

## Pier Paolo Pasolini and the medium of song: Texts written for Laura Betti for the *Giro a vuoto* show

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This article focuses on the outcome of an important episode within contemporary Italian culture: the encounter between the world of literature and song, and specifically examines the lyrics written by Pier Paolo Pasolini for the actress and singer Laura Betti for the *Giro a Vuoto* show, performed in 1960 in Milan. This essay intends to highlight the key elements of this encounter and the characteristic elements of these songs by virtue of textual and stylistic analysis, and provide remarks with regard to the relationship between music, text and singing performance. A study of this kind allows emphasis to be placed on the innovation originating from this distinctive collaboration which represents an important sign of change towards the emergence of a quality song within the mass market which would later come to be defined as *canzone d'autore* (singer-songwriter genre).

**Keywords:** Pasolini's song lyrics; Betti, *Giro a vuoto*; Girolamo

### Introduction

From the end of the 1950s, the *canzone di consumo* (popular song) seemed impervious to the wave of renewal which swept through various spheres of Italian culture, resisting deviation from its essential function of pure entertainment. It retained its disengaged nature, with love being favoured as the only subject matter worthy of consideration. It was characterised by pathos-drenched sentimentalism and excessive mawkishness, or erotic languor which emerged in a retrograde literary culture through the not uncommon use of nineteenth-century lexical repertoire and an abundance of apocopation, intended to compensate for the endemic scarcity of oxytone words in the Italian language. The Italian-language popular song, save for rare exceptions, remained faithful to its melodramatic heritage: an evolution of salon music which enjoyed wide mass-media distribution, the content of which remained generally resistant to the cultural upheaval of the time.<sup>1</sup> It was, therefore, immune to any form of critical reflection on the contemporary social and political situation. It is these elements which inspired certain writers, poets and composers to tackle the medium of the *canzone di consumo*, thereby facilitating the first conscious – if brief – encounter between the world of high culture and song at the end of the 1950s and 1960s.

This essay intends to highlight certain key elements of this encounter, with a particular focus on the outcomes of the collaboration between Pier Paolo Pasolini and Laura Betti

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for *Giro a vuoto*, performed in 1960 at the Teatro Girolamo in Milan. The examination of the four songs originating from this collaboration, namely *Macri Teresa detta pazzia*, *Valzer della toppa*, *Cristo al Mandrione* and *Ballata del suicidio*, will be accompanied by reflections on dialect as an expressive tool with which, ideologically, the author proposed to contrast the advance towards homologation from which Italian society was unable to escape. Three pieces of music out of four are in Roman dialect and the protagonists, in keeping with poetry, film and fiction production of the period, are often prostitutes and outcasts of the Roman suburbs. As well as establishing a connection between the songs analysed and his work, it will be demonstrated that the motivation for choosing this proletarian setting lies in a well-defined political intent upon which Pasolini built his ideal of resistance against the rampant consumerism utilised by those in power to reinforce their control over society. Parallels are drawn, finally, between *Ballata del suicidio*, with lyrics in Italian, and *La divina mimesis* (1975), his posthumous work, as well as some of his dramas, so as to better comprehend the nature of the spiritual testament contained in this song.

### Pasolini, dialect and song

Pier Paolo Pasolini has been considered a peculiar intellectual, constantly in search of new expressive forms within the various media in which he dabbled.

His first publication was a collection of poems in Friulian dialect entitled *Poesia a Casarsa* (1942), positively evaluated in a review by the critic Gianfranco Contini. The review, originally intended for publication in the *Primato* magazine, was censored as it discussed a work written in dialect, deemed 'scandalous' in Fascist Italy which disdained 'barbarian languages'; it was thus published in the *Corriere di Lugano* on 24 April 1943 (Siciliano 1995, 90). The poet's decision to transform the Friulian dialect into a vehicle for poetry, aware of the ideological implications which a decision of this kind carried, represents an initial 'challenge' to the established power. Ten years later, in 1952, Pasolini was commissioned to prepare an anthology of twentieth-century dialectal Italian poetry (Pasolini and M. Dell'Arco 1952). His interest in this type of poetry continued into the following years, and he published two subsequent collections: *Canzoniere Italiano* (Pasolini 1972, 1st ed. 1955) and the essay *La poesia popolare italiana* (Pasolini 1960). His articulate introduction to *Canzoniere italiano* traces a historiography of the studies conducted on dialect poetry from the end of the nineteenth century, analysing the topic with rare critical acumen. It indicates the first clear signal of renewed interest by the literary world in an 'other' literature in the post-war period. He was, therefore, amongst the first Italian-language authors to re-evaluate popular heritage as an artistic-cultural phenomenon on a par with so-called 'high' literature. Like Gramsci, Pasolini considers the higher or lower grade of reciprocal influence of the two classes as a sign of the evolution of society in its entirety (Pasolini 1972, 46). In this sense, Gramsci maintained:

The philosophy of an era is not the philosophy of one or another philosopher, of one or another group of intellectuals, of one or another large partition of the popular masses: it is a combination of all these terms which culminates in a determined direction, where its culmination turns out to be a norm of collective action, i.e. it becomes concrete and complete (integral) 'history'.<sup>2</sup>

From this perspective, the progress of human and cultural history is seen as a dialectical exchange and thus a product of interaction, where the dynamics of change are therefore

not predetermined, but rather the product of negotiation which is subject to various phases or contrasting impulses: injunction, opposition, change and so on.

Poetry in dialect too – according to Pasolini – embodies artistic expression through the interaction of two social realities: that of the dominant and the dominated classes.<sup>3</sup> Pasolini emphasises, furthermore, that ‘cultured poetry and folk poetry both essentially derive from one single type of culture: historic culture of the world in dialectical evolution’.<sup>4</sup> In making these observations, he establishes how progress and historic change have led to a gradual levelling of the social classes, throwing the survival of the *canto popolare* (in the dual sense of dialect poetry and folk song) into crisis.

Similarly, in music, Pasolini identified a dialectical exchange between the bourgeois and rural/proletarian strata in the *canzonetta* genre, defined by him as follows:

It can be said that the present day *canzonetta* is simply an aspect of ideological diffusion by the dominant class on the dominated class. Given this, I don’t see why both the music and words of the *canzonette* should not be nicer. The intervention of a cultured and perhaps refined poet would not be deplorable. On the contrary, a contribution of the kind would be stimulating and welcome.<sup>5</sup>

It is thus plausible to maintain that the popular song, in so far as it is an expression of *popular culture*, can be seen as the *space* or better the *terrain of contradiction* that oscillates between ‘imposition’ and ‘authenticity’, ‘elite’ and ‘ordinary’ (Middleton 1994, 24).

