

Martín Espada

**The Republic of Poetry**

*For Chile*

In the republic of poetry,  
a train full of poets  
rolls south in the rain  
as plum trees rock  
and horses kick the air,  
and village bands  
parade down the aisle  
with trumpets, with bowler hats,  
followed by the president  
of the republic,  
shaking every hand.

In the republic of poetry,  
monks print verses about the night  
on boxes of monastery chocolate,  
kitchens in restaurants  
use odes for recipes  
from eel to artichoke,  
and poets eat for free.

In the republic of poetry,  
poets read to the baboons  
at the zoo, and all the primates,  
poets and baboons alike, scream for joy.

In the republic of poetry,  
poets rent a helicopter  
to bombard the national palace  
with poems on bookmarks,  
and everyone in the courtyard  
rushes to grab a poem  
fluttering from the sky,  
blinded by weeping.

In the republic of poetry,  
the guard at the airport  
will not allow you to leave the country  
until you declaim a poem for her  
and she says *Ah! Beautiful.*