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Pasolini's Aesthetics of Will

The essay La sceneggiatura come «struttura che vuol essere altra struttura» has been subject to comprehensive biographical interpretations but it seldom has been taken seriously as the outline of a Pasolinian aesthetic theory. The paper proposes, firstly, to relocate Pasolini's argument in the context of its spiritual and material genesis and to designate the philosophical and political implications of its main concepts. Secondly, it parallels Pasolini's text with Roman Jakobson's so called 'Formalist' approach and Friedrich Nietzsche's psychology. A shifting concept that the author terms 'Will to otherness' then appears as the central category of Pasolini's aesthetic thinking. As the author will briefly suggest at the end of his theoretical draft, this concept can be also used as a key to interpret Pasolini's many-sided artistic production.

Pasolini's theoretical approach

The role of the short essay *La sceneggiatura come «struttura che vuol essere altra struttura»* within Pier Paolo Pasolini's film theory is at the same time, as I will try to show with this paper, a marginal and a pre-eminent one.¹ At all times, Pasolini's thinking has definitely shown no concern of academic disciplinary distinctions and rigid conceptual definitions.² Therefore, not only his linguistics and his film theory display an alternatively amateurish or original, at any rate 'impure' approach to the matter. The theoretical character of his interventions – considering the wide range of heterogeneous texts, which since 1999 are included in the two volumes *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte*³ – is not more easily to be determined. This can be seen both in the individual case of one particular intervention and in a general way, as it could possibly apply to the collection *Empirismo eretico* (1972) as a whole. Because of their fuzzy concepts, but mainly because they try to make a language out of non-linguistic material, his 'linguistics' are not linguistics in the academic sense; because they try to make a sign out of 'insignificant' reality, from the same perspective his semiotics are not semiotics.⁴ Furthermore, as I am going to argue, his film theory is rather to be seen as a much more complex, and maybe fuzzy, attempt to seize aesthetic phenomena as such. It is revealing in this respect that Gilles Deleuze's *Cinéma* (1983-1985)⁵ seems to be the only comprehensive academic study to take a serious theoretical impulse from Pasolini's conceptualisations, mainly from his attempt to bring the literary category of free indirect speech to bear on film studies, especially on cinema history. Deleuze absorbs this analytic approach; what he calls the cinema of «image-temps» is conceptually akin to Pasolini's «cinema di poesia» as the specifically postmodern, neocapitalist manifestation of the seventh art.⁶ Deleuze's approach, as well as Pasolini's, is of course an unconventional and undogmatic one. Rather than film theory or cinema semiotics, his work is to be thought of as a Philosophy of Cinema. One could similarly designate Pasolini's intellectually engaged contributions to theoretical debates as General Aesthetics, or rather Aesthetics of Will: This *determinans* seems indeed to constitute one of the main orienting concepts in his essayistic oeuvre.

La sceneggiatura come «struttura che vuol essere altra struttura»

The essay's contexts

As we may know it from *Empirismo eretico* or from the comprehensive volume of Pasolini's essays edited by Walter Siti, *La sceneggiatura come «struttura che vuol essere altra struttura»* was first published in 1966 as the second part of a rather long article entitled *Laboratorio* (I. *Appunti en poète*



per una linguistica marxista; II. *La sceneggiatura come struttura che vuol essere altra struttura*). It appeared in the periodical «Nuovi argomenti», then directed amongst others by Alberto Moravia. The basic argument in the second part of this text, however, is yet to be found in an earlier article, also published in 1966 in «Filmcritica». ⁷ Here the perceptive notion of «immaginazione fulminea» – a visual reflex following the cognition of a linguistic sign – is applied to exploring the relationship between text and image in a more general way. It should be pointed out, though, that this perceptive mechanism is irreversible. According to Pasolini's argument, the mental images awakened by the understanding of a word – different degrees of abstractness do not seem to be an obstacle – cannot be again recoined into the same word, without generating an ambiguity. Still, the example Pasolini chooses to discuss in this first article does not concern a single word. He cites a verse of Dante evoking the resurrection of the wanderer from hell and his morning impression of the shimmering sea on the shore of the mountain of purgatory: «conobbi il tremolar de la marina». ⁸ To an Italian-speaking reader, this verse evidently evokes a virtually infinite number of easily available images. On the other side, it is just as evident that any seascape depiction, without any further hints, will not at any rate be connected with the specific poetic

Andrej Tarkovskij, *Solaris*, 1972

condition of Dante's language. Pasolini's early draft seems to focus the unidirectional effectiveness and the semantic fecundity of the relationship between text and image as its theoretical core: «Un'immagine è di per sé infinitamente meno significativa di una parola». ⁹ This idea is at the origin of his discourse on the screenplay as the artistic form that institutionalises the same intermedia fecundity.