### **Pasolini and the debate facilitated by *Avanguardia***

The Casarsa poet’s aforementioned declaration was solicited by a cultural debate proposed by the magazine *Avanguardia* in 1956. The then director Gianni Rodari drew attention to the state of cultural degradation which characterised the Italian song in light of the works presented at the *Festival di Sanremo* (Sanremo song festival) that year and extended an invitation to the cultural world to identify possible solutions to qualitatively improve the genre. In other words, scholars were asked to contribute by penning texts to put to music. One issue raised by the magazine centred on the typology of the love song of the period, which posed as a ‘museum of unhappiness’, focalizing sad or impossible love stories (Rodari 1956a, 16). Diego Carpitella, the musicologist, emphasised furthermore that the Italian song was en route to a progressive desiccation from an anti-cultural viewpoint (Rodari 1956a, 16).

*Avanguardia* did not, however, explicitly call for a cultured intervention. The magazine’s plea to scholars was designed to promote the concept of a genuine song conceived ‘to express, in verse and music, the sentiments of the people . . . and to give voice to their love, their pain, their desire to live, their sadness, their hope’.<sup>6</sup> They aspired to the conception of a real song, soaked in realism, reminiscent of the positive results enjoyed by the French song of the period which benefited from the contribution of literary figures of the calibre of Jacques Prévert, Jean Cocteau, Francis Carco and Louis Aragon. These authors had applied their art to the popular sentiment, effectively nourishing the song, enriching it with significance (Rodari 1956b, 7). Carpitella, moreover, observed how song, by its nature, is linked to the notions of custom and trend and thus destined for a ‘transient life’ (Rodari 1956a, 16). Rodari, however, responded that the great Neapolitan song, enriched with verses by authors such as Salvatore Di Giacomo, Libero Bovio and Raffaele

Viviani, was destined to stand the test of time by virtue of its sublimation of popular sentiment (Rodari 1956b, 7).

Pasolini's vision was consonant with that of the *Avanguardia* director, who identified in the *canzonetta* a folk-poetic matrix. As the folk song had undergone commercialisation by virtue of the operation of bourgeois style taste,<sup>7</sup> it was conceivable that the so-called song that derives from it may be enhanced by the composition of truer, refined texts which confer a cultural depth, an internal vitality, disengaging it from the ephemeral nature of trends.

Approximately four years after the *Avanguardia* debate, the climate seemed opportune for the realisation of that which Pasolini had envisioned in his intervention. The circumstances arose by virtue of his encounter with singer and actress Laura Betti (1927–2004) – Bolognese by birth but Roman by ‘adoption’ – leading to a collaboration that would endure through the entire intense and brief life of the great Friulian intellectual. In January 1960, Betti performed in *Giro a vuoto* at the Teatro Girolamo in Milan, performing songs written for her by numerous men of letters, amongst them Alberto Arbasino, Giorgio Bassani, Italo Calvino, Alberto Moravia, Mario Soldati, Ennio Flaiano, Franco Fortini, Goffredo Parise and of course Pier Paolo Pasolini. This event was not incidental, but rather predictable, given that her first residence – in via del Babuino in Rome – had become a sort of club for writers and artists and made an impact on the Roman scene of the era, contributing to the creation of the show in question.

The initiative promoted by *Avanguardia* originated from a cultural ferment that was soon to bear fruit. From 1958 literary figures such as Franco Fortini and Italo Calvino collaborated with composers, namely Sergio Liberovici and Fiorenzo Carpi, within the realm of the *Cantacronache* collective whose activity began in Turin in 1957 following an initiative by Michele Straniero, Fausto Amodei and Sergio Liberovici (Jona and Straniero 1995, 19).<sup>8</sup> At the beginning of the 1960s, the ‘progressive folklore’ under the guise of the *canto popolare* (folk song) represented a starting point to modernise Italian song, in order to produce a committed song steeped in realism as a result of ethnographic research.

A renewed interest in folk culture and music emerged in the United States in the mid-1930s. This re-evaluation of folk music and of the culture of ethnic minorities was called the *Folk Music Revival*.<sup>9</sup> It consisted not only of a sort of imitation of the musical and textual patterns of the folk song but, above all, of re-proposing its potential emotional and protest function, hence its ‘progressive’ purpose. The *Cantacronache in primis* and the collective of the *Nuovo Canzoniere Italiano* (which counted Sandra Mantovani, Giovanna Marini, Gualtiero Bertelli, Ivan della Mea, Paolo Pietrangeli, as well as the above-mentioned Michele Straniero, among its members) are the most important figures of the *Folk Revival* in Italy.

The *Cantacronache* engaged in a cultural challenge that drew upon both the artistic outcomes of other countries’ traditional songs (in particular the Francophone *chansonniers* and the German examples such as the *Lieder* written by Bertolt Brecht and set to music by the composers Kurt Weill and Paul Dessau) and the varied Italian folk tradition, with a view to offering a quality alternative in the field of Italian popular song. The *Cantacronache*’s repertoire is characterised by two tendencies: the first a social nature, the second a satirical and mocking tone. According to Franco Fortini ‘the burlesque songs were the best’.<sup>10</sup>

They considered the song to be a tool of political agitation, which had to confront current problems, in order to reawaken a dormant historical conscience. They aimed to

reintroduce the historical ballad – which had precedents in the Italian folk tradition – that would serve as a tool to guarantee cultural memory (Jona and Straniero 1995, 16).

As regards the success that the song in dialect enjoyed within the popular music channels at the end of the 1950s, it is right and fair to refer to the singer-songwriter and actor Domenico Modugno. Although he was already a celebrity in 1958 with his *Nel blu dipinto di blu*, also known as *Volare*, the reason for his importance in this decade is to be found in his repertoire of dialectal songs. Songs such as *Lu pisci spada* (The swordfish) and *Grullu' nnamurato* (The cricket in love) are in the dialect of the South of Italy and inspired by local folklore, whilst songs such as *Lu minatore* (The miner) and *Amara terra mia* (in Italian) deal with social problems regarding the exploitation of miners and emigration respectively.

These changes within the Italian song arose from various cultural stimuli. *Avanguardia* – as has been noted – appealed for the use of lyrics that would express a recognisable artistic value; not necessarily an intellectual pursuit, but rather the result of a sublimation of popular sentiment. This type of song would ideally be juxtaposed to the standardised and impersonal *canzonetta* disseminated by the music industry and subject to fashions and trends. The political ferment of the 1960s and the 1970s aroused different figures' interest in the song; these included literary men and intellectuals (namely Italo Calvino, Franco Fortini within the experience of the *Cantacronache* collective, Pasolini, Dario Fo with Enzo Jannacci and Roberto Roversi with Lucio Dalla) and crucially the *cantautori* (singer-songwriters). Through accessible music and textual forms, which were inherently *popular*, a song emerged that was indissolubly bound to the inner nature and artistic purposes of its author. It was further enriched with political overtones so as to counter the escapist nature of the *canzonetta*, benefiting, however, from the latter's distribution potential. The *canzone d'autore* (singer-songwriter genre), therefore, became an instrument of opposition to the forced homologation imposed, on various fronts, by the incessant consumerism that Pasolini, as a man and as an intellectual, denounced firmly throughout his life.

