



Watching the Moon and Other Plays (Renaissance & Modern Plays)

Massimo Bontempelli

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Massimo Bontempelli (1878–1960), poet, novelist, playwright and composer, would become one of the literary giants of the twentieth century. The father of magic realism in Italy, he was associated with the futurist avant-garde and then launched his own influential literary movement, Novecento. Editor and creator of various journals, he collaborated with some of the greatest writers of his day, from James Joyce to Luigi Pirandello. Bontempelli was a prominent fascist intellectual and largely for this reason is today a controversial, little studied and seldom translated writer. Patricia Gaborik strikes out at this problem by presenting here an extensive introduction on the thought and legacy of this figure and complete translations of three of his major plays: "Watching the Moon" (1916), "Stormcloud" (1935) and "Cinderella" (1942). Bontempelli's sense of theatricality was unparalleled, his characters are bewitching, and Gaborik's translations privilege both readability and playability, offering these plays the chance for a robust, English-language life not only on page but also on stage. In 1953, Bontempelli was awarded the Strega Prize, Italy's most prestigious literary award. "Watching the Moon" is a densely layered response to the era's avant-gardism, with traces of symbolism, expressionism and futurism. It presents the story of a woman who travels to the literal ends of the earth in an attempt to rescue her (dead) daughter, whom she believes has been kidnapped by the moon. "Stormcloud," where a nimbus is responsible for misery and destruction, points fingers at individual behaviors and especially at personal egotism in the face of love and death. It is a strange and compelling exemplar of magic realism for the stage. "Cinderella," fearless, radical and subversive, adds to Bontempelli's slate of strong and complex female characters, still sometimes a rare commodity on the stage. First English translation. Introduction, notes, select bibliography, illustrated. 198 pages.

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