



**DINO
CAMPANA**

CANTI ORFICI

ORPHIC SONGS

translated by

LUIGI BONAFFINI

CANTI ORFICI

(Die tragödie des letzten Germanen in Italien)

A Guglielmo II imperatore dei Germani

l'autore dedica

by

DINO CAMPANA

ORPHIC SONGS

(Die tragödie des letzten Germanen in Italien)

To William emperor of the Germans

the author dedicates

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BORDIGHERA PRESS

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To the memory of Glauco Cambon

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INTRODUCTION

Interest in Campana has been growing steadily in the last twenty years, as witnessed by the proliferation of critical and biographical studies, to the extent that in 1989 alone four new editions of *Canti orfici* were published, and while Mario Luzi has defined *Canti orfici* "il libro più libro, più 'oeuvre' del nostro Novecento" [the book more book, more "oeuvre" of our twentieth century],¹ there are those who are now unabashedly calling Campana one of the greatest poets of this century. But even independently of the merits of his poetry, Campana would remain one of the most striking, dramatic, and exciting figures of twentieth-century Italian literature, and certainly one of the most disputed and controversial.

Canti orfici is of great interest for its innovative use of language, for its imaginative syntactical patterns, for its free mixture of verse and prose, for the creation of new lexical and semantic relationships, for the original way it appropriates preceding cultural experiences and uses them in the construction of the text, and finally for the attention it has received by poets and critics alike. In its most controversial passages, Campana's poetry exhibits all the elements of the most groundbreaking and avant-garde poetic language in modern Italian literature: irrational repetitions, illogical relative clauses, asyntactical, instinctive conjunctions, a period structured on rhythmic, rather than semantic, nuclei, a musical phrasing that is non-linear, but widens and spirals upward. For all these reasons, and because it occupies such a unique place in Italian poetry, *Canti orfici* is to be considered a fundamental text in twentieth-century Italian literature.

Dino Campana was born on 20 August 1885 in Marradi (Florence), near Faenza, the oldest son of an elementary school teacher, Giovanni, and Francesca (Fanny) Luti, a housewife. He had three uncles who played a role in his life: Francesco, a Public Prosecutor in Florence; Torquato, also an elementary school teacher who became Campana's guardian after he was declared incompetent; and a third uncle who died in an insane asylum, and

¹*Dino Campana oggi* (Firenze: Vallecchi, 1973) 144.

who is mentioned in Campana's admission to the asylum of San Salvi. According to one of Campana's biographers, Sebastiano Vassalli, this family illness was Campana's curse, since it provided a simple hereditary explanation to Campana's erratic behavior, and was readily accepted first by his fearful parents, then by the townspeople, and finally by the doctors who examined him.

Between 1891 and 1896 Campana attended elementary school in Marradi, and was then sent to the Salesian Institute of Faenza to complete his secondary school studies. In 1900 he was registered in the first year of the Liceo, and commuted between Faenza and Marradi. This is the period in which, as stated by his father in a 1906 letter to the director of the insane asylum in Imola, Dino began to manifest signs of: "impulsività brutale, morbosa, in famiglia e specialmente con la mamma" [brutal impulsiveness, with the family and especially towards his mother].² Campana's father, stern and somewhat distant, but fair and caring, was clearly unable to mediate between Dino and his mother, who was becoming so increasingly intolerant and so obsessed with religious practices, that she convinced herself that she had begotten the Antichrist. Vassalli imagines Campana throwing out of the window all the sacred images his mother would place in his room and in his books, while she called him "monster," "devil," "antichrist." Campana himself will later acknowledge that this period represented a decisive turning point in his life, the beginning of his compulsive wandering, as he told Carlo Pariani, the psychiatrist who often visited Campana in the asylum of Castel Pulci and wrote a well-known biography in 1938 — published again by Guanda in 1978 with the title *Vita non romanzata di Dino Campana* [The Unromanticized Life of Dino Campana]:

Dalla età di quindici anni, mi prese una forte nevrastenia, non potevo vivere in nessun posto. A quindici anni andai in collegio in Piemonte. Più tardi alla Università. Non riuscivo in chimica. E allora mi diedi un po' a scrivere e un po' al vagabondaggio. [From the age of fifteen, I was seized by a

²Gabriel Cacho Millet, *Dino Campana Fuorilegge* (Palermo: Edizioni Novecento, 1985) 46.

strong neurasthenia, I was unable to live anywhere. At fifteen I went to boarding school in Piedmont. Later to the University. I wasn't doing well in chemistry. So I took to writing and to wandering.] (Pariani 1978, 43)

Urged by his wife, who had always believed in the existence of hereditary flaws in the Campana family, Giovanni decided to have Dino undergo a psychiatric examination, but the doctor did not make a negative diagnosis. In 1903 Campana was admitted to the University of Bologna, where he registered in the School of Sciences, with a major in chemistry; in December of the same year he entered the Military Academy of Modena, from which he was expelled after a few months for failure to pass the qualifying examination to the rank of sergeant. Having returned home, amid increasing tensions with his parents, between 1904 and 1905 Campana spent much of his time wandering alone in the mountains around Marradi and reading a great deal, especially Carducci, Pascoli, D'Annunzio, and Nietzsche. He also began to write literary articles — destined to remain unpublished — as he would later tell Dr. Pariani. In 1905 he moved to Florence (where he probably stayed with his uncle Francesco) and attended the University of Florence, but, according to his uncle, he did a lot of reading and very little studying, and did not take a single examination. At the end of the year again he registered at the University of Bologna, while studying in Marradi under the supervision of his father and his uncle Torquato.

In May 1906 Campana suddenly began his long series of unpredictable “flights,” first to Genoa and then to France, where the French police put him on a train back home because he did not have a passport. On 5 September Campana's father had him committed to an asylum in Imola for “observation,” “*dementia praecox*” — a term covering a wide variety of socially unacceptable behavior — being strongly suspected; Dino was released on 31 October under his father's supervision and against the advice of the director Dr. Brugia. Considering the short stay in the asylum and a letter from Campana's father to the director of the asylum — “*egli ha la psiche esaltata, avvelenata, pervertita, non sente affetti e prende presto a noia luoghi e persone*” [he has an excited, poisoned, perverted psyche, feels no affection and gets quickly bored with people and

places]³ — Campana's biographers Cacho Millet and Vassalli conclude that the machine that would crush his life, with the assistance of his family and Marradi's notables, had now been set in motion. From this moment on, Dino Campana would be officially "insane"; in fact, in November he was declared unfit for military service.

Most critics agree that sometime between September 1907 (date of his passport for Buenos Aires) and March 1909 (date of a letter by the Mayor of Marradi to order his interment),⁴ Campana, probably because his family decided to send the "psychopathic" son abroad, went to Argentina, where he worked at many different jobs:

Facevo qualche mestiere. Per esempio: temprare i ferri; tempravo una falce, una accetta. Si faceva per vivere. Facevo il suonatore di triangolo nella Marina argentina. Sono stato ad ammucciare i terrapieni delle ferrovie in Argentina. Si dorme fuori nelle tende." [I worked at several jobs. For example: tempering tools; I would temper a sickle, an axe. In order to make a living. I was a triangle player in the Argentine Navy. I was a doorman in a club in Buenos Aires. I had so many jobs. I worked on railway embankments in Argentina. We slept outdoors in tents.]⁵

He was also a miner, a fireman, a juggler, a gypsy, played the piano in brothels, stoked coal on a ship, and worked in a rifle range.

In the autumn of 1909 Campana was back in Marradi, where he began to write the first nucleus of prose and poetry around which his *Canti orfici* [*Orphic Songs*] would take shape. This is also a period characterized by intense study, and by the voracious reading, while wandering on the mountains, of French, English, German, and Italian texts. In April 1909, due to some disturbances caused by drunkenness, most probably a reaction to his status as "deranged" among the people of Marradi, Campana was committed to the asylum of San Salvi, from which he was released after a few days for "insufficienza di titolo" [insufficient grounds]. There followed another brief trip to Paris which, in conformity with a well-estab-

³Cacho Millet, *Dino Campana Fuorilegge* 46.

⁴Ibidem 17

⁵Pariani 45.

lished pattern, no doubt due in no small measure to the fact that the word “demented” appeared in his passport, would end in the insane asylum of Tournay, in Belgium (some biographers place this internment at the time of his return from South America). The people in Marradi resign themselves to his return only after the Mayor of Florence, on the basis of a psychiatrist’s report, wrote to the Mayor of the town, stating that it was not possible to keep in an asylum someone who showed “verun segno di alienazione mentale” [no sign of mental alienation].⁶

Campana spent the years 1909–1911 between Marradi, Florence, and Bologna. In February 1912 he was in Genoa, where the police put him back on the train with travel orders. Finally he went back to the University of Bologna and attended classes in the year 1912–13, passing the Physics exam. But he still manifested extravagant behavior, as witnessed by his biographer Ravagli. These are the years in which Campana intensifies his study of Nietzsche, in the original language, and completes his cultural development, while publishing his first poems, “La Chimera,” “Le cafard,” “Dualismo,” in the student paper “Il Papiro” [The Papyrus]. In 1913 Campana transferred to the University of Genoa, a city that held a particular fascination for him, the poet’s “magical” place, frequently revisited in the *Orphic Songs*, and the setting of the final, shattering epiphany at the end of the book. He discovered *Lacerba* and the Futurists, and wrote a poem, “Traguardo” [Finish Line], dedicated to Marinetti, the acknowledged leader of the movement, who however refused to publish his work. Campana also sent some of his poems to *La Voce* and *Lacerba*, the most important and influential publications of the time, controlled by Papini and Soffici, who would eventually accept some of his verses. Forced to leave Genoa again due to some troubles with the police, Campana went back to Marradi, where in a few months he finished drafting his manuscript, as the poet himself tells us in a letter to Emilio Cecchi:⁷

Three years ago I had returned to the University of Bologna to do the fourth year of pure chemistry. The people of my

⁶Cacho Millet, *Dino Campana Fuorilegge* 81.

⁷Gabriel Cacho Millet, *Le mie lettere sono fatte per essere bruciate* (Milano: All’insegna del pesce d’oro, 1978) 37.

town who had always persecuted me with a vileness and viciousness all disgracefully Italian and clerical, since I was nothing but a jailbird because several times I had been sent back home loathsome and torn (I was fleeing from their vileness), they had the police carry out a persecution against me which prevented me from continuing. They said I was a dangerous anarchist, I wanted to kill the king, the professors etc. I tried changing university. But in Genoa it was worse. So I fled to my mountains, always brutally persecuted and insulted and I wrote in a few months the *Orphic Songs* including things I had already done.

They were meant to be the justification of my life because I was outside the law, before I ended up murdered with the complicity of the government, in spite of the Statute. Come winter I went to Florence to the Acerba [sic] to see Papini whom I knew by name.

Campana gave his only copy of the manuscript, entitled *Il più lungo giorno* [*The Longest Day*], to Papini, who read it and promised to publish it, but then handed it over to Soffici. Soffici, in what became a *cause célèbre* in Italian letters, lost the manuscript while moving to a new house, as he would tell Campana when the latter finally asked him for it. In a rather baffling display of nonchalance, Soffici would much later say that he did not think it was very important at the time, since Campana had not inquired about it for a long time.

From Campana's letters, however, we know that this was a devastating experience for him, which marked his complete break with contemporary Italian literature and literary institutions, the "Florentines" (Papini and Soffici) and *Lacerba* and *La voce* in particular (letter to Emilio Cecchi):⁸

Those spies acted that way because they knew I was being closely watched and against me everything was permissible. The policemen followed me and had me insulted wherever I went and Papini and Soffici became accomplices of the murderers while I with complete trust abandoned in their hands

⁸Cacho Millet, *Le mie lettere* 38.

what was the only justification of my existence. I tried leaving Italy but was arrested and sent back to my town amidst boos and insults. I was therefore supposed to die instead I am only half paralytic (paresis) and I held out another year and a half because I rewrote the manuscript from memory (maybe some of the nonsense was missing in Soffici's manuscript) I found the money for the printing and within a year I received a splendid letter from Soffici whose impassiveness had certainly been shaken by the knowledge that I was still alive.

Campana was therefore forced to rewrite the book, but it is very unlikely that he did so totally from memory, as he states in the letter, since he almost certainly had notes and copies of at least some of the poems to work with. Between December 1913 and January 1914 Campana worked on the manuscript, taking out some parts very decisively and adding others, and completely transforming some of the most important sections. The book, bearing the new title *Canti orfici*, came out in June 1914, published by a Marradi printer named Bruno Ravagli.

The loss of the original manuscript contributed considerably to Campana's legend, prompting more than one critic to consider the final product, *Canti orfici*, somehow unfinished, not completely realized, a work in progress, while lamenting as a calamity the disappearance of *Il più lungo giorno*, whose supposed perfection *Canti orfici* had not been able to recapture. All speculations, however, were put to rest in 1971, when Mario Luzi announced that the original manuscript had been found by Soffici's family. Everyone agrees now, starting with Domenico De Robertis, who edited and published the anastatic edition of *Il più lungo giorno* in 1973, that *Canti orfici*, far from paling in comparison, is in fact a decidedly superior work in every way. No one would disagree with Neuro Bonifazi that while the loss of the original manuscript was undoubtedly a personal tragedy for the poet, it represented on the other hand a great fortune for Italian literature.

After the publication of *Canti orfici*, Campana appeared in Florence again, perhaps the only time in his life when he enjoyed some respect and consideration. He frequented the café Giubbe Rosse, talked to the artists, visited art exhibits, Papini and Soffici published three poems from *Canti orfici*, "Sogno di prigione"

[Prison Dream], “L’incontro di Regolo” [Meeting with Regolo], and “Piazza Sarzano.” He also attended personally to the sale of his book, in a way that has become legendary. There are several eyewitness accounts, including Soffici’s, recalling how Campana would sell his book among the customers of the café, but only after very carefully sizing up each prospective buyer, and then tearing out the pages that he believed would not be understood. Soffici also informs us that Marinetti received just the cover of *Canti orfici*, all the pages having been torn out by Campana.

With a characteristically iconoclastic, anti-bourgeois stance, deeply rooted in his painful condition as a social outcast, the poet had decided, on the eve of Italy’s entrance into war against Germany, to dedicate *Canti orfici* to the German Emperor, with the subtitle “Die Tragödie des letzten Germanen in Italien” [The Tragedy of the Last German in Italy]. This caused quite a bit of consternation and attracted the attention of the police, so that Campana, to avoid further persecution, since he was normally under surveillance for being “demented” and just out of an asylum, erased the dedication from all the copies he had left. But his polemical gesture, which had no political significance, was naturally misunderstood, as Campana himself would later explain:⁹

Now I said *die Tragödie des Letzen germanen in Italien* showing that in the book I had preserved the moral purity of the German (ideal not real) which has been the cause of their death in Italy. But I was saying it in a sense which was imperialistic and idealistic, not naturalistic (I was looking ideally for a country because I had none). The German taken as representative of the superior moral type (Dante Leopardi Segantini). So I invoked justice against clerical and popular brutality. . . .

Again Campana ran away, to Pisa, Sardegna, Turin (where he sold newspapers in the street), then to Switzerland looking for work.

Back in Florence once more, when on 24 May 1915 Italy entered the war, he tried to enlist as a volunteer, — a clear indication that the

⁹Cacho Millet, *Le mie lettere* 38.

dedication to the Kaiser was not politically motivated — but was rejected. After spending a month in a psychiatric hospital, suffering from strong headaches, insomnia, and a recurrent paralysis on his left side, Campana was becoming increasingly unstable, and began to feel for the first time that poetry was abandoning him. During his frequent outbursts he would write to Papini and Soffici demanding that they return the lost manuscript and threatening to go after them with “un buon coltello” [a good knife].

In August 1916 he met the writer Sibilla Aleramo, with whom he began a stormy love affair. Dino alternated between periods of complete lucidity and moments of total alienation and fury. He was tormented by migraines and forms of delirium, and the relationship between the two lovers turned increasingly violent. Anstrid Anhfelt, a friend of Sibilla’s with whom they were staying, writes: “Tutta la notte si sono battuti e graffiati. Si ammazzeranno senz’altro, se qualcuno non interviene” [All night long they have beaten and scratched each other. They will without a doubt kill each other, if someone does not intervene].¹⁰ Sibilla immediately recognized the signs of Campana’s illness, and wrote to Cecchi: “Campana è malato profondamente, nevrasstenia con mania continua di fuga, di annientamento. È atroce quel che la vita può su di un uomo” [Campana is profoundly ill, neurasthenia with a constant obsession to run away, to destroy himself. It is a dreadful thing the power that life has over a man].¹¹ According to Neuro Bonifazi, one of Campana’s best-known critics, the poet’s flight and annihilation are two typical aspects of Nietzschean fanaticism, inserted in a subject certainly unstable and showing symptoms of neurosis since adolescence. Campana’s whole attitude toward Sibilla, made of insults and violence and ecstasy and dreams, bears witness to his Orphic and Nietzschean frenzy, to his underlying misogyny (“the war is women’s fault,” he had once said), to his latent sadism, and to his antipopulism — “lo sguardo idiota di questa gente” [the idiotic look of these people].

The end of their love affair inspired one of Campana’s last poems, “In un momento,” which would appear posthumously with other unpublished works. Their separation, which took place in late

¹⁰Cacho Millet, *Le mie lettere* 64.

¹¹Cacho Millet, *Le mie lettere* 56.

January 1917, marks the beginning of a period of frequent drunkenness, of strange and unpredictable behavior, often degenerating into fits of violence, which again landed Campana in prison and then in a psychiatric hospital. Finally, on 12 January 1918, by order of the mayor of Lastra a Signa where he was staying with his father, Campana was committed to the asylum of San Salvi, where he was diagnosed as suffering from the usual “dementia praecox.” From there he was transferred to the asylum of Castel Pulci, where he would remain until his death. Carlo Pariani recalls how Campana:

nella permanenza ospedaliera dapprima diede indizi di allucinazioni uditive, espresse idee deliranti di grandezza e di persecuzione, ebbe scatti ingiustificati. Poscia prevalsero false percezioni acustiche cutanee muscolari viscerali, talvolta dolorose; fallacie rappresentative, ripetizioni sonore del pensiero. . . . Diceva di ricevere influssi elettrici magnetici medianici ipnotici; di produrne e di trasmetterne” [in the hospital at first he gave signs of auditory hallucinations, expressed delirious ideas of grandeur and persecution, had unjustified fits of temper. Later there prevailed false perceptions — acoustic cutaneous muscular visceral — at times painful; representational fallacies, verbalized repetitions of thought. . . . He said he was receiving electrical magnetic medianic hypnotic suggestions; that he was producing them and transmitting them].¹²

In 1928 Vallecchi published the second edition of *Canti orfici*, edited by Bino Binazzi, who made arbitrary modifications and additions. Campana, who received a copy in the hospital, perceived these changes made without his knowledge as the latest indignity against him, and asked his brother to look for the original Marradi edition, so that the text of his poems would not be lost. He died of septicemia on 1 March 1932.

Perhaps no other poet has been so completely identified with one book as Campana, who repeatedly referred to *Canti orfici* as the only justification of his life. There is, however, a rather large and complex body of preceding heterogenous material: early poetry, fragments, rough drafts of both and poetry and prose, and poems

¹²Pariani 76.

in various stages of development collected in the so-called *Quaderno* [Notebook]; the recovered manuscript of *Il più lungo giorno*, which can be considered a first draft of *Canti orfici*; and finally the *Taccuinetto faentino* [Faenza Journal], a small notebook of preliminary notations and sketches. In the *Quaderno*, published by Falqui in 1941, one can find, as Bonifazi points out, the prehistory of Campana's poetry, the first decadent and symbolist European experiences, the influence of Baudelaire and the Scapigliati, touches of sadism and vampirism, Verhaeren and the post-symbolists, Carducci, fashionable superman poses (Nietzsche), a lot of Crepuscolarismo and Futurism, some hooliganism. There are many passages that would be taken up later, so that the *Quaderno* is a valuable source for the study of the variants, which show that Campana would work on the same passage with an almost obsessive insistence. And there are many passages as well that herald Campana's more mature work, as in "Oscar Wilde a San Miniato," with its almost surrealist analogic intensity:

Ma bella come te, battello bruciato tra l'alto
 Soffio glorioso del ricordo, gridai o città,
 O sogno sublime di tendere in fiamme
 I corpi alla chimera non saziata
 Amarissimo brivido funebre davanti all'incendio sordo lunare.

[But beautiful as you, boat burnt in the high
 Glorious breath of memory, I shouted o city,
 O sublime dream to tender in flames
 The bodies to the unsated chimera
 Most bitter funereal shudder before the muted lunar blaze.]

Il più lungo giorno marks an intermediate stage, already displaying a powerful new voice and many of the stylistic innovations found in its subsequent reincarnation as Campana's masterpiece, *Canti orfici*.

The liberating novelty of Campana's poetry is apparent from the very first paragraph of the section that opens *Canti orfici*, entitled *La notte* [Night], without a doubt one of the most memorable "incipit" in Italian literature:

Ricordo una vecchia città, rossa di mura e turrata, arsa sulla pianura sterminata nell'Agosto torrido, con il lontano refrigerio di colline verdi e molli sullo sfondo. Archi enormemente vuoti di ponti sul fiume impaludato in magre stagnazioni plumbee: sagome nere di zingari mobili e silenziose sulla riva: tra il barbaglio lontano di un canneto lontane forme ignude di adolescenti e il profilo e la barba giudaica di un vecchio: e a un tratto dal mezzo dell'acqua morta le zingare e un canto, da la palude afona una nenia primordiale monotona e irritante: e del tempo fu sospeso il corso. [I remember an old city, red-walled and towered, burnt on the endless plain in the torrid August, with the distant coolness of soft green hills in the background. Enormously empty bridge spans over the river mired in sparse leaden pools: black outlines of gypsies shifting and silent on the bank: amid the distant glare of a canebrake distant naked figures of adolescents and the profile and the Judaic beard of an old man: and suddenly from the midst of the dead water the gypsy women and a song, from the soundless marsh a primordial chant, monotonous and irritating: and time came to a standstill.]

With the very first word, Campana introduces the fundamental theme of memory, which in *Canti orfici* is a complex notion operating on several related levels of meaning, and is inseparable from the perception of historical and metahistorical time, personal experience and collective myth. The suspension of time at the end of the paragraph can only be the result of a redemptive memory, which transforms private occasions into mythical epiphanies, and aims at the abolition of chronological time through the recovery of an inner dimension that is beyond time and history (an important theme in subsequent modern poetry, as in Ungaretti). Thus this Dantean "libro della memoria" [book of memory] — and there are many references to Dante's *Vita nuova* in *La notte* — is open to multiple levels of reading, as Ceragioli suggests. On the literal level, Campana in *La notte* remembers episodes in the land of his youth, and in particular the encounters in the house of the matron and the conquest of the "ancella" [maiden], followed by the vision of a series of images from the past. "Il viaggio" is an episode in Genoa, after

which there is a return to the “scorci bizantini” [Byzantine perspectives] of Romagna. Dominant throughout is the theme of love in all its manifold manifestations, from animal lust — “Il suo corpo ambrato la sua bocca vorace i suoi ispidi neri capelli” [Her amber body her voracious mouth her bristly black hair] — to unattainable ideal: “Amore, primavera del sogno sei sola sei sola che appari nel velo dei fumi di viola. Come una nuvola bianca, come una nuvola bianca presso al mio cuore, o resta o resta o resta!” [Love, spring of dream you are alone you are alone who appear in the veil of the purple haze. Like a white cloud, like a white cloud next to my heart, o stay o stay o stay!] But *La notte* is also a katabasis, a descent into the instinctual world of the unconscious: “Inconsciamente colui che io ero stato si trovava avviato verso la torre barbara, la mitica custode dei sogni dell’adolescenza” [Unconsciously he who I had been found himself moving toward the barbarous tower, the mythical guardian of the dreams of my youth]. “Barbarous,” “mythical,” “savage,” “ancient” are obsessively recurring keywords, always charged with strong positive connotations, and belonging to the same semantic field expressing an essential primordial purity. In this netherworld, places and people take on an oniric dimension (here again one should mention not only Orphism and the extraordinarily vital Orpheus myth, but also the descent into hell of Dante, who Campana most probably considered one of the great exponents of the Orphic tradition, in the wake of Plato and Virgil). In this ambivalent realm — “tutto era arido e dolce nel panorama scheletrico del mondo” [everything was arid and sweet in the skeletal landscape of the world] — the figures encountered by the poet appear as the last incarnation of timeless presences, perpetuating from generation to generation the eternal and unchanging story of passion and love, pleasure and pain. Finally, there is an even deeper, barely fathomable region of being, reaching back in time to the most distant origin of man, which only the greatest artists had been able to reach with their imperishable creations (Ceragioli), and which for a fleeting moment can become dimly perceptible through an intense visionary experience: “E allora figurazioni di un’antichissima libera vita, di enormi miti solari, di stragi di orgie si crearono davanti al mio spirito” [And then representations of a most ancient free life, of enormous solar myths, of mas-sacres of orgies were created before my spirit]. This is an important

interpretive key to the recurrent surfacing of Michelangelo's *Night* and Dante's *Francesca*, two of the most important structural and thematic nuclei in the book, recurring in *La verna* (the third section of the book) as well as *La notte*:

... poi che Michelangiolo aveva ripiegato sulle sue ginocchia stanche di cammino colei che piega, che piega e non posa, regina barbara sotto il peso di tutto il sogno umano, e lo sbattere delle pose arcane e violente delle barbare travolte regine aveva udito Dante spegnersi nel grido di Francesca là sulle rive dei fiumi che stanchi di guerra mettono foce, nel mentre sulle loro rive si ricrea la pena eterna dell'amore. [. . . after Michelangiolo had bent on her knees weary of the journey the one who bends, who bends and does not pause, barbarous queen under the weight of all human dreams, and Dante had heard the battering of the arcane violent poses of the wind-tossed barbarous ancient queens become extinguished in Francesca's cry there on the banks of the rivers that tired of war run into the sea, while on their banks the eternal pain of love is being reborn.]

The next section, a series of seven poems entitled *Notturni*, takes up many of the themes of *La notte* — hope, love, suffering — with the addition of another important element which had been already implicit: death. Death seen as a liberating force, a bridge to infinity, as in “*La speranza*” [Hope]: “*Per l'amor dei poeti, porte / Aperte de la morte / su l'infinito*” [For the love of poets, open / Doors of death / onto infinity]; and therefore as a consoling, desirable presence, as in “*Il canto della tenebra*” [The song of darkness]: “*Non c'è di dolcezza che possa uguagliare la morte*” [There is no sweetness that can equal death]. The sense of alienation, the suffering, the sacrificial blood shed by the poet (“*sangue*” [blood] and “*sanguigno*” [blood-red] are recurrent keywords) with which the world is covered, as in the quotation from Whitman, is the main theme of “*L'invetriata*” [The glass window]: “. . . c'è / Nella stanza un odor di putredine: c'è / Nella stanza una piaga rossa languente” [. . .there is / In the room a smell of putrefaction: there is / In the room a red stagnant wound]. The poem in this section, which Campana himself considered of the utmost significance, is “*La Chimera*”

[The Chimera], first published in a student newspaper in 1912, and which Campana sent to Prezzolini in 1914 with the words: “Scelgo per inviarle la più vecchia la più ingenua delle mie poesie, vecchia di immagini, ancora involuta di forme: ma Lei vi sentirà l’anima che si libera” [I have chosen the oldest the most ingenuous of my poems to send you, still old in images, still formally involute: but in it you will feel the soul freeing itself].¹³ The Chimera, a hauntingly complex, enigmatic projection appearing throughout Campana’s work — “Sui suoi divini ginocchi, sulla sua forma pallida come un sogno uscito dagli innumerevoli sogni dell’ombra, tra le innumerevoli luci fallaci, l’antica amica, l’eterna Chimera teneva fra le mani rosse il mio antico cuore” [On her divine knees, on her form as pale as dream risen out of the shadow’s innumerable dreams, amid the innumerable deceptive lights, the ancient friend, the eternal Chimera held in her red hands my ancient heart] (*La notte*) — represents not only the unreachable feminine ideal, but also, as the letter to Prezzolini suggests, the prefiguration of poetry itself, the ultimate aim of Campana’s life-long quest, younger sister of Leonardo’s *La gioconda* and other great artistic creations of the past, so that the poem becomes in fact a passionate hymn to the poetic mission, the gaze of the nocturnal poet fixed intensely on the shadows of reality in search of a possible metaphysical opening, a sign from unknown distances suddenly showing through the eternal forms of the objects of the world.

The following section, *La verna* — whose title in *Il più lungo giorno* was *Il mattino: il pellegrinaggio: le sorgenti*, a clear indication of the archetypal narrative structure of the book, based on the solar cycle and the alternation of darkness and light, and on the metaphor of the journey, which is central to *Canti orfici* — represents, in the Orphic-Dantean iter of initiation, the reawakening of light after the oppressive darkness of hell, a purgatorial ascent, and if Campana calls his walk on the mountains a pilgrimage, it is mainly because he feels Dante’s presence “Dante la sua poesia di movimento mi torna tutta in memoria. O pellegrino, o pellegrini che pensosi andate” [Dante his poetry of movement comes all to mind. O pilgrim, o pilgrims who walk so pensive]. *La verna*, like *La notte*, is a

¹³Cacho Millet, *Le mie lettere* 165–66.

journey toward origins, an initiatory journey that aims at the discovery of a temporal dimension in which past and present can coincide. The structure of *La verna*, as Ceragioli points out, is of extreme interest because Campana constructs his pilgrimage on a series of ever-changing sceneries, conceived as vast backdrops, each profoundly different from the next and marked by a variety of elements running from the mystical to the grotesque, and because the spiritual itinerary also proposes the lyrical recovery of everyday reality (the donkey, the comments of the workers). Campana's climb – the verb “salire” [to climb] punctuates the various stages of the journey and expresses both physical and spiritual movement: “Guardo oppresso le roccie ripide della Falterona: dovrò salire, salire” [Oppressed I look at the steep rocks of the Falterona: I will have to climb, climb] – is also a sacred quest which holds the promise of a “paese nuovo” [a new country], “un paesaggio promesso” [a promised landscape], an ancient castle seen in the distance which is the symbol of both lost innocence and purity and of poetry itself, “la poesia toscana che fu” [Tuscan poetry which once was], the real purpose of the poet's search, and whose characteristics are simplicity and austerity (Dante, Michelangiolo). “Ritorno,” where the symbolic meaning of “salire” is made clear in the subtitle “SALGO (nello spazio, fuori del tempo)” [I CLIMB (into space, outside of time)], is an attempt to return to the very beginning of things, through a metaphysical history of nature (Bonifazi), a cosmogonic theory of the origin of the elements, of things which are pure and sound:

L'acqua il vento
 La sanità delle prime cose –
 Il lavoro umano sull'elemento
 Liquido – la natura che conduce
 Strati di roccie su strati – il vento
 Che scherza nella valle – ed ombra del vento
 La nuvola – il lontano ammonimento
 Del fiume nella valle –

[The water the wind
 The soundness of first things –
 Human toil on the liquid

Element – nature leading
 Layers of rocks upon layers – the wind
 Playing in the valley – and shadow of the wind
 The cloud – the distant warning
 Of the river in the valley –]

The image of human work is significant in that it denotes integration and harmony between man and nature, as noted by Mario Luzi, when he says that Campana sets against the pattern of humanistic disillusionment a complete integration of man in the vicissitudes of the world, in the continuity and omnipresence of all life.¹⁴ In this elemental symphony, “la tellurica melodia della Falterona” [the telluric melody of the Falterona], water is the primal element whose voice reverberates with the echo of undifferentiated oneness – “Nella voce dell’elemento noi udiamo tutto” [in the voice of the element we hear everything] – it is the source, rising from the depths of the earth, the very essence of being in its roots and its immensity. But it is also the element that connects moments and places, memory and imagination, childhood and death, the image of time itself.

After *La verna*, Campana’s endless journey of discovery – “conosco una musica dolce nella memoria, senza ricordarmene neppure una nota. So che si chiama la partenza o il ritorno” [I know a sweet music in my memory, without remembering even one note. I know it’s called departure or return] – takes him to the New World – “Viaggio a Montevideo” [Voyage to Montevideo] – in his search for harmony and purity, which he seems to find for a moment in “Pampa,” where the direct contact with the forces of nature and the intense visionary experience lead to a mystical palingenesis:

E allora fu che nel mio intorpidimento finale io sentii con delizia l’uomo nuovo nascere: l’uomo nascere riconciliato colla natura ineffabilmente dolce e terribile: deliziosamente e orgogliosamente succhi vitali nascere alle profondità dell’essere: il cielo come la terra in alto, misterioso, puro, deserto dall’ombra, infinito. [And it was then that in my final torpor I felt with delight the new man being born: man being born rec-

¹⁴Dino Campana *oggi* 144.

onciled with nature, ineffably sweet and frightening: delightfully and proudly vital juices being born to the depths of being; flowing from the depths of the earth: the sky like the earth high above, mysterious, pure, deserted of shadows, infinite.]

The visionary experience is the privileged moment in Campana's journey, differing only in intensity from his "dream," or his regenerative, archetypal memory, and it is more likely to summon all the subversive power of Campana's language, all its creative energy, forcing it to the very limit of syntactical and semantic tension, as in the extreme case of the fourth stanza of "Genoa." A key stylistic device in all of Campana's work is the obsessive iteration, the constant intratextual and intertextual resurfacing of the same word or image, which has a remote Romantic ascendancy and has been likened to the Wagnerian leitmotif (Galimberti); but in Campana reiteration, while preserving its more traditional musical function, also plays a marked structural role, by effecting a process of identification across different places, times, and texts, which undermines the distinction between past and present and the concept of time as progression and sequentiality.

Canti orfici is a constant revisiting of places and cities, especially those belonging to the poet's past, Bologna, Faenza, Florence, Genoa, each with its own unmistakable character, its own secret essence: "Se Firenze è l'immagine della musica, Faenza è l'immagine della danza latina" [If Florence is the image of music, Faenza is the image of Latin dance]. And each is linked to a different experience, a different aspect of reality: in "Firenze" the great artistic tradition of the city and its high spiritual quality are set against the night life of its red-light district, while Bologna in "Giornata di un nevrastenico" [The Day of a Neurasthenic] inspires tones of scorn and derision in the almost surrealistic description of the people as small, leaping animals. But in "Scirocco" he discovers in Bologna the image of a fabled port toward the Orient, and its streets conjure stilnovistic, Cavalcantian apparitions: "Una figura giovine, gli occhi grigi, la bocca dalle linee rosee tenui, passò nella vastità luminosa del cielo. Sbiancava nel cielo fumoso la melodia dei suoi passi" [A young figure, with grey eyes, her mouth with soft rosy lines, went by in the luminous vastness of the sky. The melody of her steps paled in the hazy sky].

Campana is always pursuing a lyric ideal, a personal mode of expression, and in trying to give it a definitive form, he constantly broadens and multiplies his experimental approach, attacks it from several angles, starts over at every turn, as the host of variants, his proteiform style, and his iterative obsession amply indicate, but always in search of an absolute — this is the essential nature of Campana's work and of his very life — which for him can only be a poetic absolute. In other words poetry is for Campana the only non-deceptive absolute, which can be reached solely at the furthest limits of personal commitment (Jacobbi). Finally, it is poetry, against and beyond the failure of time and history, that justifies a senseless and dispersive life and totally defines it.

Dino Campana, even independently of the merits of his poetry, would remain one of the most striking, dramatic, and exciting figures of twentieth-century Italian literature, and certainly one of the most disputed and controversial. His story is complicated by two factors of far-reaching import: his uncertain mental condition, which would ultimately confine him to the asylum of Castel Pulci for the last fourteen years of his life, but would mark him from the age of fifteen — through a complex interplay of conflicts and events involving his family, his hometown, the authorities, his own unorthodox behavior and absolute commitment to poetry, and finally all social institutions — as “strange,” incorrigibly unstable, erratic, and later “demented,” the “Mad Poet,” the wandering “maudit,” jack-of-all trades, cosmopolitan more out of neurotic compulsion than cultural choice; all this compounded by the fact that in this man the diversity of the pure artist (as Campana called himself) with respect to the dominant cultural models, especially after the traumatic experience of the loss of the first manuscript, explodes with extreme violence against all literary institutions and their rituals, which Campana challenges with his own irreducible uniqueness: “Viene alle lettere una generazione di ladruncoli. Chi vi insegnò l'arte del facil vivere fanciulli?” [A generation of petty thieves is coming to literature. Who taught you the art of easy living boys?]¹⁵ and then, on the same page, “Il popolo d'Italia non canta più. Non vi sembra questa la più grande sciagura nazionale?” [The people of Italy no longer sing. Doesn't this seem to you

¹⁵*Opere e contributi*, ed. Enrico Falqui (Firenze: Vallecchi, 1973) 442.

like the greatest national tragedy?] A further complication, from a critical standpoint, stems from the initial perception, as part of the legend, of Campana as a sort of romantic “primitive” poet, uncultured and instinctive. The question of Campana’s culture has been largely resolved by several studies (Bonalumi, Bonifazi, Galimberti, Turchetta, and others) showing that Campana’s text is in fact highly literary and culturally dense. Nietzsche, Shurè, Wagner, the Orphic tradition, Goethe, Poe, Whitman, Rimbaud, Verlaine, Mallarmè, Nerval, D’Annunzio, Carducci, the Futurists, Dante are some of the most important points of reference for Campana, who can also be credited for being one of the first in Italy to read the works of Freud. Yet for those who knew him, Campana’s culture was never in question:

Dalla sua conversazione trapelavano ogni momento conoscenze di paesi, di linguaggi, di usi e costumi alieni e remoti, che nessuno di noi sapeva spiegarsi e che ci disorientavano. Si parlava di letteratura? e Campana citava nomi di poeti tedeschi, francesi, inglesi, spagnoli e brani delle loro opere nella lingua originale.” [His conversation betrayed at every moment a knowledge of countries, languages, alien and remote practices and customs which none of us was able to explain and which confounded us. Were we talking about literature? and Campana would cite names of German, French, English, Spanish poets and passages from their works in the original language.]¹⁶

Campana expressly stated that he wanted to create a poetry having a European character, “una poesia europea musicale colorita” [a musical, colored, European poetry], so that the search for a new poetic dimension did not entail a rejection of tradition, notwithstanding Campana’s own polemical invectives, aimed in any case mostly at contemporary literature, and often showing unresolved conflicts, as in the case of D’Annunzio and the Futurists; on the contrary, it was to be founded on the grafting of “la più viva sensibilità moderna nella linea della più pura tradizione italiana” [the

¹⁶Ardengo Soffici, *Ricordi di vita artistica e letteraria* (Firenze: Vallecchi, 1931) 118.

keenest modern sensibility on the line of the purest Italian tradition]. By the latter he meant primarily Dante, whose constant presence in *Canti orfici* is to be considered of fundamental importance for an understanding of the deep structure and the mythical and symbolic underpinning of the book (Bonaffini).

Campana's acute sense of alienation, his extreme, painful social "eccentricity," are nowhere more clearly expressed than in the colophon at the end of *Canti orfici*, a slightly modified quotation from Whitman, to which Campana attributed a fundamental importance, as shown in a letter to Emilio Cecchi: "Se vivo o morto lei si occuperà ancora di me la prego di non dimenticare le ultime parole *They were all torn and cover'd with the boy's blood* che sono le uniche importanti del libro" [If dead or alive you still show interest in me I beg you not to forget the last words in the book *They were all torn and cover'd with the boy's blood* which are the only important ones in the book].¹⁷ The image, as often is the case with Campana, is complex and multi-layered, and it offers different levels of interpretation, from the personal (Campana's own role as sacrificial victim), to the mythical (Orpheus's fate at the hand of the Maenads and Dionysus's dismemberment by the Titans), to the deeper psychological and anthropological level of the *Sparagmos*, the ritual tearing apart mentioned by Northrop Frye. In any case it stands for a profound laceration affecting all aspects of expression and existence.

Campana did not have followers and imitators, as for instance did D'Annunzio, probably because his experience was too intensely personal and unrepeatable, but Campana's voice has penetrated deeply into twentieth-century poetic consciousness, and while it is difficult to determine its full impact, its echo can be heard in the voice of numerous modern poets, such as Ungaretti, Cardarelli, Montale, Bigongiari, Gatto, Luzi, as Silvio Ramat has shown.¹⁸ One can only agree with Jacobbi when, commenting on the irradiating power of *Canti orfici*, he calls it the first complete book of our poetic experience; only in Campana and with Campana does poetry show the co-presence of word and image, the dissolution of man into language, which is the supreme aspiration of the moderns and which has been attempted again and again in the different formulas

¹⁷Cacho Millet, *Le mie lettere* 38.

¹⁸Dino Campana *oggi* 111–36.

of “*lirica pura*” [pure poetry], Orphism, “*prosa d’arte*,” and finally, more consistently, “*Hermeticism*.” Interest in Campana has been growing steadily in the last twenty years, as witnessed by the proliferation of critical and biographical studies, to the extent that in 1988 alone four new editions of *Canti orfici* were published, and while Mario Luzi has defined *Canti Orfici* “*il libro più libro, più ‘oeuvre’ del nostro Novecento*” [the book more book, more “oeuvre” of our twentieth century],¹⁹ there are those who are now unabashedly calling Campana *the* greatest poet of this century (Vassalli).

A critical evaluation of Campana, even after eight decades of close attention to his work and an ever-growing body of criticism, has yet to find a well-defined area of consensus, aside from the general acceptance of Campana as an authentic poet, and seems to oscillate between two principal positions: on one side are his designation as innovator and founder of modern Italian poetry (Anceschi and others), the abiding support and admiration of writers and critics connected with the Florentine Hermetic movement (Luzi, Bigongiari), and the reassessment of Campana’s role carried out by Sanguineti in his important anthology of modern Italian poetry, where Campana’s “*greatness*,” as the foremost representative of expressionistic poetry in Italy, is proclaimed with such conviction as to make it indisputable:

Ma Campana, finalmente, cioè uno dei pochi veramente grandi del nostro Novecento, trova qui la sua chiave legittima: è in lui, precisamente, che tutta la possibile tensione espressionistica del nostro Novecento ritrova il suo autentico protagonista. Per la prima volta, qui si tenta di misurare a quanto impeto d’anima il linguaggio sia capace di resistere, quanta intensità spirituale sia in grado di contenere, quale pressione, e anche proprio pressione morale, il verso spinto al limite riesca a arginare e sorreggere.” [But finally Campana, namely one of the few truly great of our twentieth century, finds here his legitimate key: it is in him, precisely, that all the possible expressionistic tension of our twentieth century discovers its authentic protagonist. For the first time, there is here an attempt to measure how much vehemence of the soul lan-

¹⁹*Dino Campana oggi* 144.

guage is capable of withstanding, how much spiritual intensity it is able to contain, how much pressure, even moral pressure, verse pushed to the limit can still check and sustain.]²⁰

For Sanguineti, Campana is the one who has brought this laceration within language to the breaking point, drawing the entire pathology of the collective poetic conscience into the alienation of his mind, the whirlwind of his images, his obsessive repetitions, his impossible rhythms. And Campana's greatness is inseparable from his extreme designs of cultural sabotage, his firm refusal to collaborate with literary institutions, and with all institutions in general.

On the other side there is a long series of tentative, reductive interpretations (Papini, Bo, Contini, Mengaldo) and some outright rejections (Saba: "era matto e solo matto" [he was crazy and only crazy]),²¹ From the beginning, Campana's turbulent, nomadic life, his well-known excesses and frequent detentions in prisons and asylums, his vehemently adversary stance with respect to literary institutions and movements, his final, tragic internment in Castel Pulci, inevitably elicited the creation of a public persona, the Rimbaudian *bohémien*, the "mad poet" of *Canti orfici*. Campana's disconcertingly difficult language, the rupturing style of certain passages, which had no precedent or parallel in Italian letters, and was not in any way explainable in terms of pre-existing models, if beyond the reach of critical exegesis, would then become accessible to a psychological interpretation.

Already in 1914–15, the first critics to review Campana, Giuseppe De Robertis, Emilio Cecchi, and Giovanni Boine, notwithstanding their keen sensibility and discretion, and their valuable stylistic analyses, by underscoring certain human aspects of the Campana "case," contributed unintentionally, and perhaps inevitably, to the formation of the enduring Campana myth. The legend of Campana, as Corsaro and Verdenelli have documented in their recent bibliography, exploded with devastating force, producing an enormous, overwhelming mass of newspaper articles

²⁰Edoardo Sanguineti, *La poesia italiana del Novecento* (Torino: Einaudi, 1971) lv.

²¹Quoted by Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo, *Poeti Italiani del Novecento* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1978) 277.

that detail moments and aspects of Campana from every possible angle. Even the numerous biographies (Pariani, Ravagli, Soffici, Gerola, Vassalli, Turchetta) have shown a marked tendency to romanticize the figure of the poet (a possible exception is Pariani's biography, the first of the series, which, whether or not it can persuade a modern reader, does take a rather neutral and objective stance, and has produced a wealth of information utilized by subsequent researchers). Corsaro and Verdenelli point out, however, that Campana from the very first was well known not for his extravagant behavior, but for the close, meaningful relationship that behavior instituted with the reading of *Canti orfici*. After the legend gained momentum, those who wrote about him would remember the mad poet rejected and misunderstood in his unacceptable conduct by the ignorant townspeople and by the short-sighted Florentine culture. But that fortune would in fact always be based on real intellectual interactions, an essential role being played by the character of a poetry which was not totally categorizable, but which was being read over and over. It is a fact that Campana's legend was a strong preconditioning factor in the evaluation of his poetry. Already in 1915 Boine spoke of "allucinata febbre" [hallucinated fever], "lirica frenesia" [lyric frenzy], "spasimo dell'inesprimibile" [agony of the inexpressible], all terms which would become lasting features of Campana criticism.²² Solmi, who was the first to recognize the musical quality of *Canti orfici*, speaks of thought coming apart in a "balbettio demente" [demented stuttering]²³ when dealing with the fourth stanza of "Genoa," the most expressly visionary passage in *Canti orfici*, which has contributed more than any other to the misprision of Campana's poetry.

Even Carlo Bo, in a 1939 essay which is perhaps the first balanced study of Campana's poetry and in which the critic underscores the visionary nature of that poetry, when confronted with "Genoa" is forced to fall back on the "official" interpretation, and writes that words seem to come to a standstill, "nel cerchio di un'insistenza disperata" [in the circle of a desperate insistence].²⁴

²²Giovanni Boine, *Riviera ligure* August 1915: 431–38.

²³Sergio Solmi, *Fiera letteraria* 26 August 1928: 1–2.

²⁴Carlo Bo, *Frontespizio*, December 1973; rpt. *Otto studi* (Firenze: Vallecchi, 1940) 125.

That same year Gianfranco Contini, who defined Campana as “visivo” [visual], as opposed to visionary, spoke of the “fase magico-balbettata” [magical-stuttering phase], and the attempt to capture the ideal through “assurdità verbale” [verbal absurdity].²⁵ Papini, one of Campana’s evil spirits, who could not understand the interest generated by the poet, relegates him among other passing fads, reducing his more daring passages to “disordine mentale” [mental disorder], while Raimondi spoke of “balbettio verbale” [verbal stuttering].²⁶ “Balbettio,” with its implications of incompleteness and impotence, had become a prejudicial term, a conceptual filter inevitably applied to the fruition of Campana’s poetry that would be used again and again, even by critics of the stature of Giuseppe De Robertis — “un frantumarsi molecolare, un balbettio frenetico” [a molecular shattering, a frenzied stuttering]²⁷ — and Marco Forti — “infrenabile balbettio” [uncontrollable stuttering].²⁸ The first real break with this restrictive critical orientation came only as late as 1953, with Parronchi’s essay “‘Genoa’ e il senso dei colori nella poesia di Campana” [“‘Genoa’ and the Sense of Colors in Campana’s Poetry”], in which the critic expresses the hope that as a result of his analysis the verb “balbettare” [to stutter] would no longer accompany the definition of even the most tormented of Campana’s verses. Insisting on the formal consciousness of the poet and on the “effetto caleidoscopico del frazionamento dell’immagine” [the kaleidoscopic effect of splitting the image], Parronchi attempts to show how the de-composition and the fragmentation of planes corresponds to the technical experimentation of contemporary figurative art, especially Futurism and Cubism²⁹; a fruitful suggestion (the cubist element in *La verna*) exploited by later critics (Del Serra, Ceragioli). But the real turning point takes place with Neuro Bonifazi’s book (*Dino Campana* [Roma: Edizioni dell’Ateneo, 1964], and expanded second edition 1978), one of the most intelligent and richest contributions of all Campana criticism, which not only examines the importance of Nietzsche (especially the Nietzsche of

²⁵Gianfranco Contini, *Letteratura* 4 (Oct. 1937): 106–10.