### *Homologation as a new form of fascism and the importance of dialect*

Pasolini's last public appearance was at the Palmieri high school in Lecce on 21 October 1975 for the debate on '*Dialecto e Scuola*' (Dialect and School). His paper was on the relationship between dialect and the 'new technical Italian' disseminated by modern media, particularly television, and therefore resistant to linguistic diversity guaranteed by the variety of Italian dialects (Piromalli and Scarfoglio 1976, 38–39). The Italian language – he maintained – was losing its expressive power, and gradually becoming a sterile means of communication (Pasolini 2010, 228). The Friulian intellectual set the genuine cultural value of the dialect as 'maternal idioms' (ibid., 54) against the Italian language as an impoverished mass-media vehicle. The first was considered to be a means of popular expression juxtaposed to the consumerist language of the bourgeoisie.

In other words, the poet associated the presence of the dialects with the humane and positive values of the folk as opposed to the bourgeois culture, as they are a manifestation of the cultural diversity that homologation, imposed by the new capitalist establishment, erased: 'Sono infiniti i dialetti, / i gerghi, / le pronunce, perché è infinita / la forma della vita . . .'.<sup>11</sup>

During the 1960s, Italian society was experiencing an economic boom, as the speedy increase in consumption expenditures, exportations and a consequent rise in the standard of living testified. This led to the emergence of an ‘*edonismo neolaico*’ (neo-lay hedonism), i.e. the cult of profit that did not require the ideological endorsement of the Church, as happened under Fascism (Pasolini 2010, 23). These social and economic dynamics determined the dissolution both of folk culture and of difference and, consequently, of the friction between social classes, which marked the birth of a single and extensive bourgeois class, united by common needs. This unification took place initially on an ideological level; social inequality persisted. The poorest strata of society, particularly young people, began to harbour resentment and anger due to the lack of means to achieve the wealth that was seemingly within everyone’s reach (Pasolini 2010, 24).

This situation led Pasolini to recognise the presence of a new fascism based on its promise of comfort and affluence for all (Pasolini 2010, 29). He considered it more dangerous and powerful than Mussolini’s regime, concealed as it was behind the acceptable shape of a long-lasting democracy typical of the advanced capitalist State. Its dangerousness is rooted in its guise of tolerance, which distinguished it from historical Fascism – based on nationalism and clericalism – that was overtly intolerant of diversity. The age-old Church control and the nationalist frenzy of the last century were replaced by the globalising consumerist power.

Pasolini judged this as a form of neo-fascism, the worst repression of history, which favoured the emergence of an interclass bourgeoisie as a result of ‘progress without development’ (Pasolini 2010, 22, 228–29). During the fascist *Ventennio*, the poor classes survived because, in spite of everything, they remained faithful to their roots (ibid., 25) but with the advent of neo-capitalism their annihilation was inevitable and the integration of the dependent class and bourgeois values, through consumerism, was accomplished (ibid., 53).

In line with the speculations of the Frankfurt School, the poet saw the outcasts of society as the only force, if not able to successfully oppose the capitalist establishment – as Marcuse and Benjamin had hoped – at least not subjugated to its totalising logic.<sup>12</sup> Therefore figures such as prostitutes, thieves and pimps of the Roman suburbs were perceived as part of transgressive communities who lived on the fringe of the standardisation process that enveloped Italian society. In the poetry collection *La religione del mio tempo* (1976/1961) he noted pointedly: ‘La loro pietà è nell’essere spietati, / la loro forza nella leggerezza, / la loro speranza nel non avere speranza’.<sup>13</sup>

The decision to write songs in Roman dialect can be regarded, from an ideological point of view, as the will to give voice to a social group – i.e. society’s outcasts – whose linguistic spontaneity and behavioural instinctiveness were the last remnants to set against the bourgeois religion. An apocalyptic vision of this kind is counterbalanced by an optimistic outlook on the future, that is to say, the confidence placed in the pockets of resistance within Italian society: it is up to them to carry out the difficult task of countering the progressive cultural regression imposed by the neo-capitalist power (Pasolini 2010, 231).

Through the adaptation of dialect in his work, Pasolini claims to have undertaken an ‘operation’ that he defined as an:

... explorative and camouflage [action] of regression ... both in environment and personalities, in spheres, then, which are both sociological and psychological. From a Marxist point of

view it appears to be a regression not so much from one cultural level to another as from one class to another. (Martellini 1984, 92)

This philosophy was also – I suggest – successfully applied to song, in which the protagonists do not appear to be filtered through an act of literary adaptation, but rather have a distinct life, a physiognomy and a temperament which is well defined in the figure of their performer. The operation of extreme realism or better of ‘regression to the underclass’ (Martellini 1984, 82), which Pasolini also draws upon in the composition of texts for music, is understood in function of the more vast and systematic action achieved in works such as *Ragazzi di vita* (1955) and *Una vita violenta* (1959). The actions of underclass characters such as Il Riccetto and Tommaso Puzilli are depicted from the inside in a naturalistic cause–effect logic. In this sense, the author intends to demonstrate the context of social injustice inhabited by these characters and – through prudent recovery of the historical dimension – highlights the ‘humanity where previous artists highlighted the inhumanity (not to speak of animality) of a condition of existence’ (Asor Rosa 1965, 410–11, translation by author).

The artistic and ideological concept that led to the creation of the *Giro a vuoto* show moves in this direction. Pasolini and his peers developed a politics of art by virtue of which it is possible to conceive a new type of song, faithful to reality, unlike the feeble and standardised nature of the *canzonetta*. At the same time they took political action, through art, aimed at undermining the impersonality and the vacuity that characterised the kind of popular song criticised by *Avanguardia*.

### Pasolini’s texts for *Giro a vuoto*

The songs selected for analysis here exclusively consist of lyrics included in the *Giro a vuoto* recital. All musical readaptations by various authors of the Casarsa poet’s poems are therefore omitted.

Although an overall analysis of the *Giro a vuoto* show is desirable, it is outside the objectives of this article. Exclusive attention is given to the texts set to music written by Pasolini with a view to understanding and defining the composition strategies of the lyricist by means of metrical, stylistic and musical analysis. This choice has also been motivated by the deep and long artistic bond between Pier Paolo Pasolini and Laura Betti. This allowed the former to make the most of the performance potential of the latter in order to conceive songs that could fully reflect a highly mimetic representation of the underclass world.

### *Analysis of the pieces*

Pasolini composed four texts for the show: *Macri Teresa detta pazzia*, *Valzer della toppa*, *Cristo al Mandrione* and *Ballata del suicidio*.<sup>14</sup> The first three, in Roman dialect, tell tales of ordinary misery set against the backdrop of the Roman suburbs, the same *milieu* described by Pasolini in his novels and films of this period. The fourth text is in the Italian language.

