

ECHOES OF PIER PAOLO PASOLINI  
IN CONTEMPORARY ITALIAN CINEMA:  
THE CASES OF MARCO TULLIO GIORDANA AND AURELIO GRIMALDI

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In this dissertation, I examine the legacy of Pier Paolo Pasolini's life, artistic production and political engagement in contemporary Italian cinema. I focus on films by Marco Tullio Giordana (*Maledetti vi amerò* [*Bastards, I will Love You*, 1980]; *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano* [*Pasolini: An Italian Crime*, 1995]; *100 passi* [*One Hundred Steps*, 2000]) and by Aurelio Grimaldi (*Nerolio: Sputerò su mio padre* [*Nerolio: I Will Spit on My Father*, 1996]; *Un mondo d'amore* [*A World of Love*, 2002]). Through their references to and reappraisal of Pasolini, these films re-appropriate thematics dear to him, acquire a more powerful socio-political meaning and rethink the aesthetic possibilities of Italian contemporary cinema.

I focus on Giordana and Grimaldi because they exemplify two different treatments of Pasolini. Giordana shows absolute admiration for Pasolini, focuses on his socio-political struggles, and deals with his death as a result of a conspiracy. Grimaldi instead takes a more critical stance vis-à-vis Pasolini's merits and flaws, represents specifically the different stages of Pasolini's homosexual life, and interprets his death as a consequence of the homosexual encounters in hidden, often degraded places. In Grimaldi's view, Pasolini's (homo)sexuality has been overlooked by those who have sought to monumentalize him, and in this way, the power of Pasolini's word and his

public engagement have been neutralized.

While Pasolini's presence is self-evident in Giordana's *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano*, and in Grimaldi's *Nerolio* and *Un mondo d'amore* where Pasolini is the protagonist, in Giordana's *Maledetti vi amerò* and *I cento passi*, Pasolini appears in a few citations of his poems (particularly those referring to Antonio Gramsci's politics and to Pasolini's relationship with his mother). I maintain that if spectators miss the significance of those citations, they also miss the political and social nuances present in the films. In exploring the presence of Pasolini in Giordana's and Grimaldi's films, I also touch upon their understanding of cinematic realism, their encouragement to reflect on what it means today to look for and talk about truth, the role of the intellectual in Italy, and finally homosexuality as an important social question in contemporary Italy.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Anna Paparcone was born in Vico Equense, in the province of Naples, and was raised in Aquino, the town of Thomas Aquinas, in the area known as Ciociaria. Imbued with Neapolitan spirit and acquiring popular traditions of her home town, she grew up happily surrounded by family and friends. Her mother Rosa and her father Francesco set up some priorities for her: studying first of all, and then her hobbies, which included volleyball and singing in the town's choir. And it worked well for her. Her parents made it possible for Anna to study without economic concerns, always supported and encouraged. She attended elementary and high school in Aquino, and high school and the university in Cassino, a city that is overlooked by the famous abbey of Montecassino. At the university she had a wonderful group of friends and she met her best friend Nicoletta. At an early age she began to play piano as well. For a few years she took private lessons, until she enrolled as a piano student at the Conservatorio Licinio Refice in Frosinone, where she took her degree in piano. Combining both commitments (school and conservatory) was not always easy, and when the time came to decide between these, she opted for the university. That was the first difficult choice of her life. However, the university program in Foreign Languages and Literatures greatly satisfied her interests; knowing different cultures and traveling fascinated her. She took her first plane to England (Brighton and then London). She found that it was truly exciting to meet people from all over the world and to study English in full immersion.

The trip of her life was in August 1999, when she first flew to the United States of America to participate in an exchange program between the

University of Cassino and Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania. She stayed in Pennsylvania for four months. It was indeed crucial for her, since it changed the way she looked at her entire life: the possibility of working in an American campus was very appealing. This first experience also gave Anna the opportunity to meet people of different nationalities who, today, are among her best friends. After graduating from the Università degli Studi di Cassino, she returned to the USA in 2000 to teach Italian at the same university she had attended as a student a year earlier. She meant to stay there one semester, but it ended up being two years. Living in the US allowed her to pursue her dream of teaching and studying, without having to struggle endlessly with the Italian academic system. She tried to return to Italy for a few months, but the possibility of working and doing what she studied for was close to impossible.

At Lock Haven, she also met Jason, the man who, a few years later, would become both her husband and an incredible guide through the American academia. The decision to remain in the USA became an issue when she was accepted into a Ph.D. program at Cornell University. More years away from Italy meant a definitive farewell to the possibility of returning and working there. The decision was very hard, since her bond with her family was strong and so was her sense of guilt at leaving behind her parents and sister Raffaella. She was very fortunate because they did not think about their desire of having her close to them, but encouraged her to pursue her dream of studying and working at the university. She started her Ph.D program, and since then she has been working hard to finish her dissertation and present her work at scholarly conferences. In October 2008 her sister Raffaella moved to the USA as well, and this added more joy to her life. She has recently

accepted a job at Bucknell University in Pennsylvania, a job that allows her to meet both her professional and private needs. Throughout these years, Anna has been extremely lucky to encounter and know exceptional people, who have helped her to learn new things and to enjoy her life. She was blessed to have the support and love of her family and her friends in Italy and in the US.

*Alla mia famiglia*



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for the time he often dedicated to our exchanges, and to Professor Carlo Testa for sharing his extensive knowledge of Italian cinema and Italian history with me, for reading my work and for supplying me with a steady stream of references and materials to continue my research successfully. I have been incredibly lucky to encounter such a variety of scholars at Cornell and elsewhere, and I am grateful for their contributions to my academic growth.

I wish to express my appreciation to the Graduate School, the Romance Studies Department, the Cornell Society for the Humanities, and the Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies for granting me funds that allowed to me to travel to and throughout Italy, to collect useful material for my thesis and to interview filmmakers and film critics. Their financial support has been instrumental for the completion of my thesis and is very much appreciated.

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parents encouraged me to pursue my dream. They are a constant point of reference, my lighthouse in moments of difficulties, and I thank them for their endless care and unconditioned support. Raffaella, my little sister (who is not so little anymore) is among those to whom I dedicate this dissertation and to whom I am most grateful. We grew up together, and together we plunged into enterprises that took us away from our own country. She is an incredible scholar, an example of wit and determination, and by looking at her I am constantly reminded of how important it is to believe tenaciously in what I do. She always showed her love, understanding, and encouragement. Her participation in my life and accomplishments has been the warmest I could hope for, and I know that I could not be luckier than to have her so close to me.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the last ten years many film scholars have attempted to define the common features of contemporary Italian cinema. The task has proved considerably difficult. In his essay "Il cinema italiano oggi," Gian Piero Brunetta writes of a fragmentation of voices, a paucity of common interests and a lack of "a dialogue or intergenerational interaction."<sup>1</sup> Mario Sesti, another eminent scholar of Italian cinema, while asserting that Italian contemporary cinema has its substance, personality and form, also refers to its lack of roots, to the scarcity of ideals and techniques left behind by the debacle of the 1980s. He writes: "The texture of this [contemporary] cinema does not bear any trace of the influence of models and languages of the past, and if this happens, its nature rejects them as exterior and alien."<sup>2</sup> After two vibrant decades of "politicized" cinema—let us think of films by Francesco Rosi, Ettore Scola, Pietro Germi, Pier Paolo Pasolini to name a few—the 1980s appear deprived of inspiration and talented filmmakers, but most of all they show lack of political verve and lack of brilliant cinematographic techniques. The advent of a privatized system of TV stations has doubtless its fatal role in the considerable hiatus of the 1980s Italian cinema, and still plays a baleful role on the production, selection and visibility of a variety of Italian contemporary films.<sup>3</sup> Despite the limits of the post-1980s cinema, Brunetta also points to a common denominator for many contemporary filmmakers, namely the appeal to an antecedent text, which becomes a privileged means to access a collective

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<sup>1</sup> Gian Piero Brunetta, "Il cinema italiano oggi," *Annali d'Italianistica. New Landscapes in Contemporary Italian cinema*, ed. Gaetana Marrone, 17 (1999): 23. "Un dialogo o interazione generazionale". All translations, unless otherwise specified, are my own.

<sup>2</sup> Mario Sesti, *Nuovo cinema italiano: Gli autori, i film, le idee* (Rome: Edizioni Theoria, 1994), 11.

<sup>3</sup> On this subject, see Lino Micciché, ed. *Schermi opachi: Il cinema italiano degli anni '80* (Venice: Marsilio, 1998).



memory and to question the past. In Manuela Gieri's words, contemporary Italian cinema is "literally obsessed with memory, with the past, with history."<sup>4</sup> Recently, through a series of conferences on the Italian Cinema for the New Millennium, film scholar Millicent Marcus has also emphasized that Italian cinema is not fatally dead, that it looks eagerly to return to the real, and that it still has the power of offering its spectators valid representations of the past and the present.<sup>5</sup>

It is on this note that I decided to propose a study of contemporary Italian cinema, particularly selected films by Marco Tullio Giordana and by Aurelio Grimaldi that revitalize the name, the political engagement, and the artistic production of Pier Paolo Pasolini, and which, through a variety of methods and techniques, create a common ground of interest and research. I argue that it is through the references to and reappraisal of Pasolini that films by Giordana and Grimaldi acquire a stronger social and political meaning and also rethink the aesthetic qualities of Italian contemporary cinema. In other words, if spectators miss or undervalue the significance of Pasolini's presence in Giordana's and Grimaldi's films, they would also miss the films' contribution to the understanding of Italian society and cinema in the past and the present.

Many scholars of cinema—Giordana and Grimaldi among them—have been fascinated by Pasolini since the 1960s, and the interest in his work has exponentially increased in the last ten years. One only need look at recent publications and events to gauge the extent to which Pasolini is still vividly

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<sup>4</sup> Manuela Gieri, "Landscapes of Oblivion and Historical Memory in the New Italian Cinema," *Annali di Italianistica* 17 (1999): 42.

<sup>5</sup> See for instance, Millicent Marcus, *Italian Film in the Shadow of Auschwitz* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

present in the memory and the activity of Italian and international scholars of cinema.<sup>6</sup> For the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death (November 2, 2000), Italian television devoted documentaries and a variety of shows to the Italian intellectual, thus confirming the country's enduring interest in his cinematic and literary production.<sup>7</sup>

One may wonder: why such an ongoing interest in Pasolini? How does this interest affect a branch of Italian cinema, and ultimately Italian society today? These are the questions that animated my research at the beginning. I came to the conclusion that the re-appraisal of Pier Paolo Pasolini is due to a significant combination of political and aesthetic reasons, which are best exemplified by Giordana's and Grimaldi's films. I suggest that Giordana is more inclined to engage with Pasolini's ideological views rather than with the formal qualities of his cinema. Grimaldi, instead, along with authors such as Giuseppe Bertolucci, Daniele Cipri and Franco Maresco, also embraces some of the formal qualities of Pasolini's cinematographic works, formal qualities that are recognizable because they are often "irregular and provocative."<sup>8</sup> I am referring, for instance, to Grimaldi's use of the technique that Pasolini defined as "the free indirect subjective shot," or to the employment of classical music in contrast with the content of the scene, and to the presence of frequent full close-ups in black-and-white scenes to emphasize the power of the characters' look. In Pasolini's words we may more specifically refer to "the alternation of different lenses...the proliferation of wasted zoom shots...the continuous, deceptively casual shots against the light, which dazzle the camera...the hand-

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<sup>6</sup> For a complete bibliography on Pasolini and for recent events dedicated to him, see [www.pasolini.net](http://www.pasolini.net)

<sup>7</sup> See [http://www.pasolini.net/2novembre\\_televisione.htm](http://www.pasolini.net/2novembre_televisione.htm)

<sup>8</sup> See Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, trans. Ben Lawton and Louise K. Barnett (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 184.

held camera movements, the more sharply focused tracking shots, the interminable pauses on the same image.”<sup>9</sup> However, the appreciation of Grimaldi’s films is extremely limited, and their formal qualities have been paradoxically regarded as “outdated.” Grimaldi’s films have been undermined or overlooked in a period in which the film market, both in its stages of production and distribution, requires works that are more easily received and consumed by the spectator. In other words, Italian cinema does not seem to be prepared to welcome such filmic products.

As I mentioned, the role of Pasolini as an engaged public intellectual is certainly appealing to Giordana and Grimaldi who re-propose his “civic” ideals in their artistic production. It is well known that Pasolini was a poet, a novelist, a filmmaker, a literary and cinematographic critic who often spoke out against the injustice and the corruption of political power, as well as the manipulation of people through the mass media. This aspect of his own political and social engagement made him “un personaggio scomodo,” that is to say an unsettling person loathed by politicians and with many enemies in the high spheres of institutional power. He was also a prophet of sorts: oftentimes, in fact, he foresaw fundamental problems related to politics, race, gender and religion that would fully develop only many years later. Pasolini remains certainly a major point of reference in the more recent debate of Italian scholars of cinema on the need to re-define the role of the intellectual today. Giordana and Grimaldi reconfigure themselves as intellectuals whose public performances, in Edward Said’s terms, “can neither be predicted nor compelled into some slogan, orthodox party line, or fixed dogma.”<sup>10</sup> They

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<sup>9</sup> Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, 184.

<sup>10</sup> Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), xii.

seem to hold to universal standards for human behavior and to a solid “interaction between universality and the local, the subjective, the here and now.”<sup>11</sup> The historical period that Italy is currently experiencing asks urgently for political measures that would face and solve social and economic problems that have been left unresolved in the past and that are reflected in the present with their consequences and their analogues.<sup>12</sup> Intellectuals like Giordana and Grimaldi then make their art a vehicle of critical thinking and social protest. Their return to Pasolini in the films I analyze is not a passive nostalgic appeal to the “corsaro” (a person who fights without restraint and fear), but an active attempt to restore his struggles, instilling in spectators Pasolini’s same attitude of resistance and reaction.

The revitalization of Pasolini complies with the alternative view on the concept of mourning that Alessia Ricciardi proposes vis-à-vis Lacan’s denying of any logical rationale for grief. Ricciardi emphasizes that the demise of mourning by post-modernity “implies the abandonment of any effort to provide a nuanced ethical response to the claims of the past... As a result, the abandonment of a hermeneutics of mourning both compromises our understanding of the past and sterilizes our vision of the future, as it deprives

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<sup>11</sup> Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, xiii. Said also specifies that “universality means taking a risk in order to go beyond the easy certainties provided us by our background, language, nationality, which so often shield us from the reality of others. It also means looking for and trying to uphold a single standard for human behavior when it comes to such matters as foreign and social policy,” xiv.

<sup>12</sup> Italy, after about ten years of unproductive government, faces today a serious economic crisis, a recession that involves public and private activities alike. The unemployment rate has exponentially increased in the last few months (according to March 10, 2009 *Repubblica on line* reports, between January and February 370,561 workers in Italy lost their job, 116,983 more than in March 2008); a recent law by the Minister of Education, Mariastella Gelmini has recently cut several funds destined to university research; cases of political corruption dominate the daily news reports, the judicial system is overlooked and neglected by the political institutions that, in the person of Silvio Berlusconi, proposes and approves anti-constitutional laws in the interest of a privileged few; organized crime (camorra, mafia and ‘ndrangheta) is rampant, delinquency is on the rise, especially in the big cities where in the last few months there have been a number of cases of racism and violence against women.

our culture not only of utopian inspirations and messianic inclinations, but also, finally, of the very notion of justice.”<sup>13</sup> In this sense, as Ricciardi notes, Pasolini as well as Godard offer their works as an example of the repudiation of a nostalgic conception of culture, and “by projecting back to us the figures and events of western civilization in a mood of bereavement, the two directors envision ‘the beyond’ as a space in which the mournful imagination may be resituated and reinvigorated.”<sup>14</sup> Following Ricciardi’s logic, I similarly argue that contemporary Italian filmmakers revisit the past through the figure of Pasolini in order to revise and reconfigure it. Intellectuals such as Giordana and Grimaldi who refer to Pasolini today are then interested in shedding light on historical events that ask for justice, in restoring ethical stands that have been discarded altogether over the years by the emerging technocracy of mass media. Their “spectral films” then, as was the case for Pasolini’s works, pose a potential challenge to the assumption that the image is the commodified medium par excellence of contemporary mass culture.<sup>15</sup>

While Ricciardi proposes Pasolini’s *Teorema* as an example of spectral film where mourning of the departed houseguest is conceived as an enigma, I refer to films by Marco Tullio Giordana’s *Maledetti vi amerò* (*Bastards I will love you*), *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano* (*Pasolini. An Italian Crime*) and *I cento passi* (*One hundred steps*) in chapters one and two, and Aurelio Grimaldi’s *Nerolio* and *Un mondo d’amore* (*A World of Love*) in chapters three and four. I show that in these works the object of mourning is directly or indirectly Pasolini himself, and the filmmakers portray Pasolini’s figure as the enigma in question, the

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<sup>13</sup> Alessia Ricciardi, *The Ends of Mourning* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 2.

<sup>14</sup> Ricciardi, *The Ends of Mourning*, 5.

<sup>15</sup> In Ricciardi’s words, “Unlike nostalgia films, spectral films investigate the past in order to raise questions regarding the future,” 9. Ricciardi’s point of departure for her reflection on mourning is Jacques Derrida’s *Specters of Marx*.

“demanding apparition,” the visual guide on the path toward a new openness of memory. Giordana’s and Grimaldi’s films then cannot be easily identified as “nostalgia films.” Fredric Jameson, champion of postmodern views, introduced the definition of this new genre (nostalgia film) to name certain feelings of longing or yearning for the past into an exclusively commercial value system, according to which, as Alessia Ricciardi notes, “history can be viewed only as a product to be exchanged, without any further dimensionality.”<sup>16</sup> Both Pasolini’s cinema and the cinema of Giordana and Grimaldi propose instead a poetics that fulfills a political and critical function, thus counteracting the cinema of nostalgia as it is conceived by a postmodern critique.

In my thesis I underline how Giordana and Grimaldi, through their references to Pasolini, convey a heartfelt urge (perhaps never openly declared) to re-launch certain ethical values (justice and freedom among others) that have been lost over time and that were dear to Pasolini himself. As Edward Said would note, intellectuals are authors of a language that “tries to speak the truth to the power.”<sup>17</sup> It is inevitable when we deal with Grimaldi’s and Giordana’s films, especially the ones inspired by Pasolini, to refer to the most recent debate that not only involves the role of the intellectual in Italy today, but also the philosophical re-visitation of the concepts of “truth” and “objective knowledge.” Films such as *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano* or *I cento passi*, as well as *Nerolio*, encourage us to reflect on what it means today to look for and talk about truth. Not by chance Pasolini was a very strong advocate of the “truth” itself especially when the latter was concerned with political

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<sup>16</sup> See Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 270-96.

<sup>17</sup> Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, xiv.

corruption, organized crime, diffusion of what he called *omologazione* (homogenization, the cultural sameness among social classes), genocide of local cultures and reconsideration of the equation of progress with modernity. Think of Pasolini's article "Il romanzo delle stragi" ("The Novel of the Slaughters") published in *Il Corriere della sera* in 1974 and later inserted in *Scritti corsari* to realize how crucial for Pasolini was the possibility of reconstructing the truth about the events that occurred in Italy after 1968. "This truth," Pasolini asserts, "can be perceived with absolute precision—it stands behind numerous judicial and political speeches."<sup>18</sup> Giordana tries to reconstruct the truth of the death of both Pasolini in *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano* and Peppino Impastato in *I cento passi*. Grimaldi attempts to reveal the truth behind Pasolini's death in *Nerolio* and life in *Un mondo d'amore*.

Since the category of truth has been problematized by postmodern philosophy, in my dissertation I analyze Pasolini, Giordana and Grimaldi's relationship with that philosophical stance. In a very postmodern fashion, Pasolini certainly repudiated avant-garde formalism and universal methodologies, and embraced different media giving life to a poetics of contamination. However, as Ricciardi points out, he introduced a new "engaged note of ethical and political critique" into postmodernism's emphasis to explore possibilities of new forms of narrative language.<sup>19</sup> I believe that Giordana and Grimaldi do the same in their works. The major difference is that while Pasolini openly conferred upon himself and upon intellectuals like him the possibility of finding the truth, Giordana and

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<sup>18</sup> Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società* (Milano: Mondadori, 1999), 363. "Tale verità, la si sente con assoluta precisione—sta dietro a una grande quantità di interventi anche giudiziari e politici."

<sup>19</sup> Ricciardi, *The Ends of Mourning*, 124.

Grimaldi hardly advocate that prerogative in a public arena, though they do raise questions related to an eventual truth in their films. Pasolini's point of view back in the 1970s and Giordana's and Grimaldi's today are indeed remarkable in their attempt to propose a possible truth about social, political or cultural issues, considering the potential clash that may occur between the intellectuals' belief in the existence of unquestionable truths (be they the mafia's responsibility for Peppino Impastato's assassination or the involvement of more than one person in Pasolini's murder, or even the discrimination of homosexuals in the case of both Pasolini and Peppino) and the post-structural relativism that emerged in the 1960s and that is still dominant today. Elizabeth Wren-Owens explains that with post-structuralism "in this new de-centered universe, there is no centre, no authority against which to measure ideas, no fixed point to deviate from. In such a world there are no facts, only interpretations which cannot be validated, and hence the notion of communicating truth through writing becomes problematized."<sup>20</sup> In Satya Mohanty's words, a postmodern deconstructive approach invokes "the acceptance of a vulnerability based on the belief that nothing is ever epistemically reliable... today progressive politics—feminist, antiracist, anticolonialist, and so forth— has increasingly become identified with a critical and demystificatory project that not only interrogates the smugness of traditional claims to truth but is also skeptical of any attempt to seek objectivity."<sup>21</sup> In my study of contemporary Italian cinema, especially the films by Giordana and Grimaldi, although I take into account postmodern claims to

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<sup>20</sup> Elizabeth Wren-Owens, *Postmodern Ethics* (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 103.

<sup>21</sup> Satya P. Mohanty, *Literary Theory and the Claims of History. Postmodernism, Objectivity, Multicultural Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 13, 16.



plurality and openness, I am inclined to consider Mohanty's post-positivist realist theory, since it helps reorient philosophical attention towards the possibility of ethical claims on the basis of acquired knowledge. Mohanty's theory, which suggests the possibility of relying on objective knowledge through a refined understanding of the relationship between error and truth, allows us to position Giordana and Grimaldi's works within the current philosophical debate on the definition of truth and justice.<sup>22</sup> Mohanty trusts men's rational faculty and agency to evaluate a variety of social occurrences, to eradicate some socially based error, and reach at least a *more just view* of the world in full respect of cultural pluralism.<sup>23</sup> I think that this was the goal of Pasolini in the 1960s as it is the goal of Giordana and Grimaldi today.

Committing themselves to social and political causes that demand further attention, Giordana and Grimaldi also reconsider the relationship between cinema and reality. In order to clarify the features of Giordana and Grimaldi's realistic approach, it may be useful to refer back to the old literary

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<sup>22</sup> According to Mohanty one must reject the binary extremes of ethnic absolutism or essentialism on the one hand and postmodern relativism on the other. Mohanty defines "objective knowledge as something we achieve when we have freed ourselves from all bias..." and he refers to a more nuanced conception of objectivity that is "built on an analysis of the differences between different kinds of subjective or theoretical bias or interest, an analysis that distinguishes those biases that are limiting or counterproductive from those that are in fact necessary for knowledge, that are epistemologically productive and useful." Satya Mohanty, "Can Our Values Be Objective? On Ethics, Aesthetics, and Progressive Politics." *New Literary Theory*, 32.4 (2001): 804. See Mohanty, *Literary Theory and the Claims of History: Postmodernism, Objectivity, Multicultural Politics*, 193. Mohanty's theory is radically anti-foundationalist, no a priori incorrigible epistemological principles are possible, knowledge is socially and historically mediated, but at the same time it is not shy of justified metaphysical claims

<sup>23</sup> "In some instances some kinds of error can be eradicated through adjustments in our methodologies, our background assumptions and theories, or the cultural information we take for granted. Empirical inquiry becomes essential if we are to understand the particular kind of error but what the values are." Mohanty, "Can Our Values Be Objective? On Ethics, Aesthetics and Progressive Politics," *New Literary History*, 803-833. The excerpt is taken from the same article published on [http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/new\\_literary\\_history/v032/32.4mohanty.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/new_literary_history/v032/32.4mohanty.html), p. 7 of 18. For further details of the post-positivist realist theory, consult Mohanty. *Literary Theory and the Claims of History: Postmodernism, Objectivity, Multicultural Politics*; Paula M.L. Moya, Micheal R. Hames-Garcia. *Reclaiming Identities: Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

and cinematographic tradition of realism and neorealism. A brief overview is therefore necessary.

As Millicent Marcus points out, the definition of realism and then of neorealism is extremely difficult, since it entails a set of “complex, often contradictory and aesthetic and philosophical manifestations.”<sup>24</sup> That is why, each term (realism or neorealism) “requires a highly contextual approach.”<sup>25</sup> It is possible to talk about different realisms which, following Marcus’ study, do have certain elements in common: they all hold that an objective world exists, it can be known, and, finally, its existence and the processes by which we come to know it, are separable.<sup>26</sup> From the eighteenth century through the twentieth century, realism has counteracted expressionism, aestheticism and more in general illusionism. Marcus emphasizes the gap between classical realism and the realist theory that came to prevail in nineteenth-century France. Classical realism was based on Aristotelian philosophy according to which nature is the proper model for artistic imitation, and

artists are able to improve upon their model by bringing to completion what nature necessarily leaves imperfect and flawed. In this way, Aristotelian mimesis (of reality) is didactic and dynamic, unwilling to remain at the level of the surface. Aristotle argues that the ideal is indeed inherent in the real and artists should bear witness to this truth by purging nature of all obstacles to its perfect progress.<sup>27</sup>

In French literature and art that developed in the nineteenth century, realism, instead, confined the artist to the accurate, impassive, objective observation of

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<sup>24</sup> Millicent Marcus, *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 3. In her introduction, Marcus traces the history of literary realism and of cinematographic neorealism by referring to a rich and significant bibliography on those themes.

<sup>25</sup> Marcus, *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism*, 4.

<sup>26</sup> As for different realisms, see Maurizio Viano, *A Certain Realism: Making Sense of Pasolini's Film Theory and Practice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 55-56.

<sup>27</sup> Marcus, *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism*, 7.

empirical phenomena. This approach was emphasized by French Naturalism, whose authors claimed to obtain scientific knowledge, and used theories of genetics for their literary practice. Aristotelian realism can be found in George Lukács' Marxist realist perspective whose aim was to detect the dynamics of historical development, and modify and perfect the social order.<sup>28</sup> Nowadays, Marcus stresses, both classical realism and nineteenth-century realism are present in the claims of modern realist theory, and, as such, they cause contradictions and inconsistencies since the art works are required to be at once objective, disinterested, limited to empirical phenomena (nineteenth-century realism) and politically engaged, didactic, attuned to the patterns that determine certain phenomena (classical realism). So, on the one hand there is the didactic, politically interested impulse of the realist classical tradition; on the other hand, there is the denial of preconceived systems of meaning, and the insistence on a scientifically verifiable, objective approach to the material world.

As for Italian realism specifically (for example, in works by Giovanni Verga and his friend and colleague Luigi Capuana), realist authors assimilated the methods of impersonal observation and artistic nonintervention implied in the French scientific approach, but at the same time they also rejected the strictly material, deterministic elements of naturalism and retained the

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<sup>28</sup> See George Lukács, *Realism in Our Time: Literature and the Class Struggle*, trans. John and Necke Mander (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1964). On Lukács' realism and the opposition between mere appearances and true reality, Christopher Williams writes that such opposition reappears in the Marxist aesthetic of "György Lukács, with his distinctions between the 'apparent form' of the art-work and its 'inner core' or essence, through which the conscious reader can gain access to the real truth of a historical situation, and between 'naturalism', which albeit with great detail, shows only the appearances of situations, and 'realism,' which by using devices like the historically typical character and action, functions in the same sort of way as the 'inner core.' 'Naturalism' describes events but without providing the reader with a key to understanding them; and thereby denies him/her access to the truth...." Christopher Williams, *Realism and the Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1980), 11.

Aristotelian belief in a permanent, ideal order in the world. Marcus remarks that “this conservative, yet flexible approach to realism has continued in Italy up through the twentieth century. It lives in the simultaneous claims of absolute, scientific objectivity on the one hand, and a quest for underlying patterns of significance on the other.”<sup>29</sup>

Neorealism then resulted from a combination of both kinds of realisms. Roberto Rossellini in 1952 argued that neorealism expressed “a need that is proper to modern man, to tell things as they are, to understand reality... in a pitiless concrete way, conforming to that typically contemporary interest for statistical and scientific results.”<sup>30</sup> At the same time, however, Rossellini stressed the necessity of grasping the “the intelligence of things... because to give true value to anything means to have apprehended its authentic and universal significance.”<sup>31</sup> In writings on neorealism as well as in films by neorealist filmmakers (Roberto Rossellini, Vittorio De Sica, Luchino Visconti) there is often the use of the word “truth,” which shows their desire to go beyond the surface and reveal hidden, universal meanings. There is much controversy about definitions, rules and influences of neorealism (both in literature and cinema).<sup>32</sup> Marcus refers to Georges Sadoul’s list of rules governing neorealist practice, including “location shooting, long takes, unobtrusive editing, natural lighting, a predominance of medium and long shots, respect for the continuity of time and space, use of contemporary, true-to-life subjects, an uncontrived, open-ended plot, working class protagonists, a

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<sup>29</sup>Marcus, *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism*, 14.

<sup>30</sup>Quoted in Mario Verdone, “Colloqui sul neorealismo,” *Bianco e nero*, 2 (1952), 8. Trans. Millicent Marcus.

<sup>31</sup>Quoted in Mario Verdone, “Colloqui sul neorealismo,” 8.

<sup>32</sup>See Alberto Asor Rosa, *Storia europea della letteratura italiana*, vol. 3 (Torino: Einaudi, 2009): 400-67.

non professional cast, dialogue in the vernacular.”<sup>33</sup> However, “no filmmaker of the so-called neorealist tendency will consistently manifest all the hallmarks of the style as institutionalized by the critical literature.”<sup>34</sup> It seems that consensus on commonalities in neorealist practice comes when the attention moves from technical aspects to ethical positions. “For many critics neorealism is first and foremost a moral statement,” a form of art that promotes true objectivity and ethical responsibility.<sup>35</sup> The Resistance certainly influenced neorealist activism; Neorealists, unlike Verga who was resigned to the status quo, adopted art not as a passive instrument of registration of events, but as a means to motivate radical social change through “a ferocious love of honesty.”<sup>36</sup> Despite the fact that neorealism was rejected by both the Right and the Left wing of Italian politics, and by mid-1950s had already declined, it certainly had its impact on subsequent films.<sup>37</sup>

We may ask then in what way contemporary Italian filmmakers such as Giordana and Grimaldi reappropriate a (neo)realist approach, and to what extent they diverge from Pasolini’s use of Neorealist practice. First of all, let us analyze Pasolini’s realism.

The relationship between cinema and reality was very dear to Pasolini who, in an interview with Oswald Stack, asserted that “When I make a film I am always in reality, among the trees and among the people like yourself;

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<sup>33</sup> Marcus, *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism*, 22.

<sup>34</sup> Marcus, *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism*, 23.

<sup>35</sup> Marcus, *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism*, 23.

<sup>36</sup> Alberto Lattuada, quoted in Marcus, *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism*, 26.

<sup>37</sup> Brandon French, “The Continuity of the Italian Cinema,” *Yale Italian Studies* 2 (Winter 1978), 59-69; Alfonso Canziani and Cristina Bragaglia, *La stagione neorealista* (Bologna: Cooperativa Libreria Universitaria, 1976): 15; Lino Micciché, “Per una verifica,” in *Il neorealismo cinematografico italiano* (Venice: Marsilio, 1975):10; Carlo Lizzani, *Il cinema italiano 1895-1979* (Rome: Riuniti, 1979): 163-263; Peter Brunette, “Recent Italian Film,” *Italian Quarterly* 25 (Spring 1984), 61-62; Roy Armes, *Patterns of Realism* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Co. Inc., 1971), 194-207.

there is no symbolic filter between me and reality, as there is in literature. So in practice cinema was an explosion of my love for reality."<sup>38</sup> In *Heretical Empiricism*, he spoke of "cinema of reality," asserting that reality is in itself a cinematic spectacle, and that is through cinema that we can reach a better understanding of reality. Furthermore, in an article published in the journal *Film and Filming* in 1961 Pasolini asserted that "There is no absolute Realism that is valid for all epochs. Every epoch has its own realism. And this is because every epoch has its own ideology."<sup>39</sup> In the same article he praised neorealism for having shown Italy and revealed what the Fascists could not show (people's misery), but he also accused neorealism of being too rational and humanistic. According to Maurizio Viano's argument, Pasolini's realism, though adopting the neorealist unmasking operation, rejected a (neo)realistic mimetic practice, and was bound to desire and the subject.<sup>40</sup> As such

the entire edifice based on the notion of realism as impassive observation and dispassionate portrayal from an objective point of view crumbles. Fueled by passion and different ideological and cinematic assumptions, Pasolini's realism becomes a subjactive force, a bodily humor circulating in the veins of people rather than in the crevices of a text.<sup>41</sup> (Viano's emphasis)

Pasolini's realism, Viano suggests, turns into "an act of reading," that is to say it shifts the attention from the author to the reader/viewer's interpretation and position vis-à-vis the textual dimension.<sup>42</sup> In other words, Pasolini's

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<sup>38</sup> Oswald Stack, *Pasolini* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969): 29.

<sup>39</sup> Pier Paolo Pasolini, "Intellectualism... and the Teds," *Films and Filming* (January 1961): 17. Cited in Viano, *A Certain Realism*, 69.

<sup>40</sup> Pasolini seeks for "a New Realism [which] is the feeling behind my work," in "Intellectualism... and the Teds," 17. Once again, Pasolini's emphasis is on the importance of feelings (passion and desire) in the application of a neorealist approach.

<sup>41</sup> Viano, *A Certain Realism*, 58.

<sup>42</sup> Viano suggests that both author and reader/viewer are informed by passion and provide a subjective interpretation of reality. This interpretation, fueled also by reason, becomes then subjactive, that is to say, it leads author and reader/viewer to take an active part in the process of knowing and participating in the making of reality.

realism “transforms viewing into an experience with a reality-value, that is, an experience which increases the subject’s awareness of his/her position within the language of reality.”<sup>43</sup> Viano also stresses Pasolini’s combination of passion and reason into ideology, and he concludes that “the main trait of a realist reading is *ideological awareness*.”<sup>44</sup> The ideological attitude fueled by Marxism and Freudian psychoanalysis, does not trust the world of appearances and therefore treats reality suspiciously. In other words, “Immediate physical reality (e.g. *Gennariello’s* curtain) and the subject’s consciousness (e.g. his perception of the curtain) are *not* to be trusted, for something more real is going on behind and beneath them, something which determines their actual meaning and which must be uncovered if knowledge is to prompt effective action.”<sup>45</sup> However, despite the awareness of the existence of a multilayered reality, Pasolini’s realism, according to Viano, “is never a question of discovering an ultimate essence or of arguing that what power hides is intrinsically more substantial than what it reveals.”<sup>46</sup> Viano also refers to Pasolini’s mystical attitude and mythical perspective to emphasize the multiplicity of meanings inherent in the reality, and to enhance “the subject’s disposition to wondering. And wandering.”<sup>47</sup>

Viano takes into account several aspects of Pasolini’s private and artistic life (Humanism, Marxism, Freudian psychoanalysis, Catholicism), but he does not take into consideration Pasolini’s repetitive use of the word “truth” in *Heretical Empiricism* (“truth can be felt with absolute precision”) and elsewhere

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<sup>43</sup> Viano, *A Certain Realism*, 59. Viano, however, stresses also that Pasolini never actually tackled the question of what a realist reading would/should do.

<sup>44</sup> Viano, *A Certain Realism*, 60.

<sup>45</sup> Viano, *A Certain Realism*, 61.

<sup>46</sup> Viano, *A Certain Realism*, 62.

<sup>47</sup> Viano, *A Certain Realism*, 63.

in his interviews.<sup>48</sup> For Pasolini knowledge of truth granted justice. Since in his political tirades Pasolini talked about truth, one wonders then how that truth is attainable if reality with its multiple layers can never be dug up until one reaches an ultimate reality. Pasolini was extremely concerned with justice, and, as such, it seems contradictory that he did not believe in the possibility of ever reaching an ultimate reality (truth) that would “prompt effective action.” Pasolini’s position, in this sense, may find its explanation in his ingrained spirituality (Catholicism) and may be more attuned to Lukács’ realism.

If the complexity of realism, neorealism and Pasolini’s own realistic approach makes it difficult to pin down all their features and compress them in a monolithic ensemble, it is not less difficult to determine what kind of realistic methodology contemporary filmmakers such as Giordana and Grimaldi adopt. One should take each author and each one of their works separately to analyze their realism. However, in more general terms, one notices that they do not eschew a sort of mimetic realism that was adopted by neorealist filmmakers and is inclined to reproduce the reality, or better the historical event, on the screen faithfully, on the basis of a study of collected documents and research on location. This is the case of Giordana’s *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano* and *I cento passi* for instance, or Grimaldi’s *Un mondo d’amore*. Their representation of historical people or events is never as fully accurate, or objective and impassive as nineteenth-century realism would require. However, this does not necessarily mean that their representation is less truthful. Vittorio Taviani once said that “To render the idea of reality it is often necessary to modify it.”<sup>49</sup> Siegfried Kracauer also emphasized the apparent

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<sup>48</sup> Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 363.

<sup>49</sup> Vittorio Taviani in Aldo Tassone, *Parla il cinema italiano*, vol. 2 (Milan: Il Formichiere, 1980), 368.



paradox that a reconstructed event may produce of stronger illusion of reality.<sup>50</sup> In other words, even when reality is not perfectly mirrored on the screen and is somehow manipulated, the results (or illusions) “find their ultimate justification in their service to a higher truth: the revelation of the world order in a way that would otherwise escape our unaided notice.”<sup>51</sup> With respect to Pasolini, who especially in his latest films rejected many of the neorealist techniques (especially the respect for continuity of time and space, unobtrusive editing), Giordana and Grimaldi do retain some neorealist techniques included in the definition of neorealist cinema, though they do not consistently use all of them. For instance, they shoot on location and adopt the vernacular in certain instances (Giordana’s *I cento passi*), or use a non-professional cast (Grimaldi’s *Nerolio* or *Un mondo d’amore*).

What seems to be a common element among neorealists, Pasolini and contemporary Italian filmmakers such as Giordana and Grimaldi is their interest in historical and present reality, as well as their ethical responsibility, their will to convey a message through their works, and their invitation to the spectator to think critically about social and political issues of Italy past and present. Unlike Pasolini who was a public intellectual who never missed a chance to openly criticize the political or social system as he also did in his films, Giordana or Grimaldi, as mentioned before, never publicly acknowledge their commitment, except through their films. Though these considerations are not central in my thesis, it is useful to note, on one hand, the extent to which Italian cinema is tied to a dominant political control, and, on the other, the inability for these filmmakers to take an explicit position as

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<sup>50</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (New York: Oxford, 1979), 35.

<sup>51</sup> Marcus, *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism*, 6.

Pasolini did in the 1970s.

As for their new take on realism, Grimaldi and Giordana become part of a larger contemporary cinematographic movement that continuously returns to Italian history in order to re-evaluate events and reconsider the Italian *forma mentis* and *modus operandi*. Let us think for instance of recent successful films such as Paolo Sorrentino's *Il divo* (2008), or Matteo Garrone's *Gomorra* (2008) and Marco Risi's *Fortapasc* (2009), that insert themselves into the increasing number of contemporary Italian films that call on us to recognize and denounce social and political problems of the past and the present. Like Sorrentino and Garrone, also Giordana looks back to history. He chronicles the Italian political and social turmoil of the 1960s and 1970s; in his first film *Maledetti vi amerò*, particular attention is given to the disillusionment that occurred after the decline of the Left Movements' ideals and to the rise of the Red Brigades. As I mentioned before, Giordana's return to the past occurs through the lenses of Pasolini who, in this film, is recalled as a spectral figure along with another eminent spectral reference, Antonio Gramsci. Giordana's goal is to lead the spectators to think critically about the outcome of personal and collective ideals that failed in the 1960s. Pasolini and Gramsci then become points of departure for political and philosophical observations, and they configure themselves as a means by which Giordana connects a past full of ideals with a present deprived of any concrete and reliable political and institutional reference. In his second film *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano*, Giordana adopts the same strategy, that is to say the re-visitation of the past through Pasolini, this time with a direct reference to the poet's life and especially to his death. In this film the assassination of Pasolini is positioned in a context in which political corruption and the role of the mass media have a crucial

relevance in the tragic end of the artist and its public reception. The film directly refers to the present time by treating Pasolini's death as an unresolved enigma and by calling for a re-opening of the trial against Pino Pelosi, Pasolini's murderer, and possible accomplices (included political institutions). In Giordana's third film, *I cento passi*, Pasolini returns in a direct parallel with Peppino Impastato, the historical protagonist of the film. Here, besides the commonalities of political and ideological views, the reference to Pasolini helps Giordana deal also with a subject matter that was as tragically relevant for Pasolini as it was for Peppino Impastato: homosexuality. Once again, Pasolini becomes the vehicle to bring past and present in close connection, and to deal with social issues that needed to be addressed then as much as now. If *I cento passi* were not read through the lense provided by Pasolini, much of the significance of the film would be missed.

The theme of Pasolini's homosexuality becomes central in Aurelio Grimaldi's *Nerolio*. I have chosen to focus on Grimaldi (instead of, say, Giuseppe Bertolucci), since Grimaldi gives me the opportunity to offer a different perspective on Pasolini, a point of view that appears contrary to Giordana's, and that is directly related to Pasolini's homosexuality. In fact, while for Giordana the return and revitalization of Pasolini is informed by a declared passionate admiration for the artist, in the case of Grimaldi we can talk about a "critical love", as Grimaldi himself defines it. Most of all, for Grimaldi, one has to pay great attention to the excessive praise given to Pasolini after his death. Grimaldi, along with Carla Benedetti, Cecilia Mangini, and Giovanni Dell'Orto, seeks to warn the spectator against what they all refer to as "the monumentalization" of Pier Paolo Pasolini. In fact, transforming Pasolini into a saint or a martyr means reducing his destructive potential and

the force of his polemical tirades, and it leads to a neutralization of his word and active engagement.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, monumentalization or martyrdom often entails obscuring Pasolini's homosexuality. For this reason, Grimaldi focuses on Pasolini's sexual drives, and emphasizes the merits and flaws of the man and the artist. In *Nerolio* Grimaldi offers an image of the poet as he approached the last year of Pasolini's life (1975). This image has deeply irritated Pasolini's friends and outraged many cinema scholars. Roberto Chiesi, film critic and director of the Archives of the Centro Studi Pier Paolo Pasolini in Bologna, has candidly asserted that "Grimaldi should not make films. His films are very ugly... from an aesthetic, linguistic and narrative point of view... *Nerolio* is one of the most aberrant [cinematographic] operations ever realized in Italy."<sup>53</sup> Chiesi's verdict is clear, and it reflects perhaps the opinion of many admirers of Pasolini's. In *Nerolio*, according to Chiesi, Pasolini appears as an artist deprived of his intellectual substance and deep sensibility; the vulgarity of his language in the film is excessive and inappropriate. Though I was myself struck by Pasolini's coarse language in this film, and would ask Grimaldi for a more attentive treatment of Pasolini's murder, I also acknowledge Grimaldi's thoughtful attempt to inform and almost shock the spectator about the final, tormented phase of Pasolini's life as well as his desperate attempt to react.<sup>54</sup> Filmmaker Cecilia Mangini, who

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<sup>52</sup> Carla Benedetti is professor of Contemporary Italian Literature at the University of Pisa, and has extensively written on Pasolini (*Pasolini contro Calvino*, Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 1998); Cecilia Mangini is a film critic and filmmaker who worked with Pasolini when the latter wrote some texts for her documentaries in the 1960s (*La canta delle marane*, *Stendali*); Giovanni dell'Orto is a writer and an activist in the Italian Gay Movement.

<sup>53</sup> Roberto Chiesi, my interview (Bologna: June 30, 2008). "Penso che Grimaldi non dovrebbe fare film, i suoi film sono molto brutti esteticamente, narrativamente, linguisticamente... *Nerolio* lo ritengo una delle operazioni più aberranti che siano state mai fatte in Italia." Trans. mine.

<sup>54</sup> Mangini sees Pasolini's use of coarse language as a sort of liberation against the repression in act during a period of high bourgeois prissiness (*perbenismo*). See my interview with Cecilia Mangini (Rome: July 13, 2008).

enjoyed Pasolini's gentleness and mildness while working with him, has no doubt that by the end of his life Pasolini was utterly embittered by the critiques and attacks that had been addressed to him for over twenty years. She thinks then that Grimaldi's representation of Pasolini in *Nerolio* is not far off the mark. Mangini asserts:

I am sure that little by little the sum of accusations and trials embittered him so much that at the end he built his rebellion to the status quo... Hence I am certain that what Grimaldi intended to do was to talk about the latest Pasolini, the resentful Pasolini that had asked to be understood and loved... To be loved and accepted was fundamental for him [Pasolini], just because of his personality, his mildness, the availability he showed with everybody, his capacity of listening to the people and to empathize with their problems. All this has been swept away by this incredible persecution. I believe that Grimaldi understood this truly well.<sup>55</sup>

Most of the attacks against Pasolini were due to his homosexuality. This becomes clear in the film *Un mondo d'amore*, where Grimaldi portrays Pasolini at the crucial moment of his forced coming out. *Un mondo d'amore* offers an image of Pasolini as a timid and intimidated artist who is disoriented and tormented by the public opinion's homophobia; the film leads to an immediate parallel with the earlier film, *Nerolio*, and makes the spectator realize the change that Pasolini underwent over time due to the acknowledgement of his homosexuality. By presenting in *Nerolio* Pasolini's extremely negative behavior, Grimaldi intends to shock spectators and prompt them to question the unrestrained admiration for the poet, an

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<sup>55</sup> See Cecilia Mangini, my interview. "Io sono convinta che pian piano questa somma di accuse e processi l'abbia talmente amareggiato che alla fine ha sedimentato una ribellione a questo stato di cose... Quindi sono convinta che quello che voleva raccontare Grimaldi è l'ultimo Pasolini, il Pasolini amareggiato che aveva chiesto di essere capito e amato... Il fatto di essere benvenuto e accettato era per lui [Pasolini] fondamentale, proprio per il suo carattere, la sua mitezza, la disponibilità che aveva con tutti, il suo ascoltare la gente e sapersi immedesimare nei suoi problemi. Tutto questo è stato travolto da questa persecuzione incredibile. Credo che questo Grimaldi l'abbia capito veramente bene."

admiration that, as I already underlined, immobilizes and nullifies his critical attacks and ethical stances. Finally, Grimaldi wants spectators to focus on Pasolini's homosexuality. In Grimaldi's view, one needs to focus on this assassination as an exemplification of many murders occurring in those years and today among homosexuals. For Grimaldi, speaking of political conspiracy means undermining the homosexual component of Pasolini's life. I believe that Pasolini's murder invites spectators who live that event through the film to reflect on the state of homosexuals in those years and now, and on social and political issues that could be related to the 1960s and 1970s Italy and to Pasolini's specific murder. In other words, the two hypotheses about Pasolini's murder (that is to say the hypothesis of a murder of a homosexual by another homosexual, and the hypothesis of a [political] conspiracy) do not necessarily contradict or exclude each other.

In sum, my work aims to reevaluate the films of those contemporary Italian filmmakers such as Giordana and Grimaldi who revitalize Pier Paolo Pasolini's life and artistic production. It is through the lenses of this controversial artist that Giordana and Grimaldi re-consider the past, analyze the present time and invite the spectator to take a more active stance against social and political injustice. Edward Said wrote that

the intellectual is an individual endowed with a faculty for representing, embodying, articulating a message, a view, an attitude, philosophy or opinion to, as well as for, a public. [t]he intellectual is]someone whose place it is publicly to raise embarrassing questions, to confront orthodoxy and dogma (rather than producing them)...[is] someone who cannot easily be co-opted by governments or corporations, and whose *raison d'être* is to represent all those people and issues that are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, 11.

I believe that Pasolini offers the perfect example of Said's intellectual, and those filmmakers such as Giordana and Grimaldi who turn to Pier Paolo Pasolini in their works share his ethical values (justice and freedom among others) and open a new productive venue for Italian contemporary cinema.

## CHAPTER 1

### PASOLINI AND THE EARLY FILMS OF MARCO TULLIO GIORDANA

This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first one (1.1) I present filmmaker Marco Tullio Giordana, and analyze his experience and knowledge of Pier Paolo Pasolini and the social context in which the Italian intellectual was stigmatized mainly because of his homosexuality. Giordana has been able to see beyond that discrimination and take Pasolini as a “maestro” of cinematic techniques and political and social critique. The influence of Pasolini’s thought and artistic style is evident in Giordana’s earlier films. The second section of this chapter (1.2, 1.3) is devoted to two films with which Giordana reached his popularity: *Maledetti vi amerò* (1980) and *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano* (1995). In these films we can already trace themes that were dear to Pasolini himself, for instance the relationship with the PCI and Gramsci in the 1960s and 70s, the role of the intellectual, the importance of the body, the function of montage in a film as well as the relationship between reality and fiction. These themes will provide a solid base for Giordana’s latest film *I cento passi* (2000), which will constitute the subject matter of the second chapter.

#### 1.1 *Giordana Meets Pasolini.*

In an interview with Angela Prudenzi, critic for the journal *Il Cinematografo*, Giordana extensively talks about his personal interaction with Pasolini.<sup>57</sup> He explains that his first encounter with the eminent Italian intellectual occurred when he was only twelve:

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<sup>57</sup> Angela Prudenzi’s interview with Giordana which is titled “Pasolini: Un delitto italiano” has not been published. Marco Tullio Giordana kindly granted it to me, explaining that it took place in Rome in 1996, with the purpose to insert it in the ‘extras’ of his film *Pasolini: Un delitto*



I was struck by a photo on a weekly magazine, a black and white image of Pasolini while he was shooting 'Mamma Roma'. He wore a shirt that looked like the suit of an inmate sentenced to life in prison, with numbers on it as it was in fashion then. He wore dark glasses, and the all image had something dangerous, emphasized by the *contemptuous comment of the caption*. I don't remember the exact words, but they had a definitive weight and tone, *they seemed to be a finger pointed against a reprobate*.<sup>58</sup> (Emphasis mine)

One aspect that is immediately evident from the director's reminiscence is the 'mediated' power (or better 'potere mediatico') of this encounter. Both the posture in which Pasolini is caught and the journalist's comments confine the Italian intellectual in a narrow, uncomfortable cage where he is trapped with no right of appeal. Like Giordana, many young people of his generation and the following ones were induced to shape a negative image of Pasolini by journals, newspapers, and TV programs of that period.<sup>59</sup> Pasolini often commented on the persecution of press and media, recognizing that it was mainly due to his homosexuality. In a 1975 interview with Jean Duflot he stated:

For twenty years Italian journalists, especially in the written press, have contributed to render my persona a moral countertype, an outcast. There is no doubt that the public opinion has banned me because of my homophilia. The latter has been imputed to me for all my life as a sign of degeneration that was particularly emblematic for the case I represent: [homophilia seen as] the seal of a human disdain that would

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*italiano* home video (DVD). However, at the very last moment, the home video distributor, Cecchi Gori, decided not to include it.

<sup>58</sup> Angela Prudenzi, interview with Marco Tullio Giordana (Rome, 1996), 1. Unpublished work. "Rimasi colpito da una fotografia su un settimanale, un'immagine in bianco e nero. Pasolini colto durante le riprese di 'Mamma Roma' in maniche di camicia, una *camicia da ergastolano* con i numeri stampati sopra, come allora usava. Portava gli occhiali scuri e tutto l'insieme aveva un che di pericoloso, enfatizzato dal *commento sprezzante della didascalia*. Non ricordo le parole esatte, ma avevano un peso e un tono definitivo, sembravano *l'indice puntato contro un reprobato*." All translations, unless otherwise specified, are my own.

<sup>59</sup> For a complete view of the press's strategies to persecute and denigrate Pasolini's image see *Una strategia del linciaggio e delle mistificazioni*, ed. Roberto Chiesi (Bologna: Centro Studi Pier Paolo Pasolini, 2005). See also Franco Grattarola. *Pasolini. Una vita violentata* (Rome: Coniglio Editore, 2005).

mark me, would condemn whatever I am, my sensibility, my imagination, my work, the totality of my emotions, of my feelings and actions to be nothing else but a camouflaging of a fundamental sin, a sin and a damnation.<sup>60</sup>

Looking at himself as the young boy who meets Pasolini, Giordana confirms: That image [of Pasolini] “ induces him to reflect and it also troubles him. Perhaps because he perceives that the strangeness of that person has something to do with sexuality, a topic to which he assigns the maximum curiosity with the least amount of information.”<sup>61</sup> It did not take Giordana much time to reformulate his own judgement on Pasolini: in a few years he furthered his knowledge of the Italian filmmaker, as well as issues related to sexuality and cinema. In 1964, when he saw Pasolini’s film *Mamma Roma*, he was dazzled by its images and deemed the author to be a graceful man whose

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<sup>60</sup> Pier Paolo Pasolini in “Il sogno del centauro. Incontri con Jean Dufloy,” *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*. (Milan: Mondadori, 1999), 1532. “Sono vent’anni che la stampa italiana, e in primo luogo la stampa scritta, ha contribuito a fare della mia persona un controtipo morale, un proscritto. Non c’è dubbio che a questa messa al bando da parte dell’opinione pubblica abbia contribuito l’omofilia, che mi è stata imputata per tutta la vita come un marchio d’ignominia particolarmente emblematica nel caso che rappresento: il suggello stesso di un abominio umano da cui sarei segnato, e che condannerebbe tutto ciò che io sono, la mia sensibilità, la mia immaginazione, il mio lavoro, la totalità delle mie emozioni, dei miei sentimenti e delle mie azioni a non essere altri se non un camuffamento di questo peccato fondamentale, di un peccato e di una dannazione.” See also Pasolini “Paragrafo terzo: ancora sul tuo pedagogo,” *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 556. In this article (March 20, 1975) Pasolini gives a very acute definition of ‘tolerance’: “Io sono ...un tollerato. La tolleranza, sappilo, è solo e sempre puramente nominale. Non conosco un solo esempio di tolleranza reale. E questo perché una ‘tolleranza reale’ sarebbe una contraddizione in termini. Il fatto che si ‘tollerì’ qualcuno è lo stesso che ‘lo si condanni’. La tolleranza è anzi una forma di condanna più raffinata. Infatti al ‘tollerato’ ...si dice di far quello che vuole, che egli ha pieno diritto di seguire la propria natura...ma la sua ‘diversità’ – o meglio la sua ‘colpa di essere diverso’ – resta identica sia davanti a chi abbia deciso di tollerarla, sia davanti a chi abbia deciso di condannarla. Nessuna maggioranza potrà mai abolire dalla propria coscienza il sentimento della ‘diversità’ delle minoranze.” “I am... a tolerated man. Tolerance, know it, is always and only purely nominal. I don’ know a single example of real tolerance. And this is because a ‘real tolerance’ would be a contradiction in terms. The fact that one ‘tolerates’ somebody is the same as one ‘condemns him’. Tolerance is rather a more refined form of condemnation. In fact one says to the tolerated man that he can do what he wants, that he has the right to follow his nature...but his ‘diversity’ – or better ‘his fault of being different’ – remains identical for both who has decided to tolerate it and who has decided to condemn it. No majority could ever cancel from its conscience the feeling of the ‘diversity’ of the minorities.”

<sup>61</sup> Prudenzi, interview with Marco Tullio Giordana, 1. “...lo fa riflettere e lo turba. Forse perché intuisce che la stranezza di quella persona ha qualcosa a che vedere con la sessualità, argomento al quale associa il massimo della curiosità con il minimo di informazioni”.

personality denoted sensitivity, passion and empathy for the 'diverse.' The individual emerging from his own art was not the same person that the newspapers more or less explicitly stigmatized. Giordana concludes by saying, "I had the clear perception that Pasolini was victim of a prejudice, even a falsification."<sup>62</sup> Giordana's interest in Pasolini increased over time, as Pasolini became, despite the opposing public opinion, one of the major intellectuals of the Italian literary and cinematographic panorama, and a controversial part of the literary canon.<sup>63</sup> Radio and TV interviews with him, as well as his books and newspaper articles were widespread. In the introduction to his book *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano* (1994) Giordana states:

Though I knew very little of his films—and some of them had even struck me—my admiration was addressed to his figure of intellectual that he embodied:...[he was] a contemporary of mine, within a vocal and visual reach, so to speak. I could have almost weekly appointments with his pedagogy, it was enough to enter a bookstore or even only read the newspapers. I had clear in my ears the sound of his voice, in my eyes his physiognomy. I also had clear those physiognomies and voices that polemicize with him. Not all of them were banal or unimportant people.<sup>64</sup>

Giordana was particularly fascinated by Pasolini since the latter offered him the possibility of drawing a connection between literature and cinema, and

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<sup>62</sup> Marco Tullio Giordana. *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano* (Milan: Mondadori, 2005), 1. "Ne ricavai la netta sensazione che Pasolini fosse vittima di un pregiudizio, addirittura di una falsificazione."

<sup>63</sup> Though Giordana asserts that Pasolini was "già installato nei testi di Storia della Letteratura insieme agli altri grandi tutori della mia formazione" ("already installed in the texts of History of Italian Literature with all the greatest authors of my education") (*Pasolini: Un delitto italiano*, 17). I would argue that, on a general basis, considering the syllabi of courses on History of Italian literature in the last twenty-five years, the major books of Italian literature adopted in the 1960s through the 1980s, and the social stigmatization of Pasolini, he was far from being inserted in the traditional literary canon taught in schools throughout Italy.

