

FRANCO BUFFONI

See here for the original texts:

http://www.francobuffoni.com/files/pdf/nuove_poesie.pdf

NEW POEMS

I. - *SILVANO THE CONFECTIONER AND OTHER "LOMBARD" POEMS*

Silvano the confectioner

Silvano confectioner aged sixteen
And Guido eighteen wood-turner
Took time off at Vizzola Ticino
To see each other during lunch breaks.
Guido passed by on his Yamaha
And together they'd go down to the river
To eat the sandwich of kisses.
Nothing strange about the accident on return
Caused by the sudden
Reversal of a lorry.
The photo on the Prealpina
Shows two vanilla hands
Still clasping the overalls
Faded on one side.

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Porro Lambertenghi

Now that no one learns the history of the Risorgimento
And the old schoolmistresses have retired or died,
I recall the whispered amazement of Carla Martegani -
Reluctant to open her books -
At the third mention of the Carbonari heroes
Maroncelli, Pellico, Porro Lambertenghi...
"But why "Porro"? Was he a relative?"
Confused by the simple use of the prefix "poro"
The Lombard word for the dear departed
"Poro" Michele
"Poro" papa.

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Angels to Paris

Up there from here I almost feel
The murmuring of the older angels,
And the more timid ones whisper,
But certain others raise their voice
While the great candelabras and waxes move
To Paris, between Crenna and the Boschina...
Where wandering I emerge along the edge
Of a shady roadside
In the sombre early afternoon.

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Ul sass de preja buia

Ul Sass de Preja Buia close to Sesto
On the eastern bank of the Ticino
Just outside Verbano
Recalls both movement and immobility.
A heavy splintery mass from the Zumstein
That in light errancy
On the layer of Precambrian glacier
Then pierced down into the ground below
At the junction for Taino.
Like that real splinter
Of glass in my wrist
As a child.

Ul Sass de Preja Buia is an enormous mica schist, a moving block regarded as sacred until the Nineteenth century, particularly for the fertility of young brides. Zumstein is one of the peaks of Monte Rosa. Taino, Crenna, Boschina are villages in the moorland area of the Parco del Ticino.

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With the smell that fish nets have

With the smell that fish nets have
Damp in the sand
With the taste of oranges in England
On the morning terrace
With the colour of the sky in the last
Days of August
With the noise of the water at the falls
On the Rossa Pass,
From year to year
Summer things decreed and rediscovered

I know
That when the last time comes
When I really no longer wish it
The last time will have already gone.

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Cemeteries

I

Then when you return you find
Someone there at the cemetery,
Of those high up on the wall
Shooting for fun
At the neighbours' dahlias.
You see them there with their
Tired little faces
And you wonder how much longer,
Yesterday, the day before, how much? Among photos
Of those you know or knew
Aunts of parents
And motorcycle victims intransigent
Nephews.
In their own way a community,
A small town,
While in the squalid metropolis
The living have confirmation of the dead
In the tenements outside the gate
Or on their way toward civilization
Of the urn of ashes on the sideboard.

II

It's raining on the country cemeteries
And on those of marble in the city,
It's raining on the bare pigeonholes
On occasion of the new memorial
concessions allowed for the proportion
Between population and burial ground.
Pigeonholes. A name that as a child
Seemed to be a joke:
"You in the pigeonholes, keep quiet",
My teacher would say to the three Colombo boys
- Daniele, Marco and Gino -
Sitting in a semicircle on the third row...
And there they are today, but not together, wealthy Gino
In the marble and green glass chapel

In the middle of the cemetery arcade;
Marco abandoned by wife and children
In a bunk bed on the salt flats
Where the nomad camp has joined up to the dead;
While Daniele smiling takes
The rural April rain
Between a willow and an olive tree
Alone, as he'd always been,
And in ground not exactly consecrated.