*Macri Teresa detta pazzia* is a jazz piece for orchestra composed by Piero Umiliani. It is structured in three long strophes of nine lines. The first and third are divided musically into four distinct sections: *a* (first couplet), *b* (third line), *a* (second couplet), *b'* (sixth line),

*c* (seventh line) and *d* the conclusive couplet, embellished with background ornamental notes which highlight the recitative. The melodic line played by the brass section, corresponding to the final word of both lines of couplets (*a*), is characterised by the sudden increase in dynamics and volume with the singer yelling the interpretation. The musical fragment *c* is absent in the second strophe.

The first six lines of every strophe are characterised by an imperfect monorhyme structure:<sup>15</sup> in strophe one it is based on the vowel /e/ (line 1 – where the rhyming word is *Mei* – is an exception), while in strophes two and three the ending is /a/. The *I* is represented by a prostitute who, in the interrogatory phase, refuses to reveal the name of her protector – with whom she is in love – to a police commissioner: ‘E mo’ che te sei messo ‘n testa? / N’a faccio ‘sta cantata de core! / N’ ce so n’infamona!’<sup>16</sup> It is interesting that the world of the poor – so dear to the author – is not recounted by the outside; rather it is ‘represented in the act of speaking’ (Fiori 2003, 122, translation by author). In that sense, the only method which allows for underclass speech to be re-evoked is the use of direct discourse and a fluid use of dialect. Rather than songs, therefore, one may speak of *rôle* in pure theatrical style, which Betti – by virtue of her great familiarity with that socio-cultural context – could render with great efficiency.<sup>17</sup>

Note that the identity of the *I* is represented clearly by a series of specific details, such as her name and appellative (‘Macri Teresa detta Pazzia, fu Nazzareno and ed Anna Mei’, line 1),<sup>18</sup> her address (‘abbito a Via del Mandrione a la baracca ventitré, line 2), her age (‘c’ho diciott’anni’, line 3), her current activity (‘Me do alla vita da più de n’anno . . .’, line 4), and also that of her boyfriend, presumably her protector (‘So’ disgraziata, ma c’ho un ragazzo che, sarvognuno, pare un re. / Je passo er grano . . .’, lines 5–6).<sup>19</sup> The interrogative reiterated in the text (strophes one and two) provides, furthermore, a psychological profile of the *I*, whose non-collaborative attitude towards the authorities is designed to protect the identity of her companion: ‘. . . Embéh, è così, che vò da me?’ (line 6) and ‘che arto ancora vò sapé?’ (line 4).<sup>20</sup> To conclude, the vivid realism established in the text is ascribable to the presence of toponyms such as the protagonist’s district of provenance (‘il Mandrione’, line 2), the location where she carries out her activity (‘Poi è venuto er momento de ripiegamme a camminà / a Caracalla [. . .]’, lines 14–15),<sup>21</sup> or the old women’s prison ‘Le Mantellate’ (line 21) in Rome, in the old convent of this order of sisters.<sup>22</sup>

Note how ‘ripegamme a camminà’ (line 14), in function of the psychological characteristic of the *I*, is dictated by a state of destitution more than by free choice. The declamation of these lines ‘None! None! Nun lo dico er nome! / Er nome suo nun l’aricordo! / Se chiama amore, e basta’ (lines 25–27) assigns a further emotive nuance to the story.<sup>23</sup> The way in which Betti pronounces ‘Se chiama ammore’ is characterised by a sudden drop in volume of the voice, compared with the resolute and more dynamically marked tone of the negation. This assigns a greater emphasis to the significance of the word ‘love’, pronounced with a more serious register and in a wavering, melancholy melodic intonation, thus transmitting true emotional closeness which links prostitute and protector.

The theme of prostitution is a recurring one in Pasolini’s work. A systematic reference can be found in the poems included in the section *La ricchezza* (from *La religione del mio tempo*, 1961) which are set in the area of the Caracalla baths in Rome, the same setting of *Macri Teresa* and presumably that of *Valzer della toppa*.<sup>24</sup> The prostitute, like the poor classes that the author likes to portray in his poetry, cinema or fiction, has the advantage



of being an outsider because she lives on the fringe of the temporal power and of the Church.

The poet does not see chaos or the turpitude of human existence in that urban blight but rather a dimension which follows its own set of laws. In *Sesso, consolazione della miseria*, Pasolini reverses social contempt for the world of the Roman outcasts, in particular prostitutes and pimps, that he considers to be governed by their own rules juxtaposed to the presumed bourgeois righteousness: 'Ma nei rifiuti del mondo, nasce / un nuovo mondo: nascono leggi nuove / dove non c'è più legge; nasce un nuovo / onore dove onore è il disonore . . .'.<sup>25</sup>

Similarly, in *Valzer della toppa*, with music by Piero Umiliani, Pasolini's pen and Betti's histrionics give voice to another prostitute gripped by a state of drunkenness: 'Me so' fatta un quartino / m'ha dato a la testa / ammazza che toppa / a Nina, a Roscetta, a Modesta, / lassateme qua!<sup>26</sup> It is structured in a *chorus-bridge* form.<sup>27</sup> The protagonist, in an obvious state of intoxication, wanders the streets of Testaccio ('Le vie de Testaccio / me pareno come da giorno / de n'arte città!').<sup>28</sup> By adopting this toponymy, the author imbues the text with increased realism. She addresses herself at the top of her voice first to her companions (lines 4–5) and then to the potential client who stops her on the street ('Va via moretto').<sup>29</sup> Here too Pasolini inserts various signals that intensify the level of veridicity in the text, such as the age of the *I* ('E poi so' vecchia, c'ho trent'anni', line 12), and offers a psychological picture, together with a set of circumstantial referents, for example the names of the other prostitutes and the model of motorcycle: 'Va via moretto, fala bella / . . . / spara er *Guzzetto* e torna a casa/che mamma tua te sta a aspetta!<sup>30</sup> The image of youngsters, riding their motorcycles in the Caracalla area, driven by desire, is also present in coeval poetry such as *Verso le Terme di Caracalla* (from *La religione del mio tempo*, 1976/1961), where a metonymic reference is made to two Italian motorcycle manufacturers: 'Vanno verso le Terme di Caracalla / giovani amici, a cavalcioni / di *Rumi* o *Ducati*, con maschile / pudore e maschile impudicizia'.<sup>31</sup>

The protagonist's drunken state represents a moment of evasion from her day-to-day reality, in which the surrounding world acquires a bizarre shape, transmitting a certain sense of euphoria: 'An vedi le foje! / An vedi la luna! / An vedi le case! / E chi l'ha mai viste co' st'occhi? / Me vie' da cantà'.<sup>32</sup> From the outset the protagonist perceives vague images of her surroundings, brief indistinct glimpses associable with a person in this condition. From a textual point of view, the stupor is conveyed both by the anaphoric procedure of the verses and Betti's interpretation, characterised by a series of paralinguistic signals such as her frivolous laugh, the swinging tones and intensity of voice. The psychological characteristic of the *I* is also rendered by the touch of paradoxical comedy in the last strophe, as is evinced by the humorous prepositional analogy 'un fiore de verginita' with which this other vivid Pasolinian sketch concludes: 'Me so' presa la toppa / e mò so' felice! / Me possi cecamme / me sento tornata a esse un fiore / de verginità!<sup>33</sup>

Madness is another theme which recurs in Pasolini's work and carries particular implications. In *Picasso* (from *Le ceneri di Gramsci*, 2003/1957) he maintained that madness is necessary in order to be clear. In his theatre, for example in *Calderón* (Pasolini 1973, 133–40), foolishness is represented by Maria Rosa's aphasia, through her disjointed and ungrammatical utterances, that signify the 'language of the outcasts': the language of those who are incorporated in and/or do not acknowledge themselves in the totalising power of consumerist society (Santato 1980, 282). The song's protagonist, like Maria Rosa or Accattone (the eponymous film's main character), who experiences a dreamy state or

rather lives in a 'quasi-reality' (Angelini 2000, 69), embodies the ideal of irrationalism which underpins the necessity of a renewed awareness.

