

Poems

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Poet

National Pride

*The niche¹ 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.*

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



Ekobio

*The ekobio¹ 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.*

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 caballos¹ 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.*

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,²
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.*

1- Maní: 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
limón¹, 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.*

1- Lemon