

Il cinema come happening

Pasolini's Primitivism and the
Sixties Italian Art Scene

Luca Caminati

As is well known Pasolini's cinema was from the very beginning caught up in an intense dialogue with the other visual arts (painting, photography, performance). As is evident from numerous interviews, articles, and polemics, he reflected deeply on the Italian and European tradition of painting, to which he was introduced in 1941-42 at the Università di Bologna when he attended Robert Longhi's seminars on Masolino and Masaccio. That was the source of his *fulgorazione figurativa*, "figurative fulmination," a lasting impression that was destined to shape his way of seeing and framing the world through the camera. Two superb studies, Marchesini's *Citazioni pivettoriche nel cinema di Pasolini*, and Francesco Galluzzi's *Pasolini e la pittura* have unraveled the intertextual conjunctions that exist between Pasolini's films and Longhi's reading of Italian art history, tracking down and identifying images borrowed, quoted, parodied, and used by one of the most erudite directors in the history of cinema.¹

Yet when we come to the lively art scene of the Cold War period, we find much less written about Pasolini – and much less written by him.² Pasolini's writings are surprisingly quiet about any art movement or artist of his own time, even though Pasolini was surely very aware of the contemporary visual arts as one of the notables at the heart of the Roman intellectual community of his time. That silence of Pasolini's stands out more when we compare him to, say, his friend Alberto Moravia, an accomplice in stirring ideological controversies, who took a very active part in the debate about the visual arts. Moravia, as Pasolini, was waging wars on two fronts: on the one hand, against the domination of a backward and conformist bourgeois/catholic political/intellectual quietism, the reigning ideology of late Fifties and Sixties Italy; and on the other hand, against the dominant oppositional line, maintained by the Italian Communist party (following their Soviet counterpart), which still promoted Socialist Realism.³ The features of the Roman debate about art were reproduced in many cultural capitals of the time, and it is beautifully narrativized in Moravia's novel *La noia* (*Boredom*, 1960):⁴ figuration versus abstraction,

creation versus reproduction, Lukács (the official position of the Italian PCI) versus Brecht.⁵ When Pasolini did take note of the contemporary art scene, he could be quite spiteful, as he was in his comments about any form of avant-garde.⁶ Pasolini's distaste for the avant-garde extended to cinema as well: Andy Warhol and Stan Brakhage are the unmentioned victims of this description:

In Montreal, I read, one sees new technical film experiments. Perhaps that is the road to the cinema of poetry-poetry? But, how horrible. In the future will the poetry of cinema only be able to be expressionistic, macro-pop, deforming, gigantic, distressing, and hallucinogenic? [...] Whoever loves reality too much, as I do, eventually hates it, rebels against it, and tells it to go to hell. But I don't believe in a cinema of lyric poetry obtained through editing and the intensification of technique.⁷

Why was Pasolini so hostile to the avant-garde? The early Sixties saw Pasolini as the object of an attack mounted by the Gruppo '63, under the influence of Umberto Eco and Edoardo Sanguineti. Eco and Sanguineti targeted the editorial board of *Nuovi argomenti* (Pasolini, Moravia, Morante, etc.) as members of the cultural establishment. Sanguineti ridiculed Pasolini for crying over the "end of dialectic",⁸ which left the "heretical" Pasolini in the uncharacteristic position of having to defend his status of a Leftist intellectual before the gaze of a new generation which was bored with the Old Left and with the recommendations of the Party, while at the same time claiming to be producing new political and aesthetic models. As a result of this antagonism, Pasolini kept a low profile with regards to contemporary art, with the exception of one act of personal participation in a performance piece just few months before his untimely death. It was in a work by his long time friend Fabio Mauri: a performance titled *Intellettuale (Il Vangelo di/su Pasolini)*; *Intellectual (the Gospel by/on Pasolini)*, documented by photos of Antonio Masotti, in May 1975 at GAM

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in Bologna. The performance was based on Pasolini's physical presence in the museum space as both medium and object of art: in the piece, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (1964) was projected on its author's white shirt as he was seated at the center of an otherwise unfurnished room. The Mauri/Pasolini performance spoke directly to the entire corpus of Pasolini's themes and concerns: body, realism, representation, etc. Pasolini's decision to take part in this performance clearly demonstrates that his opposition to contemporary art was not absolute, but was mostly triggered by the notorious fragmentation of the Italian leftist scene (then and now), the personal acrimony between various major groupings, and Pasolini's belief that his ideological position was stifled. Fabio Mauri was indeed one of the few artist/intellectuals who could keep contact with both the *Nuovi Argomenti* establishment and the new *avanguardisti* associated with Gruppo '63.

