

Journal of Italian Translation



Editor Luigi Bonaffini

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Journal of Italian Translation

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Luigi Bonaffini

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In each issue of *Journal of Italian Translation* we will feature a noteworthy Italian or Italian American artist. In this issue we present the work of **Simona Stivaletta**.

Simona Stivaletta was born in Vasto (Italy) in 1970. Trained as an artist in her youth, she later moved to Florence, where she studied and worked in fields as diverse as puppetry and the restoration of antiques. Over the past decade she has focused exclusively on painting, with shows hosted throughout Italy and Germany. Her production has been described as “deceptively *naïf*,” as the apparently *naïf* quality of her painting reveals an intriguing capacity to blend disparate pictorial traditions, from across times and spaces. Artists as diverse as Klee, Van Eyck, Mondrian and Alfred Wallis all inform Stivaletta’s work, making her a medium of sorts for a myriad of influences internalized and metabolized over the course of decades. But such ownership of the past – in accord with the possibility of its *dispossession* – is what allows her, paradoxically, to invent a new language, a new vision: one both poetic and harmonious, where forms and colors mingle in startlingly original, indeed “musical” compositions. This, while the apparently *naïf* quality of her painting ultimately betrays a pervasive element of a kind of “familiar disquiet,” an intriguing capacity to yield a most contemporary expression of what psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas calls the *unthought known*. Indeed Stivaletta, I’d dare say, is an expression of **our** unthought known: a slow bubbling of elements of a near-timeless iconographic unconscious in which we all share, whose outcome – precisely in its dimension of a *familiar disquiet* – makes for the discreet but unmistakable signature of a distinctly contemporary creative force.

Still, one might ask: where is the originality of Stivaletta? In his book *The Mystery of Things* Bollas writes: “When the painter paints, or the musician composes, or the writer writes, they transfer psychic reality to another realm. They transubstantiate that reality, the object no longer simply expressing itself, but re-forming it... The term ‘transubstantial object object’ allows me to think of the intrinsic integrity of the form into which one moves one’s sensibility in order to create: into musical thinking, prose thinking, painting thinking.” Stivaletta’s “painting thinking”, the process whereby

her peculiar sensibility is transposed into distinctly idiomatic and integral forms, reminds me of a comment by Igor Stravinsky (quoted by Bollas), who writes of how a “foretaste of the creative act accompanies the intuitive grasp of an unknown entity already possessed but not yet intelligible, an entity that will not take definite shape except by the action of a constantly vigilant technique.” For all of the grand “presences” one might see or imagine inhabiting Stivaletta’s work, her paintings — or intelligible *entities* — are unshakably and unequivocally *hers*, borne of the very possession, and specific technical vigilance, of which Stravinsky speaks. In my opinion, Simona Stivaletta can own traditions past in the very process of honoring them, unconsciously. But to clarify what I suggested earlier, it is her very relationship with the past that allows her — again, via its essential dispossession — to, and indeed remakes that future, as every true artist does, trekking territory that is by necessity familiar but gets always trodden again. Consider, for instance, some of her landscapes, where a degree of mechanized alienation takes center stage (albeit not without a quirky transcendent urge), that renews and updates the distinctly Italian Futurist tradition while calling, perhaps ironically, or nostalgically, on Chaplin and his “Modern Times”. It is in works like these that familiar territory gets re-envisioned. Recast. Or, as Bollas would have it, forever, yet originally, transubstantiated.

Anthony Molino

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Simona Stivaletta, *Borghi*

Essays

A Taste of Montale's *Amleto*

by Peter D'Epiro

Peter D'Epiro received a PhD in English from Yale University and is the author or coauthor of five books, including *Sprezzatura: 50 Ways Italian Genius Shaped the World*. His doctoral dissertation on Ezra Pound's "Malatesta Cantos" (Cantos 8-11) was later published as a book, and he has also written several articles on the *Pisan Cantos* for *Paideuma*, the Pound journal. His verse translations, mainly from Italian and Latin, have appeared in his books and in journals such as *Prairie Schooner*, *The Formalist*, and *The New Renaissance*. He has translated most of the *Inferno* into English verse, including two cantos (10 and 15) appearing in the 2012 issues of JIT, which also published his verse translation of Giacomo Leopardi's *La Ginestra* in the fall of 2013.

Besides being the Nobel laureate in literature for 1975 and the most distinguished Italian poet since Leopardi, Eugenio Montale (1896-1981) was also an assiduous translator, and his output from English in this literary category included four Shakespearean plays: *The Comedy of Errors*, *A Winter's Tale*, *Timon of Athens*, and *Hamlet*. While none of Shakespeare's plays can even remotely be described as straightforward in utterance, sparse in metaphor, or simple in diction, *Hamlet* is justly cited for its complex imagery and word play, especially in Hamlet's probing soliloquies and his witty, polysemous verbal jousting with other characters. "Sometimes, no doubt," writes A. C. Bradley of him, "he plays with words and ideas chiefly in order to mystify, thwart, and annoy."¹ Mark Van Doren says of Hamlet that "his tongue is as flexible as his mind. It knows its way among all words, all tones, all attitudes. And it is superbly trained. The intellect of its owner is apparent in nothing so much as his literary skill."² How well, then, did the "superbly trained" Eugenio Montale handle the subtle verbal intricacies of *Hamlet* when he decided to translate the play into Italian?

In his preface to the translation, Montale writes that he has attempted to produce "un *Amleto* in lingua moderna . . . , tradotto in prosa e tuttavia non privo di qualche brano 'in versi' che consentisse all'interprete due diversi modi o colori di recitazione."³ With the

exception of Hamlet's soliloquies and a few other speeches, Montale chose to translate the play into vigorous, idiomatic Italian prose, since "il 'blank verse,' quand'è piuttosto narrativo che lirico, impone ormai quasi irresistibilmente l'uso della prosa."⁴ We find, however, that although Montale's version is remarkably faithful to the original, it does not succumb to the temptation of excessive literalness, which a prose translation of a poetic work often invites. Thus, Hamlet's first line in the play, his sardonic and punning aside "A little more than kin and less than kind" (1.2.65)⁴ becomes "Un po' più che nipote e men che figlio" (p. 28), Polonius's injunction to Laertes "But do not dull thy palm with entertainment / Of each new-hatched unfledged comrade" (1.3.64-65) elicits "ma non ti ammolire le palme con pulcini di nuova covata" (43), and Ophelia's "primrose path of dalliance" (1.3.50) appears simply as "un letto di rose" (42).

Montale takes some justifiable liberties with his text, such as compressing two synonymous adjectives into one, "extravagant and erring" (1.1.154), for example, becoming simply "erratico" (23). Yet his eye is often open to the tiniest enriching detail, as where Shakespeare's "lazarlike" (1.5.72), which could have been rendered as "lebbroso" ("leprous"), is expanded into "più immondo di Lazzaro" (57), thereby fastidiously preserving the eponym of Lazarus in the English adjective and casting a stark aura of otherworldly resonance on the Ghost's narrative of his murder by Claudius. Earlier in the play, when Ophelia refers to Hamlet's "tenders of his affection," Polonius responds with a maze of puns on the multiple meanings of "tender," which Montale deftly recreates by punning on Ophelia's "segni" ("signs of affection") with words stressing the counterfeit nature of Hamlet's love:

Think yourself a baby
 That you have ta'en these tenders for true pay,
 Which are not sterling. Tender yourself more dearly,
 Or—not to crack the wind of the poor phrase,
 Running it thus—you'll tender me a fool (1.3.105-109).

Fa conto che tu, da quell'ingenua che sei, hai preso questi
 segni da nulla per assegni di banca, buoni e spendibili.
 Spenditi meno, dunque, e vedi (risparmio il fiato della mia
 povera frase per non farla correre troppo) vedi di non
 [assegnarmi
 la parte dello sciocco (45-46).

Montale's fairly obvious financial puns ("assegni" and "spendibili"/"spenditi") are more subtly reinforced by the pun on "conto" ("[take into] account," but also "financial account") at the very beginning of the passage, as well as by the clever use of "risparmio" ("I spare," but also "I save [money]"). His final word play on "segni" with "assegnarmi" ("assign me") reflects Polonius's final riff on "tender." Note, however, that Montale cannot reproduce the pun on "fool," which in Elizabethan usage was also a term of endearment for a baby and serves as a semantic overtone for the "baby" in line 105. Thus, there is no hint of Polonius's indirect warning that he wants Ophelia to present him with no grandchildren at this point.

As competent as Montale's handling was of this fairly dense passage, a number of individual images and expressions in the play are diminished or obscured in his translation. The earnestness of the soldier Francisco's "For this relief much thanks" (1.1.8) is diluted to "Grazie del cambio" (14), and the emotional weariness of his "I am sick at heart" in the following line is transformed into the merely physical tiredness of "non reggo più." There is probably no way to render Hamlet's pun of "I am too much i' the sun" (1.2.67) into Italian, and thus "Sono fin troppo al chiaro" (28) will have to do, but "contracted in one brow of woe" (1.2.4) might have been handled more imaginatively than by "una sola e uguale espressione di cordoglio" (25), in which the image of the brow is sacrificed to the abstract "espressione." More regrettable is the loss of the fine image of the moon as "sick almost to doomsday with eclipse" (1.1.120): "oscurato da un'eclissi da giorno del Giudizio" (21). Here the translation misses an opportunity to reinforce the imagery of diseased nature that runs throughout the play and heightens Shakespeare's presentation of the diseased—indeed rotten—state of Denmark.

A shortcoming of a different kind appears in Montale's translation of Polonius's rhythmically majestic line, "This above all: To thine own self be true" (1.3.78), as "E infine sii fedele a te stesso" (44). The self-effacing flatness of this verse could have been avoided by closer attention to the strong caesura in Shakespeare's line to produce something like, "Questo soprattutto: Sii fedele a te stesso." Similarly, the delicate, leisurely movement of "The glowworm shows the matin to be near, / And 'gins to pale his uneffectual fire" (1.5.89-90) loses much of its charm when compressed to "Il fuoco della lucciola si fa più scialbo, e l'alba è prossima" (57), though the similar sounds of "scialbo" and "alba" set up a pleasing euphony. Montale provides a vigorous idiomatic translation of Hamlet's couplet at 1.5.189-190, but

the absence of rhyme prevents the Italian prose lines from sticking in the memory, deprived of the epigrammatic punch of the original:

The time is out of joint. Oh, cursèd spite
That ever I was born to set it right!

Il mondo è fuor di squadra: che maladetta noia,
esser nato per rimetterlo in sesto! (64)

The only conspicuous mistranslation that I found in *Amleto* occurs in the relatively insignificant line “Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause” (4.4.63): “una / contesa a queste schiere incomprendibile” (185). Montale here translates Hamlet’s line (referring to young Fortinbras’s assault on a tiny patch of Polish territory, and meaning that the contested land is so minuscule that it cannot hold the numbers of soldiers fighting over it) as if the English meant “Whereof the masses (of the soldiers) cannot understand the cause (of fighting for this piece of land).”

But elsewhere, too, we see that the scrupulous precision Montale shows in the rendering of a phrase like “in the ear / Of all their conference” (3.1.192-193) as “origliare il loro colloquio” (123), literally “to ear their conference,” is not maintained throughout. Thus, the rhetorical flavor of “The observed of all observers” (3.1.162) is ignored in “segnato a dito da tanti ammiratori” (122). The flower image of “blown youth / Blasted with ecstasy” (3.1.167-168; my italics) is only partially reproduced in “figura fiorente di giovinezza così sconvolta dal delirio” (122). The obscene pun on Hamlet’s “country matters” (3.2.123) is not reproduced, and the terse punch of Gertrude’s “The lady doth protest too much, methinks” (3.2.240) is diluted in the expansiveness of “mi pare che quella dama faccia troppe dichiarazioni solenni” (139). Similarly, the laconic despair of Claudius, emphasized by the rhyme of the closed couplet, falls flat in Montale’s prose version:

My words fly up, my thoughts remain below.
Words without thoughts never to Heaven go (3.3.97-98).

Le mie parole volano in alto, i miei pensieri restano
quaggiù. E non bastano le parole per raggiungere il cielo
(156).

The colloquial majesty of Claudius's words at 4.5.123-125 is transmuted into what sounds like a legalistic argument (my italics):

There's such divinity doth *hedge* a king
That treason can but *peep* to *what it would*,
Acts little of his will.

Un tal potere divino *protegge* la maestà che
il tradimento può solo *intravedere* i suoi
propositi, non già *attuarli* (193).

On the other hand, the inferior quality of the verse of the play within a play in Act 3, Scene 2, *The Murder of Gonzago*, is splendidly conveyed by the excessive elision, inversion, and Latinate diction of Montale's "very choice Italian," as in lines like "eppure i nostri intenti noi sovente infrangiamo" and "si spengono i propositi in essa alimentati" (137). The pun in 5.1.175-176 is skillfully handled:

Hamlet. Upon what ground?
First Clown. Why, here in Denmark.

Amleto. Per quale ragione?
Becchino. In quale regione? Qui in Danimarca (225).

Montale shows fine judgment in his translation of 5.2.90, where Hamlet says of the foppish Osric (my italics):

'Tis a chough, but, as I say, spacious in
the possession of *dirt*.

È un cafone, ti dico, ma possiede *letame*
in lungo e in largo (240).

Because Italian differentiates between *dirt* as in "filth" ("immondizia") and *dirt* as in "soil" ("terra"), Montale had to abandon both of these possibilities, since the first would have been a mistranslation and the second would have been neutral, or even positive, in its connotations. With "*letame*" ("manure"), he chose a word that reflects a good deal of Hamlet's scorn for Osric and his landed estates.

I wish to conclude by examining Montale's verse translation of the most famous speech in all of dramatic literature, Hamlet's soliloquy in 3.1.56-88:

Essere . . . o non essere. È il problema.
 Se sia meglio per l'anima soffrire
 oltraggi di fortuna, sassi e dardi,
 o prender l'armi contro questi guai
 e opporvisi e distruggerli. Morire,
 dormire . . . nulla più. E dirsi così
 con un sonno che noi mettiamo fine
 al crepacuore ed alle mille ingiurie
 naturali, retaggio della carne!
 Questa è la consunzione da invocare
 devotamente. Morire, dormire;
 dormire, sognar forse . . . Forse; e qui
 è l'incaglio: che sogni sopravvengano
 dopo che ci si strappa dal tumulto
 della vita mortale, ecco il riguardo
 che ci arresta e che induce la sciagura
 a durar tanto anch'essa. E chi vorrebbe
 sopportare i malanni e le frustate
 dei tempi, l'oppressione dei tiranni,
 le contumelie dell'orgoglio, e pungoli
 d'amor spazzato e remore di leggi,
 arroganza dall'alto e derisione
 degl'indegni sul merito paziente,
 chi lo potrebbe mai se uno può darsi
 quietanza col filo d'un pugnale?
 Chi vorrebbe sudare e bestemmiare
 spossato, sotto il peso della vita,
 se non fosse l'angoscia del paese
 dopo la morte, da cui mai nessuno
 è tornato, a confonderci il volere
 ed a farci indurire ai mali d'oggi
 piuttosto che volare a mali ignoti?
 La coscienza, così, fa tutti vili,
 così il colore della decisione
 al riflesso del dubbio si corrompe
 e le imprese più alte e che più contano
 si disviano, perdono anche il nome
 dell'azione (116-118).

The very first line of the speech is singularly weak when compared with "To be, or not to be—that is the question." Besides the fact that "essere" in Italian is a much more "passive" verb than "to be," Montale's verse is also rhythmically inert. Although Italian hendecasyllabic verse is usually a close equivalent of English blank verse,

Amleto's soliloquy gets off to an anemic start when Shakespeare's five accented syllables (*be, not, be, that, ques-*) are counterbalanced by only three strong Italian equivalents: *ess-, ess-,* and the middle syllable of *problema*. This epigrammatic verse might have done better as "Campar . . . o non campar — ecco il problema," a version that adheres closely to the rhythmic structure of the original and substitutes for the flabby verb "essere" the stronger verb "campare" ("to live," with a connotation of "to keep on living, survive").

In the third line, instead of "The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," Montale gives us the equivalent of "the outrages of fortune, stones and arrows." The directness of the metaphor is thereby toned down a bit, since the emphasis falls on the "oltraggi," an abstraction, rather than on the concrete images of "sassi e dardi." Hamlet's "sea of troubles" is likewise de-concretized to "guai" ("woes"), and Montale also misses the implication of the passage in which the image appears: "Or to take arms against a sea of troubles / And by opposing end them." In the context of this speech, that is, Hamlet's consideration of committing suicide or taking forceful action resulting in death, these two lines mean that by opposing the sea of troubles, he could put an end to them—by dying in the process. In contrast, the Italian verbs "opporvisi e distruggerli" carry no implication that forceful opposition to the woes would result in the death of the agent.

Montale displays considerable judgment in handling the lines "Who would fardels bear, / To grunt and sweat under a weary life . . ." (3.1.76-77): "Chi vorrebbe sudare e bestemmiare / spassato, sotto il peso della vita . . ." Here, the "fardels" ("burdens") are generalized into "il peso della vita," but with a certain gain in pathos and power, and he shrewdly transforms the "grunt," which does not add much to the idea of "sweat," into "bestemmiare" ("curse, blaspheme"), while his "spassato" ("exhausted") conveys the idea of weariness. Toward the end of the soliloquy, however, Montale loses some of the voltage Shakespeare packs into his verse. Hamlet's "undiscovered country from whose bourn / No traveler returns" is baldly rendered by "[il] paese / . . . da cui mai nessuno / è tornato," since the traveler is stripped of his journeying identity ("nessuno"), and "undiscovered" and "bourn" are omitted altogether. Finally, the lines describing how "the native hue of resolution / Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought" are watered down in "il colore della decisione / al riflesso del dubbio si corrompe." The color metaphor in "pale cast" is lost, as well as the sickness metaphors

in that phrase and “sicklied,” though “corrompe,” which can mean “infects” as well as “corrupts,” does reinforce the disease imagery that is central to the play.

Many of the criticisms in this *assaggio* of Montale’s *Amleto* deal with minor matters that do not seriously impair the overall effect of his version of Shakespeare’s most fascinating work, since the prime directive for a playwright—or the translator of a play—is to keep the action moving without getting bogged down in rhetorical minutiae. In fact, Montale informs us in his preface that “il mio resta un lavoro da udirsi, più che da leggersi,” and I have neither heard his version of *Hamlet* recited nor seen it performed, but only submitted it to the leisurely and sometimes caviling scrutiny of a reader.

Notes

1. A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy: Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth*, Greenwich, Conn., Fawcett Publications, Inc., n.d. [1904], p. 127.
2. Mark Van Doren, *Shakespeare*, Garden City, N. Y., Anchor Books, 1953 [1939], p. 168.
3. All citations from this translation are from Eugenio Montale, *Montale traduce “Amleto” di William Shakespeare* (Milan: Longanesi, 1971). The translation was originally published as *Amleto, principe di Danimarca, tradotto per le scene italiane da Eugenio Montale* (Milan: Cederna, 1949).
4. All citations from *Hamlet* are from G. B. Harrison, ed., *Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1948).

Politics In Translation: The “Original” Translation of *Dux*

Alessandra Calvani was born and educated in Rome. She is a literary translator from English into Italian and a prize-winning writer of short novels and poems. She earned an academic degree in Modern Languages, a Master’s degree in Marketing and Web communication and a European doctoral degree in Comparative Literature and Translation Studies. She has published many papers and two books on literary translation. She worked as adjunct professor of Translation Studies at Roma Tor Vergata, Macerata, Urbino and Cassino Universities. Her research interests include literary translation, translation history and gender and translation.

Introduction

The book *Life of Benito Mussolini* was published in London in 1925 in a translation by Frederic Whyte. Presented as a “condensed version” of the Italian original, the book was a great success, and was translated into 18 languages. The author of *Dux*, the Italian version, was Margherita Sarfatti, writer and journalist, colleague of Benito Mussolini at the newspaper *Avanti* and his lover. What makes this a case of special interest is that at the time of the English translation, in 1925, there was no published Italian original. Apparently Sarfatti wrote it in 1924, but the book was first published in English translation and only later in Italian. The fact that Whyte presented his work as a condensed version could be used as evidence of the existence of an Italian original, but the comparison of the published ‘translation’ with its ‘original’ seems to put this in question.

The analysis of the two texts operated through the manual comparison of the English and Italian versions points out their differences. Changes and differences get evidence of the different project that presided over the publication of the two books. Particularly I want to argue that changes have been dictated mostly by the different needs of propaganda in the two countries. Furthermore, that they are due to what the writers believed to be the different tastes and also expectations of the English and Italian readers.

To start with, let’s consider the titles. The title is the first thing that catches the eye of the reader and it also offers the first indication of the differences that it is possible to find in the English and Italian version of the book.

The English title, *The Life of Benito Mussolini*, is a very ordinary title for a biography. In its reassuring banality, it immediately presents the reader with the main topic of the book. Its singularity and so the reason to prefer this particular biography is pointed out by the name of the protagonist only, Benito Mussolini.

The Italian title is quite different. It is a Latin word, *Dux*. In line with the emphatic and concise style of the time, the only one word title of the Italian sounds quite aggressive. The Latin word links Mussolini directly to the Roman Empire and to the glory of Rome whose restoration fascist propaganda boasted about (Falasca Zamponi 2003, 143-160).

The very first impression communicated by the titles seems to be confirmed by the opening photographs included inside the texts. The English book opens in the frontispiece with a smiling photograph of Mussolini with some papers in his hands. The Italian version opens with a photograph of a marble bust of Mussolini by Adolfo Wildt, protégé of Margherita Sarfatti. The marble sculpture and the imperious cast of Mussolini's features stress again the link with the Roman Empire.

The 11 photographs of the English version are taken from the public and private life of the dictator to present the image of a dynamic Prime Minister who rides an horse or caresses his favorite lioness, whose singularity has been balanced by the photographs of his children. The last photograph of the English text reproduces the greeting to George V visiting Rome. On the contrary the 32 photographs of the Italian text are mostly taken from his public life. Additional illustrations include pictures of him as a volunteer soldier in the First World War and many images of public ceremonies and of him in uniform or at work as Prime Minister. The photographs of his children and of the greeting to George V are not present. There is only one smiling picture in the Italian text whose unicity reinforces the Italian myth of the never smiling dictator (Sarfatti 1926, 306).

The title together with the photographs offer a different image of the Duce, a smiling reassuring one for the English public and an intimidating, aggressive one for the Italian public. As the choice of the title and images are usually based on what the editor or the publishing house believes to be the tastes and expectations of the readership (Spirk 2014, 144-155), it could be argued that two different projects presided over the creation of the English and Italian text and the different projects obeyed to the different needs of the propaganda at home and abroad.

To clarify this point it is necessary to give a brief account of the political situation that ratified the publication of this biography.

After the March on Rome in 1922 and Mussolini's seizure of power, the elections of 6 April 1924 legitimized Mussolini's government in the eyes of public opinion. On 30 May 1924, Giacomo Matteotti, a member of the opposition in Parliament, denounced the violence of the fascist paramilitary squads and the results of the elections as illegal. On 10 June Matteotti was kidnapped and murdered by a group of fascists who were members of the Ceka, the political police. Mussolini soon asserted his non-involvement in the murder, but from the beginning public opinion accused him of being its instigator. Attacked by public opinion and by members of the opposition, Mussolini faced the most difficult time of his political career.

In the meantime, an aggressive press campaign against Italian fascism was going on in England and the agreements that were to be signed between the Italian government and the American company Sinclair Oil had no little part in it. Just a few days before Matteotti's assassination, the oil company had been awarded drilling rights in Sicily and Emilia. The English government considered the agreements, signed on the 29 April 1924, as an attack on English interests (Canali 1997, 66) since the British Petroleum, the Italian branch of the English Apoc, had been cut off from the Italian market. In April 1924, Matteotti travelled to London and met many members of the Labour party. Documents in the ILP archive (1997, 65) seem to get evidence that Matteotti's indicated to the labourist leaders the decrees on the gambling houses licenses and drillings for oil rights to the Sinclair Oil, as the proof of the "speculator mentality of the regime" (1997, 65) damaging to Italy's interests.

According to Mauro Canali (1997, 63 - 81; 263 - 265), Matteotti came to England to get evidence of the corrupt dealings between the Italian government and Sinclair Oil. In fact the periodical *English Life* published a posthumous article (1997, 73) in which Matteotti declared he had evidence of the corruption that was going on and could name names. Matteotti's papers, confiscated by his killers (2004, 234 - 238), have never been found and Mussolini's direct involvement in the assassination of Matteotti has never been proven (1997: 412 - 443).

The assassination had a great impact on public opinion and cast a shadow over fascism and its leader. In Italy Mussolini could control the press, but nothing could be done to prevent the British press from speaking against fascism. The publication of a carefully written biography could reassure the public opinion and give sup-

port to the many English fascist supporters against his opponents.

The text analysis

First of all, the *Life of Benito Mussolini* and *Dux* are two different books and this is not simply due to the translation process. It could be argued from the very first fast comparison of the two tables of contents: the English translation has got 42 chapters while the Italian one has got 48 chapters. The existence of a different previous Italian original for the English translation has been confirmed by the leaflet enclosed to the Italian version. The Italian publisher says that due to the extraordinary success of the biography of Mussolini in England the author decided to publish it in Italy as well. But he also remarks that “notwithstanding this substantial success, the Author [...] wanted to rewrite completely the Italian edition, according to stricter needs of stylistic concision” [all the Italian quotations have been translated].

Missing the original text sent to the translator by the author, I considered as first hypothesis the possibility that the original had been written by the author, Margherita Sarfatti, directly in English. This would have been an answer to the question of why rewriting what should have been ready for publication. In fact, Sarfatti, who by the age of fourteen spoke and wrote German, English and French, was the ghostwriter of Mussolini's articles in English for the American Thomas B. Morgan of the United Press. Furthermore the translator, Frederic Whyte, member of the editorial staff for Cassell & Company and literary advisor for Methuen & Company, was also a biographer and writer himself. Was it possible that Sarfatti wrote *Dux* in English and sent it to Whyte to give it literary form? The answer seems to be no, it is revealed by the letters that Prezzolini wrote to Sarfatti in order to arrange the publication. Prezzolini, literary agent in Paris for a foreign publishing house, was asked for a biography of Mussolini, probably to capitalize on the English public interest drum up by the press campaign on the Sinclair Oil affair and the Matteotti's murder. He contacted Margherita Sarfatti who had written articles for him in the past. As it is evident from the letters I found in the Sarfatti's archive of the Rovereto MART, Sarfatti wanted to write the book directly in English, but it is Prezzolini who advised her against doing it. In particular, in the letter of 7 July 1923, he says he will talk with the publisher about it, but he adds that he fears the publisher could stake claims on her not perfect English knowledge. Furthermore he explains that the publisher could have his translator, probably also a popular writer, who will help in the spreading

of the book. She eventually agreed with him if in the letter 13 may 1924 Prezzolini presses Sarfatti to finish the book. As it seems, she sent the chapters to him as soon as they were ready, but Prezzolini says that in this way they could not press the translator to finish his work, while on the contrary they wanted it to be soon finished in order to publish the book in Autumn and sell the foreign rights to other countries.

So, if she had already written the book in Italian, other reasons must have convinced the author of the convenience of rewriting the book for the Italian public.

The remark made by the Italian publisher on the "stylistic concision" is quite interesting if we consider that the English translator, Frederic Whyte, in his translator's note, had already stated that: "it has been found necessary to condense somewhat freely Signora Sarfatti's text, partly owing to its great length, partly because many portions of it would be unclear to the English reader unless they were elaborately annotated." (Sarfatti, 1925, 6). As a result of such a complicated publication process, we have a "condensed" translation, published in 1925, one year before the Italian original, which in turn has been abbreviated one year later, in 1926, for concision needs.

As the analysis will point out what has been claimed as necessary for sake of stylistic concision include different political speeches quotations, different historical accounts of the Italian and European political situation prewar, differences in the dictator's attitude to women and differences in the narration of the very same events of Mussolini's life.

To have a clear idea and a complete account of the changes and differences, I did a manual analysis of the whole English and Italian texts, but due to length limit in this paper I will present the analysis of representative selected extracts.

Leaving apart the differences in the historical accounts of some events concerning Italy and Europe in general¹, it is important to notice the presence, only in the Italian version of the quotation of one of Mussolini's speeches explaining the necessity for Italian territorial expansion (1926, 289-290) or the presence of a passage, in English only, where Sarfatti explains that "Mussolini gave himself to the task of showing up the Communist illusion" saving "England, Germany, France and even America from the dreaded infection." (1925, 262). Furthermore there is a whole chapter, in Italian only, dedicated to the idealization of fascism and transformation of its violence into a sort

1 See Sarfatti 1925, 139-140, 145-146.

of game. Fascism should reflect the military virtues of courage and discipline, but Sarfatti says it reflects also some "deficiencies" due to the "military education" (1926, 248), "faithful to the supreme leader, [...] but quarrelsome." (1926, 248). Unfortunately with the restoration of the "sect and faction, the revengeful, delightful and a little bit cruel Italian joke revived too." and addressing the English readers in Italian, the ones who mostly criticized fascism for its violence, she asks them to reread "our and your classics" as "Shakespeare, for first, inherited this tradition." (1926, 249). The so called fascist punitive expeditions were born from the *Commedia dell'Arte* tradition:

"it was the playful episode, or the fictional adventure, staged nearly always open-face, generously, against local little despots, kidnapped and kept in easy, very brief imprisonment, as a joke; or obliged by force to gulp down a glass of castor oil. The ridiculous plaid down the arrogance." (1926, 251)

References to Mussolini's anti-feminism are not present in English. So in Italian Sarfatti says that during a party he abruptly interrupts two foreign ladies who were talking about politics saying that «these talkings are for other brains» (1926, 303) and she goes on telling that an English feminist, Lady M., said to him that with such ideas he will not have success in England and he answered "I don't go to England and I don't believe that in England all the women are quaker politicians" (1926, 303).

It is also interesting to notice the presence of many different passages concerning the alleged powerful fascination that the Italian dictator seems to exert over women of all ages and nationalities since he was a child, slightly exaggerated in the English version. So in the third Italian chapter the young Mussolini frightens the little girls, one of them in particular, while in the fourth English chapter the little girl «had to go with him meekly, a bit fascinated, no doubt, as well as dominated, [...]. Seven years old, she was woman enough to enjoy being tyrannized over by this young man of five» (1926, 29) while in the 14th Italian chapter he has got a Russian girlfriend that in the corresponding 15th English chapter doubles.

Among the many differences it is also important to stress the references to the Matteotti case, "inflamed against us by a systematic Press campaign" (1925: 159) in English. But in 1926 the Matteotti "incident" was over with the arrest of the presumed murderers. So the Italian text can clearly claim the innocence of Mussolini even

using that tragic event to boast about Mussolini's great sense of justice. Consequently the text informs the Italian reader that when the people asked for justice for the Matteotti's murder, "a diabolic crime [that] makes him almost fall down" (1926, 265) he commanded for justice to be done, "deaf to any call of fear, or interest, or affection" (1926, 265).

But the differences do not consist only in cuts or addings in the English or Italian version, they include real manipulations occurred in translation in order to make the original conform with the tastes and expectations of its new readership. A case in point could be the description of an episode of Mussolini's childhood in the fifth English chapter. The young dictator, "had given the word of command for a raid upon a certain apple tree" (1925, 38). In English an angered farmer fired at one of the boys who had been wounded in the leg and the boys flew away "all but one. Benito, like the true leader he already was, went to the rescue of the wounded lad who was all but unconscious, his leg bleeding profusely[...] having done so, his next concern was to punish his timorous companions" (1925, 38).

The very same episode has been narrated in the fourth chapter in Italian but it is slightly different. Mussolini is described as leader as usual, but the boys run away at the shouts of the farmer. The wounded boy has not been shot in Italian, but he fell down of the tree breaking his leg. The farmer has got a shotgun but he does not use it and Mussolini rescues his friend defying the farmer.

To conclude the different chapters, the differences in the very narration, the different construction of that narration together with the differences in the pictures and in the presentation of the books testify the different strategies used by the English and the Italian writer in order to adapt their text to the different social and political background of England and Italy.

Both versions have been written and published for propaganda, but the very same end seems to be achieved in a slightly different way allegedly according to the different public and its assumed expectations.

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Between Tradition and Creativity: William Weaver and the Translation of *On the Carpet of Leaves Illuminated by the Moon* by Italo Calvino

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Brief History of Translation Studies

Theories of translation have rapidly developed in the 20th and 21st centuries with the increasing demands for translation in the fast changing world of information and communications. However, it is understood that not all theories help the translator achieve a "faithful" translation. As Umberto Eco states, one must experiment first-hand the concrete difficulties of translating in another language: "Mi chiedo se, per elaborare una teoria della traduzione, non sia parimenti necessario non solo esaminare molti esempi di traduzione, ma avere fatto almeno una di queste tre esperienze: avere controllato traduzioni altrui, avere tradotto ed essere stato tradotto -o, meglio ancora, essere stato tradotto collaborando con il proprio traduttore" (15). Eco's words underline that a good translation is a combination of creativity, experience and theory, an over compassing approach that was successfully utilized by Calvino's main translator, William Weaver. Thus, it is important to document the translation theories and approaches that are part of Weaver's knowledge and preparation and which explain the choices he made within a text.

Many renowned theorists in translation studies including Jakobson, Steiner, Fedorov, and Cary as well as Seleskovitch and Lederer from the Parisian school and other relevant representatives such as Vermeer, Toury, Even-Zohar, Venuti, Lambert, and Derrida, proposed different approaches to the theory of translation. While Jakobson, Steiner, and Fedorov insisted on the necessity of creating a scientific theory of translation, Cary claimed that this discipline

should be considered a true literary activity. The contribution of the theorist Even-Zohar is interesting especially for his take on reciprocal influences between national systems, and for the relationship between translated literature and literature in general. According to the Israeli theorist, literature is governed by a conglomerate of elements that change and transform while in connection with one another. In his Polysystem Theory, translated literature is not an isolated item, but it is part of a system. According to Even-Zohar, any foreign literature which is brought in from another country is able to influence the native literature at various degrees. "I conceive of translated literature not only as an integral system within any literary polysystem, but as a most active system within it" (46).

The term "translation studies" was first used in the 1970s by James Holmes. He declared two objectives to translation: "to describe the phenomena of translating and translation(s) as they manifest themselves in the world of experience" and "to establish general principles by means of which these phenomena can be explained and predicted" (67-80). In the 1980s, thanks to Susan Bassnett, Translation Studies became a field that analyzed questions related to translation techniques and systematic approaches to translation were first implemented. The translated work would no longer be seen secondary in regards to the original, but instead would be studied as an autonomous piece of narrative. In the 1990s, Lawrence Venuti's influential work on translation studies deepened the theory and evolution of two major translation methods which he defined as domestication and foreignization. Venuti, thus, remarks the difference between an approach that brings the foreign text closer to the target culture, adapting it to its own literary and cultural paradigms; and a system that aims, instead, at a literal translation which leaves the reader free to discover the foreign elements of the original text. Other theorists, like the Belgian, André Lefevere, claim that a translation is a rewriting subject to political and ideological creeds, and as such, becomes inevitably an effective instrument of manipulation. According to Lefevere, translators have an important, yet undervalued, role of mediators since they are responsible for the success of another work.

Another concept linked to translation is that of "power," which was presented by Edwin Gentzler and Maria Tymoczko. They believe that the translator makes precise ideological choices when translating: "Translation is not simply an act of faithful reproduction but, rather, a deliberate and conscious act of selection, assemblage, structuring, and fabrication – and even, in some cases, of falsifica-

tion, refusal of information, counterfeiting, and the creation of secret codes" (xxi). This concept assigns the role of re-creator of meaning and knowledge to the translator, and confirms his/her role of re-writer of a text.

Derridian concepts of deconstruction/deconstructionism is of great interest for contemporary theorists in translation studies. His position on translation is quite distinct from his contemporaries – he claims that translation is impossible but at the same time necessary: "What remains untranslatable is at bottom the only thing to translate, the only thing translatable. What must be translated of that which is translatable can only be the untranslatable" (8). Even recent post-colonial theories have shown interest in the theory of translation. If the literal meaning of the term "translate" is to "transport" (from the latin traducere, "carry over there"), translation is always subject to another field and to another language. According to this definition, the translation becomes inevitably a process of transculturation.

In recent years computer applications of translation studies have greatly increased. Based on this recent interest in automatic translations and of Corpus-based Translation Studies, linguists, mathematicians, and engineers have opened their fields to the study of the disciplines of computational linguistics, translation technology, and theory of information from which new and original approaches to translation studies are now emerging.

The English Translation of Italo Calvino's Prose

Among the various theoretical approaches briefly mentioned, the translations of Calvino's narrative display a possible contamination of multiple approaches developed across the 1970s and 1980s. Undoubtedly, William Weaver, the most prolific of Calvino's translators, has consciously chosen a technical style for his translations that aimed at a semantic and syntactical equivalence with the text, in an attempt to interpret the thought of the author in the moment. This recalls what Eco defined as the "text's intention" and it suggests recreating not only the author's intent, but executing the text's truth (20). Nevertheless, with this choice, Weaver reveals he is also a re-creator of meaning, placing himself at the author's level. Thus the American translator is not merely a professional who seeks a faithful rendition of a text.

In the United States, the translations of the works of Italo Calvino were published quite swiftly, and apart from Weaver, the

other most important translator of the Ligurian writer was Archibald Colquhoun. The only two works translated respectively ten and eight years after the Italian editions were *Il Sentiero dei nidi di ragno* and *Il castello dei destini incrociati*. Colquhoun took over the translations of Calvino's production from the 1940s to the 1960s from the *Sentiero* to *Ultimo viene il corvo*. *Trilogia* was published in a single volume in 1962 collecting all of the three short stories under the title, *Our Ancestors*.

The belated translation of Calvino's first works can be understood in two reasons. The first is that Americans lacked interest for the historical context of Neo-realist narrative. The second is the profound influence of their own narrators, authors of the caliber of Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos, Jack London, Gertrude Stein, Sherwood Anderson, and William Faulkner.

Weaver, on the other hand, was also a prominent translator of Eco, Moravia, Gadda, Levi, and Pasolini, while he translated Calvino's more recent productions from the *Cosmicomiche* to *Sotto il sole giaguaro*. For the translation of *Cosmicomiche*, he received a translation award in 1967. Unlike Colquhoun, Weaver established a personal rapport with Calvino, which probably helped to speed up the translation process. In fact, there was not much of a time gap between Weaver's translations and the Italian publications by Einaudi. Weaver frequently spoke to Calvino on the phone to confirm even minor corrections and revisions. As testified by Weaver himself, Calvino "would intervene on the original Italian and would change it as to make the English version more fluent" (Guarnieri 129-130). Weaver reports that he often thought that Calvino wanted to translate his work himself. It was hard, Weaver recalls, to talk to him; he was an extremely reserved person, who did not love gossip and unnecessary confidence. Even though they knew each other for over twenty years, they still used the formal pronoun *Lei*. Weaver would call him "'Mr. Calvino' and [Calvino] in return, would address his translator as 'Mr. Weaver'" (Guarnieri 130).

An exception was the elegant first edition of *Il Castello dei destini incrociati*, edited by Franco Maria Ricci in 1969, to which followed the Einaudi's edition in 1973 and Weaver's translation in 1977. Another curious episode was the case of *Sotto il Sole Giaguaro* which came out first in the English translation done by Weaver and then in Italian. The American translator worked on two short stories, *The Name* and *The Nose*, published in 1976 in *Antaeus*, and *The Jaguar Sun*, published on the *New Yorker* in 1983. In Italy the entire work was published only in 1986 while in the United States the entire col-

lection was published under the title *Under The Jaguar Sun* in 1988.

Until now, most of Calvino's narrative is either translated by Weaver or Colquhoun, with the exception of the *Fiabe Italiane*, published in Italy in 1956 and translated in 1961 by Luis Brigante, and in 1980 by George Martin, with the title of *Italian Folktales*. The translation of *Una Pietra Sopra* is to be attributed to Patrick Creagh, in 1986, which was published under the title *The Uses of Literature*. Inside this work one can find an essay that was translated by Weaver in 1982, with the title *The Pen in the First Person* (*La penna in prima persona*). Weaver also translated the preface of the *Sentieri dei nidi di ragno* published in Italian in 1964. In 1993 Tim Parks translated *La Strada di San Giovanni* (1990) and in 1996 *Prima che tu dica pronto* (1993). In 2001, Martin McLaughlin translated the collection of short stories *L'entrata in guerra* (1954).

We know that Calvino himself was a translator and an advocate of translation research. He translated Raymond Queneau's *Les Fleurs bleues* (The blue Flowers) in 1967 and *La canzone del polistirene* (1958), originally entitled *Le chant du Styrene* for which he sought help from his friend Primo Levi. As stated by Federico Federici, in a study of Calvino's own translations, he claims that even Elio Vittorini would encourage him to translate different authors: "Since 1947, Calvino attempted some translations, and encouraged by Vittorini, tried to first translate Conrad, then Ponge. He also collaborated with Quadri and Solmi in translating Queneau" (Federici 33).

Calvino states the importance of strong relationships between author and translator:

Quante volte, leggendo la prima stesura della traduzione d'un mio testo che il traduttore mi mostrava, mi prendeva un senso d'estranità per quello che leggevo: era tutto qui quello che avevo scritto? Come avevo potuto essere così piatto e insipido? Poi andando a rileggere il mio testo in italiano e confrontandolo con la traduzione vedeva che era magari una traduzione fedelissima, ma nel mio testo una parola era usata con un'intenzione ironica appena accennata che la traduzione non raccoglieva, (...) queste sono tutte cose di cui scrivendo non mi ero reso conto, e che scoprii solo ora rileggendomi in funzione della traduzione. Tradurre è il vero modo di leggere un testo; questo credo sia stato detto già molte volte; posso aggiungere che per un autore il riflettere sulla traduzione d'un proprio testo, il discutere col traduttore, è il vero modo di

leggere se stesso, di capire bene cosa ha scritto e perché (*Lettera di Italo Calvino 1825-1831*).

The Translation of *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*

The novel, *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, written by Calvino in 1979 was translated by Weaver in 1981 with the title, *If On a Winter's Night a Traveler*. This book can be considered a postmodern work since it discloses Calvino's semiological and structuralist interests, which were quite significant to his poetics.

This work has a very complicated construction since its main story is interrupted by ten other short stories' *openings* which are then left unfinished. The *Reader* (main character of the story) realizes that his own copy of Calvino's work presents some binding errors; in fact, the first thirty pages of the novel are repeated throughout the volume. When the novel gets to the most interesting part, the *Reader* decides to go back to the bookstore where he bought it to complain. He meets *Ludmilla* (the female reader) with whom he would begin the search for the *integral* novel, ultimately to find out that all of the existing copies are flawed.

The ten short stories included in *If on a Winter's Night* present similarities between themselves and some characters recur in various stories. This is typical of Calvino's style, according to which, books communicate between themselves and are connected with one another. The character that most identifies with Calvino's vision is the "translator," Ermes Marana, an employee of the publishing house who meets the *Reader* when as he attempts to find an explanation for the typographical mishap. He is a brilliant and astute falsifier, the mastermind behind the labyrinth of the ten short stories' *incipit* with no ending. These stories leave the reader suspended in determining the endings and give voice to the notion of multiplicity of stories that generate from a single source. This is how Marana describes the process in a letter to the editor: "Who knows which books from our period will be saved, and who knows which authors' names will be remembered? Some books will remain famous but will be considered anonymous books, as for the epic of Gilgamesh; other author's names will still be well known, but none of their works will survive, as was the case with Socrates; or perhaps all the surviving book will be attributed to a single, mysterious author, like Homer" (*If on a Winter's Night* 101).

The translator embodies Calvino's idea that in literature no

work is uninfluenced by another and that an author does not really create anything original, but always produces something pre-existing. Calvino considers literature as a "mystifying mechanism, a mathematical reproduction of forms and features, a *pastiche* of creative prototypes" (Anselmi, Fenocchio 670). In light of this view, then, a translator is not free from external pressures, from memories of what is read or absorbed. To avoid such inconveniences Calvino endorses the creation of a language composed of precise and concrete linguistic features that would increase its translatability. His vision, though, also establishes that this language maintains the *secrete essence* of the text, an *intrinsic truth* as defined by Eco.

In an article, Calvino claimed that "da qualsiasi lingua e in qualsiasi lingua si traduca, occorre non solo conoscere la lingua, ma sapere entrare in contatto con lo spirito della lingua, lo spirito delle due lingue, sapere come le due lingue posso trasmettersi la loro essenza segreta" (*Tradurre è il vero modo* 1828). This concept was first introduced in his essay written in 1965 entitled *L'antilingua*:

La nostra epoca è caratterizzata da questa contraddizione: da una parte abbiamo bisogno che tutto quel che viene detto sia immediatamente traducibile in altre lingue; dall'altra siamo coscienti del fatto che ogni lingua è un sistema di pensiero a sé stante, intraducibile per definizione. Prevedo che ogni lingua si concentrerà attorno a due poli: uno di immediata traducibilità nelle altre lingue con cui sarà indispensabile comunicare, tendente ad avvicinarsi ad una sorta di interlingua mondiale ad alto livello; ed un altro in cui si distillerà l'essenza più peculiare e segreta della lingua, intraducibile per eccellenza, e di cui saranno investiti istituti diversi come l'argot popolare e la creatività poetica della letteratura." (*Una pietra sopra* 125).

Calvino expected the English language to acquire the role of the "lingua franca" and thus he struggled between the necessity of finding a rigorous linguistic structure, a sort of "scientific," precise, and universal language; and, on the other hand, create an expressive language, which is creative and unpredictable. This language dualism, typical in Calvino which characterizes most of his literary style, reveals constant struggle between the crystal nature of his vocabulary and the exuberance and imaginary, chaotic nature of his imagination.

Speaking of his collaboration with Calvino, Weaver, also re-

vealed his preference towards lexical exactitude: "Calvino was in some ways not difficult to translate, because the works are very literary, and literary or writerly language is much easier to translate than dialect and popular speech. In another way, he was not easy to translate. With him, every comma and sound has an importance, and it isn't only a question of getting the words right. It's a question of not spoiling the rhythm, of getting the cadences and the tone exactly right. Although he was not a scientist, both of his parents were, and he liked to read scientific works. He had an entire technical and scientific vocabulary that I don't have" (Spiegelman, "The Art of Translation").

According to Weaver, another challenge posed by translating Calvino is represented by the rhythm of his prose, which was not always easy to recreate and quite difficult to imitate: "The rhythm isn't quite right, and maybe it just needs a comma somewhere, or something like that. This is particularly true of Calvino. With *Invisible Cities* I read the whole book aloud" ("T"). This aspect, together with the reproduction of Calvino's syntax, makes Weaver's talent as a translator, surface even more.

On the Carpet Illuminated by the Moon: From Theory to Practice

A perfect example of the problematics of translating Calvino from Italian into English can be seen in *Sul tappeto di foglie illuminato dalla luna*, story number nine in *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*.

Despite Calvino's lexical precision and accuracy, this *oeuvre* provides the translator with several challenges, in particular in regards to the verbs (whose conjugations and declinations are amongst the more complex in any Romance language), sayings, and the transcultural context. The short story presents different cultural levels, Italian, Japanese, and Anglophone, while these contexts are to be transmitted to the reader in the most accurate way possible. The simple plot of the narration becomes, however, rather complex with the persistent erotic-visual implications that distinguish the story.

In the story written by the Japanese writer, Takakumi Ikoka, one of the authors of the short stories included in *If one a Winter's Night*, arrives in the hands of Silas Flannery, who had previously received it from the translator Marana. The plot begins by introducing the protagonist of the story, a student who is attempting to improve his attention span under the guidance of Mr. Okeda. To accomplish this, he tries to concentrate his attention on a single

Ginkgo leaf that is falling off a tree in order to isolate his emotional state in that moment. Subsequently, when the student bends over a small pond in order to smell a water nymphaea, he casually comes in contact with the bosom of the daughter, Makiko, and wife of Mr. Okeda, Mrs. Miyagi, who were kneeling down to pick up flowers. On his way back home, the protagonist asks Makiko out on a date, and she accepts. However, that night, something unexpected happens. While the student plays hide and seek with the daughter, he enters a room where Miss Miyagi was placing flowers into a vase and picking up the leaves that had fell on the floor. In doing this motion, Miss Miyagi by mistake places her hand on the student's genitals, while he, instead, lightly touches her breast.

Driven by the woman, the two find themselves making love while the daughter (who had finally reached in the room looking for her date) and Mr. Okeda secretly watch them in true voyeuristic fashion. The *casual* sexual encounter makes the student distance himself from the two ladies: Makiko now sees him like a new lover for her mother; on the other hand, Miss Miyagi realizes she cannot have him since he whispered her daughter's name during the love making. The short story is abruptly interrupted when a policeman, upon the *Reader's* descent from a plane, confiscates his book since in the country it is forbidden, but leaves, us readers, with wanting the story to continue.

The language of the novel in question is sensual and precise, just like Calvino desired. Often the Ligurian author expressed his views on the Italian language: "Un italiano che sia il più possibile *concreto* e il più possibile *preciso*. Il nemico da battere è la tendenza degli italiani a usare espressioni *astratte* e *generiche*. Per svilupparsi come lingua *concreta* e *precisa* l'italiano avrebbe possibilità che molte altre lingue non hanno. Ma la necrosi che tende a farne un tessuto verbale in cui non si vede e non si tocca nulla lo sta cancellando dal numero delle lingue che possono sperare di sopravvivere ai grandi cataclismi linguistici dei prossimi secoli" (121). Calvino underlines the importance of using a language which reveals its richness, fullness and concreteness in order to become a modern language which is highly communicative and ultimately easy translatable.

Weaver, before this translation, probably read the Italian version several times to grasp the tone and the atmosphere in order to faithfully reproduce it. He would have understood that this story generally mimics the typical language utilized throughout *If on a Winter's Night*. The style of which is written in an average Italian,

clean and precise, and rich of professional and specialized vocabulary (for example from the publishing, botanical, and food industry). Weaver would see that Calvino's prose also uses sophisticated words in many different languages (for example *schoëblintdjia*, or tree of *Keiaki*), next to common sayings and dialect; the juxtaposition of erudite and informal jargon is typical of Calvino's narrative.

In light of Calvino's poetic style, Weaver wrote an essay underlying his approach to translating Calvino. In this article entitled *The Process of Translation*, published inside *The Craft of Translation* (1989), Weaver reveals that he used an approach based mostly on instinctive knowledge of the work and authors, rather than focusing solely on theoretical norms: "On Thursday translating Moravia one may write 'maybe' and on Friday, translating Manzoni, he may write 'perhaps'" (Biguenet 117). Not having a precise set of rules of translation to follow, Weaver claims that speaking of right or wrong translations makes no sense; the only mistake is to consider a translation the exact replica of the original: "The words of the original are only a starting point; a translator must do more than convey information (a literary translator, that is)" (118). The creative "spontaneity" theorized by Weaver is a reminder that there are many different approaches to translation as previously emphasized in this essay.

Regarding the characteristics of the Italian language that can more or less help the work of a translator, the linguist Raffaele Simone claims that Italian is one of those languages that has particular flexibility: "Italian has a particular flexibility in comparison to other Romance and Germanic languages, like, for example, German, English which are syntactically more rigid." (Simone *n. pag.*) The malleability of the Italian language thus, allows it to compensate the English's "rigidity."

Of the same opinion is one of the most prominent translators in Italy, Silvia Pareschi. In an interview regarding her English translations, she admits that the degree of difficulty of a translation depends on the linguistic style of each author. "Trovo che molto dipenda dallo stile dell'autore. Una scrittura come quella di Jonathan Franzen, per esempio, che è fatta di periodi lunghi e complessi, si avvicina di più al ritmo dell'italiano di una scrittura dai periodi più brevi e secchi, e per questo, almeno sotto questo aspetto, è anche più facile da tradurre. Però l'italiano, malgrado le accuse spesso fondate di rigidità, può adattarsi a modificare il proprio ritmo consueto, e può anche, se trattato con la necessaria attenzione, rivelare una inaspettata duttilità. Se il mio compito è quello di rispettare sempre la

sintassi dell’italiano, ricreando una prosa che, come diceva Calvino, si legga *come fosse stata pensata e scritta direttamente in italiano*, ciò non significa che io non possa avvicinare gentilmente le due lingue e regalare all’italiano un nuovo ritmo, più vicino a quello dell’inglese” (Pareschi n. pag.) In recognizing ductility of the Italian language Pareschi aligns herself with Calvino’s plight to create a language with a high translatability factor. In addition, this story facilitates the work of the translator since the syntax is made up of short sentences which render the work of the translator almost transparent. Therefore, the syntactical characteristic of this short story is that the phrases are relatively short, a relief for Weaver, who was instead used to very long paragraphs, typical of Calvino’s style. Even the renowned Peter Newmark said a few words about Italian syntax: “Paragraphs tend to be longer in Italian than in English; rhetorical questions are more frequent, and are often converted to English Statements; [...] more use is made of colons and semicolons” (Newmark 391) For example, in *If on a Winter’s Night a Traveler*, the frequent colons are almost always substituted by semi-colons. Yet in this story, the colons remain unaltered. From the comments released by Weaver, it becomes clear that his main preoccupation was to preserve the original structure of the Italian text.

We will see how in the short story *On the Carpet...* the American translator would confirm this tendency. A clear example is this short paragraph with the original Italian and the English version translated by Weaver:

Le foglie del ginkgo cadevano come una pioggia minuta dai rami e punteggiavano di giallo il prato. Io passeggiavo col signor Okeda sul sentiero di pietre lisce. Dissi che avrei voluto separare la sensazione d’ogni foglia di ginkgo dalla sensazione di tutte le altre, ma mi domandavo se sarebbe stato possibile. Il signor Okeda disse che era possibile. Le premesse da cui partivo, e che il signor Okeda trovava ben fondate, erano le seguenti. (*Se una notte* 198)

Here is the English version:

The ginkgo leaves fell like fine rain from the boughs and dotted the lawn with yellow. I was walking with Mr. Okeda on the path of smooth stones. I said I would like to distinguish the sensation of each single ginkgo leaf from the sensation of all the others, but I was wondering if it would be possible.

Mr. Okeda said it was possible. The premises from which I set out, and which Mr. Okeda considered well founded, were the following. (*If on a Winter's Night* 199)

The differences in regards to the verbs; the imperfect (*ca-devano*) is translated with a simple past (*fell*) and the same happens with the verb *dissi* (remote past); which is rendered in a similar way. It is important to underline that in Italian, these verbs in the past manifest actions that are limited in time. The imperfect is used to describe a habitual action like the falling of the leaves each year in the fall. The verbs *As I was walking* (*camminavo*) and *I was wondering* (*mi domandavo*) demonstrate undefined lengths of time in English (present perfect), while in Italian the imperfect provides an entirely different meaning.

Marina Biondi, who studied the peculiarities between the translation of the verbs between the two languages, confirms that often it is the context that helps speakers understand each other: "La determinazione temporale o la prospettiva del parlante sono implizite e si risolvono dunque solo a livello delle conoscenze condivise dai parlanti. La scelta poi comunque non dipende solo dalla collocazione "cronologica" o "affettiva" dell'evento, ma anche dal suo carattere" (407). There are other examples in the story in which the remote past (typical of the Italian narration mode) is translated with the simple past in English, (*Uscì dalla stanza/left the room; replicò/answered*). When determining which past tense to use, the translator must also keep the context in mind, sometimes this is implicit: "la scelta poi comunque non dipende solo dalla collocazione "cronologica" o "affettiva", dell'evento, ma anche dal suo carattere" (407).

The Japanese-themed short story offers different reflexive forms. For example, "*approssimandosi il plenilunio o che potessero verificarsi e ripetersi*" (*Se una notte* 208). One of the difficulties in the translation of these verbs is understanding which type of reflexive it is, sometimes one must distinguish between the impersonal form and the passive structure. In addition, there can be ambiguity in certain verb functions: for example, the verb *cambiarsi* means two different things: *changing clothes* but also *transforming* (Nermin Abd El-Hamid Hamdy 1).

