Focusing on Eugenio Montale’s ‘ciclo di Arletta’, in particular ‘La casa dei doganieri’ [The Custom Guards’ House] (Le occasioni, 1939), this lecture will discuss the nature of the poetic subject’s mourning for Arletta and how it challenges traditional views on elegy. Mourning in Montale’s poetry is intermittent but, nevertheless, unending. By considering the relationship between Montale’s poetry and mourning from the Derridean perspective of ‘demi-deuil’ [half mourning], the lecture will offer an original contribution to the study of Montale’s ‘care ombre’ [beloved shadows] (‘Proda di Versilia, La bufera e altro, 1956), in which subjects of mourning are no longer considered as negatively dominated by the Other’s death, but are, indeed, devoted to preserving the affect relationship with the dead, as opposed to the Freudian notion of ‘moving on’ after loss. From this standpoint, elegiac poetry, in Montale’s rendition of it, assumes the key responsibility of passing on traumatic knowledge and, in so doing, affirms its own centrality in the creation of a space where death and the experience of mourning can be framed and processed.

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