# Pasolini, poesia dal registratore/Pasolini. Poetry from the recorder

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**English transcription** 



## host/Alessia

One day, when it was possible to take a step again and to meet at least one voice, I took the poem and carried it around trying to put together stories, people and those neighborhoods in Rome where the author of the sheets I was holding in my hand wandered around. He was Pier Paolo Pasolini.

May I ask you to read some poems?



# Speaker 1 (Quadraro suburb: old lady)

I'm not able to read: I'm really illiterate.



#### Alessia

... How come?



# Speaker 2 (Pietralata suburb: man at the market)

I don't read so well: and if I make mistakes?



## Alessia

Ah, no matter.



## Man at the market

Let's do it!

E' difficile dire con parole di figlio ciò a cui nel cuore ben poco assomiglio.

It's so hard to say in a son's words what I'm so little like in my heart.

(from Supplica a mia madre/Prayer to my mother)



# Speaker 3 (Pietralata suburb: young boy, Mirko)

Povero come un gatto del Colosseo, vivevo in una borgata tutta calce e polverone, lontano dalla città

e dalla campagna, stretto ogni giorno in un autobus rantolante: e ogni andata, ogni ritorno

era un calvario di sudore e di ansie.

Poor as a cat in the Coliseum I lived once, in a limestone-dusted slum, far from the city centre

or the countryside, squashed every day aboard a bone-rattling bus: and every trip in, every trip back,

was a sheer calvary of anxiety and sweat.

(from II pianto della scavatrice/The tears of the excavator)



# Speaker 4 (young boy 2)

I only understood "Poor as a cat in the Coliseum", then I stopped.



#### Mirko

Gasping, but what does it mean?



#### Alessia

Honor to you Mirko, who on a cold winter day stopped curious in front of a tape recorder and amidst the laughter and embarrassment of your friends you finally spoke up and never let go words pass away: what on earth were you doing, gasping on the asphalt of Pietralata, the former Roman suburb with its recently colored lots and the football field where in the 70s the football team of communist militants "Alba Rossa" played their matches?



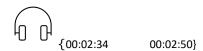
## Speaker 5 (Villa Gordiani suburb: old man at the bar)

I saw him a couple of times but I didn't know him, eh! The first time when he passed in front of the coffee bar in the car, very slowly. And another time, where did I see him? I don't remember where I saw him here around, I don't remember...



# Speaker 6 (Villa Gordiani suburb: the shoemaker)

Many years ago, I was a child, he passed here in front of the coffee bar near the kiosk and he said goodbye. I'm talking about the end of the 60s. I recognized him because there were older people who told me who he was.



## The old man at the bar

I worked with someone who was also from Casarsa (the village where Pasolini wab born, translator's note): he had known him since when he was a child; he knew him as a great person, for God's sake though, but... without praise or blame.



#### The shoemaker

There was much talk about him because here there is Ninetto Davoli, who is a Roman actor who got married to a girl coming from this suburb. Ninetto Davoli made his debut thanks to Pasolini.



### Alessia

Villa Gordiani, Mandrione, Pietralata and Ponte Mammolo, Rebibbia and Tor Pignattara, Pigneto: what still remains, besides the memories, of the Roman suburbs that were once "the crown of thorns that surrounds the city of God"?



## Mirko

Stupenda e misera città, che m'hai insegnato ciò che allegri e feroci gli uomini imparano bambini, le piccole cose in cui la grandezza della vita in pace si scopre, come andare duri e pronti nella ressa delle strade rivolgersi a un altro uomo, senza tremare, non vergognarsi di guardare il denaro, contato con pigre dita dal fattorino che suda che suda contro le facciate in corsa in un colore eterno d'estate;

Stupendous, miserable city, you who taught me what men learn fiercely and happily as children, the small things in which life's majesty is quietly revealed, like going rough and readily into the crowd on the streets, addressing another man without trembling, not ashamed to check the change counted out by the lazy fingers of the conductor that sweat in the glare of passing facades eternally summer-coloured;

(from II pianto della scavatrice/The tears of the excavator)

... Wait a moment! I thought there was the period here: can I start again?



