

**Poems by Miguel Barnet:
Translated from the Spanish by George Henson**

Flowers

She used to cut her nails with rusty clippers
Her skin was milky white
and she smelled like armpits
But her back had freckles and was shiny
and her nose was beautiful like a toucan
She was a foreigner
and read cards in a broken accent
I tried to bring her flowers
but she refused them
Give them to the man who takes care of the dogs
he has sores in his eyes
and dreams of lost loves
or so the cards tell me
So I did, like in a
Charlie Chaplain movie.

Black Men

He was black and drank *aguardiente*
I never heard him speak again
I never heard him laugh again
I never saw him kill a fly

He wore a white shirt, full of holes
and washed cars with a yellow cloth
His thick black fingers
squeezed the rag,
with such hatred, with such pain
that his white, gapped teeth
shot out of his mouth
I imagine his green kidney
pierced with an arrow

Everyone was afraid of him, even me
That was in the forties
when I still wet the bed

I know that time has passed
that there have been wars, tidal waves,
coups d'état and revolutions
but his white teeth are still there, in my pupils
intact, like the night.

BIO:

George Henson is a translator of Latin American and Spanish prose and verse. His work has previously appeared in *World Literature Today*, *The Kenyan Review*, *The Literary Review*, and *Puerto del Sol*, and include works by Miguel Barnet, Andrés Neuman, Elena Poniatowska, Alberto Chimal, and Raquel Castro. His book-length translations include Elena Poniatowska's *The Heart of the Artichoke* and Luis Jorge Boone's *The Cannibal Night*. He is currently translating the memoir *The Art of Flight* by Mexican Sergio Pitol. George lives in Dallas, where he teaches Spanish at the University of Texas at Dallas.

BIO:

Cuban novelist, poet and ethnographer Miguel Barnet is perhaps best known for this testimonial novel *Biography of a Runaway Slave*. The winner numerous national and international literary prizes, including the Premio Nacional de Literatura and the Premio Juan Rulfo, Barnet is the author of a ten books of poetry and five novels, as well dozens of essays on Afro-Cuban ethnography. His work has been translated into over a dozen languages, and three of his works have been translated into other media, including film, music, and dance. He is the founder and executive director of the Instituto Fernando Ortiz and is president of the Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba. Barnet resides in Havana.