

Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922-75)

Intelligence will never have much value
in the collective judgment of this public's opinion.
Not even the blood of concentration camps
could draw from a million of our nation's souls
a clear judgment of pure indignation.

Each idea is unreal, every passion unreal,
in a people [Italians] who lost their unity centuries ago
and use their gentle wisdom
only to survive, and not to gain freedom.

To show my face -- my leanness --
to raise a single, childlike voice,
makes sense no longer. Cowardice accustoms us
to seeing others die atrociously,
locked in the strangest indifference.
So I die, and this too causes me pain.

(1964)

* * *

Oh unfortunate generation
tears you'll weep, but lifeless tears
because perhaps you won't even know how to return to
what, not having had, you couldn't even lose;
poor Calvinist generation as at the bourgeoisie's origins
adolescently pragmatic, childishly active
you sought salvation in organisation
(which can't produce anything but more organisation)
and you've spent the days of your youth
speaking the jargon of bureaucratic democracy
never departing from the repetition of formulas,
for organising can be signified not through words
but through formulas, yes,
you'll find yourself using the same paternal authority,
at the mercy of that ineffable power that willed you against power,
unfortunate generation!
Growing old, I saw your heads filled with grief
where a confused idea swirled, an absolute certainty,
an assumption of heroes destined not to die --
oh unfortunate young people, who've seen within reach
a marvelous victory that didn't exist!

(1970)