

Sergio Solmi and his English 'personal canon in miniature'

**11th EST Congress: The Changing Faces of Translation and Interpreting Studies
Panel 2 – Affect(s) and Translation**

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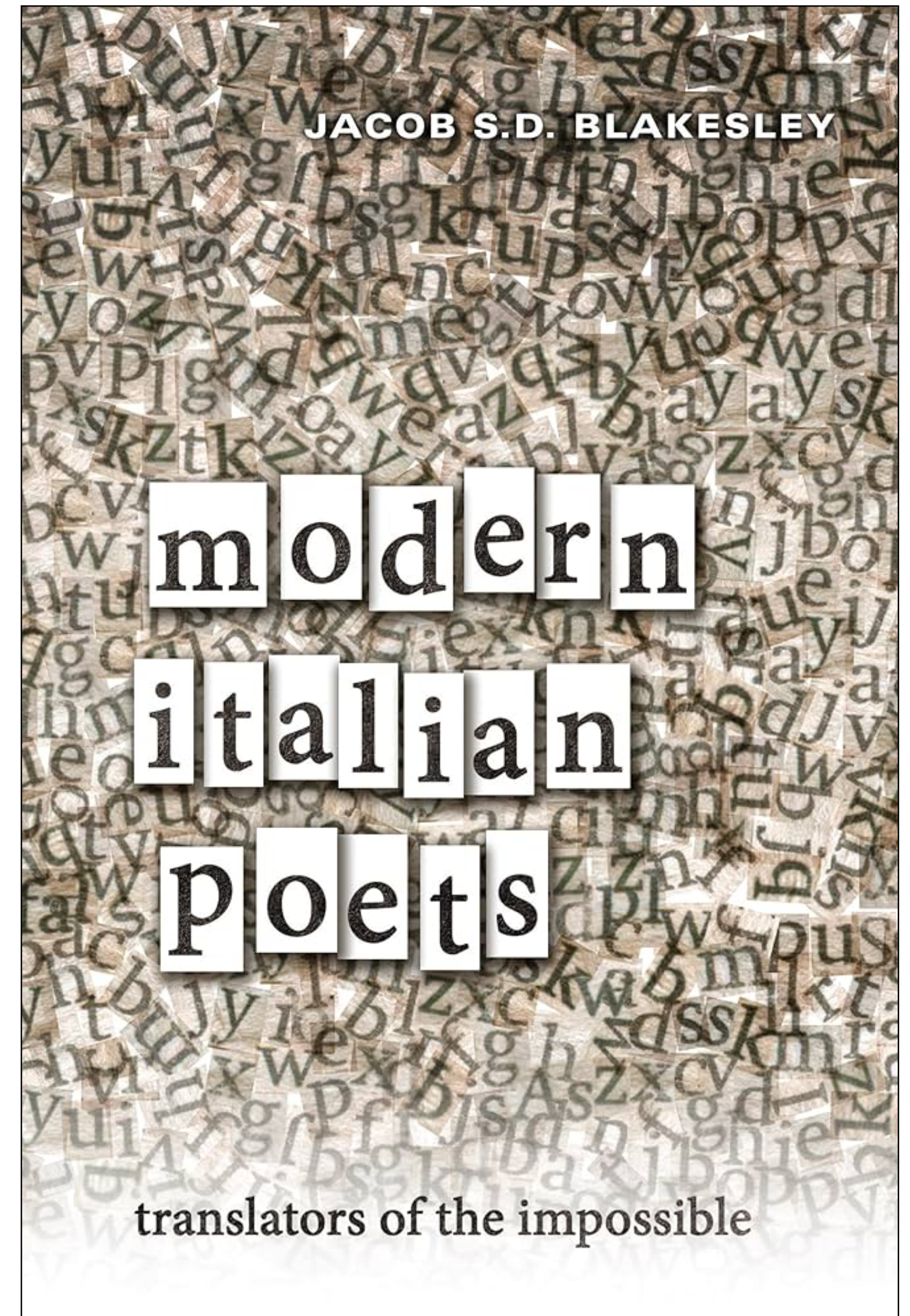
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Plan