²⁶G. Raimondi, *Mondo* 219 (25 April 1953): 7.

²⁷G. De Robertis, *Poesia* 6 (1947): 81.

²⁸Marco Forti, *Inventario* 5–6 (Oct.–Dec. 1953): 113.

²⁹A. Parronchi, *Paragone* 48 (Dec. 1953): 16.

Zarathustra and *The Birth of Tragedy*, with its Apollonian-Dionysian duality) and the Orphic tradition (filtered through French symbolism) for Campana's poetry, but undertakes as well a fundamental diachronic study of the variants of "Genoa," demonstrating convincingly that the poem had gone through several "normal" phases lacking any logical-syntactical "aberration" of discourse. "Genoa"'s "balbettio," far from being an abnormality due to mental disorder, is finally elevated to critical respectability as "il risultato di uno studio esigentissimo di stile" [the result of an extremely exacting study of style]. More strictly literary, adopting a methodology with structuralist tendencies, is *L'immagine aperta*, 1973, by Maura del Serra, for whom Campana is an avant-garde poet, in the very precise sense of the word as a semantic, lyric, ideological recovery of a personal meaning in the Italian-European poetic tradition and heritage of the eighteenth century; in the sense of an immediate and conscious attempt at total art, or rather at the dynamic conversion of the relationship (of Romantic origin) between art and life into the other relationship, both classical and modern, between knowledge and existence.

Worthy of mention, finally, are the excellent propedeutic monograph by Ruggero Jacobbi (*Invito alla lettura di Dino Campana* [Milano: Mursia, 1976]), who discovers the power of Campana's voice in its dramatic certainty of being alone, of standing for a song which can at times be heard by common people, if they ever come out of the parameters of bourgeois life and emerge as nocturnal ghosts, apparitions marked by sarcasm, evil and innocence; and *Orfismo e poesia in Dino Campana* (Genoa: Il Melangolo, 1983), by Ida Li Vigni, for whom Campana's Orphism, far from being a mere literary and cultural "topos," constitutes a process of symbolic re-semanticization, which also affects the relationship between man and nature, between erosive historical time and regenerating cyclical atemporality, a way of approaching not only the World and the depths of the Self, but above all poetry itself.

The most significant contribution to Campana studies in the last twenty years is undoubtedly the work of Fiorenza Ceragioli. Her annotated edition of *Canti orfici* (Vallecchi 1985 and Rizzoli 1989) is a marvel of insight and painstaking research, and it sheds light on many of the passages and images that had remained

obscure for so long. Besides Ceragioli's Rizzoli edition, four other editions of *Canti orfici* came out in 1989, by Neuro Bonifazi (Garzanti), Gianni Turchetta (Marcos y Marcos), Sebastiano Vassalli and Carlo Fini (TEA), and Mario Lunetta (New Compton). As for Campana's life, indispensable is the work of Gabriel Cacho Millet (*Le mie lettere sono fatte per essere bruciate*, 1978; *Souvenir d'un pendu. Carteggio 1910–1931 con documenti inediti e rari*, 1985; *Dino Campana fuorilegge*, 1985; *Dolce illusorio sud*, 1997).

Editor's note: the Italian text follows that of the 1985 edition by Fiorenza Ceragioli, which is based on the original 1914 Ravagli edition of *Canti orfici* and differs in many minor details from the standard 1973 Vallecchi edition.

CANTI ORFICI

(Die tragödie des letzten Germanen in Italien)

*A Guglielmo II imperatore dei Germani
l'autore dedica*

ORPHIC SONGS

(Die tragödie des letzten Germanen in Italien)

*To William emperor of the Germans
the author dedicates*

LA NOTTE

THE NIGHT

I
LA NOTTE

1. Ricordo una vecchia città, rossa di mura e turrata, arsa su la pianura sterminata nell'Agosto torrido, con il lontano refrigerio di colline verdi e molli sullo sfondo. Archi enormemente vuoti di ponti sul fiume impaludato in magre stagnazioni plumbee: sagome nere di zingari mobili e silenziose sulla riva: tra il barbaglio lontano di un canneto lontane forme ignude di adolescenti e il profilo e la barba giudaica di un vecchio: e a un tratto dal mezzo dell'acqua morta le zingare e un canto, da la palude afona una nenia primordiale monotona e irritante: e del tempo fu sospeso il corso.



2. Inconsciamente io levai gli occhi alla torre barbara che dominava il viale lunghissimo dei platani. Sopra il silenzio fatto intenso essa riviveva il suo mito lontano e selvaggio: mentre per visioni lontane, per sensazioni oscure e violente un altro mito, anch'esso mistico e selvaggio mi ricorreva a tratti alla mente. Laggiù avevano tratto le lunghe vesti mollemente verso lo splendore vago della porta le passeggiatrici, le antiche: la campagna intorpidiva allora nella rete dei canali: fanciulle dalle acconciature agili, dai profili di medaglia, sparivano a tratti sui

I
THE NIGHT

1. I remember¹ an old city,² red-walled and towered, burnt on the endless plain in the torrid August, with the distant coolness of soft green hills in the background. Enormously empty bridge spans over the river mired in sparse leaden pools: black outlines of gypsies moving silently along the banks: amid the distant glare of a canebrake distant naked figures of youths and the profile and the Judaic beard of an old man: and suddenly out of the midst of the dead water the gypsy women and a song, out of the soundless marsh a primordial chant, monotonous and irritating; and time came to a standstill.



2. Unconsciously I raised my eyes to the barbarous tower that overlooked the endless avenue of plane trees. Above the intense silence it lived its distant savage myth again: while through distant visions, through dark, violent sensations another myth, it too mystical and savage, came to mind now and then. Down there the strollers, the ancient³ ones, had softly trailed their long dresses toward the vague splendor of the gate:⁴ the countryside would grow listless then in its network of canals: young girls with lithe hairdos, with medallion profiles, would disappear now

¹Key word in Campana, belonging to the important semantic field of memory. Here it introduces the realm of poetry (see *The Night*, sec. 9, p. 17) where poetry is called “queen of memory,” and where time can finally be abolished (“and time came to a standstill”).

²The city is Faenza, as Campana tells Pariani. Cf. Carlo Pariani, *Vite non romanizzate di Dino Campana Scrittore e di Eugenio Boncinelli scultore* (Milano: Guanda, 1978) 58.

³*ancient: ancient*, in Campana’s poetic world, indicates an eternal presence, and it always has very strong positive connotations, as do other related words such as *barbarous, savage, primitive, primordial*.

⁴*gate*: city gate.

carrettini dietro gli svolti verdi. Un tocco di campana argentino e dolce di lontananza: la Sera: nella chiesetta solitaria, all'ombra delle modeste navate, io stringevo Lei, dalle carni rosee e dagli accesi occhi fuggitivi: anni ed anni ed anni fondevano nella dolcezza trionfale del ricordo.



3. Inconsciamente colui che io ero stato si trovava avviato verso la torre barbara, la mitica custode dei sogni dell'adolescenza. Saliva al silenzio delle straducole antichissime lungo le mura di chiese e di conventi: non si udiva il rumore dei suoi passi. Una piazzetta deserta, casupole schiacciate, finestre mute: a lato in un balenìo enorme la torre, otticuspide rossa impenetrabile arida. Una fontana del cinquecento taceva inaridita, la lapide spezzata nel mezzo del suo commento latino. Si svolgeva una strada acciottolata e deserta verso la città.



4. Fu scosso da una porta che si spalancò. Dei vecchi, delle forme oblique ossute e mute, si accalcavano spingendosi coi gomiti perforanti, terribili nella gran luce. Davanti alla faccia barbata di un frate che sporgeva dal vano di una porta sostavano in un inchino trepidante servile, strisciavano via mormorando, rialzandosi

and then on small carts behind green bends. The silvery toll of a bell, sweet in its distance: the Evening:⁵ in the solitary little church, in the shadows of the modest naves, I held Her,⁶ pale-rose flesh and burning restless eyes: years and years were fusing in the triumphant sweetness of memory.



3. The one I had once been found himself walking unconsciously toward the barbarous tower, the mythical guardian of youthful dreams.⁷ He was climbing in the silence of very ancient lanes along the walls of churches and convents: you could not hear the sound of his footsteps. A small deserted square, crushed hovels, silent windows: to one side in an enormous blaze the red tower, eight-pointed,⁸ impenetrable, parched. A parched sixteenth-century fountain lay still, with its stone shattered in the middle of the Latin comment. A deserted cobblestone road made its way toward the city.



4. He was startled by a door that opened wide. Old men,⁹ hunched bony silent forms crowded together pushing each other with piercing elbows, menacing in the great light. They paused with an anxious servile bow before the bearded face of a monk leaning out of a doorway, then shuffled away muttering, straightening little by little,

⁵*the Evening*: Fiorenza Ceragioli, in her comment to *Canti orfici* (Firenze: Vallecchi, 1985), notes that the capital letter signifies the first evening of love for the poet, transfigured into an event of knowledge and poetry.

⁶*Her*: also capitalized, because in Campana woman and poetry tend to converge in a single image.

⁷*mythical guardian of adolescent dreams*: Campana went to high school in Faenza.

⁸*eight-pointed*: the octagonal belfry of S. Maria Vecchia.

⁹*old men*: there was a shelter near S. Maria Vecchia. One of several everyday scenes in *The Night* transformed into a modern hell. *The Night* is the realm of instinct, of the unconscious, of pain and suffering, a *katabasis* as a necessary moment in the journey of initiation.

poco a poco, trascinando uno ad uno le loro ombre lungo i muri rossastri e scalcinati, tutti simili ad ombra. Una donna dal passo dondolante e dal riso incosciente si univa e chiudeva il corteo.



5. Strisciavano le loro ombre lungo i muri rossastri e scalcinati: egli seguiva, autòma. Diresse alla donna una parola che cadde nel silenzio del meriggio: un vecchio si voltò a guardarlo con uno sguardo assurdo lucente e vuoto. E la donna sorrideva sempre di un sorriso molle nell'aridità meridiana, ebete e sola nella luce catastrofica.



6. Non seppi mai come, costeggiando torpidi canali, rividi la mia ombra che mi derideva nel fondo. Mi accompagnò per strade male odoranti dove le femmine cantavano nella caldura. Ai confini della campagna una porta incisa di colpi, guardata da una giovine femmina in veste rosa, pallida e grassa, la attrasse: entrai. Una antica e opulente matrona, dal profilo di montone, coi neri capelli agilmente attorti sulla testa sculturale barbaramente decorata dall'occhio liquido come da una gemma nera dagli sfaccettamenti bizzari sedeva, agitata da grazie infantili che

dragging one by one their shadows along the red peeling walls, each of them just like a shadow. A woman with a swaying walk and a mindless laugh joined them and closed the procession.



5. Their shadows shuffled along the red peeling walls: he followed like an automaton.¹⁰ He said a word to the woman that fell in the afternoon silence: an old man turned to look at him with an absurd luminous and empty look. And the woman was still smiling with a soft smile in the arid afternoon, doltish and alone in the catastrophic¹¹ light.



6. I never knew how I saw my shadow again mocking me from the bottom as I skirted listless canals. It accompanied me along foul-smelling streets where women were singing in the heat. At the edge of the countryside a door scarred¹² by blows, watched by a young woman in a red dress, pale and fat, attracted it: I went in. An ancient opulent matron¹³ with the profile of a ram was sitting inside, her black hair lithely twisted on her sculptural head barbarously decorated by her liquid

¹⁰*automaton*: because in the realm of the unconscious. Follows *unconsciously* at the start of secs. 2 and 3 of *The Night*.

¹¹*catastrophic*: forceful and violent use of adjectives typical of Campana.

¹²*door scarred by blows*: the door of a brothel. “The blows have the power to cause wounds even on an inanimate object. Campana’s expressionistic oneirism has an almost ‘animistic’ evocative capacity” (Mario Lunetta, in comment to *Canti orfici* [Roma: Newton Compton, 1989] 35).

¹³*matron*: “the matron and the maiden preside over the world of instinct and of the unconscious and are, therefore, structural elements of the second interpretive key of *The Night*, like the other matrons and maidens given this function by Campana in this itinerary” (Ceragioli 22). The first level of interpretation is the literal, and the third, in Ceragioli’s classification, is the recovery of the past, as an authentic source of strength and truth, through art (here primarily Dante and Michelangelo).

rinascevano colla speranza traendo essa da un mazzo di carte lunghe e untuose strane teorie di regine languenti re fanti armi e cavalieri. Salutai e una voce conventuale, profonda e melodrammatica mi rispose insieme ad un grazioso sorriso aggrinzito. Distinsi nell'ombra l'ancella che dormiva colla bocca semiaperta, rantolante di un sonno pesante, seminudo il bel corpo agile e ambrato. Sedetti piano.



7. La lunga teoria dei suoi amori sfilava monotona ai miei orecchi. Antichi ritratti di famiglia erano sparsi sul tavolo untuoso. L'agile forma di donna dalla pelle ambrata stesa sul letto ascoltava curiosamente, poggiata sui gomiti come una Sfinge: fuori gli orti verdissimi tra i muri rosseggianti: noi soli tre vivi nel silenzio meridiano.



8. Era intanto calato il tramonto ed avvolgeva del suo oro il luogo commosso dai ricordi e pareva consacrarlo. La voce della Ruffiana si era fatta man mano più dolce, e la sua testa di sacerdotessa orientale compiaceva a pose languenti. La magia della sera, languida amica del criminale, era galeotta delle nostre anime oscure e i suoi fastigi sembravano promettere un regno misterioso. E la sacerdotessa dei piaceri sterili, l'ancella ingenua ed avida e il poeta si guardavano,

eye like a black gem with bizarre facets, stirred by childlike graces that were being reborn with hope as from a deck of long greasy cards she drew strange processions of languid queens kings infantrymen arms and knights. I greeted her and a convent voice, deep and melodramatic, answered me with a graceful wrinkled smile. In the shadows I noticed the maiden sleeping with her mouth half open, rattling in heavy sleep, her lovely lithe amber body half-naked. I sat down quietly.



7. The long train of her loves paraded monotonously in my ears. Ancient family portraits were scattered on the greasy table. The lithe figure of the amber-skinned woman stretched out on the bed listened curiously, leaning¹⁴ on her elbows like a Sphinx:¹⁵ outside were the deep-green orchards amid the reddish walls: only the three of us alive in the afternoon silence.



8. Meanwhile the sun had set and shrouded with its gold the place stirred by memories, and seemed to consecrate it. The voice of the Procress had become gradually softer, and her head, like that of an oriental priestess, delighted in languishing poses. The magic of the evening, languid friend of criminals, was the go-between¹⁶ to our dark souls, and its heights seemed to promise a mysterious realm. And the priestess of sterile pleasures, the ingenuous greedy maiden and the

¹⁴*leaning on her elbows*: a ritual pose recurrent throughout *Canti orfici*, figuratively related to Michelangelo's *Night* and perhaps to the famous frescoes of the Villa of Mysteries in Pompeii.

¹⁵*Sphinx*: women are seen as caryatids or sphinxes for the ritual fixity evoked by such images.

¹⁶*go-between*: *galeotta*: reference to Dante, *Inf.* V, 137, where the same adjective appears. The allusion is repeated and made more explicit in the next section.

anime infeconde inconsciamente cercanti il problema della loro vita. Ma la sera scendeva messaggio d'oro dei brividi freschi della notte.



9. Venne la notte e fu compita la conquista dell'ancella. Il suo corpo ambrato la sua bocca vorace i suoi ispidi neri capelli a tratti la rivelazione dei suoi occhi atterriti di voluttà intricarono una fantastica vicenda. Mentre più dolce, già presso a spegnersi ancora regnava nella lontananza il ricordo di Lei, la matrona suadente, la regina ancora ne la sua linea classica tra le sue grandi sorelle del ricordo: poi che Michelangiolo aveva ripiegato sulle sue ginocchia stanche di cammino colei che piega, che piega e non posa, regina barbara sotto il peso di tutto il sogno umano, e lo sbattere delle pose arcane e violente delle barbare travolte regine antiche aveva udito Dante spegnersi nel grido di Francesca là sulle rive dei fiumi che stanchi di guerra mettono foce, nel mentre sulle loro rive si ricrea la pena eterna dell'amore. E l'ancella, l'ingenua Maddalena dai capelli ispidi e dagli occhi brillanti chiedeva in sussulti dal suo corpo sterile e dorato, crudo e selvaggio, dolcemente chiuso nell'umiltà del suo mistero. La lunga notte piena degli inganni delle varie immagini.



poet¹⁷ were looking at each other, barren souls unconsciously seeking the problem of their lives. But the evening descended, golden message of the cool shivers of the night.



9. Night came and the conquest of the maiden was completed. Her amber body her voracious mouth her bristling black hair the sudden revelation of her eyes terrified by wantonness wove a fantastic story. Sweeter meanwhile, already about to fade away, in the distance still reigned the memory of Her,¹⁸ the beguiling matron, the queen still in her classic bearing among her great sisters of memory: after Michelangiolo had bent her down on her knees weary of the journey, she who bends, who bends and does not pause, barbarous queen under the weight of all human dreams, and Dante had heard the battering of the arcane violent poses of the wind-tossed barbarous ancient queens¹⁹ die out in Francesca's cry there on the banks of the rivers that war-weary run into the sea, while on their banks the eternal pain of love is born anew. And the maiden, the ingenuous Magdalene with bristly hair and luminous eyes asked in spasms of her sterile golden body, crude and savage, sweetly closed in the humility of its mystery. The long night full of the deceits of the various images.



¹⁷*poet*: “Campana, by defining himself as such, says that his problem is poetry; the procuress seeks the solution to the problem of her life in the illusory world of playing cards, the maiden, *ingenuous*, in that just as illusory of *sterile pleasures*” (Ceragioli 26).

¹⁸*Her*: poetry, whose *great sisters of memory* are Michelangelo's *Night* and Dante's *Francesca*, namely the great artistic creations of the past which Campana associates with the world of poetry. Elsewhere it is also identified with the Chimera.

¹⁹*ancient queens*: Semiramis, Dido, Helen, Cleopatra (Inf. V, 31).

10. Si affacciavano ai cancelli d'argento delle prime avventure le antiche immagini, addolcite da una vita d'amore, a proteggermi ancora col loro sorriso di una misteriosa incantevole tenerezza. Si aprivano le chiuse aule dove la luce affonda uguale dentro gli specchi all'infinito, apparendo le immagini avventurose delle cortigiane nella luce degli specchi impallidite nella loro attitudine di sfingi: e ancora tutto quello che era arido e dolce, sfiorite le rose della giovinezza, tornava a rivivere sul panorama scheletrico del mondo.



11. Nell'odore pirico di sera di fiera, nell'aria gli ultimi clangori, vedevo le antichissime fanciulle della prima illusione profilarsi a mezzo i ponti gettati da la città al sobborgo ne le sere dell'estate torrida: volte di tre quarti, udendo dal sobborgo il clangore che si accentua annunciando le lingue di fuoco delle lampade inquiete a trivellare l'atmosfera carica di luci orgiastiche: ora addolcite: nel già

10. At the silver gates of the first adventures appeared the first images,²⁰ softened by a life of love to protect me once more with their smiles of mystery and enchanting tenderness. The closed halls where the light sinks evenly into the mirrors²¹ to infinity were opened, as the adventurous images of the courtesans appeared in the light of the mirrors, pale in their sphinx-like postures: and once more all that was arid and sweet,²² the roses of youth withered, came back to life on the skeletal landscape of the world.²³



11. In the saltpeter smell of the festival night, the last uproars lingering in the air, I saw the very ancient girls²⁴ of the first illusion appear in the torrid summer evenings midway across the bridges thrown by the city onto the suburb: turned three-quarters of the way, while from the suburb you can hear the uproar grow louder as the flaming tongues of the lamps begin to flicker and bore restlessly through the air laden with orgiastic lights: now softened:²⁵ soft and rose-colored

²⁰*first images*: not childhood memories, as Ceragioli points out, but memories of the first erotic experiences. The silver gates therefore belong to a brothel.

²¹*mirrors*: a common image in decadent poetry, the mirror in Campana facilitates encounters with the world of infinity and regression into archetypal memory.

²²*arid and sweet*: a typical pairing of semantically contrastive adjectives, a consistent feature of Campana's style.

²³*skeletal landscape of the world*: an example of Campana's baroque expressionism. A recurrent image in *The Night* (sec. 11, sec. 12, sec. 18) to describe mundane reality.

²⁴*most ancient girls*: the same as the ancient strollers of sec. 2. "He sees in today's girls those of long ago; Campana's characteristic perspective by virtue of which the person in the present is the current and latest of a series that from antiquity has continued until now" (Ceragioli 32). The abolition of time through a process of identification is one of the main aims of *Orphic Songs*.

²⁵*now softened*: refers to the most ancient girls.

morto cielo dolci e rosate, alleggerite di un velo: così come Santa Marta, spezzati a terra gli strumenti, cessato già sui sempre verdi paesaggi il canto che il cuore di Santa Cecilia accorda col cielo latino, dolce e rosata presso il crepuscolo antico ne la linea eroica de la grande figura femminile romana sosta. Ricordi di zingare, ricordi d'amori lontani, ricordi di suoni e di luci: stanchezze d'amore, stanchezze improvvisate sul letto di una taverna lontana, altra culla avventurosa di incertezza e di rimpianto: così quello che ancora era arido e dolce, sfiorite le rose de la giovinezza, sorgeva sul panorama scheletrico del mondo.



12. Ne la sera dei fuochi de la festa d'estate, nella luce deliziosa e bianca, quando i nostri orecchi riposavano appena nel silenzio e i nostri occhi erano stanchi de le girandole di fuoco, de le stelle multicolori che avevano lasciato un odore pirico, una vaga gravizza rossa nell'aria, e il camminare accanto ci aveva illanguiditi esaltandoci di una nostra troppo diversa bellezza, lei fine e bruna, pura negli occhi e nel viso, perduto il barbaglio della collana dal collo ignudo, camminava ora a tratti inesperta stringendo il ventaglio. Fu attratta verso la baracca: la sua vestaglia bianca a fini strappi azzurri ondeggiò nella luce diffusa, ed io seguii il suo pallore segnato sulla sua fronte dalla frangia notturna dei suoi capelli. Entrammo. Dei visi bruni di autocrati, rasserrenati dalla fanciullezza e dalla festa si volsero verso di noi, profondamente limpidi nella luce. E guardammo le vedute. Tutto era di un'irrealtà spettrale. C'erano dei panorami scheletrici di città. Dei morti bizzarri guardavano il cielo in pose legnose. Una odalisca di gomma

in the already-dead sky, lightened by a veil: just as Saint Martha,²⁶ her instruments broken on the ground, when the song that Saint Cecilia's heart harmonizes with the Latin sky has already stopped on the ever green landscapes, rests²⁷ sweet and rose-colored near the ancient twilight in the heroic pose of great Roman women. Memories of gypsy women, memories of distant loves, memories of sounds and lights: prostrations of love, sudden prostrations on the bed of a distant tavern, another adventurous cradle of uncertainty and regret: thus what was still arid and sweet, the roses of youth withered, was rising over the skeletal landscape of the world.



12. In the evening of fireworks of the summer festival, in the delightful white light, when our ears barely rested in the silence and our eyes were tired of the Catherine wheels, of the many-colored stars that had left a smell of saltpeter, a vague red heaviness in the air, and our walking side by side had made us weary exalting us with our too-different beauty, she delicate and dark, pure of eye and face, the dazzle of her necklace from her bare throat now lost, was now walking hesitantly holding her fan. She was drawn to the booth: her white gown with thin blue stripes swirled in the diffuse light, and I followed her pallor marked on her forehead by the nocturnal bang of her hair. We entered. Dark faces²⁸ of autocrats, made serene by their youthfulness and by the feast, turned toward us, profoundly limpid in the light. And we watched the scene.²⁹ Everything looked spectrally unreal. There were skeletal landscapes of cities.³⁰ Bizarre dead bodies

²⁶*Saint Martha*: refers to the Saint Martha in Raphael's painting, *Sacred Conversation*, in the Pinacoteca Nazionale of Bologna.

²⁷*rests*: the subject is Saint Martha.

²⁸*dark faces*: faces of gypsies, who often worked in carnivals. Gypsies appear frequently in Campana's landscapes (cf. *The Night*, sec. 1).

²⁹*the views*: the images in the magic lantern.

³⁰*skeletal landscapes of cities*: cf. *The Night*, sec. 10, p. 19.

respirava sommessamente e volgeva attorno gli occhi d'idolo. E l'odore acuto della segatura che felpava i passi e il sussurrio delle signorine del paese attonite di quel mistero. "É così Parigi? Ecco Londra. La battaglia di Mukden." Noi guardavamo intorno: doveva essere tardi. Tutte quelle cose viste per gli occhi magnetici delle lenti in quella luce di sogno! Immobile presso a me io la sentivo divenire lontana e straniera mentre il suo fascino si approfondiva sotto la frangia notturna dei suoi capelli. Si mosse. Ed io sentii con una punta d'amarezza tosto consolata che mai più le sarei stato vicino. La seguii dunque come si segue un sogno che si ama vano: così eravamo divenuti a un tratto lontani e stranieri dopo lo strepito della festa, davanti al panorama scheletrico del mondo.



13. Ero sotto l'ombra dei portici stillata di gocce e gocce di luce sanguigna ne la nebbia di una notte di dicembre. A un tratto una porta si era aperta in uno sfarzo di luce. In fondo avanti posava nello sfarzo di un'ottomana rossa il gomito reggendo la testa, poggiava il gomito reggendo la testa una matrona, gli occhi bruni vivaci, le mammelle enormi: accanto una fanciulla inginocchiata, ambrata e fine, i capelli recisi sulla fronte, con grazia giovanile, le gambe lisce e ignude dalla vestaglia smagliante: e sopra di lei, sulla matrona pensierosa negli occhi giovani una tenda, una tenda bianca di trina, una tenda che sembrava agitare delle immagini, delle immagini sopra di lei, delle immagini candide sopra di lei pensierosa negli occhi giovani. Sbattuto a la luce dall'ombra dei portici stillata di

were looking at the sky in wooden poses. A rubber odalisque³¹ breathed softly and turned her idol's eyes all around. And the sharp smell of the sawdust that muffled the footsteps and the whispers of the young ladies from the town astonished at that mystery. "Is that how Paris is? There is London. The battle of Muckden."³² We looked around: it must have been late. All those things seen through the magnetic eyes of the lenses in that dream light! Motionless by my side I felt her grow distant and estranged as her charm deepened under the nocturnal bang of her hair. She moved. And I felt with a twinge of bitterness soon consoled that I would never be near her³³ again. So I followed her as you follow a dream loved in vain: thus we had become suddenly distant and estranged after the uproar of the feast, before the skeletal landscape of the world.



13. I was under the shadow of the porticos that dripped drop after drop of blood-red light in the fog of a December night. Suddenly a door had been thrown open in a splendor of light. Toward the back a matron³⁴ rested in the splendor of a red ottoman, her elbow holding her head, she leaned on her elbow holding her head, with lively brown eyes and enormous breasts: beside her a young girl on her knees, amber-skinned and delicate, her hair cut across her forehead, with youthful grace, her legs smooth and bare out of her shimmering robe: and over her, over the matron thoughtful in her youthful eyes a curtain, a white lace curtain, a curtain that seemed to move images, images over her, pure white images over her thoughtful in her youthful eyes. Thrust toward the light by the shadow of the porticos dripping drop

³¹*rubber odalisque*: so soft as to appear made of rubber. A striking example of Campana's expressionism.

³²*Muckden*: place in Manchuria where in 1905 a battle between the Russians and the Japanese took place.

³³*And I felt . . . would I be near her*: some critics see this as a reference to the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. It's rather doubtful, since the bitterness is *soon consoled*.

³⁴*matron*: cf. *The Night*, sec. 6, p. 11.

gocce e gocce di luce sanguigna io fissavo astretto attonito la grazia simbolica e avventurosa di quella scena. Già era tardi, fummo soli e tra noi nacque una intimità libera e la matrona dagli occhi giovani poggiata per sfondo la mobile tenda di trina parlò. La sua vita era un lungo peccato: la lussuria. La lussuria ma tutta piena ancora per lei di curiosità irraggiungibili. “La femmina lo picchiava tanto di baci da destra: da destra perché? Poi il piccione maschio restava sopra, immobile?, dieci minuti, perché?” Le domande restavano ancora senza risposta, allora lei spinta dalla nostalgia ricordava ricordava a lungo il passato. Fin che la conversazione si era illanguidita, la voce era taciuta intorno, il mistero della voluttà aveva rivestito colei che lo rievocava. Sconvolto, le lagrime agli occhi io in faccia alla tenda bianca di trina seguivo seguivo ancora delle fantasie bianche. La voce era taciuta intorno. La ruffiana era sparita. La voce era taciuta. Certo l’avevo sentita passare con uno sfioramento silenzioso struggente. Avanti alla tenda gualcita di trina la fanciulla posava ancora sulle ginocchia ambrate, piegate piegate con grazia di cinedo.



14. Faust era giovane e bello, aveva i capelli ricciuti. Le bolognesi somigliavano allora a medaglie siracusane e il taglio dei loro occhi era tanto perfetto che amavano sembrare immobili a contrastare armoniosamente coi lunghi riccioli bruni. Era facile incontrarle la sera per le vie cupe (la luna illuminava allora le strade) e Faust alzava gli occhi ai comignoli delle case che nella luce della luna sembravano punti interrogativi e restava pensieroso allo strisciare dei loro passi che si attenuavano. Dalla vecchia taverna a volte che raccoglieva gli scolari gli piaceva udire tra i calmi conversari dell’inverno bolognese, frigido e nebuloso come il suo, e lo schioccare dei ciocchi e i guizzi della fiamma sull’ocra delle volte i passi

after drop of blood-red light I stared fascinated astonished at the symbolic adventurous grace of that scene. It was already late, we were alone and an open intimacy was born between us and the matron leaning with youthful eyes spoke against the backdrop of the moving lace curtain. Her life was one long sin: lust. Lust, but for her still full of unreachable curiosities. "The female kept on pecking him with kisses from the right: from the right, why? Then the male pigeon remained on top, motionless?, ten minutes, why?" The questions still remained unanswered, and in her longing she recalled the past for a long time. Until the conversation began to languish, the voice had fallen silent around us, the mystery of wantonness had shrouded the one who was evoking it. Frantic, with tears in my eyes, I followed still followed white fantasies in front of the white lace curtain. Meanwhile the voice had fallen silent. The procuress had disappeared. I was sure I had felt her brush by me with a quiet agonizing touch. In front of the crumpled lace curtain the young girl still rested on her amber knees, bending bending with the grace of an ephebe.



14. Faust³⁵ was young and handsome, he had curly hair. At that time the women of Bologna resembled Syracusan³⁶ medallions and the slant of their eyes was so perfect that they loved to look motionless in harmonious contrast with their long brown curls. It was easy to run into them down the dim streets in the evening (the moon lit up the roads then) and Faust would raise his eyes to the chimneys of the houses like question marks in the moonlight and stood absorbed in thought at the shuffle of their dying footfalls. At times from the old tavern where students met, amid the quiet conversations of the Bologna winter, frigid and foggy as his own, and the crackle of the logs and the flickers of the flame on the ocher of the vaults, he liked to listen to the hurried footsteps under

³⁵*Faust*: alter ego from Goethe with whom Campana identifies himself here. This section is of great interest because in it Campana paints a sort of spiritual self-portrait.

³⁶*Syracusan*: the girls' profiles resembled those of ancient Greek medals from Syracuse.

frettolosi sotto gli archi prossimi. Amava allora raccogliersi in un canto mentre la giovine ostessa, rosso il guarnello e le belle gote sotto la pettinatura fumosa passava e ripassava davanti a lui. Faust era giovane e bello. In un giorno come quello, dalla saletta tappezzata, tra i ritornelli degli organi automatici e una decorazione floreale, dalla saletta udivo la folla scorrere e i rumori cupi dell'inverno. Oh! ricordo!: ero giovine, la mano non mai quieta poggiata a sostenere il viso indeciso, gentile di ansia e di stanchezza. Prestavo allora il mio enigma alle sartine levigate e flessuose, consacrate dalla mia ansia del supremo amore, dall'ansia della mia fanciullezza tormentosa assetata. Tutto era mistero per la mia fede, la mia vita era tutta "un'ansia del segreto delle stelle, tutta un chinarsi sull'abisso." Ero bello di tormento, inquieto pallido assetato errante dietro le larve del mistero. Poi fuggii. Mi persi per il tumulto delle città colossali, vidi le bianche cattedrali levarsi congerie enorme di fede e di sogno colle mille punte nel cielo, vidi le Alpi levarsi ancora come più grandi cattedrali, e piene delle grandi ombre verdi degli abeti, e piene della melodia dei torrenti di cui udivo il canto nascente dall'infinito del sogno. Lassù tra gli abeti fumosi nella nebbia, tra i mille e mille ticchietti le mille voci del silenzio svelata una giovine luce tra i tronchi, per sentieri di chiare salivo: salivo alle Alpi, sullo sfondo bianco delicato mistero. Laghi, lassù tra gli scogli chiare gore vegliate dal sorriso del sogno, le chiare gore i laghi estatici dell'oblio che tu Leonardo fingevi. Il torrente mi raccontava oscuramente la storia. Io fisso

the nearby arches. He loved to gather himself in a song then, while the young hostess, with her red petticoat and lovely cheeks under her hazy³⁷ hairdo, moved back and forth in front of him. Faust was young and handsome. On a day like that day, from the wallpapered room, amid the refrains of the player pianos and the flower decorations, from the small room I could hear the crowd rushing by and the dim noises of winter. Oh! I remember!: I was young, my restless hand resting to hold my indecisive face, made gentle by longing and weariness. Back then I would lend my enigma to smooth lithe seamstresses, consecrated by my longing for the supreme love, by the longing of my tormented thirsting youth. Everything was a mystery to my faith, my life was all “a longing for the secret of the stars, all a leaning over the edge of the abyss.”³⁸ I was handsome with torment,³⁹ restless pale thirsty wandering after the ghosts of mystery. Then I fled. I lost myself in the tumult of the colossal cities, I saw the white cathedrals rise as enormous congeries of faith and dreams with their thousand spires in the sky, I saw the Alps rise as greater cathedrals still, and full of the great green shadows of the fir trees, and full of the melody of the streams whose song I could hear being born from the infinity of dreams. Up there among the hazy fir trees in the mist, among the thousands upon thousands of tickings the thousand voices of silence, as a young light appeared through the tree trunks, through paths of brightness I climbed: I climbed up to the Alps, white delicate mystery in the background. Lakes, up there among the crags, clear pools watched over by the smile of dreams, the clear pools the ecstatic lakes of oblivion⁴⁰ that you Leonardo created. The stream told me the story dimly.

³⁷*hazy*: *fumoso* is used frequently by Campana to mean *hazy*, having an indistinct outline.

³⁸*a longing . . . the edge of the abyss*: Campana tells Pariani that these are the verses of a Russian poet from the time of the Romanovs.

³⁹*handsome with torment*: *bello di tormento* is reminiscent of Foscolo's *bello di fama e di sventura*, and the whole Alpine landscape is suggestive of *Jacopo Ortis*.

⁴⁰*the ecstatic lakes of oblivion*: “in this ‘ascent’ another literary topos, the waters of oblivion, which also belongs to Campana’s two spiritual fathers, Dante and Goethe” (Ceragioli 47). The lakes are “watched over by the smile of dreams,” that is, are transfigured by art. That is why Leonardo is invoked.

tra le lance immobili degli abeti credendo a tratti vagare una nuova melodia selvaggia e pure triste forse fissavo le nubi che sembravano attardarsi curiose un istante su quel paesaggio profondo e spiarlo e svanire dietro le lance immobili degli abeti. E povero, ignudo, felice di essere povero ignudo, di riflettere un istante il paesaggio quale un ricordo incantevole ed orrido in fondo al mio cuore salivo: e giunsi giunsi là fino dove le nevi delle Alpi mi sbaravano il cammino. Una fanciulla nel torrente lavava, lavava e cantava nelle nevi delle bianche Alpi. Si volse, mi accolse, nella notte mi amò. E ancora sullo sfondo le Alpi il bianco delicato mistero, nel mio ricordo s'accese la purità della lampada stellare, brillò la luce della sera d'amore.



15. Ma quale incubo gravava ancora su tutta la mia giovinezza? O i baci i baci vani della fanciulla che lavava, lavava e cantava nella neve delle bianche Alpi! (le lacrime salirono ai miei occhi al ricordo). Riudio il torrente ancora lontano: crosciava bagnando antiche città desolate, lunghe vie silenziose, deserte come dopo un saccheggio. Un calore dorato nell'ombra della stanza presente, una chioma profusa, un corpo rantolante procubo nella notte mistica dell'antico animale umano. Dormiva l'ancella dimentica nei suoi sogni oscuri: come un'icona bizantina, come un mito arabesco imbiancava in fondo il pallore incerto della tenda.



Motionless among the still lances of the fir trees believing at times that a new savage and yet sad melody was drifting in the air perhaps I was gazing at the clouds that seemed to linger curiously for an instant on that profound landscape and observe it and vanish behind the still lances of the fir trees. And poor, naked, happy to be poor and naked,⁴¹ to reflect for an instant the landscape as an enchanting horrid memory, deep in my heart I climbed: and I arrived, I arrived where the snows of the Alps were blocking my way. A young girl was washing in the stream, she washed and sang in the snows of the white Alps. She turned, welcomed me, in the night she loved me. And still in the background the Alps the white delicate mystery, the purity of the stellar lamp lit in my memory, the light of the night of love began to shine.



15. But what nightmare⁴² still weighed on all my youth? Oh the kisses the vain kisses of the young girl who washed, who washed and sang in the snow of the white Alps! (tears came to my eyes at the memory). I heard the still-distant stream again: it flowed roaring through ancient desolate cities, along silent roads, deserted as if they had just been pillaged. A golden warmth present in the shadow of the room, bountiful locks, a rattling reclining body in the mystic night of the ancient human animal. The maiden slept oblivious in her dark dreams: something like a byzantine icon, like an arabesque myth whitened the uncertain pallor of the curtain in the background.



⁴¹*poor and naked*: echo of Petrarch. Here Campana proclaims, with uncharacteristic elation, his condition as outcast, in opposition to traditional values.

⁴²*But what nightmare*: the poet keeps on remembering, still in Magdalene's room, during the *long night of the deceptions of the various images* (cf. *The Night*, sec. 9, p. 15).

16. E allora figurazioni di un'antichissima libera vita, di enormi miti solari, di stragi di orgie si crearono avanti al mio spirito. Rividi un'antica immagine, una forma scheletrica vivente per la forza misteriosa di un mito barbaro, gli occhi gorgghi cangianti vividi di linfe oscure, nella tortura del sogno scoprire il corpo vulcanizzato, due chiazze due fori di palle di moschetto sulle sue mammelle estinte. Credetti di udire fremere le chitarre là nella capanna d'assi e di zingo sui terreni vaghi della città, mentre una candela schiariva il terreno nudo. In faccia a me una matrona selvaggia mi fissava senza batter ciglio. La luce era scarsa sul terreno nudo nel fremere delle chitarre. A lato sul tesoro fiorento di una fanciulla in sogno la vecchia stava ora aggrappata come un ragno mentre pareva sussurrare all'orecchio parole che non udivo, dolci come il vento senza parole della Pampa che sommerge. La matrona selvaggia mi aveva preso: il mio sangue tiepido era certo bevuto dalla terra: ora la luce era più scarsa sul terreno nudo nell'alito metalizzato delle chitarre. A un tratto la fanciulla liberata esalò la sua giovinezza, languida nella sua grazia selvaggia, gli occhi dolci e acuti come un gorgo. Sulle spalle della bella selvaggia si illanguidì la grazia all'ombra dei capelli fluidi e la chioma augusta dell'albero della vita si tramò nella sosta sul terreno nudo invitando le chitarre il lontano sonno. Dalla Pampa si udì chiaramente un balzare uno scalpitare di cavalli selvaggi, il vento si udì chiaramente levarsi, lo scalpitare parve perdersi sordo nell'infinito. Nel quadro della porta aperta le stelle brillarono rosse e calde nella lontananza: l'ombra delle selvaggie nell'ombra.

16. And then figures of a very ancient free life,⁴³ of enormous solar myths, of massacres of orgies took shape before my spirit. I saw an ancient image again, a skeletal form living through the mysterious force of a barbarous dream, the eyes changing whirlpools vivid with dark lymphs, in the dream's torture reveal the vulcanized⁴⁴ body, two patches two musket holes on her apent breasts.⁴⁵ I thought I heard the guitars quivering there in the hut made of boards and zinc on the barren grounds of the city, while a candle lighted the bare ground. Opposite me a savage matron stared at me without batting an eyelid. The light was feeble on the bare ground in the quivering of guitars. To one side the old woman now clung like a spider on the blossoming treasure of a young girl in dream while she seemed to whisper in her ears words I could not hear, sweet as the wordless wind of the submerging Pampas. The savage matron had seized me: my warm blood⁴⁶ was certainly being drunk by the earth: now the light was more feeble on the bare ground in the metallic breath of the guitars. Suddenly the freed young girl exhaled her youth, languid in her savage grace, her eyes sweet and piercing as a whirlpool. Grace began to languish on the shoulders of the beautiful savage in the shadows of the flowing hair and the august mane of the tree of life⁴⁷ wove itself onto the bare ground while in the pause the guitars invited a distant sleep. From the Pampas one could clearly hear the leaping the pawing of wild horses, one could clearly hear the wind rise, the pawing seemed to fade away muted into infinity. In the frame of the open door the stars glimmered red and warm in the distance: the shadow of the savages in the shadow.

⁴³*figurations of a most ancient free life*: nightmares of the unconscious. There are now four figures: Campana, the matron, the maiden and an old woman (*skeletal form*).

⁴⁴*vulcanized*: hardened, as if covered with lava.

⁴⁵*extinct breasts*: belonging to the old woman.

⁴⁶*my warm blood*: Campana's ritual death. The spilling of blood in *Orphic Songs* is the concrete manifestation of unendurable personal anguish (cf. the quotation from Whitman at the end of the book "They were all torn and cover'd with the boy's blood," with which the poet declares himself a tragic figure and a sacrificial victim).

⁴⁷*tree of life*: the tuia.

II
IL VIAGGIO E IL RITORNO

17. Salivano voci e voci e canti di fanciulli e di lussuria per i ritorti vichi dentro dell'ombra ardente, al colle al colle. A l'ombra dei lampioni verdi le bianche colossali prostitute sognavano sogni vaghi nella luce bizzarra al vento. Il mare nel vento mesceva il suo sale che il vento mesceva e levava nell'odor lussurioso dei vichi, e la bianca notte mediterranea scherzava colle enormi forme delle femmine tra i tentativi bizzarri della fiamma di svellersi dal cavo dei lampioni. Esse guardavano la fiamma e cantavano canzoni di cuori in catene. Tutti i preludii erano taciuti oramai. La notte, la gioia più quieta della notte era calata. Le porte moresche si caricavano e si attorcevano di mostruosi portenti neri nel mentre sullo sfondo il cupo azzurro si insenava di stelle. Solitaria troneggiava ora la notte accesa in tutto il suo brulicame di stelle e di fiamme. Avanti come una mostruosa ferita profondava una via. Ai lati dell'angolo delle porte, bianche cariatidi di un cielo artificiale sognavano il viso poggiato alla palma. Ella aveva la pura linea imperiale del profilo e del collo vestita di splendore opalino. Con rapido gesto di giovinezza imperiale traeva la veste leggera sulle sue spalle alle mosse e la sua finestra scintillava in attesa finché dolcemente gli scuri si chiudessero su di una duplice ombra. Ed il mio cuore era affamato di sogno, per lei, per l'evanescente come

II
VOYAGE AND RETURN

17. Voices and voices and songs of children and of lust rose through the winding alleyways inside the burning shadow,⁴⁸ to the hill to the hill. In the shadow of the green streetlamps the white colossal prostitutes were dreaming vague dreams in the light grown bizarre in the wind. The sea in the wind was mixing its salt that the wind mixed and raised in the lusty smell of the alleyways, and the white Mediterranean night played with the enormous forms of the females amid the flame's bizarre attempts to tear away from the hollow of the streetlamps. They were looking at the flame and singing songs hearts in chain. All the preludes had fallen silent by now. The night, the quietest joy of the night had descended. The moorish doors⁴⁹ filled and writhed with monstrous black portents while in the background the dark blue deepened with stars. Solitary now the night sat enthroned burning with all its teeming stars and flames. Ahead a street plunged downward like a monstrous wound. Beside the doorjamb white caryatids of an artificial sky⁵⁰ were dreaming, their faces resting on their palms.⁵¹ She bore⁵² the pure imperial line of the profile and the neck dressed in opaline splendor. With a rapid gesture of imperial youthfulness she drew her light dress on her shoulders as she moved and her window glimmered in expectation until the shutters closed softly on a double shadow. And my heart hungered for dreams, for her, evanescent like

⁴⁸*burning shadow*: "the lust in this Genoa nocturne is expressed with a very high linguistic temperature" (Lunetta 45).

⁴⁹*moorish doors*: spiral columns in the gates of old Genoa. The architectural elements, deformed by the shadow, become fantastic creations.

⁵⁰*artificial sky*: the realm of illusory pleasures.

⁵¹*resting on their palms*: cf. *The Night*, sec. 7, p. 13, where the girl is likened to a Sphinx.

⁵²*She bore*: the giver of love in the harbors.

l'amore evanescente, la donatrice d'amore dei porti, la cariatide dei cieli di ventura. Sui suoi divini ginocchi, sulla sua forma pallida come un sogno uscito dagli innumerevoli sogni dell'ombra, tra le innumerevoli luci fallaci, l'antica amica, l'eterna Chimera teneva fra le mani rosse il mio antico cuore.



18. Ritorno. Nella stanza ove le schiuse sue forme dai velarii della luce io cinsi, un alito tardato: e nel crepuscolo la mia pristina lampada instella il mio cuor vago di ricordi ancora. Volti, volti cui risero gli occhi a fior del sogno, voi giovani aurighe per le vie leggere del sogno che inghirlandai di fervore: o fragili rime, o ghirlande d'amori notturni. . . . Dal giardino una canzone si rompe in catena fievole di singhiozzi: la vena è aperta: arido rosso e dolce è il panorama scheletrico del mondo.



19. O il tuo corpo! il tuo profumo mi velava gli occhi: io non vedevo il tuo corpo (un dolce e acuto profumo): là nel grande specchio ignudo, nel grande specchio ignudo velato dai fumi di viola, in alto baciato di una stella di luce era

evanescent love, the giver of love in the harbors, the caryatid of venturesome skies. On her divine knees, on her form pale as a dream issued from the shadow's countless dreams, amid the countless deceptive lights, the ancient friend, the eternal Chimera⁵³ held my ancient heart⁵⁴ in her red hands.



18. Return. In the room where I embraced her form unfolding from the veils of light, a lingering breath: and in the twilight my pristine lamp casts starlight on my heart still longing for memories. Faces, faces whose eyes smiled on the edge of dreams, you young charioteers through the airy paths of the dream I garlanded with fervor: o frail verses, o garlands of nocturnal loves. . . . From the garden a song breaks into a faint chain of sobs: the vein⁵⁵ is open: arid red and sweet is the skeletal⁵⁶ landscape of the world.



19. Oh your body! your fragrance veiled my eyes: I could not see your body (a sweet piercing fragrance): there in the large mirror naked,⁵⁷ in the large mirror naked, veiled by the violet haze,⁵⁸ high above kissed by a star of light was the

⁵³*Chimera*: one of Campana's great mythical figures, rich with symbolic meaning, and usually associated with both love and poetry.