The Roman contemporary art scene of the time was itself split: on one side there was La Tartaruga gallery, which was run by Plinio de Martiis in collaboration with Leo Castelli. The latter acted as a medium between the American abstract artists (Rauschenberg, Twombly, De Kooning) and their Italian counterparts, the *pittori di Piazza del Popolo* - the Piazza del Popolo painters - of whom the chief representatives were Festa, Schifano, and Burri. On the other side was Fabio Sargentini's gallery, L'attico. Sargentini was already moving his gallery space beyond Pop-Art and abstraction (often criticized by the Italian left as being too "pro-American"), and promoting conceptual pieces by the late Sixties. Kounellis' 1969 *Untitled [Twelve Horses]* was probably their most famous exhibit. Later, L'attico became the foothold by which the European artists of the Seventies asserted themselves in Italy: Beuys, Prini, Acconci, etc. Pasolini's taste in art was undoubtedly more traditional: he took his inspiration from figurative art, and he disliked modern music.⁹ His favorite contemporary painters were Morandi, De Pisis, Guttuso, and Zigaina, modernist of a realist vein.¹⁰

This is the background against which I'd like to offer a symptomatic reading of Pasolini's film theory and practice as it articulates a particular anxiety about the contemporary art scene of his time, even as Pasolini shares certain commonalities with it. In particular, I will argue that many "primitivist" elements in Pasolini's art (both materially and ideologically speaking) are infused with archaic and primitive thematic very visible at the time. Dialectically, I intend to use an insight of Benjamin Buchloh's, who has pointed out that "primitivism" in the arts springs from a confrontation between Western culture and its Others. Yet this art materializes a paradox: much of primitivist art often pursues purity and primacy through hybridity and pastiche.¹¹ The inner dialectics of western discovery of a "pure and untouched Other" very quickly give way to a fully developed conceptual paradox of the introjection of the Other: the signature gesture of refusing modernity by some form of escape to a primitive society becomes the hallmark of modernity within the metropole, the ultimate avant-garde technique that achieves the incessant demand for novelty by breaking the parameters of beauty and acceptability in art (as in Picasso and Braque).¹² By these means, the primitive is recuperated back into the modernist repertoire, and exchanges its aura of challenging the artistic status quo for its function as a status marker of 'taste' within the capitalist commodity culture. Primitivism is ultimately then caught in the fold between an anti-modernist ambition and modernist technique, following in this sense one of the paradoxes of modernity as outlined by Compagnon.¹³

Here I think it is important to clarify the odd position Pasolini had in relationship to the notions of realism and modernism. Pasolini's "certain realism" (as he defined his own work) is created through the deployment of Brechtian alienation techniques that he had very consciously used from the very outset of his cinematic career. Pasolini indeed sides with Brecht against Lukács in maintaining that realism lies in showing the "discontinuity" of the world, or, as Ernst Bloch put it, "an art which strives

to exploits the *real* fissures in surface inter-relations and to discover the new in their crevices”.¹⁴ These Brechtian techniques are never meant to be just shocking (shock for the sake of shock is indeed one of Pasolini’s criticisms of the new avant-garde art/film scene): *Teorema* (1968) summarizes Pasolini’s condemnation of the bourgeois quest for the ever new in the character of the young Pietro, whose desperate attempts to be original culminate in his hopeless paint-dripping, and eventually his pissing on the canvas. Paolo’s stance in this allegory clearly mocks the modernist artist who is enslaved by the prestige of the new.¹⁵ Pasolini’s opposition to avant-gardes in general and abstract expressionism in particular stems from his suspicion of the *coazione al nuovo* (“compulsion to newness”), as Carla Benedetti aptly defines a key XX century mode of modernism.¹⁶ How does Pasolini renegotiate primitivism in his own works, and what kind of *Weltanschauung* did he share with other Italian visual artists of his time? Let us start our analysis from the surface of things.

The visual style of Pasolini’s “Third World” documentaries – such as *Notes Towards a Film on India* (1968) and *Notes towards an African Orestes* (1969) share a certain aesthetic vernacular with the work of those artists who, inspired by the same oppositional impulse to find models for a non-commodified aesthetic, hit upon a (very loosely defined) primitivist mode. These include, among others, the *arte povera* group, and Pino Pascali in particular. The *arte povera* group very explicitly sought to create a rupture with the commodification of the perpetually new by giving primacy to a stripped down materiality, with an emphasis on the use of archaic, natural, and authentic “materials”. But the links between Pasolini and the *arte povera* aesthetic affinities go beyond a mere interest in stripping back to “poor” mediums—sack, earth, iron, burnt fabric, etc— and a general investment in rediscovering nature in their works (not dissimilar to the contemporary efforts of Alberto Burri, Lucio Fontana, Mimmo Paladino, and Michelangelo Pistoletto), all of which have their filmic complement in Pasolini’s documentary style of street level hand held camera shots,

