

Classic Poetry Series

Ugo Foscolo
- poems -

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Ugo Foscolo(1778 - 1827)

Ugo Foscolo was born January 26 1778, at Zante in the Ionian Isles. He was an Italian poet and patriot. His name was originally Niccolo Foscolo. A devoted Venetian, he pinned his hope of a restored republic on Napoleon and fought under him against the Austrians, even after Napoleon's political untrustworthiness had become evident. Upon Napoleon's defeat and the annexation of Venice to Austria, Foscolo exiled himself to London, where at first he had great social success. Having spent his earnings, he was forced to give lessons and write articles and for several years before his death lived in extreme poverty.

His novel, *The Last Letters of Jacopo Ortis* (1798–1802, tr. 1818), an account of his political disillusionment, exerted a strong influence on Italian letters, as did also his critical essays, translations, and lyric poems, especially *Sepulchres* (1807).

A Zacinto

I'll never step ashore and feel your beach
the way I felt it as a barefoot child,
or see you waver in the windy reach
of goddess-bearing sea. You were the island
Venus made with her first smile,
Zakynthos, the moment she was born.
No song embraced your leafy sky,
not even his who sang the fatal storm
and how Ulysses, his misfortunes past
and beautiful with fame, sailed home at last.

Some will not return: I too
offend the powers that be, am banned
from home. Oh maternal land,
my words are all I have to send to you

Ugo Foscolo

To The Night

Maybe because you always have appeared
The image of that fatal rest to me,
O night! You come towards me so dear!
Escorted by the summer clouds with glee
And by the gentle breezes full of cheer,

Or from the snowy air you come sending
That long, uneasy darkness to the world,
O summoned night, upon the earth descending,
The darkest secrets of my heart you hold.

At sight of you my mind begins to wander
To the eternal void beyond the sky;
And all along the wretched time meanders
And with it all my worries; meanwhile I
Stand looking at your peace that calms the torment
Within my raging spirit lying dormant.

Ugo Foscolo