These examples determine that there is no precise correspondence with Italian; if we think of the present indicative in English, it has different connotations. Therefore, it is best to translate them using their actual use in English without trying to find an equivalency

at all costs. A further example of this is the translation of the word *portare* which cannot be translated in English with the verbs to *carry* or with *to take* in the phrase, “*portare la conversazione su di un altro terreno*,” (translated by Weaver with *To shift the conversation to different grounds*), since what is important is to collocate the phrase within the proper cultural and idiomatic contexts. Another translation that can create problems is the word *terreno* which can be translated with *land, country, field, plot or site*, and that Weaver, in this case, translated with *ground*. Weaver in translating this short story, documents how he approached the final version of his translation and shows all of the challenges, big or small that he encountered.

Translating Seduction

The strong visual-erotic footprint of this story, is marked by an important verb, *guardare*, which in the narration acquires different visual nuances and is translated in many different forms, from *look* to *gaze* to *seeing*.

In the story *On the Carpet of leaves Illuminated by the Moon*, which sees the presence of the *voyeur*, the aspect of the “gaze” is underlined by many verbs that implicate the sight, like *seguire* (with the eyes), *vedere, guardare, scrutare, fissare, contemplare, percepire, sorvegliare, apparire, osservare*. The variety of these verbs is also found in the English language: *to follow, to see, gaze, to look, to examine, to stare, to contemplate, to spy, to watch, to appear, to observe, to describe*. There are other examples of the translation of the verb *guardare* in this story which are significant to discuss. In the case in which the verb is translated with “*to stare*” it literary means in Italian *to look at someone with intent*. However, if one chooses to use the verb *to watch* this corresponds to the verb *guardare, osservare*, while if one selects the verb *to gaze*, this would mean to remain in contemplation and to stare at someone.

The Italian phrase *sapeva che non vedeva che per gli occhi di sua figlia*, translated in English with “*Miyagi knew I lived only for her daughter*,” creates some problems. In the English translation one loses the visual aspect that characterizes instead the Italian sentence. In another passage of the story, the visual aspect is however preserved in the English translation: *screditare agli occhi dei docenti*; rendered with *discrediting in the eyes of the University professors*. This shows, once again, that translations do not always follow rigid rules and that every word has to be weighted and translated on a case by case basis.

The descriptions of the erotic scenes between the student and Mrs. Miyagi appear to be more precise in the English version. The following is an example of this: “Non so da quanto tempo il signor Okeda era là. Guardava fissamente, ma non sua moglie e me, ma sua figlia che ci guardava. Nella sua fredda pupilla, nella piega ferma delle sue labbra si rifletteva lo spasimo della signora Miyagi riflesso nello sguardo di sua figlia” (*Se una Notte* 207). The English version delivers this: “I have no idea how long Mr. Okeda had been there. He was staring hard, not at his wife and me but at his daughter watching us. In his cold pupil, in the twist of his lips, was reflected Madame Miyagi’s orgasm reflected in her daughter’s gaze” (*If on a Winter’s Night* 208). The peculiarity of the English translation resides in the fact that Weaver interpreted the word *spasimo* like a precise act, without leaving the Anglophone reader any other possibility; while in Italian the meaning of this word offers several other implications. One must also notice that in English, Mrs. Miyagi gains the title of *Madame*, since, as Weaver explained, it is a term usually attributed to foreign people. If he used Mrs. Miyagi, her sensual appeal would weaken.

Other verbs that more or less pertain to the sight in the story *On the Carpet...* convey erotic tones. The importance of the visual aspect in Calvino was also highlighted by one of the most renowned Calvino’s critics, Aurore Frasson-Marin. Within this context, the French critic underlined the representation of women as “carnivorous” and aggressive. Although the character of Mrs. Miyagi appears in a captivating role, in reality, according to Frasson-Marin, this is no other than a hoax used to diminish her role. To this point, the description of the female intimate area is compared to a *bouche dévorante*: “Jamais n’avait été exprimé aussi clairement par Calvino l’isomorphisme ténébreux et négatif de la femme; mais aussi la peur de la castration qu’elle peut susciter chez l’homme” (Frasson-Marin 354-355). The description of the narrating voice of the story seems to be the *sacrificial victim*, forced to engage in involuntary sexual acts. In addition, the woman always attracts the man with the art of seduction rather than her intelligence, culture or dialogue. Moreover, according to the French critic, when the women exercise these qualities, these are strongly criticized and diminished by Calvino.

A related approach proposed by Frasson-Marin, is the topic of gender in translation which deserves attention. In the translation of the female character in *If on a Winter’s Night* with *Other Reader*, Weaver caused strong reactions and criticism since this choice contributed to the diminishing role of the woman in the novel who

appeared to be “other,” different than the norm, marginal and deviant (Guarnieri 155). The determination of gender in Weaver is a recurrent problem in his translations, however, he opted for solutions that *obscured* female characters. Representing the female reader as “other,” Weaver also becomes a *creator* of meaning. In this case, the American translator makes a particular ideological choice and he is now at the same level of the author, and becomes a co-writer of the original text.

During the 1970s, a new approach for translation studies surfaced, mostly in North America and in France, which focused on analyzing gender in translation. Several sociologists explored this innovative field, commonly known as *Sex and Language* since it is known that in constructing gender identity, language has a defining role. The authors Thorne and Henley, understand that “sexual difference in language is a way in which sexual differences are socially displayed, emphasized and brought on to the scene” (115). Thus, it becomes important to recognize the different approach that a writer (and the translator) has in relation to gender difference since it can create problems in the translation of the text.

In Italian there is no gender neutral and all words have a specific gender attribution; in English this distinction does not exist; and there are no few words that point to the gender of nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and articles. In another instance, Weaver managed with difficulties the challenge posed by the feminine gender in the story of *Marcovaldo*. For example, to translate the word for female rabbit (*coniglia*) he chooses to eliminate the word and only use the generic terms of *male* e *female*. This can also be seen in the collection of short stories entitled *Gli idilli difficili*, where *un impiegato* and *una impiegata* (clerk) become a man and a woman in the translation. The trends continues in the story *L'avventura di un impiegato*, where the character of the cashier clearly identified as a woman, simply becomes the cashier in English. There is even no presence of the *she/he* pronouns to identify the gender, thus the English version loses every reference to the sexual identity of the character.

Features of the Technical Translation

To understand the process of translation, it is important to showcase a few examples that indicate the challenges faced by translators, but also to disclose the ones tackled by William Weaver. Among the selected ones, there is the issue of the morphosyntactic

alignment, the translation of sounds (but also the phonosymbolism), false-friends, and the translation of the vocabulary.

In the following paragraph taken from *On the Carpet*, we notice how the Italian syntax follows a predictable pattern: a subject, a verb and object. However, the order can change if one wishes to emphasize a certain word or element. In the next example the word “order” is subverted since in English, one must be clear who the subject is while in Italian one can avoid to constantly mention it. “Se due foglioline scendono dall’albero, l’occhio segue il volteggiare delle due foglioline nell’aria che s’avvicinano e s’allontanano come due farfalle che si rincorrono, per planare infine una qua e là sull’erba” (*Se una Notte* 199). The English version is: “If two leaves descend from the tree, the eye follows the twirling of the two leaves as they move closer, then separate in the air, like two butterflies chasing each other, then glide finally to the grass, one here, one there” (*If on a Winter’s Night* 199).

Furthermore, in this instance, Weaver was forced by English’s own structure to change the order of the words. After the use of the adverb in English, one needs a direct object while in Italian the structure is freer and the word “order” more flexible. The verb “spinning” translates the Italian *volteggiare*; this verb in Italian yields a sense of delicacy and grace while “spinning” implies the movement of a vortex. In fact, the whole first page of the short story written by Calvino creates an atmosphere of delayed sensuality, one that recalls the movements of classical ballet.

We find the same verb at the end of the story, but this time Weaver, translates it with *twirling*, a verb that in English has different meanings such as *twisting, curling, bending, winding*. In fact, at a certain point in the story the sound of the -s- increases the sensual ambience in the story: in about twenty lines this vocabulary echoes across the pages: *sensazioni*, (repeated four times), *s’abbassa, complessiva, distinta, visivo, seguirla, suo, posarsi, perseverare, proposito, forse, aggiunsi, festoni, lasciarmi, saltando, passaggi, sottoposti, tesoro, delinearsi, mescolata, fascio, impressioni, diffuse*. In English, Weaver was able to recreate the same effect with the use of the following words: *losing, pleasant, sensations, distinct, others, confusing, comes, blades, grass, persevere, purpose, perhaps, edges, times, silence, served, as, conjectures, series, stages, lesson, tiniest, sheaf, diffused, impressions*. All of these words appear in the English text according to a clear strategy on the part of the translator to convey the sensuality and eroticism chosen by Calvino for this story. Weaver shows his mastership in being able

to produce the same atmosphere of the original and the same sound of words. This is, in part, due to the verbal richness of the English language.

Another relevant aspect to underline in the translation of the vocabulary is the so-called *lexical equivalence* according to Bruno Osimo (83); something very important to preserve in order to achieve textual accuracy. In this story, there are words that are translated in a rather generic way, something that goes under the name of *under-translation*.

For example, the word *scrutare*, which in Italian means to *look at intently* is translated with *to examine*. To translate it with the verb *scrutinize* would have seemed more appropriate since *to investigate* as a synonym is closer to the original meaning. We also have an example of an *over-translation* with *turbare* translated with *upset* which indicates a type of *disruption* that conveys sadness. In Italian, the verb instead offers more interpretative solutions: it does not only imply sadness but it can be a synonym of confusion, trouble, disorder, agitation and anxiety. One can be worried but not necessarily sad.

Obviously an error that Weaver does not commit is to confuse the so called *false-friends*; words that formally appear similar to Italian, but instead mean something different. In this story, *sensibilità*, does not correspond to *sensibility*, but rather to *sensitivity*, sensible in Italian means to be of sound mind. Another word is *biblioteca*, which is translated with *library*, since *libreria* in Italian is the *bookstore*. *Pavimento* should not be translated with *pavement* but with *floor* since *pavement* means sidewalk and concrete. Furthermore, the word *gentile* could be translated with *genteel*, but *kind* is its correct equivalent.

A particular creative choice made by Weaver can be found in the translation of the word *osso sacro* inside the paragraph: "I suoi piedi nei bianchi calzettini di cotone s'incrociavano sul mio osso sacro" (108). The American translator instead chooses its Latin equivalent which creates an awkward outcome – an erudite word which generates a different atmosphere. The following is an example of an *over-translation*: "Her feet in their white cotton socks crossed at my sacroiliac." Weaver could have selected "sacrum," also because "sacroiliac" refers more to the sacroiliac articulation, rather than tale bone.

What is needed in a good translation is not just the equivalence, but finding words can be associated with a word in a particular context. Another interesting example is "lavoro" which at times refers to the university profession of the main character. Both times when

the word appears Weaver translates it with “work.”

We can further discuss the implications of this word since in English we can find words such as *labour* and *job* which have different connotations. The first one refers to *hard labor* (unskilled), always remunerated, while the second term usually refers more to a profession, an activity where personal ability is at stake. In *If on a Winter's Night...*, we find three different words used to express this concept: *di rispetto s'intende non verso il tuo lavoro*; *of respect, that is, not for your job*; while *luogo di lavoro* resulted in *place of employment*. The phrase *tavolo da lavoro* is translated *with you are at your desk*, omitting completely the verb linked to *work*. The word *lavoro* can be found in *Palomar* and *Marcovaldo*. In the first one, the expression *per un lavoro delicato* is translated with a *delicate job*; while in the *Marcovaldo* this word is often translated with *work*. Lastly, I want to point out the translation of the word *aiuola* which in *On the Carpet...* is translated with *path*; and in the story *Funghi in città* (*Marcovaldo*) is translated once with *bed of dirt, strip of ground* and *patch*. In many dictionaries the word is translated with *flower-bed*. A close reading of the story in *Marcovaldo*, we notice how the translation differs, given the fact that *aiuola* usually refers to a piece of land in which one can grow flowers, vegetables, or seeds. It appears an exaggeration to choose *bed of dirt*, while *path* seems a clear example of an *under-translation*.

These numerous translation examples are presented to demonstrate in concrete terms what it means to be a skillful translator. Nonetheless this also shows how Weaver used his creativity and artistic talent for his translations. Weaver demonstrates that his practice is a combination of creativity, training and inspiration. A translation cannot be considered only like a second-hand copy of the original, born out of a mechanical process, but instead it should be considered as a creative act and as a work of re-interpretation.

To conclude the discourse on Calvino’s translation, Weaver’s major challenge was the vocabulary. From dialect, ways of sayings which in Italian are plenty, every novel has had its own main difficulties. In *The Cosmicomics* it was the punctuation; in the *Trilogy* and in *The Path*, the vocabulary; and in *Mr. Palomar*, *The Cosmicomics*, and in *The Castle*, it was the syntactical aspect. The translations of Calvino’s novels, despite their rapidity are often considered by many intellectuals and academics with certain superficiality, as if the work of the translator does not necessitate any specific preparation or research. Calvino’s narrative demonstrates the exact opposite, because it would not be possible to reproduce the exact copy of the original

without knowing his poetics, his style and his ideology. Every word is intentional and calibrated. The translator has to grasp his whole essence in order to return it to the public in its full integrity. The renowned translation theorist, Eugene Nida reminds us that when transposing a language into another, the content is to be maintained at all costs: "In transferring a message from one language to another, it is the content that must be preserved at any cost; the form, except, in special cases such as poetry, is largely secondary... An excessive effort to preserve the form inevitably results in a serious loss or distortion of the message" (Nida, Taber 105-106).

Many translators of Calvino chose to make the integrity and essence of his poetics a priority respecting both form and content. Other components such as punctuation, word order, and vocabulary have been modified in order to allow the American public to have a better reception of Calvino's texts. However Weaver's translation of Calvino has made a distinctive contribution not only to the success of the Italian author in the United States but also to the American literary scene by allowing the Italian writer to convey his style and poetics to a new generation of American novelists.

NOTES

¹ All of Calvino's work has been translated by either American or English translators: *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* has been translated with the title *The path to the nest of spiders* by A. Colquhoun (Boston: Beacon Press, 1956.) In 1998 a revised version was published with the title, *The path to the spiders' nest* by British translator Martin McLaughlin (London by Jonathan Cape). Of the *Fiabe italiane* we have three different translations, the one by Louis Brigante (*Italian Fables*. New York: Collier Books, 1959), one done by Sylvia Mulcahy (*Italian Folk Tales*, London: Dent, 1975) and the last one in chronological order, *Italian Folktales*, translated by George Martin (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Javanovich, 1980). The book, *Ultimo viene il corvo* was translated by Archibald Colquhoun and Peggy Wright, with the title, *One afternoon and other stories* (London: Collins, 1957). The novel, *Il barone rampante* (*The Baron in the Trees*) was translated by A. Colquhoun, (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1959). *Il cavaliere inesistente* and *Il visconte dimezzato* were translated again by Colquhoun (*The Nonexistent Knight & The Cloven Viscount*, (London: Collins, 1962). The story, *La speculazione edilizia*, was translated with the title, *Plunge into real estate* by S. Carne-Ross in 1964 by Pocket Books. *La Strada di San Giovanni* (*The Road to San Giovanni*. (New York: Vintage International, 1993), and the collection of essays, *Prima che tu dica pronto* (*Numbers in the dark and other stories*. New York: Vintage Books, 1995) have been translated by Tim Parks. The text, *Prima che tu dica 'pronto'* was first translated 1985 by William Weaver with the title *Before you say "hello"* (Cottondale, Alabama da Plain Wrapper Press). The other collection of essays, *Un eremita a Parigi* has been translated by Martin McLaughlin (*Hermit in Paris*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2003). British translator Patrick Creagh translated *Lezioni americane* (*Six memos for the next millennium* (Cambridge, Ma Harvard University Press, 1988), *Una Pietra Sopra*

(*The Uses of Literature*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Javanovich, 1986), and *The Literature Machine* (London: Secker & Warburg 1987). He is also the translator of a series of essays that come from different collections, among which *Una Pietra Sopra e Perchè leggere i classici*. The American translator, William Weaver translated *Il castello dei destini incrociati* (*The castle of crossed destinies* NY: Harcourt Brace Javanovich, 1977), *Le Cosmicomiche*, (*Cosmicomics*. San Diego: HBJ, 1968), *Ti con Zero*, (*T Zero*, NY: HBJ, 1969), *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, (*If on a winter's night a traveler*. NY: HBJ, 1981), *Le città invisibili*, (*Invisible cities*, NY: HBJ, 1974), *Marcovaldo*, (*Marcovaldo: or the seasons in the city*. NY: HBJ, 1983.), *Palomar* (*Mr. Palomar*. San Diego: HBJ, 1985), *Sotto il sole giaguaro* (*Under the Jaguar sun*, San Diego: HBJ, 1988), and *Amori difficili*, (*Difficult loves*: London: Secker & Warburg 1983). In addition, *La nuvola di smog* (*Smog*) was translated by Weaver in 1971 (Harcourt Brace Javanovich).

² “Caro Primo, Ti scrivo per chiederti un favore, e anche stavolta si tratta di Queneau, per il quale avrei anche stavolta bisogno del tuo gentile e competente aiuto. L'editore Scheiwiller, per una strenna della Montedison, vuol fare Le chant du Styrène di Quenau con mia traduzione a fronte. Ho accettato e ho provato, per riuscirci dovrei saperne un po' di più sulla fabbricazione degli oggetti in plastica e soprattutto disporre della terminologia tecnica italiana. C'è tutta una parte di cui non capisco niente: tamis, jonc, filière, boudin. [...] Ho tentato di mantenere la metrika dell'Alessandrino italiano di 14 sillabe (settenario doppio) che lascia abbastanza libertà di movimento, per cui spero di poter riaggiustare versi e rime dopo le tue osservazioni. Ti sarò dunque grato se potrai dirmi dove ho preso fischi per fiaschi e dove non ho usato i termini giusti. Il bol del primo verso avevo sperato fosse un bolo di materia plastica per poter consentire l'attacco Tempo, sospendi il bolo! (parodia di Lamartine). Invece temo non sia altro che un bol en plastique, una scodella come esempio di prodotto in serie. Ho ripiegato su un gioco dassonanze salvando solo il ritmo del verso. Ho usato qualche volta polistirolo anziché polistirene fidandomi dei dizionari che li danno come sinonimi. Le formage sous vide sarà anche un termine tecnico o solo un gioco con fromage? Cosa sarà la buse? Ho capito bene il pistone e il cilindro? Cosa vorrà dire, Et, rotativement, le produit trèbucha? Penso che sarai in vacanza e non so quando vedrai questa lettera. Io resterò almeno fino alla fine di agosto all'indirizzo qui sopra. Ti ringrazio per tutto quello che potrai dirmi e ti auguro un buon agosto, tuo Italo Calvino.” This letter was written to Primo Levi by Calvino in 1985.

“Starting in 1947, Calvino attempted some translations, and encouraged by Vittorini, he tried to first translate Conrad, then Ponge. He then collaborated with Quadri and Solmi in translating Queneau.” (33) The translation is my own. Examples from *Il sentiero*: “anche i gesti e gli utensili maneggiati da questo e da quello, il batticarne, lo scotitoio per il crescione, l'arricciaburro...” (34) “...un secondo cortile ingombro di sacchi d'alfalfa...” (227); “Passo accanto al palazzo d'un ministero, la cui facciata è carica di cariatidi, colonne, balaustre, plinti, mensole, metope...” (247).

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Simona Stivaletta, *Dama in ascesa*

Translations

“Quarto comandamento” from *Colloquio di notte*

by Paola Masino

Translated by Louise Rozier

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Paola Masino (1908-1989) wrote prolifically during the Fascist dictatorship and was a prominent figure in the Italian cultural and intellectual environment of her time. Her first novel *Monte Ignoso* was awarded the 1931 Viareggio Literary Prize and her short stories were published in the most prestigious Italian literary magazines of the time. Her official narrative production includes three novels, *Monte Ignoso* (Bompiani, 1931), *Periferia* (Bompiani, 1933) and *Nascita e morte della massaia* (Bompiani, 1945), three collections of short stories *Decadenza della morte* (Casa editrice Alberto Stock, 1931), *Racconto grosso e altri* (Bompiani, 1941) and *Colloquio di notte* (published posthumously by La Luna in 1994), as well as a book of poetry, *Poesie* (Bompiani, 1941).



Simona Stivaletta, *Dialogo*.

“Quarto comandamento” da *Colloquio di notte*

Laio pascolava il suo gregge lungo il fiume, tra mare e monte, in una pianura morbida, sotto un cielo di pallidissimo verde, nell'aria odorosa di menta. Le pecore qua e là sugli argini sembravano riccioli canuti intorno alla fronte e alle gole di quel bonario nume fluviale che sonnecchiava, adagiato traverso la valle. Laio, come il fiume, si sdraiò sull'erba; per un poco i suoi occhi fissarono il cielo che s'andava facendo tutto d'argento, brillarono riflettendone il chiarore, poi dolcemente si chiusero, e Laio dormiva.

Un agnellino venne a leccargli il volto; lui mosse appena il capo. Allora venne ad annusarlo il cane Argo. Argo sembrava inquieto e non contento del sonno del pastore. Una pecora belò e corse via dalla proda, le altre la seguirono alla rinfusa: s'udì lontano il richiamo d'una contadina; gabbiani che fuggivano dal mare passarono bassi sui prati stridendo. Il cane ne inseguì per qualche passo le ombre, ma quasi subito si voltò alla foce del fiume e mugolava. Tutte le pecore ora gli si venivano raggruppando intorno e gli agnelli cercavano ognuno la propria madre. Sui monti il cielo s'era fatto bianchissimo, sul mare di un colore di ferro con venature sanguigne; soltanto sul fiume restava ancora quella luminosità blanda e primaverile, riflesso dell'erba minuta.

Laio mosse di nuovo il capo come se stesse per svegliarsi. Il cane puntava sempre l'occidente e di quando in quando ululava. Sulla strada maestra, lontanissima alle loro spalle, passavano carri trainati da bovi. A un tratto il rotolio delle ruote, il cigolio delle assi, e gli incitamenti dei carrettieri e il muggito basso delle bestie e il loro zoccolio sui selci s'avvicinò tanto che Argo si mise ad abbaiare. Un altro cane, chissà dove, rispose. L'aria era diventata così fluida e portava tanto i rumori che si cominciò a udire distinto anche lo sciacquo della risacca sulla spiaggia invisibile. Lo sciacquo cresceva di minuto in minuto, per la foce si spandeva nel flume che tutto ne risonava palpitando. Poi il fiume parve gonfiarsi, la sua pelle si tese e fece d'un colore di acciaio come le nubi che, levatesi improvvise dal mare con un brontolio sommesso di tuono, ora correvarono rapidissime al monte. Le vene minime della corrente, i piccoli gorghi a riva sotto i cespugli di crescione, le cascatelle tra i ciottoli, furono cancellati dalle onde sabbiose risalenti il corso delle acque. La mandria taceva, con i musi all'aria. E finalmente

The Fourth Commandment

Laio was grazing his flock in a gentle meadow along the river, between the mountains and the sea, under a sky of the palest green, the air smelling like mint. The sheep, scattered along the banks of the river, looked like the white curls of a kind, sleepy river god stretched across the valley. Laio, like the river, stretched out in the grass and stared at the sky going silver. His eyes were bright, a reflection of the luminous sky; he closed his eyes slowly, and he lay asleep.

A lamb came to lick his face, but Laio barely moved. His dog Argo came to sniff him. The dog seemed concerned, unhappy his master was asleep. A sheep bleated and ran from the bank; others followed, scattering. Far away, a peasant woman cried out. Sea gulls, escaping from the sea, flew low over the ground, screeching. The dog chased their shadows, then stopped, faced the river, and howled. The sheep gathered around Argo, the lambs searching for their mothers. The sky had turned ashen over the mountains and the pewter-colored sea, the undercurrent like veins of blood. Only over the river had the sky kept its spring-like glow, mirroring the tender grass.

Laio moved his head slightly, as if about to wake up. The dog was still facing east, howling now and then. On the main road, far behind them, in the distance, carts went by, pulled by oxen. And the drivers' commands, the soft bellowing of the oxen, their hooves on the pavement, the wheels spinning, the axles squeaking, all this came so close, it set Argo to barking. Somewhere, another dog answered. The air was so thin it carried the sounds. Even the surf breaking on the invisible shore could be heard, and it grew louder and louder as the waters rushed from the plain into the river. The river echoed and throbbed, seemed to swell, its surface tightening, now the same pewter-color as the clouds rising so suddenly from the sea, speeding towards the mountains, with a low rumbling thunder. The waves carried sand upstream, erasing the small veins in the current, the tiny whirlpools under the watercress, the little cascades between the rocks. The sheep were quiet, muzzles raised. Then, a purple lightning flashed across the sky and the clouds crashed together, echoing in the mountains.

un lampo violetto tagliò a mezzo il cielo e le nubi cozzarono con tal violenza che i monti ne echeggiarono.

In quell'attimo Laio fece questo sogno: se ne tornava alla sua capanna in cima a uno di quei monti. Eccolo avanzare con il gregge tra i massi di quarzo e le eriche in fiore che fanno il luogo tutto d'oro e amaranto. C'è un sole forte, il quarzo scintilla, la polvere arde in una nuvola pungente dietro le bestie che si muovono a salti e a una curva scompaiono. Certo si sono fermate a pascolare per un declivio; nè il pastore nè il suo cane se ne preoccupano. Cercano più in alto la capanna scura tra i cardi selvatici e avanzano sempre. Alla nuova curva anche Argo scompare. «È andato a raggiungere le pecore» pensa Laio affrettandosi. Chissà perché ha tanta ansia di arrivare a casa, dove nessuno lo aspetta: né padre né madre, benché Laio sia ancora molto giovane, né, benché sia molto forte e generoso, sposa o figli. Il pastore non ha, per fargli compagnia, se non la sua solitudine, il suo lavoro e la sua povertà che porta sempre con sè. Pure corre. E già sente l'odore dello strame negli stabbi, già ode il chiocciolare della sorgente sulla roccia dietro la capanna, già vede il cespo di rosmarino presso la porta. Finalmente è arrivato; si placa, entra, guarda intorno. In un angolo della cucina, seduto sul mucchio delle patate, sta un uomo vecchissimo e sconosciuto, con pochi fili bianchi di barba per il mento. Sta seduto a gambe larghe, piegato un poco in avanti e da là cerca di soffiare nel fuoco del camino all'altro angolo della stanza. Appena lo sconosciuto vede Laio dice: - Presto; non ho più fiato. Attizza il fuoco prima che muoia. - Il fuoco arde compatto sotto il paiolo che bolle in fretta; tuttavia il pastore, per obbedienza alla vecchiaia, va al focolare, prende un ceppo e fa per metterlo sulle braci ardenti; ma le fiamme che già se ne sprigionano, fanno resistenza, s'irrigidiscono, non gli lasciano disporre la nuova legna. Laio si ostina, prende il fuoco tra le mani, cerca di romperlo, spostarlo, dividerlo, per accomodarvi in mezzo il ceppo, ma si accorge che il fuoco è gelido e solido come metallo. Si volge al vecchio. Il vecchio sorride con malizia e sussurra:

- Oro. - Pare felice, ma il giovane si spaventa: - Come ti preparo la zuppa?

- Quanta zuppa con quell'oro, quanta zuppa senza fatica - sussurra ancora lo sconosciuto.

- No - gemme il pastore: - senza fuoco non è vita, anche l'oro vuole il fuoco.

At that moment Laio had this dream: returning to his home, he's at the top of one of those mountains. He's walking with his flock among the blooming nettles and blocks of quartz that turn everything golden and amaranthine. The sun is blazing and the quartz sparkles. The dust dries in a hot cloud behind the meandering sheep vanishing around the bend. They're probably grazing on the slope; the shepherd and the dog aren't concerned and keep walking toward the hut -- a dark spot among the wild thistle. At the next curve, Argo disappears as well. "He's going after the sheep," Laio thinks, hurrying along. Who knows why Laio's so anxious to get home where no one is waiting for him, even though he's young: no father, no mother, even though he is strong and generous; no wife; no children. His relentless solitude, his hard work and his poverty keep him company, that's all. Still he runs. He almost smells the hay in the pens, hears the murmur of the spring on the rocks behind the hut and sees the rosemary bush next to the door. At last he's home. He calms down and goes inside. In a corner of the kitchen, he sees a stranger, an old man sitting on a mound of potatoes. He has a few white whiskers on his chin, and he sits with his legs apart, leaning forward a little, trying to blow on the fire in the hearth on the opposite side of the room. As soon as he sees Laio, the old man says: "Hurry up. I'm out of breath. Poke the fire before it dies." The fire is roaring and the water in the cauldron is at a rolling boil. Laio always obeys his elders, so he goes to the fireplace to set a log on the burning coals. But the flames are wild, they stiffen and fight and don't allow him to put the log on the fire. Laio tries again. He takes the fire in his hands, tries to pull it apart. But he realizes the fire is as cold as ice, as hard as metal. He looks up, and the old man whispers, smiling mischievously:

"Gold." He looks happy, but the young man is scared.

"How will I cook your supper?"

"Gold will get you many suppers," the stranger says mildly. "Lots of suppers with very little work."

"No," the shepherd says. "There's no life without fire. Even gold needs fire."

"So then," the old man exclaims, even more playful, winking: "Burn me instead. Why not set me on fire? I'm a seasoned old trunk, I'll burn right away. Burn me. Burn me." Laio is shaking.

- E allora - esclama il vecchio sempre più maliziosamente, ammiccando: - brucia me. Perché non mi accendi? Io sono un vecchio tronco, subito ardo. Bruciami, bruciami.

- Laio comincia a tremare, gli si butta in ginocchio davanti e si segna. - Prova - continua il vecchietto. - Vedrai che bella fiammata. Sentirai che buon profumo spando, e che calore. I giovani devono nutrirsi dei vecchi, i figli usare i padri. Non è così? Suvvia, Laio, se tu non lo farai Dio lo farà, giacché l'ha stabilito.

- No! - urla il pastore alzandosi, - no! - urla fuggendo con le mani sopra le orecchie, fuori dalla capanna; - no! - urla per la terza volta appena è sull'aia. Gli risponde un gran rombo che fa tremare il monte e una luce lo investe e lo trascina lontano. Allora si volta indietro e vede la sua casa, traversata da un lampo, avvampare e in un attimo consumarsi in pezzi carbonizzati che si alzano leggeri per l'aria quasi carta infiammata, gli vengono a cadere sopra e intorno e mentre cadono si vanno facendo gialli, rotondi, lucenti: grosse monete d'oro che gli piovono sul volto e sulle mani e gli fanno male.

Per quel dolore Laio si svegliò. Gocce pesanti e chicchi di grandine misti piovendo diritti con violenza, gli bucavano gli occhi. Fulmini di un colore marcio traversavano il cielo da occidente a oriente, salivano dal mare a ferire i monti che gemevano dalle viscere profonde.

Laio fu d'un balzo in piedi: si mise a correre verso il gregge raccoltosi intorno a un pioppo e con la voce e con i gesti lo allontanava dall'albero, lo spingeva alla strada maestra in cerca di riparo. Aveva appena avviata la mandria quando la pioggia cominciò a turbinare in raffiche improvvise, sospinta da vortici di vento che facevano ballare tutta l'aria e le nubi con un orribile frastuono. In breve si fece così buio che Laio temeva di perdere la direzione perché era la prima volta che scendeva in quella valle e non ne conosceva il gioco delle correnti, l'accumularsi dei nembi. Ora la pioggia aveva già ripreso a cadere diritta, in massa compatte: non sembrava di camminare tra velo e velo d'acqua ma di essere sommersi in un lago dove, per nuova legge, si potesse respirare. In quel gran buio liquido, fatto ogni tanto fosforescente dai lampi, le bestie non sapevano più muoversi, si accucciavano a terra per cercare riparo in ogni ruga del suolo: Argo stesso, invece di soccorrerle, si buttava giù con loro e guaiva lamentosamente. Si udivano, a quando a quando, i belati morbidi e sempre più flebili degli agnelli.

He drops to his knees and makes the sign of the cross. "Go ahead," the old man says again. "I'll make a great fire. I'll smell good and put out a lot of heat! The young must feed on the old; sons must use their fathers. Isn't that how it works? Come on, Laio, it's God's Law. If you don't do it, he will."

"No!" the shepherd cries, getting to his feet. "No!" he cries fleeing from the hut, hands over his ears. "No!" he cries, for the third time, once outside. His answer is a sharp thunderclap that shakes the mountain, then a flash of lightning that hits him and hurls him aside. He looks back, and his hut, struck by lightning, has burst into flames, is being consumed, the carbonized pieces floating up, like burning paper, falling on him, all around him, and as they fall, the pieces are turning yellow, round, shiny: large gold coins that hurt as they strike his face like rain.

With this pain, Laio awoke. Big heavy rain drops and hail were falling, a violent downpour, stinging his eyes and his hands. Flashes of lightning, the color of rot, crisscrossed the sky from west to east, rising from the sea to batter the mountains, making them moan from deep within their bowels.

Laio jumped up: he ran toward his flock huddled beneath a poplar tree, and he yelled and waved his arms to drive them away from the tree and onto the main road, as he searched for cover. They were barely on their way when the rain began spinning in sudden gusts from the whirling winds that made the clouds crash together with a terrible noise. Soon it was so dark Laio was afraid he'd get lost since it was the first time he'd gone into this valley and he wasn't sure how the streams turned, how the clouds formed. The rain fell straight down, a solid wall. It didn't feel like sheets of rain. It was more like being submerged in a lake, where some new law made breathing possible. In that liquid darkness, now and then flashing phosphorescent with lightning, the sheep didn't know how to move. They pressed to the ground, trying to hide in the furrows. Argo, too, unable to help, huddled with them, barking pitifully. Now and then, Laio heard the sweet bleating of the lambs, growing ever weaker. He tended them as best he could, encouraging them and calling them by children's names. Groping around in the dark, he picked up two, tucking one inside his cloak, setting the other on his shoulders. But now walking was exhausting. The ground was saturated, a muddy mire, and he sank in

Il pastore come poteva li aiutava, li sospingeva, li chiamava con nomi di figli: brancolando ne raccolse due, se ne mise uno dentro la giubba, l'altro sulle spalle. Ma così gli si fece davvero faticoso il muoversi. E il prato era diventato flaccido, una poltiglia d'acqua e d'arbusti in cui affondava fino alla caviglia e succhiava i passi a lui e agli animali. Un uccello estenuato gli sbatte sulla faccia le ali insanguinate, gli riempì la bocca di un sapore dolciastro. Più in là pestò una biscia che gli si attorse a una gamba fischiando, ma Laio non si chinò a liberarsi. Andava avanti senza pensiero, accompagnato dal sibilo della serpe, dal battito pauroso del cuore dei due pecorini. Finalmente gli parve di aver ritrovato un terreno sicuro sotto i piedi e si fermò. Solo allora si accorse di un fragore monotono che accompagnava quello della pioggia, ma come di fianco, irregolare e minaccioso. Un nuovo lampo illuminò il paesaggio. Laio vide di aver raggiunta e traversata la via maestra, di essere sull'argine del fiume, nel tratto a monte. Questo pezzo d'argine era costruito dagli uomini, con grosse pietre insaccate in reti di metallo a difesa delle onde che precipitavano senza ordine da una gola di rocce. Il pastore non riusciva a capire come poteva esservi giunto né quanto tempo vi avesse impiegato, né quale strana solitudine fosse intorno a lui e desolato silenzio ai suoi piedi. Allora invocò un altro lampo. Il lampo venne. Si aprì la via tra le nubi e scese tanto basso sulla terra, stridendo e incendiando, che il cane Argo gettò un urlo e balzò via dal padrone. Dov'era il gregge? - Argo - chiamò il pastore, ma il tuono si portò via rotolando la sua voce. L'agnellino che Laio portava sul collo cadde con un tonfo molle in terra. Laio lo toccò appena con la punta del bastone e seppe che era morto. Morto. Così tutto il gregge che il pastore, senza bisogno di una terza saetta venuta crudelmente a mostrargli il dirupo per il quale lui era passato lungo il salto del fiume, sapeva ormai essere precipitato, tutte le pecore a una a una dietro la prima, nel torrente. Laio aveva fin qui conosciuto Dio onnipotente e giusto, ma ora stava perplesso davanti a quello sperpero di potenza, a quella indecifrabile giustizia. Pensava con sforzo: « O Dio, perché tratti così le tue creature? Perché le dai al torrente che non si nutre di latte né di carne? Dio, mi senti, o forse sei troppo lontano? Che cosa ne fanno del mio armento, la tempesta e il mare? Hanno un corpo da vestire di lana? E il fulmine perché le brucia, se non le mangia? Gran Signore, senza me troveranno le mie pecore l'uscio del tuo

up to his ankles, and the mud sucked at his and the sheep's every step. A tired bird flew into Laio's face. The blood from its wings filled his mouth and tasted sweet. A little further, he stepped on a snake that wrapped itself around his ankle, hissing, but Laio did not try to shake it off. He kept going, not thinking, accompanied by the hissing of the snake and the frightened heartbeats of the two lambs. Finally, when it seemed they'd reached solid ground, he stopped. Only then did he hear the dull crashing alongside the rain, but this was all to the side, something sporadic, menacing. Lightning lit up the landscape. Laio saw he'd reached the main road, crossed it, and was now along the river, at the foot of the mountains. This section of the river bank was manmade, with boulders stacked inside metal wire to hold back the wild waves rushing down the rocky gorge. The shepherd couldn't figure out how he'd gotten there or how long it took, or anything about this strange solitude all around him, this desolate silence at his feet. He pleaded for another flash of lightning and the lightning came. It broke through the clouds, came down so close, screaming and burning, that Argo yelped and ran from his master. Where was the flock? – "Argo!" – the shepherd called, but the rolling thunder carried his voice away. The lamb on Laio's shoulders thudded to the ground. The shepherd poked him gently with his staff, and he knew the lamb was dead. Dead. They were all dead. And it didn't take the third, cruel flash of lightning for Laio to see the cliff and know that the entire flock was dead, dropped one by one, into the river below.

Until now, the shepherd had believed in a just and omnipotent God, and he stood bewildered before such a misuse of power, such indecipherable justice.

"God, why do you treat your creatures this way? Why give them to the river that doesn't feed on meat or milk? Can you hear me, God, or are you too far away? What good is my flock to the storm and the sea? Do they have a body that needs to be dressed in wool? And why does the lightning burn them if it doesn't eat them? Lord, how will my sheep find the entrance to your fields without me? Why punish us so? Who can answer? Now we don't know what you want from us. Do you want this lamb as well?" and as he asked, Laio pressed the last lamb to his heart. But no one answered, and he started walking again.

chiuso? Chi lo sa perché questo castigo? chi lo sa perché? Cosí poi uno non capisce più quello che deve fare. Forse io ora dovrei darti anche questa?» Cosí dicendo si stringeva l'ultima agnella al cuore. Ma nessuno rispose e Laio riprese a camminare.

Non seppe mai quanto camminò. Camminò finché non sbatté in un muro. Là contro s'era fermato, dentro la pioggia sempre più spessa, e non si sa che cosa aspettava.

A un tratto quel muro (muro credeva Laio che fosse) si aprì e una voce cattiva cercava intorno: - Chi ha battuto? - Allora il pastore entrò in una cucina. Grondava acqua e barcollava. Avanzò fino alla tavola, si tolse l'agnello dal petto e ve lo depose. Poi si volse indietro a chi gli aveva aperto e disse:

- Hai una stuoa, una coperta o un sacco, una pelle vecchia, qualche cosa per coprire questa mia bestia? - Acqua ruscellava da lui e mota gli si staccava dai piedi e dalle gambe e gli uscivano con le parole gravi sospiri dal petto.

- Che cosa? - urlò la voce cattiva - Qui non c'è locanda, né bottega. E guarda come infanghi tutto. Via.

- Dammi, per amor di Dio, una scatola, un cesto, meglio una pelle, per riparar l'agnello. Quando riscendo a valle te la riporto.

La voce taceva. Laio non si muoveva e non guardava, stava nella propria desolazione come in una nebbia. Finalmente si udì un ridere stentato, maligno e lusinghevole:

- Una vecchia pelle da darti, per l'amore di Dio, ce l'ho. Ma a patto che tu non me la riporti mai più. Se la vuoi è per sempre.

- Dunque per sempre. Dammela.

- Eccola là.

Laio guardò nell'angolo che gli era stato indicato e cominciò a tremare.

In quell'angolo di cucina, seduto sul mucchio delle patate, stava un uomo vecchissimo con pochi fili bianchi di barba per il mento. Stava piegato in avanti ad ascoltare con terrore la voce cattiva e tuttavia con le mani rattrappite continuava a dividere le patate sane dalle germogliate.

- Eccola là - ripeté la voce. - Puoi prenderla. Non è forse una vecchia pelle? E fu una

buona lana davvero. Fu anche mio padre, quando serviva a qualche cosa. Prendilo e non riportarlo mai più. Hai promesso.

Laio ora batteva i denti dal ribrezzo e sentiva le ginocchia

He didn't know how long he walked. He walked until he hit a wall. And that's where he stopped, the rain growing even harder, and he didn't know what to expect. All at once the wall (at least he thought it was a wall) opened and a nasty voice called from inside:

"Who's there?" And the shepherd entered a kitchen. He was dripping wet and unsteady on his feet. He went to the table, took the lamb from inside his cloak and set it down. Then he turned to the man who'd opened the door and said:

"Do you have a mat, a blanket or a sack, an old hide, something to cover my lamb?" Laio was soaked, the mud running down his legs and feet, and he took deep breaths as he spoke.

"What are you saying?" the mean voice shouted. "This isn't an inn -- it's not a shop. And look at the mud you're leaving. Get out."

"For the love of God, give me a box, a basket or, better yet, a hide to cover the lamb. I'll return it to you when I return."

The voice was silent. Laio didn't move, didn't look, lost as he was in his own desolation as in a fog. Finally, there came a tense, cunning laugh:

"An old hide, that I can give you. For the love of God -- that I can do. But only if you promise never to bring it back. If you want it, then it's yours forever."

"Forever then. Just give it to me."

"It's over there."

He looked to the corner of the room where the other had pointed, and he started trembling. There, in the corner, on a pile of potatoes, sat a very old man with a few white whiskers on his chin. Terrified, he was leaning forward to listen to the evil voice and meanwhile his stiff old hands divided the good potatoes from the bad.

"Here you go," the voice said again. "Take him. Isn't he an old hide? And a real old goat as well. And my father besides, back when he was still worth something. Take him and don't ever bring him back -- you've promised."

Laio was horrified, his teeth chattering, he could feel his knees buckling, but he tried to smile, hoping it was just an awful joke. But the voice came again, closer now:

"Go on, shepherd -- what are you waiting for? -- Take what

piegarglisi ma cercava di sorridere nella speranza di un incredibile scherzo. La voce riprese, avvicinandosi:

- Su, pastore, che cosa aspetti? Prendi quanto hai chiesto e vattene.

Allora il vecchio si alzò e venne da Laio. Si guardarono fisso, come per riconoscersi, poi il pastore abbassò il capo e il vecchio uscì avanti a lui. Laio aveva raccolto l'agnello, raggiunse il vecchio, glielo accomodava sul collo e provava a dire: - Non pesa e ripara. Per la bestia è meglio, se muore; ritorna alla madre. - L'altro non rispose e si mise a camminare sotto la pioggia nera. Pareva che fosse meno vecchio, fuori dalla casa del figlio, si moveva con un certo vigore e senza lamenti. Il pastore lo seguiva, vergognoso di aver osato parlargli, timoroso ora di interrogarlo sulla direzione da prendere: da buon figliuolo aveva già ceduto a lui ogni comando. D'altra parte, tornare alla capanna sarebbe stato inutile, meglio cercare un paese dove chiedere lavoro. Il vecchio certo doveva conoscere i luoghi e sapere dove voleva andare se moveva con tanta certezza.

Traversarono la notte in silenzio, per sentieri sommersi dall'acqua, per frane e fossati. Il vecchio con gesti brevi indicava a Laio il passo e i pericoli. Finché all'alba ritrovarono la strada maestra ed entrarono a riposare in un fienile. Il pastore cercò di accomodare un giaciglio per il compagno, di accendere un piccolo fuoco tra due pietre per asciugarlo e riscalarlo. Il vecchio accettava tutto con naturalezza, ma non parlava. E che cosa c'era da dire? Pensavano tutti e due alla scena della notte e si vergognavano, ognuno per l'altro, di quella malvagità che avevano subita. Quando l'aria si fece più chiara e la pioggia più rada, il vecchio si alzò e si avviò per uscire. Laio volle seguirlo, invece cadde di schianto in terra chiamandolo. Il vecchio si fermò ad ascoltare.

- Padre - gemeva il pastore, - non è da queste parti la mia capanna. Chi sa dove è. E non te l'ho detto, perché intanto io non ho più niente e almeno volevo te; un padre da toccare, da soccorrere, non come Dio che ci castiga perché è lontano e noi non possiamo sentire i suoi ordini. - Alzava e abbassava le mani, in grande ambascia: - Ti ho lasciato prendere la strada sbagliata e ora tu certo sei stanco e avrai fame, ma io sono povero, non ho da darti che acqua cotta e pane. Io sempre ho sognato, per il padre mio, una felice ospitalità con il suono delle campane e ghirlande di fiori tra

you asked for and go."

The old man got up and walked toward Laio. They looked each other in the eye, as if trying to recognize each other. Then the shepherd bowed his head and let the old man leave first. Laio picked up the lamb. He followed after the old man and placed the lamb on the old man's shoulders, saying shyly: "Here, it doesn't weigh much. It'll protect you. Maybe it's better if the lamb dies and joins its mother."

The old man didn't answer, just started walking along in the dark rain. He looked younger now that he had left his son's house, and he walked with vigor and no complaints. The shepherd followed after, ashamed he'd dared speak to him and afraid to ask where they were going. Like a good son, Laio had put himself under the old man's authority. Besides, going back to the hut would be useless; better to find some village and ask for work there. If the old man walked so decisively, he had to know where they were going.

They walked all night without a word, across washed-out paths, across ditches and landslides. With brief gestures the old man showed him where to go and what to avoid. Finally, by dawn they reached the main road and rested in a hayloft. The shepherd made a pallet for his companion and lit a small fire between two stones where the old man could dry himself and warm up. The old man accepted all this naturally, but he didn't speak. And what was there to say? They were both thinking about what had happened the night before, feeling ashamed, one for the other, for the evilness they'd endured. When daylight broke and the rain had slowed, the old man awoke and prepared to leave. Laio stood to follow, but then collapsed to the ground, calling out. The old man stopped to listen:

"Father," cried the shepherd. "My hut's not around here. Who knows where it is. I'll tell you ... I have nothing now. But at least I wanted you, a father to love and comfort. Not like God who punishes us because He is so far away that we can't hear His commands." He lifted his arms, then dropped them in great anguish:

"I let you take the wrong way, and now of course you are tired and hungry, but I'm poor; all I can give you is bread and warm water. I have always dreamed I'd give my father a happy welcome, with bells ringing and flower wreaths over the ears of

le orecchie d'ogni pecora. O povero mio gregge, che fai ora laggiù nel mare, invece di darmi il latte per questa creatura offesa, il padre mio che torna? Perché tu sei mio padre, è vero? È vero?

- Come ti chiami?

- Laio.

- Laio, sei stanco. Non sai che la disperazione pesa più di una montagna?

- O padre - balbettò il pastore piegando la faccia sulle ginocchia - io sto seduto davanti a te così vecchio.

- Perché ora tu devi rimanere qui ad aspettarmi. Ieri io aspettavo te.

- Mi aspettavi? Mi volevi per figlio?

- E che cosa te ne fai di un padre come me, Laio?

- Per volere bene, per volere bene - gemeva Laio scotendo la testa a destra e a sinistra. - Per portarti, come un agnello, sulle spalle, per farti traversare i prati, e prepararti il cibo.

Allora il vecchio rise:

- E poi mungermi, Laio?

Laio non capiva:

- Mungerti, padre?

- I giovani devono nutrirsi dei vecchi, i figli usare i padri. Non è così?

«Sto ancora sognando» pensava il pastore con un brivido. Ma il vecchio prosegue:

- Ora dormi, e io farò quanto Dio ha stabilito.

Quanto Dio ha stabilito. Dio stabilisce e l'uomo pecca. Dunque è Dio che stabilisce il peccato. Cattivo Dio. Dio che stabilisce ci sia un figlio che regala via suo padre. Un padre. Buono il padre, nutre la famiglia, perché il Dio buono ha stabilito così. Difficile da capire. Forse capire non si deve. Solo ubbidire si deve. Ubbidire alla legge. Le dieci leggi. E se il padre ha detto: - Dormi - Laio deve dormire e se il padre dice:

- Svegliati.

Laio si sveglia.

Doveva essere passato molto tempo. Un poco di sole entrava nel fienile e in quel poco sole stava il vecchio, che sorrideva con arguzia:

- Alzati. Vieni.

Il pastore si alzò. Lo seguiva.

every sheep. Oh, poor flock of mine, what are you doing at the bottom of the sea? Why aren't you providing milk to this offended human being, for my Father, who's come back to me? Because you are my Father, aren't you? Aren't you?"

"What is your name?"

"My name is Laio."

"You're tired, Laio. Don't you realize that despair is heavier than a mountain?"

"Oh, Father," the shepherd stammered, lowering his head. "Look at me, I am sitting here while you're standing, in spite of your age."

"You must stay and wait for me. Yesterday, I was the one waiting for you."

"You were waiting for me? You wanted me for a son?"

"And what would you do with a father like me, Laio?"

"Love you! Love you!" Laio cried, shaking his head. "Carry you on my shoulders like a lamb. Help you cross the meadow. Feed you."

The old man laughed: "And then milk me, Laio?"

Laio didn't understand. "Milk you, Father?"

"The young must feed off the old; sons must use their fathers. Isn't that the case?"

I must still be dreaming, the shepherd thought with a shudder.

The old man added: "Now go to sleep, and I'll do God's will." God wills it and man sins. So sin is God's will. Evil God. It's God's will that a son gives his father away. A father. The good father, he provides for his family, that's the will of a good God. It's hard to understand, and may-be we shouldn't try. We should obey, that's all. Obey the law. The Ten Commandments. If the father says "Sleep," Laio must sleep and if the father says "Wake up," Laio must wake up.

Time had passed. There was a little sun in the hayloft and in that sun stood the old man as he said with a knowing smile:

"Get up and come with me."

The shepherd got up and followed after the old man. Outside, under a sky of fluffy clouds sat a crimson cart drawn by white oxen. The old man climbed in and gestured for Laio to sit beside him. They set off, along a wide winding road through the young

Fuori, nella strada larga che ondulava tra boschi leggeri di tremule, sotto un cielo ricciuto di nuvolette bambine, stava un gran carro scarlatto tirato da candidi buoi. Il vecchio vi montò e fece cenno a Laio di sedersi al suo fianco. I bovi si mossero. Una brezza sottile spazzava dolcemente il cielo sul loro cammino e le tremule, agitando le foglie d'argento, parevano salutarli al passaggio.

Alla prima curva la via, uscendo dai boschi di pioppi, saliva tra vigne nane, campi di granturco e prati d'erba medica. I contadini si fermavano a mezzo il lavoro udendo il cigolio del carro, si voltavano intorno a cercarlo facendosi schermo con la mano contro il sole sempre più alto e, appena scorto il vecchio, lo salutavano umili o con frasi di rispetto e devozione. Laio si meravigliava, il suo compagno rispondeva con un cenno del capo, donne e bambini, misteriosamente avvertiti, uscivano dai casolari per guardarli. Traversata così qualche collina, il pastore finalmente propose:

- Padre, questi contadini sembrano gentili. Forse qualcuno potrebbe darmi lavoro. Lasciami scendere a chiedergliene.

L'altro fece cenno di no con il capo e a Laio parve anche di sentirlo brontolare tra sé: «Il lavoro sei tu, che lo dai a loro»; ma credette di non aver capito bene e ad ogni modo non osò domandare spiegazione.

Ora i campi tornavano a stendersi in una valle tagliata da filari di pioppi e folti di canne dietro cui, di quando in quando, appariva un luccicare d'acque. Il sole era quasi al centro del cielo e il vecchio curvava sempre di più le spalle sotto il gran calore. Laio ne ebbe pietà:

- Padre - si mise a pregarlo, - riposati un poco all'ombra di questi alberi, mentre io vado a cercare, in qualche casa, che ti diano un posto per stanotte.

Ma: «Un posto quando si ha il tutto?» gli parve ancora che il vecchio brontolasse tra sé mentre di nuovo scoteva il capo per fargli cenno di no: tuttavia neppure questa volta osò insistere o domandare spiegazione.

Presto costeggiarono il fiume che scendeva dal monte al mare in una pianura morbida, sotto un cielo di pallidissimo verde, nell'aria odorosa di menta. Il pastore pensò a ieri, alle sue bestie affogate, ad Argo, e si chiuse gli occhi con le due mani. Quando li riaprì andavano lungo una distesa di prati, per i quali molte greggi pascolavano. Laio balzò in piedi sul carro, e guardava a destra e a

aspens, a gentle breeze sweeping down, making the silver leaves quiver in greeting as the cart went by.

At the first bend in the road, they came out of a grove of poplars, and they climbed, surrounded by dwarf vineyards and fields of corn and alfalfa. Farmers, hearing the cart, stopped their work to see who was going by, and they shielded their eyes from the ever-rising sun, and seeing the old man, they greeted him with humble words of respect and devotion. Laio was surprised; his companion responded with a nod; women and children, somehow aware of their presence, came out of their homes to watch them pass. They went over several more knolls and then the shepherd said:

"Father, these farmers seem nice. Maybe one of them might give me work. Let me go ask." The old man shook his head, and Laio thought he heard him mumbling: "You are the one who gives them work." But he must not have heard right, and he didn't dare ask questions.

Now the fields returned, stretched out in a valley cut by stands of poplars and thickets of cane, here and there, water sparkling behind them. The sun was almost in the middle of the sky and the old man slumped over more and more from the heat. Laio took pity on him:

"Father," he begged, "rest a little under these trees and I'll go see if someone in one of these houses can put you up for the night."

But:

"A shelter when everything belongs to you?" The old man mumbled and shook his head, and once again, Laio didn't dare insist or ask any questions. Soon they were in a gentle meadow, following a river that flowed from the mountains to the sea, under a sky of the palest green, the air smelling like mint. The shepherd thought of the day before, of Argo and his sheep that drowned, and he covered his eyes with his hands. When he looked again he saw flocks of sheep grazing on pasturelands. Laio stood up in the cart. He looked to the right, to the left, as though searching, seeing. A dog ran to meet them, and he almost called out, but he stopped and a tear rolled down his face. Then, without another thought for himself, concerned only for the old man:

"Father, there's no shepherd. Let me milk one of these sheep and give you a little milk. You haven't eaten for almost an entire day."

sinistra, come cercando, riconoscendo. Un cane corse loro incontro e lui fece per chiamarlo, ma si trattenne e una lacrima gli scendeva per il volto. Poi subito, ricacciando indietro ogni altro pensiero di sé, si preoccupò:

- Padre, non «c'è pastore. Lascia che io munga una di queste pecore e ti dia un poco di latte. È quasi un giorno che non ti nutri.

Allora finalmente il vecchio fermò il carro e, in modo chiaro, rispose:

- No. Non mungere, Laio, non cercare ospitalità né lavoro. I contadini sanno che, da ora in poi, debbono a te chiedere opere, tetto e nutrimento. Perché questo bestiame è mio, mie le case che hai veduto e i poderi che abbiamo traversato. È mio questo carro che ora diventa tuo - in così dire gli passava le redini - come i poderi e le case e il bestiame, perché da stanotte tu sei diventato il mio figlio vero.

