Subjectivity And Politics In Pasolini's Bourgeois Tragic Theater

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Subjectivity And Politics In Pasolini’s Bourgeois Tragic Theater

Abstract
Italian author Pier Paolo Pasolini wrote his plays Affabulazione, Orgia and Porcile during his shift to theater in the late 1960s as a critical response to consumer culture in Italy and the West more generally. For him, this expanding mass, petit-bourgeois civilization displaced Italy’s premodern cultures and their sense of the sacred. In his plays, his bourgeois protagonists re-experience the sacred and undergo conversion. The works engender his new “bourgeois tragic” genre, in which the sacred’s return destroys modern subjectivity. They offer a unique examination of this subjectivity, its radicalizing breakdown and the potential radical politics that could emerge from that breakdown. To further these significant insights, this study systematically theorizes Pasolini’s Bourgeois Tragic Theater – his dramatic genre and its production through his “Word Theater” practices – as one of bourgeois subjectivity and politics. It is the first of its kind among the Italian- and English-language criticism, framed through psychoanalysis and classical and twentieth-century Western theater. The predominant form of radical subjectivity and politics is “self-destructive otherness” and martyrdom, the latter of which will be a falsity and no politics at all. However, Orgia and Porcile in its drafts formulate a more critical radical subjectivity and politics: the transformation of self-destructive otherness into the “Logic of Otherness,” which looks to reconstruct Otherness as a new ideology of liberation. The protagonists ultimately fail to act on this Logic, and the plays end ambiguously, suspending catharsis. When Pasolini’s dramas are staged through his Word Theater praxis, his complete Bourgeois Tragic Theater looks to realize this Logic itself. It gives spectators the task of creating their own catharsis through its post-performance dialogue, which contains a Platonic pedagogy with radicalizing effects for subjectivity and politics. Pasolini’s theater will contradict the conclusion among scholars that his tragedies signal the “Second Pasolini,” one who is unable to propose any affirmative and effective form of resistance to modernization in this period. In fact, his theater will be his most rigorous and concerted effort at a radical political art, attempting to answer the crisis of both Marxism and the Church, with foresight of the pitfalls of the Student Movement.

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SUBJECTIVITY AND POLITICS IN PASOLINI’S BOURGEOIS TRAGIC THEATER

Andrew F. Korn

A DISSERTATION

in

Italian

For the Graduate Group in Romance Languages

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania

in

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Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2018

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SUBJECTIVITY AND POLITICS IN PASOLINI’S BOURGEOIS TRAGIC THEATER

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ABSTRACT

SUBJECTIVITY AND POLITICS IN PASOLINI’S BOURGEOIS TRAGIC THEATER

Andrew F. Korn

Kevin Brownlee

Italian author Pier Paolo Pasolini wrote his plays Affabulazione, Orgia and Porcile during his shift to theater in the late 1960s as a critical response to consumer culture in Italy and the West more generally. For him, this expanding mass, petit-bourgeois civilization displaced Italy’s premodern cultures and their sense of the sacred. In his plays, his bourgeois protagonists re-experience the sacred and undergo conversion. The works engender his new “bourgeois tragic” genre, in which the sacred’s return destroys modern subjectivity. They offer a unique examination of this subjectivity, its radicalizing breakdown and the potential radical politics that could emerge from that breakdown. To further these significant insights, this study systematically theorizes Pasolini’s Bourgeois Tragic Theater – his dramatic genre and its production through his “Word Theater” practices – as one of bourgeois subjectivity and politics. It is the first of its kind among the Italian- and English-language criticism, framed through psychoanalysis and classical and twentieth-century Western theater. The predominant form of radical subjectivity and politics is “self-destructive otherness” and martyrdom, the latter of which will be a falsity and no politics at all. However, Orgia and Porcile in its drafts formulate a more critical radical subjectivity and politics: the transformation of self-destructive otherness into the “Logic of Otherness,” which looks to reconstruct Otherness as a new ideology of liberation. The protagonists ultimately fail to act on this Logic, and the plays end ambiguously, suspending catharsis. When Pasolini’s dramas are staged through his Word Theater praxis, his complete Bourgeois Tragic Theater looks to realize this Logic itself. It gives spectators the task of creating their own catharsis through its post-performance dialogue, which contains a Platonic pedagogy with radicalizing effects for subjectivity and politics. Pasolini’s theater will contradict the conclusion among scholars that his tragedies signal the “Second Pasolini,” one who is unable to propose any affirmative and effective form of resistance to modernization in this period. In fact, his theater will be his most rigorous and concerted effort at a radical political art, attempting to answer the crisis of both Marxism and the Church, with foresight of the pitfalls of the Student Movement.
ABBREVIATIONS


BNR: Biblioteca nazionale centrale Vittorio Emanuele II, Rome.


# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................................................................ III

ABSTRACT ................................................................................................................................. IV

ABBREVIATIONS ....................................................................................................................... V

INTRODUCTION: THE BOURGEOIS TRAGIC ........................................................................ 1

Pasolini’s Shift to Theater in the Consumption Civilization ......................................................... 1

The Bourgeois Tragic in *Affabulazione, Orgia* and *Porcile* ...................................................... 12

The Bourgeois Tragic and Twentieth-Century Western Theater .................................................. 24

The Logic of Otherness: A Critical Radical Subjectivity and Politics .......................................... 34

CHAPTER ONE: THE FATHER’S LOVE AND HATE FOR HIS MYSTERIOUS SON IN *AFFABULAZIONE* ........................................................................................................ 43

The Father’s Dream ..................................................................................................................... 43

The Son’s Flesh .......................................................................................................................... 49

Paternal Love ............................................................................................................................ 52

Sophocles’ Shadow and the Oedipal Lesson ............................................................................... 57

Paternal Love-Hate .................................................................................................................... 62

Melancholic Postwar Patriarchs .................................................................................................. 65

CHAPTER TWO: THE COUPLE’S RITUALIZATION OF CHILDHOOD LOVES IN *ORGIA* .................................................................................................................. 69

The Couple’s Memories ............................................................................................................. 69

The Premodern Language of the Body ...................................................................................... 75

Sadomasochism: A Ritualized Language of the Body ................................................................ 85

Suicidal Reunions with Parental Love ...................................................................................... 90

The Man’s Shadow and the Other’s Task .................................................................................. 97
CHAPTER THREE: THE FATHER AND SON’S MERGER TO CUT OFF OTHERNESS IN *PORCILE* ................................................................. 100

The Family’s Pigsty .................................................................................................................................................. 100

The Klotz Estate: A Reservation of Premodernity ................................................................................................. 107

Julian’s Otherness .................................................................................................................................................. 113

The Merger and Its Casualties ................................................................................................................................ 116

Spinoza’s Shadow and the Logic of Otherness ........................................................................................................ 124

CONCLUSION: THE BOURGEOIS TRAGIC IN PRACTICE ......................... 131

The Cultural Rite .................................................................................................................................................. 131

Spaces, Spectators and Actors ................................................................................................................................ 136

Catharsis Suspended ........................................................................................................................................... 142

BIBLIOGRAPHY .................................................................................................................................................... 148

INDEX OF NAMES.............................................................................................................................................. 156
INTRODUCTION: THE BOURGEOIS TRAGIC

Pasolini’s Shift to Theater in the Consumption Civilization

In the decades following the Second World War, Italy experienced a phase of rapid economic development due to its infrastructure that had remained relatively intact, financial aid from the Communist-fearing United States and the liberal policies of the Christian Democratic Party (DC), which controlled Parliament from 1948. This development’s effects were evident by the 1960s and became known as the “Economic Miracle” (mid-1950s-mid-1960s) – the country’s second industrial revolution, which was far more transformative than its first at the beginning of the century. Though the Miracle’s expansion of industrialism, capitalism and bourgeois hegemony appeared at first to regard solely the Northwest’s urban centers, by the 1970s it was clear these modernizing processes had the potential to touch the entire peninsula. The postwar decades mark Italy’s transition from a premodern, agrarian and artisanal culture – “culture” being synonymous with “civilization,” as a people’s social, political and economic systems at a given time and place – to a modern, capitalist one. Multifaceted Italian artist and intellectual Pier Paolo Pasolini (Bologna, 1922 – Rome, 1975) leveled arguably the most relentless critique of his country’s transition as an attack on its premodern cultures. He grew up in this world, in his mother Susanna’s rural Friulian village of Casarsa, and made it the subject of his first works, such as his poetry collection

1 For a history of postwar Italy, see Duggan 240-98.
La meglio gioventù (The Best of Youth, 1954) and his novel Il sogno di una cosa (A Dream of Something, 1962). After he moved to Rome in 1950, the Eternal City’s subproletariat – another culture at odds with modernization – animated his works, such as his novel Ragazzi di vita (The Ragazzi, 1955) and his first film, Accattone (1961). By 1964, after having made several Roman works, he began to explicitly voice his critique of neocapitalismo, neo- or advanced capitalism, as a dehumanizing regime: it is a “tragic future that paints itself before my eyes, a future made of men reduced to dehumanized robots by the neocapitalist society” (“La necessità” 1576).² By the 1970s, in the years before his assassination, he had elaborated his critique of the civiltà dei consumi, the “Consumption Civilization,” as one that sought to homogenize and hence destroy Italy’s, and more generally the world’s various premodern cultures, assimilating them to a sole bourgeois model:

[T]he Consumption Civilization’s acculturation has destroyed the Third World’s various cultures (I am still talking on a global level, and thus I also refer to the Third World’s cultures to which the Italian peasant cultures are profoundly analogous): the cultural model offered to Italians (and to all men of the world, in the end) is one. The conformity to such a model takes place primarily in life, in existence, and hence in the body and behavior. It is here that the values are lived, still unexpressed, of the Consumption Civilization’s new culture, that is, of the new and most repressive totalitarianism that has ever been seen. (“8 luglio 1974” 321-22)

For Pasolini, neocapitalism was “neofascism,” as it was achieving what Mussolini’s regime had always failed to obtain, that is, the total control of the subject’s desire. He

² Quotations of Italian texts are given in translation only, except block quotes of Pasolini’s plays, where the original precedes the italicized translation. After a play’s first quotation in Chapters One-Three, all subsequent ones include only the page number(s). Translations of all texts are by this study’s author and all emphasis is original unless otherwise noted.
was waging such a ferocious artistic and intellectual war against this new civilization
because he saw no political or spiritual movement that could effectively oppose it, either
from the Left, specifically from the Italian Communist Party (PCI), or from the Catholic
Church. As the Resistance had failed to bring about Communist revolution or carry the
PCI to power in Parliament, Pasolini increasingly lost belief in the possibility of
Communism in Italy, especially after a succession of Party-crippling events:
Khrushchev’s revelation of Stalin’s purges and the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian
Revolution in 1956; the death of PCI co-founder Palmiro Togliatti in 1964; the Soviet
suppression of the Prague Spring in 1968; and the convergence of the PCI with the DC in
the “Historic Compromise” in the mid-1970s. Despite being expelled from the Party in
1949 for his homosexuality, Pasolini nevertheless remained an important point of
reference for Communism in Italy, included as he was among other major Communist
figures in painter Renato Guttuso’s *Funerali di Togliatti* (Togliatti’s Funeral, 1972). In
addition, Pasolini did not automatically consider the late-1960s Student Movement as a
“New Left.” He famously criticized the Movement and its 1968 protest in Rome’s Valle
Giulia in his poem “Il Pci ai giovani!!” (“The PCI to Young People!” 1968). In his eyes,
the Movement was part of a bourgeois intestinal struggle, a civil war between this class’
children and their parents that would end, not in a revolutionary transformation of
culture, but in a reformed bourgeois society. In fact, throughout the 1970s, the
government ushered in a number of reforms that simply placated the civil unrest. Lastly,
given its alliance with the DC, the Church did not provide him with any strong hope that
it would radically act out against neocapitalism. In the early 1970s, Pasolini made the African and Asian Third World the subject of his works, such as his films Appunti per un’Orestiade africana (Notes for an African Orestes, 1970) and Il fiore delle Mille e una notte (Arabian Nights, 1974), in yet another effort to center his art on nonbourgeois cultures. Yet in 1975 he controversially abjured this latter film, along with the others of his “Trilogy of Life” (Il Decameron [The Decameron, 1971] and I racconti di Canterbury [The Canterbury Tales, 1972]), as he could no longer deny even the Third World’s imborghesimento, its “bourgeoisification,” in which neocapitalism triggered the peasantry’s, subproletariat’s and proletariat’s assimilation to the petit-bourgeoisie.

Italy’s civilizational transition provoked a crisis in Pasolini’s life and art. Having shifted at the beginning of the 1960s from poetry and novels to cinema, by the middle of the decade he felt disoriented here as well, no longer able to make his Gramscian “national-popular” films (from Accattone to Il Vangelo secondo Matteo [The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, 1964]), whose subjects and audience were fading into one mass, petit-bourgeois culture: the “clear class distinction Bourgeoisie/People is no longer true […] because Italy too […] is experiencing an internal revolution, I would say anthropological, for which it is passing from a class culture […] to a mass culture […]” (“Dibattito” 330). His fourth feature, Uccellacci e uccellini (The Hawks and the Sparrows, 1966), signaled the end of his national-popular aesthetic and the dawn of his new style a canone sospeso, his “suspended” or “unresolved” style, which, as an intensified response to the rise of consumerism, sought inconsumability by mass culture,
addressed critically-minded intellectuals, tended towards allegory and ambiguity, and posed questions. Using footage of Togliatti’s funeral, _Uccellacci_ conveys, via its Marxist Crow, this ideology’s crisis, but also its potential future renewal. A few months after editing the film at the end of March 1966, Pasolini was dining with his friends and fellow writers Alberto Moravia and Dacia Maraini when he suffered severe ulcer hemorrhaging (Naldini 368). His illness was strangely symbolic of his thinking, which had undergone such tumult throughout the decade. However, during his month-long convalescence, his existential and artistic crisis found an antidote in his shift to theater, giving birth to his six tragedies.

Though Pasolini’s tragedies were his most substantial engagement with theater, they were not the first time he involved himself in the artform. In his youth, he wrote plays inspired by Greek tragedy: _Edipo all’alba_ (Oedipus at Dawn, written 1942, published 2001) and _I Turcs tal Friul_ (Turks in Friuli, written 1944, published 1976). His early poetry collections, _Poesie a Casarsa_ (Poems in Casarsa, 1942) and _L’usignolo della Chiesa Cattolica_ (The Nightingale of the Catholic Church, 1958) contain dialogues in verse and prose. In 1960, he returned to Greek tragedy, translating Aeschylus’ _Oresteia_ for Vittorio Gassman and Luciano Lucignani’s production at Syracuse’s Teatro Greco and publishing his translation the same year. He also began a translation of Sophocles’ _Antigone_, which he never finished. At this time, many established Italian writers – Natalia Ginzburg, Leonardo Sciascia, Giovanni Testori, Goffredo Parise and Moravia, to name only a few – similarly approached the theater, in efforts alongside Dario Fo and
Carmelo Bene to spark, as in other Western countries, the artform’s renovation in Italy.\(^3\)

Pasolini began writing critically on theater and, in an unpublished article, he criticizes the unrealistic spoken Italian that had become a convention (“Il teatro” 2362). In response to the journal *Sipario*’s inquiry on the rapport between writers and the theater, Pasolini reiterated and furthered his sweeping linguistic critique: the “men of theater committed the error of pretending that there is a standard spoken Italian and, consequently, they created a theatrical convention on the nonexistent […] The theater’s spoken Italian is thus *entirely* academic, it never has traces of reality” (“Irrealtà” 2783). According to him, the solution to this convention’s false realism is the creation of expressionistic languages, of which he finds examples in playwright, director and actor Eduardo De Filippo’s theatrical Neapolitan, actress Franca Valeri’s caricatures and actress and friend Laura Betti’s Gaddian plurilingualism. In 1965, he furthered entrenched himself when Sergio Graziani directed his play *Nel ’46!* (In ’46! written 1946-65, published 2001) at Rome’s Teatro dei Satiri. The work deals with a young schoolteacher tormented by his dreams. In his seminal historical survey, *I teatri di Pasolini* (2005), Stefano Casi suggests that the writer’s increasing involvement in the theater world built up pressure on him to produce new dramas (139-42). Indeed, his six tragedies were not a completely new artistic direction, but a meditated elaboration of his previous work and response to this pressure; however, his convalescence did act as a catalyst, precipitating the process.\(^4\) He describes

\(^3\) For a history of the movement of Italian writers to the theater, see Casi, *I teatri* 132-42.
\(^4\) Pasolini’s other pre-1966 dramatic works include: *La sua gloria* (His Glory, written 1938, published 1996); *I fanciulli e gli elfi* (The Children and the Elves, written 1944-45, premiered 1945 at Casarsa’s Sala
his convalescence in the following verses: “in healing, I was reborn, and in regressing / I relived in a month / an entire indecent youth” (“Note,” TE 1148). On another occasion in 1970, he describes it specifically in terms of his shift to theater and the prolonged playwrighting process that followed: “perhaps because while I was bedridden I had reread Plato […] I took to writing theater: six tragedies in verse, which I worked on these last five years – at times returning to them after having abandoned them for a year and more […]” (“Al lettore” 2511-12). Autobiographically steeped in his “indecent youth,” his “six tragedies in verse” are a synthesis of his poetic dialogues, work on Greek tragedy and growing psychoanalytic interest in the return of the repressed. Giorgio Bàrberi Squarotti disproportionately interprets his tragedies in an autobiographical vein when he reduces them to “narcissistic lyricism” (674). Though Pasolini will indeed project himself to an extent in his protagonists, reducing the texts as simple maskings of his life avoids how they incorporate an almost overwhelming number of theories, philosophies and historical events that drastically complicate their protagonists as mere reflections of their author. In fact, Pasolini’s new theater will be the most rigorous and concerted effort of his career at a radical political art, which attempts to answer the crisis of both orthodox Marxism and the Church, with foresight of the pitfalls of the Student Movement.

dell’Asilo under direction of Pasolini, published 2001); La poesia o la gioia (Poetry or Joy, written 1947, published 2001); Un pesciolino (A Little Fish, written 1957, published 2001); Vivo e Coscienza (Life and Consciousness, written 1963, published 2001); Italie magique (Magical Italy, premiered 1964 at Bologna’s Teatro La Ribalta under direction of Mario Missiroli, published 1965); Il vantone (The Braggart, translation of Plautus’ Miles Gloriosus, premiered 1963 at Firenze’s Teatro della Pergola under direction of Franco Enriquez, published 1963).
Pasolini wrote and continually revised his plays from 1966 to 1974, finalizing only *Calderón* for publication in a volume during his lifetime.⁵ Though Garzanti first published the most advanced drafts of the remaining tragedies between 1977 and 1979, working drafts and productions nevertheless reached the public while the author was still alive. His first drama, *Orgia* (Orgy, written 1966-69), takes place in the Bolognese apartment of a middleclass couple, the Man and Woman, whose sadomasochistic relationship ends in their suicide. The only tragedy Pasolini ever produced himself, *Orgia* officially premiered on November 27, 1968 at Turin’s Deposito d’Arte Presente. Its first episode was published in the production’s program and the *Quaderni del Teatro Stabile di Torino*, along with the author’s *Manifesto per un nuovo teatro* (*Manifesto for a New Theatre*), which had first been published in *Nuovi Argomenti*, the journal Pasolini edited with Moravia and Alberto Carocci. His second work, *Bestia da stile* (*Beast of Style*, written 1966-74), follows Bohemian poet Jan’s life and career from the Second World War to the 1968 Soviet Invasion of Prague. A little more than a week before his death, Pasolini delivered Jan’s final monologue at Lecce’s Liceo Classico Palmieri. *Pilate* (Pylades, written 1966-68) is a continuation of Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*, in which Pylades opposes his cousin Orestes’ new, rationally organized society. In 1967, Pasolini published a working draft in *Nuovi Argomenti* and Giovanni Cutrufelli directed a production of it that premiered on August 29, 1969 at Taormina’s Teatro Greco. His

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⁵ For extensive bibliographical information on Pasolini’s drafts, see Pasolini, “Note,” *TE* 1147-1212. This study’s analyses derive from the most advanced drafts unless otherwise noted. Pasolini conceived many other dramas, which he never drafted, including plays on Malcolm X and Lenin. See Pasolini, “Orgia (I stesura)” 79-83 and “Calderon e altri materiali” “Monumento” folder.
fourth tragedy, *Affabulazione* (Fabulation, written 1966-69), takes place in Brianza, north of Milan, where an industrialist becomes attracted to and kills his son. In 1969, Pasolini published a working draft in *Nuovi Argomenti*. Konrad Swinarski attempted but failed to produce the play in Zurich in 1971 and 1972. Peter Lotschak finally succeeded, with a production that premiered on October 6, 1973 at Graz’s Schauspielhaus. In *Porcile* (Pigsty, written 1967-69), the West German industrialist Klotz merges with his fellow businessman Herdhitze to protect his enterprises from his son Julian, who is devoured by the family’s pigs. In 1968, Pasolini prepared his homonymous film adaptation, which premiered on August 30, 1969 at the Venice Film Festival. Lastly, inspired by Pedro Calderón de la Barca’s *Life is a Dream* (1636), Pasolini’s final tragedy *Calderón* (written 1967-73) describes protagonist Rosaura’s series of reawakenings in different social spheres of Francoist Spain. In 1973, Garzanti published it and Pasolini received an offer to produce it, which he later refused.

