

DIALECT POETRY OF NORTHERN & CENTRAL ITALY

TEXTS AND CRITICISM

(A Trilingual Anthology)



Edited by Luigi Bonaffini and Achille Serrao



Dialect Poetry of Northern and Central Italy

Legas

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Volume VII

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Dialect Poetry of Central and Northern Italy

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A characteristic aspect of studies in Italian literature is represented by the need to come to terms, from the earliest centuries, with the existence and juxtaposition of different linguistic realities. It can even be said that the development of a literary tradition in Italy is characterized by a permanent diglossic tension¹, which pits a normative and centralizing intent (represented by Tuscan in its subsequent codifications) against a presence of dialect voices which instead reclaim the rights of particularity, plurality and otherness. In the three volumes of his imposing work *La poesia in dialetto*, Franco Brevini cites Gianfranco Contini, one of the most authoritative Italian philologists and critics of the second half of the twentieth century, who reminds us that Italian literature is the “only great national literature whose dialect production is an integral, inseparable part of the remaining patrimony.”² Thus dialect gives rise to a conscious literature within an articulated system of written culture and theoretical discussions, with specific spaces and functions, not to be confused with the documents originating from oral speech and its transcriptions. I am not claiming to summarize in a few lines a century-old matter, but I am convinced that in order to understand better the critical peculiarities of twentieth-century poetry in dialect it is necessary to lay down at least certain historical references. I will not repeat what is known to everyone, from Dante’s hypotheses to Bembo’s codification, to the perpetuation of the “question of language” which now is, as previously mentioned, an integral part of the development of the Italian canon. I will limit myself to following another path, trying to capture a significant basic element.

The opposition between “living language” (namely everyday, lived, practical) and “literary language” (learned through instruction, nourished above all and handed down through books and by them), which is defined as the mandatory place of discussion and characteristic of the Italian language through the centuries, already contains its own limit: that practical and anti-literary function which is sought for Italian, has in fact always been carried out by dialects.

As a consequence, the use of dialects has from the start been charged with secondary meanings operating within conscious theoretical boundaries, where it has definite tasks within the sphere of “genres” (that is, to give voice to non-cultured situations: low comic, parody, farce), but also the more general task of representing corporality, materiality, the immediacy excluded from Italian literature. This way, however, even within dialects there rises a contrast between the reality of spoken speech and its literary (or rather hyper-literary) codification in the text: writing in dialect entails a reduction of the linguistic continuum to system, which is perhaps more binding – given its more restricted usage – than writing in Italian.

From its first applications, literature in dialect has had the function of representing a reality circumscribed to the parodic register, to farcical realism, playful experimentation. It becomes a conscious mask. Only at the height of the eighteenth century, exploiting a new social and cultural dynamics, Carlo Goldoni invented a space of real communication, where words meet their speakers and, redeeming the dignity of the characters from the dialect mask, gave them depth and resonance. This new approach is also found in the work of the Milanese Carlo Porta, among the best of the whole national production, which lays down a well-balanced model of esthetic realism and ethical commitment. He moreover identifies the recipient of his work as a cultured diglossic reader, who has the romantic idea of the people and a taste for the popular.

Porta’s great lesson does not have a full following in its entire range of achievements.³

Dialect instead turns once again toward the identification with a genre, it forgets its own suggestive power and the task of giving voice to a world. Limited to the representation of what is “popular” (from a bourgeois point of view), during the nineteenth century it would prescribe the commonplaces of a poetic “dialectal” imagination, namely municipal, sentimental, secondary by vocation and ancillary with respect to the great cultural themes. It is true, on the other hand, that poetry in dialect, almost always conservative in themes and forms, will take it upon itself to bring well into the twentieth century the sense of continuity with the past through the attention to ordinary life, constituted by the landscape and by everyday objects, by the occasions of social life⁴. In this respect throughout the whole century it offers the never-revoked hypothesis of giving poetic form to the “sense of place” (Seamus Heaney’s expression), namely the anthropological link between language and the material horizon which constitutes the self. This aspect persists as a subterranean force, which can be glimpsed only rarely, while often what prevails are the second-rate effects, tied to local particularism, facile folklore, a lowering of the formal quality of the texts.

Keeping in mind the factors of continuity just observed, which help us to better understand the dialectal reality as a whole (but also great personalities, such as Delio Tessa), one needs to point out, nevertheless, two new circumstances: 1) at the beginning of the century, the assimilation of dialect poetics of symbolist derivation; 2) starting with the sixties, the use of dialect as an answer to the acceleration of modernity, which threatens the entire cultural and communicative identity of the individual.

Let us try proceed in an orderly fashion:

1) With Virgilio Giotti and Biagio Marin there is a shift toward the identification of dialect with pure poetry (already present in part in the Neapolitan Di Giacomo, aided by the authoritative reading of Benedetto Croce). In the case of Giotti and Marin, of consequence is the geopolitical situation, which entails a particular orientation with respect to the relationship between language and dialect and the cultural world of which it is part.⁵ With a strong change in tendency, dialect becomes an instrument for exploring the poetic themes of post-symbolist poetry. From “language of the people” as it had been for nineteenth-century tradition, for Giotti it becomes “language of poetry,” or an instrument to evoke the shadings of the soul, ephemeral voice of an absence. Marin makes of it a medium for the invention of a totally poetic universe as a sounding board for the great themes of laic spirituality in the early part of the century, according to a process of rarefaction of the real referents of the landscape and everyday life, which transforms them into emblems of absolute lyricism.

Pier Paolo Pasolini would endeavor to give a critical consciousness to these events, identifying the premises for a “neodialectality”, and including himself, in the introduction to the 1952 anthology⁶, among the writers aware of its implications for the national literature. He sees in dialects a potential for the renewal of the themes and the voice of Italian poetry, in favor of a greater adherence to lived reality, but which would save the poetic union of diction and evocation.⁷ This is an aspiration which, in truth, was grounded on apparently dialectical, but in reality conflicting, cultural premises: the weakest feature of Pasolini’s lesson would in fact be configuration of a thoughtfully pensive world, though dense and carnal, while a fundamental lesson would be strong awareness of the linguistic medium, and above all the possibility of extracting from everyday life, in the space between dialect and language, new occasions for poetry.

2) A few years after Pasolini's first experience, the condition of language, society, and social communication in Italy would change in significant ways. Pasolini formulated some important suggestions in order to bring the reality of dialect into the context of the great themes of culture, but what really changed the large picture was tied to some epochal events. At the center of these events, beginning in the sixties, lied a strong acceleration of the processes of social change which at first modified and then threatened the very life of the dialectal world. In certain areas of Italy the transition from an archaic and rural world to a modern technological society took place very rapidly, undermining century-old anthropological balances. As the burning house uncovers its frame, so belonging to the dialectal world at this time showed its many implications fully. The experience of diglossia then became the place of reflection and aesthetic refinement, it gave rise to a new self-narrative, it transformed ethical values. Dialect saw the objective limits of its separation from the world of the official language confused and in part abolished, it became a dissonant but "inner" voice of it, and therefore rejected the vernacular tradition, proposing strongly individual examples of linguistic selection and transcription.⁸

A summary of the most important core themes of the discussion about neodialect poetry should furthermore include: a) the transformation of the relationship between language and writing in the mass-media era of globalization and of the new oral communication; b) the new perception of the "mortality" of languages through the processes of acceleration of social change; c) the reworking of the concepts of identity and belonging relative to language and its memory content.

These are subjects still being discussed and very dynamic, although the context is rapidly changing.

Documenting all this through an anthology is not an easy task, given the complexity of the references in question. Further, the differences are at times profound, the similarities minimal.

Proposing a small selection, with the presence of only established poets, would be a way to confuse ideas rather than clarifying them, taking away resonance and meaning from the major poets themselves. But on the other hand an anthology, while aiming at being informative, cannot avoid making choices. It can, however, offer the utmost information while leaving the utmost freedom to the reader. In order to do this, it must renounce superimposing an overly rigid schema on things, while adopting very clear criteria of documentation, ordered by a precise idea of the reality to be studied.

Luigi Bonaffini and Achille Serrao seem to meet these requirements fully with a very simple plan: a subdivision by region which allows one to follow both local and national perspectives, with an essential profile for every poet, filled with linguistic and bibliographical references.

This Dialect Poetry of Central and Northern Italy, which completes the endeavor begun by Luigi Bonaffini with Dialect Poetry of Southern Italy (New York: Legas, 1997), has above all the function of a map. As all maps, it takes on real meaning at the moment one begins to imagine a real journey and, in a different way, when one ends it. The experience of Achille Serrao, author of *Via terra*⁹, a significant anthology of neodialect poetry, enriches furthermore the understanding of a complex, difficult reality, which cannot be approached with predefined yardsticks.

While it is true that neodialect poetry offers a "punctiform field of unrelated experiences" (Brevini), it is not true that it is better or even necessary to abandon a presentation by regional areas. There are in fact specific recognizable traits in the relationship between a language, its social usage, and its application to poetry. There are radiating centers (the now mythical Santarcangelo di Romagna, with Baldini, Fucci, Guerra, and Pedretti) and radiating figures (Zanzotto for a vast area of Venetian speech; Pasolini in the past and currently Giacomini in Friuli). There are also political and cultural conditions which have favored or favor the presence of a dialect rather than suppress it (an eastern Adriatic area has been identified, which shows features of structural continuity despite the definite linguistic diversity between Friulian and Venetian dialects).

It bears repeating that this anthology should be used as a map, possibly with the help of a geographical map (political borders do not correspond to linguistic areas), learning to read the city, the countryside or the mountain, the places of emigration and those of more rapid industrial transformation; as long as one takes note of the dates and, in the bibliography, of the publishing series, the journals, the critical comments, then relationships interwoven in this geography. And, finally, as long as one does not neglect the Italian translation, almost always a self-translation¹⁰, through which the poets come in contact with each other on a different level, which is that of the entire landscape of Italian poetry. This anthology also provides an excellent opportunity to look for possible parallel references: the work of some of the major poets in Italian (as for instance Andrea Zanzotto or Fernando Bandini) not only consists of some dialect poetry, but makes of the coexistence of Italian and dialect one of the essential elements of the work itself¹¹. Or let us think, reading the critical bibliography, about how much dialect has contributed to the discussion over writing in Italian, offering cause for controversy and reflection, bearing on poets such as Giovanni Giudici and Milo De Angelis, for instance, and prodding them in turn to measure themselves with their "other" words. All this has happened in keeping with the cultural and artistic events that have marked the last decades of the twentieth century outside of Italy as well.

Even if the situation seems still fluid, it can be said that it is necessary to mention the names of Raffaello Baldini and Franco Loi as those representing the highest achievements of poetry in dialect in the second half of the century, for the strong tension toward a striking and dramatic diction. Just as important is the work of Amedeo Giacomini or Tolmino Baldassarri. But one should remember poets closer to everyday life such as Bertolani, Grisoni, and Bressan, those tied to the depths of memory such as Bertolino and Cecchinel. There are areas of experimentation on the great example of Ernesto Calzavara. Not to be neglected, finally, is the poetry that finds expression at the end of the century with languages adrift, such as Emilio Rentocchini's and Giovanni Nadiani's.

Notes

1 Diglossia: a particular form of bilingualism, which is present when the use of two languages not having the same cultural and social prestige alternates according to circumstances (Great Garzanti Dictionary)

2. Franco Brevini, *La poesia in dialetto. Storia e testi dalle origini al Novecento*, 3 vols., Milan: Mondadori, 1999, vol. I, p. XXVIII.

3. As in any case will not have followers the great poetry of G. G. Belli. Not even the refined hypothesis of Manzoni (of Manzoni the writer, if not really of the theoretician) of an internal line of “translating” confluence, polyphonic, between dialects and the living Tuscan heritage, would concern poetry (cf. Ezio Raimondi’s interpretation, *La dissimulazione romanzesca*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990).
4. Far-reaching during the century is Pascoli’s influence, as it is natural to surmise, and as it is immediately clear from Pasolini’s interpretation (see the publication of Pasolini’s college thesis, *Antologia della lirica pascoliana*, edited by Marco. A. Bazzocchi, Turin: Einaudi, 1993), not to be forgotten is the importance of Carducci for the intonation and some thematic references.
5. It is well known that early-century Trieste uses bureaucratic German, Slavic in local commerce, it has Italian as literary aspiration and “triestino” as living language, a speech based on Venetian without a written tradition, linguistically close to Italian itself.
6. P. P. Pasolini, M. Dell’Arco (editors), *Poesia dialettale del Novecento*, Parma: Guanda, 1952.
7. Or foregrounds the lyrical self, while adhering to a popular aura, on the example of the Spaniard Antonio Machado.
8. Here one should place, with respect to Giotti’s category of dialect as “language of poetry,” the felicitous contrast of a “language of reality,” cf. M. Chiesa, G. Tesio (editors), *Le parole di legno. Poesia in dialetto del ‘900 italiano*, Milan: Oscar Mondadori, 1984, 2 vols. In the direction of a “language of reality” is also to be taken the sense of the rejection of dialect tradition: a choice which is no longer precious but aims to connect with lived experience. One should note, furthermore, that “neodialect” poetry works outside the great dialect traditions (Milanese, Venetian, Romanesco, Neapolitan) or in peripheral forms of the latter.
9. A. Serrao, *Via terra. Antologia di poesia neodialettale*, Udine: Campanotto, 1992; a trilingual edition of it (Dialect-Italian-English) has recently been published: *Via terra. An Anthology of Contemporary Italian Dialect Poetry*, edited by A. Serrao, L. Bonaffini, and J. Vitiello, New York, Legas, 1999.
10. For the critical interpretation of this aspect of the dialect landscape, see G. M. Villalta, *Autotraduzione e poesia “neodialettale,”* in *Testo a fronte*, n.7, 1992, pp. 49-63.
11. A reconstruction of the positions that concern the relationship between language and dialect spanning the entire poetic career of Andrea Zanzotto, from the early fifties to the late nineties, can be found in the selected passages of *Prospezioni e Consuntivi*, edited by G.M. Villalta, in *QA. Zanzotto, Le poesie e prose scelte*, edited by S. Dal Bianco and G. M. Villalta, Milan: Mondadori, 1999. One can follow closely some of the movements and shifts in perspective tied to the changes in the conditions of experiencing dialect and Italian during the second half of the century.

ITALIAN SWITZERLAND

Renato Martinoni

A country with a long democratic tradition, founded on the principles of federalism, from the very beginning respectful of its ethnic groups and minorities, Switzerland is well known as a multilingual nation. For many centuries, besides many languages from Europe and beyond, four languages have been spoken there – German, French, Italian, and Romansch (some also add, as a fifth language, the Scwyterdüsch, that is, the Swiss-German dialect (for others the “fifth language” is now English) – which have their own history, traditions, and cultural referents (Germany and Austria, France, Italy) and above all, although with very different in size, their own geography. The Romansch is spoken in a few regions of the Canton of Graubünden; French in the western part of the Swiss Confederation, the French-Provençal one; Italian in the Canton Ticino and other valleys of the Graubünden (Mesolcina and Calanca, Bregaglia, Poschiavo), that is – the term has more of a cultural than juridical value – in “Italian Switzerland,” a region which, being separated by the Alps from the rest of Switzerland, is historically, but also climatically and culturally (one only need to think of architecture or religious art), open toward the south of Europe .

In reality, the territorial distinction inevitably satisfies the point of view of the political and institutional world, much less that of sociolinguists, because, for example, the migratory phenomena have made it possible for the Italian language – which in Zurich’s or Basel’s work yards and factories is also the lingua franca used by foreigners (but in Zurich, Basel and other German-speaking cities one family in ten speaks Italian at home) – to be used more outside than inside its institutional borders. More than half of Italian speakers, in short (and they are for the most part workers coming from Italy), do not live in Italian Switzerland, but in the German or French section. The same, although in much lower numerical terms, can be said of the Romansch speakers. What not infrequently causes discussions about the Swiss linguistic policy is that, by defending the “principle of territoriality” (i.e., by supporting minority languages in particular, Italian in Italian Switzerland and Romansch in the Romansch area), it turns a deaf ear to the needs and the problems of Italian-speaking minorities living outside Ticino and the valleys of Italian Graubünden. In other words, the logical consequence would be to speak of “Italian Switzerland,” meaning above all a subalpine linguistic geography, and of “Italian-language Switzerland,” referring to a sociolinguistic situation that concerns the whole national territory.

The condition of those who live in Italian Switzerland – and most of the time have a Swiss passport – means at any rate having to deal with two realities, often very different from each other: the country’s, Switzerland, to which they belong politically (today French, German, and English are studied in schools), even if the “Ticinese” may feel “Ticinese” first and Swiss second; and the nation’s, Italy, to which they often feel tied linguistically and culturally. This relationship varies in its dynamics, being subject to influences and conditionings of a political, historical, ideological nature. One need only think of the epoch – the beginning of the twentieth century – in which there was a pervasive fear of a progressive and irreversible germanization of the country (through a strong immigration of German-speaking Swiss, thanks to the Saint Gotthard tunnel and the new railroad line; or of the Mussolin years, when the equation Italy=fascism contributed to create a climate of suspicions, hostility and misunderstanding toward “italianness.”

In all Italian Switzerland, and this is no doubt a differentiating factor, there have existed (and in part, being a marginal geolinguistic region, they are

still currently spoken, especially in non-urban areas) Lombard-Alpine dialects that have created and still continue to cultivate cultural relationships, beyond the common linguistic substratum, especially with Piedmont and Lombardy. Questions of a political nature and in particular the desire to sidestep censorship in Austria and Lombardy have even led, during the course of the nineteenth century, many Italian authors to publish their books in Ticinese presses. Among them there is also the Milanese Carlo Porta, whose Milanese poems went through no less than twelve editions in Switzerland between 1826 and 1840. For more than a century the Port's success with his readers gave rise to a vernacular and "bosino" tradition in Ticino: widespread but unfortunately mediocre (for lack of the right cultural stimuli) and reduced to a repetitive and empty occasional exercise.

At least until the second decade of this century in Italian Switzerland there has been no dialect poet who really knew how to escape the trap of drab mediocrity, who in short knew how to take his distances from the "Lombard provincials," as Pasolini wrote, finally transforming the language of reality into the language of poetry. But even in the twenties and thirties the dialect muse still moved between late Scapigliatura and local sketch. New developments, which are important for their linguistic and cultural characteristics, came instead from the field of Positivistic philology – the name of Carlo Savioni will suffice – and from the dialectological and lexicographic studies that led to the undertaking of the *Vocabolario dei dialetti della Svizzera italiana* at the start of the century.

It may not be by chance that the first interesting author, far removed from the tired nineteenth-century versification, which nevertheless continued to be cultivated with great zeal and very few convincing results, was a friend and correspondent of Salvioni. He is Emilio Zanini (1866-1922), and he wrote in the Alpine vernacular of the Maggia valley (a valley that in the preceding decades, like other mountain regions of Ticino, had seen most of its men emigrate first to Australia, then to the west of the United States). His verses, characterized by a crude and at times violent realism, are often grounded in popular oral tradition, but they also are able to translate the Dantean episode of Count Ugolino in the rustic and archaic speech of Cavigno.

But there was a lag of several decades with respect to Italian poetry, and the first convincing poetry in dialect did not appear until the war years. It was convincing in the sense of being finally in step with contemporary Italian and European culture of the time. It may not be by chance that the first really new collection, *Garbiröö* (1942), was the work of a poet – Giovanni Bianconi – that until that time had practiced the art of xylography, modeling it, after a period of study in Germany, on German expressionism. *Garbiröö* are the grape clusters ripened after the harvest. They are late-coming, then, in the late fall season, like Bianconi's poems (and it is somewhat symptomatic that in the beginning poetry in dialect was the work of mature men: this is true of Bianconi and Alina Borioli; but it is also true of Canonica, Orelli, Scamara).

Fundamental and stimulating was the presence of many Italian exiles and political refugees. Thanks to their tutelage (one need only recall Gianfranco Contini's teaching at Freiburg), their contributions to newspapers (Contini reviews Pasolini's *Poesie a Casarsa* in the *Corriere del Ticino* in 1943), their reading circles, and their lectures the cultural scene was suddenly modernized. Eugenio Montale published *Finisterre* in Lugano in 1943 as well, at the time of his difficult relationship with fascist Italy and, the following year, Umberto Saba published *Ultime cose*. But if poetry and prose in Italian seemed to draw immediate benefit from the vigor of these new voices, at the threshold of the forties (even without thinking of poets like Tessa and Giotti, whom Bianconi knew anyway) Switzerland dialect clock continued to tick measurably slower.

These were years in which some Ticinese scholars unfortunately continued to confuse poetry with folklore, but the impetus was too strong not to be felt by someone. The rapid change of the country, its economy, its social structures, and its urban landscape, became reasons for reflection and for nostalgia as well, and for violent criticism. Thus reality, after the epoch of the idyll, began to be explored in its slow and hard – and at times painful – transition from an agricultural society to a pre-industrial one (until the middle of the twentieth century, while Swiss-German capital began to circulate, invested in building speculation and the exploitation of hydroelectric power plants, the Ticino remained a region divided between agriculture and tourism).

But it was the very idea of dialect – also as a consequence of an educational policy that tended to privilege the Italian language and to fight with any didactic means the "dialect weed" – that continued to be associated to that of a rural civilization somewhat easygoing and farcical, familiar and good-natured, or to feelings of vague melancholy for the lost motherland and the good times of yore.

Culture and reading (besides the Lombard tradition, he is an admirer of the Triestino poet Virgilio Giotti), perhaps even the connection between xylography and poetry, allowed Giovanni Bianconi instead to follow new paths, no doubt not as wide or safe as those of some of his colleagues in other regions of Italy, but at least more dignified, modern, and clearly drawn than those previously suggested. The interest in dialects seemed to increase rapidly, also with the complicity of radio ("Radio Monteceneri"), which regularly aired readings of dialect texts, especially during the war, in the name of the "spiritual defense of the nation"; and thanks to a literary contest organized in Lugano by the journal *Cantonetto* (between 1955 and 1962), which for the first time could present new and finally interesting authors and promote their activity. The anthology that came out of it (*El quell'aqua in Lombardia*, 1957) intended "to give an idea of the new poets of dialect Italian Switzerland," and it still remains an interesting point of reference for the authors of the time.

Among the winners there was Pino Bernasconi (the Lugano publisher of the poems of Saba and Montale, who called Bernasconi's (1904-1993) verses, following the path of a certain poetry in Italian that looked to Ungaretti and Montale, "anything but dialectal, rather subtly elegiac in spirit"). There was Alina Borioli (1887-1965), author of a cantare or chant, both epic and archaic, *Ava Giuana*, made of traumatic memories, oneiric cadences, oracular sounds, visionary madness; Giulietta Martelli Tamoni (1890-1975), born in Argentina, another daughter of Swiss-Italian emigrants; Sergio Maspoli (1920-1987), a playwright, who loved to regress into popular and somewhat picaresque characters (*La bottega da nüm matt* "The shop of Us Madmen", is the title of his only book of poetry); and Giovanni Orelli and Ugo Canonica. They are all, or almost, poets who would become known in the following years, even if at times they went their own way: Maspoli with dialect comedy, Orelli with the novel, Canonica with Italian poetry and linguistic experimentation.

In short, except for Bianconi, who continued to publish in his old age, the most interesting dialect work of Italian Switzerland came after the war, namely in the publication of a few collections between the sixties and the next decade (by Bernasconi, Borioli, Martelli Tamoni, Maspoli, and Canonica; taken with fiction, Orelli would publish his book of dialect poetry only much later).

Later, the most noteworthy innovations were tied to the names of Ugo Canonica, Fernando Grignola, and Gabriele Alberto Quadri, and the production intensified in the eighties, concurrent with the success of neodialect poets in Italy. In 1981 came Canonica's *I ligolèghi*; the following year Bernasconi's *Umbri che viàgian*; in 1983 Grignola's *La mamma granda da tücc*; in 1985 Quadri's *Ra scherpa föra di scaff*; in 1986 Canonica's *To vi* and Orelli's *Sant'Antoni ddai padü*; the following year Grignola's *La pagina striàda* (and in 1989 dialect was included among the Italian poems of Orelli's *Spiracoli*). In the following decade there was also Elio Scamara who, with his poetry written in the dialect of the Verzasca valley, was perhaps the happiest and most interesting surprise of the nineties.

In reality, as shown by the anthology edited by Grignola (*Le radici ostinate. Poeti dialettali della Svizzera italiana*, 1995), the poetic landscape in dialect in Italian Switzerland numbers various other names and several collections. One fact stands out: if the geolinguistic marginality of Italian Switzerland, and the nature of its vernaculars, more conservative than elsewhere, allows dialect to be still spoken by many young people (especially in the valleys; but all the poets in this anthology are dialect-speaking, although they use Italian in the practice of their everyday profession), poetry in dialect does not seem to be embraced by the new generation, given that the youngest authors (like Quadri) are now fifty years old. And then, beyond the names just mentioned, dialect poetry generally is not able to avoid – in this it is far removed from the best work in Italy – the usual traits of lyric-elegiac interiorization, plaintive gnomic tones, and the representation of a popular idyllic and theatrically exemplary ethos. The best poets (some of them are present in dialect anthologies published in Italy) are in short those who, leaving behind an almost exhausted tradition, can come face to face with the stimulating experiences of their best counterparts in Italy.

Among the most recent and interesting things that deserve mention (reminiscent of analogous experiments carried out by Pasolini, Pierro, Giacomini, and others) are the "translations" in Ticinese dialect from ancient Provençal by Quadri (whose last collection is titled *Bestiarum criviaschese*), and those from Villon and Orelli. One should add that this practice is widespread among the best poets – the philological-lexical research and the study of jargons and marginal languages which, by constantly nourishing dialect with new lymphs, tend to rescue it from everyday use in order to bring out both its phonic potential and its deepest social and psychological significance (the *petèl* of childhood, the magic of adolescence, the individual and collective unconscious).

But it is difficult to find general themes and directions, outside a common, subliminal tension before the idea of man's progressive alienation, victim of a civilization seen as contemptuous of dignity and forgetful of history, and for a widespread taste for marginal times and places. The needs are too different, the motivations and inspiration too inconsistent. Nevertheless, at least a few similarities with Italian neodialect poetry can be identified. There are no examples in Italian Switzerland of an aristocratic use of dialect, like Noventa's, but it is legitimate to find, for example, analogies and echoes in the modalities: the inwardness of Marin and Grignola (to whom the Ticinese poet often refers explicitly); the resentment and "political" urging of Pedretti, Loi, Giacomini, and the indignation of Quadri, Orelli, Grignola himself; the frequent incursions into rustic life and Pasolini's idea of dialect as a "temporal category" preceding industrialization; the reversions – especially in Canonica, Orelli, and Scamara – into the mythical and transgressive territory of childhood, and Zanzotto's return to a dialect-uterus ("where there is no writing[...] or grammar").

What counts most, however, is overcoming the old dichotomy Italian-dialect and the notion of the latter's ancillary status with respect to the former.

It is difficult to foresee the future of poetry in dialect in Italian Switzerland, whether because dialects, despite a fair staying power, are undergoing a constant erosion (it is now a matter of a few generations), or above all because of the lack of a "dialectal" culture that does not confuse the literary and critical utilization of dialect with the improvisation and banalization of its use. Some examples of new usage (new for the local tradition, not for other regions of Italy) can be found in songwriting. But there dialect is above all and merely the transcription of everyday life, maybe even somewhat easygoing (the same old commonplaces), and is thus often far removed from poetry. At any rate, the Swiss-Italian minority has other accounts to settle with its own languages. For this reason also, the possibility of discourse today is rather limited and paradoxically even a bit elitist, if not overly so.

Anthologies and Dictionaries

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The English translation for the Italian Switzerland Section are by Gaetano Cipolla

GIOVANNI BIANCONI

Giovanni Bianconi (Minusio, 1891-1981) worked very intensely in three fields: research on the trades of agricultural civilization and rural architecture, xylographic art, and poetry in dialect. Although wood engraving was his main occupation for a long time, these interests tended to complement each other (*Legni e versi* is the title of a 1978 collection, but all his books of poetry are accompanied by wood engravings). Bianconi's "tragic" realism, which so deeply informs the work of the artist and later the poet's, not infrequently blends with the ethnographic and expressionistic bent that the young Bianconi had nourished during the period of study at the Stuttgart Academy – one only needs to look at the anguished faces and the fading shadows that so often come out of the pen, the gouge, or the burin.

His first collection of dialect verse is titled *Garbiröö* (they are the grape clusters ripened after the harvest, in late autumn, on the vine). Rather than alluding, in Pascoli's wake, to the humbleness of the objects, the title indicates with a pinch of self-irony (the fledgling poet is now over fifty years old) the late season of Bianconi's first poetic fruits. But the taste is good, the novelty, at least for Italian Switzerland, is substantial. The region, which at the same time was

looking to a less provincial culture, was by now moving quickly toward rapid social and economic changes. Bianconi, although preserved by an innate pessimism that marks so many of his verses, could not detach himself completely, without nostalgia, from the civilization in which he grew up. "The only vital lymph that runs through them," observed Dante Isella, is "to be found in a reserved, but tenacious, one is tempted to say religious, attachment to the reality of his land."

The world of Bianconi's poetry (being situated on the chronological and cultural watershed between rural reality and modernization) is thus not yet completely free of nostalgia and the lure of the idyll. But the bitter undercurrent of irony and sarcasm, and the veil of keen wit that permeates them, more often than not keep his verses on this side of that unpropitious territory.

Bianconi's sentimental geography is made of the lakes and countrysides (and at times mountains) of his land, but it offers wide spaces to the places of abandonment and solitude ((the outskirts, the house for the elderly), which sometimes – with the public slaughterhouse, the sewer, the dirty lake bottom – become a bitter and almost *crepuscolare* parody of the *locus amoenus* (one is reminded of a certain Govoni).

The chronology is the natural one of the seasons, of birth and death, and is filled with everyday things (life in the village, religious holidays, funerals, trips to the mountain), with memories (childhood, military life), with special occasions (the music band playing in the square, the procession in the alley), with dark and mysterious premonitions; and it is inhabited by objects (the telegraph pole, the abandoned chapel) and by often alienated figures like the blind man, the farmer, the carter, the pruner, solitary figures that (like old people waiting for death) can at times bring to mind a certain Giotto.

Bianconi does not have the latter's elegance, nor his lyric and intellectual rigor (but in an autograph dedication Giotto calls him "poet of the heart," recognizing the human solidarity that always underlies Bianconi's poetry. To Giotto's "realism of sorrow," Bianconi prefers to counter with a pessimism imbued with irony, with protest (against the new indiscriminately flaunted) against the germanization of Canton Ticino), with disenchantment, with the sense of death.

Bianconi's poetry is thus firmly rooted in reality, but also deeply imbued with bitterness. By refusing subtleties and refinement, it wants to taste like *pan da segra* (rye bread): a rough, rustic taste, but much more intense than that of bread made with white flour, and therefore having more body and a more enduring flavor.

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Ai lagh in magra

Dagh e dagh, sta gran sücina
la t'ha fai molaa i calzon,
poro lagh! Che compassion
a vedett a la berlina
con chell tocch da riva a secch!
A vedee coss ti scondevi
sott a l'aqua, quand ti sevi
alt! Un gatt con fò i büsecch,
fiasch a tocch, cüü da botili,
mücc da toll rügin, sfondaa,
vas da smalt tütt gibolaa,
pécian rott, pell da cünili..
Bèè, che schivi!... e da lontan
sa diress che in nissün sid
ga pò vess un lagh pulid
come 'l nost (Eh! da lontan
l'è tütt bell! Ma, a vardagh dent,
crédompür, car al me lagh,
a voree propi vardagh,
l'è un po' insci tüta la gent ...)

da Garbirö

Il lago in magra. Dagli e dagli, questa grande siccità / ti ha fatto calare le brache, / povero lago! Che compassione / vederti messo alla berlina // con quel pezzo di riva

in secca! / Nel vedere cosa nascondevi / sotto l'acqua, quando eri / alto! Un gatto sbudellato, // fiaschi a pezzi, culi di bottiglie, / mucchi di barattoli di latta arrugginiti, sfondati, / vasi di smalto tutti ammaccati, / pettini rotti, pelli di coniglio... // Bèè, che schifo! ... e da lontano / si direbbe che in nessun luogo / ci può essere un lago pulito / come il nostro (Eh, da lontano // è tutto bello! Ma a guardarci dentro, credimi pure, caro il mio lago, / a volerci proprio guardare, / è un po' così tutta la gente ...

(traduzione di Renato Martinoni)

A Lake in a Drought

This awful endless drought keeps going

It's made you call uncle,

poor lake! What a pity

to see you down and out

with that patch of shore dried up.

Seeing what lay hidden

below the water when you were full

a disemboweled cat,

broken flasks, bottoms of bottles,

bottles of polish

completely crushed

broken combs, rabbits' skins...

How disgusting ...and from far away

you'd think that nowhere in the world

there could be a lake as clean as ours.

(But from far away

everything is beautiful, though if you look with care,

believe me, my dear lake,

If you really look,

people are all like that...).

Final

Contrabass da la mort

la cassa ca squariga giù in la tomba

e ca crica sù i cord;

quàtar manad da tera ca rimbomba

sül vöid dal quere; bocch storgiud dai sangiott

strozzaa dent in la gora;

öcc tórbor dal gran piang

e li fiss sù la bara ca scompariss sott tera: bastiment

ca sa sprofonda dent in l'aqua mara.

da Garbiröo

Finale. Contrabbasso della morte / la cassa che scivola giù nella tomba e scricchiola sulle corde; / quattro manate di terra che rimbomba / sul vuoto del coperchio; bocche storte dai singhiozzi / strozzati in gola; / occhi torbidi dal gran piangere / fissi sulla bara / che scompare sottoterra: bastimento / che sprofonda dentro l'acqua amara

(traduzione di Renato Martinoni)

Ending

Double-bass of death
the coffin sliding down into the tomb
creaking on the ropes
four handfuls of dirt reverberating
upon the empty space inside the cover.
Mouths distorted by sobbing
choked in the throat
bloodshot eyes from endless weeping
staring at the coffin
as it disappears into the ground: a ship
sinking into the bitter waters.

Strecia da paes

Casett vecc, stramb, metiù da sbiess
i s'fiada adoss col finistrinn:
odor da stall, odor da cess,
odor da müff sù di cantinn.
Tra i mür smagiaa da giald, da verd,
bordei da mosch ca vola in gir,
cipp cipp da pàssar ca s'disperd
in l'aria insem a vèz di sbir.
Da là sa sent, sù la riscia da,
da là sa sent zòcor, scarpon,
da là sa sent 'na ciciarada,
di vos güzz güzz, di vos da donn.
Chì riva giüsta quai galinn ca beca
sü quaicoss da bass,
chì passa giüsta un quai gatin
süi so sciampett, senza fracass.
Ma d'una cà sotüma, fregia,
a un finestrin ross da gerani,
di volt 'na man, 'na man da vegia,

la fà di segn continuv, strani...

da Ofell dal specc

Vicolo di paese. Casupole vecchie, strambe, messe di sbieco / si fiatano addosso con le finestrelle: / odore di stalla, odore di cesso, / odore di muffa che sale dalle cantine. // Tra i muri macchiati di giallo, di verde, / sciami di mosche che volano in giro, / cipp cipp di passerì che si disperdono / nell'aria insieme al verso dei rondoni. // Di là si sente, sull'acciottolato, / di là si sentono zoccoli, scarponi, / di là si sente un chiacchierare, / di voci acutissime, di voci di donne. // Qui arriva soltanto qualche gallina / che becca su qualcosa da terra, / qui passa soltanto qualche gattino / sulle sue zampe, senza fracasso. // Ma da una casa malinconica, fredda, / a una finestrella rossa di gerani, / a volte una mano, una mano di vecchia, / fa dei segni continui, dei segni strani...

(traduzione di Renato Martinoni)

Small Town Street

Old dilapidated, weirdly leaning houses,
breathe on each other through small windows
stable stench, latrine stench, mold stench
rising from the basement.
On the yellow-stained walls
swarms of flies flying about
chirping of sparrows waning
in the air together with the chirping of swallows.
On the other side you on the cobblestones
can hear wooden sandals, boots,
on the other side you can hear chatting
of shrilly voices, high-pitched voices of women.
Only a hen makes it this far,
pecking at something on the ground,
only some kittens pass by here,
light on their paws without noise
but from a cold and lonely house
at times a hand, the hand of an old woman,
makes continuous incomprehensible gestures
to a little window red with geraniums.

Ricòvar

Pori vegitt setaa
sü la bancbeta al soo. la schena al mür,
cavii gris, vestii scür,
facett patid, con quii öcc stracch e bon
ca varda al via vai
dal stradon e di tren ca passa via,
pori vecc stracch e smort

a m' parii di vagon

ca specia fermi sù binari morti.

da Ofell dal specc

Ricovero. Poveri vecchietti seduti / sulla panchina al sole, la schiena al muro, capelli grigi, vestiti scuri, / faccette pallide, con quegli occhi strani e buoni che guardano il viavai / dello stradone e dei treni che passano via, poveri vecchi stanchi e smorti / mi sembrate vagoni / che aspettano fermi sui binari morti.

(traduzione di Renato Martinoni)

Old People's Home

Poor old people sitting down

On the bench in the sun

their backs to the wall

colorless little faces with strange good people's eyes

looking at the bussle of traffic

on the road and the trains passing by

poor tired old people

you look like wagons

waiting on a section of dead tracks.

Squaiass

Squaiass

senza fracass

come la neve tra i sass

di scimm a primavera.

Da Paesin ca va...

Squagliarsi. Squagliarsi / senza fracasso / come la neve tra i sassi / delle cime a primavera.

(traduzione di Renato Martinoni)

To Melt Away

Melt away

without noise

like the snow in the roks

on mountaintops in spring.

UGO CANONICA

He is the dean of Ticinese dialect poets. Originally from Val Colla (Canton Ticino), born in Willisau, German Switzerland, in 1918 – therefore the son of immigrants – he lives in Lugano. He has authored works of narrative, plays, and six books of Italian poetry, but his work has moved progressively towards dialect, with very good results. Made of quick and sudden glances, filled with antinomies and symbols, Canonica's long experience continues to be balanced on the fragile brink between being and non-being, life and death, play and pain, youth and old age, fairy tale and disenchantment, temptation and weariness, amid reflections on existence and an increasingly disenchanted look at the present.

So To vi. A vigh ("You see, I see"), his third collection, takes a pensive and insisted look at the meaning and brevity of existence. And R imbiugh (the "lymph" that courses through a plant) alludes to a process of interiorization and probing into the deepest layers of being, the fears, the afflictions, the pain, the violence, the sickness, the folly of man.

There is a reality that appears in the background: it's the valley and its mysteries, the city and its ills. In short, Eden and Hades. But nature, except for its symbolic signs, is often empty, silent. What dominates is always first of all the uncertainty, the fragility of things, the sense of the ephemeral, the awareness of man's limits. At any rate, the author warns us, the most appropriate interpretive key is not that of naturalism, because Canonica's reality, behind the most superficial layer, is fragmented, reduced to occasionally hallucinatory shreds, to the search for the deepest connections, to the timeless truths of existence, to rapid and sudden glances, to the glimmer of memories. Perhaps this is also why it does not eschew symbolic images, and it ends in pessimism, bitter awareness of the futility of life.

But what is striking first of all are the formal properties. Canonica's poetic language is a constant mixture of daily life and sectorialization, rusticity and idiolect. It breathes different registers and languages, at times it mixes – in an inexhaustible refinement of style (which is an introjection into the archetypes of his own being) – Italian (or French, or the rügin, the ancient and obscure jargon of the smiths of Valcolla) and dialect: “and already this linguistic choice,” writes Franco Brevini, “links his experience to that of neodialect poets who have opted for peripheral varieties.”

The linguist Ottavio Lurati has observed that Canonica's dialect is not that of everyday life; it is archaic, difficult to master, it is (as Giovanni Orelli suggests) a Ur-language. It intensely exploits formal experimentation, the search for phonic word play, sonorous phantoms (especially in Gherengh gherangh, which transcribes the apparently asemantic language, but not at all devoid of profound meaning, of the stuttering and emotions of childhood). In short, Canonica's dialect poetry is suckled with a mother's milk (and one cannot help but think of Zanzotto's “Eve's drop of milk”), it aims at probing sedimented material and uncovering clots of memory now transformed into myth.

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Passa n saraja

Passa n saraja

fuin tence

ai ciama i fiö

a bofà in dro mantes

ra brasa sui padell

lus re stell

preponta r firmamente

cal se ciairiss lentamente

fèn per lecc

sempre in quel tecc

Ma incö...

Is ví domà ra spoia

ögg lucid

in gir a mazzà ra noia

da R imbiugh

Passa un magnano. Passa un magnano / faina nerissima / chiama i ragazzi / a soffiare nel mantice / la brace sulle padelle / luce le stelle / trapunta il firmamento / che si rischiara lentamente / fieno per letto / sempre in quella stalla / Ma oggi... / si vede soltanto la spoglia / occhi lucidi / in giro ad ammazzare la noia.

A Locksmith passes by

A locksmith passes by

a black stone marten

calls the boys

to blow in the bellows

the embers on the pans

light the stars

dotting the firmament

which slowly brightens

hay for a bed

always in the stable

but today...

only the remains

shiny eyes

searching around to kill boredom.

The Lymph (Blood)

The dried up and lifeless lymph

has taken all the color from that body

thoughts wandering aimlessly

the clock sounded midnight

but it was one o'clock in a morning

sparkling with crystals of dew

yesterday that voice was sharp

today it has faded with eyes yearning to cry

with all that sea of troubles

with a desire not to budge nor to pray

but to pick up straps

and go fa away, going beyond

to see nobody, to greet nobody

to be in the world and yet no to be there
to look, to keep quiet, most of all to want not to live
when you see
that a hundred thieves
are stealing your days and nights.

R imbiugh

R imbiugh succ e smorte
l'a sbiancò tutt quel corpe,
girava a vöide i pensé,
ro lerog segnava mezzanöcc
ma l'eva ra vuna d'una mattina
lustra di cristai de brina,
pizzighenta ier quela vos,
incö sbiavida co i ögg che vo piange,
con tutt quel mar de ma
miga vöia de möves nè de pregà
ma de fa su r baluscion
na lontan, passà de là,
più vedè nissun, nissun saludà
vess in dro monde e miga vessìgh
volpàa, verbàa vita
sovratutt piú vöre viv
quante ca to ví
che cent brames
it buii re nöcc e i dí

da R imbiugh

La linfa (il sangue). – La linfa asciutta e smorta / ha sbiancato tutto quel corpo / giravano a vuoto i pensieri / l'orologio segnava mezzanotte / ma era l'una d'una mattina / lustra di cristalli di brina / pizzighenta ieri quella voce / oggi sbiadita cogli occhi che vogliono piangere / con tutto quel mare di mali / non voglia di muoversi, né di pregare / ma di far fagotto / andar lontano, passare di là / più vedere nessuno, nessuno salutare / essere nel mondo e non esserci / guardare, tacere / soprattutto non voler piú vivere quando vedi / che cento ladri / ti rubano le notti e i giorni.

A Shining Light

Life: once over it fits
inside a hole not large enough,
wick of a candle that smokes
without telling you either the hour or the day.
What's on this side is separated
from what on the other side.

And if we look back
in the distance
we can see a function left over.
There are so many of them, but not one complaint
crosses their minds.
Among themselves they keep silent,
they are surrounded by a great peace.
A light that shines
Like the sun and never ends

‘Na lus che lusiss

Ra vita: finida l’agh sta
in d’un bögg de curta misura
stopin dra candera che va in fum
senza ditt nè r’ora nè r di.
Separò quel ca l’è de qui
da quel ca l’è de là.
Es’am se guarda indré
in distanza
e s vi ‘na funzion che la avanza.
I è n tance,
gnanca ‘n lamente
ch’egh passa in dra mente.
Tra de lor i tas
i è in mezze a ‘na gran pas.
‘Na lus che lusiss
comè r so e mai la finiss.

da To vi. A vigh

Una luce che luccica.– La vita: finita ci sta / in un buco di corta misura / stoppino della candela che va in fumo / senza dirti né l’ora né il giorno. / Separato quello che è di qui / da quello che è di là. / E se ci guardiamo indietro / in distanza / si vede una funzione che avanza. / Sono in tanti, nemmeno un lamento / che passi nella mente. / Tra loro tacciono / sono in mezzo a una gran pace. / Una luce che luccica / come il sole e mai finisce.

Cifente

A m bramava
r fontanon lontan lusiss a r lusciarö
i gàlbora tra la strovarda
e nun li a broncaa
e búii i fruite

i prim dra stagion

sgalfion tence

e quii in alte pence

he domà i uccei

posè su i ram

i po pilucaì, vedei

da I predé e i nosance

Caldissimo - Si bramava il mare / lontano luccicano al sole / le ciliegie tra le foglie / e noi li a cantare / a rubare i frutti / i primi della stagione / sgalcioni neri / e quelli in alto nerissimi / che soltanto gli uccelli / posati sui rami / possono piluccare, vedere

Very Hot

Very hot—we yearned for the sea

Far away cherries shine

through the leaves in the sun

and we were there singing

and stealing the fruits

the first of the season

big black cherries

and the darker ones high up

which only the birds

resting on the branches

can peck at and see.

A m parla

Ra cascada

varispe

sui lares castegn nòs

sui cròs.

In dre strad

su r géron

a m parla de mesté

de omen de donn. De sira de nòcc

in dre stanze

in dre brugh

i s vo ben brascè

lengua longa a lengua in boca

un tomente, i s toca.

Catt in arögna

oroch sciguett
i fa r verse
in sto monde quiett
ombre che va
che sta
denanze pòs a i cà
fantasme che nass.
I salta su da i sass.

da I predé e i nosance

A mparla. Parliamo - La cascata / scintille i sui larici castagni noci / sulle crose. / Nelle strade / sulla ghiaia / parliamo di lavoro / di uomini di donne. / Di sera di notte / nelle stanze / nelle brughe / si amano abbracciati / lingua lunga lingua in bocca / un tormento ci s tocca. / Gatti in amore / gufi civette / fanno il verso / in questo mondo quieto i ombre che vanno l che stanno / davanti dietro le case / fantasmi che nascono. / Saltano su dai sassi.

We Talk

The waterfall
Sparks
on larch, chestnut, walnut trees
on the crose (what is crose?)
In the street
on the gravel
we talk about work
men and women.
In the evening, at night
in the rooms
in the brughe (what is brughe?)
they make love and embrace
long tongue tongue in mouth
a torment, we touch one another.
Cats in heat
owls, screech owls
mimic each other
in this quiet world
Shadows that move
That linger
in front behind the houses
ghosts that are born.
They jump out the rocks.

Born in 1928, originally from the Bedretto valley, he is known mainly as a narrator (his novels have been published by Mondadori and Einaudi), but he also writes poetry in Italian (his last collection, *Né timo né maggiorana*, 1995, contains sixty sonnets). His dialect poetry was born in two different periods and it was determined by as many conditions. “The necessity of writing in dialect,” he writes in an afterword to *Sant’Antoni da padü*, “surfaced the first time when I was struggling with Latin (between 1954 and 1955), for a contrastive reason, as linguists say. [...] And that necessity for dialect surfaced a second time for a reason of “oxygenation,” if I can use that term, in more recent years. In other words, they are texts either from 1954-55 or 1981-89.”

In short, Orelli approached dialect for the first time when still young, in order to look for a pendant to the humanistic-medieval philological studies done at the university of Milan, and he offered a sample of it in a journal. He then went back to it in the early eighties in search of new nourishment, a regeneration, after taking other directions in literary creativity.

“Orelli’s poetry,” Franco Brevini has observed, pointing out the bipolarity of his diction, “plays on the tension between an archaic world, which is also the world of childhood, entrusted to an earthy Alpine dialect such as the one from Val Bedretto [...], and the cultivation of the self, in its turn wavering between regression into a rustic ego scriptor and personal utterance.” It should be added that his vision of childhood is not an angelic one, nor is it the idea of a pure and happy age, but rather and most of all a projection in cognitive terms of the experience, carefully filtered, at times even somewhat flaunted, through the culture of adulthood.

Orelli’s poems, in fact, mix cultured references and playful enumerations, the recitative and almost aphasic taste for the nursery rhyme (which at times, for this reason, becomes a simple and cultured verbal divertissement), and propitiatory invocations ritualized by a strong eroticism, divided between easygoing cantabile and violent invective. The love of flesh – which at times borders on coprolalia, but in a playful manner – and of a vigorous reality, rich with humors and blood, opens the way to a more concrete and alluring reality, but above all it aims at exorcizing, through the channels of desire, the sense of a solitude and alienation which is more ancestral than existential, the idea of human injustice and of death.

It is by virtue of this sense that one can explain the particular and persistent taste for ancient places of social interaction (the church square, the tavern, the cemetery), and, above all, for the times of waiting, which often have a metaphorical value (the eve of All Souls’ Day, Halloween, twilight and night). But the man who in his mature years went to live far from that hard social landscape, yet certainly not devoid of humanity, cannot resist the impulse to level his vis polemica against the false and selfish ideals of the new world (the civilization of financial speculation and atomic adventures, the religion of consumerism and false myths).

Orelli’s discourse – which generously recovers, with its archaic Alpine dialect, biblical reminiscences and classical memories (Lucretius, Cicero), Dantean echoes and somewhat visionary apparitions reminiscent of Tessa – brings together, with a particular bent, antithetical elements: the sacred and the profane, cultured quotation and prosaic reference, the exotic and the mundane. This way his poetry – Brevini again observes – reaches “precious effects by making the primitive of a childish *confina* or of the magical-liturgical invocation clash against a polished hendecasyllable, amid references to the Eliot’s classical deliberate calques.”

Then there is a strong need (characteristic of other Swiss-Italian poets: Canonica, Scamara, Quadri), to delve deeply, with philological precision, into the lexical potential of dialect: a need that translates into phonic, alliterative, paronomastic wordplay. But Orelli’s scant and savory collection of dialect poetry is also a passage from the playful and relaxed nonsense rhyme to the clear and bitter consciousness of nothingness. Emblematically, the last poem ends with an apocalyptic vision and a lapidary verse: “into the nothingness of Nothingness.”

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Sant’antoni dai padü

Sant’Antoni dai padü

fam trovè chël c’ò perdú

fam trovè la tusa biunda

c’ò incuntrù ‘n trenu ‘n secunda,

la vegneva du Friuli t

la vaséva a Winterthur,

l’éva straca e la troveva

mia un pos't pa la sò tes'ta..
 I ò dicc, se la vöreva,
 da domì sùì mé ginocc,
 i c'atéa da tegni 'l fièt
 a sentila re'spirè:
 ma u'mtocheva sautrè sgiù,
 cun che öcc la m'à vardù
 cun 'na man i ni c'avi
 specianéi par via du vent
 e i so mia cum la s'as ciam
 e in che strèda la va a vif,
 ma si vèi a Winterthur
 la dumegna a la matin
 i la s'peci fò det gesa
 a la messa det i servi.
 Sant'Antoni dai c'auzei
 c'è s'guanù e l'è s'tècc in péi
 fam trovè la tusa biunda
 mand'la incuntra piunda tendra
 c'è la prūma di giügèt
 chi c'è i daga in primavera
 dal taren i sciüscian fò
 senza rumpai cul dii sù
 chis'ti atèmpai giügèt:
 "giügèta vegn giügèta vegn
 c'è mé pà l'è nècc in Bregn
 a crumpè 'n sacch det c'as'tegn
 par mi par ti
 par chèla végia c'è l'à da morì".

Sant'Antonio dai padù – Sant Antonio dalle pantofole / fammi trovare quello che ho perduto / fammi trovare la ragazza / bionda che ho incontrato in treno in seconda,
 / veniva dal Friuli andava a Winterthur; / era stanca e non trovava / mica un posto per la sua testa. / Le ho detto, se voleva, / di dormire sui miei ginocchi, / cercavo di
 tenere il fiato / a sentirla respirare: // ma mi toccava scendere, / con che occhi mi ha guardato / con una mano nei capelli / spettinati per via del vento / e non so come si
 chiama / e in che strada va a vivere, / ma se vado a Winterthur / la domenica alla mattina / la aspetto fuori della chiesa / alla messa delle serve. // Sant'Antonio dalle
 scarpe / che è scivolato ed è rimasto in piedi / fammi trovare la ragazza bionda / mandala incontro tenera tenera / come una delle "giügèt" (crochi) / che i ragazzi in
 primavera / dal terreno succhiano fuori / senza romperle dicendogli su / queste litanie per i crochi: // "giügèta vieni giügèta vieni / che il mio padre è andato in Blenio /
 a comprare un sacco di castagne / per me per te / per quella vecchia che ha da morire".

St. Anthony of the Slippers

St. Anthony of the slippers,

help me find what I have lost;
help me find the blond girl
I met in second class on the train.
She was coming from Friuli
and was going to Winterthur.
She was tired and could not find a place
On which to rest her head.
I told her she could use my knees
to sleep on, if she wanted.
I tried to hold my breath
while listening to hers.
But I had to get off.
What a look she gave me
with a hand on her hair
mussed up on account of the wind.
And I don't know her name
Or the street she was going to live on.
But if I go to Winterthur
on a Sunday morning
I will wait for her outside the church
After the mass for the maids.
St. Anthony of the shoes
who slipped and remained standing
help me find the blond girl.
Send her my way like one
of the tender crocuses
that boys in the spring
suck up out of the ground
without injuring them
by saying these crocus litanies:
"Come out, little Crocus, come out
for my father went to Blenio
to buy a sack of chestnuts
for you and for me
for that old woman who's about to die."

ai miei di casa, a Bedretto
 La vigilia di Mort l'é mò taregn,
 i óman àn via a dè fò ladàm pai prei
 sot a 'na mantelina a la nebia,
 i l'aria u i é aria 't nef, la la tófa
 la c'èura prìma da nè a la prazéf,
 c'é la mareig'a intant dananz a l' üss.
 S'tasira intant c' i séva dré a nè a c'è
 indaparmi una lanterna
 la s'é auzèda da luisc a salüdàm,
 ò auzù ènc'a mi la mè a salüdè
 i fóman, i tusèi cu la citè,
 la pena 't vif e la droga di sögn,
 ò salüdù un mort det cent ègn fa:
 u's ciameva 'mè mi, senza parenc,
 l'à lassècc: lü pa la sò crus det sass,
 vita ones'ta la dis, ma intant nissün
 uì porta quatru fiù in una s'c'atra
 vöida da la cunzèrva cun un po' 't c'arta d'or
 intum, par sempra indaparlü.
 U vegnarà queidün a portàm un quei fiù?
 Par un quei crisantemu da prüc'è
 u's femarö a trovàm almèn' 'na c'èura.
 Un bòt passù la fes'ta di Mort
 àn dumà i c'èuri c'ù gira sù i foss.
 E can' c'é 'l sù ti va via e u vegn scè frecc
 i pàssan fò dal c'artégn nial sarù,
 i van dré i mü a lic'è g'ù un po' 't creda,
 e cul maréisc un quei ciochin u's sent
 sonè int par int, int i nu c'aut du tecc.

La vigilia dei morti – La vigilia dei Morti è ancora terreno / gli uomini sono via a spargere letame per i prati / sotto a una mantellina per la nebbia, / nell'aria c'è aria di neve, la annusa / la capra prima di andare alla greppia, / che ruminava intanto davanti all'uscio. / Questa sera intanto che stavo tornando a casa / da solo una lanterna / si è alzata da lontano a salutarmi, / ho alzato anch'io la mia a salutare / le donne, le ragazze con la città, / la pena di vivere e la droga dei sogni, / ho salutato un morto di cento anni fa: / si chiamava come me, senza parenti, / ha lasciato lui per la sua croce di sasso, / vita onesta dice, ma intanto nessuno / gli porta quattro fiori in una scatola / vuota della conserva con un po' di stagnola / intorno, per sempre solo. / Verrà qualcuno a portarmi qualche fiore? / Per un crisantemo da bruciare / si fermerebbe a trovarmi almeno una capra. / Passata la festa dei Morti / sono solo le capre che girano sulle fosse. // E quando il sole va via e vien qua freddo / escono dal cancello mal chiuso, / vanno dietro ai muri a leccar giù un po' di creta, / e col ruminare qualche campanello si sente / suonare di tanto in tanto, dentro nel caldo della stalla.

On the eve of the Dead it's still the land,
men are still out there spreading manure on the fields,
wearing a little shawl on account of the fog.
Snow is in the air, the goat smells it
while she ruminates before the door,
before proceeding to the pastures.
Tonight while I was returning home
a lantern alone
was raised far away as a greeting
and I raised mine to say hello
to the women, the girls with the city,
the pain of living and the drug of dreams,
I greeted a man who had died a hundred years ago.
His had my name, no relatives,
he left for the stone cross on his tomb
an honest life, he says, but meanwhile
nobody brings him flowers in an empty can
of preserves wrapped in aluminum foil
forever alone.
Will someone come to bring me flowers?
For a chrisanthemum to nibble at least a goat
would stop by to visit me.
Once the feast of the Dead is over,
only the goats come visit the graves.
And when the sun goes away and it gets cold,
they go out of the gate left ajar,
they go behind the walls to scrape off bits of clay,
and as they ruminate, from time to time, you can hear
their bells ringing while in the warmth of the stable.

Det dumegna

U piassè da pissè can' la vissia l'é piéna.
Pus a l'üss 't l'us'taria,
cun un pè sül s'c'aléuru
e l'autru sù la s'trèda 't l'ört,
us pissa senza préssa
cuntra 'l mū c"us das'crèda

par via di c'èuri i inverm l'aqua i s'tratemp
 túcc i pissèt di chi 't la mura
 mort e vivent, a l'us'taria:
 u piase da pissè senza l'umbria
 d'un paissèi s'us farà la lūna o 'l vent,
 pal lūndas'di o i tusèi
 c''i pàssan sül s'caléuru cuntra l'üss
 pòri piòi piü sül sò cume se iö
 ui füss, quarcü da la sò man,
 u Diàuru:
 u piase da pissè can c''u s'é tiss
 e u vin a una bona misüra
 e u s'as s'tüdia la bisca
 c'la va verz linsalata
 e 'l su u sas sbassa dré i pitèi
 "no, sulavévas mia tusèi,
 u s'c'apa mia, i l'ò scè in man": e se
 dopu 'na s'gorledina cu la man
 e gropù sù la pata,
 s'us auza i öcc al s'tredón
 u fa piase c'é cul pissè
 l'öcc u s'é das'fesciù det tüt chel tulbru
 d'us'taria, det dumegna,
 e prüima da nè int a dè fò i c'art
 s'minè un tus c''u pedala in equilibriu
 cume se mia caranz di c'èuri ma
 ciuculatitt da mia s'c'üscè
 ui füdess iö, par chi c''un vö, i la pulbra.

Di domenica – Il piacere di pisciare quando la vescica è piena / Presso l'uscio dell'osteria, / con un piede sulla scala / e l'altro sulla strada dell'orto, / si piscia senza fretta / contro il muro che si disintonaca / per via delle capre gli inverni l'acqua gli stratempi / tutte le pisciate di quelli della morra / morti e viventi all'osteria: // il piacere di pisciare senza l'ombra / di un pensiero se si farà la luna o il vento, / per il lunedì o le ragazze / che passano sulla scala contro l'uscio / povere pollastre (che non sono) più sul loro come se lì / ci fosse, coperto dalla sua mano, / il Diavolo: // il piacere di pisciare quando si è sazi / e il vino a una buona misura / e si studia la bisca / che va verso l'insalata / e il sole cala dietro i tetti / "no, non allamatevi ragazze, / non scappa, l'ho qua in mano": e se dopo una scrollatina con la mano / e abbottonati i calzoni, / se si alzano gli occhi allo stradone / fa piacere che col pisciare / l'occhio si è disfecciato di tutto quel torbido / di osteria, di domenica, / e prima di entrare a dar fuori le carte / guardare un ragazzo che pedala in equilibrio / come se non cacaranz di capre ma / cioccolatini da non schiacciare ci fosse lì, per chi ne vuole, nella polvere.

On Sundays

There's a pleasure in pissing when the bladder is full.

near the door of the tavern

with one foot on the stair
and the other on the road to the orchard.
You pee with no hurry
against the wall that's losing the plaster
on account of the goats, winters, water and bad weather
and on the pissing by those dead or alive
who played "morra" in the tavern.
There's a pleasure in pissing without the shadow
of a thought about whether the Moon will rise or the wind
about Monday or the girls
who pass on the stair against the threshold
Poor little hens (who are not) in their world as if there
covered by his hand
there were the Devil himself.
There's a pleasure in pissing when you are sated
and the wine a good measure
and you study the snake
as it moves towards the salad
and the sun sinks behind the rooves
"No, don't be alarmed, girls
it's not going anywhere, I'm holding it in my hands" and if
after shaking it a bit with you hand
and buttoning down your pants
you raise your eyes to the road
it is pleasing to see that with that pissing
the eye has freed itself of all that Sunday
tavern murkiness
and before entering to hand out the cards
to look at a boy who pedals balancing himself
as if on the road in the dust there were not
an abundance of little goat droppings,
but little chocolates not to run over.

Vigilia

In exitu Israel de Aegypto:
in u neiru di ni di ucéi c'is'c'apan
a Hiroshima, Bikini,

vis` t a la television (venardi sant)
cui èr c` i fann un lunch “adio” a la tèra
e i crit INRI Diu Diu
parché ti ni` é lasècc indapami?:
in i rì in do` c` i nòdan
cuntracurent i trút c` i màzan
a culp det dinimit,
e i rèi, in i leozz, o in mezz ai boll,
i traboi in amur, ghigliotinei:
o raza sanguinaria
varda in u micros` copi l` öcc paisàn
di chi c` u s` quarta e nèta
la c` èm d` iòrit pai chilbi ` t Pas` qua:
l` é l` öcc du cascíadù
c` u s` pecia u sö c` amóss e ` l branca
int i nu canògial tra c` öl e c` ör
in u sautru salvèdi da un zapél
a la g` èna Gehenna
i l` aria rèira di scime ` t la mort:
cu la fàcia hippocratica di indios
in u mirin det soudit circoncesi
e intant sùl video
u vegn fò la culumba e alura
bona nòcc, bona Pas` qua, bon apetit, bon tütt,
populo barbaro.

Vigilia - In exitu Israel de Aegyptu: / nel nero dei nidi degli uccelli che scappano / da Hiroshima, Bikini, visti alla televisione (venerdì santo) / con le ali che fanno un lungo “addio” alla terra / e i gridi INRI Dio Dio / perché mi hai abbandonato?: / nei fiumi dove nuotano / controcorrente le trote che ammazzano / a colpi di dinamite, / e le rane, nelle pozze, o in mezzo alle bolle, / le coppie in amore, ghigliottinate: // o razza sanguinaria / guarda al microscopio l`occhio contadino / di chi squarta e pulisce / la carne di capretti per i banchetti di Pasqua: / è l`occhio del cacciatore / che aspetta il suo camoscio e lo prende / dentro nel cannocchiale tra collo e cuore / nel salto selvatico da un dirupo / alla gana Gehenna / nell`aria rara delle cime e della morte: / con la faccia hippocratica degli indios / nel mirino di soldati circoncesi / e intanto sul video esce la colomba e allora / buona notte, buona Pasqua, buon appetito / popolo barbaro..

Eve

In exitu Israel de Aegyptu:
In the black nest of the birds fleeing
Hiroshima, Bikini
seen on television (Holy Friday)
with their wings sending a long goodbye to earth
and the screams of INRI God God

why hast thou forsaken me?:

In the rivers where trout are swimming upstream

killed by blasts of dynamite

and the frogs, in pools or in the middle of bubbles,

guillotined couples in heat,

O bloodthirsty race,

look through the microscope at the peasant eye

of those who quarter and clean

the meat of lambs for the Easter Banquets;

It's the eye of the hunter

who stalks his chamois and hits it

through his telescope sight between the neck and heart

in the wild jump of a ravine

in the gana Gehenna (what is this?)

in the rarified air of the mountaintops and of death

With the hippocratic face of Indios

in the sights of circumcised soldiers.

And meanwhile on the video

The dove flies out and then

Good night, have a good Easter,

good appetite, good everything,

Barbaric people.

G'ascia

Vüna di chis 'ti nocc det lüna,

vüna di chis 'ti nef al lüm

du cel c'è i la campagna

a la matin u pru l'é tampas 'tù

di pass 't la vulp, di léurí, di fòit,

di bidri, 'mé biniss det infiniti

mis 'teri gaudiosi gloriosi e dolorosi,

mila via mila avemari

passéi i ni dit det fòman

nècc i l'eternità:

vüna di chisti nòcc c"u g'èra

u büi, u puz di rèi, e 'l ri ma

sot a la g'ascia l'aqua

cume s' la passess g'ü in padüra
la cur: la trüta la s tira int i la vita
la s fa int i la tana
in u prufunt 't la tèra,
in u centru du munt:
vüna di chisti lün c''a g'ascia
la incòla l'üss al limadè
e u g'èra u fièt süi vidri
ma i c'è i la noce i dòman
in fila sü la s'trèda
'mé i mort du sciminteri.,
ò insögnù una braméra
ò insögnù da basàt
e c'è la frecc u gjaréva
vüna a l'autra i noss bocch,
e c'è par dag'arài
ui vaséva s'peciè la primavera
ma c'è la primavera
la ven dumà a la fin du munt
u di du balurdon, det l'ira,
c'è i bocch di mort i mòrdan
tramurent i l'invern det Giosafat
u confiteor di culp, u rogaturus
al giüst c''u vegnarà sül rüss du munt,
me 'l lüf dal bòsc', da Giüdas,
e intant 'na nüra
neira cun int un pien
det saèt e 't tamps 't
.....
o dagarài mèi piü,
mört
in u nota du Nota.

Ghiaccio - Una di queste notti di luna, / una di queste nevi al lume / del cielo che nella campagna / alla mattina il prato è tempestato / di passi della volpe, di lepri, di faine, / di emellini, come grani di infiniti / misteri gaudiosi gloriosi e dolorosi, / mille via mille avemarie / passate nelle dita di donne / andate all'eternità: // una di queste notti che gela / la fontana, il pozzo delle rane, e il fiume ma / sotto al ghiaccio l'acqua / come se passasse giù scalza / corre: la trota / si tira dentro nella vita / si fa dentro nella tana / nel profondo della terra, / nel centro del mondo: // una di queste lune che il ghiaccio / incolla l'uscio alla soglia / e gela il fiato sui vetri / ma le case nella notte domono / infilata sulla strada / come i morti del cimitero: // ho sognato una galaverna / ho sognato di baciarti / e che il freddo gelava / una all'altra le nostre bocche, / e che per disgelarle / bisognava aspettare la primavera / ma che la primavera / viene solo alla fine del mondo / nel giorno del capogiro, dell'ira, / che le bocche dei morti mordono / tremanti nell'inverno di Giosafat / il confiteor delle colpe, il rogaturus / al giusto che verrà sul pattume del mondo, / come il lupo dal bosco,

da Giudice, / e intanto una nuvola / nera con dentro un pieno / di saette e tempeste / o sgelarla mai più, / morte / nel niente / del niente.

Ice

One of these Moonlit night,
One of these snows seen in the light
Of the sky where in the countryside
In the morning the fields are marked
By the footprints of foxes, hares, deer,
Ermines, like grains of infinite
Joyous, glorious sorrowful mysteries
Thousands upon thousands of Hail Marys
Counted by women's fingers
Who have entered eternity:
One of these nights when the fountain,
the frog well and the river freeze, but
under the ice water
flows digs in, as if it were deeper:
the trout pulls itself inward in life
it goes deeper into its lair
in the depths of the earth
into the center of the world:
One of these moos that the ice
Makes the door stick to the threshold
And freezes our breath on the windowpanes
But the houses sleep in the night
All lined up in the street
Like the dead in the cemetery.
I dreamed of a galaverna (?)
I dreamed I was kissing you
And that the cold froze our mouths together
And that we had to wait for spring
To thaw them out,
But that spring
came only at the end of the world
on the day of lightheadedness, of wrath,
when the mouths of the dead bite
trembling in the winter of Jehosaphat

the confiteor of guilt, the rogaturus
to the just one who will come
onto the grime of the world,
like the wolf from the forest, as a Judge
and meanwhile a black
cloud holding inside a full complement
of lightning bolts and storms
.....
or never to thaw them,
death,
in the void of nothingness.

ELIO SCAMARA

He appeared suddenly on the dialect scene – and he is the nicest surprise of this last decade – in 1990, at the age of sixty, with a book of verse (the first of two) entitled *El nono et fràssenn*. “It is written in the dialect of Lavertezzo, with a few words imported from the towns of Valle Verzasca, particularly Brione,” Scamara says in the preface: “I have also used the Tarom jargon with words that have become common usage; archaic words or *parlaar ar ingrandà* (grand speech, of those who want to put on airs), without avoiding suitably transformed neologisms.”

In sum, Scamara’s language is openly complex and eclectic: firmly tied to a place (often in the valleys of Italian Switzerland dialects still vary a little from town to town and are therefore geographically identifiable) but also generously open to the mysteries of the archaic jargon of chimney sweepers who at one time emigrated to Piedmont and Lombardy (the Tarom), as well as to temporal variations and social usages. All this complements the singular mixture of themes and characters, divided between a rural civilization – locked in its magic and its languages made of signs, totems, allusions – and the era of the computer.

It is a cultured world, more than in the boundary that nostalgically opposes past and present, in the antinomy and the distance that separate the two extremes, making them impermeable, that is, unapproachable. Two distant spaces, substantially without real connections between them (except for the memory and the experience of those who experienced them and experiences them), where the blessed years of childhood – namely of discovery and wonder – are an uncontaminated moment to be lived again with boundless imagination, where youth, with its marked and provoking taste for freedom and transgression, between desire and sense of guilt, yearning for enjoyment and age-old fear of sin, seems to restore meaning and value to a reality forever lost.

Scamara’s past, which finds a way, in its mysterious rituals and spaces (the river, the wood, barns and hovels), to extend as far as the present, but without penetrating it, is thus a reality often more pagan than Christian, peopled by voices, phantoms, the whispers and secret languages of the dead, or of strange characters. From this past, between what is said and what is left unsaid, astonishment and temptation, admonishment and violation, desire and sin come to the surface amid terse statements and sudden reticence, amid allusions, side glances, and negations: themes experienced without regret, perhaps with the amazement of one who cannot fully understand their deepest meaning, but wants to probe them without pause. “Scamara’s poetry,” Franco Loi observed, “is indeed rooted in dialect tradition and in the memories of the valleys, [...] but the places and the language are experienced again within the modern world and linguistic freedom.

More ambitious (even in the linguistic medium engaged in polyphonies) is the second book, *Er magn* (the hand: symbol of life and death, desire and repression, strength and weakness). It is a long poem in verses often close to prose, punctuated by “poetic thoughts” (that is, moments of pause and reflection), based on often mysterious dialogues and rapid, almost cinematic landscapes, where the places of the primitive alternate once more with those of an invading and tentacular civilization (addicts’ syringes, abandoned tires, condoms).

The text develops around the interplay of reciting voices: that of the “storyteller” (the poet’s alter ego), those of the dead (prehistoric hominids, tourists drowned in the river), and those of living men, of people in agony, of ghosts, in an endless mixing of contemporary events and tenuous memories, of loud voices and distant echoes. Franco Brevini has rightly included Scamara in the restricted group “of names which no doubt scholars of dialect literatures will have to consider in the near future.”

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I nöss münt

Possibil!

Ner faurèira sóna um piano.

Um piànu veru.

Et dent, na dona magra, patida.

Un òmen, dai cavill mai scarpüid

a un oregign,

u bóófa ent in um sciürell.

Pen um segign: zainitt, siring

a i pèll dí preservatiiv.

Dóó nesèll it lèca i mai.

Lüü ut fà sègn da tooi sù:

– Porti via, porti via,

Tant stenöcc, o un'alta nöcc,

nói um es maaza –.

da El nono etfrässenn

Nostri monti. – Possibile! / Nella stalla suona un pianoforte. / Un pia noforte vero. / Lì dentro, una donna magra, smunta. / Un uomo, dai capelli spettinati / e un orecchino i soffia dentro uno zufolo. / In un secchiello: boccette, siringhe / e la pelle dei profilattici, / Due caprette ti leccano le mani. / Lui fa cenno di prenderle: / – Portale via, portale via. / Tanto, questa notte, o un'altra notte, / noi ci uccidiamo

Our Mountains

Possible!

A piano plays inside a stable.

A real piano.

Inside there's a skinny, pale woman.

A man, with mussed-up hair

And an earring

Blows into a reed.

In a little pail:

Vials, syringes

And the skins of profilactics.

Two little goats lick you hands.

He motions you to take them:

--Take them away, take them away--

for tonight or some other night,
we are going to kill ourselves.

Er Iapa

L'è um vent cald
ch`u vegn ent dal frentómm,
dai fessüür di port e di mü.
– As egh senta – i diis.
Agh é chil ch`a bistòchiss,
chil ch`a büstèma,
chil ch`as óaga o isghignazziss.

It bófa ent pi órècc.

It liscia i cavill in ària.

It grata er s/fèna slóza et südóó frècc

L'è um vent cald
ch`uui scónsgüüra in di sô scenc
inssèma ar sciüèta e al nòcc.

A chei ch`i diis: í à mai lassuu desórdenn.

Miga fõóí rütt in del libro di patèr.

Miga móltrinàda er velina der popòlà,

In di besf: sì. Cadènn gropà o vedell strózèè.

Tütt u lassa capii ch`í é di nöss sgent,

mal fà bègn vegnüü de là,

prètig di sid e di mestee.

da El nono et frässenn

Il parlare dei morti. – E un vento caldo / che entra dalla finestrella del frontone, / dalle fessure delle porte e dei muri. / – Si sente – dicono. / Ci sono quelli che borbottano, / che bestemmiano, / che litigano o ghignano. / Ti soffiano nelle orecchie. / Ti lisciano i capelli arruffati. / Ti grattano la schiena sudata. // È un vento caldo / che li riporta in prigione nella cengia / insieme alla civetta e al buio. / A quel che si dice non lasciano disordine. / Non rotti i fogli del libro delle preghiere, / né il velo della vergine. / Nelle bestie: sì. Catene annodate o vitelli strozzati. / Tutto lascia supporre che sia gente nostra / venuta dall'aldilà, / pratica dei luoghi e dei costumi.

The Talking of the Dead

It's a warm wind

That comes through the little window in front

Through the cracks of the doors and walls.

–You can hear – they say.

There are some who mumble

Who curse,

Who fight or sneer.

They blow in your ears.
They comb your disheveled hair
They scratch you sweaty back
It's a warm wind
That takes them back to prison in the rock ledge
Together with the screech owl and in the dark.
From what I have heard they do not leave a mess.
The prayer book pages are not broken,
nor is the veil of the virgin.
But the animals: yes. Tied up chains, or choked calves.
Everything points to people from these parts,
Who have come from beyond,
Who know these places and their customs.

El lag da Starlarèsc

Cand che a Starlarèsc
agh'è er lüma
tücc i prefer is cōntràsta
col ciàr a'l scür di crést vüzz
cor melancónia di colüür chi lova,
cól Ponciónm, cór Efra, cór Införa,
cón chel la• li ch'a parla
et pèss at sirenn.
Mètegh na femna di tóó li per orla
e fala bagnàà in na umbria lunga a setira.
Penssa cóm ti sè fortunóó
da vèss in chi poch
gh'u senta uni ciòchètt
– l'è na banda –;
ch 'u bala cór lüna
– l'è na "samba" –;
ch u fà er amór in der piòda
a cón chel'acqua us lava el pecàd.

da El nono et fràssenn

Il lago di Starlarèsc. – Quando a Starlarèsc / c'è la luna / tutti i profili si contrastano / col chiaroscuro delle creste aguzze, / con la malinconia dei colori che si sfanno, / con il Poncione, con l'Efra, con il Piano, / con quel lago che parla / di pesci e di sirene. / Mettici una donna, nostra, sul bordo / e fa' che si bagni in un'ombra lunga e sottile. / Pensa quanto sei fortunato / di essere tra i pochi / che sentono un campano / – è una banda –, / che ballano con la luna / – è una samba –, / che fanno l'amore sulla pioda / e con quell'acqua si lavano il peccato.

The Lake of Starlarèsc

When in Starlarèsc
Shines the moon
All the profiles
Are contrasted against
The chiaroscuro of the sharp mountaintops
With the sadness of the dying colors,
With The Poncione, the Efra and the Piano,
With that lake that talks
About fish and sirens.
Put a woman, one of ours,
on the border
and make sure that she bathes
in a long thin shadow
Think how lucky you are
To be among the few
Who hear a bell
—it's a band—
who dance with the Moon
—it's a samba—
who make love on the ledge
and who wash away their sins with that water.

Er mágn

Cór nona
um bevèva dal scossàa.
Cór máma: dai mai metüü inssèma a squèla.
El pà
ugh fèva mèèt er mágn vèrta cóntra er crèsta,
— dopo vèèla netàda via —
e ti sciüsciàva tra el dedòmna el signánd.
Pöö,
um scapàva da par nôi ar fontàna:
agh èva sempriu una mágn
ch'la fèèva i circol per àqua.
Da Er mágn

La mano. — Con la nonna / bevevamo dal grembiule. / Con la mamma: / dalle mani messe a scodella. / Il pa' / ci faceva mettere la mano aperta contro la roccia, / — dopo

averla pulita – / e succhiavi tra il pollice e l'indice. // Poi, / scappavamo da soli alla fontana: / c'era sempre una mano / che faceva i circoli sull'acqua.

The Hand

With grandmother

We used to drink from her apron;

With mother

From her hands joined as a scoop.

Dad

Made us place an open hand against the rock,

– after we had cleaned it –

and we sucked between the thumb and the index.

Afterwards,

We ran to the fountain alone:

There was always a hand

Making circles in the water.

[...]

I noss strad í èva sempriu

in salida. El scuur der àqua:

el motu perpétuo, E um fradéll,

da scorazzáá.

El Mund di Paghègn l'è

tüt in rovina: bonemént canicc

o chemèsc fecc ent. Da m cantinign

um s é rudiid et dent: el tóm,

tazinn scaiá, cassètt tütt rüüsenn.

Um veer un'alta porta: cunch et ram

an fmò lüseent. Um veer un'alta porta:

torléri et lotóm, bracialitt,

corónn, crosítt et:

“OR!”.

Um veer un'alta porta:

um gránd odóór et rasa,

d'incéns a et medesinn ar menta.

E pöö füm. A m spartitràfif,

una magn voltàda a driza,

una magn là da manzina:

“Chèla a sinistra cón el rolòcc?”.

– El Chico ugh’ à sgià là el Svocc.

Nòoi, bonemènt, chel del campanìgn –.

“Adèss: da chi o da là?”.

Da chi u vegn füm: la gh’ à del cinees

chèla basciòca. De là?:

“Ma varda là el Chico! Secónda

porta dopo er arcàda “.

– Casotto. Cóntra er AIDS: all’automatico:

8 fr. x 10 pezzi – “Ma! I s rà pèzzi per er aftomàti!”

Lüü l’ é mecànìf. Nemm per nossa Strada!”.

Dopo náá e náá e náá:

magazitt, supermercati, tapee orientèll.

sempru una destra, sempru na sinistra.

– Fiòlla, che tropa! –.

Sempru sgent a pass de córza,

ma cóme rètt a scundes,

perchè i strad ogni tdnt i v à inssèma:

e ti t immügia e ti ciàpa i cariisg:

sgent cói maai ingropà et pòs ar s’fèna.

Coltùura. Cinema: in cartelòmnr

“Mondo cane”.

Dar alt cò, um es volta indré.,

“Mondo cane” anfmò. Pitüür,

pichèta, picasèss: David,

el bombonidig del Budda,

büsecòm del Botèro,

e libri: a pèia a pèia.

Kandinsky: l’ Ermitage,

anfmò et scià dar vedràda:

[...]

da Er mágn

Le nostre strade erano sempre / in salita. Lo scorrere dell’acqua: / il moto perpetuo. E un fratello, / per scorrazzare. / Il Monte dei Pagani è / tutto in rovina: ruderi / o catenacci bloccati. Da una cantina / ci portiamo dentro: il tornio, / ciotole rotte, barattoli arrugginiti. / Apriamo un’altra

porta: conche di rame / ancora lucenti. Apriamo un’altra porta: / cianfrusaglie di ottone, braccialetti, / corone, croci di: “ORO!” // Apriamo un’altra porta: / un forte odore di resina, / di incenso e medicine alla menta. / Poi fumo. E uno spartitraffico: / una mano che indica la destra, / una mano che indica la mancina: / “Quella di sinistra, con l’orologio?”. / – Il Chico ha lo Swatch. / Noi, generalmente, quello del campanile – // “Adesso: da questa o dall’altra parte?”. / Da questa parte viene fumo: sembra una struttura cinese / quella casupola. Di là?: / “Ma guarda di là il Chico! Seconda / porta dopo l’arcata”. / – Casotto. Contro l’AIDS: all’automatico: / 8 fr. x 10 pezzi – / ... “Ma! Saranno pezzi per l’automatico! / Lui è meccanico. Andiamo per la nostra Strada!”. // Dopo camminare e camminare: / magazzini, supermercati, tappeti orientali: / sempre una destra, sempre una sinistra. / – Figlioli, che truppa! – / Sempre gente a passo di corsa, / ma come ratti a nascondersi, / perché le strade

ogni tanto si riuniscono: / e ti ammucci e prendi i viottoli: / gente con le mani unite dietro la schiena. / Cultura, Cinema: in cartellone: / “Mondo cane”. / Dall’altra parte, rivolti: / ancora “Mondo cane”. Pittori, / tagliapietre, scultori: David, / l’ombelico del Budda, / le pancione del Botero, / e libri: a mucchi, a mucchi. / Kandinsky: l’Emitage, / ancora al di qua della vetrata [...]

[...]

Our roads were always

Uphill. The flow of water:

The perpetual motion. And a brother

To run amok.

The Mountain of Pagans is

All destroyed: ruins

Or blocked by chains. From a basement

We take away: a drill

Broken cups, rusty cans.

We open another door:

Nick-nacks of brass, bracelets,

chains, crosses made of

“GOLD”

We open another door:

A strong odor of resins,

Of incense and mint medicines.

Then smoke. And a traffic sign:

A hand pointing to the right,

Another pointing to the left:

“The one to the left with the watch?”

Chico has the Swatch.

We generally the one on the bell tower

–“Now, should we go this or that way?”

There’s smoke coming from this side: that hut

looks like a Chinese structure. That way?:

“But look where Chico is over there! The second

door after the archway.”

A country structure. In the automatic machine. Against AIDS

8 Francs x 10 pieces—

... “Who knows! They’re probably coins for the automat!

He is a mechanic. Let’s go our Way!”

After walking and walking

Stores, supermarkets, oriental rugs:

There is always a left and a right.
—Guys, what a crowd!—
—People always running about,
but like rats trying to hide,
because the streets converge one in a while
and people form a crowd and you take the side streets:
people with their hands behind their backs.
Culture, Cinema: on a poster
“Mondo Cane”.
Across the street another
“Mondo Cane”. Painters,
stonecutters, sculptors: the David,
the belly of Buddha,
Botero’s plumpy women,
And books: piles upon piles.
Kandinsky: The Hermitage,
And more on this side of the window: [...]

FERNANDO GRIGNOLA

A restless observer, interpreter, and portrayer of a rural reality that lives between the countryside and the lake, but already within consumer society, Fernando Grignola (born in 1932) decided to be – at last in his first books, in which one finds the echo of the poetry of Biagio Marin’s, whom Grignola calls “my father of light and thoughts – the sentimental interpreter of a whole community.

His main focus is the world d’antan, the motherland (La mamma grand da tücc, everyone’s great mother, as the title of one of his collection says), a wise, good land, rich with flavors and harmonies, regenerating, reassuring: the land of roots (a word very dear to the author), firmly bound to the slow and precise rhythms of the seasons, of man’s activities, to the allurements of a civilization filled with values and human warmth, and for this reason looked at with passion and regret.

In short, Grignola’s world is “bewitched,” to paraphrase the title of two of his collections, made of “a distant past kept miraculously close” by the power of words. The poet – who loves to listen to them (Visin luntán thus also indicates this constant need to get close, especially in recent years, to the memorial essence of distant things) – observes nature in its symbols, in its warm pulsation (Grignola’s lyric is full of “breaths” and “sighs”: breaths of life, but also universal breaths), hanging by the slender thread of memory. The ensuing emotion is made of sadness and counters the images of violence, pain (to which the author answers with a mix of indignation and religious compassion), ruin, dissolution, that can only give rise to feelings of rage, irritation, disorientation before the unknown.

The modern world’s guilty carelessness with respect to nature raises ecological protests (accompanied by sympathy for what nature can still give). The false myths, the woes of everyday life (solitude, drugs, alienation), the “sickness of living” born before a present made of wars and injustices, irrevocably distance man from his truest values, pushes him into mystery, creates in him the need listen ever more inwardly, of a “closeness” with his own being and the eternal questions of existence. Past and present are set against each other in violently antithetical terms (but also poetically productive: “from the attrition between the world of roots and universe of standardization are born the surest texts,” Franco Brevini observes.

This need for more intimate reflections on his own life, accompanied by a growing faith in words, taken as conveyors of religious feeling, or at least transcendence, was probably a consequence of his experience with illness, and the enigma of death that inevitably attends it. Perhaps due also to this need for concentration, Grignola’s last poems take on more and more an epigrammatic tone (the author himself speaks of “a more incisive rarefaction of verses and words”), increasingly avoiding, as Franco Loi has noted, the easy seduction of feelings and ideological thought in order to bring to light the substance of things and concentrate on the particular “as a sign of a more complex and universal reality.”

Grignola, however, does not reject the constant need to go back with his memory to the “roots of a flame that never goes out,” as he says in one of his most recent poems. His conversation is with feelings and emotions, the hope for something that cannot end with man’s death

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Esemchi!

Che corda stramba da ghitarra
al podarà mai pizzigaa stò paésan
rambat là a la porta dal puléé,
se 'l fastidi danaa dal tiraa 'nnanz
col runchett pena sotta da cà
al gà scancèla fin la vöia da bestemaa ?
Eni spazzaa via la vigna, i camp
da patati, i carlonèr, Vendüt ai fabbrich
em intossega l'acqua, l'aria,
ul noss dialett. Coi danéé
em cambiaa i penséé, la manéra da viv
e da guardass in di öcc. Sempüü nüm.
... I ghitar iè inciodaa sül rüggin
di sapp e di badi, sül fògh ch'a brüsa
l'ütim fén che piü nissün vö taiaa.
E semchi!

da La mammgranda da tücc

E siamo qui! – Che corda stravagante di chitarra / potrà mai pizzicare questo paesano / addossato alla porta del pollaio, / se il fastidio dannato del tirare innanzi / con il piccolo ronco sotto casa / gli toglie perfino la voglia di bestemmiare? // Abbiamo spazzato via la vigna, i campi / di patate, i campi di granoturco. Venduto alle fabbriche / a bbiamo intossicato l'acqua, l'aria, / il nostro dialetto. Con i soldi / abbiamo cambiato i pensieri, la maniera di vivere / e di guardarci negli occhi. Non siamo più noi. // ... Le chitarre sono inchiodate sulla ruggine / delle zappe e dei badili, sul fuoco che brucia / l'ultimo fieno che più nessuno vuole tagliare. // E siamo qui!

(Traduzione di Renato Martinoni).

And so we're here!

What kind of strange chord of the guitar
Can this neighbor play,
Leaning against the door to the henhouse,
If the damned bother of going ahead
with that little wheeze down below
takes away even his desire to curse?
We have swept away our vineyards, our potato fields,
our fields of corn. We have sold our factories
we have polluted the water, the air
and our dialect. With the money
we have changed our thoughts, our way of life
the way we look into each other
We are the damned bankers of "Scud" missiles
And of the electronic games with the "Patriots"
On the sands of hell. We are the factory
Of the oil-covered cormorants, the exterminators
Of good and evil, the resurrection of the crematory
Ovens, the black slime of the sea, the cables
Tom out of incubators... We are already the mountains
Of innocent people torn apart by the bombings,
And the warning sirens, the fear of desperate people,
The throbbing pain that vomits the blood of all the races
And countries .
We are war without dead or wounded,
The hidden truths, the lying ass of the world.
We are the sun blackened by five hundred wells
Burning day and night, we are the white, the black,
And gray, Intifada, Slovenia, "trojka" EEC.
Escalation, the "vu cumprà", tanks,
Bazookas and Migs, hope and death,
The Computer as God, the anti-AIDS vaccine...
We are all and no one come from who knows where
And we have learned new words even today!
In modern dialect, a jargon sewn up with the bestial
Orality of hatreds without end, human
Solidarity that must survive stupidity,

Filthy condemnation of many, power of few:

The price of History that throws away

Millions of unfortunate people.

Cundàna par tanti, putenza da pòch

Càntom la fin da la vita paesana

masc'nàda in fregüi da mümmia da museo.

Finít, ul sgotonàa lung di di

sempru stess, sempru quii,

ch'a rèstèlava la sacralità di stagiòn,

Finida, la civiltà di camp e di bòsch.

Nüm sem già i vanzadüsc depraváa

di bastrozzón da mascur antigás

e di bumb ordnans infettív.

Sem i banchée stramaledít di missili Scud

e di giògh eletrònich cu'i Patriot

sü la sabia da l'inferno. Sem la fabrica

di cormoràni impiastráa, i sterminaduu

dal ben e dal maa, la risürezión di furni

crematori, la pociciaca negra dal mar, i fir

strepát dai incubatrici... Sem già i muntàgn

d'innucént squartáa sota i bombardamént,

i sirénn d'alame, la pagüra di disperdáa,

ul maa viv che trà sfi sangh d'ogni razza

e paés...

Sem la guèra senza mòrt nè ferít,

i verità scondüt, ul cüü busàrd dal mund.

Sem ul suu snegrít da cinchcent pozz

ch'a brüsa nòcc e di, sem ul bianch ul negro

e'l gris, Intifàda, Slovenia, trojka CEE,

l'éscalscion e i vù cumprà, i tank

bazuca e Migh, la speranza e la mort,

ul Diu Compiuter, ul vaccino anti AIDS...

Sem tücc e nissün vegnüt da chissà 'ndua

e ancha incöö em imparát paròll növ!

In dialètt mudemu, gèrgo ricüsìt cun l'oralità

bestiàla da l'odio senza cunfin, solidarietà

umana ch'a dev sopraviv a la stüpidità,
schifusa cundàna par tanti, putenza da pòch:
ul prezzi da la Stòria ch'a sbatt via
miglión da disgraziaa.

da Ciel da paròll

Condanna per tanti, potenza di pochi. – Cantiamo la fine della vita contadina / macinata in briciole di mummia da museo. / Finito lo sgocciolare lungo dei di I sempre uguali, sempre quelli, / che rastrella / vano la sacralità delle stagioni. / Finita, la civiltà dei campi e dei boschi! // Noi siamo già gli avanzi depravati / dei sensali delle maschere antigas / e delle bombe “ordnance” infettive. / Siamo i banchieri stramaledetti di missili “Scud” / e dei giochi elettronici con i “Patriot” / sulla sabbia dell’inferno. Siamo la fabbrica / dei comorani impiastrati, gli sterminatori / del bene e del male, la risurrezione dei fomi / crematori, la melna nera del mare, i cavi / strappati dalle incubatrici... Siamo già le montagne / d’innocenti squartati sotto i bombardamenti, / le sirene d’allarme, la paura dei disperati, / il dolore lacinante che vomita sangue d’ogni razza / e paese... // Siamo la guerra senza morti né feriti, / le verità nascoste, il culo bugiardo del mondo. / Siamo il sole annerito da cinquecento pozzi / che ardono notte e giorno, siamo il bianco il nero / e il grigio, Intifada, Slovenia, “trojka” CEE, / l’escalation” e i “vu cumprà”, i “tank” / “bazooka” e “Mig”, la speranza e la morte, / il Dio «Computer», il vaccino anti AIDS... // Siamo tutti e nessuno venuti da chissà dove / e anche oggi abbiamo imparato parole nuove! / In dialetto moderno, gergo ricucito con l’oralità / bestiale dell’odio senza confini, solidarietà, / umana che deve sopravvivere alla stupidità, / schifosa condanna per tanti, potenza di pochi: // il prezzo della Storia che getta via / milioni di disgraziati.

(Traduzione dell'autore)

Mi sùm cumè ra rúngia

Mi sùm cumè ra rúngia in pián d’Agn
ch’a scúr-giò vèrs ra foce dar lággh
in d’un scapà d’ànadra a sbrinzád d’argént
e fóiaigh pasturóni ai boiamént di can.
Ch’è stai un un di i seghezzát
di culúr lúminús dar mártín pescaduu
cu ra niàda in tana sùii spúnd a tèrapién
e ‘r stralüsè di trütèll in mièzz ar cressón
ar várch di cotumóni róss.
Incöö piü da tànn, piü pedonàa da mèrli d’acqua..
Mi e ra rúngia pàssum giò adási
nòcc e di vèrs ar pòrt di sögn ar tramúnt
ch’a spètta tanti rispòst dra grandezza dar ciel.
Süi rív mì e léé emm lassát tàntu da nüm
ma da sempriu càttum-sü granéi d’òr e diamánt.

Io sono come la roggia. – Io sono come la roggia in pian d’Agno / che scorre verso la foce del lago / in uno scappare d’anitra a spruzzate d’argento / e folaghe stanziali agli abbaiaanti dei cani. // Ci sono stati un di i balenii / dei colori luminosi del martin pescatore / con la nidata in tana sulle sponde a terrapieno / e il lampo delle trotelle in mezzo al crescione / al varco dei rossi stivaloni. // Oggi non più tane, non più zampettare di merli d’acqua. // Io e la roggia scorriamo adagio / notte e giorno verso il porto dei sogni al tramonto / che aspetta tante risposte dalla grandezza del cielo. // Sulle rive abbiamo lasciato entrambi tanto di noi / ma da sempre raccogliamo granelli d’oro e diamanti.

I Am Like a Small Canal

I am like a small canal in the vally of Agno
That flows toward the mouth of the lake
In the silvery spray of fleeing ducks

And coots not heeding barking dogs.
There were once the flashes
of the luminous colors of kingfishers
who had full nests on the ramparts of the shores
and the flash of the young trout amidst the water-cress
as large red boots passed by.
Today there are no more lairs,
No more splashing of feet of the water birds.
I and the canal; flow slowly
Day and night toward the port of dreams at the horizon
Awaiting so many answers from the mightiness of the sky.
We both have left so much of ourselves on the shore
But we have been gathering grains of gold and diamonds forever.

... Tacát aí còrd nùm tusón

Processión ' biánch dra cunfraternita
di Rogaziòn ch' i riváva in Colegiada
sù'r gudròn dar stradón ch' a tàia
cámp e prat dar pián d' Agn
fiùm ch' andava a ra foce dra lüs.
Danánz a scurlón ur Crist in crús,
ur prèvat da Müscián, i cerighitt,
tùriboi in nivula d' incéns
sù'r profùm, dar fén immügiát a ra síra.
Pü a undàna i litanii di dònn iscür
uraziòn paésann in dr' aria ciara
da quii matín da cristàll.

... Tacát ai còrd nùm tusón a sonàa i campànn
tirát in àlt dar campanón cumè a tucàa 'r Signúr.

... Attaccati alle corde noi ragazzi. – Processioni bianche della confraternita / delle Rogazioni che
arrivavan in Collegiata / sull'asfalto dello stradone che taglia / campi e prati del pian d'Agno
fiumi che andavano alla foce della luce. // Davanti a spintoni il Cristo in croce, / il prete di Muz-
zano, i chierichetti, / turiboli in nuvola d'incenso / sul profumo del fieno ammuchiato alla sera.

// Poi ondeggiando le litanie delle donne scure / orazioni contadine nell'aria chiara / di quelle mattine di cristallo. // Attaccati alle corde noi ragazzi a suonare le
campane / tirati in alto dal campanone come a toccare il Signore.

Dangling from the Ropes, We Boys

White processions of the confraternity

Of the Rogations that reached the Collegiata
On the asphalt of the road that cuts
The fields and meadows of the Valley of Agno
Rivers that flowed to the mouth of light.
Christ on the Cross, ahead of pushing and shoving,
The Priest of Muzzano, the altar boys.
Columns of incense smoke
Over the odor of hay piled up in the evening.
Then undulating litanies of veiled women
Peasant orations in the clear air
Of the those crystal mornings.
Dangling by the ropes of ringing bells, we boys,
were pulled on high as if to touch the Lord.

Vèss

Mìga ra mòrt. Ma ra pagùra dar patii

vív

in dra cama

ra m'ha sparancát i öcc

sü stà góta pinina

da lús il

ch'a sùm, Signúr.

Visfbur metüd ar mínd

da 'n diségn grandíús

galassia-óm in dra Tò eternità

vèss

stà pèrta, meraviglia viva!

Sinfonía ch'a végn da luntán.

Da Radísa inamurada

Essere. – Non la morte. Ma la paura del patire / vivo / nella carne / m'ha spalancato gli occhi / su

questa piccola goccia / di luce / che sono, Signore. // Pulviscolo messo al mondo / da un disegno grandioso / galassia-uomo nella Tua eternità / essere / questa perla, meraviglia viva! // Sinfonia che viene da lontano.

To Be

Not death.

But the fear of suffering

Alive

In the flesh

Has opened up my eyes
On this small drop
Of light
That I am, Lord.
Dust born into this world
Out of a grandiose design
Galaxy-man in Your eternity
To be
This pearl, a living marvel!
A symphony that comes from afar.

GABRIELE ALBERTO QUADRI

Born in 1950, Quadri readily acknowledges to know “only one Master in the people”: a statement which is not devoid of precise ideological choices (he wants to be “the spokesman for a voiceless people”) and – for those who know the poetry and intentions of Porta and Tessa – of as many cultural values. The author’s anarchist, desecrating ludus philologicus, which he studied at the universities of Zurich and Pavia, is carefully measured on the models of literary tradition, especially the medieval one, with its genre of the Bestiary (*Bestiarum criviaschese* is the title of his last collection), and the Lombard tradition (the author takes up the genre of the seven and eighteen-century *bosinata*, but is also interested in other traditional metrical forms, like the sonnet).

The poetry of Quadri – a careful reader of the best tradition – is rich in quotations and memories, at times resolved in irony or parody; it is a poetry that often looks to a high and illustrious tradition, frequently embodied by the figure of the medieval bard, dear to Petéle Gambin (Quadri’s nom de plume), by the Meneghino of the Lombard theater, by the country rogue. It moves between fairy tale – to be taken as exemplum – and historical fact (documents, events, between hellish settings and ideological implications (“the historical drama of subaltern classes”), between popular epic and rustic theatricality (“in dialect [...] I often find myself assuming attitudes of open theatricality,” Quadri says insisting on the “theatrical dimension inherent in every dialect”).

Quadri’s dialect thus lends a voice to wretched and alienated characters, to madmen, drunkards, loners (who remind Franco Loi of Raffaello Baldini’s “desperate Romagnoli”), to old harlots and bandits, devils and witches, hungry vagabonds and men-animals. The *Bestiarum*, in short, means to recall the medieval treatise (there are also real animals, which carry symbolic reminiscences as in the old bestiaries), but also an ironic repertory of human animality.

But perhaps Quadri’s best poetry, not far removed from the atmosphere of the maudits and medieval goliards, is to be found in the squalid and crumbling interiors, reminiscent of the hovels of ancient barbarians, and in the foggy and hellish landscapes, places of desolation and sinful couplings, of orgies and shameful Sabbaths, where nakedness annuls every trace of moral and social difference, where each is called to carry on a Dantesque purge, and maybe even redeem the sins of a humanity prone to evil. But this constant immersion in “gross” matter, this aesthetics of morbidity often displayed to the limits of coprolalia (accompanied by an accurate lexical research), is also a safety valve and becomes reason for a polemic and aggressive invective against conventional and respectable society, against the ambitious and superficial nouveaux riches, against the rhetoric of intellectuals, the lack of moral sense, the selling of the land to outsiders, the arrogance of politicians (Quadri speaks of “anarchist desecration of what is and rules”).

Looking back to his Lombard models, to that eighteenth-century dialect line that goes from Carlo Maria Maggi to Carlo Porta, Quadri insists on the value of “the morality of dialect” (which is also the title of an ethnographic study he carried out in his valley); and he bases his work on a very accurate lexical research (he likes to cultivate the “seed” of “dialect rarities”), with incursions into jargons – like his contemporary Canonica – and into the expressionistic mixtures of Italian and dialect (and dialect and liturgical Latin, dialect and Spanish), and finally translating from the Provençal and Villon’s old French.

Bestiarum criviaschese (canzoniere which aims to be, the subtitle says, “Breviary of Initiation to the Mysteries of Life” and which therefore goes through its stages: from childhood to death) is, for now, the most organic and solid achievement. But there is no doubt that Quadri, the youngest among the Swiss-Italian dialect poets, will produce more interesting poetry in his singular language.

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Familia Longobardorum

a Maria Corti

Ch'eva dent na tanfà in dra stamberg
da restá lí de stüch, strozzá in gora 'r magon:
brasa dapertütt, ra scherpa fò di scaff,
fazzolett, scossá, na federa sür scagn.
Lü: biott comè 'n rospo, schena da vedro,
lifrocch ch'a ghigna 'r fã mia na grinza,
l'è lí comè in trapola. 'Na spanda
püssè in lá sbòga fóra ora canapia
de quela tacola d'ona tò guidazza:
bell e che stinchi a fùria da trincá
grapott in quela baita da marlòsen:
lüdri! da lepá sù tütt de riff o de raff,
pür da sgrafigná via on slöcch de pan
e mett via da part on ghell, ch'a sa sa mai!

Da Ra scherpa fóra di scaff

Familia longobardorum – C'era un tal tanfo dentro la stamberg / da restar li di stucco, con il magone strozzato in gola: / brace dappertutto, / il corredo fuor degli scaffali, / ecco qui fazzoletti, là un grembiule, anche una federa sullo sgabello. // Lui: biotto come un rospo, schiena di vetro, / sciocco che ghigna non fa una grinza, / è li come in trappola. Una spanna / poco più in là sbuca fuori il nasone // di quella taccola, la tua madrina: / ubriachi fradici a furia di trincare / grappotti in quella baita di vagabondi senzapatria: // luterani ingordi! da lappare tutto di riffa o di raffa, / pur d'arraffare un tozzo di pane / e metter via un soldo, non si sa mai!

(Traduzione dell'autore)

Familia Longobardorum

There was such a stench inside that hovel
it could turn you into stone and put a knot inside your throat:
burning coals all over
household goods out of their closets
handkerchieves here, an apron there, even a lining on a stool.
He -- ugly as a toad, a glass spine,
A silly man who sneers without a wrinkle--

Is there as if caught in a trap. A few feet
Away inside the large nose of you godmother,
That chatterbox, appears:
Dead drunk from the continuous gulping down
Of grappa inside that countryless vagabonds' hut:
Gluttonous Lutherans! Grabbing everything by any means at all
Just to put their hands on a piece of bread
And put away a few cents, you never know.

Ona vision

Ar mè pòro pà
Ar vegnéva sü bofänden, sto porom!
A's sentiva de qui gícor in dro vent
da fá drizzá in dra jossa i pori mort:
- Gh'ò da vosá püssè fort par fam senti?
Ra vegnéva sii tapasciänden, st'anima
in pena! par quer santé ch'a scarpa
dent in dro valon.
- S'a gh'avressa on quai ann men sü in dra schena,
ga faressa vedé mi quant'è ch'i sona i or!
Che par nüm magütt vegnü fora dra calcina,
poch bela la vö vess, l'è sempro staia grisa:
ch'ai rémbie dro cargansc gh'è tacò lá,
sub transit gloria mundi, or fir dro balüscion
par girá or mond, o lacrimarum valle:
cargá r'arp, picá or sapon, portá giü fen,
vanitas vanitatum, drizzá sü mür.
Or che ci sono le strade ferrate, cínicali,
rentre chez toi! Füma or vapor, ma-güüt,
ma-güüt! mater mea, oi che dolor!

da Ra scherpa fòra di scaff

Una visione.– «A mio padre». Saliva ansimando, il poveruomo! Si udivano urla tremende nel vento / da far levare i morti nella fossa: / Ho da gridare più forte per fami sentire? / Veniva su trotando, l'anima in pena, per quel sentiero che scoscende / dentro il vallone. / – Se avessi qualche anno in meno sulla schiena, / gli farei vedere io come si contano le ore! / Che per noi poveracci venuti fuori dalla calcina, / c'è poco da discutere, l'è sempre stata grama: / che alle cinghie della gerla ci sta attaccato, / sub transit gloria mundi, il filo del fagotto / dell'emigrante che gira il mondo, o lacrimarum valle: / salire all'alpe, spicconare, portar fieno, / vanitas vanitatum, tirar su muri. / Or che ci sono le strade ferrate, italiano, / rentre chez toi! Fuma il vapore, ma-güüt (= muratore), / ma-güüt! mater mea, oi che dolor!

(Traduzione dell'autore)

A Vision

To My Father

The poor man climbed up breathing hard.

You could hear such awful screams in the wind

They could have raised the dead out of their graves:

--Do I have to scream louder for you to hear me?

He came up trotting, his soul

In pain, along that path that descends to valley.

--If I were a few years younger,

I would show them how to count the hours!

For us poor folk who came out of the dirt,

It has always been grim, needless to say:

For at the belts of the back basket there hangs,

Sub transit gloria mundi,

The rope of the bundle

Of the emigrant who circles the globe, o lacrimarum valle:

Climbing the mountain, breaking the ground with your pick axe

Carrying hay,

Vanitas vanitatum, building walls.

Now that we have the railroad, Italian man

Return home! Smoke the vapor, ma-güüt!

ma-güüt! Mater mea, oh what pain!

Piomba da ciorlína

Sü la riscuada

punciröo squiscé sür ümed,

botigiöo föra dr'usc'ciöo,

on müsciatt cont i strivai:

sü in dro scagnett

tri pampalüga:

on margnacch ch'a becia

in d'on canton,

on botascion con fö ra botasciera:

béven on ciapp! ciorlína!

tri pampalüga (na piomba!)

I tira s büscion:

che scamebiada!

che strelüsc! te vist?

che tron!

da Ra scherpa fòra di scaff

Sbomia d'acquerello. – Sull'acciottolato, / acini calpestati sul bagnato, / botticelle contro la finestruola, / un cappellaccio con gli stivali: / sullo sgabellino / tre lanernuti in ozio: / un pappataci che sbircia / in un cantone, / un pancione con la trippa fuori: / bevine un sorso! acquerello! / tre scioperati (che sbomia!) / stappano bottiglie: / che nebbione! / che folgore! hai visto? / che cupo rimbombo!

(Traduzione dell'autore)

Getting drunk on Acquerello

Getting drunk on Acquerello

On the cobblestones

Grape stepped on in the wet

Little barrels agaist the small window,

A large big hat with boots:

On the little stool

Three idle people by a lantern

A cuckold who ogles

In a corner,

A great big belly sticking out:

come drink a bit of it: acquerello!

Three good-for-nothings (what intoxication!)

Uncork bottles: what a big cloud!

What a lighting bolt!

Did you see it?

What a loud thunderclap!

Vegiadà

da François Villon

Inscí, nüm pòvre scarampán

a sem qui, ingöbfit, gïü in crüsc

a regordass di noss beī ann,

bñtè lá comè mondadüsc

a 'n fõõgh ch'a l'è né pizz né smòorz

in dra fümèra di mergásc..

Consolémes, l'è inscí par tücc...

Pensá comè a sévom bon!

da Bestiarium criviaschese

Vecchiaia. Così, distrutte dal lavoro, / qui, gobbe, raggomitolate / ricordiamo la gioventù, / buttate là, scarto dei campi, / a un fuoco né vivo né spento / fra le volute delle stoppie. / Consoliamoci, è il destino... / e pensare: eravamo belle!

(Traduzione dell'autore)

Old Age

This way, destroyed by work
Here, hunchbacked, rolled up
We remember our youth,
Discarded here, rejects of the fields
Before a fire neither burning nor cold
Among the turnings of the stubbles
Let us console ourselves, it's destiny . . .
And to think we were once beautiful!

Or Basarísch

Matt comè 'n cavall, or Basarísch
(prím ch'a parla o ch'a rfid ga tírom i orecc!)
invece da basá 'r cù a ra vègia
a r'á bevü r'aqua in dro codèe,
mangio ra papa dro lavecc,
e mò adess gbém scid ora péest.
Brütt vizi quell da mett giü i radiis
in d'on paées da biss e da ghezz
e mia nàagh aprèss ai sganzèll
comè i marlòsen e i senzatecc,
i prèvet e i frá co r'oli benedett.

da Bestiarium criviaschese

Il gallo basilisco. – Come un cavallo matto, il Basilisco / (tiriamo le orecchie a chi parla o ride!) / invece di baciar culo di vecchia, / ha bevuto l'acqua nel portacote, / non ha più potuto fame a meno, / e adesso è arrivata la peste. // Brutto vizio di metter le radici / in un paese di serpi e ramari / e non correr dietro alle sottane / come i senza-patria e i senza-tetto, / preti e frati con l'olio benedetto.

(Traduzione dell'autore)

VALLE D'AOSTA

Giuseppe Zoppelli

The origins of poetry in Valle d'Aosta date back to the fifteenth century, to the 1402 quatrain in French by Boniface de Challant (1326-1426), written on a wall of Fenis castle (unfortunately lost today).

There is other evidence in this regard, such as the verses of the troubadour Thibaut de Champagne (who died in 1253 and might have been only passing through the region), written on a wall of Quart castle. Or the proverbs, taken for the most part from the anonymous collection *Diz et Proverbes des Saiges* (1260), also from the end of the fourteenth or the beginning of the fifteenth century, frescoed in the gallery of the Sages of Fenis castle and commissioned by Boniface de Challant himself. In reality, these early documents are characterized by their fragmentation, dispersion, and rarity, so that not only it is impossible to write a history of the literature of the origins but, being an atypical regional case in the Italian literary landscape, Valle d'Aosta lacks a poetic tradition, and a possible history of poetry must per force begin in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Later works, also in French, are not enough to found it, such as the *Genealogie des Seigneurs de Challant*, maybe by Boniface himself, a poem of 400 verses that praises and celebrates the noble family; or the ecclesiastical songs popular since the fifteenth century, all the way down to the collections of poetry in the nineteenth century published during the episcopal consecrations in Aosta, without any artistic value. Whether we take

1820 (A. Christillin) or 1840 (L. Collard) as the starting point for a history of poetry in Valle, not only in French, the lack of a poetic tradition is in any case certain.

After 1820 the provincial society of Aosta showed a certain openness (the Valley, a region enclosed by tall mountains, in its long history went through long periods of isolation), where the French language dominated unopposed and the movement for its abolition as the official language had not yet begun. This was due on the one hand to renewed contacts with French culture, beginning with the relationships with families from the other side of the Alps who had taken refuge in Valle after the revolution, and with Italian culture; and on the other hand to local economic and social changes, to the birth of small industries and the first factories, of the *Comice agricole* in 1840, and to the growth of the middle class in Valle d'Aosta. This is the context in which a literary group was formed in Aosta in the first decades of the nineteenth century, socially homogenous but poetically heterogenous, around the *Feuille d'Annonces d'Aoste*, the region's first paper, founded in 1841. Thus a first coterie of poets was formed, hagiographically defined *la petite Pléiade valdôtaine*: the brothers Alcide (1802-1859) and Fernand (1804-49) Bochet, Augustin Vagneur (1796-1844), Joseph Alby (1814-80), Eugène Pignet, Félix Orsières (1803-70), and Léon-Clément Gérard (1810-76). Their work ranges from romantic and Lamartinian influences, present especially in Alby, to the model of French eighteenth-century and pastoral poets, particularly of the abbot Delille, in Gérard, unaffected by the dominant romanticism.

The Basilisk Rooster

Like a crazy horse, the Basilisk
(let's pull the ears of those who talk or laugh!)
instead of kissing the ass of an old woman,
drank the water in the stone sharpener,
he could not help himself
and now the plague is here.
An awful thing to plant roots
In a town full of snakes and lizards
And not to run after underskirts
Like the countryless and homeless,
Priests and monks with their blessed oil.

The real novelty in the middle of the century, however, is represented by the birth of a literature in a Val d'Aosta patois (a French-Provençal language, as first defined by G.I. Ascoli) at the hands of Jean-Baptiste Cerlogne (1826-1910), harbinger of further and unforeseeable developments, to the extent that from then on it would be poetry in dialect that offered the best artistic results in Valle. The first poem in patois by the Val d'Aosta *fëlibre* was "L'infan predeggio" of 1855, that also marked the epochal and anthropological passage from a language that had always been oral to a written language. There were only sporadic written traces of the Val d'Aosta patois before then.

The first prose writing consists of the six different anonymous versions, in as many varieties of Val d'Aosta patois, of the *Parabola del figliuol prodigo* collected by the dialectologist Bernardino Biondelli in 1841 but published only in 1913 by Carlo Salvioni (and therefore unknown to Cerlogne himself and to subsequent local scholars). It was in any case Cerlogne, in his splendid isolation, who founded the written patois, prose and poetry in dialect, who gave it a written form, a grammar, a dictionary, and who outlined the first historical and linguistic profile.

In the second half of the nineteenth century Valle d'Aosta, particularly after the unification of Italy, was struck by a serious economic and demographic crisis: moreover, the appalling condition of the routes of communication had not changed, nor had the lack of passable roads and particularly of railroad lines, so that the advantages derived from national unification had not been felt in Valle. It was this disastrous economic condition that prompted the local intelligencija to react by creating, on the intellectual level, a culture of autonomy and regional feelings. At first it was a reaction to the attempt on the part of the State to abrogate the right of a French-speaking minority to use and teach its own language; then, with increasing awareness, the building of a strong sense of regional cultural identity on three basic elements: the history, the language, and the traits of the mountain people..

Cerlogne contributed to the establishment of regional values and the modern cultural identity of the Valle with his literary work in French-Provençal. For the cultural elite, however, the other regional language was in *primis* French, a language commonly spoken at court and in the public life of the Kingdom of Sardinia until Unification, in Valle a language of high culture and literature, of the middle class and the clergy, of the bureaucracy and offices. Anyone wishing to speak of poetry in Valle d'Aosta, particularly if in patois, cannot ignore the linguistic reality of the region, by virtue of the strong cultural and political implications that the various idioms that coexist there have come to signify: French, patois (or rather patois in the plural), Italian, Piedmontese (to which we can add the German of the Waldensian minority of Gressonay and Valle del Lys). In short, it is necessary to deal with what we could define, for Valle d'Aosta, as the question of language.

In this sense, as late as 1980 in Valle d'Aosta's cultural debate the patois was considered on the one hand the idiom of idiots, and on the other the foundation of regional identity along with French, but subordinate to the latter. In Valle, French was and still is considered the *langue maternelle*,

and it was Cerlogne, a man of the people, who defined his patois la lenga de ma mère (my mother's tongue). The culture of regional identity, born in the second half of the nineteenth century, was no doubt founded on language, but paradoxically on French and not on the patois: someone from Valle d'Aosta speaks French, among other things, and his literature is French literature. The same Valle d'Aosta elites did not have great consideration for the patois, "imperfect expression of a primitive mentality" (T. Omezzoli), and at most they used it to buttress French (the clergy, for example, played it against Piedmontese), or were openly hostile to it (supporting the patois could harm French indirectly by favoring Italian and Piedmontese). And even those from the middle class or the clergy, like the clergyman Bernard, who showed some interest in the patois, looked at it as a literary object or, as Cerlogne notes, "comme une chose toute nouvelle," and in any case those few would never undertake collective initiatives for its preservation, as was the case with French. All in all, both the middle class and the clergy mistrusted the language of the people. Bérard and Trevès only alluded to the French contained in nuce in the patois, but only to note that it would be a catastrophe if Valle d'Aosta Frenchness were reduced to that" (T. Omezzoli). Bérard, when he encouraged Cerlogne to write poems in dialect, tried to influence the spelling by Frenchifying it.

Cerlogne never claimed any linguistic primacy for his Valle d'Aosta patois, but overturned the terms of the question, noting in an article: "Quand s'en ira le patois, le français le suivra de près." In the socio-cultural and linguistic context of Valle d'Aosta, only someone like Cerlogne, a man steeped in oral, material, popular culture, forcibly acculturated, alien to literary culture, to official and French culture in Valle d'Aosta, would be able to write poetry in patois and elevate dialect to literary language.

Cerlogne's linguistic and poetic lesson, irreplaceable and tireless, which took place in the most complete isolation and indifference on the part of official culture, remained unheeded and unique throughout the whole second half of the nineteenth century. The first important achievements took place only at the beginning of the next century, in poetry with Marius Thomasset (*Mes premier essais – Proses et poésies en dialecte valdôtain*, 1910, and *Pages volantes – Poésies et proses en dialect valdôtain*, 1911), and in prose with abbot Henry (1870-1947), both of whom employed Cerlogne's spelling; and above all, but with a "esprit laïque," Désiré Lucat with *Le soldà e le fen* (*Poésies en patois valdôtain*, 1915). These are works that have the merit, on the one hand, to accept Cerlogne's legacy, and on the other to found patois literature on more solid grounds, if with persistent linguistic and spelling problems due to the extreme variety of local patois, and to finally give impetus to its possible development, as well as to promote social and cultural interest.

In fact, for the first time in the dialect literary history of the Valle, in 1955 six patoisants poets (A. Ronc-Desaymonet, E. Martinet, C. Binet, M. Thomasset, A. Berthod, R. Willien) met in the Ducal Hall of Aosta's Hôtel de Ville and read their poetry in public. This was the first step. In October 1955 the patoisants of Valle d'Aosta met for the first time with those of Western Switzerland; in spring 1963 there was the first patois contest Abbé Cerlogne reserved for teachers and pupils of the elementary schools of the region, and publication by the Council on Public Education of the first volume, edited by Willien, of *Noutro Dzen Patoué*, a dialect anthology of Valle d'Aosta (they would be eight in all, the last two being dedicated to Cerlogne's opera omnia); and in spring 1964 came the second Abbé Cerlogne patois contest with the participation of Piedmontese schools and those from the French-Provençal and Provençal area.

If these are the significant landmarks of the cultural renaissance, which involved poetry in dialect as well, it must be remembered that already before July 1955, when patois finally became a collective cultural event, there had been indications such as the appearance in 1948 of two local reviews that for the first time devoted a few pages to contemporary dialect poetry: *La Grolla* (edited by Willien) and *Esprit Nomade* (edited by Italo Cassard), as in the following years would do *Le Flambeau* (1949), a quarterly Francophone journal of the Comité des Traditions Valdôtaines. The first two monthly reviews were founded in June, concluding their brief but intense experience with n.8 of Sept. 1948. To *La Grolla* (A Valle d'Aosta symbol of friendship and communion) contributed poets and writers from Valle d'Aosta and from outside: André Ferré, Eugenia Martinet, Marius Thomasset, Anais Ronc-Desaymonet, Giovanni Calchera, Martin Victor, Sergio Solmi.

A century after Cerlogne's first poem in patois, the time has come to recognize the specific character and autonomy of the poetry in French-Provençal of Valle d'Aosta. From the first significant observations of critics nationwide (Pasolini, Bärberi Squarotti and others), it has been considered, still today, Piedmontese dialect poetry, and confused with it. Perhaps it is time to recognize that it has its own tradition, however young, starting with the founding father Cerlogne, continuing with Eugenia Martinet (1896-1983) and Marco Gal (1940); and without taking into account minor poets, as befits any poetic tradition: Marius Thomasset (1876-1959), Désiré Lucat (1853-1930), Anais Ronc-Desaymonet (1890-1955) with her *Poésie campagnard de Tanta Neïsse* (1951), Césarine Binet (1897-1956) with the posthumous *Poésies Patoises* (1967), Armandine Jérusel (1904-1991) with *Rouse batarde* (1964), *Mondo blan* (1976), *L'Ouva et lo ven* (1983), *Poussa de solei* (1991), René Willien (1916-1979), tireless promoter and organizer of activities in favor of the patois (besides the Teatro Popolare and *Noutro Dzen Patoué*, we must at least remember the foundation of the Cerlogne Museum in 1963 and the Centre d'Etudes Francoprovençales in 1967). This specific character lies first of all in the language used (distinct from the Piedmontese and the Languedocian of some subalpine valleys), French-Provençal, which is a regional idiom and an original oral language.

Today it is even possible to advance a first interpretation, a first historiographic perspective, albeit temporary, unthinkable a few years ago and arguably still in fieri, of the poetry in the Valle d'Aosta patois, at this point of its now mature existence; and this means tracing a precise line and genealogy. Formulas and interpretive categories, however rigid and reductive, still have a heuristic and paradigmatic value, so that we could simplify as follows: Cerlogne's is popular dialect poetry, Martinet's is poetry in dialect, Marco Gal's is neodialect poetry. The three phases correspond more or less to three different literary periods, respectively in the second half of the nineteenth century, the first half and the second half of the twentieth, in addition to different poetics and conceptions of poetry, three different uses of poetic language and patois, three different forms of poetry and different themes, which I'll try to specify in the critical introduction to the three authors in the anthology. If anything, it is regretful that in Valle there is a dialect author of quality every half century (but as a partial consolation we could remember that for Ungaretti, according to a poem by Sereni, it takes a century or almost to make a poet).

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The English translations of the poems from Valle D'Aosta are by John Shepley

JEAN-BAPTISTE CERLOGNE

Battita de Frantsou was born on March 6, 1826, in the village of Cerlogne: the homonym could not illustrate better the close relationship between the poet and his land, their complete identification. He attended the school of his native town in three different stages, and began secondary school much later, at the age of thirty, when his ecclesiastical career had been decided, under the guidance of the parish priest Basile Guichardaz. He began an accelerated course of study (1856-1859) before entering the Seminary to complete his theological education (1859-1864). Ordained in 1864, spurred by his restless and nomadic spirit, soon after he embarked on a career as "an errant knight for the Church," a long pilgrimage in numerous places of Val D'Aosta and Piedmont which he recounted in his autobiography (*Les étapes de la vie*, 1902 and 1904). He died in 1910.

Essentially illiterate and devoid of culture, if by that we mean the high culture he was subjected to and which was imposed on him, and then became superimposed on his own culture, which was popular, oral, material, dialectal, finally drying up the sources of his poetry in poetry. His best work in French-Provençal was written in the decade 1855-66: *Marenda a Tsesalet*, *La bataille di vatse a Vertozan*, *Megnadzo de Monseur Abonde* (later collected in the volume *Poésies en dialecte valdôtain*, 1889-1890). A traditionalist in many respects, conservative, even politically reactionary and intolerant in matters of religion, l'abbé Cerlogne was in many ways a conformist, but not in the choice and use of his literary language, entirely within the sphere of popular culture and spirit: *la lengua de ma mère* (my mother's tongue, and the homonymous poem represents a true declaration of poetics), his Val D'Aosta patois, which he established as a written language by endowing it with spelling, a *Petite grammaire du dialecte valdôtain* (1893-1894), a *Dictionnaire du patois valdôtain* (1908), a first historical compendium, *Le patois valdôtain. Son origine littéraire et sa graphie* (1909), and by enriching patoise culture with three almanacs containing poetry, contes, anecdotes, sayings, and proverbs in patois (*Dzan-Pouro*, 1892, 1893, 1906).

His poetry in dialect (the only one worthy of note although he also wrote in French, Piedmontese, and Italian), deeply rooted in the earth and devoid of literary models, grounded in his milieu, fell under the influence of oral culture and literature, from which it drew expressions and color, and of popular humus and local folklore, which are the background for his social sketches. His best poems, given the fact that epic and narrative poetry was more congenial to his dialect poetry, are completely lacking in religious and confessional inspiration, understood in a traditional sense, but not in the sense of communal and everyday religion.

La bataille di vatse a Vertozan, recognized as Cerlogne's poetic masterpiece in patois, is a secular feast of the senses, an epic poem, his most realistic representation, in which animals are transformed into ancient knights and the battle becomes "un véritable tournoi entre guerriers de l'antiquité" (R. Willien). Cerlogne is the epic bard of the Alpine epos. As *Megnadzo de Monseur Abonde* is a true culinary feast, a walking dream of abundance, the village is seen as the real myth of Plenty, the house of abundance capable of warding off poverty and famine. It is also an overview of the local economy of an entire agricultural and pastoral community. At any rate, the whole economic and social organization of pre-industrial Valle D'Aosta was based on the community, in which prevailed the organizational strength of the village, centered on the household, and

a real collective organization of labor.

The natural realism in Cerlogne's poetry should not be confused with the naturalism or regionalism of verismo, because he rejects any historical or social documentation, and any polemical, critical appraisal of his milieu.

Because of its realism and its deep native roots, the poetry of Cerlogne requires an approach that is almost more anthropological than aesthetic, also due to the fact that the artistic achievements of his poetry are modest and only a few of his works are worthy of note. For Cerlogne, patois is still the language of reality more than the language of poetry, and his poetry is dialectal, that is, folklore, local color, more than poetry in dialect.

Cerlogne's popular poetry is not poetry for the people written by a cultured author, but a poetry authored by the people (through Cerlogne's voice). And the people here are not Berchet's middle class, but mountain people, whom the latter called Hottentots, poor farmers. Cerlogne is the genius loci of the community of Valle D'Aosta, the voice of the chorus, a popular voice of which he is a part, and he does not need the artifice of regression to wear the poor clothes of the popular character or to depict the vernacular world, whose public scribe he is by reason of his birth. Perhaps he is not even the chorus, the voice that uses the chorus. His language is the chorus itself, and therefore he never distances himself from the characters or the world he portrays, nor does he identify with them, because he already is totally within that world and that popular language.

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La lenga de ma mère

Quan dz'ëro petsou din lo brë,

Mamma in tsanten dejet parë:

"Në në dessu la pluma,

In bon repou,

Mon dzen petsou,

Fé nëna, drumà drumà".

Quan un Non tsëjet de se pot,

Aprë llie dze dijò lo mot:

(in dzeugnen le man). JEUSE..

JESU, Josè

Vardade-mè

Cetta nët. Amejeuse.

Lettre ma mamma sayet pà;

A prèdzé llie m'at inségnà

Sensa gneuna Grammère.

Mè pi grantet,

Dze prèdzo adret

La lenga de ma mère.

L'est de coteuma i dzor de vouë,

Qu'atot d'entso su lo papë,

In pout dère (pachence!),

Tan in patoè,
Come in francè,
Le bague qu'in se pense.
In adzeublen et lettre et mot.
Dz'aprouvo d'ecrire mè ettot
Lo patoè de mon père.
Mè! tot solet,
Pouro vieillet,
Que pourri-dzò tan fère?
(da Dzan-Pouro, 1892)

La lingua di mia madre – Quand'ero piccolo nella culla, / Mia madre cantando così diceva: / “Ně ně sulla piuma, / In buon riposo, / Mio bel piccino, / Fai la ninna, dormi dormi”. // Quando un nome cadeva dalle sue labbra, / Dopo di lei ripetevi la parola: / giungendo le mani): jeuse... / Gesù, Giuseppe / Proteggetemi / Questa notte. Così sia. // Mia madre non conosceva le lettere; / A parlare lei m'ha insegnato / Senza nessuna Grammatica. / Io più cresciuto / parlo come si deve / La lingua di mia madre. // E' costume oggiogiorno, / Che con l'inchiostro sulla carta, / Si possa dire (finalmente!), / Tanto in patois, / Quanto in francese, / Le cose che si pensa. // Combinando lettere e parole, / Anch'io provo a scrivere / Il patois di mio padre. / Ma! tutto solo, / Povero vecchietto, / Che cosa mai potrò fare?

(Traduzione di G. Zoppelli)

My Mother's Tongue

(from Dzan-Pouro, 1892)

When I was in my cradle,
Here's what my mother sang:
“Go to sleep, my baby,
on your feather bed.
My beautiful baby,
Go to sleep, beddy-bye.”

Whenever a name fell from her lips,
I repeated it after her:
(Clasping my hands). JEUSE...

JESUS, Joseph
Protect me
This night. Amen.

My mother couldn't read;
She taught me to speak
Without any grammar book.

Now that I'm grown up
I speak as one must
My mother's tongue.

Nowadays it's the custom,
That with ink on paper,

You can (finally!) say

Both in patois

And in French

The things you're thinking.

By arranging letters and words,

I too try to write

The lingo of my father.

But all by myself!

Poor old man,

How will I ever succeed?

La bataille di vatse a Vertozan)

I

Un bà dzor de juillet, lo dzor de la Revenna,

De Veulla dze m'en parto a l'arba di matin,

In porten aprè mè: salan, pan blan, fontenna,

E tsecca de ci cllier que se fait din la tenna,

Pe me bletti lo pot lon de mon tsemin.

A Saint-Pierre dzi prei lo tsemin que meinàve

Su di coutè de Vertozan.

Dzà pe Saint-Nicolà lo mondo s'apprestàve

Come cen se fait tseut le-s-an.

Lé, qui d'un coutè crie et qui de l'âtro braille

Hoé! hoé, parten-nà, le-s-ami?

Di vatse se vat fère euna groussa bataille;

Maque degadzen-nò, l'est l'aoura de parti.

II

Bientou se sent lo flà di violette neissante,

Qu'imboumon l'air frèque de Vertozan:

Bientou dze sento dzà que le béque pouegnente

Repondon a bē-tor, i sublo di s-arpian.

Pe le prà, tseut in fleur, qu'un eigue pura arrouse

Dèsot l'erba catsà tsante lo greseillon

Di boueisson i sapin lo rossegnon se pouse,

Et regale i passen se pi belle tsanson.

De llioen se veit qu'i Breuil embouon leur vatse pleine,

Que bedzolàvon dzà, senten lo tsaat di dzor;

Dze traverso lo plan, yaou dzouère se promeine,
Et que partadze in baillen de détör.

III

In arreuveu i Breuil dz'i vu, comæ euna fêta;
Tot lo mondo achouedzà di pià tanque a la têta.
Le femalle, ci dzor, l'ayan de dzen pitset,
Fran comæ voulon leur; cen restàve se ret!
L'ayan leur bà faouder lliat atos de levreye,
Leur dzen motsaou di cou di pi bô qu'in troveye;
L'ayan leur sardze rodze a baste pe lo fon;
Ci dzor, l'an dzaratà tanqu'i fon de l'artson.
Le berdzé leur ettot l'an trét leur vesta grise;
L'an bettà la tanetta et la dzenta tsemise.
Aprè mè, tot vecinet: ferrialle, omno, garçon:
Le s-un su de monteure et le s-âtre a pìaton,
Porten din leur doblè de tsér de la greichère,
Et p'aplani la tsardze, un passablo barlet,
Plein de ci bon vin viou de l'an quarente-vouet:
Cen lé, lo miou de tot, contente le fretère.

IV

Pe trové me s-ami dze sayà lo tsemin;
Dze vâ tanque tsi leur, dze crio: ho! de dedin.
La fretère sort foura et me deut: Maque entràde;
Soplé, dete-mè vei cen que v'avolontàde.
Dz'i pe vo presenté pocca tsousa avouë ren;
Pe tsecca de caillà féde gneun complimen.
Pe me fère chatté me baille euna breiletta;
Su la tabla, toustou, l'épate euna sarguetta;
Me presente, avouë grâce, un fromadzo pequen.
Fét de vouet dzor devan, et fran bon pe me den,
Et grevière, et fontenna incora case intsère,
Et de beuro sorti frêque de sa beurrère.
Eun'ecouëla de crâma, un âtra de caillà;
Et dz'i trovâ bien bon tot cen que m'at baillà.

V

A tabla, tot solet, dze mindzo san façon;

Dz'aveitso celle dzen fatsendé pe meison.
Le dò bré rebratà dze veyo la fretère
Que l'avendze lo præ di fon de sa tsaoudère:
I tsardze son fromadzo, et poué pren lo tsanon,
Vat terrié de bouné d'un petsou bareillon;
I croè dessu lo fouà bette dove s-etalle.
Bingue la leità couet, l'appreste le feisalle;
Dei cen fait lo serré. Inque fat pa manqué
De dère que me jeu l'an possu remarqué
La granda propretà de celle megnadzère,
Que trouve d'éve praou quan l'est que vat in dzouère.
Le fretère i berdzé crion: Dené l'est preste!
P'arrevé lo premiè, l'est a qui l'est pi leste.
Tsacun pren sa coueiller deut lo Benecitè
Un garçonnet vat prendre un pan i panatè.
Le berdzé, le meïnà que l'ayan pa de brèle,
Qui vat tsertsé de tron, qui vint atos de cèle;
P'avei pi vito fêt qui reste a crepegnon,
Et mindzon la peilà tseut din lo mëmo bron.

VI

Bientou, pe totte carre in sentset dza crié:
L'aoura d*eitava arreuve, allen don vito arrié.
Vucho vu! le berdé, le petsoude berdzère,
Un tsanon aprè l'âtro, impleisson le tsaoudère.
In dzouère, vant lavé leur tsanon, leur coillaou,
Et mëmamen lo nà tanque cen sie praou.
Pe baillé de coradzo i vatse pe se battre,
I baou li van porté, sensa lo dère a d'âtre,
Euna demi ceilà d'aveina pe letson,
O bin lei baillon beire un per de quarteron.

VII

Më come de dzettè lo momen arreuvàve,
I baou, vatse. modzon, tot sen se tormentàve.
Pertot in vejet dzà de petsou garçonnet:
Le s-un, devan lo baou fejan pette leur fouet!
Le s-âtre per dedin a gran train depeillàvon.

Deuse que sortichan, le vatse s'approtsàvon
Ator de leur berdzé, pe possei de leur man
Prendre un grenà de sà, de grescille de pan.
Tsaque devan-berdzé comence de s'inmoure:
Le vatse in boralen, se betton a lo choure.
L'acouton quan lei deut: ma vatse, mon vatson,
Et quan le crie à par tsaqueuna pe son non:
Vin tè, té vin. Baoutsan; vin té, Maurin, Marquisa,
Sardègne, Tsatagnon, Guerra, Fribour, Parisa....
Devan leur le berdzère acoueillàvon le vë
Qu'aprè leur marre in llioen restàvon in dèrè.

VIII

L'aura approtse: in sent dzà le trouno di sonnaille;
In veit trei grou troupè pe la Revenna in tsan:
Son le vatse di Breuil di Frà, de Dzovensan
Qu'impachente attendzan l'aura de la bataille.
Pemiè tant de carrà que meclliàvon leur son
In sent le Valesan que tsanton leur tsanson
Tranquilemen dzèsu dèsot euna brenvetta:
"Le s-Armailli de Colombetta..."
Modze, vatse et modzon, come p'amusemen,
Van émotten le fleur, lo triolet neissen;
Et le petsou veillon garfoueillon pe le carre.
Se dzèson un momen; tomon avouë leur marre,
Le berdzé san souci, que lo trop de bon ten,
Que l'an in Vertozan, assemble tot soven.
Veyen leur vatse queye a l'erba savouria.
Profiton di momen pe fére la partia.
Lé', j'un trét son abit et l'âtro son bonet,
D'âtre, firque le soque, et dzovon i palet.
Doze pouin lo boton! C'en l'est pa bagatelle;
Surtou quan fat copé ci que tin le bretelle.

IX

Dza le vatse son totte atot lo mouro in l'air
Bomeyen, comaten cella que l'an aper.
Le berdzé, le s-arpian, le métre, le fretère,

Que perduche la leur, l'ayant dza tseut penchère.
Le s-étrandzé pourtan, après fêt lon tsemin,
Se n'en retomon pa sensa vère la fin.
Gneun semblàve më guei; tsacun s'impachentàve,
Attendzet ci momen que pancora arreuva.
Quan la Reina di Frà s'empart, in borallen,
Contre Maurin di Breuil, adon crion: lei sen!
Llië fejet de grou jeu, tégnet sa tète bassa,
Feyen pletté lo couér de son étsenna grassa.
Cella di Breuil l'atten, la tète de traver,
Montren lo blan di jeu dèsot son grou fron ner.
In soufflen, dzaraten, lié se son approtsaye;
Tsaqueuna fait un eurlo, et se son attaquaye.

X

Tot lo mondo formàve un cercllio ator de leur,
Dion: la neire perd, cen-lé l'est case cheur.
Tsacun di dò parti betton euna gadzure:
La noutra, dejan-t-ë, l'at le come pi dure.
Bien vito s'est passà do quar d'aoure de ten
Me savei quinta gagne, in n'en sayet de ren:
Tantou l'euna recule, et poue toustou s'avance,
Et tsaqueuna a bë tor s'ecotte a crapa panse.
Lé, la grassa di Frà se bette pe dabon;
L'âtra fait cen que pout pe dère sa reison.
Tot lo parti di Breuil trevolle dza de creinte;
Më, leur Maurin toustou de se come pouegnente,
Me sarre cella reina amodo pe lo cou,
La me fait requelé, mon cher, tanqu'a trei cou!
Lé, l'âtra se repren, më llië s'est bien bardàye,
Et lo quatrêmo cou bien llioen l'at intsaouchàye;
Et se jeu l'an chovet dimen que l'an possu,
Cell'âtra que s'en vat moutsa d'avei perdu.
Le Frà son meconten d'avei perdu leur reina;
Lo Breuil beusse di man; n'en vailet bin la peina.

XI

A mon tor! l'at-ë deut, un berdzé valesan;

Dze vo tsertsé Fribour, reina de Dzovensan.
Euna vatse s'avance in branlen sa sonnaille:
L'est Fribour, que s'en vin presenté la bataille.
Maurin, reina di Breuil l'attendzet a pià fer.
Lé s'anufon toustou, s'aveitson de traver.
Inque cella di Breuil, quoique dza bien lagnàye,
Se bette a borallé; l'est totta inforochàye;
Sa gordze l'est in boura, et souffle de son nà,
La terra que vegnan de dzaraté se pià.
L'âtra de Dzovensan in borallen s'appreste:
Treine son mouro in terra et fait tan dâtre geste.
Semblàve que se jeu l'uchen de fouà dedin,
Et que pe se do nà n'en sortuche lo fin!
Lo mondo ator de leur, tot court, s'impin, s'amatse;
L'an tseut le jeu fichà dessus le dove vatse.
Lé, qui gadze un écu, qui gadze un loui d'or;
Tot terrie son borset; ren lei coute ci dzor.
Le reine di momen s'apeillon pa pe rire:
Tsaqueuna fait son cou. tsaqueuna se revire.
L'an come contre come, et fron contre lo fron;
I multen di s-épale infonçon lo cotson.
Bingue fejan d'effor tseut leur membro cracàvon;
Leur s-ousse sortichan, leur veine se conflàvon-,
Et tsaqueuna, a bê-tor, pe pa perdre terren
Plante se coque in terra, et lé vat pa pi llioen.
Egàla l'est leur force, egal l'est leur coradzo:
Faren-t-ë de leur gloère ettot egal partadzo?...

XII

Toustou di combatten se veit coure lo san,
Më! më! qu'est-ë ço-cè? tot vat incontinan
Pe vère cluinta. l'est cella deforteunàye...
L'ëtse Maurin di Breuil a meitsà decomàye.
Lé, pe le revendzé se betton le parti;
Më, ni brotte, ni fouet, ren pout le separti!
Tsacun di combatten, p'onnoré sa montagne,
L'epame ni de flà, ni d'effor, ni de lagne.

Gneun l'ayet incò vu de bataille parè!...

A Maurin lei decappe un di pià de dèrè:

Adon in sent crié: Fribour! Fribour!... la reina!

Tödzen!... lo mot l'est p'anco deut a peine.,

Que la pouira Maurin, malgré sa coma vià,

L'an tant fèt que l'at tenu pià,

L'an tant fè force, et redoblà coradzo,

Que Fribour di momen,

Come p'intsantemen,

Requele, baille tor, s'envat... là! bon voyadzo,

Galoppe a son betun pun tsemin lo pi pré

Et la coma i crepion Maurin lei vat aprè.

