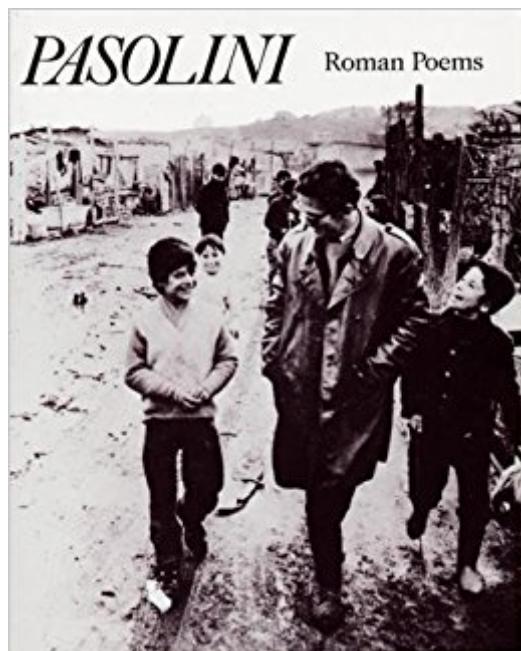


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# Roman Poems (City Lights Pocket Poets Series) (Italian Edition)



## Synopsis

The Italian film-maker Pier Paolo Pasolini was first and always a poet; the most important civil poet, according to Alberto Moravia, in Italy in the second half of this century. His poems were at once deeply personal and passionately engaged in the political turmoil of his country. In 1949, after his homosexuality led the Italian Communist Party to expel him on charges of "moral and political unworthiness," Pasolini fled to Rome. This selection of poems from his early impoverished days on the outskirts of Rome to his last (with a backward longing glance at his native Friuli) is at the center of his poetic and filmic vision of modern Italian life as an Inferno. "From all these refusals, we know what Pasolini stood against; political ideologies of all kinds, the complacency inherent in the established social order, the corruption of the institutions of church and state. If Pasolini could be said to have stood for anything it was for the struggles of Italy's working class; both the rural peasants and those barracked in the urban slums at the edges of Italian cities; whose humanity he evoked with great eloquence and nuance. But it is his refusals that animate his legacy with an incandescent rage, a passionate and profound fury that did not, as Zigaña suggests, cry out for death; but for just the opposite." •Nathaniel Rich, The New York Review of Books

Pier Paolo Pasolini was born in 1922 in Bologna. In addition to the films for which he is world famous, he wrote novels, poetry, and social and cultural criticism, and was an accomplished painter. He was murdered in 1975 at Ostia, near Rome.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922-1975) was a major cultural figure in post-WW2 Italy, well-known as a poet, novelist, communist intellectual, and filmmaker. Controversial and openly homosexual, Pasolini was brutally murdered at the age of 53. Lawrence Ferlinghetti is the famous Beat poet and painter who founded City Lights Books in San Francisco. His most recent books are *How To Paint Sunlight* (poetry) and *Love in the Days of Rage* (fiction).

"Roman Poems," by Pier Paolo Pasolini, is a bilingual edition with Italian and English versions of the poems on facing pages. The translations are by Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Francesca Valente. The book includes a preface by Alberto Moravia, who describes Pasolini as "a civil poet," by which Moravia means "a poet who sees his native land in a way that the powerful of the country do not and cannot see it." There are a number of recurring themes and motifs in this book: the urban environment, poverty, politics, the life of a poet. Many of the poems have a strong autobiographical or confessional flavor; a number of them deal with death. Another thing that struck me about these poems was that many of them evoke a gritty, down-and-dirty sense of life. Pasolini's words evoke a world of "sweaty delivery boys," "the sticky smell of coal," "ancient whores," and "alleys choked with darkness and garbage." Much of the book is very rooted in specific places; Pasolini cites such geographic names as the Viale Marconi, Trastevere Station, the fields of Aniene, Piazza Bologna, and the Garibaldi Bridge. Pasolini creates a particularly powerful and mesmerizing portrait of the city. He takes the reader from "the bourgeois quarter" to "a poor people's house at the city's far edge," and vividly appeals to the senses as he describes what he encounters on the journey. Some of the poems that appealed to me the most are as follows. "The Privilege of Thinking" offers the speaker's thoughts and observations while on a train ride; the poem is very down-to-earth, yet also has a transcendent quality. "Sex, Consolation for Misery" is a darkly prophetic vision of a "new world" being born; the poem offers a paradoxical message and hallucinatory imagery. "I Work All Day . . ." combines a playful touch with a political edge as the speaker reflects on his role as a poet. "But It Was a Naked and Swarming Italy" offers a vivid and passionate portrait of a young poet living in poverty in Italy in the 1950s and 1960s. But my favorite piece in the collection is "Toward the Caracalla Baths," which combines deliciously rich and evocative language with an effective parallel structure as the poet describes a diverse group of characters heading towards the title baths. The back cover of the book notes that Pasolini was born in 1922 in Bologna, and was murdered in 1975 near Rome. I found this book very hard to get into on my first reading. But as I re-read the poems, Pasolini's language and vision began to really come alive for me; he may be one of those poets

whose work rewards patience and attentiveness. In "Roman Poems" Pasolini is very introspective and psychological, but also casts a penetrating cinematic gaze on 20th century Italy in both its beauty and its pain.

Pier Paolo Pasolini was most remembered as a controversial filmmaker -- *Salo;120 days of Sodom* is his most notorious, famous because it proceeded his tragic death. Likewise, Pasolini possessed others talents: painting, which was undermost and, as already proved on this site, writing. Pasolini began writing prose/poetry at an early age but soon developed his talent as a fiction writer (some of his films were originally novels). *Roman Poems*, beautifully translated by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, is a collection of Pasolini's scribblings: mainly prose, eulogies, odes, and long-poems. These compositions were compiled from different sources: some books dating from Pasolini's teenage years, others sometime before his death. *Roman Poems* presents many themes but usually centers around Pasolini's lifestyle as a street hustler and derelict; his poems are generally set in his Roman homeland --hence the titled. Moreover, Pasolini has created a ideology all his own, attacking groups as the aristocracy, Fascist Italy, Capitalism, and sympathizing the proletariat and the underdog. Of all the pieces in the book, the ones that stands out the most is "A Sentimental Education," and "The Resistance and its Light;" both exhibiting intense imagery and spirit for which Pasolini was known for. Unfortunately, Pasolini was persecuted and despised by many people: indeed an untimely death for an artist of his time. It's sad to say that people still have a hard time comprehending Pasolini, and this incomprehension usually manifests itself as deep-seated hatred. *Roman Poems* presents Pasolini as a man who anticipated a change in politics as well as a change in art. Those who will read are taking a great step.

Many here in the US know Pier Paolo Pasolini as a filmmaker, and many know him solely for his last film, *Salo* or the *120 Days of Sodom*, arguably the most disturbing, disgusting, and controversial movie ever made. He was a multi-faceted man to say the least. He was an essayist, a political activist, a playwright, a novelist, and a poet (in addition to being a filmmaker). This is a small but vital collection of some of his most famous poems. My favorite one is "But It Was a Naked and Swarming Italy", along with "The Wealth of Knowing". This is a reasonably priced, tiny collection of Pasolini's poetry, and is definitely worth picking up for anyone who is interested in this brilliant, controversial artist.

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