On an immanent level, *La sceneggiatura come «struttura che vuol essere altra struttura»* is also closely connected to the programmatic outline of *Il «cinema di poesia»* (1965), the text which precedes it in the collection *Empirismo eretico*. One could possibly observe different ways of correspondence between the two paragraphs of *La sceneggiatura* and the cited articles. While the first and longer paragraph is devoted to developing the semiotic and aesthetic concepts of a «cinema di poesia», the second and shorter one is marked by a more political impetus derived from *Dal laboratorio*. The author begins by extending his semiotic theory of a ternary sign (composed of an oral, a written and a visual dimension) to a seemingly secondary object. Then he points out the political subtext of this theory by reusing his concept of a «structure willing to be another structure»: this, in turn, is described in *Dal laboratorio* as the model of the vectorial force moving social processes. Nevertheless, according to Pasolini these two schemes of reflection would be erroneously isolated from each other. The essayist aims at being understood as an artist, whose considerations are designed to make possible the artistic «esperienza diretta» with untheorizable phenomena («il magma»). At the same time he wants to be seen as a Marxist – one could also say, a kind of *zoon politikon* –, whose desire to structure the world is the desire to change it. ¹⁰ The vectorial figure in *La sceneggiatura* consists in Pasolini's historical view of cinema aesthetics that are subject to a process of 'permanent revolution' even before being fixed as an assignable structure. Furthermore, the very beginning of the first paragraph of the article stresses the experimental character of the theoretical approach. Like in a test arrangement, the screenplay is isolated from its normal external context: «Prendiamo il caso di una sceneggiatura di uno scrittore, non tratta da un romanzo e – per una ragione o l'altra – non tradotta in film». ¹¹ Such a screenplay is consequently meant or left to be autonomous, depending on whether the lack of an actual film transposition can be ascribed to the author's will («una vera e propria scelta dell'autore»), ¹² or to any other aesthetic or economic reason. This form of test arrangement with all its conceptual precariousness is in any case the main thinking dispositive of *Empirismo eretico*, whose planned title at some point was exactly *Laboratorio*. ¹³



In addition to these few remarks on the general publication context of *La sceneggiatura*, the theoretical discourse of the article *Il «cinema di poesia»* has to be briefly outlined, as it has a strong repercussion on the argument of the following article. As we already stated, Pasolini draws the concept of a ternary sign with auditive, graphic and visual dimensions. Obviously the merely visual signs («im-segni»)¹⁴ are the less codified ones; they are qualified by their «rawness», by their «animality», by their «irrational» and «oneiric» nature.¹⁵ They have to be first brought into existence by the filmmaker, who thus establishes a genuine dictionary of 'im-signs' taken away «from chaos». Only then will he or she be able to accomplish the ordinary work of a writer, i.e. «aggiungere a tale im-segno puramente morfologico la qualità espressiva individuale».¹⁶ This is to say, that prior to any cinematographic creation there has to be the creation of a language of its own, conferring to cinema its archaic character. However perfect the superficial narrative construction of a given film may be, its underlying 'sub-film' remains subliminally present as its «mythic» and «infantile» basis material.¹⁷ Of course, the mystifying tendency of this account of the cinematographic creation itself completely diverges from any Saussurean or, in the largest sense, structuralist approach to the semiotics of cinema – a diagnosis that makes appear idle the discussion of the evident epistemological contrast between Pasolini's discourse and 'serious' academic (cinema) semiology as represented by Christian Metz and Umberto Eco.¹⁸

Therefore, and for the purpose of this paper, I will concentrate on the pragmatic and analytical 'outcome' of *Il «cinema di poesia»*. Pasolini identifies the specific quality of any artistic creation – «di poesia», as he emphatically designates it –, mainly recognizable by the absence of both rational narrative and compositional devices, as well as by the appearance of an archaic sign repertoire, i.e. in terms of cinema: «le inquadrature e i ritmi di montaggio ossessivi».¹⁹ From an anthropological point of view, the «cinema di poesia» (or, in Deleuze's words, the «time-image») operates a reconciliation between «il mito e la coscienza tecnica della forma», a function labeled as «tardo-umanistica».²⁰ The corresponding technical command is as apparently simple as the one of traditional cinema: In Pasolini's views, the imperative of a 'poetic cinema' should be that of 'making you feel the camera,' whereas soon after the invention of cinema, a tendency to concealing technical devices had become more and more evident. The cinematograph thus seems to be the privileged aesthetic means to produce a dimension of mythic, i.e. archaic significance.

The essay's argument

Pasolini then turns toward the screenplay, not only because he simply wants to deepen and to illustrate once again his conception of the ternary sign and of the mythic power of cinema. He comes across the screenplay because of the vectorial forces which it presents and because it virtually reports and enables the creative act of the cinematographic image. More than any completed work, such as a particular film, the screenplay with its constitutionally unfinished character appears to be the appropriate theoretical object for Pasolini's semiotic and aesthetic considerations as exposed in the first part of the article *Dal laboratorio*.

A screenplay to this effect is in the first place an ordinary narrative and descriptive text, which basically differs from other narrative texts but for its allusion to a cinematographic work to be produced.²¹ In addition, this allusion is supposed to be explicit, but Pasolini does not make any further precisions as to how it should be carried out technically. He only claims that the reference to the cinematographic work to be produced be complementary, which means related to the text as a whole, not only to parts of it. It seems important to me to point out this rather simple fact in order to clarify how this allusion to cinema, here referred to as a constitutive feature of screenplays, dramatically differs from the rhetorical use of cinema references, aiming at increasing the *enargeia* of a certain image or impression and calling on the reader's mental representation of some part of the narrative or description as a film scene. Thus, strictly speaking, at least by the means of traditional literary criticism, the text of a screenplay is thus irrerecognisable as such. In



Pasolini's own screenplays we find several technical devices alluding explicitly to the 'film to be produced' like the indication of camera adjustments in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* (1963-1964), or the alternation of dialogic and descriptive paragraphs in *Uccellacci e uccellini* (1965-1966). But there are also poems or fragments of psychological reflections like in *Teorema* (1968) which, considered out of their context, do not contain any specific 'filmic' references.