⁵⁴*my ancient heart*: Campana explicitly links his oneiric experience to that of Dante in the *Vita nuova*, III, 5: "e ne l'una delle mani mi pareva che questi tenesse una cosa la quale ardesse tutta, e pareami che dicesse queste parole: vide cor tuum" (and in one his hands he seemed to hold something which was all burning, and he seemed to say these words: look at your heart).

⁵⁵*the vein is open*: another image of the poet's suffering.

⁵⁶*skeletal landscape*: cf. *The Night*, sec. 10, n. 23.

⁵⁷*naked*: the adjective in Italian is in an ambiguous position, another recurrent trait of Campana's style, but it refers to *body*.

⁵⁸*violet haze*: perfumes obtained by burning fragrant substances.

il bello, il bello e dolce dono di un dio: e le timide mammelle erano gonfie di luce, e le stelle erano assenti, e non un Dio era nella sera d'amore di viola: ma tu leggera tu sulle mie ginocchia sedevi, cariatide notturna di un incantevole cielo. Il tuo corpo un aereo dono sulle mie ginocchia, e le stelle assenti, e non un Dio nella sera d'amore di viola: ma tu nella sera d'amore di viola: ma tu chinati gli occhi di viola, tu ad un ignoto cielo notturno che avevi rapito una melodia di carezze. Ricordo cara: lievi come l'ali di una colomba tu le tue membra posasti sulle mie nobili membra. Alitarono felici, respirarono la loro bellezza, alitarono a una più chiara luce le mie membra nella tua docile nuvola dai divini riflessi. O non accenderle! non accenderle! Non accenderle: tutto è vano vano è il sogno: tutto è vano tutto è sogno: Amore, primavera del sogno sei sola sei sola che appari nel velo dei fumi di viola. Come una nuvola bianca, come una nuvola bianca presso al mio cuore, o resta o resta o resta! Non attristarti o Sole!

Aprirò la finestra al cielo notturno. Gli uomini come spettri vaganti: vagavano come gli spettri: e la città (le vie le chiese le piazze) si componeva in un sogno cadenzato, come per una melodia invisibile scaturita da quel vagare. Non era dunque il mondo abitato da dolci spettri e nella notte non era il sogno ridesto nelle potenze sue tutte trionfale? Qual ponte, muti chiedemmo, qual ponte abbiamo noi gettato sull'infinito, che tutto ci appare ombra di eternità? A quale sogno levammo la nostalgia della nostra bellezza? La luna sorgeva nella sua vecchia vestaglia dietro la chiesa bizantina.

beautiful, beautiful and sweet gift of a god: and the timid breasts were swollen with light, and the stars were absent, and not one God in the violet evening of love: but you so lightly you sat on my knees, nocturnal caryatid⁵⁹ of an enchanting sky. Your body an airy gift on my knees, and the stars absent, and not one God in the violet evening of love: but you lowering your violet eyes, you who had stolen a melody of caresses from an unknown nocturnal sky. I remember dear: light as dove's wings you rested your limbs upon my noble limbs. My limbs breathed happily, they inhaled their beauty, they breathed to a clearer light in the divine reflections of your gentle cloud. Oh don't light them! don't light them! Don't light them: everything is vain vain is dream: everything is vain everything is a dream: Love, spring of dream you are alone you are alone that appear in the veil of the violet haze. Like a white cloud, like a white cloud close to my heart, oh stay oh stay oh stay! Do not be saddened o Sun!⁶⁰

We opened the window onto the evening sky. Men like ghosts wandering: they wandered like ghosts: and the city (the streets the churches the squares) was composing itself into a cadenced dream, as if through an invisible melody sprung from that wandering. Wasn't then the world inhabited by gentle ghosts and in the night wasn't the dream reawakened in all its triumphant powers? What bridge, we asked silently, what bridge have we thrown across the infinite, so that everything seems a shadow of eternity to us? To what dream did we raise our longing for beauty? The moon was rising in its old robe behind the byzantine church.

⁵⁹*nocturnal caryatid*: cf. *The Night*, sec. 17, p. 33: *white caryatids of an artificial sky*.

⁶⁰*Do not be saddened o Sun!*: "Faustian exclamation, to mean that the splendor of that night surpasses that of the sun" (Ceragioli 64).

III
FINE

20. Nel tepore della luce rossa, dentro le chiuse aule dove la luce affonda uguale dentro gli specchi all'infinito fioriscono sfioriscono bianchezze di trine. La portiera nello sfarzo smesso di un giusta cuore verde, le rughe del volto più dolci, gli occhi che nel chiarore velano il nero guarda la porta d'argento. Dell'amore si sente il fascino indefinito. Governa una donna matura addolcita da una vita d'amore con un sorriso con un vago bagliore che è negli occhi il ricordo delle lacrime della voluttà. Passano nella veglia opime di messi d'amore, leggere spole tessenti fantasie multicolori, errano, polvere luminosa che posa nell'enigma degli specchi. La portiera guarda la porta d'argento. Fuori è la notte chiomata di muti canti, pallido amor degli erranti.

III
END

20. In the warmth of the red light, within the closed halls⁶¹ where the light sinks evenly within the mirrors to infinity, white flashes of lace blossom and die. The doorkeeper in the cast-off splendor of a green jerkin, the wrinkles on her face softer, her eyes in the brightness veiling the blackness, watches the silver door. One can feel the vague fascination of love. A mature woman rules, softened by a life of love with a smile a vague glimmer in her eyes the memory of tears of wantonness. Light shuttles weaving multicolored fantasies, they go by⁶² in the vigil bringing messages of love, they wander, luminous dust that rests in the enigma of the mirrors. The doorkeeper watches the silver door. Outside is the night wreathed with silent songs, pale love of wanderers.⁶³

⁶¹*closed halls*: in a house of pleasure (cf. *The Night*, sec. 10).

⁶²*they go by*: the girls go by like light shuttles.

⁶³*Outside . . . wanderers*: two eight-syllable verses repeated in the poem "Hope" from *The Nocturnes*.

NOTTURNI

NOCTURNES

LA CHIMERA

Non so se tra roccie il tuo pallido
Viso m'apparve, o sorriso
Di lontananze ignote
Fosti, la china eburnea
Fronte fulgente o giovine
Suora de la Gioconda:
O delle primavere
Spente, per i tuoi mitici pallori
O Regina o Regina adolescente:
Ma per 'il tuo ignoto poema
Di voluttà e di dolore
Musica fanciulla esangue,
Segnato di linea di sangue
Nel cerchio delle labbra sinuose,
Regina de la melodia:
Ma per il vergine capo
Reclino, io poeta notturno
Vegliai le stelle vivide nei pelaghi del cielo,
Io per il tuo dolce mistero
Io per il tuo divenir taciturno.

THE CHIMERA

I do not know if among rocks your pale
Face appeared to me, or a smile
You were from unknown
Distances, your bowed ivory
Brow gleaming, o young
Sister of the Mona Lisa:⁶⁴
For your mythical pallor
O Queen O adolescent Queen
Of dead springs:⁶⁵
But for your unknown poem⁶⁶
Of wantonness and sorrow
Bloodless musical girl,
Marked by a line of blood
In the circle of your sinuous lips,
Queen of Melody:⁶⁷
But for your inclined
Virginal head, I poet of the night
Kept watch over the bright stars in the oceans of the sky,
I for your sweet mystery
I for your silent becoming.

⁶⁴*Sister of the Mona Lisa*: sister of one of the great artistic creations (cf. *The Night*, sec. 9).

⁶⁵*dead springs*: the past. She was *queen of memory* in *The Night*, sec. 9, p. 15.

⁶⁶*unknown poem*: Campana's own poetic work, not yet completed at the time he wrote "The Chimera," one of his earliest poems.

⁶⁷*Queen of melody*: "of the poetic word, which for Campana must be . . . 'musical'" (Lunetta 53). The Chimera is identified with poetry throughout *Orphic Songs*.

Non so se la fiamma pallida
Fu dei capelli il vivente
Segno del suo pallore,
Non so se fu un dolce vapore,
Dolce sul mio dolore,
Sorriso di un volto notturno:
Guardo le bianche rocce le mute fonti dei venti
E l'immobilità dei firmamenti
E i gonfii rivi che vanno piangenti
E l'ombre del lavoro umano curve là sui poggi argenti
E ancora per teneri cieli lontane chiare ombre correnti
E ancora ti chiamo ti chiamo Chimera.

I do not know if the pale flame
Of her hair was the living
Sign of her pallor,
I do not know if it was a sweet vapor,⁶⁸
Sweet on my sorrow,
Smile of a nocturnal face:⁶⁹
I gaze at the white rocks the mute sources of the winds
And the stillness of the firmaments
And the swollen rivers that go on weeping
And the shadows of human work curved there on the gelid hills
And still across tender skies distant bright shadows running
And still I call you I call you Chimera.⁷⁰

⁶⁸*sweet vapor*: taken from Dante (Purg. XI, 1–6).

⁶⁹*nocturnal countenance*: as Campana is a nocturnal poet (of the mystical night of love and sorrow), the Chimera is a creature of the night.

⁷⁰*Chimera*: the name of the one invoked throughout the poem appears only at the very end.

GIARDINO AUTUNNALE (FIRENZE)

Al giardino spettrale al lauro muto
De le verdi ghirlande
A la terra autunnale
Un ultimo saluto!
A l'aride pendici
Aspre arrossate nell'estremo sole
Confusa di rumori
Rauchi grida la lontana vita:
Grida al morente sole
Che insanguina le aiole.
S'intende una fanfara
Che straziante sale: il fiume spare
Ne le arene dorate: nel silenzio
Stanno le bianche statue a capo i ponti
Volte: e le cose già non sono più.
E dal fondo silenzio come un coro
Tenero e grandioso
Sorge ed anela in alto al mio balcone:
E in aroma d'alloro,
In aroma d'alloro acre languente,
Tra le statue immortali nel tramonto
Ella m'appar, presente.

AUTUMN GARDEN (FLORENCE)

To the spectral⁷¹ garden to the laurel silenced
Of green garlands
To the autumnal earth
A last farewell!
On the arid hillsides
Harsh reddened in the waning sun
Clashing with raucous noises
The distant life cries out:
It cries out to the dying sun
That bloodies flower beds.
One hears a piercing fanfare⁷²
Rising: the river disappears
Into the golden sands: in the silence
The white statues at the head of bridges
Stand upturned:⁷³ and already things no longer are.
And from the deep silence a tender
And majestic chorus
Rises and surges up toward my balcony:
And in laurel scent,
In sharp languishing laurel scent,
Among the immortal statues in the sunset
She⁷⁴ appears to me, now present.

⁷¹*spectral*: without leaves, the trees appear skeletal.

⁷²*fanfare*: to Pariani: "There is a barracks near Boboli" (61).

⁷³*upturned*: reflected upside down in the water.

⁷⁴*She*: the Chimera.

LA SPERANZA (SUL TORRENTE NOTTURNO)

Per l'amor dei poeti
Principessa dei sogni segreti
Nell'ali dei vivi pensieri ripeti ripeti
Principessa i tuoi canti:
O tu chiomata di muti canti
Pallido amor degli erranti
Soffoca gli inestinti pianti
Da' tregua agli amori segreti:
Chi le taciturne porte
Guarda che la Notte
Ha aperte sull'infinito?
Chinan l'ore: col sogno vanito
China la pallida Sorte
.
Per l'amor dei poeti, porte
Aperte de la morte
Su l'infinito!
Per l'amor dei poeti
Principessa il mio sogno vanito
Nei gorgi de la Sorte!

HOPE (ON THE NOCTURNAL STREAM)

For the love of poets
Princess of secret dreams⁷⁵
In the wings of living thoughts repeat repeat
Princess your songs:
O you wreathed with silent songs
Pale love of wanderers
Hold back the unexhausted tears
Give respite to secret loves:
Who watches the quiet
gates that Night
Has opened onto infinity?
The hours wane: with the vanished dream⁷⁶
waned the pale Fate
.
For the love of poets,
gates of death open
Onto infinity!
For the love of poets
Princess my dream vanished
Into the whirlpools of Fate!

⁷⁵*Princess of secret dreams*: the night (cf. *The Night*, sec. 20, p. 39).

⁷⁶*vanished dream*: his dream of poetry.

L'INVETRIATA

La sera fumosa d'estate
Dall'alta invetriata mesce chiarori nell'ombra
E mi lascia nel cuore un suggello ardente.
Ma chi ha (sul terrazzo sul fiume si accende una lampada) chi ha
A la Madonnina del Ponte chi è chi è che ha acceso la lampada? — c'è
Nella stanza un odor di putredine: c'è
Nella stanza una piaga rossa languente.
Le stelle sono bottoni di madreperla e la sera si veste di velluto:
E tremola la sera fatua: è fatua la sera e tremola ma c'è
Nel cuore della sera c'è,
Sempre una piaga rossa languente.

THE GLASS WINDOW

The misty summer evening
From the high glass window⁷⁷ pours brightness upon shadow
And leaves a burning seal in my heart.
But who has (on the terrace on the river a lamp is lighted) who has
Who is it who is it that has lighted the lamp to the little Madonna
of the Bridge?⁷⁸

— there is

In the room a smell of putrefaction: there is
In the room a red languishing wound.⁷⁹
The stars are mother-of-pearl buttons and the evening is dressed in
velvet:
And the fatuous evening quivers: the evening is fatuous and it quiv-
ers but

there is

In the heart of the evening there is,
Always a red languishing wound.

⁷⁷*high glass window*: of a café or public place.

⁷⁸*Madonna of the bridge*: “a Madonna of Marradi, of my town” (Pariani 61).

⁷⁹*red languishing wound*: secret pain. See *The Night*, sec. 15, n. 46.

IL CANTO DELLA TENEBRA

La luce del crepuscolo si attenua:
Inquieti spiriti sia dolce la tenebra
Al cuore che non ama più!
Sorgenti sorgenti abbiám da ascoltare,
Sorgenti, sorgenti che sanno
Sorgenti che sanno che spiriti stanno
Che spiriti stanno a ascoltare . . .
Ascolta: la luce del crepuscolo attenua
Ed agli inquieti spiriti è dolce la tenebra:
Ascolta: ti ha vinto la Sorte:
Ma per i cuori leggeri un'altra vita è alle porte:
Non c'è di dolcezza che possa uguagliare la Morte
Più Più Più
Intendi chi ancora ti culla:
Intendi la dolce fanciulla
Che dice all'orecchio: Più Più
Ed ecco si leva e scompare
Il vento: ecco torna dal mare
Ed ecco sentiamo ansimare
Il cuore che ci amò di più!
Guardiamo: di già il paesaggio
Degli alberi e l'acque è notturno
Il fiume va via taciturno . . .
Pùm! mamma quell'omo lassù!

THE SONG OF DARKNESS

The twilight is waning:
Unquiet spirits may darkness be sweet
To the heart that no longer loves!
Spirings springs we must listen to,
Spirings, springs that know
Spirings that know that spirits go
That spirits go by and listen . . .
Listen:⁸⁰ the twilight is waning
And for unquiet spirits darkness is sweet:
Listen: you have been vanquished by Fate:
But for the light hearts another life is at the gate:
There is no sweetness that can equal Death
More More More
Hear the one who still cradles you:
Hear the sweet girl⁸¹ who
Says in your ear: More More
And now the wind rises and eases:
now it returns from the sea
And now we feel the heave
Of the heart that loved us more!⁸²
We look: already the landscape
Of trees and waters is nocturnal
The river goes its taciturn way . . .
Bam! mama that man up there!⁸³

⁸⁰*Listen*: the springs themselves are speaking.

⁸¹*sweet girl*: death; cf. Leopardi, "Amore e Morte" lines 10–11.

⁸²*the heart that loved us more*: the heart of death.

⁸³*that man up there*: Campana tells Pariani: "It's someone who killed himself. They're all fantasies" (Pariani 61).

LA SERA DI FIERA

Il cuore stasera mi disse: non sai?
La rosabruna incantevole
Dorata da una chioma bionda:
E dagli occhi lucenti e bruni colei che di grazia imperiale
Incantava la rosea
Freschezza dei mattini:
E tu seguivi nell'aria
La fresca incarnazione di un mattutino sogno:
E soleva vagare quando il sogno
E il profumo velavano le stelle
(Che tu amavi guardar dietro i cancelli
Le stelle le pallide notturne):
Che soleva passare silenziosa
E bianca come un volo di colombe
Certo è morta: non sai?
Era la notte
Di fiera della perfida Babele
Salente in fasci verso un cielo affastellato un paradiso di fiamma
In lubrici fischi grotteschi

CARNIVAL NIGHT

My heart tonight said to me: don't you know?⁸⁴
The enchanting darkrose
Golden in her blond hair:
And she with shining dark eyes whose imperial grace
Enchanted the pale-rose
Freshness of mornings:
And you would follow in the air
The fresh embodiment of a morning dream:
And she used to wander when the dream
And the fragrance veiled the stars
(That you loved to watch behind the gates⁸⁵
The stars the pale nocturnal stars):
Who used to pass as white as a flight of doves
Surely she is dead: don't you know?
It was the festival
Night of the treacherous Babel⁸⁶
A paradise of flames rising in streams toward a bundled sky
In lewd grotesque whistles

⁸⁴*My heart tonight said to me: don't you know?:* this poem is a modern rendering of Dante's premonitory dream in the *Vita nuova*, XXIII, in which he witnesses Beatrice's death and ascent to Paradise: "*Don't you know? Your admirable lady has departed from this century. . . . Then it seemed to me that my heart . . . said to me: 'It is true that dead lies our lady.'*" The *Vita nuova*, with its theme of regeneration through memory, has been of fundamental importance for modern Orphism.

⁸⁵*gates:* probably the gates of a house of pleasure (cf. *The Night*, sec. 10, p. 17).

⁸⁶*faithless Babel:* "the chaotic and corrupt city" (Lunetta 59).

E tintinnare d'angeliche campane
E gridi e voci di prostitute
E pantomime d'Ofelia
Stillate dall'umile pianto delle lampade elettriche

Una canzonetta volgaruccia era morta
E mi aveva lasciato il cuore nel dolore
E me ne andavo errando senz'amore
Lasciando il cuore mio di porta in porta:
Con Lei che non è nata eppure è morta
E mi ha lasciato il cuore senz'amore:
Eppure il cuore porta nel dolore:
Lasciando il cuore mio di porta in porta.

And tinkling of angelic bells⁸⁷
And shouts and voices of prostitutes
And pantomimes of Ophelia⁸⁸
That dripped from the humble weeping of the electric lamps.

A vulgar little song had died
And had left my heart in sorrow
And I kept on wandering without love
Leaving my heart from door to door:
With Her who wasn't born and yet has died
And left my heart bereft of love:
And yet she bears the heart in sorrow:
Leaving my heart from door to door.

⁸⁷*angelic bells*: the jingles of the carnival.

⁸⁸*pantomimes of Ophelia*: in the preceding line, the prostitutes appear for what they are. Here those who try to disguise their true nature are called *Ophelia* (cf. "Faenza" and "The Day of a Neurasthenic").

LA PETITE PROMENADE DU POÈTE

Me ne vado per le strade
Strette oscure e misteriose:
Vedo dietro le vetrate
Affacciarsi Gemme e Rose.
Dalle scale misteriose
C'è chi scende brancolando:
Dietro i vetri rilucenti
Stan le ciane commentando.

.....

La stradina è solitaria:
Non c'è un cane: qualche stella
Nella notte sopra i tetti:
E la notte mi par bella.
E cammino poveretto
Nella notte fantasiosa,
Pur mi sento nella bocca
La saliva disgustosa. Via dal tanfo
Via dal tanfo e per le strade
E cammina e via cammina,
Già le case son più rade.
Trovo l'erba: mi ci stendo
A conciarmi come un cane:
Da lontano un ubriaco
Canta amore alle persiane.

LA PETITE PROMENADE DU POÈTE

I go walking through the streets
Mysterious dark and narrow:
Behind the windowpanes I see
Gemmas and Rosas⁸⁹
Looking out.
There are some who grope their way
Down mysterious flights of stairs:
And behind the shiny windows
Stand the gossips with their chatter.

.....
The little street's deserted:
Not a dog; a few stars
In the night above the rooftops:
And to me the night seems fair.
And poor wretch I keep on walking
In the whimsy of the night,
Still I feel inside my mouth
The disgust of my saliva. Away from the stench
From the stench and through the streets
And I walk and keep on walking
Where the houses get more scarce.
I find grass and I lie down
To get dirty like a dog:⁹⁰
Far away there's a drunk
Singing love songs to the blinds.

⁸⁹*Gemmas and Rosas*: common names among Florentine women of the lower classes.

⁹⁰*like a dog*: cf. Baudelaire, "Le vin de l'assassin": "Je me coucherai sur la terre, / Et je dormirai comme un chien!"

LA VERNA

THE VERNA

LA VERNA (DIARIO)

5 Settembre (per la strada di Campigno)

1. Tre ragazze e un ciuco per la strada mulattiera che scendono. I complimenti vivaci degli stradini che riparano la via. Il ciuco che si voltola in terra. Le risa. Le imprecazioni montanine. Le roccie e il fiume.

Castagno, 17 Settembre

2. La Falterona è ancora avvolta di nebbie. Vedo solo canali rocciosi che le venano i fianchi e si perdono nel cielo di nebbie che le onde alterne del sole non riescono a diradare. La pioggia à reso cupo il grigio delle montagne. Davanti alla fonte hanno stazionato a lungo i Castagnini attendendo il sole, aduggiati da una notte di pioggia nelle loro stamberghe allagate. Una ragazza in ciabatte passa che dice rimessamente: un giorno la piena ci porterà tutti. Il torrente gonfio nel suo rumore cupo commenta tutta questa miseria. Guardo oppresso le roccie ripide della Falterona: dovrò salire, salire. Nel presbiterio trovo una lapide ad Andrea del Castagno. Mi colpisce il tipo delle ragazze: viso legnoso, occhi cupi incavati, toni bruni su toni giallognoli: contrasta con una così semplice antica grazia toscana del profilo e del collo che riesce a renderle piacevoli! forse. Come differente la sera di Campigno: come mistico il paesaggio, come bella la povertà delle sue casupole!

THE VERNA¹ (DIARY)

September 5 (on the Road to Campigno)

1. Three girls and a donkey coming down the mule track. The lively compliments of the workers repairing the road. The donkey rolling on the ground. The laughter. Mountain profanities. The rocks and the river.

Castagno, September 17

2. The Falterona² is still enveloped by fog. I see only rocky trenches that vein its sides and disappear into the sky of fog that the alternating waves of the sun are unable to disperse. The rain has deepened the grey of the mountains. In front of the fountain the people of Castagno have stopped for a long time waiting for the sun, distressed by a night of rain in their flooded hovels. A girl in slippers walks by saying meekly: one day the floodtide will carry us all away. In its dark noise the swollen stream comments on all this dreariness. I look oppressed at the steep rocks of the Falterona: I will have to climb, climb. In the presbytery I find a memorial tablet to Andrea del Castagno.³ I am struck by the type of girls: wooden faces, dark deepset eyes, darkish tones over yellowish tones: it contrasts with such a simple ancient Tuscan grace⁴ of the profile and the neck which manages to make them look pleasant! maybe. How different Campigno's evening: how mystical the landscape, how beautiful the

¹*The Verna*: The Verna is a mountain in that part of the Appenines separating Tuscany from Emilia-Romagna, known for the hermitage of St. Francis of Assisi.

²*Falterona*: another mountain in the Appennines between Tuscany and Romagna.

³*Andrea del Castagno*: the great Tuscan painter was born in Castagno in 1421.

⁴*simple ancient Tuscan grace*: the simple elegance of ancient Tuscany is keenly felt by Campana as an artistic ideal and as a source of poetry.

come incantate erano sorte per me le stelle nel cielo dallo sfondo lontano dei dolci avvallamenti dove sfumava la valle barbarica, donde veniva il torrente inquieto e cupo di profondità! Io sentivo le stelle sorgere e collocarsi luminose su quel mistero. Alzando gli occhi alla roccia a picco altissima che si intagliava in un semicerchio dentato contro il violetto crepuscolare, arco solitario e magnifico teso in forza di catastrofe sotto gli ammassamenti inquieti di rocce all'agguato dell'infinito, io non ero non ero rapito di scoprire nel cielo luci ancora luci. E, mentre il tempo fuggiva invano per me, un canto, le lunghe onde di un triplice coro salienti a lanci la roccia, trattenute ai confini dorati della notte dall'eco che nel seno petroso le rifondeva allungate, perdute. Il canto fu breve: una pausa, un commento improvviso e misterioso e la montagna riprese il suo sogno catastrofico. Il canto breve: le tre fanciulle avevano espresso disperatamente nella cadenza millenaria la loro pena breve ed oscura e si erano taciute nella notte! Tutte le finestre nella valle erano accese. Ero solo.

Le nebbie sono scomparse: esco. Mi rallegra il buon odore casalingo di spigo e di lavanda dei paesetti toscani. La chiesa ha un portico a colonnette quadrate di sasso intero, nudo ed elegante, semplice e austero, veramente toscano. Tra i cipressi scorgo altri portici. Su una costa una croce apre le braccia ai vastissimi fianchi della Falterona, spoglia di macchie, che scopre la sua costruzione sassosa. Con una fiamma pallida e fulva bruciano le erbe del camposanto.

poverty of its small houses! How enchanted had the stars risen for me in the sky from the distant backdrop of the soft recesses into which the barbarous valley⁵ faded, from where came the restless stream dark in its depths! I felt the stars rise and settle brightly on that mystery. Raising my eyes to the very high sheer rock carved in a serrated semicircle against the violet twilight, solitary magnificent arch extended with catastrophic force under the restless stacks of rocks ambushing the infinite, I wasn't I wasn't rapt⁶ to discover in the sky more and more lights. And, while time fled vainly for me,⁷ a song, the long waves of a threefold chorus⁸ bounding up the cliff, held back at the golden edges of the night by the echo that in the stony bosom recast them lengthened, lost. The song was brief: a pause, a sudden mysterious comment and the mountain went back to its catastrophic⁹ dream. The brief song: the three young girls had desperately expressed their brief dark pain in the millennial cadence and had fallen silent in the night! All the windows in the valley were lighted. I was alone.

The fog has lifted: I go out. The good homey smell of lavender and spike of the small Tuscan towns cheers me up. The church has a portico of small square columns made of whole stones, bare and elegant, simple and austere, truly Tuscan. Among the cypress trees I notice other porticos. On a mountainside a cross opens its arms to the vast flanks of the Falterona free from the undergrowth, that reveals its stony structure. The grasses of the cemetery burn with a pale tawny flame.¹⁰

⁵*barbarous valley*: still virginal, primitive.

⁶*I wasn't I wasn't rapt*: uncertain construction. The right reading is probably: I wasn't, I wasn't, rapt etc.; that is, I no longer was, no longer existed, totally taken by the spectacle of the sky.

⁷*time fled vainly for me*: the abolition of time signals a higher level of consciousness (cf. *The Night*, sec. 1: *And time came to a standstill*).

⁸*threefold chorus*: the number three has a symbolic meaning, and underlines the symbolic nature of Campana's pilgrimage on the Verna.

⁹*catastrophic*: cf. *The Night*, sec. 5, p. 11.

¹⁰*pale tawny flame*: reference to Leonardo, seen by Campana as the great interpreter of nature and of primal elements: water, rocks, wind. In the manuscript *Il più lungo giorno* [*The Longest Day*] the reference is explicit.

Sulla Falterona (Giogo)

3. La Falterona verde nero e argento: la tristezza solenne della Falterona che si gonfia come un enorme cavallone pietrificato, che lascia dietro a sé una cavalleria di screpolature screpolature e screpolature nella roccia fino ai ribollimenti arenosi di colline laggiù sul piano di Toscana: Castagno, casette di macigno disperse a mezza costa, finestre che ho visto accese: così a le creature del paesaggio cubistico, in luce appena dorata di occhi interni tra i fini capelli vegetali il rettangolo della testa in linea occultamente fine dai fini tratti traspare il sorriso di Cerere bionda: limpidi sotto la linea del sopra ciglio nero i chiari occhi grigi: la dolcezza della linea delle labbra, la serenità del sopra ciglio memoria della poesia toscana che fu. (Tu già avevi compreso o Leonardo, o divino primitivo!)

On the Falterona (Summit)

3. The Falterona green black and silver: the solemn sadness of the Falterona that swells like an enormous petrified billow,¹¹ that leaves behind a cavalry of white horses, cracks and cracks and cracks in the rock as far as the sandy swirls of hills down there on the plain of Tuscany: Castagno, small stone houses scattered half-way up the mountainside, windows I have seen lighted: so for the creatures of the cubist landscape,¹² in a barely golden light of internal eyes amid thin vegetable hair the rectangle of the head in a mysteriously fine line with fine features the smile of blond Ceres¹³ shines through: the clear grey eyes limpid under the line of the black eyebrows: the soft line of the lips, the serenity of the eyebrows memory of the Tuscan poetry that once was.¹⁴ (You had already understood o Leonardo,¹⁵ o divine primitive!)

¹¹*billow*: the word Campana uses is *cavallone*, which means both large wave and large horse. The play on words generates *cavalleria*, *cavalry*. The addition of *white horses*, which also has the same double meaning in English, allows the wordplay to be retained.

¹²*cubist landscape*: like the landscapes of Cubist painters. This passage confirms Campana's interest in figurative arts.

¹³*blond Ceres*: an ideal of beauty, which also appears in a poem to Sibilla Aleramo, "The Piers Make the River More Beautiful" *More beautiful than blond Ceres your figure*.

¹⁴*memory of Tuscan poetry that once was*: an ideal of elegance and artistic perfection to which Campana himself aspires (cf. sec. 8).

¹⁵*Leonardo*: "divine primitive, because he has divinely represented the primal elements of nature: water, rocks, skies" (Lunetta 68). The frequent references to artists and poets in *The Verna* is a clear indication that Campana's pilgrimage is primarily artistic, and it underscores the extreme literariness of his text.

Campigna, foresta della Falterona

4. (Le case quadrangolari in pietra viva costruite dai Lorena restano vuote e il viale dei tigli dà un tono romantico alla solitudine dove i potenti della terra si sono fabbricate le loro dimore. La sera scende dalla cresta alpina e si accoglie nel seno verde degli abeti). Dal viale dei tigli io guardavo accendersi una stella solitaria sullo sprone alpino e la selva antichissima addensare l'ombra e i profondi fruscii del silenzio. Dalla cresta acuta nel cielo, sopra il mistero assopito della selva io scorsi andando pel viale dei tigli la vecchia amica luna che sorgeva in nuova veste rossa di fumi di rame: e risalutai l'amica senza stupore come se le profondità selvagge dello sprone l'attendessero levarsi dal paesaggio ignoto. Io per il viale dei tigli andavo intanto difeso dagli incanti mentre tu sorgevi e sparivi dolce amica luna, solitario e fumigante vapore sui barbari recessi. E non guardai più la tua strana faccia ma volli andare ancora a lungo pel viale se udissi la tua rossa aurora nel sospiro della vita notturna delle selve.

Stia, 20 Settembre

5. Nell'albergo un vecchio milanese cavaliere parla dei suoi amori lontani a una signora dai capelli bianchi e dal viso di bambina. Lei calma gli spiega le stranezze del cuore: lui ancora stupisce e si affanna: qua nell'antico paese chiuso dai boschi. Ho lasciato Castagno: ho salito la Falterona lentamente seguendo il corso del

Campigna, forest of the Falterona

4. (The four-sided houses in living stone built by the Lorenas¹⁶ remain empty and the avenue of lime trees lends a romantic air to the solitude where the powerful of the earth have erected their dwellings. Evening descends from the alpine ridge and gathers in the green bosom of the fir trees). From the avenue of the lime trees I watched a solitary star light up on the alpine spur and the very ancient forest cluster the shadows and the deep rustling of silence. From the sharp ridge in the sky, above the drowsy mystery of the forest, walking along the avenue of the lime trees I spotted my old friend the moon rising in a new robe reddened by a coppery haze: and I greeted the old friend again without surprise as if the savage depths of the spur were waiting for it to emerge from the unknown landscape. Meanwhile I walked down the avenue of the lime trees protected from enchantments while you were rising my sweet friend moon, solitary misty vapor over the barbarous recesses. And I no longer watched your strange face, but for a long time I kept on walking down the avenue, if ever I could hear your red dawn in the sigh of the nocturnal life of the forest.

Stia,¹⁷ September 20

5. In the hotel an old Milanese gentleman talks of his distant loves to a lady with white hair and a childlike face. Calmly she explains the vagaries of the heart to him: he is still astonished and flustered: here in the ancient town enclosed by the woods. I have left Castagno: I have slowly climbed the Falterona following the

¹⁶*Lorenas*: the Grand Dukes of Tuscany.

¹⁷*Stia*: town at the foot of the Falterona, in the province of Arezzo.

torrente rubesto: ho riposato nella limpidezza angelica dell'alta montagna addolcita di toni cupi per la pioggia recente, ingemmata nel cielo coi contorni nitidi e luminosi che mi facevano sognare davanti alle colline dei quadri antichi. Ho sostato nelle case di Campigna. Son sceso per interminabili valli selvose e deserte con improvvisi sfondi di un paesaggio promesso, un castello isolato e lontano: e al fine Stia, bianca elegante tra il verde, melodiosa di castelli sereni: il primo saluto della vita felice del paese nuovo: la poesia toscana ancor viva nella piazza sonante di voci tranquille, vegliata dal castello antico: le signore ai balconi poggiate il puro profilo languidamente nella sera: l'ora di grazia della giornata, di riposo e di oblio.

Al di fuori si è fatta la quiete: il colloquio fraterno del cavaliere continua:

Comme deux ennemis rompus
Que leur haine ne soutient plus
Et qui laissent tomber leurs armes!

21 Settembre (presso La Verna)

6. Io vidi dalle solitudini mistiche staccarsi una tortora e volare distesa verso le valli immensamente aperte. Il paesaggio cristiano segnato di croci inclinate dal vento ne fu vivificato misteriosamente. Volava senza fine sull'ali distese, leggera

course of the raging¹⁸ stream: I have rested in the angelic purity of the high mountain softened by dark tones from the recent rain, gem-studded in the sky with a sharp and luminous outline that made me dream before the hills of ancient paintings.¹⁹ I have lingered in the houses of Campigna. I have descended through interminable wooded and deserted valleys with the sudden backdrops of a promised landscape,²⁰ an isolated distant castle: and finally Stia, white elegant amid the green, melodious with serene castles: the first greeting of the happy life of the new land: Tuscan poetry still alive in the square echoing with tranquil voices, watched over by the ancient castle, the ladies on the balconies resting²¹ their pure profile languidly in the evening: the day's hour of grace, of rest and oblivion. Outside all is quiet: the fraternal conversation of the gentleman²² continues:

Comme deux ennemis rompus
Que leur haine ne soutient plus
Et qui laissent tomber leurs armes!

September 21 (near La Verna)

6. From the mystical solitudes²³ I saw a turtle dove break away and glide toward the immensely open valleys. The Christian landscape marked with crosses bent by the wind was mysteriously vivified by it. It flew without end on its

¹⁸*raging*: the Italian word is *rubesto*, taken from Dante (“L’Archian rubesto” Purg. V, 124–25).

¹⁹*ancient paintings*: again the landscape is seen through the filter of art.

²⁰*promised landscape*: this whole section is rich with symbolism and myth. This Casentino is seen by Campana as a mythical land, where ancient Tuscan poetry is still alive, and which holds the promise of both spiritual and artistic salvation for the poet.

²¹*resting*: for this same pose, cf. *The Night*, secs. 7 and 17.

²²*gentleman*: the old gentleman continues his conversation with three lines by Henri Becque (1837–1899).

²³*From the mystical solitudes*: “once again Campana underscores the strongly spiritualized relationship he establishes with the landscape, the gestures, the encounters, lived as in a ritual” (Lunetta 70).

come una barca sul mare. Addio colomba, addio! Le altissime colonne di roccia della Verna si levavano a picco grige nel crepuscolo, tutt'intorno rinchiusa dalla foresta cupa.

Incantevolmente cristiana fu l'ospitalità dei contadini là presso. Sudato mi offesero acqua. "In un'ora arriverete alla Verna, se Dio vuole." Una ragazzina mi guardava cogli occhi neri un pò tristi, attonita sotto l'ampio cappello di paglia. In tutti un raccoglimento inconscio, una serenità conventuale addolciva a tutti i tratti del volto. Ricorderò per molto tempo ancora la ragazzina e i suoi occhi consci e tranquilli sotto il cappellone monacale. Sulle stoppie interminabili sempre più alte si alzavano le torri naturali di roccia che reggevano la casetta conventuale rilucente di dardi di luce nei vetri occidui.

Si levava la fortezza dello spirito, le enormi rocce gettate in cataste da una legge violenta verso il cielo, pacificate dalla natura prima che le aveva coperte di verdi selve, purificate poi da uno spirito d'amore infinito: la meta che aveva pacificato gli urti dell'ideale che avevano fatto strazio, a cui erano sacre pure supreme commozioni della mia vita.

22 Settembre (La Verna)

7. "Francesca B. O divino santo Francesco pregate per me peccatrice. 20 Agosto 189. . ."

Me ne sono andato per la foresta con un ricordo risentendo la prima ansia. Ricordavo gli occhi vittoriosi, la linea delle ciglia: forse mai non aveva saputo: ed ora la ritrovavo al termine del mio pellegrinaggio che rompeva in una confessione così dolce, lassù lontano da tutto. Era scritta a metà del corridoio dove si svolge

outstretched wings, light as a boat on the sea. Farewell dove, farewell! The Verna's soaring columns of rocks rose straight up, grey in the twilight, enclosed all around by the dark forest.

Enchantingly Christian was the hospitality of the farmers around there. As I was sweating, they offered me water. "In an hour you'll get to the Verna, God willing." A little girl was looking at me with her black and slightly saddened eyes, bewildered under the large straw hat. In everyone an unconscious concentration, a conventional serenity softened everyone's features. I will remember for a long time the little girl and her conscious tranquil eyes under her huge nun's hat. On the endless stubbles, higher and higher rose the natural towers of rock holding the little conventual house that glimmered with streams of light in the windowpanes at sunset.

The fortress of the spirit²⁴ rose, the enormous rocks cast in stacks by a violent law toward the sky, pacified by primal nature that had covered them with green forests, then purified by an infinite spirit of love:²⁵ the goal²⁶ which had pacified the clashes of the ideal that had caused such agony,²⁷ to which the pure supreme emotions of my life were sacred.

September 22 (The Verna)

7. "Francesca B.²⁸ O divine Saint Francis pray for me sinner. August 20 189. . . ."

I came away through the forest with a memory, feeling the first longing again. I remembered the victorious eyes, the line of the eyebrows: maybe she had never known: and now I found her again at the end of my pilgrimage breaking into

²⁴*The fortress of the spirit*: St. Francis's hermitage on the Verna.

²⁵*purified*: by the presence of the saint (*infinite spirit of love*).

²⁶*goal*: the goal of the pilgrimage is the hermitage.

²⁷*caused such agony*: to Campana himself.

²⁸*Francesca B.*: Campana finds the name of his first love, who had made the same pilgrimage, written halfway down the corridor.

la Via Crucis della vita di S. Francesco: (dalle inferriate sale l'alito gelido degli antri). A metà, davanti alle semplici figure d'amore il suo cuore si era aperto ad un grido ad una lacrima di passione, così il destino era consumato!

Antri profondi, fessure rocciose dove una scaletta di pietra si sprofonda in un'ombra senza memoria, ripidi colossali bassorilievi di colonne nel vivo sasso: e nella chiesa l'angiolo, purezza dolce che il giglio divide e la Vergine eletta, e un cirro azzurreggia nel cielo e un'anfora classica rinchiude la terra ed i gigli: che appare nello scorcio giusto in cui appare il sogno, e nella nuvola bianca della sua bellezza che posa un istante il ginocchio a terra, lassù così presso al cielo:

stradine solitarie tra gli alti colonnari d'alberi contente di una lieve stria di sole

finché io là giunsi indove avanti a una vastità velata di paesaggio una divina dolcezza notturna mi si discoprì nel mattino, tutto velato di chiarie il verde, sfumato e digradante all'infinito: e pieno delle potenze delle sue profilate catene notturne. Caprese, Michelangiolo, colei che tu piegasti sulle sue ginocchia stanche di cammino, che piega che piega e non posa, nella sua posa arcana come le antiche sorelle, le barbare regine antiche sbattute nel turbine del canto di Dante, regina barbara sotto il peso di tutto il sogno umano.

Il corridoio, alitato dal gelo degli antri, si veste tutto della leggenda Francescana. Il santo appare come l'ombra di Cristo, rassegnata, nata in terra d'umanesimo, che accetta il suo destino nella solitudine. La sua rinuncia è semplice e dolce:

such a sweet confession, up there away from everything. It was written halfway down the corridor where Saint Francis's *Via Crucis*²⁹ unfolds: (the icy breath of caves rises up from the gratings). Halfway, before the simple figures of love, her heart had opened to a cry to a tear of passion, so destiny was consummated!

Deep caves, rocky cleavages where stone steps sink into a shadow without memory, steep colossal bas-reliefs of columns in the living rock: and in the church³⁰ the angel, sweet purity that divides the lily and the elect Virgin, and a cirrus glows blue in the sky and a classical amphora encloses the earth and the lilies: that appears in the precise angle where dreams appear, and in the white cloud of his beauty as he rests his knee on the ground for an instant, up there so close to the sky:

solitary paths among the tall colonnades of trees happy with a light streak of sunlight

until I arrived where a divine nocturnal softness appeared to me in the morning before the veiled vastness of the landscape, the green all veiled with brightness, fading and shading off to infinity, and full of the powers of its looming nocturnal ranges. Caprese,³¹ Michelangiolo, she³² whom you bent on her knees weary of the journey, who bends who bends and does not pause, in her arcane pose like her ancient sisters, the barbarous ancient queens tossed in the whirlwind of Dante's canto, barbarous queen under the weight of all human dreams.

The corridor,³³ stirred by the icy breath of the caves, is all decorated with the Franciscan legend. The saint appears as Christ's shadow, resigned, born in the land of humanism, accepting his destiny in solitude. His denial is simple and sweet:

²⁹*Via Crucis*: frescoes depicting the life of St. Francis painted by Fra Emanuele di Como (1670).

³⁰*church*: the Chiesa Maggiore, which houses an Annunciation by Andrea della Robbia, which Campana describes.

³¹*Caprese*: Michelangelo's birthplace (1475), now called Caprese Michelangelo.

³²*she*: Michelangelo's *Night*, seen with her ancient sisters (cf. *The Night*, sec. 9, p. 15).

³³*corridor*: in the convent again.

dalla sua solitudine intona il canto alla natura con fede: Frate Sole, Suor Acqua, Frate Lupo. Un caro santo italiano. Ora hanno rivestito la sua cappella scavata nella viva roccia. Corre tutt'intorno un tavolo di noce dove con malinconia potente un frate . . . da Bibbiena intarsiò mezze figure di santi monaci. La semplicità bizzarra del disegno bianco risalta quando l'oro del tramonto tenta versarsi dall'invetriata prossima nella penombra della cappella. Acquistano allora quei sommarii disegni un fascino bizzarro e nostalgico. Bianchi sul tono ricco del noce sembrano rilevarsi i profili ieratici dal breve paesaggio claustrale da cui sorgono decollati, figure di una santità fatta spirito, linee rigide enigmatiche di grandi anime ignote. Un frate decrepito nella tarda ora si trascina nella penombra dell'altare, silenzioso nel saio villosa, e prega le preghiere d'ottanta anni d'amore. Fuori il tramonto s'intorbida. Strie minacciose di ferro si gravano sui monti prospicienti lontane. Il sogno è al termine e l'anima improvvisamente sola cerca un appoggio una fede nella triste ora. Lontano si vedono lentamente sommergersi le vedette mistiche e guerriere dei castelli del Casentino. Intorno è un grande silenzio un grande vuoto nella luce falsa dai freddi bagliori che ancora guizza sotto le strette della penombra. E corre la memoria ancora alle signore gentili dalle bianche braccia ai balconi laggiù: come in un sogno: come in un sogno cavalleresco!

Esco: il piazzale è deserto. Seggo sul muricciolo. Figure vagano, facelle vagano e si spengono: i frati si congedano dai pellegrini. Un alito continuo e leggero soffia dalla selva in alto, ma non si ode né il fruscio della massa oscura né il suo fluire per gli antri. Una campana dalla chiesetta francescana tintinna nella tristezza del chiostro: e pare il giorno dall'ombra, il giorno piagner che si muore.

from his solitude full of faith he chants his hymn to nature: Brother Sun, Sister Water, Brother Wolf. A dear Italian saint. Now they have renovated his chapel³⁴ carved out of living rock. A walnut paneling runs all around, where with powerful melancholy a monk . . . from Bibbiena³⁵ inlaid half-figures of saintly monks. The bizarre simplicity of the white design stands out when the gold of the sunset tries to pour into the dim light of the chapel from the nearby grating. Then those summary designs take on a bizarre nostalgic charm. White against the rich walnut tone the hieratic profiles seem to protrude from the brief claustral landscape from which they rise beheaded, figures of a saintliness made spirit, rigid enigmatic lines of great unknown souls. A decrepit monk in the late hour trudges in the half-light of the altar, quiet in his shaggy habit, and prays the prayers of eighty years of love. Outside the sunset grows dim. Menacing iron-colored streaks loom in the distance over the mountains ahead. The dream nears its end³⁶ and the soul suddenly alone seeks a comfort a faith in the sad hour. In the distance one can see the mystical warlike lookouts of the Casentino castles slowly being submerged. All around is a great silence a great emptiness in the false light full of cold glimmers still flashing in the grip of the shadow. And memory flies again to the gentle ladies with white arms on the balconies down there: like in a dream:³⁷ like a chivalric dream!

I go out. The small square is deserted. I sit on the low wall. Figures wander, torchlights wander and go out: the monks take leave of the pilgrims. A light continuous breath wafts up from the forest, but one hears neither the rustling of the dark mass nor its flowing through the caves. A bell from the little Franciscan church tinkles in the sadness of the cloister: and the day from the shadow, it seems to mourn the dying of the day.³⁸

³⁴*chapel*: where St. Francis received the stigmata.

³⁵*monk . . . from Bibbiena*: Fra Leonardo, Franciscan artist.

³⁶*The dream nears its end*: the state of harmony with poetry (dream) is coming to an end, and this is perceived as a painful loss by the poet.

³⁷*chivalric dream*: cf. sec. 5, p. 72.

³⁸*to mourn the dying of the day*: a verse from Dante (Purg. VIII, 1–6). In frequently incorporating lines from other poets in his own poetry, Dante in particular, Campana is a precursor to both Eliot and Montale.

II
RITORNO

8. SALGO (nello spazio, fuori del tempo)

L'acqua il vento
La sanità delle prime cose
Il lavoro umano sull'elemento
Liquido – la natura che conduce
Strati di rocce su strati il vento
Che scherza nella valle – ed ombra del vento
La nuvola – il lontano ammonimento
Del fiume nella valle –
E la rovina del contrafforte – la frana
La vittoria dell'elemento – il vento
Che scherza nella valle.
Su la lunghissima valle che sale in scale
La casetta di sasso sul faticoso verde:
La bianca immagine dell'elemento.

II
RETURN

8. I CLIMB³⁹ (in Space, outside Time)

The water the wind
The soundness of first things –
Human work⁴⁰ on the liquid
Element – nature leading
Layers of rocks upon layers – the wind
Playing in the valley – and shadow of the wind
The cloud – the distant warning
Of the river in the valley –
And the collapse of the buttress – the landslide
The victory of the element – the wind
Playing in the valley.
On the endless valley that rises in steps
The little stone house on the wearisome green:
The white image of the element.

³⁹I *CLIMB*: again Campana underlines the symbolic, initiatory nature of his journey, which takes place *outside time*. Campana's climb in *The Verna* is also a purgatorial ascent after the nightmarish landscapes of *The Night*, and it is therefore the Dantean model that is more strongly felt.

⁴⁰*human work*: the bridge over the river.