Il pastore lo guardava a occhi sbarrati e non vedeva più questo ma l'altro, il vecchio del sogno, e un poco aveva paura. Per scongiurarlo mormorò:

- Non posso, non devo. Tutto questo è del tuo figlio carnale, anche se ti ha cacciato. Così vuole la legge. Non era per questo che ti ho chiamato padre: non voglio che possa essere per questo.

- Non è per questo - sorrise il vecchio. - Essere figlio è un legame spirituale, e tu l'hai dimostrato e io ora lo ribadisco. Prendi dunque la guida del carro e sii il padrone, Laio.

Ma Laio non si moveva né rispondeva. Ora davvero non pensava più né al sogno né a sé stesso né a questo miracolo pieno di sgomento che gli sta accadendo di vivere, ma pensa al figlio rimasto solo nella propria malvagità, al suo strazio quando saprà di quanto gli è stato tolto, al suo dannarsi in un'idea di vendetta. Il vecchio lo capì e subito riprese:

- Anche lui è ricco. Mi aveva preso tutto quel che conosceva essere mio. Ma gliene avevo tenuta celata la più gran parte, per fargli un dono e una sorpresa, poi. E vedi ch'è stato bene. Se fosse venuto a saperlo mi avrebbe ucciso.

- Ora -minacciò finalmente Laio riscotendosi - nessuno più ti farà male. Ci sono io a difenderti.

- Sì, figlio, a te mi affido. Portami nella tua casa - e gli volgeva, sereno, una fronte piena di bianca luce.

I bovi ripresero lenti il cammino percorso. Laio guardava con

And finally the old man stopped the cart and spoke, and his voice was clear:

"No, Laio. Don't do any milking, don't look for shelter or work. The farmers know: from now on it's you they have to ask for work, for a roof, for food. Because those flocks are mine, the houses and the farms you saw belong to me. This cart is mine, and now it's yours - and he handed Laio the reins - like the farms, houses and sheep. Because since last night, you've become my true son."

The shepherd looked at the old man with wide-open eyes, but he didn't see him. He saw the old man from his dream, and he was frightened. To dispel his fear, he whispered:

"I can't. I mustn't. All this belongs to your other son, your flesh and blood, even if he rejected you. That's what His law is. This isn't why I called you Father. I don't want it to be for this."

"It isn't." The old man smiled. "Being a son is a spiritual bond, and you have proven that there is one, and now I'm proving it to you. Now take the reins, Laio. Drive the cart. It's time to take charge."

But Laio didn't move or answer. He was no longer thinking about his dream, about himself, about the miracle that was happening to him. He was thinking about the old man's son and his rancor, about his torment once he realized what had been taken from him, about his desire for revenge and how he would be damned for it. The old man knew what he was thinking and he said at once:

"He's rich too. He took everything he thought was mine. But I hid most of it away. I wanted to give it to him later as a surprise. And you see, I was right, he would have killed me if he'd known."

"No one's going to hurt you now," Laio said, his voice threatening. "I am here to protect you."

"Yes, my son. I trust you. Now take me to your home." He turned to Laio, and his face was serene, radiant.

The oxen slowly turned and were on their way again. Deeply moved, Laio stared at the road ahead, at the fields all around, a young man who sees the woman he loves sleeping for the first time, her face tinged with modesty and mischief. The old man was no longer watching the road, the oxen, or all that was his; he was watching his son, his greatest possession. He leaned lovingly on Laio's shoulder and said:

"I've driven you through your land and given you reasons to

commozione la strada avanti a sé, e i prati svolgersi intorno, come un giovane che per la prima volta scopre il sonno della donna amata, soffuso il volto di pudore e malizia. Ma il vecchio non guardava più la via o i bovi o quelli che erano stati i suoi beni terreni, il vecchio guardava il suo figlio nuovo, nuovo bene e totale, e alla spalla di lui amorosamente si appoggiava dicendogli:

- Ti ho condotto per la tua terra e ti ho fatto ritrovare le ragioni della tua vita, ora a te conviene accompagnarmi con altrettanta cautela fuori da ogni terra e da ogni ragione di vita, alla morte: che è il dovere supremo dei figli.

live. Now, you must use the same care and lead me away from the land and the reasons that make men want to live. You must help me to die -a son's highest duty."

Luigia Sorrentino's 'Il sonno' from *Olympia*

Translated by Anthony Molino and Gray Sutherland

Luigia Sorrentino was born in Naples, but lived with her family in Torre del Greco until she completed her university studies. A professional journalist, she lives in Rome where she works for RAI. For several years she has worked interviewing major foreign and Italian writers for RAI News cultural and TV programmes. At present she designs and hosts programs for RAI Radio, including the weekly *Notti d'autore* (Authors' Nights), which revisits the life and work of important writers of our times (www.radio1.Rai.it). She also hosts *Poesia, di Luigia Sorrentino*, the first RAI poetry blog, conceived for the Rainews Poesia website. She has published the following books of poetry: *C'è un padre* (Lecce: Manni, 2003), *La cattedrale* (Milan: il ragazzo innocuo, 2008), *L'asse del cuore* (Milan: Mondadori, *Almanacco dello specchio*, 2008), and *La nascita, solo la nascita* (Lecce: Manni, 2009).

Anthony Molino is an award-winning translator, anthropologist, and psychoanalyst. He has translated ten books from the Italian into English, including works by Eduardo De Filippo, Antonio Porta, Valerio Magrelli, Paolo Febbraro and Lucio Mariani. His most recent published collection is Mariani's TRACES OF TIME (Open Letter Books, 2015).

Gray Sutherland is the author of five collections of poetry and a novel. In 2006 he began translating contemporary Italian poetry into English. His most recent translation is Stefano Guglielmini's MAYBE IT'S RAINING (Chelsea Editions, 2014).

Il sonno

la condizione umana chiude
 in sé la forma del tempo
 che non vuoi più, allora
 ti incammini tastando
 muri che non vedi, conosci
 la disaffezione
 negli occhi scende, toccata
 nell'incertezza della gamba
 è poca cosa
 è poca cosa anche
 l'oscillare sulla strada sdegnosa

hai visto il tempo nello spazio
 brevissimo, ancora da varcare

*

inesauribile sul fondo
 la scomparsa si deposita
 premendo negli occhi la rara
 bellezza
 imperfetta resta lì sul confine

la madre è là dentro, insieme
 erano stati l'aurora più forte

al ventre fa la guardia il vento
 tutto il mattino cade nella mano
 passa in un soffio
 beati gli occhi fa la luce

*

frana il *terreno*, scende,
 nessuno lo fermava,
 il rifugio nella cavità
 tra roccia e roccia
 l'ultima notte

il freddo lo ha scacciato
 gracile, senza più occhi
 là dove vuole dormire

Sleep

the human condition encloses
within itself the form of time
you no longer want, and so
you set out, tapping
walls you don't see, and come to know
disaffection
enters the eyes, touched
in the leg's uncertainty
nothing much
like nothing much is
your wavering along the disdainful road

you have seen time in the shortest
of spaces, yet to be crossed

*

at bottom inexhaustible
disappearance settles
pressing upon the eyes the rare
beauty
remaining, there, imperfect at the edge

the mother is there, inside: together
they'd been the strongest daybreak

the womb is guarded by the wind
in the hand all morning falls
duration of a breath
eyes blessed by light

*

the *soil* caves in, slides,
unstoppable
the refuge in the cavity
between rock and rock
the final night

the cold expelled him,
frail, with no more eyes
there, where he wants to sleep

un cavo di mano di vento
lo ha trovato affamato
il vuoto gli ha fatto
da scoglio

ecco l'inviolabile
la senza volto
si è avvicinata stanca

impallidita e mutata lo toccò

severi grandi occhi colpivano
l'immagine sfigurata
della giovinezza

ma lascia che ti prenda
a chi ti ha dato, tra le braccia
di padre in padre siamo stati
quella tua età sparsa nella casa

*

lei era rimasta lì
tenue la luce diradava
con enormi occhi l'ultima
volta lui la guardava
abbandonava
e si sentiva abbandonato
nel fondo
stabile degli sguardi

quella bellezza che si posa
dall'iride cadeva
rinnovandosi in lei
allontanandosi da lei

a cupped hand of wind
found him famished
for him the void
would prove a cliff

here now is the inviolable
the faceless one
tired, she has drawn near

pale, no longer the same, she touched him

huge severe eyes struck
the disfigured image
of youth

but let me take you
from whoever gave you, in my arms
from father to father we've been
that age of yours strewn throughout the house

*

there she'd remained
the faint light lifted
with enormous eyes he
beheld her one last time
abandoned her
and felt abandoned
in the firm
depths of eyes that see

that beauty that settles
fell from her iris
renewing itself in her
from her taking leave

Poems by Robert Zaller

Translated by Anthony Molino

Anthony Molino is a widely published psychoanalyst and award-winning translator from the Italian. Born in Philadelphia where he lived for 30 years, he now resides in Italy, where he moved after being awarded the first Raiziss/De Palchi Translation Fellowship in 1996. His translations include Antonio Porta's *Melusine* (Guernica Editions, 1992) and *Kisses, Dreams and Other Infidelities* (Xenos Books, 2004); Valerio Magrelli's *Nearsights* (Graywolf Press, 1991) and *The Contagion of Matter* (Holmes & Meier, 2000); Lucio Mariani's *Echoes of Memory* (Wesleyan University Press, 2003), as well as two plays: Manlio Santanelli's *Emergency Exit* (with J. House, Xenos Books, 2000) and Eduardo De Filippo's *The Nativity Scene* (with P. Feinberg, Guernica Editions, 1997, also anthologized in *20th Century Italian Drama*, Columbia University Press, 1995). For Chelsea Editions he edited Magrelli's *Instructions on How to Read a Newspaper and Other Poems* (2008), which includes a re-issue of *Nearsights*. Recently, he has published Lucio Mariani's *Traces of Time* (Open Letter Books, 2015) and completed, together with Gray Sutherland, the translation of Luigia Sorrentino's *Olimpia*.

Robert Zaller is the author of six books and chapbooks of verse, *The Year One*, *Lives of the Poet*, *Invisible Music*, *For Empedocles*, *Islands*, and *Speaking to Power*, as well as two critical studies: *The Cliffs of Solitude: A Reading of Robinson Jeffers* and *Robinson Jeffers and the American Sublime*. He is Distinguished University Professor of History at Drexel University. He lives in Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania with his wife, the author and actress Lili Bita. Together with his wife he has also translated, from the Greek, *Thirty Years in the Rain: The Selected Poetry of Nikiforos Vrettakos*. The poems here presented and translated by Anthony Molino are taken from his two most recent collections, *Islands* (Boston: Somerset Hall Press, 2006) and *Speaking to Power* (Philadelphia: Moonstone Press, 2015).



Simona Stivaletta, *L'incantesimo delle giare*

From ISLANDS (2006)**The Islands Appear**

In the evening the islands appear
faint blue incisions on the parchment of night
coming each day to live their hour
between the red sun's fall and the evening star.
Sea and sky are perfect,
the dying sun marries them.
Pure volume, lucid height.
Yet without islands there is no solace.
Born under the plunge of the sun, their frailty,
like ours, dies with the light.
Their single flaw makes distance real.
They are the riddle that solves the night.

Before Islands

The fret of motion
stirs the world
to being.
The gull's eye,
that never sleeps,
is its centerless center.
It sees hunger,
feigns a mouth.
Hunger is aloft,
an eye, a beak,
raging at the sea.

All this was before islands,
before the first cliff
that shouldered up
and snagged the sky.

Appaiono le isole

Di sera appaiono le isole
incisioni di un lieve azzurro sul papiro della notte
che ogni giorno vivono la loro ora
tra Venere e la caduta del rosso sole.
Perfetto il mare, perfetto il cielo
mentre il sole morente li sposa.
Volume puro, lucido slancio.
Eppure, senza isole non vi è riposo.
Nate sotto il tuffo del sole, la loro fragilità,
come la nostra, muore con la luce.
Il loro solo torto rende vera ogni distanza.
Sono loro l'enigma che schiude la notte.

Prima delle isole

L'inquietudine del moto
scuote il mondo
verso l'essere.
L'occhio del gabbiano
che mai s'addormenta
è il suo centro senza centro.
Vede la fame,
finge una bocca.
La fame aleggia,
un occhio, un becco,
furibondi col mare.

Tutto questo era prima delle isole,
prima della stessa scogliera
che si prese sulle spalle il cielo
e se ne impadroni'.

Afternoon of the Islands

It's the hour of erasure
when blue flows into blue
the sun strikes us dumb
the horizon wavers
the birds disappear.
Nothing survives
the crush of being
but there an island rises
gray cape on a matador's point
another and another
like constellations coming out at night.
The light won't win today
nor the dark
as long as the islands
cast javelins at the sky.

Keros

Gulls describe a cliff
weaving it back and forth
with the strong thread
of a sail

A surf of hills
makes its lunge
against a wilder blue

They say a goatherd
lives on Keros, or a monk.
I like to think
he is the harpist who plays
the mad music of the wind.

The Rehearsal

Dawn. The first cast of silver
on the bare blue shield
the islands rough-shouldering
themselves into the sky
the first gull hunting the wave
the sun's angry eye

Pomeriggio sulle isole

E' l'ora in cui tutto si cancella
quando l'azzurro confluisce in altro azzurro
il sole ci rende muti
l'orizzonte oscilla
svaniscono gli uccelli.
Niente sopravvive
al crollo dell'essere
ma oltre sorge un'isola
punta della mantella grigia del matador
e poi un'altra, e ancora un'altra
come costellazioni che di notte si affacciano.
Oggi non vincerà la luce
e nemmeno il buio
fin quando le isole
lanceranno giavellotti contro il cielo.

Keros

I gabbiani tracciano la scogliera
avanti e indietro la tessono
col filo forte
di una vela

Una mareggiata di colline
si avventa
contro l'azzurro selvaggio

Dicono che un pastore di capre
viva su Keros, o forse un monaco.
A me piace pensare
che sia il suonatore di arpa
che mette in musica
la follia del vento.

Incipit

Alba. La prima cascata di argento
sullo spoglio scudo azzurro
le isole che sgomitano
per un posto nel cielo
il primo gabbiano a caccia dell'onda

setting watchfires on the sea.
Gold hastens to the rock.
It is all one chord of light
struck from the silent gong,
rehearsing another day.

From **SPEAKING TO POWER** (2015)

Creation Theory

Light explodes from a stone fist
and so every rock
is the cavern of a thousand suns
is paradise encapsuled.
But whose, you say,
the hand that closed that fist?
It is no matter.
Five-pointed like a star
it lies open, generous
and its fingers stream infinity –
back into stone.

The Rival Poet

Yours the tree in whose shadow I lie
yours the river whose current carries me
resistless or resisting
to the snagged branch that fishes me
Yours the mountain from whose height
a boulder crashes through the caverns
from black to blacker might
toward cataracts of dawn.
How then shall I praise thee?
How then shall I not deny thee?
Stone by stone, I subtract your temple.
Word by word, I rebuild your world.

l'occhio irato del sole
che appicca incendi sparsi sul mare.
La roccia in fretta s'indora.
Tutto è un solo accordo
di luce, muto incipit
delle prove di un altro giorno.

Teoria della creazione

Eplode la luce da un pugno di pietra
per cui ogni roccia
è la caverna di mille soli
e incapsula il paradiso.
Ma di chi, dirai,
la mano che chiuse quel pugno?
Non importa.
Come una stella a cinque punte
giace aperta, generosa
e le sue dita incanalano l'infinito -
a ritroso, nella pietra.

Il poeta rivale

Tuo l'albero nella cui ombra mi distendo
tuo il fiume la cui corrente mi trascina
che io resista o meno
fino al ramo afferrato che mi pesca fuori
Tua la montagna dalle cui vette
un macigno precipita per le caverne
da nera a più nera notte
verso le cataratte dell'alba.
Come, allora, elogiarti?
Come, allora, non rinnegarti?
Pietra per pietra sottraggo al tuo tempio.
Parola per parola, rifaccio il tuo mondo.

In the Rain

In Giacometti's *In the Rain*
there is, of course, no rain.
You must bring it yourself.
A man, too naked for clothing,
bestrides an anvil. He has
come from a place without beginning
and he goes to one without end.
We must imagine the rain.
He moves through it.
The anvil is as wide
as Lear's heath.
It comes from nowhere
and goes to nowhere,
but the rain, the rain
we must bring ourselves.
The data are enough.
We stare until a tear
collects in each eye
and then the rain
then the rain will fall
and nothing we can do
will make it stop.

Sotto la pioggia

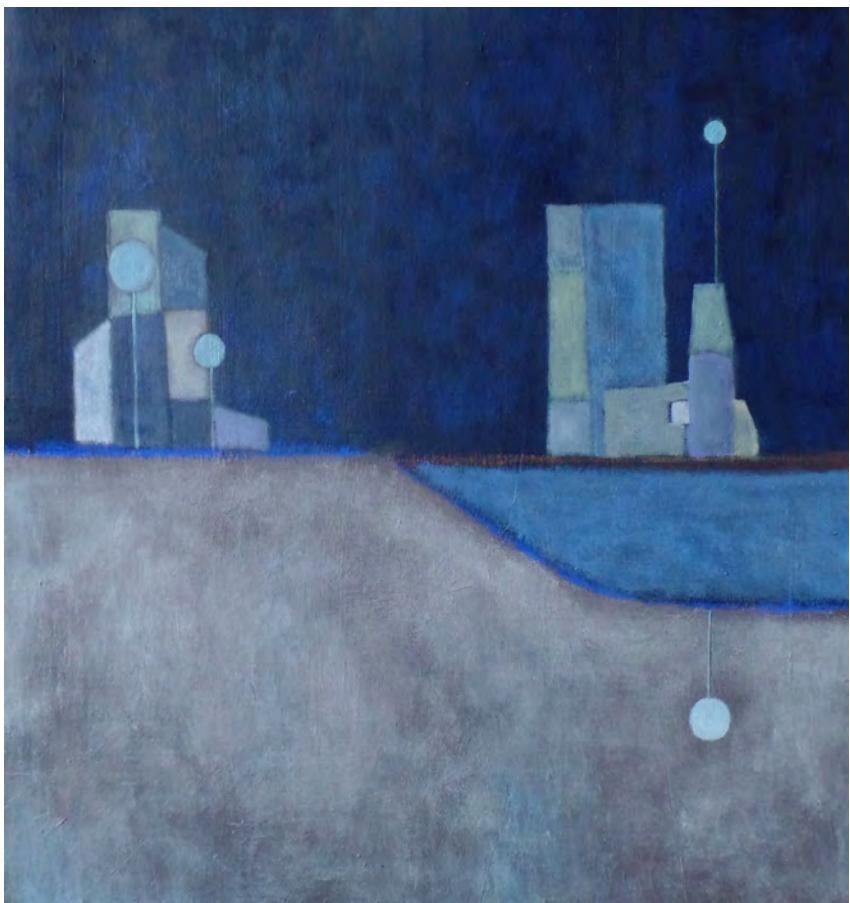
Ne *L'uomo che cammina sotto la pioggia* di Giacometti
manca, ovviamente, la pioggia.
Devi portarcela tu.
Un uomo, troppo nudo per essere vestito,
si affretta lungo un'incudine. Arriva
da un luogo senza inizio
e va verso un luogo senza fine.
Dobbiamo immaginarcela, la pioggia.
L'uomo l'attraversa.
L'incudine è larga tanto
quanto la brughiera di Lear.
Viene da nessun dove
e da nessuna parte va,
ma la pioggia, la pioggia,
dobbiamo portarla noi.
I dati sono sufficienti.
Fissiamo lo sguardo fino a che
una lacrima si addensa in ciascun occhio
e poi la pioggia
e poi la pioggia scenderà
e niente più potremo fare
per fermarla.

Poems by Ernesto Livorni

Translated by Jacob Blakesley

Jacob Blakesley is a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at the University of Leeds' Centre for Translation Studies. His recent monograph is entitled *Modern Italian Poets: Translators of the Impossible*, published by the University of Toronto Press (2014). He has also translated an anthology of modern Italian fiction for Dover Publications, *Great Italian Short Stories of the Twentieth Century* (2013).

Ernesto Livorni is Professor of Italian Language and Literature, and Affiliate of Comparative Literature, at the University of Wisconsin – Madison. His scholarly publications include *Avanguardia e tradizione: Ezra Pound e Giuseppe Ungaretti* (1998) and *T. S. Eliot, Montale e la modernità dantesca* (forthcoming). He also translated into Italian and edited *Ted Hughes, Cave-Birds: Un dramma alchemico della caverna* (2001). He has published articles in Italian and in English on medieval, modern and contemporary Italian literature, English and American literature, Italian-American literature, and comparative literature. Livorni is the founding editor of *L'ANELLO che non tiene: Journal of Modern Italian Literature*. Livorni has also published three collections of poems: *Prospettive illusioni* (1977-1983) (1987) (Illusions of Perspective), *Nel libro che ti diedi. Sonetti* (1985-1986) (1998) (In the Book that I gave you. Sonnets) and *L'America dei Padri* (2005) (The Fathers' America). The collection *Onora il Padre e la Madre* (Honor Thy Father and Mother), which gathers previously published and new poems, was released in October 2015.



Simona Stivaletta, *Paesaggio in blu*

Ed anche se qualcosa
del tuo corpo rimarrà
scolpita sul mio viso, non sarà mai
la zagara lieve di scirocco
sullo spettro addormentato dell'infanzia.

Sospeso sul tuo seno il pendolo
dell'ora: l'uomo parla in attesa della morte
scalfisce sillogismi segreganti.

Non chiedermi calma.

Lettera al Padre

Eccomi, Padre. Ormai anche il tempo
ha ceduto il suo scettro imbiancato
e torni, ancestrale figura, o forse
son io che percorro la strada. Padre,
ero già vecchio quando mi hai fatto
e son certo che allora ti morse
nel petto, come visione, il lamento
dei primi vagiti. Ancora t'arde
quella corona di sogni che corse
la fronte, come fosse un riscatto
certo; dimmi, Padre, avresti mai vinto
tutto l'incanto delle lune tarde?

Eccomi, Padre. Ti guarda la notte
e ti vince un sonno piú duro del pianto
e tutto quello che sento e che faccio,
come fosse di vetro, si frange.
Invano ho seguito, Padre, le lotte
e come un rabbioso leone il ghiaccio
ho scrostato ad unghiate, con l'incanto
negli occhi d'una visione che sparge.
O Padre! tutto nel soffio d'un bacio
potrebbe ancora svanire, ma tanto
ho creduto, che ancora si scorge
il taglio che brucia e mi contorce.

And even if something
of your body remains
sculpted on my face, it will never
be the faint orange blossom of the *scirocco*
on the sleeping ghost of childhood.

The hour hand lies suspended
over your breast: man speaks waiting for death
he scratches out segregating syllogisms.

Don't ask me to keep calm.

Letter to the Father

Here I am, Father. By now time
has ceded its whitened scepter
and you return, ancestral figure, or perhaps
it is I who walk along this road. Father,
I was already old when you made me
and I am certain that my first cries
bit into your chest, like a vision. That crown
of dreams, racing down your forehead,
still burns you, as if it were ironclad
blackmail; tell me, Father,
would you ever have overcome
the full and complete enchantment of the late moons?

Here I am, Father. The night watches you,
and sleep, heavier than tears, overwhelms you,
and everything that I feel and do
breaks like glass.

Father, I followed the fights in vain,
and like a raging lion I clawed away at
the ice, enchanted by a dissolving vision
in my eyes.

Oh Father! everything could still fade away
in the breath of a kiss, but I believed
so much that the burning,
writhing cut is still visible.

Eccomi, Padre. Ribelle al passato
ne sento il fascino come tortura,
come passione le vene mi gonfia
e certo capisci quel che ti dico.
Padre, non vedi che brucio? Soltanto
se guardi le mani, vedi ogni dito
proteso in cerca, proteso con cura
verso ogni grido che forte trionfa
dentro le tempie. Padre, ogni fessura
della mia mente, come fosse un atto
mancato, ripete un rito antico
di generazioni macchiate d'onta.

Eccomi, Padre. Sentii una voce
venire dal fondo della tua stanza
e dapprima mi parve essere un vento
che si sfaldava in un coro di fiati.
Come fossi un bimbo, Padre, mi sento
rapire le viscere ed è atroce
sentire ancora il respiro che danza
e sfoglia l'elenco dei miei reati.
Questo fantasma percuote ogni tempo,
m'alita addosso, guardandomi avanza,
e tu sei lì, Padre, parli e mi baci:
“Anche tu, figlio, m'uccidi!” poi taci.

Eccomi, Padre. Anche tu m'uccidi
ogni volta che quel sospiro vario
mi sfila le dita, gli occhi ritorti,
scomparsi nel bianco delle pupille.
Tu, Padre, sei un male necessario;
adesso comprendo quello che vidi
ed un giorno uniremo i nostri volti,
quando un nuovo figlio verrà, ribelle.
Ora son qui, ed attendo i miei riti
e vivo ogni giorno come precario,
rischiando ogni giorno tutte le sorti:
Padre, perché mi hai abbandonato?

Here I am, Father. A rebel against the past,
its fascination tortures me;
like passion, it swells my veins,
and you certainly know what I am telling you.
Father, do you not see I am burning? Just
look at my hands, you will see every finger
stretched out, carefully searching for
every cry that loudly triumphs
in my temples. Father, every crevice
in my mind, like a failed
action, repeats an ancient ritual
of disgraced generations.

Here I am, Father. I heard a voice
coming from deep in your room
and at first it seemed to be a wind
crumbling into a chorus of sighs.
Father, I feel my guts stolen away,
as if I were a child, and it is atrocious
to sense once more the dancing breath
leaf through the list of my crimes.
This ghost strikes hard every time,
he breathes on me, watches me move closer,
and you are there, Father, you speak and kiss me:
"Even you, son, kill me!" and you fall silent.

Here I am, Father. Even you kill me
each time that varied breath
slips off my fingers, the eyes rolled back,
vanishing in the pupils' whiteness.
You, Father, are a necessary evil;
now I understand what I saw
and one day we will join our faces,
when a new child comes, a rebel.
Now I am here, and I attend to my rituals
and I live each day precariously,
risking each day by tempting all the fates:
Father, why have you forsaken me?

The Pain Tapestry by Baret Magarian

Translated by Andrea Sirotti

Andrea Sirotti was born in Florence, where he teaches English language and literature. His primary interests are women's poetry and postcolonial studies, and he serves on the editorial boards of both *Semicerchio*, a journal of comparative poetry (<http://www.unisi.it/semicerchio/>), and *El Ghibli*, an online journal of migrant literature (<http://www.el-ghibli.provincia.bologna.it/>). The authors he has translated (for major Italian publishers such as Einaudi, Giunti, Rizzoli, and Le Lettere) include Carol Ann Duffy, Sujata Bhatt, Margaret Atwood, Karen Alkalay-Gut, Eavan Boland, Sally Read, Hisham Matar, Hari Kunzru, Lloyd Jones, Alexis Wright, Aatish Taseer, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. He has taught post-graduate courses in his areas of specialization at the University of Pisa and elsewhere, organized international poetry festivals, and co-authored (with Shaul Bassi) *Gli studi postcoloniali: Un'introduzione*, published by Le Lettere in 2010. He has recently begun working as a freelance literary scout and editorial advisor.

Baret Magarian was born and raised in London, but he is of Armenian extraction and currently lives in Italy. He began his writing career by contributing features and reviews to *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Times*, *The Observer* and *The New Statesman*. In London he directed fringe theatre and cabaret. "The Pain Tapestry", published here, was recently staged by Magarian in Florence as a dramatic monologue, performed to electrifying effect by the noted Italian American actor Roberto Zibetti. Zibetti and Magarian hope to stage the piece again in 2016 in Torino. Magarian has been published in *World Literature Today*, the White Fly Press' anthology *HOTell*, *El Ghibli*, *IrisNews*, *Semicerchio*, *Contrappasso*, *Voyages*, *Darker Times* and *Panurge*. He can be contacted at this email address: baretbmagarian@hotmail.com



Simona Stivaletta, *Paesaggio*

Desert Visions

Light, dark, light, dark, so it goes, the same old symphony, the same old pattern. They told me to drive to the guy, the big guy, the boss, the genius, the man who pisses pink champagne, and who craps caviar. I knocked on his door in Lincoln, Nebraska, he handed me the package. This big guy, the master, he handed me the package, said to me, you'd better have AC or the trip might leave you dead, you better not lose that package or I might leave you dead, it's hot, kid, it's hot, the contents of that package are hot, I'm not talking about the sun frying your retinas, don't lose that package kid or I'll pick up your ashes and cast them into the wind, it's hot kid, what's in that package, don't blow it, don't fuck up kid, you can make it, you can do it, you can pull out all the stops, you can send the hounds packing, you can generate enough heat with that thing in your hands to launch the space shuttle.

So I took the package respectfully, handled it as though it was Claudia Schiffer's digitally remastered pussy, got back in my bruised Chrysler and began to drive like a suicidal vagrant whose ship had come in and he was being offered one last glimpse of paradise before his body expired.

I had to make it all the way to Los Angeles. The final stages of the trip entailed a hypnotized spell in the Mojave desert with its honey mesquite trees and tumbleweeds and cacti and lizards and a blowtorch sun and the unreal skies and the desolation and the cosmic American landscape. Just me, the car, the package, the bottles of Miller beside me offering to lubricate my soul, so long as no cops spotted me as I trailed a blaze of toxic speed, dust clouds blooming around my tires, the smell of gasoline in the wind, tainting that pristine nothingness of the desert. That nothingness was perfect for me because that nothingness was my life.

The Cowboy Junkies' "Escape is so Simple" had been on repeat forever, that cool, almost imperceptible voice, that distant resignation. Pressing the gas, driving the machine hard, the wind vacuuming off the dust between the cracks, the elemental tapestries being weaved around me, and for a moment, for a second, it was perfect, the music vibrating, a low hum, the engine purring, the

Deserto

Luce, buio, luce, buio. Così vanno le cose, sempre la stessa musica, la stessa vecchia trama. Va' da quel tizio, mi avevano detto. Il pezzo grosso, il boss, il genio, quello che piscia champagne rosa e caca caviale. Avevo bussato alla sua porta a Lincoln, Nebraska, e mi aveva dato il pacchetto. Il pezzo grosso, il Maestro, mi aveva dato il pacchetto dicendo: vedi di mettere l'aria condizionata o ci rimani secco, vedi di non perdere quel pacco o ti faccio secco, è roba che scotta, ragazzo, scotta. Quel che c'è dentro scotta, e non parlo del sole che ti frigge la retina. Non perderlo, il pacco, ragazzo, o spargo le tue ceneri al vento, c'è roba che scotta nel pacco, non buttare tutto all'aria, non mandare tutto a puttane, ragazzo, ce la puoi fare, ci puoi riuscire, se ce la metti tutta puoi mandare al diavolo Satana stesso. Con quel coso in mano sprigioni un tale calore da inviare in orbita una navicella spaziale.

Dunque avevo preso il pacchetto, maneggiandolo con cura manco fosse la versione digitale rimasterizzata della fica di Claudia Schiffer. Tornato alla mia Chrysler ammaccata mi ero messo a guidare come un vagabondo suicida a cui, arrivato il suo vascello, viene offerto di dare un'ultimo sguardo al paradiso prima di tirare le cuoia.

Dovevo arrivare fino a Los Angeles. L'ultima parte del viaggio includeva un ipnotico tratto nel deserto del Mojave con gli arbusti di mezquite, le erbe mobili, i cactus, le lucertole, un sole ossidrico nel cielo irreale, la desolazione e il cosmico paesaggio americano. Solo io, la macchina, il pacco e, accanto a me, le bottiglie di birra Miller che promettono di lubrificarmi l'anima purché uno sbirro non mi beccasse in mezzo a una vampata di velocità tossica, le nuvole di polvere sbocciate dalle gomme, l'odore di benzina nel vento a imbrattare l'immacolato nulla del deserto. Un nulla perfetto per me, perché quel nulla era la mia vita.

Avevo messo su, in funzione repeat, "Escape is so Simple" dei Cowboy Junkies, una voce fredda, quasi impercettibile, una distante rassegnazione. Davo gas, andavo al massimo. Il vento risucchiava la polvere tra le fessure, il tessuto degli elementi naturali mi s'avvolgeva attorno, e per un istante, per un secondo, era tutto perfetto: la musica vibrava con un basso ronzio, il motore faceva le fusa, le possibilità infinite della vita scaturivano dal paesaggio,

infinite possibilities of life spilling out of the landscape, the desert offering some nameless beauty. Consciousness seemed to expand in vibrating rings, pulsing out like the Gulf of Mexico oil spill.

The light was fading, the evening was coming. There was no stopping it. By then I'd moved on from the Cowboy Junkies to Chris Isaak by way of Johnny Cash. I glanced at the package slumped on the back seat. It was still intact. No ants had eaten into it, gaffer tape squeezed it like bandages round an Egyptian mummy.

I pulled up at a desert motel. I needed showering, a bed, some kind of sanctuary for a few hours. Maybe I'd find the dregs of humanity there. Time had decomposed the place. In fact it looked like it had been abandoned years ago. Discarded branches were scattered before its entrance like cigarette butts and the wooden sign that announced it was slanted at an acute angle, hanging from a tall stump of wood, looking like it might decapitate a passing stranger. The windows were thick with grime. Despite all this the place attracted me and I pulled into the parking lot, where plastic bags stirred in the residual wind.

I parked with precision and care, picked up the package. The package was cold to the touch, icy cold. It felt as if it had just been sitting in a freezer. This was weird, given that the temperature was in the 100's. And the fact of the iciness of the package could not be explained by the car's air conditioning. I got out shakily, cradling the package and walked up to the reception. A large, bovine woman was behind the counter. She made me think of a squashed cream puff. She nodded up from her airport novel and glanced at me without a flicker of interest.

'You wan' a room?' she enquired with all the charm of an anaemic tax inspector.

'Yes.'

'You wan' a single or a double?'

'A single.'

'You got any ID?'

I produced my driving licence.

'This do?'

'I guess so,' she said in a lazy drawl. She began to write carefully with a half chewed biro. I clutched the package protectively.

'You got any luggage?'

il deserto offriva una bellezza inenarrabile. La coscienza sembrava espandersi in cerchi vibranti, che sgorgavano pulsanti come il petrolio fuoriuscito nel Golfo del Messico.

La luce si smorzava, scendeva la sera. Inutile provare a fermarla. Nel frattempo ero passato dai Cowboy Junkies a Chris Isaak attraverso Johnny Cash. Lanciai uno sguardo al pacchetto appoggiato sul sedile posteriore. Era ancora integro. Non era stato aggredito dalle formiche, i nastri telati lo strizzavano come bende intorno a una mummia egiziana.

Mi fermai a un motel nel deserto. Avevo bisogno di farmi la doccia, di un letto, di qualche ora di ristoro. Forse ci avrei trovato la feccia dell'umanità. Il tempo aveva decomposto un luogo che, in effetti, pareva in abbandono da anni. Davanti all'ingresso c'erano rami sparsi a mo' di cicche, e l'insegna di legno era inclinata ad angolo acuto, appesa a un ramo tozzo in alto e sembrava che da un momento all'altro dovesse decapitare un passante. Le finestre erano spesse di sudiciume. Malgrado tutto, quel posto mi attirava e m'infilai nel parcheggio, dove buste di plastica s'agitavano nel vento residuo.

Parcheggiai con cura e precisione e raccolsi il pacchetto. Era freddo al tatto, così gelido da sembrare uscito dal freezer. Strano, visto che fuori c'erano quasi quaranta gradi. E il fatto che il pacco fosse così freddo non si spiegava con l'aria condizionata. Scesi barcollando dalla macchina, tenendo il pacco con circospezione e mi avviai alla reception. Dietro al banco c'era un donnone dall'aria bovina che mi fece venire in mente un grosso bignè spiaccicato. Sollevò lo sguardo dal suo thriller e mi guardò senza alcun lampo d'interesse.

'Una camera?' domandò con lo stesso appeal di un esattore delle tasse anemico.

'Sì.'

'Singola o doppia?'

'Singola.'

'Ha un documento?'

Le mostrai la patente.

'Può andare?'

'Va bene,' disse col suo accento strascicato. Cominciò a scrivere con cura, con una biro mezzo masticata. Afferrai il pacco con aria protettiva.

'No, that is, nothing apart from this package.'

'Mind if I ask what's inside?'

'Well, actually yes, I do.'

'There's a new law around here, we've been instructed by the sheriff to ask about packages. Could be terrorism. Or could be drugs.'

'Do I look like a terrorist?'

'Maybe, maybe not.'

She reached into her handbag and pulled out a chocolate chip cookie and began nibbling at it like a hamster.

'But I guess you look ok. But listen, mister, why don't you just tell me what's in the package and we'll leave it at that. I won't call the sheriff, you look ok.'

'It contains a manuscript.'

At this point I realized that the package no longer felt so icy and cold.

'What's a manucrit?'

'It's the typewritten pages of a book, actually a novel.'

'You write it? You a writer?'

'No, it was written by someone else.'

'Who?'

'Listen lady, are you going to give me the fucking keys or what?'

'Ok, ok, take it easy, jus' doing my job, that's all. That'll be twenty bucks for the room. Payment upfront. Check out 10 am.'

I gave her the money. She gave me the keys and said, 'Number 13, down the hall.'

I didn't know a thing about the novel. The master I mentioned at the start. It was his work. His editor was in LA, you see. So here's the scoop. This guy, this genius, this giant of literature, he's old school. He types on an old Olivetti, makes a single carbon copy for himself when he types. He has ruled out the computer, the fax, the attachment, the email, this fucker wants his masterpiece to be handed in person to his associate as though it were an aluminum case stuffed with loot. He doesn't want to take a flight, he doesn't want to send it through the mail, he's old school, he wants it handed over in person as if it's gold bullion. No one gets to hack into his work on the Internet, so spies, no voyeurs, no geeks, no nerds, no government agencies, no NSA, no CIA, no FBI, no IRS,

‘Ce l’ha il bagaglio?’

‘No, è questo. Non ho nulla, a parte il pacco.’

‘Le dispiace dirmi cosa c’è dentro?’

‘Be’, a dire il vero sì, mi dispiace.’

‘C’è una nuova legge da queste parti, lo sceriffo ci ha dato istruzioni di chiedere cosa c’è nei pacchetti. Per via del terrorismo. O potrebbe esserci la droga.’

‘Ho l’aria del terrorista?’

‘Forse sì, o forse no.’

Infilò la mano in borsa, tirò fuori un biscotto al cioccolato e prese a sbocconcellarlo come un criceto.

‘Senta, lei mi sembra un tipo a posto. Perché non mi dice cosa c’è nel pacco e la facciamo finita. Non chiamerò lo sceriffo, mi sembra a posto.’

‘Contiene un manoscritto.’

Mi resi conto a quel punto che il pacco non era più così gelido.

‘Cos’è un manoritto?’

‘Sono le pagine battute a macchina di un libro. Di un romanzo, per l’esattezza.’

‘Lo ha scritto lei? È uno scrittore?’

‘No, lo ha scritto un altro.’

‘Chi?’

‘Senta, signora, mi vuol dare quel cazzo di chiavi, o cosa?’

‘Ok, ok, stia calmo, faccio solo il mio lavoro. Sono venti dollari per la camera. Pagamento anticipato. Stanza libera entro le dieci.’

Le diedi i soldi e lei mi consegnò le chiavi dicendo: ‘La numero tredici, lungo il corridoio.’

Non sapevo nulla del romanzo. Il Maestro, quello di cui parlavo all’inizio. Era opera sua. Il suo editor stava a Los Angeles, tutto qui. Questo è lo scoop. Quell’uomo, il genio, il gigante della letteratura, è uno all’antica. Scrive su una vecchia Olivetti e fa un’unica copia per sé. Ha messo al bando computer, fax, allegati, e-mail. Quello stronzo vuole che il suo capolavoro venga consegnato personalmente al suo collaboratore, manco fosse uno scrigno d’alluminio imbottito di grana. Non vuol prendere l’aereo, non vuole spedirlo per posta, è uno all’antica, lo vuole consegnato a mano, come un lingotto d’oro. Nessuno può ficcare il naso sul suo lavoro in internet, niente spie, guardoni, smanettoni, nerd, agenzie governative,

no interception at the critical moment, no advance viewing, no Twitter, no Shitter, no Facebook, no hype, no spoiler, no press leaks, no nothing. And I'm the courier, I've been paid in spades by his publisher to take pristine delivery, to drive and deliver, to be a good boy, to do as I'm told.

He is the Elvis of literature. As I said he craps caviar and he pisses pink champagne. He is as eccentric as Howard Hughes and as classic as a Ferrari. He writes prose of a beauty that makes grown men weep and women squirt. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the final word in Final Words, the Writer whose every phrase gets emblazoned onto the fabric of consciousness as surely as if it were a laser beam. This wizard, this charmer, this old style magus doesn't sit around and wait for the Muse to descend, he doesn't chew tobacco or sip whisky and pass away an idle hour, he is a machine, a writing machine, a precision machine squeezing out masterworks as chickens lay eggs.

The Overdog (1986), his first novel, had been about a man who has a bizarre skin disease that targets his face which, at intervals, undergoes a complete meltdown and subsequent recreation, thus freakishly allowing him to 'become' different people, presenting in turn to the world the face of a poet, an athlete, an angel, a pugilist. His second, *Prototype of Love* (1990), was told from the point of view of a pregnant man. *The Sound of Extinction* (1995) was about meeting God who turns out to be this little guy who goes around with a supermarket trolley. The books grew larger and more ambitious. *The Philosopher King* (2001) was set in a remote village in Cyprus whose inhabitants are pig ignorant and primitive. Then one day a stranger takes up residence there and his exotic appearance gives rise to all sorts of rumors and the village splits into those who like him and those who don't. Gradually he takes over and sets up a kind of new society based on Ancient Greece, educates everybody, and improves life in the village until egomania takes hold and his various money-making schemes lead to disaster and the village's total ruin. Next came *The Millions* (2004), a 900 page satire about an agency in New York that specializes in faking alternate lives for people whose own lives are boring and uneventful. The agency produces documents, diplomas, certificates, letters, emails, creates an illustrious, exotic past for those who come knocking at its door.

nemmeno la sicurezza nazionale, la CIA, la FBI, l'agenzia delle entrate, nessuna intercettazione al momento cruciale, nessun occhio indiscreto anzitempo, niente twitter o twatter, niente facebook, lanci di stampa, spoiler, soffiate, niente di niente. E io sono il corriere. L'editore mi paga fior di quattrini per fare una consegna pulita, per guidare e consegnare, per fare il bravo ragazzo ed eseguire gli ordini.

È l'Elvis della letteratura, lui. Come ho già detto, caca caviale e piscia champagne rosa. È più eccentrico di Howard Hughes e più classico di una Ferrari. La sua prosa è così bella che, nel leggerla, gli uomini piangono come bambini e le donne hanno orgasmi poderosi. È l'Alfa e l'Omega, è l'ultima tra le Ultime Parole, è lo Scrittore le cui frasi rimangono incise nel tessuto della coscienza come un raggio laser. Questo mago, questo cantatore, questo stregone vecchio stampo non sta ad aspettare l'arrivo della Musa, non mastica tabacco o sorseggia whisky per ingannare un'ora di ozio, è una macchina che scrive, un congegno di precisione che sforna capolavori come una gallina depone le uova.

Lo sfacciato (1986), il suo primo romanzo, parla di un tizio affetto da una bizzarra malattia della pelle che gli aggredisce il viso, il quale, a intervalli, si scioglie completamente per poi rigenerarsi, permettendogli di 'diventare' persone diverse e di presentare di volta in volta al mondo la faccia di un poeta, di un atleta, di un angelo, di un pugile. Il secondo, *Prototipo d'amore* (1990), è narrato dal punto di vista di un uomo gravido. *Suono d'estinzione* (1995) parla dell'incontro con Dio, che si rivela essere un piccoletto che va in giro con un carrello della spesa. Il libri successivi si fanno più ampi e ambiziosi. *Il re filosofo* (2001) è ambientato in un remoto paesello cipriota i cui abitanti sono primitivi e ignoranti come bestie. Poi, un bel giorno, vi prende la residenza uno straniero. Il suo aspetto esotico suscita ogni tipo di dicerie e il paese si divide in due parti: quelli che lo amano e quelli che lo odiano. A poco a poco lo straniero prende il sopravvento e istituisce una specie di nuova società basata sull'antica Grecia, dà un'istruzione a tutti e migliora la vita nel villaggio, finché l'egocentrismo la farà da padrone e i suoi vari progetti per fare soldi porteranno al disastro e alla totale rovina del borgo. Poi fu la volta de *I milioni* (2004), un romanzo satirico di novecento pagine su un'agenzia di New York specializzata nel costruire vite alternative a gente dall'esistenza noiosa e monotona. L'agenzia produce documenti, diplomi, certificati, lettere, email,

Eventually the real and the fake become indivisible as people struggle to concoct even more lies to support the original lies. The fake biographies sabotage the actual until reality itself becomes one vast and bloated invention. *The Overhaul* (2008) chronicled the decline of a wealthy American family over four generations. The narrative spanned hundreds of years, evoking in hallucinatory detail the Native American genocide, episodes from the American civil War, the assassination of Martin Luther King and the attack on the World Trade Center. What finally emerges is the complete culpability of money. The origins of the family's fortune lie in eighteenth century slavery. Key events from the twentieth century – the Vietnam War, the Indonesian killings of 1965-66, the first Gulf War – all obliquely yield immense sources of revenue for the family and the novel eventually grows into a gigantic portrait of greed and human cruelty whose final chapter shows Riley Jude Stennefor, the heir to a fortune of \$80 billion, realizing that his entire identity has its roots in the evils of his forefathers and that his lifestyle, his choices, the very fabric of his being is irrevocably entwined with the real legacy of his family: money made from blood and human misery. He throws a gargantuan New Year's Eve party, the family mansion becoming a vortex of every conceivable instance of lust and decadence. After the midnight celebrations die down he offers the surviving family members port of a rare vintage from a diamond-encrusted decanter. The port has been laced with strychnine and the whole clan, including Riley, goes into convulsions and asphyxiates. The book garnered tremendous critical acclaim and several death threats and there were rumors that the CIA and the FBI had subsequently opened files on him.

No one knew the subject of his latest novel. No one even knew the title.

I wrestled with the key and stepped in. I placed the package carefully on a side table and switched on the lamp. Dirty light, dirty windows. Light, dark. The place was a lousy dump. But it would do. I was exhausted. I closed the door, on the back of which a scrawled sign read KEEP DOOR CLOSED: SNAKE SPOTTED.

creando un passato illustre o esotico a chiunque bussi alla sua porta. Alla fine il vero e il falso diventano inscindibili, e la gente s'affanna a costruire nuove bugie a sostegno di quelle originali. Le false biografie corromperanno i dati fattuali finché la stessa realtà non diventerà che una vasta e tronfia invenzione. *La verifica* (2008) registra il declino di una ricca famiglia americana attraverso quattro generazioni. La narrazione abbraccia centinaia di anni, evocando con dettagli allucinanti il genocidio dei nativi americani, episodi della guerra civile americana, l'assassinio di Martin Luther King e l'attacco al World Trade Center. Quel che ne emerge alla fine è che c'è un unico colpevole: il denaro. Le origini delle fortune familiari risalgono alla schiavitù nel diciassettesimo secolo. Gli avvenimenti cruciali del ventesimo secolo – la guerra del Vietnam, i massacri indonesiani del 1965-66, la prima guerra del Golfo – sono tutti fonte indiretta di immensi guadagni per la famiglia, e il romanzo finisce col trasformarsi in un gigantesco ritratto di avidità e crudeltà umana nel cui capitolo finale vediamo Riley Jude Stennefor, l'erede di un capitale di ottanta miliardi di dollari, rendersi conto che l'intera sua identità ha radici nelle malefatte dei suoi antenati e che il suo stile di vita, le sue scelte, la stessa stoffa del suo essere sono irrevocabilmente intessuti col vero retaggio della sua famiglia: i soldi guadagnati col sangue e la miseria umana. Riley organizza una festa pantagruelica di fine anno trasformando la magione avita in un vortice di ogni esempio concepibile di lussuria e decadenza. Esauriti i festeggiamenti di mezzanotte, egli offre ai membri superstiti della famiglia un porto di una rara annata, mescendolo da una caraffa incastonata di diamanti. Il vino era stato avvelenato con la stricnina e tutto il clan, Riley compreso, ha le convulsioni e muore di asfissia. Il libro si guadagnò un enorme successo di critica e anche diverse minacce di morte, e si diceva in giro che la CIA e l'FBI avessero aperto dei dossier sull'autore.

Nessuno conosceva l'argomento dell'ultimo romanzo. Nessuno sapeva neppure il titolo.

Armeggiai con la chiave ed entrai in camera. Depositai con cura il pacco su un comodino e accesi l'abat-jour. Luce sporca, finestre sporche. Luce, buio. Quel posto era un letamaio, ma avrebbe fatto al caso mio. Ero sfinito. Chiusi la porta, sul cui retro c'era un car-

I stared hard at the package. What lay inside it? What gems and what pearls? Did that package somehow contain the guy? Did it contain his essence? All that was best about him? Was that package, in the final count, more real, more destined for immortality than the man himself? It had been made abundantly clear to me that on no account was I to open it. It had been made digitally clear that if that package were tampered with my balls would be neatly severed from my scrotum. I stared hard at the thing. Or maybe what lay in there was no good after all, was just scrambled shit...

The motel room was stuffy. I walked over and yanked open a window. This didn't really have any effect. I stared outside at nothing, at the barren night, approaching like the onset of a disease, the night of longing and sexual desire and unanswered calls for companionship. Then I took one of those interminable pisses, one of those that last so long that your legs begin to buckle and you have to prop yourself up against the wall with your arms. I pulled out a Marlboro and smoked it right down to the tip.

I walked back over to the package. It was warm. I'm not joking. The damn thing was emanating heat like a computer. What was going on with this package? First it was freezing cold, now it was warm, it was as though the thing had been plugged into an electrical source. It seemed as if the package was alive, it seemed to be a living thing. I managed to foil a mad impulse to open it. I was beginning to feel scared. I took the thing over to the cupboard and shoved it inside. I walked out into the corridor and over to my car, opened it up, pulled out the bottles of beer and returned with them and opened one up and took a long gulp. That steadied me a little bit and I spread out on the bed. The springs whined in protest. Then I finished off all the beer.

Before I knew it I was sleeping. But it was short-lived and I woke up a few hours later. I stared at my watch. It was 2.30 in the morning. I instinctively knew that I wouldn't be able to get back to sleep. I switched on the bedside lamp and went over to the cupboard. I touched the package. It was no longer warm and no longer cold. For a moment I thought I'd imagined its altering states. But it was true, the package had been cold, had been hot. It was an insane package, it had been driven mad by its contents, or maybe it was a package that was subject to the freakish extremities of climate change.

tello scarabocchiato con su scritto TENETE LA PORTA CHIUSA:
È STATO VISTO UN SERPENTE.

Guardai fisso il pacchetto. Cosa c'era dentro? Quali perle e gemme di saggezza? Quel pacco conteneva in qualche modo l'uomo stesso? Conteneva la sua essenza? La sua parte migliore? Era quel pacco, a conti fatti, più reale, più immortale dell'uomo? Mi era stato abbondantemente spiegato che non avrei dovuto aprirlo per nessuna ragione. Mi era stato chiarito con digitale precisione che se quel pacco fosse stato manomesso mi avrebbero staccato di netto le palle dallo scroto. Fissai attonito quel coso. Forse, dopotutto, non c'era nulla di buono, lì dentro, solo merda strapazzata...

C'era puzzo d chiuso in quella stanza. Mi avvicinai alla finestra e la spalancai. Senza risultato. Guardai fuori il nulla, la notte sterile che si avvicinava come l'insorgere di una malattia, la notte di nostalgia e desiderio sessuale, la notte di chiamate senza risposta per avere compagnia. Poi feci una di quelle pisciate interminabili, quelle che durano così a lungo che le gambe cominciano a cedere e ci si deve appoggiare al muro con le braccia. Tirai fuori una Marlboro e la fumai fino al filtro.

Poi tornai al pacco. Era caldo. Non scherzo. Quel maledetto coso emanava calore quasi fosse un computer. Che succedeva al pacco? Prima era gelido, ora caldo, come se qualcuno lo avesse infilato in una presa di corrente. Quel pacco pareva vivo, pareva avesse un'anima. Riuscii a trattenere il folle impulso di aprirlo. Cominciai ad aver paura. Lo portai fino all'armadio e ce lo ficcai dentro. Uscii nel corridoio e andai alla macchina, l'aprii, tirai fuori le birre, le portai in camera, ne stappai una e ne buttai giù una lunga sorsata. Questo mi calmò un po' e mi stravaccai sul letto. Le molle gemettero, contrariate. Poi scolai la birra.

Prima che me ne rendessi conto, mi addormentai. Ma fu un sonno di breve durata e dopo alcune ore mi svegliai. Guardai l'orologio. Erano le due e mezzo. D'istinto capii che non sarei stato in grado di riprendere sonno. Accesi la lampada sul comodino e mi diressi all'armadio. Tastai il pacco. Non era più né caldo né freddo. Per un attimo pensai di essermi immaginato le sue alterazioni termiche. Ma era vero, il pacco prima era freddo, poi era caldo. Era un pacco pazzo, era il suo contenuto ad avergli fatto perdere il senno, o forse era soggetto ai bizzarri eccessi del cambiamento climatico.

As I stood there in the grip of that drenched mixture of unreality and mental depletion that accompanies a nocturnal awakening when amnesia seems to melt your brain and the events of your life are misty I heard a tapping, from the room next to mine. It was hard to identify what was making the sound. I glanced out of the window where I found nothing but the parking lot half swallowed in the void of night. This was the desert. The desert where life existed, but barely, where the only friends to be had were the shadows, rustling like leaves and pattering like leaves on the fringes of consciousness. There was nothing here, not even a yellowing skeleton in the cupboard that might be dragged out and danced with in a last ditch attempt to ward off terminal loneliness.

The next part of this whole thing is rather hard to describe. As I was sitting there, feeling myself sinking deeper and deeper, I began to have the impression that the boundaries of reality were being redrawn, that they were shifting, that a seismic shift was taking place and that my motel room was no longer a motel room, that it was more like a chamber passing through space.

I continued to stare out of the window. I turned away but, when I turned back again, at once — with the awful certainty that accompanies dread — I knew that something was wrong. I looked through the murky window. A tall, dark figure with his back to me, standing motionless and inert. He just stood there, looking out into space, wrapped up in a brown raincoat. What the hell was he doing out there in the dead of night? I watched, the curtain pulled toward me to conceal my presence. It might have been a statue as opposed to an actual human being. As I watched I began to feel my throat growing dry. I needed water, so with two long strides made it to the bathroom. I let the faucet run and downed a glass. When I had returned to my vantage point he, it, was still there. I just couldn't take my eyes away from him. Indivisible horror was rising, spinning its sticky web. I was aware of my hands tightening into fists as I stood there. It was as though the weight of what I saw was pushing against, crushing, my ability to interpret it. I was seized with the idea that if I could just catch a glimpse of its face my curiosity would be laid to rest so I decided to venture out there, leave my safe room and stare the thing in the eyes, but I could feel my heart vaulting as I hurried down the corridor, and my legs

Mentre ero preso nella morsa di quella vischiosa mistura di irrealità ed esaurimento mentale che accompagna un risveglio notturno, quando l'amnesia sembra fondere il cervello e gli eventi della vita si fanno nebulosi, sentii un picchietto nella stanza accanto. Era difficile capire la causa di quel rumore. Guardai dalla finestra e non vidi che il parcheggio mezzo inghiottito nel vuoto della notte. Questo era il deserto. Il deserto dove c'era sì la vita, ma solo un barlume, dove i soli amici erano le ombre che frusciavano come foglie e come foglie battevano ai margini della coscienza. Non c'era nulla qui, neppure uno scheletro ingiallito da tirar fuori dall'armadio per ballarci insieme in un ultimo disperato tentativo di tenere a bada la solitudine terminale.

