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"UN'ALTRA VOLTA, FUORI DI ME." ANTHOLOGISATION AND ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF SABA, UNGARETTI AND MONTALE IN THE SIXTIES AND NOWADAYS

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Introduction

The second half of the twentieth century saw the publication of up to a hundred anthologies of modern Italian poetry translated into English, including several in literary reviews. However, despite this growing interest in poetry translation and anthologisation, there does not seem to be a systematic study on the role played by the anthologists in the shaping of the Italian poetic canon in Anglo-American culture.[1]

In this essay I shall explore one of the various forms through which contemporary Italian poetry has been exported, translated and canonised in English. To this end, I shall analyse the translations of poems by Saba, Ungaretti and Montale (the most famous twentieth-century Italian triad) as they are presented in a sample of anthologies published after 1960 both in Britain and the United States. The essay shall focus on a restricted number of anthologies: *Contemporary*

[1] My doctoral thesis deals with this topic both from a cultural and literary pespective. I would like to thank Prof Martin McLaughlin, with whom I have started this journey into the world of poetry anthologies, and Prof Nicola Gardini, with whom I am continuing it. With special thanks to Jamie McKendrick, who has always been ready with a few words of wisdom.

Italian Poetry: An Anthology, edited by Carlo Golino in 1962; Jamie McKendrick's *The Faber Book of 20th-Century Italian Poems* (2004); and *The FSG Book of Twentieth Century Italian Poetry: An Anthology*, edited by Geoffrey Brock in 2012. [2] The reason for concentrating on a limited anthological selection is twofold: on the one hand, it allows the comparison between contrasting translation solutions (solutions that are in turn the expression of the editors' different ideology and system of values); and, on the other, it sheds light on the ways in which some of the most eminent publishing houses (California University Press, Faber & Faber, and Farrar Straus Giroux) have influenced the reception of the Italian poetic canon in the Anglophone world. The result of this transcultural fertilisation is unexpected: not only the last fifty years offered "a progressive decentralization and revision of the aesthetic, linguistic and ideological values associated with a monolingual and monological version of the canon,"[3] but also poetic translations prove to be a significant part of this transnational and re-creative process. More specifically, the decision to concentrate on anthologies that were published at the extremes of this chronological spectrum (the sixties and the present day) allows me to underline some of the distinctive features of "internationalisation" that have characterised the reception of the Italian poetic canon in English.

In the first section of the essay I shall present Golino's, McKendrick's and Brock's strategies of translation and anthologisation of Saba, Ungaretti and Montale in the light of

[2] Carlo L. Golino, *Contemporary Italian Poetry: An Anthology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962); Jamie McKendrick, *The Faber Book of 20th-Century Italian Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 2004); Geoffrey Brock, *The FSG Book of Twentieth-Century Italian Poetry: An Anthology* (New York: Ferrar Straus Giroux, 2012). Carlo Golino (Pescara, 1913-La Selva Beach, 1991) was an Italian American who taught at the University of California, Berkeley, and at the University of Massachussets, Boston. Jamie McKendrick (Liverpool, 1955) and Geoffrey Brock (Atlanta, 1964) are contemporary poets and translators who also teach creative writing at various English and American universities.

[3] Daniela La Penna, "Historicizing Value, Negotiating Visibility: English and Italian Poetic Canons in Translation," in *Twentieth-Century Poetic Translation: Literary Cultures in Italian and English*, ed. Daniela Caselli and Daniela La Penna (London: Continuum, 2008), 2.

Lawrence Venuti's categories of domestication and foreignisation.[4] More specifically, I shall discuss the theoretical guidelines that they state in their introductions to describe their stance towards Italian tradition and the ways through which Saba, Ungaretti and Montale have been made canonical in Italy. In the second section, I shall offer an analysis of poems by Saba ("La Capra"), Ungaretti ("In Memoria") and Montale ("L'anguilla") as they have been selected and translated in the three anthologies examined here. The consideration of the different translation solutions will point out some of the correspondences between foreignisation and literality on the one hand, and domestication and experimentation on the other. Finally, I shall suggest how and why the history of Saba's, Ungaretti's and Montale's anthologisation in the English-speaking world has followed a path of domestication and complexity rather than one of alienation and distance.

The task of the anthologist

Why is poetry so adaptable to the most disparate forms of anthologisation? To what extent does the anthologist's private canon dialogue with the canons of the past and of the present? Can translations be considered the canon of the future? Poetry anthologies not only propose a new configuration of the canon, which can be revisited, restricted, enlarged or dramatically overturned, but also question the history of literary criticism. This is the case, for instance, for translations of Italian poetry into English, which tend to complicate "a history of the twentieth-century split along the lines of a modernist heritage which defends the value of linguistic experimentalism […] against the values of (alleged) communicability, transparency and translatability." [5] Moreover, contemporary Italy, emblematically defined by Lawrence Smith as a "land of paradox,"[6]

[4] Lawrence Venuti, "The Construction of Cultural Identities," in Lawrence Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 67-87.

[5] Daniela Caselli, "Value and Authority in Anthologies of Italian Poetry in English (1956-1992)," in *Twentieth-Century Poetic Translation*, 57-58. As Caselli stresses, the opposition between linguistic conservatism and experimentalism is visible in the dichotomy between English and American traditions, the former being conventionally resistant to novelty.