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II. - *THE BUS OF DEAD CHILDREN AND OTHER "ROMAN" POEMS*

The bus of dead children

The bus of dead children
Is what Christine Koschel
Saw in Berlin in forty-five,
Some still alive, many infants
All totally alone
Abandoned escaping from nowhere to nowhere
During the Soviet advance.
From here forever the eyes
Of Christine
That saw the horror
Untranslatable except
In the syntactic wrench.

Christine Koschel, poet and translator, born in Wrocław in 1936, lives in Rome.

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Rome, winter 2012

Marietto is gone
Thrown one snowy Rome night,
Into the Tiber by his father to spite
Mummy.
If Marietto had been three months old
Or four, he'd have suffered less. Sixteen: no,
At a year and a half you can't tear
A conscious child at night from a woman
Carry him kicking in January to the river
Yelling words at him.
The icy water will have moved his arms
Mixing his cries with the water for a few moments
While a rougher bough

Scratched a number on his wrist.

ANSA: "The man admitted throwing the child from Ponte Mazzini. Among the motives for the act, the umpteenth quarrel with his former partner over custody of the child".

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I was dying and that's all

I was dying and that's all,
At the traffic lights yesterday morning,
A fraction of a second saved me,
Yet for that mass of younger people
It would have meant little. Very little,
Except for the inconvenience to traffic
From a body in distress.

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Rome slippery cobbles

Rome slippery cobbles
Triple work the morning
At the veterinary clinic lab,
Then the mime classes and toward evening
Proofs ad nauseum to correct ...
In bad weather Vanni wore
Waterproofs over his jeans
And when he took them off at lunch-break
There ahead
It was all already planned
That on Sunday with his paraglider
He'd exercise breakneck. Vanni
After many years still nurtures
The thought of pleasure that doesn't last
And of pain that then remains.
Of that lunch-break with no helmet
Hurriedly transporting the shit and piss
Of six sterilized cats.

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Drops on the carpet

It is the constant stress, the strain
To which you constantly subject the windpipe
That suggests the business is at an end,
The move negotiated

Your surrender.
And in emptying the world
Go gently,
May there be no drops on the carpet.

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The world no

The world... the world no,
He continues and continues
With his dinosaur smile
Painted on his face,
And an ego as large as
A tomb.

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Si parva licet

Leopardi wrote that in a whole year
Only on a few days is the weather tolerable,
Lucretius invited us to look at
The snakes in the desert
And the expanses of ice
In order to conclude that no, the world
Was not meant for us.
And I – now that the wind, its air
Left off from high in the heavens,
Thrust down drives me
And mocking my slow legs
Roughly taunts my windpipe
Barely protected by the raised collar,
Firing ruggedly at my right ear
Its “Come, come on
High in the heavens, march” -
Si parva licet I’ll say they’re right.

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Today when the Foro Italico hides

*There is a certain island beyond Ortygia
Called Syria where the Sun turns in its course,
A goodly land where only in old age
Do people die
From Apollo’s kindly dart in an instant
And with no feeling of pain.
(from Odyssey XV, 403)*

Today when the Foro Italico hides
Among the folds of distant traffic
The heartbeat of its statues, their
Healthy breath, I who scaled mountains
Climb to the top of the Janiculum
And from there see Rome, my house
Empty
And I
Who can find no company.

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A little Harpagon

Jealous now I'm old I claw my way
Like a little Harpagon among my verses.
Hoopoe folder. Expert
Like that damned upturned soul
That slides ably between the swords
Of fire and burning embers,
Once I was diligent
When we exchanged small photos. Now
Do I send you the prostate scan
Haematocrit, creatinine?
Or a good CT chest scan with contrast?
The relationship that is interlaced with new
Unknown entities: foreign cities
Holiday resorts
I've now established with my body.

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Accident at work

A screech like a thud I was at the computer
I looked out, silence then suddenly the rasp of a cutter,
Commotion then noise of an ambulance.
Life has no price but an expert
Still knows how to value its parts,
Usually at the first assessment
Quantifying the capacity to work,
Then thanks to special tables
Calculating even pain and suffering
The exact pecunia doloris, Vito, for
You're amputated arm.

