

Martín Espada

### **Coca-Cola and Coco Frío**

On his first visit to Puerto Rico,  
island of family folklore,  
the fat boy wandered  
from table to table  
with his mouth open.

At every table, some great-aunt  
would steer him with cool spotted hands  
to a glass of Coca-Cola.

One even sang to him, in all the English  
she could remember, a Coca-Cola jingle  
from the forties. He drank obediently, though  
he was bored with this potion, familiar  
from soda fountains in Brooklyn.

Then, at a roadside stand off the beach, the fat boy  
opened his mouth to coco frío, a coconut  
chilled, then scalped by a machete  
so that a straw could inhale the clear milk.  
The boy tilted the green shell overhead  
and drooled coconut milk down his chin;  
suddenly, Puerto Rico was not Coca-Cola  
or Brooklyn, and neither was he.

For years afterward, the boy marveled at an island  
where the people drank Coca-Cola  
and sang jingles from World War II  
in a language they did not speak,  
while so many coconuts in the trees  
sagged heavy with milk, swollen  
and unsuckled.