|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|

|  |
| --- |
|  **I Am Offering This Poem**  |

 |  |
|

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|   | I am offering this poem to you,since I have nothing else to give.Keep it like a warm coat,when winter comes to cover you,or like a pair of thick socksthe cold cannot bite through,I love you,I have nothing else to give you,so it is a pot full of yellow cornto warm your belly in the winter,it is a scarf for your head, to wearover your hair, to tie up around your face,I love you,Keep it, treasure it as you wouldif you were lost, needing direction,in the wilderness life becomes when mature;and in the corner of your drawer,tucked away like a cabin or a hoganin dense trees, come knocking,and I will answer, give you directions,and let you warm yourself by this fire,rest by this fire, and make you feel safe,I love you,It's all I have to give,and it's all anyone needs to live,and to go on living inside,when the world outsideno longer cares if you live or die;remember,I love you. Jimmy Santiago Baca |

 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|

|  |
| --- |
| **Some Advice To Those Who Will Serve Time In Prison**  |

 |
|

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|   | If instead of being hanged by the neckyou're thrown insidefor not giving up hopein the world, your country, your people,if you do ten or fifteen yearsapart from the time you have left,you won't say,"Better I had swung from the end of a ropelike a flag" --You'll put your foot down and live.It may not be a pleasure exactly,but it's your solemn dutyto live one more dayto spite the enemy.Part of you may live alone inside,like a tone at the bottom of a well.But the other partmust be so caught upin the flurry of the worldthat you shiver there insidewhen outside, at forty days' distance, a leaf moves.To wait for letters inside,to sing sad songs,or to lie awake all night staring at the ceilingis sweet but dangerous.Look at your face from shave to shave,forget your age,watch out for liceand for spring nights,and always rememberto eat every last piece of bread--also, don't forget to laugh heartily.And who knows,the woman you love may stop loving you.Don't say it's no big thing:it's like the snapping of a green branchto the man inside.To think of roses and gardens inside is bad,to think of seas and mountains is good.Read and write without rest,and I also advise weavingand making mirrors.I mean, it's not that you can't passten or fifteen years insideand more --you can,as long as the jewelon the left side of your chest doesn't lose it's luster!May 1949 |

 |
| James Oppenheim. 1882– |
|   |
| 93. **The Slave** |
|   |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| THEY set the slave free, striking off his chains... |   |
| Then he was as much of a slave as ever. |   |
|    |  |
| He was still chained to servility, |   |
| He was still manacled to indolence and sloth, |   |
| He was still bound by fear and superstition, | *5* |
| By ignorance, suspicion, and savagery... |   |
| His slavery was not in the chains, |   |
| But in himself.... |   |
|    |  |
| They can only set free men free... |   |
| And there is no need of that: | *10* |
| Free men set themselves free. |   |

|  |
| --- |
|   |

**End of A Discussion with a Jailer
Samih Al-Qasim**

From the window of my small cell
I can see trees smiling at me,
Roofs filled with my people,
Windows weeping and praying for me.
From the window of my small cell
I can see your large cell.

(from *Voices of Conscience: Poetry of Oppression*, edited by Hume Cronyn, Richard Mc Kane, Stephen Watts; Iron Press 1995)

|  |
| --- |
| **I will live and survive Irina Ratushinskaya**I will live and survive and be asked: How they slammed my head against a trestle, How I had to freeze at nights, How my hair started to turn grey... But I'll smile.  And will crack some joke And brush away the encroaching shadow. And I will render homage to the dry September That became my second birth. And I'll be asked: 'Doesn't' it hurt you to remember?' Not being deceived by my outward flippancy. But the former names will detonate my memory - Magnificent as old cannon. And I will tell of the best people in all the earth, The most tender, but also the most invincible, How they waited for letters from their loved ones. And I'll be asked: what helped us to live When there was neither letters nor any news - only walls, And the cold of the cell, and the blather of official lies, And the sickening promises made in exchange for betrayal. And I will tell of the first beauty I saw in captivity. A frost-covered window! No spyholes, nor walls, And the cold of the cell, and the blather of official lies, And the sickening promises made in exchange for betrayal. And I will tell of the first beauty I saw in captivity. A frost-covered window! No spy holes, nor walls, Nor cell-bars, nor the long endured pain - Only a blue radiance on a tiny pane of glass, A cast pattern- none more beautiful could be dreamt! The more clearly you looked the more powerfully blossomed Those brigand forest, campfire and birds! And how many times there was bitter cold weather And how many windows sparkled after that one - But never was it repeated, That heavily upheaval of rainbow ice! And anyway, what good would it be to me now, And what would be the pretext fro the festival? Such a gift can only be received once, And perhaps, it is only needed once.(from *Freedom: Human Rights Education Pack*, Caroline Adams, Marietta Harrow and Dan Jones Amnesty International UK Hodder and Stoughton, Hodder and Stoughton 2001) |

|  |
| --- |
| **About Irina Ratushinhskaya** Irina Ratushinskaya, the Ukrainian poet and dissident, was sentenced to 7 years jail in Mordovia in 1983 for anti Soviet agitation and propaganda. In prison, she wrote poetry in miniscule script on cigarette papers or bars of soap which she later dissolved in water after memorising the verses.   In prison she sewed protective workmen's gloves. Once she persuaded the prison guards to give her coloured cottons some sacking and needles  'to improve her sewing skills'. Across the top of the cloth she embroidered 33 different flowers. Below them she embroidered different arrangements of the same flowers in a series of rows across the cloth. She sent the cloth to a fellow women political prisoner who immediately realised that the flowers on the top were the letters of the Cyrillic alphabet and that the embroidery below was a poem. Friendly soldiers carried these across Russia and some were dropped over the wall into the British Embassy in Moscow later to be published in her book *Grey is the Colour of Hope*. |
| **Touch Hugh Lewin**When I get out I'm going to ask someone to touch me very gently please and slowly, touch me I want to learn again how life feels. I've not been touched for seven years for seven years I've been untouched out of touch and I've learnt to know now the meaning of untouchable. Untouched- not quite I can count the things that have touched me One: fists At the beginning fierce mad fists beating beating till I remember screaming don't touch me please don't touch me Two:paws The first four years of paws every day patting paws, searching -arms up, shoes off legs apart- prodding paws,systematic heavy, indifferent probing away all privacy. I don't want fists and paws I want to want to be touched again and to touch I want to feel alive again I want to say when I get out Here I am please touch me. (from *Freedom: Human Rights Education Pack*, Caroline Adams, Marietta Harrow and Dan Jones Amnesty International UK Hodder and Stoughton, 2001) |

|  |
| --- |
| **About Hugh Lewin** In 1964, the security police in Johannesburg detained Hugh Lewin, a member of the Liberal Party and the African Resistance Movement, which both opposed the apartheid system in South Africa. He was later tried and convicted on the charges of sabotage.  He spent seven years in prison, secretly recording his experiences, and those of his fellow inmates, on the pages of his Bible. On release, rather than submit to 24-hour arrest, he left South Africa on a one-way visa. |