Do you mind reading the poems? ... Maybe once by once? Let's see the ones you like most. ... Serena? Ok, then we have... Samir, you too. And Marika, let's try!



# Speaker 7 (lady at the market, Marika, and her daughter Serena)

Stupenda e misera città, che m'hai insegnato ciò che allegri e feroci gli uomini imparano bambini,

le piccole cose in cui la grandezza della vita in pace si scopre, come andare duri e pronti nella ressa

delle strade, rivolgersi a un altro uomo senza tremare, non vergognarsi di guardare il denaro contato

con pigre dita dal fattorino che suda contro le facciate in corsa in un colore eterno d'estate;

a difendermi, a offendere, ad avere il mondo davanti agli occhi e non soltanto in cuore, a capire

che pochi conoscono le passioni in cui io sono vissuto: che non mi sono fraterni, eppure sono

fratelli

Stupendous, miserable city, you who taught me what men learn fiercely and happily as children,

the small things in which life's majesty is quietly revealed, like going rough and readily into the crowd

on the streets, addressing another man without trembling, not ashamed to check the change counted out by the lazy fingers of the conductor that sweat in the glare of passing facades eternally summer-coloured; taught

me to defend myself, to lash out, to have the world in front of my eyes and not only in my heart, to understand

that very few know the passions
I lived; that these others are not brothers,
and yet that they are my brothers

(from II pianto della scavatrice/The tears of the excavator)



#### Alessia

What is Poetry?



# Speaker 8 (Quadraro suburb: man while painting the house, Livio)

Poetry? ... It could be a brushstroke, maybe a Raphaelian brushstroke? Or maybe is it just working out some money in a day to support the family? Oh well, these are historical matter, they're not told anymore. We are now used to high definition stories.

Ehi, be careful! (looking at Alessia and at the recorder)

And if poetry is just telling about poor people like Pier Paolo Pasolini did? It hasn't changed so much, don't you know? He said he liked progress but he didn't like this development. I'm telling you about the 70s, what a year we are into? I mean, I am no one but I like progress and, me too, I don't like this development.



#### Alessia

Do you need a hand? A hand and a help to whitewash this wall?

# Speaker 9 (Quadraro suburb: a sewage worker)

Like us, right? They have a good life and we, on the contrary, a shitty one, that's it.



# Speaker 10 (Quadraro suburb: sewage worker 2, Gabriele)

Look at this sentence, it's about you, I'm gonna tell you.



# The sewage worker

What about it?



### Gabriele

... ho passato l'infanzia schiavo di questo senso alto, irrimediabile, di un impegno immenso.

My childhood I lived a slave to this lofty incurable sense of an immense obligation.

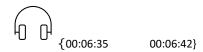
Nice to meet you, I'm Gabriele.

Come on, let's go read but... I don't know... I'm not so much "tuned", I mean...



## Alessia

It was just a coincidence...



## Gabriele

... You got the right guy, the punch worker who just knows about him (*Pasolini*, translator's note), as I live and breathe. Oh, tell me then when...



Also honor to you, Gabriele, who spent the 5 minutes of break with a sheet of paper in your hand in an alley of the Quadraro suburb, exactly where – do you remember "i ragazzi di vita" – "Lanzetta" and "Il riccio" ("The hedgehog" socalled, two characters of Pasolini's novel Ragazzi di vita, translator's note) went hunting for pieces of lead, old irons to resell for a few "lira" ("Italian liras", old currancy, translator's note), then to be spent in the Rome of the center.



### Gabriele

Supplica a mia madre/Prayer to my mother. It's the title...

È difficile dire con parole di figlio ciò a cui nel cuore ben poco assomiglio.

Tu sei la sola al mondo che sa, del mio cuore, ciò che è stato sempre, prima d'ogni altro amore.

Per questo devo dirti ciò ch'è orrendo conoscere: è dentro la tua grazia che nasce la mia angoscia.

