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Italian Novecento arises from the need to reconsider and revivify «contemporary classics», those great books by great authors which appeared during the 20th Century and were withdrawn from bookstore shelves for a number of reasons or were deliberately neglected, perhaps because of an obsession with the present and presentness. The selection was therefore based on topical and vital themes: although they have reached «maturity» since the first edition, those themes are still relevant in today's society, which looks very much the same. They tell of moral, civil, religious needs that have not been forgotten, while they have inevitably changed their value and meaning.

Guido Davico Bonino (1938) teaches Theater History at the Turin University. He was editor at Einaudi, theater critic for *La Stampa* and worked for the Italian public broadcasting service. He directed the Teatro Stabile of Turin from 1994 to 1997.

Libero Bigiaretti
ESTERINA

192 pages | 2010

novel

Afterword by Eugenio Ragni

“Bigiaretti always [...] supported a literature that cared about politics and civil engagement, and expressed opinions on the world and reality” – Stefano Giovanardi

“One of the most incisive authors in 20th century literature” – *Corriere della Sera*

Published in 1942, *Esterina* met with hostile reviews from Fascist press, as it proposed a realistic and hypocrisy-free vision of the family, while in those years the regime propaganda was a staunch supporter and steward of family values. The story, told by Esterina's husband, tells about a wrong marriage, that had been a way for them to get rid of their families rather than a consequence of their love. Soon, life as a married couple becomes a boring and suffocating routine coupled with work problems and frustrations and the clash of youth hopes with the grim everyday

reality. Everything builds up to a tragic ending, which the two characters themselves have built around themselves without even realizing. In an extremely modern book, written in a calm yet firm style, Libero Bigiaretti explores the deepest nooks of the human soul, bringing to the surface all the malaise and anxiety of a generation reduced to silence and conformism.

Libero Bigiaretti: Born in Matelica in 1905, Libero Bigiaretti very early moved to Rome where he had to find jobs to pay for his studies, including as an apprentice bricklayer and technical draftsman. His first published work was a collection of poems; later on, he shifted to fiction. He was also a translator and Olivetti's press office director, and worked for newspapers and the public Italian television company Rai. He also published *Carlone* (1950), *La scuola dei ladri* (1952) and *I figli* in 1954, a Premio Marzotto winner. He died in Rome in 1993.

Reviews available

Manuscript available

Angelo Fiore

IL SUPLENTE | The Substitute Teacher

novel

224 pages | 2010

Afterword by Giorgio Bàrberi Squarotti

“Il supplente is an absolute masterpiece of the late 20th century” -- La Repubblica

Attilio Forra is a frustrated man, doomed to failure. To make a new life, he leaves his job at the register office and moves to a little village in Sicily to teach English in school. The reality he experiences, however, is full of hostile and mean characters. They lead him into a spiral of mistrust and suspicion, which prevents him from fully revealing himself. In this claustrophobic and hopeless condition, Forra feeds his own inadequacy and pursues his vain desire of being a philosopher. *Il supplente* is a novel about the discomfort of a man who yearns to be somebody or at least something, without success. It pitilessly explores the narrow-mindedness of a provincial community that refuses to accept the newcomer.

Angelo Fiore: born in Palermo in 1908, Angelo Fiore worked as a civil servant and an English teacher in technical schools. He wrote a number of novels, including *Il lavoratore* (1967), *L'incarico* (1970) and *Domanda di prestito* (1976). His last one, *L'eredità del Beato*, featured an introduction by Geno Pampaloni.

Riccardo Bacchelli
LO SA IL TONNO | The tuna knows
A mundane and philosophical fable
250 pages | 2010
novel
Afterword by Maurizio Cucchi

“The thing is, Bacchelli is endowed with an in-born authority: an indefinable gift that very few people have. It is not clear what it consists of and where it lies, and he appears to be unaware of it himself. That gift emanates not only from his person but also from his books” – INDRO MONTANELLI

“And we think that we are here to raise a family, and for a serious gentleman this is a worry nowadays. Trade imbalances must be avoided”

In an old fish store of his city, a 30-year-old man from Bologna listens to the story told by a tuna lying on ice: his juvenile apprenticeship with a whale and his encounters: with gossipy lobsters; with crabs, considered by lobsters as an inferior race and therefore humiliated and offended; with lowlife oysters; and finally with fellow tunas. Two adult and curvaceous female tunas try to seduce him. But soon, in another shoal, he meets a decent little she-tuna and marries her off Portovenere. His friendship with a swordfish gets him into all sorts of new adventures... The tune knows is a literary game, ironical and funny, but also a subtle parody of a Bildungsroman, in the style of a *compte philosophique* such as Voltaire’s *Candide*. One cannot but be enthralled and fascinated by this close-knit fishing fable.