Il seguito di questa storia è assai arduo da raccontare. Mentre ero lì seduto, sentendomi sprofondare sempre di più, ebbi l'impressione che i confini della realtà venissero ridisegnati, che si stessero spostando, che fosse in corso un mutamento sismico e che la mia stanza non fosse più una camera d'albergo, ma piuttosto un abitacolo che attraversava lo spazio.

Continuai a guardare dalla finestra. Distolsi lo sguardo ma, quando guardai di nuovo, all'improvviso — con la terribile certezza che accompagna il terrore — capii che c'era qualcosa che non andava. Attraverso il vetro offuscato vidi una figura alta e scura che mi dava le spalle, immobile e inerte. Stava ferma là, lo sguardo perso nel vuoto, avvolta in un impermeabile marrone. Cosa diavolo ci faceva là fuori a notte fonda? Scrutai, la tenda tirata verso di me per nascondere la mia presenza. Avrebbe potuto essere una statua piuttosto che un essere umano. Guardando, sentii la gola farsi secca. Avevo bisogno d'acqua, e con due lunghe falcate raggiunsi il bagno. Aprii il rubinetto, feci scorrere l'acqua e ne ingollai un bicchiere. Tornato al mio punto di osservazione, quell'uomo, o quella cosa, era ancora là. Non riuscivo a staccare lo sguardo da lui. Un indissolubile orrore cresceva, tessendo la sua tela appiccicosa. Impietrito, mi resi conto che le mie mani si stringevano a pugno. Era come se il peso di quella visione comprimesse, schiacciandola, la mia capacità di interpretazione. Fui colto dall'idea che se avessi potuto vederlo in faccia la mia curiosità si sarebbe placata, così decisi di avventurarmi all'esterno, di lasciare la stanza sicura e guardare quella cosa negli occhi, ma percorrendo in fretta il corridoio sentivo

seemed to have turned to jello. But I came out into the parking lot where tumbleweeds were rocking hypnotically in the residual wind and there he was again, carved out of wood, in the distance and I could tell then that he was not of this world, that he was tangible and three dimensional and at the same time made out of shadows, as though countless shadows had meshed themselves together in such a way as to form matter, but I was so unnerved that I couldn't take another step and I just stood there too, a counterpart of percolating impressions, uncertainties and I was aware of the silence, the punctured plastic bags that stirred imperceptibly, beautifully, the motel sign, which, in that remote tenebrosity, took on the angular dimensions of a gigantic tombstone, the dead branches about me, like splintered fragments of a raft in a salt dead sea, the sea about me that was the desert, where everything was etched and unreal as the sky hung heavy with blackness and the dying world, and then the figure turned and turned in such a way as to exactly meet my gaze and I could see that where his forehead and temples should have been there were just vast black cavities, gigantic holes, and I began to scream, I began to scream and then it seemed to me that all the blood in my body was being syphoned out of my veins and arteries and my body was being shut down and I ran back into the motel, everything breaking up, my vision growing dim, my mind coming apart at the seams, as I panted and dived back into the motel, slamming the entrance door, locking it frantically, and the dim light of the corridor was strange, foggy and I stood outside my room, trembling and heaving, my first thought to drive the hell out of there, despite my fear, my exhaustion, the blackness of the night. As I grappled with my keys, another door, way down the corridor, on the opposite side to my room, opened slowly. A woman stepped out uncertainly. She had blonde hair. She wore jeans. She could see that I was too scared to pose any danger to her. She weighed up the situation, probably assuming from my behavior that I was either mad or sick.

'I—I'm sorry, I didn't mean to scream—there's—there's something in the parking lot—'

'Jesus, are you ok?' She spoke with a strong Alabama twang.

'There's ... there's something out there. It was ... it was standing right outside my room... I can't go back inside my room ... I just can't ...'

il cuore volteggiare nel petto, e le gambe avevano la consistenza di gelatina. Uscii dunque nel parcheggio dove gomitoli d'erba mobile dondolavano ipnotici nel vento residuo, e lui era ancora là, scolpito nel legno, silenzioso e immobile a distanza, e allora capii che non era creatura di questo mondo, che era tangibile e tridimensionale ma al tempo stesso fatto di ombre, come se innumerevoli ombre si fossero intessute a formare materia, ma ero così atterrito che non riuscii a fare un altro passo e rimasi fermo anch'io, un alter ego trasudante impressioni, incertezze, e percepivo il silenzio, le buste di plastica forate agitarsi impercettibili, bellissime, e l'insegna del motel che, in quelle tenebre remote, assumeva l'aspetto angolare di una gigantesca lapide, i rami secchi intorno a me, frammenti scheggiati di una zattera in un mare morto e salato, il mare-deserto intorno a me in cui tutto è scolpito e irreale come il cielo nero che incombe carico di buio e di mondo morente, e poi quella figura si voltò, si voltò in modo da incontrare esattamente il mio sguardo e mi accorsi che, al posto della fronte e delle tempie, c'erano grosse cavità nere, dei buchi enormi, e allora cacciai un urlo, e mentre urlavo mi parve che tutto il sangue nel corpo mi venisse aspirato dalle vene e dalle arterie mandando il mio corpo in avaria, e allora corsi al motel, mentre tutto si spezzava, la vista s'attenuava, la mente si scuciva, mentre ansimante mi rituffai nel motel, sbattendo il portone, chiudendolo freneticamente e la luce fioca del corridoio era strana, nebbiosa, e mi fermai davanti alla camera, tremulo e ansimante, l'unico pensiero salire in auto e fuggire, malgrado la paura, lo sfinimento e il buio della notte. Mentre armeggiavo con le chiavi, vidi che un'altra porta lungo il corridoio, dal lato opposto rispetto alla mia, si apriva lentamente. Ne uscì guardingo una donna. Era bionda. In jeans. Capi che ero troppo spaventato per rappresentare un pericolo. Soppesò la situazione, forse concludendo dal mio comportamento che fossi pazzo o malato.

'Mi ... mi dispiace, non volevo urlare ... solo che ... c'è qualcosa là fuori ... '

'Gesù, si sente bene?' Parlava con un forte accento dell'Alabama.

'C'è ... c'è qualcosa là fuori. Era ... stava in piedi proprio davanti alla mia stanza. Non posso tornare nella mia stanza ... non posso ... '

'Oh mio dio. Sta bene?' Mi venne incontro cauta. Era nella metà sbagliata dei quarant'anni, aveva lineamenti prosciugati e un corpo vissuto, ma non brutto, non privo di un certo fascino da

'Oh my lord. Are you ok?' She inched up to me. She was on the wrong side of forty, with depleted features and a beaten up body, but not unattractive, not without a certain 3 am allure. She was wearing jeans and a blue denim shirt and she was smoking a cigarette.

'I can't go back inside my room. I just ... can't ... it was out there ... in the lot ...' I stammered.

She watched me as I unraveled before her, and something held her to me. She had latched on to my torment.

'Listen. Honey. How do you say we fix you a drink? I've got some Bourbon. How does that sound? In my room? You sure look like you could use a drink.'

'Yes, that ... sounds good.'

'You ok with that plan?'

I nodded slowly. Some strength returned to my frazzled legs.

'That's what I thought, we can fix you a little drink and we can have a little chat and you can tell me what you saw. In my room. That way you'll be safe. Safe and cozy. But you're ok aren't you? You're not dangerous or anything? You're a gentleman, right?'

'Yes ... of course.'

'I thought so, but, you know, thought I'd ask, all the same.'

I looked into her eyes, they were large and mild and blue and her self-possession acted on me like Xanax and I followed her, docile, into her room. There was an overpowering smell of cheap perfume and on the little table next to her bed were two cracked glasses and a bottle of Bourbon, almost as if she'd been expecting me.

'You feeling a lil' better, treasure?'

I nodded. She poured me a drink and handed it to me.

I managed a smile and I could see that she was the kind of person who didn't need things to be spelled out, she was easy going and had been through more than her fair share of shit and had emerged with a crust of unflappability. I took a sip of Bourbon and felt it erupt in my throat. I was with another human being, a desirable woman, I had company, I had alcohol, the night no longer seemed nightmarish, interminable.

'What was it that you thought you saw? Whatever it was had you all shook up pretty frickin good.'

'I don't know, I don't know. Do you mind if we don't talk about it?'

tre del mattino. Fumava una sigaretta.

‘Non posso tornare nella stanza ... non posso ... era là fuori ... nel parcheggio ...’ Farfugliai.

Lei mi guardò mentre mi aprivo a lei, e qualcosa la teneva stretta a me. Si era allacciata al mio tormento.

‘Senti, dolcezza. Che ne dici se ci prepariamo un drink? Ho del bourbon. Che te ne pare? Nella mia camera? Hai l’aria di chi apprezzerebbe un buon bicchiere.’

‘Sì, mi piace ... l’idea.’

‘Ti va, come programma?’

Annuii lentamente. Mi tornò un po’ di forza nelle gambe dis-trutte.

‘Pensavo questo: ora ci beviamo un drink e facciamo due chiac-chiere, così mi dici cosa hai visto. Nella mia camera. Così ti senti sicuro. Sicuro e protetto. Ma tu sei uno a posto, giusto? Non sei pericoloso? Sei un gentiluomo, dico bene?’

‘Sì ... certo.’

‘Lo credo anch’io, ma te l’ho chiesto lo stesso, non si sa mai.’

La guardai negli occhi, erano grandi, mansueti e azzurri e la sua compostezza mi fece l’effetto di un Xanax. La seguii docile nella stanza. C’era un fortissimo odore di profumo a buon mercato, e sul tavolino accanto al letto due bicchieri incrinati e una bottiglia di bourbon, quasi come stesse aspettando me.

‘Ti senti un po’ meglio, tesoro?’

Annuii. Mi versò un drink e me lo passò.

Abbozzai un sorriso e riuscii a vedere che era il tipo di per-sona che non ha bisogno di farsi pregare, che era una alla mano, che dalla vita aveva avuto più del giusto quantitativo di merda e ne era emersa con una scorza di imperturbabilità. Presi un sorso di bourbon e sentii che mi scoppiava in gola. Ero con un altro es-sere umano, una donna desiderabile, avevo la compagnia, avevo l’alcool, la notte non mi sembrava più un incubo interminabile.

‘Cosa ti è sembrato di vedere? Qualunque cosa fosse, ti ha sconvolto da morire.’

‘Non lo so, non lo so. Ti dispiace se non ne parliamo?’

‘No, non mi dispiace per nulla.’

La spassatezza mi aveva investito come un treno. La follia degli ultimi minuti aveva disintegrato le mie inibizioni e tirai fuori quello che avevo in mente: ‘Senti, ti sembrerà assurdo, ma ti

'No, I don't mind. Don't mind at all.'

Exhaustion knocked me sideways like a freight train. The madness of the last few minutes shredded my inhibitions and I just blurted out what was on my mind, 'Listen, this might sound crazy, but do you mind if I sleep in your bed, with you tonight, I just don't think I can sleep in that room, knowing ... knowing ... that it's ... that ...'

She looked urgent with curiosity. I said nothing. She said nothing. I took another sip of Bourbon.

'Sure, you can sleep in my bed. Actually it'll be kind of nice to have a man in bed, kind of nice to have someone to snuggle up to. Haven't had a man in my bed ... since ... oh, how long's it been now? How long since I left Ray? Well, you aren't interested in my lil' old life, are you now? Tell the truth, I'm much more interested in you and what it was that spooked you so much but you said you didn't want to talk about it, so that's fine by me, fine by me, but I must say you've kind of got me hooked.'

'Was Ray your husband?'

'Yeah, that's right, that good for nothing piece of shit was my husband, 'till I kicked him out and he wasn't my husband no more. Yeah he was as low as they get, old Ray, yes siree, a piece of real shit, a real evil motherfucker.'

'What did he do? To you?'

'Well... if you really wanna know ... well... it's kind of upsetting ... and ... seeing as I don't know you, and all' She paused, seemed to reconsider, then started again, with renewed vigor, 'He used to beat me 'till I was black and blue ... he was ... a thief, a liar ... he was violent, dumb, zero personal hygiene... and he fucked around ... hell, he even fucked my kid sister ... guess it served me right for being so trusting ... but ... well ... he's probably in some gutter now somewhere ... holding his dick in his hand ... not a dime to his name ... like a ... like a big fat drunken fart. I'm just too goddamn nice, that's me, too trusting, too nice. I think I got a sign tattooed on my head saying, "Walk right all over me." What do you think? Did I give off that vibe?'

'No. You seem pretty tough. Pretty tough. And you were very kind just now. Not many people would have given me the time of day. I must have struck you as crazy just now. I'm ok now, but ... back then, wow, I was ... you must have thought ... I was

dispiacerebbe se dormissi nel tuo letto, con te stanotte, è che non penso di poter dormire in quella stanza, sapendo ... sapendo che ... che quella ... cosa ...'

Sembrava ansiosa di sapere. Io non dissi nulla. Lei non disse nulla. Presi un altro sorso di bourbon.

'Ma certo che puoi dormire nel mio letto. In effetti sarebbe carino avere un uomo nel letto, qualcuno contro cui ranicchiarsi. Non ho un uomo nel mio letto ... da ... oh, quanto tempo è passato? Da quando ho lasciato Ray? Be', a te non importa nulla della mia piccola vita, vero? Di' la verità, a me, invece, interessi tu e quello che ti ha fatto spaventare, ma mi hai detto che non vuoi parlarne, allora per me va bene, per me va bene, devo dire, però, che mi hai colpito.'

'Ray era tuo marito?'

'Già, proprio così, quello stronzo buono a nulla era mio marito, finché non l'ho preso a calci in culo e niente più marito. Sì, è quanto di più spregevole ci possa essere, il vecchio Ray, sissignore, un vero pezzo di merda, un vero bastardo figlio di puttana.'

'Cosa ha fatto? Cosa ti ha fatto?'

'Be' ... se proprio lo vuoi sapere ... è abbastanza sconvolgente ... e ... dato che non ti conosco ...' S'interruppe, sembrò ripensarci, poi ricominciò con rinnovato vigore, 'Mi picchiava finché non diventavo tutta nera e blu ... era ... un ladro, un bugiardo ... era violento, stupido, zero igiene personale ... e mi tradiva ... cazzo, mi ha scopato persino la sorella minore ... immagino mi sia servito da lezione per essermi fidata troppo ... ma ... be' ... adesso sarà in qualche fogna ... col cazzo in mano ... senza un centesimo ... come un ... come un grosso stronzo ubriacone. È che son troppo buona, ecco come sono, troppo fiduciosa, troppo gentile. Devo avere un tatuaggio sulla fronte che dice: "Calpestami pure." Che ne pensi? Do quel'impressione?'

'No. Sembri una tosta. Una tosta. E ora sei stata molto gentile. Non molti mi avrebbero fatto stare bene così. Devo esserti sembrato un pazzo scatenato. Adesso sto meglio, ma ... poco fa, cazzo, ero ... devi aver pensato ... che ero proprio fuori di testa.'

'Be', in effetti un po' lo sembravi ... avevi proprio l'aria ... di chi ... eri proprio sconvolto. Ma in realtà sono abituata ad avere a che fare coi pazzi ... lavoravo in un ospedale psichiatrico ... a volte i pazienti scleravano proprio ... cercavano di tagliarsi le vene dei polsi,

a real nut case.'

'Well, you did seem to be a bit ... you were definitely acting ... like ... you were shook up all right. But actually I been around a lot of crazy people ... I used to work in a mental institution ... sometimes the patients would throw tantrums ... try and slit their wrists, you know, it wasn't very easy ... it was actually pretty tiring ... but, it's like anything else ... after a while you get used to it ... it becomes normal.'

As she talked I began to ask myself if I was actually insane. Had I finally gone insane? Was it the driving? Was it the manuscript? Was it my nothing life?

'Listen honey, I hate to be the one to say it, but I'm kind of beat. I don't mind you sleeping with me, in my bed - but no funny business -- but right now I think we should both hit the sack, it's late and I gotta get up early 'cause I'm headed north, all the way up to Spokane.'

'Sure.'

'Where you headed darlin'?'

'South, Los Angeles.'

I stared again into her blue eyes. In that instant a connection was made and I was filled with tenderness for this complete stranger. We both took off our clothes, leaving our underwear, and climbed into the bed and it was all very natural. She cuddled up to me and whispered in my ear, 'How does that feel?'

'It's nice. I feel safe. Cozy.'

I placed my hand against the base of her neck. She didn't object. I began to stroke her hair very very softly. She stretched her arm out and switched off the bedside lamp. We lay there together in the dark. I felt suspended between grief and joy. Part of me wanted to kiss her, but it seemed to me there, laying there, in the motel, in darkness, that a kiss would only chalk up pain later, that each kiss would add to the pain tapestry, would be another stitch and bit of embroidery in the pain tapestry so I resisted and I guess she resisted too.

Sleep rolled over me like a great tidal wave.

And then I was awake again. Something was happening. My eyes opened, my body contorted, the darkness was everywhere, but I felt super attenuated pleasure in my loins, surging, coruscating

eh sì, non era per nulla semplice ... era proprio una gran fatica ... ma come tutte le cose ... dopo un po' ti ci abitui ... diventa normale.'

Mentre parlava mi chiesi se ero pazzo per davvero. Avevo finito con l'impazzire? Erano state le ore di guida? Era stato il manoscritto? Il nulla della mia vita?

'Senti dolcezza, odio essere io a dirlo, ma sono abbastanza distrutta. Non mi dispiace che tu dorma con me, nel mio letto - niente idee strane, però - ma adesso penso sia l'ora di andare a nanna, è tardi e devo alzarmi presto perché vado su a nord, a Spokane.'

'Certo.'

'Tu dove sei diretto, bello?'

'A sud, A Los Angeles.'

La guardai di nuovo negli occhi azzurri. In quell'istante si creò un legame e mi riempii di tenerezza per quella perfetta sconosciuta. Ci spogliammo entrambi e rimanemmo in biancheria intima, ci infilammo a letto ed era tutto molto naturale. Si rannicchiò verso di me e mi sussurrò all'orecchio: 'Che te ne pare?'

'È bello ... mi sento al sicuro. Protetto.'

Le misi una mano alla base del collo. Non fece obiezioni. Presi ad accarezzarle pian piano i capelli. Allungò il braccio e spense l'abat-jour. Rimanemmo distesi insieme, al buio. Ero sospeso tra pena e gioia. Una parte di me avrebbe voluto baciarla, ma mi parve che essendo sdraiati là, in quel motel, al buio, un bacio avrebbe finito solo per aggiungere dolore, che ogni bacio avrebbe allungato la tela del dolore, che non sarebbe stato che un altro ricamo nella tela del dolore. Allora mi trattenni e penso che si trattenne anche lei.

Il sonno mi sorprese come un'onda gigante.

E poi fui di nuovo sveglio. Succedeva qualcosa. Mi si aprirono gli occhi, il corpo si contrasse, c'era buio dappertutto, ma avvertii una lieve sensazione di piacere ai lombi, che saliva, che mi attraversava brillante, e allora capii, con una sorta di destabilizzante gioia, che mi aveva preso il pene in bocca e pareva che i palpiti della sua lingua e le sue labbra allentassero dadi e bulloni del mio cervello finché non scoppiettarono e scintillarono come coriandoli fosforescenti che turbinavano nella colonna di un tornado. Sentii la sua voce fioca, notturna, mormorare: 'Ti piace, caro?' Le parole suonavano aliene, irreali. Mi accorsi che il corpo acconsentiva al proprio sublime sacrificio. Sentii che la mia anima, la mia essenza,

through me, and then I knew, with a kind of unsettling joy, that she had taken my penis in her mouth and it felt like the palpitations of her lips and tongue were loosening the nuts and bolts of my brain until my brain was firing and glittering like phosphorescent confetti twisting in the column of a tornado. I heard her husky, nocturnal voice murmur, 'That nice? Darlin'?' The words sounded alien and unreal. I was aware of my body acquiescing to its own exquisite sacrifice. I felt my core, my essence being re-written, I felt the contours of my personality changing, I already knew that this moment, these moments were signalling my transit into a foreign land, that I was passing through the borders, and from henceforth I would be an exile in my own life, later to be deprived of this fatal intoxication, searching in vain for it. As she impelled me, tenderly, firmly, and, in the end, frantically towards orgasm my molecules broke apart and the barrier between my physical self and the universe dissolved and my brain became vapor and I slumped into a place of crystalline oblivion, expunged of words, of thoughts, practically of consciousness.

Very very slowly the world began to creep back in. My singed and scorched limbs gradually became capable again of movement. In the darkness I could hear her breathing fast. She whispered, her voice golden, 'Darlin', I feel ... wasn't that, wasn't that just somethin' ...? You taste very sweet, like milk and honey, darlin', I kind of feel you still on my lips, my tongue, in my mouth, you've done something to me. You've turned on a switch inside me. I never knew it could be like that. You're so different to Ray, so ... so different.'

I didn't know what to say. I could see light coming in at the edges of the curtains. The night was expiring. I thought of the drive that awaited me. I wondered again about what it was that I'd seen before: those terrible black cavities.

'I don't know your name, I just realized,' I whispered.

'Likewise. Let's not bother with our names. Maybe it's better that way. Soon I'll have to get going, day's breaking. I got to drive to Spokane. Too bad you aren't headed the same way.... Now that I've met you, I'd kind of like to stay with you in this bed, not move for a day or two. You know what I mean?' She laughed easily.

'Yeah, I know what you mean.'

A blade of light sliced across the room, a thin corridor of light.

veniva riscritta, sentii i contorni della mia personalità cambiare, sapevo già che quel momento, quei momenti segnavano il mio passaggio a una terra straniera, che attraversavo alle frontiere, e da quel momento sarei stato esule nella mia stessa vita, per poi essere privato di quella intossicazione fatale, cercandola invano. Mentre lei mi spingeva con tenerezza, con fermezza, e infine con frenesia verso l'orgasmo, le molecole si spezzarono, la barriera tra il mio io fisico e l'universo si sciolse, il cervello divenne vapore e crollai in un luogo di oblio cristallino, privo di parole, di pensieri, praticamente privo di coscienza.

Molto, molto lentamente il mondo ricominciò a strisciare al proprio posto. Le mie membra arse e ustionate a poco a poco furono di nuovo in grado di muoversi. Al buio la sentivo respirare veloce. La sua voce raggiante sussurrò: 'Caro, come sto ... non è stato, non è stato bellissimo ... ? Hai un sapore dolce, come latte e miele, caro, ti sento ancora sulle labbra, sulla lingua, nella bocca, hai avuto un effetto su di me. Mi hai acceso un interruttore dentro. Non avrei mai pensato che potesse essere così. Sei così diverso da Ray, sei così ... diverso.'

Non seppi cosa risponderle. Vedeva la luce trapelare dai lati delle tendine. La notte stava morendo. Pensai al viaggio che mi attendeva. Mi chiesi di nuovo cosa diavolo avessi visto, prima: cosa fossero quegli orrendi buchi in faccia.

'Mi è venuto in mente che non so nemmeno come ti chiami,' mormorai.

'Nemmeno io. Ma che importano i nomi. Forse è meglio così. Presto dovrò darmi una mossa, si fa giorno. Dovrò guidare fino a Spokane. Peccato che non andiamo dalla stessa parte ... Ora che ti ho incontrato, mi piacerebbe stare qui a letto con te, senza muoversi per un giorno o due. Capisci cosa voglio dire?' Aveva la risata facile.

'Sì, capisco cosa vuoi dire.'

Una lama di luce attraversò la stanza, un sottile corridoio luminoso. Colsi i suoi lineamenti. Stava per piangere.

'Devo confessarti una cosa. Ho bisogno di dirti una cosa.'

Rimasi in silenzio. Poi risposi: 'Di' pure.' Il mondo riacquisiva i suoi contorni, il sole sorgeva, la terra si preparava a un altro giorno. Oggi la gente nel mondo sarebbe andata a lavorare, avrebbe pranzato, si sarebbe innamorata, avrebbe ucciso per avidità, per amore, la gente avrebbe fumato sigarette e si sarebbe iniettata

It caught her features. She was on the verge of tears.

'I have to tell you something. I need to tell you something.'

I was silent. Then I said, 'Go ahead.' The world outside was coming into focus again, the sun was rising, the earth preparing itself for another day. Today people around the world would go to work, have lunch, fall in love, kill one another for the sake of greed, for the sake of love, people would smoke cigarettes and inject heroine, people would make porn films and surf the internet, people would commit suicide and get married, would bury loved ones and drink toasts. All of this would happen today.

'I killed Ray. I killed him. With my gun. Shot him twice in the head. Believe me, he deserved it. If anyone did he did. No doubt about that. And you know what? I think I did the right thing. Maybe they'll catch me in the end. Probably. But I just had to do it. I had to rid the world of Ray. Just to make the world that tiny bit better a place. You know.'

'Do you think I'm out of my goddamn mind?'

I didn't say anything. What could I say? Did I think she was mad? I guess so. I guess murder is madness. In a flash I understood. Understood what it was I'd seen.

'You're probably no madder than the average person, I'd say.'

She turned over to me and in the sunlight her eyes attained an incredible pitch of luminosity.

'Thank you for saying that. You're a sweet guy. Too sweet for most women, I expect, too sweet. Stupid dumb bitches don't know what they're missing. But that's the way the cookie crumbles.'

I stared at her, trying to disguise my uneasiness. She had killed a man. The last twelve hours had been so strange. I realized then that I had to get out of there. Had to leave this woman, this murderer's bed. It wasn't anything to do with fear but I no longer felt I could deal with being so close to her. Too much proximity, too much intimacy, too much something.

'I should get going,' I said, my voice cracking a little.

She smiled and I could see that her eyes were welling up with more tears though no tear actually fell.

'I guess I scared you?'

'No. Not really.'

She adjusted her hair, smoothed it down. As if she was getting ready to go out. Then she reached over and poured herself a

eroina, avrebbe fatto film porno e navigato in internet, si sarebbe suicidata e sposata, avrebbe fatto funerali e brindisi. Oggi sarebbe successo tutto questo.

‘Ho ammazzato Ray. L’ho ammazzato io. Con la mia pistola. Gli ho sparato due colpi in testa. Credimi, se lo meritava. Se qualcuno se lo meritava, quello era lui. Non c’è dubbio. E sai cosa? Penso di aver fatto la cosa giusta. Forse alla fine mi prenderanno. È probabile. Ma dovevo farlo. Dovevo liberare il mondo da Ray. Per rendere il mondo un posto un pochino migliore. Capisci?’

‘Pensi che sia completamente svitata?’

Non dissi nulla. Cosa potevo dire? Che pensavo che fosse pazza? Forse sì. Forse l’omicidio è pazzia. In un lampo capii. Capì cos’era quello che avevo visto.

‘Non sei più pazza della media delle persone, direi.’

Si voltò verso di me e alla luce del sole i suoi occhi raggiungevano un picco incredibile di luminosità.

‘Grazie per averlo detto. Sei molto dolce. Sei troppo dolce per la maggior parte delle donne, credo, troppo dolce. Quelle stupide mignotte non sanno cosa perdono. Ma è così che si bruciano le torte in forno.’

La guardavo impietrito, cercando di mascherare il mio disagio. Aveva ucciso un uomo. Le ultime dodici ore erano state troppo strane. Capii soltanto allora che dovevo uscire da lì. Dovevo lasciare quella donna, il letto di quell’assassina. Non aveva nulla a che fare con la paura, ma sentivo di non poter più sopportare di esserne così vicino. Troppa prossimità, troppa intimità, troppo di tutto.

‘Dovrei andarmene,’ dissi, la voce un po’ fessa.

Sorrise, e mi resi conto che i suoi occhi erano gonfi di altre lacrime anche se non ne uscì nessuna.

‘Immagino di averti spaventato.’

‘No. A dire il vero no.’

Si sistemò i capelli, se li lisciò, come se si stesse preparando a uscire. Poi allungò il braccio a prendere la bottiglia di bourbon, se ne versò un goccio e lo scolò.

‘Grazie per avermi ascoltata. Dovevo dirlo a qualcuno. Dovevo proprio dirlo a qualcuno. Adesso mi sento molto meglio.’

Mi voltai verso di lei e la baciai piano sulle labbra. Poi scesi dal letto. Nella camera entrava sempre più luce. Luce intensa, distillata. Mi guardò con una specie di tenerezza da ultimo minuto.

drop of Bourbon and downed it.

'Thank you for listening. I needed to tell someone. I really really needed to tell someone. I feel a lot better now.'

I leaned over and kissed her softly on the lips. Then I got out of bed. The room was filling with more and more light. Intense, distilled light. She watched me with a kind of finishing line tenderness.

I didn't want to say goodbye, it seemed so final so I just smiled and left, as noiselessly as I could.

I closed the door to her room. As I did so I realized that she was already slipping into the nebulous realm of memory.

I walked a little shakily to room 13 and unlocked the door and sat down on the bed. I didn't know if I had the energy for the rest of the drive. I stared at the cupboard. I opened it. The package sat there, ugly and squat and dull. What was I doing with my life? What kind of life was it? At once, without hesitation, I started opening the package, ripping away the black tape that carefully sealed it. I pulled out the manuscript but as I did so the typewritten paper was burningly hot under the touch of my fingers. Before I knew it the paper had ignited in orange and red flames and a foul, metallic odor was released into the air and then the pages underneath were also claimed in the flames and I dropped the whole thing as it became an inferno spreading with unstoppable speed and by the time I had reached the bathroom to get some water the fire had mutated to the cupboard which, after a brief resistance, also became an orange blur. The sunlight was streaming brilliantly into the room; the day outside was fully formed, bursting with promise and beauty and mystery. I stared out of the window, into the parking lot and made out my trusted Chrysler. No one, nothing was out there. Neither ghosts nor predators. I looked back at the fire now happily claiming the rest of the room, generating stupendous heat, turning my humble motel room into the greatest show on earth, a spectacle as awe-inspiring as anything that the master had yet dreamed up. I continued to stare into those fluctuating, purifying flames. And I knew that it was all right. It was all going to be all right in the end.

Non volevo dire addio, sembrava troppo definitivo, quindi sorrisi e me ne andai, nel modo più silenzioso possibile.

Chiusi la porta della sua camera. Nel farlo, capii che lei scivolava già nei nebulosi reami del ricordo.

Barcollando appena, arrivai alla camera numero tredici, aprii la porta e sedetti sul letto. Non sapevo se avrei avuto l'energia per guidare per il resto del viaggio. Fissai imbambolato l'armadio. Lo aprii. Il pacco era sempre là, tozzo brutto e stupido. Che facevo della mia vita? Che tipo di vita era? All'improvviso, senza esitazione, presi a scartare il pacco, strappando il nastro nero che lo sigillava. Tirai fuori il manoscritto ma, nel farlo, sentii che i fogli battuti a macchina scottavano sotto i polpastrelli. Prima che potessi rendermene conto, la carta si era incendiata di fiamme arancioni e rosse, e un acre odore metallico si sprigionava nell'aria, e poi anche le pagine al disotto furono avvolte dal fuoco e lasciai cadere il tutto appena divenne un inferno che si diffondeva con una velocità inarrestabile e nel tempo che ci misi ad andare in bagno a prendere un po' d'acqua, le fiamme si erano trasferite all'armadio che, dopo breve resistenza, si trasformò a sua volta in un bagliore arancione. La vivida luce del sole inondava la stanza; fuori il giorno era al suo massimo splendore, traboccante di promesse, di bellezza e di mistero. Guardai dalla finestra, nel parcheggio, e individuai la mia fidata Chrysler. Non c'era nessuno, là fuori, non c'era nulla. Nessun fantasma, nessun predatore. Tornai a guardare il fuoco, che ora s'imponeva felice del resto della stanza, generando un gagliardo calore, trasformando quell'umile camera di motel nel più grande spettacolo sulla terra, uno spettacolo più maestoso di quanto il Maestro avesse mai immaginato. Continuai a fissare le fiamme fluttuanti, purificatrici. E capii che era giusto così. Che alla fine tutto sarebbe andato bene.

Poems by Giuseppe Bonaviri

Translated by Stephen Campiglio

Stephen Campiglio's poems have appeared in *Common Ground Review*, *Gradiva*, *Italian Americana*, *Miramar*, *Natural Bridge*, *Ping*Pong*, *TAB: The Journal of Poetry & Poetics*, *Theodate*, and *The Worcester Review*, and in the 2011 anthology, *New Hungers for Old: One-Hundred Years of Italian American Poetry*. He has also been translating the poetry of Sicilian writer, Giuseppe Bonaviri (1924-2009), and one of these poems won the 2014 Willis Barnstone Translation Prize, which was then published in *The Evansville Review*. Other Bonaviri translations have appeared or will appear in *VIA: Voices in Italian Americana*, *The Massachusetts Review*, *Poetry Daily*, and *Miramar*, and he will continue the project to a book-length collection. Nominated for two Pushcart Prizes, he was a finalist in the 2013 Bordighera Poetry Book Prize, has published two chapbooks, *Cross-Fluence* (2012) and *Verbal Clouds through Various Magritte Skies* (2014), and is seeking a publisher for his first full-length collection of poems.

Giuseppe Bonaviri was born in Minèo, Sicily in 1924, earned his medical degree in 1949 at the University of Catania, and in 1957 moved to Frosinone, in the Ciociaria region southeast of Rome, where he worked as a cardiologist. His first novel, *Il sarto della stradalunga*, was chosen by Elio Vittorini for the publisher, Einaudi, and published in 1954. Bonaviri went on to complete more than 30 works of fiction, poetry, essays, and articles. Only a small selection of his work has been translated into English: the novels *Dolcissimo* (tr. Umberto Mariani, 1990) and *Nights on the Heights* (tr. Giovanni Bussino, 1990) and the collection of fables, *Saracen Tales* (tr. Barbara De Marco, 2007), as well as one section of a special Bonaviri issue in the journal, *La Fusta* (tr. Mariani, 1981). Although primarily known as a novelist, he published several poetry books throughout his career, including *Il dire celeste* (1976, 1979, 1993), *O corpo sospiroso* (1982), *L'incominciamento* (1983), and *I cavalli lunari* (2004).

He also published an autobiography, *Autobiografia in do minore*, in 2006. Bonaviri's literary imagination was often fed by his native/mythical Sicilian roots, his profound understanding of nature, and his technical erudition. As Mariani writes [in his introduction to *Dolcissimo* but with an insight applicable to Bonaviri's work in general], "In its synthesis of the animistic and the scientific, of the ancestral and the modern, Bonaviri's language expresses the pain of the contemporary individual caught in a violent crisis of passage ... [He] often abandons ordinary logic ... and makes startling, dreamlike leaps we associate with modern poetry." His work has been the subject of Italian literary criticism for the past few decades, including books and essays by scholars Franco Zangrilli, Rodolfo Di Biasio, Giacinto Spagnoletti, Giovanni Raboni, and Sarah Zappulla Muscarà. He was considered for the Nobel Prize on more than one occasion, and died in Frosinone in 2009. Of recent note, the Bonaviri estate in Italy has established *Centro Studi Internazionale Giuseppe Bonaviri*, which houses Bonaviri's archives and sponsors special literary events.

Da *O corpo sospiroso* (Milano: Rizzoli, 1983)
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IL FUMO

Nel fico in fogliazione il fumo
 con canne fatto dalla madre veniva
 sulla palpebra del vecchio che ascoltava
 l'andare del cavaliere in splendor di prato.

La zolla lo assorbiva, la gallina lo seguiva;
 e nel burrone, in fiorelli, da quel fumo etesio
 in su era portata la luna, dove un Dio
 pensava suonando cornini d'oro.

ESTATE ALLA NUNZIATA

Giravano gli asini nell'aia,
 in sospiro le formiche cercavano ombra.
 L'allodola non era vaga del maschio
 nella terra in grandissima arsura. Mille
 e un corvo sugli ulivi cantavano
 il partimento del giorno. In coda
 di fotoni senza fiore il sole batteva
 rossissima luce sul monte.
 La vecchia in dannaggio
 senza amanza di vita
 cercava acqua valliva – che moriva
 in mutamento di sassi.

IL TUONO

Rimbombò solingo il tuono nella valle;
 sulla roccia
 tra morte conchiglie si piegò
 l'asfodelo in pensiero. Verso
 il burrone per lucentissima pioggia

From *O corpo sospiroso* (Milano: Rizzoli, 1983)
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SMOKE

Lifting through the fig tree's foliage,
smoke from our mother burning reeds
reached the eyelids of the old man listening
to a horse and rider cross the luminous meadow.

The clods of earth absorbed the sound, the hen followed it.
And from the ravine, abloom with tiny flowers,
that sweet, smoky breeze raised the moon up to where a God,
deep in thought, was playing delicate golden horns.

SUMMER AT NUNZIATA

The donkeys were treading in circles on the threshing floor,
and ants, sighing, searched for shade.
The female lark did not seek the male
in this parched land of burning heat.
One thousand and one crows in the olive trees
rejoiced at the day's departure.
With a tail of unearthly photons,
the setting sun lashed the mountain with intense red light.
The old woman, damned by the drought
and her withered love for life,
searched for water in the valley –
its dying flow, disappearing along stones.

THUNDER

An isolated thunderclap echoed in the valley
where an asphodel, enfolded with thought,
leaned over a rock among dead seashells.
Olive trees with umbrella-like tops
walked through glittering rain toward the ravine,

camminavano l'ulivo in ombrelle,
 la pietra calcarea in fiorenza, e
 in meraviglia
 su nubi il girfalco.

IL VENTO

L'erba bianca tremava al vento,
 ogni cosa era in ispavento.
 Nell'eucalipto si inchinava il nido,
 il cardello basiva.

Sola, la vecchia vegliava; suonò
 cupa campana
 in un gorgo lontana.

In languenza affioravano i morti
 per diamanti e camminamenti ritorti.
 Percosse dal vento le stelle
 cadevano in brillanti fiammelle.

L'universo in densità
 fu infinito,
 di buchi neri e pozzi fu gremito.

COME BRILLA IL MATTIN!

Sparsasi l'alba per burroni, frate
 Giuseppe pregò la luna che in cornetti
 sonante veniva dalla voragine.
 "Sorella, se di là, morto
 non ho materia in me,
 né ori, né l'occhio Veggente,
 disperdimi, pim-pum-pam, nel nulla."

E lui nel toccar l'agave
 altissima tra pietre di zolfo,
 vide sé come ombra sulla luna
 in risalita dal nulla, né c'erano
 cotogno brillantissimo
 e, in spin violetti, atomi.

and limestone bloomed into life
below a gyrfalcon, up in the clouds,
gazing down in wonder.

THE WIND

The pale grass trembled in the wind;
everything, seized by fright.
The nest in the eucalyptus bowed
to the swooning goldfinch.

Alone, the old woman kept vigil.
At a distant vortex,
a gloomy bell rang.

The dead languidly emerged
from diamonds and twisted tunnels.
Through a lashing wind, the stars
fell with brilliant flames.

The dense universe was infinite
and packed with black holes
like earthly shafts.

HOW BRIGHT THE MORN!

With dawn spreading across the ravines,
Brother Joseph prayed to the moon
that was adorned with tinkling little horns
as it rose from the abyss.
“O Sister, when I am dead and on the other side,
devoid of substance, gold, and the Prophetic Eye,
disperse me further into nothingness.”

And he touched the tall agave
between sulfurous rocks
and saw himself like a shadow on the moon
rising from the nothingness.
No longer, the splendid quince
nor atoms in their violet spinning.

O come il mattino cresceva
in ghirigori di sassetti vezzosi
nel taràssaco in fior spinoso!

NON PIÙ CANTERÀ IL GALLO

O corpo sospiroso,
o corpo mio amoroso,
soperchianza di Dio
in allegro sciacquare d'acque,
zufolo, uccello rosso,
oh, mio fiore cilestrino!

In te alberga il mondo,
lo mondo alberga fino,
o mia erba silvestre,
e ruota galattica, e sodio,
per infinitezza d'elettroni vai
in barca tra equorei canti.

O mio cielo stellato!
in tenebrore muori.
O frasca, o orto, oh gocciola,
in cima al fiore hai un dio,
chiusa spirale, e chiocciola
in profondissima verdura!

Cantando, morte - o mio
corpo santo -
t'apporta le 4 spogliature,
e così perdi dolcezza e frutto,
galassia magnetica - e gravitazione
nella morte moritura.

O mia rosa fresca
e rososa desianza -
non più chiarezza del giorno,
su romito carrubo fiorito
né luce di Ricordanza
ti renderanno adorno.

O how the morning grew
along squiggles of colorful outcroppings
from the taraxacum field's thorny bloom!

NO LONGER WILL THE ROOSTER CROW

O sighing body,
my loving body,
joyfully overflowing
with divine rinsing waters,
you whistle, you red bird,
my pale blue flower!

Within you, the world dwells;
a sheer world dwells there.
O my woodland grass,
galactic wheel, and elemental salt.
The boat of your body sails as numberless electrons
through aqueous songs.

O my stellar sky!
you die in darkness.
O branch, garden, dewdrop.
The top of your flower upholds a god;
you, enclosed spiral, a snail,
snug in verdant depths!

O my sacred body—
death, singing,
delivers you to the fourfold unfoldings,
as you lose your *sweetness*, your *fruit*,
the magnetic galaxy, and *gravitation*,
with the final stage of death upon you.

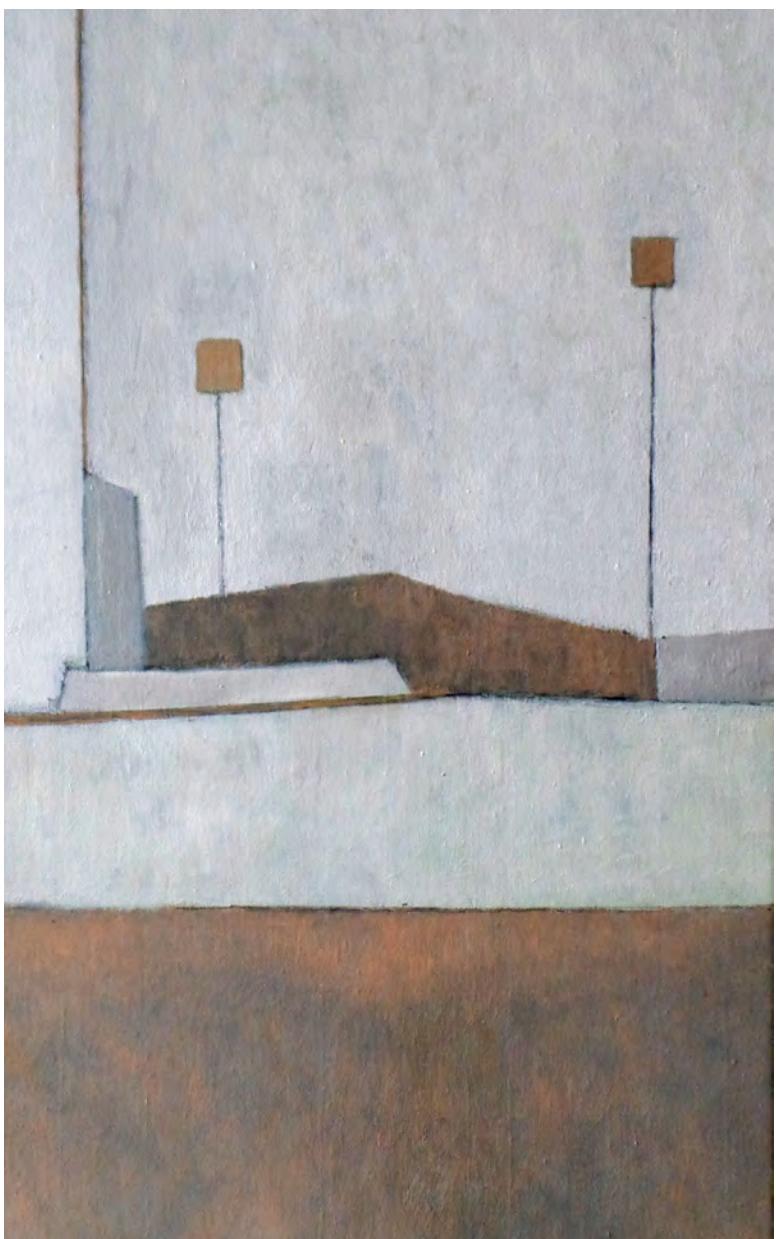
O my fresh rose
and rosy desire—
neither daylight on the blooming,
secluded carob tree
nor the light of memory
will restore your loveliness.

Non c'è carta navigatoria
nella morte, né sarti
con dipinture d'aghi, e tu,
o corpo cortese andrai
in buia tenebrìa
che non dà allegria – né abbondanza.

O corpo cristallo,
e rame, e Ore, e lago,
uovo trifrome, e tempo,
ti inscuri, ebete
si fa il viso del giorno,
non più canterà il gallo!

There is no navigation map in death,
nor tailors with needlepoint designs
that point the way, and you,
my gracious body, will go
darkly into the dark,
devoid of happiness—or plenty.

O my crystal body,
copper, Hours, a lake,
the three-dimensional egg, and time,
you turn dark,
while the face of day grows dull,
when the rooster crows no more!



Simona Stivaletta, *Paesaggio*

A Selection from *Paolina*
by Iginio Ugo Tarchetti

Translated by Jonathan Hiller

Jonathan Hiller is a scholar of nineteenth-century Italian literature and opera. He is Assistant Professor of Italian in the Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures at Adelphi University on Long Island. His research interests include the Risorgimento, *scapigliatura*, *verismo*, and the development of Italian national consciousness. He is presently working on a book based on his dissertation research, entitled *Arresting Physiognomies: Positivist Science and Italian Culture, 1870-1910*, which examines the relationship between literature, opera and the works of the school of criminal anthropology of Cesare Lombroso. Recent publications include articles on the reaction of the British press to an earthquake in Basilicata in 1858 (*Forum Italicum*) and on Grazia Deledda and positivist science (*Journal of Modern Italian Studies*).

Iginio Ugo Tarchetti (1839-1869) was one of the foremost authors of *scapigliatura*, the non-conformist circle of novelists, painters, musicians and other intellectuals active around Milan during the years immediately following Italian unification. A native of the Piedmont, Tarchetti enlisted in the Italian army as a young man. He participated in the campaigns to repress revolts in the south and often clashed with superior officers for his outspoken and unconventional opinions during his military career. Author of novels, short stories and works of criticism, Tarchetti was also one of the first important Italian translators of English literature. Nearly always in dire financial straits, Tarchetti died of typhoid fever at age 29.

Paolina

Capitolo 2

Verso le undici ore di quella sera medesima, Paolina vegliava ancora nella sua camera lavorando di ricamo; e dal sostare improvviso al minimo rumore, dal volgere continuamente gli occhi alla porta, e dal trasalire ad ogni passo che si udisse per le scale, pareva che attendesse l'arrivo di qualche persona aspettata con molta impazienza.

Una tersa lampada di latta gialla dorata rifletteva la sua luce su quella testa gentile curvata leggermente sul telaio, e si sarebbe detto che tutti i raggi della fiamma si riunissero su quelle treccie copiose e biondissime, ondate come il mare, quasi per una misteriosa attrazione.

Essa era una di quelle bellezze che si vagheggiano a quindici anni, che si sognano lungo tempo nella vita, finché non si è disperato di rinvenirle, che una volta incontrate da un uomo sensibile, debbono assolutamente decidere di tutto il suo destino.

Il suo viso era un ovale inimitabile; l'epidermide, d'una bianchezza e d'una trasparenza abbagliante, lasciava quasi scorgere in alcuni punti la ramificazione azzurra delle vene; una tinta di rose leggiera e incarnata attestava il vigore della gioventù e della salute: un naso greco affilato, una bocca breve e purissima, le labbra colorite di cinabro, e sempre molli e rugiadose, le sopracciglie esatte e bene arcate, le ciglia lunghe e pieghevoli, le pupille dell'azzurro più puro del cielo.

Ma non era da questi lineamenti di una perfezione quasi ideale, che avessero origine tutte le sue attrattive; vi era in lei qualche cosa d'inconcepibile, non provato che pe' suoi effetti, un'emanazione, un profumo, un'armonia che andavano all'anima e la facevano sua; e quel sorriso, quel solo sorriso avrebbe piegato alla tenerezza e alla virtù il cuore più abietto e colpevole.

Per ciò ella incontrava dovunque un'accoglienza onesta e cordiale, né aveva potuto crearsi un'idea sfavorevole degli uomini, perché non aveva veduto mai che mani sporte a stringere la sua, e non aveva udito parole che non suonassero un omaggio alla sua innocenza. — La medesima dissolutezza avrebbe arrossito di attentare a quella virtù che ignorava sé stessa, e rinveniva in questa medesima ignoranza una difesa.

Paolina

Chapter 2

Around eleven o'clock that same night, Paolina was still awake in her room, working at her embroidery. From the way she stopped at the slightest noise, the way her eyes turned constantly to the door, and the way she gave a start at every step she heard from the steps, it was clear she was awaiting the arrival of some person with great impatience. A polished lamp of yellowish-gold tin cast its light on her delicate head, and one might have said that all the entire glow of the flame had gathered on her lustrous and blonde hair, with waves like the sea, almost as if by some mysterious attractive force.

Hers was the kind of beauty a fellow yearns for at fifteen, that he dreams of through the years, until he despairs of rediscovering it, a beauty which must, no sooner than a sensitive man comes across it, decide once and for all his entire destiny.

Her face was an incomparable oval; on her skin, of a dazzling whiteness and luster, one could just make out the blue ramification of her veins in a few places. Her pinkish, rosy complexion attested to the vigor of youth and health. A thin, Grecian nose, a small, demure mouth, cinnabar lips, always soft and dewy, perfectly arched eyebrows, long and supple eyelashes, eyes of a blue purer than the sky.

But her appeal did not derive entirely from these features, though they were almost ideal in their perfection. There was something imperceptible in her, felt not but through its effect; an emanation, a scent, a harmony that went to the soul and made her its mistress. And that smile, that smile which could have won over the most ignoble, guilty heart to tenderness and virtue.

Thus she was received with honesty and cordiality wherever she went, and was unable to form an unfavorable opinion of men, since she had only ever seen their hands extended out to take hers, only ever heard words that rang out as a homage to her innocence. Debauchery itself would have blushed at encroaching upon such unaffected virtue, which by its very naiveté served as a defense. Hatred, fear, bitterness, discomfort, and pain had long been unknown sensations to her. She was orphaned at birth, living until sixteen in comfort beyond her station, reared by a prudent

L'odio, il timore, l'amarezza, lo sconforto, il dolore le erano state per lungo tempo delle sensazioni sconosciute. — Orfana appena nata, vissuta fino a sedici anni in una agiatezza superiore al suo stato, educata da una saggia tutrice a principi retti ed austeri, fiduciosa nella Divinità e negli uomini; docile, buona, lieta, contenta per una proprietà della sua natura, quantunque dotata d'una sensibilità squisitissima, non aveva avuto che fiori e sorrisi nella vita. Ma nulla è sacro a quegli illustri viziosi che la ricchezza rende petulanti, e già da alcuni mesi la povera fanciulla soffriva le persecuzioni del marchese continue colla più impudente perseveranza. — Ciò nonostante, essa godeva di quella ineffabile tranquillità che nasce dal lavoro e dall'esercizio d'una vita innocua e virtuosa; amava un onesto operaio cui era fidanzata, e rammentava come i più bei giorni della sua esistenza alcune passeggiate fatte con lui in campagna: un ruscello che scorre, un salice agitato dal vento, una farfalla che aleggia intorno a un rosaio, una gemma di rugiada tremolante sopra una foglia di pervinca, erano i punti più luminosi di quel gran quadro, in cui ella vedeva come riprodotto il suo passato.

Concorrevano per altro a questa felicità molte circostanze che ne facevano una delle più agiate operaie. Essa guadagnava circa diciotto soldi al giorno, ciò che è il massimo guadagno ottenibile in quell'arte, e possedeva nel vecchio quartiere del Coperto Figini, un piccolo, ma grazioso appartamento, lasciatole come in eredità da sua madre. Consisteva in una piccola sala, una cameretta da letto, e una specie di tinello che servivale da cucina, tutto proprio e quasi elegante: vi si entrava per uno stretto corridoio che partiva dalla scala comune, due finestre erano prospicienti alla piazza ornate sempre d'alcuni vasi d'azalee, con cortine di mussola bianca listata. — La cameretta da letto conteneva un lettino a padiglione, una toeletta con tavola di tarso e un vaso di porcellana sempre ripieno di fiori freschi; la piccola sala un tavolo grande intarsiato, un tavolino per lavoro con cestello, un pendolo a muro, un sofà e alcune sedie coperte di stoffa cremisina a fiori gialli. Era assai più che non convenisse ad un'operaia, e questa superiorità di fortuna, e le sue abitudini al ritiro, e la sua stessa bellezza creavano quasi una distanza tra lei e le sue compagne.

Ma stava ella ancora lavorando, come si è detto, al lume della lampada, quando intese due colpi battuti lievemente alla porta colla nocca delle dita — Luigi... — disse la ragazza trasalendo —

governess on upright and strict principles, trusting in the divine and in mankind. Docile, good, cheerful, contented by nature, she was nonetheless possessed of an exquisite sensitivity, having had a life of nothing but flowers and smiles.

But nothing is sacred to those famously depraved men whom wealth makes petulant, and for several months the poor girl had been victim of the Marquis's unwanted attentions, in which he persisted with shameless perseverance. This notwithstanding, she enjoyed that ineffable calmness born of work and of leading a blameless, virtuous life. She was in love with an honest artisan to whom she was engaged, and counted a few strolls taken with him in the country among the finest days of her existence. A babbling brook, a willow blowing in the wind, a butterfly flitting around a bed of roses, a gem of tremulous dew on a periwinkle leaf; these were the highlights of that great picture in which she saw her own past virtually reproduced.

Contributing to this happiness were many circumstances which made her one of the most fortunate of workers. She earned about eighteen *soldi* a day, the most one can get in that occupation, and she owned a small but charming apartment in the old Figini Lodge building, a bequest from her mother. The apartment was made up of a small sitting room, a bedroom, and a little dining area which doubled as a kitchen, all hers and not without a touch of elegance. One entered through a narrow corridor off the main stair, and two windows looked out over the piazza, always embellished with a few vases of azaleas, and with bordered white muslin curtains. The bedroom contained a canopy bed, a toilette with an inlaid top and a porcelain vase always filled with fresh flowers. The sitting room had a large inlaid table, a little worktable with a small basket, a sofa and a few chairs covered in crimson fabric with yellow flowers. It was quite a bit more than a seamstress might expect, and this excess of fortune, her retiring habits, and her beauty itself created something of a distance between her and her fellow workers.

There she was still working at her lamp, as we have said, when she heard two gentle raps made by someone's knuckles at her door. "Luigi..." said the girl with a start. "So late!" And she ran to let him in.

The new arrival was a handsome youth of about twenty-two, with curly black hair, a thin moustache with the ends pointed

così tardi!... — e corse ad aprire.

Il nuovo giunto era un bel giovine sui ventidue anni, coi capelli neri ricciuti, due baffi sottili che finivano in una punta un po' voltata all'insù, occhi vivaci, inquieti, ma esprimenti la bontà e la schiettezza, un colorito bruno; una corporatura maschia, spigliata, nervosa, in tutto il tipo ideale dell'artigiano.

— Come?... siete venuto solo stassera? — disse Paolina arrossendo.

— Sì, solo — rispose l'altro, con un'esitazione cagionata da un poco di vergogna. — Marianna è malata di febbre da stamattina; ma se ciò vi dispiace, se credete bene ch'io mi ritiri...

— No, no, vi scongiuro... che dite, Luigi? voi sapete ch'io sto con voi come con un fratello, e poi... aveva quasi bisogno di vedervi stassera, oh sì!... aveva bisogno di vedervi.

— Che intendete di dire, Paolina? ma che vedo!... il vostro turbamento... la vostra tristezza, i vostri occhi... per Dio! giurerei che avete pianto...