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POESIE FRANCO BUFFONI (ITALIANO)

INVITO A NAPOLI

E in questo golfo attraversato stamattina
Da quattro jet sopra Posillipo e due cargo
Verso molo Beverello,
Io rivedo insieme a tre gabbiani
Da un balcone del Royal
La mia relazione
Per il convegno sulla traduzione.
In Cappella Pappacoda oggi all'Orientale
Saremo in tanti figli di navigatori
Santi e poeti, mi viene in mente ora
Tutti già un tempo anche traduttori.
Come i piloti quattro dei jet militari
E dei cargo i dieci marinai.
Lasciami Napoli
Nelle loro scie
E dolcemente strangolami in cielo
O in mare
Da questo ottavo piano.
Non mi tradurre altrove.

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PROFEZIA

Da qui, tra luci fragili
Che orientano il profilo verso il golfo,
Si vede bene che la città è fondata
Su cunicoli e cunicoli, e cantine profondissime
E canali, acque morte in transito acquitrini
Ciechi sbocchi di sabbia e ghiaia, ossa pietrificate
Di necropoli a strati su carcasse di orse
Alte tre metri e di altri animali avariati.
Si sa che è lavata da acque di giro
Costantemente dal porto e da ponente,
Che è divaricata e biforcuta tangenzialmente
Verso la collina di macerie putrefatte.
Che è nata e rinata su fondamenta mobili
E che questa non sarà l'ultima volta.

A CARTAGINE IL TOPHET

Tre bambini si tengono per mano
Sotto l'arco del ristorante Nettuno

A due passi dal Tophet.
Non si son dati per vinti e qui a Cartagine
Non li immolano neanche più.

Ma il capo cameriere
Come Mastro Ciliegia
O delle guardie il re
Li guarda infastidito dalla sala
Che sovrasta gli scogli,
Il Tophet era lì

Con le sue urne piccoline
Contrassegnate da una stele...

Si levano intanto i gabbiani
Da un tappeto di erbacce
Di fronte al porto circolare
Delle duecento navi
Pronte a sfidare Roma.
E qualche scavo mostra
Il quartier generale
E le stanze dei rematori
Coi segni di catene alle pareti.

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IL SILENZIO DEI BISBIGLI

Yusif, non so se alla fine tu abbia
Davvero imparato la mia lingua
- Persino due rughe vedo formarsi
Ai lati degli occhi levantini
E più profondamente farsi
Segnali di estati vissute vicini -
O se invece io stia iniziando a cogliere la tua
Dalle inflessioni del canto, so soltanto
Che una lingua delle lingue
Risuonava al pomeriggio verso Kerouan,
Le due voci la tenda il thè alla menta.
E alla sera il silenzio dei bisbigli:
La tua lingua che danzava nella mia
O la lingua-canto-suono del Libro dei consigli?

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CROCI ROSSE E MEZZE LUNE

Cocciniglia cinabro carbone
E pigmenti vari vegetali
Ematite anile
In bacheca minerali e animali,

Di amuleti ossa sacre reliquie il potere
Al piccolo museo della natura e del mare
La finestrella il cortile,
Seif che aspetta fuori.

Parlerò della tua porta con decorazione,
Della cucina dove si vede il mare
Da una parte e dall'altra,
E dei panni stesi sul terrazzo
Stringendo le mollette tra le labbra.
E di sauri storioni attesi al guado
Dagli occhi accesi di calma caparbia
Che ti ho visto sui verbi irregolari.
E dell'acqua rosa nera della baia.

Ci si immagina caldo il Maghreb,
Ma il vento di questo gennaio
Ti ha ispessito la pelle del viso
E le mani graffiano, stringendo.
Così il tuo armadietto di farmacia
Con scatole e boccette
Croci rosse e mezze lune
Altre carezze.

