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# Selected Poems of Sandro Penna

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UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Selected Poems of Sandro Penna

by

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A THESIS

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation is a selection and translation of the poetry of Sandro Penna (1906 Perugia – 1977 Rome), an important figure in Italian twentieth-century literature who remains largely unknown to English-language readers. Penna’s poems are brief but complete, desirous but self-possessed, traditional but transgressive. In his lifetime, Penna was infamous but intensely private, well-known in Italian literary circles but a non-participant in most aspects of literary and social life. In 1970, Pier Paolo Pasolini named Penna “perhaps the greatest and happiest Italian poet alive,” while the same year Amelia Rosselli described Penna’s behaviour as “a social suicide”. While Penna has for decades been considered a marginal figure in twentieth-century poetry, Italian criticism has recently begun to re-evaluate his place in the expanding modern canon. English translation, however, has not kept up, a trend that this dissertation corrects. One of the major contributions of this translation is its improved rendering of the rhyme, metre and other formal qualities of Penna’s verse, neglected in previous book-length translations, none of which are currently in print. This dissertation also includes a discussion of Penna’s biography, a review of the critical issues in his work, a history of Penna’s translation into English, and a description of the translation process used in this dissertation.

## **Acknowledgements**

Thank you, Robert Majzels, for teaching me how.

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Thank you, Michael Clarke, so very much.

## **Dedication**

A Zia Bianca, per avermi parlato in italiano.

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## **Epigraph**

Living is for loving something.

Sandro Penna

## INTRODUCTION

. . . Amo soprattutto i poeti che non hanno voluto fare del loro nome una parola universale, amo le poeti che nessuno di noi conosce. Fra gli altri, fra i celebri, amo soprattutto chi si è avvicinato alla rinuncia della arte: e solo ha commesso il tradimento verso gli uomini di scrivere ugualmente.

. . . Most of all I love the poets who did not want to make a universal word of their name, I love the poets who none of us know. Among the others, among the famous ones, I love most of all who approached the renunciation of art: and only those who committed the betrayal of men by writing anyway. (Penna, Journal, 3 Aug 1928, 45)

In this excerpt from his 1928 journal, the twenty-two year old Sandro Penna – still a year away from being discovered by the well-known and influential poet, Umberto Saba, and four years from his first publication – identifies with “the poets who none of us know,” while imagining what it might mean to be the kind of “famous” poet whom he admires. His first published verses, when they did come, garnered Penna immediate praise from the literary establishment, even as their author retreated into relative publishing silence for more than a decade, a disappearing act repeated a number of times during Penna’s career. This is perhaps “the renunciation of art,” that he considers, an always-imminent abandonment of literature because what he wrote, “a betrayal of men,” risked and often found the disapproval of many. For this, as well as for the apparent simplicity and traditionalism of his poems, Penna would remain a

marginal figure in the canon of Italian twentieth-century poetry as it was dominated by more visible and visibly “modernist” figures. However, Penna’s fame— in some cases, infamy — persisted throughout his life as a poet who shunned society and its rules. Pier Paolo Pasolini, in a 1970 letter to Penna called him “forse il più grande e il più lieto poeta italiano vivente” (“Perhaps the greatest and happiest Italian poet alive”; Letter to Sandro Penna, Feb. 1970). As definitions of modern poetry have expanded in recent years, Penna’s work has come more clearly into focus, his unique poetics and personality sparking anew the interest of Italian criticism, and I hope, the curiosity of English-language readers. While Penna’s name has not become “a universal word”, it is, for those who know it, the name of the author of verses considered among the most graceful and audacious of the Italian twentieth-century.

## **Life**

Sandro Penna was born June 12, 1906 in the Umbrian city of Perugia. He was the oldest child of Armando and Angela Satta, the owners of a struggling general store. The Pennas — later to include a brother, Beniamino, and a sister, Elda — suffered considerable economic insecurity, leading them to change homes seven times in ten years during Sandro’s youth. When Sandro was sixteen, his mother moved to Rome to live with her sister, leaving her husband and two sons in Perugia. According to Sandro’s diaries, the absence of his mother inspired his first attempts at poetry (Pecora, *Una cheta follia* 35). However, Sandro’s frequent visits to his mother in Rome — the city that would become his permanent home as an adult — as well as to Porto San Giorgio — a seaside town in the Le Marche region where his family often vacationed — were formative experiences for the young Penna.

Penna's youthful reading, recounted in letters and diaries, prominently features the Romantic poet Giacomo Leopardi, composer of *I Pensieri* and *Zibaldone*. At the age of eighteen, with Acruto Vitali, a friend from Porto San Giorgio who shared Penna's literary interests, Penna made a poetic pilgrimage to Leopardi's home in Recanati where the famous poem "l'Infinito" was composed. Penna also read the work of the celebrity decadent figure, Gabriele D'Annunzio, and other poets who were influential in the early twentieth-century, among them Giovanni Pascoli and Giuseppe Ungaretti. Penna admired the author of *The Immoralist*, André Gide, as well as the *enfant terrible* of French poetry, Arthur Rimbaud, about whom in a letter to his friend Acruto, Penna claims, "Rimbaud è ora divenuto realmente il mio Dio . . ." ("Rimbaud has now really become my God . . ."; qtd. in Pecora, *Una cheta follia* 60). Of English language authors, Penna read Oscar Wilde, identifying with his outsider status: "Io sono una stranissima creatura, uno di quegli esseri, forse, che – come dice Oscar Wilde – 'sono fatti per l'eccezione e non per la regola' " ("I am a very strange creature, one of those beings who, perhaps – as Oscar Wilde says – 'are made for the exception, and not the rule' "; qtd. in Pecora, *Una cheta follia* 47). In 1928, the twenty-two year old Penna attended a conference in Perugia held by F.T. Marinetti and the futurists. Penna made a brief note about this experience: ". . . attività spasmodica – coscienza del proprio genio – felicità, giovinezza – scavare la mia originalità con forza, futuristicamente" ("...spasmodic activity – consciousness of own genius – happiness, youth – delve into my originality with strength, futuristically"; qtd. in Pecora, *Una cheta follia* 68). While Penna's mature poetry would not appear particularly futuristic, it does share the futurists' high valuation of youth, sensation, and immediacy.

In 1929, at the age of 23, Penna moved to Rome. Around this time, the poems that would make up his earliest published material start to appear in his notes. That November, under the



pseudonym Bino Antonione, Penna sent some of his poems to Umberto Saba, the well-known author of *Il Canzoniere* [*Song Book*], who was also the owner of a bookshop in Trieste. The young Penna immediately found a sympathetic and enthusiastic reader in Saba, who in his response to the young poet just days later, describes one of Penna's short verses as "deliziosa" ("delightful"; Saba, Letter to Sandro Penna, 5 Dec. 1929, 3). While Saba is less interested in other of Penna's poems, he ends his letter with what must have seemed tremendous praise to the budding poetic talent, revealing at the same time Saba's own charming vulnerability: "la prima delle sue poesie mi è stata come un ramoscello verde che mi fosse pervenuto nel pieno di un rigido inverno" ("the first of your poems was a green shoot that found me in the middle of a frigid winter"; Saba, Letter to Sandro Penna, 5 Dec. 1929, 4). While their correspondence seems to have stopped for the next three years, in 1932 Saba met Penna in Rome, an encounter arranged by the Freudian psychoanalyst Edoardo Weiss, of whom both Saba and Penna were patients. This meeting, in which Penna revealed to Saba that he was Bino Antonione of the earlier letter, renewed the poets' correspondence, and soon after, Saba wrote to the editors of the literary periodicals *L'Italia Letteraria* and *Solaria*, securing Penna's first publications which would come a few months later. Over the course of the following several years, Saba became Penna's "padre letterario" ("literary father"; Deidier 95), offering praise, advice, affection, admonishment, and even money. In 1937, Penna briefly resided with Saba and his family in Trieste, as the young poet continued the long preparations of his first book. While Penna's letters from his correspondence with Saba have not survived, Penna seems to have been a difficult pupil, often diffident of Saba's editorial advice, and unable to ultimately follow Saba's repeated recommendation to find steady employment. However, Saba's autobiographical and musical verse, dealing with quotidian topics in everyday Italian, influenced Penna's work. While in later

years, Penna would offer varying and contradictory accounts of his initial decision to send Saba his poems in 1929 – in one case claiming to have written Saba only because the address of Saba’s bookstore had appeared in a newspaper – Penna’s notebooks suggest that he had already read Saba’s writing by that time (Deidier 35). After the 1930s, the two poets kept a relatively distant, if affectionate, relationship. After Saba’s death in 1957, among the items found in his recent use was Penna’s *Poesie [Poems]* (1957) with the dedication: “A Umberto Saba. Con la speranza che tutto sia limpido come un tempo. Il suo fedele Sandro Penna ” (“To Umberto Saba. In the hope that all is lucid as it once was. Yours faithfully, Sandro Penna”; qtd. in Deidier “Penna tra Saba e Montale” 104-5).

