

SUBURBANO

32 POEMS / 32 POEMAS BY HYAM PLUTZIK

WITH FOREWORD BY OBAMA INAUGURAL POET RICHARD BLANCO

EDITED BY GEORGE B. HENSON

RELEASED FOR NATIONAL POETRY MONTH – APRIL 1, 2021

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Suburbano Ediciones

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Miami, Florida - Suburbano Ediciones (suburbanoediciones.com) in Miami announces the publication of **32 Poems / 32 Poemas**, a new bilingual (Spanish and English) selection of the poetry of the American poet Hyam Plutzik (1911-1962) (hyamplutzikpoetry.com). Fourteen poets and scholars have contributed, honoring Suburbano's mission of "Building Community," creating opportunities for writers to engage in cross-cultural dialogue with texts from different milieus -- in this case, reviving the legacy of a mid-20th century American poet from the Jewish diaspora.

The Foreword is by **Richard Blanco**, chosen by Barack Obama as the nation's fifth inaugural poet in 2009. The editor, **George B. Henson**, assistant professor at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies, is an essayist whom *L.A. Review of Books* has called "one of the most important literary translators at work in the United States today."

Hyam Plutzik spoke only Yiddish and Russian at home and did not learn English until he attended a one-room schoolhouse in rural Connecticut. Educated at Trinity College and Yale University, he taught for 16 years in the English department of the University of Rochester before his untimely death, at 50, in 1962. He was a three-time finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Poetry for *Aspects of Proteus* (1949), *Apples from Shinar* (1959), and *Horatio* (1961).

In his Foreword to **32 Poems / 32 Poemas**, Richard Blanco, son of Cuban immigrants, finds affinity with Brooklyn-born Plutzik, son of immigrants from Belarus. This spirit of shared exile inspired Blanco to feel the mystery of shared poetic power: "*Plutzik and I meet at the junction of this irony and our respective obsessions: he finds home in his longing to transcend, whereas I find transcendence in my longing for home. Through the timeless grace and art of poetry, my 1968 Miami merges with Plutzik's 1911 Brooklyn, our parents become immigrants from the same country, and our languages blend as one, 'in the one, shadowed sea where all things melt'.*"

The fourteen translators reflect a diversity of voices from Spain and the Americas. In addition to Henson, they are Layla Benitez-James. Pablo Brescia, Pablo Cartaya, Carlos A. Del Valle Cruz. George Franklin, Ximena Gomez, Pedro Medina. Natalia Molinos. Carlos Pintado, Jonathan Rose, Jorge Vessel. Jose A. Villar-Portela, and Gastón Virkel. Following is a translation of Hyam Plutzik's poem, *The Last Fisherman*, by Carlos Pintado.

The Last Fisherman

By Hyam Plutzik

He will set his camp beside a cold lake
And when the great fish leap to his lure, shout high
To three crows battling a northern wind.

Now when the barren twilight closes its circle
Will fear the yearning ghosts come for his catch
And watch intently trees move in the dark.

Fear as the last fire cringes and sputters,
Heap the branches, strike the reluctant ashes,
Lie down restless, rise when the dawn grays.

Time runs out as the hook lashes the water
Day after day, and as the days wane
Wait still for the wonder.

El Último Pescador

Acampará a la orilla un lago de aguas frías
Y cuando el gran pez atrape la carnada, gritará
A los tres cuervos que luchan contra el viento del norte.

Solo cuando el ocaso estéril agonice,
Tendrá miedo de los fantasmas que se acercan.
Observará cómo se mueven los árboles en lo oscuro.

Cuando el fuego chisporrotee por última vez,
Vendrá el miedo a amontonar las ramas, a esparcir las cenizas,
Se acostará inquieto, se levantará con el alba.

Día tras día el tiempo acaba
Mientras su anzuelo fustiga el agua
Y él espera el milagro.

Traducido por Carlos Pintado

TRANSLATORS REFLECT - ON THE TRANSLATION PROCESS

Layla Benitez-James *"Hyam Plutzik's poetry first captivated me a few years ago when I translated his haunting poem, "My Sister," into Spanish. As a non-native Spanish speaker, I rarely translate in this "direction," but the experience of helping translate Sharon Olds's The Gold Cell into Spanish the previous year had made me bold. "Imagine a land where there is no rain as we know rain." This line got so deep under my skin that I have rewritten it in every journal since. The act of translating in the "wrong" direction revealed that I knew far more than I thought I knew and allowed me to unstitch every line in English before I felt I could try to render it in Spanish. I also thought about the Spanish in a fresh light, asking if a phrase was supposed to sound ordinary or jarring. It also inspired me to seek out some amazing collaboration as I asked a friend and translator, Natalia Molinos Navarro, to look over my work and make sure that the translation was strange in the right ways."*