— Voi sapete che le donne piangono facilmente; per un nastro, per uno spillo, per un nonnulla, esse hanno delle lacrime per le più piccole sventure — disse Paolina tentando di rimediare in qualche modo alla sua confessione.

— Via via — esclamò il giovine profondamente attristito — io so bene che voi non piangete per queste cose — e dopo un istante di silenzio — ah! mi trattate dunque ben duramente, se temete di confidarmi i motivi che vi hanno fatto piangere.

— Io trattarvi duramente! ah Luigi, quanto siete cattivo, quanto siete duro ed inconsiderato voi stesso!

— Ma perché dunque volete farmi un mistero dei vostri dispiaceri?

— Perché siete sempre irragionevole, perché vi lasciate vincere troppo facilmente dallo sdegno; e poi esagerate le cose, vi abbandonate ciecamente alla gelosia, e quasi mi credete colpevole di...

— Ah cane! ah cane! ancora quel marchese di B.! — interruppe il giovine alzandosi impetuosamente dalla sedia: — ho capito, ho capito; non dite altro, non aggiungete una parola, non proseguite, non mi ponete nel caso...

— Ecco, ecco dunque come fate — esclamò Paolina e diede in uno scoppio di pianto.

Ma Luigi prese a passeggiare furiosamente per la camera,

slightly upwards. He had lively eyes, perhaps restless but expressive of goodness and sincerity, a dark complexion, and a manly, poised, sinewy physique. In short, he was an ideal model of the artisan.

"What? Have you come alone this evening?" said Paolina, blushing.

"Yes, alone," he answered with a hesitation caused by a bit of shame. "Marianna has been sick with a fever since this morning, but if that bothers you, if you think it right for me to leave..."

"No, no, please don't...what are you saying, Luigi? You know that being with you is like being with a brother, and then...I almost had to see you tonight, oh yes! I needed to see you."

"What do you mean to say, Paolina? But what's this? Such anxiety...that sadness, those eyes...by God! I'd swear that you've been crying..."

"You know that women cry easily. Over a ribbon, over a pin, over a trifle, tears over the smallest misfortune," said Paolina, trying to somehow paper over her confession.

"Tut, tut" exclaimed the young man, deeply troubled, "I know well that you don't cry over such things." And after an instant of silence, "Oh, you treat me harshly indeed if you won't tell me the reason you've been crying."

"Treat you harshly? Oh Luigi, how wicked *you* are, how hard and inconsiderate!"

"But why do you want to hide your troubles from me?"

"Because you are always unreasonable, because you always give in to your anger. And then you are always blowing things out of proportion, you give yourself over to blind jealousy, and you almost seem to believe I'm guilty of..."

"That cur! The cur! Again that Marquis of B.!" the young man interrupted, leaping out of his chair impetuously. "I understand, I understand. Say no more, not a word, don't go on, don't tell me..."

"See, see how you act!" exclaimed Paolina, bursting into tears.

But Luigi began pacing furiously about the room, continuing in his invective against the marquis. "The murderous cur! And he thinks that a working girl can't be honest because she's a working girl...He thinks that everything must yield to money, even virtue, even the innocence of a poor girl! It's enough to drive a man crazy, to drive him even the score. And I'll do it, better that way, no back-

continuando nelle sue invettive al marchese...

— Cane assassino! e crede che un'operaia non possa essere onesta perché operaia; crede che tutto deva cedere al danaro, anche la virtù, anche l'innocenza di questa povera tosa; ma è cosa da impazzire, cosa da fare un colpo, e lo farò, tant'è, non v'ha rimedio, non vi ha via di transazione... Pensare che potrei essere così felice, così immensamente felice, e sempre questo sospetto, sempre questo spavento, sempre questo tarlo nel cuore!... È Paolina essa pure... — Ma rivolgendosi a lei, e vedendola singhiozzare col volto nascosto tra le mani, si sentì a un tratto mutato.

— Che fate, Paolina? — le disse — non affliggetevi, per carità! perdonate al mio risentimento.

— Andate, andate Luigi; voi non mi amate, perché non mi fate che soffrire.

— Oh, cielo! — esclamò il giovine tutto intenerito — io non amarvi? e non è egli per ciò che mi sento tutto rabbividire al pensiero di quello scellerato, che non so contenermi quando me ne parlate; che farò... ma non dite che non vi ami, non mi giudicate troppo severamente.

— Non dico questo io — rispose Paolina per via di conciliazione, sollevando la faccia umida di pianto e illuminata bizzarramente dalla lampada, come un fiore di giglio stillante ancora di pioggia dopo un temporale, su cui venga a cadere un raggio di sole — non dico questo, ma la vostra facile suscettibilità mi è motivo di molti dolori, e se non vi foste così tosto adirato, avreste inteso, che il mio dispiacere d'oggi non provenne tanto dall'insistenza di quell'insolente, quanto da un piccolo dissapore colla mia padrona.

— Quando è così, crederò dunque che non mi vorrete perdonare — soggiunse il giovine con accento umile e dimesso.

Paolina sorrise malinconicamente, e gli porse per tutta risposta la mano che egli strinse al cuore con un trasporto di riconoscenza.

In quell'intervallo di silenzio, il pendolo suonò dodici ore: — Mezzanotte! — dissero ad un tempo i due giovani; e tenendosi ancora per mano, si abbandonarono a delle tristi riflessioni.

Mezzanotte! chi non ha ascoltato il suono di quest'ora senza una sensibile commozione? Chi non ha provato quanto egli sopraggiunga doloroso nell'istante del godimento e dell'ebbrezza, e quanto discenda invece confortevole a coloro che soffrono, perché indica il principio d'un nuovo giorno, e l'origine di nuove speranze? Chi

ing out, no chance for a settlement! To think I could be so happy, so immensely happy, and yet always this suspicion, always this fear, always this worm in my heart...And Paolina too..." But turning to her and seeing her sobbing, face buried in her hands, his mood suddenly changed.

"What is this, Paolina?" he asked her, "Please, don't be upset! Forgive my spitefulness."

"Go away, go away Luigi! You can't love me, because all you do is make me suffer."

"Oh Heavens!" exclaimed the young man, softening his tone at once, "I, not love you? Is it not love that makes my whole being shudder at the thought of that scoundrel, so I can't contain myself when you speak of him? What can I do...But don't say that I don't love you, don't judge me too harshly."

"I don't mean it," replied Paolina by way of conciliation, raising her face, moistened by tears and bizarrely lit by the lamp, like a lily dripping rainwater following a storm upon which a ray of sun alights. "I don't, but your hot temper has given me much grief, and if you hadn't flown so quickly into a rage, you'd have understood that my troubles today came not so much from that insolent man's persistent attentions, but rather from a little quarrel with the mistress."

"In that case, I suppose that you won't wish to forgive me," said the young man in a humble, meek tone. Paolina gave a melancholy smile, and her entire reply was to give him her hand, which he pressed to his heart with an outpouring of gratitude. In that interval of silence, the clock struck twelve. "Midnight!" the couple said at the same time. Still holding each other's hand, they grew absorbed in gloomy reflections.

Midnight! Who has not heard the sound of that hour without palpable commotion? Who has not felt how it arrives mournfully in a moment of pleasure and elation, and how it descends soothingly upon those who suffer, because it marks the beginning of a new day, the origin of new hopes? Who has not heard it in those sleepless winter nights, when the wind screams down the streets, and the fire in the domestic hearth crackles like the language of an invisible being? In those nights of insomnia and suffering, when we weep, afflicted by an anguish which will not leave us! In the moment of planning revenge, of discovering a lover's infidelity, of

non lo ha ascoltato in quelle lunghe veglie d'inverno, quando il vento investe urlando per le vie, e la fiamma crepita nel domestico focolare come linguaggio d'un ente invisibile: in quelle notti d'insonnia e di dolore, quando si geme travagliati da un affanno che non ci abbandona! Nell'istante di meditare una vendetta, di spiare un tradimento, di avvicinarsi alla donna lungamente desiderata... oh, ella è una terribile ora cotesta! e non vi ha cuore per quanto inaridito che non lo senta — ma nel momento dell'addio, nell'istante della separazione, quando i cuori si spezzano, e lo spasimo stagna le lacrime, e l'accento esce rotto nel singulto, come il frangersi lamentevole dell'onda... oh allora non havvi parola che valga a definirne il linguaggio! Vi ha lo sconforto del rivedersi, vi ha la malinconia che ammollisce gli animi e ne raddoppia l'affetto, vi ha un'idea confusa e lontana dell'infinito, in cui vengono meno il coraggio e la volontà, e si estingue la più nobile rassegnazione.

Poco dissimili da queste mie, potevano essere in quell'ora le meditazioni dei due giovani; e quando Paolina accomiatando il suo fidanzato, mosse la luce della lampada sul suo volto, vide o le parve di vedere che anche i suoi occhi fossero rossi di pianto.

Il giovine la contemplò lungamente con amore, e dopo un indugio silenzioso, prima di lasciare la sua mano, cedette ad un impulso irresistibile, e la baciò sulle guancie.

— Oh Dio! — esclamò la fanciulla, e rientrò precipitosamente.

La luna mandava una luce viva come un crepuscolo, e le stelle brillavano limpide e numerose. Paolina le vide, e aprendo la finestra, vi si appoggiò a contemplarle.

Non passava una creatura sulla via — un vento tiepido e profumato vi faceva roteare alcune foglie cadutevi dai balconi; i colombi annidiati nelle nicchie delle guglie tubavano sommessamente.

La fanciulla rimase assorta in quella contemplazione per lungo tempo. Che pensò ella? che vi fece? fu una preghiera, un sogno, un'aspirazione? L'orologio dei Mercanti suonò due ore; essa rinchiusa la finestra, sorrise, e disse: — Sono pazza io! quali motivi ho forse di non essere lieta? perché affliggermi tanto? grazie, grazie, o mio Dio, della felicità che mi comparti e perdonami per averla un istante disconosciuta.

Ciò detto, si spogliò come per incanto, e levando fuori dal letto un braccio nudo e tornito, tirò a sé le cortine del padiglione,

drawing near to a woman long-desired...Oh, it is a terrible hour! And not even the most hardened heart does not feel it. In the moment of farewell, at a time of parting, when hearts are broken, and pangs stanch the flow of tears, and words are interrupted by sobs, like the plaintive crash of waves. Oh, there are no words which can define its language! There is the torment of meeting again, there is melancholy that softens the soul, there is a confused and faraway idea of the infinite, in which courage and willpower fail us, and the noblest resignation wanes.

At that hour, the meditations of the two young lovers must not have been far off from mine above. And Paolina, bidding farewell to her fiancé, moved the light of the lamp onto his face, she saw (or thought she saw) that his eyes too were red from weeping.

The young man gazed lovingly at her awhile, and after a moment of silence, before letting go over her hand, he gave in to an irresistible impulse and kissed her on the cheeks.

"Oh God!" exclaimed the girl, who rushed headlong back inside.

The moon cast a vivid light akin to that at dusk, and the stars shone limpid and plentiful. Paolina saw them, and opening the window, leaned out to gaze at them. Not a soul was walking on the street. A warm, fragrant breeze was blowing about a few leaves which had fallen from the balconies. Pigeons nesting in the niches of the Duomo's steeples cooed softly.

The girl remained absorbed in that contemplation awhile. What was she thinking? And what was she doing? Was it a prayer, a dream, a longing? The Merchant's Clock struck two. She shut the window, smiled, and said, "I'm crazy! What reasons can I have to be unhappy? Why do I fret so? Thank you, thank you, dear God, for the happiness you grant me, forgive me for failing to appreciate it even for an instant."

Having said this, she undressed as if in a trace, and lifting a bare, shapely arm out of bed, and pulled down the curtains of the canopy, for she liked to sleep thus enclosed, like a mermaid in a mother-of-pearl shell, or like the mayfly in the cup of a tuberose. There she had sweet and gentle dreams, because hers were those of the virtuous and innocent.

perché ella amava di dormire così racchiusa, come un'ondina nella sua conca di madreperla, o come l'efimera nel calice d'una tuberosa, e ne aveva dei sogni dolci e soavi, perché i suoi sogni erano quelli della virtù e dell'innocenza.

* * *

Ma lasciamo ora questi affetti rozzi e volgari dell'infima classe sociale; togliamoci a questo lezzo delle soffitte dell'operaio, questo paria della società civile, condannato perpetuamente al lavoro come gli animali che arano i nostri solchi, e a un disprezzo perpetuo, e a una perpetua miseria come il delinquente. Chi s'indurrà mai a credere che l'operaio abbia un cuore, una volontà, de' desideri, delle passioni? Esso è nato pel lavoro forzato, come l'operaia è nata per la prostituzione, e pei piaceri del ricco. Inneggiamo alla ricchezza!

Il marchese di B. stava discorrendo col conte di F. nella sala più splendida del suo palazzo. Io non mi farò a descrivere questa sala, perché potrebbe destare delle supposizioni sull'entità di questo personaggio, che non posso far conoscere al lettore; ma vi collochi l'immaginazione quanto le arti danno di più meraviglioso, quanto la mollezza ha di più ricercato, quanto il sentimento più squisito del bello può collocare in un soggiorno destinato a tale cui riesce possibile l'effettuazione di ogni desiderio che abbia un fomite nella ricchezza, e sarà ancor lontano dall'avere un'idea adeguata di quel luogo, più degno d'essere il soggiorno della Divinità che dell'uomo.

Dall'apparato straordinario dei doppieri, dal movimento incessante dei servi, da alcun ordini dati, rimossi, e ridati in breve spazio di tempo, appariva manifesto che dovesse avervi luogo in quella sera qualche cosa di eccezionale — Ed era... un'orgia solenne, colossale, gigantesca, al cui confronto, le cene tanto famose dei Romani, e le refezioni di Claudio e di Eliogabalo, erano merende da fanciulli, erano un passatempo scipito che non si riferiva che al senso del gusto; una di quelle orge, cui non tutti gli eroi della più eletta società hanno preso parte, dove si profonde in un'ora quanto basta per nutrire in un lustro cento famiglie povere; dove le più belle ree ricercano di abbracciamenti voluttuosi come le Urì del *Corano*, e la vita quasi si scioglie pel senso troppo eccitato del godimento.

Questa è la grande, la vera, la nobile esistenza, alla cui misura d'un giorno, contribuiscono per un anno mille braccia incallite nel

* * *

But now let us leave these coarse, vulgar affections of the indigent classes. Let us remove ourselves from the stench wafting from the garret of the workman, that pariah of civil society, condemned to perpetual work like the beasts who plow our furrows, to perpetual scorn, and to perpetual destitution, like a criminal. Who could ever be persuaded that the workman has a heart, a will, desires, passions? He is born to hard labor, as the working girl is born to prostitution and the amusement of the wealthy. All hail wealth!

The Marquis of B. was talking with the Count of F. in the most sumptuous room of his palace. I will refrain from describing the room, because it might awaken certain suppositions as to the essence of this personage which I cannot reveal to the reader. But may it please his imagination to place therein the most marvelous things the arts can produce, the most refined things luxury can offer, the things which only the most exquisite feeling for beauty can put in a sitting room, a room destined to achieve the fulfillment of every desire aroused by wealth. Having imagined this, the reader will still be far from having an adequate notion of that place, more worthy of being the Deity's own sitting room than that of a man.

From the extraordinary ornamentation of double-branched candlesticks, from the incessant movement of servants, from the number of orders given, carried out, and given anew in a short space of time, it seemed evident that something special was to take place that evening. It was...a solemn, colossal, gigantic bacchanal, which, when compared to the banquets of the Romans, those heralded refections of Claudius and Heliogabalus, made the latter seem like a child's afternoon snack, like an insipid pastime involving only the sense of taste. It was one of those bacchanalia, in which many of society's most elect heroes have participated, where in the space of an hour, enough to feed a hundred poor families for five years is dissipated; where the comeliest strumpets pursue sensual embraces like the Houris of the Koran. Life itself practically melts away from the overpowering sensation of jouissance.

This is the great, the true, the noble existence, which in the span of one day consumes what a thousand work-hardened arms toil for; the toil of a thousand graceful, beautiful, suffering girls, paid at a rate of fifty-five *centesimi* a day, who subsist on milk and

lavoro, mille giovani creature, gracili, vaghe, soffrenti, rimunerate in ragione di cinquantacinque centesimi al giorno, nutrientisi di solo latte e di pane, e finalmente costrette a prostituirsi per vivere, giacché bisogna pur vivere.

Ma a ciò non pensavano il marchese ed il suo amico, perocché vi ha un abisso tra queste due classi estreme della società, e la ricchezza accieca sempre l'intelletto e rende quasi impossibile la conoscenza degli enormi patimenti del proletario.

Il marchese, di cui non palesiamo il nome, né i connotati più essenziali, pel motivo che vive tuttora, e si occupa perdutamente d'impresse galanti, che non gli tolgonon per nulla il prestigio d'un uomo onesto e distinto, è sdraiato oscenamente sopra un sofà orientale, fumando tabacco turco in una pipa di Scemnitz dorata.

La sua età forma un contrasto ripugnante co' suoi costumi; egli può aver cinquant'anni, ma alcune rughe che solcano le sue guancie smunte ed illividite, e una fronte breve e sporgente, accusano una virilità accelerata dalle dissolutezze, e una vecchiaia precoce.

Nella sua gioventù viaggiò per l'Italia; passò alcuni anni in Francia, dove lasciò non poco fama di sé negli annali amorosi di quella nazione. — Splendido, ma per ambire distinzione, sozzo, brutale per istinto, abbietto e codardo per natura, egli riuniva in sé tutti gli attributi malvagi della nostra razza; cosicché, ciò che è disseminato in molti individui, si riassumeva in lui solo, e non aveva una sola virtù, nulla di nobile ad opporvi, tranne un'abilità inimitabile di celarli.

Noi ne faremo l'innominato del nostro racconto, e con maggiori motivi che non avesse il celebre romanziere di nascondere il suo. — Egli è a dispetto dei buoni che la ricchezza offre agli iniqui una difesa contro la comunione delle opinioni, contro le leggi, e non di rado anche contro la giustizia e la severità della fama; e a questa condizione vi sarebbe di che scoraggiarsi troppo sui nostri destini — ma Dio non paga il sabato.

— Voi non sapete — diceva egli al conte di F., e diceva il vero
— voi non sapete quanto io darei per quella ragazza.

— Mi sono avveduto che l'amate seriamente.

bread, who are ultimately forced into prostitution to live, since, after all, one must live.

Certainly the Marquis and his companion had no such thoughts, since there is a chasm between these two extreme classes of society, and wealth always blinds the intellect and makes it nearly impossible to comprehend the enormous sufferings of the proletariat. The Marquis, whose name and most essential features we shall not reveal, because he is still living and because he endlessly busies himself with amorous exploits (which by no means strip him of his reputation as an honest and distinguished man), lies obscenely upon an oriental sofa, smoking Turkish tobacco in a gilt Schemnitz pipe. His age is belied grotesquely by his vices; he might be fifty or even younger, but several wrinkles furrowing his pale, livid cheeks and his short, protruding forehead reveal both a rampant virility accelerated by debauchery, and precocious old age. In his youth he traveled throughout Italy. He then spent a few years in France, where he gained not a little fame in the amorous annals of that nation. Extravagant, but only to make a name for himself, base, instinctively brutal, naturally degraded and cowardly, he brought together all the evil qualities of our race; what is spread out among many individuals was to be found entirely within him. He had not a single virtue, no good qualities to compensate, except a matchless genius for dissimulation.

We shall make him the Unnamed One of our tale, and with better reasons than the celebrated novelist¹ had for hiding the identity of his. He scorns good company, because wealth inoculates sinners against the opinions of society, against all laws, and not infrequently against judgment and the millstone of ill repute. This state of affairs might demoralize us as we contemplate our destinies...however, the mills of God grind slowly.

"You have no idea," he said to the Count of F., and he spoke in earnest, "You have no idea what I'd give for that girl."

"I've observed you are genuinely in love with her."

¹ Alessandro Manzoni (1785 -1873) is directly alluded to here, as is his character from *The Betrothed*, "The Unnamed One." This character is a villain in the novel, so evil that the very mention of his true name inspires fear. The character plots with the novel's antagonist, Don Rodrigo, in the latter's effort to abduct the heroine, Lucia Mondella. Capturing her in his castle, the Unnamed One undergoes a religious conversion after Lucia prays to the Virgin Mary to intercede on her behalf, and releases the girl with a vow to mend his ways.

— Seriamente! dite pazzamente, disperatamente, come un insensato...

— È strano in voi questo sentimento.

— Sì, strano, ne convengo: ma ne avete indovinato il motivo?

— Veramente non l'oserei asserire; ma che non vi ami, poi, non se ne può dubitare: è una fanciulla molto capricciosa cotesta, molto riservata, e si vede ben chiaro che si è data tutta a quell'artigiano.

Il marchese non rispose, ma fece schiattare coi denti la cannucia d'ambra della sua pipa.

— Vedo ben ora — soggiunse l'altro, sorridendo — che l'amate più seriamente di quanto immaginassi e...

— Non vorrei però che prendeste abbaglio sull'indole della mia passione.

— Come sarebbe a dire?

— Che mi credeste innamorato come un collegiale, o come un amoroso da commedia.

— Oh, questo no; vi conosco bene, molto bene, marchese, e poi non ho forse indovinato che vi ci siete incaponito per la sua renitenza?

— Appunto, e più vi medito sopra, vedo che non vi ha altro motivo; ben inteso, lasciamo da un lato la sua bellezza, perché io sono uomo, e peccatore, e un ostinato peccatore.

— Quando è così, non si tratterebbe dunque che di procurare una soddisfazione al vostro amor proprio...

— Parmi che voi mi leggiate nel cuore, ma il modo?

— Ve ne sono molti.

— Per esempio?

— Si può simulare un amore di sentimento, si cerca di attirarla in casa vostra, le si toglie dal fianco quell'amoroso, e se occorre, le si promette di sposarla; che ne dite? e poi io credo che la mediazione di quella signora possa molto, possa tutto, ove sia eccitata da una ricompensa vistosa.

— Ma voi mi fareste impazzire, ditele dunque; non sapete che sono pressoché due mesi che mi occupo di questo affare, ed è una cosa vergognosa per me, il non esserci ancora riuscito; una cosa umiliante, lo capisco. Figuratevi, e non vo' dirlo per vantarmene, che non ho sciupato neppur tanto tempo per quella baronessa di... e si che era quella donna che voi sapete... Ah! vi giuro, caro conte, — proseguì il marchese, sollevandosi dal sofà col volto acceso, e con certo sorriso di trionfo, che pareva una contrazione nervosa ec-

"Genuinely? You mean madly, desperately, like a fool..."

"Such a sentiment is strange in you."

"Strange, yes, I agree. But can you guess at the reason?"

"Reason? Fie! Can there be any other for you than her beauty, her youth, her innocence? But how now? I daresay, her defiance?"

"Precisely," the Marquis interrupted, "you've hit the nail on the head. It's her defiance, her loathing. Wouldn't you say, dear Count, that she loathes me?"

"Truly I wouldn't venture to say. But that she loves you not? Of this there can be no doubt. She's a flighty girl, very reserved, and it's quite clear she's entirely devoted to that young artisan."

The Marquis did not answer, but he gnashed the amber stem of his pipe between his teeth.

"Now I see all too well," added his friend, smiling, "that you love her more seriously than I had imagined and..."

"However, I wouldn't want you to misunderstand about the nature of this passion."

"How so?"

"That you might think me in love like a schoolboy, like a lover in a play!"

"Oh, certainly not. I know you well, very well, dear Marquis. Haven't I deduced that you've dug your heels in because she spurns you?"

"Indeed, and the more I consider it, I realize there's no other motive. Of course there's her beauty, but let's leave that aside for the moment, since I'm a man and a sinner, and an inveterate one at that."

"In such a case, nothing more is required than exacting satisfaction for your wounded *amour propre*..."

"Methinks you read my heart's desire. But how?"

"There are many ways."

"For example?"

"You can feign sentimental love, try to lure her into your house and thus get her swain away from her side. If necessary, promise to marry her. What do you say to that? I also think the Signora's connivance could be helpful, nay instrumental, if she is enticed with large enough a reward."

"There is not one of these approaches I have not already tried, except for somehow finding a way to be rid of the boy."

"That's precisely what you need to do."

citata da qualche passione feroce — vi giuro che se la mi cade tra le mani una sola volta, ne avrò una vendetta esemplare, inaudita: sarà un buon ammaestramento, una lezione salutare per coteste sedicenti virtuose.

— E noi vi serberemo la nostra parte di riconoscenza, per il profitto che ne verrà alla nostra causa.

A questo punto del discorso, entrò un domestico ad annunziare l'arrivo dei signori e delle signore.

— Spicciatevi dunque, mio caro amico, — disse il marchese di B. — indicatemi queste mille maniere onde disfarsi di quel rivale poco onorevole.

— Ma lasciate che io maturi prima un progetto, già non è cosa da deliberarsi così su due piedi; vi basti che io ve la do per fatta, e ne impegno la mia parola di conte.

— Ma il tempo, mio caro, il tempo...

— Vi fornirò, non più tardi di domani a sera, un piano dettagliato di tutta l'impresa.

— Veramente! me lo promettete?

— Diamine! vi ha luogo a dubitarne?

— Io riposo dunque tranquillo sulla vostra parola, e ciò mi renderà questa notte più deliziosa. Ora andiamo ad accogliere i nostri amici.

I nuovi giunti si annunziarono con una armonia assordante di grida, di risa, di battimani, di passi concitati, di fruscio di abiti di seta e invasero in un batter d'occhio la sala.

Erano sette cavalieri con nove dame, vestite con eleganza abbagliante: i più bei visi che la fantasia d'uomo possa delineare: pareva che la natura, nel comporne le fibre, ne avesse escluso l'elemento predominante, il dolore, e che il vizio non vi avesse lasciato alcuna traccia di sé, come veggiamo accadere di quei fiori bianchi, su cui sia passato un bruco nero, peloso, ributtante, senza offenderne la bellezza e il profumo. Vi vorrebbe il pannello fantastico di Grandeville, per offrire un'idea di quel gran quadro, di quelle nove dame, giovani, bellissime, pieghevoli, molli, voluttuose come le baccanti, e arrendevoli come le visioni d'un sogno.

Né credo compatibile col carattere del mio racconto una descrizione più estesa di quell'orgia superba e straordinaria, di questi segreti baccanali della società moderna di cui nulla si trova di più stupendo nell'effeminatezza e nelle lascivie degli antichi.

"Easily said."

"Easily done, in a thousand different ways!"

"Now you are beginning to vex me; explain how, then! You may not realize I have been at this business for nearly two months, and, mortifying as it is for me to admit, I have yet to succeed. Yes, humiliating, I know. Consider, and here I am not boasting, that it didn't even take me this long with that Baroness of____ who you know was the kind of woman who...Ugh! I swear, dear Count," continued the Marquis, rising from the sofa, his face flushed, with a sort of triumphant smile which resembled a nervous contraction brought on by fierce passion, "yes, I swear that if she falls into my hands just once, a delicious, unwonted vengeance shall be mine. It will be an act of domestication, a salutary lesson for these self-proclaimed daughters of virtue."

"And we will extend you our gratitude since you will be advancing our cause."

At this juncture of the conversation, a servant came in to announce the arrival of the ladies and gentlemen.

"Do be quick about it, dear friend," said the Marquis of B., "explain these thousand ways to do away with this most unworthy rival."

"First let me devise a plan, it's not something to sort out like this, off the cuff. For now suffice it to say that the thing is done, that on this I give you my word as a count."

"But time, dear man, time is..."

"I will provide you a detailed plan of the whole scheme, no later than tomorrow evening,"

"Really? I have your word?"

"Is there cause for doubt? Fie!"

"Then I will rest easy, which shall make tonight even more agreeable. Now, let's welcome our friends."

The freshly arrived guests made their presence known with a deafening chorus of shouting, of laughter, of cheering, of eager steps, of rustling silk gowns. In the blink of an eye, they marched into the room. There were seven gentleman accompanied by nine ladies dressed in dazzling finery, with the loveliest faces that man's fancy could picture. It seemed that Nature, in crafting their make-up, had excluded sorrow, that predominant element. This care had left no trace of itself, as one might observe when a disgustingly black, hairy, caterpillar crosses a white flower without compromis-

Basti il rammentare, fra le altre splendidezze innumerevoli, un bagno tiepido di *punch* per venti persone, una pioggia di foglie di rose continuata sino al mattino, una battaglia a zampilli di *champagne* da quindici franchi la bottiglia, un enorme pasticcio automa che lanciava confetture e spruzzi di vino del Reno per ogni direzione, una di quelle danze che il Certaldese chiamerebbe ‘trivigiane’, e finalmente una quantità innumerevole di veli azzurri trapuntati di fiori di gelsomino, che discendendo verticalmente dal soffitto a cui restavano assicurati, formavano tante linee di separazione tra l’una e l’altra coppia danzante.

Al primo mattino, alcuni raggi di sole introducendosi per gli spiragli delle finestre, gittavano una luce fantastica attraverso quei veli, e nelle altre camere, dove ardeva ancora qualche lucignolo, con una luce azzurra e guizzante ad intervalli, come avviene nell’alzare d’una lucciola. — Non un accento; non un’eco di quell’armonia bizzarra della notte: solo il respiro agitato o tranquillo di chi dorme, e qua e là, sporgente da quel letto di rose, una treccia bionda discolta, un braccio nudo giacente con un abbandono più profondo del sonno, un piccolo piede calzato di raso bianco, o qualche candido seno di donna rilevantesi come due bocciuoli di magnolia in un cespo di rododendri fioriti.

Ma mentre qui incomincia il riposo, ed il sonno vi scuote tutta la polvere de’ suoi papaveri, in una soffitta della via di S. Eustorgio si riprendeva la scena della vita e del lavoro.

ing its beauty or scent. Grandville's fantastic canvas² might offer some idea of this great picture of nine ladies, all young, beautiful, supple, tender, voluptuous like the bacchantes, and submissive as in the realization of a dream.

I find it incompatible with the character of my tale to provide a more detailed description of this sumptuous, extraordinary orgy, of these modern-day bacchanalia which not even the ancients can match in effeminacy or wantonness. Suffice it to recollect, among the innumerable splendors, a tub of warm punch for twenty, endless rose petals raining down from the ceiling until dawn, a flowing fountain of fifteen-franc bottles of champagne, an enormous contraption shooting off candies and jets of Rhenish wine in every direction, and one of those dances which Boccaccio would call "Trevisan"³. Finally, innumerable light-blue curtains, sheer and embroidered with jasmine blossoms, dropped down from the ceiling to form so many lines of separation between one dancing couple and the next.

At first light, a few rays of sunshine, streaming in from the small openings of the windows, cast an eerie light through those curtains. In the other rooms, where a few wicks were still burning low, this caused a rhythmic light-blue flickering, as when a firefly takes wing. Not a word, not an echo of the bizarre symphony of the night before. There were only the sounds of here fitful, there peaceful slumber. Here or there, peeking out from a bed of rose petals, a loosened blonde braid, a naked arm reposing in the deepest abandon of sleep, a graceful foot shod in white satin, or a woman's white breasts, revealing themselves like two magnolia buds in a tuft of flowering rhododendron.

Whereas here, the hour of repose has just begun, and slumber shakes off the dust of its poppy-flowers, scenes of life and work were just resuming in a garret of the Via di Sant'Eustorgio.

2 J. J. Grandville (1803-1847) was a French caricaturist. Here, Tarchetti may be referring to Grandville's last work, the series *Fleurs Animées*, published posthumously in the year of his death. In this work, beautiful women emerge from several varieties of flowers.

3 A reference to Decameron VIII.8, in which Zeppa di Mino takes revenge on his friend Spinelloccio Tavena for seducing his wife. Zeppa vindicates himself by having sex (in Boccaccio's euphemistic turn of phrase "doing a Trevisan dance") with Spinelloccio's wife on top of a chest in which Spinelloccio has been locked.



Simona Stivaletta, *Rebus*

Scritture sperimentali / Experimental Writing

Edited by Gianluca Rizzo

Poems by Jackson MacLow

Translated by Gianluca Rizzo

Gianluca Rizzo is the Paganucci Assistant Professor of Italian at Colby College. His research focuses on modern and contemporary macaronic writing, contemporary poetry, and aesthetics. He has published numerous articles, poems, and translations, both from English to Italian and vice-versa (on *Or, Chicago Review, l'immaginazione, il Verri, Autografo*, etc.). With Luigi Ballerini and Paul Vangelisti he edited an anthology of American poetry in translation entitled *Nuova Poesia Americana, New York* (Mondadori, 2009), which will be followed by an additional installment dedicated to the poetry of Chicago, forthcoming in 2016. With Massimo Ciavolella he edited the volume *Like Doves Summoned by Desire: Dante's New Life in 20th Century Literature and Cinema* (Agincourt Press, 2013).

Jackson MacLow was born in Chicago in 1922 and died in New York, December 8, 2004. He was a poet, essayist and the author of musical, performance, visual, and radio works. He published more than 30 books and was included in over 90 anthologies. Over the course of his long career he received numerous awards and recognitions, including: Guggenheim, NEA, NYFA, and CAPS fellowships, and the 1999 Wallace Stevens Award of the Academy of American Poets.

From Anne Tardos' Foreword to *Thing of Beauty: New and Selected Works* (edited by Anne Tardos, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2008):

In a talk he gave in Tucson in 2001, he said that he and these other writers and composers tried to make artworks with as little intervention as possible from the individual ego. We considered the ego a formation that stood in the way of one's perceiving "reality as such." The use of chance operations seemed at the time a good

way to minimize egoic motivations. [...]

It was only later, after years of studying and irregularly practicing Buddhism, as well as years of utilizing such artmaking methods, that I realized that using those methods is as egoic as other ways of making artworks—that, in short, there are no shortcuts to “enlightenment.”

Moreover, while Buddhism enjoins us to lessen the hegemony of the ego in its most widely accepted sense—the dominance of what one experiences as her individual will—it more importantly calls us to realize that the self is ultimately illusory. [...]

However, by the time I realized that the artmaking methods that I’d mistakenly thought were “nonegoic” are not, I had come to value them for their own sake. As often happens, what were conceived and devised as means toward a highly elevated end came to be valued, if not as ends in themselves, as means toward less exalted ends: I liked the kinds of poems and other verbal works and the music that I could make with those methods. So I continued to employ them (though not exclusively) and came eventually to combine them with other artmakingways. Buddhism had led me to them but no longer provided me with justifications or motivations for utilizing them.¹

¹ A Talk about *My Writingways*, University of Arizona, Tucson, 24 January 2001.

Giant Otters

They were a close family of giant otters
in Surinam giving a low growling sound when
they were insecure so they were called the Hummers.

Trace elements had landed near them and they effloresced
in even amounts throughout an even eon and an evening
[more
fortunate as they were in knowing nothing

or peering curiously into unknowable presence
alert to no future living the past as presence
whose elements were traces in their efflorescing being

going as far as they could within the world they were
as fortune particularized occasions within unfolding
breathed upon my memory's wraith and anticipation's all
[but absence.

Where were they going but farther along and through
whatever their being eventuated in clearness no demand for
[clarity
as the eyes are unsealed and the world flows in as light?

*13-14 February 1982
New York*

Central America

Sing Goddess the centrality of America
of the nation called Usonia
by the architect Frank Lloyd Wright
The problem isn't "Central America"
It is people having very much money and power
and other people having very little
and what the rich and powerful do
to keep powerful and rich and get more so
and what the other people
not powerful or rich
cannot or do not do

Lontre giganti

Erano una famiglia molto unita di lontre giganti nel Suriname ed emettevano un basso ringhio ogni volta che si sentivano insicure così le chiamavano Ronzatrici.

Degli oligoelementi capitavano proprio lì vicino e fiorirono in quantità costanti attraverso un eone costante e una serata più fortunata mentre se ne stavano in casa senza sospettare

o a sbirciare curiose la presenza inconoscibile interessate a nessun futuro in particolare vivendo il passato come una [presenza

i cui elementi erano solo tracce nel loro essere infiorescente

spingendosi quanto più possibile nel mondo che abitavano [come

occasioni di fortuna particolarizzate dentro uno sdipanarsi [col fiato

sul collo il mio ricordo è uno spettro e l'anticipazione è [quasi assenza

Dove potevano andare se non più lontano e attraverso [qualunque

cosa il loro essere risolte in trasparenza senza pretese di [chiarezza

mentre gli occhi sono schiusi e il mondo li inonda di luce?

13-14 febbraio 1982

New York

America Centrale

Cantami o diva la centralità dell'America
della nazione che l'architetto

Frank Lloyd Wright ha chiamato Usonia

Il problema non è l'"America Centrale"

È il fatto che alcuni hanno troppi soldi e troppo potere
e altri hanno pochissimo

e quello che fanno i ricchi e potenti

per mantenersi ricchi e potenti e anche di più

e quello che gli altri

né ricchi né potenti

non possono fare o non fanno

not knowing all riches and power stem from them

Manhattan Shirts went south
from Usonia to El Salvador
leaving here in the North
plenty of shirtmakers jobless
Texas Instruments went to El Salvador also
So much of that company went there
it should be called
El Salvador Instruments
And the part of Kimberly-Clark
that sells disposable diapers they call Huggies
has Salvadorans make them now
and ship them to Usonia
and elsewhere for disposal
Few are sold and disposed of in El Salvador
where nearly all diapers are cloth
washed and rewashed and re-rewashed
before being washed again to be used as rags
and probably many babies wear no diapers

No wonder in El Salvador
where “death squads” run amok
and the bridges get blown up
the government of Usonia
all but functions as the state
despite the uppity puppets who think *they* do

No wonder it is so worried
by anything like The Other
or anything vaguely Otherish
Cuba or Grenāda
Chile or Nicaragua
horrid Otherish weeds in that nice clean yard

Don’t talk about defending “human rights”
Stroessner has lasted in Paraguay thirty years
torturing and murdering
with never a Usonian landing
But how long did Allende last
as Otherish as Norman Thomas
but threatening nevertheless
to Usonian power and money

non sapendo che ricchezza e potere provengono tutte da
[loro]

La Manhattan Shirts si è trasferita a sud
da Usonia a El Salvador
lasciando senza lavoro un sacco
di magliai qui al Nord
anche la Texas Instruments è andata a El Salvador
Una parte così grossa della compagnia si è trasferita laggiù
che dovrebbero chiamarla
El Salvador Instruments
E quella parte della Kimberly-Clark
che vende pannolini usa e getta e che chiamano Huggies
adesso impiega perlopiù salvadoregni
e poi li spediscono a Usonia
e altrove perché siano usati e gettati
Ne vendono pochi in El Salvador
dove quasi tutti i pannolini sono di stoffa
lavati e rilavati e ri-rilavati
e poi lavati di nuovo e usati come stracci
e forse molti dei bambini non li indossano affatto

Non stupisce che in El Salvador
dove le "squadre della morte" girano indisturbate
e i ponti vengono fatti saltare in aria
il governo di Usonia funzioni
in tutto e per tutto come lo stato nonostante
i fantocci arroganti pensino di esserlo *loro*

Non stupisce che sia così preoccupato
da qualunque cosa assomigli all'Altro
che sembri anche lontanamente Diverso
Cuba o Granāda
Cile o Nicaragua
orrive erbacce Diverse in quel bel giardino pulito

Non si parli si difendere i "diritti umani"
Stroessner è durato trent'anni in Paraguay
a torturare e assassinare
senza che un solo Usoniano si sia fatto vivo
Ma quanto è durato Allende
che era Diverso quanto Norman Thomas
ma comunque costituiva una minaccia

They didn't even bother with the Cuban ploy
cutting off trade and aid
to force an Otherish government
to turn to the Other for help
to give them a pretense to weed that government out
out of that tidy backyard

Now they are trying to do just that
to that horrible Otherish junta in Managua
trying to bring it down
by supporting bands of "patriots" called "contras"
many of whom were soldiers and policemen
who used to kill and torture for Somoza
but now destroy and kill "to bring back freedom"

And still to the liars and thieves
the torturers and murderers
who think they rule El Salvador
they are giving our money away
to fight the Otherish rebels
who might not be so nice to runaway shops

Banality after banality
about the most bānal banality
postponing the inevitable question
What can people do
who *don't* have much money or power
to stop the liars and thieves
the torturers and murderers
the profiteers and exploiters
the powerful and rich
and those who keep them that way
from profiting and exploiting
from lying and from stealing
from torturing and murdering
from doing whatever they want in the big backyard
There is *nó óne ánsver*
and *nó poém* purporting to give one does
What your hand finds to do
do

per i ricchi e potenti di Usonia
 Non hanno neanche provato a usare la mossa cubana
 tagliando il commercio e gli aiuti
 per costringere un governo Diverso
 a rivolgersi all'Altro in cerca di assistenza
 giusto per dargli una scusa per estirpare quel governo
 via dal loro giardinetto ordinato

E adesso stanno provando a fare la stessa cosa
 a quella junta orribilmente Diversa lì a Managua
 cercano di buttarla giù
 sostenendo bande di "patrioti" chiamati "contras"
 molti dei quali erano soldati e poliziotti
 che prima uccidevano e torturavano per Somoza
 ma adesso distruggono e uccidono "per riportare la libertà"

E poi ai ladri e ai bugiardi
 agli aguzzini e agli assassini
 che pensano di governare El Salvador
 danno via i nostri soldi
 per combattere i ribelli Diversi che potrebbero
 non essere così accomodanti con le fabbriche che si
 [trasferiscono]

Banalità dopo banalità
 sulla più bânaile delle banalità
 rimandando la domanda inevitabile
 Cosa possono fare le persone
 che *non* hanno molti soldi o potere
 per impedire ai ladri e ai bugiardi
 agli aguzzini e agli assassini
 ai profittatori e agli sfruttatori
 ai ricchi e ai potenti
 e a quelli che li fanno rimanere tali
 di approfittarsene e sfruttare
 di mentire e rubare
 di torturare e uccidere
 di fare quello che vogliono nel grande giardino
 Non c'è *uná sóla rísposta*
 né *úna poésia* che possa dire di averne una
 Quello che la mano trova da fare
si faccia

1-31 gennaio 1984, New York

Dialogos for John

{I}

To each legible
music you
listen globally.

{II}

Is perhaps
the thing
or yes?

{III}

Do airlines
give a proven I
the town's
next
pleasant
preliminary ill?

{IV}

Watch—
is transforming
or wondering
already travel—
was I another?

{V}

See landscape's
Zen inclusion dawning,
the hospital Marxist
said ironically—
materialistically.

Dialogos per John

{I}

Per ogni musica
leggibile che
ascolti globalmente.

{II}

È forse
la cosa
o sì?

{III}

Le compagnie aeree
danno un io verificato
la prossima
piacevole collina
preliminare
della città ?

{IV}

Guarda —
trasformare o
vagabondare è
già viaggiare —
ero un altro?

{V}

Vedi l'inclusione
del paesaggio Zen che sorge,
il marxista da ospedale
disse con ironia —
materialisticamente.

{VI}

Not song
when like
machine.

{VII}

Identical watches today:
you're young
and the womb
is an airplane.

{VIII}

Successful child's
dance there:
day now.

{IX}

Graphic.

{X}

A piano,
thinking,
singing,
made having
clear coloration
boring.

{XI}

Suddenly love,
time,
constant centers
provided.

{XII}

Major
refreshments.

{VI}

Non canzone
quando come
macchina.

{VII}

Orologi identici oggi:
tu sei giovane
e il grembo
è un aeroplano.

{VIII}

Una danza bambinesca
di successo laggiù:
giorno oggi.

{IX}

Grafico.

{X}

Un piano
che pensa,
che canta,
che ha reso noioso
l'avere una coloritura

{XI}

Improvvisamente amore,
tempo,
centri costanti
già forniti.

{XII}

Rinfreschi
da paura.

{XIII}

Really
it.

{XIV}

Expanded much,
spring hasn't missed
as design:
staying, we
finally seek
education.

{XV}

Music:
remain!

{XVI}

Gone—
through the window!

{XVII}

Texts:
reach headlights
so that a view begins
and something then
means things
that one asserts.

{XIII}

Veramente
quello.

{XIV}

Ingrandito di molto,
la primavera non ha
toppato
in fatto di design:
rimanendo, quello che
vogliamo davvero è
un'istruzione.

{XV}

Musica:
rimani!

{XVI}

Sparito –
fuori dalla finestra!

{XVII}

Testi:
raggiungi i fari
in modo che cominci una vista
e allora qualcosa
significa le cose
che uno afferma.

{XVIII}

Colors
have heard appeals
that misled.

{XIX}

I
should be
we.

{XX}

Exemplify underdevelopment
including mushroom stories
establishing government
transcends all limits:
books dismemberment
of two against it,
Fuller and me,
each a chord to himself,
a cricket creaking along.

*February 1988
New York*

Sources: *Silence* (1961), *A Year from Monday* (1987), and *M* (1973), all by John Cage and published by Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, Connecticut.

Still Waldoboro Wednesday a.m. 9/22/2004

In the yard just beyond the red dying tree.
White butterfly swerving around in front of it and off in
[front and away.
Little line of bushes ends while the line of piled boulders
[swerves around
and comes up to the wooden "gate" about ten feet
[to the right of me.

{XVIII}

I colori
hanno ascoltato appelli
che ingannavano.

{XIX}

Io
dovrei essere
noi.

{XX}

Dà un esempio di sottosviluppo
incluse quelle storie di funghi
che impiantano governi
travalicando ogni limite:
libri smembrati
di due che erano contro,
io e Fuller,
ciascuno un accordo a sé,
un grillo che continua a cigolare

*Febbraio 1988
New York*

Le fonti per la poesia precedente sono: *Silence* (1961), *A Year from Monday* (1987), e *M* (1973), tutte di John Cage e pubblicate da Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, Connecticut.”

Ancora Waldoboro mercoledì mattina 22/9/2004

In giardino appena oltre l'albero morente rosso.
Farfalle bianche gli girano intorno su e giù davanti e via.
Una piccola fila di cespugli si interrompe mentre un
[muretto gira
intorno e arriva fino al “cancello” di legno a circa tre metri
[alla mia destra.

The pile of boulders goes on past the wooden "gate" and
 [back of me.
 A wild wind from my right.
 The leaves of the dying red-leaved tree only move a tiny bit
 [in the wind
 to the right, a few feet in front of me—just to the
 [right of the front of
 the older part of the house.

It's a lovely nearly-autumn day in Maine.
 Warm sunshine with a continuing intermittent little wind
 [that stops and
 goes, mostly goes.
 The little bit of Gerolsteiner is warming in the sun right in
 [front of me,
 but I'm back of it in the shade.

Anne was here but she's gone inside.
 I hear passing cars somewhere way to the right but they're
 [far away in
 back at the right and invisible.
 A bird squeaks in twos in front, and to the left.
 Now one at a time, a different bird.
 And feeble peeps at the far left and a very soft dump-tee-oh.

Don't ask what birds—they speak a little and stop.
 Now a continuing *up* swerving *down* over and over
 And a repeated tec-oo-WEE but never loud.
 The German water's still a bit cool.
 The wind's blown in first and on the back of my head and
 [then on my left
 ear and now from the left and then from the front
 [and then back.
 Two three white butterflies and a fly and a dragonfly that
 [stops & then
 hurries away.

I'm going inside for a wee bit.
 I dropped the cover for my pen in the grass in front of me,
 [but Anne
 found it.
 I'm not going inside yet because Anne's reading a book in
 [the sun to the

Il mucchio di massi continua al di là del “cancello” di legno
 [e dietro di me.

Un vento forte dalla mia destra.
 Le foglie dell’albero morente rosso-chiomato si muovono
 [appena nel vento
 alla destra, a qualche metro davanti a me — appena
 [sulla destra di fronte alla
 parte vecchia della casa.

È una bellissima giornata di quasi-autunno in Maine.
 Una luce calda con un costante venticello intermittente che
 [va e
 viene, ma perlopiù viene.
 Quel po’ di Gerolsteiner che è rimasta si sta scaldando al
 [sole davanti a me,
 ma io sto più dietro nell’ombra.

Anne era qui ma adesso è andata dentro.
 Sento le macchine che passano da qualche parte di là verso
 [destra ma sono lontane
 dietro verso destra e non si vedono.
 Un uccello cinguetta a due a due sul davanti, e verso
 [sinistra.
 Adesso un cinguettio alla volta, un uccello diverso.
 E un pigolio fioco in fondo a sinistra e un leggerissimo
 [damp-ti-o.

Non mi chiedere che uccelli sono — parlano per un po’ e poi
 [tacciono.
 Ora un suono continuo che s’impenna e poi giù e su e via
 [così
 E un tec-o-UI ripetuto ma mai troppo forte.
 Il vento prima mi soffiava in faccia e sulla nuca e poi sull’
 [orecchio
 sinistro e adesso dalla sinistra e poi dal davanti e poi da dietro.
 Due tre farfalle bianche e una mosca e una libellula che si
 [ferma & poi
 schizza via.

Adesso me ne vado dentro per un po’.
 Ho fatto cadere il tappo della penna nell’erba di fronte a
 [me, ma Anne

right & in front.

It's not quite autumn, but leaves are falling, especially from
[the tree
with red leaves in front & to the right of the house.

A tiny yellow crawler on my sleeve before I blow it into the
[grass.

I didn't go inside before, but now I will, but not for long.

I'ha trovato.

Ancora non sono entrato perché Anne sta leggendo un libro
[al sole sulla
destra & sul davanti.

Non è ancora autunno, ma le foglie stanno cadendo,
[specialmente dall'albero
con le foglie rosse davanti & a destra della casa.

Un minuscolo bruco giallo sulla manica poi lo soffio via e
[finisce nell'erba.

Non sono ancora entrato, ma adesso vado, ma non per molto.

L'autunno è cominciato oggi mercoledì 22/9/2004



Simona Stivaletta, *Volo*

**Voices in English
from Europe to New Zealand**

edited by

Marco Sonzogni



Simona Stivaletta, *Composizione*

Poems by Fabiano Alborghetti

Translated by Marco Sonzogni and Ross Woods

Marco Sonzogni and **Ross Woods** teach in the School of Languages and Cultures at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. Their first co-translation – the selected poems of Giorgio Orelli (*Pondering the Weight of Being*. Oakville: Guernica Editions, 170pp) – was published earlier this year.

Fabiano Alborghetti (1970) is a widely published poet, editor and critic. He is the author of several collection of poems, including the critically acclaimed *Registro dei fragili* (2009) and *L'opposta riva* (2013). The poems included here are from *L'opposta riva*, a poignant and moving account of the human and cross-cultural experiences of migration. The English translation, *The Other Shore*, will be published by Guernica in 2016. His work – supported by Pro Helvetia, the Swiss Arts Council – has featured in international literary festivals in Canada, China, Colombia, Italy, Macedonia, Nigeria, Poland, Slovenia, Switzerland, USA. He lives in Canton Ticino, Switzerland.

Fabiano Alborghetti

from L'opposta riva/The Other Shore

I

E dove altro credi possibile la mia presenza
se anche la mia terra è contro? Non rimane niente altro
che la cancellazione ripeteva un dirsi presenti

anche senza il luogo. Adesso conta diceva
fai la somma dei rimasti. Sottratti gli urti i lampi
i sacchi senza nome o le cataste di arti e bocche colme

di vuoto, avrai la misura del rimanere: l'innominata
[ampiezza.

II

Come uno qualunque diventasse un soldato, stupiva:
apprendisti
lavorare la carne un tanto al chilo

fabbricarne senza smaltire.
Come lui in tanti diceva: improvvisati
ovunque nel corredo lordo

entrare in casa nella figlia, nel vicino
con il corpo o un appendice.
Bastava aprire l'uscio o il ventre:

fare un buon lavoro diceva, che Dio ci guarda.

III

Alla conta venne la misura non prima:
non in moltitudine ma uno ad uno
sparivano, lasciando il quesito al posto, il vuoto

della certa destinazione. Con l'assenza a tavola
continuava mamma a preparare per quattro:
anche dopo rimasta ultima, anche ora

che le fosse disimparano il contenere.

Fabiano Alborghetti
from L'opposta riva/The Other Shore

I

And where else do you think my presence possible
if even my homeland is against me? Nothing else remains
but the negation he repeated stating his presence

despite lacking a place. Now count he said
add up those who remained. Subtract the blows the flashes
the nameless lootings or the piles of limbs and mouths full

of emptiness, you'll have the measure of what remains: the
[anonymous magnitude.

II

The way anybody would become a soldier, it stupefies:
apprentices
handling meat at so much a kilo

producing without selling.
Like him many he said: improvised
everywhere in the dirty overalls

entering the house the daughter, the neighbour
with the body or an appendage.
It was enough to open the door or the womb:

doing a good job he said, God watching over us.

III

At the count the measure came, not before:
not as a multitude but one by one
they disappeared, leaving questions in their place, the void

of the certain destination. With absence at the table
mom still cooked for four:
even when she was the last, even now

that graves are unlearning to contain.

IV

Certe dozzine eran troppe da contare
non sapendo dove gettarne o cosa conservare:
dall'unico mucchio è indistinguibile diceva

la milizia con gli affetti, la paura con la sorpresa
la manovra o la fuga. Partita patta, senza vinti e vincitori:
segnato il punto, sulla terra il singolare niente

spianava con l'ordine il lezzo...

V

C'era chi resisteva al luogo a prima vista
immutato. Solo dei segni apparire ma sparsi: un falò
per casa una catasta di fascine e arti

una colonna di fumo o blindati a lato strada.
Eppure rimaneva simile la vastità alla quiete
conosciuta: non vedere è l'abiura diceva, ignorare

i randagi armati abbattere chi non cambiava pelle o terra
e rifare altre rovine dopo la cenere.
Il non avere intenzioni ha quantificato lo sbaglio

l'averne troppe: le fazioni al centro impuntate
chiamandosi giusti, continuavano. Varcando il silenzio
col baccano alcuni e le frontiere in fila gli altri.

Al centro sempre al centro la sola carne, il flusso
dello stesso colore illuminare il dissolto ma rimaneva
il luogo uguale: vestiva di stagioni e spogliava insieme
senza curare dei delitti, dei destini inutili al germoglio.

VI

Dipende l'attenzione dal numero che vedi
o dal dolore personale mi chiedeva: così spera l'uno
di non trovare un caro reso astratto dalla morte

IV

Some batches were too many to count
not knowing where to chuck 'em out or what to keep:
from the one pile it's indistinguishable he said

militia with loved ones, fear with surprise
movement or flight. A draw, without winners or losers:
the point marked, on the ground the singular nothingness

levelled the stench with order...

V

There were those who endured the place at first glance
unchanged. Only signs appear but sparsely: a beacon
a stack of faggots and limbs

a column of smoke and tanks by the roadside.
Yet the immensity remained similar to the familiar
calm: to not see is to renounce he said, to ignore

vagrant soldiers killing those who didn't shed skin or land
and bring further ruin after the ashes.
Not having intentions has quantified the wrong

having too many: the factions stubbornly at the core
calling themselves fair, continued. A few crossing silences
making noise and others lining up at the borders.

At the core always at the core the flesh alone, the stream
of unvarying colour illuminating the dispersion but the
[place
remained the same: at once wearing the season and stripped off
unconcerned with crimes, with useless destinies about to
[blossom.

VI

Does attention depend on the number you see
or on personal pain he asked: in this way one hopes
against finding a loved one made abstract by death

o solo un altro volto da contare.

La presenza dalla vita come stona in paragone:
sui passaporti gli occhi vividi nelle foto e l'opposto:

da non credere diceva, vedere i documenti sparsi
attorno ai corpi, i portafogli alla rinfusa
dopo il pasto dello stupro. Rimasugli da sciacalli.

Nemmeno un passo riesce dopo
mentre fermi a quelli in piedi tanta vita resta attorno
da stordire: per come pesa il testimonio

per non sapere cosa fare...

VII

Tra i corpi e i fuochi regnava dopo la pace
di ogni primo Gennaio, quel silenzio di un qualcosa
ch'era appena cominciato

ma era Marzo allora, forse Novembre:
io guardavo i buchi a terra
e resti umani

rinunciare ad una posa, apparire sul terreno
in gesti immobili, sguaiati.
Braccia aperte, teste torte, altri assieme alla rinfusa.