On November 20, 1932 (with money borrowed from Saba) Penna visited Le Giubbe Rosse cafe in Florence, a now-mythical haunt of literary personalities. This was the very day that Penna’s first published poems appeared on the front page of *L’Italia Letteraria*. During this Florentine excursion, Penna met, among others, Eugenio Montale, and the two began a correspondence soon after. Ten years Penna’s senior, Montale was already an influential figure on the Italian literary scene. Like Saba, Montale offered editorial and career advice to Penna; however, Montale’s mentorship was of a different tone than the older Triestine’s. As Penna describes it in one of his letters to Montale: “Il parere di Saba, amoroso, non esclude il tuo, più critico” (“Saba’s loving opinion doesn’t exclude your own, more critical”; Letter to Eugenio Montale, 22 Oct 1934, 35). Nonetheless, the young poet continually searched out affectionate confidence with Montale: “Caro Eusebio, vorrei tanto che mi parlassi un po’ di te” (“Dear Eusebio, I’d really like you to tell me a little about yourself”; Letter to Eugenio Montale, 11 Jun. 1936, 57), while Montale kept a comparatively reserved tone in his missives. Montale admired Penna’s work and encouraged him to enter literary competitions; however, Montale would not

publicly support the elements of Penna's poetry that he found – or thought others would find – objectionable: “E come faccio a farti vincere il premio con *una* di queste poesie di nudi fanciulli?” (“And how can I help you win the prize with *one* of these poems about naked children?”; Letter to Sandro Penna, 13 Mar. 1934, 28). By contrast, Penna's other mentor, Saba, had attempted to quell Penna's concerns on this issue: “Le tue poesie sono così caste, così piene di pudore (è uno dei motive per i quali mi sono tanto piaciute) che non credo possa derivarti nulla di male” (“Your poems are so chaste, so full of modesty [it's one of the reasons that I liked them so much] that I don't believe anything bad can come of them for you; Letter to Sandro Penna, 2 Nov. 1932, 4). Through his connections at the press, Carocci, Montale planned to have published Penna's first book in 1935. While editing the manuscript, however, Montale warned of a potential problem with censorship and recommended the removal of fifteen poems from the book which Carocci would otherwise publish: “le poesie gli piacciono (come molte picciano a me,) ma non c'è di sperare che la censura di qui le *passi*” (“They [Carocci] like the poems (as I like many of them) but there is no hope that the censors here will let them pass”; Letter to Sandro Penna, 15 Mar. 1935, 47). Vexed by this situation, Penna soon fell into silence in his correspondence, all but giving up on publishing the book for the time being, eventually informing Montale: “Non pensare più alle mie poesie” (“Don't think about my poems anymore”; Letter to Eugenio Montale, 2 May 1936, 55). Soon after, Penna and Montale's correspondence stopped definitively. In a letter to Umberto Saba in 1937, while trying to help Penna find employment, an exasperated Montale references Penna in harsh tones, alluding to his “scabroso *penchant*” (“embarrassing *penchant*”) and criticizing him for “una fama della quale può fregarsi solo chi vive per rendita” (“a reputation that only someone who lives from private means can [afford] not to care about”; Letter to Umberto Saba, 15 Oct. 1937, xi-xii). In the decades to

come, as Montale's literary star ascended to the heights of the Nobel Prize, he seemed to erase all connection to the Perugian poet. In 1956, Montale expressed reservations over the awarding of Le Grazie prize to Penna's book *Una strana gioia di vivere* [*A Strange Joy of Living*] (Deidier 65).

Penna's first book *Poesie* [*Poems*] was eventually published in 1939, after Penna's stay with Saba in Trieste and some months in Milan where Penna worked as a copy-editor for the press, Bompiani. While Montale was no longer involved – the book being published through Penna's connections with the Milanese writer and editor Sergio Solmi – *Poems* appeared with Montale's recommended excisions. With its author living in Rome again, now indefinitely, *Poems* received numerous positive reviews, confirming Penna's word-of-mouth notoriety, which was not, apparently, all bad, as it is described by the painter Fernando de Pisis in a letter to Penna: “Sapevo che lei era il nostro migliore poeta ‘giovane’ (si dice così?) lo sapevo da amici che stimo [. . .] ma questo libro me lo riconferma” (“I'd heard that you were our best ‘young’ poet [is that how you say it?] I'd heard it from friends whom I respect [. . .] but this book reconfirms it for me”; Letter to Sandro Penna, 30 Apr. 1940, 61). In constant economic distress, Penna began a small activity dealing books, and later, in full wartime, selling food. Even though Penna had caught the notice of censors at the fascist Ministry of Popular Culture with two poems published in a periodical, from 1939 to 1941 Penna received a small quarterly stipend from the ministry, whose policy it was to support writers favorable to the regime, as well as to pay others to essentially stay silent (Sedita 295). In 1943, Penna took paid work translating books by Paul Claudel and Prosper Mérimée from French. While he remained in Rome for the duration of the war, living with his mother in their shared apartment, very little of wartime life enters Penna's

writing, although a friend recounts having seen Penna handing out partisan pamphlets in Campo de' Fiori square, apparently unaware of the risk he was incurring (Pecora, *Una cheta follia* 177).

A regular in Rome's art galleries, after the war Penna began collecting and selling paintings, including the work of acquaintances Fernando de Pisis and Giorgio de Chirico. Besides the income from publishers and literary awards, art dealing became Penna's main, if infrequent, source of income for the rest of his life. During his most active period as a collector, Penna travelled to Florence and Milan to make acquisitions. Gallery owners sometimes complained that Penna's items lacked proper paperwork, occasionally turning out to be stolen or counterfeit (Pecora, *Una cheta follia* 204). Penna's commercial activity slowed in his old age and he became increasingly destitute. However, at the time of his death Penna had valuable works by Mario Mafai and Mario Schifano hanging on his walls (Pecora, Introduction, *Autobiografia* 7-8) and in a 1972 documentary film, *Umano Non Umano*, an elderly Penna appears in his apartment with piles of canvases stacked to the ceiling.

In 1950, eleven years after his debut, Penna's second book, *Appunti [Notes]* was published. After Penna's long period of silence, few critics noticed this book, with the notable exceptions of Piero Bigongiari and Pier Paolo Pasolini. The public and stridently political Pasolini – poet, critic, novelist, and filmmaker – was in some ways the opposite of the reclusive Penna. However, the two poets, who both lived in Rome, were friends and frequent companions, a bond strengthened by their shared experiences of homosexuality. Pasolini would become one of Penna's advocates in the years that followed, which saw Penna's reputation growing within Italy's changing political, economic, and cultural climate. In 1956, Penna's third book, *Una strana gioia di vivere [A Strange Joy of Living]* received significant critical praise, including another elegant review by Pasolini, and was awarded the Le Grazie literary prize. This was

followed in 1957 by the publication of *Poesie* [*Poems*], which was edited and arranged by Pasolini himself. This book contained all of Penna's poetry published until that point, as well as unpublished early works, including seven of the poems that had been removed from the manuscript of *Poems* (1939). Among polemics, scandal and national press, *Poems* was awarded the Premio Viareggio, sharing this prize with Pasolini's *Cenere di Gramsci* and Alberto Mondadori's *Quasi una vicenda*. Among the judges supporting Penna's book was the influential Giuseppe Ungaretti. On this wave of attention, encouraged by Pasolini and others, Penna published his third book in as many years, *Croce e Delizia* [*Cross and Delight*] in 1958.

In 1956, Penna met Raffaele Cedrino, at the time a teenager, who would eventually come to live with Penna in his apartment in Via Mole de' Fiorentini. The two maintained a difficult relationship until 1970. This period – the 1960s – was a time of relative publishing silence for Penna, even as his reputation and demand for his work grew. The poet Amelia Rosselli – who knew Penna personally and in the late sixties wrote to Pasolini attempting to secure a new edition of Penna's *Poems* to help the struggling poet (Rosselli, Letters to Pasolini, 10 Oct 1968, 57-9 and 19 Jan 1969, 67-70) – interprets Penna's silence as “un suicidio sociale” (“a social suicide”), a withdrawal from society and the act of someone who “non vuol farsi incastrare della letteratura adatta al uso scolastico e commemorativo...” (“does not want to let himself be trapped by literature suitable for academic and commemorative uses”; “Sandro Penna” 4). In 1970, Penna published *Tutte le poesie*, [*All The Poems*], a new and collected works, again including early unpublished materials. This highly-anticipated book was awarded the Premio Fiuggi. In 1973, Penna published *Un po' di febbre* [*A Little Fever*], a collection of short fiction, memoir, and travel writing from the 1930s and 40s, Penna's only book of prose.