[6] Lawrence R. Smith, *The New Italian Poetry, 1945 to the Present: A Bilingual Anthology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 2.

offers editors the model of a contradictory society, which enables them to deal with the (parallel and consequent) paradoxes of both poetry and translation. Therefore, the ways through which the canon(s) can be reassessed and reshaped by anthologists are manifold and composite, if not ambiguous: from the necessity of preserving the collective memory of a nation to the desire to sublimate and transcend it; from the acknowledgment of the continuing transformations of literary history to the attempt to defend the role of the critic alongside the authority of his or her voice.

To come to terms with such a bulk of contradictory forces, the three anthologists analysed here pursue two divergent strategies: whereas Golino presents an exhaustive overview of the situation of the Italian poetic canon in the post-war years (mainly characterised by an insoluble debate around the role of hermetic poetry), McKendrick and Brock eradicate Italian poetry from its native soil, letting it experience not only a linguistic but also a cultural transplantation. This approach is evident both from a theoretical and practical perspective: theoretically, in McKendrick's and Brock's treatment of the category of Italian hermeticism as an expression of the broader phenomenon of European modernism; and practically, in the anti-literal and unconventional translations that they present. If we use Lawrence Venuti's categories, we may argue that the three anthologies we are dealing with offer an example of how the opposing practices of domestication and foreignisation are a constitutional part not only of the translational process, but also of the anthological one—when the anthology is a collection of foreign poems of course. Whereas Golino's literal translations of Saba, Ungaretti and Montale have the effect of alienating the English reader who is not used to the Italian syntax and precious vocabulary (foreignisation), McKendrick and Brock pursue an effect of familiarisation both from a linguistic and cultural angle (domestication), a strategy that nonetheless entails a distortion of the original. Moreover, in Golino the voice of the translator is made "transparent" by a faithful reproduction of the Italian rhythm and vocabulary, whereas in McKendrick and Brock the translation solutions aim at nuancing, altering and even transforming the original texture.[7] A further instance of McKendrick's and Brock's effort to challenge, if not rewrite, the source poem is provided by the

[7] For a discussion on the effects of "transparency" and translation see Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

adoption of multiple translators for each poet. This choice, however, acquires a slightly different meaning in the two anthologies. In McKendrick's collection, it seems that the translations' diverse words are an expression of his broader search for plurality and multilingualism, which is evident in the depiction of a cosmopolitan (and, in a certain sense, still "un-unified") twentieth-century Italy. By the same token, McKendrick's selection responds to the desire to give the sense of the "ongoing conversation"—sometimes even a bit of a quarrel—that informs the inherent intertextual nature of Italian literature. From this perspective, the translators' voices variously contribute to this subterranean, fragmented and yet erudite dialogue: to recall one of McKendrick's evocative images, the music of "angels" and "tent-poles" that plays under the "threshold of the audible."[8] Conversely, in Brock, the decision to represent individual poets through the versions of multiple translators, who are poets as well, is the result of a theoretical reflection on the metaphorical meaning of translation. If translating means creating metaphors (no matters whether good or bad), then the translator of poetry must also be a poet, and his or her translations, therefore, read like real poems in English.[9] Such a decision engages the Anglo-American audience on at least two levels: on the one hand, it calls for the reader's interpretation as well as for the translator's recognition of his or her limits; and on the other, it may be seen as "a partial survey of the engagement of Anglophone poets with their twentieth-century Italian counterparts."[10] In other words, Brock's anthology is inherently twofaced: is it not only a collection of modern Italian poems in translation, but also a hidden anthology of contemporary Anglophone poets who (re)write poems on, for and from Italy.

As far as the theoretical aspects of the anthologies are concerned, the editors discuss Saba's, Ungaretti's and Montale's central role in relation to certain Italian critical categories, and hermeticism in particular. Do they move, or remove, the Italian triad from its hermetic pedestal, or do they reaffirm the key role it has always had in the

[8] McKendrick, "Introduction," in *The Faber Book of 20th-Century Italian Poems*, xvii.

[9] For a description of the translation process as a direct emanation of the words and metaphors used in poetry itself see Matthew Reynolds, *The Poetry of Translation: From Chaucer & Petrarch to Homer & Logue* (Oxford: University Press, 2011).

[10] Brock, "Two Tunnels. A Note on Translation," in *The FSG Book of Twentieth-Century Italian Poetry*, xlii.

Italian poetic tradition? Has this threefold model lost its influence in the era of the scarcity of "isms," or does it work as a bulwark against confusion and generalization? In his introduction, Golino stresses the importance of Ungaretti and Montale in the foundation of Italian hermeticism, seeing in Saba the forerunner of the movement. Yet, despite a convincing presentation, Golino places the Triestine poet at the forefront of a hybrid category called "Tradition and Experiment," which testifies to the paradoxical and diversified landscape of post-war Italian poetry. This unrefined and mixed category, which gathers very different poetic experiences (from the poetry of Saba and Pavese to that of Penna and Bertolucci), was destined to have the longest effect in the history of poetry anthologisation in English. Both Brock and McKendrick, for instance, renounce the hermetic label to offer instead a more vivid representation of Saba's, Ungaretti's and Montale's work within as well as beyond the boundaries of Italian tradition. More specifically, while preserving their institutional status, Brock charges these poets with a new, revolutionary value: the weight of modernity. In a way that is innovative in the panorama of Italian criticism, Brock conceives the experience of hermeticism as if it were "Italy's brand of Modernism, akin to the Eliot's strain in Anglophone poetry." Similarly, he declares that "the primary concern of most Hermetic poets (like most Modernists in general) were aesthetical and philosophical" more than ethical and political: a subtle attempt to liberate the hermetics from their fascist connections.[11] While linking these Italian poets to the major names of the Modernist Revolution, Brock goes even further in claiming Saba's, Ungaretti's and Montale's estrangement from a unilateral hermetic discourse. Indeed, in his anthology's introduction, a real manifesto of his poetic credo, Brock argues that the attitude of the three Italian poets towards the traditional poetic forms is comparable to that of Pound, Eliot, Stevens and Williams in the American tradition, without even mentioning the context of fascist Italy and the names of other Italian poets of the period.[12] From this perspective, Brock's attempt to liberate Saba, Ungaretti and Montale from the grasp of a longstanding critical debate (are they hermetic or not?) is much more important in that it inserts the three Italian most highly canonical poets into the circuit of Anglo-