Pasolini’s lack of a more sustained engagement with theater – his abandonment of his plays for a “year and more” at times – was the product of his ambivalent relationship to the artform, which remained constant throughout his life. Before his ulcer attack, he had expressed this ambivalence in his linguistic critique of Italian theater, and he voiced it again afterwards, in a letter to Garzanti in late April 1966: “I already mentioned my work to [editor Giorgio] Cusatelli. And I told him what my problem is. To produce these

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plays abroad, and in Italy, maybe, not produce them, or produce them after publication” ("A Livio [1966]" 611). Though he desired to produce and publish his tragedies both in Italy and abroad, he was wary of their theatrical viability, given that they were in verse, having taken his own advice and created an expressionistic spoken Italian. In his Manifesto, he distinguishes his new poetic theater from what he considers are the period’s two dominant trends: the bourgeois teatro della Chiacchiera, “Talk Theater,” and its contrary, the antibourgeois teatro del Gesto o dell’Urlo, “Gesture/Scream Theater.” In addition, the negative reception, or, in some cases, lack of reception altogether of Orgia’s production, Pilade’s publication and production, and Calderón’s first edition confirmed his fear that the public would have misapprehended his project. For example, though the majority of Orgia’s reviews were the simplistic negative criticism that characterized much of the author’s career, this attack nonetheless took its toll; Pasolini disenchantedly described the tour as the following: a “mistake that was my own fault, because I attempted […] to reach with theater that famous decentralization that disregarded obligations, that is, the obligatory instructions of mass culture. But for this one must decide to dedicate oneself to theater for an entire lifetime […] I did it, but only partially, with an incomplete experience, realized halfway” (qtd. in Naldini 398). He filled the gaps during which he abandoned theater with films, essays, articles, poetry and novels, each of

7 This study borrows Pieter Vanhove’s useful translations. See Vanhove 37.
8 For Orgia’s negative reception, see Chapter Two 71-73. For the lack of reception of Pilade’s publication, see Pasolini, “10. Stile di lavoro” 1381. For Pasolini’s response to Elio Pagliarani’s negative review of Pilade’s production, see Pasolini, “Note,” TE 1165-68. For Pasolini’s response to critics’ confusion regarding Calderón’s first edition, see Pasolini, “Note,” TE 1189-90.
which continued to address Italy’s, and the world’s cultural transformations and major historical events, such as May 1968 and the following “Leaden Years” of right- and left-wing domestic terrorism. In the end, he redirected much of his shift to theater onto film: along with Porcile, he directed Edipo re (Oedipus Rex, 1967), the Shakespearian Che cosa sono le nuvole? (What Are Clouds? 1968), Teorema (1968) (originally another play that became the novel and film), Medea (1969) and the previously cited Appunti per un’Orestiade africana. However, an “incomplete experience,” rather than an outright “mistake,” most adequately sums up Pasolini’s effort, as there was, of course, positive reception of the plays he made public, such as Orgia, Affabluzione and Calderón.⁹ And after Orgia’s initial performances, Pasolini remarked in a significant statement that he had eventually found the more culturally engaged audience he was seeking:

[M]y experience is divided in two: discouragement, and anger, for the first part; trust and hope for the second […] The social identity [of the public of the initial performances] is of he who is most powerful […] his judgment is guided by his satisfaction, which consists in “consuming something desired.” If his desire is disappointed, he is offended and clearly shows his disapproval […] The public that came afterwards […] is not at all the one made aggressive by its economic power: rather, it is composed of bourgeois professionals, some students, some workers. Hence, they are characterized by their respect for another’s work, which presents itself to them as a “message” and not as a “farce” […] With this “timid” bourgeoisie, I did not feel like a fish out of water anymore; the relationship that was born was a real one […] I felt that Orgia was an “unanticipated” event, but one to which this public was open. (“La rabbia” 352-53)

Though he was disappointed, these later spectators nevertheless reassured him in his theater’s viability, as they were more “open” to its “message” and to dialogue. Unlike

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⁹ For Orgia’s positive reception, see Chapter Two 73-74. For positive commentary on Lotschak’s production of Affabluzione and on Calderón’s first edition, see Casi, I teatri 262-63.
other works, he never abjured his tragedies, and as late as 1973 he still expressed his desire to Garzanti to publish all of them (“A Livio [1973]” 730). Today, the growing frequency of productions in both Italy and abroad and of scholarly literature on his theater attest to its continued interest, relevance and impact, bringing his experience “realized halfway” to ever greater levels of realization.10

The Bourgeois Tragic in Affabulazione, Orgia and Porcile

Pasolini’s dramas give way to a new tragic genre, the “bourgeois tragic.” His Manifesto is primarily a proposal of how to produce his bourgeois tragic, through his teatro della Parola or “Word Theater” practices. When his bourgeois tragic dramas are staged through his Word Theater praxis, they form his complete Bourgeois Tragic Theater.

Following Erika Fischer-Lichte’s theory of dramatic texts as “sketches of identity” – a notion to which Pasolini adheres, especially in his Manifesto – Bourgeois Tragic Theater

becomes a reflection of current and potential bourgeois subjectivity and its politics (5). First, his dramas are “bourgeois,” because he writes them about and for this class: the “addressee is my enemy, it is the bourgeoisie that goes to the theater” (“Se nasci” 1622). At this point, bourgeoisification had become too pervasive, making his critique of it too pressing that he could no longer indirectly condemn it through his Gramscian national-popular aesthetic, but had to do it head-on through his unresolved style at the theater – Italy’s bourgeois artistic institution *par excellence* since the Renaissance. For him, the rise of mass culture as the human condition effaced the traditional revolutionary subjects of the peasantry, proletariat and Catholicism; he subsequently sought new revolutionary subjects in all of the individuals whom bourgeoisification “othered,” in those whose radically individual desires that process marginalized. In his *Manifesto*, he qualifies that his plays are not for the entire class, but for its intellectual “advanced groups,” who are culturally engaged and open to critique and dialogue: “the few thousands of intellectuals in every city whose cultural interest may be naïve, provincial, but *real* […] they are constituted mostly by those who define themselves as ‘leftist progressives’ (including those Catholics who tend to constitute a New Left in Italy); the minority of such groups is formed by the surviving elite of liberal Crocian secularism and by radicals” (2483). He emphasizes that his new theater can impact the working classes via these intellectuals, “not because it *directly* and *rhetorically* addresses the working class, but because it addresses it *indirectly* and *realistically* across the advanced bourgeois intellectuals who are its *sole* public” (2500). In the end, his shift does not make him abandon Gramsci; it
only refocuses his attention from one Gramscian focal point to another: from the peasants and proletariat, to the intellectuals. Pasolini wants to foster what Gramsci calls “organic intellectuals” – individuals of varying social extraction who could play a crucial role in their respective circles in making and changing culture (Gramsci 258-65). Second, the classic dramatic genre that acts as the bourgeoisie’s mirror is “tragedy,” because, for Pasolini, bourgeoisification is a destructive process. Bourgeois subjectivity – an entire way of thinking and being – is continually seduced, haunted and brought to destructiveness by the memories, people and places of the premodern world in which that subjectivity has its origins, both in Italy and in Europe more generally. In Pasolini’s mythification, this premodern Italian world – extending from the countryside to the città di provincia, or province town – possessed a sense of the sacred, that is, the body and nature were more central and integral in human experience. In his interview with Jean Duflot, he explains how “bourgeois civilization” replaced the “sense of the sacred” of the preceding “peasant civilization” with the “ideology of wealth and power” and how, consequently, the “tragic is precisely the definitive break in this [ideology’s] continuity. The sacred’s eruption into everyday life” (“Il sogno” 1483-84, 1506). After having uprooted themselves from their popular origins, Pasolini’s protagonists re-experience the sacred and undergo conversion: they become aware that their values of extreme rationalism, wealth and power have not provided them with real fulfillment and meaning, but have driven them to a state of inter- and intrasubjective emptiness, one devoid of love, passion and community. This realization makes them their own Teiresias: they
become foreseers of their demise that this devastating revelation will provoke. Pasolini explains the sacred’s persistence in modernity: “Being sacred remains juxtaposed to being desecrated […] I have made, like everyone, thousands of successive overcomings, but the facts of my (infantile) sexuality have remained there, inside of me, exactly the same, despite having been progressively overcome in the course of my history” (“Il sogno” 1473). His nondialectical vision of history sees modernization, not as absorbing and eliminating the sacred, but, rather, as “juxtaposing” itself to the sacred, which remains intact. Correlating this view to one of individual subjectivity, he identifies specifically “(infantile) sexuality” as a representative of the sacred that culture displaces, but never erases. His bourgeois tragic genre follows Peter Szondi’s dispersal of a monolithic “Tragedy” into many “tragics”: the “tragic is a mode, a particular manner of destruction […] that results from the unity of opposites, from the sudden change into one’s opposite, from self-division” (55). Pasolini’s bourgeois tragic is precisely this destructive re-union, this contrast without synthesis between the premodern world and modern subjectivity that destroys that subjectivity.

Of the six dramas, Affabulazione, Orgia and Porcile most coherently stage this contrast at the heart of Pasolini’s bourgeois tragic. They give form to a new Western tragic myth: the uncanny return of the sacred in the bourgeois family. They engender modern sacre rappresentazioni, or mystery plays, a theatrical triptych across which the author theorizes how the bourgeois and the sacred interact. In each case, Italy’s premodern world returns, as a virtual or material reality, and precipitates the protagonist’s
tragedy. In *Affabulazione*, the Father, after awaking from a dream of a homoerotic episode from his infancy, attempts to make love to his son, even if it entails their demise. *Orgia’s* Man and Woman struggle to actualize their memories of their childhood loves through self-destructive sadomasochistic rituals. Similarly, in *Porcile*, Klotz cuts off his son, whose attraction to their estate’s peasants and pigs leads to his self-annihilating bestial rituals. The sacred by which these characters are fatally seduced is the flesh, corporeality; it is what Stefania Benini calls Pasolini’s “immanent sacred,” which “does not belong to a transcendental horizon but, rather, pertains to a *hic et nunc* corporeal dimension, which inscribes in the flesh – in its *eros* and even more in its *thanatos*, in its scandalous finitude – the presence of the real” (8). It is the flesh’s very material presence, its sensuality, which Pasolini’s characters consecrate and also desecrate through all of their sacred references in these texts.

To a certain extent, Pasolini defines the sacred as Freudian infantile sexuality. Freud’s influence on Pasolini is well known, and the author even cites the father of psychoanalysis in *Affabulazione* and in *Porcile’s* first draft and screenplay.\(^{11}\) For Freud, as for Pasolini’s protagonists, infantile love is always affectionate and carnal, excites the desire to touch, is polymorphously perverse and can be an alloy of the sex and death drives, displaying sadomasochistic qualities (Freud, *Three Essays 167-68, Totem 37-38* and *Civilization 107*). His characters endure bourgeoisification like Freudian repression:

\(^{11}\) For Freud’s influence on Pasolini, see Pasolini, “Freud conosce.” Several of Freud’s works are present in Pasolini’s library (Chiarossi and Zabagli 16, 179). For Pasolini’s library, this study consults the following volume: Graziella Chiarossi and Franco Zabagli, eds., *La biblioteca di Pier Paolo Pasolini*, Florence: Olschki, 2017.
it displaces the subject’s love, continually provoking him or her to retrieve his or her lost corporeal oneness with the mother’s womb, or, for Pasolini, even the father’s arms, and producing his or her ambivalent attitude, where, in Freud’s words, he or she is “constantly wishing to perform this [love-] act […] and detests it as well” (Totem 38).12 The character’s hate towards the love-object begins to overshadow his or her original aim of amorous union, increasingly transforming it into destructive union. His characters’ civilization that repressed the sacred and represses its return only exacerbates their infantile desire, propagating their love-hate and destructiveness towards their love-object.

Marcuse, in Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud (1955), theorizes how this exacerbated sexuality manifests itself. Marcuse’s impact on Pasolini is also well documented, and the author even cites the theorist’s text as having partially informed Orgia’s ideology in his production’s program (“Prologo” 319-20).13 Marcuse elaborates Freud’s conclusion in Civilization and Its Discontents (1930) that sexuality and, analogously, subjectivity and culture are products of the dialectic of the sex and death drives, explaining repression in terms of “Eros” and “Thanatos.” For him, the mid-twentieth century’s “late industrial civilization” is especially illustrative of a culture that efficiently builds itself by sublimating Eros’ creative energies, consequently desiccating

12 Pasolini’s nondialectical vision of history is undoubtedly influenced by Freud, who explains repression as finding “expression in the coexistence of antithetical impulses” (From the History 279).
13 For Marcuse’s impact on Pasolini, see Pasolini, “Anche Marcuse.” Pasolini states that he read the translation of Eros and Civilization’s eleventh chapter, “Eros and Thanatos,” in the following anthology: Franco Fortini, ed., Profezie e realtà del nostro secolo: testi e documenti per la storia di domani, Bari: Laterza, 1965. The anthology also includes Eros’ fourth chapter, “The Dialectic of Civilization.” Though Eros is not present in Pasolini’s library, he would have had access at this time to its entire translation: Eros e civiltà, trans. Lorenzo Bassi, Turin: Einaudi, 1964.
Eros and its capacity to counterbalance Thanatos and its destructive energies (83). While Eros continually renounces its original objectives for sublimation into socially productive interpersonal relations, sexuality and labor, what remains is Thanatos – destructiveness “not for its own sake, but for the relief of tension. The descent toward death is an unconscious flight from pain and want” (29). Destructiveness, therefore, as false consciousness. Pasolini’s protagonists have this frustrated sexuality, which the sacred’s return then radically desublimates, revealing their sexuality’s extremeness. Marcuse explains that when drastic desublimation takes place within repressive culture and its repressed subjectivity, this “dominion […] explodes suppressed sexuality […] and [that sexuality] manifests itself in the hideous forms so well known in the history of civilization; in the sadistic and masochistic orgies of desperate masses […] Such release of sexuality provides a periodically necessary outlet for unbearable frustration; it strengthens rather than weakens the roots of instinctual constraint […]” (202). To sate their desiccated eros, Pasolini’s protagonists obsessively repeat the sexual act; to placate their aggravated thanatos, they exhaust their love-object to eliminate frustration and reach quiescence. These two factors collide, and any kind of “purer” love – one that is spontaneous, reciprocal or joyful – regresses into an ambivalent love-hate, into morbid possessive ritualization. Here, sexual aggression, both sadistic and masochistic, is for Pasolini as it is for Freud and Marcuse: a regular component of sexuality in all cultures, and not solely bourgeois culture’s creation. However, what this civilization does in particular to this component is exacerbate it to the point of becoming extremely violent.
To describe their reunion with the sacred, the characters will employ an ambivalent love-hate poetry: they pronounce a language of the flesh, articulating their original infantile desire to touch and experience the flesh, but also a language of possession, voicing their exacerbated adult sexuality that objectifies and ultimately destroys that same flesh. But sexuality and its exacerbation only partially define Pasolini’s sacred and the protagonist’s demise its return precipitates. In truth, the sacred will encompass the entire premodern world, of which sexuality, though essential, is only a part. In the three dramas, sexual desire is inconceivable apart from all of the other sensations, emotions and experiences of premodern Italy. For example, in Porcile’s screenplay, Julian succinctly states that between his Italianate villa’s “countryside and that sun and dreams, and sexual pleasure there is no discontinuity” (Porcile, PC1 1160). The plays construct a myth that is both beautiful and brutal, with an ambiguous historical truth. “Premodern Italy” always implies the author’s mythification. The impetus behind this study’s close analysis of his myth comes less from proving its historical truth, than from revealing its capacity to provoke the theorization of a more humanistic culture.

The overarching Pasolinian intertext in the three tragedies is his novel and film Teorema, which stages the effects of the sacred’s return on an entire bourgeois family. The mysterious Visitor seduces and makes love to each member, and after he departs each one suffers an existential crisis. The daughter Odetta becomes an institutionalized catatonic; the son Pietro, a fringe artist; the mother Lucia, a drifting nymphomaniac. The father Paolo’s and the maid Emilia’s fortunes are left more open: he ambiguously donates
his factory to his workers, strips himself, like Saint Francis, of the remnants of his privileged identity in the train station and uncertainly awaits the sacred’s return in the desert; she goes back to her peasant community, becomes a saint and gives her body to the earth upon which the proletariat builds modern society. Similarly, Affabulazione, Orgia and Porcile are domestic dramas, where the secluded bourgeois household sets the stage for the family’s reunion with the sacred, which always recalls Emilia’s community. Radical desublimation takes place, after which the characters move as if dreaming, like Teorema’s family members when they unite with the Visitor. The novel describes Pietro’s transition to oneiric movement as the following: “by not understanding or admitting, but only by acting, will he be able to grasp the reality that his bourgeois reason took from him; only by acting, as in a dream; or better, by acting before deciding” (Teorema 38). In the Visitor’s absence, Paolo and Odetta suffer illnesses that recall those of Affabulazione’s, Orgia’s and Porcile’s protagonists. Drawing on his ulcer attack, Pasolini recurrently employs sickness as a sign of bourgeois subjectivity in crisis. The three tragedies’ protagonists finish as Odetta, Pietro and Lucia: they “end up losing or betraying God” (Teorema 121). They all reexperience “God,” or the sacred, but they are unable to construct a sustainable bond with it, one devoid of possessiveness. In a description of Odetta’s, Pietro’s and Lucia’s fortunes that applies to those of the other protagonists, Benini argues that they “experience a subjective revolution only in bouts, one that leads nowhere […] They have undergone conversion, but there is no redemption for them, no resurrection or revolution” (117). Like Pietro and Lucia, the other
protagonists hopelessly attempt to rematerialize the sacred they lost in compulsive corollaries. In Teorema’s concluding investigation of Paolo’s ambiguous donation, the journalist advances a hypothesis that resonates with all of these cases: “Would the – not very original – hypothesis be then that the bourgeoisie can no longer in any way free itself of its fate, neither publicly nor privately, and that whatever a bourgeois does, he is wrong?” (Teorema 188). This “fate” is the bourgeois individual’s inability to approach the sacred in any other terms but those of possession and domination, which ultimately leads to his or her social and/or physical death. However, Paolo’s and Emilia’s fates, though grim, are not perfectly tragic. Likewise, Orgia’s Man and Porcile’s Julian will also hinder their fate by contemplating how to reformulate their approach to sacred and thus free themselves of that fate.

