



## Poems

*Pier Paolo Pasolini , Luciano Martinengo (editor) , Norman MacAfee (Translator)*

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

## Poems

*Pier Paolo Pasolini , Luciano Martinengo (editor) , Norman MacAfee (Translator)*

**Poems** Pier Paolo Pasolini , Luciano Martinengo (editor) , Norman MacAfee (Translator)  
"Sex, death, political passion, these are the simple objects to which I give my elegiac heart"

Winner of the first Renato Poggioli/William Weaver Award of PEN American Center

Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922-1975), who is best known in this country as an inspired filmmaker, was also the most outspoken and original Italian writer of his generation, the author of distinguished and controversial novels and plays, political and literary criticism, and, above all, poetry. His poems are widely considered the most important contribution to Italian literature since Montale and, along with the work of Brecht and Neruda, represent the most powerful political poetry of the century. This dual-language book presents his major poems as well as an autobiographical essay, which together make for an outstanding introduction to Pasolini's exceptional gifts as a poet.

### Poems Details

Date : Published April 30th 1996 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux (first published 1970)

ISBN : 9780374524692

Author : Pier Paolo Pasolini , Luciano Martinengo (editor) , Norman MacAfee (Translator)

Format : Paperback 231 pages

Genre : Poetry, European Literature, Italian Literature, Cultural, Italy, Literature, 20th Century, Fiction

 [Download Poems ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Poems ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online Poems Pier Paolo Pasolini , Luciano Martinengo (editor) , Norman MacAfee (Translator)**

---

## From Reader Review Poems for online ebook

### David Cribbin says

Le centri di Gramsci

Non é di maggio questa impura aria  
che il buio giardino straniero  
fa ancora piú buio, o l'abbaglia

con cieche schiarite...questo cielo  
di bave sopra gli attici giallini  
che in semicerchi immensi fanno velo

alle curve del Tevere, ai turchini  
monti del Lazio...Spande una mortale  
pace, disamorata come i nostri destini,

Pier Paolo Pasolini  
1947

Gramsci's Ashes

It is not May's impure air  
that darkens this foreign garden  
to a deeper dark, or the glare

that blinds...this sky, cloud laden  
above the burr of yellowish lofts  
which in semicircles veil eden,

the Tiber's course, and the crofts  
of Lazio's sky blue hills...Bestrewing a deathly  
peace, as dissatisfied as all our lots,

Translated by David Joseph Cribbin

I've just bought The Selected Poetry of Pier Paolo Pasolini Translated by Stephen Sartarelli. As always with translations of poetry from Italian into English, the translation is not by a poet, so when it comes to poems that employ the terza rima, this rhyme form is abandoned in favour of a standard transliteration of the original. e.g. the three stanzas above from Gramsci's Ashes, which is translated by Sartarelli as...

It's not May that brings impure air,  
makes the darkness of the foreign garden  
darker still, or dazzles with the glare

of blind sunbursts...this frothy sky

over pale-yellow penthouses  
in vast semicircles that deny

a view of the Tiber's meanders and  
Latium's deep-blue hills...Between these old  
walls the autumn May extends

a deadly peace as unloved as our  
destinies. It carries all the greyness  
of the world, the close of a decade where

The line "a deadly peace as unloved as our destinies" is moved to the first line of the fourth stanza and dropped as the last line of the third. This typifies the translation throughout, i.e. it evades rhyme, and it transliterates, rather than attempting to translate in an adaptive way the original music and imagery of Pasolini's poetry.

The 1 star is for the dull translation not the original poems, luckily it is a Bilingual Edition.

---

### **Jim Leckband says**

I had no idea going into the book what kind of poems to expect. Furthermore, I have never seen any of Pasolini's films. So it was a surprise to encounter such engaging writing, deep in the Italy of the post-war. It is serendipity that I am also reading Elena Ferrante's Neapolitan novels (The Neapolitan Novels which covers the same time period. Whereas the US has been encountering the modern for over a century, it seems that post-war Italy only accelerated it during this era. Both Ferrante's Lena and Pasolini are observers on the sidelines, so to speak - a Neapolitan woman escaping poverty and the slums through writing and Pasolini, a gay poet/filmmaker creating a new art form in his films.

Pasolini writes about his neighborhood, his days, his loves, his everyday encounters in a free, conversational manner, but firmly centered on his viewpoint. He is not particularly interested in staking an aesthetic other than what is required to get across how he is responding to his subjects.

One of those subjects is particularly timely. Both in Ferrante and Pasolini we encounter Fascists. I had always thought that the Fascists were thoroughly defeated in WWII - and that any reference to them was metaphorical. In America, until recently, it was just hyperbole. But not in Italy - the Fascists survived in the Mafia and other places and make their evil known to all. That's the thing about Fascists isn't it - they revel in their outrageousness and dare us to stop them. Pasolini's mockery certainly didn't.