<sup>64</sup> Giordana, *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano*, 17. "Per quanto conoscessi i suoi film – e da alcuni fossi stato addirittura folgorato – la mia ammirazione era piuttosto rivolta alla figura di intellettuale che incarnava: ...mio contemporaneo, a portata- per così dire – di voce e di sguardo. Potevo avere appuntamenti quasi settimanali con la sua pedagogia, bastava entrare in una libreria o anche soltanto leggere i giornali. Avevo chiaro nelle orecchie il suono della voce, negli occhi la sua fisionomia. Altrettanto chiare le fisionomie e le voci di quelli che polemizzavano con lui, non tutte persone banali o dappoco."

provided critical means to analyze the socio-political situation characterizing Italy in that period:

Obviously I admired also other intellectuals such as Sciascia, Calvino, Sereni, Paci, Morante...but, in addition, he had cinema and his interests ranged three hundred sixty degrees. Above all, he was the *curious witness of a reality, even political, in which I began getting interested, and that I believe I was able to interpret (or at least try to) thanks to him.*<sup>65</sup> (Emphasis mine)

From the excerpt above, it is patent that Pasolini's lucidity in analyzing the social and political state of Italy from the beginning of the 1940s to the beginning of the 1970s gives Giordana a significant key to discern the dynamics that governed the foggy history of that long and tormented period.

Giordana's reading of Pasolini's works and his films could alternatively elicit enthusiasm or irritation. Giordana asserts: "Enthusiasm, irritation were feelings that coexisted, that feed each other. I oscillated between the two, I forced myself to think, it was impossible to remain indifferent."<sup>66</sup> In his interview with Prudenzi, Giordana remarked that Pasolini died as in a page of his novel, in a sequence of his film, and that the most painful aspect of his death was

to see disappear a person with whom I seemed to have a direct and daily relationship even if I had never met him. It was not a fanatic and acritical admiration: every time Pasolini intervened on a topic he caused scandal, disorientation. *I also felt challenged by him. But it was a challenge that invited me to process all my beliefs, from the most intimate to*

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<sup>65</sup> Giordana, *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano*, 2. "Naturalmente ho ammirato anche altri intellettuali come Sciascia, Calvino, Vittorini, Sereni, Paci, la Morante...ma Pasolini aveva in più il Cinema e una straordinaria capacità di muovere i suoi interessi a trecento sessanta gradi e soprattutto di essere *il testimone curioso di una realtà, anche politica, alla quale comincio a interessarmi e che credo di aver potuto interpretare, o tentare di interpretare proprio grazie a lui.*"

<sup>66</sup> Giordana, *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano*, 17. "Entusiasmo, irritazione. Erano sentimenti che coesistevano, che si nutrivano l'uno dell'altra. Altalenavo tra i due, mi constringevo a riflettere, impossibile rimanere indifferente."

*the superficial ones, in order to build new ones and escape from conformism and false conscience.*<sup>67</sup> (Emphasis mine)

For Giordana, Pasolini's prominence lay in his ability to awaken people's conscience, to induce his contemporary fellows to reflect on the state of the nation, and on the developments of mass production and consumption culture. And this was Pasolini's major intent: in the documentary by Laura Betti, *Pasolini e le ragioni di un sogno* (*Pasolini and the Reasons of a Dream*), the journalist asks a FGCI young representative if the Pasolini's connection with that association had been very strong.<sup>68</sup> The answer does not leave any doubt about Pasolini's inexhaustible attempt to invite young generations to think more critically:

[Our relationship with him] was painful. He laid in front of us a different reality of an intellectual, a Renaissance man who was neither trying to flatter us nor opposing us since we were young people politically engaged. He presented us with a way of thinking that did not agree with ours, but that offered us the possibility of leaving behind those schematizations that belonged to everybody else. He taught us not just to accept everything without questioning what has been presented, stated and taught.<sup>69</sup>

In the documentary then, while the camera shows images of protesters in Italy and in Poland (in the 1980s, during the strikes by Lech Walesa's Solidarity) we

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<sup>67</sup> Prudenzi, interview with Marco Tullio Giordana, 2. "Vedere sparire una persona con la quale mi sembrava di avere un rapporto diretto e quotidiano anche senza averla mai conosciuta. Non si trattava comunque di un'ammirazione fanatica e acritica: ogni volta che Pasolini interveniva su qualsiasi argomento suscitava scandalo, disorientamento. *Anch'io mi sono sentito sfidato da lui. Ma era una sfida che mi invitava a processare tutte le mie convinzioni, dalle piú intime alle superficiali, per costruirne di nuove rifuggendo sia il conformismo che la falsa coscienza.*"

<sup>68</sup> F.G.C.I. stands for Federazione Giovanile Comunisti Italiani (Youth Association of Italian Communists). It was created in 1949 and reached its peak of popularity in the 1960s when it was active in a variety of initiatives promoted by the PCI.

<sup>69</sup> Laura Betti, *Pier Paolo Pasolini e la ragione di un sogno*, produced by Palomar, Stream, Mc4, Arte; distributed by Mikado Film, 2001. "[Il nostro rapporto con lui] è stato sofferto. Lui ci ha messo davanti a una realtà diversa di intellettuale, di uomo di cultura che non cercava né di adularci, né di contestarci in quanto giovani impegnati politicamente. Ci ha messo davanti a un modo di pensare che non concordava con il nostro, ma che ci offriva la possibilità di uscire da quelle schematizzazioni che erano caratteristiche di tutti gli altri. Lui ci ha insegnato a non accettare mai niente, senza mettere in dubbio quello che ci viene presentato, ci viene detto, ci viene insegnato."

hear Pasolini's voice confirming that the intellectual's primary goal is to remind young generations that

If you want to be a new generation of infinitely more mature young people, you must get used to the atrocity of the doubt, to this unpleasant subtlety of the doubt. You must truly begin debating problems, but concretely not only formally. People applaud clichés, but one needs to reason, not to applaud or disagree.<sup>70</sup>

Giordana understood Pasolini's lesson, and relentlessly regarded him as "un maestro" in a sort of "rapporto viscerale...come tutti i rapporti di emulazione/dipendenza."<sup>71</sup> Though initially convinced that classic authors like Pasolini are so unique that it is impossible to imitate and to reproduce faithfully their cinematic features, Giordana later understood that younger directors could still be influenced by their artistic fathers:

In my first film for instance – I realize it now – the use of music is completely Pasolinian. Back then I did not realize it, I thought it was way to do it, but in reality I followed faithfully the way Pasolini used music in *The Gospel according to Matthew* or in *Accattone*. Evidently, the impression they made on me was so deep to influence a fundamental aspect of the form of the films that I would have made in the future.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Pasolini in Laura Betti. *Pier Paolo Pasolini e la ragione di un sogno*. "Se voi volete essere una nuova generazione di giovani infinitamente piú matura, voi dovete abituarvi anche a questa atrocità del dubbio, anche a questa sottigliezza sgradevole del dubbio. Dovete cominciare a dibattere veramente i problemi, ma veramente non formalmente. Si applaudono sempre i luoghi comuni, bisogna ragionare, non applaudire o disapprovare."

<sup>71</sup> Prudenzi, interview with Marco Tullio Giordana, 2.

<sup>72</sup> Prudenzi, interview with Marco Tullio Giordana, 3. "Nel primo film ad esempio – me ne rendo conto adesso – l'uso della musica è d'importazione assolutamente pasoliniana. Allora non me rendevo conto, credevo che si facesse così e basta, ma in realtà seguivo con fedeltà il modo con cui Pasolini aveva usato la musica nel *Vangelo secondo Matteo* o in *Accattone*. Evidentemente l'impressione che mi avevano suscitato era così profonda da influenzare un aspetto fondamentale della forma dei film che avrei poi realizzato." On this subject, Giordana had already admitted in a 1980 interview that Pasolini returns in *Maledetti vi amerò* in the use of Bach's Mottetto. However, Giordana specifies that in most cases Pasolini's music had been employed as a form of catharsis, for instance in *Accattone* where the fight between the main character and his brother-in-law is purified by the music. Giordana, instead, uses classical music with the same function only rarely, for instance, in the scene where Svitol runs in the darkness of the night. In other circumstances, "I would not be able to use it with that function on a subject that does not tolerate it: not Bach, for instance, but Verdi." Fulvio Accialini, Lucia Coluccelli, Claudio M. Valentinetti, "Conversazione con Marco Tullio Giordana," *Cinema e cinema*, 25-26 (Oct.-Dec. 1980): 136. Verdi's *Il Rigoletto* fits the protagonist's vicissitudes, since it

After Pasolini's death, more than during his life, Giordana was impelled by the urge to talk about him, his view of the world, and ultimately his atrocious and unjust death. His films then became vehicle of his interest and admiration for Pasolini: "when in 1979 I made my first film *Maledetti vi amerò*, I felt the need to talk about him, to say what I thought of this controversial figure that had disappeared leaving an enormous, unfillable void."<sup>73</sup> And after his first film he directed others in which Pasolini appears both formally through direct citations of his works and conceptually through references to his personal ideals. In the introduction to his book, *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano* Giordana remarks:

After *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano*, I made other films, and I was not able to forget the person who had been the source of my inspiration. Every time, unconsciously, I happen to return to him. I know I will find in my work *unintentional trace* of him, of his sparkle. I re-read his work, I am enchanted by his poems. Sometimes I return to his 'civic' prose, and I look for instruments to delve into an incomprehensible, hostile present.<sup>74</sup>

## 1.2 "Maledetti vi amerò"

Giordana has manifested an ongoing and deep attention to Pasolini since his first film, *Maledetti vi amerò* (*Bastards, I will Love You*, 1980). Years

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is the tragedy of an outsider, an individual who is obliged to play a superstitious, ignorant fool, and who ends up killing his own daughter by accident. *Il Rigoletto*, Giordana adds, well connects itself with Svitol's reference to the national-popular culture, to Gramsci and the communists. See Accialini, Coluccelli, Valentinetti, "Conversazione con Marco Tullio Giordana," 136.

<sup>73</sup> Prudenzi, interview with Marco Tullio Giordana, 2. "Quando nel 1979 ho realizzato il mio primo film *Maledetti vi amerò* ho sentito il bisogno di parlare di lui, di dire che cosa ne pensavo. Di questa figura controversa, che era sparita di scena lasciando un vuoto enorme, davvero incolmabile.

<sup>74</sup> Giordana, *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano*, 7. "Dopo *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano* ho fatto altri film, senza riuscire a dimenticare la persona che l'aveva ispirato. Ogni volta, *senza volerlo*, mi capita di tornare su di lui...nel mio lavoro so che ritroverò *una sua traccia involontaria*, un suo barbaglio. Rileggo spesso la sua opera, mi lascio incantare dalle sue poesie. Ogni tanto torno sulle sue prose 'civili', cerco strumenti per penetrare un presente incomprensibile e ostile."

later, it is the author himself who, introducing his book *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano* (Pasolini. An Italian murder 1994), confirmed:

I have already made a film on Pasolini in 1980. It was titled *Maledetti vi amerò*, it was my first film. I have already seen the horrible images of his cadaver, I already filmed them. Together with the murder of Aldo Moro, the other famous Italian crime of that decade, Pasolini's assassination lingered over the film to circumscribe the bewilderment, the confusion and the fury of the Seventies, to symbolize the criminal and poisonous events.<sup>75</sup>

Recollecting the premiere of *Maledetti vi amerò*, Giordana stated that, by referring to Pasolini, his film was highly autobiographical, and that it was his intention to denounce the easy dismissal of the eminent intellectual:

The protagonist of the film continuously wondered what Pasolini would have said or done to face various situations. These were the questions that I asked myself and that – as autobiographical as all the beginners – I wanted to convey at all costs... (four years had passed from his death) Pasolini was not in fashion anymore. To re-propose him then did not have a nostalgic meaning; on the contrary, I tried to express all the rage that I felt for the way he had been so swiftly forgotten.<sup>76</sup>

In a 1980 interview Giordana had already mentioned the autobiographical feature of the film: when the main character, Svitol, returns home, he is 'a visitor' and becomes "autobiographical in his reactions. For him I feel a double feeling of repulsion and sympathy: I identify in some things, I reject

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<sup>75</sup> Giordana, *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano*, 21. "Ho già fatto un film su Pasolini. Nel 1980. Si chiama *Maledetti vi amerò*, era il mio primo film. Ho già visto quelle immagini orrende del cadavere [di Pasolini], le ho già filmate. Insieme a quello di Aldo Moro, l'altro grande delitto italiano eponimo del decennio, l'assassinio di Pasolini aleggiava sul film a circoscrivere lo smarrimento, la confusione e il furore degli anni Settanta, a simboleggiare il precipitato criminaloide e velenoso."

<sup>76</sup> Prudenzi, interview with Marco Tullio Giordana, 2. "Il protagonista del film si interrogava di continuo su cosa avrebbe detto e fatto Pasolini di fronte alle situazioni più diverse. Erano le domande che mi ponevo io e che – autobiografico come tutti gli esordienti – volevo trasmettere a tutti i costi... (erano passati quattro anni dalla sua morte) Pasolini non era più di moda. Riproporlo quindi, non aveva per me alcun senso nostalgico, al contrario cercavo di esprimere tutto il furore che provavo per come era stato sbrigativamente dimenticato."



others, especially—for now—the final choice.”<sup>77</sup> In the same year Giordana had admitted in *Cinema Nuovo* that “this is a film born to give shape to some experienced obsessions: his [the protagonist’s] own inability to express the rebellion with an appropriate, aesthetic language that well communicates with the rest of the society.”<sup>78</sup> Giordana achieves his goal through direct reference to Pasolini. Encouraged by his presence, in *Maledetti vi amerò* the filmmaker investigates what he himself defines “ ‘the points’ of the Italian tragedy: a politics without change, a majority with no replacement, terrorism, disintegration, what it is normally defined as ebb. The film recounts just the experience of a person that encounters all these ‘phenomena’ without accepting them, and for this reason the film can be defined indirectly political.”<sup>79</sup> Giordana emphasizes that his film does not take sides, but crosses ideologies, differences, political choices. Certainly, I would add, he appropriates and shares Pasolini’s political view.

*Maledetti vi amerò* premieres in a period in which Italian cinema is notoriously experiencing its worst crisis on a national and international level, and “ it arrives just to indicate the opposite.”<sup>80</sup> The film tells the story of

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<sup>77</sup> Accialini, Coluccelli, Valentinetti, “Conversazione con Marco Tullio Giordana,” 134. “...autobiografico nelle reazioni. Per lui provo un atteggiamento duplice di repulsione e simpatia: in certe cose mi identifico, altre le respingo, soprattutto – per il momento – la scelta finale.”

<sup>78</sup> Marco Tullio Giordana and Vincenzo Caretti, “ Maledetti vi amerò con rabbia e tristezza,” *Cinema Nuovo*, 267 (Oct.1980): 29. “Questo film è nato per dare una forma a delle ossessioni vissute: la propria incapacità a esprimere la ribellione, come dire, con un linguaggio appropriato, estetico, che molto comunica con il resto della società.”

<sup>79</sup> Giordana and Caretti, “ Maledetti vi amerò con rabbia e tristezza,” 28. “... ‘i punti’ della tragedia italiana: una politica senza ricambio, una maggioranza senza ricambio, il terrorismo, la disgregazione, quello che normalmente viene chiamato riflusso: il film racconta proprio l’esperienza di una persona che incontra senza accettarli tutti questi ‘fenomeni’, ed è per questo che il film può essere definito indirettamente politico.”

<sup>80</sup> Jean A. Gili. “Maudits, je vous aimerai,” *La Revue du Cinéma* 363 (July-Aug. 1981): 41. “[il] arrive à point nommé pour indiquer le contraire.” Giordana’s film was presented, discussed and appreciated at the Cannes Film festival in May, 1980. The same year it received the first prize at the Locarno Film Festival, and it was invited to participate in the San Francisco Film Festival.

Riccardo whose nickname is "Svitol," a Marxist-Leninist, who spent five years in Latin America after participating to extra-parliamentary protests in the 1960s.<sup>81</sup> He returns to Italy in 1978 completely disoriented and without money and passport. His depression increases when he realizes that the world he left behind does not exist anymore, the Italian political and social scenery is completely changed, and he is haunted by the presence of the Red Brigades. "Chissá cosa avrebbe detto Pasolini (who knows what Pasolini would have said),"<sup>82</sup> exclaims the protagonist, thus introducing the spectral figure of the Italian intellectual in the film as a constant conduit. In an interview with a journalist of *Cinema 60*, Giordana remarked, "The film is permeated by regret, grief, by the constant wound of Pasolini's disappearance."<sup>83</sup> However, Giordana admits that while Pasolini's moralism revealed an irremediable desperation, and the awareness that everything was lost, Giordana, instead, being younger and more naïve, preserves some optimism to be traceable exclusively in his faith in the people's capability to "recognize problems, call them by their name, be able to take responsibility, have the courage to be unpopular, which in Italy seems criminal... It is useless to scream against the culture of an industrial society, it is not possible to go back. Let us uncover the

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<sup>81</sup> The choice of the protagonist's nickname may be symbolic. The word in Italian recalls a few meanings: the first is the verb "svitare" which means to unscrew, undo, and in this case Riccardo may stand for a person who wants to "undo", subvert the political and social system. "Svitol" is also a lubricant spray that has the unique quality to penetrate the tinier lines of metal chains and make their movement more fluid. In this case, the name would create a significant conduit that runs throughout the film and leads to the final writing/testament that Riccardo sprays on the wall before dying. By doing what he has been named for, Riccardo connects his past with his present, and confirms that he has not changed. This is why he prefers dying instead of dealing with the changed world. Finally, the word "svitol" is also strangely similar to the word "svitato" that in Italian means "fool, crazy," which is what in the end Riccardo seems to be.

<sup>82</sup> Riccardo is informed by the police officer that Pasolini was murdered three years earlier, in 1975.

<sup>83</sup> Marco Tullio Giordana. "Marco Tullio Giordana: la fiducia nel film d'autore," *Cinema 60*, 138 (March-April 1981): 22. "Il film è invaso dal rimpianto, dal dolore, dalla ferita costante della scomparsa di Pasolini."

mechanisms, the contradictions, the expandable spaces (the opportunities), let us remove the censorship."<sup>84</sup>

Svitol's comrades are failed revolutionaries who parody their former protests, often in the more privileged position of the typical bourgeois. Some of them find refuge in cocaine and marijuana, that Riccardo ironically defines "the ashes of Gramsci." *The Ashes of Gramsci* is the title of a poem that Pasolini composed in 1954, and that was included in eponymous collection published in 1957. The poem conveys Pasolini's objective awareness that times have changed, that Gramsci is irremediably dead, and an "uncaring city"<sup>85</sup> looks at his ideals with "patrician ennui"<sup>86</sup> and indifference. Pasolini feels enlightened by history and by Gramsci's politics ("But while I possess history, it possesses me. I am illuminated by it"<sup>87</sup>), but at the same time he does not know what use he can make of them ("but what's the use of such light?"<sup>88</sup>). In addition to the historical unsuitability of the Communist ideals to the contemporary world, Pasolini feels the burden of a personal struggle that emphasizes both his passion and men's "awesome, ancient, almost Alexandrian sensuality, (which impurely decorates all with golden light when there in the world something collapses)"<sup>89</sup> over the Party's extreme rationality. Caught by his own

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<sup>84</sup> Giordana, "Marco Tullio Giordana: la fiducia nel film d'autore," 23. "Saper riconoscere i problemi, chiamarli col loro nome, sapersi prendere ognugno le sue responsabilità, aver il coraggio, che in Italia sembra delittuoso, di essere impopolari. ...È inutile tuonare contro la cultura di una società industriale, indietro non si torna. Vediamo di scoprirne i meccanismi, le contraddizioni, gli spazi allargabili, rimuoverne le censure."

<sup>85</sup> Pier Paolo Pasolini, "The Ashes of Gramsci," *Poems*, trans. Norman MacAfee (New York: The Noonday Press, 1996), 5. "e la città [che] indifferente..."

<sup>86</sup> Pasolini, "The Ashes of Gramsci," 13. "Noia patrizia ti è attorno."

<sup>87</sup> Pasolini, "The Ashes of Gramsci," 13. "Ma come io possiedo la storia/ essa mi possiede; ne sono illuminato."

<sup>88</sup> Pasolini, "The Ashes of Gramsci," 13. "Ma a che serve la luce?"

<sup>89</sup> Pasolini, "The Ashes of Gramsci," 18. "Quanto è più vano-in questo vuoto della storia, in questa/ronzante pausa in la vita tace-/ogni ideale, meglio è manifesta/la stupenda, adusta sensualità quasi alessandrina, che tutto minia/ e impuramente accende, quando qua nel mondo, qualcosa crolla..."

disillusionment with the PCI, which deemed passions and the instinctual nature of men a sort of regressive stage, and by his drama of being himself a bourgeois in a bourgeois world, Pasolini here may have erroneously assimilated Gramsci and his peculiar and innovative view of men's psyche with the most orthodox and traditional stand of the PCI.<sup>90</sup> In fact Gramsci condemned impassive, purely intellectual endeavors as ineffectual, and remarked that

the intellectual's error consists in believing that one can know without understanding and, even worse, without feeling and being impassioned (not only for knowledge in itself, but also for the object of knowledge): [it is an error to think that] the intellectual can be an intellectual (instead of a pure pedant) even if distinct and so far removed from the people-nation, that is, without feeling the elementary passions of the people, understanding them and therefore explaining them in a particular historical situation, connecting them dialectically with the laws of history, with a superior conception of the world that is scientifically and coherently elaborated, that is "knowledge." One cannot practice politics-history without this passion, that is to say without sentimental connection between intellectuals and people-nation.<sup>91</sup>

Beyond the poem itself, it is worth noting what Maurizio Viano says about Pasolini's Gramsci. According to Viano, "in his struggle against arid academic intellectualism Gramsci assigned passion a role which resembles

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<sup>90</sup> Though admitting Pasolini's subjective interpretation of Gramsci, Wallace P. Sillanpoa, in his fine essay on Pasolini's Gramsci, poses the equation Gramsci=reason, Pasolini=passion, but he, like Pasolini, does not delve into the subtler differences between Gramsci and the orthodox Marxist line, as well as into the weight that Gramsci gave to human passions. See Wallace P. Sillanpoa's "Pasolini's Gramsci." *MLN* 96: 1, Italian Issue (1981): 120-37.

<sup>91</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere* (Turin: Einaudi, 1975), 1505. "L'errore dell'intellettuale consiste nel credere che si possa sapere senza comprendere e specialmente senza sentire ed essere appassionati, (non solo del sapere in sé, ma per l'oggetto del sapere) cioè che l'intellettuale possa essere tale (e non un puro pedante) se distinto e staccato dal popolo-nazione, cioè senza sentire le passioni elementari del popolo, comprendendole e quindi spiegandole e giustificandole nella determinata situazione storica, e collegandole dialetticamente alle leggi della storia, a una superiore concezione del mondo, scientificamente e coerentemente elaborata, il 'sapere'; non si fa politica-storia senza questa passione, cioè senza connessione sentimentale tra intellettuali e popolo-nazione." For the relation of Gramsci with pathos see also Maurizio Viano, "The Left According to the Ashes of Gramsci," *Social Text*, 18 (Winter 1987-88): 52.

Pasolini's."<sup>92</sup> In a 1981 article, Wallace Sullampoa states that "the Gramsci of Pasolini remained first and foremost the pathetic hero of the prison letters,"<sup>93</sup> and Viano suggests that "although somewhat reductive, this idea is effective in singling out 'pathos' as an element which was present in Gramsci and which attracted Pasolini."<sup>94</sup> He also adds that the step from pathos to passion is short, and that both Pasolini and Gramsci assign passion an important role.<sup>95</sup> According to Viano, in *Heretical Empiricism*, Pasolini expresses the need to provide "Marxism with the theory of the subject that it sorely lacked,"<sup>96</sup> a theory that tends to stress the body *as* subject and the body *of* the subject celebrating it as the privileged site of passion.<sup>97</sup> The latter for Pasolini represents irrational desire and instincts, and opposes Marxist rationality.<sup>98</sup> Therefore instincts receive a positive connotation, whereas the left-wing critics consider them a regressive stage. Pasolini believes that passion characterizes the proletariat's existential life style, and is a fundamental tool of knowledge. It allows the individual to resist the authoritarian reality that rationally imposes itself on the subject. Viano states that for Pasolini "the more our semiotic histories are impassioned—that is, the more the marks on our flesh are

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<sup>92</sup> Viano, "The Left According to the Ashes of Gramsci," 52.

<sup>93</sup> Sillampoa, "Pasolini's Gramsci," 213.

<sup>94</sup> Viano, "The Left according to the Ashes of Gramsci," 52.

<sup>95</sup> Viano asserts that "In aesthetics, pathos refers to subjective and emotional elements. It highlights, if not individuates the subject as constitutive of and separate from the object." Maurizio Viano, *A Certain Realism: Making Use of Pasolini's Film Theory and Practice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 38.

<sup>96</sup> Viano, *A Certain Realism*, 38. For Pasolini's own critique of Marxism, see also Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Le belle bandiere* (Rome: Riuniti, 1977).

<sup>97</sup> As to the relation between passion and body, Maurizio Viano explains that "Pasolini's earliest associations with the word 'passion' are quiet revealing. In his posthumously published *Amado mio* (written in the 1940s), 'passion' signified the irresistible call of the protagonist's homosexual flesh. In his poetry of the same time, it referred to Christ's passion. The semantic ambivalence reflected the Western tradition, according to which passion could signify the seemingly opposite poles of sublimity and vulgarity." Viano, *A Certain Realism*, 41.

<sup>98</sup> Naomi Green underlines that "if the leftists denounced Pasolini's insistence on emotions and instincts, it was at least partially because such 'instincts' included sexual impulses perceived as ungovernable and unforgivable." Naomi Green, *Pier Paolo Pasolini. Cinema as Heresy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 29.

allowed to influence our sign-reading—the greater are our chances to resist the authoritarian language of things.”<sup>99</sup> And, I would add, to be fully oneself. In other words, it is passion manifested in its bodily instinctual expressions that on one hand “enslaves the subject through compulsive desires at odds with the rational ego, but on the other it exalts the subject’s freedom from compliance with the dominant semiotic script.”<sup>100</sup> It is significant that in another film by Giordana, *I cento passi* (*One Hundred Steps*, 2000), when the protagonist of the film, Peppino, and his comrades protest against the expansion of the Cinisi airport, they oppose the developers’ massive trucks by positioning their bodies between those trucks and the area where the trucks are to excavate. And it is first of all the body that is punished and restrained when Peppino and his fellows are imprisoned.

Returning to the “The Ashes of Gramsci”, the PCI, metonymically represented by Gramsci, becomes inadequate for its lack of flexibility in understanding the primacy of passions over logic. For this reason Pasolini writes

The scandal of contradicting myself, of being  
with you and against you; with you in my heart  
in light, but against you in the dark viscera;

traitor to my paternal state  
–in my thoughts, in the shadow of action–  
I know I’m attached to it, in the heat

of the instincts and aesthetic passion;  
attracted to a proletarian life  
that preceded you; for me it is a religion,

its joy, not its millennial

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<sup>99</sup> Viano, *A Certain Realism*, 41.

<sup>100</sup> Viano, *A Certain Realism*, 41.

struggle; its nature, not its  
consciousness...<sup>101</sup>

Years later, in *Heretical Empiricism*, Pasolini would assert that “I cannot and I will never be able to relinquish a tension owed to the desire to bring order to the magma of things and not to content myself with knowing its geometry, (that is, I don’t have and never will have an alternative other than Marxism).”<sup>102</sup> We can conclude that the ashes of Gramsci that Pasolini visits in the English Protestant cemetery in Rome, and that he immortalizes in his poem, may evoke the past tradition, and stand for a valuable set of ideals that, however, can hardly be useful in the present unless the historical party modifies its politics, and the common people stop their frenetic evolution toward a capitalist society where superfluous goods prevail over products of primary need, where, in Pasolini’s words, progress gives way to development.<sup>103</sup>

In Giordana’s film, the ashes of Gramsci become cocaine, the social degeneration occurring in the 1960s and 70s. Nothing has remained of what Gramsci stood for; Svitool refuses to sniff the drug, to conform to the bourgeois degradation, and remains desperately attached to his past values. In Giordana’s words, Svitool’s life “is carried on in the balance of this choice that

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<sup>101</sup> Pasolini, “The Ashes of Gramsci”, 10. “Lo scandalo del contraddirmi, dell’essere / con te e contro di te; con te nel cuore / in luce, contro te nelle buie viscere; del mio paterno stato traditore / - nel pensiero, in un’ombra di azione - / mi so ad esso attaccato nel calore / degli istinti, dell’estetica passione; attratto da una vita proletaria / a te anteriore, è per me religione / la sua allegria, non la millenaria sua lotta: la sua natura, non la sua coscienza...”

<sup>102</sup> Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Empirismo eretico*. In *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull’arte* (Milan: Mondadori, 1999), 1339. Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), trans. Ben Lawton and Louise Barnett, 71.

<sup>103</sup> See Pier Paolo Pasolini, “Sviluppo e progresso,” *Pasolini. Saggi sulla politica e sulla società* (Milan: Mondadori, 1999), 454. In some interviews Pasolini proposes the difference between progress (progresso) and development (sviluppo). He says that the first is fostered by the Left and aims at the production of essential, necessary products, the second is wanted by the Right whose scope is to produce superfluous goods. Pasolini candidly admits that he supports progress but not development.

is continuously postponed: if being homogenous with the group of daddy's boys or with the most desperate people...by the end, instead of choosing one group over the other, Svitol decides to kill himself, not 'to belong.'"<sup>104</sup> Svitol's choice reflects also Pasolini's own disapproval of drugs: in the July 24, 1975 issue of the newspaper *Corriere della sera*, after associating the phenomenon of drug use to the loss of important values like that of "family" and "God" (when these values are not 'professed' by priests or moralists<sup>105</sup>), Pasolini announces his own hostility towards drug addicts since "on the one hand there is their presumption to realize a sub-cultural act that they mythologize; on the hand there is my personal intolerance to accept the escape, the renunciation, the unavailability."<sup>106</sup> Pasolini is certain that using drugs means both escaping reality and renouncing a personal engagement for a social and political change. Though he does not have the strength to carry on any social fight, Svitol does blow the cocaine away, and in doing so he decides not to align himself with those old comrades that Pasolini had already accused in 1968 since they showed signs of their petit-bourgeois nature: "You have the faces of spoiled children./ Good blood doesn't lie./ You have the same bad eye./ You are scared, uncertain, desperate/ (very good!) but you also know how to be/ bullies, blackmailers, and sure of yourselves;/ petit-bourgeois

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<sup>104</sup> Giordana, "Marco Tullio Giordana; la fiducia nel film d'autore," 22. "...si accompagna sul bilico di questa scelta continuamente rimandata: se essere omogeneo alla galleria di amici figli di papà o a quella dei disperati più totali...alla fine, piuttosto che scegliere l'un ghetto o l'altro, Svitol decide di uccidersi, di non 'appartenere'."

<sup>105</sup> Pier Paolo Pasolini, "La droga: una vera tragedia italiana," *Lettere luterane*. In *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 611.

<sup>106</sup> Pasolini. "La droga: una vera tragedia italiana," 611. "Da una parte c'è la loro ricattatoria presunzione nel compiere un atto sotto-culturale che essi mitizzano; dall'altra c'è la mia insofferenza personale ad accettare la fuga, la rinuncia, l'indisponibilità."



prerogatives, friends.”<sup>107</sup> It appears that it is indeed the “buona razza,” the real subject of Giordana’s film.

Pasolini returns once again in *Maledetti vi amerò* when we see photos of his corpse in the magazines that Svitol collects. The contours of Pasolini’s body become the subject of Svitol’s drawings and of his moral and ideological reflections. The historical Left has mingled with the Right wing, it is impossible to distinguish between the two parties, what really counts is defining all the elements according to Right wing and Left wing, but these definitions do not make any sense. Svitol strikes the spectators with a long and ironic list of non-sense definitions:

Definitions are what really count. Di Vittorio is left wing, Lama is right wing. Terracini is left wing, just like the. Brown rice and macrobiotic cooking. Coffee is rightwing. Even bathrooms with a tub are rightwing, whereas showers are leftwing. Portugal are leftwing, just like the Greek Islands. Morocco and Afghanistan. Vienna, Praga and Venice, on the contrary, are rightwing. Visconti was left wing, whereas Pasolini, before dying was an irrational, rightwing populist. After his death, however, he became a hell of a comrade. Eroticism is leftwing, but pornography is rightwing. Even penetration is rightwing, whereas foreplay is leftwing, with the exception of blow-jobs which are rightwing. The norm is rightwing, folly is leftwing. Heterosexuality is rightwing, whereas homosexuality has a deep transgressive value and thus is leftwing. Moroccan and Afghan hash, pot and mushrooms are leftwing, but amphetamine, coke and heroin are rightwing. Nietzsche has been re-valued and now is leftwing, whereas Marx is rightwing. Bisaglia is rightwing, Basaglia is leftwing: look at the power of a single vowel!<sup>108</sup>

The cadaver of Pasolini and those of other public figures are equated to the corpses of Fascist followers who were also brutally killed. Giordana ends the

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<sup>107</sup> Pier Paolo Pasolini, “The PCI to the Youth”, *Heretical Empiricism*, 150. “Il PC ai giovani”, *Empirismo eretico*. In *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull’arte*, 1440. “Avete facce di figli di papà./ Buona razza non mente./ Avete lo stesso occhio cattivo./ Siete paurosi, incerti, disperati/ (benissimo!) ma sapete anche come essere/ prepotenti, racattatori e sicuri:/ prerogative piccolo-borghesi, amici.”

<sup>108</sup> Marco Tullio Giordana, *Maledetti vi amerò*, 1980, in Viano, “The Left according to the Ashes of Gramsci,” 57.

scene with an uncertain position, “a certain *ambiguïté politique* (a certain political ambiguity),” as Gilli notes.<sup>109</sup> Giordana wonders whether one should feel the same pity for everybody, regardless his/her political affiliation. Svitol does not find any more effective means than violence to react to the failure of his ideals in the modern society: he gives an appointment to the police commissar that had initiated him to the new world, and not far from the place where Aldo Moro was found dead, he pulls out his gun and lets the commissar kill him.<sup>110</sup> The commissar who had no intention to shoot Svitol underlines how the young man’s final and unexpected gesture allows an unjust equation: he becomes what he is not, that is, a terrorist. If anything, Roberto Alonge acutely observed:

He *mimes* terrorism by trying to bend it into a traditional *human* measure, taking it back within the rules of an archaic code...as in the western, [where] the enemy has a face, a name, is a known presence, sometimes even loved, for a relationship that is ambiguous but authentic and that always ties two rivals... he has chosen his Moro in the person of the policeman. He chose him to be killed instead of killing him.<sup>111</sup>

This choice may be better understood if we take into account Freud’s theory of the totem, and we make an equation between the commissar, Moro, and the totem. In the fourth chapter of his work *Totem and Taboo* Freud identifies the

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<sup>109</sup> Gilli, “Maudit, je vous aimerai,” 43.

<sup>110</sup> It should be noted that three years passed between the writing of the screenplay (1977) and the shooting of the film (1980). Aldo Moro, president of the Christian Democrats, was killed in 1978. Before this murder, Giordana was willing to present a political film with “the usual moralistic and paternalistic conclusion that the left extremism revolution damages the workers’ movement and encourages the reaction of the State.” However, after the murder of Moro, Giordana thought that “perhaps it would be more interesting to delve a sort of desperate complicity with the enemy, a psychological and political regression induced by the absence of perspectives and by his [the protagonist’s] weaknesses.” See “Marco Tullio Giordana; fiducia nel film d’autore”, 21.

<sup>111</sup> Roberto Alonge, “La metafora del presente in Orsini e Giordana,” *Cinema Nuovo*, 270 (April 1981): 16. “Egli *mima* il terrorismo cercando di piegarlo a una misura tradizionale, *umana*, riportandolo entro le regole di un codice antico...come nel western, [dove] il nemico ha un volto, un nome, è una presenza conosciuta, talvolta persino amata, per un rapporto ambiguo ma autentico che sempre lega due rivali...egli ha scelto il suo Moro nella persona del poliziotto. L’ha scelto per farsi uccidere anziché per ucciderlo.”

totem as a substitute of the father. In the traditional myth the totem (animal, plant or object) protects men, and men in exchange pay respect and devotion to the totem, abstaining from killing him if that is an animal or breaking it apart if that is a plant or object. In such a way, according to Freud, the totem takes the place of religion, and becomes the foundation of the social organization. Why then, people still want to kill the totem? It is here that Freud elaborates his psychoanalytical theory of the totem: the totem becomes the substitute for a primordial, authoritative father who is the object of hatred since his power inhibited the other men's potential to grow and satisfy their sexual libido. However the father, for his strength and power, is also the object of admiration and love. Both envied and feared, the father is killed and devoured by their 'sons' or 'subjects,' who thus appropriate portions of his power. However, once they have satisfied their hate, their remaining love for him causes guilt and regret. In Freud's words,

Psychoanalysis has revealed that the totem animal is in reality a substitute for the father; ... The violent primal father had doubtless been the feared and envied model of each one of the company of brothers: and in the act of devouring him they accomplished their identification with him, and each one acquired a portion of his strength. [...] After they had got rid of him, had satisfied their hatred and had put into effect their wish to identify with him, the affection which had all this time been pushed under was bound to make itself felt. It did so in the form of remorse. ... The dead father became stronger than the living one had been - for events took the course we often see them follow in human affairs to this day.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, in *Origins of Religions*, vol.13 (London, UK: Penguin Freud, 1985): 202-204. Freud also adds that "They thus created out of their filial sense of guilt the two fundamental taboos of totemism, which for that very reason inevitably corresponded to the two repressed wishes of the Oedipus complex. Whoever contravened those two taboos became guilty of the only two crimes with which primitive society concerned itself... At the conclusion, then, of this exceedingly condensed inquiry, I should like to insist that its outcome shows that the beginnings of religion, morals, society and art converge in the Oedipus complex," 204, 219.

If we reckon first Moro and then the commissar as possible “totemic fathers” and if Svitol had lived after them, he, like his comrades would have also acquired what Freud defines as “deferred obedience”, that is to say that he would have somehow conformed spontaneously to the rules of his “fathers”. Death then becomes a means of preventing the continuation of that same cyclic system. Though this interpretation may seem a stretch and has not been so far corroborated by any interview with the screenwriter or the director, one should take into account that the screenwriter himself, Vincenzo Caretti, was first of all a psychoanalyst and knew how to render a complex concept through a complex personality. Significantly, in an interview released in 1980, the filmmaker remarks that he wanted to create a film in which he could tell the story of a man whose actions were driven by well motivated thoughts, so

the collaboration with Vincenzo Caretti got closer to this objective more than the collaboration with a professional screenwriter who would have found smart tricks, or with a young man who would have employed too much autobiography. I instead was looking for—and from here a Jungian psychoanalyst like him was of help—the *private moment of the protagonist in which, however, everybody could identify*.<sup>113</sup> (Emphasis mine)

In such a way *Maledetti vi amerò* becomes an unsettling story of the “desperation that can make people accomplices of power to the point of deciding their own death, knowing very well that their own images will be then undersold, and desiring this as a sign of cancellation,”<sup>114</sup> and at the same

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<sup>113</sup> Accialini, Coluccelli, Valentinetti, “Conversazione con Marco Tullio Giordana,” 134. “La collaborazione con Vincenzo Caretti si avvicinava a questo obiettivo molto più di quella con uno sceneggiatore di mestiere, che avrebbe trovato i ‘trucchetti’ furbi, o con un giovane, che ci avrebbe buttato troppa autobiografia. Io invece cercavo – e da qui il suo aiuto, lui che è uno psicanalista junghiano – il momento sì privato del protagonista ma nel quale tutti potessero identificarsi.”

<sup>114</sup> Marco Tullio Giordana and Vincenzo Caretti, “Maledetti vi amerò con rabbia e tristezza,” *Cinema Nuovo*, 267 (Oct.1980): 27. “... disperazione che può rendere complici del potere al punto da decidere la propria morte e sapere benissimo che la propria immagine sarà poi svenduta, e desiderare questo come segno di cancellazione.”

time, as Jean Gilli remarks, as a desperate claim, a mute protest.<sup>115</sup> Giordana conceives Svitol's suicide/homicide as a metaphor: "It is necessary that one experience death in order to have a new one born: the suicide cancels the adolescence, the incapacity of growing, so that a new figure emerges from death. My film invokes the necessity of dying if living means paralysis within the schemes of the economic ebb."<sup>116</sup> Though Svitol's final choice may appear a sacrificial expiatory death, as a Christian interpretation may suggest, Françoise Aude underlines that "The film only apparently follows a Christian itinerary. Svitol's confession is an example. His confession is more a self-critique. Svitol speaks of 'extenuating circumstances' and does not ask for forgiveness. He develops a defense in favor of his lassitude. He confronts the values of a human moral not a religious one."<sup>117</sup> This is also confirmed by Giordana who states that while he endows the protagonist with a sort of religious attitude as constituent of his education and culture (this responds to Giordana's anthropological rigor), the filmmaker does not intend to transform Svitol into the vehicle of a Christian message.<sup>118</sup>

We are left with the image of Svitol's silhouette, which becomes like Pasolini's, that is to say another "phantasm" to meditate on. In the last scene our attention is directed to the writing "MALEDETTI VI AMERO" that the

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<sup>115</sup> Gilli, "Maudit, je vous aimerai," 41.

<sup>116</sup> Giordana and Caretti, "Maledetti vi ameró con rabbia e tristezza," 28. "è necessario che muoia un'esperienza perché ne possa nascere un'altra: il suicidio cancella un'adolescenza, un'incapacità di crescere perché dalla morte sorga una nuova figura. Il mio è un film che invoca la necessità della morte se la vita significa paralisi entro gli schemi del riflusso." For a definition of "ebb" see on page 10 of this chapter.

<sup>117</sup> Françoise Aude, "Le destin d'un camarade idiot," *Positif*, 246 (Sept. 1981): 61. "n'a que les apparences d'un itinéraire christique. La confession de Svitol n'en n'est pas une. Elle n'est pas non plus une auto-critique. Svitol parle de 'circonstances atténuantes' et ne réclame aucun pardon. Il développe un plaidoyer en faveur de sa lassitude. Il affronte les valeurs d'une morale humaine et non pas religieuse..."

<sup>118</sup> Giordana, "Marco Tullio Giordana: la fiducia nel film d' autore," 22.

protagonist sprayed on the wall near the piazza where he dies.<sup>119</sup> The “E’s” are reversed to confirm that the Communist comrades– the object of Svitol’s love– have indeed changed their political direction, and have adopted a new political language. Maurizio Viano explains that the writing

*Maledetti vi amerò* is the site of a contradiction at a semantic level for the word ‘Maledetti’ does not normally open onto a declaration of love. It is a message revealing the acceptance of ambivalence, of an oxymoronic fissure... However the acceptance of the enemy contained in the sentence ‘Maledetti vi amerò’ is given a particular twist by the fact that the three ‘Es’ are pointing backwards. Besides giving to the graffiti-title an uncertain pace, a reluctant rhythm, the inversion of the role can be seen as the recognition of ontology’s disintegration. In the Italian language, the ‘E’ plays a double role. One is the conjunction ‘and’, the main linker between sentences, a symbol for syntactic ordering. The second is the third person of the verb ‘to be’, so that the inversion of this letter suggests the end of the metaphysical function that characterizes it. In a world in which the ‘E’ serves the purpose of essentialist statements tagging people, things, and behaviors, with the deadly epithets ‘rightwing’ and ‘leftwing,’ ‘Maledetti vi amerò’ suggests that the left depth-wish is now a death-wish.<sup>120</sup>

The writing ‘Maledetti vi amerò’ is then Svitol’s last appeal to the old leftist ideals that promised a better world, to the same ideals that Pasolini looked at with a sort of nostalgic fascination until his death.

The entire film is thus imbued with Pasolini’s presence, which acts as a filter for most of the political observations that could be made on the 1970s’ historical landscape. The film in fact conveys Pasolini’s (and the director’s) well known disappointment with the Italian Communist Party’s politics and the historical compromise that was to be signed in those years with the Christian Democrats (DC). The bureaucratization of the PCI and its distance from the population’s poorest strata (sub-proletariat) led Pasolini to

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<sup>119</sup> The writing is itself composed with a reversed “E” so that we read “MALÈDETTI VI AMÈRO’.” See next pages for more details.

<sup>120</sup> Viano, “The Left According to the Ashes of Gramsci,” 58.

disapprove the politics of the historical party, even though, as mentioned above, he never declared his complete detachment from the Marxist ideals.<sup>121</sup>

On this subject, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith wrote:

Sometimes the position was hostile to the PCI, sometimes favorable, but either way the Party is always a co-ordinate. He fights it, he supports it, he opens a 'dialogue' with it...he may ostentatiously turn his back on it. But the very ostentation only serves to prove the point that his interlocutor, real or imagined, was always the same.<sup>122</sup>

This position may also be taken into account to clarify the statement "Maledetti vi amerò," which emphasizes an everlasting hate-love relationship with the Communist party.

### **1.3 "Pasolini: Un delitto italiano"**

*Pasolini: Un delitto italiano* premiered in 1995, and was based on Giordana's eponymous book published in 1994. Both the book and the film retrace the steps that led to Pasolini's murder, providing evidences from the first trial's archives, and from interviews conducted within and without the official investigations. The author's conclusion, contrary to the judges' resolution, is that Pino Pelosi, Pasolini's alleged assassin, was not alone on the night of the murder, and that political organs, and organized criminality (mafia) may have been involved. The book was re-published in 2005 with a significant premise in which Giordana refers to the film and sadly remarks that, though the film's resonance in Italy, Europe, and USA led the Italian Attorney General's Office to re-open the case on Pasolini's assassination, in ten years nothing has really changed: the resumed trial confirmed Pelosi as the sole murderer of Pasolini. In the meantime Italy sank under the scandals of

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<sup>121</sup> See this chapter, 40.

<sup>122</sup> Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, "Pasolini's Originality," in *Pier Paolo Pasolini*, ed. Paul Willemen (London: British Film Institute, 1977), 6.

“Tangentopoli,”<sup>123</sup> the Italian political parties of the so called First Republic recycled their ideas into pseudo-renewed groups ready to settle in the Italian government through the new electoral majority-based system, and no political party proposed true reforms, in short “everything is changed to remain as it was before. With the TV to guard, to impose the false myths of modernity, to make appealing the new order founded on consumption.”<sup>124</sup> Giordana concludes his notes observing that Pasolini, who had well predicted those political and social changes, was ‘rediscovered’, celebrated as a national monument, “senza per questo ottenere giustizia.”<sup>125</sup>

In the film, as previously in his book, Giordana consecrates all his energies to the Italian intellectual, whose murder and the following trial become for the filmmaker a useful pretext to uncover and denounce the faults of the judicial and political system, the social prejudices, and the mass media’s deviations, all responsible for having misled the investigations and reduced Pasolini to “just an homosexual,” killed because of his own “vice” by a young man from the Roman shantytowns (*borgate*).

The film cannot be easily categorized into a defined genre. Giordana asserts: “This is not a detective film, nor a biographical film nor many other

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<sup>123</sup> The term Tangentopoli (Bribeville) refers to the corrupted political system that dominated Italy in the 1980s, and that was unmasked by the “Mani pulite”(Clean Hands) investigation at the beginning of the 1990s. It was a scandal that involved well known politicians (Bettino Craxi of the Socialist Party) who were extremely rich, favored undeserving people for careers in RAI and other public companies, and finally fostered the so called “lottizzazione”, that is to say the procedure of awarding guidance important state conglomerates of such as IRI, ENEL or ENI to political figures, or at least managers with a clear political orientation. The scandal of “Tangentopoli” determined the end of the so-called First Republic and the birth of the Second Republic in 1994.

<sup>124</sup> Giordana, *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano*, 4. “Tutto è cambiato per rimanere come prima. Con la tivù a fare la guardia, a imporre i mitologeni della ‘modernità,’ a rendere appetibile il nuovo ordine fondato sui consumi.”

<sup>125</sup> Giordana, *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano*, 4.



things. Even I don't know how to define it."<sup>126</sup> The film may be considered an insightful combination of different elements: repertory material, such as: black and white documentary images of Pasolini shooting *Uccellacci uccellini* or entertaining himself with his friends, and black-and-white clips from national TV news regarding the trial; a series of false documentary images from 1975, that include a small number of scenes shot in black and white with which Giordana, imitating the reportage style, uses a hand-held camera trying to make visible what the official reports of the trial and the media left in the shadow, and to instill suspects and further hypotheses; finally, the film is composed of color images that construct the murder in the style of a feature film.<sup>127</sup> Of the three shots or styles (real footage, false documentary, and color images), the one that calls for more attention is the fictitious documentary, in particular two sequences: in the first Furio Colombo, a famous journalist for the newspaper *La Stampa*, interviews Ennio Salvetti, a poor inhabitant of the shabby houses at the Idroscalo in Ostia, who adamantly declares that he intentionally omitted to report to the police that he had seen four or five people beating Pasolini on the night of his murder.<sup>128</sup> The other sequence

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<sup>126</sup> Prudenzi, interview with Marco Tullio Giordana, 14. "Non è un film inchiesta, non è un film biografico, non è tante altre cose ancora e nemmeno io saprei definire bene cosa invece è." The director also adds: "I have continuously tried to cause a fracture among the different 'genres' the film could belong to... I believe that the plurilinguistic inspiration of this film should be traced engineer Gadda's 'Quer pasticciaccio brutto di via Merulana' ('That Ugly Mess of Merulana street') where the continuous subversion of the linguistic schemes and the mixture of dialects, of refined, colloquial, bourgeois, petit-bourgeois Italian, foreign language, bureaucratic jargon produces a sort of abyssal construction... in this construction one can read, through various and innumerable stratifications, the cultural composition, the psychology, the social class of the crowd of characters in the scene," 14.

<sup>127</sup> Giordana indicates the RAI archives, the Fondo Pasolini in Rome (recently transferred to the Centro Pier Paolo Pasolini in Bologna), the French ORTF, the German WDR, the Archivio Storico del Movimento Operaio as the places where he has been able to find all the repertory material he inserted in the film. See Angela Prudenzi, interview with Giordana, 16.

<sup>128</sup> Giordana bases this scene on an article that appeared November 11, 1975 in *La Stampa*, in which Furio Colombo reports his interview with Salvetti: "Io mi chiamo Salvetti – dice un uomo robusto, con capelli bianchi – vivo qui (indica una baracca). Ho visto com'era al mattino. So chi è Pasolini. Ho sentito come abbaiano i cani. Io vivo qui. Mi chiamo Salvetti. Sono pratico della vita qua dentro. Mi creda. Loro erano in tanti." (In Giordana's book,

under examination is the one in which Pino Pelosi's lawyer proudly affirms that he wanted to read Pasolini's novels to learn about his "disease" (his homosexuality) and accuses him of "cultural terrorism" and "exploitation" of a miserable proletariat. Let us analyze the two sequences in detail: in the first one, Furio Colombo's interview with Salvetti follows a series of news footage from November 3, 1975, the day after Pasolini's death. The images are in black and white, shot at the Idroscalo while a journalist tries to interview Alberto Moravia who is visibly too upset to talk. Then the footage focuses for a few seconds on a police officer who is collecting evidence. From the documentary footage Giordana then passes to the fictitious one, that is to say the sequence in which Colombo interviews Salvetti. The passage from the real image of the past and the recreated one is so smooth to be imperceptible; in doing so, Giordana probably wants to emphasize the relevance of Colombo's interview, which was overlooked at the time of Pasolini's death and in the following years. The second sequence, the one with Pelosi's lawyer, starts instead with color images of the lawyer while he talks with some journalists. Then, as the lawyer is stressing Pasolini's wrongdoing (cultural terrorism, exploitation of poor people), Giordana turns his camera towards a journalist in the crowd

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*Pasolini: Un delitto italiano*, 41) "My name is Salvetti – says a sturdy man with white hair– and I live here [he indicates his hovel]. I saw [him] as he was in the morning. I know who Pasolini is. I heard the dogs barking. I live here. My name is Salvetti and I am familiar with the lifestyle of this place. Believe me. There were many people." In Giordana's film Salvetti first talks about many men attacking Pasolini, then he refers to four or five men (this specification may be true, but we should verify it in Colombo's full article which is not in my possession). Salvetti (whose name is reported as Salvitti in other newspapers' articles of that period, as well as in Giordana's film) was interviewed by other journalists after Colombo, but he retreated his first version. The judges never took Salvetti's statements into account. See Giordana's book, *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano*, 40-43. Furio Colombo also interviewed Pasolini a day before his death. The interview was supposed to be revised by Pasolini in the following days, but of course this did not happen. By Pasolini's suggestion this interview was titled "Siamo tutti in pericolo" (We Are All in Danger) and can be read at <http://www.cinetecadibologna.it/sitopasolini/madrid-saggi22.htm>

who is filming the lawyer. The immediate next shot is black-and-white and gives the spectator a frontal perspective of the lawyer (rather than a shot sideways or from the bottom up). The passage from the color image to the black-and-white occurs significantly when the lawyer, who now looks straight into the camera, states that “This trial will clearly demonstrate what cultural terrorism is, and who Pasolini really was.”<sup>129</sup>

In his many interviews released after the film’s premiere, Giordana has never specified the meaning of those fake documentary shots. However, when five years later he commented on the final scene of his film, *I cento passi* (2000), in which color images turn into black-and-white shots, Giordana asserts: “In order to make clear that the film at this point becomes pure ‘news’, the image turns black and white, it does not yield to the comforting propaganda.”<sup>130</sup> By transforming color images into black and white shots, Giordana wants to validate facts and findings that had been neglected by the official investigation, and give them the status of a ‘real document.’ Furthermore, the passage from color to black and white is also an original procedure to make the present past and the past present. Affectation, ignorance, hypocrisy, prejudice, and a vile “code or conspiracy of silence” (*omertà*) marked the past as they characterize the present.

*Pasolini: Un delitto italiano* proves to be a rigorous and diligent reading of piles of reports, police interrogations, trial minutes, and photos of Pasolini’s corpse borrowed from Pasolini’s family lawyer, Nino Marazzita, pictures that contributed to convince Giordana that “That night Pelosi could not act by

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<sup>129</sup>Giordana, *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano*. “Questo processo farà capire fino in fondo cos’è il terrorismo culturale, e chi era davvero Pier Paolo Pasolini.”

<sup>130</sup> Maurizio Fantoni Minnella, “Conversazione con Marco Tullio Giordana,” in *Non riconciliati: Politica e società nel cinema italiano dal neorealismo a oggi* (Turin: UTET Libreria, 2004), 282. “Perché sia chiaro che il film a quel punto si trasforma in pura ‘cronaca’, l’immagine vira al bianco e nero, non concede carta alla propaganda consolatoria.”

himself. One cannot slaughter a man—an athletic man like Pasolini—without suffering the smallest bruise, contusion or wound.”<sup>131</sup> Giordana underlines that, by representing the testimonies of Pelosi and that of Professor Faustino Durante—who reconstructs the murder providing scientific, precise evidence and explanations—he and the other screenwriters, Sandro Petraglia and Stefano Rulli, have meticulously reported the acts of the trial “without changing a comma (*senza cambiare una virgola*).”<sup>132</sup> In other words, Giordana stresses his respectful faithfulness to the ‘reality,’ and his heart-felt commitment to a supposed ‘truth’ that has been intentionally brushed aside. Giordana does not wonder if it is still possible “knowing the truth” (because he is almost resigned to the idea that the truth will never be fully disclosed<sup>133</sup>) “but at least knowing *why* this truth was never known and, perhaps, will never be known.”<sup>134</sup> With regard to exposing those pieces of information that would eventually lead to the truth, what is certainly more compelling in the film is the montage, the procedures by which Giordana and editor Cecilia Zanuso assemble the scenes with the scope of “explaining the facts as clearly as possible.”<sup>135</sup> Representing Pasolini’s death and making the film through a skillful work of editing are the incisive tools through which Giordana connects his work not only with Pasolini’s life and death but also with his cinematic theory. In *Heretical Empiricism*, Pasolini stated that

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<sup>131</sup> Prudenzi, interview with Marco Tullio Giordana, 9. “Pelosi quella notte non poteva aver agito da solo. Non si può massacrare un uomo – un uomo atletico come Pasolini—senza riportare la sia pur minima ecchimosi, contusione, ferita.”

<sup>132</sup> Prudenzi, interview with Marco Tullio Giordana, 10.

<sup>133</sup> Giordana is aware that the investigations were not done properly, that the evidence collected was disregarded by the Attorney General’s Office (La Procura Generale) in 1975 and in the trials of the following years. That time had certainly contributed to move people’s attention away from Pasolini’s case.

<sup>134</sup> Giordana, *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano*, 21. “Non dico sapere la verità, ma sapere almeno *perché* la verità non si è mai saputa e, forse, non si saprà mai.”

<sup>135</sup> Giordana, *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano*, 11. “Spiegare con la maggior chiarezza possibile i fatti.”

