Monstrance Man

By Ricardo Pau-Llosa

As a boy he had trouble speaking, past three before a real word preened from his lips. And for the longest time, malaprops haunted him. His older sister did what she could to train the bitten seal of his brain to twirl the red ball on the nose of eloquence, and his grandmother tired of insisting he utter the names of toys or foods — for every desire was coded — and gave him whatever he grunted and pointed to.

O, the man then a boy thought, when I tower among them I should invent my own speech and leave others empty and afraid that they did not know it, could not ask or plead their case in the one tongue that mattered. I shall have them look upon the simplest things, the man then a boy thought, and fill up with stolen awe, and point with their faces, their pupils wide as blackened coins, and hope with all the revenue shattered heart-glass can muster that someone had grasped their need as need and not as the monstrous coupling of sounds in a trance of whims. Then, the grind of his teeth vowed, then the plazas of my city will fill with my name, and their blood will matter as little to them as to me.

Source: Poetry (February 2013)