

Sonnet for My Cousin Xiomara, Who Tried to Teach Me How to Dance Salsa

The execution fails, though I'm an expert
in the theory. Technically, I know exactly
what to do. It's simple. Right foot forward
then back, left foot back then forward.
It all goes wrong when I try to bring the hips
in. Xiomara tells me to just feel the music.
Sentilo Sentilo she cries, tells me to pretend
my hips are birds trying to escape from
the cage of my body, she tells me to pretend
my hips are words I've been holding onto
for too long that need to be set free.
I say okay, but still my hips feel stiff,
they don't budge, like tenants who
refuse to be evicted from their home.