In his final years, Penna was beset by health problems, aggravated by his precarious economic circumstances, hypochondriac tendencies, and dependency on sleep and pain medications. He rarely left home, although he received visitors and spoke with friends in phone conversations that could last hours (Pecora *Una chetta follia* 216). With the help of friends, including Natalia Ginzburg, Penna secured a small monthly stipend from his publisher, Garzanti, and through a call for donations in the newspaper *Paese Sera*, a significant sum was raised for the ailing Penna. In 1976, *Stranezze* [*Strangenesses*] was published, a large new collection of poetry, again culled from older materials, edited by critic Cesare Garboli. On January 21, 1977, Penna died of heart failure, a few days before *Strangenesses* would win the Premio Bagutta. In February of that year, a small collection of poems which Penna had approved for publication, titled *Il viaggiatore insonne*, [*The Sleepless Traveller*], edited by Giovanni Raboni, was published. The large quantity of material found in Penna's apartment after his death – including diaries, letters, and manuscripts – has led to a number of posthumous publications, notably *Penna Papers* edited by Cesare Garboli, who is also the editor of Penna's collected poems *Poesie* [*Poems*], the latest edition of which was published in 2000. Elio Pecora, the author of Penna's biography, *Sandro Penna: Una cheta follia*, has also edited *Confuso sogno*, a collection of previously unpublished juvenilia. Pecora has also edited *Una felicità possibile: Appunti di diario*, selections of Penna's diaries, as well as *Autobiografia al magnetofono*, the transcriptions of autobiographical voice recordings that Penna made in his final years. Among the works published by Roberto Deidier, the current curator of Penna's papers, is Saba's letters to Penna, Penna's correspondence with Eugenio Montale, as well as a philological analysis of Penna's archive, much of which is still unpublished, titled *Le parole nascoste: le carte ritrovate di Sandro Penna*.

## Critical Issues

What struck Penna's earliest critics and perhaps still strikes readers today, is the "grazia" ("grace"; Solmi 132) of Penna's poetry. This "grace" is maybe best understood as a combination of technical skill and lightness of tone, even while sometimes depicting dark subject matter. Sergio Solmi succinctly explains this feature of Penna's work in his 1939 review of Penna's first book, *Poems*: "lo sforzo, lo scrupolo formale – e ci sono – riescono a farsi dimenticare nel tono naturale e sfumato di una voce" ("the effort and formal scrupulousness – which indeed there are – succeed in being forgotten in the natural and soft tone of a voice"; Solmi 132). In a review of Penna's second book, *Notes* (1950), Piero Bigongiari offers a phrase that has become among the most quotable in Pennian criticism, describing Penna's poetry as "un fiore senza gambo visibile: per noi spettatori uno di quegli intensi fiori che sembrano galleggiare sull'acqua" ("a flower without a visible stem: for us spectators, one of those intense flowers that seem to float on water; 47). While Bigongiari's comment has usually been read as a description of the immediate and obvious beauty of Penna's verse, his remark also alludes to the obscured realities beneath, the "stem" conspicuous in its absence, what Penna in his 1956 book *A Strange Joy of Living* calls "le radici [...] del mio male" ("the root [. . .] of my suffering"; "XVII. Cercando del mio male le radici," *Poems* [2000] 217 ).

Pier Paolo Pasolini sheds light on this aspect of Penna's work in a 1957 review of *A Strange Joy of Living*, seeing in Penna's writing "un strutturale processo eufemistico," ("a structural euphemistic process"), a technique of alluding to, rather than depicting outright, sexual or otherwise illicit content ("*Una strana gioia di vivere*" 398). Pasolini cites the following poem as an example:



Come è bello seguirti  
o giovine che ondeggi  
calmo nella città notturna.  
Se ti fermi in un angolo, lontano  
io resterò, lontano  
dalla tua pace, – o ardente  
solitudine mia.

How fine it is to follow you  
o young one who wavers  
calmly in the nocturnal city.  
If you stop in a corner, far off  
I'll be, far off  
from your peace, — o my  
ardent solitude. (“IV” *Selected Poems* 147-8)

This poem describes a drunk young man who urinates on the street, but without the euphemistic veil, Penna’s eroticization of this moment would seem too ignoble for poetry. Many poems in Penna’s oeuvre describe sexually-charged encounters with young men and boys. For Pasolini, Penna’s difference, sexual and otherwise, can be read through these euphemisms and the sensual qualities of his verse: “[Penna] produrre in modo diverso: qualcosa come [. . .] se un ciliegio, con scorno dell’ortolano, producesse delle ciliege bellissime con sapore di pere o di arancie” (“[Penna] produces in a different way: something like[...] if a cherry tree, with the scorn of the farmer, produced very beautiful cherries with the flavour of pears or oranges” ; “*Una*

*strana gioia di vivere*” 397). Pasolini’s review encourages us to read Penna not just formally, but historically as well, to extend our reading to the condition of exclusion that produced the poems, to the person who is “troppo originale” (“too original”) to be expressed within the poems themselves (“*Una strana gioia di vivere*” 404).

Penna’s poetry, in fact, has a place in Pasolini’s larger arguments about experimentalism which Pasolini detailed in the late 1950s. In 1957, the same year that Pasolini reviews *A Strange Joy of Living*, he criticizes “neosperimentalismo” (“neo-experimentalism”; “La libertà stilistica” 143), the work of many of the poets who would come to be included in the *I Novissimi* anthology and to make up the collective Il Gruppo 63. Pasolini sees neo-experimentalism as a continuation of a failed twentieth-century poetics that includes decadentism, crepuscularism, futurism, and hermeticism, all of which increased class-distinctions by elevating the artist/individual above society in various ways. For its part, neo-experimentalism produces “lingua per poesia” (“language for poetry”), an abnormal elevation of language resulting in, for Pasolini, an undesirable loss of comprehensibility and social function (“La libertà stilistica” 145). In contrast to writing that would continue this twentieth-century practice, Pasolini suggests the “riadozione di modi stilistici pre-novecenteschi” (“readoption of pre-twentieth century stylistic modes”), because “tali modi stilistici tradizionali si rendono. . . mezzi di uno sperimentare che, nella coscienza ideologica, è assolutamente, invece, anti-tradizionalista” (“such stylistic modes become [. . . ] tools of an experimentation that, in ideological consciousness, is actually absolutely anti-traditional”; “La libertà stilistica” 147). In his review of *A Strange Joy of Living*, Pasolini exalts the value of Penna, who in the middle of the twentieth-century writes “sotto il segno di una poetica della restaurazione, la cui lingua si rinnova in lui, la sua esistenza” (“under the sign of a poetics of restoration, whose language is renewed in him, in his existence”; “*Una*

*strana gioia di vivere*” 404). For Pasolini, Penna’s brand of non-conformity with dominant literary and social values was unique and important. In 1970, after a decade in which neo-experimentalism dominated poetic debates (Verbaro 88), Pasolini exalts Penna in a letter, calling him “forse il più grande e il più lieto poeta italiano vivente” (“maybe the greatest and the happiest Italian poet alive” ; “Letter to Sandro Penna”). For Pasolini, Penna is a figurehead of resistance, “un santo anarchico e un precursore a ogni contestazione passiva e assoluta.” (“an anarchic saint and a precursor to every protest, passive and absolute”; “Letter to Sandro Penna”).

Pasolini’s reading makes potentially transgressive, therefore, the qualities of Penna’s work that had always seemed traditional, or even anachronistic. Early readers described Penna’s poetry as “greca”, (“greek”) perhaps for the implied sexuality of its author, as well as for its “brevità senza durezza, che ho sentito chiamare di tipo greco” (“brevity without harshness, which I have heard called of a greek type”; Barile, Letter to Sandro Penna, 8 Aug 1938, 52). Penna is also often described as writing in the Petrarchan tradition of love poetry, well after that tradition was supposed to be exhausted. Indeed much of Penna’s work is obsessed with desire, “una riflessione sul desiderio” (“a reflection upon desire”; Garboli vii), and in his verse traditional elements of prosody, such as rhyme and metre, are more obvious than in the work of most other twentieth-century Italian poets. Penna was aware of his reputation as a poet of tradition – he begins one of his poems “ ‘poeta esclusivo d’amore’ / mi hanno chiamato” (“ ‘poet exclusively of love’ / they called me”; *Poems* 344) – an association he did not refute. In the 1938 promotional copy for his first book, Penna describes himself writing with “una grecità modernissima” (“a very modern greekness”; 96), thereby suggesting that he did not believe ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ were mutually-exclusive categories.

