

VÍCTOR RODRÍGUEZ NÚÑEZ

FROM MIDNIGHT MINUTES

TRANSLATED BY KATHERINE HEDEEN

MIDNIGHT MINUTES / 3

The light is the first visible animal of what's invisible

José Lezama Lima

They're everywhere watching us
with their eyes not made for seeing
but to be seen

 When we catch a glimpse
they run toward the instant
where being's blindness

 can't catch up
Childhood with no deer
 and with just one horn
to braid vigils honeysuckle
frozen among bits of charcoal
Childhood of secrecies where the light emerged
from every dark corner
 with its goring

Childhood woven
with loose fibers and knots coherent
from the tired night horn
Hanging from its tail
the animal with a fragrant name
 unpronounceable

Has been in the ceaseless periwinkle
at the door of the Bedouin dwarf
who removes the last toys from its path
With that somber sniffing
what's it looking for to sate its hunger
if not the light?

Night become jasmine
 crouched
over the one swallow that made summer
These shadow salts
 starryless
are the only proof against you
The frogs in the sky
dive
 don't stop accusing you
The deer are antlered angels
longings on alert
 And they pasture their dew
their toad cadence
 before splitting the shadow

I am their exorbitant pupils that follow me
closed to death
Though nobody believes it
behind the significant blue
carelessly growing
 a dry lake spins
Confirmed by the fish
 surfacing each night
to play in the neighbor's childless backyard
That cat its weepy embers
realizes we're looking for the same thing
Some thread that isn't light
in this arduous penumbra skein
now put to undoing

Even if it is a strand
 colored in logic

to mend the sky
That cat its embered mirrors
won't shatter my fish breath
At least the deer cut short by tonight
with moon from another world
and cold that makes sleeping creak
only its own shadow follows
And at the doorstep
 late getting there
to make sure it's not left ajar
it ceremoniously eats
the leftovers of your anguish

The night with birds that won't let you sing
Those madmen who hide
 midday in their craws
and only quiet if the breeze goes out
The eloquent birds light has set fire to
The sunflowers fixed
 in the dry penumbra
cling to the yellow
stamen
 wound up by the moon
Higher than light
the moths make fun of everything
and though they know they're dead with the day
they won't stop stirring the shadow

The crow has perched
on the cedar branches
 that watch over your window
while other birds

from color sing all their suffocation

The tree trembles

claws the bit of sky

quartered in roots

and turns shadowless

at least breathing

I've been able to see it

with my son's tattered eyes

Like a silver bullet shot in the night

against the lifted tail of a deer

Like the constellated

deer rush fleeing through the sky

at each brilliance

On my unmoving horse

I flee from whatever isn't penumbra

Gallop through the trees

that don't know what to do

with the sulfur frost spilled at their feet

In the saddle I discover

being what the forest thinks of itself

That rhyming animal

between lake and night

what grace does it respond to?

I don't know and nobody can tell me

in this too clear world

A similar coherence

frizzes up shadows

The water feels like raining

and it's better to not forget

The raccoon stealing

what nothingness offers
in the neighbor's yard each night
The frogs and crickets observant
so nobody dries out the lake with their song
As it leaves its mine
the mole mixes
 stone up with sun
Watch out the night bites