

Bendición

The Complete Poetry of Tato Laviera

TATO LAVIERA

PREFACE BY
Nicolás Kanellos

INTRODUCTION BY
Laura Lomas



Arte Público Press
Houston, Texas

para ti, mundo bravo

in the final analysis
i am nothing but a historian
who took your actions
and jotted them on paper

therefore making you
the source, the strength,
the base of my inspirations

in the final analysis
i know that the person
in this society
most likely to suffer . . .

is you, out there
sometimes living the
life of a wandering nomad
to taste the breadcrumbs
of survival . . .

one thing though,
if we ever meet
and you overpower me,
i would mention a book
by dostoevsky which
you have not read

and don't think because i passed
the evening junior high school
exam that i am more educated
than you

i still have plenty of room
to grow, check me out
and straighten me . . .
don't cliché me . . .

i might get angry now ✱

but in the final analysis
i'll appreciate it, thank you

the salsa of bethesda fountain

the internal feelings we release
when we dance salsa
is the song of manu dibango
screaming africa
as if it were a night in el barrio
when the congas are out

the internal soul of salsa
is like don quijote de la mancha
classical because the roots are
from long ago, the symbol of cer-
vantes writing in pain of a lost
right arm, and in society today,
the cha-cha slow dance welfare

the internal spirit of salsa
is an out-bembé on sunday afternoons
while felipe flipped his sides
of the cuban-based salsa
which is also part of africa
and a song of the Caribbean

the internal dance of salsa
is of course plena
and permit me to say these words
in afro-spanish:
la bomba y la plena puro son
de Puerto Rico que ismael es el
rey y es el juez
meaning the same as marvin gaye
singing spiritual social songs
to black awareness

a blackness in spanish
a blackness in english
mixture-met on jam sessions in central park,
there were no differences in

the sounds emerging from inside
soul-salsa is universal
meaning a rhythm of mixtures
with world-wide bases

did you say you want it stronger?
well, okay, it is a root called africa in
all of us.



La Bodega Sold Dreams

MIGUEL PINERO

LA BODEGA SOLD DREAMS

by Miguel Piñero

Arte Público Press

Houston, Texas

1985

A LOWER EAST SIDE POEM

Just once before I die
I want to climb up on a
tenement sky
to dream my lungs out till
I cry
then scatter my ashes thru
the Lower East Side.

So let me sing my song tonight
let me feel out of sight
and let all eyes be dry
when they scatter my ashes thru
the Lower East Side.

From Houston to 14th Street
from Second Avenue to the mighty D
here the hustlers & suckers meet
the faggots & freaks will all get
high
on the ashes that have been scattered
thru the Lower East Side.

There's no other place for me to be
there's no other place that I can see
there's no other town around that
brings you up or keeps you down
no food little heat sweeps by
fancy cars & pimps' bars & juke saloons
& greasy spoons make my spirits fly
with my ashes scattered thru the
Lower East Side...

A thief, a junkie I've been
committed every known sin
Jews and Gentiles... Bums and Men
of style... run away child
police shooting wild...
mother's futile wails... pushers

making sales...dope wheelers
& cocaine dealers...smoking pot
streets are hot & feed off those who bleed to death...

all that's true
all that's true
all that is true
but this ain't no lie
when I ask that my ashes be scattered thru
the Lower East Side.

So here I am, look at me
I stand proud as you can see
pleased to be from the Lower East
a street fighting man
a problem of this land
I am the Philosopher of the Criminal Mind
a dweller of prison time
a cancer of Rockefeller's ghettocide
this concrete tomb is my home
to belong to survive you gotta be strong
you can't be shy less without request
someone will scatter your ashes thru
the Lower East Side.

I don't wanna be buried in Puerto Rico
I don't wanna rest in long island cemetery
I wanna be near the stabbing shooting
gambling fighting & unnatural dying
& new birth crying
so please when I die...
don't take me far away
keep me near by
take my ashes and scatter them thru out
the Lower East Side...

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NUYORICAN POETRY

An Anthology
of Puerto Rican
Words and Feelings



Edited by Miguel Algarín
and Miguel Piñero
Photographs by Gil Mendez

“Dusmic” is a new word. It defines the process of transforming aggression being directed at you by another person (or, more generally, society) into your strength.

