

Martín Espada

**En la calle San Sebastián**

*Viejo San Juan, Puerto Rico*

Here in a bar on the street of the saint  
en la calle San Sebastián,  
a dancer in white with a red red scarf  
en la calle San Sebastián,  
calls to the gods who were freed by slaves  
en la calle San Sebastián,  
and his bronze face is a lantern of sweat  
en la calle San Sebastián,  
and hands smack congas like flies in the field  
en la calle San Sebastián,  
and remember the beat of packing crates  
en la calle San Sebastián,  
from the days when overseers banished the drum  
en la calle San Sebastián,  
and trumpets screech like parrots of gold  
en la calle San Sebastián,  
trumpets that herald the end of the war  
en la calle San Sebastián,  
as soldiers toss rifles on cobblestone  
en la calle San Sebastián,  
and the saint himself snaps an arrow in half  
en la calle San Sebastián,  
then lost grandfathers and fathers appear  
en la calle San Sebastián,  
fingers tugging my steel-wool beard  
en la calle San Sebastián,  
whispering your beard is gray  
en la calle San Sebastián,  
spilling their rum across the table  
en la calle San Sebastián,  
till cousins lead them away to bed  
en la calle San Sebastián,  
and the dancer in white with a face of bronze

en la calle San Sebastián,  
shakes rain from his hair like the god of storms  
en la calle San Sebastián,  
and sings for the blood that drums in the chest  
en la calle San Sebastián,  
and praises the blood that beats in the hands  
en la calle San Sebastián,  
en la calle San Sebastián.