

Edgar Allan Poe Is Reached at the Baltimore Harbor by the Shadows That Pursue Him

By Fernando Valverde

Translated by Carolyn Forché

*And the cloud that took the form
(When the rest of Heaven was blue)
Of a demon in my view—
—Edgar Allan Poe*

They always followed you.

Disdainful dogs,
they made you lose your balance.

You had to shout
blasphemies into shadows
trying to put out the din of their barking.

Other times
it was advisable to talk and try to calm them,
whispers could be more convincing
and stop them on any corner,
so as to continue alone.

Solitude is a walk through the streets of Baltimore.

You could never free yourself,
those shadows were growing,
crows perched on the statues
with eyes fixed on the emptiness of a demon who dreams.

To you,
who were on the edge of a dismal midnight
watching specters of dying embers on the ground.

To you,
who tasted sorrow,
who drank it like an exquisite liqueur,
I come close
and I look at you trying to find you on the other side of the stone
carved by misfortune,
the same as happens with beauty.

Never again will the silver bells ring,
the ships that now arrive at the port of Baltimore
are filled with people too frightened to speak.

They bring a stone in place of the heart,
they do not sense these shadows that wander the streets,
these shadows that are neither men nor women nor beasts,
perhaps dogs or birds or words in the beaks of the birds
or in their jaws.

When they pass they are nothing more than the sea breeze
from which they come.

There is a silence now
about silence
in the shadows.

They bite like words
in place of the heart.

Translated from the Spanish

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