

MARGHERITA GUIDACCI

ITALY (1921–1992)

LANGUAGE: ITALIAN

POETIC FORM: FREE VERSE

LA CONCHIGLIA

Non a te appartengo sebbene nel cavo della tua mano
ora riposi, viandante;
né alla sabbia da cui mi raccogliesti
e dove giacqui lungamente,
prima che al tuo sguardo
si offrisse la mia forma mirabile.
Io compagna d'agili pesci e d'alghe
ebbi la vita dal grembo delle libere onde.
E non odio né oblio ma l'amara tempesta me ne divide.
Perciò si duole in me l'antica patria e rimormora
assiduamente e ne sospira la mia anima marina,
mentre tu reggi il mio segreto sulla tua palma
e stupito vi pieghi il tuo orecchio straniero.



Born in Florence, Margherita Guidacci was a poet, translator, and teacher of English literature. She often described writing as a spiritual way of responding to the suffering caused by World War II. A frequent image in her poetry is the natural landscape, especially the countryside and the coast. In her words, "Not only can every poet (man or woman) identify, through the workings of their imagination, with any other individual of the species, male or female, but they can identify with every other creature of the universe, be it animate or inanimate."*

* From an interview in *Italian Women Poets*, ed. Biancamaria Frabotta (Guernica Editions, 2002).

TRANSLATOR'S GLOSSARY		
WORD	DEFINITION	POSSIBLE SYNONYMS
a te appartengo (phrase)	from the verb <i>appartenere</i> , meaning to belong to something or someone else	I belong to you, I am part of you, I reside in you
al (prep.)	expressing belonging or direction	to
alghè (n.)	a plant that grows underwater	algae, seaweed
alla (prep.)	expressing direction	to, of, in
anima (n.)	the essence of life	spirit, soul
assiduamente (adv.)	with great diligence	tirelessly, persistently, continuously
compagna (n.)	a member of the same group	friend, companion, mate
d'agili (prep. + adj.)	related to something that moves quickly	of nimble, of lively, of vivacious
d'alghè (prep. + n.)	related to a plant that grows underwater	of algae, of seaweed
da cui (prep.)	expressing origin	from which, off which, from where
dal (prep.)	expressing direction	from the
delle (prep.)	expressing possession or belonging	of, of the
dove (prep.)	describing position or location	where, in which
e (conj.)	in addition to	and, as well as
ebbi la vita (phrase)	from the phrase <i>avere la vita</i> , which literally means to have life	I was born, I was created, I was birthed
forma (n.)	the outer contour of an object	shape, form, outline
giacqui (v.)	from the verb <i>giacere</i> , meaning to lie or recline	I lay, I rested, I slept
grembo (n.)	an intimate, protected place	womb, uterus, lap
il mio (art. + adj.)	owned by the speaker	my, of mine
il tuo (art. + adj.)	owned by the person being spoken to	your, of yours

WORD	DEFINITION	POSSIBLE SYNONYMS
in (prep.)	expressing position or location	in, within
io (pron.)	used by the speaker or writer referring to himself or herself	I
l'amara (adj.)	describing something unpleasant	the bitter, the harsh, the cruel
l'antica (adj.)	describing something that dates back to the past	the old, the ancient
la conchiglia (n.)	the hard outside covering of an animal	the shell, the seashell, the conch
la mia (art. + adj.)	expressing possession or ownership	my, of mine
libere (adj.)	unrestricted, released, loose	free, open, limitless
lungamente (adv.)	expressing a period of time	for a long time, for ages, for a while
ma (conj.)	expressing contrast	but, yet, rather
mano (n.)	the part of the body with five fingers, used for touching	hand, palm, grip
marina (adj.)	relating to the sea	marine, sea, aquatic
me ne divise (pron. + v.)	from the verb <i>dividere</i> , meaning to separate	separated me from it, divided me from it, took me from it
mentre (conj.)	at the same time	while, as
mi raccogliesti (pron. + v.)	from the verb <i>raccogliere</i> , meaning to collect	you picked me up, you found me, you got me
mirabile (adj.)	worthy of admiration	amazing, enchanting, marvelous
né (conj.)	used to connect parts of a negative sentence	nor
ne sospira (v.)	from the verb <i>sospirare</i> , meaning to sigh	longs for it, yearns for it, sighs for it
nel cavo della (phrase)	located in a hollowed out space	in the cavern of, in the valley of, in the alcove of
non (adv.)	used to make statements negative	not, do not, neither
oblio (n.)	the condition of forgetting	forgetting, neglect

WORD	DEFINITION	POSSIBLE SYNONYMS
odio (n.)	a feeling of extreme dislike	hate, hatred, ill-will
onde (n.)	movement in a body of water	waves, swells, breakers
ora (adv.)	at the time of speaking	now, at the moment
orecchio (n.)	the bodily organ for hearing	ear
patria (n.)	a person's native country	homeland, country, nation
palma (n.)	inner surface of the hand	palm, hand
perciò (conj.)	used to express consequence	therefore, thus, for this reason
pesci (n.)	an animal with fins that lives in water	fish, sea creatures
prima che (conj.)	describes what happened at an earlier time	before
rimormora (v.)	from verb <i>mormorare</i> , meaning to make a soft sound	it hums, it murmurs, it whispers
riposi (v.)	from the verb <i>riposare</i> , meaning to be inactive	I rest, I relax, I take a break
sabbia (n.)	a fine material of rocks and minerals	sand, shore, beach
sebbene (conj.)	introduces a modifying statement	though, even if, despite
segreto (n.)	something kept hidden	secret, mystery, surprise
sguardo (n.)	the act or means of seeing	gaze, eyes, glance
si duole in me (v.)	from the verb <i>dolere</i> , meaning to feel pain	aches in me, hurts me, pains me
si offrìsse (v.)	from the verb <i>offrire</i> , meaning to offer or make available	showed itself, presented itself, opened itself
straniero (adj.)	from another place	foreign, alien, unfamiliar
stupito (adj.)	from the verb <i>stupire</i> , meaning to stupefy	astonished, amazed, astounded
sulla (prep.)	expressing position or location	on, upon
tempesta (n.)	a violent storm of rain and wind	gale, tempest, hurricane
tu reggi (pron. + v.)	from the verb <i>reggere</i> , meaning to hold	you hold, you grasp, you bear

WORD	DEFINITION	POSSIBLE SYNONYMS
tua (adj.)	describing possession	your
tuo (adj.)	describing possession	your
vi pieghi (v.)	from the verb <i>piegare</i> , meaning to bend	you tilt, you lean, you turn
viandante (n.)	someone who has no permanent home	traveler, wanderer, nomad

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

PHRASE BY PHRASE

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mentre tu reggi il mio segreto sulla tua palma _____

e stupito vi pieghi il tuo orecchio straniero. _____

DEFENDING YOUR TRANSLATION—FINDING THE 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?
