1996

Entering an American Classroom

M. Carmen Àbrego

Follow this and additional works at: https://ir.uiowa.edu/iowareview
Part of the Creative Writing Commons

Recommended Citation
M. Carmen Ábrego

ENTERING AN AMERICAN CLASSROOM

entering the beige latex classroom
looking at glossy white faces.

never seeing one of my own faces.
¿donde estamos?

looking to my left
and to my right
and now and then
looking behind me
and what i see each second is something
I’ve seen before,
¿where are we?

when i was six i pee in my panties.
i cried out for el baño!
squirming like a worm
putting my hands between my legs.
my mexican pee-pee is warm.
making my mouth taste like copper.
¡por favor!
I heard a
burst of laughter,
cracking the shell of
innocence.

the teacher,
pointing her index
finger in my face.
I followed the direction,
up and down.
becoming dizzy and
i was under her spell.
she says bathroom

repeat after me . . .
ba-th-ro-om.
i say baño . . .
baño . . .
ba . . . room.
looking down to the
milky floor
seeing the yellow orange
urine.
feeling its warm
stream on my legs,
leaving a chill
over my body.
from the corner where i
was made to stand.
i repeat
the new word.

at six i learned my first
american word.
bathroom, bathroom.
at forty
   i speak
   english too well.
yet the memory remains
   a stain
   in my life
when entering an
   american classroom.

   ni modo,
   i am still the only
   person of color in
   the classroom.

   this poem is dedicated to the
   children of color in "Las Americas"