Along with Teorema, Affabulazione, Orgia and Porcile spell out the importance Pasolini attributes at this juncture to examining bourgeois subjectivity, its radicalizing breakdown and the potential radical politics that could emerge from that breakdown. This sacred-induced crisis is perhaps one of the only genuine “wrenches in the machine,” one of the only ways to effectively halt the bourgeoisie’s thanatotic logic. Fabrizio Di Maio calls it “one of the few defeats, however devastating, that the representatives of a class accustomed to triumphing must register […]” (117). The relevance of Pasolini’s examination has clearly not expired with his passing: today, capitalist globalization attacks minoritarian cultures, often forcing them into passive assimilation and/or violent opposition. Thus, to further these critical insights, this study undertakes a systematic
theorization of Pasolini’s Bourgeois Tragic Theater – his dramatic genre and its representation through his Word Theater practices – as one of bourgeois subjectivity and its politics. It is the first of its kind among both the Italian- and English-language criticism, providing translations of numerous texts currently unavailable in English. The predominant form of radical subjectivity and politics in the three tragedies will be “self-destructive otherness” and martyrdom, the latter of which, in the end, will be a falsity and thus no politics at all. However, in crucial contradiction of Teorema’s hypothesis, Orgia and Porcile will bring to light a more progressive, critical radical subjectivity and politics: the transformation of self-destructive otherness into the “Logic of Otherness.” This affirmative and effective form of resistance to the Consumption Civilization will also contradict the repeated conclusion among scholars that these tragedies signal the beginning of the so-called secondo Pasolini, or “Second Pasolini,” one who is unable to see any form of affirmative and effective resistance to this culture, and who maintains this position in his later life and art until his death. For example, Rinaldo Rinaldi claims that the “void of [his] theater, prefigures with clarity the future destiny of all of Pasolini’s literature between the late 1960s and the 1970s: its sublime misery, its ascetic irrelevance” (Pier Paolo 308). Theorizing from Porcile, Di Maio states that “according to Pasolini, the technocratic society […] succeeds with ease in liquefying into oblivion any type of revolution, narcissistic or transgressive” (296). And Antonio Tricomi finds that, though Pasolini “in his Manifesto vindicates literature’s capacity to make an impact on

14 For an overview of the “Second Pasolini,” see Vanhove 36.
the democratic dialectic, he opposes it in the tragedies with the most resigned and most lucid admission of impotence, and even of enslavement to Power of the contemporary author and his or her works” (340). There is no doubt that the tragedies initiate Pasolini’s depiction of the neocapitalist order as a totalitarian regime, which continues into his last film, *Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma* (*Salò, or The 120 Days of Sodom*, 1975), and his treatment for the film that would have followed, *Porno-Teo-Kolossal* (written 1967-75, published 1989). And in interviews, the author does identify a neocapitalist future as a *Preistoria nuova*, or “new Prehistory” (“Intervista rilasciata ad Alberto” 1572). However, Pasolini was a conscious polemical pedagogue, and his announcement of the end of human history was not only a serious statement of a true possibility, but also a hyperbolic means to stimulate more resistance. In truth, there are too many motions in his later life and art that contradict these scholars’ conclusions that he had lost all sense of struggle and history. For example, in one of his last interviews on October 31, 1975, he debunks interviewer Philippe Bouvard’s accusation that he was no longer a “political militan”: “I have not at all given up. I am one more than ever” (qtd. in Schwartz 609). In his final interview, “Siamo tutti in pericolo” (“We’re All in Danger,” 1975), which he gave the following day only several hours before his murder, he stands by his belief in the act of refusal and in history: “I believe in it [neocapitalism’s collapse] […] because I know that by constantly hitting the same nail on the head one can possibly make a whole house fall down. We find a small example of this among the Radical Party […] that is able to influence the whole country […] Most of all, it’s history that gives us the best example.
Contestation [(il rifiuto)] has always been an essential act” (“We’re All” 234). Radical change is therefore possible, but it will be an arduous and continuous struggle. In the 1970s, he also frequently collaborated with the radical left-wing groups Lotta Continua, the Communist Youth Federation and the Radical Party (Schwartz 547-48, 636).

Furthermore, both of his late films – like his three tragedies – do not end in definite apocalypse, but, significantly, in ambiguity, and hence he leaves them to the spectator/reader to grapple with: in Salò, the young collaborators’ secret dance could indicate hollow obliviousness or homoerotic defiance; in Porno-Teo-Kolossal, as protagonists Nunzio and Epifanio look down at Earth from the cosmos, they hear “songs of revolution [...] becoming clearer,” and Nunzio concludes: the “end does not exist. Let’s wait. Something will happen” (2753). In sum, the “Second Pasolini,” in both life and art, was never perfectly apocalyptic, which thus validates the search for and elaboration of the sparks of resistance that flash up in the darkness of these works. Close textual analyses of his three tragedies and their drafts will indeed bring an alternative to light, one which will only come into greater focus and strength when these texts are viewed with, rather than separated from his contestatory Manifesto’s theater praxis.

**The Bourgeois Tragic and Twentieth-Century Western Theater**

Pasolini’s Manifesto acts as a point of departure from which to further elaborate his bourgeois tragic, its subjectivity and politics, situating it within twentieth-century Western theater. He defines his new theater against Talk and Gesture/Scream Theaters. On one hand, Anton Chekhov, Eugène Ionesco and Edward Albee exemplify the
entertaining Talk Theater, which takes place in the *teatri stabili*, or permanent theaters, and in which the bourgeoisie mirrors and affirms itself through ironic verbal expression and naturalistic *mise-en-scène*. On the other, Antonin Artaud, The Living Theatre and Jerzy Grotowski represent the orgiastic Gesture/Scream Theater, which takes place in warehouses and abandoned buildings, and scandalizes, and hence also affirms the bourgeoisie through the destruction of verbal expression in favor of physical presence and action, and disorienting *mise-en-scène*. For Pasolini, these currents are two faces of one bourgeois culture, each with the same hatred for the Word. His purposely cerebral theater takes from Greek tragedy and the Platonic dialogues to critique this culture via poetic, more expressionistic verbal language and minimalistic *mise-en-scène*. He bases his *Manifesto* on Moravia’s essay, “La chiacchiera a teatro” (Talk at the Theater, 1967), where he also identifies two major trends: *il teatro della chiacchiera*, “Talk Theater,” and *il teatro dialettico*, “Dialectical Theater.” Pasolini retrieves his definition of Talk Theater from Moravia, who moreover describes it as one of symbolic chatter, where there is a “maximum of conventionality, of absurdity, of fragmentariness, that is, of talking, and at the same time a maximum of anguished, tormenting, mystical feeling […] it is impossible that, behind the talking, something elevated, profound, complex, that is, dramatic does not hide itself” (Moravia 875). He cites Chekhov, Ionesco and Samuel Beckett as his Talk Theater’s representatives, assessing them negatively for their work’s evasion of identifying the basis of cultural crisis. He advocates instead for the more explicitly ideological Dialectical Theater, where the conflict is in the words and “nothing is
obscured or silenced. The dialogue, therefore, is realistic, taking realism to mean a form of superior rationality that consents the recuperation of the real’s totality” (875). He associates primarily Henrik Ibsen and Luigi Pirandello, but also Jean Genet, Bertolt Brecht, Jean-Paul Sartre and Peter Weiss with this current. He does not mention a Gesture/Scream Theater, and so Pasolini coins this third category himself. Pasolini’s bourgeois tragedies are a form of Moravia’s Dialectical Theater, which the latter calls the “legitimate heir of classical tragic theater” that restores the Word to its “privileged position, makes it once again the place of the drama” (885).

In fact, the only label Pasolini repeatedly employs for his plays is “tragedy,” and so it is this classic genre or, in Szondi’s words, this “particular manner of destruction” that can more specifically theorize his own. On one hand, Affabulazione, Orgia and Porcile follow Greek tragedy, in that their contrast takes place in their expressionistic verses and their plots generally maintain Aristotle’s unity of action, moving from the protagonist’s complication, discovery and reversal, and explication, and concluding with his or her demise (Aristotle 23-39). In early drafts, Affabulazione and Orgia even contained a chorus; in Porcile, Julian will give the peasants this designation (Pasolini, “Affabulazione (I stesura)” 2, “Orgia (I stesura)” 1 and “Orgia: I elemento” first folder 7). On the other hand, two recurrent features distance the plays from Greek tragic conventions, producing a distinctly bourgeois tragic. First, from the perspective of

26
language, Talk Theater’s ironic chatter tempers the texts’ solemn verses. In a linguistic
description of his characters, Pasolini states that they are “rather ignorant, lacking a
contestatory and revolutionary ideology, immersed in their bourgeois state to their ears,
who at the same time speak a language, a poetic one, which is conscious, and they are
continually illuminated by the awareness of what they are” (“Dibattito” 327-28). This
implies a “split personality: they are contemporaneously unaware petit-bourgeois
individuals and poetically conscious souls” (“Dibattito” 328). Being “immersed in their
bourgeois state” means that his characters employ irony to mask and defend themselves
from their reality’s painful emptiness, creating a humorous and at times grotesque tone.
The author defines this humorous tone as an “attitude of the ruling class […] what are
humor’s qualities? The sense of guilt and reductiveness. Now the bourgeois feels guilty
(because he possesses power) […] Humor is an attitude of defense of he who has an
impoverished, quotidian vision of life” (“Se nasci” 1621). In contrast, he claims that true
tragic “heroes never have a sense of humor” (“Il sogno” 1621). His protagonists’
humorous “attitude of defense” will work to undermine their heartrending nostalgia for
premodern Italy and their biting analyses of modern culture. Casi argues that their humor
has the “objective of disarming tragicity with its derision, making tragedy slip towards
farce” (“Il derubato” 12). Indeed, their irony eventually culminates into events that alter

Luca Ronconi suggests that Pasolini’s dramatic genre is more elegiac than tragic, given the strong
presence of nature and nostalgia (XXV). It is true that elegy, like irony, can attenuate the unity of action,
specifically forestalling events; this will occur most noticeably in Orgia. However, elegy, which exists to
an extent in Greek tragedy, can also heighten tragicity. In the end, irony, rather than elegy, does more in
Pasolini’s plays to dilute tragedy.
tragic plot structure, specifically the heroic sacrifice. This is the second recurrent feature, this time from the perspective of action, that distances Pasolini’s plays from Greek tragic conventions. In *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama* (1963), Benjamin locates classical tragedy’s essence in the hero’s martyrdom, in his or her self-sacrifice that becomes the seed of a new community (106-07). The deaths of Pasolini’s protagonists will never simply be explosions of suppressed sexuality, but they will also at the same time be restagings – predominantly unbeknownst to them – of some of the West’s most legendary heroic sacrifices: *Affabulazione*’s Father will resemble Heracles, Oedipus and King Lear; *Orgia*’s Woman, Medea and Ophelia; *Orgia*’s Man, Baudelaire’s Cytherian; and *Porcile*’s Julian, Pentheus. These refigurations will not only correlate those legendary lives to those of the protagonists, but will further suggest these protagonists’ status as heroes, as martyrs for the sacred in modernity. However, though they may strive – each to varying degrees of consciousness – to become proper tragic heroes, they will remain merely protagonists, as each play will contain a plot element that reduces their self-sacrifice and, consequently, their achievement of martyrdom. *Affabulazione* does not conclude on the Father’s murder of his son and his own social death, but with an epilogue that takes place twenty years later, after his prison sentence and his wife’s suicide: he is now a beggar who derides his destitution, and compulsively mourns and fabulates an alibi for his son’s murder in an abandoned train car. *Orgia* ironically extends the Man’s suicide into its opening prologue, announcing his death before the fact: his shadow ridicules his cross-dressed body hanging from the ceiling of his bedroom and reevaluates
how he lived his life. His wife goes in silence to drown herself in a forgotten river outside of the city. Similarly, in *Porcile’s* final episode, Herdhitze silences the peasants – the tragedy’s “chorus” with its greater awareness and conscience who witnessed and mourn Julian’s dismemberment – so that his and Klotz’s merger celebration can continue uninterrupted. Like ironic language, these events that flatten devastation will be the means with which bourgeois society and, by extension, the bourgeois characters reduce tragicity, because they reduce heroic sacrifice. At this point, the dialectic between Talk and Gesture/Scream Theaters comes to light, as the protagonists’ reactions against their class result in their contained and hence codified destructiveness. As a bourgeois tragic, Pasolini’s genre appropriately attenuates what Benjamin considers classical tragedy’s essence. It also assuages what Szondi calls the tragic “manner of destruction”: “the demise of something […] whose removal does not allow the wound to heal, is tragic. The tragic contradiction may not be sublated […] If this is the case […] the tragic is already vanquished in humor, covered up in irony […]” (55). In both word and deed, Pasolini’s characters will always attempt to “heal” their tragic “wound,” “sublating” their “tragic contradiction” in posthumous second thoughts, anonymous gravesites or distracting party music. Masking, defensive language and action will trivialize the heroic sacrifice, making the tragedy, in Casi’s words, “slip towards farce.” Yet Pasolini’s dramas are not perfect parodies; they remain divided between tragedy and its parody. His genre does not signal the end of tragedy in the Consumption Civilization, but that culture’s increasingly efficient reduction of tragedy.
Marta la madre (The Mother Marta, 1952, premiered 1953 in Rome), by little-known playwright Mario Federici (Aquila, 1900 – Rome, 1975), comes the closest of any other Western drama prior or contemporaneous to Pasolini’s bourgeois tragedies to staging the specific contrast at the heart of his genre. Though it remains uncertain whether Pasolini was familiar with the play or Federici, there is an extraordinary thematic resonance between Pasolini’s dramas and Federici’s work written more than a decade earlier. Marta is set in the village of San Pietro, whose old, agrarian town was flooded after the First World War for the construction of a dam, which supplied the power to build a new, industrialized town. Marta is the matriarch of San Pietro’s wealthy landowning family, and her son Giorgio was the planner behind the dam and new town. He has been deceased for some time and Marta painstakingly looks after his projects in his memory. When a break in the dam cuts off the power supply and spreads unemployment, Marta attempts to suppress the workers’ unrest with aid. However, now that the dam is drained, San Pietro’s old town resurfaces, seduces the townspeople and causes the workers to desire to return to farming and past traditions. In an indirect Oedipal battle, Giorgio’s son (Marta’s grandson) Francesco organizes this popular movement to reclaim the old town and its way of life. After Marta continually refuses to abandon Giorgio’s industries, Francesco takes his life in an effort to make her concede to the townspeople. Marta contains all three of the thematic pillars of Pasolini’s bourgeois tragic: premodern Italy’s return in modernity, its sense of the sacred and the destructive contrast between these two cultures. When San Pietro’s old town reemerges from the lake
and seduces the industrialized townspeople with its not-so-distant memory, the Mayor describes their “enchantment” to Marta:

It [the new town] was built, so to speak, in a day. Every building, four tiny identical apartments […] all intimacy has been lost […] Go see it [the old town]. You will understand why everyone is up there, enchanted. It is not just for the possession of the land. It is even possible that the possession of the land is only an excuse. It is also possible that they do not perfectly understand that what keeps them up there, enchanted, is not the land, but something else. That is to say, a sort of enchantment that the new town surely does not have. An atmosphere that is ancient and new […]. (Federici 312-13)

He emphasizes that, for the townspeople, resurrecting the old town attempts not only to resolve the economic crisis through farming, but also to fill their modern subjective void with that town’s “intimacy” and “atmosphere that is ancient and new.” Indeed, Federici identifies capitalism, like Pasolini, as a dehumanizing regime, and furthermore sees this system’s oppressive factory as a continuation to an extent of Nazism’s concentration camp. As a camp survivor, Francesco pleads with his grandmother to recognize this aspect of industrialization:

FRANCESCO […] You forget that I was strapped to a machine in a concentration camp, that I had to obey its rhythm, bow to its tempo, I, who was born a free man.

MARTA But it ended! You see? It ended!

FRANCESCO But it can always happen again. It is enough to restart the sirens, reopen the gates and lock them when they are all inside. I know. But I had this town’s image in my eyes when I was a slave of a machine […].

MARTA Now you have come home.

FRANCESCO […] But I, in my eyes, did not have this town that I knew, as my father wanted it, but the other one from before I was born and from forever, populated by free men, made by God. (342)
Like the Saint, Francesco espouses fraternity and simplicity by organizing the townspeople’s movement – what he calls a “backwards revolution, a refusal of a mechanized, arid life” (343). The way he takes his life during San Pietro’s procession, which now displays the antique statue of its patron saint disinterred from the old church, further sanctifies him. In his dying words, Francesco wants his grandmother to know that he sacrificed himself so that his people would no longer be “slaves of machines” (347). The play ends with the idea that he will become a true martyr: his self-sacrifice will overcome his grandmother’s opposition and act as the seed from which San Pietro’s premodern culture flowers anew.

The Pasolinian drama’s major thematic divergence from Marta is its negation of martyrdom, of the potential of its protagonist’s self-sacrifice to incite cultural transformation. Writing more than a decade later in the Consumption Civilization with the crisis of Marxism and the Church, and also, for him, that of the Student Movement, Pasolini is unable to instill Francesco’s revolutionary potential in his protagonists’ examples. In their dehumanizing civilization that desecrates death, martyrdom becomes a falsity. This modification relates Pasolini’s genre to Jean Anouilh’s negation of martyrdom in Antigone (1946, premiered 1944 in Paris). His Antigone’s modernized setting leads to a parody of Sophocles’ myth, in which the characters are metatheatrically aware of and deride their classical roles. The text’s irony strips Antigone’s self-sacrifice of any cultural impact: the Chorus concludes that “Antigone was right – it would have

16 Though Anouilh’s Antigone is not present in Pasolini’s library, he was likely familiar with the work.
been nice and peaceful for us all without her. But now it’s over. It’s nice and peaceful anyway. Everyone who had to die is dead […] And those who are still alive are quietly beginning to forget them […] Antigone’s quiet now, cured of a fever whose name we shall never know” (Anouilh 60-61). In this twentieth-century Antigone, there is a normalizing social order that effectively cools the heroine’s “fever,” one that reduces her revolutionary subjectivity and politics, enticing the townspeople to “forget” her example. For Anouilh writing in Nazi-occupied France, modernizing Antigone means contextualizing it within Nazism’s dehumanizing regime, which desecrates not only death, but also tragic myth more generally. Following the French playwright, Moravia’s Il dio Kurt (Kurt the God, 1968, premiered 1969 in Aquila) tackles Nazism’s destruction of Western (Greek) tragic myth head-on. In 1944, Kurt, Commander of a concentration camp in Poland, arranges for an imprisoned family to carry out Sophocles’ Oedipus myth, but denies them their cathartic self-sacrifice – Jocasta, her hanging, Oedipus, his blinding. Vice Commander Horst informs their Oedipus of his and his mother’s new fortune: “to continue to make yourselves useful to our glorious Reich through work, like all of the other prisoners” (Moravia 511). Il dio is an allegory of Nazism’s resignification of myth: by deindividualizing individuals into masses, Nazism empties the West’s Greek tragic myths of their tragicity because it erases individual exemplarity. Whereas ancient Greek Fate consecrated the individual, modern German Fate consecrates the “races of nations, society, groups” (507). Nazism now creates myths of national exemplarity.

