

PASETTA RACCONTA  
*consiglia, scrive poesie*  
*sogna*

Prefazione di Cosimo Savastano  
Postfazione di Teresio Valsesia

*Testi in italiano, inglese e tedesco*

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## Sommario

Prefazione di Cosimo Savastano .....	9
<i>Preface by Cosimo Savastano</i> .....	19
<i>Vorwort von Cosimo Savastano</i> .....	25
<b>Pasetta racconta</b>	
La Mia vita .....	33
<i>My life</i> .....	75
<i>Mein Leben</i> .....	113
Dall'album fotografico di Pasetta .....	153
<b>Pasetta consiglia</b>	
In gita con Pasetta .....	175
<i>Wandering on the mountains with Pasetta</i> .....	203
<i>Bergtouren mit Pasetta</i> .....	229
Fotografie di Pasetta e le sue montagne .....	244
<b>Pasetta scrive poesie</b> .....	257
<i>Pasetta writes poetries</i>	
<i>Pasetta schreibt poetries</i>	
<b>Pasetta sogna</b> .....	327
<i>Pasetta's dreams</i> .....	331
<i>Pasettas Träume</i> .....	333
Postfazione per un 'unicum' di Teresio Valsesia .....	335
<i>Epilogue for a 'unicum' by Teresio Valsesia</i> .....	337
<i>Epilog fur ein 'unicum' von Teresio Valsesia</i> .....	339
<b>IMPORTANTE DA NON PERDERE:</b>	
Hanno parlato e parlano di Pasetta .....	341

*Ho scritto questo libro  
volendo strappare al lettore  
un sorriso.  
Se non ci sono riuscito,  
gli chiedo scusa.  
Se ho fatto centro  
ne sono felice e,  
se ci trova anche  
qualche cosa di interessante  
da comunicare ad altri,  
gliene sono grato.  
La volontà e il buon senso  
possono aiutare gli uomini  
a superare le difficoltà e a fare  
emergere la propria personalità.  
E vai a tutti!*

*Grazie a tutti coloro i quali hanno letto la prima edizione del libro contribuendo così alla sua diffusione in tutti i continenti. Grazie a loro per aver sorriso e comunicato ad altri la mia storia.*

*(l'autore)*

## ***Preface***

*The cover on this book shows a man dressed in sheep's skin and you might think he is about to take part in a charade or maybe the costume reminds you of a distant past. Indeed, the second interpretation is correct. In fact, the roots of this man, Pasetta, are to be found in the history of the people of Abruzzo. He is not an actor playing the role of a man from the past. He actually is the past, showing us his origins. Both his grandfather and father passed their traditions and values on to him and it can be said that these traditions and values for Pasetta are the salt and other spices with which he seasons his daily life.*

*Few people will recognize the clothes of those who had the courage to fight the wolves of the province of Aquila, which during the long and cold winters descended the slopes of the mountains. These animals decimated the sheep, which were the principal source of income of the poor inhabitants of the region and even threatened the people themselves, who lived in small, primitive communities, which were few and far between. Even in the latter part of the twentieth century, the people in this part of Italy were still living in small, fortified villages, where during the night the gates were closed to protect the inhabitants against bandits, robbers, gypsies and, last but not least, wolves.*

*Stories about wolves abounded, and in all of them the wolf was ferocious and voracious and certainly the vilest and most malicious animal of all carnivores. According to the narrators it could kill in one attack more sheep than it was able to eat. So it was inevitable that man had to defend himself against this monstrous beast. Moreover, the provincial administration paid generously for the head and the ears of a dead wolf, giving a much higher price for the females, especially when they were pregnant. Obviously, shepherds and sheep farmers, who had a direct interest, favoured this merciless killing.*

*The leading part in this struggle was for the lupari (wolfmen), thus called because of their talent to perfectly imitate the call of the wolves. Only very few people today can remember or at least imagine the real part these lupari played, despite pictures or other exhibits kept in the Museum in Civitella Alfedena. Even in the villages of the Altosangro area, where their activities took place, the stories about the lupari are based on legends or, at best, on oral tradition.*