La cenere sui bordi
al centro a lato strada alzata in zolle.
Contro le case, dentro le stanze

quelle grida quei rumori, scoppi
come a festeggiare un capodanno:
chi segnava una tacca sul fucile per contare

e arrivati al trentuno, proseguire...

or just another face to count.
How the presence of life clashes by comparison:
in the passport photos vivid eyes and the opposite:

hard to believe he said, to see documents scattered
around bodies, wallets in a mess
after the rape meal. Jackals' leftovers.

Afterwards even footsteps fail
but so much life remains around those standing still
it stuns: because of how heavy the baton weighs

because of not knowing what to do...

VII

Afterwards among the bodies and fires reigned the peace
of every New Year's Day, that silence of something
that had just started

but it was March then, perhaps November:
I was watching the craters in the ground
and human remains

give up a pose, appear on the soil
in immobile, vulgar gestures.
Open arms, bent heads, others together in a mess.

Ashes on the edges
at the centre on the roadside lifted in sods.
Against the houses, within rooms

those cries those noises, explosions
as if to celebrate New Year:
someone marking a notch on the rifle to keep count

and reached thirtyone, keep going.

VIII

Sono un intralcio, appartengo alla nazione
ma con quale colpa mi chiedeva: del luogo generato
sono figlio non un ospite né intruso.

Spoglio di cose l'esilio illuminava le macerie
e la schiena non ancora perforata:
ai lati chi asciuga un altro pianto

in piedi
senza cose né bagaglio.
Di fronte chi ora prende il mio posto

e prega e ringrazia che io perda.
Io sono l'infamia:
in marcia, uscente

a capo chino.

IX

Margini, confini che non sono da ignorare
ancora: è lo spazio del campo concesso per il tratto di pace.
Alcuni incolumi chiedevano

all'infermiera e mostravano le foto. Altri
sotto i teli. Il lezzo di vita persa è eguale in ogni posto.
Dio qui non ha tempo pare

di mettere fine agli opposti. E arrivi e tende e veli
stesi sopra i visi e soldati
in casco blu ad osservare

quanto assente è il pudore, e la vita se persegue.

VIII

I am a hindrance, I belong to the nation
but who's to blame he asked me: I was born and
raised here I'm no guest or intruder.

Stripped of belongings exile illuminated the debris
the back not yet pierced by bullets:
at the side someone drying another tear

standing
with no belongings nor luggage.
In front someone now takes my place

and prays and is grateful that I may lose.
I am infamy:
marching, departing

head down.

IX

Margins, borders not to be ignored
yet: it's the part of the field of paddock allowed for the
[peace line].

Someone unharmed asked

the nurse and showed their photos. Others
under sheets. The stench of lost life is the same everywhere.
Here it seems God has not time

to reconcile opposites. And arrivals and curtains and veils
laid out over faces and soldiers
in blue helmets watching

how absent is decency, and life if it follows.

X

Conta i centimetri quadrati rimasti illesi
diceva, le stoviglie intatte pur mancando la parete:
a tutela del privato una tenda hanno tirato, una lamiera

e uguale situazione anche agli altri. Nella privazione
sembra molto il poco
e così rimane, velata nella tregua

la stessa luce dello stesso cielo
l'accadere della cena e del risveglio.
Rifatto l'attorno non cambia il senso.

Là dove tu guardi, cambia la famiglia
tolta la casa? Scompare l'amore o perdura?
L'intero suolo è casa, diceva

e dal suo fuoco il fango risplendeva...

X

Count now the square centimetres left unharmed
he said, the intact crockery even with the wall missing:
for the sake of privacy they have drawn a curtain, a metal
[sheet

and similar situations to the others too. In hardship
little seems a lot
and so remains, shrouded in truce

the same light of the same sky
the event of the evening meal and of the awakening.
The surroundings rebuilt, the meaning doesn't change.

There where you watch, does the family change
taking away the house? Does love disappear or endure?
The whole land is home, he said

and from his fire the mud was shining.

Poems by Lynn Jenner

Translated by Francesca Benocci

Francesca Benocci is a PhD candidate in Literary Translation Studies at Victoria University of Wellington, and holds an MA in Literary Translation and Text Editing and a BA in Languages, Literatures and Cultures both from the University of Siena. She is also a poet, short-story writer, editor and blogger. Her poetry translations appear regularly in *Journal of Italian Translation* (US) and *Atelier* (Italy). She has recently coedited *Translation, Transnationalism, World Literature* (Novi Ligure: Edizioni Joker, 2015, 426pp, in print), a volume of essays by established and emerging scholars from around the world on current issues in Translation Studies.

Narration through Poetry: Lynn Jenner

Lynn Jenner was born in Hawera, Taranaki, and now lives with her partner on the Kāpiti Coast, close to Wellington, the capital city of New Zealand. She holds a Masters and a PhD in Creative Writing from the International Institute of Modern Letters at Victoria University of Wellington, as well as an M. Ed., Dip Ed. Psych. and Dip. Teaching. Before she took up serious creative writing – at the age of forty-nine – she practised as a psychologist and counsellor for twenty-five years. She has also worked as a researcher.

Jenner won the Best First Book Award for Poetry in the New Zealand Post Book Awards for her debut collection, *Dear Sweet Harry*, which she completed during her MA at Victoria (Auckland University Press, 2010). *Dear Sweet Harry* was described by Hugh Roberts in his *Listener* review as a “simply exhilarating” poetic sequence “that weaves together scraps of found material, family history, speculation and archival research pertaining to Harry Houdini, Mata Hari, Jewish history, the author’s grandfather’s World War I experiences, Katherine Mansfield, early treatment

of tuberculosis, locomotive whistle-signal codes and god knows what else into a kind of fun-house mirror-world evocation of the early 20th century".

The fruit of her PhD, also published by Auckland University Press in 2015, is *Lost and Gone Away*, a book that defies classification. Amid other things, it tells of the long-delayed recovery of a diamond ring from the ruins of Christchurch's red zone in the days and months after the 2011 earthquake, the discovery of the torn papyrus remains of the works of the ancient Greek lyric poet, Sappho, the revelation of an over-painted mural by a murdered Jewish painter in a children's nursery in Ukraine, and visits to Holocaust memorials in Sydney, Wellington, and Auckland. It is often the story of human loss but it is also a triumph of remaking and restoration. *Lost and Gone Away* is a shared meditation on distances of time and place, which ultimately focuses on the nearly unspeakable topic of the Holocaust as seen from the perspective of a late-born New Zealander.

Jenner's poetry shares with her prose the ability to narrate the events in their miniature, in the extreme relevance of the infinitely little, from the typos in an email she wrote during the quest for her mother's ring in *Lost and Gone Away*, to the 'absolute value' of a son's finger.

Jenner's distinctive voice is witty and ironic, the language never artificial, baroque, yet at the same time never predictable or ordinary. She explores some of the deepest human feelings with angel-like grace and lightness of touch, leading the reader to what is hidden in the words and showing us that, if we know where and how to look, everything is clear, irrespective of how good, how bad, how challenging.

Women's Business

When I had a son in his early teens
a Russian thought formed in my head
that if a war came I would cut
the index finger of his right hand off
so that he would be no use for fighting.
The part of me which visits
hospitals would do the cutting.
I wouldn't care if he hated me
for what I did.
I might even be pleased.
By this time I knew that he was nearly
a man, and that if I didn't cut his finger off
or shoot him in the foot, he would go.
Even if he was afraid.
Even if he thought it was pointless.
Now he is a man and I ask him
to carry my suitcase.

'This is ZL4BY . . . ZL4BY on the air . . .' my father would say

Then there might be squeals
rising and falling in pitch
a long patch of silence
maybe a low animal noise like a cow
giving birth, or static so bad
I could hardly bear it

My father would turn the dial towards
the very centre of the pain, trawl
through it over and over and inside
there might be a man's voice
clear as a bell

The man
might be the only person awake
in a town in Northern Saskatchewan

Cose da donne

Quando avevo un figlio adolescente
mi si è formato in testa un pensiero russo
che se fosse venuta la guerra gli
avrei tagliato l'indice della mano destra
così sarebbe stato inutile in combattimento.
La parte di me che visita gli
ospedali avrebbe fatto il taglio.
Non mi sarebbe importato se m'avesse odiata
per ciò che avevo fatto.
Forse mi avrebbe persino fatto piacere.
A questo punto sapevo che ormai era quasi
un uomo e che se non gli avessi tagliato il dito
o sparato a un piede, sarebbe partito.
Anche se aveva paura.
Anche se pensava che non avesse senso.
Adesso è un uomo e gli chiedo
di portarmi la valigia.

'Qui ZL4BY . . . ZL4BY in trasmissione . . .' diceva mio padre

Poi potevano esserci degli stridii
che andavano su e giù di tono
un lungo tratto di silenzio
forse il suono basso di un animale come una mucca
che partorisce, o delle scariche così forti
che le sopportavo a malapena

Mio padre ruotava la manopola verso
il centro esatto del dolore, ci frugava
avanti e indietro e dentro
ci poteva essere la voce di un uomo
forte e chiara

L'uomo
poteva essere l'unica persona sveglia
di una città del Saskatchewan settentrionale

My father and the man
would exchange first names
report on each other's signal strength
and say something about the weather
in each country. That seemed
to be enough

Sometimes
responding to a different urge
my father would just turn on his receiver
and listen

According to my father,
unacknowledged signals circled the earth
until someone received them properly

If my father heard one of these signals,
and he often used to – often – at the new moon,
and when low in spirits – all he had to do
was say the person's call sign
and then say,

'ZL4BY, receiving.'

That was enough.

A Hassidic story might start...

A Hassidic story might start with trees and a problem

*Once in Poland
or any other country with black trees,
a Jewish girl
needed to be someone else.*

involve water and someone taking heroic action

*She bought a set of other people's clothes
which she hid under a rock
beside a deep pool in the woods.*

Mio padre e l'uomo
si scambiavano i nomi di battesimo
ragguagli sulla potenza di segnale l'uno dell'altro
e commentavano le condizioni atmosferiche
nei due paesi. Il che sembrava
bastare

A volte
rispondendo a un'urgenza diversa
mio padre si limitava ad accendere il ricevitore
e ascoltare

Secondo mio padre,
i segnali senza risposta facevano il giro del mondo
finché qualcuno non li riceveva a dovere

Se mio padre sentiva uno di questi segnali,
e gli capitava spesso – spesso – alla luna nuova,
e quando era giù di morale, gli bastava dire
il nominativo emittente dell'altro
e poi dire,

'ZL4BY . . . ZL4BY in ascolto'

Tanto bastava.

Una storia chassidica potrebbe iniziare...

Una storia chassidica potrebbe iniziare con degli alberi e un
[problema]

*Una volta in Polonia
o qualunque altro paese dagli alberi neri,
una ragazza ebrea
doveva essere qualcun altro*

metteteci acqua e qualcuno che prende un'iniziativa eroica

*Comprò una serie di vestiti di altre persone
che nascone sotto un masso
accanto a uno stagno profondo nel bosco.*

*One day she walked into the woods
changed into her new clothes
and left.*

which might have miraculously ordinary results

*The first day
was sailing in past Barrett's Reef
and seeing hills and houses.*

*The first summer
was the young man.
No-one else.
No words.*

involve trees again

*The first house
had a hill behind it, covered with trees.
He built a clothes line. Sheets
pulled away from this line
like sails.*

and end with wind moving over water

In the voice of Paul Celan reading *Todesfuge*, I hear a man led by his poem.

I hear his poems deeply, with my mouth. I hear him
[travelling
East at night, alone. I hear him laying stone on stone. Each
[night
he finds a dark shining heart and holds it in his hand. From
[this
heart flows cunning. The voice of cunning wakes me from a
dream. It comes from my own mouth.

*Un giorno si recò nel bosco
indossò gli abiti nuovi
e se ne andò.*

il che potrebbe avere conseguenze miracolosamente
[ordinarie]

*Il primo giorno
fu veleggiare oltre Barrett's Reef¹
e vedere case e colline.*

*La prima estate
fu il giovane.
Nessun altro.
Niente parole.*

metteteci di nuovo gli alberi

*La prima casa
aveva alle spalle una collina, tappezzata d'alberi.
Lui costruì un filo per il bucato. Le lenzuola
si libravano da questo filo
come vele.*

e concludete col vento che si muove sull'acqua

Nella voce di Paul Celan che legge *Todesfuge, sento un uomo guidato dalla propria poesia.*

Sento profondamente le sue poesie, con la bocca. Lo sento
[viaggiare
di notte verso est, da solo. Lo sento porre pietra su pietra.
[Tutte le notti
trova un cuore scuro e lucente e lo tiene in mano. Da questo
[cuore
fluisce la scaltrezza. La voce della scaltrezza mi risveglia
[da un
sogno. Viene dalla mia bocca.

1 Un grande scoglio affiorante nello stretto di Cook, all'ingresso della baia di Wellington.

I hear him laying stone on stone. Every exiled poet is a
[stone.

Every place or person with more than one name is a stone.
[Every

date is a stone. Every mother is a stone. Every blue eye is a
[stone.

Every brown suit is a stone. Every photograph is a stone.
[Person-stone,

book-stone, place-stone.

Lo sento porre pietra su pietra. Tutti i poeti in esilio sono
[pietre.
Tutti i posti e le persone con più di un nome sono pietre.
[Tutte le
date sono pietre. Le madri sono pietre. Gli occhi azzurri
[sono pietre.
I completi marroni sono pietre. Le fotografie sono pietre.
[Persona-pietra,
libro-pietra, posto-pietra.

Sesso Facile
(Tragedia e Ironia)

Due Atti Unici di Mario Fratti

Translated into English by the author

MARIO FRATTI, professor emeritus of Italian literature at Hunter College, is an internationally acclaimed playwright and drama critic.

Author of such works as *Suicide*, *The Cage*, *The Return*, *The Academy*, *Mafia*, *Races*, and *The Bridge*, he is best known for his musical *Nine* (inspired by Fellini's famous film, *8 1/2*) which in its original production in 1982 won the O'Neill Award, the Richard Rodgers Award, two Outer Critics Circle Awards, eight Drama Desk Awards, five Tony Awards, and in 2000 was a recipient of the Otto Award for Political Theater.

In its 2003 revival, *Nine* won three Outer Critics Circle Awards and two Tony Awards.

Fratti's nearly seventy plays have received some six hundred productions in two dozen countries and have been translated into many languages.

Fratti was born in Italy but has been living in New York City since 1963. In addition to his writing achievements, he also serves as New York drama critic for European newspapers.



Simona Stivaletta, *Fine del viaggio*

***Sesso Facile
(Tragedia e Ironia)***

Due Atti Unici di Mario Fratti

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A.I.D.S.

Le Persone:

OTTO, vittima dell'A.I.D.S.

EVAN, il suo migliore amico

Oggi, a New York. Camera privata in ospedale; finestra aperta per arieggiare il locale. OTTO guarda con curiosità attraverso una porta a vetri, tipica degli ospedali; si regge a fatica; è malatissimo, vittima dell'A.I.D.S. Si volta improvvisamente e cerca di raggiungere in fretta il letto; gli è difficile e penoso. Entra il suo amico EVAN e lo aiuta.

EVAN. (allarmato, aiutandolo) Che fai? Perché ti sei alzato? Non dovresti, lo sai... Sei troppo debole... (riesce a farlo coricare; un silenzio) Come ti senti oggi? (gesto di OTTO significante "così così") Sei pallido, senza fiato. Perché ti sei alzato? Chiama l'infermiera se hai bisogno di qualcosa... (premuroso) hai bisogno di niente? Acqua, succo d'arancia?... (OTTO fa segno di "no"; un silenzio) Sono un po' in ritardo per il traffico... la nostra sfilata... Ricordi lo scorso anno? Mano nella mano, felici, orgogliosi della nostra relazione, del nostro... (gli prende una mano; esita) ...amore.

OTTO. Chi c'era?

EVAN. Tutti... Jim, Rudolph, Tony, Michael, Pablo... gli anziani... coppie a favore del movimento "gay"... poliziotti, soldati, soldatesse... Un cartello diceva. "Proteggete la nostra ambasciata a Mosca con soldati 'gay'. Vi potete fidare solo di loro". (OTTO sorride) Un cartello applaudito da tutti, entusiasticamente. Divertiva tutti... Vedi? Il nostro senso dell'umorismo non è morto.

Easy Sex
(Tragedy and Irony)

Two One Act Plays by Mario Fratti

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A.I.D.S.

The Persons:

OTTO, a victim of A.I.D.S.

EVAN, his best friend

Today, in New York; a hospital room; the window is open. OTTO is looking with curiosity outside, through a glass-door; he is very sick, very weak; he suddenly turns to run back to his bed; he moves anyhow with difficulty, with pain. he must have seen someone approaching the door. EVAN, his best friend, enters the room.

EVAN. (alarmed, helping him) What are you doing? Why are you up? You shouldn't, you know that... You are too weak... (he succeeds in helping him back into the bed. a silence) How do you feel today? (a vague gesture. OTTO indicates that he feels "so-so") You're so pale, breathless. Why did you get up? Just call the nurse, if you need something... (kindly) Do you need anything? Water, orange juice?.. (OTTO indicates he needs nothing; a silence) I'm late today because of the traffic, because of our Parade... Do you remember last year? We were together, hand in hand, happy, proud of being in that Parade, of our relationship, of our... (he takes his hand. he hesitates)... love.

OTTO. Who was there?

EVAN. Everybody... Jim, Rudolph, Tony, Michael, Pablo... a group of senior citizens, some couples— proud parents of "gays"—... policemen, soldiers—men and women— ... A poster read. "Protect our Embassies with "gay" soldiers. You can trust only them." (OTTO smiles) They were all amused by it and they applauded with enthusiasm. You see? Our sense of humor is not dead.

OTTO. (con una vena di tristezza) Quello non morirà mai, fortunatamente... (un silenzio) Chi ha sfilato, del nostro gruppo?

EVAN. Coppie... Jim e Rudolph, Tony e Pablo, Mark e Phil... La Papessa e la sua nuova fidanzata...

OTTO. David?

EVAN. Non l'ho visto.

OTTO. Art?

EVAN. Sì... in una sedia a rotelle... lo spingeva Moses.

OTTO. Bill?

EVAN. (dopo un'esitazione) Mi han detto che è tornato a casa sua... con la madre.

OTTO. Come sta?

EVAN. (con cautela) Agli sgoccioli, purtroppo... Una settimana, al massimo...

OTTO. E Conrad? È anche lui, lì, con la madre? Tanto, ormai...

EVAN. (esitando) Sono andato al suo funerale, ieri mattina.

OTTO. Perché non me l'hai detto?

EVAN. Non è facile raccontare che...

OTTO. Che ce ne andiamo tutti, uno dopo l'altro, implacabilmente?

EVAN. Non è vero... Io risulto ancora negativo.

OTTO. Per quanto tempo? (Un silenzio) Perdonami...

EVAN. Per sempre, spero.

OTTO. Te lo auguro, per me è finita... (improvvisamente, sorprendendo Evan) Che ti diceva, quel dottore, nel corridoio?

EVAN. (sorpreso, esitando) Ah... quello è il direttore dell'ospedale.

OTTO. Che voleva da te?

EVAN. Uno che sa tutto ed ama chiacchierare, tipi di medicine, costi... Notizie dall'Europa... (OTTO lo fissa intensamente; lo studia) Sembra che stia aumentando enormemente il numero degli eterosessuali colpiti da... Specialmente in Africa... Lì, più del 50% sono eterosessuali... Altro 30%, drogati... Le prostitute a New York, due su tre... i ruffiani sono furiosi... Pochi clienti.... Botte da orbi, poverine... Ne han trovata una - sedicenne - con la gola tagliata.

OTTO. (interrompendo) Che ti ha detto, di me?

EVAN. È al corrente di tutto. Conosce ogni caso. Mi ha detto di quello nella stanza accanto. 10 giorni, al massimo...

OTTO. (with a touch of sadness) That will never die, fortunately. (a silence) Who was in the parade—from our bunch?

EVAN. Couples ... Jim and Rudolph, Tony and Pablo, Mark and Phil... Fat Rose and her new girl friend...

OTTO. David?

EVAN. I didn't see him.

OTTO. Art?

EVAN. Yes... In a wheel-chair... Moses was pushing him ...

OTTO. Bill?

EVAN. (after a hesitation) I was told he went home... to his mother.

OTTO. How is he?

EVAN. (carefully) Not too well... They say it's the end... One more week, maybe...

OTTO. What about Conrad? Is he with him? Was he allowed to—?

EVAN. (interrupting) I went to his funeral, yesterday...

OTTO. Why didn't you tell me?

EVAN. It's not easy to tell a friend that—

OTTO. —That we are all dying, one after the other, implacably?

EVAN. It's not true... I'm still "negative."

OTTO. For how long? (a brief silence) I'm sorry...

EVAN. For ever, I hope.

OTTO. I hope so too. For me ... It's over. (suddenly; surprising EVAN) What was that doctor telling you, in the corridor?

EVAN. (surprised, hesitating) Hah... He is the hospital director...

OTTO. What did he want from you?

EVAN. The kind of guy who knows everything and likes to talk. Medicines, complications, costs, last gossip from Europe ... (OTTO studies him) It seems a huge number of heterosexuals are getting it now. More and more. Especially in Africa. More than thirty per cent are heterosexuals there. Thirty percent, drug-addicts... Prostitutes, two out of three ... The pimps are furious. No business. They beat the poor girls up. One of them—just sixteen—was found with her throat cut—

OTTO. (interrupting) What did he say about me?

EVAN. He knows all the details, every case. He told me the

OTTO. (insistendo) Che ti ha detto, di me?

EVAN. (evitando) ...il tuo caso non è disperato come quello di...

OTTO. (interrompendo) Quanto tempo mi resta?

EVAN. Oh... molto di più. Mi diceva che...

OTTO. (interrompendo) Un mese? Due?

EVAN. (esitando) Mi parlava di prezzi, costi... Dieci giorni, i dieci giorni che restano al tuo vicino, costano all'ospedale più di 12000 dollari...

OTTO. Quante settimane mi restano?

EVAN. Mesi... Ha parlato di mesi.

OTTO. Quanti?

EVAN. (esitando) Sei... Almeno sei...

OTTO. Non mi stai mentendo?

EVAN. No, no...

OTTO. Per amicizia?

EVAN. Per amore, vuoi dire? (gli bacia la mano)

OTTO. Mi stai mentendo, per 'amore'?

EVAN. No... Bisogna essere onesti... Siamo sempre stati onesti, noi due...

OTTO. Lo so. (lo fissa) Ma ti conosco troppo bene. Mi stai nascondendo qualcosa....

EVAN. A che scopo? Se fossero solo dieci giorni, o dieci settimane, perché mentirti? È meglio sapere.

OTTO. È meglio sapere. Dimmi tutto.

EVAN. Te lo giuro sulla nostra relazione, sui meravigliosi ricordi del nostro passato insieme...

OTTO. Sei mesi?

EVAN. Almeno sei mesi, ha detto. Te lo giuro. (un silenzio)

OTTO. Mi stai nascondendo altro, allora. Che cosa?

EVAN. (incerto) No... No...

OTTO. Chi altro è morto? (EVAN gli porge il giornale, aperto sulla pagina delle notizie necrologiche)

EVAN. (mentre OTTO legge) Altri tre. (OTTO legge attentamente) Uno strano trio... un sacerdote, un ballerino e un medico... Leggi quello del medico.

OTTO. Lo conosciamo?

EVAN. No.

OTTO. (leggendo attentamente) Danna la colpa a noi?

poor fellow in the next room is in bad shape. Ten more days, at most...

OTTO. (Insisting) What did he say about me?

EVAN. Your case is not as desperate as—

OTTO. How long?

EVAN. ... much longer. He was telling me that—

OTTO. (interrupting) One month? Two months?

EVAN. (avoiding)... He was mentioning prices, costs... The Hospital is spending more than twelve thousand dollars for the ten days your neighbor has got—

OTTO. What about me? How many more weeks?

EVAN. Months... He said you've got months, many—

OTTO. How many?

EVAN. (hesitating)... Eight, at least...

OTTO. Are you lying to me?

EVAN. No... I'm not.

OTTO. Out of friendship?

EVAN. Out of love, you mean? (kisses his hand)

OTTO. Are you lying to me, "out of love?"

EVAN. No... We have always been honest with each other...

OTTO. I know. (he studies him) But I know you too well not to sense that you're hiding something...

EVAN. Why? If you had only ten days or ten weeks, why would I lie to you? It's always better to know.

OTTO. It's better. Tell me everything.

EVAN. I swear it on our relationship, on the wonderful memories we share.

OTTO. Eight months?

EVAN. At least—he said. Cross my heart. (a silence)

OTTO. You're hiding something else, then... What?

EVAN. (uncertain) No... I don't...

OTTO. Who else died? (EVAN hands him a newspaper, open on the obits.)

EVAN. (while OTTO is reading) Three more. (OTTO reads carefully) A strange trio... A priest, a dancer and a doctor... Read the one about the doctor.

OTTO. Someone we know?

EVAN. No.

OTTO. (reading carefully) Are they blaming us?

EVAN. No.

OTTO. (continuando a leggere) Meno male... ah.

EVAN. Ha avuto coraggio, no?

OTTO. Non è il primo. (pensa; riflette)

EVAN. (con curiosità) A che pensi?

OTTO. Al come ha fatto. Un salto e basta.

EVAN. Ha voluto evitare gli ultimi giorni, l'agonia... Dovresti vedere quello alla 911... fa paura.

OTTO. A chi?

EVAN. (incerto; a disagio) A chi lo vede... Infermieri, amici...

OTTO. Ha ancora amici? Non ho mai visto nessuno venire a visitarlo.

EVAN. Nemmeno io... non è di queste parti. Viene dal Texas... (un silenzio; si fissano)

OTTO. A che pensi?

EVAN. Niente, niente...

OTTO. So che ti annoi, qui.

EVAN. Annoiarmi, con te? Mai!

OTTO. Forse hai qualcosa da fare, urgente...

EVAN. No, assolutamente nulla. Posso restare con te l'intero pomeriggio. Fino a che mi caccian fuori. Con la forza, a pedate. (un silenzio)

OTTO. So che mi nascondi qualcosa.

EVAN. Sai. Che sai? Chi te l'ha detto?

OTTO. Ho visto.

EVAN. Che hai visto?

OTTO. Là fuori, nel corridoio.

EVAN. Che hai visto?

OTTO. Il medico, il direttore ti ha dato una busta. Che tipo di busta? Un altro conto?

EVAN. Oh no! Sanno che non possiamo pagar più niente. Hai venduto l'appartamento, i quadri, i mobili. Non possono costringer me a vender niente... (sorridendo amaramente) Non sono - secondo la legge - un parente stretto. Che ironia, vero? Sono il tuo amico più intimo e non sono considerato di famiglia!

OTTO. Son capaci di tutto. Ti han forse ricattato. O paghi oppure...

EVAN. Oppure...? Che potrebbero farmi?

EVAN. No.

OTTO. (still reading) We are lucky this time... They blame us for everything... (discovering something) Hah.

EVAN. He showed guts, didn't he?

OTTO. He is not the first one. (he thinks; reflects)

EVAN. (curious) What are you thinking about?

OTTO. How he did it. Just a plunge into nothingness.

EVAN. He wanted to avoid the agony of the last days... You should see the guy in room 911... Frightening.

OTTO. To whom?

EVAN. (uneasy) To those who see him... Orderlies, friends
...

OTTO. Does he still have friends? I never saw anyone visiting him.

EVAN. He's not from around here. He comes from Texas. (a silence. they stare at each other)

OTTO. What are you thinking about?

EVAN. (vague) Nothing.

OTTO. If you're getting bored, just go.

EVAN. Me, bored? With you? Never!

OTTO. Maybe you've something to do, something urgent.

EVAN. Nothing, absolutely nothing. I can stay here the whole afternoon. For as long as they allow me. Until they kick me out. (a pause)

OTTO. I know you're hiding something from me.

EVAN. You know? What do you know? Who told you?

OTTO. I saw.

EVAN. What did you see?

OTTO. Outside, in the corridor.

EVAN. What did you see?

OTTO. That doctor—the director—gave you an envelope. What kind of envelope? Another bill?

EVAN. Oh no! They know we can't afford it any longer. You've sold your apartment, paintings, your furniture. They can't force me to sell anything... (smiling bitterly) I am not—according to the Law—a relative. What an irony! I am your most intimate friend and I'm not considered part of the family!

OTTO. Maybe they're blackmailing you. Either you pay or...?

EVAN. Or...? What can they do to me?

OTTO. A te, niente, forse... A me...

EVAN. Che cosa? (scherzando) Avvelenarti?

OTTO. Buttarmi in strada. Ce ne son tanti, malati e senza-tetto...

EVAN. Non in un caso come il tuo. Hai me, qui, a difenderti. Quelli che han buttati sul lastrico non avevano nessuno.

OTTO. (improvvisamente, di nuovo; una domanda precisa e diretta) Che c'è in quella busta?

EVAN. (vago) Numeri, statistiche... Mi ha spiegato che costate più di mille dollari al giorno, all'ospedale. Han paura di andar bancarotta. (ironico) Lo meriterebbero. Pensano solo e sempre al "profitto".

OTTO. (riflettendo, calcolando) Sei mesi... se è vero sono più di duecentomila dollari...

EVAN. È quel che calcolano. Esagerano, forse...

OTTO. Forse. Sei d'accordo con loro?

EVAN. (incerto) No... Ma si legge in molti giornali...

Dev'esser vero.

OTTO. Che cosa?

EVAN. I mille dollari al giorno.

OTTO. E allora? ... (una breve pausa) Fammi vedere la busta, le statistiche. Lo sai che i numeri mi son sempre piaciuti.

EVAN. (cercando di cambiar argomento) Il nostro numero preferito?

OTTO. (con una vena di tristezza) Otto... Dovrei avere almeno otto mesi, ancora, se ci fosse giustizia a questo mondo...

EVAN. C'incontrammo l'otto... giorno del tuo compleanno... Siamo nati tutti e due in agosto – contenente il numero otto... I primi mesi ci scambiavamo sempre regali l'otto...

OTTO. Solo i primi mesi.

EVAN. Per un paio d'anni. Poi decidemmo – pieno accordo – di smettere... Troppe cravatte, camicie, mutandine, cioccolatini... Decidemmo di perder peso, ricordi?

OTTO. (con senso dell'umorismo) Io ci son riuscito, vedi? Ho perduto ventinove chili. (EVAN, commosso, si alza e gli bacia la fronte)

EVAN. Ventotto mi dickesti.

OTTO. Mi son ripesato. Son ventinove, adesso... (un silenzio; insistendo) Che c'è in quella busta?

OTTO. Nothing to you. Maybe to me ...

EVAN. What? (joking) Poison you?

OTTO. Throw me into the street. There are so many sick people... Homeless, in the streets of New York.

EVAN. They can't do that to you. I'm around. I'll defend you. The ones they kicked out had no one to protect them, to defend them.

OTTO. (suddenly, again; a precise question) What's in that envelope?

EVAN. (vague) Figures, statistics. He explained that each one of you costs more than one thousand dollars a day to the Hospital. They are afraid to go bankrupt. (Ironical) They deserve to. They should. They are only interested in "profits."

OTTO. (thinking it over, calculating in his mind) Six months ... If it's true, it's over two hundred thousand dollars...

EVAN. It's what they say. They always exaggerate.

OTTO. Do you agree on that figure?

EVAN. (uncertain) Well... Many papers mention that figure. It must be true... One thousand a day, at least.

OTTO. All right. Show me those statistics, that envelope. You know I love numbers.

EVAN. (trying to change the subject) What's OUR number?

OTTO. (with a touch of sadness) Eight... I should have at least eight months. If there were any justice in this world... (they smile)

EVAN. We met on the eighth – your birthday... We were both born in August – the eighth month. When traveling, we always asked for the eighth floor – a room containing number eight... The first months we always exchanged gifts on the eight –

OTTO. Only the first months.

EVAN. Then we decided together – full agreement – to stop... Too many neckties, shirts, underwear, chocolates... We decided to lose weight, remember?

OTTO. (with a sense of humor) I succeeded, look at me. I've lost forty-nine pounds. (EVAN, moved, kisses his forehead)

EVAN. You told me. forty-eight.

OTTO. That was yesterday. (a silence)

OTTO. (insisting) What's in that envelope?

EVAN. (dopo un'esitazione) Ti sembrerà strano... un assegno.

OTTO. (sorpreso) Un assegno? Che è successo? Hanno avuto una crisi di coscienza e ti han rimborsato? Lo vedi? C'è un po' di giustizia a questo mondo ed io son colpevole di diffidenza. Sono stato troppo frettoloso nel condannare ospedali e società! Quanto ci han dato? Hanno ammesso di aver sbagliato i conti? (un silenzio; EVAN non reagisce) Fammi vedere. Ti faccio la verifica in tre minuti. Quanto abbiamo pagato, quanto ti han restituito - se ci stanno imbrogliando.

EVAN. (dopo un'esitazione) Non è un rimborso.

OTTO. Che è allora? Un premio di buona condotta? Non do guai, io, alle infermiere. Sto quieto quieto, come un bravo topolino.

EVAN. (dopo un'esitazione) Una strana, bizzarra... proposta.

OTTO. Soldi o proposta?

EVAN. Tutt'e due.

OTTO. Cioè?

EVAN. Una certa cifra se... la proposta è accettabile.

OTTO. Quanto?

EVAN. (dopo un'esitazione) Trentamila.

OTTO. (sorpresissimo) Una fortuna, per noi. Che proposta? Hai detto "sì"? Di' sì senz'altro. Quei soldi ci servono.

EVAN. Una proposta... assurda.

OTTO. Accettala lo stesso. Quel che conta è aver soldi, oggi. Nel mio testamento non c'è più nulla per te. Che devi fare per quei ventimila?

EVAN. ...non sono per noi... son per la Fondazione AIDS...

OTTO. (sorpresa) Ah... strano... un suo dono personale? Che ha preso l'AIDS? Suo figlio? Suo fratello?

EVAN. Non è un suo dono personale... viene da una banca... un fondo speciale.

OTTO. Per che cosa? A quale scopo? Crisi di coscienza? Colpevolezza? Si vergognano di far pagare più di mille dollari per una stanza d'ospedale? (un silenzio) Spiega la proposta. (un silenzio) C'entro anch'io? (EVAN annuisce. Tira fuori la busta e si accinge a strapparla)

EVAN. Io la strizzo e non se ne parla più.

OTTO. (intervenendo) No! Prima di buttar via trentamila dollari parlami di quella proposta. Nella quale sono incluso pure io.

EVAN. (hesitating) It will seem strange, to you ... A check.

OTTO. (surprised) A check? What happened? They feel guilty, all of a sudden, and they are reimbursing us? You see? There is some justice in this world! And I should be ashamed of myself I was in such a hurry to condemn hospitals and society! How much are we getting back? Did they admit they overcharged? (a silence; EVAN is motionless) Let me see. I'll figure everything in three minutes. How much we paid, how much we are getting back; and if they are shortchanging us.

EVAN. (hesitating) It's no reimbursement.

OTTO. What is it, then? Some award for good behavior? I'm no trouble here. I'm as quiet as a little tiny mouse.

EVAN. (carefully) An unusual, weird... proposal.

OTTO. Is it money or a proposal?

EVAN. Both.

OTTO. That is?

EVAN. A certain amount if... the proposal is... acceptable.

OTTO. How much?

EVAN. ...Thirty thousand.

OTTO. (very surprised) That's a fortune, for us. What kind of proposal? Did you accept it? Say "yes" right away. We need that money.

EVAN. The proposal is ... absurd.

OTTO. Accept it all the same. What's important today is that money. In my will there is nothing left for you. What do they want from us? What must we do?

EVAN. The money is not for us. It's for the A.I.D.S. Foundation.

OTTO. (surprised) Hah... That's strange... His personal gift? Who caught A.I.D.S.? His son? His brother?

EVAN. It's not a personal gift... It comes from a Bank. Some special fund...

OTTO. For what? What purpose? A moral crisis? Guilt? Are they ashamed they're charging one thousand dollars a day for a dump like this? (a pause) Explain the proposal. (a pause) Am I part of it? (Evan nods. He finally shows the envelope. he is ready to tear it up.)

EVAN. Let's tear it up and forget the whole thing.

OTTO. (intervening) No! You can't throw away thirty thou-

EVAN. (lentamente, con cautela) Sai come sono questi direttori d'ospedale... calcolatori, metodici. Han la mentalità di un ragioniere... conti, calcoli, bilanci, paura di essere licenziati, se non creano profitto...

OTTO. Che ti ha detto?

EVAN. Che... in linea di massima... siccome... (non riesce a esprimersi con chiarezza)

OTTO. Dimmi un po'. Questa proposta l'ha fatta anche al vicino? Quello che muore entro dieci giorni?

EVAN. No.

OTTO. (lentamente) Comincio a capire... la proposta è solo per quelli che hanno otto mesi di vita... (EVAN non osa guardarla negli occhi, non ha il coraggio di correggerlo) Le pillole? Ti ha dato pure le pillole?

EVAN. Che pillole?

OTTO. Il veleno che devi darmi.

EVAN. Oh no. La situazione è... volontaria, puramente volontaria.

OTTO. E va bene! Mi faccio volontario! Dove sono! Le prendo da solo, "volontariamente".

EVAN. Niente pillole. Lui non fornisce nulla.

OTTO. (ironico) Che gentiluomo!

EVAN. Non vuol essere coinvolto...

OTTO. Naturalmente.

EVAN. È stato... corretto, in un certo senso.

OTTO. (ironico) Correttissimo.

EVAN. Mi ha spiegato - con cortese distacco - vantaggi e svantaggi.

OTTO. Parlami degli svantaggi.

EVAN. Gli ultimi giorni sono... terribili.

OTTO. Lo so. Agonia infernale. Ci ho pensato.

EVAN. A che?

OTTO. All'agonia, al come evitarla. (un silenzio; si fissano) Come vedi, han letto i miei pensieri... Han capito, intuito.

EVAN. Che cosa?

OTTO. Quell'agonia non la voglio... quel medico (indica il giornale), il suo metodo - salto nel vuoto - dal decimo piano... ci ho già pensato mille volte... (fissano entrambi la finestra; un penoso silenzio) Fammi vedere quell'assegno.

sand like that... I must know. I'm involved in this. It's about me too—you said so.

EVAN. (slowly, carefully) You know how they think—these Hospital Directors... They're just accountants... They figure out the best budget, they are afraid to be fired if they don't make a profit...

OTTO. What did he tell you?

EVAN. (uncertain, slowly) That... as a rule... because of... considering ... (he cannot express himself clearly)

OTTO. Tell me something. Did he give the same proposal to the guy next door—the one who has just ten days left?

EVAN. No.

OTTO. (slowly) I begin to understand... That proposal is only for the ones who have eight more months to live. (EVAN does not dare look into his eyes. he knows OTTO has understood.) The pills? Did he give you the pills?

EVAN. What pills?

OTTO. The poison you're supposed to give me.

EVAN. Oh no! The situation is ... optional, absolutely optional.

OTTO. All right. I'll volunteer for it! Where are the pills? I'll take them voluntarily.

EVAN. No pills. He doesn't supply anything.

OTTO. (ironical) What a gentleman!

EVAN. He does not want to be involved in...

OTTO. Naturally!

EVAN. He is being... correct, in a way.

OTTO. Very correct.

EVAN. He explained—with polite detachment—advantages and disadvantages.

OTTO. Tell me about the disadvantages.

EVAN. The last days are... terrible.

OTTO. (bitterly ironical) I know. An infernal agony. I thought about it.

EVAN. About what?

OTTO. The agony. How to avoid it. (a silence. they look at each other) As you can see, they have read my thoughts, they have guessed.

EVAN. Guessed what?

EVAN. (porgendoglielo) Eccolo. (OTTO apre la busta e fissa l'assegno) Strappalo.

OTTO. Non è intestato...

EVAN. Strappalo.

OTTO. A chi dovremmo intestarlo, secondo lui?

EVAN. Dallo a me. Lo strappo io.

OTTO. (insistendo) A chi?

EVAN. (dopo una pausa) Alla fondazione AIDS.

OTTO. (lentamente, fissandolo) No...

EVAN. Distruggiamolo.

OTTO. Ti ha dato una scelta, evidentemente.

EVAN. Che scelta?

OTTO. Potresti mettere il nome tuo...

EVAN. Oh no! Mai!

OTTO. (calmo, fermamente) E' il mio ultimo desiderio... non puoi dir no... devi mettere il tuo nome... (EVAN, con le lacrime agli occhi, scuote il capo)

EVAN. No... No...

OTTO. Devi... è il mio ultimo dono, per te... (si stringono, convulsamente, le mani; EVAN bacia la mano di OTTO; fissano entrambi la finestra aperta; vien messa a fuoco da una luce di scena)

- immobilità -

- sipario -

OTTO. That I don't want that agony... That doctor (indicates the newspaper) — his method — a sudden jump from the tenth floor... I thought about that a thousand times... (they both stare at the window; a painful silence) Show me the check.

EVAN. (handing him the envelope) Here it is... (OTTO opens the envelope and stares at the check.) Tear it up.

OTTO. It is not made out to anyone...

EVAN. Tear it up!

OTTO. To whom should we... make it out, in his opinion?

EVAN. Give it to me. I'll tear it up myself.

OTTO. (insisting) To whom?

EVAN. (after a pause) To the A.I.D.S. Foundation.

OTTO. (slowly, staring at EVAN) No...

EVAN. Let's destroy it!

OTTO. He gave you a choice, obviously.

EVAN. What choice?

OTTO. (slowly, studying him) You could put your name, here

...

EVAN. No! Never!

OTTO. (calm; determined) It is my last desire ... You cannot say no to my last wish... You MUST put your name here... it is for you... (EVAN, tears in his eyes, shakes his head.)

EVAN. No... No ...

OTTO. YOU MUST... It's my last gift, to you... (They hold hands tightly, desperately. EVAN kisses OTTO's hand. They both stare at the open window. A spotlight illuminates the window. Tableau. Blackout.)

- immobility, curtain -

IL SALVADANAIO

Le persone:

UOMO - trentenne

LEI - una bella ventiquattrenne

CLIENTE - un timido quarantenne

Una stanza modestamente arredata, a New York. Un letto, un tavolo, tre sedie, un acquaio, una tenda che nasconde un angolo della stanza. Un UOMO sta fumando e guardando la televisione. Sente dei passi che si avvicinano. Mette rapidamente la sigaretta nel portacenere; spegne la televisione; si nasconde dietro la tenda. La luce resta accesa. LEI ed il CLIENTE entrano.

LUI. (sospettoso) Vivi sola?

LEI. Sola. Ho lasciato la luce accesa perché sapevo di tornar subito.

LUI. Subito? Non sapevi di certo che sarei venuto io.

LEI. Tu o un altro. In dieci minuti, al massimo... (si studiano; lui nota improvvisamente che la sigaretta emette ancora del fumo)

LUI. (allarmato) La sigaretta! C'è qualcuno qui! (si guarda dattorno con timore)

LEI. È la mia! Fumo sempre una sigaretta dopo... (indica il letto) quel tipo d'attività! Ma lascio poi qui il mozzicone. Non è corretto, per una signora, fumar per la strada.

LUI. Perche'?

LEI. Le donne sposate non fumano in strada. Io sono sposata.

LUI. Lo sei?

LEI. Che cosa ti ha fatto pensare che non lo fossi? Che ti aspettavi? Una vergine?

LUI. Pensavo che... sei ancora sposata?

LEI. (vagamente) Non lo siam tutti, in un certo senso?

LUI. In un certo senso...

LEI. Tua moglie, fuma per la strada? O nei ristoranti? Usa parolacce? Ti dà tutto, in letto? Non sarebbe una vera "signora", se lo facesse!

THE PIGGY BANK

The Persons:

MAN - in his thirties

SHE - a beautiful woman in her mid-twenties

CLIENT - a timid man in his forties

Today. New York City. A modestly furnished room in a New York apartment. A bed. A table, three chairs, a wash-basin and a curtain that hides a corner of the room. A man is smoking and watching television. He hears footsteps approaching. He quickly puts out his cigarette in the ashtray; he turns off the television and hides behind the curtain. The light remains on. SHE and the Client enter.

HE. (looking around) You live alone?

SHE. I do. I left the light on because I knew I'd be back right away.

HE. (surprised) "Right away"?... You didn't know you would meet me.

SHE. You or someone else. (They study each other. He suddenly notices that the cigarette is still burning.)

HE. (alarmed) The cigarette—there! Someone is here! (He looks around, frightened.)

SHE. That's mine. I always smoke a cigarette after that... (She indicates the bed) I leave it here ... It doesn't look good to smoke in the streets...

HE. Why?

SHE. Married ladies don't. I'm married.

HE. You are?

SHE. What made you think I wasn't? What did you expect? A virgin?

HE. No. I was just... Are you "still" married?

SHE. (vague) Aren't we all - somehow?

HE. Somehow... (He looks around. He is still worried.)

SHE. Does your wife smoke in the streets? Or in restaurants? Does she curse? Does she do "everything" in bed? She wouldn't

- LUI. È via... una lunga vacanza...
- LEI. Per quanto tempo?
- LUI. Sei settimane -
- LEI. Venticinque dollari, la prima volta. Venti, la seconda.
- LUI. Perché meno, la seconda volta?
- LEI. Dopo la prima valgo meno, no?
- LUI. In un certo senso -
- LEI. È' come se fossi tua moglie. Anticipati.
- LUI. Che cosa?
- LEI. I venticinque. (il CLIENTE estrae venticinque dollari e li porge) (indicando un salvadanaio che è sul comò) Lì dentro, per favore. Non li tocco mai, io, i soldi. Rovinano la poesia dell'amplesso. (indica se stessa e il CLIENTE) (il CLIENTE mette il denaro nel porcellino. Lo ammira per un momento. Nota che è inamovibile, parte integrante del comò)
- LUI. Non... non si muove.
- LEI. Incollato al comò. I soldi van dentro, nel primo cassetto. Che è chiuso a chiave. E la chiave l'ho buttata nel fiume. Li toccherò solo quando sarò vecchia, quei soldi. Se ne avrò bisogno.
- LUI. E le spese? Per vivere?
- LEI. Mi fa piacere... sei premuroso.
- LUI. Mi preoccupo... come tiri avanti?
- LEI. I primi due clienti, la mattina, mettono i soldi vicino al porcellino, che tengo coperto con queste. (mostra un paio di mutandine nere)
- LUI. (curioso) I primi due...
- LEI. Solo i primi due. Cinquanta dollari al giorno son più che sufficienti.
- LUI. Modestamente...
- LEI. Vuoi una tazza di caffè?
- LUI. Se è pronto... (timidamente) Dove lo lavo?

be a well brought-up lady if she did... (a brief silence; she studies him; he avoids her eyes.)

HE. She's away... a long vacation ...

SHE. How long?

HE. Six weeks —

SHE. Twenty-five dollars for the first time. Twenty for the second.

HE. Why less the second time?

SHE. After the first time the novelty is gone. Isn't it?

HE. In a way—

SHE. It's as if I were your wife. In advance.

HE. What?

SHE. The twenty-five. (The Client hands her two bills. She indicates the piggy bank on her dresser.)

SHE. In there. I never touch the money. It would spoil the beauty of our... encounter. (She studies him, vaguely sarcastic) (The Client puts the money in the piggy bank. He admires it for a moment and notices that it cannot be removed. It is part of the dresser—stuck.)

HE. (surprised) It doesn't... move.

SHE. Specially built. Part of the dresser. The money goes inside the first drawer. I locked it and threw the key away. I will use that money when I grow old. If I need it.

HE. (surprised) What about your living expenses?

SHE. Nice... You, care.

HE. I care... How do you manage?

SHE. In the morning, the first two clients put the money near the piggy bank. I keep it covered. (shows a pair of black panties)

HE. The first two...

SHE. Only the first two. Fifty dollars a day is more than enough for me... I live modestly.

HE. (looking around) Modestly...

SHE. Would you like a cup of coffee?

HE. If it's ready... (timidly) Don't you want to wash me, first...?

SHE. (after a short hesitation) Wash what?

- LEI. Che cosa?
- LUI. (indicandosi) Il... il mio fratellino, che già ti desidera...
- LEI. Lavatelo tu.
- LUI. Dove?
- LEI. (vaga) Lì. (indica l'acquaio) (il CLIENTE va a lavarsi.)
- LEI lo ignora completamente. Prepara due tazze di caffè.)
- LUI. Non sei un po'... curiosa?
- LEI. No. (le due tazze sono pronte. LEI si siede al tavolo e lo attende.)
- LUI. (cercando di scherzare) Non siamo creati tutti uguali... la curiosità è umana (lei lo ignora completamente). Non hai fretta di...?
- LEI. (invitandolo a sedersi) No. (LUI si siede. LEI l'osserva. Lo invita a bere.) Dove l'hai mandata tua moglie?
- LUI. In California. E tuo... tuo marito?
- LEI. Qui.
- LUI. (allarmatissimo) Qui?
- LEI. In città.
- LUI. (allarmatissimo) Pensi che... potrebbe...? (indica la porta)
- LEI. Torna sempre a mezzanotte.
- LUI. (dopo averla osservata per alcuni istanti) Sa che tu...?
- LEI. Non ne sono sicura.
- LUI. Che vuoi dire? Lo sa o non lo sa?
- LEI. Suppongo di sì. Se no tornerebbe a casa prima...
- LUI. Vuoi dire che... potrebbe tornar prima?
- LEI. Potrebbe (un silenzio)
- LUI. Non è che lavora in qualche posto, fino a mezzanotte?
- LEI. Non lavora.
- LUI. Ed accetta i frutti del tuo... lavoro?
- LEI. Gli feci credere che ero ricca quando eravamo fidanzati. Per farmi sposare. Così quando vede i cinquanta dollari, li prende e va a far le spese.

HE. (timidly) ... My ... It's ready, full of desire...

SHE. Wash it yourself.

HE. (lost, disappointed) Where?

SHE. In there... (shows the basin or sink) (The Client meekly goes to wash himself. She ignores him completely. She prepares two cups of coffee.)

HE. Aren't you a bit curious?

SHE. No.

HE. (trying to joke) We are not created equal and... curiosity is human. (She ignores him completely. The two cups of coffee are ready. She sits down at the table and waits for him. He is puzzled. He does not know what to do.) Aren't you in a hurry to...?

SHE. (signaling him to sit) No. (He sits down. She observes him and invites him to drink) Where did you send your wife?

HE. To California ... (a silence) And your husband?

SHE. He's here.

HE. (jumping up, alarmed) Here?

SHE. In the city.

HE. (worried) You think he... could...? (indicates the door)

SHE. He comes home at midnight.

HE. (worried, studying her) He knows that you...?

SHE. I'm not sure.

HE. What do you mean? Does he or doesn't he?

SHE. I think he does. That's why he comes home late.

HE. (worried) You mean to say... He could... he could show up early.

SHE. He could. (a silence)

HE. What ... what does he do until midnight? Does he work somewhere?

SHE. He doesn't work.

HE. And he ... he accepts the profits of your... "encounters"?

SHE. I made him believe I was rich when I first met him. So he would marry me. When he sees the fifty dollars he takes for granted they come from me. He takes them and goes shopping.

HE. But he must know they come from somewhere. Friends or maybe—

SHE. An inheritance. He's the quiet type. He accepts eve-

- LUI. Ma sa che vengono da qualche parte. Amici o...
- LEI. O forse un'eredità. È un tipo taciturno. Accetta tutto, senza far mai domande. Ma parliamo un po' di te, adesso.
- LUI. (sempre teso e preoccupato) Ma potrebbe, eventualmente, tornare alle nove?
- LEI. Potrebbe. Non l'ha mai fatto finora.
- LUI. Ma potrebbe! Questa sera, per esempio... che fa fino a mezzanotte? Dove va?
- LEI. Non lo so. Non ne parla mai. Hai figli?
- LUI. Sì. E tu?
- LEI. Non gli piacciono. Quanti ne hai?
- LUI. (dopo un indugio; non ha voglia di parlare della sua famiglia) Tre.
- LEI. Fammi vedere le foto.
- LUI. (dopo un indugio) Non ne ho.
- LEI. Peccato! A me piacciono i bambini. (lo fissa) E mi piacciono gli uomini che hanno addosso le foto dei loro figli. Do loro di più.
- LUI. (interessato) Che vuoi dire?
- LEI. Lo sai quel che voglio dire. Ci metto tutta me stessa.
- LUI. Più passione, vuoi dire? Reagisci con più... amore?
- LEI. Esattamente. Fammi vedere le fotografie.
- LUI. (dopo un silenzio) Come fai a sapere che le ho con me?
- LEI. Sei il tipo.
- LUI. Che cosa intendi per "tipo"?
- LEI. Il bravo padre di famiglia. (LUI indugia) Che hai paura? Che le contamini?
- LUI. (prontamente) Oh no! (altro breve indugio)
- LEI. Mettile sul tavolo. Voglio solo vederle! Non le tocco. (LUI, galantemente, le mette nelle mani della donna) Belle. Specialmente le due ragazze. Quanti anni hanno?
- LUI. Diciotto, sedici, quattordici.
- LEI. Come si chiama il maschio?
- LUI. Vito. (indicando) Donata e Rosalia.
- LEI. (velatamente ironica) Originali.

rything without ever asking a question. But let's talk about you.

HE. (still tense and worried) But he could come back, let's say — at nine o'clock?

SHE. He could. But he has never done it before.

HE. (nervous) There's always a first time... What does he do until midnight? Where does he go?

SHE. I don't know. He never tells me. Do you have any children?

HE. Yes and you?

SHE. He doesn't like them. How many do you have?

HE. (reluctant) Three.

SHE. Let me see their pictures.

HE. (after a brief hesitation) I don't have them.

SHE. Too bad. I like children. (she observes him) And I like men who have pictures of their children on them. I give more.

HE. (interested) What do you mean?

SHE. You know what I mean. I put all I've got into it.

HE. You mean — more passion? More... love?

SHE. You guessed. Let me see the pictures.

HE. (after a silence) How do you know I have them with me?

SHE. You're the type.

HE. What do you mean — "type"? ...

SHE. A good father. (a silence; he hesitates) What are you afraid of? That I'll contaminate them?

HE. Oh no! (another brief silence)

SHE. Put them on the table. I only want to see them. I will not touch them. (He gallantly puts them in her hand.) Beautiful. Especially the two girls. How old are they?

HE. Eighteen, sixteen, fourteen.

SHE. What's the boy's name?

HE. Vito. (indicating) Donata and Rosalia.

SHE. (vaguely ironic) Original.

HE. My wife chose them.

SHE. Do you have her picture too?

HE. I'm here to forget her. (pockets the pictures again) Why don't we...? (indicates the bed)

SHE. (pretending not to understand) Why don't we what? (He makes the gesture. she pretends to be nearsighted)

- LUI. (giustificandosi) Scelti da mia moglie...
- LEI. Hai la foto di tua moglie?
- LUI. Son qui per dimenticarla. Perché non... (indica il letto)
- LEI. (fingendo di non capire) Perché non? (LUI fa il gesto.
- LEI finge di essere miope)
- LUI. ...quel per cui ho pagato in anticipo.
- LEI. (scattando in piedi, offesa) Eccomi qua! La vuoi sulla tavola o in piedi? Son pronta! (LUI è di nuovo a disagio; LEI, addolcendo il tono) Ma perché rovinar tutto con la fretta? Dove devi correre?
- LUI. (a disagio) In nessun posto, ma...
- LEI. Ma...? Che t'è successo? Non puoi proprio resistere?
- Quando hai fatto l'amore l'ultima volta?
- LUI. Pochi giorni fa. Non è per quello...
- LEI. Perché tanta fretta, allora? Conosciamoci un po' meglio. È nel tuo interesse.
- LUI. Mio interesse?
- LEI. (ammiccando) Esattamente.
- LUI. (dopo un breve silenzio, non sapendo che dire) Tu... non hai fretta?
- LEI. No.
- LUI. Le altre...
- LEI. Le "altre"?
- LUI. Han tutte fretta.
- LEI. A loro non piace quel che fanno. Non sentono niente.
- LUI. (fissandola) E tu?
- LEI. A me piace se l'uomo lo conosco e lo rispetto. Voglio godermela, io! (indica il letto con il movimento del capo)
- LUI. (lusingato) Grazie... grazie, ma... non son ricco, purtroppo... Avevo solo quei venticinque, con me... Non perdi denaro restando qui, a parlar con me?
- LEI. Ne ho già avuti trentuno, oggi. Non ne voglio altri. Mi piaci tu. (lo fissa e gli sorride)
- LUI. (sorpreso e turbato) Trentuno. Sei sicura?
- LEI. Li conto sempre. Vuoi vedere? (mostra una rubrica; la pagina ha trentuno croci rosse; lei ne aggiunge una) e tu sei il trentaduesimo!

