

ALFONSO FILIERI

STORIES OF FIRE

the linear journey of the exemplary vagabond

Nelio Sonogo

orolontano

The stories of fire, or rather, the linear journey of the exemplary vagabond, and events on the way around the world of other excellent travellers, were taking shape during a summer stay, under the shadow of a patio in a house on the hills after the spark of a fire, from the gathered notes, like in a diary since 1980, on certain notebooks that Antonio Spolentini had brought from St. Petersburg, Cuczo, Puebla, Benares, Baktapur, and on the notebooks of regenerated cellulose from the straw paper fields of the ancient paper mill of Dueville, near Vicenza.

On the cover:

Nelio Sonogo in 1989

in his studio in Ponte della Muda

Alfonso Filieri

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### Note

To the present edition have been added two notes from 2007 that weren't in the first edition of 1998, "The oracle and the enigma. Perfumes of antique paper" and "Dust and beauty. A new day", in memory of a "master" I never knew the name of and Sveva Lanza whom in this occasion I want to remember with a 1989 letter written with a graceful calligraphy and sent to a friend, a letter found between two pages of a notebook that somebody had brought as a gift from far away.

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For Sonego and Filieri

**The song above the earth.** Sonego and Filieri paint and write. Like the Egyptians who made paper for their hieroglyphic secrets from strips of papyrus. Sonego and Filieri prepare material for small volumes, which are filled by the former with very colourful, minimal signs and by the latter with many words, searching for the infinite trace. They move together, pushed by their fever towards the orolontano. Which, like the horizon, always withdraws itself as their steps go forward. On the roofs: airy terraces of Istanbul, Cairo, Amman, Bagdad, it is still possible to listen to the hoarse scream of the Muezzin invoking Allah. Which in Arabic means mystery.

The mystery that man, this monkey that progressed over a period of five millions of years and more, has just scratched, that wraps us in the night of the not-knowing, pushes us to the discovery of what exists beyond anything else that we can call all or God, or Buddha, or Christ, or Allah, or Gospodin, or My Lord, or creator, or thought of thought, or primo mobile, or starry sky, or sand granules or sea drops. The other supremacy that animates signs, semantemes, meanings and significatives. Their works are full of eroticism but never mention love. The circle closes.

Only the song above the earth consecrates and celebrates. Inebriated in their flying they stop and admire the tiny shriveled-up tomato that in the middle of the winter hangs with a spider's dribble from a small dry branch and continues its battle, imposing its numb red to the north wind frost, inescapable, invincible, eternal.

The Egyptians remembered better than us that man used to be a monkey. Thus, on the name of the man and the half beast woman, they raised the Sphinx in the heart of the desert to illuminate with shadows the mystery of the blinding sun (Horus).

But now, having become adults they put the pyramid along with all theorems known before Euclid and with their whole matema, their episteme. Therefore Sonego and Filieri thicken messages they launch to their contemporaries in bottles that infinitely go for the only Ocean that wets emerged lands, bottles with the science of the world that nobody picks up. Unique waves that slowly become sea. Nelio has just come back from Halle, a place where two civilisations still confront each other: the battle that Christ started for emancipation and that Spartacus armed with a sacrilegious hand and the confused suffused noise of the pitiless conformism to ice the heroic flames of the discovery of colours to come.

The coloured patterns of Missoni's sweater excite Sonego's palette that entrusts to the chromatic traces showier for their bathed sound, often incomprehensible.

Thus I become younger every second I remember all the hours spent in the darkness of the cinema Verdi in Pordenone running after, with mute movies, the far-away lightning bolts of my childhood and youth that intensely resound like shells of dead cicadas. Therefore, I attempt this light homage to their understanding of existence, there on the edge of the NON that slowly and lazy drags, towards the Adriatic Sea, the rest of many fortunes. Together, the three of us, dedicate our images to this legend.

Luigi Serravalli  
*Rovereto, 29 January 1998*

## THE ORACLE AND THE ENIGMA

### Perfume of antique paper

Three things are at the origin of remembering and telling: the tree of the oracle, the enigma of an imaginary dimension and a well of new water stars that was the history of a returned gift. All this is a tired journey suggested by the memories that a tiny chip of time sometimes can mutate without any fortune in shape, that is, of works on paper, canvas, wood, terracotta, deeply perfumed by colours and sounds of that garden and orchard. A unique copy of a ninety-seven handmade paper, "The garden of Feaci", other books with limited print like their glorious frontispieces tell, numbered and signed bookmarks like a suggestion to follow and fragments or immense dimensions of works made of recycled paper, wax, tissue paper, papers coming from the Far East, handmade papers where manipulation traces are visible, of hands and tools used to leave clear traces of transparency, airframes, or mirrors, or glares, or for water's pages, pages of leaf-green colour, rich and juicy greens and velvety purples, rough, sweet-sour reds, blackish reds or bluish violets of small fruits that are echoes and loyal mirrors of that place and time for me remembrance of a legendary summer holiday, and returned gifts.

Sometimes the morning slowly raised on a road which silence was interrupted only by secure steps on wobbly stones and by some words, that the road leading to the oracles and enigmas is cobbled with very deep unexpressed thoughts, and finished when towards the evening, the dark tower of a castle, destination of a deserved return, seemed melting on the edges with a touch of a summer gold that the sun, master of the fire masters, hurled on the borders of the walls. In that fraction of time my grandfather, king of the strawberries, seeker of water and builder of oracles and enigmas, was telling about suspended gardens, was teaching me new roads, new names, secrets of the land, and the secret of hands among leaves and how to discover the morning stars.

Far away was the time of the watches in that legendary, unforgettable summer. I found, inside a well locked case, on the second floor of a house used for breaks and refuge built on the last tier of the garden, also perfumes of antique paper, books seemingly incomprehensible of calculations to penetrate lands and others with drawings related to bifurcated woods, notes and drawings of grafts among branches and trunks and sheets scattered among pages of other books, more notes on sheets of even more older paper with borders consumed by the time that works on the paper and makes borders uncertain, other handcut papers and written with black sepia ink and elegant pen-nib. He was also telling about the source that he himself found and dug up to the returned gift of fragments of the sky's sparkling mirrors, with his hands in first instance docile and strong veins of olive and mud, and then luminous claws of pure water.

The people of neighbouring fields also made use of that water and of the gifted freshness everybody drunk rich sips with limited fatigue or used the thirsty land of the warm season to produce fruits of generous colours.

A unique example in fourth minor represented a map of that well where signs, drawings and words indicated a site that had been excavated following a wavering of stars that fell, discrete lights in the silence, all spring serene nights, on the vertical, at the point where another wavering of bifurcated woods indicated where to locate improvised explosives for dusty plops followed by exemplary arm movements, and it was a corner wrapped by the whitened non-shadow lilies in prayer until morning. Around, inside the insurmountable beauty of that silence, shaped vegetable patches and perfumes' architectures, balustrade of pink and violet carnations, was the secret place where the time stopped.

And for the astonishment of the birds of that realm the tree of twelve clutches. A sphere opened to all flights for all seasons. The monthly stations of the flight steps.

Twelve different species of pear fruits of twelve different shapes and colours.