(da Poësies en dialecte valdôtain, 1889-90)

La battaglia delle mucche a Vertozan – Un bel giorno di luglio, il giorno della Revenna, / da Aosta parto alle prime luci del mattino, / Portando con me: salame, pane bianco, fontina, / E un po' di quel succo che si fa nel tino, / Per bagnarmi le labbra lungo il mio cammino. / A Saint-Pierre ho preso il sentiero che portava / Su alla volta di Vertozan. / Già a Saint-Nicolas la gente si preparava / Come si usa fare tutti gli anni. / Li, chi da una parte chiama e chi dall'altra grida / Hoé! hoé, partiamo, amici? / Si prepara una grande battaglia di mucche; / Sù sbrighiamoci, è l'ora di partire. // Già si sente l'odore delle violette nascenti, / Che profumano l'aria fresca di Vertozan: / Presto già sento che le vette aguzze / Rispondono tutt'intorno ai fischi dei mandriani. / Nei prati fioriti che un'acqua pura irrorà / Sotto l'erba nascosto canta il grillo. / Dal cespuglio all'abete si posa il pettirosso, / Regalando ai passanti le sue più belle canzoni. / Di lontano si vede che al Breuil fanno rientrare le mucche sazie, / Che già correvano, sentendo il caldo del giorno; / Attraverso il pianoro dove il ruscello gironzola / Dividendolo con le sue svolte. // Giungendo al Breuil ho visto, come in un giorno di festa, / Tutti ben vestiti dai piedi alla testa. / Le donne, quel giorno, avevano dei bei merletti, / Proprio come esse li vogliono, stavano così rigidi! / Avevano il loro bel grembiule legato con dei nastri, / E intorno al collo il più bel fazzoletto che si possa trovare; / Avevano la loro gonna rossa con le balze al fondo, / Quel giorno, hanno rovistato fino in fondo alla cassapanca. / Anche i pastori hanno tolto la loro giacca grigia; / Hanno indossato il completo e la bella camicia. / Dietro di me, venivano tutti: donne, uomini, ragazzi: / Gli uni cavalcando gli altri a piedi, / Portando nelle loro bisacce carne della vacca ingrassata, / E per equilibrare il peso un discreto barilotto, / Pieno di quel vecchio buon vino dell'anno quarantotto: / Quello, più di tutto, soddisfa le caciare. // Per trovare i miei amici conoscevo la strada, / Vado da loro e grido: oh! di casa! / La caciara esce e mi dice: Entrate pure; / Mi prego, ditemi quello che desiderate. / Posso offrirvi poco o quasi niente; / Per un po' di cagliata non fate complimenti. / Per farmi sedere mi dà uno sgabello; / Subito sulla tavola stende una piccola tovaglia, / Con grazia mi presenta un formaggio piccante, / Fatto da otto giorni e proprio buono per i miei denti, / E gruviera, e fontina ancora quasi intere, / E del burro appena uscito dalla sua zangola, / Una scodella di panna, un'altra di cagliata; / E ho trovato ottimo tutto quello che m'ha dato. // A tavola, tutto solo, mangio senza complimenti, / Osservo quella gente faccendare per casa. / Le due maniche rimboccate, guardo la caciara / Che trae la cagliata dal fondo del calderone: / Carica il suo formaggio, e poi prende il mastello, / Va a spillare del siero di latte da un piccolo barile; / Mette due ceppi sul fuoco in croce. / Mentre il latticello cuoce, prepara gli stampi; / Poi fa il sérac. Ora non bisogna dimenticare / Di dire che i miei occhi hanno potuto notare / La grande pulizia di quella massaia, / Che trova acqua a volontà quando va al torrente. / Le caciare gridano ai pastori: Il pranzo è pronto! / Ad arrivare primo è chi è più lesto. / Ognuno prende il suo cucchiaino e dice il Benedicite! Un ragazzino va a prendere un pane dalla rastrelliera. / Dei pastori, dei bambini che non hanno sgabello, / Chi va a cercare un tronco, chi un secchio; / Per fare più in fretta c'è chi resta a covaccioni, / E mangiano la pappa di granturco tutti dentro lo stesso paiolo. // Ben presto, da ogni parte già si sentiva gridare: / L'ora ottava arriva, andiamo dunque presto a mungere. / Se aveste visto! i pastori, le pastorelle, / Un mastello dopo l'altro, riempiono i calderoni. / Al torrente vanno a lavare il loro mastello, il loro colino / E anche il naso quel tanto che basta. / Per dare alle mucche il coraggio di battersi, / Alla stalla si porta loro, senza dirlo, agli altri, / Un mezzo secchio d'avena per pietanza. / Oppure si fa loro bere un paio di boccali. // Ma come il momento di uscire arrivava, / Alla stalla, mucche, vitelli, tutti si agitavano. / Dappertutto già si vedevano dei ragazzini: / Gli uni, davanti alla stalla facevano schioccare la loro frusta! / Gli altri dentro in gran fretta slegavano. / Man mano che uscivano, le mucche s'avvicinavano / Ai loro pastori, per poter dalle loro mani / Prendere un grano di sale, dei crostoni di pane. / Ogni primo pastore comincia a muoversi: / Le mucche muggendo prendono a seguirlo. / L'ascoltano quando egli dice: mia mucca, mia piccola manza, / E quando le chiama ad una ad una col loro nome: / Vieni tu, tu vieni, Baoutsan; vieni tu, Maurin, Marquisa, / Sardègne., Tsatagnon, Guerra, Fribour. Parisa ... / Innanzi ad esse le pastorelle spingevano i vitelli / Che lontano dalle loro madri restavano indietro. // L'ora si avvicina: si sente già il frastuono dei campanacci: / Si vedono tre grandi mandrie pascolare alla Revenna: / Sono le mucche del Breuil, del Frà, di Dzovensan / Che impazienti attendevano il momento della battaglia. / In mezzo a tanti campanacci che mischiavano i loro suoni / Si sentono i Valesani cantare le loro canzoni / Tranquillamente distesi sotto un piccolo larice: / "Le s-Arnailli de Colombetta..." / Manzi, mucche e vitelli, come per divertimento, / Vanno brucando i fiori, il trifoglio nascente; / E i vitellini brucano di qua le di là, / Si riposano un istante; tornano dalle loro madri. / I pastori senza preoccupazioni, che i felici passatempo / Di Vertozan riuniscono spesso, / Vedendo le loro vacche tranquille all'erba saporita, / Approfittano del momento per fare una partita. / Là, uno si toglie il vestito e l'altro il berretto, / Altri anche gli zoccoli e giocano ai palet. / Ogni dodici punti un bottone! Non è mica una bagatella, / Soprattutto quando bisogna togliere quello che tiene le bretelle. // Già tutte le mucche stanno col muso in aria, / Guardando di storto, incornando quella vicina. / I pastori, i mandriani, i padroni, le caciare, / Già tutti temevano che perdesse la loro. / I forestieri tuttavia, dopo lungo cammino, / Non ritomavano senza aver visto la fine. / Nessuno sembrava più felice; ognuno si spazientiva, / Aspettava quel momento che ancora non arrivava. / Quando la Reina del Frà si lancia muggendo contro Maurin del Breuil, allora si grida: ci siamo! / Faceva gli occhi grossi, teneva la testa bassa, / Facendo raggrinzare la pelle della schiena grassa. / Quella del Breuil l'aspetta, la testa di traverso, / Mostrando il bianco degli occhi sotto la sua grande fronte nera. / Soffiando, smuovendo la terra, si sono avvicinate; / Ognuno lancia un muggito, e si attaccano. // Tutti facevano cerchio intorno a loro, / Dicendo: la nera perde, è quasi certo. / ognuno dei due partiti fa una scommessa: / La nostra, dicevano, ha le coma più dure. / Ben presto sono passati due quarti d'ora / Ma indovinare quale avrebbe vinto non si poteva ancora: / Talora, una arretra, e poi tosto avanza, / E, a turno, ognuna spinge a più non posso. / Là, la

grassa del Frà si mette di lena; / L'altra fa ciò che può per dire la sua. / Tutto il partito del Breuil già trema di timore; / Ma la loro Maurin ben presto con le sue coma puntute / Mi stringe quella regina come si deve per il collo, / La fa arretrare, mio caro, per ben tre volte! / Là, l'altra si riprende; ma essa è ben piantata, / E la quarta volta molto lontana la spinge; / E i suoi occhi hanno seguito finché hanno potuto, / Quell'altra che se ne va confusa d'aver perduto. / Quelli del Frà sono dispiaciuti d'aver visto fallire la loro regina, / Quelli del Breuil applaudono; ne valeva proprio la pena. // Tocca a me! dice un pastore Valesano; / Vado a cercare Fribour, regina di Dzovensan. / Una mucca arriva agitando il suo campanaccio: / E' Fribour; che si presenta per battersi. / Maurin, regina del Breuil a piede fermo l'aspettava. / Li si annusano ben presto, si guardano di traverso. / Poi quella del Breuil, malgrado fosse già molto stanca. / Comincia a muggire; è tutta inferocita. / La sua gola schiuma e soffia con le narici / la terra che i suoi zoccoli han sollevato. / L'altra di Dzovensan muggendo si prepara: / Strofinò il muso in terra e in altri modi si dimena. / Sembrava che i suoi occhi avessero il fuoco dentro, / E che dalle sue narici uscisse il fumo! / Tutti intorno ad esse corrono, si spingono, si ammassano, / Tutti hanno gli occhi fissi sulle due mucche. / Là, chi scommette uno scudo, chi un luigi d'oro; / Ognuno tira fuori il portafoglio; nulla in questo

giorno gli costa. / Le regine all'improvviso si attaccano sul serio: / Ognuna assesta coma, un colpo: ognuna si difende. / Hanno coma contro coma e fronte contro fronte; / in mezzo alle spalle infossano il loro collo. / Mentre facevano lo sforzo tutte le loro membra scricchiolavano; / Le loro ossa affioravano, le vene si gonfiavano; / Ed entrambe, a turno, per non perdere terreno / Piantano i loro zoccoli in terra, e lì non si muovono. / La loro forza è la stessa, uguale è il loro coraggio: / Faranno anche della loro gloria un'equa spartizione? // Ad un tratto delle combattenti si vede il sangue colare! / Ma! Ma! che cosa succede? Tutti entrano in campo. / Per vedere qual è quella ferita ... / Er Maurin del Breuil a metà scomata. / Allora per dividerle si uniscono i partiti; / Ma, né verga, né frusta, nulla può separarle più! / Ognuna delle combattenti, per onorare il suo alpeggio, / Non risparmia né fiato, né sforzo, né fatica. / Nessuno aveva ancora visto una battaglia così! ... / A Maurin scivola una zampa di dietro; / Allora si sente gridare: Fribour! Fribour!... la regina! / Piano, piano!... la parola è stata appena pronunciata, / Che la povera Maurin, malgrado il corno rotto, / Ha tanto fatto che tiene duro, / Ha tanta forza messo, e raddoppiato il coraggio, / Che Fribour all'improvviso, / Come per incanto, / Arretra, si gira, se ne va... là! buon viaggio! / Galoppa alla sua mandria per la via più breve / E il corno ai fianchi Maurin la insegue.

(Traduzione di G. Zoppelli)

The Great Cow Battle at Vertozan

(from Poésies en dialecte valdôtain, 1889-90)

I

One fine day in July, the day of the Revenna,

I set out from Aosta in the early morning,

Taking along some salami, white bread, fontina cheese,

And a little of that juice that's made in a vat,

To wet my whistle along the way.

At Saint-Pierre I took the path

Leading up to the heights of Vertozan.

Already at Saint-Nicolas folks were getting ready

As they do every year,

Some yelling from one side, some from the other,

Hey! Hey, friends, let's get going!

We're all set for a big cow battle;

Come on, hurry up, it's time to go.

II

You can already smell the odor of growing violets,

Perfuming the cool air of Vertozan:

And soon I hear how the pointed peaks all around

Answer the whistles of the herdsmen.

In the flowering meadows bathed by spring water

Hidden crickets chirp under the grass.

The robin flits from bushes to fir tree,

Offering its best songs to the passersby.

In the distance at Breuil you can see them driving home the well-fed

cows,

Which are already running, feeling the heat of the day,

Across the plateau where the brook meanders,

Dividing it up by its twists and turns.

III

When I got to Breuil it was like a feast day,

With people decked out in their Sunday best.

The women, that day, were wearing their best lace

The way they wanted to, stiff as could be!

They had their lovely aprons tied with ribbons,

And around their necks the finest kerchiefs you ever saw.

They wore red skirts with flounces at the hem:

They'd rummaged that day to the bottom of their chests.

The drovers, too, had taken off their gray jackets;

To put on a suit and a nice shirt.

They were coming along behind me, women, men, children:

Some on horseback, others on foot,

Carrying fattened beef in their rucksacks,,

And to balance the weight a little cask,

Full of that good old wine of the year '48:

That, more than anything, is what the cheesemakers like.

IV

I knew the road to the house of my friends:

I go there and yell: Hello! Anyone home?

The woman comes out and says: Come right in;

Please tell me what you'd like.

I can't offer you much so don't stand

On ceremony for a little curd.

She gives me a stool to sit down on;

And immediately spreads a small tablecloth;

Gracefully she serves me a tasty cheese,

Eight days old and just right for the teeth,

And gruyère and fontina still almost whole,

And butter right out of the chum,

A bowl of cream, another of curds;
And whatever she gave me I found excellent.

V

All alone at the table, I help myself freely;
I observe these people bustling around the house.
I watch the housewife, both her sleeves turned back,
As she scoops curds from the bottom of the cauldron:
She packs her cheese, then taking the tub,
She goes and draws whey from a small cask;
She puts two crossed logs on the fire.
While the buttermilk simmers, she prepares the molds;
Then she makes sérac. Now I mustn't forget to say
That my eyes were quick to notice
How immaculate that housewife was;
She finds all the water she needs when she goes to the stream.
The women call the shepherds: Lunch is ready!
Whoever runs fastest gets there first.
Each picks up his spoon and says grace.
A little boy goes to the rack to get bread.
Some shepherds and children have no stools,
So some go looking for a log, others a bucket;
While others to get a headstart just squat
And eat their commeal mush from the same pot.

VI

Pretty soon, from all sides, the cry went up:
It's eight o'clock, quick, let's do the milking.
You should have seen them! Drovers and their wives
Refilling the cauldrons, one tub after another..
They go to the stream to wash their tubs and strainers,
As well as, for what it's worth, the spout.
To give the cows the courage to fight,
They bring them in the barn, without telling anyone,
Half a pail of oats as a main course,
Or they make them drink a couple of jugs of water.

VII

But as the moment to start arrived,

All the cows and calves in the barn were restless.
Children were already flocking around,
Some cracking their whips in front of the barn!
Others inside made haste to untie the cows,
Who, as they slowly came out, made straight for
Their drovers, to take from their hands
A pinch of salt, some crusts of bread.
Each leading drover starts to move,
And the lowing cows follow behind him.
They listen when he says: my cow, my little heifer,
And when he calls them one by one by name:
Come along, Baoutsan; come along, Maurin, Marquisa,
Sardègne, Tsatagnon, Guerra, Fribour, Parisa...
In the rear the girls drive the calves,
Who've been left behind by their mothers.

VIII

The hour approaches: you can hear the sound of cowbells,
And see three big herds grazing at the Revenna:
They are the cows from Breuil, Frà, and Dzovensan,
Impatiently waiting for the battle to start.
Mingling their sound with all those cowbells
You can hear the valley folk singing their songs
As they lie stretched out under a larch tree:
“Le s-Armailli de Colombetta...”
Steers, cows, and yearlings, as though for diversion,
Go browsing among the flowers, the blooming clover;
And the little calves graze here and there,
Rest for a moment, then run to their mothers.
The carefree drovers, often brought together
By the cheerful pastimes of Vertozan,
Seeing their cows grazing quietly on the fragrant grass,
Take advantage of the moment to play a game.
One takes off his suit and another his cap,
Still others their clogs, and they play quoits.
Every twelve points a button! That's no joke.
Especially when you have to remove the one holding your suspenders.

IX

Now all the cows stand with their muzzles in the air,
Each looking to the side, goring the one next to her.
The drovers, the herdsmen, the owners, the housewives,
Were now all afraid that theirs would lose.
The outsiders, however, having walked all this way,
Didn't go back without seeing the end.
Now no one looked happy; they were all getting impatient,
Waiting for the moment that still hadn't come.
When Reina from Frà gives a moo and charges
At Maurin from Breuil, they cry: Here we go!
Reina's eyes bulged, she kept her head down,
Wrinkling the skin on the fat of her back.
The Breuil cow waits, her head turned sideways,
Showing the whites of her eyes under her broad black forehead.
Puffing, pawing the ground, they approach each other;
Each lets out a bellow, and they attack.

X

Everyone gathered around them in a circle,
Saying: the black one will lose, it's almost certain.
Both sides make bets, saying
Ours has tougher horns. And before you know it
Half an hour has gone by and still
No one can guess which cow will win:
Sometimes one draws back, then lunges forward,
And each in turn keeps pushing to the limit.
Now the fat cow from Frà sets to work,
While the other does all she can to hold her own.
The whole Breuil faction now trembles with fear;
But soon their Maurin with her pointed horns
Jabs that Reina right in the neck,
And makes her retreat, my friend, a good three times!
Now the other recovers; but Maurin holds fast,
And the fourth time drives her from the field.
Her eyes pursue as far as they can
Her opponent retreating in confusion for having lost.

The people from Frà are displeased at seeing their queen defeated;
Those from Breuil applaud; it was worth the trouble.

XI

It's up to me! says a Valesano drover;
I'll go and get Fribour, the queen of Dzovensan.
Along comes a cow, swinging her bell:
It's Fribour, presenting herself for battle.
Maurin, queen of Breuil, stands there waiting.
Each sniffs the other, they look at each other sideways.
Then the cow from Breuil, tired as she is,,
Starts bellowing, she's in a rage;
She foams at the mouth and her nostrils
Snort at the soil upturned by her hooves.
The cow from Dzovensan bellows and gets ready:
She rubs her muzzle on the ground and busies herself in other ways.
Her eyes looked aglow with fire,
And smoke seemed to come out of her nostrils!
Everyone around comes running, shoving and crowding together;
And all eyes are fixed on the two cows.
Some bet a scudo, others a louis d'or;
Each pulls out his wallet, on a day like this the sky's the limit.
All of a sudden the two queens attack as though they mean it:
Each lands a blow, each defends herself.
It's horn against horn, and forehead to forehead;
Their necks have sunk between their shoulders.
All their limbs were straining as they struggled,
Their bones protruded, their veins swelled;
And both, in turn, so as not to lose ground
Plant their hooves in the soil, and don't budge an inch.
They're evenly matched, in strength and courage:
Will they also equally divide the glory?

XII

Now suddenly blood is seen flowing from the combatants!
But what's happening? Everyone runs into the field
To see which cow has been wounded...
It was Maurin from Breuil, one horn half broken.

Then the factions unite in trying to divide them
But nothing can separate them now, neither stick nor whip!
Each of the fighters spares neither breath, nor strength, nor effort
For the honor of her mountain pasture.
No one had ever seen such a battle before...
One of Maurin's hind hooves slips,
And the cry goes up: Fribour! Fribour!... the queen!
Not so fast!... hardly has the word been spoken,
When poor Maurin, despite her broken horn,
Holds fast for all she's worth,
Musters her strength and doubles her courage,
So that suddenly Fribour,
As though by magic,
Retreats, turns, and gallops away... bon voyage!
She makes a beeline for her herd,
Followed by Maurin, with a dangling horn.

EUGENIA MARTINET

With Martinet's work, patois in Valle d'Aosta is transformed from being a language of reality to a language of poetry, and popular dialect poetry and local color give way to poetry in dialect, lyric and subjective. Martinet's highly literary and refined patois is not a popular language. Her poetry, despite its political and ideological stance, does not have a Gramscian bond with the subaltern classes, and it does not share their world view, nor does it speak for them.

Eugenia Martinet was born in Aosta on November 2, 1896. She attended secondary school in Aosta and then studied literature at the University of Turin, but left before graduating to teach part-time in the local middle schools. She published a few chapbooks in Italian, such as *Il Fuoco sacro* in 1915 and *La trilogia de la Ferriera* in 1920, which she later totally rejected. In 1920 she moved to Milan where, thanks to her brother-in-law Sergio Solmi, she came into contact with the city's literary world, which was decisive for the development of her poetry. More important still was her acquaintance with Filippo Fichera, who was interested in dialect poetry. The turning point in favor of French-Provençal poetry probably took place in the late twenties, and several of her poems began to appear in Fichera's journals. In 1935 *Convivio Letterario* published her first work in patois, *La Dzouère entzamaie*.

In 1968 she returned to Aosta for good, to live with her elderly mother in the house in Bibian,

renouncing the Milanese cultural and literary milieu. Meanwhile, her second and last collection in patois, *Meison de berrio, meison de glièse*, had come out in 1964. In the sixties and partly in the seventies she continued to publish her poems in journals and anthologies, especially in Pacot's *Ij Brandé* and Dell'Arco's *Il fiore della poesia dialettale*. She died in Aosta in 1983.

While being appreciated by critics, Eugenia Martinet is even today one of the least known and studied dialect poets of the twentieth century, but perhaps the time has come for her poetry to be known by a larger, non-specialized readership. A critical edition of her opera omnia in patois is currently being prepared. Martinet fully accepts Giotto's notion of dialect as the language of poetry, and she represents perhaps its most extreme and perfect case. Her use of patois coincides with the psychological situation of distance and separation, but *La Dzouère entzamaie* show no trace of that, even though it was written in her Milan years. She uses dialect solely as a function of her native terroir and it is from there that she broadens her discourse. It is as if Martinet, having reached modernity (anonymity, estrangement, alienation), withdraws in horror to go back into the reassuring niche of what is local and provincial, of belonging and sharing. Facing the challenge of modernity, she resorts to increasingly closed poetic forms, a formal discipline against the entropy of the times. Formally, the continuity between poetry in Italian and in patois is to be found in the adoption of closed forms, traditional meter, the systematic use of rhyme, and onomatopoeic language; with respect to subject matter, in civic themes and in the love for what Martinet calls "modest things," the small and humble things so dear to Pascoli, which would become gradually fraught with uneasiness and anxiety.

Another constant of her French-Provençal poetry, besides its magical character and the figure of myth, is the presence of the silent shout, or even silent weeping, the expression of a century-old collective culture which internalizes suffering and joy and which has learned resignation and patience. This wisdom is also at the root of her detachment from things, but the ultimate risk it runs with the passage of time is ultimate silence, self-

exclusion and isolation. Martinet is intimately courtly the moment in which feelings and above all love are dissembled in the manner of the troubadours, a love which is mainly pain because the fin'amor feeds on solitude, longing, distance, and it is the obsession of absence, aspiration and torment of the impossible, solipsistic closure. Martinet calls it *Lo ma d'amour*, in Cavalcanti's wake. The homecoming attempted through the patois and her attachment to her land is not sufficient, however, as her last rondos reveal; maybe being truly rooted in destiny means death, being-for-death, the earth: *tsercé anco-mé l'abri, l'étrete di terren* (still looking for shelter, / the embrace of the earth).

Criticism

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Su dove rime

Su dove rime fà ballié passadzo
i tormèn , a la joué é i dammadzo
de noutra via, è tegnèn tot aplan,
avei la guida ferma deun la man
que atten son tor senza pèdre coradzo.

Pà fâta de mistéro o d'étaladzo
pe sotteni, mecllià deun lo tapadzo,
eun mottet que conserve son balan
su dove rime,
frémiolen quaque cou de l'éretadzo
de tan de dzeivro a l'ombra di megnadzo.

E tooteun la pachence come eun gan
recompose la chouite encontinan
de si repon que dze porto en ommadzo
su dove rime.

Su due rime – Su due rime dobbiamo dar passaggio/al tormento, alla gioia e al guasto/della nostra

vita, e, tenendo ogni cosa a sesto,/aver la guida ferma nella mano / che attende il suo turno senza perder coraggio. // Non 'è il caso di mistero o di ostentazione /per sostenere, mescolato nel frastuono, /un mottetto che conserva il suo bilanciarsi / su due rime , // rabbrivendo talvolta dell'eredità /di tanta brina all'ombra della casa. / E tuttavia la pazienza come un guanto /

ricompono subito la sequenza/di questa ripresa che offro in omaggio / su due rime.

In a Couple of Verses

In a couple of verses we're asked to express
the torment, the joys, the ruin

of our lives, and, keeping it all in order,
to hold the reins firmly in the hand
that awaits its turn with no loss of courage.
There's nothing mysterious or boastful
about sustaining, amid the uproar,
a motet that keeps its balance
in a couple of verses,
while sometimes shuddering at the legacy
of all that hoarfrost in the shadow of the house.
And yet patience like a glove
immediately rearranges the order
of this refrain, which I offer as homage
in a couple of verses.

La cllià

Ivri an porta é passé semble facile,
tzertzé deun lo tiren o la credence,
më on trouve pà la cllià, lo ten utilo
passe é on dei fère longa penitence.
“Verria la cllià, pren-là, beta-là i carro”.
Më iaou? La tète l'è pleine de gnoule.
Fat sarré, sarra bien, e me dze sarro,
é poue me fat tzertzé, de baggue foule.
Lo mëtzo verrie entor, come eun moleun,
avouë toute le niche é le catzette,
é l'espouè saoute inque é lé dedeun
craquèn lo fouà follet di-s-allemette.
Më rèn é todzor rèn, le cllià son foura
di mondo, son partie toute reide,
devan le grouse é aprè le peigne, é l'oura
respecte ci passadzo, vo la vèide
fère eun détou de grâce. Fat adë
devan l'artze fremaie é lo guetzèt
attendre avouë pachence. Ci fourië
tomon poue le gardienne di secrèt.

La chiave – Aprire una porta e passare sembra facile, / cercare nel cassetto o nella credenza, / ma non si trova la chiave, il tempo utile / Passa e si deve fare lunga penitenza. // “Gira la chiave, prendila, riponila in un posto” / Ma dove? La testa è piena di nuvole / Occorre chiudere, chiudi bene, e io chiudo, / e poi devo cercare, cose da impazzire. // La casa gira intorno come un mulino, / con tutti i suoi angolini e i nascondigli, / e la speranza salta qua e là dentro / sprizzando il fuoco fatuo dei

fiammiferi. / Ma nulla e sempre nulla, le chiavi sono fuori / dal mondo, sono partite tutte rigide, / prima le grosse e poi le piccole, e il vento / rispetta questo passaggio, lo vedete // fare un

giro di grazia. Ora dobbiamo, / davanti alla cassapanca chiusa e allo sportello, / attendere con pazienza. In primavera / torneranno le guardiane dei segreti.

The Key

To open a door and go in seems easy,
to look in the drawer or the sideboard,
but the key's not there, time runs out,
and you go on feeling guilty.
"Turn the key, take it out, put it away somewhere."
But where? One's head is full of clouds.
One must lock the door, lock it well, and I do lock it,
but then I have to go looking, it drives me crazy.
The house spins you around like a mill,
and with all its little corners and hiding places,
and hope keeps hopping around inside
spraying the foolish flame of matches.
But nothing and still nothing, the keys
are not in this world; all rigid, they've left it,
first the big ones, then the little ones, and the wind
respects their passage, you can see it
blow a graceful gust. Now there's nothing to do
but wait patiently by the locked chest
and the door. Those who know the secret
will be back in the spring.

Gramaci

Ah, gramaci, la via,
t'è étaie semplà è ardia
é sta mateun dze voui me reverrié
pe t'aveitzé.
La quenta de no dove
l'a meinà l'atra? Trove
te que te m'a tzecca trop épouériaie
pe rendre saie
mà fantasi de tēta?
A carne la tempēta
te m'a eidzaie chovèn senza malece

douça nereusse.

Grazie – Ah, grazie, la vita, / sei stata semplice e ardita, / e stamattina voglio voltarmi / per guardarti./ Quale di noi due / ha condotto l'altra? Trovi / che m'hai un po' troppo impaurita / per render savia / la mia fantasia di testa? / A calmar la tempesta / tu m'hai spesso aiutata senza malizia / dolce nutrice.

Thanks

Ah, thank you, life,
you've been simple and daring,
and this morning I'd like to tum around
and look at you.
Which of us two
has led the other? Would you say
you've scared me a little too much
to impart any wisdom
to the fancies in my head?
Without malice, you've often helped me
to calm the tempest,
kind wet nurse

Eun freustapot

Clemeritinna l'aïet euii freustapot
i teii que llié l'amave d'être en via.
Su lo lardzo gradeun de ba desot,
contro lo meur di mëtzo
iaou la rousa s'étzöle di solèi
s'arrétave eun momen, l'ère contenta,
l'aïet l'apro di bocque en pe le pèi
et lo freic su la bôtze.
Adon sonnave: totte le tzanson
vegriavon-më peisible et sérieuse
come eun sermen surprèi de vibrachon,
eun salu solitéro.
Poue soit flà repregnave lo re.frein
tot jouèyeu de relâtzo. Su lo boueil
l'an quettà lo fossaou... "Oh, va pa cen!"
le jeu nèr vo surveillon
en remisen la feun d'euna dzormaie
totta pouégnenta de pequet sarradzo
totta nuia de terra grisolaie.

L'è lo ten de poué.

Dze si praou que deman te fat levé

devait que dzor, më la tzanson l'é douce

ara, depi que la mait di berdzé

quan caresse la modze toita tzâda.

Aprë veun poue lo vë.

Un'armonica – Clementina aveva un'armonica / al tempo che le piaceva d'essere in vita. / Sul largo gradino di giù./ contro il muro della casa, // dove trascolora la rosa del sole, / si fermava un momento, era contenta, / aveva l'asprezza del bosco nei suoi capelli, / e il fresco sulla bocca. // Allora suonava; tutte le canzoni / venivano così facili e serie / come un giuramento sorpreso da vibrazioni, / un saluto solitario.// Poi il suo soffio riprendeva il ritornello / tutto gaio di pace. Sulla vasca / hanno dimenticato la zappa: "Oh, ma questo non va!"/ Gli occhi neri vi sorvegliano. // riassetando la fine di una giornata / tutta pungente di pioli selvatici, /tutta nuda di terra bianconera. / È il momento di potare.// So ben che domani devi alzarti / prima che spunti il giorno, ma la canzone è dolce /ora, assai più che la mano del pastore / quando accarezza la giovenca tutta calda.// In seguito, viene poi il vitello.

A Harmonica

Clementina had a harmonica

in the days when she was glad to be alive.

On the wide step at the bottom,

against the wall of the house,

where the glow of the sun faded,

she paused for a moment, she was happy,

she had the harshness of the woods in her hair,

and their freshness in her mouth.

So she played; all the songs

came so easily and seriously

like a vow surprised by vibrations,

a solitary greeting.

Then her breath again took up the refrain,

so gay and peaceful. They've left the hoe

on the vat: "Oh, but that won't do!"

Her black eyes look you over,

rearranging the end of a day,

unfriendly with pointed stakes

and naked with gray earth.

It's time to start pruning.

I know very well you have to get up tomorrow

before daybreak, but the song now is sweet,

much sweeter than the hand of the herdsman

when it strokes the overheated heifer.

Then afterward comes the calf.

Lo ma d'amour

Ah! que lo mā d'amour l'è an bagga beurta,
que no pieuque lo cor tanque a la mioula,
no-s-abbandonna i couis, et no s-enseurta,
se no pleyen lo cou desot la pioula
come la lourda pesse di tzanté.
Creiade-mè que dz'i l'âma coueisenta
pi que la tzà den lo crou di fornë,
et que lo san cordalle pe la fenta
nèire di coeur. "Coplé? Coplé? ". Magina!
Vo v'ête chor, ségneur, pe ci tormen
et voutra man sa pa prendre la mina.
Tan miou: dze poui adon vo leiché creire
que dze s'i vo l'amé senza mâten,
en sourien i crèt que ine fat beire.

Il mal d'amore – Ah! quanto il mal d'amore è cosa brutta, / che cī bezzica il corpo fino al midollo, / ci abbandona alla tormenta, e ci insulta / se pieghiamo il collo sotto la scure. // come il pesante abele del promontorio. / Credetemi che ho l'anima cocente / più della calce nella bocca della fornace, / e che il sangue fa le corde giù dalla ferita // nera del cuore. "Come dici? Come dici?" Figuratevi! / V'oi siete sordo, Signore, a questo tormento, / e la mano vostra non sa prendere la mia. // Tanto meglio: posso così lasciarvi credere / che io so amarvi senza infelicità, / Sorridendo al fondiglio che mi tocca bere.

Lovesickness

Oh, what an awful thing lovesickness is,
it pecks at our bodies to the marrow of our bones,
abandons us to torment, and insults us
if we bend our necks under its ax
like the heavy fir tree on the promontory.
Believe me, I have a soul more burning
than the lime in the mouth of the kiln,
and the blood drips down from the black
wound of the heart. "What are you saying?
What are you saying?" Just imagine!
You are deaf, Lord, to this torment,
and your hand is unable to take mine.
So much the better: thus I can let you believe
that I'm able love you without being unhappy,
while smiling at the dregs it befalls me to drink.

Lo poteun

L'ère venu de nêt conie un voleur

– posà lo sac i carro di crotteun
totta sarraie a soit sarvadzo coeur
l'aïet fondu mon cri den son poteun.
Dei adon, tzaque nêt passe et lambina
trèine le s-ombre entor come le ru
quan débordon. Me dit Nanon, malino:
“Torne pamë, ci cou l'aïet trop bu”.
Q biènerousa. cella coppa vouida,
biènerousa saveur de mon desteun,
et tanque i pléi de la première rida,
todzor todzor mon cri den ci poleun.

Il bacio – Era venuto di notte come un ladro / – posato il sacco in un canto della rimessa / tutta costretta al suo selvaggio cuore, / aveva fuso il mio grido nel suo bacio. // Da allora ogni notte trascorre, e lenta / trascina le ombre intorno come i rivi / quando straripano. Mi dice Nanon maliziosa: / “Non torna più, quella volta aveva bevuto troppo. // O benedetta quella coppa vuota, / benedetto sapore del mio destino, / e fino al solco della prima ruga, / sempre sempre il mio grido in questo bacio.

The Kiss

He came like a thief in the night
—leaving his sack in a corner of the garage—
in the grip of his savage heart,
my cry melted in his kiss.
Since then the nights go slowly by, dragging
the surrounding shadows like brooks
that overflow. “He won’t come back,” Nanon says slyly,
“He’d had too much to drink that time.”
O blessed be that empty cup,
blessed taste of my destiny,
and until the first wrinkle furrows my face,
always always my cry in that kiss

Caserna Enzo Zerboglio

L’at son non, l’at son non, saiò pa què.
L’ère eun petzou meinà come no-s-atre,
më lo ten feït de cice dzouà de mago
qu’on vei su euna caserna
lo non d’eun rago,
Eun pèr de casse queurte et quaque cou
finque eun petzou faoudèr; desot le botte,
toi lliouièn de broquen; et su la tète

cella casquetta soupla

di dzor de fêta.

Quan no no sen trovà su lo besan,

– et quei et pa souflé –, lo baraquen

avoue son dzen collet rodzo d'ampouïe,

– pa fâta de plaouré –

l'è pa la pouïe,

l'è cella bagga dröla di montagne

que, tot d'encou, vo v'ei devan lo berrio

tot blan, tot drèt et poue desot le crôé

d'eun bocque enseveli

semblon guegné,

et on pout panë passé, et pe le pouente

le gnoule fan de bouére den lo ciel.

Et ci cou que la bléta l'ère lé

de brotte et rame presta

pe eun fouà de joué,

et veun la nêt et S. Barthelemy

l'è eun flambò que galope pe la cöta,

et Sarro lei répon: fat leiché tzére

euna peleuva et flamon le s-Aouselére.

Ettot ci cou de l'âilla: beiche ba

come eun foillaou crotzu su le pedzeun

et l'èr balanche i-tor, et l'ombra nèie

verrie i crotzon di prà.

Lo ten de vèie.

Et l'atro cou quan Melién i Vaco

l'a perdu lo modzon et pe lo bocque

an sonnaille cliotzave; et, lo coeur plat,

la lanterna partia,

la sonnaille que vat.

Pe què l'ère pa l'an mégro di deuil

et l'aian tzette i cou lo gorgoillon

le bêtze trie et lo meulet tzardzà,

më Baoutzan et Paris

eun grou carrà.

Dze me sovegno pa se l'an trovalo...

Mê lo dén dén l'è todzor lé: pe an poussa

reste dedeun lo bouégno euimclliotzetta

pleina de compachon,

lourda ou levètta.

Caserma Enzo Zerboglio – Ha il suo nome, ha il suo nome, non ne sapevo nulla. / Era un ragazzino come noi, / ma il tempo fa di quesli giochi da mago / che si vede su una caserma / il nome di un fanciullo. // Un paio di calzoncini corti e qualche volta / per sino un grembiolino; sotto le scarpe, / tutto scintillante di chiodi; e sulla testa / quel berretto soffice / dei giorni di festa. // Quando ci siamo trovati sul precipizio, / e zitti e senza respirare, – il secchiello / con il suo bel colletto rosso di lamponi, / – non c'è bisogno di piangere / – non è la paura, // è quella strana cosa della montagna / per cui all'improvviso avete davanti la roccia / tutta bianca, tutta scoscisa e poi, sotto, le crocette / di un bosco sepolto / paiono aminiccare, // e non si può più passare, e per le vette / le nubi fanno grandi strappi nel cielo. // E quella volta che il mucchio era lì, / di frasche. E rami pronto / per un fuoco di gioia. / e viene la notte, e S. Barthélemy / è una torcia che corre per le pendici, / e Sarre le risponde; bisogna lasciare cadere / una favilla e fiammeggiano / le Auxillères. // Anche quella volta dell'aquila; cala giù come un follatoio adunco sui pulcini / e l'aria ondeggia intorno, e l'ombra nera / volge sul dosso del prato. / Il tempo di vedere. // E quell'altra volta quando Emiliano al Vaco / ha perso il vitello, e per il bosco / un sonaglio scampanellava; // e il cuore piatto, / partita la lanterna, / il sonaglio che, va. // Perché non era l'anno magro del lutto e avevano tutte al collo i sonagli / le bestie piccole, e il mulo carico, / ma Bauzzan e Paris / un grosso campanaccio. // Non mi ricordo più se l'han trovato... / Ma il den den é sempre lì: per molto tempo / rimane dentro all'orecchio un campanellino / pieno di compassione, / greve o leggiere.

The Enzo Zerboglio Barracks

It has his name, it has his name, I knew nothing about it.

He was just a kid like the rest of us,

but time plays these magic tricks

and there on a barracks

you see a boy's name.

A pair of short pants and sometimes

even a schoolboy's smock; the shoes below

with shiny hobnails; and on his head

that soft holiday cap.

When we found ourselves on the precipice

—silent and holding our breath—the bucket,

its rim stained red with raspberries,

—there's no reason to cry—

it's not fear,

it's that weird thing about the mountains

when all of a sudden you have the cliff before you,

so white, so steep, and down there in the buried woods

the lupines seem to wink,

and you can't get by, and over the peaks

the clouds make big holes in the sky.

And that time when the heap

of foliage and branches was ready

for a joyful bonfire,

and night comes, and Saint-Barthélemy

is a torch running along the slopes,

and Sarre responds; a spark

has only to fall and the Auxillères

blaze up.

And that time with the eagle: it drops

like a hooked winepress on the chicks,

rippling the air all around, and the black shadow

turns on the rise in the meadow.

It was something to see.

And that other time when Emiliano

lost his calf at Vaco, and in the woods

a harness bell rang, and the anxious heart,

the spent lantern,

the bell that kept ringing.

Because it wasn't the lean year of mourning

and the young animals all had bells

on their necks, and the loaded mule,

but Bauzzan and Paris

had big cowbells.

I can't remember whether or not they found it...

But the ding-dong is still there: for a long time

a little bell full of compassion,

heavy or light,

remains in the ear.

MARCO GAL

If Eugenia Martinet marks the transition from Cerlogne's popular dialect poetry to poetry in dialect, Gal represents the subsequent transition in Valle d'Aosta from the latter to neodialect poetry, starting with his choice of the patois of Gressan, marginal with respect to the metropolitan language, to the regional koine centered on the dialect of Aosta, as it had been developed by Cerlogne and taken up, with a few differences, by Martinet; but also for the different use of language, devoid both of idiomatic and mimetic idiosyncrasies and of the many gallicisms present in Martinet's work. In a certain sense Gal's patois, while not being popular, presents itself as being purer, even archaic, with rare Italianisms, mostly of cultured origin.

Marco Gal (Gressan, 1940), has been writing in Italian for a long time (*Canti di ricerca*, 1965; *Felicità media*, 1968), when dialects did not yet enjoy the present favor, before the dialectal turning point, which can be placed around the mid-eighties. It took more than twenty years before Gal would begin to think (poetically, because even today the patois is Gal's language of home and community), to write in French-Provençal, without however forgetting his long experience with Italian. His choice of the maternal tongue is purposeful, not emotional; a linguistic challenge and a cultural operation, as an attempt to test and show all the expressive potential of his French-Provençal, but also to safeguard it from a poetic usage limited by tradition and the custom of the local sketch still present today, and from a native culture which had been unable to understand Martinet's lesson. All this is compounded by the sense of loss alluded to in the title of the first collection in patois, *Ècolie* (1991), lost waters, but also lost words: dialect has lost or is about to lose the deep roots of its world, even if the poet still "hears it sing."

The poems of *Ècolie* are in dialect but they are not provincial, stripped as they are of every localism and aiming at an absolute discourse: what is

most dialectal in Gal is paradoxically not the patois, but his being rooted in the earth, in nature, or rather in the naturalness of life rather than in the native terroir (except by birth). The main themes of his poetry are desire, ideal of beauty, memory (of what wasn't), time, nature, the body, the antinomy dream/reason, life/non-life, which seems to take any illusion away even from love, bent to the necessity of procreation.

His poems are almost always brief lyric sequences, far removed from Cerlogne's long poems and Martinet's closed forms. The form is that of a few brief verses (aiming at a strong concentration and sparseness), while the meter ranges freely from seven to eleven-syllable lines, with rare examples of shorter lines. His style is characterized by the frequent use of synesthesia, often with an expressionistic function, or by the use of analogies and oximora. In the second collection in patois, *A l'ençon* (1998), in order to settle the score with his past, Gal has begun to reminisce with the figures of his past, with the "lost people of the ancient world," a host of Shadows to whom the poet pays homage, deeply tragic characters whose fate is sealed. In *A l'ençon* there is a proliferation of repetitions, iterations, refrain, and the rhyme becomes more insistent, evidence of a promising work, stylistically and thematically still in progress.

Criticism

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Pavioule

Dj'i euna conta de pavioule

a vo féye,

euna conta de pavioule.

Tcheut le dzor no remarquen

l'imoralitou de la nateua,

yaou lo meuto l'at pa de place,

yaou la fôce l'est la seula mæseua

avouë la malice et la via

di s-espèce que se medzon etintre leur

avance su lo mouë di mor.

Dj'i euna conta de pavioule

a vo féye,

euna conta de pavioule.

(Da A l'ençon)

Farfalle – Ho una storia di farfalle / da raccontarvi, / una storia di / farfalle. / Ogni giorno constatiamo / l'immoralità della natura, / ove il merito non ha valore, / ove la forza è la sola misura / insieme con l'astuzia e la vita / delle specie che si divorano tra loro / avanza sul cumulo dei morti. / Ho una storia di farfalle. / da raccontarvi, / una storia di farfalle.

Butterflies

I have a story to tell you

about butterflies,

a story about butterflies.
Every day we notice
the immorality of nature,
where merit has no place,
where strength combined with cunning
is the only yardstick, and the life
of the species devouring each other
proceeds over heaps of the dead.
I have a story to tell you
about butterflies,
a story about butterflies

Méye

Totta la nèye via
de ner faoudèr vètuya
sensa eun sondzo de pavioula
blantse euntremè di dèi que sie
pa ètou eun pétchià d'èspéance.
Méye laméye,
te crouéye vie améye
euncô fan ombra
dessu le jouéce réye
de la sémén de te s-antraille,
brichatte euncô di son
deur di travaille
et di gou apro di mœur.
(Da A l'encon)

Madre – Tutta la nera vita / di neri grembiuli vestita / senza un sogno / di farfalla / bianca tra le dita che non sia / stato un peccato di speranza / Madre amata, / le tue tribolazioni amare / ancora fanno ombra / sulle gioie rare / del seme delle tue viscere, / cullato ancora dal suono / duro della fatica / e dal gusto aspro della sventura.

Mother

For her whole dark life
dressed in black aprons
with no dream of a white
butterfly between her fingers
that was not a sin of hope.
Dearest mother,
your bitter tribulations

still cast a shadow
over the rare joys
of the seed of your womb,
still cradled by the harsh
sound of fatigue
and the sour taste of misfortune.

Patse

A sèfan m'at arritou la mor
de se man frèide
et m'at avèitchà avouë se jeu gri.
Dj'i deut-lèl – Lèissa-me, te prèyo,
soplé. Maque te demando de possèi
cognètre devan l'amour.
Avouë lieu dj'i fé euna patse.
L'est pe cen que dze foulyo
l'amour comme la mor.
(Da A l'encon)

Patto – A sedici anni mi ha fermato la morte / con le sue inani fredde / e mi ha guardato con i suoi occhi grigi. / Le ho detto – Lasciami, ti prego, / ti supplico Solo ti chiedo di potere / conoscere prima l'amore.– Con lei ho stretto un patto. / È per questo che fuggo / L'amore come la morte.

Pact

When I was sixteen death stopped me
with its cold hands
and looked at me with its gray eyes.
I told it: Please go away.,
I beg you. All I ask is
to know love first.
So we made a pact, we two.
Which is why I flee
from love as from death.

Éducachon

Come l'est deurt de t'éduquë a mouere
eun t'éduquen a vivre, té que te greumpeuille
dessui l'avëi comme se te déyuhe jamë tchère
Te dèi apprendre a éisistè dessu lo vouido di mistéro
comme llià a eun amour eumpossiblo que jamë
te pourrie pénétrë et cognètre,

lèi vequi protso eun senten lo seun souflo
terriblo et douce t'eunveloppè comme eun vouido
et comme euna plénitùide.
Te fa pa t'eumprechon-ë
se la cllioupa l'at fé lo ni deun lo teun abro
et tcheut le seun bitchion de mor
crèisson i son de sa plénte.
A la feun te te fondrè deudeun l'eumbrassemen
sensa reponse.
(Da A l'encon)

Educazione – Com'è duro educarti a morire / educandoti a vivere, tu che ti arrampichi / sull'avvenire come se non dovessi mai cadere. / Devi imparare a esistere sul baratro del mistero / come legato a un amore impossibile / che mai potrai penetrare e conoscere, / vivergli accanto sentendo il suo respiro / terribile e dolce avvilupparti come un vuoto / e come una plenitudine. / Non ti devi impressionare / se l'upupa ha fatto il suo nido nel tuo albero / e tutti i suoi piccoli di morte / crescono al suono del suo lamento. / Alla fine ti fonderai nell' abbraccio senza risposte.

Education

How hard it is to educate yourself to die
while educating yourself to live, you who
climb the future as though you'd never fall.
You must learn to exist over the chasm of mystery
as though tied to an impossible love you will never
be able to penetrate and know,
to live beside it feeling its sweet and terrible breath
enveloping you like a void
and like a plenitude.
You mustn't be frightened
if the hoopoe builds its nest in your tree
and all its fledglings of death
grow to the sound of its lament.
In the end you'll melt into its embrace
without an answer.

Andze eumpeur

Fleur de ma fleur
que te te fé
sèinè de plèisi
pe le foille catchià
de la planta di mondo
māgaa te sen pe le rèice

totta la meusecca de la téra
et ti protso di coeur
yaou beusse la voya
de la bêtche étemella.
Té t'ë cheur l'andze eumpeur
que l'at pa de péce, que l'at pe mèseua
la nateua étourdya
de sa libra jouéce.
Quan te la bèise
fran dessu lo jeu
sensiblo de l'univer
rapella-no a sa douça radze.
(Da Écolie)

Angelo impuro – Fiore del mio fiore / che ti fai / sanguinare di piacere tra le foglie nascosto / della pianta del mondo / forse senti nelle radici / tutta la musica della terra / e sei vicino al cuore / ove batte la voglia / della bestia etema. / Di sicuro sei l'angelo impuro / che non ha pace, / che ha per misura / la natura stordita / della sua libera gloia. / Quando la baci / proprio sull'occhio / sensibile dell'universo / ricordaci alla sua dolce rabbia.

Impure Angel

Flower of my flower
that makes you
bleed with pleasure
among the leaves
hidden by the tree of the world
perhaps you feel in its roots
all the music of the earth
and lie close to the heart
where beats the will
of the eternal beast.
You're surely the impure angel
that knows no peace,
and whose only limit
is the dazed nature
of its free joy.
When you kiss it
right on the sensitive
eye of the universe
remind us of its gentle rage.
(Translated by John Shepley)

Semen

Dreumnia, petchiou, dreumma,
dreumma dedeun ta sémen;
dreumma, petchiou, dreumma,
dreumma deun lo sondzo
d'être jamé ètoù.

(Da Ècolie)

Seme – Dormi piccolo, dormi, / dormi nel seme; / dormi, piccolo, dormi, / dormi nel sogno / di non essere mai stato

Seed

Sleep, little one, sleep,
sleep in the seed;
sleep, little one, sleep,
sleep in the dream
of never having been..

Lenva

Dze predzo de viëille paolle
nëssuye avouë ma tseur viventa,
ëpanduye deun lo meun cervë
pe se barme euncougnuye
et sortuye comme de meusecca di ten
fouettéye de ma lénva,
de son crëissu pe de siécle su de botse amé,ye,
chouedzjà et battu euntre le den di ten,
sortu de la via
comme de sourie et de querrio
et comme euna moffa de douleur
dessu le tomen de la tseur
et di coeur.

(Da Ècolie)

Lingua – Parlo antiche parole / nate con la mia carne vivente, / sbocciate nel mio cervello / nei suoi antri sconosciuti / e scaturite come musica del tempo / frustate dalla mia lingua, / suoni cresciuti per secoli su bocche amare, / lisciati e sbattuti tra i denti del tempo, / scaturiti dalla vita / come sorrisi e grida / e come un muschio di dolore / sul tormento della carne e del cuore.

Language

I speak old words
born with my living flesh
sprouting in the unknown hollows

of my brain
and springing forth like time's music
whipped by my tongue,
sounds growing for centuries in bitter mouths,
smoothed and beaten between the teeth of time,
springing from life
like smiles and cries
and like painful moss
over the torment of flesh
and heart.

Botou

Te passe protso la bôtou
et te sen son ala de lemëye,
deun son regar l'y est totta ta via,
meriaou de l'ëmadze vrèya,
l'idé fête fourma et matchie.
Paà, te perd le-s-aoure
et le menute et le dzor
pe tsertchè la brillenta apparechon
i.fon de tcheut le sourie,
pe l'aperçèivre que vequèi,
euncoa et todzor,
la riénta fourma
de cen que sémble di noutro ren.
(Da Êcolie)

Bellezza – Ti passa accanto la bellezza / e senti la sua ala di luce; / nel suo sguardo c'è tutta la tua vita, / specchio dell'immagine vera, / l'idea fatta forma e materia. / Così sciupi le ore / e i minuti e i giorni / per cercare la splendente apparizione / nel fondo di ogni sorriso, / per scorgerla che vive, / ancora e sempre, / la ridente forma di ciò che appare del nostro nulla.

Beauty

Beauty walks beside you
and you feel its wing of light;
in its gaze lies your whole life,
mirror of its true image,
the idea given form and substance.
Thus you while away the hours,
the minutes and days,

seeking the splendid apparition
in the depths of every smile,
to see if it's still alive,
as it used to be,
the laughing form
of what appears of our nothingness

PIEDMONT

Giuseppe Zoppelli

After the essentially provincial experience of the *Generazione del "Birichin"* (a publication dealing with dialect poetry that lasted from 1887 to 1927), the poetry in Piedmontese of the twentieth century opened with the rivalry between Nino Costa (1886-1945) and Giuseppe Pacòtto (pen-name Pinin Pacò, 1899-1964), though generationally not too far apart. The self-awareness of both could not be more explicit. The former writes about the latter: "It's not popular poetry, and in fact it's not even dialect poetry"; and the latter about the former: "he represents the end of an epoch and we claim to be the beginning of another."

But, boutade and provocations aside, the true distinction lies in the linguistic consciousness. Costa wrote in his collection *Sal e pèiveri* (1924): "The author of this volume has at times, but rarely, used assonance instead of rhyme, comforted by the example of Italian and dialect classics, but even more by hearing the songs and speech of the master of all poets: the people." In the preface to his last posthumous collection (*Tempesta*, 1946), he presented his poems as the "expression of the sentiment of the people of Piedmont." And Pacòtto, many years later, during the sixties, wrote almost in reply to him: "The poet expresses above all his inner world, and if this world is made of feelings and sensations which are particular or decadent, the poet, if he is sincere, must express it as it is ... So be it if poetry is in contrast with the true sentiment of the people, who identify only with dialect and express their very soul in dialect! It means that if it's not one poet it will be another who will interpret the real soul of the people." This last comment, beyond the obvious differences between the two, acknowledges at least the presence or possibility of two different, but complementary and parallel, poetic modes. In fact Pacòtto himself had maintained that Costa was "the column on which the past rests and from which it will fly towards the future," only to disavow him as a master in 1937, at the height of their dispute. After his death, having overcome certain misunderstandings, he gave him back the title of magister.

But the poetic history of Piedmont in the twentieth century seemed characterized more by continuity and gradual reforms than by dramatic and radical breaks, and Costa again, in the preface to *Arsivòli*, mentioned among others Giovanni Gianotti (1867-1947) as the immediate precursor of the young Pacòtto. To his name we can add, as a forerunner of the new generation, that of Alfonso Ferrero (1873-1933), about whom Pacòtto would later say: "a poet with uneven results, but with an often high and powerful inspiration" (*Ij Brandé*, n.1, September 15, 1946).

In reality, the real precursor of twentieth-century Piedmontese poetry in dialect was Costa himself, and in fact he was "the line of demarcation (and suture) between occasional versification and the poetry of the 'young people' who write in the *Armanach piemonteis* published 'a l'ansègna dij Brandé'.¹ And it is not so much a problem of filiation as one of complementation, as Pacòtto himself had understood. In the end – as we shall see – Costa and Pacòtto point to two paths which in the final analysis are complementary, without mutual exclusion.

This does not save Costa's poetry from belonging to an anachronistic and belated cultural climate, with everything this entails in terms of what is conventional, merely descriptive or inspired by folklore or local color, all of it accompanied by a rather superficial metrical adroitness. He was still tied to *la veja religion dla fàseusa e dla sartoirèta* (the old religion of the milliner and the seamstress), with *tuta soa nostalgia bicerin-a* (with all its liqueur-glass nostalgia). Yet he was able to bridge the gap with the newest poets, adapting his rugged Piedmontese to the "taste for rhyme and harmony," following Pascoli's example of a melancholy tone, whispered, muted in a language of a lightness and delicacy uncommon in the vernacular Piedmontese tradition. Maybe there were no rifts, revolutions, dramatic and traumatic breaks in twentieth-century dialect poetry, but certainly a turning point came with the young poets of *Ij Brandé*, so much so that, although the disagreement with Cost was patched up, the sense of Pacòtto's (and Olivero's) polemic remains.

If for historiography the twentieth century is the short century, it is more so for Italian poetry in dialect, at least for its terminus a quo (with the exception of the forerunner Di Giacomo, the first fully twentieth-century authors are Marin from Grado with *Fiuri de tapo* of 1912, and Giotti with *Piccolo canzoniere triestino* of 1914), and in particular for Piedmontese poetry, whose beginnings fall well within the century, a decade after the Great War. The closing of the weekly *Birichin* in 1927 and the publication the same year of the first issue of the journal *Ij Brandé* can with good reason mark, in the mid-twenties, the date of the passage from nineteenth-century dialect poetry to twentieth-century poetry in Piedmontese dialect. Between *Birichin* and *bicerin-a* poetry there was the subalpine *fin de siècle*. If twentieth-century poetry in Piedmontese came later than that in Italian, the new *squisia* poetry in dialect initiated by Pacòtto did succeed in crossing regional boundaries and acquiring national status. Having abandoned nineteenth-century vernacular tradition and the successful satirical genre of previous centuries, what was new and modern in Piedmontese poetry in dialect, although thirty years late with respect to the precocious Di Giacomo (*Ariette e sunette*, 1898), was due to Pacòtto (*Arsivòli*, 1926). But for Pacòtto it is not a question of lateness if compared with other regional areas, because in the end he represents a key figure, establishing himself, along with the Sicilian *Vann'Antò* (*Voluntas tua*, 1926), the Ligurian *Firpo* (*O grillo cantadö*, 1931) and the Milanese *Tessa* (*L'è el di di mort, aлегher!*, 1926), as the terminus ad quem of early twentieth-century dialect poetry.

The Piedmontese landscape, however, is so different that not only did Pacòt's dispute with Costa in the Armanch Piemontèis in 1937 make sense, but so did Luigi Olivero's (1909-1996). He was more of an iconoclast than Pacòt in his battle against the worn-out vernacular tradition and was armed to the end with an aggressive and vigorous vis polemica against the vej abacuch (old fools). From the thirties on, joining Pacòt in the attempt to deprovincialize Piedmontese poetry, he represented the most conscious break with contemporary dialect poetry, without any possibility of compromise between the old and the new (unlike the more moderate tone of his friend, without rifts or traumas): writing in the Piedmontese dialect could no longer mean "rhyming sartina with scarpina, sorrissino with bacino, cuore with dolore." As the defense of a folkloric, provincial dialect poetry, with a facile use of rhyme, persisted into the forties and fifties, so did Olivero's polemical stance.

While less sarcastic and inclined to soft-pedal disputes and look for compromise, even Pacòt took part in this common battle, coming out in favor of an Elògi dla polèmica al servissì dla Poesia (Praise of the Dispute in the service of Poetry), but above all he steadfastly took the side of dialect as language of poetry, with extremely clear comments in *Ij Brandé* during the fifties, going so far as to formulate a complete poetics centered on Piedmontese as a literary language, tied to the regional koinè but also to single cities or villages. Because doctrines and theories do not count for Pacòt, and the only thing that counts, as Croce teaches us, is poetry, it is useless to raise barricades and fences; so the pages of his journal, in the name of a certain ecumenicalism, became the meeting place for Costa's, Pacòt's and Olivero's generations. There are even the poems of Arrigo Frusta (1875-1965), maybe the oldest, author of the collection *Faravòsche* (1901); of Mario Albino (1880-1946), whose *Canto 'd cò mi* was published posthumously; of Giulio Segre (1881-1952), author of *La poesia dla montagna* (1949); *El progress* 1952). And *Ij Brandé* published poems by Domenico Buratti (1882-1960), Carlo Baretta (1886-1946), Alessio Alvazzi Delfrate (1890-1982).

If Pacòt, unlike Olivero, allowed Piedmontese poetry to make huge strides "more through continuity than rupture" (G. Tesio), then, all polemics aside, even Costa's reappraisal and rehabilitation became significant. For this reason, instead of disavowing the master's lesson, he paid tribute to it. At any rate, if Pacòt's poetic line seemed to prevail in the second half of the century, it is nevertheless true that it combined with Costa's durable example in many authors, such as Camillo Brevo, Gustavo Buratti, Domenico Badalin, Antonio Bodrero. On the other hand, Costa's, Pacòt's and Olivero's generations coexisted with the so-called first generation of *Ij Brandé*, represented by Oreste Gallina (1898-1985), Alfredo Nicola (1902-1995), and Armando Mottura (1905-1976).

With Oreste Gallina, a fine Latin scholar, literature professor, high school principal, founder with Pacòt and Alfredo Formica of the first *Brandé* in 1927, "we have – writes Pacòt himself – a farmer, totally and only a farmer, writing about his land" (*Ij Brandé* 1947). In reality his first book, *Freidolin-e* (1926), contains urban and occasional verses (to which he would return in *Mia tera* in 1960) that shift from center to fringe, even linguistically, with a local koinè of the Langhe, in a sort of pendular motion. If anything, the world of town and country is at the center of his second book, *Canta, Péro* (1933), whose persona however "does not belong entirely to himself and has the sentimental and nostalgic spirit the poet gives him" (G. Tesio, op. cit., p. 65)..

Alfredo Nicola, one of the founders with Pacòt of *Compania dij Brandé*, besides being a poet (he signed his name *Alfredino* in Piedmontese journals), was a trend setter and founder in 1959 of the quarterly *Musicalbrandé* (which he edited until his death), with the precise intent to continue ideally the work of *Ij Brandé*. A musician, he collected Piedmontese songs and poems of the most important subalpine writers for singing and piano and for choir. In 1929 he published *Penombre*, influenced by the *Crepuscolari* and Pacòt, and in 1933 *Primavere*, metrically much more experimental, showing echoes of Ungaretti and Palazzeschi, and the treatment of words as music, from which Costa distances himself in the preface. But not so Olivero who, in the preface to the third book (*Nivole*, 1951), praised its songlike quality, its musicality and melody, more than its poetic quality. The "harmony between music and poetry," Tesio writes, would take place in his subsequent works: *Spers* (1969), *Arcodanse* (1970), *Samada* (1982), *Cartolin-e* (1986), which alternate between a D'Annunzio-style musical quality and a more intimate and existential diction, but always through a refined selection of words and allusive verse.

Armando Mottura, born in Turin, was one of the founders of *Compania dij Brandé* (with Pacòt, Bertolotto, Nicola, Brero, Spaldo, and others) and an assiduous contributor to the journals *Ij Brandé*, *Musicalbrandé*, and *Ij Brandé*, *Armanach éd poesia piemontèisa*, besides being the author of numerous plays in dialect. His poetry contains simple themes, tones, and language, and uses a plain style between elegy and Arcadia, revolving around a stereotyped image of his "small homeland" of Turin, as in *Reuse rosse* (1947), *Paisagi 'd Val Susa* (1949), *La patria picita* (1959), and the anthology *Vita, stòria bela* (1973).

The twentieth century is rich with names for Piedmontese poetry, at least quantitatively, more so than the *siglo de oro* par excellence of Savoy literature in dialect, i.e. the eighteenth century. For Pasolini, in his mid-century anthology, the other Piedmontese gravitating around *Ij Brandé* besides Pacòt, were only "regional Arcadia," between popular poetry in Pascoli's mode, following Costa, and refined poetry following Pacòt (but of much poorer quality). Only Olivero stood out by combining, as Pasolini noted, Symbolists and Provençals, D'Annunzio and aero-poetry. It must be remembered that, despite such a harsh polemic on the one side (Olivero) and the calm consciousness of representing the new (Pacòt), despite proclamations and charges of worn-out versifying, dialect poetry in Piedmontese did not experience a true revolution, neither with Pacòt nor with Olivero, or great metrical innovations.

The first generation was followed by what has been called the second generation of *Brandé*, poets loyal to the koinè whose legacy they uphold: Camillo Brero (1926), the leader, who edited the annual almanac of Piedmontese poetry after Pacòt's death (1964), and the slightly younger Gustavo Buratti (1932). Brero, after teaching for a few years in the elementary school of Pinerolo and in the professional middle schools of Turin, worked as a FIAT employee. Besides his intense militancy in favor of Piedmontese language and culture, his activity as poet and journalist, his works of prose and his essays, he is also known as a scholar and anthologist, as the author of a *Gramàtica piemontèisa* (1967), an Italian-Piedmontese dictionary (1976) and Piedmontese-Italian dictionary (1983), a *Letteratura in piemontese dalle origini al Risorgimento* (1967), with Renzo Gandolfo, and above all *Storia della letteratura piemontese* in three volumes (1981-83).

The major themes of his poetry are *l'ànima mia* and *la tera* (soul and land), beginning with the first collection *Spluve* (1949), still green, naively enthusiastic, in praise of his land, but already imbued with religious feeling and displaying the typical themes developed in subsequent collections, beginning with *Stèile ... steilin-e* (1957). The recurrent motifs here are childhood, regret, attachment to his region, the *nostalgia piemontèisa*,

religious prayer, which reappear in *Breviari dl'anima* (1962). The poetry is somewhat mannered, hackneyed and stereotypical. Nevertheless, this collection marks a progress, and his poetry grows in strength and shows greater stylistic maturity. In the two subsequent works the themes of soul and land seem to go in different directions: the former embodied in *L'anima mia a s'anandia* (1968), undoubtedly his best collection, steeped in meditation and lyricism; the latter in *Bin a la tèra e l'autra bin* (1977), about roots and reclaiming a lost identity, with its trite *tòpoi* (the land, tradition, religion, the "elders"). The two motifs later converge in *Ma 'l sol doman a vent!* (1986), in a mix of Piedmontese roots and lyric-religious verse, and prayer and poetry have never been so close as in the recent collection of 1996, *An brassa al sol*.

After Brero, the banner of *Ij Brandé* passed to Buratti (Tavo Burat), born in Stezzano (Bergamo) but from a family from Biella, where he resides. His connection to Pacòt is evident, as he programmatically uses as language of poetry not the dialect of Biella but the regional koiné. A teacher, journalist, author of essays and studies on Piedmontese culture, editor of several journals of Italian linguistic and ethnic minorities, active in politics, militant critic, not a "dialect" poet but, as he is fond of calling himself, "a poet in the Piedmontese language." At any rate, in his critical reflections he is capable of combining a micro view (his interest in what he calls the dialects of the Piedmontese language) with a macro perspective (a Europeanist vision of ethnic groups in which the defense of Piedmontese is part of the broader safeguard of all threatened minor languages). It is not by chance that he is involved with the Association for the Protection of Threatened Languages and Cultures, which he helped to found in Toulouse in 1964 and in which he represents Italy as secretary. With Pacòt, in 1961 he founded in Crissolo *Escolo dòu Po*, after establishing a relationship with the Provençal *fèlibres* for the renewal of Provençal culture this side of the Alps.

He has written three collections of poetry in Piedmontese *Prusse mulinere* (1960), *Finagi* (1979), and *Menhir* (1992), in addition to the multilingual anthology, with Albert Maquet, *Dal creus dèl temp/d'â fond dè tìmps* (1993). The first collection is the poetry of a *cheur masnà* (a child's heart), full of childish candor and enchanted dreams, the robin that sings, all played in *minore*; within the microcosm of a circumscribed natural habitat, with its tiny bestiary, he enjoys *l'anima cita* (the small soul), which however does not exclude the soaring flight, panic mysticism, the shiver of the infinite, the exotic dream, the longing for freedom ("freedom/first love/of my childlike heart," *Masnà*). Everything is expressed in polished, light, refined diction, in charming images, in frail and luminous verses, as a "refinedly archaic poet" (G. Spagnoletti - C. Vivaldi, *Poesia dialettale dal Rinascimento ad oggi*, Milan: Garzanti, 1991, p. 11), at the edge of lyric dissolution. According to Brevini, he is a better poet "when he yields to his dream of flight and freedom," giving vent to "the cultural myths of his small homelands," be they the Gaelic world, Japan, the Saxon world or, obviously, his Piedmont" (*Le parole perdute*, Turin: Einaudi, 1990, pp. 276-77).

It is the risk he runs in *Finagi*: the excessive refinement borders on virtuosity and shades off into music as in *D'Annunzio*, but he is saved by his very concrete reclaiming of a totally Piedmontese identity and the presence of "an entire universe of banks, embankments and boundaries, the last defense of a civilization that by losing its words is losing itself" (G. Tesio). *Menhir*, a Celtic title, stands at the crossroads of the pair *villaggio/viaggio* (village/voyage), only apparently an oxymoron: "L'piemontèis a l'é mè pais/tuta la resta a l'é mach d'anviron. All the rest is surroundings and thus proximity, but also distance to be crossed, voyage to undertake adventurously. The village is simultaneously the local microcosm and the global village ("this soiled world is really all our town"), in which a sense of belonging and estrangement coexist: the *menhir* are the *passà lontan* (remote past), witnesses of a remote past – rooted in memory – which does not pass. The homeland is anywhere roots sink in the humus.

As mentioned before, a parallel to Pacòt's poetry in the twentieth century was the work of Costa, followed in various ways by authors such as Antonio Bodrero (1921), herein included, Vincenzo Buronzo (1884-1976), and Domenico Badalin (1917-1980); but also removed from the regional koiné is the poetry of Giovanni Rapetti (1922), who wrote in the idiom of Villa del Foro, a town near Alessandria, and above all in the idioms of marginal areas, such as the districts of Alessandria, Monferrato, and Mondovì. Understandably, the acknowledged leader of the new poetry of the district of Mondovì was Tòni Bodrie, the poet of Frassinò and Val Varaita, a notable poetic personality from the outskirts and on the border (although, after considerable travail, he accepted the koiné).

Another member of Costa's generation was Buronzo (teacher, leader of the Italian artisan movement, senator, also a writer in Italian) who, however, followed a marginal path that took him far from the regional tradition and the contemporary experiences of other dialect poets. His first work was *Al mè pais* of 1962, a collection of "songs from Monferrato," original for its literary echoes and models: from Leopardi to the Latin classics (Horace and Tibullus above all), with an epic-elegiac cadence, which foreshadowed subsequent developments. In fact, he achieved his best results in *Al litaniji di giòbia* (posthumous, 1977), Thursday being a market day in Moncalvo Monferrato (his native town), a day for encounters and apparitions. As a key to reading these *litaniji*, mention has been made of a personal *Spoon River Anthology* in which death "moves in living figures, in lines of shadow and in idyllic caresses, in metaphysical sweetness, in evangelical and rustic meetings. Characters who emerge with their gifts of dreams and eccentricities: mirages, sagas, amusing expressions; an atmosphere in which it is easy to pass from reality to dream, lives wrapped in light webs of madness, redeeming drunkenness; a language that rises in poetic images, at once concrete and dreamy; a deeply rooted humor, at times grotesque, at times surreal" (G. Tesio, *op. cit.*, p. 67).

Another poet from the Monferrato area is Badalin, a native of Turin whose family came from Monferrato and who has always written in his mother's idiom, faithful to the themes and speech of that impoverished land, of the *Varèi*, a real and at the same time mythical place that he describes in recited monologues, giving voice to various characters. His best book of poetry is *Listeurji dij Varèi. Poesie paisan-e dle tèra ròve dèl Monfrà* (1978), with a preface by Davide Lajolo (the following year he published *Doe minute pèi ti. Paròle d'amor sitadin-e e paisan-e dle pèr tute j'età*.) The most distinguished exponent of the Alessandria district is Rapetti, teacher, draftsman and sculptor, active in the *Centro di Cultura Popolare* "G. Ferraro," a partisan, student of the rural world, for whom poetry is an anthropological commitment to recover what has been lost and to preserve the little that has survived of that world. His poetry is written in the Alessandria dialect: *Er fugaron* (1973) and above all *I pas ant l'erba* (1987).

With his second collection, Rapetti "has given us just a sample of a potentially endless rural and working-class epic, conceived in the form of *bosinada*: a poem with rhyme and assonance in which the story-tellers would comment in a plain manner on everyday occurrences and the impact of historical events on the small community" (G. Tesio). The poet from Villa del Foro has continued making an inventory of his anthropological universe threatened with extinction – anxious to compile a comprehensive census (a sort of poetic Ark) of men, plants, things, animals, in short a

whole world of vanquished things to remember – contained in the collection *Ra memòria dra stèila* (1993). A memory of the star (and utopia) to understand, still, obstinately, the *sèins a ra listòria*, in the hope of finding the sense of history, despite the inexorable passing of time and so much easy forgetfulness. Rapetti has erected a poetic monument *dra lèngua ch'a parlavu* (in the language we used to speak) to the *gèint mòrt sèinsa glòria* (the people who died without glory), whose epigraph could be: *Que ra memòria 'd cui sèinsa memòria* (Here the Memory of those without memory).

But the district that seems to have produced the greatest innovations and the best poetry in recent years, even giving rise to a “new poetry” that has transformed it from a marginal area to a regional center, is no doubt Mondovì, in the Cuneo area. In fact, the poets of the Mondovì district (above all Carlo Regis, Domenico Boetti, and Remigio Bertolino, included in this anthology) have given life to a sort of Piedmontese Sarcangelo (Bàrberi Squarotti), which however is rooted in a solid twentieth-century local tradition, more than respectable, with its own continuity despite the diversity, so that a thread runs through the three generations of Mondovì poets, creating, for instance, an Antonio Giordano (1898-1981)-Boetti (1947)-Bertolino (1948) line. On the other hand, the fact that these authors have a clear consciousness of their identity and poetic individuality as a group is attested by cultural and publishing initiatives as well as the anthology *Nen viré 'l cher èndrè* (Mondovì, 1982), edited by Bertolino and Carlo Dardanello and presented under the label *Nuova poesia in lingua piemontese*. This anthology gives a great deal of space to the poets of the province of Cuneo and in particular to the district of Mondovì, as if to say that a good part of the new poetry is born in the outlying areas. A decade later another anthology, edited by G. Tesio and Bertolino himself, *I poeti di Mondovì* (1991), drew a more detailed poetic map of that territory and that province, including the latest work of the promising fourth generation.

The two most significant collections by Carlo Regis (Mondovì, 1929) – who holds a degree in chemistry and is a business manager – *Èl ni dl'ajassa* (1980) and *Lun-e* (1980), reveal a witty and subtle poet, graceful and light, ironic and cheery, amused and amusing with a lunar and nostalgic vein, and a cumulative, formulaic style (the *magpie's nest* is his symbol for poetry). After the conventionality of his early work (*Cantona pian*, 1960, and *Mia gent e mie montagne*, 1970), still grounded in local tradition and family, he has achieved a refined and rarefied diction, all centered on the musicality of the word and its phonosymbolic value, “often used with magical intents, as evocation through sound of metaphysical situations and images” (G. Bàrberi Squarotti) *Storia della civiltà letteraria italiana*, vol. V, tomo II, Turin: UTET, 1996, p. 1086). His poetry displays a taste for the bizarre, the surreal, the strange, the hallucinatory, the unforeseeable, played with a few objects that seem to come to life.

Brevini detects a turning point in Regis' poetry with the long poem *Via Vi doi* (1989), in which his phonic experimentation is applied to autobiographical material, in such a way that it is no longer and end in itself, “but functional to the evocation of a historical climate, confirming once again the remoteness and estrangement of his poetry going back to the *Crepuscolari* and *Gozzano* (op. cit., pp. 307-8). His last book, *Bleupom* (1997), between reality and fantasy, reveals the magical world of the most common objects, filled with emblems, created in a poetic structure made of mobile layers, continually sliding into one another (from reality to fantasy, but also to dreams and memories, from the *hic* and *nunc* to the elsewhere and the past, from yesterday to today, but with a privileged movement: “to bring along in the head/what is fading on the earth.”

The lapidary Domenico Boetti (1947), a self-taught barber, who publishes with the pseudonym of *Barbafiòre*, combines a satirical, moralistic vein with popular wisdom in his epigrams, but in reality in order to reverse it into its opposite, with irony and against all tradition; in fact, in order to show, with some bitterness, all the unreliability of good sense and popular common sense. His best aphoristic poems are included in the recent anthology *Viragalèt* (1997), which assembles two decades of numerous and now unfindable chapbooks: from *Set-te li, parloma un po'* (1979) to poems selected from *Na pentnà a l'ànima* (1984), *Vita bela dèsmora* (1985), *Frise* (1987), *Për quatr di che j'oma da vive ...* (1988), *Fosëtta* (1988), *Lòsne e tronì* (1989), *Èl gust èd na vita* (1991), *Gòj* (1993).

With some risk, I would like to conclude by noting that perhaps Piedmontese dialect poetry of the twentieth century postulates its own type of poet (not even very ideal), endowed with a specific character, even in those moments of greatest experimentation (but at any rate never as pronounced as they are in Italian, as attested by Bodrero's polemic against the “avant-garde trends in Italian poetry”). In the Piedmontese poets, as Costantino Nigra suggests in another context, “form is always subordinate to thought” and “words are more obedient to consciousness.” It is a constant beyond which he does not go, harbinger as he is of a culture of the limit, which is overstepped neither by Pacòt's refined poetry, nor Olivero's experimentation, nor Bodrero's *homo ludens*, nor the “new poetry” of the Mondovì district, nor the harshness of diction and places of Dorato (included). Beyond, perhaps, there is the marsh of Italian poetry: that limit is the boundary – more and more crossable – which still separates poetry in Piedmontese from poetry in Italian, and for which it has made sense to write in dialect in this century.

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The English Translations for the Piedmont section are by Justin Vitiello

NINO COSTA

Nino Costa was born in Turin (1886-1945) and always lived there. He completed his classical studies in high school, received degrees in veterinary medicine and literature, taught for a year and then worked as a bank employee for the Cassa di Risparmio until his retirement. He started out by writing poetry in Italian, which he published in the *Gazzetta del Popolo della domenica* (1905), and began writing in dialect in 1909, publishing in 'L Birichin under the pseudonym of Mamina (also the title of his first collection in Piedmontese). He is the author of verse as well as prose, short stories, plays in dialect (among them *Tera mônfrin-a* of 1927 and *Testa 'd fer: Emmanuele Filiberto di Savoia* of 1929), and a contributor to various journals and newspapers. He wrote his poetry mainly in the period between the wars: *Mamina* (1922), *Sal e pèiver* (1924), *Ròba nòstra* (1938), and then the posthumous collection *Tempesta* (1946), followed by *Tornand* (1977), edited by Andrea Viglono, which assembles all his unpublished poems.

Costa's best known and complete poetic profile remains the one sketched by Pacòt: "Our whole poetic tradition in its various moments flows in him: the eighteenth-century Piedmontese, Brofferio's national idiom, the dialect of Turin of the early twentieth century fuse harmoniously in his inspiration. Whence the richness of tones and motifs in his poetry, from the popular quality of certain canzonette, from the moralizing content of the fables to the sentimentality of many sonnets, to the lyricism of certain very personal moods, to the heroic poems in praise of Piedmont and Italy. A vast body of work, diverse and uneven; but he is a great poet when, abandoning the last preconceived notions he inherited from his immediate predecessors, he pours his soul into the music of a whispered intimacy, or when (and here lies his greatest originality), becoming the spokesman for Piedmontese spirit, he raises an hymn to his land." In many ways still tied to the generazione de "L Birichin," with which he shared many elements of nineteenth-century poetry (Piedmontese patriotism, popular inspiration, satirical caricature), he was nevertheless open to what was new in contemporary poetry, from Pascoli to the Crepuscolari. This would seem sufficient to distance him from the older poets, even if his poetry still believes in "the immediate effect, the easy suggestion, in a round and vibrant word" (G. Tesio). At any rate, Costa's is a popular poetry and he acknowledges the people as his master of language, or even of life, sharing with it a common way of feeling, to the point of wanting his poetry to be the expression of the animus, of popular Piedmontese sentiments: he remains enclosed in the "dialect-popular," within the strictest localism, nostalgically tied to the good old times, to the sad and beautiful ancient things. But then, beyond Pacòt's excessively partial and provincial reading – which however recognizes in him the initiator of a renewal in poetry – Costa shows a more modern restlessness and sensibility that betrays the influence of Pascoli, Gozzano, French poetry and the Parnassians.

The other pole of his poetics, that of the popular, moves uneasily between the modern demand for an ethnic space with its popular Piedmontese ethos and its ancestral virtues, the need for a sense of belonging and one's own civil and literary tradition, and the risk of "stumbling by evoking the regional past or events from recent history (the Resistance), too far removed from his puristic dialect" (G. Bàrberi Squarotti). Excesses of sentimentality or romanticism are always a danger here and there, between "solitude and sadness, melancholy and regret for lost illusions, for the verses not written, for the lips not kissed" (F. Piga). Still Costa, with his literary refinement, his "terse, spare" language (P. P. Pasolini), is the point of transition between two epochs: he takes the best of the heritage of the past – in order to breathe new life into it – and thus, with a modern sensibility, he inaugurates a new age of poetry in Piedmontese, on which Pacòt's work is grounded.

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Drinta 'l mè cheur...

Drinta 'l mè cheur a j'è 'n giardin sarà
 pien.d'erbe amère e triste e 'd fior passìe:
 a i e 'l giardin dle mie malinconie...

Gnun, fòravija 'd mi, l'è mai intrà.
 Mi i vad quaich vòlta, quand ch'i son tròp sol,
 e quand ch'i na peuss pi 'd mia pòvra vita.

Imseto 'nt un canton parei 'd n'armita
 e i goardo ij gieugh ëd j'ombre e ij gieugh dël sol.

Quanta ròba sgairà 'nt ël mè giardin;
 che dë speransse e d'ilusion pèrdue!...

...e tante reuse ch'a son mai s-ciodue
 e tanti arbut ch'a l'ha brusà 'l marin!

Ecco, lagiù 'n t'ël fond, quasi stèrmà,
 tra le memòrie e ij seugn dla gioventù,
 le bele rime ch'i l'hai pà scrivù,
 le boche dosse ch'i l'hai nen basà...

Da sora ij crisantem ch'a j'ancoron-o
 am goardo j'eui ch'a son pi nen dël mond
 e i scoto drinta 'd mi, giù 'nt ël profond,
 le care vos ch'ampasio e ch'ampèrdon-o.

Profil dèspers, ritrat e miniature
 së spòrso 'nvers a mi, tra feuja e feuja;
 la fantasia ch'aj vest e ch'aj dëspeuja
 torna fè arvive 'n pòch le soe figure.

... Sota na leja, a spass, con soa totin-a

– sempre sbatua da ‘n crussi a na speransa –

a va përdendesse adasi an lontanansa

la bela testa scarpentà ‘d “Mamina”.

Pi davsìn, tra ij giranio e le ciochètte,

na camisin-a reusa e ‘n tailleur bleu:

na sensitiva con la boca ‘d feu

e la testin-a përfumà ‘d violète,

e peui, e peui... j’amis dël temp passà,

tanti parent ch’a son mai pi vëdusse,

e tuti ij bei moment ch’a son përdusse

e j’ore d’òr ch’a son pi nen tomà...

Ma, contra ‘l sol, s-ciodù sl’istessa rama,

j’è dcò doi botonin pen-a fiori:

na gognin-a e ‘n gognin: tut èl me avni,

ch’a gieugo e a rio tacà ij cotin dla mama.

D’antorn a lor, come ‘nt lë class d’un bòsch

sla portin-a, sle cioende e sla muraja:

la pianta dla tristèssa e dla veciaja:

“Brassabòsch, brassabòsch e brassabòsch”.

(Da Brassabòsch)

Dentro il mio cuore... – Dentro il mio cuore c’è un giardino chiuso / pieno di erbe amare e tristi e di fiori appassiti: / è il giardino delle mie malinconie... / Nessuno, all’infuori di me, vi è mai entrato. // Io ci vado qualche volta, quando sono troppo solo, / e quando non ne posso più della mia povera vita. / Mi siedo in un angolo come un eremita / e osservo i giochi delle ombre e i giochi de sole. // Quanta roba spiccata nel mio giardino; / quante speranze e quante illusioni perdute! ... / ...e tante rose non mai sbocciate / e tanti germogli bruciati dallo scirocco. // Ecco, laggiù in fondo, quasi nascoste / tra le memorie e i sogni della gioventù, / le belle rime che non ho scritto, / le dolci bocche che non ho baciato... // Di sotto i crisantemi che li incoronano / mi guardano gli occhi non più del nostro mondo / e ascolto dentro di me, giù nel profondo, / le care voci che mi calmano e mi perdonano. // Profili dispersi, ritratti e miniature / si piegano verso di me, tra foglia e foglia, / la fantasia che li veste e che li spoglia / toma a far rivivere per un momento le loro figure. // ... Sotto un viale, a spasso, con la sua signorinetta / – sempre sbattuta tra un cruccio e una speranza – / va perdendosi adagio in lontananza / la bella testa scarduffata di “Mamma”. // Più vicino, tra i gerani e le campanule, / una camicetta rosa e un tailleur blu: / una sensitiva con una bocca di fuoco / e la testina profumata di violette, // e poi, e poi ... gli amici del tempo passato, / tanti parenti che non si sono mai più visti, / e tutti i bei momenti perduti / e le ore d’oro che non sono più tomate ... // Ma, contro il sole, sbocciati sullo stesso ramo, / ci sono anche due bocciolini appena fioriti: / una piccina e un piccino: tutto il mio avvenire, / che giocano e ridono attaccati alla gonna della mamma. // Intorno a loro, come nel folto d’un bosco, / la porticina, sulle siepi e sul muro di cinta: / la pianta della tristezza e della vecchiaia: / “Edera... edera... ed edera”.

(Traduzione di Riccardo Massaro)

In My Heart

In my heart there’s a secret garden

full of bitter-sad herbs and sere flowers:

it’s the garden of my melancholias -

no one but me has ever been there.

I go there at times when I feel too alone

and when I can stand this misery anymore.

I sit like a hermit in a corner and watch

plays of shadows and sun...

What wastes, my garden!

What hopes and illusions!

So many rosebuds withered!

So many shoots scorched by the Sirocco...

Yet here they abide, down deep, veiled,

mid memories and dreams of youth:

those lovely verses I've never written

and the sweet mouths I've never kissed...

Under the crowning chrysanthemums

they watch me, eyes no longer of this world,

and I hear within, deep down,

dear voices that calm and forgive me.

Scattered profiles, portraits, miniatures

defer to me amid the leaves; the vision

that adorns and strips them revives

their contours for one more instant...

Beneath the boulevard arbor,

promenading with her bonny lass -

ever tossed between torment and hope -

Mamma sports lovely ruffled tresses

that nuance adagio over the horizon.

And here, mid geraniums and bellflowers,

float a pink shift and a blue tailleur:

sensory sponge with mouth of fire

and locks scented with violets,

and then there appear friends of yore,

so many kin never seen again

and all those lovely moments lost

and the gilded hours never repeated...

But, cutting across the sun, blooming

on the same branch, two buds barely

opened: baby boy and girl, my whole future -

they play and laugh as they clasp

the skirts of their mother.

And around them there spreads,

like a forest thicket, at the gate,
by the hedges and the walls that surround
the plant of sadness and old age:
ivy, ivy, more ivy...

La copà

Su, 'nt la doja piemonteisa, verssa 'ncora lòn ch'at resta –
dòpo l'ultima batòsta – dòpo l'ultima tempesta
dël vinett ch'i dèsbotiavo quand ch'a l'era 'l dì dla festa
ch'i na beivo na copà.

Da col temp clie 'd ròbe neuve pòch pèr vòlta a son frustasse,
che 'd person-e a j'ero 'nssema che peui dòp son separasse
e che 'd file 'd teste aote son dventà dle teste basse,
ma 'l vinett l'è nen cambià.

Goarda 'n pò come ch'as goerma ciar e san – fin e sincer;
com'a scapa da 'nt la bota, com'a fris ant'ël bicer,
quasi quasi ch'as diria ch'a l'han mach tiralo jer
da 'ntle cròte dël Monfrà.

Verssa pura senssa gena: l'è pà 'n vin ch'a dà a la testa.

Lassa pura ch'a n'arlegra e ch'an buta 'l cheur an festa
Se la doja l'è 'n pò frusta, l'è però na doja onesta,
l'è la doja 'd nòstra cà.

Giontje 'nssema le memòrie dël bon temp ch'a i'è passaie,
le miserie e le baldòrie, le strachèsse e le bataje,
le passion, ch'a s'anviscavo come 'l feu da le buscaje,
le speransse e j'ilusion

e ij soris ch'a tèrmolavo sle bochin-e moscatele,
e ij basin ch'i vendumiavo sota ij brombo dle tirele,
e le còse antiche e triste, e le còse antiche e bele
ch'i na fasso na cansson,

E cantomla 'ncor 'na. vòlta con la bela compagnia,
con la vos ch'a treuva 'ncora le volade d'alegrìa,
mentre fòra – 'n mes a l'ombra - j'è la Mòrt ch'a fa la spia
pen-a lì, vira 'l canton.

Ma s'a j'e, goardomla 'n facia. Somà gent ëd bon-a rassa.

Si ch'ai fà se j'ani a chèrsso – se la vita a n'è strapassa.

L'omà forsse 'l sangh pì maire – la caviara meno s-ciassa,

ma 'l cassiött l'è sempre bon.

Na cansson dla nòstra tera fà pì gòì che na cocarda,

quaicadun a la dèspresia, ma l'è n'anima bastarda.

Noi ch'i soma 'd marca franca la cantoma a la goliarda

con na fiamma 'ndrinta a j'eu.

E 'ntratant il gran a spono, e 'ntle vigne ij branch a buto,

e 'ntle cà j'è le maraie ch'a travajo e ch'a discuto.

Gnun-e tèmme ch'i s'è sperdo. Quand che ij pare a stago ciuto

s'ancamjñ-o i nòstri fieuj.

(Da Fruta madura)

Beviamo, amici! – Su, nel boccale piemontese, versa ancora ciò che ti resta / – dopo l'ultima batosta, dopo l'ultima tempesta – / vinello che stappavamo quando era il giorno della festa – eh facciamo una bevuta. // Da quel tempo quante robe nuove a poco si sono consumate, / quante persone erano insieme che poi si sono separate / e quante schiere di teste alte sono divenute teste chine, / ma il vinello non è cambiato. // Guarda un po' come si conserva limpido e sano, fino e sincero; / come trabocca la bottiglia, come spumeggia nei bicchiere, / quasi quasi si direbbe che l'hanno spillato solo ieri / da entro le cantine del Monferrato. / Versa pure senza esitazione; non è un vino che dà alla testa. / Lascia pure che ci rallegri e che ci metta il cuore in festa. / Se il boccale è un poco frusto, è però un boccale onesto, / è il boccale di casa nostra. // Aggiungici insieme le memorie del buon tempo che è trascorso, / le miserie e le baldorie, le stanchezze e le battaglie, / le passioni che si accendevano come il fuoco dai fuscilli, / le speranze e le illusioni, // e i sorrisi che tremolavano sulle boccucce moscatelle / e i baci che vendemmiavamo sotto i pampini dei filati, / e le cose antiche e tristi, e le cose antiche e belle / che ne facciamo una canzone. / E cantiamola ancora una volta con la bella compagnia, / con la voce che sa ritrovare le volate di allegria, / mentre fuori – avvolta nell'ombra – c'è la Morte che ci spia / appena lì, svoltato l'angolo. // Ma se c'è, guardiamola in faccia. Siamo gente di buona razza. / Che importa se gli anni crescono – se la vita ci strapazza. / Abbiamo forse il sangue più magro – la capigliatura meno folta, / ma il petto è sempre saldo. / Una canzone della nostra terra dà più gioia che una coccarda, / qualcheduno la dispregia, ma è un'anima bastarda, / noi che siamo di marca schietta la cantiamo alla gagliarda / con una fiamma dentro gli occhi. // E frattanto i grani spuntano, e nelle vigne i tralci germogliano, / e nelle case ci sono i ragazzi che lavorano e discutono. / Nessun timore che ci sperdiamo... Quando i padri abbiano a tacere / s'incamminano i nostri figli.

(Traduzione di Riccardo Massaro)

Let's Drink, My Friends

Let's drink from the Piedmontese jug –

drain your last dregs again!

After the last rout and tempest,

drink the new wine we uncorked

on that festival day

we did justice to the vintage.

Since then how many things,

bit by bit, have been consumed,

how many companions have separated

and how many throngs of heads

held high have bowed – yet

the new wine endures!

Look how it seasons,

limpid, bodied, fine, genuine,

how it brims from the bottle,

how it sparkles in the glass -

you'd be tempted to swear

it was tapped yesterday

from the cellars of Monferrato...

It pours forth decisive -

it's not a wine that drunks,

so let it make us joyful,

make our hearts festive.

Though the jug's a drop caked,

it's still an honest jug, a down-

right, down-home jug.

In it let's mix the memories

of the good times spent,

times of scarcity and carousals,

of bum-outs and battles,

the passions burnt like bunches of twigs,

the hopes and illusions

and the smiles that flickered

across muscatel grimaces

and the kisses that we reaped

under rows of grapevines

and the ancient sad things,

the ancient lovely things

we turned into song...

So let's sing out one more time

in lovely companionship

with the voice reclaiming

flights of joy while, outside,

engulfed in shadow, Death

spies upon us, there,

around the corner...

Well, if It's there, let's

see it face to face. We

are people of a proud race.

Who cares if the years amass

or if life overcomes us?

Perhaps our blood is thinning

like the hairs on our heads -
but our breasts are still sound.
Songs of our land render
more joy than a cockade -
some will mock them but
they're bastard souls -
while we of genuine brand
sing them strong
with flame in our eyes.
Meanwhile the buds sprout,
in the vineyards shoots flower
and in our houses youth
still work and contest.
Don't worry, we
will never disperse.
When the fathers grow silent,
our children spring forth...

La sità andurmïa

Acqua cïaita dël lag, acqua profunda,
che le montagne, an gir, sê specio 'ndrinta.
Gïairëtta e ròch e pà na fior sla sponda...
El temp ch'a varia ai fa varié la'tinta.
Acqua vërda e giassà: senssa tempeste,
che i vent pi fòrt a la carëssa a pena:
per j'ore dël malheur o i dì dle feste
sempre calma l'istess, sempre serena.
Sota: sël fond dël lag, la gent a conta:
j'è na sità... na gran sità 'ndurmïa,
con le cese, i cioché, soe guglie an punta,
i palass e le cà... feita e finia.
A deurm da mila e mila ani tranquila
sota la cuerta dl'acqua trasparente.
Al temp d'ij temp a l'ha vivù 'd cò chila,
adess a deurm... pi gnente a la tormenta.
Forsse na seira, stoffia d'esse,viva,
l'è vnuje seugn... Nossgnor l'ha contentala.

Pianin, pianin l'è sghijà giù dla riva
e l'acqua, la grand'acqua a l'ha coatala.
D'anlora a deurm, ma certe vòlte 'ncora,
quand che la luna a fa la neuit mascheugna
quaicòs, come 'n sospir, a s'aossa 'dsora
d'j'acque d'el lag... L'è la sità ch'a seugna...

(Da Ròba nòstra)

La città dormiente – Acqua limpida del lago, acqua profonda, / dentro cui le montagne, intorno, si rispecchiano. / Ghiaietta e rocce e non un fiore sulla sponda ... / Il tempo variando ne fa variare la tinta. // Acqua verde e ghiacciata senza tempeste, / che i venti più forti appena accarezzano: / nelle ore della sventura come nei giorni delle teste / sempre egualmente calma, sempre serena. // Sotto sul fondo del lago la gente racconta, / c'è una città... una grande città che dorme, / con le chiese, i campanili, e tanto di guglie in punta, / i palazzi e le case... fatta e finita. // Dorme da mille e mille anni tranquilla / sotto il velo dell'acqua trasparente. / Al tempo dei tempi ha vissuto anch'essa; / ora dorme... più nulla l'affligge. // Forse una sera, stanca di essere viva, / il sonno l'ha colta... Nostro Signore l'ha accontentata. / Pian pianino è scivolata giù dalla riva / e l'acqua, l'acqua profonda l'ha sommersa. // Da allora dorme, ma certe volte ancora, / quando la luna fa la notte piena di ombre arcane / qualcosa, come un sospiro, si alza dal profondo fino / alla superficie del lago...È la città che sogna...

(Traduzione di Riccardo Massaro)

The Sleeping City

Limpid water of the lake,
deep water where
the mountain is reflected.
Pebbles and rocks and not
a flower on the shore...
Time in its flows
varies the hues...
Frozen green water
(without storms) that
the strongest winds barely caress:
in tempestuous hours
as on festive days
it's always calm, serene.
And beneath? At lake bottom,
people say, there's a city,
a great city that sleeps,
with churches, belltowers,
so many crowning steeples,
and palaces and houses...
erected and crumbled...
The city has slept in peace
for thousands of years
under the veil of transparent water.

Once upon a time it lived.
Now it sleeps. And no-
thing afflicts it...
Perhaps one night when
it was weary of life
sleep alit to reclaim it...
Our Lord did its bidding.
Little by little it slid
down from the shore
and the water, the deep
water submerged it.
Ever since it has slept
and yet, at times,
when the moon, in the dead
of night, casts
arcane shadows,
something like a sigh
rises from the depths
to the surface of the lake...
It's the city that dreams...

Nivola reusa

Na nivola reusa
na nivola bianca
nen pi larghe 'd na branca
sòta la vòlta ancreusa
dle trasparenze bleuve...
Le còse dla tèra: le piante,
j'aque, ji pais, le montagne
– creature compagne
gropà da l'istessa cadena –
a guardo quasi con pen-a
cole doe còse distante
nen pi larghe 'd na branca,
– un-a reusa, un-a bianca –
libere ant l'aria seren-a.
La mia malinconia,

come n'ala spërdua,
continuament a vòla
senza pensé né paròla,
sota la vòlta ancreusa
tra la nivola bianca
e la nivola reusa

(Da Fruta madura)

Nuvola rosa. – Una nuvola rosa, / una nuvola bianca / non più larghe di una spanna / sotto la volta profonda / delle trasparenze azzurre... // Le cose della terra: le piante, / le acque, i paesi, le montagne / – creature compagne, / legate dalla stessa catena – / guardano quasi con pena / quelle due cose lontane, / non più larghe di una spanna, / – una rosa, una bianca – / libere nell'aria serena. // La mia malinconia, / come un'ala smarrita, / continuamente vola / senza pensieri né parola, / sotto la volta profonda / tra la nuvola bianca / e la nuvola rosa...

(Traduzione di P.P. Pasolini)

Pink Cloud

Pink cloud
white cloud,
no wider than a span
under the deep vault
of blue transparencies...
The things of the earth:
plants, water, towns,
mountains - creatures,
companions, linked
by one chain - they watch,
at the edge of pain, those
two distant things no wider than
a span - one pink, one white -
free in serene air.
My melancholia,
like an errant wing,
keeps flying without
thoughts or word
beneath the deep vault
mid those clouds,
white and pink...

PININ PACÒT

Giuseppe Pacotto (Turin 1899 - Castello d'Annone, Asti, 1964), became a bank employee at the Istituto Bancario San Paolo of Turin after receiving his diploma in accounting. His poetic vocation in dialect (the dialect of Turin, but he also wrote in the dialect of Asti), developed during

W.W. I, in the prison camp of Cellalager in Saxony, while far from home and from his city. Some time later, reacting to the widespread neglect of Piedmontese, he founded the journal *Ij Brandé* ("The Andirons," 1927), followed by the movement *Campania dij Brandé* –, gathering around it a group of young people in order to launch a program of research and historical and philological studies aimed at revitalizing poetry in Piedmontese and the dialect itself. In collaboration with Andrea Viglongo, he provided the principles for the spelling and transcription of Piedmontese dialect, which was being written in an arbitrary and unscientific manner. Sensitive to the fate of minor languages and idioms, and close to the *félibres* of Provence, in 1961 he founded with other poets *Escolo dòu Poi*, a good vehicle for the rebirth of Provençal culture and poetry in the Piedmontese valleys.

During forty years of writing in dialect, he published the following collections of poetry in Piedmontese: *Arsivòli* (1926), *Crosiere* (1935), *Speransa* (1946), *Giovntù, pòvra amija...* (1951), *Sèira* (1964); *Poesie e pàgine* was published posthumously in 1967, edited by R. Gandolfo. In 1954 he published *Poesie*, a new edition of his first four collections, with the addition of a few poems and the elimination of other texts considered too weak. After Costa, it was finally the time of Pacòt's refined (*squisia*) poetry: with the symbolic killing of his master, he initiated a more modern project of dialect poetry, breaking with the stale local tradition, the provincialism, the ethnic-folkloric, popular, vernacular world. His literary points of reference were the French and Belgian *parnassians* and symbolists above all, and then Provençal poetry. Finally there was a European literary consciousness in Piedmont, and his project for modern lyric was very different: selective, introspective, musical, refined, non-popular, anti-idiomatic, anti-realistic; for dialect as language of poetry (dialect and Italian as two different conditions of the same language), which however merges with elements of persisting *félibrisme* (evident even in the *piedmontization* of his name).

His consistency of themes (among which, obsessively, the death motif, see "Ant una fila d'arbre.."), of tones (colloquial, confidential, elegiac, meditative), of forms (besides the dissolution *en musique*, he uses closed metrical forms: *sonnets*, *canzonette*, *couplets*, etc., all rhymed) combines with Croce's poetics (prelogic nature of artistic cognition, poetry as emotion and expression, rejection of any intellectualistic superimposition and the necessity for schools, poetics, trends, theories, self-sufficiency of poetry, absoluteness of esthetic enjoyment). And, while taking his distance from it, he subsumes Costa's lasting lesson (the "simplicity", the *saveur du terroir*, poetry as consolation, form subordinate to thought).

No doubt, such poetry is not free from the risks of lyricism and virtuosity and an excessive refinement and dematerialization, beginning with *Arsivòli* (roughly "Flights of dreams"); it is not by chance that contemporary local critics reproach him for "useless preciousness and even a certain unjustified exoticism" (L. Collino). Pacòt's sweetness and refinement in extreme cases verge on the *mawkish*, as in the end of a summer like a very ripe fruit: *La fin dl'istà se a l'é na còsa dossa/parèj 'd na fruta che a l'é bin madura* ("La fin dl'istà"); like a *dossor sfinia* (an exhausted sweetness). And *dossa* (sweet) is recurrent adjective in Pacòt's vocabulary, just as terms like *gràssia* (grace), *fin-e* (delicate), *còtia* and *sutila* (soft and fine), *legera* (light), *seren-a* (serene), *al in Eva*. A kind of poetry that really seems suspended, as one verse says, *coma sospèisa/an drinta a n'eva càira*: transparent, rarefied, weightless, of musical lightness dissolved in water. And a whole verse, in *Mòrt, ò mia bianca seure...* the second of the following quatrain, is highly concentrated: *la carèssa che andeurma/dossa leggera dossa/la pòvra ànima corma/e malàvia d'angossia* (The caress that puts to sleep/sweet light sweet/the poor soul brimming/and sick with anguish). Poetry is like death: sweet, light, a music that caresses and consoles the soul sick with anguish. A musicality of the word and Verlainian sickness of the soul, heritage of French symbolists and decadents, coming somewhat late: *De la musique avant toute chose*; similarly even *l'ora trista* (the sad hour) of a *cheur malavi* (sick heart) becomes *squasi dossa* (almost sweet, "L'òm a l'é strach...").

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L'ora squisia

C'est l'heure exquise.

VERLAINE

A l'è l'ora squisia. Ant l'aria che a së scura
a-i tërmola un soris leger, fàit ëd rifless
ëd reusa spali e d'òr, che a svanisso tramez
al nèir dle feuje s-ciasse, mentre l'aria a së scura.

A l'é l'ora squisia. Ant le lèje pi sombre
mi im nê vad sol apress al vòl dij mè pensé,
e mia ment as arpòsa ant cost fantastiché,
mentre che j'euja séguo tra j'erbo 'l gieugh ëd j'ombre.

A l'é l'ora squisia. Ij motos a sparisso
daré dle bussonà, an bësbijand sot vos,
përché a st'ora ij basin a son pi delissios.

Ant l'ombra compiasenta ij moros a sparisso.

A l'é l'ora squisia. Ant la sèira d'avril,
jë sguard as serco ant l'ombra e j'ànime as confondo,
ij làver a tërmolo e ij cheur an feu as rëspondo,
e daspërtut as sent come un përfum sutil.

A l'é l'ora squisia. Su përl cel steilà
la lun-a a monta adasi. Tut ant la sèira a tas
coma ant un seugn ëd pas.

La lun-a a monta adasi su përl cel steilà.

(Da Arsivòli)

L'ora squisita – È l'ora squisita. Nell'aria che si oscura / trema un sorriso leggero, fatto di riflessi / rosa pallido e oro, che svaniscono frammezzo / al nero delle foglie folte, mentre l'aria si oscura. // È l'ora squisita. Nei viali più cupi / me ne vado solo, seguendo il volo dei miei pensieri, / e la mia mente si riposa in questo fantasticare, / mentre gli occhi seguono tra gli alberi il gioco delle ombre. // È l'ora squisita. Gli innamorati spariscono / dietro le siepi, bisbigliando sottovoce, / poiché in questa ora i baci sono più deliziosi. / Nell'ombra compiacente gli innamorati spariscono. È l'ora squisita. Nella sera d'aprile, / gli sguardi si cercano nell'ombra e le anime si confondono, / le labbra tremano e i cuori in fuoco si rispondono, / e dappertutto si sente come un profumo sottile. // È l'ora squisita. Su nel cielo stellato / la luna ascende adagio. Tutto nella sera tace, / come in un sogno di pace. / La luna ascende adagio su per il cielo stellato.

(Traduzione di Riccardo Massaro)

The Exquisite Hour

It's the exquisite hour.
In the darkening air
a faint smile trembles,
all reflections, pale pink
and gold that vanishes there
in the black of thick leaves
while the air darkens.
It's the exquisite hour.

Along the gloomiest boulevards

I flee alone,

pursuing the flight

of my thoughts.

And my mind rests

in this vain perambulating

as my eyes seek out

among the trees

the play of shadows.

It's the exquisite hour.

Lovers disappear

behind the hedges,

whispering sotto voce

for in this hour

kisses are more delightful.

In the compliant shadows

the lovers disappear.

It's the exquisite hour.

This April evening, eyes

search each other in the shade

and souls commingle,

lips tremble and hearts

on fire communicate

and everywhere you sense

a subtle redolence.

It's the exquisite hour.

Up in the starlit sky

the moon rises adagio.

In the night air

all grows silent

as if dreaming peace.

The moon rises adagio

in the starlit sky.

Eva

A Nino Costa

Ti che ant l'ora tranquila

it arpòse andurmia
s'l'erba còtia e sutila
sota la rama 'd bussolin fioria,
che da ant l'ombra it è-spòrze
a la càuda dorura,
che la caviara scura
at bagna 'd ciàir senza che ti it n'ancòrze,
i-é toa bionda sorela,
la dossa primavera.
la prima e la pi bela,
che at gira antom an soridend legera.
La rama che a tramola
bianca at guarda e a rimira,
travers a l'òr che a cola
an sël tò còrp ëd reusa che a respira;
a rimira e as ancanta,
sbardland un vel ëd pieuva
fioria e carëssanta
sla gràssia frësca dla toa vita neuva.
E ij seugn novei at rijo,
antant che ti it arpòse
an mez a tante còse,
che it annamore e che it sass rien clic a-i sio,
che at sorido e a stan ciuto
për che it deurma seren-a
mentre antom a-i é apen-a
ëd fior che as dësbandisso e 'd branch che a buto
che pi fin-e as dëstaco
sël bleu dl'aria pi sclin-a,
përchè a sento 'l miraco
ëd la minuta sola che as avsin-a,
che it surtrass nüa e drita
su da tò seugn ëd fija,
come un cri 'd maravija
campà an sël mond, perchè ti it sess la vita.
Ti it ses coma sospèisa

an drinta a n'eva ciàira,
e a smija gnanca che a pèisa
tò còrp abandonà 'd sora dla giaira,
't ses lontan-a e sperdù
drinta la trasparenza
ëd tò seugn che a comensa
e che a finiss ant la toa gràssia nù;
e 'l moment che it dësvijë,
che ant ij ren at frisson-a
e che përl'eva arson-a
coma në s-cionfëd pior e na goj 'd rije,
ti che it drisse stupia
con na rijada sclin-a,
't sente 'd colp ant la schin-a
la spa dël cherubin che at manda via.

(Da Crosiere)

Eva – O tu che nell'ombra tranquilla / posi dormente / sull'erba soffice e fine/ sotto il ramo di biancospino fiorito, // e affiorando dall'ombra ti porgi / alla calda doratura, / la quale ti bagna / di luce la chioma /scura, senza che tu te ne accorga, // c'è la tua bionda sorella, / la dolce primavera, / la prima e la più bella, /che ti gira intorno sorridendo leggera. // Il ramo che tremola / bianco ti guarda e rimira, / attraverso l'oro che filtra / sul tuo corpo di rosa che respira, // rimira e s'incanta, / spandendo un velo di pioggia / fiorita e carezzevole / sulla fresca grazia della tua della tua vita nuova // E i sogni novelli ti arridono, / mentre tu posi / in mezzo a tante cose, / che innamorì di te e tu non sai che esistono, // che ti sorridono e tacciono / perché tu dorma serena, / mentre intorno ci sono appena / dei fiori che sbocciano e dei rami che gemmano, // e più delicate si stagliano / sull'azzurro dell'aria più nitida / perché presentano il miracolo / dell'attimo che si avvicina // quando uscirai nuda e dritta / su dal tuo sogno di fanciulla, /come un grido di meraviglia / gettato sul mondo, perché tu sei la vita. // Tu sei come sospesa / dentro di un'acqua chiara, / e sembra neanche aver peso / il tuo corpo abbandonato sul greto, // sei lontana e perduta entro la trasparenza / dei tuo sogno che comincia e // finisce nella tua grazia nuda; // e nell'istante in cui ti risvegli, / e nelle reni ti freme / e per l'acqua risuona / quasi uno scoppio di pianto e una gioia di riso, // tu che ti drizzi stupita / con una risata argentina, / senti di colpo nella schiena / la spada del cherubino che ti discaccia.

(Traduzione di Riccardo Massaro)

Eve

to Nino Costa
You in the tranquil shade,
you repose asleep
on the fine soft grass
under a branch of hawthorn
in bloom and, emerging from shadows,
stretch toward the hot gilding
that bathes your dark hair in light
unbeknownst to you,
there's your blonde sister,
the sweet springtime,
the first is the loveliest,

it swirls around you
smiling oh so subtle.
The white branch that quivers
watches you and gazes
through the gold filtering
across your pink porous skin,
it gazes and wonders spreading
a veil of rain - all
blossoms and caresses -
over the fresh grace
of your new life.
And the newborn dreams
smile on you as
you recline with myriad
wonders that you enamor,
not even knowing they exist,
yes, they smile on you
and are silent because
you sleep serene
while all around you
there emerge
flowers that bloom
and branches that bud.
These wonders emerge so subtle
in the blue of the purest air
for they presage the miracle
of the moment drawing nigh
when you'll arise naked
and erect from
that woman-child's dream
like a hosanna cast
out into the world
because you are life.
It's as if you're suspended
in pristine water, weightless,
your body abandoned on the bank,

you're far away, dispersed
amid the transparency
of your dream that begins
and ends in your naked grace.
At that moment you awake
and from your kidneys
thrill with joy
and through the water
there resounds something
like an explosion of tears
and a trill of laughter.
You arise stunned
with a silver laugh
and feel all of a sudden
at your back
the sword of the Cherub
who drives you out of Eden.

La fin d'istà

La fin d'istà se a l'é na còsa dossa,
parèj 'd na fruta che a l'é bin madura,
che a speta mach un sofi che a la possa
për. casché tra ij motass ëd la cotura.,
La fin d'istà l'é pen-a na doruta
sospèisa ant l'ària tra un piàsì e n'angossa,
fin che l'otugn aj campa an sia verdura
soa tèrlandin-a che a l'é giàuna e rossa.
La fin d'istà, ant na dossor sfinia,
che andeum le sàive die radis ancreuse,
straca e slanghìa, la campagna a nija,
che a sent rivé l'otugn che a ven basela
con ij làver sutii s'j'ùltime reuse
ant la frèid 'd nè sgrisor che a la cotela.

(Da Crosiere)

La fine dell'estate – La fine dell'estate oh quanto è dolce cosa, / come un frutto ben maturo, / che attende solo un soffio che lo spinga / per cadere tra le zolle della terra arata. // La fine dell'estate è soltanto una patina d'oro / sospesa nell'aria tra un piacere e un'angoscia, / finché l'autunno getti sulla verzura / il suo velo di mussolina giallorossa. // Sul finire dell'estate, in una dolcezza sfinita, / che addormenta le linfe delle radici profonde, / stanca ed esausta, la campagna affonda, // ché sente arrivare l'autunno il quale viene a baciarla / in punta di labbra sulle ultime rose / nel freddo di un brivido che l'agghiada.

The End of Summer

The end of summer is so sweet
like the ripest fruit
that awaits a mere breath
of air that wafts
to send it amid
clods of plowed earth.

The end of summer is merely
a patina of gold
hovering on air mid
delight and anguish
till autumn casts
over its green
a veil of yellow-red muslin.

Toward summer's end
in a spent sweetness
that lulls the nymphs
of the deep roots to sleep,
weary, exhausted,
the countryside sinks
for it senses the arrival
of the impending fall
that will kiss it full
on the last roses' lips
in a transfixing shiver.

Iv guardo, o man....

A Renzo Candolfo

Iv guardo, o man da le bele onge reusa,
ansima ai mè ginoj fèrme e slanghie,
parèj ëd doe carèsse nen finie,
che a lasso an cheur un gust ëd fruta beusa;
fior, che i cascreve con ël branch che av pòrta,
sbardland ij vòstri ossèt bianch e sutii
con ël ricòrd dël gieugh leger dij dii
così dlicà sot la pel seulia e smòrta;

man, che ant ël creus bujent ëd sangh i pòrte
gravà pèr sempre 'l sègn ëd, mè destin,
tant che i carësse ant un moment ëd bin
o che iv sare pèr strenze dure e fòrte;
mie man, iv guardo, e q' uand che iv vëddo ant l'ombra
spàlie e distante, tèrmolante e nùe,
come se i fusse dèstacà e sperdùe
an serca 'd chissà còsa ant la neuit sombra,
parèj dle man dij mòr't an Purgateure,
che as afaro an pregand 'd sora dle fiamme:
– mie man, pi nen mie man, che tant im ciamo,
ëd colp vë strenzo al cheur coma doe seure.
E peui iv gionzo, e an vòstra conca càuda
pòso la testa che a veul nen pensé,
e i torno al temp che a l'era bel sugné,
quand che a mia mare im andurmia an fàuda.

(Da Gioventù, pòvra amia...)

Vi guardo, o mani...– Vi guardo, o mani dalle belle unghie rosate, / sopra le mie ginocchia ferme e abbandonate / come due carezze non finite, / che lasciano in cuore un gusto di frutta acerba; // fiori, che cadrete con il ramo che vi regge, / spargendo i vostri ossicini bianchi e sottili / con il ricordo del gioco leggero delle dita / così delicato sotto la pelle liscia ed esangue; // mani, che nel cavo ardente di sangue portato / inciso per sempre il segno del mio destino, / sia che accarezziate in un momento d'amore / o che vi chiudiate per stringere dure e forti; // mie mani, vi guardo, e quando vi vedo nell'ombra / pallide e distanti, tremanti e nude, / come se foste staccate e sperdute / in cerca di chissà cosa entro la notte cupa, // come le mani dei morti in Purgatorio, / che si tendono pregando al di sopra delle fiamme: / – mie mani, non più mie mani, che così forte mi invocate, / di colpo vi stringo al cuore come due sorelle. // E poi vi congiungo, e la vostra conca calda / poso la testa che non vuol pensare, / e ritorno al tempo che era, bello sognare, / quando mi addormentavo in grembo di mia madre.

(Traduzione di Riccardo Massaro)

I Watch My Hands

I watch my hands with
lovely roseate nails
rest upon my knees,
still and abandoned
like two caresses poised
and leaving in the heart
a taste of unripe fruit...
They droop flowers with
the branch that sustains them,
spreading their white and lithe limbs
with the memory of a deft game of fingers
so subtle under
the smooth pale skin:

These hands bear forever incised
in their burning hollow of blood
the sign of my destiny -
may they caress
in a moment of love
or clasp in one granite fist!
I watch my hands
and when I see them in the shadows
they pale and subside,
trembling and bare,
as if detached
in search of who-knows-what
in the gloomy night,
like the hands of the dead
of Purgatory that stretch
praying beyond the flames...
Hands no longer mine
invoke me so pressing
that in one stroke I clutch them
to my heart like two sisters.
Then I reunite them
and in their warm shell
rest the head
that does not want to think
and return to the time
when it was lovely to dream,
when I'd fall asleep
in my mother's lap.

Ant una fila d'arbre...

Ant una fila d'arbre a-i nè i é un-a,
pi legera e dlicà, che as drissa ant l'ària
an filtrand la dosseur dij rag dla lun-a,
c an mezz a j'âtre as biàuta solitària;
e ant soe feuje, montand su da la brun-a
tèra, la sàiva con ël sol as m'aria,
për fé pi ciàir ël bòsch dl'ùtima cun-a,

che pèr mia mòrt mare natura ampària.

Quatr ass bianch rabotà, con 'd longhe ven-e,

che a bato ancora gónfie 'd tënerëssa,

cunà dal fià dle bele neuit seren-e;

e mi, sarà ant ël gran gnente che am guerna,

forse i sentrai patèj ëd na carëssa,

travers mia mòrt, score la vita eterna.

Castel d'Anon, 19 Agost 1956.

(Da Sèira)

In un filare di pioppi... – In un filare di pioppi ce n'è uno, / più leggero e delicato, che si drizza nell'aria / filtrando la dolcezza dei raggi della luna, / e in mezzo agli altri si dondola solitario, // e nelle sue foglie, salendo dalla bruna / terra, la linfa si sposa col sole, / per far più chiaro il legno dell'ultima cuna, / che per mia morte madre natura mi appresta. // Quattro assi bianche piallate, con lunghe vene, / che pulsano ancora gonfie di tenerezza, / cullate dal respiro delle belle notti serene; // e io chiuso nel gran niente che mi custodisce / forse sentirò così come una carezza, / attraverso la mia morte, scorrere la vita eterna.

(Castello d'Annone, 19 agosto 1956),

(Traduzione di Riccardo Massaro)

Along a Row of Poplars

Along a row of poplars there's one -

more lithe and delicate

that rises straight in the air,

distilling the sweetness

of moon rays,

swaying unto itself.

In its leaves lofting

from the brown earth

lymph weds the sun to clarify

the wood of the last cradle

that, for my death,

mother nature prepares.

Four white planks

planed in long grains

that still throb

swollen with tenderness,

cradled by the breath

of lovely calm nights...

And me, enclosed

in the great nothingness

that watches over me...

Perhaps I will sense here
something like a caress
rippling through my death
as eternal life...

(Castello d'Annone, August 19, 1956)

LUIGI OLIVERO

If Pacòt represents the moderate wing of the poetic renewal in Piedmontese in the first half of the century, Olivero displays an extremist verve and *vis polemica* in his repeated attacks against the remaining "old fools," but they share a common need to be more innovative and open toward modern European poetry, and to abandon once and for all the use of local color. At any rate, besides Pacòt who can be considered one of the best Italian poets in dialect of this century, Olivero is the best of the group of Ij Brandé, "energetically experimental, with an almost futuristic non-traditional bent that is ostentatiously *maudit*, able to achieve notable lyric results" (G. Spagnoletti-C. Vivaldi). He would always remain loyal to that group, so much so that, after he moved to Rome, from 1945 to 1949 he published there the journal *Èl Tòr*, in the attempt to go back to the first experience of IJ Brandé and its plans for renewal. In that journal he published his "Discursin ai vej abacuch" and from time to time launched his *j'accuse*. In fact, besides being a polemist, poet, playwright and author of texts for the radio, film and literary critic, he was also the founder of several cultural journals: besides *Èl Tòr*, *Il Garibaldi*, *La Fiera dialettale* and *Il Cavour*, which he conceived and edited.

To provincialism, to sedentary and local culture, he opposes a Rimbaudian, *maudit* poetry, steeped in nomadism, exoticism and adventure, and mixed with a futurist spirit. For the boldness of his images, Olivero recalls Marinetti's first Manifesto, writing that poetry can be found on "a hydroplane at 6000 altitude flying over the Acropolis," on the velvet "of a sleeping through Mitteleurope," on "a boat wrecked by a storm in the middle of the Mediterranean," or in "Spanish district riddled by the guns of revolt." Still, perhaps to counterbalance his audacity or for fear of having gone too far, Olivero later feigns a homecoming by going back to folksy and local themes.

He was born in Villastellone (Turin) on November 2, 1909 (he died in 1996), but for a long time lived in Rome as a journalist (an activity which he undertook very young, after irregular studies, and he would always remain in the trade, as a correspondent, copy reader or editor), as writer and polemicist. Above all he had the opportunity, thanks to his profession, to travel through Europe and beyond, coming into contact with different cultures. This certainly helped him to form an anti-provincial poetic culture, whose pillars are D'Annunzio and Campana, the Symbolist tradition, Lorca and the post-symbolist poets. He published various poetic works in Piedmontese: chapbooks, collections and notebooks of the *Colan-a Musical dij Brandé* of poetry set to music; among which are worthy of mention, also for the continuity and consistency of themes and forms, the anthologies *Sent poésie* (1942), *Ij faunèt* (1955), *Rondò dle masche* (1971), *Romanzie* (1983).

While one cannot speak of two distinct periods for Olivero's poetry, it is possible to detect the alternation and coexistence of two souls in all his work: the *maudit* and the more reflexive and introspective one, the powerful vision and the dream. The polemical contrast between "old" and "young" that Olivero never resolved, presented itself in the form of a young and *Maudit* Olivero (the first phase of his poetry, until the Fifties) and a not so young Olivero (the second phase), who is able to write in more serene cadences, in a light gracefulness, in a delicate gentleness (certainly missing during his dispute), but who nevertheless does not forego metrical and lexical experimentation or the acquired expressive freedom in dialect as well.

Criticism

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Crist paisan

Crist senza cros, ò mòrt, biond partisan
che 't pende con la còrda al còl, strossà,
le man daré dla schin-a ai pols gropà,
j'eu j fiss al cel: a un ragg ëd sol lontan.
Ij comajass, ch'at vòlo, antom, a van
a posesse an s'ij branch d'ërbo gelà
e con dë strep ëd bèch e dë sgrinfà
scamiflo toe fatësse 'd Crist paisan.
An slë sfond invermègh ëd la campagna
– bianca-azura-ondolà paréj d'un mar
l'ërbo e tò còrp son fèrmant na mistà.
Ma un fil ëd sangh, dai tò pé rèidi, a sagna
ant ij sorch frèid come scalin d'autàr
scaudand la smens dël gran dla Libertà.

(1944)

(Da Romanzie)

Cristo paisano – Cristo senza croce, o morto, biondo partigiano / che pendi con la corda al collo, strozzato, / le mani dietro la schiena legate ai polsi, / gli occhi fissi al cielo: a un raggio di sole lontano. // corvi, che ti volano intorno, vanno / a posarsi sui rami dell'albero assiderato / e con strappi di becchi e con unghiate / straziano le tue fattezze di Cristo paesano. // Sullo sfondo invernale della campagna / – biancaazzurra (di neve) ondulata come un mare – / l'albero e il tuo corpo hanno l'immobilità di una immagine sacra. // Ma un filo di sangue, dai tuoi piedi rigidi, cola / nei solchi freddi come scalini d'altare / scaldando il seme del grano della Libertà (1944).

(Traduzioni dell'autore)

Paisan Christ

Christ without cross,
you dead blond partisan who hangs
with noose around neck,
strangled, with hands
tied at back by the wrists,
eyes fixed on skies,
on a ray of distant sun.
The crows that circle you
land on the branches
of the frozen tree
and peck and claw to rend
your face of Paisan Christ.
In the winter backdrop
of the countryside

blue-white undulations
like the sea...
the tree and your body
are still, sacred image...
But a trickle of blood
from your stiffening feet
flows in the cold furrows
terraced like an altar
to warm the seed,
the grain of Liberty.

(1944)

Tòrce a vent

Yo tengo el fuego en mis manos.

Federico Garcia Lorca

Fiame, rosse caviere

che spatare ant ël vent

le farfale d'argent

ëd le spluve legere.

Fiame, rosse bandiere.

L'hai sèrcà 'd carèsseve

pen-a vistve, da cit:

ché 'm cissave un invit,

n'anvia fòla 'd baseve.

Spricc ëd sangh ch'iv soleve.

Meze lun-e 'd faussije

anforà, come 'd làver,

dé spi 'd gran e 'd papàver

sota un vòle d'avije.

Lenghe 'd fàun cioch ëd rije.

Crèste vive 'd galòro

come giòle 'd sufrin;

doje pèrgne dël vin

dle vos càude dij còro.

Feuie 'd vis ch'a s'andòro.

Foèt giàun ch'a s-ciuplisso

dësneudà come 'd sèrp

tra la fumèd jè stèrp
euj èd brasa ch'at fisso.
Cove 'd tigrì ch'as drisso.
Cheur avisch d'alegria
ant la neuit frissonant
con riflèss èd diamant
cangià 'n feu pèr magia.
Comà 'd tòr èd Sevija.
Fianch foà 'd bailadora
ch'a sè stòrzo 'd piàsì
sbrincià 'd sangh benedi
dèl Crist nu con j'òss fòra.
S-cirpe 'd mùsica mòra.
Bussonà 'd retise mate
dij tramont èd cel vèrt
che l'hai vist sui desèrt
con èl ghibli a combate.
Simitare scarlate.
Reu 'd colòne torziè
'd mausolei egissian
s'j'orizont èd zafràn
tajà 'd palme spèrdùe.
Trombe 'd sàbia e dè splùe.
Ale 'd màchine 'd guèra
tra garlande 'd color,
canson drùe 'd motor
ch'a rimbombo an sla tèra.
Tèra 'd sènner amèra.
Scaje 'd pèss tra le fèrle
dij boschèt èd coral
sota ij mar stèmi 'd sal
e 'd cuchie orlà 'd pèrle.
Euj d'olive ant le gèrle.
Fiame! Stèile marin-e
fèstonà 'd zora ij sen
dl'Aventura ch'a ven

coroneme dè spin-e.

Oh, ij mè seugn, mie ruvin-e!

Ma sul nèir paisagi

dla mia vita 'd torment

àusso un pugn prepotent

con na tòrcia 'd coragi.

E un sorch, ross, l'é mè viaggi..

Tòrce a vent, crij ëd fiam

ant la neuit senza fin:

compagné mè destin

vèrs la luz doa lo ciam

ël silensi 'd mia Mama.

Roma, 7 dzèmbèr 1947.

(Da Romanziè)

Torce a vento – Fiamme, rosse capigliature / che spargete al vento / le farfalle d'argento / delle faville leggiere. / Fiamme, rosse bandiere. // Ho tentato di accarezzarvi, / appena vi ho viste, da bimbo, / perché mi urgevate un invito, / un desiderio folle di baciarmi. / Sprizzi di sangue che vi sollevate. // Mezzelune di falci / infiorate, come labbra, / di spighe di grano e di papaveri sotto uno sciame di api. / Lingue di fauni ebbri di riso. // Creste vive di galli / come fiamme di zolfanelli; / brocche pregne dei vino / delle voci calde dei cori. / Foghe di viti che s'indorano. // Fruste gialle che crepitano snodate come serpi: / tra il fumo acre degli sterpi / occhi di bragia che ti fissano. Code di tigrì che si rizzano. // Cuori corruschi d'allegria / nella notte frementi / con riflessi di diamanti / tramutati in fuoco per magia. / Comate di tori di Siviglia. // Fianchi arroventati di bailadora (danzatrice spagnuola) / che si contorcono di piacere / spruzzati dei sangue benedetto / del Cristo ignudo con le ossa scolpite. / Scarpe di musica moresca. // Cespugli di rose matte / nei tramonti di cielo verde / che ho visto sui deserti / con il ghibli (vento caldo vorticoso del Sahara) combattere. / Scimitarre scarlatte. // Roghi di colonne contorte / di Mausolei egiziani / negli orizzonti di zafferano / tagliati di palme sperdute. / Trombe di sabbia e di scintille. // Ali di macchine di guerra / fra ghirlande di colori, / canzoni fervide di motori / che rimbombano sulla terra. / Terra di cenere amara. // Scaglie di pesci fra i virgulti / dei boschetti di coralli / sotto gli oceani lastricati di sale / e di conchiglie orlate di perle. / Occhi di olive nelle giare. // Fiamme! Stelle marine / festonate sopra i seni / dell'Avventura che viene / a incoronarmi di spine. / Oh, i miei sogni, le mie rovine! // Ma sul nero paesaggio / della mia vita di tormento / levo un pugno prepotente / con una torcia di coraggio. / E un solco, rosso, è il mio viaggio. // Torce a vento, urla fiamme / nella notte senza fine: / accompagnate il mio destino / verso la luce donde lo chiama / il silenzio della mia Mamma.

It Twists Like Wind

"I hold fire in my hands" -

Federico Garcia Lorca

Flames, your red tresses

that cast on wind

the silver butterflies

of subtle sparks.

Flames, red flags.

As a child I tried

from the moment I saw you

to caress you for

your very presence was urge,

mad rush to kiss you.

Spurts of blood you hoist.

Sickle crescent adorned
with flowers like lips
of spikes of wheat and poppies
under a swarm of bees.
Tongues of fauns
drunk on laughter.
Throbbing rooster crests
like flames of sulphur matches,
jugs brimming with wine
and hot chorus voices.
Grape leaves that gild,
yellow whips the crackle
recoiling like serpents:
mid the acrid smoke
of thickets, hot coal
eyes fix you.
Tiger tails erect.
Hearts resplendent with joy,
fervid in the night
with diamond prismatic
transformed magically in fire.
Sevillian horn strokes...
Red-hot flanks
of Flamenco dancers
that twisting in pure olè
are sprinkled with blessed blood
of the naked Christ
with sculpted bones.
Mantillas of Moorish music.
Bushes of mad roses
in sunsets of green sky
that I've seen in the deserts
when the ghibli blows and beats.
Scarlet scimitars.
Pyles of twisted columns
of Egyptian mausolea

on the saffron horizons
cut by dispersed palms.
Whirlwinds of sand and sparks.
Wings of war machines
mid rainbow garlands,
fervid songs of motors
that thunder over the land.
Earth of bitter ash.
Fish scales mid the shoots
of the coral forests
under oceans paved with salt
and shells rimmed by pearls.
Olive eyes in the jars.
Flames! Starfish
festooned upon the breasts
of the imminent future
to crown me with thorns.
My dreams! My disasters!
Yet in the black panorama
of my life of torment
I raise a proud fist
with a torch of courage.
And a furrow, red,
is my journey.
It twists like wind,
shouts, flames,
in the endless night:
go with my destiny
toward the light where
the silence of my Mamma
beckons.

- Rome, December 7, 1947

Cantada dla provincia granda

Quand che a l'alba am dës vija 'l gal paisan
cantand da na cassin-a an mez dla val,
am ven l'anvia dë s-ciopaté le man.

El cel l'è anlumirà come un missal.
A l'è ancor gnanca ciar. Ma da la comba
svapóra già na flosca luz d'opal.
Peuj, ant un nen, èl vel dla neuit a tomba..
Le stèile a nio 'nt un mat ch'a l'ha ij color
cangiant d'èl tomacòl ëd na colomba.
A l'è il moment che crijeria d'amor
sfrandand con èl galòro un ritornel
an glòria 'd boche e d'euj ch'a rio 'nt le fior.
Ma, come 'l sol batesa 'l dì novel.
ij paié biond a smijo 'd cese d'òr..
Che 'd crocifiss ëd røndole ant èl cel!
Sbalucà dai riflessi giàun d'un tesòr,
s-ciairo un farchèt con ale 'd feu ch'a va,
con mè cheur ant èl bèch, ant un sèrc d'òr.
Mè cheur an sla campagna sconfinà!
Ej'erbo a lo saluto a sò passage
con man ëd feuje vërde svantajà.
Slansandme apress a chièl. pèr fé sò viage,
sento ant la pera në scalin d'autàr
e ant l'ànima a mè splend èl paisage.
Oh benedet al mond ij seugn bizar
dla poesia che 'd vent e m'angarlanda
fasend na fiamma rossa 'd mè folar!
An vòl abbrasso la Provincia Granda
e tuti ij sò pais, le soe sità
doa ròche e catedrai sé strenzo aranda.
Soe veje tor son stèile fulminà
ch'a guèrno an sen, rien mach ij ragg dla Stòria
'd j'acquile 'd Roma e 'l sangh dle soe sgrinfà,
ma ij blason che an s'èl reu dl'ùltima glòria
l'han fondù j'ame ant èl martel d'assel
che 'd na spà, piegà ad arch, l'ha fàit na msòira:
na fiëtta che s'un fianch bala un rondel
e ant èl pugn nèir ëd tèra d'èl paisan
a vèrsa 'd cope 'd fior come d'amel.

Quand ëd Prima a comensa a cuspié 'l gran,
quand ch'a j'é ij fen dl'Istà, quand che la rapa
dl'uva – a l'Otonn – a spricia 'd sangh uman,
ël campagnin chinandse su la sapa
s'inchin-a con ël cheur d'nans a Nosgnor
present ant l'ostensère d'ògni mapa.
E, antant, a benediss con ël sudor
ij sorch drit ch'a-j daran la maravia
dël pan e 'l vin për le soe gòj d'amor.
L'òm ëd campagna a l'è 'l rè dla famija
e sò cheur as fà largh parèj dël mond
dòp ëd j'arcòlt, a la stagion furnija....
Provincia Granda, che dai brich ariond
dle toe Langhe it dëstende a la pianura
sota ij brass dle montagne e 'l cel profond,
tente a la tèra e a l'òm ëd la natura!
Bat an s'j'ancuso, fà arbombé ij tò māj,
förgia 'd ciadeuvre e fame una parura:
ma ricòrdte che l'òr ch'at pijran mai
a l'é ant jë spi 'd toe anson e che ij rubin
son an toe vis, sle crèste dij tò gaj.
Ti, mare 'd mas-cc, paisan e bricolin,
ancoron-a ij tò fieuj con ij diamant
avisch ant j'euje dle spose e di gognin.
Fa che sò avnì sia un bel caval balsant
con la stèila d'Italia su la front
ch'ai bërluz ant lë sfòrs dël saut grim pant.
S'ùltim trè vir dla stròfa, a l'orizont,
ël farchèt ëd mè vèrs lassa a l'azar
calé mè cheur sul tò. Ntant che, al tramont,
a cola 'l Pò lontan l'ànima al mar.
Monserà dël Borgh San Dalmass, 1954.

(Da Romanzie)

Cantata della provincia grande (la Provincia di Cuneo) – Quando all'alba mi sveglia il gallo rusticano / cantando da una cascina in mezzo alla valle / mi viene il desiderio di applaudirlo con un battimano. // Il cielo è illuminato come un messale, / Non c'è neanche il minimo chiarore. Ma dalla convalle / svapora già una fioca luce d'opale. // Poi, improvvisamente, il velo della rione cade. / Le stelle naufragano in un mare che ha i colori / cangianti del collareto di una colomba. // È il momento in cui griderei d'amore / sfrecciando, con il gallo, un ritornello / in gloria di bocche e occhi che ridono nei fiori. // Ma, come il sole battezza il dì novello, / i pagliai biondi assomigliano a chiese d'oro... / Quanti crocifissi di rondini nel cielo! // Abbagliato dai riflessi gialli di un tesoro, / scorgo un falchetto con ali di fuoco che va / con il mio cuore nel becco, in un cerchio d'oro. // Il mio cuore sulla campagna sconfinata! / E gli alberi lo salutano al suo passaggio / con mani di foglie verdi sventaglianti. //

Slanciandomi appresso a lui per seguire il suo viaggio, / sento nella roccia un gradino d'altare / e nell'anima mi sfogora il paesaggio. // Oh benedetti al mondo i sogni bizzarri / della poesia che il vento m'inghirlanda / convertendo in una fiamma rossa la mia sciarpa! // In volo abbraccio la provincia Grande / e tutti i suoi paesi, le sue città / ove rocche e Cattedrali si affiancano amorevolmente. // Le sue torri antiche sono stelle fulminate / che custodiscono in seno, non soltanto i raggi della Storia / delle aquile di Roma e il sangue delle loro unghiate, / ma i blasoni che, sul rogo dell'ultima gloria, / hanno fuso le loro armi nei martello d'acciaio / il quale d'una spada, piegata ad arco, ha fatto una felle messoria: // una forosetta che, inclinata su un fianco, balla un rondò / e nel pugno nero di terra del contadino / versa coppe di fiori colme di miele. // Quando a primavera il grano incomincia a germogliare con molte fila, / quando vi sono i fieni dell'estate, / quando il grappolo dell'uva – in autunno – sprizza sangue umano, // il campagnolo, chinandosi sulla zappa, / s'inchina con il cuore davanti a Dio / presente nell'ostensorio di ogni pannocchia. // E, intanto, benedice con il sudore / i solchi dritti che gli daranno la meraviglia / del pane e del vino per le sue gioie d'amore. // L'uomo della campagna è il re della famiglia / e il suo cuore si dilata come il mondo / dopo i raccolti, a stagione compiuta // Provincia Grande, che dai colli tondi / delle tue Langhe ti distendi alla pianura / sotto le braccia tese delle montagne e il cielo profondo, // tienti alla terra e all'uomo della natura! / Batti pure sulle incudini, fa pure rimbombare i tuoi magli, / forgia opere belle e fattene uno sfoggio; // ma ricordati che l'oro che nessuno ti potrà mai sottrarre / è nelle spighe delle tue messi e che i rubini / sono nelle tue viti e sulle creste dei tuoi galli. // Tu, madre di maschi, contadini e colligiani, incorona i tuoi figli con i diamanti / accesi negli occhi delle spose e dei bambini. // Fa che il loro avvenire sia un bel cavallo balzano / con la stella d'Italia sulla fronte che gli sfavilla nello sforzo dei salto arrancante. // Sugli ultimi tre giri della strofa, all'orizzonte, / il falchetto del mio verso lascia fortunatamente / precipitare il mio cuore sul tuo. Mentre, al tramonto, // lungi trasfonde il Po l'anima al mare.

Monserrato di Borgo San Dalmazzo, 1954.

Cantata of the Grand Province (Cuneo)

At dawn when the rustic rooster wakes me

singing from a farmstead in the valley

I'm pressed to give him a standing ovation.

The sky is lit like a missal.

There's still no sign of dawn.

But from the valley there emanates

a faint opaline light.

Suddenly the veil of night drops.

The stars sink into a sea

tinted like a dove's throat.

It's the time when I shout with love,

unsheathing, with the cock, a refrain

in the glory of gullets and eyes

that laugh with the flowers.

As the sun baptizes the new day

the blond haystacks emerge

like gilded temples...

Look at all those crucifixes

of swallows in the sky!

Dazzled by yellow glimmers of treasure

I spy a hawk with wings of fire

that with my heart in its beak

reconnoiters for gold.

My heart across the endless countryside!

The trees greet it as it passes

with fanning hands of green leaves.

Soaring to track the hawk's quest

I glimpse in the rock a stair

to a sanctuary and in my soul

the landscape incandescens.

How blessed in this world

are the strangest of dreams

of the poetry that the wind

festoons for me

transforming my bandana into

a bright red flame!

In flight I embrace the Grand Province

and all its towns and cities

where rooks and cathedrals

flank each other in love.

Her ancient towers are lightning stars

that harbor in their breasts the rays

of the history of Roman eagles

and the blood of their clawing

and the blazons that, on the pyre

of the ultimate glory,

have fused their arms

in the hammer of steel

made of a sword bent into a bow -

the crowning harvest sickle...

A country lass, perching on one hip,

dances a rondo and in her peasant fist

black with earth pours forth

florid chalices brimming with honey.

When come spring the grain begins

to sprout in myriad rows,

when the summer hay ripens,

when the grape clusters come autumn

spurt human blood,

the country folk bending over the hoes

with their hearts bow to God,

present in the show of every cob.

Meanwhile they bless with sweat
the straight furrows that will yield them
the marvel of bread and wine
in their joy of love.

The man of the fields
is the king of the family
and his heart swells like the world
after the harvest at season's end.

Grand Province that from the round hills
of your Langhe span the plain under
the stretched arms of the mountains
and the deep sky, embrace
the earth and those who live
in harmony with nature!

And beat the anvils,
thunder your hammers,
forge lovely works
and proudly display them;
but remember that the gold
that is yours forever
is in your harvest spikes
and that your rubies are
in your grapevines
and one your roosters' crests.

You, mother of humanity,
peasants and hill-dwellers,
crown your children with jewels
glowing in wives' and children's eyes.

Make their future
a lovely horse prancing
with the star of Italy on its brow,
that star sparkling as it

With the last three gyres
of the strophe, on the horizon,
the hawk of my verses,
in a fortuitous hour,

frees my heart to plunge into yours.

Meanwhile, at sunset, the Po

transfuses its soul with the sea.

- Monserrato di Borgo San Dalmazzo, 1954

LOMBARDY

Giuseppe Gallo

Contra i melanconij, contra i magon / rezipte, el me zion./ rezipte i rimm del Porta (Against melancholy and anguish, / take, my dear uncle, take / the verses of Porta). So begins, with this sort of programmatic statement – almost a declaration of poetics –, one Delio Tessa's most significant poems, even if less cited, titled simply To Carlo Porta. Richly interwoven with quotations and echoes from Porta, the poem stands – despite what the title might lead one to believe – completely outside the usual clichés of encomiastic poetry, in order to reopen with the author of “Ninetta” a dialog which is both a looking back and a going forward.

This choice is anything but expected at the beginning of the century. Despite the authoritative comments of the Ticinese linguist Carlo Salvioni and Attilio Momigliano (who in 1909 devoted the first comprehensive critical study to him), Porta was then still little known even to the people of Milan. Even if not totally obscured, his fame was decidedly uneven after his death and remained so until the second half of the twentieth century, when the renewal of critical parameters led to a more suitable reappraisal of the experiences in dialect of past and present, and to the reevaluation, as a consequence, of the “hierarchies” of literary history.

It was after all Manzoni the real popular literary author in this region until a few decades ago. Although inspired by a no lesser moral tension than that underpinning the work of the author of *Promessi sposi*, Porta's poetry has remained the province of the restricted circles of the intellectualized middle class.

On the other hand, whoever appeared on the Milan dialect scene at the start of the last century with the intent to go beyond the narrow and consolatory of vernacular hum-drum did not have many recent models to refer to or to look back to in order to continue the experience. In the second half of the eighteenth century, in fact, there was no outstanding figure capable of renewing the dialect tradition by adapting it to the political and moral tensions of the new Italy, just coming out of national unification.

Of a more documentary rather than literary interest, all considered, are the dialect works (at least partly foreshadowed by Giovanni Rajberti's experiments) attempted in a “scapigliatura” milieu, especially by Antonio Ghislanzoni, Vespasiano Bigami, Ferdinando Fontana. The most interesting results were to be found rather in prose and theater: on the one hand in the collection of short stories *Milanin Milan* by the novelist Emilio De Marchi, and on the other in the comedy *El nost Milan* by Carlo Bertolazzi. Within their limits, they are the ones who in that period were able to utilize dialect in the most convincing manner, as a living instrument, suitable to study a changing human and social reality, not divided by the broader context of the modernization process taking place.

Going back to Porta, recognizing his mastery in that situation meant strengthening the ties with a poetry having a strong ethical content and a great stylistic and expressive awareness. The direction indicated by Tessa is the one that would later give the best results of the twentieth century in Lombardy. It is through the mediation of the great author of “*De là del mar*” and “*Caporetto 1917*” that Porta's presence, if with repeated rifts or in a hidden or lateral position, remains very much alive in the dialect poetry of the twentieth century, much more than it was in nineteenth-century Lombardy.

What is taken from him is first of all his open-minded and multifaceted realism, to be understood not so much in the naturalistic sense of ambition to reflect phenomenological reality, often susceptible to violent grotesque or expressionistic deformations, but in a romantic sense of aspiration towards a literature able to understand the events of the human universe and examine in depth its contradictions.

Hence the preference, common to poets of several generations (from Tessa to Emilio Villa to Franco Loi to Piero Marelli), for a poetry sustained by a strong narrative bent which remains recognizable despite the most brutal tampering.

“Novelistic,” hypotactic syntax, characteristic of Porta's tales, gives way to Joyce's elliptical and paratactic syntax, which proceeds by accumulating heterogenous material. Nevertheless, the Lombard line (a category which is to be understood in a broad sense, not coinciding perfectly with the geographical area) confirms – in dialect as well as in Italian – its fundamental inclination toward a poetry of things, veined with a plurality of humors and inhabited by more or less precisely delineated objects, figures, or characters.

One also finds this in poets more open to a thoughtful and intimate lyricism (such as Cesare Mainardi, Giacinto Gambirasio, Giancarlo Consomi, Franca Grisoni, Umberto Zanetti), nourished for the most part by the natural or urban landscape, although depicted without idyllic complacency.

Rather the flaw, from which are not exempt even authors endowed with a greater awareness of their aims, consists in a sort of unintentional as well as paradoxical inverse rhetoric: in short a falling back on themes that go from the crepuscular to the minimalistic, born out of the overestimation of the degree of autonomy of everyday events, that is, from the unconscious belief

that they are capable of speaking by themselves and that it is enough to mention them in a diligent list on the page to obtain a poetry of things.

On the other hand, twentieth-century Lombard poetry owes Porta another important peculiarity: that it, the insistent and almost general linguistic experimentation. In portraying his *comédie humaine*, Porta had made use of an extremely broad stylistic and expressive range, which, besides literary Milanese (already “purified” in the verses of Carlo Maria Maggi, Domenico Balestrieri, Carl’Antonio Tanzi, and Giuseppe Parini) and the different varieties of contemporary Milanese spoken by the various social classes, also included the other languages which interacted with dialect: Latin, Italian, French, Austrian German.

Twentieth-century authors follow this path even though they select a linguistic area very restricted geographically: the harsh speech of Verano Brianza by Piero Marelli, the airy Milanese of Verderio Inferiore Giancarlo Consonni, the Sirmionese by Franca Grisoni.

In any case, with respect to Porta’s experience the plurilinguistic element tends to acquire another meaning in the twentieth century, changing from a phenomenon of the sociological context, to be represented narratively, to a problem of the self, to be analyzed lyrically. The reason for this lies in the fact that before and more than what happens elsewhere poetry in dialect in Lombardy is influenced by the process of erosion that affects local speech everywhere, forcing them to lose ground before the advance of standard Italian.

Before this process is concluded in the second half of the century with the widespread abandonment of dialect by the younger generations, the Lombard capital finds itself, however, – under the pressure of the powerful migratory waves that accompany the process of industrialization – playing host to a variety of accents of a diverse nature and origin, mostly southern, but with a conspicuous presence of the Veneto and Friuli areas.

Milanese does not disappear from spoken speech as a consequence, but (despite the cultured or folkloristic attempts at reclaiming it) is finally relegated to secondary roles or even degraded to the dimension of local sketch.

This, of course, only makes even more problematic the choice of dialect, which on the other hand gets its revenge in literature, thanks also to the stances taken by the avant-garde movements, that for many reasons here found very fertile ground, both in the maudit phase of the early century and the rationalistic phase of the fifties and sixties. In the new literary landscape that makes stylistic freedom its fundamental rule, dialect is legitimated as one of the many possible codes, constitutionally not inferior to any other.

Dialect is then really transformed into idiolect, a private and individual language that each author tailors to his expressive needs, often turning to the language of the past, a linguistic variety which no longer exists, but which for this very reason lends itself to being reinvented, or to the living language, actually spoken, but selecting the habits common to the more restricted areas, often with slang expressions almost foreign to urban or regional settings.

On the other hand, dialect poets display the same detachment manifested by poets in Italian as well toward the city and the materialistic morality that more and more characterizes it. Under the innovative thrust of a romanticism interpreted not in opposition but as a continuation of the Enlightenment, nineteenth-century poetry in dialect from Porta onward, along with the novel, had given voice to the hopes and aspirations of a growing modern middle-class, progressive minded even if politically moderate. It is the middle class that gives rise to the myth of Milan as capital of morality and work, that discovers the importance of a knowledge that has a concrete advantage for the community – economy, statistics, engineering, mechanics. It is the middle class that founds the Polytechnic, but it also establishes charitable societies, and it is interested in attenuating social conflicts and to take steps in order to correct the shortcomings of modernization and the free market.

In the twentieth century this propulsive force is irremediably lost. Milan fails in the attempt to become the ethical and cultural model for the entire country. The logic of interest gets the better of the work ethic, favoring the development of an entrepreneurial class which is less cultured and much more cynical than that of the nineteenth century, which tolerates and even facilitates fascism’s rise to power, and which in the second half of the century embraces a dangerous ideology inspired by a coarse and unrestrained *laissez-faire*, grounded on technological and financial capitalism.

Like fiction, the poetry of the Lombards also reflects this state of things in a more or less direct manner, eschewing any manifestation of local pride (which is rather relegated to the vernacular idyll, which significantly finds its identity more in certain areas – Ticinese, Porta Romana – than in the urban setting as a whole) and expressing instead elements of collective and individual anxiety.

Even in certain experiments with historical aims, such as Franco Loi’s, tending toward a modern epos, and with an oneiric-expressionistic style that fragments the narrative structure, what prevails in any case is the propensity to “interiorize” the elements of crisis, and to foreground the self rather than society and, at any rate, to represent society in a way that emphasizes the consciousness of the individual.

In a strictly literary sense, this leads to the introduction in dialect poetry of expressive material from the most diverse contemporary traditions and currents: from a certain disposition toward dadaist *divertissement* to the adoption of models of verbal estrangement inspired by Joyce, Montale, Eliot, Pound, Beckett.

Along this path, the link with the local tradition becomes complicated, but it is not severed. What is reaffirmed instead is the substantial trust in a realism, which presents itself as a shared sensibility or collective vision of life rather than as an actual poetics or program. It is this very particular kind of realism that keeps the authors of the “Lombard line” from attempting to escape, forward as well as backward.

There is no nostalgia for the premodern or pre-bourgeois past in this poetry, not even in Franca Grisoni’s, born in the outlying areas of the metropolitan center, or in Giancarlo Consonni’s, which is nevertheless open to a painful dialog with his rural roots. On the other hand, there are no socialist undertones, except in certain passages of Loi’s early work, but in any case outside ideological orthodoxy. If there is any criticism, it comes from inside Milanese modernity: as if by showing mercilessly the signs of decay, one really wanted to keep alive its most innovative product, that work ethic that in its original formulations constituted a valuable meeting ground for different classes.

