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*Translator's note*

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I first encountered Franco Buffoni's poetry in his *Adidas: poesie scelte 1975-1990*. In this volume of selected poems, brief texts that had sometimes been written years apart were combined into a number of sequences. Although his short lines, epigram-like stanzas and compressed style were at the furthest remove from the practice of Walt Whitman, I was nonetheless reminded of *Leaves of Grass* by Buffoni's apparent sense of his own poetry as a fluid, developing body of unified work. The larger thematic connections within these sequences were not always clear to me, but from my very first acquaintance with his work, I was intrigued by Buffoni's turns of mind and turns of phrase, and by his patterns of association and organization. My admiration for these qualities grew stronger as I read his individual collections in chronological order, and it was enriched with an ever-deepening understanding of his subjects and themes.

One of those subjects is himself. Always an element in Buffoni's poetry, autobiography has been increasingly emphasized as he has moved from book to book, to the point where his latest-and largest-collection, *Il profilo del Rosa* (whose title provides the basis for the title of this translation), gathers over one hundred personal lyrics into six thematically unified groupings, thus creating a volume even more reminiscent of Whitman than was *Adidas*. But in Buffoni's poetry this foregrounding of the self is not so solipsistic an enterprise as it is in the work of many other writers, since the self presented in his work is one characterized by cultural and historical curiosity (as demonstrated by the notes to this selection), by political and moral consciousness, and by an individual and often quirky sensibility that is fueled by a rich appreciation of the labyrinths of human personality.

Buffoni's stance is often that of an outsider, an outlook intensified by his sense of being marginalized because of his sexual identity. Unsurprisingly, he has waged an ongoing battle with the Catholic Church, as can be seen in such poems as «Antiquated Abstinence», «Lafcadio», and the extremely popular «Carmelite Sister»; in the last of these, however, we see that as he grows more at ease with himself, the forces oppressing him diminish in size and strength, and there is less need to lash out: «I don't lie now about myself, I sit and listen». Despite the increased air of self-confidence – as shown, for instance, in the uncomplicated

celebration of an attractive crane operator – he retains a satirical edge that is displayed to particularly good effect in the dry and biting «If you don't know what it means in English to maroon». And it should also be noted that, in contrast to the lugubrious self-importance of far too many poets, Buffoni can be amusing and even hilarious, as he is in «Hayseed Airbase», a poem which, unfortunately for these who are concerned about such things, will do absolutely nothing to dispel the stereotype of Italians as militarily hopeless.

Over the several years in which I have worked on this book, I have found both challenge and delight in my attempts to carry over the voice, the substance, and the quality of Franco Buffoni's poetry. I can only hope that these English versions will find readers who will be as challenged and as delighted as I have been.