

## Italian Jewish Writing

This ten-week study group will focus primarily on the work of Italian Jewish writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially during the fascist and post-war periods. We'll read works by Umberto Saba, Italo Svevo, Primo Levi, Carlo Levi, Natalia Ginzburg, Giorgio Bassani, and Lia Levi—a mix of poetry, fiction, memoirs, and essays. This will be primarily a discussion group framed by brief lectures offering historical and cultural context.

### *Texts:*

Giorgio Bassani, “A Memorial Tablet in Via Mazzini,” in the one-volume Novel of Ferrara (Norton, 2018) but also available in Within the Walls (Penguin Modern Classics).

\_\_\_\_\_, The Garden of the Finzi-Continis in the one-volume Novel of Ferrara or in the Penguin Modern Classics edition.

Natalia Ginzburg, Family Lexicon (NY Review of Books Classics).

-----, The Little Virtues (Arcade).

Carlo Levi, Christ Stopped at Eboli (FSG Classics).

Lia Levi, The Jewish Husband (Europa) [*but we'll discuss replacing this text with Levi's newest YAF novel Tonight is Already Tomorrow.*]

Primo Levi, The Periodic Table (Schocken Books or Everyman's Library).

Italo Svevo, “Preface,” “Introduction,” “The Last Cigarette,” [also translated as “Preface,” “Preamble” and “Smoke”} Confessions of Zeno. (The translation by Beryl de Zoete in the Vintage edition is the one I happen to have but William Weaver's translation which translated the title Zeno's Conscience—is also excellent.)

We will be discussing the books in English but if you prefer to read any of

the texts in Italian, that's terrific. If so, it would be helpful if you'd try to comment on the adequacy of the English translations.

March 3, 2021 Some history, some geography, some biography, a few poems, one community (Trieste)

READ three poems by Umberto Saba ("The Goat," "Trieste," "from Autobiography"); one by Primo Levi ("Shema"); and one by Giorgio Bassani ("The Racial Laws").

Available at the OLLI site at

[https://olli-dc.org/spring\\_2021\\_handouts](https://olli-dc.org/spring_2021_handouts)

March 10 ITALO SVEVO: The Modernist of Trieste.

READ: "Preface," "Introduction," and "The Last Cigarette"

Confessions of Zeno (also translated as The Conscience of Zeno).

Use either the Beryl de Zoete or the William Weaver translation.

Available at the OLLI site at

[https://olli-dc.org/spring\\_2021\\_handouts](https://olli-dc.org/spring_2021_handouts)

You can also find the entire book on line at

<https://ethwreent.firebaseio.com/aa640/zenos-conscience-a-novel-by-italo-svevo-0375727760.pdf>

March 17 PRIMO LEVI: The Chemist of Turin

READ: The Periodic Table, "Argon," "Hydrogen," "Zinc," "Iron," "Potassium." "Nickel."

March 24. PRIMO LEVI. Continue in The Periodic Table, "Phosphorus," "Gold," "Cerium," "Chromium," "Silver" "Vanadium," "Carbon."

March 31 CARLO LEVI: The Polymath of Lucania; NATALIA LEVI

READ: Levi, Christ Stopped at Eboli, chapters 1-12 and dip into the rest as you please. Also READ NATALIA GINZBURG's "Winter in the Abruzzi" in The Little Virtues.

April 7. NATALIA GINZBURG: The Tragic Comedian

READ: Family Lexicon and also “He and I,” “Human Relationships” in The Little Virtues

April 14 GIORGIO BASSANI: The Watcher of Ferrara.

READ, “A Memorial Tablet in Via Mazzini.”

April 21 GIORGIO BASSANI.

READ: The Garden of the Finzi-Continis, Prologue, Chapters 1 and 2

April 28. FINISH The Garden of the Finzi-Continis.

March 5 LIA LEVI: Roman Ruminations

READ: The Jewish Husband [though after discussion we may choose to replace it with her brand-new *Tonight is Already Tomorrow*]