La tellurica melodia della Falterona. Le onde telluriche. L'ultimo asterisco della melodia della Falterona s'inselva nelle nuvole. Su la costa lontana traluce la linea vittoriosa dei giovani abeti, l'avanguardia dei giganti giovinetti serrati in battaglia, felici nel sole lungo la lunga costa torrenziale. In fondo, nel fruscio delle nere selve sempre più avanti accampanti lo scoglio enorme che si ripiega grottesco su se stesso, pachiderma a quattro zampe sotto la massa oscura: la Verna. E varco e varco.

Campigno: paese barbarico, fuggente, paese notturno, mistico incubo del caos. Il tuo abitante porge la notte dell'antico animale umano nei suoi gesti. Nelle tue mosse montagne l'elemento grottesco profila: un gaglioffo, una grossa puttana fuggono sotto le nubi in corsa. E le tue rive bianche come le nubi, triangolari, curve come gonfie vele: paese barbarico, fuggente, paese notturno, mistico incubo del Caos.

Riposo ora per l'ultima volta nella solitudine della foresta. Dante la sua poesia di movimento, mi torna tutta in memoria. O pellegrino, o pellegrini che pensosi andate! Catrina, bizzarra figlia della montagna barbarica, della conca rocciosa dei venti, come è dolce il tuo pianto: come è dolce quando tu assistevi alla scena di dolore della madre, della madre che aveva morto l'ultimo figlio. Una delle pie donne a lei dintorno, inginocchiata cercava di consolarla: ma lei non voleva essere consolata, ma lei gettata a terra voleva piangere tutto il suo pianto. Figura del

The telluric melody⁴¹ of the Falterona. The telluric waves. The last asterisk⁴² of the melody of the Falterona hides in the thicket of clouds. On the distant slope the victorious line of the young fir trees shines through, the vanguard of youthful giants⁴³ serried in battle, happy in the sun along the long torrential slope. In the background, in the rustling of the black forests encamping closer and closer, the enormous crag folds grotesquely upon itself, like a pachyderm on all fours under the dark mass: the Verna. And I keep on crossing.⁴⁴

Campigno: barbarous, fleeing town, nocturnal town, mystical incubus of chaos. Your inhabitant reveals the night of the ancient human animal in his gestures. Your turbulent mountains outline the grotesque element: a lout, a fat whore flee under the racing clouds. And your banks⁴⁵ white as the clouds, triangular, curved like swollen sails: barbarous, fleeing town, nocturnal town, mystical incubus of Chaos.

I rest now for the last time in the solitude of the forest. Dante⁴⁶ and his poetry of movement, it all comes back to mind. O pilgrim, o pilgrims that so pensive walk! Catrina,⁴⁷ bizarre daughter of the barbarous mountain, of the rocky basin of the winds, how sweet are your tears: how sweet when you witnessed the scene of the mother's sorrow, the mother whose last son was dead. One of the pious women around her tried to console her on her knees: but she did not want to be consoled, but

⁴¹*telluric melody*: the melody generated by all the geological elements of the Falterona.

⁴²*asterisk*: the melody is here associated with sacred music, since the asterisk is a little star that marks a pause in the middle of each line of psalms.

⁴³*youthful giants*: *giganti giovinetti* is from Carducci, "Davanti San Guido."

⁴⁴*I cross*: *varcare* is another Dantean verb used frequently by Campana, in its symbolic meaning of going beyond, linked semantically and symbolically to the other Dantean verb *salire*, to climb; *varcare* is used in the same way by Montale.

⁴⁵*banks*: the houses on the outskirts of Campigno.

⁴⁶*Dante*: Dante's poetry is constantly present in Campana's mind. Here the line from the *Vita nuova*, "pellegrini che pensosi andate," becomes a sudden invocation to Dante (*O pilgrim*). A pilgrim in Dante's footsteps is, of course, Campana himself, whose pilgrimage is therefore of fervently artistic nature, rather than religious.

⁴⁷*Catrina*: to Pariani Campana says: "they are farmgirls from Marradi; fantasies."

Ghirlandaio, ultima figlia della poesia toscana che fu, tu scesa allora dal tuo cavallo tu allora guardavi: tu che nella profluvie ondosa dei tuoi capelli salivi, salivi con la tua compagnia, come nelle favole d'antica poesia: e già dimentica dell'amor del poeta.

Monte Filetto, 25 Settembre

9. Un usignolo canta tra i rami del noce. Il poggio è troppo bello sul cielo troppo azzurro. Il fiume canta bene la sua cantilena. E un'ora che guardo lo spazio laggiù e la strada a mezza costa del poggio che vi conduce. Quassù abitano i falchi. La pioggia leggera d'estate batteva come un ricco accordo sulle foglie del noce. Ma le foglie dell'acacia albero caro alla notte si piegavano senza rumore come un'ombra verde. L'azzurro si apre tra questi due alberi. Il noce è davanti alla finestra della mia stanza. Di notte sembra raccogliere tutta l'ombra e curvare le cupe foglie canore come una messe di canti sul tronco rotondo lattiginoso quasi umano: l'acacia sa profilarsi come un chimerico fumo. Le stelle danzavano sul poggio deserto. Nessuno viene per la strada. Mi piace dai balconi guardare la campagna deserta abitata da alberi sparsi, anima della solitudine forgiata di vento. Oggi che il cielo e il paesaggio erano così dolci dopo la pioggia pensavo alle signorine di Maupassant e di Jammes chine l'ovale pallido sulla tappezzeria memore e sulle stampe. Il fiume riprende la sua cantilena. Vado via. Guardo ancora la finestra: la costa è un quadretto d'oro nello squittire dei falchi.

she thrown to the ground wanted to cry all her tears. Figure of Ghirlandaio,⁴⁸ last daughter of the Tuscan poetry that once was,⁴⁹ you down from your horse you then watched: you who climbed in the wavy stream of your hair, climbed with your company, as in the fairy tales of ancient poetry: and already oblivious to the poet's love.

Mount Filetto, September 25

9. A nightingale sings among the branches of the walnut tree. The hilltop is too beautiful against a sky too blue. The river sings its sing-song well. For an hour now I have been looking at the clearing down there and the road halfway up the hillside leading to it. Up here live the hawks. The light summer rain⁵⁰ was beating down like rich chords on the leaves of the walnut tree. But the leaves of the acacia dear to the night bent noiselessly like a green shadow. The blue opens between these two trees. The walnut tree is in front of the window of my room. At night it seems to gather all the shadow and curve the dark melodious leaves like a harvest of songs⁵¹ onto the round milky almost human trunk: the acacia knows how to reveal its outline like a chimeric haze. The stars were dancing on the deserted hilltop. No one is coming down the road. From the balconies I like to watch the deserted countryside inhabited by scattered trees, soul of solitude forged by the wind. Today that the sky and the landscape were so soft after the rain I thought about the young ladies of Maupassant and Jammes,⁵² their pallid ovals bowed on the tapestry and engravings, lost in memories. The river takes up its sing-song again. I leave. I look at the window once more: the slope is a little gold painting in the squeaking of the hawks.

⁴⁸*figure of Ghirlandaio*: a comparison between the girls of Castagno and Ghirlandaio's paintings. One of the numerous references to painting in *The Verna*.

⁴⁹*Tuscan poetry that once was*: cf. sec. 2, n. 14.

⁵⁰*The light summer rain*: echoes of D'Annunzio's "La pioggia nel pineto."

⁵¹*harvest of songs*: like crops swept by the wind.

⁵²*Maupassant . . . Jammes*: the softness of the landscape after the rain evokes the softness of literary figures.

Presso Campigno (26 Settembre)

10. Per rendere il paesaggio, il paese vergine che il fiume docile a valle solo riempie del suo rumore di tremiti freschi, non basta la pittura, ci vuole l'acqua, l'elemento stesso, la melodia docile dell'acqua che si stende tra le forre all'ampia rovina del suo letto, che dolce come l'antica voce dei venti incalza verso le valli in curve regali: poi ch  essa   qui veramente la regina del paesaggio.

Valderv    una costa interamente alpina che scende a tratti a dirupi e getta sull'acqua il suo piedistallo come la zanna del leone. L'acqua volge con tonfi chiari e profondi lasciando l'alto scenario pastorale di grandi alberi e colline.

Ecco le rocce, strati su strati, monumenti di tenacia solitaria che consolano il cuore degli uomini. E dolce mi   sembrato il mio destino fuggitivo al fascino dei lontani miraggi di ventura che ancora arridono dai monti azzurri: e a udire il sussurrare dell'acqua sotto le nude rocce, fresca ancora delle profondit  della terra. Cos  conosco una musica dolce nel mio ricordo senza ricordarmene neppure una nota: so che si chiama la partenza o il ritorno: conosco un quadro perduto tra lo splendore dell'arte fiorentina colla sua parola di dolce nostalgia:   il figliuol prodigo all'ombra degli alberi della casa paterna. Letteratura? Non so. Il mio

Near Campigno (September 26)

10. To render the landscape, virgin country that only the gentle river down in the valley fills with its noise of fresh shivers, painting is not enough, you need the water, the element itself, the gentle melody of the water that spreads among the gorges over the vast wreckage of its bed, that sweet as the ancient voices of the winds advances in regal curves toward the valleys: because here she is really queen of the landscape.

Valdervè⁵³ is an entirely alpine slope which at times descends in crags and throws its pedestal⁵⁴ on the water like the fang of a lion. The water turns with clear deep splashes leaving the high pastoral scenery of great trees and hills.

Here are the rocks, layers upon layers, monuments of solitary tenacity that console the hearts of men. And my destiny fleeing⁵⁵ toward the spell of distant mirages of fortune which still smile down from the blue mountains has seemed sweet to me: and to hear the murmur of the water under the naked rocks, still fresh from the depths of the earth. So I know a sweet music⁵⁶ in my memory without remembering a single note: I know it is called departure or return: I know a painting lost in the splendor of Florentine art with its word of sweet longing: it's the prodigal son in the shade of the trees of his father's house. Literature?⁵⁷ I do

⁵³*Valdervè*: mountain locality near Marradi.

⁵⁴*pedestal*: base of the mountainside.

⁵⁵*fugitive*: cf. *The Night*, sec. 14, p. 25: *Then I fled*.

⁵⁶*I know a music*: "clarifying passage for an understanding of Campana's work, because it explicitly states that the theme of music is closely linked to departures and returns" (Ceragioli 143).

⁵⁷*Literature?*: Campana himself wanders whether his sensibility is conditioned by literary and cultural models, and thereby provides an important interpretive key.

ricordo, l'acqua è così. Dopo gli sfondi spirituali senza spirito, dopo l'oro crepuscolare, dolce come il canto dell'onnipresente tenebra è il canto dell'acqua sotto le rocce: così come è dolce l'elemento nello splendore nero degli occhi delle vergini spagnole: e come le corde delle chitarre di Spagna . . . Ribera, dove vidi le tue danze arieggiate di secchi accordi? Il tuo satiro aguzzo alla danza dei vittoriosi accordi? E in contro l'altra tua faccia, il cavaliere della morte, l'altra tua faccia cuore profondo, cuore danzante, satiro cinto di pampini danzante sulla sacra oscenità di Sileno? Nude scheletriche stampe, sulla rozza parete in un meriggio torrido fantasmi della pietra . . .

Ascolto. Le fontane hanno taciuto nella voce del vento. Dalla roccia cola un filo d'acqua in un incavo. Il vento allenta e raffrena il morso del lontano dolore. Ecco son volto. Tre le rocce crepuscolari una forma nera cornuta immobile mi guarda immobile con occhi d'oro.

Laggiù nel crepuscolo la pianura di Romagna. O donna sognata, donna adorata, donna forte, profilo nobilitato di un ricordo di immobilità bizantina, in linee dolci e potenti testa nobile e mitica dorata dell'enigma delle sfingi: occhi crepuscolari in paesaggio di torri là sognati sulle rive della guerreggiata pianura, sulle rive dei fiumi bevuti dalla terra avida là dove si perde il grido di Francesca:

not know. This is how my memory, how the water is. After the spiritual landscapes⁵⁸ without spirit, after the golden twilight, sweet as the song of the omnipresent darkness is the song of the water under the rocks: as the element is sweet in the black splendor of the eyes of the Spanish virgins: and like the strings of the guitars of Spain . . . Ribera,⁵⁹ where did I see your dances accompanied by harsh chords? Your pointed satyr in the dance of the victorious chords? And on the opposite side your other face, the knight of death, your other face deep heart, dancing heart, satyr girdled with vine leaves dancing on the sacred obscenity of Silenus? Bare skeletal engravings, on the ragged wall one torrid afternoon phantoms of the stone. . . .

I listen. The fountains have fallen silent in the voice of the wind. From the rock a trickle of water drips into a hollow. The wind slackens and checks the bit of distant sorrow. I have turned around now. Among the rocks of twilight a black horned motionless figure⁶⁰ watches me motionless with golden eyes.

Down there in the twilight the plain of Romagna.⁶¹ O woman I have dreamed, woman adored, strong woman, profile ennobled by a memory of Byzantine stillness, in soft powerful lines noble mythical head gilded with the enigma of the sphinxes: twilight eyes in a landscape of towers dreamed there on the banks of the war-torn plain, on the banks of the rivers drunk by the thirsting earth where Francesca's⁶² cry dies out: from my childhood a liturgical voice:

⁵⁸*After the spiritual landscapes*: here Campana seems to oppose the virgin voice of the elements to contemporary decadent poetry.

⁵⁹*Ribera*: Jusepe De Ribera (1591–1652). The interpenetration of landscape and painting continues with the evocation of Ribera's *Drunken Silenus* and Dürer's *The Knight, Death, and the Devil*.

⁶⁰*horned motionless figure*: wearing a horned helmet. To Pariani Campana said that this was "survival after death." It is probably a reference to the duke Corrado Lando, who was killed in 1358 at a place called the Scalelle, where Campana is now.

⁶¹*Romagna*: Romagna is personified as the noble figure of a Byzantine woman. "The cultural model to which Romagna is connected is always ancient Byzantium" (Ceragioli 146).

⁶²*Francesca*: Francesca da Rimini; cf. *The Night*, sec. 9, p. 15.

dalla mia fanciullezza una voce liturgica risuonava in preghiera lenta e commossa: e tu da quel ritmo sacro a me commosso sorvegli, già inquieto di vaste pianure, di lontani miracolosi destini: risveglia la mia speranza sull'infinito della pianura o del mare sentendo aleggiare un soffio di grazia: nobiltà carnale e dorata, profondità dorata degli occhi: guerriera, amante, mistica, benigna di nobiltà umana antica Romagna.

L'acqua del mulino corre piana e invisibile nella gora. Rivedo un fanciullo, lo stesso fanciullo, laggiù steso sull'erba. Sembra dormire. Ripenso alla mia fanciullezza: quanto tempo è trascorso da quando i bagliori magnetici delle stelle mi dissero per la prima volta dell'infinità delle morti! . . . Il tempo è scorso, si è addensato, è scorso: così come l'acqua scorre, immobile per quel fanciullo: lasciando dietro a sé il silenzio, la gora profonda e uguale: conservando il silenzio come ogni giorno l'ombra. . . . Quel fanciullo o quella immagine proiettata dalla mia nostalgia? Così immobile laggiù: come il mio cadavere.

Marradi (Antica volta. Specchio velato)

11. Il mattino arride sulle cime dei monti. In alto sulle cuspidi di un triangolo desolato si illumina il castello, più alto e più lontano. Venere passa in baroccio accoccolata per la strada conventuale. Il fiume si snoda per la valle: rotto e muggente a tratti canta e riposa in larghi specchi d'azzurro: e più trascorre le mura nere (una cupola rossa ride lontana con il suo leone) e i campanili si affollano e nel nereggiare inquieto dei tetti al sole una lunga veranda che ha messo un commento variopinto di archi!

echoed in a slow, moving prayer: and from that sacred rhythm you appeared to me who was deeply moved, already restless with vast plains, with distant miraculous destinies: my hope reawakens on the endlessness of the plain or of the sea feeling a breath of grace blowing gently: carnal golden nobility, golden depth of the eyes: warlike, lover, mystical, benign⁶³ Romagna ancient in human nobility.

The water of the mill flows even and invisible into the mill-stream. I see a boy again, the same boy, lying on the grass down there. He seems asleep. I think back at my childhood: how much time has passed since the magnetic glimmers of the stars told me for the first time of the infinity of deaths! . . . Time has gone by, has condensed, has gone by: as the water goes by, motionless for that boy: leaving behind the silence, the deep and level mill-stream: conserving silence as each day its shadow. . . .

That boy or that image projected by my longing? So motionless down there: like my corpse.⁶⁴

Marradi (Ancient Vault. Veiled Mirror)

11. Morning smiles down from the mountaintops. High on the pinnacles of a desolate triangle the castle⁶⁵ grows bright, higher and more distant. Venus⁶⁶ goes by crouched in a cart down the conventual road. The river winds through the valley: broken and bellowing at times it sings and rests in wide stretches of blueness: and more swiftly it runs along the black walls (a red cupola laughs in the distance with its lion) and the bell towers crowd together and in the restless blackening of the rooftops in the sun a long veranda which has put on a many-colored comment of arches!

⁶³*benign*: *benigno*, probably from Dante, precisely in the Francesca episode: “O animal grazioso e benigno.”

⁶⁴*corpse*: in the body of the boy lying on the grass Campana sees an image of his own death.

⁶⁵*castle*: the castle of Marradi.

⁶⁶*Venus*: probably a local farmgirl going by.

Presso Marradi (ottobre)

12. Son capitato in mezzo a bona gente. La finestra della mia stanza che affronta i venti: e la . . . e il figlio, povero uccellino dai tratti dolci e dall'anima indecisa, povero uccellino che trascina una gamba rotta, e il vento che batte alla finestra dall'orizzonte annuolato i monti lontani ed alti, il rombo monotono del vento. Lontano è caduta la neve. . . . La padrona zitta mi rifà il letto aiutata dalla fanticella. Monotona dolcezza della vita patriarcale. Fine del pellegrinaggio.

Near Marradi (October)

12. I have come upon good people. The window of my room facing the winds: and the . . . and her son, poor little bird with soft features and an indecisive spirit, poor little bird dragging a broken leg, and the wind beating on the window, from the clouded horizon the distant high mountains, the monotonous rumble of the wind. Snow has fallen in the distance. . . . The landlady quietly makes my bed aided by the young servant girl. Monotonous sweetness of the patriarchal life. End of the pilgrimage.

IMMAGINI DEL VIAGGIO E DELLA MONTAGNA

. . . poi che nella sorda lotta notturna
La più potente anima seconda ebbe frante le nostre catene
Noi ci svegliammo piangendo ed era l'azzurro mattino:
Come ombre d'eroi veleggiavano:
De l'alba non ombre nei puri silenzi
De l'alba
Nei puri pensieri
Non ombre
De l'alba non ombre:
Piangendo: giurando noi fede all'azzurro

.....
.....
Pare la donna che siede pallida giovine ancora
Sopra dell'erta ultima presso la casa antica:
Avanti a lei incerte si snodano le valli
Verso le solitudini alte de gli orizzonti:
La gentile canuta il cuculo sente a cantare.
E il semplice cuore provato negli anni
A le melodie della terra

IMAGES OF THE JOURNEY AND OF THE MOUNTAIN

... after the muted nocturnal struggle
When the more powerful second soul¹ had broken our chains
We woke up crying and it was sky-blue morning:
Like² shadows of heroes³ were gliding:
No shadows of dawn in the pure silences
No shadows
In the pure thoughts
Of dawn
No shadows of dawn:
Crying: we pledging our faith to the blue:⁴

.....
.....
The woman sitting pale still young appears
On the last steep slope near the ancient house:
Before her the uncertain valleys unfold
Toward the high solitudes of the horizons:
The gentle white-haired woman hears the cuckoo singing.
And the simple heart tested through the years
Listens quietly

¹*second soul*: Ceragioli traces this to Goethe's Faust, who suffers the conflict of two souls, the first turned toward earthly pleasures, the second toward spiritual joys. Also echoes of St. Francis's "second death."

²*like*: characteristically, Campana gives *come* not the usual meaning of "as," but of "almost," "something like"; that is, "something like shadows of heroes were gliding." This is a salient and persistent feature of Campana's style.

³*shadows of heroes*: another reference to Faust: "Oh, if you ever exist spirits of the air, who pass as lords between earth and sky, descend from the golden cloud, and take me to a new and varied life" (Ceragioli 155). The great soaring spirits are the great artists of the past.

⁴*pledging our faith to the blue*: pledging our life to poetry.

Ascolta quieto: le note
Giungon, continue ambigue come in un velo di seta.
Da selve oscure il torrente
Sorte ed in torpidi gorgghi la chiostra di rocce
Lambe ed involge aereo cilestrino . . .
E il cuculo cola più lento due note velate
Nel silenzio azzurrino

.....
.....

L'aria ride: la tromba a valle i monti
Squilla: la massa degli scorridori
Si scioglie: ha vivi lanci: i nostri cuori
Balzano: e grida ed oltrevarca i ponti.
E dalle altezze agli infiniti alberi
Vigili, calan trepidi pei monti,
Tremuli e vaghi nelle vive fonti
Gli echi dei nostri due sommessi cuori . . .
Hanno varcato in lunga teoria:
Nell'aria non so qual bacchico canto
Salgono: e dietro a loro il monte introna:
.....
E si distingue il loro verde canto.

To the melodies of the earth:⁵ the notes
Reach her, constant ambiguous as in a silken veil.
The stream flows out of the dark woods⁶
And pale blue and airy in sluggish eddies
It skims and enfolds the circle of rocks.
And more slowly the cuckoo trickles two veiled notes
Into the azure silence.

.....
.....

The air laughs: the trumpet⁷ starts
to blare down in the valley: the mass of racers
Unfolds: it has sharp spurts: our hearts
leap up: and it shouts and rides over the bridges.
And the echoes of our two subdued hearts
From the heights to infinite dawns vigilant,
anxiously descend the mountains,
Tremulous and vague in living fountains . . .
They have crossed in a long train:
I don't know what bacchic song is in the air
As they climb: and behind them the mountain thunders:⁸

.....
And one can still make out their green song.⁹

⁵*melodies of the earth*: important theme in Campana (cf. *The Verna*, sec. 8).

⁶*dark woods*: *selve oscure*, *sorte*, *chiostra di rocce*, *gorghi*, *ciletrino* are Dantean. This poem is full of echoes from Dante, who is twice quoted directly further on in the composition (cf. nn. 14–15).

⁷*trumpet*: the trumpet that precedes a bicycle race. The race described in this stanza is transformed into a joyous, bacchic celebration of life, a sort of Orphic initiation (the reference to the god Dionysus was explicit in the variant of the manuscript).

⁸*the mountain thunders*: another possible Dantean reference: the mountain of Purgatory thunders after a soul has completed its purification. On the literal level, the shouts of the crowd at the passage of the racers.

⁹*green song*: a song of youth, but also a song mixing with the green landscape.

.....
.....
Andar, *de l'acque ai gorgi*, per la china
Valle, nel *sordo mormorar sfiorato*:
Seguire un'ala stanca per la china
Valle che batte e volge: desolato
Andar per valli, in fin che in azzurrina
Serenità, dall'aspre rocce dato
Un Borgo in grigio e vario torreggiare
All'alterno pensier pare e dispare,
Sovra l'arido sogno, serenato!
O se come il torrente che rovina
E si riposa nell'azzurro eguale,
Se tale a le tue mura la proclina
Anima al nulla nel suo andar fatale,
Se alle tue mura in pace cristallina
Tender potessi, in una pace uguale,
E il ricordo specchiar di una divina
Serenità perduta o tu immortale
Anima! o Tu!

.....
.....
La messe, intesa al misterioso coro
Del vento, in vie di lunghe onde tranquille
Muta e gloriosa per le mie pupille

.....
.....

To go,¹⁰ *to the waters' whirlpools*, down
The valley's slope, *in muted grazing whispers*:¹¹
To follow down the valley's slope a weary wing¹²
That beats and turns: to go desolate
Through valleys, till in the pale blue serenity,
From the rugged rocks a Village¹³ rising
In grey and varied towers, in alternating
Thoughts appears and disappears,
Over the arid dream rendered serene.
Oh if like the stream that rushing downward falls
And comes to rest into an even blueness,
If so toward your walls the soul inclined
To nothingness along its fated journey,¹⁴
If in crystalline peace toward your walls
I could reach out, in an even peace,
And the memory reflect of a divine
Serenity lost, o you immortal Soul! O you!

.....
.....

Intent upon the wind's mysterious chorus,
In streaming paths of long and tranquil waves,
The harvest in my eyes, silent and glorious,

¹⁰*To go*: optative infinitive, denoting a wish, meaning "If only I could go etc. . . ." The whole stanza expresses a deep longing for serenity and peace.

¹¹*grazing whispers*: the whisper of the vegetation as the poet goes by.

¹²*weary wing*: bird in flight.

¹³*Village*: Italian *borgo*, town or village. Marradi.

¹⁴*fated journey*: Dante, *andar fatale*, Inf. V, 22. Critics have recognized in the musical quality of this stanza an indebtedness to D'Annunzio, but at a deeper level the determining literary model is still Dante. The longing for peace is strongly reminiscent of the Francesca episode.

Discioglie il grembo delle luci d'oro.
O Speranza! O Speranza! a mille a mille
Splendono nell'estate i frutti! un coro
Ch'è incantato, è al suo murmure, canoro
Che vive per miriadi di faville! . . .

Ecco la notte: ed ecco vigilarmi
E luci e luci: ed io lontano e solo:
Quieta è la messe, verso l'infinito
(Quieto è lo spirto) vanno muti carmi
A la notte: a la notte: intendo: Solo
Ombra che torna, ch'era dipartito . . .

From her bosom unfolds her golden lights.
O hope! O hope! By the thousand, the fruits
Glisten in the summer! A chorus
That's enchanted is at its murmur, melodious,
That lives through a myriad glimmers.

Here is the night, and here to watch me
Light after light: and I alone and distant:
Quiet is the harvest, toward infinity
(Quiet is the spirit) go silent hymns
In the night: in the night: I hear: Only
His shadow¹⁵ now returns, who had once left us. . . .

¹⁵*Only his shadow*: Dante, “l’ombra sua torna, ch’era dipartita” (Inf. IV, 79–81). The *Inferno* episode can help clarify this image. As Virgil is welcomed back by the great spirits of antiquity, so Campana also hears a voice that welcomes him, made pure shadow, like the gliding heroes of the first stanza. Campana feels himself being called back to the world to which he knows he belongs and for which he lives.

VIAGGIO A MONTEVIDEO

Io vidi dal ponte della nave
I colli di Spagna
Svanire, nel verde
Dentro il crepuscolo d'oro la bruna terra celando
Come una melodia:
D'ignota scena fanciulla sola
Come una melodia
Blu, su la riva dei colli ancora tremare una viola . . .
Illanguidiva la sera celeste sul mare:
Pure i dorati silenzi ad ora ad ora dell'ale
Varcaron lentamente in un azzurreggiare:
Lontani tinti dei varii colori
Dai più lontani silenzi
Ne la celeste sera varcaron gli uccelli d'oro: la nave
Già cieca varcando battendo la tenebra
Coi nostri naufraghi cuori

JOURNEY TO MONTEVIDEO

I saw from the deck of the ship
The hills of Spain¹⁶
Vanish, while in the green
Within the golden twilight the dark earth concealed
Like a melody:¹⁷
Like a blue melody
Of solitary unknown youthful scene,
On the bank of the hills still trembling a viola . . .¹⁸
The pale-blue evening languished on the sea:
From time to time the golden silences of wings
Also crossed¹⁹ slowly in the deepening blue . . .
Distant tinged with various colors
From the most distant silences
The golden birds crossed in the sky-blue evening: the ship
Already blind²⁰ crossing beating the darkness
With our shipwrecked²¹ hearts

¹⁶*I saw*: This poem is also replete with Dantean echoes and Campana relives his journey through the experience of Dante's Ulysses. The opening lines show a precise correspondence with the start of Ulysses's voyage, including the mention of Spain (cf. Inf. XXVI, 103 "L'un lito e l'altro vidi infin la Spagna").

¹⁷*like a melody*: again *come* with the meaning of "almost."

¹⁸*viola*: Ceragioli argues convincingly that *viola* here is not a flower, but the musical instrument, whose tremulous sound accompanies the departure (cf. *The Verna*, sec. 10: *I know a sweet music in my memory without remembering even one note: I know it's called departure or return*).

¹⁹*crossed*: *varcaron*, Dantean verb repeated several times in the course of the poem, and it always subtends the possibility of a metaphysical crossing, as in Montale. Furthermore, Dante calls Ulysses's voyage "il varco folle," the mad crossing (Par. XXVII, 82).

²⁰*blind*: almost without direction in the darkness, but also a reference to Ulysses's mad flight.

²¹*shipwrecked*: lost in the ocean, but also establishing a parallel with Ulysses's shipwreck.

Battendo la tenebra l'ale celeste sul mare.
Ma un giorno
Salirono sopra la nave le gravi matrone di Spagna
Da gli occhi torbidi e angelici
Dai seni gravidi di vertigine. Quando
In una baia profonda di un'isola equatoriale
In una baia tranquilla e profonda assai più del cielo notturno
Noi vedemmo sorgere nella luce incantata
Una bianca città addormentata
Ai piedi dei picchi altissimi dei vulcani spenti
Nel soffio torbido dell'equatore: finché
Dopo molte grida e molte ombre di un paese ignoto,
Dopo molto cigolìo di catene e molto acceso fervore
Noi lasciammo la città equatoriale
Verso l'inquieto mare notturno.
*Andavamo andavamo, per giorni e per giorni: le navi
Gravi di vele molli di caldi soffi incontro passavano lente:
Sì presso di sul cassero a noi ne appariva bronzina
Una fanciulla della razza nuova,
Occhi lucenti e le vesti al vento!* ed ecco: selvaggia a la fine di un giorno che
apparve
La riva selvaggia là giù sopra la sconfinata marina:
E vidi come cavalle
Vertiginose che si scioglievano le dune
Verso la prateria senza fine
Deserta senza le case umane
E noi volgemmo fuggendo le dune che apparve

The wings²² beating the pale-blue darkness on the sea.
 But one day
 Aboard ship came the solemn matrons of Spain
 With turbid angelic eyes
 With breasts heavy with vertigo.²³ When
 In a deep bay of an equatorial island²⁴
 In a bay much more tranquil and deep than the nocturnal sky
 We saw in the enchanted light rise
 A white city asleep
 At the foot of the highest peaks of the dead volcanoes
 In the turbid breath of the equator: until
 After much shouting and many shadows of an unknown country,
 After much clattering of chains and much burning fervor
 We left the equatorial city
 Toward the restless nocturnal sea.
*We went on and on, for days and days: the ships
 Heavy with sails slackened by warm breezes slowly went by:
 Near the upper deck a bronze-colored girl
 Of the new race appeared to us,
 Eyes shining and clothes in the wind!* and then: savage at day's end
 The savage shore appeared to us down there over the boundless ocean:
 And I saw the dunes unfurl
 Like whirling Mares
 Toward the endless prairie
 Deserted without human houses
 And as the dunes fled we turned, for the marine capital²⁵

²²*beating . . . wings*: “batter l’ali” is a recurring image in the *Divine Comedy* (Inf. XXII, 115; Purg. XII, 98; Par. XI, 3).

²³*heavy with vertigo*: capable of causing deep emotions.

²⁴*equatorial island*: to Pariani (67), Campana says the island is Capoverde.

²⁵*marine capital*: to Pariani (67): “Buenos Ayres” [*sic*].

Su un mare giallo de la portentosa dovizia del fiume,
Del continente nuovo la capitale marina.
Limpido fresco ed elettrico era il lume
Della sera e là le alte case parevan deserte
Laggiù sul mar del pirata
De la città abbandonata
Tra il mare giallo e le dune
.....

Of the new continent appeared²⁶ on a sea yellow
With the prodigious abundance of the river.
Limpid fresh and electric was the light
Of evening, and there the tall houses seemed deserted
Down there on the sea of the pirate²⁷
Of the abandoned city
Between the yellow sea and the dunes
.

²⁶*appeared*: cf. Inf. XXVII, 133–37: “quando n’*apparve* una montagna . . . / noi ci allegrammo, e tosto tornò in pianto; / che della *nova terra* un turbo nacque.”

²⁷*pirate*: to Pariani (67): “Garibaldi, in his memoirs, speaks of pirates on the coasts of Uruguay.”

FANTASIA SU UN QUADRO D'ARDENGO SOFFICI

Faccia, zig zag anatomico che oscura
La passione torva di una vecchia luna
Che guarda sospesa al soffitto
In una taverna café chantant D'America: la rossa velocità
Di luci *funambola che tanga*
Spagnola cinerina
Isterica in tango di luci si disfà:
Che guarda nel café chantant
D'America:
Sul piano martellato tre
Fiammelle rosse si sono accese da sé.

FANTASY²⁸ OVER A PAINTING BY ARDENGO SOFFICI

Face, anatomical zig-zag that dims
The grim passion of an old moon²⁹
That watches hanging from the ceiling
In a tavern American
Café chantant: the red speed
Of lights *rope-dancer that tangoes*³⁰
Ashen Spanish girl
Hysterical with lights dissolves in tango:
That watches in the American
Café chantant:
On the hammered piano three
Red flames lit up all by themselves.

²⁸*Fantasy*: the painting was presented at *Lacerba*'s Futurist Exposition in 1913.

²⁹*old moon*: an old lantern.

³⁰*that tangoes*: to Pariani (67–68): “It represented a dance in a café chantant.” The painting has a personal relevance for Campana, who told Pariani that when he was in Argentina he played the piano in a café chantant.

FIRENZE (UFFIZII)

Entro dei ponti tuoi multicolori
L'Arno presago quietamente arena
E in riflessi tranquilli frange appena
Archi severi tra sfiorir di fiori.

.....

*Azzurro l'arco dell'intercolonna
Trema rigato tra i palazzi eccelsi:
Candide righe nell'azzurro: persi
Voli: su bianca gioventù in colonne.*

FLORENCE (UFFIZII)

Within your many-colored bridges
Foresighted³¹ Arno quietly runs aground
And in tranquil glimmers gently breaches
Austere arches amid the dying flowers dying.

.....
Pale blue the arch between the columns
Quivers in streaks³² among majestic buildings
Pure white streaks in the blue: lost
Flights: up white youths in columns.

³¹*foresighted*: the river anticipates the calm.

³²*quivers in streaks*: the arch is streaked because it is reflected in the flowing water.

BATTE BOTTE

Ne la nave
Che si scuote,
Con le navi che percuote
Di un'aurora
Sulla prora
Splende un occhio
Incandescente:
(Il mio passo
Solitario
Beve l'ombra
Per il Quais)
Ne la luce
Uniforme
Da le navi
A la città
Solo il passo
Che a la notte
Solitario
Si percuote
Per la notte
Dalle navi
Solitario
Ripercuote:
Così vasta
Così ambigua

POUND THE GROUND

In the ship
That slowly rocks,
With the other ships it knocks³³
Of a dawn
On the prow
An incandescent
Eye³⁴ is shining:
(My solitary
Footstep
Drinks the shadow³⁵
Along the Quais)
In the even
Light of day
From the ships
To the city
In the night
Just the sound
of the footsteps
Solitary
In the night
From the ships
Solitary
They resound:
So vast
So ambiguous

³³*it knocks*: because of the movement of the water.

³⁴*eye*: a lamp.

³⁵*drinks the shadow*: the shadow drinks my solitary footsteps.

Per la notte
Così pura!
L'acqua (il mare
Che n'esala?)
A le rotte
Ne la notte
Batte: cieco
Per le rotte
Dentro l'occhio
Disumano
De la notte
Di un destino
Ne la notte
Più lontano
Per le rotte
De la notte
Il mio passo
Batte botte.

Through the night
So pure!
The water (the sea
Exhaling³⁶ from it?)
Pounds
Toward paths
In the night: blind
Along the paths
In the inhuman eye³⁷
Of a destiny³⁸
More distant
Than the night
In the night
Along the paths
of the night
My footsteps
Pound the ground.

³⁶*the sea exhaling*: probably means: the salty smell coming from the water.

³⁷*inhuman eye*: still the lamp.

³⁸*of a destiny*: the construction is: my footsteps pound the ground along the paths of a destiny more distant than the night, namely death.

FIRENZE

Firenze giglio di potenza virgulto primaverile. Le mattine di primavera sull'Arno. La grazia degli adolescenti (che non è grazia al mondo che vinca tua grazia d'Aprile), vivo vergine continuo alito, fresco che vivifica i marmi e fa nascere Venere Botticelliana: I pollini del desiderio gravi da tutte le forme scultoree della bellezza, l'alto Cielo spirituale, le linee delle colline che vagano, insieme a la nostalgia acuta di dissolvimento alitata dalle bianche forme della bellezza: mentre pure nostra è la divinità del sentirsi oltre la musica, nel sogno abitato di immagini plastiche!



L'Arno qui ancora ha tremanti freschi: poi lo occupa un silenzio dei più profondi: nel canale delle colline basse e monotone toccando le piccole città etrusche, uguale oramai sino alle foci, lasciando i bianchi trofei di Pisa, il duomo prezioso traversato dalla trave colossale, che chiude nella sua nudità un così vasto soffio marino. A Signa nel ronzio musicale e assonnante ricordo quel profondo

FLORENCE

Florence lily of power spring shoot.³⁹ Spring mornings on the Arno. The grace of adolescents (for there is no grace in the world that can conquer your April grace) living virginal continuous breath,⁴⁰ fresh, that revives the marble and gives birth to Botticelli's Venus: Heavy the pollen⁴¹ of desire from all the sculptural forms of beauty, the high spiritual Sky, the wandering lines of the hills, along with the sharp longing for dissolution exhaled by the white forms⁴² of beauty: while also ours is the divine feeling⁴³ of being beyond music, in the dream inhabited by plastic images!



Here⁴⁴ the Arno still has cool shivers: further on it is seized by a most profound silence: low monotonous hills in the canal that touches the small Etruscan cities, level now as far as its mouth, leaving the white trophies⁴⁵ of Pisa, the precious Duomo traversed by the colossal beam, that holds in its bareness such a vast breath from the sea. In Signa, in the musical entrancing hum, I remember that

³⁹*Florence lily of power*: here Campana imitates D'Annunzio (*Alcyone*, Dithyramb I, lines 113–17): “O Fiorenza, o Fiorenza, / Giglio di potenza / Virgulto primaverale; / E certo non è grazia alcuna / Che vinca tua grazia d'aprile.” *Fiorenza* is literary.

⁴⁰*breath*: the morning air on the Arno is like a vivifying breath that recreates Renaissance art in today's youth.

⁴¹*pollen*: a diffuse sensuality emanates from the sculptural forms of beauty, that is, from the youth who are the embodiment of ancient creations, and spreads like pollen in the air.

⁴²*white forms*: the figures of youth, as beautiful as white marble statues.

⁴³*divinity*: a privileged, superhuman condition beyond music, into dream.

⁴⁴*here*: in Florence.

⁴⁵*trophies*: the monuments in Piazza dei Miracoli in Pisa.

silenzio: il silenzio di un'epoca sepolta, di una civiltà sepolta: e come una fanciulla etrusca possa rattristare il paesaggio . . .



Nel vico centrale osterie malfamate, botteghe di rigattieri, bislacchi ottoni disparati. Un'osteria sempre deserta di giorno mostra la sera dietro la vetrata un affaccendarsi di figure losche. Grida e richiami beffardi e brutali si spandono pel vico quando qualche avventore entra. In faccia nel vico breve e stretto c'è una finestra, unica, ad inferriata, nella parete rossa corrosa di un vecchio palazzo, dove dietro le sbarre si vedono affacciati dei visi ebebi di prostitute disfatte a cui il belletto da un aspetto tragico di pagliacci. Quel passaggio deserto, fetido di un orinatoio, della muffa dei muri corrosi, ha per sola prospettiva in fondo l'osteria. I pagliacci ritinti sembrano seguire curiosamente la vita che si svolge dietro l'inventriata, tra il fumo delle pastasciutte acide, le risa dei mantenuti dalle femmine e i silenzi improvvisi che provoca la squadra mobile: Tre minorenni dondolano monotonamente le loro grazie precoci. Tre tedeschi irsuti sparuti e scalcagnati seggono compostamente attorno ad un litro. Uno di loro dalla faccia di Cristo è rivestito da una tunica da prete (!) che tiene raccolta sulle ginocchia. Fumo acre delle pastasciutte: tinnire di piatti e di bicchieri: risa dei maschi dalle dita piene di anelli che si lasciano accarezzare dalle femmine, ora che hanno mangiato. Passano le serve nell'aria acre di fumo gettando un richiamo musicale: Pastee. In un quadro a bianco e nero una ragazza bruna con una chitarra mostra i denti e il bianco degli occhi appesa in alto. Serenata sui Lungarni. M'investe un soffio stanco dalle colline fiorentine: porta un profumo di corolle smorte misto a un odor di lacche e di vernici di pitture antiche, percettibile appena (Mereskoswki).

profound silence: the silence of a buried epoch, of a buried civilization: and the way a young Etruscan girl⁴⁶ can sadden the landscape . . .



In the central alleyway⁴⁷ seedy taverns, secondhand shops, odd mismatched brasses. A tavern always deserted during the day in the evening shows a bustle of sinister figures behind the glasspane. Shouts and brutal sneers spill out into the street whenever a customer goes in. Across the way in the short narrow alley there is a single window with a grating in the red corroded wall of an old building, where one can see behind the bars doltish faces of haggard prostitutes peering out, whose heavy rouge lends them the tragic look of clowns. That deserted passageway, stinking from the urinal and the mold on the corroded walls, has the tavern as its only view at the far end. The painted clowns seem to follow with great curiosity the life unfolding behind the glasspane, amid the smoke of the sour-smelling pasta, the laughter of the men kept by their women and the sudden silences caused by the vice squad: Three underage girls monotonously sway their precocious charms. Three hairy Germans, gaunt and shabby, sit composedly around a liter of wine. One of them with a Christ-like face is dressed in priestly robes (!) which he keeps tucked over his knees. Acrid smoke from the pasta: tinkling of dishes and glasses: laughter of the males with their fingers full of rings who let themselves be caressed by the females, now that they have eaten. The maids go by in the air acrid with smoke giving out a musical call: Pastaas. In a black-and-white painting a dark girl with a guitar shows her teeth and the white of her eyes, suspended overhead. Serenade on the Lungarnos. From the Florentine hills a weary breeze descends on me: it carries a smell of lifeless corollas, mixed with an odor of lacquer and varnish from old paintings, barely perceptible (Mereskowski).⁴⁸

⁴⁶*Etruscan girl*: this is once more Campana's metahistorical way of seeing, which tends to superimpose ancient images onto the present. In a girl he sees he discerns the image of an ancient Etruscan.

⁴⁷*central alleyway*: to Pariani (68): "The central alley must be Borgo Santi Apostoli."

⁴⁸*Mereskowski*: Dimitri S. Merezkowskij, Russian writer (1865–1941). Campana tells Pariani (68): "I put Mereskowski's name because I take the last image from him."

FAENZA

Una grossa torre barocca: dietro la ringhiera una lampada accesa: appare sulla piazza al capo di una lunga contrada dove tutti i palazzi sono rossi e tutti hanno una ringhiera corrosa: (le contrade alle svolte sono deserte). Qualche matrona piena di fascino. Nell'aria si accumula qualche cosa di danzante. Ascolto: la grossa torre barocca ora accesa mette nell'aria un senso di liberazione. L'occhio dell'orologio trasparente in alto appare che illumina la sera, le frecce dorate: una piccola madonna bianca si distingue già dietro la ringhiera colla piccola lucerna corrosa accesa: *E già la grossa torre barocca e vuota e si vede che porta illuminati i simboli del tempo e della fede.*



La piazza ha un carattere di scenario nelle loggie ad archi bianchi leggeri e potenti. Passa la pescatrice povera nello scenario di caffè concerto, rete sul capo e le spalle di velo nero tenue fitto di neri punti per la piazza viva di archi leggeri e potenti. Accanto una rete nera a triangolo a berretta ricade su una spalla che si schiude: un viso bruno aquilino di indovina, uguale a la Notte di Michelangiolo.

FAENZA

A huge baroque tower:⁴⁹ behind the railing⁵⁰ a lighted lamp: it appears on the square at the end of a long street where all the buildings are red and all have corroded railings: (the streets at the crossroads are deserted). A few matrons full of charm. A feeling of dance⁵¹ gathers in the air. I listen: the huge baroque tower now lighted casts a sense of liberation in the air. The transparent eye of the clock appears high above illuminating the evening, its hands golden: a little white madonna is already visible behind the railing with the small corroded lantern lighted: *And already the huge baroque tower is empty and one can see that it bears, illuminated, the symbols of time and faith.*



The square has a scenery-like quality in the loggias with white arches, light and powerful. The poor fisher⁵² passes by in the café-chantant scenery, with the net on her head and on her shoulders a black delicate veil crowded with black points, across the square alive with light powerful arches. Beside⁵³ her a black cap-like net unfolding in a triangle falls on a shoulder: a dark aquiline fortune-teller's face, identical to Michelangiolo's Night.

⁴⁹*baroque tower*: The Clock Tower in Piazza Maggiore.

⁵⁰*railing*: next to the Tower there is a Madonna and child in marble, surrounded by a wrought-iron railing.

⁵¹*feeling of dance*: In *Taccuinetto Faentino* (21), Campana says: "If Florence is the image of music, Faenza is the image of Latin dance."

⁵²*poor fisher*: in *Taccuinetto Faentino* (27): "I remember Puviv de Chavannes your poor fisherman in Luxembourg as a lacerating scream in the skeletal humility of the shallow limbs. Here the poor fisherwoman draws the veil on her shoulders."

⁵³*Beside*: next to the fisher there is another female figure, whose fortune-teller face is likened to Michelangelo's *Night*.

Ofelia la mia ostessa è pallida e le lunghe ciglia le frangiano appena gli occhi: il suo viso è classico e insieme avventuroso. Osservo che ha le labbra morse: dello spagnolo, della dolcezza italiana: e insieme: il ricordo, il riflesso: *dell'antica gioventù latina*. Ascolto i discorsi. La vita ha qui un forte senso naturalistico. Come in Spagna. Felicità di vivere in un paese senza filosofia.



Il museo. Ribera e Baccarini. Nel corpo dell'antico palazzo rosso affocato nel meriggio sordo l'ombra cova sulla rozza parete delle nude stampe scheletriche. Durer, Ribera. Ribera: il passo di danza del satiro aguzzo su Sileno osceno briaco. L'eco dei secchi accordi chiaramente rifluente nell'ombra che è sorda. Ragazzine alla marinara, le liscie gambe latte che passano a scatti strisciando spinte da un vago prurito bianco. Un delicato busto di adolescente, luce gioconda dello spirito italiano sorride, una bianca purità virginea conservata nei delicati incavi del marmo. Grandi figure della tradizione classica chiudono la loro forza tra le ciglia.

My hostess Ophelia⁵⁴ is pale and her long eyelashes barely fringe her eyes: her face is both classic and adventurous. I notice that she has bitten lips: of the Spaniard, of Italian softness: and at the same time: the memory, the reflection: *of ancient Latin youth*.⁵⁵ I listen to the conversations. Life here has a strong naturalistic feeling. As in Spain. Happiness of living in a place without philosophy.⁵⁶



The museum. Ribera⁵⁷ and Baccharini.⁵⁸ In the body of the ancient red building scorched in the muted afternoon the shadow hatches bare skeletal engravings on the rough wall. Durer,⁵⁹ Ribera. Ribera: the dance step of the pointed satyr over the obscene drunken Silenus. The echo of the sharp chords clearly ebbing in the muted shadow. Little girls in sailor suits, their smooth milky legs that shuffle by jerkily, pushed by a vague white tingle. The delicate bust⁶⁰ of an adolescent smiles, joyous light of the Italian spirit, a white virginal purity preserved in the delicate hollows of the marble. Great figures of the classic tradition enclose their strength between the eyelashes.

⁵⁴*Ophelia*: cf. “Carnival Night,” “The Day of a Neurasthenic.”

⁵⁵*ancient Latin youth*: in the faces he observes Campana sees a reflection of ancient images eternally renewed through time.