Sei insostituibile. Per questo è dannata alla solitudine la vita che mi hai data.

E non voglio esser solo. Ho un'infinita fame d'amore, dell'amore di corpi senza anima.

Perché l'anima è in te, sei tu, ma tu sei mia madre e il tuo amore è la mia schiavitù...

It's so hard to say in a son's words what I'm so little like in my heart.

Only you in all the world know what my heart always held, before any other love.

So, I must tell you something terrible to know: From within your kindness my anguish grew.

You're irreplaceable. And because you are, the life you gave me is condemned to loneliness. And I don't want to be alone. I have an infinite hunger for love, love of bodies without souls.

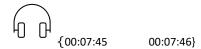
For the soul is inside you, it is you, but you're my mother and your love's my slavery...

(From Supplica a mia madre/Prayer to my mother)



## Alessia

Thank you.



### Gabriele

Have you earned your bread-n-butter?



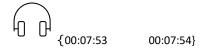
## Alessia

Will you be still here in the next...?



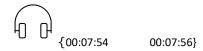
# Gabriele and his fellows

The whole week... it's so long! What do you have in mind?



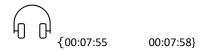
## Alessia

No, no, no...

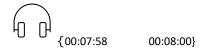


## Gabriele

You're coming with Leopardi... Who are you coming with next?



No, it could only be... an attempt to say thank you, again.



### **Gabriele**

Ah, alright, okay.



# Speaker 11 and 12 (Quadraro suburb: two women down the street)

Look, I have so much to do, I don't have any time... I have a newspaper but I can't help finishing to read it. But I like reading...

You know what my father used to make me do?

I really like, from morning until night. Reading all the time together, however.

Me! I don't remember any poems: we were eleven children doing the cleaning, imagine if my mother taught us poems! Then it's hard to tell with.



### Alessia

Do you like reading just a poem?



# The man at the market

Well, no, I don't want to... I do mind...



#### Alessia

But if I don't say "poetry" and I say thought?



## The man at the market

Alright.

È difficile dire con parole di figlio ciò a cui nel cuore ben poco assomiglio.

Tu sei la sola al mondo che sa, del mio cuore, ciò che è stato sempre, prima d'ogni altro amore.

It's so hard to say in a son's words what I'm so little like in my heart.

Only you in all the world know what my heart always held, before any other love.

So, I must tell you something terrible to know: From within your kindness my anguish grew.

(From Supplica a mia madre/Prayer to my mother)

It's fine here, we have the subway, the supermarket, the mall "Panorama", buses... we are fine.

Now it's not like the old days. Now it's fine, before there were "casini", now everything is fine. Almost everybody is working, with this basic income, anyway... we are living well.



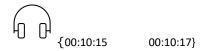
## Alessia

Thank you so much to give up a cigarette in order to talk to me in front of the sun, man from the market of Pietralata. How long has it been since you read a poem?



#### The man at the market

I gave up in the seventh grade, then I went to work and I didnt' study anymore. ... They (*poems*, translator's note) come out when I chat via mobile, but there and then, when I feel like it... messages come out. Then they come out like poems, too. When I'm on the right mood... Now I dont' feel like it.



Oh well, it's not necessary. Never mind.



## The man at the market

Ok.



#### Alessia

OK, and thanks for this... "stumble", have a nice day. Can I meet you again here in the market?



## The man at the market

Thank you and... yes, I'm here, they give me a hand because I work and... I don't work: I do favors, I drop off some groceries, I sometimes change money for shopkeepers...



## Pasolini

No doubt, my gaze towards the things of the world, towards objects is not a natural, not a secular one. I always see things as somewhat miraculous: every object for me is a miracle, that is... I have a vision of the world, in a way that is always shapeless, let's say, non-confessional, but in a certain way, a religious manner of the world.. That's why I'm using this point of view in my art work, too.



# Speaker 13, 14, 15 (Pietralata suburb: a group of men down the street)

- Oh no, with kids... you won't understand: when the ice cream cart was passing by, every kid had his icecream paid by him
- Yes, yes, me too, I remember about it.
- But what do you remember about? You weren't born yet!
- I was three years old, instead!

