

MANDORLA

NUEVA ESCRITURA DE LAS AMÉRICAS • NEW WRITING FROM THE AMERICAS

Excerpt/Fragmento from *Mandorla*, Issue 7

JAIME SAENZ

FROM THE NIGHT (PART I)

(TRANSLATED BY FORREST GANDER AND KENT JOHNSON)

~To my beloved friend, Carlos Alfredo Rivera

1.

The night, its rack of antlers twitching in the distance

the night locked in a box swallowed and re-swallowed by the night in the dresser
in the nook

while my eyes and especially that space between my eyes and nostrils
stretches out long as a two-story gutter

I'm startled and unnerved at the sudden fact—there's a tubular cocoon,
spun from one eye to the other, through which I see only the night in its fractured
and phantasmagoric phase

thanks to a force from who knows where the space of my dream has been
split by a wall

on this side sleep is not possible and on the other it's perfectly possible but
nevertheless thoroughly impossible

the wall, in fact, is not a wall but a live thing that writhes and throbs and
this wall is me

with an inconceivable transparency that permits me access to the night's
other side

to spaces where you might sleep in the overcoat of interminable sighs and
aches and grief-giving terrors which home-in on your bones

the other side of night is a night without night, without earth, without
abodes, without rooms, without furniture, unpeopled

there is absolutely nothing on the other side of the night

it's a world utterly without world, and to possess it you must become
powerless to reach it

it's the dock at the very side of your body
and, at the same time, it's inconceivably remote.

2.

Through the high tension cables which trace the contour of the hills and
then plunge to the fields

the night broadcasts itself in invisible sparks that flicker here, now there
in the eyes and buttons of neighbors not yet taken by sleep

and who valorously stay fixed to the doors of their dwellings to witness
the first onslaught of the night.

This first onslaught has, in truth, a mysterious source,

and no doubt it spurts up from the dead who have died for the sake of
alcohol and who now swoon and babble at the vision dangled before them by the
other side of the night,

and this has to do with the casks, the kegs, the bars, and the huge vats of
alcohol dreamed each and every night by rounders known only to me,

and who, having drunk their whole life to the seams, writhe, screaming for
alcohol, in atrocious spasms on soaked beds and in deep cloacas.

These rounders have learned plenty and they've got patience,

and know the other side of the night has sunk itself into the shaft of their
spines,

and gone down in their throats,

which retain forever the redolence of alcohol,

which is exactly what torments them unrelentingly, through the long,
long time of the night on the other side of the night.