⁵⁶*without philosophy*: in *Taccuinetto Faentino* (23): “of Romagna one can say as of Spain; the country is without philosophy.” Campana associates Romagna with naturalism, namely the capacity to establish a direct contact with the forces of nature.

⁵⁷*Ribera*: cf. *The Verna*, sec. 10, p. 89.

⁵⁸*Baccharini*: Domenico Baccharini (1883–1907), a painter from Faenza.

⁵⁹*Durer*: Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528), German painter (cf. *The Verna*, sec. 10, p. 89).

⁶⁰*bust*: of San Giovannino, attributed to Benedetto da Maiano (to Pariani [69]: “Donatello made it”).

DUALISMO

(Lettera aperta a Manuelita Etchegarray)

Voi adorabile creola dagli occhi neri e scintillanti come metallo in fusione, voi figlia generosa della prateria nutrita di aria vergine voi tornate ad apparirmi col ricordo lontano: anima dell'oasi dove la mia vita ritrovò un istante il contatto colle forze del cosmo. Io vi rivedo Manuelita, il piccolo viso armato dell'ala battagliera del vostro cappello, la piuma di struzzo avvolta e ondulante eroicamente, i vostri piccoli passi pieni di slancio contenuto sopra il terreno delle promesse eroiche! Tutta mi siete presente esile e nervosa. La cipria sparsa come neve sul vostro viso consunto da un fuoco interno, le vostre vesti di rosa che proclamavano la vostra verginità come un'aurora piena di promesse! E ancora il magnetismo di quando voi chinaste il capo, voi fiore meraviglioso di una razza eroica, mi attira non ostante il tempo ancora verso di voi! Eppure Manuelita sappiatelo se lo potete: *io non pensavo, non pensavo a voi: io mai non ho pensato a voi.* Di notte nella piazza deserta, quando nuvole vaghe correvano verso strane costellazioni, alla triste luce elettrica io sentivo la mia infinita solitudine. La prateria si alzava come un mare argentato agli sfondi, e rigetti di quel mare, miseri, uomini feroci, uomini ignoti chiusi nel loro cupo volere, storie sanguinose subito dimenticate che rivivevano

DUALISM
(Open Letter to Manuelita⁶¹ Etchegarray)

You adorable Creole with black eyes sparkling like molten metal, you generous daughter of the grassland nourished by virgin air, you appear to me once more with the distant memory: soul of the oasis⁶² where for a moment my life came into contact again with the forces of the cosmos. Once more I see you, Manuelita, the small face armed with the combative⁶³ wing of your hat, the ostrich feather rolled and swaying heroically, your small steps full of contained energy on the ground of heroic promises! You are all present before me slender and nervous. The powder sprinkled like snow on your face consumed by an inner fire, your rose-colored dress that proclaimed your virginity like a dawn full of promises! And still the magnetism of when you bowed your head, you wonderful flower of a heroic race, still draws me toward you regardless of time! And yet Manuelita you must know if you can: *I did not think, I did not think of you: I never thought of you.*⁶⁴ At night in the deserted square, when wandering clouds coursed toward strange constellations,⁶⁵ under the sad electric light I felt my infinite solitude. The grassland rose like a silvery sea in the background, and flotsam⁶⁶ of that sea, wretched fierce men, unknown men locked in their sullen will, bloody stories soon forgotten

⁶¹*Manuelita*: Campana says to Pariani (70): “The one I pretend to write to was a neighbor of mine in Bahia Blanca, daughter of a notary who lived in Bahia Blanca. Manuelita is the name I gave her; I didn’t know her name.”

⁶²*oasis*: see *Pampas*.

⁶³*combative wing*: Manuelita is described in warlike terms, as a virgin Amazon (cf. “Fragment [Florence],” full of vigor and strength, but feminine at the same time (the powder, the rose-colored dress).

⁶⁴*I did not think of you*: “Italics signal the particular importance of this statement with which Campana reveals his own *dualism*: participation and estrangement” (Ceragioli 212). The main theme of this composition is the contrast between the world of poetry and the world of a girl from Bahia Blanca.

⁶⁵*strange constellations*: strange to the northern hemisphere.

⁶⁶*flotsam*: the men that weaved the history of the city seemed like flotsam on the shore of that sea (the prairie).

improvvisamente nella notte, tessavano attorno a me la storia della città giovine e feroce, conquistatrice implacabile, ardente di un'acre febbre di denaro e di gioie immediate. Io vi perdevo allora Manuelita, perdonate, tra la turba delle signorine elastiche dal viso molle inconsciamente feroce, violentemente eccitante tra le due bande di capelli lisci nell'immobilità delle dee della razza. Il silenzio era scandito dal trotto monotono di una pattuglia: e allora il mio anelito infrenabile andava lontano da voi, verso le calme oasi della sensibilità della vecchia Europa e mi si stringeva con violenza il cuore. Entravo, ricordo, allora nella biblioteca: io che non potevo Manuelita io che non sapevo pensare a voi. Le lampade elettriche oscillavano lentamente. Su da le pagine risuscitava un mondo defunto, sorgevano immagini antiche che oscillavano lentamente coll'ombra del paralume e sopra il mio capo gravava un cielo misterioso, gravido di forme vaghe, rotto a tratti da gemiti di melodramma: larve che si scioglievano mute per rinascere a vita inestinguibile nel silenzio pieno delle profondità meravigliose del destino. Dei ricordi perduti, delle immagini si componevano già morte mentre era più profondo il silenzio. Rivedo ancora Parigi, Place d'Italie, le baracche, i carrozzoni, i magri cavalieri dell'irreale, dal viso essiccato, dagli occhi perforanti di nostalgie feroci, tutta la grande piazza ardente di un concerto infernale stridente e irritante. Le bambine dei Bohemiens, i capelli sciolti, gli occhi arditi e profondi congelati in un languore ambiguo amaro attorno dello stagno liscio e deserto. E in fine Lei, dimentica, lontana, l'amore, il suo viso di zingara nell'onda dei suoni e delle luci che si colora di un incanto irreale: e noi in silenzio attorno allo stagno pieno di

suddenly living in the night again, weaving around me the history of the young fierce city, implacable conqueror, burning with the acrid fever of money and instant pleasures. I would lose you then Manuelita, forgive me,⁶⁷ among the throng of supple young ladies with soft faces unconsciously fierce, violently exciting between the two bands of smooth hair in the immobility of the goddesses of the race. The silence was punctuated by the monotonous trot of a patrol: and then my unrestrainable yearning would go far away from you, toward the calm oases⁶⁸ of old Europe's sensibility, and violently wring my heart. I would go then, I remember, into the library: I who was not able I who didn't know how to think of you. The electric lamps swayed slowly. Up from the pages a dead world sprang back to life, ancient images⁶⁹ arose, swaying slowly with the shadow of the lampshade, and above my head weighed a mysterious sky, heavy with vague forms, rent now and then by melodramatic moans: ghosts⁷⁰ dissolving silently to be reborn to inextinguishable life in the silence full of the wonderful depths of destiny. Lost memories, images were forming already dead as the silence grew deeper. I see Paris again, Place d'Italie, the booths, the caravans, the lean horsemen of the unreal, their shriveled faces, their eyes piercing with fierce longings, the whole square burning in a hellish concert,⁷¹ shrill and irritating. The little girls of the Bohemians,⁷² their hair loose, their eyes bold and deep, frozen in an ambiguous bitter languor around the smooth and deserted pond.⁷³ And finally She,⁷⁴ oblivious, distant, love, her gypsy face in the wave of sounds and lights taking on the hue of an unreal

⁶⁷*forgive me*: because he chooses literature over Manuelita.

⁶⁸*oases*: as South America is the oasis of harmony with the cosmos, Europe is the oasis of sensibility (and poetry) that wrings Campana's heart.

⁶⁹*ancient images*: the ancient world that resurfaces and is superimposed on the present. A basic feature of Campana's poetics (cf. *The Night*, sec. 10, p. 17).

⁷⁰*ghosts*: cf. *The Night*, sec. 14, p. 25: *ghosts of mystery* (*larve del mistero*, keeping the original Latin meaning of *larva* as ghost)

⁷¹*hellish concert*: the city remembered in its nightmarish, infernal aspects.

⁷²*Bohemians*: gypsies (cf. *The Night*, secs. 1 and 12).

⁷³*pond*: the round fountain basin in Place d'Italie.

⁷⁴*She*: poetry (cf. *The Night*, secs. 2 and 9; and "Carnival Night").

chiarori rossastri; e noi ancora stanchi del sogno vagabondare a caso per quartieri ignoti fino a stenderci stanchi sul letto di una taverna lontana tra il soffio caldo del vizio noi là nell'incertezza e nel rimpianto colorando la nostra voluttà di riflessi irreali!

.....
..... E così lontane da voi passavano quelle ore di sogno, ore di profondità mistiche e sensuali che scioglievano in tenerezze i grumi più acri del dolore, ore di felicità completa che aboliva il tempo e il mondo intero, lungo sorso alle sorgenti dell'Oblio! E vi rivedevo Manuelita poi: che vigilavate pallida e lontana: voi anima semplice chiusa nelle vostre semplici armi.

So Manuelita: voi cercavate la grande rivale. So: la cercavate nei miei occhi stanchi che mai non vi appresero nulla. Ma ora se lo potete sappiate: io dovevo restare fedele al mio destino: era un'anima inquieta quella di cui mi ricordavo sempre quando uscivo a sedermi sulle panchine della piazza deserta sotto le nubi in corsa. Essa era per cui solo il sogno mi era dolce. Essa era per cui io dimenticavo il vostro piccolo corpo convulso nella stretta del guanciale, il vostro piccolo corpo pericoloso tutto adorabile di snellezza e di forza. E pure vi giuro Manuelita io vi amavo vi amo e vi amerò sempre più di qualunque altra donna . . . dei due mondi.

enchantment: and we in silence around the pond full of reddish glimmers: and we still weary from the dream wandering aimlessly through unknown places until we stretched out wearily on the bed of a distant tavern amid the warm breath of vice, we there in the uncertainty and regret tingeing our wantonness with unreal reflections!

.....
..... And so those hours of dream⁷⁵ passed far away from you, hours of mystical sensual depths that dissolved in tenderness the most acrid clots of sorrow, hours of complete happiness that abolished time⁷⁶ and the entire world, a long sip at the wellsprings of Oblivion! And then I would see you again Manuelita: keeping watch pale and distant: your simple soul closed in your simple weapons.

I know Manuelita: you were looking for the great rival,⁷⁷ I know: you looked for her in my weary eyes that never revealed anything. But now you must know if you can: I had to remain faithful to my destiny: it was a restless soul I always remembered when I went out to sit on the benches in the deserted square under the racing clouds. It was for her alone that dream was sweet for me. It was for her that I would forget your small body convulsing in the grip of the pillow, your small dangerous body all adorable with slenderness and strength. And yet I swear to you Manuelita I loved you I love you and I will always love you more than any other woman . . . of the two worlds.⁷⁸

⁷⁵*hours of dream*: hours spent in the world of poetry and art.
⁷⁶*abolished time*: cf. *The Night*, sec. 1 and *The Verna*, sec. 8. As we have seen, the abolition of time, with its gnoseological implications of deeper, privileged knowledge, is another essential element of Campana's poetics.
⁷⁷*great rival*: Manuelita was looking for a real woman, but her rival was not of flesh and blood.
⁷⁸*of the two worlds*: Manuelita's rival, both in America and in Europe, was not a woman, but poetry.

SOGNO DI PRIGIONE

Nel viola della notte odo canzoni bronzee. La cella è bianca, il giaciglio è bianco. La cella è bianca, piena di un torrente di voci che muoiono nelle angeliche cune, delle voci angeliche bronzee è piena la cella bianca. Silenzio: il viola della notte: in rabeschi dalle sbarre bianche il blu del sonno. Penso ad Anika: stelle deserte sui monti nevosi: strade bianche deserte: poi chiese di marmo bianche: nelle strade Anika canta: un buffo dall'occhio infernale la guida, che grida. Ora il mio paese tra le montagne. Io al parapetto del cimitero davanti alla stazione che guardo il cammino nero delle macchine, sù, giù. Non è ancor notte; silenzio occhiuto di fuoco: le macchine mangiano rimangiano il nero silenzio nel cammino della notte. Un treno: si sgonfia arriva in silenzio, è fermo: la porpora del treno morde la notte: dal parapetto del cimitero le occhiaie rosse che si gonfiano nella notte: poi tutto, mi pare, si muta in rombo: *Da un finestrino in fuga io? io ch'alzo le braccia nella luce!!* (il treno mi passa sotto rombando come un demonio).

PRISON DREAM

In the violet of the night I hear songs of bronze. The cell⁷⁹ is white,⁸⁰ the cot is white. The cell is white, full of a stream of voices that die in angelic cradles, the white cell is full of angelic bronze voices. Silence: the violet of the night: in arabesques from the white bars the blue of sleep. I think of Anika: deserted stars on the snowy mountains: white deserted streets: then white marble churches: in the streets Anika sings: a buffo⁸¹ with an infernal eye guides her, shouting. Now my town among the mountains. I at the parapet of the cemetery⁸² in front of the station watching the black march of the engines, up, down. It isn't night yet; many-eyed silence of fire: the engines keep devouring the black silence in the march of the night. A train:⁸³ it deflates it arrives in silence, it's standing still: the train's purple bites the night: from the parapet of the cemetery the red eye sockets swelling in the night: then everything, it seems to me, turns into a roar: *I in flight from a train window?*⁸⁴ *I that raise my arms in the light!!* (the train passes under me roaring like a demon).

⁷⁹*the cell*: to Pariani (70): "when I was in Belgium, in a cell." Campana had been arrested for vagrancy upon his return from Argentina, in 1910.

⁸⁰*white*: "'Prison Dream' is certainly, in Campana's chromatic-musical experience, the most decisive starting point" (Parronchi).

⁸¹*buffo*: this figure appears in one of the unpublished poems, "Specie di serenata agra e falsa e melodrammatica" (Falqui 314), where he leads a train of prostitutes. There he is described as having the profile of a goat, which identifies him as a Dionysus-like character leading a procession of Bacchantes. This also points to Anika's identity.

⁸²*cemetery*: when asked by Pariani who was observing the trains from the parapet of the cemetery, Campana replies: "I seem to be observing that movement, to be watching someone fleeing in a train; I see a figure. It must be an assimilation."

⁸³*train*: the train is seen as monstrous beast that carries away Campana's projection of himself.

⁸⁴*I in flight*: Campana sees himself rushing away in the train window. Powerful hallucinatory experience.

LA GIORNATA DI UN NEVRASTENICO (BOLOGNA)

La vecchia città dotta e sacerdotale era avvolta di nebbie nel pomeriggio di dicembre. I colli trasparivano più lontani sulla pianura percossa di strepiti. Sulla linea ferroviaria si scorgeva vicino, in uno scorcio falso di luce plumbea lo scalo delle merci. Lungo la linea di circonvallazione passavano pomposamente sfumate figure femminili, avvolte in pelliccie, i cappelli copiosamente romantici, avvicinandosi a piccole scosse automatiche, rialzando la gorgiera carnosa come volatili di bassa corte. Dei colpi sordi, dei fischi dallo scalo accentuavano la monotonia diffusa nell'aria. Il vapore delle macchine si confondeva colla nebbia: i fili si appendevano e si riappendevano ai grappoli di campanelle dei pali telegrafici che si susseguivano automaticamente.

Dalla breccia dei bastioni rossi corrosi nella nebbia si aprono silenziosamente le lunghe vie. Il malvagio vapore della nebbia intristisce tra i palazzi velando la cima delle torri, le lunghe vie silenziose deserte come dopo il saccheggio. Delle ragazze tutte piccole, tutte scure, artifiziosamente avvolte nella sciarpa traversano saltellando le vie, rendendole più vuote ancora. E nell'incubo della nebbia, in quel cimitero, esse mi sembrano a un tratto tanti piccoli animali, tutte uguali, saltellanti, tutte nere, che vadano a covare in un lungo letargo un loro malefico sogno.



THE DAY OF A NEURASTHENIC⁸⁵ (BOLOGNA)

The old city,⁸⁶ learned and priestly, was enveloped by fogs in the December afternoon. The hills showed through more distant on the plain battered by loud noises. On the railway line one could see the nearby freight yard in a false slant of leaden light. Along the outer road in shaded outline female figures went by pompously, wrapped in furs, their hats abundantly romantic, approaching with little automatic jerks, raising their fleshy wattles⁸⁷ like farm-yard fowls. Muffled thuds, whistles from the yard heightened the diffuse monotony in the air. The steam from the engines mingled with the fog: the wires hanged over and over from the clusters of bells on the telegraph poles that automatically followed one another.



The long roads open silently from the breach of the red corroded bastions in the fog. The noxious vapor of the fog droops among the buildings veiling the top of the towers, the long silent streets deserted as if they had been pillaged. A few girls all small, all dark, artfully wrapped in their scarfs, skip across the streets, making them emptier still. And in the nightmare of the fog, in that graveyard,⁸⁸ suddenly they seem like so many small animals to me, all alike, skipping, all black, on their way to hatch in a long hibernation one of their malignant dreams.



⁸⁵*Neurasthenic*: Campana himself. The title sets the tone for the grotesque description of the characters seen through the deforming filter of “neurasthenia.”

⁸⁶*city*: “Bologna, place of ancient culture and sacred images” (Lunetta 101).

⁸⁷*fleshy wattles*: the girls are seen as ridiculous animals.

⁸⁸*graveyard*: the gloominess of the streets gives them the appearance of a cemetery.

Numerose le studentesse sotto i portici. Si vede subito che siamo in un centro di cultura. Guardano a volte coll'ingenuità di Ofelia, tre a tre, parlando a fior di labbra. Formano sotto i portici il corteo pallido e interessante delle grazie moderne, le mie colleghe, che vanno a lezione! Non hanno l'arduo sorriso d'Annunziano palpitante nella gola come le letterate, ma più raro un sorriso e più severo, intento e masticato, di prognosi riservata, le scienziate.



(Caffè) È passata la Russa. La piaga delle sue labbra ardeva nel suo viso pallido. È venuta ed è passata portando il fiore e la piaga delle sue labbra. Con un passo elegante, troppo semplice troppo conscio è passata. La neve seguita a cadere e si scioglie indifferente nel fango della via. La sartina e l'avvocato ridono e chiaccherano. I cochieri imbacuccati tirano fuori la testa dal bavero come bestie stupite. Tutto mi è indifferente. Oggi risalta tutto il grigio monotono e sporco della città. Tutto fonde come la neve in questo pantano: e in fondo sento che è dolce questo dileguarsi di tutto quello che ci ha fatto soffrire. Tanto più dolce che presto la neve si stenderà ineluttabilmente in un lenzuolo bianco e allora potremo riposare in sogni bianchi ancora.

C'è uno specchio avanti a me e l'orologio batte: la luce mi giunge dai portici a traverso le cortine della vetrata. Prendo la penna: Scrivo: cosa non so: ho il sangue alle dita: scrivo: "l'amante nella penombra si aggraffia al viso dell'amante per scarnificare il suo sogno . . . ecc."

In great numbers the female students under the porticos. One can see at once that we are in a center of learning. Now and then they look around with the ingenuousness of Ophelia,⁸⁹ three at a time, speaking under their breath. Under the porticos they form the pale interesting procession of modern graces, my classmates on their way to class. They do not have the hard smile of D'Annunzio throbbing in their throat like those who study letters, but a smile more rare and more severe, earnest and labored, of guarded prognosis, these girls of science.



(Cafè) The Russian went by. The wound of her lips burned on her pale face. She came and went by bearing the flower and the wound of her lips. With an elegant walk, too simple and too conscious, she went by. The snow keeps on falling and melts indifferently in the mud of the street. The young dressmaker and the lawyer laugh and chatter. All bundled up the coachmen pull their heads out of their coat collars like bewildered animals. Everything is indifferent to me. Today all the monotonous and dirty greyness of the city stands out. Everything melts like snow in this slush: and deep down I feel the sweetness of this dissolving of everything that has made us suffer. So much sweeter that soon the snow will spread inexorably into a white sheet and then we will be able to rest in white dreams again.

There is a mirror in front of me and the clock strikes: the light reaches me from the porticos through the curtains of the glass window. I pick up the pen: I write: what, I don't know: blood flows to my fingers: I Write: "the lover in the half-darkness claws at the face of his beloved to strip the flesh from his dream . . . etc."

⁸⁹*Ophelia*: false ingenuousness (cf. "Faenza," "Carnival Night").

(*Ancora per la via*) Tristezza acuta. Mi ferma il mio antico compagno di scuola, già allora bravissimo ed ora di già in belle lettere guercio professor purulento: mi tenta, mi confessa con un sorriso sempre più lercio. Conclude: potresti provare a mandare qualcosa all'Amore Illustrato (*Via*). Ecco inevitabile sotto i portici lo sciame aereoplanante delle signorine intellettuali, che ride e fa glu glu mostrando i denti, in caccia, sembra, di tutti i nemici della scienza e della cultura, che va a frangere ai piedi della cattedra. Già è l'ora! vado a infangarmi in mezzo alla via: l'ora che l'illustre somiero rampa con il suo carico di nera scienza catalogale

Sull'uscio di casa, mi volgo e vedo il classico, baffuto, colossale emissario

Ah! i diritti della vecchiezza! Ah! quanti maramaldi!



(Notte) Davanti al fuoco lo specchio. Nella fantasmagoria profonda dello specchio i corpi ignudi avvicendano muti: e i corpi lassi e vinti nelle fiamme inestinte e mute, e come fuori del tempo i corpi bianchi stupiti inerti nella fornace opaca: bianca, dal mio spirito esausto silenziosa si sciolse, Eva si sciolse e mi risvegliò.

(*In the street again*) Acute sadness. My old classmate stops me, already very bright at the time and now already a squint-eyed festering literature professor:⁹⁰ he tempts me, confides in me with an ever filthier smile. He concludes: you could try to send something to *Amore Illustrato*⁹¹ (*Street*). Here under the porticos the inevitable airplaning swarm of intellectual young ladies, who laugh and go gobble gobble showing their teeth, in pursuit, it seems, of all the enemies of science and culture, that is going to crash at the foot of the professorial chair. It's already time! I go get muddied in the middle of the street: time when the illustrious jackass ramps with his load of black inventorial science

On the doorstep of the house I turn and see the classic, mustached, colossal emissary⁹²

Ah! the rights of old age! Ah! how many double-crossers!



(Night) In front of the fire the mirror.⁹³ In the deep phantasmagoria of the mirror the naked bodies alternate silently: and the bodies weary⁹⁴ and vanquished in the unextinguished silent flames, as if outside time the white bodies bewildered inert in the opaque furnace: white, from my exhausted spirit she silently freed herself, Eve⁹⁵ freed herself and awakened me.

⁹⁰*professor*: to Pariani (71): "he was someone from Dovadola, a literature professor."

⁹¹*Amore Illustrato*: weekly published in Milan from 1897 to 1928.

⁹²*emissary*: to Pariani (72): "it must be someone from public security, they have sent him to watch me."

⁹³*mirror*: entryway to the world of visions and dreams (cf. *The Night*, secs. 10 and 19).

⁹⁴*bodies: corpi lassi* is from Dante (Inf. I, 28).

⁹⁵*Eve*: "the woman of a false paradise or a paradise that is merely earthly" (Ceragioli 233).

Passeggio sotto l'incubo dei portici. Una goccia di luce sanguigna, poi l'ombra, poi una goccia di luce sanguigna, la dolcezza dei seppelliti. Scompaio in un vicolo ma dall'ombra sotto un lampione s'imbianca un'ombra che ha le labbra tinte. O Satana, tu che le troie notturne metti in fondo ai quadrivii, o tu che dall'ombra mostri l'infame cadavere di Ofelia, o Satana abbi pietà della mia lunga miseria!

I stroll under the nightmare of the porticos. A drop of blood-red⁹⁶ light, then the shadow, then a drop of blood-red light, sweetness of the entombed.⁹⁷ I disappear into an alley but from the shadow under a streetlamp a shadow with painted lips grows white. O Satan, you who put the nocturnal whores in the back of street corners, o you who show the vile corpse of Ophelia⁹⁸ from the shadow, o Satan⁹⁹ have mercy on my long misery!

⁹⁶*blood-red light*: the surroundings reflect an existential condition. This is another constant in Campana's poetics. For the significance of the blood motif, see "The Night," n. 46.

⁹⁷*the sweetness of the entombed*: the shadow, alternating with the light from a lamp.

⁹⁸*Ophelia*: Ophelia, like Faust, is a recurring figure in decadent poetry. "Campana adopts her to signify duplicity. In *Hamlet*, in fact, before going mad Ophelia is pure and limpid, while afterwards she manifests murky and ambiguous thoughts" (Lunetta 104).

⁹⁹*Satan*: from Baudelaire: "O Satan, prends pitié de ma longue misère" ("Le litanies de Satan").

VARIE E FRAMMENTI

VARIA AND FRAGMENTS

BARCHE AMORRATE

.....

Le vele le vele le vele
Che schioccano e frustano al vento
Che gonfia di vane sequele
Le vele le vele le vele!
Che tesson e tesson: lamento
Volubil che l'onda che ammorza
Ne l'onda volubile smorza . . .
Ne l'ultimo schianto crudele . . .
Le vele le vele le vele

MOORED BOATS¹

.....
The sails the sails the sails
That crack and lash in the gale
That with vain sequences swells
The sails the sails the sails!
That weave and weave: changeable wails
That the wave that subsides
Hides in the changeable wave . . .
In the last cruel crash . . .
The sails the sails the sails

¹*Moored boats*: “These verses consent a polysemic reading: the moored boats represent the human condition tied to its own destiny: men (*the sails*) pushed and pressed by life (*the wind*), oppressed by a series of useless problems (*vain sequences*), are condemned to the sorrow of a life always varied and always the same, that time (*the wave*) shatters with death” (Ceragioli 236). There are also considerable echoes of D’Annunzio’s “L’onda.”

FRAMMENTO (FIRENZE)

.....
Ed i piedini andavano armoniosi
Portando i cappelloni battaglieri
Che armavano di un'ala gli occhi fieri
Del lor languore solo nel bel giorno:
.....
Scampanava la Pasqua per la via . . .
.....
.....

FRAGMENT (FLORENCE)

.....
The little feet went their harmonious way
bearing along the huge combative² hats
That armed with a wing those eyes so proud
Of their languor only in the fine day:

.....
Easter went on tolling through the street. . . .
.....
.....

²*combative*: cf. "Dualism": *the small face armed with the combative wing of your hat.*

PAMPA

Quiere Usted Mate? uno spagnolo mi profferse a bassa voce, quasi a non turbare il profondo silenzio della Pampa. — Le tende si allungavano a pochi passi da dove noi seduti in circolo in silenzio guardavamo a tratti furtivamente le strane costellazioni che doravano l'ignoto della prateria notturna. — Un mistero grandioso e veemente ci faceva fluire con refrigerio di fresca vena profonda il nostro sangue nelle vene: — che noi assaporavamo con voluttà misteriosa — come nella coppa del silenzio purissimo e stellato.

Quiere Usted Mate? Ricevetti il vaso e succhiai la calda bevanda.

Gettato sull'erba vergine, in faccia alle strane costellazioni io mi andavo abbandonando tutto ai misteriosi giuochi dei loro arabeschi, cullato deliziosamente dai rumori attutiti del bivacco. I miei pensieri fluttuavano: si susseguivano i miei ricordi: che deliziosamente sembravano sommergersi per riapparire a tratti lucidamente trasumanati in distanza, come per un'eco profonda e misteriosa, dentro l'infinita maestà della natura. Lentamente gradatamente io assurgevo all'illusione universale: dalle profondità del mio essere e della terra io ribattevo per le vie del cielo il cammino avventuroso degli uomini verso la felicità a traverso i secoli. Le idee brillavano della più pura luce stellare. Drammi meravigliosi, i più meravigliosi dell'anima umana palpitavano e si rispondevano a traverso le costellazioni. Una stella fluente in corsa magnifica segnava in linea gloriosa la fine di un corso di storia.

PAMPAS³

*Quiere Usted Mate?*⁴ a Spaniard offered me in a whisper, almost as not to disturb the deep silence of the Pampas. — The tents⁵ stretched a few steps from where we sat silently in a circle and from time to time we would glance at the strange constellations that tinged the unknown of the nocturnal grassland with gold. — A magnificent vehement mystery made the blood flow in our veins with the cool freshness of a deep fresh vein: — which we savored with mysterious wantonness — as in the cup⁶ of the purest starry silence.

Quiere Usted Mate? I received the pot and took a sip of the warm drink.

Stretched on the virgin grass, facing the strange constellations, I was gradually giving in to the mysterious play of their arabesques, delightfully rocked by the muffled noises of the camp. My thoughts wavered: my memories drifted by in quick succession: that delightfully seemed to submerge and reappear in the distance now and then lucidly beyond the human, as if through a deep mysterious echo, within the infinite majesty of nature. Slowly gradually I was rising to the universal illusion: from the depths of my being and of the earth, across the paths of the sky I followed mankind's adventurous journey toward happiness through the centuries. Ideas shone with the purest starlight. Wonderful dramas, the most wonderful of the human soul pulsed and echoed across the constellations. A star⁷ flowing in magnificent flight marked with a glorious line the end of a course of history.

³*Pampas*: Campana almost certainly went to South America, which in *Pampas* he transforms into a mythical land, a *new country*, where a spiritual palingenesis is possible for the *new man*, outside of the cultural baggage of old Europe.

⁴*Quiere Usted Mate?* Mate is a drink obtained from the leaves of the plant that bears the same name.

⁵*tents*: according to Cacho Millet, these tents housed railroad workers, and Campana tells Pariani that one of the many jobs he held in South America was working on a railroad.

⁶*cup*: the vault of the sky, being savored, almost drunk in.

⁷*A star*: probably a comet.

Sgravata la bilancia del tempo sembrava risollevarsi lentamente oscillando: — per un meraviglioso attimo immutabilmente nel tempo e nello spazio alternandosi i destini eterni. Un disco livido spettrale spuntò all'orizzonte lontano profumato irraggiando riflessi gelidi d'acciaio sopra la prateria. Il teschio che si levava lentamente era l'insegna formidabile di un esercito che lanciava torme di cavalieri colle lance in resta acutissime lucenti: gli indiani morti e vivi si lanciavano alla riconquista del loro dominio di libertà in lancio fulmineo. Le erbe piegavano in gemito leggero al vento del loro passaggio. La commozione del silenzio intenso era prodigiosa.

Che cosa fuggiva sulla mia testa? Fuggivano le nuvole e le stelle, fuggivano: mentre che dalla Pampa nera scossa che sfuggiva a tratti nella selvaggia nera corsa del vento ora più forte ora più fievole ora come un lontano fragore ferreo: a tratti alla malinconia più profonda dell'errante un richiamo: . . . dalle criniere dell'erbe scosse come alla malinconia più profonda dell'eterno errante per la Pampa riscossa come un richiamo che fuggiva lugubre.

Ero sul treno in corsa: disteso sul vagone sulla mia testa fuggivano le stelle e i soffi del deserto in un fragore ferreo: incontro le ondulazioni come di dorsi di belve in agguato: selvaggia, nera, corsa dai venti la Pampa che mi correva incontro per prendermi nel suo mistero: che la corsa penetrava, penetrava con la velocità di

Unburdened the scale of time⁸ seemed to spring up again swaying slowly: — for a wonderful instant the eternal destinies⁹ alternating immutably in time and space. . . . A livid spectral disk¹⁰ appeared on the distant fragrant horizon radiating icy glimmers of steel onto the grassland. The skull¹¹ that was slowly rising was the formidable standard of an army¹² that hurled throngs of horsemen with their lances couched, sharp-pointed and gleaming; the Indians¹³ dead and alive charged forward in lightning charge to reconquer their dominion of freedom. The grasses bent in a light wail at the wind of their passage. The emotion of the intense silence was prodigious.

What was fleeing above my head? The clouds and the stars were fleeing, they were fleeing: while from the shaken black Pampas that fled now and then in the savage sweep of the wind at times stronger at times fainter at times like a distant iron roar: now and then a call went to the deepest melancholy of the wanderer: . . . from the manes of the shaken grasses as if to the deepest melancholy of the eternal wanderer across the shaken Pampas rose a call that fled mournfully. I was on the speeding train: stretched out on the car above the stars and the gusts from the desert were fleeing in an iron roar my head:¹⁴ the undulations coming toward us like the backs of beasts in ambush: savage, black, swept by winds the Pampas racing toward me to take me into their mystery: that the rushing train was penetrating, penetrating with the speed of a cataclysm: where an atom¹⁵

⁸*the scale of time*: another privileged moment when time is suspended, signaling total harmony with the cosmos (cf. *The Night* sec. 1).

⁹*the eternal destinies*: time having been abolished, past and present become undifferentiated.

¹⁰*a disk*: the moon.

¹¹*the skull*: the upper part of the moon. “Image of great expressionistic power” (Lunetta 110).

¹²*army*: the moonbeams illuminate the prairie giving the blades of grass the appearance of sharp, gleaming lances.

¹³*Indians*: the *indios* exterminated by the conquest.

¹⁴*above my head*: Campana is in an open freight car.

¹⁵*an atom*: Campana himself. This is stated explicitly in the manuscript.

un cataclisma: dove un atomo lottava nel turbine assordante nel lugubre fracasso della corrente irresistibile.

Dov'ero? Io ero in piedi: Io ero in piedi: sulla pampa nella corsa dei venti, in piedi sulla pampa che mi volava incontro: per prendermi nel suo mistero! Un nuovo sole mi avrebbe salutato al mattino! Io correvo tra le tribù indiane? Od era la morte? Od era la vita? E mai, mi parve che mai quel treno non avrebbe dovuto arrestarsi: nel mentre che il rumore lugubre delle ferramenta ne commentava incomprensibilmente il destino. Poi la stanchezza nel gelo della notte, la calma. Lo stendersi sul piatto di ferro, il concentrarsi nelle strane costellazioni fuggenti tra lievi veli argentei: e tutta la mia vita tanto simile a quella corsa cieca fantastica infrenabile che mi tornava alla mente in flutti amari e veementi.

La luna illuminava ora tutta la Pampa deserta e uguale in un silenzio profondo. Solo a tratti nuvole scherzanti un po' colla luna, ombre improvvise correnti per la prateria e ancora una chiarezza immensa e strana nel gran silenzio.

La luce delle stelle ora impassibili era più misteriosa sulla terra infinitamente deserta: una più vasta patria il destino ci aveva dato: un più dolce calor naturale era nel mistero della terra selvaggia e buona. Ora assopito io seguivo degli echi di un'emozione meravigliosa, echi di vibrazioni sempre più lontane: fin che pure cogli echi l'emozione meravigliosa si spense. E allora fu che nel mio intorpidimento finale io sentii con delizia l'uomo nuovo nascere: l'uomo nascere riconciliato colla natura ineffabilmente dolce e terribile: deliziosamente e orgogliosamente succhi vitali nascere alle profondità dell'essere: fluire dalle profondità della terra: il cielo come la terra in alto, misterioso, puro, deserto dall'ombra, infinito.

struggled in the deafening whirlwind in the mournful din of the irresistible current.

Where was I?¹⁶ I was standing: I was standing: on the pampas in the rushing winds, standing on the pampas that were flying toward me: to take me into their mystery! A new sun would greet me in the morning! Was I speeding among the Indian tribes? Or was it death? Or was it life? And never, it seemed to me the train would never stop: while the mournful clanking commented incomprehensibly on its destiny. Then the weariness in the cold of the night, the calm. Stretching out on the iron flooring,¹⁷ concentrating on the strange constellation fleeing among light silver veils: and my whole life so similar to that blind fantastic irresistible rush¹⁸ coming back in bitter vehement streams.

The moon now lighted the whole Pampas, deserted and even, in a deep silence. Only some clouds playing with the moon now and then, sudden shadows scurrying across the grassland and still a strange immense brightness in the great silence.

The light of the now impassive stars was more mysterious on the infinitely deserted earth: a vaster homeland had destiny given us: a sweeter natural warmth was in the mystery of the savage good earth. Now I was drowsily following the echoes of a wonderful emotion, echoes of ever more distant vibrations: until the wonderful emotion died out along with the echoes. And it was then that in my final torpor I felt with delight the new man being born: man being born reconciled with nature, ineffably sweet and frightening: delightfully and proudly vital juices being born to the depths of being: flowing from the depths of the earth: the sky like the earth high above, mysterious, pure, deserted of shadows, infinite.

¹⁶*Where was I?*: another moment of *Pampas*. The train trip represents an oneiric, hallucinatory experience, perhaps due to the effects of mate.

¹⁷*iron flooring*: of the car.

¹⁸*irresistible rush*: Campana repeatedly compares his life to a blind, unbridled race. It's interesting to note that in one of the unpublished poems he describes his book in exactly the same terms, intentionally identifying his life with his art.

Mi ero alzato. Sotto le stelle impassibili, sulla terra infinitamente deserta e misteriosa, dalla sua tenda l'uomo libero tendeva le braccia al cielo infinito non deturpato dall'ombra di Nessun Dio.

I had stood up. Under the impassive stars, on the earth infinitely deserted and mysterious, from his tent free man extended his arms toward the infinite sky not defiled by the shadow of Any God.¹⁹

¹⁹*the shadow of Any God*: one of the key epiphanic experiences of *Orphic Songs*. The new man can be born only under an infinitely deserted earth, and under a sky not corrupted by preconditioning cultural models.

IL RUSSO
(Da una poesia dell'epoca)

Tombé dans l'enfer
Grouillant d'êtres humains
O Russe tu m'apparus
Soudain, célestial
Parmi de la clameur
Du grouillement brutal
D'une lâche humanité
Se pourissante d'elle même.
Je vis ta barbe bionde
Fulgurante au coin
Ton ame je vis aussi
Par le gouffre rejetée
Ton ame dans l'étreinte
L'étreinte désespérée
Des Chimères fulgurantes
Dans le miasme humain.
Voilà que tu ecc. ecc.

THE RUSSIAN²⁰
(From a poem of the epoch)

Tombè²¹ dans l'enfer
Grouillant d'êtres humains
O Russe tu m'apparus
Soudain, célestial
Parmi de la clameur
Du grouillement brutal
D'une lâche humanité
Se pourissante d'elle même.
Se vis ta barbe blonde
Fulgurante au coin
Tom âme je vis aussi
Par le gouffre réjetée
Ton âme dans l'étreinte
L'étreinte désespérée
Des Chimères fulgurantes
Dans le miasme humain.
Voilà que tu ecc. ecc.

²⁰*The Russian*: Campana, speaking of his return from South America around 1910, tells Pariani, 73–74: “Passing through Belgium, they arrested me and kept me in a prison cell for two months: Saint Gilles. Some were mad and some weren’t. Then I was locked up at Tournay in a sort of sanatorium, because I had no fixed residence, I was always restless. It was a home for people in decline, a sort of mental hospital. In there I met that Russian who always refused to tell me his name. He was one of the many Russians that wander around the world, that don’t know what to do.”

²¹*Tombè*: several typographical errors found in the original Ravagli edition are retained: *Tombè* for *Tombé*, *célestial* for *célestial*, *purissante* for *pourissant*, *Se* for *Je*, *réjetée* for *rejetée*, *Tom* for *Ton*, *désespérée* for *désespérée*.

In un ampio stanzone pulverulento turbinavano rifiuti della società. Io dopo due mesi di cella ansioso di rivedere degli esseri umani ero rigettato come da onde ostili. Camminavano velocemente come pazzi, ciascuno assorto in ciò che formava l'unico senso della sua vita: la sua colpa. Dei frati grigi dal volto sereno, troppo sereno, assisi: vigilavano. In un angolo una testa spasmodica, una barba rossastra, un viso emaciato disfatto, coi segni di una la ta terribile e vana. Era il russo, violinista e pittore. Curvo sull'orlo della stufa scriveva febbrilmente.



“Un uomo in una notte di dicembre, solo nella sua casa, sente il terrore della sua solitudine. Pensa che fuori degli uomini forse muoiono di freddo: ed esce per salvarli. Al mattino quando ritorna, solo, trova sulla sua porta una donna, morta assiderata. E si uccide.” Parlava: quando, mentre mi fissava cogli occhi spaventati e vuoti, io cercando in fondo degli occhi grigio-opachi uno sguardo, uno sguardo mi parve di distinguere, che li riempiva: non di terrore: quasi infantile, inconscio, come di meraviglia.



In a large dusty room whirled the dregs of society. I after two months in a cell anxious to see some human beings was thrown back as if by hostile waves. They walked rapidly like madmen, each absorbed in what constituted the only sense of his life: his guilt.²² A few grey friars with serene features, too serene,²³ were sitting: they kept watch. In a corner a spasmodic head,²⁴ a reddish beard, a haggard emaciated face, with the signs of a horrible vain struggle. It was the Russian, violinist and painter.²⁵ Bent on the edge of the stove, he wrote feverishly.



“A man on a December night, alone in his house, feels the terror of his loneliness. He thinks that outside perhaps some men are dying of cold: and goes out to save them. When he returns in the morning, alone, he finds a woman on his doorstep, frozen to death. And he kills himself.” He was speaking:²⁶ when I, as he stared at me with his frightened empty eyes, searching deep into his grey-opaque eyes for a look, a look I seemed to perceive, that filled them: not of terror: almost childlike, unconscious, as of surprise.



²²*They walked . . . his guilt:* echoes of Dante's *Inferno*, where the damned are also left with nothing but their guilt.

²³*too serene:* Campana criticizes the monks' indifference to the pain around them.

²⁴*spasmodic head:* shaking convulsively.

²⁵*violinist and painter:* The Russian is clearly one of Campana's alter egos, in whom he recognizes his own dedication to art.

²⁶*He was speaking:* he was reading out loud.

Il Russo era condannato. Da diciannove mesi rinchiuso, affamato, spiato implacabilmente, doveva confessare, aveva confessato. E il supplizio del fango! Colla loro placida gioia i frati, col loro ghigno muto i delinquenti gli avevano detto quando con una parola, con un gesto, con un pianto irrefrenabile nella notte aveva volta a volta scoperto un po' del suo segreto! Ora io lo vedevo chiudersi gli orecchi per non udire il rombo come di torrente sassoso del continuo strisciare dei passi.



Erano i primi giorni che la primavera si svegliava in Fiandra. Dalla camerata a volte (la camerata dei veri pazzi dove ora mi avevano messo), oltre i vetri spessi, oltre le sbarre di ferro, io guardavo il cornicione profilarsi al tramonto. Un pulviscolo d'oro riempiva il prato, e poi lontana la linea muta della città rotta di torri gotiche. E così ogni sera coricandomi nella mia prigionia salutavo la primavera. E una di quelle sere seppi: il Russo era stato ucciso. Il pulviscolo d'oro che avvolgeva la città parve ad un tratto sublimarsi in un sacrificio sanguigno. Quando? I riflessi sanguigni del tramonto credei mi portassero il suo saluto. Chiusi le palpebre, restai lungamente senza pensiero: quella sera non chiesi altro. Vidi che intorno si era fatto scuro. Nella camerata non c'era che il tanfo e il respiro sordo dei pazzi addormentati dietro le loro chimere. Col capo affondato sul guanciale



The Russian was condemned.²⁷ For nineteen months shut in, hungry, spied on without mercy,²⁸ he had to confess, he had confessed. And the torture of the mud!²⁹ With their placid joy the monks, with their silent sneer the scoundrels had told him when with a word, with a gesture, with uncontrollable weeping in the night he had at times revealed a little of his secret! Now I watched him cover his ears so as not to hear the stony stream of the constant shuffle of footsteps.



They were the first days of the spring's awakening in Flanders. From the vaulted dormitory (the dormitory of the real madmen where they had put me now), beyond the thick glasspane, beyond the iron bars, I watched the cornice outlined against the sunset. A fine gold dust filled the meadow, and further on in the distance the silent skyline³⁰ of the city broken by gothic towers. Thus every night I greeted spring as I went to bed in my imprisonment. And one of those evening I found out: the Russian had been killed. The fine gold dust that enveloped the city suddenly seemed to be sublimated into a bloody³¹ sacrifice. When? I thought the bloody reflections of the sunset were bringing me his greetings. I closed my eyelids, I remained for a long time without thinking: that evening I asked for nothing else. I saw that darkness had fallen all around. In the dormitory there was only the stench and the muted breathing of the madmen sleeping after their

²⁷*condemned*: he would not be able to save himself.

²⁸*spied on without mercy*: the description of the Russian here becomes semi-autobiographical, reflecting Campana's own persecutions and suffering.

²⁹*mud*: probably meaning shame.

³⁰*silent line*: the city is too far away for its sounds to be heard.

³¹*bloody*: or blood-red. Blood always betrays the presence of a sacrificial victim, of pain and suffering (cf. "L'invetriata").

seguivo in aria delle farfalline che scherzavano attorno alla lampada elettrica nella luce scialba e gelida. Una dolcezza acuta, una dolcezza di martirio, del suo martirio mi si torceva pei nervi. Febbrile, curva sull'orlo della stufa la testa barbata scriveva. La penna scorreva strideva spasmodica. Perché era uscito per salvare altri uomini? Un suo ritratto di delinquente, un insensato, severo nei suoi abiti eleganti, la testa portata alta con dignità animale: un altro, un sorriso, l'immagine di un sorriso ritratta a memoria, la testa della fanciulla d'Este. Poi teste di contadini russi teste barbute tutte, teste, teste, ancora teste

La penna scorreva strideva spasmodica: perché era uscito per salvare altri uomini? Curvo, sull'orlo della stufa la testa barbata, il russo scriveva, scriveva scriveva



Non essendovi in Belgio l'extradizione legale per i delinquenti politici avevano compito l'ufficio i Frati della Carità Cristiana.

chimeras.³² With my head sinking in the pillow I followed a few butterflies in the air playing round the electric lamp in the shallow cold light. An acute sweetness, a sweetness of martyrdom, of his martyrdom writhed through my nerves. Feverish, bent over the edge of the stove, the bearded head wrote. The pen flew screeched spasmodically. Why had he gone out to save other men? A portrait³³ of his, of a criminal, a fool, sober in his elegant clothes, the head carried high with animal dignity: another one, a smile, the image of a smile drawn from memory, the head of the young girl of Este.³⁴ Then heads of Russian peasants, bearded heads all, heads, heads, more heads

The pen³⁵ flew screeched spasmodically: why had he gone out to save other men? Bent, his bearded head on the edge of the stove, the Russian wrote, wrote on and on



Because Belgium had no legal extradition for political criminals the duty had been performed by the Brothers of Christian³⁶ Charity.

³²*chimeras*: not capitalized, here it simply means illusions.

³³*a portrait*: The Russian was also a painter.

³⁴*d'Este*: to Pariani, 74: "it's a painting by Leonardo da Vinci, Beatrice d'Este."

³⁵*the pen*: the use of italics for emphasis is frequent in Campana.

³⁶*Christian*: "the Brothers of Charity are a congregation founded in Belgium (Gand 1807) for the care of the sick and the aged and for the education of youth. *Christian* is an adjective ironically added by Campana" (Ceragioli 263).

PASSEGGIATA IN TRAM IN AMERICA E RITORNO

Aspro preludio di sinfonia sorda, tremante violino a corda elettrizzata, tram che corre in una linea nel cielo ferreo di fili curvi mentre la mole bianca della città torreggia come un sogno, moltiplicato miraggio di enormi palazzi regali e barbari, i diademi elettrici spenti. Corro col preludio che tremola si assorda riprende si afforza e libero sgorga davanti al molo alla piazza densa di navi e di carri. Gli alti cubi della città si sparpagliano tutti pel golfo in dadi infiniti di luce striati d'azzurro: nel mentre il mare tra le tanaglie del molo come un fiume che fugge tacito pieno di singhiozzi taciuti corre veloce verso l'eternità del mare che si balocca e complotta laggiù per rompere la linea dell'orizzonte.