HE. ...what I paid you in advance for.

SHE. (standing up, offended) Here I am! You want it on the table or standing up? I'm ready! (He is again uneasy.) (kinder) Why the rush? Why ruin everything?

HE. (uneasy) I'm sorry... I thought —

SHE. What's wrong with you? Can't you control yourself? When was the last time you had sex?

HE. A few days ago. It's not that —

SHE. Why the hurry then? Lets get to know each other. It's in your interest.

HE. (curious) My interest?

SHE. That's what I said. (they study each other; he is uneasy.)

HE. Aren't you in a hurry?

SHE. No.

HE. The others...

SHE. The "others"?

HE. —they're all in a great hurry.

SHE. Because they don't like what they're doing. They don't feel anything.

HE. And you?

SHE. I like it. Especially when I know and respect my partner. I want to enjoy it too.

HE. (confused and flattered) Thank you... Thank you but... I'm not rich... I only had those twenty-five. I know the price and ... Don't you lose money staying here - talking?

SHE. I already had thirty-one today. I don't need more. I like you. (she smiles at him)

HE. (uneasy, shocked) Thirty-one... Are you sure?

SHE. I always count them; you want to see? (She shows him a booklet; the page has thirty-one red x's; she adds another) And you make thirty-two!

HE. Does your husband ever see those x's?

SHE. Once. I told him they were kisses — kisses for him. He smiled.

HE. He believed you?

SHE. I think he did. (they study each other)

HE. With those... "partners" did you talk this much before ...? (indicates the bed)

LUI. Tuo marito, le vede mai quelle croci?

LEI. Una volta. Gli ho detto che eran baci, baci per lui. Non ha domandato altro.

LUI. (incredulo) Ti ha creduta?

LEI. Mi ha creduta. (LUI la studia)

LUI. Con gli altri... (indica la rubrica) parli tutto questo tempo, prima?

LEI. Solo con quelli che mi piacciono. I tipi che avrei sognato di sposare, eventualmente. Il sesso è orribile senza amore.

LUI. (confuso, ma vagamente lusingato) Grazie... Te le han mostrate anche gli altri le foto dei figli?

LEI. Solo i migliori. I bravi padri e mariti. Ed io li premio. Gli altri, li punisco.

LUI. (sorpreso e vagamente allarmato) Come?

LEI. Ci sono mille modi.

LUI. Quali modi?

LEI. Lo sai.

LUI. A me, che avresti fatto se non ti avessi mostrato le foto? (LEI lo studia con un sorrisetto ironico) Dammelo per favore. Sono il tipo curioso.

LEI. Non conviene essere curiosi, a volte.

LUI. Per favore...

LEI. Meglio non saperlo. Tanto non ti succederà. (il CLIENTE è a disagio. Ha paura. Pensa con orrore che, se non avesse mostrato le foto, gli avrebbe forse...) Dimmi un po'. A quanti anni hai avuto la tua prima donna? Era vergine?

LUI. (studiandola; vagamente offeso da tanta curiosità) Come mai vuoi sapere tutti i particolari della mia vita?

LEI. Te l'ho detto. Mi piaci. Voglio saper quindi tutto di te.

LUI. Tutto? Ci vorrebbero ore ed io non posso di certo restar qui fino al ritorno di tuo marito.

SHE. Only with the ones I like. Types I would have dreamt of marrying... Sex is awful without love.

HE. (confused, vaguely flattered) Thank you... Did they show you their pictures? Their children?

SHE. Only the best ones. Good fathers and husbands. Those I reward. The other ones, I punish.

HE. (worried) Punish? How?

SHE. There are a thousand ways.

HE. What ways?

SHE. (straight in his eyes) You know. (a silence)

HE. If I hadn't shown you the pictures ... what would you have done to me? (she studies him; an ironic smile.) Please tell me. I'm curious. (a silence) Please.

SHE. It doesn't pay to be curious at times... (she is very mysterious)

HE. Please.

SHE. (mysterious) Some things are better left unsaid... Anyway ... it won't happen to you. (The Client is uneasy. He's afraid but at the same time curious. He thinks with horror that if he had not shown her the pictures, she might have...) Tell me something... How old were you when you had your first woman? Was she a virgin?

HE. (studying her, annoyed by her curiosity) How come you want to know all these details about me?

SHE. I told you, I like you. I want to know everything about you.

HE. That would take hours... I can't obviously stay until your husband comes back.

SHE. We have three hours. We'll enjoy it all the way, like two real lovers, two passionate lovers who met again after —

HE. (interrupting) Three hours?

SHE. Or less, if you prefer. Until you get tired. Whichever way you like it. It's the man who chooses positions, intensity, duration. It will be up to you.

HE. To the other — the one before me. (indicates the ash-tray) How much time did you give?

SHE. I didn't like him. A fat business man. A Nigger. Only a few minutes.

LEI. Abbiamo quasi tre ore. Ce le godremo fino in fondo. Come due veri amanti, due appassionati amanti che si ritrovano dopo una lunga separazione!

LUI. (vagamente impaurito) Tre ore?

LEI. O un po' meno, se preferisci. Fino a che ti stanchi... come preferisci tu, comunque. È l'uomo che decide intensità, posizioni, durata. Toccherà a te.

LUI. All'altro, quello prima di me (indica il portacenere), quanto tempo hai dato?

LEI. Ah, quello? Un grasso uomo d'affari. Negro. Non mi piaceva. Solo pochi minuti.

LUI. Ne-negro? Accetti anche loro, fra i tuoi clienti?

LEI. Uomini come gli altri... se pagano!

LUI. Come gli altri, dici tu... si sente dire che son diversi.

LEI. Sessualmente, vuoi dire?

LUI. Sessualmente.

LEI. Quella è una storiella inventata da qualche umorista negro. Son come te e mille altri.

LUI. Come... come lo sai?

LEI. Spesso, peggio. Non conoscono la parola "tenerezza".

Non aspettano che la donna...

LUI. Che la donna?

LEI. Venga, no? Non mi dirai che sei egoista pure tu?

LUI. Oh no, no... (perplesso) Quanti negri, oggi?

LEI. (apre la rubrica e conta la prima colonna) Ventidue negri - gli piaccio perché la mia pelle è molto bianca - due piloti Vietnamiti, un turista tedesco, un poliziotto brasiliano, tre marinai francesi e due commercianti italiani.

LUI. (cercando di celare il suo disgusto) Tutti sposati?

LEI. Solo diciannove.

LUI. Tutti con figli?

LEI. Solo quattordici.

LUI. E quanti... quanti ti han mostrato le foto?

LEI. Solo nove.

HE. (shocked) A Ni-? You take them too?

SHE. They're men like the other ones... If they pay!.

HE. You say like the others... I heard they are different.

SHE. Sexually, you mean?

HE. Sexually.

SHE. That's just a legend. They're just like you.

HE. How... how do you know?

SHE. They're often worse than you whites. They don't know the meaning of the word "tenderness." They never wait for the woman to ... (vague gesture)

HE. For the woman to?

SHE. ... to come! They never did, with me. Don't tell me you're selfish too!

HE. Oh no, no! (he is perplexed) ... How many Negroes, today?

SHE. (opens the booklet and counts the first column) Twenty-one. They like me because I'm blonde and my skin is very fair ... (keeps counting) two Vietnamese... a German tourist... a Brazilian cop... three French sailors... two Italian businessmen.

HE. (trying to hide his discomfort) All married?

SHE. Only nineteen.

HE. All with children?

SHE. Only fourteen.

HE. And how many... how many showed you their pictures?

SHE. Only nine.

HE. Then you... punished five.

SHE. I did.

HE. What did you do to them? (a silence)

SHE. (avoiding) Why ruin everything with depressing details? Let's talk about you. How old were you when you began to play with yourself?

HE. (lost) Play?

SHE. (indicating his crotch) When did you discover you had that toy, between your legs? (a silence) You can tell me. I'll be your woman in a little while. More passionate and intimate than your wife ever was.

HE. (reluctantly) Eleven ... eleven years old.

SHE. Quite early. Good!

LUI. Ne hai quindi puniti... cinque.

LEI. Si'.

LUI. Che gli hai fatto?

LEI. Perché rovinar la serata con particolari deprimenti?

Parliamo di te. Quanti anni avevi quando hai cominciato ad... appuntar la matita?

LUI. La matita?

LEI. (indicandogli fra le gambe) Quando hai scoperto che avevi un'arma, fra le gambe? (un silenzio) A me puoi dirlo. Sarò la tua donna, fra poco. Più... appassionata e intima di tua moglie.

LUI. (malvolentieri) Undici... undici anni.

LEI. Prestino. Bravo!

LUI. (che non ha dimenticato) Quei ne-, quegli stranieri che... eran sani?

LEI. (vaga) Che vuoi dire?

LUI. (allarmato) Nessuna malattia, speriamo...

LEI. Credo di sì'.

LUI. Credi di sì'? Non li hai lavati?

LEI. Non siete più bambini. Vi lavate da soli, no?

LUI. Ma... supponiamo che uno di loro fosse malato?

LEI. Non m'importa.

LUI. (spaventatissimo) Non t'importa?

LEI. Diciamoci la verità. Quaranta al giorno, per sette anni.

Se avessi paura delle malattie, morirei di crepacuore quaranta volte al giorno! Ho cancellato quella paura dalla mia vita. Non ci penso più.

LUI. Ma... supponiamo che l'ultimo avesse qualcosa.

LEI. È la vita, amico mio. Bisogna affidarsi al destino! Con tua moglie, quante volte alla settimana?

LUI. Al tuo dottore, quante volte alla settimana?

LEI. Due volte all'anno. E tu?

LUI. Due volte alla settimana.

LEI. Dal dottore? Devi avere un'ossessione, tu, colle malattie. Non credo che ti piacerà.

LUI. Che cosa? (un silenzio; lei lo fissa) Che cosa "non mi piacerà"?

HE. (who has not forgotten) Those Ne— those strangers who... Were they healthy?

SHE. How do you mean?

HE. Clean, I mean,

SHE. I think so.

HE. (alarmed) You "think" so? You didn't wash them?

SHE. You're no children, You wash yourselves, right?

HE. But... let's suppose one of them was sick?

SHE. I don't care.

HE. (frightened) You don't care?

SHE. Let's be frank. Forty a day for seven years... If I were afraid of diseases, I'd die of heart failure forty times a day! I wiped that fear out of my life. I don't think about it any more.

HE. But... let's suppose the last one had something—

SHE. That's life, my dear! (melodramatic and funny) We must have faith in our destiny, amigo! (changing) How many times a week, with your wife?

HE. How many times a week, to your doctor?

SHE. Twice a year. And you?

HE. Twice a week.

SHE. (making fun of him) At the doctor's? With your hang-up about sickness, I don't think you'll like it.

HE. What? (a silence; she observes him) What "won't I like?"

SHE. If you're so afraid to catch a disease, how can you enjoy a woman?

HE. Tell me the truth. Are you sure you're not...?

SHE. (smiling)... "sick"? (a silence; they study each other; then, maternally) Remember when I mentioned "punishment," for some clients?

HE. (eager) Yes - and you didn't explain what you meant. How do you punish them?

SHE. (slowly, friendly) When a client chooses me, I try to be kind... want to know him better, more intimately. I know you well now. (a brief silence)

HE. Go on.

SHE. (deliberately) If he's a bastard and refuses to talk, communicate, relate... Or if he's a Commie, a trouble-maker, a foreigner, well...

LEI. Se hai paura d'impertostomi, come fai a goderti una donna?

LUI. Dimmi la verità. Sei sicura di non essere... "malata"? (un silenzio; lei lo fissa; parla poi "maternamente" con simpatia)

LEI. Ti ricordi quando ti ho parlato di "punizioni", per alcuni clienti?

LUI. Sì. E non mi hai spiegato quel che volevi dire.

LEI. (lentamente, spiegando con cordialità) Quando un cliente mi sceglie, cerco di essere cordiale... Perché voglio conoscerlo meglio, più intimamente...

LUI. Continua.

LEI. Se è un bastardo che si rifiuta di parlare, comunicare, o se è comunista, o sovversivo, o straniero...

LUI. Ebbene?

LEI. Ebbene, io lo punisco...

LUI. Come?

LEI. Gli permetto... intimità. (il CLIENTE è confuso. Non ha ancora capito)

LUI. Gli permetti...?

LEI. Il letto. Quel che vogliono...

LUI. (perplesso, incredulo) Quel che vogliono... e quella è una "punizione"?

LEI. (lentamente, fissandolo) Se è invece un brav'uomo come te, un uomo che ama sua moglie ed i suoi figli, ebbene...

LUI. Quindi?

LEI. Gli dico la verità.

LUI. (con curiosità) Che verità?

LEI. (dopo un breve silenzio, fissandolo) Che ho l'A.I.D.S. (LUI si alza di scatto. Non sa che fare. Passeggia per alcuni attimi. Va poi vicino al porcellino salvadanaio nel quale ha messo i venticinque dollari. È incerto. Lo fissa come se volesse toccarlo, romperlo.) Sono stata onesta, con te... Non punire la mia onestà rompendo il mio "porcellino"... è un caro ricordo... un regalo di mia madre.

HE. (eager to know) Well?

SHE. ... I punish him.

HE. How?

SHE. I allow him... intimacy. (He is confused; he does not understand.)

HE. You allow him...?

SHE. The bed. Whatever he wants...

HE. (lost, confused) And that's "punishment"!

SHE. (slowly, observing him) If he's instead a good man like you, a man who loves his wife and children, well...

HE. (eager) So?

SHE. I tell him the truth.

HE. (losing his patience) What truth? (a silence; she studies him)

SHE. I have AIDS. (He jumps up from his chair. He does not know what to do. He paces around for a few seconds. Then he goes near the piggy bank in which he put the twenty-five dollars. He stares at it, ready to break it. He thinks it over. He is unsure. He is debating his situation. He lifts his hand ready to break it. He thinks it over. He relaxes for a few seconds. looks at her.) I was honest with you... Please don't break my "Piggy Bank"... It's a souvenir, very dear to me... From my mother.

HE. But my twenty five...

SHE. It could have been thousands, if I hadn't warned you... Thousands of dollars to cure you, your wife... Thousands... (He is finally convinced. He suddenly decides to leave. Without looking at her; he goes toward the door and leaves slamming it behind him.) (The Man comes out from behind the curtain holding a butcher knife. A silence. No one moves. The audience will think for a few seconds that her husband has surprised her and is about to kill her. Their eyes meet. They explode into loud laughter.)

THE MAN. (to the woman, who evidently knew that her husband was hiding behind the curtain) When he got near the "piggy bank" I said to myself. "If he touches it I'll cut his balls!"

SHE. (amused) How can they? When I tell them the tender story about my mother leaving it to me...

THE MAN. (consulting the booklet) Thirty-two! Eight hundred dollars without even one pig laying a hand on you! Wasn't I right?

LUI. Ma sono venticinque -

LEI. Sarebbero migliaia... se non ti avessi avvertito. Migliaia di dollari per curare te, tua moglie... Migliaia... (LUI decide improvvisamente di andarsene. Senza guardarla, s'avvia verso la porta. Esce sbattendo la porta alle sue spalle. L'UOMO esce da dietro la tenda. Impugna un acuminato coltello. Un silenzio. Immobilità per alcuni attimi. Gli spettatori crederanno per alcuni istanti che il marito abbia sorpreso la moglie e sia pronto ad ucciderla. I loro occhi s'incontrano. Scoppiano in una fragorosa risata.)

L'UOMO. (alla donna che sapeva evidentemente che il marito era nascosto dietro la tenda) Quando si è avvicinato al nostro "porcellino" mi son detto: "se lo tocca, gli stacco i coglioni"!

LEI. (divertita) Non osano, te l'ho detto! Alzano la mano, ma quando racconto loro la storiella del regalo di mamma...

L'UOMO. (consultando la rubrica) E trentadue! Ottocento dollari senza che nemmeno un porco t'abbia messo una mano addosso! Avevo ragione?

LEI. Hai sempre ragione, tu, amore! (civetta, implorando) Basta, per oggi?

L'UOMO. (consultando l'orologio) E' presto. Altri due e poi ti porto a cena!

LEI. Cucina cinese?

L'UOMO. Italiana, amor mio! Ho bisogno d'energie! Per farti felice stanotte! (Ridono. S'abbracciano con amore.)

Immobilità.

Sipario.

SHE. You're always right, darling! (coquettish, begging)
Enough for today?

THE MAN. (looking at his watch) It's still early. Two more and
then we'll go out to dinner.

SHE. Chinese food?

THE MAN. Italian, my love! I need energy to make you happy!
(indicates the bed) (They laugh. They hug with love.)

- immobility, curtain -



Simona Stivaletta, *Paesaggio*

***Those Who from Afar Look Like Flies.
An Anthology of Italian Poetry from Officina
to the Present***

Edited by Luigi Ballerini and Beppe Cavatorta

**Poems by Edoardo Cacciatore
and Gianni D'Elia**

Translated by Andrew Hiltzik and Sarah Cantor

Questi testi fanno parte del secondo volume di una massiccia antologia di poesia italiana in versione bilingue curata da Luigi Ballerini (UCLA) e Beppe Cavatorta (University of Arizona) dal titolo *Those Who from Afar Look Like Flies. An Anthology of Italian Poetry from Officina to the Present* in cui si tenta di ridisegnare una possibile mappa della poesia italiana dagli anni di *Officina* fino ai nostri giorni. Il primo volume che copre fino al 1975 uscirà per University of Toronto Press nell'autunno del 2016.

Andrew Hiltzik got his BA in 2010 from Washington University in St. Louis, with a major in the Interdisciplinary Project in the Humanities and a minor in Italian. He received his Masters degree from UCLA in 2012 and is currently working towards his Ph. D. His research focuses on the poetry and humorous works of Niccolò Machiavelli.

Edoardo Cacciatore is one of the most original voices of Twentieth Century Italian poetry, although he was better known abroad than at home. He was born in Palermo in 1912 and soon after his family moved to Rome, where he lived his whole life. His first prose publication was *L'identificazione intera* (Complete Identification, 1951), an arduous philosophical investigation disguised as an autobiographical narrative. Equally philosophical was his first collection of verse, *La restituzione* (Restitution, 1955), which was soon followed by *Lo specchio e la trottola* (The Mirror and the Spinning Top, 1960), *Tutti i poteri (cinque presentimenti)* (All the powers (Five Omens), 1969), *Ma chi è qui il responsabile?* (Who's in Charge Here Anyways?, 1974), *La puntura e l'assillo* (Sting and Distress, 1986), and *Graduali* (Graduals, 1986). Among the prose published after *L'identificazione intera* there are: *Dal dire al fare: la lezione delle cose* (From Saying to Doing: The Lesson of Things, 1967), *Carichi pendenti* (Hanging Loads, 1989), *Itto itto* (1994), *L'esse blesa* (The Lisp, 1997). *Il discorso a meraviglia* (The Marvelous Discourse, 1996), edited by Giulio Ferroni, constitutes the only anthology of Cacciatore's work

and was compiled by the author himself. At the core of Cacciatore's preoccupation lies the inconstant and amorphous nature of reality and its relationship with language. The goal of his poetry is to provide a *restitution*, that is a reproduction through poetic language of those same mechanisms he observes in the world. This operation is not an effort to create a complete mimesis of reality, but rather it constitutes a desperate attempt to justify it ("*and reality itself will no longer seem foreign to you, but intimate and agreeable*"), an attempt to cure it with the medicine of poetry: "Facing the crowded void of the modern world, although relentlessly torn, the poet exercises his enlightened presbyopia. He realizes he has access to a *medicine*." Continuing along this line of inquiry, Cacciatore's poetic works unfold through a series of explorations and evaluations that led many critics to describe his verse as neo-baroque. Because of the crucial role that philosophy plays in his writings, Cacciatore is compared to thinkers like Pythagoras, Campanella, and Bruno. He died in Rome in 1996 and Giorgio Patrizi edited his complete poems (*Tutte le poesie*) in 2003.

Sarah Cantor is a third year doctoral student in the UCLA Department of Italian, where she currently serves as the Managing Editor for the graduate student journal, *Carte Italiane*. She earned her BA in Italian from Vassar College in 2010 and her MA from UCLA in 2015. Her research interests include Medieval and Renaissance Italian literature, in particular Renaissance epic and the influence of classical authors on their Italian successors.

Gianni D'Elia vive a Pesaro, dove è nato nel 1953. Libero docente e traduttore, tiene corsi e seminari di letteratura italiana e francese. Traduce dal francese e collabora con le riviste "Rendiconti" e "L'Indice". Ha fondato e diretto la rivista "Lengua" (1982-1994), collaborando come critico a numerosi quotidiani e riviste. Suoi saggi sono usciti sul "Manifesto", "Poesia", "Nuovi argomenti", "L'Unità". Ha pubblicato diverse raccolte di poesie e su Pasolini ha realizzato due volumi: "L'erisia di Pasolini" e "Il petrolio delle stragi". Con Claudio Lolli e Paolo Capodacqua ha realizzato un cd dal titolo "La via del mare"

Edoardo Cacciatore**Un parlatorio a denti stretti**

Pensare è sorreggere i transili schianti
 Secondo l'assillo che punge ove smania
 Il tatto vi avoca e lo modula in tanti
 Ribattiti espansi - la sparsa zizzania
 Dei sensi è d'accordo si scansa e il suo aiuto
 Respinge in distanza sta lì di prospetto
 Chi pensa ha l'assillo con lui da muto
 Che è tutti i suoni distacca di netto
 Ne fa un continuo di battiti immenso
 La lingua lei tace ed i denti più stretti
 Che mai or erigono esatto consenso
 Al tatto smanioso il cui ordine accetti
 In battiti espansi ormai perentorio
 L'assillo in silenzio si fa parlatorio.

Oistros

È privo di labbra ma punge suh dillo
 Col tatto che smania e tasteggia più avanti
 Per dromi salvifici penetra - assillo...
 Pensare è sorreggere i transili schianti
 Si estro ti sembra è rigore e si spolpa
 Per farsi contiguo via via mancorrente
 Fuggiasco e a palpebre s'alza e la colpa
 Di essere mero frammento tra gente
 Trascina non sei ormai più una scaglia
 Sei battito al colmo che punto da un niente
 Ottieni successo di dromi e si staglia
 Sottratto ogni volta supplisci l'assente
 Nel gran visibilio sei più che scintilla
 Combaci per ordine e il tatto ti assilla.

Edoardo Cacciatore
Translated by Andrew Hiltzik

A Parley through Clenched Teeth

To think is to sustain all the transile crashes
Coming from the gadfly that stings where frenzy
Summons the touch and modulates in so many
Expansive pulses-- the scattered darnel of the
Senses agree it sets itself aside and its aid
Thrusts back in the distance it stands there face to face
Whoever thinks has that gadfly with him muted
Being every sound he makes a clean break of it
Makes an enormous constant pulsing out of it
The tongue she quiets and the teeth clenched even more
Than ever now establish exact consensus
At the frenzied touch whose order you accept in
 Expansive beats by now become peremptory
 The gadfly silently makes itself a parley

Oistros

It has no lips but it stings go on and say it
With touch that agitates and gropes along ahead
And through salvific courses penetrates -- gadfly
To think is to sustain all the transile crashes
Yes estrus seems to you a penalty and bleeds
To make itself a neighbor more and more handrail
Fugitive and waking blink by blink and the guilt
Of being a mere fragment among people
Pulls at you now you are no longer a flake
You are a pulse at the height who stung by a nothing
Achieve success at the races and it stands out
Subtracted always you beseech the absentee
 In the great ecstasy you're more than a shimmer
 You line up by order and the touch is your gad.

Fulmineità del linguaggio

Zonzeggia il linguaggio eppure obbedisce
 Al fulmine spicchio che coglie nel segno
 Ci scaccia all'Esterno ma a modo di strisce
 Scontorce le voglie e le affibbia a un congegno
 Che ci esula intanto benché sia pienone
 Reciproco entra e caletta a collana
 Quel tutto-esaurito un alt propone
 Flussipede va la realtà e si sbrana
 Linguaaggio è tale perché da una frotta
 Intende ottenerne una docile fresa
 Le voglie scontorce a forza di rotta
 In fretta per farne un cenno d'intesa
 Va il fulmine ormai che fu così spicchio
 Su sillabe a zonzo non dà raccapriccio.

Dà meraviglia

Benché sia mnemonico dà meraviglia
 L'insieme degli itti che incombe al mattino
 Riapri i tuoi occhi dal sonno e ti piglia
 Nel vortice suo lo svelto cammino
 Al quale appartieni per forza vorresti
 Deviare la rotta inventarti un altrove
 Altrove è altrimenti di tutti i tuoi gesti
 Recenti le prove magari assai nuove
 Annosa esperienza si fanno ma avviene
 Che gli itti in cadenza avranno altro posto
 Ti orienti per dare obiettivo al tuo bene
 Spostato quel bene non c'è si è nascosto
 L'insieme degli itti è tale faccenda
 Fa sì che il suo buio un tratto si accenda.

Quel cinema abrupto

La veglia è quel cinema abrupto che dona
 Spettacolo al posto di coma o letargo
 Goderselo è bazza che soffia e pistona
 Per dare l'allarme all'intorno e far largo
 Perché l'impiantito si adatti ora a scena

The Immediacy of Language

A-wander goes language and yet it obeys
The sudden lightning bolt that hits the bullseye
Chases us Outside but in the manner of stripes
Twists desires and buckles them to a device
That yet lies beyond us although it is brimming
Reciprocal enters and fastens like necklace
That empty-all a halt proposes fluxiped¹
Goes reality and tears itself apart
Language is such because from a throng it intends
To acquire itself a tame milling cutter
Desires it twists with abundant force rushing
To make of it a gesture of understanding
The lightning bolt now goes that once was so sudden
On wandering syllables causes no disgust.

It Bewilders

Even though it is mnemonic it bewilders
The sequence of strokes that loom over the morning²
You reopen your eyes from sleep and it
Grabs you in its vortex the narrow path
To which it belongs perforce you would like
To stray from your route to invent an elsewhere
Elsewhere is otherwise than all of your gestures
Recent rehearsals but perhaps rather new
Aging experience they become but it happens
That the strokes in cadence will have another place
You orient yourself to give purpose to your good
Displaced that good that is not there it is hidden
The complex of strokes is such an affair
Ensures that its darkness suddenly ignites.

That Abrupt Cinema

The vigil is that abrupt cinema that grants
Spectacle in place of coma or lethargy
Enjoying it is cake that blows and pumps
To raise the alarm all around and clear the way
For the flooring to be readied for the set

Su cui ampolloso e con molto sussiego
 Ognuno vi recita un attimo appena
 Il proprio episodio più in là in diniego
 Per svolgersi in altri a farne una storia
 Di pubblico uso adatta ai proclami
 Tu dormi in licenza ma è solo illusoria
 Ti svegli e sei preda di ciò che più ami
 Quel cinema abrupto l'assillo da frusta
 Che è lo fa lente e perfetto l'aggiusta.

L'arìtmesi

Arìtmesi evoca il gesto che paga
 Moneta in contanti o crudele quel conto
 Che numera gli anni — per contro è la maga
 Che s'altera e tinge d'aurora il tramonto
 Parrebbe ogni volta d'andare ad un fine
 Che nulla riserva all'attonito oggi
 Ma cifra che corre in avanti ora è incline
 A farsi Energia che ovunque ti appoggi
 Sospinge ad un posto ch'è pausa quel tanto
 Per dare altro balzo ad ogni momento
 Mai somma risulta o solido vanto
 Che dallo sfacelo estrae un provento
 Arìtmesi incede bensí a precipizio
 Via via ricapitola fine ed inizio.

L'energico impatto

Frequenta s'intende finanche chi è triste
 L'energico impatto così tal e quale
 Di pianto fa subito riso e sussiste
 Assiduo t'accosta da contubernale
 Seppure in silenzio con mano su spalla
 Ti fa compagnia ma a un tratto ti sbotta
 In scosse — distruggerti sembra traballa
 Comunica forza così ininterrotta
 Da essere strazio vorresti sfuggire
 Al ruvido slancio che ruota e percuote
 Gingilli vorresti tintinno di lire
 Magari piuttosto che giro di cote
 Quel contubernale sì il gesto ti affila
 Ritagli il tuo numero in cui sei trafila.

On which imperious and with great disdain
 Everyone recites to you one moment hardly
 Their episode even further in denial
 To turn then to others to make it a story
 Of public domain fit for the proclamations
 You sleep on leave but it is just illusory
 You wake and you are prey to what you love the most
 That abrupt cinema the gadfly of a whip
 That it is makes a lens and perfect the focus.

Arithmesis

Arithmesis evokes the gesture that pays
 Coin in cash or so cruel is that bill that
 Numbers the years — on the other hand it is the witch
 Who gets upset and tinges with sunrise the sunset
 It would seem each time to go to some purpose
 That reserves nothing for the stupified today
 But a cipher that runs ahead now is inclined
 To become Energy that wherever you rest
 Pushes to a place that is pause that so as to
 Grant another impulse to every moment
 Never amounts to a sum or solid boast
 That from the decay extracts a revenue
 Arithmetic marches rather precipitously
 Time after time recapping end and beginning

The Energetic Impact

It visits you know even who is sad
 The energetic impact exactly as is
 Turns weeping quickly into laughter and subsists
 Assiduous pulls up to you like a tentmate
 Albeit silently with a hand on shoulder
 Keeps you company but of a sudden sends you
 Into convulsions — destroy you it seems staggers
 Communicates a force so uninterrupted
 As to be torture you would like to escape
 The fitful surge that tumbles and pummels
 Trinkets you would like the tinkling of lyres
 Maybe instead of the turn of a whetstone
 That tentmate yes the gesture sharpens you
 Cut out your number in which you are the die.

Il saliscendi ilare

Ne avverti il fruscio seppure non tendi
 L'uditò a distanza – già qui è di casa
 Quell'ilare battito è saliscendi
 Che appunto apparecchia la tabula rasa
 Ricolma di oggetti si offre alla vista
 Vi affondi le dita a modo di sabbia
 Quei grani allontani la transile pista
 Addosso ti viene sebbene tu abbia
 Deciso che l'ilare battito è gioia
 Rimbalzo che apporta maggiore aderenza
 Ma immagine a un tratto da te già si scuoia
 A sagoma astratta di soma sei senza
 Quell'ilare battito strega il fruscio
 Euforico accogli per quanto restiò.

Il cibo croccante

Nel buio è esitante splendore di lucciola
 Sospesa a ramengo non sa dove vada
 Realtà è cemento è asfalto ma sdruciolata
 Durizia che transita e batte la strada
 Imbattersi vuole in ilare offerta
 Un cibo croccante che sa d'Energia
 Procede ad embolo pènsola all'erta
 Indulge in se stessa e intanto si svvia
 Cadenza si fa ed in sosta si assiepa
 Ormai ha raggiunto il suo tratto d'arrivo
 Ma tappa è illusoria raminga una crepa
 S'inghiotte il traguardo che fu diversivo
 Quel cibo croccante che a noi non ci spetta
 Ci sfugge itto itto realtà è disdetta.

Laboriosità dell'ozio

Si agita l'ozio gesticola quasi
 Istante di requie non abbia né sosta
 Si finge una tappa ma in pratica stasi
 È studio di chi tende agguati e si apposta
 Estatico immagina l'ostica preda
 Intanto che l'esca scavizzola ingenua
 Le spalle a rigiro e il profilo conceda

The Jolly Latch

You notice the rustle although you cannot reach
 The hearing from afar – already it has made
 Itself at home that jolly tapping is the latch
 That indeed lays out the *tabula rasa*
 Covered in objects it offers itself to your sight
 You sink your finger in it as if it were sand
 Those grains you keep away that transile trail
 Around you comes even though you have
 Decided that the jolly tapping is joy
 A bounce that brings about a greater adherence
 But an image suddenly already skinned by you
 In abstract outline of a burden you are without
 That jolly tapping bewitches the rustle
 Euphoric you embrace however reluctant.

Crunchy Food

In dark it is hesitant splendor of fireflies
 Suspended in roaming does not know where it goes
 Reality is cement is asphalt but slips³
 A hardness that passes and hits the road
 It wants to bump into a jolly offering
 A crunchy food that smells like Energy
 Proceeds to embolus it dangles at the slope
 Indulges in itself and meanwhile is distracted
 A cadenza becomes and at a stop blocks off
 By now it has come to the home stretch but it is
 One stretch an illusory nomad a fissure⁴
 Swallows the finish line that was a diversion
 That crunchy food that is none of our business
 Escapes us stroke by stroke reality is cancelled.

Industriousness of Sloth

Sloth agitates it gesticulates almost
 A moment of peace it will not have nor rest
 It feigns to be a stretch but in practice stasis
 Is the work of who sets ambush and lies in wait
 Ecstatic imagines the troublesome prey
 While the bait rummages about the naïve
 Shoulders turn back and the profile concedes

La smorfia più atroce sul riso ora tenue
 È lì il momento in cui l'ozio ormai tocca
 Il traffico massimo corri da fermo
 C'è scambio di idee tra gli occhi e la bocca
 La lingua alle palpebre offre il suo schermo
 La preda più agile all'ozio dà retta
 E il più impercettibile transito accetta.

Pentasticha

I

La città oggi ha dalla sua la follia
 Dopo il vuoto di ieri odio amore s'intendono
 I vincitori magari ai vinti si arrendono
 Dubbi o inganni macché — la promiscua è allegria
 Degli assiderati che un bel fuoco riaccendono.

II

Festeggia l'uscita scoppio di mortaretti
 La Madonna interdetta barcolla e indignata
 Vorrebbe tornarsene al punto di sortita
 Ma i portatori aggiogati due per due
 Si mettono a posto in mezzo alla forza pubblica.

III

Decifrabile a un tratto è tutta la via
 Attizzano attenzione le insegne accese
 In realtà chi di noi si accorge dove sia
 I semafori e le tabelle di transito
 Invano insinuano un che nel proprio gergo.

IV

Piumoso il silenzio ed ecco è già urlo
 Piomba giù subito e si architetta a loggia
 A mente è il corpo in cui non sei più chiuso
 Pensiero che si attarda in te e fuori affrettano
 Ori obliqui dove voli appena poggiano.

V

In angelomachia di raggi obliqui
 Si squarciano le nuvole — brucia l'altezza
 L'eroismo dei sensi non ha altri ingaggi
 Iridescenti cupole di vetri accende

The grimace most foul on the smile now tenuous
It is there the moment when sloth finally touches
The heaviest traffic you run while still
There is exchange of ideas between eyes and mouth
The tongue to the eyelids offers its screen
The prey most agile to sloth pays its heed
And the most imperceptible transit accepts.

Pentasticha

I.

The city today has madness on its side
After yesterday's void hate love get along
The victors perhaps to the beaten surrender
Doubts or deceits no way – the promiscuous joy
Of the frozen who a nice fire rekindle.

II.

Celebrated is her exit by bursts of firecrackers
The Madonna speechless falters and indignant
Would like to return to the point of departure
But the bearers yoked together two by two
Find themselves a place amid the law enforcement.

III.

Decipherable at once is the entire street
Sparking an interest the lit up signs
In reality who of us knows where he is
The traffic lights and the crossing signals
Vainly insinuate a what in their jargon.

IV.

Downy the silence and look it is a cry already
It plummets swiftly and constructs itself a lodge
In mind is the body you're no longer closed in
Thought that lingers in you and outside hurry
Oblique golds where flights are barely perched.

V.

In an angelomachy of oblique rays
The clouds are shredded -- the altitude burns
The heroism of senses has no engagements
It lights the iridescent cupolas of glass

Nei cieli tetri ed iniqui dell'astrattezza.

VI

Bizzarri proprio loro i visi i luoghi soliti
Eccomi qui è certo — e vado errando altrove
Guastafeste la verità non dirla odi
L'inaudito e godi in ogni addio un inizio
Non è cenere sparso in un campo di rose.

VII

Dal deposito di locomotive il fumo
Colonne tortili erige un padiglione
Cenni lontani partenze definitive
Non fine confine ti sia l'alterazione
Mentre il futuro si prepara ad obbedire.

VIII

Umanamente la città si decompone
Sazietà e inedia vagano lato a lato
Ognuno nel viso porta la sua funzione
Una falda di luce un rovescio di fuoco
Labile apocalissi non verità a fuoco.

IX

Due sfere plumbee sono le loro mani
Il sipario delle spalle hanno per viso
Muti nel labirinto errano gli amici
Ma discordi finalmente li faccia il grido
Del fratricida che ha bisogno di amore.

X

Tra lingua e labbra appare la lacuna
Gli oggetti stanno ordinati entro scansie
A posto le idee su mezzi di fortuna
Sono realtà effettuali sono utopie
Gesti e la mente li aduna in cibo di arpìe.

XI

Le leggi di sviluppo dànno altra ebbrezza
D'ipogeo in apogeo — che acrobazie
Lineamenti d'un viso e sono la strada
Un lamento di tortore e sono i veicoli
Alla curva dove indugiano con incertezza.

In the heavens gloomy and wretched of abstraction.

VI.

Bizarre truly they the faces usual places
Here I am for sure -- and I go wandering elsewhere
Killjoy the truth do not utter it hear
The unheard and enjoy in each farewell a start
It is not ash scattered on a field of roses.

VII.

From the locomotive depot the smoke
Tortuous columns erects a pavilion
Distant signs definitive departures
Not an end but a border let the conversion be
While the future prepares itself to obey.

VIII.

Humanly the city decomposes
Satiety and famine wander side by side
Each one on its face carries its function
A layer of light a torrent of fire
Fleeting apocalypse not truth in focus.

IX.

Two leaden spheres are their hands
The curtain of shoulders they have for a face
Mute in the labyrinth wander their friends
But let be made discordant by the cry
The brother-killer in need of love.

X

Between the tongue and lips appears the gap
The objects are arranged within the shelves
In place the ideas on makeshift means
They are effective realities utopias
Gestures the mind gathers for harpies' food.

XI

The laws of development give another thrill
Hypogee to apogee - what acrobatics
Features of a face and they are the street
A turtle dove's lament and they are vehicles
At the bend where they linger with uncertainty.

XII

Nell'immaginazione i visi conosciuti
 Astuti si sporgono offrono anzi ingenui
 Tenui sorrisi pronti all'interrogatorio
 Illusorio non dirlo anzi è avviso d'intesa
 Resa una sola le facce del medaglione.

XIII

Volentieri divulgano voglia di vita
 I cantieri delle necropoli future
 Prediletti oggi luoghi della fatica
 Alacri certo finché la polpa del giorno
 Non si attempi e al gusto del dubbio li maturi.

XIV

Immagine memorabile ad ora ad ora
 No — anche tu sei *cosa* inevitabilmente
 S'issava interminabile eppure rotondo
 Un sole contagia al traffico cittadino
 Brulla nostalgia del caos dal profondo.

XV

Alla fine la nudità è il tuo ornamento
 Come è misero il fasto di ogni veste amore
 L'arredo dei sensi si disfa nel pensiero
 E la rivoluzione stessa della morte
 Novità instaurata dopo un trionfo spoglio.

Hexasticha

I

L'acquazzone delle immagini ogni volta
 Fa scena o scema ed uno salta la pozza
 Alla soglia per riuscir libero insepolta
 Ritrova la moltitudine dei pensieri
 Distanzianti quali cavalli nella corsa
 Libertà è a prezzo continuo di ieri.

II

La corsa degli olmi prolunga la criniera
 Nella memoria che ripropone la via
 Di episodio ilare in storia guerriera

XII

In the imagination faces known
Shrewd stick out offer even ingenuous
Tenuous smiles ready for interrogation
Illusory don't call it but warning of agreement
Rendered only one the faces of the medallion.

XIII

Willingly they divulge the will to live
The build sites of future necropolises
Preferred today places of labor
Swift certainly till the pulp of the day
Ages and with a taste of doubt matures them.

XIV

A memorable image until day in day out
No - even you are *thing* inevitably
Hoisted interminably yet round
A sun infects the urban traffic
Barren nostalgia for the chaos from the deep.

XV

In the end nudity is your ornament
How miserable is the pomp of any guise my love
The furnishing of senses is undone in thought
And the very revolution of death
Novelty installed after an empty triumph.

Hexastica

I.

The downpour of images every time
Makes a show or shrinks and one jumps the puddle
At the threshold to finally be free unburied
Recovers the multitude of thoughts
Outpaced like horses in a race
Freedom comes at the constant price of yesterday.

II.

The running of the elms extends the canopy
In the memory that reshapes the way
Of a jolly episode into a history of wars

Di astuzia innocente in losco diletto
 Il delirio onnivago della ragione
 Schianta le macchinazioni dell'intelletto.

III

All'uscita dei cinema gli spettatori
 Ecco hanno un crollo in ognuno si nega
 La squallida trascendenza che già dileguia
 Ora corriva al vero la città diresti
 Senza tregua una libertà i passanti leva
 E i rifiuti e i resti a piè di muri illustri.

IV

I viaggiatori appena il treno è in moto
 Staccati in parte già distaccati
 La follia assaporano l'entità del vuoto
 Stranirsi dei visi avvento di tenerezza
 Anche l'avaro con la carezza di un dono
 Generosa sorte d'ognuno — esibirsi.

V

Nessuno ormai si aspetta nulla da nulla
 Non c'è altra riunione che Coito e Ceto
 Zitte le indossatrici vanno avanti e indietro
 Oh e i rotocalchi di vuoto luminari
 Anche la luna che finzione tra il neon
 Veramente in periferia i primi spari.

VI

L'alba non basta alle speranze di ognuno
 Più luce ancora per le parole non dette
 Fumo asfittico è il silenzio nella bocca
 E i ricordi superflui quanto le vendette
 Mezzogiorno esatto ma il pulviscolo umano
 Piano manda in fumo anche il sole di città.

VII

Il sole sui cartelloni pubblicitari
 Nel rosso nell'azzurro non trova resistenza
 Il giallo con la pazzia dei libertari
 È lui la forma il significato l'essenza
 Circola il sangue in cielo voglia ha di persone
 Ma zolfo che ti ustiona questo è incarnazione.

Of innocent cunning into illicit delight
That all-wandering delirium of reason
Shatters the machinations of the intellect.

III.

On leaving the movies the spectators
Look they're in crisis in everyone negates
The squalid transcendence that already disperses
Now raced to the truth the city would you say
With no truce a freedom the passers-by uplifts
And the remains the refuse at the foot of noble walls.

IV.

The travelers soon as the train is in motion
Distant in part already in part detached
The madness savor the entity of the void
Disquiet of faces advent of tenderness
Even the miser with the caress of a gift
Generous lot of everyone – on display.

V.

Nobody now expects nothing of nothing
There is no other meeting but Coitus and Class
Quiet the mannequins move to and fro
Oh and the tabloids of emptiness luminaries
Even the moon what a fiction with the neon
Truly at the outskirts the first shots.

VI.

The dawn is not enough for the hopes of all
More light still for the words unsaid
A stifling smoke is the silence in the mouth
And superfluous memories like vendettas
High noon but the human dust mote
Slowly sends up in smoke even the city sun.

VII

The sun on the advertising billboards
In the red in the blue finds no resistance
The yellow with the madness of libertarians
It is the form the meaning the essence
Blood circulates in heaven craving for people
But sulfur that scalds you this is incarnation.

VIII

Dove corri férmati è qui il movimento
In quest'alterazione così sediziosa
Le facciate contro il sole sono l'eterno
Sul momento non più la medesima cosa
Fermo il nome non è sulla targa stradale
Libra altre labbra s'apre a rimpatrio reale.

IX

Il male il roditore con ingordigia
In mostri mitici in tratti umani si effigia
Il tuo respiro ne riempie la vacanza
Quando per meglio ascoltare tu lo rattieni
Nell'attimo attento con occhi grandi vieni
E più asserisci il silenzio della stanza.

X

Avvinghiati alla paralisi fotografica
Chi ha un viso d'assassino chi un'aria serafica
Immobilità in viaggio col passaporto
Sosta quanto alla frontiera appena un momento
Figura libera ormai e già lo sento
Viva sì che la morte non può farti torto.

VIII.

Where are you off to stop here is the movement
In this transformation so seditious
The facades against the sun are the eternal
At the moment no longer the same thing
Steady the name is not on the street sign
Balancing other lips opening to real repatriation.

IX.

The evil the rodent with avidity
In mythic monsters in human traits configures
Your breathing fills the vacancy
When to better hear you hold it in
In the instant attentive with big eyes you come
Asserting even more the silence of the room.

X.

Clutched in the photographic paralysis
Some with a killer's face some a seraphic air
Immobility on route with a passport
Stopped as if at the border a moment
Free figure by now and already I feel it
Alive so that death can do you no wrong.

NOTES

1 An attempted translation of the neologism flussipede, based on its roots.

2 Itto, a favorite word of Cacciatore, seems to be an “Italianization” of a term for which Italians generally use the Latinate ictus, which has both medical and musical/rhythmic connotations. I have chosen the term “stroke” as it comes closest to capturing both senses.

³ *Sdrucciola* is also a type of rhyme in which the stress of each word falls on the antepenultimate syllable. In the original text, the word *sdrucciola* itself forms a *sdrucciola* rhyme with *lucciola* in the first line.

⁴ *Tappa* generally refers to a leg of a long race.

Gianni D'Elia

Istruzioni

«Ma esclusi i numeri e i bei segni
Interpuntivi ecco qui trentadue
Lettere fonemi in tasti uno due
Bianchi su nero per nero

Su bianco chiasmo che tu scegli
Consonanti vocali con gli accenti
Ventuno meccanismi da imparare
Di cui tre chiari fondamenti

Carrello leva barra dell'andare
Maiuscole interlinea spaziatore
E impostare gli arresti incolonnare
Coperchio mobile aste reggicarta come

Retrattili antennine al bicolore
E a destra e a sinistra marginare annullare
O capoverso foglio margo liberare
Regolando alla mano di chi muove

Il tocco piú pesante o piú leggero
Cambio del nastro tasto di ritorno
Della frizione nero il bottone
Rullo guidacaratteri al pensiero...»

Altre istruzioni

«L'impoetico: raccontalo a lampi.
Nomina le nuove impercepite
cose del mondo in cui ora siamo
immersi. E siano i versi

attenti al comune, alla prosa
che servi. E all'arso
cicaló delle stampanti, poi che canto
è forza di memoria e sentimento

Gianni D'Elia
Translated by Sarah Cantor

Instructions

"Besides numbers and nice marks
Of punctuation here we have thirty-two
Letters phonemes on keys one two
Whites upon black to get black

On white the chiasmus you choose
Consonants accented vowels
Twenty-one devices to be learnt
Of which three clear and essential

Carriage type lever carriage return
Lever uppercase double hard returns
Tabulating the breaks column formatting
Removable cover paper-propping rods like

Retractable two-colored little antennae
And to the right and to the left set the margins
Undo them or indent the page free the marge
Adjusting to the hand that moves it

Heavier or lighter touch
Replace ribbon return key
And the clutch of the black button
Roller guiding types to thought..."

More Instructions

"The antipoetic: tell it in flashes.
Name the new unperceived
things of the world in which we are
now immersed. And let the verses

pay attention to the common,
to the prose that you serve. And to the arid
drone of printers, for a song
is strength of memory and feeling

e oggi nient'altro che il frammento
 sembra ci sia dato per istanti,
 tu pure tentalo, se puoi, come tanti
 durando un poco oltre quel vento...»

Ribattendo

- Ma quanti entusiasmi, quanti
 scoraggiamenti, nel prendere te
 e nel lasciarti, quanti sogni arsi
 in incipit di romanzi spenti, autodafé,

falliti racconti, versi da rifarsi, belli
 quanto amore spuntato sui tuoi denti
 da chiuse bocuccce per sempre
 a medesime sillabe, minimi martelli

ah espedienti, gioie e abbattimenti,
 resti di gomme e piú accidenti, mentre
 da tasti mancati, sbagliati accenti
 al fondo del tuo ipnotico rastrello

lí per cogliere l'attimo, davvero quello...

Libro-libero

«E tu leggi il libro che ti legge
 Dentro come una sonda nel pensiero,
 Se muove al meccanismo che ci regge
 Sulla pagina bianca il rigo nero

Perché lo sai che leggere è pensare
 Mentre si legge tenendosi al vero
 Del proprio vivere e del proprio immaginare
 Nelle lettere scritte il mondo intero

Perché ti puoi anche fermare, tornare
 Indietro rifacendo il sentiero
 Già fatto e alla moviola piú bella ragionare
 Senza dipendere da un fotogramma straniero

and today nothing but fragments seem
to be given us in the blink of an eye,
you too, like so many, ought to try it,
making it last a bit longer than a breeze..."

Retyping

- Oh what excitement, what
disappointment, in taking you up
and leaving you, so many burnt-up dreams
in the incipits of burnt-out books, auto-da-fé,¹

broken tales, verses to be rewritten, verses
as beautiful as love born from your teeth
from puckered pouts forever
tied to repeat syllables, the tiniest hammers

ah expedients, the joys and dejection,
eraser crumbs and so many serendipities,
while from skipped-over keys, wrong accents
at the bottom of your mesmerizing rake

are there to seize the moment, that very one...

Book-freedom

"And so you read the book that reads inside
You like a probe within your thoughts,
If the black lines move along toward the engine
That keeps us on the candid page

Doubtless you know that reading
Is thinking while you read, keeping to
The truth of your life and your imagination,
The whole world rests in the written letters

Doubtless you can also stop,
Turn back along the path
Trodden already, and with the finest
Editing machine reason without relying on

Libro tu stesso che vuoi dire libero
 Atto in memoria vivente del passato
 Piú presente ch'è il futuro disegnato
 Dal cuore e dalla mente in quel seguente

Rigo di frase o verso impressionato
 Da chi scrive a chi legge perché sia ascoltato
 Quel che tra leggere e scrivere è il parlare
 Vivo in ogni opera scritta celebrato

E perché ancora tanto puoi imparare
 Di tutto il bene fatto e tutto il male
 Sempre da una all'altra lingua rinvia
 Perché ci si spinga al meglio che è dato...»

Voto d'Aprile

Oggi, in questo giorno d'erba falciata
 coi giardini che ricevono un sole (elettorale
 e intermittente tra le nubi e il mare
 turchese di garbino e di caligine) ah l'afore

ventoso d'oggi coi versi precisi del prato
 falciato come il nostro desiderio non nato
 d'essere la grazia che va per il mondo,
 oggi con le gambe indolenti del sogno

che si ripete stanco e appaiato tra giardini
 di ville ombreggiate da platani e da lecci (semi-
 secolari, con quei trafori di foglie appena nate
 saettate da una luce estatica che rade

il sottobosco concimato di pregio e di spreco,
 perché qui la città ha eletto le contrade
 del riposo e del decoro già borghesi), oggi
 dopo avere incontrato la farfalla dei mesi

piú belli, di quando i ragazzi sbracciati e scoscesi
 tirano calci in bilico a una palla; è aprile,
 questo spande il racconto: l'esistere comune
 sotto gli alberi urbani mossi dal vento

A stranger's frame. You, yourself,
A book, and that means freedom²
A living act stored in a memory, more
Present than a future sketched

By heart and mind in the following
Line or verse stamped on the reader
By the writer so that the lively
Talk 'twixt reading and writing is heard

And praised in all written works. Doubtless
Much there is that you will have to glean
From all the good and bad rebounding between
The tongues that guide you to your very best..."

April Vote

Today, on this day of mowed grass
and the gardens catching a bit of sun (electoral
and intermittent amongst the clouds and the turquoise
sea of zephyrs³ and smog) ah the windy

stench of today, the manicured lines of a
trimmed lawn like our unborn desire
of being the grace that travels the world,
today with its idle legs of a dream

repeating itself tiredly and paired through the gardens
of villas shaded by sycamores and oaks (a half-
century old, with those etchings of newborn leaves
pierced through by an ecstatic light that razes

the underbrush fertilized by wealth and waste,
because here the city has chosen quiet contrade⁴
once rife with bourgeois respectability), today
after sighting the butterfly of the most gorgeous

months, when bare-armed, craggy kids,
teetering, kick a ball around; it's April,
which broadens the tale: the communal existing
under city trees swayed by the wind

visti da un vetro d'auto o d'ospedale,
con qualcuno che vive e qualcuno che muore,
e questa strana voglia di andare
e di non arrivare, fino alla prossima voglia;

è tutta qui la vita, in questo andare
pur sapendo che mai si va in nessun luogo
e che è tutto un gioco di stanare
la spoglia che sottovive al nostro fuoco -

ah, le verande macchiate di salsedine
col plexiglass che storce la visione, le sieste
dei viaggiatori di commercio, le coppie,
le gite chiassose delle scolaresche

a grappoli sulle panchine, coi cartocci al sole,
in questa rima tra il sentire e il pensare
dove sta la fenditura del reale; ma non dire
mai di sé troppo per timore di svelare

i baci fantasmatici della pornografia,
la virulenta ambigua ebefrenia, riarsa in rimare
nei quattro elastici della poesia
ah, non dire del giocattolo la scortesia

di unire al sogno la verità micidiale;
noi, venuti su dal fondo (dai raggi gamma
delle epoche) e ora galleggiando nell'immondo
pittato dal presente che si inganna

anche in queste strade, anche nell'onda
che batte fresca il litorale e fa la treccia
bianca in cui il lirismo si riannoda, anche
su un roso e riаро marciapiede di banchina

da cui si cammina costeggiando il mare,
tentati di rinnovare la sponda che si snoda
con le parole di chi non ha nulla da fare,
sí noi con tutta la vecchia menzogna che abbonda!

seen through a car or hospital window,
a person lives and a person dies,
and this strange wanderlust, setting out but
never arriving, until you feel the next itch;

that's all there is to life, in this drifting along
though you know you're never going anywhere
and that it's all a game of smoking out
the essence that lives hidden under our fire -

ah, the verandas splashed with salty air
plexiglass that distorts vision, the siestas of
traveling salesmen, couples,
noisy field trips of schoolchildren

in clusters on benches, with their snack wrappers out in the
[sun,
in this rhyme between feeling and thinking
where reality reveals its fissure; without
saying too much about yourself for fear of exposing

fantasized pornographic kisses,
contagious deceptive hebephrenia, thirsty for rhyming
in the four rubber bands of poetry
ah, don't say anything about the toy's rudeness

in joining the terrific truth to the dream;
we, arising from the bottom (from the gamma rays
of eons) and now floating in the sickening filth
painted by the self-deceiving present

even along these streets, even in the wave
that crashes coolly against the shore and traces
a white braid where lyricism starts afresh, even
on a dry, corroded sidewalk at the pier

where people walk coasting alongside the sea,
tempted to renew the shore that meanders
with the words of those who have nothing to do,
oh yes, it's us immersed in that old overflowing lie!