Dream, like the inebriation of the *Valzer della toppa*'s protagonist, does not provide a distorting perspective on reality, as it is 'first of all the conceptual framework that holds a series of clear visions, of stages towards the knowledge of that coveted goal that Pasolini defines as "reality"' (Angelini 2000, 130, translation by author). As in *Accattone*, the night acquires a specific symbolic value in this song too: it is a moment of revelation. In an ideal fusion of the country/city antithesis ('le foglie', 'la luna', 'le vie del Testaccio'), the *I* is able to discover the beauties of urban reality that are invisible to her eye as a result of her difficult life conditions.

The distinctly profane tone of the two pieces just discussed is hybridised with the sacred tone that characterises *Cristo al Mandrione*, a very intense invocation by a poor woman to Jesus Christ. Pasolini was undoubtedly amongst the few great intellectuals of the twentieth century able to synthesise, in his life and work, the two great categories of the sacred and the profane. We need only remember the crucifixion (and consequent death) of the underclass Stracci in *La ricotta* (1963, episode of the film *Ro.Go.Pa.G.*) and the still incredibly human Christ in *Il Vangelo Secondo Matteo* (1963–64).

The piece consists of four strophes, regulated by an evident symmetrical relationship. The hugely lyrically intense music is by composer Piero Piccioni. It is a classical style composition for orchestra. The song has the following structure: first quatrain, *A1* ( $a-b-c$ ); second quatrain, *A'2* ( $a-b-c+d$ );<sup>34</sup> couplet, *B*; third quatrain, *A'3* ( $a-b-c+d$ ), with the same text and music as *A'2*; final line, *C* (*coda*).<sup>35</sup> The quatrains are symmetrical in so far as the first two verses are composed of non-canonical decasyllables; the third is a truncated *settenario*. There's just a slight metrical difference between the final lines of the two quatrains: the first is a truncated *dodecasillabo* (line 4), while the latter is a truncated *endecasillabo* (line 14). The symmetry is also evident in the placing of the *ictus* in relation to the second decasyllables of the two quatrains, with accents on the 1st–4th–6th–9th metrical syllable (lines 2 and 6). The first decasyllables of every quatrain present instead a different arrangement of rhythmical accents: 'Ec<sub>1</sub>chime den<sub>4</sub>tro qua<sub>6</sub> tut<sub>7</sub>ta ignu<sub>9</sub>da' (line 1) and 'Fi<sub>1</sub>leme, se ce sei<sub>6</sub>, Gesu<sub>8</sub> Cri<sub>9</sub>sto' (line 11). This 'clash' of accents as in the case of 'qua tutta' (line 1) and 'Gesù Cristo' often has a precise semiotic function, as it may indicate an altered psychic condition or, as in this case, desperation.

The *I* is a needy woman who lives in a dilapidated shack, in the district of the Mandrione in Rome, which does not even provide shelter from the rain: 'Ecchime dentro qua tutta ignuda / fracica fino all'osso de guazza. / Intorno a me che c'è? / quattro muri zozzi, un tavolo, un piqué'.<sup>36</sup> Devoid of hope, the only thing which helps her is her faith, manifested as an intense and distressed invocation to the mercy of Jesus: 'Fileme, se ce sei, Gesù Cristo / guardeme tutta sporca de fanga, / abbi pietà di me, / io che nun so' niente, e te er Re dei Re!'<sup>37</sup> The supplication is addressed specifically to Jesus, not God, as the humanisation of divinity is anthropologically peculiar to the folk religiosity. Ascension to the concept of God does not suit the genuine working-class setting which characterises this text.

A plea emerges from the linguistic dialectical fabric which draws on the canonical rite, 'abbi pietà di me', and contributes to rendering the 'distance' separating the *I* from *He* to whom the imploration is addressed, as well as representing a sacred element within this profane prayer. This invocation has, furthermore, a clear iconic function as it highlights all

the more the contrast between a *top* (conventional phrase of a prayer/Christian faith/God) and a *bottom* (usage of the Roman dialect/poverty).

The last line of the *chorus* is interpreted by Betti with growing intensity until the prolonged high note, which corresponds to the second hemistich 'e te er Re dei Re!' (*d*). In this phase, Betti's singing interpretation follows an ascendant melodic direction and the hemistic 'io che nun so' niente' is, furthermore, marked in an accelerated way in accordance with the agogic of the music. This, contextually, assigns greater intensity to the impetus of this plea. It is interesting that the double bass performs a quick descending diatonic scale which is interrupted on the pronoun *te*, rendering clearer the variation of the tempo of the melodic phrase. Thus in the musical moment of the second hemistic (*d*), the melodic flow of the passionate vocal execution – ascending precisely because it is aimed at the 'King of Kings' – reaches a climactic moment, in musical and poetic terms.

In the musical part corresponding to the couplet (*B*), the difficulty of the woman's life is emphasised: 'Lavora' senza mai rifiata' / moro: e l'anima nun sa'.<sup>38</sup> Difficult working conditions and quotidian misery reduce the concept of living, for these humble beings, to that of survival. The precariousness in the Roman suburbs at the end of the 1950s, to which the poet could attest, finds an echo in these lines from *Le ceneri di Gramsci*: 'in quei grami // caseggiati dove si consuma l'infido / ed espansivo dono dell'esistenza / ... / non vita, ma sopravvivenza ... / ... nel cui arcano / orgasmo non ci sia altra passione // che per l'operare quotidiano'.<sup>39</sup> The existence of the *I* belongs to the tiring and necessary 'daily works' of the working-class masses; in any case Pasolini catalyses on the protagonist of *Cristo al Mandrione* the condition of pain and suffering intrinsic in that reality, glimpsing the intimacy of the poor woman and therefore rendering us directly involved in her exhaustion.