17 Though Moravia’s Il dio Kurt is not present in Pasolini’s library, he was likely familiar with the work.
Writing in the Consumption Civilization, and well aware of Pasolini’s critique of it, Moravia draws an implicit correlation in his work between Nazism’s cult of the fascist nation and advanced capitalism’s cult of mass society. Pasolini sets his tragedies in precisely this mass culture, which will contain echoes of the Holocaust’s horror, and in which his protagonists’ singularity will lose significance. In fact, their self-sacrifice for the sacred will not contest, but will actually affirm that culture by ridding it of their disobedient otherness.

The Logic of Otherness: A Critical Radical Subjectivity and Politics

The mass culture of Pasolini’s plays refuses all forms of life that are not its own. It looks to alienate and even erase the memory of radical individuality. In his protagonists’ desire to reunite with premodern Italy, with the sacred, their society will “other” them. “Otherness” translates Pasolini’s term “Diversità,” which he employs throughout Orgia and which applies to the other two tragedies. “Otherness” denotes the minoritarian subject position that repressive modern society produces when it marginalizes and pushes radically individual desire towards self-destruction to rid itself of that desire’s real or potential disobedience. “Otherness” describes an ambivalent subjectivity, potentially creative and/or destructive. Though his protagonists may believe they are martyrs for the sacred, their self-destructive otherness is actually a functioning part of their society, by which that society moves towards greater homogeneity. Their society disarms martyrdom, emptying self-sacrifice of the potential to transform culture. In a description of the couple’s suicide in Orgia that also applies to the other two tragedies, Pasolini
admits that it occurs “under extreme conditions” and that it is ultimately limited in its
cultural impact: “sexual ‘otherness’ […] opened a crack in the city’s walls […] In fact, it
takes much of this explosive material to bring down the high walls of a city, which for
Orgia’s protagonists is majority and conformity” ("Prologo" 320-21). In his profound
disillusionment with the PCI and the Church, and even with the Student Movement,
Pasolini works out his meditations on a new radical subjectivity and politics across his
three tragedies. For him, the Consumption Civilization’s others were the new
revolutionary subjects, but he was concerned with how they tended towards self-erasure,
only creating a power vacuum for the established order to fill with itself. In his polemical
1967 letter to his friend and fellow poet Allen Ginsberg, he voices this preoccupation
when he questions the nonviolent American protestors’ renunciation of the idea of power:
“to renounce […] also the idea of the conquest of power on the part of the just signifies
leaving power in the hands of the fascists who always and everywhere hold it” ("A
Allen" 633). He is not advocating that these protestors become power-hungry, but he
does want them to overcome their impotent nondialectical stance, which, in his eyes, is
on its way to alienation from the city, only bolstering its high walls. On the European
front, he saw a similar form of self-erasure in Greek Resistance fighter Alexandros
Panagoulis, to whom he compares Orgia’s Man in his production’s program ("Prologo"
321). Panagoulis was on Pasolini’s mind during the tour, as it was in late November 1968
that the Regime of the Colonels sentenced the fighter to death for having attempted to
assassinate the country’s tyrannical leader; Panagoulis refused to collaborate with and ask
for pardon from the Regime. Though the Junta eventually lifted his sentence, imprisoned him and later released him, during the days of his seemingly imminent execution, Pasolini dedicated the following verses to him in his poem “Panagulis” (1968): “We do not want Panagoulis to die, like the boy Menoeceus […] We are impotent, it is true. But words are also worth something” (33-34). Pasolini associates him, like his tragedies’ protagonists, with a legendary heroic sacrifice – that of Creon’s son in Euripides’ The Phoenician Women – and wants to see him transcend his exacerbated death drive, which he believes will not bear the same mark on society as his struggle’s continuation, even if it entails its reformulation. In fact, for Panagoulis, “words were also worth something,” as his imprisonment gave birth to his poetry, which, in Pasolini’s view, continued to communicate his “faith, or fixed idea, founded on a nondialectical logic,” that was “one of those ‘forms’ of existence and struggle that is history itself modeled into an elementary perfection with his own hands” (“Primo” 2691). For Pasolini, others who persist, struggle and critically engage with repressive society more forcefully resist it than those who fall into a false and impotent martyrization, only emptying points of resistance for that society to fill with itself.

Orgia and Porcile will theorize how Otherness can transcend ghettoization and self-destruction to become a movement towards a less repressive reality. Affabulazione’s Messenger, Sophocles’ Shadow, prescribes with his Oedipal Lesson that the Father live his infantile desire in a freer, less possessive and more open way to avoid destructiveness; however, the play will ultimately prove this purer experiential approach to reality
impossible in a culture that maintains itself by marginalizing and exacerbating radically individual desire. Subsequently, *Orgia* and *Porcile* will formulate the Logic of Otherness, which points to a way out of *Affabulazione*’s dead end. *Orgia*’s Man is aware of his martyrdom’s falsity, and his shadow continues this realization in the posthumous prologue: he questions how his life would have been different if he had not lived his self-destructive otherness as the pure negation, and thus affirmation of society’s norm, but had “progressively reconstructed” it, “disobeying, both the laws of normality, / and those of Insanity” (*Orgia* 248). *Porcile* then furthers his line of inquiry in its first draft and screenplay, where the Messenger, this time Spinoza’s shadow, similarly proposes that Julian reconstruct his otherness as the “Dream Logic,” which could critically engage with and contest his society’s one-dimensional “Reality Logic.” In this new Dream Logic, Otherness – the substance of dreams – would become the basis from which subjectivity and culture are reborn. Julian would renounce his nondialectical stance and risk making his otherness dialectical, transforming it into another movement, into a “Logic of Otherness,” which reinserts the contradiction into his one-dimensional society, with the potential to change the direction of history. These highly significant moments tempt the bourgeois tragic towards a final genre shift to the revolutionary epic.

To a certain extent, Pasolini’s Logic of Otherness is indebted to Marcuse’s theorization of society’s others as the late twentieth century’s new revolutionary subjects. In his “Postscript 1968” to his essay “Repressive Tolerance” (1965), Marcuse outlines a form of resistance to repressive society’s false tolerance for “radical minorities,” who
must be “willing to break this tyranny and to work for the emergence of a free and sovereign majority – minorities intolerant, militantly intolerant and disobedient to the rules of behavior which tolerate destruction and suppression” (123). Though Marcuse theorizes on a falsely tolerant society, and Pasolini, in his tragedies, on a more openly intolerant one, both thinkers give the marginalized the task of transforming their otherness into a force of liberation, stressing the centrality of collectivity, struggle and disobedience. However, the Pasolinian Logic of Otherness is always anchored in premodern Italy: it is from the dream of this Eros-oriented past that resistance forms, to revive a sense of it in the present. Silvestra Mariniello makes an important remark when she calls Pasolini’s revolutionary vision, not a “nostalgic return to the past,” but a “labor of radical deconstruction of Western history” (177). For Pasolini, resisting in the present from a reference point in the past means reinstating what William Van Watson, in his penetrating psychoanalytic account, _Pier Paolo Pasolini and the Theatre of the Word_ (1989), calls “coherence” – the transhistorical continuum of human traditions, struggles and values – in the Consumption Civilization that threatens all such coherence with erasure (17). Theorizing from the tragedies as well, David Ward argues that “[f]orgetting opens up a vacuum that is immediately filled by hegemonic power structures […] the past [thus becomes] an ideological weapon […]” (159). Indeed, Pasolini characterizes mass culture with extreme amnesia of the past, both of its beauty and its brutality. To a much

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lesser degree, Marcuse also sees memory and myth as points of departure for a radical reconstruction of Western culture. In *Eros and Civilization*, he devotes an entire chapter to the ancient myths of Orpheus and Narcissus, whom he finds point towards a more gratifying world order (159-71). In his later *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), he describes “historical consciousness” as the critical tool with which to distinguish between progress and regression in modernity: if the “progressing rationality of advanced industrial society tends to liquidate, as an ‘irrational rest,’ the disturbing elements of Time and Memory, it also tends to liquidate the disturbing rationality contained in this irrational rest,” hence, the “[r]ecognition and relation to the past as present […] renders possible the development of concepts which de-stabilize and transcend the closed universe by comprehending it as historical universe” (102-03). The past becomes the rational foundation of modern critical theory and practice, the reference point from which to uncover modernity’s irrationality. Here Pasolini and Marcuse begin to reconverge in their understanding of memory and myth as vehicles through which to theorize alternative forms of life that are humanistically rerooted in more gratifying and less damaging forms of thinking and being.

Though tempted, *Orgia* and *Porcile* never become revolutionary epics; they remain bourgeois tragedies. Though the Logic of Otherness flashes up, the Man and Julian never act on it. These facts, along with Pasolini’s removal of Spinoza’s shadow

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19 Though Marcuse’s *One-Dimensional Man* is not present in Pasolini’s library, he would have had access at this time to its translation: *L’uomo a una dimensione*, trans. Luciano Gallino and Tilde Giani Gallino, Turin: Einaudi, 1967.
from his film adaptation and, afterwards, of the shadow’s Dream Logic from the play’s most advanced draft hinder the Logic’s viability and point to the author’s skepticism of it, despite proposing it as perhaps currently one of the only affirmative and effective forms of resistance. Yet the Logic of Otherness cannot be dismissed, since it remains in *Orgia* and since it is uncertain what life it would have taken on in drafts of both *Orgia* and *Porcile* finalized for publication by the author himself. In addition, it is now clear that Pasolini never completely lost faith in struggle and history. Under these conditions, the Logic of Otherness flashes up in the Man’s and Spinoza’s shadows and smolders there in their darkness as a question demanding the spectator’s attention. The protagonists’ failure to achieve martyrdom will suspend catharsis and leave the dramas in ambiguity.

Conceived in the author’s unresolved style, his bourgeois tragedies conclude in purposeful ambiguity, in non-conclusions, and, in his *Manifesto*, he makes a post-performance dialogue essential to their staging, thus extending his dramas into the audience. His tragedies purposefully leave their questions unanswered, posing them to their spectators to provoke their critical intervention. The way his characters employ Brechtian alienation effects to install a degree of critical distance between themselves and the spectators further stimulates the latter’s engagement: they will comment on their own theatricality and directly address the audience. Dialogue is key to Bourgeois Tragic Theater’s status as radical political art or, in Pasolini’s words, as a “cultural rite” (*Manifesto* 2500). He emphasizes that his new theater is “above all debate, exchange of ideas, literary and political struggle, on the most democratic and rational plane possible”
(Manifesto 2492). It is a “component of a true ‘New Left’” (“A Livio [1968]” 634). For both the others of the audience and the other author himself, Bourgeois Tragic Theater will in fact act to actualize the Logic of Otherness, to realize its critical radical subjectivity and politics that progressively reconstructs culture.

The following three chapters elaborate Pasolini’s examination of bourgeois subjectivity, its radicalizing breakdown and the radical politics that could emerge from that breakdown in Affabulazione, Orgia and Porcile. The analyses focus especially on how the texts characterize Pasolini’s premodern Italian myth and the Logic of Otherness that emerges from Orgia to Porcile. Chapter One, “The Father’s Love and Hate for His Mysterious Son in Affabulazione,” acts as an ideal introduction to the bourgeois individual’s sacred-induced crisis, as the play lays it out in elementary form. The Father must confront the return of his homoerotic infantile desire in his mysterious son, first attempting to make to love to him, and then, when this proves impossible, moving to destroy him and his own identity. Chapter Two, “The Couple’s Ritualization of Childhood Loves in Orgia,” expounds bourgeois culture’s exacerbation of the Man’s and Woman’s childhood desire that leads to their suicide. Of the three tragedies, Orgia will versify Pasolini’s premodern myth in the greatest depth, depicting not only how this world gave expression to childhood sexuality, but also revolved around a broader “language of the body.” The Man’s shadow will begin the theorization of the progressive reconstruction of Otherness. Chapter Three, “The Father and Son’s Merger to Cut Off Otherness in Porcile,” elucidates how the drama synthesizes the previous two: like
Orgia’s couple, Julian endures the exacerbation of his childhood desire; like Affabulazione’s Father, Klotz must confront the return of the sacred in his mysterious son. Through the merger, the play stages advanced capitalism’s effect on the traditional father-son conflict. Spinoza’s shadow will reopen theorization of the progressive reconstruction of Otherness, proposing the Dream Logic, or Logic of Otherness. The Conclusion, “The Bourgeois Tragic in Practice,” contextualizes Bourgeois Tragic Theater within classical and twentieth-century Western theater praxes, and how it acts to actualize the Logic of Otherness. It will give its spectators the task of creating their own catharsis through the post-performance dialogue, which contains a Platonic pedagogy with radicalizing effects for their subjectivity and politics.
CHAPTER ONE: THE FATHER’S LOVE AND HATE FOR HIS MYSTERIOUS SON IN AFFABULAZIONE

The Father’s Dream

Pasolini wrote Affabulazione’s first draft between the summer and fall of 1966. Inspired by his first trip to New York that August, he originally set the work in the American metropolis. After five more drafts, he published it in Nuovi Argomenti in 1969 and afterwards revised it again the same year. Garzanti first published it in 1977, with the author’s friend and fellow poet Attilio Bertolucci introducing it as “perhaps the most tremendous (and suave) of the tragedies” (qtd. in Pasolini, Affabulazione Pilade back cover). Peter Lotschak directed the first productions in 1973, at Graz’s Schauspielhaus, and in 1976, at Paris’ Espace Cardin. Some of the most well-known productions remain those of Vittorio Gassman in 1977, at Rome’s Teatro Tenda, and in 1986, at Pistoia’s Teatro Manzoni, as well as that of Luca Ronconi in 1993, at Turin’s Teatro Carignano. In 1988, Gassman even adapted the play for film with Carlo Tuzii as L’altro enigma (The Other Enigma). In the twenty-first century, productions have been particularly frequent in France, but have also taken place in Italy, Belgium and England.

20 Pasolini, “Affabulazione (I stesura)” attached folder. For these notes’ publication, see Pasolini, “Note,” TE 1170-71.
Affabulazione opens with a prologue, where Sophocles’ Shadow inaugurates the author’s new theater to the audience. The subsequent eight episodes follow the Father, an industrialist on summer vacation with his wife and son at their country villa in Brianza, north of Milan. One afternoon in the garden, the Father has a dream of a homoerotic episode from his infancy: he wakes up screaming and believes his dream continues in his son, with whom he desperately falls in love. He has an existential crisis, in which he informally abandons his social identity, neglecting work to stay at home with his son and to undergo a religious conversion, which makes him ill. When he attempts to show his sex to his son one evening, the Son runs away. The Father then begs his son to show him his sex and kill him, but the Son wounds him and runs away again. While the Father convalesces, Sophocles’ Shadow returns to warn him against repeating Oedipus’ error: his son is not another enigma for his bourgeois reason to resolve and possess, but a mystery that he can only experience. Nevertheless, with the Fortuneteller’s help, the Father tracks down his son at his girlfriend’s house and, while they make love, he kills him. The play closes with an epilogue twenty years later, after the Mother has hanged herself and the Father has served his prison sentence: the latter now lives as a beggar in the train station with his imaginary friend Cacarella.

Pasolini bases the Father’s dream on recollections of his original homoerotic seduction and his love for his own father, Carlo Alberto. Before awakening, the Father cries out his dream’s images:

Aaaaaaah! No… Voglio toccarti le ginocchia…
Dietro il ginocchio… sui tendini!
Aaaah… Nei giardini…
Dove vai… ragazzo, padre mio!
La stazione, laggiù, la stazione… Aaaaaah,
oh i piedi qui, piedini di un bambino di tre anni.
Ragazzo che giochi, ragazzo grande!
Che viso hai? Lasciami vedere il viso!
[…] Se n’è andato!
Voglio inseguirlo, mamma… Non c’è più… (Affabulazione 472)

Aaaaaaah! No… I wanna touch your knees...
Behind your knee... on the tendons!
Aaaaah... In the park...
Where are you going... boy, my father!
The train station, down there, the train station... Aaaaaah, my feet are here, the little feet of a three-year-old child.
Boy who plays, big boy!
What face do you have? Lemme see your face!
[…]
He went away!
I wanna follow him, Mamma... He is gone...

In his diaries, the Quaderni rossi (Red Notebooks, written 1946-47, unpublished),

Pasolini records this memory, which took place around 1925 when he was living in the
northeastern province town of Belluno and was three years old – the age at which, for

Freud, a child enters sexual life:

Some boys were playing in the park and, more than anything else, what struck me
were their legs, above all the concave part of knee’s inside where, in bending
while running, the nerves pull in an elegant and violent gesture […] Now I know
that it was an acutely sensual emotion. If I reexperience it, I feel with exactness in
my gut the tenderness, anguish and violence of desire. It was the sense of the
unreachable, of the carnal – a sense for which a name was not yet invented. So I
invented it, and it was “teta veleta.” (qtd. in Naldini 23)
Pasolini mythifies this memory of “teta veleta” as his original seduction by male youth’s mysterious corporeality, specifically by the fetish of the knee’s backside. In his dream, the Father wanted to touch an older boy, who was simultaneously his father. His father’s presence connects to another of Pasolini’s mythified recollections, in which he claims he loved his father until the age of three, after which this original love was deadened by hate (“Intervista rilasciata a Dacia” 1671-72). In his interview with Jon Halliday, he explains: “I had always thought that I hated my father, but recently, while writing […] Affabulazione […] I realized that, deep down, a great part of my erotic and emotional life does not depend on hate against him, but love for him […]” (“1. Il background” 1286).

The Father’s dream condenses and thus relates Pasolini’s memories. Indeed, the protagonist will state that he dreamed both his “father” and a “boy,” and that he was “making love” (533). The Father’s infantile desire is therefore homoerotic, and also incestual.

Pasolini’s excavation of the Father’s infancy defocuses Freud’s privileging of the son’s point of view – how he sees his childhood and his consequent relationship with his father – opening up, through stanzas of monologue, the father’s perspective – how he views his past and his later bonds with his son. In fact, through the Fortuneteller, Pasolini exclaims: “I am very surprised: this is something / that both Freud and Jung overlooked” (526). For the writer, the paternal perspective is even more crucial than the filial one, as it is always the father who establishes the bonds between himself and his son, and thus it is he who provides the most knowledge regarding subsequent forms of male subjectivity.
and patriarchal institutions. Pasolini puts pressure on the Simple Oedipus Complex Freud initially lays out in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), which claims that the original link between father and son is one of hate (228). The author, again through the Fortuneteller, voices his incredulity of this hate:

> Eh, si conosce ben poco dei rapporti tra questi padri e coloro per cui sono veramente padri, cioè, scusi la banalità, i loro figli maschi. Si è sempre steso un velo su questo, con la pretesa che si tratti soltanto di un rapporto di rivalsa o di rivalità. E la causa della rivalsa sarebbe l’odio per il nonno, mentre quella della rivalità, sarebbe l’amore per la moglie, o, in generale, il sesso femminile. È tutto qui? (527)

> Well, we know very little about the relationships between these fathers and those for whom they are truly fathers, that is, pardon the banality, their sons. There has always been a veil placed over this, with the pretense that it concerns only a relationship of revenge or rivalry. And the cause of revenge would be hate for the grandfather, while that of rivalry, would be love for the wife, or, in general, the female sex. Is that everything?