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The English Translations for the Piedmont section are by Justin Vitiello

DELIO TESSA

For his "absolutely modern taste for narrating" (as Pasolini defined him), Delio Tessa stands at the center of early twentieth-century Italian poetry, not only in dialect. While he followed an independent path, the milieu to which he legitimately brings to mind is the heterogeneous one of the Voice, with its aspirations of moral renewal and its expressive torments. Like the poets of this circle, moreover, Tessa has been a "master in the shadow," aiming at finding his own personal and solitary style, only recently adequately recognized for its value and historical importance.

Born in Milan in 1886, after his studies at the liceo Beccaria he majored in law at the University of Pavia, reluctantly working as an attorney after graduation. His particular interests were rather literature, theater, cinema (among other things he wrote the screenplay for a film, *Vecchia Europa*, published posthumously in 1986).

Being against Mussolini's regime, he stayed away from the institutions of official culture, contenting himself to contribute to small local periodicals or foreign newspapers, such as the *Corriere di Ticino*. Except for *L'è el di di mort*, published in 1932, his work was published entirely after his death. It is in any case not a very large body of work, but very complex for the wealth of subject matter and variety of expressive modes.

What characterizes Tessa's poetry as a whole is a restless sensibility, which is revealed first of all in the very strong tension to which language is subjected: of spoken dialect only shreds tend to be left, juxtaposed in an almost dreamlike fashion without apparent logical connections. Porta's model is thus reinterpreted in the light of the most modern experimental tradition, from the great decadent writers (Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Verlaine), to the futurists and, even more so, to those particular forms that expressionism takes on in Italy, especially with Jahier, Campana, Rebora.

The results at times approached the very modern modes of atonal poetry, nourished by pure threads of sound. The connotative use of parenthesis, of exclamations, of white spaces, of the pauses gives the page the look like a contemporary musical score, rich with modulation signs.

This “deconstructive” drive also affects metrics, which is skillfully orchestrated on a complex web of enjambements and striking rhymes, with an insistent tendency to break the coincidence between stanzaic and syntactical orders.

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La mort de la Gussona

I.

Al prim vedett, inscì,

te seet on omasciott

discret, cara el me Rost,

e per la portinara

ti te see “l'omm dispost”...

... ma per mi già quj to man

pienn, quj to rucc
– upp – che te ven
su quand te parlet,
qui bruscon, ah... qui bruscon
su la mattina, qui dent marsc e qui bugnon...
... ah per mi già l'è patenta!
Hin qui slepp che te paciòtet
fora fora... quella carna
foeura d'ora,
„, caro ti, che te sassina!
Fuma pu, dam a trà a mi,
rend alcalina l'orina...
ancamò on alter bugnon,
vera, che te tormenta
come on'anima in pena!
A quij che te gh'avevet
sul coll e sulla s'cenna
on alter te s'en tacca,
tremendo, sul pretèret!
Ti te seet come la toa
mamma... on uricemich, ti!
Eh... già tutti gh'àn la soa! ...
... e mi? e mi, pover sacrament?! ...

I. Così a prima vista / sei un discreto omaccione, / caro il mio Rosti / e per la portinaia / tu sei “l'uomo ben messo” // ... ma per me, già quelle tue mani / piene, quei tuoi rutti

– upp – che ti vengon / su quando parli, / quelle acidità, ah... quelle acidità / alla mattina, / quei denti marci e quei bubboni ...ah per me già è evidente! / Son quelle grosse fette di manzo che divori / in fretta in fretta... quella carne / fuori ora, / caro mio, che ci frega! // Non fumar piú, / dammi ascolto, / rendi alcalina l'orina... / ancora un altro bubbone, / nevvvero, che ti tormenta / come un'anima in pena! / A quelli che già avevi / sul collo e sulla schiena / un altro te se ne aggiunge, / tremendo, sul preterito! / Tu sei come la tua / mamma ... un uricemico, tu! / Eh... già, tutti hanno la loro! / ... e io? e io, povero sacramento? ...

II.

Tas, che on pelo incoeu e creppi
come on can, li per la strada!
Óo tolt sù ona bicoccada,
no gh'óo vist putas che creppi!
borli giò, crincio, tegnim!
Óo perduu la tramontana,
m'è saltaa on scaggett puccianna,
óo buttaa là on brasc a stimm

e me sont rancaa a ona mura!

Alt, in gamba, fioeuj de cani,

se me intoppi, se me ingrani,

fioeuj, me salden la fattura...

l'è la Mort! ... (man muss, man muss,

picca l'uss, picca la porta ...)

II.- Taci che oggi sono stato a un pelo dal crepare / come un cane, lì, per strada! / Mi è venuto un capogiro, / non ci ho più visto... taci che crepo! // cado, accidenti, tenetemi! / Ho perso la tramontana, / mi ha preso una paura maledetta, / ho allungato un braccio a caso // e mi sono aggrappato a un muro! / Alt, in gamba, figli di cani, / se m'intoppo, se mi incaglio, / figlioli, mi saldano il conto... // è la Morte... (man muss, man muss, / picchia all'uscio, picchia alla porta ...)

V.

Greta Garbo, Colleen Moore,

Wilma Banky, Taylor.

Questa chi – bocca tirenta,

dal tignon lazz a la geppa –

questa chi l'è la Gussona morta!!

Gloria Swanson, Bessie Love,

Billie Dove, Lilly Page

aria, aria farfallett

della Metro, della Fox,

della Paramount... aria!

Paradis millanoeuvecent-

trenta,

se soffega in la Lupetta,

aria... aria!!

De quel matt che sont, on vol, pensi,

on vol de farfallett,

de cicitt, a coronetta,

intorna al lett

de la sciora Antonietta

morta!

Da L'e' el di' di mort, Alegher

V.- Greta Garbo, Colleen Moore, / Wilma Banky, Taylor, / questa qui – bocca tirata, / una fascia dal cocuzzolo alla bazza / – questa è la Gussoni morta!! // Gloria Swanson, Bessie Love, / Billie Dove, Lilly Page, / aria, aria farfallette della Metro, della Fox, / della Paramount... aria! / Paradiso millenovecento- / trenta. // Da quel matto che sono ad un volo, penso / ad un volo di farfallette, / di uccellini, a coroncina / intorno al letto / della signora Antonietta / morta!

The Death of Dear Mrs. Gussoni

I.

At first glance,

my dear friend Rosti,
you're a mountain of a man
and for the concierge
"every inch the species"
but for me, those
plump hands of yours,
your belches that surge
when you speak,
those stomach disasters
and rotten teeth and boils -
for me, it's clear -
all on account of those monstrous
slabs of beef that you gorge,
even between meals! ... Man,
they're eating you alive!
Hear me, stop smoking,
or your piss will go pure acid!
Oops, another boil! How
can you stand this season in Hell?
To compound those buboes on
your neck and back, now,
for kicks you've sprouted a new one,
colossal, on your behind!
You're like your mamma, gouty!
Sure! Everybody bears that cross...
Mine? It's a poor sacrament?

II.

Hush up! Today, I was
on the verge of croaking
like a dog, in the alley.
Hush up! I'm croaking!
I fall, damn, hold me up!
I lost all sense of direction,
seized by a cursed fear,
I groped and suddenly
I clutched at a wall...

Halt! Hup! Son of a
If I trip, stumble, kids,
I'll close all my accounts...
It's Death... Scratch...
Scratch... It bangs at my door,
bangs, bangs, it's Death
(scratch, scratch)...

V.

Greta Garbo, Colleen Moore,
Wilma Banky, Taylor -
Liz here with tense mouth
and a bandage from pate to chin -
she is Madame Gussoni -
defunct...
Gloria Swanson, Bessie Love,
Billie Dove, Lilly Page -
air, all air of butterflies
of MGM, Fox, Paramount -
Paradise
1930
suffocates on Lupanar Boulevard...
Air! Air!
Like the madman I am
I think of a flight,
a flight of butterflies,
little birds in one fine
crown all around
Madame Antonietta's death bed.

A Carlo Porta

Contra i melanconij, contra i magon
rezipe, el me zion,
rezipe i rimm del Porta; el pà Carloeu
dopo la gran pacciada
per el Santo Natal... (e ravioeu,
pollin, torron, mostarda)...
in cà Marianna

ultempiaatt de portada – varda, varda
l'è chi, largo, l'è chi! – pas e legria!!
La Lomazza, la Nanna
bella col biadeghin
de post-disnaa al camin tasen; “Zion,
derva el liber, zion!” D'intornovia
damazz e pretascion,
veggiabi, vesighett, ghicc, paracar,
tutta la compagnia
morta la se descanta
ai reciamm del grossista de catar!
Nebbia! Nebbia ven su! vólzet fumeri
di riser, di marscit! Nebbia ven su!
Tra el Redefoss, el Lamber e l'Olon, a
scigheron della bassa,
impattònom Milan,
sfóndomel sott!
Sira del milla e vott!
Dal Liron, dai Quadronn, dalla Coronna,
dal Carrobi, dai Fior
salten focura de pianta
el Bongee con la donna, la Tetton,
la Firisella, el scior
Marchionn, la mora del sciall giald... allon,
allon... sur abadin,
al cors, al Teatrin!
alla Scara al Promètich, alla Scara
sur Giovannin! allon,
la risottada al Carchen, a velion,
a velion!... armandolin, legrij
chitar e Cottarij!... Scolta, zion.
L'è la nostra Milan
veggia – tiremm el fiaa –
l'è la nostra Milan, zion, che canta
e che sona e che balla a camevaa!
In fuga per i straa,

dent per i boeucc, can-can,
baracch e luminari... e la Tetton
la balla cont el sciàbel,
e l'abadin el petta i onc sul gnàbel,
fin che ven giò el sipari... e ven mattina!

A Carlo Porta – Contro le malinconie, contro gli affanni / recipe, caro zione, / recipe le rime del Porta; / il papà Carlino, / dopo la grande abbuffata / del Santo Natale (e ravioli / tacchino, torrone, mostarda), / in casa Mariani / – ultimo piatto di portata – guarda, guarda, / arriva, largo che è qui, pace e allegria! / La Lomazzi, la “Nanna bella” col nipotino, dopo pranzo tacciono sedute al camino: “Zione, / apri il libro, zione!” Tutt’intorno da mazze e pretacchioni, / vecchiarde e ragazzette schifiltose, seminaristi, militari, / la compagnia / morta si scioglie dall’incanto / ai richiami del grossista di catarro // Nebbia! Nebbia, vieni su. Alzati, fumea / delle risaie e delle marcite! Nebbia su. / Tra il Redefossi, il Lambro e l’Olona, / tu, nebbione della Bassa, avvolgimi Mi lano nella tua coltre, / sprofondamelo sotto! / Sera del milleottocento... / Dal Nirone, dal Quadronno, dalla Corona, / dal Carrobbio, dai Fiori / saltano fuori, vivi, / il Bongee con la moglie, / la Tetton, la Firisella, il signor / Marchionn, la mora dallo scialle gial lo... allons, / allons signor abitino, / al passeggio, al teatro!; / alla Scala al Prometeo alla Scala, / signor Giovanni!; allons, / la risottata al Càrcano, a veglione, / a veglione mandolini, allegrie, / chitarre e liete brigate!... Ascolta, zione. / È la nostra Milano / vecchia – tiriamo il fiato / – è la nostra Milano, zione, che canta / e che suona e che balla a carnevale! / In fuga per le strade, / dentro alle bettole, balli, / bisbocce e lumi narie... e la Tetton / balla con lo storpio, / e l’abatino ficca le unghie sul bel pomo, / finché cala il sipario... e viene mattina! [...]

To Carlo Porta

Against melancholy and anguish,
take, my dear uncle, take
the verses of Porta,
Little Father Carlo,
after the orgies of Holy Xmas:
raviolies, turkey, torrone, mostarda
at the Mariani’s and
the piece-de-resistance?
Look! Look! It’s coming,
make way, it’s here -
peace and joy to all!
Dame Lomazzi and lovely Nanna
with her grandson
after dinner grow silent,
seated at the hearth:
“Uncle, open the book!”
All around the fire, all fat
matrons and priests,
old bags and demure chicks,
seminarians, soldiers, the whole
dead company unfurls
from enchantment in echoes
of the wholesaler of catarra.
Fog! Fog! Come forth!

Rise, fume from rice-paddies
and irrigated fields!

Fog, rise amid the rivers,
the Redefossi, the Lambro, the Olona,
you, Great Fog of the Lower Po,
wrap Milan in your comforter,
and sink me there slow.

An evening in 1800...

From the Nirone, the Quadronno,
the Corona, the Carobbio, the Fiori,
there emerge, still alive,

Mr. Bongee with his wife,

Mrs. Tetton and Firisella,

Mr. Marchionn and the brunette

with the yellow shawl...

Allons! You Father, recently novice,
to the promenade! the theater!

La Scala! - to see Prometheus

at La Scala, Don Giovanni...

Allons, to gorge risotto at Carcano's

and to dance all night!:

mandolins! joy! guitars!

camraderie!

Listen, Uncle Carlo,

this is our Old Milan -

let's breathe it in and out -

it's our Milan, uncle,

it sings, plays, dances

so camavalesque!

Fleeting through the streets,

in the dives, dances, revelries,

under a festival of lights...

And Big Tits dances with the cripple

and the new priest sticks his nails

into a lovely apple

until the curtain drops

and moming comes.

Caporetto 1917

Tomi da vial Certosa,
tomi di Cimiteri
in mezz a on someneri
de cioccatee che vosa,
de baracchee che canta
e che giubbiana in santa
pas con de brasc la tosa.
L'è el di di Mort, alegher!
Sotta ai topiett se balla,
se rid e se boccalla;
passen i tramm ch'hin negher
de quij che torna a cà
per magnà, boccallà:
scisger e tempia... alegher
fioeuj, che semm fottuu!
I noster patatocch
a furia de trajj ciocch,
de ciappaj per el cuu,
de mandaj a cà busca
m'àn buttaa via la rusca,
scalcen a salt de cuu,
scappen, sti sacradio,
mollen el mazz, me disen,
mollen i arma, slisen
de tutt i part, el Zio
me l'à pettaa in del gnàbel
longh quatter spann e stàbel,
l'è el di di Mort e dio!
Passen i tramm ch'hin negher
gent sora gent... lingerà...
tosann e banch de fera!
"Oh i bej coronn!" "Alegher!"
"oh i bej lumitt!" "oh i pizzi,
le belle tende, oh i pizzi!"

“L’è el dì di Mort... alegher!”

... e giò con sta missolta

de locch che a brigadella

canta alla-loibella:

“O macchinista i

ferma il diretto i

perchè al distretto

me tocca andà...”

– questa l’è bonna! scolta:

“stacca la macchina,

ferma il diretto

che son costretto

d’andà a soldà!”

... a furia de batost

tirom là... “Caldarost!”

... e giò vers porta Volta,

adree con sto mis-masc

de ciocch che se balanza...

Te vedet?! no me vanza

pu che i nost quatter strasc,

l’eredità l’è andata,

semm in bolletta in strada

tomèmm a fà el pajasc!

Comincia adasi adasi

a vegnì sira... e là...

– canten anmò, dà a trà

“... che al mio paese

voglio tomà ...”

giò vers Milan l’è quasi

scur... rong e semineri,

navili e citniteri

suden adasi, adasi,

umèd e nebbia... Ottober,

cocober... pover nun!

vun per vun, vun per vun,

me perteghen i rogher!

Oh Gesù, che sbiottada
de piant! che pertegada
là sù! ... Ottober... cocober! ...
Turines giolittian,
milanes socialista,
coragg, lustrev la vista!
Tognitt de San Damian,
slarghev el coeur, hin chi..
toma i todisch... hin chi..
riven qui car pattan,
qui car barbis, qui rost
de cojn! A stondera
per i banch della fera
pavani e pensi ai nost
miseri: rogn, deslippa
e generai de pippa!
e quell di... "Caldarost!...
Caldarost!"... e quell di
vedi (Madonna! dò?
tre settimann ammò?...)
...che in piazza o forse li
dal Briosch: "T'ée sentiì? ...
– me diran – ... t'ée sentiì?
riven... ghe semm.. hin chi..
mòllen di part de Bressa,
riven... hin a Veston!
de Desenzan, Gardon
scàppen... cara el me Tessa,
stemm d'oca! ... " e mi, de slanz,
foeura! ... li insci denanz
del Campari... gh'è ressa...
pienna la Galleria
gent che rebutta... duu
che vosa... "A pee in del cuu
vemm inanz!.. sansesia
m'an sfottuu!" "Non bisogna

cedere!" ... gent che roгна...

gent che inzigia sott via...

che rebuij e che baja.

Caporetto 1917 – Tomo da viale Certosa, / tomo dai Cimiteri / in mezzo ad un semenzaio / di avvinnazzati che vociano, / di festaioli che cantano / e che scherzano in santa / pace a braccetto della ragazza. // È il dì dei Morti, allegri! // Sotto le pergole si balla, / si ride e si tracanna; / passano i tram neri / di quelli che tornano / a casa per mangiare e sbevazzare: / ceci e tempia... allegri / figlioli, che siamo fottuti! / I nostri fantaccini / a furia di intontirli, / di prenderli per il culo, / di mandarli a prender botte / hanno gettato la divisa, / scalciano a salti di culo, / scappano, questi sacrati, / hanno mollato, mi dicono, / buttan le armi, se la svignano / da tutte le parti, lo Zio / ce lo ha schiaffato nel deretano / lungo quattro spanne e stabile, / è il giorno dei Morti e dio! / Passano i tram neri gente su gente... teppa... / ragazze e bancarelle da fiera! ... / "Oh le belle corone!" Allegri! / "Oh i bei lumini!" "Oh i pizzi, / le belle tende, oh i pizzi!" / È il dì dei Morti! ... allegri! //... e via, con questa accozzaglia / di giovinastri / che a brigatelle / cantano spavalamente: // "O macchinista, / ferma il diretto / perché al distretto / me tocca andà... " // – questa è buona! ascolta: // "stacca la macchina, / ferma il diretto / che son costretto / d'andà a soldà!" // ... a furia di batoste / tiriamo innanzi... "Caldaroste!" ... e giù ver so porta Vòlta / e via con questa baraonda / di barcollanti ubriachi... / Lo vedi? non ci restano / piú che i nostri quattro stracci, / l'eredità è sfumata, siamo in bolletta in strada / tomiamo a fare il pagliaccio! // Comincia adagio... adagio... / a venir sera... e là... / cantano ancora, ascolta – "... che al mio paese / voglio tomà..." giù verso Milano è quasi / buio... rogge e seminati, / navigli e cimiteri / trasudano adagio, adagio, / umido e nebbia... Ottober... / cocober... poveri noi! / ad una ad una / ci abbacchiano le roveri! / Oh Gesù, che spogliata / di piante! che battuta / lassù! ... Ottober... cocober!... // Torinesi giolittiani, milanesi socialisti, / coraggio, rallegratevi! / Austriacanti di San Damiano, / allargate il cuore... sono qui... / tornano i tedeschi... sono qui... / arrivano quei cari patani, // quei cari baffoni, quei poco / di buono! A zonzo. / mi aggiro fra i banchi della fiera, / e penso alle nostre / miserie ... rogne, sfortuna / e generali da pipa!... / e quel giorno... "Caldaroste!... // Caldaroste! ... " ... e quel giorno / vedo... (Madonna! due? / tre settimane ancora?...) ... che in piazza o forse lì / dal Brioschi: "Hai sentito?.. / – mi diranno – ... hai sentito? / ... arrivano... ci siamo... son qui... // cedono dalle parti di Brescia, / arrivano... sono a Vestone! / da Desenzano, Gardone / scappano... caro il mio Tessa / siamo fritti! ..." ed io, d'un balzo, / fuori! ... lì davanti / al Campari... c'è ressa... // zeppa la Galleria... / gente che si urta... due / che gridano... "A calci in culo / andiamo avanti! ... Oramai / ci hanno sfottuti!" "«Non bisogna c/ edere!" ... gente che brontola... / gente che aizza sotto sotto... // che ribolle e che urla."

Caporetto, 1917

I return from Certosa Way,
back past the Cemeteries,
mid a teeming of winos
that warble and revellers
that sing and joke in bliss,
arm in arm with their girls.
It's the Day of the Dead -
and they're jovial!
Under the arbors, people
dance, laugh, tipple.
The black trolleys pass by
bringing home those
who will eat and tope:
chickpeas and brains!
Jovial children, we're screwed!
Our doughboys, desperate
to stupify our dead,
to pull their legs,
to send them off to be thrashed,
cast away their uniforms and,
kicking off in leaps from their arses,
they escape, these sextons,

they've given up, they tell me,
they throw down their arms
and sneak away where they can
and Uncle Emperor swatted us in the ass
with four firm hand spans - yeah,
it's the Day of the Dead and god!
The black trolleys pass by
with crowds upon crowds,
mobs, rabble, girls
and festive stands.
"Oh, the lovely crowns!"
They're all joyous.
"Oh, the lovely lights!"
"Oh, the hangings, the lovely tents,
the hangings!" - it's
the Day of the Dead -
all are joyous - but away
with this pressing throng of youths
that sing so boldly,
"Oh, engineer, stop the Direct
because to the District
I have to go".
What a good line, listen:
"Shut down the engine,
stop the Direct
for I'm conscripted
to go be a soldier".
In a rage of smashing defeats
we withdraw -
"Roasted chestnuts!" -
and down we go
toward Volta Gate...
Away with this tumult
of swaggering drunks!
Don't you see it?
We are stuck

with a few rags,
our heritage up in smoke,
sold out on the streets,
clowns once more.
Slowly, slowly, evening
descends, and there, they
still sing - listen:
“for to my town
I want to return”.
Down there toward Milan
it’s almost dark: irrigation
ditches, sown fields, canals
and cemeteries transpire
slowly, slowly, in the dank
and fog - October of Tombs...
Oh, poor us! One by one
they make our oaks fall.
Oh, Jesus, what a defoliation!
What a low blow!
October of Tombs!
Giolittian Turinese,
Socialist Milanese.
courage, rejoice!
Pro-Austrians of San Damiano,
open your hearts -
they’re here again -
the Teutons! They’re here,
the same old Krauts,
those ancient Mustachios,
those no good bastards.
Mad, I wander amid
the festive stands
and think of our wretchedness:
rot, bad luck, and two-bit generals
and that day - “Roasted Chestnuts!
Roasted Chestnuts!” - and that day

I see (Madonna! Two or three
weeks more?) in the square
or maybe in Brioschi's Bookstore:
"Have you heard?" they'll tell me,
"Have you heard, they're coming,
we're O.K., they're here,
they're surrendering near Brescia,
they're coming, they're already
at Vestone! They're fleeing
from Desenzano, Gardone...
Dear friend Tessa, we're fried!"
And I, in one leap, am out!
There, at the Cafe Campari,
there's a multitude, the Gallery's
packed, people are
pushing, shoving...
Two of them
shout, "I'll kick your ass,
onward, by now we know
they've screwed us royally".
"No! We can't surrender!"
People grumble,
whispering, they agitate,
seethe and furtively shout...

II.

[...]

Mombell...

...che strano effett

me fan certi paroll!...

...tra capp e coll

piómben e m'insarzissen

lor!

Per di or e di or

qui calavron che ronza

règnen in del cozzon

tant che m'insormentissen...

...Nivol ...fantasma ...nebbi...
...sit
omen ...idei...on mond,
mi disariss ch'intorna
tutt on mond ghe se forma,
rimm ghe ressònen... vuna
la chiama
l'altra a campana e via
via te filet via
- vol de la fantasia!
... Mombell! ...
... Mombell! ...
dilla ...redilla
quella parolla li
e poeu tòmela a di
e allora... te comincet
a s' ciariss... a capi...
... bolla d'aria nell'aria
parolla solitaria... ...
fema, che se colora...
La te dà no l'ideia
d'on sit avert e voeuj? ...
te vèdet minga on praa? ...
Ma per vedell polid
te gh'ee de sarà i oeucc
perchè l'è on pradesell
quest... che te par comè
d'avell gemò veduu
on'altra volta ti...
...ah si...
... a corda molla...
... fra on bosch e ona muraja...
ona mattina... in sogn...
Me seri dessedaa
con tant de grinta, in luna
stramba e in setton sul lett,

cont ona gamba su
e l'altra giò... pensavi:
Oh tra la vuna e i do...
– Vanni!
... qui pesciatoni
to... tutt a torna al lett...
par che te me rotólet
sul cò
– disevi –
... tas ch'el se quietta giù...
(forsi el mangia on limon...
o fors...)
... ma, no...
sent ch'el se moeuv ammò,
ch'el toma a camminà!
L'è in de quell fond de tomba
di sò penser ch'el luma, el tasta
e come se l'andass
adree a ona nastaa...
... sèntel adess ch'el va
in sala de là.
[...]

da De la' del mur

II. – Mombello... // che strano effetto / mi fanno certe parole! // ... piombano / tra capo e collo / e m'incastano, loro! // Per ore e ore / quei calabroni che ronzano / regnano dentro il testone / tanto che m'imbalordiscono... / Nuvole... fantasmi... nebbie... / siti... / uomini... idee... un mondo, io direi che intorno / tutto un mondo gli si forma, / rime che risuonano, una / chiama / l'altra come le campane, / e via via t'invola / – volo della fantasia! //... Mombello! /... Mombello! //... dilla, ridilla, / quella parola / e poi tornala a dire, / e allora... incominci / a schiarirti... a capire... // Bolla d'aria nell'aria, / parola solitaria... / ferma, che si colora... // Non ti dà l'idea / di un sito aperto e vuoto? / ... non vedi tu un prato? // ... Ma per vederlo bene / hai da chiudere gli occhi... / perché ... è un praticello, / questo ... che ti pare come / di averlo già veduto / un'altra volta, tu ... / ...ah sí ... // ... a corda molle... / fra un bosco e una muraglia... / una mattina... in sogno... // Mi ero svegliato / con tanto di broncio, / la luna a rovescio, / e seduto sul letto, / con una gamba su / e l'altra giù... pensavo: / Oh tra la una e le due... / – Vanni! – //... quei piedoni tuoi... / tutt'attorno al letto... // pare che mi rotoli / sulla testa! – dicevo – ... taci che si acquieta un poco... / (forse mangia un limone... / o forse...) //... ma no... senti che si muove ancora, / che toma a camminare! // È in quel fondo di tomba / dei suoi pensieri che egli scruta, / tasta, / e come se andasse dietro a un fiuto / ... sentilo adesso che va in sala... di là. [...]

II.

Mombello...
certain words
strike me so strange...
They plummet down the nape
of the neck and fixate me!
Hour upon hour, those homets
that buzz rule my noggin

so much that they

send me buzzing.

Clouds... Ghosts... Fogs...

Places... Men... Ideas...

A world, I'd say that around

a whole world there take shape

rhymes that reverberate,

calling to each other like bells,

and, on and on, you take off:

flight of fantasy!

Mombello!

Mombello!

Say it! Guffaw it!

That word, and then,

say it again

and start to clarify,

to understand...

Air bubble in the air,

solitary word...

Still, polichromatic...

Doesn't it look like

a place open and empty?

Don't you envision a meadow?

But to see it well

you have to close your eyes...

Because it's a glen...

This little place...

It seems you've seen it already,

yes, you've seen it,

of course at loose ends,,

between a forest and a wall,

one morning, in dreams...

I'd woken up, so cloudy,

pouting, after a bad dream,

and sitting in bed,

one leg up, the other hanging,

I was thinking: Oh!
between one and two,
Vanni!
Those big feet of yours!
All around the bed
it seems they spin through my head,
I was saying, shut up,
so things can fall into place...
Perhaps you can eat a lemon,
or maybe... But no...
Look, it's moving again,
about to wake up!
It's in those depths of the tomb
of its thoughts that it scrutinizes,
touches, and, as if it pursued the
scent... Sniff it out now
that it's going into the parlor...
From there...
In the morning, then,
the morning after,
there are little numbers written
on a piece of paper:
"How strange!"
(Night... sleep...)
Breath of
the mamma who sleeps...

FRANCO LOI

"The most powerful poetic personality of recent years," is Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo's definition as he concluded with a selection of Loi's poetry the anthology *Poeti italiani del Novecento*. No doubt Franco Loi (Genoa 1930) has been one of the main protagonists of the renewal that dialect poetry experienced in the early seventies, thus establishing himself as a necessary reference point for the authors of subsequent generations and above all as the model of an ethically committed poetry.

Born of a father from Sardinia and a mother from Emilia, Loi grew up in a working-class Milan (his family moved there in 1937) which is remembered in his poetry. In this context dialect is not a maternal tongue, but a conquest of maturity and of a moral and political consciousness: it is the symbol of the lower status of an entire social class to which the author feels attached in the common destiny of defeat and in the common aspirations of existential and civil redemption.

Individual factors and historical themes are inextricably mixed in this poetic experience which is among the most complex of the twentieth century. The modes of protest, inspired by a "heretical" conception of Marxism, go hand in hand with compassionate humanitarianism grounded on a liberal religiosity; analogously, his visionary utopianism is coupled with the impatience of anarchist rebellion.

Loi's originality lies in the fact that this plurality of themes of realistic and decadent origin is expressed in forms which are absolutely alien both to nineteenth and twentieth-century populist poetry and to neo-aristocratic poetry of symbolist and hermetic derivation. We are rather dealing with an

unusual example of lyric expressionism which on the one hand tends to be visionary and deforming with extremes between the hallucinatory and the grotesque, and on the other to dissolve in elegy and aesthetic reconciliation with the world.

If a sense of continuity can be found in this great poet, it must be sought in a musical tension which tends to pursue, as inside a symphony, distinct thematic and expressive motifs which at times overlap, at times take turns, at times converse with each other.

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VII.

Oh Sergiu, Sergiu,
scundü ne la mantella,
recalcitrus restín murdú del luff,
amis de bucca düra, che la sera
ne la tua câ madragna, cum'un sciur,
l'amur di tò dulur l'è 'n mandrügàss

che streng i sogn, rabbius, e piang
e traas...
Sergiu,
che storg el brasc per fàm sigà
e roba, per vantàss, la limunina ma,
cum'un gatt, e mí, la früsta ris'cia
aj strengulun del carr, due ghe tampina
ràmpègh sü quj muntun de ball de carta
che a trèm la fantasia cercum cuj man
tra i maghi di calíff Mandrake e Polo,
e Bragelònn e Uòlass, d'Artagnan,
el carr ch'a niinch ginèj ghe par che 'l vaga
due che i cà se strossa a l'urizunt
e névur l'incantàss d'un murí pü,
tí, Sergiu,
che cul Màntua e la sua ghenga
té vist cun mí i cumpagn scappà,
e, cume l'òmm, che per büttàss se orba,
insèm 'me dü turèj a sgrügnatàss

VIII.

Oh dí che tuma
e pü che se repét,
teppa del Ric'uej in piassa de la Scala,
e nünch,
che la bandera d'arcumbèll
tra i pügn e i vus ghe par cruscià
'me 'n'ala
ch'í sogn de libertà la fa destend.
'Sassin! Carogna! General de pest!
A testa bassa, tra i trumbàss che sona,
ürla i siren, tabacca la mamàja,
e nünch, in trí, cuntra cent e cent...
Andèm, bagjànn, adoss!
Se no, ja ciàppum!
E fjö, bagjànn scüriàtten per la piassa.
Un ring de ciel tra i fil e 'l fusch di stell,

e gip, e camiunett, tarell che sgrüigna,
Leunard, sulient, tra i quatter di cadènn.
E Sergiu, la Rosanna, cum'un sogn,
se sèm truá tra i câ del Silviu Pèlligh
ch'in fund la cartulina l'era verta,
tra i arch e i pôrtègh, del ruan del Dom.
Vigliacch! 'Sassin!
e nüm ghe par ch'aj spall,
se fèmmum, e respènd la gran bandera
de linsö russa sü 'l s'ciussà di matt.
Pulizìott angiul,
cun la furca e i cord
oh brasc fradèj che streng cume 'na göva,
g'aví cinghiâ la vita e de carogna
la zàjna bumba i spall e, 'm'i martell,
curí dré i nòster fiâ cuj bucch che trona,
fradèj in bestia,
cume cingulâ,
che vegn burdöcch e san stritularà,
el temp l'è pü el temp, e d'un ciel götigh
palass utucentesch slünghen la via
de tunf, ustiàss e sturgiunad che toma...
Öcc brasch de Sergiu,
tra quj denc de mona!
Mí, a teater, che stu lí a vardà
i püign, i tarellad e la ciccada
che, s'ij ganàss, de vibla par scüràss,
e lí, che tremà, che la gura mord,
vigliacch i mè penser, porca resun,
che 'l cör 'me 'n fió che l'è nassù bastard,
suffèghen d'un crià che sta per piang.
Penser de mader, penser di temp indré,
de liber, de presun, desranghiment
del legn de la mia vita malmustus,
per scurbaggiâl, per rid, e vess büffün
nel cabriulà s'ciavèn a San Vittur,

penser de spagüres 'g, e 'na gran vöja
de renversàm la vita in buttunü,
e j'ògg ch'j ciamo: vegn!
e, nel dí no,
spers ögg ussídric, ögg bej fã de pittüra,
tra i pagn grisverd, i mitra tegnü bass,
i suffia ch'in burghes üsman la scüra,
i elmett ch'in círcul bòggen,
e pö slargàss
al brüs che tra mí e lü l'è restá là,
al banfajàm girund che 'l mè büttàm
né mí, né lü, né lur, ma, porcu Díu,
tí, Sergiu,
i vamp di öcc, el mè s'cincàm..

Da Stròleggh

VII – Oh Sergio, Sergio, / nascosto nella mantella, / recalcitrante e caparbio morso dal lupo, / amico di bocca dura, che la sera / nella tua casa matrigna, come un signore, / l'amore dei tuoi dolori è uno smangiarsi e masticarsi / che stringe i sogni rabbioso e piange e li butta al vento... / Sergio, / che mi torce il braccio per farmi urlare / e ruba, per vantarsi con noi, la limonina / ma, come un gatto, e anch'io, la frusta rischia / ai trabaltoni del carro della cartiera, dove ci perseguita / arampicati su quei montoni di balle di carta / che tremanti frughiamo cercando con le mani la fantasia / tra gli album di maghi dei califfi Mandrake e Marco Polo, / e i libri del Visconte di Bragelonne e Wallace e d'Artagnan, / il carro che a noi ragazzini ingenui sembra che vada / là dove le case si strozzano all'orizzonte / e le nuvole sono un incantarsi del non morire piú, / tu, Sergio, / che col Mantova e la sua banda / hai visto con me i compagni scappare, / e, come l'uomo che per gettarsi si nasconde gli occhi, / insieme come due torelli a romperci il grugno

VIII. Oh giorno che ritorna / e che mai piú si ripete, / teppa del generale Ridgway in piazza della Scala, / e noi, che la bandiera dell'arcobaleno / tra i pugni e le voci ci sembra calare spiovento / come un'ala / che i sogni di libertà fa dispiegare. / Assassini! Carogne! Generale portapeste! / A testa bassa, tra le trombacce che suonano, / urlano le sirene, se la dà a gambe sparpagliandosi la mammaglia, / e noi, in tre o quattro, contro cento e cento... / Andiamo, ragazze, addosso! / Se no, le prendiamo! / E ragazzi, ragazze serpeggiano come fruste per la piazza. / Un quadrato di cielo tra i cavi e il fosco delle stelle, / e jeep, e camionette, manganelli che sgrugnano, / la statua di Leonardo solitaria tra i quattro che tengono le catene. / E Sergio, la Rosanna, come un sogno, / ci siamo trovati tra le case di via Silvio Pellico / che sul fondo la visione formato cartolina era spalancata, / tra gli archi e i portici, del cavallo-monumento in piazza Duomo. / Vigliacchi! Assassini! e a noi sembra che alle spalle, / se ci fermiamo, risplende la grande bandiera / come un lenzuolo rossa sullo scozzonarsi delle teste ammatite. / Poliziotti-angelo, / con la forca e le corde, / braccia sorelle che stringono come una morsa, / ci avete avvinghiato ai fianchi e da carogne / con gli zaini che vi pesano di bombe sulle spalle, e, come martelli, / correte appresso ai nostri fiati con le bocche che tuonano, i fratelli-in-bestia, / come mezzi cingolati i che vengono avanti da scarafaggi e sanno che stritoleranno, / il tempo non scorre piú come il tempo, e di un cielo gotico / i palazzi ottocenteschi allungano la strada / di tonfi, bestemmie e bastonate che fanno stramazzone... / Occhi di brace di Sergio, / tra quei denti di mona! / Io a teatro che sto lí a guardare / i pugni, manganellate e la sputacchiata / che, sulle mascelle, di violaceo sembra oscurarsi, / e lí, che tremano, che mordono la gola, / miei pensieri vigliacchi, porca la ragione, / che il cuore, come un figlio che è nato bastardo, / soffocano di un urlare che sta per piangere. / Pensieri di madre, pensieri di tempi trascorsi, / di libri letti, di prigionie, di sgranchire una volta per tutte / il legnoso della mia vita stitica e di malumori, / per scorbacchiarlo, per riderne, e divertirmi a fare il buffone / nel farmi scariolare incatenato a San Vittore, / pensieri di terrori, e una gran voglia / di rovesciare la mia vita in un casino della malora, / e gli occhi che mi chiamano: vieni! e nel dire di no / sperduti occhi ossidrici, occhi belli fatti di colori, / tra i panni grigioverdi, / mitra tenuti bassi, / gli spioni che in borghese sussurrano e annusano l'oscurità, / gli elmetti che in cerchio si urtano come bocce, e poi si srotolano via dallo spazio / dove è rimasto quel bruciore tra me e lui, / quel farfugliarmi ansante, elusivo, che il mio buttarmi / non me, né lui, né loro, ma, porco Iddio, / tu eri là, Sergio, / con le vampe degli occhi, il mio spezzarsi dentro...

VII.

Sergio, Sergio,
muffled in your cloak,
defiant and tenacious
wolf bite, friend
of the hard-set mouth,

who evenings in your
stepmother house,
like a lord, undergo
the love of your pains,
chew-and-chomp that,
rabid, constricts your dreams
and wails and casts
them to the winds...
Sergio, you who twist
my arm to make me scream
and steal the lemonade
to show us up, but,
like a cat, like me too,
risk a whipping
when the papermill cart tips
and they chase us as we
scale mountains of bales
that, furious, we rummage,
grasping for fantasies midst
the albums, the magicians,
the caliphs, Mandrake, Marco
Polo, the books of Viscount
Bragelonne and Wallace, D'Artagnan,
the cart that to us ingenues
seems to lead where
houses choke on the horizon
and the clouds are magic -
will we never die? -
you, Sergio,
who with Mantova and his band
have been with me to witness
how our comrades escaped
and like the man who to leap
hides his eyes you've been
one with me as if we were
bullocks landing together

on their snouts...

VIII.

Oh, day that returns

never to repeat itself,

fascist scum of General Ridgeway

in Piazza della Scala,

and us,

clenching

that rainbow flag

midst fists and voices,

we thought we saw it drop

plunging like a wing

that dreams of liberty

unfurl...

Assassins! Carrion!

Bubonic General! Heads

bowed amid the trumpet blares

and the wailing sirens, the mob

scatters and we, in threes

and fours, mobilize against

the thousands... Let's go, boys,

courage, if not we're doomed!

And us boys and girls

whiplash through the square...

A square swath of sky

amid the cables and the haze

of the stars, and jeeps and

trucks and billy-clubs

that smash the snout

of the statue of Leonardo -

there all alone in the thick of the four

who brandish all the chains...

And Sergio, Rosanna,

as if in a dream, there

we were among the houses

on Via Silvio Pellico -

it was, in the distance,
like a postcard vision wide-open,
through arches and porticoes,
to the equestrian monument
of Piazza Duomo.
Cowards! Murderers!
It looks like, if we stop,
behind us there shines
the great red flag like a sheet
over the breaking of madding heads.
Guardian-angel-cops, with
the gallows and the nooses,
hand-cuffs that grip like vices,
you've lacerated our flanks,
and like carrion with knap-sacks
weighing you down with bombs,
like hammers, you pursue us,
stifling our breathing with
those mouths of yours that thunder,
brothers turned beasts, tanks
that advance like cockroaches
knowing they will crush,
time no longer passes like time
and from a gothic sky
the neoclassical palaces
lengthen the road with
splashes and curses and clubbings
that drive us rabid...
Sergio's hot coal eyes
and his teeth of gaping gorge!
And me, like I'm at the theater,
I stand and watch
the punches and cloutings and spittle
that on jaws grows livid and there,
trembling and choking, I
withdraw into cowardly thoughts -

oh, you vile reason! - that suf-
focate the heart, like a bastard child
in a scream verging on tears:
thoughts of my mother, of
times spent, books read, prison,
of stretching once and for all
to relieve the wood stiffness
of my life of constipation and fits,
to put it to shame, laugh over it,
and enjoy playing the fool when
I had myself carted in chains
to San Vittore Jail..
Thoughts of terrors, and of the urge
to cast all my life's seeds
in some seedy brothel where
eyes call to me: come!
but I say no to those stray-
ing blow torch eyes,
lovely eyes so iridescent
mid the gray-green uniforms,
machine guns lowered,
spies in civies that
hiss and sniff in the dark,
encircling helmets that
collide like bocce balls
and careen into space
where what remains is
that burning sensation between us,
that breathless, elusive babel,
my mortal leap at...?
It's not me! Not him! Not them!
But, God be cursed,
Sergio,
you were there
with fire in your eyes
when I was cracking from within.

II.

L'era 'na furusella de buschiva,
de or cavi e læer abijé,
de sverd, che tempuriv 'me fa la lüsa
ils vont changeant pour se jamais donner.
Sren cör, che vegn inanc me fa la viöla,
setidà sü quj gamb che par danzáss
e te respira d'un legria de spusa
ch'al sò murus la gioia de luntan
fä curre, avert i brasc, embjebol d'ala
cume se 'l sù la tèra retruâss...
Lé, quan' bej nivur, quan' lünn ciel che van!
inalterabl bëj öcc de la dulör,
due che l'intelligensa par severa
e slira 'na pietà che te fa mör,
lé, che se te vardi vegn tristessa,
me a tí d'amur el cör ghe l'an brüsa
e tra quj mancartient: de fiâ nel vöj
se lé te canta tí cunsüma un piang...

XXI.

Razza ciavada, chimera re di gatt,
caràpuss göggia che ne la valva fùria
te scündet la pag-úra di tò mar
e ballerín s'inunda l'ippocampuss
me 'n' anda sciammenéra de cercàtt,
scultim, ciamí quèl füsfer fiurdalisa,
i rosaneon da la nott rubà,
quèl'umbra de la sabbia che de sülfer
sfrisen i pèss ballabuntemp de sâ.
Mí vuraría la lüsa di sprufunda,
'na paradisa de stellèss sül mar
e quj triangul ciar che nel tramunta
fan circul, flèss de ramm e cume squam
i lènd de mar, i fòj de or lamera
ch'a l'infini scarlighen ne l'aranz,
e j ógg mí vuraría de la tristessa

che passa sota el mar tra i pèss de piomb

e l'acqua che par brillen l'è la spessa

de quj barlùm antìgh s'dementegus...

Gügg flurescent, pèss da la pell morta,

cücc sguladú durment, là, sota i croz,

vardí, cumè che frappa la tegnóra!

e cume vela nera vegn la nott!

Da Teater

II.— E ra una simpatica fanciulla da boschivi, / di chiome d'oro e labbra vestita / di verdi occhi che, mutevoli al tempo come la luce, / vanno mutando di colore per non donarsi mai. / Stringicuore, che viene innanzi come fa la viola, / sottile sulle gambe che sembrano danzarsi / e ti respira d'un rallegrarsi da sposa / che al suo amoroso la gioia da lontano / fa correre, aperte le braccia, amabili le ali / come se il sole la terra si ritrovasse... / Lei, quante belle nuvole, quanti lunari cieli che. vanno! / inalterabili begli occhi del dolore, / nei quali l'intelligenza appare severa / e risuona una pietà, che ti fa morire, / lei, che se ti guarda viene tristezza, / come a te d'amore il cuore gliel'hanno bruciato / e tra quei mancamenti di fiato nel vuoto / se lei ti canta ti consuma in piangere..

XXI. — Razza chiodata, chimera re dei gatti di mare, carapoago che nella valva furiosa / nascondi la paura dei tuoi mari / e ballerino s'inonda l'ippocampo / come una sciamante goffa andatura di

mèdicanti, / ascoltatemi, chiamate quel fosforescente fiordaliso, / i colori rosaneon rubati alla notte, / quell'ombra della sabbia che di zolfo / sfiorano i pesci perdigiorno di sale. / lo vorrei la luce delle profondità, / una paradisiaca di cieli stellati sul mare / e quei triangoli chiari che nel tramonto / fanno cerchi, riflessi di rame e come squame / gli spiazzati di mare, i fogli di lamiera dorata / che all'infinito scivolano nell'aranciato, / e gli occhi io vorrei della tristezza / che passa sotto il mare tra i pesci di piombo / e l'acqua che sembrano far brillare è la melma / di quei barlumi antichi che non hanno memoria... / Aghi florescenti, pesci dalla pelle morta, / accucciati gabbiani dormenti, là, sotto le scogliere, / guardate, come batte le ali il pipistrello! / e come a vela spiegata nera viene la notte!

II.

She was a wild lass

of the dark woods,

hair of gold and lips

so full..., with green eyes

that changing in time like

the light go changing

color never to fade...

Heart-breaker that blooms

early like the violet,

supple as if dancing,

and she inhales you

like the joy of a bride who,

to her beloved, offers

joy from on high, with

arms spread and lovely wings

as if the sun was re-

discovering the earth...

She... How many lovely

clouds, how many lunatic

skies that transpire!
Exquisite eyes of pain
where acumen seems severe
and a compassion ripples
to make you die... She,
who makes you sad when
you gaze at her, as if,
for you, love has been
consumed - and amid those
failures of breathe
in the void, if she
sings for you, your
tears are consumed.

XXI

Impaled race, chimera,
king of sea cats, barbed
carapace in furious valves
hiding the fear of your seas -
the dancer drowns the seahorse
in swarming, clumsy sways
of beggars - so, hear me out,
call the phosphorescent fleur-de-lys,
the pink neon colors robbed from night,
the shadow of the sands grazing,
with sulphur, the idle salt fish.
I want the light of the depths,
a paradisiac of starlit skies
upon the sea, those lucent
triangles that at sunset form
circles, copper prisms
and, like scales, expanses of water,
the gilded metal foils
that ripple orange toward the
infinite -
and I want
the sight of the melancholy that passes

beneath the sea amid
the fish of lead and
the water they seem to radiate
is the ooze of those ancient
glimmers without memory...
Fluorescent needles, fish
of dead scales, hunched
seagulls slumbering,
there under the reefs,
look! Look how the bat
beats its wings! And how,
unfurling its black sail,
night comes!

L'aria

A l'arba sùlfer, ai pàsser che fan festa,
l'è un rusià de névur malascént
che fòsfer, clori, arsenegh e remèsta
de Breda, de Nerviàn un firmament
t'infèscia sù Milan de malattia,
che sura i cupp schiliga me la gent
che per cità van umber d'un'aria.
Ûslitt, anema dulsa, anema spèrsa,
franfròtt ch'aj grund sajòeca e vula via,
m'avì strepà dal cör na vus invèrsa
e chi, nel lècc, lassá sta panarisa,
sta büsa morta d'ustarla malversa...
Oh Lamber, Röttul, mia stagiun scalisa,
cul Gñüli galavrà e aj müt sgarbèj
lappà di di che vègn e par che bisa,
e un sù che fiapp ghe sbigna dai grappèj,
papà segünd d'una foto antiga
e terz i ögg che pòden pü vedè.
Arént al taul, cume vèssegh minga,
bev i bellèss de vùn sto magotèj.
Oh cör, fiur de speransa, cör che giga,
a spàrt despettenent i mè cavèj

brev del bersò, el ramenghin che pia,
bèl ciel che inai feniss di mè fradèj.
S'angrùtta i copp dal püvasch che spia,
la pèlgura a stravent la möv la frasca
e mi, la vita in ödi che me cria,
nel lècc me smangia pes 'g d'una pücciasca,
e sgagni i mè regòrd, gùsti na ciappa
di baravàj ch'un di me diran: asca!

Da I cart

La follia. – A Valba solforosa, ai passerì che fanno festa / è un rosare eli nuvole malazzate / che fosforo, cloro, arsenico, e rimescola / di Breda, di Nerviano un firmamento / ingombra su Milano di malattia, / che sopra le tegole scivola come le genti / che per la città vanno come ombre d'una follia. // Uccellto, anima dolce, anima sperduta, / franfrottini che alle gronde saltellano e volano via, / m'avete strappato dal cuore una voce inversa / e qui, nel letto, lasciato il patereccio, / questa buca morta d'un'osteria maledetta... / Oh Lambro, Rottole, mia stagione spavalda, / con Giulio ronzare come calabroni e ai muti sgibelli / parlare dei giorni che verranno e sembrano sciami, / e un sole che flaccido ci osserva di nascosto tra i grappoli d'uva, / mio padre, secondo di una foto antica, / e terzi gli occhi che non possono più vederli, // Accosto al tavolo, come se non ci fosse, / a bere i resti dei bicchieri di tutti, questo fantolino, / Oh cuore, fiore di speranza, cuore che danza, / a scompigliare spettinandoli i miei capelli / la breva dalla pergola, e il passero che pigola, / bel cielo che mai finisce dei miei fratelli. // Singhiozzano le tegole il piovasco / che s'avverte nell'aria, / la pergola dell'altana allo stravento agita le frasche, / e io, la vita in odio che mi grida / nel letto mi smangia peggio di una puttana / e mordo i miei ricordi, gusto le chiappe / delle mie masserizie che un giorno mi diranno: osa! salta!

Madness

In the sulphur dawn,
for the sparrows that frolic,
it's a flush of chronic clouds -
phosphorus, chlorine, arsenic -
all compounded in a firmament
of Breda and Nerviano,
it plagues Milan, plagues
from the rooftops where
it slips and slides
like the people who
through the city go
like shadows of madness.
Little bird, sweet soul,
scattered soul, whimsicalities
that leap about the gutters
and fly away, you've
wrenched from my heart
a contrary voice, and here,
in bed, left my nails bruised,
in this dead dive of
a cursed tavema...

Oh, Rivers Lambro and Rottolo,
my glorious season,
with Giulio to buzz like hornets
and to the mute stools
speak of days to come,
looking like swarms,
and a sun that flaccid
observes us on the sly
mid the grape vines, and
my father, second in an old photo,
and, third, the eyes that
no longer see anyone...
I approach the table,
as if it wasn't there,
to drink the dregs
of everybody's drink,
this child...
Oh heart,
flower of hope, heart
that dances to scatter
ruffling my hair,
the breeze in the arbor
and the sparrow that chirps!
Lovely sky of my brothers
that never ends...
The roof-tiles gasp
under the downpour
imminent in the air,
the arbor of the terrace sways
its branches in the gusts,
and I, life in a hate that shrieks,
in bed am consumed
worse than a whore
and I champ at the bit
of my memories and chomp
the cheeks of all my accoutrements

that one day will urge

me to dare and leap!

Oh òmm

Oh òmm, che sul nel frègg andì de prèssia,

guardiv indré, vardi al fjö, che mör,

che disen dîm, sü,, dîm un pù de tètta,

sü dîm, un sgrisurin de murusia,

e viàlter che passì cul ghign di mort ...

Milan, foppa de òmm, de ciel che pètta,

de balabiött, che vör massâss,

na vita che verén par che la spètta,

Milan, rùns' gia de vècc e fjö fugâ,

de òmm che fâ de giüss ghiccen cuj face.

Da I cart

Oh uomini – Oh uomini che, soli nel freddo, andate di fretta, / guardatevi indietro, guardate ai figli che muoiono, / che dicono datemi, su, datemi un po' del vostro latte, / su datemi, un piccolo brivido di amorosità, / e voi che passate col ghigno dei morti... / Milano, fossa di uomini, cielo che loffia e puzza, / di allegri poveracci, ragazzini che vogliono ammazzarsi, / una vita che sembra aspettare ormai solo il veleno, / Milano, roggia di vecchi e giovani affogati, / di uomini che fatti di brodo di letame s'inculano con le facce.

Oh, men...

Oh men who, alone

in the cold, rush,

look around,

see the children

who are dying

yet say, "please,

give me some of your milk,

please, give me one

shiver of love..."

And you who pass by

with the smirk of the dead...

Milan, the last ditch of men,

sky that flatulates and stinks

of jovial turds,

kids ready to kill each other,

life that by now seems

to want only poison,

Milan, mineshaft

of drowned youths and elders,
of men who, now essence
of manure, defile themselves
face to face.

Tuuu, che mi sorridi verde luna

Tuuu, che mi sorridi verde luna
El Paradis... Se fa svelt! Ma, 'me quèl là,
forsi vegn priina l'Infernu, o 'stu pastiss
del Limbu, Purgatori, e 'na sorpresa
de minestrin cù risi e bisi
che un penser se 'l vegn traversa 'n alter
e l'alter l'è 'n regord tra milla e pù...
I nom pr'esempi, o i cansun... Eccu,
sun lì, che camini, g'ù gnanca per i ball
quèl che me pirla... Tracch!... Da 'na vetrina
te miagula 'na mina cun la tuss...
L'è 'n quarantott, 'na rüssia girabolda,
un deslassàss de tütt la buttunéra...
Solitude, el Men ai lov, Carioca,
i blues de l'Armstrongh, Ciattanuga ciù-ciù,
“... e le patate si chianan patate...”
T'amo, t'amo, sei per me la vita, intera
e pö la Gilda, Sciarlot cun Viuletera,
la Ingrid Bergman, el Uels del Terso uomo,
nüm taccà dré d'un tram càntum Brasil...

Da L'angel

[Tu, che mi sorridi verde luna ...]- Tu, che mi sorridi verde luna... / Il paradiso... Si fa in fretta! ... Ma, come a quello là, / forse viene prima l'Inferno, o questo pasticcio / del Limbo, Purgatorio, e una sorpresa / di minestrone con riso e piselli / che un pensiero se viene traversa un altro / e l'altro è già un ricordo tra mille e più... / I nomi, per esempio, o le canzoni... Ecco, / sono lì. che cammino, non ne ho neanche per l'anima / di quel che mi frulla dentro... Tracch!... Da una vetrina / ti miagola una ragazza con la tosse ... / U un quarantotto, una confusione intricatissima, / uno slacciarsi di tutti i bottoni... / Solitude, The Man I Love, Carioca, / i blues di Armstrong, Chattanooga chu-chu / “... e le patate si chianan patate...” / “T'amo, T'amo sei per me la vita, intera...” / e poi Gilda, Charlot con la Viuletera, / Ingrid Bergman, e Wells nel Terzo Uomo, / noi attaccati dietro i tram cantiamo Brazil..

You, green moon

You, green moon
that smiles at me:
Paradise! Quick!
Perhaps Hell comes first,
this mess, this pastiche,

with Limbo and Purgatory,
what a surprise! Like
minestrone with rice and peas,
thoughts heaped upon thoughts
with a thousand memories
all embroiled...
Like
names or words of songs...
They elude me
as I stroll - but I can't
follow the path to
the mincemeat of what
is blending inside...
Ugh! From a storefront
a chick meows at you,
coughs - it's a 48 RPM,
most intricate confusion,
unbuttoning of all possible buttons:
"Solitude", "The Man I Love",
"Carioca", Armstrong's blues,
"Chattanooga Choo-Choo" and
"Potatoes, You Potatoes",
"I Love You, I Love You,
You're All That Life Means"
and then Gilda
and Charlie Chaplin
with the Flower-Girl,
Ingrid Bergman and Welles
in "Citizen Kane" -
while we buy it all
singing "Brazil"...

Che d'i, ragassi! In de per tütt balera!

Che d'i, ragassi! In de per tütt balera!
Baler in strada, baler den' di curtil...
L'è la mania del ballo! Milan che balla!
Gh'è 'n giògli de bocce, un prà... Sü tri canicc.

e, traccheta, la sala belle prunta...

Un urchestrina... Tri balabiott pescà

fòra Lambrà... E via, volare! El Nait

na lüsa sula! basta che penderi,

chi quatter lampedin de carta rosa...

Gardenia, Miralago, Stella Rossa,

el Lido, Lago Park, la Capannina...

Fina nel Trotter... E ogne nom 'na storia,

che basta di "l'era 'l quarantacinq"

e pö "quarantases", e a tanta gent

s'indrissa i urègg, ghe vegn i furmigun...

Vegnivum da la guèra, e per la strada

gh'evuni passà insèma amur, dulur.

Amò sparàven, amò gh'eren i mort,

e serum nüm, serum class uperara,

nüm serum i scampà da fam e bumb,

nüm gent de strada, gent fada de morta,

num serum me sbuttí dai fopp del mund,

e nun per crüdeltá, no per despresi,

mancansa de pietá, roia de nüm,

ma, cume 'na passlun de sù s'ciuppada,

anca la nojt nüm la vurevum sù...

Ciamila libertá, ciamila sbornia,

ciamila 'me vuri, festa al cujan!

ma nüm che l'èmpatida propi tütta

anca la libertá se sèm gudü!

da L'angel

[Che giorno, ragazzi! Dappertutto feste da ballo]. – Che giorno, ragazzi! Dappertutto feste da ballo! / Balere in strada, balere nei cortili, / è la mania del ballo, Milano che balla! / C'è un gioco di bocce, un prato... Su tre cannicci, / e, traccheta, la sala è bell'e pronta... / Un'orchestrina... Tre strapelati pescati / fuori Lambrate... E via volare! Il Night / una luce sola! basta che penzolino / quelle quattro lampadine di carta rosa... / Gardenia Dancing, il Miralago, la Stella Rossa, / il Lido, il Lago Park, la Capannina... / Perfino al Trotter... E ogni nome una storia, / che basta dire "era il quarantacinque" / e poi "quarantasei" e, a tanta gente, / si raddrizzano le orecchie, vengono pruriti ai piedi... / Venivamo dalla guerra e per la strada / ci avevamo passato assieme amori, dolori, / ancora sparavano, ancora c'erano i morti, / ed eravamo noi, eravamo classe operaia, / noi ci avamo gli scampati alla fame e alle bombe, / noi, gente di strada, gente fatta di morte, / noi eravamo come germinati dalle fosse del mondo, / e non per crudeltá, non per disprezzo, / mancanza di pietá, vomito di noi, / ma come una passione di sole scoppiata, / anche la notte noi la volevamo sole... / Chiamatela libertá, chiamatela sbornia, / chiamatela come volete, festa ai piú coglioni!, / ma noi che l'abbiamo patita proprio tutta / anche la libertá ci siamo goduta!

What a day, boys!

What a day, boys!

Dancing everywhere!

Dancing in the street,

dancing in courtyards,
it's an orgy of dancing,
it's Milan all a-dancing!
People are playing bocce
on three courts laid out,
all in velvet, the hall
is readied for our joy!
A band, three billiard-
ball-heads flushed out
from Lambrate... Off we go!
The Nightclub, one light
alone - all we need
are those four pink
paper lanterns swinging...
Gardenia Dance Hall,
Lakeview, Red Star, the Lido,
Park Lake, the Hut, and
the Trotter to boot!
Every name is a history,
and all you have to say
is "1945" to make
that clear, or "1946" and then
hosts perk up their ears
and their feet start to itch.
We were emerging from the war
and in the streets
we'd lived loves and pains,
shots still resounded,
there were casualties,
and there we were,
the working class,
the survivors of hunger and bombs,
us, street people,
people shaped by death,
we were sprung from
the pits of the world,

and, not out of cruelty.
scom, lack of pity, nausea,
but like an exploding
passion for the sun,
we even urged
the night to be sun...
Call it liberty,
call it drunkenness,
call it what you will,
festival of the biggest jerks,
but we who suffered it all,
liberty too, revelled!

Scriv, scriv, puèta! Sta li a pissutà!

Scriv, scriv, puèta! Sta li a pissutà!
'N alter invemu 'ndà! Vegn primavera!
Ch'èm la legria del temp che se ne va.
Insci, tuma l'invermu, e pö se spera
che primavera semper tomarà.
Scriv, scriv, puèta! Nel büs d'una galera
due che te gira intuma el mund e va
senza che te la ciàppet la belessa
che dèss la gh'è e pö la scapparà.

Da Lünn

[Scriv, scriv, poeta! Sta lí a pisciottare!]. – Scriv, scriv, poeta! Sta li a pisciottare! / Un altro inverno andato! Viene primavera! / Abbiamo l'allegria del tempo che se ne va. / Così, toma l'inverno, e poi si spera / che primavera sempre tomerà. / Scriv, scriv, poeta! Nel buco d'una galera / dove ti gira attorno il mondo e va / senza che tu la prendi la bellezza / che adesso c'è e poi fuggirà.

Write, poet, write

Write, poet, write!
Piss forth your juices!
Another winter shot!
Spring on its way!
We clutch at the joy
of time that flows by.
So winter comes back
and we still hope
spring will return.

Write, poet, write!

In the hole of a jail

where the world spins your head

and passes before

you can grasp its beauty,

its presence that will flee...

Se vègn la mort ghe disarù surela

Se vègn la mort ghe disarù surela,

perchè ne l'aria respiri anca la mort,

che la se scund, la sta cume suspesa,

la ghe cumpagna cun la stracca e 'l sònn,

pö d'impruis la fiada, la se svelia

e l'ànema inamura a lassà 'l corp,

e se ghe pensi la chiamarù nemisa,

perchè 'me 'n lader la ghe roba el fià

e la s'intana in corp e malattia

semper diventa se la vör parlà,

se sula pó la vègn dirù amisa,

perchè l'è facil inamuràss de lé,

se pèrd slöja e dular, 'sta grama lesa

che ciàmum vita e l'è dumà velen.

Quan' pö la vegnarà farù 'me tücc,

sensa paròl, nel tàs che vègn del mund.

Se viene la morte gli dirò sorella. – Se viene la morte gli dirò sorella, / perché nell'aria respiro anche la morte, / che si nasconde, sta come sospesa, / ci accompagna con la stanchezza e il sonno, / poi d'improvviso dà un fiato, si risveglia / e inamora l'anima a lasciare il corpo, // e se ci penso la chiamerò nemica, / perché come un ladro ci ruba il respiro / e s'intana nel corpo e malattia / sempre diventa se vuole parlare, / se poi viene sola dirò amica, / perché è facile innamorarsi di lei, / si lasciano noia e dolore, questo malo disfacimento / che chiamiamo vita ed è soltanto veleno, / Quando poi verrà farò come tu ti, / senza parole, nel silenzio che viene del mondo.

If death comes

If death comes, I'll

call her sister, for

I breathe death in the air,

it hides, suspended,

she keeps us company

in fatigue and sleep,

then suddenly in one gulp

she reawakens and woos

the soul to leave the body...
If I think about it,
I'll call her foe,
for like a thief
she steals our breath,
sneaks into the body,
speaks and becomes disease...
But if she comes alone,
I'll call her friend,
for it's easy to fall
in love with her
to cast off boredom and pain,
this rotten undoing
that we call life
when it's mere poison...
So when she comes,
I'll act as all do,
without a word,
in the silence
born of the world.

PIERO MARELLI

After publishing his first two collections in Italian, Piero Marelli (Limbate 1939) starts writing in dialect with *Stralüsc*, which already displays the need to go beyond the lyric fragment through long poetic sequences. Such a need becomes greater in the subsequent collections, in which Marelli takes an original approach to the myths of Greek and medieval antiquity: *Antigone*, *Oedipus*, *Heloise*.

In keeping with a very frequent tendency in neodialect poetry, the dialect chosen is that of Verano Brianza, peripheral and without literary tradition, phonetically harsher than the Milanese to which it is related. On the other hand, Marelli has been open towards Italian and the oldest forms of dialect, in an experimentation grounded in a deep awareness of aims and above all alimented by a restlessness that leads the author to continually test the meaning of writing in dialect in an age that has severed its ties with its rural past. For this reason as well, the predominant result is a tormented writing, which avoids any temptation to give in to musicality, while showing at the same time a clear preference for verses longer than the hendecasyllable and for broadly articulated stanzas.

We are clearly in the realm of a deforming and visionary expressionism, which tends to overcharge the page through the use of diverse material: various forms of analogy, iteration, semantic disarticulation.

Totally alien to vehemence of the avant-garde, such stylistic restlessness represents on a formal level a tension that aims to bring to light a submerged reality in movement, which presents itself in a chaotic and labyrinthine tangle of characters and voices asking to be interpreted.

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I

Birlögia la tua sbirciada i
'cumpagna la dulza sbandada
che sgöra 'ride te se trövet ti
per lasà ai me fianch 'n pö de giracö arius
ma la palta che catarö föra
sarala quella de la primavera.
"Cred minga che i muntagn
inn divers del pian
o che la sira improvvisa desmentega
la lüstrada del mezdi. Padrum
di busch e di urelocc, specierö
in vitametema l'amur sbilzá da l'umbria
specierö la grisa pulver a sbirtilamin
la buca, ma anca la músiga che vegn
cume aqua d'està, sura
la mia crapa, sura la mia paüra".
Semper.

Da Stralüsc

Strabica li tu occhiata / accompagna la dolce sbandata / che vola accanto a te / per lasciare ai miei fianchi un po'di vertigine ariosa, / ma il fango che sceglierò / sarà quello della primavera. / "Non credere le montagne diverse dalla pianura / o che la sera improvvisa dimentichi / brillare del mezzogiorno. Pádrone / dei boschi e degli orologi, aspetterò / per sempre l'amore uscito dall'ombra / aspetterò la grigia polvere a portami via / la bocca, ma anche la musica che viene / come acqua estiva, sopra / la mia testa, sopra la mia paura." / Sempre.

I

Your cross-eyed glance
ushers the sweet skid

that takes off from you
to leave at my flanks
a bite of airy vertigo
but the mud I will choose
will be springtime's.
"Never believe the mountains
are other than the plains
or that the sudden evening
forgets the noon's blaze.
Master of forests and clocks,
I will always await
the love emerging from shadows,
I will await the gray dust
to sweep me away,
the mouth, and the music
that comes like summer water
over my head,
over my fever" -
always.

III.

La fontana l'è sücia. La primavera tumarà pü.

La fêra e i campan ànn sumená

'l panurama. Chì, gh'è dumá 'na dona
de suterà e giujna per depü.

Sunt cumpiüda, 'l me andà e turnà

l'è cumpiü, la ròda l'à fá 'n'òlter gir

e mi su no se 'l pigher e i matad

me trasfumerann 'n bandiröla de tòla

a segnà 'l bell dal campanin.

Chì resta de recugnuss l'ütima ùra

l'amar de vün che de nesüna part

emm maj 'ncuntrà! Quel che m'à sciüsciá

cunt i brasc e 'l caf pundà aj me tempi

per vedem visin cume nisügn

l'è stá bum de fà. Tì muca de tentam

fêma 'l sguagnì di cagnö, sluntana i trüsc

che 'ndüjñi tremà rent de mi, branca
tùta la beleza di ari cume se füsën cerüs.
Sgarbeli suj mür 'n'eredità
de scöt, ve mandi ugiad cume resch
adess che m'inventi prunta
e i ölter inn prunt a strasàm
vegia e lasciutèla, a disperà 'l mancà di specc
che bela e petenada la vör andà.
Tì, piegá cunt la faccia a tera
te néghet o ametet i delizi di respir scambià?
Te respundi da 'n badalüff d'auror
per semper e n rüjna e 'n tuchèl de cör
a martell... Só del tirass via
di gos, del balà sura i taul
di pügn, del gnient scumpari guardat:
eren luntan de mi i vantagg del pesc
minga mè 'l cunstimass venerà
püse di abitüidin... Sé, aduravi 'l rigà
del vegni, pütüràda al bummaner
per retruas risunada a partegni
prima de ricumpun préa a préa, unda
a unda, gemàda cunvinta a gemàda...
L'è 'stò sunà d'oss a sparpaja
löch recugnusü cume busch inurbì d'aqua:
chi vór i glori e la scendra di re?
Chi sà cüntà 'l perdes del me vin gentil?
Mi 'e giràvi smagiada di vif e di mort
e sü 'l me venter rejncunträ
recasciaven i nascit, 'n di stess mila maner
de quand se derven i cadenazz aj salüt.
Chì dal spüzà di fiüm 'sculti 'l prestass
di primavera, 'l dundà penserüs di està,
la vedrina culurada di utünn, la cunfurtevuła
giuntàda di inverni... Föj bianch
duarien restà, per pudè inferi aj distanzi
e se me separi, l'invidia di risparmià

me consacrerà al surgent incantà

da la mia set.

Da Antigone

III. – La fontana è asciutta. La primavera non tornerà più. / Il trambusto e le campane hanno seminato / il panorama. Qui, c'è soltanto una donna / da seppellire e giovane per di più. / Sono compiuta, il mio andare e tornare / è compiuto, la ruota ha fatto un altro giro / e io non so se la pigrizia e le follie / mi trasformeranno in una banderuola di latta / a segnare il bello dal campanile. / Qui resta da riconoscere l'ultima ora / l'amaro di uno che da nessuna parte / mai abbiamo incontrato! Quello che mi ha succhiato / con le braccia e il cavo delle mani ha posato alle tempie / per vedermi da vicino come nessuno / è stato capace di fare. Tu smettila di tentarmi / ferma il lamento dei cani, allontana i fastidi / che indovino tremare accanto a me, prendi / tutta la bellezza delle arie come se fossero cordiali. / Incido sui muri un'eredità / da riscuotere, vi mando occhiate come resche / adesso che m'invento pronta / e gli altri sono pronti a sciuparmi / vecchia e bambina, a disperare la mancanza di specchi / perché bella e pettinata vuole andare. // Tu, piegato con la faccia a terra / neghi o ammetti le delizie dei respiri scambiati? // Ti rispondo da una moltitudine di aurore / per sempre e in rovina e un pezzetto di cuore.

a martello... So del tirarsi via / degli ingordi, del ballare sopra i tavoli / dei pugni, al come niente scomparire sguardi: / erano lontani da me i vantaggi del peggio / non mio il consumarsi venerato / più delle abitudini... Sì, adoravo l'allinearsi / del futuro, dipinta alle belle maniere / per ritrovarmi risuonata ad appartenere / prima di ricomporre pietra a pietra, onda / a onda gemmatura convinta a gemmatura... // È questo risuonare d'ossa sparpagliate / luogo riconosciuto come bosco accecato d'acqua: / chi vuole la gloria e la cenere dei re? / Chi sa contare il perdersi del mio vino gentile? // Io giravo macchiata dai vivi e dai morti / e sul mio ventre reincontrato / rispuntavano le nascite, nelle stesse mille maniere / di quando si aprono i catenacci ai saluti. // Qui dal puzzare dei fiumi ascolto il prestarsi delle primavere, / il dondolare pensieroso delle estati, / la vetrina colorata degli autunni, la confortevole / perdita degli inverni... Fogli bianchi / dovrebbero restare, per potere inferire alle distanze / e se mi separo, l'invidia dei risparmiati // mi consacrerà alle sorgenti, incantate dalla mia sete.

III

The fountain is dry. Spring wont return.

Tumults and bells have sown

the panorama. Here, just a woman

to bury - she was young.

I am whole, my wanderings as well:

the wheel has come 'round again,

and I dont know if sloth and madness

will turn me into a tin weathervane

to top the beauty of the belltower.

Here lies the last hour to recognize

the bitter taste of one who

we have never met. He who

sucked me in with his arms,

set the hollows of his hands

at my temples to see me closer

than anyone else has ever been

able to... You! Stop tempting me,

silence the dogs' barking,

enough of this nuisance

that I sense trembling in me,

oust all the beauty of the airs

as if they were from the heart...

I incise in the walls

a heritage to reclaim
and dart meaningful glances at you
now that I invent my new image
ready for others to ready their wars
on me, old and infantile, to despair
of the absence of mirrors - for
lovely and preened she wants to go!
You, bent earthward,
do you deny or admit
the delights of reciprocal breathings?
I answer you from a myriad
of dawns, always and in ruins
with a piece of the heart
hammered out... I know of
withdrawal and the insatiable
and dancing on tables
and fists and how to disappear
from prying glances like nothing:
the advantages of the worst
were always far from me
and I am far from any
extreme of consuming oneself
as venerated. Yes, I adored
how the future lined up,
when I was painted
in those lovely fashions
to see myself acclaimed,
to belong, before recomposing
stone by stone, wave by
wave, gemmation dedicated
to gemmation...
And this resounding of strewn bones,
recalled place like a forest
blind with water: who wants
the glory and ashes of kings?
Who knows how to estimate

the loss of my suave wine?
I wandered polluted
by the living and the dead
and on my rediscovered belly
births reemerged, in the same
thousand ways as when you open
the locks to so many greetings.
Here, from the stench of rivers,
I listen to the mutual assent
of springs, the ruminating sway
of summers, the autumn's
variegated window, the
comforting loss of winters...
White leaves should remain,
to rage in the distances,
and, if I depart, the envy
of survivors will consecrate me
at the springs, enchanted
by my thirst.

*

E quand i me pàgin basterann pü
te giürerò lóltra parlàda che vòr no muri.
Sunt stàda de cà 'n quel che scugnusévi
sgumènta 'n quel diventà dumâ 'n nom
segnàda da 'na matàna che stràscia
tücc i ôlter paròj. Recòrdes dunca, ripòrtela
anca s'el pár minga fàcil, la bùla
minzunàda da la valèta de rübìn
che adess se süga 'n quel cüntá
o 'n quel che maj em pudü svelà.
Cà no 'n'óltra mort 'stó dialett
'L sbasàss de tütt i memòri, a rinàss
maj 'n duè 'n sperdü badalüff
'nscì arènt che sugnàl l'è quàsì véra.

Da Eloisa

E quando le mie pagine non basteranno più / ti giurerò l'altra parlata che non vuole morire. / Ho abitato quello che non sapevo / sgomenta in quel diventare soltanto nome // segnata da una furia che uccide / tutte le altre parole. Ricordati dunque, riportala / anche se non sembra facile, la pozza

nominata dalla piccola valle delle robinie // che ora si asciuga in quello raccontato / o in quello che mai abbiamo potuto dire. / Non ha altra morte / questo dialetto // al ribasso di tutte le memorie, rinascere / chissà dove in perdita moltitudine / così vicino che sognarlo è quasi vero.

*

And when my pages no longer
suffice, I will swear to you
in the name of that other idiom
that does not want to die.
I have lived what, I never
knew, appals in that becoming
only a name, marked by
a fury that kills
all the other words.
So remember, take it to heart
even if it does not look easy,
the well named for the vale of acacias
that now dries up in what is
narrated, or in what we have never
been able to say. The only death
of this dialect, fading in everyone's
memory, is the rebirth, who
knows where in the diaspora,
so close that to dream it
is almost true...

I.

[...]

Sunt chi a dumandà 'l firunfucc gelùs, inzegà
da 'n güst ch'el tira i crüsc, féver d'ültim
margherit e s'genugiàd ai tàj de l'insalàda denanz
del frecc. Vé rivarà 'n senti de ramètt secch
e sciabelà intorna a 'u stremizi 'ncumprés
denter 'n stralüná pensàs a nöf rabèj e desedàss
magàri cuntra vü stess... Bechè 'l delicà mument
di fiù: come surprésa 'bucà, come aventüra
speràss, come recunuscènza 'l vurèss a tüscóss
Qujèt, vurarisi 'nda via, rubà da 'n zenté umbrùs
su no cusa regalà a 'stí prá avert, a 'stà gent

stravacàda a dísna 'n del mezdi de fèsta.
Cusa farò de quej 'ncuntrá? Ma fèmes, sètes
fà nümer no refüdá a la cantàda, che 'n pô
la vör rimpiançe 'n pô scurliss... Ah, savévi
che m'avrisi cüntá per quest, insèma 'l piesè
de met 'n fòeh quel tós ai salüd per travia
tüta 'na fèta del campà. Chì sunt stá giüjn
cunt adòss 'n'idéa de ves per semper. Ma la sira
l'è gemò prunta 'l fund de la val, pür quajcòss
se duarà ripét e fà ridiscent ai santi manér
del scrif, muri 'l pasá anca 'n del savèl, smenàch
o guadagnà fregüj che pòden amò salvàss:
vü minga purtâ da 'n'òltra part e g'û no pretendü
sübit 'n respünd, m'è stá asé 'n'ugiada
per riprend a cüntàla sü, liberàl 'n di pulmùn. Anca mi
sunt 'l vòster temp e vjòlter 'l mè, Che rimpiant
che vegnüd ànn purtâ i stagiùm? A respünd
nüm, setâ chì, cunt 'n pensà de cataföra.

da Paola

Sono qui a chiedere il poco parlare geloso, tormentato / da un gusto che porta f~atidi, febbre d'ultime // margherite e inginocchiate ai tagli d'insalate prima / del freddo. Vi arriverà un rumore di rametti secchi / e zoppicare inntorno ad uno spavento incompreso // dentro uno stralunato pensarsi a nuove contese e risvegliarvi / magari contro voi stessi. Cogliete il delicato momento / dei fiori: come sorpresa credere ancora, come avventura // sperarsi, come riconoscenza l'amore a tutto... / Calmo, vorrei andamene, rubato da un sentiero ombroso / non so cosa regalare a questi prati aperti, a questa gente // seduta a mangiare nel mezzogiorno festivo. / Cosa farò di quelli incontrati? Ma fermati, siediti / fai numero non rifiutato alla cantata, che un po' // vuole rimpiangere e un po' andare... Ah, sapevo / che mi avreste accettato per questo, insieme al piacere / d'incendiare quel togliersi ai saluti per buttare // tutta una fetta dei campare. Qui sono stato giovane / con addosso un'idea d'eternità. Ma la sera / è già pronta al fondo della valle, pure qualcosa // bisognerà ripetere e far ridiscendere alle giuste maniere / dello scrivere, morire al passato pure sapendolo, / rimetterci o guadagnare briciole che possono ancora salvarsi: // non vi ho portato da un'altra parte e non ho preteso / subito una risposta, mi è bastata un'occhiata / per riprendere il racconto, liberarlo nei polmoni. Anch'io sono il vostro tempo e voi il mio. Che rimpianti / che nascite hanno portato le stagioni? A rispondere / noi, seduti qui, con un pensare da scegliere.

I

I am here to demand
succinct, jealous speech,
tormented by a taste that disturbs,
feverish yen for the last daisies
bent when the salad is cut
just before the first frost.
The crunch of dry sapplings will reach you
with the limping through vague frights
within dizzying reflections on
new conflicts and your reawakening

perhaps against your will. Seize
this delicate moment of flowers:
like a surprise to believe still,
like an adventure of hope too,
like a vision of love for all..
Calm, I would like to leave,
abducted through shady groves -
but I don't know what to give
to these meadows, these people
picnicking this festive noon -
how will I handle these encounters?
Just stop, sit, join the chorus -
that is a bit nostalgic and cheery -
oh, I knew you would accept me
for this, with pleasure
of setting fire to that refusal
to greet the future in order to
throw on the coals a whole
slab of mere survival. Here
I've been young, bearing
an idea of eternity. The evening
is ready deep in this valley
yet something must be done
to repeat and redescend
to the just ways of writing,
to die to the past while
still knowing it, to get
ourselves whole again, or
earn crumbs worth saving:
I have not brought you
anywhere, have not demanded
a quick response or glance.
Suffice it that I resume
the story once more to
free it from the lungs.
I am your time

and you are mine.

What regrets and births

have brought on the seasons?

To answer, here we are seated,

with a thought to choose.

GIANCARLO CONSONNI

In its totality, Giancarlo Consonni's (Merate, Lecco, 1943) "harsh poetry of the Adda – as Franco Loi defined it in the introduction to his first collection, *Lumbardia* – seems to find its main inspiration in a skillful depiction of the natural landscape, albeit perceived from a very personal perspective which tends to constantly transfigure it in order to make of it a symbol of Consonni's tormented but basically joyous vision of existence.

The language adopted is the "airy" dialect of Verderio Inferiore, where the author spent his childhood and youth until the age of twenty-four. A harsh-sounding language which Consonni takes pains not to soften, underscoring instead its elements of disharmony and difficulty, so as to avoid any risk of giving in to an idyllic or nostalgic versification, which the subject matter might have inspired.

In reality, however, the interest in keeping alive the memory of the rural and artisan past rises more from the desire to relate than from the prejudicial rejection of urban modernity, which Consonni (professor of Urban Studies at Milan's Polytechnic) has studied as a scholar, dealing both with the theory and practice of urban projects and the literary image of the metropolitan universe.

Buttressed by a deep technical knowledge (as evidenced by his critical essays and comments on poetics), his poetry aims above all, through nature, to delve into an anthropological reality destined not to perish in its different facets: the overriding theme then becomes that of nothingness, or rather of absence, that poetry is asked to fill.

Hence the sense of *pietas* that runs through these verses which achieve the best results in certain moments of surrender between disenchantment and meditation, in which the expressive tension dissolves in cadences of sing-song or childhood tune.

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Cuscritt

a Enio.

I iù crèsp prepará la sira

vòn inturciá ai cònn del car

che faghén bèla la cà ai cuscritt

la stagiòn primà de la guéra.

Lunedì che vègn, quel che se sia,

la cà l'andrà disfada istèss
e nissògn al vusa adré ai tusòn
del tèmp perdü a fà di fiù.

Da Viridarium

Coscritti. – I fiori crespi preparati la sera / vanno attorcigliati alle canne del carro / che facciano bella la casa ai coscritti / la stagione prima della guerra. / Lunedì che viene, in ogni modo, / la casa andrà disfatta lo stesso / e nessuno sgrida le ragazze / per il tempo perso a fare fiori.

Conscripts

The rippling blooms arranged at dusk
go twined around tank turrets
that embellish conscripts' houses
the season before the war.
Next Monday anyway
the house will be destroyed
so no one scolds the girls
for wasting time with flowers.

Ul siu Giuli

a Lello.
Al rivava cèrti dumènech d'está,
trènta chilòmet andà, trènta a turnà,
la Bianchi crumada, i gemèj ai pulsitt.
Quej dei gasometro, a diséven sotvüs,
gòn ul stumèch brüsá, i oecc sèmpèr fiss.
Lü intònta al sbagliava mínga un balin.
A ritirà la Bianchi e i gemèj
e 'l ritratt di oecc fiss, in Paolo Sarpi,
in duvü andà e firmà töcc i nevüd.
Al mè pà ghè tuca ul spècc decorà.

Da Viridarium

Lo zio Giulio. – Arrivava certe domeniche d'estate, / trenta chilometri andata, trenta a tornare, / la Bianchi cromata, i gemelli ai polsini. / Quelli del gasometro, dicevano sottovoce, / hanno lo stomaco bruciato, gli occhi sempre fissi. / Lui intanto non sbagliava un pallino. / A ritirare la Bianchi e i gemelli / e il ritratto degli occhi fissi, in Paolo Sarpi, / dovettero andare e firmare tutti i nipoti. / A mio padre è toccato lo specchio decorato.

Uncle Giulio

He showed up certain summer Sundays,
sixty kilometers round trip,
in the chromed Bianchi with
cufflinks at his wrists.
The gas-pumpers,

they'd say in hisses,
have upset stomachs
with obsessive gazes.
Uncle, meanwhile,
never swerved a whit.
Picking up the Bianchi
and the cufflinks and the portrait
with obsessive gaze, at Paolo Sarpi,
all the nieces and nephews
had to go and sign.
The gilded mirror was
my father's bequest.

Al Carmen de Brescia

Biònc de scira
róss russisc
e vért 'mè 'i ghèss
se mètem in fila
al paradìs di pueritt.
Stèla stelascia
sivria e belèt
gioia giuiassa
prufòm e russèt
ul ciâr e la rōsa
fiurissen ul spècc.
Töt en bòtt
un quai matt
al dèrva 'l sipari
per mustraff
ul spectacul mundiàl
si cuscritt a cavàl.

Da Viridarium

Al Camine di Brescia – Bianchi di cera / rossi del più rosso / e verdi ramarro / ci mettiamo in fila / al paradiso dei poveri. // Stella imia / cipria e belletto / gioia cara / profumo e rossetto / il lume e la rosa / fioriscono lo specchio. // Tutto a un tratto / qualche matto / apre il sipario / per mostrarvi / lo spettacolo mondiale / dei coscritti a cavallo.

At Brescia's Church of the Carmine

Whites of wax

reddest reds
lurid greens -
we lined up at
the poor's paradise.
Star of mine,
powder and grease,
dearest joy,
perfume and lipstick,
the light and the rose
flourish the mirror.
Suddenly
some lunatic
raises the curtain
to reveal to you
the world stage
of conscripts on horseback.

La stonza della spusa

Ul lècc cul trapuntin laurà a mòn
'mè 'n paramènt de gésa, i dü cifón
angiul sens'ali, un madunin là a vólt,
ul canterà, l'amadi, la specéra.
Ricòm de la cuèrta, vardà respetùs,
"i cifri in perfètt söl cantón di fudrètt".
Chi strüsa e russia, muscatu a gutitt,
chi ride e bacàia, chi pröva i vusitt.
La sbatt. La dèrva 'l bècch. La slunga 'l còll.
La scróla 'l cül. La se alsa infin
gàina inturada a burlunàss
cun 'na matóca che la fa i facc fat.
Se slisen i dü fià in del lassàs,
se giusten ul scussà, cavèj, mulètt,
e cèrchen i sö sócur cul có bass.
I ólter in vultà, varden la spusa.

Da Viridarium

La stanza dlla sposa – Il letto col trapuntino lavorato a mano / come un paramento di chiesa, i due comodini / angeli senz'ali, un madonnino là in alto, / il canterano, l'amadio, la specchiera. / Ricami della coperta, guardare rispettoso, / pomelli della sponda, toccare curioso, / "le cifre sono perfette sugli angoli delle federe". // Chi spinge e arrossisce, moscato a gocconi / chi ride e baccaglia, chi prova il falsetto. / Sbatte. Apre il becco. Allunga il collo. / Scrolla il culo. Si alza infine / gallina

immascolita a rotolarsi / con una matta che fa le facce sciocche. / Si slisano i due fiati nel lasciarsi, / si aggiustano il grembiule, capelli, mollette, / e cercano gli zoccoli a testa bassa. / Le altre sono girate, guardano la sposa.

The Bride's Chamber

The bed with handmade quilt
like a church tapestry -
two comodes - angels
without wings - a boy virgin
aloft - chest of drawers -
armoire - toilette...
Embroideries of the comforter,
respectful gaze, pommels
at the edges, curious
touch:
“the figures are perfect at
the pillow case angles”
Some folk push and blush,
others sip moscatel,
some laugh, guffaw,
others do falsettoes.
Or slap thighs. Gape. Crane
their necks. Wiggle their
arses.
And finally rise,
hens
become roosters to somersault
grimacing in mad hordes.
Four breathy lips
slip and slide in departing,
readjust smocks,
hair, hairpins, and seek
their clogs with heads bowed.
The other women had turned around
to watch the bride.

La murnera

A Franco

L'à comincià cul di

ch'a lé piàs la ressumada,
che la cagiada l'è la fin del mündt,
che 'l röss de löf, si, ma bèn sbatü,
e che saddisfassiön ul lacc
sbilsâ di pècc.

Che cèrti savür se tröven a spusàj:
i pèrsech cun l'üga,
i nus nöf cui fich sècch, a dü a dü,
che cui pesciö ghè vör la vérsa
se no fòn schivi anc'al al purscèll.

Sì, la quantitâ la gà 'l sò bèll,
ma 'n piatt al déf piàs è
in del vedèll,
in del usmàll.

Té mai sentü l'udü del mall?

E qué di lacérej
che te fòn pèrdt i sentiment?

A mi, fin quel di buàse
me diss quâj cöss.

E 'l frött in del tucàll?

Pröva cui pèrsech sò la pèll,
insci, pumèll cuntra pumèll.

E de bagaj,

försi ti te 'l fèt amò

la gara di buricc

cun la camisa pièna de sgalfiön?

L'è cuma vècch cuntra n'óltra pònschia

burigiö cun burigiö.

Pènsa che mi

i dané i a scundi chi,

te pödett sta sicür ch'ai lader

ghè passa minga per la mènt

de mancàtt de rispètt.

Ei disi,

in due te metü la parlantina?

Te l'òn cavada a scöla?

Ma a ti te piàs pròpi niènt?
T sé smòrt pussé d'un strasc,
squasi squasi vó a toett un maraschin.
In de l'andà de là
le mié del mumé l'è scarligada,
fó per vùtala e cuma 'n miracul
me se presènta 'n tabernacul
che squasi bórli dènt.
Fó mè se vèssi vist niènt,
a sbati 'l sac in spala
e via! Senza vultòmm,
'mè la légora cui cònn.
N'è passà de tèmp, ma amò adèss,
quònd: ghè in gîr de la farina,
me se dèrva una cantina,
un gran vòj d'una quâj part,
a mòngi a mòngi,
ma la se stópa mai.

La mugnaia – Ha cominciato col dire / che a lei piace lo zabaglione / che la cagliata è la fine del mondo, / che il rosso dell'uovo, sì, ma ben sbattuto, / e che soddisfazione il latte / sprizzato dalle poppe. / Che certi sapori si trovano a sposarli: / le pesche con l'uva, / le noci nuove coi fiocchi secchi, a due a due, / che coi piedini ci vuole la verza / se non fanno schifò anche al maiale. / Sì, la quantità ha il suo bello, / ma un piatto deve piacere / nel vederlo, / nell'annusarlo. / Non hai mai sentito l'odore del mallo? / E quello dei fiori di robinia / che ti fanno perdere i sentimenti? / A me, fin lo sterco delle vacche mi dice qualcosa. / E il frutto nel toccarlo? / Prova con le pesche sulla pelle, / così, pomello contro pomello. / E da ragazzi, / forse tu lo fai ancora, / la gara della pace / con la camicia piena di duroni? / È come avere contro un'altra pancia / ombelico con ombelico. / Pensa che io / i soldi li nascondo qui, / puoi star certo che ai ladri / non passa per la testa / di mancarti di rispetto. / Ehi dico, / dove hai messo la parlantina? / Te l'hanno rubata a scuola? / Ma a et non piace proprio niente? / Sei più smorto di uno straccio, / quasi quasi vadio a prenderti un maraschino. / Nell'andare di là / la moglie del mugnaio è scivolata, / faccio per aiutarla e come un miracolo / che per poco non casco dentro. / Faccio come se non avessi visto niente, / sbatto il sacco in spalla / e via! Senza voltarmi, lepre con i cani. // Ne è passato di tempo, ma ancora adesso, / quando c'è in giro della farina, / mi si apre una cantina / un gran vuoto da qualche parte, / mangio mangio, ma non si riempie mai.

The Miller's Wife

She started off saying
she liked eggnog cream,
those curds were divine,
the yolk had to be really whipped,
and the milk, what a joy,
spurred from the udders - see,
special tastes come from weddings...
Like peaches with grapes,
fresh nuts with dried figs -
two by two -
and with pigs' feet ya gotta

have savoy cabbage
if the pigs can stand them too...
Yeah, it's nice to pig out
but a dish should delight
just looking or sniffing...
Have you ever smelled malt?
Or acacia blossoms? -
they make you faint.
Me, I even go sky-high
on cow dung.
And fruit when you touch it?
Try peaches on your skin,
yeah, knob against knob,
still in your prime
maybe you still do it...
Then there's the battle of the bellies
with shirts still full of corns.
It's like having, gut to gut,
the same belly button.
Just imagine, I hide
all my dough here,
dont worry, thieves
would never think
to disrespect me.
Look, I'm saying -
did the cat get your tongue? -
did they yank it out at school? -
what gives you a rise?
You're dead as a door nail,
do you need a shot of homebrew?
Rambling on from there
the miller's wife slipped,
I go to help her up -
miracle! - I run across
a shrine -
almost fall in...

I make like I've seen nil.
Throw my pack on my back,
and bingo! without turning,
wild hare with the hounds!
Time has passed
but still today
when flour is around
canteens gape underfoot
like ubiquitous voids,
and I eat, eat, eat,
never get full...

Milòn

Tó cunussüda
frégia fregiscia
cunt i gòmb che sprfundaven
in di muntògn ribaltâ di Dòge.
T'ó cunussüda
negra negriscia
suta 'j'ùncc
dopu 'na guéra
per truá 'l luminiu
in del tò trassö.
O senti i udû
de Porta Cinés
'n del rō de Milòn.

Milano – Ti ho conosciuta / freddissima / con le gambe che sprofondano / nelle montagne ribaltate dai Dodge. // Ti ho conosciuta / nerissima / sotto le unghie / dopo la guerra / per trovare l'alluminio / nel tuo vomito. // Ho sentito gli odori / di Porta Ticinese / nel letame di Milano.

Milan

I've known you
cold, frigid
with legs sinking deep
into the mountains
upset by bulldozers.
I've known you
blacker than black
under fingernails

after a war disclosing
all the alluminum
in your vomit.
I've smelled the stench
of Ticino Gate
in the bung of Milan.

FRANCA GRISONI

Franca Grisoni (Sirmione, 1935), without a doubt the most significant voice of poetry in Lombardy outside the Milan area, writes in a dialect with no literary tradition and even more peripheral than the one used by Marelli, from Verderio Inferiore di Consomni.

In many ways her inspiration can bring to mind Emily Dickinson's to whom she has been often compared. From the great American poet Grisoni no doubt inherits an inclination toward a reflexive contemplation of nature and the events of everyday existence. Grisoni's mysticism, however, finds its most congenial form in an over-excitation of words which excludes any biblical or religious reference.

As Piero Gibellini has acutely observed, it rather feeds on a cognitive tension aimed at "deciphering the signs of the corporeal alphabet" starting with sensations and minimal everyday episodes, that Grisoni promotes to metaphors of a problematic conception of existence centering around heterogeneous themes: from the theme of the double to that of the uncertain identity of the self, from the anxiety of reuniting with the other to the elegy of marital love, from the surrender, even ironic, to biographical memory to the indignant protest against the crystallization produced by cultural clichés.

But Grisoni's greatest merit lies in the harshness of a style for the most part monosyllabic which stays away from any possible surrender to the most traditional lyric effusion.

Even the depiction of the landscape in these verses is in fact filtered through a consciousness entirely bent on reflection and inner monolog.

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Ntat che nète 'n piat

'Ntat che nète 'n piat
vergot 'l me vé 'n met
che 'l s'è pensat da sul,
ades che l'ho sintit
só come la se mèt.

Penser che s'è ciarit.
'L piat l'è rezentat,
'L tègne 'n mà l'è fret,
gho za dezzmentegat
chèl che m'ia parit
che m'ia 'nlüminat
che l'è tumat 'ndré
da 'ndo l'era vignit.

Da la böba

Intanto che netto un piatto. – Intanto che netto un piatto / qualcosa mi viene in mente / che s'è pensato da solo, / adesso che l'ho sentito / so come mi si mette. / Pensiero che s'è chiarito. / Il piatto è risciacquato, lo tengo in mano è freddo, / ho già dimenticato / quello che mi era parso / che mi aveva illuminato / che è tomato indietro / da dove era

I scrape a plate

I scrape a plate
and something occurs,
thought by itself -
then
it registers,
fits:
thought clarified...
Now the plate is rinsed,
cold in my clutch
and I forget
what it was that
maybe lit me up
before receding
whence it came.

Ma chel saur de persec

Ma chel saur de persec
che sirche quand che sgagne
mà 'ndo so nada a tl
se 'l cate mia 'ndel fröt.
E chesti chí i è persec
e i è de chèl madür
e i gha en bel udur
mà cate mia 'l saur

is é, proprio del persec,
e sé che 'l s'gusula
e 'l sponzi sö le s'gvanze
ma l'è che 'l sà mia asé
e 'l resta 'mpo pö 'ndré
de chèl che gho 'n met mé.

Da la böba

Ma quel sapor di pesca – Ma quel sapor di pesca / che cerco quando mordo / ma dove sono andata a prenderlo / se non lo trovo nel frutto. / E queste sono pesche / e sono di quelle mature / e hanno un bell'odore / ma non trovo il sapore / ma è che non sa abbastanza / e resta un po' indietro / di ciò che ho in mente io.

But that taste of peach

But that taste of peach
I seek in the bite -
What I'd do to have it when
it escapes me in the fruit!
These are real peaches,
they are ripe and fragrant,
but the real
peach taste
is missing -
sure,
the one I choose
bursts with juice
that stings my cheeks
but it just doesn't
taste enough
like what
I have in mind.

Ancö me s'è crepat come 'na grösta

Ancö me s'è crepat come 'na grösta,
spacada per en colp de teremot,
chèla che l'èra 'na verità sicüra
con 'na parola la m'è nada 'n tòc,
ghe varde zo, ghe varde senza pora,
chèl che stàa sota 'l me salta ai occ,
amó qualc colp, amó 'na netadina
e saró pronta per 'n oter s-ciop.

Da La böba

Qui mi si è crepata come una crosta. – Oggi mi si è crepata come una crosta, / spaccata per un colpo di terremoto, / quella che era una verità sicura / con una parola mi è andata in pezzi, / guardo giù, guardo senza paura, / quel che stava sotto fili salta agli occhi, / ancora qualche colpo, ancora una pulitina / e sarò pronta per un altro scoppio.

Today the crust flaked

Today the crust flaked
and crumbled in one shake:
one more unassailable truth
sunk in a fault...
It took one word
to hit me in the face -
I lowered my glance,
fearless,
over the precipice
and it leaped into
the hollows of my eyes...
A few more quakes,
another reconnoitre
and I'll be ready
for another bomb.

e chi èi chèi che me comanda a me

e chi èi chèi che me comanda a me
zo 'ndei servèi
ades ghe sto e volarés scuitai
e servares de gòst pör de capii
ma i me comanda quand me crede mèi
de decider mé per i facc mil
i ria quand so dré a desmentegai
e se gho dat da mét mé no 'l so mai
e quancc sarai
e so zontada a lur o lur èi mii

da La böba

e chi sono quelli che mi comandano. – e chi sono quelli che mi comandano / giù nei cervelli / ora ci sto e vorrei ascoltarli / li servirei di gusto pur di capirli / ma mi comandano quando mi credo / di decidere da sola i fatti miei / arrivano quando li sto dimenticando / e se li ho ascoltati non lo so mai / e quanti saranno / e sono aggiunta a loro o loro sono miei.

And who are they?

And who are they?

Who wracks and charts
my brains? Now
I'm in tune, ready
to listen, serve
with pleasure, understand
their will, but
they summon me when
I think I can decide
how to run my own show -
see, they show up when
I'm forgetting them
and if I've heeded
I never know when,
never know how
many of them are around -
so I join them
and they are
mine.

*

Ancó me par a me,
che töt el sies.
Come se l'es sait,
che 'l spetaes,
de pö mè 'n tuma chí
de chèl che ghie,
che senza ite te
no so 'ndó sie,
e me, ghe soi debù
o te me striet?

Da L'oter

Oggi pare a me / che tutto sia. / Come se l'avessi saputo, / che l'aspettassi, / di piú ne torna a me / di ciò che avevo, / che senza avere te / non so dov'ero, / e io, ci sono davvero / o mi stregghi tu?

*

Today it seems
all is in place.
As if I knew already

what to expect,
I gather more than
what I had
when I didnt have you,
I dont know where I was
and now am I
really here or...
are you bewitching me?

*

Ch'èi che me chiama
amó traers el corp?
apò mé compagna
a chi se 'l sent adòs?
En inet gho za chel nom,
èco chi chiama!
e se ghe fós gna lü?
el scultares el nissü
che amó 'l me chiama.

Da L'oter

Chi è che mi chiama, / ancora attraverso il corpo? / anch'io compagna / a chi se lo sente addosso? / In mente ho già quel nome, / ecco chi chiama! / e se non ci fosse nemmeno lui, / lo ascolterei il nessuno / che ancora chiama.

*

Who is it
still calling me
across my body
"companion"?
Who still feels
its weight?
The name is still
on my mind -
here's the one who calls!
What if there's
no one else?
I'd heed the No One
who still calls.

*

te parle deter
empreste la me us
e le ve dite
le robe to, penser,
che i vöi scundise.
Mé me permete
ma sculta apena té
stöpe le rice
vöi mia sai de pö
che somse apena en giü
ma do le vite.

Da L'oter

Ti parlo dentro presto la mia voce / e vengono dette / cose tue, pensieri, / che si vogliono nascondere. / Io mi permetto / ma ascolta solo tu / tappo le orecchie / non voglio sapere di più / che siamo sì un solo uno / ma due le vite.

*

I speak to you within,
my voice is quick
and what's said
is yours, thoughts
that want to hide...
I dare open
but you alone listen...
I plug my ears
fed up with knowing more...
Yes, we are unique,
one - but two lives!

*

L'è chèl che te do a te
quand té me tóchet
el corp che té m'e dat,
ghe l'ho amó deter.
De tep ghe n'è pasât,
té l'et tignit vardât
e té li conose
apò se l'è cambiât.
L'è semper l'oter

per te che te m'e töt

aca per date.

Da L'oter

È quello che do a te / quando mi tocchi / il corpo che mi hai dato, / ce l'ho ancora dentro. / Di tempo ne è passato, / tu l'hai tenuto guardato / e lo conosci / anche se è cambiato. / È sempre l'altro / per te che mi hai preso / anche per darti.

*

It's what I give you

when you touch me,

the body you gave -

it's still in me.

It came and went

long ago but

you've kept it,

guarded,

you know it -

howsoever changed.

It's always other

for you who took me

to give of yourself too.

TÒNI BODRIÈ

He also signs his name Tòni Baudrier, in Provençal, as in the preface to *Solestrehl òcitan* (1971). Antonio Bodrero was born in Frassino, in Val Varaita (Cuneo) in 1921. Both his parents were elementary school teachers in the mountain region, in a bilingual context in which both the patois and Piedmontese were spoken. He still lives in Frassino. He received a degree in literature in Turin after the war, and taught art history in Saluzo, Savigliano, Cuneo, and literature in Savigliano and in a middle school in Sampeyre, where he is also principal. He lives on the fringe between the Provençal and Piedmontese worlds, Provençal language and subalpine language, country and city, tradition and modernity, signifier and signified, corporality and metaphysics, the absolute and roots. And, as it sometimes happens, those at the fringe, on the border, in reality are at the center, so that Bodrero is the “convergence of many streams” and diverse and complementary influences of twentieth-century Piedmontese poetry, and constitutes “for that very reason the boldest voice, if not always the most controlled, of Piedmontese literature: worthy of being included among those who are usually considered in the landscape of dialect poetry tout court” (G. Tesio).

Genealogically, Bodrero belongs more to Costa's branch than Pacòt's, at least in the way he takes his distance from refined poetry. He began to write in the local Provençal dialect on Buratti's advice, following the rebirth championed by the *Escolo dòu Po*, and this would lead to the publication of *Fràisse e Méel* in 1965, one of the first works in Provençal in the subalpine area. “Frassino and Melle” (two towns in Val Varaita), but also “ash trees and honey” (two common elements of Alpine world), and from the start this double reading characterizes Bodrero's poetry in a polysemic sense. An excellent practitioner of the language, which he studies in depth by collecting dialect terms and grammars, he knows how to exploit and bring to light all its expressive potential, making skillful use of stylistic and rhetorical devices: alliteration, paronomasia, homophony, puns, series of words and synonyms, popular etymologies, derivatio, anaphoras, etc., as evidence of an assiduous workmanship with words, at the edge of an obsessive search for sound and music. On the other hand, giving priority to *homo ludens*, Bodrero speaks of his poetry as of *get 'd Paròle* (wordplay), in which the signifier plays a primary role, never an end in itself but at the service of consciousness. Another trait of his unmistakable style is the plurilinguism between the grammatical, pre-grammatical and post-grammatical levels, the juxtaposition of different and contrasting linguistic registers (from the popular to the literary), and tones (from the epic to the idyllic).

His first two collections in Provençal contain all the elements of his poetry, since his poetics does not change even if his language does: “rest, contemplation. living in the midst of nature, memories, childhood songs, dreams, fantasy, the veneration of the ancestors and the past, the free and natural loves of butterflies, the cheerfulness one finds in things one seeks” (G. Tesio). Moreover, in *Solestrehl òcitan* there is political and civil fury which is waiting to move in favor of Provence (the publication of the second collection in Provençal is considered a political gesture), and some Piedmontese texts which foreshadow his definitive choice in favor of the *patria piemontèisa*. Their final fulfilment would be achieved with *Val d'Inghildon* in 1974, his first organic collection in the Piedmontese dialect, toward which Bodrero says he felt “a kind of love-hate, more love than

hate” (the latter because the Piedmontese is like someone dying killing someone else dying”),

Bodrero reclaims his own linguistic, anthropological and cultural diversity in which dialect, he says, “must be poetic renewal, that is, production of poetry, and lexical conservation”; for this reason, faithful to the koiné and the lofty Piedmontese modeled on the dialect of Turin (but renewed), his language is an alternative to Italian, rejecting any Italianism (rather accepting Provençal or Piedmontese terms of the Cuneo province, or accentuating its dissimilarity through the choice of archaic or rural expressions) in defense of the traditional vocabulary and against the spread of Italian that tends to substitute it. His rejection of Italian, as a symbol of political, social and cultural oppression, responsible for the suppression of traditional languages and dialects – to which he opposes the language of the fathers and its defense, as of any minority – goes hand in hand with his radical rejection of modern technological and consumer society, with his stance against progress, his fêlibrisme, and with his moral indignation before the squalid present, guilty of not respecting nature, animals, plants or any other creature. A respect which was felt instead by the servan (inhabitants of the woodland, and Bodrero’s poetic world is inhabited by, besides the servan, Celtic witches and elves, by mythical and legendary characters, by the Rèire, the ancestors.).

Bodrero is a man of civil commitment and active political engagement, but also a man of conversions, from the linguistic to the religious, the latter coinciding with the his mother’s death: a mystical conversion tending toward the metaphysical and the recovery of traditional religious values. His political and civil passion is transformed into religious and human passion, and the poet, from being the bard of the past and of oppressed minorities, becomes the prophet who “announces a word of truth and freedom to modern man,” maybe uttered in the language of the people (G. Urbano), as in his fourth collection, the anthology Sust ,1985 (his remaining work is scattered in journals and entries in literary prizes).

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Castel ch’a stèila ...

Castel ch’a stèila (l’han dije Castija
pèrchè ch’a castijava ij brav e ij gram)
bel, giovo e vej, lòn ch’as peul disse bel,
a gigìò dla colin-a, a baticòle
d’un passà ‘d fèr tut ciar e scur dè spa,
a varda, a vaita, sivalié ‘mbossà;
ah ‘l magon d’esse mach pi na pèrzon!,
chiel ch’a savia le gighe e le canson
e ch’a l’avia maitass d’esse cantà.
A argàucia e arlama ij sign, a l’ha d’arlie:
“Sti ciafri neuv a portran pa maleur?”.
Sèl mostass argniflù a la soldala
a-j grimpo la fumia e la laserta
e fin-a la lumassa dòp la pieuva.

Gher, ij guerié d'un temp pèr la scalada
a pijo l'andi 'ns la colin-a 'n fior
e:"Speta, coco, ti, 'd lòn ch'a-i è sì,
ciuciù la baja, pasia la maraja" –
a-j braja largh sor Bulo dij Bulon,
ël baudro d'ël dongion, baron d'è spa
o da drit o an bautiandse sla cadrega
o an gratandse, s'a smangia, con la laja –
"Un momentin ch'iv servo dlongh a dun-a,
tambussé nen parèj, fas intré tuit
ant ël pi bel ... tafus ëd mè castel »
e da 'ns na scala a n'àussa un e giù
giusmin ant ël fossal: „Oppa lalà
e cor coma na poma fin-a Roma".
Coma mamin ch'a lo campava an aria
da cit e a lo tnisia pèr ij brassin,
chiel a lo àussa, ma a lo lassa andé
e minca n'òm flambà a-j fa na ghiga.
Madamin Dòna Bianca Pòch-ai-manca
pomin prussòt e moro d'avrilanda
con j'euje e ij vir d'orin ch'a fan servan
a ven a vèdde mincatan e a-j ciamà,
docia, an riand tut a s-ciofèt flutà:
"Chi a l'è ch'a vagna, chi a l'è cavagnin?"
E sor baron d'è spa:"Oh madamin! –
a-j fa an parandse j'euje dal sol ... ëd chila
- chi a l'è ch'a vagna belessì a l'è chila,
noi e lor soma tuti cavagnin"
e 'ntramentré ch'a dis loli, na flecia
con un biet reusa a lus e a-j fa na cara
a la caviera bionda, e chila a cria
e a-i la dà, ma 's ten nen da cheuje 'l biet.
J'òimo a batajo da sudé ij cavèj,
le fomne a piro fin-a a colé j'euje,
a buto j'ale ij mòrt, nivole e ragg
a-j men-o da San Pé, j'àngej e ij diav

a-j fan a tira e mòla un pèr ij pé

ansangonà, l'autr pèr le man sagnose.

E sor castel a l'ha finì so seugn

d'Inghildon, col ch'a l'era, col ch'a l'è

nòst vej Piemont.

Castello che brilla di stelle ... – Castello che brilla di stelle (l'hanno chiamato Castiglia / perché castigava i buoni e i cattivi) / bello, giovane e vecchio, quanto si può dir bello / a cavallo della collina, a cavalluccio / d'un passato di ferro tutto chiaro e scuro di spade, / guarda, guata, cavaliere rovesciato; / ah il chiuso dolore di essere soltanto più una prigioniera, / lui che sapeva le gighe e le canzoni / e smaniava dal desiderio di essere cantato. / Aggrotta e ridistende i sopraccigli, ha dei timori superstiziosi : / “Queste babilonie nuove non porteranno disgrazia?” / Sul mostaccio accigliato alla soldatesca / gli s'arrampicano la formica e la lucertola / e perfino la chiocciola dopo la pioggia. / Largo, i guerrieri di un tempo per la scalata / prendono lo slancio sulla collina in fiore / e “Aspetta, cucco, tu, di quello che c'è qui, / guaffete, calma la ragazzaglia” - / gli grida largo sor Bullo degli Spintoni, / il signore del torrione, barone (= mucchio) di spade / o stando in piedi o dondolandosi sulla sedia / o grattandosi, se prude ,con lo spadone - / “Un momentino, che vi servo subito subito, / non bussate così, faccio entrare tutti / nel più bel ... sotterraneo del mio castello” / e da sopra la scala ne alza uno e giù / gelsomino nel fossato: “Oppa là! / e corri come una mela fino a Roma”./ Come la mamma che lo lanciava in aria / da piccolo e lo teneva per i braccini, / egli lo alza ma lo lascia andare / e a ogni uomo ucciso fa uno schiocco con le dita. / Madamina Donna Bianca Poco-le-manca / melina peretta e faccia dei primi giorni d'aprile / con gli occhi e i pendenti che fanno lo sguizzasole / viene a vedere ogni tanto e gli domanda, / leggiadra, ridendo tutto a sbuffetti flautati: / “Chi è che vince (cavagna: omofono = cesto), chi è cavagnino? (cestino)” / E sor baron di spade:”Oh madamina! / - le fa riparandosi gli occhi dal sole ... di lei - / chi vince qui è lei, / noi e loro siamo tutti cavagnini (vinti) “ e mentre dice quello, una freccia / con un biglietto rosa brilla e le fa una carezza / alla chioma bionda, ed ella grida / e se la batte, ma non si trattiene dal cogliere il biglietto. / Gli uomini battagliaano da sudare i capelli, / le donne piangono fino a colare gli occhi, / mettono le ali i morti, nuvole e raggi / li menano da San Pietro, gli angeli e i diavoli / gli fanno a tira e molla uno per i piedi / insanguinati, l'altro per le mani sanguinose. / E sor castello ha finito il suo sogno / d'Inghildon terra lontana, quella che era quella che è / il nostro vecchio Piemonte.

Castle Resplendent with Stars

Castle resplendent with stars

(they called it Castille

because it castigated

the good and the bad),

lovely, young and old -

so much beauty astride the hill,

piggyback with an iron past

so bright and dark with swords,

look, see the unhorsed knight.

Feel the mute pain of the present,

just a prison for him who knew

all the jigs and ballads

and longed to be sung.

He frowns and arches his brow

in superstitious anxieties:

“These new babylons, don't they

usher in misfortune?”

Over the crenelated battlements

there climb the ant and the lizard

and, after rain, even the snail.

From afar the ancient warriors

rush across the hills in bloom
to scale the walls and, in defiance,
there echoes a shout: "You fools,
just you wait, calm your rabble,
otherwise" - it's Sir Bull
of the Shove, Castlekeep Lord,
Baron of Heaps of Swords,
on foot or rocking on his seat
or scratching himself, if he
itches, with his saber:
"Just wait, I'll oblige you,
posthaste, don't knock so hard,
I gladly usher all into the loveliest
dungeon of my castle."
And from his turret
he brandishes a sword
and down falls the jasmine
into the moat: "Up and away
with you and off to Rome
with your pates rolling!"
Like the mother who, when
he was a child, tossed him
into the air, then swung him by
his little limbs, he lofts his blade
but unfurls to dispatch
every man who draws nigh,
and snaps his fingers just like that!
His little lady, White Damsel,
Little Pumpkin Head,
apple and pear of his eye,
with the face of early April
and eyes and earrings wriggling with sunlight,
comes out upon occasion to watch the gore
and in all her splendor guffawing
queries: "Who is it that baskets,
and who is basketted?"

And the Baron of the Swords replies:

“Fair lady of mine,” shielding his eyes

from the sun of her glance,

“The basketter is you for

we and they are all basketted!”

And as he speaks an arrow

with a pink billet-doux flares

and caresses her golden locks

and she shouts and flails but

does not fail to extract the note.

Men do battle till

they sweat from hair roots,

women weep till

they drain their eyes,

the dead sprout wings,

clouds and rays drive them

all the way to Saint Peter,

angels and devils tug them

up and down, one by

the bloodied feet, another

by the blood-stained hands.

And Sir Castle is done with the dream

of Inghildon, faraway land,

the land that was, that land that is

our ancient Piedmont.

Val d'inghildon...

Aor ch'a va noneus l'ora pì muta

son-a la fluta 'ntrega e cola cuta

barba servan pèr fè lui la fruta

e soa valba e soa val a l'ha 'nt la fluta,

val d'Inghildon, nì dij servan viton.

A l'ha na còsa ahidé, bischin biscòsa,

sot la lòsa ch'a 'mbranca l'autra lòsa,

sot ij so dèir pì vej cheicòs n'arpòsa:

la vera vita; e gnun la sa ... la còsa.

Val dij mascon, mascheugn dèl temp pì bon.

Martel sl'airora a la matin bonora,
t'arcòrdes? aor mè cheur a l'è l'airora,
pica; vaire agn pèr tan ch'a torna l'ora?
sinch, ses: ciri e servan geugo a l(L)a m(M)ora.

Val dij rocion, speja martlà dai tron.

Tomoma, amis, viscoma 'l feu d'èstiss

an tra ij brandé doa son nòste radis;

sla tèra a-i sarà nen l paradis

ma Inghildon e l'arvira ch'a s-ciupliss

s'ij ghirindon, j'escarlo e ij calisson.

An mes ai tò brandé i é 'n fil, n'euj 'd fiama,

cheidun a ciama, a smija 'd sente mama

ch'a l'ha avù 'nt èl cheur na speja grama:

- Tomé, Ciri-Pipi, i é 'l nì sla rama -.

Val d'Inghildon, arvirte ai tò magon.

Canson èd piòle, aivere, faje dròle,

fràule d'armada neuva, arvire fòle,

paròle 'd dé Culass, neuit feita 'd giòle,

veje strajòle rosse 'd sangh e 'd fròle:

val d'Inghildon, armada dij pceron.

I é 'nco 'd Ciri-Pipi 'ntra Sol e Lun-a

e a ciucio tut l'avni 'nt èl gius dl'ambrun-a,

la mare fràula aor bionda aor brun-a

a bogia con la faula 'l cheur dla cun-a:

- Cheidun a sà cò a speta Inghildon -.

Soa eva a leva al cel l'anima greva,

a la fa vive an seugn, reva che 't reva,

reva l'arvira sclin-a coma l'eva

dl'adoss èd gioventura; a seurt l'anleva

coma 'n tron da l'adoss: ij fiolass-tron.

E 'nlora a monto dai basin djè spos

reu, arcancej e cej, bleu, viòla e ross,

fin-a j'avije a fan j'amej pi doss

con cole fior ch'han quatà toe cros,

Val d'Inghildon, amel, fior èd Passion.

Toa tèra al sol dl'istà l'é bela cauda

coma mavan cand ch'an pijava an fauda
e an ninava an cantand, chi sà ? toa lauda,
tèra d'un feu che fin la mòrt nē scauda.
Val d'Inghildon, na nina 'n ginojon.
Con n'andi 'd siri candi, squasi 'd liri,
e n'andi 'd liri candi pì che ij siri
van toe ànime 'n cors con d'ale 'd Ciri-
Pipi; neuit, gèil e fiòca a-j fan da chiri
e 'n mascon (vascapon) va pr'ij valon.

Valle d'Inghildon... – Adesso che passa invano l'ora più muta/ suona il flauto intero e quello mozzo / zio silvano per maturare i frutti / e la sua regione e la sua valle egli ha nel flauto, / valle d'Inghildon, nido dei fauni montanari. // Essa ha una cosa ahidio, un segreto d'enigma, / sotto l'ardesia che abbranca l'altra ardesia, / sotto le sue rocce più antiche qualcosa ci riposa: / la vera vita; e nessuno lo sa ... la cosa. / Valle dei maghi incantesimo del tempo migliore. // Martello sull'incudine del falciatore al mattino presto, / ti ricordi? Adesso il mio cuore è l'incudine, / batti; quanti anni affinché torni l'ora? / cinque, sei: uccelli e silvani giuocano a(lla) (L)a n(M)orra. / Valle dalle grandi rocce, spada martellata dai fulmini. // Torniamo, amici, accendiamo il fuoco spento / tra gli alari dove sono le nostre radici, / sulla terra non ci sarà il paradiso / ma Inghildon e la rivolta che crepita ardente / sui candelabri, i falò e i calascioni. // In mezzo ai tuoi alari c'è un filo, un occhio di fiamma, / qualcuno chiama, sembra di sentire mamma / che ha avuto nel cuore una spada malvagia: / - Tomate, Uccelli-Pulcini, c'è il nido sul ramo -. / Valle d'Inghildon, ribellati ai tuoi affanni. // Canzoni di osterie, ninfe delle acque, fate strane, / soldatine dell'armata nuova, rivolte folli, / parole del dio Fuoco Nottumo, notte fatta di fiammelle, / vecchie stradicciuole rosse di sangue e di fragole: / valle d'Inghildon, armata degli avi. // Ci sono ancora Uccelli-Pulcini tra Sole e Luna / e succhiano tutto l'avvenire nel succo delle bacche di mirtillo, / la madre soldatina ora bionda ora bruna / muove con il mito il cuore della cuna: / - Qualcuno sa che cosa aspetta Inghildon - // La sua acqua leva al cielo l'anima aggravata, / la fa vivere in sogno, sogna che ti sogna / sogna la rivolta pura come l'acqua / della fontana di giovinezza; esce l'alunna / come un tuono dalla fontana: i figlioloni fulmine. // E allora salgono dai baci degli sposi / paraselenii, arcobaleni e cieli azzurri, violetti e rossi / perfino le api fanno i mieli più dolci / con quei fiori che hanno coperto le tue croci, / valle d'Inghildon, miele, fiore di Passione. // La tua terra al sole dell'estate è bella calda / come la mamma quando ci prendeva in grembo / e ci ninnava cantando, chi sa?, la tua lode, / terra d'un fuoco che ci riscalda perfino la morte / Valle d'Inghildon una ninna nanna in ginocchio. // Con un'andatura di ceri candidi, quasi gigli / e un'andatura di gigli candidi più che i ceri, / vanno le tue anime nella processione (dei morti) con ali d'Uccelli- / Pulcini; notte, gelo e neve fanno loro da manto / e un mago (mantello d'erbe) va per i valloni.

Inghildon Valley

Now that the mutest hour passes in vain
the Sylvan Uncle plays his double and half flutes
to ripen his fruits for he has in his flute
his region and valley, the Valley
Inghildon, nest of mountain fauns.
Oh gods, it has a certain secret, enigma,
under its intermeshing layers of slate,
and under its most ancient rocks something
reposes: real life, yet no one knows of it.
Valley of magicians, wonder of better times.
Hammer against the anvil of the reaper
at break of day - do you remember? -
now my heart is the anvil - beat!
How many years will pass before
the hour returns? Five? Six?... Birds
and sylvan gods play A-morra...
Valley of boulders, sword

hammered by lightning strokes.

Friends, let's return, rekindle the fires

mid the andirons where our roots smolder -

on this earth there will be no paradise

but Inghildon and the revolt that still crackles

and sparkles in the candlesticks,

bonfires and mandolins.

Mid your andirons there's a thread,

an eye of flame, someone calls out,

"Mamma?" - he's been stabbed in the heart?

"Come back, fledglings, there's

a nest on the branch...

Inghildon Valley, rebel

against all your afflictions.

Hostelry songs, water nymphs,

strange fairies, little soldiers

of the new Armada, mad revolts,

words of God the Nocturnal Fire,

night composed of flickers,

beaten paths red with blood

and strawberries: Inghildon

Valley: Armada of Ancestors...

There are still fledglings mid Sun and Moon

and they suck all the Future

in the juices of blueberries

and the soldier mother,

now blonde, now brunette,

rocks the cradle heart with myth:

"Someone knows what Inghildon awaits" -

its waters buoy its afflicted soul to the sky

where it is graced with life in dreams,

dreams upon dreams of revolt pure

like water of the fountain of youth where

its pupil emerges like fountain thunder

and its children are spawned as lightning.

And then there arise from the kisses

of consorts moon eclipses, rainbows
and skies: blue, violet, red -
and the bees make the sweetest honeys
from those flowers that adomed your crosses,
Inghildon Valley, all honey and Passion flower.
Your earth under the summer sun
is so lovely in its warmth like the mother
when she held us on her lap and lullabied us
singing perhaps a psalm to you, you earth
of fire that warms us till death.
Inghildon Valley, lullaby on its knees.
With the sway of tapers, candid like lilies
and a sway of lilies more candid than tapers,
your souls process for the dead
with fledgling wings...Night,
frost and snow cast their cloak
and a magician mantled like grass
stalks the valleys.

Un bel tirimbalin

Aor tròpi motor e feu fan meuire
l'ambra d'aire, fial nòst e 'd minca fiana,
e a empio l'aire dla fièira dla mòrt
tan ch'a ventrà chité findi ij farò.
L'eva? la tèra? Ahi dé, l'è gréva, amèra.
La Bibia a dis che l'òm l'è 'l bàudro 'd tut;
a-i é da chërdje? Mah. Ma 'l bon bërgé
bërton-a, pèila nen bero e barbin
e 'l bon bàudro chèrs ij talent, la ròba
e a fà nen balé tut, coma a fà l'òm
ch'a fà meuire la Tèra, soa creada.
Ma dij preivass, l'han mostrà che mach j'òimo
(a Mascon a disio: gnanca le fomne)
l'han l'ambra ch'a meuir nen; nompà le bes-ce,
j'erbo a 'l'han pròpi nen o a meuir cò chila.
Për lòn: la mòrt a tuit; process a 'l bes-ce
(për biandensa) e la mòrt, gnanca da di ;

genite: bin flambà e bin grufià;
 nen (òl boch): bin flambà e mal grufià.
 E daje a brusé ij bòsch: a-i é ij servan!
 Nompà ij servan dij bòsch, bin baciassà
 ‘nt òl bial da mare scapà d’an pajòla,
 as lo sentio che tut – le stèile, ‘l sol,
 la lun-a, ‘l bial batior, l’adoss, òl brich,
 j’erbo e j’erbe – a l’é sacrà.
 Oh sacherlòto!
 S’a scursavo na bes-cia pèr paresse
 la sgheusia, ebin, a-j ciamavo perdon
 e a savio che tut lòn ch’a viv an Téra
 a l’é pi brav che l’òm(a-i va pa vaire),
 che l’òm l’era ‘l derié, l’é fasse ‘l prim
 e bin per lòn sarà toma ‘l derié:
 chi ‘s làuda e s’àussa, sàuta ‘n sàussa...’d pàuta.
 Pèr lòn Nosgnor l’ha daje l’andi al Fieul,
 pèr giuté soa pi grama crea-dura,
 l’onta dla creassion; e mach so Fieul
 a podia bin biné, ma gnanca chiel
 l’ha nen binà pèr tuit, pèr ij pi gram.
 Miraco pèrchè a l’ha nen dit: - Sei frej
 con j’erbo, j’erbe e ‘l bes-ce e sté parèj -.
 Lassoma sté, soma pien ‘d lassme sté.
 Donca i disia
 ch’a l’é stait, teh, li li pèr fè partia,
 ma ij diav cò l’han-ne fait? Ij prèive e ij frà
 (coj democrin).

Un bel labirinto. – Adesso troppi motori e fuochi fanno morire / l’anima dell’aria, respiro nostro e d’ogni fiamma, / e riempiono l’aria con il fetore della morte / tanto che bisognerà perfino smettere (l’usanza de) i falò. / L’acqua? La terra? ahi Dio, è greve, amara. / La Bibbia dice che l’uomo è padrone di tutto; / c’è da crederci? mah. Ma il buon pastore / tosa, non scortica pecore e agnelli / e il buon padrone accresce i talenti, la roba / ma non dilapida tutto, come fa l’uomo / che fa morire la Terra, fatta per servirgli: / Ma certi pretacci hanno insegnato che solo gli uomini / (al concilio di Mâcon dicevano: neanche le donne) / hanno l’anima che non muore; invece le bestie / gli alberi o non ce l’hanno davvero o muore anch’essa. / Perciò: la morte a tutti; processi alle bestie / (per riguardo) e la morte, neanche da discutere; / pure: ben uccise e ben divorate; / impure (il capro espiatorio); ben uccise e mal divorate. / E dagli a bruciare i boschi: (tutto perché) ci sono i divini silvani! / Invece i silvani dei boschi, ben sciacquati / nel ruscello dalla madre scappata dal pagliericcio subito dopo il parto, / se lo sentivano che tutto: le stelle, il sole / la luna, il ruscello battezzatore, la sorgente, la montagna / gli alberi e le erbe, le bestie, è sacro. / Oh sacro loto! / Se uccidevano una bestia per sfamarsi, / ebbene, le chiedevano perdono / e sapevano che tutto ciò che vive sulla Terra / è più buono dell’uomo (non ci vuole molto), / che l’uomo era l’ultimo, si è fatto il primo / e proprio per ciò sarà di nuovo l’ultimo: / chi si loda e s’inalza, salta in salsa ... di fango. / Per ciò il Signore ha dato l’avvio al Figliuolo, / per aiutare la sua più cattiva creatura (cretadura), / la vergogna della creazione; e solo suo Figlio / poteva riuscir bene, ma neanche lui / non è riuscito per tutti, per i più cattivi. / Forse perché non ha detto: “Siete fratelli / con gli alberi, le erbe e le bestie e restate così”. / Lasciamo stare, siamo pieni di “lasciami stare” (di problemi e di stanchezza) / Dunque dicevo / che egli è stato, eh, li li per vincere la partita, / ma i diavoli che cosa hanno fatto? I preti e i frati / (quelli democristiani).

A Lovely Labyrinth

Now too many motors and fires kill
the soul of the air, our breath and the flame's,
and fill the air with stench of death
so heavy we must forsake our bonfire rites.

Water? Earth? Oh God, it's grave, bitter...

The Bible says that Man
is Master of all things he surveys, so...

But the good shepherd shears,
he does not flay sheep and lambs,
and the good lord nurtures talents,
the stuff of what we produce,
he does not squander everything as does Man,
Man kills the Earth created to be of his fruition.

Certain bad shepherds have taught
that only men (at the Council of Macon
they excluded women) have an immortal soul
and that animals, trees and other creatures
don't have one or, if they do,
it dies with them...

So: Death to all? Animals on trial,
with the eternal death sentence
as a given in advance... The pure?
killed efficiently, devoured well.

The impure -scape goats - dispatched
but devoured with indigestion?

And let's burn down those forests because
they're infested with sylvan deities!

But the gods of the forests, well rinsed
in the brook by their mother, escaped
from their straw beds just after their birthing
and they intuited that all creatures -
stars, sun, moon, baptizing brook,
spring, mountain, trees and grass,
beasts - all was sacred.

Sacred lotus! If they had to kill a beast

to free themselves from hunger,
they begged it forgiveness,
and they knew that everything living on Earth
was better than Man - that does not take much -
and that Man came last (though he took first place)
so he will once again be last:

“Whosoever praises and exalts himself
will flail in a soup of slime.”

So the Lord forged the way for his Son
to succor his most malignant creature,
hard clay, the shame of Creation.

Only his Son could hope to do good,
but not even he could reach all men
perhaps because he neglected to say:

“You’re brothers and sisters with trees and grass
and animals and be so forever.”

But let’s forget it, we’re so full
of apathy and all our problems and depression...

I was saying that he was... Oh, well...

To win the game, what’s the plan?

What have the devils done with
their clerical and political clones?

Ròcia la cun-a

A l'é 'ndait pèr ël color fin-a a soa cun-a

cauda : Ròcia La Cun-a,

a l'é stait a beiché e deume, deume e beiché,

ch'a l'é 'l vive pì bel e 'l meje giughé,

col dij mes mat e dij matòt;

a vèdia, a vèdia ij drocheri

dij grand ëd la ruà pinatà s'un such,

a vèdia ij parpajon a basesse,

a fé 'd virabèrchin , giughé a ciapesse,

a-j vèdia basé Ròcia La Cun-a,

basé l'eva dël bial, la ghèrla che pèr tun-a

a squicia (a l'ha sognà?); a vèdia

tuit, tuit ij parpajon ch'a l'han soa cun-a

ant le fior dij drocheri
dij grand dël vilaret pinatà s'un such,
e a-j ësmejjava 'd visesse 'd soa mare
cand a cantava l'andurmia dle fare:
"Fa nen la piora dësnò mama a piora,
pluca 'n rapet e voleras chiet chiet;
ciri? nen; parpajon? gnanca; angelet";
a vëdia su 'nt ël valon
ël bial fë balé j'arie a soa canson,
l'òra fë balé j'arie e ij parpajon ;
a vëdia la neuit e 'l duch e 'l midem deuit :
vej, neuv ël duch, veja e neuva la neuit;
e la grinor dla pera a l'era fasse cun-a
për cuné 'l pior dël roj, cuneje la lun-a;
Ròcia La Cun-a, ròcia dle pi grinoze,
'ma 'n mignin, un taboj 't ruda la gamba
ò na manzëtta ch'at ven bin aramba
për fesse mose.
E l'abbà dij servan, gris e sërvej,
cand soa balma a-j ësmejjava na cuchija
a saut d'abbà-camoss si a vnisia;
e a lo bautiavo, a lo cunavo vaj
sòj servanòt, e 'ntlora tut dumia;
e solëtta a vijava sot la lun-a
Ròcia La Cun-a.

Roccia la culla.– È andato per il colatoio fino alla sua culla / calda: Roccia La Culla, / è stato a guardare e dormire, dormire e guardare, / che è il vivere più bello e il miglior giocare, / quello dei mezzi matti e dei bambini; / vedeva, vedeva le case in rovina / degli antenati della borgata piantata su un ceppo (abbandonata) / vedeva le farfalle baciarsi, / fare giravolte, giocare ad inseguirsi e raggiungersi, / le vedeva baciare Roccia La Culla, / baciare l'acqua del ruscello, il sassolino che per burla / frana (ha sognato?); vedeva / tutti, tutte le farfalle che hanno la loro culla / nei fiori delle case in rovina / degli antenati della borgata abbandonata, / e gli sembrava di ravvisarsi di sua madre / quando cantava la narcosi, la ninna nanna delle fiamme (del focolare) / "Non fare il pianto senno' mamma piange, / pilucca un grappoletto (appisolati) e volerei quieto quieto; / uccello? no; farfalla? nemmeno; angioletto"; / vedeva su nel vallone / il ruscello far ballare le arie musicali e le bacche del lizzeruolo di monte alla sua canzone, / la brezza far ballare le arie, le bacche e le farfalle; / vedeva la notte e il duca barbagianni e il medesimo stile; / vecchio, nuovo il duca, vecchia e nuova la notte; / e l'affetto della pietra si era fatto culla / per cullare il pianto dell'acquazzone, cullarvi la luna; / Roccia La Culla, roccia tra le più affettuose, / come un gattino, un cagnolino ti cozza la gamba / o una manzetta, che ti viene ben vicino / per farsi i mungere. / E l'abbà dei silvani, grigio e selvaggio, / quando la sua grotta gli sembrava una conchiglia, / a salti d'abbà dei camosci qui veniva; / e lo altalenavano, lo cullavano delicati / i suoi piccoli silvani, e allora tutto dormiva; / e soletta vegliava sotto la luna / Roccia La Culla.

(da Val d'Inghildon) – Le traduzioni sono dell'autore.

Cradle Rock

He passed through the gorge
down to his warm cradle:

Cradle Rock, where he tarried
to watch and sleep, sleep and watch
for the ways of the mad and children
are the loveliest to live and play;
and he saw, saw the shambles
of the ancestors' homes of the village –
rooted like forsaken stumps,
he saw butterflies dallying, pirouetting,
chasing and catching each other,
he saw them kiss Cradle Rock,
kiss the waters of the brook,
the pebbles that to joke landslide
(did he dream it?), he saw everything,
all the butterflies with their cradle
in the flowers of crumbled houses
of the ancestors of the forsaken village
and he thought he saw his mother again
as she sung the deadening lullaby
of the flames of the hearth:
“Don't cry or else
mamma will cry,
pluck the grape of sleep
and you'll silently loft;
bird? no; butterfly? no, no,
just my little angel.”
Up the valley he saw the brook
launching a dance of the music airs
and the berries of mountain azarole
in rhythm with her song, he saw
the breeze launching a dance
of the airs, the berries, the butterflies;
he saw the night and the noble barn owl,
all in the same style; old and new,
that noble bird, old and new the night,
and the affection of the rock
had become cradle to rock

the mourning of the downpour
and to rock the moon there;
Cradle Rock, rock among
the most affectionate, like a kitten
or puppy rubbing against your leg,
or a calf approaching you
to let you milk it.
And the Don of the Sylvans,
gray and wild, when his grotto seems
a shell too ordered and claustrophobic
for the leaps of the Don of the Chamoix
drawing nigh; but his little Sylvans
swung and rocked him oh so gentle
and then all slept and, so alone,
Cradle Rock kept watch
under the moon.

BIANCA DORATO

Nomen omen: the name is an omen and a destiny; Bianca Dorato's name is already all in the light, luminous and variegated. And although one might not believe in any predestination by name, it becomes difficult for the reader to avoid the suggestion of the name, when the dominant theme of her work is light. She was born in Turin on May 26, 1933 and, after interrupting her classical studies, she started studying accounting and got a job as an accountant. Her first verses in Piedmontese appeared in 1975 in *Musicalbrandé*, a journal to which she would always continue to contribute (and in which she published her first play in dialect, *Doi di, a luj*, in 1989; a second drama, *Ël serv*, appeared in the same year in the journal *Crosiere* of Montreal). She published the following collections: *Tzantelèina* (1984), *Passagi* (1990), *Drere 'd lus* (1990).

The themes of light and mountain have precise precedents in the Piedmontese twentieth century: the first in *Pacòt* (learned from *Mistral*), while the second is a real topos of the subalpine literature of this century, at least since *Giulio Segre's La poesia dla montagna* (1949; just as Dorato may appear close to *Tòni Bodrie* in her love for the alpine world. Yet the two motifs sound absolutely new: there is no trace of *félibrisme*, no piedmontization of the name, no concession to the Piedmontese homeland or to the local alpine sketch, to the idyll, no contraposition of city and country, alpine world and modern society, political vindication or defense of minorities. We are before the absolute. A poetry of a place (the mountain with its essential elements of rocks, wind, frost, animals, plants, silence, sky, intact and deserted villages, tracks on the snow) and of a Place (the home of the Absolute), from which the urban milieu in which the poet nevertheless lives, and all human and autobiographical elements are totally excluded, as alien to it. As in *Petrarch*, the ascent to *Mont Ventoux* is in reality a descent in *interiore homine*, as Dorato's climbs and excursions are in reality spiritual ascents.

Perhaps Dorato's whole poetic journey, and her mountain walks, are only the longing for 'n leu 'nté avèj pas, a place where to find peace, the Place. Poetry and mountain (poetic quest and mountain walk) go hand in hand, are two forms of the same quest for the Absolute; ascension and verbal ascent, each with its few, sparse elements: light and spare diction. Light itself, which nevertheless is charged with metaphysical connotations and is a manifestation of a divinity that raises temples amid the alpine solitude with snow, ravines and rocks, that erects a home for splendor up there," the sword of hope that rends God's darkness ("here where wounds of light rend deeply/the thick darkness of the branches – with their dense foliage," *Sapin*), is a metaphor for poetry: *òh podei di paròla, che a sia luaj*, (to be able to say a word that is light!; or "parole di luce fossero le mie!" (if my words were made of light!)) The quest for light is a quest for meaning, and poetry as well. Like poetry, light is revelation. And lyrics are God's prayers uttered and dropped on earth from the height of the distant skies and blossomed in light, received in silence by the poet (the poet does not choose but is chosen: by language, places, poetry itself) and aspires "to become song and prayer." The poet is a shaman, the chosen one, poetry is a shaman-like act of divination, of love and communion, of grace received and given back to others in the form of thaumaturgic power; it is the inner arena for the poet's strengthening and spiritual exercises, and a balm and healing of the soul for the reader.

Dorato's forceful poetry is marked by the harshness of her language (no sweetness of rhythm, no song-like quality), the harshness of the mountain, arduous quest s of the absolute along her mountain path. Like any artist, she too has created her poetic language, a Piedmontese that exists only on her page, re-invented and invented from the ashes of dialect, a language of the soul, not in the least nostalgic or outdated. She enriches her native dialect of Turin with a vocabulary variously taken from her childhood spent in the hills around the city, in *Bardassano* (her mother's birthplace), and from her excursion on the Piedmontese mountains, picking up the local speech from valley to valley (*Val di Susa*, *Valle Po*, *Val Varaita*), and in

particular the Provençal and Piedmontese-Provençal. But what was said about her language can after all also be applied to her world: found again and invented at the same time, namely place and utopia, toponym and absolute.

Dorato's poetry has the strength and the intensity (and the passion and torment) of mystical language; but also its limit: the excessive light is blinding and the rarefied air of the alpine heights in the end takes one's breath away. Her poetry lacks shading, and it risks monotony and overexposure. Everything is absorbed and leveled by light, including joy and sorrow. Për sòn is a distillation of mystical language ("black ravines splintered/by sharp swords,/flames of burning ice") and, not unexpectedly, of baroque metaphors and oxymora, if the late sixteenth century and the seventeenth are periods of great mystics, among which that of the Spaniard Juan de la Cruz (1542-1591) – a friend of Teresa of Avila – cited by the poet in Tzantelèina. Beyond precise references to Juan de la Cruz, there is the similarity of the immersion of the soul in a "dark night," that can prepare the passage into the light. But in Dorato there is absolutely no rejection of the world, its (nothingness) nada before the all (todo) which is God. on the contrary as in Bin - the creatures of the world raise a hymn of praise to God, reminiscent of St. Francis.

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Val d'Ubajëtta

Sempe imaviso 'd col'ora 'd matin
che i marciava ant la stra dij pasturaj
sla còsta amont, tra 'l Còl e j'Agujëtta:
cand la lus a batiss bëcche e barsaj :
Là 'nté la stra as ëslarga ant na calanca,
adasi i son rivà : e coma 'n fiali
lusent a-i era là, coma 'n ghërgoj,
n'aura 'd lus che a gitava dnans a mi.
Doi a cantavo, ansem dzora a na pera,
doi ciri, cit: e la vos a scoria
anver mè cheur, e tan dossa e tan sclinta
sensa fé crij tut ël cel a vempia.
E-lo stàit un moment, o a son passaje
d'ore longhe, là, antant ch'imargalava
'd cola canson che an rondej dë s-ciandor,
smaravijà, vers la gòj amciamava?
E-lo stàita dabon, tanta delissia

versà pèr l'aria, e ant mè cheur fin-a al brus?

oh comà chiej, esse canson e Bin:

oh podèj di paròla, che a sia lus.

(Da Tzantelèina)

Vàlle dell'Ubayette. – Sempre io ricordo quell'ora mattutina / che camminavo nella strada dei pascoli / sul pendio alto, tra il Colle e le Anguilletes: / quando la luce crea vette e precipizi. // Là dove la strada si apre in un calanco / io giunsi lenta: e come un respiro / luminoso era là, come un sussurro, / un vento di luce che nasceva davanti a me. // Due cantavano, insieme sopra un sasso, / due uccelletti, piccoli: e la voce fluiva / verso il mio cuore, e così dolce e così limpida / senza farsi grido colmava tutto il cielo. // Fu un attimo solo, o passarono / lunghe ore là, mentre mi dilettao / di quel canto, che in strofe di splendore / meravigliata mi chiamava alla gioia? // Fu davvero, tanta delizia / versata nell'aria, e fino all'estremo nel mio cuore? / Oh, come essi, poter essere canto e preghiera: / oh poter dire parola, che sia luce.

Ubayette Valley

I always recall that morning hour

when I strolled along the pasture road

up there on the high slopes

between the Hill and the Aiguillettes:

when the light generates

peaks and precipices.

There the path yields to a calanque -

I reached it gradually,

and like luminous inhaling

it was there like a murmur,

a wind of light born before me.

Two fledglings sang together

from a rock, and their voice

flowed toward my heart, so sweet,

so pristine without shrieking that

it filled the sky to its brim.

Did this all happen in one instant

or did many hours pass there

as I delighted in that song

that in verses of splendor

summoned me to magic joy?

Was it truly such delight

spilling into the air,

brimming my heart's cup?

How I'd like to be like those birds,

song and prayer, gifted to speak

a word that might be light...

Passagi

Tanta dossor a l'ha cantate antom
lë stalasagn ant ël di bel dla prima,
ël di dl'arciam: a venta alvesse, e parte,
s'a-i é 'n cel neuv, e na tèra novissa,
al cheur ëspers che a sa 'l temp ëd soa gòj;
a venta andé. Dëssamblà l'uss duvert
da la buria dl'invern, àuta la fiòca
ancora a vemp la stansia: tan solenga
e longa toa stagion ëd neut geilà,
ëd crij d'orissi. E ancora a sarà sèira
a fé rèida la fiòca sle costere,
a 'ingrumli 'd geil tut ës-ciòde 'd boton
al buf malegn dl'ëscur. Sola e chità
't ses drocheri e mongiòja: se paròle
sacrà ti it sare an toe pere vivente,
s'a-i é 'n foalé stëmà, un cheur ancreus
savent ëd feu e 'd canson ; d'un Bin sicur
për vagné l'alba. Ant ël di che as esmòrta
genita at toca l'ùltima rajà,
a di salut dnans a l'ambrun-a. E ora
ël picaròche at signa dë scarlata.

(Da Passagi)

Passaggio.– Tanta dolcezza ha cantato intorno a te / lo stillare del disgelo nel giorno bello della primavera, / il giorno del richiamo: bisogna alzarsi, e partire / se vi è un cielo nuovo, ed una terra novella, / per il cuore bramoso che conosce il tempo della sua gioia: / bisogna andare. Scardinato l'uscio aperto / dalla bufera invernale, alta la neve / ancora colma la stanza: tanto solitaria / e lunga la tua stagione di gelide notti, / di grida di uragano. E ancora si farà sera / a rapprendere la neve sui pendii, / a raggrumare di gelo ogni schiudersi di gemma / al soffio maligno dell'oscurità. Sola e abbandonata / tu sei maceria ed altare: se parole / sacre tu racchiudi nelle tue pietre viventi / se vi è un focolare nascosto, un cuore profondo / sapiente di fuoco e di canti: di una preghiera sicura / per raggiungere l'alba: Nel giorno che si spegne / puro ti tocca l'ultimo raggio di luce / a dire saluto davanti al crepuscolo. Ed ora / il picchio muraio ti segna di scarlatto.

Passage

Such sweetness has sung all around you
the trickling of the thaw
that lovely springtime day,
day of the recall: you must
arise and depart if
there's a new sky for you,
and a new earth for the anxious heart
that knows the time of its joy;

you must go...

Unhinged, the door is open,

free from winter storms -

the snow is still so high

it fills the room: so solitary

and long is your season of gelid nights

of hurricane shrieks...

And yet evening comes again

to cast snows on the slopes

to clot in ice every opening of buds

in malign breathe of the dark.

Alone and abandoned

you are ruins and altar:

perhaps as sacred words,

you mantle self in living stones,

perhaps as hidden hearth,

a deep heart knowing fire and songs

of a certain prayer to reach the dawn.

The day when the lights goes out,

that pure ray of light strokes you

to greet the evening...

And now the woodpecker of the wall

incises you in scarlet hues.

Ij di dasiant

Al temp d'agost, che l'erba as muda an òr,

da sì tan bela mi it vardo, mia bëcca,

'ncó nua 'd fiòca. Belessi sël còl

le røndole a foëtto l'ària sclinta,

maj freme: e già 'nt ël cheur a-j gita anvia

'd rive daleugne, e a san le stra dla mat

e ij signaj ëd j'èstèile. E mi sì it vardo,

toa ponta al cél e toe rèis ant mè cheur:

sola i bëstanto e ij di d'antan i penso.