The tree of the oracle always full of fruits for all seasons. Below that vast and vertical oracle the challenge, the enigma of the dimension.

It was the lonely, sole apple, fruit of red carmine vanished into light pink not less than thirty centimetres in diameter, magically hung from a small, ordered tree, whose branches were an umbrella of strong nerves, interlaced branches, solid and gentle arms, and it was a fruit of a magical art or of a fortunate talent, of a wrong or lucky graft, or simply it was the fate that invented it.

It tore, from that vibrant and surprised roots, that sweet apple grown with such care, careful and discrete, jealous looks, and day after day while it was gradually growing pride and astonishment, the boss, that was myself, of a group of youngsters that on an afternoon of that unrepeatably summer I dragged to the place perhaps part as a joke, part to reveal an immense secret.

## DUST AND BEAUTY

### A new day

Urged by Nelio I restarted writing in the uncertain hour of late afternoon of a new year's day.

I went back to this rough and sincere paper of recycled notebooks, to navigate on these paper rafts that are the pages of those handmade books. A light seemed to shake on the memory of those pages, forgotten by a distracted and fragile god, that entered sliding on that suspended greyish textures, a bit cold, a bit golden and with some forgotten sun reflection, almost wanting to reveal the sense of impenetrable traces, among leftovers of wax paper, wood, terracotta, fired enamels, veil paper, handmade paper, around scattered canvases on easels almost marking an obliged path between the marble surface and a wax's table, between the wooden surface used for the paint and a handmade paper's table eternally full of colour.

They emerged on everything and around everything like small sudden waves, fragments of every dimension of already worked paper remains that were also precious cuts without perimeter and never forgotten stories. So, pushed by that tremor of light that was there, at that hour very close to its end, pushed by a secret invite, I also opened the cases of those books that had been shut for a few years.

It divided dust and beauty, only a seemingly fragile container of machine-glazed tissue paper. Inside were the wrapped pages of those editions of handmade books, in that hour of nobody and everybody of that day for rest or party, voices of generous lives started telling about new stories of this earth, of every time and memory, of known and unknown words, of whispered paper sounds, to the inventions of colours, signs, shapes.

They were maps for that raft and on the horizon pages for those upcoming days, still so many unknown places that the places of memory never end, in the fortune or bad luck, of the easy and tired back-and-forward of flipping through the smooth and rough of the paper, of the settled mix and modular glazing of paper tissues on canvases or woods; echoes of a few sounds that seemed repeating that after every journey there are only a few colours and eternal words left. Those that remain. And the new horizon that is moving away after the last page, for the next pages. Pages.

Still. Of dusty butterflies wings and whispering of mermaid's salts, of transparent shadows on things, a scream of hoarse paper of a young hawk and strong movement that swirl lighter than veil heavier is the echo of its shadow, of a blue bird's eye, of that king of paradise birds of king's birds, of the time where it had strong and fast wings and mates voted to certain defeat, born labyrinths that reveal, of light remains and reflections and small water mirrors, of fresh morning and dream's nerves where the first light is a transparent golden rosy nerve, of green night and smell of dark green night and trails of trained firefly, fires of meat on the hands, fires of summer evenings, of beauty and sleepless desires, where "the sleepless bird with beauty wings drink the moon and the white desire slides, through skeleton, muscles, skin. Works. Still. In that dusk also geometric measures were pages of generous giving. Linseed oil cooked on the master tree wooden fragments, the crush of a fatal boat, a small canvas circle becomes the eye of fear, seemed fires of a good auspice, instead the albatross vibrated its wings against the wood and looked for white roots while it found only a fallen circle of bad luck. A luminous fragment was gold waxed with fire, and luminescent pigments of metal paper on linen paper in a horizontal oval, where white won every star, marked veins on bodies, left paper textures and the last layer of sheer white perfumed of fire. It was an 'immensity of delicate emotions, other pages other works, other found ways. I had already told, for the times of the clock, stories of places and mysteries of handmade books. I collected them for artists, poets, they were stories of friendship. Written on rough paper that slows down the thought, for the fatigue of the hands that make you slow down and think. Now I also remember the happiness of some friends and the beauty of their words.

Now there were also new stories.

Still among the silent flipping-through of rediscovered works, new images of renewed and ancient ideas, Nelio, an exemplary road companion, the way of the Art, not well known, walked and I heard his steps. Close. Tired like mine. Tired for the fatigue of being. King and prisoners between those pages where an eternal wander seems to last. One of those many days of many last moves which every single one seems the last like the horizon of Serravalli that always withdraws itself as the steps go forward, on two big



notebooks with an abnormal vertical format composed by two groups of seven blue ruled sheets, folded in the middle and fixed with rough metallic stitches now slightly oxidized and with a poor cardboard cover reinforced on the spine and corners with dark blue canvas, covered with patina not too refined on the firsts and fourth and where are vaguely readable confused labyrinths of stones or water movements or maps of blue, reddish green, dark ochre, pale ochre forests (presumably imaginary work of a certainly melancholic illustrator), I found many places, words, notes, short stories, memories slightly mixed up like my own going in that time and illuminated and dusted fragments of the end of the century and of infinite mirrors. Those pages will never be translated. Perhaps they are imaginary works. Art makes you discover invisible places, also invisible men, men of every-and-no place, to invent and forget the names of things. A photograph among those pages, the image of Nelio under the pergola and the West in flames and that outline stood out inside every single red and the notes of the Passion according to Matthew were visible circles of creativity.

Sometimes I exchanged Nelio's visits.

Although I don't want to remember the name, we used to call him "the master", we always met him. Sometimes in the square, in Sacile, when from the house of Ponte della Muda we used to go out for the pure pleasure of going out.

Otherwise we met him on one of the small Livenza bridges, day or night, always smiling.

And he seemed not to have a destination.

Ever.

He could go forward, backward, come with us to have a beer in the summer, or a passito on a spring evening, or a hot chocolate on a winter night, he could go from where he came from, he could go and write a piece of music.

That we never heard and will never do. And he, road companion, doesn't defeat death, today he wanted to get lost, he became for all of us invisible.

Art is also the fatigue of not getting lost. Nelio struggles.

For years, and his story is also the story of a builder of horizons. Among those small infinite mirrors, those infinite fragments of horizons, between two sheets of that unusual notebook a photocopy of Sveva Lanza's letter, another creature now invisible, that tells stories of a divine art simulation and the story who touched, like her, the veil of existence and transcendence.

Dear Clive,

finally a break to write you about the exhibition proposal that we talked about on the phone. I spoke to Alfonso Filieri and he is as enthusiastic as myself. It's about an imaginary journey, outside time, since both Alfonso and I work on the breaking down of mythological and magic values (mythological events are a variation of landscape) through volumes, colours and images, blurred-spatial alienations untied from the temporal matrix. Alfonso plays around with the four philosophical elements: air, water, fire, earth, contrasting on wood and paper shapes manually mould and modeled (with air and water) chemical elements of metals like gold, silver, brass and iron (fire and earth). His latest works fly towards the infinite on walls, developments of discontinued and asymmetric perspectives, almost like they don't want to be caught, not even for the eyes of others. I'd like to show flying carpets and earth textile gardens (with wooden twigs, roses and orchids on postcard) and sea (with stones and seashells), where images are located in a different and unusual context from their logical destination while magazine covers are woven, mixed and alternated, so not obligatory stages anymore but reversible asymmetries suspended in short-circuit of the geometric snarl. It is a world trip in transparency where myth is a veil that includes and excludes existences-transcendences. "Ulysses and the canvas", like Alfonso Filieri writes, "the big maps of the blue" where "the dream of the journey, the fortune of the light, the indiscreet perimeter of memory never wear out because they are a magic gift of the creation and a divine simulation of the art"

Rome, 19 may 1989.

