

POEMS BY SALGADO MARANHÃO

Translated by Alexis Levitin

NUT

The distances that lie
beneath my feet, draw
my eyes to a bed of saddened
souls:

those sad leagues
that scatter me to
stained metropolises.

I who am of potter's
clay, of the sun
that wakens miradors;

I, of the watercourse--
brother to barefoot rivers
and silent stones--,

have no one for whom
to cry this litany
of ghosts,
these graffiti of blood.

It's not a franchise of pain

irmão dos rios descalços
e das pedras mudas –,

não tenho para quem
chorar esta litania
de espectros,
estes grafites de sangue.

Não é a sucursal da dor
que nos acende o sol
e a sede de ágora,
é o esplendor
do ínfimo.

Pode ser que agarremos
o real pelas vísceras,
que se nos afoga
à superfície;

pode ser que elevemos
o caos aos baixios,
que nos rende ao pântano
sem planície.
Ainda assim,
quebra-se a noz desse jogo...

o que não serve ao pasto,
serve ao fogo.

LIKE A RIVER 1

Maybe I am merely
what was lost
in the mirror,
as I searched for keys
where there were no doors.

Myriad are my judges;
those who gauge me
by the color of my flesh— not by
bone-deep facsimiles
tying me to History.

I live by squandering
pain--,
reinventing sympathies.

) Ah, those madmen
who love us
proportionate to
fire, as if to love
were to die! (.

I live from raising sphinxes
where the word makes its nest.

I don't have swords
to measure out my tracks,
I am just a river
in the shadow of tigers.

COMO UM RIO 1

Talvez eu seja só
o que se perdeu
no espelho,
buscando chaves
onde não existem portas.
Incontáveis são meus juízes;
esses que me aferem
pela cor da carne – sem
os ossos – fac-símiles
atados à História.

Vivo de desperdiçar
a dor –,
reinventando afetos.

(Ah, esses desviados
que nos amam
à medida
dos incêndios, como se amar
fosse morrer!).

Vivo de erguer esfinges
onde a palavra faz seu ninho.

Não tenho espadas
para medir meus rastros,
sou somente um rio
à sombra dos tigres.

LIKE A RIVER 2

In the kingdom in which I am entangled,
digging up the stones
of ancestors--
of those secured from
the jurisdiction
of fear--, I feel

wheat growing
among packs of wolves: I feel
the bursting forth.

Give me a crystal
cracked
and bloody, give me
that invention that cries out

like a tear
from God
fallen on cement.

I know where wild
grasses grow; I know
where the frontier of anger
dwells.

And I grasp hold of that mythic land;
the land of endless life,
of goats browsing on moons.

Within my hands,
my eyes,
ravenous;

transfixed with wonder.

COMO UM RIO 2

No reino em que me enredo
e escavo a pedra
dos ancestrres –
dos que se hão infensos
à jurisdição
do medo –, sinto

crescer o trigo
entre matilhas: sinto
o rebento.

Dá-me esse cristal
fendido
em sangue, dá-me
esse invento que grita
como a lágrima

de Deus
sobre o cimento.

Sei onde brotam
as ervas bárbaras; sei
onde habita a fronteira
da ira.

E me aferro à terra mítica;
a terra da vida à granel,
das cabras pastando luas.

Dentro das mãos,
estão meus olhos
ávidos,
atravessados de espanto.

LIKE A RIVER 4

Surrounded by a vegetation
of words,
in a biome of waters
sewn
to the alphabet,
I call
to mine
who are already made of stone.
Stone,
that from song to song,
breaks the spell
in my heart
of fire.

I call to madmen

who stage with me
this dawn
 of supplications.

I call to vines
that depend upon
the consecration of insects.

Just a moment ago,
messengers were beating
at my door,
 accompanied by bloody
creditors.

I have no badges from paradise;
I am selling my bones,
to pay for my laughter.

COMO UM RIO 4

Encerrado à vegetação
 das palavras,
ao bioma dessas águas
costuradas
 ao alfabeto, chamo

pelos meus
que já são pedra.
 Pedra,
que de canto em canto
desencanta
em meu coração
 de fogo.

Chamo pelos loucos

que comigo encenam
esta aurora
suplicante.

Chamo pelas vinhas
que se arrimam
à sagração do inseto.

Ainda há pouco,
bateram em minha porta
os arautos,
com seus credores
de sangue.