It is therefore absolutely necessary to die, because, so long as we live, we have no meaning, and the language of our lives (with which we express ourselves, and to which we therefore attribute the greatest importance) is untranslatable; a chaos of possibilities, a search for relations and meanings without resolution. Death effects an instantaneous montage of our lives; that is, it chooses the truly meaningful moments ... and puts them in a sequence, transforming an infinite, unstable, and uncertain—and therefore linguistically not describable—present into a clear, stable, certain, and therefore easily describable past... It is only thanks to death that our life serves us to express ourselves. Editing therefore performs on the material of the film (which is composed by fragments that can be extremely long or infinitesimal, of many sequence shots understood as possible infinite subjective shots) the operation that death performs on life.<sup>136</sup>

Giordana took inspiration from Pasolini's theory when, contrary to the initial intention to represent the intellectual's entire life since his youth in Friuli, he decided to focus only on his death: "The epiphany came from Pasolini himself... we had to start with Pasolini's death to recount his life, even if, said like this, it could seem a paradoxical device."<sup>137</sup> Through the montage Giordana is able both to present Pasolini's exceptional sensibility as a man and as a poet, and to clarify the dynamics of his murder, shedding light on some important elements. Montage then seems to acquire the potential to unveil an 'objective truth'; on this subject, let us recollect what Pasolini himself

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<sup>136</sup> Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, trans. B. Lawton and L.K. Barnett, 236-37. "È dunque assolutamente necessario morire, perché, finché siamo vivi, manchiamo di senso, e il linguaggio della nostra vita (con cui ci esprimiamo, e a cui dunque attribuiamo la massima importanza) è intraducibile: un caos di possibilità, una ricerca di relazioni e di significati senza soluzione di continuità. La morte compie un fulmineo montaggio della nostra vita: ossia sceglie i suoi momenti veramente significativi...e li mette in successione, facendo del nostro presente, infinito, instabile e incerto, e dunque linguisticamente non descrivibile, un passato chiaro, stabile, certo, e dunque linguisticamente ben descrivibile. Solo grazie alla morte, la nostra vita ci serve ad esprimerci. Il montaggio opera dunque sul materiale del film (che è costituito da frammenti, lunghissimi o infinitesimali, di tanti piani-sequenza come possibili soggettive infinite) quello che la morte opera sulla vita." Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Empirismo eretico*, 1561-62.

<sup>137</sup> Prudenzi, interview with Marco Tullio Giordana, 9. "L'illuminazione è venuta da Pasolini stesso...bisognava partire proprio dalla morte di Pasolini per raccontarne la vita, anche se a dirlo così può sembrare un espediente paradossale." Giordana read Enzo Siciliano's biography of Pasolini, *Vita di Pasolini* (1978), and was willing to make a film on the intellectual's whole life. See Giordana's interview with Angela Prudenzi, 8.

remarked as he commented on hypothetical shots/perspectives from different angles about the mysterious assassination of president John Fitzgerald Kennedy. As he ponders the last moments of Kennedy's life, what Pasolini defines "sintagmi viventi" (living syntagmas), that is to say the president's last actions as well as those of his assassin(s), Pasolini is convinced that to make sense of all those moments, to make them complete and comprehensible, one should establish a relation among them. This occurs "not through a simple multiplication of presents<sup>138</sup>—as would be realized if we were to juxtapose the various subjectives—but through their coordination."<sup>139</sup> According to Pasolini, it is through the selection and coordination of the most significant passages of different shots representing the same event that the confused present becomes clear past. Then he refers to the possibility of having a detective who has seen all the shorts on Kennedy's murder, and who has "una geniale mente analizzatrice" (a genial analytical mind), and concludes asserting that

His cleverness could therefore only consist in coordination. *Intuiting the truth*, from a careful analysis of the various naturalistic segments composed of the various shorts, would his cleverness be capable of reconstructing it, and how? By choosing the truly meaningful moments of various subjective sequence shots and consequently finding their *real* ordering. In other words, it would be montage. After this work of choice and coordination, the various angles would be dissolved, and the existential subjectivity would give way to *objectivity*.<sup>140</sup> (Emphasis mine)

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<sup>138</sup> "La realtà vista e udita nel suo accadere è sempre al tempo presente." Pasolini, *Empirismo eretico*, 1556. "Reality seen and heard as it happens is always in the present." Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, 233.

<sup>139</sup> Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, 235. "non attraverso una semplice moltiplicazione di presenti – come avverrebbe se giustapponestimo le varie soggettive—ma attraverso la coordinazione di esse." Pasolini, *Empirismo eretico*, 1558.

<sup>140</sup> Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, 235. "La sua genialità non potrebbe dunque consistere che nella coordinazione. Essa, *intuendo la verità* – da un'attenta analisi dei vari pezzi...naturalistici, costituiti dai vari filmini – sarebbe in grado di ricostruirla, e come? Scegliendo i momenti veramente significativi dei vari piani-sequenza soggettivi, e trovando, di conseguenza, la loro *reale* successività. Si tratterebbe, in parole povere, di un montaggio. In seguito a tale lavoro di scelta e di coordinazione, i vari angoli visuali si dissolverebbero, e la soggettività, esistenziale,

What is most striking in the passage above is Pasolini's unconditional faith in the possibility of intuitively grasping an 'objective absolute truth' through an intelligent reorganization of shots. It is as if Pasolini accords men of outstanding intelligence, both indisputable honesty and the unquestionable power of finding the 'truth' and delivering it to the spectator. Pasolini does not elaborate on how to detect the 'analytical genial mind,' and how to assess their ethical stands or eventual political agenda once they proceed with the analysis and evaluation of a given event. Giordana and his editor Zanuso become Pasolini's trusted 'geniale mente analizzatrice' and the film conveys the idea that 'an absolute objective truth' may exist, and can be intuited through the facts and shots organized and proposed in the film. Though we do have different and contrasting points of view, that is to say, Pelosi's, his lawyer's, his friends', the testimonies of the poor people from the Idroscalo, and then the reports of Pasolini's family lawyers, and of professor Durante, by the end of the film it is likely that the spectator has a clear idea of who is the most credible and sets the right path to 'the truth'. On this subject, interviewed by Angela Prudenzi in 1996, Giordana significantly noted:

I had many scruples about Pelosi, in both representing him (and in fact I chose a young actor, Carlo De Filippi who emphasized his human fragility rather than his ferocity or obtuseness) and giving him the possibility to express 'his own' truth that I personally do not believe. But I did not want that my opinion influenced the spectators. That is why Pelosi tells us three times his detailed version of the facts, and what he says is also believable, probable. Faustino Durante (the actor Massimo De Francovich) speaks instead only once without emphasis, without pathos, without sensational development. But he is so precise, direct, scientific that at the end the facts, as they are aligned, result

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cederebbe il posto all'oggettività." Pasolini, *Empirismo eretico*, 1558-59. Here one should wonder whether "intuition" grants understanding or knowledge.

much more credible than how Pelosi had reported them. Obviously one can accuse me of having used all my invisible weight as filmmaker in order to obtain this result, to have used an artifice, that impartiality is only apparent. But the truth is that in writing those scenes and in shooting them we have done nothing but report the proceedings as they were reported at the trial, without changing a thing.<sup>141</sup>

Giordana stresses his faithfulness to the trial reports and minutes, and our final choice regarding 'the truth' on Pasolini's murder depends on a sort of leap of faith, that is to say, on whether we believe in the veracity and accuracy of original testimonies and evidence, and in Giordana's honesty and moral integrity in transcribing his findings in the film. Giordana exposes different points of view (his selection then is not limited to what conforms to his beliefs), but not all of them acquire the same credibility (and this may depend simply on the evidences, not necessarily on Giordana's intervention and use of them). By means of logical observations, the spectator can perceive the weakness of Pelosi's version, the flaws of his friends' stumbling reports, the ridiculous affectation of Pelosi's lawyer vis-à-vis the more scientific and rational explanation of Professor Durante, or the earnest and heartfelt work of Pasolini's lawyers. The conclusion (seen as the first step to 'the truth') is that Pelosi had some accomplices, and that the superior judicial organs (perhaps in connection with political institutions) had disregarded some evidence and

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<sup>141</sup> Prudenzi, interview with Marco Tullio Giordana, 10. "Mi sono posto molti scrupoli nei riguardi di Pelosi, sia nel rappresentarlo (e infatti ho scelto un giovane attore, Carlo De Filippi, che ne mettesse in risalto la fragilità creaturale più che la ferocia o l'ottusità), sia nel dargli modo di esprimere la 'sua' verità. Alla quale io personalmente non credo. Ma non per questo volevo che la mia opinione influenzasse gli spettatori. Ecco perchè Pelosi ci racconta tre volte la sua versione con tutti i dettagli, ed è anche molto credibile quello che dice, molto verosimile. Faustino Durante (l'attore Massimo De Francovich) parla invece una volta sola. Senza enfasi, senza pathos, senza colpi di scena. Ma è talmente preciso, diretto, scientifico, che alla fine i fatti, così come vengono allineati, risultano molto più credibili di come ce li ha raccontati Pelosi. Naturalmente mi si può accusare di aver messo tutto il mio peso invisibile di regista per ottenere questo risultato, di essere ricorso a un artificio, che l'imparzialità è solo apparente. Ma la verità è che nello scrivere quelle scene e nel filmarle non abbiamo fatto altro che riportare i verbali così come agli atti del processo, senza cambiare una virgola."



closed the first trial too early. The politicians and the judiciary's flaws, according to Giordana, have impeded *the truth* from being fully revealed.

On the relation between editing and *truth*, let's take into consideration Maurizio Viano's essay "Who Is Killing Pasolini?,"<sup>142</sup> in which he remarks that

Even if the authors' probable intention was to come up with *the actual truth*, *Who killed Pasolini?* would still implicitly assert that truths are 'editing effects,' effects of the choice and juxtaposition of fragments...once the 'desperate vitality' of Pasolini's legacy becomes a matter of fragments to be selected and reordered in a new sequence, then, the film's editing lesson goes, *we are free to create our collages, our stories*. In fact, editing is more than splicing a few images together. It is also the act of taking something out of Pasolini and grafting it into other signifying chains. Instead of aiming to produce more auterist readings, one can cut some of his work out, and use it (thereby valorizing it) in other areas such as, for example, addiction studies and queer theory.<sup>143</sup> (Emphasis mine)

Though I agree that anybody can indeed organize fragments to construct his/her own 'truth'; however what seems arguable, at least in the case of Pasolini's murder, is the certitude that we are free to create our stories, no matter what is at stake. Are we indeed free to disregard evidence, to dismiss facts, and to select from the whole picture just the bits that are more useful for our own theory or political stand? The most skeptical of us could argue that even the original evidence (basically reproduced in photos, videos and written reports) may have been forged re-constructions of facts, modified imitations

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<sup>142</sup> Viano's choice of titles both for his article and for the translation of the original film title is emblematic; in the excerpt, we note that Viano translates *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano* into "Who killed Pasolini?," Giordana's original title is a statement that underscores how Pasolini's murder has all the characteristics of the typical Italian assassination. Giordana explains that "the specific title is a sign that establishes a relation with other events in the historical, political and social Italian landscape; being a sign, it is interpreted in multiple ways according to different ideological stands; being an "Italian crime" means also that it is not punished, or only partially punished; finally being an "Italian crime" entails that surely it is manipulated by the mass media". Giordana. *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano*, 9-10. Viano then disregards the meaning of Giordana's title, and, more significantly, adds a question mark that, contrary to the spirit of the film, emphasizes doubts and confusion around a possible truth.

<sup>143</sup> Maurizio Viano, "Who is Killing Pasolini," *Film Quarterly*, 51 (1997-98): 25.

realized by means of the most advanced technologies, but then how do we deal with Pasolini's murder? Linda Hutcheon, quoting Dominick LaCapra, contends that "documents are not inert or innocent, but may indeed have 'critical' or even potentially transformative relations to the phenomena represented in them'."<sup>144</sup> If Hutcheon is right, then how do we hope to ever reach a just conclusion? In other words, how do we integrate this extreme relativism with one's search for justice? Is it possible in the case of Pasolini's slaughter to speak about "truths as 'editing effects', effects of the choice and juxtaposition of fragments," thus legitimizing 'truths' that seem to be far from providing justice to Pasolini and his family? I believe that Viano's attitude tends to disparage studies and findings whose validity has been confirmed recently by Pino Pelosi's confession. He has admitted, confirming the thesis brought forward by Pasolini's family lawyers and later by Giordana's filmic reconstruction, that he was not alone at the Idroscalo on the night of the murder, and that he had lied to protect his family.<sup>145</sup>

Regarding the idea of *truth* and its ideal interpreter, I also would like to direct our attention to the famous "Romanzo delle stragi" (The Novel of the Slaughters) that Pasolini wrote on November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1974. After declaring he knew the names of politicians and CIA members who colluded with the Mafia and were responsible for a series of crimes—including the massacres in Milano, Brescia, and Bologna<sup>146</sup>—he states:

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<sup>144</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 2002), 50.

<sup>145</sup> On May 11, 2005, Pino Pelosi participated in the TV talk show "Ombre sul giallo" broadcast on RAI TRE, and he confessed that other people were with him, that they had a Southern accent, but he did not say who they were. Pasolini's lawyers believe that Pelosi continues to lie. For further detail on Pelosi's confession, see the video from the talk show on <http://www.raiclicktv.it/raiclickpc/secure/teaser.srv?id=27602&path=RaiClickWeb^Home^Storie&home=false#> and see the articles from different Italian newspapers on [http://www.cinetecadibologna.it/sitopasolini/omicidio\\_stampa-11maggio2005.htm](http://www.cinetecadibologna.it/sitopasolini/omicidio_stampa-11maggio2005.htm)

<sup>146</sup> The terroristic attack in Milan and Brescia occurred in the central squares of the two cities, respectively at the National Bank of Agriculture situated in Piazza Fontana (12 December

I know all these names and I know all the facts (attacks on the institutions and slaughters) for which they are responsible. I know, but I have no proof. I don't even have clues. I know because *I am an intellectual*, a writer who tries to observe all that happens, to know all that is written, to imagine all that one does not know or is quite about; [I am an intellectual] *who coordinates facts which are distant from each other, who puts together the disorganized and fragmentary pieces of an entire coherent political picture, who re-establishes the logic where arbitrary judgment, craziness and mystery dominate*. All this is part of my job and of the instinct of my job... I believe that it is difficult that my 'project of a novel' is wrong, that it has no connection with reality, and that its references to facts and people are incorrect. I believe that many other intellectuals and novelists know what I know as an intellectual and a novelist. Because the reconstruction of the *truth* regarding what happened in Italy after 1968 is not so difficult.<sup>147</sup> (Emphasis mine)

In this passage, once again note Pasolini's trust in the existence of an unquestionable, absolute truth; furthermore, one should observe how he uses a literary tool "il romanzo" (the novel), a term associated above all with fiction or fictionalized stories, as a useful vehicle to express that truth; finally, we can draw a parallel, if not an identification, between the "geniale mente analizzatrice" that Pasolini mentions in *Heretical Empiricism* and the intellectual, more specifically the writer or the novelist he depicts in his polemical article. Both that "genial mind" and "the intellectual" have the ability of coordinating facts and disclosing *the truth*. In both cases Pasolini

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1969), and in Piazza della Loggia (28 May 1974); The terroristic attack in Bologna occurred at the central train station (2 August 1980).

<sup>147</sup> Pier Paolo Pasolini, "Il romanzo delle stragi," *Scritti Corsari*. In *Pasolini. Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 363. "Io so tutti questi nomi e so tutti i fatti (attentati alle istituzioni e stragi) di cui sono resi colpevoli. Io so. Ma non ho le prove. Non ho nemmeno indizi. Io so perché *sono un intellettuale*, uno scrittore, che cerca di seguire tutto ciò che succede, di conoscere tutto ciò che se ne scrive, di immaginare tutto ciò che non si sa o che si tace; *che coordina fatti anche lontani, che mette insieme i pezzi disorganizzati e frammentari di un intero coerente quadro politico, che ristabilisce la logica là dove sembrano regnare l'arbitrarietà, la follia e il mistero*. Tutto ciò fa parte del mio mestiere e dell'istinto del mio mestiere... Credo che sia difficile che il mio 'progetto di romanzo' sia sbagliato, che non abbia cioè attinenza con la realtà, e che i suoi riferimenti a fatti e persone siano inesatti. Credo inoltre che molti altri intellettuali e romanzieri sappiano ciò che so io in quanto intellettuale e romanziere. Perché la ricostruzione della *verità* a proposito di ciò che è successo in Italia dopo il 1968 non è poi così difficile." This article was originally published on the newspaper *Il Corriere della Sera*, on November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1974, with the title "Che cos'è questo golpe?"

maintains that the reason why a genial mind, an intellectual, or a novelist, are able to understand *the truth* is thanks to his/her “instinct” that ensures them to feel *the truth* “con assoluta precisione”(with absolute precision).<sup>148</sup>

Pasolini’s point of view is indeed remarkable considering the potential clash that may occur between the intellectual’s belief in the ontological existence of an unquestionable truth, and the poststructuralist relativism that was emerging in the 1960s and that fully developed in the 1970s. In such cultural world, where the word of Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida led the theoretical debate,<sup>149</sup> Italo Calvino noticed that

All the parameters, the categories, the antitheses that they used to define, classify, plan the world are questioned. [They question] not only those [parameters] tied to historical values, but also those that seemed to be stable anthropological categories: reason and myth, work and existence, male and female, and even the polarity of the most elementary typologies: affirmation and negation, up and down, subject and object.<sup>150</sup>

Poststructuralist intellectuals removed the center from a structure, where the center may be understood as the key concepts of Western thought.<sup>151</sup> As Elizabeth Wren-Owens argues “in this new de-centered universe, there is no centre, no authority against which to measure ideas, no fixed point to deviate from. In such a world there are no facts, only interpretations which cannot be

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<sup>148</sup> Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 363.

<sup>149</sup> See Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977) and Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997) as well as Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978).

<sup>150</sup> Italo Calvino, *Una pietra sopra: Discorsi di letteratura e società* (Milan: Mondadori, 1995), 346. “Tutti i parametri, le categorie, le antitesi che usavamo per definire, classificare, progettare il mondo sono messi in questione. Non solo quelli più legati a valori storici, ma anche quelli che sembravano essere categorie antropologiche stabili: ragione e mito, lavoro ed esistenza, maschio e femmina, e perfino la polarità delle tipologie più elementari: affermazione e negazione, sopra e sotto, soggetto e oggetto.”

<sup>151</sup> “The function of this center was not only to orient, balance and structure the structure – one cannot in fact conceive of an unorganized structure – but above all to make sure that the organizing principle of the structure would limit what we might call the play of the structure,” Derrida, “Structure, Sign and Play,” in *Writing and Difference*, 278.

validated, and hence the notion of communicating truth through writing becomes problematized.”<sup>152</sup> Poststructuralist view of the world opened itself towards all those ethnic and social minorities that the absolute-truth-based-system had rejected as abnormal. Pasolini was discriminated as a homosexual; his committed writing, however, did not embrace the poststructuralist approach, but sought to communicate truths to the reader and possibility of change; he seemed to hold firmly to higher ethical and aesthetic values (justice and beauty) that were to be valid for all people. Postmodern or poststructuralist approach to reality is still predominant today and, in Satya Mohanty’s words invokes “the acceptance of a vulnerability based on the belief that nothing is ever epistemically reliable... today progressive politics–feminist, antiracist, anticolonialist, and so forth– has increasingly become identified with a critical and demystificatory project that not only interrogates the smugness of traditional claims to truth but is also skeptical of any attempt to seek objectivity.”<sup>153</sup> In the disorienting chaos of subjective perspectives and the lack of points of reference, I keep in mind what Noam Chomsky argued as he confronted Michel Foucault in their debate on human nature: “it is of critical importance that we know what impossible goals we’re trying to achieve, if we hope to achieve some of the possible ones. And that means that we have to be bold enough to speculate and create social theories on the basis of partial knowledge, while remaining very open to the strong possibility... that at least in some respects we’re very far off the mark.”<sup>154</sup>

Satya Mohanty, referring to Chomsky’s view of human nature and putting

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<sup>152</sup> Elizabeth Wren-Owens, *Postmodern Ethics* (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 103.

<sup>153</sup> Satya P. Mohanty, *Literary Theory and the Claims of History. Postmodernism, Objectivity, Multicultural Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 13, 16.

<sup>154</sup> Michel Foucault and Noam Chomsky, “Human Nature”, in *Reflexive Water: The Basic Concerns of Mankind*, ed. Fons Elders (London: Souvenir Press Ltd, 1974), 173.

forward a post-positivist realist theory suggests the possibility of relying on objective knowledge and on men's rational faculty to evaluate a variety of social occurrences, to eradicate some socially based error, and reach a *more just view* of the world in full respect of cultural pluralism.<sup>155</sup> I tend to believe that in the political corrupted system in which he lived, Pasolini pursued and believed in an absolute truth that for Mohanty's theory is at least approachable. Pasolini was informed by a strong and genuine belief (but hardly acknowledged) in some non-discriminating moral, ethical, and aesthetic values that were rooted in human nature, that permeated his sense of justice, and that were fundamental in the evaluation of political and social issues concerning people of different social and cultural identities.

The intellectual in Pasolini's view is an individual who more than others is concerned with the truth, is courageous, and finally "is not compromised *in practice* with the power, and has, by definition, nothing to lose."<sup>156</sup> Pasolini's idea of intellectual reminds us of the more contemporary view by Edward Said who, in *Representations of the Intellectual*, states that the intellectual is a person who "cannot easily be co-opted by governments or corporations, and whose *raison d'être* is to represent all those people and issues

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<sup>155</sup> According to Mohanty one must reject the binary extremes of ethnic absolutism or essentialism on the one hand and postmodern relativism on the other. Mohanty defines "objective knowledge as something we achieve when we have freed ourselves from all bias..." and he refers to a more nuanced conception of objectivity that is "built on an analysis of the differences between different kinds of subjective or theoretical bias or interest, an analysis that distinguishes those biases that are limiting or counterproductive from those that are in fact necessary for knowledge, that are epistemologically productive and useful." Mohanty. "Can Our Values be Objective? On Ethics, Aesthetics, and Progressive Politics," *New Literary Theory*, 32.4 (2001): 804. For further details of the post-positivist realist theory, consult Mohanty. *Literary Theory and the Claims of History. Postmodernism, Objectivity, Multicultural Politics*; Paula M.L. Moya, Micheal R. Hames-Garcia, *Reclaiming Identities. Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

<sup>156</sup> Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 364. "Non è compromesso *nella pratica* col potere, e, inoltre, non ha, per definizione, niente da perdere."

that are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug.”<sup>157</sup> Pasolini is aware that he could enter the political realm and find evidence for what he already knows; however, he does not accept any compromise of his moral integrity with the corruption of that world: “In Italy the intellectual courage of truth and political practice are irreconcilable.”<sup>158</sup> Pasolini maintains that intellectuals, though preserving political (communist) ideals, should avoid any contact or collaboration with politicians (*Il Palazzo*) and their activities, and should use their analytical intelligence at least to raise suspicions, increase doubts, induce people to think more critically, if not to bring the truth forward. To return to Giordana, the latter seems to incarnate Pasolini’s view of ‘the intellectual.’ In an interview with Maurizio Fantoni Minnella Giordana conveys a certain disgust for political practice, and remarks:

I have never been a ‘militant’ except for a period of my life that was too brief to have the label stick on me. The extraparliamentary groups, each one of them without exception, even the ‘uncontrived’ Lotta Continua, were inclined to reproduce in miniature that same bureaucracy and discipline that had made so dull the life of the traditional parties. When I was eighteen years old I already realized that my *personal militancy* would not be expressed in politics, but rather *in ideas, in the production of meaning, and in the cinema* that I started to long for precisely in that period. My curiosity for politics and the paroxysms of Italian society remained confined to the curiosity of a *witness, an observer* who was sometimes sympathetic, other times critical or even horrified. I do not consider and I have never considered myself a representative of what is called political cinema.<sup>159</sup> (Emphasis mine)

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<sup>157</sup> Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 11.

<sup>158</sup> Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 364. “Il coraggio intellettuale della verità e la pratica politica sono due cose inconciliabili in Italia.”

<sup>159</sup> Minnella, “Conversazione con Marco Tullio Giordana,” *Non riconciliati: politica e società nel cinema italiano dal Neorealismo a oggi*, 280. “Non sono mai stato un ‘militante’ se non per un periodo troppo breve per sentirmi appiccicata l’etichetta. I gruppi extraparlamentari, tutti senza eccezione, perfino la ‘spontaneista’ Lotta Continua, tendevano a riprodurre in sedicesimo quella stessa burocrazia e disciplina che avevano reso così poco affascinante la vita dei partiti tradizionali. Già a diciott’anni mi ero reso conto che la mia *personale ‘militanza’* non si sarebbe espressa nella politica, ma piuttosto *nel campo delle idee, della produzione di senso, del cinema* che proprio in quel momento cominciavo a vagheggiare. La mia curiosità verso la politica e le convulsioni della società italiana rimase confinata a quella di un *testimone, di un*

Giordana admires Pasolini for being an intellectual who is “free of ideologies, of preconceptions, and although he was a man of the Left, he was not a slave to left-wing ideology or any other ideology. This permitted him to be very free, to be very flexible and to exercise incredible imagination in seeing where Italian society was going and in analyzing Italian society and history.”<sup>160</sup>

Though Giordana’s political tendencies are not a mystery (he too seems to be a man of the Left, and his opposition to Berlusconi’s control of the mass media is well known<sup>161</sup>), he repudiates contemporary political practice, and focuses on “il campo delle idee” (the field of ideas), or better of ideals, giving life to a kind of cinema, which, as he observes,

[If] it tells more simply stories of women and men, their aspirations, desires, risks, if in short it represents them with simplicity, honesty, curious more about them than about personal ideas (‘there are more things in the sky and on earth than in your philosophy’ said Shakespeare in *Hamlet*), then cinema becomes *also* political, provided that it talks about a society, a world without stiffening up to dictate solutions, without falling into rhetoric or doing an election rally.<sup>162</sup>

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*osservatore* talvolta simpatetico, talaltra critico o addirittura inorridito. Non mi considero, non mi sono mai considerato, un esponente del cosiddetto cinema politico.”

<sup>160</sup> David Walsh, interview with Marco Tullio Giordana in “Why was Pasolini murdered. A Review of Pasolini: An Italian Crime,” (Nov. 20, 1995), <http://www.cptelecom.net/mbayly/pasolini3.htm>

<sup>161</sup> In more general terms, but still very indicative of his political sympathies, Giordana affirms “La politica, questa brutta politica fatta di disimpegno, ignoranza, consumismo, brutale, volgarità, odio per la diversità, le donne, il corpo, la povertà, questa ossessione isterica e totalizzante che vuole convincerci che bombardare, rapinare petrolio, rinchiudere nei lager di Guantanamo sia *dignum et iustum*, questo voyeurismo che non distingue l’ombelico di una velina dallo sguardo terrorizzato di un bambino (palestinese, israeliano o bosniaco) tutto tritato nello stesso blob, abbia oggi invaso – attraverso la televisione – la nostra vita, l’abbia profondamente inquinata, avvelenata, resa irrespirabile.” M. Fantoni Minnella, “Conversazione con Marco Tullio Giordana,” 286.

<sup>162</sup> Minnella, “Conversazione con Marco Tullio Giordana,” 280. “[Se]racconta più semplicemente storie di donne e uomini, le loro aspirazioni, i desideri, i rischi, se in poche parole li rappresenta con semplicità, onestà, curioso più di loro che delle proprie personali idee (‘ci sono più cose in cielo e in terra che nella tua filosofia’ dice Shakespeare nell’*Amleto*) allora il cinema diventa *anche* politico, a patto di raccontarci una società, un mondo senza impancarsi a dettare ricette, senza precipitare nella retorica e nel comizio.”



In summary, Giordana tries to create a kind of cinema that “makes you enter others’ head, hears their voice, [a cinema] that touches you, moves you, challenges your attention and intelligence, thinks about you not as if you were a passive idiot that needs to be persuaded only to buy the latest cellphone.”<sup>163</sup> Against a cinema that fabricates automata, willing to challenge the intelligence of the spectators, and rejecting a construction that diverts from the reality of evidence and clues, he proposes the story of Pasolini’s murder.

In *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano*, Giordana uses an actor to replace Pasolini’s body, but only in the nocturnal scenes and showing nothing more than his back. This choice, associated with newsreel of Pasolini’s interviews, inundates the film with Pasolini’s own voice and eyes (repertory footage), making his presence even more significant, and reinforcing the fact that the person who was murdered indeed existed and asks for justice. Pasolini’s gaze and words become Giordana’s privileged means by which spectators access reality, are enabled to enter Pasolini’s world and know his personality.

Giordana is not only talking about Pasolini, but he is doing so by adopting his privileged means of knowledge: the body. On this subject, Pasolini declared:

“I attribute great importance to faces, also because by focusing on faces it is impossible to lie: the camera reveals their most intimate reality.”<sup>164</sup> And

Giordana writes:

His icon was so exciting, his voice was so intense—as unmistakable as a fingerprint—that we understood we could not give it up. Perhaps

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<sup>163</sup> Minnella, “Conversazione con Marco Tullio Giordana,” 286. “Ti fa entrare nella testa degli altri, sentire le loro voci, che ti tocca, ti commuove, sfida la tua attenzione e intelligenza, ti pensa non come un idiota vegetale che dev’essere convinto solo a comprare l’ultimo telefonino.”

<sup>164</sup> Pasolini in “Il sogno del centauro. Incontri con Jean Dufлот,” *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 1515. “Attribuisco una grande importanza ai visi, anche perché con essi è impossibile barare: la cinepresa rivela la loro realtà più intima.”

Pasolini is the only Italian intellectual whose *body* must be taken into account: this is because he himself used the body—some people will say he did it obsessively—as an essential instrument of knowledge. For this reason his body could not be *replaced* with someone else's. Any actor who would have stood in his shoes—even the greatest actor on earth, even the most similar to him, the most identical—would have been his pathetic and inadequate stand-in.<sup>165</sup>

In some sequences with the assassin, Giordana evokes the importance of the body again. He admits that in representing Pelosi on the screen, he took inspiration directly from Pasolini:

Every time that I represented his murder on the screen, I wanted to film it with the 50, 75 and 100 in a frontal shot, almost as if it [Pasolini's body] was sacred, directly descended from Masaccio, Pontormo and Rosso Fiorentino whom Pasolini employed when he filmed the boys of *Accattone*, *Mamma Roma*, *La ricotta*. For I think that that night Pelosi imposed himself on his [Pasolini's] look as an apparition, as the embodiment of that plastic paradigm that had always fascinated Pasolini. I have always been very struck by the thought that that face was one of the last things that Pasolini saw.<sup>166</sup>

In conclusion, *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano* is not only a film about Pasolini.

Giordana, in fact, constructs it employing aesthetic values (montage, focus on the body) and conceptual values (search for truth and justice) that pertained Pasolini's life and cinematic work. In doing so, Giordana revitalizes the intellectual's social, political and artistic activity. Pasolini breathes new life

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<sup>165</sup> See Giordana, *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano*, 13: "La sua icona [Pasolini's] era così emozionante, così intensa la sua voce – inconfondibile come un'impronta digitale – che abbiamo capito di non potervi rinunciare. Forse Pasolini è l'unico intellettuale italiano dal cui *corpo* sia impossibile prescindere: proprio perché il corpo era stato da lui utilizzato-qualcuno dirà ossessivamente-come un indispensabile strumento di conoscenza. Proprio per questo non poteva essere *sostituito* con quello di un altro. Qualsiasi attore – anche il più grande di questa terra, il più somigliante, il più mimetico–nel rivestire i suoi panni non sarebbe stato che una sua patetica e inadeguata controfigura."

<sup>166</sup> Prudenzi, interview with Marco Tullio Giordana, 16. "Ogni volta che è in scena il suo assassino, io ho voluto filmarlo col 50, il 75 e il 100 nel modo frontale, quasi sacro, direttamente disceso da Masaccio, Pontormo e Rosso Fiorentino, col quale Pasolini aveva filmato i ragazzi di *Accattone*, *Mamma Roma*, *La ricotta*. Perché credo che quella notte Pelosi si sia imposto al suo sguardo come un'apparizione, come l'incarnazione perfetta di quel paradigma plastico che lo aveva sempre affascinato. Mi ha sempre fatto una grande impressione pensare che quel volto è stato una delle ultime cose che Pasolini ha potuto vedere."

into the spectators' awareness of who he was and why he died. At Angela Prudenzi's question " Why speak of Pasolini's death?", Giordana answers: "Naturally it doesn't do any good to Pasolini the artist. But knowing the truth helps Pasolini the citizen and us citizens a lot, whatever the truth might have been. A civil country should not hide skeletons in the closet."<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Prudenzi, interview with Marco Tullio Giordana, 11. "A che serve parlare della morte di Pasolini?" "A Pasolini artista naturalmente nulla. A Pasolini cittadino, a noi cittadini, serve invece moltissimo sapere la verità. Qualunque essa sia stata. Un paese civile non dovrebbe nascondere scheletri nell'armadio."

## CHAPTER 2

### PASOLINI IN MARCO TULLIO GIORDANA'S *I CENTO PASSI*

#### 2.1 *Pasolini and Peppino in the Film*

By Giordana's own admission, Pasolini is present in his works, even without full awareness, and the re-visitation of the artist's writings and films is animated by a stubborn will to understand the present time.<sup>168</sup> Let us analyze then how Pasolini appears in Giordana's *I cento passi* (premiered in 2000).

The film tells the story of Peppino, a young left-wing activist growing up in the seventies in the small town of Cinisi, Sicily. Peppino rebels against his father, affiliated with the local mob. With his friends he opens a self-financed club (Circolo Musica e Cultura) and then a radio station (Radio Aut) where he discusses major social and political issues, and publicly denounces the connections between mafia and local politics, and their illicit activities. When Peppino decides to run for council elections with Proletarian Democracy, and to bring his fight directly to the city hall, the mafia reacts to his initiatives by brutally killing him on May the 9th, 1978—the same day in which the body of Aldo Moro, kidnapped by the Red Brigades, is found in Rome.

One of the scenes in which Peppino is most clearly associated with Pasolini is when Peppino, disavowed by his father and ejected from his family, lives in a nearby garage. When Peppino is given a book by Pasolini, he recites two poems: the first one is from the collection *Le ceneri di Gramsci* (*The Ashes of Gramsci*, 1957) and is addressed to the Marxist politician. The second

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<sup>168</sup> See chapter 1, 32.

poem is from *Poesia in forma di rosa* (*Poetry in the Form of a Rose*, 1964) and is dedicated by the poet to his mother. The construction of the entire sequence emphasizes two major aspects of Pasolini's life: his ambivalent admiration for Gramsci and, arguably, his homosexuality. The director creates an uncanny overlapping of the character, Peppino, with the Italian intellectual, Pasolini, blurring the distinctions between the two. How does this occur?

Soon after the incipit of the poem addressed to Gramsci, Peppino switches to the poem "Supplica a mia madre," ("Prayer to my Mother")<sup>169</sup> in which Pasolini declares his desperate love for his mother. As Peppino reads, the tone of his voice loses its brutal vehemence and it becomes sweet and calm. The camera approaches Peppino with a medium close-up. At the outset he is cheerful, but he soon becomes very serious. When he recites the line "Only you in all the world know what my / heart always held, before any other love,"<sup>170</sup> the camera rapidly cuts to his mother's face with a middle close-up, and then at the words "before any other love" returns to Peppino. There is an exchange of looks between the two. As the camera movement establishes a clear and direct one-on-one relationship between the two characters, it suggests that the poem is not impersonal, that Peppino is not detached from what he is saying, but he is directly involved and is addressing the poem to a specific person, his mother. It is here that an uncanny overlapping between the figure of Peppino and Pasolini takes place. The woman is moved by his words, and Peppino encourages her to recite the poem, almost as if he wished she would respond to his own devotion with reciprocal love and desire.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> For the complete text of the poem, see Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Poems* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1996), trans. Norman MacAfee, 108.

<sup>170</sup> "Tu sei la sola al mondo che sa, del mio cuore, / ciò che è stato sempre, prima d'ogni altro amore." Pasolini, *Poems*, 108.

<sup>171</sup> In real life, according to the indications reported on Peppino Impastato's official web site ([www.peppinoimpastato.com](http://www.peppinoimpastato.com)), the level of literacy of Peppino's mother was not sufficient for

When his mother starts reciting the poem, the camera gets closer to her with a medium close-up, while in the background we can see a mirror reflecting Peppino's almost-naked body. Peppino is not looking at the mirror, we see only his profile.

From a Lacanian psychoanalytical perspective, it can be argued that it is as if Peppino's refusal to look into the mirror metaphorizes his rejection of the difference from and the loss of his mother, and suggests the interference of his father. According to Lacan, in the mirror stage the child first imagines a unity with the mother, then he perceives his difference from her. At this point he imagines an illusory identification with the self in the mirror, but then he senses the loss of the mother. Lacan calls this part of the mirror stage Imaginary. Having sensed the loss of the mother, the child desires reunification with her. But this desire is sexualized, and so the father intervenes: he enters as the third term into the mirror/ reflection, forming a triangle of relationships. He prohibits access to the mother by saying 'No'. In such a way, language functions as symbolic order. This phase of the mirror stage is called The Symbolic. For the child to become a fully socialized subject, he must obey the father's 'No', that is The Law of the Father.<sup>172</sup> It is evident that in the case of Pasolini/Peppino this stage of the process is contradicted by a refusal of the Law of the Father, and their growth does not follow the prescribed path. The scene ends with Peppino's mother reading the rest of the poem, which emphasizes the poet's/Peppino's solitude, the impossibility of replacing her, and his love for her as his own eternal imprisonment: "your love is my slavery." In a full close-up of Peppino we can sense all his passion

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her to read the poem. That is why it seems that the entire scene is ideally constructed in favor of a recuperation of Pasolini.

<sup>172</sup> See Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection* (New York: Norton, 1977), trans. Alan Sheridan, 1-9.

and desperation, and with a final medium close-up of his mother who turns towards him we infer her sympathy for her son's feelings.

As mentioned, a profound contrast with his father, Luigi Impastato, is in play. This contrast takes us back to Pasolini's conflict with his own father. Peppino's triangular relationship with his parent is also foreshadowed by another "mirror scene" at the very beginning of the film, when Peppino, still a child lovingly helped by his mother, is getting ready to visit his relatives. His father appears with his reflection in a mirror positioned behind Peppino. Peppino is exactly in between his mother and the image of his father in the mirror. The young child is caught between the love for his mother and the hatred for his father, which is paired with Peppino's reaction to his father's involvement with the Mafia. The scene of the break with his father is significant. The bodies of both Peppino and his father once again express the two characters' feelings. After listening to a provocative radio program by Peppino, his father returns home, pretends to engage Peppino in a conversation and instead suddenly punches him, bends on his knees, and lies on Peppino's body. Nine times Luigi asks Peppino to repeat the fundamental law he should respect "onora tuo padre (honor thy father)" Peppino says nothing until he explodes in a desperate scream. He rejects his father's law, the law that would co-opt him to the mafia system, and also oblige him to give up his love for his mother.

In Freudian terms, loving the mother and hating the father could be an indication of the unsuccessful resolution of the Oedipus complex, and could lead to homosexuality. However, it may be rash and thoughtless to assert Peppino's homosexuality, especially if we consider exclusively the relations he had with his parents or his closeness to his male friends. It can be argued in

fact that these relations would be weak evidence of homosexuality.<sup>173</sup> The latter comes into play only if inserted in a context in which Pasolini, with the weight of his personal background, is already the term of comparison.

Pasolini's presence in the film can be perceived also in connection with intellectual and communist leader Antonio Gramsci. I am referring to the scene in which Peppino recites the first three verses of Pasolini's poem "Le ceneri di Gramsci" ("The Ashes of Gramsci", from the collection *The Ashes of Gramsci*, 1957):

It isn't May-like, this impure air  
which darkens the foreigners' dark  
garden still, then dazzles it...<sup>174</sup>

These verses that Pasolini wrote in 1954 after visiting the tombstone of the Marxist intellectual, both reminds us of the politician and of Pasolini's admiration for him. Formal references to Gramsci materialize also in the scene in which Gramsci's picture appears in the office of the communist leader Stefano Venuti, as well as the scene in which, after Peppino's death, the camera pans on one of Gramsci's books spread on the floor of the radio station. I believe that Giordana constructs the figure of Peppino Impastato and his social struggle according to a Gramscian perspective. Despite the historical Peppino's scant interest in Gramsci,<sup>175</sup> in the film *Giordana through Peppino*

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<sup>173</sup> Freud's analysis of homosexuality has not been systematized in one work. Freud presented his studies on homosexuality in the first essay of *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1975), as well as in *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*, trans. Alan Tyson (New York: Norton & Company), 1964.

<sup>174</sup> Pasolini, *Poems*, 5. "Non è di maggio questa impura aria/ che il buio giardino straniero/ fa ancora più buio...". Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Le ceneri di Gramsci* (Milan: Garzanti, 1957), 65. It is the second time that Giordana formally resorts to Pasolini's poem "The Ashes of Gramsci." He had already done it in his film *Maledetti vi amerò*. See this chapter, p.10.

<sup>175</sup> According to Peppino's comrade Salvo Vitale, Peppino certainly read Gramsci's *Quaderni del carcere* (*Prison Notebooks*), (in fact they are still shelved in his house in Cinisi), but the Sardinian intellectual was not one of his main references. See my interview with Salvo Vitale (Cinisi, July 1, 2007).



and his initiatives, takes up and re-elaborates in a new historical context, Gramsci's political objectives: attention to local problems, rebellion against the bureaucratization of the Communist Party, (osmosis between international and national politics, the city and the countryside, the intellectuals and the laborers.<sup>176</sup> Though all these themes are present in different scenes, a Gramscian reading of the film is prompted and encouraged particularly by the connection to Pasolini through Peppino's reading of Pasolini's poem. In fact looking at Peppino as the personification of Gramscian ideals, and at the film as a contemporary interpretation of a Gramscian politics, may not be immediately ready to us if there were not an explicit reference to Pasolini himself.

Pasolini's respect for Gramsci is well known, and I suspect that such strong connection between Pasolini and Gramsci had its weight in Giordana's choice to elaborate the film and the figure of Peppino through a Gramscian perspective. In an interview with Oswald Stack, Pasolini declared that while he found Marx somewhat distant from him for various reasons, "Gramsci's ideas coincided with mine; they won me over immediately, and he had a fundamental role in my formation. I first read him in the period 1948-1949."<sup>177</sup> Pasolini grew up as an artist in a period when there was a revival of the communist ideology through Lukács and Gramsci. Pasolini found Gramsci more congenial to himself, because he exhibited none of the prescriptive moralism that defined the Marxist orthodoxy of the time, especially the works of Lukács and Asor Rosa. Naomi Greene suggests that Pasolini must have

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<sup>176</sup> For a more detailed description of the connection between the film and Gramsci see Appendix.

<sup>177</sup> Oswald Stack, *Pasolini on Pasolini: Interviews with Oswald Stack* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969), 23.

admired Gramsci because “Gramsci never judges; he never suggests, for example, that political considerations render one artistic style or movement—be it realism or modernism—better or more ‘positive’ than another.”<sup>178</sup> The affinity that Pasolini felt for Gramsci was also due to Gramsci’s own interest in psychoanalysis, and to his distinctive approach to literature.<sup>179</sup> Furthermore, Greene remarks that “unlike Lukács, whose focus is almost entirely upon content, Gramsci—and here he foreshadows the socio-linguistic approach that would characterize Pasolini—analyzes the *language* of literary works.”<sup>180</sup> In *Letteratura e vita nazionale*, Gramsci observes: “In addition to its given cultural and sentimental world, the work of art contains other ‘historical elements’ [such as] its language, perceived not only as a purely verbal expression which could be fixed in a certain grammatical time and place, but as an ensemble of images and modes of expression not encompassed by grammar.”<sup>181</sup>

In short, we can assert that Pasolini’s critical essays of 1950s are inspired by Gramsci’s historical view of literature and his emphasis on style and language. Critics may argue that the poem “Le ceneri di Gramsci,” far from being a respectful homage to Gramsci, reveals indeed the profound

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<sup>178</sup> Naomi Greene, Pasolini, *Cinema as Heresy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 33. On the same page Greene also observes that for “Gramsci the critic’s task is not to judge a work of art but to explore its hidden ideologies, to see what political and historical questions they call into question on the part of both writer and audience. These ideologies must be deciphered before they can be changed in order to further a new cultural hegemony.”

<sup>179</sup> See Jennifer Stone’s “Italian Freud: Gramsci, Giulia Schucht, and Wild Analysis,” *October* 28 (Spring 1984): 105-24.

<sup>180</sup> Greene, *Cinema as Heresy*, 34.

<sup>181</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Vita e letteratura nazionale* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1977), 23, trans. Naomi Greene, *Cinema as Heresy*, 34. “L’opera d’arte contiene anche altri elementi ‘storicistici’ oltre al determinato mondo culturale e sentimentale, ed è il linguaggio, inteso non solo come espressione puramente verbale, quale può essere fotografato in un certo tempo e luogo della grammatica, ma come un insieme di immagini e modi di esprimersi che non rientrano nella grammatica.”

disillusionment of the poet with Marxist revolutionary hopes.<sup>182</sup> This feeling involves Gramsci as well, but, as I observed in the previous chapter, I believe it is more related to Pasolini's own drama of being himself a bourgeois in a bourgeois world than to the Gramscian (Marxist) ideology.<sup>183</sup> In *Heretical Empiricism* (1972) Pasolini will in fact say: "I cannot and I will never be able to relinquish a tension owed to the desire to bring order to the magma of things and not to content myself with knowing its geometry, that is, I don't have and never will have an alternative other than Marxism".<sup>184</sup> Later he speaks of his obsessive need to go back to Marxism since it is "the only ideology that protects me from the loss of reality."<sup>185</sup>

In *I cento passi*, Peppino seems to lose hope in the Communist Party's action, in its tendency towards a more moderate politics and a compromise with the DC, but he does not give up the Marxist ideology in his Gramscian expression, and continues his struggle against the mafia and the capitalist system by adhering to Proletarian Democracy, another left-wing party of that period. Peppino reacts no less vigorously than Pasolini to the the excessive

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<sup>182</sup> This comment may be induced by Pasolini's verses: "Lo scandalo del contraddirmi, dell'essere / con te e contro te; con te nel cuore, / in luce, contro te nelle buie viscere." Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Le ceneri di Gramsci*, 71. "The scandal of contradicting myself, of being / with you and against you; with you in my heart / in light, but against you in the dark viscera." Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Poems*, 11. In Italy the early 1960s were the years of the economic boom, which broke the sharp class divisions of the postwar years and rendered workers susceptible to the lure of consumer capitalism. The Communist Party itself was becoming increasingly moderate and centrist, thus favoring the new consumerism and ignoring the mental changes wrought by the capitalist technology. For all these reasons Pasolini's disillusionment became a strong pessimism that erupted in his 1966 film, *Uccellacci Uccellini* (*Hawks and Sparrows*). With this film Pasolini further developed a theme that Bernardo Bertolucci had introduced in an earlier film, *Prima della rivoluzione* (*Before the revolution*, 1964).

<sup>183</sup> See chapter 1, p. 12.

<sup>184</sup> Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, trans. Ben Lawton and Louise Barnett (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 71. "Non posso e non potrò mai rinunciare a una tensione dovuta al desiderio di portare ordine nel magma delle cose, e non di accontentarmi di saperne la geometria (ossia non ho e non avrò mai altra alternativa che il marxismo." *Empirismo eretico*. In *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte* (Milan: Mondadori, 1999), 1337.

<sup>185</sup> Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, 72. "l'unica ideologia che mi protegga dalla perdita della realtà." *Empirismo eretico*, 1339.

intellectualism and the bureaucratization of the Communist Party represented by its leader, Stefano Venuti. After protesting against the expansion of the Cinisi Airport, Peppino and his friends are arrested. In the prison they address Venuti and accuse the Central Committee of abandoning the cause carried on by the communists in Cinisi. Salvo stands up and says:

We should figure out what we can learn from this defeat. We must first recognize our friends and our enemies. If the Party promises to stand by our side, to send that laborers and construction workers from Palermo and instead no one shows up, it means that the Party does not give a shit about us.<sup>186</sup>

Peppino supports his friend raising the stakes with a self-explanatory criticism of the PCI's myopia: "It's absurd that we keep getting mad at one another. We should talk about what's happened. Perhaps this fight was already lost at the beginning, maybe the Party betrayed us for a few new jobs at the airport."<sup>187</sup>

The *mise-en-scène* here clearly helps to visualize the two positions, since the Venuti and Peppino are kept in separate cells literally facing each other. Peppino and Salvo raise the same problem, namely the disconnection between the center and the periphery, when they meet Venuti in his office. The *mise-en-scène* seems to suggest a problematic association between Venuti and Gramsci, whose picture—unsurprisingly, given Gramsci's historical role—appears behind Venuti. But the narrative contradicts the deceiving *mise-en-scène*. Peppino and Salvo show the party man the provocative front page they have written for *L'Idea socialista*, their newspaper. It is a direct, angry attack

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<sup>186</sup> Marco Tullio Giordana, *I cento passi* (*One Hundred Steps*), (RaiCinemafiction, 2000). "Bisognerà pure prendere lezioni dalle sconfitte. La prima lezione è capire chi sono gli amici e chi sono i nemici. Se il partito promette di sostenerci, se dice che da Palermo verranno gli operai e gli edili e invece non si fa vedere nessuno, vuol dire che a questo partito di noi non gliene frega una beata minchia."

<sup>187</sup> Giordana, *I cento passi*. "Mi sembra assurdo che continuiamo a scannarci tra di noi, cerchiamo invece di discutere su cosa è successo. Forse questa lotta era già persa in partenza, forse il partito ha preferito mollarci in cambio di qualche posto di lavoro all'aeroporto."

against the mafia which their article terms una “montagna di merda (a pile of shit).” The two young men want to transform, at long last, the local situation. They are tired of waiting and Peppino asks Venuti:

Why is this office empty? Have you ever wondered why young people don't come anymore...“You can't do this” and “that is adventurism” and “and the people are not ready.” Here a comrade can only get depressed and feel defeated... Discipline, obedience, it was all set in Rome, in Palermo. When is it that we can make decisions too? ... Stefano, that poem by Majakowskji, your favorite one: “Do not lock yourself up in your rooms, oh Party / Be a friend to the street people.”<sup>188</sup>

The position taken by both Peppino and Salvo seems to echo Gramsci's opposition to a mechanic application of the party line. As Ann Showstack Sassons observes, “Gramsci thought that the most important question was whether each party [sections of the PCI] had understood how to apply the United Front policy. The answer was ‘no’.”<sup>189</sup>

It is undeniable that both Peppino and Pasolini engaged in a courageous social and political struggle in which they were unafraid of expressing their ideas. They did that in different ways, but certainly the strongest and most effective weapon of their engagement was their own word, a word that often times involved their humanistic knowledge of classic and modern texts. In this regard, it is worth noting that in the film Peppino attacks the Mafiosi by developing a parody of a few verses from the beginning of Dante's *Inferno*:

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<sup>188</sup> Giordana, *I cento passi*. “Perché questa sezione è vuota? Ti sei chiesto perché i giovani non ci vengono più...” e questo non si può fare e quello è avventurismo e le masse non sono pronte” ...qui un compagno impara solo a deprimersi, a sentirsi uno sconfitto a vita...la disciplina, l'obbedienza, hanno deciso così a Roma, hanno deciso così a Palermo...e noi quando decidiamo?...Stefano, quella poesia di Majakowskji, la tua preferita? “Non rinchiuderti partito nelle tue stanze, resta amico dei ragazzi di strada.”

<sup>189</sup> Ann Showstack Sassoon, *Gramsci's Politics* (London: Hutchinson, 1987), 66.

Midway, upon the journey of our life  
I found myself in a forest dark,  
for the straightforward pathway had been lost.

Ah, how hard a thing was / that dick savage, rough and stern  
towering right in the middle of the glade....  
It is Cinisi, a disgraced place,

for all those who inhabit it  
are broken, ugly and their ass is staved in.  
"Why, said I, is this place inhuman?"

"Because for thirty years almost everybody  
has been voting the Christian Democrats."  
We arrived at the heart of Mafia City,

the hot city full of people,  
where stood those whose breath  
stinks for all the asses they have licked.

My teacher told me "Turn around, what are you doing?  
Look, the Vice-Mayor is awake  
you will see him from the belt up."

"Thou, Vice-Mayor of Mafia City" I said  
"what are you doing here?"  
"Leave me alone" he sadly said

I am doomed to have the typhus  
I tried to move the Sports Ground  
and now they tell me: It sucks!"<sup>190</sup>

Peppino's first 5 verses are a literary parody of *Inferno*, Canto I, vv.1-5. Here rather than the word "minchia" (which means "dick") Dante says "selva" (forest). From lines 6 through 16, Peppino creates a parodic pastiche (in theme,

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<sup>190</sup> These are verbatim the film's English subtitles. I here provide also Peppino's Italian version, to show how the rhythm and the rimes, lost in translation, fit Dante's text. "Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita / Mi ritrovai per una selva oscura / Che la diritta via era smarrita Ahi, quant' a dir qual' era è cosa dura / Quella minchia selvaggia e aspra e forte / Che così troneggiava in mezzo alla radura ... / È Cinisi quel loco disgraziato / Perché ogni poveretto che ci vive / È rotto, brutto e con il culo sfondato. / "Perché" dissi io "questo loco è inumano?" / "Perché da trent'anni quasi tutti / votano il partito democristiano." ... E poi arrivammo al centro di Mafiopoli / La turrida città piena di gente / Dove eran color che nella bocca / Puzzano per i culi che han leccato. / E il mio maestro: "Volgiti, che fai?" / "Vedi il vice sindaco s'è desto / Dalla cintola in su tutto il vedrai." / "Oh tu che di Mafiopoli sei il Vice" gli dissi / "che ci fai in questo loco?" / "Lasciami stare" triste ei mi dice / "Qui sono dannato a soffrir di tifo, / tentai di spostar lu campu sportivo, / e tutti ora mi dicono "che schifo!"

tome and rhythm) of the poet's verses. From line 17 to 19, Peppino refers to Canto X of the *Inferno*, lines 31-33, where the poet and Virgil meet Farinata degli Uberti, whose Ghibelline politics in Florence was so hideous and arrogant as to contribute to the return of the Guelf opponents to the government of the city. In Peppino's remake of the same verses, Farinata becomes the vice-mayor of Cinisi. The rest of Peppino's verses are again a creation "à la Dante." As we have noticed, the departure from Dante's text begins with the word in Italics 'minchia,' which sets the polemics and the tone for the rest for the poem.

Peppino's parody of Dante's poem may be interpreted as another possible reference to Pasolini. The latter wrote extensively on many contemporary intellectuals and past writers; his humanistic vocation often led him to speak of Dante, the "sommo maestro (supreme teacher)" more than others, not only in his essays, but also implicitly through his films. As Greene observes, Dante's presence haunted Pasolini's universe from the opening preface of *Accattone* to the last shots of *Salò*.<sup>191</sup> In *Heretical Empiricism*, Pasolini devotes to the medieval poet, a whole essay "La volontà di Dante ad essere poeta" (Dante's will to be a poet) arguing that Dante created his best poetry when he used a sociological register with a plurilinguistic style that is suitable to record the political events and the violent human dramas of Florence. Pasolini equated poetry (and the cinema of poetry) with the expression of instinctual passions, and from his point of view, Dante's highest moments of irrationalist poetry are to be found in the "obsessive tonal unity of the poem";<sup>192</sup> in other words, even though Dante uses a variety of expressions and

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<sup>191</sup> Greene, *Pier Paolo Pasolini. Cinema as Heresy*, 125.

<sup>192</sup> Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, 110. *Empirismo eretico*, 1387. "l'unitarietà ossessiva di tono del poema."

words spoken by people belonging to different social strata, his tone always maintains a certain distance between his characters and himself. Pasolini writes: "Such an ironclad law of equidistance not only causes Dante's moral and emotional attitude to *always be the same* toward his characters and his facts, but it also ensures that Dante *is always equidistant from himself, that is, from his own feelings.*"<sup>193</sup>

Pasolini asserts that Dante achieves this goal by making himself protagonist of his poem; in such a way the sentiments are never the author's, but belong to Dante as a character. Whether Pasolini's observations are entirely well-founded is not under scrutiny here. What interests us for the study of the film is Pasolini's opposition to the idea of being detached from the characters' vicissitudes. Pasolini is both author and protagonist of his own works, that often times are autobiographical: he speaks through his characters by means of the free indirect speech.<sup>194</sup> It seems that in a certain way Pasolini wishes to contrast the poetic paternal authority of Dante with his own view of poetry— a kind of poetry in which the presence of the author alongside his characters (often belonging to the proletariat and other minorities) is a relevant element. It is no coincidence if in an article published in 1965 in the newspaper *Il giorno* entitled "I repeat: I am in full search,"<sup>195</sup> Pasolini stated that he had "in mind to remake Dante's 'Inferno': it should be in the form of a

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<sup>193</sup> Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, 111. *Empirismo eretico*, 1388-89. "Tale ferrea legge dell'equidistanza non soltanto fa sì che... l'atteggiamento morale e sentimentale di Dante sia sempre lo stesso verso i suoi personaggi e i suoi fatti: ma fa sì anche che Dante sia equidistante da se medesimo, ossia dai propri sentimenti."

<sup>194</sup> For a definition of free subjective shot see Pasolini, *Empirismo eretico*, in *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte*, vol. 1 (Milan: Mondadori, 1999), 1475-88. Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, trans. Ben Lawton and Louise Barnett (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 176-85. See also chapter three, 128-29. Strangely enough, in the essay on Dante, Pasolini easily attributes the free indirect speech to Dante's character instead of Dante's author. The criterion by which he identifies who performs the free indirect speech is not clear.