It is true that in his later *The Ego and the Id* (1923) Freud acknowledges the Simple Complex’s reductiveness and he revises his theory, proposing a Complete Oedipus Complex, in which the boy feels both love and hate for his father, the former of which, however, the child eventually abandons in (hetero)normative development (28-29).

*Affabulazione* explores this Complete Complex and the original love between father and son on which it speculates. The Father was obedient to his father, who had (re)established a rivalry between them. His father sent him to serve in the Second World
War, and afterwards the Father reproduced his father’s image. Having been unable to live his infantile desire in any form, the Father, in Di Maio’s words, now “‘falls in love’ with the Son and this pushes him to experience the truth and regress to the point of refetalization in the body of the ‘First Father’” (142). His repressed love for his father and male youth resurfaces and seeks reunion in the Son, who synthesizes male youth’s mysterious corporeality and paternal potency and authority. His dream will be a sacred vision that materially extends into the mysterious flesh of his son, who incarnates a popular-class virility. Massimo Fusillo relates the Father’s crisis to the Laius Complex, which implies both incestual homosexual desire and a homicidal drive (47). Of the three dramas, Affabulazione most unambiguously versifies ambivalent bourgeois desire, as the Father relives the primary transformation of his infantile love into adult love-hate. Though he attempts to reestablish his relationship with his son as one of love rather than love-hate, this will be impossible, as the incest and homosexuality taboos, as well as the Son’s resistant mystery force the Father to revert to a relationship of love-hate and destructiveness with him. The Oedipal Lesson of Sophocles’ Shadow, which prescribes a purer experiential approach to reality, fails in its unmediated form to save the Father and his son. The Father becomes symbolic of melancholic postwar patriarchs, who, having placed their faith in neocapitalist development, betrayed their popular origins and those Marxist ideals of the Resistance, negating the construction of a more humanistic society.
The Son’s Flesh

The Father’s dream is sacred, as it is a vision of his infantile seduction in premodern Italy. It occurs on the holy day of Sunday, and the Father calls it a “religious dream,” one of “God,” and afterwards undergoes a religious conversion (481). It immediately shatters his life’s apparent order, forcing him to perceive his subjective emptiness: he describes his eyes as “streetlamps” of his “desert” and “misery,” recalling Teorema’s final images of the desert (493). He announces: “I am no longer myself. What has been added to me? / Something that I already was or that I should still be?” (474). He realizes that his past, infant self has returned and pushes back his present, adult one. He is reborn at his experience of *teta veleta*: Belluno’s park now materializes into his villa’s garden, and the older boy and his father, into his striking son who appears before him. This parallel between his dream’s virtual reality and his villa’s material one creates the conditions by which he can act as if still dreaming, as if once more his seduced three-year-old self. In the first half of the play, he does not act rationalistically with his former presumption of being able to master reality at will, but irrationally, religiously, letting fate take over, and even declaring that “God is the culprit behind everything” (497).22 His life’s former utilitarian motions are suspended, and he begins to contemplate the world around him, with his son ultimately capturing his gaze.

The text refers the Son’s corporeality to the sacred as well. The Father perceives his angelic golden-haired son as an “apparition” (480). The Fortuneteller compares him

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22 The Father’s declaration was *Affabulazione*’s initial epigraph from Sophocles’ *The Women of Trachis*. See Pasolini, “Affabulazione (I stesura)” II.
to those who make love with “grace” (524). And the Father finds “purity” in his cheeks, “saintly strength” in his shoulders and that he belongs to the sky like a bird (477, 484).

The Son’s flesh is sacred, as it evokes a popular-class virility. Just as the Father once fetishistically admired the older boy’s knee, he now venerates his son’s blond hair, which he claims does not belong to him, but to “servile” working-class men, to sailors or Liguria’s boat workers (477). The Fortuneteller too, likens his golden hair to that of scruffy port laborers, or earthy Neapolitan boys:

Che hanno questa fuliggine sull’oro,
e, se li guardi sotto, hanno grembi molli e un po’ sporchi,
e sempre troppo pronti a fare all’amore,
con crudeltà di guappi e grazia di ragazze.
Hanno il sesso negli occhi, e il suo odore di seme
nei capelli spettinati e un po’ polverosi. (524)

Who have this soot on their gold,
and, if you look below, have tender and quite dirty laps,
and are always too ready to make love,
with the cruelty of thugs and the grace of girls.
They have sex in their eyes, and its smell of semen
in their uncombed and rather dusty hair.

Further associations of the Son with premodern Italy appear when he and his girlfriend make love in one of Milan’s remaining popular houses. The Girlfriend indicates how he always announces his arrival with his carefree whistle, evoking Teorema’s working-class Messenger Angiolino (played by Ninetto Davoli in the film). The Son’s mysterious corporeality, his sacred flesh is his young, popular-class physicality, his carefree body movements and gestures, the erotic scent of his unkempt hair and, later, the thanatotic flow of his blood by his father’s knife. The numerous associations of the Son’s
corporeality with premodern Italy evidence that his father desires not only his body, but that body in that world. In fact, in the epilogue, he explicitly laments how he was unaware that this civilization was fading while his son was alive. His elusive son who embodies a popular virility symbolizes this fading premodern Italy.

While the Father has desecrated his sense of the sacred through his assumption of wealth and power, his son has maintained his own. Van Watson argues that the latter has “never succumbed to the fall, but remains an entity of prime matter, a fully integrated individual who does not suffer from the divided nature of modern man. Like God, he looks to no higher authority than himself; he is omniscient […] He retains a sublime indifference to his father’s power, neither challenging it nor championing it” (66-68).

Though not entirely immune from bourgeois self-consciousness, the Son does not indeed suffer from a divided nature to the extent of his father: he is nineteen years old, in the flower of youth and is not yet responsible for his father’s industries. He maintains a God-like “omniscience” that recognizes his father’s existential void. He thus critically resists any type of totalizing union with him, whether incestual or rivalrous, which would entrench him in a dialectic with the bourgeoisie and propel him to reproduce its corrupt form of life. In the epilogue, the Father exclaims:

[N]on voleva né uccidermi né lasciarsi uccidere!!
Né l’una cosa né l’altra, capisci, Cacarella?
Non gliene importava niente di me,
e di tutte le uccisioni, vecchie e nuove,
che legano un padre e un figlio…
Quindi si era liberato di tutto […]. (548-49)

[H]e neither wanted to kill me nor be killed!!

51
Neither one nor the other, you understand, Cacarella?
Nothing about me was important to him,
nor about all the killings, old and new,
that link a father and son...
So he had freed himself of everything [...].

The Son is a fleeting figure, neither totally obeying nor totally disobeying his father’s desires. He contextualizes his life within the late 1960s when he states that both the “old bourgeois, but also the young / revolutionaries” will disapprove of him because they “all belong to a same breed: the breed that measures what one does / by its utility” (540). He gives voice to Pasolini’s critique of the Student Movement, whose revolutionary nature the author deeply questioned, given the characteristically bourgeois utilitarianism it reproduced, often resulting in violence and destruction.23 The Son consciously and strategically escapes this destructive dialectic: he entertains his father’s wishes, yet never completely satisfies them, undermining both his obsessive love and hate. In fact, recalling Federici’s Francesco, Affabulazione’s first draft compares the Son to a Saint Francis who wants nonviolence (“Affabulazione (I stesura)” 89, 93). His constant ambivalence is a form of resistance that frustrates his father, whom he consequently leaves unable to shape his image in his own.

Paternal Love

In his first movement towards his son, the Father shows an original love largely devoid of hate, looking to experience his son’s corporeality. He will not fulfill his infantile desire by merely contemplating his son. When the Son first appears, the Mother – the voice of

23 See Pasolini, “Il sogno” 1463-68.
bourgeois reductiveness throughout the play – leaves her husband to his “monologues” and he explicitly states the limits of contemplation: “But what am I searching for, in him? / And in what does searching consist? For now, in looking: / even though no gaze has ever touched the bottom of any object” (476-77). Thomas Simpson remarks that he “wants to enter and be entered by his son. The Father wants something even beyond sex from the son, but we never learn precisely what because it can never be realized” (229). “Sex,” as those acts that bring orgasm, is indeed reductive of how he wants to experience his son. He does not want just sex, or perhaps not even sex; he wants to amorously unite with him to touch, see, feel his flesh. In Affabulazione’s first draft, he states that he wants the kind of love made of friendship and caresses (“Affabulazione (I stesura)” 82). He longs for sensations, emotions and experiences that are too vast and overwhelming to articulate, recalling Teorema’s highly connotative images where each family member moves beyond contemplation to finally lay with the Visitor.

The play’s second, third and fourth episodes are its complication, during which the Father attempts to amorously come together with his son. Immediately after his dream, he invites his son to stay with him a while, and in the second episode, he meets him again, this time with his girlfriend. She recognizes the possible love between them in their frustrated remarks to one another: “Is this your true relationship? / Because it has to do with a love between you two: / I, here, certainly have nothing to do with it…” (487). Though the Father quickly dismisses this possibility, shortly thereafter he confesses his new, post-dream capacity to love:
Considerando la vita una scommessa (come diceva bene mio figlio) non si prova né pietà né amore per nessuno: se non per chi ha i nostri medesimi interessi. Ebbene, qualcosa in me si è spezzato. La vita non è più per me una scommessa… ma un moncone… un ricordo… qualcosa, insomma, che non so. Ora io posso dunque avere pietà e amore per gli altri, come l’hanno coloro che scandalizzano. (489)

Considering life a bet (as my son rightly said) one feels neither pity nor love for anyone: if not for those who have our same interests. However, something in me has broken. For me life is no longer a bet… but a fragment… a memory… something, in short, that I do not know. Now, therefore, I can have pity and love for others, like those who have them and scandalize.

His newfound sentiments of “love” and “pity” suspend his capitalist pragmatism and competitiveness. However, his son’s girlfriend is an obstacle to his love and he heckles her, creating a “scene”: “Tell me then […] are you happy / with that part of my son’s body that you steal from us?” (491). By the third episode, he feels seduced and abandoned, and implores his son to spend more time with him: “I always miss you. In the morning / I get up and you are not there […] In the evening I wait for you, and you never arrive. / You cannot wait to leave!” (497). The Son resists his incestual love, passing only the necessary time with him.

The Father’s efforts intensify when he begins to claim their resemblance. His dream provokes him to abandon his paternal role and return to his youth. He demotes himself as a “deadbeat dad – no longer a father, / but almost a son” (498). Even more directly, he tells his son: “I want to resemble you” (499). He ignores the differences
between his broken bourgeois identity and his son’s much more radically mysterious presence to prove to both himself and his son that they are equals and can bond like male companions. Van Watson interprets these initial moves as his establishment of a Freudian rivalry between himself (Laius) and his son (Oedipus), which runs throughout the entire drama: “the astutely permissive Laius figure of the Father first attempts to absorb rather than challenge his Oedipal rival. He tries to engage his son by befriending him” (65). It is true that he wants to “befriend” him, but he wants much more – he wants to amorously unite with him, not to eventually “absorb” and eliminate him, but to revel in the experience of his alterity. At this point, he has not yet reestablished a power struggle with him. In these first four episodes, he acts impossibly to create a bond of purer love with his son, one devoid of possessiveness. In fact, in the third episode he proclaims: “One of the two rivals is dead – me!” (498). There is no struggle without at least two rivals. He therefore attempts to free himself of the psychoanalytic conflict and create a different relation with his son.

The Father’s desire to resemble and unite with his son culminates in the highly metatheatrical fourth episode, where he exhibitionistically shows his sex to him. In the previous episode, he gifted his son the knife he had always wanted and planned to meet him that evening in his studio. He now tries to convince his wife to make love that evening in the same place with the door open; she is unaware that he wants to prove his equality to their son by showing him his sex and hopefully provoking him to do likewise. At first, it seems the Father wants to stage the archetypal primal scene, in which the son
witnesses the father’s phallus – his violent potency and hence paternal authority over him. However, he breaks again with reestablishing a Freudian rivalry, as he thanks his wife for refusing to comply and excitedly restages the primal scene as a solo act of masturbation. Before his son arrives, the Father once more denies their differences to claim their resemblance:

[I]o e lui siamo uguali.
[…]
in fondo [è] già vecchio, come tutti
i figli dei padri padroni. Questo, in quanto uomo.
Ma in quanto ragazzo... (506)

He and I are equal.
[...]
in the end [he is] already old, like all
sons of father-masters. This much, as far as he is a man.
But as far as he is a boy…

He reviews his son’s few bourgeois traits to allege their resemblance, yet stops short of considering the numerous qualities that divide them, as his son arrives and immediately interrupts his evaluation. Without his wife beneath him, in absence of heterosexual intercourse, he believes masturbation will assert his resemblance to his son, as it is the sexual act par excellence of mysterious male youth:

[V]edrà il mio sesso… la cui funzione, dunque,
sarà pura… senza utilità… come nelle masturbazioni
del ragazzo, appunto… quando il ragazzo si sente,
nel pugno, un sesso di padre, ma privo
del privilegio e del dovere di fecondare [...]. (507)

[H]e will see my sex… whose function, therefore,
will be pure... without utility... as in the masturbations
of the boy, exactly... when the boy feels,
in his fist, a father’s sex, but devoid
of the privilege and duty to procreate [...].

Imitating the “masturbations of the boy,” he believes his son will find a male companion in him, like one of his friends with whom he undresses in the “locker rooms of the soccer fields” and erotically comes together (487). For the Father, his restaged scene is neither heterosexual nor incestual, but a homoerotic one between peers. He articulates his eros through imitation, and in carnal terms, as the feeling of the boy’s penis, uncorrupted by cultural “privilege” and “duty.” However, upon seeing his nude father, the Son runs away to La Spezia’s train station, in Liguria, materializing the conclusion of his father’s dream. This dissipates much of the dream, frustrating his father’s love and making him realize that loving his son is as impossible as it was to love the older boy and his father.

**Sophocles’ Shadow and the Oedipal Lesson**

The fifth and sixth episodes are the turning point at which the Father’s infantile love transforms into adult love-hate; his deterritorialized desire reterritorializes within the historically destructive Freudian rivalry. When the Police Chief brings the Son home, the Father begins to re-discover his bourgeois identity and his son’s partial resemblance to him, momentarily doubting his mystery:

Ah, ah, dov’è finito il tuo mistero?
Ti leggo dentro come dentro di me.
Tutto è difficoltà, squallidi complessi, prosa.
Hai problemi, non grazie.
Il tuo corpo è pesante.
Non voli, con la leggerezza dei figli misteriosi.
Mi ripeti, pesantemente, nel mondo. A Milano.
Da Milano alla Brianza. Problemi di coscienza.
Linguaggio convenzionale anche nell’anarchia di figlio che disprezza i padri e la loro società. (509)
Ha, ha, where did your mystery go?
I read inside you like inside myself.
Everything is difficulty, squalid complexes, prose.
You have problems, not grace.
Your body is heavy.
You do not fly, with the lightness of mysterious sons.
You repeat me, heavily, in the world. In Milan.
From Milan to Brianza. Problems of consciousness.
Conventional language even in the anarchy
of the son who despises fathers and their society.

He reidentifies his rapport with his son as a power struggle: he is a threatened Laius, and his son, a threatening Oedipus who “despises fathers and their society.” Significantly, he no longer perceives his son’s blond hair as seductive, but menacing: “If a hand were to pass over it, / it would be scratched and cut – like when / one falls on ice…” (509). This is the beginning of his tragic reversal: taboos and the Son’s resistant mystery displace and exacerbate his infantile love. He begins to abandon his sacred desire to experience his son’s penis in amorous union, desecrating it into one to possess, or be possessed by his son’s flesh and phallic power in destructive union. Yet he never completely abandons his love, as it does not totally become hate, but is only increasingly overshadowed by it.

In his second movement towards his son, the Father, having rediscovered his identity, considers himself an impotent patriarch and looks to be possessed and destroyed by his son’s hands. At this point, he symbolically reinterprets the previous episodes, and metaphorizes the knife he gifted his son into the phallus, the symbol of male power, and realizes that he already passed it to him: “See, I also had my filial condition, / youth. And to have / had it is to have lost it” (510). The sobering protagonist resigns himself to his son without a fight. At the end of the fifth episode, while he ironically and reductively
states how he naively lives his “tragedy in its unfolding,” he also dramatically begs his son to show him his sex and kill him:

> Questo è il momento che io devo vederti nel tuo aspetto che fa paura per la virilità che si scatena: uccidi, uccidi il bambino che vuole vedere il tuo cazzo! (512)

>This is the moment that I must see you in your aspect that frightens for the virility that it unchains: kill, kill the child who wants to see your cock!

He no longer articulates his desire purely through the language of the flesh, but also through that of possession: he still wants to experience his son’s “cock,” but he masochistically accepts to being “killed” as a consequence. Here, as well as in *Orgia* and *Porcile*, Pasolini figures destructiveness through these ambivalent gestures to elucidate the unconscious drive towards amorous union that that destructiveness still nevertheless implies. In the following episode, Sophocles’ Shadow fittingly likens the Father’s tragedy to Heracles’ funeral in his *The Women of Trachis*. In fact, in the first draft, the following episode consisted in the convalescing Father who, in sleep-talking to his son, explicitly correlates his tragedy to that of Heracles, and implores his son to do like Hyllus and burn his decrepit body on one of Brianza’s mountaintops (“Affabulazione scarti” first folder).²⁴ Both men are impotent patriarchs who suffer and beg their sons to put them out of their misery in an act in which they are at the same time violently dominated and

²⁴ For the publication of the Father and Son’s exchange in the first draft, see Pasolini, *Affabulazione* 553-59.
sensually soothed by the filial phallus. However, while the Father’s perception has drastically reversed, that of the Son has remained constant. As he resisted his incestual love, he now repels his rivalrous (self-)hate, with his refrain of resistance becoming: “you want to pass every limit, / but I will not follow you” (512). Despite his father’s pleas, he defends himself with his knife enough to wound him, afterwards restoring it to him and running away again.