However, Penna's obvious appeal to poetic tradition would marginalize him in the critical climate of modernism. Francesca Napoletano summarizes the situation well:

In anni di sperimentazione linguistica e di contestazione del canone poetico tradizionale, Penna esibisce un amore e un rispetto per la tradizione che possono farlo apparire un epigono, un attardato, estraneo alla modernità.

In years of linguistic experimentation and contestation of the traditional poetic canon, Penna exhibits a love and a respect for tradition that can make him seem like an imitator, a late-comer, an outsider to modernity. (72)

Penna's poetry – modest in tone and scope – does not seem driven by the Baudelairian, “trouver le nouveau” or Poundian “make it new,” and seems relatively unconcerned with performing its difference from the past or from others. Rather, the Pennian personality already knows, *a priori*, that he is different, as the epigrammatic opening to his 1950 book *Notes* demonstrates:

Felice chi è diverso  
essendo egli diverso.

Ma guai a chi è diverso  
essendo egli comune.

Happy is he who's different  
really being different.

But cursed is he who's different  
really being common. (*Selected Poems* 108-9)

In this poem difference can be a curse if it excludes one from a “common” life one would otherwise share. Indeed, Penna’s speaker often looks in upon quotidian reality with envy for what he cannot seem to participate in. The poem’s simplicity, its “common” language, suggests a desire for communicability and belonging achieved through poetry, rather than a desire for difference which is already acutely felt.

In the introduction to Penna’s collected poems, Cesare Garboli underlines the dissimilar fates of Penna and Montale, as Montale became a central figure of twentieth-century Italian poetry and Penna did not.:

Penna è stato, in questo secolo, il solo poeta italiano che abbia parlato a gola spiegata, dicendo chiaramente chi era e che cosa voleva, in contrasto con la grande e vincente formula montaliana di negatività.

Penna was, in this century, the only poet to speak at the top of his lungs, saying clearly who he was and what he wanted, in contrast with the great, victorious Montalian formula of negativity. (vii)

While I would not argue for the positivity of Penna’s writing, here implied by the contrast with Montale’s “negativity,” the differences between the two poets are intriguing, given the correspondence between them in the 1930s, and the silence that would ultimately separate them. It is critical commonplace to suggest that the loss of the stable referentiality of words, a product of the radical changes language undergoes in the twentieth-century, produced in Montale’s work something akin to the poetics of the objective correlative, which Montale borrows from T.S. Eliot and indeed uses in his own critical writings (*Sulla Poesia*). This poetics places a high degree of significance on the word as its own unique, peculiar, material object, and is perhaps

most obvious in the rich, difficult, and highly specific vocabulary of Montale's first book, *Ossi di Seppia*. This poetics can also be seen as an attempt to ground poetry in the increasingly authoritative, supposedly "objective" discourse of science and its observation of the material world. Furthermore, it is important to notice the implied audience of such poetry, which is one interested, educated, and specialized enough to appreciate such texts, which is the basis of a class-oriented critique of modernist poetry which both Pasolini and Rosselli put forth. Penna's poetry is quite different than this. Penna's poetry does not produce its effects through unique, specific, specialized words; rather, Penna's poetry is more interested in the interplay of words, and especially in their sounds. Penna's vocabulary – instead of resonating in its objective, material weight, seems to disappear in chiming, repetitive resonances, producing musical effects and phenomenological impressions on readers. Penna's work, promising ease and pleasure, is ultimately designed to charm and seduce, displaying a different relationship to its readership, and perhaps more of an interest in a "common" reader. While part of this effect is produced by the apparent simplicity of such poetry, the results are in fact produced by complex arrangements and hard won reworkings. Furthermore, such poetry, based less on individual words and more on their sonic interplay, is difficult to translate.

It is safe to say that Penna did not enjoy writing literary criticism, since he only published seven short book reviews in his life, all of them between 1932-3, around the time of his debut on the literary scene. However, Penna demonstrates awareness of the debates implicit in modern poetry and a self-consciousness about his place within them, especially in his journals. There Penna critiques the monumental modernist Giuseppe Ungaretti, "Ungaretti è insomma il miglior risultato della poesia futurista e nulla più" ("Ungaretti is therefore the best result of futurist poetry and nothing more"; *Journal*, 16 Oct. 1930; 30), essentially dismissing what Penna

considers the excessive formalistic concerns of avantgarde poetry generally: “chi ha potuto credere a questa religione della forma ...?” (who could believe in this religion of form. . . ?”); *Journal*, 16 Oct. 1930; 28). Rather, Penna locates his “faith” somewhere else: “ci vuole ‘ostinazione,’ questo ‘amore’ o ‘fede’ in se stesso, cio è credere a questo mondo...” (“It requires ‘obstinancy,’ this ‘love’ or ‘faith’ in oneself, that is, to believe in this world . . .”; *Journal*, 1 Apr 1930; 25).

Penna’s “obstinancy” – the insistence on writing about oneself and one’s “world” – resembles the “honest poetry” expoused by Umberto Saba in a tract called “What Remains For Poets To Do” (525). While this manifesto-of-sorts was not published during Saba’s lifetime, it describes an important element of his poetics that may shed light on Penna’s poetics as well. Saba, arguing through examples, insists that the poetry of Gabriele D’Annunzio is dishonest: “he exaggerates or actually pretends to passions and admirations that have never been part of his temperament” (525), while the work of Alessandro Manzoni is honest because of “his rare and constant care to say no word that does not perfectly correspond to his vision” (525). While showing Saba’s preference for more traditional prosody, this is also a critique of poetry concerned only with form, because even while “dishonest verse, taken in isolation, may be superior...” (526) it fails as honest poetry if it does not correspond to the personality of the poet. To write honest poetry, as Saba describes it, requires introspection and critical self-awareness, which Saba illustrates through one of his poems he includes in the essay: “I believed it sweet to dream; / but the dream is a mirror, that shows / me whole . . .” (530). Here, “honest poetry” seems to intersect with Saba’s interest in psychoanalysis, which came to influence other Italian writers, including Pasolini and Elsa Morante, partly due to Saba’s work (Cadel). Saba and Penna both, as mentioned above, underwent analysis with Edoardo Weiss, and Penna uses the

language of psychoanalysis in his journals: “sento che il migliore di me è nella inconfondibile sottigliezza dell’autoanalisi” (“I feel the best of me is in the unmistakable subtlety of self-analysis”; Journal, 1 Apr 1930; 24). When Penna compares himself to Saba, his “literary father” (Deidier, *Le parole* 95), Penna finds himself superior; Saba “solo può riconoscere [la vita] quando ne abbia i ‘lunghi’ elementi” (“can only recognize [life] when he has its ‘long’ elements”; Journal, 16 Oct. 1930; 27). Penna critiques the relatively protracted form of many of Saba’s works, while on the otherhand, Penna finds that his own poems operate through a more immediate mechanism; “poesia, per me, è insomma questa illuminazione inconfondibile con altri stati d’animo . . .” (“In short, poetry is for me this illumination, unmistakable with other states of mind”; Journal, 16 Oct. 1930; 26). This evokes Rimbaud, of course, but here again is Ungaretti, the author of the famous couplet: “M’illumino / d’immenso” (“I illuminate / with immensity”; “Mattino” 46) and the Italian avantgarde modernism that he represents. One way to read Penna’s work, in short, is that it shares elements of Saba’s honest poetry and its tradition-inflected prosody, while passing through a partial formal fragmentation that favours brevity and immediacy, more typical of a modernist poet like Ungaretti.