As Pasolini writes, what traditional literary criticism would detect is a lack of form of the screenplay compared with texts of traditional genres. Such a «rozzezza» or «incompletezza»²² are therefore the main stylistic devices of an autonomous technique designed in order to leave sufficient contact surface as a space for the reader's imagination. The screenplay requires an «image thinking»,²³ which transcends conceptual language-based thinking. Although Pasolini once again dismisses as inconsistent any analogy of cinematographic and verbal languages, he nonetheless conceptualises this «image thinking» as a linguistic model of a new kind, whose smallest unity of articulation he identifies with the «cinema».²⁴ However, there is of course no definition of such «cinema» as the basic 'vocabulary' at the beginning of every cinematographic work, or as the scene elements to be considered when reading a screenplay. That's why the reader's collaboration not only has to be much more «intense», as Pasolini says; he or she gets to be an «accomplice», whose function is much more precise than in any ordinary narrative text. By referring to the poems of Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898) and Giuseppe Ungaretti (1888-1970), Pasolini points to a certain kind of modern poetry, whose typical synaesthetic effects are produced by means of «grafemi», using them in the written text in a way that transcends them toward the corresponding «fonemi» – «“fingendo” di sentire acusticamente quei grafemi».²⁵ This is to be understood on the background of Pasolini's somewhat Platonic emphasis on oral language, whose distance from a written one is similar to that ascribed to *im-signs*. In Pasolini's own words, orality is a «fantasma»²⁶ a designation certainly to be taken in its global, positive artistic sense. The choice of the reference model for his conception of screenplay is at any rate significant, insofar as this is envisaged as something like a rather hermetic, self-transcending poem (and in this sense as a typically 'modern' literary product).

Though the crucial point of *La sceneggiatura* is to be found in the first part of the essay, its full meaning only appears in the second one. The self-transcending character of the screenplay, the change not only of medium, but also of level (from the rational to the irrational) is ascribed to the «volontà della forma»,²⁷ whereas the screenplay as such comes to be considered as «forma in movimento».²⁸ Pasolini's thinking device of a «structure that wants to be another structure» is triggered by those two synonymous pseudo-metaphysical terms. The author already uses it in the first part of the original publication *Dal laboratorio* as he describes the socio-linguistic change taking place in the Italy of his time: «Noi italiani viviamo concretamente la tendenza di una struttura a essere un'altra struttura: viviamo il suo movimento di modifica [...]».²⁹ On the other hand, the use of the term «volontà» goes back to Pasolini's first writings, where it already seems to have not only a – maybe adolescent-like – voluntaristic meaning, but is closely linked to the socio-linguistic and downright political structures. It is also related to the author's interest for the use of Friulian as a language that is and in a way wants to be 'another' Italian, i.e. an Italian that has never been Italian – «Una specie di [...] volgare appena svincolato dal pre-romanzo con tutta l'innocenza dei primi testi di una lingua».³⁰ The essay *Volontà poetica ed evoluzione della lingua*, written in 1946, is very instructive in this regard. Integrating a historical point of view, Pasolini comes back to these considerations with the analogous formula of *La volontà di Dante a essere poeta* (1965): here he develops another example of 'formalist' poetics, locating the poetical in «punti di frizione, di scandalo, di instabilità espressiva» or in those passages «dove avviene il salto di qualità».³¹

We do not find in *La sceneggiatura* any further specification about what exactly is meant by «will». Only once, Pasolini mentions a «will of the author», but, given the syntactical structure of the statement alone, it seems rather clear to me that he does not allude to the traditional concept of the authorial 'intention': the screenplay manifests, Pasolini writes,



una vera e propria volontà di movimento, la volontà dell'autore che designando i significati di una struttura linguistica come i segni tipici di quella struttura, nel tempo stesso designa i significati di un'altra struttura. Tale volontà è precisa: è un dato di fatto, che l'osservatore può osservare dall'esterno, di cui è egli stesso testimone.³²

The observer is, as we have seen, not only a «witness» but an accomplice as well. The «will» thus appears to be both an interior and an exterior factor and merges with the already employed terms of «tendency», «movement» or «evolution». Given his use of the concept of 'structure,' Pasolini also refers to some of the most prominent structuralists (Claude Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, Cesare Segre), but mostly to underscore structuralist approaches. Furthermore he cites the notion of 'process' coined by the American anthropologists Peter George Murdock and Evon Z. Vogt to contrast with a more dynamic concept the French model of 'structure.' But, as Pasolini himself insinuates, his essay is not on any account a 'serious' discussion of the philosophical value of these concepts. The recourse to Murdock's concept of 'process,' for instance, is in conceptual terms immediately limited by a paradox: «Murdock e Vogt si troverebbero davanti a un "processo che non procede"». ³³ Moreover, the short assumption of Lévi-Strauss' basic structural model is in an almost uncandid way reductive.³⁴

If the philological reconstruction of these influences on Pasolini's text does not seem very helpful, it might by contrast be necessary to point out the more or less hidden sources of inspiration concerning in particular the concepts of movement, evolution and will, i.e. Karl Marx and Henri Bergson.

A clear reference to Marx is to be seen in the statement that all social structures are involved in a historical movement, the will of acting groups or individuals coinciding with this movement, so that, or rather because the schemes of class struggle and social change are given by necessity. Accordingly «Dante's will to be a poet» or the author's will for his screenplay 'to become something different,' are supposed to be both individual and voluntary art expressions; yet, considered by themselves, they only express a «movement which is taking place before our eyes», including the reader's or spectator's, and in which we are at the same time taking part as well.³⁵ Considering Pasolini's argument in *La sceneggiatura*, one probably has to speak of a rather crude transposition of a political theorem – maybe bald in itself, depending on one's own historical standpoint. Yet at the same time, this transposition evidences Pasolini's comprehensive method: he does not simply give an analytical account of a certain aesthetic phenomenon, but also simultaneously outlines a poetic program and takes a position of his own in the historical evolution of his art. It is exactly this multiform purpose that enforces the epistemological «rozzezza» of the essay.