Leugna la prima doleuria e la glòria

solia dl'istà: ora tuta ampëgnà 'd lus

a meuir la tèra e 'd so meuire as argala,

pasjà; a finiss tut ës-cianch e magon,
ora, ant l'otogn che a ven. Dossor e gòj
da di a di 'nt la stagion che a degola,
ij di dasiant che tut a mudo an lus,
ròche e bòsch e costere. Bel speté
danans a ti la fiòca, mia montagna:
nassuva 'd cèl a vnirà, coma anvlupa
garva che tut a para dë s-ciandor;
pian a vnirà, e ancora i sarai sì
danans a ti – cèl e tèra e silensi,
pa d'àutr – mach la tra candida bërlusenta,
e mi rochera a ti rochera anlià.

(Da Drere 'd lus)

I lenti giorni.– Al tempo d'agosto, che l'erba si muta in oro, / di qui così bella io ti guardo, mia vetta, / ancora spoglia di neve. Qui sul colle / le rondini sono sibili di frusta nell'aria limpida, / mai ferme: e già in cuore hanno desiderio / di rive lontane, e conoscono le vie del mare / ed i segnali delle stelle. Ed io qui ti guardo, / la tua cima al cielo e le tue radici nel mio cuore. / sola io indugio e penso ai giorni andati. / Lontana la primavera dolorosa e la gloria / solare dell'estate: ora tutta pregna di luce / muore la terra e si delizia del suo morire, / saziata; finisce ogni strazio e dolore, / ora, nell'autunno che viene. Dolcezza e gioia / di giorno in giorno nella stagione che declina, / i lenti giorni che tutto mutano in luce, / rupi e boschi e pendii. Bello attendere / dinanzi a te la neve, mia montagna: / nata di cielo verrà, come soffice / manto che tutto adorna di splendore; / piano verrà, e ancora io sarò qui / davanti a te – cielo e terra e silenzio, / non altro – solo la candida distesa luminosa, / ed io rupe a te rupe legata.

The Slow Days

From August when the grass gilds,
I watch my peak, so lovely,
still free of snow - here,
on the hill, the swallows,
never still, are whipping hisses
in the limpid air and now
they crave distant banks
and they know the sea roads
and where the stars lead.
I watch you here,
your peak toward the sky
and your roots in my heart.
Alone I linger
and think of days gone by.
Faraway the painful spring
and the solar glory of summer:
now all pregnant with light,
the earth dies delighting

in its dying, all plenitude;
every torture, every grieving
reach their quietude
with the impending Fall.
Sweetness and joy,
from day to day,
in the declining season,
slow days that transform
everything into light,
cliffs and woods and slopes.
It's lovely to witness before you
the snow, my mountain:
born from sky, it will come
like a soft cloak adorning
everything with splendor;
slow, it will come
and I
I will still be here
before you - sky
and earth and silence -
nothing more - only
the pure white luminous expanse,
and me cliff one with you, cliff.

Për sòn

A-i son dij leu, là amont –
solengh ëd fiòca àuta,
barsaj nèir anchërnà
da speje avusse,
fiare 'd giassa brusanta.
A-j fa la lus, a l'alba:
con ròche nuitere a batiss
na ca përla s-ciandor.
Per sòn i ven-o da leugn
ciamanda ver se drere –
ch'a-i sio përl mi
lame 'd giassa tajenta

a travèrseme 'l cheur,

a dreube stra a la lus.

(Da Drere 'd lus)

Per questo. – Vi sono luoghi, lassù - / solitudini di neve alta, / neri dirupi scheggiati / da spade aguzze, / fiamme di ghiaccio bruciante. / Li crea la luce, all'alba: / con rupi notturne costruisce / una dimora per lo splendore. / Per questo io vengo di lontano / invocando verso tali sentieri - / che vi siano per me / lame di ghiaccio tagliente / a trapassami il cuore, / ad aprire vie alla luce.

For this

There are places up there -

solitudes of lofty snow,

black crags shattered

by piercing swords,

flames of burning ice.

Light creates these places,

at dawn: with nocturnal cliffs

it erects an abode

for all the splendor.

For this I come from afar

invoking such paths

so I might find

blades of cutting ice

to transfix my heart,

to open roads to the light.

Bivach

Mach na calà 'd camoss

dnans a noi, vers la nebia,

e peui nòste pianà

che as mës-cio sla tra 'd fiòca

Fiochiss an ven, giassà,

turbij èd cel e 'd vent –

le giòute an pogna, e 'l cheur

antivist èd l'invern

Pa d'àutr, ant la frèid granda

Se nen susné n'arpar

- a j'é, dè dla dij ròch,

ant na piarda sicura

Bel riveje, e pasiesse

dla fatiga e dël gel
- la calà a riva sì,
e ancora as ësłontan-a
A l'è gòj l'uss che as dreub
gòj ël lum che as anvisca
la gòj a l'è sarà
'n tra 'd muraje satie
Ma la calà solenga
i la vëdromà pi -
longa a va amont, a leuve
stërmà 'd nebia, antërdie.

(Inedita)

Bivacco.- Soltanto una traccia di camoscio / davanti a noi, verso la nebbia, / e poi le nostre orme / che si mescolano sulla distesa di neve // Nevischio ci giunge, ghiacciato, / turbine di cielo e di vento - / ci punge le guance, ed il cuore / presago dell'inverno // Null'altro, nel grande freddo, / se non sospirare un riparo / - c'è, oltre le rocce, / in un pianoro sicuro // E' gioia l'uscio che si apre / gioia il lume che si accende / la gioia è racchiusa / tra solidi muri // Ma la traccia solitaria / non la vedremo più - / a lungo sale, a luoghi / nascosti di nebbia, proibiti.

Le traduzioni sono dell'autrice

Bivouac

Only a trace of chamois,
before us, toward the mist,
and then our tracks merging
with the expanse of snow.
The sleet reaches us,
whirlwinds of sky
pierce our cheeks
and our hearts
prescient of winter.
Nothing else in the great chill
if not the gasping for shelter,
it's there beyond the rocks
on a secure plateau.
How fine to arrive
and find peace
away from the struggle
and the deep-freeze -
the trace comes this far
and then recedes.

It's joy - that way out,
joy, the light that shines,
the joy is sheltered
amid solid walls.
Yet the solitary trace -
we won't see it anymore -
it rises in the distance to places
hidden in fog, off limits.

REMIGIO BERTOLINO

Remigio Bertolino was born in Montaldo Mondovì in 1948 and lives in Vicoforte (Cuneo). He is a teacher and writes in the dialect of Mondovì. He is a major exponent of that peripheral area which has established its own clear identity by becoming the most active center of poetry in Piedmont, taking the place of the region's capital and bearing witness to the waning power of the metropolitan dialects around which the regional koinés had been formed. This new awareness is evident in Bertolino's anthology *Nen viré 'l cher ëndré*, with the telling subtitle *Nuova poesia in lingua piemontese* (New Poetry in Piedmontese), 1982. Yet he does not follow local traditions. More than any other poet from Mondovì, Bertolino looks to other poetic experiences: Bodrero in Piedmont, or simply Italian or European poetry tout court.

After a start in Italian (*Un ponte ci divide*, 1974) and some poems in a collective chapbook (*Paröle dë squacion*, 1975), in 1976 he published in the Piedmontese dialect the short story *Mia mare* (My Mother), a figure he would always return to in his work. The wound caused by his mother's death, when he was thirteen, perhaps no longer bleeds, but it never healed. Nevertheless, Bertolino's poetry has a tragic side as well as a naively childlike side, gently dreamlike, mythical, fantastic and enchanted, so that his tragic world and death itself are at times inscribed in a fairy-tale atmosphere. The titles of his major works of poetry could not be more explicit: on the one hand *Lj lumin* (The Fireflies), 1984; *L'eva d'ënvern* (It Was in Winter), 1986; *Sbaluch* (Splendor), 1989; *A lum ëd fioca* (By the Light of the Snow), 1995; the one-act play *Neut ëd tòrmenta*, 1997; on the other hand the fanciful, youthful and visionary side of *A gatipola dël nivole* (Riding the Clouds), 1987, and the small things of *Passore* (Swallows), 1992, which become emblems of all humankind and an allegory of a tragic sense of contemporary man's existential condition (one should not be fooled by the archaic words, the idiomatic expressions, the jargon: he is a thoroughly modern poet.)

In his poetry it is eternally winter, he does not know any other season. Bertolino's desolate and lifeless landscape seemed inhabited by scraggy "shadows of the evening" (like the shadow of the nail in Ere) or by Giacometti's stark skeletal statues – dogs or other animals. The severity, the expressiveness, the bitterness, the tragicity, and the gloomy, hallucinated, visionary atmospheres of his poetry seem those of nordic and Scandinavian art (from Strindberg and Ibsen to Munch and Bergman). To put it another way, his world – expressed in an analogical, metaphorical, and allusive language – is reminiscent of Pascoli's livid earth and tragic sky. He is indebted as well, more than it might appear, to Ungaretti's poetry and *Allegria di naufragi*, a title which sounds like an interpretive key to Bertolino's poetry, which always shows a clarity of images, but also a surprised, childlike wonderment. Ungarettian and vertical are the lines and the vocabulary, spare, cold, lifeless, refractory. His verses are bare and stark, elementary like a dry branch in winter; they do not comfort, do not cradle, do not give in to easy consolation or emotions (severe and merciless as the nature they represent). His poetry subtracts, takes out, both in the construction of the verse and the analogical concentration. Bertolino works through intermittence, through flashes, through *sbaluch* and epiphanies, though he also writes some narrative poetry.

If the world of the past, the ecosystem of the Piedmontese mountains behind Mondovì becomes deserted and arid, creating a hostile, alienated world, made of ice and snow, inhabited by "famished figures," simple objects, what else could dialect speak of if not the absoluteness of that condition? Dialect in its archaicism, having lost its outer referents, becomes the stark language of poetry, it gives life to a tragic condition of universal abandonment. Dialect poetry, of which Bertolino is one of the best voices today, paradoxically has had to see its own world die in order to become universal.

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O fava apen-a cèr

O fava apen-a cèr
e fiòcàva larga la man
quand son fame sl'uss
a fé un pò d'eva ...
N'ariass fregg
sivorava ënt la bragheta
gatiandme la pansa.
Son stirame come un gat
contra 'l muragn;
con la boca duverta
"Ohé" j'heu bramà
a la matin ch'a fava cucù
da la Mòlarissa
e na brancà 'd faròsche
fresche 'd nivola
son dròcàme sij barbis.
Pian pian j'heu colaje
come s'i pijessa l'òstia.

(da A gatipola dël nivole)

Albeggiava.– Albeggiava appena / e nevicava a larghe falde / quando mi sono affacciato all'uscio / a far un po' d'acqua / Un ventaccio gelido / fischiava nella
bottoniera / solleticandomi la pancia. // Come un gatto mi sono stirato / contro il muro; / con la bocca spalancata / "Ohé" ho gridato / alla mattina che faceva cucù /
dalla Molarissa: / e una manciata di falde di neve / fresche di nuvola ... / mi sono cadute sui baffi. / Pian piano le ho ingoiate / come se mi comunicassi.

Àngel ëd piume nèire

I

Ël mè ciabòt – spers
pèi 'd na crava
ënt ij bòsch.
Le ciape dël cuvert
scrusso al cagné dla fiòca.
Imno stògn
ëngrumli dacant al feu
a scoté jë s-ciòp

dij such ch'is no van

ën sòtole 'd lus.

La damigian-a d'eva

dl'Otin Neuv

a specia la finestra

ch'as fà scura.

Èl so l'ha lassà

chèich piume rosse

sle rame patanùe.

Sofia n'aria fregia

sla mia schin-a,

la testa a brusa

e lòcia pèi 'd na ciòca:

le gambe im campo

sla pajassa.

I.-La mia catapecchia – spersa / come una capra / nei boschi: / Le pietre del tetto / scricchiolano al peso della neve. / Me ne sto / raggomitolato accanto al fuoco / ad ascoltare gli scoppi / dei ciocchi che se ne vanno / in girandole di luce. / La damigiana d'acqua / della Vigna Nuova / specchia la finestra / che si fa scura. / Il sole ha lasciato / sui rami nudi / qualche piuma rossa. / Soffia un vento gelido / sulla mia schiena, / la testa brucia / e trema come una campana: / le gambe mi buttano / sul pagliericcio.

II.

Ij di passo.

Da la finestra i vegh

viragalèt ëd faròsche

ai subi dël vent.

Dal sòt dël pajon

slongheme le man

parpajon

che carand

im favi monté 'n cel

masnà.

II. I giorni passano. / Dalla finestra vedo / capriole di fiocchi / ai fischi del vento. // Dalla fossa del pagliericcio / allungatemi le mani / falde di neve / che vorticando / mi facevate salire in cielo / bambino.

III.

Mia seure, l'eva,

da la scuola tèrmand

am fà umri

ij lavr siorà:

l'ha ël gust

dle nivole d'istà

ferme s'el verme.

III. Mìa sorella, l'acqua, / dalla scodella tremando / mi fa umide / le labbra screpolate : / ha il sapore / delle nuvole d'estate / ferme sugli ontani.

IV.

Om d'èsvija sovens

lè scherziné 'd na rama

chinà da la fiòca

o lè squise d'un giari

ch'os vagna la tan-a.

L'aria a gonfia 'l papé

pendù s'un veri rot.

Mi lo bèich

e sògn ij bastiment

e 'l mar

che mai j'heu vist.

IV. Spesso mi desta / lo scricchiolio d'un ramo / chinato dalla neve / o lo squittire d'un topo / che si guadagna la tana. / Il vento gonfia la carta / stesa su un vetro rotto. / Io la guardo / e sogno i bastimenti / ed il mare / che mai ho visto.

V.

Àngel ëd piume nèire

t'è calà,

mës-cià al bal dle faròsche,

fin su mia pajassa.

It còsti ij lavr

a mia scuela:

un frisson ëd mòrt

drinta l'eva it sofij.

Parej i bèiv

j'ombre scarabocià

da tò fià.

V. Angelo di piume nere / sei sceso, / mescolato al ballo della neve, / fin sul mio pagliericcio. / Accosti le labbra / alla mia scodella: / un brivido di morte / soffi dentro l'acqua. / Così bevo / le ombre rabescate / del tuo fiato.

VI.

E na neucc

la mòrt l'è passà.

L'ha campà

drinta l'eva dla scuela

come un cerce nèj.

J'heu pënsà al bion
che devma avej ëndrinta:
tucc j'agn sè scrivo
ënt na reusa
semp pì gròssa ...
Peu l'é ëndassno
tra 'l rame giassà
che sglinavo pèi 'd ciochin.

VI. E una notte / la morte è passata. / Ha gettato / dentro l'acqua della scodella / come un cerchio nero. / Ho pensato al tronco / che dobbiamo avere dentro: / ogni anno s'iscrive / in una rosa / sempre più ampia ... / Poi se n'è andata / tra i rami ghiacciati / che tinnivano come campani.

VII.

Land ëndavo a perdse
le passonà fresche sël puvrin
che treuvava dacant a l'uss
la matin?
Levr volp e can
i-j conoss dal trasse
fiorie s la fiòca:
ma le passonà dla mòrt?
Pì legere dij gat
quand fan na filesca 'n cusin-a
o dël passore con la pau
dë strocioné 'l cussin
neuv ëd fiòca
sij cuvert.

VII. Dove si perdevano / le orme fresche sul nevischio / che trovavo accanto all'uscio / la mattina? / Lepri volpi e cani / riconosco dalle péste / fiorite sulla neve: / ma i passi della morte? / Più leggeri dei gatti / quando rubano in cucina / o dei passerì col timore / di gualcire il cuscino / nuovo di neve / sui tetti.

VIII.

Drinta l'eva mòrta dla scuela
ël cioché dle Mulin-e
spuva – na vòta doe tre –
n'arbomb rusià
dai giarièt bianch dle faròsche.
L'aria l'ha un frisson
come se na truta d'argent
a nueissa drinta la stansia.
Peu la fiòca

ch'as mugia 'n silenzi ...

(da Sbaluch)

VIII. Dentro l'acqua morta della scodella / il campanile di Moline / sputa una volta due tre / un'eco rósa / dai topini bianchi dei fiocchi di neve. / L'aria ha un fremito / come se una trota d'argento / nuotasse nella stanza. / Poi la neve / che s'ammucchia in silenzio...

Le traduzioni sono dell'autore

Black-feathered Angel

I

My shack, in shambles -

like a goat

in the woods.

The roof tiles creak

with the snow's weight.

I stay huddled

by the fire

to listen to the crackles

of the logs that flake

in vortices of light.

The demijohn of water

from the New Vineyard

reflects the window

that darkens.

On the bare branches

the sun has left

some red feathers.

An icy wind blows

at my back,

my head burns

and trembles like a bell.

My legs throw me down

on my straw bedroll.

II

The days pass.

From the windows I see

somersaults of flakes

in the whistling of wind.

From the ditch

of my bedroll,
please, stretch your hands,
you snowflakes that , swirling,
lofted me, when a child,
to the heavens.

III

My sister, water,
trembling from the bowl,
moistens my cracked lips:
she tastes of summer clouds
still amid the alders.

IV

It often wakes me,
that creaking of a branch
bent by the snow
or the squeaking of a rat
that reclaims its hole.
The wind swells the cardboard
taped across the broken pane.
I watch it and dream
of cargo ships
and the sea I've never seen.

V

Black-feathered angel,
you've descended,
swirling in a snow dance
down to my bedroll.
Draw your lips closer
to my bowl:
blow a quiver of death
into the water..
so I can drink
the arabesque shades
of your breath.

Cesare Vivaldi

Dialect literature has ancient traditions in Liguria in both verse and prose. There are documents between the twelfth century and then the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth of a vernacular speech that is more closely related to Provençal than with modern Genoese. Documents such as the answer of a common Genoese woman to Rambautz de Vaqueiras (who was in Genoa after 1190), who woos her, and she answers the troubadour's Provençal with a hypothetical Genoese; or the collection of various poems, some in incorrect Latin, most of them in a vernacular close to old Provençal, with civil, historical, religious themes, given to an Anonymous Genoese and written between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, or the sacred *Laudi* and the religious and civil prose treatises of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. But, as in the other regions of Italy, true dialect poetry, "reflected," according to Croce, began in Liguria in the Renaissance and developed during the Baroque period. Thus Paolo Foglietta, "the first inventor of the Genoese Parnassus," wrote in the sixteenth century, and for him it was no longer a "vulgar tongue," but a true Genoese dialect, used polemically against Tuscan. In the seventeenth century, with Gian Giacomo Cavalli, a contemporary and friend of Gabriello Chiabrera, we have an important Baroque poet, who thanks to the vital expressionism of his dialect went beyond the moderate version of the baroque practiced by Chiabrera and approached the overpowering frenzy of Marino.

There was not very much in the eighteenth century, besides the popular Rococo of Stefano De Franchi, a gallant Metastasio follower, but also rudely patriotic in poems like the one dedicated to the famous incident of Portoria or the other dedicated to commander Domenico Castellino, "terror of the Algerians." The nineteenth century, on the other hand, had a long list of poets who did not escape the worst kind of petit-bourgeois provincialism. They were limited to the sketch and local humor and, between the end of the century and the beginning of the twentieth century, to the imitation of fashionable national models, like Trilussa, Testoni, Barbarani. Some originality can be seen in the *crepuscolare*, and a bit art nouveau, vein of poets already belonging to this century, at least chronologically, like Carlo Malinverni and a few less interesting ones.

It was these writers, who no doubt brought an epoch to a close, that opened the way to the greatest Ligurian poet of our century and perhaps of all dialect literature of Liguria: Edoardo Firpo, whose art nouveau roots were the same as Malinverni's, but who was the first "new" poet, at last completely modern, the counterpart of Sbarbaro and Montale (though not of the same level). Pasolini wrote enlightening pages on Firpo, tracing his beginnings between Pascoli's legacy on the one hand and on the other "the sense of freedom, of delighted surprise always present in using dialect with the same dignity as literary Italian." Firpo blossomed late and it took him a long time to dispose of local tradition, a tradition at times echoed even in his mature work. He published his first book, *O grillo cantadô*, in 1931, when he was forty-two; his second book, *Fiore in to gôto*, prefaced by Montale, in 1935; and his third, *Ciammo o martin pesòu*, in 1955. A handful of poems written between 1955 and 1957, the year of his death, mark his highest achievement, along with almost the whole third book, a few poems from the second, and very few from the first.

Firpo's true maturity, in essence, coincided with the new cultural consciousness with which poetry in dialect took root after W.W. II, with Pasolini and Guerra above all. It was then that the profound meaning of his poetry became fully apparent: the feeling of death, the irrevocable and merciless flow of time and of things in time, and their constant metamorphosis until the end, after which they can be born again, reincarnate, but always into something perishable, of mortal substance. Firpo, no doubt, is a deeply Genoese poet, like Montale, but is not "a poet of Genoa," as Montale is not. What interests the best Firpo is the skylark in the sky, the blade of grass and the trace left in the mind by its glimmer. Genoa, at best, is the quiver of distant lights or the Lantern seen from a ship going out to sea or a place between the finite and the infinite: the humble beach before which a dead cat is floating, the fountain of a villa circled by swallows, a desolate mountain village. Firpo does not identify with a place, even if it is a big and noble city, but in things large and small, the sky, the sea, the butterfly, the downy seed of the thistle. And above all, as Boselli notes, he "is aware of being a loner who observes himself constantly and also knows that his nature conditions his existence at every level, to the end" (preface to Edoardo Firpo, *Diario 1918-1955*, Genoa 1980).

As a matter of fact, Firpo even tried to become "a poet of Genoa," perhaps heeding a misguided advice given by Montale, more likely due to the influence of post-war populism to which he was open, as a registered communist. He did so with the poems of *Tutta Zena ciù un caroggio*, published between 1947 and 1949 in the Genoese edition of the communist daily *L'Unità*; an unsuccessful attempt to describe Genoa neighborhood by neighborhood. Firpo, a poet capable of true greatness but not a man of great culture, mostly self-taught and naïf, as the mentioned *Diario*, published posthumously, demonstrates, when he does not follow his natural inspiration becomes a mere versifier.

Firpo is unique, in the sense that there are no contemporary poets who can be compared to him, except maybe Luigi Panero (Loano 1903-1960), a good friend of Firpo although younger and also a good friend of the excellent poet in Italian Angelo Barile. Panero, who died tragically without ever collecting his poems in a volume, can unfortunately be judged only from what he published in newspapers, journals, and anthologies, thanks especially to Boselli and other friends. From what remains of him we get the image of a poet similar to Firpo in his feelings toward nature, but with a much smaller technical range, based mostly on very flimsy stanzas, on chains of fine images bordering on aphasia, but phonically and visually very suggestive. So in a glimmer of lights and the October sun, what shines more than anything else are the chestnuts, amid swarms of birds and tolls of bells in the evening, the heart "looks for a sign/barely a feather/of life around."

Even if they have no ties with Firpo, except for being contemporaries, Alfredo Gismondi and Silvio Opisso, capable of some originality despite their traditional inspiration, seem at least worthy of mention. Better than they, even if very "old style," is Aldo Acquarone, author of graceful sketches and vignettes, whose nineteenth-century roots are enlivened by a very crisp diction.

The second half of the century has had different types of dialect poetry, beginning with Pasolini and Guerra. Poetry in dialect is one with poetry in Italian, it has no quarrel with it, and it addresses not the speakers of one dialect or another, but the general readers of poetry, while the new dialect poets usually write in Italian as well. In Liguria, the first new poet is Cesare Vivaldi, born in Liguria (Imperia 1925), but a Rome resident until his death in 2000, who in 1951, during Firpo's mature years, published *Otto poesie nel dialetto ligure di Imperia*. Vivaldi was immediately acknowledged as a dialect poet by Pier Paolo Pasolini, who in 1952 wrote about *Otto poesie* in the preface to *Poesia dialettale del Novecento*, which he edited with Mario Dell'Arco: "C..Vivaldi, the youngest of the Ligurian poets, is connected to A. Guerra, the Friulians, and in a way to Dell'Arco as well, that is, in general to the most modern poets (also in the sense of being more current and socially committed); his small book

(eight poems in all), if not enough to have him included in an anthology, places him among the most talented dialect poets of the last generation.”

After the Neorealist experience, Vivaldi found a more intimate measure in a constant dialogue with himself or with a loved one, and in recent years his poetry has taken on the form of an essential diary, both in dialect and in Italian, more experimental and dynamic.

Not too different from Vivaldi for his capacity to observe landscapes and figures with loving sharpness, maybe even with greater tenderness, is another poet from Imperia, Giuseppe Cassinelli, born in Dolcedo in 1928. Cassinelli is linguistically the most dedicated of all Ligurian poets, in terms of the total restoration of his archaic dialect, without Italianisms and without the interference of other dialects, even the neighboring ones. A characteristic trait of the latest Cassinelli is his resigned and thoughtful religiosity, that brings him close to a Ligurian poet who writes in Italian, the already mentioned Angelo Barile.

Firpo has left quite a legacy in Genoa because, so reclusive in life and not very well liked, he achieved a huge fame, almost a veneration, after his death. But the only one who really continued what we may call Firpo's line, in a very original and personal way, was Vito Petrucci, also author of plays and essays. Petrucci, in any case, is quite different from Firpo. He is not afflicted by solitude like him, and has the gentleness and the serenity of his gaze, but not his desperation. He is rooted in life, in social relationships, in literature itself.

Other Genoese poets take different routes, at times very personal. This is the case of Plinio Guidoni, who often takes refuge in the history of the Genoese Republic to vent his strongly hallucinatory narrative power. Also worthy of mention is Giuliano Balestrieri.

A very singular place in Genoese poetry is held by Roberto Giannoni (1934), a highly cultured writer, no doubt the best poet of the area and perhaps of all Liguria, the only one who has been able to come to terms with the dialect poetry tradition of his city, freeing himself with authority from the experiences of the past. Having begun to write poetry rather late, after 'E gage in 1987 he published 'E trombe in 1997. Both volumes reclaim a true, authentic, Genoese spirit rooted in that communal life that once had determined its greatness. Franco Brevini writes in *Parole perdute* (Turin: Einaudi, 1990): "Giannoni's poetry is rigorously antilyric and recently tends to transform itself into authentic verse narrative. Giannoni delves into a sort of collective geology, in which dialect becomes the language of the chorus. His poems reveal a gloomy and mortuary Genoa, observed from an almost archeological distance. ... There is a radical rejection of the lyric self in order to lend a voice to the people, the biographies, the realities touched during the long peregrinations on the seas, but also, in a city-prison approaching its decline, to a suffering and humiliated humanity. With his prosaic narrative verse, Giannoni today represents the epic and choral spearhead of neodialect poetry."

A notable contribution to the latest dialect poetry of Liguria has been made, and continues to be made, by the two "horns" of the Riviera, the eastern and the western. As for the east, there is the revelation of Paolo Bertolani (La Serra di Lerici 1931), a very sincere poet and certainly one of the dialect poets, past or present, who have achieved national prominence. Bertolani makes elegant use of the rough and dense language of an area between Liguria and Tuscany, not without the influence of Emilia, depicting figures through which he expresses the feeling for stark landscapes and for the smallest corners of the countryside. The poetry of Bertolani, who is bilingual and also writes fiction in Italian, has for now found the best expressive medium in the ruggedness of dialect. His rediscovery of the landscape and of the people achieves an essential sobriety in dialect, devoid of naivete and sentimentality.

As for the west, the name of the young Andrea Capano (Turin 1923), born in Piedmont but Ligurian (Ventimiglia) by adoption, should be added to those of Vivaldi and Cassinelli. For Stefano Verdino, who writes well of Capano, he is a violently expressionist poet, capable of "a sharp feel for a degraded landscape, disfigured to the point of becoming almost hallucinatory, brute matter... the first measure of a true poetics of ruin, namely the accumulation of images whose continuous sequence only expresses the impossibility of finding a meaning" (*La poesia in Liguria*, Forlì 1986).

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EDOARDO FIRPO

Edoardo Firpo was born in 1889 in Genoa, where he died in 1956. He wrote poetry in dialect and in Italian (although with uneven results, of great quality the former, less than mediocre the latter), was a fine painter, although not of a professional level, and author of a comedy staged in 1922 with little success. Upon his death, he left a voluminous diary, published in 1982. Poor and isolated, he lived solely for poetry, without affection and with very few friends. For a long time he practiced the trade of piano tuner, inherited from his father, and only in his later years was able to write for *Unità* and other newspapers. In his drab life, spent almost entirely in Genoa (apart from his wanderings on the Riviera and the Genoese hinterland), the most significant episode was his arrest by the fascists and Germans in March 1945, after the censors intercepted one of his letters. Sentenced to deportation, he was saved by the Liberation.

In his lifetime Firpo published four volumes of poetry in dialect. After his death, the anthology *O grillo cantadò* was published in Turin (Einaudi), edited by Mario Boselli and Guido Sechi; in 1978 *Tutte le poesie*, in two volumes, was published in Genoa (S. Marco dei Giustiniani).

Raised in a cultural milieu between *crepuscolare* and Liberty, contaminated early on by the petit-bourgeois taste of Genoese dialect poetry of the first decades of the twentieth century, Firpo began to show some originality only with his second book of verse in 1935 (not by chance prefaced by Montale), but he did not reach his full maturity until after the second world war through the contact with the “new” dialect poets (Pasolini and others) and in a literary climate no longer provincial and “peripheral,” according to Pasolini’s thesis, but fully “central” and national. This progress was due to Genoa itself, in a new cultural milieu centered around Mario Boselli and the Sechi brothers (and the journal *Nuova Corrente*), but above all to Firpo’s work in almanacs and journals with a national circulation, such as Mario Dell’Arco’s *Il Belli*, which published the best Italian poetry in dialect, with writings by Pasolini, Caproni, Marin, Sciascia, Boselli, and others.

The real meaning of the best poetry of Firpo is the sense of the passing of time and of death, the latter seen as the transformation into something else, into a breath of wind, into a flash of light, into a bird’s song. A profoundly Genoese poet, Firpo is not the poet of Genoa but of minimal events, the skylark in the sky, the swaying blade of grass, the butterfly drowning in the sea. Genoa is at most a pulsation of lights in the distance, or the Lantern seen by the sailing ship; because he recognizes himself in enormous or infinitesimal things, the sky, the sea or the plume of a thistle, the swallow grazing the water of a fountain.

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Incontro

A rondaninn-a a calla zù in sce l’aegua
e a s’incontra con quella che ven sciù
da-o çe da vasca;
un attimo se toccan e van via.
Unn-a a ritorna dove a nostra fòa
a finisce sens ’ombra e senza fo,
l’atra in to pàise a va dove l’odo
di proèi fiorii o dua senza fin
e l’oa a trilla eterna in sce-a mattin.
A galla resta un zeugo de çercetti
che se ne van ai orli ciancianin.

Incontro – La rondine si eala sull’acqua / e s’incontra con l’altra che risale / dal cielo della vasca; / un attimo: si toccano e si lasciano. / L’una ritorna dove la nostra favola / dilegua senz’ombra e senza rumore, / l’altra nel paese va dove l’odore / dei prati fioriti dura senza fine / e l’ora trilla eterna nel mattino. / A galla rimane un gioco di cerchietti / che se ne vanno agli orli lentamente

Encounter

A swallow swooping down upon the water
encounters another one that's rising up
from the heaven of the basin:
they touch for an instant and then separate.
One turns back where our fairy tale is scattered
without a shadow and without a sound,
the other flies off to the countryside
where the flowered fields are fragrant endlessly
and the moment trills in the morning eternally.
On the surface of the water a set of circles
opening slowly, widening lazily...

L'orto

Bello pe sempre l'orto in ta mattin
serròu da traè muagette, in vista a-o mà
e-o cipresso soti li da-a vixin,
quande tutta sprussa de margaitin
a sùcca in sce-a muagetta a pa giassâ.
Bella pe sempre l'aêgua in ta conchetta
quande unn'aguggia d'aegua a se-a trapanna,
e unna fêuggia d'olivo a se gh'ornezza;
bello pe sempre o ciocco de campann-a
che o vento fresco o porta sciù da-o mà.
Bello pe sempre ascì quande lampezza
in sce-e coste lontann-e da rivea
e cieûve in sce-a leituga e a scorsona;
bella pe sempre a vegia cansonetta:
Gianchi son i cavelli comme o lin.

L'orto – Bello per sempre l'orto nel mattino / chiuso da tre muretti in vista al mare / e un cipresso sottile li vicini, / quando cosparsa di perline / la zucca sul muretto par ghiacciata. / Bella per sempre l'acqua nella tinozza / quando un filo d'acqua la perfora, / e una foglia d'olivo vi s'omeggia; / bello per sempre il rintocco di campana / che il vento fresco porta sul mare. / Bello per sempre anche quando lampeggia / sulle coste lontane della riviera / e piove su lattuga e scorzonera; / bella per sempre la vecchia canzonetta: / Bianchi sono i capelli come il lino.

The Orchard

Forever lovely in the morning light
the orchard hemmed by three low walls, the tree--
a slender cypress--near, and the sea in sight,
when the gourd upon the wall appears to be
frost-covered as the seed-pearls turn it white.

Forever lovely the water basin where
a thread of water knifes into the swell
when a leaf from an olive tree is mooring there:
forever lovely the tolling of the bell
when the cool wind carries it across the sea.
Forever lovely even the harsh glare
when the lightning from the coast inflames the sky,
and it rains on the lettuce and the salsify;
forever lovely the words of the old air:
Like linen is the hair when it's gone white.

Çinque taere

A rampa a va sciù a rompicollo
in ta penombra de case;
se vedde un çe così netto
de dato a-e vege çimaxe...
E intanto o mù o s'arrampinn-a
a-o son de tutti i sunaggi;
doutrèi che cioccan insieme
fan unna muxica lenta
ma un atro de notta ciù bassa
o dà un ciochetto ogni tanto.
Ven zù a sätetti e gallinn-e
pittando in mēzo ai risseù.
L'e domenega anch'èù.
E donne son tutte de feùa
davanti a-e porte inbagiâe
e son vestite de neigro
perche ciù tardi gh'e vespro.
Secchae da-i anni e da-o sô
discoran cianin ogni tanto
e dixan cose zà dite
in scii antichi scalin.
De votte arriva un pó o fo
de là da-e case tranquille
da ziventú in to sô
L'è o primmo giorno d'autunno

e dû o cado da stae;
ancon gh'è l'uga in ti fiagni,
no gh'è unna nuvia pe-o çê.
E mi che passo un momento
me fermo solo lasciù,
in mezo ai fiagni assoigiae
da quelle venn-e argentinn-e
tanto che scüggian zù bordellinn-e
e van a perdisse in mâ.

Cinque terre – La rampa va su a rompicollo / nella penombra delle case; / si scorge un cielo così limpido / fra le vecchie grondaie... / E intanto il mulo s'arrampica / al tintinnio di tutti i sonagli; / duo o tre che rintoccano insieme / fanno una musica lenta / ma un altro di tono più basso / dà un rintocco ogni tanto. / Vengon giù saltellando le galline / e beccano in mezzo ai ciottoli. / È domenica oggi. / Le donne son tutte fuori / davanti alle porte socchiuse / e vestite di nero / perché più tardi c'è vespro. / Raggrinzite dagli anni e dal sole / discorrono piano piano ogni tanto / e dicono cose già dette / su quegli antichi scalini. / A volte arriva il brusio / di là dalle case tranquille / della giovinezza nel sole. / E' il primo giorno d'autunno e dura il calore dell'estate; l'uva è ancora nei filari / e non c'è nuvola in cielo / Ed io che passo un momento, / mi fermo solo lassù, in mezzo ai filari assolati / presso quelle vene argentine / che scendono già canterine / e vanno a perdersi in mare.

Cinqueterre

The slope rises rapidly
in the shadow of the houses;
amid the eaves and gutters
appears a limpid sky...
The mule clammers up the hill
in the tinkle of harness bells;
two or three jingling together
make a slow melody
but one with a lower tone
gives a ring every now and then.
The hens scamper down and peck
at pebbles along the ground.
Today is Sunday, and
all of the women stand
before their half-open doors,
all dressed in black because
of vespers still to come.
Withered by years and sun
they chat softly now and then,
saying things already said
upon those ancient steps.

Sometimes there comes the hum
from behind the quiet houses
of the young ones in the sun.
Today's the first day of autumn
and the heat of summer lingers;
the grapes are still on the vine
and not one cloud in the sky.
And I who am passing by
pause on the height, all alone,
in the midst of the sunny vines
close by the silvery veins
that warble as they run down
to lose themselves in the sea.

Ciammo o martinpescou ch'o porte l'oa...

... de belle aegue nette
quande cō becco affiòu pã co fraccasse
un specchio de cristallo,
mã o canto malinconico do gallo
in mezo a-a neütte o pã
un crio ch'o se perde in imezo a-o mã.
Sento pösamẽ in sce-a lontann-a sponda
vixin a-o nonno ai giorni senza scheûa,
e o canto che sentivo in lontanansa
zã fin d'alloya o mẽ strenzeiva o cheû.
Chi ghe l'aveiva dito a-o cheû piccin
che o tempo o xeûa?
e chi a dubita de l'avvegnĩ?
A caravella che batteiva o mã
a sperava de vedde un'atra sponda,
mã a chi in to tempo navega
ogni staggion l'è un'onda
verso o silenzio d'unna riva morta.
E mi che intanto navego
mentre che l'onda a franze,
ciammo o martinpescòu ch'o porte l'õa
de belle aegue nette

quande cō becco affiòu pã mo fracasse

un specchio de cristallo.

Chiamo il martin pescatore che porti l'ora... – ...delle belle acque nette / quando col becco affilato pare infranga / uno specchio di cristallo, / ma il canto malinconico del gallo / nel mezzo della notte pare / un grido che si perda in mezzo al mare... // Sento posarmi sulla lontana sponda / vicino al nonno nei giorni senza scuola, / e il canto che sentivo in lontananza / già fin d'allora mi stringeva il cuore. / Chi aveva detto al piccolo cuore / che il tempo vola / e a dubitar dell'avvenire? // La caravella che batteva il mare / sperava di

vedere un'altra sponda, / ma a chi nel tempo naviga / ogni stagione è un'onda / verso il silenzio d'una riva morta. // Ed io che intanto navigo / mentre l'onda si frange, / chiamo il martin pescatore che parti l'ora / delle belle acque nette / quando col becco affilato pare infranga / uno specchio di cristallo.

I Call the Kingfisher to Bring Me the Time...

...of the clear and lovely waters

when with his pointed beak he seems to shatter

a crystal mirror,

but the melancholy singing of the rooster

in the middle of the night now seems to be

an outcry lost in the middle of the sea.

I feel myself set down on a distant shore

with my grandfather nearby when school was out,

and the song I heard in the distance had the power

even in those early days to wring my heart.

Who told the youthful heart time flies away?

and who told it never

to trust the future?

The galley beating oars against the sea

was hoping soon to see another shore,

but to him who navigates through time

every season is a wave

drawn toward the silence of a lifeless coast.

And I who in the meantime navigate

as the wave shatters,

I call the kingfisher to bring me the time

of the clear and lovely waters

when with his pointed beak he seems to shatter

a crystal mirror.

Dopo a vitta

L'erbo ch'o dava i sò fruti

in sce quell'orlo de monte

coscì a straciongio in sce-o-mà,

questo zená o l'è seccòu.
E òua o riflesso do sò
che là in sce-o-mâ o l'è vegnûo
o mette fiori de luxe
a quello scheletro scùo...

Dopo la vita – L'albero che dava i suoi frutti / in su quell'orlo di monte / tanto a strapiombo sul mare, / seccò in questo gennaio.// E ora il riflesso del sole / che là sul mare s'accese / fiori di luce compone /su quello scheletro scuro

After Life

The tree that gave its fruits
along the mountainside
jutting out above the sea
has withered this January.
And now the sun's reflection
that flamed there on the sea
fashions flowers of light
on that dark skeleton.

LUIGI PANERO

Luigi Panero was born in Loano (Savona) in 1903, where he died in 1960, in tragic and obscure circumstances. A self-taught farmer, he honed his skills following above all the example of Angelo Barile, a good friend of his, and of Edoardo Firpo, with whom he also had a friendly relationship. Still unpublished in a volume, his only known poems appeared in journals or in anthologies, but they are sufficient to place him among the best Ligurian poets in dialect of this century.

Close to Firpo in his deep feeling for nature, in which the poet tends to dissolve, Panero used light, dancing verses. There is no human figure in his poetry and much less a feminine presence, but only the anxious reflection of a voice that through nature speaks to itself, only for itself, with a subtlety taken almost to the limit of aphasia, and yet with great consistency and unbreakable tenacity.

Criticism

Mario Boselli, in *Poesia dialettale genovese*, Genoa: Di Stefano, 1958.

Fiorenzo Toso, in *Letteratura genovese e ligure, Il Novecento*, Genoa: Marietti, 1991.

U piccettu che-u porta tristessa

A sentu che féua
adoxiu baixina:
a stansia l'è pîna
de luxe in pò freida.
U vegne de in can
u baiun luntan,
e-i canti di galli
i cúre a campagna.
U chêu me s'insuppa.
du grxiu mattin,-

du lentu baixin
che-u cianze sciù a tæra.
In cima a-u barcun,
intantu, se posa
de ciume in pugnettu,
in fi de becchettu:
se scrolla, u dà in crïu,
i se mïa in pò in gïu,
e tùm a se scrolla,
dà tuma in suspïu.
E quellu. piccettu
cu-e tre stisse russe
che a gïa i ghe maccia,
de l'otra tristessa,
me caccia in tu-chéu.

Il pettirosso che porta tristezza – Sento che fuori / piovigina adagio: / la stanza è piena / di luce un po' fredda. // Viene il grido / di un cane lontano, / e i canti dei galli / percorrono la campagna. // Il cuore mi s'intride / del grigio mattino, / della lenta acquerugiola / che piange sulla terra. / Sulla finestra / intanto si posa / un pugno di piume / un filo di beccuccio:// si scrolla, dà un grido, / si guarda un po' in giro / e ancora si scrolla, / dà ancora un sospiro.// E quel pettirosso / con le tre gocce rosse / che gli macchiano la gola / mi butta nel cuore / un'altra tristezza.

The Robin Who Brings Sorrow

I hear the gentle
drizzle fall:
the room is filled
with chilly light.
I hear a dog bay
from far away,
the roosters' songs
come across the field.
The gray of dawn,
the drops trickling down
on the sodden earth
dampen my heart.
On the window sill
there settles meanwhile
a handful of feathers,
a bit of a beak:
he shakes, makes a cry,

takes a look around,
gives another shake,
gives another sigh.
And that robin with
the three red drops
that stain his throat
throws another sorrow
into my heart.

Cheu spersu

Sciamettu d'oxelli
neigri, che-i passa,
u branca i tucchi
da veggia campona;
se i porta cun lè.
E tutta morta
e resta l'oja,
e l'erbui nù
i tremà adoxiu
e nêutte i spâeta.
L'ûa l'e queta,
tantu che-u chêu
se trêuva spersu
e-u cerca in sègnu,
appena i na ciurma
de vitta intumu.

Cuore sperduto – Piccolo stormo d'uccelli / neri, che passa, / afferra i rintocchi / della vecchia campana: / li porta con sé. // E tutta morti / resta l'aria, / e gli alberi nudi / tremano adagio / e la notte attendono. // L'ora è tranquilla / tanto che il cuore / si trova sperduto / e cerca un segno, / appena una piuma / di vita intorno.

Lost Heart

Small flock of black
birds passing by
who seize the knells
of the old bell
and carry them off.
And all the air
is still and dead
and all the bare

trees shiver softly
and wait for night.
The hour's so quiet
that the heart
feels itself lost
and looks for a sign,
hardly a feather
of life about.

Cantu de grillu

S'e faetu nêutte:
de luna nêuva
in telu appena
u aççende vena
de luxê in mî.
Nu vuxe intumu
che a digghe pëna
che a digghe gioia:
toxê l'ajena,
stradda e campagna.
Ma d'impruvvisu
tuttu se bagna
de in lëgiu trillu,
de in scüsu rîe:
u canta u grillu.

Canto del grillo – S'efatto notte: / della luna nuova / uno spicchio appena / accende una vena / di luce sul mare. // Non una voce intorno / che dica pena / che dica gioia / tace l'arena / la strada e la campagna. // Ma all'improvviso / tutto si bagna / di un trillo leggero; / di un nascosto ridere: / canta il grillo.

Cricket Song

Now night has come:
from the crescent moon
hardly a thread
of light is shed
upon the sea.
No voice to express
the sounds of grief
or happiness:
the sand, the field,

the road are still.
Then suddenly
splashing everything
with a sparkling trill
with a laugh concealed
the crickets sing.

Prime castagne

In cima e muntagne
l'è chëuita aëgua a segge
ma sèn poi s'è fäetu.
E-u boscu de schegge
de sù brilla, e stisse
d'argentu, e nodù
Se drëuve aù a risse
e-a pugni ne sgruggia
i fruti che i luxe
a zueni muggetti
sciù l'umida tâera,
tra l'erba e-u fëuggiame.
Oh prime castagne,
e ottubre tranquillu
sciù e duçi muntagne!

Le prime castagne – Sulla cima, delle montagne / l'acqua è caduta a secchie / ma sereno poi è tornato. // E il bosco di scheggie / di sole brilla, / e gocce / d'argento, ed odora. // Si aprono ora i ricci / ed a pugni ne sgusciano / i frutti che luccicano // a giovani mucchietti / sull'umida terra, / tra l'erba, ed il fogliame. // Oh prime castagne, / ed ottobre tranquillo / sulle dolci montagne!

The First Chestnuts

On the mountains' crest
the day is clear
where it rained before.
Gold flecks appear
and silver pearls,
in the fragrant woods.
We strip the curls
of skin around
the glistening fruits
in the young heaps found

in the grass and leaves
on the damp ground.
First chestnuts are best,
in October's peace,
on the mountains' crest!

Chêu stancu

Zà in tu pendalocchi
mette l'erbu de ninsêue;
fin frevò, l'invému méue
e-u s'ingianca l'amanduetta
de pissetti e lègi fiocchi
“Vegne a nêuva primaveja,
sveggia sveggia amigu chêu,
tempu bün rispunta anchêu
pe' rimette in mô a barchetta
e do' a-u ventu a.noscia veja!!...
Ma u chêu toxê cume priä,
drentu stancu de passon.

Cuore stanco – Già nel bosco il nocciolo / espone i suoi festoni: / fine febbraio, l'inverno muore / il piccolo mandorlo s'imbianca / di pizzetti e fiocchi leggiadri.//
“Viene la nuova primavera, / sveglia, sveglia, amico cuore, / tempo buono spunta oggi, / per rimettere in mare la barchetta / e dare vento alla nostra vela!!... // Ma il cuore tace come pietra / già stanco, dentro, del passato.

Weary Heart

The hazel tree already puts
its festive garlands on display:
now February fades away,
the winter dies, the almond tree
whitens with lovely tufts and shoots.
“Awake, awake, my heart, my friend,
it's the beginning of the spring,
the weather smiles today, to bring
the little boat back to the sea
and once more fill our sail with wind!”
But the heart is silent as a stone,
wearyed by all that's gone before.

CESARE VIVALDI

Cesare Vivaldi was born in Imperia (Porto Maurizio) in 1925 and died in 2000. Since 1933 he lived in Rome, where he received a degree in

literature studying with Ungaretti, and where he worked as a journalist and taught at the Academy of Fine Arts, which he also directed. A poet who wrote both in Italian and in the Ligurian dialect, an art critic, translator of the classics, he published various books in Italian, anthologized in 1993 in *Poesie scelte* (Rome: Newton Compton, 1993). In dialect he published a few chapbooks through the years, collected in 1996 under the title *La vita sa di buono* (Rome: Newton Compton, 1996). Author of many monographic studies and essays on art, he translated from the Latin Virgil's *Aeneid*, Martial's *Epigrams*, and Ovid's *Canti priapei* and *The Art of Love*.

Stefano Verdino wrote in his preface to *La vita sa di buono*:

If in his Italian poetry Vivaldi has often been (even if not always) more concerned with the self that sees, in the dialect poems there is always present a self that sees and feels (that is, filled with emotion), beginning with *Poesie liguri*. The collection is marked by the figure of his dead mother, whose loss, in a way, gives birth to the private self of the poet (as compared to the emblematic self of *Otto poesie*) and his elegiac vein... Vivaldi tries to temper his mourning with his innate sense of the evidence of the visible, as he tells us in the fine sonnet dedicated to Mafai, but something has broken forever; even in his analogous Italian poems one perceives this acute sense of loss, but what is striking in the dialect texts is the emergence in *Poesie liguri* of an obsessive motif: the theme of the fall which resonates in all subsequent poetry... But if the obsessive image of the fall, in all its various forms, is a very concrete sensation of loss for a poet who is a master of sensations, it should nevertheless not be forgotten that it does not unleash an unredeemed mourning, but measure, Horatian measure, which does not erase the poet's gift of seeing and tasting for us the (fragile) colors of the world, and that his dialect verses can really describe for us in a light and discreet verse.

Criticism

P.P. Pasolini, introduction to *Poesia dialettale del Novecento*, Parma: Guanda, 1952.

F. Toso, in *Letteratura genovese e ligure, Il Novecento*, Genoa: Marietti, 1991.

M. Boselli, "Cesare Vivaldi dialettale," in *Resine*, second trimester 1996.

La casa dove sono nato

A cà unde a sun nasciùu

a l'è a cà russa ;

in sce u munte Calvariu,

d'unde u se ve in ma ciàiu

d'in tra i ulivi e i pin,

e cume inu stranüu

u ventu u büssa

gerusgie e fenestrin.

Vint'anni partiu che a sun,

e àu turmu a mià.

A cà a l'è arruinà,

e i amisgi unde i sun?

Ûn garsùn d'officina,

l'autru cascè in t'a banca,

in tersu u l'è emigrante

partiu pe l'Argentina:

"Ciau me màe, ciau papà.

Mamma mia dammi cento lire

che in America voglio andà."

La casa dove sono nato / è la casa rossa / sul monte Calvario, / di dove si vede un mare chiaro / tra gli ulivi e i pini, / e come uno stemuto / il vento bussa / gelosie e finestrini. // Vent'anni che son partito, / e adesso torno a guardare. / La casa è rovinata, / e gli amici dove sono? / Uno garzone d'officina, / l'altro cassiere alla banca, / un terzo è emigrante / partito per l'Argentina. / «Ciao mamma, ciao papà. / Mamma mia dammi cento lire / che in America voglio andà."

The House Where I Was Born

The house where I was born
is the red house on
Mount Calvary, from where
you can see the sea so clear
through the olive trees and pines
and just like a sneeze
the wind rattles the little
windows and blinds.
Twenty years I've been gone,
now I'm back to look around.
The house is falling down
and where are my friends gone?
One's a factory hand,
and one's a bank cashier,
and one's an emigrant
gone away to Argentina.
"Ciao mamma, ciao papà.
Mamma gimme a hundred lire
to go to America."

Madre non dimentico

A. nun me sun scurdàu de ti, che ti me
disgevi, o màe, che "u ventu u nasceva
da e muntagne e u caàva in t'e maine,
cu u ventu ti sei nasciùu ti". Fasgeva
freidu, un utubre frèidu: u gh'èa in fine-
strun darè au letu, e u ventu u ghe batteva
e senza fin nivue gianche. Dimme
se au ventu ti sei morta ti! Cureva
troppu u me cõ cu u ventu. In t'e maine
trövu a to faccia, e au so che ti sei morta.
Trövu u to cõ duse e amaru in te st'agri
àsgini d'üga, e toe man senza fin
in t'e nivue, e (so che ti sei morta)
in t'u me cõ u diamante d'ina lagrima.

Non mi sono dimenticato di te, che mi / dicevi, o madre, che "il vento nasceva / dalle montagne e calava nelle marine, / col vento sei nato tu". Faceva // freddo, un

ottobre freddo: c'era un fine- / strone dietro al letto, e il vento vi batteva, / e senza fine nuvole bianche. Dimmi / se al vento sei morta tu! Correva // troppo il mio cuore col vento. Nelle marine / trovo la tua faccia, e lo so che sei morta. / Trovo il tuo cuore dolce e amaro in questi agri // acini d'uva, le tue mani senza fine / nelle nuvole, e (so che sei morta) / nel mio cuore il diamante d'una lagrima.

Mother I Don't Forget

I haven't forgotten you, mother, the memory
of what you told me: "The wind was born," you said,
"in the mountains, and it descended to the sea,
and you were born with the wind." I remember we had
a cold October: the wind was endlessly
battering the big window behind the bed,
and the endless white clouds. Tell me, can it be
that you are dead with the wind? My heart has sped
too much with the wind. And now along the sea
I find your face, and I know that you are dead.
I find your sweet and bitter heart right here
in the tart grape seeds, your hands eternally
in the clouds, and now (I know that you are dead)
in my heart I find the diamond of a tear.

Morte del turista amico

L'omu che femu in sce a colla u fagèva
fotografie au panuràma u l'è mortu,
mortu in pe sempre, finiu. Nu pasgèva
mai che a duvesse murtàse in t'e l'ortu
serràu d'a valle sta lüsge, u pasgèva
eternu st'omu da e braghe a la sport
che eternamente da a colla u fagèva
fotografie au panuràma. Balordu
miu usgelli in pe l'àia gianca: i sgura
in silensiu, carandu da a muntagna
cume stendardi barbareschi. Negri
in t'u ventu i me mieàn alegri.
Are e passa e e repassa in sce a campagna:
cun velle a vita in t'u se a se demùra.

L'uomo che fermo sulla collina faceva / fotografie al panorama è morto, / morto per sempre, finito. Non pareva che dovesse mai spegnersi nell'orto // chiuso della valle questa luce, pareva eterno quest'uomo dai calzoni sportivi / che. eternamente dalla collina faceva / fotografie al panorama. Stordito guardo uccelli nell'aria bianca: scivolano / in silenzio, calando dalla montagna come stendardi barbareschi. Neri // nel vento mi guarderanno allegri. / Ali passano e ripassano sulla campagna: / con esse la vita si diverte in cielo.

Death of a Tourist Friend

The man who stood still on the hill and took
photographs of the panorama is now dead,
forever dead, done for. It didn't look
as if the sunlight where the orchard hid
in the valley would ever die away; he looked
eternal, that man in sporting pants who stood
eternally up there on the hill and took
photographs of the panorama. With my head
reeling, I watch the birds in the clear air:
down from the mountains silently they glide
like the banners of barbarians. All black
upon the wind, they gaily watch me back.
Wings pass and repass over the countryside:
life entertains itself with them up there.

La casa di Finale

Auta cà de Finà
fàlta de veggio prie,
de màun, de lavagna,
unde fiöi i mè rie
e l'amù u me cumpagna
man in t'a man a andà,
cume in t'ina campagna,
longu tante scurie
fenestre, fin a in mà
che u pa tantu luntan
mà che a u tuccu cu a man.
Cianca cà de Finà,
intumu a ti, da e finte
fenestrette dipinte
u respira cianin
u paise, cianin
in t'a nòtte: u me pa
tüttu stretu au lümin
d'ina motu che a passa
in t'a pasge de a ciassa.

campagna, / lungo tante fiorite / finestre, sino a un mare / che sembra tanto lontano / ma che tocco con la mano. // Bianca casa di Finale, / intorno a te, dalle finte / finestrelle dipinte, / respira pianino / il paese, pianino / nella notte: mi sembra / tutto stretto al lumino / di una moto che passa / nella pace della piazza.

The House at Finale

High house at Finale
that is made entirely
of old stones, brick, slate,
where children laugh at me
as love and I walk past
hand in hand, as in a field,
past so many windows filled
with flowers, till at last
we stand before a sea
that seems so far, and yet
I put my hand in it.
White house of Finale,
around you, from the false
windows painted on the walls
the village is breathing so
very softly, so
very softly in the night:
it seems gathered in the glow
of a motion passing there
in the stillness of the square.

Il vecchio legno

U su u l'è àutu, Assisi a brilla gianca
cume ina rōsa de veddru, a campagna
a se spentèna in fūmni. A nu se stanca
d'a me pasiensa de ciungiu a cumpagna
negra e ciaia che a me marcia d'arente
e a me rie d'u so bon rie. A ragna
de e parole a l'è prunta: e vōa lente
in t'a gran lūsge, decise a u so segnu,
e l'amù u pa de nóvu nóvu, u sente
che da e brasgi u pia fōgu u veggju legnu.

Il sole è alto, Assisi brilla bianca / come una rosa di vetro, la campagna / si spettina in fumi. Non si stanca // della mia pazienza di piombo la compagna / nera e chiara che mi cammina vicino / e mi ride del suo buon riso. La ragnatela // delle parole è pronta: volano lente / nella gran luce, decise al loro segno, / e l'amore sembra di nuovo nuovo, sente // che dalle braci prende fuoco il vecchio legno.

The Old Wood

The sun is high, Assisi seems ablaze,
white as a glass rose. All around I see
the meadow ruffled up in clouds of haze.
The dark and sparkling one who walks with me
doesn't weary of my dull deliberation
and laughs her gentle laughter tenderly.
The web is set: in the wide illumination
the words fly slowly, headed for their mark.
Love feels reborn once more, with the sensation
of old wood catching flame from embers' spark.

GIUSEPPE CASSINELLI

Giuseppe Cassinelli was born in Dolcedo (Imperia) in 1928 and lives in Alessio, where he was a teacher for many years. A poet who writes both in Italian and in dialect, he has published various chapbooks in very limited editions. His dialect poetry was anthologized in *U fiêu e a nêutta* (Bordighera: Managò, 1989) and his Italian poetry in *Come un calmo paese* (Albenga: Edizioni del delfino moro, 1997). Cassinelli has also been very active as an essayist, concentrating mainly on Ligurian authors, such as Boine and Mario Novaro.

Cassinelli's early work is intensely visual, with harshly expressionistic tones, due in part to the use of the dialect of his native town of Dolcedo, rather archaic and very pure. But gradually Cassinelli's poetry has become more interiorized, foregrounding intimate family conversations and reaching forms of religious meditation that are reminiscent of the religiosity of another Ligurian poet, Angelo Barile. In any case, the dominant note in Cassinelli's poetry, even in the most vivid and intense moments, is the rapt thoughtfulness, the serenity expressed in a simple, gentle manner.

Criticism

M. Chiesa and G. Tesio, *Le parole di legno*, Milan: Mondadori, 1984.

F. Toso, in *Letteratura genovese e ligure, Il Novecento*, Genoa: Marietti, 1991.

G. Giudici, "L'umanità di Giuseppe Cassinelli," in *Resine*, second trimester 1996.

Stentürassu

Gióie gianche de snitta,
sigore, stentürassu,
sû fèrmu: e in t'un fenassu
manco e bisce i busticca.
Numa Giuvan, ch'u cova...
D'in tantu in tantu u amia
l'oria sènsa ina bova
de gnivure; u suspia
E u cova, u cova, u cova.

Afa – Greti bianchi di alghe / cicale, afa opprimente, / sole fermo: e nel fienaccio neppure le bisce si muovono. // Soltanto Giovanni, che zappa... Di tanto in tanto guarda / l'aria senza una bava / di nuvole, sospira... // E zappa, zappa, zappa.

Sultriness

Riverbed white with algae,

cicadas, brute sultriness:
the sun sits motionless,
no snakes stir in the hay.
Only Giovanni, who hoes...
Now and again his eyes
turn to the air, which shows
not a wisp of cloud; he sighs...
And he hoes, and hoes, and hoes.

Perché delongu e campone

Perché delongu e campone
a bataiéttu i m'han stréntu
u chéu? U serà che in t'i giurni
de féia, u gh'éia
delongu in t'a ciassa u vegéttu
di osci-da-mortu
e u stortu anciuè;
o fosci u serà per chell'àutru
che tütta a giurnô
u se s-ciuppova a sbragió
“fundine! pignatte! teràie!”,
péui, candu de séia e tuvàie
i s'assendeva de lüxe,
ratissu in t'in cantu
u se rescaudova u panchèuttu
in sc'in fugurô
de latta garbô.

Perché sempre le campane . – Perché sempre le campane / a festa mi hanno stretto / il cuore? Sarà che nei giorni / di fiera, c'era / sempre nella piazza il vecchietto / degli ossi-di-morto / e lo storto venditore di acciughe; / o forse sarà per quell'altro / che tutto il giorno / scoppiava a sgolarsi / “fondine! pentole! terraglie!”, / poi, quando di sera le tovaglie / si accendevano di luce, / rannicchiato in un angolo / si riscaldava il pancotto sopra un focolare / fatto con una latta bucata.

Why Is It the Holiday Bells

Why is it the holiday bells
have always pierced my heart?
Is it because on the days of the fair
in the square
there was always the old fellow
with dead man's bones, and the hunchbacked

anchovy-seller?

Or is it because of the other one

who all day long

would holler till he was hoarse

“crockery! soup bowls! pots!”

Then in the evening when the tablecloths

were kindled with light,

squatting in a comer

they'd reheat the bread-soup in

a stove they'd made

with perforated tin.

A vegetta di orti

Candu a vegetta di orti

a s'arecampa in p'a rena,

l'ória a l'è zà tantu spessa

ch'u se ghe vè appena.

Ma a porta in t'u cavagnu

l'estàe cui soi curù,

a sciàmma de pumatte

la sù di peverù.

La vecchietta degli orti . – Quando la vecchietta degli orti / rincasa per il sentiero, / l'aria è già tanto densa / che ci si vede appena. // Ma porta nel canestro / l'estate coi suoi colori, / la fiamma dei pomodori / il sole dei peperoni.

The Old Lady of the Orchards

When the old lady of the orchards

goes back home at close of day,

the air grows so thick around her

she can barely find her way.

But she carries summer's colors

in her basket all the same,

in the sunlight of the peppers

and tomatoes all aflame.

Pe' man

a Paula, de dùì àgni

S'a te digu “Sciurtimu”, piccenina,

ti te lasci menó

dunde a véuiu: in t'in pràu

o vixìn a-a marina,
ti ciammi a rundurina
e a lūna ch'a l'è ancú cusci luntàn
che nisciūn u gh'abàdda
U pâ ch'a s'égge mi
a menóte pe' man,
mà ti sei tū che ti me mùsci a stradda.

Per mano . – a Paola, di due anni. O piccola, se ti dico “Usciamo”, / ti lasci portare dove voglio: in un prato / o vicino al mare, / chiami la rondine e la luna che è ancora così lontana / che nessuno ci bada... / Sembro io / a condurti per mano, mà sei tu che mi insegni la strada.

By the Hand

for Paola, two years old

“Let’s go out,” I say and, little one, you follow,
letting yourself be led
where I want to go: by the sea
or down in the hollow,
you call out to the swallow
and the moon that’s still so distant from the land
no one pays it any mind...
I appear to lead you
by the hand,
but it’s you who show the way for me to find.

Séia

A poxe di àuti boschi
u ciéllu tütto in spéggiu
e zà i fèughi tranchilli
di luntài carbunìn.
Nùì, sènsa ciù parolle.
A primma stélla
a incumènsa segùra u sò camin.

Sera . – La pace degli alti boschi / il cielo tutto uno specchio / e già i fuochi tranquilli / dei carbonai lontani. // Noi, senza più parole. // La prima stella / incomincia sicura il suo cammino.

Evening

The peace of the tall woods
the sky one sheet of glass
and already the tranquil fires
of the coalmen far away.

We, with no more words.

The first star

sets out steadily upon its way.

PAOLO BERTOLANI

Paolo Bertolani was born in La Serra di Lerici (La Spezia) in 1931. Some time ago he moved to Romito Magra (La Spezia) where he lives and works. He writes both in Italian and the Ligurian dialect, and has published two books of verse and a narrative in Italian. He made his debut in dialect in 1988 with *Seinà* (Turin: Einaudi), followed by *'E gose, l'aia* (Milan: Guanda, 1989); *Diario greco* (Bergamo: El Bagatt, 1989); *Dall'Egitto* (Lucca: Rugani, 1991); *Avéi* (Milan: Garzanti, 1994); *Sotocàl* (Dogliani,: Liboà, 1995).

In his harsh border dialect (between Liguria, Tuscany and Emilia) Bertolani is able to stay close to the reality of things, often seen through the mediation of memory or dream, which he is able to convey with very delicate and graceful verses. With an enormous respect and reserve towards emotions, Bertolani finds moving words in the smallest descriptions of country landscapes, of an earthy Liguria that sees the sea but does not love it, in the evocation of love stories long past and seen through the sudden illumination of gestures and objects, in the memory of the dead whose voices inhabit the air. "The reader will find here – wrote Giuseppe Conte in the introductory note to *'E gose l'aia* – the tone of both elegy and invective... He will find images made as light as feathers by the light of the sea, the crumbling hinterlands, with the chestnuts that no one picks up any more, the shadows no one looks at in an Italy now similar to the one foreshadowed by Pasolini, melancholy prophet. In his dialect of La Serra ... Bertolani poses some of the eternal questions of Leopardi's shepherd, but these questions are not projected onto a cosmic and metaphysical plane: they remain at the level of a strong ethical sense, harsh and mundane."

Criticism

G. Giudici, introduction to *Seinà*.

A. Bertolucci, introduction to *Diario greco*.

G. Tesio, introduction to *Sotocà*.

De stada 1

per Paolo

A Donde la siàn adè, dadré

che maséa, e óe bèle,

er cóstro chi renfrésca

(ghe domà n'aia fina);

a cà l'è tóma a méa,

coménsa l'aiguesina, e la vén

fito séa?

Oe bèle,

nicò pu aa lunta avóa

Ma seneimo dai síti

i s-ciòchi d'i baghe ch'a s-ciòpe

e i cucù,

chi ne gomme dae costèle.

D'estate 1 – Dove saranno adesso, dietro / a quale muraglia le ore belle, / la siepe che rinfresca / (vi dorme un'aria fina); / la casa è di nuovo mia, / comincia la pioggerellina, e viene / presto sera? / Ore belle, / anche più lontane ora / che sentiamo dai campi / gli schiocchi dei baccelli che esplodono // e i cuculi, / che ci immalinconiscono dalle collinette.

On Summer 1

Where will they be now, behind

what wall, the lovely hours,
the cooling hedge (a fine
air is sleeping there);
the house is mine again,
a gentle rain begins, and evening
coming soon?
The lovely hours,
even further from us now
that we hear the snap
of bursting beans from the fields
and melancholy calls
of cuckoos from the little hills.

‘E góse, l’aia

Se ‘e góse d’i morti, cóm’i díse,
la rèste tème ‘ntátisse ‘nte l’aia,
e nissùn gi pè pu scancelàe
– nte l’aia
fèa de chi, sórve a l’àigua de mae,
tra i àrbi chi la sùrbe – l’aia –
e pò i ne la redàn, buata dar verde fresco
d’i fòge chi gh’an,
nìcò ‘nte l’aia scua
d’i botrígón, e ‘nte quela
d’i scae –
s’la gh’èn davéo – ‘nte l’aia –
‘ste góse, e quarcò seguaménte
la ne podiàve díe
alóa a semo noi i mamà
che nó gi vèi sentie.

Le voci, l’ari – Se le voci dei morti, come dicono, / restano eteme intatte nell’aria, / e nessuno le può più cancellare nell’aria / fuori di qui, sopra all’acqua di mare, / tra gli alberi che l’assorbono – l’aria – / e poi cela ridanno, setacciata dal verde fresco / delle foglie che hanno, / anche nell’aria scura / dei baratri, e in quella / delle scale – / se ci sono davvero nell’aria – / queste voci, e qualcosa sicuramente / ci potrebbero dire // allora siamo noi i malnati / che non le vogliono sentire.

The Voices, the Air

for Paolo

If, as they say, the voices of the dead
remain intact forever in the air,

and no one can erase them
--in the air
beyond here, over the water of the sea,
amid the trees that absorb it--the air--
then give it back to us, filtered through the fresh green
of their leaves, as well
as in the murky air
of chasms, and in that
of stairs--
if they're really there--in the air--
those voices, and something surely
they might say to us
then we are surly
wretches who choose not to hear.

Adè ch'a passémo

Adè che 'e fròle e l'ua
la gh'èn per tuto l'ano
e che tra vògia e cosa
nó gh'è manco l'òmbia
de spetàe de na vòta,
còse te vèi speràe?
Adè ch'a passémo senza salutàe,
che 'r cóstro i nó gh'è pu
o sí gh'è, a le savémo
ben còse la gh'è dadré.

Adesso che passiamo – Adesso che le fragole e l'uva / ci sono tutto l'anno // e che tra desiderio e cosa / non c'è neppure l'ombra // dell'attesa di una volta, / che cosa vuoi sperare? // Adesso che passiamo senza salutare, / che la siepe non c'è più // o se c'è, lo sappiamo bene cosa c'è dietro.

Now That We Pass

Now that strawberries and grapes
are here the whole year long
and between desire and thing
there isn't even the shadow
of the waiting of those days,
what are you hoping for?
Now that we pass without a greeting,
that the hedge is no longer there,

or if it's there, we know it
as something behind us now.

De'n can

Er can vècio de bàsua bianca
tuti i giorni che fa cristo
i me speta bón pe óe,
squasi i vuésse 'nsegnàme
che 'a pasiénsa l'è 'ncò amóe.
G'è sordo franco, e per fame sentie
a devo smève l'aia sbate porte,
cossì lu i vira 'a testa
da quélo po' de sóe
che zenàe i ne manda.
A me raménto ben quando na séa
sentindo 'n can buscàe – chi nó smetéva –
quarchidùn i m'ha ito: 'I animài
i sòfre come omi chi nó san

o i nó pène parlàe.

Di un cane – Il cane vecchio di mento bianco / tutti i giorni che fa cristo / mi aspetta buono per ore, / quasi volesse insegnarmi / che la pazienza è anche amore. // È completamente sordo, e per farmi sentire / devo smuovere l'aria sbattere porte, / così lui volta la testa / da quel po' di sole / che gennaio ci manda. // Ricordo bene quando una sera / sentendo un cane abbaiare – che non smetteva – / qualcuno mi ha detto: Gli animali / soffrono come uomini che non sanno // o non possono parlare.

On a Dog

The old dog with his white chin
calmly waits for me each day
fashioned by Christ above,
as if he wants to show me
that patience is also love.
He's totally deaf, and to let him know I'm here
I have to slam the door and move the air,
so that he turns his head
from that droplet of sun
that January sends us.
How well I recall one evening when I heard
the howling of a dog--it went on and on--
and someone said to me: The animals
suffer like men who don't know how to speak

or just can't form the words.

Fadighe

Considera sfôrso der can per capie
che si busca i le lighe
quélo dí buti téni a primavéa
pe rompie 'a pèle dí rami
e der moibóndo per fasse capie
co' 'a sé bóca de préa.

Fatiche – Considera lo sforzo del cane per capire / che se abbaia lo legano // quello dei gemogli teneri a primavera / per rompere la pelle dei rami // e del moribondo per farsi capire / con la sua bocca di pietra.

Weariness

Consider the dog as he strains to understand
they'll tie him up if he barks
the effort of the tender springtime buds
to break through the branches' skin
the dying man trying with his mouth of stone
to make himself understood.

ROBERTO GIANNONI*

Born in Genoa in 1934, Giannoni lived there until 1959. In 1959 he moved to Turin for reasons of work and has been living in Milan since 1934.

After the volume 'E gagge (1987), which caught the attention of the most perceptive critics, he published 'E trombe, confirming his propensity for a poetry which is totally original and particular within the context of contemporary dialect poetry.

A large part of neodialect poetry manifests a widespread need for an interiorized reinvention of dialect and for linguistic sublimation, and it is often elegiac and symbolic. 'E gagge instead aims at being – in the radical antilyric option it represents, rooted in reasons that are ethical and political more than literary – a "tale" in verse of the a world (the eighteenth and nineteenth century Genoese middle class) he describes with a wealth of details. Giannoni's page is filled with explanatory notes, historical and cultural references, never meant as a substitute or a simple explanation of the text. Rather, the notes contribute to the articulation and completion of the poem, and of the epic poem, of Genoese civilization, captured "from an almost archeological distance" (Brevini).

On a more specifically linguistic level, Giannoni's work is characterized by archaic usage, which leads him to reclaim a Genoese dialect which is almost no longer spoken, a speech both popular and aristocratic, employed as an instrument for probing into a sort of collective geology. "Toward that end – Brevini writes – Giannoni predisposes an articulated strategy, which once again attests to his respect for the tradition of dialectal multilingualism." In some poems, in fact, foreign expressions accompany dialect speech, thick with jargon and idioms. Their function is to retell the great myths of humanity from a low perspective, the alley of a coastal city, following a preference already manifested by Pascoli in his "convivial" poems.

With 'E trombe, Giannoni's work is enriched by an element that produces a "corrective" effect of the basic narrative structure, the effect of "diluting" the historical-narrative fact: an unprecedented attitude of reflection and meditation, of introspection, which consequently favors the introduction of long lyric passages into the fabric of the "tale."

Criticism

F. Loi, in *Quotidiano* (C. Ticino), May 4, 1988.

R. Martinoni, in *Almanacco* 1990, Bellinzona: Ed. Dell'Almanacco 1989.

F. Brevini, *Le parole perdute*, Turin: Einaudi, 1990.

F. Toso, *Letteratura genovese e figure*, Genoa: Marietti 1991.

*Roberto Giannoni's profile was written by Achille Serrao.

*

Crh'ò provôu prôppio tanto a dí d'e còse
con 'o mezo italian d'a schoea: ma 'a gente,
gh'aveivan tûtti da pensâ a dell'âtro,
e allôa me son çemûo questâtra lengua,
che no ô mai sacciûoparlâ e no 'a doevio.
'A l'êa 'a lengua d'i mòrti e 'a lé d'i vëgi.
A l'é vëgia lê asci quand'a me piaxe,
e da chi a 'n po' 'a saiâ bèlla che mòrta.
D'e vòtte a mi me sa cbo segge 'n ätro
quello ch'o parla e no sò manco ciù
se son bon d'accapîlo... Pòi m'appenso
che ghe dev'êse li da quarche '
parte (o fra mill'anni) quarchedûn ch'o 'o sente.
No sò ben chi: ûn cho ghe daggbe 'a mente.

(1973)

Ho provato molte volte a dire delle cose / nel mezzo italiano che insegnano a scuola: ma tutti / avevano altro a cui pensare, / e così mi sono scelto quest'altra lingua, / che non ho mai saputo parlare e e non adopero normalmente. / Era la lingua dei morti e ora è dei vecchi / È vecchia anch'essa quando mi piace, / e fra non molto sarà più che morta. / A volte mi sembra / che parli un altro / e non so neppure se son / capace di intenderlo.... Poi penso / che deve pur esserci da qualche parte / (o fra mill'anni) qualcheduno che lo ascolti. / Non so bene chi. Uno che gli presti attenzione,

*

Time and again I've tried to talk about things
in the half Italian that they teach in school:
but people had other things to think about,
so I've chosen this other language for myself
that I've never learned how to speak and that I don't use.
It's the language of the dead and of the old.
The language itself is old even now when I love it,
and it will be deader than dead before too long.
Sometimes I feel that it's someone else who's talking
and that I don't even know if I'm capable
of understanding him... And then I think
there ought to be somebody out there somewhere
(sometime in the next thousand years) who can hear him too.
Somebody who's listening to him: I don't know who.

Dui che zœgan

à la memoire de Denise Jourdan

Dui che zœgan a-a môra, ûn zembo a beive

co-a cantabrûnn-a in gôa, l'ômno d'e tasce

solo, insci'o bôrdo 'na tœua lunga:

pœi, ciù in fondo, 'o parlâ de due bagasce.

'Na cœa de lûxe 'a vœgne zù da-a spia,

'a l'arria giûsto dond'o s'ê assettœu

lê, che manco 'o l'ammîa questi âtri e 'o leze

ûn tôcco de pappê mezo cegœu.

Framezo a-o rîe, a-e giastemme, a-o fûmme, a-o scœu,

a 'na gente cosci, ti ti te geni.

Lê invece, s'o se mescia, l'ê pe andâ

da quell'ômno d'e tasce, a dîghe: "Vœgni!"

(1994)

Due che giocano - Due persone che giocano a morra, un gobbo che beve, / avendo in gola il tubo del vino, luomo delle tasse / che rimane solo, sut bordo di una lunga tavola: / comœ sfondo, il parlare di due prostitute. / Un poco di luce viene giù da uno spioncino / e arriva proprio là dove si è seduto / lui, che non sembra guardare gli altri e continua a leggere / un suo pezzo di carta,

in parte piegato, / in mezzo alle risa, alle bestemmie, al fumo, al buio, / a una gente così, ci si sente imbarazzati. / Lui invece, se si muove, è per avvicinarsi / all'uomo delle tasse e dirgli: "Vieni!"

Two Who Play

à la memoire de Denise Jourdan

Two who play odds or evens, a hunchback drinking

with the wine tube down his throat, in isolation

a tax collector sitting at a long table:

for background noise, two whores in conversation.

A bit of light comes through a peephole, falling

precisely on him as he's sitting there

seeming not to notice the other ones and reading

a piece of paper folded into squares.

With the laughing and the cursing, with the smoke and the darkness,

with people like these, it's embarrassing. But he,

if he makes any move at all, instead moves closer

to the tax collector, and says: "Come, follow me!"

'E trombe

pe-o Sandro Senaldi

Quelle braççe, lighae con tante binde

in fondo d'a ciù lûvega d'e tombe,
 pan 'o vive de chi, che scinn-a 'e trombe
 s'ascordiàn d'addesciâne a-a fin d'i tempi.
 ... E se invece vegnissan? Se a ponente
 (o chinando ciù zù d'o Monte Mōu)
 se fèssan vedde, poegi a-o giō de 'n crōu:
 gianco però, ciù gianco ancon che 'a neve?
 Due ãe, ma a noiãtri ne parrieivan mille.
 Passieivan pe dedãto a-i bastimenti
 e se portieivan via tanti mai centi,
 tûtte 'e nostre maotïe, tûtto 'o patì... '
 Spostieivan 'e bandëe che gh'è insc'e tōri,
 'i lensœ ch'an desteizo sciù pe-e caze,
 tanto da vegnì zù a fi d'e çimaxe,
 e poeine criã: "Figgiœ, sotta a chi tocca!"

Le trombe - Quelle braccia, legate da tante bende, / in fondo alla tomba più lugubre, / assomigliano all'esistenza di questa città, dove persino le trombe / si dimenticheranno di svegliarci alla fine dei tempi. /... Ma se invece giungessero? Se comparissero a ponente / (o ancor più giù del Monte Moro) / e fossero come il volteggiare di un corvo: / bianco però, più bianco che la neve? / Due ali, ma a noi sembrerebbero mille. / Passerebbero sopra ai bastimenti / e porterebbero via chissà quanti pianti, / tutte le infermità, tutto il soffrire.../ Scosterebbero le bandiere sopra alle torri, / le lenzuola distese sugli edifici, / e raggiungerebbero l'altezza delle cimase, / per poterci gridare: "Sotto a chi tocca!..."

3. 'o vive de chi: dove tutto sembra ormai decadere e farsi opaco..

6. Monte Mōu: un'altura che chiude la città verso Levante.

8. ciù gianco ancon che 'a neve: la veste degli angeli non potrebbe essere meno chiara, neppure nel momento in cui annunziano la fine del mondo.

9. parrieivan mille; in qualunque concezione mistica la molteplicità degli oggetti è vista

come il rifrangersi d'un'entità semplicissima, radicalmente unitaria.

13. spostieivan 'e bandëe: iniziando dal Palazzo Ducale.

16. sotto a chi tocca: un'espressione familiare agli angeli del Belli.

... Ei finïo de becciã, ma asci de cianze,
 e d'andã a camallã d'i peixi in spalla
 Finïo de sbatte pe riescì a stã a galla.
 Sei in fondo a-o vôstro vin, ma anche all'axôu!
 ... Còse vorriësci mai portãve apprevvo?
 Quarche fœggia de campo, ùn grattacù...
 L'inçenso 'o l'ëa pe quelli de comando
 e l'ôu, poei zûãlo, 'o no servieiva ciù ... ».
 ...Ciantiëscimo li tûtto: agûi, tenagge,
 'na cavagna de spinn-e da intreççã...
 E l'arfè se-o scordiëscimo, 'sta sponzia

bagnâ d'anão, ch'a se ciammava "mâ".

... Senza ciù vento, tiæ zù tütte 'e rande,

no gh'arrestia che 'na scammëa pe-o remmo,

e 'a saia l'ãa ch'a passa e ch'a pâ ninte

Pöi se sentieiva dî: « Crestien, ghe semmo».

(1981-88)

Avete finito di fare l'amore, ma anche di piangere / e di portare pesi in spalla.... / Finito di divincolarvi per galleggiare. / Siete giunti in fondo al vostro vino, ma pure all'aceto! / Che cosa vorreste mai portare con voi? / Solo qualche foglia di campo, qualche boccio di rosa selvatica. / L'incenso era per i potenti / e l'oro, potete giurarlo, non vi servirebbe più... / Lascieremo tutto: chiodi, tenaglie, / quel cesto di spine da intrecciare... / Dimenticheremo il fele, questa spugna / bagnata di amaro, che chiamavamo "mare". / Senza più vento, calate le rande, / resterebbe soltanto la scalmiera di un remo, / e sarebbe l'ala che passa e che pare sia nulla... / Poi si sentirebbe dire: "Gente, ci siamo."

24. 'a no servieiva ciù: qualche ligure potrebbe essersi illuso d'usare il denaro, per addolcire giudici e dèmoni.

25. agüi, tenagge ecc.: i chiodi, le tenaglie, le spine, la spugna imbevuta di aceto sono fra i principali simboli della Passione e ricorrono perciò nell'iconografia, soprattutto medievale: talora come elementi staccati, quasi astratti.

31. l'ãa ch'a passa: cfr. Purgatorio, 11, 32-36.

32. crestien: il vocabolo non indica specificamente ed esclusivamente i fedeli. Designa piuttosto le creature umane contrapposte agli animali.

The Trumpets

for Sandro Senaldi

Those arms, tied tightly with so many bands

down in the gloomiest recess of the tomb,

are like the living: even the trumpets of doom

will fail to rouse us at the end of time.

...But what if they came instead? If they appeared

in the western sky like the fluttering of a crow,

but that they were white, even whiter than the snow,

hovering there even lower than Mount Moro?

Two wings, but to us they'd seem to be a thousand.

They would fly above the ships docked at the piers

and carry away who knows how many tears,

all of our sickness, all of our suffering...

They would make their way around the flags on the towers

and the laundry hung out to dry, then they'd alight

on the tops of the tallest buildings, and from that height

they would call to us: "Step forward, next in line!

...It's the end of making love, but it's the end

of weeping, the end of carrying the load...

The end of struggling just to stay afloat.

The last of the wine, but the last of the vinegar too!

...What is it you'd most like to bring along?
Some leaves from the fields, the bud of a wild rose...
Incense was for your masters, and as for gold,
it won't help you any longer, heaven knows..."

...We would leave it all behind: pincers and nails,
that clump of thorns to entwine... How readily
we would forget it all, the gall, the sponge
that was soaked in bitterness, that we call "the sea."

...With the wind gone and the lowering of the sails,
there'd be nothing but the rowlock of an oar,
and the passing wing that seems not to be there...
And then a voice: "Good people, here we are."

Quande 'a l'arriva

Reikô ni
Comm'a saiâ quand'a ne vègne a schoeve?
'Na bagarda in dezarmo? Ûnn-a figgioëta
ch'a no sa manco 'o mǎ ch'a fa e, s'a strenze,
la ne pâ despëtadda?... Es'a l'é invece
quarchedûnn-a ciù queta, ûnn-a ciù paxa,
ch'a ne dixè de scì senza dî ninte,
scibben che drento 'a segge ûn po' serrà?...
... O 'a vegniâ a arvîne ûnn-a vègia de caza,
de quelle che vœan vedde tûtto a pòsto,
pe poei fâ 'n letto bello sciòcco...
...E tòsto
la fiâ in ça 'e arve, 'a gh'infiâ zù 'n legnetto.

(1972-94)

Quando arriva - Come sarà quando verrà a riscuoterci? / Una prostituta in disarmo? Una ragazzina minuta, / la quale ignora il male che fa e, se stringe, / può sembrare dispettosa?... E se fosse invece / qualcuna più quieta, una giovane tranquilla / che ci dice di sì senza dire nulla, / benché dentro sia ancora un poco impervia? / ...Oppure verrà ad aprire una vecchia di casa, / di quelle che vogliono vedere tutto in ordine, / per prepararci poi un letto bello soffice... / Una che chiuderà presto le imposte e le assicurerà con un legnetto.

When She Arrives

Reikô ni
How will she be when she comes collecting us?
A harlot who yields herself up to us? A young girl
who doesn't know the harm she does, who seems
spiteful when she embraces?... And if she were

someone quieter instead, someone more serene,
who says yes to us without a word, but stays
a bit inaccessible within?... Or else
an old housemaid who admits us, one of those
who likes everything in its place, who'll prepare for us
a bed for the night that's soft and comfortable...
...And close
the shutters suddenly, and bar them tight.

In fondo

pe-o B. Nacci

je veux lui faire voir là-dedans un abîme nouveau.

Blaise Pascal, Pensées,

Fondo d'o fondo, in fondo a 'n gatto ciaò

('o voeo 'o lascia passâ d'a lûxe)... Sæ

de tûtta 'st'ægua... Ûn po' de grizantemmi

ciù in fondo ancon, tra-e òsse d'i mainæ.

Fondo d'o tondo, se no se gh'à ninte.

Fondo d'a sciamma, dove brûxa'e æe.

Fondo de quello monte ch'o se fonde

e, a spòrzise, 'o l'é pægio a-o voeo d'e scæe.

Drento 'e pñe en tanto fœgo e tûtto bogge.

Anche 'o choe 'o l'é 'a vampâ ch'a ven da-o fümme:

ûn'âxima, l'axòu d'a croxe, l'oejo

in fondo a-a pigna, se t'asmòrti 'o lümme.

... Fondo ciù fondo ancon, fondo d'a vitta,

che 'a gritta 'a se gh'asconde e 'a no ghe pâ...

Pezo de 'n posso, ch'o va zù e 'o ven grande

e scûo, e 'o continua de lungo a ciammâ...

(1994)

Sul fondo - Fondo del fondiglio, alla fine di un bicchiere chiaro / (il vetro vuoto lascia passare la luce)... La sete / di tutta quest'acqua....: come crisantemi / sul fondo, tra le ossa dei marinai. /... Fondo del piatto, se non si ha nulla da mangiare. / Fondo della fiamma, dove bruciano le ali degli insetti. / Fondo di quel monte che sembra stia per fondersi: / sporgersi sul suo cratere, è come guardare il vuoto delle scale. / All'interno le pietre sono un unico fioco che bolle, / ed anche il cuore assomiglia a una vampata in mezzo al fumo: / o a un'ansia, all'aceto porto a chi sta in croce, all'olio / che resta in fondo alla coppa, una volta spenta la lampada. /...Fondo più fondo ancora, fondo della vita, / dove il granchio si nasconde e non sembra neppure ci sia... / Peggio di un pozzo che scenda e s'allarghi / e venga scuro, e continui a chiamarci a sé.

At the Bottom

for B. Nacci

Je veux lui faire voir là-dedans un abîme nouveau.

Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, fr. 185 ed. Le Guern

(fr. 72 ed. Brunschvicg).

Bottom of the dregs, at the bottom of the glass

(and through the empty crystal the light comes)...

The thirst for all this water... On the bottom

between the sailors' bones, chrysanthemums.

Bottom of the plate, when there's nothing there to eat.

Bottom of the flame, that burns the wings of insects.

Bottom of that mountain as it melts, and shows

the emptiness of the scales where it projects.

Inside the rocks are one fire, all aboil.

The heart's like a blaze in the smoke, an anxiety about

the vinegar brought to the cross, the oil

at the bottom of the cup, when the lamp's gone out.

Bottom of a deeper bottom, bottom of life,

where the crab hides itself as if not there at all...

Worse than a pit that descends and spreads and grows

dark, and goes on luring us with its call...

VENETO

Elettra Bedon

One can speak of twentieth-century poetry in the Veneto dialects only by placing it, along with that of other Italian regions, within the conceptual framework defined at the time of Contini's review of Pasolini's *Poesie a Casarsa*, when there was a renewed interest for poetry in dialect. It was then that the distinction between the first and second part of the twentieth century became common (although, in reality, the first part had come to a close around the end of the first world war, and the second would begin fully only in the sixties), as well as the idea according to which dialect was used because it was the language of reality or because it was well-suited to being used as the language of poetry. It was at that time that those in the field began to make a distinction between dialect poetry and poetry in dialect (a distinction that goes back to Pancrazi), and the related concept of the passage from regionalism to metaregionalism.

The poets who wrote in the Veneto dialect in the first half of the century in general used a more uniform koiné. Because they had lived between the nineteenth and twentieth century and were influenced by Pascoli and Carducci, their poetry is characterized by an adherence to popular subject matter, expressed in the nineteenth-century form of the description of a landscape, of a scene, of a situation, in addition to the one – inspired by socialism – that took up the themes of the struggle against exploitation and poverty, for a greater respect for subaltern social classes.

A case in point is Berto Barbarani (Verona), whose career was long and appreciated by both public and critics; while possessing a fluid and melodious poetic language, he was not able to avoid the limits typical of the Italian province at the end of the last century. Even his love for the poor was expressed through a humanitarian socialism that sought the solution to social inequalities in reciprocal help and compassion.

Another is the Venetian Domenico Varagnolo who, for the abundance of his production, his versatility (lyric author, but also playwright and theater critic), his renown in the area, deserves no less of a recognition than is given to Barbarani. His language is sweet and harmonious; aside from the themes tied to traditional poetry, his poems also deal with the events and emotions of the first world war.

There is also Gino Piva (Pola). Grounded in the mists, the waters, the fields of the Pola region, Piva evokes the hard life of farmers and fishermen, marked by tragedies, not in order to spur them into action, or to suggest solutions based on good sentiments, but to make their experience almost a paradigm, a metaphor of the human condition.

Other authors, more or less of the same age, offer innovations and experimental forms in addition to a matter that departs from nineteenth-century tradition, and become the link between the two periods into which the twentieth century is usually divided. Among them are those whose experimentation is more timid and others regarding whom one can begin to use the term metaregionalism, in the sense that, while preserving a sense

of collectivity through the regional language, they are already moving toward the expression of the self.

Some example of the transitional poets are Egidio Meneghetti (Verona), Livio Rizzi (Pola), Giulio Alessi (Padua). And then Eugenio Ferdinando Palmieri, playwright, well-known theater critic, who has also written poetry in dialect: he is the freest of the Pola poets, the most extroverted. Finally Dante Bertini (Verona); although he was (or perhaps because he was) a contemporary of the widely known and respected Barbarani, he expressed himself in a considerably different way from the latter.

Two elements denote Bertini's originality. The first is the dialect he uses, from the lower Verona area; for the first time the dialect is not the one of the great urban centers, it has no tradition behind it. The second element is his style: in some poems, and in parts of others, Bertini uses proparoxytone verses, with the stress on the third from last syllable (disharmonious but not unpleasant, notwithstanding the negative assessment by Pasolini, who defined them "like those of a seventeenth-century writer in heat, practically unreadable"). He frequently uses free verse, and rhyme is not always present. When he remains within tradition, the form is more often closer to that of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (canzoni and canzonette, frottole, contrasti, strambotti) than of the nineteenth. His poetry shows nothing of the narrow "local" perspective, but is open to all suggestions, both from the past and contemporary authors in Italian.

A few lines must be devoted to Giacomo Noventa who, although he published his poems in 1956, had already conceived them (spoken, recited) a few years earlier.

Giacomo Ca' Zorzi, a Venetian aristocrat, assumed the name Noventa when he published an essay on Helm in Solaria. A man with a rich culture and many interests, he turned to a personal language in his poetry, almost to attest to a total independence from the themes and forms of contemporary poetry. The choice of dialect was the instrument of a dispute against the development of post-nineteenth-century thought, as well as a return to origins, to a greater bond between poetry and speech. Noventa's endeavor was cultured and refined; in antithesis to contemporary poets who had turned to classical authors, to the principal vein of eighteenth and nineteenth-century poetry, from Goethe to Heine, and as a result he used dialect in a completely anti-vernacular sense.

In the poets who have written in dialect in the first half of this century one can thus observe, on the one hand, the presence of characteristics that were to remain constant at least until the sixties (the half tone, the search for balance between tradition and innovation, the identification with the landscape, an elegiac temperament); and on the other, the transition from a complete adherence to the themes of the "small homeland" (which would continue in popular poetry) to themes oriented towards metaregionalism, a phenomenon that will become one of the characteristics of poetry in dialect in all of Italy from the sixties on.

Between the first and second half of the century there was an interval of about twenty years. From the forties to the sixties something new was developing: this was the period in which Pier Paolo Pasolini and Tonino Guerra emerged. In the Veneto several authors showed signs of renewal of form and subject matter, although it is not possible to point to a name that might be a clear turning point.

The adoption of dialect in poetry by cultured poets became one of the salient phenomena from the sixties on, as was mentioned before. The use of dialect no longer meant going towards the town, the province, but rather leaving time altogether. As a consequence, the language changed, at times it became incomprehensible even for dialect speakers of the same area as the poets', because dialect was recovered from childhood, sometimes was reconstructed through the use of archaisms. It became increasingly clearer that the readership the poet was addressing was, in general, only that of the readers of poetry.

The themes of the poems are diverse, but they can be traced back (using a subdivision considered classic by critics) roughly to two veins: the one bound more closely to the land, expressionistic, and the one that shades off into metaphor, the oneiric, in which dialect is used as a precious language. In both cases, however, poets express themselves, they speak subjectively.

Dino Coltro, Sandro Zanotto, and Ernesto Calzavara became known in 1960. Both Coltro and Zanotto made their debut writing again about the world of peasant civilization, almost to hold on to something which was soon to become only a memory, thus entrusted to those who have been able to record it. Coltro would remain faithful to materiality, while Zanotto was later to give his poems an oneiric, surreal dimension, in a language that has become personal, precious. Somewhat different is the experience of Calzavara, who from the start decided to experiment with dialect and on dialect, as a language able to accept amalgamations and innovations.

Coltro, whose research and anthropological documentation has made him a well-known essayist, uses the dialect of the lower Verona area in his poetry. He knew that, especially since he had made a different choice in life by having studied, he was cut off from the world of his childhood, but also knew that his roots were there. The realization that bringing to light his own roots was fundamental would lead him to express himself in dialect from 1967 on.

Coltro's last collection came out only in 1989, after a long period devoted primarily to his work as an anthropologist. What strikes one immediately is its language, much more rustic than that of his previous poetry: an archaic language, perceived almost as sacred.

The use of dialect by Flaminio De Poli, another author quite prolific in Italian as well, in both prose and poetry, is due to the same fundamental reasons as Coltro's. De Poli's original contribution consists of his books of short stories in dialect, where a profound reflection on life is presented in a simple form, close to everyday experience, through tales of farmers who, perhaps because bound to and conditioned by the rhythm of sowing and harvest, the change of seasons, seemed to have possessed a wisdom that helped them to live.

One should not underestimate De Poli's dialect poetry, however: the long poem *El toro*, in eleven-syllable lines, is a perfect example of harmony, patterned on epic poetry; the short story in verse *La degòra* (which reveals a longing for the past, not because everything had value then – as Coltro seems to say –, but rather because we seem to have lost the human aspect of that time, the capacity to live in harmony with one's own destiny on earth, conscious that there is something beyond the physical world); and the only collection of poetry in dialect, *Da la Tore a le Valtèle*,

where in the unearthed rural past one finds those reflections that render a poetic voice universal, beyond the language it uses, because they are inherent to the human condition.

The poetry of Attilio Carminati, who writes in a Venetian not devoid of archaisms, is instead without references to the rural world. This author, who went from lyric poetry in free verse, rich with images and evocative power, to a predominantly narrative poetry, always shows a tendency to see man (humanity, often a suffering humanity) placed within history, in relationship to history. This man who is the common denominator displays a variety of moods, primarily serious, but there is also tenderness, serenity, and then biting irony or harsh sarcasm.

In Venice, the poetry of contemporary authors who write in Italian and dialect seem to attest to the presence of a more deliberate cultural operation. Such is the case of Luciano Menetto, who has infused his dialect with a certain hermeticism (Luzi, Sinisgalli) through the skillful use of the phonic elements, playing on nonsense (preceded in this only by some of Noventa's poems); or with Carlo della Corte, Mario Ancona, Paolo Balboni, Eugenio Tomiolo. A case apart is instead Mario Stefani, whose poetry is mostly in Italian; his only two collections of dialect poetry go back to the late sixties, written in the Venetian of those years in a simple style, without any type of linguistic experimentation.

Andrea Zanzotto is another poet, well known nationally and internationally, who has written poetry almost exclusively in Italian. His attitude toward dialect is to some degree contradictory; born and raised in it, he found himself almost removing it in his formative years, preferring Italian. That dialect, perceived as "coming from where there is no writing," as he himself observes in the Note to *Filò*, where he uses dialect for the first time. The "old idiom" reappears in the central part of *Idioma*, which for the rest is written in Italian. Dialect is inserted, again in a contradictory way, in a basic discourse centered around language, identity, the impossible correspondence between language and external object; contradictory because, while the poet seems to suggest on the one hand that it is possible to recover the sense of existence by placing himself in a mother/son relationship with the world (a relationship in which not many words are needed, and the "petèl" can suffice), he simultaneously denies it by using dialect only to speak about the past, of something that no longer exists.

For Cesare Ruffato dialect also represents a means of expression which he has used occasionally, while most of his work is in Italian. Ruffato has always worked essentially on language, mixing different languages (including the scientific), creating neologisms, manipulating syntax and grammar. His experimentalism seems based on the concept that sound (and only sound) should determine the arrangement of words. Turning to dialect, Ruffato has not abandoned the traits that had characterized his poetry for more than thirty years. Dialect seems to be perceived as the language that, in a particular moment of his experience, lent itself better to expressing what he felt. Ruffato wants to remove dialect not only from the awkwardness of vernacular use, but also from the limits of seeing it only as language of the past, immobilized, destined to disappear.

Luigi Bressan makes the dialect still spoken by the old people of Agna, in the province of Padua his personal code. It is a language distant in time and space, because he has been living in Friuli for years.

One cannot speak of schools of dialect poetry in Veneto; there are trends (which at any rate are not exclusive to this region), and it is possible to link the work of single poets to one or another trend, but there are no masters, personalities who have conditioned or determined the style of others. The only exception is Andrea Zanzotto; one cannot help referring to him when dealing with the sense of sacredness attributed to the past by Luciano Caniato and Luciano Cecchinel; for Gian Mario Villalta, instead, the point of contact is in the considerations on language: much of what the latter has written in his *Lettura della "trilogia" di Andrea Zanzotto: il Galateo in Bosco, Fosfeni, Idioma* can be applied to his own poetry.

Among the authors driven to use dialect by the desire to stop in time what is disappearing, there are also Ernesto Sfriso and Gianni Sparapan. Others, as we have seen, use it because they consider it better suited to express their inner world, as is also the case with Renzo Favaron and Livio Pezzato. The latter does not use dialect to talk about the past, but rather uses a language of the past to denounce a society about to be undone by corruption. Pezzato, as Noventa in the past, seems to seek through language a world more consonant to himself.

Like him, R. Favaron began by writing in Italian. He frequently inserts Italian words in the dialect of Cavarzero (province of Venice). The tone of his poems conveys a sense of uncertainty, of indeterminateness for himself and others, of the hardship and fear of living, of the impression of being "extras" forced to recite a part, to look at themselves reciting a part.

E. Sfriso is a noted playwright and essayist. He turned to dialect poetry (the dialect of Chioggia and its hinterland) later in his literary career, heeding a need to find his roots again, depicting landscapes, customs and traditions of the past.

G. Sparapan has felt the need to preserve his own childhood memories in the dialect of the central Pola area. With a strong, clear voice and a sure rhythm, Sparapan expresses himself in blank verse with a frequent use of rhyme, internal rhyme, alliteration and assonance, attaining his best results in his narrative verse.

The outline drawn so far does not include the names of all those that have written poetry in dialect in the twentieth century. I have intentionally excluded those who belong to popular literature, generally in close contact and interdependence with Italian and with the society in which they live, whose verses remain tied to the vernacular tradition.

Reading the works of the authors cited, from the sixties onward, it is possible to realize that the rural world has increasingly taken on a metaphoric value. One should not underestimate the fact that poetry in dialect was born while peasant society was on the way to extinction but still alive; those who wrote in dialect in the eighties and nineties no longer spoke of the living, but of the dead.

Since the sixties, then, dialect poetry has reappeared with the double motivation to record what was disappearing, and to find once again a language that would allow what Italian, trivialized and trivializing, seemed no longer able to provide.

Independently from the impulses of single poets, one can say that only in those years dialect poetry began to display those characteristics that distinguish it from that of previous periods: a metaregional subject matter and a language, which is a dialect (in the real sense of "variation of a

common language”) extended to include even personal variations. The language of the Veneto poets (as in any case that of poets of other regions) is often (re)invented, through the use of archaic terms and the creation of neologisms, with an almost constant attention to sound patterns.

As for the subdivision between language of reality and language of poetry, proposed by some critics, it would be preferable if it were replaced by one closer to the poets’ point of view. If one has to speak of subdivision, it should be between the poets who use dialect in its greatest authenticity, using archaic forms, transcribing with accuracy its sounds, and those who have refused to make it sacred, who have mixed it with other idioms and have created neologisms. The latter, after all, have considered it a “living thing”: a language in every respect, and therefore subject to change and evolution, with its survival at stake. The former, on the other hand, through the out-of-datedness of dialect have described and attested to the out-of-datedness of the world in which it expressed itself and, metaphorically, the precariousness, the possible disintegration, the possible sensation of out-of-datedness of human experience.

They, as Calzavara would say, both have only one risk to avoid, “that of transgressing the superior law of artistic necessity.”

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The English translations for the Veneto section are by Dino Fabris

ERNESTO CALZAVARA

The first collection by Ernesto Calzavara (*Poesie dialettali*), which contains poems written since 1946, came out in 1960. Calzavara himself wrote

about them: "At a certain point in my life as a poet, the dialect poetry I had begun to write was no longer enough for me in the way I had written it."

This realization spurred his interest in *fèlibrisme*, in modern Italian and foreign poetry, in the problem of how to introduce the techniques and formal structures of the avant-garde in dialect poetry. For him dialect was, as he himself stated more than once ¹, the language in which he was not only born and raised, but also the one that brought back the time of childhood (his own and that of the human race), an age in which instinct prevails over reason, the unconscious over the conscious, the "primordial" over the literary word. In dialect he could find the traces of a prelogical and prescientific culture that seemed to facilitate for him access to asyntactical and alogical forms, the isolation of verbs, prepositions, adverbs, all elements that would characterize his "experimentalism," felt as an adaptation to the expressive necessities of the modern world.

In the years in which the use of dialect was defined by critics more or less as being motivated by the perception of it as either language of poetry or language of reality, Calzavara experiences it in a totally personal and innovative way. In his poetic journey it is possible to identify the influence of deep convictions (the tenets of Steiner's anthroposophy, the idea that true knowledge is that of illiterates, that is, of those who possess only an oral culture, and that dialect is "a living thing that can and must continually renew itself," which he has translated into poetry.

The journey began with *Parole mate, parole pòvare* (1966) in which animals are still often present (recognized by Calzavara as a "link" between the world of humans and the vegetable/mineral world), while there appears an element that will recur – in various degrees – in all subsequent works: reflections (always bitter, pessimistic) on life and human nature.

The general tone of *Come se* (1974) is instead light, ironic, good-natured, both in the dialect texts and those in Italian it contains. Some poems seem lively occasions to bring together and repeat sounds, and this aspect will return in *Analfabeto* (1979), in which a religious inspiration (or, at any rate, esoteric) prevails. In the collection *Le ave parole* (1984) Calzavara insists more on the mixing of languages (Italian and dialect, French, Latin – macaronic and scholastic), so that it makes one think of an experiment in style rather than the fruit of inspiration, and it is clearer that the language of an illiterate culture is used in a way that completely denies vernacular tradition. *Poesie nuove*, the last organic collection of poetry, almost completely in dialect, came out in 1987: a look backwards that translates the mood of someone who – being along in years – feels death approaching.

Calzavara was not afraid to strip dialect of its sacredness by exposing it to the influence of other languages; he did not look for obsolete terms. He called "affected" or at most "research" the poetry of those who use "words that have long disappeared, maybe precious and beautiful, but which are not spoken anyplace." In the end, though, he recognized that other poets – like himself – had the right to express themselves in any manner they considered more apt to translate their own thoughts and feelings, when he stated that the only risk a poet must avoid is not to be faithful to "artistic necessity."

Ernesto Calzavara has commented various times on the subject; the various texts can now be read in *Rio terrà dei pensieri*, Milan: All'Insegna del pesce d'oro, 1996. All the quotes refer to the same text.

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La galina

Va su par la scaléta, galina,

pian pian in punèr,

sola sola a far l'ovo

in pensierà, de scondo'n.

Va su co' tuti in me pensieri,
ovi senza rosa né bianco, vo'di.
Va su galina, va su.

(da Poesie dialettali, 1946-1960)

Va su per la scaletta, gallina/ pian piano nel pollaio/ sola sola a far l'uovo/ assorta, di soppiatto./ Va su con tutti in miei pensieri/ uova senza tuorlo né albume, vuoti/
Va su gallina, va su.

The Hen

Climb up the ladder, hen,
slowly slowly in the coop,
alone alone to lay your egg
thoughtfully, secretly.
Climb up with all my thoughts,
yolkless, whiteless, empty eggs.
Climb up, hen, climb up.

(From Poesie dialettali, 1946-1960)

Parole mate

Rame che rèma che respira de ùa roza
rama rèmo rime roma ruma
rotàmi dapartùto che casca
sul còlo dea Morte dai recini de rame.
E mi sèrco mi vago no so par dove
par che razo 'n no vedo no so
ma rovine rénte rovine
rovinàsi ore de sol
su aque nere che frize pescao 'ri e pési
in croze de po'.
Marao 'ri rua chicaribo
romài amori più romài resta
parole mate.
Restè no morir
no morime in man
restè restè parole.

(da e, Parole mate, parole pòvare, 1966)

(Parole senza senso) Rami che remano che respirano di uva rosa/ ramo remo rime roma ruma/ rottami che cadono dappertutto/ sul collo della Morte dagli orecchini di rame// E io cerco io vado non so per dove/ per che ragione non vedo non so/ ma rovine vicino a rovine/ macerie ore di sole/ su acque nere che friggono pescatori e pesci/ in croce di poi// Maraori rua chicaribo/ ommai non più amori ommai restano/ parole senza senso./ Restate non morite/ non moritemi in mano/ restate restate parole.

Mad Words

Branches that row that breathe of red grapes
remiform ramifications thyme rome rumination
wrecks that everywhere set
on the neck of the brass-eared goddess of Death.

And I search I wander where don't know
for reasons don't see don't know
but ruins racked upon ruins
ruined hours of sun
on black fishers-and-fish-frying waters
upon afterwards's crosses.

Runnel macaori chicaribo*
henceforth a paucity amor henceforth
and words survive.

Abide don't die
don't di in my hands
abide abide words.

*A stab

(From e, Parole mate, parole pòvare, 1966)

Co te sarà tornàda

Co te sarà tornàda
in sta caza dei vèci
dopo che sarò partio
e te verzarà in balconi,
in amaro 'ni, in comò
e tante robe te saltarà fo'ra
le piccole robe
che ghémo godùdo insieme;
co te tomarà drio la caza in cortivo
e rénte la porta de cuzina
se sentarà de no'vo in gati, le dònne che cuze
e vegnarà a zogàr su la pièra
in fiòi dei fiòi
che ghémo conosùdo insieme
e fo'ra nel boschéto
altri nii de merli

se scondarà tra rame de nozelèri;
co te tomarà a védar sti àlbari
che se slo'nga sempre de più
sta erba che no finisce mai de crésar par tuto,
te pararà de sentir a la note
caminar su la giaréta in giardin.
.....
No stàme lasàr fo'ra al frédo.
Cavarò qualcòsa da dirte
o forse, tazarò.

(da e, Parole mate, parole pòvare, 1966)

Quando sarai tomata/ in questa casa dei vecchi/ dopo che sarò partito/ e aprirai le finestre/ gli armadi, in cassettoni/ e tante cose ne verranno fuori/ le piccole cose/ che abbiamo goduto insieme:// quando tomerai nel cortile dietro casa/ e vicino alla porta di cucina/ verranno di nuovo in gatti, le donne a cucire/ e verranno a giocare sulla pietra/ in figli dei bambini/ che abbiamo conosciuto insieme/ e fuori nel boschetto/ altri nidi di merli/ si nasconderanno tra in rami dei noccioli;/ quando tomerai a guardare questi alberi/ che si allungano sempre di più/ questa erba che non smette mai di crescere dappertutto/ ti sembrerà di sentire di notte/ camminare sulla ghiaietta del giardino./ Non lasciarmi fuori al freddo./ Avrò qualcosa da dirti/ o forse, tacerò.

When You've Come Again

When you've come again
to this house of the old
after I've left
and you open the windows,
the wardrobes, the chests
and out leap so many things
little things
we both liked;
when you go in the back yard again
and the cats are sitting and the women are sewing
by the kitchen door
and the children of children
we both knew
come and play on the walk
and away in the hazel wood
other blackbird nests
lie couched in the branches;
when again you look on these trees
that spread ever broader
this gras that everywhere never stops growing,
you'll think that you hear in the night

steps on the garden's fine gravel.

.....

Don't leave me out in the cold,

I'll have something to tell you

or perhaps, I'll be still.

(From e, Parole mate, parole pòvare, 1966)

Parole nove

« Dormono tutte le cause chiuse nei loro chiusi

e le teste mozze degli Archetipi a terra stanno »//

Cusi ze sta dito in alto da quei che sa.

E noàltri cosa faremo?

Noàltri che no savémo lèzar né scriver

cosa diremo?

Balbetarémo nòve parole?

Chi ne darà in nòvi segni?

A B C D E ...

come li metarémo insieme de no`vo?//

No vegnarà nesùn a salvàrme de fòra via.

Ne tocarà a noàltri rangiàrse

rebaltàndose zo

rampegàndose su

de sto potzo dea vita.

Par vegnérghene fòra

da noàltri soli

par capir e capirse.//

« In fiori della solitudine »

quei che scrive in poeti

nesùn li agiutarà a cercàrli.//

No in preti de le Ciéze

no in preti dei Studi

né quei del Governo

che oramài ze za a caza

mà in pòri cani

che se arabàta

noàltri li trovarémo.//

E zveiarémo le Cause che dome

par conto nostro e de tuti
e invidarémo le teste tagliade
sui so còli driti
e ghe diremo a una a una
a una a una

PARLA

(da Come se Infralogie ,1974)

« Dormono tutte le cause chiuse nei loro chiusi/ e le teste mozze degli Archetipi a terra stanno »./ Così è stato detto in alto da quelli che sanno./ E noi cosa faremo?/ Noi che non sappiamo leggere né scrivere/ cosa diremo?/ Balletteremo parole nuove?/ Chi ci darà in nuovi segni? / A B C D E .../ come li metteremo di nuovo insieme?// Da fuori non verrà nessuno a salvarci./ Toccherà a noi arrangiarci/ capitombolando/ arrampicandoci/ per in muri lisci/ di questo pozzo della vita./ Per venircene fuori/ da soli/ per capire e capirci.// « In fiori della solitudine »/ quelli che scrivono in poeti/ nessuno li aiuterà a cercarli.// Non in preti delle Chiese/ non in preti delle Università/ né quelli del Governo/ che ormai sono già a casa/ ma in poveri cani/ che si arrabattano/ noialtri li troveremo.// E sveglieremo le Cause che domono/ per conto nostro e di tutti/ e avviteremo le teste tagliate/ sui loro colli dritti/ e gli diremo a una a una/ a una a una/ PARLA.

New Words

“All the causes sleep locked in their keeps
and the Archetypes’ looped heads lie on the ground.”

Thus on high it is said by the knowing.

And we, what shall we do?

We who can’t read and can’t write

what shall we say?

Shall we mumble new words?

Who will give us new signs?

A B C D E ...

how shall we put them together again?

No outsider will come to save us.

We’ll have to shift for ourselves

fall head over heels

clamber up

from this sinkhole of life.

To emerge from

our isolate selves

to know and be known.

“Solitude of flowers”

those that great poets inscribe

no one to aid in their quest.

Not the priests of the Church

not the priests of the Schools

nor the Government ones

who've gone home already

but poor bastards

who hump the day long

we'll find them.

And we'll waken the Causes asleep

for our sakes and all others'

and onto their uprighted necks

we'll screw the lopped heads back on

and we'll say to each one

one by one.

SPEAK.

(from *Come se Infralogie*, 1974)

Bùtate drento

Bùtate drento

dezvìda scata

scava scova sco'lta

sco'ndate scòdate strasinate

drento.

Tra àlbaro pièra

piàvola bestia òmo

drento

ficcate drento

fòra no ghe ze gnénte.

Devénta tèra àlbaro pièra

parla coe parole sue

impara.

« Sunt animae rerum »

de più ancora

Sunt linguae rerum

sigghi pianti tremiti

ridàe discorsi

pensièri rerum

sunt sunt.

Drento.

Devénta coscienza del sasso.

(da *Analfabeto*, 1979)

Buttati dentro/ svita scatta/ scava scova ascolta/ nasconditi scuotiti trascinati/ dentro.// Terra albero pietra/ bambola bestia uomo/ dentro/ ficcati dentro/ fuori non c'è niente.// Diventa terra albero pietra/ parla con le loro parole/ impara.// « Sunt animae rerum »/ di più ancora/ Sunt linguae rerum/ grida pianti tremiti/ risate discorsi/ pensieri rerum/ sunt sunt.// Dentro./ Diventa coscienza del sasso.

Throw Yourself in

Throw yourself in

unscrew spring

dig sweep listen

hide shake drag yourself

in.

Earth tree stone

doll beast man

into

drive in

there's nothing outside.

Become earth tree stone

speak with their words

learn.

“Sunt animae rerum”

even more

Sunt linguae rerum

shouts cries tremblings

laughs talks

thoughts rerum

sunt sunt.

In.

Become the stone's self.

(From *Analfabeto*, 1979)

SANDRO ZANOTTO

La flora del vin, Zanotto's first dialect work, appeared in 1960. He had become known the previous year through a collection of poetry in Italian that, considering the limitations of a first work, already displayed traits of his later style: a solid sense of rhythm, modulated on the recitative.

Throughout his life Zanotto, essayist, novelist, art critic, as well as poet, has switched between Italian and dialect in his poetry, using the latter at first in a realistic-populist kind of verse, which gradually became more and more oneiric and metaphysical. His vast production cannot be analyzed without noting that this author was also writing in Italian, both in poetry and prose, because there are so many references and connections.

The poems of *La flora del vin* arise from the desire to produce the literary record of a language which was still being spoken by some older people in the countryside. The poems of *El di de la conta*, instead, stemmed from an anthropological interest. There is a basic continuity, but one can see an evolution of the subject matter: gradually the rural world becomes metaphor; the poet displays a philological interest which goes beyond folklore. These are elements that will reappear in subsequent collections, along with the theme of water, in a landscape of waters and islands that was to become almost a constant in Zanotto's work.

The next collection in dialect came out only in 1985, but Zanotto's literary history was not interrupted in the meantime. Interested in the avant-gardes, which he has examined as an art critic, he has been influenced – especially in the novels – by that fantastic vein that would lead to

surrealism; this fact allows one to underscore the link between his various works, beyond genre and language used.

Beginning with 1985, Zanotto turned exclusively to poetry, with the exception of his work as an art critic. *Acque perse* (1985) contains poems that seem written by the “solitary sailor” of the novel *Delta di Venere* and which in subject matter and style are close to the collection of poems in Italian *Il funzionario testimonia*. Considerably different from the two previous books in dialect with respect to language and themes, this collection nevertheless preserves the characteristic of expressing moods through concrete experiences. In *Insoniarsi de aque*, in the same year, it is still possible to find borrowings from his novels and other works. Next year came *Lettere dall’argine sinistro*, poems in Italian, which blend reality and dream, signs and symbols, memories and judgments.

The publication of *Loghi de l’òmo* (1988) marked a turning point in Zanotto’s poetry. The poet is no longer either the solitary sailor or the official but, abandoning any role, a man, who expresses himself in shorter texts, whose syntax is less fragmented, in which references to previous works are almost non-existent and without learned quotations. The language is simpler and more natural, the vocabulary richer. “The places of man” are those that allow one to go back to his roots, that make one understand the importance of memory for reconstructing one’s personal history and identity.

Zanotto’s latest collection in dialect, *Canton del mondo*, has remained unpublished, except for a few poems published in *Antologia personale* (1996). The previous one is *Dadrio del specio*, in which the poet accounts for irrevocable death and for dialect through the objects that have lost their reason for being. Perhaps more than other collections, akin in atmosphere to the two novels, this collection seem to be influenced by the suggestions of the surrealist avant-garde: in different poems concrete events slide into absurdity, become daydreams, symbols.

From a stylistic point of view, it is interesting to note how Zanotto tends to create a rhythm through the alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables. From *Insoniarsi de aque* onward, there appears an internal structure, a new closed form, based on the regular repetition of the number of rhythmic accents in a verse.

In his more than twenty years of writing poetry, Zanotto has demonstrated that he acquired and maintained a solid mastery of rhythm almost immediately; after him, other poets who write in the Veneto dialect would follow the criterion of metrical feet, a fundamental element of this poet’s voice.

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Dialetto fruà

I nomi riva da distànte
ste parole le ga doparà i vèci
sensa fruàrle,
ga vosùo dire senpre le stese robe,
se ga capio tuti.

I nomi riva da distànte
ma ramài co tuta la strada
che le ga fato, ste paroe
no le tira pì el fià
e le casca zo

cofà le foje de ottobre
e le ne lasa col legno nuò.
Semo restài qua co pochi nomi
tuti fruài
e no ghin nase de novi.
Chel sia morto sto àlbaro vècio?

(da El di de la conta ,1966)

I nomi arrivano da lontano/ queste parole le hanno usate i vecchi/ senza consumarle/ hanno voluto dire sempre le stesse cose/ si capivano tutti./ I nomi arrivano da lontano/ ma ormai con tutta la strada/ che han fatto, le parole/ hanno il fiato corto/ e cadono/ come foglie d'ottobre/ e ci lasciano col legno nudo./ Siamo rimasti qui con pochi nomi/ tutti consumati/ e non ce n'è di nuovi./ Che sia morto questo albero vecchio?

Worn Dialect

The names come from afar
the old used these words
without wearing them out,
wanting always to say the same things,
they were all understood.
The names come from afar
but now with the long road
they've traveled, these words
can't breathe any more
and fall
like the leaves of October
and only bare branches are left.
We're left with few names
all worn out
and no new ones in sight.
Could this old tree be dead?
(From El di de la conta)

Drio l'aqua

El me spècio scànpa de nòte,
va fo'ra da caza mia, devénta aqua.
El sèrca lagune fonde senza erbe,
quele che néga i cocàli che se po'za.
(I dize che i tòchi de spèci roti
va butài in te l'aqua che co're
ma lu sèrca lagune femme verdi).

El se buta so'to cola me facja zvéja,
i òci varda vanti voria altri òci.
El spècio fa onda ne l'acqua ferma
e i me sogni scanpa come barche
col velo alto e colorato, no i ciaparò
più co me zvejarò.
A po'pe de quele barche, in pie
cola ribola in man, voria stàrghe
senpre a contàrghe ai cocàli
la storia che no me ricordo altro.

(da Insoniarse de aque, 1985)

(Sull'acqua). Il mio specchio fugge di notte/ esce di casa mia, diventa acqua./ Cerca lagune profonde senza erba/ quelle che annegano i gabbiani che si posano./ (Dicono che i pezzi di uno specchio rotto/ vanno buttati nell'acqua che scorre/ ma lui cerca lagune immobili verdi)/ Si butta sotto con la mia faccia sveglia/ gli occhi guardano avanti vorrebbero altri occhi./ Lo specchio crea un'onda nell'acqua ferma/ e i miei sogni fuggono come barche/ con la vela alta e colorata, non li prenderò/ più al mio risveglio.// A poppa di quelle barche, in piedi / con il timone in mano, vorrei starci/ sempre a raccontare ai gabbiani/ la storia che non ricordo più.

Upon the Water

At night my mirror runs off,
it goes out of my house, becomes water.
It looks for deep grassless lagoons,
those that drown gulls resting upon them.
(They say that pieces of broken mirrors
should be thrown into running water
but this one is after green still lagoons.)
It dives under with my wakening face,
the eyes look ahead wanting other eyes.
The mirror stirs up a wave in the motionless water
and like ships my dreams sail away
with hoisted colorful sails. When I wake
I won't find them.
On the poop of those ships, upright,
tiller in hand, I'd like always to be
telling the gulls
the tale I no longer remember.

(From Insoniarse de aque, 1985)

Drio i scuri

El primo ciàro del sol me svéja
co bonbàzi de bòra par tuto :

méto fo'ra la testa e vedo finestre.
Lo'ra no gèra sogni ste finestre,
ma la luna me ga portà al solito
posto da ligàrme, tacà un salgàro morto
(nisùni sa che qua se va ben ligàrse)
rénte na caza zbandonà
coi scuri de piccolo'n.
In sta bòra pare che i scuri
« numina conclamant »
ma qua nela batèla no go mai vudo
lo'go e vòja de portàrme altarini,
qua bisogna contare le mòse.
Po'le capitare paràltro che sta tartàna
sensa posto devéti anca un capitèlo,
co càpita un buzo che varda fo'ra
e se vede de matina bono'ra
framèzo i calighi, come se i gavése
molà dei scuri che no ghe ze,
tuto quello che podaràve èsarghe
delà da l'arzare, delà dal mondo,
delà da mi.*

(da Aque perse, 1985)

(Dietro le imposte). La prima luce del sole mi sveglia/ nebbia cotonosa dappertutto:/ metto fuori la testa e vedo finestre./ Allora non erano sogni queste finestre/ ma la luna mi ha portato al solito/ posto d'attracco, accanto al salice morto/ (nessuno sa che qui è comodo attraccare)/ vicino a una casa abbandonata/ con le imposte mezzo staccate./ In questa nebbia sembra che le imposte/ « numina conclamant »/ ma qui nella barca non ho mai avuto/ posto e voglia di portarmi altari/ qui bisogna calcolare i movimenti./ Può capitare però che questa barca/ senza spazio diventi anche un capitello/ quando si guarda fuori attraverso un foro/ e si vede di mattina presto/ tra le nebbie, come se avessero/ aperto delle imposte che non ci sono/ tutto quello che potrebbe esserci/ al di là dell'argine, al di là del mondo/ al di là di me.

Behind the Shutters

The sun's first light awakens me
everywhere cottony mists.
I stick out my head and see windows.
They weren't dreams, then, these windows;
but the moon has brought me the usual
landing, beside a dead willow
(no one knows that this is a good place to tie up)
near a desolate house
with dangling shutters.
In this mist it seems that the shutters

“numina conclamant”

but here in this skiff I've never had room
and desire to bring little altars along;
here no one must watch what he's doing.
On the other hand, this bark without room
could even become a high perch,
when a hole appears to look through
and on sees through mists
of early morning, as if shutters
that hadn't been there had swung wide,
all that could be
on the bank's farther side,
beyond the world, beyond me.

(From *Aque perse*, 1985)

Drento la insonianda del dì

No ghe ze tanti che va drìo
ala insoniànda del dì,
anca intramèzo la zènte che parla
e ghe dìze su://
Vorìa pròpio dirve
qua su pa sta carta
(nisùni la lezarà)
che quei che se insònia pal dì
sa tante robe
che no rivarà mai saére
quei che se insònia
solo che de note
e se dezméntega co fa ciàro,
co el fantàzimo se sfànta
perché i taca còrare
drìo i schèi, el paro'n, i to'zi...//
A mi el sol
no magna mai le ore,
la canta no se stùta,
le ave zbìzega
tuti i momenti

pale sféze s-ciàra
na vèrta de sol drènto
sta calighéla del mondo
che no se roèrsa mai.//
La note me fa paura
cola insoniànda grava
che manda zo la zénte vera
drìo i curiòtoli de latrina
indo've i demoni fa rasa,
e mi no so bo'n
'ndàrghe drìo.*

(da Loghi de l'omo, 1988)

(Sogni da sveglio). Non sono molti quelli/ che sognano di giorno/ anche tra la gente che parla/ e che racconta.// Vorrei proprio dirvi/ qui su questo foglio/ (nessuno lo leggerà)/ che quelli che sognano da svegli/ san tante cose/ che non riusciranno mai a sapere/ quelli che sognano/ soltanto di notte/ e dimenticano quando fa giorno/ quando gli spettri svaniscono/ perché cominciano a inseguire/ i soldi, il padrone, i figli. .// Per me il sole/ non cala mai troppo presto/ il canto non si spegne/ le api ronzano/ senza posa/ per le fessure brilla/ una primavera di sole dentro/ la nebbiolina di un mondo/ che non cambia mai.// La notte mi fa paura/ con i sogni grevi/ che spingono la gente vera/ lungo scoli di fogna/ dove i demoni s'accoppiano/ e io non riesco/ a seguirli.

L'istà che pasa

Pantéza sta istà zgio'nfa
co s-ciàpi de mosche
e 'na zvolànda de capèli
fo'ra a la pio'va.
Drènto i canèli siga la pitima
ciamàndo i gati morti
schinsài pale strade :
no se devénta vèci
fo'ra pala frégola.
Sta istà straca se buta
de rebalto'n cofà el tenpo
che se buta in vaca.
Le ore che ne resta
co're su pai lanpio'ni
che se inpisa masa presto.*

(da Dadrio del specio, 1993)

Daydreaming

Not many undertake daydreams,
even the talkers

about them and
opinion givers.
I should really tell you
right here on this paper
(no one will read it)
that those who dream by day
know many things
never revealed
to those who dream
only at night
and who when at daylight
the phantasms vanish forget
because they must run
after shekels, the bosses, the kids ...
For me the sun
never devours the hours,
the song never fades,
the bees never
stop buzzing
a sunny spring
gleams in the rifts
of this mist of a world
that never changes.
The night scares me
with its laboring dreams
that drive honest men
along sewage pits
where demons are coupling,
and I can't
follow after.

(From Loghi de l'omo, 1988)

Passing Summer

This swollen summer pants
with flies in swarms
and hats in flurries
in the rain outside.

The caracara in the canes
shrieks for dead cats
squashed along the roadsides.
There is no growing old
chasing after cunt.
This frazzled summer turns
upon its back like the weather
gone whoring.
The hours that are left
hurry up the impost
that light up prematurely.

(From *Da drio del specio*, 1993)

LUIGI BRESSAN

Luigi Bressan, who became known by winning the S. Vito al Tagliamento Prize in 1986 with *El canto del tilio*, unlike other contemporary poets never went from Italian to dialect (he seems to reserve Italian for prose, as shown by a series of unpublished short stories).

Bressan perceives poetry as a “gift”, as he declares already in the first poem of his first book. Only in a few texts of his collections, though – whether out of modesty, need, or poetic choice – is this gift offered with simplicity, easily recognizable as such. In most cases it is presented covered by a mask, itself very fragmented. In order to capture Bressan’s “gift” one has to look beyond rhetorical devices, including the harshness of language and its emphatic imitation of speech. Then the fragmentation, the dispersion, the complexity of the poems not only do not become obstacles, but reflect problematic, uncertain qualities of life, in which the ease of making contact makes the inevitable, ineradicable solitude of every human being even more palpable.

In the second collection (*El zharvèlo e le mosche*, 1990), there are already poems that speak of absence, privation, distance, death, in an atmosphere of dream, of observation from the outside. In the poems that appear for the first time *Che fa la vida fadiga*, 1992, (others had already been published in journals), there is the beginning of the disintegration of syntax, while there is no change in the elements of style that characterize all of Bressan’s works: rhyme (especially internal), alliteration, assonance, paronomasia. In *Data*, 1994, the previous attempts at reading himself become a suffered and difficult inner exploration, and one can see the appearance of the world of memory. Everything is expressed in a language in which imitation of actual speech (with its diphthongizations, metathesis of the [r], apheresis, etc.) clashes with a complex syntax, laden with literariness.

Bressan’s most recent work, *Vose pas S.*, is an unpublished long poem. Everyday events – rain and shine, trains and stations, people meeting – are experienced, perceived, as if taking place in a parallel world, almost at edge of consciousness. The detachment that had marked his previous works has disappeared (could it be a sign of a change in process?): in this poem Bressan is completely present, painfully present, while he reports, without narrating them, the stages of the sickness of a poet friend.

Everything is filtered through memory; past events assume the same significance as very recent ones, both on the immemorial backdrop of time, in an atmosphere of serene, dreamy, intense melancholy.

In all his work Bressan expresses himself in a dialect that becomes a refined language (in the sense that an understanding of words and feelings is no longer an essential element); the attention to what is happening within remains constant, often originated by the observation of nature, by the relationships with others, by philosophical reflections. A return to himself (never a withdrawal) in the transcription of the moments that make up every life: the serene ones (few), and those that cause disquiet, in the repetition of existential questions.

Never withdrawal into himself, I said before; never pessimism (that can lead to desperation), but lucidity: the gaze of one who, conscious of the dominion of time, gathers before the flow of life, a witness to its complexity.

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Puisia

Vurìa scrivare a pi bèla puisia
ca so malà de ela – no tanto
da murire – pà spèndarla
come 'a monéda pi fruà
o forse pa' cantarla, regalarla
o pa' butàrla via.
El vento me 'a toria
da 'e man, da' zbàcjo
de 'a boca senzha on bazo,
pa' tegnérła nel vaso
de 'a so sén, che 'l porta
sol verde e sol bruzà.
El me faria contento,
ché, persa, 'a zhercaria
e anche tuti i altri ne vurìa.

(from *El canto del tilio*, 1986)

Vorrei scriver la più bella poesia/ ché di lei son malato – non tanto/ da morire – per spenderla/ come moneta più usata/ o forse per cantarla, regalarla/ o per buttarla via./ La strapperebbe il vento/ dalle mie mani, dalla bocca/ socchiusa senza un bacio./ per tenerla nel vaso/ della sua sete, che porta/ sull'arido e sul verde./ Contento sarei/ ché, persa, la cercherei/ e ne vorrebbe anche l'altra gente.

Poem

I'd write the most beautiful poem,
being sick with it (not quite
onto death), so I could spend it
like common currency,
or maybe sing it, make a gift of it
or throw it away.
The wind would snatch it
from my hands, from out of my barred

mouth without a kiss
to hold it in the vase
of the thirst it carries
over green fields and dry wastes,
I'd be happy for, having lost it,
I'd want to look for it,
and the others would want to too.

(from *Lengua*, n.7, April 1987)

Che zhenàro zéo

Che zhenàro zéo, che 'l pizhega
sì ma 'l carézha,
tanto che 'e rame se vézha
tirare fuòra 'e lenguéte
e pare ch' 'e se leca
el sole dòso?
Che aria zéa, che 'a zhampéta
pa' 'e strade scoà
pì larghe de 'a larghézha?
Do' ca no vuòjo 'ndare
brigando la m'indrézha
la me cjàpa la me àsa
senzha 'na cana tomo
ca me taca e tira 'l fià.
Che fare zéo partirse
da caza on'ora mata
e pèrdarse sui pàsi
come se fuse festa
de ani e de stajon?

(da *Lengua* n.7, April 1987)

Che gennaio è, che pizzica/ sì, ma accarezza./ tanto che il ramo s'avvezza/ a tirar fuori linguette/ e sembra sì lecchi/ il sole addosso?/ Che aria, è che zampetta/ per le strade pulite/ così larghe in larghezza?/ Dove non voglio andare/ brigando m'indirizza/ mi prende e poi mi lascia/ senza un appoggio intorno/ cui attaccami un po'./ Che fare è uscirsene/ di casa a un'ora strana/ e andare senza meta/ come se fosse festa/ di anni e di stagioni?

What January Is This?

What January is this that nips so
yet caresses,
so that the branches keep sticking out

their little tongues
as if licking up
the sun upon them?
What breeze is this that trips
down wider-than-wide
swept streets?
To where I'm loath to go
assiduously it leads me
holds me leaves me
without a crutch to lean on
and catch my breath.
What is this quitting
the house at a crazy hour
and roaming around
as if in a years' and
seasons' celebration?

*

Da la fumàra 'l sòno
senzha d'iznisiàrse
'ndémo inànzhi discoréndo
co boche de pèse,
'ndémo sol no 'ndare
di' pasi persi.
Sémo rivà èsare
on fià de noàltri stisi.

(from *El zharvèlo e le mosche*, 1990)

Dalla nebbia al sonno/ senza svegliarsi/ andiamo avanti parlando/ con bocche di pesce,/ andiamo sul non andare/ dei passi perduti./ Siamo arrivati a essere/ fiato di noi stessi.

*

From mist into sleep
without waking
we walk without talking
with mouths of fish,
we walk in the not going
of lost steps.
We've arrived at being

breath of ourselves.

(From El zharvèlo e le mosche)

*

Me levo senpre pi tardi
che 'l sole òcja a n'antra parte,
ch' 'e zhéleghe ze ormai partie.
(Dispèto de frégole vanzhà,
àstio 'e no èsare pi zhélega).
Vao. Ma l'aria no me péza :
la m'intraèsa,
la désfa do' ca jèra.

(from Che fa la vita fadiga ,1992)

Mi alzo sempre più tardi/ il sole guarda da un'altra parte/ i passeri sono ormai partiti// (Dispetto di briciole avanzate,/ astio di non essere più passero)// Vado. Ma l'aria non mi pesa/ m'attraversa/ cancella dove ero.

*

I get up always later,
the sun ogling fromelsewhere,
the sparrows already gone.
(Vexation for crumbs set aside
anger at no sparrows there).
I go out. But the air's without heft;
it goes through me,
obliterates where I'd left.

(from Che fa la vita fadiga, 1992)

*

Ecu, va 'a malo l'aria :
el di no ga pi belèzhe,
'l è altro che durare.
Se va 'vanti cavàrse
pelo e péne anche
se 'l gnaro no s'ha 'a fare.
Cusi oni uno se sco`nde

-asà elo solo dal partire

de tuti – dal patire
on cjelo che no tien
pi tèra de memoria,

diluzio'n de festa
bandia dal vento.
Ma 'i ze pinsièri tuòlti
a l'amigo che dorme, càleze
antighi in man putèla,
beù anche 'a 'oze
che dize 'ténto' oni o'ro.
'oze beù da 'a sén del tèmpo.
Anche 'sta mia che taze drènto
le onbrie del suto, chi sa
dimàn se 'a risponde...

(from Data ,1994)

Ecco, va a male l'aria:/ il giorno non ha più bellezza,/ non è altro che durare.// Si continua a strapparsi/ pelo e piume anche/ se il nido non s'ha da fare.// Così ognuno si nasconde/ -lasciato solo dal partire/ di tutti –dal patire/ un cielo che non ha più/ terra di memoria/ delusione di festa/ bandita dal vento.// Ma sono pensieri tolti/ all'amigo che dorme, calici/ antichi in mano fanciulla/ bevuta anche la voce/ che dice 'attento' a ogni poco.// Voce bevuta dalla sete del tempo.// Anche questa mia che tace dentro/ le ombre dell'arsura, chi sa/ se domani si risponde...

*

Look, the air's turning bad,
the day's absent all beauties,
nothing else but flat time.
We go on plucking feathers and
fur from ourselves though
we've no nest to build.
Thus each of us hides
– left alone by everyone's
leaving – from bearing
a sky that no longer
has memory's ground,
no illusory whirl
proclaimed by the wind.
But these are thoughts drawn
from the friend who's asleep,
antique cups in a young girl's hand,
the voice also drunk down
that says "beware" at every trifle.
Voice drunk down by time's thirst.
My own too, dumb within

dryness's shadows and which tomorrow

may reply or may not ...

LUCIANO CANIATO

Caniato has published only two books of dialect verse, but they are sufficient to recognize his strong voice and to identify the themes that inspire his poetry.

The study of the documents necessary for his college thesis² – almost all of them manuscripts from the XIth to the XIXth centuries – have brought him in contact on the one hand with the most lowly, those who have no voice, and on the other with their language, the same language that the Caniatis have spoken for generations, before his family left the Pola area for Conigliano in 1951, after the flood of that year. This biographical event is at the origin of the sense of estrangement, of loss of identity, of guilt (almost as if it were the betrayal of a mother) felt by the poet.

The two published works reflect the passage from a sociological perspective to a more personal and intimate one. *E maledetto è il frutto* (1980) is characterized by the mixture of different languages, different codes, and lexical, but above all syntactical, experimentation. As the subtitle reads – *Storia poetica del potere* – it means to be the history of the contrast between power and the poverty of farmers and day workers; a contrast that is manifested little by little, after speaking of history in the true sense of the term.

Thus, the book begins with what happened “in the beginning far in the beginning,” with the emergence of lands from the water, with the river Po setting its course, with the first settlements: the Etruscans, the Veneti, the Romans. The relationship between the dominators and those dominated through the centuries remained essentially the same, whether the former were the Bishops-Counts, or the Serenissima, or Austria, or the House of Savoy.

La signora nostra morte corporale (1992) is different from the first work in several aspects. For one thing, the experimentation that characterized especially the Italian poems of *E maledetto è il frutto* is almost completely abandoned here; diction becomes less involved, more fluid. Rhyme, mostly internal, that appeared occasionally, becomes a constant in this book and, accompanied by a versification based on rhythmic accents, it produces a new closed form. But above all in this work there is a new inspiration, which here is the desire (the necessity?) to recover the past, his own and his family's, through the language of imprinting, to which Caniato devotes more than one poem.

From the point of view of style, in this work there is an interesting use of alliteration, assonance, and internal rhyme, many of which are placed in the final word of a verse and at the beginning of the next, or in two contiguous words of the same verse, creating a sound chain.

The structural function of these various elements and the way they are utilized becomes particularly evident in one of the sections into which the book is subdivided, titled *Poemini finio*. It begins with a long sequence in which the sound play is occasional; as the discourse continues – very slowly – internal rhymes, assonances and alliterations increase, only to diminish in the final part. The different weight of the sound play – arranged in such a way as a crescendo, a *plafond*, a *calando* can be perceived, as well as the length of the lines, and the citations from the classics (Petrarch, Leopardi, Dante, and Zanzotto) are details that contribute in giving the poem an almost solemn tone, as a calm, serene dialog with oneself.

Caniato has so far alternated poetry in Italian with poetry in dialect, and he intends to continue doing so. Slow to publish, he is currently working on a book in dialect that will be titled *El lovo e le parole*, where *lovo* stands for the wolf of the unconscious, and the *parole* are an allusion to poetry.

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Alluvione, 1951

E pò bòvoli e s-ciàfe e nantri drenà.

Scuro orbo.

A do bòti del prete fumàra.

Rosari e biastème. Putin.

Al crèpo de luze un màzaro vèrto.

Cruòspa nte l'aqua na borèla

zgiònfà col muzo sota;

crochetun cofà sùori
pin e pan de le tole
sul muro del vòlto.
Sanpièro e Madòne
na rutza el silenzio a cuntàre le ore.
Metzodi. Zéleghe.
Zgirolàre d'ànatre mute.
Procisio'n de bo e gati ca uchèla.
« Liberàteme dòmini ab-ogni malo »
e « San Bovo jutène ».
A le tzinque tza scuro. Paura.
.....
Ma i puriti jè come i musì :
gninte i magna si piàntze
e quello ca dize i parùn
bruzàoci i lo ga ca ne dura
de più d'un piovàle d'istà.
Alora- Su le màneghe –
ho dito – Me tzente!
Da chi a ne nase suméntza
s'a spetèn ca lodàma la tèra
la parola buziàra di siùri.

(da E maledetto il frutto, 1980)

E poi gorghi e ondate e noi sfiniti./ Buio pesto./ Ai due rintocchi del campanile nebbia./ Rosari e bestemmie. Bambini./ Alla prima luce una fossa da macero aperta./ Zoccolo nell'acqua una vitella/ gonfia col muso sotto;/ copertoni come sugheri/ sbattere di tavole/ sul muro del sottoportico./ Sanpietro e Madonne/ è ronzio il silenzio a contare le ore./ Mezzogiorno. Passeri./ Passano e ripassano anatre mute./ Si lamentano buoi e gatti in processione./ « Liberàteme dòmini ab-ogni malo »/ e « San Bovo aiutateci »/ Alle cinque già buio. Paura./ Ma i poveri son come gli asini/ se piangono non mangiano niente/ e quello che dicono i padroni/ è come un soffione che non dura/ più d'un piovasco d'estate./ Allora- Su le maniche -/ ho detto – Mia gente!/ Da qui non nasce semente/ se aspettiamo che concimi la terra/ la parola bugiarda di chi ha i soldi.

Flood, 1951

.....
And the whirlpools, rolling waves and we undone.
Pitch black.
At two by the priest's bells fog.
Rosaries and curses. Kids.
At first light an open sewer.
A swollen heifer, hoofs rattling,
face submerged,

tarps like bobbing corks,
planks thock-wacking
on the arcade wall.
Saint Peters and Hail Marys
a humming hush to count the hours.
Noon. Sparrows.
Mute ducks paddling back and forth.
Cortéges of wailing cats and oxen.
“Lord deliver us from evil”
and “Saint Bovo help us.”
By five already dark. Fear.

.....

But the poor are like asses:
they eat nothing pity themselves
and they bear what the bilious
blowhard landlords say
like passing summer squall.
Then “Roll up your sleeves,”
I said, “My friends!
If you expect something to grow
in earth manured by the living word
of the rich, you’re shit out of luck.
(From È maledetto il frutto, 1980)

Preànbuli,II

Sènto ca s à dritzà na vòja de puisia
e l aria dèntro la sa ‘za de niève
e tuti in frève i bisì del pensiero
i pintze sul gumièro che, fursì, l ararà
sènto che in tondo in tondo, duminti,
a se dezlìga dal fondo del mè sacco
el zulo de spuàcio e a nàvega sul brodo
i òci del pasà inrantanà fin jèri.
Cumiti sto pecà, inruzenia mè man,
colègate co ela la bianca cusì bèla
regina de tetine carta inverginà
peténala lizièra col schinco del penin

e màs-cia la gran mare vèrta dje parole

le sole ca me pòle fa un dio dezumanàre

(da La siora nostra morte corporale, 1992)

Sento che si è svegliata una voglia di poesia/ e l'aria dentro sente già di neve/ e i pensieri moschini eccitati/ spingono sul vomere che forse arerà// sento che in tondo in tondo, fra poco,/ si slega dal fondo del mio sacco/ di sputo un laccio e naviga sul brodo/ l'unto del passato impigliato da ieri.// Commetti peccato, mia mano arrugginita,/ distenditi con lei bianca così bella/ vergine carta regina di tettine// pettinale leggera in punta di pennino/ possiedi la madre aperta delle parole/ le sole che possano un dio farmi sentire

Preambles, II

I feel an urge for poetry aroused

the air inside already tastes of snow

and swarming gnat-thoughts crowd

upon the ploughshares and may furrow.

From deep within my sack

I feel a spit cord's been unsealed

to sail on broth memorial fat

up to yesterday congealed.

Sin these sins, my rusty hand,

lie down with it, queen of teats,

white and so lovely virgin sheets

comb it lightly, penpoint, fructify

the great wide mother of words

for me this only way a god may reify.

(From La siora nostra morte corporale, 1992)

Poemin tentà

.....

No, mi no ch'ò fato gran cariera :

la fòla d la coriera che senpre inantzi va

co mi la s' à femà :

le malte de la cà le tègno su a puisie,

ne vòle el mondo e gninte a se ne fa

de chi ca suma le parole in zbiùma

.....

Ma fame a n in patiso ancora, Tarezina;

ina me buta la parola inchièta

e a mèstego putin ca ne ghin vòl savère

co l'amidà camiza dl italiàn

sto can ca spolpa mòrsega a dispèto

le caze del dialèto ch el pèto el m'incatàra
e che par senpre verde inochetzà lo spèrde
par senpre strùsio
morto insomenà
.....

(da La siora nostra morte corporale)

No, io non ho fatto gran carriera:/ se c'era una corriera che sempre avanti va/ con me più non andrà:/ le malte della casa le tengo su a poesie,/ non vuole il mondo e niente se ne fa/ di chi raccoglie schiuma di parole// Ma non patisco la fame, Teresina,/ fine mi nasce la parola inquieta/ addomestico a scuola chi non ne vuol sapere/ con l'italiano, camicia inamidata,/ cane che spolpa e morde per dispetto/ le case del dialetto che m'opprime il petto/ e che per sempre verde istupidito si perde/ sperperato per sempre/ morto senza semente

Little Incipient Poem

.....

