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CATAMARAN

LITERARY READER



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BILL SCOTT

Always Night and Day, 2014
Oil on Canvas, 37 x 43 in



COURTESY HOLLIS TAGGART GALLERIES, NEW YORK

BISTRA VELICHKOVA

Forgiveness

Walking the streets of Milan, I found myself faced with a drunken beggar. ... Suddenly dawned on me that he, with his few begged coins, had long before the rest of us reached, a happiness, some of us have striven for all of our lives, and which we, with all our ambitions and efforts, never reached.

—Saint Augustine, *Confessions*,
Book VI, Chapter 6

I went out to beg in the streets just after Christmas Eve. This year, for the first time in my life, I had neither *sarmi*¹ nor pumpkin bread on the table for the occasion. Up until then, I'd scraped together enough money to make ends meet despite the difficult times. Eh, I'm not complaining. Though not easy, my life has been good. Most of it, I spent as a photographer for the Bulgarian Union of Photographers, yes, the official photography company of the Bulgarian state. After the nineties, however, everything fell apart. Our union, you see, was dismantled. It was part of the Communist Minister's Council. My husband was also a photographer, so after *The Changes*,² we had no idea what to do—no money coming in, unemployment everywhere. We owned a small room on the ground floor of the building we lived in and so, in the spirit of the new times, we decided to start our own business and to open a restaurant. For two years, we tightened our belts and poured in all our savings, decorating the place with love and our dreams. At the beginning, we managed to break even and even earned a little money. Soon after, however, some unpleasant people began to appear. Parked out front were black cars with tinted windows. They entered, ordered and purposefully failed to pay, drank, fought, and even shot guns. My husband, when he asked them to leave, or at least to deal with their problems outside, found a gun pinned to his head. Finally, they set the whole place on fire and that was the end of it. Soon after came Videnov's winter of massive inflation and no bread on the shelves—that must have been 1997. It was incredibly hard. People were cold, starving, and miserable. Our family struggled with the question of where and how to find enough money just for bread. Then, my son went abroad, emigrated, to seek a better life—at least for himself. Shortly thereafter, my husband unexpectedly died, and suddenly I found myself a single woman without work or money. Those years were

¹ "Sarmi" is a Bulgarian traditional dish cooked for Christmas. It is made with cabbage leaves stuffed with minced meat and rice.

² *The Changes* is a widespread term in Bulgaria (in Bulgarian, *Prehod*) that addresses the period after 1989. It is related to the changes that happened right after this year, connected with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War. After 1989 started the transition of the country from a totalitarian political system and socialist economy toward democracy, capitalism, and a free market economy.

BILL SCOTT

The Last Days of August, 2015
Oil on linen 43 x 39 in



COURTESY HOLLIS TAGGART GALLERIES, NEW YORK

MARCELIJUS MARTINAITIS

Closeness

Translated from Lithuanian by Laima Vince

Already you've washed summer's light from your hands,
and have lit the fire, so that it would be easier for us to be quiet together.
And shadows run across my dead ancestors' bed,
and last year's embers come to life, painful as a flower.

Our faces are close—as though meeting over the cradle
of a sick child. And you don't say anything to me.
A dim peace has spread across the fields,
and children beat at the sun in a pond.

There is nothing to say—as though words were wooden.
The roads have widened, so that the sun may roll down them.
Only you protect the fire with cupped palms
as though it could warm our tiny country.

Marcelijus Martinaitis (1936–2013) was a Lithuanian poet and essayist and the recipient of the Lithuanian National Prize in Literature. He was also an active participant in Lithuania's independence movement. Martinaitis published ten collections of poetry and three books of essays in addition to plays and screenplays. His poetry has been translated into a number of European languages.

Laima Vince is a literary translator, poet, novelist, literary journalist, and playwright. She has translated Marcelijus Martinaitis's poetry since she was his student at Vilnius University in 1988. Vince has published two collections of Martinaitis's persona poems in English translation: *The Ballads of Kukutis* (Arc Publications) and *K. B., The Suspect* (White Pines Press).

BILL SCOTT

Turning Time to Flowers, 2014
Oil on canvas, 45 x 57 in



SALGADO MARANHÃO

Seal 7

When, in the end, will we read
the seal of this today
in the delirium of the piercing
that tears the tongue?

How many carats of
the aboriginal to swell our pride?

The blood that stains the afternoon
on the wall of centuries
sings of empire and the shack.

It's all infected,
every piece and parcel: life
restocking
in the coyote's den.

Give me at least that kingdom
of failing love, oh morning,
my concubine, give me
that cross of flowers.

A dry river flows through
the labyrinth, a
cyber symbol flows
in the drum that echoes
the border between peoples.

Yet, in the end, invincible
time is our game,
and each of us only dies
his proper death.

—Translated from Portuguese by Alexis Levitin

Salgado Maranhão has lived in Rio de Janeiro since 1973. In 1999, he received the Jabuti Award, the highest literary award in Brazil. He won in 2011 with the book *The Word Color*, the prize Academy Letters of Brazilian in the poetry category. He has published nine books of poetry.

Alexis Levitin's translations have appeared in well over 200 magazines, including *Grand Street*, *Kenyon Review*, *Partisan Review*, *APR*, *New Letters*, and *Prairie Schooner*. His thirty-two books of translations include Clarice Lispector's *Soul-storm* and Eugenio de Andrade's *Forbidden Words*, both from New Directions.