

ALDA MERINI

ITALY (1931–2009)

LANGUAGE: ITALIAN

POETIC FORM: FREE VERSE

UNTITLED

Io ero un uccello
dal bianco ventre gentile,
qualcuno mi ha tagliato la gola
per riderci sopra
non so.

Io ero un albatro grande
e volteggiavo sui mari.
Qualcuno ha fermato il mio viaggio,
senza nessuna carità di suono.
Ma anche distesa per terra
io canto ora per te
le mie canzoni d'amore.



Alda Merini is one of Italy's most beloved poets. She was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature. Born in Milan on the first day of spring, she began writing at a young age. As an adult, she suffered from mental illness and spent more than twenty years in psychiatric hospitals. This experience influenced her writing. Her poems discuss solitude, love, magic, and the beauty that can be found even in sad, difficult moments. Of her poetry, she once said: "I find verses by dipping my inkwell into the sky."

TRANSLATOR'S GLOSSARY		
WORD	DEFINITION	POSSIBLE SYNONYMS
albatro (n.)	a large bird with white feathers	albatross, seabird
anche (adv.)	emphasizing something surprising	even
bianco (adj.)	the lightest color possible	pale, white, snowy
canto (v.)	from the verb <i>cantare</i> , meaning to make musical sounds with the voice	sing, croon, trill
canzoni (n.)	a musical composition	hymns, melodies, songs, ballads
carità (n.)	a benevolent action or attitude	kindness, compassion, love
d'amore (prep. + n.)	with a feeling of strong affection for someone	of love, about love, loving
dal (prep.)	used to describe a person or thing	with a
di (prep.)	related to	of, for
distesa (adj.)	from the verb <i>distendere</i> , meaning to stretch out	lying, sprawled, prone, knocked
e (conj.)	in addition	and
ero (v.)	from the verb <i>essere</i> , meaning to be	was
gentile (adj.)	pleasant and graceful	fine, elegant, noble
grande (adj.)	large in size or stature	grand, great, huge
ha fermato (v.)	from the verb <i>fermare</i> , meaning to stop	halted, ended, put an end to
il mio (art. + adj.)	indicating possession	my, of mine
io (pron.)	used by the speaker or writer referring to himself or herself	I
le mie (art. + adj.)	indicating possession	my, of mine
ma (conj.)	expressing opposition or contrast	but, yet, however, still

WORD	DEFINITION	POSSIBLE SYNONYMS
mari (n.)	bodies of salt water	seas, oceans, depths, waves
mi ha tagliato la gola (phrase)	describing a violent way of killing an animal	cut my throat, slit my throat, slashed my throat
non so (v.)	from the verb <i>sapere</i> , meaning to have knowledge of	I don't know, I'm not sure
ora (adv.)	at the present moment	at this moment, now
per (prep.)	with the purpose of	to, in order to, so as to
per terra (prep. + n.)	expressing position or location	on the ground, on the earth
qualcuno (pron.)	an unspecified person	someone, somebody
riderci sopra (v. + prep.)	from the verb <i>ridere</i> , meaning to laugh	laugh at, joke about, tease, have a laugh
senza nessuna (prep.)	expressing absence or lack	without any, with no, showing no
sui (prep.)	expressing position or location	on the, over the, above the
suono (n.)	what is perceived with the ear	speech, sounds, words
te (pron.)	used by the speaker to address another person	you
uccello (n.)	an animal with wings and feathers	bird
un (art.)	used to refer to someone or something for the first time	a, an, one
ventre (n.)	the central part of the body	chest, breast, belly
viaggio (n.)	the act of traveling from one place to another	journey, trip, voyage
volteggiavo (v.)	from the verb <i>volteggiare</i> , meaning to move in a circle	I circled, I twirled, I flitted

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

PHRASE BY PHRASE

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REFLECTING AND FINDING MEANING

Group Member Names:

Date: _____

Pick a scribe for the group, and work together to answer the questions.

What are the best parts of this translation, and why do you think they are good?

What elements of the original poem did you lose in the translation? What did you manage to keep?

Did you achieve something new with your translation, and if so, does it make sense in the poem or not?