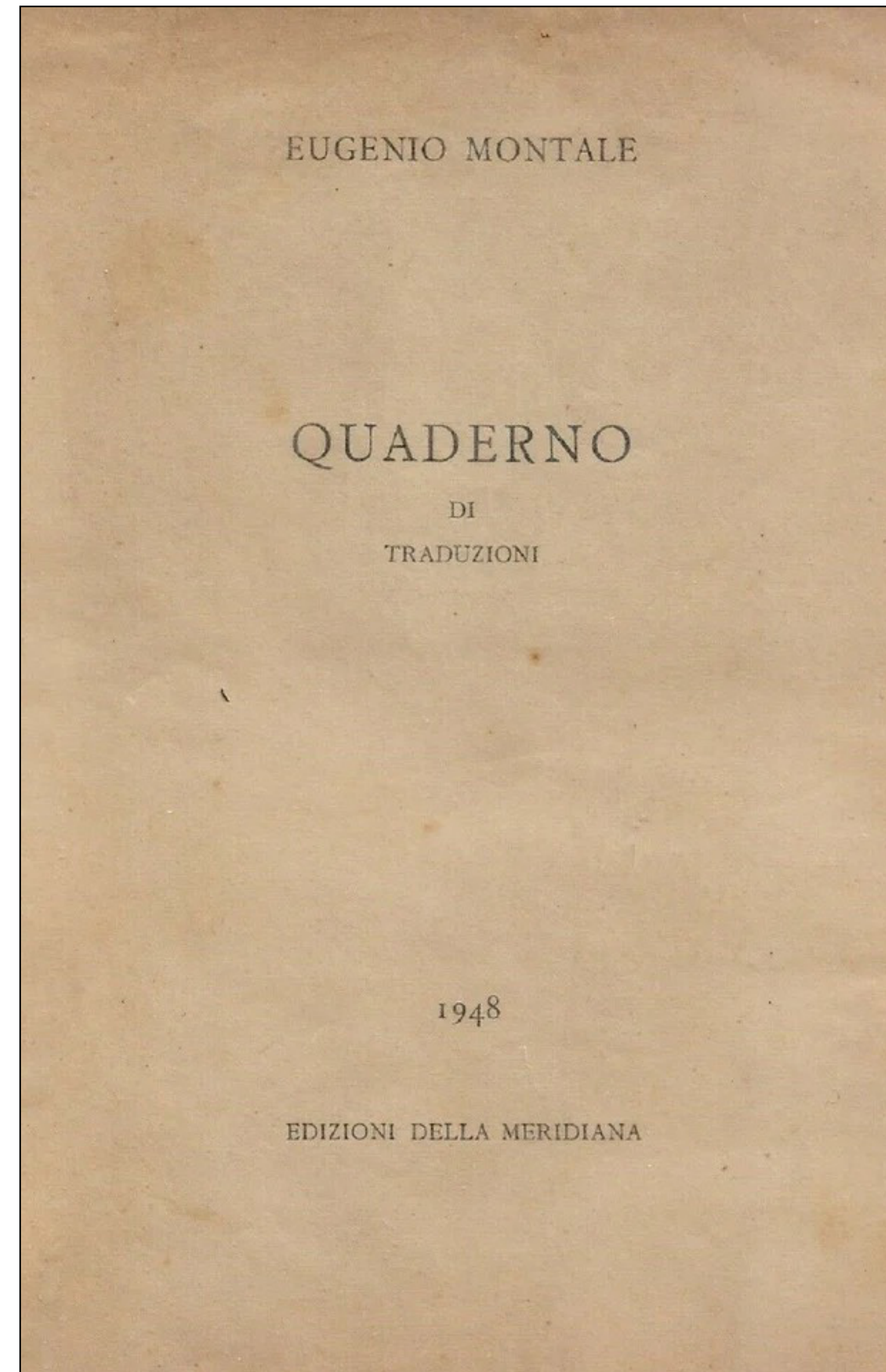
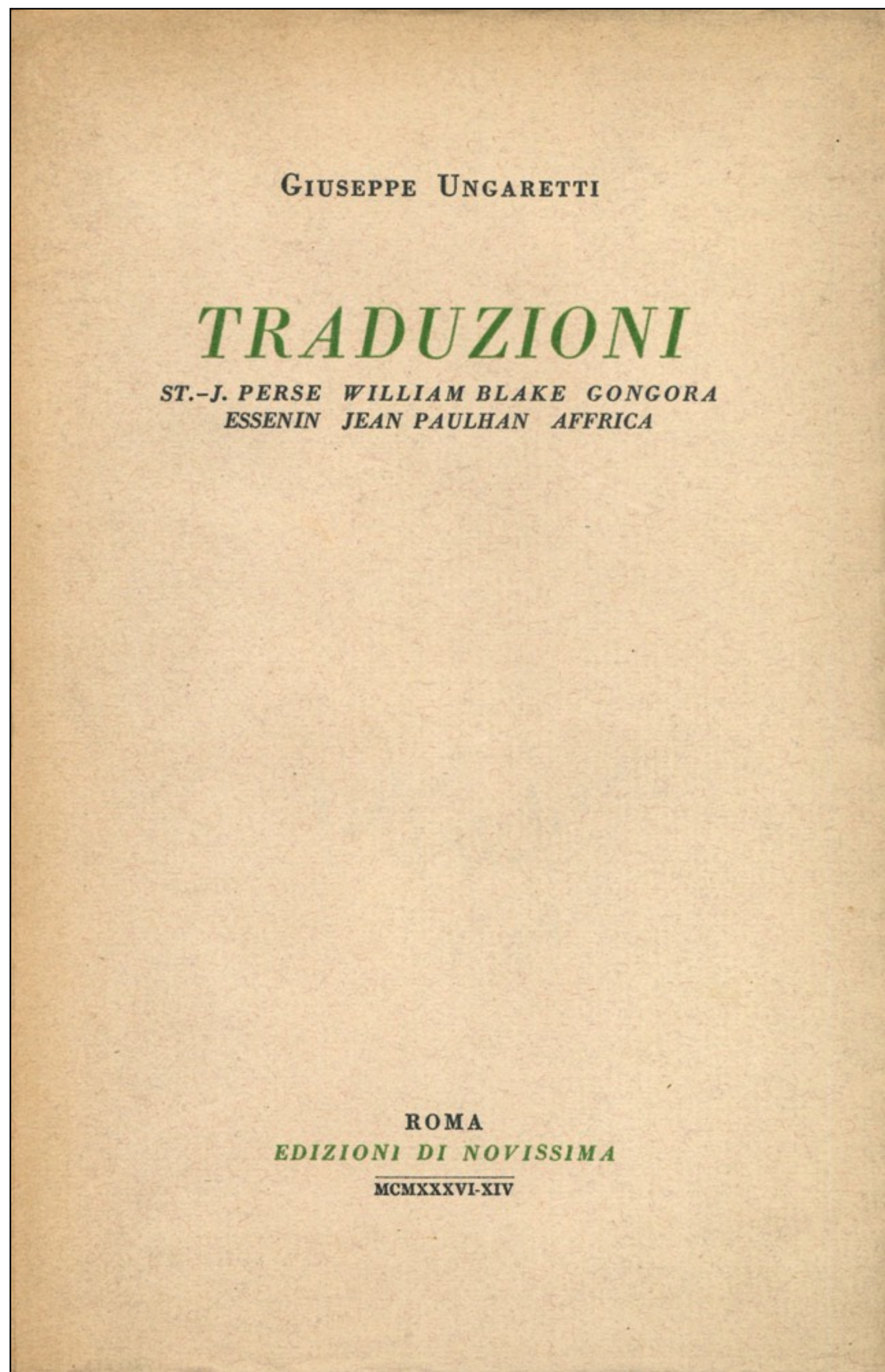
1. **Theoretical framework:** Blakesley (2014)
2. ***Quaderni di traduzione*:** editorial context and metagenre
3. **Case study:** Sergio Solmi
4. **Close readings:** three translations from Stephen Spender