- It was just a pride, we were pride to live where Pasolini was living: compared to San Basilio and suburbs nearby... we had Pasolini!
- Yes, nobody never like us!
- Also because he was a great character.
- Well, regardless of the fact that one does what one wants in life, but on the side, let's say
- He was an artist: everybody is an artist in his own way. Im' for artists.
- In short, you can't say anything of him.



# Speaker 14 (Pietralata suburb: a man down the street)

Fifty years ago it was fine, we were all like a family but times change, therefore... we used to have bath there in the fields of meat. There were cultivated fields, sheeps, there was also the butcher shop, there was everything: it was like a small village. The fields were flooded and there was a beautiful "marana" at the exit of the prison nearby, that was the fun: climbing over a banana tree with a bamboo cane.



# Speaker 13 (Pietralata suburb: a man down the street)

We used to go and steal some fruit around. At the end of the day a litte bit hungry but...



#### Alessia

I met Domenico, Anchise, Umberto, Enzo, right near Giovanni Tagliere street, where Pasolini lived between 1951 and 53 with his mother. We hadn't made an appointment, we didn't know each other before the adolescence of Rome came out from their sly stories. In the heart of Rebibbia suburb, a group of low houses is still keeping the silence of the city. Blessed is the one who discovers it.



## Livio

He was attracted by the peripheries because he was looking for a "virginity", an instinctiveness people – the lumpenproletariat - gave him. That's to say, he wanted to understand the system that then led to improve and therefore, where was he looking for it? Where there was none. Let's say, he was an observer, he was curious. Then he created stories and there was someone who found clues for himself/herself in that way, wondering: What if I don't behave in a certain way with myself? Well I don't improve.

It's Livio here, immersed in the peripheral stories that become central to his gaze and to our listening, he knows Pasolini's poems by heart and finds them among the people he meets every day.

### Livio

When I walk in the suburbs, in those areas I usually attend, I see the same things Pasolini told about: fifty years later, sixty years later I don't find anything different. How the guys of the 1960s or 70s used to walk, I find the same way of posing themselves now... the same ways of looking for or, on the contrary, not looking for at times.

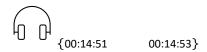
### Alessia

Hello, can I disturb you for a moment while you're waiting for the bus? ... Oh, but I've already met you!



# Speaker 4 (Pietralata suburb: the young boy at the bus stop)

Yes, yes (we met) in Pietralata.



You are Mirko's friend, aren't you? But I don't remember your name. Do you feel like reading a Pasolini's poem?

# The young boy at the bus stop and his fellows

No, I've already done too much at school, today.



... Are those girls friends of you?



# The young boy at the bus stop

Yes, we are at the same school.



# Speaker 16 (Pietralata suburb: the young girl at the bus stop)

Solo l'amare solo il conoscere conta, non l'aver amato, non l'aver conosciuto. Dà angoscia

il vivere di un consumato amore. L'anima non cresce più. Eccone il calore incantato

della notte che piena quaggiù. tra le curve del fiume e le sopite visioni della città, sparsa di luci,

echeggia ancora di mille vite, disamore, mistero e miseria dei sensi mi rendono nemiche

le forme del mondo che fino a ieri erano la mia ragione d'esistere. Annoiato, stanco, rincaso...

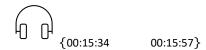
Only to love, only to know, are what matter; not having loved, having known. It's agony

to live a consummated love. The soul, straitjacketed, just can't grow. In the night's spellbound stove heat down here, where the river flows and there's the calming sight of the light-strewn city, come echoes

of a thousand lives in the night, unloved, mysterious, and miserable in their senses, pitching me right

against the world's forms, which until evening were my reason for living. Bored and bone-tired, home-returning,

(from II pianto della scavatrice/The tears of the excavator)



## Alessia

Those who walk in the city write Urban poems in the suburbs, which have long been integrated into the urban and social fabric of Rome, but which preserve the struggles and betrayals for an identity that is never taken for granted, that must always be conquered.