*The life of a luparo was hard and lonesome. He used to wait day and night between huge piles of snow for the wild, fearsome animals. He stood there on his remote and lonely posts, armed with just a primitive gun and his incredible courage. Once he had spotted a wolf he would try to isolate it from its pack. After killing it, he would tie it by its paws to the top of his cart. Then, with this cart, pulled by a mule which the luparo held by the halter, he passed through the local villages, showing his prize: one or even more dead wolves. The inhabitants, in return, showed their gratitude by giving some money or food to him and his poor family, who followed him everywhere. The lupari were content with their “job”, which earned them a modest income, which was not bad compared with other work. With the exception of a happy few, mountain people were not rich in those days.*

*The struggle against the extreme cold of the winter and the enemy which always returned shaped the way of life in the Abruzzo mountains. Everyone knew it was a hard and uphill fight and consequently they were dependent upon each other. This may explain why there are narrow holes in the walls of the old houses so the people could shoot the wolves or bandits if they came too close thus defending their community. This interpretation differs from the one that tries to make us believe that these holes are a proof of mistrust and hate between houses and families.*

*The lives of these lupari took place in the distant past. Nevertheless the author of this book can tell us with pride, that “the last luparo in the Alto Sangro area, not professionally but for the love of hunting, was Ulderico d’Amico”, his grandfather, who lived from 1865 to 1930. He was a highly respected shepherd from Barrea, and like Pasetta’s father Salvatore would have filled the childhood of little Tommaso D’Amico with stories of a great past.*

*From his ancestors, Pasetta inherited an extreme love of nature and a tremendous*



1 - Ulderico D'Amico

*talent in finding and interpreting the foot marks and other traces of both wolf and bear. However, Pasetta does not, like his ancestors, feel the urge to kill but, in a very poetic way, is connected with the world of mountains, woods and all the creatures living in it.*

*He tells us how as a boy he had to make a daily trip to his father's hut in the mountains, to bring back home the fresh ricotta produced there; how he had to make his contribution to the living of the family by giving a helping hand in the cantina they ran. He describes the hard life of the people of Barrea and for Pasetta the cantina was an observatory where he learned a lot about the nature of mankind.*

*It may be odd, however, that in spite of all these details about daily life in Barrea, he hardly ever writes about his grandfather. He talks about him with extraordinary passion and affection and cherishes his grandfather's belongings: the busby - a hat made of goat skin, for instance, which he keeps like a relic. He is apparently proud to be the moral heir of "the last luparo", not in order to boast about it, but because he wants to pass on, like his ancestors did, the values and traditions of this former life, filled with qualities like courage and generosity.*

*That is the reason why we have to consider his story as an important document. We cannot look upon his booklet as a work of high literary standard, simply because it wasn't meant to be one. The language of Pasetta, very personal in itself, is based upon the vernacular of the inhabitants of Barrea, which, of course, has a lot in common with the other local dialects of the Abruzzo area. Today, these dialects are disappearing, or, at least, becoming more and more alike, as is happening with other local dialects in the world.*

*Pasetta uses his dialect unconsciously whenever he wants to season his story, thus showing his fundamental ties with his native soil. It is, therefore, evident that this combination of literary talent and ties with his native soil makes his book fascinating as a literary document. We cannot help comparing Pasetta with Benedetto del Virgilio, a man of literacy from the past. He was a farmhand from Villetta Barrea serving the Benedictines for which he received some modest education. This enabled him to put his thoughts to paper and later on he even made it to the Papal Court in Rome, where he was a favourite of Pope Alexander VII for his literary talents. In spite of all the honours and prizes he*

received, he continued to call himself *poeta bifolco* (the peasant poet). After the 17th century, other craftsmen and shepherds from the area became poets and authors.

Unfortunately, not much work of these poets has been preserved, but in an article about Pescasseroli Benedetto Croce describes a witness of the hard life in the National Park whom he had known personally. He lived in the latter part of the 19th century and was a shepherd called Cesidio Gentile, better known as Iurico or Cerusico. Pasetta's literary talent can be compared with that of Iurico. However, Pasetta's creativity seems to remain original, whereas Iurico's work was clearly influenced by his reading. In this respect, Pasetta's language "illuminates" his stories with lively figures of speech.