While Penna’s poetry is clearly steeped in the poetics of his own time, his poems often create a sense of timelessness which beguiles readers and challenges those historicizing his work. The novelist Natalia Ginzburg in her 1977 preface to *The Sleepless Traveller* suggests that Penna’s poems are often set in “un imperfetto senza fine” (“an imperfect without end”; 13), referring to the Italian verb tense that depicts incomplete or on-going action in the past. For Daniele Marcheschi, Penna’s poetry is “ciò che ferma lo scorrere del tempo” (“that which stops the passage of time”; 115). Adding to the sense of frozen time in Penna’s work is its continual return to similar scenes and situations. Perhaps most notably, the “fanciullo” (“boy”) regularly



appears in Penna's poems, a figure with a tradition in Italian poetry, including in the work of Montale, Saba, and D'Annunzio. Deidier, however, suggests Penna's fanciullo is in the "grande archetipo leopardiano" ("great Leopardian archetype") in which "fanciullezza e antichità sono attributi complementari, reciproci" ("childhood and antiquity are complementary, reciprocal attributes"; *Le parole nascoste* 24). The eternally youthful boy deemphasizes linear, progressive time, emphasizing, instead, cyclical time. Dates are not appended to Penna's individual poems, which are instead characterized by signs of cyclicity, like the season or time of day. As Pasolini has noticed, the speaker in Penna's work continually undergoes a cyclical transformation from anguish, to euphoria, and back again ("*Una strana gioia di vivere*" 402); Garboli calls this a "pendolarità di felicità e frustrazione" ("pendolarity of happiness and frustration"; Introduction viii).

A number of critics, including De Robertis as early as 1957 (137), have suggested that Penna's work should be read as a *canzoniere* ("song book") for its unity of form, as well as for its autobiographical themes, as if Penna throughout his life were actually writing one book. The *canzoniere* is Petrarchan, of course, but a more recent example is the work of Umberto Saba, who published, updated and republished his own *Canzoniere* numerous times throughout his life. Penna, too, often published older material, retrieving and refurbishing notes from decades earlier for new publication, adding them to previously published material, as happens in *Poems* (1957) and *All The Poems* (1970), and *Strangenesses* (1976). This publishing habit, as well as the confused and dispersed nature of his papers, has made it difficult in some cases for philologists to date Penna's poetry with certainty (Raboni 156-7 and Deidier *Le parole nascoste*, 98-115), complicating the insertion of Penna's work into a historical timeline.

## Language and Style

Penna's poems tend to be short, often no longer than a stanza or two, and become noticeably more epigrammatic over his career. While Penna sometimes writes a hendecasyllabic line, the traditional eleven-syllable line used by Dante, Petrarch and Leopardi, Penna's poems rarely achieve this metre perfectly and never maintain it throughout a poem. Additionally, Penna sometimes use a septenary line, a seven-syllable line also prevalent in Italian tradition, but again, he does so with extreme irregularity. The same is typically true of Penna's use of end rhyme, which occurs frequently but unpredictably. The poet and critic Giovanni Raboni has called Penna's formal approach "un gioco lieve e catastrofico della trasgressione stilistica" ("a delicate and catastrophic game of stylistic transgression"; 148), in which tradition is neither forgotten nor followed. Penna's loose observance of tradition, however, allows his poems to resonate sonically in other ways. The following piece from *Poems* (1939) illustrates Penna's prosody well:

Se la notte d'estate cede un poco

Su la riva del mare sorgeranno

– nati in silenzio come i suoi colori –

Uomini nudi e leggeri che vanno.

Ma come il vento muove il mare, muovono

Anche, gridando, gli uomini le barche.

Sorge sull'ultimo sudore il sole.

If the summer night yields a little

they will rise onto the shore

– born in silence like the sea’s colours –

naked and nimble men who go.

But the men, like the wind moves the sea

also, shouting, move the boats.

With the last of their sweat, the sun rises. (*Selected Poems* 50-1)

Here the only hendecasyllabic line is the second (“Su la riva del mare sorgeranno”), a canonical hendecasyllable *a maiore* (“greater”) because a stress falls on the sixth syllable. However, the first, fourth, sixth and seventh lines approach this metre, each being twelve syllables long. The second line also initiates the only perfect rhyme in the poem, which comes with the fourth line (“sorgeranno” / “vanno”), while there is an off-rhyme between the first line and fifth line, (“poco”/“muovono”). However, like the men emerging from the sea, other sound effects surface in this poem. This is the case in the fifth line: “Ma come il vento muove il mare, muovono,” which is rich with assonance (“come” / “vento” / “muove”), alliteration (“ma”, “muove” / “mare” / “muovono”), internal half- rhyme (“come” / “muove” / “mare”). The final line, “Sorge sull’ultimo sudore il sole”, is also particularly loaded with sibilance (“sorge” / “sull’” / “sudore” / “sole”) and internal half- rhyme (“sorge”, “sole”, “sudore”). This loosening or fragmentation of traditional metre and rhyme allows Penna’s verse to resonate on other axes as well, heightening the experience of internal rhyme, half-rhyme, assonance, consonance and alliteration.

Another prominent feature of Penna's verse is its simple vocabulary. A quantitative analysis of Penna's lexicon finds 2, 203 different words in 15, 057 total usages, making Penna's vocabulary the second smallest among twentieth-century Italian poets (Mongiat 220). Penna's vocabulary reveals, perhaps, the influence of poet Vincenzo Cardarelli, who himself has the smallest vocabulary of Italian poets of the twentieth-century (Mongiat 220), and who a young Penna read carefully, according to his journals (Journal, 16 Oct. 1930; 29). Penna's most commonly occurring nouns are quotidian and familiar: *amore* ("love"), *sole* ("sun"), *vita* ("life"), *luce* ("light"), *cuore* ("heart"), *occhio* ("eye"), *cosa* ("thing"), *sera* ("evening"), *mare* ("sea"). So too are his favorite adjectives: *lieto* ("happy"), *dolce* ("sweet"), *bello* ("beautiful"). Cesare Garboli comments that Penna succeeds in "riducendo a pochi inimitabili suoni una tastiera letteraria" ("reducing a literary keyboard to a few, inimitable sounds"; Introduction xi). Penna's vocabulary certainly resonates differently than, for example, the high-cultural Montale, who, at the other end of this spectrum, uses the largest vocabulary of twentieth-century poets (Mongiat 220-1). As Amelia Rosselli suggests, Penna's poems are "leggibili, anche a persone non colte" ("readable, even for uneducated people"; "*Sandro Penna*" 4).

However, in another sign of his traditionalism, Penna will occasionally use archaic words and literary language. This is the case with *fanciullo* ("boy"), which, as already mentioned, is a word with literary overtones. It appears eighty-eight times in Penna's poetic oeuvre, the third most frequent of any noun in Penna's poems (Mongiat 220). The recurrence of this word speaks to the importance of this figure in Penna's literary world; furthermore, its appearance among the more quotidian vocabulary accentuates its special status, giving it an aura that indeed the *fanciulli* in Penna's works exhibit. Among traditional literary touches, quite rare for poetry of the second half of the twentieth century, is Penna's occasionally archaic orthography (for example,

“ei” for *egli* [“him”; “Piove sulla città. Piove sul campo,” *Poems* 35 ], “pur” for *pure* [“indeed”; *È pur dolce il ritrovarsi,*” *Poems* 48]), which may help achieve a rhythmical effect, or simply contribute to an aura of literariness. Penna’s work is almost entirely free of dialectal usages, and he never uses his own Umbrian dialect. This has led Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo to nominate Penna “certo l’esempio di monolinguisimo lirico più rigoroso ed assoluto del nostro Novecento. È un linguaggio insieme letterario e nobilmente popolare” (“certainly the most rigorous and absolute example of lyrical monolingualism in our twentieth-century. His language is both literary and nobly popular”; Mengaldo 736).

Like his diction, the syntax in Penna’s poetry is simple, yet maintains elements of literariness. In Penna’s poems statements tend to be linear, rather than subordinated. They are paratactically arranged, generally proceeding through juxtaposition, rather than through causation.

Se dietro la finestra illuminata  
dorme un fanciullo, nella notte estiva,  
e sognerà...

Passa veloce un treno  
e va lontano.

Il mare è come prima.

If behind the illuminated window  
a boy sleeps, in the summer evening,  
then he’ll dream...

A train passes fast

and goes far.

The sea remains the same. (*Selected Poems* 54-5)

This poem moves between three scenes – the sleeping boy, the passing train, and the unmoving sea – juxtaposing these images without determining relationships between them. Girardi has noticed in Penna’s work “lo stile nominale” (“a noun style”), in which Penna juxtaposes nouns rather than employs verbs to indicate movement (61). The conjunction “se” (“if”), which is used extensively in Penna’s work, suggests the existence of the “fanciullo” (“boy”) conditionally, establishing an atmosphere of uncertainty. Overall, there is the impression in Penna’s works that things do not happen, but that they simply are, or might be.