Theoretical framework

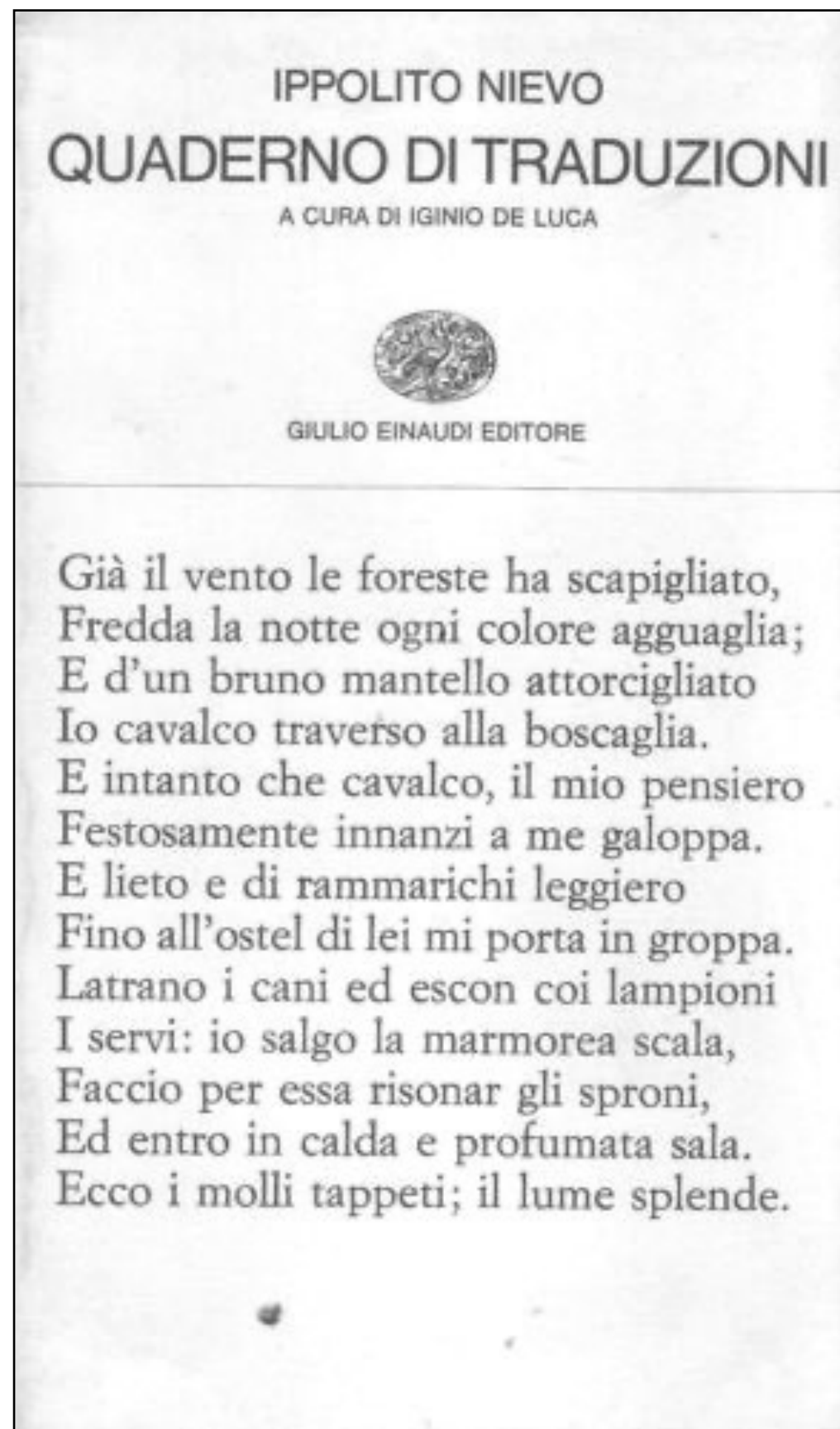
- An **anthology** implies, by nature, a **canon**; likewise, it would be difficult to argue that Solmi's *quaderni* are anything more than **personal canons in miniature**. The poetic canons (in Italian translation) are not necessarily the same as the officially received ones. (pp. 21-22)
- [T]he series of *Quaderni di traduzioni*, formerly published by Einaudi, can be seen as a **swan song** for a certain vision of **international culture and poetics**. (p. 12)
- [...] *quaderno* could refer to any anonymous notebook kept in a long-forgotten desk drawer. (p. 17)