<sup>195</sup> The article can be found in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte*, vol. 2 (Milan: Mondadori, 1999). "Lo ripeto: io sono in piena ricerca. (I repeat it: I am in full search.)"



pamphlet, therefore ironic in many ways.”<sup>196</sup> Pasolini was not able to achieve this goal during his lifetime. Peppino, on the other hand, manages to accomplish that task before his death. One may wonder why an attack on the mafia was conducted through Dante’s work. First of all, Dante’s *Divine Comedy* was a canonic subject matter of middle school courses of Italian literature at that time, and as such many people were acquainted with his most famous cantos and could laugh on the ironic changes. Furthermore, a parody of Dante may signify a more general rebellion against another authority, this time the father of the Italian literature, and in more general terms against the imposition of certain norms in an individual’s personal, social and cultural life.

There is another element that may suggest a significant parallel between Peppino and Pasolini: that is to say the importance they both attribute to beauty, especially in regard to the natural environment. Pasolini nourished a sense of—a sensitivity for—Beauty and Form that led him, in true humanistic fashion, ever to re-create those two ideals in his art, and to seek them in the world surrounding him. Pasolini often denounced the real estate speculation as an offence to the original beauty of the countryside, especially the area that surrounded the city of Orte. Much in the same way as Peppino does with regard to the landscape around Cinisi. In the scene where Peppino and his friend Salvo are on the hill photographing the construction of the airport Peppino says:

You know what I think? This airport isn’t that bad, after all. ...If you look at it from here, if you look at it from above, it seems that nature is stronger than men. But it’s not true. You can find a logic for everything

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<sup>196</sup> Pasolini, *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull’arte*, vol. 2, 2447. “I am thinking about a remake of Dante’s *Inferno*. It is a pamphlet that is ironic in many ways.”

once it is done, once it exists. Think of those houses with windows in aluminum and no plaster. People go live in them. They put curtains, geraniums, a television, and after a while, it is as if everything has always been there. Nobody remembers what it looked like before. It takes so very little to destroy beauty... Instead of matters of politics and social class, and all that bullshit, someone should remind people what beauty is, teach them how to recognize and preserve it. Beauty is important. Everything descends from it.<sup>197</sup>

Peppino's own position in relation to industrial development and environmental problems is also emphasized in the scene in which Peppino screens Francesco Rosi's film, *Le mani sulla città* (*Hands Over the City*, 1963) which also deals with the same issues.<sup>198</sup>

After all these considerations in which the fictitious Peppino and Pasolini overlap, we are left with a few questions: Is Giordana still telling us the story of Peppino's life? Or are we dealing with a totally fictitious character constructed on Pasolini's personal experiences? In other words, has the director intuitively created a brilliant parallel between two intellectuals who were equally engaged in a similar personal and political struggle? Or has he indeed modified Peppino's character to adjust it to Pasolini's personality? To

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<sup>197</sup>Giordana, *I cento passi*. "Sai cosa penso? Che questo aeroporto in fondo non è brutto, anzi...uno sale qua sopra e potrebbe pensare che la natura vince sempre, che è ancora più forte dell'uomo e invece non è così. In fondo tutte le cose una volta fatte si trovano una logica, una giustificazione per il solo fatto di esistere. Fanno 'ste case schifose, con le finestre in alluminio, i muri di mattoni vivi...i balconcini, la gente ci va ad abitare, ci mette le tendine, i gerani, la televisione, dopo un poco tutto fa parte del paesaggio, c'è, esiste, nessuno si ricorda più di come era prima. Non ci vuole niente a distruggere la bellezza...allora, invece della lotta politica, la coscienza di classe, tutte le manifestazioni, ste fesserie...bisognerebbe ricordare alla gente che cos'è la bellezza, aiutarla a riconoscerla, a difenderla... è importante la bellezza, da quella scende giù tutto il resto."

<sup>198</sup>Rosi's film, which premiered in 1963, focuses on problems related to the illegal industrial progress and the interests of private constructors involved with the local politics.<sup>198</sup> *I Cento passi* and *Le mani sulla città* can be compared on the basis of some interesting parallels: both films concentrate on problems regarding the Southern Italy: in *Le mani sulla città*, we are in Naples where engineer Nottola wants to appropriate public land for his own illegal profits by benefiting from the support of local politicians. In *I Cento Passi* we are in Cinisi, Sicily, where, as we have seen, the mafia promotes the expansion of the airport, supported by the regional political administration. In Rosi's film we can clearly see counselor De Vita, representative of the left-wing party, contrasting Nottola who, instead, is affiliated with the right wing. De Vita, like Peppino, stands up against injustice and corruption, but is left alone by the Party. For further details, see the Post Script to chapter 2.

answer these questions and clarify both the relationship between historical facts and their fictionalization, and the reasons behind the director's cinematographic preferences, an inquiry into the reality of Peppino's private and public life is necessary. It is worth noting that Peppino's political life, his determination and courage made him very similar to Pasolini. Furthermore, through his personal diary, and the testimony of his friends and family, it will be also evident that Peppino, whose life was characterized by moments of both profound depression and high exaltation, probably was in search of his own identity.

## 2.2 *The Real Peppino*

Giuseppe Impastato, called Peppino by his friends, was born on January 5, 1940 in Cinisi, a small town near Palermo. His father, Luigi, belonged to a well-known mafia family that had controlled Cinisi since the end of World War II. Despite living about one hundred meters from the house of the mafia boss Gaetano Badalamenti,<sup>199</sup> Peppino grew up with his mother's family, uncle Matteo and aunt Fara, who nurtured anti-fascist and liberal ideals.<sup>200</sup> In Giuseppe Casarrubea's words, "Peppino grows up with a minority of people

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<sup>199</sup> Gaetano Badalamenti, also known as Tano, became the mafia leader in Cinisi in 1963, when the previous boss, Cesare Manzella, was killed by the opposing mafia clan. Badalamenti, arrested in several occasions for stealing cattle and for a series of illicit actions [associazione a delinquere], in 1946 moved illegally to the USA where he continued his criminal activity until 1950, year in which he returned to Sicily. Here he started an illegal traffic of heroine, commanded a series of murders, and in a short period of time he ascended the mafia hierarchy, taking the most influential position in the so-called Cosa Nostra. He dominated until 1978 when leaders of other mafia clans replaced him. After years of assassinations and illegal actions, in 1987 the USA justice court condemned Badalamenti to forty-five years of federal prison for being one of the leaders of the "Pizza connection," an illegal traffic of drugs that occurred through well-known pizzerias in Italy and in USA from 1975 to 1984. He died in 2004 in the Federal Medical Center in Massachusetts.

<sup>200</sup> Peppino was sent to live with his relatives when his older brother, also named Giovanni, got a contagious disease, encephalitis. When Giovanni died a few months after Peppino's departure, Peppino had the possibility of going back to his own house, but he never really did. He returned home sporadically to see his mother, he stayed there for a few days, but the conflicts with his father prevented him from remaining longer.

who want to break up with a stagnant environment; he is deeply affected by his mother's and uncle's [Matteo] enormous love, but especially by the hatred of his father. Since he was a child he [Peppino] is in difficult and uncomfortable search for his own identity."<sup>201</sup> The Communist leader of Cinisi, Stefano Venuti, recalling Peppino's childhood, affirmed: "I remember that at my election rallies there was always a little guy, who, while all the other kids were playing and running, was on the sidewalk listening the whole time. My first impression, when I got to know him, was that this guy had enthusiasm and an enormous desire for justice, (moral) cleanliness, and honesty."<sup>202</sup>

Peppino began his political activity in the 1960s, when he was a high school student at Partinico (a town near Cinisi). He gave his first political public speech at age fifteen, he participated in Stefano Venuti's initiatives, and wrote short articles for a local newspaper against the politicians in Cinisi and Partinico. He acquainted himself with Marxist ideals through the reading of works by Marx, Lenin and Mao Tse-Tung. His library also included works by several Italian and foreign authors such as Friedrich Engels, Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, which provided him with theoretical tools to constitute one

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<sup>201</sup> "Peppino cresce tra compagnie minoritarie che vogliono rompere con un ambiente stagnante; risente molto dell'enorme affetto della madre e dello zio [Matteo], ma soprattutto dell'odio del padre. Fin da piccolo è alla ricerca, difficile e scomoda, della sua identità." Giuseppe Casarrubea, Introduction to *Nel cuore dei coralli. Peppino Impastato. Una vita contro la mafia* by Salvo Vitale (Catanzaro: Rubbettino Editore, 2002), 20.

<sup>202</sup> "Ai miei comizi ricordo sempre presente un ragazzino che, mentre tutti quelli della sua età giocavano e correvano, se ne stava sul marciapiede ad ascoltare per tutto il tempo. La prima impressione che ebbi quando lo conobbi, fu quella di un ragazzo dotato di entusiasmo e di un desiderio enorme di giustizia, di pulizia, di onestà." Salvo Vitale, *Nel cuore dei coralli. Peppino Impastato. Una vita contro la mafia*, 51. Salvo Vitale was one of Peppino's closest friends, and shared with him most of his social and political fights against the corruption of the local administration and its illicit collaboration with the mafia bosses. Salvo was born in Cinisi, and now lives at Partinico, and with his writings and public speeches, is still active in the struggle against the mafia culture and system.

of the first anti-mafia laboratories in Italy.<sup>203</sup> Among Peppino's readings were Erasmus, Saint Augustine as well as literary writings by Giovanni Verga, Leonardo Sciascia, Luigi Pirandello, and above all Pasolini, whose works, according to his closest friends, were among his favorites. He shared most of his books (about a hundred) with his comrades (who also offered their texts), forming the so-called "itinerant library" that in Peppino's view aimed to decentralize the ownership, and contrast those who had the official cultural power.<sup>204</sup> Casarrubea explains that "In such a way they began a campaign for reading and studying that opposed the process of homologation and cultural destruction which were already perceived by Pier Paolo Pasolini. In this group reading and studying found organization and theoretical ground."<sup>205</sup> Peppino was convinced that cultural information of larger strata of the population was necessary to fight "the increasing mystificatory aggressivity of the mass

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<sup>203</sup> Karl Liebknecht (1871-1919), Marxist exponent of the German Socialist Party, wrote extensively against the participation of Germany to the First World War. For his anti-military stance and his activity against the state government, he was arrested several times. Rosa Luxemburg, a Polish citizen, moved to Germany in 1897, and fought against capitalism, defending the most orthodox and classic form of Marxism against the Reformist Revisionism of those years. She opposed the excessive bureaucratization and centralization of the Socialist Party [Partito Socialdemocratico Tedesco], believed in the creativity of the masses, and in the spontaneous revolution carried out by the laborers. In 1914, Liebknecht and Luxemburg constituted the Spartakusbund, the Spartacus League that promoted the proletarian revolution. With other representatives of the League, they organized the Spartacus Revolution [la rivoluzione spartachista] in 1919, which was brutally repressed by the dictatorial government. Liebknecht and Luxemburg were arrested, tortured and killed.

<sup>204</sup> "A collective library, in the sense that every owner is part of the association and keeps at his own house books and a copy of the library records (the books, the librarians, and the users). Each owner becomes the librarian for the fraction of library that he manages." Peppino's writings in Salvo Vitale, *Nel cuore dei coralli. Peppino Impastato. Una vita contro la mafia*, 23.

<sup>205</sup> Casarrubea, 23. "Si apriva, in tal modo, una campagna di lettura e di studio che nasceva per contrastare i processi di omologazione e di schiacciamento culturale già avvertiti da Pier Paolo Pasolini, e che a Cinisi, in quel circolo, trovavano forma organizzativa e substrato teorico."

media.”<sup>206</sup> There were only a few books that Peppino held very dearly and kept for himself, and those were works by Pasolini, Lenin, and Marx.<sup>207</sup>

In 1963 some local mafia killers murdered Peppino’s uncle, Cesare Manzella. The atrocity of the assassination (his car was wired with explosives) was a shock for Peppino who, since then, took a definitive and stronger position against mafia. His mother declared: “He was struck by that episode. From that time on he began to say: “Then they are truly bad people. He became increasingly aware. He understood they were delinquent and started hating them.”<sup>208</sup> He enrolled at the University of Palermo for a Master’s degree in history and philosophy, and in 1965 became a member of PSIUP (Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity), an extra-parliamentary expression of more orthodox leftist ideals. In Peppino’s words:

I got involved in politics a long time ago, in November 1965, for merely emotional reasons: starting, that is, from a need I had to react to a family situation that by then had become unbearable...I joined the PSIUP with the anger and desperation of someone who wants simultaneously to break with everything and look for protection. We created a strong young group, we founded a newspaper and an opinion group, we ended up in court and in all the newspapers. I left the PSIUP two years later, when the Young Federation was forced to close. That was the period of the Cultural Revolution and of Che Guevara.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> Peppino’s writings. In Salvo Vitale, *Nel cuore dei coralli. Peppino Impastato. Una vita contro la mafia*, 23. “La sempre crescente aggressività mistificatrice dei mezzi di comunicazione di massa.”

<sup>207</sup> “ [Nella biblioteca itinerante] c’è poco di Lenin e mancano del tutto Carlo Marx e Pasolini che tenne gelosamente per sé.” Casarrubea, *Nel cuore dei coralli*, 23.

<sup>208</sup> Felicia Bartolotta Impastato, *La mafia in casa mia. Interview by Anna Puglisi and Umberto Santino* (Palermo: La luna edizioni, 1987), 29. “Ne fu colpito. Da allora cominciò a dire: ‘Insomma, veramente delinquenti sono allora.’ Andava capendo. Capiva che erano delinquenti veramente, e li odiava.”

<sup>209</sup> Giuseppe Impastato, *Lunga è la notte. Poesie, scritti, documenti*, ed. Umberto Santino (Palermo: Centro di documentazione Giuseppe Impastato, 2006), 115. This excerpt is taken from a diary that Peppino wrote in a few days in November 1977, summarizing the major events of his life and political activity. “Arrivai alla politica nel lontano novembre del 1965, su basi puramente emotive: a partire cioè da una mia esigenza di reagire ad una condizione familiare divenuta ormai insostenibile...Approдай al PSIUP con la rabbia e la disperazione di chi, al tempo stesso, vuole rompere tutto e cerca protezione. Creammo un forte nucleo giovanile, fondammo un giornale e un movimento d’opinione, finimmo in tribunale e su tutti i

In 1965, Peppino founded *L'Idea socialista*, a small local newspaper that denounced social problems related to employment, emigration, sexual repression and above all the connections between local political administration and the mafia system. One of the newspaper's issues was titled "Mafia, una montagna di merda (Mafia, a pile of shit)" and provoked the final rupture between Peppino, a man without "respect" and "honor," and his mafia relatives. Peppino was well aware that his personality, his mentality, his actions were a direct product of the dominant ideology that had chosen what he could think, choose and act upon.<sup>210</sup> For this reason he was strongly determined to denounce all those daily attitudes and behaviors shaped by mafia culture. His scope was to induce people to adopt a more self-critical view of a passively acquired social system.

In 1968, after Peppino was obliged to quit *L'Idea socialista* (*The socialist idea*), he created the "Che Guevara Club" ("Il circolo Che Guevara") that gave him and his comrades the possibility to meet, read a variety of Marxist texts, the *Quaderni Rossi*, Marcuse's works, and move their political view towards more radical, extremist and independent leftist positions. Salvo Vitale wrote: "The Che Guevara club helped to open new political dimensions to those young people that perceived the limits of the mafia culture from which they came. This group joined the political unrest of the student movement and served also to explore—with a feeling of disorientation—the meanderings of the extra-parliamentary movement that then began to grow."<sup>211</sup> Cinisi became the

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giornali. Lasciai il PSIUP due anni dopo, quando d'autorità fu sciolta la Federazione Giovanile. Erano i tempi della Rivoluzione culturale e del 'Che.'

<sup>210</sup> Vitale, *Nel cuore dei coralli. Peppino Impastato. Una vita contro la mafia*, 62.

<sup>211</sup> Vitale, *Nel cuore dei coralli. Peppino Impastato. Una vita contro la mafia*, 80. "Il 'Circolo Che Guevara' servì ad aprire nuove dimensioni politiche a quei giovani che avvertivano i limiti della cultura mafiosa da cui provenivano. L'esperienza si legò ai fermenti del movimento

“red point” where militants and leaders of different revolutionary movements reunited (Communist League, Servire il Popolo, Avanguardia Operaia, Manifesto, etc...), but none of those, according to Salvo Vitale, offered any innovation to the traditional communist stance.

It is useful to read Peppino’s diary of this period not only to comprehend his political evolution, but also to get more acquainted with some nuances of his personality:

1968 caught me almost unawares. I participated in disorganized fashion in the student protests and in the first sit-ins... It was also a period of disputes about the conception and construction of the party: [it was] a moment of extraordinary and fascinating work of theoretical elaboration. By the end of the year, I joined one of the two branches, that of the majority of the PCD’I ml (Communist Party of Italy, Marxist Leninist): the need of a minimum of organizational structure (need of protection) was very strong... this period was perhaps the most heartbreaking and at the same time the most thrilling of my existence and of my political life. I passed smoothly and without interruption from phases of dark desperation to moments of true exaltation and power. The construction of a vast movement of opinion among the youth, the growth of the party sections in the region, the first experiences of the struggle in the local area demonstrated it. But I moved myself away more and more from that reality, it became continually more difficult to establish a linear connection to the external world, I turned more and more into myself. I was very afraid of everything and everyone, and at the same time I had an uncontrollable desire to open myself up and to create.<sup>212</sup>

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studentesco e servì anche ad esplorare, non senza qualche sensazione di disorientamento, i meandri del labirinto extraparlamentare che allora cominciava a crescere.”

<sup>212</sup> Impastato, *Lunga è la notte. Poesie, scritti, documenti*, 117. “Il ’68 mi prese quasi alla sprovvista. Partecipai disordinatamente alle lotte studentesche e alle prime occupazioni... È stato anche un periodo delle dispute sul partito e sulla concezione e costruzione del partito: un momento di straordinario e affascinante processo di approfondimento teorico. Alla fine di quell’anno, l’adesione ad uno dei due tronconi, quello maggioritario del PCD’I ml (Partito Comunista d’Italia, Marxista-leninista): il bisogno di un minimo di struttura organizzativa alle spalle (bisogno di protezione), è stato molto forte... È stato forse quello il periodo più straziante e al tempo stesso più esaltante della mia esistenza e della mia storia politica. Passavo con continuità ininterrotta da fasi di cupa disperazione a momenti di autentica esaltazione e capacità: la costruzione di un vastissimo movimento d’opinione a livello giovanile, il proliferare delle sedi di partito nella zona, le prime esperienze di lotta di quartiere, stavano lì a dimostrarlo. Ma io mi allontanavo sempre di più dalla realtà, diventava sempre più difficile stabilire un rapporto lineare con il mondo esterno, mi racchiudevo sempre



This excerpt of Peppino's diary gives evidence of the frenetic political activity of a young extra-parliamentary politician who was trying to relate himself to the historical changes occurring throughout Italy and especially in Sicily. The second half of the 1960s was, in fact, the period that laid the basis for the so called "historical compromise," a phenomenon which saw the official PCI (Partito Comunista italiano) merging towards the positions of the DC party (Democrazia cristiana), and which probably manifested itself in Cinisi (1970-72) earlier than anywhere else in Italy (1976-78).<sup>213</sup> Peppino and his friends felt increasingly hostile towards the institutional leftist party, since the closeness of the Communist Party to the DC indicated the corruption of the left-wing representatives and their collusion with the mafia bosses.<sup>214</sup> The communists isolated Peppino and opposed his political activity. From the passage above, it is also noticeable Peppino's complex personality: he was extremely thoughtful, and often tormented by doubts and fears, moments of exaltation and periods of extreme alienation and silence. According to his comrades, Salvo Vitale, Guido Orlando, Giuseppe Vitale, Giuseppe Manzella, his brother Giovanni and his cousin Piero Impastato, Peppino was indeed

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più in me stesso. Mi caratterizzava una grande paura di tutto e di tutti e al tempo stesso una voglia incontrollabile di aprirmi e costruire."

<sup>213</sup> Vitale, *Nel cuore dei coralli*, 88. "In the city hall elections of November 1972, Peppino's group's votes went to the PCI, the only force from the left on the ballot. Nobody could have foreseen that we were contributing to the election of a councillor that would create *the first national example of a historic compromise* and contribute to the start of the pillaging of the territory beginning in 1974. We noticed that this kind of political alliances in 1970, when the city council formed by DC, PSI and PCI and guided by mayor Impastato, had dismissed the social-democratic group of Pandolfo."

<sup>214</sup> In my interview (July 1, 2007) with Salvo Vitale, he asserts that DC meant Mafia for his group and if the PCI was allied with the DC, then also the PCI became Mafioso. He also explains that, however, the detachment of Peppino's group from the PCI had more remote origins, and traced back to the period in which the PC betrayed the orthodox Marxism, and Peppino and his comrades positioned their political activity to the left of the Communist Party." Interview with Salvo Vitale. 1 July 2007.

very reserved, many of them did not know his personal life's troubles and only looked at him as a "political leader."<sup>215</sup>

In the following years (1968-1978) Peppino's political activity aimed to help the peasants of Cinisi; the latter had been illegally deprived of their land by the local government that had approved the construction of the Palermo airport's third runway.<sup>216</sup> This initiative increased the illicit traffic of drugs controlled by the Mafia, and also destroyed the natural beauty of that area. The protests organized by Peppino did not stop the construction. In Salvo Vitale's words "It was all for nothing. The enterprise (the construction of the runway) was conducted with brutality and determination in a sea of shameful illegality."<sup>217</sup> In 1972, after months of alcohol's abuse<sup>218</sup> due to profound political disillusion and depression, Peppino joined Lotta Continua, a non-institutional political group which "did not present severe military rituals nor rigid orthodoxy of alignment, it presented a line of assault, but was close to the problems of the people and worked concretely in the society without losing a national point of view."<sup>219</sup> Since then Peppino was on the forefront of different causes with great enthusiasm.

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<sup>215</sup> This observation is based on my interviews (Cinisi, July 1 through July 5, 2007) with Peppino's friends and family.

<sup>216</sup> Vitale, *Nel cuore dei coralli*, 82. "...the area was diverse. There were about 200 families working...all the area was rich with fruit trees, citrus and olive. The vegetable and fruit production constituted the last breaths of the economy of the region. Additionally the speculation that these mafia owners made on these products left the peasants only enough to survive."

<sup>217</sup> Vitale, *Nel cuore dei coralli*, 82. "Non servì a niente. L'impresa [la costruzione della pista] venne condotta tra un mare di illegalità vergognose, con brutalità e decisione."

<sup>218</sup> "I dragged myself along for several months, consumed by alcohol, until the Spring of 1972 (the murder of Feltrinelli and campaigning for the upcoming political election)." Giuseppe Impastato, *Lunga è la notte. Poesie, scritti, documenti*, 121.

<sup>219</sup> Vitale, *Nel cuore dei coralli*, 89. "...non offriva severi rituali di militanza né rigide ortodossie di allineamento, presentava una linea d'assalto, ma era vicina ai problemi della gente e operava concretamente nel sociale, pur senza perdere di vista i temi nazionali."

By 1975 he vehemently increased his public fight against the PCI. In flyers distributed throughout town by the group, Peppino wrote:

we consider that the experience of the participation of the PCI in the community committee has been a failure, and that the behavior of the communist council, actually the vice-mayor, has been and continues to be clumsy, uncertain, indecipherable in certain things. Therefore it is open to any interpretation, not excluding the demagogical and facile interpretation of a collusion with the group managing the DC. *This group on the local level as well as the national one, functions as a kind of mafia association not only for the convergence between mafia and parasitic clientele that it manages to combine, but also for the criminal manner to plot and exercise power in the administration of public affairs.*<sup>220</sup>

In the following three years, Peppino created the club named “Music and Culture” (Circolo Musica e Cultura) that provided a large group of young men and the Women’s Association (Collettivo femminista) occasions to meet, to discuss social problems (for instance the high unemployment, the exploitation and conditions of construction workers, the mafia monopolization of the economic activities of Cinisi and the nearby area), and organize concrete initiatives to solve them. The music played at the club represented itself a moment of rebellion to the old-fashioned mentality that regulated social relationships.<sup>221</sup> Among the activities of the club there was the “cineforum” that entailed the screening of films by Italian and foreign directors like Vittorio De Sica, Federico Fellini, Carlo Lizzani, Pier Paolo

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<sup>220</sup> Giuseppe Impastato, “Sulla partecipazione del P.C.I. alla giunta comunale di Cinisi. (On the participation of the PCI in the City Hall of Cinisi.” In Vitale, *Nel cuore dei coralli*, 106.

“...riteniamo che l’esperienza della partecipazione del PCI alla giunta comunale sia stata fallimentare e che il comportamento del consigliere comunista, attualmente vice sindaco, sia stato e continui ad essere impacciato, incerto, indecifrabile sotto certi aspetti e perciò stesso oggettivamente aperto a qualsiasi interpretazione, non esclusa quella, demagogica e di comodo, di una collusione con il gruppo dirigente DC che nello scacchiere politico locale, come su quello nazionale, si pone come un’associazione di tipo Mafioso non solo e non tanto per la convergenza di mafia e di clientele parassitarie che è riuscito a suscitare e ad aggregare attorno a sè, quanto per il modo stesso, banditesco e truffaldino di concepire ed esercitare il potere nella amministrazione della cosa pubblica.” (Emphasis in Peppino’s original document).

<sup>221</sup> See the document put out by “Circolo Musica e Cultura.” In Vitale, *Nel cuore dei coralli*, 111.

Pasolini, and Herbert Birbermann, among others. Each film was preceded by a detailed presentation, and followed by a debate that often times brought to the surface the political and social problems that Peppino and his comrades faced everyday in Cinisi. Here is the introduction with which Peppino presented Pasolini's *Uccellacci Uccellini* (*The Hawks and the Sparrows*) to the audience:

The film was from 1966 and was organically based on the poems from *The Ashes of Gramsci*. In the film Pasolini pours out his disappointment after the Resistance, which was withdrawn and betrayed. It is a crisis lived in the public, with a great critical and anti-institutional attitude. The crow of the film is Pasolini himself, a little anarchistic, a little of a beatnik poet, a free and sweet spirit, as well one who is marginalized. The voyage finishes in the greyness of an unreal landscape. The only references remaining are road signs reading, "Istanbul 4253km, Cuba 13,257km" which leave no doubt: the third world is getting ready to be a protagonist and its avant-garde is already marching. The decadent instinct of the Western society is defeated by the instinct to survive of the new people. In fact, in the last scene Totò and Ninetto, proletariat made into a protagonist, start walking again toward a new horizon, a new society.<sup>222</sup>

This analysis of Pasolini's film does not leave any doubt about Peppino's clear understanding of the most significant themes that the director intended to convey in the film. In 1965 Pasolini in fact had written:

I wrote the screenplay with a Marxist crow in mind, a crow that was not yet fully liberated from the anarchical, independent, sweet, and truthful crow. At this point the crow has become autobiographical—a kind of irregular metaphor of the author... the crow too, like me, must have been aware of the crisis of Marxism—a Marxism of the 1960s—but with some

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<sup>222</sup> See document signed by Peppino in Vitale, *Nel cuore dei coralli*, 112. "Il film è del 1966 ed ha come base organica le poesie di 'Le ceneri di Gramsci'. In esso Pasolini riversa le delusioni seguite alla Resistenza, rientrata e tradita, ed è una crisi vissuta in modo pubblico, con un grande senso critico e antistituzionale. Il corvo del film è lo stesso Pasolini, un po' anarchico, un po' poeta beatnik, uno spirito libero e dolce, oltre che un emarginato. Nel grigiore di un paesaggio irreale il viaggio finisce. Unici riferimenti restano i cartelli segnaletici: 'Istanbul Km 4253, Cuba Km 13.257' e non lasciano dubbi: il terzo mondo si prepara a farsi protagonista e le sue avanguardie sono già in marcia. L'istinto decadente delle società occidentali è sconfitto dall'istinto di vita delle nuove genti. Infatti nell'ultima scena Totò e Ninetto, proletario fatto protagonista, riprendono il cammino verso un nuovo orizzonte, verso una nuova società."

reasons that were not strictly mine.<sup>223</sup>

Furthermore, in an open letter to some friends and Milanese critics Pasolini, commenting on the same film, suggested that the ideology of Marxism was not dead as long as it would deal with the reality represented by the Third World.<sup>224</sup>

In 1977 Peppino and his friends created a self-financed radio station, Radio Aut, whose most popular program, “Onda Pazza” (Crazy Wave), through irony and satire, denounced and ridiculed the illegal activities of the mafia organization and its connection with the local politicians. Peppino assigned humorous nicknames to mafia bosses and local administrators.<sup>225</sup> His irreverence served as an effective weapon to challenge them and demolish their respectability. Radio Aut opened its doors also to the hippies of Villa Fassini, who were coordinated by Carlo Silvestri.<sup>226</sup> This experience, however, did not last long: Peppino lamented that behind Silvestri’s ‘politics of the body’ and appeal to an absolute freedom, there was a complete lack of interest in the local political and social problems, especially those linked with the mafia activities.<sup>227</sup> Peppino had nothing against the hippies’ movement: he surely read Marcuse’s *One-dimensional Man*, and was well aware that to the

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<sup>223</sup> Pier Paolo Pasolini, “Le fasi del corvo (The phases of the crow),” *Pasolini per il cinema*, v. 1 (Milan: Mondadori, 2001), 825-27. “Ho scritto la sceneggiatura tenendo dunque presente un corvo marxista, ma non del tutto ancora liberato dal corvo anarchico, indipendente, dolce e veritiero. A questo punto, il corvo è diventato autobiografico—una specie di metafora irregolare dell’autore... Anch’egli [il corvo] come me, doveva essere cosciente della crisi del marxismo—essere cioè un marxismo degli anni Sessanta—ma con delle ragioni che non fossero strettamente le mie.”

<sup>224</sup> Pasolini, “Lettera aperta,” *Pasolini per il cinema*, *Pasolini per il cinema*, v. 1, 831.

<sup>225</sup> “The choice of the name AUT recalled Autonomia Operaia organized by Scalzone, Negri, Piperno, even though officially they said that AUT was an indication for an alternative choice to the existential problem of the aut-aut.” Vitale, *Nel cuore dei coralli*, 121.

<sup>226</sup> This place was a nineteenth-century structure created by the architect Ernesto Basile and was the residency of the Florio family. See also Vitale, *Nel cuore dei coralli*, 150.

<sup>227</sup> In a letter to Lotta Continua Peppino wrote: “The hippies never made an effort to connect themselves with the political and cultural reality present in the region. In Vitale, *Nel cuore dei coralli*, 152.

German philosopher the sexual revolution and liberation could be pursued only if a new society was created in contrast with the bourgeois capitalism, that is if civilization, through radical thinking and opposition, would turn away from a social system organized around profit and exploitation. However, Peppino, may have been closer to Foucault's position.<sup>228</sup> The latter in volume one of *History of Sexuality*, contended that 'sexual revolution' could take place only within the power system, namely within social and discursive processes. It was the resistance, in fact, that would bring about a new way of thinking about sex, and would lead to the re-definition of sexuality itself. The Foucauldian approach to the sexual revolution would have complied with Peppino's priority to conduct his political fight from within the system against the local administration and its collusion with the Mafia.

In February 1978 Peppino's group resumed and extended another important initiative, the "itinerant show" (*mostra itinerante*) of pictures that demonstrated the local administrators' level of negligence towards the environment in Cinisi. Photos and captions carried throughout the town denounced the devastation of the peasants' world and several other illegal activities controlled by the Mafia.<sup>229</sup> In Salvo Vitale's words:

The show of 1978 resumed and widened with greater force and new arguments, the show of a year earlier, demonstrating attention to environmental themes, that in the rest of Italy would have developed a decade later, and detecting the delicate topic of environmental and ecological havoc caused and orchestrated by the relationship between the political power and the mafia, between the institutional groups that distributed funding and the Mafia groups that got the contracts for the creation of public works that were often useless and almost always

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<sup>228</sup> According to Vitale, it is likely that Peppino read Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, which was published in 1976.

<sup>229</sup> See Vitale, *Nel cuore dei coralli*, 162-63.

destructive.<sup>230</sup>

In February 1978, Peppino and most of his comrades decided to participate in the city elections. Though adverse to the institutions, Peppino was aware that their votes could not go either to the DC or to the PCI that had proved to be corrupted. He resolved then to present a list of candidates with the DP (Proletarian Democracy) party. A few days earlier Aldo Moro had been kidnapped, and Italy was enraged with the Red Brigades (BR) and with the leftist extra-parliamentary groups. Peppino faced the hard task to explain the difference of his group from the BR, and to obtain consensus. The program's nucleus entailed their fight against the Mafia, as well as against all those initiatives promoted by the local administration that had ruined the landscape and devastated peasants' and workers' lives. In these days Peppino also distributed a flyer in which he took a strong position against the State whose political strategy was complying with Aldo Moro's assassination.<sup>231</sup>

Peppino should have delivered his first stump speech on 9 May, which instead was the day in which he was found dead. While newspapers and TV news informed Italians about the recovery of Aldo Moro's corpse, Peppino's family and friends were facing the assassination of Peppino, who was accused of being a terrorist or, at best, a suicidal agitator. Since then Giovanni Impastato, Peppino's brother, his mother Felicia, his comrades, and the Centro di documentazione "Giuseppe Impastato," guided by Umberto Santino and

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<sup>230</sup> Vitale, *Nel cuore dei coralli*, 162. "La mostra del '78 riprendeva e ampliava, con piú forza e con i nuovi argomenti sopraggiunti, quella di un anno prima, dimostrando un'attenzione verso i temi ambientali, che nel resto d'Italia si sarebbe sviluppata un decennio dopo, e individuando il tema delicatissimo dello scempio ambientale ed ecologico causato ed orchestrato dal rapporto tra il potere politico e quello mafioso, tra i gruppi istituzionali che disponevano i finanziamenti e i gruppi mafiosi che si accaparravano gli appalti per la realizzazione di opere pubbliche spesso inutili e quasi sempre devastanti."

<sup>231</sup> For the complete text of the flyer, see Vitale, *Nel cuore dei coralli*, 170. The weight of Peppino's words resembles that of Pasolini's "Romanzo delle stragi," *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 362.

Anna Puglisi, have fought to bring the truth to the surface: Peppino was killed by the Mafia. In 2001, Vito Palazzolo, Badalamenti's henchman, was accused of assaulting and executing Peppino. He was condemned to thirty years in prison. In 2002 Badalamenti was judged guilty of having ordered Peppino's murder, and he was condemned to prison for life.

### 2.3 *Peppino and Pasolini outside "I cento passi"*

When the producer Fabrizio Mosca that proposed Giordana direct the film *I cento passi*, Giordana was reluctant, "I was actually afraid of detaching myself from the project. They proposed this film to me, I thought that the screenplay was excellent, but since I am Milanese, and I have lived in Rome for twenty-five years, I did not feel like working on a film about Sicily."<sup>232</sup> However, Giordana was encouraged by illustrious examples like Luchino Visconti, Francesco Rosi, and more recently, Marco Risi, who were not Sicilian, but had been able to create films such as *La terra trema*, *Salvatore Giuliano*, and *Mery per sempre*. Giordana then decided to go to Sicily and reside in Cinisi for ten months to get acquainted with the Sicilians and their mentality.<sup>233</sup> In Cinisi he found the ideal place where he could learn more about Peppino. Thanks to Peppino's friends and family Giordana was able to connect with the story, and "adapt the script to his own personality."<sup>234</sup> By talking with people who had

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<sup>232</sup> "J'avais effectivement peur de ne coller au projet. Parce qu'il s'agit d'un film qui m'a été proposé. Le scénario m'est parvenu entièrement terminé: je l'ai jugé excellent, mais comme je suis milanais d'origine et que je réside à Rome depuis vingt-cinq ans, je ne me sentais pas de faire un film sur la Sicile." Marco Tullio Giordana: Interview with Yves Allion, *L'avant-Scène du Cinéma*, 508 (Jan. 2002): 119.

<sup>233</sup> See Franco Marineo, "Marco Tullio Giordana: Interview with Franco Marineo," *Duel*, 76 (Dec.-Jan. 1999-2000): 56. In this interview Giordana asserts: "I have tried to become Sicilian along with them and to tell of the miseries and greatness within this land."

<sup>234</sup> "Je me suis alors installé en Sicile et j'ai entrepris d'effectuer quelques petites retouches au scénario pour mieux l'adapter à mon personnalité. J'ai rencontré les amis de Peppino Impastato, les gens de sa famille. J'ai voulu me mettre dans l'ambiance réelle: c'est pour quoi j'ai tourné sur les lieux-mêmes de l'histoire, à Cinisi." "I moved to/located in Sicily and I



known, lived or fought with Peppino, Giordana felt increasingly fascinated by the young rebel and his story; Peppino probably encompassed political and moral values that were very similar to the filmmaker's ideals. In an interview for *Duel*, Giordana stated:

Impastato is exactly one of those guys who in 1968 would not have mixed with nor have been changed by power. He would have rejected 'the career' of his contemporaries. He embodies that ideal, perhaps illusory, of the political and above all cultural fight, of the protest at all levels. This protest by now has been cancelled out by the fast endings of 1968 in which it seems that those 'penitents' that today wag around the person in power stand out more than the enemies of that time.<sup>235</sup>

Peppino's political determination, his open and courageous fight against the corruption of local institutions must have reminded Giordana of Pasolini's own political and social engagement. Furthermore, Giordana was informed that Peppino too read Pasolini, and that, like him, he wrote poems.<sup>236</sup> In Giordana's words, [Peppino] was

outside the choir, outside the horde. Perhaps even outside the world, like Pasolini whom among other things Peppino Impastato admired and defended against the Movement (that considered him decadent and bourgeois) against the hypocrites on the Left, (that found him to be instead too transgressive). Probably the sympathy that I feel towards Peppino Impastato is rooted in those past common readings.<sup>237</sup>

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started retouching the screenplay to adapt it to my personality. I met Peppino Impastato's friends and his family. I wanted to place myself in the real environment: this is why I shot the film in the same places of the story, in Cinisi." Marco Tullio Giordana, *L'avant- Scène Cinéma*, 119. Trans. mine.

<sup>235</sup> Giordana in Marineo, "Marco Tullio Giordana: Interview with Franco Marineo," *Duel*, 56. "Impastato è esattamente uno di quei ragazzi del '68 che non si sarebbero mischiati né riciclati all'ombra del potere. Avrebbe aborrito 'la carriera' di tanti suoi coetanei, incarna quell'ideale, forse illusorio, di lotta politica e soprattutto culturale, di contestazione a tutti i livelli, ormai cancellata dalle sbrigative liquidazioni del '68 in cui sembrano distinguersi, più che i nemici di allora, proprio quei 'pentiti' di oggi che scodinzolano nei dintorni del potente di turno."

<sup>236</sup> See Impastato, *Lunga è la notte*, 49-63.

<sup>237</sup> Giordana in Marieno, "Marco Tullio Giordana: Interview with Franco Marineo," *Duel*, 57. "Fuori dal coro, fuori dal branco. Forse addirittura fuori dal mondo, come Pasolini. Che, tra l'altro, Peppino Impastato ammirava e difendeva in controtendenza sia col Movimento (che lo considerava decadente e borghese) che con la Sinistra parruccona (che lo trovava invece

Attilio Coco, in *Segnocinema*, has acutely remarked that the instruments that Giordana utilizes to recover the tragic event of Peppino's death, are those linked to the filmmaker's very personal obsessions, one of which is Pasolini. Coco asserts:

Pasolini of *Heretical Empiricism*, the man that in his essay *Observations on the sequence shot* theorizes the need to die in order to give meaning to one's life, lends this idea to define Peppino Impastato's 'personality', to give substance to his programmatic movement towards death, and altogether contributes to create a sort of fantastic myth that is needed to turn the recollection into memory.<sup>238</sup>

In order to comprehend the scenario that preceded the making of the film it is necessary to keep in mind these elements: Giordana's admiration for Pasolini's works and his intellectual and political engagement, Peppino's own love for Pasolini, and finally the striking similarity of Peppino's political ideals and fight to Pasolini's own sense of justice and freedom. The vehemence and openness of Pasolini's accusations in the "Romanzo delle stragi"<sup>239</sup> can be easily paired to Peppino's public irreverence against the mafia bosses.<sup>240</sup> Both Pasolini and Peppino however were against violence: in a 1962 article Pasolini wrote

I feel a profound, ancient antipathy towards those who carry a gun in their pocket... One cannot hate an idiot that carries around a gun since

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troppo trasgressivo). Probabilmente la simpatia che provo verso Peppino Impastato affonda anche in quelle lontane comuni letture."

<sup>238</sup> Attilio Coco, "I cento passi" *Segnofilm*, 106 (Nov-Dec. 2000): 34. "Il Pasolini di *Empirismo eretico*, quello che nel saggio *Osservazioni sul piano sequenza* arriva a teorizzare la necessità del morire per dare senso alla propria vita, presta questa suggestione per definire il 'carattere' di Peppino Impastato, per dare corpo e sostanza al suo programmatico andare verso la morte e, insieme concorre a creare una sorta di mitopoiesi necessaria perché il ricordo diventi appunto memoria."

<sup>239</sup> Pasolini, "Romanzo delle stragi." *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 362.

<sup>240</sup> It is likely that Peppino, twenty-six years younger than Pasolini, took the Italian intellectual political engagement as an example to follow, but I would also argue that, due to the social reality in which he lived and to the peculiarities of his personality and political choices, Peppino was able to proceed independently.

he is childish... in him an obsessive mistrust in the other, a fanatic and unpleasant narcissism, an introverted and awkward pride dominate and make him an hateful patient for a doctor, an unbearable character for an author.<sup>241</sup>

After his father's sudden death in 1977, Peppino remained without protection.<sup>242</sup> His mother encouraged him to carry a gun and defend himself in case he was assaulted, but Peppino refused, even though he was well aware of the danger.<sup>243</sup>

Both Peppino and Pasolini worked to protect the environment in the name of an ancient beauty that needed to be remembered and protected. Pasolini nourished a sense of—a sensitivity for—Beauty and Form that led him, in true humanistic fashion, ever to re-create those two ideals in his art, and to seek them in the world surrounding him. As mentioned earlier, Peppino struggled against the construction of the airport's third runway that not only deprived the local farmers of their own land, but also disfigured the natural landscape of the so-called Molinazzo, that is Punta Raisi, a sort of heavenly oasis."<sup>244</sup> Giordana faithfully and accurately reported Peppino's struggles for the environment and his sensibility for natural beauty in a significant scene in which Peppino and Salvo are on the top of the hill near the airport, and remember the beautiful landscape that has been destroyed by real estate speculation.

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<sup>241</sup> Pasolini, *Saggi sulla società e la politica*, 110-111. "Provo una profonda, antica antipatia per chi porta una pistola in tasca... Un idiota che vada in giro armato di pistola non si può che detestare: poiché possiede dell'infantilismo...in lui predomina un'ossessiva sfiducia nel prossimo, un narcisismo fanatico e sgradevole, un orgoglio introverso e goffo che lo rendono un paziente odioso al clinico, un personaggio insopportabile all'autore."

<sup>242</sup> Luigi Impastato, Peppino's father, died after a car ran him over the night of the 19<sup>th</sup> of September 1977.

<sup>243</sup> When Peppino's mother was asked if Peppino knew that he was risking his life, she answered: "L'aveva, l'aveva (la paura). Ma non parlava (He was afraid, but he did not talk about it)," Felicia Bartolotta Impastato, *La mafia in casa mia*, 45.

<sup>244</sup> Vitale, my interview (Cinisi, July 1, 2007). "Una sorta di oasi paradisiaca."

In 1974 Pasolini too began a campaign to defend the old city of Orte, near Rome. He made a short documentary in which he clearly took position to preserve the ruins of the city against the modern urbanization. Pasolini stated:

I chose the city of Orte... I first chose a shot that showed only the city of Orte in its stylistic perfection, that is to say the city as perfect, absolute form (and it is a shot more or less like this one); it is enough that I move this device on the camera, and the form of the city, its profile, its architectural substance are cracked, ruined, disfigured by something extraneous, that is what you can see over there on the left. Can you see it?<sup>245</sup>

In a TV interview on February 4<sup>th</sup>, 1974 Pasolini stated that "In the image of the modern city there is a sense of annoyance, pain, offense, anger that comes from the disturbance of form and style... Whoever does historical films like I do, perceives this contemporary horror of the decay of civilization and sensibility."<sup>246</sup> Furthermore, in his short film *Che cosa sono le nuvole* (*What are the clouds*), Pasolini narrates the story of two puppets, Totò and Ninetto, who

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<sup>245</sup> "Io ho scelto una città, la città di Orte ...Io ho scelto un'inquadratura che prima faceva vedere soltanto la città di Orte nella sua perfezione stilistica, cioè come forma perfetta, assoluta, ed è più o meno l'inquadratura così; basta che io muova questo affare qui, nella macchina da presa, ed ecco che la forma della città, il profilo della città, la massa architettonica della città, è incrinata, è rovinata, è deturpata da qualcosa di estraneo, che è quella casa che si vede là a sinistra. La vedi?" Pasolini in *Pasolini e... la forma della città*. Film documentary by Paolo Brunatto and Pier Paolo Pasolini. Produced and broadcast by RAI TV, 1974. The documentary was part of "Io e... ", a program dedicated to a monument or art work of which some intellectuals denounced the threatened survival. Pasolini chose to talk about the shape of Orte. See also Franco Contini's comments in *Pier Paolo Pasolini, Testimonianze*, eds. Anna Panicali and Sergio Sestini (Firenze, Salani, 1982), 14. In the documentary Pasolini also adds: "It is a humble thing that cannot even be compared to certain wonderful art works of the Italian tradition. And yet I think that this little insignificant humble path must be defended with the same tenacity, the same good will, the same severity with which one defends the artwork of a great author... I want to defend something that is not approved, nor codified, something that nobody defends, that is, so to speak, people's work. It is a work of the entire history of the people of a city, of an infinity of men without name who however worked in a historical period that produced its most extreme fruits in the artworks of professionals... nobody realizes that what needs to be defended is just this anonymous past, this past without name, this popular past."

<sup>246</sup> Excerpt reported in Raffaele Milani. "Il paesaggio, l'arte, l'estetica." *F/L - FILM e LETTERATURE*, Rivista di Cinema e Letteratura, 4. In [http://www.almapress.unibo.it/fl/numeri/numero4/monogr/paesaggio\\_arte.htm](http://www.almapress.unibo.it/fl/numeri/numero4/monogr/paesaggio_arte.htm). "C'è, nell'immagine della città moderna, un senso di fastidio, di dolore, di offesa, di rabbia che nasce dal profondo turbamento della forma e dello stile. [...] Chi, come me, fa film storici, percepisce questo orrore contemporaneo della caduta della civiltà e della sensibilità."

exemplify the eternal struggle between life and death, appearing and being. In the last scene, the two protagonists are thrown away in the trash by their puppeteer, and, despite the degradation of the surroundings, they look with awe at the clouds in the sky. Totó finally exclaims: “Ah, straziante, meravigliosa bellezza del creato! (Ah, heartrending, wonderful beauty of the creation!)”<sup>247</sup> This is one of Pasolini’s most powerful appeals to the beauty of the world, to the poetry that simple things, which are often taken for granted, still maintain, despite the human effort to degenerate the environment and ignore its value.

Finally both Peppino and Pasolini understood the role of the mass media (newspapers and TV) in the shaping of public opinion. Pasolini wrote a significant article in 1966, “Contro la televisione (Against TV),” in which he remarked that

The screen is a terrible cage that keeps in captivity the Public Opinion—*slavishly served to obtain total servility*... The TV of public life, of the political events and of the re-elaboration of ideas has to—and feels rigidly this duty—to function according a selection of choices and a series of linguistic norms that assure that ‘everything goes well,’ and it is done for your own good.<sup>248</sup>

Peppino, who, along with his friends often times had denounced the ‘partiality’ of the local newspapers and the national media, resorted himself to the same weapons, namely the small newspaper *L’Idea* and Radio Aut as means to provide counter-information.

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<sup>247</sup> Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Che cosa sono le nuvole* (Rome: Dino de Laurentis Cinematografica, 1967).

<sup>248</sup> Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 135, 137. “Il video è una terribile gabbia che tiene prigioniera l’Opinione Pubblica—*servilmente servita per ottenerne il totale servilismo*... La televisione, della vita pubblica, delle vicende politiche e della elaborazione delle idee, deve—sente rigidamente tale dovere—operare secondo una selettività di scelta e una serie di norme linguistiche, che assicuri innanzi tutto che ‘tutto va bene’, ed è fatto per il bene.”

Finally, it is relevant for my argument noting that one aspect that Peppino and Pasolini had in common was their relationship with their parents. Both had a conflictual relationship with their father, and loved their mother dearly. Pasolini, interviewed by Jean Dufлот in 1969, confessed:

I will simply say that I felt a strong love for my mother. Her 'physical' presence, her way of being, of speaking, her discretion and her sweetness subjugate all my childhood. I was convinced for a long time that all my emotional and erotic life was determined exclusively by this excessive passion that I deemed even a monstrous form of love... I always dedicated to my father a mixture of contradictory feelings... As a matter of fact, there was between us a permanent conflict, in which I do not exclude that I may have misunderstood my hostility for hatred.<sup>249</sup>

Pasolini will clarify that the contrasts with his father were due to his parent's egocentrism, egoism and authoritative, tyrannical attitude; and he also added that his rejection may have hidden some ambiguity.<sup>250</sup> Pasolini will admit that he felt a partial love for his father, a love, however, that regarded only the sexual sphere.<sup>251</sup> Through Peppino's friends and relatives' testimony, it is immediately clear that Peppino felt a profound hostility towards his father, a conflictuality that Salvo deems to be "much stronger than it appears in the film."<sup>252</sup> In his diary Peppino noted:

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<sup>249</sup> Pasolini, "Il sogno del centauro. Incontri con Jean Dufлот," *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 1407-1408. "Dirò semplicemente che ho provato un grande amore per mia madre. La sua 'presenza' fisica, il suo modo di essere, di parlare, la sua discrezione e la sua dolcezza soggiogarono tutta la mia infanzia. Sono rimasto convinto per molto tempo che tutta la mia vita emozionale ed erotica era stata determinata esclusivamente da questa passione eccessiva, che ritenevo addirittura una forma mostruosa dell'amore... Ho sempre dedicato a mio padre un amalgama di sentimenti contraddittori... In effetti quello che c'era tra noi era una sorta di conflitto permanente, in cui non è escluso che abbia potuto scambiare l'ostilità per odio."

<sup>250</sup> Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 1408.

<sup>251</sup> "In short, while for my mother I felt a true love that involved the entire person, for my father I felt a partial love that regarded only sex." Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 1408.

<sup>252</sup> Vitale, my interview (Cinisi, 1 July 2007).

My father, head of a small clan and member of a larger one that had ideological features typical of a late rural and pre-industrial society, had concentrated all his efforts, since I was born, in the attempt to impose on me his choices and his behavioral code. He managed only to cut every channel of affective communication and to compromise for good any possibility for a linear development of my individuality.<sup>253</sup>

In the interviews conducted with Salvo Vitale and Piero Impastato, Peppino's cousin, they both recalled public episodes in which Peppino fought with his father and challenged him publicly. Salvo remembered.<sup>254</sup> Peppino could not tolerate his father's servility towards his Mafia friends, his bigotry and his patriarchal attitude. Luigi, on the other side, vented his arrogance, anger and frustration at home, where his wife, Felicia, lived what she herself defined as "hell":

I lived a martyrdom, the dictatorship... he picked up a fight for nothing... desperation and fear... When I heard him coming back home I was very afraid... never a sweet word, never some fun, a party, some money... He controlled everything... he let me go out only to visit Tanino Badalamenti and to talk with his wife... never a present, I am the only one who knows what I went through, and Peppino figured that out too. He used to say to me "I come here only for you."<sup>255</sup>

Though Luigi forbade Peppino to go back home, his mother, however, defended him and let him in secretly.<sup>256</sup> Peppino's friends have not been able

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<sup>253</sup> Impastato, *Lunga è la notte*, 115. "Mio padre, capo del piccolo clan e membro di un clan più vasto, con connotati ideologici tipici di una società tardo contadina e preindustriale, aveva concentrato tutti i suoi sforzi, sin dalla mia nascita, nel tentativo di impormi le sue scelte e il suo codice comportamentale. È riuscito soltanto a tagliarmi ogni canale di comunicazione affettiva e a compromettere definitivamente ogni possibilità di espansione lineare della mia soggettività."

<sup>254</sup> See Vitale, my interview (Cinisi, 1 July 2007).

<sup>255</sup> Felicia Bartolotta Impastato, in Vitale, *Nel cuore dei coralli*, 53. "un martirio...quello che ho passato...la dittatura...sul niente attaccava brighe...disperazione e paura...quando lo sentivo arrivare mi pisciavo addosso...mai una parola dolce, mai uno svago, mai una festa, mai una lira...teneva tutto in mano..., mi faceva uscire solo per andare a trovare Tanino Badalamenti e parlare con sua moglie...mai un regalo, quello che ho passato, solo io lo so, e anche Peppino se lo immaginava, mi diceva 'Io vegnu cca sulu pi tia'."

<sup>256</sup> See Bartolotta Impastato, *La mafia in casa mia*, 34. Felicia's daughter-in-law, whose name is Felicia as well, lived very close to Peppino's mother, and, when interviewed about the relationship between Peppino and his mother, she stated: "Mia suocera viveva per Peppino. Non ne ho dubbi." ("My mother-in-law lived for Peppino. I have no doubt about it.") My interview (Cinisi, 4 July 2007).

to talk extensively about Peppino's feelings toward his mother, since Peppino was very reserved, and extremely concentrated on his political engagement. Interviewed about the scene in the film in which Peppino recites Pasolini's poem to his mother, his friends Salvo and Guido Orlando, admitted that it is difficult to imagine the real Peppino doing the same. However, from Felicia's memories, it is clear that Peppino was close to his mother:

[Peppino] was a loving son. Once he told me: 'I come to visit you because I feel pity for you.' I cannot forget his words... Once I was ironing, he knocked on the door but I didn't hear him. Hiding from my husband then, he climbed the gutter, kicked in the door, entered and hugged me.<sup>257</sup>

It is common knowledge that often Peppino gave his mother a red carnation. Giovanni Impastato, commenting on Peppino's relationship with their mother, asserted:

A wonderful, loving relationship. His mother was an important resource for him. He knew that she suffered and was afraid for him, and in moments of high tension, Peppino sometimes restrained his political engagement. However, he did not tolerate that in order to defend him his mother stopped him, thus entering those mafia mechanisms that Peppino fought against. In a certain way, though understanding her, Peppino rejected her form of protection.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> Bartolotta Impastato, in Vitale, *Nel cuore dei coralli*, 18. "[Peppino] con me era affettuoso. Una volta mi disse: 'Io vengo a trovarti perché mi fai pena.' Certe parole non me le posso dimenticare di questo figlio... Una volta ero lí dentro che stiravo, lui bussava, ma io non lo sentivo. Sempre di nascosto da mio marito, salí da una grondaia, sfondó la porta del balcone, entrò e mi abbracciò."

<sup>258</sup> Giovanni Impastato, my interview on the phone (Aquinas, Italy. 24 October 2007). "Un rapporto splendido, molto affettuoso. La madre era per lui una risorsa importante. Sapeva che la madre soffriva e temeva per lui, e nei momenti di tensione più alta, Peppino, a volte, frenava il suo impegno politico. Tuttavia non sopportava che per difenderlo la madre lo bloccasse, entrando nei meccanismi mafiosi che Peppino combatteva. In un certo senso, pur comprendendola, Peppino rifiutava la forma di protezione di nostra madre."



#### 2.4 *Making Sense of Giordana's Choices*

Giordana must have looked at Peppino's relationship with his parents drawing a parallel with Pasolini. However, while for Pasolini, by his own admission, this relationship may be at the origins of his erotic life and preferences, there is no element that leads us to ascribe the same to Peppino.

We can return then to the questions that Giordana raises in the scene in which Peppino recites the poem to his mother: is this scene talking of Peppino's homosexuality? Or has Giordana inappropriately constructed a total identification between Peppino and Pasolini? In addressing this issue of Peppino's sexual orientation, Peppino's brother, Giovanni, categorically stated: "No, I tell you clearly. He was not homosexual."<sup>259</sup> He then tells about a radio program in which Peppino defends Pope Paul VI saying that "even if he was a bit homosexual, one should not attack him, since everybody is, 'me too.'"<sup>260</sup> Peppino, according to Giovanni, wanted to provoke the audience, and was often very contradictory, but, based on what he knew about him, he was not homosexual. Without dismissing Giovanni's statement, let us take into consideration first of all some pages of a short diary that Peppino wrote in November 1977, while he was recalling the period in which he became a member of the PSIUP (1965):

I joined the PSIUP with the anger and desperation of who, at the same time, wants to break with everything and look for protection...Soon after that I madly fell in love with a young comrade: I never expressed my desires, but I tumultuously built a large part of my political dimension on this schizoid condition.<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Giovanni Impastato, my interview (Cinisi, 1 July 2007). "No, te lo dico chiaramente, non lo era."

<sup>260</sup> Impastato, my interview, "Anche se lui era un po' omosessuale, non bisognava attaccarlo perchè siamo un po' tutti omosessuali, 'lo sono anch'io'."

<sup>261</sup> Impastato, *Lunga è la notte*, 116. "Approdai al PSIUP con la rabbia e la disperazione di chi, al tempo stesso, vuol rompere tutto e cerca protezione. Mi innamorai subito dopo e fino alla

Peppino here admits that he had fallen in love with a male friend, and that had not been able to express his feelings; he also defines this state of mind as 'a schizoid condition.' He finally adds that the relationship with his partner ended two years later, in 1967.<sup>262</sup> Talking about the impact of the 1968 on his life, Peppino confesses once again "I \_\_\_\_\_ once again with a young 'comrade'. This period was perhaps the most heartbreaking and at the same time the most thrilling of my existence and of my political life. I passed smoothly and without interruption from phases of dark desperation to moments of true exaltation and creative power."<sup>263</sup> As you may have noticed, Peppino leaves a blank in which the verb "to fall in love" is missing. Furthermore, he puts in quote the word 'compagno,' that in Italian indicates not only the political comrade, but also a private partner. Finally, some pages later, he writes that he coped with his depressive ups and downs until 1971, "when I decided to move myself out of the condition in which I floundered, and away from politics."<sup>264</sup> Once again, notice the quotation marks around the verb "decisi (I decided)". It is now that he announces that he fell in love with a girl, but the result was not positive: "...I only managed to construct a very long and schizophrenic relationship which was ununderstandable, even

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follia di un mio giovane compagno di partito: non espressi mai i miei desideri, ma su questa condizione schizoide ho costruito larga parte della mia dimensione politica, tumultuosamente."