Ma mi parve che la città scomparisse mentre che il mare rabbrividiva nella sua fuga veloce. Sulla poppa balzante io già ero portato lontano nel turbinare delle acque. Il molo, gli uomini erano scomparsi fusi come in una nebbia. Cresceva l'odore mostruoso del mare. La lanterna spenta s'alzava. Il gorgoglio dell'acqua tutto annegava irremissibilmente. Il battito forte nei fianchi del bastimento

A TROLLEY RIDE TO AMERICA AND BACK

Harsh prelude³⁷ of a muted symphony, quivering violin³⁸ with electrified strings,³⁹ trolley running in a line across an iron sky of curved wires while the white mass of the city towers like a dream, multiplied mirage of enormous palaces, regal and barbarous, the electric diadems⁴⁰ turned off. I run with the prelude that quivers recedes recovers gains strength and freely pours out before the pier into the square crowded with ships and carts. The tall cubes⁴¹ of the city scatter all across the gulf in infinite dice⁴² of light streaked with blue: meantime the sea between the pincers of the pier is like a river that flees⁴³ quietly full of stifled sobs and runs swiftly toward the eternity of the sea that frolics and plots down there to break the line of the horizon.

But it seemed to me that the city was disappearing while the sea shivered in its swift flight. On the bouncing stern⁴⁴ I was already carried far away in the whirl of waters. The pier, the men had disappeared dissolved as if in a mist. The monstrous smell of the sea was growing stronger. The spent lantern⁴⁵ rose up. The gurgling of the water relentlessly drowned everything out. The strong

³⁷*Harsh prelude*: the noise of the streetcar.

³⁸*trembling violin*: the music that always accompanies a departure in Campana (Cf. the viola of "Journey to Montevideo").

³⁹*electrified strings*: the streetcar is seen as a violin whose strings are the electric wires.

⁴⁰*diadems*: streetlamps.

⁴¹*high cubes*: the buildings of the city.

⁴²*infinite dice*: another example of a Cubist landscape.

⁴³*river that flees*: away from the shore.

⁴⁴*bouncing stern*: the streetcar turns into a ship.

⁴⁵*The lantern*: not that of the ship, but the one on the port of Genoa, that rose as the stern of the ship sank.

confondeva il battito del mio cuore e ne svegliava un vago dolore intorno come se stesse per aprirsi un bubbone. Ascoltavo il gorgoglio dell'acqua. L'acqua a volte mi pareva musicale, poi tutto ricadeva in un rombo e la terra e la luce mi erano strappate inconsciamente. Come amavo, ricordo, il tonfo sordo della prora che si sprofonda nell'onda che la raccoglie e la culla un brevissimo istante e la rigetta in alto leggera nel mentre il battello è una casa scossa dal terremoto che pencola terribilmente e fa un secondo sforzo contro il mare tenace e riattacca a concertare con i suoi alberi una certa melodia beffarda nell'aria, una melodia che non si ode, si indovina solo alle scosse di danza bizzarre che la scuotono!

C'erano due povere ragazze sulla poppa: "Leggera, siamo della leggera: te non la rivedi più la lanterna di Genova!" Eh! che importava in fondo! Ballasse il bastimento, ballasse fino a Buenos-Aires: questo dava allegria: e il mare se la rideva con noi del suo riso così buffo e sornione! Non so se fosse la bestialità irritante del mare, il disgusto che quel grosso bestione col suo riso mi dava . . . basta: i giorni passavano. Tra i sacchi di patate avevo scoperto un rifugio. Gli ultimi raggi rossi del tramonto che illuminavano la costa deserta! costeggiavano da un giorno. Bellezza semplice di tristezza maschia. Oppure a volte quando l'acqua saliva ai finestroni io seguivo il tramonto equatoriale sul mare. Volavano uccelli lontano dal nido ed io pure: ma senza gioia. Poi sdraiato in coperta restavo a guardare gli alberi dondolare nella notte tiepida in mezzo al rumore dell'acqua. . . .

pounding⁴⁶ against the sides of the ship mixed with the pounding of my heart and awakened a vague pain around it like an abscess about to burst. I listened to the gurgling of the water. At times the water seemed musical to me, then everything plunged back into a rumble and the earth and the light were unconsciously wrested from me. How I loved, I remember, the dull splash of the prow sinking into the wave that receives it and rocks it for the briefest instant and throws it lightly upward while the vessel is a house shaken by an earthquake that totters horribly and makes another effort against the tenacious sea and with its masts in concert strikes up again a certain mocking melody in the air, a melody⁴⁷ that can't be heard, it can only be imagined at the bizarre dancing jolts that shake it!

There were two poor girls on the stern: "The gang,⁴⁸ we're from the gang: you will never see Genoa's lantern again!" Well, what did it matter in the end! Let the ship dance, let it dance as far as Buenos-Aires: this cheered us up: and the sea laughed with us with its laughter so comical and sly! I don't know if it was the irritating beastliness of the sea, the disgust that the huge beast provoked in me with its laughter . . . enough: the days went by. Among the sacks of potatoes I had discovered a shelter. The last red rays of the sunset illuminating the deserted coast!⁴⁹ they had been sailing along the coast for a day. Simple beauty of manly sadness. Or at times when the water rose to the portholes I followed the equatorial sunset on the sea. Birds were flying far away from the nest and so was I: but without joy. Then stretched on the deck I would stay and look at the masts swaying in the warm night amid the noise of the water. . . .

⁴⁶*The strong pounding*: the noise made by the engines.

⁴⁷*a melody that can't be heard*: cf. *The Verna*, sec.10, p. 87: *I know a sweet music in my memory without remembering even one note.*

⁴⁸*gang*: *leggera* is a Northern slang term for the underworld, the world of criminals.

⁴⁹*deserted coast*: to Pariani, 75: "Uruguay."

Riodo il preludio scordato delle rozze corde sotto l'arco di violino del tram domenicale. I piccoli dadi bianchi sorridono sulla costa tutti in cerchio come una dentiera enorme tra il fetido odore di catrame e di carbone misto al nauseante odor d'infinito. Fumano i vapori agli scali desolati. Domenica. Per il porto pieno di carcasse delle lente file umane, formiche dell'enorme ossario. Nel mentre tra le tanaglie del molo rabbrivisce un fiume che fugge, tacito pieno di singhiozzi taciuti fugge veloce verso l'eternità del mare, che si balocca e complotta laggiù per rompere la linea dell'orizzonte.

Again I hear⁵⁰ the discordant prelude of the coarse strings under the violin bow of the Sunday trolley. The small white dice smile on the coast all in a circle like an enormous denture amid the foul smell of tar and coal mixed with the nauseating smell of infinity. The steamers smoke in the desolate docks. Sunday. In the port full of carcasses⁵¹ a few slow human lines, ants of the enormous charnel-house. Meantime between the pincers of the pier a fleeing river shudders, tacit full of stifled sobs it flees swiftly toward the eternity of the sea, that frolics and plots down there to break the line of the horizon.

⁵⁰*Again I hear*: he is back in Genoa once more.

⁵¹*carcasses*: Genoa takes on a funereal look, and is seen as a huge cemetery (cf. "The Day of a Neurasthenic").

L'INCONTRO DI REGOLO

Ci incontrammo nella circonvallazione a mare. La strada era deserta nel calore pomeridiano. Guardava con occhio abbarbagliato il mare. Quella faccia, l'occhio strabico! Si volse: ci riconoscemmo immediatamente. Ci abbracciammo. Come va? Come va? A braccetto lui voleva condurmi in campagna: poi io lo decisi invece a calare sulla riva del mare. Stesi sui ciottoli della spiaggia seguivamo le nostre confidenze calmi. Era tornato d'America. Tutto pareva naturale ed atteso. Ricordavamo l'incontro di quattro anni fa laggiù in America: e il primo, per la strada di Pavia, lui scalagnato, col collettone alle orecchie! Ancora il diavolo ci aveva riuniti: per quale perché? Cuori leggeri noi non pensammo a chiederlo. Parlammo, parlammo, finché sentimmo chiaramente il rumore delle onde che si frangevano sui ciottoli della spiaggia. Alzammo la faccia alla luce cruda del sole. La superficie del mare era tutta abbagliante. Bisognava mangiare. Andiamo!



Avevo accettato di partire. Andiamo! Senza entusiasmo e senza esitazione. Andiamo. L'uomo o il viaggio, il resto o l'incidente. Ci sentiamo puri. Mai ci eravamo piegati a sacrificare alla mostruosa assurda ragione. Il paese natale: quattro giorni di sguattero, pasto di rifiuti tra i miasmi della lavatura grassa. Andiamo!



ENCOUNTER WITH REGOLO⁵²

We met on the outer bypass by the sea. The street was deserted in the afternoon heat. He watched the sea with dazzled eyes. That face, the cross-eye! He turned: we recognized each other immediately. We hugged. How is it going? How is it going? Arm in arm he wanted to take me to the countryside: then I convinced him to go down to the seashore instead. Lying on the pebbles of the beach we calmly went on with our confidential exchange. He had returned from America. Everything seemed natural and expected. We remembered our encounter four years before down there in America: and our first, on the road to Pavia, he down at the heels, with his big collar over his ears! The devil had reunited us again: to what end? Light of heart⁵³ we did not think of asking ourselves. We talked, talked, until we clearly heard the noise of the waves breaking against the pebbles of the beach. We raised our face to the harsh light of the sun. The surface of the sea was dazzling. We had to eat. Let's go!



I had agreed to leave. Let's go! Without enthusiasm and without hesitation. Let's go. The man or the journey, the rest or the incident. We feel pure. We had never bowed to monstrous absurd reason. The birthplace: four days as a dishwasher, eating leftovers among the fumes of the greasy wash. Let's go!



⁵²*Regolo*: like the Russian, another of Campana's alter egos. To Pariani, 75: "Regolo is someone who went to Argentina. His name was Regolo Orlandelli, he was from Mantua. I met him in Argentina, in Bahia Blanca. Previously I had known him near Milan. He traveled the world. In America he had an employment agency: in Milan he was a traveling salesman. In Genoa I met him by chance after returning from Argentina. I believe he died; he must have died for sure."

⁵³*light of heart*: free. Cf. "The Song of Darkness": *But for the light of heart another life is at the gate*. The expression is probably taken from Baudelaire.

Impestateo a più riprese, sifilitico alla fine, bevitore, scialacquatore, con in cuore il demone della novità che lo gettava a colpi di fortuna che gli riuscivano sempre, quella mattina i suoi nervi saturi l'avevano tradito ed era restato per un quarto d'ora paralizzato dalla parte destra, l'occhio strabico fisso sul fenomeno, toccando con mano irritata la parte immota. Si era riavuto, era venuto da me e voleva partire.



Ma come partire? La mia pazzia tranquilla quel giorno lo irritava. La paralisi lo aveva esacerbato. Lo osservavo. Aveva ancora la faccia a destra atona e contratta e sulla guancia destra il solco di una lacrima ma di una lagrima sola, involontaria, caduta dall'occhio restato fisso: voleva partire.



Camminavo, camminavo nell'amorfismo della gente. Ogni tanto rivedevo il suo sguardo strabico fisso sul fenomeno, sulla parte immota che sembrava attrarlo irresistibilmente: vedevo la mano irritata che toccava la parte immota. Ogni fenomeno è per sé sereno.



Voleva partire. Mai ci eravamo piegati a sacrificare alla mostruosa assurda ragione e ci lasciammo stringendoci semplicemente la mano: in quel breve gesto noi ci lasciammo, senza accorgercene ci lasciammo: così puri come due iddii noi liberi liberamente ci abbandonammo all'irreparabile.

Infected several times, syphilitic in the end, a drinker, a squanderer, in his heart the demon⁵⁴ of novelty that flung him far with strokes of luck that always went his way, that morning his exhausted nerves had betrayed him and he was left for fifteen minutes with his right side paralyzed,⁵⁵ the cross-eye fixed on the phenomenon, touching with irritated hand the motionless part. He had recovered, had come to see me and wanted to leave.



But leave how? My tranquil madness that day irritated him. The paralysis had made him worse. I observed him. The right side of his face was still atonic and contracted and on his right cheek the trace of a tear but one tear only, involuntary, fallen from the eye that had remained fixed: he wanted to leave.



I walked, I walked in the amorphous crowd.⁵⁶ Once in a while I saw his cross-eyed glance again fixed on the phenomenon, on the motionless part that seemed to attract him irresistibly: I saw his irritated hand touching the motionless part. Every phenomenon is in itself serene.



He wanted to leave. We had never bowed to sacrifice to monstrous absurd reason and separated by simply shaking hands: in that brief gesture we separated, without realizing we separated: pure as two gods we free freely gave ourselves to the inevitable.

⁵⁴*demon*: like the Russian, Regolo is also *condemned*.

⁵⁵*paralyzed*: again the character's pain reflects Campana's own. By a strange coincidence, Campana too had suffered a partial paralysis of the right side of the face and of the right hand (Pariani 26).

⁵⁶*amorphous*: anonymous, indifferent.

SCIROCCO (BOLOGNA)

Era una melodia, era un alito? Qualche cosa era fuori dei vetri. Aprii la finestra: era lo Scirocco: e delle nuvole in corsa al fondo del cielo curvo (non c'era là il mare?) si ammucciarono nella chiarezza argentea dove l'aurora aveva lasciato un ricordo dorato. Tutto attorno la città mostrava le sue travature colossali nei palchi aperti dei suoi torrioni, umida ancora della pioggia recente che aveva imbrunito il suo mattone: dava l'immagine di un grande porto, deserto e velato) aperto nei suoi granai dopo la partenza avventurosa nel mattino: mentre che nello Scirocco sembravano ancora giungere in soffi caldi e lontani di laggiù i riflessi d'oro delle bandiere e delle navi che varcavano la curva dell'orizzonte. Si sentiva l'attesa. In un brusio di voci tranquille le voci argentine dei fanciulli dominavano liberamente nell'aria. La città riposava del suo faticoso fervore. Era una vigilia di festa: la Vigilia di Natale. Sentivo che tutto posava: ricordi speranze anch'io li abbandonavo all'orizzonte curvo laggiù: e l'orizzonte mi sembrava volere cullare coi riflessi frangiati delle sue nuvole mobili all'infinito. Ero libero, ero solo. Nella giocondità dello Scirocco mi beavo dei suoi soffi tenui. Vedevo la nebulosità invernale che fuggiva davanti a lui: le nuvole che si riflettevano laggiù sul lastrico chiazzato in riflessi argentei su la fugace chiarezza perlacea dei visi femminili trionfanti negli occhi dolci e cupi: sotto lo scorcio dei portici seguivo le vaghe creature rasenti dai pennacchi melodiosi, sentivo il passo melodioso, smorzato nella cadenza lieve ed uguale: poi guardavo le torri rosse dalle travi nere, dalle balaustrate aperte che vegliavano deserte sull'infinito.

Era la Vigilia di Natale.



SCIROCCO (BOLOGNA)

Was it a melody, was it a gentle breeze? Something was outside the glasspanes. I opened the window: it was the Scirocco: and some clouds rushing by at the lower edge of the curved sky (wasn't the sea out there?) thronged in the silver brightness where the dawn had left a golden memory. All around, the city showed its colossal crossbeams in the open scaffolds of its large towers, still damp from the recent rain that had darkened its bricks: it gave the impression of a great harbor,¹ deserted and veiled, open in its granaries after the adventurous departure in the morning; while in the Scirocco the gold reflections of the flags and the ships that crossed the curve of the horizon still seemed to arrive in warm distant breaths from down there. One could feel the anticipation.² In a hum of tranquil voices the silvery voices of the children held sway freely in the air. The city rested from its tiring fervor. It was the eve of a holiday: Christmas Eve. I felt everything resting: memories hopes I also abandoned them on the curved horizon down there: and the horizon seemed to want to rock them with the fringed reflections of its clouds moving to infinity. I was free, I was alone. In the gaiety of the Scirocco I rejoiced at its tenuous breaths. I saw the winter mist fleeing before it: the clouds that were reflected down there on the pavement stained with silver reflections onto the fleeting pearly whiteness of the women's faces triumphant in their soft dark eyes: under the view of the porticos I followed the graceful³ creatures that walked close to the wall with their melodious⁴ feathers, I heard the melodious step, muffled in the light, even cadence: then I looked at the red towers with black beams, with open deserted balustrades standing watch over the infinite.

It was Christmas Eve.



¹*great harbor*: Genoa is transformed into a sort of magical harbor.

²*anticipation*: it's Christmas Eve.

³*graceful*: *vago*, a frequent adjective in Campana, is polyvalent, meaning comely, beautiful; vague, indistinct; and wandering. Campana usually combines the various meanings, but this is impossible in English. It would be more accurate to say the *graceful wandering creatures*.

⁴*melodious*: the swaying of the feathers seems to generate a melody.

Ero uscito: Un grande portico rosso dalle lucerne moresche: dei libri che avevo letti nella mia adolescenza erano esposti a una vetrina tra le stampe. In fondo la luminosità marmorea di un grande palazzo moderno, i fusti d'acciaio curvi di globi bianchi ai quattro lati.

La piazzetta di S. Giovanni era deserta: la porta della prigione senza le belle fanciulle del popolo che altre volte vi avevo viste.



Attraverso a una piazza dorata da piccoli sepolcreti, nella scia bianca del suo pennacchio una figura giovine, gli occhi grigi, la bocca dalle linee rosee tenui, passò nella vastità luminosa del cielo. Sbiancava nel cielo fumoso la melodia dei suoi passi. Qualche cosa di nuovo, di infantile, di profondo era nell'aria commossa. Il matrone rosso ringiovanito dalla pioggia sembrava esalare dei fantasmi torbidi, condensati in ombre di dolore virgineo, che passavano nel suo torbido sogno: (contigui uguali gli archi perdendosi gradatamente nella campagna tra le colline fuori della porta): poi una grande linea che apparve passò: una grandiosa, virginea testa reclina d'ancella mossa di un passo giovine non domo alla cadenza, offrendo il contorno della mascella rosea e forte e a tratti la luce obliqua dell'occhio nero al disopra dell'omero servile, del braccio, onusti di giovinezza: muta.



I had gone out: A great red portico⁵ with Moorish lanterns: books I had read in my youth were displayed in a window among engravings. At the far end the marble luminosity of a great modern building, at the four sides the steel stems curving under white globes.

The small square of St. Giovanni was deserted: the door of the prison without the beautiful working girls that I had seen there on other occasions.



Across⁶ a golden square from small burial vaults, in the white wake of her feathers a young figure, grey-eyed, her mouth with tenuous roseate lines, passed in the luminous vastness of the sky. The melody of her footsteps whitened in the hazy sky. Something new, child-like and deep, was in the charged air. The red brick rejuvenated by the rain seemed to exhale troubled ghosts, condensed in shadows of virginal sorrow,⁷ that passed by in its troubled dream: (contiguous and even, the arches gradually disappearing in the fields among the hills outside the gate):⁸ then a great line appeared and went by: a magnificent, virginal inclined head of a maiden moving with a youthful step untamed by the cadence, offering the outline of a strong roseate jaw and from time to time the slanted light of her black eye over the servile shoulder and the arm crowned by youth: silent.



⁵*portico*: to Pariani (77): “The great red portico is the Brugnoli library, in Merchants’ square, near the two towers.”

⁶*Across*: the whole scene is reminiscent of the feminine apparitions of the *Dolce Stil Novo*, Cavalcanti’s in particular.

⁷*shadows of virginal sorrow*: “the troubled ghosts are incarnated (*condensed*) in figures of young sorrowful women, poor and dressed in black (*shadows*). Note Campana’s attention toward the human condition, which is always revealed through small details” (Ceragioli 288).

(Le serve ingenue affaccendate colle sporte colme di vettovaglie vagavano pettinate artifiziosamente la loro fresca grazia fuori della porta. Tutta verde la campagna intorno. Le grandi masse fumose degli alberi gravavano sui piccoli colli, la loro linea nel cielo aggiungeva un carattere di fantasia: la luce: un organetto che tentava la modesta poesia del popolo sotto una ciminiera altissima sui terreni vaghi, tra le donne variopinte sulle porte: le contrade cupe della città tutte vive di tentacoli rossi: verande di torri dalle travature enormi sotto il cielo curvo: gli ultimi soffii di riflessi caldi e lontani nella grande chiarezza abbagliante e uguale quando per l'arco della porta mi inoltrai nel verde e il cannone tonò mezzogiorno: solo coi passerì intorno che si commossero in breve volteggio attorno al lago Leonardesco.)

(The naive maids busy with their baskets full of provisions, their hair artfully combed, wandered in their fresh grace outside the door. All green the surrounding countryside. The great misty masses of the trees weighed upon the small hills, their line in the sky added a note of fantasy: the light, a barrel-organ that tried out the modest poetry of the people under a huge smokestack on the barren grounds,⁹ among the colorful women on the doorsteps: the dark streets of the city all alive with red tentacles:¹⁰ tower verandas with enormous crossbeams under the curved sky: the last breaths of warm distant reflections in the great brightness, dazzling and even, when through the arch of the gate I stepped onto the green and the cannon thundered noon: alone with sparrows around me that stirred in a brief circling of the Leonardesque lake).¹¹

⁸*outside the gate*: “outside the Saragozza gate, to go the Madonna of San Luca” (Pariani 77).

⁹*barren grounds*: cf. *The Night*, sec. 16. Here *vago* has still a fourth meaning (see p. 177, n. 3).

¹⁰*tentacles*: the porticos, a characteristic feature of Bologna’s architecture.

¹¹*Leonardesque lake*: to Pariani, 77: “The lake calls to mind Leonardo, it lies outside the Santo Stefano gate, in the public gardens” (cf. *The Night*, sec. 14, p. 25; *The Verna*, sec. 3, p. 69).

CREPUSCOLO MEDITERRANEO

Crepuscolo mediterraneo perpetuato di voci che nella sera si esaltano, di lampade che si accendono, chi t'inscenò nel cielo più vasta più ardente del sole notturna estate mediterranea? Chi può dirsi felice che non vide le tue piazze felici, i vichi dove ancora in alto battaglia glorioso il lungo giorno in fantasmi d'oro, nel mentre a l'ombra dei lampioni verdi nell'arabesco di marmo un mito si cova che torce le braccia di marmo verso i tuoi dorati fantasmi, notturna estate mediterranea? Chi può dirsi felice che non vide le tue piazze felici? E le tue vie tortuose di palazzi e palazzi marini e dove il mito si cova? Mentre dalle volte un altro mito si cova che illumina solitaria limpida cubica la lampada colossale a spigoli verdi? Ed ecco che sul tuo porto fumoso di antenne, ecco che sul tuo porto fumoso di molli cordami dorati, per le tue vie mi appaiono in grave incesso giovani forme, di già presaghe al cuore di una bellezza immortale appaiono rilevando al passo un lato della persona gloriosa, del puro viso ove l'occhio rideva nel tenero agile ovale. Suonavano le chitarre all'incenso della dea. Profumi varii gravavano l'aria, l'accordo delle chitarre si addolciva da un vico ambiguo nell'armonioso clamore della via che ripida calava al mare. Le insegne rosse delle botteghe promettevano vini d'oriente dal profondo splendore opalina mentre a me trepidante la vita

MEDITERRANEAN TWILIGHT

Mediterranean twilight perpetuated by voices that come alive in the evening, by lamps that light up, who staged you¹² in the sky, vaster, blazing brighter than the sun, nocturnal Mediterranean summer? Who can call himself happy who did not see your happy squares, the alleys where high above¹³ the long day still wages glorious battles in golden ghosts,¹⁴ while in the shadow of the green street lamps,¹⁵ in the marble arabesque a myth is lurking which twists its marble arms toward your golden ghosts, nocturnal Mediterranean summer? Who can call himself happy who did not see your happy squares? And your streets winding with countless sea palaces, where myth is lurking? While from the vaults another myth is lurking which lights up the solitary limpid cubical colossal lamp with green corners? And now on your harbor hazy¹⁶ with yards, now on your harbor hazy with soft golden cordages, young forms solemnly advancing¹⁷ along your streets, already presaging immortal beauty to my heart they appear, revealing in their stride one side of the glorious¹⁸ person, of the pure face where the eye laughed in the tender lithe oval. The guitars played at the advancing of the goddess. Various scents weighed the air, the chords of the guitar came softer from an ambiguous alley in the harmonious clamor of the street that descended steeply to the sea. The red signs of the shops promised oriental wines with a deep opal splendor while life passed

¹²*who staged you*: introduces the staging of a great baroque scenery.

¹³*high above*: the scenery is two-leveled, encompassing both what happens on earth and what happens in the sky. This double perspective is common in Baroque painting.

¹⁴*golden ghosts*: the clouds, made golden by the twilight.

¹⁵*shadow of the streetlamps*: an obsessive motif throughout the *Orphic Songs*, finally culminating in the intense vision of "Genoa."

¹⁶*hazy*: as always, *fumoso* means out of focus, indistinct.

¹⁷*advancing*: *incesso* denotes stateliness, in consonance with the majesty of the vision.

¹⁸*glorious person*: another Stilnovistic apparition. *Glorious* is Dante's favored adjective to describe Beatrice in the *Vita nuova*: ". . . when to my eyes first appeared the *glorious* lady of my mind" (second paragraph).

passava avanti nelle immortali forme serene. E l'amaro, l'acuto balbettio del mare subito spento all'angolo di una via: spento, apparso e subito spento!



Il Dio d'oro del crepuscolo bacia le grandi figure sbiadite sui muri degli alti palazzi, le grandi figure che anelano a lui come a un più antico ricordo di gloria e di gioia. Un bizzarro palazzo settecentesco sporge all'angolo di una via, signorile e fatuo, fatuo della sua antica nobiltà mediterranea. Ai piccoli balconi i sostegni di marmo si attorciano in se stessi con bizzarria. La grande finestra verde chiude nel segreto delle imposte la capricciosa speculatrice, la tiranna agile bruno rosata, e la via barocca vive di una duplice vita: in alto nei trofei di gesso di una chiesa gli angeli paffuti e bianchi sciolgono la loro pompa convenzionale mentre che sulla via le perfide fanciulle brune mediterranee, brunite d'ombra e di luce, si bisbigliano all'orecchio al riparo delle ali teatrali e pare fuggano cacciate verso qualche inferno in quell'esplosione di gioia barocca: mentre tutto tutto si annega nel dolce rumore dell'ali sbattute degli angeli che riempie la via.

before me quivering¹⁹ in its immortal serene forms. And the bitter, the acute babbling of the sea suddenly dying away on a street corner: dying away, reappearing and suddenly dying away!



The golden God of twilight kisses the great figures²⁰ fading on the walls of the high buildings, the great figures that yearn for him as for a more ancient memory of glory and beauty. A bizarre eighteenth-century building protrudes around a street corner, elegant and fatuous, fatuous with its ancient Mediterranean nobility. On the small balconies the marble supports coil in a bizarre way. The large green window encloses in the secret of the shutters the capricious speculator, the lithe dark-rose tyrant, and the baroque street is alive with a double life: high above in the plaster trophies²¹ of a church the chubby white angels unfold their conventional pomp, while on the street the dark faithless Mediterranean girls, darkened by shadow and light, whisper in each other's ear sheltered by the theatrical²² wings and seem to run away driven toward some hell in that explosion of baroque joy: while everything everything drowns in the soft noise of the beating wings of the angels that fills the street.

¹⁹*before me quivering*: syntactical ambiguity is one of the most original traits of Campana's style, and is used consistently in the *Orphic Songs*. Here *quivering* can qualify either *me* or *life*.

²⁰*great figures*: figures painted on the facades of the buildings, eroded by time and by the weather.

²¹*trophies*: to Pariani (77): "they are plaster Madonnas with angels that you see in Genoa."

²²*theatrical*: another reference to the staged quality of the scenery.

PIAZZA SARZANO

A l'antica piazza dei tornei salgono strade e strade e nell'aria pura si prevede sotto il cielo il mare. L'aria pura è appena segnata di nubi leggere. L'aria è rosa. Un antico crepuscolo ha tinto la piazza e le sue mura. E dura sotto il cielo che dura, estate rosea di più rosea estate.

Intorno nell'aria del crepuscolo si intendono delle risa, serenamente, e dalle mura sporge una torricella rosa tra l'edera che cela una campana: mentre, accanto, una fonte sotto una cupoletta getta acqua acqua ed acqua senza fretta, nella vetta con il busto di un savio imperatore: acqua acqua, acqua getta senza fretta, con in vetta il busto cieco di un savio imperatore romano.

Un vertice colorito dall'altra parte della piazza mette quadretta, da quattro cuspidi una torre quadrata mette quadretta svariate di smalto, un riso acuto nel cielo, oltre il tortueggiare, sopra dei vicoli il velo rosso del roso mattone: ed a quel riso odo risponde l'oblio. L'oblio così caro alla statua del pagano imperatore sopra la cupoletta dove l'acqua zampilla senza fretta sotto lo sguardo cieco del savio imperatore romano.



PIAZZA SARZANO

Street upon street up toward the square of tournaments²³ and in the pure air one can sense the sea under the sky. The pure air is barely spotted by light clouds. The air is rose-colored. An ancient twilight has tinged the square and its walls. And it endures under the sky that endures, roseate summer²⁴ of a more roseate summer.

All around in the twilight air one can hear laughter, serenely, and from the walls stands out a small rose-colored tower amid the ivy that conceals a bell: meanwhile, nearby, a fountain under a little cupola spurts out water water and water without haste, on the crest the blind bust²⁵ of a sage Roman emperor: water water, it spurts water without haste, on the crest the blind bust of a sage Roman emperor.

A colored summit at the other side of the square puts forth²⁶ square tiles, from four pinnacles²⁷ variegated with enamel a square tower puts forth square tiles, a shrill laughter²⁸ in the sky, beyond the meandering,²⁹ above the alleys the red veil of the corroded brick: and I hear oblivion³⁰ reply to the laughter. Oblivion so dear to the statue of the pagan emperor over the little cupola where water spurts out without haste under the blind gaze of the sage Roman emperor.



²³*tournaments*: in ancient times, tournaments were held in the square.

²⁴*roseate summer*: the twilight, within a *more roseate summer* (the Mediterranean summer).

²⁵*blind bust*: in the square there is a little temple with a bust of Janus on its cupola. *Blind* because the eyes have no pupils.

²⁶*puts forth*: generates, as a tree generates leaves.

²⁷*four pinnacles*: four square pyramids at the corners of the bell tower of St. Augustine, covered with enameled tiles.

²⁸*shrill laughter*: again, a second level of representation in the sky.

²⁹*meandering*: of the alleys.

³⁰*oblivion*: oblivion accompanies the abolition of time.

Dal ponte sopra la città odo le ritmiche cadenze mediterranee. I colli mi appaiono spogli colle loro torri traverso le sbarre verdi ma laggiù le farfalle innumerevoli della luce riempiono il paesaggio di un'immobilità di gioia inesauribile. Le grandi case rosee tra i meandri verdi continuano a illudere il crepuscolo. Sulla piazza acciottolata rimbalza un ritmico strido: un fanciullo a sbalzi che fugge melodiosamente. Un chiarore in fondo al deserto della piazza sale tortuoso dal mare dove vicoli verdi di muffa calano in tranelli d'ombra: in mezzo alla piazza, mozza la testa guarda senz'occhi sopra la cupoletta. Una donna bianca appare a una finestra aperta. É la notte mediterranea.



Dall'altra parte della piazza la torre quadrangolare s'alza accesa sul corroso mattone sù a capo dei vicoli gonfi cupi tortuosi palpitanti di fiamme. La quadricuspide vetta a quadretta ride svariata di smalto mentre nel fondo bianca e torbida a lato dei lampioni verdi la lussuria siede imperiale. Accanto il busto dagli occhi bianchi rosi e vuoti, e l'orologio verde come un bottone in alto aggancia il tempo all'eternità della piazza. La via si torce e sprofonda. Come nubi sui colli le case veleggiano ancora tra lo svviare del verde e si scorge in fondo il trofeo della V. M. tutto bianco che vibra d'ali nell'aria.

From the bridge³¹ above the city I hear the rhythmic Mediterranean cadences. The hills with their towers appear bare to me through the green bars but down there the countless butterflies of light fill the landscape with a stillness of inexhaustible joy. The large pale-rose houses among the green meanders³² keep on beguiling the twilight. A rhythmic cry rebounds on the cobblestones of the square: a boy who skips away melodiously. A brightness at the far end of the desert of the square writhes up from the sea where alleys green with mold descend in snares of shadows: in the middle of the square, the severed head³³ watches eyeless on the little cupola. It's the Mediterranean night.



On the other side of the square the quadrangular tower rises all lighted on the corroded brick at the end of the alleys swollen dark tortuous pulsating with flames.³⁴ The four-pointed tiled crest laughs³⁵ variegated with enamel while at the back beside the street-lamps white and turbid lust seats imperially. Nearby the bust with its white eyes corroded and empty, and the green clock like a button³⁶ high above latches the square's time onto eternity. The street winds and plunges downward. Like clouds on the hills the houses still sail amid the variegated green and one can see at the far end the trophy of V.M.³⁷ all white vibrating with wings in the air.

³¹*bridge*: the Carignano bridge.

³²*green meanders*: the alleys.

³³*severed head*: the bust.

³⁴*pulsating with flames*: cf. "Genoa," fourth stanza.

³⁵*laughs*: the colored enamel reflects the light of the street lamps.

³⁶*like a button*: "image of powerful surrealistic estrangement" (Lunetta 126).

³⁷*trophy of V.M.*: Virgin Mary. "They are statues of marble and plaster that are there in Genoa" (Pariani 78).

GENOVA

Poi che la nube si fermò nei cieli
Lontano sulla tacita infinita
Marina chiusa nei lontani veli,
E ritornava l'anima partita
Che tutto a lei d'intorno era già arcana-
mente illustrato del giardino il verde
Sogno nell'apparenza sovrumana
De le corrusche sue statue superbe:
E udii canto udii voce di poeti
Ne le fonti e le sfingi sui frontoni
Benigne un primo oblio parvero ai proni
Umani ancor largire: dai segreti
Dedali uscì: sorgeva un torreggiare
Bianco nell'aria: innumeri dal mare
Parvero i bianchi sogni dei mattini
Lontano dileguando incatenare
Come un ignoto turbine di suono.
Tra le vele di spuma udivo il suono.
Pieno era il sole di Maggio



GENOA

After the cloud stopped in the sky
Distant over the silent endless
Seashore enclosed within the distant veils,
And the departed soul³⁸ returned,
For all around it was the green
Dream³⁹ of the garden already arcane-
ly brightened in the superhuman
Appearance of its superb glancing statues:
And I heard songs⁴⁰ I heard voices of poets
In the fountains and on their pediments
The benign sphinxes seemed to grant a first
Oblivion yet to prone mankind: from
Secret labyrinths⁴¹ I emerged: white towers⁴²
Were looming in the air: innumerable
Fading in the distance from the sea the white
dreams⁴³ of morning seemed to enchain
an unknown whirlwind of sound.⁴⁴
Among the sails of foam I heard the sound.
The May sun was at its height



³⁸*departed soul*: a variation of the verse from Dante in “Images of the Journey and of the Mountain”: *Ombra che torna, ch’era dipartita*. A return to the world of poetry.

³⁹*green Dream*: the garden as an image of beauty.

⁴⁰*And I heard songs*: the song of the fountains seems like voices of poets beckoning him. The call of poetry.

⁴¹*secret labyrinths*: Genoa’s alleys.

⁴²*white towers*: Genoa’s buildings.

⁴³*white dreams*: the buildings that become gradually smaller in the distance.

⁴⁴*whirlwind of sound*: the beginning of Genoa’s *fertile symphony*.

Sotto la torre orientale, ne le terrazze verdi ne la lavagna cinerea
Dilaga la piazza al mare che addensa le navi inesausto
Ride l'arcato palazzo rosso dal portico grande:
Come le cateratte del Niagara
Canta, ride, svaria ferrea la sinfonia feconda urgente al mare:
Genova canta il tuo canto!



Entro una grotta di porcellana
Sorbendo caffè
Guardavo dall'invetriata la folla salire veloce
Tra le venditrici uguali a statue, porgenti
Frutti di mare con rauche grida cadenti
Su la bilancia immota:
Così ti ricordo ancora e ti rivedo imperiale
Su per l'èrta tumultuante
Verso la porta disserrata
Contro l'azzurro serale,
Fantastica di trofei
Mitici tra torri nude al sereno,
A te aggrappata d'intorno
La febbre de la vita

Under the oriental tower, in the green terraces in the ashen slate
The square pours out toward the sea that amasses ships unexhausted
The arched red palace⁴⁵ laughs with the great portico:
Like Niagara Falls
The fertile symphony sings, laughs, varies as it clangs its way toward the sea:
Genoa sing your song!



Inside a porcelain grotto⁴⁶
Sipping coffee
From the glass window I watched the crowd climb swiftly
Among statue-like women vendors, offering
Shellfish with raucous shouts falling
On the motionless scale:
That's how I still remember you⁴⁷ and see you imperial
Up the tumultuous hill
Toward the wide open gate⁴⁸
Against the blue of the evening,
Fantastic with mythical
Trophies⁴⁹ among bare towers in the clear sky,
The fever of pristine⁵⁰ life
Clinging around you:

⁴⁵*red palace*: to Pariani, 79: “Palazzo San Giorgio.”

⁴⁶*porcelain grotto*: a café with tiled walls.

⁴⁷*I still remember you*: Genoa.

⁴⁸*open gate*: Porta Soprano.

⁴⁹*mythical Trophies*: statues (cf. “Mediterranean Twilight” and “Piazza Sarzano”).

⁵⁰*pristine*: ancient, with the same positive connotations as *primitive*.

Pristina: e per i vichi lubrici di fanali
Il canto instornellato de le prostitute
E dal fondo il vento del mar senza posa,



Per i vichi marini nell'ambigua
Sera cacciava il vento tra i fanali
Preludii dal groviglio delle navi:
I palazzi marini avevan bianchi
Arabeschi nell'ombra illanguidita
Ed andavamo io e la sera ambigua:
Ed io gli occhi alzavo su ai mille
E mille e mille occhi benevoli
Delle Chimere nei cieli: . . .
Quando,
Melodiosamente

And through the alleys lewd⁵¹ with streetlamps
The torch songs of the prostitutes
And from below⁵² the relentless sea wind,



Through the marine alleys in the ambiguous
Evening among the street lamps the wind pursued
Preludes from the tangle of the ships.
The marine buildings had white arabesques
In the languishing shadow⁵³
And I and the ambiguous evening went on:
And I raised my eyes up to the thousand
And thousand and thousand benevolent eyes
Of the Chimeras⁵⁴ in the skies: . . .
When,⁵⁵
Melodiously

⁵¹*lewd*: illuminated by the dim light of the street lamps, but it also introduces the prostitutes in the next line.

⁵²*from below*: the city is built on a slope.

⁵³*languishing shadow*: softened by the twilight.

⁵⁴*Chimeras*: see “The Chimera.” “Here, in the plural and capitalized, *Chimeras* are the fabulous presences that look down from above in Faustian fashion” (Ceragioli 321).

⁵⁵*When*: introduces the visionary experience. The fourth stanza of “Genoa” has contributed more than any other passage to the incomprehension of Campana’s poetry, and exhibits all the elements of the most groundbreaking and avant-garde poetic language in modern Italian literature: irrational repetitions, illogical relative clauses, asyntactical, instinctive conjunctions, a period structured on rhythmic, rather than semantic, nuclei, a musical phrasing which is non-linear, but widens and spirals upward. The pertinent relationships in the construction of the stanza are not logical, but musical and rhythmic, and are sustained by a complex pattern of interthreaded iterations, which in fact have nothing to do with aphasia, so often mentioned in relation with this stanza, but have a precise stylistic function in the context of this stunningly original poetic discourse.

D'alto sale, il vento come bianca finse una visione di Grazia
Come dalla vicenda infaticabile
De le nuvole e de le stelle dentro del cielo serale
Dentro il vico marino in alto sale, . . .
Dentro il vico ch  rosse in alto sale
Marino l'ali rosse dei fanali
Rabescavano l'ombra illanguidita, . . .
Che nel vico marino, in alto sale
Che bianca e lieve e querula sali!
*«Come nell'ali rosse dei fanali
Bianca e rossa nell'ombra del fanale
Che bianca e lieve e tremula sali: . . .»*
Ora di gi  nel rosso del fanale
Era gi  l'ombra faticosamente
Bianca . . .
Bianca quando nel rosso del fanale
Bianca lontana faticosamente

From high saltiness,⁵⁶ the wind fashioned a white vision of Grace
 As if from the tireless changing
 Of the clouds and stars within the evening sky
 Within the seaside alley⁵⁷ in high saltiness, . . .
 For red within the seaside alley in high saltiness
 The red wings of the street lamps
 Arabesqued the languishing shadow, . . .
 That in the seaside alley, in high saltiness
 That white and light and querulous it rose!
 "As in the red wings⁵⁸ of the street lamps
 White and red in the shadow of the street lamp
 That white and light and tremulous it rose! . . ."
 Now already⁵⁹ in the red of the street lamp
 Was the shadow strenuously

⁵⁶*high salt*: the wind seems to fashion a vision from the salty air. The unusual *alto sale*, which, repeated four times, three times in a prominent position at the end of the line, becomes the focal point of the vision, is significantly taken from Dante (Par. II, 10–15): "You other few who turned your minds in time / unto the bread of angels, which provides / men here with life — but hungering for more — / you may indeed commit your vessel to / the *deep salt-sea* [*alto sale*], keeping your course within my wake, / ahead of where the waves are smooth again" (Mandelbaum translation). Here Dante proclaims himself the pilot of an unknown sea, and urges the initiates, the chosen few, unlike those in their "little bark" who must turn back, to follow his singing ship that crosses the deep seas ("The waves I take were never sailed before"). An exhortation Campana feels he has the power to heed, thereby declaring himself Dante's disciple, and one of the elect. This precise and poignant reference to Dante's famous *terzine*, in the climactic and most expressly visionary and epiphanic moment in *Orphic Songs*, is the definitive acknowledgement of Dante's high spiritual and poetic legacy, and Campana's last tribute to the great Florentine poet, following whose wake he set sail for the high seas.

⁵⁷*Within the maritime alley*: The vision of Grace, that rose white light and querulous in the salty air in the maritime alley, in the salty air, because the red wings of the streetlamps graced with arabesques the languishing shadow.

⁵⁸*As in the red wings*: the flames of the street lamp. Italics here introduce a *pianissimo*.

⁵⁹*now already*: now the white shadow was already in the red of the street lamp, already the white shadow in the red of the street lamp, when distant strenuously the astonished echo laughed an unreal laughter.

L'eco attonita rise un irreale
Riso: e che l'eco faticosamente
E bianca e lieve e attonita sali . . .
Di già tutto d'intorno
Lucea la sera ambigua:
Battevano i fanali
Il palpito nell'ombra.
Rumori lontano franavano
Dentro silenzi solenni
Chiedendo: se dal mare
Il riso non saliva . . .
Chiedendo se l'udiva
infaticabilmente
La sera: a la vicenda
Di nuvole là in alto
Dentro del cielo stellare.



Al porto il battello si posa
Nel crepuscolo che brilla
Negli alberi quieti di frutti di luce,
Nel paesaggio mitico
Di navi nel seno dell'infinito
Ne la sera

White . . .
White when in the red of the streetlamp
White distant strenuously
The astonished echo laughed an unreal
Laughter: and the echo strenuously
And white and light and astonished rose. . . .
Already all around
The ambiguous evening glittered:
The streetlamps pulsated
In the shadow.
Distant noises⁶⁰ crumbled
Within solemn silences
Asking: if the laughter
Was not rising from the sea . . .
Asking if the evening
Untiringly
Heard it: the changing
Of the clouds high above
Within the starlit sky.



In the port the boat rests
In the twilight that glimmers
In the masts quiet with fruits⁶¹ of light,
In the mythical landscape
Of ships in the bosom of the infinite
In the evening

⁶⁰*distant noises*: distant noises crumbled asking the tireless changing of the clouds high above within the starlit sky asking untiringly if the laughter was rising from the sea, asking if the evening heard it.

⁶¹*quiet with fruits of light*: the masts are seen as trees whose lights are fruits.

Calida di felicità, lucente
In un grande in un grande velario
Di diamanti disteso sul crepuscolo,
In mille e mille diamanti in un grande velario vivente
Il battello si scarica
Ininterrottamente cigolante,
Instancabilmente introna
E la bandiera è calata e il mare e il cielo è d'oro e sul molo
Corrono i fanciulli e gridano
Con gridi di felicità.
Già a frotte s'avventurano
I viaggiatori alla città tonante
Che stende le sue piazze e le sue vie:
La grande luce mediterranea
S'è fusa in pietra di cenere:
Pei vichi antichi e profondi
Fragore di vita, gioia intensa e fugace:
Velario d'oro di felicità
E il cielo ove il sole ricchissimo
Lasciò le sue spoglie preziose
E la Città comprende
E s'accende
E la fiamma titilla ed assorbe
I resti magnificenti del sole,
E intesse un sudario d'oblio



Warm with happiness, shining
 In a great in a great curtain
 Of diamonds⁶² extended on the twilight,
 In thousands upon thousands of diamonds in a great living curtain
 The boat unloads
 Ceaselessly creaking,
 Untiringly it rumbles⁶³
 And the flag is lowered and the sea and the sky is golden and on the pier
 The children run and shout
 Their cries of happiness.
 Throngs of travelers
 Venture into the thundering city
 That spreads out⁶⁴ its squares and streets:
 The great Mediterranean light
 Has fused into ashen stone:⁶⁵
 Through the deep ancient alleys
 Clamor of life, intense fleeting joy:
 A golden curtain of happiness
 Is the sky where the richest sun
 Left its precious spoils
 And the City understands
 And lights up
 And titillates⁶⁶ the flame and absorbs
 The magnificent remnants of the sun,
 And weaves a shroud of divine



⁶²*diamonds*: lights.

⁶³*rumbles*: cf. "Images of the Journey and of the Mountain," where the mountain rumbles.

⁶⁴*that spreads out*: "As the evening is a great shroud of diamonds, the squares and the streets are the drapery spread out by the regal city" (Ceragioli 325).

⁶⁵*ashen stone*: slate.

⁶⁶*titillates*: the city excites the flames of the streetlamps, that seem to absorb the waning sunlight.

Divino per gli uomini stanchi.
Perdute nel crepuscolo tonante
Ombre di viaggiatori
Vanno per la Superba
Terribili e grotteschi come i ciechi.



Vasto, dentro un odor tenue vanito
Di catrame, vegliato da le lune
Elettriche, sul mare appena vivo
Il vasto porto si addorme.
S'alza la nube delle ciminiere
Mentre il porto in un dolce scricchiolio
Dei cordami s'addorme: e che la forza
Dorme, dorme che culla la tristezza
Inconscia de le cose che saranno
E il vasto porto oscilla dentro un ritmo
Affaticato e si sente
La nube che si forma dal vomito silente.



Oblivion for weary mankind.
Lost in the thundering twilight
Shadows of travelers
Walk through *The Proud One*⁶⁷
Frightful and grotesque⁶⁸ as the blind.



Vast, within a tenuous faded smell
Of tar, watched over by electric
Moons,⁶⁹ on the sea barely alive
The vast port falls asleep.
The cloud rises from the smokestacks
While the port in a soft creaking
Of ropes falls asleep: and the strength
Sleeps,⁷⁰ the sadness that sleeps unconscious
Cradle of things to come
And the vast port sways within a tired
Rhythm and one can feel
The cloud that forms from the silent heaving.⁷¹



⁶⁷*The Proud: La Superba* is Genoa.

⁶⁸*frightful and grotesque*: “Another powerful image of Campana’s expressionism” (Lunetta 132).

⁶⁹*electric Moons*: the lamps.

⁷⁰*that the strength / Sleeps*: the strength that sleeps.

⁷¹*silent heaving*: the cloud from the smokestacks.