[11] Brock, "Introduction," in *The FSG Book of Twentieth-Century Italian Poetry: An Anthology* (New York: Ferrar Straus Giroux, 2012), xxxiv.
[12] Brock, "Introduction," in *The FSG Book of Twentieth-Century Italian Poetry*, xxx-i.

American literature: "'make it new' in all those ways", and in every time if I may add.[13]

Despite a similar domesticating ratio, McKendrick's programme seems to be of a different kind: while repeating the predominance of the status of Saba, Ungaretti and Montale, he introduces the English-speaking reader into the "great variety and vitality of the poetry of their contemporaries and successors."[14] As he states since the very first line of his introduction, the task (and doubts) of an English anthologist before the modern Italian tradition is at least twofold: on the one hand, to deal with the realisation that twentieth-century Italian poetry has entered the Anglophone world via Montale (and Saba and Ungaretti); and on the other, to offer the reader "more than a glimpse" beyond the predominance of these poets.[15] Here, however, McKendrick is not challenging Montale's, Saba's and Ungaretti's status; rather, he is fostering a refreshing, cosmopolitan understanding of modern Italian culture, an operation that helps the English reader in the difficult task of grasping its breadth and complexity. To this end, McKendrick informs his reception of contemporary Italy, with all the cultural flourishing and political turmoil that it entails, with a multiperspectival and multicultural approach: first, by describing it through the poets' inherent regionalisms (Trieste, the Karst region, or the Ligurian landscape, to name a few); and second, by adding Saba's Jewishness, Ungaretti's Egypt and France, and Montale's Vienna and Eastbourne into a discourse that problematises received notions of identity and canonicity. From this viewpoint, McKendrick's project touches a question that lies at the basis of both English and Italian criticism: the paradoxical and inscrutable nature of modernity, and of all its ways, whose innumerable splinters the anthologist collects and sings.

Saba, Ungaretti and Montale: a translingual reading

[13] Brock, "Introduction," in *The FSG Book of Twentieth-Century Italian Poetry*, xxx.
[14] McKendrick, "Introduction," in *The Faber Book of 20th-Century Italian Poems*, xiv.
[15] Apart from McKendrick's "Introduction" to *The Faber Book of 20th-Century Italian Poems*, xiii-xviii, see also Jamie McKendrick, "Dubbi e Problemi di un Antologista Inglese," *Nuova Corrente* 153 (2015): 79-82.

In this section I shall compare different translation of one poem per author: "La capra" by Saba, "In memoria" by Ungaretti, and "L'anguilla" by Montale.[16] Composed between 1909 and 1910, Saba's "La capra" shows the poet's predilection for the mixture of simple, unusual vocabulary together with a taste for traditional metres. This poem, made up of three stanzas of various length (respectively four, six and three lines each), alternates different metres: hendecasyllables and *settenari*, with the exception of a five-syllable line in the conclusion. The peculiar prosody of Saba's poem, alongside its phonic texture, is recognisable in Thomas Bergin's version for Golino's anthology. Bergin's poem shows an attempt to respect both the Italian classical lure ("sazia," "celia," "sentiva," "querelarsi") and frequent rhymes ("legata-bagnata," "fraterno-eterno," "varia-solitaria," "semita-vita"). With this aim in mind, the translator intervenes on two levels: on the one hand, he introduces rhyming words that do not appear in the Italian ("goat-coat"), and, on the other, he breaks the original punctuation. In the central part of the poem, the result of this operation is a longer stanza (seven lines instead of six) that, displaying an unusual word order, presents a parenthetical sentence that is absent in Saba: "for sorrow timeless unending / has but the one unvarying note." In conjunction with this penchant for the classical and magniloquent, Bergin opts for an elevated and formal diction ("satiated," "rain-sodden," "incessant") that seems to emulate Saba's most arduous lexical choices (see the archaic "sentiva" for the first personal pronoun). If in some cases this process of refinement and elevation of Saba's language expands and nuances the meaning of the original ("uguale" becoming "incessant"), in others the same process has an effect of semantic specification ("voce" becomes "message" and "viso" becomes "muzzle"). Interestingly enough, Thomas Bergin, Simon Carnell and Geoffrey Brock (the latter being "La capra"'s translators for McKendrick's and Brock's anthologies respectively) disagree on the rendering of the expression "uguale belato." This expression is interesting not only on a semantic but also on an aesthetical level for its association with Nietzsche's concept of the "Eternal Return of the Same"—Nietzsche, whom Saba used to call "il mio Nietzsche", being an important reference point in the poet's formation. [17] Carnell proposes a possibly philosophical syntagm

[16] A full transcription of the poems, alongside their English translations, is available in the appendix.