## MOUNTAINS OF WAX TISSUE PAPER

### The fire explodes

The stories of fire, or rather, the linear journey of the exemplary vagabond, and events on the way around the world of other excellent travellers, were taking shape during a summer stay, under the shadow of a patio in a house on the hills after the spark of a fire, from the gathered notes, like in a diary since 1980, on certain notebooks that Antonio Spolentini had brought from St. Petersburg, Cuczo, Puebla, Benares, Baktapur, and on the notebooks of regenerated cellulose from the straw paper fields of the ancient paper mill of Dueville, near Vicenza.

It was one of those August days when the violent sun drinks the colours of our poor, rich earth and the things exposed to that light become unmovable objects covering themselves of golden fragile paper to burn.

In the place where I found myself, the wheel, tired of continuous turning, laid down and seemed to want to stop near uncles Antonio and Felice that Antonio Spolentini, excellent traveller and supporter of artists as well as proud great-grandson, rebuilt among emerging stones framed by brambles and on the few traces probably left of an old refuge, in that land called hill of Acqua Calda.

Now there was also a patio held by seven pillars which had been chestnut trees and I arranged myself under its solid shadow. On one side, the hill of the invisible small cascade hidden inside the big brush of oak trees, which with its own pleasant modular was the undisputed and harmonious voice of that place.

On the other side, the hill of foxes' lair that in the night came up to the wall and external walls of the house.

Opposite, a piece of seventy-feet-long land that was sweetly going down to go back up again and end towards a depth of white rocks with grey, green and dark grey veins.

Beyond those rocks, warm until late night, a deep green cliff apparently inaccessible to everybody; but from that extreme point, if it happened to be a clear day, the look went first back towards the evergreen hills, marked by shadow paths and white paths; then, towards mountains of tissue paper, transparent and very clear.

The work proceeded regularly in that precious and so desired peace, away from the daily going back and forth of the city. New papers and thoughts were born.

Stories of fire with red vermilion, cinnabar, scarlet, orange and luminescent red orange dust, primary yellow and rich gold, while they didn't tinge the glass of nocturnal blues, Veronese, indigo, Prussia, ultramarine and moon white.

Fragments of handmade paper formed and painted was born from cotton and colour for a new memory vision, paper also marked by veins and burns of blackish blue, shadow dark red, opaque green black.

Fragments of thoughts, then, for the texts meant for Nelio in the name of a friendship of nearly twenty years that connected us, and for a new enthusiasm for this new work: a haiku trilogy for the new orolontano editions. It was a promise and a new idea.

Slowly though in a sudden infinite and present-time fragment, from the middle, from the borders, from every point of those canvases, and around those thoughts, an acrid smell of smoke seemed to waft up and turn around that white Carrara shelf invented in the shadow of that patio. Stirring memories of bonfires that never existed: on midnight beaches, inside the heart of lower padana invaded by cold light of a winter moon, fires of promised loves between spars and ribbons under useless blasts of defeated sleet, fires spied on silence to discover the future with lost thoughts perhaps momentarily between cracks and sparks, and shapeless wheels that go, rising or dying flashes always ready to be reborn and die, that don't let themselves be read nor captured, that the escaping beauty of the fire's shape is the illusion of poets and the certainty of poetry.

It was adequate to uncertain and divine facts, magic and reality, astonishment and art of doing, hands soaked in colours and thoughts, at fire speed to create cotton, water, earth, glues and borders expanded, stripped, curved or stretched or extended matter, shadow, matter. Lights and reflections jumped on paper tongues, lightened spindle-shaped points, eyes steamed up for that smoke that suggested fire on paper, paper on fire, and a smoke that was almost real was covering everything, inside a kind of non-colour or whiteness transparent at times, opaline sometimes. The truth is sometimes in the sky.

I looked up beyond the patio and a pale crescent vanished and appeared in the light and dark grey of a big cloud, while on earth, a carousel recalled sounds of sinister nostalgias turning impossible geometries of complex figures just sketched, never completed...

For a few minutes a fire was telling its cruel story.

Closer to the valley stubbles burnt, among stones and clods, vine stock and bunch of newborn grapes, olive trees with their precious loads.

On the ground apples, plums and pears were already pulp and dust. They had lost their shape forever.

The unexpected fire sung and the waterfall became mute. During those hours of fire and fatigue the memory of friendship, Love and Art shone. The story was now becoming a double promise.

## THE GARDEN OF MEMORY

### Rosemary and pomegranate

He lived under the push of an imminent getaway with a fugitive spirit in his heart.

Domenico Sonogo hardly ever went out. He spent day and night in that corner of the house taking now and then something from the nearby kitchen, around the sofa where sometimes he rested, day or night, located between the window facing park Ortolan framed by the ever-shiny leaves of a rich medlar tree and the garden window where, as soon as he came back from Switzerland with newborn Nelio, he had planted a now sparkling pomegranate and an old rosemary that had impetuously assaulted the wall and twisted itself to its own shadow.

The body of that birdman with a human shape was missing the necessary air and space.

Sometimes he looked perched, sometimes fluttery but always close to the oxygen torpedo located in the corner, behind the sofa. Around that tool of life and death, scrupulously controlled, he cultivated the garden of memory and thought with fear of the future. He was resigned and understood the sense of all human hard work.

He was telling stories with tense nerves and wit.

One evening he felt nostalgic of war times because of the frightening thunder, an undefined number of airplanes, coming from Aviano military base, were flying over Ponte della Muda towards a mysterious destination, some mission; and that was an irreparable yearning.

Other times his cutting gibe did not leave him a way out and seemed to be consummated with the extreme ease of pretense of a consumed actor, like when, with the very sharp point of a tailor's scissor wanted to work professionally in a skilful ancient way, under the cheerful and lovable glance of her wife, the neighbours' hen-sparrow that kindly knocked on his door and asked for a cut for her dress.

He was also the painter of Cordignano's hamlet and restored the Madonna located on the Church of Saint Valentine's greater altar.

Additionally he painted with a fine technique oil portraits, still lifes, mainly typical scenes, lovers' meeting places, scenes of boat trips on peaceful seas, storms and thunderstorms, pigeons on a flourished gothic-like windows and landscapes of the surrounding area, on the boundary between Veneto and Friuli marked by Meschio.

On the right bank of that river was Nelio Sonogo's study.

## NELIO'S STUDIO

### Art of borders

It was a vast studio, open towards all cardinal points. He had obtained it as a sort of gift without time limit.

It had fallen on him from a page of the book of changeable life stories, lent with no strings attached, and it was equipped with exemplary expertise. He started working just after dawn and finished when a movement of slow shadows was on the nearby Prealps.