simple panning, the use of graininess in the film, etc.. This “return to nature” quickly becomes a “turn to pre-history” in Pasolini’s hands, as at the same time, the neo-primitivist tendency in Italian art emerges along with Pasolini’s appropriation of anthropological projects. The artists of *arte povera* furthered their anti-establishment critique by moving beyond the traditional limits of the frame and of painting, both figurative and abstract. Thus they created “works in progress” as political gestures, aimed at incorporating the spectator into the space of the artwork, which was meant to demystify the autonomy of the artistic realm and the cultic status of the author. Similarly, Pasolini thought of the ideological potential of his films as “direct revolutionary interventions” (as Pasolini connotes his Third World engagement in the manifesto “Notes towards a Film on the Third World”), stripped—in Brechtian fashion—of their ontological patina by engaging directly with the “raw material” (documentary footage), and by creating an open narrative form.¹⁷ Hal Foster notes that many artistic fields in the Sixties, including cinema, were increasingly dominated by an insistence on reading art works according to a rigid epistemological model: either the work exists as a referential object inextricably linked to the reality of the world, or it is cast as an independent or arbitrary simulacrum, and by its existence catalyzes our sense that all forms of representation (including realism) are nothing more than self-referential forms.¹⁸ Pasolini resolves this dichotomy with the well-known formula of cinema as the “written language of reality,” that is to say of cinema as a moment of inscription on celluloid of that which occurs in everyday life.¹⁹ But this represented world is already *a priori* a code: “Nature is, in short, already artifice, culture, spectacle; nothing elementary or primary exists any longer; everything refers back to a preexisting code [...] Reality plays the role of art, or rather, is already art” (my translation).²⁰ In a passage from *Heretical Empiricism* Pasolini explains the relationship between reality and representation using the metaphor of the “happening”:

*Living, then, we represent ourselves, and we attend the representations of others. The reality of the human world is nothing other than this double representation, in which we are at once actors and spectators: a gigantic happening, if you will.*²¹

The notion of the *happening* was very trendy at the time; Pasolini would know of it not only from the media but also from his direct contact with experimental theater (let us not forget that both Julian Beck of the Living Theater and Carmelo Bene were cast in *Medea*, 1969). Bringing the *happening* into contact with Pasolini's aesthetic helps us clarify Pasolini's operational framework as a filmmaker in the later Sixties and early Seventies, and offers us an instance of the kind of thing Nicolas Bourriaud means to explain through the notion of *esthétique relationnelle* (relational aesthetics).²² Taking seriously post-conceptual art's challenge to any form of aesthetics that seeks to identify an essence of art, Bourriaud's relational aesthetic projects a new relation of the art object to the spectator, in which the meaning of the work exists in the form of a shared epistemological investment in and around the work on the part of the participants in the event. Stripping the art object of a central, mastering intentionality and dispersing its very substance out to the point that the spectator is transformed into a participant was at the core of the (whether or not she wants to be), this aesthetic of the sixties and seventies "happening."²³ As Benedetti has also noted, Pasolini had a participatory vision of art that recalls that of recent performance artists, in which poetry and life, and reality and audiovisual representation, coincide. The life that is cinema, and the cinema that is life mutually reflect each other, each in the process mediating the other. The movie camera can only faithfully render this union through a process of fragmentation and unmasking. The palimpsest formed by Pasolini's images, with its estrangement effect, result in the end in something more than what he had theorized: not only is Pasolini's cinema a writing of reality (like the graph of the electrocardiogram that

records the movements of the cardiac muscle), but also a metalanguage of reality, a “non-fictional fiction.”²⁴

The experience of trying to make films in Third World, or “Southern”, countries (Palestine, Yemen, India, etc.) pushed Pasolini in new and unexplored directions. The discovery of the Other, the mixing of narrative techniques between fiction and documentary, and the investigation of modernity in the living bodies of colonialism and of the first phases of the postcolonial era are all conducted through hybrid techniques. Pasolini’s feeling for the archaic and the colonized might even have its roots in his experience of Friuli, his mother’s native area, at the end of WWII. As Cesarino notes, “for him it is precisely as an anachronistic narrative straight out of the archaic substrata of folklore and myth that the history of modernization becomes conceptualizable and representable.”²⁵ From this sprang his long-standing interest in ethnographic films, the magical aspects of rural life, the works of such authors as Mircea Eliade and De Martino, and a fascination with dialects.²⁶ Pasolini’s involvement in ethnology started in his early years in Rome when he contributed to anthropological films by Cecilia Mangini, a young and innovative documentary ethnographer training with De Martino. Pasolini worked on a couple of her films, but his most interesting contribution was in *Stendali* (1958) where he helped solve a problem typical of early ethnographic cinema: sound. Mangini did not film with a proper sound camera (unthinkable in our digital age!), which left her with beautiful but silent images of funerary rites from Puglia. Pasolini composed a song sampling lines based on Greek tragedy that was then performed on the soundtrack.²⁷ Mangini’s films, rather than being recordings of actual events, were closer to Jean Rouch cine-ethnographies, that is to say the reconstruction of actual events, more similar to docu-dramas or docufictions. It is probably in the Roman anthropological circles that Pasolini learn to mix genres and modes of filmmaking