Riccardo Bacchelli (1891- 1985) became part of the Florence editorial staff of *La Voce* under Pratolini’s direction in 1913. He fought WW1 as a volunteer. In 1919, after he came back from the front, he co-founded *Ronda*. He worked for a number of publications including *Il Corriere della Sera*, *Il Resto del Carlino*, *La fiera letteraria*, *La Stampa*. The author of numerous novels and short stories, he is particularly appreciated outside Italy, especially in the US.

Reviews available
Manuscript available

Livia de Stefano
LA VIGNA DI UVE NERE

240 pages | 2010

novel

Afterword by Salvatore Ferlita

Winner of the Salento prize in 1953

One of the most peculiar books that came out in Italy in the second half of the 20th century – La Repubblica

Casimiro Badalamenti is a tough and ruthless man living in Cinisi, where he tends his black grape vineyard as he manages his shady business. He gets married to Concetta, a prostitute that is extremely devoted to him and gives him four children. Casimiro demands that the children be estranged from the family and raised by other farmers, unbeknownst to each other. Years later, Casimiro decides to go get his children back home, but an insane passion flares between young Nicola and his sister Rosaria, leading them straight to incest. This is intolerable for Casimiro, as it would expose them to an unbearable shame and would thwart his plan of becoming a man of honor. Written in a sharp and wry language, *La vigna di uve nere* is a mafia story set in a barren and fossilized Sicily, a haze of pain and blood hovering on it. It tells about the rough and ancestral world of peasants, who follow the unrelenting pace of seasons and speak in proverbs. The story is reminiscent of the human landscapes of Carlo Levi's *Christ Stopped at Eboli*.

Livia de Stefani was born in Palermo in 1913. A landowner's daughter, she was educated privately. She wrote her first poem when she was eight, and by ten she was writing for *Grilli* and *Giornalino della Domenica*. She contributed short stories and poems to a number of periodicals and newspapers. She died in Rome in 1991.

Reviews available

Manuscript available

Massimo Bontempelli
THE INTENSE LIFE | La vita intensa

212 pages | 2009
novel

Afterword by Alessandro Tinterri

“True to his dimension, Bontempelli supplies everything needed to prove a surprising ebullience, or to be more precise, his ability to react to the purity, the chemical purity, of life itself” – CARLO BO

In 1919, life in Milan is already intense. Italy’s vicecapital is populated by frenetic and aimlessly wandering silhouettes of characters, portrayed in their frenzied – and even ludicrous – attempt to go about their activities, be it practical occupations or mere ego diversions: a lady tobacconist, a gentleman with a suitcase, a jealous woman, a proof-reader. As a narrating voice assembles, disassembles and reassembles the actions of these characters in a sort of meta-novel, a tableau vivant of personalities and narrative techniques is put on stage, whose perceptive and pointed parody by Massimo Bontempelli disintegrates the ideological fabric of an era, and reveals the foibles that still plague man. Its avantgardism, not just a formal one, makes *The Intense Life* one of the most successfully experimental works in twentieth-century literature.

Massimo Bontempelli (1878-1960) Was a teacher, journalist, narrator, poet, playwright, critic and essayist. The theorist of «magical realism» in Italy, he founded a journal, «900», *Cahiers d’Italie et d’Europe*, with Curzio Malaparte. His last book, *The Faithful Lover* won him the Premio Strega in 1953. His work was translated in English (Host Publications, Faber & Faber, MacPherson & Co. Paul Dry Books), Spanish (Ediciones B.), German (Steidl) and French (Christian Bourgois, *Serpent à Plumes*, Albin Michel, Gallimard, PU de Caen).

Previous foreign editions of this book:
La vie intense, Gallimard, 1990.