The other unmentioned but obvious intertext of *La sceneggiatura* is Bergson's *Matière et mémoire*, or, in Pasolini's words, the «ontology of movement» of the French philosopher.³⁶ Discussing the famous paradoxes of Zeno of Elea, Bergson develops a differing concept of movement, extracting it, so to speak, from its determination by space and time. Zeno's logical contradictions are based on the tentative fragmentation of movement. His attempt is, in Bergson's view, to make movement coincide with immobility, i.e. with states in space and time that are possible only in an isolated form. That is the reason why Zeno eventually affirms that movement does not exist at all.³⁷ Independent of space and time, though, movement presents itself to the human consciousness as «un fait indivisé ou une suite de faits indivisés». ³⁸ This 'ontological' conception of movement confers its autonomy to Pasolini's «forma in movimento». It is, after all, a question of assumption: the screenplay will not be taken in consideration in its finality, but as the aimless creative process leading there. The «forma in movimento» is focussed on a creative and transformational, purely vectorial force, that according to Pasolini, becomes a basic aesthetic theorem. I will try in the following to discuss some further implications of his Aesthetics of Movement or Will.



*Toward a general aesthetic theory
The formalist approach (Jakobson)*

On the one hand, as we have seen, reconstructing Pasolini's explicit references to Marx and Bergson is crucial to explain the main concepts and the structure of *La sceneggiatura come «struttura che vuol essere altra struttura»*. On the other hand, though, these concepts implicitly encompass some other hints to a general aesthetic theory that let appear a much broader approach to aesthetic phenomena as such, beyond the semiotic questions related to screenplay and cinema.

The *differentia specifica* of the screenplay, that we shall provisionally call the 'will to otherness', may also be seen in the author's aesthetic theory as the *differentia specifica* of all art. As Pasolini is obviously searching to define this difference, there is a clear link to 'formalist' theorems to be observed, all the more, if we consider the concepts as linked with social, political and historical notions. One of them, in my opinion closely related to Pasolini's idea of a «volontà della forma», is the Russian term *ustanovka*. For reasons I am going to explain, the best way to translate it in English is by using the word 'set' in the sense of 'accentuation,' but also of 'adjustment' or 'alignment.'

Ustanovka means a mindset of both production and reception, conferring to an object its specifically artistic nature. Inasmuch as this includes a shift exerted on the object, and consequently its disautomation and decontextualisation, i.e. the «reduction of the aesthetic object to its sensually accessible phenomenality»,³⁹ *ustanovka* is close to a better known chief concept of formalism, namely *ostranenie* or «Alienation». Roman Jakobson, for instance, speaks of a certain «prose [...] set toward poems», referring to literary works of writers inspired by symbolism and futurism, namely Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893-1930) and Boris Pasternak (1890-1960).⁴⁰ Most notably though the concept of *ustanovka* is to be found in Jakobson's renowned definition of the poetic function as the «set toward the message as such»⁴¹ or «*vyskazyvanie s ustanovkoj na vyraženie*», i.e. «utterance adjusted to the expression».⁴² Furthermore *ustanovka* is used within the context of Russian avant-garde to designate cinematographic or technical arrangements: the functioning of a film-set, the collective alignments of everyday public transport etc.⁴³ The «set toward the message as such» evidently reduces the communicative function «to a minimum».⁴⁴ This is a pivotal fact, because it distinguishes poetic language from sheer emotional language, which precisely wants to communicate the emotion.

Jakobson's further development of the linguistic devices of the poetic function is well known: «*The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination. Equivalence is promoted to the constitutive device of the sequence*».⁴⁵ Obviously, this definition cannot be applied to all kinds of poetic language. Most of Pasolini's poems would not coincide with it; his prose even less. As a consequence, the 'set' on something, the 'will' of a given form is necessarily deviant in relation to the ordinary, traditional and codified function of this form, it is its inclination to otherness. We could also formulate that the screenplay's specific artistic character consists in its being 'set' toward its filmic realisation without actually being a film, of course, just like Pasternak's prose is 'set' toward poetry without being itself a poem.

The psychological approach (Nietzsche)

That a generalised use of a formalist concept like the 'set of the form to otherness' can be detected in Pasolini's writings does not of itself tell us of what kind this 'set' may be, what determines it, what, or who performs or implements it. That is, more exactly, the question of will;



it seems natural to connect the formulated questions with the concept developed by one of the main theorists of will, namely Friedrich Nietzsche, or at least with part of it. This connection is not easy to be made; Nietzsche's concepts are seizable only by a multitude of reflexes and these, in addition, are often deflected by different traditions – and aberrations – of reception. First of all and in contrast to Marx, Nietzsche locates the will within the sciences of the mind. Psychology is, as he writes in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), the «morphology and genealogy of the will to power», thus it has to be considered as the «mistress of sciences» paving the way to all «basic problems».⁴⁶

