

Remembering Oscar Romero

Sam Hickford

'Haz patria, mata un cura' – slogan (*'Be a patriot, kill a priest'*).

Forget him, he whose life was elegy,
tasting and tracing death's shadow. In touching it,
he fought the umbrageous, audacious canopy
it stretched over El Salvador, the death-squad-valleys
so cruelly cooing with caracara, woodcreepers
wounded by the weight of the noise, the Lete's
screeching flow he had so swam and strained against.

The mass came. He knew he would die, and so exposed
his chest to absorb the bullets, not swooning to the east,
and, knowing the resurrection was delayed,
he consecrated another, and redismembered each
campesino, fearing himself, not as a story-book martyr.
He nervously tilted his shoulder to the nervous flow of the staccato
of a God-made gun.

