Porcelain

By George Kalogeris

It's when her first-grade teacher held up a shiny
Dinner plate and said to the class: "What's this?"
My mother sprang to her feet and called out *piáto!*
And as the room erupted in laughter, my mother
Burst into tears. But later that night she scolded
Her parents, and told them to "speak American."

Piáto. It all came back while I was reading
Porcelain by Durs Grünbein, and thought
I heard the poet's mother when she was a child,
Weeping for shattered Dresden—if only because
The shade of mine by now must surely weep
For what it means to speak American.

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