One emblematic example of hybridity is certainly *Notes for a Film on*

India, made in 1968 by Pasolini and a small crew from RAI. As is typical of the “Notes” genre, the film positions itself between two different registers, artistic experimentation and the socio-political documentation.²⁸ The structure of *Notes* visually and narratively calls attention to the conditions of its construction through interrupted narration, an off-screen voice that explains and repeats interviews that have already been carried out, alternation between beautiful framings and cinema vérité shots. As Page notes, Pasolini’s rediscovery of a reality underneath the project of modernization is performed by taking cinema back to its reality as language, that is, as discontinuous, problematizing the loss and absence of the real, rather than creating an illusion of its existence.²⁹ Pasolini’s cinema and the “Notes” genre are redeemed from banal exoticism (with its penchant for ignoring the forces of history that have allowed the traveler access to the land s/he travels) thanks to a strong metalinguistic framework – implied by the very title, *Appunti* (Notes) - creating instead an intensely rational and intellectual cinema. As a film about a film, in its double, hybrid formal nature, *Notes for a Film on India* finds a kind of exemplary convergence of form and substance in the central scene: a long tracking shot alongside an oil pipeline. The style is abstract and futuristic: the car gains speed until the long tube becomes an indistinct mass of grey material, an amorphous spot of color, an abstract painting in movement, an image in which one can almost no longer distinguish the contours of sky and earth. To this shot Pasolini adds his off-screen voice-over that explains, didactically, to the public the radical changes in Indian history from the rural to the industrial.

*The first part of the film [...] represents not only pre-Independence India, but the totality of Indian prehistory. The second part of the film, the story of the impoverished family, represents not only the year of Liberation, but all the history of modern India. These problems can be summed up with a single word: industrialization (my translation).*³⁰

The commentary that accompanies the shot of the oil pipeline underlines a convergence within the substance of the film of the two narratives. To avoid presenting this moment with a perfect coincidence between image and sound—which would run the risk of offering “truth” as a given to the spectator—Pasolini complicates the composition of the shot, contaminating it, dissolving the contours of the image into a kind of abstract painting in movement. The mass of amorphous material contaminates the voice of Pasolini which “explains” Indian history, diminishing its potential oversimplification (that of the colonial observer) and forcing the spectator to face antithetical intellectual and emotional stimuli. The imperial eye of the western traveler, in the very moment in which it imposes its historic vision upon the other, sacrifices its historical, chronological, and deductive capacity for meaning.

The short history of India as told by the off-screen voice, the fast race alongside the profile of modernity represented by the oil pipeline as a metonymic object of Indian industrialization, and the stylistic choice to deprive the spectator of a clear vision, substituted by the indefiniteness and ambiguity of the image, seem in many senses to respond to the concerns of several theorists of the image—among them Trinh T. Minh-ha—about the truth content of framed reality, and about the political consequences implicit in the use of ethnographic documentary to translate one culture for another.³¹ Pasolini’s move in the film of using fragmentation as a device to underline the problem of exoticism and break it into its more basic terms, bringing them to their extreme consequences, responds to the late-modern critique of the authenticity of every possible representation of reality. Pasolini uses film here to interrogate the process by which the Third World has become the reality that it is, which calls into question the dominant Western cinematographic culture founded on narrative and teleological continuity, just as he has questioned the centralizing process by which Friuli’s particularities have been confiscated and erased in unified Italy. The marginalized, the refused/refuted, and the excluded come

to allegorically represent the Other of the West. The precarious stylistic equilibrium, the mixing of genres, and the apparent lack of solid rhetorical structures attest to Pasolini's desire to situate himself outside of his own (Western) world in order to confront it in a critical manner. It is certainly not surprising that the free form of the "Notes" allows Pasolini to express himself about Italy and about his own culture in general, in particular as regards modernization and technology. Signification as dialectics, that is, the mediation of the raw by the documentation process bring us into contact with the uncommodified objects of a rural and agrarian society, the details of the people's living conditions (close-up of tools, clothes, dresses, etc.), and close-up of people' daily life as they are being drawn into the maw of modernity.