Nietzsche's examination of will in *The Gay Science* (1882) begins with a sharp rejection of Schopenhauer's metaphysical interpretation of the term. There is no such thing as a transcendent force ruling the world, called 'Will'. Nietzsche defines the concept in a strictly human, individual and psychological sense, related to the notions of pleasure and aversion and to their intellectual interpretation.⁴⁷ The often cited notion of «will to power» has also to be considered from this perspective in relation to the aesthetic self-affirmation of the artist. Art virtually appears as the only way to survive; by contrast, intellectual «honesty», i.e., in semiotic terms, the unambiguous covering of the world, would be simply unbearable: «Die Redlichkeit würde den Ekel und den Selbstmord im Gefolge haben. Nun aber hat unsere Redlichkeit eine Gegenmacht, die uns solchen Konsequenzen ausweichen hilft: die Kunst, als den *guten Willen* zum Scheine».⁴⁸ «Will to power» is a syntagm combining the two aspects of one and the same phenomenon: 'Power' is the translation of 'will,' and 'will' is the impetus of 'power.' The formidable transvaluation of all values proclaimed in the later *Antichrist* (written in 1888, but published only in 1895) is nothing but the object of this will to power, insofar as it simply claims a positive practical philosophy:

Das Leben selbst gilt mir als Instinkt für Wachstum, für Dauer, für Häufung von Kräften, für *Macht* – wo der Wille zur Macht fehlt, giebt es Niedergang. Meine Behauptung ist, dass allen obersten Werthen der Menschheit dieser Wille *fehlt*, – dass Niedergangs-Werthe, *nihilistische* Werthe unter den heiligsten Namen die Herrschaft führen.⁴⁹

The generalising turn of this ultimate state of Nietzsche's conception accentuates the unconscious character of will and its physiological objectivity as a synonym of «instinct». Within the limits of my argument, it is important to point out two essentials: firstly, will is to be interpreted from the inside as well as from the outside. Insofar as it remains unconscious it is manifest only in its formal appearance; the formal appearances though – and this would be the prominent feature of any Nietzschean methodology or, in Deleuze's words, of a «philologie active»⁵⁰ – have to be interpreted as a function of the will inhabiting them. Secondly, not only is art a will-driven phenomenon, but it is the most immediate and most positive manifestation of it;



Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Il mondo non mi vuole più e non lo sa*, s.d.

it is indeed the will to deceive, to deviate from 'honest' but lethal *Eigentlichkeit* ('ownmostness'). Consequently, art is in its formal appearances as art intrinsically marked by the drift to be something which it is not, that is to say by its ontological «rozzezza» and «incompletezza».

One can also speak of a 'set toward otherness' as a technological adjustment of the above discussed semiotic materials. The vectorial force driving it must be recognised as an existentially human feature. Both the formalist and the Nietzschean approach seem to be useful to extract from Pasolini's allusive thinking a more consistent theoretical pattern. Even if slightly deviant from the original context in *La sceneggiatura come «struttura che vuol essere altra struttura»*, this pattern may help to understand some of Pasolini's general aesthetic preoccupations.



Conclusion: Pasolini's Aesthetics of Will

Claiming a homogeneous Pasolinian theory of aesthetics would be a philologically adventurous enterprise: I would rather give here a series of reflections on the three most salient aesthetic features in Pasolini's own work, that are nonetheless sufficiently abstract to be adoptable for more general considerations as well.

The first feature is Pasolini's many-sidedness. I refer hereby to a current still very strong in his reception history, trying at any attempt to write a new piece of biography. Pasolini's shift between different genres and media thus seems above all motivated by personal creativeness or delusion. Certainly, this view is not erroneous, but it is precisely limited to biographical considerations. The above-mentioned theorems and philosophical outlines are suited though to give another thrill to the media and genre differences in the work of the author alone. We have already seen that the difference between prose and poetry is for Pasolini a quasi ontological one, converging with the difference between text and image or film. The small essay on the screenplay I have taken as starting point for my own reflections shows clearly that Pasolini not only changed genres and media during his lifetime, but that in every genre and every medium he used, he already saw the possibility of developing into another medium.⁵¹ The reason for it was not his personal unsteadiness, but the 'will of the forms' he dealt with. In his poetry, the 'set toward prose' is easily recognisable and vice versa. A good deal of his prose, the very screenplays, is written in order to be transposed into images, and the images he produced in films and drawings are at least saturated with text, not to say unintelligible, or heavily bearable in their aesthetic dimension without the inter- and subtexts they are displaying, or they are referring to. It is not only with regard to their content or in relation to the scandals they provoked that Pasolini's works are transgressive, but also – and in a questionable and therefore maybe even more radical sense – in relation to the aesthetics of genre and media they enact. There is a formal, political and, of course, personal will in them to be the other and to deceive the 'honest' self, i.e. the taken for granted political and aesthetic *status quo* of what Pasolini would call late capitalist society.

My second point concerns a content issue, namely the most scandalous feature of almost all of Pasolini's work: sexuality. It goes without saying that in this regard as well biographical interpretations are copious and pertinent. But there exist different angles to look at the question. One of these is defining sexuality in Pasolini as an aesthetic necessity insofar as it corresponds to formal exigences of his artwork. First of all, sexuality obviously functions as 'the other' with respect to rationality and convention, and in its homoerotic manifestations it is at the same time 'the other' with respect to normative heterosexual behaviour. Moreover, what seems important to me is that sexuality entertains an ambiguous relationship with art itself: Pasolini was very well aware of this ambiguity and could himself not escape it, as can be seen in the case of the «abjuration» of the *Trilogy of Life*.⁵² Sexuality can be stimulated by art, art can be stimulated by sexuality, but sexuality in itself is also the other of art. In this sense, the 'will of the form' tends toward a kind of ecstatic self-transgression, to its dissolution as a form as such. If art is set toward sexuality, it revocates and destroys itself. The film *Teorema* deals with those self-transgressive experiences triggered by both art and sexuality, but it is not 'about' sexuality. It is about a drift to otherness, about the sudden manifestation of a will. As to genre, it appears that *Teorema* drifts between completely different dimensions: It begins like a news report, then shifts to an elegiac mode, that hard-boiled tv-watchers would nowadays call 'soft porn', whereas I would tend to take it as evidence of an originally Pasolinian topic, namely the historicity of sexuality; it ends with the pictorial scenes of the housekeeper's burial and the father's desert wandering, each with its allegorical significance. While breaking out of any genre conventions, the film also seems here to break out of itself. Similar to the screenplay, it calls for the spectator to read the poems Pasolini wrote while shooting it.⁵³



