

ANDREW PURCHIN

A Bird Celebration, 2013
oil on canvas, 40 x 30 in



courtesy the artist

RUY BELO

A Few Sentences with Birds and Trees that the Poet Rounds Off with a Reference to the Heart

Birds are born from treetops
The trees I see bear birds instead of fruit
Birds are the liveliest fruit of the trees
Birds begin where trees end
Birds make trees sing
Reaching the birds trees thicken begin to move
leave the vegetable kingdom to join the animal kingdom
Like birds leaves settle on the earth
as autumn descends upon the fields
I'd like to say that birds emanate from trees
but I'll leave that way of speaking to the novelist
it's complicated and doesn't go well in poetry
it hasn't yet been separated from philosophy
I love trees especially those that produce birds
Who is it who hangs them on those branches?
Whose hand is it, whose uncounted hand?
I pass by and have a change of heart

—Translated from the Portuguese by Alexis Levitin

Ruy Belo, who died prematurely in 1978, published eleven collections of poetry, four collections of critical writings, and numerous translations of writers such as Jorge Luis Borges, Blaise Cendrars, Federico García Lorca, and Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. Belo's work has appeared in over thirty anthologies in Portugal, as well as in collections published in France, Spain, Italy, Serbia, Germany, Sweden, Latvia, Bulgaria, Holland, Mexico, and, of course, Brazil. Recent translations of his work have appeared in or are about to appear in *International Poetry Review*, *Metamorphoses*, *Per Contra*, and *Saranac Review*.

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 *Soulstorm* and Eugenio de Andrade's *Forbidden Words*, both from New Directions.