The *explicit* is characterised by the intimist inspiration of the *I* who sings the initial line 'Fileme, se ce sei, Gesù Cristo'. Words are almost whispered; the preceding tied performance (through *legato*) of the same line is now replaced by a more marked division through pauses (i.e. 'Fileme / se ce sei / Gesù / Cristo') that equally allows for an expansion of the utterance within its musical frame: the feeling of pain and hope embodied in this extreme request are representative not of a mere invocation but rather of an intimate need to be heard by someone who has nothing to lose.

The *Ballata del suicidio* concludes the pieces written by Pasolini and included in *Giro a vuoto*. It is the only Italian-language song, with music by Giovanni Fusco. It is interpreted by Anna Nogara (Micocci 1995), as no version by Betti appears to have been recorded. It is a ballad structured in waltz tempo consisting of six heterometric strophes of eleven short verses (mainly *quinari* and *quadrisillabi*), regulated by an evident symmetrical rapport. All the strophes are introduced by the *incipit* 'pietà, pietà' and close with the *explicit* 'qui tra noi' with the exception of the last strophe in which the final line appears: 'Vi lascio il mondo'. Each strophe includes a discursive process marked by three different musical segments on which is based the deixis between (an) *I* and (a) *you* (plural): *a* (tercet), *b* (first quatrain) and *c* (second quatrain). The strophes are divided musically by an incisive motif played on a piano which functions as an instrumental *chorus*.

Beside the humble beings, the Pasolinian world is also populated by 'different ones', those who challenge the ethical norms of bourgeois conformism: 'Chi è diverso / – voi dite – non può / rimaner neanche un po' / qui tra noi!'<sup>40</sup> The *I* is again a woman who, in this case, addresses a society which judges and condemns her: 'Pietà, pietà! / Voi mi volete / morta e sepolta: / senza voce, / senza gesti, / senza viso, / senza vita ... / che non torni / –

voi dite – mai più / la pazzia ch'essa fu, / qui tra noi!"<sup>41</sup> The exclamation 'Pietà, pietà!', as well as manifesting a state of profound prostration, also transmits a degree of sarcasm. On a musical level (*b*), the fourth and fifth lines of every strophe are supported by an accompaniment performed on the piano, which generates a certain harmonic tension, and articulates a counterpoint producing a dissonant effect. In strophe two, in particular, the musical fragment (*b*) is perfectly combined with the verbal element, emphasising the resentment towards the protagonist that, over the course of the piece, becomes more pronounced: 'voi mi sperate: impiccata, / annegata, / incendiata, / maciullata'.<sup>42</sup>

Each strophe is addressed to a generic category of person characteristic of the conformist bourgeois society: 'gente felice' ('happy people', line 13); 'gente per bene', ('decent people', line 24); 'gente normale' ('normal people', line 35). The political tone of this ballad becomes more explicit when referring to those who, officially or otherwise, hold power: 'Pietà, pietà! / Gente al potere, / voi minacciate: / ... / La passione / – voi dite – non dà / che fastidi e ansietà / qui tra noi!"<sup>43</sup> The passion that has led certain nonconformist figures to express their ideas or their beliefs has often been punished, as history teaches, by those who consider themselves the custodians of a pre-constituted order, inflicting punishment which reduces the 'outcasts' to silence ('con l'arresto, / con la cella', 'by means of arrest, / by means of jail', lines 48–9), humiliation ('con la gogna', 'by means of pillory', line 50) and even physical elimination ('con il rogo...', 'sending to the stake', line 51).

Reflecting on Pasolini's poetry, this passion perfectly describes his 'visceral' way of relating to life and that determines the emergence of those drives which clash with the insurmountable barriers in the world he inhabits. *Frammento alla morte* (from *Poesie incivili*, 1960) contains certain lines which articulately explicate the conflict between his way of being and the false moral respectability characteristic of society of the time:

La furia della confessione / prima, poi la furia della chiarezza: / era da te che nasceva, ipocrita,  
oscuro / sentimento! E adesso, accusino pure ogni mia passione, / m'infanghino, mi dicano  
informe, impuro / ossesso, dilettante spergiuoro: / tu mi isoli, mi dai la certezza della vita: / sono  
nel rogo, gioco la carta del fuoco, ... vinco quest'infinita, / misera mia pietà.<sup>44</sup>

As is easily deducible, this poetic excerpt represents a more articulated and complex rendition of the contents of the song, but it acts as a poetic 'counterpoint' to the argumentative effectiveness of the *Ballata del suicidio*.

Every strophe of the song, except the last, concludes with 'qui tra noi', used by the author to highlight 'the distance' separating the two worlds, specifically between the society which considers itself to be the bearer of a universal ethics and the world of those who are not aligned to those laws. In the final verse, indeed, faced with a wall of incomprehension, the *I* also matches her incapacity to react (or perhaps her free choice), which results in her inevitable auto-annihilation: 'Ma sì, ma sì! / Per me è finita, / state tranquilli... / Entro nell'ombra, / vi lascio il mondo...'.<sup>45</sup> The farewell to the world is an act of renouncement and disenchantment, as reality appears to be based on an irreconcilable contradiction that she is not capable of understanding. The speech is rendered through a sombre but effective lyricism in which the oxymoron life (light)/death (dark) is re-elaborated in the image of the journey towards the shadow, the final act of a spiritual testament of those who live 'against'.

Shortly before his death, Pasolini submitted *La divina mimesis*, an unfinished work, to the publisher Einaudi. The fictitious author, a Pasolinian Dante, undertakes a journey in the 'aldiqua', a transfigured world that is nothing but his and our contemporary reality, where both *Inferno* and the two capitalist and communist *Paradises* are represented (Pasolini 1975, 19). He severely criticises conformists, politicians and the corrupt and their castigation is simply that of inhabiting this world: 'the only punishment of this place is to live in it' (Pasolini 1975, 50, translation by author). The same *Inferno*, inhabited by the damned, is shared by those who – like him and the *Ballata del suicidio*'s protagonist – are bearers of a different set of values that clashes with that of consumerist society. The epilogue can only be tragic: the author of the manuscript is found dead, 'beaten with a stick to death' (ibid., 60, translation by author). Although, as has been noted, his violent death lends itself to other interpretations,<sup>46</sup> it seems that Pasolini predicted prophetically his own end by means of a high degree of *mimesis*.

In drawing further links with his theatre, Pasolini exemplifies, in this last song, the tragic destiny associated with diversity, as occurs to Julian, the main character of *Porcile* (1968), who refuses both the love epitomised by Ida (a young communist) and his father (who is nostalgic for Nazism), and is ultimately eaten by pigs. In *Orgia* (1968) – a play about the psychological and physical self-destruction of a respectable bourgeois couple – the Man ('l'Uomo') hangs himself after dressing up as a woman. For Pasolini, the dialogue, the refusal of traditional knowledge, results in a dispute, a sort of test to ascertain the truth. His characters, split by contrasting drives, can arrive at a sense of unity through self-annihilation. However, such a desperate act should not be regarded as a nihilistic deed *tout-court*. The Man in *Orgia*, before he dies, pronounces these words: 'Il mio linguaggio [quello della morte] diventerà muto per eccellenza, / oltre che per l'eternità... Eppure / chi domattina verrà, e alzerà gli occhi per decifrarlo / capirà ...'.<sup>47</sup> In doing so, Pasolini does not depict death as an abrupt end of the dialogue with a world which cannot or does not want to understand his nature as well as that of his characters: it represents instead a legacy which can be understood and re-evaluated in times to come.