[17] Saba's admiration for the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche is notorious. In particular, Saba appreciated Nietzsche's praise for simplicity and clarity, as we

("monotonous bleat"), which recalls the motif of repetitiveness on the one hand, and has rather a depersonalising effect on the other.[18] By contrast, Brock uses periphrasis to reproduce a more colloquial diction: "Her steady bleating brothered / My own grief," whereas Bergin, speaking about the goat's "incessant bleat," offers the most literal version. However, although they are similar in tone and style and equally idiomatic in the lexical choice, Carnell's and Brock's poems differ considerably in the translation of the last stanza, which proves to be the locus where most of the divergences occur. Indeed, whereas Bergin maintains the original rhyme ("muzzle-trouble"), Brock manages to omit the last word of the poem ("vita") for the less lyrical and more visceral "throat." Such a choice not only makes the last line rhyme with the first word ("goat"), but also gives the poem a less lyrical twist.

Generally speaking, Bergin's version reflects Golino's penchant for literal and literary translations, a practice that is abandoned by McKendrick and Brock. Moreover, the most recent anthologies display the editors' preference for a language that is colloquial and philosophical at the same time, a language that enables the interchange between different disciplines and cultures. In this way, as McKendrick puts it, the anthology of foreign poetry becomes the expression of a truly cultural endeavour, as it actually stages, rather then merely evoking, the rich "traffico poetico tra […] due culture."[19]

"In memoria," an epitaph-like elegy written by Ungaretti for his Arab friend Mohammed Sceab (who committed suicide in Paris "perché non aveva più / Patria"), is what the poet was later to call the "metaphysical tragedy" of rootlessness.[20] Overall narrative in tone,

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read in Claudio Milanini, *Da Porta a Calvino: Saggi e ritratti critici* (Milan: LED, 2014), 285-286: "In *Storia e Cronistoria del Canzoniere* (1944-1947), [Saba] giunse ad affermare che avrebbe potuto scegliere come titolo della sua opera la parola "Chiarezza," come motto della sua poesia il nietzschiano 'Siamo profondi, ridiventiamo chiari;' e va subito precisato che per lui la chiarezza coincideva col risultato di un processo di sedimentazione, non di selezione."

[18] This same strategy of depersonalisation is evident in Carnell's use of the neuter pronoun "it" to name the goat. Conversely, Bergin and Brock agree on the use of the feminine pronoun "she."

[19] McKendrick, "Dubbi e Problemi di un Antologista Inglese," 79.

[20] See Joseph Cary, *Three Modern Italian Poets: Saba, Ungaretti, Montale* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 143.

this poem is, in fact, less a dramatic page of Ungaretti's memories than an excruciating denunciation of man's wandering condition. In particular, this correspondence between *homo sapiens* and *homo viator* suggests, on the one hand, the coincidence of the phenomenon with the absolute, and, on the other, the continuity of the private with the universal.[21] This is the reason why the death of Mohammed Sceab is here not only the final farewell of the poet to his friend, but also becomes the very essence of Ungaretti's words: "Alle soglie del nulla […], l'ultimo dono della morte è la smaterializzazione delle forme, il loro diafano transito nella parola."[22]

Unsurprisingly, the places of strongest disagreement among the translators are those lines where the semantic tension reaches its peak. A clear example of this phenomenon is given by the translations of those words that stand as single lines throughout the poem: "discendente," "suicida," "patria," "vivere," "sciogliere," "riposa," "sempre." All the translators—Lowry Nelson for Golino, Patrick Creagh for McKendrick, and Andrew Wylie for Brock—try to retain this one word scheme, although through divergent lexical choices. For instance, while Creagh and Wylie opt for the more literal "descendant" and "descended," with the present participle giving a sense of continuity between the world of the alive and the dead, Nelson draws a word from plant imagery, that makes a connection with the idea of roots ("scion"). Another point of divergence is the interpretation of:

> sciogliere
> il canto
> del suo abbandono

where the theme of the exile is associated with the impossibility of disentangling an intricate knot. This image, however, is kept only in

[21] For Ungaretti, to use his own words, "può avere, quel luogo sulla terra, questo o quel nome […]; ma che importa, poiché esso è il luogo epico dove l'uomo è simultaneamente indigeno e straniero, e possiede la precipua condizione della vita leggendaria, quella di essere avvolto di solitudine e simultaneamente quello di essere legato alla sorte di tutto." See Carlo Ossola, *Giuseppe Ungaretti* (Milan: Mursia, 1975), 131. For the image of the *homo viator* see Rosalma S. Borello, "Il Girovago di Ungaretti. Breve Viaggio Intorno ad un Motivo Letterario," in *Atti del Convegno Internazionale su Giuseppe Ungaretti*, ed. Carlo Bo (Urbino: 4 venti, 1981), 1295.
[22] Ossola, *Giuseppe Ungaretti*, 312.

Wylie's translation, which nonetheless introduces an interesting element of naturalisation. Indeed, in the eyes of a contemporary American audience, the translation of the Italian "abbandono" into the English "exile" may suggest a potential postcolonial reading of the poem:

> And he couldn't
> free
> the song
> of his exile.[23]

By contrast, Creagh offers a positive interpretation of the same term, by associating it with the possibility of a hedonistic enjoyment of freedom (also a form of domestication at its opposite extreme):

> He did not know
> how to release
> the song
> of his unconstraint.