Não tenho comenda do paraíso,
estou vendendo os ossos,
para quitar meu riso.

LIKE A RIVER 10

Love has been bitten
by vampires.

Now,
while the night puts on
its burka of silk,
its fangs glisten
beneath bared lips.

Love is wounded;
with its mouth of scarlet
where desert
is pasture.

Shall we call, then, for
the scribes of the wind? Or
those who negotiate with death

in a pawnshop?

I want to sing with the pluvial
waters—

 where the rain on the roof
is sweet.

Each of us our only compass
and abyss.

More than the cross of this rhyme,
there flowers between my fingers
the fencer fencing time.

COMO UM RIO 10

O amor foi mordido
pelos vampiros.

 Agora,
enquanto a noite veste
sua burka de seda,
seus caninos brilham
sob o lábio.

O amor está ferido;
com a boca escarlate
onde o deserto
 é pasto.

Chamaremos então
os escribas do vento? Ou
os que alugam a morte
no penhor?

Quero cantar com as águas

Plúvias--

onde é doce a chuva
sobre o telhado.

Cada um é sua bússola
e seu abismo.

Mais do que a cruz
desta rima,
cresce em meus dedos
a flor da esgrima.

LIKE A RIVER 11

My speech rises from the fire
flowing in my veins; which then
is recreated
like the petal
and the wind.

It moves like a centaur
embracing the
beyond the ether
that is alchemized
in the famicide of the days
in the patina
of leopards.

It moves, fruitful,
without permission of the sea: a
gushing forth,
as in devotion to the alter.

(God is a passion
to which we give our life,
no patronage expected.)

de arrendar a vida
sem patrocínios).

Ah, os morcegos transmarinos,
que ergueram no sabre
a fé;
os mitos que nos deram
dádiva e dor, são-nos, agora!

Falo de um reino sem rei,
que se nos demarca
ao sol da memória,

feito uma estaca no azul.

LIKE A RIVER 12

They got us this far
exploding from their avarice—
with praise and laurel-leafed
decapitations.

They got us this far
(with winches) for us to sprout
from dry stalks:

a cutting wind and muscular
reason inaugurating
pain;

the long archive of dawns
awaiting
constellations
of marbled death.

And an arm's tillage
that strengthens the soil
and its seeds (the arm that
both whips and cradles).

And so I sleep above the rift
open to the radiation
of centuries--and I go on

with those who have abandoned
any pilgrimage of return.

What I haven't yet become
the rising cliff suggests to me.

Who erected that trapeze
with its rotten ropes?

Who seeded that orchard
of clouds?

And this jungle
in the streets of language?

The poem begs for silence
so it may dream.

COMO UM RIO 12

Trouxeram-nos até aqui
à pilha da usura –
com louvores e degolas
laureadas;

trouxeram-nos até aqui
(a guindaste) para brotar
nos caules secos:

o vento cáustico e a razão
muscular inaugurando
a dor;

o longo acervo de auroras
a guardar
 constelações
de mármore.

E o lavar do braço
que arrima o solo
e as sementes (o braço, que é
açoite e capuz).

Então durmo sobre a fenda
aberta à radiação
dos séculos –, e sigo

com os que perderam
a caravana de volta.

O que ainda não sou
me acena o penhasco.

Quem ergueu esse trapézio
com as cordas rotas?

Quem semeou esse pomar

de nuvens?
E esta selva
nas ruas da língua?

O poema pede silêncio
para sonhar.

Seven Poems from Salgado Maranhão's forthcoming book
Consecration of the Wolves, presented bilingually.

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 four collections of his work in English: *Blood of the Sun* (Milkweed Editions, 2012), *Tiger Fur* (White Pine Press, 2015), *Palavra* (Dialogos Books, 2019) and *Mapping the Tribe* (Spuyten Duyvil, 2020). A fifth collection, *Consecration of the Wolves*, is coming out from Bitter Oleander Press in 2021.

Alexis Levitin has published forty-six books in translation, mostly poetry from Portugal, Brazil, and Ecuador. In addition to four books by Salgado Maranhão, his work includes Clarice Lispector's *Soulstorm* and Eugénio 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 the Banff Center, Canada, The European Translators Collegium in Straelen, Germany (twice), and the Rockefeller Foundation Study Center in Bellagio, Italy.

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