<sup>262</sup> See Impastato, *Lunga è la notte*, 116.

<sup>263</sup> Impastato, *Lunga è la notte*, 118. "Mi \_\_\_\_\_ ancora una volta di un mio giovane 'compagno'. E' stato forse quello il periodo più straziante e al tempo stesso più esaltante della mia esistenza e della mia storia politica. Passavo con continuità ininterrotta da fasi di cupa disperazione a momenti di autentica esaltazione e capacità creativa."

<sup>264</sup> Impastato, *Lunga è la notte*, 120. "quando 'decisi' di fuoriuscire dalle condizioni in mi cui mi dibattevo e dalla politica."

Kafkian. The result: we broke up and I was devastated and even more incapable of relationships with the external world.”<sup>265</sup>

Emerging from Peppino’s diary is a man who is profoundly tormented not only by the political situation that characterized those years, and by the mafia’s illegal activities, but above all by his personal life. Though Giovanni maintains that Peppino’s love for his male friend was only a platonic affection to a friend, one can argue that Peppino’s torture and anguish go well beyond a friendly attachment. They seem to hide especially Peppino’s deep fear of being misjudged by a society in which homosexuality was still a taboo.<sup>266</sup> He never spoke with any of his friends about his feelings, admitting them only to the hidden pages of his diary, where at times he was afraid to use compromising verbs such as ‘fell in love’ (*mi innamorai*) and preferred adopting the ambiguous quotes to describe his will to ‘change his mind’ (*decisi*). He was well aware, knowing the case of Pasolini, what being stigmatized as a homosexual, or a bi-sexual, entailed. In addition, in Sicily, island to the extreme South of Italy, the prejudice against homosexuality was even stronger than in the rest of the peninsula.

In a 2007 interview with Umberto Santino, president of Centro Siciliano di Documentazione ‘Giuseppe Impastato’ in Palermo, Santino reported accurately the story of the publication of Peppino’s diary. It emerges how problematic and discriminating being a homosexual was at the time in which Peppino was killed and for a long time thereafter. Apparently, only Giovanni Impastato, Salvo Vitale, and Umberto Santino knew about Peppino’s diary.

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<sup>265</sup> Impastato, *Lunga è la notte*, 120. “... riuscii a costruire soltanto un rapporto lunghissimo e schizofrenico, incomprensibile, kafkiano addirittura. Il risultato: ne uscii con le ossa rotte e ancora piú incapace di rapporti col mondo esterno.”

<sup>266</sup> For more information about history of homosexuality in Italy, see chapter 4.

After Peppino's murder, when Peppino was accused of being a terrorist or a suicide and public opinion was against him, his brother decided to keep the diary secret and avoid further social hostility.<sup>267</sup> Santino states: "We learned about Peppino's homosexuality quite early. In order to avoid that the court of inquiry got some documents, he [Giovanni] immediately gave me Peppino's notebook (diary) and planner."<sup>268</sup> From then on the diary has been shelved at the Centro di Documentazione Siciliano, and nobody has access to the text except for Umberto Santino and Giovanni Impastato. In the first edition of Salvo Vitale's *Nel cuore dei coralli. Peppino Impastato. Una vita contro la mafia* (1995), a book on Peppino's life and political commitment, the author omitted the parts from the diary that dealt with his friend's homosexuality.<sup>269</sup> Only in 2003, when Umberto Santino decided to publish the third edition of *Lunga è la notte*, he obtained Giovanni Impastato's permission to publish Peppino's diary in its entirety, and finally "farlo conoscere e rispettarlo così come era (to present and respect him for what he was)."<sup>270</sup> Giordana's film however was released three years earlier, so Giordana knew about Peppino's homosexual tendencies while conceiving his film. Salvo Vitale, at odds with Santino and Giovanni, talked with Giordana while he was working on the screenplay and, though he could not show him Peppino's integral diary, certainly gave the filmmaker important information regarding Peppino's private and political life.

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<sup>267</sup> See my interview with Umberto Santino (Palermo, 4 luglio 2007).

<sup>268</sup> Umberto Santino, my interview (Palermo, 4 luglio 2007). "L'omosessualità di Peppino è una cosa che noi abbiamo scoperto abbastanza presto. Per evitare che alcune carte cadessero nelle mani degli inquirenti, lui [Giovanni] mi ha dato subito il taccuino e l'agenda di Peppino."

<sup>269</sup> Though the book was published in 1995, Salvo Vitale started working on it right after Peppino's death.

<sup>270</sup> Santino, my interview.

## 2.5 Conclusion: The Realism of “*I cento passi*”

When I started my research on *I cento passi*, I was looking for elements that confirmed the connection of the film to Pier Paolo Pasolini, and ultimately clarified whether Giordana had created a parallel or an inaccurate identification of Peppino with the illustrious intellectual. I wanted to verify to what extent Giordana’s film adhered to the reality, and in more general terms, I intended to shed light on the type of realism that the director employed in his film. My long conversations with Peppino’s family and friends led me farther than I expected. I found out that the filmmaker and his collaborators on the screenplay, Claudio Fava and Monica Zapelli, have been subtler than it first appears. There are a few elements in the film that are not strictly faithful to historical reality: as Umberto Santino and his friends Pino Vitale and Andrea Bartolotta observe, Giordana downgrades Peppino to a simple provincial man whose political commitment does not go beyond local activity, whereas in fact Peppino was a political leader whose initiatives often put him in contact with other anti-mafia activists (for instance, Danilo Dolci in Palermo).<sup>271</sup> Santino affirms:

His letters and his cultural activity demonstrate that Peppino was a man of his own time, an avant-gard intellectual... His political engagement (the election rally, the leafleting, his trips), his journalistic work (Radio Aut), his cultural initiatives (the club Music and Culture) and the other activities (theatre and cinema) are fully open and extend beyond the local.<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> “The political leader is mortified in a very reductive dimension,” my interview with Santino. Santino’s statement is certainly true and can be explained if we take into account Giordana’s construction of the character according to a Gramscian perspective. For further details see Postilla to chapter 2.

<sup>272</sup> Santino, my interview. “Le sue lettere, la sua pratica culturale dimostrano che Peppino era un uomo del suo tempo, un intellettuale all’avanguardia...La sua attività politica (il comizio, il volantinaggio, i viaggi), sia la pratica giornalistica (Radio Aut), sia la pratica culturale (il club Musica e Cultura) e le altre attività (teatro e cinema) sono sempre molto ariose, sprovincializzate.”

Furthermore, in the film Peppino is a solitary hero while the presence of his friends is reduced to Salvo Vitale's company. In reality, though Peppino was the charismatic leader of the group, many friends supported his initiatives. Since the film presents a lonely hero, Santino laments the fact that it induces the young generations not to follow Peppino's example because that would lead them to death, hence "[the film becomes a service for the mafia more than the anti-mafia."<sup>273</sup> Among the scenes that Santino and some friends deem to be unlikely in the historical Peppino's life, include the most famous scene in which Peppino walks one hundred steps with his brother towards Badalamenti's house, and the controversial scene in which Badalamenti speaks with Peppino and Giovanni in their pizzeria.<sup>274</sup>

Despite these discrepancies between the reality and its fictionalization, I believe that Giordana has fully respected the true nature and essence of the historical Peppino's political activity and personal life. Due to the success of the film in Italy and abroad, the filmmaker has managed to spread Peppino's story and let a larger number of people get acquainted with his struggle and death. The spectators learn pivotal aspects of his activity and political thought through the film; though we are not informed about how short Peppino's experience with Stefano Venuti was, or about the political steps following his early detachment from the PCI, we learn an important point of his fight, that is to say his aversion to the bureaucratization of the PCI and its weak struggle against the mafiosi in Cinisi. This would be a natural prelude to the PCI's collusion with the DC and consequently with the Mafia. Another important

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<sup>273</sup> Santino, my interview. "[il film] diventa un servizio più per la mafia che per l'antimafia."

<sup>274</sup> The scene is controversial since it is not clear whether it is a dream or not. Furthermore, in reality it never occurred. For further details regarding the differences between the reality and its fictionalization, see [http://www.peppinoimpastato.com/i\\_cento\\_passi.htm](http://www.peppinoimpastato.com/i_cento_passi.htm)

aspect that emerges from the film is the use of the radio that allows Peppino and his friends to express freely and ironically their ideals and to attack the mafia. Peppino understood the importance of mass media as fundamental means of information when they are free from political influence or direct control of the corrupted local administration. Most of all Giordana has delicately rendered Peppino's personal turmoil and ultimately the true nature of his identity. Above all, he has conveyed a plethora of information through direct and indirect references to Pier Paolo Pasolini.

In the film Peppino's homosexuality is left in suspension, deferred and veiled, so as to restrict access to this information to a smaller number of people, particularly scholars of cinema and literature. In such a way Giordana has chosen to partially respect Peppino's family and their decision to conceal that information. Nine years have passed since the premiere of the film (2000), and in the meantime Peppino's diary has been published. On May 9, 2008, Cinisi hosted thousands people for the national anti-mafia protest and the thirtieth anniversary of Peppino's death. Never before the Centro di Documentazione Siciliano 'Giuseppe Impastato', represented by its president Umberto Santino, his wife Anna Puglisi, and Peppino's family and historical friends had so many people marching with them against the mafia. Their effort to grant justice to the victims of mafia and to free common people from its control had been a solitary one for decades. The actress Lucia Sardo (who in *I cento passi* played Peppino's mother) was there too, implicitly reminding everybody the role of the film in this social struggle. Books on Peppino's personal life and political activity have been sold to a larger number of people. Despite all this activity, today Peppino's homosexuality is still a taboo topic in Cinisi. When discussing the reasons of such a denial, the response is that in

the present, as in the past, homosexuality is still a source of discrimination that would certainly give some political representatives of the Right wing parties and, more in general, the majority of common people, the tools to distort the image of Peppino and diminish the value of his political activism against the mafia. Homosexuality, in other words, would be a perfect means to discredit Peppino's political importance, as if being homosexual automatically translates into being crazy, incapable of reason and of conducting a just political and social struggle. In the light of these considerations, Peppino's family has reason to be afraid of presenting Peppino for who he truly was, and is obliged to deny Peppino's homosexuality or at best his bisexuality. Social prejudice and political racism silence people, prevent them from bringing the truth to the surface, and in doing so they become natural affiliations with the mafia. This of course leads us to reflect on the state of Italian society, on absurd forms of racism, and ultimately on the power of political institutions that through the manipulation of mass media can easily forge and direct public opinion.

The film then can be considered highly realistic. But what kind of realism are we talking about? Giordana's realism does not conform to the realist or neorealist cinematic traditional approach advocated by André Bazin or Cesare Zavattini, for whom long takes, deep focus, limited editing, use of non-professional actors, simplicity, purity and transparency are the core of cinematic practice. Giordana's realism is not a naturalistic, documentary, faithful registration of historical events. Despite that, his cinematic work does include location shooting as in the early works by Vittorio De Sica, Luchino Visconti, Roberto Rossellini, and Pier Paolo Pasolini; the filmmaker does collect documents before telling the story of Peppino as Francesco Rosi does



for some of his most famous films (*Salvatore Giuliano*, *Le mani sulla città*, *Il caso Mattei*).<sup>275</sup> Though Giordana inserts in the film some events created by his artistic imagination, his creativity becomes a powerful means to generate new forms of visibility and new ways of thinking about the world. Giordana's realism, like Orson Welles's, Jean Renoir's, and Italian neorealist filmmakers stems from what Bazin called a fundamental faith in reality, and weaves into the plot the political and social issues that regarded Sicily and the rest of Italy in the past as much as in the present. Most of all, in *I cento passi* the director goes well beyond appearances, seeking the reality that lay beneath the mask, thus providing us with nuances on Peppino's identity. With *I cento passi*, but also with *Maledetti vi amerò* and *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano*, Giordana invites us to view the world unseen—whether represented by the Roman shantytown or the Sicilian towns dominated by the mafia—and this sets in motion the intellectual process that intends to bring us back to a certain social reality and reaffirms our participation in it. Most important, he successfully achieves his goal by resorting to Pier Paolo Pasolini's life and political commitment. Through Giordana's films one can almost hear Pasolini's comments on the relation between cinema and reality. Pasolini remarked that "reality is cinema in nature...cinema is the written language of reality,"<sup>276</sup> and "since cinema reproduces reality, it ends up bringing us back to the study of reality. But in a

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<sup>275</sup> Manuela Gieri speaks of Francesco Rosi's "critical realism" since the author, following the suggestions offered by Visconti and by cinematic social realists like Elia Kazan and Jules Dassin, "focuses quite openly on narration, rather than description." In doing so, Rosi distances himself from neorealism that revolved more around immediacy and chronicle than documentation of facts and interpretation of reality. "For Rosi and others, such as Gillo Pontecorvo and Elio Petri, the goal was to develop a form of critical realism aimed at unmasking the lie behind the surface of things, to make cinema an instrument for knowledge." Manuela Gieri, "Hands Over the City: Cinema as Political Indictment and Social Commitment," in Carlo Testa, *Poet of Civic Courage: The Films of Francesco Rosi* (Westport, Ct: Praeger, 1996), 55-56. Marco Tullio Giordana's films can easily ascribe to this form of realism.

<sup>276</sup> Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, 224. "Ho definito il cinema come 'lingua scritta della realtà'... la realtà è un cinema in natura", *Empirismo eretico*, 1543.

new and special way, as if reality had been discovered through its reproduction, and as if certain of its expressive mechanisms had been revealed only through this new 'reflected' situation."<sup>277</sup>

## 2.6. *Post Script: "I cento passi" through a Gramscian Perspective*

Although the major theme of *I cento passi* is ostensibly limited to the ongoing blight of the Sicilian mafia, the film becomes for us a powerful lens through which to explore at a national level the complex historical period of the 1970s, covering, *inter alia*, the historic compromise between the Christian Democratic Party (DC) and the Italian Communist Party (PCI), the many unresolved political murders, the Red Brigades' terrorist attacks including the assassination of Aldo Moro, president of the DC. I will argue that *I cento passi* does not simply return to the past, but also looks to the future by recalling a Gramscian conception of politics. In compliance with the latter and by means of citations from Francesco Rosi's film, *Le mani sulla città* (*Hands Over the City*, 1963), *I cento passi* invites us spectators to take an active role in the social realm, thus offering us a powerful example of a rejuvenated political engagement in contemporary Italian cinema.

Why is Gramsci's political and cultural perspective a useful tool for the analysis of Giordana's film? I have opted for Gramsci for a twofold reason. First, a 'philological' one: *I cento passi* formally refers to Gramsci in the

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<sup>277</sup> Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, 228. "Siccome il cinema riproduce la realtà, finisce con il ricondurre allo studio della realtà. Ma in un modo nuovo e speciale, come se la realtà fosse stata scoperta attraverso la sua riproduzione, e certi suoi meccanismi espressivi fossero saltati fuori solo in questa nuova situazione 'riflessa'", *Empirismo eretico*, 1548. For further details on Pasolini's realism and on critique of Pasolini's film theory, see *o Viano, A Certain Realism*, 22-31.

scene in which Gramsci's picture appears in the office of the communist leader Venuti, and in the scene in which, after Peppino's death, the camera pans on one of Gramsci's books spread on the floor of the radio station. Secondly, and decisively, the film takes up and re-elaborates forward, in a new historical context, themes dear to the Sardinian intellectual and politician. I agree with Ann Shawstack Sassoon when she asserts that

It is perfectly legitimate to ask what, if anything, is useful in a writer for today's needs. Indeed the fascination with Gramsci derives from the very fragmentary, multifaceted, open-ended nature of his discourse, from the impression he conveys that the old schema simply will not do, that reality is a complex dynamic which demands a transformation in the very way we try to grasp it ... Gramsci's use to us today, then, is in suggesting the lines of a research agenda and furnishing some key concepts, which will help us to analyze contemporary society. Above all he helps us to ask the right questions about what is new in social, political, and economic developments, about the contradictory effects of the historical process, about the implications and consequences of specific forms of institutional and social relations in different countries.<sup>278</sup>

Gramsci was active in Italy between the 1920s and the 30s, and was one of the co-founders of the Italian Communist Party before dying in prison in 1937. In his pre-prison writings and the *Prison Notebooks*, he urged that more attention

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<sup>278</sup> Shawstack Sassoon, *Gramsci's Politics* (London: Hutchinson, 1987), xviii, xii. In an interview with Lino Del Fra, political activist and director of *All'armi, siamo Fascisti!* (1962) and *Antonio Gramsci. I giorni del carcere* (1977), after being asked about the use of Gramsci in the contemporary times, declared: "As to the contemporaneity (to read the past in relation to the present) I think that it can be perceived not by projecting people as myths out of their own time, as it happens with the fairy-tellers: let's throw Gramsci's thought in a suitcase, let's have him travel through time, let's open the suitcase today, and let's use him as it is, as if he were a vacuum cleaner or a dish washer. It is ridiculous. Contemporaneity, present time mean something else. Massimo Salvadori is right when he insists on the contemporaneity of a character as possibility of a relationship between his work throughout time and us. And then one should ask: are the problems, the questions that Gramsci thought about still ours even if the historical terms seem largely changed? Can the field he attempted to move through in his answers be used today? And the direction of his research? Only in this way Gramsci speaks to the present." The interview dates to 1979. The passage can be found in Pasquale Iaccio, *Il mezzogiorno tra cinema e storia* (Naples: Liguori Editore, 2002), 159-60. All translations, unless otherwise specified, are my own.

be paid to local problems, particularly to those social issues concerning southern Italy (the Southern Question) and stressed the necessity of fashioning a coalition of proletariat and peasants against the inimical, symmetrical bloc of fascist and capitalist government. In other words, he was the most prominent, active and effective promoter of a communist politics, which aimed at solving specific Italian social and political problems. He took into account the needs of the exploited people (workers and peasants), and strongly propounded an ideal osmosis between international and national politics, the city and the countryside, the intellectuals and the laborers.

In his writings Gramsci often refers to “local” and “localities,” without specifying, however, the meaning of the term. For instance, while emphasizing the importance for the individual members of the PCI to be able to undertake personal initiatives even when the Center of the party was unable to function due to political repression, he referred to what he named “internal democracy,” defining it as “the degree of political capacity by *local* bodies, and by the individual comrades working in the *localities*.”<sup>279</sup> (Emphasis mine) No specification of what locality means follows in the passage presented here. We can notice, however, that, with an ideal centripetal movement, Gramsci's attention goes from the international perspective linked to the relationship with the Soviet Union Central Committee, to the Italian national political landscape. The national is embodied by the city in which he lived and worked most of his life, Turin. From this city, he turns his attention to the suburbs from which most of the factory workers hailed. In the 1920s Gramsci became more and more interested in the southern problems, and the

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<sup>279</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Political Writings II* (1921-1926) (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1978), 364.

eventual alliance between workers and peasants. This change of focus shifted his political analysis not only from the North to the South of Italy, but from the city to the countryside, and from the center to the periphery, particularly to the small and isolated villages where the peasants worked.

As we will see, in the film the protagonist, Peppino, does have that 'centripetal' tendency to concentrate on the social reality characterizing his own town. Gramsci likewise believes that intellectuals must involve the masses on a local level, and fight against the deleterious bureaucratization of the Italian Communist Party. In my view, the film is strongly indebted to these themes, and re-proposes them in a renewed social, economic and political context.<sup>280</sup>

In the film, categories such as those of proletariat, peasants and bourgeoisie are less precisely defined than they are in Gramsci's work, but no less clearly identifiable for that. Peppino belongs to a bourgeois mafia family that owns a pizzeria. His relatives are peasants who have survived hunger and hard work, and are now member of the upper-middle class that has reached a higher social status thanks to illegal capitalist trades. At the beginning of the film, the mafia boss Cesare Manzella says, as he welcomes his American cousin:

Anthony, I still remember when, as a kid, you'd bring water to me and your dad, over there in the vineyard, peasants sweating for their masters. We were poor then, we owned nothing. Your father had to go

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<sup>280</sup> In the 1950s and 60s Italy enjoyed the effects of the so called "economic boom," characterized by the reconstruction of the cities destroyed by the war and the development of a capitalist economy fostered by American support. However, the economic boom left unresolved previous social and economic problems, concerning factory workers and peasants, especially in the south of Italy. That is another reason why Gramsci's political view is not an outdated tool to analyze the social reality of the 1970s.

far away, to look for fortune. But today, all these stones belong to us. We bought them with our sweat, we earned them one by one.<sup>281</sup>

In the discussion between the old uncle Gasparo and Cesare Manzella, the latter recommends adopting new technologies for their agricultural production and applying for free grants from the regional administration: “Uncle Gasparo, wise up. Don't vote for the monarchy anymore. We are in a republic, a democracy!”<sup>282</sup> This scene makes crystal clear just how muddy the connection is between the Impastatos’ economic activity and Sicilian regional politics. Mafia, capitalism, politics, and democracy all shamefully converge towards the same objectives: gaining more power and making more money. In this context “Democracy” becomes a concept easily manipulated for personal gain.

References to different classes and social struggles appear several times in the film's background, for instance in the newsreel showing the students’ movement in action, or in the graffiti scribbled on the walls of Radio Aut, which repeatedly refer to the “movimento operaio.” The latter not only reminds us of the political movement active in the 1970s, but also of the struggles of the factory workers fighting for their rights. It is on May 20, 1970 that the workers, in fact, obtain the “Statuto dei lavoratori,” a set of laws that assured the laborers better working conditions. In other words, even though the film focuses on the mafia and its impact on Cinisi’s social life, it elaborates on the same issues that Gramsci had faced forty years earlier.

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<sup>281</sup> Marco Tullio Giordana, *I cento passi* (Raicinemafiction, 2000). “Anthony...mi ricordo quando eri ancora bambino, che portavi l’acqua a me e a tuo padre, là nella vigna, cafoni [illiterate peasants] che sudano sotto il padrone. Eravamo poveri allora, niente era nostro. Tuo padre se ne dovette andare lontano, a cercare fortuna. Oggi tutte queste pietre sono nostre, comprate, sudate, guadagnate ad una ad una.”

<sup>282</sup> Giordana, *I cento passi*. “Zio Gasparo, fatti furbo, non votare più per il re. Oggi abbiamo la repubblica, la democrazia.”

How, then, is “the local” (so dear to Gramsci) portrayed in the film? Let us begin with the first scene, located in the Impastatos' mansion in the countryside. There, the mob family circumscribes the space within which the spectator is allowed to move: a wall symbolically delimiting the mafia world marks the horizon of the events. Both the setting and the speeches at the table create a microcosm, built on the principle of loyalty to the family. The tacit understanding is the impossibility of ever moving beyond or outside that world, which becomes a symbolic text wherein everything is already pre-inscribed and that excludes any form of external referentiality.<sup>283</sup> Only one body stands out both literally and symbolically, that is the young Peppino who, standing on a chair, recites Giacomo Leopardi's poem *L' Infinito*. This scene has the important task of distancing Peppino from the rest of the family. The camera pans on people at the table. The camera closes in on Tano Badalamenti, the future boss, who looks at the boy without showing any sign of approval or admiration. Peppino never looks back at the boss, which seems to confirm his detachment from him.<sup>284</sup> Moreover, this full close-up suggests Tano's ominous predominance in the family, and creates tension. Tano's full close up may also invite the spectator to identify with him and become part of his world, but any such identification is not only questioned by Tano's physical position, which is inferior to Peppino's, but is also problematized by the most significant medium close-up in the film. It is a shot of Peppino's mother. Following her son's recitation of the poem, she also stands up, and she whispers the same poem word by word to herself. Her heartfelt participation to the poem indicates her support for her son, and her concern with her son's

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<sup>283</sup> On this subject, see Maurizio Viano's *A Certain Realism*, and his treatment of Pasolini's *Salò*, 294-311.

<sup>284</sup> This attitude will be confirmed later in the nightmare-scene in the pizzeria.

success.<sup>285</sup> She is the only one who is literally and symbolically on the boy's same level.

The attention to local space is obvious when Peppino recites Leopardi's "L'infinito," because this poem not only conveys attachment to the local and familiar area ("sempre caro mi fu quest'ermo colle, e questa siepe" / this solitary hill was always dear to me, and so this hedge), but also intimates the possibility of trespassing mentally and spiritually that very space in order, possibly, to reach "interminati spazi di là da quella, (endless spaces beyond that hedge)," that is, of exploring a world that exceeds the known and traditional microcosm. The "safe local" (provided by the mafia) then becomes a larger world, a space of infinite alternatives constructed within the town of Cinisi, where a radical and irrevocable break with the mafia system and societal bonds occur. Peppino's quest, however, is not a romantic one for a metaphysical, internal, and imaginative transcendence, as in Leopardi's poem, but rather for something rooted in recognizable social realities.<sup>286</sup> Significantly, there is encouragement to go beyond what is visible or audible, beyond the one hundred steps that separate Peppino's house from Badalamenti's, beyond the distance between the subject and the hedge in Leopardi's poem. The hedge

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<sup>285</sup> The film begins with a scene in which Mr. Impastato repeatedly asks his son, Peppino, if he has learned his poem well. Succeeding in reciting the poem honors the family, and ultimately contributes to the good relationship with its authoritative members (for example the mafia boss and uncle Cesare Manzella). A fine recitation of the poem seems also to avoid more personal contrasts between Peppino and his father. Peppino's mother seems to be well aware of all the issues involved in her son's performance, and her participation is a clear sign of her fear for the family's judgments and her support to her son.

<sup>286</sup> As Carlo Testa suggested to me, in Leopardi (as in Novalis and any other Romantic poet worthy of the term) the infinity is an internal one; it is not the real world that excites curiosity, but the imaginary one inside the mind. After all, Leopardi writes "io nel pensier mi fingo / I imagine". So he could hardly be more explicit about that interiorization. In the film, impelled by their 'claustal condition', Peppino and his mother propose the poem in a new dimension that goes well beyond the pure imaginative, mental operation. In fact, though everything is prompted by an initial thought, "going beyond the hedge" involves the materialization of this thought into real places and action.



is now the tall wall of the countryside mansion. While blocking the view, the hedge also leaves tiny spaces to look through and over itself. In other terms, the hedge suggests a dialectical relation between the visible and the invisible, the familiar and the unknown, the closeness and the distance.

A Gramscian emphasis on the local issues and on the need to inform the people in a grassroots manner is also highlighted in the scene in which the young man occupies Radio Aut. On this occasion Peppino refers to the hippies that had arrived at Cinisi to promote—in a new-age 'propaganda of the deed'—the sexual revolution. Peppino later tells his brother that in order to understand the young rebels one should know Marcuse. He is of course alluding to Marcuse's claim, at the core of his work, *One-dimensional Man*, that sexual revolution and expression of repressed instincts is possible only by breaking away from the bourgeois capitalist system. And yet, however sympathetic with the liberation movement of the so-called flower children, Peppino soon comes to realize that there is more than just one dimension even to notions such as freedom of the body and of sexuality. On one of his radio programs, he powerfully argues, Gramsci-like:

But this is neither Paris, nor Berkeley, no Woodstock nor the island of White. This is Cinisi, this is Sicily. They are just waiting for us to give up, and start again leading our old silent lives. The reason why I squatted in the radio was to get your attention. But I can't do myself: we must all go back to informing, and telling the truth. We must be truthful also about our limits.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> Giordana, *I cento passi*. "Ma qui non siamo a Parigi, non siamo a Berkeley, non siamo a Woodstock e nemmeno all'isola di White, qui siamo a Cinisi in Sicilia, dove non aspettano altro che il nostro disimpegno, il rientro nella vita privata, per questo ho voluto occupare simbolicamente la Radio, per richiamare la vostra attenzione. Ma non voglio fare tutto da solo, bisogna che ognuno di noi ritorni al lavoro che ha sempre fatto, cioè informare, dire la verità, e la verità bisogna dirla anche sulle proprie insufficienze, sui propri limiti."

Here Peppino calls everyone's attention to the need to focus on local problems. Giving space to national and international 'hot' themes would only have complied with the hidden plans of the capitalistic system involved with the local mafia. The film suggests that within the local space no substantial social change may evolve from the sexual revolution, because even breaking with the capitalist system to create a new social system indeed avoids certain real problems—even the rejection from the bourgeois lifestyle is maneuvered by the capitalist bourgeois system. We thus have a clear critique of Marcuse's standpoint, and a tendency towards what Foucault wrote about the sexual revolution in his *History of Sexuality vol. 1*: namely, it is only within the system that resistances can be created. It is crucial to be aware of being part of a web of power relations, if we want to construct alternatives within it.

This concept is strikingly similar to Gramsci's idea of "hegemony." When in the late twenties and thirties, with the rise of fascism and the failure of Western European working-class movements, Gramsci analyzed the reasons why the working class was not necessarily revolutionary, why it could in fact accept fascism, he argued that the fascist capitalist bourgeoisie was able to exercise a sort of ideological and cultural hegemony over the working class by persuading it to absorb its own moral, political and cultural values. Thoroughly brainwashed by propaganda, people's minds were shaped and influenced to believe that what was good for the bourgeoisie was good for the subaltern classes as well. In Dominic Strinati's paraphrase of Gramsci, "dominant groups in society maintain their dominance by securing the 'spontaneous consent' of subordinate groups, including the working class, through the negotiated construction of a political and ideological consensus

which incorporates both dominant and dominated groups.”<sup>288</sup> Gramsci wished to see the development of resistance to such a play, and to that effect he proposed the creation of an alternative hegemony or historical bloc through the formation of new social alliances based on common interests.

While Foucault does not seem to leave any opening for the possibility of a real social or political revolution, *I cento passi*, inspired by a Gramsci-like optimism of the will, appears to suggest that resistance is in itself an opening to a significant change. It may seem that the film undermines the importance of the social movements; on the contrary, it indicates that a revolution may occur by aggregating and allying scattered forces and take action from the particular to the universal, from the local to the national level ('centrifugal movement'). The activists dealing with local issues in a limited space are already fighting against global problems linked to bourgeois capitalism, thus contributing to a larger social struggle. This process of aggregation can best be described in Gramsci's words: "The line of development is towards internationalism, but the point of departure is 'national', and it is from this point of departure that one must begin."<sup>289</sup>

It appears to me that Peppino is that kind of passionate intellectual who knows and reads Gramsci, is close to the people on the street, involves them in a grassroots way through the local radio, and recites Dante's poetry intelligently as a means to grab the people's attention and to cause them to question the mafia's entrenched corruption.

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<sup>288</sup> Dominic Strinati, *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995), 165.

<sup>289</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Q. Hoare and G. Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 240.

Peppino reacts no less vigorously to the bureaucratization of the Communist Party represented by its leader, Stefano Venuti. After protesting against the expansion of the Cinisi Airport, Peppino and his friends are arrested. In the prison they address Venuti and accuse the Central Committee of abandoning the cause carried on by the communists in Cinisi. Salvo stands up and says that

We should figure out what we can learn from this defeat. We must first recognize our friends and our enemies. If the Party promises to stand by our side, to send that laborers and construction workers from Palermo and instead no one shows up, it means that the Party does not give a shit about us.<sup>290</sup>

Peppino supports his friend raising the stakes with a self-explanatory criticism of the PCI's myopia: "It's absurd that we keep getting mad at one another. We should talk about what's happened. Perhaps this fight was already lost at the beginning, maybe the Party betrayed us for a few new jobs at the airport."<sup>291</sup>

The mise-en-scene here clearly helps to visualize the two positions, since the opponents (Peppino and his friends on the one hand, and Stefano Venuti with other official representatives of the Communist Party on the other hand), are kept in separate cells literally facing each other. Peppino and Salvo raise the same problem, namely the disconnection between the center and the periphery, when they meet Venuti in his office. The mise-en-scene seems to suggest a problematic association between Venuti and Gramsci, whose picture—unsurprisingly given Gramsci's historical role—appears behind

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<sup>290</sup> Giordana, *I cento passi*, "Bisognerà pure prendere lezioni dalle sconfitte. La prima lezione è capire chi sono gli amici e chi sono i nemici. Se il partito promette di sostenerci, se dice che da Palermo verranno gli operai e gli edili e invece non si fa vedere nessuno, vuol dire che a questo partito di noi non gliene frega una beata minchia."

<sup>291</sup> Giordana, *I cento passi*. "Mi sembra assurdo che continuiamo a scannarci tra di noi, cerchiamo invece di discutere su cosa è successo. Forse questa lotta era già persa in partenza, forse il partito ha preferito mollarci in cambio di qualche posto di lavoro all'aeroporto."

Venuti. But, the narrative contradicts the deceiving mise-en-scene. Peppino and Salvo show the party men the provocative front page they have written for *L'Idea socialista*, their newspaper. It is a direct, angry attack against the mafia, which their article terms '*una montagna di merda*'. The two young men want to transform, at long last, the local situation. "Ci siamo stancati di aspettare. Qui bisogna fare qualcosa," Salvo begins, and Peppino continues by asking his presumed political leader:

Why is this office empty? Have you ever wondered why young people don't come anymore... "You can't do this" and "that is adventurism" and "and the people are not ready." Here a comrade can only get depressed and feel defeated... discipline, obedience, it was all set in Rome, in Palermo. When is it that we can make decisions too? ...Stefano, that poem by Majakowskji, your favorite one: "Do not lock yourself up in your rooms, oh Party / Be a friend to the street people."<sup>292</sup>

The position taken by both Peppino and Salvo seems to echo Gramsci's opposition to a mechanical application of the party line. As Ann Showstack Sassons observes, "Gramsci thought that the most important question was whether each section of the PCI scattered in the peripheries had understood how to apply the United Front policy. The answer was 'no'."<sup>293</sup> Gramsci wrote that

The party has lacked the possibility of choosing, with rational criteria, the trustworthy elements to whom particular tasks could be assigned. The choice has been made empirically, according to the personal knowledge of individual leaders, and has most often fallen on elements

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<sup>292</sup> Giordana, *I cento passi*. "Perché questa sezione è vuota? Ti sei chiesto perché i giovani non ci vengono più..." e questo non si può fare e quello è avventurismo e le masse non sono pronte" ...qui un compagno impara solo a deprimersi, a sentirsi uno sconfitto a vita... la disciplina, l'obbedienza, hanno deciso così a Roma, hanno deciso così a Palermo... e noi quando decidiamo?... Stefano, quella poesia di Majakowskji, la tua preferita? "Non rinchiuderti partito nelle tue stanze, resta amico dei ragazzi di strada."

<sup>293</sup> Showstack Sassoon, *Gramsci's Politics*, 66.

who did not enjoy the confidence of *local* organization and therefore saw their work sabotaged.<sup>294</sup>

What Gramsci was denouncing was the inability of the center to impel and guide the activities of the base. As Sassoon rightly observes, this division, which is created between the party leadership and the mass of party members, reproduces the kind of separation between leaders and led inherent in the politics of capitalist society. She also writes:

Gramsci suggests that the mere creation of an apparatus which adheres to an official orthodoxy, itself derived from this abstract approach to organizational questions, does not represent a break with the socialist tradition and indeed implies a mistaken concept of the revolution, which according to Gramsci, is made by the masses and is not determined by the mere existence of a rigidly organized party.<sup>295</sup>

Gramsci envisioned a reorganization of the PCI through the political education of all the party militants, without the imposition of an abstract discipline. He wanted a closer contact with the party members by establishing an intermediate stratum between the rank and file and the leadership. He criticized a mechanic, 'rationalistic' approach to politics which was unable to relate specific questions of organization and tactics to the real experiences of the mass movement, to the concrete political reality of different localities. Most important Gramsci spoke of a "creative autonomous policy." In *La formazione del partito dirigente del PCI nel 1923-24 (The Formation of the PCI leadership in 1923-24)* he wrote that the Comintern

so far has not been successful in creating parties which know how to undertake a *creative autonomous policy* which is automatically centralized, in as much as it corresponds to the general plans of action drawn up in the congresses. I believe therefore that it would be difficult

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<sup>294</sup> Gramsci, *Political Writings II*, 197-198.

<sup>295</sup> Showstack Sassoon, *Gramsci's Politics*, 71.

to change the present situation by establishing obligatory tactics, because in reality this has been fruitless.<sup>296</sup>

In other words, as Sassoon argues, “Gramsci accepts the establishment of broad strategic indications by the International which must, however, be applied in the national context by ‘autonomous, creative politics’.”<sup>297</sup> The relationship that he obtains at the international level between Comintern and national PC also holds, in Gramsci's view, for the relationship between the center and the periphery within nations.

When speaking of the relation between different sections of the communist party and the Central Committee, Gramsci opposed his view of democratic centralism to the view of bureaucratic centralism put forward by another communist leader, Amedeo Bordiga. Gramsci asserted the importance for the party of “a matching of thrusts from below with orders from above, a continuous insertion of elements thrown up from the depths of the rank and file to the solid framework of the leadership apparatus which ensures continuity and the regular accumulation of experience.”<sup>298</sup> In Sassoon's words, for Gramsci “the internal functioning of the party is directly connected with a non-mechanical view of history and with an ability by the party to relate constantly to an ever-changing reality. From this comes the possibility of concrete political intervention.”<sup>299</sup> With Peppino and his friends' political activity, *I cento passi* seems to affirm the Gramscian necessity of relating the PCI politics to the specific reality of the young people's town. The film also puts forward the urgency to take personal constructive initiatives that, though

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<sup>296</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *La formazione del partito dirigente del PCI nel 1923-24* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1974), 261.

<sup>297</sup> AShowstack Sassoon, *Gramsci's Politics*, 66.

<sup>298</sup> Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 188-189.

<sup>299</sup> Showstack Sassoon, *Gramsci's Politics*, 162.

faithful to the Marxist-Leninist ideals, distance themselves from the Communist Party's rigid line of action.

In summary, in the film the scenes that broach the relationship of the local sections of the PCI to the central—and centralizing—party recall different aspects of the same problem, and allow us to construct an ideal bridge between the 1930s and the 1970s. More precisely: the problem of the (dis)connection between international directives (the USSR Central Comintern) and the national Italian Communist Party present in Turin, Rome and other big Italian cities, as well as between the PCI and the different sections located in peripheral small towns, was crucial during the 1930s; and it was no less topical in the 1970s, even though at this later time a new direction for the PCI defined the Italian political landscape.<sup>300</sup>

The historic compromise of 1973-78 led the Italian Communist Party to detach from the directives of the USSR, and to adopt a more moderate politics that re-proposed, however, the same problem faced by Gramsci in the 1930s, that is to say the separation of the party from the masses and their social

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<sup>300</sup> According to Antonio Negri, here uncharacteristically uncontroversial “After the oil crisis of 1973 and the first capitalist counter-offensives, things changed. The Italian parliamentary left broke off dialogue with the new social forces, and the majority component of that left, the Italian Communist Party (PCI), proposed a “historic compromise” (*compromesso storico*) with its long-time adversaries, the Christian Democrats (DC). ...At the start of the 1970s, building on the base of a growing electoral power, which it was acquiring from the development of these social movements, the PCI decided that it was time for it to play a bigger role in the parliamentary majority. From now on, it presented itself not merely as a “party of struggle”, but as a “party of struggle and government”. From 1973-74 onwards, parliament appeared to be operating on this basis with a degree of unanimity. In 1978 the PCI went so far as to offer active support to the new government. And in so doing, it was to step down from the last remaining controlling functions, which were assigned to it under the ‘imperfect two-party system’, as the political representative of the opposition. The ‘co-associationism’ became ‘perfect’. The four years from 1974 to 1978 saw a progressive tightening of the alliance between the DC and the PCI: this alliance extended outwards from government and parliament to the whole system of power, from the central administration out to the periphery, to the trade unions, to the running of communications and the media and even, remarkably, to the police. In “Between compromise and terrorism.” Published in *Le monde diplomatique*, (September 1998), <http://mondediplo.com/1998/09/11negri>, trans. by Ed Emery.



struggles. In other words, in the 1970s the problem remained the same (disconnection from the people and their major interests), but the causes cannot be reduced to the relation with the Russian Comintern. In my view, *I cento passi* brings to the fore Gramscian concerns in a new historical context, allowing us to delve into social and political mechanisms, and reflect on the reasons for the the PC's detachment from the masses.

In order to analyze how Giordana's film conceives of the connections between the 1930s and the 1970s, it may helpful to focus briefly our attention to the film that Peppino shows, en abyme, in his club: Francesco Rosi's *Le mani sulla città* (*Hands Over the City*). The latter, premiered in 1963, focuses on problems related to the interests of real estate speculators involved with the local politics.<sup>301</sup> *I cento passi* and *Le mani sulla città* can be compared on the basis of some compelling parallels. Both films concentrate on problems regarding Southern Italy: in *Le mani sulla città*, we are in Naples, where the developer Nottola wants to appropriate public land for his own illegal profits by

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<sup>301</sup> In *Senses of cinema*, (<http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/directors/03/rosi.html>). Gino Moliterno summarizes the plot as it follows: "Rosi's film *Mani sulla città* (*Hands Over the City*, 1963) "sought to tackle the burning contemporary issue of the rampant building speculation which had already devastated many of Italy's urban centers in the wake of the so-called "boom economico" (economic miracle). After the titles, which appear over a wide helicopter view of wall-to-wall high-rise buildings characterizing the Naples of the "economic miracle", the film begins with what seems to be documentary footage of the catastrophic collapse of a multi-storey building. An official inquest into responsibility for the collapse and the ensuing deaths, which seems to lie clearly at the feet of right-wing politician and entrepreneur, Edoardo Nottola is soon blocked as a result of the complex political machinations and the ferocious power struggle which is going on in the city Council on the eve of an election. As the film proceeds, the Council chamber comes to resemble a Roman arena as the political factions, hungry for power, tear into each other, with Rosi's camera documenting their heaving bodies and contorted faces with unflinching accuracy. Spectacular as these scenes are, however, the real genius of the film lies less in its pitiless critical realism than in the way it documents and uncovers the more subtle negotiations of power that eventually lead not only to Nottola's complete exoneration but to his being handed the Council Housing portfolio on a platter! The film closes with the greater Sack of Naples about to commence." See also Manuela Gieri in *Poet of Civic Courage: The Films of Francesco Rosi*, ed. Carlo Testa (Westport, Ct: Praeger, 1996).

benefiting from the support of local politicians. In *I cento passi* we are in Cinisi, Sicily, where, as we have seen, the mafia promotes the expansion of the airport, supported by the regional political administration. In Rosi's film we can clearly see the counselor De Vita, representative of the Left, contrasting Nottola who, for his part, is affiliated with the Right. De Vita, like Peppino, stands up against injustice and corruption, but is abandoned by the Party. He is the only one who speaks at City Hall Council meetings; he is again alone when he goes to visit the people on the streets, stirring them to fight against Nottola's maneuvers and the general political corruption. At the film's end, however, the people are evicted and obliged to abandon their houses, which are slated to be demolished for the construction of new buildings. Though De Vita strongly represents the serious commitment of the Left, he is not shown as receiving enough support from his party. Thus Nottola, with the help of other politicians, manage to win his cause in the administration Council, and to launch the new illegal frenzy. As Gramsci had observed more than thirty years earlier, it seems that the Right is able to win thanks to the weakness of the Left rather, than to its own merits.

The corruption of local politics is at the center of Rosi's attention, and so of Giordana's. De Vita in *Le mani sulla città* seems to be optimistic: "le cose stanno cambiando (things are changing)," he says at the end of the film, when he refers to the important fact that people are becoming aware of their own rights. However, as Jean Gili observes: "De Vita's fiery discourse adumbrates changes in which the cineaste [Rosi] can hardly be said to believe... [in fact] everything reverts to form, the men in power are definitely the same..."

bitterness dominates the film."<sup>302</sup> Gili also notices that the film real protagonist is not Nottola, but the Power in a western metropolis. Rosi, who is profoundly pessimistic, poses fundamental questions that should lead to a radical change:

For him, nothing can be really saved by mere institutional interplay: even the Left Party is a part of the system to the extent that *it accepts its mode of official functioning*. ...The lack of a solution to the problem suggests the need for radical change: indeed only a revolutionary path can provide an effective remedy.<sup>303</sup>

Whereas Rosi's film closes by a pessimistic reference to the real estate 'sack of Naples,' Giordana's film seems to leave some hope for change. After Peppino's death we do not see his body, but we inevitably think of his ashes: in fact, when the investigators return to the place of Peppino's assassination, the camera shows only a large crater in the bare soil surrounded by the railroad destroyed by the explosion.<sup>304</sup> The explosion in itself conveys the idea of fire and cremation. The young man's ashes, however, seem to empower the hundreds of bodies who participate in his funeral and who are, from then on, committed to the fight against mafia and political corruption.<sup>305</sup>

In his *Prison Notebooks* Gramsci wrote: "Interpretations of the past, when one seeks the deficiencies and the errors (of certain parties or currents)

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<sup>302</sup> Jean A. Gili, *Francesco Rosi: Cinema et Pouvoir* (Paris: Éditions du cerf, 1976), 54. "Le discours enflammé de De Vita laisse entrevoir des changements auxquels le cinéaste ne croit guère....tout est donc rentré dans l'ordre, les hommes au pouvoir sont sensiblement les memes...l'amertume domine le film." Translation mine.

<sup>303</sup> Gili, *Francesco Rosi: Cinema et Pouvoir*, 57. "Pour lui, rien ne saurait être sauvé par le simple jeu des institutions: même le parti de gauche participe du système dans la mesure où il en accepte le mode de fonctionnement officiel... L'absence même de solution au problème posé suggère la nécessité d'un changement radical: seule la voix révolutionnaire peut apporter un remède efficace," 57. Emphasis mine.

<sup>304</sup> In my view, the scene in which the investigators return to the place of Peppino's assassination may induce the spectators to think of Peppino's ashes. The camera shows only a big hole in the bare soil surrounded by the railroad destroyed by the explosion of Peppino's body. The explosion in itself conveys the idea of fire and cremation.

<sup>305</sup> Peppino's family and friends still live in Cinisi. They promote and coordinate several anti-mafia activities against the mafia association. See the site [www.centroimpastato.it](http://www.centroimpastato.it). Thanks to this film, the trial against Gaetano Badalamenti has been re-opened, and Gaetano Badalamenti has been sentenced to life in prison.

from the past itself, are not 'history' but present-day politics *in nuce*."<sup>306</sup> In my view, Giordana's *I cento passi*, while informing us about important events characterizing the 1960s and 1970s aims at addressing us as contemporary spectators, and invites us to reflect not only on past problems, but on current political and social issues that call for our attention. The film urges us spectators to renounce a passive position, to give up our role of 'spectators' in the social and political realm, and be aware of both illicit political maneuvers and the manipulation of the mass media. It is certainly no coincidence that one of the final scenes of the film focuses on the lack of mass media coverage of Peppino's death. In his last speech on the radio, Salvo offers an opening to the historical events of that time, and referring to Peppino's 'presumed suicide,' claims:

Suicide! Just like Pinelli the anarchist, who jumped out the windows of Milan Police Headquarters, or like Feltrinelli, the editor, who exploded on the Enel pylons. They all committed suicide! This is what you'll read tomorrow on the papers, this is what they'll say on television. Actually, you'll read nothing at all, because tomorrow papers and television will talk about something very important: the finding in Rome of MP Aldo Moro, killed like a dog by the Red Brigades. Of course, this news will make anything else look like a trifle. So who gives a shit? Who the fuck gives a shit about the little provincial Sicilian? Who the hell is this Peppino Impastato? Now, do something: turn off the radio, turn yourself back on it; all know how these things work, anyway. We all know that nothing's going to change.<sup>307</sup>

The film encourages us not to be content with the reality immediately available to our eyes. We are urged to 'read between the lines,' to 'look beyond

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<sup>306</sup> Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, 1815, in Shostack Sassoon, *Gramsci's Politics*, 205.

<sup>307</sup> Giordana, *I cento passi*. "Suicidio! Come l'anarchico Pinelli che vola dalle finestre della questura di Milano, oppure come l'editore Feltrinelli che salta in aria sui tralicci dell'Enel, tutti suicidi. Questo leggerete domani sui giornali, questo vedrete alla televisione, anzi non leggerete proprio niente, perché domani stampa e televisione si occuperanno di un caso molto importante: del ritrovamento a Roma dell'onorevole Aldo Moro, ammazzato come un cane dalle brigate rosse. E questa è una notizia che naturalmente fa impallidire tutto il resto, per cui chi se ne frega del piccolo siciliano di provincia, chi se ne fotte di questo Peppino Impastato. Adesso fate una cosa, spegnetela questa radio, voltatevi pure dall'altra parte, tanto si sa come vanno a finire queste cose, si sa che niente può cambiare."

Leopardi's hedge' and over 'the one hundred steps,' to find meanings and messages that would otherwise remain hidden. The alternative position put forward in the film calls people on the streets, fights injustice on a local and familiar ground, refuses corruption, and encourages the re-discovery of an original beauty forgotten with the rise of 'modernity' and its progress. The indispensable tool of such a committed position is not a passive look at the past, but an active understanding of the social economic changes, up to and including the recuperation of an aesthetic approach to life.<sup>308</sup> To conclude: through Giordana's film and the reference to Rosi's *Le mani sulla città*, Italian cinema allows us to develop a critical understanding of political and social issues ranging from 1930s to the 1970s, and to design a significant trajectory that connects those years with political and social problems of our own time.

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<sup>308</sup> It is significant that in the film there is a scene in which Peppino and Salvo admire the landscape from the top of a hill close to Cinisi, and Peppino says: "You know what I think? This airport isn't that bad, after all. ... If you look at it from here, if you look at it from above, it seems that nature is stronger than men. But it's not true. You can find a logic for everything once it is done, once it exists. Think of those houses with windows in aluminum and no plaster. People go live in them. They put curtains, geraniums, a television, and after a while, it is as if everything has always been there. Nobody remembers what it looked like before. It takes so very little to destroy beauty... Instead of matters of politics and social class, and all that bullshit, someone should remind people what beauty is, teach them how to recognize and preserve it. Beauty is important. Everything descends from it."

### CHAPTER 3

#### PASOLINI AND THE EARLY FILMS OF AURELIO GRIMALDI

After analyzing Marco Tullio Giordana's films and getting acquainted with his ongoing admiration for Pier Paolo Pasolini, I would like to present another filmmaker, Aurelio Grimaldi, who, although equally fascinated by the artist, offers us a different view on Pasolini, a challenging position at odds with the mainstream perspective. Grimaldi emphasizes some of the most vicious aspects of Pasolini's life and personality: his persistent, in some way perverse sexual attraction for young men; his unbridled and aggressive reaction to everyday critique of his works; and finally, his death caused by an insistent attempt to extort sex from a young man, Pino Pelosi, who, as a consequence, kills him. As we will see, many critics and friends of the famous intellectual have rejected and bitterly criticized Grimaldi's position as inappropriate to the true nature of the artist. After analyzing Grimaldi's works, we may, however, come to the conclusion that Grimaldi, though exaggerating some aspects of Pasolini's personal life, wants to bring to the surface those very elements (particularly homosexuality) that condemned the artist to solitude and public denigration. At the same time Grimaldi is trying to act against the excessive praise that Pasolini received especially after his death, and against the monumentalization that relegated the artist into a sterile and unproductive position.

Grimaldi has been marginalized in the Italian cinematographic world, when instead it would have been fruitful to debate his ideas fully as happened with Marco Tullio Giordana's *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano*. The study of Grimaldi's works both induces us to reflect on the nature of Grimaldi's

approach to Pasolini and serves as a useful springboard to examine not only Italian attitudes toward homosexuality, but also the relationship between cinema and reality.

In the first section of this chapter I would like to trace the first and most significant steps of Grimaldi's life and career, since they uncannily resemble Pasolini's. This study may lead us to parallel the two filmmakers, and unravel Grimaldi's peculiar relationship with his eminent predecessor. The second section of this chapter will be dedicated instead to *Nerolio: Sputerò su mio padre* (*Nerolio. I will Spit on My Father*, 1996), the first film in which Grimaldi explicitly refers to Pasolini, and especially to the last and most tumultuous period of his life. As we will see, *Nerolio* provides Grimaldi with ideas that inform his most recent production, *Un mondo d'amore* (2002), which will be analyzed in the fourth chapter, and which presents a young Pasolini who is making his debut in the literary world, and is timidly revealing his homosexuality; And *Rosa Funzeca* (2002), a remake of Pasolini's *Mamma Roma*, in which Grimaldi recovers themes dear to Pasolini but in a contemporary social and cultural key.

### 3.1 "A Critical Love": Aurelio Grimaldi Meets Pasolini

Aurelio Grimaldi was eighteen years old in 1975, when Pasolini died. At that time, he lived in Luino, a small town in the province of Varese, in the north of Italy, where he moved from Sicily when he was two. Recounting the moment, Grimaldi states: "when Pasolini died, I was as old as Pelosi, the murderer. I remember well the sensation caused by his death."<sup>309</sup> Despite the

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<sup>309</sup> Aurelio Grimaldi, my interview (Rome, June 18, 2008), 11. This interview is unpublished. "Quando Pasolini morì, avevo l'età di Pelosi, l'assassino. Ricordo bene lo scalpore di questa morte." The interview is unpublished. The page number refers to the manuscript of my hand-

news was much talked about, Grimaldi remained emotionally detached, since he truly believed that Pasolini was celebrated only as the current fashion's fetish: "At the beginning I did not like Pasolini... There was a period of my life in which I was sure (and not because I studied his works) that Pasolini was overestimated and that he was only a fad."<sup>310</sup> Grimaldi regarded the famous Italian intellectual as "an extraordinary and exaggerated personality with a sort of intimate vanity. He loved to show his exaggerations. I thought that all this did not make sense."<sup>311</sup> Until then, Grimaldi had not been able to watch many of Pasolini's films, since, as he remembers, they were prohibited to minors. The only films he had seen were the ones belonging to the trilogy (*The Decameron*, 1971; *The Canterbury Tales*, 1972; *Arabian Nights*, 1974), but he did not find them particularly impressive, and he could not understand Pasolini's fame. Later he watched *Salò* and, as was the case with the majority of Italians, "I thought that he was sick, maniacal, dangerous, that he tried to shock me, that I would not have fallen in his trap, and instead he had already caught me... he had scandalized me. The result was that with the passing time, I got more and more interest in him. This was more a general interest for his biography than for his works."<sup>312</sup> In a 2003 interview for the journal *Cineforum*, he confirmed that: "...what strikes me the most is a sort of intimate

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written transcription of the interview. All translations, unless otherwise specified, are my own.

<sup>310</sup> Grimaldi, my interview, 10. "Inizialmente io non ho amato Pasolini... Ci fu una fase della mia vita in cui mi ero convinto (e non perché l'avessi studiato) che Pasolini fosse sopravvalutato, fosse solo una moda."

<sup>311</sup> Grimaldi, my interview, 10. "Una personalità straordinaria, esagerata, con una sorta di vanità interiore. Lui amava mostrarsi con la propria esageratezza. Pensavo che in tutto questo c'era qualcosa di poco convincente."

<sup>312</sup> Grimaldi, my interview, 11. "Ho pensato che Pasolini fosse malato, maniaco, pericoloso. Pensavo che lui tentasse di scandalizzarmi, che io non ci sarei cascato e invece lui c'era già riuscito... mi aveva scioccato. Il risultato fu che, strada facendo, ho provato sempre più interesse per lui, un interesse più biografico e complessivo, che per le sue opere."



brotherhood. His life attracts me immensely, I can 'feel' for him."<sup>313</sup> In other words, Grimaldi's interest for Pasolini emerged gradually, and was, as the filmmaker stated, "a critical love...an interest that was constructed over time and for this reason it is more solid and thought-out."<sup>314</sup>

Strangely enough, Grimaldi's life after Pasolini's death, followed a path that, in some ways, resembles Pasolini's personal vicissitudes. When he was about twenty years old, the Grimaldi family decided to return to Sicily, and Aurelio was obliged to follow his parents. This reminds us of Pasolini's forced move from Valvasone, in the north of Italy, to Rome. Of course, the reasons for Pasolini's relocation were very different from Grimaldi's, but both authors found themselves entering a new world and getting acquainted with the sub-proletariat.<sup>315</sup> In this regard, Grimaldi maintains that "there is something that Pasolini and I will always have in common, that is to say that the youth, the subproletariat are part of our life. Life is where they are. And there is also a political fact: though I come from a bourgeois family that has never been rich, I carry a sense of guilt since there are rich and poor people. This guilt turns into interest."<sup>316</sup> In the period just preceding his return to Sicily, Grimaldi, who belonged himself to a petit-bourgeois family, started writing secretly a novel

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<sup>313</sup> Pier Maria Bocchi, interview with Aurelio Grimaldi, in "Invisibilità e sopravvivenza. Aurelio Grimaldi e l'imbarazzante Pasolini, *Cineforum* 425 (2003): 59. "...quello che mi colpisce di più è una sorta di fratellanza interiore. La sua vita mi attira immensamente, e mi fa 'palpitare' per lui."

<sup>314</sup> Grimaldi, my interview, 10-11. "Un amore critico...un interesse costruito nel tempo e penso in questo senso anche più solido e consapevole."

<sup>315</sup> Pasolini was accused of having seduced young boys in Valvasone, where he taught Italian literature. He underwent a trial that judged him innocent, but he was expelled from the Communist party and attacked by public opinion. This is why he preferred to leave the town in 1949, when he was 27. See Nico Naldini, *Pasolini, una vita* (Turin: Einaudi, 1989), 133-143.

