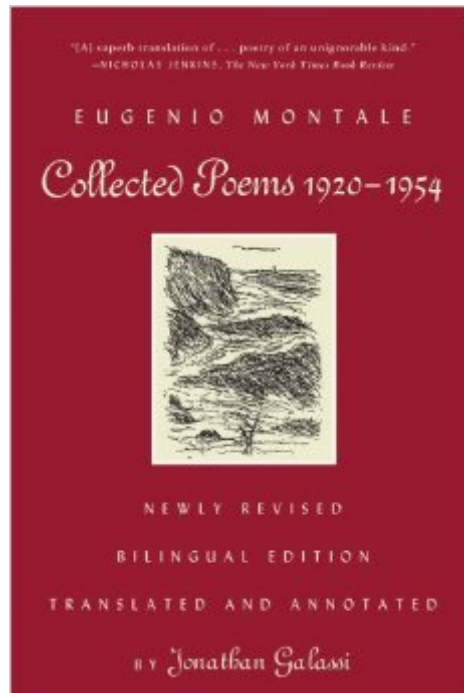


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Collected Poems, 1920-1954: Revised Bilingual Edition (Italian Edition)



Synopsis

A strong, idiomatic translation of Italy's greatest modern poet. Eugenio Montale is universally recognized as having brought the great Italian lyric tradition that began with Dante into the twentieth century with unrivaled power and brilliance. Montale is a love poet whose deeply beautiful, individual work confronts the dilemmas of modern history, philosophy, and faith with courage and subtlety; he has been widely translated into English and his work has influenced two generations of American and British poets. Jonathan Galassi's versions of Montale's major works—*Ossi di seppia*, *Le occasioni*, and *La bufera e altro*—are the clearest and most convincing yet, and his extensive notes discuss in depth the sources and difficulties of this dense, allusive poetry. This book offers English-language readers uniquely informed and readable access to the work of one of the greatest of all modern poets.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

There are some good translations of Montale around but this is not one of them: in fact I'd say it is the least successful of any of the translations that have been made. Galassi goes overboard to make Montale jagged and unmusical: in a word: unpoetic. The lovely, brief love poems of the *Le Occasioni* have been rendered as bits of broken glass that cut the mouth. Even the content is changed when it doesn't fit in with Galassi's arch-modernist convictions: words get dropped, content get changed around, religious words get omitted, extraneous things are put in. Galassi defends his vision of Montale as an anti-poet in an essay at the back of the book, but it doesn't convince, and, significantly, no evidence is cited in support. Even the arrangements of the poems on the page -- in this case probably the publisher's fault, rather than Galassi's -- manages to misrepresent them.

Poems that were, in the original, meant to be separated by a page break are here represented in run-on fashion, so that one reads the parts as connected in a way that they are not intended to be. *News from Amiata* (not *Mount* Amiata, as Galassi renders it!) is a case in point: the parts should be on separate pages, not run-on as they are. The same goes for the Motets. But this would be less jarring if the translations themselves were more faithful to the spirit of the originals. Unfortunately they completely mislead the reader as to the meaning of Montale's poems. The translations of William Arrowsmith were much, much better and Norton would do the lover of Montale's poetry a great service by putting them back into print. Arrowsmith gets the modernism of Montale right without making him sound like he just didn't know how to write.

Exchanging notes with Mike Birman about Petrarch, whose poems inspired some of the greatest composers of the 16th and 17th Centuries, I suddenly made a connection -- had an epiphany, to put it in grad school terms. Eugenio Montale (b. 1896) wrote a lot like Petrarch! That may not be such a surprise to scholars of Italian literature, or it may seem like pure nonsense to those same scholars. Che sara sara. But for the various readers of my reviews of Monteverdi and other madrigalists, the mere mention of a modern Italian poet, and an extremely good one, may be a revelation. Here's a very short poem by Montale: LUNGOMARE Il soffio cresce, il buio e rotto a squarci, e l'ombra che tu mandi sulla fragile palizzata s'arriccia. Troppo tardi se vuoi esser te stessa! Dalla palma tonfa il sorcio, il baleno e sulla miccia, sui lunghissimi cigli del tuo sguardo. But Montale lived through tougher times, and modern themes show up in his work as veins of grief through his translucent marble lyricism. Here's my own translation of his poem "La Primavera Hitleriana": HITLER SPRING thick lamp-loony mist, moths, dim as sleets swirls down parapets, eddies, drains, shakes down on the stones a sheet that crackles like sugar underfoot. When summer comes, now soon, it breaks chill nitres loose the dying season held hidden in coverts, quarries, orchards which from Maiano snake down sandhills to sandy banks. Hooked crosses, flags and flambeaux, mystic chants of stooges gorged him in -- the hellbent henchman cyclist who through the Corso just now blazed. Shop fronts are shuttered, broke and gutless though they, they too, sport plastic cannons.

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