No, my life's not been much of a fuss.

The parked bus that keeps moving on
has dropped me off.

I keep my house mortared with poems;
the world doesn't want and couldn't care less
about one works words into froth.

.....

But I'm not hungry any more, Teresina.

The subtle disquieting word ripens within me
and in school I tame kids who don't want to learn
with starch shirted Italian

the flesh ripping cur that spitefully bites

dialect's houses oppresses my breast
and always throws green away stupefied

eternal vain labor

sterile dissemination

.....

(From La siora nostra morte corporale, 1992)

Poemin finio

.....

Escricia la parola infadigà dal pézo

drenà la piega e cuazi la se spaca

morsà par fortza a farse onesto verso

in te sta lingua destinà al matzèlo

che più gnisùn a vòle, che più gnisùn a sa;

.....

Ma mi sta lingua adèso a l'ò salvà
a l'ò vestia da spoza, a l'ò lavà, netà,
a gò da fòrtza, a l'ò supia in poesia,
a l'ò sufria sufria sul bianco de la carta
e tanto a ghe dovèa a cui ca à fabricà
stì rami deramà, ste sièze d'armonia;
a cui che dèso i sta ntel centro del canèlo
dove se fa più bianca la fiamma dja memoria
e do che tuto bruza trasformando in oro
anche el carbo'n più mòro...
cui che zvanpii par senpre te ninanani
ancora, Mare c'ò zbandonà, Tèra
c'ò continuà a lasàre par sta marègna mare

.....

(da La siora nostra morte corporale)

E geme la parola dal peso affaticata./ s'finita si piega e si spezza quasi/ costretta a forza a farsi onesto verso/ in una lingua buona pel macello/ che più nessuno vuole,
che più nessuno sa;// Ma questa lingua io ora l'ho salvata/ l'ho vestita da sposa, ripulita, lavata/ le ho dato forza, l'ho messa in poesia./ l'ho sofferta sofferta sul
bianco della carta/ e tanto io dovevo a chi ha dato vita/ a rami di rami, a siepi d'armonia;/ a chi adesso sta al centro del canneto/ dove incandescente è fiamma di
memoria/ e dove tutto brucia trasformando in oro/ il carbone più nero.../ Quelli che svaporati per sempre ninnananni/ ancora, Madre abbandonata, Terra/ che ho
lasciata per una madre matrigna

Finished Poem

.....

And grates the weight-fatigued word
collapses spent and nearly breaks
forcibly bent to make an honest verse
in a language destined for the slaughterhouse
that no one wants any more, that no one knows any more;
.....
But here this language I've gleaned
dressed it as a bride, cleaned it, preened it,
given it strength, worked it to poem,
on the white of the paper suffered it suffered it
and much have I owed to whoever
these branching branches, these hedgerows of harmonies and
to whoever is now in the pith of the cane
where ever whiter glows memory's flame
burning and turning everything even

the blackest coal gold ...
to those evermore air whom yet
you console, Mother I've left, Earth
I keep leaving for this lacklove other
.....

(From *La siora nostra morte corporale*, 1992)

Congedi, II

Eco : mi anca ò scalà l abiso del dentro
sèntza catàre un centro ca fèse da lumin.
Sibèn, rapàndome sui spèci, ò dezmisia
-baline che dumiva- fa barbastrèji onbre
e a go parlà in dialèto, la lingua de l afèto,
e lore i à scoltà e gè tornà un fià vive,
potèntza dja puisia. Dèso romài l è tènpo
de ranpegàrse indrio, cofà un Enea, un Achile,
o chiàltro che gnan mile insieme a njo faria,
a riveder le stele, le stele dl italiàn.

(da *La siora nostra morte corporale*)

Ecco : anch'io ho scalato l'abisso del dentro/ senza trovare un centro che facesse lume./ Eppure, con fatica, ho risvegliato/ -bozzoli che dormivano- ombre pipistrelli/
gli ho parlato in dialetto, la lingua dell'affetto, e loro hanno ascoltato e son tornate vive/ potenza di poesia. Adesso ormai è tempo/ di arrampicarsi
indietro, come Enea, o Achille,/ o l'altro che mille insieme non sarebbero a pari/ a riveder le stelle, le stelle in italiano.

Valedictions, II

And so; I too have plumbed the internal abyss
and upon a center of light never come.
Nevertheless, clambering in caves, I've roused
shadows like bats, sleepers in jars,
and in dialect, love's tongue, addressed them
and they listened anew, breathed life,
poetic force drew. Now again time
to scabble back up, like an Aeneas, an Achilles,
or the one whom thousands together never could shade,
to see the stars once again, Italian's stars.

(From *La siora nostra morte corporale*, 1992)

LUCIANO CECCHINEL

The genesis of Cecchinel's dialect poetry seems to have been a psychological leap that lent a metaphorical quality to his town and his language. His poems, in fact, display an obvious superimposition of a culture that was disintegrating on his own personal problems.

Still residing in the town where he was born, Cecchinel has detached himself from dialect through his studies (which led him to become a teacher), feeling for this reason that he has in a certain sense betrayed those who continued to be marginalized. Thus, he has a strong desire to sacralize through poetry a language that had been only oral, and to sacralize the people through their language; that is, to freeze in time what was rapidly disappearing; to try to clarify – to himself most of all – the meaning of value given to customs and traditions of the past, and as a result to find an answer, above all, to the why of poetry.

In his most substantial collection, the title itself (*Al tràgol jért*, 1988, the steep path along which farmers used to drag down to the valley the trunks of the trees they felled) refers to the harsh life of those who have to fight for survival every day. The poems in this book, written between 1972 and 1984, are (in Cecchinel's own words) "scaje de tràgol," splinters on the path.

Cecchinel's voice is strong and forceful; he is very careful in transcribing his harsh dialect, firm in the desire not to betray, not to intrude in the world he is evoking, but perhaps also in the awareness that the Italian version, while aiding to understand the original, can do little to render its elements of style.

The book is characterized by a harmonious order (a beginning, a development, a conclusion) that inform in its unity not only the entire collection, but each of the three sections into which it is divided, in a double undulatory movement. Syllabic stress is replaced by metrical feet; the rhythmic accents, for instance, are regular in the poems in rhymed quatrains, but less so in those with an open form.

Cecchinel alternates free verse and traditional closed forms, without a marked preference for one or the other; the mastery with which he chooses words and utilizes meter, however, ensures that the words remain concrete, strong, rich, essential, despite the end rhymes, internal rhymes, and assonances.

In the first section, the elegiac tone gradually fades away, while the author describes the forest, the farmhouse, the daily chores. The last two poems are set in the present, which predominates in the central section: the present with its uncertainty, disquiet, bitterness. The past seems to have left only inanimate objects and the "strange verses" of the poet, who almost no longer knows what he is doing there. Ill at ease in a present of greedy people, the poet longs to return to the idealized world of memory.

Particularly in the third section the value of metaphor that the author attributes to the "town" stands out, when he identifies with it, begging it to make him understand its meaning (of the town and of the poet). The poems are "signs" through which the past speaks; now the author can make a bonfire of himself, letting himself be carried by the light breeze, "for other eyes and other ears."

Two years later Cecchinel published a chapbook containing three poems and another one in 1997, with one poem in Italian and one in dialect.

Unlike other authors in whose work one can recognize that passage from a voice still looking for itself to a mature expression, Cecchinel – despite the modest number of poems published – has demonstrated from the start that he is capable of writing poetry both of high quality and of great beauty.

Criticism

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Scaje dhe tràgol

Scàje dhe tràgol le é ste qua,

stran e teràzh tenpràdi

dal fret, dal calt e dha la son,

suti, misiàdhi, ruciolo'zi.

De entro, te tanti dhe co'r credho'zi,

l'é seménzhe ciàre insenbràde

de canpagnòi, primole e viole

e so're', biàva e fomènt
ma anca dhe cavarézeghe e agròst
e erba dhel diaùl, zgarlasà e pezhòla.
Carèzhe curte dhe sol e de pio'va
e nef mèstega e vèrte tèndre
le se inso'gna dhe ua e dhe pon,
dhe ondhe dhale de vena e dhe spagna,
ma zbo'e, buzno'r, s-ciantis e sec
i torighéa la ràbia sol persa via
de i roài, de l'erba e dhe l'erba mata.
Jo'zhe, sié dolzhe, raj cévedhi,
nef ién do' céta
sul coàt de sta zlevàda poréta.
E oiàltri sté lontàn
nifère dhe nèole e saréche
cofà le fulishe e le fiantigole
de 'n panevìn mat sote 'l vent.

(da Al tràgol jért, 1988)

Schegge di strada da strascino sono queste/ strame e terriccio temprati/ dal freddo, dal caldo e dal sonno./ asciutti, mescolati, sdruciolevoli./ Dentro, in tanti cuori di creta,/ ci sono sementi rade, raccolte,/ di bucaneve, primule e viole/ e sorgo, granturco e frumento/ ma anche di angeliche e veratri/ e aconito, eleboro ed erica./ Carezze brevi di sole e di pioggia/ e docile neve e primavere tenere/ sognano di uva e di mele,/ di onde gialle di avena ed erba medica,/ ma turbini, brontolii, lampi e siccità/ tormentano la rabbia solo assopita/ dei rovi dell'erbaccia e dell'edera./ Gocce, siate dolci, raggi tiepidi,/ neve scendi quieta/ sul giaciglio di questo povero prodotto./ E voi state lontane/ nidiate di nuvole e saette/ come la fuliggine e le faville/ di un panevin impazzito sotto il vento.

Roadside Leavings

Roadside leavings, these –
straws and humus tempered
by cold, by heat and by sleep,
dried, scrambled, slick.
Inside, in many clay hearts,
rare seeds are laid up,
the anemone, primrose, violet,
and sorghum, corn and wheat
but also of angelica and veratria
and wolfbane, hellebore and heather.
brief caresses of sun and rain
and gentle snow and tender springs
dream of grapes and apples,
of yellow waves of oats and clover,

but storms, thunder, lightning and drought
incite rage only drawn off
by brambles, grasses and weeds.
Raindrops, be mild, sunrays warm,
fall quietly snow
on the mat of these poor pickings.
And you others, broods of clouds and
fiery bolts, stay away,
and the sparks and thick smoke
of the wind-crazed Epiphany blaze.

(From *Al tràgol jért*, 1988)

Parfun e susuri dīversi

Par strise longhe dhe nèole e dhe sol
son stat a scoltàr al faldin
cantar pian co i fastùc che i caschéa :
al peverèl e la stela indoradha
co le so' lanpidhàdhe curte
qualcòsa segùr i oléa dhirme
par lònç e par stravès
parfùn e susùri dhivèrsi.
Fursi la farfàla lidhiéra,
nef de jenàro scondèst
da i bòcoi dhrìo oltàr dho'...//
Par le sbave longhe dhel sol de mèzh
tel misiòt ciòc de la son e dhel vin
son stat a scoltàr al restèl
tirar su, sconpis salterin,
da la menta e dha l'erba stranudhèla
parfùn e susùri dhivèrsi.
Fursi 'l tavàn, fulisca fiantigola
via tomo le spale secàdhe...//
Segùr qualcòsa i me véa dhita
al peverèl e la stela indoradha
e la menta e l'erba stranudhèla,
candelìer spauridhi sote 'l faldin,
formighèr brustolidhi

in tra i lénc' del restèl...
e dhès al mè temp l'é 'l bal stomo
de la farfala inbalumidha,
al zhizàr semeni
del tavàn inorbi.

(da Al tràgol jért)

Attraverso striscie lunghe di nuvole e sole/ son stato ad ascoltare il falchetto/ cantar piano al cader di festuche:/ il timo e la verga d'oro/ coi loro lampi brevi/ volevan certo dimmi qualcosa/ per lungo e per traverso/ profumi e sussurri diversi./ Forse la farfalla leggera/ neve di gennaio nascosta/ da boccioli che stan per cadere...// Attraverso bave lunghe del sole di mezzo/ in mistura ubriaca di sonno e di vino/ son stato ad ascoltare il rastrello/ tirar su, ranocchio salterino/ dalla menta e dall'arnica/ profumi e sussurri diversi./ Forse il tafano, fuliggine scintilla/ intorno alle spalle bruciate.// Avevan certo detto qualcosa/ il timo e la verga d'oro/ e la menta con l'arnica./ candelieri spauriti sotto il falchetto/ formicai arroventati/ tra i legni del rastrello.../ e adesso il mio tempo è il ballo ubriaco/ della farfalla abbagliata,/ il ronzio insensato/ del tafano accecato.

Varied Fragrances and Murmurings

Under long lines of clouds and sun
I listened to the scythe's
soft song in felling hay.
Quick flickerings
of buttercup and thyme
surely had a message for me
direct or indirect
in varied fragrances and murmurings.
Perhaps the nimble butterfly,
January snow is incipient
blooms due to fall ...
Under silken threads of the sinking sun
in a drunken blend of wine and sleep
I stood listening to the leapfrog rake
stir from arnica and mint
varied fragrances and murmurings.
perhaps the horsefly, scattering ash
from its burnt back ...
Surely buttercup and thyme
arnica and mint
(scythe-startled candlesticks),
baked anthills between
the rake's wooden teeth
said something to me ...
and now my beat's

the dazzling butterfly's
dizzy dance, the glittering
horsefly's batty buzz.

(From *Al tràgol jért*, 1988)

Pastòzh de làip

Pastòzh de làip, aqua lispo'sa
ndé che dhe zbris la se vardha la luna
e mael al pézh al revèsa
i brazh scanàdhi dhal scur.
Par chi sé tu?
Par la strazégna dhel cuèrt?
Da tant òcio insùlso a zmira
al to' fondi fis.//
E par chi spètetu ti
faldin rudheni
in tra pière e roài
e zhinis-cio e calif
orbo a le stele
des fuliscàdhe dhal vent?//
L'onbria céta dhe i bòcoi dhe nef?
Fa l'angonia dhe 'n cato'r
al to' cridhàr ultimo
al se a inbuzà dho' agremo'zo
tel torcolamént negro dhe i crép.
Romài pi susùro dhe vespe
o zventolamént de falchét
i se sovien te i to sénc' de l'istà...
fursi gnanca 'l sol che tu a inbarlumì.//
Ma mi, sa fae lora qua
scodràzh zhot zhabòt
picà a bar dhe stele
qua col faldin e pastòzh
a vejàr son de pézh
e lune zlaidhe
in tra nibie alte e comàje?
Co i me sest e vers stranbi

despèrs da no so quanti ani

fae ciàro stremi

sote i cavedhài dhe le stele

par na zventàdha

che a 'ncora dha végner.

(da Al tràgol jért)

Intruglio di truogolo, acqua mucida/ dove furtiva si guarda la luna/ e solitario il pino rovescia/ le braccia spossate dal buio./ Per chi sei?/ Per la stilla del tetto? / Da tanto un occhio insulso fissa/ il tuo fondo denso./ E tu chi aspetti/ falcetto arrugginito/ tra pietre e roveti/ e muschio e foschia/ cieco alle stelle/ che il vento ha ripulito?// L'ombra quieta dei boccioli di neve?/ Come agonia di cotumice/ il tuo ultimo strido/ si è infossato lacrimoso/ nel contorcimento nero dei crepacci./ Omai non più ronzo di vespe/ o svolare di falchi/ ricordano i tuoi segni dell'estete../ forse neanche il sole che hai abbagliato./ Ma io, che faccio io allora qui/ ultimo nato zoppo balzubiente/ impigliato a cespugli di stelle/ qui col falcetto e l'intruglio/ a vegliare sonni di pini/ e lune infradicate/ tra nebbie alte e cornacchie?/ Con i miei gesti e versi strani/ sperduto da non so quanti anni/ faccio luce allo stremo/ sotto i solchi iniziali delle stelle/ per un colpo di vento/ che deve ancora venire.

Swine-through Muck

Swine-through muck, rank water

with the moon glancing out of slick

and a solitary pine spilling

weary branches out of dark.

Whom are you for?

For the drip of the eaves?

Long has a dull eye

fixed your dense depth.

And what, rusted scythe,

are you waiting for

among stones and briars

blind to the stars

clarified by the wind?

Snowflakes' still shade?

Like the pang of a marsh-hen

your final lament

has plaintively sunk

into the crack's black involutions.

By now our precepts of summer

no longer revive droning of wasps

or soaring of hawks ...

perhaps not even the sun you have dazzled.

But I, then, what am I doing here,

lame, last born, loquacious,

hung up on star clumps

with the scythe and the muck
minding a slumber of pine
and a rotting moon
among rooks and rising mists?
Lost for years unsung
under furrowed stars, utterly
drained, with my tics and
bent lines I make
light for a breeze
yet to come.

(From *Al tràgol jért*, 1988)

Sonàbol

Cofà 'n traèt al zhéi to 'rgol del zhièl
par andreo 'ne bizlònghe in jertùra
le porta scudhèle ciàre dhe miel
fin a l'òcio cròt de na saradhùra...
là oltra le telarine dhe 'n pio 'l
par rise che arzh de ori dhe ani
al é canpàne insordhidhe dhal sol
al é 'n inbarlumimént ros de jeràni
là sote onbrie cévedhe dhe jazenèra
na còca la cridha cofà 'n cortèl
che i sie dhrìo uzàr su 'n tai dhe manèra
là pian pian ghe riva a la réja podhàdha
bòt fròi dhe tos... ma la é saràdha
la porta e sa a incantà 'l saltarèl.

(da *Al tràgol jért*)

Come un sentiero al ciglio torbido del cielo/ per androni bislunghi in salita/ portano chiare scodelle di miele/ all'occhio malato di una serratura...// là oltre le ragnatele di un ballatoio/ per scie che ardono dell'oro di anni/ ci sono campane assordate dal sole/ c'è un abbaglio rosso di gerani// là sotto ombre tiepide di bagolaro/una chiocchia stride come un coltello/ che stiano arrotando su una scure// là pian pian arrivano all'orecchio appoggiato/ rintocchi sfatti di tosse... ma è serrata/ la porta e si è inceppato il saliscendi.

Sonnambulist

As on a path to the vexed verge of the sky
along long rising corridors
they carry clear honey in bowls
to a lock's languishing eye ...
there beyond the pales of a porch

on golden years' glowing tracks
is a bell the sun has stunned
is a red geranium torch
there in an elm's soft shade
screeches a hen like a knife
whet on a hatchet blade
there to the listing ear rise up
the slow spent tolls of coughs ... but the bar
is down and the door fast shut.

(From *Al tràgol jért*, 1988)

Cròze crozàt

Dès che ò vèrt al cadhenàzh dur
del stàul stracolmo e orbo
l'é na risa dhe ciàro guàst
su sto sparpagnamént de restèi sechi,
de dhèrle rote e faldin rudhenidhi
che sa 'ncora da menta e strafo`i,
tut an siròc malsàn
sul mè coàt de pavée.
Dès che fa 'n stròlego ò fat
de le inprèste soàdhe
e pò inprèste dhe le fadhighe,
mi, caro`l caroli dhe canàgola,
fae mami dhe mi panevin :
de sudho`r, de àgreme e sangue
mea la é la razià pi vera
e meo l'a dha èser al fun
cusì o che 'l vae su verso sera
o che 'l vae su verso matina
no 'l ve portarà polenta e farina...
sol zhéndre trist par la òstra caljéra.
Ma la me tegnarà l'aria lidhiéra,
parfun despèrs
de roze salvèreghe e raza,
oro balerin de spenàzh
te telarine sutile dhe sol.

E fursi te n'antro an de la fan
la me ultima trazha
fa na fiantigoléta
la zluzarà dha in tra le stele,
fa 'n tozatèl lontan
la batolarà pian tel vent,
tel screcolamént alt de i ran
infasadhi dhal nef,
par altri òci e altre réje.

(da Al tràgol jért)

(Crocè crocione). Adesso che ho sbloccato il catenaccio duro/ dello stabbio stracolmo e cieco/ c'è una scia di luce guasta / su questo sparpaglio di rastrelli secchi/ di gerle rotte e falchetti arrugginiti/ che sanno ancora di menta e trifoglio/ scirocco malsano/ sul mio giaciglio di falene./ Adesso che come stregone ho fatto/ di attrezzi comici/ e poi attrezzi delle fatiche/ io, tarlo tarlato di collare/ faccio di me stesso un grande fuoco/ del sudore, delle lacrime e del sangue/ mia è l'eresia più vera/ e mio deve essere il fumo/ così che vada a occidente/ o salga verso oriente/ non vi porterà polenta e farina../ solo cenere amara per il vostro caldaio./ Me, mi terrà l'aria leggera/ profumo disperso/ di rose selvatiche e resina/ oro ballerino di pennacchi/ in sottili ragnatele di sole./ E forse in altro anno della fame/ la mia ultima traccia/ come una favilletta/ rilucerà tra le stelle/ come un bambino lontano/ bisbiglierà nel vento/ nello scricchiolio alto dei rami/ fasciati dalla neve/ per altri occhi e altre orecchie.

Cribbled Cross

Now that I've loosed the hard chain
of the blind, dung-glutted stall,
ther's a film of stained light
on this hodgepodge of tom hampers,
dry rakes and rust-cankered scythes
that still smell of clover and mint,
an unwholesome sirocco
over my den of nocturnal moths.
Now that I've turned like a magus
tools into frames
and then labors to tools,
I, gnawer gnawed by a neckrope,
become myself Epyphany's flame:
of sweat, of blood and tears
mine the heresy truest
and mine the smoke must be
that whether to night
may stray or to day
will bring tough luck either way –
just bitter dross for your pot.
But mine will contain the light breeze,

ubiquitous odors
of wild roses and resin,
the plumes' dancing gold
on the sun's rarified weave.
And perhaps in another lean year
my ultimate mark
like a smallest spark
will rekindle in stars,
like a faraway child
prattle softly in wind,
in the jingling dances of
snow-shrouded branches,
for some other eye, some other ear.

(From *Al tràgol jért*, 1988)

GIAN MARIO VILLALTA

Villalta's work has so far been divided equally between prose in Italian (theoretical and critical essays) and poetry in dialect; in both he manifests an authentic interest for language which, along with the concept of time, is the basic theme of *Vose de vose* (for now the only organic work published, besides several poems that have appeared in journals and anthologies).

Particularly important is the "reading" that Villalta does of Andrea Zanzotto's trilogy,³ because what he says of the latter's work can also be applied to his own poetry.

Vose de vose (1995) assembles four works written in a period of ten years, and it attests to a journey. In fact, there is an obvious difference between the first poems of the book published in 1988 (and which now constitutes the first section of *Vose de vose*) and all the rest. The former are reasoned, rich with notes that betray a philosophical reflection, characterized by a certain detachment; in the latter, not only do the notes gradually disappear, but the dialogue between past and present, between the poet and *vu* (you), *lore* (them), changes the tone from detachment to involvement, through the development of two main themes, as already mentioned, not parallel but rather entwining: dialect and time.

These are two themes that Villalta perceives to be necessarily interdependent when he concludes his reflection on the concept of time (which, in his view, does not correspond to calendar time). Dialect seems to be that something that allows him to find a sense for his life again, when the realization that the present does not exist (every instant of the present, in the moment in which it passes, becomes past, and is replaced by the future instant) and that future is still to be experienced, could lead to the disintegration of the sense of identity. Dialect allows him to take part in something which began before him, and which will go on after him.

In the third part, through a long list of names that identify objects, actions, trades, customs, and traditions, Villalta inserts the concept of the values to be received and handed down; he attests that this can be done only in the language alive then, the language of the people who lived yesterday.

Within the organic whole of *Vose de vose*, in the single sections the author reveals himself by confronting what is problematic to him: choosing his own expressive language, coping with the difficulty of communicating the meaning that one wishes to give to words, living the rift between the inside and the outside.

There is no dispersion. Reading the work is like observing the lines of a seismograph: the final drawing will emerge when the needle has completed the repeated movement back and forth, up and down.

The discourse concludes in the fourth part with the passage from autumnal gloom to summer; the author, who has been able to contact "them," in the image of the *fèmena piena* (pregnant woman) offers the image of language (mother-tongue?) which, also pregnant, will bear fruit.

With his reflections on language, through the unintentional involvement he is manifesting, Villalta shows (without the need for theorizing) how important language is for a sense of identification and belonging.

Criticism

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Altro che storie! VIII

de Vu, mi altro, antico
mi, che ciàmo Vu
par rispèto, rispèto'zo
rimors de 'ver lasà pustòt,
colpa de no 'ver colpa,
Vu che me spèta
pi 'vanti 'ndo' che no so dove
e che sente (savéndo
sensa savér) che 'l sarà, ndo' de Vu
sarà de novo l'odor
de la piòva
sarà 'l piantà che da ieri
el se trova 'l formènt
alt come mi. Sarà el mai pi e 'l da nisùna
parte, el mai che sarà, che so
che l'è
da qualche parte,
ndo' le formìghe le porta
i denti da late, dove che l'è le corse
'n te l'aria negra
e tut ancora
da zmentegàr, sperar, riscumisjàr, dizmentegàr
de novo a parlar
'n te na lengua che no l'à
le parole gioia e felicità
e che no ghe n'à bizo'gno.

(da *Vose de vose*, 1995)

di Vòi, l'altro me, l'antico/ me, che chiama Vòi/ per rispetto, rispettoso/ rimorso di aver lasciato incoltivato/ colpa di non aver colpa/ Vòi che mi aspettate/ più avanti,
non so dove./ e che sento(sapendo/ senza sapere) che ci sarete, dove di Vòi/ sarà di nuovo l'odore/ della pioggia/ sarà il campo che da ieri/ si trova il frumento/ alto
come me. Sarà il mai più e il nessun/ luogo, il mai che sarà, che so/ che c'è/ da qualche parte/ dove le formiche portano/ i denti da latte, dove sono le corse/ nell'aria
nera/ e tutto ancora/ da dimenticare, sperare, ricominciare, dimenticare/ di nuovo a parlare/ in una lingua che non ha/ le parole gioia e felicità/ e non ne ha bisogno.

of Thee, my other, ancient
me, that i Thou
out of respect, respectful
remorse for having left fallow,
guilt for being guiltless,
thou who awaitest me
farther on (where I don't know)
and whom I feel (knowing
without knowing) will be, where of Thee
will once again be
the smell of rain
will be the field where since yesterday
the wheat's as tall as I;
will be the nevermore and the nowhere,
the never that will be, that I know
is
somewhere,
where the ants have
milk teeth, where races are run
in black air
and everywhere is still
to forget, to hope for, to begin again, to forget
again in speaking
in a tongue that doesn't have
the words joy and happiness
and has no need of them.

(From Vose de vose, 1995)

El scra vaso e altre vose

Voria cono'serla, e no
come che mi me cono'se,
ma come che me conoséva
me mare co' la me 'véva
drènto de ela.
Voria savér che qualcòsa
de mi el crèse e 'l va via
da mi e via no po' l'èser,

parché me porta co' ela
parte de sé come un nini
che 'l se 'nsònia de nàser

(da Vose de vose)

Vorrei conoscerla, e non/ come mi conosco io/ ma come mi conosceva/ mia madre quando mi aveva/ dentro di lei./ Vorrei saper che qualcosa/ di me cresce e va via/ da me e via non può andare/ perché mi porta con sé/ parte di sé come un bimbo/ che sogna di nascere.

The Downpour and Other Voices

I'd like to know her, and not
like I know myself,
but like my mother knew me
when she had me
inside her.
I'd like to know that something
of me grows and leaves
me and cannot be apart,
because she has me in her
as part of herself like an infant
who dreams of being born.

(From Vose de vose, 1995)

El scravas, V (ora de tornar caza)

Sposesà, anca del to
èser nisùn,
fà' la vardia al seragno de silabe
par contarghe a la nòt
ndo' te diòl
co te toca.
Dis co' mi, co' ti stès
che temp 'sto qua che 'l sentir
el combàte par na parola
de pièra, un pézo che rèste
tel cuòr, che 'l se 'ncùgne drènto
'n te 'l gnent?

(da Vose de vose)

(L'acquazzone, tempo di rincasare). Spossato, anche del tuo/ esser nessuno/ fa' la guardia al recinto di sillabe/ per raccontare alla notte/ dove ti fa male/ a toccare./ Di con me, con te stesso/ che tempo è questo che il sentire/ lotta per una parola/ di pietra, un peso che resti/ nel cuore, che si incunei dentro/ nel niente?

The Downpour, V (time to go home)

Dispossessed, even of your
being no one,
to hold vigil over syllables' bound
to tell night
where it hurts
to touch.
Say with me, with yourself
“What time's this when feeling
fights for a word
of stone, a weight to remain
in the heart, to embed inside
in the nothing?”

(From Vose de vose, 1995)

Panevin, VIII

De còsa che pasa, de prima
ch'i nasa, de co' i era bòce a to fiòi,
to nevo'di, co'nteghe e anca de ti
e quel ch'i te contàva, ch'i sco'lte,
ch'i co'nte anca lori, ch'i 'mpari
a contàrse 'n tel contar,
a scoltàrse scoltàr – e gnentàltro.
No l'è 'nsegnaménto, no inlùderte
de dirghe na verità, na rezo'n, de savér
ti, de far ti na mizùra, un giurin giuro'n :
te sta sto gnentàltro – el gnentàltro, contar
còsa che pasa, che l'è,
che l'è calcos'altro
da tut quel che 'ncùo resta scrit,
filmà, registrà anca masa
pièn de parché che no i sarà pi.
Fa che sia la to facia, i to sèst,
la to boca ch'i conta – el gnent'altro,
che l'è contar còsa
che pasa, che 'n tut sto restàr
de ricordi de tuti i fati de tuti
e de nisùn, el pasi, el calcòsa

del gnen't'altro

(e 'ténto, sta 'ténto, ma tant

'ténto a cianàrlo memoria)

(da Vose de vose)

Di ciò che passa, di prima/ che nascessero, di quando erano bimbi, ai tuoi figli/ ai tuoi nipoti racconta, e anche di te/ e quello che ti raccontavano, che ascoltino/ che raccontino anche loro, che imparino/ a raccontarsi nel raccontare/ ad ascoltarsi ascoltare – e nient'altro./ Non è insegnare, non illuderti/ di dirgli una verità, un perché, di sapere/ di far tu la misura, di garantire e promettere:/ a te sta il nient'altro – il nient'altro, raccontare/ ciò che passa, che è/ che è qualcos'altro/ da tutto ciò che oggi resta scritto/ filmato, registrato, anche troppo/ pieno di ragioni che non avranno più senso./ Fa che sia la tua faccia, i tuoi gesti/ la tua bocca a raccontare – il nient'altro/ che è raccontare ciò/ che passa, che in tutto questo restare/ di ricordi di tutte le storie di tutti/ e di nessuno, passi, il qualcosa/ del nient'altro/ (e attento, sta' attento, ma tanto/ attento a dargli il nome di memoria)

Epiphany Fire, VIII

of things that happen, from before

they were born, when they were slips your kids,

your nephews, and of yourself tell too

and what they told you, that they may listen,

may themselves tell, themselves

may learn to tell in telling,

to listen in listening – and nothing else.

I's not instruction, don't fool yourself thinking

you're giving a truth, a reason, that you yourself know,

that you yourself are the measure, a warrant and pledge.

This nothing else will be left, the nothing else, the telling

what happens, what is

that it is something other than

everything written, filmed,

registered even to excess today

replete with meaningless wherefores and whys.

Let it be your own face, your own gestures,

your own mouth that tells – the nothing else,

which is telling what

happens, that which in all this remaining

of memories of all the talk of all

and of none happens, the something

of the nothing else

(and careful, be careful, but very

careful in calling it memory).

(From Vose de vose, 1995)

Parché le mē toche, co' te le tién

in boca quel fià, le sàpie

de mi le parole che te sercarà

par contàrte, cuzirte na vita

intorno a la voze,

anca lontan pi dei ani

che te eri nina.

Parché te toche co' le parole

-caresàrme sintirme visin

anca pensàndote scampàndo via

ti ti sola.

Par questo e no par la pel

che dezléga na sepa de miel

in te le zontadùre.

Par scumisiar a 'nsegnàrse

el senza fin un doman

vistirse de la tèra e no pi avérse.

(da Vose de vose)

Perché mi tocchino, quando le tieni/ per poco in bocca, che sappiano/ di mē le parole che cercherai/ per raccontarti, cucirti una vita/ intorno alla voce/ lontano più ancora degli anni/ che eri bambina./ Perché io ti tocchi con le parole/ -carezzami, sentirmi vicino/ anche pensandoti mentre scappi via/ tutta sola./ Per questo e non per la pelle/ che scioglie un seme di miele/ nelle giunture./ Per cominciare a insegnarci/ il senza fine un giorno a venire/ vestirsi della terra e non più aversi.

Voice's Voice

That they may touch me, when

you hold them a while in your mouth,

have my taste, words you'll search for

in telling yourself, weaving yourself

life around the voice,

farther off even

that your little girl years.

That I with words may touch you

– myself caress, myself feel close

even thinking of you running off

by yourself.

For this and not for the film

a honey seed leaves

in the joints.

To begin teaching yourself

the endless one day to come

to dress in earth and be averse.

(From Vose de vose, 1995)

ANDREA ZANZOTTO

The dialect part is minimal in Andrea Zanzotto's work, yet anything but unimportant, if only for the questions raised by the poet's attitude toward his local idiom.

Born and raised in it, he still turns to it daily, since most of the time he resides in Soligo, yet his renown is due to the interest that critics and essayists have devoted to his writings in Italian.

His first work in dialect known to the public at large is *Filò*, solicited by Fellini for his *Casanova*. (I said the "public at large" because the verses of *Filò* are not really the first verses in dialect; as the author himself wrote to me personally (Nov. 30, 1997):

...I wrote in dialect, almost as a *fèlibre*, when I was about seventeen, and then on social occasions and for graduations... I went back to a dialect experience through fragments that surface in the Italian of my verses (around 1965), so that by 1969 I had already completed an "Eclogue in dialect on the end of dialect" that I found again a month ago after it had been missing for a long time. From there came Fellini's *Filò* in the Soligo dialect....

Filò dates back to 1976, but Zanzotto's first collections were published in the fifties. In Italian he wrote the poems (1938-1972) to be included in *Poesie*, characterized by a lofty language, and soon there would be assonances, internal rhymes, and anaphoras. At the time of *Ecloghe* (1962), the use of various rhetorical forms became as important as the subject matter. It is a succession of sounds in pursuit of each other, almost a frenzy. The lofty language has disappeared; there are single lofty words, but they no longer capture one's attention. The impression is of a crumbling dam, of water rushing in impetuously, of the immediate, uncontrolled translation of thoughts that pile up, cross over, exert pressure: language has a hard time keeping up with them, it stumbles, it repeats, it confuses. But the meaning is conveyed very clearly.

Filò gathers three texts: *Recitativo veneziano* and *Cantilena londinese* written in a Veneto dialect close to a koiné, and *Filò*, the only text in the dialect of *Pieve*, that dialect experienced as "coming from where there is no writing," as Zanzotto himself observes in a Note that accompanies the volume. The poet dares to use it in poetry:

me son ris-cià, picolà in fo'ra,

fin a cavàr su da chisà onde

fin a sforzarme co 'sta sécia zbugada

co 'sto tàmizo de maja 'ramài masa larga

a cavàr su 'l parlar vècio

(I have risked, out on a limb, / to the point of pulling out from who knows where / to the point of trying with this pail full of holes / with this sieve with a mesh now too-large / to pull up the old idiom)

The language that for centuries had guaranteed a sense of cohesion and duration seems almost to impose itself, rising from the unconscious. It imposes itself in poetry, although the poet knows that:

la poezia no l'è in gnesùna lengua

in gnesùn lo'go – fursi –

la è 'l pien e 'l vo'do de la testa-tèra

che tas, o zhigna e uzma un pas pi in là

de quel che mai se podaràe dirse, far nostro ...]

Ma ti, vècio parlar, rezisti.

(Poetry is in no language / in no place – maybe – / it is in the fullness and void of the head-earth / which is silent, or winks or sniffs a step beyond / what we could ever say to each other, make our own [...] / But you, old idiom, resist)

In the Italian collection that came out two years later (*Il Galateo nel bosco*, 1978), and in the same style, with insertions in English and letters in ancient Greek, one finds "E po', mucì," in the *Pieve* dialect. The "old idiom" reappears in *Idioma*, in the central part of the book, whose remaining sections are in Italian. In it Zanzotto speaks of a people in whom to recognize oneself, of the need to understand, of the awareness of being: "I rest in the right / being one with so many here."

Dialect appears in the brief description of Maria Carpèla, the woman who made the round of the houses to sew, but the poet immediately returns to Italian to speak of his *contrada*, “building of the mind.” Other figures, known by Zanzotto as a child, are then evoked in dialect; there follows a text that begins in dialect, attesting to their belonging to the *contrada*, but that continues in Italian, putting everything into question: “every line is a bit off.” In dialect there is then a poem for the eightieth birthday of Montale, who “*tanti ani fa me ‘véa segnà ‘na strada*” (so many years ago saw me mark a street); one in memory of Pasolini, one remembering the funeral of Toti del Monte, another for Chaplin’s death. In it one finds the text that appears in the appendix of *Il bosco del Montello* (“rustic ode” of Nicolò Zotti); in the Note the poet says: “It is mentioned in the book *Galateo in Bosco* to which I say farewell with this poem.” And finally, *Mistierò*, which presents all those who practiced trades that no longer have any reason to exist: the transporter of tree trunks, the cartwright, the shepherds, the smith, the umbrella fixer, the knife sharpener, the coppersmith, the chair mender, the weavers, the washerwomen. The poet ends with an invocation to the grandmothers “so that now they will preserve / what they praised as children.”

He then goes back to Italian in intentionally conclusive texts, which could be taken as a summary/explanation of what had been said before.

Dialect is inserted in a fundamental discourse based on language, identity, an impossible correspondence between language and external objects; in a contradictory way because, while the poet seems on the one hand to suggest that it is possible to give a sense to existence by placing oneself in a mother/son relationship with the world (a relationship in which not too many words are necessary, the *petèl* can be enough), he simultaneously denies the possibility of creating it, using dialect only to speak of the past, of something that no longer exists (as was seen in the texts quoted).

In 1996, ten years after his last book of poetry, came *Meteo*, containing poems written in different periods, and in which dialect also appears in a poem that describes a character (*Tarèza*, almost a reincarnation of Nino), in a singsong (*Marotèl*), and in a title (*Morèr Sachèr*). The author himself qualifies *Meteo* by describing it as a “sample of work in progress”; not a completed collection, then, but rather a series of “uncertain fragments.” One has the impression that the nature that appears in it should not be read in a naturalistic way; the hail and storms of the weather predictions seem to be once again a reading of the contemporary world.

In the letter cited Andrea Zanzotto, after admitting that psychological problems have influenced his relationship with dialect, at a certain point decreasing “considerably the number of poems that even partially refer to it,” opens the possibility of a return to it: “in the collection that I am putting together for a future volume there are a substantial number of them.”

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Recitativo veneziano

O come ti crési, o luna dei buzi fo'ndi,
o come ti nasi, cavégi blu e biondi,
nu par ti, ti par nu,
la gran marina no te sèra più,
le gran baréne de ti se inlaga
vien su, dragona de arzénto, maga!

(da Filò, 1976)

O come cresci, o luna dei baratri fondi/ o come nasci, capelli blu e biondi/ noi per te, tu per noi/ il grande mare più non ti rinserra/ le grandi barene di te si allagano/
sali, dragona d'argento, maga!

Venetian Recitative

O moon of deep depths, oh how you wax,
oh how you hatch, coiffed cerulean and flax,
you for us, we for thee,
no more shut in the vasty sea,
flood the great plage,
ascend, silvery dragon, sage!

(From Filò, 1976)

Cantilena londinese

Pin pidin
cosa gàstu visto?
Sta piavoléta nua
'sto corpezin 'ste rozéte
'sta viola che te consola
'sta pèle lisa come séa
'sti piseghèti de risi
'sti océti che te varda fisi
e che sa dir « te vo'i ben »
'ste suchéte 'sta svezéta –
le ze le belése da portar a nòse
a nòse conpòste de chéa

che jèri la jèra putèa.

(da Filò, 1976)

Piè-piedino/ che hai visto?/ Questa bambolina nuda/ questo corpicino queste rosette/ questa viola che ti consola/ questa pelle liscia come seta/ questi riccioli pizzichini/ questi occhietti che ti guardano fissi/ e che san dire « ti voglio bene »/ queste zucchette questa fessurina -// sono le bellezze da portare a nozze/ nozze composte di quella/ che ieri era bambina.

London Lullaby

Pussyfoot,

what did you see?

This little trunk these rosettes

this comforting violet

this silky smooth skin

these tangy tresses

these little eyes that scrutinize you

and know how to say "I love you"

these little gourds this little cleft –

these are the beauties to bring when you wed

wed with the lass

who the day before was a lambkin.

(From Filò, 1976)

Filò

Inte 'sti dì che 'l frèt scurta e la pio'va

sòfega – sepuli setembre

e un an, primà del tèmp -,

inte 'ste not che 'l vènt ciàma e fa fò'ra

co sio'n de acqua e lanpidàr,

fumàne e fumeghère –

inverno e istà misiàdi cofà cavèi de strighe -,

inte 'ste ore che 'l sol par un momento

libera, e po 'l mòla

a morir inte 'l mòj, tra restèi

negri drìo i crép de le montagne –

e tut quel che se vèt par trat inte 'na co'rt

anca sibén che de òri l'é piéna 'sta co'rt –

santa tèra, tu tremà. Tèra cos'atu, tèra?

[...]

se sa che tu sé furia, pèdo che miér e miér de furie,

salvàrega tremenda irata sphinx

[...]

... o pur

che cusita l dis al libro de la Ginestra

no tu sa gnént

né de ti né de noi, e l to' ndar par i miér de miér de ani

l'é come un star. Vérda tu sé, par sénpre,

anca co tu sé sas galivo e stèrp,

tu fioris anca intànt che tu co'pa; inpetrida, tu bo'j.

[...]

In questi giorni che il freddo accorcia e la pioggia/ soffoca – seppellito settembre/ e un anno, prima del tempo -/ in queste notti che il vento chiama e divora/ con grandi scrosci d'acqua e lampeggiare,/ vampe e fumigamenti -/ inverno e estate mischiati come capelli di streghe -/ in queste ore che il sole per un momento/ libera, e poi le lascia andare/ a morire nel madido, tra cancelli/ neri dietro i gruppi delle montagne -/ e tutto quello che si vede sembra buttato in un letamaio/ anche se di ori è pieno il letamaio -/ santa terra, tu tremi. Terra, che hai, Terra?/ &]/ si sa che tu sei furia, peggio che migliaia e migliaia di furie, selvatica tremenda irata sfinge/&]/& oppure/ che come dice il libro della Ginestra -/ non sai niente/ né di te né di noi, e il tuo stare è come il tuo scrollarti/ e il tuo andare per le migliaia di millenni/ è come uno stare. Verde sei, per sempre,/ anche quando sei sasso liscio e sterile,/ fiorisci anche mentre uccidi; coagulata, ribolli.

Evening Discourse in the Stable

In these days when the cold constricts and the rain

oppresses – September and a year

entombed, prior to time –

in these nights with the lashing and howling of wind

and torrents of rain and lightning flashes,

flares and smoky fumigations –

winter and summer entangled like witches' hair –,

in these hours the sun for a moment

untethers, then surrenders

to die in damp, among portals

black behind the sharded mountains –

and all one sees seems cast upon the dungheap

even though the dungheap has overflowed for hours –

blessed earth, you shudder. What ails you, earth?

.....

we know you're a fury, worse than thousands and thousands of furies,

wild awesome angry sphynx

.....

... or rather

that – as the Broom's book says –

you know nothing

nor of us nor of yourself, and your going these thousands and thousands of years
is like a staying. You're green forever,
even when a smooth and sterile stone,
even when you kill you quicken; clotted, you boil up again.

(From Filò, 1976)

Andare a cucire

A la Maria Carpèla
(che la ndéa a pontàr par le caze)
Si no l te fèse n paradizo
apòsta par ti, anca si paradizi no ghe n'è,
al saràe de mèter a l'infemo
l'istésò Padretèrno –
la saràe da mèter a l'infemo
tuta, tuta quanta « la realtà »,
si par ti no fèse 'n paradizo
pien de bontà come la to bontà,
gnentàlto che 'l paradizo
come che ti tu l'ha pensà.

(da Idioma, 1986)

A Maria Cappel (che andava a cucire presso le famiglie). Se non ti facesse un paradiso/ apposta per te, anche se paradisi non ce ne sono,/ sarebbe da mettere all'inferno/ lo stesso Padre Eterno -/ sarebbe da mettere all'inferno/ tutta, tutta quanta « la realtà »/, se per te non facesse un paradiso/ pieno di bontà, come la tua bontà,/ niente altro che il paradiso/ come tu l'hai pensato.

Going Sewing

To Maria Carpela,
who went sewing from house to house.
If a paradise hasn't been made
especially for you, even if no paradise be,
then to hell with
the Father Eternal himself,
and to hell as well
with the lot, the whole "reality" plea,
if they haven't paradise for you,
goodness-filled like your own goodness,
no paradise other
than the one you considered.

(From Idioma, 1986)

Sarlòt e Jijéto

Ecusi tu sé 'ndat anca ti, Sarlòt,
dhà che gnesùn resta qua par seménzha,

[...]

àsa che insieme co ti
me pense de Jijéto
che l'è stat al Sarlòt del me paéze
inte quel tenp che oramài
lunàri no l ghe n' à pi.

[...]

A Jijéto inte l scur daghe na man
e ménelo co ti de foravia :

[...]

Ma òcio, che l'è furbo anca lu,
che na lugànega o na palànca o 'na stèla
par scaldàrse lasù inte i bus del blu,
o 'n fulminànte par inpizhàrge bubaràte
no 'l te fae sparir dala scarsèla
par tegrérseli lu
o magari tomàrteli, co 'n pie 'nte 'l cul.

Sarlòt, ména Jijéto
ména tuti i Jijéti del pasà
che i voléa fàr na cùbia co ti
a trasformar inte 'na gran ridàda
tut al gran viajo co le so' stazhio'n –
inte la mèjo farsa
che se àpie mai vist...

[...]

(da Idioma, 1986)

E così te ne sei andato anche tu/ Charlot, poiché nessuno resta qui per semenza [&] lascia che insieme con te io ricordi anche Gigetto/ che è stato lo Charlot del mio paese/ in quel tempo che ormai/ non ha più calendari [&] A Gigetto nell'oscurità dà una mano/ e portalo con te alla chetichella [&] Ma attento, che è furbo anche lui/ che una salsiccia o una monetina o una scheggia di legno/ per scaldarsi lassù nei buchi del blu./ o un fiammifero per accendervi falò/ non ti faccia sparire dalla tasca/ per tenersi lui/ o magari ridarteli, con una pedata nel sedere.// Charlot, conduci Gigetto/ porta tutti i Gigetti del passato/ che volevano far coppia con te/ a trasformare in una gran risata/ il gran viaggio con le sue stazioni/ nella più bella farsa/ che sia mai stata vista

Charlot and Gigetto

And so you too are gone, Charlot,
since no one stays around as seed,

[...]

let me, i recalling you,
recall Gigetto as well,
who my country's Charlot was
in that now
uncalendared time

[...]

Take Gigetto in hand in the dark
and silently fade away:

[...]

But look out, for he's crafty too
and he'll disappear from your pocket
a star or a nickel or a sausage
to keep for himself to stay warm
up there in that holely blue,
or a match for a bonfire, or maybe he'll return
them, along with a kick in the ass, to you.

Lead Gigetto, Charlot,
tale all the bygone Gigetτος
who wanted to duo with you
and transform into the grandest laugh
the whole grand stationed journey –
into the greatest farce
that ever was seen...

[...]

(From Idioma, 1986)

Mistieròi

... Cusi, so 'te l camin squàzi stuzà
se n tozatèl vardéa
par quela finestrela cèa

[...]

chi èrelo, pò, che paséa, che batéa
su quel vièro, e sparia
no so se zhotegàndo o se nte n bal;
èreli tuti lo 'ri, none, del vostro tènp,

[...]

Cusi in cà col co'r son restà là

a la finestrela cèa&

E zvodà pian pianin la se véa

e in éla altro che stèle no ghe n'era

e l libret de le none e dei so' tènpi se véa serà

(da Idioma, 1986)

Così, sotto il camino quasi spento/ se un ragazetto guardava/ attraverso quella minuscola finestra/[&]/ chi era mai che passava, che batteva/ su quel vetro, e spariva/ non so se zoppicando oppur danzando;/ erano tutti loro, nonne, quelli del vostro tempo,/[&]/ Così ammaliato con il cuore sono rimasto là/ alla piccola finestra& / E la si vedeva svuotarsi piano piano/ e in essa non v'erano che stelle/ e il libretto delle nonne e dei loro tempi si era chiuso.

Mysteries

... so, if from the almond damped hearth

a lad had looked up

through that miniscule window

[...]

who, then, had it been, who'd gone by, who had tapped

on that glass and vanished

I don't know whether stumbling or dancing;

[...]

so, there I stood whiling away with my heart

at that miniscule window ...

An I saw it empty little by little

and nothing but stars remained in it

and the times and the little book of the grandmothers closed ...

(From Idioma, 1986)

Menàdas

Strasinàr la musa :

par che la slisole so'ra 'l blu del jàzh

e invézhe, co 'sto mazh

co 'sto grun de taje che l'à adòs,

la se info'nda, o la ne scànpa

e la ris-cia de ciàpame so'te,

de tràme do' pa' i bus, do' par i fòs.

Forzha mus, co'la musa, e sù 'l mostàzh!*

(da Idioma, 1986)

Trasportatori di tronchi. Trascinare la slitta:/ sembra che scivoli sopra l'azzurro del ghiaccio/ e invece, con questo mazzo/ con questo mucchio che la sovrasta di tronchi,/ affonda, o sfugge/ e rischia di venirci addosso,/ di spingerci giù per i burroni, giù per i fossi./ Forza asimo, con la slitta, e su la fronte!

Lumber Haulers

Pulling the sled:

it seems to be gliding on the blue of the ice

and instead, with this load,

with this pile of logs overtopping it,

it founders, or it breaks away

and almost runs us over,

drags us down ravines, into ditches.

Dig in, ass, have the sled, and keep your chops up!

(From *Idioma*, 1986)

CESARE RUFFATO

Cesare Ruffato's first published poems in dialect appeared in *Padova diletta* (1988), a book which – with *Floema della pietra* the same year – closed a long and fruitful period of poetry in Italian. Since the publication of his first collection (*Tempo senza nome*, 1960), there has been no lack of critical discussion on this and subsequent works: *La nave per Atene* (1962), *Il vanitoso pianeta* (1965), *Cuorema* (1969), *Caro ibrido amore* (1974), *Mimusgrafie* (1978), *Parola bambola* (1983), *Trasparenze luminose* (1987). Also written in Italian was *Prima durante dopo*, which came out in December 1989, but – because of the themes that inform it and because it also contains poems by his daughter Francesca – it must be considered separately.

If this introduction to Ruffato's dialect poetry begins with a list of works in Italian, it is because his poetic itinerary – from the sixties to the present – follows the same track, and one cannot speak (write) of his dialect poetry without referring to the Italian poetry that has preceded it, for several reasons.

Meanwhile, it is important to underscore that Ruffato does not consider his writings in dialect less valuable than their Italian counterparts. In the phase of metalinguistic reflection, both within the texts and through theoretical observations, he has more than once stressed the positive aspects of writing in dialect.

Moreover, it must be noted that the essential characteristics of Ruffato's poetry do not change in going from Italian to dialect, either in form or subject matter. Mentioning these characteristics is a particularly difficult task, not because they are difficult to identify, but because any label will be inevitably reductive, incapable by itself to describe the complexity and originality of what it refers to.

It can be said with extreme concision – with respect to form – that Ruffato's texts are characterized by an experimentalism (multilingualism, creation of neologisms, deconstruction of the syntax) that reveals how this author has always taken into account everything that moves in the intellectual sphere – especially in literature and psychoanalysis – in order to absorb it, filter it, and use it in a markedly original way. Further, his fundamental themes are ethical reflection and civil protest: once again Ruffato seems immersed in the world in which he lives and taking active part in it.

At this point it seems useful to point out another of Ruffato's characteristics, namely the restraint and reserve of his sentiments, which leads one to hypothesize that culture (experimentalism) has become – more or less consciously – a shield against the manifestation of emotions, always strong, to the point of seeming at times excessive.

Two years after the publication of *Padova diletta*, Ruffato began a long period of writing in dialect with *Parola pirola*, without fundamental changes in themes and subject matter, as was mentioned, but centering on the same presence: his daughter Francesca, who died tragically in July 1989.

One can surmise that the first use of dialect was instinctive (utilizing a medium that he felt was capable of greater adherence to what he wanted to say), and which only later – through a reflection that would lead to *Diaboleria*, published in 1993 but written right after *Parola pirola* – was chosen consciously, because it fulfilled other needs.

The single poems and the collections that follow (after *Parola pirola*, 1990, *El sabo*, 1991, and *I bocète*, 1992) are all attempts on Ruffato's part to communicate with Francesca, his only daughter with whom he shared so many interests, and to bring her back to life.

In 1996 Ruffato went back to Italian with *Etica declive*, and in 1998 published *Scribendi licentia*, a book that – as the inside cover reads – “contains most of Ruffato's dialect poetry.” Besides the collections of the early nineties, there are numerous unpublished poems, which contribute to complete the portrait of a poet who intended to give “an affectionate, ethical recognition” to his mother tongue with this volume, in the attempt “tinged with nostalgia, to correspond to the intimate echoes, particularly subtle and unreachable, of its voice.”

Criticism

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Cesare Ruffato's poems were translated by Luigi Bonaffini

*

Dove e come vivere co 'sti incantamenti
 senza combinare la distansa co la speranza
 alambicando a spirito i pensieri da inscrignare
 o che discore el sguardo astrato
 robando el più possibile la vose del silensio
 scoltare el respiro de la parola
 lampra statua bambola
 nova vecia leterale poetica traficà
 sempre la fabulerà
 intrigando erotisandose
 sacrificà a la roba senza che mai
 boca a boca consista
 co illa sentimento del tempo
 che imaga transduse sublima.

(da Parola pirola)

Dove e come vivere con questi incantesimi/ senza combinare la distanza con la speranza/ alambiccando a spirito i pensieri da raccogliere in scrigno (inscrignare)/ o che discorre lo sguardo astratto/ rubando il più possibile la voce del silenzio/ ascoltare il respiro della parola/ trasparente statua bambola/ nuova vecchia letterale poetica trafficata/ sempre lei affabulerà/ intrigando erotizzandosi/ sacrificata alla cosa senza che mai/ bocca a bocca consista/ con illa sentimento del tempo/ che imma transduce sublima.

*

Where and how to live with these spells
 without combining distance and hope
 distilling in alcohol the thoughts to be coffered
 or that the abstracted gaze goes over

stealing as much as possible the voice of silence

to listen to the word's breath

transparent statue doll

new old literal poetic trafficked

it will always fable

entangling eroticizing itself

sacrificed to the thing without ever

mouth to mouth

forming with it

the sentiment of time

that enchants transduces sublimates.

*

E se melina coi verbi al condissionale

pignate de ponsiopilaterie

gargarismi ganzi co la parola

prevenzione, senza el costruto

de cultura e carità.

La gioventù nel capio alchemico

nero svena el sacrificissio

cossì malamente

da no portarse gnente

pardelà da contare.

(da El sabo)

Esì melina con i verbi al condizionale/ pentole di ponziopilaterie/ gargarismi furbi con la parola/ prevenzione, senza il fondamento/ di cultura e carità./ La gioventù nel capio alchemico/ nero svena il sacrificio/ così tristemente/ da non portarsi niente/ nell'aldilà da raccontare.

*

And one holds off with verbs in the conditional

pots full of pontiuspilateries

sly gurglings with the word

prevention, without the basis

of culture and charity.

Youth in the black alchemical

snare bleed sacrifice dry

so wretchedly

that they can't bring anything

to tell in the beyond.

*

Sgorlo dai fiori fiabe seche
nuvole m'ingossa la lente
interiore el to sonare co l'acqua
oracoli celesti che spalpugna
le recie dei cieli, insaco el vodo
de la vita che te ga in antisipo
folo ben in mente qualche rigo
sacro che me sfunfigna foja scritta.
Na sbrassà de volte a luce albasia
go fruà el calendario, robe robe
sempre miele fiele
de le varie lengue, go tentà enigma
simulacri date nel to silabario,
imbragà sbaco
interdeto a starte drìo
sento forte cortei e mutansa
mia hermosa, mia edera effatà.

da I bocète, pagina 105

Scuoto dai fiori fiabe secche/ nuvole mi soffocano la lente/ interiore il tuo suonare con l'acqua/ oracoli celesti che cincischiano/ le orecchie dei cieli, insacco il vuoto/ della vita che ti ha in anticipo/ pigio bene in mente qualche rigo/ sacro che mi strapazza foglia scritta./ Moltissime volte alla luce del vento albale/ ho consumato il calendario, cose cose/ sempre miele fiele/ delle varie lingue, ho tentato enigma/ simulacri date del tuo sillabario./ impacciato mi affanno/ interdeto a rincorrerti/ sento forte lame e mutamento/ mia bella, mia edera apriti.

*

I shake old fairy tales off flowers
clouds suffocate my inner lens
and your making music with water
heavenly oracles that shred
the ears of the sky, I stuff life's
emptiness that has you ahead of time
I squeeze in my mind some sacred
line that vexes me written leaf.
So many times in the light of dawn's wind
I have gone through the calendar, things things
always honey gall
of the various languages, I have tried enigmas
simulacra dates in your ABC,

entangled I struggle
dumbfounded to chase you
I hear loudly blades and changes
my lovely, my ivy, open.

Onghe

Le onghie se sfesa par longo nebiae
piate s-censae, squasi senza luneta
la forfè fa male, le ròsego
co fadiga, colpa dei ani coi raggi
tardi se s'incorse de 'ste carogne
me strussio a tor su fregole foji.
Radioleso par sfissio de pontare
su quello che le robe podaria
essere, no me vergogno senza
manicure, scolto el dottore
dei infortuni sul lavoro, digo
de pèto a l'amore par la vita,
de sera, olivo salvadego in posa,
le conso perben in ojo fino
no se toma indrio a luto dolore.
La famejola vardava 'ste onghie
impegnae par la paga co passion
desso senza speransa in pension
senza rason stuae lenti
co tante ombre latenti.

da Smanie, pagina 238

Unghie Le unghie si fendono in verticale appannate/ appiattite scheggiate, quasi senza lunetta/ la forbice fa male, le rosicchio/ con fatica, colpa degli anni con le radiazioni/ in ritardo ci si accorge di queste carogne/ mi arrabatto a raccogliere briciole e fogli./ Radioleso per lo sfizio di puntare/ su ciò che le cose potrebbero/ essere, non mi vergogno senza/ manicure, ascolto il dottore/ degli infortuni sul lavoro, sostengo/ d'impeto l'amore per la vita./ di sera, come olivo selvatico in posa./ le condisco per bene con olio raffinato/ non si ritorna indietro dal lutto e dolore./ La famigliola custodiva queste unghie/ impegnate per la paga con passione/ ora senza speranza in pensione/ senza ragione spente lenti/ con tante ombre latenti.

Nails

Nails crack lengthwise clouded
flattened splintered, almost without lunula
the scissors hurt, I've trouble
gnawing on them, blame it on the years of radiation
you notice these bastards too late

I scramble to pick up crumbs and sheets.

Radiation-injured for the hell of aiming

at what things could be,

I am not ashamed of not having

a manicure, I listen to the doctor

who handles work accidents, I forcefully

maintain my love for life,

in the evening, a wild olive tree posing,

I season them well with refined oil

you can't go back from mourning and grief.

The small family kept these nails

for the paycheck with passion

now without hope getting a pension

without reason spent slowly

with so many latent shadows.

*

No so se me consolo d'un buso

da studente ad hoc al Verdi in loggion

lusinghe ociae da londi sbecae d'illusion

anfosa. Desso « est ma vie trop pesande

a porter ...

mors, de ma vie me delivre! » delusion.

Dove parole e figure no riva

el mistero sbassa seje e sipario

la peripatetica nera mena

el gnente par sé tuto

l'estremo cao icse de ognun.

(da Giorgio mortis)

Non so se mi consolo d'un buco (posticino)/ adatto a studente al Verdi in loggione/ lusinghe sguardi da lontano scheggiati d'illusione/ afosa. Ora « la mia vita è troppo ardua /da tollerare... / morte, liberami dalla mia vita! » delusione./ Dove parole e figure non sono sufficienti/ il mistero abbassa ciglia e sipario/ la tenebrosa paripatetica conduce/ il nulla per sé tutto/ l'estremo limite incognito di ognuno.

*

I don't know if I can find comfort

in a ad hoc student hole up in the gallery at the Verdi

flatteries glances from a distance splintered

with sultry illusion. Now "my life is too heavy

to bear ...

death, free me from my life!" disappointment.

Where words and figures do not reach

mystery lowers eyelashes and curtain

the dark streetwalker brings

nothingness for herself all of

everyone's extreme unknown limit.

FRIULI- VENEZIA GIULIA

Dante Maffia

Before tracing the development of twentieth-century poetry in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region, I was sorely tempted to examine socio-linguistic factors. This was because I found myself consulting essays, anthologies, and prefaces in which a poet could very easily be assigned to one area rather than another. It is obvious that the boundaries are blurred and interpretations are controversial, so that in the end questionable arrangements were adopted which have nevertheless not undermined the validity of the authors, at least with respect to their poetic and literary value. Spagnoletti and Vivaldi, for instance, distinguish between *Venezie* and *Friuli*,¹ and Serrao includes Gian Mario Villalta in *Friuli-Venezia Giulia*.² It is not a question of errors or misunderstandings, but choices made on methodological grounds, not based strictly on historical, philological, or anthropological factors.

In any case, we know for certain that the web of the dialect universe is so thin and varied as to disorient even specialists, if they do not have a long familiarity with the syntactical, grammatical and phonic nuances of speech. It makes me think of the attitude of a street vendor at Porta Palazzo in Turin. He could not agree on the price of some articles of clothing (jeans, I believe) with some customers from Calabria and Apulia, and finally he came out: "Ehi, Neapolitans, no more subtracting." For him southerners are all Neapolitans, or even worse "Naples," but in his voice there was no sign of scorn or insult. He was just reacting in a generic way to the differences in speech. If that vendor had the task of compiling an anthology of dialect poets, more than likely he would group together in one chapter, maybe entitled *Terronia, Belli and Di Giacomo, Domenico Tempio and Padula*.

In any event, "The essential fact for the linguistic history of the region is provided by an extremely elusive ethnic notion: such as that of the *Carni* (inhabitants of the *Carnia* region): the Gallic population that descended from the mountains in the 5th century B.C., breaking the continuity between the *Veneti* from the eastern region and the *Veneti* from the *Isonzo* and *Carinzia* regions."³ Devoto follows the process of acculturation, exchange and contamination in all its amplifications and ramifications, but "this is not the place to raise once again the well-known question of whether Friulian is a variant of Ladin ... or a harsh, archaic Italian *volgare*. What counts is the singularity, or rather the uniqueness of the Friulian dialect, more than a dialect almost a language with the charm of its archaisms, its rusticity and popularity."⁴

It was almost natural, therefore, that over the centuries, after endless unsuccessful attempts or partial achievements (think of the nineteenth century, for example, with Percoto's short stories in dialect) Friuli-Venezia Giulia would produce a group of poets with a distinct and significant voice, not bound to the dialect tradition of sentimentality and local color, of sarcasm and civil and political invective. The ground had been prepared over a long time (there are those who go as far back as the thirteenth century to find traces of a heritage that became slowly important),⁵ and it would be interesting to review the works that have appeared up to the beginning of this century, but it would be a long list of names and publications that mean little poetically. I am interested in seeing how the poetry of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, from the beginning of this century, has suddenly ceased to be a simple witness to events and has become instead an important moment in Italian literature that cannot be ignored. Let me be clear, "dialects are not enough to have a revolution and not even to return to the core of myth. They can be considered a more authentic, popular and original side of Italian and any other language. Like Italian, no more and no less... dialects are precious witnesses to civil and cultural history; they are imbued with the intelligence and labor, the intellectual knowledge and the cultural experiences of the people who spoke them and speak them."⁶ Pietro Zorutti (Lonzano del Collio 1792 – Udine 1867), who in the years of the "Strolic furlan" and in the various published volumes had profusely spread all the commonplaces of the backward rural province, was not writing poetry. Rather, he had contaminated the smallest achievements and had made more difficult the task of those who aspired to break the circle of repeating the same words and images in order to find something different and new, at least outside the unbearable weight of bourgeois rhetoric and respectability.

The first to reject the quagmire of the past was Pietro Bonini, soon followed by several others, because they felt it was improper and out place to continue on a road leading backwards, to the source of nostalgia, to regret, to the reconstruction of a reality gradually annulled by history, but that dialect poets insisted on "remaking," with the intention of opposing an eternal value to the discontinuity caused by Napoleon and the "disgrace" of the French Revolution.

Celso Cescutti (pen name *Argeo*), from *Flaibano*, showed a genuine vein without excessive descriptiveness, and adopted a language that had considerable strength, as Pasolini later recognized. In 1911 he published *Primavere*, which precedes by a year Biagio Marin's first work, *Fiuri de tapo*. These are the first signs of a sensibility that will eventually engender the fundamental books by Marin himself and by Pasolini, Giacomini, Cergoly, and Giotti.

It is extremely difficult to outline in a few pages what took place in the crowded world of Friuli-Venezia Giulia in the course of the entire twentieth century, also because dialect poetry has not traveled along a parallel path with Italian poetry, but has constantly interacted with it, often lending a rhythmical quality as well as linguistic and human richness to it, and often borrowing from Italian poetry all the innovations that came from French symbolism and other international experiences. This dialectic relationship has become so close and so competitive in recent times, that with the onset of neodialect poetry it is almost impossible to make a distinction between writing poetry in dialect and poetry in Italian. The reason is that dialect, overcoming the pitfalls of tradition and abandoning the attitude of self-importance and trendiness taken by poets in reprisal, in the end becomes the language of poetry, comparable to Chinese and English, Spanish and Russian. Today no one would ever think of writing a history of Italian literature starting with the preconception and the reservation that dialect poetry is second-rate reading.

The wealth of authors from Friuli-Venezia Giulia who have attained a certain prestige and critical recognition caused a great deal of doubt and perplexity as to what names to include in the anthology. What were the criteria that guided the selection? Perhaps it was my familiarity with the poets included, but also the fact that these poets, with the exception of two, represent the entire century in its complexity and in its evolution, and give the exact idea of a world that, though within the borders of Italy, never withdrew into its own identity, but was able to channel and transmit a Mittel-European sensibility.

It is worthwhile to reflect on the fact that the greatest Italian narrator and the greatest Italian poet of this century are both from Trieste and that the best-seller *Và dove ti porta il cuore* is the work of someone from Trieste. And from Trieste as well is the best interpreter of German literature, Claudio Magris, the intellectual who more than any other has been adept at capturing universal themes in books of extraordinary power. On the one hand there is Sicily with the countless great authors who shape the history of Italian literature between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and on the other Friuli-Venezia Giulia. Two border literatures, two experiences to compare with the experiences of the rest of Italy and Europe.

It is perhaps their border location that triggers the need to keep their identity alive and to find refuge in the tower of dialect, engendering a strong sense of their roots, so that nothing and no one would ever be able to move the axis anywhere else. This probably explains the proliferation of poets in the various dialects of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, and it explains how they have been able to preserve their ethical and metaphysical convictions without resorting to maternal justifications (with the exception of Pasolini) or psychoanalytical or sociological rationales.

At this point I have to mention at least some of the poets who are not included in the anthology, but who have nevertheless shaped the history of a region that can be linguistically defined as being telluric. To give one example, the anthology edited by Roberto Damiani and Claudio Grisancich, *La poesia in dialetto a Trieste 7*, takes into account seventy-five poets, including Adolfo Leghissa, Vittorio Cuttin, Angelo Cecchelin, Corra, Anita Pittoni, besides, of course, Giotti, Gergoly and Grisancich.

Absent are also Franco De Gironcoli from Gorizia, Siro Angeli from Carnia, Novella Cantarutti from Spilimbergo, Bindo Chiurlo, Ugo Pellis, Lorenzoni, Nardini, Carletti, Riccardo Castellani, Tonuti Spagnol, Dino Virgili, Leo Cianon, Leonardo Zanier, Ida Vallerugo.

Many of these poets (and so many others) have usually worked in groups, in academies or associations, which is significant for a project that has always been at the root of the world of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, i.e., the need to be united in advancing a proposal for preserving the best of the ancestral world in order to offer it to future generations. Something of the old groups still remains, but some forceful and commanding figures have appeared recently who have clouded the "project" and polarized attention (I am speaking of Pier Paolo Pasolini, Nico Naldini, Amedeo Giacomini, Claudio Grisancich, Nelvia Del Monte). Indirectly, they have renewed the interest in poets who, though they had received a great deal of critical attention in the past, were now being essentially ignored. Of course I am not speaking of recent years, and the reference is to Virgilio Giotti, Biagio Marin, Luigi Bartolini, and Carolus Cergoly.

There is no question of interrelation for any of these nine poets, as sometimes can happen among writers who live and work in the same region and within the same linguistic and cultural milieu. The individual poetics and individual histories seem to stem from very personal pursuits and explorations into the history of poetry in all its vastness and international correlations. Even Virgilio Giotti, who was born in 1885, does not seem to be influenced by the regional climate, though he did not belong to the ranks of novelty-seekers and of those readers who trample everything in the fury of their quest. He had clear ideas about poetry and about how to write it, and his being almost isolated did not limit him or turn him into a barren minstrel of personal objects, small places, solipsistic situations. Giotti was a poet in the full sense of the word, because he did not pursue the absolute or saw it in its relationship with people and events. For Giotti poetry meant the expression of an ideal reality, if all the elements harmonized and united in the effort of finding a new truth. But nothing should stem from psychoanalytical or intellectualized notions or from literature tout court. Giotti took from everyday life: a store sign, a window, a narrow street, a passerby, words he overheard, fragments of conversations, which he then would organize in perfect meter, with usual and unusual rhymes, with a music that did not betray the source of things. Thus his poetry, while having popular roots, instantly becomes highly refined: a landscape, a feeling, a sorrow, a joy. We are still not in the sphere of what would later be called neodialect poetry, but neither do we enter that provincial climate in which every verse was born of fading memories and picture postcards. Giotti has a strong feeling for colors (it's not a chance that he was also a painter), a healthy feeling for life, an innocent and enchanted gaze, even when sadness seem to mute his voice, the landscape of his days.

Biagio Marin likewise "defended the law that invites you to pause, to say yes to the call of life,"⁸ but especially in his last years lived entirely within Grado's world and gradually reduced the concreteness of reality. It is as if he took the pulp out of everything and came up with a formula, but not a rigid one, an immaterial substance made of sky and sea, of air, infinity. One can perceive, more manifestly in the last collections, something like a murmur of algae and an ungraspable whisper, a music that whirls upon itself and yet opens towards the depths, the abyss. As time goes by, Marin pursues an ever-denser light, a truth whose reach and limits are unknown.

Almost all critics have noted that in Marin's poetry history withdraws to make room for a sort of irreducible fire; it is like facing sculpted marble, words that filter the ultimate sense of existence. Yet Marin was a proud and defiant man, exuberant, egocentric, marked by suffering and sorrow, and in his pages we should be able to perceive the weight of the world's harshness. Marin swallowed everything, drank everything, absorbed everything, and then left it in his depths, not because he intended to forget what life is, but because tensions must cast every experience into light

and music, if the palpable presence of a lesson is to survive.

Before turning to poetry, Carolus Cergoly devoted his attention and his work to the theater, and it seems to me that this experience shows in his poetry as well. He was also a journalist, published successful novels, and almost always tried to give credit “among Italian readers to the bookish image of cosmopolitan Trieste.”⁹ As a dialect poet, however, he remains outside any canon, and it is difficult to interpret or place him because ideally he is linked to Giacomo Noventa and does not take into account the works of Saba and Giotti, reiterating the “presumption of living outside one’s own time, but with an appearance of frivolousness that belongs to him alone; and he is misleading about the true morality of a poet who is in reality very serious.”¹⁰ Being outside one’s own time, however, is not similar to Biagio Marin’s attitude, unconsciously prompted by metaphysical urges. Cergoly’s seems a deliberate choice, political or at least social in nature; Marin’s is to flow toward the moon, to lose oneself in order to reach the absolute.

I am not the only one who is convinced that Pasolini gave the best of himself in the poems written in the Friulian dialect, especially those penned at the same time as *Le ceneri di Gramsci*. Naturally, since Neorealism prevailed in the early fifties, he was in any case involved in it, while protesting against the coarseness of a style that he considered useless and devoid of any possibility of producing anything worthwhile. In the course of time his dynamic personality overshadowed his dialect poetry, but reading it now without the excessive noise made around his figure and comparing it to his later work in Italian, we can realize that in the Casarsa dialect the poet had been able to find the limpid milk of a season never again repeated. With the risk of shocking the fanatics and those who have made a martyr, a saint and a matchless film director, narrator and so on of Pasolini, perhaps the time has come to say out loud that the best of Pasolini’s work is to be found in books such as *Poesie a Casarsa*, *Dov’è la mia patria*, *Tal cour d’un frut*, *La meglio gioventù*, *Poesie dimenticate*, *La nuova gioventù*.

Perhaps one of the reasons he worked on *Poesia dialettale del Novecento* and *Canzoniere italiano* with Dell’Arco was to show that those who wrote in dialect should not be considered poets behind the times and bound to popular traditions. He has left no statements in this regard, but what is certain is that he devoted a great deal of work to dialect, with research and writings that still today must constantly be taken into account.

Elio Bartolini, editor of classics, man of the cinema and well-known narrator, began writing in dialect only in 1977 with *Poesie protestanti*, a surprise that in a few years has become an abiding presence. Reading Bartolini is like moving through a mine field, like breathing the air of tragedy at every step. He observes the mad rush of events with bewildered and sorrowful eyes, and when his gaze falls on his native town, he imbues reality with the same tragic feeling. There is also a vein of regret for a world erased or adrift, yet there is no longing for the past, the yearning to return to distant times. There is the sadness of feeling adrift and having to bow one’s head before the consumption of the world and of the self.

Nico Naldini, author of excellent biographies and of a few books in Italian, has written only occasionally in dialect. A relative of Pasolini and himself from Casarsa, he made his debut in dialect in 1948. His writings always carry an air of innocence and candor which however conceals a variety of moods, an obstinate longing to find in the music of every verse the elusive heartbeat of life. Naldini’s poetry does not show linguistic refinements or flourishes; it aims straight at things, and things seem to wake up from a centuries-old sleep.

Claudio Grisancich painstakingly avoids intellectualizing, and from the start has distinguished himself for his harsh language, for his ability to capture reality with natural ease. One has the impression that the act of writing is for him similar to eating, conversing, breathing. His verses show no unresolved resonance, no ambiguities, they do not circle around the discourse, but take what is out there and turn it into certainty and admonition. Something of Leopardi can also be detected when he deals with the question of maturity, but nothing is left to the least fatalism or to inertia. His verses burst with vital energy, manifest the consciousness of a crisis and are a bridge toward the future.

The poet who has captured the interest of critics in recent years is Amedeo Giacomini, from Varmo, author of books of prose, essays, poetry in Italian and in dialect. The most prestigious names have always been enthusiastic (Maria Corti, Cesare Segre, Dante Isella, Franco Brevini), pointing to the expressive power of his verses, which at first showed the influence of a certain Mittel-European expressionism, and later a meditation increasingly bearing on his own condition as a man and intellectual in a jagged world, torn apart and about to disintegrate.

Yet, his poetry is not maudit, there is nothing that points to eccentricity, exhibitionism, a gratuitous gesture. He lives among contrasting tensions, opposes dishonesty, dismisses residues and smoke, and for this reason his every word is incandescent, every verse is like the crack of a whip, every inflection has the irony of someone who plays with the gods and knows he can fool them.

As is always the case with poets who can enter the quick of the universe, there is a side that looks at nature in the fullness of its beauty. When faced with wonderment, Giacomini’s language can create unforgettable verses, among the best of recent years, and of course I am not referring only to poetry in dialect.

Nelvia di Monte, from Pampaluna, who after her debut in *Diverse lingue* and *Il segnale* in 1996 published *Cjanz da la meriche*, concludes our brief dialect journey in Friuli-Venezia Giulia. She is a poet who was born seasoned, with a world of emotions and small mythologies told in pure narrative, without embellishments and without metaphorical excesses, so that the native strength of her dialect can manifest itself in everyday reality and in absence.

There is no doubt that, given more space, I would have included poets such as Leonardo Zanier, Anita Pittoni, Siro Angeli, to name a few. But the aim of this work is limited, which also explains the scant attention given to the concatenations of certain events which would have shed light on such a singular literary world. Friuli-Venezia Giulia, in any case, has too many poets, of various levels, and it was not possible to do a detailed survey of a literary output which is at least as vast as that of Sicily or Campania.

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3. G. Devoto-G. Giacomelli, *I dialetti delle regioni d'Italia*, Florence: Sansoni, 1981, p.48.
4. *Poesia dialettale dal Rinascimento a oggi*, cit., p. 401.
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6. T. De Mauro-M. Lodi, *Lingua e Dialetti*, Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1986, pp.13-14.
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8. C. Magris, "Io sono un golfo," in Biagio Marin, *Nel silenzio più teso*, Milan: Rizzoli, 1980, p.7.
9. *La poesia in dialetto a Trieste*, cit., p.26.
10. *Poesia dialettale dal Rinascimento a oggi*, cit., p.248.

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The English translations for the Veneto section are by Adeodato Piazza Nicolai

VIRGILIO GIOTTI

Virgilio Giotti' (Trieste 1885-1857) real name was in reality Virgilio Schönbeck; he changed it modeling it on his mother's name, Emilia Ghiotto, but also in order to affirm his Italian origins. After turning twenty, he moved to Florence, where a small colony of people from Venezia Giulia had emigrated, and there he became a sales representative while devoting himself to painting, in which he showed a considerable talent, appreciated in the difficult Tuscan environment. In Trieste he had translated into dialect one of Dante's sonnets and a brief canzone by Leopardi, but there are no original verses that might give an idea of his intentions to express himself in the language of his birthplace. In Florence instead it became spontaneous and necessary for him to write in his mother tongue and in 1914 he published a collection titled *Piccolo canzoniere in dialetto triestino* (Gonnelli Publishing), in which there is almost no trace of the experiences of those years, so rich in contrasts, reversals, and innovations. One can think of Gozzano, Campana, Ungaretti, who were publishing and developing in that period, to realize that Giotti followed his own instincts, without letting himself be lured by trends and revolutions, not even of the silent type, such as Pascoli's. Yet, for certain aspects he did look to Pascoli, but without being ensnared by mystery and the irrational. He instead described life in its everyday flow and becoming, in its manifestation through small things, which however do not become symbols or stereotypes, not even archetypes. Perhaps he had benefitted from the lesson of Emilio Praga and

Giacomo Zanella, from their "classicism" which became music, their being within things and at the same time fleeing from them. Perhaps he did not believe that in order to write poetry one needs to seek innovation at all costs, but no doubt he immediately began to write with the naturalness of a classic, and it is not by chance that Anna Modena has mentioned the Greek lyric poets.

Giotti was inside and outside tradition: fascination and repulsion, fear of being trapped into a worn-out musicality (it was the dispute with his friend Saba), the conviction that poetry is attained by bringing within oneself all that is around and refashioning it with one's soul.

After the first great war he went back to Trieste. In the meantime he read the poems of Salvatore Di Giacomo edited by Benedetto Croce, followed with great interest the experiments of the Ronda and, like everyone else, he felt the need to put some order within and outside himself. The result was *Caprizzi. Canzonette e Storie*, published in 1928 by Edizioni di Solaria. A suffused melancholy, a light sentiment are abundantly present, along with a pictorial touch, with pastel highlights, with half-tones reminiscent of *Crepuscolarismo*.

Trieste's life enters fully in the new quatrains and the rhymes but without vehemence, and portraits, streets, "still lives" come back to life from ancient sequences to reclaim their authenticity, now brimming with heartfelt pathos. There is nothing to make one think of a psychoanalytic study (the relationship with Saba notwithstanding), there is nothing to create anguish, ambiguity, unbridled irony. It has been rightly said that "Giotti is a poet who does not fear the simplicity of subject matter" and for this reason he can search for the truth and turn it into a sort of lyric diary, in a subdued tone, until he is struck by misfortunes and afflictions. At this point "the idyllic vocation," as Brevini writes, "is brought face to face with tragedy" and *Colori* (1941), with its airy texture, with those serene pages that open onto the air and the sun in the peaceful change of seasons, gives way to *Sera* (1946), where a dull, incurable pain prevails everywhere and turns even words into a deadly, inextricable knot. Nevertheless, nothing is shouted, nothing is exhibited, rather there seems to be a reduction of beings as if it were a natural thing, as if everything were about to fall apart in order to find a regeneration. And somehow that happens in the presence of his granddaughter

And between the rocks and the smell
of dead animals, I heard
Rina call me,
with her tiny, little
woman's voice.

The young shoot gives new lymph and stands all the more simple and regal as Giotti thins his colors and makes them transparent, almost breaths of a memory or a hope. Spagnoletti and Vivaldi summarize it well when they say that Giotti "in his dialect sums up the poetic trends of the early twentieth century, from *Crepuscolarismo* to *Vocianesimo* to *Hermeticism*, in a sense as Di Giacomo had done for decadent poetics; and, as did Di Giacomo, he opens and closes an epoch.

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I veci che 'speta la morte

I veci che 'speta la morte.

I la 'speta sentai su le porte

de le cesete svode d'i paesi;

davanti, sui mureti,

co' fra i labri la pipa.

E par ch'i vardi el fumo,

par ch'i fissi el ziel bianco inivolado

col sol che va e che vien,

ch'i vardi in giro le campagne e, soto,

i copi e le stradete del paese.

Le pipe se ghe studa;

ma lori istesso i le tien 'vanti in boca.

Pipe,

che le xe squasi de butarle via,

meze rote, brusade,

che le ciamà altre nove:

ma za

le bastarà.

Se senti el fabro del paese bàter,

in ostarìa ch'i ciacola,

un contadin che zapa là vizin,

e el rugna

e el se canta qualcosa fra de sé

ch'el sa lu' solo;

e po' ogni tanto un sparo,

in quel bianchiz smorto de tuto,

un tiro solo, forte.

I veci che 'speta la morte.

I la 'speta sentai ne la corte,

de fora de le case, in strada,

sentai su 'na carena bassa,

co' le man sui zenoci.

I fioi ghe zoga 'tomo.

I zoga coi careti,

i zoga còrerse drio,

i ziga, i urla

che no' i ghe ne pol più;

e quei più pici i ghe vien fina 'dosso,

tra le gambe;

i li sburta,

i ghe sburta la sèdia,

i ghe porta la tera e i sassi

fin sui zenoci e su le man.

Passa la gente,

passa i cari de corsa con un strèpito,

pieni, stivai de òmini e de muli

che toma de lavor:

e tra de lori ghe xe un per de fie

mate bacanone,

che in mezo a quei scassoni

le ridi e ridi;

e le ga el rosso del tramonto in fronte.

I veci che 'speta la morte.

I la 'speta a marina sui mucì

tondi de corde;

ne le ombre d'i casoti,

cuciai par tera,

in tre, in quatro insieme.

Ma ziti.

I se regala qualche cica

vanzada d'i zigàri de la festa,

o ciolta su, pian pian, par tera,

con un dolor de schena:

i se regala un fulminante

dovù zercar tre ore,

con quele man che trema,

pai scarselini del gilè.

A qualchedun ghe vigniria, sì,

de parlar qualche volta;

ma quel che ghe vien su,

che lu' el volarla dir,

lo sa anca l'altro,

lo sa anca scaltro e scaltro.

Nel porto, in fodno, xe 'na confusion,

un sussuro lontan,

forte che se lo senti istesso.

I vaporeti parti

e riva drio man.

I ciapa el largo, i va via pieni neri;

i riva driti, i se gira, i se 'costa,

i sbarca in tera

muci de gente

che se disperdi subito.

Resta solo el careto de paranze,

un per de muli

che i se remena tuto el dopopranzo

là 'tomo,

e el scricolar sul sol del ponte.

I veci che 'speta la morte.

I la 'speta sentai su le porte

dei boteghini scuri in zitavècia;

nei piccoli caffè, sentai de fora,

co' davanti do soldi

de àqua col mistrà;

e i legi el fòglio le ore co' le ore.

In strada,

ch'el sol la tàia in due,

ghe xe un va e vien continuo,

un mòverse, nel sol ne l'ombra,

de musi, de colori.

I legi el fòglio :

ma tute robe xe

che ghe interessa poco;
ma come mi i lo legi,
quando che 'speto su 'na cantonata
la mia putela,
che tiro fora el fòglio
par far qualcosa,
ma che lèger, credo de lèger,
ma go el pensier invezzi a tuto altro;
e un caminar, 'na vose,
che me par de sentir,
me fermo e 'scolto.

I vecchi che attendono la morte – I vecchi che attendono la morte. // L'attendono seduti davanti alle porte / delle piccole chiese vuote dei paesi; / fuori, sui muretti, / con la pipa in bocca. / E sembra che seguano il fumo, / sembra che fissino il cielo bianco nuvoloso / con il sole che va e viene / che osservino attorno le campagne e, di sotto, / le tegole e i viottoli del paese. / Le pipe si spengono; / ma loro egualmente le tengono in bocca. / Pipe, / che sono quasi da gettare via, / mezze rotte, bruciacchiate, / che ne chiamano altre nuove: / ma già, / basteranno. / S'ode il fabbro del paese battere, / all'osteria si discute, / un contadino là vicino zappa, / e mugola / e a se stesso canta qualcosa / che lui solo conosce; / e poi ogni tanto uno sparo, / in quel biancore pallido del tutto, / un solo tiro forte. // I vecchi che attendono la morte. // L'attendono seduti nei cortili, / fuori dalle case, sulla strada, / abbandonati su una sedia bassa, / con le mani sui ginocchi. / I fanciulli giocano attorno. / Giocano coi carretti / giocano a rincorrersi, / gridano, urlano / che non ce la fanno più: / e i più piccoli piombano addosso, / tra le gambe; / li spingono, / spingono la sedia, / e portano terra e sassi / fin sopra i ginocchi e sulle mani. / La gente passa, / di corsa transitano i carri strepitando, / carichi, stivati d'uomini e di ragazzi / di ritorno dal lavoro: / e tra loro vi son delle ragazze / allegre pazzerele, / che in mezzo a quel trambusto / ridono e ridono; / e hanno il rosso del tramonto in fronte. // I vecchi che attendono la morte. // L'attendono alla marina su cumuli / tondi di corde; / all'ombra dei capanni, / accucciati in terra, / a tre, a quattro insieme. / In silenzio. / Si passano qualche mozzicone / avanzato dai sigari della festa, / o raccattato su, piano piano, per terra, / con un dolore di schiena: / si scambiano uno zolfanello / cercato per tre ore, / con le mani che tremano, / nelle tasche del gilè. / A qualcuno vien voglia, sì, / di parlare qualche volta; / ma ciò che affiora, / ciò che vorrebbe dire, / anche l'altro lo sa, / e quest'altro ancora e ancora l'altro. / Al porto, in fondo, è una confusione, / un lontano brusio, così forte che s'ode ugualmente. / Partono i vaporette / uno appresso all'altro. / Guadagnano il largo, vanno via pieni neri; / arrivano dritti, si girano, s'accostano, / sbarcano a terra / mucchi di persone / che si disperdono immediatamente. / Resta solo il carretto delle arance, / due ragazzi / che vagano tutto il dopopranzo / là intorno, / e il crepitio nel sole del ponte. // I vecchi che attendono la morte. // L'attendono seduti davanti alle porte / delle piccole botteghe della vecchia città; / nei piccoli caffè, seduti fuori, / con davanti due soldi / d'acqua e anice; / e sfogliano il giornale un'ora dopo l'altra. / Sulla strada, / tagliata a metà dal sole, / è un viavai incessante, / un agitarsi, nel sole e nell'ombra, / di volti, di colori. / Leggono il giornale; / ma si tratta di cose / di poco interesse; / ma come me lo leggono, / quando a un cantone attendo / la mia bambina, / che spiego il giornale / tanto per far qualcosa, / quanto a leggere, fingo di leggere, / e invece ho il pensiero altrove; / e se un passo, una voce, / mi sembra di sentire, / mi fermo e ascolto.

(Traduzione di Dante Mafia)

Old Men Sit Waiting for Death

Old men sit waiting for death
They wait sitting on the doorsteps
of the towns' small, empty churches,
on the surrounding stone walls
as they suck on their pipes.
Their eyes seem to follow the smoke,
staring at the cloudy-white sky
with the sun that comes and goes;
They watch the fields all around them
as well as the roof tiles and streets.
The pipes flame out but still

they clench them in their mouth.

Half broken, burned-out

these smoking pipes

that should be replaced

with some new ones:

the old pipes will do.

The village blacksmith is pounding

and in the bars they tell the same stories

while nearby a farmer is plowing

and talks to himself

he then starts a melody

only he knows;

once in a while a gun shot

will ring through white fog,

one loud bang, alone.

Old men sit waiting for death.

Patiently seated in courtyards,

outside their homes, by the roadside,

sitting alone on some narrow chair,

with hands on their knees.

Children are playing around them,

jump on hay wagons,

play come-and-chase-me

while laughing and yelling,

the old ones can't take it;

the younger boys crash

between the men's knees,

they push them around

and wiggle the chairs,

their hands and their legs

filthy with dirt and with sand.

Persons walk by

as noisy trucks keep on rolling

loaded with men and teenagers

returning home from the workplace,

riding with them are some young girls

who keep on laughing and joking
among all the noise and confusion
with the red sunset on their foreheads.

Old men sit waiting for death.

Waiting for it on the beach,
wrapped inside great coils of rope;
splayed in the sand, they wait
in the shade of some beach house,
three and four men, all together.

In silence. They share
among them some butts of cigars
so gingerly picked from the ground
with visible strains on their backs;
they share one wood matchstick
they searched for three hours
with slow, trembling hands
from inside the vest pocket.

And yes, every once in a while
one of them wishes to speak
but whatever might surface,
the thought he will readily share,
the next man already has heard
and well as the next and the next man.

On the far side of the water front
there is confusion, a distant buzzing
so loud it can be heard everywhere.
So near to each other full vaporetos
are leaving, one after another.

Making wide turns, they continue,
filled to the gills and quickly arrive;
they turn and attach to the platform
to discharge each boat load of people
who quickly disperse. Only the cart
of some orange vendor remains;
there also waiting are two boys
who roam those places the whole afternoon,

and also the squeaks of the bridge in the sun.

Old men sit waiting for death.

They wait for it seated on doorsteps

of neighborhood stores in their old city;

by small coffee shops, near outside tables

where they sit drinking their water with lemon

while sharply watching their change.

They unfold and refold the newspapers

for hours and hours. Meanwhile the sidewalk

seems sliced in half by the sunlight, the traffic

is endless: the constant mixing

of faces and colors in sunshine and shade.

They read the newspaper: old news

with marginal interest; yet

how obsessively they seem to read it

if I comment on some news

just to waste away the time while

waiting for my daughter at the corner.

As for reading, I'm only faking since

my thoughts are somewhere else.

However, if voices or footsteps

come near me, I will stop to listen.

I zacinti

I do rameti de zacinti

bianchi e lila li vardo, ch'i xe come

el viso tuo de prima

che, dandomeli in man co' le tue fermi,

pàlida e i denti bianchi.

Pàlidi qua in t-el goto,

sul sbiadido del muro,

'rente el sol che vien drento, che camina

su la piera frugada del balcon.

E tuti lori no 'i xe che quel pàlido

lila slusente: 'na fiamma lassada

là ardir che intanto xe vignudo giorno;

e el bon odor ch'i ga impini la casa.

Come 'sto nostro amor,
che tuto lui no' 'l xe che un gnente là,
un pàlido; ma un pàlido che lusi,
che ardi, e un bon odor, una speransa,
che me impinissi el cuor co me la sento:
'na casa mia e tua,
mèter insieme la tovàia,
mi e ti, su la tola,
con qualchidun che se alza
su le ponte d'i pie
pici e se sforza de 'rivar coi oci
su quel che parecemo.

I giacinti – I due rametti di giacinti / bianchi e lilla li guardo, / che sono simili / al tuo viso di prima / che porgendomeli, un po' tu ridevi, / sorreggendomeli in mano con le tue, / pallida e i denti bianchi. / Pallidi qua nel bicchiere, / sullo sbiadito del muro, / nel sole che entra, che striscia / sulla pietra rovinata del balcone. / E in tutti loro non v'è che quel pallido / lilla lucente, / una fiamma lasciata / ad ardere e intanto è spuntato il giorno; / e il buon odore di cui hanno riempito casa. / Come questo amore nostro, / che in tutto non è che un niente, là, una pallidezza; / ma una pallidezza che splende, / che brucia, e un odore buono, una speranza, / che mi colma il cuore quando sto bene: / una casa mia e tua, / stendere insieme la tovaglia, / io e te, sulla tavol, / con qualcuno che s'alza / sulle punte dei piedi / piccoli e si sforza di guardare / quel che stiamo preparando.

Hyacinths

I remember white and lilac
those hyacinth flowers,
like the colors of your face
when with your fingers you placed
them in mine that very first time
as, pale, you barely smiled
with your perfect white teeth.
Now pale in the glass,
they fade like the wall
wet with sunlight that glides
by the cracked stone veranda.
On every petal shines only
that faded, luminous lilac,
There burns a flame
like each brand new day;
its delicate perfume touches
the house everywhere,
the same as our love
which in its fullness

yields only paleness,
a shining paleness
leaving its fragrance,
a lasting promise
that fills my heart so
if I am well, in our own home
as we place the napkins
around the table, together,
while someone is standing
on tiptoe, attempting to see
what we seem to prepare.

La strada

Vardo 'na strada de la mia zità,
che ghe sarò passado mille volte,
e no' me par de averla vista mai.
Le fazzade zaletè, le botteghe,
un bar, dei àuti, e el fiatin de viavai.
Come la nostra vita, sì: vissuda,
finida ormai, e mai ben conossuda.

La strada – Guardo una strada della mia città, / da cui sarò passato mille volte, / e non mi par di averla mai veduta. / Le facciate giallicce, le botteghe, / un caffè, le automobili, il viavai. / Come la nostra vita, sì: vissuta, / ormai conchiusa, e mai ben conosciuta.

The Road

I'm staring at one of my city streets
that I have crossed a thousand times
and it seems as if I've not seen it before.
The pale yellow walls, the strip malls,
one coffee shop, a chaos of cars everywhere.
Seems like our very own past life, lived
yes, already done and yet never known.

Sul vial

Vardemo, mi e mia fia,
le ombre su la giarina:
pice ombre de 'na tinta
tra rosa e zelestina.
Vardemo in suso; e un Oh!
ela la fa contenta.

Vignude apena fora
ghe xe le foietine
sui rami, averte ancora
una si una no.
La ridi: e quel su 'rider
de fiola se combina
col verde che xe nato
là suso stamatina,
co' 'ste ombrete qua zo.

Sul viale – Guardo, con mia figlia, / le ombre sulla ghiaia: / piccole ombre di colore / rosa cilestrino. / Guardiamo in alto; e un Oh! // esclama lei contenta. / Sono appena sbocciate / le foglioline / sui rami, ancora aperte / una si una no.// Lei ride: e quel suo ridere / di bambina si sposa / con il verde che è nato / lassù questa mattina, / con questa ombra quaggiù.

On the Street

Walking the street
with my daughter
I see shades on stones,
tiny rose colored shadows
as, looking up, she says: Oh!
Her laugh is happy.
On the tree branches
the first leaves come out,
some are in full blossom
while others are not.
She's laughing, her
fresh, childish laughter
combines with the greenness
born only this morning,
along with the shadows.

La casa

La casa che ga i ani
d'i fioi, la casa adesso
la casca; la se disfa.
Prinzìpia e po' ga un fin
tuto; nassi con tuto
l'istesso.
I nostri fioi xe grandi

la casa la xe vècia.
Una suasa sul muro
Zeleste; un fià de pra,
de monte 'n una lastra
che spècia:
qualche canton restado
par miracolo su,
che soli noi vedemo,
che, forsi, no 'l isisti
za più.

La casa – La casa che ha gli anni / dei figli, la casa ora / crolla, si disperde. / Comincia e poi finisce / tutto; rinasce tutto / allo stesso modo. // I nostri figli sono adulti: / la casa è vecchia. / Un contomo sul muro / celeste; un respiro di prato, / di montagna in una lastra / che riflette: // qualche angolo rimasto / in piedi per miracolo, / soltanto noi lo vediamo, / perché forse non esiste / più.

(Traduzioni di Dante Maffia)

I testi sono tratti da Piccolo canzoniere in dialetto

The House

This house has aged
like our sons, this house
that now crumbles to dust.
Every beginning does end
and is reborn just the same
once again.
Our kids are grown,
the house got old.
There is a blue trim
around the stone fence,
some green is reflected
on the stone slab:
a miracle supports
the corner wall, but
only we seem to see it
since it is probably
fallen already.

BLAGIO MARIN

Biagio Marin (Grado 1891-1985) had an initial experience similar to Giotto's; he too moved to Florence, in 1911, and was in contact with the people from Venezia Giulia. He went to school in Gorizia and Pisino, in Istria, and after the war he got a degree in philosophy in Rome with Giovanni Gentile. His first book, *Fiuri de tapo* is from 1912, and *La ghirlanda de gno suore* came out only ten years later. Then in 1927 he

published *Cansone picole*; in 1949, twenty-two years later, *Le litanie de la Madonna*, and in 1951 *I canti de l'isola*. From then on Marin's work became hectic, his books came out without pause, as if a demon had taken possession of him and forced him to write an uninterrupted diary in verse. Yet rarely has a poet been as consistent with himself as Marin: one could change at will the date of publication and it would be difficult (besides the external facts of his biography) to establish the period of the writing, already mastered at the start, identical with itself in that relationship between self and landscape that characterizes every book and has made his work unique in Italian literature. But Marin's poetry, as in any case Giotti's, did not produce followers, it did not create a school (as it happened with Matisse's painting) because he lived of impalpable furors, airy exhilarations, nuances, starts, echoes. His poetry winds endlessly over a stretch of land inhabited by the wind and the seagulls, the tides and the light, the clouds and the smell of algae. It might seem that Marin has paid attention only to emotional impulses tied to a blind lyricism unrelated to everyday life, but instead he has experienced everything, even pain and solitude, in the airiness of his feelings, in that "mathematical abstraction that does justice – the justice of poetry – to the tenderness and yearning of life. Marin's poetry is a miraculous synthesis of abstraction and sensuality, of absolute transparencies and lust for life." These are the words of Claudio Magris, one of the most thoughtful and insightful readers of Marin, one who has been able to read the poet in his essence. When Marin defines himself as "gulf," we understand the sense of his thinking of himself as end and beginning. If the tension towards the Absolute undergoes an acceleration, because of external factors and long meditations, the Heraclitean river inside him swells and widens, breaks the embankments and overflows, until it becomes liturgy, as Brevini says, until it turns poetry into "an act that substitutes existence."

This justifies the uninterrupted writing of the later years and also the relapses and reiterations, the constant recurrence of themes and images, of symbols and risky metaphors. His poetry is a rumble that breaks into streams and every stream has its own path and subtle veins, rebounds and colors, but at a certain point the various branches go back to where they came, so that the magnificent immense tree keeps on producing but forbids the birds to use its branches, the wayfarer to enjoy its shade, the farmer to take its wood.

In 1943, with the death of his only son, Falco, his horizons become open wounds and his gaze clouded (Giotti too had similar sorrows), but in the end the power of the gulf wins out, the call of the abysses experienced as counterpoint, as the possibility of dying in order to find oneself intact in the circuit of beings purified and ready to sail again. "What the word did not permit him in length, Marin redeemed in depth," Carlo Bo writes, and it could not have been any different, because he remained attached to his being like a root, to the extent that, as Pasolini said, "the light of the sun and the light of his senses have always been the same light."

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Xe vero che muri' ne toca

Xe vero che muri ne toca,
xe breve el tempo fra matin e sera,
che la zomada pol êsse de guera
che xe mundi el dolor e zogia poca.
Ma pur el sol, la luse
che in alto ne conduse,
i va vissi,
penai e godù.
Ne l'ore palpita l'Eterno,
se tu lo vighi, se tu lo senti,
se svuli via co' duti i vinti,
e mai in tu farà l'inverno:
No 'vê paura che 'l bocon te manchi,
de l'aqua de la vita un sorso;
el sol, el sielo, anche ili un sorso,
e nel travaglio sovo mai i xe stanchi.

E' vero ci tocca morire – E' vero ci tocca morire: / breve è il tempo tra mattino e sera, / e la giornata può essere una guerra, / e molto il dolore, poca la gioia. // Ma anche il sole, la luce / che ci portano in alto, / vanno vissuti, / sofferti e goduti. // Nelle ore palpita l'Eterno, / se tu lo scorgi, se tu l'ascolti, / se voli via con ogni vento, / mai dentro di te arriverà l'inverno. // Non temere che ti manchi il cibo, / e una sorsata d'acqua della vita; / il sole, il cielo, anch'essi una sorsata, / e nel loro andare non sono mai stanchi.

It's True That All of Us Die

It's true that all of us die,
from dawn to dusk the time is short
each of our days can bring only trouble
and misery rules while joy quickly fades.
But even the sunlight
that lifts up our spirit
we must yet live,
suffer and cherish.
Eternity lives in an hour,
hear it and grab it;
if you sail with the wind
you'll never feel winter.

Be not afraid to go hungry
and never drink the waters of life;
the sun and sky are also water
that never tires of the flowing.

L'acqua del fiume

L'acqua del fiume
senpre la score
in dute l'ore
con un diverso lume.
Ninte xe fermo
né sosta e resta:
trascore lesta
l'ora del zomo infermo.
No stâ voltâte indrio,
sempre camina;
fa sempre matina
dopo la note de Dio.
Godi nel pinsier
che duto e ninte more,
che drento l'ore
ogni to passo xe lisier.

L'acqua del fiume – L'acqua del fiume / scorre senza posa / a tutte le ore / con una luce diversa. // Niente è fermo / né sosta e rimane: / rapida se ne va / l'ora del giorno invalido. // Non girarti all'indietro, / cammina senza posa: / giunge sempre il mattino / dopo la notte di Dio. // Godi nel tuo intimo / che tutto e niente muore, / che dentro le ore / ogni tuo passo è leggero.

The River's Water

The river's water
flows without rest
for hours and hours,
its lights always changing.
There is no stillness,
no respite nor rest:
each day just concluded
rapidly fades in an hour.
Don't ever look back,
Keep walking, don't rest:
once the night of the Spirit

has passed, morning will break.

Then rejoice and be glad

since all and nothing will pass,

and may your steps travel light

at each turn of the hour.

Tu son vignù da me, de volo

Tu son vigna da me, de volo,

e gero duto verto:

t'hè dao la benvignù nel gno deserto,

un fonte d'aqua e pù me solo.

T'hè 'bù paura

che te tagiesso l'ale,

che te fesso un gran male,

co' la fiaba che dura,

quela de sior Intento:

ma gero solo in voglia de parole,

de 'vète a colo e scoltà l'ole,

che favela col vento.

Tu sei venuta da me, a volo – Tu sei venuta da me, a volo, / e io ero tutto aperto: / t'ho dato il benvenuto in questo deserto, / una fonte d'acqua e poi io solo. // Ti ho festeggiato / pregandoti di fermarti: / rapida hai aperto le ali, / e sei volata alla tua riva. // Hai avuto timore / che ti tagliassi le ali, / che ti facessi un gran male, / con la favola che si ripete, // quella del "sior Intento": / ma avevo solo voglia di parlare, / di tenerti vicino e ascoltar le onde, / che chiacchierano col vento.

Questi tre testi sono tratti da: Nel silenzio più tesò.

You Came to Me in Flight

you came to me in flight,

I was wide-open for you.

I drank you like water

in the desert and you left.

I feasted you, asked

that you would remain:

instantly spreading your wing,

you left for your other shore.

You feared I would trim your wings,

that I could fatally harm you

with fable too often retold

of the prince who never returns.

I only wanted to speak with you,

to have you close by my side
to hear the waves rolling in
and together talk to the wind.

Una canson de femena se stende

Una canson de femena se stende
comò caressa colda sul paese;
el gran silensio fa le meravigie
per quela vose drio de bianche tende.
El vespro setenbrin el gera casto:
fra le case incantae da la so luse
se sentiva 'na machina de cûse
sbusinâ a mosca drento el sielo vasto.
Improvvisa quel'onda l'ha somerso
duto 'l paese ne la nostalgia:
la vose colda i cuori porta via
nel sielo setenbrin, cristalo terso.

Un canto di donna si distende – Un canto di donna si distende / come calda carezza sul paese; / il grande silenzio si meraviglia / di quella voce dietro bianche tende. / Il vespro di settembre era innocente: / tra le case incantate dalla sua luce / s'udiva una macchina da cucire / ronzare come mosca nell'immenso cielo. / All'improvviso quell'onda ha coperto / tutto il paese nella nostalgia: / la calda voce porta via i cuori / nel cielo di settembre, nitido cristallo.

Il testo è tratto da El vento de l'eterno se fa teso.

A Lady's Song Spreads

A lady's song spreads across town
like warm caresses; it marvels
as her music flows from behind
the white curtains. September's
late breeze tenderly stroked every
house made so bright by her song
while sounds from a sewing machine
are heard, like buzzing of flies
in an endless expanse of the sky.
Abruptly her melody covers
the village with melancholy: her voice
enchants every heart which now flows
like pure crystals in this autumn sky.

Semo a dissenbre e incora l'ano more

Semo a dissenbre e incora l'ano more;

ma cussi lentamente
che l'oro piove
su le rose domente.
Un dio cortese
n'ha fàto el don de rose d'ogni mese
e d'un sol che comove
co' le so luse nove.
Ogni creatura
lisiera respira
quest'aria fresca e pura
e trasparenza amira.

Siamo a dicembre e l'anno ancora muore – Siamo a dicembre e l'anno ancora muore; / ma tanto lentamente / che piove oro / sulle rose addormentate. // Un dio gentile / ci ha regalato rose ad ogni mese / e un sole commovente / con le sue nuove luci. // Ogni creatura / leggera respira / quest'aria fresca e pura / e trasparenza ammira.

Le traduzioni sono di Dante Maffia.

We are in December and still the year ends

We are in December and still the year ends;
yet so slowly
the gold pours down
on roses that sleep.
A gentle God
has gifted us with roses every month
and with the sun that moves us
with a brilliance always new.
Every light creature
softly breathes
this clear and pure air
admiring the transparenze.

CARLO CERGOLY

(Carolus L. Cergoly)

Carolus Cergoly (Trieste 1908-1987) is known to the public at large for *Il complesso dell'Imperatore*, a novel published by Mondadori in 1979. Others followed, obtaining a fair success.

His debut as a dialect poet took place in 1938 with *Dentro de mi*, a book of simple poems, with a rather pleasing narrative style, but almost devoid of that indigenous humus that lends color and expression to, say, Giotti or Marin. In Cergoly there is almost no personal involvement in his poems in dialect, his diction is limpid but alien to the world of Trieste, not imbued with the temper or hues of the sea.

Poesie a Barbara, 1943, are also “graceful poems, of excellent taste, but detached from the vernacular lesson and by Giotti’s influence, and their peculiarity lies in the use of formal simplifications of direct futurist origin and in combining the simplification with an honest feeling of amiable storyteller,” as Damiani and Grisancich wrote in *La poesia in dialetto a Trieste*. This is a quality that Cergoly will later make use of in his novels.

His other books in dialect, *Il portolano di Carolus*, 1970, *Inter pocula*, 1974, *Ponterosso*, 1976, and *Latitudine nord*, 1980, do not abandon their

narrative andante, but the language becomes more essential, adjectives almost disappear, and figures and landscapes, feelings and images appear stripped to the bone, mentioned with the nonchalance of a classification, of a report, so that we seem to be in the presence of epigrammatic quotations. Cergoly's intent was to produce interest and emotions, focus and impact with the technique of embossment. In fact, there are no contours or "comments" and everything is illuminated from inside, everything is legitimized by the story of gestures and actions completed, of distant or close events, now experienced only through memory.

Spagnoletti and Vivaldi specify that "in a sense Cergoly is situated in a Mittel-European period, contemporary to Svevo, but preceding Saba and Giotti, even if that happens ideally and certainly not respecting chronological time. From the point of view of his cultural predecessors, he brings to mind Noventa, with whom he shares the presumption of living outside his own time, but with an appearance of frivolity which is all his own."

I have used in part Spagnoletti and Vivaldi's judgment because it seems to me they have seen right and they have defined Cergoly's poetry in its essential lines and in its being outside of time. But another reliable reading is that of Franco Brevini, who has captured how "in Cergoly the flight from Italian does not happen in the direction of a lesser world [...] His poems seem linguistic military parades, ephemeral and shining like the world of the belle époque." In fact, he is proud of his writing in the dialect of Trieste, which does not absorb the concreteness of the surroundings, but deals with high themes, with a world that in Trieste has found only reflections. It is an act of courage, almost a 'revolt' against tradition. Unfortunately, however, Cergoly displays this juxtaposition in very musical and refined verses whose origins can be traced to Frugoni, Rolli, Meli, in the sonorousness of an eighteenth century that understood universalism from an Enlightenment and Arcadian perspective, and not from the that of Saba's or of the early Giotti's crepuscolare vein.

The experience of Carolus Cergoly, at any rate, remains important and is the symptom of an attitude that would find its fulfillment in neodialectality.

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Arone Pakitz

Arone Pakitz

ebreo coi rizzi

del ghetto de Cracovia

un misirizzi

import export

morto a Varsavia

suo fio Simon

chirurgo a Vienna

fatto baron

per ordine del Kaiser

morto a Gorizia

Paola sua fia

cantante d'operetta

fatta savon

per ordine del Führer

morta a Mathausen.

Arone pakitz – Arone Pakitz / ebreo coi ricci / del ghetto di Cracovia / un misirizzi / import exporta / morto a Varsavia / suo figlio Simon / chirurgo a Vienna / fatto barone / per ordine del Kaiser / morto a Gorizia / Paola sua figlia / cantante d'operetta / fatta sapone / per ordine del Führer / morta a Mathausen.

Aaron Pakitz

Aaron Pakitz

Jew with the kinky hair

of the Krakov ghetto,

an imported-exported

half-breed

who died in Warsaw.

His son Simon

a surgeon in Vienna

knighted by order

of the Kaiser

died in Gorizia.

Paola his daughter

an operetta singer

made into soap bars

by orders of the Fuhrrer,

dead in Mathausen.

Lukovic Beatrice

Lukovic Beatrice

del "Drama" de Zagabria

splendida attrice

specializzata in Brecht

la locandina avvisa

oggi "Mutter Courage"

applausi sei chiamate

grazie dei fiori

tutta frescura sexy
senza ombra de posa
a far zoghi d'amor
calabrona amorosa
ghe piaseva cussi
strangola noia
incinta l'abortiva
"Mutter Courage"
a niente no serviva
sangue trasfuso
sotto una picia piera
la Lukovic Beatrice
toma de novo tera
la locandina avvisa
oggi "Mutter Courage"
di Bertold Brecht
protagonista: Olga Pohota.

Lukovic Beatrice – Lukovic Beatrice / del "Drama" di Zagabria / splendida attrice / specializzata in Brecht / la locandina avvisa / oggi "Mutter Courage" / applausi sei chiamate / grazie dei fiori / tutta frescura sexy / senza ombra di posa / in giochi d'amore / calabrona amorosa / le piaceva così / a strangola noia / incinta abortiva / "Madre Coraggio" / e a niente serviva / il sangue trasfuso / sotto una piccola pietra / Lukovic Beatrice / ritorna terra / la locandina avvisa: / oggi "Mutter Courage" / di Bertold Brecht / protagonista : Olga Pohota.

Beatrice Lukovic

Beatrice Lukovic
superb interpreter
of the Zagreb Theatre
specializing in Brecht.
The hostess announced
today: "Mother Courage".
Applause, six curtain calls
thanks to the flowers:
so young and sexy
not even the slightest
hint of any love affair
that sexy Calabrese lady,
she liked it like this
on edge and boring.
Pregnant, she would abort

“Mother Courage”.

And each blood transfusion

was useless. Beneath

a very small headstone

Beatrice Lukovic

again turns to dust.

The hostess announced

today: “Mother Courage”

by Bertold Brecht

starring Olga Pohota.

Dai dai

Dai dai

te me ga dito andremo

e semo andai

dove che te volevi

a Grinzing

musica vin e brezel

tutto ne coccolava

la marcia de Radetzky

leggeri ne portava

die gute alte zeit

ben tomido el tuo braccio

un poco el profumava

come de viole un mazzo

mettendome in matez

coi oci imbambolai

nel biondo dei cavei

no me stancavo mai

de perder basi

oci de matto fissi

i te vardava tutta

imperatrice Sissi

te ieri ti

mi niente.

Dai dai – Dai dai / mi hai detto andiamo / e siamo andati / dove volevi / a Grinzing / musica vino e pane / tutto accarezzava / la marcia di Radetzky / leggeri ci portava / il buon tempo di una volta / ben tornito il tuo braccio / profumava un poco / come un mazzo di viole / mettendomi in allegria sfrenata / con gli occhi imbambolati / nel biondo dei capelli / non mi stancavo mai / di perdere baci / occhi di matto fissi / ti guardavo tutta / imperatrice Sissi / tu eri tu / io niente.

Come On, Now

Come on, now,
you told me; let's go.
And so we went
to Grinzing where
you wanted to go.
Bread, wine and music
caressed Radetzky's march
gently bringing us back
to those good old days.
With many bracelets, your arm
gave off an aroma as if
from a handful of violets
that made me wildly happy.
With my eyes mesmerized
by your blond tresses,
I never tired
of blowing you kisses.
Staring like crazy,
my eyes could only
see you as the
Empress Sissi:
only see you,
I didn't exist.

Un giorno go trova'

Un giorno go trovà
un bocolo de rosa
sul tavolin de mammo
d'un caffè
longo marina
su la giacchetta
me lo son puntà
stemma de poeta
ciacolavo con lui
de robe delicate
castei ghè regalavo

fatti de vento
con su la mia bandiera
gente che no capissi
el giogo del parlar
de robe sotto vetro
una sera de maggio
sbregado i me lo gà
longo ridendo
bocolo diventà
subito fango
e ancora de lontan
sentir
un rider un parlottar
de Borsa e de Listini
odor de sigari
tra man grosse d'anei
col solitario.

Un giorno ho trovato – Un giorno ho trovato / un bocciolo di rosa / sul tavolo di marmo / di un caffè / lungo la marina / sulla giacca / me lo sono appuntato / stemma di poeta / chiacchieravo con lui / di cose delicate / castelli gli regalavo / fatti di vento / con sopra la mia bandiera / gente che non capisce / il gioco del parlare / di cose sotto vetro / una sera di maggio / me lo ha sciupato / ridendo a lungo / bocciolo diventato / subito fanfo / e ancora da lontano / sentire / un ridere un parlottare / di Borsa e di Listini / odore di sigari / tra mani grosse di anelli / con il solitario.

One Day I Found

One day I found
a single rose
on the marble
tabletop
of some caffè bar
on the beach front.
I put it
in my button hole,
a symbol of the poet.
I spoke with it
of gentle sweet things,
gave it castles made of air
with my flag at the top.
People who don't know
this game of talking

to things under glass;
one evening in May
while endlessly laughing
they watched it wither.
Quickly the rose
turned to mud
and still, from afar,
they laughed and talked
about the Stock Market
with their stinky cigars
between two fat fingers,
a single ring on their pinky.

Malinconia de mi

Malinconia de mi
la me ga dito sì
resto con ti
mi zitto la guardavo
ne la vestaglia gialla
un girasol che parla
con vose de farfalla
sì sì resto con ti
in segreto speravo
che delusion per mi
che la disessi vado
e dentro me cantavo
cembalo ben temprato
soletto me consolo
d'esser solo con mi
rosa allegria de mi
la me ga dito sì
no resto più con ti
go tratto el dado
ecco la chiave
snervado me ne vado
te lasso nel tuo quieto
mondo fatto de ti

con carta bianca e inchiostro

mettendose el rossetto

la me vardava e mi

ghe go basà le man

servus disendo

e dentro me cantavo

cembalo ben temprato

soletto me consolo

d'esser solo

in compagnia de mi.

Mia malinconia – Mia malinconia / mi ha detto sì / resto con te / io zitto la guardavo / nella vestaglia gialla / un girasole che parla / con voce di farfalla / sì sì resto con te / in segreto speravo / che delusione per me / che dicesse vado / e dentro mi cantavo / cembalo ben temprato / soletto mi consolo / di esser solo con me / rosa allegria mia / mi ha detto sì / non resto più con te / ho gettato il dado / ecco la chiave / snervato me ne vado / ti lascio nel tuo quieto / mondo fatto di te / con carta bianca e inchiostro / mettendosi il rossetto / mi guardava e io / le ho baciato la mano / servus dicendo / e dentro me cantavo / cembalo ben temprato / soletto mi consolo / d'esser solo / in mia compagnia.

I testi sono tratti da Latitudine nord

Le traduzioni sono di M.Chiesa e G. Tesio

Missing You

Yes I miss you

she said, and I want

to stay with you;

I silently watched her

in her yellow bathrobe

like a sunflower that speaks

with the voice of butterfly,

yes I'll stay with you, yes.

I secretly held such regret

if she were to leave me

as deep inside me a cymbal

kept playing in tune, consoling

me not to feel sad and alone.

O Rosey, joy of my heart,

you told me, yes,

I won't stay with you,

the die has been cast

and here is the key.

Heart-broken, I leave you

to that quiet world

you built for yourself
with pen and blank paper.
She puts on her lipstick
her eyes glued to mine,
then I kiss her hand
as I tell her, "I'm at
your command".
And deep inside me
a cymbal well-tuned
in consolation keeps
singing to me: I am all
alone, so alone by myself.

CLAUDIO GRISANCICH

Claudio Grisancich, born in 1939, is, according to Franco Brevini, "the best poet from Trieste after Giotti," a statement that was not made offhandedly, but after a careful evaluation of the importance of Grisancich's poetry. In 1966 he was hailed by De Franceschi as a beginner "who takes your breath away: his themes are those of every day, but burnt like Cayenne pepper in a very slow fire, full of ties and hidden cracklings" and he was historicized by Roberto Damiani in 1980 as someone who has given birth to "a disintegrated, crude, impassioned poetics, stirred by dark regrets, insulting prophecies, cumbersome resentments, contrition, violence; a sanguine poetry, then, suffered, anxious, but also plastic, symbolic, compact and at times metaphysical." In short, we are far removed from Giotti's example and from all the experiences of the poets from Friuli and Venezia Giulia. This is because Grisancich stirs the waters of language both diachronically and synchronically, attaining new and enlightening results. To achieve this, he had to make an effort not to isolate himself intellectually from his contemporaries and find shelter behind the privilege of those who fundamentally do not believe in poetry as catharsis or salvation. Yet, one does not read a single word against poetry; it is useless but it must be written, and not be written, as Montale used to say, as if it were useful to someone or something.

Grisancich has experienced approaching maturity as a prelude to death, and for this reason in his early poetry he raised a song, a wall of syllables, against decay and everything that was proof of the past and the rapid passage of emotions.

In 1972 he published *Dona de pugnai* and in 1989 *Crature del pianzer crature del rider*, but he did not stop writing for the theater and the media, an activity that made him an important figure in a city like Trieste, among the most essential and crucial for European culture even today.

After his first attempts, which were somewhat aggressive and scornful, as Damiani writes, there followed verses in which irony has something irreverent but not desecrating, and in which poetry is concrete and portrays reality with stubborn insight. Later, beginning in the eighties, Grisancich began to look inwardly, to analyze himself without turning to philology in order to find a language adequate to his needs, but reducing the influence of his readings, eliminating as much as possible "the dialect tone" from his dialect, until he created a new dialect structure as remote as possible from previous experiences.

Of course, reaching this point was not easy. Grisancich has had relapses and second thoughts, flights back to his early manner and a rejection of dialect, and only later did he achieve that bareness of style that now characterizes him. What is attractive in Grisancich is his itinerary, which apparently seems uneven, but which, if one looks carefully, is a crescendo that aims to establish an authentic relationship with the world. One can read in his effort to make the verse absolute (with echoes of the early twentieth century with Ungaretti and even Marinetti) the tension of a man who does all he can to remain simple and who at the same time wishes to become a beacon that lights the way. "He tends toward a rigorous spareness of diction, betting everything on rhythm. The use of gradually shorter verses, often reduced to one word, and aligned in the center, corresponds to a sudden contraction, an implosion of the autobiographical subject matter. There barely remains a wisp of voice, like the spine of a fish, clinging to a core of hard substance." These are words taken from Brevini's "Introduction" to *Crature del pianzer crature del rider* and they offer a picture of Grisancich's voice, which has gone from being impetuous and rugged, from powerful and mellow, to "Orphic lightness."

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With Roberto Damiani, Grisancich wrote a comedy in dialect titled *A casa tra un poco*. Also with Damiani he edited the anthology *Poesia dialettale triestina*, whose

first edition goes back to 1975 and the latest, updated, to 1989.

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A. Serrao, *Via terra*, cit.

r.

la colomba

contro el marciapie

muceto de nebia

mastruzà

co'l papavero

anca

de 'sta colpa

de mi

te ga volesto el conto.

r. la colomba / contro il marciapiede / mucchietto di nebbia / calpestato / con il papavero / anche / di questa colpa / da me / hai preteso il conto.

r.

a dove

against the sidewalk

a handful of fog

mangled together

with one poppy flower

even

for this guilt

of mine

you wish an accounting.

Pianerotolo

co xe ora de 'ndar

fèrmi

su'l pianeròtolo

me vien voia de brazzarlo strento

contro

mio mio pare mio

.....

ma ridemo forte

omini che no' se dà bado

el ganzo de la porta

incatena la vita

'gnidùn per sé.

Pianerottolo. quando è ora di andare / immobili / sul pianerottolo / mi vien voglia di abbracciarmelo stretto / contro / mio mio padre mio / / ma ridiamo forte / uomini che fan finta di esserlo / il gancio della porta / incatena la vita // ognuno per sé.

The Landing

Standing still

when it's time to go

the two of us

there on the landing

I want to clasp him

tightly against me

my own father my own

.....

but we laugh heartily

men can't be bothered

the locks on the door

imprison our life

each one to himself.

Murago

me tanto piasì

me la blangio proprio

co i canta in ostaria

diese quindese otavi

scompagnai

le vose

piturade in t-el'aria

e i canterini

ch'i se varda un co' l'altro

su la boca

quei tondi de la musica

ch'i fa

.....

cussi

de murago passando

'n'androna drento

la panza povera de piazza goldoni

mi

missià tra aventori ch'i canta.

Murago* – mi piace tanto / me la godo proprio / quando cantano all'osteria / dieci quindici calici / scompagnati / le voci / pitturate nell'aria / e i canterini / a guardarsi uno con l'altro / sulla bocca / i toni della musica / che fanno / / così / da murago passando / per un androne dentro / la pancia povera di piazza goldoni / io / frammezzo avventori che cantano.

* nome di un'osteria tipica a Trieste.

Murago*

I really like it

I truly love it

when ten or fifteen glass mugs

start singing in the bar

unaccompanied

the voices

painted in the air

and the singers

who stare at each other

at the round O's

the music makes

of their mouths

.....

so

from Murago past

the vestibule and onto

the stones of Piazza Goldoni

I

stand among singing drinkers.

*Murago is the name of a well-known tavern in Trieste.

Butacarte

son 'ndà trovarla

zala

la vestalia
zalo
el muro d' i spagnoleti
fumai
sentà 'rente el sburto
de la finestra
tignindome el palmo de la man
'verto tra le sue
la me contava
tuto el mio passà
e
iera dolze drento de mi
tuto el sofferto
creature che va
in-t-el fiume indifferente
de la vita
creature del panzer
creature del rider.

Cartomante – sono andato a trovarla / gialla / la vestaglia / gialla / la parete per le sigarette / fumate / seduto accanto allo sporto / della finestra / tenendomi il palmo della mano / aperto tra le sue / mi diceva / tutto il mio passato / ed / era dolce dentro di me / tutto il sofferto / creature che vanno / sul fiume indifferente / della vita // creature del pianto / creature del riso.

Card Reader

I went to visit her
her robe
was yellow
the wall was yellow
from cigarettes smoked
while sitting
on the window sill
holding the palm of my hand
open in hers
she read all my past
and
all the sorrow
lay sweetly within me
creatures who flow
deep within an indifferent

stream of existence

creatures of grief

creatures of joy.

Bora

pugno de bora

mètime sora

tuto quel che no' servi

frùghila

longo fora 'sta mia strada

zèrchime

bùtime in alto

'ncora 'na volta

.....

ti

te ga un zigo che spaura

te ga 'l mio mistero

bora

mètime

sora sora

più sora

'ncora 'na volta

fa de mi bandiera.

Bora – pugno di bora / mettimo al di sopra / di tutto quello che non serve / frugala / minuziosamente questa mia strada / trovami / sollevami in alto / ancora una volta / ... / tu / tu hai un grido che agghiaccia / tu hai il mio mistero / bora / sollevami su su / più su / ancora una volta / fa di me bandiera.

(I testi sono tratti da Crature del panzer crature del rider) Le traduzioni sono dell'autore.

Bora*

fist of the Bora

lift me past

all useless things

ransack clean

this endless road of mine

find me

cast me up

one more time

.....

You give out

a terrible shriek
you hold
my secret
Bora
lift me up
more and more
once again
make a flag out of me.

*Bora, a cold northeasterly wind that blows upon the city of Trieste.

**I am grateful for the guidance provided by Dino Fabris' own English translations of these poems by C. Grisancich.

PIER PAOLO PASOLINI

Everything and the opposite of everything has been said about Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922-1975). Not twice in the dust and twice on the altar, as Manzoni wrote of Napoleon, but thousands of times in the dust and on the altar, whether right or wrong, very often attacking his polemical diatribes, exploiting his obvious contradictions, changing his words. He was certainly a leading figure of Italian culture in the fifties and sixties, and did everything he could to stir the stagnating waters of a dead-end artistic, social and literary climate lacking authentic drive. When he arrived in Rome it seemed as if everything was limited to neorealism, with absolutely nothing outside of it. He tried to make significant contributions but, as more than one critic has observed, instead of going beyond those premises he remained bogged down in them, and instead of renewing current language and ideas, he yielded, especially in the use of dialect and in his narrative, to long "quotations" that did nothing to resolve the prevailing confusion and carried no elements of renewal.

Yet Pasolini has been read as a prophet, although some railed against him, warning that he was a reactionary masked as a revolutionary, notwithstanding his ties to Ferenczi.

It would be sheer folly to draw a somewhat credible portrait of Pasolini in two pages, but it seems justifiable to raise some doubts about his "immensity" as a writer, also because, twenty years after his death, we should rightly begin to assess his lasting power no longer in terms of myth and blind enthusiasm.

It might seem reductive and even shocking, but I am convinced that he will endure only because he wrote his poetry in Friulian. Everything else will become part of literary and artistic history, despite an idolatry that for a long time has stripped him of his truest purposes by focusing on those aspects that appealed to an ideological or prejudicial reading.

In dialect, Pasolini is able to give us things stark and bare in their purity, with a clear and precise diction, with no ambiguity or vagueness to blur meaning. The poet, as he wrote to De Gironcoli, found the way to enclose "infinity in the subject" and therefore is able to pursue at will any shadow or light that runs through it, also because his language has become an "absolute language, nonexistent in nature." This is a note that Pasolini wrote in 1954 for the poems of *La meglio gioventù*, even if he developed an idea already expressed in 1942. It is evident that this is the concept of "language of poetry" which later gave rise to so many discussions and even today finds either acceptance or harsh opposition, often unmotivated.

Pasolini did not embark on the adventure with dialect just out of a whim to go against something or a weariness for poetry in Italian. In a certain sense, he was called to that adventure first of all by the primordial sounds that provided the necessary purity of style to write without dispersing anything that the word had as poetic, historical, and human experience. In his numerous writings on dialect poets, Pasolini also gives some clues to his own choices, for instance "the system of oppositions between instinct and mannerism, which would mark unmistakably" his "literary work."

It would be very interesting to follow Pasolini in his constant relationship with his writing in dialect. We would realize, for instance, that his insistence on the years of his stay in Friuli is a way of finding at every occasion something of himself immersed in the peasant civilization to which he would have liked to belong, in order to nurse the wounds that instead remained open, as spectator of a world from which he had been essentially excluded. It is true that he entered his "linguistic uterus," but he would never find a perfect inner harmony, the total and serene union with the "rustic life of the 'belfry'." In the final analysis, "the Friulian poems are the result of a creative verbal process applied to his own experiences to make them utterable beyond their obsessive limits." Even if they do not open the new season of neodialectality, these poems are nonetheless the highest mark of an ethical and literary consciousness that was able to go beyond Decadentism and Pascoli, creating a new semantic level that was to affect other experiences. Pasolini's dialect poetry was not a local sketch nor was it born to preserve memories, but it came to be in order to decipher the present using the distant past, with the exact aim of avoiding the equivocation of naïveté.

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Ciant da li ciampanis

Co la sera a si pièrt ta li fontanis

il me pais al è colòur smart.

Jo i soj lontàn, recuardi li so ranis,

la luna, il trist tintinulà dai gris.

A bat Rosari, pai pras al si scunis:

jo i soj muàrt al ciant da li ciampanis.

Forèst, al me dols svualà par il plan,

no ciapà pòura : jo i soj un spirt di amòur

che al so pais al toma di lontàn.

CANTO DELLE CAMPANE

Quando la sera si perde nelle fontane, / il mio paese è di colore smarrito. // Io sono lontano, ricordo le sue rane, / la luna, il triste tremolare dei grilli. // Suona Rosario, e si sfiata per i prati: / io sono morto al canto delle campane. /

Straniero, al mio dolce volo per il piano, / non aver paura: io sono uno spirito d'amore // che al suo paese toma di lontano.

(da Poesie a Casarsa)

Song of the Church Bells

When evening dips inside water fountains

my town disappears among muted hues.

From far away I remember frogs croaking,

the moonlight, the cricket's sad cries.

The fields devour the Vespers' church bells

but I am dead to the sound of those bells.

Stranger, don't fear my tender return

across mountains, I am the spirit of love

coming back home from faraway shores.

Misteri

I àusi zirà in alt i vuj

su li pichis secis dai lens,

no jot il Signòur, ma il so lun

ch'al brila sempri imèns.

Di tantis robis ch'i sai
i 'n sint tal còur doma una,
i soj zòvin, vif, 'bandunàt,
cu'l cuàrp ch'al si consuma.
I stai un momènt ta l'erba
dal rivàl, tra i lens nus,
po' i camini, e i vai sot il nul,
e i vif cu la mæ zoventùt.

Mistero – Oso alzare gli occhi / sulle cime secche degli alberi/ non vedo il Signore, ma il suo lume/ che brilla sempre immenso. // Di tutte le cose che so / ne sento nel cuore solo una: / sono giovane, vivo, abbandonato, / col corpo che si consuma. // Resto un momento sull'erba / della riva, tra gli alberi nudi, / poi cammino, e vado sotto le nuvole, / e vivo con la mia gioventù.

Mystery

Daring to lift my eyes
towards the dry treetops,
I don't see God, but his light
is immensely shining.
Of all the things I know
my heart feels only this:
I'm young, alive, alone,
my body consuming itself.
I briefly rest in the tall grasses
of a river bank, under bare
trees, then move along beneath
clouds to live out my young days.

Mi contenti

Ta la sera ruda di Sàbida
mi contenti di jodi la int
fòr di ciasa ch'a rit ta l'aria.
Encia il mæ còr al è di aria
e tai mæ vuj a rit la int
e tai mæ ris a è lus di Sàbida.
Zòvin, i mi contenti dal Sàbida,
puòr, i mi contenti da la int,
vif, i mi contenti da l'aria.
I soj usât al mal dal Sàbida.
(da Dov'è la mia patria)

Coròt par un di vinc'ains
Sassins di sé
a' murin su l'asfalt i fantassins
dal Gnûf Friûl
tant che gneurs tonâs
denant di un Stop
par 'ne precedense no dade
sot dai platanos in linee
di lunc la Pontebane
Cu li' motos corint tant prepoténs
su la passiense dai vòns
duris li' musis lusintis di plastiche
'ne sgjaveglade grimpage daûr
ch'a mostre li' cuessis sul seggiolino
al è di chel mâl vecjo
che 'a si svindichin
la suggesìon dal masse ubidi
l'ofese antiche
quand che vosonânt in ostarie a' tegnin dit
che pur se no 'nd'è pui Signôr
a lôr
di vivi j reste dut il so dirit
Invessit a' murin
Enol è nancje un sigo a durâ
tal fueâm dai platanos
di lunc la Pontebane ma
- Nel fiore dei tuoi vent'anni
apene un lament

Lamento funebre per uno di vent'anni – Assassini di sé / muoiono sull'asfalto i ragazzi / del Nuovo Friuli / impallinati come lepri / davanti a uno Stop / per una precedenza non data / sotto i platani allineati / lungo la strada Pontebbana / Con le moto correndo così prepotenti / rispetto alla pazienza degli antenati / dure le facce lucenti di plastica / una scarmigliata aggrappata dietro / che mostra le cosce sul seggiolino / è di quel male vecchio / che loro si vendicano / la soggezione del troppo obbedire / l'offesa antica / quando gridando in osteria ci tengono a dire / che sebbene non ci sia più Signore / a loro / di vivere gli resta tutto il diritto / Invece muoiono / E non è nemmeno un grido / quello a durare nel fogliame dei platani / lungo la Pontebbana ma / - Nel fiore dei tuoi vent'anni / appena un lamento.

Dirge for a Twenty-year-old

Killers of themselves
they die on asphalt roads these youths
of the New Friuli
splattered like rabbits

in front of some Stop sign
they simply ignored,
beneath straight rows of lime trees
that flank the Pontebbana road.
They carelessly speed on motorcycles
and ignore the slower old drivers,
they wear tough faces inside plastic helmets
with their chick on the back holding on
while flashing her half-naked ass.
Rebels against some lost cause
they want to make right,
they seek revenge
against all obedience to rules;
the ancient complaint
as they heatedly argue inside the taverns:
they have every right to live their own lives
regardless of whether God might be dead or alive.
Instead they die
And it is not even screaming
that sticks on the foliage of the lime trees
along the Pontebbana, but

*

A lis quatri di matine
jo e tè, la copie,
a discori di nuje
cul marum (duciu doi) di jessi bessô
a peânus i dîncj,
a fânus di pière ...
Erindî-si, dopo, al sigo dai cuarps,
e po' il sorêli a sbrego li'tindînis.

*

Chì, c'joc di robis
gnovis, 'o crodevi tal inprin che il vueit
ch'o sintivi calchi sere, dismitût
di lavorâ, al fos dome pal intric dai
pôs carantans ingredeâz tes sclofis

de sporte, ricuart di nestre mari. Ma
cuan'che i cjamps a' son cressûz tôr dal cjasâl,
daûr dai poi e dai cjstinârs – bastardâz
ancje lôr – alc si viargeve, no sai cemût
dîti. Cui sa s'al lave ben chest sît par me,
contadin di montagne: masse lontans
i cunfins e l'adôr ch'al si piart-vie dilunc.
Vuê di matine il cîl al è tant celèst
come cuan'che il rosean s'incagnive
jù pes vals dal Nadisòn, e cussì font
che tu t'al cjatis disore, daûr, intôr.
Epûr, torcenât da tante largure,
'o stoi a voltis come dentri une presòn.

* Qui, ubriaco di cose / nuove, credevo all'inizio che il vuoto / che sentivo qualche sera, terminato / il lavoro, fosse solo per l'imbarazzo / dei pochi soldi intrecciati nei cartocci / della sporta, ricordo di nostra madre. Ma / quando i campi sono cresciuti attorno alla fattoria, / dietro i pioppi e i castagni – inselvaticiti / anche loro – qualcosa si apriva, non so come / spiegarti. Chi sa se andava bene questo posto per me, / cittadino di montagna: troppo distanti / i confini e l'orizzonte che si perde lontano. // Questa mattina il cielo è così azzurro / come quando il vento di nord-est infuriava / giù per le valli del Natisone, e così profondo / che te lo trovi sopra, dietro, intorno. / Eppure, circondato da questa grande distesa / mi trovo a volte come in una prigione.

*

Standing here, drunk on new things
I thought, at the start, that the emptiness
sensed on some evening, when work was done,
was due to my shame for having
only a few pennies rolled up in paper
inside my purse, the only gift from my mom.
But when the corn fields appeared by the mill,
behind the poplars and chestnut groves
that had grown wild, something did happen,
I can't explain it. Who knows if this place is
the right one for me, a mountain farmer: these
big lots and that horizon seem lost and so distant.

Mi accontento – Nella nuda sera del Sabato / mi accontento di guardare la gente / che ride fuori di casa nell'aria. // Anche il mio cuore è di aria / e nei miei occhi ride la gente / e nei miei ricci è la luce del Sabato. // Giovane, mi accontento del Sabato, / povero, mi accontento della gente, / vivo, mi accontento dell'aria. // Sono abituato al male del Sabato.

I'm Glad

In the roughness of Saturday night
I'm glad to watch people
outside laughing in the open air.

My heart also is made of air
my eyes reflect the joy of the people
and in my hair shines Saturday night.
Young man, I'm glad with my miserly
Saturday night, I'm happy with people
I am alive, I am happy with the air.
I am used to the evil of Saturday night.

I dis robàs

Nos ch'i sin puòrs i vin puòc timp
de zoventùt e de belessa:
mond, te pòus stà senza de nos.
Sclafś da la nàssita i sin nos!
Pavèjs ch'a no àn mai vut belessa
muartis ta la galeta dal timp.
I siòrs a no ni pàin il timp:
i dis robàs a la belessa
dai nuostris paris e da nos.
No finiràia il dizùn dal timp?

I giorni rubati – Noi che siamo poveri abbiamo poco tempo / di gioventù e di bellezza: / mondo, tu puoi stare senza di noi. // Schiavi della nascita siamo noi! / Farfalle che non hanno mai avuto bellezza, / morte nel bozzolo del tempo. / I ricchi non ci pagano il tempo: / i giorni rubati alla bellezza / dai nostri padri e da noi. // Non finirà il digiuno del tempo?

(da Dov'è la mia patria)

Stolen Days

We who are poor have little time
for youth and beauty:
you can do well without us.
Our birth enslaves us!
butterflies shorn of all beauty,
buried in the chrysalis of time.
The wealthy don't pay for our time:
those days stolen from beauty
possessed by our fathers and us.
Will time's hunger never die?

Cintin

Cintin no'l va a li sagris, pai pais dal Friul
a sunin li ciampanis, no i viulins pal Friul!

Co al jot in plassa un puòr pierdùt in tal Friul
ghi dà la so giacheta dongia il clipit di un mur,
co al jot un dai puòrs ch'a van sojpal Friul
content ghi dà il so còur sot il sèil ch'al ven scur.
“Adio mari, adio pari, jo i vai via dal Friul,
e i vai via ta la Mirica, l'aligria dal Friul!”
Treno, ti l'às puartàt viers il mar azùr,
ah se malincunia muri via dal Friul.

(da La meglio gioventù)

Vincenzino – Vincenzino non va alle sagre, per i paesi del Friuli, / suonano le campane, non i violini per il Friuli! / Quando vede in piazza un povero perduto nel Friuli, / gli dà la sua giacca, al tepore di un muretto, / quando vede uno dei poveri che vanno soli per il Friuli, / contento gli dà il suo cuore, sotto il cielo che si fa scuro. / “Addio madre, addio padre, io vado via dal Friuli, / e vado via in America, l'allegria del Friuli!” / Treno, l'hai portato verso il mare azzurro, / ah che malinconia, morire via dal Friuli.

Vincent

Vincent won't go to the fair in the towns of the Friuli,
they play only church bells not violins in the Friuli!
When he sees some poor man lost in a square of Friuli
he gives him his jacket since he's sheltered by some wall,
when he sees a poor man lost and alone in the Friuli
he gladly gives him his heart as the sky turns to dusk.
“Good-bye, mom, good-bye, dad I am leaving the Friuli
I'm leaving for America, the glory of the Friuli!”
The train is taking me toward the clear blue sea,
oh, the sad loneliness of dying so far from Friuli.

Il quaranta quatri

No rosea pì la suris, a ciantin li sizilis,
no svualpèa il colòmp, a sgiarfin li gialinis.
No suna par il timp, sunin li Aimariis.
A si vièrs l'ùs da l'ort, e palidùt il nini
al ven fòur curint, e sclufat tal glerin
al matièa bessòul c'un gamelòt lusint.
La mari dreñti in ciasa, tal sulisu fruvàt
a spaca i steccs trimànt sul puòr zenoli alsàt.
Po' a impija i fulminàns e il cialdirin dal lat
a picia un puc 'fanada stissànt il fòuc cu'l flat.
Fòur a è dut un bati fresc di Aimariis
via par i puòrs pais plens di malincunia.

Quindis àins! disnòuf àins ! Botonànt li barghessis

a vègnin ju i fantàs, a ghi tirin li stressis :

“ Dai, mama, i vin fan, prepara di mirinda!”

Cui stòmis nus a còrin tal curtil sor la linda,

e li coma doi poj, sora la vas-cia plena

un ridint al si lava chel altri al si patena.

Recuàrditi, Signòur, chel ch’a ni à capitât,

da la nuetra passìon vuarda di vej pietât.

La nuetra ciera a è stada in man dai forestèirs

e nu a ni àn puartât ta n’antra prisonèirs.

I zòvins e i vecius in plassa a àn piciât,

li nuetris fantassinis a àn disonorât.

A ni è muàrt in tal còur il ben da la ligia

ogni voja di ridi a è svualada via.

Par li stradis feratis, par i stradòns di sfalt

par vej un toc di pan i ris-ciavin la muàrt.

Clàmimi ti, o Signòur, e nu i Ti clamàrin,

toma a fà i nuetris dis coma ch’a erin prin.

(da Sot la nape, con il titolo Il Veciu Testament)

Il quaranta quattro – Non rode pù il topo, cantano le rondini, / non svolazza il colombo, raspano le galline. / Non suona per la tempesta, suonano le Avemarie / Si apre l’uscio dell’orto e pallidoccio il bambino / vien fuori correndo, si accuccia sulla ghiaia, / e gioca da solo con un barattolo lucente. / La madre dentro in cucina, sul pavimento consunto, / spacca gli stecchi tremando, sul povero ginocchio alzato. / Poi accende i fulminanti, e appende un poco affannata / il pentolino del latte, attizzando il fuoco col fiato. / Fuori è tutto un battere, fresco, di Avemarie, / via per i poveri paesi pieni di malinconia. / Quindici anni! Diciannove anni! Abbottonandosi i calzoni, / vengono giù i ragazzi, la tirano per le trecce.” / Su, mamma, abbiamo fame, prepara la merenda!” / Coi petti nudi corrono nel cortile sotto la grondaia, / e li come due pioppi, sul vascone pieno, / uno ridendo si lava, l’altro si pettina. / Ricordati, Signore, quello che ci è accaduto, / della nostra passione guarda di avere pietà. / La nostra terra è stata in mano agli stranieri, / e noi ci hanno portati prigionieri in un’altra. / I giovani e i vecchi, li hanno impiccati in piazza, / le nostre giovinette ce le hanno disonorate. / Ci è morto nel cuore il bene dell’allegria, / ogni voglia di ridere ci è volata via. / Per le strade ferrate e gli stradoni d’asfalto, / per un poco di pane, abbiamo rischiato la morte. / Chiamaci tu, o Signore, e noi ti chiameremo, / rifà i nostri giorni com’erano prima.

Nineteen Forty-four

The rats no longer crawl, the swallows are screeching

Pigeons won’t fly, chickens are scratching the ground.

No warning bells for tempests, only for Avemaria.

The garden gate swings open and a pale child

Comes out running, he sits on a pile of stones

And plays all alone with a shiny tin can.

His mom is in the kitchen, with shaky hands

she chops kindling sticks, her knee on the worn floor.

Then lighting a match she hangs the milk pot

Over the fire while blowing to kindle the flame.

Outside again bells ring everywhere Avemaria,

in every poor town filled with melancholy.
At fifteen, at nineteen years! Buttoning their pants
the young men come around, they pull her pony tail:
Mom, we're really hungry, get our breakfast ready!
Half-naked they run outside underneath the down spout
and from the rain barrel, laughing, one washes up
while the other combs his hair, like two poplar trees.
O dear God, don't forget what has happened to us
protect our passions, look upon us and have pity.
Our lands are in the hands of total strangers,
they made us prisoners in their own homeland.
The children and the old they hung in the square,
our unmarried women they raped and abused.
Our happiness and joy has dried up in our hearts,
our smiling and our laughter have flown so far away.
Along the railroad tracks, along those endless roads
we jeopardize our lives to find a piece of bread.
Call us to you, O Lord and we will call on you,
bring back our days of old as they were once before.