Pasetta's story is, among many other things, a first-hand witness of the predicament of the inhabitants of Barrea during and after World War II. His description of the difficulties that emigrants to the USA, the Promised Land, had to undergo in order to make a proper living is fascinating. Apart from the material point of view, his story also shows the pain many emigrants must have felt in leaving their country. However, Pasetta was one of the first emigrants to point out that going back can be done without losing dignity. He thinks that it is sometimes necessary to do so and he persuades other emigrants, in a friendly manner, to follow his example and give their best talents to their fatherland. The inhabitants of places like Barrea would have more hope for the future if they knew that their best men would return.

When Pasetta describes how he had to cope with many troubles in order to survive, not only in the cities of northern Italy and Switzerland, but also in the metropolis of the USA, he shows at the same time that he never has been able to properly explain the burden of being a stranger. The difference between the skyscrapers of New York and the mountains of Abruzzo was more than a geographical difference: it happened to be a difference in time, language, culture and most of all in moral values.

Pasetta's school was his life in the mountains, where he "read more in nature than in books", as Benedetto Croce would have said. Travelling far and wide enriched his cultural experience and knowledge. Would it then, one might ask, be appropriate to turn into the road of literature, for someone who, certainly not through his own fault, misses the necessary cultural background? These



*pages can answer this question. Deep inside, Pasetta has the inevitable need to socialise, to share with other people his feelings, his troubles and his indomitable joie de vivre. Being a writer seems to be the last profession for a man who has had so many professions. It is the nth manifestation of a creative spirit, who in many poems says about himself: "I'm not a poet, I'm like a fixer of umbrellas or a handyman putting together broken dishes."*

*Cosimo Savastano*

Pasetta racconta

*Pasetta tells the story of his life*

*Pasetta erzählte die Geschichte seines Leben*

## ***My life***

*I, Tommaso D'Amico, known as "Pasetta", was born in Barrea, in an area called "Casenuove" (which means something like "New Houses"), on February 2nd , 1941, at 4.30 p.m. Barrea counted 1.500 inhabitants at that time. I'm the seventh son of eight. The 2nd of February, my birthday, is a very important day of celebration for Catholic people: the day of the purification of the Virgin Mary, called Candlemas.*

*The bells of the church started ringing the moment I was born. My father and mother could not help thinking that this was to celebrate my birthday. But in effect bells were ringing to warn the citizens: there was a fire in the centre of Barrea. That was the beginning of my life.* <sup>(photo 2)</sup>

*My nickname "Pasetta" takes its origin from the name of a certain Tommasuccio (little Tom) Pasotti, an Italian cyclist of that time. An old man, Filippo Maddamma, used to call me "Pasellino the Terrible", because he saw me walking in the snow with no shoes on. Later on people in Barrea would call me "Pasetta", more correctly. In Barrean dialect "Pasa" is the word for "buttonhole". And, being a very small boy indeed, I could pass through any hole, even a small one.*

*I was 2 and a half years old, when, during World War II, German troops, in retreat from the allied forces, occupied Barrea, forcing me and my family to leave home. That was October 28th 1943. We left for Bisegna, a town 40 kilometers from Barrea: that was to be my second home.*

*By the end of the occupation we were glad to be able to go back home. But, mines placed along the road made a tragedy of our march. Lots of people lost their lives.*

*When finally we came back to our devastated and plundered homes, our major problem was to find a place to sleep. We had no beds, so I and the smallest brother we had to sleep in a commode. The first and third drawers were taken out, so we could breathe. He slept above me. Often he peed and I became wet, he stayed dry.*

*From the time I was a child, I didn't like to go to infant-school: so I was spanked every time I resisted. Later, at elementary school, I liked to play all the time, not only in school but also on the streets. And, since I did not get paid for*

*umphant. I took with me my pair of skis, on which I had printed this motto: "Tomba is a bomb, but Pasetta is a dart" (Tomba è una bomba, Pasetta è una saetta <sup>(photo 32)</sup>). This motto and my confidential approach with Tomba, had impressed very much the Beauty of the Far East, but I never could imagine that my nick name would become the brand name of a Yamaha scooter!*