In the highly metatheatrical sixth episode, Sophocles’ Shadow returns while the Father convalesces. He clarifies that it is he and not Homer who appears because he wrote tragedies, not poems, which were “represented, / not merely read” (518). In the prologue, he promised his return would change the drama, aligning himself with his Oedipus the King’s Messenger who consolidates the discovery and reversal. In Oedipus, Teiresias initiates the hero’s self-discovery and his fortune’s reversal, and the Messenger consolidates them. The latter believes he brings good news to Oedipus that will rid him of his fear of the oracle, stating that Polybus died of natural causes and that he was never his real father anyways. Ironically, his news only confirms Oedipus’ true identity as Laius’ son, his past murder of him and, ultimately, the oracle’s realization. Oedipus’ fortune reverses for the worst: his mother-wife Jocasta hangs herself and he blinds himself, afterwards becoming a beggar. Similarly, Affabulazione’s Shadow believes he brings good news to the Father, in the form of the Oedipal Lesson: that human reason is incapable of total knowledge and control over reality. He believes this message will stop the Father from approaching the world as he has in his bourgeois past, like Oedipus, as an
enigma to be resolved, possessed and dominated. The Shadow stresses that his son is not another enigma, but a mystery, which he must approach to experience — to touch, see, feel. Though the Shadow informs him of his son’s identity and how to approach him, these are not truly discoveries for him. Since the first episode, the Father, with his “eyes of a prophet,” has acted as his own Teiresias with knowledge from his dream, detecting his son’s mystery and, until the turning point, moving towards him to experience him (474). The Father has not only already grasped the Oedipal Lesson, but he has also realized that Sophocles’ purer experiential approach to reality is impossible in his repressive culture and repressed subjectivity, as he has now reverted, in a largely unconscious move, to bourgeois competition, reapproaching his son to possess him, or, for now, to be possessed by him. In the Consumption Civilization, the Oedipal Lesson — in its unmediated form — fails, as it has been, in the Shadow’s sweeping condemnation, “corrupted by many centuries of irony”:

Scusa se la mia saggezza è un po’ ironica; ma sei tu che mi vuoi così, corrotto da molti secoli d’ironia, corrotto da Cervantes, da Ariosto, da Manzoni, eroe che si cautela e riduce tutto, perché la ragione non vuole riconoscere il mistero. (518)

_Pardon me if my wisdom is a little ironic; But it is you who wants me this way, corrupted by many centuries of irony, corrupted by Cervantes, by Ariosto, by Manzoni, hero who defends himself and reduces everything, because reason does not want to acknowledge mystery._
Modernity neutralizes the classical Oedipal Lesson because “irony,” that is, bourgeois reason and repression close down a much more radically open approach to life and the existential possibilities that that approach implies. By continually demanding the Father impossibly experience his son’s flesh, the Shadow ironically only consolidates his rediscovery of his repressive culture and repressed subjectivity, and his tragic reversal, in which he murders his son to finally unite with him, his wife hangs herself and he himself becomes a beggar. The Shadow becomes aware of this ironic and tragic turn of events when the Father shuts him up and makes precise, rationalistic plans to experience his son’s mystery: “I thought I would come here to help you, / and instead my words will be the cause / of a new madness that you will stage […]” (521). In a sort of last-ditch effort, the Shadow holds off from demanding the Father materially experience his son, suggesting instead that he “contemplate him” (521). Though contemplation will not fulfill his desire, it is a way to mediate a purer experiential approach to reality, which in modernity leads to (self-)destruction. Though the Father does not adopt the Shadow’s suggestion of a period of contemplation of, rather than an immediate union with the sacred, it foresees the Logic of Otherness that will emerge from *Orgia to Porcile* as a viable form in which to live radically individual desire.

**Paternal Love-Hate**

The play’s seventh and eighth episodes, and epilogue are its explication, during which the Father completes his fortune’s reversal. In his final movement towards his son, he takes up the knife and destroys him. Sublimating his exacerbated desire by sending his son to
the military is not an option, as his privileged social status has prevented his enrollment. After his wounds heal, he visits the Fortuneteller to learn his son’s whereabouts. At this point, he has thoroughly reverted to his old rationalistic, Oedipal self. He desecrates the Fortuneteller’s mystery, plainly asking for the address of the Girlfriend’s house where his son is staying and nothing more. In the eighth episode – another highly metatheatrical sequence – the Father reaches her house and, implementing the Shadow’s advice to experience his son, convinces her to let him watch him (and plot his destruction) while they make love through her bedroom door’s keyhole. He now arranges the archetypal primal scene, where he (Oedipus) will meet the potency of his son (Laius) at the threshold of their rivalry. However, with characteristic bourgeois irony, he clarifies to the Girlfriend that his tragedy is not “devoid of humor” (532). As he spies on his son, he continues his realization of his son’s potency and his own impotence, stating that all fathers are impotent, and explaining their hate for their sons as the following:

È la presenza stessa del figlio, infatti,
che mette in scompiglio la società.
Il membro fresco, umile, assetato,
scandalizza per se stesso, se messo a confronto
con quello, senza alcuna novità, che è del genitore. (542)

*It is the presence itself of the son, in fact,*
*that puts society into disarray.*
*His fresh humble, thirsty member,*
*scandalizes in itself, if compared*
*to that, without any novelty, of his father.*

There is not paternal hate, but paternal love-hate: beneath the father’s thanatotic desire for the phallus, for male authority, lies his erotic one for the penis, for his son’s
“member.” The Father describes his own service in the Second World War as the result of this ambivalent “dream of the father-son,” in which the soldier’s “obedience” to his father’s war is the latter’s means to relieve himself of his son’s flesh, desecrating the “mystery” of his young “sex” (543-44). In the epilogue, the Father continues to versify his love-hate when he describes how he murdered his son, which was not a simple stabbing:

[M]i sono chinato sul suo corpo,
ancora caldo, e gli ho abbottonato i calzoni:
non volevo che lo trovassero in quel modo. Ho toccato,
cosi, la piccola sfinge rinchiusa in quel grembo glorioso:
e ho capito che il suo mistero era rimasto intatto. (545)

[I] bent over his body,
still hot, and buttoned up his trousers:
I did not want them to find him that way. I touched,
that way, the little sphinx locked in that glorious lap:
and I understood that his mystery had remained intact.

He figures what he calls his “regicide” as a sadistic act of love and hate: he dominates his son’s flesh, attempting to bring it to resolution, like Oedipus, as if his penis were merely a “little sphinx,” but then negates that hate, touching his penis and experiencing his intact “mystery.”25 In the second draft, before stabbing his son, the Father actually states that he has an erection, which even more unambiguously interprets his knife as symbolic of his penis, and his murder, of intercourse (“Affabulazione (II stesura)” 158).

25 The Father’s sadism recalls the Marquis De Sade, whose Juliette (1797) provides Affabulazione’s epigraph: “Causes, may be, are unnecessary to effects” (De Sade 743). See Pasolini, Affabulazione 469.
Melancholic Postwar Patriarchs

The play’s epilogue takes place twenty years after the Son’s murder and the Mother’s suicide: the Father has served his prison sentence and now lives as a beggar in the train station, cyclically returning to the place of his original seduction. Unlike the father Paolo’s more open fate in Teorema, that of the Father closes in on itself: he sits in an abandoned train car, compulsively recounting his past to his imaginary friend Cacarella (Diarrhea), who, in reality, represents the audience. His corollary employs bourgeois Talk Theater’s reductive language and action, as he derides his destitution, and mourns and fabulates an alibi for his son’s death. The epilogue thus breaks classical tragedy’s unity of action, specifically reducing the tragicity of the heroic sacrifice and the achievement of martyrdom. Brechtian alienation effects further defamiliarize the drama; the Father addresses the audience with awareness of his role: “[t]here is always, in the hero of a tragedy, / the moment in which he is a little ridiculous / and so evokes pity” (545). He makes a final correlation himself between his tragedy and that of Shakespeare’s King Lear, stating that he “pisses his pants (and has no daughters / to clean him, he, like King Lear)” (546). Both were dignified fathers who, through the abdication of their wealth and power, and subsequent madness, finish life in childless abjection. Unlike Lear however, there are no Edgars, Kents or Albanys to mourn and reflect upon the Father’s downfall. The sole Railway Worker tells him: “I do not have time to listen to you, / my train is arriving!” (546).
Through his tragedy, the Father became conscious of his lost love – not only the male body, but the entire premodern Italian world of which that body was a part – and he now mourns it in his son’s death. He realizes that this world had already faded while his son was alive:

Le abitudini erano cambiate, la mentalità diversa (si diceva): c’era anche una diversa luce nell’aria, io lo so, perché le primavere non erano più le vecchie primavere contadine intorno alle officine; i prati non avevano più quel loro umile infoltirsi, incoronati di salici e pioppi, punteggiati di primule.

Ma queste sono chiacchiere. Lo strano è che mio figlio pareva sapere da sempre tutte queste cose che per me erano una novità tanto grande. (548)

Routines had changed, the mentality different (we used to say): there was also a different light in the air, I know it, because spring was no longer that old peasant spring around the workshops; the fields no longer had that humble thickening of theirs, crowned by willows and poplars, punctuated by primroses.

But this is just chatter. The strange thing is that my son seemed to have always known all of these things which for me were such a great discovery.

He longs for premodern nature – its “light,” “peasant spring,” “fields,” “willows and poplars” – and its form of life – its “routines” and “mentality.” With his intact popular-class virility and critical resistance of his father, the Son had already understood the Consumption Civilization’s attack on this world. However, the Father downplays his devastation, ultimately chalking it up to “just chatter.” He claims that his tragedy is “not
the story of just one father,” highlighting his generational conflict’s mythical, transhistorical nature, but also, more pertinently, his conflict’s belonging to his fellow postwar fathers (550). He assesses the decade of 1960s Italy, which has had a cataclysmic impact on culture and subjectivity:

Esso ha fatto decadere il passato, e, prematuramente, domina gli uomini. Gli uomini lo vivono con inconsapevolezza, sentendolo in realtà piuttosto come morte di valori passati che come nascita di nuovi. Ciò li umilia, e li fa regredire a empietà infantile. È questo che, in realtà, mi ha reso assassino di un figlio abulico […]. (549)

*It has made the past decay,*  
*and, prematurely, dominates men.*  
*Men live it unconsciously,*  
*in reality experiencing it rather as the death*  
*of past values than the birth of new ones.*  
*This humiliates them, and makes them regress*  
*to infantile cruelty.*  
*It is this that, in reality, made me the assassin*  
*of an abulic son […].*

Postwar fathers who have “prematurely” killed “past values” for the sake of modernization foment their “unconscious” longing for this premodern Italy they have lost. Nevertheless, these melancholic men must defend this new era, as they have placed their faith in its development and rebuilt their lives, families and culture upon it. They must continually thwart the sacred past within themselves, in their dreams and memories, and that around them, in people and places, to avoid “humiliation” and scandal. When this past becomes particularly intractable, these men, unable to express a purer love, must
repress their sentiments, overshadowing them with “infantile cruelty” and “assassinating” them in some way.

Melancholic postwar fathers suffer from their betrayal of their popular origins and the Resistance’s Marxist ideals, which negated the construction of a more humanistic society. At the end of the epilogue, the Father states that wartime ruins in Italy’s cities remain, precisely, “melancholic after many years / among new buildings, as if lost / in an oasis of forgotten pain” (550). These sacred “melancholic” ruins amidst skyscrapers symbolize the modern cultural amnesia of the country’s premodern culture and the war’s destruction. In fact, in the seventh episode, the Fortuneteller predicted a future nuclear war that postwar patriarchs, in their adhesion to the Consumption Civilization, were preparing and whose price their sons would pay. In the light of an “atomic explosion,” her crystal ball conjures up images of the Father among colleagues in “one of the European Common Market’s grand industrial cities,” in the postwar conferences in “Yalta” and “Geneva,” foreseeing the planet’s postwar reorganization as one of increasing competition and catastrophe (528-31). The Father closes the play by constructing a “mental alibi” for his son’s murder: “My son disappeared in that [Second World] war / of which remain, by now secret, the ruins” (550). Both a reductive defense mechanism and a lucid admittance of remorse, his alibi declares that his son was already dead, that his future was foreclosed the moment at which Italian society, and above all its patriarchs repressed their past in the name of neocapitalist development.
CHAPTER TWO: THE COUPLE’S RITUALIZATION OF CHILDHOOD LOVES IN ORGIA

The Couple’s Memories

Pasolini handwrote Orgia’s first draft on a notepad in mid-April 1966 during bed rest after his ulcer attack. He wrote two more drafts before his production, which officially premiered November 27, 1968 at Turin’s Deposito d’Arte Presente and starred Luigi Mezzanotte as the Man, Laura Betti as the Woman and Nelide Giammarco as the Girl. The first episode was published in the production program and Quaderni del Teatro Stabile di Torino. Afterwards, Pasolini revised the text again, likely in 1969, following the play’s tour. Garzanti first published it in 1979. As the object of this study is Pasolini’s conception of his dramas and theater practice, his sole production warrants examination. The public highly anticipated his theater debut, which postponements, the work’s title and his Manifesto (published months earlier and included in the program and Quaderni) further sensationalized. Critics unanimously gave the production negative reviews, especially for two main contradictions with the Manifesto’s prescriptions: Turin’s Teatro Stabile produced it, and the audience was the traditional, culturally disengaged bourgeoisie.26 At the time, Pasolini publicly responded to these accusations, among others. In regard to the first, he stated that his acceptance of the agreement with the

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26 For example, Renzo Tian states that after “having penned a manifesto of attack on the structures of bourgeois theater, Pier Paolo Pasolini presents us a drama of his that seems to come out of the most classic matrix of bourgeois theater”; and Salvatore Tropea remarks that the “‘new public’ to whom Pier Paolo Pasolini stated he wanted to address his work, yesterday evening, was not there and it may never be there in the bourgeois locations that unfortunately represent the entirety of the Turinese Stabile’s theatergoers.” All reviews are available in the digital archive of Turin’s Teatro Stabile Centro Studi: “Orgia (1968/69) – Rassegna stampa, critiche e varie,” Teatro Stabile Torino, archivio.teatrostabiletorino.it, accessed 3 August 2018.
Stabile was “hybrid,” indicating that he did not believe that it had completely compromised his project (“A teatro” 348). Though the Stabile conformed the production to certain restrictions – most significantly those of permitting admission to members only for the initial Deposito performances and prohibiting admission to minors for the entire tour – it did grant Pasolini immediate access to bourgeois theatergoers and the opportunity to redirect its resources towards his new project. His theater’s critical radical politics looks to escape extreme separatism and self-erasure, strategically reappropriating current institutions and discourses for its own purposes and, in Pasolini’s words, uncovering within that traditional public “Stabile members who could potentially belong to that type of ‘intellectual’” to whom his “theater is addressed” (“La rabbia” 353). His theater operates in the “belly of the beast”: it throws itself into the arduous and continuous struggle of radicalizing the bourgeoisie from within. In regard to the second accusation, the author likely foresaw and was willing to initially accept this audience, as his public still needed to form – it was not going to simply appear before him on opening night. Furthermore, in the previously cited quote, Pasolini remarked that he had eventually found more open, culturally engaged spectators as Orgia’s tour progressed. The negative reviews not only demanded this utopian equivalence between his Manifesto and production, but moreover refused to concede any poetic license to him, condemning his text’s density, autobiographical nature and themes of gender and sexuality, the production’s scenography, seating arrangement and acting style, and the Deposito itself. Reading these reviews today, they appear as another episode of the simplistic negative
criticism Pasolini often received while alive: these critics rejected his work *a priori*, either convinced that the author was an empty scandalmonger (his polemical *Manifesto* and “Il Pci ai giovani!!” and his film *Teorema*’s obscenity charges all preceded *Orgia*’s tour) and/or outraged by his uncompromising Marxism and homosexuality. With defamatory headlines such as “The Orgy of the Pornomartyr” and “An Orgy of Idiocy,” these reviews, along with performance disruptions by extreme-right groups, were detrimental to *Orgia*’s tour and Pasolini’s project more generally. Nevertheless, there were some more reasoned reviews that brought to light the play’s merits. Riccardo Pozzi discredited the accusation of the play’s “verbal pornography,” pointing out how “there is always a cold detachment, devoid of every gratification, in an almost scientific language within his verse’s nevertheless poetic richness” (10). Franco Cuomo praised the work’s “clear ideology of dissent (towards a repressive reality in the most rigorous Marcusian sense that one can confer upon that definition).” Roberto De Monticelli was interested by Pasolini’s research in an austere acting style. And Antonio Stäuble saw Pasolini’s project as an “important contribution to the attempts to define a new form of theater” in Italy and hoped that he would “persist on the road of theater: a road which is not easy, above all in

27 For example, Vittorio Bottino states that the “worst thing lies in the fact that for such performances of theirs [those of Pasolini, The Living Theatre and Carmelo Bene] they are paid by Institutions without scruples, applauded by degenerates, homosexuals, paranoiacs, and approved by critics who find Pasolini ‘fascinating’ […]”; and Giampiero Pellegrini comments that *Orgia* is “not a dramatic text: it is a sort of lurid dramatization by an author who completely exhausts his ammunition, realizes it and increases his influence in a certain intellectual world, made of homosexual solidarity and servility to particular directives that want Western morality (and civilization) destroyed to make way for the ‘new order’ coming from the East.”

28 For the defamatory headlines, see Perrini; Stornello. For the extreme-right disruptions, see “Disturbata”; “Gazzarra.”
that form that he chose (the cultural and literary theater), but one that is fascinating and full of possibilities.” Conversely, almost all of the reviews praise Betti’s performance.29

In 1984, Betti took up her role again in Mario Missiroli’s production at Paris’ Centre Pompidou. Andrea Adriatico has directed Orgia on two occasions, in 1990, at Bologna’s Circolo Ketty Dò, and in 2004, at the same city’s Teatri di Vita. In the twenty-first century, productions have taken place in an extraordinarily diverse range of other countries, including Hungary, Portugal, the Netherlands, Argentina, Poland, Chile, Colombia, Turkey and Austria.30

The play opens with a prologue after the middleclass Man has hanged himself in his apartment on the outskirts of Bologna one summer. His shadow proposes to the audience that they look back at his life. The following four episodes take place on the last Easter, from evening until nighttime, inside the Man and his wife’s bedroom. They first

29 For example, Gian Maria Guglielmino praises Betti for her voice’s “interior and extraordinarily intense and subtly nuanced vibration”; and Oddone Beltrami applauds how her diction bestowed a “contour of fantasy to several pages of dense lyricism, opportunely inducing her character’s artifice, obscurity and obsessive fetishism.”

recall their popular-class childhoods and past loves: he grew up in a province town and had a love for his mother and a sadistically-colored one for another boy; she was born in the countryside and had a love for her mother and a masochistically-inflected one for her father. The Man then describes the violent acts he will inflict upon his wife: he will bind her hands and feet, leave her half-naked and eventually kick her over so he can penetrate her without her seeing his sex; he may need to punch her, tie her arms to the ceiling and whip her until she bleeds and hangs lifelessly; he may even kill their two sons and dump them in the nearby river, and return with gangs of young men to rape her; at any time, he may move aside to masturbate and ejaculate alone. These rituals are a source of pleasure for both of them. Suffering from insomnia, the Woman kills their sons with a knife and drowns herself with them in the river. In the fifth episode several months later, the Man brings home a young prostitute, the Girl, and attempts to recreate his sadomasochistic relationship with her; however, in his rage he vomits and faints, and the Girl runs away.

In the sixth episode, he wakes up later that night, puts on the Girl’s undergarments and makeup, and hangs himself from the ceiling.

Pasolini derived the play’s subject from early-1960s news stories. He states that the idea of the couple’s sadomasochistic relationship came from an Austrian report, and that of the Man’s suicide in particular, from the story of a Dutch professor who had hanged himself dressed as a woman (“Dibattito” 326). In fact, before Orgia, Pasolini had already used this cross-dressed hanging in a subject for a film, Il viaggio a Citera (Voyage to Cythera, written 1962, published 2001), and a poem, “F.” (written 1965,
It is also clear that Pasolini bases the couple’s memories on his recollections of his childhood in northern province towns, such as Conegliano, Sacile, Scandiano and the previously mentioned Belluno, and the Friulian countryside. Furthermore, Bologna was the city in which he was born and attended university.