Already outside the building there were traces and dust of unknown streets and the border. And time seemed still between the moans and silences of the countryside, between meaty and suggestive scents of various meat shops that came perhaps from memory, perhaps passed by and/or really penetrated through one's nostrils because kept on hold, or they were still in an a locked room in the hall of that house owned by Vladimiro Mattiuz, a pig dealer. However the aromas of that meat processing were only temporary passages that invited the nose of the visitor almost from inside the rooms. Inside, there were five massive rooms with floor fitted with wooden boards.

The access was through a very high door, solid but slightly askew on its symmetric axis and a flight of stairs of the same wood though polished and edgeless where steps and time highlighted reddish and grey dark grains always covered by dust.

As soon as we arrived to the twenty-first and last step, smells, lights, sounds, signs and everything else was different. Acrylics, temperas, chalks, glues, inks, pastels, graphite were lying on various tables; dark room and camerawork, paper smells, canvases, woods for frames, paints and sawdust, vases full of new paintbrushes, paintbrushes just used and always meticulously washed and dried, jars well shut, noises of steps on wood, echoes of steps and flashes of green lizard around vases of cactus randomly displayed on the terrace.

Tools, thoughts, signals, equipments to mark new itineraries and build maps. Smells of borders.

Inside that studio time swirled around rectangles of his research and secrets were kept and guarded.

It was the beginning of the eighties and Metronomo, the classifier, ordered his artworks within modular metallic structures made by himself in relation to formats and materials used.

Day after day, he built a good portion of the calendar of the linear journey of an exemplary vagabond.

## THE FIRST YEARS OF THE EIGHTIES

### The figure of ill omen

Nelio didn't show his age. His eyes had the colour of the spaces of silence and looked to the speed of thought. His mental elaborations had the final solemnity of definitive, irrefutable definition.

He didn't talk much and thought a lot, in silence and only after several and sometimes annoying waits, he gave his answer that didn't give any room for alternative possibilities. He was both tall and low and had a cobra's and eagle's step. Superb walker and marvellous lazy man, Venetian born in Switzerland and southern for his love for Rome, since the beginning of the eighties he started dreaming the truth and lie of the art and that was the recurring linear dream fragmented in moments and different places. Sometimes he dreamt, full of anxiety, that he waited nearby citation agencies inside cold train stations, airports or undergrounds and he observed with disgust of the ill omen that filled newsagents and spaces in front of the tickets offices with artworks made with awful figures, used objects, still lifes, nudes and whatever visible to the naked eye.

This being, with nearly human looks, covered then the walls of those stations of the eighties with posters and publications coated with strong weight which told stories already heard and depicted images already seen, at least a century and a half ago, objects, faces and figures still badly made.

Those artistic simulations were places of origin and destination of impostor travellers of the beginning of the eighties. They were images of their dying souls, tired stories for imminent death, looks of puffy eyes scared by their own sight and humiliated under the strain of their own body and those useless jobs. More dead than alive, the actors of those posters and catalogues stammered plots of ordinary representations, realised by specialists in visual tricks and treacherous words games.

They looked thus actors of the mirror, false for fake vocation (or received order), in other words neo classics, neo, neo expressionists held by neo, neo, neo thoughts, bearers on poor legs of their own neo corpses, filtered beings, fake dreamers of neo, neo dreams, without skeleton, nor muscles, with no blood, nor thoughts. Only wrinkled skin of an also shabby colour.

Nelio started then going around Europe, far and wide following perimeters invented before leaving, as his usual, looking for dreams that gave him peace and made him feel the beauty of awakening and the sensation of truth.

He happened to be in Arezzo in the choir of the church of San Francis, in front of the page of "Constantine's dream" he stopped for a long time enjoying in the evening wait the first flush of a secured art victory.

Between the perfumes of the colours of Piero's fresco ride the white light of the angel that illuminated a dream for longer than five hundred years. He visited London's National Gallery and in front of Mantegna's painting "Oration in the Garden" he read the thoughts of three sleepy apostles that dreamt the ways of the border of life and left their master praying in full loneliness in a landscape with a border of the known world. Nelio followed wild paths. He waited in front of the abysses along that scree of faith. So it touched all colours and shapes of memory, imagination, him as well along the borders of loneliness.

He went to Museo del Prado, where in front of Saturn's craziness he read the dream of fear. He also read about the useless fatuous fire of citationism and of what I could produce.

From Quinta del Sordo, on the riverbank of Manzanares, the old Goya taught everybody that the merchant, father, inventor, Saturn, ate his son, his works, his own craziness, dribbled blood, muscles, skeleton and skin.

So Nelio Sonego went to observe the real dreams of who knew how to create, of who understood the truth.

At Musée d'Orsay, he was fascinated by Manet's light that hurled down towards the eternal day and stayed hours and hours in front of that glare fixed forever on the canvas.

## RECTANGLES IN MINIATURE

### Codes and maps

Inside a 1983 Venetian diary bought in campo Santa Margherita from one of those shops, tight but exuberant of reflexes, suspended on the water I discovered Nelio's message. Between a ruled page with weekly notes and a squared page for notes, there were, in addition to a red note about the discovery of a new type of paper, twelve small cards, works by Nelio, left as bookmark. The diary had a linen cover and the paper was dark carmine-spotted colour and light grey hints, dark grey and blackish.

I found it in a basket of old piston stylus, pen-nibs, ink-toughened jars, empty and full, multicoloured marbles, black and white postcards and turned sepia of various times.

On the ruled pages of weekly notes there was a time of exams: third year E; a time: departure from Rome; a visit at Palazzo Ducale (China, the terracotta army); a note about Paul Klee's lesson: the hanging shapes, the troubled equilibrium, light and dark, red and blue, the re-established equilibrium, yellow and black and finally a visit to the Marciana, opening times.

On the squared pages there were precious news about a code fully illuminated from the eleventh: a "Greek" Oppian hunting treatise, and others about Saint Patrick and Saint Tryphon legend where there is a representation of the seven deadly sins and the figure of Charity, Temperance, Justice and Fortitude. Proud of at least a couple of those sins and as many virtues was Nelio's note on a piece of ivory parchment paper originally from the artwork-book titled "Argonauts' Expedition" the eighty-one.

It was a message about the exhibition Sign and Symbol with an essay by Giorgio Cortenova and thorough hints about a catalogue. Then a series of rectangles in miniature on white handmade paper with strong weight per square meter for the rectangles' white book.

Those were the years of the first traces of the golden map of the orolontano place and Nelio was a precious adventure companion. That was Nelio's linear journey of a vagabond who was walking with pure steps and real mind honesty, in spite of the ever present uncertainty of the future for the natural aptitude of being always him, away from fashions and ways that for an artist are richness and misery, life and death.

Often I found him on the Carmini Bridge, sitting astride on the highest side detached from common passengers, along that passing by that was at that time the throne of a humble king.

That small bridge on river Marin was the starting point of our dialogues; dialogues about the meaning of his wise writing and on wandering inspirations of my handmade papers, between his linear wandering around the rectangles' perimeters and my traveling into stories of memory and future.