*In the year 2001 a Dutch journalist and writer called Tineke Straatman mentioned me on two pages of her book about her hike through Italy, entitled: *De achterkant van Italie, Inside Italy*.*

*In the year 2002 I was in the Black Forest in Germany. This region is rich in lakes, rivers and mountains. I was welcomed there by Klaus and Regina, two German friends of mine, who had hiked with me in the 1999 edition of the *Camminitalia*. We are members of the "Camminitalia club", an association founded by my friend Teresio Valsesia. The president is a lady from Sondrio called Nicoletta. The club consists of 200 people from Italy and abroad. In 2002, I got in touch with an important English organization, which unites relatives of survivors of the Second World War. Finally, I was very happy to take part in the *Camminamediterraneo*, a long walk in the Mediterranean mountains in Europe, Africa and Asia, organized by Italian TV. This is a UNICEF sponsored initiative called *Overland*.*

*After having spent two days with them in the mountain land of Gran Sasso, on October 29th 2002 in Genoa I had the honour to be present at the final stage of this long hike. I had the chance to meet Mr. Beppe Tenti, the initiator of "Overland". I shook hands with several journalists from different countries of Europe, which: Giancarlo Corbellini, Michele Dalla Palma, Monique Crettenand and to the special cameraman Claudio Valeriani<sup>(photo 33,34,35,36)</sup>.*

## ***From Monte Greco to K2***

*The happiness and consciousness of being truly small*

*Adolescence is the period of life where one starts to discover the world with the desire to conquer it. It was in that stage of my existence that I came to know how big Mount Chiarano was, dominating the Barrea lake valley with its imposing 2178 meters.*

*The mountain can be admired from Barrea, the town in the most beautiful place in the world, with its old grayish south side, ornate with greenish topping*

*and with the serrated and rounded top from old times. Its greatness and beauty hides Mount Greco<sup>(photo 37)</sup>, the highest peak of our territory with 2285 meters height.*

*I was born and still live in Barrea, which is located at 1100 meters. To reach Mount Greco's peak, I must walk a path, the J6, which starts at 900 meters, at the lake border, it allows an ascent of 1400 m and reaches to a 2285 meter-level. It was the mid 50's of the previous century when an Italian expedition managed to reach K2, the second highest peak of the world. The expedition, guided by scientist Ardito Desio and accompanied by the team that reached the top, Lacedelli and Compagnoni, and around 700 porters, was able to complete an extraordinary feat, which took hold of my life became. From that time I was not able to think otherwise than imagine without believing, the huge dimensions of a mountain that I found impossible to exist.*

*As I have already narrated in the first part of this volume, I am a son of a butcher and come from generations of shepherders. Butchers need meat to trade. And thus my family had flocks that in summer were led to the heights for the animals to feed on the best pastures.*

*One year, my father won the auction for the pasture in Mount Greco and there was that our sheep was herded. It was my duty three times a week to reach our herders to take them food and to return with the cheese that was produced with the milk.*

*One day, while in the pen, just 400 meters from Mount Greco's peak, I decided to conquer the mount's top and overreach the height of 2000 mt. The happiness of the achievement was huge, but I felt discouraged at the fact that K2's peak was 4 time higher than Mount Greco's: I couldn't convince myself that our Lord could have made such high mountains so far from my country.*

*The purpose of climbing the K2 is due to the attraction I feel towards mountains which has encouraged me to know and reach one at a time the highest heights of my region first and Italy's highest mountains later. My feet have climbed, among others, Mount Amaro's (Maiella) 2793 mt., Mount Velino's 2400 mt., Gran Sasso's 2912 mt., Marmolada's 3342 mt., Peak Helbronner's (Mount Bianco) 3452 mt. and Plateau Rosa's 3800 mt.*

*The higher I climbed, the more I dreamed of K2.*

*In the year 2004 the CAI and the Overland Trekking International organized*

## PASETTA RACCONTA



2 - Con i genitori e i fratelli



3 - Pasetta allo stazzo dei Tartari con il papà Salvatore



28 - Pasetta sulle vie di Trieste alla fine di Camminitalia '99



29 - Pasetta ai piedi di Ayers Rock





43 - Pasetta ai piedi del K2





44 - Pasetta con il gruppo di Trekking International



45 - Pasetta e Marco Confortola (alpinista estremo guida alpina internazionale che ha conquistato più volte la cima dell'Everest, K2 e altri "8000". Superstite di una valanga di neve e ghiaccio caduta dal K2 nell'agosto del 2008)