If you like it, just try to read the last few lines... they're beautiful and they're about the city.



# Speaker 17 (the foreigner)

I don't speak Italian.



## Alessia

Not at all? You don't speak it at all?



## The foreigner

No, no, no, no.



But the little you know, you speak you well!

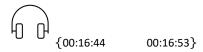
## The foreigner

Povero or poverino, isn't it? (while trying to read the first sentence of a poem...)

I come from Cuba and... He was just like a revolutionary man, wasn't he?

(while reading the commemorative plaque down the street)

From 1951 to 1953 Pier Paolo Pasolini lived in this suburb... Oh!



#### Alessia

At the end of this street there is the house where he had lived for two years. Now it has no property...



## Livio

Pasolini was very... political: it's not a coincidence that when he told about the slums, he says: "The aqueducts are the crown of thorns that surrounds the city of God". Be careful, we are in a city where we should take care of the people who have problems and on the contrary they are the ones who have become like Jesus Christ, the ones who are suffering and we pretend not to notice, don't we? That is, the slum dwellers had been living there from 25 years!

How many people said: We have to find a solution. And a solution for 50,000 people that had lasted 25 years becomes obviously *political* because only politics can solve those things.



# Speaker 17 (suburb Villa Gordiani: the former teacher, Lelio)

So, I like Pasolini first of all because of my direct experience: I was just a child, that was in 1960, and like every child of the time I went to play football on the parish field. We were playing football there and we were told that there was a film shooting nearby. And let's go, let's go see the movie they were shooting. And that was *Accattone*. So there was the whole crew: Pasolini, Bertolucci, Citti and so on... Of course I can say now these surnames, I didn't know them at the time.

And at the end of these shootings with these gentlemen we went to play in a field behind there and, many years later, I knew that the guy my not too "golden feet" played with was Pier Paolo Pasolini, who was very good at playing football, on the contrary.

#### Alessia

Lelio has got light eyes, a running tongue and the pleasure of teaching us again, just as he did at school. He played football with Pasolini for the first time during the shooting of the 1961 film *Accattone*, on the streets of Pigneto, now a neighborhood of clubs under gentrification, at the time just a village. After the experience down the street, he met Pasolini in the books, in the stories by images, he presented him to the youngest at school.

### Lelio

First of all, he was very open minded person, even if this might not seem, especially when he was on TV: he often gave the image of a closed intellectual. Actually, he wasn't it at all. That's how he got in the middle of it. Well, it would be enough just to think about these famous football matches: dressed in the everyday clothes of a film director, he went with his shoes in the mud and in the dust without any problem.

I have a Pasolini's photo, here near Piazza delle Gardenie, where there is now the subway, a C metro station. Well, at the time there was nothing, there was only the dirt road and you could see Pasolini with jacket, tie and trousers playing football in the middle of the mud. In my opinion, it represents his way of understanding world and life.

He is the typical intellectual - now I am using a rather peculiar term - the typical *Gramscian* intellectual, who not only gives but takes, who not only understands needs but he feels the needs and when he feels them he then also knows how to re-propose them in a pattern that is understandable to everyone. This was Pasolini.

## Livio

Li osservo, questi uomini, educati ad altra vita che la mia: frutti d'una storia tanto diversa, e ritrovati, quasi fratelli, qui, nell'ultima forma storica di Roma. Li osservo: in tutti c'è come l'aria d'un buttero che dorma armato di coltello: nei loro succhi vitali è disteso un tenebrore intenso, la papale itterizia del Belli, non porpora, ma spento peperino, bilioso cotto.

I observe them, these men educated to a life other than mine, the fruits of such a different story, found almost brothers here, in the last historical form of Rome.

I observe them in all of them. There is like the air of a cowboy who sleeps armed with a knife, in their vital juices an intense darkness is stretched, the papal jaundice of Belli, not purple, but dull, boiled terracotta.

