

Even Beneath This Bitterness

By Otto Rene Castillo

At the bottom of the night
the footsteps descend and retreat.

Shadows surround them.
Streets, drunks. Buildings.
Someone running away from himself.
A broken bottle, bleeding.
A widowed paper sailing around a corner.
A freethinker pissing on the grass,
where tomorrow the well-dressed children
will play
 beneath the dew.

Far away something screams, dark metal, genital.
Asphalt and blind stones, sleeping air,
darkness, cold, police, cold, more police.
Streets, whores, drunks, buildings.
Police again, soldiers, again police.
The statistics say: for every 80,000 officers of the law
there is one doctor in Guatemala.

Then understand the misery of my country,
and my pain and everyone's pain.
If when I say: Bread!

 they say

shut up!

and when I say: Liberty!

 they say

Die!

But I don't shut up and I don't die.
I live
and fight, maddening
those who rule my country.

For if I live
I fight,
and if I fight
I contribute to the dawn.
And so victory is born
even in the bitterest hours.