It was happening always in golden sunlight days and everything was easier into that light. So, we were walking among streets, canals taking about art, exhibitions, miniature codes, works of large format, about our handmade books, on an absurd swaying of life and death, where the brilliant glow of golden fluid water on the houses and on everything else seemed so uncertain, as much as definitive.

We could almost touch that perfection, think close by about the future, about the adventure of those handmade books of the orolontano place, of the map of that place.

## OPEN THE PERIMETERS!

### Eye against eye

The rectangles were the visible and pure simplicity of doing and together one of many invisible mystery doors. There were deceit openings and surprised closings, mirrors of lazy consciences and the possibility of perfections of real and unreal distances. They were incalculable depths of some measures or traces of this and other worlds and their borders, discovered during those linear journeys.

Inside and out of the rectangles the look was thrown, sometimes, beyond perimeters of unknown territories, with anxiety, courage, incautiously and sometimes, inside that fencing where reflex orbs were lost, looking for a centre, a distant support point or even further away or at a few centimetres. There were observers' portraits, curious people that look for their own semblances or their own salvation with wide open eyes of a Pantocreator Christ along those tracing coloured lines.

Or of somebody who tried to imagine beyond or inside the perimeter, the pure spirit of the elected, faceless beings, shapeless portraits of magicians and witches, queens and kings, goddess and god, sirens and tritons, devils and angels, pure essences and matter. Or of those people that dream or those people that found themselves in an advanced day, inside a dream already dreamt, a life already lived.

Open the perimeters!

In Susegana, in a warm and soothed evening in mid July, to the varnish of "territorial messages" the wounded scream of Alessandro Cadamuro... woke up lukewarm consciences of an elegant public along with neighbourhood mayors, city council members and various presidents. Alessandro... was reading the written text for "vertical black" sixteen by twenty-five, with black cover eleven comma five by twenty-five and around grey sixty by twenty-five deceit folded in four parts Canson opaque and rough paper. After a soothed, calibrated, sometimes slow feature, preparatory reading, a long break before the final screamed phrase. Open the perimeters! Of course of Nelio's rectangles.

During that break, Alessandro, love's lover and always surrounded and supported by beautiful women, drunk from the splendour of poets, by now slightly wine drunk, after thinking of all possible things on earth and specially Art, love, wine and after following the perimeter of four rectangles made with Magents batter, overseas, emerald, black, violet, lemon, orange, white, purple and vermillion, with small clouds and prints, breaks and intermittences, fireflies and lanterns, it finally happened to have vainly fought. An eye for an eye.

Battle with the bottom of the empty glass.

Having reached the excessive state of happiness he uttered the liberator's scream and finally shook those present "Open the perimeters, another red please!"

While everybody was jolted by the scream Nelio seemed to think about eventual sins, but didn't let himself gripped by any emotions. With discretion, a certain elegance and a nonexistent quota of involvement he said goodbye to Cadamuro, perhaps with a smile.



## BASTIE

### The light of the lighthouse

In a bright night which beauty confused the seasons Nelio Sonego, lavish, silent, showed off his new jacket wandering in Korut Lenin. It was a pure camel-like jacket: light ochre with velvety highlights. He had borrowed it from a friend in Ponte della Muda. For the Italian cultural week Budapest exhibited handmade books published by Edizioni Artein. We were guests of the Budapest municipality and were staying at the Grand Hotel Lenin Korut and we felt like the owners of the city. I shared the apartment with Nelio in that hotel which offered an optimal service. Every evening, after working at J. gallery, we became absorbed with the story of the city. We were fascinated by the Danube's majesty with its shiny silvery grey. Calm and enormous, the river celebrated love dreams and musical soliloquies, lives of saints and heroes. The vast breath of so much water was simultaneously gentle and powerful, to hurt the earth in depth and to give back sky travellers enough space for the flight reflexes. On the last night of our stay in Budapest it was raining. The air was clean and the rain, sometimes not excessively heavy, was even pleasant. Along the bank of the Buda, the water's donated magnificent double in its reflection, an enchantment, a bastia, among humid colours of space. Around this, an infinite flight of the eyes understood, felt that this extension was there for us, for everybody and perhaps, or surely, impossible to measure. The day we left Budapest. On the way back we used all the left florins at a trattoria on the border for a lunch that reserved Nelio the usual broth. We randomly chose from the menu written in Magyar and the fortune reserved Nelio an infinite series of the various broths existing in Hungary. Having crossed the border we started talking about signs, spaces, time, measures and we went back to our ideas and new projects. In the late afternoon towards nearby Trieste, Bastie was born. For a need: to be like phosphenes between the humid colours of the space, to fly on the water, to cross the fires of boundaries, to shape flights and look for the air's corners, to give back to the lightness and fragility of the paper the immortal infinity of light when it has been touched by the idea of flight. The idea of that little white flight was running with us on Nelio's four-wheels that left me at the train station that night.

From Trieste to Rome a long sleep in the sleeper awaited me.

Not before letting myself be cradled by the train that was going down the hill lighted by the lighthouse with a vast and delicate movement.

## JOURNEYS AND JOURNEYS

### The dry throat race

Genovese of ancient descent, Gianfederico Brocco was on the threshold of the gallery in Via Evandro to attend auspicious events. Edwige on his side, enchanted by vocation and encompassed for the occasion by solemn tremors, was tremendously nervous and also held the anxiety of her loved Giangli.

Together they were the big pillar of the events of that gallery that by then gave since the eighties the activity a sheen which was almost complete. Both lanky, French rs, full of willingness, were the president and vice-president of that cultural centre that by now produced thirty-six titles.

At the strike of twelve, at the moment when the bell started to crackle its noon, Nelio, a bit bewildered because of his pockets full of other seven hundred kilometres, crossed the doorstep with his inseparable traveller's rectangular and introduced himself to the benefactors. Immediately after long compliments, in a moment of absolute silence, Nelio prepared and started flipping through his just finished work on the gallery's legendary shelf. It was the story, 25 by 36 of the magician builder of spaces, lover of silence, printed with emerald ink.

In that work there were three rectangles: perimeters of the orolontano place. Ultramarine blue the first. An open rectangle with four scarlet fire buoys on the open border. Buoys were offered to whoever wanted to exit from that perimeter, a sense of space..., the idea of thought when travelling, the exit of the memories' labyrinth and towards the door of the future. The second one turquoise.

Still with the perimeter open and four yellow chromo pilasters. Back-lighting. Nelio travelled on ultramarines, lights in the eyes and looked at the future, from the top to the beauty of his silences. Those that stayed looked back, to the past, stayed on earth to shove, being pushed by chatty people of the dry throat race.

From the place of the dry throat race, a few days before Fulgor the reckless had got back and like in a mirrors' game and an exchange of unexpected gifts, Gianfederico Brocco and Edwige proudly showed Nelio a news 35 by 45.

It was the biggest book in format in the collection, made with parcel paper and serigraphic print for the text. The originals were portraits of the most famous critics on the square, those that the magician visitor of unknown places depicted with courage and for eternity, after a journey of nine pages. Fulgor Silvi, called the reckless, had the looks of an ideal traveller. Clever in passing obstacles and avoiding traps, agile and robust to fight against domineering and evil-minded people, quite dark and bearded to camouflage himself during moonless nights.

For a while that difficult journey was planned for him: from the orolontano place to the place of the dry throat race, where they chatter 24/7.