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PER SNIDARTI PASSERINO

Per snidarti passerino darti acqua
Prima che finisca il Ramadan,
Attraverso la processione delle tute
Dei ginnasti ricciolini
- Profili usciti dalle mani di pittori su legno -
In tasca code d'angelo cadute
Per felicità alessandrine.
E lampade vasi caffettiere
Con il becco aguzzo e alto,
Il Corano miniato sotto vetro,
Sul corpo strisce di luce dalle griglie cielo.
E dove l'ocra pallido del muro
Si fonde col verde del mandorlo
Erbe aromatiche creme odorose
Tè e spezie tisane liquirizie
Cavate fuori da un anfratto
Mirabilmente intatte.
Oh se la senti la forza delle voglie
Alla medina tra gli odori
Di zafferano e fiori di cumino
Del venditore il figlio la mano
Come sfiora.

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COI CENTOSESANTAMILA NODI

Coi centosessantamila nodi sul rovescio
Il tappeto nuovo nuovo posto in strada
Controllato dall'alto
Calpestato da passanti e carri
Deve nascere.
Spazzata via la polvere
Poi rimesso a nuovo
Non gli accadrà più nulla.
Ogni villaggio ha il suo disegno, ogni ragazzo
Arditamente arrampicato alla colonna
La sua nonna tessitrice.

+++

LE MADRI FECONDE BALENE

Le madri come feconde balene
Dal regolare respiro, e attorno
Ali Mustafà Bessem a crescere
Di notte rantolando
Contro lo scoglio morbido.

+++

MIRRA E' IL PROFUMO COL QUALE L'AMANTE

Mirra è il profumo col quale l'amante
Conduce a sé l'amato
E Tunisi come un contagocce
Lascia filtrare attraverso il metrò
Cento maschi nuovi ogni mezz'ora
In cerca di refrigerio a Sidi Bou.
Ma poi risalgono e io li aspetto qui.

Dove il rosso dei ciottoli ossidati
Diventa verde chiaro in primavera
Per la graminacea che li intride,
E ornata di buganvillee è la gola
Con gli anfratti al mattino più freschi.

Così il mio andare e venire da Cartagine
E' turismo nel passato, coi ragazzi
Berberi arabizzati dai costumi fenici
Alessandrini greci, seduti in circolo al tramonto
Accosciati a raccontarsi storie di mare
Sapendo d'alghe d'inchiostro ed invitanti
Me a restare.

+++

SANT'AGOSTINO

Basso continuo al mio pensiero questa sera
L'idea selvatica di Sant'Agostino
Nordafricano in stanza scomoda a Milano
Con altri tre o quattro magrebini.
E il vescovo era un germano.

POESIE FRANCO BUFFONI (INGLESE translated by Richard Dixon)

INVITATION TO NAPLES

And in this gulf crossed this morning
By four jets over Posillipo and two cargo ships
Toward Beverello port,
On a balcony of the Royal
In the company of three gulls
I check through my paper
For the conference on translation.
At Pappacoda Chapel today at the Orientale
We'll be many children of navigators
Saints and poets, now I come to think of it
All of them once translators too.
Like the four pilots of the military jets
And the ten sailors on the cargo ships.
Leave me Naples
In their wake
And gently strangle me in the sky
Or in the sea
From this eighth floor.
Don't translate me somewhere else.

+++

PROPHECY

From here, among frail lights
That guide the outline to the gulf,
You see clearly that the city is founded
On passageways and passageways, and deepest cellars
And channels, dead waters in transit, marshes
Blind outlets of sand and gravel, petrified bones
Of necropoli in layers over carcasses of bears
Three metres high and scraps of other rotting animals.
It is known to be constantly washed
by water circulating from the port and from the west,
That it is split and forks off at a tangent
Toward the hill of rotten debris.
That it is born and reborn on moveable foundations
And that this won't be the last time.

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AT CARTHAGE THE TOPHET

Three children hold hands
Under the arch of Restaurant Neptune
A few steps from the Tophet
They haven't given up and here in Carthage
They're not even sacrificed any longer.