Conversely, Nelson privileges a more lyrical reading of the stanza, trying to scan the English poem with the rhythm of the Italian original:

> He could no longer
> intone
> the song
> of his abandonment.

In addition to his attempt to adhere to the Italian, Nelson's lyrical taste is manifest in the translation of the line "appassito vicolo in discesa," which he turns into "a faded sloping little street" without losing the botanic imagery (see "scion"). By contrast, Creagh's and Wylie's translations both gain a sense of decay and decomposition, which is drawn from the Italian "discesa:" "steep decrepit alleyway" (Creagh); "sloping decayed alley" (Wylie). Moreover, if Nelson makes an effort to preserve the one-word pattern, even removing "to" from the infinitive "dwell," Creagh's poem tries to be explanatory ("I followed his coffin" and "they dismantle a fairground"), while Wylie seeks more idiomatic and simple results ("and no longer knew / how to live; He lies / in the cemetery at Ivry / suburb"). In particular,

[23] Nevertheless, Wylie does not eliminate the idea of abandonment, which appears in the image of the "abandoned fair" at the end of the poem.

Wylie's effort to turn Ungaretti's lyricism into the language of journalism and media gives to the original the texture of a contemporary American poem. Wylie's practice can be connected to Brock's broader concern with Italy's "eloquence problem," or *passatismo*, i.e. the sense of reverence, almost a veneration, that Italian writers have always had towards the language of their fathers. Indeed, whereas American poets "aspire to render their poems as colloquial and demotic and unillustrious as possible," their Italian counterparts tend to "'speak otherwise than in the idiom of the day.'"[24] From this perspective, Wylie's anti-eloquent translation has the evident function of domesticating Ungaretti's poem for a contemporary American audience, making it sound like a truly modern American work.

Composed of a single, interrogative sentence of thirty lines, Montale's "L'anguilla" is the quintessence of ambiguity with its continuous superimpositions between the fish and poetry, poetry and the woman, the fish and the woman. In their versions of Montale's poems, the translators considered here have all coped with the phonic density and semantic rarefaction of this poem. The dominant feature of all the translations is the attempt to recreate the widespread water imagery that characterises "L'anguilla:" "sirena," "mari," "Baltico," "guizzo," "pozze," "immerse..." Both Golino and Paul Muldoon, who contributes for both McKendrick and Brock, emulate Montale's striking symbolism by proposing visual and phonetic similarities with the original—and it is not accidental that the eel has been defined a "mito montaliano."[25] However, despite this common search for the symbolic, Golino's and Muldoon's translations are profoundly different in aspiration and aim, as is visible in their different lexical choices. Though idiomatic, Golino's diction adheres to the Italian quite faithfully ("adverse tides," "stagnant pools," "heavens of fertility"), whereas Muldoon's operation on language is overtly experimental. In particular Muldoon makes use both of unusual and evocative language, the former often resulting from a process of agglutination and hyphenation which is typical of a German or Saxon style grammar: "self-same," "bed-hugger," "mud-runnels," "arrow-shaft," "spawning-ground" and "next-of-skin." A further feature of

[24] Brock, "Introduction," in *The FSG Book of Twentieth-Century Italian Poetry*, xl.
[25] Alvaro Valentini, *Lettura di Montale. La Bufera e Altro* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1977), 249.

Muldoon's translation technique consists in grouping unfamiliar terms into similar semantic fields, as is the case for "standing well" and "drain." This particular strategy has the benefit of creating a highly original and unexpected poem, which, alluding to artificial constructions, transforms Montale's sea imagery into a modern city's landscape: perhaps the eel's latest journey into the postmodern era. At the same time, the insertion of an evocative lexis is often employed to lend tension to the narration or to charge it with more nuanced meanings: for instance, the sparkle does not only say, but "announces," and the woman's rainbow brightness is not only "intact" (as in Golino), but "undiminished." Another example of interpretation comes from the definition of the eel as a "firebrand" and a "scourge" ("torcia" and "frusta" in Montale). In particular, the first epithet can be read as a further element of civilisation, insofar as it represents the fish as a charismatic, militant preacher. In addition to the preference for evocative words, Muldoon's poem gives a realistic depiction of the original story. The most illustrative example of this urgency is the conversion of Montale's "paradisi di fecondazione" ("heavens of fertility" in Golino) into the earthier and cruder "spawning-ground," no matter how green and pleasant it can be. In this case, Muldoon's un-lyrical reading of the theme of fecundation helps to convey one of the essential meanings of the eel's epic journey from the Baltic Sea to the Italian countryside, that is the ultimate triumph of life and vitality over aridity and death. While in Golino's translation this message of regeneration is conveyed by means of plain and faithful language, here it is combined with a preference for pragmatic and realistic scenes, together with a particular taste for alliteration: "selfsame-siren," "dips-darts," "gulches-gullies," "fetch-ferry," "scouting-scanning," "drought-desolation" and "clamped-down." Finally, nestling an allusion to Blake's Jerusalem ("some green and pleasant spawning-ground" deriving from Blake's "England's green & pleasant Land"), Muldoon's "L'anguilla" becomes part of the "ongoing conversation" between poets of all places and times that McKendrick puts at the forefront of his anthology.[26] It is not surprising, therefore, that Montale included a translation from Blake's "To the Muses" in his *Quaderno di traduzioni*: a further instance of the translingual and transnational vocation of literature, as well as of anthologies.