<sup>316</sup> Grimaldi, my interview, 17. "C'è una cosa che io e Pasolini avremo sempre in comune, e cioè che i giovani, il proletariato sono parte della nostra vita, lì c'è la vita. E poi un fatto politico: pur venendo da una famiglia borghese che non è mai stata ricca, io mi porto dietro sensi di colpa per il fatto che ci sono ricchi e poveri. Questi sensi di colpa si traducono in interesse."

on the bourgeoisie of Luino, the only world he knew, but he was too timid and embarrassed to reveal the project to his acquaintances.<sup>317</sup> Once he was in Sicily, he took his degree in Italian Literature, and performed his civil service in Palermo at a social center where he worked with and for socially disadvantaged kids, “Pasolinian kids, those kids who were so-called ‘*scannazzati*’ (street boys).”<sup>318</sup> This experience changed all his life. He understood that his vocation was not to teach Italian literature or philosophy at a high school or university level, but to teach the basic notions of several disciplines at the elementary school:

It was a beautiful, mind-blowing experience. I discovered a new world when I arrived in Palermo, as it happened to Pasolini when he arrived in Rome... My choice was obvious: to set aside the idea of teaching at a high school and dedicate myself to these kids, teach them how to read and write, intervene in their life, in their social disadvantage. The more illiterate they were, the more extraordinary their vitality was... this was the vitality that Pasolini had detected in his ‘boys of life’ (*ragazzi di vita*).<sup>319</sup>

Grimaldi’s experience with the impoverished world of Palermo and his knowledge of that social reality were deepened when he was designated to teach at the juvenile prison of Malaspina in Palermo. Here, Grimaldi came in contact with the lowest and most problematic strata of Palermo’s poorest neighborhoods, and he could not but develop a profound interest in those young inmates. He alerted the Palermitan community to several problems of

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<sup>317</sup> Grimaldi, my interview, 1.

<sup>318</sup> Grimaldi, my interview, 2. “Bambini pasoliniani, quei bambini cosiddetti ‘scannazzati’.” “Scannazzati” is a Sicilian term that describes young people who are poor, illiterate and easy to get in trouble.

<sup>319</sup> Grimaldi, my interview, 2. “Fu un’esperienza sconvolgente, bellissima. Come Pasolini venendo a Roma, anch’io andando a Palermo e lavorando con quei bambini, ho scoperto un mondo nuovo...La scelta fu ovvia: accantonare completamente l’idea di insegnare al liceo e dedicarmi a questi bambini, insegnare loro a leggere e scrivere, intervenire nelle loro vite, nel loro svantaggio sociale. Tanto più loro erano culturalmente azzerati, tanto più era straordinaria la loro vitalità...la vitalità che Pasolini aveva individuato nei suoi ragazzi di vita.”

the prison's living conditions, and in a matter of a few years he was contacted to write a story on the young people that he had assisted in Malaspina.<sup>320</sup> Since Grimaldi had always secretly worked at his writings, and dreamed to have them published, the invitation to write a book did not catch him unprepared, so in 1987 he published his auto-biographical novel, *Meri per sempre* (*Forever Mery*), in which professor Marco Terzi, who embodies democratic conscience and civil passion, tries to understand and motivate his young students by teaching them Italian grammar and literature, and above all to invite them to stand up for their own rights.<sup>321</sup> He gets acquainted with their family background and he closely follows their dreams and ambitions. Particularly gripping is the story of Meri, a drag queen, arrested for assault when defending himself, in love with Mario and, in daylight, rejected by all; or the story of Natale, who instead is enamored of the mafia. Grimaldi touches themes that were certainly dear to Pasolini, who, in a 1974 article, "Il carcere e la fraternità dell'amore omosessuale" ("The prison and the fraternity of homosexual love"), had broached the problem of the homosexual love in the prisons, and had shown a moderate understanding for men in captivity that looked for sex with other men; he stressed how a false tolerance that was conceded from above (the State) allowed heterosexual love in the penal institutions, while homosexuals were still seen as abject beings: "The homosexual and homosexuality are regarded as forms of 'Evil': but this Evil is removed and transferred to a place where it is 'Other.' There it becomes

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<sup>320</sup> "Grimaldi wrote some articles for *L'Ora* newspaper. These articles called the attention of the major newspaper of the region, *Il Giornale della Sicilia*. Then schools, politicians and some catholic associations began noticing the existence of that prison. See Aurelio Grimaldi, my interview via email (Sept. 24, 2008).

<sup>321</sup> Before *Meri per sempre*, Grimaldi had published some articles on a few Sicilian magazines and newspapers, but no books. The title of the film remained the same as the book's, but with a different spelling of Meri, which shows the way young convicted at Malaspina prison would write the American "Mary".

monstrous, demoniac, degrading. There is no question about it: having a homosexual relationship is seen as an apocalyptic threat, a definitive condemnation that radically changes the nature of the condemned person.”<sup>322</sup>

In Grimaldi’s book, though some of the more intelligent students begin responding to their professor’s efforts, the system in which they are trapped is a crushing, debilitating one. The prison is an institution completely inadequate to educate its inmates; the brutality of the guards, the absurdity of the prison rules, and the total lack of interest from the prison administration all reinforce the young delinquents’ culture of violence and ‘omertà.’ They are not only prisoners of a physical place, the jail, but also ignorant and often illiterate prisoners of an outdated code of honor modeled on the mafia code. These young people express their lack of faith—and the author’s as well—in the national government and authorities. Grimaldi’s book is soon noticed by a well-known Italian actor, Michele Placido, who proposes it to film director Marco Risi, and in 1989 the book becomes a widely acclaimed film, *Mery per sempre*. The attention to the material and moral degradation of the Sicilian social environment, the denouncement of the State’s absence as well as the employment of non-professional actors and the use of the dialect, place the film in the tradition of the 1940s’ Neorealism. Grimaldi was one of the film screenwriters along with Sandro Petraglia and Stefano Rulli; he explained the passage from being a novelist to being a screenwriter as a natural one, since he

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<sup>322</sup> Pier Paolo Pasolini, “Il carcere e la fraternità dell’amore omosessuale,” *Scritti corsari*, in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, ed. Walter Siti, (Milan: Mondadori, 1999), 484-85. “L’omosessuale e l’omosessualità sono visti come forme del ‘Male’: ma di un Male rimosso e trasferito in un luogo dove è ‘Altro’. Dove diviene, cioè, mostruoso, demoniaco, degradante. Non se ne discute nemmeno: l’aver un rapporto omosessuale è visto come una minaccia apocalittica, una condanna definitiva che cambia radicalmente la natura del condannato.”

had always cultivated, from his adolescence, his passion for cinema and, on several occasions, he had wondered what writing a screenplay would entail.<sup>323</sup>

*Mery per sempre*, with its explicit attack on the Italian state system and its attention to such a degraded social environment may lead some of us to associate this work to Pasolini's novels *Ragazzi di vita* (1955) and *Una vita violenta* (1959). However, when asked about the possible influence of Pasolini's writings on his novel, Grimaldi replied:

With *Mery per sempre* there was not influence, but coincidence: we both left a small, quiet, Catholic town in the North of Italy to join the proletariat jungle... We both got fascinated by a different language: Pasolini was attracted by the Roman dialect of the shantytown and I was attracted by the Sicilian of the Palermitan outskirts.<sup>324</sup>

Grimaldi also distinguishes his experience from Pasolini's since the latter had to look for the subproletariat's youth and often contacted them through the mediation of a sexual approach, whereas Grimaldi found them easily in the Malaspina prison.<sup>325</sup> Grimaldi admits that in his novel *Mery per sempre* as well as in his other book *Le buttane* (1994) there are some Pasolinian elements, such as the prostitutes or young delinquents speaking their own dialect, but they are mainly due more to personal experience than to Pasolini's direct influence.

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<sup>323</sup> Grimaldi also remarks: "There has been no real passage for me, since, when I was a child, I have always had these two passions: literature and cinema which can be connected... When we read a book, a novel we are obliged to be artists since we have to decodify the words and transform them into images... This mechanism impels us to be filmmakers, since we construct the plot through images. For this reason we are creative." Grimaldi, my interview.

<sup>324</sup> Grimaldi, my interview, 14. "Con *Mery per sempre* non si è trattato tanto di influenza, quanto di coincidenza di esperienze: entrambi abbiamo lasciato un piccolo centro, placido e cattolico, del nord per andare in una giungla proletaria... Entrambi siamo affascinati da un linguaggio diverso, lui il romanesco delle borgate romane ed io il siciliano dei quartieri palermitani." In another exchange conducted via email (Sept. 24, 2008) Grimaldi asserts that he did not recollect the precise year in which he read Pasolini's novels, but he was able to give approximate dates: 1985 for *Ragazzi di vita*, 1990 for *Una vita violenta*.

<sup>325</sup> Grimaldi, my interview, 14. Grimaldi asserts: "I could explore them easily and above all I was in contact with extreme situations of proletariat life."

The film *Mery per sempre* had its sequel in another film *Ragazzi fuori* (1990), for which Grimaldi was the co-screenwriter with its director Marco Risi.

After *Ragazzi fuori*, Grimaldi's career took off: he presented his first film *La discesa di Aclà a Floristella* (*Aclà's Descent into Fioristella*, 1992) at the 43<sup>rd</sup> Venice Film Festival in the Independent Movies section, and received positive comments from several film scholars.<sup>326</sup> In this film "Things are above of all artworks,"<sup>327</sup> that is to say that, in a very Pasolinian fashion, even when Grimaldi is caught by the urgency of denouncing the brutality of the Sicilian rural mentality, the exploitation of young people, the violence caused by ignorance and poverty, and he preserves the beauty of the images through the excellent set design (by Maurizio Calvesi), and through veiled reference to major writers and painters.<sup>328</sup> In *La discesa* Grimaldi deals with the poverty of the Sicilian underworld by representing the story of Aclà, a twelve-year-old boy who is sold to work in underground sulfur mines by his destitute parents. The boy's life is a descent to the hell, where, like in the infernal Dantesque circle, it is hot, the miners are naked, and the boy is treated like a beast, beaten up and sexually abused. After attempting to escape, Aclà is forced to return to the sulfur mine and is left only with his dream of reaching the ocean—symbol of freedom—that he has never seen. Enzo Siciliano, film critic and Pasolini's major biographer would remark that this film is

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<sup>326</sup> See Enzo Siciliano, "La discesa di Aclà a Floristella", *L'Espresso* (Oct. 11, 1992), <http://www.mymovies.it/dizionario/critica.asp?id=145802>; Walter Veltroni, *Certi piccoli amori. Dizionario sentimentale di film*, (Milan: Sperling & Kupfer Editori, 1988), <http://www.mymovies.it/dizionario/critica.asp?id=145802>.

<sup>327</sup> Siciliano, "La discesa di Aclà a Floristella". "Le cose sono...anzitutto cose d'arte."

<sup>328</sup> "Grimaldi looks at the sulphur mines reminding us the marvellous paintings that Guttuso dedicated to the same theme. In the same way, the landscape under the silver sky reminds us the countryside of Ragusa portrayed with the pastels of Piero Guccione. But in the film there is also the memory of a beautiful work by Sebastiano Addamo, the *Zolfare di Sicilia* (*Sulphur Mines of Sicily*), as well as the recollection of an essay by Baglio published in 1905, *Il solfaraio* (*The Sulphur Miner*), where the subterranean life of these human beings is reported analytically with tragic straightforwardness." Siciliano, "La discesa di Aclà a Floristella".

The story of Aclà is the story of a body (in its physical substance) of a Sicilian man that is imbued with humiliations, bestiality, pride and degradation, but also with beauty... It is the narrative creativity that wins in the film. Faces are chosen according to Pasolini's lesson (it is a genial idea that Aclà is almost albino); and, as everybody said, Visconti's *La terra trema* is not too far. However if in Visconti's film Sicily appeared as an artistic engraving (xylography), this does not happen with Grimaldi.<sup>329</sup>

After two more films, *La ribelle* (*The rebel*, 1993) and *Le buttane* (*The whores*, 1994) Grimaldi presented *Nerolio: Sputerò su mio padre*. If so far Grimaldi had occasioned sporadic reference to Pasolini's works both thematically and formally, with *Nerolio*, for the first time, as mentioned above, Grimaldi offers his direct perspective on Pasolini.

We have already seen how Grimaldi's appreciation for the famous and divisive intellectual was gradual and never fully embraced. But then, why does Grimaldi make three films that explicitly recall Pasolini? As I have noted earlier, Grimaldi's interest for Pasolini emerged from an initial aversion that had nothing to do with any prejudice regarding the artist's homosexuality.<sup>330</sup> With the passing time, Grimaldi managed to see all of Pasolini's films and read all his novels. When asked about his general opinion of Pasolini's works, he clearly states that the films he appreciates the most are *Accattone* (1961), *Che cosa sono le nuvole* (1967), and *Salò* (1975).<sup>331</sup> As for the other films he regards

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<sup>329</sup> Siciliano, "La discesa di Aclà a Floristella". "La storia di Aclà è la storia di quanto il corpo, dico proprio lo spessore fisico del corpo, di un siciliano ha in sé di umiliazioni e bestialità, di orgoglio e degradazione. Ma anche di bellezza... è la creatività narrativa che vince nel film. Facce scelte su lezione pasoliniana (è un'idea geniale che Aclà sia quasi albino); e, come è stato detto da tutti, il Visconti di *La terra trema* non è lontano. Ma se in Visconti la Sicilia appariva in xilografia, qui non lo appare per niente."

<sup>330</sup> "I got to appreciate Pasolini slowly and with a strong initial prejudice that did not have anything to do with the fact that he was homosexual. I only felt that he was a fad." Aurelio Grimaldi, my interview, 11.

<sup>331</sup> Regarding *Salò*, Grimaldi remarks: "I saw it when it was released in 1976 and it completely disgusted me. (At that time) I collaborated with a private radio in Milazzo and I saved the radio piece where I tore it apart [*lo stroncavo completamente*]. When I saw it, VHS cassettes did not exist, and I had seen few films by Pasolini. I saw it (*Salò*) again in London in 1985, and it

positively *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, *Uccellacci uccellini* and *Medea*, he moderately appreciates *Edipo re*, but he totally dislikes *Teorema*. As for Pasolini's literary works, Grimaldi has in high esteem his first two novels, *Ragazzi di vita* and *Una vita violenta*, but "we should throw everything else away. When [Pasolini] started making films, literature paid the consequences. *Petrolino* is an unfinished disorganized work, and as such it cannot be judged."<sup>332</sup> What counts the most for Grimaldi is that Pasolini should not be monumentalized: "In the end, in the name of this critical love for Pasolini, I don't agree with his monumentalization and with the idea that everything Pasolini does is great, perfect. The lack of systematization is the most essential element."<sup>333</sup> Grimaldi, then, disagrees with the excessive praise accorded to Pasolini, since, in his opinion, as a writer he does not reach the levels of Beppe Fenoglio, Paolo Volponi and Carlo Emilio Gadda; as a poet, he is certainly a very talented one, but not as good as Eugenio Montale or Giuseppe Ungaretti; as a filmmaker, though very good, is not as successful as Francesco Rosi or Umberto De Sica. Pasolini, in Grimaldi's view, becomes great only if one considers his opus as a whole: "Pasolini is great as a whole: in his contradictions he dealt with everything, he wrote novels, articles in newspapers, and then he made films. As a whole his opus is important, and his activity as an intellectual is fundamental."<sup>334</sup>

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convinced me completely. Today I think it is one of his most important films." Aurelio Grimaldi, my interview via email, Sept. 24, 2008.

<sup>332</sup> Grimaldi, my interview, 12. "Tutto il resto è da buttare. Quando [Pasolini] ha cominciato a fare cinema, la letteratura ne ha pagato le conseguenze. *Petrolino* è un'opera incompiuta, disordinata, quindi non la si può giudicare."

<sup>333</sup> Grimaldi, my interview, 12. "Alla fine, in nome di questo amore critico per Pasolini, non ci sto alla sua monumentalizzazione, non ci sto all'idea che di Pasolini tutto è grande, tutto è perfetto. La dispersività in lui è un elemento essenziale."

<sup>334</sup> Grimaldi, my interview, 13. "Pasolini è grande nell'insieme: nelle sue contraddizioni si è occupato di tutto, ha scritto romanzi, articoli su quotidiani, e poi ha fatto film. Nell'insieme la sua opera è importante, la sua azione di intellettuale è fondamentale."



More important than Grimaldi's personal preference in the literary and cinematographic world is his concern with Pasolini's mummification through a continuous and unjustified panegyric, and his attention to Pasolini's engagement as an artist and as an intellectual. In an interview with Flavio De Bernardis, Grimaldi stated: "As to Pasolini, I just refused everything that grants and silences his memory, that is to say (I refused) his *martyrdom*."<sup>335</sup> Grimaldi's reasons for his hostility to Pasolini's monumentalization not only regards the validity (or not) of his works, but more significantly the risk that the name of Pasolini paradoxically obscures his artistic production; Grimaldi remarks that "the result [of this monumentalization] is that young people hear about Pasolini but they do not see his films or read his novels. This is painful for me. Pasolini's destructive force gets lost because of this monumentalization, his canonization and all the missed opportunities to watch his films."<sup>336</sup> Though from a different perspective, Carla Benedetti expresses similar concerns in an article entitled "Pasolini celebrato o tradito? (Pasolini, celebrated or betrayed?)." She remarks that

Celebrations have an ambivalent quality, since they risk putting what they celebrate into a plaster cast, transforming it into inert marble. In the case of Pasolini the risk becomes at least one hundred times greater. In fact he was not only a great poet, filmmaker and critic of customs, but also a *troublesome figure* for Italian culture. For this reason it is inevitable that even when one celebrates him (actually, precisely when he is celebrated) that Italian culture tries to immobilize him, to wrap him in layers of pearls, as the oyster does with the bacterium.<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>335</sup> Flavio De Bernardis, "L'avventura e l'intimità. Conversazione con Aurelio Grimaldi," *Segnocinema* 95 (1999): 24. "Ho rifiutato, di Pasolini, proprio ciò che ne garantisce, e acquieta, la memoria, ossia il *martirio*."

<sup>336</sup> Grimaldi, my interview, 13. "Il risultato [di questa monumentalizzazione] è che i giovani sentono parlare di Pasolini ma non vedono i film e non leggono i suoi due romanzi. Soffro di questa cosa. La forza distruttiva di Pasolini tra monumentalizzazione, classicizzazione e mancate possibilità di vedere i film si perde."

<sup>337</sup> Carla Benedetti, "Pasolini celebrato o tradito?" *Italian Culture* 24-25 (2006-2007): 141. "Le celebrazioni hanno qualcosa di ambivalente perché rischiano di ingessare ciò che celebrano, di

For Benedetti, then, there is not only the risk of undermining Pasolini's work, but first and foremost the risk of sabotaging his political commitment. Grimaldi would agree with Benedetti: even if he does not believe that another truly engaged intellectual like Pasolini exists today and that it is impossible to imitate Pasolini, he also underlines the importance of his voice as a 'corsaro', and he states that "a strong, aggressive and provocative voice like his would have been useful to this nation."<sup>338</sup> Benedetti and Grimaldi disagree instead on the reasons why it seems that there is no 'engaged' intellectual today: Benedetti insists that there are there are distinguished intellectuals, but the media channels through which they could express their opinion are closed.<sup>339</sup> Grimaldi, instead, simply believes that there is no intellectual who, like Pasolini, is able and willing to stubbornly engage in a social and political struggle.<sup>340</sup>

Though Grimaldi denies that Pasolini influenced him, and maintains that any trace of Pasolini is not intentional, a more attentive examination of Grimaldi's films may help us to verify to what extent Grimaldi was indeed inspired by his predecessor.<sup>341</sup>

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marmorizzarlo e di renderlo inerte. Ma nel caso di Pasolini il rischio aumenta di almeno cento volte. Egli è stato infatti non solo una grande figura di poeta, di regista e di critico del costume, ma anche una *figura scomoda* per la cultura italiana. Perciò è quasi inevitabile che persino mentre lo si celebra, anzi proprio mentre lo celebra, la cultura italiana abbia cercato in qualche modo di imbozzolarlo, di avvolgerlo dentro strati di madreperla, come fa l'ostrica con il batterio." Emphasis mine.

<sup>338</sup> Grimaldi, my interview, 26. "Una voce forte, aggressiva, provocatoria sarebbe stata utile a questa nazione."

<sup>339</sup> Benedetti, "Pasolini celebrato o tradito?," 147.

<sup>340</sup> Grimaldi, my interview, 25.

<sup>341</sup> Grimaldi states that Pasolini's influence "è meno automatica e programmato" ("is certainly less automatic and programmatic.") Grimaldi, my interview, 20.

### 3.2 Pasolini in Grimaldi's "Nerolio: Sputerò su mio padre"

The decision to shoot a film about Pasolini's life originated from various experiences: in 1994 Grimaldi went to Berlin to participate in the Potsdam Festival with his film *Le buttane*. In this occasion he also got involved into a meeting organized by the German government between young Sicilian writers and German writers, and had a very productive exchange with some scholars on Pasolini's *Petrolio*, particularly the chapter "Il pratone della Casilina (The big lawn of the Casilina)," in which Pasolini recounts the many homosexual encounters that Carlo, the protagonist of the book, has in one single night.<sup>342</sup> Furthermore, before this event, Grimaldi started to write the screenplay for a theatrical representation, *Sputerò su mio padre (I will spit on my father)*, which was inspired by Pasolini and presented the story of a bourgeois young man who tried to take advantage of Pasolini's homosexuality and fame to find his way in the editorial world. The idea of working on *Petrolio's* chapter along with the screenplay of *Sputerò su mio padre* generated respectively the first two episodes of Grimaldi's film, *Nerolio: Sputerò su mio padre* (1996), which ends with a third episode in which the filmmaker represents the night in which Pasolini looked for sex in the Roman slums and was killed.

The film was shot on a restricted budget in seventeen days in Siracusa, Italy.<sup>343</sup> Its participation in the Venice Film Festival was rejected,<sup>344</sup> and it was

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<sup>342</sup> *Petrolio* was published posthumously in 1992. It is an unfinished work, and since its publication has raised the attention of many scholars for its complexity and symbolic meanings. For a description of this work, see the letter that Pasolini sent to his friend Alberto Moravia along with the draft of his work, in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Petrolio* (Milan: Mondadori, 2005), 579-81.

<sup>343</sup> "Il film fu realizzato con una soluzione produttiva inaudita, perché fu fatta con soldi provati miei e di Leonardo e Caterina, due signori siracusani che ci tenevano ad entrare nel mondo del cinema. Il film fu realizzato a bassissimo costo, con pellicola a 35 mm, girammo tutto a Siracusa, la loro città ...e lo realizzammo in soli 17 giorni risparmiando su tutto e avendo dal comune di Siracusa un piccolo sostegno." "The film was realized with an

presented at the Locarno International Film Festival where, despite the hostile atmosphere, it raised mixed reactions from the Italian and international cinematographic world.<sup>345</sup> In 2003, critic Pier Maria Bocchi asserted that the film was “ ‘cursed.’ One cannot see it, nor talk about it. The film is not screened and cannot be found.”<sup>346</sup> Italian cinema scholars and Pasolini’s friends despised it, Sergio Citti stopped talking to Grimaldi, Laura Betti was shocked and accused Grimaldi of having gone crazy.<sup>347</sup> The film premiered in a semi-clandestine fashion, with no distribution and it was prohibited to minors, though there is no explicit sex scene. This translated into the film’s exclusion from public TV. Even a private channel like Tele+ refused to buy it, limiting the potential visibility of the film. Abroad by contrast *Nerolio* was welcomed favorably. It was invited to several European film festivals, and in the August 26, 1996 issue of *Variety’s Film Reviews*, Derek Elley reported:

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unthinkable solution of production, since two people from Siracusa, Leonardo and Caterina, who wanted to start business in the cinematographic production, and I financed the film. The film was made at low cost, with a 35 mm film; we shot everything in Siracusa, the city of the two producers... in 17 days, and in such a way we saved money on everything. Even the city hall of Siracusa gave us a small contribution.” Aurelio Grimaldi, my interview, 27.

<sup>344</sup> “[Gillo] Pontecorvo, who was in the jury at the Venice Film Festival, rejected it. He did it with sincerity and pain, I am sure. After all, if he had accepted it, the film would have been slaughtered ten times more brutally than in Locarno. I am very grateful to [Giorgio] Gosetti, (Pontecorvo’s assistant) for defending it with all his energy, and to Marco Müller for strongly requesting its participation at Locarno.” Grimaldi, in Bocchi, “Invisibilità e sopravvivenza. Aurelio Grimaldi e l’imbarazzante Pasolini,” 62.

<sup>345</sup> See De Bernardis, “L’avventura e l’intimità. Conversazione con Aurelio Grimaldi,” 24. Though in Italy the film obtained negative reviews (see among others Ezio Alberione, *Duel*, Nov. 30, 1998; my interview with Roberto Chiesi [Bologna, July 4, 2008]), there were also some positive reviews that emphasized the importance of offering a complete picture of Pasolini’s life and of subtracting the poet’s image from the his sanctification and normalization. See following articles: Roberto Rombi, *La Repubblica* (Oct. 16, 1998); Roberto Napoli, *La Repubblica* (Oct. 19, 1998), Lietta Tomabuoni, *L’Espresso* (Oct. 29, 1998)

<sup>346</sup> Bocchi, “Invisibilità e sopravvivenza. Aurelio Grimaldi e l’imbarazzante Pasolini,” 62.

“ ‘maledetto’. Non si vede, non se ne parla, non si trova, non si proietta.”

<sup>347</sup> “Sergio Citti ... mi tolse la parola e il saluto, Laura Betti ... dichiarò ‘Grimaldi ha preso un colpo di sole’, due anni senza distribuzione e infine un’uscita semiclandestina.” (“Sergio Citti... stopped greeting and talking with me. Laura Betti declared ‘Grimaldi had a sunstroke’. Two years without distribution, and finally a semi-clandestine premiere.”) Bocchi, “Invisibilità e sopravvivenza . Aurelio Grimaldi e l’imbarazzante Pasolini”, 62.

*Nerolio* perfectly mirrors the diverse faces of its subject, Pier Paolo Pasolini...[it] could raise some useful ruckus from its deliberately non p.c. stances on both the filmmaker's gayness and the veneration he has inspired since his death in 1975... *Nerolio* is all the richer for its deliberate ambiguities and contradictions. Those who knew Pasolini may consider it an outrage to his memory, but, as Grimaldi has stressed, and the finished pic supports, that would be missing the point. Though the pic is verbally unrestrained, it's coy on a visual level, with no male full-frontals or explicit sex.<sup>348</sup>

What precisely brought about such a critical reaction in Italy? A further analysis of the film is required. *Nerolio* is divided into three episodes, in which Pasolini, never called by name, but only 'maestro' or 'poeta,'<sup>349</sup> is immediately recognizable by the physical resemblance of the actor, Marco Cavicchioli, who personifies him on the screen. The first episode revolves around Pasolini's nightly sexual encounters with several young men from the Roman suburbs. In the second episode Pasolini meets Valerio Varzo, a young student who wants to take advantage of Pasolini's fame to have his novel published. This episode gives Grimaldi the possibility to depict Pasolini's controversial and arrogant relationship with his literary milieu. Finally, in the third episode, Grimaldi represents Pasolini's tragic death. The film is entirely shot in black and white. When asked Grimaldi why he preferred to employ the black and white style in his films on Pasolini, Grimaldi remarked:

The black and white style is anti-realistic. I did not think about Pasolini since at one point Pasolini too started making film in Technicolor. The black and white style, since it is not realistic, becomes an extraordinary expressive instrument. I like it very much since it enhances the contours of people's faces, and defines the shape of the objects. For this reason I don't like the shades of grey... This style [the black and white] is not tied to time, I don't think to eternize through it; it is a question of plot,

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<sup>348</sup> Derek Elley, *Variety's Film Reviews*, 1995-1996.

<sup>349</sup> Grimaldi explained to me that he and the producers did not use Pasolini's name to avoid a lawsuit. Furthermore, Grimaldi has always stated that this is "his Pasolini" and as such, the name can be omitted. Grimaldi, my interview, 34.

story, images; it is a different way of communicating. It regards expressive choices.<sup>350</sup>

Let us now analyze these episodes in detail in order to make sense of the Italian critical reaction to the film.

### 3.2.1 “*Nerolio*”: *First Episode*

At the very beginning of *Nerolio*'s first episode, we are in a second-class train car, we hear only the noise of the railroad and the train whistle, and we are looking at common people's faces. The train is heading to Siracusa, in Sicily. The black and white emphasizes the passengers' traits and expression—of a young woman's serenity, of a middle-aged man's tiredness, of a young man's self-pleasing dreamy thought, of the other people's resigned waiting—and we soon realize that the eye through which we have looked at these people is as much Pasolini's as Grimaldi's. It is an instance of free indirect subjective point-of-view ('*soggettiva libera indiretta*'). In *Heretical Empiricism* Pasolini explains that the '*soggettiva libera indiretta*' takes place when there is a psychological and social coincidence between the character's view of the world and the author's, and this common view results in some cinematographic technical choices that reveal how the reality is looked at by both the protagonist and the author.<sup>351</sup> This view cannot be expressed by a shared linguistic apparatus as it happens in a novel, since images do not have a codified language to speak with. That is why Pasolini states that the

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<sup>350</sup> Grimaldi, my interview, 36. "Il bianco e nero è [uno stile] antirealistico. Non pensavo a Pasolini perché anche Pasolini a un certo punto ha cominciato a fare film a colori. Il bianco e nero, non essendo realistico, diventa uno strumento espressivo straordinario. Mi piace molto il contrasto bianco e nero perché con esso emergono tantissimo i contorni delle persone, i loro volti, e degli oggetti. Per questo non mi piacciono i grigi...Questo stile non è legato al tempo, non penso ad eternizzare; è una questione di racconto, di storia, di immagini, è una diversa maniera di comunicare. Si tratta di scelte espressive."

<sup>351</sup> See Pasolini, *Empirismo eretico*, in *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte*, vol.1 (Milan: Mondadori, 1999), 1475-88. Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, trans. Ben Lawton and Louise Barnett (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 176-85.

filmmaker's operation is not linguistic, but stylistic, that is to say poetic (hence the birth of 'cinema of poetry'). Pasolini significantly offers examples of free indirect subjective shot referring to Michelangelo Antonioni's *The Red Desert* and Bernardo Bertolucci's *Before the Revolution*. In both cases there is a contamination between the view of the world as seen by the protagonist (a neurotic individual) and the view of the world as seen by the filmmaker. The common view results in some peculiar formal aspects spread throughout the entire film. Regarding Antonioni's film, Pasolini observes that "He [Antonioni] has substituted *in toto* for the world-view of a neurotic his own delirious view of aesthetics, a wholesale substitution which is justified by the possible analogy of the two views... It is clear that the 'free indirect point-of-view' is a pretext, and Antonioni took advantage of it, possibly arbitrarily, to allow himself the greatest poetic freedom."<sup>352</sup> As for Bertolucci's film, Pasolini remarks that "Beneath the technique produced by the protagonist's state of mind—which is disoriented, incapable of coordination, obsessed by details, attracted by compulsory kindness—the world as it is seen by the no less neurotic filmmaker continually surfaces, dominated by an elegant, elegiac spirit, which never becomes classicist."<sup>353</sup> In brief, in the free indirect shot, the point of view of the filmmaker coincides with the main character's point of view. In this first scene of *Nerolio*, we can indulge ourselves in a moment of metacinematic reflection: in fact, it is just the very author and theorician of the free indirect point-of-view, Pasolini, who becomes the subject and object through which the theorized technique is concretely applied. Grimaldi looks at the world around him adopting the protagonist's eye; this is evident in

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<sup>352</sup> Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, 179-80.

<sup>353</sup> Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, 181.

some cinematographic technical choices—in this case the sequence of close-ups— that, though not as peculiar as Antonioni’s and Bertolucci’s frenzy and original shots (after all the protagonist is not supposed to be a neurotic individual)—disclose the inner attitude with which the protagonist looks at (and films) the people, and the way Grimaldi explores the world around him. This is confirmed also by the fact that, immediately after the close-ups of the train car’s passengers, Pasolini states his love for the South and its people, mirroring Grimaldi’s own affection for Sicily.

The episode continues with Pasolini arriving at Siracusa, holing up in a ritzy hotel, and then out again in the hot hours of an early afternoon to explore the historical Greek amphitheatre and to walk on the ocean promenade. The next morning the protagonist goes to visit the poor area of the city, La Mazzarona, where Grimaldi portrays the everyday ordinary life of people from the working class. For the protagonist’s entry in to the shabby neighborhood, Grimaldi chooses the powerful notes of George Philip Telemann’s *Magnificat* to emphasize the energy and vitality of the landscape and its inhabitants: in about one minute and twenty seconds the camera shots eighteen different scenes from the neighborhood’s everyday life: a kid looking through the fence, a couple of young lovers walking in the fields, a group of children on the street petting a little dog, a pile of trash, and most important, several shots of the background, the well recognizable ‘case popolari,’ new and cheap buildings constructed in the 1950s for the poor people. It becomes transparent through the rapid movement of the camera that Grimaldi is eager to offer the viewer the highest number of shots from every possible angle of La Mazzarona; Grimaldi’s fervor in presenting this neighborhood corresponds to his declared love for suburbs, since it is there that one can find true life: “I



love these places like Pasolini did; I agree with him: here there is life.”<sup>354</sup> The landscape strikingly reminds us of the sad panorama that appears in Pasolini’s *Mamma Roma*, when the protagonist moves to the new buildings of the Roman suburbs, and her son meets his friends in the neglected fields surrounding the area. As we have seen, in *Nerolio* the shots from the proletariat’s everyday life are accompanied by classical music, another element that connects us with Pasolini’s use of the same formal device. In this case too we may tend to believe that Grimaldi was influenced by Pasolini, but the contemporary filmmaker remarks that he became very passionate about baroque classical music well before he knew and appreciated Pasolini. Furthermore, unlike Pasolini, Grimaldi preferred Handel over Bach. In 1972 Pasolini observed that “the musical source—which cannot be located on the screen and originates in ‘some place’ which is ‘profound’ by its own nature—breaks through the flat or falsely profound images of the screen, opening them onto the confused and limitless depth of life.”<sup>355</sup> Regardless whether Grimaldi was inspired or not by his predecessor in the peculiar matching of classical music with images from the city’s poorest slums, I believe that Pasolini’s observations on the use of music in the cinema of poetry perfectly apply to the sequence that I presented in Grimaldi’s film.

In his wandering through the streets of Siracusa, the protagonist finally finds what he was looking for, that is to say his beloved ‘ragazzi di vita,’ young teenagers who are playing soccer, and starts gazing at them: “And I

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<sup>354</sup> Giuseppe Gariazzo, “L’abisso del genere umano. Conversazione con Aurelio Grimaldi, Rotterdam 1997,” *Panoramiche* 17 (Spring 1997), 47. “A me questi posti pasolinianamente piacciono molto e in questo senso sono d’accordo con lui [Pasolini]: qui c’è la vita.”

<sup>355</sup> Pier Paolo Pasolini, “La musica nel film,” *Confessioni tecniche ed altro*, in *Pasolini per il cinema*, vol. 1, ed. Walter Siti (Milan: Mondadori, 2001), 2796. “La fonte musicale—che non è individuabile sullo schermo, e nasce da un ‘altrove’ fisico per sua natura ‘profondo’—sfonda le immagini piatte o illusoriamente profonde, dello schermo, aprendole sulle profondità confuse e senza confini della vita.”

found them, darting beautiful young boys... life! You wanted to watch them for hours, to see them when they made love for the first time... it's a fixation, your life fixation."<sup>356</sup> Grimaldi's camera follows the young men at their body's height, often shooting from their genitals up, a camera movement that was dear to Pasolini himself. Then our protagonist approaches the young players and in all likelihood arranges a night meeting with them. The next sequence is shot at night on the beach near the ocean: it is the beginning of Pasolini's series of sexual encounters. From here until the end of the episode Grimaldi takes direct inspiration from *Appunto 55* in Pasolini's *Petrolio*.<sup>357</sup> In the book Carlo, who represents Pasolini, meets twenty different men, and for each one of them he provides an accurate physical description, while recounting the specifics of each fellatio and sexual intercourse. In the cinematographic rendition of this sequence Grimaldi could not represent as many encounters, so we only see Pasolini in four of his sexual meetings.<sup>358</sup> Most of the time, Pasolini sits in his car with one of the doors open, while his lovers stand outside, close to the door. While a sad melody creates a repetitive quiet tune, and the camera (Pasolini's gaze) slowly and closely pans over the body of each man in turn, we hear Pasolini in voiceover rhapsodizing about their physical beauty. The first man is Saverio whom Pasolini describes as follows:

Saverio was wearing thin, tight slacks that clung arrogantly to his body. I watched his hands unbuckle his belt. My throat was thick with saliva and I had to keep swallowing. I was afraid he'd free his treasure out of

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<sup>356</sup> Aurelio Grimaldi, *Nerolio: Sputerò su mio padre* (DVD, 1996 Arancia Films, 1997 Cinevista, Inc.). "E trovai i ragazzi. Belli, giovani, guizzanti, la vita! Volevi passare ore ed ore a guardarli e volevi vederli la prima volta che avevano fatto l'amore. È la tua fissazione, la fissazione della vita." Trans. from the film's subtitles.

<sup>357</sup> Pasolini, *Petrolio*, 214-244. For further details on *Petrolio*, see *Progetto Petrolio. Una giornata di studi sul romanzo incompiuto di Pier Paolo Pasolini*, ed. Paolo Salerno (Bologna: CLUEB, 2006); *A partire da Petrolio. Pasolini interroga la letteratura*, ed. Carla Benedetti and Maria Antonietta Grignani (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1996).

<sup>358</sup> Grimaldi does not adopt the name of Carlo as it is in *Petrolio*.

my sight without letting me enjoy every detail. But he didn't. He stripped and waited motionless, offering himself.<sup>359</sup>

Though this episode could have occasioned explicit sex scenes, the oral sex or actual intercourse is not shown in the film. For Grimaldi, the body acquires an aesthetic value: "I want to see the pores...there is an aesthetic desire: human bodies have their own perfection that should not be hidden."<sup>360</sup> The protagonist [Pasolini], caught at the peak of his sexual desire, does not come across as 'vulgar'; the landscape with the moon shining on the protagonist's sexual experience, and poetic words in voiceover enhance the intensity of his feelings. While writing *Petrolio*, Pasolini's intention was to give life to a poetic text; when he sent the draft of *Petrolio's* first five hundred pages to Alberto Moravia, he asked his friend, among other things, to tell him frankly if he had been able to express "dignitosamente e poeticamente [with dignity and poetry]"<sup>361</sup> what he wanted to say. Grimaldi, in his film, fully respects the poetry emanated in Pasolini's *Petrolio*, as well as the attention given to the emotional experience tied to the sexual one. Carlo in the novel as much as Pasolini in the film is overwhelmed by his sexual desire. In the book we read: "Carlo's heart was pure even in the tension of his nerves: his tension was due to a sexual desire that was so strong and exclusive to be tragic in the end, or at least it imposed itself as such."<sup>362</sup> The sight of those men, however, not only shakes his body, but involves his feelings. The passage from absolute physical

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<sup>359</sup> Grimaldi, *Nerolio: Sputerò su mio padre*. "Saverio indossava pantaloni aderenti, di stoffa leggera, si posavano sul suo corpo con arroganza. Osservavo quelle mani che scioglievano la cintura con gesti lenti, la saliva mi infognava la gola, e dovevo deglutire a ogni respiro. Avevo paura che sciogliesse il suo tesoro lontano dai miei occhi senza farmi godere ogni dettaglio. Ma non lo fece. Si sciolse la cintura e si offrì, immobile." Trans. from subtitles.

<sup>360</sup> Gariazzo, "L'abisso del genere umano. Conversazione con Aurelio Grimaldi, Rotterdam 1997," 48. "voglio vedere i pori... c'è un desiderio estetico: i corpi umani hanno una loro perfezione che non va nascosta."

<sup>361</sup> Pasolini, Lettera a Moravia, in *Petrolio*, 580.

<sup>362</sup> Pasolini, *Petrolio*, 215. "Il cuore di Carlo era puro pur nella tensione dei suoi nervi: tensione dovuta peraltro a un desiderio sessuale così forte ed esclusivo da essere in conclusione tragico, o almeno da imporsi come tale."

attraction to emotional involvement is gradual and intense. Though Pasolini tries to act by imitating “the quick performance of a prostitute who does not have to admit that what she does is for pleasure, not for money,”<sup>363</sup> he soon feels his heart pounding impetuously: “he began to be involved sentimentally”<sup>364</sup> and then “his heart beat tumultuously, since the dick presented itself always as it was a miracle,”<sup>365</sup> and later “looking at him this way, a sudden feeling of love captured him, as if it came down from the cosmos, mixing itself with the acute and fermenting smell of the wild herbs, and the heat of the summer night.”<sup>366</sup> So, while “the desire had finally become so law, obscene, excessive”<sup>367</sup> and Pasolini loves these young men for the authentic physical pleasure they give him, he intensely relishes their inner vitality and their social status:

He loved that guy also for what he didn't and couldn't give him... Pietro went back to poverty, to his world of labor. For this reason Carlo liked not only his naked sex which was powerfully revealed, but also the smell of iron from his workshop, the absolute, innocent imprecision of his clothes... since all this was the symbol of a deep social difference: the world of the other class, that was almost the world of another life. This was what made Pietro and all the others dear to him.<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>363</sup> Pasolini, *Petrolio*, 216. “La frettolosa prestazione della puttana che non deve ammettere di fare ciò che fa per piacere e non per soldi.”

<sup>364</sup> Pasolini, *Petrolio*, 218. “Cominciò a metterci più sentimento.”

<sup>365</sup> Pasolini, *Petrolio*, 222. “Il suo cuore era in tumulto, perché era sempre sotto forma di miracolo che si presentava il cazzo.”

<sup>366</sup> Pasolini, *Petrolio*, 226. “Guardandolo così, un sentimento improvviso di amore prese Carlo, come se gli piovesse dal cosmo, mescolandosi con l’odore acuto e fermentante delle erbe selvatiche, e il calore della notte estiva.”

<sup>367</sup> Pasolini, *Petrolio*, 226. “la voglia si era fatta finalmente voglia di bassezza, dell’oscenità, dell’eccesso.”

<sup>368</sup> Pasolini, *Petrolio*, 242. “Egli amava quel ragazzo anche per quello che non gli dava e non poteva dargli... Là dove rientrava Pietro era la povertà, il mondo del lavoro. Per questo a Carlo piaceva, di lui, oltre che il suo sesso, nudo, potentemente rivelato, l’odore di ferro dell’officina che portava addosso, l’assoluta, innocente approssimatività dei suoi vestiti... perché tutto questo era invece simbolo di una profonda diversità sociale: il mondo dell’altra classe, che era quasi il mondo di un’altra vita. Era ciò che rendeva caro Pietro e tutti gli altri.”

In the film Grimaldi reveals Pasolini's intimate thoughts, that is to say an understandable physical need that is accompanied by a profound heartfelt necessity of loving and being loved. This becomes evident, as we will see, in the emphasis given to the eyes as a vehicle of a more personal connection. Though sex in itself would be a sufficient justification for these encounters, we realize that Pasolini wants to know these men and their world, he wants to feel closer to them. For Pasolini, love and sex go hand in hand, almost undistinguishable.

Grimaldi asserts that "sexuality becomes a means of communication between rich and poor."<sup>369</sup> In several occasions both in the novel and in the film we see that Pasolini is struggling to look for and at the men's eyes, as if they guarantee a secure entrance into their most intimate life: "I couldn't see him but he must have closed his eyes. Brown eyes they were, with a girl's delicate lashes... I wish I could have seen his eyes."<sup>370</sup> And with another man later: "Robertino stood by my car, he didn't say a word, he had the long wavy hair of a child, neutral expression (*occhi neutri*) given by a million thoughts not knowing which to pursue." And with the last man: "The look in his eyes was glassy yet sweet. He didn't love me but he couldn't hate me. He had the eyes of a gentle cow, not of a dog... I longed for you to love me as I loved you all. I had given my life, my dreams, my wealth, my acknowledged talent in exchange for all that."<sup>371</sup> However, when Pasolini looks at these young men's

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<sup>369</sup> De Bernardis, "L'avventura e l'intimità. Conversazione con Aurelio Grimaldi," 24. "La sessualità [diventa] un mezzo di comunicazione fallito tra ricchi e poveri."

<sup>370</sup> Grimaldi, *Nerolio: Sputerò su mio padre*. "Non lo vedevo ma di certo aveva chiuso gli occhi. Erano occhi bruni, con delle ciglia delicate da fanciulla... Avrei voluto vedere i suoi occhi." Trans. from the subtitles.

<sup>371</sup> Grimaldi, *Nerolio: Sputerò su mio padre*. "Robertino rimase immobile accanto alla mia macchina, non disse niente perché aveva i capelli lunghi e mossi da bambino, gli occhi neutri di chi pensa mille cose, ma non sa quale pensiero seguire... Mi guardava con gli occhi vitrei eppure dolci, non mi amava, ma non riusciva ad odiarmi. I suoi occhi non erano di cane, ma di dolce mucca... Avrei dato tutto perché tu mi amassi quanto io amavo voi. Avrei dato tutta

eyes, his look is hardly ever returned. Grimaldi creates an alternation of faces and eyes that never cross. The editing excludes any sort of contact that a shot/reverse shot technique would allow, thus introducing the poet's experience constructed on his extreme solitude. As Attilio Coco remarks referring to Pasolini's previous strolling in the city, "this solitude is confirmed by the very rare long takes in which the poet is positioned in the middle of the shot, alone in an atmosphere of decay."<sup>372</sup> The urgency of communicating, of filling his world of solitude is emphasized by Pasolini's repetitive attempts to speak with somebody once he returns to his hotel room. He calls several people, but we only hear an endless series of telephone rings. The first episode ends with Pasolini returning to Rome and the extravagant, unrelated shot of a musician playing a sad melody with his accordion.

The public display of Pasolini's night life definitively caused disapproval. Nobody before Grimaldi had talked so openly about Pasolini's homosexuality. Pier Maria Bocchi observed that

Pier Paolo Pasolini remains a thorny problem for those who decide to talk about him...but Pasolini as a man made out of muscles and thoughts, results much more impudent, disturbing and sticky than many other 'men of culture'...Pasolini remains inconvenient and *embarrassing*. The reasons are evident to everybody, some of them are still difficult to digest (his thirst for male bodies and the obscure circumstances of his death, just to name a few).<sup>373</sup>

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la mia vita, i miei sogni, le ricchezze, il talento che mi riconoscevano, per avere tutto questo." Translation from subtitles.

<sup>372</sup> Attilio Coco, "Nerolio," *Segnocinema* 95 (1999): 43. "Questa solitudine è confermata dai rarissimi campi lunghi in cui il poeta viene ripreso, al centro dell'inquadratura, solo, in una atmosfera di degrado."

<sup>373</sup> Bocchi, "Invisibilità e sopravvivenza. Aurelio Grimaldi e l'imbarazzante Pasolini, 57. "Pier Paolo Pasolini resta una questione spinosa per tutti coloro che decidono di raccontarlo...ma l'uomo Pasolini fatto di muscoli e di pensiero, risulta molto più ardito e scomodo e vischioso rispetto a una buona parte di altri 'uomini di cultura.'...Pasolini rimane disagevole e *imbarazzante* e i motivi sono alla portata di tutti, alcuni dei quali ancora poco digeribili (la sete di carne maschile e le circostanze oscure della sua morte, per citarne solo un paio)."

What Grimaldi does is to represent Pasolini's 'umanità corporale' (bodily humanity), and he achieves his goal once again with 'free indirect subjective shots': as Bocchi remarks, that urgency of skin and smell becomes a stylistic figure; the roughness, the anxiety, the edginess of his sentences, of his intonation and of his attitude and the camera movements and shots, create a perfect psychological symbiosis between the author, Grimaldi, and the character, Pasolini. Grimaldi does not share Pasolini's homosexual tendencies, but like him he deeply believes that, in whatever form, sexuality is part of human life and that for too long it has been repressed and hidden:

[Sexuality] is an essential aspect of life. One communicates through his/her own body. We have definitive studies that prove it...By narrating of a human being, I want to talk about him/her in its entirety, and his sexual side is not different from the other, I should not hide it...However I too reprimand myself, and only by talking about sexuality I partially put myself outside the schemes and for this reason people attack me.<sup>374</sup>

After all, Pasolini, though refraining from talking about his sexuality until the very end of his life, in his films, especially those belonging to the *Trilogy of Life*, openly showed the vitality and importance of body and sexuality. In *Salò* he demonstrates how tragically just human body and sexual appetites have become instruments in the hands of the State Power, in other words how they have been reified and disparaged. Finally, writing *Petrolio*, he demonstrated that he was willing to break his repressive silence on his own homosexuality, as he adamantly says in his letter to Moravia: "In these pages I spoke directly and unconventionally to the reader...I spoke to the reader as myself, in

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<sup>374</sup> Grimaldi, my interview, 47-48. "[La sessualità] è un aspetto essenziale della vita. Si comunica con il proprio corpo. Su questo abbiamo degli studi definitivi... Raccontando l'essere umano, voglio raccontarlo nella sua interezza, e il lato sessuale non è diverso dall'altro, non devo nascondere... Eppure anch'io mi censuro, e già raccontando la sessualità parzialmente io mi metto fuori dagli schemi e per questo sono molto attaccato."

flesh.”<sup>375</sup> Probably *Petrolino* was also the result of years of solitude, though it is the author who at the end of the same letter asserts: “This novel does not serve my life anymore ...it is not a proclamation that says ‘ehi, men, I exist!, but [it is] the preamble of a will, the testimony of that little bit I have got to know over the years, and it is different from what one expected.”<sup>376</sup>

As noted before, Grimaldi has been vehemently criticized for his choice of recounting Pasolini’s night sexual encounters. He recognizes that his appeal to the flesh has received all kinds of epithets: his critics, in fact, have charged him of “sex mania, homosexuality, personal instability, ambition of financial success acting on the worst humans drives, immorality, pornography, ridiculous and provocative attitude, and many others.”<sup>377</sup> We may wonder why Grimaldi decided to deal with Pasolini’s sexual life, especially if it was largely predictable that the reactions would be hostile. Grimaldi has responded referring to the reasons that led him to represent Pasolini’s (homo)sexuality: first of all the idea that the language of bodies is necessary to tell the story of human beings, and secondly it is a political statement: “I think that there is a mixture of inner certitude (according to which the language used by the body is necessary to talk about human beings) and of political

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<sup>375</sup> Pasolini, Lettera a Moravia, *Petrolino*, 579-580. “Ora in queste pagine io mi sono rivolto al lettore direttamente e non convenzionalmente...Io ho parlato al lettore in quanto io stesso, in carne e ossa.”

<sup>376</sup> Pasolini, “Lettera a Moravia,” *Petrolino*, 581. “Questo romanzo non serve più a molto nella mia vita..., non è un proclama, ‘ehi, uomini! Io esisto’, ma il preambolo di un testamento, la testimonianza di quel poco di sapere che uno ha accumulato, ed è completamente diverso da quello che egli si aspettava!”

<sup>377</sup> Bocchi, interview with Grimaldi in “Invisibilità e sopravvivenza. Aurelio Grimaldi e l’imbarazzante Pasolini,” 60. “Maniacalità sessuale, omosessualità, squilibri personali, il voler puntare al successo commerciale agendo sui peggiori pruriti umani, immoralità, pornografia, ridicola provocatorietà e tanti altri.”



militancy: the sexual repression in the society and more than ever in cinema offends me as a citizen."<sup>378</sup>

Homosexuality was a vital aspect of Pasolini's life, and though a private issue, it contributed to constitute a unique personality, a sensibility that comes to light through his works and public statements. Recounting Pasolini's sexual encounters diminishes neither the value of the poet nor of the person; it allows the spectators to see him as a full person among those who share his same passion, to sympathize with his own solitude. In *Nerolio's* first episode, sexuality is indeed recognized as an important component of a human being, and is revealed with a delicate poetic touch. Grimaldi's choice to deal with Pasolini's sexual desires becomes finally a valid and provocative political statement against homophobia, and as such it is worthy of attention and support.

### 3.2.2 "*Nerolio*": *Second Episode*

The second episode begins with a date, February 20, white writing on the black screen, followed by what seems to be the title of a documentary: "Un artista del nostro tempo: scandalo o rivelazione. Prima parte (An artist of our time: scandal or revelation. Part I." For about four minutes we see the character of Pasolini, in full or middle close-ups, delivering his opinions about love, homosexuality, religion and other major themes in front of a video-recorder. The image of the poet appears scratchy, the movie old, as if we are watching some footage from Pasolini's film archives. It is instead Grimaldi's

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<sup>378</sup> Bocchi, interview with Grimaldi, "Invisibilità e sopravvivenza. Aurelio Grimaldi e l'imbarazzante Pasolini," 60. "Credo che ci sia un miscuglio di convinzione interiore (secondo cui il linguaggio dei corpi è necessario per raccontare gli esseri umani) e di militanza politica: la repressione sessuale nella società e più che mai nel cinema mi offende come cittadino."

creative device to offer the spectator a personal synthesis of what he believes was Pasolini's opinion on significant social and cultural issues: the first one is love, introduced by the title: "l'amore" on the screen. Love does not exist, has been "invented by false poets to depict what they were unable to depict: fleeting passions and a lifetime of boredom and endurance."<sup>379</sup> And then "sexuality," something that is no more important than drinking and eating. Critics who accuse Pasolini of being hung up on sex are instead repressed, manic and potential rapists. The next is "nudity": men are like animals; the latter simply do not wear clothes. And later in the film we hear Pasolini's talking about "homosexuality" something that he has suffered and endured. He has reached the conclusion that "every human being is biologically bisexual";<sup>380</sup> the person who has the courage to come out of the closet in a sexophobic Catholic society is an individual of superior qualities, and "his revelation is great from a human and artistic point of view."<sup>381</sup> And then he comments on "socialism": Jesus Christ was socialist, "he was not the son of God, he was only a son of a bitch, but he was the most phenomenal revolutionary in the world. A Christian can't but be socialist. It is an identification in terms: freedom and social justice. That is a Christian's sole aim. Not the popes of course, quite the reverse."<sup>382</sup> In his next recording he

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<sup>379</sup> Grimaldi, *Nerolio: Sputerò su mio padre.* "L'amore non esiste. L'hanno inventato i falsi poeti per raccontare ciò che non sapevano raccontare: due mesi di passione e mille anni di noia e sopportazione."

<sup>380</sup> Grimaldi, *Nerolio: Sputerò su mio padre.* "L'essere umano è biologicamente bisessuale."

<sup>381</sup> Grimaldi, *Nerolio: Sputerò su mio padre.* "Chi trova la forza e il coraggio, perché in questa società cattolico-sessuofoba ce ne vuole tantissima, di riconoscere pubblicamente il proprio stato di frocio, chi trova questa forza è un essere superiore...La rivelazione della propria diversità è grande rivelazione, umana ed artistica."

<sup>382</sup> Grimaldi, *Nerolio: Sputerò su mio padre.* "Gesù Cristo era socialista. Non era figlio di Dio, era solo un figlio di puttana, ma il più straordinario rivoluzionario figlio di puttana del mondo, ed era socialista. Il cristiano non può non essere socialista. È un'identificazione di termini: libertà e giustizia sociale. Il cristiano aspira solo a questo, i papi no naturalmente, l'esatto contrario."

also comments on “the Church,” which is not infallible. For the Church premarital sex, masturbation and homosexuality are sins, and the popes have had the same sexual drives as all the other human beings on earth.

Grimaldi remarked that the construction of these sequences is based on his own interpretation of Pasolini’s writings, particularly his letters, and his interviews.<sup>383</sup> He is convinced that especially by the end of his life, Pasolini became extremely pessimistic and cynical, and this attitude spread from his personal life throughout his works.

Grimaldi emphasizes this aspect of the late Pasolini when the artist also interacts with Valerio Varzo, a young student who wants to take advantage of Pasolini’s fame and have his book published. Vaguely inspired by the relationship that the real Pasolini had with a young writer, a certain Massimo Ferretti, who believed that Pier Paolo was in love with him and reacted aggressively. Pasolini wrote to him a bitter letter in which he explained that because Massimo was a bourgeois, he could never be considered as an object of the poet’s love.<sup>384</sup> Grimaldi had invented the story of Varzo and Pasolini and used it as the base of his previous unpublished play *Sputerò su mio padre*. Then he included the latter in *Nerolio*. Varzo meets Pasolini in his house when he is self-documenting his thoughts with the video recorder. While the young man appears timid and submissive, Pasolini instead shows arrogance and self-confidence. He uses with no restraint coarse language that becomes more aggressive and presumptuous when he explains to Valerio what art is, or when he is attacking the critics for their negative reviews of *Salò*: “They are the biggest shits on earth! Nonentities,

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<sup>383</sup> See Grimaldi, my interview, 35-36.