This resistance to modernity through choice of materials is essential in understanding *arte povera's* political importance in the Italian context. As a recent article by Nicholas Cullinan points out, "peasant resistance was a model for *arte povera's* renunciation of consumerism," upon which point Pasolini was certainly the group's ally, making the very level of materiality of art the transcript of resistance to the processes and institutions in which art circulated, a move that cannot but have resonated with the Italian art movement.³² A case in point is Pasolini's use of costumes in his "Third World" fiction films, specifically *Medea* (1970). Thanks to the skill of the Farani, the Roman Atelier that made them, Pasolini's costumes feel very much like a primitivist installation on their own account: the use of specific earthy materials, and the eclectic approach that makes this cloths point towards an indeterminate primitive culture, can be counted as part of a general movement toward the archaic.³³

At a deeper level, beyond form, style and intentions, Pasolini shared with the Italian artists of the Sixties an understanding of the ideological shift from modernity to post-modernity. What Debord calls *La société du spectacle*, Pasolini will persistently label *l'irrealità*.³⁴ Unreality is the target of Pasolini's slogan in *Heretical Empiricism*, "we must de-ontologize, we must

ideologize” – for capitalism, no longer content to manufacture reality, was manufacturing irreality in the era of Cold War capitalism. That is, it was using the new techniques of audiovisual media (a major growth industry) to liquidate or trivialize all resistant social interstices, and commodifying all personal relationships, while presenting itself as a non-ideological and irresistible force. Pasolini’s slogan was aimed at keeping Italy from advancing into an irreversible “anthropological mutation.”³⁵ The (then) nascent “society of the spectacle” directly acts, in an interesting inversion of the relation between base and structure, on the world of reality, flattening representation even as it sensationalized it.

The primitivist turn of Sixties Italian art (taking in such examples as Burri’s burnt sacks, Pino Pascali’s *Attrezzi agricoli* (*Agricultural Tools*), Penone’s investigation of nature, and Giovanni Anselmo’s *Senza Titolo* (*Struttura che mangia*) [*Untitled - Eating Structure*]) – in which a lettuce is wedged between a small stone block and a larger one, was as much a form of political as aesthetic resistance, and it had a lot in common with Pasolini’s artistic world: materials, methodology, overcoming of art as product (as noted, in tune with Situationists concerns³⁶). To clarify this relationship, let’s look for example at Pino Pascali’s performance recorded by Luca Maria Patella, *SKMP2* (1968), where the title is a acronym for Sargentini, Kunellis, Mattiacci, Pascali, and Patella, the protagonists of this film, and subtitled *reportage ironico visuale* (ironic visual reportage). Pascali’s work is uncannily Pasolinian. While the point here is not to establish a chronology of influences – the two artists might very well have been unaware of each other’s experimental work – reconnecting the *post facto* network of ideas which held places for both the younger provocateur and the established director helps us go beyond old parochial diatribes. Pascali/Patella’s performance addresses in different way what we saw in Pasolini/Mauri’s GAM work: body, performance, representation, etc. The video opens with a “birth/death” scene on a beach in Puglia. Pascali sticks out from neck up: as if by replicating Eisenstein’s *Que Viva Mexico*’s execution of

the rebellious peasants scene, Pascali's ironically references the birth of Venus topos. While Handel and Mozart accompanies the images, a hand first and a head later emerges from the sand. This immediately resonates with the Pasolini' process of détournement of Roman low-life—as in the fight scene in *Accattone* (1960)—aimed at turning the two *borgatari*'s very uncinematic fight into a “sacralized” moment by scoring it to the resurrection movement in Bach's *The Passion of San Matthew*. Pasolini's détournements were aimed at adding new meaning to the bodies of the lumpenproletariats: this practice will become in fact a staple of Pasolini's *modus poetandi*. Bach is used again in the *Gospel*, and Vivaldi in *Mamma Roma* in an oxymoronic counterpoint to the images in order to create a dialectical tension that breaks open the filmic sequences surface meanings.³⁷ The marginals of Italy's economic boom are resemantized both artistically (giving new sexual cachet to their proletarian bodies) and politically (in term of replacing them in the ideological scenario) through their spectatorial recontextualization. Pascali's ironic “birth” has its beginning in an Eisensteinian beheading, and thinking in terms of the reference to Eisenstein should perhaps make us think of Eisenstein's engagement with the revolution in Mexico, recently explored in Masha Salazkhina's *Eisenstein's Mexico*. Salazkhina argues that beyond the obvious desire of the Marxist director of the recent revolution to film the results of its New World counterpart, Eisenstein was finding a form for the conjunction of ethnography and revolution, making the Other the locus of revolutionary potentialities.³⁸ In Mexico, Eisenstein discovered a place of projections and investigation of a revolution to be, just as Pasolini was to do in the *Appunti* films. Pascali's birth/death incipit dialectically complicates the role of the artist in the 1968 revolutionary Italian contest. The situation, with its structuring antitheses, is also complicated by two choices: the locale and the soundtrack. The empty beach is, as the locale of a mythic scene, obviously a “primitive” space. But it is also a tourist space, a space of the artificially contrived escape of the city-dweller. The choice