My third point is about the obvious leading position of myth in Pasolini's works. As we have seen, he was constantly occupied by the search for a mythical dimension in the largest sense, that he believed to discover – with regard to language – in less codified or hardly codifiable media like dialect or film. Whatever media or genre he used, however, there appears to be a strong will to get in touch with the 'other side,' the «magma». The predominance of sexuality in his work is of course to be understood in this perspective, rather than against the background of a simple intent of provoking or disturbing. Still the same function can be attributed to other content topics like the sacred, the primitive or violence. All the same, this genuinely aesthetic reason explains why these contents appear in so many different combinations: as a consequence a superficial approach may result in the conclusion that they are incoherent or aesthetically precarious, or even camp. At least in terms of cinema history, therefore Pasolini's films remain famous and at the same time marginal within the formal development of film in the second half of the Twentieth century because in this regard, he is often considered as – to use another Nietzschean term – «untimely».⁵⁴ On the other hand, the attempt to make palpable the subliminality of a mythic dimension precisely where it is not manifest is certainly to be ascribed to Pasolini as an aesthetic merit. This 'Set toward Otherness' can be demonstrated at its best on the basis of *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*. The scriptural subtext of the film is by definition a «forma in movimento»: not a story, but the Gospel, transcending its linguistic shape. Pasolini's adaptation of the biblical model enacts the mythic «magma» precisely using a 'neorealist' or 'naturalistic' pattern. Of course, one can state that he thus deconstructs the underlying myth, clearly depicting the Saviour as an ordinary Mediterranean young boy and his disciples as fishermen engaged the previous day at some mole.⁵⁵ At the same time if the whole cinematographic enterprise is considered to possess any aesthetic sense, the spectator has to approve that there is a «volontà della forma», tending to explore precisely what one cannot see.

¹ P.P. PASOLINI, *La sceneggiatura come «struttura che vuol essere altra struttura»*, in ID., *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte*, a cura di W. Siti, S. De Laude, Milano, Mondadori (I Meridiani), 1999, I, pp. 1489-1502.

² For an academic account on Pasolini's linguistic and cinematographic concepts cfr. for instance T. DE MAURO, *Pasolini's Linguistics*, in Z.G. Baranski (ed.), *Pasolini Old and New. Surveys and Studies*, Dublin, Four Courts Press, 1999, pp. 77-90, and C. WAGSTAFF, *Reality into Poetry: Pasolini's Film Theory*, *ivi*, pp. 185-227.

³ P.P. PASOLINI, *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte*, cit. [SLA].

⁴ Cfr. F. VIGHI, *Le ragioni dell'«altro». La formazione intellettuale di Pasolini tra saggistica, letteratura e cinema*, Ravenna, Longo Editore, 2001. Especially illuminating is the chapter on *Cinema, pansemologia e ideologia* (*ivi*, pp. 234-239), where Vighi highlights the all but logical link between Pasolini's theoretical attempt to «recuperare un dato extra-linguistico alla semiologia» (*ivi*, p. 237) and his cinematographic ambition to explore «una dimensione percettiva «intraducibile»» (*ivi*, p. 235). It seems crucial to me to receive Pasolini's theory as the workbench-reflection of an artist rather than as academic meta-discourse. As a matter of course, the subversive or even 'revolutionary' hints implied by this theory remain strongly attractive. Cfr. with regard to the above developed linguistic argument, F. IMPELLIZZERI, *Sémiotique de l'outrage. Infractons politiques du langage, sociolectes et cinélangues chez Jean Genet et Pier Paolo Pasolini*, Roma, Aracne, 2010. Beyond my focus are the biographic interpretations of Pasolini's theoretical concepts that continue to haunt the critical accounts on his work. The most prominent among them is of course G. ZIGAINA, *Hostia. Trilogia della morte di Pier Paolo Pasolini*, Venezia, Marsilio, 1995, but there are theoretically more sophisticated approaches like for instance O.V. SOLOVIEVA, *The Intellectual Embodied in His Medium, or The Cinematic Passion of Pier Paolo Pasolini*, «Italian Quarterly», XLIV, 171-172, Winter-Spring 2007, pp. 45-61.

⁵ Cfr. G. DELEUZE, *Cinéma I: L'image-mouvement*, Paris, Minuit, 1983; *Cinéma II: L'image-temps*, Paris, Minuit, 1985.

⁶ Cfr. P.P. PASOLINI, *Il «cinema di poesia»*, in SLA I, pp. 1461-1488.

⁷ Cfr. P.P. PASOLINI, *In calce al cinema di poesia*, «Filmcritica», 163, gennaio 1966, in SLA II.

⁸ D. ALIGHIERI, *La Divina Commedia*, II, *Purgatorio*, con il commento di A.M. Chiavacci Leonardi, Milano, Mondadori (I Meridiani), 1994, I, p. 117.

⁹ P.P. PASOLINI, *In calce al cinema di poesia*, cit., p. 2966.

¹⁰ Cfr. P.P. PASOLINI, *Dal laboratorio*, in SLA I, p. 1341.

