

PEDRO

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

PIETRI



Edited by Juan Flores and Pedro López Adorno

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City

Lights



City Lights Books | San Francisco

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Pietri, Pedro, 1944-2004.

[Poems. Selections]

Pedro Pietri : selected poetry / edited by Juan Flores and Pedro López Adorno.

pages cm

ISBN 978-0-87286-656-0 (paperback)

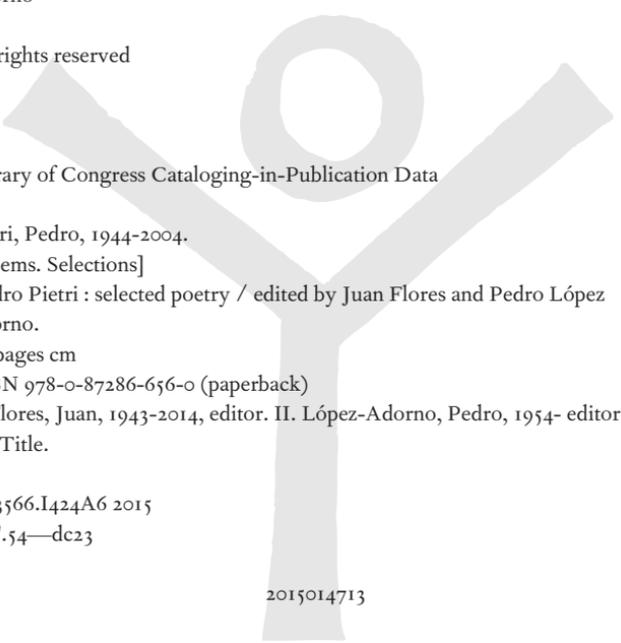
I. Flores, Juan, 1943-2014, editor. II. López-Adorno, Pedro, 1954- editor.

III. Title.

PS3566.I424A6 2015

811'.54—dc23

2015014713



City Lights

City Lights Books are published at the City Lights Bookstore
261 Columbus Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94133
www.citylights.com

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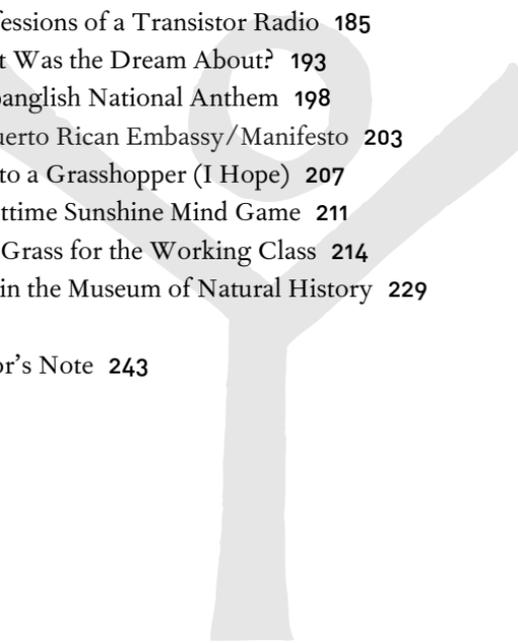
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City Lights



**PUERTO
RICAN
OBITUARY**

**City
Lights**

PUERTO RICAN OBITUARY

They worked
They were always on time
They were never late
They never spoke back
when they were insulted
They worked
They never took days off
that were not on the calendar
They never went on strike
without permission
They worked
ten days a week
and were only paid for five
They worked
They worked
They worked
and they died
They died broke
They died owing
They died never knowing
what the front entrance
of the first national city bank looks like

Juan
Miguel
Milagros
Olga
Manuel

All died yesterday today
and will die again tomorrow
passing their bill collectors

on to the next of kin
All died
waiting for the garden of eden
to open up again
under a new management
All died
dreaming about america
waking them up in the middle of the night
screaming: Mira Mira
your name is on the winning lottery ticket
for one hundred thousand dollars
All died
hating the grocery stores
that sold them make-believe steak
and bullet-proof rice and beans
All died waiting dreaming and hating

Dead Puerto Ricans
Who never knew they were Puerto Ricans
Who never took a coffee break
from the ten commandments
to KILL KILL KILL
the landlords of their cracked skulls
and communicate with their latino souls