Reviews available
Manuscript available

Sergio Antonielli
CAMP 29 | Il campo 29

256 pages | 2009
novel

Afterword by Edoardo Esposito

“We have rarely seen a literary document of such raw power and painful passion” –
GIACINTO SPAGNOLETTA

“India becomes a mythical backdrop to this drama of elementary impulses, the
mystery of instincts and the seminal reasons for human behavior” – VITTORIO
SERENI

Camp 29 is the account of a lesser-known historical event. During WW2, about
10,000 Italian soldiers were concentrated in four camps in Yol, at the foot of the
Himalayan range. They were Camps 25, 26, 27 and 28. Camp 29 was not an actual
camp. It was a term used in the inmates' jargon when someone died. "He went to the
29." Sergio Antonielli describes the physical pain – the malnutrition, the barbed-wire
fever, the unbearable heat – but mainly focuses on the account of imprisonment as a
living condition. The suspension of life in the camp, the hours spent resuming one's
activities where they had been left: A professor studying, a merchant doing business,
a tailor cutting and sewing. This excruciating and fake collective play is an attempt to
disguise the gradual annihilation of man and, if possible, to survive.

Sergio Antonielli (1920-1982) was an Italian writer and literary critic. His works of
fiction include *La tigre viziosa* (1954), *Un cane e un uomo in più* (1958), *Il
venerabile orango* (1962), *Oppure, niente* (1971).

Reviews available

Manuscript available

English sample available

Domenico Rea

JESUS, SHINE A LIGHT | Gesù, fate luce

240 pages | February 2010

short stories

First published in 1950 by Mondadori / Viareggio Prize 1951

Afterword by Domenico Scarpa

“Arguably, no other Italian writer today has this introspecting ability” – ALBERTO
ASOR ROSA

“Meaty, ruddy, baroque, glamorous and flashy.[...] A piece of “Magnesiumflash” writing, a Caravaggesque illumination of the eternal city of Naples. Lights, shadows, loss, ecstasy, violence and perdition” – IL MATTINO

Nofì, Naples and its surroundings, in the time between Fascism and the departure of the Allies from Southern Italy: this is the backdrop for the twelve stories included in this collection. First published in 1950, these stories describe grieving and weary characters in their everyday lives: a couple fighting in an unseemly way, a fake cripple who scrapes a living under the Fascists, a beggar who steals from a convent’s cellar to feed his family, a peasant’s wild and wanton passion for a girl his age. In his coarse but anxious writing, Domenico Rea focuses alternatively on the look of a man, the tension in a feeling, the voices in a courtyard. Every one of his stories straddles the fine line between tragic and comic.

Domenico Rea (Naples, 1921 – 1994) was a factory worker, a stenographer, a proofreader. He later worked for some newspapers, including *La Repubblica* and *Il Mattino*, as well as the Italian public broadcasting company Rai.

Previous foreign editions of this book:
Jésus, fais la lumière, Actes Sud, 1989 (France).

Reviews available
Manuscript available

Renzo Rosso
THE HARD THORN | La dura spina

352 pages | 2010
novel
Afterword by Anco Marzio Mutterle

“Renzo Rosso can capture the essence of a man or a situation with just a few words, using no artifices, in a conspicuous style” – TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

“A perceptive and refined narrator, the author looks into human contradictions with millions of eyes taking a 360-degree look at the world” – ITALO CALVINO

“Its story proves the author’s umbilical relationship with Italo Svevo’s characters and atmospheres” – IL PICCOLO

“My heart bleeds / as any other heart. / The hard thorn that love inflicted to me / I carry it everywhere...” A poem by Umberto Saba gave the title to this novel by his fellow townsman Renzo Rosso. A famed pianist in his sixties, Ermanno Cornelis is back in Trieste for a concert. But what he finds is a city in disarray, so rough and concrete that he cannot deny the decline of his artistic and physical performance much longer: the sex with young Giuliana is no exception. *La dura spina* is a private and intimate story about the somber and unpleasant realization of aging. It is told in an eagerly matter-of-factly and perceptive way, and its consummate precision is reminiscent of Edward Hopper’s bourgeois interiors.

Renzo Rosso (Trieste, 1926 – Tivoli 2009) pursued musical studies from his childhood, following his mother’s wish. With a diploma in violin performance under his belt, he graduated in Philosophy. In 1951 he moved to Rome, where he has lived since, to work for RAI, the public Italian broadcaster. He also worked as a playwright. A pivotal encounter with Gadda started his career as a writer.

