

Differentia: Review of Italian Thought

Number 8 *Combined Issue 8-9 Spring/Autumn*

Article 30

1999

Poems

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Recommended Citation

Milazzo, Richard (1999) "Poems," *Differentia: Review of Italian Thought*. Vol. 8 , Article 30.
Available at: <https://commons.library.stonybrook.edu/differentia/vol8/iss1/30>

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Richard Milazzo

From: *Le Violon d'Ingres:
Sunday Poems and Lineations*

Among Other Things

In an encrusted, torn, gray, old box,
oddly lined with rotting corrugated cardboard,
marked "damaged books,"
thrown to the side in one of the stalls at a flea market
in the decrepit outskirts of a modern city,
copies of *French Verse: 16th-18th Centuries*;
The Essentials of Logic by Bernard Bosanquet
(St. Martin's Street, London, 1924);
a monograph on
The Provincial Architecture of Northern France
(part of a series,
entitled *The Tuileries Brochures*);
and John Milton's "Comus" and "Lycidas,"
among other things.

...

Later,
on the subway,
I tried to discern
the visage of an uninjured soul in the crowd.

But there were no petals
"on a wet, black bough";
only lips moving slowly across the page
of a bestselling novel.

Revlon Plato

Any individual who demands
existential respite
in a public square or conveyance
knows and does not know
two things, respectively: God
wears lipstick
and the *polis* has polio.

Blessed is the farmer
who is overdressed and suffers
the redundancy of the gods.

A Love Poem**I**

You have to be mean-spirited
to write a poem like that;

you have to lack generosity
and be hard-hearted;

you have to have a place in your soul
that is not worthy of being human.

II

Put my bones in a sack
and tie the rope around my neck

and drop the whole affair into a lake.
I have no taste for a well-done heart.

I have no intentions of walking
on the higher moral ground of hypocrisy

or turning my proverbial darker, truer,
hidden self into metaphor.

III

To hell with the spirit and poetry,
to hell with magnanimity;

to hell with the soul.
To hell with the spirit of poetry,

to hell with the poetry of the spirit.
I'll roam the lower regions of humanity

and snack on the organs of resentment, anger and rage;
and neither raise my sword

nor turn my cheek;
cowardice and indifference will be my deities.

IV

And when the time comes,
I'll sleep in the garage.

Poetry

I am lost inside
the sticks of your voice: the
brambles of meaning have become
my compass; stones
are what I can hope for.

Names,
a damaged sky,
broken bones, harm's way,
have become my directive; the perverting
of the negative, my star.

Landscape**I**

I did not know
there were so many
blanks,
so many dead,
so many undone
places,
in the eyes,
in the words
she did not speak,
in the heart.

I thought
it was the soul
she could not reach
in the one she loved,
in the one
she then
could not love.

I thought
it was just the stare,
a look, one of
the slick prosthetic devices of the soul.

I did not know
it, too,
had died;
I did not know
the bridge had collapsed;
that the self had withdrawn

even before the distance of no landscape
could be born.

I did not know.
I did not know.

I swear,
I did not know.

II

And there I was,
with Hemingway,
on Kilimanjaro,
the highest mountain in Africa,
on its western summit,
called Masai
"Ngáje Ngái"
(the House of God),
contemplating the dried and frozen carcass
of a leopard. No one,
according to legend,
has been able to explain
what the leopard was seeking
at that altitude.

Or there I was
in the foothills
of Mongolia, thinking
about insurance companies,
bonding superhighways,
the consoling misapprehensions
generated by retired local politicians,
and the mysterious
suicide of her father.

There I was,
soulless.

I might as well have been thinking
about the leopard's spots, found there
so close to the summit,
snow-covered and
insurmountable.

III

A penny for your thoughts.

Half Moon Bay

I need to inculcate
the requisite
language thigh —

just to put
the howling kittens
to rest.

Bouquiniste

a Daumier print
on the quai di Montebello
does not so easily erase
the deep impressions
of the hangman's rope
on the reader's neck

nor does it conduce
to the ironies of indigence
that can sometimes play
so loosely
on the history
of a mold

Label

Lug pole trammel
used for hearth cooking
before the advent of
the swinging crane

Lamentation*for Peter Nadin*

O unbroken diadem
of History,

lies and illusions
your fort;

redemption
forced to traffic

in the whimsy
of your footsteps.