Juan
Miguel
Milagros
Olga
Manuel
From the nervous breakdown streets
where the mice live like millionaires
and the people do not live at all
are dead and were never alive

Juan
died waiting for his number to hit
Miguel
died waiting for the welfare check
to come and go and come again
Milagros
died waiting for her ten children
to grow up and work
so she could quit working
Olga
died waiting for a five dollar raise
Manuel
died waiting for his supervisor to drop dead
so he could get a promotion

Is a long ride
from Spanish Harlem
to long island cemetery
where they were buried
First the train
and then the bus
and the cold cuts for lunch
and the flowers
that will be stolen
when visiting hours are over
Is very expensive
Is very expensive
But they understand
Their parents understood
Is a long non-profit ride
from Spanish Harlem
to long island cemetery

Juan
Miguel
Milagros
Olga
Manuel
All died yesterday today
and will die again tomorrow
Dreaming
Dreaming about queens
Clean-cut lily-white neighborhood
Puerto Ricanless scene
Thirty-thousand-dollar home
The first spics on the block
Proud to belong to a community
of gringos who want them lynched
Proud to be a long distance away
from the sacred phrase: Que Pasa

These dreams
These empty dreams
from the make-believe bedrooms
their parents left them
are the after-effects
of television programs
about the ideal
white american family
with black maids
and latino janitors
who are well train—
to make everyone
and their bill collectors
laugh at them
and the people they represent

Juan
died dreaming about a new car
Miguel
died dreaming about new anti-poverty programs
Milagros
died dreaming about a trip to Puerto Rico
Olga
died dreaming about real jewelry
Manuel
died dreaming about the irish sweepstakes

They all died
like a hero sandwich dies
in the garment district
at twelve o'clock in the afternoon
social security number to ashes
union dues to dust

They knew
they were born to weep
and keep the morticians employed
as long as they pledge allegiance
to the flag that wants them destroyed
They saw their names listed
in the telephone directory of destruction
They were train to turn
the other cheek by newspapers
that misspelled mispronounced
and misunderstood their names
and celebrated when death came
and stole their final laundry ticket

They were born dead
and they died dead
Is time
to visit sister lopez again
the number one healer
and fortune card dealer
in Spanish Harlem
She can communicate
with your late relatives
for a reasonable fee
Good news is guaranteed
Rise Table Rise Table
death is not dumb and disable—
Those who love you want to know
the correct number to play
Let them know this right away
Rise Table Rise Table
death is not dumb and disable
Now that your problems are over
and the world is off your shoulders
help those who you left behind
find financial peace of mind
Rise Table Rise Table
death is not dumb and disable
If the right number we hit
all our problems will split
and we will visit your grave
on every legal holiday
Those who love you want to know
the correct number to play
Let them know this right away
We know your spirit is able
Death is not dumb and disable
RISE TABLE RISE TABLE

Juan
Miguel
Milagros
Olga
Manuel
All died yesterday today
and will die again tomorrow
Hating fighting and stealing
broken windows from each other
Practicing a religion without a roof
The old testament
The new testament
according to the gospel
of the internal revenue
the judge and jury and executioner
protector and eternal bill collector

Secondhand shit for sale
Learn how to say Como Esta Usted
and you will make a fortune
They are dead
They are dead
and will not return from the dead
until they stop neglecting
the art of their dialogue—
for broken english lessons
to impress the mister goldsteins—
who keep them employed
as lavaplatos porters messenger boys
factory workers maids stock clerks
shipping clerks assistant mailroom
assistant, assistant assistant
to the assistant's assistant
assistant lavaplatos and automatic

artificial smiling doormen
for the lowest wages of the ages
and rages when you demand a raise
because *is* against the company policy
to promote SPICS SPICS SPICS

Juan
died hating Miguel because Miguel's
used car was in better running condition
than his used car

Miguel
died hating Milagros because Milagros
had a color television set
and he could not afford one yet

Milagros
died hating Olga because Olga
made five dollars more on the same job

Olga
died hating Manuel because Manuel
had hit the numbers more times
than she had hit the numbers

