

## **guer ain fron**<sup>1</sup>

i am from fire  
on the tambourine rain.  
tossing dominoes onto bongos like a  
! pitter patter dance i  
dance to the sounds of *claves castañeteando*<sup>2</sup>  
and toss up pieces of picked-up colored glass  
while my feet pitter-pat pat  
on the dance floor next to bongos,  
toes, and dominoes:  
double-blank, 2-3 *y un unicornio*.<sup>3</sup>  
my eyes flash blank to uncle opponent  
but they shine like colored glass to the ally across:  
“cierraló.”<sup>4</sup>  
and  
losing hands throw losing hands which fall  
up and  
float down  
like tambourine rain rattling  
pitter patter flash glass and unicorn color sounds.

like all translations, this (of *self* to *words*) is a poor one;  
much is lost along the way.

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1. Phonetic spelling of “where i’m from,” as pronounced with a thick Cuban accent
2. *claves* (traditional Afro-Cuban percussion instrument) *chattering*
3. *and a unicorn*, refers to refers to a domino tile with a single dot on one end
4. close the game

*Lemme otra vez, ¿okay hije?*<sup>5</sup>

I am from concrEEK steps,  
from P.A.N. and Palmolive.  
I am from the snow melting atop a spiraling bush.  
(Gelid, lustrous,  
a facade of bright crystals.)  
I am from the green ash;  
the *trinitarias*  
*que florecen siempre*  
where the prettiest *grrrls* live.<sup>6</sup>

I am from pan piñita and kinky locks,  
from isame!<sup>7</sup> and Isabelle.  
I am from the recalcitrants  
and the short-tempered,  
From *¡Te callas o te callo!*<sup>8</sup> besides *¡Ain't no one dying!*  
I am from *I don't know* plus practicality,  
and the inability  
to convince my rationality.  
I'm from the Windy City past Buena Vista,  
*arepas y ropa vieja*.<sup>9</sup>  
From the mother my *'buelita*<sup>10</sup> lost to the Great White Plague  
and the one she gained in her stead;  
the twisted, ugly finger of my father,  
gullible,  
young,  
who stuck it in the chain of his brother's bicycle.

There is an album in a box in a plastic tote in a closet in a room,  
moved there from the walls of my childhood home,  
where aging monochrome memories  
of the same few persons  
who never got to know who they were  
slowly crumble away.  
and the endless seas of family  
whose unphotographed faces  
I'll never get to discover.

5. *Let me again, okay child?* (utilizing a gender-neutral spelling of "hijo")

6. Reference to a Venezuelan saying: "the bougainvillea that always bloom where there are pretty girls."

7. Ismael

8. *Shut up or I'll shut you up!*

9. arepas (Venezuelan dish) and "old clothes" (common name in Cuba for this national dish of shredded beef)

10. Little grandmother; granny

So much is lost in the translation of *self* to *something else*.  
 Like all translations, this one is a myth:  
 all each  
 an attempt at synthesizing something new through which to spew  
 one's consciousness—  
 each all  
 never better than the previous, but;  
 stays the hoping that 'this next one!' will be  
 (the absence of a story is itself a story<sup>440</sup>).

<sup>440</sup>¿Qué haces después de llegar a donde siempre pensaste que querías estar y encontrar que todas tus palabras<sup>11</sup> *for knowing and meaning don't mean anything at all—that, now, yours is the foreign history—a life confined to italics?*

\*

amoooOOOOoooooor  
 vē' pa' 'cá niñ(o),  
 q tus bloome[r]s se 'tan viendo por atrás!  
 oooOOOOOLL[j]E

baaaabeeYYYYyyyyYY  
 cuh' 'ere kid,  
 yuh bloomers is show'n' frum behine!  
 oooOOOOOLL[j]E

\*

i am

chi-town chatter and the muffled quiet  
 of otherwise buzzingly busy  
 and bouncing beach banter, like white noise;

boards gripping to once-delicate  
 feet and once-complete  
 soles now wholly worn out and tracking

salt inside the threshold  
*provoca un grito de la chica en la trastienda donde*  
*juice WRLD y montaner se están cayendo a coñazos*<sup>12</sup>  
 somewhere within reach of the space near the gap  
 between my "mom" n' sib's worlds; maybe  
 that's where i sit.

maybe that's why i got this lump that sits inside of me and why i  
 sit like a lump and wait to be heard despite not being able to  
*Llora, llora corazón.*<sup>13</sup>

11. *What do you do after making it to where you always thought you wanted to be and finding that all of your words...*
12. *evokes a shout from the girl in the back room where Jucie WRLD (late American rapper) and Ricardo Montaner (Venezuelan vocalist) are raining blows onto one another*
13. *Cry, cry heart*, dual reference to Latin American classics by Oscar D'León and Carmencita Lara

Translated into english, “vivapurú<sup>14</sup>” means “you have more power than you know.”  
This is a fine translation.

\*

we.

winded blankets weary  
of holding down forts  
and  
*elote***ama**le<sup>y</sup>ourhairdownsistagrrrl.<sup>15</sup>

bachata en chanclas.<sup>16</sup>  
dominoes smacking bongos  
(like  
tambourine rain).

elephants-stacked-on-a-slab-of-marble denting wood  
wonder why  
the fort didn't fall forth with it when  
snow blanketed the door  
and Beatriz's basement burst with aguas frescas<sup>17</sup>  
fallen from sky, not  
swirling in its spot next to hurricane horchata.  
This is my understanding of haunting.

(the first graveyard i gardened felt strangely familiar)    much was lost along the way.

14. Vick's VapoRub

15. elote; tamale; let your hair down, sister girl

16. bachata in flip-flops

17. fruit-based beverage