[26] I would like to thank Martin McLaughlin for pointing out this reference to William Blake.

Conclusions

The anthologisation of Saba, Ungaretti and Montale in the last fifty years has shown a peculiar, consistent trend: from a less polemic acceptance of their central role within the Italian tradition, a role that was assured by their stance as hermetic poets (Golino), to a more complex and problematic understanding of their poetry even outside the spatial and chronological boundaries of Italy (McKendrick and Brock). Although none of the editors presented here have challenged the eminence of the triad, all of them have contributed to a redefinition of the three poets' status within as well as outside of the Italian poetic canon. In the 1960s, Golino foreshadowed the unsuitability of certain critical criteria despite his adherence to the hermetic (and anti-hermetic) dogma; in the twenty-first century, McKendrick and Brock have enlarged the meanings of Italian hermeticism by turning it into a (post)modern, multicultural and transnational experience. Interestingly enough, different translation techniques (Golino's substantial foreignisation vs. McKendrick's and Brock's attempt to naturalise the Italian texts) stand for diverse cultural exigencies: the need to present Italian poetry as if it were a total foreign affair in the sixties (Golino), and the desire to put it into dialogue with the Anglo-American dimensions nowadays (McKendrick and Brock). In this scenario, poetry translations have contributed to the reshaping of the Italian poetic canon(s) in at least two fundamental ways: on the one hand, they have become the starting point for the poems' very journey towards an other culture (and therefore towards its future); on the other hand, they have established a new relationship to the cultural conditions under which they have been realised and read.[27] From this perspective, McKendrick's and Brock's projects may be interpreted as an example of cultural domestication insofar as they construct "uniquely domestic representations" of the foreign culture: a poetic Italy that is made more English and American, and therefore less contingent.[28] As Brock's ambition to compose an anthology of both Italian and English poets suggests, domestic translations not only have the effect of making Italian poetry more familiar to the English reader, but also of fostering the passage and trafficking of values, something that is common to the poetry of every time and space. Similarly, the editors' belief in the porous nature of poetry is evident in

[27] See Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*, 18.
[28] Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation*, 76.

McKendrick's intuition to present not one but many "Italies;" even the English Italy that his cosmopolitan, lyric view permits.

On a linguistic and stylistic level, in many occasions translations have provided a deeper understanding of the original poem. An example of the positive effects of translation on the primary texts can be found in the different versions of "In memoria," which indirectly re-evaluate the depth of Ungaretti's poem. While Patrick Creagh illustrates the meaning of the sixth stanza, specifying the sense of the Italian verb "accompagnare" ("I followed his coffin"), Nelson's choice of the infinitive "intone" implicitly reinforces the strong connotation of the original "sciogliere." Conversely, Andrew Wylie's postcolonial translation of Mohammed's "abbandono" as an expression of the tragedy of man's exile transfers Ungaretti's modernist poem, written in 1916, into our postmodernist age.

A further point of interest raised by the analysis of the anthologies considered here is the illumination of the manifold relationships between a series of different phenomena: classicisation and anthologisation on the one hand, and classicisation and resistance towards the canon on the other. In this regard, Saba's case is particularly significant, the reasons for his less canonical reception deriving not only from a belated critical response, but also from the "inner difficulty" of his poetry (in Giovanni Giudici's words his "perfida semplicità"). [29] Furthermore, though acknowledging the centrality of the triplet Saba, Ungaretti and Montale in the constitution of the Italian poetic canon, all the anthologists underline the poets' undecipherable essence. While Golino stresses Saba's constitutional reluctance to any poetic school, McKendrick and Brock refuse all critical labels by presenting the poets as a dialoguing triad that projects itself into the future of literature (i.e. its translation). From this perspective, Saba's complicated critical parabola, both canonical and anti-canonical at the same time, is not to be seen as an exception in the landscape of twentieth-century Italian poetry, but rather as a hallmark of its paradoxical nature.

This brief overview on the possibilities of translating and anthologising Saba's, Ungaretti's and Montale's in English, from the sixties onwards, has shown how all the schematic oppositions between hermetic and anti-hermetic, tradition and innovation, classical and

[29] Giovanni Giudici, "Saba: L'amore e il Dolore," in *Umberto Saba, Trieste e la Cultura Mitteleuropea*, ed. Rosita Tordi (Milan: Mondadori, 1986), 64.

modern have finally failed. Twenty-first-century anthologies of Italian contemporary poetry open up to a sense of complexity and paradox that allow the coexistence of old and new, Italiannes and Englishness, identity and the other. In this sense, the anthology has become the site where poetry and translation become so similar as to become indistinguishable, since they are part of the same process of creation and recreation of the work of art whose endless rebirth we call canon. The span of years from the 1960s to the first decades of the twenty-first century sees thus the exposure of the Italian poetic canon—embodied here in the figures of Saba, Ungaretti and Montale—to a decentralised and international dimension. The image of Italian poetry that McKendrick and Brock offer is one imbued with cosmopolitan, global and transoceanic values. According to Brock, Italy's twentieth-century poetry is a modernists' land; for McKendrick, it is a divided country with an endless generation of poets who are willing to speak for its weakness and beauty. More specifically, McKendrick's eye for both Italy's literary tradition and transnational character challenges the received idea of a country that is paralysed by its own cult of eloquence. From this viewpoint, perhaps it is not accidental that the inherent anti-academic character of McKendrick's anthology, a Faber book issued in paperback and without the Italian originals, works also as a catalyst for a transnational and decentralised reading of Saba, Ungaretti and Montale: the three Italian poets who are actually less Italian—and more Jewish, Slavic, Egyptian, French, American and English—than we could possibly expect.

