

Vieques Island, Puerto Rico

Each dawn Navy ships blast the eastern cliffs
rehearsing for Nicaragua

Vilma came here from the main island to teach high school
she shows us how the mangrove
ripped loose from the lagoon's sandy floor
floats with the tide and re-roots elsewhere

Marta--Vilma's friend--could not give birth here
the government closed the hospital three years ago
already in labor she hired a flight to Fajardo
her waters broke over Sonda de Vieques

Vilma and Dave plan the new cultural center
will it keep some young people from leaving?
will young people and old people sit down together
discuss ancient pottery shards found in the sand
listen to the cuatro
eat sancocho made from home grown roots?

Each afternoon under darkening sky
thunder replies
craters fill with rainwater
vines appear

Bill Crossman 1986

cuatro=guitar-like instrument used in indigenous Puerto Rican
music

sancocho=stew of indigenous roots