Eugenio Montale
Poet
Merggiare pallido e assorto

...sentire con triste meraviglia
com’è tutta la vita e il suo travaglio
in questo seguire una muraglia... (vv. 14-16)

To slump at noon

... once more, to feel, with sad surprise
how all life and its battles
is in this walk alongside a wall... (v. 14–16)

Published in Five A corpi Stanziati, 1925.
(Eugenio Montale, A corpi Stanziati, Mondadori, Milan 2000).
Translation by Milliken Bell in AGNI MAGAZINE, n. 51, 2000; Boston University.

Gabriele Basilico
Photographer

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Office of the
POET LAUREATE, Washington, DC
Art in Transit Program
Gianni Berengo Gardin
Photographer

Giacomo Leopardi
Poet

L’Infinito

Sempre caro mi fu quest’eremo colle,
E questa siepe, che da tanta parte
dell’ultimo orizzonte il guardo esclude. (vv. 1-3)

The Infinite

Always to me beloved was this lonely hillside
And the hedge row creeping over and always hiding
The distances, the horizon’s furthest reaches. (v. 1–3)

Written in 1819 at Recanati and published for the first time in Canti, Edition Saverio Starita, Naples 1835.

Toscana 1966.
silver gelatin on fiber paper, 11.8 x 15.75 in.

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Published for the first time in Poesia in forma di rosa, Garzanti, Milan 1961–1964.


Supplica a mia madre

E difficile dire con parole di figlio
cio a cui nel cuore ben poco assomiglio.
Tu sei la sola che sa, del mio cuore,
cio che è stato sempre, prima d’ogni altro amore.
Per questo devo dirlo che è orrendo conoscere:
è dentro la tua grazia che nasce la mia angoscia.
Sei inesistibile. Per questo è dannata
a solitudine la vita che mi hai data.
È nato solo per esercitare. Ho un infinito fame
d’amore, dell’amore di corpo senza anima.
Perché l’anima è in te, sei tu, ma tu sei mia madre e il tuo amore è la mia schiavitù:
ho passato l’infanzia in questo senso alto, irrimediabile, di un impegno immenso.
Era l’unico modo per sentire la vita,
unica forma, l’unica tinta, l’unica forma: ora è finita.
Sopravviviamo ed è la confessione
di una vita rinata fuori dalla ragione.
Ti supplico, ah, ti supplico: non morire.
Sono qui, solo, con te, in un futuro aprile…

Prayer to my mother

It’s so hard to say in a son’s words
what I’m so little like in my heart.
Only you in all the world know what my heart always held, before any other love.
So, I must tell you something terrible to know:
From within your kindness my anguish grew.
You’re irreplaceable. And because you are,
the life you gave me is condemned to loneliness.
And I don’t want to be alone. I have an infinite hunger for love, love of bodies without souls.
For the soul is inside you, it is you, but
you’re my mother and your love’s my slavery:
My childhood I lived a slave to this lofty ineradicable sense of an immense obligation.
It was the only way to feel life,
the unique form, sole color; now, it’s over.
We survive, in the confusion
of a life reborn outside reason.
I pray you, oh, I pray: Do not hope to die.
I’m here, alone, with you, in a future April…

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Higgs Ocean #6, 2009
cyanotype on aluminum dibond, 29.5 x 45.7 in. Courtesy Andrea Galvani, Meulensteen Gallery, New York and /e Arte Ame Italy

Design: Fayçal Zaouali

Ed è subito sera

Ognuno sta solo sul cuor della terra trafitto da un raggio di sole: ed è subito sera. (vv. 1-3)

And suddenly it’s evening

Everyone stands alone at the heart of the world, pierced by a ray of sunlight: and suddenly it’s evening. (v. 1–3)

Salvatore Quasimodo
Poet

Written in 1939 and published in the collection Acque e terre, Solaria, Florence 1930.


Andrea Galvani
Photographer

Salvatore Quasimodo
Poet

Ed è subito sera

Ognuno sta solo sul cuor della terra trafitto da un raggio di sole: ed è subito sera. (vv. 1-3)

And suddenly it’s evening

Everyone stands alone at the heart of the world, pierced by a ray of sunlight: and suddenly it’s evening. (v. 1–3)

Salvatore Quasimodo
Poet

Written in 1939 and published in the collection Acque e terre, Solaria, Florence 1930.


Andrea Galvani
Photographer
Amelia Rosselli
Poet

Poesia dedicata a Spatola

Sentendo morire la dolce tirannia io ti richiamo sireniva volenterosa - ma il viso disfatto di un chiaro prevedere altre colpe e docili obbedienze mi promuove cretine speranze. (vv. 9-12)

Poem dedicated to Spatola

Sensing sweet tyranny die I recall you, eager siren—but the face stripped of a lucid prediction of other faults and docile submissions promotes idiot hopes in me. (v. 9–12)

Written in 1963 and dedicated to the poet Adriano Spatola, published for the first time in Palermo ’63 (conference acts).


