaja  
o asesinar a los perros en las alucinantes cacerías,  
que resistir en la madrugada  
los interminables trenes de leche  
los interminables trenes de sangre  
y los trenes de rosas maniatadas  
por los comerciantes de perfumes.  
Los patos y las palomas,  
y los cerdos y los corderos  
ponen sus gotas de sangre  
debajo de las multiplicaciones,

y los terribles alaridos de las vacas estrujadas  
llenan de dolor el valle  
donde el Hudson se emborracha con aceite.  
Yo denuncio a toda la gente  
que ignora la otra mitad,  
la mitad irredimible  
que levanta sus montes de cemento  
donde latan los corazones  
de los animalitos que se olvidan  
y donde caeremos todos  
en la última fiesta de los taladros.  
Os escupo en la cara  
La otra mitad me escucha  
devorando, cantando, volando en su pureza.  
Como los niños de las porterías  
que llevan frágiles palitos  
a los huecos donde se oxidan  
las antenas de los insectos.  
No es el infierno, es la calle.  
No es la muerte, es la tienda de frutas.  
Hay un mundo de ríos quebrados y distancias inasibles  
en la patita de ese gato quebrada por el automóvil,  
y yo oigo el canto de la lombriz  
en el corazón de muchas niñas.  
Oxido, fermento, tierra estremecida.  
Tierra tú mismo que nadas por los números de la oficina.  
¿Qué voy a hacer, ordenar los paisajes?  
¿Ordenar los amores que luego son fotografías,  
que luego son pedazos de madera y bocanadas de sangre?  
No, no; yo denuncio.  
Yo denuncio la conjura  
de estas desiertas oficinas  
que no radian las agonías,  
que borran los programas de la selva,  
y me ofrezco a ser comido por las vacas estrujadas  
quando sus gritos llenan el valle  
donde el Hudson se emborracha con aceite.

New York  
Of vice and Denunciation

by Federico García Lorca from the  
*Poet in New York* sequence  
translated by Galway Kinnell

Under the multiplications  
is a drop of duck's blood;  
under the long divisions  
is a drop of sailor's blood,  
under all the adding up, a river of tender blood.  
A river which flows singing  
past bedrooms in the boroughs,  
a river which is money, cement, or wind  
in the false dawn of New York.  
The mountains exist. I know it.  
And wisdom's eyeglasses.  
I know it. But I didn't come to look at the sky.  
I came to see the murky blood,  
blood that carries the machinery over the waterfalls  
and the soul to the fang of the cobra.  
Each day in New York they slaughter  
four million ducks,  
five million hogs,  
two million pigeons for the dying to relish,  
one million cows,  
one million lambs,  
and two million roosters which shatter the sky.

It is better to sob while sharpening the knife  
or while murdering dogs in hallucinated hunts,  
the endless trains bringing milk,  
the endless trains bringing blood,  
and the trains full of roses manacled  
by the perfume-dealers.  
The ducks and pigeons  
and hogs and lambs  
lay their blood-drops  
under the multiplications,  
and the terrified bellowings of cows milked empty  
fills with sorrow the valley  
where the Hudson becomes drunk with oil.

I denounce all those  
who never think of the other half,  
the irredeemable half,  
who raise their mountains of concrete  
where the hearts of little  
forgotten animals beat  
and where all of us will fall  
in the final fiesta of jackhammers.  
I spit in your faces.  
That other half hears me,  
eating, pissing, flying in their purity,  
like the supers' children  
who take their flimsy palettes  
to the holes in spaces where  
insects' antennas are rusting.  
This is not hell, this is the street.  
That is not death. That is the fruit stand.

There are broken rivers and distances just out of reach  
in the cat's paw smashed by a car,  
and I hear the song of the worm  
in the hearts of many young girls.  
Rust, fermentation, earth tremors.  
You yourself are earth drifting among numbers in the office  
What am I going to do, put the landscapes in their right  
places?  
Put in good order the loves that soon turn into photographs,  
that soon become pieces of wood and mouthfuls of blood?  
No, no: I denounce,  
I denounce the conspiracy of these deserted offices  
which erase the plans of the forest,  
and I offer myself as food for the cows milked empty  
when their bellowings fill the valley