Manuel
died hating all of them

Juan
Miguel
Milagros
and Olga

because they all spoke broken english
more fluently than he did

And now they are together
in the main lobby of the void
Addicted to silence
Off limits to the wind

Confined to worm supremacy
in long island cemetery
This is the groovy hereafter
the protestant collection box
was talking so loud and proud about

Here lies Juan
Here lies Miguel
Here lies Milagros
Here lies Olga
Here lies Manuel
who died yesterday today
and will die again tomorrow
Always broke
Always owing
Never knowing
that they are beautiful people
Never knowing
the geography of their complexion

PUERTO RICO IS A BEAUTIFUL PLACE
PUERTORRIQUENOS ARE A BEAUTIFUL RACE
If only they
had turned off the television
and tune into their own imaginations
If only they
had used the white supremacy bibles
for toilet paper purpose
and make their latino souls
the only religion of their race
If only they
had return to the definition of the sun
after the first mental snowstorm

on the summer of their senses
If only they
had kept their eyes open
at the funeral of their fellow employees
who came to this country to make a fortune
and were buried without underwears

Juan
Miguel
Milagros
Olga
Manuel
will right now be doing their own thing
where beautiful people sing
and dance and work together
where the wind is a stranger
to miserable weather conditions
where you do not need a dictionary
to communicate with your people

Aqui
Se Habla Espanol
all the time
Aqui you salute your flag first
Aqui there are no dial soap commercials
Aqui everybody smells good
Aqui tv dinners do not have a future
Aqui the men and women admire desire
and never get tired of each other
Aqui Que Pasa Power is what's happening
Aqui to be called negrito
means to be called LOVE

THE BROKEN ENGLISH DREAM

It was the night
before the welfare check
and everybody sat around the table
hungry heartbroken cold confused
and unable to heal the wounds
on the dead calendar of our eyes
Old newspapers and empty beer cans
and jesus is the master of this house
Picture frames made in japan by the u.s.
was hanging out in the kitchen
which was also the livingroom
the bedroom and the linen closet
Wall to wall bad news was playing
over the radio that last week was stolen
by dying dope addicts looking for a fix
to forget that they were ever born
The slumlord came with hand grenades
in his bad breath to collect the rent
we were unable to pay six month ago
and inform us and all the empty
shopping bags we own that unless
we pay we will be evicted immediately
And the streets where the night lives
and the temperature is below zero
three hundred sixty-five days a year
will become our next home address
All the lightbulbs of our apartment
were left and forgotten at the pawnshop
across the street from the heart attack

the broken back buildings were having
Infants not born yet played hide n seek
in the cemetery of their imagination
Blind in the mind tenants were praying
for numbers to hit so they can move out
and wake up with new birth certificates
The grocery stores were outnumbered by
funeral parlors with neon signs that said
Customers wanted No experience necessary
A liquor store here and a liquor store
everywhere you looked filled the polluted
air with on the job training prostitutes
pimps and winos and thieves and abortions
White business store owners from clean-cut
plush push-button neat neighborhoods
who learn how to speak spanish in six weeks
wrote love letters to their cash registers
Vote for me! said the undertaker: I am
the man with the solution to your problems

To the united states we came
To learn how to misspell our name
To lose the definition of pride
To have misfortune on our side
To live where rats and roaches roam
in a house that is definitely not a home
To be trained to turn on television sets
To dream about jobs you will never get
To fill out welfare applications
To graduate from school without an education
To be drafted distorted and destroyed
To work full time and still be unemployed

To wait for income tax returns
and stay drunk and lose concern
for the heart and soul of our race
and the climate that produce our face

To pledge allegiance
to the flag
of the united states
of installment plans
One nation
under discrimination
for which it stands
and which it falls
with poverty injustice
and televised
firing squads
for everyone who has
the sun on the side
of their complexion

Lapiz: Pencil

Pluma: Pen

Cocina: Kitchen

Gallina: Hen

Everyone who learns this
will receive a high school equivalency diploma
a lifetime supply of employment agencies
a different bill collector for every day of the week
the right to vote for the executioner of your choice
and two hamburgers for thirty-five cents in times square

We got off
the two-engine airplane
at idelwild airport
(re-named kennedy airport
twenty years later)
with all our furniture
and personal belongings
in our back pockets