Pasetta consiglia

*Pasetta gives advices*

*Pasettas Empfehlungen*

## ***Wandering in the mountains with Pasetta***

*I have 55 years of experience with the mountains, which I have loved for as many years. To all those who want to spend an unforgettable time in Abruzzo National Park and in Abruzzi Region I used to say that they should not take a step without first listening to my advice. That at least is what a group of German and Dutch tourists did, who arrived in my campsite at the end of May 2000. Today they still send me postcards and letters to thank me for my advice.*

*Upon their arrival, I had welcomed them with my usual words: "Welcome in my Paradise, this unique Barrean amphitheatre of endless beauty, which was not sculptured, but painted by God."*

*Then I told them, like I tell all newcomers: "God has worked else-where with hammer and chisel: here he worked with a paint-brush. He designed these mountains giving to the scenery a complete harmony and a unique beauty. One night I dreamed that when God had finished his work he was proud of himself rightly and said standing on the hill della Malafiglia "Here I have given all my capacities full scope". Thank you very much, great Master for the special gift you have given to us.*

### ***The first day***

*Colle della Malafiglia <sup>(photo 50)</sup> - Paths K1-K8. The old Town - The Canyon on Sangro river.*

*I asked if they had put their luggage in good order. They answered everything was OK. Then I asked them to follow me to a hill called Malafiglia", paths K1 and K8, east of Barrea at 1270 m.*

*I was disappointed when I saw that not every one of them was equipped with the right boots. Good mountaineering boots are a must for a hiker. As far as this first day's degree of difficulty was concerned it would be all right, I told them, but on the next excursions they should carry the right foot-wear.*

*When we were close to the last houses of Barrea, I explained to them that in order to reach the top of the Malafiglia, by K1 and K8 paths, one can take any*

## **Fotografie di Pasetta e le sue montagne**



50 - La valle del Lago di Barrea



51 - Mosè: un salice alla fonte del Sambuco

Pasetta scrive poesie

*Pasetta writes poetries*

*Schreibt poetries*

## **L'UOMO SAPIENTE**

Venni al mondo  
e mi chiamarono Uomo Sapiente.  
Di ciò che mi circondava  
non conoscevo niente.

Il Tempo eloquente  
mi insegnò a lodare  
e ringraziare l'Onnipotente.

Da colto  
sono diventato impudente  
e ho inquinato l'ambiente.

Riuscirò a capire  
che sarò un niente  
se non lascerò  
un mondo vivente?

## O...K2

Ad Ardito che fu  
il gran maestro  
va un grazie infinito.

50 anni fa  
alla grande conquista  
dava il "là",  
ed oggi felicemente  
anche noi siamo qua.

Dodici le regioni rappresentate  
dal gruppo  
di 30 giovanotte  
e giovanotti  
baldanzosi, orgogliosi  
ed allegrotti.

Tante sono state  
le emozioni  
che ognuno di noi  
ha provato  
lungo il percorso  
fatto di ponti vacillanti,  
crepacci moventi,  
grotte espandenti,  
fiumi crescenti,  
ruscelli di giorno rumorosi  
e di notte silenti,  
pareti e stalagmiti  
di terra e ghiaccio  
sovrastate da enormi sassi  
schiacciati e pericolanti,  
morene frananti,  
miriade di vele di ghiaccio  
in un mare di detriti  
variegati  
e portatori operanti  
come formiche  
sempre pronti e scattanti.  
Sotto un cielo terso

per la gioia  
il "self control"  
abbiamo un po' perso.

Ai piedi del colossale  
monumento papale  
di prestigio universale,  
sua grandezza "K2",  
ci siamo inchinati  
emozionati ed esaltati.

Quel lungo sognar  
il mio cuor  
tanto ha fatto palpitare  
quando circondato  
dagli "8000" mi sono  
andato a trovar.

Sulla via del ritorno  
ormai siamo.  
Con noi  
tanti ricordi riportiamo,  
ringraziamo i pakistani,  
anche se ci sono mancati  
i cibi nostrani.

