Litany 6

Salgado Maranhão
Translated by Alexis Levitin

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
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.
Litany 9

For Marcelo Sá Correa

An oblique byway
of saffron sunset
tells
the tenuous afternoon
In Laranjeiras.

And the rows of orchids
on General Glicérios
transpire indifferent
to what the city
hides in its thick pitch.

From my glistening desire
I attend
the vertigo
of the dying afternoon,
in which the lonely sun
loses its mane.
Nomad among the anonymous,
I gather poetry

*In natura,*
before the corpuscles of night
and a sky filled with rubies.