<sup>384</sup> See Nico Naldini, “Un fatto privato. Appunti di una conversazione con Nico Naldini” in *Cupo d’amore. Quaderni di critica omosessuale*, ed. Stefano Casi (Bologna: Il Cassero, 1987), 51-52.

parasites...their dreams of artistic peaks ended up in the shit...so they turned to writing about real artists...and the greater the artist, the more they hurt and dip their pans in gall...these cruds who know fuck-all about films, literature, art and mankind are worth less than the piss of their lap-dogs."<sup>385</sup> Pasolini is often enraged, and Grimaldi explains his behavior referring to the fact that, though in public the artist was always very kind and respectful, by 1975 he was also consumed by many trials and public accusations, he often raved against the power of the political system, and against the anthropological changes of the sub-proletariat that had adjusted to the new capitalistic society. Furthermore, his own friends reported that Pasolini became very furious when he received negative reviews: "Pasolini was incredibly vain...in the episode [with Valerio] Pasolini gets tremendously offended, enraged, and , supported by his friends, he asserted that who was not with him, was against him."<sup>386</sup> In the sequences with Valerio, Grimaldi asserts, "Pasolini, more than rude becomes sincere...he vents his feelings out with a young man also to get in contact with him, to become his teacher."<sup>387</sup>

It is only when Valerio goes back to his house that we realize that he is not as acquiescent and obedient as he is in the presence of his maestro. In reality he highly despises him; his hate towards Pasolini fully emerges in a

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<sup>385</sup> Grimaldi, *Nerolio: Sputerò su mio padre*. "Sono le merde più schifose della terra. Nullità, parassiti, topi di fogna. Il niente del niente. Sognavano di raggiungere le vette dell'arte e non li ha voluti nemmeno la merda. Si sono messi dall'oggi al domani ad occuparsi degli artisti veri, e tanto più grandi sono gli artisti, tanto più soffrono come cani e sputano fiele....questa cozzaglia di essere inutili...non capisce un cazzo di cinema, di letteratura, di arte e di umanità. Io li apprezzo meno dell'ultima pisciatina del loro cane da salotto." Trans. from film subtitles. Grimaldi stated that he took the reviews that Pasolini reads from an article written by Luigi Rondi in *Il tempo* in 1976.

<sup>386</sup> Grimaldi, my interview, 31-33. "Pasolini era animato da una vanità stupefacente...nell'episodio [con Valerio] emerge un Pasolini che in effetti se la prendeva a morte, si infuriava e, spalleggiato da amici e critici vicini, sosteneva che chi non era con lui era contro di lui."

<sup>387</sup> Grimaldi, my interview, 34. "Pasolini più che volgare diventa sincero...si sfoga con un ragazzino anche per entrare in contatto con lui, per fargli da maestro."

conversation that the young man has with his friend. He defines the artist “a pain in the ass, full of shit...he forgets of those who call him a genius, now that he is a played-out... He was great, the greatest, then success came along and that was that. They all go that way.”<sup>388</sup> Valerio does not hesitate to denigrate Pasolini: his friend ironically reprimands him saying: “And you spit on your father, your teacher.”<sup>389</sup> Grimaldi admits that in the expression ‘sputerò su mio padre’, “there is something autobiographical: In some way I make Valerio say something that I partially think. I also make him exaggerate, even though I still think that when Pasolini started making films he did not write literary works worthy of this name.”<sup>390</sup> Grimaldi also underlines that through Valerio’s story, he wants to talk about the fear, the ambition of a young writer who believes to be an artist and rebels against the consecrated authority. More generally, Grimaldi wants to tell the story of a bourgeois that prostitutes himself to achieve success, and his attempt to solve class conflicts through deception, sex and humiliation. The attempt fails. At the end of the episode Pasolini finds out that Valerio lied: he was not there to complete his thesis under the supervision of Professor Barilla, Pasolini’s friend. The conversation between them becomes openly offensive and rude. They have sex, but it is only a sacrifice for both Pasolini who wants to revenge himself for Valerio’s lies, and for Valerio who hoped to avoid selling his body for the publication of his novel.

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<sup>388</sup> Grimaldi, *Nerolio: Sputerò su mio padre*. “È un cacacazzo, pieno di boria fino al collo... È stato grande, il più grande di tutti. Poi è arrivato il successo ed è finita. Si riducono tutti così.” Trans. from subtitles.

<sup>389</sup> Grimaldi, *Nerolio: Sputerò su mio padre*. “E in segreto sputi su tuo padre, il tuo maestro.” Trans. from subtitles.

<sup>390</sup> Grimaldi, my interview, 29. “C’è qualcosa di autobiografico: in qualche maniera faccio dire a Valerio qualcosa che io in parte penso. Lo faccio esagerare molto, però il fatto che quando comincò il cinema Pasolini non scrisse opere letterarie degne di questo nome lo penso ancora adesso.”

Pasolini's rudeness here is a sign of rage and profound disillusionment in mankind, and his venting allows him to underline that he may not be as good as in the past, but "before your rubbish can get passed off for masterwork, you have to spend years writing masterworks slated as tripe. Unlike you I didn't give my ass to get published. I sweated, I waited, I thought I'd never make it, I was tempted to shoot myself, but I got there."<sup>391</sup> Valerio responds with equal aggressiveness and wickedness: "From your death there can be born a new life, but only if you've croaked and are done for. Which you are, and you know it. There is nothing left of you."<sup>392</sup> In the last scene of this episode we see the two men having sex, looking into each other's eyes, while the music from the accordion almost reminds the sad ineluctability of that event.

This passage leaves the spectator with numerous questions: first of all, why the necessity of displaying such a repertoire of rudeness and vulgarity? And once again, to what extent Grimaldi has adhered to the reality of Pasolini's personal life? In an interview for *Panoramiche*, Grimaldi compares *Nerolio* to Pasolini's *Salò*:

*Nerolio* has a negative or positive abyss that is expressed above all in the final dialogue, of eight minute and a half, between Valerio and Pasolini. Here two human beings tell each other 'abysmal' things, in the sense that they investigate in the depth of the human being: they both break all the barriers, and throw on each other's face what they think of themselves, of life and art. I believe that among Pasolini's films, this

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<sup>391</sup> Grimaldi, *Nerolio: Sputerò su mio padre*. "Ma per arrivare a scrivere merde e vederle sciorinate come capolavori, occorre aver passato anni scrivendo capolavori e vederli recensire come merde. Io a differenza di te non ho dato il culo a nessuno per essere pubblicato. Io ho sudato, aspettato, pensato per anni che non ci sarei mai riuscito, ho anche avuto voglia di spararmi un colpo in testa. E invece ce l'ho fatta." Trans. from subtitles.

<sup>392</sup> Grimaldi, *Nerolio: Sputerò su mio padre*. "Dalla tua morte può rinascere la vita, ma solo se sei crepato e finito. Ed è il tuo caso, lo sai benissimo. Di te non è rimasto più niente."

capacity to explore the abyss of the human mankind is manifested precisely in *Salò*.<sup>393</sup>

This excerpt may help us to understand Grimaldi's need to explore the hidden, repressed desires and thoughts of a human being, in this case Pasolini's, and bring them to the surface when most critics and friends tried to forget in the name of a normalized monumentalization. (Homo)sexuality does not edify a widely accepted public image: "When I made the film I tried to oppose the celebrations for the twentieth anniversary of Pasolini's death. It was a collective praise, without any reference to his private life since in a process of monumentalization his 'personal' (life) is not set as an edifying model."<sup>394</sup> In other words, Grimaldi, though exaggerating and exacerbating some of the most vicious aspects of Pasolini's personality thus altering his most delicate and gentle nature, wants to rescue those very elements of the artist's private life that condemned him to solitude and public denigration. At the same time he is trying to act against the excessive praise that Pasolini received especially after his death. Sparkles of what Harold Bloom defines "the anxiety of influence" may also be detected in Grimaldi's approach to Pasolini. It is as if on the one hand Grimaldi recognizes the artist's poetic value and is influenced by him, but on the other hand he rejects 'the father's authority', and represses his influence to become original and produce his own art. However, Bloom's theory involves the reappearance of the precursor

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<sup>393</sup> Gariazzo, "L'abisso del genere umano. Conversazione con Aurelio Grimaldi. Rotterdam 1997," 47. "Nerolio ha un fondo, positivamente o negativamente, 'abissale' che si esprime soprattutto nel dialogo finale, di otto minuti e mezzo, tra Valerio e Pasolini, dove due esseri umani...si dicono cose 'abissali', nel senso che indagano nel profondo dell'essere umano: ciascuno dei due si libera completamente di ogni muro e di ogni maschera e spiattella all'altro in faccia tutto quello che pensa di se stesso, della vita, dell'arte. Credo che tra i film di Pasolini questa capacità di esplorare l'abisso del genere umano si manifesti proprio in *Salò*."

<sup>394</sup> Gariazzo, "L'abisso del genere umano. Conversazione con Aurelio Grimaldi. Rotterdam 1997," 47. "Facendo il film ho anche cercato di contrappormi alle celebrazioni effettuate in occasione del ventennale della morte di Pasolini. Si è trattato di una sviolinata collettiva, senza alcun riferimento alla sua vita privata perché in un processo di monumentalizzazione il suo 'personale' non si pone come modello edificante."

under the colors given him by the younger poet, and this is, in very general terms, what may be happening with Grimaldi's work.<sup>395</sup> Ultimately, Grimaldi's most important task remains to shake the spectator and invite him to reflect: "I always try to make films that, to some extent, create difficulties for the spectator and different opinions, and raise bitter discussions."<sup>396</sup>

### 3.2.3 "*Nerolio*": *Third Episode*

This episode begins with panning shots from Pasolini's car moving through Rome at night. We are looking at the outside while Pasolini is speaking in voiceover: he is there, in the streets, to look for "a world of love." The artist approaches a young man, Marco, who has physical traits—skinny, curly dark hair—that make him look like Pino Pelosi, Pasolini's alleged assassin. Marco is not portrayed in the usual night activity of the hustler (as Pelosi would have been). Instead, he is calling his girlfriend. By the time Pasolini takes him to eat, we are sure that Grimaldi is re-enacting Pasolini's last night and murder. In the middle of the poet's futile conversation with Marco, while they are traveling towards Ostia, once again we hear Pasolini's thought in voiceover: "Do you... can you understand that it wasn't only sex I needed, but warmth, life, smiles. We are hungry for love, and artists are the hungriest. Do you understand that I loved him, I loved you, I love you."<sup>397</sup> Once again it is Pasolini's desperate cry for a love made of physical pleasure

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<sup>395</sup> See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

<sup>396</sup> Gariazzo, "L'abisso del genere umano. Conversazione con Aurelio Grimaldi. Rotterdam 1997," 47. "Tento sempre di fare dei film che, in qualche misura, mettano in difficoltà lo spettatore, dividendo le opinioni e suscitando discussioni anche aspre."

<sup>397</sup> Grimaldi, *Nerolio: Sputerò su mio padre*. "Ma lo capite, riuscirete a capirlo che non è solo di sesso che avevo bisogno, ma di calore, vita, sorrisi. Siamo tutti affamati di amore, e gli artisti sono i più affamati di tutto. Ma lo capirete che l'amavo, lo amo, ti amavo, ti amo." Trans. from subtitles.



and spiritual connection. Once the car stops, however, Pasolini appears thirsty just for sexual intercourse, a beast in front of the young man's beauty. But Marco wants just to be touched. We see him running out of Pasolini's car, the poet provokes him and finally attacks him when he refuses to have anal sex. The physical fight begins, accompanied by classical music that suggests fear and despair. Marco/Pino Pelosi hits Pasolini savagely, and finally gets in the poet's car and runs him over, leaving him dead on the ground. In the next sequence it is probably early morning, and we approach slowly Pasolini's cadaver while hearing a voiceover remarking, "His iconoclast fury, his unbridled urge to shock, to go against the stream, sing the praises of shit and semen, in an improbable reconstruction of fascist horrors, had long ago brought him—and I am sorry to say this at the sad time of his tragic end—to *the aesthetic demise* he had equally pursued."<sup>398</sup> Another voice adds: "His pitiful, violent death cannot intimidate us, nor can it compel hypocritical rhetoric. It cannot mitigate our disgust and sorrow at this film astutely released right after the tragedy, but nonetheless a pathetic jumble of excrement and butchered bodies."<sup>399</sup> And finally, "We must draw a compassionate veil of silence over the messy stew of provocative non-sense, buried under close-ups of excrement and genitalia, the coherent testament of a filmmaker whom we

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<sup>398</sup> Grimaldi, *Nerolio: Sputerò su mio padre*. "La furia iconoclasta, il bisogno incontrollato di scandalizzare, andare contro corrente, cantare le lodi della merda e dello sperma, in un abnorme inverosimile ricostruzione degli orrori fascisti, avevano già condotto da tempo—e spiace dirlo in un momento così doloroso per la sua tragica fine— ad una *morte estetica* ugualmente perseguita." Trans. from subtitles. Emphasis mine for following comments.

<sup>399</sup> Grimaldi, *Nerolio: Sputerò su mio padre*. "La sua morte, pietosa e violenta non può intimidirci, né costringerci ad una ipocrita retorica, né può attutire il disgusto e la pena per questo film astutamente distribuito subito dopo la tragedia, ma che resta una penosa accozzaglia di escrementi." Trans. from subtitles.

lost a long time ago and whom we nevertheless respect at the moment of his death.”<sup>400</sup>

*Nerolio* ends with a bitter view of Pasolini as a man and as an artist. The voiceover’s comments probably report the major critical and negative reviews on *Salò* that appeared after the poet’s death. It is as if in the final part of the film, Grimaldi, with a selection of ill-mannered words, is opposing the critics’ rhetoric to the delicate and poetic one adopted by Pasolini in the first episode. It is well known that Grimaldi does not share those views, since he deems Pasolini’s last film as one of his best. So, then, why does he end *Nerolio* with such a slaughter of Pasolini’s life and work? I believe that Grimaldi may be doing several things at the same time: first of all he is emphasizing the solitude of the poet who was attacked after his death as much as during his life. Furthermore, Grimaldi is proposing one of the two major theses on Pasolini’s death. In this regard let us analyze an excerpt from a 1976 article by film critic and journalist Giovanni Grazzini who wrote:

What is scary is the blackmail we all undergo as victims in front of a film that cannot be judged regardless the author’s violent death or the provocation that Pasolini, prisoner of his own role in a society that digests every scandal, looked for... I wonder if the protest is not against perversion but against life itself, if the hatred for himself pushed Pasolini towards an *auto-punitive torture* in that mud that he had managed to elevate intellectually with the help of some literary trends, and of which he had measured the irreparable disgust after he felt guilty for the success of his decameronian cinema.<sup>401</sup>

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<sup>400</sup> “Un velo pietoso di silenzio e di pena va posto su questo miscuglio informe di insulsa provocazione, sommerso da primi piani di escrementi e genitali. Il coerente testamento di un regista da tempo perduto che oggi comunque rispettiamo nella vicinanza della sua scomparsa.” Trans. from subtitles.

<sup>401</sup> Giovanni Grazzini, *Gli anni Settanta in cento film* (Bari: Laterza, 1978) in [http://www.pasolini.net/cinema\\_salo\\_b.htm](http://www.pasolini.net/cinema_salo_b.htm) “Ciò che sgomenta è il ricatto di cui tutti siamo vittime dinanzi a un film sul quale è quasi impossibile esprimere un giudizio che in qualche modo prescinda dalla morte violenta del suo autore, e non lo correli alla provocazione, esplicitamente cercata, di un Pasolini prigioniero del proprio ruolo in una società che digerisce ogni scandalo... Mi chiedo questo: se la protesta non sia contro la perversione ma contro la

In the citation I emphasized Grazzini's expression "*supplizio punitivo*" (punitive torture) to associate it with the comment in the film that stresses the *aesthetic demise* Pasolini had *equally* pursued. Grimaldi is reporting here one of the two major theses regarding Pasolini's death: put forward by Pasolini's friend and painter Giuseppe Zigaina and underlined also by Pasolini's cousin and biographer Nico Naldini.<sup>402</sup> The thesis in question contends that Pasolini died in the very way he had already planned and announced in some of his works: (his) death would have given sense to his entire life, as he suggested in *Heretical Empiricism* when speaking about the montage. Zigaina maintains:

A punctilious scrutiny of Pasolini's literary corpus conveys, on the whole, the tally of prefatory and conclusive facts about his tragic end—its timing, wording and mode—all coherently outlined in minute alignment: the day, the year, the football yard, the shores of the sea of Ostia, ultimately the Sunday (that corresponds once every six years to All Saints' Day); everything had been punctiliously delineated like a strange urge to impart the unutterable to the world. *Il Manifesto per un nuovo teatro (Manifesto for a New Theatre)*, *Manifestar*, *Bestia da Stile (A Beast with Style)*, *Cocodrilli (Crocodiles)*, The Editor's Note in *La divina Mimesis (The Divine Mimesis)*, the ebullient contamination with verse of Giovanni in *Patmos*, together with some poems called *Comunicato all'Ansa* bear witness to it... After the author's death, a desisting

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vita stessa, se l'odio di sé non spingesse Pasolini a un *supplizio autopunitivo* in quel fango che a lungo era riuscito a intellettualizzare, aiutato dalle mode letterarie, ma del quale aveva misurato (anche per il complesso di colpa creatogli dal successo del cinema decameronico) l'irreparabile ribrezzo.

<sup>402</sup> Naldini adds: "Pasolini aveva un grande istinto di difesa, i suoi allarmi scattavano subito perché si era ormai convinto di vivere in una società violenta ed era molto difficile, dunque, che cadesse in un agguato. È andata purtroppo come si disse fin dal primo momento: e cioè che il ragazzo gli si rivoltasse contro con una rabbia tale da ridurlo in quello stato. L'errore di Pasolini è di non aver calcolato la potenzialità violenta di questo giovane." "Pasolini had a great instinct of defense, his alarms went off immediately since he was convinced that he lived in a violent society and it was very difficult that he fell in ambush. It went as one said at the beginning: that is to say that the young man would react with such an anger to put him down like that. Pasolini's mistake is that he did not calculate the violent potential of this young man." Nico Naldini in Dino Martirano, "Il cugino di Pasolini. 'Aveva ragione Andreotti. Pier Paolo se l'è cercata'," *Corriere della Sera*, (May 9, 2005), [http://www.corriere.it/Primo\\_Piano/Cronache/2005/05\\_Maggio/09/naldini.shtml](http://www.corriere.it/Primo_Piano/Cronache/2005/05_Maggio/09/naldini.shtml)  
See also, Nico Naldini, *Come non ci si difende dai ricordi* (Cargo: L'ancora, 2005).

conclusion seems prevalent—superposing his death onto a premeditated performance... Pasolini's violent death would thus appear to have been rather 'organised' than fortuitous: organised, planned the way an artist is shaping out and experimenting his own language.<sup>403</sup>

Though such conclusion may be plausible, it does not explain in detail the dynamics of Pasolini's death, it does not seem to take into account, if not the political conspiracy, at least the possible intervention of men other than Pelosi. Though Pasolini was well aware of the dangers of his night life and chose to risk, Zigaina's thesis leaves some friends, scholars and myself perplexed, especially if one considers that Pasolini was actively and enthusiastically working on other projects (for instance the novel *Petrolio*, the film *Porno-Teo-Kolossal*) to be presented in the near and far future.<sup>404</sup>

In his film Grimaldi also simplifies Pasolini's murder by attributing it to the lone hand of Pino Pelosi. In the contemporary filmmaker's mind, there seems to be no doubt that the tragic event occurred simply as a consequence of a failed sexual approach, and there is no reference to the aftermath of the artist's death (for instance the evidence collected for Pino Pelosi's trial). The filmmaker is inclined to believe that there are not enough elements to think about a political conspiracy, and stresses the fact that, despite the lack of clarity in Pelosi's testimony, his experience as a teacher in the Malaspina prison taught him that it is not easy for a young man to reconstruct a traumatic experience since many strong emotions are involved. He also is convinced that it is impossible that Pelosi has been able to lie and not

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<sup>403</sup> Giuseppe Zigaina, "Pasolini and Death," (Cervignano del Friuli: May 14, 1996) Trans. Simone Kuhn. In [http://karaart.com/p.p.pasolini/cultural\\_death/textes\\_anglais/zigaina\\_sans.html](http://karaart.com/p.p.pasolini/cultural_death/textes_anglais/zigaina_sans.html) See also Giuseppe Zigaina, *Pasolini e la morte. Un giallo puramente intellettuale* (Venice: Marsilio Editori, 2005).

<sup>404</sup> For a review of the arguments regarding Pasolini's death, see Barth David Schwartz, *Pasolini Requiem* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 3-76; and Enzo Siciliano, *Vita di Pasolini* (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori, 2005), 7-27.

contradict himself for so many years.<sup>405</sup> So, for Grimaldi, Pelosi must have been Pasolini's killer.

Pasolini's murder has been investigated for years, and the passing time has not contributed to uncover the truth regarding the tragic event. On the contrary, facts and evidence are buried under piles of theses and theories. Grimaldi's treatment of Pasolini's murder is questionable and it does not seem to take into account the many findings regarding possible accomplices in Pasolini's murder, but another problem requires our attention: Grimaldi's ideas have been obscured and marginalized when, like Giordana's *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano*, they could have at least been fully debated and analyzed. Here comes to mind what Grimaldi says on the sense of Pasolini's films and his own: "I always try to make films that provoke the spectator and raise bitter discussions. In this sense I feel a bit like Pasolini... If I have to think about Pasolini's lesson, I always think about an author that caught unprepared his interlocutor."<sup>406</sup> Pasolini was often censored and so has Grimaldi. The filmmaker cannot but observe that many talented Italian filmmakers like Marco Tullio Giordana (with *La caduta degli angeli ribelli* and *Notti e nebbie*), Ferzan Ozpetek (with *Il bagno turco*) have been silenced for a while by the Italian cinematographic establishment, and finally forced to land onto a more reassuring and less formally sophisticated cinema. Grimaldi maintains that Italian cinema today is rather flat, clean and too politically correct. As he puts it,

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<sup>405</sup> See Grimaldi, my interview, 23.

<sup>406</sup> Gariazzo, "L'abisso del genere umano. Conversazione con Aurelio Grimaldi, Rotterdam 1997," 47. "Tento sempre di fare film che, in qualche misura, mettano in difficoltà lo spettatore, dividendo le opinioni e suscitando discussioni, anche aspre. In questo mi sento un po' pasoliniano... Se devo pensare alla lezione di Pasolini, penso sempre a un autore che ha sempre spiazzato il suo interlocutore."

today there are conditions for a cinema that is the exact opposite of the kind of cinema advocated by Pasolini. It is evident that, since we are obliged to make films either with governmental funds or with the TV involvement, and since they have imposed a 'politically correct' model to follow, no other author, not even those who are potentially more free (Moretti, Amelio, Tornatore, Muccino, Ozpetek), is truly interested in a cinema that throws the spectator into crisis.<sup>407</sup>

Grimaldi adds that the most unsettling disturbing films are those of Ciprì and Maresco, who also have devoted to Pasolini their short film *Arruso* (2000), and Antonio Capuano for whom Pasolini is "an absolute point of reference."<sup>408</sup>

These authors have never received the approval of the political establishment.

Grimaldi then is right when he asserts that "Pasolini's 'lesson' has been increasingly, unjustly, fearfully, dangerously betrayed."<sup>409</sup>

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<sup>407</sup> Bocchi, "Invisibilità e sopravvivenza. Aurelio Grimaldi e l'imbarazzante Pasolini," 62. "Oggi ci sono le condizioni ambientali per un cinema che è esattamente l'opposto di quello propugnato da Pasolini. È evidente che, essendo costretti a fare film o coi Fondi Governativi o con le Televisioni, ed avendo costoro imposto un modello 'politicamente corretto', nessun altro autore, nemmeno tra i più potenzialmente liberi (Moretti, Amelio, Tornatore, Muccino, Ozpetek) è davvero interessato ad un cinema che metta troppo seriamente in crisi lo spettatore."

<sup>408</sup> Fabrizio Colamartino, "Vito, Nunzio, Mario e gli altri: conversazione con Antonio Capuano" (05/04/2006) in [http://www.frameonline.it/ArtN32\\_Capuano.htm](http://www.frameonline.it/ArtN32_Capuano.htm) and [www.camera.minori.it](http://www.camera.minori.it) Colamartino observes that between Capuano and Pasolini there is a great thematic and cultural affinity. Capuano clearly asserts that Pasolini has been for him an absolute point of reference.

<sup>409</sup> Bocchi, "Invisibilità e sopravvivenza. Aurelio Grimaldi e l'imbarazzante Pasolini," 62. "La lezione' di Pasolini è stata sempre più tradita, ingiustamente, paurosamente, pericolosamente."

## CHAPTER 4

### PASOLINI IN GRIMALDI'S *UN MONDO D'AMORE*

#### 4.1 "*Un mondo d'amore*" and the Continuity with "*Nerolio*"

*Un mondo d'amore* (*A World of Love*), Grimaldi's second cinematic work on Pasolini, premiered in Italy in 2002, and recounts the artist's life from the moment he is accused of corrupting minors in 1949 to his forced move to Rome and first years in the capital. The film explores mainly the crucial moment in which Pasolini's private life becomes public, and portrays the social and political aggressiveness towards his 'deviancy,' and the consequences for the poet and his mother. When *Un mondo d'amore* was released, Pier Maria Bocchi wrote in *FilmTV* magazine: "Perhaps it is not possible to appreciate or even 'watch' *Un mondo d'amore* before seeing *Nerolio* (1996), since they form an hourglass: no matter how you turn them, they influence, recall, prefigure each other."<sup>410</sup> Bocchi's comments reflect Grimaldi's idea that "these films [represent] two sides of the same coin."<sup>411</sup> In both films, in fact, Grimaldi focuses on Pasolini's (homo)sexual desire, but while in *Nerolio* that desire is represented in its most mature developments as the only form of life and allegedly the cause of the artist's death, in *Un mondo d'amore* the same desire is at its initial stage, caught in the author's passionate, naive search for the other and in his anxious wait to possess what is more suitable to his needs. The urgency of physical contact, different in its outcome in the two

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<sup>410</sup> Pier Maria Bocchi, "Uno sguardo profondo e asciutto sul primo Pasolini," *FilmTV*, at <http://www.film.tv.it/recensione.php/film/1699/un-mondo-d-amore/> "Forse non è possibile apprezzarne o addirittura 'vedere' *Un mondo d'amore* a prescindere da *Nerolio* (1996). Perché entrambi formano una clessidra: comunque li si giri, si influenzano, si recuperano, si ricordano, si anticipano." All translations, unless otherwise specified, are my own.

<sup>411</sup> Aurelio Grimaldi in Pier Maria Bocchi, "Invisibilità e sopravvivenza. Aurelio Grimaldi e l'imbarazzante Pasolini," *Cineforum* 425 (2003): 58, "questi due film [sono] i due lati della stessa medaglia."

films, dictates, as Bocchi suggests, the stylistic parameters of both works so that *Nerolio* is a more aggressive, funereal film, where bitterness and solitude prevail, while *Un mondo d'amore* is a more detached film that opens up to a timid but restless hope.

Despite these differences, in *Nerolio* one can certainly find the germs of ideas that Grimaldi transplanted and developed in *Un mondo d'amore*. For instance, in the second episode of *Nerolio* (set about twenty-five years after the Ramuscello scandal<sup>412</sup>) Pasolini has just read the negative critique on his film *Salò* and is venting his frustrations with Valerio Varzo.<sup>413</sup> He recollects the specific moment when for the first time he was publicly accused of being a pervert:

When I was a school teacher I was charged and tried for seducing a boy of twelve. Yes, I did it. I lost my teaching job, I lost my friends. My dear party comrades kicked me out in no time, and before I could say a word they expelled me. I was unworthy of the Communist Party... Since then, and forever more, I have known no shame. I was even able to meet my mother's troubled eyes. Yes, even artists know shame, but I don't, not anymore.<sup>414</sup>

In other words, never after the scandal of Ramuscello, did Pasolini feel such shame. It is evident that since the making of *Nerolio*, Grimaldi was thinking about Pasolini's first trial as a crucial period in the artist's life, he probably detected in those first accusations and public scorn a circumstance in which

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<sup>412</sup> Ramuscello is a fraction of the tiny town of Cordovado, in the region of Friuli. See later in the text for more details.

<sup>413</sup> See chapter 3, 165-67.

<sup>414</sup> Aurelio Grimaldi, *Nerolio: Sputerò su mio padre* (DVD, 1996 Arancia Films, 1997 Cinevista, Inc.) Trans. from subtitles. "Sì, sono stato accusato e processato per aver sedotto quando ero un professore un ragazzino di dodici anni, l'avevo fatto, sì, l'avevo sedotto e ho perso il lavoro, ho perso l'insegnamento, ho perso gli amici. I miei cari compagni di partito mi hanno cacciato via in cinque minuti senza neanche darmi il tempo di dire una parola, mi hanno espulso. Ero indegno di loro, indegno del partito comunista italiano... E la vergogna da allora e per sempre non mi appartiene più. Ho saputo anche affrontare gli occhi di mia madre che non sapevano più come guardarmi. Sì, anche gli artisti conoscono la vergogna, ma io no, non la conosco più."



Pasolini was more vulnerable and intimidated, and had to face the humiliation he caused his mother as well.<sup>415</sup> That is why Grimaldi decided to represent Pasolini's drama extensively in his second film.

Finally, in the third episode of *Nerolio*, Pasolini is wandering through the Roman streets by car, and he refers to those young men he sees strolling around as his "un mondo d'amore" (a world of love), the same words that Grimaldi chose for the title of his second film on Pasolini. Grimaldi deemed it important to emphasize first in *Nerolio* and then more powerfully in *Un mondo d'amore* "the emotional world that boggled Pasolini's mind, his desire to know the familiar and sexual nucleus of these human beings [the young *borgatari*]." <sup>416</sup>

#### 4.2 "Un mondo d'amore": Pasolini between Fiction and Reality

I would like now to examine the relationship between Grimaldi's film and Pasolini's official biography, and pinpoint the correspondences between fiction and reality (given that biographical accounts are reported to the best of the biographer's knowledge).<sup>417</sup> This analysis is intended to allow the reader to enter the troubled world of Pasolini's homosexuality, and to get acquainted

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<sup>415</sup> There is a sequence in *Un mondo d'amore* in which Pasolini is in the train with his mother traveling toward Rome, and the spectator hears Pasolini's voice over that sadly remarks, referring to his mother, "Non c'eravamo detti una sola parola da quel momento, ma sapevo lo stesso tutto quello che provava e lei tutto quello che provavo io. E la mia *vergogna* era solo la sua *vergogna* e poi nient'altro." Aurelio Grimaldi, *Un mondo d'amore* (Impresa Pubblici Esercizi, 2002). "Since then we did not talk, but I knew what she felt and she knew what I felt. My shame was only hers and then nothing else."

<sup>416</sup> Aurelio Grimaldi, my interview (Rome, June 18, 2008), 41. "Il mondo affettivo alla cui vista Pasolini trasaliva, il desiderio di Pasolini di conoscere il nucleo familiare e sessuale di questi esseri umani [i giovani *borgatari*]."

<sup>417</sup> I will refer to the official biography published in 1989 by his cousin Domenico Naldini who lived in close contact with Pasolini while they were both in Casarsa. Naldini was in charge of taking care of all the documents and writings by Pasolini after he left for Rome. He included a substantial number of letters that he exchanged with Pasolini from 1950 on. I will also refer to Enzo Siciliano's most famous biography first published in 1978 and then re-edited with more information for a 2005 edition, and on the more detailed biography by Barth David Schwartz published in 1992.

with the Italian social and political context that vilified the artist's most intimate inclinations. Ultimately, I seek to offer a better understanding of the reasons for Grimaldi's choice and treatment of such specific and controversial subject matter. I argue that the filmmaker deals with Pasolini's homosexuality by adopting a "realist approach" to his life. By "realist approach" I mean that Grimaldi rarely departs from the Pasolini's daily vicissitudes as they are faithfully reported by Pasolini's official biographers (Enzo Siciliano, Barth David Schwartz and Nico Naldini), or as they are described in various letters that the poet wrote to his friends during his passage from Friuli to Rome. There is only one moment in which Grimaldi lets his creative imagination free to interpret Pasolini's thoughts. I am referring, as we will see, to the scene in which Pasolini is in a train and imagines the romantic life of Salvatore. Though this is a moment of fantasy that cannot be precisely referred to any passage of Pasolini's biographies or letters, the scene allows Grimaldi to express realistically the way Pasolini often escaped reality, that is to say by letting his creative, poetic inspiration run freely in search of stories for his own works. I will provide the description of some key scenes of the film with the purpose to show Grimaldi's realism. Finally, I would like to note that Grimaldi's realism, emphasized by the shooting in the streets or among common people speaking their own dialect, has a precise function: to denounce the discriminations the real Pasolini underwent because of his homosexuality, and to lead the spectator to think, through Pasolini, about contemporary Italian society and how homosexuality is perceived today.

*Un mondo d'amore* significantly opens with a scene in which couples of young and old men are dancing under the curious eyes of spectators (mainly women and a female child), who sit around the open-air dancing ring. The

catchy song that accompanies the clumsy movements of the dancers, as well as the old-fashioned habit of pairing two men, immediately bring the viewer back in time.<sup>418</sup> Through Grimaldi's skillful use of black-and-white images, the spectator is plunged into the late 1940s, in a small town where men and women could not openly talk with each other, and public behavior was generally subject to significant restrictions. At the same time, however, in the dancing of these simple men there is something innocent, natural, free from any form of malice, a primordial ingenuousness that later becomes sadly ironic in the face of Pasolini's troubled homosexuality. This opening scene stands by itself, since it is divided from the following sequence by a white title on a black screen that announces the date and place (*carabinieri* station of Casarsa, October 12, 1949) where Pasolini was questioned for the first time about his ambiguous relationship with young boys. The spectator is not made aware of what is the immediate relationship between that initial scene and the rest of the film, if it is indeed the protagonist of the story (Pasolini) who is looking at or dreaming of that dancing, or is instead a prologue that simply defines the spatial-temporal coordinates of the story. In the latter case, Grimaldi had certainly in mind a specific place and time, that is to say, the village festival of Saint Sabina in Ramuscello on September 30, 1949. According to Pasolini's biographer Barth David Schwartz, on the night of that day "during the dance, held on a wooden platform built in the fields, Pier Paolo encountered a boy he already knew. He and three others seemed willing to go into the fields, and so the four went—as they may have before—to masturbate. One boy was fifteen, two of the others were sixteen, and the last

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<sup>418</sup> The song is "La terza luna (The Third Moon)" by Neil Sedaka and was released in 1963. The music recalls the style and rhythms of the 1960s melodies. The lyrics revolve around a man's love for a person that he believes will come back in a night of full moon.

was fourteen.”<sup>419</sup> In other words, in the initial scene, Grimaldi may be very likely representing the event that for the first time occasioned and brought to public attention Pasolini’s “immoral acts” and homosexuality. Schwartz in fact also writes that “three weeks after the events, on October 22, a complaint was filed with the *carabinieri* station at Cordovado, with the charges of ‘corruption of minors’ and ‘obscene acts in a public place.’”<sup>420</sup>

The realistic description of Pasolini’s tormented coming out proceeds in the second scene, which opens directly at the *carabinieri* station where a young man, Pasolini, is awaiting police interrogation. Once he meets the marshal, the spectator who has in mind the fierce and arrogant Pasolini of *Nerolio*, is surprised. The young intellectual, in fact, is timid, humble, almost afraid of talking or looking in the eyes of the officer whose tone instead is authoritative and intimidating. When interviewed on the difference between Pasolini’s character in *Nerolio* and the young artist represented in *Un mondo d’amore*, the filmmaker remarked:

I delude myself and hope to have understood Pasolini’s psychology. He was indicted for the first time, he lived his homosexuality as if this was a demon (he defined it this way), [he had been] expelled from the Communist Party, removed from his school, rejected by his father, he was the shame of his town... I imagined what I understood from his letters and biographies... I imagined a vulnerable Pasolini.<sup>421</sup>

While the officer reads the report with all the accusations, the poet remains silent. The camera pans in half a circle around the two men, starting from Pasolini’s left shoulder to his right one, towards the marshal and then back to

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<sup>419</sup> Barth David Schwartz, *Pasolini Requiem* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 220.

<sup>420</sup> Schwartz, *Pasolini Requiem*, 220.

<sup>421</sup> Grimaldi, my interview, 42-43. “Mi illudo e spero di avere colto la psicologia di Pasolini. Era la prima volta ad essere incriminato, viveva la sua omosessualità come un demone (lui la chiamava così), [era stato] espulso dal partito comunista, cacciato da scuola, ripudiato dal padre, [era] la vergogna del paese... ho immaginato quello che mi sembrava di capire dalle lettere e dalle biografie...ho immaginato un Pasolini vulnerabile”

the artist. The slow movement of the camera follows the fluid mechanic reading of the marshal's report, and is interrupted with half close ups of the officer when the description of the events intends to emphasize a particular aspect of the story, for instance the social role of Pasolini ("professore statale," "state professor") or the very accusation, that is to say the act of masturbation ("aver menato l'uccello a Pasolini," "to having yanked Pasolini's bird"). Only on one occasion the camera cuts on Pasolini's half close-up, and he appears embarrassed, nervous while he apprehensively touches his glasses. In this particular sequence Grimaldi's choice of camera shots creates an increasing tension that culminates in Pasolini's fearful explanations: he is working on a novel inspired by André Gide's "*L'immoraliste*" (*The Immoralist*, 1902). By inviting the young boys to go with him in the fields, he wanted to experience with them the same feelings that brought the main character of Gide's novel to kill his wife in order to be able to enjoy young men's company and their drives. Pasolini, however, is prompt to add that "In my case instead the protagonist does not kill anyone, but begins weaving sexual experiences according to the model provided by the Greek-Roman morals, from Catullus to Ovid and Lucretius."<sup>422</sup> And he concludes saying that "As the protagonist of my novel and similarly to the protagonist of Gide's novel, I asked those boys to do the same things as the literary characters."<sup>423</sup> The scene in question is directly drawn from Enzo Siciliano's biography of Pasolini: Siciliano writes: "Pier Paolo was questioned at the police station on October 22. The marshal asked for clarifications. The answer was more or less: 'I tried an erotic and

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<sup>422</sup> Grimaldi, *Un mondo d'amore* (DVD, Impresa Pubblici Esercizi, 2002). "Nel mio caso invece il protagonista non ammazza proprio nessuno, ma comincia a intessere esperienze sessuali secondo il modello della morale greco-romana, da Catullo a Ovidio a Lucrezio."

<sup>423</sup> Grimaldi, *Un mondo d'amore*. "Esattamente come il mio protagonista e similmente al protagonista di Gide ho chiesto a quei ragazzi di fare le stesse cose dei personaggi letterari."

literary experience, inspired by the reading of a novel on homosexuality.' He named Gide. In short, Pier Paolo did not deny. Literature was his shield: Gide won the Nobel Prize in 1947, and he [Pasolini] deluded himself that referring to the works of such a prestigious man could save him."<sup>424</sup> As Nico Naldini explains, for Pasolini, Gide was the supreme example of current homosexuality, especially for the auto-analysis that characterized *L'immoraliste* and that Pasolini imitated in his diary.<sup>425</sup>

Grimaldi's realism does not regard only Pasolini's most private life, but also the society that caused his indictment. We notice that the simplicity and innocence of the young boys is counteracted by the narrow-minded mentality of their parents. In the following scenes, the boys, who are questioned at the *carabinieri* station, confirm Pasolini's responsibility in the Ramuscello scandal. They appear intimidated, hesitant in their report, especially when their parents are with them. Significantly, Grimaldi focuses on the traditional popular dress of one of the mothers who are present at the police interrogation, and then he moves to each and every parent in the *carabinieri* station with a series of half close ups. This slow panning conveys the presence of steady moral traditions, and a sense of shame and oppression. Soon after the marshal's tense questioning, the viewer witnesses the violent reaction of one of the parents who beats his son when they are back home.

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<sup>424</sup> Enzo Siciliano, *Vita di Pasolini* (Milan: Mondadori, 2005), 161-62. "Pier Paolo venne chiamato alla caserma dei *carabinieri* il 22 ottobre. Il maresciallo gli chiese ragione della cosa. La risposta fu, su per giù: 'Ho tentato un'esperienza erotica e letteraria, sulla suggestione d'una lettura –un romanzo d'argomento omosessuale.' Fece il nome di Gide. Insomma, Pier Paolo non negò. Prese a schermo la letteratura: Gide era premio Nobel 1947. Si illuse che il richiamo agli scritti di un uomo così prestigioso potesse salvarlo." See also the official police report transcribed in Schwartz's *Pasolini Requiem*, 225.

<sup>425</sup> See Nico Naldini, "Un fatto privato. Appunti di una conversazione con Nico Naldini" in *Cupo d'amore. Quaderni di critica omosessuale*, ed. Stefano Casi (Bologna: Il Cassero, 1987), 51.

The consequences of Pasolini's relationship with these boys are represented in two following sequences that relate Pasolini's professional life with his family drama: in the first, Pasolini is called by the school director (*provveditore agli studi*) and his teaching appointment is permanently revoked; in the second scene, Pasolini's father, Carlo Alberto, receives the written communication (*comunicazione giuridiziarica*) that his son has been legally denounced. The shame and anger of Carlo Alberto are uncontrollable. The sad music of the accordion accompanies him while he puts on his army uniform. The close up on the officer's suit underlines Carlo Alberto's desperate attempt to reaffirm through his career his honor and prestige. He feels ashamed of such a son, and in the following scene we learn how violent and aggressive is his relationship with his wife, Susanna. He accuses her of having raised a "deviant" son: "It's your fault, ugly shitty witch... You are responsible for our shameful and dishonor. It is better to die... A wimp, a monster, a fag! You turned my only son into this!"<sup>426</sup>

In the exchange with Pasolini's mother, Grimaldi represents the tragedy of a family in which it is clear that there is a huge cultural and emotional gap between wife and husband, and between father and son. In this instance as well, Grimaldi faithfully refers to Pasolini's biographies. Siciliano traces the origins of Pasolini's conflict with his father. Carlo Alberto was a fascist officer, bourgeois and authoritative man, always attentive to adhere to the social code dictated by the pettiest petit bourgeoisie. He was very different from Susanna who came from a family of farmers, was a free genuine spirit, and was intellectually and politically closer to her son. Siciliano writes:

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<sup>426</sup> Grimaldi, *Un mondo d'amore*. "La colpa è tua, brutta strega di merda... Ci hai fatto riempire di vergogna e di disonore. Meglio morire... Una femminuccia, un mostro, un finocchio! Questo l'hai fatto diventare, l'unico figlio che mi è rimasto."

“Through poetry, Pier Paolo freed himself from the moral world of his father, voicing the world of his mother...poetry [was] the vehicle to express against him and every authority the truth of being ‘different’, the true relationship with Susanna, the tragic corollary of his early Teta Veleta, his homosexuality.”<sup>427</sup> When Carlo Alberto went back home from the front, he found that the bond between mother and son had become stronger. They now lived in Casarsa and not in Bologna anymore, Pasolini was a communist. He felt he was excluded from the idyll between the two, from his son’s life forever. And of course the public announcement of Pasolini’s ‘perversion’ increased his crisis. Siciliano writes that “Sometimes he [Carlo Alberto] was obsessive, delirious, and exploded and accused... His hatred was for Susanna, her rejections. But this hatred caused his son’s hatred: a chain intertwined that doubled infinitively.”<sup>428</sup> Grimaldi does not represent on the screen a direct confrontation between Pier Paolo and his father, since he does not think that it ever happened. Grimaldi is convinced that Pasolini father, an old-fashioned man, would have been too embarrassed to talk about the shamefulness of his son’s homosexuality. Of course this was not the case with his wife.<sup>429</sup> Grimaldi may be right, considering Carlo Alberto’s personality; his virility and authority would not make it easy for him to speak openly with a son that he still wanted officially see and recognize as a heterosexual man.

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<sup>427</sup> Siciliano, *Vita di Pasolini*, 47, 48. “Attraverso la poesia, Pier Paolo si affrancava dal mondo morale del padre, dando voce a quello della madre... la poesia come veicolo per esprimere contro di lui, e contro ogni volto dell’autorità, il vero dell’esser ‘diverso’, il vero del rapporto con Susanna, il tragico corollario dell’infantile Teta-veleta, l’omosessualità.”

<sup>428</sup> Siciliano, *Vita di Pasolini*, 147, 148. See also Pasolini’s letter to Silvana Mauri (January 1950) in Pasolini, *Lettere 1940-1954* (Turin: Einaudi, 1986), 384. “Talvolta esplodeva, ossessivo, accusatore, delirando... Il rancore è Susanna, i rifiuti a lui di Susanna. Ma questo rancore provocava quello del figlio: una catena intrecciata che si doppia all’infinito.”

<sup>429</sup> See Grimaldi, my interview, 44.



Returning to the film. Grimaldi does not miss the possibility to speak through Pasolini's experiences also about the repressed sexuality of the old and modern Italian society. And he does so through direct reference to the children who were involved in the Ramuscello scandal. In the sequence under examination, while some other children questioned by the school director (*provveditore agli studi*) confirm the skills of Pasolini as a teacher who trusts the students' capabilities to learn, the artist is informed by his closest friends that he has been expelled from the Communist Party because of "moral and political indignity," and also that the boys' parents have not taken legal action, since their sons admitted that he did not oblige them, and that they usually entertained themselves with the same sexual practices even before meeting Pasolini. "Everybody knows that boys have always done these things," says Pasolini's friend in the film.<sup>430</sup> In this occasion Grimaldi, if on the one hand underlines Pasolini's responsibility in the scandal, on the other hand he also clearly brings to light the habitual custom of young men to discover and have sex among themselves. Naldini wrote: "PP [Pier Paolo]...moved to the fields with them and there he had simple erotic relationships: they masturbated. This may seem monstrous to an external observer, but those who know the boys of our region are not surprised nor do they judge that practice severely."<sup>431</sup>

Grimaldi does not omit the reaction of the PCI to Pasolini's scandal, and once again, in a very realist mode, he directly refers to documents from

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<sup>430</sup> Grimaldi, *Un mondo d'amore*. "Lo sanno tutti che qua tra ragazzi queste cose si sono sempre fatte."

<sup>431</sup> Nico Naldini, *Pasolini, una vita* (Turin: Einaudi, 1989), 134. "PP [Pier Paolo]... si è allontanato nei campi con loro e lì ci sono stati dei rapporti erotici molto semplici: c'è stata una masturbazione. Ora questo fatto ad un osservatore estraneo può sembrare quasi mostruoso ma per chi conosce i ragazzi dei nostri paesi, non può né destare meraviglia né essere giudicato severamente."

that period: the information he provides are taken directly from the biographies, and help the viewer to understand the political strategies that were woven around Pasolini's behavior. What Cecilia, Pasolini's friend in the film, reads to him, is the real dispatch that was released by the Party and is fully transcribed in Naldini's biography:

We drew on the facts that determined the disciplinary action against the poet Pasolini to denounce once gain the deleterious influences of certain ideological and philosophical trends proposed by Gide, Sartre, who are as well decadent poets and scholars who pose as progressive men, but in reality they gather the most damaging aspects of the bourgeois degeneration.<sup>432</sup>

Furthermore, Grimaldi makes reference to the role of the Christian Democratic Party: according to Naldini the DC had been threatening and persecuting Pasolini for several months to induce him to abandon the communist activity. When the DC learned from the *carabinieri* about the scandal, the party's members were fast to send the police report to the regional press, contributing to ruin Pasolini's image forever.<sup>433</sup> Schwartz acutely observes that "Homosexuals (including dissident intellectuals, and Pasolini was both) were beyond the puritanical pale of the 'new Party' PCI, dedicated to 'proletarian morality,' even more intolerant than it had been of lax Fascism... Christian Democrats and Communists had agreed that the traditional family was the right form of life."<sup>434</sup>

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<sup>432</sup> Naldini, *Pasolini, una vita*, 134. This official dispatch was written specifically by Ferdinando Mautino of the Udine Association (Federazione) on October 28, 1949. "Prendiamo spunto dai fatti che hanno determinato un grave provvedimento disciplinare a carico del poeta Pasolini per denunciare ancora una volta le deleterie influenze di certe correnti ideologiche e filosofiche dei vari Gide, Sartre, di altrettanto decadenti poeti e letterati, che si vogliono atteggiare a progressisti, ma che in realtà raccolgono i più deleteri aspetti della degenerazione borghese." In reality her name was Teresina Degan, "a committed Party leader of impeccable credentials, [who] has objected long and loudly at the way Mautino railroaded Pier Paolo's expulsion." Schwartz, *Pasolini Requiem*, 227.

<sup>433</sup> See Naldini, *Pasolini, una vita*, 134. See also Pier Paolo Pasolini's letter to Ferdinando Mautino, October 1949 in Pasolini, *Lettere* (Turin: Einaudi, 1986), 368.

<sup>434</sup> Schwartz, *Pasolini Requiem*, 224.

Pasolini was not allowed to defend himself: "No appeals were available, hearings unknown. All that in the course of forty-eight hours."<sup>435</sup> At the end the charges (obscene acts in public place and corruptions of minors) were dropped because the sexual meeting with the young boys occurred in a field surrounded by densely growing bushes, and because no real crime, as defined by law, occurred.<sup>436</sup> Despite the acquittal, Pasolini's reputation was destroyed: he was publicly condemned, and was obliged to leave Casarsa. The film does not show any of the trial's proceedings and conclusions, since they did not lessen Pasolini's shame. *Un mondo d'amore* shows instead the sad resolution, the forced departure for Rome where Pasolini and his mother hoped to find a job and live a more peaceful life. The letters Pasolini wrote to his friends in this period are imbued with disillusion. Despite his expulsion from the PCI and the public scorn, however, he decided not to give up.<sup>437</sup> He had to live for his mother's sake.<sup>438</sup>

In the following scenes Grimaldi, no less realistically, depicts the train trip to Rome and the arrival of Pasolini and Susanna in the capital. In the sequence shot in the train, Grimaldi makes sure to linger over each and every face of the common people traveling with Pier Paolo and his mother. Particularly interesting is the encounter with an old Sicilian lady who talks uninterruptedly about her family, her son Salvatore and her grandchildren. Next to her, there is a couple of newlyweds from Calabria. The entire scene and the importance of the 'journey' reminds us of Elio Vittorini's *Conversazioni*

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<sup>435</sup> Schwartz, *Pasolini Requiem*, 224.

<sup>436</sup> Schwartz, *Pasolini Requiem*, 226.

<sup>437</sup> Though rejected by his comrades, Pasolini wrote a letter in which he declared to will to remain a communist: "Despite all of you, I remain and will remain a Communist in the truest sense of the word." Pasolini's letter to Ferdinando Mautino. October 31, 1949. In Schwartz, 224.

<sup>438</sup> See Pasolini's letter in Schwartz, *Pasolini Requiem*, 225.

*in Sicilia (Conversations in Sicily)*.<sup>439</sup> The entire conversation in the train revolves around the importance of the family. Though politely listening to and agreeing with the old lady, Susanna and Pier Paolo know how different is their current family. They have just left Carlo Alberto in Casarsa, and they both know that Pasolini will never have a 'normal' family on his own. No grandchildren for Susanna, no those joys that are normally assured to a happy married couple for Pier Paolo. Grimaldi takes this occasion to lead the spectator to reflect on the traditional structures of the 1950s Italian society, and to emphasize the grief of Pasolini and Susanna's ineluctable destiny. The sequence in the train gives the contemporary filmmaker also the opportunity to show the geography of Italy through people coming from different regions. As Pasolini always highlighted the importance of the dialects as representatives of old traditions and local customs, so Grimaldi in a very realist fashion makes sure that each character in the train compartment speaks his or her own dialect.

While common stereotypes and the parochialism (*campanilismo*) characterize people's conversations in the train, Pasolini silently leans toward the window and imagines the love story of Salvatore, the old lady's son. This is the moment in which Grimaldi disengages from biographical reports and from Pasolini's own letters to create freely the story of Salvatore. In this way, Grimaldi allows Pasolini to escape his reality in an imaginative novel that gives him some relief from his tormented life. Through this moment of fantasy, however, Grimaldi is still revealing something true about Pasolini's real life, that is to say his desire to escape reality through imagination in

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<sup>439</sup> In Elio Vittorini's *Conversazione in Sicilia (Conversation in Sicily, 1941)*, the main character Silvestro travels from Milan back to his native Sicily. His trip becomes a metaphorical journey toward real knowledge of the horrors caused by war and poverty.

search for stories that he would translate into poetic or filmic products.<sup>440</sup> In this scene Grimaldi's realism comes across also through his reference to real pictures from the Second World War. The viewer is told about Salvatore, a young soldier, who leaves for the front, where he is initiated into love and sex. In this sequence Salvatore's story has a double function: first of all, it draws the trajectory of a simple man who falls in love, has sex and constitutes his own family, a trajectory that Pasolini could never follow (so, in a certain way it reflects Pasolini's dream of love, tolerance and peace); secondly, it talks briefly about the war. Through pictures that Grimaldi borrows from the National Association of Italian Partisans (Associazione nazionale partigiani d'Italia), the filmmaker shows soldiers in combat, partisans who are caught and hanged, and finally soldiers who are going back home triumphantly at the end of the war. With these photos, Grimaldi directly comments on the horrors of the war and particularly of the Fascist government. At the same time, the viewer is also reminded that Pasolini did live the horrors of the war, escaped the German soldiers and lived fearfully in Casarsa until the end of the conflict.<sup>441</sup> Furthermore, Pasolini lost his brother Guido who was himself a partisan and was killed at Porzûs.<sup>442</sup>

The train with Pier Paolo and Susanna arrives in Rome. In the following scenes, we see mother and son who tenaciously try to survive in the capital. Grimaldi once again strictly complies with Pasolini's biographies and letters for the description of this complex period in Pasolini's life. Grimaldi's realism

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<sup>440</sup> On this subject, see introduction, xxiv-xxv.

<sup>441</sup> He was required to join the army in Pisa on September 1, 1943. On September 5 of the same year, Italy signed the armistice with the Allied Forces (England, France and USA). The Germans blocked Pasolini's division, and the younger soldiers (Pasolini included) were assigned to a train to be deported to Germany. Pasolini and one of his comrades escaped from the train jumping in a ditch and walking for over a hundred kilometers until they arrived at Casarsa, where Pasolini hid until the end of the war.

<sup>442</sup> For the details of Guido's death, see Siciliano, *Vita di Pasolini*, 95-107.

becomes particularly functional to convey what Rome meant for Pasolini's career and also for his homosexuality. Susanna and Pier Paolo have to split, since she works for a Roman rich family as housemaid and governess, and has to live with them. Her dignity is humbled by her maid's uniform and the arrogance of the rich lady for whom she works. Pier Paolo, instead, is denied the possibility to work at a private school by an ambiguous and slimy bureaucrat. He attempts to work as a walk-on actor, but he is rudely sent away. Despite that, in this scene, Pasolini sees for the first time how they shoot a film, and he appears to fall in love with it. Life in Rome is difficult. Solitude and nostalgia assault him, lack of money haunts his everyday life. He sells his books to buy his daily meal (and perhaps some time with young boys), he works on his own writings, he tries to meet editors who may be interested in publishing his poetry and novels, but at first all his efforts seem useless. Grimaldi's representation of this period reflects Siciliano's description of Pasolini's impact with Rome: "Everything sank into the past with which there is a tenuous bond: a happy memory; but by now life is 'violent'."<sup>443</sup> In the letters that Pasolini wrote in this period (1950-1955) to Silvana Mauri and Nico Naldini it is clear that life in Rome was hard and that the years in Casarsa are now a dream: "Life is cruel here in Rome, and if you are not tough, stubborn, willing to fight, you can't survive. It seems a dream when I had days, weeks, entire months for myself without any commitment except a soccer game or some dancing at a local festival (*sagra*)."<sup>444</sup> In the film Pasolini wanders aimlessly through the streets of Rome, until he sees a group of young boys

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<sup>443</sup> Siciliano, *Vita di Pasolini*, 166. "Tutto è sprofondato in un passato con il quale c'è un tenue legame: un ricordo felice; ma ormai la vita è 'violenta'."

<sup>444</sup> Pier Paolo Pasolini's letter (September 25, 1955) in Siciliano, *Vita di Pasolini*, 167. See also Siciliano, 183. "La vita è crudele, qui a Roma, e se non si è duri, ostinati, disposti a lottare, non si riesce a sopravvivere. Mi sembra un sogno aver avuto per me giorni, settimane, mesi interi, senza altro impegno che non fosse una partita di Pallone o il ballo a una sagra."

who are playing soccer. They soon become his only form of consolation in such a difficult period. In fact the letter he writes to his cousin Nico he declares his love for them:

Only they are *my world of love*. Without them everything would be useless and would make no sense, even our literature, poetry, Dante and Ariosto, Leopardi and Love. Art without life has no value, and only they are life and we are nothing. And I love them more than myself, my mother, my brother Guido, and I would have liked to enter their bodies, their heads, their knees, their arm pits and, at the end, I would have achieved my goal, I would have put my hands in their hair. I did not touch any of them, Domenico, and I did not have the courage to approach any of them. It is enough for me to think about them, to watch them in order to feel alive.<sup>445</sup>

In the following scene, Pasolini dreams of dancing with his mother and then with a young man. They are happy, and since the dancing ring and the song are the same as in the film's opening scene, one can assume that they are back in time, still in Casarsa. By connecting Pasolini's wandering in the Roman streets to his dream, Grimaldi shows how different from Casarsa the poet's life was in Rome, and how the capital had a double effect on him. No more happy *sagre* (local festivals), no more wine, no more dancing, no more mindless meetings with young boys in the rural countryside. Despite that, in Rome Pier Paolo gets acquainted with the wild Roman proletarian youth, "a new love by which he was dazed and won out."<sup>446</sup> And probably the last scene of the film in which Pasolini lovingly hugs a child and smiles, confirms the artist's happiness for that new love. Furthermore, as Siciliano observes "In

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<sup>445</sup> Grimaldi, *Un mondo d'amore*. "Loro, solo loro sono il mio *mondo d'amore*. Senza di loro tutto sarebbe inutile e insensate, anche la nostra letteratura, la poesia, Dante e Ariosto, Leopardi e l'Amore. L'arte senza vita non vale più niente e loro, solo loro sono la vita e noi il niente. E io li amo più di me stesso, più di mia madre, di mio fratello Guido e sarei voluto entrare nei loro corpi, nelle loro teste e alla fine ci sarei riuscito, nei ginocchi, nelle ascelle, mettergli le mani tra i capelli. Non ne toccavo nessuno Domenico e a nessuno avevo il coraggio di avvicinarmi. Ma mi basta pensarli e guardarli per sentirmi un po' vivo."