Lately, the relationship of Penna’s poetry to his prose, especially his book of published prose *A Little Fever*, has been a topic of discussion among critics. Comberiati (*Tra prosa e poesia*) and Marchesi (“Tra poesia e prosa”) have shown the poetic qualities of Penna’s prose and prosaic qualities of Penna’s poetry, supporting the claim to Penna’s modernity through his interrogation of these generic boundaries. As the letters from Saba show, some of Penna’s earliest poems were prose poems which Saba discouraged him from writing and that Penna, in fact, never published (Letter to Sandro Penna. 5 Dec. 1929, 3). Roberto Deidier, the current custodian of Penna’s archive, has argued that many of Penna’s poems were derived from prose notes. The note, (or *Notes*, the title of Penna’s second poetry collection) is an important form for Penna:

Ed è proprio l’appunto in prosa a rispondere a questo primissimo impulso espressivo appunto al quale darà un’impronta ritmica, introducendo variante e apponendo le linee oblique che delimitano i versi, in uno scambio reciproco tra i due generi.

And it is exactly the note in prose that responds to this very first expressive impulse; a note to which he will give a rhythmical imprint, introducing variations and appending oblique lines, delimiting the verses in a reciprocal exchange among the two genres.

(Deider 86)

The results of this “rhythmical imprint,” include the occasional inversions or alterations in otherwise prosaic word order, which function, as Mongiat has noticed, to “impreziosire” (“make precious”) Penna’s syntax (245). For example, a notable inversion occurs in one of Penna’s most well-known poems: “Vivere vorrei addormentato / entro la dolce rumore della vita” (“I would like to live asleep / within the sweet noise of life”; *Poems* 59). “Vivere vorrei”, which would be *vorrei vivere* in standard syntax, lends the line a noble poetic air and defamiliarizes the phrase, perhaps suggesting the otherworldiness of being asleep.

### **Penna in English Translation**

Penna’s fate in English translation has not been as fortunate as other Italian poets of the twentieth-century. This is not surprising, due to the marginal place in the canon Penna has occupied. According to Robin Healy’s *Twentieth-Century Italian Literature in English Translation: An Annotated Bibliography, 1929-1997*, the three most translated twentieth-century Italian poets until 1997 were Eugenio Montale (26 books), Salvatore Quasimodo (9 books), and Giuseppe Ungaretti (6 books). Recently the works of postmodern poets have caught the interest of translators, publishers, and academics working in English. For example, Antonio Porta, a poet in the *I Novissimi* anthology of 1960s experimental poetry, has had five book-length translations since 1986. Amelia Rosselli has recently garnered significant attention as well, with book-length translations in 2005, 2009 and 2012. For his part, Sandro Penna has had three book-length

translations, but none in the last twenty years. The first was a selection of poetry translated by W.S. Di Piero titled *This Strange Joy*, published by Ohio State University Press in 1982. The second was *Confused Dream*, published in New York and Madrid by Hanuman Books in 1988. The third was a selection of poetry and prose translated by Blake Robinson called *Remember Me, God of Love*, published by Carnacet Press in the UK in 1993. Di Piero's and Blake's works I will discuss in more detail below, while I will not comment at length on Scrivani's translation *Confused Dream*. His book is a translation of *Confuso sogno*, a posthumous publication of Penna's juvenilia edited by Elio Pecora, which, while interesting in the context of Penna's entire corpus, does not present Penna's best qualities to readers unfamiliar with his work. This was a less-than-ideal book to translate, and the English *Confused Dream* passed almost without critical notice.

W.S. Di Piero's *This Strange Joy* is a selection and translation of poems from Penna's major collections, with the exception of *The Sleepless Traveller*. In a brief foreword, Di Piero acknowledges that Penna is "unlike other modern poets," but he avoids the dehistoricizing impulse of Pennian criticism of the era, relating instead Penna's work to other twentieth-century poets, including Umberto Saba and Guido Gozzano. *This Strange Joy* was well-received, garnering favorable reviews from Dana Gioia, Brian Swann, and Hermann Haller, among others. In 1996 it was the winner of the inaugural edition of the Raizzis/De Palchi Award for translation of modern Italian poetry. However, an unattributed review in *Choice* offers some criticism of Di Piero's translations: "In its overt simplicity, Penna's verse is rich in sound patterns, external and internal rhyme, repetitions. . . these poetic elements are occasionally lost". In 2000 in a short note about his translation, Di Piero expresses some regret at his decision not to do more to reproduce the formal qualities of Penna's verse, such as metre and rhyme. At the time, he feared



this might have seemed like “frivolezza” (“frivolousness”; “Reviewing Penna” 155). Di Piero ends with this message “al nuovo traduttore che vorrà ritradurre Penna, consiglio a fare tutto il possibile per ottenere, in inglese, l’equivalente dinamismo formale che c’è nella sua poesia” (“to the new translator who wants to retranslate Penna, I suggest doing everything possible to obtain, in English, the equivalent formal dynamism that there is in his poetry”; 155).

Blake Robinson’s 1993 translation of Penna’s work was less successful critically than Di Piero’s. It received only one review, which spared the translator the brunt of the criticism, blaming instead the “extreme chastity and sparseness of Penna’s own diction” (Davis 26). Robinson’s book, however, has a number of its own flaws, some of which were probably beyond the translator’s control. For example, Robinson’s book lacks the facing Italian text. Also, it does not include Penna’s most notable works, perhaps because many of Penna’s major poems had already been translated by Di Piero, and Robinson could not retranslate them for copyright reasons. Instead Robinson dedicates half of his book to Penna’s prose, which is a very small part of Penna’s overall output. Like Di Piero’s work, Robinson’s translations do not rhyme or seem particularly concerned to reproduce other formal qualities of Penna’s verse. However, Robinson also often fails to render the tone of Penna’s work. For example, the line “forse la lenta tua malinconia si perde” (Penna, *Poems* 184), Robinson translates as “maybe this sluggish glumness you’ve got” (39). The translator seems to notice that the original phrase is itself slow and drawn out, but his attempt to reproduce this effect corrodes the cool tone of the original.

### **Translating Penna**

I have made representative selections from all of Penna’s major works using Cesare Garboli’s 2000 edition of Penna’s collected poems as my base text and taking particular care to

include poems that have been most discussed in criticism. Because of this, there are more selections from Penna's books considered the most successful, for example, *Poems* (1939) and *A Strange Joy of Living* (1956), and fewer from *Strangenesses* (1976). The present selection does not offer translations of Penna's prose works, an interesting but marginal part of his corpus, which was, in any case, over-represented in Robinson's 1993 translation. A translation of Penna's selected prose – including epistolary and diaristic writing – might be appropriate for an ideal future public interested in further study of Penna. The present selection will serve, hopefully, as a re-introduction to the best works of a poet who has been all but forgotten in North America in the last thirty years.

These translations were completed with the understanding, imparted by my supervisor, Robert Majzels, and reinforced by Di Piero's note to the "new translator of Penna," that a successful translation of Penna's verse should reproduce as much as possible the formal features of the originals while remaining true to the sense of the poems. A poem produces effects upon a reader in a number of ways, including through its sound, its sense, its duration, and its look on the page, and these translations take account of these characteristics, weighing their relative importance in each poem translated. In some cases, a relatively straight-forward rendering of the sense of the poems seemed to most accurately portray the concerns of the original poem. In most cases, however, especially in Penna's most epigrammatic and rhyming poems, the sonic qualities were absolutely integral to producing a translation that could produce something akin to the effect of the original. In these cases, some derivation from the first or second dictionary definitions of words in the interest of finding rhythms and rhymes were justified. Just as Penna's poems, according to Roberto Deidier's investigations, began as prose notes before passing through a process of poeticization (*Le parole nascoste* 86), my translations began as relatively

prosaic renderings of the originals. On later readings of the Italian poems, I quantified their formal elements, noting syllable count, end rhyme, half rhyme, internal rhyme, assonance, consonance, repetition, and any other noticeable feature. Then began the long process of attempting to reproduce these features in English. I stacked line variations one on top of the other, alternating diction and syntax until the desired effect – or something close to it – could be found. Concessions had to be made; for example, accepting half-rhymes where the original rhymed fully, or rhyming in a different pattern than the original, if this did not seem to contradict the intention of the original poem. Here is an example:

Tu dici “fuga”, ma perchè non piove  
su i mietitori scalzi lungo la collina?  
Lucono le fontane di San Pietro. Dove  
la fuga. Il Colosseo è pavida rovina.

