

FROM GIUSEPPE UNGARETTI

PHASE

Mariano, 25 June 1916

On the road on the road
I've rediscovered
the well of love

In its thousand-and-
one-nights eye
I've rested

Upon the abandoned gardens
she alit
like a dove

Within the air
of a noontide
that was one long swoon
I picked her
oranges and jasmine

FIRST LOVE

It was a city night,
Rosy and yellowish the wan light
Out of which, as if from a shift in the darkness,
There seemed to have arisen form.

It was a sultry night
When I saw teeth I had not foreseen, violet
In a juncture of limbs that pretended peace.

Out of that unaccustomed, unhappy night
And from the depth of my own estranged blood
I have brought to light the stuff of which
I shall make my own arcana.
[1929]

from 1914–1915

I have seen you, Alexandria
Crumbling on your ghostly foundations
Become a memory for me
In a half-completed embrace of lights.

Not long since, you eluded me; and I've no regrets
For the seawrack thrown up by your tepid surf,
Passing upon the sexes its sentence of frenzy,
Nor the limitless and deaf full moon
Of the dry nights that lay seige to you,
Nor, amidst the howling dogs,
Under a taut canopy,
Cupids and dreams sprawling across the carpets.

I belong to another blood and have not missed you,
But in this shipboard solitude
More than usually the melancholy
Delusion has come back, stranger,
That you might be the city where I was born.
[1932]