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Red Hen Press

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Last Voyage: Selected Poems of Giovanni Pascoli

Translated by

Deborah Brown, Richard Jackson & Susan Thomas

This first appearance of the verses of Giovanni Pascoli, an important 19th century Italian poet, in English translation provides an introduction to his work for the English-speaking reader. The first section of the book includes some of Pascoli's brief lyric poems, many of them displaying his innovative use of image narrative. We see scenes of country life in his village near Barga, Italy, in the Apuan Alps, at the end of the 19th century. We see the aurora borealis, chickens, donkeys, women hanging laundry, the new railway and men crushing wheat. The second part of the book consists of three somewhat formal narrative poems set in classical Rome and Greece. The book ends with a long narrative sequence, an exciting and poignant re-imagining of Odysseus' famous tale told from the perspective of an old man. The aging hero falls asleep by the fire with Penelope and dreams a final voyage, in which he reassembles his old crew and visits the scenes of his earlier adventures: Circe, the Sirens, the Cyclops, Lotus Eaters and Calypso.



Last Voyage: Selected Poems of Giovanni Pascoli

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Biographical notes:

Deborah Brown is the editor, with Maxine Kumin and Annie Finch, of *Lofty Dogmas: Poets on Poetics* (Univ. of Arkansas Press, 2005). Her poems have appeared in *Margie*, *Rattle*, *The Alaska Quarterly*, *Stand*, and other magazines. Brown teaches literature and writing at the University of New Hampshire-Manchester. Her book of poems, *Walking the Dog's Shadow* (BOA Editions, forthcoming) was chosen by Tony Hoagland for the A. Poulin Award.

Richard Jackson is the author of ten books of poems, most recently *Resonance* (Ashland Poetry Press, 2010) and *Half Lives: Petrarchan Poems* (Autumn House, 2004). He has edited two anthologies of Slovene poetry, the *Selected Poems of Iztok Osojnik* (Slovenia), and *Poetry Miscellany*. In 2000, he was awarded the Order of Freedom Medal for literary and humanitarian work in the Balkans by the President of Slovenia and has received a Guggenheim, NEA, NEH, two Witter-Bynner and Fulbright Fellowships, and five Pushcart Prizes. He has won two teaching awards at UT-Chattanooga and the Vermont College MFA program. His previous book of translation is Alexander Persolja's, *Potovanje Sonca (Journey of the Sun)* from Slovene, 2008.

Susan Thomas has stories, poems, and translations in many journals and anthologies and has won the Iowa Poetry Award from the *Iowa Review*, the Ann Stanford Prize from the University of Southern California, and the 2010 MR Prize from the *Mississippi Review*. Her collection, *State of Blessed Gluttony*, (Red Hen Press, 2004), won the Benjamin Saltman Prize. She is also the author of two chapbooks, *The Hand Waves Goodbye*, and *Voice of the Empty Notebook*.

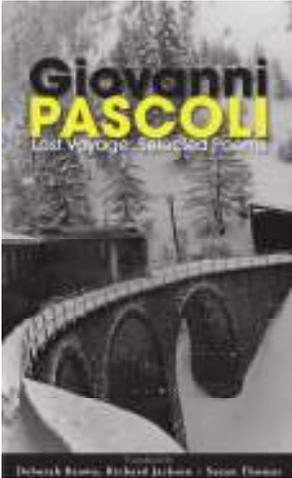


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Praise for *Last Voyage*



“The major portion of this ambitious translation is devoted to Pascoli’s revisionist version of Homer’s epic; in it Odysseus does not return home, slay the suitors and embrace his wife. Instead, he falls into a deep sleep, sails past Ithaka and is forced to revisit his former route, complete with heart-stopping adventures and profound grief. The narration is deft, elegiac, and intensely lyrical, making this book a pleasure to read.”

—Maxine Kumin

“The poetic landscape of Pascoli, captured here in excellent English translations, is deceptively simple. It resonates like a ‘sound that falls evenly, softly, like a persuading voice,’ to borrow from one of Pascoli’s poems. Spanning short lyrical pieces as well as longer neoclassical narratives, Pascoli’s poetry gives an impression of smoothness, though its intensity is derived precisely from hidden dramatic themes and tensions. At times overtly philosophical, shot through with deep melancholic wisdom or irony, this richly orchestrated verse veers between potent references to ancient civilization and contemporary everyday experiences, displaying a distinct ear for the quotidian profanity of modern Italian poetic language.”

—Iztok Osojnik

From “XI. The Beached Ship”

...They sat, as their custom was, on the beach,
these companions of the hero, Odysseus;
they had been waiting there for him for ten years,
in good weather and with each new dawn.
and seeing the swallow, a sign, their wives
brought to the ship, carried on their heads,
amphora filled with flaming wine, and goat-skins
filled with barley milled in a mortar.
And before the new spring dawn scattered
roses against the sky, they came down to the sea,
these longtime companions of Odysseus,
carrying their long oars on their shoulders,
each his own. Then they seated themselves
on the sand, under the red prow of lead,
with their eyes also red, counting the waves
as they broke, listening to the wind whistle
through their beards, hearing the piercing gulls,
and far off sailors singing far out to sea.



Poet Giovanni Pascoli

—from *Last Voyage*



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