**Pedro Pietri, (1944-2004)**

Very short biography: Pietri was born in [Ponce, Puerto Rico](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ponce%2C_Puerto_Rico), however his family moved to New York City in 1947, when he was only three years old. They settled down in the [Spanish Harlem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_Harlem) section of [Manhattan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manhattan) where he and his siblings received their primary and secondary education. Pedro was greatly influenced by his aunt, who often recited poetry and on occasions put on theatrical plays in the local church. Pietri himself started to write poems as a student at Haaren High School.[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pedro_Pietri#cite_note-Pietri-0) After graduating from high school, Pietri worked in a variety of jobs until he was drafted into the [Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Army) and sent to fight in the [Vietnam War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnam_War). The experiences that he faced in the Army and Vietnam, plus the discrimination that he witnessed while growing up in New York, were to become the main factors that would forge his personality and style of poetry. Pietri helped found the Nuyorican Poets Cafe, together with [Miguel Piñero](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miguel_Pi%C3%B1ero) and [Miguel Algarín](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miguel_Algar%C3%ADn). The Cafe is an institution where many Puerto Rican intellectuals perform. Pietri wrote the play "*El Puerto Rican Embassy*". The theme was that an island, which was neither an independent nation nor a state of the United States, should have an embassy. The idea for the play came from Pietri's nationalistic views. During the performance, he would sing "The [Spanglish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanglish) National Anthem" and hand out simulated "Puerto Rican passports."

Visit: http://www.prdream.com/histories/pietri-mov.html

"They used to draft us from Puerto Rico. That's the reason Puerto Ricans were made American citizens in the first place. The purpose of the Jones Act. These two soldiers who were drafted in Puerto Rico approached me and my friend, my good friend Angel Luna, to alert us and awaken us--to make us aware of the fact that this was not our war to fight. We have no business going there, invading total strangers who share a lot in common with us. So anyway, they told us we should just go AWOL. At least it would guarantee our lives. We could come out of it alive. And me and my friend Angel Luna--we were sort of--like--colonized, right?--being raised up here. We decided that--well, you know, we both stated that our mothers would have heart attacks if we desert our patriotic obligation and not fulfill our military duty in service to this country. So they went AWOL and me and Angel Luna went to Vietnam. And I came back a year later totally out of my mind and I call up to find out his whereabouts and he had died the first month there. I wrote a poem for his mother in this book. It's written in Spanish and I--afterwards--I will translate it into English. I'll read this poem because that blew my whole mind. "It's called "Para La Madre de Angel Luna." I mean it really blew my mind. When I speak about this I have memories afterwards."

"Para La Madre de Angel Luna"

El hijo tuyo queria irse AWOL

La noche antes de salir para Vietnam

Con su nombre boricua adentro de ese uniforme norteamericano

Fabricado en Wall Street por esos inhumanos

Que quieren conquistar al mundo entero.

El hijo tuyo comprendia quien era el enemigo verdadero,

queria irse AWOL la noche antes de salir para Vietnam

Pero no se fue porque no queria hacer a su madre sufrir

Cuando la policia militar fuera a su hogar en el South Bronx para encarcelarlo.

La noche antes de salir para Vietnam

Lo ultimo que el hijo tuyo le dijo a su companeros boricuas fue:

"Si no regreso vivo, diganle a mi madre querida que me entierre

En la tierra de Borinquen."