

ROBUSTELLI, SYMBOLIST AND SURREAL
Spazio Papel Gallery, Milan 2012

In the literary field, is not a great tradition to associate the images with words, that is result of the artistic process commonly called "illustration of a text." Or rather, it occurs perhaps for works of fiction, but in which you follow almost diametrically opposed roads. On the one hand, children's books are provided with illustrations, operation clearly intended to make them more tempting to read. Typically, these illustrations are of naturalistic, "photographic" type, in order to give visual form to a few moments of the narrative. On the other hand, there are perhaps illustrated novels for adults, but in such cases there is a quite different spirit, being them illustrations made by great names. Here, therefore, the intention is to give but a visual paraphrase of a track, but with the purpose to match the artistic value of images in prose also of artistic value.

It is evident that neither of these two perspectives lends itself to poetry, which is the realm of empathy, feelings, sentiments destined to arouse intimate vibrations ... that is almost never those concrete hints that, as such, would be subject to a representation . If anything, it is different in the case of civil poetry, the poems that somehow approach the narrative. A perspective in which is exemplary the Spoon River Anthology, 1915, the book of twentieth-century poetry perhaps most loved by non-specialist readers. Not surprisingly, another great poet as it was Fabrizio De Andrè took inspiration for one of his most touching musical compositions, the then long-playing. Not the money, not love nor heaven. Well known is the perspective on which Edgar Lee Masters has set his poem: in the cemetery on the hill of the small town of Spoon River, those who rest there tell his own death, raising ironic or mocking voices but especially furious or sorrowful, weaving a dense interweaving of references, capable of revealing the pettiness, the envy, the cowardice, hatred: in short, all those feelings that the hypocrisy of respectability have not leaked in life. In this sense, the anthology could also lend itself to illustration.

But this is not the approach to it by John Robustelli. First, he did not "explained" the work but instead has isolated some lyrics of the hundreds which compose it. And in relation to each of them he has composed an image of counterpoint. He gave a very personal visual form to the feelings aroused in him by that specific text, a kind of inner correspondence from artist to artist. A dialogue that the artist Robustelli obviously entertains in its own way, but according to the unexpected parameters of originality: the surreal approach (Franklin Jones), the interpretation Symbolist (Louise Smith), the metaphorical reference (Ida Frickey), the allusive reference (the judge Arnett, Benjamin Pantier, Knowlt Hoheimer).

This, in relation to the different ratios under the analytical aspect. Uniform, however, remains its refined playing technique, depends on an unusual use of an ordinary writing tool, a fine-tipped ballpoint pen. Used for tiny and elegant hatching, able to outline textures "in the image and likeness" of the engraver's chisel. A sumptuous artistic result obtained by means of absolutely humble origin. Almost want to say that "artistry" is inside the soul of the artist and not in the wealth of operational tools at its disposal.

Gianni Brunoro