But the head waiter
Like Mastro Ciliegia
Or the king of the guards
Watches them in annoyance from the hall
That stands above the rocks,
The Tophet was there

With its small urns
Marked by a stele ...

Meanwhile the gulls fly up
From a carpet of grass
Opposite the circular port
Of the two hundred ships
Ready to challenge Rome.
And several excavations show
The headquarters
And the oarsmen's rooms
With chain marks on the walls.

+++

THE SILENCE OF MURMURING

Yusif, I don't know if in the end
You have really learnt my tongue
- Even the two wrinkles I see forming
At the sides of your Levantine eyes
And more deep down show
Signs of summers spent close -
Or if instead I'm beginning to pick up yours
From the inflexions of the chant, I know only
That one tongue of tongues
Echoed in the afternoon toward Kerouan,
The two voices the curtain the mint tea.
And in the evening the silence of murmuring:
Your tongue that danced in mine
Or the tongue-chant-sound of the Book of Kavus.

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RED CROSSES AND HALF MOONS

Cochineal cinnabar charcoal
And various vegetal pigments
Haematite indigo
Minerals and animals on display,
The power of amulets bones sacred relics
At the small museum of nature and of the sea
The small window the courtyard,
Seif who waits outside.

I'll speak of your decorated doorway,
Of the kitchen where you can see the sea
From one part and the other,
And clothes hung out on the terrace
Clenching the pegs between your lips.
And of lizards sturgeons waiting at the ford
Their eyes flashing with the calm obstinacy
That I saw in you on irregular verbs.
And of the rose black water of the bay.

The Maghreb is supposed to be hot,
But the wind this January
Has hardened the skin of your face
And your hands are grazed, clasping.
So too your medicine cabinet
With boxes and bottles
Red crosses and half moons
Other caresses.

+++

TO DRIVE YOU OUT LITTLE SPARROW

Give you water, little sparrow, to drive you out
Before Ramadan ends,
Through the procession of tracksuits
Of curly-haired gymnasts
- Outlines straight from the hands of wood etchers -
Tails of fallen angels in pockets
For Alexandrine bliss.
And lamps vases coffee pots
With tall sharp spout,
The illuminated Koran under glass,
Over the body strips of light from the skylights.
And where the pallid ochre of the wall
Blends with the green of the almond
Fragrant cream aromatic herbs
Tea and spices tisanes liquorices
Extracted from a ravine
Marvellously intact.
Oh you can feel the power of desire

At the medina among aromas
Of saffron and cumin flowers
Of the vendor the son the hand
How it lightly skims.

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WITH A HUNDRED AND SIXTY THOUSAND KNOTS

With a hundred and sixty thousand knots beneath
The brand new carpet laid out on the street
Watched from above
Trampled by passersby and carts
Must be born.
Once the dust is swept off
Then returned to new
Nothing more will happen to it.
Every village has its own design, every boy
Up there fearless on the pillar.
His grandmother the weaver.

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MOTHERS FERTILE WHALES

Mothers like fertile whales
Breathing regularly, and around
Ali Mustafà Bessem growing
At night gasping
Against the soft rock.

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MYRRH IS THE PERFUME WITH WHICH THE LOVER

Myrrh is the perfume with which the lover
Draws his beloved to him
And Tunis drop by drop
Lets a hundred new males
Filter through the metro every half hour
In search of coolness at Sidi Bou.
But then re-emerge and I wait for them here.

Where the red of oxidized cobblestones
Becomes light green in springtime
With the grassy weeds that invade them,
And bougainvillea decks the gorge
With its hollows fresher in the morning.

And so my coming and going from Carthage

Is tourism into the past, with boys
Arabized Berbers in Phoenician costume
Alexandrian Greeks, seated in a circle at sunset
Squatting down to tell stories of the sea
Scented with seaweed and ink and inviting
Me to stay.

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SAINT AUGUSTINE

Basso continuo of my thoughts this evening
The wild idea of Saint Augustine
North African in a stark cell in Milan
With three or four other Maghrebi
And the bishop was Germanic.