

Exile

By Otto Rene Castillo

I

My exile was made of cries.

The infinite face of police, grey
on my insufficient features.
The great tables of hunger beyond the fist
full of dollars that violates the land.
The bags packed every month,
ready to wrap up the exodus
of tears and dust.

I walked strange shores
in search of my country's face.
Dawns of gulls followed me.
I received the brutal embraces
of he who discovers a cataclysm of roses
in the most hidden places of his soul;
touch of hands in the nights
of escape, where the liquid eyes
of our mother burned,
her ageless dimension of cottonwood,
branches up
defending the city of birds
from the endless assault of water.

I was a tear of my country
rolling down the face of america.

Because I am one of those
who still carry
maternal winds
in the pores of his blood.
One who cries swallows
when he dreams the face of his infancy.
One who runs after agile butterflies.
And who sails his paper boat
every winter afternoon.

I am only the young tide
of my people.

And yet I say:
tomorrow my long hair
of fish
will be wiped out
by hands of fog.
The shape of my bones
will be lost in a wind
of ash.

But my heart
will be a whole soldier
with flags flying.

II

You who sell my country,
listen:
Have you heard the land walk
beyond your blood?
Did you ever wake up
crying from the sound of your pulse?
Sitting at a café in a far off land
one winter day
have you listened to men speaking
of your fight?
Have you seen the moribund exile,
in a dirty room, sprawled
on a bed of planks,
question the vague stature
of his children far from his love?
Have you heard him combing his laughter?
Have you once cried on the great belly
of our country? Have you been victim
of that accusation:
communist! because you were different
from the deifying sheep of the despot?
Have you watched as the sweet seamstress
planted a tender kiss on the oily cheek
of her prince the mechanic?
Or pressed the calloused hand
of the workers who build
the world's collective destiny?
Have you seen poor children laugh
the beautiful optimism of their childhood?

Salesman of my country, your silence
is greater than all your cash.
And you, the indifferent, what do you say?

Silence!

 You do not answer,
Don't open your mouths
if you can't
answer in protest.

One last painful question for all:
Do you even know what exile is?
Oh, you will know!
I'll tell you:
 exile
is a long long avenue
where only sadness walks.
In exile every day
is called simply: agony.

And one more thing, salesmen and indifferent
of my land. In exile you can lose
your heart, but if you don't
they'll never be able to kill its tenderness
nor the powerful strength of its storms.