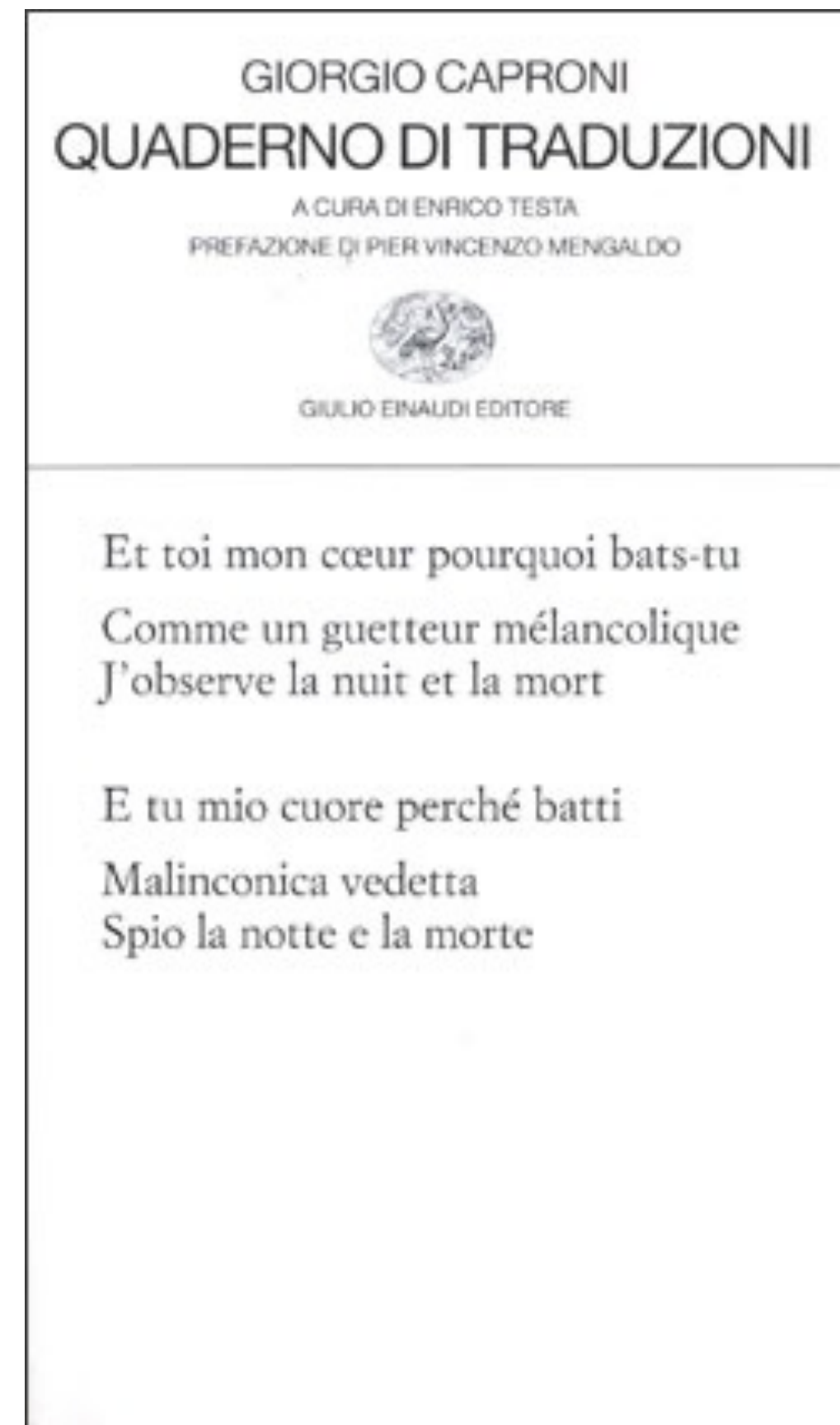
1936



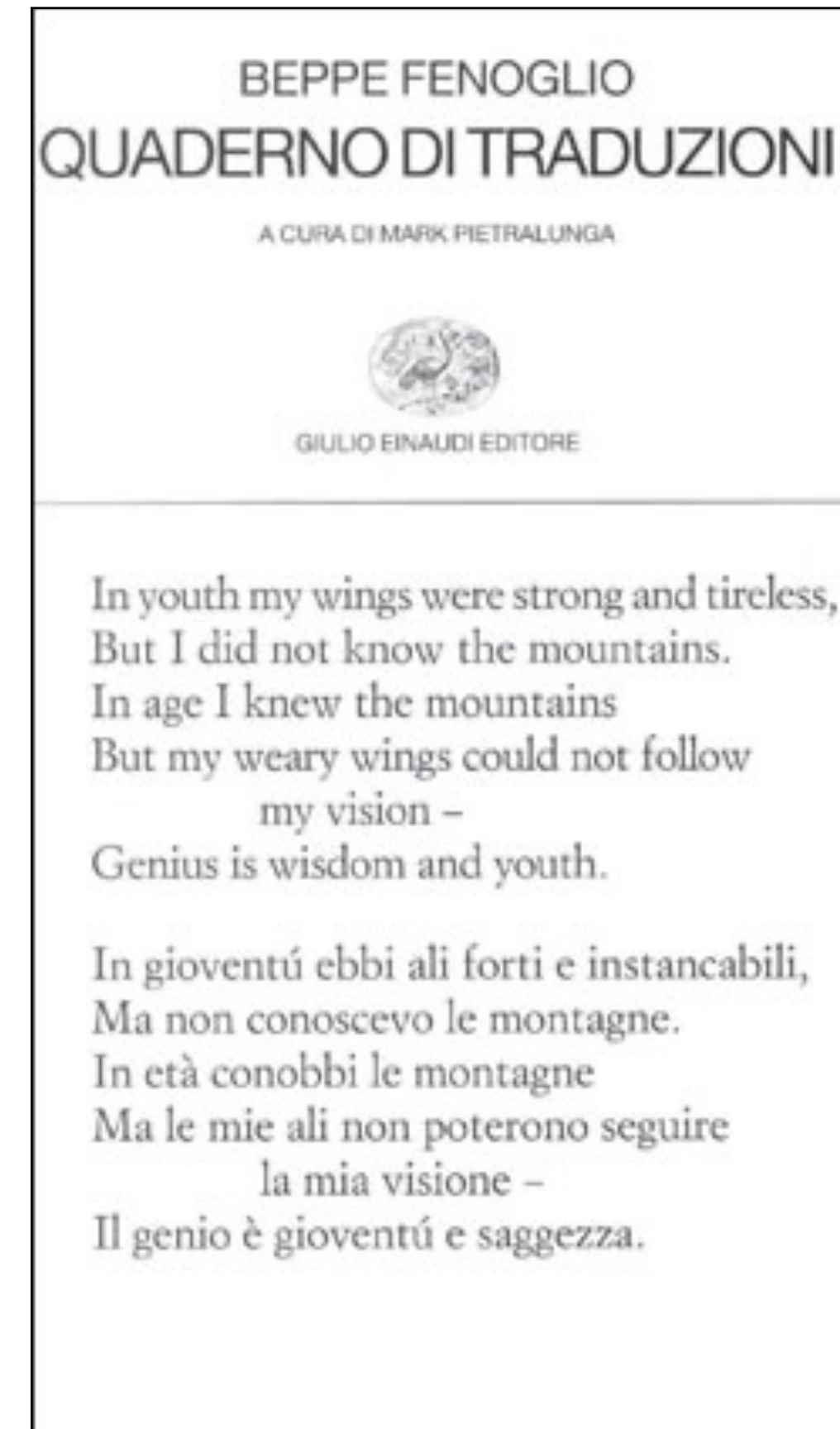
1948



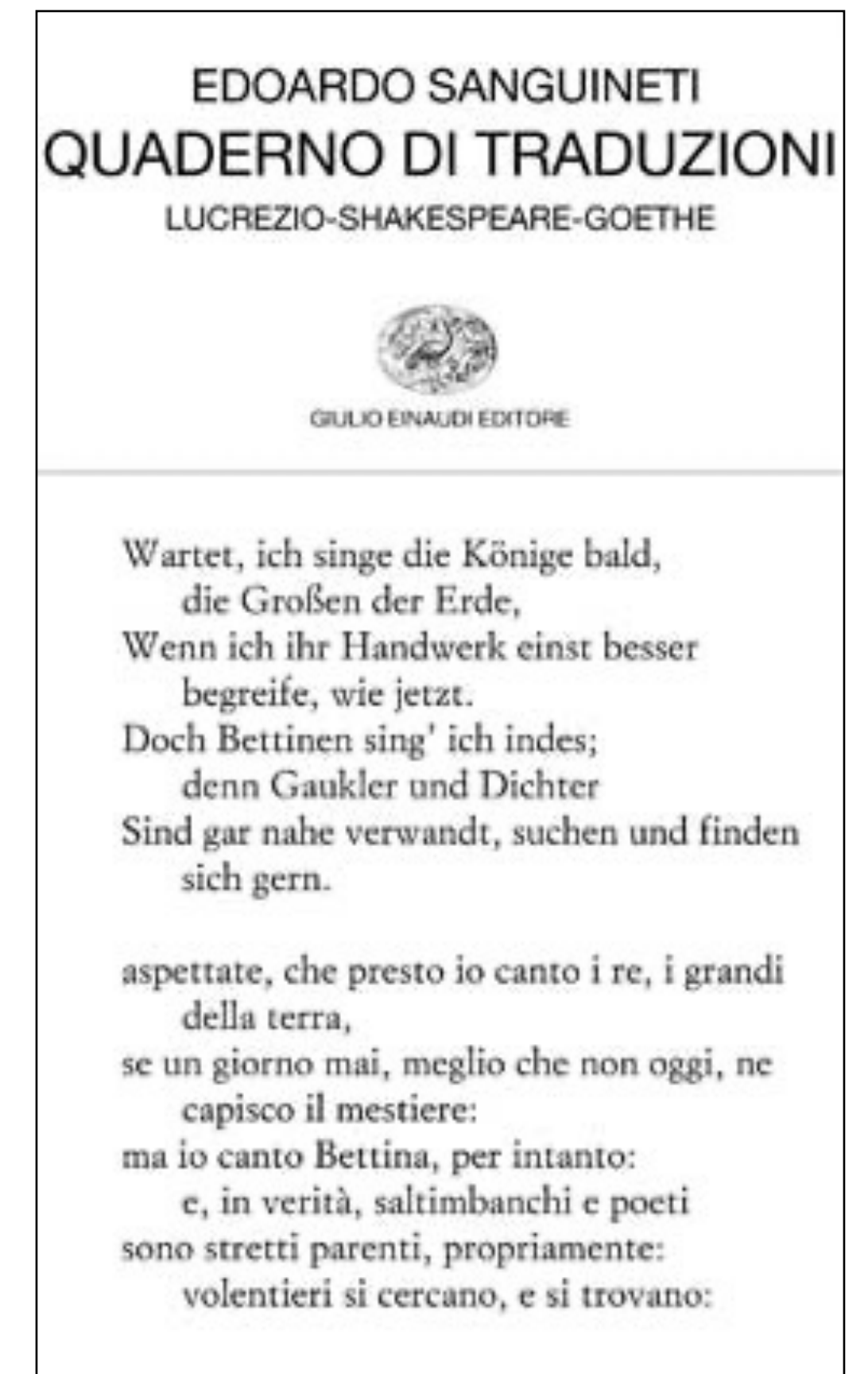
1964



1998



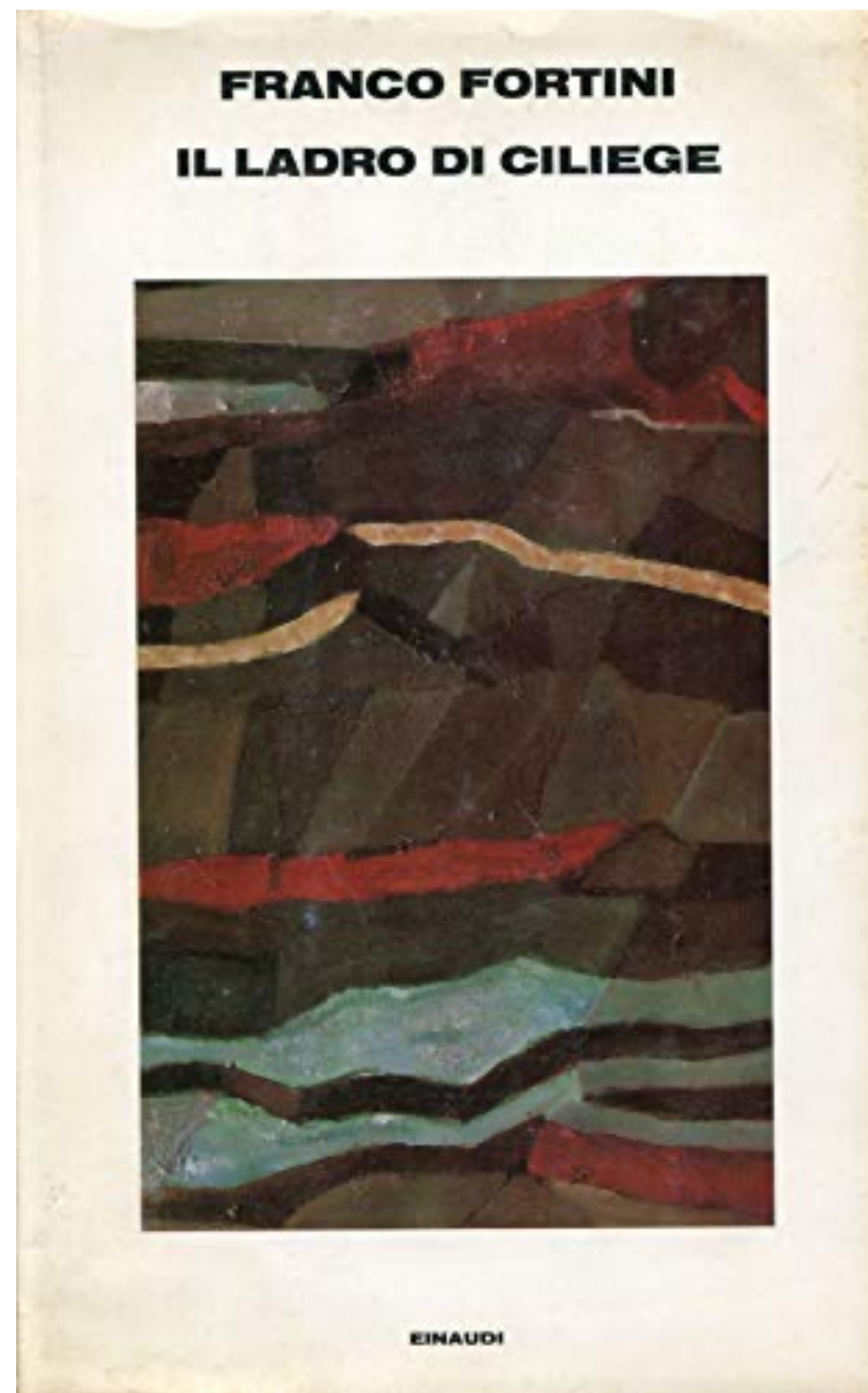
2000



2006



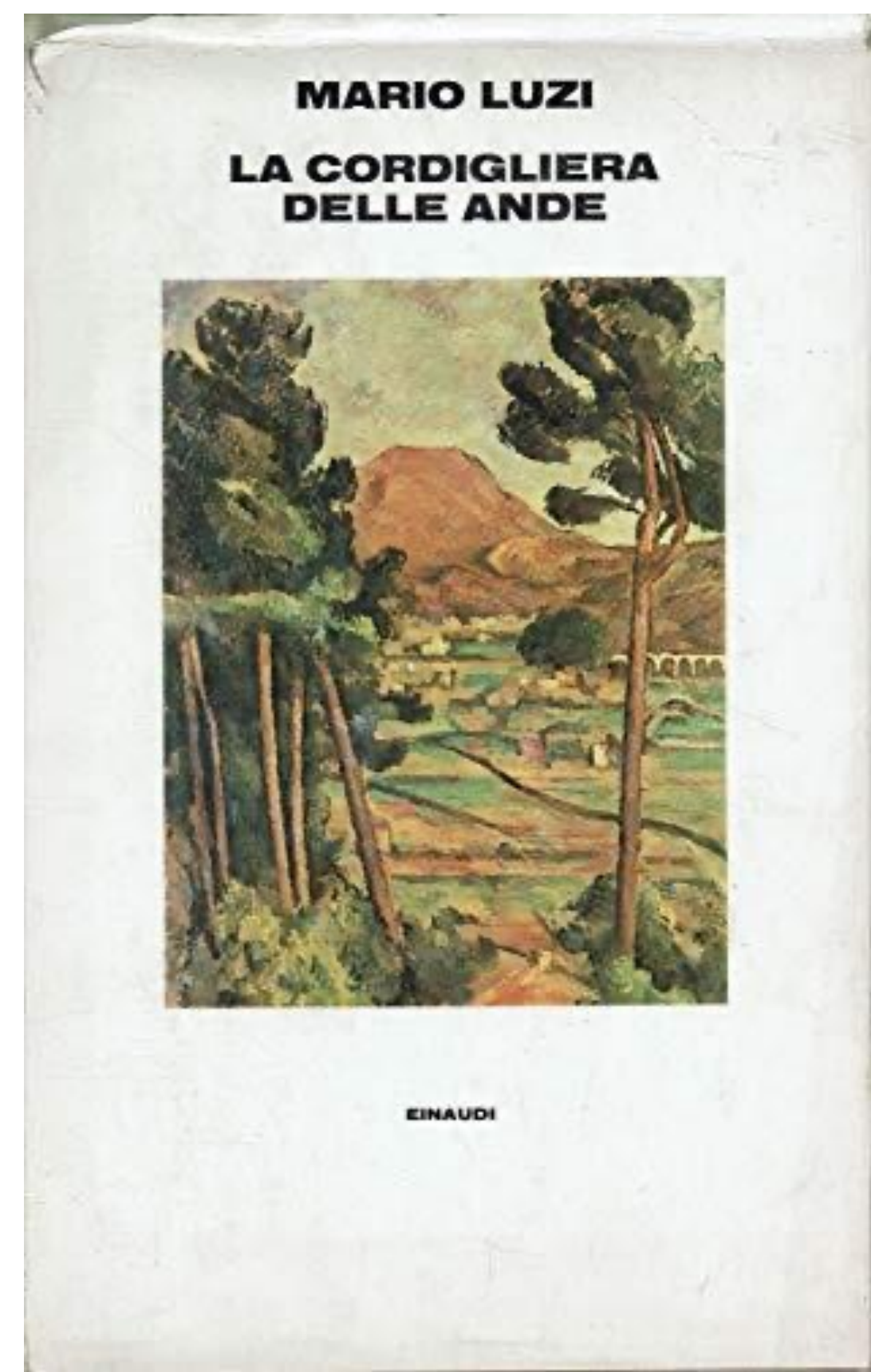
1981



1982



1982



1983

