

Litany 6-9

Salgado Maranhão
Translated by Alexis Levitin

Salgado Maranhão, winner of all of Brazil's major poetry awards, has toured the United States five times, presenting his work at over one hundred colleges and universities. In addition to fourteen books of poetry, he has written song lyrics and made recordings with some of Brazil's leading jazz and pop musicians. He has published three collections of his work in English: *Blood of the Sun* (Milkweed Editions, 2012), *Tiger Fur* (White Pine Press, 2015), and *Palavora* (Dialogos Books, 2019). These four poems are taken from his book *Mapping the Tribe*, to appear from Spuyten Duyvil in the fall, 2020. On Nov. 13, 2017, Salgado received an *honoris causa* doctorate for his cultural achievements from the Federal University of Piauí in Teresina, Brazil.

Alexis Levitin has published forty-four books in translation, mostly poetry from Portugal, Brazil, and Ecuador. In addition to three books by Salgado Maranhão, his work includes Clarice Lispector's *Soulstorm* and Eugenio de Andrade's *Forbidden Words*, both from New Directions. He has served as a Fulbright Lecturer at the Universities of Oporto and Coimbra, Portugal, The Catholic University in Guayaquil, Ecuador, and the Federal University of Santa Catarina, in Brazil, and has held translation residencies at Banff, Canada, Straelen, Germany (twice), and the Rockefeller Foundation Study Center in Bellagio, Italy.

Litany 6

Now, here, this vacancy,
tied to the sound
of viscera
(and of dreams),
I burn in the scar of time
like a tiger
in flames.
I who whip
the dogs who eat the shadows;
I who sleep
between roses and the apocalypse,
I came to merge myself with stone,
I came to sing in the fissures of the rocks.
Here, sustained
by a verbal skeleton,
I bring nothing but this pollen
from a sun seeking no revenge.
Who calls out the name
that no longer dwells in me?
What wind lulls
my winged lips?
Obstinate against surrender,
I seek a land of avatars
greater
than these fevered wanderings.

Litany 7

From the expanded window
In which the sphinx
of stone
confronts me
with
a sparse scrubland of scattered dwellings,
I gallop day and night
upon my cry: ascetic
alien
locked within my circle.
I have come here
unable
to carry what remains of me;
knocking door to door,
crying out a scrap
of help.
(And the rock keeps an eye on me
--in silence—
as if it knows.)
I got here by a miracle:
dry tongue ablaze,
a ground of bleeding paws.

Litany 8

With stories
instead of teeth,
I resist the slow decay
of viscera, alive
in my own legend's light.
They made me from this intimate
left-over of lightning
from which words emerge.
Since then, I've been many things: laughter
and slaughter; and the one who eats stars
with his biscuits.
Each enclosure, an everglade of mirrors,
every dream, a dried-up century.
And yet the verse roars on,
ancestral as a stone
and a branch from an acacia tree.

