

# 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)