

Giacomo Leopardi Speaks English

Giulia Madron (December 03, 2013)



The first complete English version of Giacomo Leopardi's manuscript, "Zibaldone," was presented at the Italian Cultural Institute in New York.

After six years of studies and seven years to translate it, finally, Giacomo Leopardi's "Zibaldone" lands in the US thanks to [Farrar, Straus & Giroux](#) [2], one of the most prestigious literary publishing houses in North America.

Yesterday [The Italian Cultural Institute of New York](#) [3] organized a round table inviting the team of critics, linguistics and scholars who worked together at the translation of the manuscripts of one of the greatest literary representatives of the XIX century.



The “Zibaldone,” also defined as a “hodge-podge” by Harold Bloom, is sort of a diary, a collection of Leopardi’s annotations and literary, critical and philosophical reflections that the author makes in response to his readings.

This literary masterpiece also includes comments that touch a wide range of fields of different nature including linguistics, history, anthropology, astronomy and psychology, showing the enormous intellectual stature of the Italian poet.

The translation of Leopardi’s “Zibaldone” was realized under the supervision of Franco D’Intino and Michael Caesar of the Leopardi Center at the University of Birmingham, both present at the round table. The event at the Italian Cultural Institute saw also the participation of other academic professionalists who collaborated at the project and who were there to give more insights and discuss their methods of approaching Leopardi’s work. Among the speakers: Jonathan Galassi, President of Farrar, Straus & Giroux, Margaret Brose, Professor at the University of Santa Cruz, Nicola Gardini, Professor at the University of Oxford and Ann Goldstein, editor and famous translator.

The panel was introduced by the Director of The Italian Cultural Institute of New York, Riccardo Viale, who briefly discussed the importance of the “Zibaldone” from a philosophical and anthropological perspective. Afterwards, each of the lecturers read, in both Italian and English, some excerpts chosen from the Leopardi’s “Zibaldone,” commenting and analyzing the greatness of such work and how both the opera and its author have influenced modern literature and modern society.

“This is one of the longest book we ever published, the most ambitious, and the one of which I am the most proud of,” said Jonathan Galassi, talking about the greatness of Leopardi’s poetry which he really appreciates since it’s not his first time approaching the works of the Italian poet.

“The Zibaldone is the accurate reflection of the breadth and depth of his mind,” he concludes before introducing the other speakers.

“There is, in the Zibaldone, a variety of subjects, languages. It’s a constant dialogue with hundreds of authors and himself. So this book is chaotic, unfinished, incoherent, non systematic,” said Franco D’Intino, who highlighted the philosophical perspective of the book and its author.

“Zibaldone is a work in progress,” said Michael Caesar, who talked more about the constant effort that took them to publish the English version of the book, deepening also into the several strategies that are used when it comes to translate such enormous literary material.

The English version, and very accurate one, of the “Zibaldone” is a great publication, a literary phenomenon that will give to the world the opportunity of understand and appreciate one of the greatest Italian thinkers ever existed.

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