### Artistic results of the Pasolini–Betti collaboration

Despite the fact that these pieces present a paradoxical and bitter humour, Betti's provocative style and the incisive and sometimes harsh tones of her voice allow for an ironic interpretation not consonant with the methods of the *canzonetta*. In dissonance with the impersonal nature of the pieces of the period, those written for Betti were conceived in light of her creative individuality. It is, in any case, towards a substantial *impoeticità* ('unpoeticism') of the text and on its 'extreme and provocative prosaicism' that Pasolini addresses his compositional ideas, especially with regard to texts such as *Macri Teresa detta Pazzia* and the *Valzer della toppa* (Fiori 2003, 123). He reasons more as playwright than as lyricist, since his texts are conceived as sung monologues destined to be interpreted by Laura Betti. The Pasolinian experience with song represents one of the first examples of intimate correlation between song and interpreter, a symbiotic relationship which arises not simply from the vocal characteristics of the singer, but also from the particular performance capacity of a specific artist. It appears evident, then, that the standards on which the poet's intuition and more generally the renewal of Italian song are based display

a marked tendency towards *orality* and thus towards a lively use of language, attested to by the recourse to dialect or inferred expressions of daily language. Standard Italian, by its nature, is much less ductile compared with the immediate and frank communication intrinsic in dialect, oral language *par excellence*.<sup>48</sup>

### Conclusion

These pieces, like their literary counterparts developed for *Giro a vuoto*, are experiments existing within a theatrical circuit. Only rare recordings exist and they are outside the channel of mass distribution of the popular song. Despite this, the brief musical collaboration between Pier Paolo Pasolini and Laura Betti alluded to possible paths to be explored with regard to the composition of a new song.

First, the tendency towards the use of oral language – through recourse to the dialect or inferred expressions of the daily language – should be noted. In other words, these texts facilitate a language which does not disdain a qualitative elevation without, however, encroaching on the refinement and the polysemic and allusive complexity of truly poetic language.

Second, their example highlighted how the truthfulness of song itself can be expressed by an interpreter, whose stage presence, gesture and personality prove coherent with what is being sung. Therefore, phrase is substituted by utterance, and text by account.

Third, the truthfulness of the musical text, as can be inferred from these songs, is nourished with real spatial references.<sup>49</sup>

The alchemy between these elements allowed for an enhancement of the authenticity of the stories, thus liberating the Italian song from that sense of general abstraction which characterised it and anticipating a tendency which, a short time later, would be channelled into the stylistic formalisation implemented by the contributions of the first singer-songwriters.

### Notes on contributor

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### Notes

1. Consider the rapid technological progress which occurred in the first half of the twentieth century.
2. Gramsci 1971, 25. Translation by author.
3. Pasolini 1972, 52. In describing the cultural dynamics in force in the creation of popular poetry, Pasolini identifies his genesis in the dialectical rapport between the two social classes. Therefore, when the rapport of the cultural initiative is attributable to an individual or groups of

individuals from the superior class, one speaks of ‘descending direction’; on the contrary if the initiative derives from a member or group of individuals from the inferior class, ‘ascending direction’ is referred to. It is in the ‘ascending movement’ that the author detects the origins of true ‘folk’ poetry.

4. Pasolini 1972, 53. Translation by author.
5. Rodari 1956b, 9. Translation by author.
6. Rodari 1956a, 16. Translation by author.
7. Eco 2003, 311. According to Eco, the major diffusion of popular music has influenced the decline of folk music; in any case, this has continued to circulate, in an impure form, acquiring the form of the *canzonetta*.
8. Jona and Straniero 1995, 19. The group first performed on 1 May 1958 in the CGIL trade union parade with a song called *Dove vola l'avvoltoio?* (‘Where does the vulture fly?’), with lyrics by Italo Calvino and music by Sergio Liberovici.
9. Liperi 1999, 371–73. Alan Lomax pioneered the *Folk Music Revival* movement through his field research, initially in the southern states of the USA, where he collected a great many folk songs and then he recorded various folk songs in the south of Italy with Diego Carpitella. Leadbelly, Woody Guthrie, C. Houston, M. Seeger, and Big Bill Broonzy became icons for the American left-wing intellectuals thanks to their songs, characterised by a vivid and committed language juxtaposed to that of the popular song as an expression of the ruling class.
10. Coveri 1996, 55. Translation by author.
11. *La reazione stilistica*, from *La religione del mio tempo* (1961). Pasolini 1976, 149. English translation: ‘Dialects are infinite, the same as jargons and pronunciations, because the form of life is infinite...’.
12. Kellner 1984, 277–88. ‘In 1964 Marcuse perceived only a last chance that the most exploited and persecuted outsiders, in alliance with an enlightened intelligentsia, might mark “the beginning of the end” and signify some hope for social change. However, underneath the conservative popular base is the substratum of the outcasts and outsiders, the exploited and persecuted of other races and other colours, the unemployed and the unemployable’.
13. Pasolini 1976, 37. English translation: ‘Their mercy lies in being merciless, / their strength in their thoughtlessness, / their hope in their hopelessness’.
14. The *Giro a vuoto* recital had a few performances. La *Ballata del suicidio* was interpreted in *Giro a vuoto n. 2* which took place in Teatro Valle di Roma on 31 March 1960. (The texts analysed in this study were collected in Vanni Scheiwiller’s 1960 volume listed in the references).
15. The text is organised in three strophes of nine lines subdivided into three tercets. The first two tercets are rhyming couplets (with the exception of the first line of the text), while the last one is composed of free verses.
16. Lines 16–8. English translation: ‘What’s in your head now? / I won’t tell you what I know / I’m not a traitor!’ In this case the music is completely interrupted except for the brief descending phrases performed on a semi-acoustic guitar which intertwine with the interpreter’s performance.
17. Consider her interpretation of the servant Emilia in *Teorema* or the Wife of Bath in *I racconti di Canterbury*.
18. English translation: ‘Macri Teresa aka Madness, daughter of the deceased Nazzareno and Anna Mei’. In line with the situations represented, other identification details are provided as though they were drawn from a registry office document, through the now-redundant formula ‘Fu Nazzareno ed Anna Mei’, which indicated the names of the late parents. It should also be observed that the people of humble extraction with a low level of education tend still to introduce themselves in formal contexts by placing the surname ahead of the Christian name: ‘Macri Teresa detta Pazzia, figlia dei defunti Nazzareno ed Anna Mei’.
19. English translations: ‘I live at 23 Mandrione street’; ‘I’m eighteen years old’; ‘I have been selling myself for more than one year’; ‘I’m poor but I have a boyfriend that, with all due respect, looks like a king. / I give him the money...’.
20. English translations: ‘Well, so, what do you want from me?’; ‘What else do you want to know?’ It is interesting to note how, in cases such as this, the singing gives way to the true recitation as

well as in all other cases in which the *I* demonstrates her reticence or reflects on the situation by having recourse to the use of non-defining relative clauses, which have a strong evocative power in terms of sketching her psychological profile.