Previous foreign editions of this book:

The Hard Thorn, Alan Ross LTD, 1966 (UK)

La Dura Spinae, Nanteuil, 1965 (France)

La Dura Espina, Seix barral, 1967 (Spain)

Reviews available

Manuscript available

Oreste del Buono

EASY TO USE | Facile da usare

novel

128 pages | 2009

Afterword by Ermanno Paccagnini

“His relentless analysis and unquenchable thirst for knowledge are rarely found in Italian contemporary fiction” – ALBERTO ASOR ROSA

Five minimal and bare short stories “in continuity”. A short novel in reverse, describing the most bourgeois of love triangles and the feeble logic of desertion in someone who may have chosen to give up love. In *Easy to Use Oreste Del Buono* takes micro-existences apart and puts them back together, x-rays them, spots their most trivial inconsistencies and makes a point of magnifying them to show how they can turn into dangerous frustrations or become manic fixations. Small everyday

details are exaggerated so that they can be transcended, and more attention can be paid to feelings. The style of the book is accommodating, as is someone who chooses compassion over indignation not as a means to commiserate man, but to resist with him, if possible.

Oreste del Buono (1923-2003) was a writer, translator of authors including Proust, Maupassant, Flaubert, editor and one of the first critics to acknowledge the aesthetic value of comic strips. He was the first director of Linus magazine, and worked for a number of newspapers and magazines including *Corriere della Sera*, *La Stampa* and *Panorama*. His work was translated in English, Spanish and French language.

Reviews available

Manuscript available

Paola Masino

BIRTH AND DEATH OF THE HOUSEWIFE | *Nascita e morte della massaia*
novel

304 pages | 2009

Afterword by Marina Zancan

“Tragic tension and spirit of rebellion fuse with satire (with the housewife licking the floor to check its cleanliness) and an experimental tinge” – *CORRIERE DELLA SERA*

Birth and Death of the Housewife tells the story of the meaningless and shallow existence woman was forced to lead at the time, and considers the role imposed upon her by society and family. Paola Masino's discourse challenges patriarchal authority and the representation of models of femininity by putting into question the ideology of the woman-mother/caretaker of family and angel of domesticity promoted by the Fascist regime. In her subtly humorous style, halfway between fairy tales and real life, draws a metaphysical and surreal portrait of a pioneering feminism. Because of her strong experimental writing – from surrealism to magic realism, from the absurd to the grotesque – her narrative was qualified as "defeatist" by the Fascist regime and she was personally criticized for "writing like a man".

Paola Masino (1908-1989) author of dramas, novels and short stories, wrote for numerous magazines, including *900*, *Epoca* and *Il Tempo*. She met Massimo Bontempelli in 1927; their romantic and professional partnership would last throughout their lives, although it raised quite a few eyebrows in the Fascist regime

and came in for severe censure. Her novels also include *Monte Ignoso* (1931) and *Periferia* (1933) and are translated in English and German.

Reviews available

Manuscript available

Guido Cavani
ZEBIO COTAL

novel

256 pages | 2009

Afterword by Guido Davico Bonino

“The rural novel *Zebio Cotal* is a small masterpiece. A highly literary book, it is an extreme, exhausted product of Verga’s Verism” – PIER PAOLO PASOLINI

Zebio, an Italian peasant, seems to be a shrewd, violent and vicious man. He lives in Pazzano, on the hills near Modena, in a farming family of six dogged by bad luck: Zuello, his first son, runs away from home; another son, Bianco, and *Zebio*’s wife die; yet another son, Pellegrino, vanishes for no apparent reason. *Zebio*, hounded by creditors and detested by his neighbors, flees into the wilderness and ends up straying in the chilly Appennines. *Zebio Cotal* is not a naturalist tranche de vie, but the apology of a desperate loneliness opposing people and things, at the risk one’s very life. In a masterful style both in the lyrical description of nature and in capturing the degradation of soul, Guido Cavani tells the story of the black-and-white asceticism of a menacing and ruthless man, who gains the reader’s sympathy in the end.

Guido Cavani (1897-1967) was a poet and narrator from Modena. In 1958 published as few as 200 copies of *Zebio Cotal* at his expense. The book, widely considered his masterpiece, was re-published by Feltrinelli in 1961 with a foreword by Pier Paolo Pasolini.

Reviews available

Manuscript available

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