O Siciliana proterva opulente matrona
A le finestre ventose del vico marinaro
Nel seno della città percossa di suoni di navi e di carri
Classica mediterranea femina dei porti:
Pei grigi rosei della città di ardesia
Sonavano i clamori vespertini
E poi più quieti i rumori dentro la notte serena:
Vedevo alle finestre lucenti come le stelle
Passare le ombre de le famiglie marine: e canti
Udivo lenti ed ambigui ne le vene de la città mediterranea:
Ch'era la notte fonda.
Mentre tu siciliana, dai cavi
Vetri in un torto giuoco
L'ombra cava e la luce vacillante
O siciliana, ai capezzoli
L'ombra rinchiusa tu eri
La Piovra de le notti mediterrani
Cigolava cigolava cigolava di catene
La grù sul porto nel cavo de la notte serena:
E dentro il cavo de la notte serena

O haughty opulent Sicilian⁷² matron
At the wind-blown windows of the marine alley
In the heart of the city battered by the noises of ships and carts
Classic Mediterranean female of the ports:
The uproars of the evening rang
Through the pale-rose greys of the city of slate
And then quieter the sounds within the clear night:
In the windows as bright as stars I saw
The shadows of marine families go by: and I heard
Songs, slow and ambiguous in the veins⁷³ of the Mediterranean city:
For it was deep night.
While you, o Sicilian,⁷⁴ from the hollow
Windowpanes in a tortuous play
Hollow shadow and vacillating light
O sicilian, the shadow enclosed
Around your nipples, you were
The Octopus of Mediterranean nights.
The crane on the port in the hollow of the clear night
Creaked and creaked and creaked with chains:
And within the hollow of the clear night

⁷²*Sicilian*: in Italian *siciliana* would normally not be capitalized, but Campana always capitalizes to indicate a symbol, in this case of the *classic Mediterranean female*.

⁷³*veins*: the alleys.

⁷⁴*While you, o sicilian*: the lowercase is retained in English to indicate that here a specific woman is being referred to. *Octopus*: behind the hollow of her windows, she seems like an octopus lying in wait with its tentacles to attract and capture the passersby.

E nelle braccia di ferro
Il debole cuore batteva un più alto palpito: tu
La finestra avevi spenta:
Nuda mistica in alto cava
Infinitamente occhiuta devastazione era la notte tirrena.

And in its iron arms⁷⁵
The feeble heart⁷⁶ throbbed with a higher beat: you
Had dimmed the window:
Naked mystical high above hollow
Devastation of infinite eyes was the Thyrranian night.

**They were all torn
and cover'd with
the boy's
blood⁷⁷**

⁷⁵*iron arms*: the crane.

⁷⁶*the feeble heart*: the poet's.

⁷⁷*They were all torn*: in a letter to Emilio Cecchi, dated 13 March 1916, Campana says: "If dead or alive you still take interest in me I beg you not to forget the last words *They were all torn and covered with the boy's blood*, which are the only important ones in the book. The quotation is from Walt Whitman whom I adore in *The Song of Myself* when he speaks of the capture of the flour [sic] of the race of rangers" (*Le mie lettere sono fatte per bruciare* 38). With this colophon Campana proclaims himself a sacrificial victim, a tragic figure whose blood reverberates throughout the *Orphic Songs*.

ALTRE POESIE

OTHER POEMS

Editor's note. The poems in the following sections are taken from Vallecchi's most complete edition of Campana's work in two volumes: *Opere e contributi* (Firenze: Vallecchi, 1973). Campana's unpublished works are grouped under the titles *Versi sparsi*, *Quaderno*, and *Taccuini, abbozzi e carte varie*, first published by Vallecchi in 1942 and edited by Enrico Falqui.

Da *Versi Sparsi*

BASTIMENTO IN VIAGGIO

L'albero oscilla a tocchi nel silenzio.
Una tenue luce bianca e verde cade dall'albero.
Il cielo limpido all'orizzonte, carico verde e dorato dopo la burrasca.
Il quadro bianco della lanterna in alto
Illumina il segreto notturno: dalla finestra
Le corde dall'alto a triangolo d'oro
E un globo bianco di fumo
Che non esiste come musica
Sopra del cerchio coi tocchi dell'acqua in sordina.

From *Versi Sparsi*

SHIP'S VOYAGE

The mast sways rhythmically in the silence.
A tenuous white-green light falls from the mast.
The sky limpid on the horizon, laden green and golden after the storm.
The white frame of the lantern high up
lights the night's secret: from the window
The ropes from on high in a golden triangle
And a white globe of smoke
That does not exist as music
Over the circle of the rhythmical muted water.

ARABESCO-OLIMPIA

A Giovanni Boine

Oro, farfalla dorata polverosa perchè sono spuntati i fiori del cardo? In un tramonto di torricelle rosse perchè pensavo ad Olimpia che aveva i denti di perla la prima volta che la vidi nella prima gioventù? Dei fiori bianchi e rossi sul muro sono fioriti. Perché si rivela un viso, c'è come un peso sconosciuto sull'acqua corrente la cicala che canta.



Se esiste la capanna di Cézanne pensai quando sui prati verdi tra i tronchi d'alberi una baccante rossa mi chiese un fiore quando a Berna guerriera munita di statue di legno sul ponte che passa l'Aar una signora si innamorò dei miei occhi di fauno e a Berna colando l'acqua, lucente come un secondo cadavere, il bello straniero non potè più sostare? Fanfara inclinata, rabesco allo spazio dei prati, Berna.

Come la quercia all'ombra i suoi ciuffi per conche verdi l'acqua colando dei fiori bianchi e rossi sul muro sono spuntati come tra i fiori del cardo i vostri occhi blu fiordaliso in un tramonto di torricelle rosse perché io pensavo ad Olimpia che aveva i denti di perla la prima volta che la vidi nella prima gioventù.

ARABESQUE-OLYMPIA

To Giovanni Boine

Gold, golden dusty butterfly, why have the flowers of the thistle bloomed? In a sunset of red turrets why was I thinking of Olympia who had pearly teeth the first time I saw her in my early youth? A few white-and-red flowers have blossomed on the wall. Because a face appears, there is like an unknown weight on the flowing water the chirring cicada.



If Cezanne's hut exists I thought of when on the green meadows among the tree trunks a red bacchant asked me for a flower when in warlike Berne armed with wooden statues on the bridge that crosses the Aar a lady fell in love with my faun-like eyes and in Berne the water trickling, shining like a second corpse, the handsome stranger could no longer stay? Inclined fanfare, arabesque in the space of the meadows, Berne.

As the oak with its tufts in the shade the water trickling through green basins a few white-and-red flowers have blossomed on the wall as among the flowers of the thistle your lily-blue eyes in a sunset of red turrets because I was thinking of Olympia who had pearly teeth the first time I saw her in my early youth.

TOSCANITÀ
(già: A BINO BINAZZI)

A Bino Binazzi

“Perché esista questa realtà tu devi tendere una volta gialla sopra il velluto nero e le trecce di una trecciaiola che intreccia pagliuzze d’oro.

Non accendere i carboni della passione: essi ti risponderanno col fuoco elementare delle carte da gioco. Ma se piuttosto intendi il battere di tamburi con cui il poverello Giotto accompagnava le sue Madonne sii certo che i doppii piani ti daranno la soluzione della doppia figurazione che lo spirito e l’orgoglio aspetta.”

TUSCAN SPIRIT
(formerly: TO BINO BINAZZI)

To Bino Binazzi

“So that this reality may exist you must extend a yellow vault over the black velvet and the braids of a braider who braids golden straws.

Do not light the coals of passion: they would answer you with the elementary fire of playing cards. But if rather you hear the drumbeat with which the impoverished Giotto accompanied his Madonnas make sure that the double planes will give you the solution of the double figuration that the spirit and pride expect.”

A MARIO NOVARO

(Domodossola 1915)

Come delle torri d'acciaio
Nel cuore bruno della sera
Il mio spirito ricrea
Per un bacio taciturno.

Se là c'è un rosso giardino
Che cosa è il bianco con il turchino?

Sull'Alpe c'è una scaglia di lavoro
Del povero Italiano non si sa.
Tra i pioppi
Al margine degli occhi
Bruni della sera
Se c'è una pastorella non si sa
Che pare far vane le torri
Al taglio di un pioppo che brilla
Italia.
Ma come torri d'acciaio
Nel cuore bruno della sera
Il mio spirito ricrea

TO MARIO NOVARO

(Domodossola 1915)

My spirit recreates
Like steel towers
In the dark heart of evening
For a taciturn kiss.

If there is a red garden
What is the red with the turquoise?

On the Alps there is a splinter of work
Of the poor Italian no one knows.
Among the poplars
Around the edges of the dark
Eyes of evening
If there is a little shepherd girl no one knows
That seems to make vain the towers
At the felling of a poplar that shines
Italy.
But my spirit recreates
Like steel towers
In the dark heart of evening

PER UN BACIO TACITURNO

Hai domato i picchi irsuti
Hai fatto strada per le montagne
Con poco canto con molto vino
Sei arrivata vicino
Fin dove si poteva arrivar.
Senza interrogare la giubba rossa delle stelle
Hai sfondato finchè si poteva arrivare
Finchè sei andata a riposare
Laggiù nello straniero suol.
Italia non ti posso lasciare
La scaglia dell'italiano senza cuore
Brilla: stai fida l'onore
Te lo venderemo con nuova verginità.
L'edera gira le torri
É la vigna della tua passione
Italia che fai processione
Con il badile prendi il fucile ti tocca andar
Fora la giubba rossa delle stelle
Questa volta con il cannone
Italia che fai processione
Prendi il fucile guarda il nemico ti tocca andar.
Guarda il nemico che poi non t'importa
Ti sei fatta a forzare la pietra
Prendi coraggio se batti alla porta
Questa volta ti si aprirà.

FOR A TACITURN KISS

You have tamed the bristling peaks
You have opened roads across mountains
With a little song and a lot of wine
You have gotten near,
As far as one could go.
Without questioning the red jacket of the stars
You broke through as far as one could go
Until you went to rest
Down there on foreign soil.
Italy I cannot leave you
The splinter of the heartless Italian
Shines: keep faith we'll sell you
Honor with a new virginity.
The ivy rounds the towers
It's the vineyard of your passion
Italy in procession
With the shovel get the rifle you have to go
Pierce the red jacket of the stars
This time with a cannon
Italy in procession
Get the rifle look at the enemy you have to go.
Look at the enemy it's not your concern
You have made yourself forcing stone
Have courage if you knock at the door
This time it will open for you.

Nel paesaggio lente si spostano le rondinelle
Il paesaggio è costituito dal ponte in riva al secondo fiume

L'oro e l'azzurro dei tramonti decrepiti si è cambiato in verde

Ma come torri d'acciaio
Nel cuore bruno della sera
Il mio spirito ricrea
Per un bacio taciturno.

In the landscape the swallows move slowly
The landscape is made of the bridge on the bank of the second river

The gold and blue of decrepit sunsets has turned to green

But my spirit recreates
like steel towers
In the dark heart of evening
For a taciturn kiss.

NOTTURNO TEPPISTA

Firenze nel fondo era gorgo di luci di fremiti sordi:
Con ali di fuoco i lunghi rumori fuggenti
Del tram spaziavano: il fiume mostruoso
Torpido riluceva come un serpente a squame.
Su un circolo incerto le inquiete facce beffarde
Dei ladri, ed io tra i doppi lunghi cipressi uguali a fiaccole spente
Più aspro ai cipressi le siepi
Più aspro del fremer dei bussi,
Che dal mio cuore il mio amore,
Che dal mio cuore, l'amore un ruffiano che intonò e cantò:

Amo le vecchie troie
Gonfie levitate di sperma
Che cadono come rospi a quattro zampe sopra la coltrice rossa
E aspettano e sbuffano ed ansimano
Flaccide come mantici.

HOODLUM NOCTURNE

Florence down below was a whirlpool of lights of muted tremors
On wings of fire the long fleeting noises
Of the streetcar soared: the monstrous sluggish
River glistened like a scaly serpent.
Over an uncertain circle the restless mocking faces
Of the thieves, and I among the double long cypresses like spent torches.
Harsher than to hedges cypresses
Harsher than the quivering of box-trees,
The love that from my heart,
That from my heart, the love a pimp intoned and sang:

I love the old whores
Swollen leavened with sperm
Who fall like toads on four paws over the red featherbed
And wait and snort and pant
Flabby as bellows.

Da *Quaderno*

IL TEMPO MISERABILE CONSUMI

Il tempo miserabile consumi
Me, la mia gioia e tutta la speranza
Venga la morte pallida e mi dica
Pàrtiti figlio. Un dopopranzo, sdraiato sull'erba
Pieno di cibi e di languore, anch'io
Alla donna insaziata e battagliera,
E ben lontana,
Avrei fatto dei versi deliziosi:
Mi rose e avvelenò fin dall'infanzia
Una cucina perfida e nefanda
Il gusto fine.
La morte magra e seria ha nella voce
Un'armonia che pure io gusto tutta
Ma il mondo grasso l'ha scomunicata
E la disprezza ricchi son potenti al giorno d'oggi
Fanno le leggi e decretan la fame
Ai poveretti che cercan nel mondo
Un ideale
L'ideale emaciato e affievolito
Va con occhi infantili ed incosciente
Vende [. . .]
Pei lupanari
Per non toccarlo s'alzan la sottana
Le donne.
I bruti ànno violato l'ora
Sacra che passa e che darà un domani
Fulgido enorme
I frenetici i pazzi su dal suolo
Nascono come funghi dopo pioggia
E ai loro tuoni di teatro buffo
Rispondono profondi
I gravi rospi e le ranocchie tenere
In melopea, dal lume della luna

From *Quaderno*

MAY WRETCHED TIME CONSUME

May wretched time consume
Me, my joy and all the hope
May pale death come and say to me
Go son.
Once after dinner, stretched out on the grass
full of food and languor, I too
would have made delightful verses
for the unsated and combative woman,
so far away:
A treacherous and foul cuisine
from childhood has gnawed at me and poisoned
My refined taste.
Lean and serious death has in its voice
A harmony that I too savor fully
But the fat world has excommunicated it
And despises it.
The rich are powerful today
They make the laws and decree hunger
For the poor people that in the world are seeking
An ideal
The emaciated and enfeebled ideal
Goes on with childlike and unconscious eyes
It sells [. . .]
In brothels
Women lift their skirts
So as not to touch it. The brutes have violated
the sacred hour that passes and will bring
An immense dazzling tomorrow.
The frenetic the crazy spring up
out of the ground like mushrooms after a rain
And to their comic-stage roars
Solemn toads and tender frogs
Answer profoundly

Madreperlacea sopra la putredine
Inebriati
O Morte o morte vecchio capitano
Ischeletrito stendi le falcate
Braccia e portami in stretta disperata
Verso le stelle
O muto e cieco reduce tra il marmo
Delle tue braccia suoni la mia testa
Eletrizzata esausta come corda
Che si dirompe

In melopoeia, enraptured
By the light of the mother-of-pearl moon
Over the putrefaction.
O Death o death old captain
Turned to skeleton extend your schythed
Arms and carry me in a desperate embrace
Toward the stars
O mute and blind survivor, within the marble
Of your arms let my head ring,
Electrified exhausted like a rope
That snaps.

SPADA BARBARICA

Voi che rompete le onde della sera
Colla punta del piede, in sul balcone

.....

O se avessi sirena
Una sol goccia del vostro sudore
Sulla lingua ardente, una sol goccia.
Ma la vostra fronte marmorea
Ma il vostro taglio scarlatto
Mi irridono metallici
Vergine inaccessibile una goccia . . .

.....

Idolo, nel mio sangue di cristiano
Io sento la vertigine colare
Idolo, il fuoco della distruzione
Mi prende. Sulla vostra testa mozza
Idolo il vostro sangue pagano
Paradisiaco io beberò
Il vostro sangue magnifico e aborrito
Il vostro sangue dolce e soffocante
Il vostro sangue che odora di muschio
Il vostro sangue tappeto regale
Dove si smorza il passo della vita
Gocciolerà lampeggiante
Stilla di verità eterna
Clessidra degli eroi e degli dei.
Ho una lama lucente
Che vince lo splendore dei vostri occhi,

BARBARIC SWORD

You who break the waves of evening
With the tip of your foot, out on the balcony

.....

O siren if I had
A single drop of your sweat
On my burning tongue, a single drop.
But your marble forehead
But your scarlet slash
Mock me metallic
Inaccessible virgin a drop. . . .

.....

Idol, in my Christian blood
I feel giddiness trickling
Idol, the fire of destruction
Seizes me. On your severed head
Idol your pagan blood
Heavenly blood I will drink
Your blood magnificent and abhorred
Your blood sweet and suffocating
Your blood that smells of moss
Your blood royal carpet
Where life's footfall dies away
Will drip in a sparkle
Bead of eternal truth
Hourglass of heroes and gods.
I have a shining blade
That conquers the splendor of your eyes,

Che fredda vorace vuol spegnere
Il suo splendore nella gola vostra
E ritornarsene vittoriosa
Di un trofeo di rossi diamanti
Di rossi diamanti che corrono
Su per il filo terribile folgoranti
E passano come meteora
E cadono silenziosamente
Nel grembo della terra genitrice
Oh che il tuo corpo mi versi
O donna le sue primavere
Più dolci in un fiotto che grava
Lambente i miei piedi severi
Con un tardo singhiozzo soffocato
Con un tardo singhiozzo soffocato:
Ed io camminerò sopra il tappeto
Rosso e movente, come un re in esilio
In un sogno di regno sopra i cieli.

That cold voracious wants to extinguish
Its splendor in your throat
And return victorious
With a trophy of red diamonds
Of red diamonds that run
Dazzling over the frightful edge
And pass like a meteor
And fall silently
Into the womb of life-giving earth
Oh may your body pour out
Its springs for me o woman
More sweet in a stream that weighs
Lapping my severe feet
With a late stifled sob
With a late stifled sob:
And I will walk over the red
And moving carpet, like a king in exile
In a dream of a realm above the skies.

UNA STRANA ZINGARELLA

Tu sentirai le rime scivolare
In cadenza nel caldo della stanza
Sopra al guanciale pallida a sognare
Ti volgerai, di questa lenta danza
Magnetica il sussurro a respirare.
La luna stanca è andata a riposare
Gli ulivi taccion, solo un ubriaco
Che si stanca a cantare e ricantare:
Tu magra e sola con i tuoi capelli
Sei restata. Nel cielo a respirare
Stanno i tuoi sogni. Volgiti ed ascolta
nella notte gelata il mio cantare
Sulle tue spalle magroline e gialle
I capelli vorrei veder danzare
Sei pura come il suono e senza odore
Un tuo bacio è acerbetto e sorridente
E doloroso — e l'occhio è rilucente
É troppo bello, l'occhio è perditore.
Sicuramente tu non sai cantare
Ma la vocetta deve essere acuta
E perforante come il violino
E sorridendo deve pizzicare
Il cuore. I tuoi capelli sulle spallucchine?
Ami i profumi? E perchè vai vestita
Di sangue? Ami le chiese?
No tu temi i profumi. Il corpicino
É troppo fine e gli occhi troppo neri
Oh se potessi vederti agitare
La tua animuccia tagliente tremare

A STRANGE LITTLE GYPSY GIRL

You will hear the verses as they slide
In the warmth of the room with steady rhythm
Ashen over your pillow on your side
You'll turn to dream, to breathe the whisper
Of this slow magnetic dance.
The weary moon has retired to rest
The olive trees are silent, just a drunk
Who gets tired of singing on and on:
You have been left so skinny and alone
With your hair. Your dreams are breathing
In the sky. Turn around and listen
To my song in the cold of the night
I would like to see your hair all dancing
Over your slender yellow shoulders
You're as pure as sound and have no smell
Your smiling kiss is just a little bitter
And painful — and your eye glitters
It's much too beautiful, your eye can doom.
Surely you do not know how to sing
But your thin voice must be so very sharp
And piercing like a violin
And smiling it must pinch the heart.
Your hair over your tiny shoulders?
You're fond of perfumes? And why do you dress
In blood? Do you love churches?
No you're afraid of perfumes. Your tiny body
Is much too fine and your eyes too black
Oh if I could see you shaking
Your tiny soul trembling

E i tuoi occhi lucenti arrotondare
mentre il santo linfatico e canoro
Che dovevi tentare
Spande in ginocchio nuvole d'incenso
Ringraziando il Signore
E non lo puoi amare
Christus vicisti
L'avorio del crocefisso
Vince l'avorio del tuo ventre
Dalla corona non sì dolce e gloriosa
Nera increspata movente
Nell'ombra grigia vertiginosa
E tu piangi in ginocchio per terra colle mani sugli occhi
E i tuoi piedi lunghi e brutti
Allargati per terra come zampe
D'una bestia ribelle e mostruosa.
Che sapore avranno le tue lagrimucce?
Un poco di fuoco? Io vorrei farne
Un diadema fantastico e portarlo
Sul mio capo nell'ora della morte
Per udirmi parlare in confidenza
I demonietti dai piedi forcuti.
Povera bimba come ti calunnio
Perché hai i capelli tragici
E ti vesti di rosso e non odori.

And your shiny eyes rounding
While the lymphatic melodious saint
You were supposed to tempt
Spills clouds of incense on his knees
Thanking the Lord
And you can't love him
Christus vicisti
The ivory of the crucifix
Conquers the ivory of your belly
With its crown not so sweet or glorious
Black curly moving
In the grey whirling shadow
And you cry kneeling on the ground with your hands over your eyes
And your long and ugly feet
Spread on the ground like the paws
Of a rebellious monstrous beast.
What can your tiny tears taste like?
A little fire? I would like to make of them
A fantastic diadem and wear it
On my head in the hour of death
To hear the little demons with cloven feet
Speak to me in confidence.
Poor child how I slander you
Because you have tragic hair
And dress in red and do not have a scent.

TRE GIOVANI FIORENTINE CAMMINANO

Ondulava sul passo verginale
Ondulava la chioma musicale
Nello splendore del tiepido sole
Eran tre vergini e una grazia sola
Ondulava sul passo verginale
Crespa e nera la chioma musicale
Eran tre vergini e una grazia sola
E sei piedini in marcia militare

THREE FLORENTINE GIRLS WALKING

On their virginal step kept on swaying
Kept on swaying their musical hair
In the great radiance of the gentle sun
They were three virgins and a single grace
On their virginal step kept on swaying
Black and crispy their virginal hair
They were three virgins and a single grace
And six small feet in military march

OSCAR WILDE A SAN MINIATO

O città fantastica piena di suoni sordi . . .
Mentre sulle scalee lontano io salivo davanti
A te infuocata in linee lambenti di fuoco
Nella sera gravida, tra i cipressi.
Salivo con un'amica giovane grave
Che sacrificava dai primi anni
All'amore malinconico e suicida dell'uomo:
Ridevano giù per le scale
Ragazzi accaniti briachi di beffa
Sopra un circolo attorno ad un soldo invisibile.
Il fiume mostruoso luceva torpido come un serpente a squame;
Salivamo, essa oppressa e anelante,
Io cogli occhi rivolti alla funebre febbre incendiaria
Che bruciava te, o nero naviglio alberato di torri
Nell'ultime febbri dei tempi remoti o città:
Odore amaro d'alloro ventava sordo dall'alto
Attorno al bianco chiostro sepolcrale:
Ma bella come te, battello bruciato tra l'alto
Soffio glorioso del ricordo, gridai o città,
O sogno sublime di tendere in fiamme
I corpi alla chimera non saziata
Amarissimo brivido funebre davanti all'incendio sordo lunare.

OSCAR WILDE AT SAN MINIATO

O fantastic city full of muted sounds . . .
While on the stairs far away I climbed before
You aflame in lapping lines of fire
In the heavy evening, among the cypress trees.
I climbed with a somber young friend
Who had been sacrificing since her early years
To the melancholy and suicidal love of man:
Down along the stairs
Willful boys drunk with mockery
Laughed over a circle around an invisible coin.
The monstrous river glistened listlessly like a scaly serpent;
We climbed, she oppressed and out of breath,
I with my eyes turned toward the funereal burning fever
Which set you ablaze, o black tower-masted ship
In the last fevers of remote times, o city:
A bitter scent of laurel wafted muted from on high
Around the white sepulchral cloister:
But beautiful as you, boat burning in the high
Glorious breath of memory, I shouted o city,
O sublime dream to tender in flames
The bodies to the unsated chimera
Most bitter funereal shudder before the muted lunar blaze.

FIRENZE VECCHIA

Ho visto il tuo palazzo palpitare
Di mille fiamme in una sera calda
O Firenze, il magnifico palazzo.
Già la folla à riempito la gran piazza
E vocia verso il suo palazzo vecchio
E beve la sua anima maliarda.
La confraternita di buona morte
Porta una bara sotto le tue mura:
Questo m'allieta questo m'assicura
Della tua forza di contro alla morte:
Non bruciano le tue ferree midolla
I tempi nuovi e non l'amaro a reste
Delle tue genti: in ricordanze in feste
L'aspero sangue sotto a te ribolla.
O ferro o sangue o fiamma è tutto fuoco
Che brucia la viltà dentro le vene!
A te dai petti e dalle gole piene,
Di gioia e forza un'inesausta polla!

OLD FLORENCE

I have seen your palace pulsing
With a thousand flames on a warm evening
O Florence, the magnificent palace.
The crowd has filled the great square already
And bellows loudly toward its old palace
And drinks in its beguiling soul.
The brotherhood of righteous death
Carries a coffin underneath your walls:
That makes me happy that indeed assures me
Of your own strength in the face of death:
The new times do not burn your iron marrow
Nor the rustic brusqueness of your people:
Let the harsh blood boil over under you
In remembrances and feasts.
Iron or blood or flame it's all one fire
That burns cowardice within the veins!
To you from breasts and from full throats
An inexhaustible spring of joy and strength.

SONETTO PERFIDO E FOCOSO

Io voglio nel sonetto pastorale
Te luccicante nelle bionde anelle
Te dal nascente tuo sesso ribelle
Inasperita, nuda incatenare;

E con sacro fervore esagitare
L'aroma acerbo delle membra snelle
E piamente sopra la tua pelle
Lunghi e superbi [. . .] rievocare:

Per veder gli occhi tuoi torbidi e verdi !
Che accese l'angiol che ti dorme accanto
A notte tarda nei sogni infiniti

Dal profondo implorarmi, mentre un tardo
Sospiro apra la bocca mortuaria
Al riso bianco dei denti immortale.

TREACHEROUS AND FIERY SONNET

I want in the pastoral sonnet
shackle you naked, amid the glimmer
of your blond ringlets, made bitter
by the dawn of your rebellious sex;

And excite with a sacred fervor
The unripe scent of your slender limbs
And piously evoke over your skin
Long and majestic [. . .]

To see your green and turbid eyes
That the angel sleeping next to you
Ignited late at night in endless dreams.

Implore me from the depths, while a late
Sigh opens the mortuary mouth
To the immortal white laughter of the teeth.

DONNA GENOVESE

Tu mi portasti un po' d'alga marina
Nei tuoi capelli, ed un odor di vento,
Che è corso di lontano e giunge grave
D'ardore, era nel tuo corpo bronzino:
– Oh la divina
Semplicità delle tue forme snelle –
Non amore, non spasimo, un fantasma,
Un'ombra della necessità che vaga
Serena e ineluttabile per l'anima
E la discioglie in gioia, in incanto serena
Perchè per l'infinito lo scirocco
Se la possa portare.
Come è piccolo il mondo e leggero nelle tue mani.

GENOESE WOMAN

You brought me a little bit of seaweed
In you hair, and a smell of wind,
that blew from far away and arrives laden
With ardor, was in your body of bronze:
– Oh the divine
Simplicity of your slender forms –
Not love not pangs of pain, a ghost,
A shadow of necessity that wanders
Throughout the soul serene and inescapable
And dissolves it in joy, serene in enchantment
So that the scirocco may carry it
Across infinity.
How small is the world and light within your hands.

GUGLIELMÍNA E MANFREDA AL BALCONE (SECOLO XIII)

Eccoci sole davanti al mistero notturno. La luna
illumina forse gli amori tristi degli uomini
Appare velata di lacrime e bruma sì come Venere
Sorge dal mare nel primo mattino del mondo
Dei mondo sconvolto ancora fumante, con riso
Ahi quanto tenero e triste
Molto da allora è corso già il tempo ma ancora
Venere è triste e affanna il tenero seno
Pure è dolcezza infinita sentir la stanchezza
Dei nostri esausti cuori che ardono ancora
Per la notte dei tempi [. . .]
All'anirna del mondo, insaziabile.

GUGLIELMINA AND MANFREDA ON THE BALCONY (XIIITH CENTURY)

Here we are alone before the mystery of the night. The moon
Perhaps shines over the unhappy loves of men,
It appears veiled with tears and mist as Venus
Rises from the sea in the first morning of the world
Of the world in upheaval still smoking, with a laugh
Alas so tender and so sad
Much time has passed since then but Venus
Is still sad and strains her tender breast
It is also an immense sweetness to feel the weariness
Of our exhausted hearts that still burn
For the night of times [. . .]
To the soul of the world, insatiable.

A UNA TROIA DAGLI OCCHI FERRIGNI

Coi tuoi piccoli occhi bestiali
Mi guardi e taci e aspetti e poi ti stringi
E mi riguardi e taci.
La tua carne
Goffa e pesante dorme intorpidita
Nei sogni primordiali. Prostituta . . .
Chi ti chiamò alla vita? D'onde vieni?
Dagli acri porti tirreni,
Dalle fiere cantanti di Toscana
O nelle sabbie ardenti voltolata
Fu la tua madre sotto gli scirocchi?
L'immensità t'impresse lo stupore
Nella faccia ferina di sfinge
L'alito, brulicante della vita
Tragicamente come a lionessa
Ti disquassa la tua criniera nera
E tu guardi il sacrilego angelo biondo
Che non t'ama e non ami e che soffre
Di te e che stanco ti bacia.

TO A WHORE WITH STEEL-GRAY EYES

With your small animal eyes
You look at me and keep quiet and wait and then draw close
And look at me and keep quiet. Your clumsy
heavy flesh sleeps benumbed
In primordial dreams. Prostitute . . .
Who beckoned you to life? Where do you come from?
From the rank Tyrrhenian ports,
From the singing fairs of Tuscany
Or was your mother rolled over
In burning sands under siroccos?
Immensity impressed stupor
On your feral sphynx-like face
The teeming breath of life
Tragically shakes your black mane
As if you were a lioness
And you watch the sacrilegious blond angel
Who does not love you and you do not love
And who suffers for you and wearily kisses you.

SPECIE DI SERENATA AGRA E LALSA E MELODRAMMATICA

Sui cerchi concentrici di vite quadrilustri
Pieno di trilli d'angeli corrotti
Sui profili
Dagli occhi pesti e dalle labbra molli
Si libra il melodramma:
Il buffo dalla voce grave e fonda
Dal profilo caprino folgorante
Nell'occhío cavo infernale
Canta una canzon d'amore:
Trilla trilla mora pesta
Presto è l'alba, presto è desta.
Usignuolo della notte
O greca dal nero profilo
O bocca rossa come una ferita
O troia incommensurabile
Ed amo le tue pose schife
O triglia condita al ragù
Di gelsomino biacca e baccalà,
O romana delinquente ferina
E te capra languida greca
Dal profilo come bambagia.
E dall'occhio velato e pecorile!
.....
Io adoro la gaiezza che fa tremare.
Un trillo del basso mi prende
Per le strade deserte.
Gelide incombono le stelle
Così belle e sole come sui monti nevosi
E va la mascherata grottesca melodrammatica
E va come la vita schernitrice
Nei suoi concerti stonati e che prendono
Una tristezza straziante nelle ultime note stridenti
.....
Il basso profondo e infernale è la guida
Le donne seguono con ondeggiamenti molli

Sort of SERENADE BITTER FALSE MELODRAMATIC

On the concentric circles of lives of twenty years
Full of the trills of corrupt angels
On the profiles
With bruised eyes and soft lips
Rises the melodrama:
The buffo with a solemn deep voice
With a goat's profile blazing
In the hollow infernal eye
Sings a song of love:
Warble warble battered brunette
Soon it's dawn, soon it's awake.
Nightingale of night
O Greek woman with a black profile
O mouth red as a wound
O incommensurable whore
And I love your lewd poses
O mullet seasoned in ragù sauce
Of jasmine white lead and baccalà
O feral delinquent Roman woman
And you languid Greek goat
With a cottonlike profile.
And with a veiled sheepish eye!
.....
I adore the gaiety that makes one tremble.
A warble of the bass grabs me
In the deserted streets.
The icy stars loom high above.
Beautiful and alone as on snowy mountains
And the grotesque melodramatic machine goes on
And goes on like jeering life
In its jarring concerts that take
A rending sadness in the last strident notes.
.....
The infernal basso profundo is the guide
The women follow with soft undulations

Le strade suonano al martellare sordo dei passi
La vertigine della fossa mi guarda in silenzio
Il nulla grottesco enorme scende come un vapore
Molle e scipito lento ondeggiante per l'aria.

The streets resound at the muffled hammering of the footsteps
The vertigo of the grave looks at me in silence
The grotesque immense nothingness descends like a soft
insipid vapor slowly swaying in the air.

Sera d'estate

Costeggiò l'Arno illuminato dai fanali tenendo la bambina per mano, traversò il ponte che metteva nella città magnificamente illuminata, coronata dai contorni graziosi e neri dei suoi alti palazzi e delle sue torri e penetrarono nella sala. Due orientali giovani brune e nude erano intorno a un bracere che dava fumi rossastri. Le fiamme pallide dei ceri torno torno sui candelabri ne erano impallidite. Un ventilatore che ronzava in alto agitava il profumo in striscie che si svolgevano e avvolgevano lentamente e ritmicamente nel silenzio reso più profondo dalle forme immobili delle orientali. Attraverso il profumo ricco leggero ondeggiante appariva tratto a tratto una chitarra solitaria sospesa sui drappi delle pareti. La statua di un arcangelo colla spada in mano, un antico quadro nerastro, una donna penserosa, Eva, che porgeva il pomo ai suoi figli, apparivano e sparivano negli sfondi. La bambina si era trovata improvvisamente sola. Si era avvicinata istintivamente allo splendore del bracere e fissava il profumo che nasceva oscillando, mentre il fuoco si scoloriva e si arrossava ancora. Portava gli occhi alle due forme brune e ferine. Il ronzio la stordiva. Le onde che cingevano le due orientali e le si avvicinavano lentamente e magneticamente le portavano un profumo terribile, mistico e soffocante di carne femminile e di fiera che le sollevava i capelli d'angoscia. Oscuri presentimenti in un'altra sua vita le brillavano a tratti nella mente lasciandola cogli occhi sbarrati. Un suono improvviso e velato di chitarra sorse ad un tratto e la ritenne tutta. Una bruna, distesa ai piedi dell'altra, tentava accordi acerbi e monotoni, lontani e irritanti. L'altra si alzò e ballò colle bande dei suoi capelli in mano che la coronarono come la notte. Si arrestava a tratti col piede avanti, coprendosi del nero padiglione dei suoi capelli, spiando nell'oscurità, chiamando i suoni, e riprendeva la danza nell'ebbrezza funebre lentamente crescente.

PLACE FOR A DRAMA

Summer evening

He skirted the Arno illuminated by the streetlights holding the little girl by the hand. He crossed the bridge that led into the city magnificently lighted, crowned by the graceful black outlines of its high palaces and its towers and they went into the hall. Two young Oriental women, dark and naked, stood around a brazier that gave out a reddish smoke. The pale flames of the candles all around on the candelabra were made paler by it. A fan droning overhead stirred the scent into streaks that raveled and unraveled slowly and rhythmically in the silence deepened by the motionless forms of the Oriental girls. Now and then a solitary guitar hanging from the drapery on the walls appeared through the rich light swaying scent. The statue of an archangel holding a sword, an ancient blackish picture, a pensive woman, Eve, offering the apple to her children, appeared and disappeared in the background. The little girl had found herself suddenly alone. She had instinctively drawn closer to the splendor of the brazier and stared at the perfume that rose swaying, while the fire paled and got red again. She looked at the two dark feral forms. The droning was dazing her. The waves girding the two Orientals and slowly and magnetically getting closer to her were bringing her a frightful perfume, mystical and suffocating of female and animal flesh that raised her hair in anguish. Dark forebodings of another life of hers were intermittently flashing in her mind leaving her with her eyes wide open. The sudden veiled sound of a guitar rose at one point and held her completely. A dark girl, lying at the feet of the other one, was trying harsh and monotonous chords, distant and irritating. The other one got up and danced holding in her hands the fringes of her hair that crowned her like the night. She stopped at times with her foot forward, covering herself with the black canopy of her hair, peering into the darkness, calling the sounds, and started the dance again in the slow crescendo of the mournful rapture.

Quando gli ultimi accordi secchi e acerbi si spensero e le due forme scomparvero la bambina vinta sentì un'amara nostalgia. Si accasciò e chiuse gli occhi abbandonandosi ai suoi sogni. Ed ecco che un angelo bruno dal volto femminile, dalle labbra rosse e gli occhi di velluto si inginocchiò davanti a lei e la baciò. Il suo collo era delicato come di cigno, i suoi capelli portavano l'odore dell'infinito. I vestiti cadevano dal corpicino acerbo di lei; ella si sentì colla schiena contro il suo petto, le braccia tese, la testa rovesciata sul suo collo e la bocca rosea aperta. I loro capelli ondulati e frammisti scendevano in strette infinite, armoniose come l'ebbrezza delle loro anime. Le pareva di essere trasportata come in un soffio verso cieli lontani e metallici, splendenti dei colori più delicati dei fiori, e anelava di svanire. Le pareva di sentire il suo cuore cullato da profumi di una potenza magica nella solitudine dell'infinito e aspettava che il suo cuore si addormentasse. Cosa era la vita, cosa era la morte? Le parve di udire un soffio sul suo corpo trasumanato, come l'ultima carezza dei suoi lontani amori di bambina che lasciava sulla terra; le parve di sentire l'angoscia vana [;] la richiamavano . . . e si affondò lentamente, disparve nel nulla, nell'infinita bellezza.

When the last sharp harsh chords died out and the two forms disappeared the little girl, vanquished, felt a bitter longing. She collapsed and closed her eyes yielding to her dreams. And suddenly a dark angel with feminine features, with red lips and velvet eyes, knelt before her and kissed her. His neck was delicate as a swan's, his hair bore the scent of infinity. Her clothes fell from her immature little body; she felt her back against his chest, her arms outstretched, her head resting on his neck and her rosy mouth open. Their wavy and entwined hair fell in endless folds, harmonious as the rapture of their souls. She felt she was being transported as in a breath towards distant and metallic skies, shining with the most delicate colors of flowers, and she longed to vanish. She seemed to feel her heart cradled by perfumes with magical powers in the solitude of infinity and waited for heart to fall asleep. What was life, what was death? She seemed to hear a breath on her transhumanized body, like the last caress of her distant loves of childhood that she was leaving on earth; she seemed to feel the vain anguish [;] were calling her . . . and she sank slowly, disappeared into nothingness, into infinite beauty.

ERMAFRODITO

Ermafrodito baciò le sue labbra allo specchio
In un quadro profondo
Nerastro appare rosea, biaccosa la carne di lui sullo sfondo
Di Ermafrodito in spasimi molli affogato
Dal paese della chimera eterno e profondo
Dove perdesi l'anima fantasticando
M'apparve affacciato alla superficie del mondo
Ermafrodito risveglio che inanellò l'acque insaziabile di giungere al fondo
Ermafrodito in spasimi molli affogato.
Dal fiume maledetto dove non canta la vita
Ti levi talvolta pur nelle notti lunari ed appari
Alla finestra mia colla madreperlacea luna
E stai come uno spettro vigilando il mio cuore
Che si consuma alla luce funerea lunare
La primavera anche ti è amica talvolta
E passi lontano coi venti odorosi pei prati
Brucia il cuore al poeta mentre riguardano i bovi;
Ma sempre sopra al mio letto vigila la bocca stanca e convulsa
Il vago pallore del volto e delle tue bionde chiome.

HERMAPHRODITE

Hermaphrodite kissed his lips in the mirror
In a deep blackish
Picture his flesh appears rosy, whitish in the background
Of Hermaphrodite drowned in soft spasms
From the land of the chimera eternal and profound
Where the soul loses itself in daydreams
Leaning on the surface of the world there appeared to me
Hermaphrodite awakening who ringed the waters anxious to reach bottom
Hermaphrodite drowned in soft spasms.
From the accursed river where life does not sing
You rise at times even on moonlit nights and appear
At my window with the mother-of-pearl moon
And stay like a ghost keeping watch over my heart
That wastes away in the funereal moonlight
Spring too is a friend to you at times
And you pass far away with the fragrant winds through the meadows
The poet's heart burns as the oxen watch;
But always vigilant over my bed is the tired convulsed mouth
The vague pallor of your face and your blond hair

MARRADI

Il vecchio castello che ride sereno sull'alto
La valle canora dove si snoda l'azzurro fiume
Che rotto e muggente a tratti canta epopea
E sereno riposa in larghi specchi d'azzurro:
Vita e sogno che in fondo alla mistica valle
Agitate l'anima dei secoli passati:
Ora per voi la speranza
Nell'aria ininterrottamente
Sopra l'ombra del bosco che la annega

Sale in lontano appello
Insaziabilmente
Batte al mio cuor che trema di vertigine

MARRADI

The old castle that laughs serenely up there
The melodious valley where the blue river
That broken and roaring at time sings an epic
Winds and rests serenely in wide pools of blue:
Life and dream that at the bottom of the mystical valley
Stir the soul of past centuries:
Now for you hope
Rises in a distant beckoning
Uninterruptedly in the air

Over the shadow of the forest that drowns it
Insatiably
It beats on my heart that trembles with vertigo.

LA CREAZIONE

Fuor dal cervello enorme e prodigioso
Iddio gettava in bronzo i suoi pensieri
Le forme formidabili ed eterne
Gettava della vita e il mondo sorse
Gli uomini l'adorarono briachi
Dell'aspro succo della verde vita
Vissero e cadder sotto l'occhio immane
Alla sera del giorno portentoso
Sorse il pensiero nelle razze esauste
Ivivi sospirarono, la luna
Baciò il sepolcro e suscitò un'ebbrezza
Finché il pensiero sceso nell'inferno
Ne bevve fiamme tanto portentose
Che di contro alla morte ed agli dei
Sublime gittò il carro del destino

CREATION

Out of the enormous and prodigious brain
God cast his thoughts in bronze
He cast the formidable and eternal
Forms of life and the world was born
Men adored it drunk
With the harsh lymph of green life
They lived and fell under the immense eye
On the evening of the portentous day
Thought was born in the exhausted races
The living sighed, the moon
Kissed the sepulcher and aroused a rapture
Until thought descended into hell
And drank from it such portentous flames
That against death and all the gods
Sublimely hurled the chariot of destiny.

UNE FEMME QUI PASSE

Andava. La vita s'apriva
Agli occhi profondi e sereni?
Andava lasciando un mistero
Di sogni avverati ch'è folle sognare per noi
Solenne ed assorto il ritmo del passo
Scandeva il suo sogno
Solenne ritmico assorto
Passò. Di tra il chiasso
Di carri balzanti e tonanti serena è sparita
Il cuore or la segue per una via infinita
Per dove da canto a l'amore fiorisce l'idea.
Ma pallido cerchia la vita un lontano orizzonte.

UNE FEMME QUI PASSE

She went. Did life open
to the deep and serene eyes?
She went leaving a mystery
Of dreams come true which for us is madness to dream
Solemn and absorbed the rhythm of the steps
Cadenced her dream
Solemn rhythmic absorbed
She went by. She vanished amid the noise
Of bouncing thundering carts
The heart now follows her along an endless road
Where next to love blossoms the idea.
But pale a distant horizon encircles life.

LA FORZA

Sorvola in cerchio altissimo le costellazioni
E ridiscende sulla potenza torpida dei mari
Che gravita immane sopra del seno del mondo
Erota dalle sue correnti sorde
La livida scintilla elettrica
Illumina il portento umano
Che pilota la vita nel suo seno
Bruciano insaziabili le fornaci interne del mondo
Ancora Il corpo dell'uomo si tende e distende.
Un balocco formidabile di raziocinio umano
Irraggia la sua volontà pei cieli
L'energia doma bramisce immane nel motore
Tremano sulle scranne barocche i monarchi belluini
Si sfiancano troni ed altari cementati di sperma
Purifichiamo le donne sotto del peso dei mari.

STRENGTH

It flies over the constellation in a very high circle
And descends again on the torpid power of the seas
That gravitates immense over the breast of the world
Emitted by its muted currents
The livid electric spark
Lights the human prodigy
That steers life in its breast
The inner furnaces of the world burn insatiably
Still
Man's body stretches and spreads
A formidable toy of human reasoning
Radiates its will across the skies
Tamed energy bellows immensely in the motor
The savage monarchs tremble on the baroque benches
Sperm-cemented thrones and altars fall apart
Let us purify women under the weight of the seas.

○ POESIA POESIA POESIA

O poesia poesia poesia
Sorgi, sorgi, sorgi
Su dalla febbre elettrica del selciato notturno.
Sfrenati dalle elastiche silhouettes equivoche
Guizza nello scatto e nell'urlo improvviso
Sopra l'anonima fucileria monotona
Delle voci instancabili come i flutti
Stride la troia perversa al quadrivio
Poiché l'elegantone le rubò il cagnolino
Saltella una cocotte cavalletta
Da un marciapiede a un altro tutta verde
E scortica le mie midolla il raschio ferrigno del tram
Silenzio – un gesto fulmineo
Ha generato una pioggia di stelle
Da un fianco che piega e rovina sotto il colpo prestigioso

In un mantello di sangue vellutato occhieggiante
Silenzio ancora.
Commenta secco
E sordo un revolver che annuncia
E chiude un altro destino

O POETRY POETRY POETRY

O poetry poetry poetry
Rise rise rise
Up from the electric fever of the nocturnal pavement.
Break loose from the elastic ambiguous silhouettes
Dart in the sudden sprint and shout
Over the anonymous monotonous barrage
Of voices untiring as the tides
The perverse whore shrieks at the crossroads
Because the dandy stole her puppy
A cocotte hops like a locust
From sidewalk to sidewalk, all green
And the iron screech of the train scrapes my marrow
Silence – a lightning gesture
Has generated a shower of stars
From a flank that folds and crashes under the prestigious blow
In a mantle of velvety eyeing blood
Still silence. Sharp and hollow the sound
of a revolver announces
and closes another destiny.

O L'ANIMA VIVENTE DELLE COSE

O l'anima vivente delle cose
O poesia deh baciala deh chiudila come il sole di maggio
Non vana come i sogni dei mattini
Torpidi. Scintilli il tuo pensiero
Sulle forme molteplici
Che muovono cantano e stridono
Elettrizzate nel sole
Anima oscura del mondo
Son le tue forme molteplici
Che tratte dal sonno alla vita
Ora avviluppano il mondo
Io confitto nel masso
Ti guardo o dea forza
Tu mi sferzi e mi sciogli e mi lanci
Nel tuo fremente torbido mare
O poesia siimi tu faro
Siimi tu faro e porterò un voto laggiù
Sotto degli infrenati archi marini
Dell'alterna tua chiesa azzurra e bianca
Là dove aurora fiammea s'affranca
Da un arco eburneo, a magici confini
Genova Genova Genova

O THE LIVING SOUL OF THINGS

O the living soul of things
O poetry ah kiss it ah enclose it like the sun in May
Not vain like the dreams of torpid
Mornings. Let your thought glimmer
On the varied forms
That move sing and clank
Electrified by the sun
Dark soul of the world
It's your varied forms
That drawn from sleep to life
Now enfold the world
Nailed to the boulder
I look at you goddess strength
You lash me and untie me and hurl me
Into your roaring turbid sea
O poetry be a beacon to me
Be a beacon to me and I will bring a pledge down there
Under the unbridled marine arches
Of your church alternately blue and white
Where blazing dawn gets free
Of an ivory arch, toward magical frontiers
Genoa Genoa Genoa

O POESIA TU PIÙ NON TORNERAI

O poesia tu più non tornerai
Eleganza eleganza
Arco teso della bellezza.
La carne è stanca, s'annebbia il cervello, si stanca
Palme grige senza odore si allungano
Davanti al deserto del mare
Non campane, fischi che lacerano l'azzurro
Non canti, grida
E su questa aridità furente
La forma leggera dai sacri occhi bruni
Ondulante portando il tabernacolo del seno:
I cubi degli alti palazzi torreggiano
Minacciando enormi sull'erta ripida
Nell'ardore catastrofico.