21. English translation: 'Then I resolved to sell myself at Caracalla'.
22. *Le Mantellate*, which is also a popular Roman song, was written in 1959 by Giorgio Strehler and Fiorenzo Carpi for Ornella Vanoni. This song, which received notable success, enters into the repertoire of 'mala' Milanese songs. We recall the chorus: 'Le Mantellate so' delle suore / a Roma so' soltanto celle scure / una campana sona a tutte l'ore / ma Cristo nun ce sta dentro a 'ste mura'. English translation: 'Le Mantellate are nuns / in Rome there are just gloomy cells / a bell tolls every hour / but Christ is away from here'.
23. English translation: 'No! No! I won't tell you his name! / I don't remember it / his name is love, that's it'.
24. The poems include *Serata romana*, *Verso le Terme di Caracalla*, *Sesso*, *consolazione della miseria*, *Il mio desiderio di ricchezza* and *Trionfo della notte*.
25. Pasolini 1976, 36. English translation: 'Amid the world's waste, comes a new world: new laws are made / where a law is no longer a law; a new honour is born / where honour is dishonour'.
26. Lines 1–5. English translation: 'I drank a quarter of wine / it makes me feel merry / good heavens how drunk I am / Nina, Roscetta, Modesta leave me here.'
27. 'The *chorus-bridge* structure is subtractive, oriented towards the beginning, more so than the end ... the pleasure is immediate, but its source after having been presented, revealed in all its aspects is subtracted and substituted by "greyness" ...'. from the intermediary musical section. 'This structure has as a condition of existence the narrowing, the implosion'. In contrast, the *strofa-ritornello* (verse-chorus) is accumulative in the sense that it gradually increases in pathos and explodes at the moment of the refrain. Fabbri 2002, 121. Translation by author.
28. Lines 17–19. English translation: 'The streets at the Testaccio area / seem to be lit by the daylight / of another town.' The perception of the illuminated streets is due, from the point of view of a very truthful characterisation, to the altered perception that the protagonist has of the city illuminated at night, so the lights appear almost to be dazzling.
29. English translation: 'Leave me alone dark-skinned boy'. This shift in perspective in the text is signalled musically by the *bridge*.
30. Lines 24–27. English translations: 'Also I'm old, I'm thirty years old'; 'Leave me alone dark-skinned boy, make the right choice / ... / rush to your house with your Guzzino as your mother is waiting for you'. Guzzi is part of the Italian motorcycle industry, established in 1921. In the postwar period it developed the production of lightweight motorcycles amongst which was the 'Guzzino', a low-powered motorbike (65 cc) that was very popular in Italy. It is probably the type of motorbike referred to in the text (*Guzzetto*). Chierici 1993.
31. Pasolini 1976, 34, emphasis added. English translation: 'They go towards the Caracalla Baths / young friends riding *Rumi* or *Ducati* motorbikes with male timidity and vulgarity'.
32. Lines 6–10. English translation: 'Look at the leaves! / Look at the moon! / Look at the houses! / Who's ever seen them this way? / I feel like singing.'
33. Lines 28–32. English translation: 'I got drunk / and I'm happy now! / May I be blinded [if it's untrue] / I feel like a flower / of virginity'.
34. The nomenclature *c + d* refers to the melodic fragments of the last line of the *chorus* where, in correspondence with the second hemistich (*d*), the music and the interpretation vary.
35. The lower-case letters refer to the phrases which compose the musical period (*chorus* or *bridge*).
36. Lines 1–4. English translation: 'Here I am undressed / drenched with water. / Where am I? / In a hovel with a table and a cover'.
37. Lines 5–8. English translation: 'Listen to me, if you're there, Jesus Christ / look at me all dirty with mud / have mercy on me / I'm nothing, and you are the King of Kings.'
38. Lines 9–10. English translation: 'Working without taking a breath / I'm dying and my soul doesn't even realize it'.
39. Pasolini 2003, 60–1. English translation: '... in those bleak // apartment blocks in which the treacherous / and expansive gift of existence burns out / ... / not life, but survival ... / ... in whose arcane orgasm there may not be any other passion than / [the passion] for the everyday life.'



40. Lines 41–44. English translation: ‘Those who are not like us / – you say – cannot / stay here with us not even for a moment!’
41. Lines 1–11. English translation: ‘Have pity on me! / you want me dead and buried: / voiceless / still / faceless / dead. . . / may the madness she was / – you say – never return here among us!’
42. Lines 15–18. English translation: ‘you wish me hung, drowned / burnt / mangled’.
43. Lines 45–55. English translation: ‘Have pity on me! You, people who hold power, you warn: passion brings nothing but trouble and anxiety/ here among us!’
44. Pasolini 1976, 157. English translation: ‘the fury of confession / first, then the fury of clarity: / it was from you, hypocrite, that rose the obscure / feeling! And now, let them blame each of my passions, / let them besmirch me, let them call me shapeless, impure / obsessed, perjuring amateur: / you isolate me, you give the certainty of life: I’m burning at the stake / I play the card of fire, . . . I overcome my infinite / miserable mercy.’
45. Lines 63–67. English translation: ‘And so be it! / I accept defeat! / Be reassured . . . / I vanish in the shadow, / I leave the world to you. . .’.
46. Merola 2006, 244. In the section *Per una Nota all’editore*, the fictitious author of the manuscript is found ‘dead, beaten with a stick, in Palermo, the year before’. It is therefore possible that Pasolini wanted to refer to the ongoing controversy with the avant-garde Group ’63, as can be inferred from the date 1966–1967, included in this passage, and because of the reference to the city where the group was founded.
47. Siti and De Laude 2001, 312, emphasis added. English translation: ‘My speech [that of the dead] will become the very essence of silence / and for eternity . . . / and yet / he who tomorrow comes to gaze upon it and unlock its secrets, *he will understand . . .*’.
48. The Italian language presents, furthermore, a very small number of oxytone words. On the other hand, the dialects are abundant in oxytone forms. This limit has posed problems for those who write musical lyrics, having to resort to linguistic artifices such as apocopations (*parlare/parlar*), to the use of constructs in which pronominal tonic forms are privileged (*guardami/guarda me*) as well as syntactic inversions. All of these devices are used at the expense of a more natural linguistic exposition.
49. Consider Pasolini’s passages in Roman dialect (*Macrì Teresa detta pazzia, Cristo al Mandrione and Valzer della toppa*) where, for example, reference is made to the districts of *Mandrione* and *Testaccio*, to the *Terme di Caracalla* and to ‘Le Mantellate’ women’s prison.

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