

My Che

I ask the boy outside my nephew's building
who Che Guevara is, the image imbedded
in red on his black T-shirt. I don't know,
he says, a motorcycle rider? The boy's Dominican.
Lazy. Unobservant. Couldn't find a fish
inside an aquarium. When the doctor hoisted
my arm around his shoulders and pulled me up
the trail, gasping through his asthma, I thought
he was the Christ until I saw what a lousy
shot he was. He laid me in a hammock
and there I was for three days. I healed quickly.
In those days we would grow extra limbs
if necessary. If not, we were executed.
We used blood for fuel and we walked
days with little sleep. I come to New York
every three years to see my nephew's family.
He has little regard for me. If it were not for his wife,
I'd never see them. I'm old and have no children.
This is what the doctor gave me. I left Cuba
with him, walked across Fidel's arrogance
into Bolivia. When I first joined the Fidelistas

out of Niquero it was because I hated Batista
for what his army did to my sister. Che said,
we're not fighting Batista. I didn't know
what he meant and thought I had joined
the wrong group. On the corner of 137th Street
and Broadway they sell what they call Cuban
sandwiches, but there is no pig in the yard.
There is no yard. There is a school three blocks
away but no one learns. Six weeks before Che
was killed, I left my hammock and walked home.
I caught malaria and in one of my deliriums
saw Che beg for his life on the day he was captured.

Three days later I dreamed that I grabbed a pistol
from a sergeant named Mario and shot Che Guevara
in the neck. I couldn't bear to see Che survive
in this world. Look at Fidel, long wind in his beard.
Look at my nephew, who despises him.
Look at my nephew's son and his gamecube,
pressing little buttons with his thumbs
to kill the guerilla army advancing on the screen.