It was known that that infamous genius lived in the antipodes of silence. They seemed like common people but were special. They talked too much and were very agile in building words as much as twisting concepts in them and that was the real sense of things.

They were an association founded solely on the spoken word and they lived protected by a mirrored dome in an urban solution of sub talkative optimization.

Fulgor thus left without hesitation with his massive hair of beard on his shoulder, parcel paper, clever eyes, temperas and ability.

The magician builder of gold gave Fulgor the most luminous gold that had ever been made and he made an optimal use of it.

With that gold he built the most precious needle for the most reliable compass and on the way back from his long journey he delivered a precious story. It was a visual testimony of nine images of the best chatty people, in a book of which were made fifteen copies, with machine-glazed parcel paper, light ochre, sand, night water, day light, gold and silver, warm and cold wind.

For that rare edition that Titivillus diabolically liked, the magician builder of gold issued a special seal with wax pastels.

THE COMET BOOK  
Gold and comings-and-goings

During those continuous comings-and-goings along the streets of the second job from Rome to Venice, or from Venice to Rome, I spent my time among fast train landscapes for every season with pens, pencils in my pockets ready to record thoughts, on paper paths, on those notebooks to leave friends traces for the orolontano stories.

Sometimes following traces of unlikely existences, digging where it is more difficult, at roots, at fonts, where thoughts are born, to try to understand how much distance exists, finally, between dream and reality, or if dream and reality are one body, or where all that blood flows at star's speed. And what is gold on things. If it is true gold or its reflection.

Also at the dawn of a carnival without no more fictions, just finished, without any breath if not for the memory of it, under the church of Frari, more lively in its golden reflection in the canal, of its dark materiality, inside that back-lighting just mould of first appearance, of impossible existence.

The vision of that gold in the water is the almost elusive idea of art, of its truth and its fiction.

You need to open the yes to the dawn, be immediately ready, because in that moment dream and reality still touch themselves and you can perceive then being on this earth and at the same time away, away from it.

Along the comet's way. It happened, among a journey and another one, in a day marked by magic, an aspiring magician. And it came from the place of waters... and brought the white reflection of seagull's flight of the lagoon between hair and earrings on the lobes with shapes of white gold and black glass acute angles. He had a rucksack on the shoulders and appeared at the last floor of that studio where workbooks were made and he did it sliding with light steps on wooden boards of that mezzanine. In that space of via Evandro, full by now of paper, words, reflections, colours, perfumes of memories, of future. In the pockets brought Magenta, gold born by clay and golden and pinkish sand for the magician builder of shapes; Magenta, gold of dark and golden sand for the magician builder of mirrors; hazy orange and thin sheets of silver parcel paper for the magician builder of paper; blue gold and blue sand for the magician builder of seas; blackish blue and opaque blackish sand for the magician builder of mountains; for the magician builder of valley golden oriental paper, golden green and silvery sand of memory; for the magician builder of flights rich hazy gold and medium turquoise; for the magician-builder of flowers still oriental paper with threads like light white golden and light golden steams and for itself the memory of blue gold of his city, when the reflection of the sky goes down among the streets and slips inside canals.

So it came to light in the month of May 1984, an edition of eighteen copies and that workbook called "the place of orolontano".

It was the index of a series and was the dream of a star and its reflection. Retreated into itself formed by nine circles, folded to make one circle in the high space of those pages.

Below, triangles, fragments of comet paper, golden way with landscapes of hard pastel inside small mirrors of that place, on the imperfections of parcel paper that became bizarre traces of a map. Along paths of that comet following art thoughts and art-making handbooks, was the light that itself and others followed.

A SPLENDID VESSEL  
The winds' direction

At the round of buoy of the decade here and there of second jobs, the continuous back-and-forth did not give any signs of break nor truce. Sometimes it was a crossed back-and-forth, sometimes a parallel, circular, rectangular way. Nelio also decided to take a studio in Rome and easily managed to satisfy his need thanks to the pure and carefree soul of brother-in-law Domenico Pacifici called Mimmo, with a galloping and contagious laugh that offered Nelio this opportunity. Nelio's Roman studio was in an old building in the historic suburbs that reminisced of border and village called Quadraro Vecchio. Outside it was not reassuring. Inside it was a bit crumbling, such that one night when by chance I was in the sleeping quarters, at the most beautiful time of the deepest sleep, a thick piece of plaster came down from the ceiling with a surface of at least two square metres, shaving the bed where I was sleeping, creating white dust and making the mosquitoes flee.

On the first night in his new studio, there was not electricity in the house because the tenant that had left it hadn't met his obligations with the supplier and a many bills were outstanding. However Nelio could celebrate with candle light dinners and lights of art.

Since the bell did not work he had an original way to communicate with guests from the window on the first floor next to the street.

That night also a driver of 556 slowed down surprised by that unusual signalling. From the window of that house in via Columella Nelio indicated a sure position of his splendid vessel. That was the image of a king fisher and captain. Beyond the window of his new studio, to show us his presence with a camping light he drew a series of slow arches that crossed with a moon hook reflected in glass of that dark house, still without electricity but already luminous of vertical spaces, signs, climbs, games and parties of a great king. Instead, during the hours from dawn to sunset, he lined with white paper folder, inside walls of the biggest room, then nailed plywood panels masking thus a war camp for a Roman countryside and darted piercing until the last light of day with brush strokes, with precise measurements, calculated gestures, thoughts connected to those gestures, worked on open triangles of his new alphabet on open triangles, formed by arches and broken lines, curves and straight lines, undulated and dotted lines continuous and infinite, like the composer of elements, that looks for everything and finds everything, separates everything and remakes every sign. He went towards lonely paths, along the cliff and hurling down of thoughts, towards the unreachable measure of uncertainty.

Nelio was far from every backwards bounce of history, but there were still those who collected here and there horizons in fragments and broken hearts of Guernica, who begged for fragments of figures while the least you could do was glue to the heart the joy of discovery. There were those who were following fashion, while shreds from the window of via Calumella were the certainty of making and measures of unknown horizons.

## THE INDEX WORK

### The golden map

After the time hidden in the arc of five moons, at the beginning of summer of the year of the golden map, while Nelio had already deposited his nice contract and finally had lights in his new Roman studio on via Columella, I still went from places and memories to cross other places, other memories, always bringing in pockets the invisible luggage of workbooks, well kept and hidden in that moment between tissues in undulated boxes, of ties, of notebooks full of texts and fragments of handmade and waxed papers.

I passed by a studio at Fossanova abbey by a house on via Cassia, where I remember Nelio, a night like any other night, that listened with his obvious indifference an unlikely piano player known on the train, or near a train station, or in a taxi that took us towards school, or place of second job.

Then in San Paolo dei Cavalieri, where I remember nights of perfection and loneliness, and I came also caught initially by a syndrome of unusual and precious silence and then by the necessity of that night peace.

There were also born moons and light golden mirrors and of snow on a white marble surface under pergolas used to capture lights, reflections and silences.

It was an open space without limits and measurements in front of a hill of the cemetery always odorous of flowers and without limits or measurements.

