

Cultural Daily

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Robert Pinsky: "Samurai Song"

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Robert Pinsky's *Selected Poems* (Farrar, Straus, & Giroux) was published in 2011. His previous books of poetry include *Gulf Music* (2008), *Jersey Rain* (2000), *The Want Bone* (1990) and *The Figured Wheel: New and Collected Poems 1966-1996*. His best-selling translation *The Inferno of Dante* (1994) was a Book-of-the-Month-Club Editor's Choice, and received both the Los Angeles Times Book Prize and the [Harold Morton Landon Translation Award](#). His prose books include *The Life of David* (2005), *The Situation of Poetry* (1976) and *The Sounds of Poetry* (1998).

Samurai Song

When I had no roof I made
 Audacity my roof. When I had
 No supper my eyes dined.
 When I had no eyes I listened.
 When I had no ears I thought.
 When I had no thought I waited.
 When I had no father I made
 Care my father. When I had
 No mother I embraced order.
 When I had no friend I made
 Quiet my friend. When I had no
 Enemy I opposed my body.
 When I had no temple I made
 My voice my temple. I have
 No priest, my tongue is my choir.
 When I have no means fortune
 Is my means. When I have
 Nothing, death will be my fortune.
 Need is my tactic, detachment
 Is my strategy. When I had
 No lover I courted my sleep.

Former poet laureate Robert Pinsky's "Samurai Song" can be found in his Selected Poems, which is being published today in paperback by Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

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