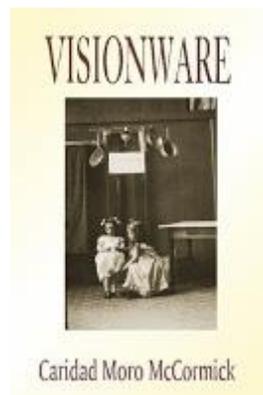


[Book Review: Visionware by Caridad Moro-McCormick](#)



One of the pleasures of attending the [Miami Book Fair International 2009](#) was discovering new books and listening to the authors read—especially when they did it well—from their work. Listening to Caridad Moro-McCormick’s reading from her chapbook, [Visionware](#), was one of those delights because her voice captured the nuances and subtle ironies in the text.

This is not to say that her poems fall apart on the page. It was just so much better *to hear* her voice when she read a poem like “Analfabeta” about her earliest experiences in sixth grade with a racist teacher and her *abuela*’s attempt to understand [American culture](#). Throughout the poem, the speaker highlights her *abuela*’s dignity in a system that seeks to denigrate her individuality and heritage:

You would have thought her a dignitary, the day she walked  
into my 6th grade classroom, staccato heels, her good black dress  
ironed crisp as a dollar, all for a date with Mrs. Dempsey

The teacher, however, does not share the same feelings of respect for her *abuela* or her culture and she notes how Dempsey “sometimes slipped and called me ‘Spic, how she pounced/when I spoke to my friends in *Español*.” During the parent-teacher meeting, her *abuela* “caught most of the/ words Dempsey lobbed her way, but didn’t say a thing,” and she waits for the right moment, “as the words/too smart for her own good lingered in the air like the bells/ that ruled or days,” to assert herself, “*Neber too esmart, mi niña, neber too esmart.*”

Moro-McCormick chooses her instances of [code-switching](#) wisely and they are deeply poignant when she describes her family’s attempts to assimilate in “White Christmas in El Exilio, 1979”:

where you dreamed of Wise men,  
*Noche Buenas* back home. women serving plate after plate:

*lechon, frijoles, yuca, arroz.*

Food becomes a trope in the collection which begins with this epigraph in the title poem:

“When you’re in love, everyday is a reason to celebrate. Every meal can be transformed into a special time to toast love, romance and your life together as a couple. [Visions-cookware.com](#).”

Such bliss is short lived as her difficulty with the American utensils becomes a metaphor for her relationship with her husband:

Glass that never did learn  
how to burn,  
warming too fast

dinner scorched  
night after night

Moro-McCormick uses food to define herself and relationship with American culture. Nowhere is this more evident than in “Compulsion: A Chronology” which details the various foods that are staples of her hyphenated identity as a Cuban-American: *harina con huevo* frito and Whoppers with cheese. Of course, the poem would not be complete without documenting the danger of using food in this way while trying to maintain the American obsession with weight-loss and Barbie-like perfection: “1999, Phentermine”: “The pills are small and canary yellow, the closest thing to magic I’ve ever tried.”

*Visionware* represents a new chapter in the Cuban-American story. Moro-McCormick’s sometimes scathing indictment of discrimination is a reminder of the indignities that many immigrants suffer even when they are navigating holidays such as Labor Day or Veteran’s Day. And this doesn’t include family events such as weddings or *quinceñeras*. Or traumatic moments described in “Coming Out to Mami.” I am looking forward to Caridad’s next reading and a full length collection of her work.

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