E ora che si fa piú stanca la passeggiata,
in questa penombra illusa d'amore dall'ombra
rada per cui solo il passato è reale,
da questa oscurità di sempreverdi appare

ancora come il ricordo sfumato il guardare...
Etico stare fuori, la testa nella notte,
non dormire, e al ronzio dei bruciatori
in questa aria buia d'aprile soltanto rischiarata

dai neon agli incroci giallastri d'ogni strada,
chiudere la finestra e sedersi a vergare
a matita queste righe, anche questo riuscire
prima di uscire è bene, anzi piú di viaggiare

e fumando fantasticare, se piú conviene;
benché resti sempre dietro ogni cosa la voglia
piú antica e nascosta — hai voglia tu a dire
il segreto, l'urto del mondo, o il paesaggio gentile:

è solo nel profondo il desiderio piú vile...
Sí, venuti al mondo con l'ansia di cambiare
piú il mondo che noi stessi: e ora il reale
ci dà ragione: non siamo che quieti ossessi

compagni occidentali al nostro male;
ci manca il coraggio di capire (poi di urlare)
che l'orrore fu piú d'ogni ideale l'orrore
di voler progettare anche l'essere umano,

chiudendo nel pugno la mano per uguagliare;
tutta questa vecchia diatriba di sinistra
senza riforme e senza rivoluzione, tutta la trista
sequela di verità di partito e di lista,

di comitato centrale e segreteria non piú comunista
ha lo stesso sapore del potere che si avversa;
cambiato il nome, il modo di fare resta tale,
né altra scissione altro non può rifondare

And now the stroll grows more tiresome,
in this dim illusion of love from the rare
shadow for which only the past is real,
from this darkness of evergreens the gaze

appears again like a hazy memory...
it's ethical to stay out of it, head in the night,
not sleeping, and at the drone of the gas burners
in this dark April air lit up only

by the neon lights at yellowish intersections,
closing the window and sitting to jot down
these lines with a pencil, even this going through
before going out is a good thing, better than traveling

and daydreaming in smoke about what's more convenient
although behind every thing lies the oldest most
hidden desire – that's what you think
the secret, the clash of the world, or the gentle landscape:

only in the deep lies the vilest desire
Yes, we entered the world more anxious to change
it than to change ourselves: and now the real
agrees with us: we are nothing but quiet obsessive

western Comrades, to our own chagrin;
we lack the courage to understand (and to scream)
that the horror was worse than anyone imagined
the horror of designing even humans,

closing our hands into fists to make us all equal;
all this old diatribe of a Left incapable of reforms
and revolution, the whole wretched
string of truths according to party-lines and

candidate lists, and the no longer communist
Central Committee tasting just like the power it opposes
the name has changed, but the institution
stays the same, a new offshoot refreshes nothing but

che il desiderio d'essere, sfatta la cosa, impuro nome;
ah, solo un partito che assumesse la chiara
ideologia della *Ginestra* – solo questa mesta
e veritiera coscienza necessaria avrebbe il cuore

di vincere il malore, i vivi confederare, battere
la volontà del volere, di chi non si vuole mortale?...
Ora, passando tra i quadri elettorali vedi
come si scollano tutte le replicate facce, come

in lembi sfatti pieghino gli slogan che non credi, secchi
sotto l'ombra degli alberi, e nel traffico che sale
accelerato dalla pioggia che si schioda
da quel cumulo nero sopra al grigio come

quei manifesti già bagnati alludano alla proda
di questo tempo in mezzo al quale siamo: gli altri
che fingendo un servizio ci tengono per mano –
e ognuno di noi è gli altri, cinico, goffo, italiano

come sulla passerella dello show, o a mezzobusto
come nel montato sondaggio d'opinione sul gusto
dell'ultimo caffè, o, fa lo stesso, sull'acquisto
dell'ultimo bomber d'importazione, sul ministro

che non sa bene ancora lo slang della televisione;
tu guarda e senti: l'aria qui sulla statale, irrespirabile,
costruiti palazzi fino al mare, distrutta
una baia naturale per profitto, e già le ruspe

lì pronte a spianare il parco al dio immobiliare;
ma pure camminando a un tuo carrello il reale
si muove e a quel cinetico stupore è piú bello
se spiove come allora, e all'infantile fitto avvicendare

ritrascorre la luna a un cornicione, ed è il segnale
che dai giardini bui ritrascolora un altro amare
le vedute della vita dentro un'arsa storia
che continua a lampare e spalma a scatti i fari

the desire of being, once the thing's undone, an impure name
ah, only a party that would take on the exact
ideology of the *Ginestra*⁵—only this morose
and truthful necessary conscience could be brave enough

to overcome the malaise, to form a union of the living,
to conquer the will of wanting, of those who act immortal?
Now, passing between the electoral posters you see
how all the duplicating faces come unstuck, how

in messy strips they bend the slogans no one believes in,
under the shade of trees, and in rising traffic
quickened by the rain unfastening itself
from a black cloud above the grey how

those rain-soaked posters allude to the shore
of the time in which we are engulfed: and those
who pretending to be helpful take us by the hand –
and each one of us is one of them, cynical, clumsy, Italian

like on a catwalk, or a talking head
in a fixed opinion poll tells us how the latest brand
of coffee tastes, or, in the same way, about the acquisition
of the latest imported MVP, about the minister

who's not yet familiar with TV jargon;
you just watch and listen: the air here on the state highway,
[unbreathable,
mansions constructed to the very edge of the sea, a natural
[bay
destroyed for profit, and there are the bulldozers,

ready to flatten the park for the glory of the real estate god;
and then again as you walk to your shopping cart the real
moves and that kinetic stupor is more beautiful
if rain lets up like it used to do, and by the thick and
[childish alternating

the moon flits over the eaves again, it is the signal
that from the dark gardens another love changes the color of
the sights of a life within a burnt-out history that
continues to blaze and smears lights in flashes

candendo le inferriate in un riverbero che impari
sciabolato a ogni vettura che s'alterna, in una boria
di motori riscaldati al rossore dei fanali
piú liquidi ai semafori, se ai già pigiati pedali

le scie dei freni ridanno aloni fermi, uguali;
e puoi pensare alla feroce norma che si serve
di noi per riprodursi, a ogni destino, fino dolce
biologico d'essere vivi per passare, e anche puoi

sorridere d'un riso leopardiano, muovendo al verde...

Stairway to Heaven

O andando, due che cantano, una lei
con l'incarnato roseo sul pallore
d'un'adolescenza intirizzita da ore
sul fitto corso principale che i due

sciamando ascolta senza pudore
alle note d'un repertorio del cuore
già giovane che senti con emozione
riecheggiare in ogni brivido, e la canzone

degli Zeppelin o degli Stones, quella
che fu tutta la vecchia stella popolare
d'una celibe e vagabonda generazione
la risenti intatta nel sabato piú incolore,

e la lei che canta, il biondo alla sua elettrica
chitarra, la piccola cassa, l'equalizzatore
di marca, il leggio con la musica riarsa
e spiegazzata nei margini del foglio,

tutta la razza che fu nostra e non nostra,
i capelli lunghi sulla faccia, il riso
mite e strafottente, la postura un po' losca
del grembo dentro i jeans, e anche l'opposta

sensazione che ti viene: l'indeciso modo
e inconcludente essere in moto, fuori

turning candied grates into a reflection whose learning
is wounded at each car's passing, in an arrogance of
engines heated in the red glare of headlights that become
more liquid stopped at traffic lights, if the slammed pedals
[cause

skid marks reflecting still halos, identical;
and you can think of the fierce regulation using us
to reproduce, and of each destiny, a sweet fine
organic aliveness to get by, and you can even

smile a Leopardian smile, sliding toward the green...

Stairway to Heaven

Or else strolling, those two are singing, one
with rosy cheeks on the pallor
of her adolescence numbed by hours spent
on the crowded swarming main street

listening shamelessly to the two,
to the notes of a young heart's
repertoire that you hear with emotion
reechoing in every shiver, and the song

by Led Zeppelin or the Stones, that
song that was the whole old popular star
of a generation of singles and nomads
you hear again intact on the dullest of Saturdays,

and that girl who's singing, the blond with his electric
guitar, the small amp, the brand-name
equalizer, the stand with dry music
crumpled up at the margins,

the whole clan that was ours and yet not ours,
the long hair falling in our faces, her meek
and arrogant laughter, her slightly slinky posture
snug in her skintight jeans, and then an

opposite feeling washes over you: your
uncertain path and fumbling progress

dal gioco sporco in cui tutto fu deciso,
e se scruti meglio quel bel viso

di lei a cui scendono in riccioli i capelli
e pare un Bacchino ermafrodito, quando chiusi
gli occhi sul motivo incede la sua gola
da cui sprigiona la meraviglia del cantare,

hai in te il sudore dei momenti belli
quando s'accalda il cuore e sa ognuno come
si prova in sé la fitta d'essere viventi
in un tempo che ci imprime la sua storia

passando nelle pause degli accordi,
nei bassi frenzy, in quegli stacchi blandi
in cui si ricapitola veloce, nei discordi
e ossessi saliscendi del dito sulla corda

che ha già in sé lo squilibrio in un atroce
e soave insieme parossío delle cadenze
fino alla tenerezza del melio che scuce
in onda lunga la tensione, e s'arrende;

a questa lingua che per noi fu straniera,
alla sua gioia che in forma fu di voce
e segmentò il suo solo suono musicale
come se fosse il senso nel cantare, senza nome

mentre la lei rintona si risale, in rima
al suo maglione tirato sulle nocche
perché fa freddo nel gelo risuonare,
a quella lana spinosa, alla sciarpa

indiana riannodata al collo blandamente,
con quella noncuranza casuale ma patente
d'una studiata e trasandante eleganza,
alla sua danza magra per scarpe troppo grosse

sotto troppo pesanti calzoni, alle scosse
che l'ugola contratta imprime alla persona,
a quella figura d'adolescente buona, ai suoi doni,
così che in lei rivedi l'inerme noia ardente

forward, outside the dirty game in which
everything was decided, and if you study more carefully

her beautiful face round which her hair
cascades in curls, and makes her into a young
androgynous Bacchus, when, with eyes closed
on the tune her throat moves forward, releasing

the wonder of her song, then you have in you the sweat of
those beautiful moments when hearts grow hot and
each person feels the sting of being alive
in a time that stamps onto us its history

weaving through the rests between the chords, in
the frenzy of the bass line, in those dull breaks
where it quickly recapitulates, in the discordant
and obsessive ups-and-downs of a finger on a string,

already dissonant in and of itself, in a paroxysm of
cadences both harsh and smooth until
the sweetness of the melody unravels
in a wave alongside the tension, and surrenders.

We climb back up to this language, foreign to us,
to its joy that took the form of a voice
and broke up its single musical sound
as if it were the meaning of singing, unnamed

while she retunes, rhyming with
her sweater pulled down over her knuckles
because it's chilly in the bitter cold playing again,
to that thorny wool, her little Indian

scarf tied carelessly around her neck
with a nonchalance that's casual but also
the mark of a studied and carefree elegance,
to her thin little dance on shoes too big for her

weighed down in heavy pants, to the vibrations
her contracted throat impresses on your person,
to that goodhearted figure of adolescence, to her gifts,
so that in her you see again the defenseless burning boredom

e senza il paradiso quella strada ustoria
che portò via dal mondo la sua gioia,
e con tanti altri il sorriso d'Antonia...

and, with no paradise, that burning street
that took her joy away from the world,
and with that of many others, Antonia's smile...

Notes

1. Literally “Act of faith,” referring to the burning of heretics at the stake during the Spanish Inquisition.
2. In Italian, libro, book, and libero, freedom, share the same etymology.
3. Garbino in the original; a southwesterly wind.
4. Neighborhoods, usually associated with the various distinct neighborhoods of the city of Siena who compete against each other in the famous bi-annual Palio, or horse race.
5. Poem by Italian poet Giacomo Leopardi, 1836.



Simona Stivaletta, *Paesaggio*

New Translators

Edited by John DuVal

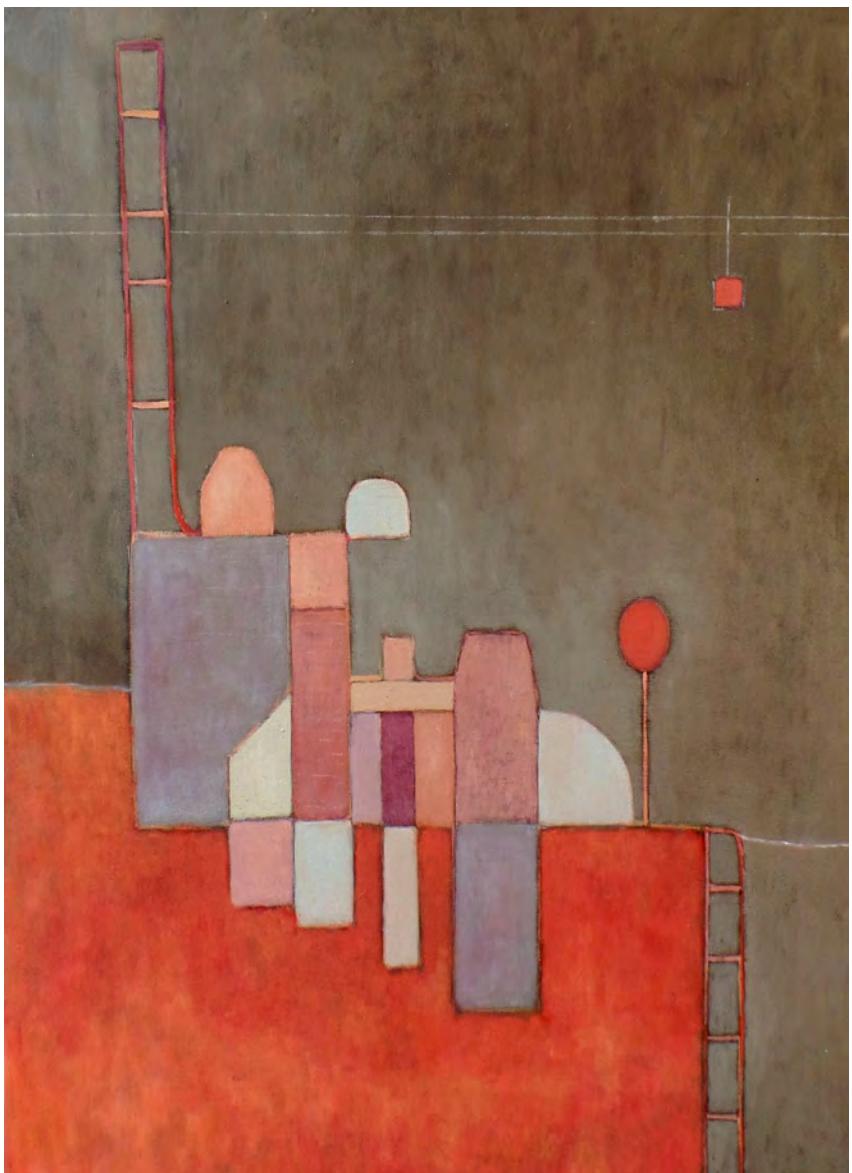
QUALCOSA NON VA

by Matteo Favaretto

Translated by Violetta Pasquarelli Gascon

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Simona Stvaletta, *Studio per armonia*

Qualcosa non va

di Matteo Favaretto

Lino aveva appena parcheggiato il camion della ditta al suo posto davanti alla fabbrica nello spazio delimitato con le strisce gialle per terra. Era sceso a fatica e si era poi diretto verso la guardiola per consegnare le chiavi ad Antonio, il magazziniere.

Era andato in bagno, aveva aperto l'acqua del rubinetto lasciando che scorresse un po' e c'aveva infilato sotto la zucca perché si rinfrescasse. Con alcune salviette di carta s'era poi asciugato il viso. S'era fissato nello specchio dello spogliatoio attiguo. Si trovava ingassato. Aveva messo su pancia e cominciava a sentirsi vecchio. Mentre si specchiava era entrato Costa, un ragazzo romeno che aveva appena finito il turno. Costa aveva subito distolto lo sguardo da Lino ma questi l'aveva vista lo stesso che lo fissava e s'era sentito come un po' a disagio.

L'imbarazzo però era diventato presto irritazione. Lino aveva preso la giacca, se l'era buttata sulle spalle ed era uscito biascicando un saluto incomprensibile. Aveva preso la sua bici parcheggiata subito fuori dalla porta. Sul palo aveva messo di traverso il suo giubbino ed era partito verso casa.

Era una sera di giugno e faceva già caldo. Mentre andava Lino sentiva in faccia il vento, ma anche quello gli sembrava caldo. E poi aveva attraversato un nuvolo di moscerini e ne aveva ingoiato uno. Aveva bestemmiato e si era irritato. Subito anche l'irritazione provata nello spogliatoio era ricomparsa e gli aveva fatto dire a mezza voce: «Marocchino schifoso!»

Mentre pedalava si guardava i campi coltivati a granturco e a soia, quelli tenuti a foraggio e via così. Gli veniva in mente del sindaco che si era accordato per far passare per il paese la tangenziale. E così avevano espropriato un pezzo di terra a suo fratello Mario. Adesso il campo di Mario era diviso in due dal pilastro di una sopraelevata e la terra non gli valeva più niente. Venderla non si poteva e a coltivarla non si rientrava quasi neanche più dei costi. La faceva venire nero nel sangue questa roba. Lino sputò per terra con ancora in bocca la sensazione sgradevole del moscerino ingoiato.

Mentre filava sulla sua bici pensava a sua figlia che grazie a dio si era sposata ed era già passato un anno. Aveva trovato un buon uomo che l'aveva presa. Un ingegnere. E perciò, col matrimonio,

Something is not right

Translated by Violetta Pasquarelli Gascon

Lino had just parked the company truck in his spot in front of the factory in the space marked by the yellow lines on the ground. He got out of the truck with effort and walked toward the guard's kiosk to give the keys to Antonio, the warehouseman.

He went to the bathroom and turned on the water faucet, letting it run for a while before sticking his head under the water to cool himself off. Then he dried his face with some paper towels. In the locker room next to the bathroom he looked at himself in the mirror for a long time, and found that he had put on weight. He had put on belly fat and began to feel old. While he was looking at his reflection Costa came in, a young Romanian who had just finished his shift. Costa suddenly looked away, but Lino saw him staring and he felt a bit uncomfortable.

The embarrassment, however, soon turned to annoyance. Lino took his jacket. He threw it over his shoulders and walked out, mumbling an unintelligible greeting. He took his bike parked just outside the door, hung his jacket across the rack and left for home.

It was a June evening and it was already hot. While riding, Lino felt the wind on his face, but even the wind was hot. And then he crossed a cloud of gnats and he swallowed one. He swore and he was annoyed. Immediately, the annoyance he felt in the locker room resurfaced and made him say: "Lousy Moroccan!"

As he pedaled, he looked at the cultivated fields of corn and soy, those growing fodder, and so on. The mayor who had agreed to allow the highway to pass through town came to his mind. That's how they had appropriated a plot of his brother Mario's land. Now Mario's field was divided in two parts by the column of an overpass and his land was worthless. He could not sell it and if he cultivated it, he hardly broke even. These things made his blood boil. Lino spat on the ground with the unpleasant sensation of the swallowed gnat still in his mouth.

As he was riding his bike, he was thinking about his daughter, who thank God, had gotten married, and already a year had gone by. She found a good man to marry her. An engineer. And therefore, with the wedding, the house and everything else, they

la casa e tutto, a lui lo avevano quasi lasciato in pace. Certo qual cosina l'aveva data, ma tutto sommato poco. Lei d'altronde era infermiera e guadagnava abbastanza.

A cinquantanove anni si poteva dire che lui era messo bene. Un'unica figlia maritata, un lavoro, una moglie che lo aveva sempre amato e gli era devota, l'Adele, una casa e un pezzo di terreno da coltivare, un piccolo vitigno. E però c'era quella voglia che aveva di andare in pensione che ancora non si realizzava. Era andato a vedere il mese prima all'INPS e gli avevano detto che doveva ancora maturare tutti i contributi. Quarant'anni di lavoro e una pensione misera. Non gli dava pace questo pensiero perché era stanco di lavorare, aveva molti acciacchi, che lui fra la terra e la fabbrica aveva sempre lavorata come un mulo. E però c'erano stati quegli anni persi, da disoccupato, nel '90. L'azienda in cui era impiegato era fallita. Siccome già era vecchio ci aveva messo tre anni a trovare un posto nuovo.

Svoltato per un viottolo Lino si era trovato davanti la sua bella casa. Aveva parcheggiato la bici in garage ed era entrato in bagno. Aveva gridato all'Adele che era tornato e l'Adele s'era messa in cucina a fargli da mangiare mentre il marito si lavava.

La cena era stata ottima perché l'Adele era una gran cuoca, anche se Lino un po' se l'era guastata per via del telegiornale. Gli capitava sempre più di frequente di non riuscire più a trattenersi quando davanti al televisore gli comparivano quelli che criticavano la linea di governo contro gli immigrati. O contro i marocchini, come diceva lui, facendo di tutta un'erba un fascio. Che tanto erano tutti uguali. Razze bastarde piene di gente senza voglia di lavorare come i romeni, o furbi e delinquenti spacciatori come i marocchini, mettendoci dentro tutte le popolazioni africane in quel termine. O il peggio del peggio: i cinesi, comunisti arraffatori che ci rubano il pane a noi italiani e portano via dal paese tutti i nostri soldi. Lui, in quei momenti che si faceva il sangue cattivo e alzava la voce e bestemmiava al vento e all'aria e inveiva apparentemente contro il televisore, che quando mangiava stava quasi sempre acceso, finiva col dire: «Altro che campi di accoglienza, campi di concentramento ci vorrebbero! Bisogna sterminarli tutti quei negri. Metterli tutti insieme e darci fuoco a quei sorci cinesi. Altro che accoglienza! Se ne devono stare al loro paese quei bastardi mandorlati!» E diceva così perché avevano gli occhi a mandorla e si sentiva creativo men-

had almost left him in peace. Of course, Lino gave her a little something, but all in all, very little. Besides, she was a nurse and she earned enough.

At the age of fifty-nine, you could say that he was doing well. His only daughter married, he had a job, and a wife, Adele, who had always loved him and was devoted to him. He had a house, a piece of land to farm, and a small vineyard. But there was that desire to retire, which had not yet been realized. A month ago he had gone to INPS and they told him that he had to wait until all his benefits had matured. Forty years of work and a miserable pension. He couldn't get this thought out of his mind because he was tired of working. He had many ailments, because between the land and the factory, he had always worked like a mule. And, moreover, there were those lost years, unemployed, in the '90s. The company where he worked had gone bankrupt. Since he was already old it took him three years to find a new job.

Having turned onto a small road, he found himself in front of his lovely house. He parked the bike in the garage and he went to the bathroom. He shouted to Adele that he had come home and Adele went to the kitchen to fix something to eat while her husband was washing up.

The dinner was excellent because Adele was a great cook, even though Lino had spoiled it a bit by watching the news. More and more often, he had trouble controlling himself while watching television and seeing those who criticized the government policy against immigrants. Or against the Moroccans, as he said, always painting everyone with the same brush, since anyway, all of them are the same. Bastard breeds of rotten people with no desire to work like the Romanians, or cunning and criminal drug dealers like the Moroccans, throwing all African populations in that same term. Or the worst of the worst: the Chinese, communists, money grubbers, who snatch the bread from us Italians and take all the money away from our country. In those moments, when his blood boiled, he raised his voice and cursed to the wind and the air, and railed ostensibly against the television that was always on while he ate. And he would end up saying: "to hell with welcome centers, we need concentration camps! We must exterminate all those negri. Put them all together and burn those Chinese mice. I'll show them a welcome! Those chink-eyed bastards need to stay in their own

tre trovava modi sempre nuovi di insultarli. E intanto sfogava la sua rabbia e il malumore che si era accumulato durante il giorno, o durante la settimana o durante l'anno.

Così, sempre più spesso, Lino naufragava nella collera e nell'odio e metteva contro gli stranieri quell'odio e quella collera che appartenevano alla sua vita e si sentiva così un poco meglio. Dopotutto non era il solo a pensarla a quel modo. E in tanto si spostava davanti alla vetrina dei liquori in soggiorno quando già fuori il sole calava e la sera invadeva il giardino davanti casa.

Apriva la vetrina e si prendeva la bottiglia della grappa. Pre-gustandosi la deriva serale negli effluvi alcolici mentre richiudeva l'anta di vetro del mobile, finiva immancabilmente col fissare la fotografia che si trovava infilata nella cornice proprio sulla mensola accanto. Nella foto c'era lui che stringeva la mano a Bossi nell'unica volta che era andato al raduno di Pontida. Al che faceva un sorriso soddisfatto e con la bottiglia di grappa in una mano e un bicchiere nell'altra andava fuori, dietro casa, dove c'era una veranda. Nella veranda c'era un divanetto di vimini. Vi si abbandonava col suo peso che andava di giorno in giorno crescendo e fissava il suo campo di terra; e poi il vigneto (appena quattro filari, ma lunghi come il campo) di Cabernet; e la vecchia casa di famiglia che ormai era un rudere in abbandono, al di là del campo. Ma fino agli anni Settanta era stata quella la sua casa. Era una di quelle vecchie cascine in cui all'inizio del Novecento i contadini della campagna veneta vivevano come una grande unica famiglia allargata con zii, cugini e parenti di primo, secondo, a volte terzo grado.

Quella sera di giugno c'era nell'aria il dolce aroma dei gelsomini e la luna splendeva piena nel cielo. Lino si beveva la sua grappa e si guardava nell'oscurità le luciole saltellare e svolazzare qua e là come piccoli puntini luminosi. Diventava nostalgico nelle serate come quella. Si alzò e sentì la testa quasi vuota e leggera. Anzi, tutto il suo corpo sembrava di colpo aver perso peso: si vedeva che c'aveva dato sotto con la grappa. Andò in giardino scendendo i quattro gradini che per poco non cadeva. Sentì la frescura fra le dita dei piedi mentre un po' intontito andava in un posto dove potesse vedere la luna. Inondato dal suo chiarore gli sembrava che tornassero a galla le parole di una vecchia poesia che aveva fatto imparare a sua figlia. Lui a scuola non c'era andato che fino alla terza media. Ma quella poesia gli veniva fuori dall'infanzia di sua

country!" And he said that because they have eyes shaped like a small crevice and he felt creative when he continually found new ways to insult them. And in the meanwhile he vented the anger and moodiness that had accumulated during the day, or during the week or during the year.

Increasingly, Lino's life was swamped in anger and hatred, and by pouring out the hate and anger out onto the foreigners, he felt better. After all, he was not the only one who thought like that. And meanwhile, he moved in front of the liquor cabinet in the living room, when outside, the sun was setting and evening invaded the yard in front of the house.

He opened the cabinet and grabbed the bottle of grappa. He was already anticipating his evening distraction in the scent of the alcohol as he closed the door of the china cabinet. Inevitably, he ended up staring at the framed picture on the stand near the china cabinet. In the picture he was shaking hands with Bossi, the only time that he had gone to the rally of Pontida. He was smiling at him with pleasure, and with the bottle of grappa in one hand and a glass in the other, he went out to the back of the house where there was a veranda. On the veranda there was a little wicker sofa. He collapsed on it with all his weight, which grew day by day, and he stared at his field and then his vineyard of Cabernet (just four rows, but running the length of the field); and the old family house that by now was an abandoned ruin, beyond the field. But up to the 70s, that had been his house. It was one of those old farmhouses where, at the beginning of the nineteen hundreds, the farmers of the Venetian countryside lived as one big extended family with uncles, cousins and relatives of first, second, and sometimes third degree.

That June evening the sweet aroma of jasmine filled the air and the full moon glowed in the sky. Lino drank his grappa and stared into the darkness at the fireflies flitting and hopping here and there like tiny dots of light. He became nostalgic on evenings like that one. He stood up and felt light headed. In fact his whole body seemed in an instant to have lost weight: It was evident that he had really gone at it with the grappa. He went to his garden, descending the four steps, and nearly fell. He felt the freshness between his toes while, a bit dazed, he went to a place where he could see the moon. Flooded by its light, it seemed as if the words to an old poem that he had taught his daughter resurfaced. He had

figlia e così disse mezzo ubriaco: «Che fai tu nel cielo, o luna?» e lì attaccò ad abbaiare il suo cocker, quello con cui alla domenica andava a caccia di fagiani con la doppietta.

«Zitto, Fionda, sono io. Cosa abbai? Stupido cane».

Ma Fionda non si zittiva e anzi ringhiava e sbraitava come se non ci fosse più domani, come se da un momento all'altro dai filari delle viti dovesse venir fuori un negro per accoltellargli il padrone. E allora Lino gridò più forte: «BASTA! ALLA MALORA, MALEDETTO CANE!»

E alla voce perentoria del padrone il cane si quieta per paura di buscarle. Poi Lino tornò barcollando a sedersi sui divanetto, ma di fatica. E tutto quel movimento gli aveva messo sete e allora giù di grappa. E tornava a fissare il campo. E in quello stato in cui era oltre che poeta si poteva permettere di essere filosofo. E pensava che lui quel campo là, lo amava e che gli era capitato un sacco di volte di pensarla. Perché tutti gli dicevano: ma dallo via quel terreno, che cosa te ne fai, è piccolo, la figlia l'hai maritata, e non c'ha da costruirsi casa nessuno lì. È solo fatica: Ma lui lo sapeva che non poteva darlo via. Per via dell'infinito. Il vento scuoteva gli alberi, sagome scure stagliate nella notte che non era così buia. L'infinito.

Ci pensava delle volte alle piante. Le piante sono in teoria eterne. Un albero se nessuno lo taglia continua a crescere, anche duecento anni, anche di più. Aveva sentito dire che c'erano sequoie in America alte come grattacieli e che erano lì da un migliaio di anni. Era quella l'idea di infinito che aveva in mente. Una metafora bellissima dell'infinito. E lui in qualche modo sentiva di doverlo conservare, quell'infinito in cui si sentiva avvolto e immerso. Dopo tutti quei bicchieri di grappa gli sembrava addirittura di poter sentire i fili dell'erba mentre pazientemente sfondavano la crosta del terreno e venivano su. Ci sarebbe voluto del tempo, ma alla fine sarebbero cresciuti verso il cielo. Ed era così. La natura era un ciclo, ma era anche l'infinito. E lui aveva voglia di farne parte. In qualche modo sentiva che non era lui a possedere quel campo ma il contrario. Il campo, certe volte gli pareva, era una parte di lui. Gli diceva che c'era speranza, che la vita continuava malgrado tutto, che c'era l'infinito, era là fuori, e bisognava conservarlo. E se lui manteneva la proprietà di quel campo era solo per conservare quella parte di sé. Era questo che voleva dire essere attaccati alla terra. Lui aveva messo radici. Se qualcuno gli avesse toccato il

only attended school up to junior high. But that poem emerged from his daughter's childhood and so he said, half drunk: "What are you doing in the sky, Oh moon?" At that point his cocker spaniel, the dog he hunted pheasants with on Sundays with his double-barreled shotgun, started barking.

"Quiet. Fionda. It 's me. Why are you barking? Stupid dog." But Fionda did not stop barking. Instead she growled and ranted as if there were no tomorrow, as if from one moment to the next from the rows of the vines a negro was going to come out to stab her owner. And then Lino screamed louder: "Enough! TO HELL, YOU DAMN DOG!"

And at the peremptory voice of his master the dog quieted down for fear of being beaten. Then Lino returned, staggering, to sit on the sofa, exhausted from the effort. And all that movement had made him thirsty, so more grappa down the hatch. And he continued staring at his field. And in the state he was in, he could risk waxing philosophical as well as poetic. And he thought about the fact that he loved that field, he loved it and he thought about it many times. Because everybody said to him: Why don't you give that land away, what are you going to do with it, it is small, you married off your daughter. You don't have to build a house for anybody there. It is only work. But he knew that he could not give it away. That was the idea of infinity that he had in mind. The wind was shaking the trees, dark shapes silhouetted in the night that was not that dark.

Sometimes he thought about plants. Plants, in theory, are eternal. A tree, if no one cuts it down, continues to grow, up to two hundred years, even longer. He had heard that there were sequoia trees in America as tall as skyscrapers that had been there for a thousand years. That was that the idea of infinity that he had in mind. A very beautiful metaphor for infinity. And he felt that in some way he had to preserve it, that infinity in which he felt enveloped and immersed. After all those glasses of grappa, he thought that he could even feel the blades of grass as they patiently broke through the crust of the earth and came up. It would take time, but in the end, they would grow toward the sky. And it was like that. Nature was a cycle, but so was infinity. And he wanted to be part of it. In some way, he felt that he did not own the field, but that the field owned him. Sometimes it seemed to him that the field was

campo lui l'avrebbe sentito come se gli avessero graffiato l'anima con un unghione di ferro.

E poi di nuovo Fionda cominciò a ringhiare e ad abbaiare. Doveva aver visto qualche bestia. E allora Lino di nuovo, strascicando le parole: «ALLA MALORA, MALEDETTO CANE!»

Aveva l'occhio annacquato dal sonno e dalla stanchezza; la testa ciondoloni e appesantita dai numerosi cicchetti. Il bicchiere gli cadde di mano e rotolò per terra mentre una folata di vento spazzava gli alberi che dividevano il suo campo dagli altri poderi.

Quando la mattina successiva Lino aprì gli occhi si ritrovò a fissare il soffitto della sua camera senza avere ben capito come fosse riuscito magicamente a passare dal divanetto di vimini della veranda al suo letto matrimoniale. Girò lentamente la testa prima a destra per controllare se l'Adele era già sveglia e constatò che sì, lo era, e anche già alzata. Poi a sinistra per controllare la sveglia sul suo comodino. Si accorse che malgrado il post-sbornia era ancora in orario. Il suo corpo ricordava queste cose, gli orari del lavoro si erano già radicati nelle sue ossa e nella sua carne.

Così Lino si alzò lentamente e rimase seduto sul bordo del letto con la testa tra le mani. Non aveva nausea. Solo un tremendo mal di testa. E poi fu colto per la prima volta in quella giornata dalla spiacevole sensazione che qualcosa non andasse. Come un pungolo continuo, quel sentore di qualcosa di male, di pezzo fuori posto non lo abbandonava. Mentre si lavava il muso in bagno e si strofinava i denti con lo spazzolino ci pensava. Qualcosa non andava. Era tutto quello che poteva dire. Non sapeva esattamente cosa e anzi non appena si metteva a pensarci tentando di ricordare o di capire cosa avesse fatto scattare quel suo presentimento e da quanto lo tormentasse e quando si fosse innescata quella miccia che aveva fatto esplodere la sua preoccupazione, subito sembrava che le sue capacità intellettive fuggissero lontano con la risposta.

Seduto a tavola per la colazione aspettava la ramanzina dell'Adele che non arrivava. L'Adele se ne stava invece tutta concentrata sui televisore che tenevano acceso. A lui dava un po' fastidio quel silenzio della moglie, ma d'altronde non osava neppure provare a parlare con la paura che quella cosa che lo preoccupava fosse collegata a qualcosa che aveva fatto o detto nel period a di tempo che andava dall'ultimo bicchiere al prima mattino di quel giorno così assurdo. Si vergognava perché la notte prima si

a part of him. It told him that there was hope, that life goes on in spite of everything, that there was infinity, it was out there, and it was necessary to preserve it. And if he retained ownership of that field, it was only to preserve that part of himself. That is what being attached to the land meant. He had grown roots. If someone had touched his field, it would have felt as if someone had scratched his soul with an iron claw.

And then Fionda started to growl and to bark again. She must have seen some beast. And now Lino again, slurring his words: "TO HELL, DAMN DOG!"

His eyes were watery from lack of sleep and tiredness; his head was drooping and heavy from numerous swigs at the bottle. The glass fell out of his hand and rolled on the ground while a gust of wind swept through the trees that divided his field from the other farms.

The next morning, Lino opened his eyes and found himself looking at his bedroom ceiling without knowing exactly how he had magically gone from the small wicker sofa on the veranda to the bed he shared with Adele. First he turned his head slowly to the right to check if Adele was already awake and he noted that indeed, she was awake, and she was also up. Then he turned to the left to check the clock on his night table. He realized that despite the hangover, he was still on schedule. His body remembered these things; his work schedule had long taken root in his bones and in his body.

He woke up slowly and remained seated on the edge of the bed with his head between his hands. He wasn't nauseated. He only had a terrible headache. And then he realized that for the first time that morning he had the unpleasant sensation that something was not right. Like a constant goading, the hint that something was wrong, a piece out of place that would not leave him. While he was rinsing his mug off in the bathroom and scrubbing his teeth with the toothbrush, he thought about it. Something was not right. That was all he could say. He did not know exactly what it was and indeed, just as he would begin to think, trying to remember or understand what had triggered his presentiment, how long it had tormented him, and when the fuse that had exploded his preoccupation had been tripped, suddenly it seemed that his intellectual capacity of recall fled away with the answer.

era comportato come un ragazzino in vacanza. Non aveva saputo controllarsi, come gli era già successo in molte altre occasioni. E malgrado decidesse tutte le mattine successive all'esagerazione di non farlo mai più, immancabilmente accadeva che ci ricascasse. Lino si alzò senza parlare e, a parte un misero ciao mentre andava a raccattare la sua bici in garage, non aprì bocca con l'Adele ed evitò perfino di baciarla sulla guancia come faceva sempre all'inizio di una nuova giornata di lavoro quando si allontanava da casa.

Perfino Antonio, il magazziniere, che non brillava certo per intelligenza ma che era buono come il pane si era accorto che quella mattina Lino era strano.

«Che c'è Lino? Una baruffa con l'Adele?» Gli aveva detto il «Bistecca» un tizio più largo che alto che faceva l'operaio lì.

E Lino gli aveva risposto per le rime: che si facesse i fatti suoi. E il Bistecca si era messo a ridere: «Vedi? Succede se alzi troppo il gomito. Le donne sono così: vanno fuori di testa se ti metti ad andare in giro per casa a piedi nudi perché lasci le impronte sul pavimento che hanno appena lavato e se alzi un po' troppo il gomito sono buone a tenerti il muso per un mese».

«Ma no, non è niente del genere. Mi sono svegliato male» disse Lino mentre raccattava le chiavi del camion dal cassetto della scrivania del magazziniere.

«E come sarebbe?» chiese Antonio

«Sarebbe che c'ho in testa qualcosa che non mi ricordo. Mi vengono le bave alla bocca se ci penso».

«Ma sì, è inutile spremersi così. Sarà una cosa da nulla» disse il Bistecca.

«Ma forse è importante» incalzò Antonio. «Magari una bolletta o una rata di qualcosa».

«Ma va là! Che Lino si mangia il fegato ogni volta che deve tirar fuori i soldi. Una cosa così non la dimentica uno come Lino. Non è mica come te sempre con la testa per aria».

«E allora?» fece Antonio che si sentì subito toccata nel vivo.

«E allora non lo so» fece Lino mentre montava sui camion.

«Tu devi fare così gli consigliò Bistecca. «Stasera quando arrivi a casa fai tutto come ieri e vedrai che te lo ricordi. È colpa di questa lavoro; è la routine: a fare sempre le stesse cose uno perde la testa e finisce col dimenticarsi perfino chi è».

Lino chiuse la portiera e avviò il motore. La sera poi, quando

Seated at the table for breakfast, he was expecting Adele's lecture that didn't come. Adele, instead, was completely focused on the television that was on. His wife's silence bothered him a little bit, but he, however, did not dare to even try to talk to her for fear that what was troubling him was related to something that he had done or said from the time he had had the last glass to the early morning of that most absurd of days. He was ashamed because the night before he had behaved like a boy on vacation. He had not been able to control himself, just like what had already happened other times. And despite the fact that in the morning, following his excesses, he would always decide to never do it again, it would inevitably happen that he would fall back again. Lino stood up without saying a word, and aside from a paltry ciao as he went to take his bike from the garage, he did not open his mouth to speak with Adele and avoided even kissing her on the cheek as he always did when he left home at the beginning of a new work day.

Even Antonio, the warehouseman, who was not brilliant but as good as gold, noticed that Lino was acting strangely.

"What happened Lino? A scuffle with Adele?" said "Bistecca" a guy who was wider than he was tall and was a worker there.

And Lino told him in no uncertain terms that he should mind his own business. And Bistecca began to laugh: "See? That's what happens if you raise your elbow too much. Women are like that: they go crazy if you walk around the house barefoot because of the footprints you leave on the floor they have just cleaned and if you raise your elbow a little too much, they are liable to hold a grudge against you for a month."

"But no, it is nothing like that. I woke up on the wrong side of the bed," said Lino while he took the keys to the truck out of the warehouseman's desk drawer.

"And what would it be?" asked Antonio.

"It would be that I have something in my head that I don't remember. I start to foam at the mouth if I try to think about it."

"Oh well, it is useless to squeeze your mind in this way... It might be nothing," said Bistecca.

"But it may be important," urged Antonio. "Maybe a bill or an installment of some kind."

"Are you kidding me?... It's that Lino makes himself sick every time he has to spend a little money. A person like Lino never forgets something like that. He is not like you, with your head always

rincasò, si andò a lavare, cenò e poi andò a prendersi la bottiglia di grappa. Fissò l'Umberto incorniciato sulla mensola che gli stringeva la mano. Ma stavolta Lino lo guardava preoccupato. Uscì in veranda e non appena poggiò il sedere sui divanetto di vimini facendolo scricchiolare gli venne in mente tutto quello che si era dimenticato.

Posò la bottiglia sul pavimento. Andò nel capanno lì vicino e prese il fucile che teneva sotto chiave. Lo caricò, fece uscire Fionda dal recinto e si incamminò silenzioso verso le vigne.

Fionda non faceva un fiato ma annusava il terreno. Il cane l'aveva capito la notte precedente cosa c'era che non andava e aveva abbaiato per avvertire il padrone.

Arrivato davanti alla cascina diroccata che tanto tempo fa era stata casa sua, Lino vide quello che lo aveva tormentato per tutto il giorno: c'era una luce che brillava nella stalla disabitata e dei lamenti di donna venivano da là dentro. Allora abbracciò saldamente il fucile e Fionda si mise ad abbaiare come un ossesso. Lino andò avanti per primo. Spalancò la porta e si trovò di fronte una donna che, aggrappata agli anelli dove una volta attaccavano le vacche, stava in piedi e tentava di partorire.

Lino era rimasto di sasso davanti a quella scena. Nella stalla oltre alla donna di origine africana si accorse che c'era anche il compagno di lei: un ragazzo di colore che se ne stava in un angelo. Probabilmente non sapendo che fare il ragazzo era andato a rincantucciarsi lì e si era girato verso il muro un po' intimorito. All'entrata di Lino si era ulteriormente spaventato e ora mostrava una faccia piuttosto arcigna.

Poi la donna gli aveva gridato qualcosa e il ragazzo come un *pampe* le era andato vicino incerto, non sapendo che fare ne con la donna né col vecchio che lo puntava col fucile e che contemporaneamente se ne stava lì imbambolato a fissare quella natività africana così strana.

Lino provava tenerezza nel vedere quel ragazzo che non sapeva dove mettere le mani e capiva che non era cosa da uomini, quella. La donna gridava come se dovesse partorire un vitello. Lino girò sui tacchi e si diresse verso casa.

Il giovane lo aveva chiamato indietro dicendogli:

«Amico, non va». Ma Lino correva. Correva come non capitava da anni. La luce della luna era ancora chiara come la notte prima, ma lui inciampava comunque. Appena giunto dentro casa posò il

in the clouds."

"And now?" said Antonio who suddenly felt that he was directly involved.

"And now, I don't know," said Lino as he got into the truck.

"You must do the following," Bistecca advised. "This evening when you go home, do everything that you did yesterday and you will see that it comes back to you. It's the fault of this job; it's the routine. When you always do the same thing you lose your mind and you end up forgetting who you are."

Lino closed the door and turned on the engine. That evening, then, when he went back home, he went to wash up; he had dinner and then he went to grab the bottle of grappa. He stared at the picture of Bossi shaking his hand on the console table. But this time, Lino looked at him with worry. He went out to the veranda and as soon as he sat down on the little wicker sofa, making it creak, he remembered everything that he had forgotten.

He placed the bottle on the ground. He went to the shed nearby and grabbed the gun that he kept under lock and key. He loaded it, let Fionda out of her enclosure, and walked silently towards the vineyard.

Fionda made no noise, but she sniffed the ground. The night before the dog had understood what was wrong and barked in order to warn her master.

When he arrived in front of the tumbledown farmhouse that many years before had been his home, Lino saw what had tormented him the whole day. There was a light shining in the deserted barn and the laments of a woman were coming from inside. Now he took the rifle firmly under his arm and Fiona started to bark like crazy. Lino got in first. He pushed the door wide open and found himself in front of a woman who stood clinging to the rings where they used to tie up the cows and trying to give birth.

Lino froze in front of that scene. In the barn, in addition to the woman of African origin, he realized that her companion was also there: a young, dark-skinned guy, standing in the corner. Probably not knowing what to do he huddled in the corner and turned toward the wall, a little frightened. When Lino entered, the guy became even more frightened and now his face held a rather grim look.

Then the woman yelled something at the guy and he went, useless, towards her side. He didn't know what to do with the

fucile sui tavolo della cucina, andò verso il telefono e prese in mano la cornetta. E poi si fermò a riflettere: era la cosa giusta da fare? E se chiamava un'ambulanza e poi arrivavano i carabinieri e quelli decidevano di rimandarli nel loro paese? Non voleva certo che quei due avessero più guai di quanti ne avevano in quel momento.

Posò il ricevitore e corse su in camera a cercare l'Adele. L'Adele dormiva. Lino la svegliò e le raccontò tutto quanto.

«Prendi asciugamani puliti. Metti dell'acqua a bollire e sterilizzi dentro delle forbici. E per l'amor di dio chiama un'ambulanza. Io vado a fare quel che posso».

Agli ordini dell'Adele Lino si sentì rincuorato.

Quando raggiunse la cascina con le forbici avvolte negli asciugamani ad attenderlo c'era un bambinetto strillante e lordo di liquido amniotico, una donna esausta accosciata a terra e l'Adele seduta lì vicino. Il ragazzo, atterrito, era appoggiato al muro che guardava suo figlio urlare come un matto mentre Fionda abbaiava perché era arrivata l'ambulanza.

Tornato in casa Lino si sentiva sfinito. Era stanco ma stranamente soddisfatto di sé e della vita: una parte con il tutto. Aveva fatto la sua parte in quella situazione e si sentiva a posto. Era andato a riporre la bottiglia di grappa nella vetrina dei liquori. L'Umberto lo fissava severo dalla cornice. Lino si vergognò e sentì che quella sensazione guastava la pace della sua buona azione e allora abbassò la cornice così da nascondere la foto. Ma la vergogna non svanì. Andò in veranda a sentire abbaiare Fionda. Probabilmente il suo cane sbraitava contro la luna o ce l'aveva con qualche randagio dei dintorni.

woman either, nor with the old guy who was pointing at him with the rifle, bewildered at the sight of that strange African nativity.

Lino felt tenderness towards this guy who didn't know what to do, and he understood that the scene wasn't one for a man to handle. Meanwhile the woman screamed as if she were about to give birth to a calf. Lino turned on his heels and took off quickly in the direction of his house.

The young guy called out to him, saying: "Friend, don't go." But Lino was running. He was running like he hadn't run in years. The light of the moon was still bright like the night before, but he stumbled anyway. As soon as he got home, he put the rifle on the kitchen table, went to the phone and picked up the receiver. And then he reflected on it: Was it the right thing to do? And if he called an ambulance and the police came and decided to return them to their country? He did not want to cause the couple any more problems than those they already had in that moment.

He hung up the receiver and ran to his bedroom to get Adele. Adele was asleep. Lino woke her up and told her everything.

"Get some clean towels. Boil some water to sterilize the scissors. And for the love of God call an ambulance. I am going to see what I can do".

He took heart at Adele's orders.

When he reached the farmhouse with the scissors wrapped in the towels, a screaming baby, filthy with amniotic fluid, an exhausted woman lying down on the ground and Adele seated next to her awaited him. The young guy, terrified, was against the wall watching his son bawl like a crazy person while Fionda barked because the ambulance was arriving.

Back home Lino was feeling worn-out. He was tired but strangely satisfied with himself and with life: at one with the world. He had done his part in that situation and he felt good. He had gone to put the bottle of grappa back in the liquor cabinet. Bossi stared out at him from the picture frame in disapproval. Lino was ashamed of himself and he felt that the sensation of shame ruined the peace that came from his good deeds, so he turned the frame over to hide the photo. But the feeling of shame didn't go away. He went on the veranda to listen to Fionda bark. His dog was probably barking at the moon or at some stray dog in the area.



Simona Stivaletta, *Senza titolo*

Traduttori a duello / Dueling Translators

Edited by

Gaetano Cipolla

Traduttori a duello / Dueling Translators

A text of poetry or prose, translated by ten equally skilled translators, will result in ten different texts. In theory, the different versions should convey the kernel meaning, that is, the basic message contained in the original text. This section of *Journal of Italian Translation* will test this theory by asking our readers to translate a text chosen by the editor, using whatever style or approach they consider best. The submissions will then be printed with the original text. We will publish as many entries as possible.

The challenge for this issue of *Journal of Italian Translation* was a poem by Antonio De Curtis (Totò). We have received two translations of the poem: one by Onat Claypole and the other by Florence Russo.

Ricunuscenza

Stanotte 'a dint' 'o lietto cu nu strillo
 aggio miso arrevuoto tutt' 'a casa,
 mme sò mmiso a zumpà comme a n'arillo ...
 e nun me faccio ancora persuaso.

Ma comme, dico io po', cu tanta suonne,
 i' mme sò ghiuto a ffa 'o cchiù malamente;
 sti suonne songo suonne ca te pònno
 fa rummané stecchito comme a niente.

I' steve allerta 'ncoppa a na muntagna
 tutt'a nu tratto sento nu lamiento.
 'O pizzo addò stev' i' era sulagno ...
 Dicette 'ncapo a me: e chisto è 'o viento!

Piglio e mme mengo pe nu canalone
 e veco sott'a n'albero piangente
 nu fuosso chino 'e prete a cuppolone ...
 e sotto a tutto steva nu serpente.

- Aiuto! Aiuto! - 'O povero animale
 se mettette 'alluccà cu tutt' 'o sciato!
 appena mme vedette: - Menu male! ...
 Salvatemi! I' mo moro asfessiato! -
 - E chi t'ha cumbinato 'e sta manera?

Il'addimannaje mentr' o libberavo.
 - E' stato nu signore aieressera -
 mme rispunnette, e ggjà se repigliava.

- Si nun era pe vvuje, i' cca murevo,
 facitave abbraccià, mio salvatore!
 Mme s'arravoglia attuorno e s'astrigeva
 ca n'atu ppoco mme schiattava 'o core.

Lassame! - Lle dicette - 'O vvià ca i' moro?
 E chianu chianu mme mancava 'a forza,
 'o core mme sbatteva ... ll'uocchie 'a fore,
 mentre 'o serpente chiù strigeva 'a morza!

- Chisto è 'o ringraziamento ca mme faje?
 Chesta è 'a ricunusenza ca tu puorte?
 A chi t'ha fatto bbene chesto faje?
 ... Ca sì cuntento quanno 'o vide muorto!

- Amico mio, serpente i' songo nato!...
 ...Chi nasce serpe è 'nfamo e senza core! ...
 ... Perciò t'aggia mangià! Ma t'hè scurdato
 ... ca ll'ommo, spisso, fa cchiù peggio ancora?!

Gratitude
Translated by Onat Claypole

Last night while I was in my bed I screamed
 So loudly that I caused real havoc in the house
 I started jumping up just like a cricket,
 And I am still confused as to the cause.

I wondered in my head just how, with all
 The dreams that one could have, I chose the worst;
 Such dreams are of a kind that can leave you
 Stiff as a board and lifeless in no time.

I was awake on top of a high mountain
 When suddenly I heard a sound like moaning.
 The peak where I was standing was deserted.
 And I said to myself: "This is the wind."

So I began to walk down this big channel

And saw beneath a weeping willow tree
 A pit that was all filled with a rock pile
 And underneath it all there was a snake.

"Help me, help me!" the poor animal began
 To cry with all the breath he had in him
 As soon as he saw me. "Thank God for you!
 Please save me, I am suffocating here."

"Who has reduced you to such sorry state?"
 I asked him as I tried to set him free.
 "It was a man last night," replied the snake
 As he began to feel a little better.

"If it was not for you, I would have died!
 Allow me to embrace you, my good savior."
 He wrapped himself around me, but so tight
 That my heart nearly burst out of my chest.

"Let go of me! Can you not see I'm dying?"
 And slowly all my strength was fading out.
 My heart was beating fast, my eyes were bulging.
 The serpent, though, kept tightening the vice.

"Is this your way of thanking me," I said.
 "Is this the way you show your gratitude?
 You do this to someone who saved your life?
 You're sated only when you see him die?"

"A serpent I was born, my friend, and one
 Who's born a serpent is a rogue without
 a heart. That's why I must eat you. Have you
 forgotten that man often does much worse?"

Gratitude
Translated by Florence Russo

While lying on my bed last night I shrieked
 So piercingly I frightened the whole house.
 I jumped around as though I were a cricket,
 And I am not completely over it.

With all the dreams available to us

How did I come by one that was so bad!
A dream like that can easily produce
Paralysis and death in a heart's beat.

I found myself upon a mountain peak
And there I heard a mournful kind of sound.
The place on which I stood was all deserted,
Which led me to believe it was the wind.

Proceeding to descend through a ravine,
Under a weeping willow tree I saw
a ditch that was filled with a pile of rocks,
and buried underneath it all a snake.

On seeing me, the snake began to cry,
"Please help me, please!" said the poor animal
With all the breath it still had in its lungs.
"Thank God you came I was about to die."

"Who is responsible for your sad state?"
I asked as I tried to remove the rocks.
"A man did this to me last night," the snake
Replied as it was gaining back his strength.

"I would have died if you had not appeared!
Let me embrace you, My good savior!"
And it then coiled around me but so tightly
my heart was nearly squeezed out of my chest.

"Let go of me!" I screamed. "You're killing me!"
My strength was slowly waning and my heart
Was beating fast, my eyes were bulging out,
but the snake kept on tightening the vice.

"Is this how you give thanks to me," I asked.
"Is this the way you show your gratitude?
You're doing this to one who helped you live?
And you rejoice on seeing him collapse?"

"My friend, as serpent I was born and so
one born as snake is mean and has no heart.
Eat you, I must! Have you stopped to consider
that man will often do much worse than me?"

For the next issue of *Journal of Italian translation* I have chosen a poem by Carlo Innocenzo Frugoni, "La follia delle donne," from *Lirici del Settecento*, Milano-Napoli, Riccardo Ricciardi Editore:

La follia delle donne
di Carlo Innocenzo Frugoni

Non v'è in bosco pastorella
che non creda d'esser bella,
anzi ognuna giureria
che l'uguale non vi sia.
Di sé altera va la bionda,
vuol che ogn'altra si nasconda,
tener crede incatenati
tutti i cor ne' crin dorati.
Col crin nero un'altra al fonte
a specchiarsi vien la fronte,
e in quel nero crede poi
che Amor tenda i lacci suoi.
Vuol la grande e ben cresciuta
la più bella esser tenuta
perché a lei su l'altre pare
ritta in piè poter regnare.
Vuol la picciola in opposto
fra le belle il primo posto,
e in compenso dell'altezza
fa giuocar la gentilezza.
Vien la bella ben nudrita,
larga in busto e stretta in vita,
e si stima quella sola
che per gli occhi il cor consola.
La magretta se ne ride
ed in suo favor decide
ché si crede un picciol fusto
tutta grazia e tutta gusto.
Vuol la ninfa dottoressa
adorata esser anch'essa.
vuol di sé, perché ha studiato
tutto il mondo innamorato.
Baldanzosa l'ignorante
pompa fa d'un bel sembiante.
Vien la bella che si vanta

d'esser bella oltre i quaranta,
e ancor vuole e ancora crede
tutti i cuori far sue prede.
Ma una bella in fresca età
viene e grida: Chi va là?
E in virtù d'anni diciotto
ai quaranta fa cappotto.
Ogni bianca senz'aiuto
di sospiri vuol tributo,
vuol col vivo suo candore
fra le belle il primo onore.
Ma superba vien la bruna,
né vuol cedere al alcuna,
piena il cor d'ardite voglie
perché il bruno il bel non toglie.

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