

**El Barrio**  
David Gonzalez 6/2000

Bring on the clave Puente style,  
bring on two-three ritmo magic,  
vaya papi que tu mambo moves me,  
vaya mami que tu mirada mirrors my own curiosity,  
vaya la clave,  
vaya el sacred groove que me tiene floating y flotando,  
and planted into the bedrock de esta tierra firme,  
of this our earth.

The winged clave,  
uprooted, sold-out,  
and chained to the miserable hold of a Portugese slave ship,  
forced into migration,  
this sacred syncopation  
mixed with the strains of Andalusian canto  
in the sugar cane fields of El Caribe,  
and landed at this spot,  
this town,  
this Nueva York,  
El Barrio,  
El Barrio, el finger-tip grip onto the American dream,  
where half the streets open wide to the horizon,  
and the other half are dead ends,  
y donde el ritmo no tiene fin,  
and the groove is deep.

El Barrio where milk is not milk - but leche,  
where manteca is manteca,  
where the plantains are maduros,  
ripe, sweet, brown smiles.

El Barrio where the call,  
la llamada a tu pueblo is only thirty-nine cents a minute,  
plus a three fifty connection charge,  
and you pay it gladly because Grandmother's voice is honey  
and you need it to be.

Listen abuela in Puerto Rico, Cuba, Santo Domingo, Mexico y Honduras,

David Gonzalez/Poetic License  
City of Dreams

los muchachos eh-speak english at school,  
pero español en la casa,  
el lenguaje de nuestra sangre - our blood tongue,  
and each morning I recite for them your prayer abuela;  
que dios te cubre con su santo bendicion,  
may God surround you with his sanctified blessing,  
and then they cross themselves and go outside,  
and cross themselves again when they pass the storefront churches  
where the charismatic pentacostals are raising the roof,  
they cross themselves once again at the corner of 176th and Amsterdam,  
where gladiolas, lillies and everlasting silk rose blossoms  
mark the spot where Papo was shot,  
his lifespan "June 14th, 1986 - June 2nd, 2001 R.I.P."  
spray painted onto the tenement bricks,  
and scrawled beneath the youthful sad eyes of Jesus on a plastic gold  
crucifix are the words,  
"Why do the good die young?"

I'm planning to move to Puerto Rico when I retire,  
I'll get a house near the beach  
and eat mangoes all day,  
but hey, then my kid'll probably go to college (que Dios le bendiga) in Ohio,  
marry a sweet smart girl from there,  
y entonces los nietos...the grandkids will need me  
and I'll need them to know where they come from,  
who we are,  
and how we live,  
so I'll stay here in El Barrio,  
life is that way,  
life is that way,  
moving and changing like the crackle and burst of Tito Puente's timbal,  
moving and changing  
in El Barrio.

## Rest, my warriors

for Gabriel Garcia Marquez and all the warriors of art.  
12/17/2000

By the shore you shall sleep my warriors,  
by midnight I will come.

By the shore you shall sleep,  
with the choral hum of the waves at your ear,  
by midnight I will come.

By the shore you shall sleep,  
beneath a blue-black blanket sequined with galaxies and shooting  
stars, clasped by the crescent moon,  
by midnight I will come.

By the shore you shall sleep,  
breathing the free winds of the earth,  
by midnight I will come.

By the shore you shall sleep,  
upon soft sands and tiny treasures washed up out of the aqua-world,  
by midnight I will come.

By the shore you shall sleep,  
where water and dirt kiss open-mouthed, and all is moist,  
by midnight I will come.

You are within my sight and I watch you my warriors,  
Your light dazzles my iris and intoxicates,  
I take you in like honeyed wine.  
I know what you have done,  
I will come to you before this day is through.

Rest, my warriors,  
by the shore you shall sleep,  
by midnight I will come.

## The City of Dreams

I release myself to you New York  
I release myself to you the way lovers give up their sanity  
I release myself to you the way that parents surrender to their children  
the way sea-birds turn toward surf gusts,  
I release myself to you New York  
to fuel your consumptive fire  
to burn my outer skin  
and discover the new growth beneath.  
I release myself to you New York for my discovery,  
for your glory

This New York, asopao, minestrone, wonton, gumbo stew,  
this one right here, right now,  
the New York beneath our feet,  
the New York beside us,  
in the turban,  
in the dashiki,  
pierced,  
buttoned down,  
opened up New York,  
sharp-edged as the happy cleaver of a Cobble Hill butcher,  
hidden as the crucifix tucked into the bright orange FUBU jersey,  
New York, mixed up and merry as a Korean salad bar,  
open as the door to the library,  
closed as a Wall St. vault,  
loud as the squeal of the F train,  
silent as downy dawn at Jamaica bay,  
as smooth as the firehouse pole,  
gleaming as sixteen steel drums parading down Nostrand Ave,  
gritty as the growl of a pit bull,  
start spreading the news,  
'cause if you gonna make it here  
first learn that the only real foreigner  
is your own murky shadow,  
and that the light that shines from twenty four time-zones simultaneously,  
has the power to illuminate your soul.

Welcome to New York,

David Gonzalez/Poetic License  
City of Dreams

City of dreams,  
the city that never sleeps won't bat an eye,  
won't lower a lash,  
lest we miss the minor miracles that guide us  
through the cyber-streaming matrix,  
and plain simple living,  
of our here and now.  
Welcome to New York,  
the magnificent location of our mortal unwinding.

**Fact and Speculations about Neruda's Eagle**  
3/30/01

Fact:

Days after Pablo Neruda's death  
an eagle was found violently flapping its wings  
within the boarded up house that he had called home.

Speculation #1:

Neruda had built the eagle's nest twig by twig,  
poem by poem,  
and had warmed its egg for a lifetime.

Speculation #2:

Neruda's soaring spirit coalesced into the winged creature.

Speculation #3:

The private in the Chilean security forces  
whose job it was to board up Neruda's house  
had read Cien Poemas de Amor  
and, in his first act of defiance, had placed the magical bird  
within the house for all to hear,  
for all to see,  
for all to wonder.

Speculation #4:

Spirit-bird/Pablo flying heavenward  
suddenly turned back to the earth,  
squeezed in between the rough planks that shuttered his home  
and furiously searched to retrieve the ink pen  
he was sure to need.

Speculation #5:

It was Neruda's last unfinished poem  
and so great was its longing for completion  
that it sprouted wings  
to seek his signature.

## Cry Out Phoenix

Beat your wings Phoenix,  
resist,  
it is natural.  
Flames are so appealing,  
such brilliant metaphors, from afar,  
but you are falling Phoenix,  
falling,  
gravity has made your feathers heavy,  
it has soaked your blood,  
and weighted your will.  
You will burn,  
and die.  
It must be said.  
So resist,  
cry out,  
yield to terror and cry out Phoenix,  
it is natural.  
If you didn't  
we would doubt the image  
we hold of you  
soaring in the azure world,  
ablaze above the sun.  
Cry out Phoenix,  
you are dying,  
and the promise of rebirth  
is a meager balm  
against the fire's rage.

David Gonzalez

## Tio Anibal

Tio Anibal,  
eres blanco y negro santo,  
fumando tu tabaco  
y haciendome las bendiciones Yoruba.  
Me metiste Ellegua y Chango  
con tus humos y cantos,  
y hoy los celebro  
y los entretengo,  
convivo en este ahora  
con ellos rumbando  
por mi ser,  
como el spiral de tu inspiracion  
y expiracion,  
como tu humo  
y como los gestos  
de tu propia biografia.