Martín Espada

**Imagine the Angels of Bread**

This is the year that squatters evict landlords, gazing like admirals from the rail of the roofdeck or levitating hands in praise of steam in the shower; this is the year that shawled refugees deport judges, who stare at the floor and their swollen feet as files are stamped with their destination; this is the year that police revolvers, stove-hot, blister the fingers of raging cops, and nightsticks splinter in their palms; this is the year that darkskinned men lynched a century ago return to sip coffee quietly with the apologizing descendants of their executioners.

This is the year that those who swim the border’s undertow and shiver in boxcars are greeted with trumpets and drums at the first railroad crossing on the other side; this is the year that the hands pulling tomatoes from the vine uproot the deed to the earth that sprouts the vine, the hands canning tomatoes are named in the will that owns the bedlam of the cannery;
this is the year that the eyes
stinging from the poison that purifies toilets
awaken at last to the sight
of a rooster-loud hillside,
pilgrimage of immigrant birth;
this is the year that cockroaches
become extinct, that no doctor
finds a roach embedded
in the ear of an infant;
this is the year that the food stamps
of adolescent mothers
are auctioned like gold doubloons,
and no coin is given to buy machetes
for the next bouquet of severed heads
in coffee plantation country.

If the abolition of slave-manacles
began as a vision of hands without manacles,
then this is the year;
if the shutdown of extermination camps
began as imagination of a land
without barbed wire or the crematorium,
then this is the year;
if every rebellion begins with the idea
that conquerors on horseback
are not many-legged gods, that they too drown
if plunged in the river,
then this is the year.

So may every humiliated mouth,
teeth like desecrated headstones,
fill with the angels of bread.