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## Keys for an Unwritten Poem translated by Vinio Rossi and Stuart Friebert

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KEYS FOR AN UNWRITTEN POEM

You have to know certain things  
to understand history. The city  
you see at the start is not Bergamo,  
it's Cremona (see also the allusion  
to 1751, year of the Transfer). Then: the old  
woman, robust but a bit weak in the head,  
who threatens her daughter with a cane—taunts her,  
widowed at forty,  
she married the apprentice at the mill: which explains,  
among other things, that business of surnames. *The assistant*  
*opposite*  
is the man who supervises the masons  
on behalf of the customer in contrast  
to the flunkie of the contractor. The war  
that was about to break out  
was the war of '15-'18 . . .

*translated by*  
*Vinio Rossi and Stuart Friebert*