Or che ci siamo conosciuti  
facciamo sì che  
tutti questi bei ricordi  
non siano perduti.

Ritroviamoci  
ancora una volta  
in cammino  
per la conquista  
di una bella vetta.  
Un abbraccio a tutti  
Pasetta

*Campo Concordia li 09/09/2004*

Pasetta sogna

*Pasetta dreams*

*Pasettas Träume*



### ***Epilogue for a unicum***

*Pasetta (never refer to him by his name and surname), is a “unicum”. I've searched my memory, right down to the last cerebral material that God so generously gave me. I've tried and tried but I cannot find a character who can be compared to him, not even a little. During the past 50 years I have met thousands of people walking through mountains and valleys, going up and down Italy twice. And you know that Italian mountains have plenty of original things, human and natural resources.*

*Evidently God has created a unique being. “Una tantum”, literally, only “one time”. I don't know when, in what part of the immense time of the universal creation. A little artistic geniality, and here his Pasetta, the Inimitable.*

*The reader will have understood all this, reading these pages, shifting between poetry and prose, painting an incredible picture of sincerity. We are not talking of a Nobel Prize matter, but maybe some time in Stockholm somebody will decide to come down from his bench and give a prize to the people writing about human life in a human way: Pasetta will certainly be the winner.*

*He already won the greatest prize: the friendliness of many people who have had the chance to know, appreciate, admire, enjoy and, care for him.*

*A “multi-talented” actor, fresh and good like a glass of pure “grappa”, sparkling as the National Park falls in springtime.*

*All his fans love him. His conduct deserves this highest prize. He is proud of that, never hiding it.*

*He has not an easy nature and can be hard-headed. His skin is tough like Abruzzi beeches, which have defied the wind and cold for centuries. Obstinate, strong, intractable, shaggy like his beard. But his heart is different: the love for his family, his hometown Barrea and the predilection for his mountains. A grand heart in which live all those people who walked with him from Sardinia to Trieste.*

***Teresio Valsesia***

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Tanti sono stati i motivi  
che mi hanno spinto ad affrontare  
questa nuova avventura.  
Innumerevoli sono stati  
i fili che lungo il cammino  
mi hanno fatto inciampare  
per ricordarmi che ognuno di loro  
è collegato ad una lampadina.  
Difficile è stata  
la scelta dei colori delle luci  
che ho usato  
per addobbare ed illustrare  
l'albero della mia vita.  
Così spero  
di essere riuscito ad illuminare  
per un attimo l'animo del lettore.

**Pasetta**

*Many were the reasons  
that motivated me  
to start this new adventure.  
Countless were the threads that  
tripped me along the way,  
to remind me that  
each of them is connected to a light bulb.  
Difficult was the choice  
of the colours of the lights that  
I used to adorn and illustrate  
the tree of my life.  
So I hope that  
I was able to light up for one moment  
the soul of the reader.*

**Pasetta**

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*Photographic references*

Carlo Brizio, n. 67  
Michela Calcagno, n. 68  
Franco Cera, nn. 51, 53, 63  
Massimo Conti, pag. 260 (in basso)  
Valerio D'Amico, n. 54  
Piero De Gregorio, nn. 17, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44  
Biagio Di Loreto, pag. 272  
Edmondo Di Loreto, retro copertina (in basso), pag. 260 (in alto)  
Nicolas Gosselt (Olanda), pag. 276  
Andrea Gusmeroli, n. 46  
Alessandro Lo Presti, pag. 281  
Ursula Knott, n. 37  
Luca Manieri, n. 60, pag. 270  
Sonia Mazzocco, n. 20  
Fritz Meyst, copertina, nn. 50, 58, 59, pag. 332  
Giuseppina Musilli, nn. 61, 66  
Antonio Pazzaglia, n. 64  
Umberto Pellarini, 295 (in basso)  
Loreto Scarnecchia, nn. 7, 55, pag. 262  
Arjan Smalen, retro copertina (in alto)  
Alessandro Ursitti, n. 48  
Teresio Valsesia, nn. 25, 28  
Wasser (Germania), n. 62, pag. 271

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