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Mimmo Jodice
Photographer

Cesare Pavese
Poet

I mattini passano chiari

È buio il mattino che passa senza la luce dei tuoi occhi. (vv. 20-21)

With no light from your eyes morning is dark, (v. 20–21)


Amatrice di Ercolano, 2007
cropped silver bromide on baryta paper, 19.7 x 23.6 in.

Amatrice di Ercolano, 2007
}

Amatrice di Ercolano, 2007
}

Amatrice di Ercolano, 2007
}

Amatrice di Ercolano, 2007
}

Amatrice di Ercolano, 2007
}
Nino Migliori
Photographer

Mario Luzi
Poet

Prima notte di primavera

Porto la mano sulla fitta, ascolto.
Prima notte di primavera, gonfia
e lacera tra l’avvenire e l’essere. (vv. 14-16)

First night of spring

My hand is on the stitch of pain, I’m listening.
First night of spring, swelling and lacerating, between becoming and being.
(v. 14-16)

(Mario Luzi, Dal fondo delle campane, Einaudi, Turin 1965, third edition)
Translation by Nick Benson at http://strayshot.blogspot.it/

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Francesco Nonino
Photographer

Ugo Foscolo
Poet

Alìa sera

Vagar mi fai co’ miei pensier su l’orne
che vanno al nulla eterno; e intanto fugge
questo reo tempo, e van con lui le torme
Delle cure onde meco egli si strugg;
e mentre io guardo la tua pace, dorme
Quello spirito guerrier ch’entro mi rugge. (vv. 9–14)

To evening

You set me and my thoughts a-wandering
along the path to the eternal void; and then
this wretched time flies, and with it
the throng of woes afflicting it and me;
and while I behold your peacefulness, that warlike
spirit that rages within me sleeps. (v. 9–14)

Written in 1803, published in Poesie, 1803.

Carro e la vergogna, 2010
silver bromide gelatin print, 15.7 x 11.8 in.

Design: Fayçal Zaouali

Come se la vergogna, 2010
silver bromide gelatin print, 15.7 x 11.8 in.

Translation by Allen Shearer, 2010.

Written in 1803, published in Poesie, 1803.

Translation by Allen Shearer, 2010.

Translation by Allen Shearer, 2010.
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Bianca Sforni
Photographer

Sandro Penna
Poet

Era la mia città, la città vuota
It was my city, the empty one

Era la mia città, la città vuota
all’alba, piena di un mio desiderio.
Ma il mio canto d’amore, il mio più vero
era per gli altri una canzone ignota. (vv. 1-4)
But my love song, my most honest one
to others remained unknown. (v. 1–4)

Written in 1957. This poem is untitled, so the first verse is used.

Sandro Penna, Poesie, Garzanti, Milan 2000
Translation by Alexander Booth in Italian Poetry Review (V, 2010), Società editrice Fiorentina.

Fujisan on FujiFilm, 2007
pigment print on Hahnemuhle 308 gr., 20.3 x 24.2 in.

Design: Fayçal Zaouali

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Washington, DC

Art in Transit Program
The triumph of Bacchus and Ariadne

How beautiful our Youth is,
that’s always flying by us!
Who’d be happy, let him be so:
Nothing’s sure about tomorrow! (v. 1–4)

Latin text: Quant’ è bella giovinezza,
che si fugge tuttavia!
Chi vuol essere lieto, sia:
del doman non v’è certezza! (vv. 1-4)

Written in 1490.
Translation by A. S. Kline.
Eugenio Montale
Poet

Spesso il male di vivere ho incontrato

Bene non seppi, fuori del prodigio
e che schiude la divina indifferenza:
era la statua nella sonnolenza
del meriggio, e la nuvola, e il falco alto levato. (vv. 5-8)

Again and again I have seen life’s evil

I have known no good except the miracle
that reveals the divine Indifference:
it was the statue in the drowsy trance
of noon, the cloud, the cruising falcon. (v. 5–8)

Published for the first time in the collection Ossi di Seppia, Mondadori, Milan 1925.

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Paolo Ventura
Photographer

The Birdman, 2007
c-print, 40 x 50 in.

Spesso il male di vivere ho incontrato

Bene non seppi, fuori del prodigio
e che schiude la divina indifferenza:
era la statua nella sonnolenza
del meriggio, e la nuvola, e il falco alto levato. (vv. 5-8)

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