

## **Night Watch**

By Mark Smith-Soto

Chico whines, no reason why. Just now walked,  
dinner gobbled, head and ears well scratched.  
And yet he whines, looking up at me as if confused  
at my just sitting here, typing away, while darkness  
is stalking the back yard. How can I be so blind,  
he wants to know, how sad, how tragic, how I  
won't listen before it is too late. His whines are  
refugees from a brain where time and loss have  
small dominion, but where the tyranny of now  
is absolute. I get up and throw open the kitchen door,  
and he disappears down the cement steps, barking  
deeper and darker than I remember. I follow  
to find him perfectly still in the empty yard—  
the two of us in the twilight, standing guard.