As Walter Benjamin pointed out in his pioneering and illuminating essay, the ultimate task of the translator (and of the anthologist) is to manage the difficult and paradoxical reconciliation of the diverse, something that can only be achieved through fragmentations and wounds.[30] Or, as Ungaretti has once confessed, in the continuous longing for the fulfilment and resurrection of words:

> Ogni mio momento
> io l'ho vissuto
> un'altra volta
> in un'epoca fonda

[30] Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," in Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings. 1913-1926*, ed. Marcus P. Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), 253-63.

fuori di me.[31]

Appendix

Umberto Saba, "La capra" (1910)

Ho parlato a una capra.
Era sola sul prato, era legata.
Sazia d'erba, bagnata
dalla pioggia, belava.

Quell'uguale belato era fraterno
al mio dolore. Ed io risposi, prima
per celia, poi perché il dolore è
[eterno,
ha una voce e non varia.
Questa voce sentiva
gemere in una capra solitaria.

In una capra dal viso semita
sentiva querelarsi ogni altro male,
ogni altra vita.

"The Goat," trans. by Thomas Bergin, in Golino 1962[32]

I have spoken with a goat.
She was alone in the meadow, tied
[to a post.
Satiated with grass and her coat
rain-sodden, she was bleating.

The incessant bleat I felt blending
with my own grief and I answered,
in mockery first and then after
(for sorrow timeless unending
has but the one unvarying note)
because of the message that came
borne over the field from the goat.

From a goat with semitic muzzle
I heard the lamenting
of all living things and their
[trouble.

"The Goat," trans. by Simon Carnell, in McKendrick 2004

"The Goat," trans. by Geoffrey Brock, in Brock 2012

[31] Giuseppe Ungaretti, "Risvegli," in Giuseppe Ungaretti, *Vita d'un Uomo: Tutte le Poesie*, ed. Carlo Ossola (Milan: Mondadori, 2009), 74.
[32] From this moment onwards: Golino 1962: Carlo L. Golino, *Contemporary Italian Poetry: An Anthology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962); McKendrick 2004: Jamie McKendrick, *The Faber Book of 20th-Century Italian Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 2004); and Brock 2012: Geoffrey Brock, *The FSG Book of Twentieth-Century Italian Poetry: An Anthology* (New York: Ferrar Straus Giroux, 2012).

I spoke with a goat.
It was alone in a field, tethered.
Stuffed with grass, soaked
with rain, it was bleating on.

That monotonous bleat, it answered
my own pain. I responded at first
as a joke – then because sorrow's
[eternal,
and speaks with one unchanging
[voice.
That's the voice I heard,
crying in a solitary goat.

In a goat with a Semitic face
every other hurt complained,
that of all creaturely existence.

I've spoken to a goat.
She was alone in the field, she was
[tethered.
Sated with grass, drenched
with rain, she bleated.

Her steady bleating brothered
My own grief. And I replied – at
[first
in jest, and then because the voice
[of grief
is one unchanging everlasting note.
That was the voice
moaning out of the solitary goat.

Out of that goat with its Semitic
[face
came grievances regarding every
[evil,
from every throat.

Giuseppe Ungaretti, "In memoria" (1916)

Locvizza il 30 settembre 1916

Si chiamava
Moammed Sceab

Discendente
di emiri di nomadi
suicida
perché non aveva più
Patria

Amò la Francia
e mutò nome

Fu Marcel
ma non era Francese

"In Memoriam," trans. by Lowry Nelson, in Golino 1962

His name
was Mohammed Sheab

Scion
of emirs of nomads
a suicide
because he had
no country

he loved France
and changed his name

He became Marcel
but he was not French
and could no longer

e non sapeva più
vivere
nella tenda dei suoi
dove si ascolta la cantilena
del Corano
gustando un caffè

E non sapeva
sciogliere
il canto
del suo abbandono

L'ho accompagnato
insieme alla padrona dell'albergo
dove abitavamo
a Parigi
dal numero 5 della rue des Carmes
appassito vicolo in discesa

Riposa
nel camposanto d'Ivry
sobborgo che pare
sempre
in una giornata
di una decomposta fiera

E forse io solo
so ancora
che visse

dwell
in his people's tent
where they listen
to the Koran sing-song
sipping coffee

He could no longer
intone
the song
of his abandonment

With the woman who owned the
[hotel
I followed him
from where we lived
in Paris
down from number 5 rue des
[Carmes
a faded sloping little street

He rests
in the graveyard at Ivry
a suburb that seems
always
on the day
of a dismantled
fair

And I perhaps I alone
still know
that he had lived

"In Memoriam," trans. by Patrick Creagh, in McKendrick 2004

Locvizza, 30 September 1916

He was called
Mohammed Sheab

Descendant of nomad emirs
a suicide
because he no longer had
a country

He loved France
and changed his name

Became Marcel
but was not French
and had forgotten how
to live
in his own people's tent
where they listen to the sing-song
of the Koran
as they sip coffee

He did not know
how to release
the song
of his unconstraint

I followed his coffin
I and the manageress of the hotel
where we lived
in Paris
number 5 rue des Carmes
steep decrepit alleyway

