

UMBERTO SABA

Ulysses

—Translated from the Italian by Zack Rogow

When I was young I sailed
the Dalmatian Coast. Little islands
fringed with waves
emerged, where, from time to time,
a bird, intent on its prey,
alighted. The islands were covered with seaweed, slippery,
and shone in the sun like emeralds. When high
tide and darkness erased them, my leeward sails
veered toward the open seas,
fleeing hidden dangers. Today my realm
is that no-man's-land. The harbor lights its lanterns
for others: my unfettered spirit
tugs me toward the high seas
and life's sad love stories.

Umberto Saba (1883–1957, born Umberto Poli) was an Italian poet from the Adriatic port of Trieste. Of Jewish descent on his mother's side, the poet took the last name of his nom de plume, Saba, from the Hebrew word for "grandfather." He was the proprietor of an antiquarian bookstore in Trieste. Because of Mussolini's racial laws forbidding Jews to own property, Saba had to sign the bookstore over to the family of the young man who worked as his assistant. When Saba came home to Trieste after hiding out during World War II, the former assistant offered to return the store to Saba, who decided instead to leave the store to the young man. The store can still be visited in Trieste, inherited by the son of Saba's original partner, and a statue of Saba stands on the same block.

Zack Rogow has received the PEN/Book-of-the-Month Club Translation Award and the Bay Area Book Reviewers Award (BABRA) in Translation. His cotranslation of *Bérénice 1934–44: An Actress in Occupied Paris* was released in 2019 by Peter Lang Publishing.

IAN KIMMERLY

Another Current, 2019
Oil on canvas, 60 x 72 in



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