On a night of warm colours inside that hill and beyond I photographed things, distances and colours. In vain the Gospel according to St Matthew's notes gave finished and infinite measurements to geometry. Also Nelio was losing logic distances of his perimeters, his shreds in that moment became unreachable, my papers melted with air colours and divine voices of those notes.

It could not miss the sea in that junction of movements.

A new studio and large visions through dunes of maquis on the road to the second job.

From time to time Nelio appeared in that studio where he slept, worked, thought and enjoyed himself in the days of sweet autumnal southwest wind of intense perfume of sea and sometimes he tried the way of the kitchen.

Indeed a day, momentarily left shreds, logoshreds, angoarcoli and other, inspired by more earthly things, he improvised himself as a young chef but managed to produce only one "thing" surely less tempting similar to a military helmet shaped like a colander. They were suffering and twisted fusilli that are already born in that status, and were still less recognisable because also twisted among them.

In short the object did not look like of this earth, not even edible, white, absolutely opaque and left on the colander where it became a solid piece, an almost hemispheric hybrid presence ready for unlikely uses.

That day though, a tempest shining of ideas turned around us.

Nelio, beyond his stout meal and at least a couple of glasses of dry red, was quite restless and did not give truce.

For me eating the solid was neither appropriate nor dignified and we started then, immediately, the work on golden map.

Papers, folds, cuts, tears, measurements, spines, creasing, weights, covers, pages.

A new work was born, white, twenty-four by thirty-two, of white Murillo, in twenty-seven copies.

Battisti, Lotito, Sonego, Piffero, Fortuna, Levini, the first travellers that faced the enterprise.

Inside, a bookmark, like in a needle of a compass, a message for those future travellers called "workindex".

A vertical stripe twenty-seven by ten centimetres numbered and signed, printed with characters of melted lead, with fragments of handmade paper, undulated, with golden sign of tempest, luminescent tempera, that crosses the printed part, a text or thought stolen at sleepless bird's flights, and vanished towards other thoughts, other flights, to indicate places and things that once did not have a name.

## THE EMERALD-GREEN BERET

### The art of circus

He had bought himself a new beret made of emerald-green cloth after several searches into good hat shops in Rome.

He showed it off often despite himself among acquaintances and friends and was very satisfied with his new buy. Something happened though along via Giulia when the last light of day sometimes announced bad landscapes. At the best point of the insignificant walk, not very comfortable cultural-wise he was a double victim of bad luck.

Actually it could not have satisfied his thirst for art, not being able to find any exhibitions worthy of his attention and he was snatched of his most precious good of that time: the emerald-green beret.

Humidity was coming down vertically especially on Nelio's head left without protection and without the thick hair of old times that had now become only a memory.

The precious beret left for a journey with no return leaving so uncovered his thoughts. A surprising gesture, from the victim's head to a pilferer's hands on a moped that, coming from Vicolo del Malpasso, cut the road to the unfortunate and already after few seconds, while folded for Vicolo delle Prigioni, exhibited his trophy throwing it in the air to take it again several times with acrobatic skill.

The night following the snatching, Nelio dreamt once more of the being of ill omen.

This time the ghost of the remade art was driving the moped and jeered it, before jumping on foot on the mechanized that was going alone as if it was a trained animal, controlled by who knows which invisible expert driver, then, jumping between his hands, like a juggler, the emerald-green beret was multiplied by three in the air.

The two wheels started then frenetically rotating while under a tent, around a track, and, while it whirled it transformed spin after spin, in George Seurat's horse.

There were also jugglers with iridescent-coloured dresses, tamer of streaked colours, dwarfs and clowns, runners in long johns and gun ladies, everybody with overflowing palettes of shiny multicolour matter and dripping brushes, singing in ring-a-ring-a-roses the hymn to that being of ill omen that kept with the emerald-green cloth hat to warm up souls and pull out applause in an open scene with the play of three hats on his back, high, standing up on the horse.

Nelio, sole spectator of that circus that did not applaud, was luckily woken up by that crash that grew in his ears out of all proportion. Thus he opened his eyes and slowly started to come back to the silence and had a reassuring vision of Seurat's work that took back shapes, his colours and calmed down himself.

He still had a good part of the night in front of himself and so, he challenged again the fate trying to tune himself as far as possible from that dream.

Fortune this time awarded him, because he found, at the first touch of the remote, a documentary on Pablo Picasso's life and works.

SHREDS IN FLAMES  
Excellent travellers

In a gallery of artists' images curated by the Associazione Culturale Amici di Morterone, Nelio appeared with an almost full figure and seemed a common man or a boy who smiles because he has just finished playing rummy at the bar of Ceno and Maria on the provincial way, he made plate's low hand and came back home, between pomegranate, rosemary and his thoughts. Instead was just back from America and accepted to model for Maria Mulas.

He left for across the Atlantic for a reason that nobody will never know. Perhaps to himself as well.

Perhaps he went to find somebody that once lived near his studio; perhaps on a whim of a rich person, because he had sold paintings a few days before; or because of a fulminating idea of a perfect vagabond and naturally also because of a curiosity to discover a bit of the world.

He broke that glass and the noise of those greetings reached Rome.

I initially thought of a joke and greeted him according to the play. After having put the receiver down I had a thought on Nelio's luggage that I knew very well because I had seen him several times with that container.

Rectangular, full of memories and rectangles with many photographs of recent works, some catalogues, some handmade books, drawing paper, lines, signs ready to take life with sudden spurts and measures waiting to become angles, shreds, angolarcoli, triangoarcoli or something else and some clothes just to fill the inside of the luggage among empty spaces left by materials and tools.

Once he dug from that kind of well also a pure pork salami slightly less than a meter long, a bowl of good fragolino, a full English course and a German dictionary. It was the year of the book "Stones and iron".

A war-grey work made on Vincenzo Perna's texts in twenty-seven copies. Printed with cold silver ink, on the cover and back cover it had signalling rays that made vibrate grey parcel paper of about two hundred fifty grams per square meter, stamped with an old decoration of Pepped a Gubbio.

"Stones and iron" had original drawings by Ciriaco Campus, Achille Pace, Nelio Sonogo.

One evening in April I went to Achille Pace with Nelio to take drawings of that new work. Achille exhibited his twenty-seven originals laying them down on the floor above a prestigious Persian with dark tones that highlighted grey cardboards. In those works there was a summary of a whole life with truth and coherence and gifted with that extreme simplicity that felt of marvel.

And they were all different! Contrary to the custom of all artists that up to then made works for handmade books: all similar and still evidence of recent work. There were instead those of Achille Pace, memories of an excellent traveller: a book in the book; stops of his artist life, from Termoli in 1948 to the current year.

Just before leave-taking, Achille, touched by the coloured texture of Nelio's sweater, noted chromatic harmonies and contrasts, geometric shapes and spaces built with wool and at the end of the speech on the generosity of that handmade pullover by Nelio's mother, we said goodbye to one of the few artists who never betrayed his own poetic, own origins and own destiny.

Ciriaco Campus, very skilled illustrator, had told war stories.

Nelio had lit fires and burnt some parts of his shreds.