Il quaranta sinc

Strussànt i piès tal pòlvar stralumis di straca
a van via i Todèscs, pioris ta la fumata.
A van tra li masèriis tra li cassis bagnadis
russànt i sclops tal fangu da li pi scontis stradis.
In tal borc na campana a bat il Matutin
e a tòmin i dis coma ch'a erin prin.
In tai borcs li ciampanis a botizèin di fiesta
par li cors ben netadis par la ciampagna fres-cia,
là che trops di frutis ch'a ghi slus la stressa
par galeriis di vencs a van legris a messa.
E driu i fantassins apena cunfessàs
cui calsetòns blancs e i ciafs biondus tosàs.
Lùnis, lùnis di Pasca! Co a còrin ridint
i miej zòvins dal borc di lunc su il Tilimint
cu li so bicicletis, e li majetis blancis,

sot i blusòns inglèis, ch'a nàsin di naransis!

Un puc ciocs a ciantin di matina bunora

e su li so siarpetis gh'inzela il flat'la bora,

ju par Codròip, Ciasàl, par li pradariis

plenis di custòdiis e di cumpagniis,

zent ch'a zuja, ch'a siga, tor atòr dal breàr

e i bistròcs risins dal prin bal da l'an.

Il Signòur ni à vistùt di liguìa e pietàt

na corona di amòur a ni à mitùt tal cìaf.

Il Signòur l'a vulùt sbassà duciu i mons

implenà li valadis fa dut vualif il mond,

parsè che il so pòpul cuntènt al camini

par la quieta ciera dal so quiet distin.

Il Signòur lu saveva che tal nustri còur

davòur dal nustri scur a era il So luzòur.

(da La meglio gioventù)

Il quaranta cinque --.Trascinando i piedi nella polvere, ciechi di stanchezza, / vanno via i Tedeschi, pecore nella nebbia./ Vanno tra le macerie, tra le acacie bagnate, / trascinando i fucili nel fango, per le strade più nascoste./ Sul borgo una campana batte il Mattutino, / e i giorni ritornano com'erano prima. / Sui borghi le campane suonano a festa, / per le corti ben spazzate, per la fresca campagna, / dove sciami di bambine, con la treccia che gli luce, / per gallerie di venchi, vanno allegre a messa. / E dietro i ragazzetti, appena confessati, / coi calzettoni bianchi, e i biondi capi tosati. / Lunedì, lunedì di Pasqua! Quando corrono ridendo i più bei giovincelli, / sul ponte del Tagliamento, con le loro biciclette e le magliette bianche, / sotto i blusoni inglesi, che sanno di arance! / Un poco ubriachi cantano, alla mattina presto / e sulle loro sciallette gli gela il fiato la bora, / giù per Codroipo, Casale, per le praterie / piene di posteggi e di compagnie, / di gente che gioca, grida, sotto la piattaforma, / dentro i fiammanti spacci del primo ballo dell'anno./ Il Signore ci ha vestiti di allegria e pietà, / una corona di amore ha messo sul nostro capo. / Il Signore ha voluto abbassare rupi e monti, / colmare le vallate, fare uguale tutto il mondo, / perché il suo popolo contento cammini / per la quieta terra del suo quieto destino. / Il Signore lo sapeva che nel nostro cuore, / dietro il nostro scuro, c'era il Suo splendore.

Nineteen Forty-five

Dragging their feet in the dust, tired to the bone

the Germans now retreat, sheep lost in the fog.

Walking among the ruins, under wet acacia trees

dragging rifles in the mud along the least-known roads.

In the village bells are calling to the early morning service

and the days of old come back as if they never left.

In the villages bells ring as if to announce some holiday

with the yards swept neat and clean, with springtime fields

where gatherings of girls, their pony tails like sun rays,

pass under greening trellises on their way to hear mass.

The wild boys do come after, just finished with confession,

dressed in white knee socks and their blond hair neatly cut.

Monday, it's Easter Monday! How they laugh how they run

these children from the village across the Tagliamento bridge,

they're riding their bicycles and are wearing white shirts
beneath their English blazers, smelling of freshly cut oranges.
They are a little tipsy as they sing to the first coming of day,
and on their narrow scarves the cold wind ices their breath
as they ride to Codroipo, Casale, through grazing fields
riddled with check points and with companies of soldiers
joking and screaming underneath the platform
while wearing their best outfits to the first ball of the year.
God has dressed us in joy and in compassion,
on our foreheads he has placed the crown of love.
God has chosen to flatten hills and mountains,
to fill in the valleys, make the earth equal for us all
so that his creatures, contented, will people the land
in peacefulness and so fulfill their destiny.
God always knows that past our gloomiest dark
His splendor shines forever in each and every heart.

La miej zoventùt

Signòur, i sin bessòj, no ti ni clamis pì!
No ti ni òlmis pì an par an, di par di!
Par di cà il nustrì scur par di là il To luzòur,
no ti às pal nustrì mäl né ira e né dòul.
Nuja da trenta sècuj, nuja no è gambiät,
al è unità il pòpul e unità al combät,
mä il nustrì scur al è scur di ogniùn di nu
e spartì lus e scur ti lu sas doma Tu!
Dis di vura! Dis muàrs! A svolta la careta
su vièrs la stassiòn par la plassa quieta,
e a si ferma denànt la s-cialinada nova
russànt tal glerin che il puòr soreli al sbrova.
Li sbaris son sieradis doi càmbions a spètin
fers tra i rudinàs, tra bars di cassis secis,
e na reciuta a poca na cariola strinzint
afanada na ponta dal fassolèt cui dinc'.
Il fantàt cu l'armònica al salta ju sunànt
e il pì zovinùt cu la scoria al flanc

ghi dà il fen al ciavàl, po' al entra balànt
davòur di chej altris luturàns dongia il blanc.

Un puc ciocs a ciàntin la matina bunora
cui fassolès ros stress atòr la gola,
e a comandin sgrausis quatri litros di vin
e caffè par li zòvinis che ormai tazin planzint.

Vegnèit, trenos, ciamàit chis-ciu fantàs ch'a ciàntin
cui so blusòns inglèis e li majetis blancis.

Vegnèit, trenos, purtàit lontàn la zoventùt
a sercià par il mond chel che cà a è pierdùt.

Puartàit, trenos, pal mond a no ridi mai pì
chis-ciu legris fantàs paràs via dal pais.

(da La meglio gioventù)

La meglio gioventù – Signore, siamo soli, non ci chiami più! Non ci guardi più, anno per anno, giorno per giorno! Di qua il nostro scuro, di là il Tuo splendore, per il nostro male non hai né collera né compassione. Niente da trenta secoli, niente è cambiato: si è unito il popolo, e unito combatte, ma il nostro male è male di ognuno di noi, e spartire male e bene lo sai solo Tu! Giorni di lavoro! Giorni morti! Svolta la carretta su verso la stazione per la piazza quieta, e si ferma davanti alla scalinata nuova, cigolando sul ghiaino che scotta al povero sole. Sono chiuse le sbarre, due autocarri aspettano femi tra i calcinacci, tra siepi di acacie secche, e una vecchietta spinge la carriola stringendo, affannata, una punta del fazzoletto tra i denti. Il giovane con l'armonica salta giù suonando, e il più giovanino con al fianco la frusta, dà al cavallo il fieno, poi entra ballando dietro gli altri, spavaldi presso il banco. Un poco ubriachi cantano, alla mattina presto, coi fazzoletti rossi stretti intorno alla gola, poi comandano rauchi quattro litri di vino, e caffè per le ragazze, che ormai tacciono piangendo. Venite, treni, caricate questi giovani che cantano coi loro blusoni inglesi e le magliette bianche. Venite, treni, portate lontano la gioventù, a cercare per il mondo ciò che qui è perduto. Portate, treni, per il mondo, a non ridere mai più, questi allegri ragazzi scacciati dal paese.

Le traduzioni sono dell'autore.

The Best of Youth

Lord, we are alone you call on us no more.
Year after year, day after day You look on us no more!
Darkness on our side and splendor on your side,
for our sins you feel neither anger nor compassion.
for thirty centuries, nothing, nothing has changed:
nations have united so, united, they wage wars
but our misery's the same as everybody's misery
and only You know how to sort out good from bad!
Work days, dead days! She pushes the wheel barrow
by the railroad tracks then towards the quiet square
and stops in front of the almost-finished staircase
where it crunches the stones baked by the sun.
The gates are shut, two trucks are parked
near the cement slag, flanked by dead bushes
and the old lady pushes the wheel barrow
while holding the tips of a scarf with her teeth.

A young man sits down to blow on his harmonica,
 another younger one with horse whip in his hand
 feeds hay to his charge then follows his friends
 who are dancing carefree by the stands.
 They sing, a bit drunk, by early morning
 and wear their red hankies around the neck.
 Hoarsely they order four liters of wine
 and coffee for the girls who are silent and sad.
 Come on, trains, take these singing youths
 dressed in white shirt and English blazers.
 Come on, trains, take them so very far away
 roaming the earth to see what they have lost here.
 Trains everywhere scatter these once happy men,
 They will not laugh when leaving home forever.

ELIO BARTOLINI

Elio Bartolini, born in Codroipo in 1922, is the same age as Pasolini. Before beginning to write in dialect, he wrote successful books of narrative, such as *Icaro e Petronio* (1950), *Due ponti a Caracas* (1953), *La bellezza d'Ippolita* (1955). His collaboration with Michelangelo Antonioni led to a cultural and linguistic renewal and prompted a transformation. When he went back to narrative, it was in the direction of psychology and fantasy with books such as *La donna al punto* (1963), *Chi abita la villa* (1967), *Il ghebo* (1970). After a pause, he again to broaden his expressive range with thoughtful incursions into the world of history, *Pontificale di San Marco* (1978) and *La linea dell'arciduca* (1980). These last two works show very clearly how Bartolini was taken by problems of language, as he tested what a word can do if used as a flintstone. These are the years of his first poems in dialect published in *Sot la nape* (XXIX, n. 3-4, Dec. 1977) which will continue with n. 14 of *Lunarionuovo* (Sept.-Oct. 1981).

Since then, Bartolini has devoted himself intensely to poetry in dialect, each time moving the axis, each time diversifying, in the conviction that it is harmful to remain tied to repetitive themes and an obsessive linguistic circle. Bartolini, in other words, moves in extension, even if the impression one gets from his poems is that of a one-theme poet, as Spagnoletti notes, perhaps because the tragedy of the world goes through the streets of Codroipo's or Santa Marizza di Varmo and becomes the voice of devastated, fragmented universe..

"His work in the Codroipo dialect, on the left bank of the Tagliamento river, develops along three lines: civic poetry, love lyric, and elegy about the passing of time," writes Franco Brevini. One is thus tempted to believe that it is not easy to decide whether Bartolini's world is all Friulian and born of the distant and near past, or is instead an immense meadow that borders on infinity. Why not both? In the final analysis, the microcosm in which ideas, sensations, images, and emotions circulate does not identify the precise season of a precise place, but is like Siddharta's river whose "water ran and ran, always ran, yet it was always there, it was always and each time the same, and yet in every moment different!"

All of Bartolini's critics have cited the sense of tragedy in his poetry, the "traumatic node" as synthesis of the various paths, the disharmony that supposedly is at the root of his diction and creates, even in moments of greatest intensity and cohesion, an imperfect web, an unhurried but confused pursuit, a fragmentation that often follows contrasting and even opposite directions.

It seems to me that the strength of Bartolini's verse stems from this very wandering stream of hues and voices, this void that suddenly fills, apparently arbitrary dissonances which instead delineate a well-orchestrated design, aimed at rendering the decay of our society.

He does not try, like an anthropologist or a politician, to challenge some assumptions and propose new ones for an ideal vision of a perfect and uncontaminated universe; he becomes an antimodernist almost by "mistake," naturally, but there is no trace of times gone by, no hint of nostalgia. This allows him to play with impunity even the card of the "civic" poet, without hype, ideological distortions or political baggage, because he puts himself at stake, offers his private life, without screens and without fear of being misunderstood.

In Bartolini's poetry the present appears as a neutral landscape, a place in which the angelic and the demonic have destroyed each other to make room for an absence that turns upon itself, with no possibility of finding a way out. As a consequence, in some poems the tone becomes apocalyptic and the past looms like a light that has always contained the germs of dissolution.

In 1985 Elio Bartolini published *Amour e dis di vore*, with a preface by Luciana Borsetto, and in 1996 *Poesiis protestantis*, with a preface by Tito Maniaco.

As always, old texts accompany new ones, to renew the hell-paradise of a poet who cannot find peace and uses his restlessness like a knife to pry open the world to read truth in it and find, if possible, at least a glimmer of eternity.

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Neon lusint a sera

Tu saltinade fîr dal 7/b

t'un pâr di barghessinis piês che crote,

rivâde fin in somp di via degli Orti

a colmâ il mond

de sovrane prisinse di te stesse,

alore come 'ne caesse

alte su 'ne lumiere ch'j pâr sô,

e che tomant viers cjase tu fâs cont

nancje di viodiju

chei cuatri a olmati dal cjanton dal bar,

che pôs tu 'nd às intôr,

tu incelofanade creature

volussade di nailon tant che un pac,
la cjosse miôr de tô zornade
la plui spietade
saressial mai il neon lusint a sere
maraveôs
dal Supermarket?

Neon luccicante a sera – Sei uscita dondolandoti dall'interno 7/B / dentro un paio di calzoncini da sparirvi peggio che nuda, / arrivata fino in fondo di Via degli Orti / a colmare il mondo / della sovrana presenza di te stessa / allora come una luce bianca / alta su una zolla che le sembra sua , / e che tornando verso casa fai conto / neanche di vederli / quei quattro che ti sogguardano dal cantone del bar, / che pochi ne hai a ronzarti attomo, / tu incellofanata creatura / avvolta nel nailon come un pacco, / la cosa migliore della sua giornata / più aspettata / sarebbe mai il neon luccicante a sera / meraviglioso / del Supermarket?

Shining Neon in the Night

Sexily swaying you leave your flat 7/b
wearing see-through pants that make you
look naked, you get to the end of Garden Street
as if the whole world
just revolved around you,
as if you were some neon light shining
upon a piece of turf you think your own
and, turning around to head back home,
you simply ignore the four men standing
at the corner of the bar who check you out
since you boast of too many lovers,
you creature wrapped in cellophane
rolled in nylon like a package;
your most important event of the day,
the most anticipated, must be that magic
neon light that shines at night by the store.

Il figâr mat

Un svualâ vie di passaris d'unviâr
d'istât un fil di ombrene:
ce ch'al reste
da la paziente puaretât d'un timp
dade di vore
in chiscju che 'ne volte a erin orts
se ancjemò a si clamìn via degli Orti,
al è chel figâr mat apene entrâs
lant viers il caseggiato B.

Di sigûr che nessun lu a plantât:
puest di pissadis chist di bussolòs
e di scovassis, no di zentilessis.
Ma i frus pì pissui tôr di lui zuiant
a cjatin ancjemò di chei ficùs
pelôs a primavere
sglonfs di lat come gjàtùs
e ju scjavazzin vie t'ùne bravure.

Il fico selvatico – Un volare via di passerì d'inverno / d'estate un filo di frescura: / quello che resta / della paziente povertà d'un tempo / messa sotto a lavorare/ in questi che una volta erano orti / se ancora si chiamano via degli Orti, / è quel fico selvatico appena entrati / andando verso il caseggiato B. / Di sicuro nessuno lo ha piantato / posto di pisciate questo di barattoli vuoti / e d'immondizie, no di gentilezze./ Ma i bambini più piccoli giocandogli intorno / trovano ancora di quei fichi appena formati / pelosi a primavera / gonfi di lattice come fiori di corniolo / e li strappano via in prova di bravura.

The Wild Fig Tree

A flight of wild sparrows in winter,
the threat of freshness in summer
is all that is left
in our patient poor of the past
who tilled this earth
in fields that were orchards,
maybe still called Garden Street
by the gate; as one walks near
Apartment B, there is the wild tree.
No one planted it for sure, and people
stopped there to piss, dump empty cans
and other refuse: not the best spot.
But little children playing around it
still find some wild figs not yet ripe,
covered with hair in spring time
and full of white juices like corn.
They steal them, so they can brag.

Corôt par un di vinc'ains

Sassins di sé
a' murin su l'asfalt i fantassins
dal Gnûf Friûl
tant che gneurs tonâs
denant di un Stop
par 'ne precedense no dade

sot dai platanos in linee
di lunc la Pontebane
Cu li' motos corint tant prepoténs
su la passiense dai vòns
duris li' musis lusintis di plastiche
'ne sgjaveglade grimpage daûr
ch'a mostre li' cuessis sul seggiolino
al è di chel mâl vecjo
che 'a si svindichin
la suggesìon dal masse ubidî
l'ofese antiche
quand che vosonànt in ostarie a' tegnin dit
che pur se no 'nd'è pui Signôr
a lôr
di vivi j reste dut il so dirit
Invessit a' murin
Enol è nancje un sigo a durâ
tal fueâm dai platanos
di lunc la Pontebane ma
- Nel fiore dei tuoi vent'anni
apene un lament

Lamento funebre per uno di vent'anni – Assassini di sé / muoiono sull'asfalto i ragazzi / del Nuovo Friuli / impallinati come lepri / davanti a uno Stop / per una precedenza non data / sotto i platani allineati / lungo la strada Pontebbana / Con le moto correndo così prepotenti / rispetto alla pazienza degli antenati / dure le facce lucenti di plastica / una scarmigliata aggrappata dietro / che mostra le cosce sul seggiolino / è di quel male vecchio / che loro si vendicano / la soggezione del troppo obbedire / l'offesa antica / quando gridando in osteria ci tengono a dire / che sebbene non ci sia più Signore / a loro / di vivere gli resta tutto il diritto / Invece muoiono / E non è nemmeno un grido / quello a durare nel fogliame dei platani / lungo la Pontebbana ma / - Nel fiore dei tuoi vent'anni / appena un lamento.

Dirge for a Twenty-year-old

Killers of themselves
they die on asphalt roads these youths
of the New Friuli
splattered like rabbits
in front of some Stop sign
they simply ignored,
beneath straight rows of lime trees
that flank the Pontebbana road.
They carelessly speed on motorcycles
and ignore the slower old drivers,
they wear tough faces inside plastic helmets

with their chick on the back holding on
while flashing her half-naked ass.
Rebels against some lost cause
they want to make right,
they seek revenge
against all obedience to rules;
the ancient complaint
as they heatedly argue inside the taverns:
they have every right to live their own lives
regardless of whether God might be dead or alive.
Instead they die
And it is not even screaming
that sticks on the foliage of the lime trees
along the Pontebbana, but
In the flowering of your twenty years
it's just a lament.

No chel

No chel che j'ai belzà
o chel che belzà j'ai vût
vonde di chel
Péimi a ti pitòst
stumît tant che 'l nemâl
ch'al spete fûr dal massél
tal stés odour dolsit dal sanc
cjapât dentri 'ne glove
di no saltaj pi fûr
tal gratâ da la tô vôs sagane
quant ch'a masane
bausiis e veretâs insieme

Non quello – Non quello che ho già / o quello che ho già avuto / basta di quello / Legami a te piuttosto / stordito al pari del bue / che aspetta fuori del macello / nello stesso odore dolciastro del sangue / preso sotto un giogo / da non saltarne più fuori / nel cantilenare della tua voce da maga / quando macina / bugie e verità insieme.

Not That

Enough of what
I might have
or possess,
enough of that

Rather bind me to you
like some senseless ox
waiting outside the slaughter house
among that sweet smell of blood,
tied with a rope
that won't let him free
from your witch-like singsong voice
that spews forth
truths and lies mixed together.

Come la muart

Come la muart dure da l'ussél
tal toc cuintre de machine
come chel murî gnaro ma sec
chel jessi juste par no jessi pi
ch'a fos cussi :
Nu doi bessoi 'cantesemâs ta l'atimo
di ferme
che il cjàn lu ponte
e il gneur si sint pontât
che il cîl 'a 'nd'â bisogne
e il lamp vampant lu segne

Come la morte – Come la morte dura dell'uccello / nel botto contro la macchina / come quel morire inconsapevole ma secco / quell'essere giusto per non esserci più / che fosse così: / Noi due soli incantati nell'attimo / di ferma / quando il cane la punta / e la lepre si sente puntata / che il cielo ne ha bisogno / e il lampo prorompendo lo segna.

Like Death

Like the harsh death of the bird
who slams on the windshield
like an unfelt but wasted death,
that seems so right in order to assure
it would not be so:
We two enchanted, alone, in the very
moment of stillness
when the pointing dog is still
and the hare is aware
that heaven has demands,
announced by one lightning bolt.

'A si jeve la mêt man

L'amour al sarés joditi tun spiel
e jodimi dentri cun te
che si tu jevis la man têt
ancje la mêt precise 'a si jevarés
tal stés moment
a fâ la stêsse robe :
- Ce tant ch'al sarés biel, ridint tu disis
E 'a si jeve la mêt man
tal stés moment cun te
precise
crodint di joditi compagne
dome che tu
li' têt bausiis di Avril disint
tu ridis
a mi lassanmi di cjatati in fal
come ombrene
che, sense, no 'nd'è lûz

Si alza la mia mano – L'amore sarebbe vederti in uno specchio / e vedermi dentro con te / che se tu alzi la tua mano / anche la mia precisa si alzerebbe / nello stesso istante / a fare la stessa cosa: / - Come sarebbe bello, dici ridendo / E si alza la mia mano / nello stesso istante con te / precisa / convinta di vederti uguale / solo che tu / dicendo le tue bugie di Aprile / ridi / a me lasciando di coglierti in contraddizione / come l'ombra / senza la quale non c'è neanche luce.

Le traduzioni sono dell'autore

My Hand Is Lifting

Love might see you in the mirror
and see me there with you;
when you lift your own hand
my own lifts just the same
at the very same instant
in order to move the same way:
–Laughing, you say how lovely it could be
And my hand lifts up
at that very moment
as yours, precise,
convinced of the sameness
however you're
laughing
while telling me your April lies

that show me your own contradiction

as if it were shadows

where no light exists.

NICO NALDINI

Nico Naldini was born in Casarsa in 1929. His mother, Enrichetta Colussi, was Pasolini's mother's sister. A restless, curious person, with a thirst for knowledge, but very selective as well, he has worked in several fields, from journalism to publishing, cinema and poetry. He spent long periods working in Milan and Rome, and now lives in Treviso.

In *Ricordo*, from Goffredo Parise's *Sillabario n.2*, we find exemplary pages that portray the life and character of Naldini, almost a "sentimental biography" masterfully organized by Parise. He also directed a film entitled *Fascista* (1974).

It was Pasolini who in 1948 published, through the *Accademia di lingua furlana*, Naldini's first dialect poems: *Seris par un frut*. Ten years later Scheiwiller published *Un vento smarrito e gentile* with texts in Friulian, Venetian and Italian. His activities began to expand considerably in 1980, the year in which he edited, with Zanzotto, Pasolini's *Poesie e pagine ritrovate*. 1982 was the year of *La vita e le lettere di Giacomo Leopardi* and *Veneto felice*, and in 1984, again with the publisher Scheiwiller, he published *Nei campi del Friuli*, on Pasolini's youth, which includes a conversation with Andrea Zanzotto. The following year he published *Vita di Giovanni Comisso* with Einaudi and soon afterward Pasolini's letters from 1940 to 1975.

Another writer he is interested in is De Pisis, but his universe is confined to this group of friends and teachers with whom not infrequently he compares himself, but without overdoing it or creating problems of influence. He writes with elegance and clarity, and uses simplicity as a weapon to be able to express fully the charm of youthful emotions, the relationship with nature, the encounter with the poets who inspired him and allowed him to find the best part of himself.

As was the case with Pasolini, the names of Trakl, García Lorca, Esprú have been mentioned in relation to Naldini, and "that popular tone of a wing of the hermetic movement, from Sinisgalli to Caproni to Betocchi," but Naldini has been very selective in his choices, lowering the tone, at times to a whisper, to an impalpable image, to a murmur that runs inside and over things and reveals in them what is transitory and eternal. His poetry has a freshness in which everything seems to flow from a ballet music, halfway between representation and evocation, vibrant emotion and fixity.

Reading Saba, Quasimodo, Cardarelli, Penna and Di Libero (perhaps a certain Vigolo as well) has no doubt helped him in depicting the emotions of those youths who seem the figures of a chiseler (see "Vuej a è domenia" or "I frus dongia i ciasaj" or "Ombris di moràrs a Gléris"), and has taught him the measure, the detachment, the diction that aims at the core and excludes any type of embellishment.

La curva di San Floreano (1988), Nico Naldini wrote, "is a title that had been winking at me for so long and from so far away. San Floreano is a village not far from Casarsa; a few houses facing each other on a double curve that at the time of bicycle trips and Sunday fairs was an obligatory crossing point because after this curve there was the tree-lined straight road that led to Gloria, Ramuscello, Morsano, Malafiesta, the Tagliamento river and the sea," but *La curva di San Floreano* is also the book in which Naldini again uses Friulian, Venetian, and Italian. And again in these pages the words have an alluring and enveloping fragrance.

Goffredo Parise was right: "Naldini is a superb poet," his words can condense not only the "tears of things," as he writes in one of the best poems in the book, but can also express those secret heartbeats in the depths of being that determine a vast musical duration, free of misunderstandings and far removed from the weariness produced by the experiences of the past. In other words, Naldini's gaze and touch are pristine, absolutely intact, and they sear the flesh, cut like a knife, become an integral part of the other (flower, youth, landscape) and, at times, even reach the other side to reflect the original light.

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Tre disèins

I.

La ciera a è secia,

a sbisièn i mos'ciòns e li èspis,

pai murs si inorgolèin li sbissis.

Lungis ombrenis a pàssin,

i zirasoj a pòjn il ciaf.

II.

Da la vas'cia a sbrissa la fres'cia aga

tal riulùt e a cor via.

E la fontanela vualiva

a barbotèa ta la so vas'cia.

III.

Di not a si leva un scur vint,

il siàl da li stelis s'intorgulis tal sèil.

L'amàr aunàr

al si plea

a la scura vòus dal vint.

Tre disegni – I. La terra è secca, / ronzano i mosconi e le vespe, / per i muri si divincolano le lucertole. / Lunghe ombre passano, / i girasoli piegano il capo. // II. Dalla vasca scivola la fresca acqua / nel rivolo e corre via. / E la fontanlla continua / a balbettare nella sua vasca. // III. Di notte si alza un buio vento, / lo scialle delle stelle si offusca nel cielo. / L'amàro alno / si piega / alla buia voce del vento.

Three Drawings

I.

The ground is parched,

wasps and horse flies are buzzing,

small lizards slither along walls.

The long shadows are gone

Sunflowers incline their heads.

II.

Sweet water flows from the fountain
into the stream and flows away.
The little fountain keeps gurgling
while contained within its own walls.

III.

At night a bleak wind blows,
the scarves of the stars disappear
in the sky. The alder
bends
to the dark voice of the wind.

Fòur da la so ciasa il zòvin Livio

Fòur da la so ciasa il zòvin Livio
al plea un fil di fièr
e al clama un altri fantàt
ch'al rit lontàn.
Dongia dal barcòn
la nona a torna a cuzi il grumàl,
e Nelo in tal s'cialin frèit
al guarda la zent sintàt
e ta li cialdis mans
al ten un clap blanc.

(da Seris par un frut)

Fuori dalla casa il giovane Livio – Fuori dalla casa il giovane Livio/ piega un filo di ferro / e chiama un altro ragazzo / che ride lontano. / Presso la finestra / la nonna torna a cucire il grembiule, / e Nello sul freddo scalino / guarda seduto la gente / e nelle mani calde / tiene un sasso bianco.

(Traduzione dell'autore)

Young Livio Outside His Home

Outside his home young Livio
bends a piece of wire
and calls another young friend
who is laughing from afar.
Close by the porch
grandma keeps sewing her apron
as Nello reclines on the cold steps
watching the people walk by
as in his warm hands
he holds a white stone.

Qualchi ciar

Qualche ciar al cor par la strada,
qualche vòus lontana
a savarièa.

La luna i podarès clamala
ta la barcugnela inluminada:
vissina e clara a è tai claps
e lusinta ta li fuejs dal figàr.

Ta la me ciambra
a colin li lus da la luna,
e jo i jòt la me ombrina
pojada tal blanc mur.

Qualchi ciarta,
blancia e inluminada,
a cola da la tàula
ta li breis dal sulisu.

I sieri il barcòn:
tai murs blancs di cialsina
li sfesis enciamò a lùzin.

(da La curva di San Floreano)

Qualche carro – Qualche carro va per la strada, / qualche voce lontana / vaneggia. / Potrei chiamare la luna / alla finestrella illuminata: / è vicina e chiara nei sassi / e lucente nelle foglie del fico. / Nella mia camera / cadono le luci della luna, / e io vedo la mia ombra / posata sul bianco muro. / Qualche carta, / bianca e illuminata, / cade dalla tavola / sulle assi del pavimento. / Chiudo la finestra: / sui muri bianchi di calce / ancora splendono le fessure.

(Traduzione dell'autore)

Some Carts

Some carts still travel the road,
some far-away voices
reverberates still.
I could ask the moon
to visit my bright open window:
it shines clear and bright on the stones,
the leaves of the fig tree reflect it.
Inside my bedroom
the moonlight is falling
and I see my shadow
at rest on the pale walls.
Some papers, shining and white

fall from the table
on the checkerboard floor.
I close the window,
on the white walls
the cracks keep on shining.

I frus dongia i ciasaj

Ta li ciasis a senin,
ma i frus dongia i ciasaj a zujn
ai laris e a li vuàrdiis.
Rino al si à platàt
davòur di un morar
e no l'àusa mòvissi.
(I moràrs a fevin ombrina,
un quart di luna dongia na nula
a sclariva il sèil).
A si sintin sigus di na banda,
a còrin par l'erba.
Vidio al è stat ciapàt,
al speta sintàt ta un clap.
A pàssin fantassins in bicicleta
e na mari a clama
il so frut par l'ort.
Nisiu al cor discòls
cui supiej in man
davòur di un lari.

(da Seris par un frut)

I fanciulli presso gli orti – Nelle case cenano, / ma i fanciulli preso gli orti giocano / ai ladri e alle guardie. / Rino si è nascosto / dietro un gelso / e non osa muoversi. / (I gelsi facevano ombra, / un quarto di luna presso una nube / schiariva il cielo). / Si sentono grida da una parte, / corrono per l'erba. / Vidio è stato preso / e aspetta seduto su un sasso. / Passano giovinetti in bicicletta, / e una madre chiama / il suo fanciullo nell'orto. / Nisio corre scalzo / con gli zoccoli in mano / dietro un ladro.

Kids Near The Gardens

They are eating in the kitchen
while the children near the gardens
play cops and robbers.
Rino hides
by the mulberry tree
afraid to make noise.

(Mulberry trees were for shade,
as the quarter-moon breaking
through clouds lit up the sky).
From that side yells are heard
as they run through the grass.
Vidio got caught,
he sits and waits on a rock.
Children fly by on their bikes
while a mother is telling her kid
to come home from the garden.
Nisio, barefooted, clogs
in his hand, is giving chase
to some thief.

Un vint smarit e zentil

Al era a balà cuj supiej
chè altra domenìa un zovin.
Ta la sala al era un pòul
cui brancs pleàs da un vint clipid.
E allora i pensi:
par chel vint smart e gentil
libertàt i ti ami.

(da La curca di San Floreano)

Un vento smarrito e gentile – Era a ballare con gli zoccoli, / l'altra domenica un giovane. / Nella sala era un pioppo / con le rami piegate da un vento tiepido. // E allora penso: / per quel vento smarrito e gentile / ti amo libertà.

A Gentle and Fugitive Breeze

With wooden clogs a young man
went dancing last Sunday.
He was a white poplar on the dance floor
its branches flexed by some gentle breeze.
That gentle and fugitive wind
did make me think
all the reasons I love to be free.
Vuej è domenìa
Vuej è domenìa
e i zòvins a van via
ta na pluma libera

cu'l vistit di festa.

A rèstin i frus

sot il puàrtin dal stali

a zujà ai batòns

fin a l'ora dal cine.

Tal pajòul la Domenia

bessola a si petèna.

(da Un vint smarit e gentil)

Oggi e' domenica – Oggi è domenica / e i giovani vanno via / in una piuma leggera / col vestito di festa. / Restano i bambini / sotto il portico della stalla / a giocare ai bottoni / fino all'ora del cinema. / Nel ballatoio la Domenica / solitaria si pettina.

Today Is Sunday

Today is Sunday

and the teenagers take off

light as a feather

in their best suit of clothes.

The kids stay behind

near the animal stalls

playing with buttons

until it's time for the show

In the dancing arena Sunday,

alone, she combs her hair.

Vuej è domenìa

Vuej è domenìa

e ta l'aga da la roja

un frosch di soreli al cola

e al cor via.

Tra i piè lizèris

dai frus c'a si lavàvin

l'aga dal sabo

a à vut la so ligria.

(da La curva di San Floreano)

Oggi e' domenica – Oggi è domenica / e nell'acqua della roggia / un fuscello di sole cade / e corre via. // Tra i piedi leggeri / dei fanciulli che si lavano, / l'acqua del sabato / ha avuto la sua allegria.

Today Is Sunday

Today, Sunday,

a twig of sunlight lands

on the well-water
and flows away.
Between the light feet
of the kids washing up
Saturday's water
had its own fun.
Ombris di moràrs a gléris
Ombris di moràrs a Gléris
cu la luna ta li stradis
tra li ramis c'a sta atenta
dai frus in bicicleteta
c'a corin pa li sagris.
e li ciamesis blancis a son
la sagra da li sagris.

(da Un vint smarit e zentil)

Ombre di gelsi a gléris – Ombre di gelsi a Gléris / con la luna sulle strade, / tra i rami che sta attenta / ai ragazzi in bicicletta / che corrono per le sagre. / E le camicie bianche sono / la sagra delle sagre.

(Tutte le traduzioni sono dell'autore)

Mulberry Shadows in Gléris

Mulberry tree shadows in Gléris
where the moon shines on the road
and between branches, watches
the kids on their bikes
as they ride to the fair.
And their white shirts
are the fair of all fairs.

AMEDEO GIACOMINI

Amedeo Giacomini was born in Varso, province of Udine, in 1940. When he was twenty-two he received a degree in philosophy with a thesis on Sartre. He taught in middle schools and later at the University of Udine, working on Paolo Diacono and Eusebio Stella, among other things.

As he likes to repeat, his has been "a paper existence" engaged in essays, translations, narrative, poetry in dialect and Italian. In 1986 he published the novel *Manovre*, which was fairly successful especially with critics, and also a collection of poetry, *La vita artificiale*. The following year he published the treatise *L'arte di andar per uccelli con vischio*, in which Giacomini's world is fully depicted and reveals the undeniable character of a strong writer, with a rich inner world unaffected by excessive reading. He later published *Incostanza di Narciso* (1973), poems; *Andrea in tre giorni* (1981), a novel; *Es-fragmenta* (1985), a long poem; *Il disequilibrio* (1985), a poetic anthology; *L'arte dell'andar per uccelli con reti* (1988), a short treatise.

In 1977 he published his first book of poetry in dialect, *Tiare pesante*, with a preface by David Maria Turoldo. It is the stunning beginning of a choice he will never forego. "I was prompted by the earthquake (for us Friulians a war!) and a need for truth with respect to our common self that often got mired in edenic (or even rhetorical) illusions from which not even the early Pasolini had been able to free himself completely."

The language used is that spoken with his friends and acquaintances, with the family, with the people he met in the tavern. It is a corrupted language, which does not appeal to literariness or archaisms, "a paternal language," as Gian Mario Villalta writes in the Introduction to the

Antologia privata of poems in Friulian, “which is not regressive, but uses the speech of adult society, even if it is to reveal a necessity for rebellion and an unresolved problem of belonging.”

Giacomini approaches and uses dialect with rare awareness, and perhaps this is the reason why he can attack reality without offending, distorting or deforming it. Giacomini’s case is emblematic in that Heidegger’s lesson becomes palpable, an obvious sign that the universe can become tangible substance in signs and sounds.

Giacomini’s verse is imbued with a restlessness that makes him look at things in their ephemeral passing, in their fleeting race toward dissolution. Light and shadow coexist in his poetry without clashing, without Manichean manifestations, dividing him, as Brevini points out, “between a desperate need to flee and an equal need to be rooted in the ‘pais di marum’ (town of bitterness).” Yet he is a poet who is not in want of energy and who does not yield to perplexity as a way of generating multiple meanings and ambiguities. Thus he gets angry and gesticulates, inveighs and almost harangues, gives in to meditation for a moment, raises the tone, becomes intolerant with himself and with the world. Nevertheless, his verses do not show any dissonances. On the contrary, they aim to grasp the profoundly human in the relationship with men and things, and beyond appearances.

There are some poems that seem to place Giacomini at the ideal crossroads from where it is possible to see the fate of men. As in Borges’ Aleph, past, present and future are on the same level and interact with expressionistic tones that bring to mind the best German tradition.

But Giacomini’s poetry has not remained the same: after the first experiences marked by his debt to Villon (but Spagnoletti disagrees on this), and in which the “gesture” mimed in words led inexorably toward the abyss, we see a man who distances his life from himself and reads into others, without comparisons, without self-questioning, but trying to understand the first and ultimate sense of being. Yet there is no metaphysical opening, and reaching nothingness does not mean zero, the void, but absence, namely the opposite of fullness, the other side of reality.

His much-extolled narcissism does not degenerate and therefore reality seizes Giacomini’s poetry with renewed objectivity, even if expressed in confessional tones that would lead one to think of something very personal, too intimate. We are looking at a paradox: the more Giacomini goes inward, the more his poetry becomes detached, and finds an almost magic realism that gradually casts off the quality of speech and post-television tonality to find a refined manner and imperceptible literariness that look back to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

What stands out in reading *Antologia privata* in its entirety is the way history has become the living flesh of a poet who once used to offer his body and soul in order to capture the echo of inescapable suffering, but now the only personal things are the consequences of the wounds, since the pain belongs to all and offers no salvation.

Nevertheless (this is another apparent contradiction), his verses do not “drip with blood,” but live with an open smile, inspired by the passing of the seasons and the songs of the birds who are not angry with the poet, although he taught the art of catching them with birdlime and nets.

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*

A lis quatri di matine
jo e tè, la copie,
a discori di nuje
cul marum (duciu doi) di jessi bessôi
a peânus i dîncj,
a fânus di piêre ...
Erindî-si, dopo, al sigo dai cuarps,
e po' il sorêli a sbrego li'tindînis.
Tociâ-si cui dêš
e sintî tal grivi dai flâs
dute la púare nostre felissîtât ...

* Alle quattro di mattina, / io e te, la coppia, / a discutere di nulla / con l'amarezza (entrambi) d'essere soli / a legarci i denti, / a farci di pietra ... / E arrendersi, dopo, al grido dei corpi, / e poi il sole a squarciare le tendine. / Toccarsi con le dita / e sentire nel greve dei respiri / tutta la povera nostra felicità ...

*

At four o'clock in the morning
you and I, a couple, argue
over nothing,
with the (shared) bitterness
of this aloneness, our mouths
tightly closed as we turn to stone...
Finally, then, giving in

to the screams of our bodies
with the sun breaking through curtains.
Our fingers caress and,
in the weight of our breaths,
do sense the poor depths of our joy...

Cianson

Us cinati une cianson
fate di nuje,
no di amôr us disarmi,
no di vite,
mã nance di dolôr;
l'ài scrite di bessól
sentât sot di un omâr
ta l'âghe blance:
us cianti, us cianti
di se ch'a' mi pâr ...
Parsôre dal omâr sgripiât
al zorle un petaros,
intôr sorêli sflanât,
un cian al brache la lune di lontan;
tal glon di une campane
'a file la sere la so lane:
núvulis blâncis, nêre lame
e un sgrisul a còrimi in tal sânc.
In chistu vùé piardût,
s'j' vuei, us cianti di doman.
Ta l'âghe sot di mè
'a sgarfe une pantiane,
une tence 'a ciuce la so ciane
e la lune? Simpri pi blance,
simpri pi lontane ...
Mi soi jevât sutumo,
une ociade a la roste, ai pôi,
a l'âghe mistereôse,
al petaros che súbite al é lát
e a ciâse j' soi tomât.

Svuale tu cumò, me cianson,
porte atôr tu, s'ì tu pôs,
il mió nuje, la me sole veretât !

Canzone – Vi canto una canzone / fatta di niente. / Non d'amore vi dirò, / non di vita, / ma neanche di dolore: l'ho scritta, solitario, / all'ombra di un ontano / dove scorre l' "Acqua Bianca". / Vi canto, vi canto / di ciò che mi pare ... // Sopra l'ontano tormentato / canta un pettirosso, / intorno sole sfiammato / un cane bracca la luna da lontano, / nel rintocco di una campana / fila la sera la sua lana: / nuvole bianche, negra lama / e un brivido a corrermi nel sangue ... / In quest'oggi perduto / vi canto, se voglio, di domani. // Nell'acqua a me d'accanto / razzola una pantegana, / una tinca succhia la sua canna... / E la luna? Sempre più bianca, / sempre più lontana ... / Mi alzo silenzioso, / un'occhiata all'argine, ai pioppi, / all'acqua misteriosa, / al pettirosso che tosto s'allontana / e a casa fo' ritorno ... // Vola tu, adesso, mia canzone / porta tu, se puoi, d'intorno / il mio nulla, la mia sola verità!

Song

I sing you a song
made of nothing.
No talk about love,
no talk about life
and not about pain;
I wrote it alone
by the shade of an elm
where the White River flows.
I sing and sing about
whatever moves me...
On the skeletal elm tree
a robin is singing
under the searing sun,
a stray dog is wailing
at the far away moon
and at the chiming of bells
night spins a sheep's cloth
while a chill stills my blood...
On this day already gone
I could sing about tomorrow.
In the water pool nearby
a fat rat is digging,
some carp sucks the mud...
And the moon light?
Always more white,
always more distant...
I stand in silence
observing the river banks,

the poplars, the mystical
flow, the robin that's gone
and I walk back home ...
Song, it is your turn to fly
and if somehow you succeed
carry my nothing, my truth!

Il poete sassinât

J'ài finît di cusî stêlis cu la lûs,
vué, úndis fevrâr, an di grassie setante siet,
j'ài finît di sintîmi a ciantâ,
come un miarli nemorât, sôre l'orâr
quânt che il prin sorêli al creve i rams:
il mônt vué al é finît, j' soi sassinât ...
Pâssaris, lûjars, gardilîns, se fasêso ?
E tú parúsule, sumiade,
zâl, vert e blu, squasi une madone
ciatade tal bûs neri di un omâr,
tú fresoe, mió compain di strade,
un zit a ogne fan par fâti sintí,
par fâmi sintí uman,
par salvâmi, se vêso far ? ...
J' soi sassinât pardabon,
vué, cun tè, vôi come àlis di cocâl,
cour di giate salvadie,
biele come une rôse jodude di frut
là che il Vâr, cul Tamarese,
al inventave, sidin, tal gore la muart,
la sole veretât ...

Il poeta assassinato – Ho finito di cucire stelle con la luce, / oggi, undici febbraio, anno di grazia settatasette, / ho finito di sentirmi cantare, / come un merlo innamorato sopra l'alloro / quando il primo sole gli spacca i rami: / il mondo oggi è finito, sono assassinato .. / Passeri, lucherini, cardellini, che fate? / E tu cingallegra, / giallo, verde e blu, quasi una madonna / trovata nel grembo nero di un ontano, / tu, frusone, mio compagno di strada, / uno "ziit" a ogni fame per farti sentire, / per fami sentire umano, / per salvami, voi, che avete fatto? / Sono assassinato per davvero, / oggi, con te, occhi come ali di gabbiano, / cuore di gatta selvaggia, / bella come una rosa vista da bambino / là dove il Varmo, con il Tamarisco, / inventava, silente, nel gorgo, la morte, / la sola verità...

The Murdered Poet

I am done mending stars with spools of light,
today, February 11, Year of Grace 1976,
I have stopped listening to myself sing

like some blackbird, love-sick among laurel leaves
while early sunlight severs the tree branch:
today the world ended, I have been killed...
Sparrows, siskins, goldfinches, what's going on?
And you, little titmouse I dreamed of,
yellow, green and blue like the Madonna
placed in the dark niche of some alder tree,
and you, endless whip, my rambling companion
you do shut-up hunger with every swish that
signals your presence and tells me I'm human;
what did you accomplish, trying to save me?
Together with you I've truly been murdered
today: eyes like the wingspread of seagull,
with beating wild heart of the cat-woman, so
red as a rose seen through the eyes of a child,
there where the Varno and Tamaresco
silently form swirling death, the singular truth...

La mê cjase

Par Hidetoshi Nagasawa
La mê cjase 'a à une scjale
ch''a clope, un ramas su la puarte
piejât a fâj di feston ...
'Ne glicine, colôr dal so odôr,
'a j pindule devant,
lûs sense sflandôr ...
Qualchi volte, di estât,
- la lune tal sîl mi fâs di lusôr -
scoltât il rusignòul,
j' tomi clopant cjoe di vite
incuintri al nît pens dal miò amôr ...
... La mê cjase 'a à une scjale,
il vin dentri, un amôr.

La mia casa (Per Hidetoshi Nagasawa) – La mia casa ha una scala / che pencola, un ramo sulla porta / appeso a farle da festone ... / Un glicine, colore del suo profumo, / le dondola davanti, / luce senza splendore ... / Qualche volta, d'estate, / - la luna in cielo mi fa lucre - / ascoltato l'usignolo, / ciondolando tomo, ubriaco di vita, / incontro al nido spesso del mio amore ... / La mia casa ha una scala, / il vino dentro, un amore.

for Hidetoshi Nagasawa
The staircase in my house
is nearly broken, a branch
hangs on the door
for decoration...
Wisteria swings from it,
giving it color and fragrance
and very pale sunlight...
Some time in summer,
--the road lit by moonlight--
I hear the nightingale sing
on my way home, so drunk
with life and often I find
there the nest of my love...
...My home has a staircase,
the wine inside, one love.

Presumût unviâr

Za a' si insede tal cour
il ricuart dal sorêli.
L'arbe 'a si è fate pluj grise
davóur dal Dogâl*.
L'ajar al mène cocâj sù dal mâr,
liseirs tanche stras o penseirs,
vêrs dome pal lôr crût piucâ.
Davóur dai Vârs*, l'aghe
no splene pluj vôj di usseluts,
ma nîts za bandonâts.
Chi a' nol vignarà pluj nuje,
nuje nol podarà pluj vignî.
Il vencjâr tal grivi dal sil
al sgrîpie la sô storie di îr.
Al è stât forsi miôr
no vèti pluj ulût ben.
Za al si piart intal cour
il ricuart dal sorêli.
Parsè? Sino sote il scurî?

A' pol stâj. Dibot, 'ne gnot,

'i podin jessi d'unviâr.

Presunto inverno – Già si incista nel cuore / il ricordo del sole. / L'erba si è fatta più grigia / dietro il Dogale. / Il vento porta gabbiani dal mare, / leggeri come stracci o pensieri, / veri solo per il loro crudo gemere. // Nelle rogge, l'acqua / non specchia più occhi d'uccelletti, / ma nidi già abbandonati. / Qui non accadrà più nulla, / nulla potrà più accadere. // Il vincastro nel greve del cielo / incide a graffi la sua storia di ieri. / E' stato forse meglio / non averti più amata // Già si perde nel cuore / il ricordo del sole. / Perché? Siamo verso il tramonto? / Può darsi. Tra poco, una notte, / potremmo essere d'inverno.

* Il Dogal e Davour dai Vârs sono due località di Varmo, mio paese natale. Vârs – letteralmente: fiumi, fontanili, rogge, luoghi palustri – è toponimo prelatino. Originariamente significava tutto ciò che è umido, investendo uno spettro semantico amplissimo.

Anticipating Winter

Already just the memory
of sunlight pulls my heart.
The grass is almost gray
by the Dogale. Winds push
seagulls away from the sea,
floating like garbage or worries,
yet only alike in their cries.
The water in the wells
no longer reflect the eyes of birds,
only the empty nests.
Nothing else will happen here,
Nothing more can happen here.
The vine in the crook of the sky
scratches the events of the past.
It was probably best
that I stopped loving you.
Already the heart has lost
the remembrance of the sun.
Why? The sunset is near?
Could be. Night is so close,
it might be winter time.

Tango

A cjantin ...
Il vieli seneôs s'inflame.
Un tai, un tai e il mio tasê ...
Oh lune stuarde, gobe al lâ a mont
tal sun vieri di une armoniche
stonade ... Ejo chî no plui seneôs,

ta un ajar ch''a m'insumie,
sense plui storie, ni afans ...
'Ne frute a bale squasi s'ualant
tai cjantôns ... Oh rose sumiade,
oh rose di nuie! ...
Ta l'ostarie 'ne nuvole di fun,
ta mê realtât.

Tango – Cantano ... / Il vecchio voglioso s'infiama. / Un bicchiere, un bicchiere e il mio tacere ... / Oh luna storta, gobba al tramonto / nel vecchio sogno di un'armonica / stonata... E io qui non più voglioso / in un'aria che mi sogna, / senza più storia né affanni ... / Una ragazza balla quasi volando / negli angoli ... Oh rosa sognata / oh rosa di nulla! ... / Nell'osteria una nuvola di fumo, / la mia realtà.

Tango

While singing, ...
the lecherous old man gets aroused,
a glass of wine, a glass will shut me up...
Oh waning crooked moon, hunchbacked
in the dream-song played off key
on the harmonica... And I'm no longer
horny, caught in the dream of an aria,
without any past, with no worries...
A young girl is dancing, she's almost
flying around the corners... Oh rose
of my dreams, oh rose of emptiness ...
In the bar float clouds of smoke,
my reality.

Ressitaîf

... E ta l'isule li che tu stâs,
squasi nâf sui gorcs qualche volte,
o cuviarte che ai cocâj no ur dà pâs,
a' végnin bolps malabiôsis
a tossi tai siumps, a sirî li' grîsis rôsis
ch'a' san di sinise e a puartâlîs
là ch''a s'indresse la tôr ai cunfins
e li' surîs a' sisîchin fîssis tra lôr
ussant ônguli' e dinç ...
Des vóltis tu vâs là ch''a scomense
la penze ombrene dai pins sidinôs,

stees tu racueis pai pescjadôrs
ch' a' nissin ferâj di lontan,
immatunîts dai tiei focs mistereôs.
E ogne tant a' pàssin tal larc,
peâts al grin dal siump-cuarp,
barcjons ch'a' si sacòdin tai vints,
ch'e' àn scûris li' vèlis e il pès
di scarsanâj lunc i flancs
marumâts dal dûr vongolâ.
Mareôse 'a ju sberleche
la lune di lûs sense douli;
tu scjâmpis alore inte pustote dal bosc
là ch'al polse il corvat sore un poul,
che de pôre ti sghindi la grôcje sô vôs;
tu ti séntis, 'ne volte rivât,
mâ il mâr bonodôr da li' rôsis
a' ti fâs sercli tal ciâf
e tu ti siâris alore te tô soledât,
ch'al é piès, tu lu sâs, di là scjampant,
che za 'ne volte tu sês fûit dal presint
e al è chest il rapâr che tu âs vût
ch'a' ti è nemîc 'româi ancje il vint ...
Chi tu âs volúdis li' pièrtiis plantâdis*
sore li' tòmbris dai tiei passâts
(tòmbris par fente: no àn lûc di polse i passâts ...)
e a' ur ridin in ponte li' strâssis di duç i pecjâts,
ch'a' si ju puarti la buere 'ne volte
fasinsi palvês dal tió sanc sbrindinât.
E tu spiètis, trimant, ch'a' végnin amîs
a cjatâti, e a' végnin magari ogne tant ;
tú tu ti mètis in bande pâlit e freit
tanche une statue di sâl ...
A' ti bandônin pitost malcontents
e tomâts in sitât a' dîsin a fis e parino
che tu sês furtunât, che sí,
il paron tu âs forsi cjatât di mètigi in man

la dimission dal tió jessi uman,
e se che cumò tu sês doventât
lôr no lu san, che no tu scòltis,
ni tu cjacàris, che dut il jessi tu pàndis
tal strenzi-si dai tiei pôs dinç.

Recitativo – E nell'isola qui dove stai / quasi nave sui gorghi talvolta, / o coperta che non dà pace ai gabbiani, / vengono volpi capricciose/ a tossire nei sogni, a cercare i grigi fiori / che sanno di cenere e portarli / là dove si leva la torre ai confini / e i topolini parlottano fitto tra loro / arrotando unghie e denti .. / Talvolta vai dove comincia / la densa ombra dei pini silenziosi, / raccogli stecchi per i pescatori / che agitano fanali da lontano, / meravigliati dai tuoi fuochi misteriosi. / E ogni tanto passano al largo, / legati al grembo del sogno-corpo, / velieri che si agitano nei venti, / che hanno scure le vele e il peso / di scheletri lungo i fianchi / intristiti dal duro vagare sulle onde. / Amara li sbava la luna / di luce senza pietà; / fuggi allora nello spiazzo incolto del bosco, / dove riposa il corvo su un pioppo, / ché dalla paura ti scansi la sua roca voce; / ti siedì, una volta arrivato, / ma l'amaro profumo dei fiori / ti fa cerchio intorno alla testa / e ti chiudi allora nella tua solitudine, / ed è peggio, lo sai, dell'andar fuggendo, / ché già una volta sei scappato dal presente / ed è questo il riparo che hai avuto: / ti è nemico ormai anche il vento ... / Qui tu hai voluto fossero piantate le pertiche / sopra le tombe dei tuoi passati / (tombe per finta: non hanno luogo di pace i passati ...) / e ridono loro in punta gli stracci di tutti i peccati, / ché se li porti il vento una volta / facendosi palese del tuo sangue sbrindellato. / E aspetti, tremando, che vengano amici / a trovarti, e vengono magari ogni tanto; / tu ti metti in disparte pallido e freddo / come una statua di sale ... / Ti lasciano piuttosto scontenti / e tomati in città dicono a figli e parenti / che sei fortunato, che sì / il padrone hai forse trovato da mettergli in mano / le dimissioni dal tuo essere umano, / e ciò che adesso sei diventato / loro non sanno, ché non ascoltì, / né parlì, ché tutto l'essere esprimì / nello stringersi dei pochi tuoi denti.

* Si allude qui a un'usanza dei Longobardi. Sulle vuote tombe dei guerrieri morti lontano piantavano alcune pertiche, sulla cui cima garrivano le insegne di famiglia.

(I testi sono tratti dal volume Antologia privata, Moby Dick, Faenza, 1997)

Le traduzioni sono dell'autore

Recitative

...And here on the island where you live,
sometimes almost like a ship in its wake
or a tarpaulin that irritates, the seagulls
the sound of some capricious foxes
visits your dreams, searching gray flowers
that taste of ashes in order to drop them
under the tower by the frontier, near where
the mice endlessly talk among themselves
grinding their claws and their teeth...
Sometimes you go where the deep shadows
of the pine forest begin and there you
gather dry twigs for the fishermen' use
as from the distance they flicker their lanterns,
bewitched by your mysterious fires.
Bound to the navel of some dream-body
from time to time sailboats swing wide,
their dark sails are filled by wind currents
and skeletons weigh down their flanks,
embittered by their harsh fight with the sea.
A bitter moon seems to bathe them

with a pitiless light and you disappear
inside the pine-wood's small clearing,
where ravens rest on the black poplar tree;
you're frightened by their raucous cawing
and run until, finally safe, you sit down.
Yet the pungent aroma of wild flowers
pains your head as if some thorny crown
so you hide in your solitude
and you know this is worse than
running away; once already you fled
the present and this is where you landed:
even the wind has now become your foe...
Here you had wished the burial poles
of your past had been planted (false tombs:
your yesterdays won't find a place to rest...)¹
and on their tips all sins like rags flap in the wind
let it take them with him at least this one time,
aware they are soaked with your splattered blood.
And, trembling, you wait that some friends
might come to find you; some times they do come
as, pale and chilled, you sit alone in the corner
like a statue that's carved out of salt...
Quite disappointed, they leave you alone
to get back to the city, telling their parents
and children how unlucky you are: how you
might have succeeded in telling the boss
that you finally quit your terrestrial existence
so they will never discover what you have become,
and that you no longer can listen or talk, since
now you can speak only by gnashing your teeth.

NELVIA DI MONTE

Nelvia di Monte was born in Pampaluna, province of Udine, in 1952, but at the age of six went to live in Cassano d'Adda, province of Milan. Though she was a just a child at the time, she has not forgotten her father's language ("Ah, where have the years gone when with your figure only you would level the wavering Chaos?"), and Rainer Maria Rilke's line, placed in the title page of *Canto dell'acqua*, the first section of her only book, becomes the guide, the sign to follow in order to interpret a poetry that was born from the original language but which has been strongly "opposed" by another language from a rather dissimilar area.

In any case, "it is not by chance that Friuli, and more generally the Veneto area," as Luigi Reina writes, (one can think of poets such as Giotti, Marin, Noventa, Cergoly, Zanzotto, Calzavara, Naldini, Zanotto, Francescotto, Pola...), have provided exemplary models that can be a reference

for other dialect literatures as well.” This is the context in which the figure of Nelvia Di Monte emerges, and after her debut in *Diverse lingue* and *Il segnale*, she published *Cjanze da la Meriche* (*Songs from America*), 1996. Coming to grips with the Friulian tradition was no easy task; if it has a considerable weight for poets from Romagna and Lombardy, one can imagine its influence on poets that live within a compact linguistic medium long adopted by poets of note. Di Monte did not find herself – as did the prefacer of her book, Achille Serrao, with respect to the Neapolitan tradition – in a position of having to abandon the cantabile acquired by the collective imagination, and had she not chosen the long verse in order to tone down the echoes of a recent and less recent past (Serrao made the same choice), she would have treaded on well-known grounds, at least musically, since it is now an accepted fact that “the neodialect challenge...is waged simultaneously on two fronts: that of language and that of subject matter.” Reina again focuses on the present situation and tells us what is happening in the tangled and often confused and contradictory landscape of neodialect poetry.

But does Nelvia Di Monte have anything to do with neodialect poets? This is the question Achille Serrao poses in the Preface to *Cjanze da la Meriche*. “In the main lines,” the answer seems to be yes, Serrao writes, though there is no evidence of “a diffuse need for an interiorized reinvention of dialect and for linguistic sublimation.” But Di Monte does not follow pre-existing models, and although she lingers in a poetic narration of private events closely tied to public events, she shows no vernacular throwbacks or adaptations to situations that might remind one of the past.

Yet the epistolary tale, the confession subdivided into four sections (*Canto dell’acqua*, *Canto dell’aria*, *Canto del fuoco*, *Canto della terra*) exalts, as Serrao rightly notes, the “function of memory,” but in a very particular way, used as a perennial present on which the facts of existence converge.

The character of the book, informed by a presocratic poetic quality, with Lucretian echoes (“things will give each other so much light”), is revealed in a composed movement without lyric or metaphorical peaks, which disorients the reader who nevertheless perceives Luzi’s *andante* of *Su fondamenti invisibili*. Nelvia Di Monte remains faithful instead to words-things, words-facts, words-events, whose concatenation gives the hidden sense of things and creates a sort of mysterious acquisition. The news-song reaches the reader without jolts, riding the thread of memory, and forces him to grapple with the “American repertory that has always seized our imagination. We realize that it is a new interpretation, which intends neither to oppose what has already been said nor erase it; it only wants to put forth a condition and offer it simply, without trappings.

There was no other way out and so “the common language, spoken by me for a few years, then abandoned and, perhaps, denied ... and finally again acknowledged and loved” ties her umbilical cord to the root again, but only in order to find psychological consonances, echoes of a submerged breath, residues of lost or broken dreams, and to build a platform with them on which to set sail. All this has happened as naturally as breathing, otherwise Nelvia Di Monte would not have thanked Roberto Giannoni for having “made her understand that dialect is not a minor but a deep language; and that the low tone allows one to listen to life more closely.”

Bibliography

Cjanze da la Meriche, Florence, 1996.

Criticism

A. Serrao, “Per *Cjanze da la Meriche*,” in *Cjanze da la Meriche*, cit.

*

‘O stoi ben, mari, ma da siet dîs ‘o viôt
tante aghe, lassât il puart spagnûl, dome
aghe e nûl e l’eliche ‘e volte tal mâr
un agâr che daurmàn al si siare sglonf
di ajar e po nuje: al è dut cussì grant
cussì grant come se i tiei voi, mari, no
viodéssin plui lis cuelinis e un plan dut
vualif al las viars lis monz sence un vencjâr.
A’ nassin, jo no sai dulà, pizzulis
vongulis ch’a’ montin tôr dal vapôr e
si discjolin viars un altri lûc lontan:
dute cheste aghe ch’e si môf planc e si
siare compagne ‘e jè come une biele

femine che'e ti cjale e tu restis là

incocalit.

* Sto bene, madre, ma da sette giorni vedo / tanta acqua, lasciato il porto spagnolo, solo / acqua e nuvole e l'elica ribalta nel mare / un solco che subito si chiude gonfio / di aria e poi niente: è tutto così grande / così grande come se i tuoi occhi, madre, / non vedessero più le colline e una piana tutta / liscia andasse verso i monti senza un salice.// Nascono, io non so dove, piccole / onde che salgono attorno al vapore e / si sciolgono verso un altro luogo lontano: / tutta quest'acqua che si muove piano / e si richiude uguale è come una bella / femmina che ti guarda e tu resti là / allocchito.

*

Mom, I am well, but for seven days I've only
seen water; we have just left the Spanish port
and only see misty waves the propeller chums
up, leaving behind an empty, deep trench
that suddenly closes; then there's nothing: mom,
it's so very huge, so huge, as if your own eyes
could not see the hills but only flat land,
with no weeping willow until the tree line.
I do not know where these little waves
might begin, which rise with the steam
and then vanish in some distant place:
far too much water moving so slowly
that evenly folds wave upon wave that
it seems like a beautiful lady who's looking
at you while dumbly you stand like a stone.

*

Chì, c'joc di robis
gnovis, 'o crodevi tal inprin che il vueit
ch'o sintivi calchi sere, dismitùt
di lavorâ, al fos dome pal intric dai
pôs carantans ingredeâz tes sclofis
de sporte, ricuart di nestre mari. Ma
cuan'che i cjamps a' son cressûz tôr dal cjasâl,
daûr dai poi e dai cjinârs – bastardâz
ancje lôr – alc si viargeve, no sai cemût
dîti. Cui sa s'al lave ben chest sît par me,
contadin di montagne: masse lontans
i cunfins e l'adôr ch'al si piart-vie dilunc.
Vuê di matine il cîl al è tant celèst
come cuan'che il rosean s'incagnive

jù pes vals dal Nadisòn, e cussì font

che tu t'al cjatis disore, daür, intôr.

Epûr, torcenât da tante largure,

'o stoi a voltis come dentri une presòn.

* Qui, ubriaco di cose / nuove, credevo all'inizio che il vuoto / che sentivo qualche sera, terminato / il lavoro, fosse solo per l'imbarazzo / dei pochi soldi intrecciati nei cartocci / della sporta, ricordo di nostra madre. Ma / quando i campi sono cresciuti attorno alla fattoria, / dietro i pioppi e i castagni – inselvaticiti / anche loro – qualcosa si apriva, non so come / spiegarti. Chi sa se andava bene questo posto per me, / cittadino di montagna: troppo distanti / i confini e l'orizzonte che si perde lontano. // Questa mattina il cielo è così azzurro / come quando il vento di nord-est infuriava / giù per le valli del Natisone, e così profondo / che te lo trovi sopra, dietro, intorno. / Eppure, circondato da questa grande distesa / mi trovo a volte come in una prigione.

*

Standing here, drunk on new things

I thought, at the start, that the emptiness

sensed on some evening, when work was done,

was due to my shame for having

only a few pennies rolled up in paper

inside my purse, the only gift from my mom.

But when the corn fields appeared by the mill,

behind the poplars and chestnut groves

that had grown wild, something did happen,

I can't explain it. Who knows if this place is

the right one for me, a mountain farmer: these

big lots and that horizon seem lost and so distant.

The sky his morning is so perfectly blue,

it recalls the wild north-easterly wind

that blew through the Natisone valley, a total

blueness that seems to enfold you all over.

And still, surrounded by this endless vastness,

sometime I feel like I'm trapped in some jail.

*

E cumò 'e jè uere: " Malvinas Argentinas "

plachis e umidis di plois, e' son dongje

e' son nestris ... cjapant dentri cjasis e vîs ?

Pavlovsk, Nikolajewka : fevelàvial

cualchidùn la mê lenghe ? Dulà ise

la femine che mi à butât dongje dal pît

une patate cjalde? Il pizzul scuindût

daür de cotule ch'al cjalave spaurit,

jo in divise di cercandul, so pari
lontan, dongje di un katiusha magari,
a spietâmi daûr de ferade, doman.

* E adesso è guerra “Malvinas Argentinas”/ piatte e umide di pioggia, sono vicine / sono nostre ... case e vivi compresi? / Pavlovsk, Nikolajewka: parlava / qualcuno la mia lingua? Dov'è / la donna che mi ha buttato vicino al piede / una patata calda? Il piccolo nascosto / dietro la gonna che guardava impaurito, / io in divisa da mendicante, suo padre / lontano, a fianco di un katiusha magari, / ad aspettarmi dietro la ferrovia, domani.

*

War again: the Malvinas Islands of Argentina
so flat and full of rain, they seem so near to us,
are they our own...including houses and people?
Pavlovsk, Nikolajewa: is someone speaking
our language? Where is she now
that woman who threw baked potatoes
close to my feet? And that young child hiding
inside her long skirt while watching in terror,
and me wearing clothes like a beggar, his father
away, probably near his katiusha and waiting
tomorrow for me, by some railroad station.

*

Ma chel pizzul leandri che tu mi às dât
cuan'ch'o soi tomade, cumò al è un arbul
che no si pues plui stramudâ! Duc'i ains
cun lui 'o ài fâtis gnovis plantutis di regalâ
'o 'n cjolerai une e par tantis stagjons
un balcon j pues bastâ. E dopo ? No
savarin ce tant grande ch'e sarà,
se cualchidun un puest j destinarà o
se ai nevôz nol imparte nuje di un flôr.

* Ma quel piccolo oleandro che mi hai dato / quando sono tomata, ora è un albero / che non si può più spostare! Ogni anno / ne ha fatto nuove piantine da regalare / ne prenderò una e per tante stagioni / un balcone le può bastare. E dopo? / Non sapremo quanto grande diventerà, / se qualcuno un posto le avrà destinato o / se ai nipoti non importa granché di un fiore.

(da Cjanz da la meriche)

Le traduzioni sono dell'autrice.

*

That tiny oleander you gave me
when I came back now is a tree
I can no longer move it anywhere!

I give new sprouts each year as gifts;
I'll keep one and for a few seasons
my balcony will do. But after?
Who knows how tall it might grow,
if someone will save it a place or
if our nephews do not care for flowers.

TRENTINO-ALTO ADIGE

Elio Fox

1. Nineteenth-century roots

It is not possible to speak of twentieth-century dialect poetry of Trentino without a brief mention of the late nineteenth-century, which saw the beginning of a new poetic season that would influence all of the poetry of Trentino in the twentieth century.

After the splendor of eighteenth and early nineteenth-century poetry with the poets of Rovereto (in the eighteenth century don Giuseppe Felice Givani, don Giacomo Antonio Turrati and Giovanni Di Dio Galvagni; in the nineteenth don Domenico Zanolli), the axis shifted to Trento and Valle di Non. The physician Giovanni Battista Garzetti (Trento 1872-Venice 1839) was the first to embark on a renewal of poetry, which had been almost exclusively the preserve of the clergy for half a century, by making it "secular" and introducing elements of disquieting modernity for the times, especially with regard to the many social and moral ties binding women to the family. A few years later, a great modernity and a profane vision of the world was introduced in Valle di Non by Pietro Tommaso Scaramuzza (Cles 1818-Trento 1883) and, above all, by Bortol Sicher (Còredo 1846-1884), perhaps the greatest poet of Trento of all time, but not very well known because of his use of a dialect of Ladin derivation, practically incomprehensible outside the valley.

Just before Sicher's death, Valle di Non gave birth to Guglielmo Bertagnoli Sanzeno 1881-Storo 1917), who was not only a good poet, but a historian of the valley as well.

All the elements to give ever greater substance to the dialect poetry of Trentino were already present, and it would be up to three poets from Trento, whose work continues even today, after almost a century, to find followers and acceptance, and even the benevolent judgment of critics. They are Bepi Mor (Trento-1853-1923) and Vittorio Felini (Trento 1862-1920) who, being of humble origin, would finally give a literary voice to the people; and a young man from the middle class who would engage in an open-minded and absorbing play with dialect, Carlo Nani (Trento 1865-Graz, Austria, 1916).

They are the ones who initiated the best-known part of Trentino's literary history, and their writing has influenced the subject matter and the style of the dialect poetry of Trentino almost to the present day.

2. Austrian Domination

Perhaps, given Trentino's atypical situation in the early twentieth century, it might be useful to trace briefly the cultural and institutional history of this period, keeping in mind first of all that when the first poets of Trentino began writing, Trento was not Italian yet, because Austrian domination ended only in 1918. For this reason, not of small importance, in the sentiments of the most cultured and socially engaged part of the people of Trento there prevailed, whether or not it was manifested, a longing for the far homeland or at least the sense that it was impossible to recognize themselves in an Italian, not Austrian, model.

Trento's condition at the start of the century and until 1918 was one of institutional and political division that often involved the family itself, between those who backed or at least tolerated the order established and imposed by the Austrian authorities, and those who did not support or tolerate it. It would suffice to recall that Guglielmo Bertagnoli died in 1917 in Storo, lower Trentino, as an officer of the Italian army, while in the same period his father was a high officer in the Austrian army. Everyone remembers the hero Damiano Chiesa of Rovereto, executed by the Austrians for desertion in 1916, while his cousin Guido, who became one of Trentino's major playwrights, both in dialect and Italian (a close friend of Diego Fabbri), was a volunteer with Austria and devoted to the Austrian cause.

At the time there were also sharp clashes between opposite sides, especially the Catholic on the one hand and the liberal and socialist on the other, the former defending the status quo and the latter looking for changes, especially a radical institutional change. The poet Giuseppe Mor had given voice to the secular and liberal Trento, while the poet Vittorio Felini was the spokesman of Catholic moderates and conservatives. Carlo Nani was irredentista and for his patriotic intemperance exiled to Trieste, where he spent almost all the rest of his rather short life. He died in 1916 during his confinement in Graz, Austria, after being discharged from the Austrian army due to a grave illness.

Nevertheless, despite the difficulty of communicating with Italy and its poets, the poets of Trento sought these contacts even before the Great War of 1915-18, not only in order to come out of the isolation in which they worked, but also because the new in dialect poetry came from the south, certainly not from the north. There were various attempts on the part of the Trento poets who were already known at the start of the century or who were beginning to write at that time to overcome their cultural isolation. Giuseppe Mor got in touch with Trilussa and Berto Barbarani, an

Trilussa came to Trento for an evening of great poetry held no less than at the Teatro Sociale in 1903, with almost a thousand people present. Berto Barbarani became a friend of the poet and historian Antonio Pranzelores (Trento 1880-1940) and of Vittorio Felini, and he went to Trentino for evenings of dialect poetry on several occasions until Antonio Pranzelores' death.

3. The first contacts with Italy

After the Liberation, there were the attempts, for the most part successful, by the poet Giacomo Floriani (Riva del Garda 1889-1968) to "come out of Trentino" with his first poems, some of which were published by various papers between 1922 and 1924, from the *Illustrazione del Popolo* of Turin to the *Gazzettino* of Venice. But it is necessary to reflect on this period, in order to see what took place until the Thirties.

The contacts with Italy in those years were not only just attempts, but are also one-sided attempts, namely from Trentino towards the rest of Italy and not vice versa. It was the poets of Trentino who strived to call the attention of Italian culture to themselves, and Italian culture answered, when it did answer, in an sporadic and occasional way, or it did not answer at all.

If this isolation of Trento's dialect culture from the rest of Italy could have some grounds before the Great War and thus before Trentino's annexation to the motherland, such grounds should have disappeared after 1918 with the fall of borders, with the full and free use of the Italian language and of the Trento dialect which had not been openly opposed before, but certainly not favored. In reality, things did not go that way. Even after the annexation, in fact, Trento's dialect culture was unable to create concrete and stable contacts with the "rest of Italy." The few poets still active after the war were barely able to maintain the contacts already established, but there was a lack of new opportunities.

Moreover, the situation after the war was totally precarious. Vittorio Felini – treated at length in the section dedicated to him – died in 1920; Giuseppe Mor in 1923, and they did not leave noteworthy heirs. Guglielmo Bertagnoli, born in 1881, died in 1917, when only thirty-six, and this was the loss that the region's dialect poetry felt the most, because Trentino would have to wait almost fifty years for a poet of that caliber, until the appearance of Marco Pola and Arcadio Borgogna in particular.

The period that followed the death of Giuseppe Mor in 1923, the last of the so-called "fathers of the dialect of Trentino," was a very difficult one for the dialect poetry of the region. It was a period practically without poets, and it was to remain that way for at least ten years, if one does not count Giacomo Florini, whose presence was still uncertain until 1928 (the year of his first book) and Antonio Pranzelores (1880-1940), who in his whole life wrote only twelve dialect poems.

4. Signs of the new

The period of the first, faint reawakening of dialect poetry after the Great War can be set towards the thirties. In that period Teresa degli Alessandrini began to write interesting poems: she was born in Trento in 1871 and died in 1940. During the period between the first and second world wars she won several contests, did not publish anything on her own, but appeared in a small anthology in 1936. Livio Tissot became fully active around the thirties, though he had written his first poems in 1918 and 1919, when he was in the army in Rome and Viterbo. Livio Tissot is the first poet of eastern Trentino, and wrote in the far from easy – and never before written – dialect of the valley of Cison. A student of his dialect, he would give Trentino not only respectable poems, but also a very good dictionary of the speech of his valley. His period of greatest activity began in 1928-1930 and continued till 1970. He published a book of poems in 1965.

The last poet of the century, who however began to write only in his later years, was Mario Alneri, who was born in Cles (Valle di Non) in 1899 and died in Novara in 1963. With a degree in literature, he taught in Piedmontese high schools. He spent his summers in Trentino, where he discovered his popular poetic vein, rooted in nostalgia and memory. His poems appeared only in journals and newspapers.

We have thus reached 1900, and from now on we will deal only with poets born in that century who began to write and publish poems around the thirties or later.

5. Between the two wars

The brief revival in the thirties was also due to two young men from Trento, who in time would reveal a more than respectable talent. The first was Italo Alberti, who was born in Trento in 1902 and died there in 1973. He was a difficult and irritable poet with few friends. Having an independent and at times rebellious character, he put instead a great deal of delicacy in his poetry. An expert on his Trento dialect, he never published anything himself, but his complete works appeared in 1975, edited by his close friend Gino De Mozzi, the author of a beautiful collection of the proverbs of Trentino.

Another poet who published his first poems in journals and newspapers in those years was Umberto Cattani, who was born in Trento in 1910 and died there in 1993. Umberto Cattani also, though he had been writing since 1930, published his first book only in 1978, but with the inclusion of his early poems. In 1992 he began to gather all his material in order to publish his collected works, which came out in 1993, the same year of his death, and he never saw the book published..

It is interesting to note how immediately after the thirties dialect poetry attracted even Nedda Falzogher (Trento 1906-1956), one of the best poets of Trentino in Italian of all time and known nationally as well. Nedda Falzogher made a very small contribution, only three poems, yet important not only for their quality, but also for the example that she wanted to give by using "the language of the people," that was already encountering the first obstacle with fascist rhetoric. She was a good friend of Marco Pola and all the most important men of culture of her time. Her house was a true literary parlor. A victim of polio at an early age, she died immobilized in a wheelchair.

In these precarious conditions, the heaviest burden of the dialect poetry of Trentino rested for the moment on the shoulders of the aforementioned Giacomo Floriani, not a prolific poet, but methodical. In 1928 his friend Riccardo Maroni, an industrial engineer and a man of great culture and

sensibility, published his first book of poems, *Fiori de montagna*, to be followed in time by another four, all published by Maroni, who later assembled all his works in one volume in 1982.

The “harvest” then is still minimal in this stage between the wars, but the new seed is ripening, which would bring the great fruits of the best dialect poetry of Trentino of all time, beginning in the sixties and continuing to the present day.

The major exponent were, as we mentioned briefly before, Marco Pola and Arcadio Borgogno in particular. The former was born in Trento in 1906 and died there in 1991, and the latter was born in Borgo Valsugana in 1914 and died in Trento in 1977. These two poets will be dealt with at length in the section dedicated to them.

6. New perspectives for the dialect poetry of Trentino

The rebirth of the dialect poetry of Trentino is tied to what happened in the sixties, when Marco Pola published his first books of dialect poetry (he had begun as a poet in Italian), and when the first poems of Arcadio Borgogno became known. They are the undisputed originators of the excellent season of poetry in Trentino that developed in those years. In their wake came other poets, who at the end of the century would produce the best part of the dialect poetry of Trentino, which would experience a second flowering – fortunately still going on – after the eighties and up to the present day. We will take a quick look at these poets “sowers” who came to light in the first decades of the century.

Aldo Salvadei was born in Mantova in 1900 from parents from the Val Rendena, and from childhood he spent summers in Caderzone, his parents’ birthplace. After the Great War he moved to Trentino, and worked in Trento as a pediatrician. He kept in touch with Caderzone, which he considered his true birthplace, and began to write poems after W.W. II, codifying for the first time the dialect of his valley.

Celestino Costa was born in Trento in 1901, a baker and connoisseur of dialect. He discovered a popular poetic vein after W.W. II, and used it to describe things and sentiments with exemplary directness. He was known with the pseudonym of “Nane dela Zervara,” because he was born on Cervara Street and was known by all. He died in 1962.

Marco Pola was born in Roncegno Valsugana in 1906 and died in Trento in 1991. His life and work are discussed in the section dedicated to him.

Lorenzo Salvadori was born in Denno, Valle di Non, in 1907. After moving several times in Italy and abroad, toward the end of W.W. II he settled in Rome, where he died in 1972. He returned every year to Denno, where he had built a house for the summer. He never forgot the dialect of his town and codified it, and was about to publish his first book when he died. It was published by his friends in 1973.

Antonio Bruschetti was also born in 1907 in Lizzana di Rovereto, in Vallagarina. A mild and reserved man, he began writing poems and comedies in dialect in his later years. He published his first three books of poetry between 1974 and 1980, and in 1985 he gathered all his poems in one volume, with the addition of new poems. He has been considered a “poet farmer” because his poetry speaks of the land and its labors. He had a good knowledge of dialect. He died in 1993.

1907 was an important year for the dialect poetry of Trentino, because Arnaldo Cristoforetti, better known in Trentino and elsewhere as Nando da Ala, was also born in that year. He was first an elementary school teacher in Italy and Africa and then worked for the railroad. A difficult, extroverted and generous man, he was the image of his poetry, which he began to write at a ripe age. In 1985 he published his only book, but his complete works appeared in 1976, a year after his death, edited by the friends of the “Filò” he had founded in 1962.

Valentino dell’Antonio was born in 1909 in Moena in Val di Fassa. He was better known as Tinòto Mònech (mònech stands for sexton), who established himself as one of the best poets in the Ladin language (or dialect?). He published his poems while living, but his complete works appeared only after his death, which took place in 1981.

Luigi Amech was born in Trento in 1914. He was a humble and honest poet, with a good knowledge of dialect and a good popular culture. He was inspired by the poems of Vittorio Felini, whom he considered his master, basically following his work. He left three volumes of respectable poetry with a popular bent, in some places very funny. He died rather young in 1967.

Arcadio Borgogno was born in Borgo Valsugana in 1914. He wrote in the dialect of Trento, where he died in 1977. His life and work are discussed in the section dedicated to him.

Corrado Trotter (died in 1997) and Quirino Bezzi (died in 1998) were also born in 1914, in Primiero and Val di Sol respectively. They are two poets who refresh the poetry of their valleys with original contributions. Trotter, an elementary school teacher and historian of his valley, is a poet-narrator, and his poetry alternates between descriptions of life in the valley and personal memories. Bezzi, also a teacher and historian, used various registers in his poetry, from the lyrical to the narrative, and spoke of his valley, his people and their social, historical and civil issues. Clelia Bellutti Golser was born in 1914 and died in 1973. She can be described as the poet of the family and published her only work in 1960.

Guido Bond was born in Innsbruck, where his family was in confinement during the war. He revealed his poetic vein after W.W. II, publishing in newspapers and reciting in the microphones of RAI in Trento. His poetry shows a popular bent, with a good dose of humor. He died in 1982 and his work appeared posthumously in 1993.

Marco Candido Nesler was born in Malosco, Valle di Non, in 1920. He is the first poet of the high part of the valley to write in dialect. In addition to poetry, he also wrote comedies in dialect. He died in Malosco in 1989. His work was known in the valley, but his poems were collected by his widow only after his death.

Marco Fonatanari (Trento 1920-1993), began writing in 1946. An Alpino and known in the mountain territory, he used to hold long poetic

meeting with his own poems, which he improvised, and read poems by Bepi Mor, Vittorio Felini and Carlo Nani. He went around the province with another poet, Enrico Rosato, to bring dialect poetry to outlying associations, libraries, and the elderly. He published his only book in 1992.

Giuseppe Caprara was born in Avio, in the lower Valagarina, in 1921. He is one of the most interesting voices in the poetic landscape of Trentino after the sixties. He was called the poet of the mountain and the poet of suffering. Wounded in Russia during the war, he became an invalid and spent the last fifteen years of his life practically in bed. He always lived in Ala, in the lower Val Lagarina and died in 1982. He published six small volumes of dialect poetry between 1964 and 1981. An anthology of his best work was published after his death by the poets of "Filò," the group of dialect poets which he joined in 1976. He had great expressive power, an austere verse, intentionally irregular, and used a plain and suggestive dialect.

7. The crisis in the aftermath of the war

But quality would be achieved by degrees. The aftermath of the war until the sixties was a period characterized not only by a scarcity of dialect poetry in Trentino, but by the retreat of dialect culture in general. Theaters closed, the companies of amateur actors dissolved, the dialect theater was in crisis, the people preferred the cinema and television was imminent... In the absence of good poetry, a type of low versification began to spread, because dialect was used in any case. This was in part the heritage of gascism, that looked askance at local cultures. Not everything was lost, however, because the handful of poets active during the period of fascism (Teresita degli Alessandrini, Umberto Cattani, Italo Bertotti, Arcadio Borgogno) were joined by Celestino Costa, Mario Aleri, and Marco Fontanari, who would carry on the tradition of dialect poetry in the decade of 1945-1955.

Now dialect was becoming fashionable. Other writers entered the scene and improvised as poets. But they were not very good and the response was not far behind. In fact, it was this lowering of the level of dialect poetry in Trentino from 1945 to 1960 that provoked the reaction of the two major poets of the post-war period, Marco Pola and Arcadio Borgogno, followed almost immediately by Renzo Francescotti and Silvano Forti and, later, Italo Varner. But let us proceed in order.

The impetus toward revival was not homogeneous and not all attributable to the merits of the poets alone. A poet, in fact, does not live as an extraneous body within the process of civil and cultural growth of his community. He interprets its desires (and illusions), appropriates a certain drive toward generational changes, and thus gradually takes part in the development and enrichment of the civil society to which he belongs. From it he draws the inspiration for his poetry. It is society that now demands more, and critics too are taking a greater interest in this small world. Writing poetry, then, becomes above all a problem of individual culture, and at the same time a problem of linguistic maturity, which in Trentino has not always achieved its best potential.

Even the best poets of the early century, Mor and Felini, were influenced by a homespun pathos, and while writing respectable poetry they often yielded to sentimentality. But if those were the times for this type of poetry, "fashionable" from the beginning of the century to the second world war, afterwards it became necessary to find the courage to change and to gauge the new wind that was sweeping Italy after the war. Instead Trentino, certainly from the beginning, but even between 1930 and 1960, was overrun by an orgy of mothers, grandmothers, grandfathers, home, garden, fairs, fountains, streams, and dawns and sunsets; or too many moons, under whose faint light nothing at all happened. In Trentino there had never been a blissfulness of the absurd, a journey into the absolute, a transgression in the purest fantasy. And almost always the flatness of the subject matter was accompanied by a flat style. Poetry needed someone to show the right way at the right time.

8. With Pola and Borgogno there is the first link between the poetry of Trentino and national culture

Marco Pola and Arcadio Borgogno entered the scene in this context, the former more than the latter because Pola's books were immediately available, while Borgogno, whose first book was published after his death, could only be found in some journals and anthologies.

It was thus Marco Pola who first took the initiative of writing in dialect and teaching many how to write and how to say things differently. In a moment of particular stagnation, of mere survival of dialect culture and poetry, Pola sent out a challenge thinking that it was the right moment precisely due to the presence of too many simple versifiers who found ample room in a journal published in those years, *Ciàcere en trentin e veneto* (1958-1964)¹, which will be certainly be remembered more for its merits than its flaws, but which had unintentionally become also a fast vehicle for the diffusion of mediocrity.

If that was poetry, and if that was dialect, Pola told himself, then he might as well give up. But Pola was not convinced that the dialect of poets was only that one, and that the subject matter of poetry was always the same. And he began to extract gold from popular culture and the wealth of its wisdom to show a way which would be followed by the best and most sensitive dialect poets of the city of Trento and its surroundings.

The same can be said of Arcadio Borgogno. With his poetry of high tragedy and moral uneasiness, he taught that with dialect one can write tragedy, with that same dialect that before him and Pola had been used to make people laugh and as the vehicle of an exasperated chauvinism.

A first link with dialect culture and poetry on a national level was no doubt established, but there was still a long way to go before this new consciousness could be perceived outside the Trento province.

Pola's and Borgogno's work would influence all dialect poetry of Trentino just enough to oblige most subsequent dialect poets of the province to look to their almost perfect rhymes, their spirit of observation and introspection and, for the poets of Trento and surrounding areas, to their dialect, used with a level of control never before achieved. After the sixties then the poetry of Trentino seemed to have found new courage and new nourishment.

It wasn't only the national recognition finally achieved by Pola and Borgogno that gave a boost to the poetry of Trentino, but also the emergence of a new generation of poets born – physically and culturally – either between the wars or even after W.W. II, who inherited the new spirit that was

to inform the dialect poetry of Trentino, if it wanted to leave behind its provincial ghetto.

These voices, new even if some of them not young – because while born around the twenties they were not heard until after the sixties – are in particular those of Ezio Endrizzi, born in Turin in 1919, the same year in which don Valerio Bottura was born in Aldeno; Mario Antolini, born in Tione in 1920; Gianni Meneguz, who was born in Pieve di Transacqua in 1922 and died in 1981; Paolo Cereghini, who was born in Trento in 1923 and died in 1995; Luciano Marconi, born in Trento in 1924 and now living in Switzerland; Lino Lucchi, born in Trento in 1924; Renata Franceschi, born in Trento in 1925, the same year in which Lorenzo Cosso was born in Milan, Bruna Zenatti in Rovereto, and Enrico Rossaro and Luciano Baroni in Riva del Garda.; Carmelo Binelli, born in Pinzolo in 1927 and died in 1987; Valentina Albertini Bonafini, born in Spiazzo in 1929; Giovanni Borzaga, born in Trebto in 1931 and died in 1998; Gastone Pancheri, born in Tione in 1931; Gianfranco Fontana, born in Roverè della Luna in 1931 and died in 1985; Gaetano Castelli, born in Trento in 1933; Arrigo Colpi, born in 1935 in Folgara; Gianfranco Arlanch, born in Mori in 1935; Francesca Candotti, born in Trento in 1936 and now living in Brindisi; Tiziana Decarli, born in Trento in 1937; Franco Tonini, born in Stramentizzo in 1937; Milena Zucchelli, born in Riva del Garda in 1938; Dario Salsa, born in Pieve di Bono in 1939; Luciano Decarli and Silvio Tardivo, born in 1940 in Léxico and Brentonio respectively; Roberto Spagolla, born in Telve Valsugana in 1943; Silvana Gottardi Ferrari, born in Brentonico in 1944; Dino Zambotti, born in Fiavé in 1945; Elisa Polla, born in Caderzone in 1950 and living in Tione; Livio Andreatta, born in Piné in 1950; Bruna Sartori, born in Borgo Valsugana in 1950; Maria Carla Failo, born in Baselga in 1952; Flavio Antonilli, born in Tione in 1957; and Luciano Daldoss, born in the valley of Ledro in 1957.

This is not meant to be the census of all the poets of the twentieth century, some of whom have been active since W.W. II. I have mentioned those who, in my opinion, with various results have contributed to the growth of the dialect poetry of Trentino.

A special mention deserve ten contemporary poets, four women and six men, who have made significant contributions to all the local contemporary poetic culture.

The four women are Grazia Binelli, born in 1939 in Pizolo and living in Rovereto, who has been writing poetry only for the last ten years. Lia Cinà Bezzi, born in 1942 in Rovereto; Antonia Dalpiaz, born in Trento in 1955; Luciana Sicheri, born in the Giudicarie in 1959; who uses the transitional dialect of the area, which shows almost no Lombard influence, but is closer to the dialect of the Basso Serca and in Part of Trento. They are four very interesting voices, quite different in temperament, subject matter, and style. Four voices that, in their own way, have sailed against the current of better-known poetry.

Grazia Binelli has “invented” her own narrative mode, mostly addressing her own “self,” and has added a nice touch of imagination and descriptive lightness to the dialect poetry of the region. A late-comer to poetry, she has rapidly become known in the last five years. In 1996 she published her first book of poems.

Lia Cinà Bezzi, of Rovereto, has always used her native dialect though she lived for many years in Trento. A reflective, meditative poet, she is a careful observer of nature and the family. She writes short poems, with a good use of dialect, and does not like descriptions. Her poems have not been collected in a volume.

Antonia Dalpiaz has brought an “aggressive,” but wise and timely femininity and womanly pride to dialect poetry, which were almost totally absent in the region. She has published two books of poetry in which she writes about the joys of love.

Luciana Sicheri’s poetry is characterized by strong naturalistic elements (nature seen as friend-foe, as comfort-consternation), and by a secular religiosity in her at times grating dialog with the supernatural. Her dialect is authentic and strong, with a great deal of spontaneity and expressiveness. She has published one book of poems.

The six male poets are the older Bruno Groff, born in Trento in 1913, and Anselmo Chini, born in Segno in 1918; Bruno Banàl, born in Rovereto in 1926; Silvano Forti, born in Romagnano in 1927; Sergio Collini, born in Spiazzo Rendena in 1928; and Fabrizio da Trieste, born in Grado in 1935, who writes in many dialectal registers. These poets stand out not only for the quality of their work, always of good caliber, but also for the attention they have given to society, which is reflected in their poetry.

Bruno Groff is the dean of dialect poets of Trentino (he was eighty-five on June 15, 1998), and has achieved a well-deserved fame with the public and careful consideration by the critics, as both satirical and lyric poet. He began writing at an advanced age by contributing to the journal *Ciàcere en trentin e veneto*, founded by his father Lionello in 1958. He has published eight volumes of poetry between 1978 and 1998.

Anselmo Chini has been well known for years, even though his first work dates back to 1985. In love with his dialect and his valley, his work is rooted in an ancient civilization and an ancient language. Writing of simple things, looking at the past without rhetoric, he uses brief verses whose musicality is highlighted by the impeccable use of dialect.

Bruno Banàl has emerged particularly during this last decade, becoming the best contemporary poet in the dialect of Rovereto. His poetry is characterized by the fanciful interpretation of reality, the full and mature use of metaphor, and his brisk and jagged dialog.

Silvano Forti brings in his poetry the strong breath of the countryside, the zesty moments of rural life, with its sacrifices, its rare joys, the fleeting serenity. A poetry of reminiscence, but above all a poetry of flash-backs from a world that no longer exists, for which there is fondness, but no regret.

Sergio Collini has “constructed” his poetry through meditation and reflection, looking through disillusioned eyes at his valley and its people. A valley of emigrants, of seasonal migrants, thus of labors and suffering, expressed by the poet in crisp and sinewy verses.

Fabrizio da Trieste is a very flexible poet, with a wide range of interests, who knows to perfection various dialects, from his ancestral one of

Anaunia, to his native one of Grado, to that of Trento, where he lives. He is a keen, brilliant, analytical poet, versatile and multilingual, whose strength lies in the subject matter and musicality of his verses.

And, of course, there are Renzo Francescotti and Lilia Slomp Ferrari, discussed in the sections dedicated to them.

In conclusion, today one can say with good reason – despite the supposed crisis of dialects – that Trentino is experiencing its best poetic season ever. Not only due to prominent voices such as Lilia Slomp Ferrari and Renzo Francescotti, but also to the presence of other strong figures like the ten poets just mentioned, who for lack of space have not been afforded the attention and consideration they deserve.

NOTES

1 The first series of the journal *Ciàcere en trentin e veneto* came out from 1958 to 1964. It was a monthly of eight or twelve pages in a tabloid format. When the first issue came out, the founder and editor, Lionelo Groff, was already 78 years old. He ran it for six years, practically alone. The name remained property of the family. In 1985, thanks to a courageous publisher and a small group of people, all volunteers, who took on the task of writing the journal, *Ciàcere en trentin e veneto* resumed publication, this time as a quarterly of 48 pages plus cover, format A4 (21.0x29.7). It was transformed into a journal of dialect culture, with essays, research and studies, and not just poetry. And with essays and dialect poetry from other parts of Italy. As of 1998, 50 issues have been published with almost 2500 pages.

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The English translations for the Veneto section are by Rina Ferrarelli

VITTORIO FELINI

Vittorio Felini was born in Trento on October 23, 1862 from a family of very modest means, which forced him to find work at a tender age. Self-taught, he was a worker and craftsman all his life, until his death on May 23, 1920. He began to write poetry late in life and published his first book only in 1907.

Before publishing his first book, he was able to publish his first poems weekly in the daily *Il Trentino*. He then decided to collect them in a volume, comforted by the success he had attained with the readers. His first book, *Ariete trentine*, was dedicated to the “sweet memory” of his mother, who “with the language of the people had been able to express, amid life’s struggles, the most delicate ideas of Christian and domestic virtues.”

During those years Felini wrote a great deal and at times in an irrelevant manner. His friends realized this and so did he, who said: “I wrote too much; had I written less, I could have polished my work better...” But he explained the reasons for this frenzied output – in two years one hundred fifty poems published in two volumes (the second, titled *Fiori de prà*, came out in 1909), a comedy, a long poem, a one-act play – “I wanted to take advantage of lost time.” All the same, a serious critic from the region such as Oddone Brentari wrote in a Milan journal that Felini was “one of the best exponents of the popular soul of Trentino.”

There followed a hiatus of a few years, then came *Sule ròste de l’Ades*, a collection of verses, in 1913. After the war broke out, his writing became much more scarce. He wrote to a friend: “My poor Muse has never looked at me so askance as in the present.” An excessively stern judgment, because in those years he wrote a few beautiful poems from exile. No doubt he never again wrote at the pace he had kept from 1907 to 1909 or from 1913 to 1914, the year of the publication of *Sule ròste de l’Ades*, the last book published by him. Yet he wrote at least a poem each month.

In the exile of Rumo in Valle di Non where he spent the war years (1915-1918), his only outlet was poetry, a poetry quite different from his previous work, more melancholy and sad, pervaded by a great existential anguish, a marked introspection and a heartfelt suffering. He did not write a lot, but what he wrote was very good, very close to the feelings of the people. Some of these poems which have reached us thanks to the care taken by a friend, the painter Metodio Ottolini, are fundamental for a spiritual reading of the poet during the last years of his life.

Yet Felini did not give up poetry easily. He resumed his contribution to newspapers, but nothing went the way he wanted., and he found he was no

longer capable of writing his simple poetry. After the war he wrote three sonnets on the liberation of Trento and very little thereafter.

Giulio Benedetto Emert, who has studied this poet more than anyone else, knew him personally, and collected his best poetry in a single volume titled *Poesie dialettali*, says of his work: "Not all the six-hundred printed pages are true poetry, and Felini himself knew it and said so. But some poems possess a native and primitive beauty... the dominant note in the successful poems is sadness, the regret of past years, the color is that of Autumn; thus a predilection – admirable in a self-taught worker – for the great poet of melancholy: Leopardi; thus the manifest difficulty in writing humor... Felini was not very good at evoking laughter, just as his smile was not capable of freeing itself from a certain bitterness that oppressed him... Maybe due to the events of his youth, maybe to everyday disappointments, maybe to that irrepressible 'spleen' that is so common in the mountains."

His three books display a wide range of emotions tied to his inner life, his home, his family, and his land. To nature and the environment Felini devoted some of his best and more deeply felt poems. Another recurrent theme is the passing of time and the changing seasons, to which Felini devoted about fifty poems, almost twenty per cent of the total. He is also a keen observer of the traditions of the people of Trentino, some of which, like the feasts, are still followed, though the mindset of Felini's time was completely different.

Felini's work possesses a popular concreteness and retains a precise place in the culture of the people. He was a unique poet, without great flights of fancy but without great failures either. Above all, he created a kind of poetry that has inspired poets to our day, the poets who write about everyday life, the simplicity of family relationships, the small things. One of the traits of Felini's poetry is resignation for all that can happen, as a design of Providence against which nothing can be done.

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L'efèt che fa do bei ociéti

V'è mai tocà de véder passar via
de nòt, per la campagna scura scura
en mèz a tuta quanta la verdura,
en pressa, come 'n lamp, la ferrovia?
De colpo no se sa còssa che 'l sia:
se sente da lontan che la sussura,
se vede do fanai che fa paura
lusenti come i òci de la stria.
E quando la è passada, sti do ocioni
i resta come 'l fuss na lanternota
seanca no se vede pu i vagoni.
L'istés l'è se me varda la Carlota
con quei ocieti mori tanto bei!
Per en gran pèz mi vedo demò quei.

L'effetto che fanno due begli occhietti – M'è mai capitato di vedere passar via / di notte, nella campagna scura scura / in mezzo a tutto quel verde / in fretta, come un lampo, la ferrovia? // Di colpo non si sa che cosa sia. / si ode da lontano un sussurro., / si vedono due fanali che fanno paura / lucenti come gli occhi di una strega. // E quando è passata, questi occhioni / rimangono come fossero una piccola lanterna / anche se i vagoni non si vedono più. // Lo stesso succede se mi guarda la Carlotta / con quegli occhietti scuri tanto belli! / Per molto tempo io vedo solo quelli.

The Effect of Two Beautiful Eyes

Did you ever happen to see the train
at night, going through the fields in the dark,
speeding by like a lightning streak
in the middle of all that vegetation?
You don't know what it is at first:
You hear a hum, a whisper out of reach,
see two big frightening lights coming,
getting closer, shining like the eyes of a witch.
And when the train has passed, these eyes remain,
large, glowing, hovering in the air like a lantern,
even when the cars can no longer be seen.
The same thing happens when Emily
looks at me with her small eyes. Long after
I see only them, so dark and lovely.

Malinconie

Che levade de sol, che bei tramonti,
che zìel senza na nùgola, turchin;
come se vede ciar via per i monti,
el par che ghe sia tut vezin, vezin.
De ste giornade chi, de sti orizzonti
celesti, da no véderghe la fin,
co' le stagion che è na, no gh'è confronti;
le ven adèss, en la stagion del vin.
E pur con tut sto ciar de ste giornade,
me sento drént de mi na gran tristezza,
e penso a tante storie zà passade.
Penso a na roba che no torna pù,
che lassa chi 'n del còr na gran freddezza
a quela che mi ò pèrs: la zoventù!

Malinconie - Che aurore, che bei tramonti, / che cielo senza una nuvola, turchino; / come si vede con chiarezza sui monti lontani, / quasi da sembrare che tutto sia molto vicino. // Con queste giornate, con questi orizzonti / celesti, da non vedeme la fine, / non ci sono confronti con le stagioni già passate; / esse vengono ora, nella stagione dei vini. // Eppure con tutto il chiarore di queste giornate, / mi sento dentro una grande tristezza. / e penso a tante storie ormai passate. // Penso ad una cosa che non torna più, / che lascia qui nel cuore un grande freddo / a quella che ho perduto: la gioventù!.

Sadness

Such risings, such lovely settings of the sun,
and a sky without clouds, blue-indigo;
so clearly do we see over the distant mountains
that every thing seems near, so very near.
With day after day like this, with such fine
sky-blue horizons, and no end in sight,
there is no comparison to past seasons;
these come now in the season of wine.
Still, despite the great clear light of these days
I feel a deep sadness within me
remembering many stories long past.
I remember one thing that will never
return, that leaves my heart so bitter cold,
what I have lost: my youth, gone forever.

Ne nòvi vezini

Sempre da sta stagion, sera e mattina,
quando che 'l sol no 'l dà quel gran calor,
sul comison via li ogni an se bina
i rondinei da nif, eri zima a l'or.
I fa ogni tant na bela sgoladina,
dopo i se posta e dopo i sgóla ancor,
ma sempre pòch lontani, a la vezina,
prché dal nif i è giust vegnudi for.
Sempre da sto temp chi se 'n vede via.
S'ciapade su per tut quel comison
che i pòlsa o i se spolina li a l'ombria.
De tut quel regiment de rondinei
ogni an se cambia la generazion,
ma a mi me par de véder sempre quei.

I miei nuovi vicini – Sempre in questa stagione, la sera e la mattina, / quando il sole non è più così caldo, / sul comicione di fronte ogni anno si radunano / le piccole rondini da nido, sul bordo. // Fanno di tanto in tanto in piccolo volo, / poi sostano, e poi volano ancora, / ma sempre poco lontani, sempre vicino, / perché sono appena usciti dal nido. // Sempre in questo periodo si vedono. / A gruppi lungo tutto il comicione / che riposano o si spollinano all'ombra. // Di tutto quel reggimento di piccole rondini / ogni anno cambiano le generazioni, / ma a me sembra di vedere sempre le stesse.

My New Neighbors

Always during this season, evenings
and mornings, when the sun is not too hot,

the little nestling swallows gather
every year on the eaves across the street.
Now and again they go for brief flights, then rest,
then fly off once more, but never go too far
from the tip of the ledge, they always stay near
because they've just come out of their nest.
You can always see them around this time
sitting in groups up and down the cornice,
dozing in the shade, or preening their feathers.
In that regiment of little swallows
every year it's a new generation
but I think I see the same congregation.

I òci de le dône

I òci de le dône i è tramadi
de ròba che l'è tut en ziel e mar:
bassòti mèzi averti o spalancadi,
i è fazili a punir e a perdonar.
Ensiem l'è orizzonti sconfinadi,
l'è mari con fondezze da tremar!
Per strade che nessun è mai passadi
i va zo 'n fond ai còri a sfodegar.
Ma guai se qualchedun en de na prèssa,
cossì, per en cicin endovinar,
a penetrarghe drént el se azardéssa!
Enveze de 'n bel ziel e de 'n gran mar,
preciso, propri live a l'istéss sito
el troveria do tòchi de granito.

Gli occhi delle donne - Gli occhi delle donne sono intrecciati / di cose che sono tutte cielo e mare: / abbassati, mezzi aperti o spalancati / hanno facilità nel punire o nel perdonare. // Assieme sono orizzonti sconfinati, / sono mari con profondità da far tremare! / Per strade che nessuno ha mai percorso / vanno giù in fondo nei cuori a rovistare. // Ma guai se qualcuno, senza riflettere, / così, per giocare all'indovino, / si azzardasse a penetrarli! // Invece di un bel cielo e di un gran mare, / all'istante, proprio quegli stessi occhi / diventerebbero due pezzi di granito.

The Eyes of Women

The eyes of women are interwoven
with things that are all sky and sea:
lowered, half-open, wide-open, they have
the facility to punish or forgive.
Together they are horizons without end,

they are seas with depths to make you shudder!

Along roads that no one has ever taken,

they go ransacking the bottom of your heart.

But woe to the one who without reflection,

like so, as if guessing, playing a game,

looked deep into them, dared penetration!

Instead of a fair sky and a great fair ocean,

in an instant those very same eyes

would become hard, two pieces of stone.

MARCO POLA

Marco Pola was born in Roncegno, Valsugana, on August 29, 1906, and died in Trento on October 9, 1991. During his long life he held various occupations, but from W.W. II till his retirement he was the director of SPI/Società Italiana per la Pubblicità. He began writing in Italian in 1936 and published his first work in dialect in 1963. His last work in dialect came out in 1989.

In the thirty years after the publication of his first book in 1963, Marco Pola brought revolutionary changes to dialect poetry, by innovating not only the expressive medium, but also by cultivating a subject matter that was quite different from the past, while remaining rooted in the tradition and culture of his people.

His “conversion” to dialect coincides with what Mario Chiesa and Giovanni Tesio have defined as the beginning of the epoch for dialect poetry, namely the late fifties. This turning point was due, besides Pasolini with his splendid poetry in Friulian and Biagio Marin with his “language” of Grado, also to Giacomo Noventa, Andrea Zanzotto, Albino Pierro, Ernesto Calzavara, Amedeo Giacomini, and Marco Pola.

The most obvious trait of Pola’s work is the range of perspectives he brings to the dialect poetry of Trentino. The fact that he published some of his best-known books (*Maria Lumeta e altri peccati*, *Ogni volta che rido, ogni volta che pianto*, *Qualcòss de pu de prima*, *Davanti a mi*, *Na strada per encontrarse*, and *Veronica dei paesi*) outside the province (*Rebellato* in Padua, *Dell’Arco* in Rome, *Scheiwiller* in Milan), shows not only the interest of national publishers for Pola’s poetry, but above all how in those years the poetry of Trentino had outgrown its provincial roots and linked with national culture and literature.

This step was no doubt favored by the rapid renewal of dialect poetry in all of Italy and by the process of revision that took place in the sixties, but in Trentino it was tied to Pola’s poetry, with its great musicality and its perfect diction. Pola can be considered, with Arcadio Borgogno and Italo Varner, the greatest dialect poet of Trentino of all time. In fact, he is able to write poetry with everything and on everything, demonstrating that the mastery of the medium is not secondary to good poetry.

For having brought back the sense of belonging to a culture which was vaster than the one found in his mountains, for having brought the dialect of his city of Trento into the national mainstream without the fear of being outclassed by the “strong idioms” around Trentino, for having catapulted his small dialect even onto the international stage, Pola is to be considered as the redesigner of the Trentino dialect. In fact, even before achieving national renown, Pola was well regarded in France. In 1983 some of his dialect poems were translated into French and appeared in the journal *Europe*, founded by Louis Aragon and Paul Eduard. He was in the company of a few other Italian dialect poets: Biagio Marin, Ignazio Buttitta, Ernesto Calzavara, and Albino Pierro. That issue of the famous journal published five poems by Marco Pola, translated by Philippe De Mee.

It should be noted that between the first poem by Bepi Mor, written in 1880, and the first dialect poem of Pola, written in 1963 and therefore eighty-three years later, there is not so much a leap in the way of writing poetry, as a completely new way of writing dialect, which with Mor and Felini was still somewhat in its childhood, while with Pola it is mature, round, and even if not perfect at the beginning, it is well on its way to becoming so.

It is a great step forward for the dialect poetry of Trentino, which from its origins always had a cultural inferiority complex with respect to other dialects, most of all because it lacked a poet able to speak to the nation at large, despite respectable poets such as Bepi Mor, Vittorio Felini, Domenico Zanoli, and especially Bortolo Sicher and Guglielmo Bertagnoli. The reality is that Mor, Felini, and Zanoli were almost never able to shed their homey air, while Sicher and Bertagnoli were handicapped by their incomprehensible dialect. The fact that the noneso dialect is still an obstacle to national critics is also documented by the latest anthology of dialect poetry *Poesia dialettale dal Rinascimento a oggi* – which does not include poets like Sicher and Bertagnoli and, inexplicably, even Borgogno.

A better knowledge and the growth of the dialect of Trentino has been very important. The different quality of Pola’s poetry also depends on the fact that he began writing in Italian and therefore possessed a completely different and more solid cultural background than either Mor or Felini. His dialect is more flexible, richer, much more mature from the start, so that one can consider Pola the founder of the new literary language of Trentino.

Pola’s dialect poetry is therefore rooted in a profound and serious study of his native dialect: as a good poet in Italian, he could not risk to

jeopardize his image though a poor knowledge of his dialect, and this desire not to make mistakes is also indicative of Pola's complex personality. He was a student of customs and sayings, and knew the earthly cycles, the work of the farmer, the labor of the craftsman. Pola touches all the registers of poetry, from the comic to the dramatic, from the lighthearted to the serious, and then love poetry, existential poetry, and even religious, in which he expresses a primitive faith in the direct dialog with God, whom he asks for things which are at times of a disconcerting simplicity.

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La festa dei pensieri

La festa dei penséri. La domenega
dopodisnar. De inverno.
Sul fòl del mè quaderno
che slùsega, Maria,
gh'è scrit demò 'l tò nome.
For su la strada morta 'nté l'ombria,
– se te vedessi come! –
no gh'è nissun che zifola.
I è tuti a l'ostaria
che i beve e che i desméntega.
Cossì,
no ghe sen che mi e ti,
co 'n fòl de carta 'n mez e na parola
su 'n zima,
e fors i l'è la prima
– o l'ultima?
fòia che se destaca
dai rami dele man e dela testa.
E ven la nòt a rovinar la festa,
sgiónfa come na spugna
de ricordi e de néf,
e scolto i mè penséri
che va, che ven, che sfrugna dapertut,
fra cròzzi e prati e nivi e zimiteri
e fiori e soldi e robe che se spaca,
ma i oci no, ma i oci (e penso ai tòl,
quando che i se spalanca)
i è sempre chi, Maria, sora sto fòl
de carta bianca.

La festa dei pensieri – La festa dei pensieri / dopopranzo. D'inverno. / Sul foglio del mio quaderno / che luccica, Maria / c'è scritto solo il tuo nome. / Fuori sulla strada morta nell'ombra / – se vedessi come! – / non c'è nessuno che zifola. / Sono tutti all'osteria / che bevono e dimenticano. / Così / non ci siamo che io e te / con un foglio di carta in mezzo e una parola / su in cima. / e forse è la prima / – o l'ultima? – / foglia che si stacca / dai rami delle mani e della testa. // E viene la notte a rovinare la festa / gonfia come una spugna / di ricordi e di neve. / e ascolto i miei pensieri / che vanno. che vengono, che frugano dappertutto, / fra rocce e prati e nidi e cimiteri / e fiori e soldi e cose che si rompono, / ma gli occhi no, ma gli occhi (e penso ai tuoi / quando si spalancano) / sono sempre qui, Maria, sopra questo foglio / di carta bianca.

The feast of thoughts. Sunday
afternoon. In winter.
Only your name is written
on my notebook page, a sheet
that shines, Mary.
Outside in the street dead in the shadows--
if you could just see how!--
no one goes by whistling.
Everyone is at the inn
drinking and forgetting.
So
there is just me and you,
with a sheet of paper between us and a word
at the top
and maybe it's the first--
maybe the last?--
leaf that drops
from the branches of the hands and of the head.
Then night comes to ruin the feast,
swollen like a sponge
with memories and snow,
and I listen to my thoughts
that come and go, that range everywhere,
looking among rocks and meadows, nests and cemeteries
flowers and coins and things that break,
but my eyes don't, my eyes (and I think of yours
when they open wide)
are always here, Mary, above this sheet
of white paper.

Maria, se te contéssa la mè storia

Maria, se te contéssa la mè storia,
quela che zerte sere
la vèn a frastormame la memoria!
Se te contéssa tut; le ròbe vere,
le ròbe storte e quele che ò 'nventà
per sconder via le lagrime!

Se te contéssa tut quel che ò passà,
quel che sento girame 'nté la testa
e i grópi che me resta,
e i di che ò rovinà
per rampegar sui muri e zinzorlame
come 'n ragn da la cros,
senza trovar qualcos che me davèrza
na porta o na finestra per sgolar!
Se te contéssa propi tut, Maria,
col còr en man! A ti che t'averia
'mpiantada zo 'nté l'òrt come 'n garòfol
per snasarlo de spes, prima che 'l mora,
ogni volta che rido, come allora,
ogni volta che pianzo, come ades.

Maria, se ti narrassi la mia storia – Maria, se ti narrassi la mia storia / quella che certe sere / viene a frastornarmi la memoria! / Se ti narrassi tutto; le cose vere, / le cose storte e quelle che ho inventato / per nascondere le lagrime! / Se ti narrassi tutto quello che ho passato, / quello che sento passarmi nella testa / e i nodi che restano, / ed i giorni che ho rovinato / per arrampicarmi sui muri e dondolare / come un ragno, / senza trovare qualcosa che mi apra / una porta o una finestra per volar via! / Se ti narrassi proprio tutto, Maria, / con il cuore in mano! A te che avrei / piantato nell'orto come un garofano / per annusarlo sovente, prima che muoia, / ogni volta che rido, come allora / ogni volta che piango, come adesso.

Mary, If I Told You My Story

Mary, if I told you my story
the one that some evenings
comes to disturb my memory!
If I told you everything; the true things
and the crooked, and those I made up
to hide my weeping!
If I told you all that I went through,
all that I feel is going through my head
and the tangles that remain,
and the days I have ruined
to climb on the walls and sway
like a spider from a cross,
without finding something that opens me
a window or a door to fly away!
If I told every little thing, Mary,
my heart in my hand! to you whom I would have
planted in the garden like a carnation
to sniff its scent often before it dies,

every time that I laugh, like then,
every time that I weep, like now.

Sgriso

Vardo la piòza trista che me 'nciòda
sul védro come 'n Cristo ala pariàna.
E passa 'l temp che fa girar la ròda.
E passa 'l temp che fa 'ngiazzar la tana.
El va come na róza che se sgranda
fra i lampi che ghe avèrze le contrade,
con tuti i mè pecadi da na banda
che ziga come pégore famade.
El passa fra 'n gazèr
de refolade corte
e 'l piove fil de fer
sui vedri neri e sulle fòie morte.

Brividi – Guardo la pioggia triste che mi inchioda / sul vetro come un Cristo alla parete. / E passa il tempo che fa girare la ruota, / E passa il tempo che fa ghiacciare la tana. // E va come una roggia che si ingrandisce / fra i lampi che gli aprono le contrade, / con tutti i miei peccati da una parte / che gridano come pecore affamate. // Passa fra una gazzarra / di refolate corte / e piove filo di ferro / sui vetri neri e sulle foglie morte.

Shivers

I watch the melancholy rain
that nails me against the pane
like a Christ on the wall.
And the time passes
that makes the wheel go,
the time passes
that strews the lair with snow.
It flows like a sluice that swells
as the lightning opens the way,
all my sins on one side
bleating like a hungry flock.
Time passes in a racket
of quick blasts
and it rains thin iron spikes
on the dead leaves and the black glass.

No tret forsi ti, Veronica

No èret forsi ti, Veronica,

quela sera de agost che te 'mpienivi
l'aria dela tò voze?
I t'à sentida
tuti,
e gh'era sta 'n silenzi
prima che i te sentis, come se 'l mondo
l'aves volù fermarse per scoltarla.
E sui pini la luna
la sgambetava da na dasa al'altra
smaltandole de luce, quella sera,
e le d'one del paés le te mandava
mili maledizion, pensando ai òmeni
che te'nsognava tuta per lori, molesina e calda,
e cossi libera da farghe rabia al vènt.
E gh'era i òrti che butava!
E l'ua che se 'ndolziva sula vigna!
E 'l formenton quasi madur! E 'nté le stale
la vaca sgionfa! Gh'era tut, Veronica,
tut quel che i voleva,
te ghe mancavi demò ti, cantora
segreta, per empienirghe le ore dela nòt
pu longhe dela còa de na cometa.

Non eri forse tu, Veronica, / quella sera di agosto che riempivi / l'aria della tua voce? / L'hanno udita / tutti, / e ci fu silenzio / prima che ti sentissero, come se il mondo / avesse voluto fermarsi per ascoltarla. // E sui pini la luna / sgambettava da una fronda all'altra / inondandola di luce, quella sera, / e le donne del paese ti mandavano / mille maledizioni, / pensando agli uomini / che ti sognavano / tutta per loro, morbida e calda, / e così libera da far rabbia al vento. // E c'erano gli orti che si svegliavano! / E l'uva che diventava dolce sulle viti! / E il granoturco quasi maturo! E nelle stalle / la mucca pregna! C'era tutto, Veronica, / tutto quello che volevano, / gli mancavi solo tu, cantante / segreta / per riempire le ore della notte / più lunghe della coda di una cometa.

Wasn't it You, Veronica

Wasn't it you, Veronica,
who filled the air
with your voice that August night?
Every one
heard it
and there was quiet
before they heard you, as if the world
had wanted to stop to listen.
And on the pines the moon
toddled from one green branch to the next

glazing them with light,
that night, and the women
cursed you a thousand times
thinking of the men
who dreamed you all for themselves, soft
and warm, and free enough
to enrage the wind.
And there were gardens awakening,
grapes sweetening on the vine!
And the corn almost ripe! And in the barn
the cow pregnant!
They had everything, Veronica,
all they wanted,
they needed only you, secret
singer,
to fill the night's hours, longer
than the tail of a comet.

Valerio, te ricorde't

Valerio, te ricorde't
Quele sere d'inverno
quando che se neva a casa
del Tinele
a sfoiar le panòce?
Te me vardavi con quei òci slanguidi
e la tò man lizera la zercava
la mia de soto 'l mùcio de sfoiàzzi
che diventava senpre pù grant...
Te ricorde't, Valerio?
Po' 'n dì te sei nà via,
te m'ài lassada chi sola, 'ngropada,
e mi no gò pu lagrime da pianzer,
però gò senpre 'n ment quela tò man
che me feva tremar come na fòia,
E ades che ti te sei cossi lontan,
e 'l Tinele, porét, l'è 'n paradìs,
ven ben ancora l'inverno come alora,

ma l'è pu lonc, Valerio, e anca pu fret.

Valerio, ricordi / quelle sere d'inverno, / quando si andava a casa / del Tinele / a sfogliare le pannocchie? / Mi guardavi con occhi languidi / e la tua mano leggera cercava / la mia sotto il mucchio delle foglie / che diventava / sempre più grande... / Ricordi, Valerio? / Poi un giorno te ne andasti / e mi hai lasciata qui sola, triste, / e non ho più lagrime da piangere, / però ho sempre in mente quella tua mano / che mi faceva tremare come una foglia. / Ed ora che tu sei così lontano, / ed il Tinele, poveretto, è in Paradiso, / torna ancora l'inverno come una volta., / ma è più lungo, Valerio, ed anche più freddo.

Valerio, Do You Remember,

Valerio, do you remember
those winter evenings
when we went
to Tinele's house
to shuck the corn?
You looked languidly at me
and your slim hand groped for mine
under the mound of husks
that grew
ever larger . . .
Do you remember, Valerio?
Then one day you went away
leaving me here alone, a lump in my throat,
I have no more tears to cry,
but I haven't forgotten your hand
that made me tremble like a leaf.
And now that you're so far away,
and Tinele, poor thing, is in Heaven,
winter still comes like then, but it's longer,
Valerio, and much colder.

ARCADIO BORGOGNO

Arcadio Borgogno was born in Borgo Valsugana on October 17, 1914, but lived practically always in Trento. He met with a dramatic death, by suicide, the morning of February 15, 1977. His body was found in the river Adige a few days later. A poet in both dialect and Italian, he was a painter, a decorator, a draftsman, a window-dresser, and a teacher in professional schools and institutes. His books of poetry were published after his death.

Borgogno's entire known works have been collected in two volumes with the same title, *Versi* (1978) and *versi – Volume II*, (1986), the first edited by G. B. Pighi and the second by A. Zanotti.

Borgogno is to be considered – with Marco Pola and Italo Varner – one of the greatest dialect poets of Trentino of all time, both for the poignancy and the expressive power of his poetry. Although his life was filled with suffering, above all moral and spiritual, and his poetry is deeply marked by this, it cannot be said that he was only the poet of desperation, nightmares, and anguish, or in love with death. No doubt desperation, nightmares and anguish were present in him since his youth – he was only twenty when he wrote that he wanted to throw his heart in the Adige –, but up to a certain point of his life he always kept them under control, and for a few very brief periods they seemed almost vanquished.

In this sense one can say that Borgogno led two parallel lives: the first with his family, society, school and work, and the second with himself, within the walls of his heart and mind. This cohabitation of the two Arcadios alternated moments of apparent serenity with times of true anguish, in a dualism that reached peaks of paroxysm. The two Arcadios were so tightly bound together, that at times his feverish imagination produced poems

of almost bemused tragedy, while at other times of tragic bemusement. There were no apparent boundaries between his living side by side with tragedy on an almost daily basis, especially in the last four or five years, and his other existence in the normalcy of social and family relationships.

This notwithstanding, Borgogno's poetry is not limited to these two veins, because he also wrote love poems, or poems in which the subject was the other half of the sky, his wife, or a friend or dream woman that many men carry always within them. An idealized, if not really ideal, woman, to whom the mind or imagination can turn in moments of discouragement. A refuge, more cultural than real, that returns periodically in Borgogno as surrogate of the escape that he had pursued a hundred times, but never really attempted, until his desperate final act.

As Marco Pola had his Maria Luméta, Borgogno had his Rosetta. A woman as mysterious as Maria Luméta, thus woman-image, woman-symbol, this Rosetta, or Rosa, appears in about ten poems, whose main theme is not always love. But then there are the love poem not necessarily tied to Rosetta's name, and there is one poem dedicated to his wife Gina which would make any woman proud.

There is a curious aspect of Borgogno's poetry that is not found in any other dialect poet of Trentino, and it is what we could call playing with death and also playing with the image of death. Borgogno writes frequently about death: his own death, or that of others, and even in times of calm, he likes to converse with death. His relationship with the Adige, the river that ran right outside his doorway, loved and hated at the same time, friend and foe, is another important aspect of Borgogno's poetry. He wrote about the river as something closely bound to his way of life, and there is a poem, one of Borgogno's best, in which the Adige is the backdrop of his sentimental experience, as an element of relaxation and rest and, in the final analysis, of certainty

For ten years he went in and out of nightmares with the composure of an actor, at times smiling and at times in pain. His poetry now was no longer a refuge, but a way of laying bare his tormented soul. This was the beginning of the crisis that would become progressively more acute in the last seven years of his life, when he was faced with the mounting difficulties of everyday life, many of them imaginary, and the gradual loss of the inner balance he had always sought but never fully attained. His condition worsened considerably in 1975, two years before his death, while he continued to live through sleepless nights, and even the moon now seemed an enemy to him.

Borgogno was a great tragic poet. The sense of death in him, as we have seen, was the other side of his sense of life, and not necessarily the negation of life.

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Tut l'è color en mi

Cristo, te vedo su la cross, co' i ciòdi
ensanguinadi 'n te le man spacade,
te vedo i segni adòss de le vis'ciade,
e so che te perdoni e no te òdi.
Ma mi biastémo, e penso che te gòdi
perché anca a mi 'l destin el m'ha enciòdade
le man sora a na cròss, e s'ha svoidade
le vene, e me dolora tuti i snòdi.

Varda el sangue su ' / legn come che 'l còla.

Sangue, e polver, e lagrime, e sudor

e mosche dré a ciuciar, opur che sgóla.

E pianzo, e rido, e vardo 'l me patir;

ma 'l sangue l'è per mi demò color.

Tut l'è color en mi, anca ' / morir.

Tutto è colore in me – Cristo, ti vedo sulla croce, con i chiodi / insanguinati nelle mani spaccate, / ti vedo addosso i segni delle frustate, / e so che perdoni e non hai odio. // Ma io bestemmio, e penso che tu goda / perché anche a me il destino ha inchiodato / le mani sopra una croce, e si sono svuotate / le vene, e mi dolgono tutte le giunture. // Guarda il sangue sul legno come cola. / Sangue, e polvere, e lagrime, e sudore / e mosche attente a succhiare, oppure che volano. // E piango, e rido, e guardo il mio soffrire; / ma il sangue è per me solo colore. / Tutto o colore in me, anche morire.

All in Me is Color

Christ, I see you hanging on the cross,

the bleeding nails in your torn hands,

the signs of lashes on your body,

I know that you forgive, you understand

and feel no hate toward us. Still, I curse,

thinking you might enjoy how fate

nailed me too, hands and feet on the cross,

and emptied my veins, how all my joints hurt.

Look at the blood dripping along the wood.

Blood, and dust, and sweat, and tears,

and flies intent on sucking, on flying.

I weep, I laugh, I watch my suffering;

but blood for me is only color.

All in me is color, even dying.

Delirio

La nòt, apena che ho serà i sperèi

e ho smorzà la luce, e son coertà;

tremili barbustèi

i me sbate 'n la testa en qua e 'n là:

i barbustèi de tuta la zità.

E se daverzo fora la finestra

e zigo desperà, tremili corvi i me risponde: crà!

Se vardo zo 'n la strada,

come na procission

passa tremili ombre col baston,

e le sbate en qua e 'n là
colpi de mazza sora a 'l salesà,
E dai muri gh'è ragni che se sóga
zo per en fil che dondola en qua e 'n là:
tuti i ragni de tuta la zità.
E dai paesi core zo per beber,
cavai negri, co' i òci
verdi per la gran féver;
e no gh'è acqua e no gh'è pu fontane,
e tremili campane,
la lengua for, la boca senza fià,
l'è 'mpicade su enzima a i campanii;
e i ragni zo dai fii
i dòndola en quà e 'n là,
e i bastoni i bate zo 'n la strada
e i rimbomba su tut el salesà...
e i corvi i fa: crà, crà.
E i desmissia tremili barbastèi
che i sbate en qua e 'n là
dento 'n la testa, dento 'n te i zervèi.

Delirio – La notte, non appena chiudo le imposte / ed ho spento la luce, e sono sotto le coperte; / tremila pipistrelli / mi scuotono la testa in qua e in là; / i pipistrelli di tutta la città. / E se apro la finestra / ed urlo disperato, / tremila corvi mi rispondono: crà! / Se guardo sulla strada, / come una processione / passano temila ombre con il bastone, / e sbattono in qua e in là / colpi di mazza sopra il selciato. / E dai muri scendono ragni / attaccati ad un filo che dondola in qua e in là: / tutti i ragni di tutta la città. / E dai paesi accorrono per bere, / cavalli negri, con gli occhi / verdi per la gran febbre; / e non c'è acqua e non ci sono più fontane, / e tremila campane, / lingua in fuori, la bocca senza fiato, / sono impiccate in cima ai campanili; ed i ragni giù dai fili / dondolano in qua e in là, / ed i bastoni sbattono giù in strada / e rimbombano sul selciato / ed i corvi fanno: crà, crà, / e svegliano tremila pipistrelli / che sbattono in qua e in là / dentro la testa. dentro nel cervello.

Delirium

At night, as soon
as I close the shutters
turn off the light
and slip under the covers,
three thousand bats
shake my head this way and that,
bats from all over town.
And if I open the window
and in despair cry out,
three thousand crows
answer, caw, caw, caw!

If I look in the street
three thousand shadows pass by
as in procession, carrying clubs,
beating the pavement
this way and that with their sticks.
And spiders come down from the walls
attached to threads
that sway this way and that:
spiders from all over town.
And from the villages
black horses come over to drink,
horses with eyes green with fever;
and there are no fountains,
there is no water,
and three thousand bells,
tongue sticking out, out of breath,
hang at the top of the towers;
and the spiders at the end of their tether
sway this way and that,
and the clubs whack the street,
the beat echoing on the pavement,
and the crows cry caw, caw, caw,
waking up three thousand bats
that bang this way and that
inside my skull, inside my brain.

Scolta

Scolta, te prego scolta.
Te digo ròbe che no tho mai dite:
parole che no digo n'altra volta.
El stròf entomo el tegn le récie drite,
per sentir la mè voze. Parlém pian,
quel che no digo ti te 'l capirai
se te scólti tegnèndo la mè man.
Voria no esser nat. Se penso, guai!
Voria no saver gnènt, no aver senti
sempre 'sto Dio, che sta en te i temporai,

‘n te ‘l vènt, ‘n te i silenzi massa fondi
de le nòt senza luna, o ‘n te l’urlar
de le onde che core, che se avèrze
come bóche che beva tut el mar.
Voria no sentir Dio, quando pu amara
me pesa dento l’anima, la nòt,
tra i linzòi che i diventa la me sbara,
e ‘l còr el bate empessa e ‘l fa: tòch tòch
come en martèl su i ciòdi. Scolta: el scròch
de na chiave ‘n te l’uss. Eco l’ariva.
‘l me spia come sempre, e mi no ‘l vedo.
No pòdo pu parlar. Adesso ‘l credo
che l’è vezin a mi. Squasi ‘l me toca;
sento ‘l fià vegnir for da la so boca,
sfiorame la me faccia, le me man...
Te fenirò doman
de contarte altre robe. Adess no pòdo.
No sentet ‘sto smacàr che fà el martèl
su ‘n ciòdo... ‘n altro ciòdo... ‘n altro ciòdo?

Ascolta – Ascolta, ti prego, ascolta. / Ti dico cose che non ti mai detto: / parole che non dico un’altra volta. / Il buio intorno tiene ritte le orecchie., / per sentire la mia voce. Parliamo piano, / quello che non dico, tu lo capirai / se ascolti tenendomi la mano. / Vorrei non esser nato. Se ci penso, guai! / Vorrei non sapere nulla, non aver sentito / sempre questo Dio, che sta nei temporali, / nel vento, nei silenzi troppo profondi / delle notti senza luna, o nell’urlare / delle onde che corrono, si aprono / come bocche che bevano tutto il mare. / Vorrei non sentire Dio, quando più amara / ini pesa dentro l’anima. la notte, / tra le lenzuola che diventano la mia bara, / ed il cuore che batte velocemente e fa: toch. toch, / come un martello sui chiodi. Ascolta: lo scrocco di una chiave nell’uscio. Ecco, arriva, / mi spia come sempre, ed io non lo vedo. / Non posso più parlare. Ora lo credo / che è vicino a me. Quasi mi tocca; / sento il fiato uscire dalla sua bocca, / sfiorarmi la faccia. le mie mani... / Finirò domani / di raccontarti altre cose. Ora non posso. / Non senti questo battere dei martello / su un chiodo... un altro chiodo... un altro chiodo?

Listen

Listen, please, listen.

I’m saying things that I’ve never told you:

words that I won’t say again.

The darkness around us

has preaked its ears

to hear my voice. Let’s speak softly,

you will understand

what I will not say, if you listen

holding my hand.

I would rather not be born.

I can barely stand thinking about it.

I would rather not know anything,

not have heard, always,
this God who lives in storms,
in the wind, in the too-deep silences
of moonless nights, or in the howling
of the waves that rush on, opening
like mouths that'd drink up all the sea.
I would rather not hear God,
when night weighs bitterly
within my soul, between the sheets
that become my shroud,
and my heart beats,
races, going tock, tock, tock
like a hammer on nails.
Listen: a key turns in the lock.
He's coming, he spies on me
as always, but I can't see him.
I can't speak anymore. Now that he is near me
I believe him. He almost touches me;
I feel the breath coming out of his mouth,
grazing my face, my hands... I'll finish
telling you other things tomorrow. Now I cannot.
Don't you hear how the hammer
beats on one nail, and then another, and another?

Guai la madona a rider

Le cicatrici no le guariss mai:
resta la pel tirada, e dura, e rossa,
e i òci i varda fora da na fòssa
e i par de védro, come quei dei gai.
Le cicatrici no le guariss mai.
Gnanca quele che ven en zoventù
su le brusade de le delusion.
Resta 'n l'anima tut en gran scotón
e se rifà la pel, ma no l'è pu
la pel de prima: de la zoventù.
Guai la Madona a rider. No se pòl
perché le fize le diventa tai.

Se ride dal de for, ma dento mai.

Dento se è séchi: se è come el giaròl.

Guai la Madona a rider: no se pòl.

Guai alla Madonna, ridere – Le cicatrici non guariscono mai: / rimane la pelle tirata, e dura. e rossa, / gli occhi guardano da una fessura / e sembrano di vetro, come quelli dei galli. / Le cicatrici non guariscono mai. // Neppure quelle che si fanno in gioventù / sul bruciore delle delusioni. / Resta nell'anima una grande scottatura / e si rifà la pelle, ma non è più / la pelle di prima: della gioventù. // Guai alla Madonna. ridere. Non si può / perché le pieghe diventano tagli. / Si ride di fuori, ma dentro mai. / Dentro si è secchi: si è come il ghiaino. / Guai alla Madonna, ridere: non si può.

The Virgin Help Us If We Laugh

Scars never heal: the skin

remains hard and red, drawn,

eyes look out of a crack

and seem of glass, a cock's

eyes. Scars never heal.

Not even those we get in youth

over the burning of disappointments.

A huge scorched place remains

in our soul; new skin grows over it,

but it's not the skin we had in youth.

The Virgin help us if we laugh.

We can't. Wrinkles become cuts.

We laugh outside, but never inside.

Inside we're dry as gravel.

The Virgin help us if we laugh.

Mi no so chi che son

Mi 'l so che son malà

en l'anima, che scónde dént ligadi

altri "mi", che è diversi, che è 'mpastadi

de cativeria, de bontà, de rabia;

altri "mi" che no so còssa che i gh'abia

quando i me sgrifa sora a la cossienza.

'N te 'l ziel no gh'è i anzoì, e l'è senza

diúoi le vampade rosse de l'inferno:

i è tuti dént de mi

che i urla 'n te le nòt de temporal.

Ogni tant en preval

uno su i altri. So che son divers

da come che i me crede. L'univers

el me ven dénto a colpi come en mar,
e l'è tut na tompesta, e 'n sbatociar
de ondade e vent rabióss;
e so che soto l'acqua gh'è 'n abiss
en do' che se sprofonda
l'infèrno e 'l paradìs
engropadi su i brazzi de na cross.
Mi no so chi che son,
g'ho qualcoss d'ogni diàol che me tormenta,
d'ogni anzol che sbrega le cadene
per liberarse da 'sta me preson.

Io non so chi sono – Io so che sono ammalato / nell'anima, che nasconde dentro legati / altri "io" che sono diversi, che sono impastati / di cattiveria, di bontà, di rabbia, / altri "io" che non so cos'abbiano / quando mi graffiano la coscienza. / Nel cielo non ci sono angeli, e sono senza / diavoli le vampe rosse dell'infèrno: / sono tutti dentro di me / che urlano nelle notti di temporale. / Ogni tanto ne prevale / uno sugli altri. So che sono diverso / da come mi credono. L'universo / mi penetra a colpi come un mare, / ed è tutta una tempesta, uno sbatacchiare / di ondate e vento rabbioso –, / e so che sotto l'acqua c'è un abisso / dove sprofondano / l'infèrno ed il paradiso / annodati sulle braccia di una croce. / Io non so chi sono; / ho qualcosa di ogni diavolo che mi tormenta, / di ogni angelo che strappa le catene / per liberarsi da questa mia prigione.

I Don't Know Who I Am

I know I'm sick
in my soul that hides other "I"s
tied inside, which are different, a mix
of wickedness, goodness, anger:
other "I"s, and I don't know what's wrong
when they prick my conscience.
There are no angels in heaven, and the red
flames of hell have no devils;
all are inside of me
howling on stormy nights.
Sometimes one prevails
over the others. I know that I'm not
what people think me to be.
The universe penetrates me
blow by blow like a sea,
and it's a huge storm, a beating
of waves and angry wind: and I know
that under the water is the abyss,
where heaven and hell disappear,
knotted on the arms of a cross.

I don't know who I am; I possess
something of every tormenting devil,
of every angel pulling at the chains
to free himself from this prison of mine.

RENZO FRANCESCOTTI

Renzo Francescotti was born in Cles (Trento) on September 22, 1938 and lives in Trento. With a degree in literature, he was a teacher his whole life and is now retired. He began writing poems in Italian in 1964, and in dialect in 1968. His first novel dates back to 1966. He is also an essayist, dialect playwright and journalist.

Francescotti began writing dialect poetry in the sixties, and has published nine books, the first of which was published in 1968 (*El ritorno*, on the drama of emigration), when he was thirty. The last book (*Celtica*) came out almost thirty years later, in 1997. In 1988, during a hiatus, he collected three volumes of poems about emigration (*El ritorno*, *L'ultimo vizio*, *Cantàda dei emigranti*) into a single volume titled *Emigranti*. He is included in a few anthologies. He has been studied, among others, by T. Burat, C. Vivaldi, and G. Spagnoletti.

Francescotti, among the male poets, is probably the greatest dialect poets of Trentino. It is always difficult to make such judgments, but his collected works and above all his last three, *Maròchi e maochini*, *Cantàda disperada*, and *Celtica*, have achieved such depth of style and subject matter that they have attracted the attention of critics nationwide. His work up to *Marchi e marochini* also earned him the inclusion in a national anthology (*Poesia dialettale dal Rinascimento a oggi*, edited by G. Spagnoletti and C. Vivaldi, 1992) that had selected more than two hundred dialect poets from all over Italy, twenty-eight from the north-east, among whom two from Trentino, Marco Pola and Renzo Francescotti. The same editors of the anthology later prefaced Francescotti's last two works – Vivaldi *Cantàda disperada* and Spagnoletti *Celtica* – as proof that having selected him a few years before had been not only a conscious and deliberate choice, but fully justified by Francescotti's subsequent poetry.

Francescotti was born as a "theme poet" from the outset. His poetry must say something, not in the sense of communicating, but in the sense of narrating, and it deals with various themes, beginning with emigration. He was no doubt the first dialect poet of Trentino who spoke of those who had to leave their home, town, valley, country and family to travel to distant lands, often inhospitable and unrewarding like the land of origin. He wrote three collections about emigration, mentioned above, but between the second and third he inserted another theme, dramatic for the people of Trentino, namely the peasant revolts at the time of the prince bishop Bernardo Clesio (1485-1539) with his work *La guèra dei Carnèri*.

Francescotti shows a particular vocation for historical research, and has not limited himself to the Renaissance period, but went further back, looking into the story of fra Dolcino and Margherita, whose adventures are splendidly described in the book *Passione di fra Dolcino and Margherita* (1980). As is known, fra Dolcino, a Piedmontese, who took refuge even in Trentino, was burned at the stake in 1307.

After editing an anthology with the works of eleven dialect poets of Trentino and condensing in one volume his three works on emigration (1988), Francescotti went back to writing poetry in 1991, after an interval of almost ten years. This time the poet was looking at the present and, given the times, to the future as well. The phenomenon of immigration from third world countries into Italy was just beginning, particularly in Trentino. But Francescotti sides with our unfortunate brothers, and the poems of *Maròchi e marochini* are thoughtful and provoking (but provocation is a positive aspect of Francescotti's poetry). From this peaceful, yet dramatic invasion of immigrants is born his next work, *Cantàda disperada*, which is a study of the changes that Trentino and its people are undergoing in the wake of this new reality that not everyone has accepted. The *cantàda* is the anguished cry of a man of culture, as well as a poet, who has seen what Trentino has become: the disappearance of the moral tension characteristic of past generations has caused the present social and cultural degradation in the region.

Vivaldi rightly notes that "Francescotti's deep attachment to the popular spirit, that drives him naturally to give a voice to his people, causes the tone and rhythm of his poetry to appear necessary, essential (whereas in other poets they approach caricature), just as his dialect is also necessary. A language that he studied anthropologically, without a trace of folklore or of the picturesque, the product of a real osmosis with nature, the people and their problems: an osmosis that expresses a delicate relationship between individual imagination and a collective imagination from which everything is born."

Thus came *Celtica*, as a need to go back to origins, to the humbleness of origins but also to their concrete morality, and to the dream of a world that could have been different. "But the Celtic world – Spagnoletti notes – is not only an ideological premise, or worst, a sentimental fancy for Francescotti. He sees not the fate of a victory from which gave rise to present civilization, but rather the many extraordinary illusions born of the Celtic dream. Thus this poetry cannot do without ancient tools, from which derive arms invisible today." Spagnoletti also observes how Francescotti conveys his message even through things not explicitly narrated, thereby avoiding becoming a "singer of nostalgia." Which is not the case, because "his passion is total, indiscriminate, and therefore today's world belongs only marginally to him..."

A coherent vision, then, characteristic of those who look at the contemporary world with a strong critical spirit.

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Ma chi èl sta pora zent?

Ma chi èl che ven zo pian pian

adèss che l'è ancora nòt

dal sintér dela val

con qualche torcia o lanterna,

mà chi èlo, en funeral,

rèchia metèma?

Ma chi èle 'ste persone

sul sintér dela val

òmeni pòpi e done

sóra l'arc del pònt

che li fionda vèrs la luna

sóra la bisca de arzènt

dei rì che dis en tra le préde

parole frède,

mà chi èlo mai: èlo zènt

che va a zercar fortuna?

Ma chi èl 'ste figure négre

(na nugola l'à smorzà la luna)

che ensèma a sachi e fagòti
i porta con fadiga
bandóni e scandorlòti?
'Sa gavé da vardar?
Zo 'n poca de tera gh'è piantine
de vigne e de pomar.
Ma chi èl 'sta pòra zènt
che ven zo sul sintér
passando pian pian sul pónt
gòbi contro 'sto vènt
done òmeni e putelòti
scoerzendo co' le man
bandóni e scanderlòti?
Osèi bagnadi de bruma
che va lontan
da 'ste pore tère trentine
e coi fagòti se tòl
da strapiantar ste piantine.

Ma chi è questa povera gente? – Ma chi sta scendendo pian piano / adesso che è ancora notte / dal sentiero della valle / con qualche torcia o lanterna, / ma cos'è, un funerale., / requiem aeternam? // Ma chi sono queste persone / sul sentiero della valle / uomini, bimbi e donne / sopra l'arco del ponte / che li fionda verso la luna / sopra il serpente d'argento / del rivo che mormora fra le pietre / parole fredde, / ma chi saranno mai: è gente / che va a cercare fortuna? // Ma chi sono queste figure negre / (una nuvola ha spento la luna) / che assieme a sacchi e fagotti / portano con fatica / bidoni e barattoli? / Cosa avete da guardare? / Dentro poca terra ci sono pianticelle / di vigne e di meli. // Ma chi è questa povera gente / che scende dal sentiero / passando piano piano sul ponte / gobbi contro questo vento / donne uomini e bambini / coprendo con le mani / bidoni e barattoli? // Uccelli bagnati di brina / che vanno lontano / da queste povere terre trentine / e con i fagotti prendono anche / per trapiantarle, queste pianticelle.

But Who Are These Poor People

But who is it that's walking down
slowly slowly now that's still night
down the path to the valley,
with a torch or a lantern,
but what is it, a funeral,
requiem aeternam?
But who are these people
on the valley's path
men children and women
on the arc of the bridge
that slings them toward the moon
on the silver serpent
of the river that murmurs cold

words among the stones,
but who could they be:
are they people seeking their fortune?
But who are these black figures
(a cloud put out the moon)
who along with sacks and bundles
strain to carry jars and cans?
What's there to see?
Planted in a little soil
are slips of apples and vines.
But who are these poor people
coming down the path, passing
slowly slowly across the bridge
bent against the wind
women men and children covering
with their hands cans and jars?
Birds wet with rime
who go far
from Trento, from these poor
lands, and who along with the other
bundles, are also taking,
to transplant them, these cuttings.

A Santiago de Compostèla

Ho eredità 'n gabàn
de me nòno, en mantèl nero
a tegnir via 'l vènt e la piòza.
Na volta i li ciamava sanrochini.
A viazar da 'n ospizio a l'altro
i li doprava i pelegriani.
Zèrte volte me digo: ciapo su
el gabàn, me taio en bordón,
me taco ala zintura
na zuca vòida, na scudèla
e vago a l'aventura
a Santiago de Compostèla.
No me enterèssa se

i ghe va co l'auto o 'l treno:
mi ghe vago a pè,
i come i antichi pelegriani.
Che meterò 'n an, ma Santiago
el vederà un dei trentini.
Po' me digo: ghe vòl fede:
va't a torte na conchilia
de l'Atlantico, souvenir?
Che va chi che ghe crede,
ghe va sol chi gà speranza:
ti no te podi capir!
Te gà reson, porco can.
Ma mi en di ciapo el bordón,
la zuca, la scudèla, el gabàn:
rivero magro come na stèla
dopo 'n an, ma riverò,
a Santiago de Compostèla!