---

### **James Ferlinghetti says**

One of the greatest Italian poets killed because of who he was.

---

## John says

deep

---

## Zane says

A nice collection of works from this Italian, queer, Marxist film-maker and poet. Definitely a departure from 'Salo, or 120 Days in Sodom', but still attempting to address questions about emotions and struggle in the master-slave dialectic.

---

## Fede says

Italy in the 50s.

"La Dolce Vita", "Volare", Sophia Loren, Audrey & Gregory riding the Vespa... a dream country, a post-war wonderland.

Uh-huh. Sure.

We tend not to remember the political clash, the corruption, the poverty, the criminality, the slums surrounding the glamorous boutiques of Via Condotti. Because Italy in the 50s was not only Anita Ekberg calling Marcello ("Come he-e-ere!"). It was also a goldmine for profiteers of any sort; it was a country in which a devastating internal migration was turning the South into a waste land, the inhabitants moving to the industrialised North full of illusions and hopes, just to find "No Southerners" signs in the doorways of the residential buildings. A country in which children were still dying of meningitis and being crippled by poliomyelitis.

The newly established Republic was run by a government of bureaucrats (accurately selected by the USA and the Vatican) and a few Communists (accurately selected by the Russians); criminality was spreading like an octopus and intellectuals were kindly invited to look the other way... or ostracised for good.

What about the bright future heralded by the Left? What about the marvelous present promised by Capitalism?

Pasolini's Italy is the country nobody sees in the movies. Rossellini's Neo-realism was little more than décor, a curiosity for tourists. The Roman suburbs were (are) more like the Brazilian favelas than the directors' poetic tableau of blinding sunshine and barefoot kids.

Pasolini was a homosexual in a deeply homophobic country and a honest intellectual in a politicised world: a novelist, essayist, poet, film director who was hated by the establishment, despised by the Left, cuddled by the avant-garde as long as he kept his distance and behaved properly. Both his human and intellectual life were basically a threat.

This anthology is a collection of poems from his works of the 50s and 60s: it allows a good insight on the poet's passion and discontent.

I suppose it's tough for a non-Italian reader to get much of Pasolini's poetry, precisely because it focus on political and social matters we ourselves today find hard to understand; hence my three-star rating.

What is universally comprehensible is the author's pessimistic (but sadly realistic) depiction of a mood, an attitude - a condition of existential abandonment: ideology has turned out to be a sham, dangerously ambiguous or overtly violent, without having truly improved the lives of those who had suffered for it.

In the ode "Gramsci's Ashes" (Antonio Gramsci was a socialist leader and victim of the fascist regime) the poet asks the dead man what became of those struggles and hopes, associating the warm light of the Roman sunset and the decadent beauty of the urban landscape to the moral twilight of a decade.

Most poems are long monologues in which Pasolini wonders through the city outskirts, looking at the people around him and recording their daily misery and greatness. Let aside his well-known fondness for (young) male prostitutes and the Roman underworld of petty thieves, drunkards, southern immigrants and middle-aged whores, what he sees is the immutability of the poor's existence, the humble man forever being the same in spite of any social and historical turmoil. In "The Weeping of the Backhoe" the poet wonders whether any Revolution could ever mean anything to the people living out of their work (or crime), for whom life itself is a struggle, hard enough for them to care about ideology and dreams.

Predictably enough, the Church is not spared his criticism, even though Pasolini's anticlericalism is more the expression of his spiritual disappointment than a political attack. In "To a Pope" he compares the life of a Pope to that of a worker; the final lines are a poignant 'j'accuse' in which he asks the Pope about his indifference toward the souls he is supposed to take care of:

" Evil is not in doing bad  
Evil is in not doing good  
There's never been  
Worst sinner than you."

Pasolini's pessimism was the ultimate proof of his love for Italy and Italians. He cried all his life over the 'anthropological genocide' that was occurring since the end of fascism, when Italy found itself too bewildered by its own freedom - politically and culturally speaking - to put its culture in discussion and discern between what was to be kept and what was to be got rid of. Italy had been put out for sale and Pasolini witnessed and recorded the whole process: in fact he himself paid the highest price in 1975, when he was killed with the help of one of those boys he loved and hated so passionately.

He died as he had lived all his life: as an outsider, a man struggling against himself in the attempt to define his own personality, forever wondering through a maze of paradoxes and contradictions:

" The whole world is my unburied body,  
An atoll crushed  
By blue sea grains..."

Today we must admit Pasolini was the most lucid intellectual of his time, sort of a seer who denounced the evil he saw and felt every day.

And yet the worst was yet to come... a whole decade of terrorism, financial crimes, cultural void was in store for the country.

---

### **willowdog says**

I' sure the poetry loses something in the translation. Found images of youth, family and religion repetitive. Not enough gay content.