Orgia’s excavation of the couple’s childhood loves responds to Marcuse’s thesis in *Eros and Civilization* that civilization and its subjectivity greatly determine how sexuality manifests its aggressiveness: he argues that the “function of sadism is not the same in a free libidinal relation and in the activities of SS Troops,” and that the “inhuman, compulsive, coercive, and destructive forms of these perversions seem to be linked with the general perversion of the human existence in a repressive culture, but the perversions have an instinctual substance distinct from these forms; and this substance may well express itself in other forms [...]” (203). In the play, the couple’s modern “repressive culture” exacerbates the aggressiveness, whether sadistic or masochistic, of their childhood desire, so that when they radically desublimate their desire within this culture and their repressed subjectivity, it explodes into sadomasochistic orgies. However, the couple’s memories will present childhood sexuality’s aggressiveness in a different culture. Their premodern past does not appear to have exacerbated their thanatotic energy; rather, this world seems to have modulated this energy, from childhood into adulthood, in a way that prevented it from becoming “inhuman, compulsive, coercive, and destructive,” thus positing that sexuality’s aggressive “substance” could indeed express itself in “other forms” in another culture and subjectivity.
Orgia elaborates how bourgeois civilization exacerbates childhood desire. The couple’s premodern past not only gave a certain expression to their childhood sexuality, but it revolved around a much broader “language of the body.” This was a chiefly vocal language centered upon nature and primary human needs that instilled a sense of the sacred in the Man and Woman. As their past desire persists into their present petit-bourgeois reality, it endures continual repression as bourgeoisification. Despite furthering their assimilation, marriage was also the means through which they could rematerialize the language of the body they had lost. Like Affabulazione’s dream, the couple’s memories provoke them to revive their old loves, this time via the other’s flesh. Though they strive to recreate their past’s Eros-oriented language, they ultimately engender an increasingly Thanatos-dictated one, an extremely violent and destructive sadomasochism. Orgia, as well as Porcile, no longer display the primary prohibition of infantile love, as their protagonists have found the means to draw out, to ritualize their reunion with the sacred, thus tainting their verses with adult love-hate through and through. Their sadomasochism ghettoizes them and produces their self-destructive otherness. Nevertheless, the Man’s shadow will begin to theorize the progressive reconstruction of Otherness, which would allow others to escape death and transform their otherness into a force of liberation.

The Premodern Language of the Body

The couple’s memories are sacred, as they are visions of their childhood loves in premodern Italy. They occur on the holy holiday of Easter, and the Man states that “God”
appears in them (Orgia 301). Before his suicide, the Man admits the carnal side of his affection for his mother: “Now, the terrible pain that I feel dying / is only for the only thing that I love: / the much chewed and never swallowed flesh of my mother” (307). His confession recalls Pasolini’s well-known, mythified love for his own mother. And at the end of the first episode, the Man remembers his homoerotic friendship with Mirco, the son of his poor neighbors whom he would tie to his house’s balcony in game they used to play:

Ogni giorno veniva, e io lo legavo alle sbarre del poggiolo. Ogni giorno egli piangeva. Ogni giorno gli dicevo che l’avrei tenuto li, e che non avrebbe mai più rivisto sua madre. Il cuore mi si induriva, come un membro […]. (257)

Every day he used to come, and I would tie him to the bars of the balcony. Every day he would cry. Every day I would tell him that I would have kept him there, and that he would have never seen his mother again. My heart would stiffen, like a member […].

Their acts’ repetitive nature – occurring “every day” – renders them as a game which, at least for the young Man, was a homoerotic one accentuated by sadistic notes: his “heart” is a metaphor for his love, which would “stiffen” or be made impure by the degree of Thanatos that overshadowed their bond. This is a refiguration of a game in Pasolini’s autobiographical novella Atti impuri (Impure Acts, 1982), which narrativizes passages of his Quaderni rossi, recounting his life and loves as a schoolteacher in Friuli from 1943 to 1947, when he was in his early twenties. In 1945, young Pasolini fell in love with one of

31 See Pasolini, “1. Il background” 1286.
his students, the peasant boy Gianni. One of their many games was, at least for Pasolini, a similarly homoerotic one heightened by sadistic elements:

For a few days Gianni had to endure my “mania” of tying him to a mulberry tree, pretending to play Cowboys and Indians. And a few times I was even able to tie him up, with what emotion it is impossible to say. But my small freedom was made exceedingly bitter by Gianni’s visibly discontent face. Nevertheless, since in tying him up I did not miss the chance to give him a few caresses, I would go home with my senses in flame, and the presence of that tender and clamoring little idol was a pitch that fed the fire. (Amado mio 63)

Young Pasolini usually failed to tie Gianni up and, when he did, the boy’s frustration – his “discontent face” – would counter Pasolini’s desire, reducing it to a “small freedom.” Nevertheless, Pasolini derived pleasure from the “few caresses” he would give him and the arousing memories that would linger on in his imaginary afterwards.

When the Woman describes the dark features of the young men whom she desires as an adult, she admits her past love for her mother: she wants the dark-haired Sicilian boy, who is “full of delicacy like a mother,” the Arab adolescent, “affectionate like a mother” (266, 290). And in the first episode, she recalls the first time she smelled “semen’s sacred stench” (290). It was with a peasant “father,” likely not her own:

UOMO
Era puro?

DONNA
Sì, perché era come suo padre.
E io volli che fosse un semplice animale
che mi mangiasse, con l’alito che sapeva di sigarette
(le prime) e la pelle di buon sapone.
[…]
la sua pace nella legge e la sua fame,
erano per me il mezzo per ottenere, invece,
scandalo e violazione. (256)
MAN
Was he pure?

WOMAN
Yes, because he was like his father.
And I wanted him to be a simple animal
that ate me, with breath that smelled of cigarettes
(the first ones) and skin of good soap.
[...]
his peace in the law and his hunger,
were for me the means to obtain, instead,
scandal and violation.

Her masochistic erotic experience appears to have amplified her senses, especially that of
smell: arousal came from the man’s “breath that smelled of cigarettes” and his skin, “of
good soap,” and making love was “smelling semen.” This was her individual
transgression, her secret “scandal and violation” of her past’s societal norms, the
“beautiful promise that renders survivors, / people crazy for the quiet happiness to live
on” (257).

The couple’s memories depict their childhood sexuality’s aggressiveness as
actually accentuating, rather than corrupting their experiences: the Man’s sadistic
yearnings were part of a larger form of play, and the Woman’s masochistic ones activated
multiple senses. In contrast to their modern bourgeois reality with its destructive
sexuality, their premodern world had a more sustainable sexuality, in which Thanatos did
not dominate, but brushed against Eros, laying down a positive friction to amorous union
that actually amplified the sources of pleasure. Significantly, they depict this sexuality as
forming in childhood and continuing into adulthood, without losing its modulation. The
first episode relates how this childhood sexuality, along its path to adulthood, would pass
through a tempered expansion, rather than be attacked by a rash prohibition. The Man recalls how the light of the valley in which he used to live gave form to a protective “silence”:

Era una protezione in cui si disfaceva la protezione del grembo materno e quella delle braccia del padre; rivelando le immensità del mondo, cui quell’immensa valle, con la sua luce, apparteneva. (258)

*It was a protection in which came undone the protection of the maternal womb and that of the arms of the father; revealing the immensities of the world, to which that immense valley, with its light, belonged.*

The “protection of the maternal womb” and “that of the arms of the father” are metaphors for maternal and paternal love, for the couple’s childhood sexuality. These loves were original “protections” that this civilization did not simply and brutally prohibit, but “undid” within the secondary “protection” of the valley’s “silence,” within its time and space. The verb “disfarsi” (to undo oneself) implies that this transformation of childhood desire was more an organic “living out” of desire, rather than a preemptive ban of it. This “living out” of desire revealed the “immensities of the world”: the child’s amorous and existential horizons expanded. His or her “immense valley” always “belonged” to these adult “immensities of the world,” and so this undoing of childhood loves appears to have remained constant in its temperance from childhood into adulthood.
The couple goes on to show how their past signified even more than sexuality, how it was an entire civilization that revolved around the body, with a “language of the body.” In the first episode, the Man reminisces on his province town, the Woman, on her countryside, and they repeat that there were voices everywhere, “YET NO ONE TALKED”:

UOMO
Nessuno in quel mondo aveva qualcosa da dire a un altro: eppure era tutto un risuonare di voci. E tu come hai imparato a parlare?

DONNA
Ascoltando quelle voci.

UOMO
Ma ti dicessero qualcosa? E che cosa?

DONNA
Oh no, erano soltanto voci. Esse, è vero, facevano il mio nome, e indicavano tutte le cose che ci circondavano e ci servivano, in quel mondo: MA NON PARLAVANO.

UOMO
E allora cosa hai imparato?

DONNA
Ad avere una voce.

UOMO
E così anch’io. E così anch’io. Ma dentro l’anima, intanto, cosa ci succedeva? CERCAVA DI PRENDERVI POSTO LA PAROLA NON DETTA.

DONNA
Sì, anche in me: ma non ho saputo mai pronunciarla. […] Là noi comunicavamo [sic] tra noi solo facendo qualcosa.
UOMO
L’Unno o il Longobardo *avevano fatto* un tempietto della più dura e bianca delle pietre; l’Etrusco *aveva fatto* una tomba di tufo con sessi rosa.

DONNA
Mia madre *faceva* il pollo con la salvia, e la torta di farina gialla, sotto la cenere.

UOMO
Un padre *faceva* la strada dell’ufficio; un altro padre *faceva* il tetto di tegole nuove; un altro ancora *faceva* delle marce coi soldati. E così si comprendevano fra loro. (254-55)

MAN
*No one in that world had anything to say to one another: yet it was all one echoing of voices.*
*And you, how did you learn to talk?*

WOMAN
*By listening to those voices.*

MAN
*But did they say anything to you? And what?*

WOMAN
*Oh no, they were only voices. They, it is true, called my name, and indicated all of the things that surrounded us and that we needed, in that world: BUT THEY DID NOT TALK.*

MAN
*So what did you learn?*

WOMAN
*To have a voice.*

MAN
*Me too. Me too.*
*But in our spirit, meanwhile, what happened to us?*
*THE UNSPOKEN WORD LOOKED TO TAKE ITS PLACE.*
WOMAN
Yes, in me too: but I never knew how to pronounce it.
[...]
There we communicated among ourselves just by doing something.

MAN
The Hun or Lombard had made a little temple
from the hardest and whitest of rocks;
the Etruscan had made a tomb of tuff with pink sexes.

WOMAN
My mother made the chicken with sage,
and cornbread, underneath the cinder.

MAN
A father made the office road;
another father made the roof of new tiles;
still another made marches with soldiers.
And they understood one another this way.

“To have a voice” and “to talk” are metaphors for what Pasolini calls “vocal” and “oral-graphic” language, respectively, in his essay “Dal Laboratorio (Appunti en poète per una linguistica marxista)” (“From the Laboratory [Notes en poète for a Marxist Linguistics],” 1972). Whereas vocal language is “solely instrumental,” the “language of the principle of necessity,” the oral-graphic one is “instrumental-expressive,” the “moment of liberation from necessity, and the invention of other necessities, perhaps determined economically, but not naturally: necessities that are moral, religious, spiritual, literary, etc.” (1320-21).

He states that between the two languages there is the “ideal moment of passage of man from the prehistorical to the historical phase […] from the pure and simple oral [(vocal)] relation to nature, to the oral-graphic one with work and society,” and that vocal language in particular, preserves a “certain metahistorical unity across the continual stratifications
and survivals of every language” (1321). Whereas vocal language is intrinsically tied to the body by fulfilling its basic “necessities,” the oral-graphic one becomes dissociated from it by entertaining secondary interests after having achieved those essential tasks.

The couple describes how vocal language was central to their premodern Italy: its sounds indicated objects in nature, at home and at work, and carried out, with those objects, the individual’s, family’s and community’s daily chores. With its physical sounds, accompanied by physical objects and actions, vocal language becomes a certain “language of the body.” Edi Liccioli similarly argues that, in contrast with the oral-graphic, “vocal signs flee the symbolic system’s arbitrariness, that is, they name the thing allowing it to appear, because in these signs the body and its primary needs speak […] To articulate sounds, to communicate across a language that is the absolute one of action, does not mean to talk but to be in the fullness of reality” (248-49). Vocal language immersed the body in this “fullness of reality,” instilling in it the “UNSPOKEN WORD,” that is, this form of life preserved the body’s and nature’s centrality and sacrality. The Unspoken Word, or the sense of the sacred, is moreover the unconscious memory of humanity since its prehistory, and hence the “metahistorical” link between individuals throughout time and space. Indeed, the couple underlines how their parents’ activities had the same necessity, rapport with nature and customariness as those of the ancient “Hun,” “Lombard” and “Etruscan.” Even if as children the Man and Woman possessed this Unspoken Word, as adults they failed to construct a life from it and have now lost it – the Woman “never knew how to pronounce it.” Their present petit-bourgeois reality, freed
from basic necessity and dominated instead by societal requirements, decenters vocal language with the oral-graphic, with empty chatter and rituals.

_Orgia_ unleashes the full force of Pasolini’s premodern myth. The couple’s memories represent interpersonal relations as more intimate, even sensual: “those voices, even in song, would come from the gardens” and “from the cafés open until late” (252-53). They depict sexuality as less traumatized and more gratifying. And they portray work as harmonized with nature and primary needs, and based on unique knowledge passed across generations: “great wisdom is at that time diffused in that world… / The elderly (the elderly who are now worthless, / like useless bodies), are its idols” (286). In contrast with the modern world, this myth imagines interpersonal relations, sexuality and work as revolving more closely around the body, as more efficiently balancing Eros and Thanatos, as always, in the end, giving in more to Eros. Yet, at the same time the couple’s memories expose this world’s violence and oppression. They reveal how patriarchy ruled at home: a “father would open his mouth to emit disgusting sounds / of command, made hostile like an old soldier / by wine and near poverty” (253). They show how aggression, even cruelty colored sexuality. They convey how peasant labor was backbreaking: “the sweet farming apes / who would not look at the sky but to pray… / For all the rest of the time they would look at the clumps of dirt” (270). And they tell how the ruling classes and Fascism exploited those popular classes for their wars: “they serve in the King’s armies; / they are Fascism’s slaves because they are poor and old-fashioned” (273). The couple does not present a simple idealization, but a complex
reminder of both the potential beauty and brutality of the human experience. This myth is significant less for its historical truth than for its capacity to provoke the theorization of a more humanistic culture.

**Sadomasochism: A Ritualized Language of the Body**

Having been swept into the Consumption Civilization, the Man and Woman put their faith in its development, uprooting themselves from their popular origins and adapting to modernity. The “peace” that bourgeois life promised “fell” and “fixed itself” upon them, where “dignity,” “lack of expression” and “disengagement” reigned (287). Yet they live this “peace” more as anxiety than serenity. Throughout the play, their refrain against postwar peace warns:

[L]a pace lascia sanguinanti tracce come la guerra.  
Un’altra mostruosità  
inscena i suoi spettacoli  
al posto delle stragi. (246)

*Peace leaves bloody tracks like war.  
Another monstrosity  
is staging its spectacles  
in the place of massacres.*

This postwar peace “worse than every war” is the couple’s petit-bourgeois reality devoid of love, passion and community (282). It is “another monstrosity” more destructive than traditional warfare, because it does not operate through identifiable “massacres,” but functions in a nameless and increasingly ubiquitous way in middleclass households, where it “stages” its “spectacles” – those that Pasolini’s theater reveals. The couple describes their bourgeoisification, not as clean line of progress, but as an indefinite and
messy battle. The Man in particular, describes it in especially dehumanizing terms: he conformed to modern society’s norms and, “like all of the others,” accepted to “being a tranquil, anonymous, / respected possessor of a little portion of power” so that his life was “gray, without choices and without passions” (245-46). Petit-bourgeois life offered him and his wife a bestial freedom emptied of distinctly human conflicts of “love” and “pity,” and “other problems of consciousness” (246). The couple hence lives the modern era mourning the premature death of their past values. While in Affabulazione the Father’s demise was a rapid overthrow, that of the couple here becomes a state of being. They endure the process of continually renouncing their childhood desire, sublimating its erotic energies into socially acceptable middleclass lives. They consequently leave their thanatotic energies to steadily unbind and live as if already dead (hence the posthumous prologue), in a repression-dominated state of tension, resignation and guilt. In the third episode, the Man makes this point with his wife’s factory-made slip, calling it a symbol of the deathly “authority” without a “face or a body” that manipulates them (281).

Modern repression is not executed by the physical hands of an identifiable dictator, but by the affective authority of wealth, by dominant institutions and discourses that promote its form of life among “millions of citizens” (281).

Orgia is the tragedy that most radically attenuates the unity of action, employing, beyond the reduction of the heroic sacrifice common to all three dramas, a supplemental narrative stasis from the first to the fourth episode – an addition which fittingly frames the couple’s compulsive corollary. Nevertheless, the unity of action casts its shadow, as
the first three episodes comprise a certain complication, in which the couple’s intractable memories provoke them to rematerialize their lost language of the body every night. These episodes are highly metatheatrical; for instance, in the third, the Woman plainly asserts that they are “making a spectacle” (275). They suspend society’s demands and reclude into their “bedroom as if in a nest” to reproduce the protection and intimacy of their past’s daily life, which used to take place, precisely, as “if in nests” (276, 271). The Woman states that in their room there is even “that immensity” – that of their old valley, whose protective silence undid childhood loves and passed them anew into adulthood (258). Yet, with characteristic bourgeois reductiveness, the Man confirms that their rituals will not be “devoid of irony” (260).

The Man and Woman are almost two sides of one sexual coin: he can rematerialize his love for his mother and sadistic urges in her, his sons’ mother, and she can reactualize her love for her father and masochistic yearnings in him, her sons’ father. However, their union does not regratify their respective homoerotic desire. In this case, the Woman, recalling Lucia’s corollary in *Teorema*, refinds her love for her mother in the maternal traits of the previously mentioned dark young men who rape her, and the Man revives his love for Mirco in the Girl, whom he calls a “girl kind of like a boy” and torments with the same words: “Do you know that you may never go home again? / That you will never see your mother again?” (302). When the Woman has sex with the gangs of young workers, the present’s chatter starts to fade in the reemergence of her past’s vocal signs – “a whisper, a laugh” – and language of the body, stating the following:
Like all of the couple’s ambivalent accounts of their orgiastic pleasure, the Woman’s description expresses her masochistic childhood desire to feel the diversity of the movements of the male body in intercourse – its “regular beats,” “uneven pushes,” “twist” and “thrust” – but that desire is exacerbated by an adult voraciousness that leads to her self-objectification and -destruction. She abruptly stops her heartrending monologue and admits that her amorous unions take place through rape, conceding to her husband that her “loves of a few minutes” will, in truth, understand neither her spirit nor
her personality: “I do not exist for them. / I exist only for you: because you are my master” (267). Similarly, while tormenting the Girl, the Man proclaims that his past’s “God,” its sacrality, “reappears” (301). However, unlike Mirco, the Girl will not return to play another day, because the Man will now completely destroy his playmate. He will not only tie her up, but he will penetrate, punch and kick her, and afterwards urinate on her lifeless body (301-04). In fact, he repeatedly clarifies that his sadistic urges are no longer a “game” (260, 268). Liccioli points out that the vocal signs that emerge in the couple are the imbalanced and regressive sounds of their “sighs of nostalgia” and “screams of fury” (201). Indeed, their rituals produce words of the flesh, but, instead of being anything like a “song,” they are now desperate cries for help.