“Escape” you say, but why isn’t it raining  
on the barefoot harvesters along the rise?  
The fountains in St. Peter’s Square are glittering.  
Escape where. The Coliseum is an awful ruin. (220-1)

In this translation I approximate the rhyme scheme of the original quatrain A/B/A/B with half-rhyme and consonance (“raining”/“glittering”) and (“rise”/“ruin”). The first line of the original is a canonical hendecasyllable *a minore* (“lesser”, meaning there is a stress on the fourth syllable) and there is also the obvious internal rhyme “perchè”/“piove”. In the first line of my translation, I do my best to achieve a sense of traditional regularity, beginning with three iambs: “ ‘Escape’

you say, but why . . .”, while producing assonance between “escape” /”say”/ ”raining.” In my translation, I gain a noticeable rhyme between words on the third and fourth lines:

“Square”/”where,” perhaps compensating for the loss of the internal rhyme on the first line of the original. In the majority of these translations, the content of individual lines was generally maintained, unless the transfer from Italian to English syntax made it sound inappropriately awkward. Sometimes I adjust the content of a line to another line to solve a problem involving form, as I do in this poem: “Dove / la fuga” [3-4] becomes “Escape where” [4] to achieve the half-rhyme “raining/glittering”. Since the average Italian word has more syllables than in English, in most poems the English lines were shorter than their Italian counterparts, although in the translations I do attempt to maintain the internal proportions of the originals. In choices about diction and syntax, I was conscious of not disrupting Penna’s usual simplicity and straightforwardness, unless Penna’s poem sanctioned it.

## **Conclusion**

A twenty-two year old Penna identified with the “poets who none of us know” (Penna, Diary, 3 Aug 1928, 45), and throughout his life, Penna seemed to vacillate in the tension between taking up a public role as a poet, and remaining anonymous and beholden to no one. In her preface to *The Sleepless Traveller*, Natalia Ginzburg calls Penna “fra gli esseri umani più liberi che siano mai esistiti” (“among the freest human beings who ever existed”;10), and Eugenio Montale, in an interview published shortly after Penna’s death in 1977, speaks on the same theme: “[Penna] ha vissuto in libertà più di chiunque altro, rinunciando anche a troppo” (“[Penna] lived in freedom more than anyone else, even giving up too much”; qtd. in Didier *Parole nascoste* 45). Literary history, however, has been gaining ground on Penna. The expansion of the canon has brought his place

on the margins more clearly into focus. In Italy, critical study of his work proliferates, energized by the steady philological research of Cesare Garboli, Elio Pecora, and Roberto Deidier. In Penna's native Perugia, conferences dedicated to him have been held on the twentieth anniversary of his death and the one hundredth anniversary of his birth, and the municipal library opened in 2004 is named after him. In Rome, Penna's personal library is now open to the public, housed in the Casa delle Letterature, just steps away from the apartment in Via Mole de' Fiorentini where Penna lived and died. A search on YouTube returns dozens of videos of people performing Penna's poems, in some cases lovingly edited with graphics and music, attesting to Penna's popular appeal. At a recent conference of Italian Studies in Victoria, British Columbia, I was asked about my translation project by a colleague, an Italianist who was not, however, a scholar of twentieth-century literature. I shyly asked if he knew a poet named Sandro Penna. Preparing myself for the usual response of my colleagues in English studies, I was surprised by his answer: "Do I know a poet named Sandro Penna? Penna is *the* poet!"

While translation transforms a foreign text into our own language, for Walter Benjamin, the point of translation is to allow our own language to be transformed by the foreign text ("The Task of the Translator" 80-1). What effect will translating Penna have on English language poetry now? It's hard to say. Penna's international profile does not measure up to the big winners in the modernist hierarchy, but his quiet presence belies a caricatured version of Italian literary history, challenging us to look at how modern literary history has been made more generally. I hope that the re-introduction of Penna's work in English will help us reconsider the boundaries between traditional and modern, lyrical and experimental, that still define our literary coteries. I hope, too, that these translations, like Penna's poems, provide pleasure to readers, so that this is not only a case of "literature for academic and commemorative uses," in Amelia Rosselli's

phrase (“Sandro Penna” 4). I hope, instead, that this translation marks for Penna “a stage of continued life” (Benjamin 71) and creates new experiences of this poet “who none of us know.”



From *POESIE* [*POEMS*] (1939)



“La vita...è ricordarsi di un risveglio”<sup>1</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>1</sup>Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 3 Print.

“Life is...remembering a sad awakening”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Mi avevano lasciato solo”<sup>2</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>2</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 4. Print.

“They left me alone”

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Il vento ti ha lasciata un’eco chiara”<sup>3</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>3</sup>Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 5. Print.

“The wind left a clear echo”

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Nel sonno incerto sogno ancora un poco”<sup>4</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>4</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 7. Print.

“In restless sleep I still dream a little”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**



“Se la notte d’estate cede un poco”<sup>5</sup>  
[Poem removed for copyright reasons]

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<sup>5</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 8. Print.

“If the summer night yields a little”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Sole senz’ombra su virili corpi”<sup>6</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>6</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 10. Print.

“Sun without shadow on bodies, virile”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Se dietro la finestra illuminata”<sup>7</sup>

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>7</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 11. Print.

“If behind the illuminated window”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

*Nuotatore*<sup>8</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>8</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 13. Print.

*Swimmer*

[Translation removed for copyright reasons]



*Città*<sup>9</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>9</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 20. Print.

*City*

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“L’aria di primavera”<sup>10</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>10</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 24. Print.

“The springtime blows”

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Le nere scale della mia tavern”<sup>11</sup>  
[Poem removed for copyright reasons]

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<sup>11</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 26. Print.

“The dark stairs of my tavern”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Le stelle sono immobili nel cielo”<sup>12</sup>  
[Poem removed for copyright reasons]

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<sup>12</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 32. Print.

“The stars unmoving in the sky”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**



“Già mi parla l’autunno. Al davanzale”<sup>13</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>13</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 34. Print.

“Already autumn speaks to me. By the window”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“È caduta ogni pena. Adesso piove”<sup>14</sup>  
[Poem removed for copyright reasons]

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<sup>14</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 38. Print.

“Every pain has fallen away. It rains”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“L’opaca moltitudine si aggira”<sup>15</sup>  
[Poem removed for copyright reasons]

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<sup>15</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 39. Print.

“The opaque multitude turns”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Se sono vuoti gli alberi e il gennaio”<sup>16</sup>  
[Poem removed for copyright reasons]

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<sup>16</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 40. Print.

“If the trees are bare and January”  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**



“Eccoli gli operai sul prato verde” <sup>17</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>17</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 46. Print.

“See the workers on the green grass”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Ero per la città, fra le viuzze”<sup>18</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>18</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 52. Print.

“I walked the city, through the alleys”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

*Il vegetale*<sup>19</sup>  
[Poem removed for copyright reasons]

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<sup>19</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 57. Print.

*The Vegetable*

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“La veneta piazzetta”<sup>20</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>20</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 58. Print.

“The small Venetian square”

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**



“Io vivere vorrei addormentato”<sup>21</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>21</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 59. Print.

“I would like to live asleep”

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**



Unpublished poems  
from *POESIE* [*POEMS*] (1957)

“Lasciavo l’ospedale. Rivestivo”<sup>22</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>22</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 69. Print.

“I was leaving the hospital. I dressed”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Le porte del mondo non sanno”<sup>23</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>23</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 77. Print.

“The doors of the world don’t know”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**



“Io nella rada seguivo un fanciullo incantato”<sup>24</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>24</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 89. Print.

“In the harbour I followed a boy spellbound”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Nel buio della stanza in me risplende”<sup>25</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>25</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 103. Print.

“In the darkness of the room inside me”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Non ami le pareti della tua”<sup>26</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>26</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 117. Print.

“You don’t love the walls of your”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Era per la città quasi un commune”<sup>27</sup>  
[Poem removed for copyright reasons]

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<sup>27</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 121. Print.

“Moving about the city he was almost”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**



“Immobile nel sole la campagna”<sup>28</sup>  
[Poem removed for copyright reasons]

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<sup>28</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 143. Print.

“Motionless in the sun the countryside”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Non moriva la luce ove un soldato”<sup>29</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>29</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 145. Print.

“The light wouldn’t die where the solitary”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Amavo ogni cosa nel mondo. E non avevo”<sup>30</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>30</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 151. Print.

“I loved everything in the world. And all”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Lumi del cimitero, non mi dite”<sup>31</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>31</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 152. Print.

“Cemetery lights, don’t tell me”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**





From *APPUNTI [NOTES]* (1950)

“Felice chi è diverso”<sup>32</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>32</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 171. Print.

“Happy is he who’s different”

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Un sogno di bellezza un dì mi prese”<sup>33</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>33</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 172. Print.

“One day a dream of beauty took hold of me”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“E poi son solo. Resta”<sup>34</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>34</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 176. Print.

“And then I’m alone. In”

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**



“Forse la primavera sa che sono mie”<sup>35</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>35</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 177. Print.

“Maybe springtime knows my sweetness”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Viene l’autunno sonnolento. Brillano”<sup>36</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>36</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 179. Print.

