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They Took You Like an Ear of Corn

Rocco Scotellaro

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They Took You Like an Ear of Corn
—for our young murdered friend

He caught sight of death and said,
Don't leave me to die
with my head at the side
of the white gravel road,
and nothing going by
but fast buses and slow
wagons and trucks full of coal.
Don't leave me on the roadside, my head
lopped off by a sickle.
Don't leave me all night,
a blanket over my eyes,
between two policemen
standing watch.
I don't know who killed me.
Carry me home.
Peasants like me
fall back, single-file, into their ranks.
Carry me to the bed
Where my mother died.
It's a long wait for dawn and the law.
Tomorrow even the flock
will flee this soaked grass,
and you'll see my head, a rock
rolling at night
through the thicket.

Rocco Scotellaro was born in Tricarico, Italy, in 1923 and died in 1953. As a writer, Scotellaro was part of the neorealist movement; he was also a labor organizer and a socialist mayor. Scotellaro's work was recognized posthumously; in 1954, a collection of his poems, put together by Carlo Levi, won the Premio Viareggio.

His poems are collected in two volumes: E'fatto giomo (Milano: Mondadori, 1954) and La poesia di Scotellaro (Franco Fortini, ed. Roma·Matera: Basicata, 1974).
Ti Rubarono A Noi Come Una Spiga

—

Vide la morte con gli occhi e disse:
Non mi lasciate morire
con la testa sull'argine
della rotabile bianca.
Non passano che corriere
veloci e traini lenti
ed autocarri pieni di carbone.
Non mi lasciate con la testa
sull'argine recisa da una falce.
Non lasciatemi la notte
con una coperta sugli occhi
tra due carabinieri
che montano di guardia.
Non so chi m'ha ucciso
portatemi a casa,
i contadini come me
si ritirano in fila nelle squadre
portatemi sul letto
dov'è morta mia madre.
Lungo è aspettare aurora e la legge
domani anche il gregge
fuggirà questo pascolo bagnato.
E la mia testa la vedrete, un sasso
rotolare nelle notti
per la cinta delle macchie.