A Santiago de Compostèla – Ho ereditato un gabbano / di mio nonno, un mantello nero / per riparare dal vento e dalla pioggia. / Una volta li chiamavano “sanrochini”. / A viaggiare da un ospizio all'altro / li adoperavano i pellegrini. // Certe volte mi dico: prendo su / il gabbano, mi taglio un bordone, / mi appendo alla cintura / una zucca vuota, una scodella, / e vado all'avventura / a Santiago di Compostèla. // Non mi interessa se / ci vanno con l'auto o in treno: / io ci vado a piedi, / come gli antichi pellegrini. / Ci metterò un anno, ma Santiago vedrà uno dei trentini. // Poi mi dico: ci vuole fede: vai a prenderti una conchiglia / dell'Adriatico, souvenir? / Ci va chi ci crede. / Ci va solo chi ha speranza: / tu non puoi capire! // Hai ragione, porco cane. / Ma io prendo il bordone, / la zucca, la scodella, il gabbano: / arriverò magro come un fuscello / dopo un anno, ma arriverò, / a Santiago de Compostèla.

To Santiago de Compostela

I've inherited a cape
from my grandfather, a black mantle
to shield me from the wind and the rain.
Once they were called “saint-rockeans”
after Saint Rocco.
Pilgrims wore them
traveling from one hostel
to the other. Sometimes
I say to myself: I will put on
my cape, cut myself a staff,
hang from my waist
an empty gourd and a bowl,
and I will go on an adventure
to Santiago de Compostela.

I don't care
if people go by car
or by train: I will go on foot,
like the ancient pilgrims.
It will take me a year,
but Santiago will see
someone from the Trenteen.
Then I say: you need faith:
go get yourself a shell
from the Adriatic sea,
a souvenir?
Only those who believe go.
Only those who have hope:
it's beyond you!
You're right, damned it.
Still one day I take the staff
the gourd, the bowl and the cape:
I will get there lean as a stick
after a year, but I will get there,
to Santiago de Compostela.

Lèt

Dal mar
del mè vagabondar
son rivà
na nòt de lampioni ròti
ala me vècia ca'.
Serada su
entomo ai spirti de quei
che no gh'è pu.
Ho postà
la me chitara al lèt
(l'ha scainà pian
come en cagn che 'l te riconosse).
L'è alt el lèt.
Entél golfò scur
dela camera el me par

na barca.

Chi

l'è endó che i mèi col sbaticòr

i m'ha concepi,

chi endó che me mama con dolor

la m'ha partori,

chi endó che son guari da malà,

chi endó che de scondón

è sbocià come na ninfea

la pèl nuda del me prim amor,

chi endó che, portadi

via da l'Alta Marea,

i è nadi

me mama e me papà,

prima lu. e po' éla, dal crepacòr.

Ho davèrt la finestra

che i spirti i vaga en paze.

L'è nòt. El lét

el varda la Via Latea.

El spèta

l'Alta Marea dele stéle

rivar a portarlo via

envèrs l'infinità.

Letto – Dal mare / del mio vagabondare / sono arrivato / una notte di lampioni rotti / alla mia vecchia casa. / Chiusa / attomo agli spirti di quelli / che non ci sono più. / Ho appoggiato / la mia chitarra al letto / (ha uggliato piano / come un cane che ti riconosca). / È alto il letto. Nel golfo scuro / della stanza mi pare / una barca. Qui / è dove i miei col batticuore / m'hanno concepito, / qui dove mia madre con dolore / mi ha partorito, / qui dove sono guarito da ammalato, / qui dove di nascosto / è sbocciata come una ninfea / la pelle nuda del mio primo amore, / qui dove, portati / via dall'Alta Marea / se ne sono andati / mia madre e mio padre, / prima lui e poi lei, dal crepacuore. / Ho aperto la finestra / che gli spirti vadano in pace. / È notte. Il letto / guarda la Via Lattea. / Aspetta / l'Alta Marra delle stelle / arrivare a portarlo via / verso l'infinità.

Bed

From the sea

of my wandering

I arrived

one night of broken street lights

at my old house.

Closed

around the ghosts of those

who are no longer here.

I leaned my guitar
against the bed
(it whined softly
like a dog who knows who you are).
The bed is high.
In the dark bay of the room
it feels like a boat.
It's here
where my parents, heart
beating, conceived me,
here where my mother,
in pain, gave birth to me,
here where I got better
after being sick,
here where, in secret, the bare
skin of my first love
bloomed like a waterlily,
here where,
my mother and my father
left, carried away
by the High Tide,
first he and then she, of a broken heart.
I have opened the window
to let the ghosts go in peace.
It's night. The bed
looks at the Milky Way.
It's waiting
for the High Tide of the stars
to come and take it away toward infinity.

Parole come en zich

Me pias le parole che g'ha
na musica desmentegàda
de arpa cèltica, che
qualchedun meàri
de ani fa l'ha enventà.
I savéva vardar,

– i òmeni e le fémene –

le piante i animài

le préde le aque la luna,

come se ogni volta la fussa

stada la prima:

Rapsodi, bardi

che no zercava

né nome né fortuna.

Che bastava inventar

i nomi e la so' musica.

Me pias le parole

che g'ha el saór del formài fumà

entén paròl

fora engrostà de carazza

e dénto ross de sol.

Parole che se leva entél vènt,

enté la me' mént,

inventade da n'altra razza.

En dialet

che fa el sgambét

ai parlari amari

de 'sto nòs temp masnà,

parole come en zich,

nude entén lèt

nude entén

lèt de linzòi de spich.

Parole come un grido – Mi piacciono le parole che hanno / una musica dimenticata / da arpa celtica, che / qualcuno migliaia / di anni fa ha inventato. // Sapevano guardare / – gli uomini e le femmine – / le piante gli animali / le pietre le acque la luna, / come se ogni volta fosse / stata la prima. // Rapsodi, bardi / che non cercavano / né nome né fortuna. / Gli bastava inventare / i nomi e la loro musica. // Mi piacciono le parole che hanno / il sapore dei formaggio affumicato / in un paiolo fuori incrostato di nerofumo / e dentro rosso di sole. / Parole che si alzano nel vento, / nella mia mente, / inventate da un'altra razza. // Un dialetto / che fa lo sgambetto / alle parlate amare / di questo nostro tempo macinato, / parole come un grido, / nude in un letto / di lenzuola di spigo.

Words Like a Shout

I love words that have

a forgotten music

a music of celtic harp

that someone invented

thousands of years ago.

They knew how to look--

men and women--
at the plants the animals
the stones the streams the moon,
as if every time
were the first time.

Rhapsodes and bards
who wanted neither fame
nor fortune for themselves.

To invent names
and their music was enough.

I love words that have
the taste of cheese
smoked in a pot
a pot encrusted with soot
on the outside
and red with sun
on the inside.

Words that rise in the wind,
in my mind,
invented by another breed.

A dialect
that trips
the bitter talk
of these wretched times,
words like a shout,
naked in a bed
with lavender sheets.

Ti come el pam

Te eri la pasta del pam
che crésse misteriosa
soto na téla bianca
co l'anima dei levà.
Te eri come ci pam
che se encolóra entél forno
bianca e calda de dénto
e crocante de fôra.

Te eri el profumo del pam
che se spande a ónde
a spazzar via la mòrsa
de massa di de fam.
Ti te cressévi en mi come el levà
e mi empastavo le to calde forme
tónde come la luna
con dedi de tremor.
Ho provà a far ancor
el pamen cà
ma no 'l g'ha pu ci profumo de quei di
E adèss son chi
a scriver 'sti nudi vèrsi
col destrani de ti
che crésse come el levà.
Ma endèl che ne sen persi?

Tu come il pane – Eri la pasta del pane / che cresce misteriosa / sotto una tela bianca / con l'anima del lievito. // Eri come il pane / che si colora nel forno / bianca e calda di dentro / e croccante di fuori. // Eri il profumo del pane / che si spande a onde / a spazzare via la morsa / di troppi anni di fame. // Tu crescevi in me come il lievito / e io impastavo le tue calde forme / tonde come la luna / con dita di tremore. // Ho provato ancora a fare / il pane in casa / ma non ha più il profumo di quei giorni. // E adesso sono qui / a scrivere questi nudi versi / con lo struggimento di te / che cresce come il lievito. // Ma dove ci siamo perduti?

You, Like the Bread

You were the bread dough
under white linen
that rises mysteriously
with the soul of leaven.
You were like the bread
that colors in the oven
white and warm inside
crusty on the outside.
You were the fragrance of bread
that spreads in waves
to sweep away the pinch
of too many years of hunger.
You rose in me like yeast
and I kneaded with trembling fingers
your warm forms
round like the moon.

I have tried to make bread
at home again, but
it no longer has the fragrance of those days.
And here I am now
writing these naked verses
with a yearning for you
that grows like yeast.
Where did we lose each other?

LILIA SLOMP

Lilia Slomp was born in Trento on April 2, 1945. She studied business and was a mother and housewife for most of her life, becoming a state employee later in life. A meditative and reflective poet, she began writing dialect poetry in the early Eighties and published her first book in 1987, followed by two more. She alternates between poetry in dialect and in Italian, and published two volumes (*Nonostante tutto* and *Controcanto*) between 1991 and 1993.

Lilia Slomp has had a seminal influence, and has brought in the dialect poetry of Trentino, but also in that of the neighboring regions, a breath of expressive freshness that has made a profound mark in recent years, creating what could be defined as the "Lilia style," almost always unmistakable in its ethereal and delicate poetic phrasing, and therefore prone to not always felicitous (or easy) imitations.

There is a "demarcation line" in Lilia Slomp's poetry, before which the "Lilia style" was only Lilia's, and after which a great deal of contemporary poetry, especially by women, displays the gracefulness and embroidery that belong to Lilia's soul and creativity.

Her poetry shows a strong personality and suggestiveness, but that would not be enough to explain the phenomenon of the substantial emulation she has inspired recently. Her poetry, in fact, has created the enchantment of abstraction, has suggested the reality of the unreal, has given a voice to the wind, the stars, the flowers, the forests, and the dew as actors and at the same time spectators of "Lilia's recital." One can no doubt imitate the diction, the expressions, the single line, but not the moral underpinning and the depth of Lilia's words, which become empty if applied by others to different conditions and situations.

In this sense, her kites, her schiramèle, her migole, her ensògni 'ngardiadi, her còr malà de malinconia, her fiori innamorati, the òci 'mbriaghi de stèle, the swallows' flight, her turning into a seashell (a maternal and at the same time sensual attitude); her wandering on the cornisoni, her being a crystal where se spegerà de nof in fiordalisi, are chords that only Lilia Slomp is able to play with total authenticity. Having opened new grounds for herself and others, she perhaps felt that she needed to find still new ways.

In fact, the novelty of Lilia Slomp's poetry, which in her first book (*En zerca de aquiloni*) is only touched upon with a few beautiful poems, consists in the necessity of "understanding" beyond words, the inner images that the poet wants to represent. Her poetry moves on different levels and requires attention. Sometimes it is necessary to dig deeply in order to identify the various layers, almost taking the veils off what is being told, one by one, in the hope of discovering the true essence of this poetry under the last layer.

There are abundant metaphors, which the poet shows only in transparency, halfway between a desire of being understood and the wish to maintain the enigma of the spirit. Many poets have played the card of mimicry either through modesty or fear of appearing defenseless, at the reader's mercy. It might seem a flight from herself and others, but in reality in her poetry Lilia Slomp represents her strength and her fragility simultaneously, and therefore does not create illusions. Instead she creates new images, strengthened by the dramas that have marked her life, often driving her toward an exasperated, rending dialogue with the Absolute. There is a desire for identity, but also a need to identify with a world that leaves her in solitude. Her poetic cries, her longing for the sublime are part of a journey of suffering, perhaps the ancient heritage of cultures in which pain was the obligatory toll to be paid for the fragile serenity of a moment. A sort of law of retaliation runs through her poetry, by which she sees or imagines herself as both huntress and prey, sacrificed and sacrificial. Lilia Slomp's poetry is also a poetry of solitude, due not only to the lack of company, but the inability to find someone on the same wavelength.

It is difficult to squeeze a poetic judgment in a few lines. Lilia's Slomp poetry is a poetry of the imagination, of dreams, of reflection, of introspection. To those familiar with it, it times it almost seems a "poetic diary" in which she speaks of herself and her things, maybe in the third person. Or she lets her loved ones speak. Her poetry is for the most part austere, but without sadness (at least not always). It is a poetry that offers various interpretive keys, because in it there is pain, disappointment, even anguish, but never desperation. In fact, there is always an opening, a tiny door leading to hope and which makes us think that for her too tomorrow will be another day.

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Quando narò via

Quando narò via,
narò en punta de péi.
No lasserò le péste
su la me scortaròla.
Me girerò a ogni pass
per comodar na viola,
na primola stremida,
‘ntrà l’erba spatuzzàda.
Sarò grombial de vènt
lizér de primavera
coi busi ‘n le scarsèle
per corer pu lizéra.

Quando andrò via - Quando andrò via, / andrò in punta di piedi. / Non lascerò orme / sulla mia scorciatoia. / Mi girerò ad ogni passo / per accomodare una viola, / una primula spaventata, / fra l'erba spettinata. / Sarò grembiule di vento / leggero di primavera / con i buchi nelle tasche / per volare più leggera.

When I Go Away

When I go away,
I will go on tiptoe.
I will not leave footprints
on my shortcut.
I will swerve at every step
to oblige a violet
a frightened primrose
in the disheveled grass.
I will be an apron of wind
as light as a breeze
with holes in my pockets
to run with ease.

En font ai me ôci

No sta zerca el prà
- en font ai me ôci.

L'è 'n prà zamàì segà
de tuti i pu bei fiori.
Zérca demò i colori
scarmenàdi da 'n ziel
coi grópi de rónole
tacàdi al capèl.
No sta zercar el prà
en font ai me ôci.
L'è 'n prà tripolà
da mili pensieri.
Ma propri pu 'n font
ride ancor na cesùra
seràda per tuti.
E li sol per mi
mādo a spass la paura
e balo descólza
sul fià dei me di.

Nel profondo dei miei occhi - Non cercare il prato / nel profondo dei miei occhi. / un prato ormai tagliato / di tutti i più bei fiori. / Cerca solo i colori / sparpagliati da un cielo / con frotte di rondini / attaccate al cappello. / Non cercare il prato / nel profondo dei miei occhi. / È un prato calpestato / da mille pensieri. / Ma proprio sul fondo / sorride ancora una radura / chiusa per tutti. / E li, solo per me / mando a passeggio la paura / e ballo scalza / sul fiato dei miei giorni.

In the Depths of My Eyes

Don't look for the meadow
in the depths of my eyes.
It's a meadow shorn, now,
of its most beautiful flowers.
Look only for the colors
scattered by a sky
with flocks of swallows
attached to its hat.
Don't look for the meadow
in the depths of my eyes.
It's a meadow trodden
by a thousand thoughts.
But at the deepest end
smiles still a clearing
closed for everyone.
And there

just for me
I send fear on a walk
and I dance barefoot
on the breath of my days.

Mi per ti

Ombria entrà le ombrie
per le to nòt. Gnanca
en fìzzòl de luna desgartìa
da la pazienza dei dì, mi.
E fò 'nventà i colori, l'arfi
de le af sul còr dei fiori,
la rosada 'ntéi òci del vènt
e tut ci so lamént spandù
al sol en grìngola.
Mi, demò mi. per ti,
senza gnanca na sbrìndola
de seda su la pèl: brasa
per i to dedi che i sgòla
come quei de 'n pòpo
davanti al prim fòl bianch da piturar...
Mi ci sol, mi la luna, mi
na casota sbilenca, forsì ancora
mi en riz de fum che 'l trema
e 'l se smariss entrà le stéle
de na nòt mai vista ensema.

Io per te - Ombra tra le ombre / per le tue notti, Nemmeno / una matassina di luna dipanata / dalla pazienza dei giorni, io. / E ti ho inventato i colori, il respiro / delle api sul cuore dei fiori, / la rugiada negli occhi del vento / e tutto il suo lamento sparso / al sole in ghingheri. / Io, solo io, per te, / senza nemmeno un brandello / di seta sulla pelle: brace / per le tue dita che volano / come quelle di un bimbo davanti / al primo foglio bianco da pitturare... / Io il sole, io la luna. io / una casetta sbilenca, forse ancora / io un ricciolo di fumo che trema / e si sbiadisce tra le stelle / di una notte mai vista insieme.

Ero en fior

Mi ero en fior,
de quei che sbòcia ogni qualtràt
per chi che li sa véder
e binar co' le man zónte.
Càpita i orbi e i sordi
sul sintér, i senzadio.
No serve a gnènt

la giostra dei colori,
le af, lori i le sghizza
manaman 'n enté la corsa.
E gnanca i se nascòrte
de la vita che s'ennucia
come na vècia stria
dessigual che i di
i ràmpega enté l'aria.
Mi ero en fior da no binar
co' le man sporche,
da carezzar, da piturar,
da 'ncomisar, magari da secar
entrà le pagine de 'n libro...
Mi, ero en fior.

Ero un fiore - Io ero un fiore, di quelli / che sbocciano ogni tanto / per chi li sa vedere / e raccogliere con le mani giunte. / Capitano gli orbi e i sordi / sul sentiero, i senzadio. / Non serve a niente / la giostra dei colori, / le api, loro le schiacciano / man mano nella corsa. / E nemmeno si accorgono / della vita che si accascia / come una vecchia strega / intanto che i giorni / arrampicano nell'aria. / Io ero un fiore da non raccogliere / con le mani sporche, / da carezzare, da pitturare, / da incominciare, magari da seccare / tra le pagine di un libro... / Io, ero un fiore.

I for You

Shadow among shadows
for your nights. I, not even
a narrow skein of moon
unraveled by the patience of days.
I have invented the colors
for you, the breath of bees
on the heart of flowers,
dew in the eyes of the wind
and all its lament scattered
in a sun dressed to the nines.
I, only I for you,
without a stitch of silk
on my skin: hot coals
under your fingers that fly
like a child's before his first
blank sheet of paper to paint . . .
I the sun, I the moon, I
a crooked little house, maybe too

I a curl of trembling smoke
that fades in the stars
of a night never seen together.

I Was a Flower

I was a flower, of those
that bloom once in a while
for the one who knows
how to see, how to gather them
hands together.

The blind and deaf
chance to walk
on the path, the godless.

The gamut of colors
is useless to them, the bees
get crushed as they run.

And they don't even notice
life collapsing
like an old witch
while the days climb the air.

I was a flower
not to be picked
with dirty hands,
a flower to caress, to paint,
to frame, even to dry
between the pages of a book . . .

I was a flower.

Ero mi

Anca se no te 'l sai,
ero mi che te 'nventavo
i 'nsògni reménghi
enté le nòt, che somenavo
en le bine stréte de le ore
le stéle robade. Ero mi,
pèl de rosada che balavo
ensema a le saiéte
l'angóssa deì tònì

che ariva massa tardi
per empizzarse ensèma
sul fià dei temporài.
E ero ancora mi, descólza,
ombra de luna,
entéi òci de l'aurora,
entéi sgrisoi del sol,
en le tonde del vènt
ai buti che se sgiónfa
scarmenando i pudori.
E gò na vesta larga
che gira come na giostra
per embriagarte de colori.

Ero io - Anche se non lo sai, / ero io che ti inventavo, / i sogni malandrini / nelle notti, che seminavo / nei solchi stretti delle ore / le stelle rubate. Ero io, / pelle di rugiada che ballavo / insieme ai fulmini / l'angoscia dei tuoni / che arrivano troppo tardi / per accendersi insieme / sul respiro dei temporali. / E ero ancora io, scalza, / ombra di luna, / negli occhi dell'aurora, / nei brividi del sole, / nelle tonde del vento / ai germogli che si gonfiano / spargendo i pudori. / Eho una gonna larga / che gira come una giostra / per ubriacarti di colori.

It Was Me

Even if you don't know,
it was me who invented
your wicked dreams at night,
who sowed stolen stars
in the slim furrows of the hours.
It was me, skin of dew
who danced with lightning,
the anguish of thunder bolts
that arrive too late
to ignite together
on the breath of storms.
And it was still me, barefoot,
shadow of moon
in the eyes of dawn,
in the shivers of the sun,
the twirlings of the wind
around the buds that swell
scattering shame.
And I have a full dress

that wheels like a merry-go-round

to intoxicate you with color.

ITALO VARNER

Italo Varner was born in Lavis on March 12, 1922 and died in Trento on March 29, 1992. He held a degree in literature and was a teacher and school principal all his life. He began writing dialect plays, which he subsequently also directed, in 1946. He also wrote comedies in Italian. He published his first book of dialect poetry in 1979, followed by his second ten years later. Working with the musician Camillo Moser, he wrote beautiful lyrics in Italian for children's songs.

Italo Varner is a first-class poet. He became interested in dialect poetry at a mature age – when he was fifty-seven – or at least he published his first book then: *Saór de tèra*, which was highly selective and which brought a breath of fresh air in the dialect poetry of Trento.

Italo Varner was born a poet. He constructed his poetry day by day, patiently, with an eye not only to the subject matter, but to the form of the language he used as well, the dialect of his native Lavis, slight different from that of nearby Trento. His long meditation has thus given Trento's popular culture a new way of writing poetry.

Trento already had the poets that wrote of their mother, and their town who were playful, satirical, or simply jocular poets, the poets of images and small things. Much of Trento's dialect literature is centered on this lyric "genre," but there was and still is an area of poetry which, while not totally unknown, remains little explored even today: the poetry of life, of suffering, of the dignity of the everyday struggle for existence.

Italo Varner has given us this type of poetry, and he has tilled his garden with the passion of memories and faith in life. Particularly rending are his poems about the heroic and unknown figures of our emigration. Renzo Francescotti did the same, but in a more ideological key. Italo Varner looks at events from the inside, and takes part in the suffering caused by the dramatic departure from one's native land.

Varner's poetry thus deals with everyday suffering, with living without shortcuts, without pretenses, and perhaps he wrote some his best poems on the life of his ancestors abroad, from where they never returned. A child of the rural world, his cultural choices had seemed to distance him from it, but instead he has come back as the inimitable bard of the rural civilization.

Speaking of Varner's poetry, Renzo Francescotti notes how strange it is that a land which has preserved a rural economy for centuries has produced practically no poetry about the rural world: "The dialect poetry of our province has been fundamentally urban, as in Trento and Rovereto. And even when it turned to the world of farmers [...] it did so by capturing above all its colors and folklore." Until the appearance of Italo Varner and Silvano Forti, he says. No doubt, other poets such as Scaramuzza and Bertagnolli had been interested in the rural world, and Marco Pola and Giuseppe Caprara have been able to express the country soul of our people. Nevertheless, Francescotti warns us, the only poets from Trento who have totally immersed themselves in the rural world remain Italo Varner and Silvano Forti.

After his first successful experience with *Saór de tèra*, Varner published his second volume, *Mi come na menùdola*, in which he heightens the initial themes of his poetry, with that strong sense of community, of town and country life that revolves around the story of Poldo, his life and his desires. While presenting *Mi come na menùdola*, Nunzio Carmeni, usually sparing in praise, wrote that this book was able "to make the mark of Italo Varner's poetry deeper." He also said that the themes and tones of this poetry were already present in *Saór de tèra*, while in *Mi come na menùdola* "the poet's visceral relationship with the existential and cultural roots of the waning rural civilization, which had given substance to his lyric world and attracted his dialect, endures and becomes more profound."

The themes in Italo Varner's poetry are varied, even if they can be confined to five main groups: town life, always precise and always different; emigration as a traumatic loss of roots, but also memory of those left behind; the problem of faith seen from a popular perspective by a socialist, as Varner was; and the reflections on the various aspects of life and death.

Mention should be made of his songs for children and adults, real first-rate dialect poems (Such as "La Madonina"), set to music by his close friend Camillo Moser.

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Mi come na menùdola

Cressù 'n do' l'aria sóra i vòssi campi
la sparpàia la pólvèr dei amori
ò 'nparà a lézer l'ora
su la vòlta del sol, a sentir l'ùsma
selvàdega de tèra,
són nà a cazza de nivi,
na vòia stramba 'ndòss de destrigar
coi roseghin sul stómèch
co' le man en scarsèla li a vardar
el còr che 'l bate 'n gola a le bisèrdole
stremide su la préda.
Trat en schéna su l'èrba,
i me òci siargadi sul ziel
cargà de stéle,
me parava i tavani, en te na
récia la storia mi sentiva del rozàl
saltarme arènt, cantar
rudolàrse lontàn i me pensiéri.
Adèss gò 'n libro 'n man
pién de parole,
ma ricordo le vòsse:
paròle biòte dite a ónza a ónza
(scavade da pensiéri cressùdi
come fiòi)
che róte la giornada.
Na s'ciarida de nùgole 'n te 'l vènt
e na bèstia de sol che 'l se spalanca.
Mi come na menùdola che ràmpega
e no' la sa fin dove che la 'riva
e per còssa l'èi viva,
sento però 'l calór
de la tèra che spénze,
da 'n di a 'laltro i colori molesini
sul vòssi òci
de l'ua che vara.

Io come un convolvolo – Cresciuto dove l'aria sopra i vostri campi / distende la polvere degli amori / ho appreso a leggere l'ora / sulla volta del sole, a sentire la
bramosia / selvaggia della terra. / sono andato a caccia di nidi, / un desiderio strambo addosso di distruggere / con il rimorso sullo stomaco / con le mani in tasca lì a
guardare / il cuore che batte in gola alle lucertole / spaventate sulla pietra. / Buttato in schiena sull'erba, / i miei occhi spalancati sul cielo / pieno di stelle, / scacciavo i
tafani, in un orecchio / la storia udivo di una roggia / saltellare vicino, cantare / rotolarsi lontano i miei pensieri. / Ora ho un libro in mano / pieno di parole, / ma ricordo
le vostre: / parole schiette, dette oncia ad oncia / (scavate da pensieri cresciuti / come figli) / che rompono la giornata.

Like a Morning Glory

Growing where the air above your fields

scatters the dust of people's loves

I learned to read the hour

on the vault of the sun, to feel

the savage greed of the earth,

I went in search of nests,

a strange desire to destroy in me

remorse in my belly

hands in my pockets

as I watched the heart beating

in the throat of the lizards

scared on a rock.

Lying on my back on the grass,

eyes open on the star-studded sky,

I swatted horseflies, heard in one ear

the story of the canal

leaping near by, singing,

rolling my thoughts far away.

I have a book in my hand

full of words,

but I remember yours:

genuine words, spoken ounce by ounce

(carved from thoughts

that grew like children)

that break the day.

A clearing of clouds in the wind

and a gigantic sun opening wide.

Like a morning glory that climbs

without knowing how far it will reach

and what it lives for,

I still feel the warmth of the earth

as it thrusts, from day to day,

the soft colors of grape tendrils
across your eyes.

A 'nmaciàrse le ale de vért

Podéssen ortigame
a davèrzer na s'ciésa, spalancar
i nòssi òci sóra na spianada
lustra 'n te 'l sol, en pòpo
che 'l ride cól dedòt
ficà 'n te 'l nas, descólz
enbafà fin su al òci,
la so ombra lizéra su la tèra
squasi la se scondéssa, i so cavèi
che apéna i ghe se mòve
che l'aria la ghe passa per zugar
la sparissa lontana
tuta ziel e straniàda
de nòvo la tomàssa celestina
a 'nmaciàrse le ale de vért
felize de sporcarse.

A macchiarsi le ali di verde – Potessimo pungerci con le ortiche / ed aprire una siepe, spalancare / i nostri occhi sopra una pianura / luminosa nel sole, un bimbo / che ride con il ditino / nel naso, scalzo / sporco fino agli occhi, / la sua ombra leggera sulla terra / quasi cercasse di nascondersi, i suoi capelli / che appena si muovono / per l'aria che passa per giocare / e scompare lontana / tutta cielo, e nostalgica / ancora toma celestina / a macchiarsi le ali di verde / felice di sporcarsi.

To Stain Its Wings With Green

If we could sting each other with nettles,
breach a hedge, open our eyes
on a plain, bright with sun, a child
who laughs with a finger in his nose,
barefoot, dirty up to his eyes,
his shadow so light on the earth
it seems to want to hide, his hair
barely moving in the air that comes
to play and then fades far away
all sky, then homesick comes back again,
cerulean, to stain its wings with green
happy to get dirty.

Merica! Merica!

Come se 'l fùssa d'aria
tremolava sul mar
en fil de vóze
d'onzermònica a bóca
che 'npieniva de soldi mai tocadi
sul pont del bastimént
el ciar de luna.

E la néva la néva la to zènt
– en do' saràla nada? –
e co' la zènt la casa
el bianc de le bugàde destendùde
la sal de le pianzùde.

En Merica anca ti Celestina
Fedrizzi cossi sola
nel grop dei desperadi
co' le schéne voltade,
cossi sola smissiàda come 'n càmol
nel sac de la farina ensièma
ai io fagòti, 'n te la gàida 'l calt
del to pu picciol
la roba da cambiarlo li a la man.

En Merica a cantar
Merica! Merica!
En Menca a morir su na memoria
poréta come ana
'rivada chissà quando 'n vai de Non
trata 'n te 'n caltro:
Nata a Toss
morta a Caxias do Sul.

America! America! – Come se fosse d'aria / tremolava sul mare / un filo di voce / d'armonica a bocca / che riempiva di soldi mai toccati / sul ponte del bastimento / il chiaro di luna. / E andava, andava la sua gente / – ma dove sarà andata? – / e con la gente la casa / il bianco dei bucato appeso / il sale dei pianti. / In America anche tu Celestina / Fedrizzi così sola / nel gruppo dei disperati / con le schiene voltate, / così sola mescolata come un acaro / nel sacco della farina assieme / ai tuoi fagottt sul grembo il caldo / del tuo più piccolo / le cose per cambiarlo li alla mano. / In America a cantare / Merica! Merica! / In America a morire su una memoria / povera come Anna / giunta chissà quando in Valle di Non / gettata in un cassetto: Nata a Toss / morta a Caxias do Sul.

Merica! Merica!

As if made of air
and trembling on the sea
the faint strain of a mouth organ

that filled with coins
never before touched the moonlight
on the ship's deck.
The people left,
they kept on leaving –
but where did they go?–
and with the people the house,
the white of drying laundry
the salt of weeping.
In America even you Celestina
Fedrizzi so alone
among the despairing
with their backs turned,
alone like a bug in a flour sack
together with your bundles,
on your lap the warmth
of your baby, the things
to change him within reach.
In America to sing
Merica! Merica!
In America to die on a memory
poor like Anna
arrived who knows when
in the Val de Non
thrown in a drawer:
Born at Toss
dead at Caxias do Sul.

Dessiguàl

Dopodisnàr doménega su al mas
fioriva ci persegàr. Dal pòrtech
te sei passàda fòra
vestida, Lisa, come na regina.
Ma prima che 'n te 'l lustrò
come l'af te sparissi che la zérca
la perlina del dólz sul còr dei fiori,
el Pòldo il te vardava dal scalàr

del car su 'n do' 'l polsava,
el baticòr del Pòldo él te spiava
femarte, Lisa, 'n àtimo, na statua!,
e po' piegarte
comodarte lizéra co' le man
la calza fin en zima 'n do' la pèl
bianca de luna
l'èi lat e mèl, l'èi calda
pu del sangue che 'l bate,
de le fiamme danade de 'l infemo.
Lisa, bianca puledra
da le gambe selvàdeghe che svèlte
l'èi cressùde 'n te 'l vènt che 'l le carézza
(compàgn de le bedòle
alte 'n te 'l zìel fin do' che le se spèrde),
dai cavèi che i te casca
drio a le spale e i se mòve e i par de aria
ché 'l li spatùzza 'l sol dei vinti ani;
i to ani che i ride
e i passa via vestidi da la festa,
en te i òci che i slàgrima del Pòldo,
sentà zo sul scalàr
cola so faccia lónga ancór de 'n popo
a 'nruzenirse come tut el mas
le so storie, i ordégni, le so bèstie
tra na fiorida e l'altra,
dessiguàl..

Man mano – Dopopranzo domenica su al maso / fioriva il pesco. Dal portico / sei uscita / vestita, Lisa, come una regina. / Ma prima che nel lustro / come l'ape. sparissi, che cerca / la perlina di dolce sul cuore dei fiori / il Poldo ti guardava dal ripiano / del carro dove stava riposando. / il batticuore dei Poldo ti spiava / femarti. Lisa. un attimo. una statua!, / e poi piegarti / accomodarti leggera con le mani / la calza fino in cima dove la pelle / bianca di luna / è latte e miele. è calda / più del sangue che batte, / delle fiamme dannate dell'infemo; / Lisa, bianca puledra / dalle gambe selvagge che veloci / sono cresciute nel vento che le carezzava / (così come le betulle / alte nel cielo fin dove si perdono), / dai capelli che ti cadono / dietro le spalle e si muovono e sembrano di aria / che li spettina il sole dei vent'anni; / I tuoi anni che ridono/ e passano via vestiti dalla festa / negli occhi che lacrimano del Poldo / seduto sul ripiano / con la faccia lunga da bambino / ad arrugginire come tutto il maso / le sue storie, gli attrezzi, e sue bestie / Tra una fiorita e l'altra / man mano...

As . . .

Sunday afternoon up on the bluff
the peach tree was blooming.
You came out of the portico,
Lisa, dressed like a queen.

But before you disappeared
in the dazzling light
like a bee that looks for a drop
of sweetness on the heart of flowers,
Poldo watched you from the bed of the
cart
where he was resting,
Poldo's heartbeat saw you stopping
one instant, Lisa, like a statue!
and then bending over
to delicately pull your stocking all the
way up
to where your moonwhite skin
is milk and honey
and warmer than the throbbing blood,
than the damned flames of hell.
Lisa, white filly, with the wild legs
that grew rapidly in the caressing wind
(like the beech trees
so tall in the sky they disappear),
with hair that falls and bounces
on your shoulders and seems of air
disheveled by the sun of your twenty years
years that laughingly go by
dressed for the feast
across the weeping eyes of Poldo
who sits on the cart
with a long face still like a child's
bent on rusting, like the whole bluff,
his stories, his tools, his cattle
between one flowering and the next
as . . .

Cune voide de tera

E quando gaverén
dinòci da pozar sóra la tèra
e récie da scoltarla

fratant che i fiori i tase
e s' à calmà la bavesèla
sentiren forsi sangiotar la rosàda
che la zérca
quei pugni de tèra
tòlta su come 'n pòpo da la cuna
e portada lontan eri te 'n cielét
ancor calda e 'nsognàda
Giustalvèrs
piena de rési da piantar
de là del mar.
E quando gaverén
dinòci da pozar sóra la tèra
e récie da scoltarla
sentiren forsi sangiotar le cune
vòide de tèra.

Culle vuote di terra – E quando avremo / ginocchia da appoggiare sopra la terra / ed orecchie per ascoltarla / nel mentre che i fiori tacciono / e si è calmata la brezza / sentiremo forse singhiozzare la rugiada / che cerca / quei pugni di terra / sollevata come un bimbo dalla culla / e portata lontano in un secchio / ancora calda e assonnata / al punto giusto / piena di vitigni da piantare / di là del mare. / E quando avremo / ginocchia da appoggiare sopra la terra / ed orecchi per ascoltarla / sentiremo forse singhiozzare le culle / vuote di terra.

Cradles Empty of Earth

And when we'll have
knees to rest on the earth
and ears to listen
while flowers are silent
and the breeze is calm
we will hear perhaps
the sobbing of the dew
that searches
for those handfuls of earth,
lifted like a child from a cradle
and taken far away in a pail
still warm and sleepy
at the right time
full of grapevine cuttings
to plant across the sea.
And when we'll have

knees to rest on the earth
and ears to listen
we will hear perhaps
the sobbing of the cradles
empty of earth.

EMILIA-ROMAGNA

Vincenzo Bagnoli

We have reached a moment in history

when we realize that man's imagination needs

all the languages of the world.

Édouard Glissant

The first thing to take into account when dealing with dialects is obviously their geographical spacing. One should take care, however, that in such a perspective literary geography does not remain an abstract “mental place,” but is rather a way of explaining the dynamics of a situation; a dynamics that, as a result, cannot help but reveal itself to be historical as well.¹ The key to reading literature in dialect, then, should not be based on isolationist provincialism, as certain idealist and later postmodernist critics have tried to suggest.

It is understandable, especially when looking at it from the outside, how dialect literature might at first glance appear as a sort of “Arcadia” grounded in provincialism, inspired by a reactionary desire for eccentricity and by the “spirit of flight.” Still, anyone willing to consider the problem and take a closer, in-depth look, cannot help but notice that the issue is not reducible to these terms, just as it is not reducible to the question of the authentic and the original. It is certainly true that the flight into individual memory or the “private” language of small communities is part of the rejection of the authority of the “super-individual” language, as it is often called these days.²

Dialect poetry, heeding Contini’s warning not to attribute an epistemological value to such a category, must be inscribed in a dynamics that puts the place at the center of a web of relationships, recontextualizing it in its own diachrony. If this type of poetry, with the emergence of a “national literature,” had begun to develop under the banner of an exoticism which could take on different meanings (it could constitute an attempt to reconnect with cultured regional trends before Unification, or to find a “new lymph” after the Risorgimento), the final outcome was a belatedness limited to local color and the narrow regional sketch.

In the same way, if dialect as regression could have a function as a ritual of memory, once the descent has been accomplished the “language of the past,” freed from any tie, seems to have lost its purpose. Then there are three possible routes: on the one hand there is the “magmatic” vitalism of a pre-logical language; on the other the reduction to a purely antiquarian, consolatory exercise; finally, the possibility of finding a place again within a public, i.e. open, discourse.

The use of dialect, in fact, is not rooted in a “cosmic” dimension of the private, just as it is not (nor can it be) a metaphor of the otherness, more dandy than revolutionary: if violating the normal use of language has always been the objective of modern poetry, the negation of a linguistic norm and thus of communication tout court results in a nihilistic reduction of the word to pure sound value. Moreover, being rooted in local custom and language is often accompanied by the trite folklore of rural nostalgia and, what is worst, an almost Homeric poetic mode of expressing everyday life. Frankly, all this appears “premodern” rather than “postmodern.”

At any rate, dialect itself today is something very different from the image of natural language or inner language: in the present situation, in fact, dialect rarely identifies a community of speakers defined in a geographical or social sense. There are a few exceptions, in progressively more limited areas, while in small and big cities there is the tendency to speak a mix of dialects shading off into regional uses of Italian. As is happening to speech, dialect poetry also reveals a composite nature, not only with regard to vocabulary, as we shall see. This language retains the characteristic most specific to poetry, that is, the capacity for self-reflection and therefore a degree of self-awareness, lucidity and coolness far removed from Orphic and primitive passions.

Thus, we have the recent definition of “neodialect poetry,” which aims at indicating a demarcation which is not merely chronological: in this poetry dialect is made not only of expressiveness and phonic color, tradition or linguistic identity, but it is, as Mann suggested, the atmosphere of a place. “Breath of the place,”³ one might say; a place which, however, is always defined, as I have tried to explain, by its own spatial and temporal dynamics with its own horizon and with totality.⁴ That is, dialect does not identify with the community of dialect speakers, but it contemplates and even requires the presence of the official language and its relationship to culture. The diglossia characteristics of this poetry thus determines, through such co-presence (but balanced in cultural, social and emotional terms according to a hierarchical relationship), a new way of being for the poetic word in dialect. And it even posits a “criticism of the linguistic difference,” based on the historicity of linguistic coexistence, shifting the emphasis from “values” to experience.⁵ One can say, essentially, if I can borrow from an authoritative voice, that the places are received as moments of “world-totality,” which can be arrived at according to criteria which are not “laws” so much as “invariances”

Turning to the geography of dialects in Emilia-Romagna, one must appreciate their great variety (in this anthology there are represented the dialects of Parma, Modena, the coast and the interior), also underscored by ancient commentators; and yet, at the same time, a tendency toward a sort of *koiné*. In mentioning such a tendency I do not refer to the hypothesis suggested for archaic epochs by Monaci, according to which in the centers of culture (Bologna, for instance) the “*volgare illustre*” was born from the meeting of students. I am talking about that particular exchange between territory and institutions, city and country, centers and surrounding areas, which becomes clear in a map that takes into account both spatial and chronological extensions.⁶ It is an exchange characterized more by difference and exclusion, participation and integration, and thus by listening to language and the language of the Other.

Following this path, which forces us into a “double step,” that is, to move in time as well as space (something familiar to those who travel through places “drawn” along a road that runs across the epochs as well), we have to come to grips with a literary stance that is hard to understand within the limits of its essential trait, be it a *genius loci* or a style, a school, and which never fails to superimpose the surreal vein of the province on the trends of the cultured capital.

Let us then take as “founding figure” of dialect poetry in Emilia-Romagna Enrico Stuffer, nicknamed Fulminant, born in 1861 in Modena and an exponent of the age of the decried regional sketch. Nevertheless, the fact that he also was very active in the local cultural scene attests to an acknowledgment of collective roots that goes beyond traditional parochialism, but feeds instead on an ironic self-awareness.

Renzo Pezzani, forty years older, seems instead more inclined towards a longing for his native land: in any case, those were the years of totalitarianism, of the world conflict and the post-war period, in which history weighs heavily on the lives of people. Moreover, even the idyll is veiled with irony, and its festive aura becomes desperate, in a manner that perhaps shows traces of Ungaretti.⁷

During those years, as in those that followed, one can notice an actual tendency to use dialect poetry as a sort of barrier with which to demarcate a marginal space, a happy island safe from the violence of history. But those same years, based on an attitude exemplified by Zavattini, mark the beginning of an experience destined to overcome any kind of separatism, and to place dialect at the center of a web of relationships, in what could approximately be defined as the “literarization” phase. The protagonist is the generation of those born in the twenties, like Tonino Guerra:⁸ The particular modernity of Raffaele Baldini, also a member of the Sarcangelo triad, stands out in the recent collections, *La naïva* and above all *Furistir*, which display an evolution from comic forms deviating from the norm (the stereotype of the “fool” as poetic voice) to the “normality of everyday neurosis.”⁹ Thus the regional topos combines with the neurotic-visionary landscape of the neoexperimentalists.

The realism of a language rooted in an easy and direct referentiality, then, is not mere expressive realism. Poetry, at any rate, does not limit itself to being a mere versification of speech, but it entails an informative quality superior to its everyday usage, more mediated and refined, as a departure from conventions. At this point one cannot even speak of “naïveté” with respect to the colloquial tone, which is instead narrative tension.¹⁰ In this context it should be noted how writings that present themselves as direct “true accounts” and documents of “low culture,” which would then exclude the literary language from its intertextuality, often mask a rhetoric of dissimulation: such works evidently are not outside literature, and are created in the tension between dialect and Italian, low and high culture.¹¹

Tolmino Baldassarri offers in his work tangible proof of how poetry in those years wavered between tradition and literarization.¹² In his more recent works, though, like *Ombra di luna* (Udine: Campanotto, 1993), one can see that the degree of literariness is increasing, in keeping with a general tendency.¹³

Giovanni Nadiani uses different media, and his collection *TIR* (Faenza: Moby Dick, 1994) is accompanied by a CD. In the preface to the volume, Gianni D’Elia underscores its innovative strength, which in fact is not limited the type of material chosen to communicate, but it involves the expressive level and, above all, the type of gaze to which poetry entrusts itself. It chooses to express the disorder of experience, the desolation of the collective imagination, yet it does not claim to be an explanation of reality, but plays the role of witness (in keeping with the themes of dialect poetry, thus revealing a continuity with his own tradition); that is to say, an observation, a gaze, as “act of seeing” more convincing (in poetry) than a “general theory of seeing.” This is due to the narrative bent that had always been the paramount characteristic of dialect poetry, and which also marks much of contemporary Italian poetry: the stream of consciousness composes an order, a narrative from chaos.¹⁴

This solution confirms dialect’s inclination toward contamination even with the language of “high” culture that I tried to point out at the beginning of our journey in Emilia-Romagna, and which should be no doubt linked to the ancient presence of centers of culture such as the University of Bologna and the academies of various other cities. Two fairly obvious examples from the past could be Carlo Goldoni, according to whom in the eighteenth century in Bologna Latin was spoken even by women, and understood by all.¹⁵ and Giovanni Pascoli, for his very singular mixture of cultured Italian, Latin, and dialect, under the banner of what was at any rate multilingualism and not polyglossia.¹⁶

To conclude, it must be noted how, in the general emphasis given the reader in the poetics of the late twentieth century, at a certain point dialect poetry too has become aware that it can no longer presuppose a model reader (in the specific case, the natural geographical receiver), and that it must instead, like any artistic product, create him.¹⁷ With the adoption of the neodialect point of view, and thus the perspective of diglossia, dialect poetry requires an activity on the part of the reader, which is not interpretive in a critical sense, but concentrates on language. The paratextual diglossia that appears in all these texts is in fact substantially (and profoundly) different from an intratextual diglossia: with the practice of self-translation it never entails the co-presence of two languages within the same text, but it involves the clash between two linguistic competencies, two “systems of reference.”¹⁸

Besides the contact with spoken languages, this inclusive structure often serves as an attempt to combine a popular tradition, to which it is closely connected, with the new forms of the popular, bearers of a different and unprecedented structure of the collective imagination. Orality, then, presents itself as “movement towards the other;” “corporeal poetics of the sound, the gaze, the gesture, in a spatiality reconquered for

concreteness,”¹⁹ or in other words interactivity.²⁰ Going back to the linguistic aspect, it is the equivalent of a participation of the text in the context of collective discourses and in a much vaster universe of communication than before, in the sharing of a linguistic space that rejects the sublime in favor of listening and of a largely horizontal responsiveness.²¹ If primitive speech, like perhaps some oral poetry today based on the trace left by the participation in the event, was rather characterized by a series of traits (conservatism, redundancy, emphasis) indicating the separateness of microcommunities,²² what is presently defined as orality (or rather neo-orality) represents an opening of the poetic towards other types of sources, stimuli, and procedures.

To conclude then with Edouard Glissant, the rejection of monolingualism also entails eschewing the monolingualistic defense of one’s “own” language, in favor of a global “solidarity” against standardization.²³ The answer is a “Poetics of Relation” which is not a poetics of magma, of indifference, of the neutral: it does not presuppose a contamination or a coexistence, but the “presence of the languages of the world in the use of one’s own,” in a dialogue between diversity and the rest of the world which is never exclusive or merely dialectic.²⁴ And it is precisely this form of openness that distinguishes neodialect poetry: as Creole retains the traces of many languages in its lexical and syntactic memory, so too at the romance origins of Italian vernaculars and in their development through the centuries (in their speaking to one another and with the “dominant” language) one can find similar riches. It remains to be seen how vital they have remained, how much they have continued to live through relationships of exchange: that is, if they have been able to find a new “identity-relationship” in place of the “nationalistic” “identity-root.”

Notes

1 Historical reviews and general perspectives, in addition to Brevini’s famous *Le parole perdute*, can be found in G. Spagnoletti and C. Vivaldi, *Poesia dialettale dal Rinascimento a oggi*, Milan: Garzanti, 1991; F. Piga, *La poesia dialettale del Novecento*, Padua-Milan: Piccin-Vallardi, 1991. From a specifically regional viewpoint: G. De Santi, ed., *La poesia dialettale romagnola del Novecento*, Proceedings of the Conference (Santarcangelo, December 14-16, 1989), Rimini: Maggioli, 1994.

2 Cf., for example, A. Carrera, “Alternative alla storia,” in D. S. Cervigni, ed., *Italy 1991. The Modern and Postmodern*, in *Annali d’Italianistica*, v. 9, Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 1991, pp. 106-123; and the trenchant G. Mari, “Postmoderno e democrazia,” *Ibidem*, pp. 72-83.

3 The definition appears in the interview titled “The writer and the breath of the place,” in É. Glissant, *Introduction à une poétique du divers*, Paris: Gallimard, 1996, Ital. trans. *Poetica del diverso*, Rome: Meltemi, 1998, pp. 103-116, where a subtle distinction is made between polyglossia and multilingualism.

4 G. M. Villalta, “Autotraduzione e poesia neodialettale,” in *Testo a fronte*, 1992, n. 7, pp. 49-63; E. Ragni, “Dialetto e poesia neodialettale. Quattro domande a Franco Brevini,” in *Rivista di Studi Italiani*, 1994, n.1, pp. 121-129.

5 G. M. Villalta, “I dialetti della poesia,” in *Baldus*, V, n. 1, 1995, pp. 13-22. On the redefinition of the relationship between “dominant” and “dominated” languages, even more telling is Glissant’s point of view, *Poetica del diverso*, cit., p. 33.

6 I am referring to G. M. Anselmi and A. Bertoni, *Una geografia letteraria tra Emilia e Romagna*, Bologna: Clueb, 1997, and in particular to E. Raimondi, “Prefazione: un possibile percorso,” *ivi*, p. VIII.

7 Cf. R. Luperini, *Il Novecento*, II. Turin: Loescher, 1980, p. 665. On Pezzani also see G. Marchetta, ed., *L’inquietta speranza. Antologia poetica parmigiana*, Parma: Battei, 1991.

8 Cf. G. Contini, “Excursus continuo su Tonino Guerra,” in T. Guerra, *I bu. Poesia romagnole*, Milan: 1972, pp. 7-15.

9 F. Brevini, introduction to R. Baldini, *Furistir*, Turin: Einaudi, 1988., p. VI; also cf. Brevini in “Il dialetto come lingua dell’estraneità,” in *Profili letterari*, 1992, n. 2, pp. 26-33.

10 G. L. Barbieri, “Le forme del contenuto nella poesia in dialetto,” in *Otto/Novecento*, 1994, n. 1, pp. 59-79. A. Stussi, “La letteratura romagnola: appunti filologici e linguistici,” now in *Lingua, dialetto e letteratura*, Turin: Einaudi, 1993.

11 Cf. for instance Z. G. Baranski, “Dante nell’opera narrativa di Luigi Meneghello,” in *Studi Novecenteschi*, XI, n. 27, June 1984, pp. 81-102. Also on the opposition of “carnival” and literary dimensions cf. E. Giachery, *Dialetti in Pamaso*, Pisa: Giardini, 1992.

12 See *la poesia dialettale contemporanea*, Ravenna: Longo, 1988, with essays by F. Brevini, F. Loi and C. Marabini.

13 Greater complexity of contemporary poetry: F. Brevini, “Come ho studiato i dialetti contemporanei,” in AA. VV. *È possibile fare storia della cultura contemporanea?*, in *L’Asino d’oro*, 1990, n. 2, pp. 165-169. Also on dialect and contemporary poetry: V. Moretti, *Le ragioni di una scrittura*, introduction by U. Vignuzzi, edited by E. Di Carlo, Pescara: D’Incecco, 1989.

14 P. Civitareale, “Cinque poeti in romagnolo,” *cit.*, p. 53. On the question of “narrative” the references are many and complex: from A. Berardinelli, *La poesia verso la prosa*, Turin: Bollati Boringheri, 1994 (cited by the same G. M. Villalta, “I dialetti della poesia,” in *Baldus*, cit., p. 19) to the observations of M. Onofri, E. Albinati, N. Lorenzini, R. Manica, F. Buffoni in M. I. Gaeta and G. Sica, eds., *La parola ritrovata*, Proceedings of the national conference (Rome, September 22-23, 1993), Venice: Marsilio, 1995, pp. 81, 92, 99, 121, 148; but also V. Bonito, *Il gelo e lo sguardo*, Bologna: Clueb, 1996.

15 C. Goldoni, *Opere*, edited by G. Ortolani, XVI, Milan: Mondadori, 1956, p. 250.

16 In this regard remains unsurpassed the analysis of A. Traina, *Il latino del Pascoli. Saggi sul bilinguismo poetico*, Florence: Le Monnier, 1971.

17 G. L. Barbieri, “Le forme del contenuto nella poesia in dialetto,” in *Otto/Novecento*, cit., 1994, n. 1, p. 70.

18 See also G. M. Villalta, "La voce nel testo poetico," in *Il Verri*, cit., p. 77.

19 N. Lorenzini, "La voce nel testo poetico," in *Il Verri*, cit., p. 77.

20 G. Majorino, "Poesia contemporanea. Campionario con figure," in *Aut-Aut*, XVII, n. 260-261, March-June, pp. 79-105.

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22 Id., *Orality and Literacy. The technologizing of the Word*. London and New York: Methuen, 1982, It. tr. *Oralità e scrittura*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 1986, p. 65.

23 *Poetica del diverso*, cit., p. 33.

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The English translations for the Veneto section are by Adria Bernardi

ENRICO STUFFLER (FULMINANT)

A doctor who lived in Modena all his life (1863-1923), Enrico Stuffer (whose dialect poems are assembled in the collection *Vérs in mudnés*, printed by Artioli Editore (Modena, 1973, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the poet's death) is one of the major writers of a city whose culture has been shaped – at least since Unification – "by the exceptional alacrity and determination of a resolute and homogenous group of 'erudite' contemporaries, mindful of the great heritage of Muratori and active in the field of historical, archival and antiquarian research." At the same time, they are far from indifferent to the provincial, bourgeois Po valley tradition of humor publications and dialect poetry" (Cremante). Suffice it to mention the quality of the romance philologist, literary critic and dialectologist Giulio Bertoni to be aware of it. Dialect poetry and theater, on the other hand, have always enjoyed wide interest, at least until the middle of this century, thanks also to the work of two elegant writers such as Guglielmo Zucconi and Luciano Zanasi.

No doubt, Stuffer should be considered their direct predecessor, along with others like him situated in the eighteenth century and endowed with such a sense of theatrical speech that they bring an almost instinctively polyphonic flair to their poetry. There were numerous occasions on which Fulminant's poems could be recited out loud and be circulated in the city's many humorous newspapers, among which stood out *Il Marchese*

Colombi for wit and elegance. And in a way they expressed a fervid and collective chauvinism, combined with a vein of crepuscolare self-irony and melancholy consciousness. In particular, the mundane and folkloric detail was often elevated by Stuffer to a degree of high objectivity, producing effective tranches de vie, admittedly still rooted in the local sketch, but not too far removed from the dark humor of the twentieth-century.

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L' Epifania dla guera

I

Sgnor, la g'aviva détt, fand al sintér
cun la zándra ai Remágg dl'Epifania,
Vo, ch'a si mort in crós pr'al gran pervia,
ch'l'iva d'esser la pès dal mand intér...
Im'han ciamèe al mari, ch'a-n-s sa dv'al sia,
l'unich fiol ch'a g'avéss l'è bersagllér...
Mo al Presepi a v'lho fat listáss e a spér,
se no, tuliv al cor e l'anma mia...
E senza tant preavis e tanti stòri
cuni a-s la semper pr'el famij di sgnor,
al gioren dápp a g'arrivè i murtóri.
Un l'era amès al prém assèlt d'un mont,
e cl'ètr'a l'ultem, decorèe al valor
sigánd: Savoia!... e cim 'na bala in front.

Epifania della guerra – Signore, gli aveva detto mentre tracciava il sentiero / con la cenere ai Re Magi dell'Epifania, Voi, che siete morto in croce per la causa suprema, / vale a dire per la pace del mondo intero...// Mi hanno chiamato il marito, che non si sa dove sia, / il mio unicofiglio è bersagliere.../ Il presepio però ve l'ho fatto lo stesso e spero: / sennò prendetevi pure il mio cuore e la mia anima. // Così senza tanto preavviso e senza tante storie, / come in genere accade per le famiglie di signori, / il giorno dopo le sono arrivati i necrologi. // Uno c'era rimasto al primo assalto di un monte / e l'altro all'ultimo, decorato al valore / gridando: Savoia!... e con una palla in fronte.

Epiphany during the War

Sir, she told him while tracing out the pathway
with ashes for the Three Wisemen of the Epiphany,
You, who died on the cross for the supreme cause,
that is to say for the peace of the entire world. . .
They called up my husband, who knows where he is,
the only son I have is in the infantry, he is a bersagliere. . .
I've set up the manger-scene for you just like every year and I hope:
if not, just go ahead and pull the heart and soul right out of me.
And without much warning and without much fuss,
which is how it generally happens for rich families,

the obituaries arrived the next day.
One died in the first assault on a mountain,
and in the last, decorated with honors
shouting: Savoy! . . . and with a bullet in the forehead.
She did not take a single breath: as if she were a statue,
slowly, slowly, she finished going about her tasks,
always staring at the two portraits
that she kept framed on her bedside table.
Then the thought came to her; and no sooner thought than done,
she lit the manger-scene, with all its tiny lights flickering,
she joined husband and son with a red-white-and-green
ribbon and she proposed a trade. . .
Look, God, what a poor woman
places on the pathway of ashes instead of the Three Wisemen. . .
Tomorrow, somebody can add mine to it.
Whether it was bad luck, or whether it was the work of a saint,
the Madonna's candle caught fire. . .
She dropped to her knees and hurled herself into her sobbing.
(January, 1915)

Pasqua di rivoluzion

I

Din dan don, din dan don... Che scampanázz,
quant bée culor, che muvimént, che fèra!...
Incòo l'è al sol ch'al v' a tgnir a battázz,
cla léspa', nèda a jer, d'la prémavéra.
El rundanénì egli en tòtti in smanázz;
l'aria la-n-n'è mai stèda acsè braghéra:
a sà la nóva fèna el crós di pázz;
e in ogni lacia, a-s vádd 'na bela céra.
Fora ed porta, pr'i camp, tòtt un giardén,
tóta n'avérta ed fior, ed srén, ed cièr,
tótta ónna méssa ed verd fráscb e tindrén!...
Mo in manch ch'an deggh: un lâmp, ónna trunèda,
un vént, 'na polvra, un sbáttres e un scapèr...
Un scur, ónn'acqua, un frádd, 'na tempestèda!.

nata ieri, della primavera. // Le rondinelle sono tutte eccitate; / l'aria non è mai stata più curiosa: / perfino i fondi dei pozzi sono informati; / e ogni viso mostra una bella cera. // Fuori porta, per i campi, è tutto un giardino, / tutta una distesa di fiori, di sereno, / di chiaro, tutta una sfumatura di verde fresco e tenero!... // Ma in men che non si dica: un lampo, una tuonata, / un vento, una polvere, uno sbattere e un fuggi fuggi / Uno scuro, un'acqua, un freddo, una tempesta!

Easter Day . . . Revolution

I

Ding, ding, dong. Ding, dong, ding. . . Such peeling,
so many beautiful colors, what movement, what a fair! . . .
Today the sun itself will be holding that little baby girl
in baptism, she was born yesterday, in the spring.
The swallows are all in a frenzy,
the air has never been so anxious:
the news is known even at the bottoms of wells
and every face wears a beautiful expression.
Outside the city walls, in the fields, it is one big garden,
an expanse of flowers, of serenity, of lucidity,
everything in shades of new and tender green! . . .
But I am leaving something out: a flash of lightening, a thunderbolt,
a wind, a dust storm, a banging and a stampede. . .
a darkness, a downpour, a cold, a storm!

II

Bén, mo a che zógh es zoga in ste paès?
Sámra ai derset d'Avril o ai prémed Znèr?...
Vada per dl'acqua o vent, ch'al srée al so més
perchè al Merz l'e vgnù a cò... mo propria nvèr?!...
Emenga dóo fruschléni!... A s'è gia arès
la sitazzaria ed tótt i bugadèr!...
Noster Sgnor ed sicur l'ha sbaglièe al pès
ed la stagion che incóo l'iva da bsèr!
Oh mo che primavera in pchèe murte!
Al verd e ai fior a-gh tramma al tabarén;
e si'àn la vida la pianzrà per quell!...
Figurèv po la nona e al non, dmaténa
cun el schèrp ed brunèl, el brègh dnanchén
e al vintal e la vesta ed mussuléna!

Beh, ma a che gioco si gioca in questo paese? / Siamo al diciassette di aprile o ai primi di gennaio?... / Passi pure per l'acqua o per il vento: / è il mese adatto perché marzo è marcito... / ma proprio nevicare?!... // E non una spruzzatina!... Si sono già arresi / anche gli stracci di tutti i lavandai!... / Nostro signore di sicuro ha sbagliato il peso / della stagione che oggi doveva baciare! // Oh, ma che primavera in peccato mortale! Al verde e ai fiori trema la manteffina, e quest'anno la vita avrà qualcosa per cui piangere!... // Figuratevi poi la nonna e il nonno, domatina / con le scarpe di stoffa, le brache di tela / e il ventaglio e il vestito di mussolina!

II

Well, what games are being playing in this town?
Is it April seventeenth or January first? . . .
You wade through either water or wind: you expect it of the month
because March is rotten. . . but snow?!
And not one or two little flakes! . . . Even the rags
hanging on lines to dry have given up! . . .
Our Lord has surely mistaken the importance
of the season, which today should be a kiss!
Oh, this is a spring in mortal sin!
The cloak shivers at the sign of green and flowering;
and this year, life will have something to cry about! . . .
Just think about grandmother and grandfather, tomorrow morning
wearing their cloth shoes, their lightweight undergarments,
and the fan and garment of muslin!

RENZO PEZZANI

Renzo Pezzani was born in Parma in 1889 and died in Castiglione Torinese in 1951. An elementary school teacher, he later worked for a publisher and then became a publisher himself. A narrator as well as a poet, he collected his poems written in the native dialect of Parma in the volumes *Bornisi. Canzoniere parmigiano*, Parma: Libreria Fiaccadori, 1939; *Tarabacchi. Nuovo canzoniere parmigiano*, Parma: Edizioni il Verdone, 1943; *Oc luster. Poesie parmigiane*, Parma: Edizioni della "Famija Pranzana," 1950.

Pezzani's poetry, organized between *Bornisi*, his first collection published just before W.W. II, and *Oc luster*, the collection that came out a few months before his death, is characterized by a variety of meter tending toward narrative and irony, which seems inspired – in its internal form as well as in the attitude of the poetic persona toward its subject matter – by the work of his almost coeval Gozzano. Moving from the forced abandonment of his birthplace, Pezzani's dialect poetry is in fact rooted in an often intense melancholy, combined with a native capacity to depict local customs with a sharp eye and abundant verve. It is true that at times he does not go beyond the narrow idyllic rendering of the local sketch, but the occasional portraits in the end bring to life, with a *crepuscolare* taste, a very respectable and credible anthropological canvas.

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Parma

Bisogna esser lontan
pär sentir col ch'at vál
aver'gh ados coll mäl
pez che na fama äd pari,
ch'i ciamen nostalgia,
Pärma; viver i dì
int la malinconia
cmè l'ò patida mi;
tirär's adrè cmè un pes

al cor ch'as volta indrè.

M'è passè jani, i mes

e tant a n'ò contè

che omäi an nin poss pu:

al cor, avert in meza,

l'à tirè su na sesa

e 'lè restè da lu.

Pämma! pär ne morir

dal näil ch'at m'è tachè,

col treno di sospir,

(ma sarè gnu anca a pè!)

rivava al sabot nota,

pär ne catär nisson.

Clä genta col baston

la m'arè dè na bota

s'la m'aviss vist da mi

girär tra 'l ciär e 'l scur

cmè na ponga drè 'l mur;

e tutt a sarè fni.

A t'inconträva a cl'ora

ch'a riva al treno e omäi

gh'è poca genta fora,

e n t'vedd che di fanäi;

un quälch fanäl chi e là

ch'a se smorsa, ch'as pia;

i camarer ch'va a cà;

qualchdon da n'ostaria;

al lumm dla bicicletta

äd la guärdia dj insonni;

int un canton dil donni

col bráz dla sigaretta;

un marinär ch'al speta

al treno pär La Spessia;

un omett ägh gh'a pressia

un giovnot ch'al s'inchieta

con la ciäva, al porton, 45

(quand a bast'rè na gossa
'd petroli, d'oli bon);
e 's senta von ch'a tossa.
as vedda un gat ch'a scapa
nigher cmè 'n galevron
na baza; 'n odor 'd grapa...
e, finalment, anson.
Alora si chTè bela,
Pärma, col scärpi in man,
da le, con la so stela
e l'aria 'd Langhiran;
e coll fil d'acqua ciära,
lustra comè 'l sign ch'a lassa
la lumäga, ch'a passa
sott'i pont, int la giära.
Alora si chjen grand
i so bor'gh, il so piassi.
Il cà, ch'i pären bassi
quand a gh'è 'l sol e quand
gh'è tanta genta ach corra,
i cress'n, is pärden via,
älti, gesumaria,
da fär gola a na torra.
E il torri? an tja vedd pu,
o ne't ghe vedd che i pè,
tant che mi j'ò pensè
ch'j avissen toti su.
Inveci i gh'eren tutti
chill beli veci sani,
con tutti il so campani,
anca s'i stäven mutti.
Int al passär, j an vist
ch'a jera mi, da mi.
Vunna l'à ditt: "Mo si,
l'è Renzo, un po' pu trist.
Povren! l'è lu ch'a ven

cmè 'n läder, a n'ora 'd nota...

Sta 'tent, al me putten,

ch'it polen där na bota.

Da na bota a la morta

Se te 't doviss salvär,

't al sè che 'l campanär

al m'lassa avert la porta;

al gh'dà sol la marletta,

mo denti a gh'è 'l cadmas.

La scäla l'è un po' stretta,

at catarè dj ozläs...

Mo quand a t'è chi su,

at capirè tant cosi

ch'a ne tja capiv pu:

at capirè che 'l crozi

ch'at port, i n'en che spen,

che 'l dolor, la fadiga

j en föjen'ni d'ortiga;

che basta vreres ben.

E se 't gh'è in fonda al cor

l'odi puntù cmè n'ärma,

de'd chi, quand at vedd Pärma,

at gh'al butt zo cmè un fior

ch'in possa tor la smensa

la genta pu cativa ... “

E Pärma la domiva

nuda cmè l'inocensa,

co' i so bilen int la con'na:

tori, cesi, zarden,

e cmè un ciocolaten

a gh'era anca la lon'na.

Mi, cmè un moros pär sträda,

la sentiva, la vdeva

domir, un po' squatida

con al cor ch'agli bateva

sotto la pela, chiet

cmè 'n fiè int una tinden'na,
al cor d'una puten'na,
un cor senza segret.
Al Dom, al Batister,
san Zvan... un bel boschett
äd torri. E mi un povrett
col sach di so penser,
ch'a serca un let äd foji
o un canton senza gnenta
e ch'al ne se spaventa
se 'l s' desdarà col doji;
e 'l ne cata che un sas
e l'è tant strac, povren,
che se il vedra' i spassen
il toran su cmè un stras.
Un sas, na peca dura
dal Batisteri. E 'l pensa:
L'è la me cà, sicura!
La cà dla me inocensa.
Picca la porta: un mur.
E l'angel da porter
al dorm ch'è 'n piazer
int al canton pu scur.
Se anca vriss insister,
chissà, dop a tant ani,
al conossrè Pessani
ch'è scritt int al register.
"Da st'ora – al me dirè –
i galantomj è' a let.
Dormiva e 'l m' à desdè!
Ch'al vaga, o ciam al pret".
A vrè picciär la porta
dal Dom, mo i du leon
i pären can int na corta,
in vol'n avzen nisson.
Andarè da san Zvan,

mo gh'è n'ozlass ch'a siga:

l'è là da tarzent an

e nâi nisson ch'al liga.

A la Stecâda si

ch'agh dormire vlontera

anca zaquè pâr tera,

e 'm desdarè a mezdi,

l'ora ch'as desda i siori,

in meza al statui, in meza

a tutt chill cosi dori,

pu in paradis che in cesa.

Ese ne m'voi nisson,

revem ti, revem ti:

i frè i domen vesti,

in s'grupen gna' al cordon;

revem ti, frè sagrista,

la porta äd la Nonsiâda,

pârchè dormir par strâda

l'è la cosa pu trista.

Revem ti, frè sârcon!

Al so che il Capussen'ni

i senten Messa a dzon

primma dil rondanen'ni.

Intant Pärma la reva

joc. La badacia in pè.

Gh'è za i pisson ch'a beva

l'aqua di "Du brassè";

e fis-cia un treno; son'na

la sveglia di soldè;

ne s'vedda che la lon'na.

Enisson sa chi è stè

ch'a avert senza 'n armor

il cesi a chil donletti

ch'i van col spagnoletti

nigri a parlär col Sgnor.

Parma.– Bisogna essere lontani / per sentire ciò che vali; / avere addosso quel male, / peggio della fame di pane, / che chiamano nostalgia, / Parma; vivere i giorni / nella malinconia come io l'ho patita; / trascinare il cuore / che si volta indietro. / Mi sono passati gli anni, i mesi, / e tanti ne ho contati che or mai non ne posso più; il cuore, aperto in due, / ha tirato su una siepe / ed è rimasto solo. / Parma! per non morire / del male che mi hai attaccato, / col treno dei sospiri / (ma sarei venuto anche a piedi) / arrivavo la notte del sabato, / per non trovare nessuno. / Quella gente / mi avrebbe bastonato / se mi avesse visto girare da solo / tra il chiaro e lo scuro, / come un topo lungo il muro; / e tutto sarebbe finito / Ti incontro in quell'ora / che arriva il treno e ormai / c'è fuori poca gente, / e non vedi che fanali; / qualche fanale qua e là / che si smorza, si accende; / i camerieri che vanno a casa; / qualcuno da un'osteria, / il lume della bicicletta / del vigile dei sogni; / in un cantone donne / con la brace della sigaretta; / un marinaio che aspetta / il treno Per LaSpezia; / un ometto che ha fretta; / un giovanotto che s'inquieta / con la chiave e il portone / (quando basterebbe una goccia / di petrolio, d'olio buono); / si sente che tossisce; / si vede un gatto che scappa / nero come un calabrone; / un ubriaco; un odore di grappa... / e finalmente nessuno. / Allora sì che è bella, / Parma, con le scarpe in mano, / sola con la sua stella / e l'aria di Langhiran; / e quel filo d'acqua chiara, / lustra come il segno che lascia / la lumaca, che passa / sotto i ponti, nella ghiaia. / Allora sì che son grandi / i suoi vicoli, le sue piazze. / Le case, che paiono basse / quando c'è il sole e quando / c'è tanta gente che corre, / crescono, si perdono via, / alte, gesummaria, / da far a una torre. / E le torri? non le vedi più, / o non ne vedi che il piede, / tanto che mi venne da pensare / che le avessero rubate. / Invece c'erano tutte / quelle belle vecchie sane, / con tutte le loro campane, / anche se stavano mute. / Passando hanno visto / che ero io, da solo. / Una ha detto: "Ma sì, è Renzo, un po' patito. / Poverino! è lui che viene / come un ladro, in quest'ora di notte... / Guardati, il mio ragazzo, / che possono colpirti. / Da' un colpo alla morte... / Se ti dovessi salvare, / lo sai che il campanaro / mi lascia aperta la porta; / chiude solo la maniglia, / ma dentro c'è il catenaccio. / La scala è un po' stretta, / troverai qualche uccellaccio... / Ma quando sei giunto quassù, / comprenderai tante cose / che non capivi più: / capirai che le croci / che porti non sono che spine; / che il dolore, la fatica / sono foglioline di ortica; / che basta volersi bene. / E se hai in fondo al cuore / l'odio aguzzo come un pugnale, / da qua in alto, quando vedi Parma, / glielo butti giù come un fiore / che ne possa prendere la semente / la gente più malvagia". E Parma dormiva / nuda come l'innocenza, / con i suoi giocattoli nella cuna: / torri, chiese, giardini, / e come un cioccolatino / c'era anche la luna. / Io, come un innamorato sperduto, / la sentivo, la vedevo, / dormire mezza scoperta / col cuore che le batteva / sotto la pelle, quieto / come un respiro dietro una tendina, / il cuore di una bambina, / un cuore senza segreti. / Il Duomo, il Battistero, / San Giovanni... un bel boschetto / di torri. E io un mendicante / col sacco dei suoi pensieri, / che cerca un letto di foglie / o un cantuccio di terra nuda / e che non si spaventa / di svegliarsi indolenzito; / e non trova che un sasso, / e è tanto stanco, poverino, / che se lo vedranno gli spazzini / lo prenderanno su come uno straccio. / Un sasso, un duro gradino / del Battistero. E pensa: / È la mia casa, sicuro! / La casa della mia innocenza. / Batti alla porta: un muro. / E l'angelo portinaio / dorme che è un piacere / nell'angolo più buio. Se anche volessi insistere, / chissà, dopo tanti anni, / se egli riconoscerebbe il Pezzani / ch'è iscritto nel registro battesimale. / "A quest'ora – egli mi direbbe – / i galantuomini sono a letto. / Dormivo e m'ha svegliato! Vada, o chiamo il prete". / Vorrei battere alla porta / del Duomo, ma i due leoni / sembrano cani in un cortile, / che non vogliono vicino nessuno. / Andrei a San Giovanni, / ma c'è un uccellaccio che stride. / È là da trecento anni, / e mai nessuno che lo leghi. / Alla Steccata sì / che dormirei volentieri, / anche bullato sul pavimento, / e mi sveglierei a mezzodì, / l'ora che si svegliano i signori, / in mezzo alle statue, / in mezzo a tutte quelle cose dorate, / più in paradiso che in chiesa. / E se non mi vuole nessuno, / aprimi tu, aprimi tu: / i frati domono vestiti, / non sciolgono neppure il cordone; / aprimi tu, frate sagrista, / la porta dell'Annunziata, / perché dormire per strada / è la cosa più triste. / Aprimi tu, frate della questua! / Lo so che le Cappuccine sentono messa / a digiuno, prima delle rondinelle. / Intanto Parma apre gli occhi. / Sbadiglia in piedi, Ci sono già i colombi che bevono / l'acqua dei "Due Abbracciati"; / e fischia un treno; suona / la sveglia dei soldati; / non si vede che la luna. / E nessuno sa chi è stato / ad aprire senza rumore / le chiese a quelle donnette / che vanno col velo nero / a parlare col Signore.

(Traduzione di P.P. Pasolini)

Parma

It's necessary to be far away from you

in order to feel what you're worth,

to be wearing that pain

which is worse than lack of bread

that they call nostalgia,

Parma, to live out the days

full of a melancholic dependency

like I have suffered,

dragging my heart

behind me as if it were a weight.

Years have passed,

I've seen many, many months come and go.

Parma! In order to not die

of this illness with which I am infected,

I arrived on the sighing train,

(but I would have dragged myself here on foot),

I got here late Saturday night
so that no one would see me.
Those people with their clubs
would have thrashed me
if they had met me alone,
as I wandered around between the light and the shadows,
like a mouse along the wall
and it would have all been over.
I met you in that nocturnal hour
when the train arrived, when
there were few people out,
and the only thing on the street were the lamplights,
a few here and there,
some lit, some spent,
and waiters on their way back home,
a person coming out of the tavern.
The bicycle light
of the dream police;
in a corner, women
with cigarette embers;
a sailor waiting
for the train to La Spezia;
a little man scurrying,
a young man who is restless
with a key at the front door
(when all he needs is a drop
of gasoline, or a drop of olive oil)
you can hear someone coughing.
You see a cat scating,
black as a homet;
a drunk; the odor of grappa. . .
and finally, no one.
And now, yes, you're beautiful,
Parma, carrying your shoes in your hand,
alone with your star, in the fresh air
that comes down from the hills near Langhirano,

with that clear thread of water,
lustrous like the mark the snail leaves,
which passes under the bridges,
along the banks of gravel.

Now, yes, see how vast
your streets, each and every piazza.

The houses which seem so low
when the sun is out and
so many people are hurrying around,
grow so tall you lose your way,
they're tall enough, Jesus Christ,
to make a tower jealous.

And the towers? You can't see them anymore,
you can see only their feet
and I started thinking
they must have stolen them.

But instead, they were all there,
those old healthy ones still standing
with their all bells,
even if at this hour they are mute.

Passing,
they've seen it's me, alone.

One says, "Yeah, sure,
it's Renzo, looking a little down.

Poor guy, it's him
sneaking in like a thief in the middle of the night. . .

Be careful my boy,
they can jump you,
land a deadly blow. . .

If you have to make you escape,
you know that the bell-ringer
will leave the door open
he'll close the door handle
but there's an bolt inside.

You'll find a few messy birds,
but when you've gotten to the top

you'll understand many things
that you no longer understood.
You'll understand that the crosses
you bear are just thorny branches,
that sorrow, exhaustion,
are like needles fallen from a nettle bush,
you'll understand that it's enough to love oneself.
And if, at the bottom of your heart,
you've buried hatred, honed sharp like a knife,
well, from this place, looking down at Parma,
you'll fling it away, out the window like a flower
that could not be inseminated,
like the people who are most evil. . .”

And Parma slept
naked as innocence
with all its toys in its cradle,
towers, churches, gardens,
like a little piece of chocolate,
there was even the moon.

Me, like a lovelorn wanderer,
I feel it, see it,
sleeping half uncovered
with a heart that beats
beneath the skin, quietly
like a breath behind a curtain,
the heart of a little girl,
a heart without secrets.

The Duomo, The Baptistery,
San Giovanni. . . a beautiful little forest
of towers. And me, a poor lost fellow
with a sack full of worries,
looking for a bed of leaves,
and an empty quiet corner
where you don't wake up
terrified and numb.

But he's only finding a stone,

he's so tired, poor guy,
that if the street-cleaners see him
they'll sweep him away like a rag.
A stone, a hard step
of the Baptistery. And he thinks
"This is my home, surely!
The home of my innocence."
You knock at the door: a wall.
And the angel-dooman
sleeps, it was a pleasure to watch,
in the darkest corner.
And if I insist on waking him up
who knows, after so many years,
if he'll recognize me as Pezzani
whose name is written down in the baptismal registry.
At this hour -- he'll say to me --
Gentlemen are in bed.
I was asleep and you woke me up!
Leave or I'll call the priest.
I would like to knock at the door
of the Duomo, but the two lions
are like dogs standing guard in a courtyard,
they won't let anyone get close.
I would go to San Giovanni
but there is one of those filthy birds shrieking:
it's been roosting up there for three hundred years
and no one has ever thought to catch it and tie it up.
At the church of the Madonna della Steccata,
sure, I would willingly sleep,
even stretched out on the ground.
I would wake up at noon
the hour when gentlemen rise,
among the statues
and all the golden things,
it's more like being in Paradise than in church.
And if no one wants me,

you will open up for me, you open the door:
the monks sleep with their clothes on,
they don't even take off their corded belts.
You open it up for me, sacristan brother,
you open up the Annunciation door,
because to sleep on the street
is the saddest thing.
Open up for me! mendicant brother,
I know that the Capuchins
hear Mass before breakfast
I know they're awake before the swallows. . .
In the meantime, Parma
opens its eyes,
stands there yawning.
Already pigeons are drinking
water from the fountain of the "Two Embracers,"
a train whistle whistles, a horn blows
revelry for the soldiers, only the moon is visible.
And no one knows who it was who
soundlessly opened the door
to all those ordinary women
who come wearing black lace veils
to converse with the Lord.

CESARE ZAVATTINI

Cesare Zavattini was born in Luzzara in 1902 and died in Rome in 1989. A writer and screenwriter for the cinema who was at the forefront during the great season of Italian neorealism, especially with Vittorio De Sica, collected his poetry, written in the dialect of his native Luzzara, in the province of Reggio Emilia on the right bank of the Po, in the volume *Stricarm' in d'na parola*, Milan: Sheiwiller, 1973, later reprinted in *Opere 1931-1986*, Milan: Bompiani, 1991, pp. 905-968.

Stricarm' in d'na parola is a completely integral part of a literary opus which always aimed at the elimination of the barriers against the coexistence of different genres: narrative, screenplay, lyric poetry, autobiography, diary, aphorisms, critical annotation. The phonosymbolic peculiarities of the borderline Luzzara dialect, with its Lombard-sounding diphthongs, sharpen Zavattini's natural inclination towards a corporal language, and lend his naturally spontaneous and subversive energy a confident cognitive quality, by virtue also of the broken and fragmentary metrics. His most successful poems are inspired by an authentic sense of community, between card games, sex, food, the struggle for life, in a context in which "vulgarity" reveals not only a taste for provocation, but is seen as an inherent property of language and of the author's innate disposition toward life.

Criticism

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An me cumpaisan

An me cumpaisan faccia da sberli, a ga spösa anch'al fià,
a l'ò sugnà c'al vulava in ciel
cun na camisa bianca cla s'infiaa,
in s'al genar d'al quadar dla Resüresiön,
mièr d'pasarot i rudava intum'a la sö plada
e me cm'al nas in sö
ca m'admandava: "chi l'avrés dét?"

Un mio compaesano. – Un mio compaesano, faccia da sberle, gli puzza anche il fiato, / l'ho sognato che volava in cielo / con una camicia bianca che si gonfiava, / sul genere del quadro della Resurrezione, / migliaia di passerotti ruotavano intorno alla sua, pelata / e io col naso in aria / a domandarmi: "chi l'avrebbe detto?"

A fellow-townsman

There is a fellow-townsman of mine, with a face you just want to slap,
even his breath stinks,
and I dreamed that he was flying in the sky
with a white shirt that was billowing out
in the style of Resurrection paintings,
thousands of sparrows circled around his bald head
and me, with my nose in the air,
asking myself, "Who would have thought?"

A l'arcnosi

I dis: al scriveva mei na volta,
ca sum dvantà volgare.
A l'arcnosi e an po' am' g'afeziuni.
Da pütlet a santiva me padar
bravá cmi sant e la madona, l'era grand,
ad not l'impiniva la camara,
di bramiti, e pr'amur quasi
al strusava me madar (a naseva i me fradei),
le la murmurava frasi a metà
dna dulsesa che ad dé
a n'an catava pö li pesti.

Lo riconosco. Dicono che scrivevo meglio una volta, / dicono che sono diventato volgare. / Lo riconosco e finisco cori l'affezionarmi. / Da fanciullo sentivo mio padre / colluttare coi santi e la madonna, era grande, / di notte riempiva la stanza / di bramiti, e quasi, per amore, / strozzava mia madre (nascevano i miei fratelli) / lei mormorava frasi a metà / di una dolcezza che di giorno / non non ne trovo più traccia.

I Recognize It

They say that I used to write better at one time,
they say that I have gotten vulgar.
I recognize it and I just end up getting more attached to it.
As a boy, I would hear my father
doing hand-to-hand combat with the saints and the Madonna,
he was a very big man,
at night the room would be filled with bellows
and out of love, almost,
he would strangle my mother (my brothers were bom)
she would murmur half-phrases
with a tenderness that in the day
there were never any crumbs left of.

Che salt

A l'impruvvis, cme in dal quarantatrì,
an sapel d'areuplan in sla testa,
che salt in sla pultruna.
Invece l'era al ciel
pén d'angei,
al vent di ali al fava
vulà via i capei, sbatar li finèstri.
Vön d'lur cm'i gradi e na vus urbi et orbi, l'a dét:
"Adès al riva lö"
Me muier la cumincia a sigà,
a la Mafalda a ghé cascà d'in man
an vas d'valur.
Lur,
sinquanta metar circa survia dli cà,
i s'è més in fila, an curidur
par chilometrì, in fond a pareva sempar
ad vedar na lüs, an quel.
Töti a pstaum,
sensa dmandà
sensa pansà.
A c'fös sta qualdon
c'al dgés na mesa parola par tgni sö
an fiöl n'amig.

Al sanguv al s'era firmà.

Sarà pasà an minut,

dü, tri, nisön s'avdeva.

Dopu omcapi ca gh'era sta

an cuntrurdan, quand

l'istés d'pröma

l'à sbraià:

manal trindeneo val,

e i cap dli squadrigli i ripeteva:

manal manal manal,

sempar da pö luntan,

fin che cm'an dietrofront parfet,

mèn vön (c'al voia artmagnar ché?)

Ié spari cm'an rümur d'mutur

tirands' a dré polvar e foi.

Da Stricarn' in d'na parola, 1973

Che salto. All'improvviso come nel quarantatré / un gran casino d'aeroplani sopra la testa, che salto sulla poltrona. / Inveced era il cielo pieno d'angeli, / il vento delle ali faceva / volare via i cappelli, sbattere le finestre. / Uno di loro con i gradi e la voce urbi et orbi ha detto: / "Adesso arriva lui." / Mia moglie ha cominciato a piangere, / alla Mafalda è cascato dalle mani un vaso di valore. / Loro, / un cinquanta metri circa sopra le case, / si sono disposti in fila, un corridoio / di chilometri e chilomeri, in fondo pareva sempre di vedere una luce, un qualche cosa. / Tutti aspettavano, / senza domandare / senza pensare. / Ci fosse stato qualcuno / che dicesse una mezza parola per tenere su / un figlio un amico. / Il sangue si era fermato. / Sarà passato un minuto, / due, tre, nessuno si vedeva. / Dopo abbiamo capito che c'era stato / un contrordine, quando / lo stesso di prima / ha gridato: / manal trindeneo val, / e i capi delle squadriglie ripetevano: / manal manal manal / sempre più lontano, / fin che con un dietrofront perfetto, / mèn uno (che yoglia restate qui?) / sono spariti con un rumore di motori / tirandosi dietro polvere e foglie..

Such a Leap

All of a sudden, just like in forty-three,

all hell broke loose with airplanes overhead,

that I leap up in my chair.

Instead, it was the sky

full of angels

and the wind from their wings

made hats fly off and windows slam.

One of the high-ranking ones

with a voice like the Pope's,

urbi et orbi,

said, "He is coming now."

My wife started to cry,

a valuable vase fell from Mafalda's hand.

They

fifty meters or so above the houses

were in a line formation, a corridor
kilometers and kilometers long,
in the distance it still looked like a single light,
a something.
Everyone watched
without asking
without thinking.
If only there had been someone
who said half-a-word to bolster up a son or a friend.
Hearts stopped.
It will be over in one minute,
two, three, no one was coming.
Then we understood that there had been a counter-order
when, the same voice as before
bellowed out manal trindeneo val
and the heads of the squadrons repeated
manal manal manal
moving farther away
until they made a perfect about-face
minus one (who wanted to stay here?)
they all disappeared with the rumblings of the motors
leaving behind dust and leaves.

Li paroli

Sempar pò alzèri
li diventa li paroli
da na generasion a n'atra, ghiv badà?
An ghé mia di pütlet chi dega incö:
comunque.
Dventarai cme gnuatar
c'om butà zò da la navzèla
punt virguli congiünzion ecc.
e as precipita?

Le parole – Le parole / diventano sempre più leggere / di generazione in generazione / ci avete badato? / Non potrete trovare oggi / bambini che dicano: comunque / Diventeranno come noi / che abbiamo buttato dalla navicella / punti virgole congiunzioni ecc. / e si precipita?

Words

Lighter and lighter

words are becoming
from one generation to the next,
have you paid any attention to it?
There are no longer little children who today say:
anyway.
They are turning out just like us
who have thrown overboard
period comma conjunctions etc.
and one throws oneself headlong into it?

TONINO GUERRA

Antonio (Tonino) Guerra was born in Santarcangelo di Romagna in 1920. An elementary school teacher, in 1943 he was interned in a concentration camp in Germany, where he began writing his first poems in dialect. When he returned to Italy, he graduated with a thesis on dialect poetry, and in 1946 published his first book of verse, *I scarabócc* (Faenza: Lega), followed in 1950 by *La schioppettata* (Lega,) and in 1954 by *Lunario* (Faenza: Benedetti). In 1952 he began writing narrative with a short novel, *La storia di Fortunat*, and four years later published a second volume, *Dopo i leoni*. After moving to Rome in the early fifties, Guerra embarked on a fruitful career as a screenwriter, which allowed him to work with famous directors such as Anghelopulos, Antonioni, Fellini, Petri, Rosi, Tarkovskij, the Taviani brothers. Two more novels, *L'equilibrio e L'uomo parallelo*, were published respectively in 1967 and in 1969 by Bompiani, while in 1969 he began to publish the volumes of the mock-heroic series *Milleinosche*, in collaboration with L. Malerba. In 1972, with L. Laks, Guerra wrote the series of comedies *Il cannocchiale* for television. In the same year his entire works in dialect, with the addition of the section "Éultum vérs" (Last Verses), was assembled in *I bu* (Milan: Rizzoli), with a preface by G. Contini (a second revised edition came out in 1993).

Simultaneously, Guerra continued to write narrative. In 1974 he published *I cento uccelli*, in 1978 *Il polverone*. *Storie per una notte quieta*, in 1981 *I guardatori della luna* (all three with Bompiani); in 1982, in collaboration with M. Antonioni, he published *L'aquilone*. *Una favola del nostro tempo*, in 1984 *La pioggia tiepida* (Rusconi), and in 1990 *Cenere* (Metrolibri). After the silence that followed *I bu*, (except for the few poems contained in *Polverone*, reprinted in 1992), Guerra resumed writing poetry with renewed energy. In the eighties and nineties he published, all with the publisher Maggioli of Rimini, *Il miele* (1981), *La capanna* (Maggioli, 1985), *Il viaggio* (1986), *Il libro delle chiese abbandonate* (1988), *L'orto d'Eliseo* (1989), *Il vecchio con un piede in Oriente* (1990, a mixture of prose and poetry); *L'albero dell'acqua* (Scheiwiller, 1992), which was reedited with a new section and with the title *L'albero dell'acqua e più* in 1995; and *E' caval d'Ulisse*, Faenza, Mobydick, 1996. In 1992 he also published a play, *A Pechino fa la neve*.

After returning to Rome in the eighties, for some years Guerra has been living in Pennabilli, in the northern Marches. He has won numerous prizes, among which the "Biella," the "Gozzano," the "Nonino," and the "Pasolini."

Before Tolmino Baldassarri, Guerra's poetry has also been lamenting the progressive disappearance of rural society since the first poems in the fifties in "deformed, broken, putrefied" verses, through the use of a "basic" dialect without history, according to Contini's fundamental essay, perfect for the scenario of less and less local and more and more universal desolate suspension— that offers a residual and elementary view of the suburbs, inhabited by animals that are either repugnant (spiders, maggots) or useless (the oxen that give the title to his 1972 collection, *I bu*). In Guerra himself, then, we find a more oneiric and visionary Pascoli, more open to the voice of the beyond and the profound choralism of an epos that no longer places barriers against the voice of the dead. No doubt, also thanks to his work as a top-rated screenwriter and associate of Fellini (whose conscious use of dialects is not limited to that of Rimini in 8½, but extends to the mix of Satyricon and the collaboration with Andrea Zanzotto in *Casanova* and in *E la nave va*), Guerra did not stop at his first lyrical poetry, but tried his hand at the long poem in *Miele* (1981) and *Capanna* (1985), achieving with the latter his highest peak as a poet, a sort of point of no return.

Within this context, in fact, Guerra replaces the subjectivity of the lyric self with the crude, hard experience of a humble and geographically very determined reality; and such a representation becomes the indispensable space for defining the progressive self-consciousness of reality, including the epiphanic insights that allow him to connect with the deepest part of nature and perception, everyday life and memory. It is not by chance that the opening scene of the poem is wintry and enveloped in fog, in a ghostly vision that associates, more often through metonymy, the distinctive traits of the landscape with the experience of survival and shipwreck, in a fully achieved interaction of rhythm and subject matter, even in the Italian version by Roberto Roversi.

Criticism

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I bu

Andè a di acsè mi bu ch' i vaga véa,
 che quèl chi à fat i à fat,
 che adèss u s'èra préima se tratòur,
 E pianz e' cór ma tótt, ènca mu mè,
 avdài ch' i à lavurè dal mièri d'an
 e adès i à d'andè véa a tèsta basa
 dri ma la córda lùnga de mazèl.

Da I bu, 1972

I buoi - Andate a dire ai buoi che vadano via / che il loro lavoro non ci serve più / che oggi si fa prima ad arare coi trattore. / E poi commoviamoci pure a pensare / alla fatica che hanno fatto per migliaia d'anni / mentre eccoli lì che se ne vanno a testa bassa / dietro la corda lunga del macello.

The Oxen

Go ahead and tell the oxen that they can leave
 that the work they did is done,
 that it's fast to plow with a tractor.
 And let's all be moved, including me,
 thinking how hard they've worked for thousands and thousands of
 years,
 now as they depart, heads lowered,
 at the end of the butcher's long cord.

La sciupèda

Ènca stanòta e' tòuna
ènca stanòta e' casca i fólmin.
Tulémnia zò la s-ciòpa dal sufètti
e fénma una cartóccia ad calzinàz;
la bòra se bumbès chl'à Giulio tagli urècci
e in chèva un cartunzéin.
L'è òura ch'a tìrémma còuntra e' zil,
l'è òura da fè bum da un finistréin.

Da I bu, 1972

Il colpo di fucile - Tuona anche stanotte / anche stanotte cadono giù i fulmini. // Prendiamo il fucile dal granaio / facciamo una cartuccia cori un po' di calcina, / la borra con la bambagia che ha Giulio negli orecchi / e mettiamoci in cima un poco di cartone. / è l'ora di fare bum dalla finestra / è l'ora di tirare contro il cielo.

The Gun-Shot

Again tonight there's lightning
again tonight there's thunder.
Let's get the rifle down from the hayloft
let's make a cartridge with some plaster;
the wadding with the cotton in Giulio's ears
and let's stopper it off with cardboard.
It's time to shoot into the sky
It's time to fire, boom, from the window.

I limèun

Sì par quàtar vintquàtar,
piò utènta, piò zinquentòt,
zèinch par òt quarènta
déu i è andè da mèl
però u n'èva fat nuvènta.
Insómma st'an i mi liméun
tra béll e bròtt
i n'à fat dusentquarenta.
A vagh a chéul ma tòtt
a stagh tra i mi liméun.
La polética più gnént
o ciap za dò curtlèdi.
Niént dùni, niént putèni,
via i parént.

Quàtar fioridèuri

quàtar stasòun.

A vagh a chéul ma tótt

a stagh tra i mi liméun.

Da I bu, 1972

I limoni – Sei per quattro ventiquattro / più ottanta, e più cinquantotto, / cinque per otto quaranta / due sono andati a male / però ne aveva fatti novantia. // Insomma, quest'inno i miei limoni / fra belli e brutti / ne hanno fatti dueceritoquaranta. / Vado in culo i tutti / sto fra i mie limoni. / Niente più politici / ci ho preso due coltellate, / donne niente e nemmeno puttane / i parenti fuori dai coglioni. / Quattro fioriture / quattro stagioni / io vado in culo a tutti / sto fra i miei limoni.

The Lemon-Trees

Six times four is twenty-four,

plus eighty, plus fifty-eight,

five times eight is forty,

two got sick

but they still put out ninety.

Anyway, this year my lemon-trees,

between the good and the bad ones,

put out two hundred and forty.

To hell with everyone,

I'm staying among my lemon-trees.

No more politics,

I was stabbed twice,

no women, not even whores,

to hell with relatives.

Four blossomings,

four seasons

to hell with everyone

I'm staying among my lemon-trees.

III

Tra finèstri, fionisgróin, fiséuri,

taparèli, béus e spurtéll, dróinta la capana

u i n' era piò ad zinquènta e Omero

par una stmèna e piò u s' è mèss

a guardè quèl ch' u s' avdèva 'd fura.

Próima di tótt al piènti che i cuntadóin

i vléva datònda chèsa: l'amòur

par l'òmbra sòura e' pòzz in módi

che cal d'òni te tó l'aqua li n ciapés
un còuip ad sòul, l'anéus che tén dalòng
al mòschi, e' vóinch par i cróin
e i zést che féva i vécc tla vèggia,
e' tamaróis par al ramazi da spazè
la stala e l'èra, la siva de sambéugh
còuntra e' vérum solitèri,
e pu e' canaid che déva al cani nóvi
ma la véгна. Tótt sta ròba la era ancòura
in pi tranne i pèl di paièr ch' i n' éva
piò la paia, l'èra di bastéun instichéd ma tèra
sai spranghi spanduléun
ch' al n tnéva piò lighéd e' strèm
còuntra al buraschi 'd vént.
Tal zumèdi 'd nèbbia u s' avdéva sultènt
la zóima di pèl e tótt e' rèst l'era sòtta
la nóvla puzèda ma tèra, quatar
péunti niri che paréva dal bèrchi
afughèdi, e piò in là e' galegèva
sòura la nèbbia e' campanóil ad San Zvan in Galiléa
sai murài de' camstènt
ch' al tnéva céus a la pr'aria
tótt al cròusi 'd fèr. Eu s' avdéva e' spóigal
de castèl indò ch' i géva
ch' l'èra arivata in visita da i parént
Francesca da Rimini, sòura un caval
si finimént d'arzént e dri ma li u i era
e' fradèl de su maróid che bastunéva
s' una cana i fiéur zal dla primavéra.
Mo dal vólti la nèbbia la féva sparó i iniquèl
e tótt al finèstri agli era céusi
da chilometri e chilometri ad pòrbia mòla
ch' la n féva avdài gnénca agli òmbri dal cani
o al fò i rùssi di pèsgh ch' al caschéva ma tèra,
però u s sentéva dal s-ciuptèdi a là d' in èlt
e un camion ch' landéva a l' inféran.

U i era du aparécc da guèra
ch'i vulèva te sòul sòura la nèbbia
e i s déva dri cuinè ch'i fòss di mat,
quand ch'is sbutéva spuntéun e' paréva
che e' caschés e' zil sòura la capana
e Omero u s'è ciutè agli urècci sal mèni
parchè e' triméva i vóidar e la tèra;
s u i sarà una guèra e' basta una bòmba
par fè piazza pulóida da e' mèr fina al muntagni
e i óman i sarà dauli òmbri còuntra i méur.
Una matóina prèst, invéci,
la campagna la era bièna 'd bróina
cumè s'l'avéss piuvéu de lat.
Pu dòp u s'è alzè e' sòul
e l'è avnéu fura i culéur dla tèra,
però cla luce chèlda la n' à sughé iniquèl
e Omero u s'è incantè a guardè e' mònd a l'arvérsa
ch'u i era al chès i e i èlbar s'agli òmbri
biènci in tóttla la pianéura.
Mo u i è stè dal zumèdi 'd vént,
sa di straz e lati ch'al sbatéva
e i sass par spaventè al mamòti
i sbatuchèva dróinta i bidéun.
Epu da sèch e' vént l'è casch ma tèra
e u s'è stughlé tra l'erba e dróinta al fòl
spanpanèdi di chèval, Omero
u n putéva dumó i da e' silénzi ch'u i era
u i paréva da piumbè t'una pòzza
senz'aqua e sénza fònd, una caschèda
ch'la n finéva mai, alòura l' à fat di rógg
par ròmp cla pala 'd bumbès ch'la i ciudéva
agli urècci, la l laséva da par léu t'un fònd ad lét.
Furtéuna che l'aria la s è armòsa,
i à artàch a sbat i finistróin, i vóidar
i zucléva mal finèstri, e' fis-céva al fiséuri
e i béus di léon e tóttla la capana

la s'è mèssa a scriché cumè se fòss

uin bastimént ch'l'andéva in zóir pr'e' mònd.

da La capanna, 1985

La capanna, III - Tra finestre, finestrini, fessure, / (apparelle, buchi e sportelli, / dentro la capanna ce n'erano / più di cinquanta e Omero / per una settimana e più si è messo / a guardare quello che si vedeva fuori. / Prima di tutto gli alberi che i contadini / piantavano attomo a casa: il gelso per / l'ombra sul pozzo perché / le donne nel tirare su l'acqua non prendessero / un colpo di sole, il noce che tiene lontane / le mosche, il vinco per i canestri e / i cesti che facevano i vecchi nella veglia, / il tamerice per le ramazze che pulivano / la staja e l'aia, la siepe del simbuco / contro il verme solitario e poi il canneto che dava le canne nuove / per la vigna. Tutto questo era ancora lì, / ma dei pagliai erano rimasti solo i pali / ficcati in terra / coi fili di ferro allentati / che non tenevano più fermo lo strame / contro le burrasche del vento. / Nelle giornate di nebbia si vedevano soltanto / le cime dei pali e tutto il resto era sotto / una nuvola che poggiava a terra, quattro / punte nere che parevano barche / affogate, e più in là galleggiava / sulla nebbia il campanile / di San Giovanni in Galilea con / le mura del cimitero / che tenevano chiuse, lassù in aria, / tutte le croci di ferro. E si vedeva lo spigolo / del castello dove dicevano / che era arrivata in visita dai parenti / Francesca da Rimini, sopra un cavallo / con i finimenti d'argento e dietro a lei / c'era il fratello del marito / che bastonava con una canna i fiori gialli di primavera. / A volte la nebbia cancellava tutto, / e le finestre erano chiuse da chilometri / e chilometri di polvere umida / che non faceva più vedere le ombre delle canne / e le foglie rosse dei peschi che cadevano a terra. / Però si sentivano là in alto delle schioppettate, / un camion che andava all'inferno / e due aeroplani da guerra / che volavano nel sole sopra la nebbia / e si inseguivano come matti. / Quando si buttavano a capofitto, / il cielo sembrava cadere / sulla capanna / e Omero si copriva le orecchie / con le mani perché tremavano i vetri e la terra: / se ci sarà una guerra, basta una bomba / a distruggere tutto dal mare fino alle montagne / e gli uomini saranno ombre sui muri. // Una inattina presto, invece, / la campagna era bianca di rugiada / come se avesse piovuto del latte. / Poi si è alzato il sole / e sono tomati i colori della terra, / ma quella luce calda non ha asciugato tutto / e Omero incantato guardava un mondo alla rovescia / dove c'erano le case e gli alberi con le ombre / bianche su tutta la pianura. // Ci sono state anche delle giornate di vento, / con gli stracci che sbattevano, le latte / che cigolavano e i sassi per spaventare le marmotte / sbaticchiavano dentro i bidoni. / Di colpo il vento / è caduto a terra e si è disteso sull'erba / e tra le foglie slabbrate dei cavoli. / Omero non poteva dormire dal troppo silenzio: / gli pareva di cadere giù in un pozzo / senz'acqua e senza fondo: allora si è messo a urlare / per rompere la palla di cotone che gli chiudeva / le orecchie e lo lasciava solo nel letto scavato. / A un tratto l'aria si è rimossa: / sbattevano i finestrini, i vetri / tremavano negli infissi, fischiavano le fessure / e i buchi nei legni e tutta la / capanna / si è messa a scricchiolaie come se fosse / un bastimento che andava in giro per il mondo.

III

from The Hut

Inside the hut, there were windows, tiny windows, cracks,
blinds, holes and doors (there were more than fifty of them)
and for more than a week Omero
began to look at what was outside to see:
First, the trees that the peasants
had planted around the house -- the mulberry they had
planted near the well so that when the women
pulled out the water they wouldn't get sunstroke,
the walnut-tree that kept flies away,
the rattan for making baskets
and hampers, which the old people made during vigils,
the tamarisk to make brooms
that were used to sweep the stalls and the threshing floor,
the elder-tree to use against tapeworms,
and the reed-thicket that supplied new canes
for the vineyard. All this was still there
but the only thing left of the haystacks
were posts driven into the ground
with loose cross-bars

that could no longer hold in fodder

in windstorms.

On foggy days, you could see only

the tips of the posts and the rest was under a cloud

raining on the ground, four

black points that looked like drowned

boats, and farther away, you could see, floating above the clouds,

the bell tower of San Giovanni in Galilea

with the walls of its cemetery

that kept all the iron crosses closed in, up there in the air.

And you could see the edge

of the castle where they say

Francesca of Rimini arrived, visiting relatives,

on a horse with a silver harness

and behind her was her husband's brother,

who was beating all the yellow spring flowers with a cane.

Sometimes the fog erased everything

and the windows were shut against

kilometers and kilometers of damp dust

that kept you from being able to see the shadows that

the reeds made and the red colored leaves of the peach-trees

that were falling to the ground.

But you could hear shots up above,

a truck that was going like hell,

and two warplanes

that were flying in the sunlight above the clouds

chasing after each other like madmen.

When they dove headfirst

it seemed like the sky was falling on the hut

and Omero covered his ears with his hands

because the windows and the ground were shaking:

If there is a war, one bomb is enough

to destroy everything between the sea and the mountains

and men will be shadows on the walls.

Early one morning, however,

the countryside was white with frost

as if it had rained milk.
Then the sun came out
and the colors of the earth returned,
although that warm light didn't dry everything,
and Omero, who watched spellbound, looked at a
world turned upside down,
where there were houses and trees with white shadows
dotting the entire plain.
There were also windy days
with tattered cloth and paper being batted around
and pieces of tin cracking,
and stones inside cans rattling
in order to scare marmots.
Suddenly the wind
fell to the earth
and was lying among the grass
and fragments of cabbage leaves.
Omero couldn't sleep because of the silence;
he felt like he was falling down into a well
that had no water and no bottom: then he started to yell
to get rid of the cotton ball that was blocking his ears
and it left him alone in the hollowed-out bed.
All at once, the air started to move
beating against the little windows.
The glass of the windows shook,
the cracks whistled and the holes in the wood,
and the whole hut,
began to creak as if it were
a ship going around the world.

This passage of *The Hut* is excerpted from *Abandoned Places*, translated by Adria Bernardi, Guemica Editions: Toronto 1999

TOLMINO BALDASSARRI

Tolmino Baldassari was born in Castiglione di Cervia (Ravenna) in 1927. He lived in his native town until the age of twenty-six, then in Cervia, Ravenna, and S. Pietro in Vincoli. He has been living in Cannuzzo since 1962, continuing to write in the native dialect of Castiglione. He has worked as a mechanic, laborer, political official and union activist. He was on the city council of Cervia from 1951 to 1956 and from 1964 to 1989. Self-taught, Baldassari has acquired a vast culture, especially literary. He taught literature in various schools and a few poetry courses at the Università degli adulti in Ravenna. A conference on Baldassari and contemporary dialect poetry was held in Cervia in 1987 (the proceedings, edited by A. Foschi and E. Pezzi, were published by Longo in 1988). He contributes to numerous journals, among which *Il Lettore di provincia*, *Il Belli*, *Pelagos*, *Diverse lingue*, *Lengua*, *Tratti*. He has won several prizes, among which the "Lanciano" (1982) and the Faustini (1987). Baldassari published his biography and a small personal anthology in *Qualcosa di una vita* (Lugo: Edizioni del Bradipo 1995).

A very cultured poet (in metrics and prosody as well as history and literature) although self-taught, Baldassari has gradually accentuated his “memorialistic-mortuary” tendency, which attests to the profound degree of re-invention of Pascoli’s *Myricae*. Such a tendency has been consistent from book to book, regardless of any stereotypical image of the easy-going and burly Romagnolo. Baldassari stresses inward movement and wonder, the willingness to listen to silence and make it a condition for a spontaneous dialogue, tense and not at all nostalgic, with those who no longer exist. These words said to (and received from) the dead remain in a constant dynamic equilibrium between an inconsolable regret and an almost cinematographic lucidity. His poetic debut, after age forty, seems above all the consolidation of a formative and cognitive process whose depth in space and time generally distinguishes true poets from mere writers of verse.

Baldassari’s writings open up an almost infinite perceptive range, rooted in a never renounced ethical rigor, the consciousness of an evident metaphysical value, and a feeling for nature that in his best poems (and, at the macrostructural level, in the masterpiece *Ombra d’luna*) becomes a genuine ecology of the heart. But Brevini is still right when he notes the stratified density of Baldassari’s poetry, animated by “that convergence of autobiography and history, of the existential and the anthropological, which represents one of the most significant traits” of the great dialect poets of today. Thus, childhood and past never become passive mirrors of a backward glance, but they are rather the instruments of a testimony, landscapes of the oneiric whiteness, between dawn, snow, maternal nourishment, that constitutes the favored backdrop of Baldassari’s extraordinary poetic instinct.

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Int la vegna

U s’éra fat scur int la vegna

e’ vent l’èva e’ fes-c lòngh

j élbar la vósa basa.

A so annastê in urecia

e amso basê dri tēra

e col pighé cumè un ulöch.

A j ò fat segn cun la mân

e lo un s'è mós.

Al so ch'e' vléva di ch'a j andes me,

mo me am séra inciudê:

u j éra int l'éria e' svuit de' mònd,

un filter fen ch'un s'pasa.

Nella vigna – Si era fatto buio nella vigna / il vento aveva il fischio lungo / gli alberi la voce bassa. / Sono rimasto in ascolto / e mi sono abbassato vicino a terra / il collo piegato come un allocco. / Gli ho fatto cenno con la mano / e lui non s'è mosso. / Lo so che voleva dire che ci andassi io, / ma io mi ero inchiodato: / c'era nell'aria il vuoto del mondo, / un filtro fine che non si passa.

In the Vineyard

It had grown dark in the vineyard

the wind was a long whistle,

the trees, a lowered voice.

I stayed there listening

and I lowered myself to the ground

my neck folded into itself like an owl.

I waved to him

and he did not move.

I know that he wanted to tell me that I should go there too,

but me, my feet were nailed in place:

the void of the world was in the air,

a fine filter you can't pass through.

Al civi dl'éria

A vléva di d'una macia sbiavida

avsen a e' poz, adēs ch'un s'véd piò gnit,

nebji ch'al mésa e' figh dla córta

e sùigh ch' j è zà ciuté da un péz,

j usel firm int e' zil

j à pérs al civi dl'éria

e nun a 'taren d'astê al mateni biànchi

quânt us svegia la chéma

par dis Ma sen a e' mònd.

Le chiavi dell'aria – Volevo dire di una macchia sbiadita / vicino al pozzo, adesso che non si vede più niente, / nebbie che nascondono il fico della corte / e solchi che sono già coperti da molto tempo, / gli uccelli fermi nel cielo / hanno perduto le chiavi dell'aria // e noi aspetteremo le mattine bianche / quando si sveglia la carne / per dirci che siamo al mondo.

The Keys to the Air

I wanted to talk about a dull spot
near the well, now that you can't see anything,
with fogs that cover the fig-tree in the courtyard,
and furrows that have been covered up for some time now,
birds are quiet in the sky
they have lost the keys to the air
and we will wait for white mornings
when the flesh wakes up
to tell us we're still in the world.

I vidar

i murt is pérd lòngh a la stréda
j è sté i n'è sté
ui gvêrda i vidar la matena præst
cumè una fanfara
ch'las sint apéna
j à sòl sta cumpagni

I vetri – i morti si perdono lungo la strada / sono stati non sono stail / li guardano i vetri la mattina presto / come una fanfara / che si . sente appena / hanno solo questa compagnia.

The windowpanes

The dead lose their way along the street
they were there they weren't there
the windows watch them early in the morning
like a fanfare
you barely hear
this, their only companionship.
early in the morning they stand in front of the windows

Stradivari

a séra a lè cun agli évi Int e' pré
a 'taséva d'ascólt ch'al cantéva
– un runzéd ch'us stindéva rês a téra –
e parchè a j ò pinsé che Stradivari
l'épa fat i su viulen

döp che int un dè d'sól cumè quest

l'à 'tê d'ascólt agli évi int un pré?

Stradivari – ero li con le api nel prato / ascoltavo che cantavano / – un ronzió che si stendeva raso terra – / e perché ho pensato che Stradivari / abbia fatto i suoi violini / dopo che in un giomodí sole come questo / ho ascoltato le api in un prato?

Stradivari

I was there with the bees in the field

quietly listening to the singing

-- a buzzing spread out along the ground --

and why did I think that Stradivari

had made his violins

after a day of sunlight like this one

when I listened to bees in a field?

L'utma néva

A j en mes a e' su pöst tot al paròli

a j en spianê gnaquêl e an s'un sen dé

ch'e' chesca l'utma néva...

Ì conta al fòli d'una vòlta

ad dentr e' zet de' scur.

E' coch u ngn'éra piò,

j usle in brànch i j éra

-- i vularà stanöta? --

Ach veni grösi ch'l'à la nòna

int al mân lònghi, ad séra,

quânt che la séva las piga int la strêda

e l'acqua cêra la sbresa int la pëla.

L'ultima neve – Abbiamo messo al loro posto tutte le parole / abbiamo messo tutto in ordine e non ci siamo accorti / che cade l'ultima neve... / Raccontano le favole di una volta / dentro il silenzio del buio. / Il cuculo noti c'era più, / gli uccelli a stormo c'erano / – voleranno stanotte? – Che vene grosse ha la nonna / nelle mani lunghe, di sera, / quando la siepe si piega sulla strada / e l'acqua chiara scivola sulla pelle.

The Last Snow

We have put all the words in their places,

we've put everything in order and we didn't realize

that the last snow was falling. . .

They tell tales of another time

inside the silence of the dark.

The cuckoo wasn't there anymore,

there were birds in flocks

-- will they fly tonight? --

What big veins grandmother has
on her long hands, in the evening,
when the hedge bends over the street
and clear water rolls on the skin.

Un fat da gnit

La lus inclicisa de' dé
un arluséd ch'e' sbriséva int al foji,
un fat da gnit, cumè un garò che' dôrma int la su cocia
e us svegia int l'èria ziga.

Un fattoda nulla – La luce indecisa del giorno / un luore che scivolava tra le foglie, / un fatto da nulla, / come un gheriglio che dorme nella sua noce / e si sveglia nell'aria cieca.

A Nothing-Fact

The hesitant light of the day
the brilliant shine that glided among leaves
a nothing-fact,
like a walnut which sleeps in its shell
and wakes up in the pitch-black sky.

RAFFAELLO BALDINI

Raffaello Baldini was born in Santarcangelo di Romagna in 1924. In his youth he was a member of the Santarcangelo group known as "E' circal de giudeizi" along with Tonino Guerra, Nino Pedretti, Gianni Fucci and other intellectuals and artists of Romagna. With a degree in philosophy from the University of Bologna, he taught for a few years, and in 1955 moved to Milan to work first as a copywriter, and later as a journalist for Panorama. In 1967 he published *Autotem*, a small satirical volume about the automobile seen as fetish.

The collection *È solilèri* (Gabicce Prize), with which he made his debut in 1976, was published by Galeati of Imola at the author's expense. With a few corrections and the exclusion of four poems, the book was later reprinted as the first section of *La nàiva* in 1982. With *Furistír* (1988) he won the Viareggio Prize, and with *Ad nòta* (1995) the Bagutta Prize. He also wrote a monolog for the theater, *Zitti tutti!*, published by Ubulibri in 1993. In 1996 Ravenna Teatro produced the show *Furistír* (directed and adapted by M. Martinelli), conceived by merging eight of Baldini's poems

Though related by birth date (1924) and birthplace (Santarcangelo di Romagna) to two other poet such as Tonino Guerra (born in 1920) and Nino Pedretti (1923-1981), through the years Raffaello Baldini has developed his own autonomous style, not at all derived from the cognitive power of sensible perceptions, from individual memory and the dialogue with the dead., as has been the case with the other major poets of his generation. His poetic experience, therefore, does not count the great European symbolist Pascoli among its most direct predecessors; rather, he is motivated by a twofold need for organization at the macrostructural level, narrative as well as theatrical. Nevertheless, a determining element in Baldini's creativity, fully and probably definitively developed in his last, extraordinary collection *Ad nòta* in 1995, is a "far from realistic" objectivity, as Brevini notes. This entails the rejection of local color as an end in itself as well as the fixed and impersonal point of view that almost always accompanies it.

The technique of representation, moreover, is generally dominated by a deep principle of estrangement, which gives rise to attitudes and ties motivated by a profoundly human, "popular" humor, which can nevertheless produce a satirical and paradoxical deformation of reality. The realistic foundation, then, the taste for certain local "sketches" (in any case always placed in the context of the globalizing effects of modernization and never entrenched behind the happy fortress of provincial life), the anthropological respect for certain traits of the "man of Romagna," in Baldini's texts represent a sort of external framework that soon gives way to oneiric imagery, frequently reaching a metaphysical breakthrough. That this can happen – wrote Mengaldo with his usual sharpness, regarding *Ad nòta* – is due above all to the reduction of the various 'stories' to the monologs of characters other than the author and the exclusion of the latter as someone to vouch for them." There are no more barriers between the objectivity of the world and a subjectivity bearing the many faces and intonations of those who inhabited it, and Baldini's poetry makes of this superimposition an extraordinary dominant theme.

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E' nòn

Te cafè? da fè chè? a stagh mèi ma chèsa,

a zugh sa cal burdèli,

i zugh ch'ò imparè mai! E u mpis da pérd.

Il nonno – Al caffè? da far che? sto meglio a casa, / gioco con quelle bambine, / i giochi che ho imparato mai! E mi piace perdere.

Grandfather

Go to the café? For what? I'm better off here in my own house

playing with the kids

playing games I've never learned! And I like to lose.

1938

La mèstra ad Sant'Armàid

dal vólti, e' dopmezdè,

la s céud tla cambra e la zènd una Giubek.

La n fómma.

Stuglèda sòura e' lèt

la guèrda ch'a s cunsómma.

U i pis l'udùr.

Dal vólti u i vén da pianz.

1938 – La maestra di Sant'Emete / delle Volte, il pomeriggio, / si chiude in camera e accende una Giubek. / Non fuma. / Sdraiata sul letto / la guarda consumarsi. / Le piace l'odore. / Delle volte le viene da piangere.

Sometimes in the afternoons
 the schoolteacher from Sant'Emete
 closes herself up in her bedroom and lights up a Giubek.
 She doesn't smoke.
 Stretched out on the bed,
 she watches it burn.
 She likes the odor.
 Sometimes she feels like crying .

Murgantòuna

Ch'a la avdèva zughé la Settimana,
 "Am", "Salàm", "Am", "Salàm", a gamba zòpa,
 sòtta i pórtich, "Permesso?", "Salta!", "Riga!"
 e d'ogni tèn, si scaléin dla Rosvilla,
 da par li, Grande pesca, Cento lire,
 mè éva vint'an, li òt,
 a paséva da lè, ecco zént frènych,
 csa i èll da véinz? ò pèsch un "Topolino",
 un témbar ròtt, ch'i m'avéss détt alòura:
 t la spusaré, ch'l'era una murgantòuna,
 sal trèzzi, al znòci scòurghi,
 e tòtt t'un bòt,
 da un màis a cl'èlt, csa dégghi? da un dè a cl'èlt,
 una dmènga l'è stè, a m'arcórd, te Bòurgh
 a ciacarémmi, e' pasa sta ragaza,
 in minigoma ad pèla, ch'a mso vólt,
 cus 'èll? l'è la Cristiria? a n'i cridéva,
 dòp, gnérit, acsè, a s sémnn vést,
 l'è pas un an, du an, e pu cla sàira
 a Savgnèn, ine vegliòun di cazadéur,
 che valzer lént, érrin tach s'un valzer lént,
 li cmè una piómma, a spali néudi, frèasca,
 a fémm ènca st'èlt bal?
 émm balè tòtt' la nòta, sémpra insén,
 a la matéina al si a balémni ancòura,
 pu ad fura a la ò basèda, a s sémnn basè,

e la m déva de léu, mo damm de tè,
sa che nasin sgnafled, e di dént biènc
quant la ridéva,
ch'la ridéva par gnént, l'era tótt nóv, par li, andémmi a magnè
da e' Lòvv, e' cino a Rémin, la partéida
a Ceséina, éva una melezént ròssa,
li la stéva argugléda se sedéili,
u t pis? la sréva i ócc,
e mè a la ò rispetèda, a n'e' so, forse
parchè mè u m'éva sémpa capè al dònì,
al féva lòu, mè a i stéva,
spusèdi, se muròus, a s divertémmi,
mèzi paroli, ségn, riinèut cuntèd,
al dònì 'd ch'ilt, in fònd, maréid, muréus,
l'è cmè di aleiàdéur, al vén da tè
ch'al fiurèss,
mo stavólta,
u n m'era mai suzèst, a la guardéva,
a sérmì sno mè e li,
l'era la mea, tótta, ènca i pensir,
znina, tèndra, la i stéva t'una mèna,
cmè un pasaròt da néid,
a i éva da insgné tótt, mè, tótt,
e a Roma,
tl'albérg, la préima nòta,
disdài da pi de lét, csa fèt? mo t piànz?
di guzlótt, t'é paéura?
amo mè a so una bés-cia, a dagh ad mórs,
a t magn, però adès basta,
basta piànz, zò, ino insòmna cs'èll suzèst
ma sta burdèla? e at che mumént, cmè un lèmp,
l'è stè la féin de mònd, e adès? csa fazi?
a sudéva, éva fièdd, mo cmè ch' pò ès stè?
andéva avènti e indri, no, l'è l'istèss,
gnént, a n vi savài gnént, gnénca sa chéi,
u mparéva cmè ch'i m caminèss sòura,

ch'i ridéss, te cafè, pu tótt chi zchéurs:
òz a n sémm piò te medioevo, e' mònd,
moo cs'èil ch'u i éintra e' mònd, csa vléiv da mè?
ch'la n sta invéll, la ti cumbéina,
che què u n cumibéina gnént,
a séra fèrum
ma la finestra, u s'avdéva tótt cópp,
na strèda strètta, un lampioun ch'e' baléva,
l'a tach a pióv, ad vént,
un aqua, la luséva zò ini véidar,
ò sinti caminé,
la in'è vnéuda davséin, a stémmi alè,
senza d'i gnént, d'impì, sti du sgraziéd,
t'una cambra d'albéghi, a Roma, ad nòta,
e fura una burasca,
la m'à tòcch
cmè non volénd, s'un gòmat,
mo la è stè alè, a s sintémmi, u s féva cièr,
e sémpra un'aqua,
la m'à puzè la testa ma la spala,
a i ò mess una mèna ti cavéll,
senza pensèi, u m'è vnu fat acsè,
i m sguiléva tra 'l dàidi, cmè la sàida,
l'éra e' dè, bèla, u s'è sinti 'ndè sò
una seranda, la m'à ciap la mèna,
a s sémun incrusè al dàidi, émm tach a zcòrr
da zétt, sal mèni,
la testa, la mstriséva ma la spala,
sòtta e' cò, pu sla schéina, pu sal gambi,
tótta atachèda, mè a i ò ciap la faza,
un vléut, ò tach a strènz, a i féva mèl?
catéiv, sa tutt' do al mèni, a la ò basèda,
cm'e' fòss la préima vólta, e li cumpàgn,
la in raspéva sagli óngi, pu te lèt,
a occ céus, a i ò dè 'd mórs dabón, piánz pò,
la s'è 'rvólta, la m'è vnù sòura, pògn,

pógn, pógn,

pu l'è stè un zugh,

mè sèmpra piò catéiv, bès dimpartótt,

a s démnii dri, a sciapémme, l'era e' dè,

la finestra, émm céus tótt,

a zandémme la luce, a la smurtémme,

a s zarchémme te schéur, l'era una guèra,

a s gémme i nóm, a ridémme, pu séri,

réid, séri, réid, émm sinti ciacaré

te curidéur, ssst!, spétta, in péunta 'd pi

a so 'ndè tua la pórtta, ò vért, pianin,

quàtar dàidi, una spana,

ò guérs, tótt céus, u n gn'èra un'anina, e ò mèss

ma la manéglija ad fura che cartléin:

Non disturbare.

Mocciosa. – Che la vedevo giocare la Settimana, / “Am”, “Salàm”, “Am”, “Salàm”, a gamba zoppa, / sotto i portici, “Permesso?”, “Salta!”, “Riga!” / e ogni tanto, sugli scalini della Rosvilla, / da sola, Grande pesca, Cento lire, / io avevo vent'anni, lei otto, / passavo di lì, ecco cento lire, / cosa c'è da vincere? ho pescato un “Topolino”, / un timbro rotto, m'avessero detto allora: / la sposerai, che era una mocciosa, / con le trecce, le ginocchia sbucciate, – e all'improvviso, / da un mese all'altro, cosa dico? da un giorno all'altro, / una domenica è stato, mi ricordo, nel Borgo, / chiacchieravamo, passa questa ragazza, / in minigonna di pelle, che mi sono girato, cosa? è la Cristina? non ci credevo, / dopo, niente, così, ci siamo visti, / è passato un anno, due anni, e poi quella sera / a Savignano, al veglione dei cacciatori, / quel valzer lento, abbiamo cominciato con un valzer lento, / lei come una piuma, a spalle nude, fresca, / facciamo anche quest'altro ballo? // abbiamo ballato tutta la notte, sempre insieme, / la mattina alle sei ballavamo ancora, / poi di fuori l'ho baciata, ci siamo baciati, / e mi dava dei lei, ma dammi del tu, / con quel nasino schiacciato, e dei denti bianchi / quando rideva, / che rideva per niente, / era tutto nuovo, per lei, andavamo a mangiare / dal Goloso, al cinema a Rimini, alla partita / a Cesena, avevo una millecento rossa, / lei stava accoccolata sul sedile, / ti piace? chiudeva gli occhi, // e io l'ho rispettata, non lo so, forse / perché a me m'avevano sempre scelto le donne, / facevano loro, io ci stavo, / sposate, col moroso, ci divertivamo, / mezze parole, segni, minuti contati, / le donne degli altri, in fondo, i mariti, i morosi, / sono come degli allenatori, vengono da te / che fioriscono, – ma stavolta, / non m'era mai successo, la guardavo, / eravamo solo io e lei, / era la mia, tutta, anche i pensieri, / piccola, tenera, stava in una mano, come un passerotto da nido, / dovevo insegnarle tutto, io, tutto, – e a Roma / in albergo, la prima notte, / seduta sulla sponda del letto, cosa fai? ma piangi? / dei goccioloni, hai paura? / devi averla, sono una bestia, io, mordo, / ti mangio, ma adesso basta, / basta piangere, su, ma insomma cos'è successo / a questa bambina? e in quel momento, come un lampo, / è stata la fine del mondo, e adesso? cosa faccio? / sudavo, avevo freddo, ma come può essere stato? / andavo avanti e indietro, no, è lo stesso, / niente, non voglio saper niente, nemmeno con chi, / mi pareva come se mi camminassero sopra, / che ridessero, al caffè, poi tutti quei discorsi: / oggi non siamo più / nel medioevo, il mondo, ma cosa c'entra il mondo? cosa volete da me? / che non sta in piedi, questa, non combina, / che qui non combina niente, – ero fermo / alla finestra, si vedevano tutti coppi, / una strada stretta, un lampione che ballava, / ha cominciato a piovere, di vento, / un'acqua, riluceva giù per i vetri, / ho sentito camminare, / m'è venuta vicino, stavamo lì, / senza dir niente, in piedi, 'sti due disgraziati, / in una camera d'albergo, a Roma, di notte, / e fuori una burrasca, – mi ha toccato, / come involontariamente, con un gomito, / ma è stata lì, ci sentivamo, faceva chiaro, / e sempre un'acqua, / mi ha appoggiato la testa alla spalla, / le ho messo una mano tra i capelli, / senza pensarci, m'è venuto così, / mi scivolavano fra le dita, come seta, / era quasi giorno, s'è sentita andar su / una saracinesca, mi ha preso la mano, / ci siamo incrociate le dita, abbiamo cominciato a parlare, / in silenzio, con le mani, / la testa, mi strisciava contro la spalla, / sotto il collo, poi con la schiena, poi con le gambe, / tutta ho preso la faccia, / un velluto, ho cominciato a stringere, le facevo male? / cattivo, con tutt'e due le mani, l'ho baciata, / come fosse la prima volta, e lei uguale, / mi graffiava con le unghie, poi a letto, / occhi chiusi, l'ho morsicata sul serio, piangi pure, / s'è rivoltata, m'è venuta sopra, pugni, / pugni, pugni, – poi è stato un gioco, / io sempre più cattivo, baci dappertutto, / ci inseguivamo, ci prendevamo, era giorno, / la finestra, abbiamo chiuso tutto, / accendevamo la luce la spegnevamo, / ci cercavamo nel buio, era una guerra, ci dicevamo nomacci, ridevamo, poi seri, / ridere, seri, ridere, abbiamo sentito chiacchierare / nel corridoio, ssst!, aspetta, in punta di piedi / sono andato alla porta, ho aperto, piano piano, / quattro dita, una spanna / ho guardato, tutto chiuso, non c'era un'anima, e ho messo / alla maniglia di fuori quel cartellino: / Non disturbare,

Snotty-brat

Who I saw playing hop-scotch,

One-two. Four-five. Seven-eight. Sky Blue,

hopping with her bent leg,

underneath the arcade, “May I?” “Jump!” “Line!”

and every once in awhile, I'd see her on the steps of the Rosvilla,

alone, saying: Play the Lottery, A Hundred Lire!

I was twenty, she was eight,

I passed by, Here's one hundred lire,

what can you win? I came up with a Topolino comic book,

a torn stamp, if they had only told me then,

You will marry her, there's a snout-nosed girl

with braids and scraped-up knees

and all of a sudden,

one month went into another, what am I saying,

one day into another

it was a Sunday, I remember,

in the Borgo,

we were standing there shooting the breeze

and this girl walks by

in a leather mini-skirt

that made me turn and look.

What? It's Cristina? And I didn't believe it.

Then, nothing happened, like that, we just saw each other once in a while,

a year went by, then two, and then that night

in Savignano, at a hunter's dance

there was a slow waltz, we started with a slow waltz,

she was like a feather, her shoulder bare, she was fresh;

should we dance the next one?

We danced all night long, always together,

at six in the morning we were still dancing,

then I kissed her outside, we kissed each other,

and she called me Lei; I told her to call me tu,

with her pug nose and white teeth

when she laughed

that laughed over nothing,

it was all new for her, we went out to eat

at the Goloso, to the movies in Rimini,

at the soccer match in Cesena, I had red Fiat Millecento

and she was hunched on the seat.

Do you like it? She closed her eyes

and I treated her with respect, I don't know why,

maybe because it had always been the women choosing me,
they chose, and I went along with it,
they were married or had lovers, we'd have fun,
half-words, signs, quick contact,
women who belonged, after all, to someone else, husbands, lovers,
they are like coaches, and when they leave you
they blossom,
but this time,
it didn't happen like that for me, I saw her,
it was just her and me alone,
she was mine, completely, even her thoughts,
small and tender, she fit into a hand like a fledgling sparrow in a nest,
I had to teach her everything. Me. Everything.
and in Rome
in a hotel the first night
sitting on the edge of the bed, What's wrong, you're crying?
are you afraid of my beads of sweat?
you should be, I am a beast, I am, I bite,
I'll eat you up, but enough now,
enough crying, here get up, but what has happened
to this girl? and in that moment, like a lightning flash,
the end of the world for her, and now? what do I do?
I was sweating, I was cold, how else could it have been?
I paced back and forth, no, it was the same,
nothing, I don't want to hear about it,
not about with who either,
it seemed like they were walking all over me,
that they were laughing, at the cafe, then all those discussion:
today we are not living in the Middle Ages, the world,
what has the world got to do with it? what do you want from me?
that she can't even stand straight, she's not accomplishing anything here,
I was standing still
at the window, you could see all the couples,
a narrow street, a street lamp that was flickering,
it started to rain, wind,
a downpour, it sparkled on the pane.

I heard steps,
she came near me, and she stood there
without saying anything, standing, these two miserable people,
in a hotel room in Rome at night,
and outside there was a storm,
she touched me,
as if involuntarily, with an elbow,
but she remained there standing, we felt each other, it was getting light,
it was still coming down,
she leaned her head on my shoulder
I ran my fingers through her hair
she came to me like this, without thinking about it
her hair slid through my fingers like silk,
it was almost day, we heard someone pull up a Venetian blind,
she took my hand,
we wove our fingers together, we started to speak
in silence with our hands
she grazed her head against my shoulder,
at the base of my neck, then the back, then the legs,
she was attached everywhere, I held her face,
which was velvet, I started to grip her, was I hurting her?
vicious, with both hands, I kissed her,
as if it were the first time, and she did the same,
she scratched me with her fingernails, then in bed,
with eyes closed, I bit her hard, go ahead and cry,
she turned, she climbed on top of me, fists,
fists, fists,
then it became a game,
I got even nastier, kisses everywhere,
we pursued each other, we took each other, it was daylight,
the window, we closed everything,
we lit the light, we turned it off,
we looked for each other in the dark, it was a war,
we called each other names, we laughed, then were serious,
laughed, then serious, laughed, we heard chatting
in the hallway, sssh! wait a minute, on tiptoe

I went to the door, I opened it, quietly, quietly,
hand flat above my eyes, on lookout,
I looked, all the doors were closed, there was not a soul,
and on the door handle
I hung a card that said:
Do Not Disturb.

EMILIO RENTOCCHINI

Emilio Rentocchini was born in 1949 in Sassuolo (Modena), where he teaches. He has published three collections of verse in the dialect of Sassuolo: *Quèsi d'amùr*, Sassuolo: Grafiche Zanichelli, 1986; *Foi sècch*, Venice: Edizioni del Leone, 1988; *Otèvi*, Sassuolo: Grafiche Zanichelli, 1994. His poems have appeared in the journals *Lengua*, *Forum Italicum*, *Gli immediati dintorni*, *Diverse lingue*, *Il Belpaese*.

More than any other major dialect poet, Emilio Rentocchini brings to his poetry an inherent diglossia that produces a considerable effect of inner dialectics. The native language, in fact, gives voice only to the first part of his textual discourse: at the foot of the page, the Italian of the translation is there ready to become in turn the language of poetry. To be able to bring some order to the chaos of dismembered voices, harsh, whispered, often solitary, that reach him via an oneiric, subliminal channel, never through a subject who decides to assume a nostalgic or evocative attitude, Rentocchini needs to respect to the letter the rules of the Tuscan octave of Ariosto and Tasso: eight rigorously eleven-syllable lines, with the first three couplets having an alternate rhyme and the last being a heroic couplet, for the traditional scheme ABABABCC. The Italian version, instead, is in free verse, completely experimental in form and language, by virtue of a syntax that exploits accumulations and elliptical procedures. Of course there is no trace of set rhymes: the dialogue between the two ends of the page, then, moves from a formal condition of open dissonance to the very fertile interplay within a score which the author himself transforms into music right before our eyes.

The words, in a still apparently symbolist mode (here too, obviously, in the Pascolian manner, but belonging to the "international" and Latin Pascoli, rather than the romagnolo), have an aura of metaphysical glimmers and flashes. But their aim – if I may cite one of the infrequent declarations of poetics made by the author – is not in the least evocative, but rather directly perceptive and cognitive, because poetry is first of all "a waiting open onto silence, to which the "living void of uncertainty" contributes in a decisive way.

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*

Pò a l'improvis un sél avèrt, e vèint
mà dòuls e profumê e sèinsa ràbia,
ch'an porta via el paròl da mèss ai dèint
e al lasa stèr al nòster stèr ed sàbia;
prema vèira? e t'et pìgh a quèll ch'et sèint
in dov'as vira al nòv, a un tèimp ch'al gh'àbia
lusnèdi d'aqua per lighèr acsé
la nòstra chèma a l'ànma a l'aria al dé.

da Otèvi, 1994

Poi all'improvviso un cielo aperto, e vento / ma dolce e profumato e senza rabbia, /che non porta via le parole di mezzo ai denti / e lascia stare il nostro stare di sabbia;
/ primavera? e ti pieghi a ciò che senti / dove si apre il nuovo, a un tempo che abbia / bagliori d'acqua per legare così / la nostra carne all'anima all'aria al di.

*

Then, all of a sudden a sky opens, and wind,
but soft and perfumed and without anger
a wind which does not suck away words from between the teeth
and leaves be our being of sand
spring? and you bend toward what it is you are feeling,
where what is new is opening up, toward a time that has
flashes of water in order to bind, in this way,
our flesh to the soul to the air to the day.

*

Slunghèdi sbavadùri el slèrghen i an
ch'agh's pèinsa in treno a vèder la campagna
o intant ch'as pasa a pê pr'un sugamàn
ed lus stèis a l'incròus, in d'òv as bagna
la vòus ed la cuntrèda e a tès luntan
al mènd scandì: e un tèimp stremmè, l'armàgna
o al scapa insèmm al treno e ai pas, al pasa,
però aesè tèndr e astràt ch'a pèr ch'an masa.

da Otèvi, 1994

Allungate sbavature dilatano gli anni / a cui si pensa in treno vedendo la campagna / o intanto che si passa a piedi per un asciugamano / di luce steso all'incrocio,
dove si bagna / la voce della contrada e tace lontano / il mondo scandito: e un tempo sgranato, rimanga / o fugga insieme al treno e ai passi, passa, / però così tenero
e astratto

*

Stretched-out smudges expand the years
which one ponders in a train, looking out at the country,
or else, while on foot, passing through a towel of light laid
on the pavement of the crossroad, where the voices of the street
are bathed, and, faroff, the syllabized world is silent:
and an unhusked time, whether it remains
or flees, along with the train and the footsteps, it passes, still,
but in a way so tender, so abstract, it seems it won't kill.

*

Iv mai sintû N'ò'd sira el vòusi fridi

del sévi arènti arènti al nòstri cà
ch'el pèren cési persunéri, isdidi
dal còsi ch'el s'avim al mènd ded là:
èlti perghéri, ètri distansi impidi
da un sciànch ed vèint ch'al còunta ai sit tr'al cà,
ch'al sèmma al sél: l'iv mai sintú Ñò'd sira
al dè ch'al mór mèinter la nòt la's vira?

da Otèvi, 1994

Avete mai sentito verso sera le voci ferite / delle siepi vicine vicine alle nostre case / che sembrano chiese prigioniere, annichilite / dalle cose che si aprono al mondo di là: / alte preghiere, altre distanze empite / da uno strappo di vento che racconta ai poderi tra lecase / che semina il cielo; l'avete mai sentito verso sera / il giorno morente mentre la notte s'apriva?

*

Have you ever heard, towards evening, the wounded voices
of the hedges that are near, so near, our houses
which seem like imprisoned churches, destroyed
by the things which open them up to the world beyond:
tall prayers, and other distances filled
by a tug of wind that recounts to the fields between the houses
that it is the sky that sows; have you ever heard towards dusk
the day dying as the night opens up?

*

Amàgn a pèdr al tèmp, a despluchèr
inùtil l'òrba srèina dal cunfin,
a schèr dre i mur murànd sèinsa serchèr,
a tór per l'aqua lèinta, tèndra 'd pin,
tra i sbuderiòun; amàgn a baratèr
la vòus col vèint, che lènghe al fiómme fin
al féss dal còr al tòurna, e l'è un sangiótt
anvè per sbàli in ste silèinsi pótt.

da Otèvi, 1994

Rimani a perdere il tempo, a spiluccare / inutile la tenebra serena del confine, / a seccare lungo i muri morendo senza cercare, / a prendere per l'acqua lenta, tenera di pini, / tra i burroni; rimani a barattare / la voce col vento, che lungo il fiume e fino / al fitto del cuore ritorna, ed è un singhiozzo / nevicato per sbaglio in questo silenzio spoglio.

*

You remain, in order to lose track of time, to uselessly
pick at the serene darkness of the borderlines,
to feel yourself drying up inside along those dying walls,

to be taken in by the slow-moving water, tender with pines
among the gorges; you remain to barter
your voice with the wind, which whines
again along the river and in the depth of your heart,
and there's a hiccup, a sob, sputtered out
by mistake, a sudden snowflake, in this naked silence.

*

A mia madre e alla sua lingua
“fontana di rustic amòur”
Aqua raisa rósna figh bagàì
piasa grèssta tvaiól nèiva (de snèr)
pìga chèdga linsól tarlócch Ñavài
nèvvia sangiòtt trampèl ènda (dal mèr)
sèssta tasèl platò frilè smurgài
óngia giangiàn ligéra èrba (da sghèr)
mo pian mo adèsi mo da bòn in pès
nèvvia sangiòtt trampèl ènda (ch'l'an tès).

Acqua radice ruggine fico coso / piazza crosta tovagliolo neve (di gennaio) / piega cotica lenzuolo grumo scarto / ostia singhiozzo baraonda onda (del mare) / cesta solaiò platò alt moccio / unghia balordo birba erba (da tagliare) / ma piano ma adagio ma davvero in pace / ostia singhiozzo baraonda onda (che non tace).

*

To my mother and to her language,
“fountain of rustic love”
Water root rust fig whatcha-ma-call-it
piazza crust napkin snow (January's)
fold pigskin bedsheet knot discard
host hiccup free-for-all wave (the sea's)
clothesbasket attic crate halt snot
fingemail nitwit you-little-rascal grass (the field's)
be careful now slow down honest-to-God in peace
host hiccup-sob free-for-all wave (which does not cease)

GIOVANNI NADIANI

Giovanni Nadiani was born in Cassanigo di Cotignola (Ravenna) in 1954 and has been living in Reda di Faenza since 1985. After traveling through Europe, in 1983 he received a degree in foreign languages and literatures from the University of Bologna, with a thesis on German popular culture. For many years he taught German language and literature in various institutes and high schools in Romagna. Besides writing poetry in dialect, Nadiani has translated German and Belgian poets and has written short stories and poems in Italian. He has published: *Dagli assetati campi*, poems in Italian and dialect, with translations from the poetry of Greta Schoon (Ravenna: Cooperativa Guidarello, 1984); *Orme d'ombra*, poems in Italian and dialect, with translations from the poetry of Oswald Andrae (Ravenna: Cooperativa Guidarello, 1986); *All'ombra mancante*, short texts of poetry and prose in Italian (Faenza: Mobydick, 1987); *È sèch. Poesie* (1977-88) (Mobydick, 1989); *Över verlaten Plaasterstraten*. Per

abbandonati selciati, translations from contemporary German poets (Mobydick, 1991); Tir, (Mobydick, 1994). In 1986 he received the Soggiorno Prize of the Artists of Lower Saxony for his work as a translator and the following year he held the title of Stadtschreiber (city writer) in Otterndorf, on the North Sea. In 1991 he won the Lanciano Prize for his unpublished poems. Author of several literary essays, Nadiani has also published fiction: Il sole oltre la nebbia, short stories in Italian (Lugo: Walberti, 1986); Nonstorie, short stories and lyric prose in Italian (1992), followed in 1995 by Solo musica italiana. both published by Mobydick. Also in 1995 he edited (and translated) the anthology L'invenzione della tenerezza, a collection of the poems by the Belgian (Flemish) poet W. R. Roggeman (Mobydick). He edits the journal Trattati and contributes to other journals, among which Il Lettore di provincia, Lengua, Diverse lingue, Cartolaria, Il Belli. Since 1989 he has been one of the promoters of the international festival of poetry and music "Faenza Folk Festival."

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Zughé

... Svaresé ins la tumâna a la matèna
prést cun 'na cvérta adös pr e' fred
ch' e' ven da bas di dèbit ch'a n'sen
sté bon d'paghè a la nôt ...
i gnech i rug i cioch d'saet ch'spaca
a mêz e' pès di sogn i s'à ciamè d'a
là in do ch'i specca i balen un mond
ch'a n'cnunsen i s'à tirat \$o d'e' lèt
i vòr e' lat adè i vô zughè cun nó
imbruié da e' sòn da la fadiga e da
la tegna zeta ingavagnèda't la voia
d'arivèi a la mota ...
int i zugh tartaié dal lengv incóra
Sérbi'u sj amescla e' frè\$ar de'
frigo in ca e fura e' run\$è dl'animèl
da la nôt la códa sgvegna senza fen
i mèl-oc zèl d'asfèlt a taièr un'acva
ch'u n'e' sa incion cvând ch'la cminzet ...
indulì acsè giost par fè a s'tiren
adös'na valanzâna butendi l'öc

ch'i n's'fèga mèl e ló ch' i rid
(cs a i sral 't la tésta di cveng miz?)
e a j avrèsum di ch'i stèga in
scvela che nenca i zugh i pö fraghé
ch'u j è sèmpar cvi ch'i jj armet
parchè i dè i s'a\$longa nenca
mo d'böta u s'ciapa la stracona
e pr e' mond u s'sent sól a sumacè ...

Da Tir, 1994

Giocare – stravaccati sul divano di mattina / presto con una coperta sopra per il freddo / che sale dal basso dei debiti / mai pagati alla notte ... // Le grida, le urla i botti delle saette che spaccano / in due il peso dei sogni ci hanno chiamato / da casa del diavolo di un mondo / a noi sconosciuto tirandoci giù dal letto, / vogliono il latte, ora vogliono giocare con noi / imbrogliati dal sonno, dalla fatica e dalla / rabbia imbrigliata nella voglia / di colpirli all'improvviso ... // Ai giochi balbettati delle lingue ancora / acerbe si mescola lo sfrigolio del / frigo in cucina e fuori il ronzio della bestia / notturna: la coda molle e senza fine, / i malocchi gialli d'asfalto a penetrare una pioggia / che nessuno ricorda più quando iniziò ... // Indolenziti, e giusto così per fare, ci tiriamo / addosso una valanzana stando attenti / a che non si facciano male, e loro a ridere / (cosa ci sarà in una testa di quindici mesi?), / e vorremmo dir loro di stare all'erta / perché anche i giochi sono traditori, / che c'è sempre chi ci rimette / affinché i giorni si allunghino nuovamente, / ma di colpo ci vince la stanchezza / e per il mondo si sente solo russare ...

Play

... stretched out on the sofa in the early morning
with a cover on top because of the cold
that rises from down below up from the never-paid-off
debts of the night
the screams the howls the bolts of lightning
that break in two the weight of dreams called us
from an unknown netherworld, pulling us out of bed,
they want milk, now they want to play with us
all muddled with sleep and exhaustion and a bridled rage
and the desire to suddenly smack them ...
to games stammered out by tongues still acid
is added the humming of the refrigerator in the kitchen
the buzzing of nocturnal beasts: the limp and endless tail,
the yellow evil-eyes of the asphalt which penetrate a rain
which no one can remember anymore when it started...
stiff, and just for the sake of doing it
we pull a valance over ourselves
careful that they don't get hurt, and they laugh
(what will be there in the head of a fifteen-month-old?)
and we would like them to keep a careful watch
because even games are treacherous,
there is always the one who pays the price

so the days get longer again
but in an instant, exhaustion gets the better of us
and around the world one hears only snoring. . .