¹¹ P.P. PASOLINI, *La sceneggiatura come «struttura che vuol essere altra struttura»*, cit., p. 1489.

¹² *Ibidem*.



¹³ Cfr. W. SITI, *Note e notizie sui testi*, in SLA II, p. 2939.

¹⁴ P.P. PASOLINI, *Il «cinema di poesia»*, cit., p. 1463.

¹⁵ All translations from Pasolini's texts are mine.

¹⁶ P.P. PASOLINI, *Il «cinema di poesia»*, cit., pp. 1463-1465.

¹⁷ Cfr. *ivi*, p. 1467.

¹⁸ It goes without saying, that Pasolini's above cited 'double articulation' of cinematographic creation is fundamentally different from the canonic 'double articulation' theorized by André Martinet, one of the pillars of structuralist linguistics. Hence, the controversies between Pasolini and Metz or Eco seem to be based on a reciprocal misunderstanding of the authors' particular intents, that may have been polemically accentuated. Pasolini just does not want to establish a structuralist model of cinema; his use of the term *langue* is precisely «mythic» and «infantile» instead of being Saussurean. Cfr. P.P. PASOLINI, *La lingua scritta della realtà*, in SLA I, pp. 1503-1540, and W. SITI, *Note e notizie sui testi*, cit., in SLA II, pp. 2968-2969.

¹⁹ P.P. PASOLINI, *Il «cinema di poesia»*, cit., p. 1483.

²⁰ *Ivi*, p. 1488. *Mutatis mutandis* Pasolini uses the same argument in *Il cinema e la lingua orale* (1969) by attributing to cinema the potential to produce something similar to immemorial oral poetry. Cfr. P.P. Pasolini, *Il cinema e la lingua orale*, in SLA I, pp. 1569-1599. This «late humanistic function» is at the center of the study by E. MELI, «*Il non verbale come altra verbalità*». *Il cinema di poesia tra teoria e scrittura*, in G. Savoca (a cura di), *Contributi per Pasolini*, Firenze, Olschki, 2002, pp. 97-110.

²¹ P.P. PASOLINI, *La sceneggiatura come «struttura che vuol essere altra struttura»*, cit., p. 1490.

²² *Ivi*, p. 1492.

²³ *Ivi*, p. 1497.

²⁴ *Ivi*, p. 1494.

²⁵ *Ivi*, p. 1493.

²⁶ P.P. PASOLINI, *Dal laboratorio*, cit., p. 1319.

²⁷ P.P. PASOLINI, *La sceneggiatura come «struttura che vuol essere altra struttura»*, cit., p. 1491.

²⁸ *Ivi*, p. 1497.

²⁹ P.P. PASOLINI, *Dal laboratorio*, cit., p. 1315.

³⁰ P.P. PASOLINI, *Volontà poetica ed evoluzione della lingua*, in SLA I, p. 160. M. Á. CUEVAS points out, that for the young Pasolini the Friulian regional language, that for him is devoid of any folklore, becomes the «metafora assoluta della lingua», cfr. ID., *La costruzione di un orizzonte estetico nei saggi giovanili di Pier Paolo Pasolini*, «Cuadernos de Filología Italiana» 2000, Numero extraordinario, II, p. 697.

³¹ P.P. PASOLINI, *La volontà di Dante a essere poeta*, in SLA I, p. 1386. The polemic triggered by this short essay can be considered exemplary for quite a lot of discussions about Pasolini's theoretical assertions. Cfr. the short and instructive recapitulation of this debate in S. DE LAUDE, *Pasolini lettore di Mimesis*, in I. Paccagnella, E. Gregori (a cura di), *Mimesis. L'eredità di Auerbach*, Atti del XXXV Convegno Interuniversitario (Bressanone/Innsbruck, 5-8 luglio 2007), Padova, Esedra, 2009, pp. 467-481.

³² P.P. Pasolini, *La sceneggiatura come «struttura che vuol essere altra struttura»*, in SLA I, p. 1498-1499.

³³ *Ivi*, p. 1498.

³⁴ Cfr. *ivi*, pp. 1501-1502.

³⁵ Cfr. K. MARX, *Das Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei* [1848]. *Kommentierte Studienausgabe*, hrsg. v. T. Stammen u. A. Classen, München, Fink, 2009, p. 78. Above, I have paraphrased the beginning of chapter II *Proletarier und Kommunisten* (paragraph 9) where the author states, that between communists and proletarians there will not be any conflicts of interest, since the will of both social groups corresponds with the historical evolution of society.

³⁶ Cfr. P.P. PASOLINI, *Dal laboratorio*, cit., p. 1341.

³⁷ Cfr. H. BERGSON, *Matière et mémoire. Essai sur la relation du corps à l'esprit*, Genève, Albert Skira, 1946, p. 195.

³⁸ *Ivi*, p. 198. Zeno's paradox is consequently resolved by an 'ontological' redefinition of the object in question: «bornons-nous à constater que le mouvement immédiatement perçu est un fait très clair, et que les difficultés ou contradictions signalées par l'école d'Élée concernent beaucoup moins le mouvement lui-même qu'une réorganisation artificielle, et non viable, du mouvement par l'esprit» (*ivi*, p. 199).

³⁹ A.A. HANSEN-LÖVE, *Der russische Formalismus. Methodologische Rekonstruktion seiner Entwicklung aus dem Prinzip der Verfremdung*, Wien, Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1978, p. 212. (My translation).

⁴⁰ R. JAKOBSON, *Randbemerkungen zur Prosa des Dichters Pasternak* [1935], in ID., *On Verse, its Masters and Explorers* (Selected Writings 5), ed. by S. Rudy and M. Taylor, The Hague and Paris, Mouton, 1979, p. 416. (My translation).

