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Recommended Citation
Sonzogni, Marco (2014) "Note on Heaney and Pascoli," Irish Studies South: Iss. 1, Article 13.
Available at: https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/iss/vol1/iss1/13

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Note on Heaney and Pascoli

Marco Sonzogni

Giovanni Pascoli (1855-1912) penned ‘L’ultima passeggiata’ (‘The Last Walk’) — a sequence of sixteen madrigals — for his lifelong friend and fellow poet Severino Ferrari (1856-1905) on the occasion of his friend’s wedding (1886) to Ida Gini. The poem is included in Pascoli’s first collection, Myricæ published in various (revised) editions between 1891 (Livorno: Giusti) and 1911 (Bologna: Zanichelli).

The rural setting, simple characters and ordinary events described by Pascoli resonated with Heaney, who with his usual mastery translated these to his native Ulster and into his own verse.


On April 3, 2012 Heaney attended the centenary commemorations of Pascoli’s death at the Alma Mater Studiorum University of Bologna.

A few days before his sudden death on August 30, 2013, Heaney completed the translation of ‘L’ultima passeggiata’ — indeed his last walk through poetry, now published in a limited edition