Six primary and defining attributes

Blakesley, 2014, pp. 16-17

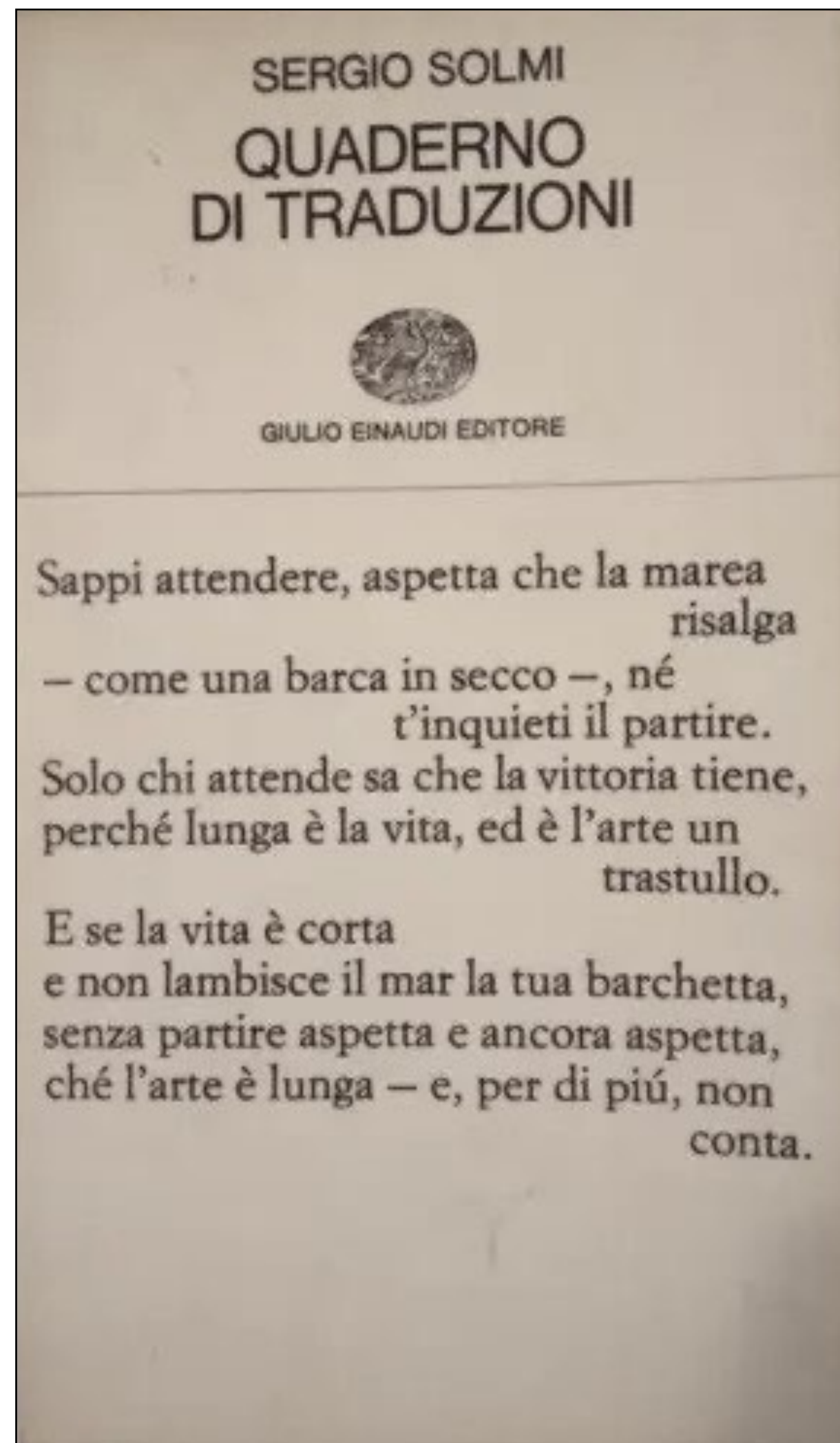
1. The volume is translated by **one poet**.
2. The volume is composed **entirely** of **translations** and **not original compositions**.
3. The collection **predominantly** consists of **poetry**.
4. The poetry is generally translated from **more than one language**.
5. The aim and the title of the collection makes **no** reference to **canonicity** or **comprehensiveness**.
6. There is **introductory material** that speaks to the poet-translator's project.