of the extracts from Handel and then Mozart, heavily loaded high cultural artifacts, are out of synch with the mime of the actor (Pascali himself) in the film, whom we see jumping around like a frog in the water, as shot through a oval viewfinder (who's point of view is this?), and then slowly planting poles in order to form a circle on the sand, wherein he eventually rest and eat. This reuse of public/nature space into the artist's nest speaks again of *arte povera's* resistance through "primitive means". The artist as (fake-)farmer uses sand to perform a ritual plowing; but the sand is sterile, and the gesture of labor becomes a political act devoid of practical but full of ideological potentials.

The opening sequence of Pasolini's *Medea* (1969) brings us to an atemporal past of rural sacrifices: a young man, obviously inebriated and sedated is brought forward by a group of villagers. He will be tied to a cross and sacrificed to the gods: the people will run to collect his blood and drink it. As it has been often the case with Pasolini's art, many critics have been too quick to follow Pasolini's own readings of his own work. A forgivable mistake since he is indeed a very attentive critic of himself, and, like Eisenstein, an artist very conscious of the ramifications of his own work. Pasolini's comments have led many scholars to Mircea Eliade and the Jungian significance of primitive sacrifice in the collective unconscious.³⁹ But an actual analysis of the images points rather towards different directions: in line with body experiments of the time, Pasolini investigates pain (it is only a few years away to the Sadean scenes in *Salò*, 1975) and its representation, while ironically commenting on the body as an exchange value. These first images of *Medea* are a rebellion against the objectified body of spectacularized sexuality. In this sense Pasolini is more in line here with the Viennese Aktionist motifs of extreme bodily stress and distortion. Beyond the simple Christological citation, *Medea's* incipit is closer to phenomena of theatrical sadomasochism as seen for example in the performances of Gunter Brus, Hermann Nitsch, or Otto Muhl (themselves indebted to the *fin-de-siècle* Grand Guignol). Muhl's

Kreuzigung (Crucifixion) of 1961 and of Nitsch *I.aktion* (1962), in which he defaces the figure of the cross, first with the use of “found” materials and then with animal blood, seem coordinate with Pasolini’s primitivist staging. Herman Nitsch’s crucifixions replicates “primitive” forms of epistemological aggregation—that is, the consumption of sacrifice as a bond—where the performance, rather than the picture, was the artistic event. In a gesture that is resonant with the relational aesthetic we discussed above, Nitsch requires the presence of the audience in order to complete his work. The Aktionist’s interest in body has an obvious sado-masochist component, a fashionable topic of the time in light of recent rediscovery of Sade’s importance thanks to Bataille, Blanchot and Foucault, which coincides with the post-68 collapse of the boundaries that segregated soft- and hard-core pornography.⁴⁰ Pasolini followed suit—only to regret it later on—and dig deep into sex-exploitation of both female and male bodies.⁴¹

When Pasolini and the *arte povera* artists produced spectacles to counter spectacularization, they were engaging in a politic-aesthetic strategy of finding ideological vantage points from which to attack *l’irrealità* that was so fatally transforming their audience. The manufacture of irreality came out of the matrix of a mass media that was implanting itself in all public and private spaces, urbanization, and the utter loss of history that Pasolini, in his essays collected in *Lutheran Letters* recognized as a rupture both in natural history and in human consciousness.⁴² To this Pasolini privileged the agricultural and subproletarian past, primitive religious sentiment, the body as site of bare life, the Third World not as escape but rather as a possible geographic alterity, and finally sought, in the form of an un-consumable art object made out of the epistemological investment of both the makers and the spectators, to create a front of resistance. Such were the terms of battle as seen by the Italian Sixties artist *engagé*.

Marchesini, Alberto, *Citazioni pittoriche nel cinema di Pier Paolo Pasolini: da Accattone al Decameron*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1994; Galluzzi, Francesco, *Pasolini e la pittura*, Roma, Bulzoni, 1994. Ecco come Pasolini si esprime sulla *fulgorazione figurativa*: «Quindi, quando le mie immagini sono in movimento, sono in movimento un po' come se l'obbiettivo si muovesse su loro sopra un quadro; concepisco sempre il fondo come il fondo di un quadro, come uno scenario, e per questo, lo aggredisco sempre frontalmente» (citato in Marchesini, p. 15). Marchesini sostiene inoltre che i primi film in bianco e nero di Pasolini riproducessero la sequenza di diapositive mostrate da Longhi durante i suoi seminari a Bologna. Da qui la frontalità e statuarietà dei personaggi pasoliniani (Marchesini, p. 121).