<sup>446</sup> Siciliano, *Vita di Pasolini*, 179. "Un nuovo amore e fu da esso stordito e vinto."

Casarsa he felt he was committing a sin; in Rome he believed he was not sinful anymore. Destiny freed him from his nightmare.”<sup>447</sup> Rome then is the beginning of a new chapter in Pasolini’s life, a period in which he will be very prolific from a literary and cinematic standpoint, and, as we will see, he will come to compromise with his homosexual identity.<sup>448</sup>

In conclusion, *Un mondo d’amore* represents a crucial period in Pasolini’s life. The screenplay, based on Pasolini’s letters and his biographers’ works, faithfully represents the artist’s passage from the idyllic world of Friuli to the urban life of Rome, and serves to present a significant aspect of the young poet’s private life. In *Un mondo d’amore* Grimaldi is not afraid of dealing with Pasolini’s homosexuality, and to make the spectator aware of the artist’s torments and the discriminations inflicted upon him by Italian society. Such awareness can only be of further stimulus for a deeper analysis of Pasolini’s relationship with his homosexual identity, and for a more detailed research on the historical period that determined the rejection and intolerance of the controversial intellectual.

### **4.3 From Film to Reality: Pasolini’s Homosexuality in its Historical Context**

The film leads us to inquire further into Pasolini’s relationship with his own identity, and into the interaction between his private life and the historical context in which he faced his forced coming out. In the scene in

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<sup>447</sup> Siciliano, *Vita di Pasolini*, 180. “A Casarsa egli si sentiva di ‘peccare’; a Roma crede di ‘non peccare’ più. Il destino lo ha liberato da un incubo.”

<sup>448</sup> Between 1959 and 1961 Pasolini writes and publishes *Ragazzi di vita* (1955), *Una vita violenta* (1959), the poems of *Le ceneri di Gramsci* (1957) and of *La religione del mio tempo* (1961), the essays of *Passione e ideologia* (1960). Furthermore he writes for *Officina*, a literary magazine, and produces thirteen film screenplays. He also translates for a theatrical representation Eschilo’s *Orestidae* (1960) and films *Accattone* (1961).



which Pasolini writes to his cousin Nico, he asserts that “nobody will ever be able to love me along with my demon.”<sup>449</sup> The demon Pier Paolo is talking about is his homosexuality. With this reference to the poet’s personal obsession, Grimaldi more explicitly presents an important aspect of Pasolini’s psychology: the troubled conflict with his identity. No resolution or clarification, however, is provided in the film. I suspect it would have taken probably another film to explore the complex feelings of guilt and pleasure that accompanied the artist’s private life. As a matter of fact, if the film introduces Pasolini’s homosexuality in light of his anguish, the film also ends on a positive note (Pasolini smiles and happily hugs a child) that becomes a sign of the possibility for the poet to find happiness in Rome. Certainly in the capital this new “state of grace, of vital joy,” as Siciliano defines it, was due to Pier Paolo’s new relation with his “demon.”<sup>450</sup> In this section I would like to go through different stages of Pasolini’s ‘coming out’ and relate them to the historical context, specifically the social, political and ethical moves towards homosexuality in Italy. With this study I hope to lead the reader back to the film for a complete appreciation of Grimaldi’s cinematographic choice. Ultimately *Un mondo d’amore* becomes a vehicle for the contemporary Italian filmmaker both to talk about a topic that has been kept in the shadow for fear of obscuring Pasolini’s aura, and to take a stance against (homo)sexual repression.

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<sup>449</sup> Grimaldi, *Un mondo d’amore*. “Nessuno, con questo demone, mi potrà mai amare.”

<sup>450</sup> Siciliano, *Vita di Pasolini*, 181.

### 4.3.1 Pasolini's 'Coming Out'

In the diary (*Quaderni rossi*) that Pasolini wrote in 1946-47, the reader can find also memories of his childhood. He recounts, for instance, of when he was three years old and he was attracted by a group of young boys who were playing near his house. Particularly, he was interested in the boys' knees, "where the tendons stretch out while running."<sup>451</sup> He realizes that what he saw in those quick tendons was a symbol of life that he hadn't yet attained. As he explains, that image of the running boy for him represented the "grown-up being" ("l'essere grande"). After years from that episode, Pasolini understood that "It was a distinctly sensual sentiment. If I re-experience it, I precisely feel in my innards the tenderness, the sorrowfulness and the violence of the desire. It was the sense of something unattainable, of the carnal."<sup>452</sup> He invented the name of "Teta veleta" to define that feeling.<sup>453</sup> This confession (or better, the decision to report it in the diary) shows Pasolini's belief that homosexuality was never chosen or characterized as a refusal of normality; as Schwartz rightly observes, "he believed he had no decision in it."<sup>454</sup> This view is clear also in the interviews that Pasolini conducted in 1965 for his documentary *Comizi d'amore*. When he inquires about homosexuality among people on the streets and in night clubs, he always makes sure to ask what happened if the interviewed had a son whose sexual inclination was 'atypical' since an early age, in other world if his/her son was born "abnormal." Pasolini is convinced that homosexuality could not be acquired, but that was an inborn trait.

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<sup>451</sup> Pasolini's diary (1946) in Naldini, *Pasolini, una vita*, 8. "Dove piegandosi correndo si tendono i nervi con un gesto elegante."

<sup>452</sup> Pasolini's diary (1946) in Naldini, *Pasolini, una vita*, 8. "Era un sentimento acutamente sensuale. Se lo riprovo sento con esattezza dentro le viscere l'intenerimento, l'accuratezza e la violenza del desiderio. Era il senso dell'irraggiungibile, del carnale."

<sup>453</sup> See interview with Dacia Maraini, *Vogue Italia* (May 1971) in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società* (Milan: Mondadori, 1999), 1670-81.

<sup>454</sup> Schwartz, *Pasolini Requiem*, 109.

Particularly for his own case, “[Pasolini] thought that there was a psycho-physiological reason for his homosexuality, a line of descent; with this belief Pasolini disagreed with the common theories of homosexuality as a traumatic event.”<sup>455</sup> Furthermore, Pasolini discovered that other members of his mother’s family were homosexual and “so, he considers it an objective proof of genetic transmission, and instance of historical family misfortune.”<sup>456</sup> According to Naldini, it is just this obsession, the idea of having “sangue marcio” (rotten blood) that, though with intolerable tensions, will increase Pasolini’s need for sexual encounters.<sup>457</sup>

During his youth until the end of the 1940s, Pier Paolo’s homosexual life was both physical and sentimental, later and for the rest of his life, according to his biographer and cousin Naldini, it was “absolutely hedonistic, ...obsessive, repetitive, sadomasochistic, in need, at one point, of rituals,”<sup>458</sup> in other words, deprived of romantic involvement or attachment. Pasolini confesses in his diary that his first sexual experiences (masturbation) occurred when he was fourteen, and though he followed his inclinations without reservation or judgment, he felt extremely guilty. It was a sin to repair with a prayer. Naldini confirms that “for Pasolini homosexuality was something extraneous, something to fight and not to give into.”<sup>459</sup> His religious creed was so profound that unavoidably had an impact on how Pasolini lived and

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<sup>455</sup> Naldini, “Un fatto privato. Appunti di una conversazione con Nico Naldini”, 49. “[Pasolini] ha pensato che c’era una ragione psico-fisiologica della sua omosessualità, una discendenza ereditaria, smentendo con questo convincimento le teorie vulgate sull’omosessualità come fatto traumatico.”

<sup>456</sup> Naldini, “Un fatto privato. Appunti di una conversazione con Nico Naldini,” 50. “Quindi la considera una prova oggettiva della trasmissione genetica, e di una fatalità storica familiare.”

<sup>457</sup> See also Pasolini’s letter to Franco Farolfi, in Naldini, *Pasolini, una vita*, 95.

<sup>458</sup> Naldini, “Un fatto privato. Appunti di una conversazione con Nico Naldini,” 50. “Assolutamente voluttuosa... ossessiva, iterativa, sadomasochistica, bisognosa a un certo punto di rituali.”

<sup>459</sup> Naldini, “Un fatto privato. Appunti di una conversazione con Nico Naldini,” 50.

expressed his homosexual preference. Siciliano reports that when Pasolini was an adolescent, his friends saw him as a 'puritan,' since he often showed a certain detachment from conversations around sex.<sup>460</sup> While he grew up he was a model scholar, he played soccer and he enjoyed the rural life of Casarsa, particularly when he swam in the Tagliamento river with young boys. In the summer 1943 he made love with one of them for the first time, and after that he abandoned himself to the most uncontrollable hedonism. Repression, transgression, pleasure and sense of guilt co-existed; "the idea of being sinful persecuted him, make his conscience restless."<sup>461</sup> In some letters he wrote to his friends in 1941, he talked about potential girlfriends, but as Siciliano observes, " these girls are... the means to keep those (male) friends closer."<sup>462</sup>

Until 1949 Pasolini's awareness of his homosexuality is relegated to the artistic dimension or to some letters to his friend Franco Farolfi in which he poetically alludes to "the indecent secret of my adult life is shameful!"<sup>463</sup> Particularly, under the influence of André Gide's *The Immoralist* and Sandro Penna's poetry, Pasolini sublimates his homoerotic feelings in the short novels *Atti impuri* (*Impure Acts*) and *Amado mio* (*My beloved*). The two works were written in the mid-to late- 1940s and published posthumous in one volume under the title of *Amado mio* in 1982.<sup>464</sup> They are considered mostly autobiographical. As David Ward observes, the protagonists of the two short novels, Paolo in *Atti impuri*, and Desiderio in *Amado mio*, express "their infatuations, courtships, kisses, and cuddles, often unrequited, almost always

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<sup>460</sup> See Siciliano, *Vita di Pasolini*, 57.

<sup>461</sup> Siciliano, *Vita di Pasolini*, 89. "L'idea del peccato lo perseguitava, gli rendeva inquieta la coscienza."

<sup>462</sup> Siciliano, *Vita di Pasolini*, 60. "Queste ragazze sono... il veicolo attraverso il quale tenersi vicino agli amici."

<sup>463</sup> See Siciliano, 63. "L'impudico segreto della mia adulta vita si vergogna."

<sup>464</sup> Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Amado mio*, ed. Concetta D'Angeli (Milan: Garzanti, 1982).

unconsumed loves for their adolescent beloveds."<sup>465</sup> As Pasolini announces to the reader in his preface, these early works are confessions of his own homosexuality, and probably the 'difficult questions' he mentions, caused the thirty years delay of the Friulian novels' publication. However, as Ward suggests, it would be inaccurate and reductive to read these works as a shocking narrative of gay confession, since "there is nothing in the text that would shock even the most uptight of contemporary readers. Indeed *Atti* is less about homosexuality, if by that we mean an already codified set of sexual practices, than about a prephallic, androgynous pansexuality, a stage prior to entry into the symbolic order."<sup>466</sup> In other words, in this phase Pasolini's innocent, playful sexuality, freed from names and categories, assures him pure joy and happiness. For a long time Pasolini refused to categorize his sexual preference under the name of 'homosexuality'; "feelings and behavior", Schwartz explains, "had no name, other than *amicizia*, friendship,"<sup>467</sup> as a sign of refusal to belong to any one of the sexual categories sanctioned by conventional mores. As we will see, Pasolini never supported the Italian Gay Liberation Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, since it aimed to obtain a tolerance that in its bourgeois attitude would have been hypocritical.

After the Ramuscello scandal, Pasolini had to face the public shame that "homosexuality" entailed. His official 'coming out' with family and friends was forced by the circumstances, but also gave him the opportunity to live his sexual drives more freely. He moved to Rome where he hoped to start a new life. In a letter written from the capital in 1950 to his beloved friend

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<sup>465</sup> David Ward, *A Poetics of Resistance. Narrative and the Writings of Pier Paolo Pasolini* (London: Associated University Presses, 1995), 29.

<sup>466</sup> Ward, *A Poetics of Resistance. Narrative and the Writings of Pier Paolo Pasolini*, 28.

<sup>467</sup> Schwartz, *Pasolini Requiem*, 197.

Silvana Mauri, he summarizes the emotional trajectory that regarded his homosexuality:

For many long years I was the light of my parents' eyes, a model son, an ideal pupil... This tradition of honesty and rectitude—that have neither name nor faith, but was rooted in myself with the anonymous depth of a spiritual thing—prevented me from accepting my verdict for a long time... I don't exactly know how to define hypocrisy, but it scares me. Enough with wishy-washiness, we must face the scandal, I think Saint Paul said... In this regard I believe I want to live in Rome, just because here there won't be either an old Pier Paolo or a new one. Those who like me were destined not to love according to the norm, end up overestimating the question of love. A normal person can resign himself—what a terrible word—to chastity, to missed occasions: but in me the difficulty of loving made obsessive the need to love.<sup>468</sup>

Until 1950, Pasolini had lived his homosexuality as “an inner, cronic, incurable disease,”<sup>469</sup> but in Rome he starts thinking that it is impossible that the “evil” is only on his part. He concludes his letter to Silvana asserting that the scandal did not change him or did not lead him to regret what happened, but “helped me to understand that I had touched the bottom, the experience was over and I could start again from the beginning without making the same mistakes; I freed myself from my wicked and old perversion, now I feel lighter and my libido is a cross, not a weight that drags me to the bottom.”<sup>470</sup> Pasolini specifies

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<sup>468</sup> Pasolini, *Lettere 1940-1954*, 389-90. “Per lunghi anni io sono stato quello che si dice la consolazione dei miei genitori, un figlio modello, uno scolaro ideale... Questa mia tradizione di onestà e di rettrezza—che non aveva un nome o una fede, ma che era radicata in me con la profondità anonima di una cosa spirituale—mi ha impedito di accettare per molto tempo il mio verdetto... Io non so di preciso che cosa intendere per ipocrisia, ma ormai ne sono terrorizzato. Basta con le mezze parole, bisogna affrontare lo scandalo, mi pare dicesse San Paolo... Io credo—a questo proposito—di desiderare di vivere a Roma, proprio perché qui non ci sarà né un vecchio né un nuovo Pier Paolo. Coloro che come me hanno avuto il destino di non amare secondo la norma, finiscono per sopravvalutare la questione dell'amore. Uno normale può rassegnarsi—la terribile parola—alla castità, alle occasioni perdute: ma in me la difficoltà dell'amare ha reso ossessionante il bisogno di amare.”

<sup>469</sup> Pasolini, *Lettere 1940-1954*, 390. “Un male ormai inoculato, cronico e inguaribile.”

<sup>470</sup> Pasolini, *Lettere 1940-1954*, 391. “Mi è servito a capire che avevo toccato il fondo, che l'esperienza era esaurita e che potevo ricominciare daccapo ma senza ripetere gli stessi errori; mi sono liberato dalla mia riserva di perversione malvagia e fossile, ora mi sento più leggero e la libidine è una croce, non più un peso che mi trascina verso il fondo.”

in the letter that he never felt complacency or a sense of aesthetic pleasure in his homosexuality, he always suffered it as a sin, he never came to compromise with his nature nor he had got used to it: "My homosexuality was an extra, something that was outside me, that had nothing to do with me. I always saw it next to me, I never felt it was inside me."<sup>471</sup> However, as mentioned earlier, a change occurs in Rome, as Pasolini himself remarks: "Only this year [1950] I let myself go."<sup>472</sup>

In Rome, [a city] "bleeding with absolute novelties,"<sup>473</sup> Pasolini feels free to explore and express his sexuality. He lives near the *borgate* (shantytown) and he gets acquainted with the overwhelming vitality and spontaneity of the Roman people, especially those young boys that Schwartz defines "fratelli minori degli sciuscià [the younger brothers of the shoeshines]".<sup>474</sup> Pasolini walks along "along the Tiber that was blackened by the urinals, along the Gianicolo with its prostitutes, along the Harbor that was darkened by dung and condoms, along the Ciriola with its arrogant boys that sell themselves at a first look."<sup>475</sup> The first years in the capital are hard but overall happy, Pier Paolo is under the spell of the "divine Rome," where sex is "an inexhaustible flourishing of life, and life is always innocent beauty."<sup>476</sup> He meets the Roman hustlers (*marchettari*) along the Tiber, they are all nice but wily (*marpioni*). The *borgate* offered infinite occasions for erotic adventures,

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<sup>471</sup> Pasolini, *Lettere 1940-1954*, 392. "La mia omosessualità era in più, era fuori, non c'entrava con me. Me la sono sempre vista accanto come un nemico, non me la sono mai sentita dentro."

<sup>472</sup> Pasolini, *Lettere 1940-1954*, 392. "Solo in questo anno [1950] mi sono lasciato un po' andare."

<sup>473</sup> Pasolini in Naldini, *Pasolini, una vita*, 143. "Sanguinante di assolute novità."

<sup>474</sup> Schwartz, *Pasolini Requiem*, 184. With this expression Schwartz probably wants to recall the young boys on the streets that were represented in Vittorio De Sica's 1946 film *Sciuscià* (*Shoeshine*).

<sup>475</sup> Naldini, *Pasolini, una vita*, 144. "I Lungotevere neri di pisciatoi, il Gianicolo con le sue battone, il Porto nero di sterco e di preservativi, il Ciriola coi suoi ragazzi strafottenti che si danno al primo sguardo."

<sup>476</sup> Siciliano, *Vita di Pasolini*, 169. "Un fiorire inesauribile di vita, e la vita è sempre innocente bellezza."

and Pasolini took them all, since “the sexual relationship can function as instrument of knowledge of the reality, since these boys brought into their sexual relationships their entire world, of which each one of them was an original expression. By loving them one ended up knowing what was strictly connected to them: from the intonations of their dialects to their social conditions.”<sup>477</sup> The relationship with these young men becomes more and more physical. No deep feelings are involved: Pasolini writes: “A life entirely of muscles... absolutely bare of sentimentalism, in human organisms so sensual as to be almost mechanical.”<sup>478</sup>

The artist learns the Roman dialect spoken in the *borgate*, and he uses it in his novels *Ragazzi di vita* (*Boys of life*, 1955) and *Una vita violenta* (*A Violent Life*, 1959), but, by the end of the 1950s, he realizes that the economic boom is bringing some social and cultural changes. Naldini reports that when Pasolini “saw that sneers followed smiles, mockery followed laughs, his world fell down and he started building his pessimistic philosophy... The loss of the possibility of transforming eros into friendship and consequently into knowledge is what Pasolini regretted the most.”<sup>479</sup> In other words when Pasolini saw the Roman proletariat take on the values of the bourgeois world,

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<sup>477</sup> Naldini, “Un fatto privato”, 53. “Il rapporto omosessuale può funzionare come strumento di conoscenza della realtà, perché questi ragazzi portavano nel rapporto sessuale un loro mondo integro, di cui ciascuno di loro era un’espressione originale. E amandoli si finiva per conoscere ciò che era strettamente legato a loro: dalle inflessioni dei loro dialetti alle condizioni sociali in cui vivevano.”

<sup>478</sup> Pasolini in Naldini, *Pasolini, una vita*, 144. “Una vita tutta di muscoli... assolutamente nuda di sentimentalismi, in organismi umani così sensuali da essere quasi meccanici.”

<sup>479</sup> Naldini, “Un fatto privato,” 53-54. “Ha visto succedere al sorriso il ghigno, alla risata lo sberleffo, il suo mondo è caduto e ha cominciato a costruire la sua filosofia pessimistica... La perdita della possibilità di trasformazione dell’eros in amicizia e quindi in conoscenza è ciò che Pasolini ha rimpianto di più.” Naldini also writes that only when Pasolini met Giovanni Davoli (for the artist ‘Ninetto’), a young man from the Roman suburbs, he found again the beauty of a sentimental relationship. In other words, it was with Ninetto that Pasolini fell in love again. However, Ninetto soon grew up and got married, causing Pasolini’s greatest disappointment.



he was tremendously hurt. His sexual encounters became more and more dangerous with the passing years. In his numerous trips Pasolini would always go in the poorest neighborhoods to look for the exuberant vitality of the Roman *borgatari*. What he could find however was only an increasing violence. Dacia Maraini who followed Pasolini in many of his trips, and was his friend until he died, wrote that “he was often very close to death, for instance during his night trips. I remember that in brutal cities such as Lagos or Adibjan he was taken back to the hotel by the police at least three times... Once he lay in a pool of blood in a restaurant of the Roman suburbs. I held him in my arms and he came to.”<sup>480</sup>

In conclusion Pasolini discovered in Rome the happiness of living his homosexuality freely, but if at the beginning he could easily enjoy his sexual meetings with his young men, later the social and cultural changes that occurred in Italy turned those encounters into squalid occasions for sex and violence. Pasolini’s homosexuality was regarded by Italian society as a sign of immorality, he was banned from public discourse, and his death for many Italians arrived as a punishment for his misconduct.

#### **4.3.2. Pasolini and the Italian Gay Movement**

In the previous section of this chapter (4.4.1) we become acquainted with Pasolini’s homosexuality from his private point of view, or at most, from the point of view of those who lived in close contact with him. To have a complete picture of Pasolini’s view of homosexuality, however, it seems important to examine also how the artist participated in the public debate on

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<sup>480</sup> Dacia Maraini, Introduction to Naldini, *Come non ci si difende dai ricordi*, 6-7. “Era stato spesso vicino alla morte, per esempio durante le sue peregrinazioni notturne. Ricordo che in città brutali come Lagos o Adibjan fu riportato in albergo dalla polizia almeno tre volte... Una volta giaceva in un lago di sangue in un ristorante del ghetto romano. Lo strinsi tra le braccia e lui si riprese.”

homosexual rights initiated in the 1960s and carried on by the Italian gay movement. In such a way we move from Pasolini's private sphere to his political (dis)engagement in the public arena.

According to historian Gianni Rossi Barilli, until the beginning of the nineteenth-century Italy had always been "famous for being the paradise for homosexuals... and attracted swarms of wealthy fans of "'the Greek love' from the coldest and intransigent Europe."<sup>481</sup> In Italy there was no repressive law that, unlike in the rest of Europe, punished intellectuals like Oscar Wilde or noblemen like Prince Eulenburg or earl Von Moltke (both friends of the Kaiser William II) who in 1907 were accused and legally punished for their homosexuality. In Italy, Rossi Barilli explains that

The [Italian] penal code, differently from the English and German one, did not touch upon homosexual acts among consenting adults: the role of a watch dog was given by tradition to the Catholic Church, and the custom had not changed since the birth of the secular and liberal state... It was up to the Church to exercise its control. Its strategy consisted in making up for the most rigid negation—the absolute silence—with a certain dose of practical indulgence toward the weakness of the flesh... Sodomy was the unmentionable sin... But in the folds of silence, if circumstances required it, one could turn a blind eye, as the travelers coming from all Europe in search of adventure well knew.<sup>482</sup>

According to Rossi Barilli, the Church's unwillingness to punish homosexual practices severely slowed the development of homosexual awareness and

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<sup>481</sup> Gianni Rossi Barilli, *Il movimento gay in Italia* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1999), 1. "La fama di paradiso degli omosessuali... attirando da regioni più fredde e bacchettone d'Europa sciami di ricchi estimatori dell'amore 'che viene da Atene'."

<sup>482</sup> Rossi Barilli, *Il movimento gay in Italia*, 3. "Il codice penale, diversamente da quello inglese e tedesco, non faceva parola degli atti omosessuali tra adulti consenzienti: il ruolo da cane da guardia in materia di etica sessuale era per tradizione affidato alla chiesa cattolica e la consuetudine non era stata smentita dalla nascita dello stato laico e liberale... Stava alla chiesa esercitare il controllo e la sua strategia consisteva nel compensare la più rigida delle negazioni—il silenzio assoluto—con una certa dose di indulgenza pratica verso le debolezze della carne... La sodomia era il peccato innominabile... Ma nelle pieghe del non detto si poteva, se le circostanze lo richiedevano, chiudere un occhio, come sapevano bene i viaggiatori disposti all'avventura di tutta Europa."

identity, and therefore also slowed the birth of movements for gay liberation.<sup>483</sup> Even during the Fascist period, though the homosexuals were subject to subtle forms of torture (exile, laxatives, brief imprisonment), no official restrictive law was introduced in the legal system. The end of Fascism and the Second World War brought the Democratic Party (DC) to power.<sup>484</sup> The DC, in agreement with the Church, showed its intolerance towards homosexuals. Furthermore, as we have seen with Pasolini's scandal, "the Catholic dictatorship on sexual ethics avails itself of the active collaboration and practical subordination of the communists."<sup>485</sup> The communists in fact deemed homosexual practices to be a sign of bourgeois degeneration. If homosexuality in the 1950s was banned from social discourse, it was largely talked about in literary works by Alberto Moravia, Elsa Morante, Vasco Pratolini, Giorgio Bassani, Alberto Arbasino, Sandro Penna and of course Pier Paolo Pasolini. The latter in 1964 released his documentary, *Comizi d'amore* (*Love Meetings*) with a series of interviews with people that he approached in cities and countryside of Italy. With *Comizi d'amore* Pasolini presented an overview of Italian attitudes toward sex, taboos and homosexuality. The verdict was almost unanimous against the corruption and immorality of homosexuals. Pasolini concluded that he did not wish for anybody that experience (interviewing people about homosexuality), since it was "as atrocious as the traumatic effect of disappointment, and loss of respect from

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<sup>483</sup> The only homosexual Italian militant at the beginning of the nineteenth century was Aldo Mieli (1879-1950) who, as his colleagues from Germany, Karl Ulrichs, Magnus Hirschfeld and Richard von Krafft Ebing believed that homosexuality was an innate trait and it was not a voluntary choice.

<sup>484</sup> According to Barilli, "durante il periodo fascista si ridussero sensibilmente i già esigui spazi di libertà degli omosessuali, anche se furono evitate le atrocità del nazismo." Rossi Barilli, *Il movimento gay in Italia*, 22.

<sup>485</sup> Rossi Barilli, *Il movimento gay in Italia*, 3. "La dittatura cattolica in materia di etica sessuale si avvaleva dell'attiva collaborazione e della subalterità pratica dei comunisti."

your own fellow citizens.”<sup>486</sup> Just a few years before, in 1961, Pasolini was in the middle of another scandal: this time he was accused of armed robbery after he had showed some interest towards a bartender. In this occasion, the charges were so absurd and the punishment so inappropriate (twenty days in the prison) that Alberto Moravia remarked: “They wanted to pronounce a verdict of condemnation anyways, simply because Pier Paolo was homosexual.”<sup>487</sup> The end of the 1960, with the economic boom, and the students’ and the workers’ movements, brought a radical change to the social and cultural customs: “Cinema and theatre talked about the topic less and less cautiously... the journalist investigations multiplied... the phenomenon was not only dangerously growing, but it had even become a trend.”<sup>488</sup> However, there were still judges and magistrates that were ready to take legal action in order to defend the “decency” of Italian mores. Homosexuality was not a crime, but it could not be lived openly. On July 1968, the public opinion faced the so-called Braibanti case. Aldo Braibanti was an ex-partisan who in 1947 left the direction of the Communist Party to dedicate his life to free expressions of his liberal ideas. He was accused in 1958 of moral subjugation (i.e. of forcing his lover, twenty-three year-old Giovanni Sanfratello, to live with him for while). The judges required Sanfratello to enter a psychiatric clinic, where he underwent electrical shock treatment, but he never confirmed the charges against his friend Braibanti. As Rossi Barilli explains, “The homosexual

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<sup>486</sup> Naldini, *Pasolini, una vita*, 273. “Tanto atroci ne sono gli effetti traumatici di delusione e di perdita di stima dei propri concittadini.”

<sup>487</sup> Naldini, *Pasolini, una vita*, 254. “Hanno voluto comunque esprimere un verdetto di condanna, per il semplice fatto che Pier Paolo è omosessuale.”

<sup>488</sup> Rossi Barilli, *Il movimento gay in Italia*, 41. “Il cinema e il teatro abordavano sempre meno cautamente il soggetto...le inchieste giornalistiche si moltiplicavano...il fenomeno non era solo in preoccupante aumento, ma era addirittura diventato una moda.”

implication of the episode was obviously the most eloquent proof of guilt."<sup>489</sup> The Braibanti case was a topic of public discussions for months, many Italian intellectuals like Elsa Morante, Umberto Eco, Alberto Moravia, Marco Pannella, Cesare Musatti, and Pasolini protested against the magistrates.<sup>490</sup> In 1971, after years of disorganized protests, Italian homosexuals, mostly from the left wing, gathered together to form FUORI (Fronte unitario omosessuale rivoluzionario italiano), the first gay liberation front in Italy, and organize their official magazine, entitled *O*. Like many other European gay associations, FUORI, along with the revolutionary Left, fought against sexual repression.<sup>491</sup> They all aimed to extend the battle from economic structure to bourgeois morals, and to show that the oppression caused by capitalism coincided with the oppression caused by patriarchy.

Pier Paolo Pasolini, like Alberto Arbasino and Luchino Visconti, refused to support the movement. Pasolini wrote three articles in which he expressed his view on homosexuality. In the first one, written for *Il tempo* on August 6, 1968, he takes position on the famous Braibanti case. He defines Braibanti as an intellectual who first refused to be recognized as an authoritative communist writer, and who also refused to be recognized as an authoritative avantgarde writer.<sup>492</sup> Braibanti's weakness, according to Pasolini, depended on this double refusal, and positioned the intellectual in a solitary

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<sup>489</sup> Rossi Barilli, *Il movimento gay in Italia*, 44. "Il risvolto omosessuale della vicenda era ovviamente la più eloquente prova di colpevolezza."

<sup>490</sup> At the end, Braibanti was condemned to six years of jail, of which two were spent on probation, two were remitted because he was an ex-partisan, and two were spent in prison. The judges applied a heavy sentence by following a Fascist norm that has never been applied before.

<sup>491</sup> FUORI stands for "United Revolutionary Front of Italian Homosexuals."

<sup>492</sup> See Pier Paolo Pasolini, "Il rifiuto di Braibanti," *Il Tempo* (August 13, 1968) in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 1100.

space outside political and economical institutions.<sup>493</sup> For this reason, “facing the scandal of a lonely and weak man, they [the petit-bourgeois Italians] are terrified by the scandal.”<sup>494</sup> With indignation, Pasolini remarks that Italians had judged Braibanti’s life like Himmler and the S.S. had judged the life of Jews, communists, pederasts, and gypsies as all unworthy to be lived. Pasolini then openly attacks the lawyer who had defended Braibanti by maintaining that he was not responsible on account of his “disease of homosexuality”; finally Pasolini advocates a reform of the Italian legal system (*Il codice italiano*).<sup>495</sup> Years later, Pasolini published two more articles, both in April 1974, this time expressing more directly his view on homosexuality. In the first article, “Il carcere e la fraternità dell’amore omosessuale,” Pasolini laments the fact that homosexual practices, even among heterosexual men, in the prisons are regarded as pure evil, monstrous and immoral: “No question about it: having a homosexual relationship is seen as an apocalyptic threat, a definitive condemnation that radically changes the nature of the man who is condemned.”<sup>496</sup> Beside any form of tolerance (that for Pasolini is always false if it comes from above, from power) what discourages Pasolini is the inability of intelligence and culture to understand that “a homosexual relationship is not Evil, or rather there is nothing mean in a homosexual relationship. It is a

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<sup>493</sup> For Pasolini Braibanti represented the real intellectual since he was free from the influence of any political or economical institution. See Pier Paolo Pasolini’s articles, “Dov’è l’intellettuale” and “Il caso di un intellettuale,” in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 1097-99.

<sup>494</sup> Pier Paolo Pasolini, “La paura dello scandalo,” in Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 1102. “Di fronte allo scandalo di un uomo *debole e solo*, essi [gli italiani piccolo-borghesi] provano, dello scandalo, tutto il terrore.”

<sup>495</sup> See Pasolini, “La paura dello scandalo” and “La riforma dei codici,” in Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 1102-1103.

<sup>496</sup> Pier Paolo Pasolini, “Il carcere e la fraternità dell’amore omosessuale,” *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 485. “Non se ne discute nemmeno: l’averne un rapporto omosessuale è visto come una minaccia apocalittica, una condanna definitiva che cambia radicalmente la natura del condannato.”

sexual relationship like any other... it does not leave permanent marks, or stains that make you untouchable, or deformations that are cause for discrimination. It leaves a man exactly as he was before."<sup>497</sup> He finally adds that in every man there is a homosexual component and what happens in the prisons demonstrates it.

In the second article, "M. Daniel–A. Baudry: *Gli omosessuali*" he comments on the two French intellectuals' book on homosexuality praising their pedagogical efforts in presenting and correctly describing the "phenomenon"; he explicitly numbers the points of agreement with Baudry and Daniel, and then he extensively speaks of some divergences. Different from Baudry and Daniel, Pasolini does not judge irresponsible the libertine pederast because of his erotic interest in young adolescents.<sup>498</sup> He does not believe that a sexually uncertain young man (probably bisexual, number 3 in the Kinsey chart) is led to homosexuality, if he is approached in his young age by another man. Furthermore, Pasolini asserts, if one is a libertine, he can still be a pedagogue, like Socrates. Finally, he remarks: "To induce a boy (until then innocent, which is only a funny hypothesis) to a homosexual

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<sup>497</sup> Pasolini, "Il carcere e la fraternità dell'amore omosessuale", *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 486. "Un rapporto omosessuale non è un Male o, per dire meglio, in un rapporto omosessuale non c'è niente di male. Esso è un rapporto sessuale come un altro... non lascia marchi indelebili, né macchie che rendono intoccabili, né deformazioni razzistiche. Lascia un uomo perfettamente quello che era."

<sup>498</sup> Pasolini summarizes Baudry's and Daniel's citations with which he agrees in the following points: people have to overcome their taboos on sexual matters; even the most liberal press and mass media are often conventional and conformist; the old Christian condemnation of homosexuals has become a false rationalism; homosexuals have not been rehabilitated after the Nazi atrocities; there are more homosexuals among readers that one would like to admit; it is not true that a man that undergoes sexual violence becomes a homosexual; there is no direct cause-effect relationship between homosexuality and neurosis; judges are often very indulgent with people who are accused of hurting or killing a homosexual; many people who fiercely reject homosexuality often are homosexual; homosexuality has nothing to do with the working class movement; the happiness of one fifth of humanity cannot be disregarded. See Pier Paolo Pasolini, "M. Daniel–A. Baudry: *Gli omosessuali*," *Il Tempo* (April 26, 1974), in Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 487-89.

relationship, it does not mean to turn him away from heterosexuality.”<sup>499</sup> What seems to be most important in this article, however, is Pasolini’s discourse on tolerance and homosexuality, which helps the reader to understand also why he never supported the gay liberation movement. Daniel and Baudry place the problem of homosexuality in the context of the new born tolerance. According to Pasolini, this tolerance however is not real, “it has been decided from ‘above’: it is the tolerance of the consumeristic power which needs an absolute formal flexibility in people’s lives in order for the individuals to become good consumers.”<sup>500</sup> This false tolerance, according to Pasolini, results in “a period of intolerance and racism that are worse than during Hitler’s time.”<sup>501</sup>

For Pasolini, then, homosexuals can obtain their rights only if they avoid political maneuvers and economic instrumentalization, if they ignore the society’s existing codes, and avoid contributing to the reinforcement of those norms that grant more tolerance since tolerance is always a bourgeois hypocritical pretence. This is exactly why Pasolini refused to support FUORI, the Italian gay liberation movement. As David Ward puts it “the political valence of homosexuality is contingent on its ability to resist being included in societal codes and practices, even those codes and practices elaborated by the gay community itself.”<sup>502</sup> Pasolini refused to render his diversity an object of representation that would be trapped in forms of consumerism, and as such he could not participate in the gay movement or adhere to their programs. In

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<sup>499</sup> Pasolini, “M. Daniel–A. Baudry: *Gli omosessuali*”, *Il Tempo* (April 26, 1974), in Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 491. “Indurre un ragazzo (fino a quel punto innocente: il che è solo una divertente ipotesi) a un rapporto omosessuale, non significa distorglielo dall’eterosessualità.”

<sup>500</sup> Pasolini, “M. Daniel–A. Baudry: *Gli omosessuali*”, 491. “è stata decisa ‘dall’alto’: è la tolleranza del potere consumistico, che ha bisogno di un’assoluta elasticità formale nelle ‘esistenze’ perché i singoli divengano buoni consumatori.”

<sup>501</sup> Pasolini, “M. Daniel–A. Baudry: *Gli omosessuali*”, 492. “Un periodo di intolleranza e di razzismo peggiori ancora che al tempo di Hitler.”

<sup>502</sup> Ward, *A Poetics of Resistance. Narrative and the Writings of Pier Paolo Pasolini*, 30.



Pasolini's mind FUORI adopted the institutional forms of political activism, required 'equal participation' in a heterosexual society, requested the rank of 'normality' with all of its secular and religious rituals and privileges. As Patrick Rumble acutely wonders, "What could be more welcome to the powerful entities governing our societies—perhaps after a cynical display of moral outrage—than the specter of political groupings, movements, campaigns, that claim to represent a constituency that wants a place near the center?"<sup>503</sup> Rumble continues, noting that Pasolini did not want homosexuals "to seek representation and recognition—the desire of the courtesan—but to remain unrecognizable."<sup>504</sup> In November 1975, a few days after his death Pasolini was supposed to participate in congress of the Radical Party (Partito radicale). For the occasion he prepared an eight-paragraph long paper that he concluded by underlining the importance of not conforming to the pre-given norms: "Against all this [the influence of Power], (I believe) you must simply keep being yourselves: which means being continuously unrecognizable, forgetting big successes immediately, continuing undauntedly, stubbornly, eternally opposite, continuing to demand, to request, to identify yourselves with the diverse, to scandalize, to curse."<sup>505</sup>

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<sup>503</sup> Patrick Rumble, *Allegories of Contamination: Pier Paolo Pasolini's Trilogy of Life* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 137.

<sup>504</sup> Rumble, *Allegories of Contamination: Pier Paolo Pasolini's Trilogy of Life* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 137.

<sup>505</sup> Pier Paolo Pasolini, "Intervento al congresso del partito radicale", *Lettere luterane*, in *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 715. "Contro tutto questo [l'influenza del Potere] voi non dovete far altro (io credo) che continuare semplicemente a essere voi stessi: il che significa a essere continuamente irriconoscibili. Dimenticare subito i grandi successi e continuare imperterriti, ostinati, eternamente contrari, a pretendere, a volere, a identificarvi col diverso, a scandalizzare; a bestemmiare."

#### 4.4 *Back to the Film: The Relevance of "Un mondo d'amore" today*

After the long digression that has allowed us to get acquainted with Pasolini's homosexuality both from a private and public standpoint, it would be useful to see what role Grimaldi's *Un mondo d'amore* plays in relation to the poet, his historical context and above all our times. As we have seen the film explores mainly the crucial moment in which Pasolini's private life becomes public. From the plot it emerges both his absolute belief in the 'normality' of his homosexual encounters, and the pure happiness he receives from those early meetings. The film also portrays the social and political aggressiveness towards Pasolini's 'deviancy', and the consequences for the poet and his mother. Certainly, Grimaldi's film helps make the spectator aware of an important aspect of Pasolini's personal life with its *croci e delizie* (mixed blessings) and also of the historical period with its social prejudices. Grimaldi does not deal with Pasolini's late disappointment with the anthropological changes that brought about cultural homologation and the disappearance of the young men he loved so dearly. Nor does Grimaldi represent or touch on Pasolini's public attitude towards homosexuality and the gay movement. Of course, aside from Grimaldi's specific interest in the young Pasolini instead of the more mature one, it is quite difficult to think of a film that deals with Pasolini's entire existence. Furthermore, keeping in mind Patrick Rumble's lesson, one can think what was valid for Pasolini is also valid for Grimaldi. The aesthetic of Pasolini in fact

is to be found 'outside' the images or, better, in how his images display their weakness and limits, their histories and their futures... Pasolini's style is one designed to present the spectator with images that allude indirectly to what is not there, to something that has been excluded; images that show the film itself, in its composition and completion, as the product of a set of inclusions and exclusions, bearing a narrative

whose economy and pleasure depend upon the exclusion of elements that would threaten it with unmotivated detour and exhaustion.<sup>506</sup>

Though Rumble is referring specifically to Pasolini's lack of free homosexual representations in his works, we can possibly apply the same reasoning to Grimaldi as well.<sup>507</sup> Grimaldi in fact never shows Pasolini while Pasolini is engaged in the act of intercourse.<sup>508</sup> Furthermore, Grimaldi indirectly induces the spectator to think about images that go beyond his film and that regard the way (homo)sexuality is portrayed today. In other words, because this film with Pasolini's homosexuality as the main subject is released in 2002, it stimulates discussion of issues that are topical in the present as much as they were in the past. Grimaldi chooses to represent Pasolini's homosexuality at the intersection between private and public life, and in doing so he asks the spectator to reflect not only on Pasolini's life, but also on what has changed in Italian customs since his death. Grimaldi is well aware that since 1975, though with internal tensions and a series of ups and downs, the gay liberation movements have created space and visibility for homosexuals in Italian society and political life. Despite the disengagement of Pasolini in the 1970s, FUORI and later Arcigay and several other gay associations have continued their fight with the revolutionary Left and with the Italian Radical Party against the old-fashioned mentality that discriminated against homosexuals.<sup>509</sup>

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<sup>506</sup> Rumble, *Allegories of Contamination: Pier Paolo Pasolini's Trilogy of Life*, 137-38.

<sup>507</sup> Rumble in agreement with Thomas Waugh, is here arguing against John Di Stefano who in his article "My Affair with Pasolini" (M. Gever, J. Greyson, P. Parmer, eds. *Queer Looks: Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Film and Video*, New York and London: Routledge, 1993), asserts that Pasolini is guilty of not representing homosexual relationships openly. See Rumble, Patrick Rumble, *Allegories of Contamination: Pier Paolo Pasolini's Trilogy of Life*, 171, note 13.

<sup>508</sup> Even in *Nerolio*, though we see the poet encountering several men, the act of having sex or the bodies' private parts are never explicitly shown on the screen.

<sup>509</sup> For a complete history of the Italian gay liberation movements and their battles, see Gianni Rossi Barilli, *Il movimento gay in Italia*.

However, much is still to be done, and Grimaldi is well aware of this. Homosexuals are still struggling to obtain the right to constitute a legally recognized couple, and to be able to adopt children. Both the Left and the Right, though to a different extent, are under the direct influence of the Church, which remains the major opponent to homosexuals' requests. Homophobia is often disguised under a generic tolerance. Grimaldi is convinced that in Italy there are still limits in the way people conceive and speak about (homo)sexuality, even merely in cinematographic terms. He asserts that "the problem I encounter when I follow Italian cinema, like the rest rest of our society, tends to hide or derail the discourse on sexuality... The veil of social repression on this theme is still very strong... in ordinary life the topic is always very intimate and confidential."<sup>510</sup> Grimaldi believes that

Cinema should talk about the human being in its entirety, and the sexual side is not any different from the other, I should not hide it. However, though with this attitude, I reprimand myself too; it is not completely true that I talk about my characters in their entirety. Even talking partially about them, I place myself outside the schemes, and for this reason they attack me... Hence in our society, today in 2008, there is an enormous gap between the desired sexuality that is felt and lived in our private space, and the sexuality that is presented in cinema, literature and the public arena.<sup>511</sup>

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<sup>510</sup> Grimaldi, my interview, 47. "Il problema che si pone quando seguo il cinema è che il cinema come tutto il resto della società tende a nascondere o deviare tutto il discorso sulla sessualità... Il velo della repressione sociale su questo tema è ancora molto forte... nel quotidiano l'argomento è sempre intimo e riservato."

<sup>511</sup> Grimaldi, my interview, 48. "Il cinema dovrebbe raccontare l'essere umano nella sua interezza, e il lato sessuale non è diverso dall'altro, non devo nascondere. Eppure, pur con questa presa di posizione, anch'io mi censuro; non è vero che racconto i miei personaggi nella sua interezza, ma già raccontandola parzialmente mi metto al di fuori degli schemi, e per questo sono molto attaccato... Quindi nella nostra società, ancora oggi nel 2008, c'è un dislivello enorme tra la sessualità desiderata, sentita e vissuta nel nostro privato e quella raccontata nel cinema, nella letteratura e nel pubblico."

In this regard, Grimaldi deems Pasolini a revolutionary man, since “he had the strength and the courage to talk about sexuality in his films.”<sup>512</sup> Most important, Grimaldi embraces the critique that has been levelled at many intellectuals that nowadays tend to make a saint or a martyr of Pasolini, tend to monumentalize him by avoiding mention of his homosexuality, especially in its most obscure and contradictory aspects. Giovanni Dall’Orto, in his polemics against Pasolini as politically disengaged homosexual, remarks that

The fact is that the elevation of this writer among Saints and Martyrs...originates substantially from a total refusal of his homosexuality. Pasolini *cannot be* simply a victim of one of those ‘squalid murders’ of which for centuries homosexuals have been the favorite target. An intellectual *cannot* die as the common people, especially the *fags!* Hence his must be a political assassination and/or a Martyrdom.<sup>513</sup>

Pasolini’s murder occasioned numerous discussions: the majority thought that Pasolini’s dramatic death confirmed that homosexuality caused mental deviance and squalid tragedies; others called attention on the treatment that was reserved to homosexuals who were obliged to live their sexuality often in hidden spaces, away from the public eye. Finally, others refused to talk about Pasolini’s homosexuality and attributed his death to a political conspiracy. As a matter of fact, one hypothesis does not exclude the other. Pasolini may be both a victim of a homosexual squalid encounter and a political conspiracy. What matters, though, is that one hypothesis should not obscure the other:

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<sup>512</sup> Grimaldi, my interview, 48. “Ha avuto la forza e il coraggio di parlare della sessualità nei film.”

<sup>513</sup> Giovanni Dall’Orto, “Contro Pasolini,” Stefano Casi ed. *Quaderni di critica omosessuale. L’omosessualità nell’opera di Pasolini*, 68. “Il fatto è che l’elevazione di questo scrittore fra i Santi e Martiri...nasce sostanzialmente da un atteggiamento di totale rifiuto della sua omosessualità. Semplicemente Pasolini *non può* essere caduto vittima di uno di quegli ‘squalidi omicidi’ di cui da secoli gli omosessuali sono il bersaglio prediletto. Un intellettuale *non può* morire come il volgo indotto, specie quello dei *froci!* Il suo deve quindi essere un omicidio politico e/o un Martirio.”

Angelo Pezzana, leader of FUORI in 1975, commented on Pasolini's murder asking: "Who will speak and write about Pasolini as a homosexual? Who will say that he died as thousands of homosexuals do?... We deem responsible of Pasolini's death, beyond the criminal who killed him, all the citizens who bask in their ignorance of the problem."<sup>514</sup> I believe that Grimaldi has heard Pezzana's appeal, and with *Un mondo d'amore* (and previously with *Nerolio*) he reminds who Pasolini was and how much struggle still awaits homosexuals in Italy.

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<sup>514</sup> Angelo Pezzana, *Dentro e fuori* (Milano: Sperling and Kupfer, 1996), 102. "Chi parlerà, chi scriverà di Pasolini omosessuale? Chi dirà che è morto come muoiono migliaia di omosessuali?... Noi riteniamo responsabili della morte di Pasolini, al di là del criminale che lo ha ucciso, tutti i cittadini che continuano a bearsi della loro ignoranza del problema."

## CONCLUSION

Working on Pasolini can be challenging, since the artist was very prolific and his works, rich in number and complex in nature, lend themselves to sundry, often contradicting interpretations and lively, occasionally tense debates. Secondary literature on Pasolini and on his entire opus is endless. As Roberto Chiesi remarked, "Pasolini is an inexhaustible continent, his work is so vital, so rich that is impossible to have the last word on what he has done. This is a manifest sign of the vitality, depth, insight and geniality of his work."<sup>515</sup>

The difficulties in dealing with so much material increase when one begins putting Pasolini in relation to contemporary Italian filmmakers. In writing this dissertation I found it necessary to narrow my focus to only two filmmakers who, better than others, exemplify the reasons for a significant reappraisal of Pier Paolo Pasolini in the last ten years (1999-2009). I concentrated on Giordana and Grimaldi's new take on realism, on their social and political commitment, and I tried to contextualize their efforts, to put them in relation to the current historical period, with the cultural debate on the role of the intellectual, and finally with the status of contemporary Italian cinema. My goal was to demonstrate that films that recall Pier Paolo Pasolini demand more attention and a more subtle analysis, because it is through Pasolini that Giordana and Grimaldi unveil crucial connections between past and present, and awaken Italian spectators vis-à-vis social and political issues that urgently require consideration and active participation. I am referring to

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<sup>515</sup> Roberto Chiesi, my interview (Bologna: June 30, 2008). "Pasolini è un continente inesauribile, la sua opera è talmente vitale, talmente ricca che non si riesce mai a dire la parola ultima, definitiva su quello che ha fatto e questo è proprio un segno evidente della vitalità, della profondità, dello spessore, della genialità di quest'opera."

events related to organized crime, political corruption, and discrimination against homosexuality.

These problems haunt Italian society in the present time, perhaps more than ever. Two examples: In 2007, through his widely acclaimed book *Gomorra* and several interviews on national TV channels, writer and journalist Roberto Saviano denounced the national and international illegal activities of the Neopolitan mafia (the camorra). After much time spent under police surveillance and protection, hiding from the camorra bosses that threatened to kill him, at the end of last year he had to leave Italy and move towards an unknown, safer place. Another recent event confirms that there still need of change in Italians' consideration of homosexuality as well: on February 17, 2009, a series of polemical discussions arose around the "homophobic" content of the song *Luca era gay* (*Luca was gay*) by Povia presented at the 2009 edition of the *Festival della canzone italiana di Sanremo* (Sanremo Festival of the Italian Song).<sup>516</sup> Povia's song talks about a man who grows up in a sort of Oedipal conflict where he undergoes the strong influence of his mother and faces the absence of his father. To remain faithful to his mother he dates only men, until he finds out that he is not gay, and he is truly happy with a woman. The song has caused the indignant reaction of the Arcigay (the Italian association for the homosexual rights) that has claimed that homosexuality is not a disease and that happiness can be found in being homosexual as well.<sup>517</sup> A strong critique of the song has also been put forth by Vladimir Luxuria, a transsexual and political activist who won the 2008 of the

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<sup>516</sup> The song is available on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m4ZbeFMGYyQ>

<sup>517</sup> See [http://www.repubblica.it/2008/08/sezioni/spettacoli\\_e\\_cultura/festival-sanremo-2009/povia-polemiche/povia-polemiche.html](http://www.repubblica.it/2008/08/sezioni/spettacoli_e_cultura/festival-sanremo-2009/povia-polemiche/povia-polemiche.html), <http://www.grillini.it/show.php?6171> and <http://www.grillini.it/show.php?6148>



reality show *Survivor* (the Italian version of the American show *Survivor*).<sup>518</sup> Finally, the song gave filmmaker Roberto Benigni the opportunity to express his full support of homosexuals. Benigni, in fact, participated in the Sanremo Festival as a guest of honor with a comic show on Italian politics that he concluded on a more serious and poetic note by mentioning the controversy about Povia's song. While Benigni admitted that he did not know the song well, he emphasized that it was ridiculous that homosexuals were still object of mistreatment since they had given humanity "enormous gifts" (in the form of artistic contributions).<sup>519</sup> He recited a letter that Oscar Wilde, condemned for homosexuality, had written from prison to his young lover. In doing so, Benigni openly and strongly condemned the insensitivity with which homosexuals are talked about and treated, and asserted that they are just normal people who love as many others. The letter by Oscar Wilde gave Benigni and the spectators a chance to reflect also on what Italy used to be in the past and is today: Wilde, in fact, recommended that his young boy leave England and go to Italy, where he would have been accepted.

What is more important to note is that if a song on homosexuality, which refers only to a story that regards one man, causes so much turmoil, and even becomes a means to attract more viewers, it means that homosexuality has not yet reached a satisfying level of "normality" and

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<sup>518</sup> The interview with Vladimir Luxuria is available on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LVNfEYmKluw>

<sup>519</sup> Roberto Benigni, "Gli omosessuali ci hanno dato dei doni enormi e io gli sono grato." (Homosexuals have given us enormous gifts and I am grateful to them." See <http://www.rai.tv/dl/RaiTV/programmi/media/ContentItem-3d94b4eb-1432-481d-8fbb-28e9bb8b549e.html> (The video is 32 minutes 12 seconds long. The section in which Benigni talks about homosexuals starts at 24.15).

respect.<sup>520</sup> That is yet another reason why Giordana's and Grimaldi's films are relevant today.

The films I have presented in this dissertation are not the only ones to revitalize Pasolini's life and political activism, to help create a common ground of research in Italian contemporary cinema. If I were to expand this research, I would probably include also *La meglio gioventù* (*The Best of Youth*, 2003),<sup>521</sup> another film by Marco Tullio Giordana, as well as works by Giuseppe Bertolucci,<sup>522</sup> whose analysis will focus on the relationship between cinema and theatre that fascinated Pasolini as well.<sup>523</sup> I would not neglect films by Daniele Cipri and Franco Maresco,<sup>524</sup> who like Pasolini, emphasize the relevance of the body and the look in their films, and works by Antonio Capuano,<sup>525</sup> who directs his interest to the poor people in the streets, particularly to children, and to the mafia and camorra's criminal activities. In a recent interview Capuano stated that

Like Pasolini, I have always told stories at the margins, borderline cases. We also have in common our passion for art, the intent to draw inspiration from it, and to find in the bodies and faces of the present time those of the people in the past. No question about it: for me Pasolini is an absolute point of reference, since he was the first Italian intellectual to deal seriously with sub-proletariat culture and approach it humbly. Even from a figurative point of view, he [Pasolini] is so

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<sup>520</sup> By the end of the song Povia sings, "Questa è la mia storia, solo la mia storia, nessuna malattia, nessuna guarigione." (This is my story, only my story, no disease, no healing/recovery).

<sup>521</sup> In *La meglio gioventù* (2003) there are significant references to Pasolini through the figure of one of the main characters, Matteo, a troubled man who becomes the perfect representation of Pasolini's complexity and of his political stances.

<sup>522</sup> I am referring to *Il Pratone del casilino* (1996), *Na specie de cadavere lunghissimo* (2004), *Pasolini prossimo nostro* (2006), *La rabbia* (2008).

<sup>523</sup> Pasolini wrote some plays in verse: *Porcile* (1968), *Orgia* (1968), *Calderon* (1975), *Pilade*, *Bestia da stile*, and *Affabulazione* (these three were published posthumously in 1977). He also wrote some critical essays (for instance *Manifesto per un nuovo teatro*) in which he theorized a new idea of theatre that he defined "Theatre of the Word" (Teatro della parola). See also <http://www.cinetecadibologna.it/sitopasolini/teatro.htm>

<sup>524</sup> I am referring to *Lo zio di Brooklyn* (1995), *Totò che visse due volte* (1998) and *Arruso* (2000).

<sup>525</sup> See *Polvere di Napoli* (1998), *Luna rossa* (2001), *La guerra di Mario* (2005).

much mine that I cannot say that I have borrowed a specific element from him. There is a channel of communication so strong that it is difficult to explain. It is like a poetry that you like but you don't know why. I think that many others feel the same toward such a great author.<sup>526</sup>

Finally more sustained work needs to be done on short films relating to Pasolini. In 2000 six short films (ranging from five to sixty minutes) were produced for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Pasolini's death. I am referring to Bruno Bigoni's *Comizi d'amore 2000 (Love meetings 2000)*, an updated version of Pasolini's *Comizi d'amore (1965)*; Davide Ferrario's *La rabbia (The Anger)* inspired by Pasolini's eponymous film; and *Morto che parla (A Dead Man Who Speaks)* by Daniele Vicari who, after meeting the actor who embodied Stracci in Pasolini's *La Ricotta*, deals with the relationship of Pasolini with his actors. These short films would allow us to explore Pasolini's own short films as well, and see how they relate to the contemporary ones.

The films and filmmakers I mention here confirm that many authors, fascinated by Pasolini, are engaged in revitalizing both the aesthetic value of his films and his political engagement. Contemporary filmmakers that return to Pasolini often present artistic products that are formally more elaborated, and in some cases, committed to social causes. These products are not welcome by a cinematographic market that accepts simple, not politically engaged films, which are easily consumable by the vast majority of the public.

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<sup>526</sup> Fabrizio Colamartino, "Vito, Nunzio, Mario e gli altri: conversazione con Antonio Capuano" (05/04/2006) in [http://www.frameonline.it/ArtN032\\_Capuano.htm](http://www.frameonline.it/ArtN032_Capuano.htm) and <http://www.camera.minori.it/cinecamera/interviste/capuano1.htm> "Io come lui [Pasolini] ho raccontato sempre storie marginali, al limite, ma in comune c'è anche la passione per l'arte, il trarne ispirazione e il ritrovare nei corpi e nei volti di oggi quelli di sempre, del popolo. Ma non c'è neanche da parlarne: per me Pasolini è un punto di riferimento assoluto, perché è il primo intellettuale italiano a essersi confrontato con la cultura sottoproletaria, a essersi avvicinato con umiltà. Ma anche dal punto di vista figurativo, lo sento talmente "mio" che non posso dire di aver preso questo o quell'elemento dai suoi film, è come se ci sia un canale di comunicazione talmente forte che è difficile spiegare. È come una poesia che non sai perché ti piace ma ti piace. Ma penso che tanti altri provino nei confronti di un autore così grande la stessa cosa."

Both the market and the audience show significant limits in the understanding of these Pasolinian films. The authors who reappraise Pasolini make his voice stronger than it was in the past, and indeed demonstrate that much work awaits to be done. The last word on Pasolini is yet to be pronounced.

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