We follow the sign
that says welcome to america
but keep your hands
off the property
violators will be electrocuted
follow the garbage truck
to the welfare department
if you cannot speak english

So this is america
land of the free
for everybody
but our family
So this is america
where you wake up
in the morning
to brush your teeth
with the home relief
the leading toothpaste
operation bootstrap
promise you you will get
every time you buy
a box of cornflakes

on the lay-away plan
So this is america
land of the free
to watch the
adventures of superman
on tv if you know
somebody who owns a set
that works properly
So this is america
exploited by columbus
in fourteen ninety-two
with captain video
and lady bird johnson
the first miss subways
in the new testament
So this is america
where they keep you
busy singing
en mi casa toman bustelo
en mi casa toman bustelo



City Lights

BEWARE OF SIGNS

Beware of signs that say
“Aqui Se Habla Espanol”
Dollar Down Dollar A Week
until your dying days

BUEYNOS DIASS
COMO ESTA YOUSTED?
AQUI SAY FIA
MUEBLAYRIA
Y TELEVECION SETS
ROPAS BARRATOS
TRAJES Y ZAPATOS
PARA SUSHIJOS
AND YOUR MARIDOS
NUMAYROSAS COSA
PARA LA ESPOSA
KAY TIENAY TODO
KAY BUEYNO CREDITO
PUEDAY COMPRAR
MACHINAS DAY LAVAR
VACUM CLEANEROS
YOUSTED NAME IT
AND IF NOSOTROS
NO LO TENAYMOS
WE LO INVENTAYMOS
IMMEDIATAMENTAY
JESS WE WILL
NADUAQUIESIMPOSI
BLAYBLABLUDAGHAZ

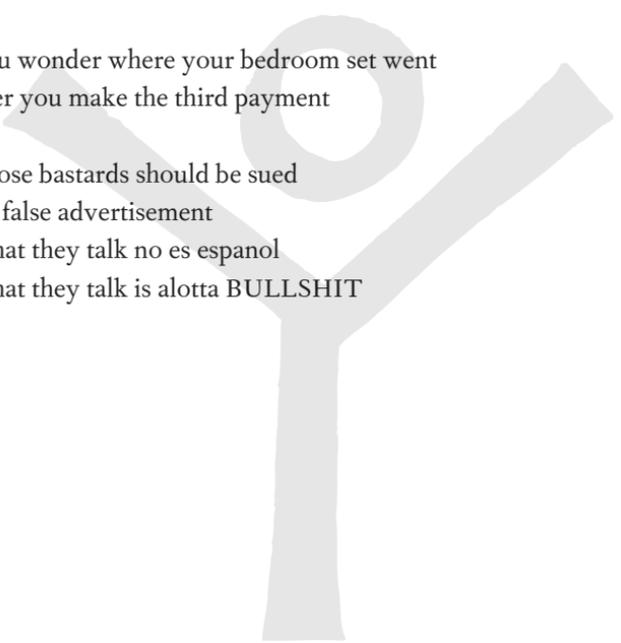
OOLADUYAJAYEAHAZ
SI NO SAY NECESITA
NINGUNO DINEROS
SOLAMENTAY YOU SIGN
AQUI ON THIS LINE
Y TODO WILL BE FINE
MUCHAS GRACIAS SENOR
MUCHAS GRACIAS SENORA
AND DON'T FORGET
TO VUELVAY AGAIN
TELL ALL YOUR NEXT
DOOR VEYCINOS THAT
WITH EVERY TEN DOLLAR
PURCHASE THEY MAKE
LEY DEMOS UNO DISCO
DEY LA CANCION
DEY SU FAVORITO
TELEVICION PROGRAMA
simplementay maria
simplementay maria
maria maria ETCETRA
HASTA LA VISTO AMIGO

Beware of signs that say
“Aqui Se Habla Espanol”
Do not go near those places
of smiling faces that do not smile
and bill collectors who are well train
to forget how to habla espanol
when you fall back on those weekly payments

Beware! Be wise! Do not patronize
Garbage is all they are selling you
Here today gone tomorrow merchandise

You wonder where your bedroom set went
after you make the third payment

Those bastards should be sued
for false advertisement
What they talk no es espanol
What they talk is alotta BULLSHIT



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