“The autumn, somnolent, comes. Behind”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Viaggiava per la terra”<sup>37</sup>  
[Poem removed for copyright reasons]

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<sup>37</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 182. Print.

“He travelled the earth”

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Forse la lenta tua malinconia si perde”  
se nella notte ad un veloce  
treno l’affidi.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 184. Print.

“Maybe your slow melancholy will be lost”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**



“Sul molo il vento soffia forte. Gli occhi”<sup>39</sup>  
[Poem removed for copyright reasons]

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<sup>39</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 185. Print.

“On the pier a strong wind blows. Your eyes”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Non è la costruzione il lieto dono”<sup>40</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>40</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 188. Print.

“It’s not a construction, the happy gift”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Tu mi lasci. Tu dici ‘la natura...’”<sup>41</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>41</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 190. Print.

“You leave me. You say ‘nature...’”

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Venni fra voi. Conobbi la normale”<sup>42</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>42</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 194. Print.

“I came among you. I knew a normal”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**



“Sono soli e legati, adesso sposi”<sup>43</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>43</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 199. Print.

“Alone and bound together, now they’re married”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Oh nella notte il cane”<sup>44</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>44</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 200. Print.

“Oh in the night the dog”

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Lento sorridi al riflettore, attento”<sup>45</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>45</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 203. Print.

“You smile into the spotlight, slowly”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Qui è la cara città dove la note”<sup>46</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>46</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 205. Print.

“Here the dear city where you’re not”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**



“Mutare il verde prato”<sup>47</sup>

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>47</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 206. Print.

“To change the grass’s green”

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**



From *UNA STRANA GIOIA DI VIVERE* [*A STRANGE JOY OF LIVING*] (1956)

I.<sup>48</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>48</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 211. Print.

I.

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

II.<sup>49</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>49</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 211. Print.

II.

[Translation removed for copyright reasons]



III.<sup>50</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>50</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 211. Print.

III.

[Translation removed for copyright reasons]

IV.<sup>51</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>51</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 212. Print.

IV.

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

VI.<sup>52</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>52</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 212. Print.

VI.

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

IX.<sup>53</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>53</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 213. Print.

IX.

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**



X.<sup>54</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>54</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 214. Print.

X.

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

XIV.<sup>55</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>55</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 216. Print.

XIV.

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

XVII.<sup>56</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>56</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 217. Print.

XVII.

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

XXII.<sup>57</sup>

[Poem removed for copyright reasons]

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<sup>57</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 218. Print.

XXII.

[Translation removed for copyright reasons]



XXIII.<sup>58</sup>

[Poem removed for copyright reasons]

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<sup>58</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 219. Print.

XXIII.

[Translation removed for copyright reasons]

XXIV.<sup>59</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>59</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 219. Print.

XXIV.

[Translation removed for copyright reasons]

XXVII.<sup>60</sup>

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>60</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 220. Print.

XXVII.

[Translation removed for copyright reasons]

XXVIII.<sup>61</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>61</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 221. Print.

XXVIII.

[Translation removed for copyright reasons]



XXIX.<sup>62</sup>

[Poem removed for copyright reasons]

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<sup>62</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 221. Print.

XXIX.

[Translation removed for copyright reasons]

XXX.<sup>63</sup>

[Poem removed for copyright reasons]

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<sup>63</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 221. Print.

XXX.

[Translation removed for copyright reasons]



From *CROCE E DELIZIA* [*CROSS AND DELIGHT*] (1958)

“Se desolato io cammino... dietro”<sup>64</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>64</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 233. Print.

“If I walk desolate... behind”

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**



“Si ricompone un ritmo. Primavera”<sup>65</sup>  
[Poem removed for copyright reasons]

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<sup>65</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 236. Print.

“A rhythm recomposed. Springtime”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Forse la giovinezza è solo questo” <sup>66</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>66</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 239. Print.

“Maybe being young is only this”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

È nel dolce scompiglio del tuo viso <sup>67</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>67</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 244. Print.

“In your sweetly flustered face”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

*Donna in tram*<sup>68</sup>

[Poem removed for copyright reasons]

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<sup>68</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 251. Print.

*Woman on the tram*

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**



“Il vento mi dà pace e la fontana”<sup>69</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>69</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 255. Print.

“The wind brings me peace, and the noisy”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Guarirai. Si odono i treni”

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

“You’ll heal. You can hear distant”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

Rediscovered juvenilia (1927-1936)  
from *TUTTE LE POESIE* [*ALL THE POEMS*] (1970)

“La mia poesia non sarà”<sup>70</sup>  
[Poem removed for copyright reasons]

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<sup>70</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 271. Print.

“My poetry will not be”

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Il fanciullo che ascolta nei libri”<sup>71</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>71</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 272. Print.



“The boy who hears in books”

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Mi adagio nel mattino”<sup>72</sup>  
[Poem removed for copyright reasons]

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<sup>72</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 277. Print.

“I linger in the spring”

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Vivere è per amare qualche cosa”<sup>73</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>73</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 281. Print.

“Living is for loving something”

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**



Other poems (1936-1957)  
from *TUTTE LE POESIE* [*ALL THE POEMS*] (1970)

“Di febbraio a Milano”<sup>74</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>74</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 291.Print.



“In February in Milan”

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Dimmi, luce del cielo”<sup>75</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>75</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 292. Print.

“Tell me, light of the sky”

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Guardare per la strada un bel ragazzo”<sup>76</sup>  
[Poem removed for copyright reasons]

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<sup>76</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 293. Print.

“Watching a lovely boy in the street”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Tu sei passato ma non come sfugge”<sup>77</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>77</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 294. Print.

“You passed but not like a room”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Nuoce più l’innocente o il delinquente?”<sup>78</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>78</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 302.



“Who does more harm: the innocent or delinquent?”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Sempre fanciulli nelle mie poesie!”<sup>79</sup>  
[Poem removed for copyright reasons]

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<sup>79</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 305. Print.

“Always children in my poetry!”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**



From *STRANEZZE* [*STRANGENESSES*] (1976)

“Era nel cinema, dove le porte”<sup>80</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>80</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 319. Print.

“It was in the cinema, where doors”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Alta estate notturna”<sup>81</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>81</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 321. Print.



“Midsummer nocturne”

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Il sedile di marmo mi era caro”<sup>82</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>82</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 328. Print.

“The marble bench was more dear to me”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Tu dici “fuga”, ma perchè non piove”<sup>83</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>83</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 332. Print.

“You say “escape,” but why isn’t it raining”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Addio fanciullo, entra nel buio ancora”<sup>84</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>84</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 337. Print.

“Farewell child, enter the darkness again.”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Poeta esculsivo d’amore”<sup>85</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>85</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 344. Print.



“A love poet exclusively”

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“O casa in costruzione se io non fossi”<sup>86</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>86</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 348. Print.

“O house under construction if I weren’t”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Morte se tu mi domini, alla vista”<sup>87</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>87</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 351. Print.

“Death if you rule me, at the sight”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Voleva raccontare una sua storia”<sup>88</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>88</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 359. Print.

“The shepherd wanted to tell one”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Come è bello la sera d’estate”<sup>89</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>89</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 372. Print.



“How beautiful the summer evening”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**



From *IL VIAGGIATORE INSONNE* [*THE SLEEPLESS TRAVELLER*] (1977)

“Al primo grillo, quando l’aria ancora”<sup>90</sup>  
[Poem removed for copyright reasons]

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<sup>90</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 439. Print.

“When at the first cricket, the air”

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

*Sbarco ad Ancona*<sup>91</sup>

**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>91</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 440. Print.

*Landing in Ancona*

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Il viaggiatore insonne”<sup>92</sup>  
[Poem removed for copyright reasons]

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<sup>92</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 143. Print.



“The sleepless traveller”

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Quanto più mi sentivo a te legato”<sup>93</sup>  
[Poem removed for copyright reasons]

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<sup>93</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 448. Print.

“The more I felt tied to you”

**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Esiste ancora al mondo la bellezza?”<sup>94</sup>  
[Poem removed for copyright reasons]

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<sup>94</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 449. Print.

“Does beauty still exist in the world?”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“Le notti vuote, piene di tamburi”<sup>95</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>95</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 450. Print.

“Empty nights, full of drums”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**

“La festa verso l’imbrunire vado”<sup>96</sup>  
**[Poem removed for copyright reasons]**

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<sup>96</sup> Penna, Sandro. *Poesie*. Ed. Cesare Garboli. Milan: Garzanti, 2000. 452. Print.



“On Sunday towards the twilight I go”  
**[Translation removed for copyright reasons]**



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