(from La religione del mio tempo/Religion of My Time)



#### **Alessia**

Non c'è cena o pranzo o soddisfazione del mondo, che valga una camminata senza fine per le strade povere dove bisogna essere disgraziati e forti fratelli dei cani.

There is no lunch nor dinner nor satisfaction big enough that's worth the hassle of an endless walk on the poor streets, where you need to be miserable and strong, brothers of dogs.

(Solitudine. Loneliness, from Trasumanar e organizzar)



#### The man at the market

E non voglio esser solo. Ho un'infinita fame d'amore, dell'amore di corpi senza anima.

And I don't want to be alone. I have an infinite hunger for love, love of bodies without souls.

For the soul is inside you, it is you, but you're my mother and your love's my slavery:



## The foreigner

era un calvario di sudore e di ansie. Lunghe camminate in una calda caligine, lunghi crepuscoli davanti alle carte

was a sheer calvary of anxiety and sweat. Long walks in the smoggy heat, long dusks bent over my papers



# The young girl at the bus stop

Lì mortale è il silenzio: ma giù, a viale Marconi, alla stazione di Trastevere, appare

ancora dolce la sera. Ai loro rioni, alle loro borgate, tornano su motori leggeri – in tuta o coi calzoni

di lavoro, ma spinti da un festivo ardore i giovani, coi compagni sui sellini, ridenti, sporchi.

There's a deathly silence there: but below, on Viale Marconi, at Trastevere Station, the evening still seems sweet. To their districts, to their slums, the young return on scooters - in overalls or work trousers, but driven by festive passion with friends riding pillion, laughing, filthy



### Mirko

Le piccole cose in cui la grandezza della vita in pace si scopre, come andare duri e pronti nella ressa

delle strade, rivolgersi a un altro uomo senza tremare, non vergognarsi di guardare il denaro contato

con pigre dita dal fattorino che suda contro le facciate in corsa in un colore eterno d'estate;

the small things in which life's majesty is quietly revealed, like going rough and readily into the crowd

on the streets, addressing another man without trembling, not ashamed to check the change counted out

by the lazy fingers of the conductor that sweat in the glare of passing facades eternally summer-coloured;



## Gabriele

Sopravviviamo: ed è la confusione di una vita rinata fuori dalla ragione.

Ti supplico, ah, ti supplico: non voler morire. Sono qui, solo, con te, in un futuro aprile...

We survive, in the confusion of a life reborn outside reason.

I pray you, oh, I pray: Do not hope to die. I'm here, alone, with you, in a future April...



### Serena and Marika

muta di vita, coi bei viali...

esperienza di quella vita ignota: fino a farmi scoprire ciò che, in ognuno, era il mondo.

Una luna morente nel silenzio, che di lei vive, sbianca tra violenti ardori...

hushed of life, with its fine avenues

A moon, dying in the silence she feeds, grows pale in the violent heats which, wretchedly on an earth hushed of life, with its fine avenues, old lanes



### Alessia

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il vivere di un consumato amore. L'anima non cresce più. Ecco nel calore incantato

della notte che piena quaggiù tra le curve del fiume e le sopite visioni della città sparsa di luci,

echeggia ancora di mille vite, disamore, mistero, e miseria dei sensi, mi rendono nemiche

le forme del mondo, che fino a ieri erano la mia ragione d'esistere.

Only to love, only to know, are what matter; not having loved,

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down here, where the river flows and there's the calming sight of the light-strewn city, come echoes

of a thousand lives in the night, unloved, mysterious, and miserable in their senses, pitching me right against the world's forms, which until evening were my reason for living



# Lelio

Of course recording makes sense, because words matter and words are stones. And if words are stones and you throw them, sooner or later they hurt.

So, while you are still recordering, I'll go to pay.



## Alessia

No, Lelio, it's up to me!



## Lelio

No, absolutely not.



#### Alessia

Lelio, come on, look at me.

# Lelio

But for heaven's sake, don't do these sort of things that are anti-Pasolini...



# Alessia

They are anti-Pasolini's style, alright.