



I sip it slowly, no straw,  
just lift the glass flared wide at the top  
like Nagasaki  
or Hiroshima,  
a trademark recognizable worldwide.

Ah, the myths:

Coke dissolves nails left lying in it.  
Aldolfo Calero and Vincente Fox walked on it.  
It contained cocaine, analgesic for the masses.

I swallow and believe.

It presents itself wherever I go:

Washes down fast food I eat as  
as I drive between jobs.  
It lifts my mood and carries me through the afternoon;  
safer to drink overseas than water.

If rum is Cuba in the Cuba Libre,  
Coke is the freedom of  
“Both mother & daughter  
working for the Yanqui dollar.”

Yes, as I sip the sweet sticky guilt  
that explodes on the surface,  
that explodes in commercials that  
would “like to teach the world to sing”  
and listen to “the pause that refreshes”  
exploding in the glass of fizz I lift,  
the pizzazz of the otherwise flat “real thing,”  
carbonation rises like fireworks in a dark night  
and explodes in my face.

*Brandon Cesmat*

Every summer, Brandon Cesmat harvests brush on a couple of underdeveloped acres he calls home above Paradise Creek in Southern California. Despite the title, Caernarvon Press published his most recent book, *When Pigs Fall in Love & Other Stories*. Poetic Matrix Press won two San Diego Book Awards for Cesmat's *Light in All Directions* and *Driven into the Shade*. Cesmat also edited *Classrooms of Poets*, which advocates writer residencies as part of all K-12 language arts curriculum. When he isn't lost among the oaks & boulders of the high desert, Cesmat hikes into town to conduct workshops with California Poets in the Schools and teach literature & writing at CSU San Marcos.