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PASOLINI

CIVIC POET OF MODERNITY

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It is apparent that a poetic oeuvre such as Pasolini's resists comprehension by ordinary literary analysis, as it depends on other disciplines – anthropology, art history, epistemology – for its thematic development. To grasp this poetry one is asked to imagine a new paradigm in Italian poetry, a paradigm that belongs to a transitional age and is enmeshed in its historical paradoxes and contradictions. The features of Pasolini's style that seem regressive to some, the elegiac and idyllic, the retention of metrical structure, are actually progressive insofar as they revalidate the literary imagination within a broader civic matrix and a more inclusive national literary culture than the one that preceded it. Viewed holistically, the poet's revolt, his self-described "scandal," can be seen as a positive and salutary response to Italy itself during a period of momentous social change.

(From the *Introduction*)

Among contemporary Italian poets, Pasolini is perhaps the closest to embodying the Barthesian notion of 'zero degree' and utopian writing. Skeptical of both the classical and modern canons, the poet of Casarsa aggressively interrogated the present while not abandoning the aulic language of the literary tradition. From the early 1940s onward, Pasolini was concerned with the tangible relation between the past and future: this was not historicism but was the physical projection into the poem of a continuum in which history and language were reciprocal forces.

(From the *Conclusion*)

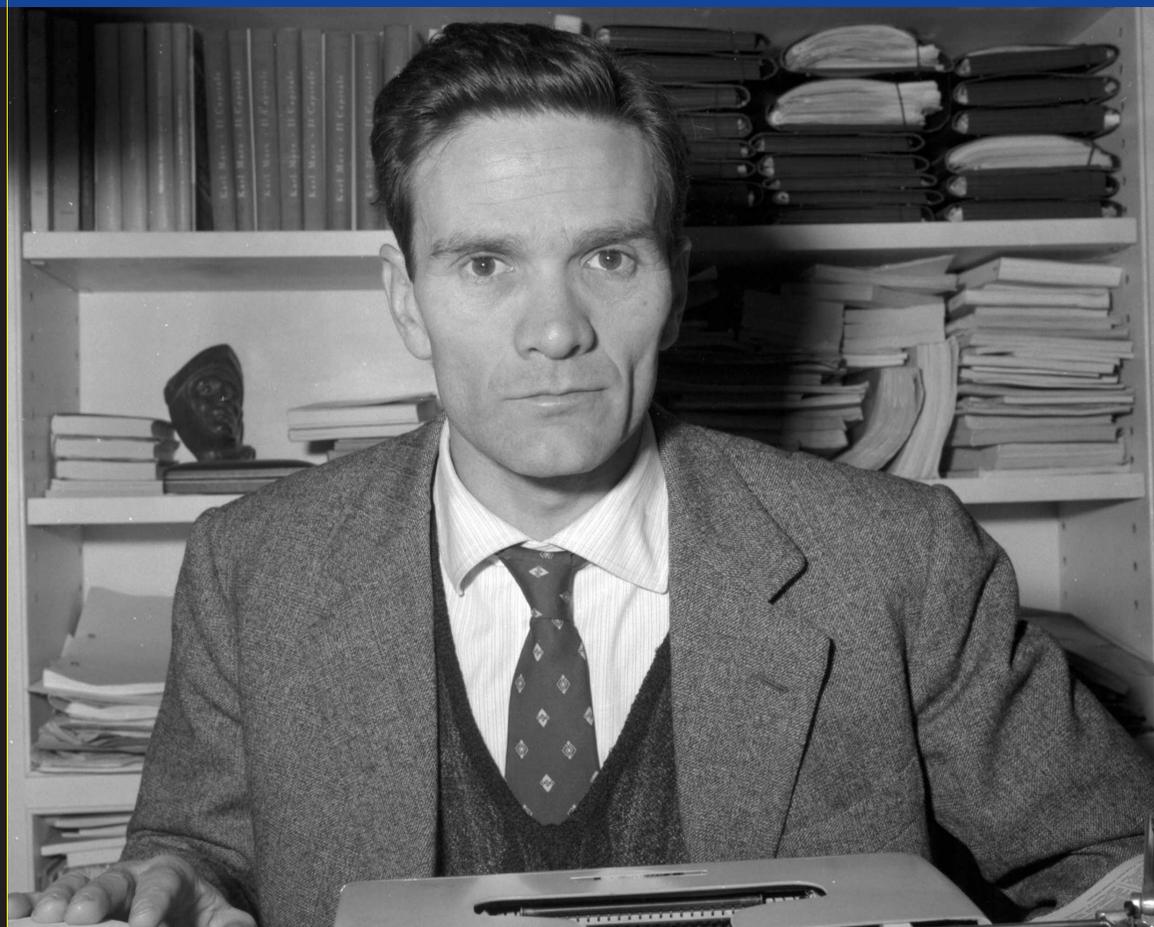
€ 18,00 £ 15,00 \$ 23,50

ISBN 88-7536-304-8



On cover: Pier Paolo Pasolini
 Roma, 12 November 1960, at home
 Photo: Giuseppe Palmas
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