He rests
in the cemetery at Ivry
a suburb that always

"In Memory," trans. by Andrew Wylie, in Brock 2012

Locvizza, September 30, 1916

His name
was Mohammed Sceab

Descended
from emirs of nomads
suicide
because he had no
country

He loved France
and changed his name

Was Marcel
but wasn't French
and no longer knew
how to live
in his family's tent
where you listen to the chant
of the Koran
and sip coffee

And he couldn't
free
the song
of his exile

I followed him
with the hotel landlady
from our place
in Paris
at number 5 rue des Carmes
sloping decayed alley

He lies
in the cemetery at Ivry

looks
like the day
they dismantle a fairground

And perhaps only I
still know
he lived

suburb that always
seems
in a day
of an abandoned fair

And maybe I only
still know
he lived

Montale, "L'anguilla" (1956)

L'anguilla, la sirena
dei mari freddi che lascia il Baltico
per giungere ai nostri mari,
ai nostri estuarî, ai fiumi
che risale in profondo, sotto la piena
[avversa,
di ramo in ramo e poi
di capello in capello, assottigliati,
sempre più addentro, sempre più nel
[cuore
del macigno, filtrando
tra gorielli di melma finché un
[giorno
una luce scoccata dai castagni
ne accende il guizzo in pozze
[d'acquamorta,
nei fossi che declinano
dai balzi d'Appennino alla
[Romagna;
l'anguilla torcia, frusta,
freccia d'Amore in terra
che solo i nostri botri o i disseccati
ruscelli pirenaici riconducono
a paradisi di fecondazione;
l'anima verde che cerca
vita là dove solo
morde l'arsura e la desolazione,
la scintilla che dice

"The Eel," trans. by Carlo Golino, in Golino 1962

The eel, the siren
of cold seas that leaves the Baltic
to reach our seas,
our estuaries, our rivers
where it swims upstream down
[deep against the adverse tides,
from branch to branch and then
to fine to finer stem,
penetrating still further into the
[boulder's
core, filtering
through miry channels till one day
a light striking through the
[chestnut trees,
kindles its darting leap in stagnant
[pools,
in the ditches that connect
the Apennine cliffs to Romagna;
the eel, torch, whip,
arrow of Love on earth
that only our gullies or arid
pyrenean brooks bring back
to heavens of fertility;
the green soul that seeks
life there where only
drought and desolation gnaw,
the spark that says

tutto comincia quando tutto pare
incarbonirsi, bronco seppellito;
l'iride breve, gemella
di quella che incastonano i tuoi cigli
e fai brillare intatta in mezzo ai figli
dell'uomo, immersi nel tuo fango,
[puoi tu
non crederla sorella?

all things begin when all things
[seem
burning to coals, buried stump,
the brief rainbow, twin sister
of the one you set between your
[lashes
and let shine intact among the sons
of man, immersed in your mire,
[can you
believe that she is not your sister?

"The Eel," trans. by Paul Muldoon, in McKendrick 2004

The self-same, the siren
of icy waters, shrugging off as
[she does the Baltic
to hang out in our seas,
our inlets, the rivers
through which she climbs, bed-
hugger, who keeps going
[against
the flow, from branch to branch,
[then
from capillary to snagged
[capillary,
further and further in, deeper
[and deeper into the heart
of the rock, straining
through mud-runnels, till one
[day
a flash of light from the chestnut
[trees
sends a fizzle through a standing
[well,
through a drain that goes by
[dips and darts from the
[Apennines to the Romagna–
that self-same eel, a firebrand

"The Eel," trans. by Paul Muldoon, in Brock 2012

The selfsame, the siren
of icy waters, shrugging off as
she
[does the Baltic
to hang out in our seas,
our inlets, the rivers
through which she climbs, bed-
hugger, who keeps going
[against
the flow, from branch to branch,
[then
from capillary to snagged
capillary,
further and further in, deeper
[and deeper into the heart
of the rock, straining
through mud runnels, till one
[day
a flash of light from the chestnut
[trees
sends a fizzle through a standing
[well,
through a drain that goes
by dips and darts from the
[Apennines to the Romagna—

[now, a scourge,
the arrow-shaft of Love on earth
which only the gulches or dried-
out
gullies of the Pyrenees might
[fetch and ferry back
to some green and pleasant
spawning-ground,
a green soul scouting and
[scanning
for life where only
drought and desolation have
[hitherto clamped down,
the spark announcing
that all sets forth when all that's
[set forth
is a charred thing, a buried
[stump,
this short-lived rainbow, its twin
[met
in what's set there between your
[eyelashes,
you who keep glowing as you
[do, undiminished, among the
[sons
of man, faces glistening with
[your slime, can't you take in
her being your next-of-kin?

that selfsame eel, a firebrand
[now, a scourge,
the arrow shaft of Love on earth
which only the gulches or dried-
[out
gullies of the Pyrenees might
fetch and ferry back
to some green and pleasant
[spawning ground,
a green soul scouting and
[scanning
for life where only
drought and desolation have
[hitherto clamped down,
the spark announcing
that all sets forth when all that's
[set forth
is a charred thing, a buried
[stump,
this short-lived rainbow, its twin
[met
in what's set there between your
[eyelashes,
you who keep glowing as you
[do, undiminished, among the
[sons
of man, faces glistening with
your slime, can't you take in
her being your next-of-kin?

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