## HAIKU'S WAY The sleepless bird

We had this passed through pages of morning grey fog and shadow skies of sleepless nights lit by memory's fortune, from the inside of the winter's soul that saw coming to life the golden map, and were surprised looking far at splendours of our ideas for the future of our stories, able and secure on that portion of just traced map, ready to meet other travellers, to discover together undamaged streets to walk, still unknown.

And everybody went exploring, to mark that map with new streets, inside perfumes of paper, stearine and virgin on paper, among folds and borders and searching imperceptible sounds, thicknesses and inks' colours, among veins and reflections of pages along torn margins at art where paper showed its nature.

Simona started shaping haiku's path, on a spring day reverberating at the passage between light and dark, in its precious case of a small house sat on a small couch, in front of that west-facing balcony, where a flower bloom every season revealing the secret of a small notebook called four season book of words. While Simona offered everybody those emotions, syllables jumped like pearls on crystal to groups of five, seven, five. Spring of ninety-five had now opened its doors and a star with infinite points slowly appeared in the haiku's constellation offered like a new gift. And every point of that light dripped with ideas. From that notebook glittered a promise of new buds under the shape of contagion for other poets, artists, with words and images, sensations and visions that penetrated each other among pages of the new series, among books themselves.

Nelio also tried the uncertain journey on the back of an insect and waited, hidden between the words of Carla Vasio, between rose petals, making thirty-six copies with leaf-green paper, buzzing white and rose pink. The ghost, the being of remade art, was perhaps disappearing because Nelio's dreams were full of shreds, angoarcoli, haiku and rose petals. With the passing of a year, the series was now a luxurious bloom. Simona, with her gift, lit a star on the orolontano map. In the fourth book of haiku she told harmony stories of flight's ways, crickets' sleepless song, harmonious carousels, April dawn, sickle blue of a faint moon, water's wings, shreds, blood of poppy's era, and artists responded with stories of luminescent colours, shadow temperas, graphite and silver, mirrored wax paper, blue sapphire, white platinum and watercolour and reflections, shred black and earth red. Dreams of every traveller now were melted words and images, pure read words amid pizza and wine.

In an evening of vast visions I discovered Piero Varroni, while we were sitting at the table, between a sip of bardolino and a bit of a white spianata with potatoes cut in thin slices, copying from the blue notebook of the recycled. It was a water haiku where blue dies because on that mirror black clouds passed by. And immediately, the ritual of red that instead run very happily wet the inaugural debut of that new eighteen copies already concrete in Piero's vision. Proud of magicians of the best race, Vincenzo Perna, very refined funambulist of haiku, playful and generous juggler, invented phrases of five mobile syllables like Calder and seven and five fixed syllables. The "mobile" solicited Nelio. Cradled by that joyful breeze of writing, painting, equilibrium, on the vertical of haiku's hung art, at a suspended axe, he made, feeling a little generous, only twelve copies with straw paper and undulated cardboard. To Rome, from Gubbio's fresh dawn, also came Marilena dressed in black wrapped with a silky orange scarf.

Marilena's silky scarf seemed to light up fire-orange at every single movement under July's noon sun at valle Giulia, while we went out from the belly of the green dragon of number thirty bus that stopped clattering and opened its door just for us. We went out to the violent breath of sun. So that very light silk, caught by that breath, became a rebel banner at every command; at times a fire tongue, a tongue of a small dragon that searched for water.

After a short while, inside the Japanese Cultural Institute, at the shadow of so much East, collapsed on a comfortable couch, we defined the idea of another book with wax paper, red, with that text of Edoardo Sanguineti that Annamaria Gelmi had sent, closing the triangle between Genoa, Trento and Rome. In the meantime, showing distinct courtesy and admiration for the lady with me, mister Mishimoto came towards us, with a nice flannel shirt that surprised Marilena. After a little while, also surprised by visions of our handmade works, he opened the doors to the East. And on Nelio's dreams still persisted the absence of the being of ill omen. The nights, towards the end of that century, were sweet and the loves glaring. A haiku was ready for those who wanted to go, still:



the sleepless bird  
with wings of beauty  
drinks the moon.

TAMED FIRE  
Nearly ripe fruits

In spite of Parkinson's disease, Vittorio, archivist of twenty one at Quirinal from the last three years of king Umberto's regency, slowly shook but with extreme precision, around olive trees that he saw rising, lumps parched with his legendary tool. No one understood the sense of that very slow fatigue, they were perhaps caresses, but he was so sure of his intentions that nobody dared to ask for explanations. Augusto, suffering of heart disease and just operated on, was only allowed to provide oak's branches. Maria, desperate, filled two watering cans and two buckets that were available and Antonietta ran bringing oak's branches and water. Antonietta appeared every time to my great relief, among vapours, waves and black dust, chips, sparks, ash and smoke and left again with empties, lighter, more agile, stronger. After frantic working hours, a bit red on the face, a bit blackened, so sweet, she could utter a sigh of relief and gave me as a present her happiness like the first time, like always, like a child. Together we defeated the evil of those olive trees' creatures that had inside them many devils and ghosts with strange souls, stoked small flames in a perpetual pique.

Having controlled the fire, under the shadow of that most big oak, Vittorio, in spite of his illness, let a glass be filled to the top of fresh white from the canteen that he brought then to his lips without any tremor, drinking all of it in a single breath to recover from fear and fatigue, saving every drop. That same evening, a pleasant breeze started spreading the sour smell of earth and burnt trees, while I stopped with Antonietta under the patio enjoying an enchantment, speaking about art and love. The dream seemed to have the best over reality. Already from the first night's signs, when the first stars started showing their beauty and came closer like trained fireflies, also the fox that lived a few meters from us, ran under the white-stone wall following other calls, towards its loves.

Far away, Nelio dreamt the journey's dream.

His visions started. The being of ill omen sold still lifes, landscapes, humans' portraits, citationists' works, new fakes, old fakes, neo avanguardistas and related followers. Nobody came closer, though...

Instead, all travellers present at that time at the train station placed themselves in an orderly row at the counter "Tickets in memory of a dream of first class" and were shreds, angolarcoli, triangolarcoli, rectangles in miniature, logoisbrindoli.

Exactly one month after the fire of Acqua Calda's hill, in a very warm September day, I left with Nelio from Ponte della Muda towards Merano, where Herta was putting on a show of artist books "Beyond the page".

The day before the opening I was walking along Passiro full of resounding water and tormented because of that fast following down among stones of its bed. I had brought with me a red Chinese notebook of the last notes, a gift from Paola Tortora, where I had written with a beautiful calligraphy a message for Nelio and, after reading and thinking again for the last time about the haiku of fire, I went back to the hotel where Nelio happened to be staying. He collapsed sweetly on a sofa among shreds and thoughts of shreds. I handed in the trilogy:

Burn the olive,  
the black earth smokes:  
watering can!

Smoke for the trunk:  
the snail is blackened  
along the way

Burn the vineyard!  
red orange metal  
the new grape

Since Merano's show, the pomegranate of the garden of memory exploded with its load of red fruits.

The rosemary disappeared together with its shadow and at its place a jasmine lightly grew with a restless shadow like its light and young leaves.

Just before my departure from the Ponte della Muda house for the umpteenth return towards usual paths, inside my bag, among handmade books unique copies and a train ticket for some place of this earth, Nelio carefully organised two nearly ripe pomegranates.