O POETRY YOU WILL NEVER RETURN

O poetry you will never return
Elegance elegance
Taut bow of beauty.
The flesh is weary, the brain grows dim, it gets weary
Grey scentless palm trees stretch out
Before the desert of the sea.
Not bells, whistles that tear into the blue
Not songs, shouts.
And on this raging aridity
The lithe form with sacred brown eyes
Asway bearing the tabernacle of the breast:
The cubes of the tall buildings tower
Threatening enormous on the steep slope
In the catastrophic ardor.

I MIEI VERSI SONO MERAVIGLIOSI: A QUALCUNO

I miei versi sono meravigliosi: a qualcuno
Potrà sembrare tutta robetta da fiera
È una grande illusione; sono fatti
Di tutto quello che vi piacerà
Un buon figliolo poi non è obbligato
A farsi dei vestiti tutti i giorni
Lui ci ha un modello, vi mostra il suo corpo
Ed arrangiatevelo a volontà
Non lo sapete fare? Voi volete
Un piatto di già bell'e scodellato?
Se ci pensate vi vergognerete
Per la vostra e la nostra dignità
Effe Ti Marinetti a un certo punto
Dice: la sarta mi ha fatto un vestito
Apposta per la guerra, quella sarta
Che specializza la specialità
Lo porto sempre e si sarà stracciato
Ma non per questo cessa d'esser bello
E dove manca vengono in aiuto
Fumo ed amore per la libertà.

Io così nel mio piccolo ho vestito
Quel che ho potuto e che mi conveniva
Son mancante, stracciato, ebbene guardate
S'è brutto quello che trasparirà
Il cuore dei poeti è ben talvolta
Bello già da sé stesso e voi potreste
Ben saperlo se solo voi credeste
Oaveste un pochettin di umanità.
I miei versi sono meravigliosi; a qualcuno
Potrà sembrare tutta robetta da fiera
È una grande illusione, sono fatti
Di tutto quello che vi piacerà.

MY VERSES ARE WONDERFUL: TO SOMEONE

My verses are wonderful: to someone
They might seem stuff you find at a fair
It's all a great illusion; they are made
Of everything you'll like
And a good kid is not obliged
To get new clothes every day
He has a model, shows you his body
And you can arrange it as you wish
You don't know how? You want
A dish that's all nice and ready for you?
If you think about it you'll be ashamed
For both your dignity and ours.
F T Marinetti at one point says:
The seamstress mad me a suit
Just for the war, that seamstress
Who specializes specialty
I always wear it and it must be torn
But just the same it is beautiful still
And where it fails help is provided
By smoke and love for liberty.

So I in my own way have dressed
What I could and was suitable to me
I am wanting, torn, but take a look
See if what is coming is no good
The heart of poets sometimes is
Beautiful in itself and you could
Well know it if only you believed
Or had an iota of humanity.
My verses are wonderful; to someone
They might seem stuff you find at a fair
It's all a great illusion; they are made
Of everything you'll like.

PARTI BATTELO SUL MAR REDIMITO

Parti battello sul mar redimito
Della corona delle ferree navi
Parti e solleva la tua croupe enorme
Al coito eroico del destino tuo.
Le primavere dolci di rimpianti
Ridon e piangon sulla terra verde:
Fumano a antiche statue ciminiere
Enormi tristi eiaculanti
Tra un martellar di passi sul selciato
Nero e profondo come una miniera
E una libera piazza al tram in corsa.
(Il cuore sopra del furente ardore
Invoca una sua nuova primavera
Tutto acre di rimpianti e di vendetta.)
Parti battello verso l'infinito ?
Puro ch  l'onde alla tua corsa sacra
S'aprano in ala come le ali d'albatro
Real marino.
Ti scortino i profumi
Varii ed arcani delle terre antiche
Ed i profumi vertiginosi della
Vergine natura
E gli occhi puri e feminei
Del divino fanciullo dell'India
Ritto a prora s  come Venere sulla conchiglia
Benedicano la tua speranza infinita.

SAIL BOAT ON THE SEA WREATHED

Sail boat on the sea wreathed
With the crown of the iron ships
Sail and raise your enormous croup
To the heroic coitus of your destiny.
The springtimes sweet with regrets
Laugh and weep over the green earth;
They steam to ancient statues to enormous
sad ejaculating smokestacks
Amid footsteps pounding on the pavement
Black and deep as a mine
And an empty square to a speeding trolley.
(The heart over the raging ardor
invokes a new spring for itself)
All bitter with regrets and vengeance
Sail boat toward pure infinity
So that the waves may open winglike
To your sacred flight like the wings
Of the royal albatross.
May you be escorted by the varied
and arcane perfumes of ancient lands
And the dizzying perfumes of
Virgin nature
And may the pure and feminine eyes
Of the divine youth from India
Standing on the prow like Venus on the seashell
Bless your infinite hope

UMANITÀ FERVENTE SULLO SPRONE

Umanità fervente sullo sprone
Che discende sul mare
Umanità che brilla e si consiglia
Sotto l'azzurro dell'infinità:
Passano l'ore, vengono i prodigi
Suoi giù dal cielo
E tace e ondeggia l'umana famiglia.
Si stirano le bimbe come gatti
Di sopra al mare dell'umanità
Inverso la commossa aeroplanata
Infinità.

HUMANITY TEEMING ON THE SPUR

Humanity teeming on the spur
That descends into the sea
Humanity that shines and shares advice
Under the blue of infinity:
The hours pass, its portents
Come down from the sky
And the human family is silent and sways.
The little girls stretch out like cats
Over the sea of humanity
Toward the stirring aeroplaned
Infinity.

LONTANE PASSAN LE NAVI

Lontane passan le navi
Nere perfide silenziose
Ma la tua bocca insaziabile
Le chiama in ruggito violento
Cannone furia appiattata
Fumida roggia che abbaglia
Cannone potenza in agguato
Sul mare che ride e abbarbaglia
Furore della terra
Che chiami sui mari infiniti
Le antiche potenze a raccolta
Lampo fumido come un sogno
Vivo e terribile sulla rovina
Voce inconscia di libertà
Amore titanico eroico
O voce rombo del cuore del mondo
Come il mar ti sorride
Ringiovanito, come la terra, e fresca
Aspra e acerba e balza ed anela tra il fumo
Che rode e scioglie la sua giovinezza
Acre aspera urgente insaziata.

THE SHIPS PASS FAR AWAY

The ships pass far away
Black treacherous silent
But your insatiable mouth
Call them with a violent roar
Cannon crouching fury
Smoking channel that dazzles
Cannon power in ambush
On the sea that laughs and bedazzles
Fury of the earth
That on the endless seas
Gathers the ancient powers
Lightning hazy as a dream
Alive and fearsome on the ruin
Unconscious voice of freedom
Titanic heroic love
O voice rumble of the heart of the world
How the sea smiles at you
Rejuvenated, like the earth fresh
Harsh and unripe, and it leaps and gasps amid the smoke
That gnaws and frees its youth
Acrid harsh urgent unsated.

PIAZZA S. GIORGIO

Irraggia lo splendore orientale
Genova nelle donne dalla testa
Sibillina, dal carco profumato
Della lor chioma grave lungo attorta
Genova in sogno tra il brusìo confuso
Genova marinara che fa festa
Sotto la torre orientale
Tra le terrazze viridi
Sulla lavagna cinerea,
Dilaga la piazza rombante
In verso il mare che addensa le navi ínesausto
Rosso ride l'arcato palazzo del portico grande
Come le cateratte del Niagara
Canta ride svara ferrea la sinfonia
Feconda urgente verso l'aperto mare
Canta il tuo canto o Genova

PIAZZA SAN GIORGIO

Genoa radiates oriental splendor
In the women with their sybilline
Head, from the fragrant burden
Of their twisted hair heavy and long
Genoa in dream amid the confused bustle
Seafaring Genoa that celebrates
Under the oriental tower
Among the green terraces
On the ashen blackboard,
The roaring square spills over
Toward the sea that untiringly amasses the ships
Red the arched palace of the great portico laughs
Like Niagara Falls
The fertile symphony sings laughs changes
As it clangs toward the open sea
Sing your song o Genoa

HO SCRITTO. SI CHIUSE IN UNA GROTTA

Ho scritto. Si chiuse in una grotta
Arsenio fortissimo disegnatore
Dipinse quadri piccoli e grotteschi
E tese l'anima in affreschi
Per desolare l'immensità
Della sua furia policroma
Attese i gnomi e le fate;
Cantava il ruscello ecc.
Io mi domando. Ha ciò senso comune
Qual cosa mi tortura e mi sospinge
All'assurdo. È il bisogno della morte
Perché su tutto chiamo distruzione?
Ci pensavo nel porto questa sera
Nel porto enorme carico di navi
Il tramonto aranciato mi ha dato lo spasimo
Della febbre malarica
Oh avere un cielo nuovo, un cielo puro
Dal sangue d'angioli ambigui
Senza le zuccherine lagrime di Maria
Un cielo metallico ardente di vertigine
Senza i miasmi putridi dei poeti e delle fanciulle
Che accolga il respiro vergine violento e sublime della prateria
Dove il tramonto bruci in fiamma vera
Col solo aroma purificatore della forza
Nuova, infinita, intatta; un cielo dove
Fratì e poeti non abbiano fatto
La tana come vermi
È questo che io voglio e lancerei
Le navi colossali

I WROTE. HE SHUT HIMSELF INSIDE A CAVE

I wrote. He shut himself inside a cave
Arsenio very strong sketcher
He painted small grotesque pictures
And reached out with his soul in frescoes
To devastate immensity
With his polychrome fury
He waited for elves and fairies;
The stream was singing etc. . . .
I ask myself. Does it make any sense
This thing tortures me and drives me
To absurdity. Is it the need for death
That makes me invoke destruction on everything?
I was thinking about it in the port this evening
In the enormous port laden with ships
The orange sunset gave me the pang
Of malaric fever
Oh to have a new sky, a sky pure
Of the blood of ambiguous angels
Without the sugary tears of Mary
A metallic sky burning with whirling giddiness
Without the putrid miasmas of poets and young girls
That takes in the violent and sublime virgin breath of the prairie
Where the sunset will burn with a real flame
With only the purifying aroma of the new
Strength, infinite, intact; a sky where
Monks and poets have not made
Their lair like worms
This is what I want and I would hurl
The colossal ships

Verso il paese nuovo (non putrida patria)
Le navi sferrate sul mare senza colore
Sì senza colore alla fine. Come è infinitamente stupido
L'azzurro infinito
Chiudiamo gli occhi o squarciamo il pavone bastardo
Anche il mare hanno imbastardito
Come il sangue che oggi sa di miasma
Hanno mai pensato che odor salutare ha il sangue nella prateria vergine
Il ferro per fortuna si copre di ruggine o li stritola
Schiacciamo una volta gli infami decrepiti
Certamente è ben questo che vorrei.

Toward the new land (not putrid homeland)
The ships launched on the colorless sea
Yes colorless in the end. How infinitely stupid
Is the infinite blue.
Let's close our eyes or tear open the bastard peacock
Even the sea they have corrupted
Like the blood that today feels like miasma
Have they ever thought what a healthy smell blood has on the virgin prairie
Fortunately iron gets covered with rust or crushes them
For once let's squash those vile decrepit ones
Certainly this is what I would really like.

SONETTO DI VITTORIA COLONNA

Il bel paggetto dal corpo ondulato
È andato nella stanza che rinchiuse
In un velario di luce le sue fuse
Forme di bronzo e un gemito attardato

Gentile e grave e ricco cuor d'amante
Si offerse vivo alle carezze ignude . . .
Poi nella notte lentamente schiuse
Il suo segreto pel mio cuor tremante

Oppresso dall'amore e dal mistero
Il suo atroce segreto di fanciullo
Partì dalle sue labbra lento e nero:

L'uccisi con un colpo alla mammella
Nella notte: rimorso e catturato
Alzai la testa e ricercai la stella

Avvelenata sotto cui son nato.

SONNET OF VITTORIA COLONNA

The handsome page with a sinuous figure
Went inside the room that then enclosed
In a curtain of light his fused
Forms of bronze and a belated whimper

Gentle and grave and rich lover's heart
He gave himself living to the naked embrace . . .
Then in the night he slowly unclosed
His secret for my trembling heart

By love and mystery held back
The atrocious secret of his youth
Departed of his lips slow and black:

I killed him with a gunshot to his breast
In the night: captured and torn
I raised my head and sought at last

The poisoned star under which I was born

Da *Taccuini, Abbozzi e Carte varie*

“SORGA LA LARVA DI ANTICO SOGNO . . .”

Sorga la larva di antico sogno
Dai confini del nulla ed a quel sogno
Tutto il mio tardo cuore, è incatenato.
Sventoli, contro il vento
Battagli: i cigli lunghi
Traenti in arco tendi
Sotto il morione nero
Che una penna commenta . . .
Ridente in grazia ovale
Più fine del velluto
Incedi ingenua ardita
Agile come vela
Nel vento sui sassi di Prè.
Nel vento che ti ha presa
I lunghi passi accelera:
Nel vento di scirocco
In strana serenata
Udrai forse novella
Questa notte dal mare:
Supina sul tuo letto
Pensare nel languore
Catastrofi lontane
Mentre colle sue antenne
E le sue luci un grande
Cimitero il tuo porto
Ti sembri e ti spaventi
Il naufragio e l'amore.
.....
Ne la notte voluttuosa
Scuotevasi il mare profondo
Caldo ambiguo il silenzio sullo sfondo
Le navi inermi drizzavansi in balzi
Terrifici al cielo

From *Taccuini, Abbozzi and Carte varie*

“MAY THE GHOST OF AN ANCIENT DREAM . . .”

May the ghost of an ancient dream
Rise from the bounds of nothingness and to that dream
All my languid heart is chained.
May it flap and battle
Against the wind: you stretch
the long eyelashes drawn in arc
Under the black helmet
That a pen comments . . .
Laughing in an oval grace
Finer than velvet
You advance ingenuous bold
Lithe as a sail
In the wind on the stones of Prè.
In the wind that has seized you
Quicken your long steps:
In the scirocco wind
In a strange serenade
Perhaps you will hear news
From the sea tonight.
Lying on your bed
Thinking in the languor
Of faraway catastrophes
While with its antennae
And its lights may your port
Seem like a great cemetery to you
And may shipwreck and love
Frighten you

.....

In the voluptuous night
The deep sea stirred
Warm ambiguous the silence in the background
The defenseless ships rose in frightful

Allucinate di aurora
Elettrica inumana, risplendente
A la poppa ne l'occhio incandescente.
Un passo solitario
Un'ombra di un'ombra sui quais:
La città giace sepolta
Ne la luce uniforme fiammeggiante
E le navi angosciate
Mi suadono all'ultima avventura
Ne la notte di Giugno
Vasta terribile e pura . . .
Acqua di mare amaro
Che esali ne la notte
Verso le eterne rotte
Il mio destin prepara:
Mare che batti come un cuore stanco
Violentato da la voglia atroce
Dell'Essere insaziato che s'inquieta
E si quiete ne la forza sola . . .
Mi sperda con te o nave,
Nave che soffri e vegli
Coll'occhio disumano
E al destino lontano
Sempre sopra del vano
Ondeggiare tu pensi
Così chiusi il mio patto
Ne la notte serena
Su l'inquieta piena
Tomba enorme del mare.

Leaps to the sky
Dazzled by the electric
Inhuman dawn, resplendent
Astern in the incandescent eye.
A solitary footstep
Shadow of a shadow on the docks:
The city lies buried
In the uniform blazing light
And the anguished ships
Lure me to the last adventure
In the June night
Vast terrifying and pure . . .
Water of a bitter sea
Exhaling in the night
Prepare my destiny
Toward the eternal paths:
Sea beating like a weary heart
Ravaged by the atrocious hunger
Of unsated Being that finds quiet
Or restlessness in strength alone . . .
May I vanish with you, o ship,
Ship that suffer and keep watch
With an inhuman eye
And you always think
Of the faraway destiny
Over the vain undulation . . .
So I made my pact
On the restless tide
Enormous tomb of the sea.

“IO POVERO TROVIERO DI PARIGI . . .”

Io povero troviero di Parigi
Solo t'offro un bouquet di strofe tenui
Siimi benigno a ai vivi labbri ingenui
Ch'io so, tremulo scendi o bacio e ridi.

“I POORMINSTREL FROM PARIS . . .”

I poor minstrel from Paris
Offer you only a bouquet of tenuous strophes
Be kind to me, and trembling o kiss
descend upon the living candid lips I know, and laugh.

“SOTTO QUAL GRAVE MUCCHIO DI NEVE . . .”

Sotto qual grave mucchio di neve
Stanno sepolte le rose della mia primavera?
Come potrà la rimembranza conoscere
Dove la morta speranza posa?

"UNDER WHAT HEAVY PILE OF SNOW . . ."

Under what heavy pile of snow
Are the roses of my spring buried?
How will remembrance be able to know
Where dead hope rests?

QUATTRO LIRICHE PER SIBILLA ALERAMO

I piloni fanno il fiume più bello

I piloni fanno il fiume più bello
E gli archi fanno il cielo più bello
Negli archi la tua figura.
Più pura nell'azzurro è la luce d'argento
Più bella la tua figura.
Piu bella la luce d'argento nell'ombra degli archi
Più bella della bionda Cerere la tua figura.

Sul più illustre paesaggio

Sul più illustre paesaggio
Ha passeggiato il ricordo
Col vostro passo di pantera
Sul più illustre paesaggio
Il vostro passo di velluto
E il vostro sguardo di vergine violata
Il vostro passo silenzioso come il ricordo
Affacciata al parapetto
Sull'acqua corrente
I vostri occhi forti di luci.

FOUR LYRICS FOR SIBILLA ALERAMO

The Piers Make the River More Beautiful

The piers make the river more beautiful
And the arches make the sky more beautiful
In the arches your figure.
More pure in the blue is the silver light
More beautiful your figure.
More beautiful the silver light in the shadow of the arches
More beautiful than blond Ceres your figure.

On the Most Illustrious Landscape

On the most illustrious landscape
Memory strolled
With your panther-like step
On the most illustrious landscape
Your velvet step
And your look of violated virgin
Your step as silent as memory
Leaning over the railing
On the flowing water
Your eyes strong with light.

In un momento

In un momento
Sono sfiorite le rose
I petali caduti
Perché io non potevo dimenticare le rose
Le cercavamo insieme
Abbiamo trovato delle rose
Erano le sue rose erano le mie rose
Questo viaggio chiamavamo amore
Col nostro sangue e colle nostre lacrime facevamo le rose
Che brillavano un momento al sole del mattino
Le abbiamo sfiorite sotto il sole tra i rovi
Le rose che non erano le nostre rose
Le mie rose le sue rose

P.S. E così dimenticammo le rose.

Vi amai per la città dove per sole

Vi amai nella città dove per sole
Strade si posa il passo illanguidito
Dove una pace tenera che piove
A sera il cuor non sazio e non pentito
Volge a un'ambigua primavera in viole
Lontane sopra il cielo impallidito.

In a Moment

In a moment
The roses have withered
The petals fallen
Because I could not forget the roses
We looked for them together
They were her roses they were my roses
This journey we called love
With our blood and with our tears we made the roses
That shone for a moment in the morning sun
We have withered them under the sun amid brambles
The roses that were not our roses
My roses her roses

P.S. And so we forgot the roses.

I Loved You in the City Where in Forsaken

I loved you in the city where in desolate
Streets the waning footstep strikes the ground
Where in the evening a tender raining quiet
Turns the unsated and unrepentant heart
Toward an ambiguous spring in violets
Distant over the fading sky turned white.

“FABBRICARE FABBRICARE FABBRICARE . . .”

Fabbricare fabbricare fabbricare
Preferisco il rumore del mare
Che dice fabbricare fare e disfare
Fare e disfare è tutto un lavorare
Ecco quello che so fare.

“BUILD BUILD BUILD . . .”

Build build build
I prefer the sound of the sea
That says build make and unmake
Make and unmake is all work
That’s what I know how to do.

“DIETRO LA SERA ANGELICA . . .”

Dietro la sera angelica
Tra le quadrate case
Addolcita nel rantolo
Di un'ancora in un porto
Filtrando sul granito
Tra le quadrate case
La musica di un'armonica.

“BEHIND THE ANGELIC EVENING . . .”

Behind the angelic evening
Among the cubic houses
Softened in the rattle
Of an anchor in a port
Filtering on the granite
Among the cubic houses
The tune from a harmonica.

"FANFARA INCLINATA . . ."

Fanfara inclinata
Rabesco allo spazio dei prati,
Berna
Se come i vostri blu fiordaliso
All'ombra delle querce secolari
C'è l'acqua che cola per conche verdi
In riva il torrione nano dell'alba
E dei fiori bianchi e rossi
Che sono fioriti
In un tramonto di torricelle rosse.

"INCLINED FANFARE . . ."

Inclined fanfare
Arabesque in the space of meadows,
Bern,
If like your blue lilies
In the shade of ancient oaks
There is the water that trickles through green basins
On the bank the dwarf tower of dawn
And a few white-and-red flowers
That have blossomed
In a sunset of red turrets.

“IMPIETRATA DI SANGUE . . .”

Impietrata di sangue
Nei vetri del caffè
Bruna i capelli rossi
Le mammelle spuntate
Su un marciapiede rosso che si piega
L’occhio più verde, il rosso che scivola
Sul rosso marciapiede che si piega.

"HARDENED INTO BLOODY STONE . . ."

Hardened into bloody stone
In the windows of the café
Dark-skinned red hair
Her breasts appearing
On a red sidewalk that bends
Her eye greener, the red sliding
On the red sidewalk that bends.

“NEL VERDE SI SPOSTARONE LE RONDINELLE . . .”

Nel verde si spostarone le rondinelle
Sotto il ponte in riva al secondo fiume
Per conche l'acqua lucente
Come un secondo cadavere
Il bianco il rosso il verde.

“IN THE GREEN THE SWALLOWS MOVED . . .”

In the green the swallows moved
Under the bridge on the bank of the second river
Through basins the glimmering water
Like a second corpse
The white the red the green.

INVIO

L'acqua ha la criniera d'argento
L'amore è senza ritorno
Bianca cavalla d'amore
Il tuo tosone dorato
Amore senza ritorno.

ENVOY

The water has a silver mane
Love is without return
White mare of love
Your golden fleece
Love without return.

BIOLOGIA

Essendo una carogna in decomposizione abbraccio l'universo. Guardate il mio cromatismo, i miei verdi e violetti. Guardate al resto, il mio scheletro, ci sono dunque esisto.

P.S. A volte infilo una camicia rossa per spaventare i passeri.

Monsieur Pappin, per la mia ingenuità naturale volli fare lo sbirro ma poi vidi la filosofia.

BIOLOGY

Being a carrion in decomposition I embrace the universe. Look at my chromatism, my greens and purples. Look at the rest, my skeleton, I am here therefore I exist.

P.S. At times I wear a red shirt to scare the sparrows.

Monsieur Pappin, because of my natural naivete I decided to become a cop but then I saw philosophy.

“NEL PORTAMENTO DELLA TESTA . . .”

Nel portamento della testa Carducci ha del germanico: la testa non inclinata da un lato di Madonna Laldomine che si fa alla finestra tutta vestita d'argento. È vista per trasparenza: l'ultima ballata della poesia che fu. Tutto è preparazione pittorica. I fiori rosacei non rosa, i balconi gonfi e inginocchiati, la ruggine della ringhiera e la pietra dell'arenaria e il barocco della prosa di Augusto Conti che culmina nella figura trasparente di Madonna Laldomine, tutta vestita d'argento, regina di carte da gioco. Già Leopardi vide “quelle dipinte mura e il sol che nasce da romita campagna. . . . Quella loggia colà volta agli estremi raggi del dì. . . .” Ma Carducci, rozzo toscano, non arriva alla purità della vita campestre e ai “figurati armenti sulla loggia colà volta agli estremi raggi del dì.” L'orientazione di Laldomine chi interessa? Nata morta. . . . Troppo a lungo durò la commedia della poesia italiana. È tempo che Madonna si affacci cogli occhi consunti a la ballata che fu e che non fu.

"IN THE BEARING OF HIS HEAD . . ."

In the bearing of his head Carducci seems German: the head not inclined to one side of Lady Landomine who looks out the window all dressed in silver. It is seen in transparency: the last ballad of the poetry that was. Everything is pictorial preparation. Rosaceous flowers not pink, balconies swollen and kneeling, the rust of the handrail and the sandstone and the baroque of the prose Augusto Conti that culminates in the transparent figure of Lady Laldomine, all dressed in silver, queen of playing cards. Already Leopardi had seen "those painted walls and the sun that rises from a solitary countryside. . . . That balcony there turned toward the last rays of the sun. . . ." But Carducci, coarse Tuscan, does not arrive at the purity of country life and the "painted herds on the balcony there turned toward the last rays of the sun." Who is interested in Landomine 's orientation? Still-born. . . . The farse of Italian poetry has lasted too long. It is time for the Lady to look out with worn-out eyes to the ballad that was and was not.

“È IL CARILLON . . .”

È il carillion d'una torre gotica. Dante too in Canto V ebbe questa fantasia cavalleresca che trionfa dell'inferno latino. Come sempre la poesia di dante risulta dalla lotta tra il nordico e il latino . . .

"IT'S THE CARILLION OF A GOTHIC TOWER. . . ."

It's the carillon of a Gothic tower. Dante too had this chivalric fantasy that triumphs over Latin hell. As always Dante's poetry is the result of the struggle between the nordic and the Latin . . .

“SAN FRANCESCO, DELICATEZZA . . .”

San Francesco, delicatezza di sbirro, la luna non si stacca dal monte, Italia Giolittiana, frasaismo borghese, imperialismo intellettuale, rospi, serponi e il domatore, ascelle di maestrine in sudore, zitelle mature coll'ombra distesa sul passo domenicale, Louis XIV (l'Italie c'est moi), sull'Arno secolare rigovernatura delle lettere, industrie del cadavere, onestà borghese, tecnica cerebrale, manuale del pellirossa. Vo alla latrina e vomito (verità).

Letteratura nazionale

Industria del cadavere.

Si Salvi Chi Può.

"SAINT FRANCIS, DELICACY . . ."

Saint Francis, delicacy of a cop, the moon does not detach from the mountain, Giolitti's Italy, bourgeois phraseology, intellectual imperialism, toads, big snakes and the tamer, armpits of sweating schoolteachers, mature old maids with the shadow stretched out on the Sunday footstep, Louis XIV (*l'Italie c'est moi*), on the age-old Arno a washing up of literature, industries of the corpse, bourgeois honesty, cerebral technique, manual of the redskin.

I go to the latrine and vomit.

National literature.

Industry of the corpse.

Save yourself if you can.

“CIELO DECREPITO . . .”

Cielo decrepito, padre nobile di tutta la letteratura nazionale chi meglio di te ha espresso la grazia ed il dolore di tutta la poesia italiana? Deserto monolite in polvere d' ametista stemperata nella serenità capricciosa senza rabesco e senza eco le bandiere sembrano come “un grand quotidien qui serait rouge et vert” come il tuo poeta Soffici.

“DECREPIT SKY . . .”

Decrepit sky, noble father of all national literature who better than you has expressed the grace and pain of all Italian poetry? Monolithic desert in amethyst dust diluted in the whimsical serenity without arabesque and without echo the flags seem like “a grand quotidien qui serait rouge et vert” like your poet Soffici.

“DAVANTI ALLE COSE . . .”

Davanti alle cose troppo grandi sento l'inutilità della vita. Il mare ieri era discretamente bello. Sono andato di notte al mare. Avevo visto i monti pisani velati da cui sorge la luna di Dannunzio senza foco e due aeroplani che volavano sul treno. Perché leggemmo d'Annunzio prima di partire? Nessuno come lui sa invecchiare una donna o un paesaggio. Pallida, con una vita senza foco come col suo diritto il macchinista stinge il paesaggio e viola il cielo che non conquista? Sciocchezze? . . . Quando sempre mai forse parole giravano nel soffitto del mio cervello. La città è una serie di cassoni balordi. Appiccicato alla spallina del passeggio guardo il mare senza parole come io sono senza pensiero. La Gorgona è un dosso lontano sul mare abbandonata laggiù nei tramonti . . . Una volta in Sardegna entrai in una casa con fuori una vecchia lanterna di ferro che illuminava la parete di granito. Fuori la via metteva sulla costa pietrosa che scendeva dall'altipiano al mare. Questo ricordo che non ricorda nulla è così forte in me! La costa bianca di macigni aveva bevuto il tramonto cupo e rosso che chiudeva l'isola e ora colla lanterna rugginosa solo le stelle sull'altipiano brillavano a me e a Garcia. Io baciai la parete di granito senza pensare e non so ancora perché. Ricordo che in quella casa stava la sarda moglie dell'alcoolizzato amico dell'amico del nostro amico. Bevemmo il moscato bianco salmastro di Sardegna ed è idiota come mi ricordo di tutto questo. La mia padrona è dell'Isola del Giglio dove io farei certamente bene ad andare ad abitare per un anno almeno. . . . Dovremmo ancora vedere le Alpi. Nietzsche scendeva di là al mare colla sua sfida. Là l'edelweis non è D'Annunziano e a ora scende in tumulto e il più leggero dei baci crea ancora forse come quando dicevo

*Come delle torri d'acciaio
Nel cuore bruno della sera
Il mio spirito ricrea
Per un bacio taciturno*

Ah miseria di questi ritorni.

“BEFORE THINGS . . . ”

Before things that are too big I feel the uselessness of life. The sea yesterday was fairly beautiful. In the night I went to the sea. I had seen the veiled Pisan mountains from which rises D’Annunzio’s moon without fire and two airplanes that flew over the train. Why did we read D’Annunzio before leaving? No one can age a woman or a landscape as he does. Pale, with a life without fire as with his right the train engineer discolours the landscape and violates the sky that he does not conquer? Nonsense? . . . When always maybe never words whirled in the ceiling of my brain. The city is a series of bizarre boxes. Glued to the pier of the promenade I watch the sea without words as I am without thoughts. The Gorgona is a distant hump on the deserted sea down there in the sunsets. . . . Once in Sardinia I went into a house with an old iron lantern outside that illuminated the granite wall. Outside the road led to the stony coast that descended from the plateau to the sea. This memory that remembers nothing is so strong in me! The coast white with boulders had drunk the dark red sunset that enclosed the island and now with the rusty lantern only the stars on the plateau shone for me and Garcia. I kissed the granite wall without thinking and I still don’t know why. I remember that in that house lived the Sardinian wife of the alcoholic friend of the friend of our friend. We drank the brackish white muscat of Sardinia and it’s idiotic how I remember all this. My landlady is from Isola del Giglio where I would do well to go and live for at least a year. We should still see the Alps. Nietzsche came down from there to the sea with his challenge. There the edelweiss is not D’annunzio’s and the Dora descends tumultuously and the lightest kiss still creates as when I said

*Like steel towers
In the dark heart of evening
My spirit recreates
For a taciturn kiss*

Ah wretchedness of these returns.

PROSPECTUS I

Calze di seta acidi veleni lustrini fiammiferi chitarre scatolette a combinazione
La Cherie, il modello delle bambole, frondami romanzi
Au Bubbon d'Ametiste
Il Bazar Giolitti e C. rende noto che i commessi
Nietzsche La Cherie
Il genio solare
La gioventù latina
Sono partiti tutti per il fronte
Au devant on vois nella polvere sperperata dei D'Annunzio e dei Rimbaud
Aigre et maigre
Stenterello violet qui se tord
Watteau confit dans le bleu du jour
Satanisme macrot, industria del cadavere, linea degli orienti e del progresso.

PROSPECTUS II

Si sente suon di tamburi alle porte della vita. Al "Paszkowski" è un dolce noioso sereno sulla vecchia pietra col vento che mette in follia le bandiere troppo fitte. Le signorine del magistero siedono con noi giovani poeti che scegliamo l'aviazione. I camerieri a pause lente camminano stanchi. Oltr'Arno si affaccia un cielo sovraccarico di vecchissimi nuvoli tra le loggie e le dolci parole Firenze arieggia una mascherata di nudo di bianco e di viola col sole delle bandiere verdi verdi verdi.

PROSPECTUS I

Silk stocking acids poisons sequins matches guitars small combination boxes
La Cherie, the model of the dolls, fronds novels
Au Bubbon d'Ametiste
The Bazar Giolitti and Co. announces that the clerks
Nietzsche
La Cherie
The solar genius
The Latin youth
Have all left for the front
Au devant on vois in the scattered dust of D'Annunzio and Rimbaud
Aigre et maigre
Stenterello violet qui se tord
Watteau confit dans le bleu du jour
Satanisme macrot, industry of the corpse, line of the orients and progress.

PROSPECTUS II

One can hear the sound of drums at the doors of life. At the "Paszkowski" there is a sweet boring clear sky on the old stone with the wind that drives the too-thick flags mad. The young ladies of the school of education sit with us young poets who choose aviation. The waiters walk wearily in slow pauses. On the other side of the Arno looms a sky overladen with very old clouds among the balconies and the sweet words Florence resembles a masquerade of nakedness of white and violet with the sun of the green green green flags.

PROSPECTUS III

Sulla panca dell'ospedale trovo: Cara mamma. L'artista ingenuo ha fatto accanto sulla panca il ritratto ingenuo della sua mamma stecchita abbandonata un occhio su e l'altro giù. Accanto sulla panca incomincia nella lettera un mistero che non sa spiegare:

“Cara mamma

“Nella chiesa del mio paese gli arcipreti cantano con voce di bue. L'Italia siede nel porto d'Ostia sotto l'arco d'oltremare volta al limo del Tevere la faccia ed eternamente giovane tra ortaggi mitologici passeggia col suo passo di belva niciana. A mezzogiorno nel vecchio chiostro a lunette imbiancate con affreschi di santi insulsi la voce dei caporali rintrona terribilmente. Al rombo del cannon. Il treno coi vagoni decorati di frasche sportive arriva. I vagoni rossi coi nostri soldati. Dentro una persona gentile, certo una donna, ha messo dei mazzi di gigli che riempiono d'odore tutto il vagone. Il treno parte, cantano, la Falterona gira, sul solco, l'odore del giglio. Il treno batte con dei preaccordi di chitarra, per scalatura abrupta dei colli un grido di tre note lungamente canta.”

PROSPECTUS III

On the hospital bench I find. Dear mom. The naive artist has drawn near him on the bench the naive portrait of his mother gaunt abandoned one eye up and the other down. Nearby on the bench he starts a mystery in the letter that he cannot explain:

“Dear mom

“In my town’s church the archpriests sing with the voice of an ox. Italy sits in the port of Ostia under the overseas arch with her face turned toward the mud of the Tiber, and eternally young amid mythological vegetables she strolls with the step of a Nietzschean beast. At noon in the old cloister with lunettes painted with frescoes of inane saints the corporals’ voice echoes frightfully. At the roar of the cannon. The train with cars decorated with sport fronds arrives. The red cars with our soldiers. Inside a thoughtful person, no doubt a woman, has placed bunches of lilies that fill the whole car with their scent. The train leaves, they sing, the Falterona turns, on the furrow, the scent of lilies. The train beats with guitar chords, up the steep climb of the hills a shout of three notes sings for a long time.”

STORIE, I

Indovinate: Gli aforismi di Nietzsche per Tito Livio Cianchettini (si pubblicano anche su questo giornale).

Su qual terreno potrebbero intendersi p.es. Baudelaire e Palazzeschi? Povera nostra poesia!

Non vi sembra che un cafonismo molto carducciano possa essere una base solida per i miei giuochi di equilibrio?

Alcuni credono di dare il senso della loro profondità coll'estensione del loro lazzaronismo.

Il sapore dolciastro della letteratura femminile? Ma oggi è assai peggio: la femminilità idealista di se stessa, la democrazia evangelica morfinomane ecc., come i poeti dell'alta società. Claudel vi disprezzo. (Potete chiedere il mio indirizzo al giornale.)

Metamorfosi di uno scrittore: non fu leone ma elefante. Del resto non mancano le tradizioni, come vi furono dei poeti negri. Poi perché fossimo fuori della storia bisognerebbe almeno che oggi vi fosse una storia. Intanto. . . .

L'arte è espressione. Ciò farebbe supporre una realtà. L'Italia è come fu sempre: teologica.

Quando un solo italiano, ragazzo s'intende, penserà a sputare sulla tomba di Machiavelli?

Viene alle lettere una generazione di ladruncoli. Chi vi insegnò l'arte del facil vivere fanciulli?

Il popolo d'Italia non canta più. Non vi sembra questa la più grande sciagura nazionale?

Oh *parvenu!* tu sei la rovina.

STORIES, I

Guess: Nietzsche's aphorisms for Tio Livio Cianchettini (they are published on this paper also)

On what ground could Baudelaire and Palazzeschi meet, for example? Our poor poetry!

Don't you think that a boorishness very much a la Carducci could be a solid basis for my balancing act?

Some think they are giving the meaning of their depth with the extension of their rascality.

The sugary taste of women's literature? But today it is much worse: femininity idealist of itself, evangelical morphine-addicted democracy etc., like high society poets. Claudel I despise you. (You can ask the newspaper for my address).

Metamorphosis of a writer: he was not a lion but an elephant. At any rate there is no lack of traditions, as there were Negro poets. Then for us to be outside history it would be at least necessary that today there were a history. Meanwhile . . .

Art is expression. This would make one suppose there is a reality. Italy is as it always was: theological.

When will one Italian, a boy of course, think of spitting on Machiavelli's tomb?

A generation of petty thieves is coming to literature. Who taught you the art of the easy life, boys?

The people of Italy no longer sing. Doesn't this seem to you the greatest national tragedy?

Oh *parvenu*! You are our ruin.

Teatro futurista. Scena rovesciata. C'è un morto sulla scena. Si alza, riceve una coltellata, letica, gioca, abbraccia. Questo ci ha fatto pensare ai casi nostri. Si affermava tra i futuristi la genialità dell'idea scenica. Purtroppo il pubblico è più spiritoso dell'autore.

Sembra veramente che il tempo dei filosofi sia finito e cominci l'epoca dei poeti, l'età dell'oro scongiurata così ostinatamente dai filosofi economisti. Nel teatro di cui sopra i poeti hanno il diritto di morir di fame sulla scena, di fronte al critico neutralista e *boche*. Il pubblico tace e quasi acconsente.

Eloquenza di cavadenti o lirica con effetti di boxe:

Io leggevo tranquillamente in una sua composizione di una maestrina dal cuor di raso (2,50 all'ora), di un signore coi calli là tranquillamente seduto in quella piazza dove passavano dei mesti bambini che forse non avevano svolto il componimento quando seppi di trovarmi in quella medesima piazza trapezio dove non si mettono bandiere se non per l'assassinio del Re.

Non dare all'uomo nulla: ma togli a lui qualche cosa e aiutalo a portarla. Dopo avermi squadrate, voltate e rivoltate e fatto i conti in tasca il benevolo poliziotto mi lasciò andare accompagnandomi con un lungo sguardo che mi parve di protezione. È certo almeno che per un po' mi sentii più leggero. Questo mi succedde leggendo un libro: anche leggendo un libro.

Infine confesso: Non amo i meridionali. Questa è stata una delle cause della mia rovina. Non amo gli scolari dei meridionali. Questo mi ha messo in una situazione intollerabile. Passo passo arrivai al pangermanesimo e alla logica di Louvain. *Cherchez . . . la femme? Non, cherchez la vache*. La causa della guerra europea sono le donne, *comme elles ont été*, i peggiori *parvenu*. (Perché una donna mi disse pitocco quando ero già coperto di sputi?)

Futurist theater. Upraised stage. There is a dead man on stage. He gets up, is stabbed with a knife, argues, plays, hugs. This has made us think of our affairs. The futurists affirmed the geniality of the scenic idea. Unfortunately the audience has a better sense of humor than the author.

It really seems that the time of philosophers is ended and that the age of poets is starting, the age of gold warding off by philosophers economists. In the above mentioned theater poets have the right of starving to death on stage, before the critic neutralist and *boche*. The audience is silent and almost consents.

Eloquence of teeth-pullers or lyric with boxing effects: I was reading calmly in one of his compositions about a schoolmistress with a lace heart (2.50 an hour), about a gentleman with calluses calmly seated there in that square crossed by sad children who perhaps had not done their composition when I found out that I was in that same trapezoid square where flags are placed only for . . . the king's assassination

Don't give man anything: but take something from him and help him to carry it. After looking up and down at me, turning and turning me again and adding it all up the benevolent policeman let me go accompanying me with a long look that seemed of protection. No doubt at least for a while I felt lighter. This happens to me reading a book: even reading a book.

At last I confess: I do not like southerners. This has been one of the causes of my ruin. I do not love the pupils of southerners. This has put me in an intolerable situation. I gradually arrived at pangermanism and the logic of Louvain. *Cherchez . . . la femme? Non, cherchez la vache*. The cause of the European war are women, *comme elles ont été*, the worst *parvenu*. (Why did a woman call me a louse when I had already been spit on?)

A diciott'anni rinchiusa la porta della prigione piangendo gridai:
Governo ideale che hai messo alla porta ma tanta ma tanta canaglia morale.

Mi sono sempre battuto in condizioni così sfavorevoli che desidererei farlo alla pari. Sono molto modesto e non vi domando, amici, altro segno che il gesto. Il resto non vi riguarda.

At the age of eighteen after the door of the prison closed I shouted:
ideal government that has put to the door so much such much
moral rabble.

I have always fought in such unfavorable conditions that I would
like to do it o even terms. I am very modest and I ask of you, friends,
no other sign than a gesture. The rest does not concern you.

STORIE, II

Quello che ha prodotto l'impressionismo francese è il *gaulois*, l'azzurro che ha preso coscienza di sé colla democrazia, schiavo, incapace di idee astratte, cioè aristocratiche. L'odore umano del *gaulois* è quello che rende la Francia inabitabile agli spiriti delicati. (Nietzsche) Però è un ottimo concime il *gaulois*, e questi spiriti hanno bisogno di frutti per nutrire il loro sogno. (Nietzsche)

Nel giro del ritorno eterno vertiginoso l'immagine muore immediatamente.

L'azzurro è il colore della dissojuzione, le ali assomigliano a *quelque chose de bleu*.

Il *bleu* del cielo fiorentino, *l'azur mystique de Baudelaire ce n'est pas ça*.

Psichari. Laforgue. Verhaeren.

Voici monter en lui le vin de la paresse: soupir d'harmonica qui pourrait delirer.

Nella sera silenziosa quando tutto si fonde e né il cielo né il mare possono parlare (Nietzsche) in queste sere in cui è profondamente dolce la voce dell'organetto, la canzone di nostalgia del marinaio, dopo che il giorno del sud ci ha riempito *du vin de la paresse*.

L'arte crepuscolare (era già l'ora che volge il desio) in cui tutto si affaccia e si confonde, e questo stadio prolungato nel giorno aiutati dal *vin de la paresse* che cola dai cieli meridionali e nella gran luce tutto è evanescente e tutto naufraga, sì che noi nel più semplice suono, nella più semplice armonia possiamo udire le risonanze del tutto come nelle sere delle stridenti grandi città in cui lo stridore diventa dolce (diviene *musique énerante et caline semblable au cri' loin de l'humaine douleur*) perché nella voce dell'elemento noi udiamo tutto.

STORIES, II

What has produced french impressionism is the *gaulois*, rascal who has become aware of himself with democracy, slave, incapable of abstract, that is aristocratic, ideas. The human smell of the *gaulois* is what makes France unlivable for delicate spirits. (Nietzsche) But the *gaulois* is excellent manure, and these spirits need fruits to nourish their dream. (Nietzsche)

In the circle of the eternal dizzying return the image dies immediately.

Blue is the color of dissolution, the wings resemble *quelque chose de bleu*.

The *bleu* of the Florentine sky, the *azure mystique de Baudelaire ce n'est pas ça*.

Psichari. Laforgue. Verhaeren.

Voici monter en lui le vin de la paresse: soupir d'harmonica qui pourrait delirer.

In the silent evening when everything fuses and neither sky nor sea can speak (Nietzsche) in these evenings in which profoundly sweet is the voice of the mouth-organ, the sailor's song of longing, after the southern sky has filled us with *du vin de la paresse*.

Twilight art (it was already the time that turns to desire) in which everything leans out and gets confused, and this prolonged stage of the day helped by the *vin de la paresse* that drips from southern skies and in the great light everything is evanescent and everything is shipwrecked, so that we in the simplest sound, in the simplest harmony can hear the echoes of the whole as in the evenings of the screeching great cities in which the screeching becomes sweet (become *musique énervanet et caline semblable au cri loin de l'humaine douleur*) because in the voice of the element we hear everything.

“IL SECONDO STADIO DELLO SPIRITO . . .”

Il secondo stadio dello spirito è lo stadio mediterraneo. Deriva direttamente dal naturalismo. La vita qual è la conosciamo: ora facciamo il sogno della vita in blocco. Anche il misticismo è uno stadio ulteriore della vita in blocco, ma è una forma dello spirito sempre speculativa, sempre razionale, sempre inibitoria in cui il mondo è volontà e rappresentazione: ancora, volontà e rappresentazione che del mondo fa la base di un cono luminoso i cui raggi si concentrano in un punto dell'infinito, nel Nulla, in Dio. Sì: scorrere sopra la vita questo sarebbe necessario questa è l'unica arte possibile. Primo fra tutti i musicisti sarebbe colui il quale non conoscesse che la tristezza della felicità più profonda e nessun'altra tristezza: una tale musica non è mai esistita ancora. Nietzsche è un Wagner del pensiero. La susseguenza dei suoi pensieri è assolutamente barbara, uguale alla musica wagneriana. In ciò unicamente nell'originalità barbaramente balzante e irrompente dei suoi pensieri sta la sua forza di sovvertimento e tutto anela alla distruzione tanto in Wagner come in lui.

“THE SECOND STAGE OF THE SPIRIT . . .”

The second stage of the spirit is the Mediterranean stage. It derives directly from naturalism. We know life as it is: now let's have a dream of life in block. Even mysticism is a further stage of life as a whole, but it's a form of the spirit always speculative, always rational, always inhibitory in which the world is will and representation: moreover, will and representation that makes of the world the base of a luminous cone whose rays concentrate on a point of infinity, on Nothingness, on God. Yes: to glide over life this would be necessary this is the only art possible. First among all musicians would be the one who knew only the sadness of the deepest happiness and no other sadness: such a music has yet to exist. Nietzsche is a Wagner of thought. The progression of his thoughts is absolutely barbaric, just like Wagner's music. Solely in this in the barbarically leaping and vehement originality of his thoughts lies his power of subversion and everything aims at destruction both in Wagner and in him.

IL DIARIO DELLA NUOVA ITALIA

Foglio di coltura europea destinato a tutti. In questo foglio che uscirebbe due volte al mese si dovrebbero raccogliere gli articoli più importanti già apparsi mettendoli in luce di attualità come avvenimenti della vita individuale e nazionale di oggi e di ieri. La realtà come dimostrazione dell'attuazione dello spirito. Tutti i fatti importanti della nostra vita nazionale (per esempio la vita di Leopardi nel suo significato) sono stati trascurati o messi in rapporto di avvenimenti di allora, troppo piccoli. Il foglio avrebbe carattere di un quotidiano intellettuale, coll'articolo di fondo e i fatti diversi. Niente critica e niente arte.

THE DIARY OF THE NEW ITALY

Paper of European culture aimed at everyone. In this paper which would come out twice a month one should gather all the most important articles already published putting them in current light as events of the individual and national life of today and yesterday. All the important facts of our national life (for example the meaning of Leopardi's life) have been neglected or related to the events of the time, too narrow. The paper would be a kind of intellectual daily, with the lead article and different events. No criticism and no art.

“L’INFANZIA NASCE . . .”

L’infanzia nasce da un ritorno di se stessi giacché in uno strano eco s’immobilizza e s’allontana dai giorni; anzi nasce proprio da una cosa “specchiata” con le ridenti spighe gialle e con i campanili conoscenza eterna (di poco tempo) e sempre a sapersi da un tempo infinito come a stare sempre sulla riva di un giorno.

“CHILDHOOD IS BORN . . .”

Childhood is born from a return of ourselves since in a strange echo it comes to a standstill and moves away from the days; in fact it is really born from something “mirrored” with the laughing yellow spikes and with the belfries eternal knowledge (of a short time) and always knowing from an infinite time to be always standing on the bank of a day.

BIBLIOGRAFIA

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