

# Poems

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Poet

## National Pride

*The niche<sup>1</sup> has:  
A white breakfast  
he has a white heart  
white is his soul,  
pure,  
blessed calm,  
has the niche  
has the negrón  
The niche has no name  
he's a negro, negrito, negrón  
it doesn't matter that he doesn't dance  
if he brags, he's a negrito  
if he sings, he's a negrón;  
white are his teeth,  
black his thick lips,  
it doesn't matter if he's cultured,  
niche, negro, negrito, negrón;  
negro is a thief,  
niche makes everyone feel nervous,  
the mulatto has no name,  
he's just colored folk,  
negro is the doctor,  
negrito is the engineer,  
niche the baker,  
negrón the boxer,  
Negro has no name,  
he's colored folk,  
black is guilty,  
black is an abuser,  
black is from the docks,  
black stevedore,  
The black has no name,  
He's colored folk;  
negro is my neighbour,  
negrón my friend,*

*The negro from the slums,  
is colored folk;  
black is everything:  
niche, negro, negrito, negrón  
black brother-in-law, he isn't,  
black son-in-law, he isn't,  
black he isn't.*

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1- Niche, negrón, negrito are all terms used to refer to black people in Cuba



**Ekobio**

The ekobio<sup>1</sup> stands on the corner,  
 Doing nothing, doing something  
 Smiling  
 From ear to ear  
 Boasting and baying  
 Like wolves,  
 He's invading the space,  
 Doing nothing, doing something  
 His pockets are full of earth  
 That's green  
 That's red,  
 The fire that burns inside him  
 Is white  
 Is vegetable,  
 The boiling point is on the corner,  
 Doing nothing, doing something  
 His armpits are growing fungus  
 Because there is no water in the rocky  
 ground,  
 The problems are on the corner  
 Doing nothing, doing something  
 The cascarilla is powder  
 All the blacks are blessing themselves;  
 Out of the indoors, towards the corner  
 Doing nothing, doing something  
 From the edge to the potholes  
 Doing nothing  
 From the queue to life  
 Doing something  
 The hangman's rope is on the corner,  
 Kicking the bucket, doing something  
 insinuating, doing nothing  
 The square is on the corner  
 The square is just around the corner  
 With rumba in full swing  
 Doing nothing  
 With gambling going on, doing some-  
 thing  
 With the colors of the stampede  
 With the burden of a thousand nights,  
 Doing nothing, doing something

With the losses,  
 Doing nothing,  
 With the gains,  
 Doing something,  
 Melting the cry in his belly,  
 Burning in his loneliness  
 Doing nothing,  
 "I'm going out onto the patio!" doing  
 something,  
 "I'm going to exhale!" doing nothing.

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1- Ekobio: member of the Abakuá secret society, brother.

**Rules of Order**

They heat up my brain  
 they sketch out the months  
 they blow out my embraces  
 and my elbows go to sleep (with wait-  
 ing);  
 They are indoctrinating my soul  
 they are taking away my fish,  
 they manipulate my mornings  
 and my evenings disappear,  
 They heat up my brain,  
 they paper over my interests,  
 they push aside my pride,  
 once, twice...an infinite number of times,  
 families disappear,  
 my streets become sad,  
 they block opportunities  
 and the caballos<sup>1</sup> become dulled;  
 The sun,  
 now it will never be summer,  
 the days are cancelled  
 and the nights fall silent,  
 Everything is the fantasy,  
 of politicians and judges,  
 the merits,  
 the victory,  
 the enemy,

*And the animals,  
They are indoctrinating my soul  
they are taking my fish away,  
living is prohibited,  
but the fire belongs to me.*

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1- Caballos: in this context, those in power.

### ***Mani, mani'....!!!***

*A peanut seller who comes,  
A peanut seller who goes,  
“Maniii...maniii....!!”  
The market place is full of people,  
The fruit market is lively;  
“Maniii...manisero!!”  
Selling avocados makes you a fortune  
Six pesos a pound of tomatoes  
The fruit market is lively  
More than a peso for a peseta,  
There are no plastic bags,  
There is nothing for the dieta,<sup>2</sup>  
Food is rationed  
The fruit tree is lively  
Maniii...manisero...  
Sell peanuts to buy beans  
Sell peanuts to buy shoes,  
Sell peanuts for the ration book,  
Selling peanuts won't make you rich.*

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1- Mani: peanuts; manisero: peanut seller.

2- Dieta: diet, as in daily food requirements

### ***Generational Conflict***

*Circulate, circulate  
circulation;  
neoliberalism,  
globalization,  
dual currency  
squeezed together  
the sugar cane harvest goes round  
the son goes round  
the black woman dances  
there's no solution  
if he buys a soft drink  
people don't understand  
if he buys ham, it's a scandal,  
the peso is crying out  
the dollar takes hold,  
when the one appears  
the other disappears,  
dual currency  
circulation,  
a dollar, yes, sir, señor, monsieur  
a peso, comrade  
limón<sup>1</sup>, limonero  
“my country first”  
one buys and the other sells  
in five languages  
no one understands  
washington, sir  
martí, comrade  
lincoln standing  
martí, comrade  
dual currency  
circulation.*

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1- Lemon