

## SALVATORE QUASIMODO

# MAN OF MY TIME

Salvatore Quasimodo (1901-1968) was born in Modica, Sicily. In 1908 his family moved to Messina, where he completed his education. In 1917 he founded the magazine *Nuovo giornale letterario*, where he published his first poems. In 1919 he moved to Rome, where he studied engineering at the Politechnical Institute and worked in construction and technical drafting. In 1929 he moved to Florence, where he published his first poetry collection, and the following year he joined the Civil Engineering Corps. In 1938 he quit this job and became editor of the weekly magazine *Tempo*, and in 1941 he became a professor at the Giuseppe Verdi Conservatory in Milan. During WWII, he was involved in the anti-Fascist movement and was briefly imprisoned. After the war, his poems recalled the horrors of war and the injustices of the fascist regime. He gradually developed an international reputation and was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1959. Giuliano DeGo's translation of the following poem from the collection *Giorno dopo giorno* (Day After Day, 1947) was published in the winter 1967-1968 issue, and a revised translation was included in *The Selected Writings of Salvatore Quasimodo* (1960).

You are still the man of the stone and sling,  
man of my time. You were in the cockpit  
with malignant wings, dials of death  
—I have seen you,—in the chariot of fire, at the gallows,  
at the wheels of torture. I have seen you: it was you,  
your exact science turned to extermination,  
without love, without Christ. You have killed again,  
as always, as your fathers killed, as they killed  
the animals that saw them for the first time.  
And the blood smells the same, as when

a brother told his brother: "Let us go  
to the fields." And that echo, chill, insistent,  
has reached you, down to your day.  
Sons, forget the clouds of blood  
risen from the earth, forget your fathers:  
their tombs sink down in ashes:  
the black birds, the wind, cover their heart.