Non ci sono studi su Pasolini e il suo tempo incentrati sulla contemporanea scena artistica. L'unico volume dedicato all'influenza di Pasolini sul panorama artistico contemporaneo è la raccolta di saggi in Cherubini, Laura (ed.), *Pasolini e noi*, Milano, Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica, 2005.

Sul vivace dibattito sull'arte nei circoli marxisti e di sinistra in Italia nel dopoguerra si veda l'esauriente Misler, Nicoletta, *La via italiana al realismo. La politica culturale artistica del P.C.I dal 1944 al 1956*, Milano, Mazzotta, 1973.

Moravia, Alberto. *La noia*, Milan,

Bompiani, 1960.

Riguardo la prospettiva di Moravia sull'arte contemporanea si veda il suo saggio *Twenty imaginary views of the American scene by twenty young Italian artists: catalogue of the Helena Rubinstein collection (1953)*, preparato per la Galleria dell'Obelisco a Roma. Su arte e marxismo in generale si veda *Comunismo al potere e il problema dell'arte*, in Moravia, Alberto, *L'uomo come fine e altri saggi*, Milan, Bompiani, 1964.

Sul dispetto di Pasolini per l'avanguardia contemporanea e storica si veda Galluzzi, op. cit., p. 126.

Il dibattito Sanguineti/Pasolini e la generale acredine tra gli avanguardisti e l'istituzione è accuratamente riportata da Schwartz, Barthes D., *Pasolini Requiem*, New York, Pantheon, 1992.

Per un'indagine sulla scena romana si veda Calvesi, Maurizio e Roberto Sigillato, *Roma anni '60: al di là della pittura*, Roma, Carte Segrete, 1990.

L'opinione di Pasolini sull'avanguardia in generale e sul Gruppo '63 in particolare si può trovare in Pasolini, Pier Paolo, *La fine dell'avanguardia*, in Pasolini, *Empirismo eretico*, op. cit.

Per una discussione introduttiva sul primitivismo nell'arte del XX secolo si veda H. Foster, R. Krauss, Y. Bois, B. Buchloh, *Art since 1900*, New York, Thames & Hudson, 2004, pp. 64-69.

Per una discussione sulle implicazioni

politiche-estetiche del Primitivismo nell'arte si veda Foster, Hal, *The 'Primitive' unconscious of Modern Art*, in *October*, 34 (1985), pp. 45-70; e Foster, Hal, *Primitive Scenes*, in *Critical Inquiry*, 20, 1 (1993), pp. 62-102.

A. Compagnon, *Five Paradoxes of Modernity*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1994. La lettura fastidiosamente anti-ideologica che Compagnon dà di Modernità e Modernismo è accettabile solo in quanto strumento utile per la sua abilità di mettere in risalto alcune questioni chiave.

E. Bloch et al., *Aesthetics and Politics*, London, Verso, 1977, p. 22. Per una discussione su Pasolini e Brecht si veda L. Caminati, *Orientalismo eretico: Pier Paolo Pasolini e il cinema del Terzo Mondo*, Milano, Bruno Mondadori, 2007.

A. Compagnon, op. cit., pp. 3-29.

C. Benedetti, *Pasolini contro Calvino*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 1998.

Il saggio *Appunti per un poema sul Terzo Mondo* è ora raccolto in P.P. Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, Milano, Mondadori, 2001, pp. 2677-2686.

H. Foster, *The Return of the Real*, Boston, MIT Press, 1996, p. 134.

P.P. Pasolini, *Empirismo eretico*, cit., pp. 197-222.

Pasolini è citato in M. Vallora, *Pier Paolo Pasolini tra manierismo e metaletteratura*, in F. Brevini (ed.), *Per conoscere Pasolini*, Roma, Bulzoni/Teatro Tenda, 1978, p.

120. Il cinema come già-sempre meta-cinema faceva parte anche della politica di comunicazione dell'Internazionale Situazionista. Mentre questi artisti si allontanano dalla materia stampata come loro unico strumento di propaganda espandendosi verso media più accessibili, il cinema diventa, in particolare nella formulazione di René Vienét, uno strumento per esporre l'artificialità della natura sociale (Perniola, p. 99).

P.P. Pasolini, *Empirismo eretico*, cit., p. 204.