Natalia Molinos Navarro *"...Sometimes, the translator falls in love with an author's writing. It has been this way for me. I found Hyam Plutzik's poetry through the poet and translator Layla Benitez-James. From the first poem I read, his metaphors, themes, and writing style were deeply attractive to me. They made me dive deeper into the meaning of each verse, many times, exploring each word. I was fascinated by his ability to relate death to creation. I find his approach to writing so original and also, in a strange way, very close to my own thoughts and feelings. I found a strange kind of union through time that unites us, writer and translator. We share a timeless, spiritual link of feelings and ideas."*

HYAM PLUTZIK'S LEGACY TODAY

History of Translations

The publication of **32 Poems / 32 Poemas** marks a further stage of growing global interest in Hyam Plutzik's work; his poetry has been published in translation in Chinese, Croatian, German, Hebrew, Russian, and Yiddish. In the 1970s, Joseph Brodsky took the lead, translating parts of Plutzik's epic narrative, *Horatio*, into Russian for a theatrical presentation in the former Soviet Union. In 2019, Miami-based publisher Suburbano Ediciones approached the poet's wife on her 100th birthday proposing to bring Plutzik's work to Spanish readers. Their interest was piqued by the attention the poet's work has gained in South Florida over the past decade through some highly visible projects that celebrate his work:

Documentary: *Hyam Plutzik: American Poet*

German versions were rendered in conjunction with the screening of *Hyam Plutzik: American Poet*, directed by Oscar nominee Christine Choy and Ku-ling Siegel (2006) when the film received its European Premiere in the American Perspectives Series' at the Zebra Poetry Film Festival in Berlin. In 2007, the film also debuted at the Jerusalem Film Festival with a feature review in the *Jerusalem Post* that foreshadowed the following: "Perhaps now, at the height of globalization, Plutzik may be introduced to new readers".

Hyam Plutzik Centennial

In 2011/12 the University of Rochester initiated a project called the 50/100 to celebrate the Centennial of Hyam Plutzik's birth and the 50th anniversary of **The Plutzik Poetry Series**, the longest running collegiate poetry series in the country, having been established upon the death of the poet in 1962

Recognizing the importance of the moment, Wesleyan University Press reprinted **Apples From Shinar** originally published in 1959 as a part of their newly minted poetry series. This new edition included an afterword by Yale Shakespeare scholar, Dr. David Scott Kastan, who wrote, "This might begin a romantic tale: of the young poet of great promise who didn't live long enough fully to develop his gift. But that wasn't Plutzik's fate. It is true that he died too young. But his gift did develop, indeed developed early, and the rat of time should not be allowed the last bite. Plutzik is a significant American poet, and his poem *Horatio* is one of the genuinely original and important

American long poems. Time is Plutzik's subject, 'the monomaniac passion, time ("The Geese"), and in his carefully measured poetry, precise but never precious, he wins his victory over it."

Publication of Plutzik's *Letter From A Young Poet*

In 2016, the Watkinson Library at Trinity College released Plutzik's *Letter From A Young Poet* with a Foreword by Daniel Halpern, who wrote, "In [this book] Plutzik addresses the concerns of an artist coming to terms with the world ... the prose is filled with determination, philosophic wonderings, thoughts on the nature of the artistic endeavor, enveloped throughout with a youthful ambition, a hopefulness, and ... is a song of the self and the soul."

The Betsy Writer's Room and The Betsy Poetry Rail

The Betsy Writer's Room (a residency program for emerging writers), and The Betsy Poetry Rail (a piece of public art that includes Plutzik's telling words):

'Out of my life I fashioned a fistful of words. When I opened my hands, they flew away'. -Hyam Plutzik
'De mi vida he creado un puñado de palabras. Y cuando abrió la mano, salieron volando' Translated by Pablo Cartaya

SUBURBANO EDICIONES (SE) is an independent publishing label established in 2009 in Miami, Florida, by writer/entrepreneur **Pedro Medina León** with a digital magazine that has more than 35,000 readers monthly and a publishing arm that champions Hispanic authors and literature in the USA. To date, SE has published 15 authors and released 18 new books. This current project, **32 Poems / 32 Poems** by Hyam Plutzik, is part of a new community-based initiative that includes translation (into Spanish).

Pedro Medina León is founder of Suburbano Editions and an award-winning author, speaker and editor. He is the author of the acclaimed novel *Varsovia* (Florida Book Award, 2017) and one of the translators in this new edition of poetry by Hyam Plutzik, about which he wrote,

"To translate Hyam Plutzik's poems was to explore his universe, the Plutzik universe, by this I mean to take an interest in his life and work and thus understand that his legacy is great despite the fact that he left young. Good literature is the one that crosses the barrier of time and is always with us, like the poetry of Hyam Plutzik, who now, thanks to this valuable contribution of writers, poets and translators, will be able to receive recognition from the Spanish-speaking community." (2020)

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