---

### **Steven Godin says**

Ridiculed and expelled from the Italian communist party for his outspoken views on homosexuality and the decline of society (although he still lived as a communist until his dying day), apparently murdered while supposedly meeting with a male prostitute (personally I think that stinks) that would lead to many conspiracy theories regarding his death, and cruelly judged for his films that carried more meaning and intellect than the brain dead cinema of today, the irony is that most of the controversy came from people who either did not know him or were responsible for far greater misdoings themselves!. Regarded by his close friend the novelist Alberto Moravia as the most important poet of the second half of the century and other associates who sung his praises as a very intelligent human being with a composed and dignified mindset and of course gained the respect of the gay community. Here in this collection that is widely described as some of his best work he deals mainly in themes of realism/neo-realism that are political, social, sexual and yes controversial but there is no denying he could write, speak his mind and care passionately in the process.

---

### **Will says**

"Stupendous, miserable/ city, you made me// experience that unknown/ life, you made me discover/ what the world was for everyone."

---

### **Avis F. says**

i'm not super into poetry but even i can tell that there are some pretty remarkable excerpts in this

---

### **Sarah says**

I didn't he was a poet, and a good one. I didn't read the ENTIRE book, but much of it.

---

### **Jeffrey Greggs says**

It's the same old story: traduttore, traditore. I know, I know, it's much easier to rhyme in Italian than English. That still doesn't excuse the would-be translator in my book. Pasolini is considered to be one the most significant post-war Italian poets and, with respect to the political content of his work, is often compared favorably to Brecht. Supposedly at the time of publication many of these poems, in particular "The Ashes of Gramsci," dominated the cafe chatter of the Roman cognoscenti. This trans. completely failed to recreate that kind of urgency, though I must admit that my occasional glances at the verso page led me to believe that I would not be enamored with them even if my command of Italian approached something near a working competence.

I won't, however, hear a word against the man's movies, which are sublime and sorely underrated.

---

### **David M says**

*Dear friend, to whom I'm writing because you're far away,*

*these are not the kind of things one tells a reader  
lost in his dreams  
they're the nothings of life only friends can believe*  
- from 'Last Dreams Before Dying'

*Would you, in death unadorned,  
have me abandon my desperate  
passion for being in the world?*  
- 'Ashes of Gramsci'

Pier Paolo Pasolini was either murdered by rough trade in a trick gone awry or else assassinated by fascists for speaking dangerous truths to power. Either way seems like a fitting end to a brilliant and chaotic life.

A committed anti-fascist who nonetheless couldn't help lusting after the enemy. He was able to live his contradictions without compromising his principles.

That atheistic obsession with god, hunger for experience, love of squalor and prostitutes; Pasolini is a link to all that was best in life before the event; in his courage and political commitment he also points to a way forward after the event. That night, after casting my ballot, before the results came in, I made a somewhat flippant pledge that no matter what happened I wouldn't despair. Well, I've been keeping my pledge, as best I can, but it hasn't been easy.

Here lies a noble soul -

conscious as an injured bird  
that gently dies but never forgives.

\*

... Behind  
Clearings of peonies, Rome in moonlight gilds

Hellenic and Baroque remains and grimy  
faithless suburbs, where no one knows  
anything but sex, and the caves are slimy

with feces and children.

\*

... At almost forty years of age,  
I find myself in a rage like a young man  
who knows nothing of himself but his youth  
and rails against the old world.  
And, like a young man, without pity  
or shame, I do not hide  
my condition: I shall never find peace. Never.

\*

In an epileptic fit of murderous  
pain. I protested  
like one imprisoned for life, shutting myself up  
in my room

- without anyone's knowing it -  
and screaming, mouth  
stuffed with blankets  
blackened with iron burns,  
those precious family blankets  
on which I nursed the flowers of my youth.

And one afternoon or evening, I ran  
screaming  
down the Sunday streets, after the game,  
to the old cemetery behind the railroad tracks,  
to perform and repeat, until I bled,  
the sweetest act there is in life,  
myself alone, atop a little mound of earth,  
some two or three graves  
of Italian or German soldiers  
nameless on the wooden crosses,  
buried there in the previous war.

Then that night, between dry tears  
the bloody bodies of those wretched strangers  
dressed in olive drab

came in swarms over my bed,  
where I slept naked and drained,  
to soil me with blood until dawn.

\*

(All that said, I still really don't like Salo, and even kind of resent him for making that movie; but maybe it's one of those had-to-be-there-at-the-time type phenomena. I've heard that the Italian left in the sixties and seventies put the French one to shame in terms of sheer craziness. So maybe in that context Salo kind of made sense.)

---

## **Mehdi Naqvi says**

Maybe Later in life. Laterzzzz.

---

## **Connor says**

Really disappointed in this. Translation really neutered these verses.

---