N. Bourriaud, *Esthétique relationnelle*, Dijon, Les presses du Réel, 1998.

Certamente con una grande differenza, come evidenzia Claire Bishop: che il nuovo stile 'relazionale' consente solo la creazione di 'microtopie', contro il progetto rivoluzionario degli anni Sessanta (Bishop Claire, *Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics*, in *October*, 110 [2004], pp. 51-79). Bishop non riesce a cogliere però come questa critica sia rivolta nuovamente all'intenzionalità dell'artista piuttosto che 'all'esperienza' reale dello spettatore. La mancanza di un intento politico manifesto nei progetti di arte contemporanea non li rende meno politici, almeno per una loro lettura sintomatica.

S. Rohdie, *The Passion of Pier Paolo Pasolini*, London, BFI, 1995, p. 3.

Cesarino, Cesare, *Oedipus Exploded: Pasolini and the Myth of Modernization*, in

October, 59 (1962), pp. 27-47.

In una recensione nel suo *Descrizioni di descrizioni* (p. 384) di *Antropologia religiosa* di Alfonso M. Di Nola Pasolini scrive «l'insegnamento antropologico ha aiutato a vincere e a vanificare la grave tara etnocentrica e culturocentrica» e, nella fattispecie, «la violenza immorale (in Italia) del neo-idelismo e del crociansesimo, che portano alla negazione della comprensione di ogni uomo (non occidentale) come portatore di diversità e di alienità».

Stendali riprende un lamento funebre contadino nella zona di Martano, vicino a Galatina. Analogamente a quanto aveva fatto per *Il Mago* (cortometraggio di Mario Gallo, 1958), anche qui Pasolini organizza un centone: questa volta di canti funebri greco-salentini (non tutti lamenti di una madre per un figlio, ma anche di una figlia per la madre, di una moglie per il marito). Pasolini, Pier Paolo, *Per il cinema*, a c. di Walter Siti e Franco Zabagli, Milano, Mondadori, 2001. Tutte le informazioni sulle relazioni tra Pasolini e Mangini sono state raccolte in occasione di una conversazione con Cecilia Mangini a Roma del marzo 2010.

Per un'analisi del documentario di Pasolini si veda L. Caminati, *Orientalismo eretico*, op. cit.

Clement Page, *Pasolini's 'Archaisms': Representational Problematics from Naples to Calcutta*, in *Third Text*, 42

(1998), p. 19.

P.P. Pasolini, *Appunti per un film sull'India*, in *Per il cinema*, Milano, Mondadori, 1999, p. 1061.

Trinh, T. Minh-Ha, *Documentary Is /Not a Name*, in *October*, 52 (1990), pp. 76-98.

N. Cullinan, *From Vietnam to Fiat-nam: The Politics of Arte Povera*, in *October*, 124 (estate 2008), pp. 8-30.

P. Farani, *Atelier Farani: Pasolini, il costume del film*, Milano, Skira, 1996.

Pasolini, Pier Paolo, *Lettere luterane*, Torino: Einaudi, 1976, op. cit., p. 72.

P.P. Pasolini, *Studio sulla rivoluzione antropologica in Italia*, in *Scritti corsari*, Milano, Garzanti, 1975, ora in *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, Milano, Mondadori, 1999, pp. 307-312.

Sulla relazione tra il mondo dell'arte e l'Internazionale Situazionista si veda Perniola, Mario, *I Situazionisti*, Roma, Castelvocchi, 1998. Perniola evidenzia qui la questione del 'trionfo dell'arte' al centro del progetto dell'Internazionale Situazionista, ma anche all'origine del disaccordo tra i Situazionisti stessi. L'arte può veramente trionfare? Secondo i puristi (incluso Debord), nel momento della sua oggettivizzazione e reificazione (l'arte che diventa oggetto: pittura, poesia, eccetera), essa era già parte della cornice modernista capitalista.

Magaletta, Giuseppe, *Musica nell'opera letteraria e cinematografica di PPP*, Quattro Venti, Urbino, 1998.

Salazkina, Masha, *Eisenstein's Mexico*, Chicago, Chiacago University Press, 2009.

Pasolini recensisce Mircea Eliade in *Descrizioni di descrizioni*, op. cit., pp. 284 e 366.

Questi nessi sono stati acutamente esplorati da Maggi, Armando, *The Resurrection of the Body: Pier Paolo Pasolini from Saint Paul to Sade*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2009.

La *Trilogia della vita* era intesa come una celebrazione della sessualità umana. Nel 1975 Pasolini rifiuta questa posizione nel suo articolo *Abiura della Trilogia della vita* ora in *Lettere luterane* (Pasolini, *Lettere luterane*, p. 72).

Pasolini, Pier Paolo, *Lettere Luterane*, op. cit.