**Sergio
Solmi
(1899
1981)**

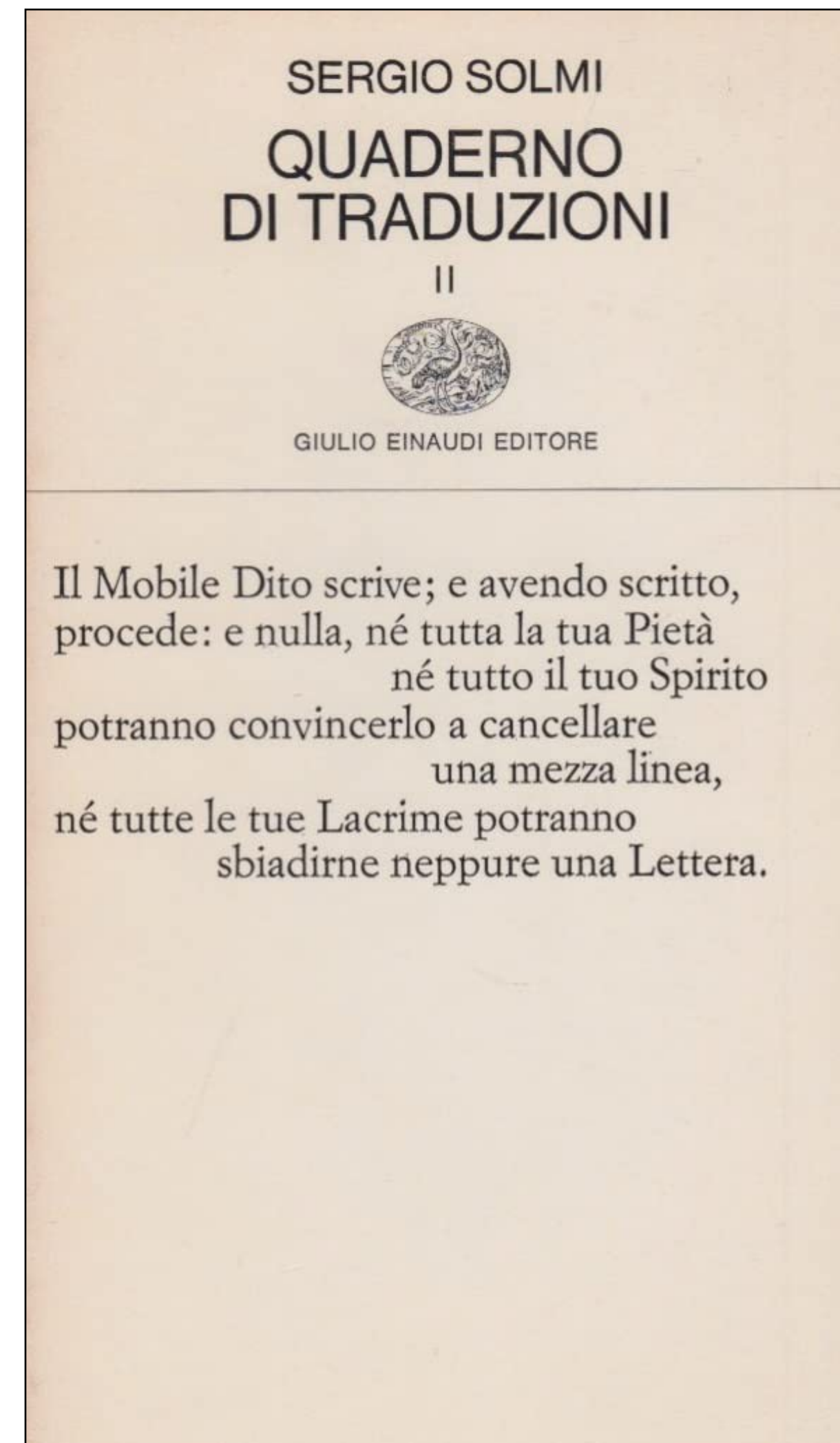




1963



1969



1977

QUADERNO DI TRADUZIONI I (1969)

Da **PAUL VALÉRY (2)**: Come sulla riva del mare; Salmo su di una voce

Da **JEAN COCTEAU (1)**: Il grigio crine

Da **ANTONIO MACHADO (8)**: Tre paesaggi; Consigli; Siesta; Paesaggio; Bocca ha di fuoco; O ornar la tua finestra

Da **JOSÉ MORENO VILLA (1)**: Osservazioni a Giacinta

Da **RAFAEL ALBERTI (3)**: Madrid assediata; L'Autunno e l'Ebro; Per dopo

Da **GOTTFRIED BENN (2)** : Canti

Da **EDWIN MUIR (7)**: Merlino; Il cavaliere incantato; I vecchi dèi; L'uccello; Sogno suburbano; L'interrogatorio; Il debitore

Da **W. H. AUDEN (3)**: Da ultimo il segreto vien fuori...; Lodi la fiorita musica...; Mira, straniero...

