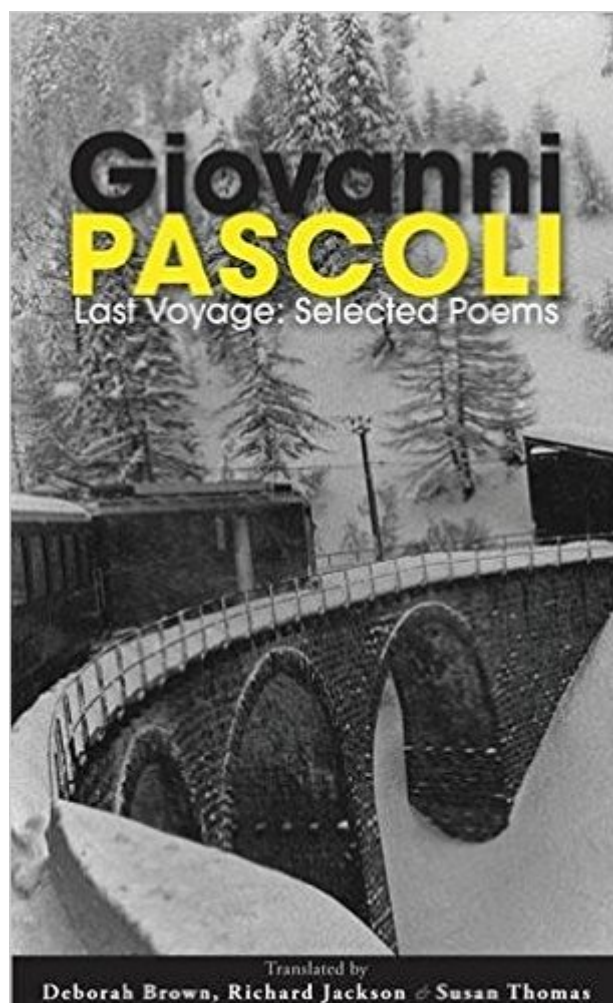


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Last Voyage: Selected Poems Of Giovanni Pascoli



Synopsis

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

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Giovanni Pascoli was an Italian 19th-century poet, 1855-1912. In his poems, there is a sense of space, with space often as a metaphor for absence. "Silence, all around: from far away you hear/only the gusting of the wind..." [from "November"]. "I can hear from such a distance,/the farewell of a steam engine..." [from "The Kiss of Death"] Pascoli himself has suggested that his early poems are an elegy for his father, who died while young in an assassination that was never solved. But the later poems retain this elegiac tone too. This elegiac, slightly mournful, though lyric quality comes to full fruition in Pascoli's long, multipart poem "Last Voyage" ("L'Ultimo Viaggio" in Italian) written toward the end of his life. This is a reworking of Homer's "Odysseus" in which Odysseus

does not return home to Ithaca, but in a deep sleep passes it by and retraces parts of his voyage from Troy. Pascoli is so masterful with the mournful, melancholic tone that this poem of classical content covering about 50 pages (in the English) would not be called an epic, but rather, however improbably, a long lyric poem. Odysseus like Pascoli passes by the conventional, given subject occupied by a different destiny. Though the translations sensitively, empathetically impart Pascoli's sensitive, ruminative mood in full, one wonders if the original Italian title "L'Ultimo Viaggio" wouldn't have been better translated "Ultimate Voyage." For in Pascoli's hands, Odysseus voyages to his death. He returns to the enchanted isle goddess Calypso who wraps the hero in the "cloud of her hair...[after] the sea returned him."

This makes much of Pascoli's best work available to English-speaking readers

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