



# Stupendous, Miserable City: Pasolini's Rome

*John David Rhodes*

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John David Rhodes places the city of Rome at the center of this original and in-depth examination of the work of Italian director Pier Paolo Pasolini—but it's not the classical Rome you imagine. *Stupendous, Miserable City* situates Pasolini within the history of twentieth-century Roman urban development. The book focuses first on the Fascist period, when populations were moved out of the urban center and into public housing on the periphery of the city, called the *borgate*, and then turns to the progressive social housing experiments of the 1950s. These environments were the settings of most of Pasolini's films of the early to mid-1960s.

Discussing films such as *Accattone*, *Mamma Roma*, and *The Hawks and the Sparrows*, Rhodes shows how Pasolini used the *borgate* to critique Roman urban planning and neorealism and to draw attention to the contemptuous treatment of Rome's poor. To Pasolini, the *borgate*, rich in human incident, linguistic difference, and squalor, "were life"—and now his passion can be appreciated fully for the first time.

Carefully tracing Pasolini's surprising engagement with this part of Rome and looking beyond his films to explore the interrelatedness of all of Pasolini's artistic output in the 1950s and 1960s—including his poetry, fiction, and journalism—Rhodes opens up completely new ways of understanding Pasolini's work and proves how connected Pasolini was to the political and social upheavals in Italy at the time.

John David Rhodes is lecturer in literature and visual culture at the University of Sussex.

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