Luz Marina Rodriguez knows that the politics of love leaves women converting negative energy into positive feelings. Luz once told Vilma Linares, an actress in the Nuyorican Theater Festival, that whenever her father showed no love she had to be patient and show him love. That’s how Luz’s mother taught her to absorb aggression and transform it into strength:

i feel the eve
of my body
flowing through
the cycle of woman.
blood rush down
cleanse my womb.
my hair at motion,
limbs in stimulation,
effecting sensation,
submerging in love.

Because the poet knows there is no safety and knows that he exists in chaos he has to pull himself together while twirling. Pedro Pietri’s poem “do not let” creates a space where the reader experiences objects melting into each other. Pedro’s space does not experience geometrical limits. It is like entering an alphabet soup nuclear war. The poem attacks the central nervous system:

do not let
artificial lamps
make strange shadows
out of you
do not dream
if you want your dreams
to come true.

There is no outside protection:

your breath
is your promiseland
if you want
to feel very rich
look at your hands
that is where
the definition of magic
is located at.

Lucky CienFuegos places the center of safety smack in the middle of his "I." In "My In Of Me" the reader is pulled by a whirl of energy that grows as he realizes that

my in of me will always be by, for he
or I, one of us will be there for this is I
I saw through the windows of this skull.

Sandra Esteves' "i am the bird in transit for the winter," not included in this collection, defines the "i" as the point of reference for all understanding. She sees herself as the

. . . eagle flying high
and the egg shaping life.

She makes the "i" the center stone, the grinding stone. She is the place from where all definitions of self in time and place evolve:

i am the timeless
and spaceless
the burning
and freezing
the smallest
and greatest
i am love

A dusmic poem fortifies and centralizes the reader. It gives hope without deceptive illusions. Sandra knows that between man and woman exists the possibility of balance. In "for tito" she achieves a beautiful energy-giving balance. The

ugly (the ghetto) blends with the beautiful (their love) and the
result is rich with love:

together
we reap mystical sugarcane in the ghetto
where all the palm trees grow ripe
and rich with coconut milk.

The poems in this section are poems of love. But the eye is kept
sharp. It is a love that grows out of desperation, strength, and a
genuine confidence in the self.

Miguel Algarín

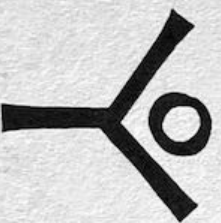
do not let

do not let
artificial lamps
make strange shadows
out of you
do not dream
if you want your dreams
to come true
you knew how to sing
before you was
issued a birth certificate
turn off the stereo
this country gave you
it is out of order
your breath
is your promiseland
if you want
to feel very rich
look at your hands
that is where
the definition of magic
is located at

Pedro Pietri

PEDRO S E L E C T E D P O E T R Y PIETRI

Edited by Juan Flores and Pedro López Adorno



City Lights Books | San Francisco

TELEPHONE BOOTH

numbers 8976

with the best of intent
this phone cell documents
all the imaginary urban
post operation boost strap
witchcraft immigrants from
the westside & the eastside
Botanicas of Spanish Harlem
whose dignity was saved by
Be Bop Acapela Nationalism
in the oral tradition of
the hippest Freedom Fighter
outside english text books
Don Pedro Albizu Campos!
who said and keeps repeating:
To take our Country You

Have to take our

LIFE

TELEPHONE BOOTH

number 1359

so lets go home
so we can get
into an argument
so you can throw me
out of your house
so I can continue
working on that
endless epic poem
about loneliness

TELEPHONE BOOTH

number 35465

it was a castle
not a ghetto,
we were dignitaries
not immigrants,
we stayed on the moon
& only came down
to go to the bodega
for more café bustelo

TELEPHONE BOOTH

number 579½

visiting a doctor
at Bellevue Hospital
equal opportunity
mental institution
armed with fig newtons
45 rpm record memory
poems I wrote
that he experienced
& some wine
hidden in hero sandwich
to take us back to
those magical hallways
of tenement destiny
where to harmonize was
our only ambition in
the land of acapela
& yes we were famous
& broke as all hell
when the visit ended
nurse told him 2 leave