Da **STEPHEN SPENDER (3)**: No, non una sola parola...; Höelderlin vecchio; La stanza sulla piazza

Da **EZRA POUND (1)**: La tomba ad Akr Çaar

Da **ARCHIBALD MAC LEISH (3)**: La silenziosa strage; Con l'età, saggezza; Giornale di bordo

QUADERNO DI TRADUZIONI II (1977)

Da **OMAR KHAYYÂM (1)**: Il Mobile Dito scrive...

Da **PAUL-JEAN TOULET (8)**: I; X; XVII; XXXVI; XLV; LIX; LXIII; LXX

Da **ANDRÉ FRÉNAUD (2)**: Riva del mare e schisti a Collioure; Ho costruito la casa ideale

Da **JUDE STEFAN (6)**: Le chiese defunte; Animali; Jude e Judith; A Malherbe più che uomo; Del tempo presente; Congedo

Da **ANTONIO MACHADO (6)**: XV; XXI; XXVIII; XLIV; XLV; XLVII

Da **PEDRO SALINAS (1)**: Acqua nella notte, serpente indeciso,...

Da **GOTTFRIED BENN (5)**: Una parola; Regressivo; Creazione; Io disperso; In Memoriam - Quota 317

Da **HERMANN HESSE (9)**: Tristezza; Profumo d'autunno; Sole di marzo; Temporale di giugno; Luce del mattino; Antichissima figurina del Buddha...; Giovane novizio in un convento Zen – I; Giovane novizio in un convento Zen – II; Scricchiolio di un ramo spezzato

Da **STEPHEN SPENDER (2)**: Il vestitino; O

Da **THOMAS HARDY (2)**: Andare e stare; Sguardo al passato

Da **W.B. YEATS (2)**: I dotti, La rosa del mondo

Da **FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE (1)**: La canzone ebbra

Da **GOETHE**: Canto di Faust

Critical material in the *Quaderni*

- [...] I excluded, besides the many failed attempts, other translations carried out and published *sur commande*, being aware that in the latter there was a lack of that **participation** – one might even say **complicity** – with the author, which seems indispensable to poetic translation. [...] The only criterion – if it can be called a criterion at all – has therefore been, from time to time, the **concordance**, the **momentary coincidence** of the translator's **feeling** with that of the poet. (Chiarimento al primo quaderno, Opere I, pp. 227-228)
- Translation is born, in contact with the foreign text, from the force, the irresistibility of the original inspiration. Something like a movement of **envy** presides at its birth, a **regret** at having lost **an irreplaceable lyrical opportunity**, at having left it to a **luckier brother** in another language. [...] In this case, the translation may resemble the original little or much: that does not matter. The poem has now become part of the translator's **world**, a matter of his entire **artistic and vital experience**; it becomes a **flower** of his own **words**, of his **deep breath**. (Del tradurre i versi, Opere I, p. 236)

Not to you I sighed. No, not a word.
We climbed together. Any feeling was ↘
Formed with the hills. It was like trees' unheard
And monumental sign of country peace.

But next day, stumbling, panting up dark stairs,
Rushing in room and door flung wide, I knew.
Oh empty walls, book-carcases, blank chairs
All splintered in my head and cried for you.

No, non una sola parola...

No, non una sola parola t'ho sospirato.
Assieme salivamo. Ogni sentimento ↘
di colline era fatto. Un inaudito ↘
arboreo segno, d'agreste pace monumento.

Ma il dì appresso, affannando, incespicando ↘
per buie scale, nella stanza ↘
irrompendo, la porta spalancata, io seppi.
Oh, vuote pareti, carcasse di libri, grige sedie, tutto ↘
mi si frantumò in capo, e per te pianse.

The Room Above the Square

The light in the window seemed perpetual
When you stayed in the high room for me;
It glowed **above the** trees **through leaves** ↘
Like my certainty.

The light is fallen you are hidden
In sun**bright** peninsulas of the sword:
Torn like **leaves through** Europe is the peace
That through us flowed.

Now I climb alone **to the high room**
Above the darkened square
Where among stones and **roots**, the other ↘
Unshattered lovers are.

La stanza sulla piazza

La luce credevo immutabile ↘
della finestra a cui stavi ad attendermi ↘
nell'alta stanza: **tra foglie** splendeva ↘
come la mia certezza.

Caduta è la luce e sei laggiù nascosta
nelle **solari** penisole della **spada**.
Stracciata come **foglie traverso** l'Europa è la **pace**
che in noi fluiva.

Ora **solitario** risalgo **all'alta stanza**
sulla piazza oscurata,
dove, tra pietre e radici, gli altri ↘
illesi amanti **stanno**.

The little Coat

The little coat embroidered with birds
Is irretrievably ruined.
We bought it in the Spring.
She stood upon a chair
And raised her arms like branches.
I leaned my head against her breast
Listening to that heavy bird
Thudding at the centre of our happiness.

Everything is dragged down and away.
The clothes that were so gay
Lie in attics, like the dolls
With which wild children used to play.
The bed where the loved one lies
Is a river bed on which
Enchanting haunting life
Is borne off where the torrent may —
Nests and singing branches
Tangled among blocks of ice:
Those were the Springs of yesterday.

Hold me in that solemn kiss
Where both our minds have eyes
Which look beyond this
Vanishment: and in each other's gaze
Accept what passes, and believe what stays.

Il vestitino

Il vestitino ricamato a uccelli
è irrimediabilmente rovinato.
Lo comprammo a primavera.
Lei stava seduta sulla sedia,
le braccia sollevate come rami.
Appoggiai la testa sul suo seno
ascoltando l'uccello più pesante
battere al centro della nostra felicità.

Ogni cosa precipita e scompare,
i vestiti che erano così allegri
giacciono nei solai, come le bambole
con cui i monelli giocavano.
Il letto dove ci si amò
è quello di un fiume su cui
l'incantevole allucinante vita
è trascinata fin dove il torrente può.
Nidi e rami canori
mischianti a blocchi di ghiaccio:
furono le primavere di ieri.

Abbracciamoci con un bacio solenne
dove le menti d'entrambi hanno occhi
contemplanti al di là di tutto questo
universale smarrimento, e nello sguardo ↘
dell'uno nell'altro,
accetta quello che passa, credi a quanto rimane.

Conclusions

- **Flexible use of sound patterns:** assonances and phonetic echoes.
- **Strategic enjambments:** to disrupt and expand verse boundaries.
- **Literary patina:** syntactic complexity through inversion, aligning the tone with the Italian poetic tradition.

Translation as a space of affect and stylistic exercise

Solmi's practice is not guided by equivalence, but by a deep poetic involvement, where translating means re-living the text in one's own language and aesthetic form.

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Thank you

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