⁴¹ R. JAKOBSON, *Closing Statements. Linguistics and Poetics*, in T.A. Sebeok (ed.), *Style in Language*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1960, p. 356.

⁴² R. JAKOBSON, *Die neueste russische Poesie. Erster Entwurf. Viktor Chlebnikov* [1921], in J. Striedter (Hrsg.) *Texte der russischen Formalisten*, München, Fink, 1969-1972, II, *Texte zur Theorie des Verses und der poetischen Sprache*, herausgegeben von W.-D. Stempel, p. 30. (My translation).



⁴³ Cfr. N. TARABUKIN, *Von der Staffelei zur Maschine* [1923], transl. into German by G. Leupold, in A. Hennig, (Hrsg.), *Über die Dinge. Texte der russischen Avantgarde*, Hamburg, Philo Fine Arts, 2009, pp. 534-547; B. ARVATOV, 1925/2009: *Alltag und Kultur des Dings* [1925], ivi, pp. 307-327.

⁴⁴ R. JAKOBSON, *Die neueste russische Poesie*, cit., p. 31.

⁴⁵ R. JAKOBSON, *Closing Statements*, cit., p. 358. (my italics).

⁴⁶ F. NIETZSCHE, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (KSA 5), No. 23, p. 38. I am using here my own literal translation maintaining the word «mistress» because of the obvious salacious implications of the aphorism.

⁴⁷ Cfr. F. NIETZSCHE, *Fröhliche Wissenschaft* (KSA 3), No. 127, p. 483: «Ihm [*sc.* Schopenhauer] gegenüber stelle ich diese Sätze auf: erstens, damit Wille entstehe, ist eine Vorstellung von Lust und Unlust nöthig. Zweitens: dass ein heftiger Reiz als Lust oder Unlust empfunden werde, das ist die Sache des *interpretirenden* Intellects, der freilich zumeist dabei uns unbewusst arbeitet; und ein und derselbe Reiz *kann* als Lust oder Unlust interpretirt werden. Drittens: nur bei den intellectuellen Wesen giebt es Lust, Unlust und Wille; die ungeheure Mehrzahl der Organismen hat Nichts davon» («I set the following propositions against those of Schopenhauer: – Firstly, in order that Will may arise, an idea of pleasure and pain is necessary. Secondly, that a vigorous excitation may be felt as pleasure or pain, is the affair of the *interpreting* intellect, which, to be sure, operates thereby for the most part unconsciously to us, and one and the same excitation *may* be interpreted as pleasure or pain. Thirdly, it is only in an intellectual being that there is pleasure, displeasure and Will; the immense majority of organisms have nothing of the kind»: F. NIETZSCHE, *Joyful Wisdom*, translated by T. Common, New York, Macmillan, 1924, p. 171).

⁴⁸ Ivi, No. 107, p. 464. (See the above cited translation, p. 146: «*Honesty* would have disgust and suicide in its train. Now, however, our honesty has a counterpoise which helps us to escape such consequences; – namely, Art, as the *good-will* to illusion»).

⁴⁹ F. NIETZSCHE, *Der Antichrist. Fluch auf das Christenthum* (KSA 6), No. 6, p. 172. («Life itself appears to me as an instinct for growth, for survival, for the accumulation of forces, for *power*: whenever the will to power fails there is disaster. My contention is that all the highest values of humanity have been emptied of this will – that the values of *décadence*, of *nihilism*, now prevail under the holiest names»: F. NIETZSCHE, *The Antichrist*, translated by H.L. Mencken, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1918, p. 46).

⁵⁰ Cfr. G. DELEUZE, *Nietzsche et la philosophie*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1962, p. 84.

⁵¹ Luca Vigliani develops the question with regard to Pasolini's theater production evocating a similar tension between text and representation. Cfr. ID., «*La gioia più grande dei padri / è vedere i figli uguali a loro.*» *Considerazioni estetiche su Affabulazione di Pasolini*, in «*Parlando cose che 'l tacer è bello.*» *Messinscena del Dialogo nella Letteratura italiana: dal «Dialogo coi morti» al «Dialogo della coscienza»*, Firenze, Franco Cesati Editore (in press, forthcoming in 2013).

⁵² Cfr. P.P. PASOLINI, *Abiura della Trilogia della vita* (15 giugno 1975), «*Corriere della sera*», 09-11-1975, in ID., *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, a cura di W. Siti, S. De Laude, Milano, Mondadori (I Meridiani), 1999, pp. 599-603.

⁵³ Cfr. P.P. PASOLINI, «*Ab, miei piei nudi...*», in ID., *Romanzi e racconti II: 1962-1975*, a cura di W. Siti, S. De Laude, Milano, Mondadori (I Meridiani), 1998, pp. 1053-1056.

⁵⁴ Cfr. J. RAUSCHER, *Pier Paolo Pasolinis mytho-mystische Realitätsversessenheit*, in T. Koebner, I. Schenk (Hrsg.), *Das goldene Zeitalter des italienischen Films: die 1960er Jahre*, München, Edition Text + Kritik, 2008, pp. 241-256. For a different interpretation of the complex of sexuality and violence, related to the above cited drawing, cfr. H.H. WETZEL, «*Il mondo non mi vuole più*», cit., pp. 117-122.

⁵⁵ Cfr. G. RELLA, *Tra cinema mito poesia. In margine alla sceneggiatura del Vangelo secondo Matteo di Pasolini*, «*Critica letteraria*», XXXI, 119, 2003, pp. 279-307.