Docmezdè

Smalvir i jeans sbraghé
sór'a un ës ch'e'dondla
cun i pi bruzé da e' sól
contra un blu mai vest
cun la burdèla fèr a gara
a chi ch'al véd piò vz en
'tânt che cl'ètar u s'condla
i sogn dal smân d'teta gionfa ...
e pu saltêr int e' sabion
pr un sgond intj oc e'mond
't e' zët savé tot cvel che
un s-ciân a cve e' pö sinti
... tra un bés e cl'ètar
(piz i livar in spala)
agli ùltum ciàcar a tēsta
basa al ragazi al va cvaz i
indulidi pr i dèbit d'un
amór spintacê da e' chéld ...
... e no puté dundlér incóra...

da Tir, 1994

Pomeriggio – Sbiadire i jeans, stracciarli / su un asse che dondola, / con i piedi bruciati dal sole / contro l'azzurro, / con la figlia fare a gara / a chi lo vede più vicino, / mentre l'altro culla / i sogni di settimane di seni gonfi... // E poi saltare sulla sabbia, / per un istante negli occhi avere il mondo, / nel silenzio sapere tutto quello che / un vivo può sentire / ... tra un bacio e l'altro / (che peso i libri sulle spalle) / le ultime frasi a testa bassa, / le ragazze vanno con passo quasi / indolente per i debiti di un / amore arruffato da calde folate... // ... e non poter dondolare ancora

Afternoon

To fade jeans, to tear them up
sitting on a board rocking
with sunburned feet
up against a blue never seen before
competing with the girl
about who sees it more closely
while the other one cradles
dreams of weeks of swollen breasts. . .

and then leaping on the sand,
for a second to have the world in your eyes,
in that quiet knowing all
that a living person can
... between one kiss and another
(the books are so heavy on your shoulders)
the last of the small talk with lowered heads
the girls walk around almost
indolent from the debts
of a love disheveled by hot gusts...
and not being able to swing anymore...

Invel

... un póst a vaion pr e' mond a cve invel
in sta piazza d' séra l'è zà nòt ...
lampiòn apié int al pscol cal stël
ch'al fora e' sren a là so da par ló
senza pinsê coma nô d'duvê cminzê
d'a cve (i diz acsè) 't e' brót
t'larmor zgvicêr e' bël pr un sgond
našêr e' zet par no' atachês
a i fil dl'élta tension chi? cvi?
qui s'impicca chi in piazza?
s'la sona ben sta parola avden zà
la piazza d'Fënza hijcvêl d'tuscân
arte fiorentina e nô a diz chilometar
piantê a cve in sta briza-piazza
un parcheg signê da righ tirati
a chês senza savé da ch'pert ch'u s'vega
d'dentar e ch'u s'dega fura un lastrôn
d'asfêlt cadù a lè a fê arbull l'isté
pr arduzar e' cios se ven la nev
tra i cartel scurdê da tot cun cvi
ch' s'incoza int e' vut dagl' elbar
zghêdi spuridi a n'al fa gnâncn piò óra
una spezi di betulla argentata scandinava
da ca' d'dio a l'ultum ós a cresar mêl

in sta tēra grasa comā j élbar d'Nadël
ch'i s'seca sobit elbar malédi maldèti
muribondi a spargujê sol dla piomā
cvând ch'l'è e su mument bzugnareb
dêj e' fugh e invezì a sla magné
la s'infila 't j oc 't agli urec
a cve pr e' mond 't un post in piazza
a parchigê sta machina rubêda a e' son
pr avdê d'ciapê cun la nostra Pioneer
le onde medie mej ch'u s'pò

da Carta da musica

In nessun luogo - ... un posto a zonzo per il mondo qui in nessun luogo / in questa piazza di sera è già notte .../ lanpioni accesi nelle pozzanghere quelle stelle / che forano il sereno lassù da sole / senza pensate come noi di dover iniziare / di qui (dicono così) nel brutto / nel rumore adocchiare il bello per un attimo / annusare il silenzio per noti appenderci / ai fili dell'alta tensione chi? quelli? / qui s'impicca chi in piazza? / come suona bene questa parola già vediamo / la piazza di Faenza qualcosa di toscano / arte fiorentina e noi a dieci chilometri / piantati qui in questa non-piazza un / parcheggio segnato da righe tirate / a casaccio senza saper da che parte / si entrì e si esca una lastra / d'asfalto piombata lì a far ribollire l'estate / a raccogliere lo sporco se vien la neve / tra i cartelli scordati da tutti con quelli / che si scontrano nel vuoto tra alberi / segati intoriti non fanno neanche più ombra / una specie di betulla argenteata scandinava / da casa di dio ultima porta a crescere male / in questa terra grassa come gli abeti di Natale / che si seccano subito alberi malati maledetti / moribondi a spargere solo piuma / quando è il suo momento bisognerebbe appicarle il fuoco e invece ce la mangiamo / s'infila negli occhiosi nelle orecchie / insomma qui per il mondo in piazza / a parcheggiare questa macchina rubata al sonno / per veder di prendere con la nostra Pioneer / le onde medie meglio che si può...

In No Place

... a place to vagabond around the world here in this no-place
in this piazza in the evening it's already night. . .
lamlights lit in the puddles those stars
perforating the serenity up above alone
without thinking like we do about having to start out
from here (so they say) in the ugliness
of the noise eying the beauty for an instant
sniffing out the silence in order to not hang ourselves
from the high tension wires who? them?
whoever comes here might as well hang himself in the piazza?"
how nice this word sounds already we have seen
something of Tuscan art Florentine in the piazza of Faenza
and we ten kilometers away
planted here in this non-piazza
a parking lot designated by stripes painted every-which-way"
not knowing where you enter
and where you exit an asphalt
slab dropped there to make it boil hotter in summer
to gather filth if it snows

between posters forgotten by everyone with all those people
jostling each other in the emptiness between the sawed-down
intimidated trees they don't even give shade anymore
a species of *betulla argentata scandinavica*
from the house of the Lord the last door to grow poorly
in this fat land like the Christmas fir-trees
which dry out right away sick damned moribund
the only thing they do is strew pollen
when it's time and we should set them on fire
and instead we swallow it it gets into our eyes our ears
so at any rate the world here in a piazza
parking this car stolen from its slumber
trying to grasp with our Pioneer
medium waves as best we can. . .

THE MARCHES

Sanzio Balducci and Marco Ferri

It is always difficult to defend the merits of dialect poetry, especially of those Italian regions with little linguistic unity where the absence of large urban (and cultural) centers does not favor the expansion of dominant models through broad areas. This is precisely the situation in the Marches, par excellence a region of a thousand dialects, a thousand bell towers and circumscribed cultural realities that rarely reach beyond the city walls of their historical centers.

The Marches has illustrious exceptions, as in the case of Leopardi and Rossini in the last two centuries, but there have been neither schools of thought nor cultural movements, so that every great artist, every thinker, every scientist from the region who has become known beyond his own territory has never been able to establish in loco a favorable and permanent atmosphere for the development of the arts and sciences.¹

Paradoxically, one can say that a great city creates a great dialect, a great market and consequently some potentially great dialect poets. The great dialect poets are almost all tied to the great cities, in a sort of reciprocal osmosis, yet even these poets, because they write in dialect, have trouble crossing the limits of their own city and the territory it controls, and do not succeed in being known nationwide.

These annotations, which who could define sociological in nature, are not meant to be a *captatio benevolentiae*, that is, a nice excuse and a reason for fostering a priori a benevolent attitude toward dialect poetry from the the Marches, which in reality could use some, given the far from flattering criticism it has received in the last fifty years, after the long and happy parentheses of Giovanni Crocioni's promotional and critical activity, which culminated in his work *La poesia dialettale marchigiana* (1934-1936).²

In the period of strong ideological contrast after WW II, which led to the Neorealist movement in literature and above all in cinema, there was a great interest in the condition of the people and of the working class, especially in the big cities. In this climate Pasolini developed his art and his attention to dialect⁴, as attested by his poetry in Friulian⁵, the anthology *Poesia dialettale del Novecento* (1952)⁶, and the *Canzoniere italiano - Antologia della poesia popolare* (1955)⁷.

Especially in the first work Pasolini clearly defines the criteria on which his choices were to be made. In dialect poets he would look for the ability to describe and represent the real, namely the situation, analyzed sociologically, in which a community is structured, in its diversity and internal contrasts. This is the reason he appreciated Belli: "Belli documents – in a marvelously visual way – the last days of an epoch which immediately precedes ours and which survived, more than in other parts of Europe, in the papal incubator" (p. LV). With Pascarella, Zanazzo and definitely with Trilussa: "The withdrawal from "Belli's" people goes hand to hand with the withdrawal from Belli's language; there is the progressive disappearance of a poetic reason and a social reason that had blended in the miracle of Belli's poetry, unique in Italian literature" (p. LVII). In short, with Pascarella begins the withdrawal from realism and realistic and sociological analysis⁸ of the situation in Rome.

Pasolini extends the negative verdict on Belli's followers to the poets of the Rome-Florence axis. His point of view seems obvious: he includes in the category of dialect poets those who bring to light the social contradictions by describing realistically these situations, without disguising or sugar-coating them in a idyllic and deceptive portrait.

Given these premises⁹, Pasolini's conclusion makes sense, since for all the dialect poets from the Marches, (with the exception of a few from the last generation, and therefore subsequent to *Poesia dialettale* (1952), such as Scataglini, Ghiandoni, Mancino, who will be addressed later), one can say what Pasolini had stated at the beginning of the preface to *Poesia dialettale* (p. XII): "The popular equation - realistic does not have at all an absolute value, because the people, at least in the meaning given to the word until the early twentieth century, did not represent themselves in poetry, devoid as they were of a social conscience, and thus, in our case, of poetic reflection, but they simply expressed their own feelings, especially of love." And further on: "dialects possess a tradition which is no less cultured and anti-popular than the one in Italian. It almost always it is a translation from Italian into dialect, and caricature deformations, when they are present, are due to a purely formal polemic."

But much more appropriate seem to be Pasolini's comments on the motivations that drive the countless dialect poets to write poetry: "The average dialect poet is in terror of being linguistically different. Of not rigidly obeying that linguistic code of honor shared by the most unconventional soul. And his greatest ambition is to disappear in anonymity, to become the unconscious demiurge of the popular genius of his city or town, the spokesman of an 'absolute' local glee" (p. LIII).

The long quotation from Pasolini's preface (which is so illuminating on the figure of the dialect poet and so clear in the ideological formulation of the parameters for judgment) is meant to exorcise in some way those negative comments it gave rise to with respect to dialect poetry from the Marches, made in fact acceptable and convincing by the authoritative prestige of this great artist.

So we encounter three scholars of dialect literature from the Marches. Alfredo Luzi, who obviously follows Pasolini's realistic formulation, states: I have the suspicion that the dialect choice in poetic expression is often born from an idyllic and limiting vision of our microcosm, that it hides a longing for the past which is visceral and has psychoanalytical implications, rather than a rational need to interpret reality." And further on: "His line [of the dialect poetry from the Marches] is to recognize, in the negative, the values on which middle-class mentality rests, and to delegate to others, to the dominant class, the management of power to which the people are inexorably and somewhat masochistically enslaved.

Giancarlo Breschi's analysis¹¹, which remains one of the keenest for the pre-nineteenth-century historical period, hinges on the qualitative weakness of dialect literature from the Marches: "We still need to face the fundamental problem, that is, the tenuous strength and vitality of dialect literature – poetry in particular – of the Marches, to be found during the entire course of its brief history, as already said. It is a matter of pointing out and rationalizing the causes, attributable to both 'internal' and 'external' history." According to Breschi, the causes of such backwardness and weakness are to be found in "the strict interaction historical, linguistic, cultural and sociological elements," and particularly in the "brain drain" that in more or less early times has impoverished the culture of the region." Nevertheless, Breschi does not seem share Pasolini's formulation: "Starting from an 'objective' and polar criterion, developed by Contini in 1951 in his essay on Petrarch, 'monolinguisism' vs. 'plurilinguisism' [...], he extends the notion ('language vs. dialect': a still usable metaphor) beyond the initial thrust (stylistic and cultural), summarizing it in a single category, which is Pasolini's 'realism'." ¹²

Sandro Baldoncini tackled the theme of dialect poetry in 1988, underlining in the first place the lack of in-depth studies: "There is an abiding absence of criticism which for the Marches concerns not only dialect literature but conspicuous segments of minor or local literature, from the Apennines to the Adriatic." ¹³ Then, following Pasolini's critical parameters, makes a sharp distinction between the quality of nineteenth-century dialect poets from the Marches (A. Leopardi, Tamanti, Manciola, Giansanti) who were able to interpret "the new political and social reality of post-Unification Italy" and that of early twentieth-century poets: "After the best voices of the late nineteenth century were gone, the new century seems veined with productive weariness, as poetry remained within the narrow limits of a nebulous memory of everyday life." ¹⁴

This distinction between two periods of post-Unification dialect poetry from the Marches seems somewhat strained, both because many poets lived between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and because the subject matter of all the poets remained more or less unaltered, privileging family and town-life themes and giving less importance to national and international events. ¹⁵ Not even metrical forms are very different during all this time, with the clear prevalence of the Bellian sonnet over the eight-syllable couplet. Only in the last few decades, following the literary model of poetry in Italian, free verse has become more widespread.

It is generally believed that much of poetry in dialect is still buried in public libraries and family archives, due to publication costs and poor market (which for every dialect poet coincides with his place of origin or work).

From this it should be inferred that it is not possible to give an overall judgment about the last one hundred years of dialect poetry from the Marches. ¹⁶

It may be a coincidence, but Polvara's anthology *Perle dialettali – Poesie tra le più belle di trenta dialetti d'Italia* ¹⁷ includes only two dialect poets from the Marches, Bice Piacentini from San Benedetto del Tronto and Luigi Capogrossi Colognesi from Cupramontana: two noteworthy poets (especially Piacentini), but whom no subsequent scholar places among the most significant in the region. This shows that dialect poetry from the Marches was (and is) almost totally unknown, and what is known of it in Italy does not correspond to the way it is judged by critics from the region and by those who have studied the linguistic reality of the Marches.

Having underlined how little it is known, it is not my intention in any case to exalt the dialect poetry of the Marches, or to place it on the same level as the poetry of Naples, Venice and Milan, recent and past. Determining a value scale is difficult (especially in this case), all the more so due to the widespread tendency to celebrate the poets of one's own province: I don't mean due chauvinistic reasons, but to familiarity and linguistic affinity.

Among the piceni ¹⁸ poets of the nineteenth century, Baldoncini underlined the importance of Alfonso Leopardi ¹⁹ of San Ginesio, Giambattista Tamanti of Fermo and Giuseppe Manciola of Macerata. The latter, born in 1824, "a clergyman of humble origins, a man of strong character, combative and determined even with his superiors," showed "a keen and constant interest in the political affairs of post-Unification Italy and, open more than most to the new liberal tendencies, noted the effect of its negative sides among the humble populace." ²⁰

Province by province, the poets who have enjoyed a great deal of esteem in their respective communities are Carlo Pagnini and Antonio Nicoli of Pesaro, Renzo de Scritti of Urbino, Duilio Scandali and Palermo Giangiacomini of Ancona, Donatella Serrani of Senigallia, Guido Moretti of Montemarciano, Lello Longhi of Jesi, Onofrio Angelelli of Fabriano, Mario Affede of Macerata, Enrico Ricciardi of Samano, Emidio Vittori and Checco Bonelli of Ascoli Piceno, Pio Salvi of Grottammare and Bice Piacentini of San Benedetto del Tronto. I intentionally left out the authors included in this anthology, who merit a more in-depth treatment.

Odoardo Giansanti, a.k.a Pasqualon²¹ (Pesaro 1852-1932), is no doubt the most famous and important dialect poet of the Marche, already winner of the best poet award in 1905 at the Esposizione Marchigiana di Macerata by a jury presided by Giovanni Crocioni. Pasqualon wrote more than four hundred poems (one hundred and fifty of which are dedicated to various characters) for a total of approximately fifty thousand lines. The language preferred by Giansanti is the urban dialect of Pesaro, at times enriched by the dialect of the countryside and by expressions from other neighboring dialects, such as those of Urbino, Fano, and Senigallia. There are some characters who speak in the best known dialects of Italy (according to the stereotypes of the *Commedia dell'Arte*): Lombard, Venetian, Neapolitan, Romagnolo and Romanesco. Contrary to some statements²², Giansanti knows how to use Italian (and the parody of Italian, spoken by the most ambitious men of the people), writing both poems completely in Italian and poems in which he wants to show his skill by alternating verses in dialect and Italian.

Giansanti's metrical form is almost always the eight-syllable couplet, but he often uses more traditional verses, especially in the dedicatory poems.

Pasqualon's personality cannot be limited to the figure of tavern and market story-teller that the poet in fact embodied, just as his work cannot be reduced to a testimony, however precious, of an epoch and of the traditional life and speech of Pesaro between 1885 and 1925 (the forty years in which he wrote). There are poems that transcend the occasion and the repetitiveness of meter (but not the banality of rhyme), there are epic moments that refer to a small world but have the breath of the great epos.

Giulio Grimaldi (Fano, 1873 - Marina di Pisa 1910) was, during his short life, one of the most complex men of letters of the Marche: historian, philologist, founder of most important historical and literary journal of the region, *Le Marche*, author of the novel *Maria risorta*, poet in Italian and in dialect. He passionately studied Fano's seaside world and collected a substantial repertory of dialect expressions and folklore. Unfortunately, these latter studies have been lost.

Grimaldi's dialect poetry is all contained in the volume *Brod e àcin* (1905), consisting of about fifty poems, usually in the form of a sonnet (not made evident in the arrangement on the page).

Grimaldi is notable for his stark but precise use of dialect, seeming almost detached from the scenes he portrays, as if not wanting to get involved in what he is telling. While his novel *Maria risorta* and his poems in Italian betray his Decadent²³ roots, in his dialect poetry he shows the eye of a verista, almost a cold camera that seeks neither tears nor laughter, but aims to depict society²⁴ as it appears to his sensitive and curious gaze.

Grimaldi did not leave any literary heirs, and the dialect poetry of the Marche continues to employ the themes and models outlined by the great figures of the nineteenth century: Belli on the one hand (and his followers), and on the other Giansanti.

In the last decades the Marche also has participated in the great movement of the so-called neodialect poets, whose medium is also dialect, but not the one which is philologically understood as the mirror of popular speech and the continuation of a given model (namely the linguistic model recognized by the single communities of speakers). It is rather a new language born of the free choice of the poet, who bends his dialect to his expressive needs and is not concerned with their relevance to the "sacrality" of tradition. This type of poetry is intellectual, not tied to circumstances or occasions, it does not seek a convivial consensus, and it stands as an alternative to poetry in Italian. In a sense, it is living poetic language against worn-out poetic language. The major exponents of this new dialect poetry are Franco Scataglini, Gabriele Ghiandoni, and Leonardo Mancino.

Notes

1. The only exception was the Duke Federico of Montefeltro who created the conditions for the flowering of Urbino's Renaissance.

2. Giovanni Crocioni, *La poesia dialettale marchigiana*, Fabriano: Stab. di Arti Grafiche "Gentile": vol. I, Saggio storico critico e con testi dialettali sino a tutto il sec. XVII, 1934; vol. II, I poeti dei secoli XIX e XX, con annotazioni, aggiunte, lessico e indice dei due volumi, 1936. The first volume is part of vols. VII-VIII (1931-1932) of *Rendiconti* of the Istituto marchigiano di scienze lettere e arti, pp. 1-210, also printed in Fabriano in 1934.

3. From a historical and linguistic point of view, and aseptically Alfredo Stussi, in *Lingua, dialetto e letteratura*, Turin: Einaudi, 1993 (in the essay that gives the book its title, which had already appeared in 1972 in the *Storia d'Italia*, I. I caratteri originali, pp. 679-728), examining the use of dialect in literature, typical of those years (Pratolini, Calvino, Fenoglio, Pasolini, Testori, etc.), underlines its ideological motivations veined with "populist attitudes brought up to date in an anti-fascist key. [...] The idea of giving progressive ideological motivations to the use of dialect expressions by characters from the dialect-speaking lower classes is no doubt disarming naive" (pp. 54-55). But Pasolini himself spoke of an "excess of naiveté," as Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo reminds us in *Poeti italiani del Novecento*, Milan: Mondadori, 1978. Referring to Pasolini and citing his *Poesie a Casarsa*, Stussi also speaks of "a document of his linguistic hedonism and of his philological passion leaning toward the primitive and the archaic" (p. 55).

4. Since *Poesie a Casarsa* is from 1942, one should more correctly say that Pasolini's interest in the world of dialect, and the primitive it represents, was born a few years before post-war Neorealism.

5. *Poesie a Casarsa* from 1942, "along with other dialect collections of the following decade, will form the volume of poems in the dialect of Casarsa and other Friulian and Venetian varieties *La meglio gioventù*, Florence: Sansoni, 1954" (Mengaldo, *Poeti*, p. 778).

6. In collaboration with Mario dell'Arco, Parma: Guanda. Pasolini wrote a demanding *Introduzione*, pp. IX-CXIX, in which he laid out the motivations behind his

choices.

7. This anthology was also published by Guanda.

8. We could say “of class,” as it was fully implemented in the middle of the twentieth century in the literature and criticism inspired by Gramsci.

9. Which in my view are biased, aiming at an analysis of the subject matter, and deferring to a later time a qualitative analysis of the works.

10. These are quotations taken from p. 60 of *La poesia dialettale marchigiana*, in *Sulla soglia del paese. Scrittori marchigiani contemporanei*, Ancona: Bagaloni, 1984, pp. 57-65 (but this essay was published for the first time by the daily *La Stampa*, Dec. 16, 1978).

11. Giancarlo Breschi, *Appunti per una storia della letteratura dialettale marchigiana*, in *Studi Urbinati. Supplemento linguistico*, 2/1 1980, pp. 15-74.

12. The quotations from Breschi's *Appunti* are taken from pp. 18, 28, 24 and 19.

13. Sandro Baldoncini, *Marche*, in the series *Letteratura delle regioni d'Italia. Storia e testi.*, Brescia: La Scuola, 1988, p. 54.

14. The last two quotations in Baldoncini, *Marche*, p. 55. The author makes similar comments (but even more similar to Pasolini's) in the essay “Di alcuni poeti dialettali piceni tra Otto e Novecento”, in *La lingua e il sogno. Scrittori in dialetto nell'Italia del Primo Novecento*, by Vito Moretti, Rome: Bulzoni, 1992, pp. 219-243, where, still referring to Alfonso Leopardi, Giambattista Tamanti and Giuseppe Manciola, he reiterates that they “will bring the fervor of a reborn inventiveness cleverly combined with everyday life.”

15. From this point of view the restrictive title *Appunti* that Giancarlo Breschi gave his work is not due to modesty.

16. Fedele Polvara published his collection in 1944, with the publisher Corticelli of Milan.

17. The designation of piceno is not given to the descendants of the territory of the fifth Augustan region named Picenum (that went from the Teramo area to boundaries of the Esino), but it is generally used today to identify the inhabitant of the Fermo and the province of Macerata, (approximately the center-south area of the Marche where the dialect has the u ending in masculine nouns and adjectives.).

18. His dialect poetry is gathered in the volume *Sub tegmine fagi. Sotto un tegame di fagioli*, published in 1887 by Lapi of Città di Castello (reprinted in 1902). This collection includes poems of other poets of the region.

19. In Baldoncini, *Di alcuni poeti dialettali piceni*, p. 230.

20. This nickname comes from a character much liked by the public, the farmer Pasqualon, whose story Giansanti tells in six poems written in 1886 and 1,200 lines long.

21. The ‘critical’ edition of his works, edited by Sanzio Balducci, came out in 1996 (Pesaro: Nobili and Pieraccini). This edition, which includes forty unpublished poems, follows the first copy of each poem and in many cases (whenever available) the manuscript text born from the collaboration between Giansanti, who was blind even before he began to write, and his printers (occasional scribes who wrote under the poet's dictation).

22. See Gualtiero De Santi's comments, *Giulio Grimaldi tra Verismo e Estetismo*, in “*Giulio Grimaldi e la cultura marchigiana del primo '900*”, edited by Marco Ferri, Urbino: Quattroventi, 1991, pp. 63-77, especially on p. 70.

23. The society described by Grimaldi consists mainly of the lower classes, sailors and farmers.

The English translations for the Veneto section are by Luigi Bonaffini

ODOARDO GIANANTI (A.K.A. PASQUALON)

Mario Ferri

Odoardo Giansanti was born in Pesaro in 1852 and died in his city in 1932 at the age of eighty. He was a successful dialect poet while leading a miserable existence. After the death of his mother when he was a boy, he was soon abandoned by his father and step-mother. He became blind in 1880 and lame in one leg in 1881. Due to numerous bouts of depression he spent some time in the city's mental hospital (the San Benedetto, which he called “The Winter Palace”), where he becomes familiar with dialect poetry, and in 1880 he begins to write a great deal of dialect verses, impressive for their quantity, their intrinsic quality, and the success they encountered with the public.

From this point of view his poetic fortune, which culminated in the first prize at the dialect poetry contest at the Macerata Exposition of 1905, has never diminished, even after his death, witness the numerous editions of his works, from the leaflets handed out at fairs, to the volumes from 1887 to 1934, to the partial reprints after 1934, all sold out. His city never forgot him, neither when he was alive, with several grants of money, nor after his death, remembering him with exhibits, conferences and anniversary celebrations, and above all by dedicating to him the new theater, the Teatro Odoardo Giansanti. And two Pesaro publishers, Nobili and Pieraccini, sponsored a new critical edition of all the poems of Pasqualon in 1996.

Pasqualon (who inherited the name from one of his characters, a farmer of the Pesaro countryside around S. Angelo in Lizzola and Montelabbate), displays an enormous varieties of idioms: the urban, the portolotto, from the countryside, from Fano, Senigallia, Urbino, Romagna, the Venetian, the Romanesco, the Neapolitan, the Italian of the city gentleman, the Italian of the farmer, the Italian of the Venetian corporal and the Neapolitan brigadiere, and even macaronic Latin. It is apparent that Giansanti's poems are meant to be recited to the public at street corners, at fairs, in the

taverns, in the kitchens and country stables. It is not the sort of poetry that is born at the writing desk and is then enjoyed in an arm chair. It has the voice of the town crier, the story teller, of the people who nod and laugh and listen with their mouths open. They listen to their own voice in the voice of the poet: a man of the people, but not illiterate and naive as some people have implied. His quotations, his language, his knowledge are much broader than a naïf's experience.

His subject matter concerns the events of the day in his city, and on the national and even international scene. He mentions fashion trends, technological progress, political movements, social themes, and extraordinary weather phenomena.

Giansanti's poetic output is enormous and consists of four hundred twenty-eight poems for a total of fifty-thousand verses. In this anthology we have included one of his most famous poems, "La vita del Rettore" (the country priest). Written in 1886, it became immediately well known for its explosive and somewhat anti-clerical stance, to the extent that the poet had to spend four days in jail for having sung in public without a licence. On appeal Giansanti was absolved for lack of evidence,¹ and after a while he changed the ending of the poem, soft-pedaling the accusations against the priest's insensitivity.

The second poem included is "Abbasso i critici: poesia moderna," written in 1985, which shows Giansanti's virtuosity by alternating verses in Italian with verses in the Pesaro dialect.

Criticism

A Pizzagalli, *Un giullare del popolo: Edoardo Giansanti*. Florence: Sansoni, 1944.

Abbasso i critici: poesia moderna

1895

Signori gentilissimi
Sti giome a jò impared
Che i vers i miei vernacoli
I è poch desidered
Perché si stenta a leggere
Ste mi dialett bsares.
Non tutti lo capiscono
Parchè l'è mezz frances.
Così diceami un critico:
"Mo scriv in italian
Che tutti lo comprendono
E t'è giriss più ben.
Declama il verso italico
Alora t' fa i baoch",
Ma un altro sussurravami:
"T' sariss un papaloch.
Saresti tu per credere
Parland a us letered
Che tutti riderebbero
Listess cumpel passed?
Quel frizzi che movevano
Le fodre di giuben
E quei che spalancavano

Le bocch di cuntaden
Quei detti che fiutavansi
Da i nes intabached
Movean le vesti ai medici
Le togh ma i avoched
Seri versi insuperabili
Mo messi in italian
A branchi abbaierebbero
Listess cum bàia i chen”
In questa via trovandomi
Tramezi. a dó martei
A l’un e a l’altro subito
Mè a cerch da contentei:
Cori un lavor reciproco.
Da matt già benintes.
Facendo un verso italico
Misted sa chel bsares.
Che la moderna logica
Ce dic. s’ a i vlemgi dritt.
Servir convien due popoli
Magnè la papa e zitt,
Ma contro l’impossibile
Me a vagh in tun st’moment,
L’intruso insopportabile
Lavora più content
Tirando il suo gran mantice
Battend sal su martel
Farà una nuova critica:
Che roba dai scorcel!
Che schiavitù, che secolo!
S’i ved a bata un chiod
La sua tutti gli dicono.
Nisciun pò fè a su mod.
Rammenterò la favola
Ch’ me dciva el por zi
E questa è molto analoga

De quel che me a v' voi di.
C'era una volta un villico
Sal fiol mezz. incanted.
Avean con loro un asino
I giva in sei marched,
Siccome il vecchio rustico
El giovne più intontid
Tenean la bestia libera
E lori i giva a pid
Diversi che osservavano
Un quedre bel acsé
A tanta stupidaggine
I à cumined a urlè:
"Che imbecilli uomini
Che raza d' papagall
Aver la bestia, o stupidi.
E d'en montè a cavall!"
Fra sé il vecchio barbottola:
I avria ragion, cle gent".
E subito si arrampica
Parsues da fei content.
Inforca il suo quadrupede
S' mett a cavall benben
E il figlio dietro andavagli
Tirand i sass ma i chen:
E fatto già un chilometro
I arsent 'n antre schiamazz.
Da altri che osservavano
Le gamb de chel ragazz
Che quasi si piegavano.
I à cumined a urlè:
"O vecchio rincrescevole
Mo smonta giò da là.
Non vedi il tuo unigenito
Ch'en pò caminè pió?",
E il vecchio giù in un attimo

Mal fiol fa monté só.
Li a poco quattro uomini
Vedend ma st' ragazacc
Che tutto insuperbivasi
Sopra ste sumaracc
E il veglio trascinavasi
Sal su cappel sle men
Mostrando il crin suo candido
I cmincia a lè un bachen
E contro il figlio scagliano
i colp e i accident.
E tutti gli ripetono:
“Mo eri t' ne vargogn pargnent
A un vecchio così debole
Fel vni diditra a pid?
Non osi di soccorrerlo,
Brutt pezz dun invomid?”
Costui fra le vertigini
L'era par smontè giò
Ma il padre disse: “Fermati!,
Stà bon. ch'a i stem tutt dó”.
E tutti due tenendosi
Ben fort par en caschè.
Ma l'asino storcevasi
Ch'en vleva caminè.
E questi due trovandosi
Tramezz a tant question
Da orbi lo battevano
Ch'i à rott quatre baston:
A questo gran spettacolo
È curs na mucchia d'gent,
Se presto non scendevano
Succ'deva un mazzament
Per quel paziente martire
Ch' 'n i pudeva portè:
“Abbasso!”. in cor gridavano!

En c'era da scherzè.
Ma dopo poi che scesero
Tutt clori i s'è sparid
E il padre e il figlio e l'asino
I è amast tutti tre a pid.
L'un l'altro poi guardandosi
Nisciun savea cum s'fè.
Montar più non osavano
E manca a caminè.
Il vecchio più bisbetico
Trovandoe in tant imbroi
Legò le zampe all'asino
Par en trovè piu noi.
Poi mise una gran pertica
Travers ma l'animel.
A spalla lo portarono
Cums'porta ma un agnel.
Ognun di voi s'immagini
Che arrivi in sel marched
Ragazzi e donne e uomini
I à fatt dle gran rised;
Quei disgraziati stettero
Fra i urlè sin'a nott
Bersaglio di quei critici
Ch'i s'cred d'essa più dott.
Il caso mio è identico.
Mo quant a vegh le brutt
Lego le zampe al diavolo
Acsé a fagh mèi de tutt.
A spalla poi portandolo
Insiem sa la ragion
Sospeso alla mia logica
Che quella è un gran baston,
E tutti i suoi malefici
Sa tutt i maldicent
Mi dicati pur cuticola

Mè enn ò paura d' gnent.

Abbasso dunque i critici

Abbass le sue lezion

Abbasso le pettegole

Evviva Pasqualon!

Abbasso i critici: poesia moderna. – Signori gentilissimi / questo giorno ho imparato / che i versi miei vernacoli / sono poco desiderati / perché si stenta a leggere / questo mio dialetto pesarese. / Non tutti lo capiscono / perché è, mezzo francese. / Così diceami un critico., “Ma scrivi in italiano che tutti lo comprendono / e tu andresti meglio, / declama il verso italoico / allora sì farai i baiocchi” / ma un altro sussurravami: / “Saresti un gran cretino, / saresti tu per credere / parlando ad uso di letterati / che tutti riderebbero / così come per il passato? / Quei frizzi che movevano / le fodere dei giubbini / e quei che spalancavano / le bocche dei contadini / quei detti che fiutavansi dai nasi intabaccati / movean le vesti ai medici / le toghe agli avvocati / son versi insuperabili, / ma messi in italiano / a branchi abbaierebbero / come ahbajano i cani”. / In questa via trovandomi / in mezzo a due martelli / l’un e a l’altro subito / io cerco di accontentarli / e con un lavoro reciproco / da matti, beninteso!, / facendo un verso italoico / mischiato a quello pesarese, / che la moderna logica / ci dice, se vogliamo andar dritti, / servir convien due popoli / mangiar la pappa e zitti! / Ma contro l’impossibile / io vado in questo momento, / l’intruso insopportabile / lavora più contento, / tirando il suo gran mantice / battendo col suo martello / farà una nuova critica. / che roba di ascia rozza! / Che schiavitù, che secolo! / Se vedono battere un chiodo / la sua tutti gli dicono, / nessuno può fare a modo suo.. / Rammenterò la favola / che mi diceva il povero zio / e questa è molto analoga / a quello che voglio dire io. / C’era una volta un villico / con un figlio mezzo incantato / avean con loro un asino / andavano al mercato, / siccome il vecchio rustico / il giovane ancor più tonto / tenean la bestia libera ed ambedue andavano a piedi / diversi che osservavano / un quadro / così ben fatto / a tanta stupidaggine / cominciarono a urlare: / “Che imbecilli uomini / che rozza di pappagalli, / aver la bestia, o stupidi, / e non montare a cavallo!” / Fra sé il vecchio barbotto. / “Avrebbero ragione, quelle genti”, / e subito si arrampica / persuaso di farli contenti, / inforca il suo quadrupede / si mette comodo a cavallo / e il figlio dietro andavagli / tirando i sassi ai cani / e fatto già un chilometro / sentono un altro schiamazzo / da altri che osservavano, / le gambe, di quel ragazzo / che quasi si piegavano / hanno cominciato a urlare, / “O vecchio rincrescevole / ma smonta giù da lì, / non vedi il tuo unigenito / che non può camminare più?”, / e il vecchio giù in un attimo / fa montar su il figlio. / Li a poco quattro uomini / vedendo questo ragazzotto / che tutto insuperbivasi / sopra quel somaraccio / e il veglio trascinavasi / col suo cappello in mano / mostrando il crin suo candido / cominciano a fare un baccano / e contro il figlio scagliano / i colpi e gli accidenti, / e tutti gli ripetono: / “Ma non ti vergogni per niente / a un vecchio così debole / di farlo venir dietro a piedi? / Non osi di soccorrerlo, / brutto pezzo d’incantato?” / Costui fra le vertigini / stava già per smontare / ma il padre disse. “Fermati!, / sta buono che ci siamo tutti e due”, / e tutti e due tenendosi / ben forti per non cascare, / ma l’asino storcevasi, / che non voleva camminare / e questi due trovandosi / in mezzo a tanti discorsi / da orbi lo battevano / tanto che han rotto quattro bastoni; / a questo gran spettacolo / è corso un mucchio di gente, / se presto non scendevano / succedeva qualche ammazzamento / per quel paziente martire / che non riusciva a portarli: / “Abbasso!”, in cor gridavano: / non c’era da scherzare. / Ma dopo poi che scesero / tutti sono spariti / e il padre e il figlio e l’asino / sono rimasti tutti e tre a piedi, / l’un l’altro poi guardandosi / nessuno sapeva cosa fare, / montar più non osavano / e nemmeno camminare. / Il vecchio più bisbetico / trovandosi in tanto imbroglio / legò le zampe all’asino / per non trovar più noie, / poi mise una gran pertica / in mezzo all’animale, / a spalla lo portarono / come si porta un agnello. / Ognun di voi s’immagini / che giunti al mercato / ragazzi e donne e uomini / hanno fatto delle gran risate; / quei disgraziati stettero / fra gli urli fino a notte / bersaglio di quei critici / che si credevano più dotti. / Il caso mio è identico, / ma quando vedo la mal parata / lego le zampe al diavolo / così faccio meglio di tutti, / a spalla poi portandolo / insieme con la ragione / sospeso alla mia logica / che quella è un gran bastone, / e tutti i suoi malefici / con tutti i maldicenti / mi dican pur cuticola / io non ho paura di niente. / Abbasso dunque i critici / abbasso le loro lezioni / abbasso le pettegole / evviva Pasqualone!

Down with the Critics: a Modern Poem

My most distinguished gentlemen

Recently I have found

That my dialectal verses

Are far from being renowned

Because Pesaro’s dialect

Can mistify too easily

Given its half-French sound.

One critic said to me:

“Why don’t you use Italian

In which all can converse

And it will go much better,

Declaim the Italic verse

And then you’ll make some dough.”

One gave me this advice:

“You’d really be a dimwit,
But how can you surmise
By showing you are lettered
The everyone would chuckle
As they once used to do?
Those jibes that could unbuckle
The linings of the jackets
And those that put a grin
On all the farmers’s lips
Those quips that would have been
Sniffed through tobaccoed noses
Could shake a doctor’s coat
And an attorney’s robe
They’re verses of great note,
But put into Italian
They would bark like mean
Packs of snarling dogs.”
Finding myself between
A rock and a hard place
Immediately I sought
To satisfy them both:
With reciprocity hardbought,
Crazy, you understand,
Writing Italic rhyme
Mixed in with Pesarese,
Since logic in our time
Says you must toe the line,
Better to serve two masters
Swallow your pap, and mum,
But it can be a disaster
To have to face the impossible,
The intolerable trespasser
Works more contented now:
Striking with his hammer
Blowing his mighty bellows
Writes a new commentary:

What a rough ax this is!
What slavery, what century!
They'll pitch in their two cents
If they see you hit a nail
You can't do what you please.
I will recall the tale
Told me by my late uncle
Which I think will convey
Just what I want to say.
There was a farmer once
With a son, a half-wit,
They had with them an ass
On their way to market,
Since the aged rustic
And his more mindless son
Had let the animal loose
While they walked in the sun
Several who observed
This very charming scene
Seeing such perfect idiocy
Began to intervene:
"What stupid men are you
As brainless as a parrot
To have an ass, you morons,
And then choose not to ride it!"
"The old man starts to mumble:
"Those people may be right,"
And in a flash he climbs,
Convinced of their delight,
Astride his quadruped
He sits snug on the ass
And his son right behind him
Throws stones to dogs that pass.
After they went a mile
He hears another row
Of other people watching

His boy's legs start to bow,
Almost bending over,
And they began to yell:
"Despicable old man
Get down from there a spell,
Don't you see your offspring
Looks like he feels half dead?".
So down came the old man,
And up his son instead.
After a while four men
Seeing the young rascal
So very smug and cocky
Astride that wretched animal
And the old farmer plodding
With his hat in hand
Showing his hoary head
They start a saraband
And hurl at the son's face
Profanities and blame,
And everyone repeats:
"Don't you have any shame
To let a feeble oldster
Walk after you in pain?
Why don't you try to help him,
You witless featherbrain?".
The boy was feeling dizzy
And ready to alight
But his father said: "Stop!,
Don't move, we'll both squeeze tight".
They held on to each other
In order not to fall,
But the ass began to fidget
And didn't want to move at all.
Those two, finding themselves
Amid so many critics,
Beat the hell out of him

And broke four walking sticks.
A lot of people ran
To look at this wild scene.
If they didn't come down soon
It would certainly mean
The end for that poor martyr
Who could not bear their weight.
"Down!" they yelled in unison,
And didn't intend to wait.
But after they got down
Everyone left the place
And father son and ass
Were left on foot to gaze
Baffled at each other,
Looking really hardput
They dared not climb again,
But neither go on foot.
The crotchety old man
Facing such a predicament
He tied the donkey's legs
Just to avoid an argument,
Then got a sturdy pole
To hold aloft the beast.
They bore him on their shoulders
Like a lamb at a feast.
You all can guess that when
They reached the market place
Kids and men and women
Laughed loudly int heir face.
The two poor farmers stayed
Till nightfall mid those cries
Target of those critics
They believed more wise.
My case is really identical,
But when it's a tough matter
I tie the devil's paws,

So I do far better,
To carry him on my shoulder
Side by side with reason
Suspended on my logic
Which is a mighty weapon,
And all his evil doings
With all of the badmouthing
Can say what they will say
I am afraid of nothing.
So down with all the critics
Down with their baloney
Down with busybodies
And long live Pasqualone!

GIULIO GRIMALDI

Grimaldi was born in Fano in 1873. He got his college degree in 1895 in Rome with a philological thesis on Cardinal Bernardo Dovizi di Bibbiena and immediately started to do research on ancient texts of the Marches. In 1901 Grimaldi founded *Le Marche*, the most important historical and literary journal of the region, to which many scholars of the region collaborated. In the meantime he collected dialectological and folkloric material in various localities, among which Fabriano, Pergola, Urbino and above all Fano.

In his city he approached the separate and suspicious world of fishermen, whose trust he gradually won over by taking part in all of their activities. Unfortunately, the considerable material he gathered, including photographs, was lost after his tragic death in 1920 in the sea of Marina di Pisa when he was only thirty-seven years old.

From his familiarity with the fishermen's world Grimaldi got the inspiration for his story *Pescatori dell'Adriatico* and above all for his novel *Maria risorta* (the name of the hero's fishing boat) published in Turin in 1908. The novel, apparently verista, belongs to the literary current of late nineteenth-century decadentism. He is tied to verismo by the maniacal and persistent description of the harbor, the boats, the stages and techniques of fishing, the fish life, the naval yards.

As a dialect poet, Grimaldi published the book *Brod e àcin*¹. He began writing poetry in high school and continued in his college years. The majority of the known poems² were written before 1895 and were published in 1905, ten years after his graduation.

The significance of Grimaldi's poetry lies in the type of dialect he uses in his sonnets. Grimaldi's writing style seem taken from the modern technique of hiding a tape recorder to capture an actual conversation among people of the lower classes, dialogs that the presence of a stranger would always compromise by forcing the speakers to clean up their speech and make it less local and closer to the Italian norm.

In those very years Odoardo Giansanti, alias Pasqualon, was very well known in the whole coastal area of the Marches and exerted a great deal of influence with his eight-syllable lines in rhyming couplets, after the example of Giustiniano Villa from Romagna. Grimaldi and Pasqualon lived in the same period, but their poetry has nothing in common. They belong to two completely different worlds, even if Grimaldi knew³ and admired the Giansanti.

All the poems included are sonnets, a typical Bellian form little used in the northern Marches. The fragmented dialogues and the direct narration of spare and broken conversations give a faithful image of Grimaldi's poetic style.

1 *Brod e àcin*. Sonetti in vernacolo fanese, Fano: Soc. Tipografica Cooperativa, 1905.

2 Aldo Deli, "Nota su Giulio Grimaldi," in Fano, supplement to n.3/1966, p. 19, speaks of what is assumed to be Grimaldi's entire body of dialect poetry.

3 Some newspapers of the time mention a lecture by Grimaldi on Pasqualon, followed by a reading of Giansanti's poetry.

Criticism

G. Crocioni, ed., *La poesia dialettale marchigiana*, Fabriano 1934.

A. Deli, preface to *Brod e àcin*, Ancona 1975

Le papàul

Purett, datj el ditin! la ciarla en conta;
tant, sta volta, en ce pass, no, da cojussa...
Por inucent... ! ce creggh! co' so' na tonta?
fatle méj, si 'n vlet ch'un senta la pussa.
... Per forza?! già, la scusa, sènper pronta:
c'er'òbligh, de balac... ! Pu, manca fussa
bella. cla brutta... Uh! l'ò machi tla ponta...
Manca a tucala sa na cann'agussa. ...
Già, già; le papàul! dmatinabunora!
Eh! per gi a casa..., c'vol la cunpagnia...
Mo vó, vó sít de rassa 'n po' cutora:
sfrega strega... E pu, lasc'la fa ma lia,
chel maritoss, sa cla boca a scursora...
... E chi ve tien? me sa miland, ch' git via.

Le balle. – Poverino, dategli il dito in bocca! La parlantina non conta; / tanto, questa volta, non ci passo da cogliona... / Povero innocente, ci credo! Cosa, son ,forse tonta? / Fatele meglio, se volete che non si senta la puzza. / Per forza? E già, la scusa è sempre pronta. / bisognava ballarci....! E poi, manco fosse / bella, quella brutta! Uh, l'ho qui sulla punta della lingua... / Non vorrei toccarla nemmeno con una canna aguzza. / Già, già, le balle! Sì, domani! / Eh, per andare a casa ci vuole la compagnia! / Ma voi, voi, carina, siete un po' facile alle cotte: / sfrega sfrega...! / E poi, lasciala fare, a lei, / quel maritozzo, con quella bocca da nodo scorsoio... / Ma chi vi tiene.? Non vedo l'ora che ve ne andiate via!

Bull

Poor thing, put a finger in his mouth! Talk is cheap.
this time you know that I'm not playing the fool
Poor baby...! You really think I am asleep?
Do a better job, or it'll smell like a cesspool.
Couldn't help it? Sure, excuses you can keep,
you had to be there...! as if she made you drool,
that hag... Uh, it's on my tongue, on the tip...
I wouldn't want to touch her with a sharp reed.
... All bull! Some other time, let's not pretend!
Company to go home with is what you need ...
But you get crushed like there is no end.
Rub, rub, rub... But let her do her deed,
and her noose-mouthed hubby, you dear girlfriend...
...But go with her, who's keeping you? And God speed.

Tel curifsunari

– E la pietà, figliola? – È gita mal...;

giust, cla mulica d' messa, acsi. a stroson...;

svujata in chiesa, senza divusion...

Saria mej ch'en usassa, el carneval!

Pu, sor curat... m'invergogn d' cunfsal!

– Robba amorosa? Aah... aah – No, prò... Al viglion

di asoc sa tuta cla gran cuinfusion...,

c' sin fermati a discura, su ple scal...

– Ebbè? – En c'era nisciun... era mez scur...;

tra na parola e n'antra pasiunata...

– Bè? – c' sin basciati, streti cost el mur.

– E poi? – Gnent àlter... – Bada un'altra volta...;

più attenta, figlia mia! più riguardata...

Atto di contrizione!... Sei assolta.

Nel confessionale. – E la pietà, figliola? – E' andata male..., / giusto quel po' di messa, così, come se mi dovesse strozzare; / in chiesa, svogliata e senza devozione. / Sarebbe meglio che il carnevale non usasse! / E poi, signor curato... No, mi vergogno a confessarlo! / Roba amorosa? Aah.... aah... ! – No, però... al veglione / dei soci, fra tutta quella confusione... / ci siamo fermati a discorrere, su per le scale... / – Ebbene? – Non c'era nessuno... era mezzo scuro... fra una parola appassionata e l'altra... / – E allora? – ...ci siamo baciati, stretti al muro. / – E poi? – Nient'altro... – Bada... un'altra volta...; / più attenta, figlia mia... più riguardata... / Atto di contrizione!.... Sei assolta.

In the Confessional

– What about piety, my child? – A sorry affair...

Just that bit of mass, like a suffocation...

In church, distracted and without devotion...

Better if there was no carnival or fair!

But, father... No, I'm ashamed to declare!

– A love story? Aah...Aah... – No, but.. in conclusion,

At the company's ball, in the confusion...

We stopped to talk a while, there on the stair...

– Well? – It was half dark,... there was nobody at all...

Our words became more and more passionate...

– Well? – We kissed, leaning against the wall.

– And then? – Nothing else...– Next time don't get involved...

Be more careful, my child! More temperate..

Do an act of contrition!... You're absolved!

Le patir

Lia cusciva, mali, tun cantuncin,

sa j ochi rosei, intant chji parechiava,

e me sculàven giù do lagrimin,

a veda cla scudela ch'amancava.

D' fora piuveva. A l'impruvis, sentin

na lagna... El vent?... Mo si manca gangava!

No la voc, no! comeri soché fin fin...

La fascina sla rola se smurciava.

– Jesumaria! – Madonna! – È mama morta... –

Ce tremava le ganb... Senza di gñent,

tutt dó gin oltra –, ce ferman sla porta.

Mama era longa, bianca comun pan,

j ochi chiusi, la boca senza i dent,

sa la curona e sa 'l cruc'fiss tle man...

Le paure. – Lei cuciva, lì, in un cantuccio / con gli occhi rossi mentre io apparecchiavo e mi scendevano giù due lacrime / nel vedere la scodella che mancava. / Di fuori pioveva. All'improvviso sentiamo / come un lamento... Il vento?... Ma se non si moveva foglia! / Non era voce, no, ma un non so che di fino fino... / La fascina sul focolare s'andava spegnendo. Gesummaria! Madonna! – E nostra madre ch'è morta... / Ci tremavano le gambe... Senza dir niente / tutte e due andiamo verso la camera; ci fermiamo sulla porta. / La mamma era lunga, bianca come il pane, / gli occhi chiusi, la bocca senza denti, / con la corona e il crocifisso in mano...

Fears

She sewed, there, in a comer, in such a state,

her eyes red while I got the table ready,

and tears flowed down my cheeks in steady

streams, as I looked down at the missing plate .

Outside it rained. Suddenly we heard, wait,

a wail... The wind? ...But no, outside it wasn't windy.

It wasn't a voice, but something thin and thready...

The fire was dying out at a fast rate.

– Jesus and Mary! – Virgin! – It's our dead mother –

Our knees shook hard ...Without a word, speechless,

we both went to the door, but went no further.

Mother was very long, as pale as bread sticks,

her eyes were closed, her mouth was toothless,...

In her hands she clasped a rosary and a crucifix.

Le pteguless

– E stat sitta, Mitilda! – Co' è sucess?

– Ji diggh, propi, ch'apar la fin del mond...

già, sa sta bela giuventù d'adess,

cu'vressi fa. Mitild? en c'è più un fond.

Cnuscet cla bionda, palida, che tess,

sa cla faccia patita, el bochin tond...?

– Inbé? – To, inbé! cla madunina d' gess,

ha parturit. – Vatt a fidà, dle biond... !

E chi...? – Batist, el fiol del calular.

– Brutt birbon! daj un ciacch de bastunat...

Già, bella forsa; ha fatt el militar...

– Basta –. jì vaggh a la messa...; ha rintucat...

Ciarvden. – C' vden.. – Oh, m'arcmand. vè, cumar.

sitt'e mosca... Dle volt... – En dubitat!

I pettegolezzi. – E, state zitta, Matilde! - Cosa è successo.? / – Io dico proprio che pare la fine dei mondo... ! / già, con questa bella gioventù d' adesso, / cosa vorresti fare, Matilde? Non c'è più fondamento. / Conoscete quella bionda, pallida, che tesse, / con quella faccia patita e la bocchina tonda... ? / – Ebbene? Ebbene un como! Quella madonnina di gesso / ha partorito. – Vatti a fidare delle bionde... ! / E chi... – Battista, il figlio del calzolaio, / – Brutto mascalzone! Dagli un fracco di bastonate... / Già, bella forza; ha fatto il militare... – Basta; io vado alla messa...; ha rintoacato... / Ci rivediamo. Ci vediamo... – Oh, mi raccomando, veh, comare; / zitti e mosca... Delle volte... Non dubitate!

Gossip

– Be quiet, Matilda! – What happened, by the way?

– I really don't know what the world is coming to...!

You're right, the way young people are today

there is no more foundation, Matilda. What can you do?

You know that blond, so pale, who weaves all day,

with a suffering look and a puckered mouth, do you...?

– Well? – Well, indeed! That painted madonna went astray

and just had a child. – You can't trust blondes...! Who

was the guy...? Battista, the shoemaker's son.

– The scoundrel! He should be rung like a doorbell...

Not hard for him. He was an army person.

– All right, I'm going to mass... there's the knell..

So long. – So long... – But, comare, listen,

mum's the word... Sometimes... – I know it well!

A scanafojèa

– Mtev a seda, Tugnina ... ! – No, no; è mèj

ch' stèt da longh più ch' se pol.. Vaggh cant a Cecch...

Sit cuntent, Cecch? – Sci, sci-, mo tant, urmèi,

el farit per fa gola ma i por vecch'!...

– Oh, badèt ma cla luma... – Ènn bei, ènn bej

sti scartoss. – Mo prò, ancora, en ènn tant secch...

– Quant c'èt fatt sa cle mandle? – Ciò fatt sei:

fan prova d'en dè gnent... – Se bagna el becch?

C'è la truffa dl'ac'tell... – E no, en tirèt;
 dop, van tra i canabucc! – Ét colt i frutt?
 – Ha fatt da fatt le mela ènn tuti machèt;
 la grandina, Tiresa, ha pulit tutt.
 – Crist è stuff, fiola mia; cià gastighèt...
 – Su, ragasi! bevrìt, scanafojèt!

A spannocchiare. – Mettetevi a sedere, Tognina ... No, no, è meglio / che voi stiate lontano più che si può... Vado vicino a Cecco... / Siete contento, Cecco? – Sì, sì; ma tanto ormai... / lo farete per far gola ai poveri vecchietti!... / – Oh, badate a quella lucerna... – Sono belle, sono belle / queste pannocchie. – Ancora però non sono tanto secche... / – Quanto ci hai fatto con le mandorle? – Ci ho fatto sei / sembra che non vogliono dar niente... – Si bagna il becco? – / C'è l'orciolo dell'acqua con l'aceto... – E no, non vi tirate le pannocchie, / perché possono andare fra i gambi del granturco! – Avete raccolto la frutta? / – Il tempo è stato matto; le mele sono tutte ammaccate; / la grandine, Teresa, ha pulito tutto. / – Cristo si è stancato, figlia mia; ci ha castigati... / – Su, ragazzi, dopo berrete; via, spannocchiate!

Husking

– Take a chair, Tognina...! – No, no. I'll sit
 next to Cecco. Don't get too close, you teasers...
 Aren't you glad, Cecco? – Yes, yes. But curse it...
 You're doing it to tempt us poor old geezers!
 – Oh, watch that oil-lamp... These corn-cobs are a bit
 moist yet. – But they are nice, real pleasers...
 – How much did the almonds bring? – Six, I quit,
 they don't want to pay anything, those squeezers.
 – Anything to drink? – There's the water jug with vinegar..
 – No, don't pull the cobs. They'll end up among the stalks!
 – Did you pick the fruits? – The apple crop was meager,
 they're all bruised. We had crazy weather. Hail like rocks,
 Teresa, scoured everything. – That's Christ's anger,
 child. He's fed up. – Come on, boys! Drink, pull off those husks!

FRANCO SCATAGLINI

In the dialect landscape, not of the Marches alone, Scataglini's poetry stands out immediately for the distance it establishes with the dialect of Ancona, which should be its referent. This distance is not detachment, because it remains an original phonic substance, even if it seems almost devoid of a cultural and anthropological context. Scataglini himself wrote: "My dialect does not correspond to actual speech, or it does only in its sounds. It is through these that I can conjure an original similarity: my models are from the thirteenth century." Thus his first work (after the chapbook *Echi*, 1950, in Italian), has for title a verse taken from a sonnet by Jacopo da Lentini, *E per un frutto piace tutto un orto* (1973), followed by *So' rimaso la spina* (1977) and *Carta laniena* (1982).

The first book already contains the places and allegories of the last Scataglini, as shown in the poem "El tuo remoto fondo," chosen as evidence of a melancholy eros, although vigilant and not without a light irony, and consisting of two quatrains of seven-syllable lines replete with emblems of courtly poetry (the woman, the fountain, the image.)

"Carcere demolito," from *So' rimaso la spina* (I am left like a fish bone), is perhaps one of Scataglini's most beautiful poems. The demolition of the Sanata Palazia prison, in the old part of the city, uncovers a dug-out (*chiogia quadrata*) which seems to point to the places of punishment and depicts, with great concision, their objects and suffering. In the splendid third part, the seagulls fly over that world of fear and distress, a symbol as well of the labyrinths of the self, and a prelude to the section that unites infinity and prison in the single wasteland of the human condition.

With *Carta laniena*, a Latin expression that stands for "slaughterhouse" and "laceration," Scataglini seems to depict his own purgatorial journey, in an autobiographical sense and as a way of leaving behind a psychoanalytical experience. "The person who writes – Massimo Raffielli noted –

looks at sacrifice from the shore, a salvation in some way already attained.” A condition which crystalizes in the subsequent *Laudario* (1982-1986), contained in the anthology *Rimario Agontano* (1968-1986).

Carta laniera, the poem that provides the title, can constitute a synthesis of this journey “de storia e alegoria” (of history and allegory), of this crossing that seems to lead to nowhere, but that retains inscribed, tattooed, “*ciarma de le turmente*,” sewn on Jews’ clothes, the most tragic icon.

For *La Rosa*, a poem published in 1992, a free adaptation of the first part of the *Roman de la Rose* by Guillaume de Lorris and a variegated play of allegories, choosing only one text would have been unsatisfactory, because the balance of each poem depends on the web of relationships it has with the others. It is better then to include *El sol*, published posthumously in 1995, an autobiographical poem with a rigorous pattern of verses and chapters, completed a few days before his death, which is a description of the Italian province where the sun (SOL) is the acronym of the *Società Ossigeno Liquido* that, as Franco Brevini wrote, “raised its smokestack over the poet’s childhood.”

Criticism

B. Pento, in *La Fiera letteraria*, December 23, 1973.

G. Bàrberi Squarotti, in *Tuttolibri*, June 24, 1978.

G. Tonna, in *Poesia marginale e marginalità della poesia*, Ancona-Urbino: Edizioni Marche-Oggi, 1980.

F. Brevini, *Poeti dialettali del Novecento*, cit..

—. Brevini, *Le parole perdute*, cit..

Cesare Segre, *Introduction to La Rosa*, cit..

Giacinto Spagnoletti, in *Storia della Letteratura italiana del Novecento*, cit..

El tuo remoto fondo

Dòna che sei sovrana
d’un mondo che no’ esiste,
io so ‘n arboro triste
‘nt’un spechio de fontana.
El tuo remoto fondo
è dietro la mia imagine.
Io so’ ‘l ciglio del mondo
e te sei la voragine.

da E per un frutto piace tutto un orto

Your Faraway Abyss

Woman who are the queen
of a world that can’t be,
I am a disheartened tree
in a fountain’s screen.
Your faraway abyss
lies behind my image.
I am the world’s edge
and you’re the precipice.

Carcere demolito

Com colpi d’aceta

sprofondane tre mure
framezo ortighe scure
de sopra la breceta;
'na faccia de cemento
d'indòve el filspinato
se driza intorcinato
le fa da sbaramento
e 'n cancelo de legno
con lucheto e catena
(el verdeto e la pena
che se delma a congegno)
Co' la demoliziò
esta chioga quadrata
sorti come schiodata
da 'na malediziò
de sbare e schiavardà,
d'aria fissa e de ronde,
de ore fate imonde
da la catività.
O raza de Cai,
fadigadora al chiuso,
vedevi alzando el muso
le sòle ai secondi.

Carcere demolito: il carcere anconitano di Santa Palazia, rimasto gravemente danneggiato nel terremoto del 1972 e successivamente abbattuto: se delma; si modella; chioga: buca, stero.

II

In piedi su lo stero
solo Santa Palazia
che sona come strazia
la lima sopra 'l fero
Sibene la faciata
sia tuta 'n'armatura
resiste a la ventura
'sta chiesa disgraziata
indove per mestiere
la gerarchia dei bagni

portava a puli i pagni
de le le pegore nere.
Sbatute sopra el scoio
del Guasco, pòre vite
mai non sortì pulite
però dal lavatoio,
ce rinforzò la ghigna,
anzi, se perse al bè
c'a sopravive c'è
solo 'n mezo, la tigna.
Su 'l spazio in abbandono
c'è fiore de la malva.
Se vive non ne salva
muri basta al perdono.

Guasco: colle storico di Ancona, su cui sorge la cattedrale di San Ciriaco: il carcere si elevava a breve distanza.

III

Io so che 'na buiosa
è tuto 'l vive d'omo
però guardo sul domo
volà i cucali rosa.
Arisali la rupe
tremenda del cagó
'ndove ingozò un papó
de pesci e d'acque cupe.
Zompati oltre le merde
de la necessità
va de soavità
incontro al mare verde
e grida de sarcasmo
contro chi 'mane avinto
drento il suo labirinto
de paura e d'orgasmo.
Pudéssimo andà sciolti
(no solo in sepoltura)
da colpe e da catura
'ndò ce semo rinvolti.

Sopra el nuvulo erto
sempre 'l spazio è infinito.
Carcere demolito,
al principio è 'l deserto.

Buiosa: carcere; cucali: gabbian; cagó: cloaca; papó: zuppa dei poveri.

da So' rimaso la spina, 1977

Demolished Prison

As if felled by ax blows
three walls crash and settle
amid the darkish nettles
over the gravel rows.
A concrete fence
where the barbed wire
rises in a twisted spire
is its sole defense
and a wooden entrance
with chain and safety
(the verdict and penalty
modeled on a contrivance)
With the demolition
this square hole in the ground
came out as if unbound
from a malediction
of bars and deadlocks,
of rounds and stale air,
and hours of despair
inside the cell blocks.
O Cain-begotten souls,
workers in the jug,
you saw raising your mug
only your keepers' soles.

II

Santa Palazia alone
stands over the pile
sounding like a file
rasping over stone.

The old facade, once great,
is braced up, in decline,
but this dejected shrine
is still resisting fate
where to earn their keep
the baths' hierarchy
went to wash the laundry
of all the black sheep.

Beaten on the bluff
of Guasco, lives nevergreen,
they never came out clean
from the washing-trough,
it made them yet more dour
totally lost to virtue
the one way to pull through
is being mangy and sour.

Over the abandoned emptiness
the mallow is in bloom.
If living's bound for doom
dying brings forgiveness.

III

I know that in the pokey
a man's life passes by
I see pink seagulls fly
over the high belfry.

To reascend the bitter
incline of the cesspool
where he downed a gruel
of fish and muddy water.

Jumping over the wide
dungheap of necessity
they go effortlessly
toward the green tide
and shout out their mockery
of those people who're always
crushed inside their maze

of fear and misery.
If we could just shake loose
(not only in the grave)
from all the guilt, the slavery
wrapped tighter than a noose.
Over the steep cloud band
space reaches to infinity.
O prison in your debris,
first there is the wasteland

Carta laniena

No brolo per mē fiolo
fondo de la realtà
‘ntra gialli de vaiolo
muri, for de cità –
i bandoni col. stema
cranio de bove a gesso,
segno fato patema
a mentovà l’istesso.
Oemme in mezo ai schiopi
de la carburazió
dietro le fole dei piopi
scarince (pel stradó
frate in cime. a le bande
d’immacolati comi
drento a ‘n fortore grande,
de piscio a lumi albomi).
Passagio de stretoia
pel marchio e per la pesa
de soto ‘na tetoia
da carena in discesa,
e tuto in compimento
usuale de strage
El sangue sul cemento,
fume suspeso in brage.

II

In mezo campo arato
el nudo matatoio
(come p'un desolato
mare punta de scòio)
da glossa de lunario
arvisto ricorente
in bordo a calendario
ciama de le turmente.
A l'ora de lo sbando
per fiato ocasionale
d'indove come e quando,
el vitelo virtuale.
Pei lòghi de suplizio
da le boteghe care
andati (e in beneficio
le poghe robe spare)
abrevi streti in ghiomo
de storia e alegoria
– omo inbrancato, omo
piombato in ferovia
fino a piazzale breve
eterno (stazió finte
i merci su la neve
spariti sbufi e spinte).

Glossa de lunario: allude alle fasi della luna simbolizzata sul calendario; ciama: tatuaggio, incisione; abrevi: ebrei; ghiomo: gomito.

III

Tuta t'ha traversata
stanote, via de morte,
vita, la bandonata
de vechio ombra de sorte
con el glu glu de gola
da verso de picioni
– aborti de parola
'ntra sordi comicioni,
e l'aria trasmeteva

lumi come cerase
a la sua angoscia abrevia
'nt'un trasmestà de case
(forme. de l'esistenza
comune, dolce modo,
sgramate a la violenza
come intonaco a chiodo).
La primordiale tara
del vive: sorti al niente,
pesci per la bogara
sul fil de la corente,
omini soto al giallo
astro de l'agonia
spinti da dietro al vallo
dei persi – in atonia.

Bogara: rete da pesca tesa alla foce dei fiumi; giallo/astro de l'agonia: allusione alla stella di Davide cucita sui panni degli ebrei.

(da Carta Ianiena, 1982)

Abattoir

I

No garden for me son, low
underside of reality
amid the smallpox-yellow
walls outside the city
emblazoned metal frames
plaster-chiseled ox skull
when mentioning the same
a sign to make you mournful.
O.M. mid the barrage
of the motors' refrain
behind the yellow leafage
of poplars (in the wide lane
bushes atop the trench
of horns gleaming white
amid the foul stench
of piss in dawn-bright light).
For branding and for weighing

a very narrow arcade
undemeath the roofing
like a keel on a downgrade
And all for the enactment
of the usual massacre.
Blood over the pavement,
smoke hanging over ember.

II

The naked abattoir
in a plowed field seems to be
the top of a sandbar
in a desolate sea
like an almanac's reminder
you can see running downwards
on the edge of a calendar,
etching of blizzards.
At the time of the row
through an occasional
breath, when where and how
the calf becomes virtual.
Taken from the shops they loved
to the place of their agony
(the little stuff they had
given away to charity)
Jews squeezed in a skein
of history and allegory
– man in a pack, man fallen
onto a railroad lorry
as far as the short depot,
eternal (fake stations,
the freight trains on the snow
huffing and pushing gone.

III

Tonight, desolate,
road of death and life,
the shadow of the old man's fate

sliced through you like a knife
with the throaty glu glu of birds,
like pigeons' noises
– aborted words
among deaf comices,
and the air would relinquish
cherry-like glimmerings
to his Jewish anguish
mid a bustle of buildings
(forms of common existence,
sweet ways,
scarred by violence
like plaster by nails).
Life's primordial defect:
coming out to nix
fish caught in the net
on the edge of the flux,
men underneath the yellow
star of agony
pushed from behind the furrow
of the lost – in atony.

*

Compatta, senza falle,
gioia de quel Natale
(su la campagna el scialle
d'un silenzio inusuale):
la gran chioma canuta
de Ida, la romanza
che ogni volta fa muta
la famiglia, fragranza
de più linde, cucine,
ferri culor cerasa
de le stufe, vetrine
lustre in tuta la casa,
e l'ndugio dei fioli,
rossi, al gelo, sudati,

prima de pranzo, voli
de passeri assiepati
presso le porte a vetri
dopo tiri de fionda.
I arbori spoi, non tetri,
dove el vallato affonda.
C'era la polveriera
de fianco a la collina
(imaginai la nera
forza de la rovina
o sui tetti incolori,
in cima a la sorpresa
dei botti, i grandi fiori
de la polvere acesa).
Ma prima, el sito vile:
latrati morituri
d'un presago canile
dietro a sportelli impuri.
Come una cateratta
su un arioso orizzonte
stava la mura sfatta
del forte, dopo el ponte
sul fosso de le ortighe.
Poi la porta sovrana
s'opri 'ntra insegna antighe:
la cità litorana.

(da El SOL, 1995)

*

Compact, without a hole,
joy of that Christmas once
(over the fields the shawl
of unusual silence):
Ida's head great and hoary
the family as always
listening to the story,
speechless, the bouquets

from the clean kitchen,
the cherry-hued iron
tongs of the stoves, the glisten
of windows at every turn,
and the children that dally
in the cold, sweating, red,
before dinner, the sally
of sparrows outspread
next to the glass doors
after the slingshot rips.
The bare trees' contours,
not grim, where the valley dips.
A powder-magazine
on the side of the hillock
(in my mind's eyes I had seen
the black power of havoc
or on the drab rooftops loom
on the surprise of the loud
explosions, the great bloom
of the burning gunpowder).
But first, the ghastly grounds:
morituri that bay
in a foreboding pound
behind an impure gateway.
Like a waterfall
over an airy ridge
stood the crumbling wall
of the fort, after the bridge
on the nettles' trenchline.
Then the sovereign door
opened twixt ancient signs:
the city on the shore.

LEONARDO MANCINO

After writing several books of poetry in Italian, in 1989 Leonardo Mancino published a collection of poems in the osimano dialect, *La casa la madre il colle e l'orto*, that already in the title shows the relationship between the mother/land (the old house of his childhood and youth) and the mother/tongue, the beloved idiom that – as he himself states in the Note/confession permits “the descent to the places where the twofold ‘mother’ exists; the one of the flesh, of the tone, of the gestures, of the blood, and the one of the earth, the *màtria*, the source of tension.”

I chose three poems to illustrate this type of evocation, filtered so that dialect does not become “the rust on the ancient gates of the small brick churches scattered through the countryside..” They attest to an alternative to the better-known poetry in Italian: “lasciando il tempo che...,” “I tocchi dell’acqua cattiva” and “Vedi la casa.”

Criticism

Preface by G. Bàrberi Squarotti to *Alle radici dei gesti ed altre cose*, Manduria: Lacaita, 1971;

C.A. Augeri, in *Oltre Eboli: la poesia*, II, Manduria: Lacaita, 1979;

Preface by R. Roversi and A. Zanzotto to *Il sangue di Herbert*, Manduria: Lacaita, 1979;

A. Martellini, *La poesia delle Marche*, Forlì: Quinta Generazione, 1981;

G. Manacorda, in *Letteratura italiana d’oggi (1965-1985)*, Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1987;

G. Spagnoletti, in *Letteratura italiana del Novecento*, Rome: Newton Compton, 1994.

Lasciando il tempo che ..

Lassa che la luce se ‘zzitti ‘ntell’incontro
cull’ombra
lassa che ‘ntel silenzio se sfaldi sta calura
sa la morte che la accompagna e ‘ntel giardi,
lassa, che l’erba secca. e gialla se ‘cciacchi
su la terra arsa
e lassa da venì l’ore de i ricordi che te strugge.
Tomà a casa nun sarà possibile più
e mai se potria ricumenzà: le cose sparse adè
le poi trovà pe ‘ll’altre case, è diventate d’altri,
pure i ricordi (e me va bè) troeranne altre case,
altre mà
e luoghi sconosciuti.
La strada de volè tutto ‘l bono
d’esse
nun porta da nisciuna parte.

Lascia che la luce si azzitti nell’incontro / con l’ombra, / lascia che nel silenzio si sfaldi questa calura, / con la morte che l’accompagna e nel giardino, / lascia che l’erba secca e gialla si acciacchi / sulla terra arsa / e lascia che vengano le ore dei ricordi che (ti) struggono. // Tomare a casa non sarà più possibile / e mai si potrebbe ricominciare: adesso le cose sparse / le puoi trovare per le altre case, sono diventate d’altri, / e pure i ricordi (ma a me va bene) troveranno altre case, / altre mani / e luoghi sconosciuti. / La strada di volere tutto il buono d’essere/vivere non porta da nessuna parte.

Let Time...

Let the light hush in its encounter
with shadows,
let this heat crumble in the silence
with death that attends it and in the garden,
let the dry yellow grass be crushed
on the burnt earth

and let the hours come of the memories that eat at you.
Going back home will no longer be possible
and you could never begin again. Now scattered things
can be found in other houses, belonging to others,
even memories (but it's all right with me) will find other houses,
other hands
and unknown places.
The road of wanting all that's good
in life
leads no place.

I tocchi dell'acqua cattiva

Sonaene i tocchi de l'acqua cattiva
'l cielo s'era coperto
d'un manto nero
l'aria de i morti
'ttanajaa
tutt'un senso
de velenosa carezza
no specchio grigio-vipera,
e terribile dolore
tutt'un gorgo
'l canto de la fine.

Sonavano i rintocchi (a martello per annunciare un temporale) dell'acqua cattiva / il cielo s'era coperto / di un mantello nero / e l'ara dei morti / attanagliava. // Tutto un senso / di velenosa carezza, / uno specchio color grigio vipera / e dolore terribile. // Tutto un gorgo / il canto della fine.

The Tolls of the Bad Rain

The tolls of the bad rain were ringing,
the sky was cloaked
with a black mantle
the air of the dead
held you tight in its grip
all a sense
of poisonous caresses
a viper-gray mirror
and terrible pain
all a whirlpool
the song of the end.

Vedi la casa

Vedi la casa
che se nasconne
dietro i bracci de j alberi
a la campagna
te accorgi che stai partenno
'n'altra volta
e ch'ei promeso de nun fallo più;
st'inverno 'l vento
mulinerà de faccia a le porte;
camina su i muri. 'l tradimento
cume l'anima d'un gecko,
da la loggia su le scale
pare de vede
na figura che se scosta
e pò se 'ppanna
se ce fai caso bè
somija cume a na madre
uguale all'altre,
a tutte,
che specchia spianno la sorte
'nte la faccia stessa sua;
senti un lamento d'un cà
vecchio che more.

Vedi la casa / nascondersi / dietro le braccia degli alberi / alla campagna. // Ti accorgi che stai partendo / ancora una volta // e che avevi promesso / di non farlo più. // Quest'inverno il vento / mulinerà a fronte del le porte. // Cammina sui muri il tradimento / come l'anima di un gecko. // Dal ballatoio sulle scale / sembra di vedere // una figura che s'allontana / e poi sfuma // se ci fai caso attentamente / somiglia alla sagoma di una madre, // eguale alle altre, / a tutte, // che di riflesso spia il destino / nella sua stessa immagine; // senti un lamento di un cane / vecchio che muore

See the House

See the house
hiding behind
the arms of the trees
in the countryside
you realize that you are leaving
again
and that you promised
you wouldn't;

this winter the wind
will whirl outside the doors;
betrayal walks on the walls
like the soul of a gecko,
from the landing on the stairs
you seem to be seeing
a figure that draws away
and then fades
if you look carefully
it looks like any
other mother,
every mother,
who glimpses at destiny
in her reflected image;
you hear the wail of an old
dog dying.

GABRIELE GHIANDONI

Gi a tors (1994), Ghiandoni's first book of poems in the dialect of Fano, places this dialect, after *Brod e àcin* by Giulio Grimaldi (1905), among the languages of poetry. The use (and re-use) of the Fano dialect is no longer a pre-text, as in the fake small dictionary at the beginning (*In cima la mare*, 1986), but fully text, in a climate of loss and self-annihilation. This is, in fact, what *Gi a tors* points to: going for a stroll, walking around aimlessly, not only among memories and gaps (of things and meaning), but among words as well.

Ghiandoni reduces dialect to his own natural voice. "Dialect chose for him – wrote Eugenio de Signoribus – because sometimes it happens that way; going in and out of a language entails accepting what it is actually capable of saying, what it was when first heard in the community... In Ghiandoni, it becomes the language of the family and therefore of a memory which is predominantly an image of that emotional realm." Achille Serrao describes his verses as broken, with a strong and well-defined concision. "A Marina" and "El ghiac" are exemplary poems in this sense, so devoid of adjectives and embellishments, starkly descriptive, where the sounds are already images.

Da per lu sol (1996) displays a sudden bitterness for the passing of time, which the dialect can render with greater physicality. "La copia" and "El Campsan" were chosen because they are emblematic of this existential journey, for which Fano's dialect, made austere by the lexical choices, seems particularly well-suited. In any case, getting closer to the spoken word is never purely a question of representation in Ghiandoni, but it almost seems a sort of dramatic and questioning recognition. The chapbook *El cimiter tla campagna* (1997), brief as it is, constitutes an accentuation of the theme but with more complex results, due to the interplay of elegy and irrevocability.

From the work in progress I have chosen the poem "Giù 'l fium," a sample of the third collection *La festa*, yet unpublished. Still paramount is the interplay between past and present, a long indirect dialogue, consisting almost entirely of the naked beauty of the descriptions.

Criticism

F. Piga, *Le parole del dialetto e le voci della natura*, in "Hortus", n. 11, 1992,

F. Loi, *Gi a tors*, "Il Sole-24 Ore", 16.4.1995;

P. Civitareale, *La "scrittura leggera" di Gabriele Ghiandoni*, in "Istmi", n. 1, dic. 1996;

D. Maffia, in *La barriera semantica*, Roma: Edizioni Scettro del Re, 1996;

M. Ferri, *La solitudine e il doppio*, in "Tratti", n. 44, primavera 1997.

A marina

Ogni giorn giva a marina

fin'a la mort:

en c'era gnent.

II

Sal ris sardònich

rosc cum el sol:

d'autun la bora di mort

j urlava tl'urechi.

Andava la mare tutti i giorni dell'anno; sino ad accorgersi che laggiù non esisteva niente.

Col riso sardonico rosso come il sole: in autunno la bora dei morti gli urlava nelle orecchie.

To the shore

I

He went to the shore everyday

until his death:

there was nothing there.

II

His mocking laughter

as red as the sun:

in Autumn the bora of the dead

screamed in his ears.

El ghiac

Ha fat el giac

el giorn dla galaverna

sopra le pos d lastra

spacat

da la punta de sola

sal vent a spas

tra le grond e la rugin.

In inverno, con la galaverna/pioggia mista a neve, si sono formate le lastre di ghiaccio, spaccate dalla punta delle suole e delle scarpe pesanti; e il vento a passeggio tra le grondaie arrugginite.

Ice

On the day of the hoarfrost

ice formed

on the sheets cracked

by pointed shoes

and the wind sauntered

amid rain-pipes and rust.

La casa tl'àngul

Apra na capana

dietra l'àngul

arpiatata tra le frat

l'àngul tond

e le sedi tutt'intom.

L'usteria dla Cafona

in fond al cors

pareva n'arcolta de gat mort.

Tra i roghi

na vechia

urlava ma i picion

sopra la testa seca.

La casa d'angolo – Appena una capanna / nascosta tra i cespugli, / l'angolo tondo / e le sedie tutt'intorno. // In fondo al corso / l'osteria della “Cafona” / assomigliava a una raccolta di gatti morti. //Tra i rovi una vecchia urlava ai piccioni che gli volavano sulla testa secca.

da Gi a tors, 1994

The House on the Corner

Just a hut

around the corner

crouching amid the bushes

the round corner

and the chairs surrounding it.

Cafona's tavern

at the end of the main street

seemed a gathering of dead cats.

Amid the brambles

an old woman

cried out to the pigeons

above her bony head

La copia

I vegh ogni sera giù su e giù per el cors

la man in tla man.

En pàren, guàrden

le vetrin pin de luc.

Se fèrmen al bar del Borgh

a pià un café;

e aspèten.

La coppia – Li vedo ogni sera andare su e giù per il Corso / la mano nella mano. // Non parlano, guardano / le vetrine piene di luce. / Si fermano al bar del Borgo / a prendere un caffè: / e aspettano.

The Couple

I see them every night going up and down the main street

holding hands.

They don't speak, they look at

the lighted shop-windows.

They stop at Bar del Borgo

for coffee.

And wait.

El campsant

a J. Paulhan, al suo giardino di Tarbes

A l'ingres del campsant làscen i fior

ch'han purtat sa lora

(na rosa roscia, un papàver un mas de papàver).

I han lasciati d'un àngul, vicin al cancel

che fa rida da quant è puret;

per entrà svòidi, tun ste post pin de mort

e de silensi.

Il camposanto – All'ingresso del camposanto lasciano i fiori / che hanno portato con loro / (una rosa rossa, un papavero un mazzo di papaveri). / Li hanno lasciati in un angolo, a fianco del cancello / che ridere da quanto è povero; / per entrare vuoti, in questo luogo pieno di morte e di silenzio.

(da Da per lu sol, 1996)

The Cemetery

to J. Paulhan, to his garden in Tarbes

At the cemetery's entrance they leave the flowers

they brought with them

(a red rose, a poppy a bunch of poppies).

They left them in a corner, next to the gate

so ridiculously bare;

in order to enter empty, into this place of death

and silence.

*

El mar distant

nas cost tel culor viola

riflet le nùvul scur

vist tra mez i véter:

è la mort impruvisa.

Malagiù, i fior

dla tera ferma

cuperta de griland

de nùvul scur e bianch.

L'auqa se slonga tel desert di fior sech:

le figur càden culpit al tir-a-segn; ji scriv

al margin del liber

(le pàgin s'acùmulen cum i madon sopra i pensier nòster).

Il mare appare lontano / calmo nel viola nascosto / a riflettere fosche nubi / attraversate dalla lente / dell'improvvisa morte. / Lontano sono i fiori / della terra immobile / avvolta / tra nuvole di avorio scuro.// L'acqua s'allunga nel deserto dei fiori secchi/ le figure cadono al tiro a segno ribaltato mentre scrivo / ai margini del libro / (le pagine accumulate sono sassi depositati sopra i nostri pensieri).

(da El cimiter tla campagna, 1997)

*

The distant sea

hiding in the violet hue

reflects the dark clouds

seen through the glass:

it's sudden death.

Down there, the flowers

of the still earth

wrapped in garlands

of dark and white clouds.

The water extends into the desert of dead flowers:

figures fall in the shooting range. I write

on the edge of the book

(the pages pile up like stones over our thoughts)

Giù 'l fium

So' stat un giom

giù 'l fium, sa la fangona;

pareva ier l'àlter:

el chiurlui sgagiava

drenta i gorgh; no do

stami arpiatati

tl'erba alta,
a veda, a en esa visti.
Girava sopra el stagn
na sgarseta bianca
a ghirigol;
pareva che se vleva fermà; invec
sa na scudata lenta
è arbrilata pr'aria.
(Più distant, la Chiusa,
sa i calanch vers el mont,
le can piegàt, na dona in tl'ombra
muta, in silensi).

Ciù al fiume. – Sono andato un giorno / al fiume, pieno di fango; / sembrava ieri l'altro / quando abbiamo sentito il chiurlui cantare / dentro le gorghe del fiume; noi due / stavamo nascosti / nell'erba alta / per guardare e non essere visti. // Girava sopra lo stagno / una sgarzetta bianca / a ghirigoro; / sembrava volersi fermare: invece / con una scodata lenta / è volata di nuovo i aria. // (Più lontano è la Chiusa / con i calanchi verso l'interno, / le canne piegate, una donna in ombra / chiusa nello scrigno del silenzio).

da La festa, unpublished

Down by the River

One day I went
down by the river, full of mud.
It seemed the day before yesterday,
when we heard the curlew singing
in the eddies. The two of us
were crouching
in the tall grass,
so we could see without being seen.
A small white heron
circled in loops
over the pond.
It seemed to want to stop,
instead it flew up again
with a slow flick of the tail.
(Further off, the Dam,
with the gullies toward the mountain,
the bent reeds, a woman in the shade,
still, in silence.)

Achille Serrao and Francesco Piga

Only recently has dialect poetry in Umbria shown clear signs of deprovincialization, of emancipation from regional localism, proving that it wants to free itself from the fetters of a popular, impressionistic, folkloric tradition and turn to "cultural" modes which are predominantly expressionistic, in order to represent itself as no less refined than poetry in Italian.

This new direction, moreover, has generated notable interest among critics such of Antonio Carlo Ponti, Renzo Zuccherini and Cesare Vivaldi (see bibliography). We will constantly refer to their writings in an attempt to draw an outline of twentieth-century dialect poetry in the region.

At the moment, then, the desolate picture drawn by Pier Paolo Pasolini in the introduction to the anthology *Poesia dialettale del Novecento*¹ seems outdated. In it one reads; "In Umbria there are almost no names, after the autochthonous notaries of the Perugia Academy of the XIV century and after two or three during the Risorgimento." A somewhat hasty conclusion, if truth be told, as was the case with other regions that the critic had not sufficiently researched.

An adequate scrutiny of the available documents might have allowed Pasolini to "re-evaluate, within limits, a couple of fairly good poets from the early part of this century"² in addition to the 'two or three from the Risorgimento,' But, if it cannot apply to the early twentieth century and up to the second world war, there is no doubt that Pasolini's categorical and apodictic pronouncement does have bearing on the period between the two wars and the one that spans from the end of the second world war to the sixties, in which it is really difficult to identify true poets. This is acknowledged by the critic and poet from Perugia Renzo Zuccherini, who is also the author of a valuable anthology³ in which he maintains "the total disappearance of our dialect poetry during decades fundamental to Italian dialect poetry."

In the preface to his anthology, Zuccherini also makes another observation of no small consequence, where he underlines the fact that Umbria has never offered a unitary linguistic image. The region, in other words, has always appeared as a mosaic of small subregional entities centered around several centers of economic and cultural importance. This explains why there is "not one dialect poetry in Umbria, but there are as many traditions of poetry as there are cities and towns in the region."

As a consequence, it has always been difficult to find unitary lines of this literary production because only in the last decade the various historical, cultural and linguistic realities of the region have sought a center with common characteristics.

Due to its geographical position, Umbria is subject to the influence both of the central-southern vernaculars and the northern ones, so that it is possible to identify some linguistic areas to which as many literary traditions correspond: 1. the central-southern area, which is characterized mainly by the influence of romanesco and by the predominance of the "realistic" sonnet and the didactic long poem, the moral fable and the lyric of emotions; 2. the northern area, where the influence of romanesco is balanced by echoes from Romagna and the Po Valley; 3. a middle strip of minor centers, which crosses Umbria, where personal and collective memory are expressed in a particular form of "lyric narrative."

Umbrian dialect poetry, which developed in the early twentieth century, is rooted in the baroque, in the Bartocciate by Francesco Stangolini and the Testamento by Orazio Tramontani, which in the eighteenth century led to the grotesque octaves of the Battaglia del Pian Perduto, by an anonymous popular narrator, and to the Perfettissimo Dittionario, an erudite work by Paolo Campelli (Spoleto), and in the nineteenth century to occasional verse, mostly satirical, and to sonnets mainly imitative of the romanesco, after the example of Ruggero Torelli and Giuseppe Dell'Uomo, both from Perugia.

Among those who at the start of the twentieth century wrote poetry in dialect, besides Furio Miselli and Ferruccio Coen from Ternoli with some playful and nostalgic verses, stands out Luigi Monti (Perugia) who, as Cesare Vivaldi writes,⁴ "is the only interesting one, perhaps the best dialect poet in Umbria, an artist deeply involved in the Italian culture of his time." We should also mention Fernando Leonardi (Spoleto) who, besides a grotesque style attained through "a harsh verbal aggressiveness" and effects of wild expressionism, "transcends the local realism of his early work in favor of a broad and emotive meditation, expressed in poems of eleven and seven syllables lines variously rhymed,"⁵ a modern meditation where the problems are no longer local but cosmic.

After the crusade of the fascist period against dialects, the recovery was slow and at any rate it remained tied to nineteenth-century canons, not only when poets looked back at themes previously developed (this is the case of Tullio Maggolini and Giovanni Polanga, both from Foligno, who followed the example of Giulio Giuliani with their depiction of town life), but also when they had other aspirations, as did Federico Berardi (Perugia), who wrote of the ancient traditions and events of his city, or Umberto Calzoni, also from Perugia, who expressed patriotic feelings, nostalgia, and lost loves.

A few local anthologies were published in the second half of the fifties and the dialect poetry that had appeared in newspapers and journals at the beginning of the century was collected and reprinted.

Even the polemic verve against social injustices, which had been a recurrent theme of the poets of the past, became a broader meditation on the adversities of destiny common to all men and things, as in the poetry of Mario Tosti (Umbertide). The more mature commitment of these years, coupled with a careful linguistic and metrical study, was also displayed by Ivano Marinucci (Spoleto) and Alighiero Maurizio (Terni).

Memory, which had been the object of so much poetry, continued to prevail even in the seventies, with new modes of expression and composition. Memories became more vivid within the medieval walls of the Umbrian towns, where time seems to have come to a standstill in order to allow events, places and characters to be recaptured. This looking back is not merely nostalgia, but a reading of one's own inner history, often juxtaposed with common history. The most representative poets of this trend are Luigi Catanelli (Perugia), Piero Radicchi (Gubbio), Aroldo Aleandri (Sigillo), Annarita Benedetti (Valnerina), and, from the Terni area, Luigi Santocchi, Marcello Ghione and Rolando Teofoli.

The polemic vein, one of the characterizing traits of Umbrian poetry in dialect, reappeared in the verses of Antonio Minciotti, priest and theologian, a philosophy teacher at the high school of Città di Castello, who harshly criticized the presumptuousness of poets engaged in politics in order to obtain benefits, ready to bow before earthly powers, to applaud the historic compromise between Christian Democrats and Communists. During these years, bad government and compromises were also the target of the satirical sonnets of Antonio Pecorelli, who had begun to write in the dialect of the Terni area in the sixties.

In the eighties and nineties Umbrian dialect poetry, more in step with national poetry, experimented with new expressive techniques but still on the themes typical of the region, as in the poems of Claudio Spinelli (Perugia), imbued with bitterness and irony, reminiscent of Trilussa. At any rate, it was the new taste for irony which undermined and belied the idyllic image. This is the meaning of Ludovico Scaramucci's self-ironic poetry, tinged with sadness and with references to the Latin world, written in the dialect of the Perugia area.

There is a sense of novelty, instead, in the verses of Gaio Fratini, Renzo Zuccherini, Antonio Carlo Ponti, and the very young Alessandro Prugnola and Ferruccio Ramadori, included in the anthology.

First of all, we should point out that the work of the latter poets corresponds to the demand for a new poetic style that historians and scholars place under the denomination of neodialectality – following Pasolini's theoretical propositions –, beginning with the cultured use that these poets make of the linguistic medium. That is, dialect is no longer employed, as in the past, as a mirror of popular speech, with a philological adherence to a given model, recognized by the single communities of speakers, but is rather interiorized and almost "reinvented" by the poet, to the extent of creating a bona fide "idiolect."

Another characterizing element of the Umbrian authors in the anthology is represented by the lyric centrality of the self, a self that stands in the page as the attractive pole of pains, losses and vital expectations, as attested by the poems in the anthology, albeit quite different in style and poetics.

NOTES

1 The anthology, edited with a modest contribution of Mario Dell'Arco, who contributed with the selection of a few texts, was published by Guanda in 1952. The work, edited by Giovanni Tesio, was reprinted by Einaudi in 1995.

2 Cesare Vivaldi, *L'Umbria*, in G. Spagnoletti-C. Vivaldi, *La poesia dialettale dal Rinascimento a oggi*, Milan: Guanda, 1991, p. 671.

3 Renzo Zuccherini, *La poesia dialettale in Umbria*, Perugia: Edizioni Thyrus, 1988.

4 Cesare Vivaldi, "Note sulla poesia umbra in dialetto," in *Diverse lingue*, n.2, October 1986.

5 Cesare Vivaldi, *ibidem*.

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The English translations for the Veneto section are by Justin Vitiello

GAIO FRATINI

He was born in Città del Pieve (Perugia) in 1921 and died in Rome in 1999.

A poet in Italian, known for his epigrammatic and satirical vein, he was also a man of theater and cinema, and above all a journalist. He also worked for Rai-Tv. He contributed to Scheiwiller's *Almanacco del Pesce d'oro* with Ennio Flaiano.

Fratini, decided to turn to his dialect no doubt as an experimental challenge. The poems included in this anthology are clear evidence of the attempt to transfer "in the harsh Perugia vernacular his modes in Italian, elegant and even too literary" (Cesare Vivaldi). In his dialect work Fratini displays a great capacity to revive the energy of fourteenth-century comic genres, with effects of violent expressionism obtained also through the use of irreverent, "salacious" lines, which are an intimate part of the popular tradition.

At times he makes a phonosymbolic use of language, with exquisitely ironic, satirical and even parodic effects.

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Gaio Fratini dialect work is yet to be published in a volume.

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Inno a Perugia

A Prugia i prugine son'òmene come se dée,
'l fiolo stracanato porteno i bebi a l'orca,
abirono 'ntorno a chèsa 'ncla scusa de 'ni a bée,
e 'ntra 'l bée e 'l magna' antla camicia 'na sorca.
Spiccacaldari, sàntoli, bugaloni, gillosi,
morzuti ananze tempo e pu' resuscitati,
barulèi a panzillodola, spimpèri, nocchiosi ...
"Me dole tanto 'n uffo! M'onno sdrenato i frati!"
"Che locca l'anda'- argi"; "Nun ce vo' gi' a Sigillo";
"I vaccio o tardo artomo"; "Viene tuquae, bregnona!
soffietto arzumminiassi de tu' bregni 'nto' lillo,
granni come de 'n bovo, scorteca de vaccina!"
"Co' quilla cicalina nun balle' che t'impaglia,
t'invischia ... ma che fè'? 'Ntla intosti tol dietro?
Anve' como fioretta, che godiolo de scaglia!"
arfa' lo scannaciccioli
chi smiccia

Fiammetta splucca' Pietro.

Inno a Perugia – A Perugina i perugini sono uomini come si deve, / i bambini stanchi li portano i padri sulle spalle, / girano intorno alla casa per poi finire a bere, / e tra il bere e il mangiare si sporcano la camicia. / Mozzorecchi, padrini, mangioni, golosi, / morti precocemente e poi resuscitati, / sciocchi con la pancia all'aria in ghingheri, permalosi... / “ Mi duole tanto un rene! M'hanno stuprato i frati!” / “Che noia andare e tornare”; “Non voglio andare a Sigillo”; “Io prima o tardi tomo”; “Viani un po' qui labbrona! / un giochetto sognassi fi labbra tue sul glande, / labbra grandi di bue, avanzo di vaccina!” / “Con quella sguardrina non ballarci che t'impaglia / t'invischia ... ma che fai? Te la prendi da dietro? / Accidenti come si muove, che godere di troia!” / ripete il tisciccio / che guarda / Fiammetta piluccare Pietro.

(traduzione dell'autore)

Hymn to Perugia

In Perugia, Perugians are real men,
fathers piggy-back their weary kids,
grunt around the house, take a snort,
guzzling and gorging, soil their shirts.
Hack-lawyers, godfathers, hogs and pigs,
premature corpses, resuscitated
as paunchy nitwits all primped and testy:
“Ouch! My kidneys! Those deadly boring monks!”
“What a bore, that trip to podunk Sigillo!”
“Don't know when I'll be back... Hey, Fat Lips,
come play a while on my dickhead,
ah!, those cow-lips-and licks!”
Don't dance with that tart, she'll pack you,
wrap you up...What's up with you?
Taking her from behind! Damn, how she
wiggles loving it like a seasoned whore!”
effuses the dwarf consumptive
as he watches
Fiammetta pick Pietro clean.

Lettera da Parrano

Ogge a Cantone giocano alle forme,
Filumena m'ha fatto 'na giavèmia,
sono golete alte le palomme,
tal forza l'ho porteto a fè' il mascalòbro.
Doppo mill'agne st'Umbria è sempre li stessa,
gne pare 'l vero de magnè' e dormi'
a barba de chi trebbia per guemalla:
co' 'sta Gionta sen beglie e cucinete!
Pe sparti' do' mancate de profacole

honno finito nto 'na ratatùia!
 "Balla de Greno"! "Balla d'Acetello!"
 Morzuta è a Prugia 'sta lengua satirica!
 Quanno arvo' su per le Scale Priore,
 Aldo, me prenne 'n'anchema chi nun
 me fa arfiatae ... L'hanno i bernogi arduette
 'n zacco d'ossa Amagina' e Arzumia'!
 Parrano (Parra-Parrae: upupa, schiochio)
 io l'hevo consagreta da tantà.
 La golpe c'ha ntol toppo la su' tana,
 quilla ciomia fioretta 'ntra gli spizzichi.
 L'ho lette, avó! Le tu' cartocciate,
 in lengua non volgare ma bigonza ...
 Curre a scola, 'nn 'l sente 'l campanone
 ch' 'l bebo d'Aldo da 'na vita sona?

Lettera da Parrano – Oggi a Cantone giocano a ruzzolone. / Filomena m'ha fatto proposte oscene, / sono volate alte le palombe, / ho portato mio figlio a fare l'antivaio. / Mille anni sono passati ma l'Umbria non cambia, / non le par vero di mangiare e dormire / in barba di chi tribola per governarla: / ci cucina la Giunta a fuoco lento! / Per pubblicare favole in dialetto / tutto è finito in rissa rusticana! // "Balla di grano!". "Balla d'Acetello!" / Morta è a Perugia la lingua satirica! / Quando torno a salire le scale dei Priori. / Aldo, un affanno mi prende che non / mi fa rifiatate... I cretini hanno ridotto / a un sacco d'ossa l'immaginario e il sogno! / Parrano (Parra-Parrae: upupa, o forse barbagianni) / io l'avevo descritta da molto tempo. / La volpe ha qui la sua tana / nel poggio, quella svnevole si dà a vista di gendarme. / Oh, se le ho lette le tue bartocciate, / in lingua non volgare ma soltanto insulsa ... / Corri a scuola, non senti il campanone / che il babbo d'Aldo da una vita suona?

(Traduzione dell'autore)

1. Balla d'Acetello: si allude a un "antipremio" fondato a perugia nel 1981 e morto dopo tre edizioni, "La balla dell'Anno".
2. Aldo: l'autore studiò privatamente da Aldo Capirini tra il 1938 e il 1940. Il padre del filosofo della non violenza era il campanaro del Palazzo dei Priori.

Letter from Parrano

Today in Cantone they play All-Fall-Down,
 Filomena's made lewd advances,
 the doves have absconded aloft,
 I've brought my son for his anti-smallpox.
 After a millennium Umbria's the same,
 always amazed to eat and sleep in
 spite of those who strain to govern her:
 Junta's cook us on a slow flame!
 Try and publish fables in dialect -
 it's all ended in rustic riots!
 "Balls of Wheat!" "Balls of Rotgut!"(1)
 In Perugia the satiric tongue has been yanked.
 Aldo (2), when I reascend the Priors' Stairs,

I get so winded I could have an attack...

The cretins have reduced to a sack of bones

all that we imagined and dreamed!

Parrano? Roots in Parra/Parrae?

Or in the hoopoe and barnowl?

I described it so long ago! Helas!

Here the fox has its den

on the hillock, that mawkish clown

puts on gendarme airs...

Oh, yes, I've read them,

those down-home masques in

a tongue not vernacular, just banal...

Boys, rush back to school!

Don't you hear that big bell that

Aldo's dad's been ringing

all his life?(3)

Notes: (1) the reference is to a counter-cultural poetry prize set up in 1981 to protest the awards made to poetasters; (2) the great Perugian, Aldo Capitini (1899-1968), was one of the founders of the democratic, anti-Fascist Party of Action and the founder of Italy's Nonviolent Movement; (3) Capitini's father was the bellringer of Prior Palace for decades.

Letterina a un glottologo di spello

Il beglio de sta' scarpa è lo spunterbo

Pressamporco il comune sta distante

Quanto noi dalla chiesa. L'orizzonte

s'è scalampato e stai dicendo che

la fine del carduccio è dentro l'oglio.

Le palomme s'aghiandano a Torsciano,

e a Passignano fa la lucarella

all'uscio della vedova il pievano.

Pietro Vannucci è un magnalascio impavido,

il Pintoricchio sale sul bricòcolo.

Benedetto Bonfigli non ha un lillero,

squàcquara il Caporali e la sua scaglia

cerca di sera tra la farzumaglia.

Vole arzumia Fiorenzo di Lorenzo

la spèrpera che fa le capucèrtole.

Scuote il Doni il suo beglio capigiottolo.

Uno spaccasolfino è Ludovico

D'Angelo. Giotto affronta galaveme

e nella lozza affonda le carògnole.

Fatiga, boia mio, che sei pagheto:

semina cintaròli nel canneto!

Letterina a un glottologo di Spello – Il bello di questa scarpa è la falce / pressappoco il comune è distante / quanto noi dalla chiesa. L'orizzonte / si è dissolto e stai dicendo che / la fine del piccolo cardo è nell'olio. / Le colombe si fondano sulle ghiande a Forgiano, / e a Passignano fa il corteggiamento / sull'uscio della vedova il pievano. / Pietro Vannucchi è un mangialasche impavido, / il Pinturicchio sale sull'albicocco, / Benedetto Bonfigli non ha un soldo, / straparla il Caporali e la sua ganza / cerca di sera in mezzo al pacciamè. / Fiorenzo di Lorenzo vuole rassomigliare / alla bisbetica che fa le capriole. / Il Doni scuote la sua testa allegra. / Ludovico D'Angelo è un pedante. / Giotto affronta gelate / e fionda nella fanghiglia piccole carogne. / Fatica, figlio mio, che sei pagato: / semina carciofi nel canneto!

(traduzione di Achille Serrao)

I testi sono tratti da Serate di poesia a Perugia

Note to a Glottologist from Spello

The beauty of this shoe is the sickle

more or less like the town hall is as far

as we are from the church. The horizon

has vanished and you are saying that

the end of the tiny thistle is in the oil.

Doves catapult down on Torgiano's acorns,

and in Passignano the parish priest

comes to court at the widow's threshold.

Pietro Vannucci is a fearless roach-eater.

Pinturicchio climbs the apricot tree.

Benedetto Bonfigli doesn't have a lira.

Caporali rants and raves and his paramour

reconnoiters all night in the compost heap.

Fiorenzo di Lorenzo wants to emulate

the shrew who does somersaults.

Doni shakes his merry head.

Ludovico D'Angelo is a pedant.

Giotto confronts frosts and, in slush,

sinks miniscule carrions.

Toil, my boy, they pay you:

sow artichokes in the canebrake!

FRANCA RONCHI FRANCARDI

Born in Gubbio in 1923, she has published a few volumes of poetry in her native dialect, the most significant being *Lutta de foco*, 1957.

Francardi experiments with the archaic, rustic dialect of her native city and this aspect already underscores her ambition to use a linguistic medium far removed from the puristic abuse of dialect of the early twentieth century.

The setting of her poetry remains nevertheless her town and the surrounding countryside, but with “dark shadows,” at times with disturbing presences (absent in the poetry of her contemporaries) and signs that remind us of the brevity of life and make us reflect on the values of existence.

The wind, always present in Francardi’s poems, is the voice of sorrow and disquiet, echo of dark natural omens, but also a breath of melancholy for a distant past no longer reachable.

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Nostalgia

Quanno che se fa scuro
‘ni cosa ‘ntorno, ‘ntorno par vestita
de nero e d’ombra fitta.
I lumi de sta strède
s’aguardano de logne
e, ntra du’ lumi, passan l’ombre scure;
ma ‘l còre mio nco’
ce passa e ce s’aferma
quanno che tal paese mio arpenso,
si ‘l chèsò me f’argi lontan da lue.

Nostalgia – Quando si fa scuro / ogni cosa intorno sembra vestita / di nero e di ombra fitta. / I lumi di questa strada / si guardano di lontano / e fra due lumi passano le ombre scure; / ma anche il mio cuore / ci passa e si ferma / quando penso al mio paese, / se la sorte mi fa partire da lui.

(Traduzione di Achille Serrao)

Nostalgia

When it grows dark
all around looks decked
in black, thick shadow.
The lights of this street
are glimpsed from afar
and mid two lights dark shadows pass;
but my heart passes
and stops as well
when I think of my town -
does fate drive me thence?

La lotta de fòco

Brieve ha la vita

la lotta che dal ciocco te se stacca:

arluce comme 'n sole,

t'abrucia comme 'n foco.

Dal ceppo du che nasce

fugge lontano, fugge 'nfim che mòre

leggiere e zitta, zitta.

La lingua di fuoco – Ha vita breve / la lingua che si stacca dal ciocco: / riluce come un sole, / brucia come un fuoco. / Dal ceppo da cui nasce / fugge lontano fino a morire / leggera e in silenzio, in silenzio.

(Traduzione di Achille Serrao)

Tongue of Fire

The tongue breaking from the log

has a short life:

it glimmers like a sun,

burns like a fire.

From the log of its birth

it flees, strays

till it dies lightly

in silence, silence.

'Na stilla d'acqua

Nte 'na stilla d'acqua c'è tutto 'l monno.

E' scura e chiara; 'l cèl ci arvedi e 'l sole;

te par che drento, li, ce stia 'nso qué

ch'è tutto e gnente nte 'n momento solo

seconda chi l'aguarda e dua e quanno.

Nte 'na stilla d'acqua è 'l piagne de Natura:

ta 'na lagrima d'òmo s'arsomija.

Una stilla d'acqua – In una stilla d'acqua c'è il mondo intero. / E' scura e chiara; ci si vede il cielo e il sole; / sembra che lì dentro ci sia un chi sa / che è tutto e niente in un momento / a seconda di chi la guarda e dove e quando. / In una stilla è il pianto di natura: / somiglia ad una lagrima d'uomo.

(Traduzione di Achille Serrao)

A Drop of Water

A drop of water is the World.

So dark and clear you see sky and sun

as if within there's a who-knows,

all or nothing in the instant

whoever looks where and when.

A drop is nature's plaint -

like a human tear.

Il vento

Va ... 'l vento sturza nco le fòie secche,

e sturza a rincorrelle e a gi d'an su:

se chiappano, se lassano e s'afermano.

L'arpiia, tutt'a'n botto, 'l vento a fugge:

se bira; pu' s'arbira, ecco ... s'artorna;

s'era scordéto de 'na foia secca

e fanno tutti ascième 'n mulinello.

Poi fugge su pe l'albero, nfr'i rami:

li sbatte, li strapazza e ntanto fistia:

se stronca 'n ramoscello ch'è più fino.

S'abassa 'l vento a terra, là nsul prèto,

n'aguarda manch'i petali d'i fiori,

ch'anchinan le corolle adobedienti

e ntanto 'l vento passa sempre mprescia;

cento e cento giochi t'aricomincia,

ma tutto lassa giù, ch'ha prescia 'l vento.

Il vento – Va ... il vento gioca con le foglie secche / e gioca a rincorrerle e a spingerle in alto: / si prendono, si lasciano e si fermano. // Le germisce, all'improvviso, il vento al volo: / vira: poi si rigira, ecco :: ritorna: / aveva dimenticato una foglia secca / e insieme fanno mulinello. // Poi fugge sull'albero, fra i rami: / li scuote, li svisisce e intanto fischia; / si spezza un ramoscello, il più esile. // S'abbassa il vento a terra, sul prato, / non guarda neanche i petali dei fiori / che piegano le corolle obbedienti / e intanto il vento passa sempre velocemente: / inizia cento e cento giochi, / ma lascia andare tutto, perché ha fretta il vento.

(Traduzione di Achille Serrao)

I testi sono tratti da La lotta de fòco.

The Wind

It goes, the wind plays with dry leaves,

plays pursuing and lofting them high.

They stick together, part, hesitate.

Suddenly the wind swoops down,

tacking, it swerves and drops again

(it had forgotten one dry leaf

but now, as one, they whirlwind).

Then it's in flight once more mid branches

that it shakes and humbles, whistling all the while.

The most slender branch snaps.

The wind sinks to earth, across the meadow,
never looking back at petals of the flowers
that, compliant, bow their corollas.
The wind, all this time, passes so quick,
launching hundreds and hundreds of games,
but lets all slide for it's in a rush.

ANTONIO CARLO PONTI

Ponti was born in 1936 in Rome, but his family came from Bevagna (Perugia). He is the author of excellent historical-linguistic essays that have contributed considerably to establish some order in the very fluid poetic material available in Umbria. He founded and for many years directed the daily *Il Corriere dell'Umbria* and Umbria Publishing's series *Poeti*. Also important is his work as an art critic and organizer of exhibits which "(like his work on poetry) have tended to build an Umbrian style."⁶

Today he is probably the greatest dialect poet of his region. He has published only one book, *Mevania Bevagna Beagne*, in his native vernacular, which complements, with its new and "startled" expressive potential, the numerous books of poetry in Italian written and published in about twenty-five years (from *Al punto zero*, 1972, to *I merli d'Albornoz*, 1995).

Ponti's dialect poetry, still unpublished in a volume, had already been studied by Cesare Vivaldi, the first to attest with authority the importance of his work: "Ponti [...] rediscovers dialect words in all their weight and physicalness, spelling them slowly, depositing them on the page one by one to savor all their ancient aroma."⁷ And Vivaldi himself, in the preface to *Mevania Bevagna Beagne*, confirms Ponti's attention to the linguistic medium, underlining "his long and difficult sounding of the semantic and sonorous material."⁸

The diction, then, is intense, but in relation to the "density" of the themes, all essentially tied to the painful existence in a world experienced as a traumatic emptiness of values and symbols, in their most immediate meaning, in the forms of life, in the elements of the landscape, in the deepest links with the past of a concrete historical community; nevertheless without a total and definitive involvement in the pain which the poet describes, at least in appearance.

Among the available tools, Ponti is very skilled in the use of irony which, by establishing a firm distance from the subject matter at hand, guarantees an effective defense from suffering.

Among the poets of the different Umbrian areas, he is one of the few who can ensure, with the music and the rare textual balance of his poetry, the possibility of a very considerable future development of his poetry, in complete keeping with the mandates of neodialectality.

6 R. Zuccherini, in *La poesia dialettale in Umbria*, cit., p. 184.

7 C. Vivaldi, in *La poesia dialettale dal Rinascimento ad oggi*, cit., p.675.

8 Ibidem.

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L'anni de la bruscia

che manco li somari ...
Bòne le mosciarelle
e li confittini co' l'aniso:
uno ne bastàa pe' la felicità.
Erano l'anni de la bruscia:
du' baca d'úa secca
a colazione,
'na bettella de cacio
a merennetta,
'na fiarata de frasche
pe' scallasse,
'n orillo de crescita
pe' cena.
Ar bujo, doppo zoffiato
su l'acetilena,
stà a penzà a tisto e a quillo,
a decco e a dello,
alla dimocrazia,
alla farge, ar martéll
e ar cortéll senza lama.
Esse semble 'n salliporo
senza sapello.

Gli anni della carestia – Buone le carrube / che nemmeno gli asini ...// Buone le castagne secche / e i confettini all'anice: / ne bastava uno per essere felici. // Erano gli anni della carestia: / due acini di uvetta / a colazione / una crosta di formaggio / a merenda, / una fiammata di rovi / per scaldarsi, / un orsetto di pane / per cena. // Al buio, spenta / l'acetilene, / stare a pensare a questo e a quello, / a qui e là, / alla democrazia, / alla falce, al martello, / e al coltello senza lama. // Ed essere sempre / una cavalletta / senza saperlo.

The Years of Famine

How good were the carob pods! -
not even donkeys'd eat them but...
Good the dried chestnuts
and the anise confetti:
one was enough to make you happy.
Those were the years of famine:
two raisins for
breakfast,
some cheese rind
for lunch,

a blaze of brambles
to warm you up,
a crust of bread
for supper.
In the dark,
the gas lamp spent,
there thinking about this and that,
here and there -
democracy?
the sickle? the hammer?
the knife without blade?
And always to be a
grasshopper
without knowing it.

Nengue da millant'ora

Nengue da millant'ora
e la cioëtta s'annisconne
co' l'ale sopra 'l core.
Nengue su l'ormo spojo
e su la cerqua tamanta,
nengue su 'l malanotto
che piagne, nengue su la lengua
de l'arbuccio, sopra
le pâpane mute,
nengue su la caponera
e su la recchia de 'l cane.
E io m'appalghjno
drento 'n aco de luna
che do' s'accosta tégne
come 'n abbise de sole.

Neveca da mille ore – Neveca da mille ore / e la civetta si nasconde / con le ali sul cuore. // Neveca sull'olmo spoglio / e sulla quercia maestosa / neveca sul barbagianni / che piange, neveca sulla cima / del pioppo, sopra / le papere mute, / neveca sulla capinera / e sull'orecchio del cane. // E io mi appisolo / dentro un ago di luna / che tinge tutto quel che tocca / come una matita di sole.

It's Been Snowing a Thousand Hours

It's been snowing a thousand hours
and the owl is hiding with

wings over its heart.
It snows on the bare elm
and the majestic oak,
it snows on the barn owl
that cries, it snows on the crown
of the poplar, upon
the mute ducklings, it
snows on the blackcap
and on the dog's ear.
And I doze off
in a needle point of moon
that tinges all it touches
like a crayon of the sun.

Quanno che arserena

Quanno che arserena
e 'l célo pare de bommace
e la lúcciora se fiara
su 'l pinzo de 'na ruga,
abbracciato a tté
me te birrió a jumelle,
amore
abbricòcolo
panicòcolo palomma
sperella pettoroscio.

Quando rischiera – Quando rischiera / e il cielo sembra di bambagia / e la lucciola si avventa / sulla schiena di un bruco, / abbracciato a te / a grandi sorsi ti berrei, / amore / albicocca / cialda colomba / solina pettiroso.

When it Clears up

When it clears up
and the sky looks like fluff
and the firefly hurtles onto
the caterpillar's carapace,
embracing you
in deep draughts I'd imbibe
you, my love,
apricot,
wafer, dove,

nook of sun, robin.

Còre dorge

Còre dorge

sotto la camicia,

li penziéri a bbàbbise,

‘na biciangora

de “grolipatrì”

e de “verennamerito”.

De pillere amare

‘na broscuja,

‘na stascione de cantafavole

co’ ‘na preta sopra.

E caloia de fantignole

e merolla sdirinate.

Somentà piòzzi

e arcoje pescòlle.

Non poté artirà le pòlise

pe’ tutta quanda la vita.

Cuore dolce – Cuore dolce / sotto la camicia, / i pensieri a casaccio, / un’altalena / di “gloria patri” / e di “Dio ve ne renda merito”. // Di pillole amare / una foresta, / una stagione di favole / con una pietra sopra. // E faville di convulsioni / e midolla stremate. // Seminare cavicchi / e raccogliere pozzanghere. // Sentirsi un cencio / tutta la vita.

Sweet Heart

Sweet heart

under the shirt,

random thoughts,

a seesaw of

“Gloria patri” and

“May God reward you”.

Of bitter pills,

a forest,

a season of fables

now shut with a stone slab.

And sparks of convulsions

and spent marrows.

To sow splinters

and reap puddles.

To feel like a rag
all your life.

Ma scí ma scí

Ma scí ma scí
che tt'amo
amore mia.
Assae tte vojo bbene
bè scí che
'ste pene mia
m'honno 'ncattijto
drento
che 'n m'arconosco
piune.
Ma scí còre mia,
le tribbolazzioni
te fónno 'ncanufí
e là le guance
ce stà quarghe fissurina
(e la còrba è la mia).
Ma sí semble bbella,
billissima.
Stémo 'nzieme,
ché tutto s'arcompone.
Solo co' la morte
uno 'n ce l'appone.

Ma sì ma sì – Ma sì ma sì / che ti amo / amore mio. // Assai ti voglio bene / benché / queste mie pene / m'abbiano reso cattivo / dentro / da non riconoscermi più. // Ma sì cuor mio / i triboli / ti incanutiscono / e sulle guance / s'affaccia qualche piegolina / (e la colpa è mia). // Ma sei sempre bella, / bellissima. // Stiamo insieme / ché tutto s'aggiusta. // Solo alla morte uno soccombe.

But Yes! Yes!

But yes! Yes,
I love you,
my love.
I love you so much
even though
these pains of mine
have made me deep down

so nasty that I
no longer know myself.
But, yes, my heart,
your torments
turn you gray
and on the cheeks
some wrinkles surface
(that's all my fault).
But you're still lovely,
oh so lovely...
We're together so
it'll all work out.
Only in death
does one succumb.

Morte pe'acqua

Pe' 'l troppo abbajà
li cani ciono la rincalatìa;
'n se sintìa andro romòre
che l'acqua jaccia de 'l Miànnoro
sotto a la luna che parìa d'argendo
fuso co' lo scuro de li ripali
e de l'ellera avvorda a li tronchi
de l'alberi tamanti.
Fu quilla la notte che Arcibiade
'l lupo mannaro morette
fogato jù la chiusa de l'Accorda.
Chi dicette disgrazzia.
Chi dicette succiddio.
Cia l'occhi operti e la trippa gonfia.

Morte per acqua – Per il troppo abbaiare / i cani avevano la raucedine; / non si udiva altro rumore / che l'acqua fredda del Meandro / sotto la luna che sembrava d'argento / fuso con il buio degli argini / e dell'edera avvinghiata ai tronchi / degli alberi giganteschi. // Fu quella notte che Alcibiade / il licantropo morì / annegato giù alla chiusa dell'Accolta. // Chi disse disgrazia. / Chi disse suicidio. // Aveva gli occhi spalancati e il ventre gonfio.

I testi sono tratti dal volume Mevania Bevagna Beagne, le traduzioni italiane sono dell'autore.

Death by Water

Barking too much,
the dogs went hoarse;

under the silvery moon
no other sound was heard
but the Meandro's cold water
fused with the dark of the dykes
and of the ivy clinging to the trunks
of the gigantic trees.
That was the night Alcibiades
the Lycanthrope died,
drowned down in the Accolta's dam.
Some said it was tragedy.
Others, suicide.
His eyes were open wide
and his belly swollen.

RENZO ZUCCHERINI

Born in Perugia in 1946, he was the first to identify the new modes of Umbrian poetry and its neodialect expressive potential, with a series of important essays (see regional bibliography) and with his intense activity as a translator of some of the major Italian poets (Saba, Noventa) into the Perugia dialect.

A reading of Zuccherini's texts allow us an insight, with his use of "an extremely pure rural vernacular that portrays with vigor and precision the archaic and somewhat dark world of rural life,"⁹ into the author's frequent experimental bent. In many poems – some of them included here – Zuccherini tends, in his "pretense" to reclaim the playful singsong of popular origin, to attribute the function of contemporary nonsense to his poems.

In other words, through deliberately incoherent linguistic formulations, often devoid of any logic or sense, he creates a literary form that means to express the absurdity of modern life, foregrounding its incommunicability, the social and spiritual "reduction" of the self in the mass.

At the same time, such expressive forms tend to represent the need to free the mind, to unleash the power of imagination, to manifest one's creative and playful flair, in relation to the most intimate and profound impulses.

9 A. Carlo Ponti, *Appunti sulla poesia dialettale in Umbria dall'Unità ad oggi*, cit., p.504.

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*

Mira giù pe' l'anguillèa

quegne granne ciabbrillèa
'na cimbcèa, 'na brust'chèa,
me pèr tutta 'na serpanèa,
na ceppèa, 'na cespujèa,
na tamanta siepanèa;
ma tli 'n mezzo s'apolèa
qualca vecchia 'n po' ciurlèa,
mira, strèta la blichèa,
se scatizza la budlèa.

Guarda giù per l'anguillaia / quale gran selvaticume, / una cimiciaia, un luogo rinselvatichito, / mi sembra tutto un serpaio, / una ceppaia, un fitto di cespugli, / una grande siepe impraticabile; / ma lì in mezzo si appollaia / qualche vecchia un po' pettegola, / guarda, sdraia la pancia, / si stuzzica la pelle del corpo.

*

Look down where eels
and other beasts swarm,
in the havens of bed-bugs,
mælstrom like a snake-pit,
copse thick with brambles,
blind maze of hedges;
still there, in their midst,
crones roost, tongues awagging,
look, they sport their bellies
and twiddle their wrinkled skin.

*

Pòrteme 'n bròccu'lo
d'acqua e pu' sciàcqu'lo,
léva 'l baròccu'lo
più cirignàcqu'lo;
sbrighete gnòccu'lo,
co' 'sto briàcqu'lo,
parghi 'n brignòccu'lo,
parghi 'n bemòccu'lo,
ma se' 'no zòccu'lo.

Portami una brocca / d'acqua e poi sciacquala, / togli quell'impiccio / più piccolo; / sbrigati sciocco, / con questo ciondolo / sembri un albicocco, sembri un bemoccolo, / ma sei uno zoccolo.

*

Bring me a jug

of water, flush it,
unbung the most
minute clog,
fast, you fool
with this pendant
you resemble
an apricot tree,
a lymph node, but
you're really a clod.

I poltracci de Gino

P'aposasse 'na mulica
Gino aranca tla poltrona,
ce se strèta, ce se sblica,
ce se mette a la colcona.
Sente tli come samòcca,
comme sfronchia, comme ronfa;
ntra 'l palùgino e la locca
nton bel summio, Gino tonfa.
Summia d'essese arlecchèto
nco la giubba e la cintura,
pe' ntinn'esse' sbracanèto
'n ghirigiòla a la frescura.
Summia d'esse' cavajere
ta ragazze e ta signore,
de ballè' tutte le sere
e de piasse 'l rinfreddore.

Per riposarsi un poco / Gino si mette sulla poltrona, / ci si sdraia, ci si accomoda la pancia, / ci si mette coricato. / Senti li come samacchia, / come russa, come ronfa; / tra il dommicchiare e la sonnolenza / in un bel sogno Gino cade. / Sogna di essersi fatto bello / con la giubba e la cintura, / per non essere sbrindellato / vestito leggero al fresco. / Sogna di essere il cavaliere / di ragazze e di signore, / di ballare tutte le sere / e di prendere il raffreddore.

Gino's Sloth

To take a brief rest
Gino sinks in the easy-chair,
stretches out there,
cradles his paunch,
settles in, flat out.
Listen to how he chortles,

snorts, and then snores;
snoozing and drowsing in
sweet dreams Gino falls.
He dreams of looking smart
in bubbles, buckles and tweeds,
no longer in tatters,
now all decked for sport.
He dreams of being the knight
for damsels and ladies,
of dancing all night,
and catching a cold.

*

Ta 'na frega penziosa, acost'acòsto,
j'aronto 'na storia;
je discuro 'ntl'orecchie,
e 'gni tanto, quan che sente 'n soché,
'l bregno 'i ride 'na mulica.

A una ragazza pensierosa, vicino vicino / (le) racconto una storia; / le parlo nelle orecchie / e ogni tanto, quando sente non so che, / la bocca le ride un po'.

*

I'm telling a story
to a pensive lass,
my lips hov'ring 'round her ears,
and, at times, when
she hears je ne sais quoi,
her mouth cracks a faint smile.

FERRUCCIO RAMADORI

Born in Scheggino, in Valnerina, in 1952, he graduated from Spoleto's Art Institute and is also very active as a painter.

"At times he gets some good results, a hallucinatory and grotesque physicalness," writes Vivaldi in the note cited more than once, and he does it by recapturing old memories and recapturing, with a repressed desire to rebel, the simplicity of the poor and dignified life of the people of Valnerina.

Ramadori's language is dry and concise, at times "stony." Adjectives, which are never decorative, are carefully selected and functional to the crudity of the situation to be represented, barely tempered by the deep, bitter irony that subtends them.

The final result is a social and anthropological protest and the recognition of an incurable defeat suffered across the centuries by a "poor and cyclically troubled" land. (A.C. Ponti), Valnerina, at the hands of a cruel and hostile nature.

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Emigrazione

Su ste montagne
non ce vole stà più gnisciunu
semo armasti noiandri vècchi
se ne so jiti tutti 'sti 'bbardascitti.
Honno lasciatu lu carrittu
lu somaru
l'aratru.
Ma noiandri do jemo,
che magnamo!
Ce semo accòrti tutti quanti
che più faticamo e peggio
c'iartrovamo.
Non sapemo parlane
non sapemo arrisponne.

Emigrazione – Su queste montagne / non ci resta più nessuno / siamo rimasti noi altri vecchi / se ne sono andati tutti questi giovanotti. Hanno abbandonato il carretto / il somaro / l'aratro. / Ma noi altri dove andiamo, / che mangiamo! // Cia siamo accorti tutti quanti / che più fatichiamo e peggio / ci ritroviamo. / Non sappiamo parlare / non sappiamo rispondere.

Emigration

Across these mountains
no one stays anymore,
only us old folks 've lasted,
all the young have left.
They've ditched the carts,
donkeys,
plows.
Where do the rest of us go?
What can we eat?

All of us realize
the more we toil
the worse off we are.
We don't know how to speak,
don't know how to respond.

Gente bastarda

Cusci, noiandri
de li monti venemo chiamati
e jemo per nomina da tant'anni
per come puzzamo.
Semo jente bastarda perchéne
quilli dellà, de lu pianu
se sentono tutti arpuliti.
Ma cemo lu core bonu,
e non sapemo di mai de none.
Ma li tempi se cambiano
e ce voglion' i più tristi.
Po' bè!
Stemo semble a tribbulane co lu focu,
co le fère, co lu campu.
Come potemo capicce o 'mbarà chiccòsa.
Po' che vedranno mai la jù?
Che staranno a fane
drento le fabbriche
'mmezzu a quilli macchinari?
E qui, la pe 'sti campi
mancu li spini
ce crescono piune.

Gente bastarda – Così, noi altri / veniamo chiamati montanari / e siamo famosi da tanti anni / per quanto puzziamo. / Siamo gente bastarda perché / quelli di là, della pianura / si sentono tutti ripuliti. / Ma abbiamo il cuore buono, / e non sappiamo mai dire no. / Ma i tempi cambiano / e ci vogliono i più cattivi. / Poi beh! / Siamo sempre a tribolare con il fuoco, / con le fiere, con i campi. / Come possiamo capirci o imparare qualcosa? // Alla fine, che vedranno mai laggiù? / Che staranno a fare / nelle fabbriche / in mezzo a quei macchinari? / E qui, per questi campi / neanche le spine / ci crescono più.

(Traduzioni di Achille Serrao)

Bastard People

That's what we're called -
mountain folk -
we've been famous so long

for how we stink.
We're bastard people 'cause
those folks down on the plains
feel like they're nice and clean.
But we have good hearts,
don't know how to say no.
Still, times change, then you need
the worst kind of people.
Yet who can tell?
Anyway, we gotta fight
fire, wild beasts, fields -
forever...
How can we understand each other
or learn any-old-thing?
In the end, down there,
what can they ever see?
What will they manage to do
in the factories amid
all that machinery?
(while, up here, in these fields,
not even thorns
grow for us anymore)...

ALESSANDRO PRUGNOLA

Born in Rome in 1958 from Umbrian parents, he holds a law degree. He has been engaged in theatrical activities in both Italian and dialect.

Prugnola writes in the vernacular of Mongiovino, a hamlet close to Panicale, where he was born.

An underestimated poet, he is even absent in the critical works on his region (there is a fleeting mention in Zuccherini's *La poeìa dialettale in Umbria*, often cited. Prugnola's work is described as follows: "A poetry of memory and naturalistic sensuality").

Within the sphere of Umbrian poetry, Prugnola certainly shows a propensity, equaled only by his contemporary Ponti, towards neodialect poetry, starting with the references in his poems to twentieth-century poetry in Italian and in other languages. In fact, in his poems one can catch glimpses of a European culture (from Italian hermeticism to French surrealism) and a fair bent for neoexperimentalism.

The frequent allusion in place of direct statements, the use of a coloristic adjective of surrealist origin and, further, the recurring asyntacticality of discourse, provide more than occasional traces of twentieth-century poetry, but all deeply "involved" and absorbed into the poetic texture of dialect, in which, in any case, the anthropological side and popular humus remain preeminent.

Moreover, Prugnola's poetry betrays the knowledge and experience acquired in the theater, especially in his tendency to "represent" the images and to give a stage-set quality to some natural views.

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A Mongiovino vecchio, mio paese

Qui in città talvolta pare
che la guerra non sia mai finita
“Mongiovino nun curri
nun curri comme el resto
che se scolla
ma arponi ‘l respiro
e conserva la mi’ cosa
che va sul logoro numeræ del mortale.
Nessun dei nati in te ha più ‘l fiato
pe lanciasse in ta la caccia
o pe godè sotto ‘l porticone
stoffa crespà d’orfane mura
spettro grinzoso de fiabe
dietro ‘n grosso rovo”
Qui in città non c’è posto
per l’olivo o l’uve.

A Mongiovino vecchio, mio paese – Qui in città talvolta pare / che la guerra non sia mai finita // “Mongiovino non correre / non correre come il resto / che si frantuma / ma trattieni il respiro / e conserva il mio sogno / che convive con i colpi consumati nel mortaio. // Nessuno che sia nato qui ha più fiato / per lanciarsi nella caccia / o per godere sotto il portico / stoffa crespà di orfane mura / spettro grinzoso di favole / dietro un grande rovo”. // Qui in città non c’è posto / per l’olivo o l’uve.

(Traduzione di Achille Serrao)

In Old Mongiovino, My Town

Here in the city at times it seems
that the war’s never ended.
“Mongiovino, don’t run off,
don’t race like the rest
that shatter,
no, hold your breath and
preserve my dream
that lives with pestle strokes
in the mortar...
“No one born here has breath left
to hurtle into the hunt

or to relish under the porticoes
creased fabrics of orphaned walls,
the wrinkled specter of fairy tales
behind the bramble hedge".
Here in the city there's no place
for the olive tree or grape vines.

Paese

cul sentier che t'allaccia ta la pianura
tu sé le poche stanze
limate dal batteto del giorno
culle mane 'ntomo al foco
e 'l lungo eco del campanile
chiesa vota
li passe su pe' le scale doppe l'arcolta ni fondi
d'acerbe mele.
Tu sé la cantina
pregno soffio de vinsanto
e n'incanto la sera de maggio
quanne da li giacigli sulle rame se parleno le cincie
e 'l giallo delle ginestre struscia le tu vesti
senso d'estate che supera 'l colle de' pini
e te 'ncontra e te prende e te coie
e tu freme e toie 'l nero del lutto
e te penetra dintro co tutto 'l su cielo promisso
n'altra tenera scorza d'aliti de luglio.

Paese – Con il sentiero che ti allaccia alla pianura / tu sei le poche stanze / limate dal battito del giorno / con le mani attorno al fuoco / e la lunga eco del campanile / chiesa vuota / i passi sulle scale dopo la raccolta nei campi / di mele acerbe. // Tu sei la cantina / odore pregno di vinsanto / e un incanto la sera di maggio / quando dai nidi sui rami si parlano le cinciallegre / e il giallo delle ginestre si sfrega sulle tue vesti / senso d'estate che supera il colle dei pini / e ti incontra e ti prende e ti coglie / e tu freme e cancella il nero del lutto / e ti penetra dentro con tutto il suo promesso cielo / un altro tenero scorrere d'aria di luglio.

(Traduzione di Achille Serrao)

"Hometown"

With the path that links you to the plains,
you are the few rooms
filed by the pulse of days
with hands around the fire
and prolonged echoes of the belltower

empty church
steps up the stairs after harvests
of tart apples.
You are the cantina
pregnant scent of vinsanto
and a magic of May evenings
when from nests on branches
the titbirds commune
and the yellow of broomflowers
grazes all your vestments
sense of Summer that surpasses
the hill of pines
and meets, grasps, gathers you -
you quiver as it wipes clean
the black of mourning
and pierces you deep
with all its promised sky -
another tender flowing
of July air.

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Sanzio Balducci received a degree in Modern literature from the University of Urbino with a thesis on Italian dialectology entitled "Ricerche dialettali nell'area metaurense." From 1977 to 1983 he taught History of the Italian Language at the University of Urbino, where since 1983 he holds the chair of Italian dialectology. He has done a great deal of research in the field of dialectology, especially in the Marches, publishing several studies on the dialects of Fano, Urbino, Ancona, Fabriano, and Ascoli Piceno. He has also studied dialect poetry, dialect theater, folklore, and popular traditions, and contributes to an inter-university research on Italian proverbs. Lately he has been collaborating with a few painters, particularly those from Fano, and this collaboration has produced several short stories and poems, only partially published, which include the stories *La battaglia di Sentino* and *La battaglia del Metauro*, each illustrated by four acqueforti by Bruno d'Arcevia. In 1991 he published *Si se*, fourteen short stories.

Elettra Bedon was born in Padua and after completing her studies in Italy moved to Montréal (Canada) where she received a Ph.D. from McGill University and studied twentieth-century literature in the language of Veneto. She has published *Il filo di Arianna*, essays on twentieth-century literature in the language of Veneto, 1999; the book of poems *Con le altre parole*, 1998; the book of narrative *Storie di Eglia*, 1998; and the books for children *Ma l'estate verrà ancora*, 1985, *Vi racconto di Gesù*, 1991, and *Mio zio l'investigatore*, 1998. In 200 she published *Al di là della veste*, a study of Cesare Ruffato's *Scribendi licentia*.

Alberto Bertoni was born in Modena in 1955. His poems have appeared in journals and anthologies, and he has published the volumes *Lettere stagionali*, winner of the Caput Gauri Prize and the Dario Bellezza Prize; *La casa azzurra*, 1997 (book+CD, in collaboration with Enrico Trebbi and Ivan Valentini); *Tatì*, 1999, Selezione San Pellegrino Prize. Some of his poems have been published in the United States and Russia. He has edited F.T. Marinetti's *Taccuini 1915-1921*, 1987, and has published three books of criticism: *Dai simbolisti al Novecento*, 1996, winner of the Russo Prize and the Croce Prize; *Una geografia letteraria tra Emilia e Romagna*, 1997, with Gian Mario Anselmi; and *Partiture critiche*, 2000. He teaches Italian literature at the University of Bologna and edits the journal *Frontiera*.

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Elio Fox, born in 1930, is one of the best known scholars of the popular culture of Trento and one of the best known dialect playwright of his region. His most important works of research are: *Trento 1850-1950*, 1973; *Storia delle osterie trentine*, 1975 and 1998; *Trento, aspetti e immagini di ieri*, 1984 and 2000; *La civiltà*

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Giuseppe Gallo (Milan, 1960), is a journalist and scholar. He received a degree in the history of modern Italian literature and has written on Edmondo de Amicis, Emilio Salgari, Antonio Fogazzaro, humor literature and contemporary mass literature. He edited a commented edition of *Promessi sposi*, 199, and a successful guide to *Letteratura italiana. Ottocento e Novecento*, 1999, with Davide Pinardi. He has also published a book of poems entitled *Da prodigio a prodigio*, 2000, and edited the cultural journals *Mediante* and *Yanez*. He contributes to various periodicals, such as *L'Unità*, *Linea d'ombra*, *Diario*, *Tirature*, *Critica sociale*, *Inchiesta*. He is currently the deputy editor-in-chief of the weekly *Soprattutto*.

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Francesco Piga, born in Porto Azzurro (Isola d'Elba) in 1951, graduated from the University of Florence, where for several decades he contributed to the seminars on contemporary Italian literature. He has published *Il Mio del superuomo in Nietzsche e D'Annunzio*, 1979, and *La poesia dialettale del Novecento*, 1991. He is the literary critic for journals and newspapers for which he writes reviews of Italian and foreign authors. He has dealt with various aspects of D'Annunzio's work in numerous issues of *Quaderni del Vittoriale*. He has contributed to *Storie della letteratura* and has taken part in many conventions on Italian fiction, dialects, literary reviews, Papini, and Brignetti. He has written essays on Leopardi, Nievo, Fogazzaro, Bufalino, Stifler, Quenau, Seifert, Bernhardt, and writes a column on dialect literature for *Diverse lingue*. He has written articles against the death penalty, political corruption, and environmental degradation.

Achille Serrao was born in Rome from parents from Campania and received a degree in jurisprudence. He began writing poetry in Italian in 1968 with a small book of poems titled *Coordinata popolare*, followed by *Honeste vivere*, 1970; *Destinato alla giostra*, 1974; *Lista d'attesa*, 1979; *L'altrove il senso*, 1985. His works of narrative are: *Scene dei guasti*, 1978; *Cammeo*, 1981; *Retropalco*, 1995. His critical works are *Contributi per una saggistica luziana*, 1984; *L'ònomia – appunti per una lettura della poesia di Giorgio Caproni*; *Ponte rotto*, 1992; and *Presunto inverno*, 1999. In dialect he has published *Mal'aria*, 1990; *'O ssupierchio*, 1993; *'A canniatura* 1993; *Cecatèlla*, 1995; *Semmènta vèrde*, 1996. In 1992 he edited the anthology of neodialect poetry *Via terra*, which appeared in English translation in 1999, edited by Luigi Bonaffini and Justin Vitiello. *Cantalésia*, a trilingual anthology of his dialect poetry, edited and translated by Luigi Bonaffini, appeared in 1999. Some of his poem appear in *La poesia in dialetto*, edited by Franco Brevini, 1999, for which Serrao translated into Italian the Neapolitan poets from the fifteenth to the twentieth century. He is the dialect editor of *Pagine* and edits the literary periodical *Periferie*.

Gian Mario Villalta was born in 1959 in Visinale di Passione, in the province of Pordenone. He received a degree in literature in Bologna with a thesis on the rhetoric of the text. His books of poetry in dialect include *Altro che storie*, 1988; *Sapeghète*, 1992; *Vòse de vose*, 1995; *L'ass ingrevà de la tera*, in *Cinque poeti in dialetto veneto*, 1998. In Italian he has published *L'erba in tasca*, 1992; *Malcerti animali in Poesia Cocontemporanea*, 1992. He has published numerous studies, among which "L'introduzione a Amedeo Giacomini," in *Antologia privata*, 1997; and *Andrea Zanzotto. Le poesie e prose scelte*, edited by S. Dal Bianco and G.M. Villalta, 1999. He has published two books of criticism: *La costanza del vocativo. Lettura della "trilogia" di Andrea Zanzotto: Il Galateo nel bosco, Fosfeni, Idioma*, 1992; and *La mimesi è finita*, 1996. His first book of fiction, *Un dolore riconoscente*, came out in 2000.

Cesare Vivaldi was born in Porto Maurizio (Imperia) in 1925. He received a degree in literature with Ungaretti from the University of Rome. He worked as a journalist and then taught History of Art at the Academy of Fine Arts in Naples and Rome. He died in 1999. His books of poems in Italian are: *Poesie scelte 1952-1992*, 1993; *Umbria negli occhi*, 1995. He has also translated classical works, among which the *Aeneid*. His works in dialect include: *Otto poesie nel dialetto ligure di Imperia*, 1951; *Poesie liguri*, 1960; *Poesie liguri vecchie e nuove*, 1980; *La brace delle parole*, 1984; *La poesia sa di buono. Tutte le poesie in dialetto ligure 1951-1992*, 1996. In 1991 he edited, with Giacinto Spagnoletti, the anthology *Poesia dialettale dal Rinascimento ad oggi*.

Giuseppe Zoppelli was born in 1958 in San Vito al Tagliamento (PN) and moved at a very young age to Aosta, where he lived for a long time. He received a degree in literature from the University of Turin, the city where he currently lives and teaches. He was an editor and contributor to the first poetry review in Valle d'Aosta, *Le Soleil Valdôtain* (1980-83), and edited with Marco Gal and Marco Consolati the multilingual anthology *La poesia in Valle d'Aosta*, 1987. He recently published the collection of essays *Il leone e la lyra. Poesia e patois in Valle d'Aosta*, 2000, and the pamphlet *Critica ex. Sullo stato della critica letteraria e della cultura*, 2000. He is also the author of the book of poems *Frammenti di un mondo probabile*, 1992.

TRANSLATORS

Adria Bernardi holds a degree in Italian from the University of Chicago and lives in Worcester, Massachusetts. Her translation of Gianni Celati's *Adventures in Africa* was published in 1990. She is the author of a collection of short stories, *In the Gathering Woods*, which was awarded the 2000 Drue Heinz Literature Prize. Her novel, *The day Laid on the Altar*, 2000, was awarded the Bakeless Fiction Prize. In 1999 she published *Abandoned Places*, a translation of the poems of Tonino Guerra, written in the romagnolo dialect.

Gaetano Cipolla has translated several authors from the Sicilian: Giovanni Meli's *The Origins of the World*, Don Chisciotti and Sanciu Panza, and *Moral Fables and Other Poems*; Vincenzo Ancona's *Malidittu la lingua / Damned Language*; *The Poetry of Nino Martoglio*; Antonino Provenzano's *Vmissi/I'd Love to Come*. He is a professor of Italian at St. John's University and editor of *Arba Sicula*.

Dino Fabris (1930-1999) was a journalist, poet, and editor. His translation of Pier Paolo Pasolini's poems have appeared in various journals, and his translation of Pasolini's *La nuova gioventù* was awarded the Columbia University Translation prize in 1980. His translation of Giacomini's *Presumât unviâr* was a finalist in the Lockert Library in Translation competition at Princeton University Press. He translated several dialect poets for the trilingual anthology *Via terra*.

Rina Ferrarelli is a poet and translator of modern Italian poetry who came from Italy at the age of fifteen. She has published a book and a chapbook of original poetry, *Home Is a Foreign Country* (Eadmer Press, 1996), and *Dreamsearch* (malafemmina press, 1992), and two books of translation, *Light Without Motion* (Owl Creek Press, 1989) and *I Saw the Muses* (Guemica, 1997), from the Italian of Giorgio Chiesura and Leonardo Sinisgalli respectively, and is currently working on a selection of Cattafi's poetry. She received an NEA and the Italo Calvino Prize from the Columbia Translation Center. Her work has appeared in publications such as *Americas Review*, *Bsu Forum*, *Chelsea*, *College English*, *the Critic*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Exchanges*, *5 A.m.*, *the Hudson Review*, *the International Quarterly*, *the Literary Review*, *the Laurel Review*, *Mundus Artium*, *New Letters*, *the New Orleans Review*, *the Pittsburgh Post-gazette*, *the Pittsburgh Quarterly*, *Poet Lore*, *Poetry Now*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Translation*, *West Branch* and in many anthologies and several textbooks.

Adeodato Piazza Nicolai was born in Vigo di Cadore, at the foot of the Dolomites, in the Province of Belluno, in 1944. He emigrated to the United States and lives in Hammond, Indiana. Piazza-Nicolai has been writing poetry in his native koiné, the Ladin of the Cadore Region, since 1971, as well as poetry in Italian and English. He obtained an MA from the University of Chicago in 1987 and since 1999 has been Visiting Professor for the English and Foreign Languages Departments at Purdue University Calumet. His poems have appeared in numerous anthologies and literary journals. He has published several books of poetry: *La visita di Rebecca*, 1979; *I due volti di Janus*, 1980 (poetry and translations); *La doppia finzione*, 1988; *Diario ladin*, poetry in ladino, 2000.

Michael Palma has published translations of Guido Gozzano (*The Man I Pretend to Be*), Diego Valeri (*My Name on the Wind*), Sergio Corazzini (*Sunday Evening*), Armando Patti (*The Eye Inside*), and Luigi Fontanella (*The Transparent Life*). With Dana Gioia, he co-edited *New Italian Poets*, and with Alfredo De Palchi he co-edited *The Metaphysical Streetcar Conductor: Sixty Poems of Luciano Erba*. He translated the work of a number of dialect poets for *Dialect Poetry of Southern Italy*. He has also published two chapbooks of his own poetry, *The Egg Shape and Antibodies*, and a book of poems, *Fortune in Gold*, 2000. His translation of Dante's *Inferno* is being published by W.W. Norton. His essays, reviews, and other prose pieces have appeared in numerous literary journals.

John Shepley has published numerous translations, among which: Mario Brelich's *The Holy Embrace and Navigator of the Flood*; Ferdinando Camon's *Conversations with Primo Levi*, *The Fifth Estate*, *Life Everlasting*, *The Sickness Called Man*; Beppe Fenoglio's *Ruin*; Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Roman Nights and Other Stories* (Italo Calvino Award); Guido Piovene's *In Search of Europe*; Alberto Savinio's *Capri*, *Operatic Lives*, *Speaking to Clio*, *Tragedy of Childhood*; Enzo Siciliano's *Pasolini: A Biography*; Giuseppe Antonio Borgese's *Beautiful Women*; Roberto Calasso's *The Forty-nine Steps*; Guglielmo Petroni's *The World Is A Prison*; Mario Rigoni Stern's *The Story of Tönle*.

Justin Vitiello is a professor of Italian at Temple University. He received his B.A. from Brown University and his Ph.D. in Comparative Literature (English, Italian, Spanish) from the University of Michigan. He has published numerous scholarly articles and translations of medieval, Renaissance and modern Italian, Sicilian and Spanish poetry. His books in print include *Il carro del pesce di Vanzetti* (poems, 1989); *Vanzetti's Fish Cart* (poems, 1991); *Confessions of a Joe Rock* (novel, 1992); *Sicily Within* (essays, 1992); *Poetics and Literature of the Sicilian Diaspora: Studies in Oral History and Story-Telling* (1993, reprinted in 1998); *Subway Home* (poems in English, 1994, and Italian, 1998); *Italy's Ultramodern, Experimental Lyrics: Corpo 10*; and *Labyrinths and volcanoes: Windings Through Sicily*, 1999 (the latter is also forthcoming in Italian). A civil and human rights activist for five decades, he is also a member of the IWW and the Wooden Shoe Collective. He co-edited *Via terra: An Anthology of Contemporary Italian Dialect Poetry*, 1999.