The couple does not create their past’s Eros-oriented language, but a Thanatos-dictated one. However, their destructive union still nevertheless contains their drive to love, to experience the flesh, to feel protection, and they are aware of their false consciousness. The Man plainly states: “in this lack of every love / my love has hidden itself” (250). The Woman concludes likewise:

La lingua che siamo costretti a usare,
– al posto di quella che non ci hanno insegnato
o ci hanno insegnato male – la lingua del corpo,
è una lingua che non distingue la morte dalla vita. (268)

The language that we are forced to use,
– in place of the one that they did not teach us
or that they taught us poorly – the language of the body,
is a language that does not distinguish death from life.
Whereas their past’s “language of the body” more efficiently balanced Eros and Thanatos, producing a culture in which there was a greater distinction between life’s affirmation and negation, the present “language” they are “forced to use” collapses this distinction in favor of Thanatos. Products of the same Eros-Thanatos dialectic, civilization, subjectivity and sexuality are, to a great extent, reflections of one another, and thus it becomes impossible that the couple perfectly reproduce their sustainable premodern sexuality within their imbalanced modern culture and identity. This culture looks to erase the degree of difference that existed in the past between society and individual subjectivity and sexuality; for instance, the Woman realizes that their “window is open: / but nothing moves here in the room. / Inside and out, it is still, there is the same heat” (282). They fail to make their bedroom one of their past’s “nests” with their valley’s “immensity.” In the end, the Woman describes the inside like the outside, as all one “inferno” (281).

**Suicidal Reunions with Parental Love**

In the fourth and fifth episodes, the young men who rape the woman and the Girl are Messengers who consolidate the couple’s discovery of their otherness and suicidal reversal. From the first episode, they are aware that their rituals ghettoize them. The Woman reminds her husband that “if the people of the world / behind the walls of this house, / could only see…” (249-50). They live their otherness as a condemnation and death sentence. The Woman calls their bedroom an “inferno,” where they punish themselves for having betrayed their past and for inadequately adapting to their present
(281). The Man calls this space a “lager” – their systematic fate for not meeting society’s image of normality (248). Their tragedy appropriately takes place on Easter: repressive society progresses by the (self-)sacrifice of its (sacred) others. Visitors from the outside who are unaware of their tragedy only aggravate their self-destructive otherness. The mindless young men who rape the Woman do not fulfill her childhood desire; they only worsen her remorse (290). And the equally careless Girl is incapable of understanding the sense of the sacred that the Man wishes to revive with her (297). They recognize that no one will fulfill their desire and take a plunge to their death.

The Woman’s suicide in the fourth episode, and that of the Man in the sixth episode and posthumous prologue are the play’s explication. These ambivalent suicides are both irrational movements of their thanatotically-driven desire, which looks to definitively eliminate frustration, and also rationalized stagings of death as their symbolic reunion with parental love. On one hand, their suicides are the mechanical outcome of their exacerbated sexuality, and Pasolini confirms this to an extent in Orgia’s program: he states that the play’s ideology, though partially informed by Marcuse, was even more influenced by Emile Durkheim’s *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* (1897) (“Prologo” 320).32 The writer defines the Woman’s death in particular, as an example of Durkheim’s “anomic suicide,” which is caused by the overwhelming lawlessness an individual feels during periods of lessened social regulation (241-76). Though he only associates the Woman with anomie, the Man could also fall under this category. For instance, before

32 Pasolini read about Durkheim’s *Suicide* in Robert Paul Wolff’s essay “Beyond Tolerance,” which was part of the previously cited *Critica della tolleranza*. 
death, both become extremely delirious. In her final monologue, the Woman plainly notes that this is “without a doubt a delirium” (286). And the Girl exclaims that the Man talks like a “madman” (302). In addition, oneiric movement overwhelms their actions.

Before murdering her sons, the Woman needlessly asks herself: “Do I act before having decided?” (291). And in the prologue, the Man’s shadow unnecessarily questions his hanging in the same terms: “Can one act before deciding? Or without deciding? / Yes” (247). Appeasing rational thinking, oneiric movement, while it can affirm life, erotically uniting bodies, can also negate it, thanatotically destroying them. However, by defining their suicides as purely irrational explosions of suppressed sexuality, Durkheim’s and also Marcuse’s theories actually reduce their full meaning.

The dense intertextual matrix of their suicide scenes renders them as rationally constructed symbolic reunions with parental love: the Man will die in the “maternal womb,” the Woman, in both this womb and also the “paternal lap.” Stabbing her two sons to death with a knife and then drowning herself with them in the river, the Woman unconsciously makes herself the synthesis of Euripides’ Medea and Shakespeare’s Ophelia. All three women suffer the loss of their “father”: Ophelia mourns for Polonius, Medea, for her archaic fatherland Colchis, and the woman, for both her peasant father and agrarian Italian fatherland. Consequently, in her final monologue, which is an address to the audience, the Woman reiterates her intolerable remorse, which is the pain she feels for having betrayed parental love and also the point from which she imagines her suicide as a reunion with that love: “In my remorse, / I dreamed of that womb” (290).
“That womb” refers to the young men’s laps that she substituted for that of her father. She announces her desire for paternal and maternal love in terms of imitation: “I want to, if anything, go backwards in time, / where I can dream / of being like my father and my mother” (285). At the same time, she also derides her elegy with a humorous “Tra-la-la” (288). In her closing verses, she states that she will pass from the “city” to the “countryside,” from her “present” to her “past” to reach the river (292). This river evokes that of her and the Man’s old immense valley, whose light gave form to a protective silence: “I will go to the shores of that river – with the light – / that forms the immensity…” (291). Her journey to the river is thus her symbolic return to her childhood valley, and her immersion into water in particular, her refetalization in the maternal womb’s liquidity. Only in her final monologue do her words of the flesh transform from morbid “sighs of nostalgia” into a vitalistic “heartbeat in a body” and “breath of air” (286). Yet, this glimpse of an affirmative subjective transformation does not point to new sustainable life; it is merely a jolt of energy quickly extinguished by death.

The Man’s cross-dressed hanging refigures that in Il viaggio a Citera, which is based on Baudelaire’s homonymous 1857 poem, whose narrator describes the sight of a man’s corpse hanging from gallows on Cythera, the mythological island of the Greek goddess of love and beauty Aphrodite. In Il viaggio, Pasolini draws upon Baudelaire’s myth of man’s uncompromising search for aphrodisiacal pleasure that leads to his demise. Interspersing his treatment with passages of the original poem, Pasolini constructs a parallel between Baudelaire’s narrator who views one man’s voyage to
Cythera, and his own, who glimpses a university professor’s analogous journey in modern Bologna. This middle-aged man seeks pleasure, first in one of his pupils, then in young men outside and inside of the city. He fails, and with his desire once more repressed, by society and himself, he hangs himself. However, before slipping his head through the noose, he symbolically reunites with the maternal womb and his Oedipal (incestual and homoerotic) love through imitation: he dons women’s clothing, becomes a “Hermaphroditus” and so reunites with his “mother” Aphrodite’s womb. Confirmation of his “arrival to Cythera” comes the following morning when two doves – signs of the goddess – stop by his apartment window. Similarly, in Orgia the Man’s cross-dressed hanging is his symbolic reunion with his mother’s womb and Oedipal love. In his highly metatheatrical final monologue, which is also an address to audience, the Man strips himself of his men’s clothing and associates his suicidal return with the image of his mother nursing him – the “silent larva”:

In poche settimane sono ritornato, 
indietro, a essere 
la silenziosa larva col suo basso sorriso 
che pensa solo a succhiare la vita. (306)

In only a few weeks I went, 
backwards, to be 
the silent larva with his base smile 
who thinks only of sucking up life.

Continuing this image, he admits his love for her: “Now, the terrible pain that I feel dying / is only for the only thing that I love: / the much chewed and never swallowed flesh of my mother” (307). That he dons specifically women’s undergarments furthers evidences
his erotic refetalization in her. Nevertheless, he undercuts his elegy, deriding it as “humorous” and entreating the audience to “Be happy!” before slipping his head through the noose (308, 312).

The Man differentiates his suicide from that of his wife, as he believes that it has not only individual, but also social significance. Before hanging himself, he announces that his suicide is an “alternative… a revolutionary one!” (311). He contends that his hanging does not result, like the Woman’s drowning, from having “lost the sense of the law: / but from having recovered it and… JUDGED IT” (312). Though it is true that the Woman lost the sense of the law, she also recovered it, constructing a contained, individually meaningful death, which, in fact, only bolstered her repressive city’s walls. Unlike Medea, there was no alternative city for her, and unlike Ophelia, there is no friend or family member to mourn her passing. In contrast, the Man claims that he has “recovered” and “JUDGED” the law: he refuses a solitary death and “rebels,” taking back the “atrocious oath of loyalty” to society that he has always pronounced (308, 311). He cross-dresses, hangs himself and allegedly leaves his deathly spectacle of otherness for members of society to witness the following morning:

Il gruppetto di gente che il sole porterà qui delegati dall’immenso mondo della storia (i vicini di casa, in silenzio, i poliziotti col loro triste sudore, gli infermieri venuti dalla campagna: come li vedo!) si troveranno davanti a un fenomeno espressivo indubbiamente nuovo, così nuovo da dare un grande scandalo e da smerdare, praticamente, ogni loro amore. (312)

*The small group of people that the sun will bring here*
He believes his new “expressive phenomenon” will subvert the values and authority of
the “delegates from the immense world of history,” of all those apparently normal
members of society, and will shake the city’s walls. He even conceives his gesture in
epic, Biblical terms, as similar to the critical moment when Joshua asks for God’s help in
conquering the Promised Land for the Israelites: “Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and
thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon” (*King James Bible*, Josh. 10.12).33 Declaring
moreover that he “made good use of death” and calling himself a “Buddhist monk” –
referring to those at the time who would self-immolate in extreme protest – the Man
clearly sees himself to an extent as a martyr for Otherness (312). However, in the
previously cited quote, Pasolini explained that his gesture is ultimately limited in its
cultural impact: “In fact, it takes much of this explosive material to bring down the high
walls of a city […]” (“Prologo” 320-21). The author views the Man’s self-destructive
otherness, not as oppositional to, but as a functioning part of mass society, neatly ridding
that society of its disobedience and thus reaffirming it. Significantly, the Man reaches the
same conclusion: “And now, here, as I die, / Do I not do anything but serve this function
of mine?” (307). Furthermore, in *Il viaggio*, the narrator bluntly remarks that the

33 See Pasolini, *Orgia* 312.
professor’s suicide only “sanctions society’s refusal” of him (2642). The Man’s death is
not displayed on an island as a forewarning to all passersby, but remains closeted in his
bedroom. For Pasolini, others who persist in and struggle against the Consumption
Civilization more forcefully resist it than those who fall into a false martyrization, only
emptying points of resistance for that same culture to fill with itself.

**The Man’s Shadow and the Other’s Task**

The Man continues his final monologue moments later as a shadow in the prologue. Like
film montage, his death now organizes and makes a sense of his life as a “flashback” of
its “last significant, and also typical facts,” granting his shadow “too much wisdom”
(245). Accordingly, his shadow more deeply theorizes his otherness and formulates
questions regarding how he should have expressed it. Like *Affabulazione*’s epilogue,
*Orgia*’s posthumous prologue breaks the unity of action, reducing the tragicity of the
heroic sacrifice and the achievement of martyrdom. The shadow employs Talk Theater’s
reductive language and action, not only reevaluating his self-destructive otherness, but
also ridiculing his cross-dressed hanging: he notes that his body is “strangely dressed […]
in a truly abominable fashion” (245). And alienation effects further defamiliarize the
drama: the shadow continues to address the audience and is conscious of his role – “if my
life / had been a spectacle” (247). In life, the Man kept his otherness out of consciousness
and history, permitting it to act only in his bedroom. His shadow states that his otherness
always remained “virginal / as it came into the world,” that he never “examined,
understood, accepted, / discussed, manipulated” it (247). Since he accepted the
condemnation of his otherness, his otherness functioned exactly as repressive society
dictates: Otherness ghettoized his radically individual and potentially disobedient desire
into the prison cell of his bedroom, exacerbated it and led to his self-erasure.

In a critical final stanza, the Man’s shadow contemplates whether Otherness in repressive society fatally induces self-destruction or if, from within that same society,

Otherness can instead take a positive turn and become a force of liberation:

Ha diritto la Diversità a restare sempre uguale a se stessa?
A non essere altro, in tal caso, che verifica di scandalo?
Non deve, piuttosto, divenire altro scandalo?
Cos’è insomma la Diversità –
quando essa stessa non divenga diversa da sé –
se non un puro termine di negazione della norma?
E quindi parte della norma essa stessa?
E, quel che importa, che cosa deve fare chi è Diverso?
Negro, Ebreo, mostro, cosa sei tenuto a fare?
Ricostruire in te la realtà,
rendendola nuovamente reale?
Progredire anche tu, disobbedendo, insieme alle leggi della norma,
anche alle leggi della Pazzia?
[…]
Mah, io non sono riuscito a rispondere a queste domande […]. (247-48)

Does Otherness have the right to always remain the same?
To be nothing else, in that case, than the verification of scandal?
Must it not, rather, become other scandal?
In the end, what is Otherness –
when it does not become other to itself –
if not a pure term of negation of the norm?
And thus part of the norm itself?
And, what matters most, what must the Other do?
Black, Jew, monster, what is your task?
To reconstruct reality in yourself,
making it newly real?
To progress as well, disobeying, both the laws of normality,
and those of Insanity?
[…]

98
Who knows! I could not respond to these questions [...].

Otherness leads to oblivion when the Other accepts its condemnation, and his or her otherness remains the “pure,” or extreme “negation” and “scandal” of the “norm.” As such, Otherness only defines and reaffirms the norm itself, securing the norm’s progress over its own historically negative image. To escape death and transform their otherness into a genuine force of liberation, others must “reconstruct” their otherness. Here Pasolini presents an affirmative form of resistance to repressive society that contradicts the conclusion among some scholars that Orgia signals the writer’s belief in suicide as the only means of resistance, with either individual or cultural significance, to this society.34 Otherness must “become other to itself,” its scandal must “become other scandal.” Orgia gives others the “task” of “progressing” their otherness, of forming a critical radical subjectivity and politics that maintains Otherness’ “disobedience” to the Consumption Civilization’s “laws of normality,” refusing conformism, but also installs a new disobedience to the exacerbation of their desire and of that culture’s “laws of Insanity,” equally escaping self-destruction. This theoretical and practical reformulation of Otherness opens the road to the mediation of the impossible experiential approach to reality suggested by Sophocles’ Shadow in Affabulazione, and will be further elaborated by Spinoza’s shadow in Porcile as the Logic of Otherness.

34 Van Watson argues that, in Orgia, “[d]eath presents itself as the only viable means of escaping the closure of the bourgeois universe, much as it did in Pigsty” (96); and Tricomi, not questioning the Man’s achievement of martyrdom, concludes that from “Orgia above all, but also from Bestia da stile, Pasolini’s idea that voluntary martyrdom remains the only possibility of breaking and delegitimating Power clearly emerges […]” (359).
CHAPTER THREE: THE FATHER AND SON’S MERGER TO CUT OFF OTHERNESS IN PORCILE

The Family’s Pigsty

Pasolini wrote Porcile’s first draft in the fall of 1967. He originally included two visions, one of a Hades of martyrs with echoes of his trip to New York, and another of Spinoza, the former of which he left out of all subsequent drafts. In 1968 he prepared his homonymous film adaptation’s screenplay from the first draft, and after the film’s premiere in 1969 he revised the text again. Garzanti first published it in 1979. The play’s first productions did not arrive until 1989, with that of Roberto Guicciardini at Rome’s Teatro dell’Orologio, and that of Philippe Poulain at Alès’ Festival du Jeune Théâtre. In the twenty-first century, productions have continued in Italy and France, and debuted in Austria and Portugal.

The play’s first episode opens on the first day of the spring of 1967: it is the twenty-fifth birthday of Julian, the son of West German industrialists. His father Klotz profited before, during and after the Second World War from the production of wool, cheeses, beer, buttons and cannons. His family prefers life in their ancestral Italianate

35 Pasolini, “Porcile: I elemento” II-IV, 481-4815. For these visions’ publication, see Pasolini, “Note,” TE 647-58.
36 As the object of this study is Pasolini’s dramatic texts for theatrical production, which has received far less critical attention than his cinema, analysis of his film has been withheld.
village in the countryside of Godesberg, far from their factories in Bonn and Cologne. Julian grew up here and fell in love with the world of the Italian peasants who work on the estate, including their pigs. As an adult, he now frequents the pigsty to engage in bestial rituals. The young heiress Ida visits Julian on his birthday; she is in love with him, but he does not reciprocate her desire. She attempts to persuade him to join her and her fellow antibourgeois student protestors in a Peace March in Berlin. In the meantime, Klotz and his wife realize that their son is neither obedient nor disobedient, that he wants neither to continue nor to dismantle their industries. Julian eventually falls into a three-month catatonia, during which Klotz’s old friend and current business rival Herdhitze visits him. Herdhitze was a Nazi physician who ordered the extermination of prisoners for a collection of skulls of Jewish-Bolshevist commissars and escaped the prosecution of his crimes after the war by getting a facelift, changing his name and becoming an industrialist. Klotz is aware of Herdhitze’s Nazi past, as is Herdhitze of Klotz’s bestial son, and so Klotz merges his old industries with Herdhitze’s new ones, each therefore avoiding their respective scandals and leaving Julian to the pigs. While Klotz and Herdhitze celebrate their merger in the villa, Julian takes his final trip to the pigsty, where he meets Spinoza’s shadow. In the eleventh episode, the play comes to a close when the peasants interrupt the celebration to tell Herdhitze that the pigs devoured Julian; Herdhitze orders them not to say a word to anyone.
Pasolini bases *Porcile* on Alexander Mitscherlich and Fred Mielke’s *Doctors of Infamy: The Story of the Nazi Medical Crimes* (1947) and also his own *Atti impuri*. The former recounts the crimes of the Nazi physicians, from whom Pasolini constructs the pasts of Herdhitze and his spy Clauberg, formerly Hirt and Ding. Hirt’s new identity as the upstart postwar industrialist Herdhitze symbolizes the continuity in the Consumption Civilization of Nazism’s mass violence and oppression for the gain of a powerful few. Klotz also symbolizes this continuity, as he profited from the production of arms both during and after the war. *Doctors of Infamy* moreover informs the language of *Porcile*’s characters that recreates the grotesque tone of the Nazi physicians’ letters and reports, in which they rationalize and even celebrate their irrational, murderous behavior through intricate formalities and discourses of scientificity and civilizational progress. Analogously, Klotz and Herdhitze defend themselves from their past and present involvement in mass destructiveness through ironic language. Whereas *Affabulazione*’s and *Orgia*’s protagonists employed irony at different moments of their tragedy, creating a mild humorous tone, *Porcile*’s characters almost entirely envelop their (and others’)

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39 Strasbourg Professor of Anatomy and SS Captain August Hirt most infamously ordered the extermination of eighty-six Auschwitz prisoners for a collection of skulls of Jewish-Bolshevist commissars, while Physician and SS Captain Erwin Ding-Schuler experimented with Typhus on Buchenwald prisoners; both escaped the prosecution of their crimes (Mitscherlich and Mielke 42-51, 81-89).

40 For example, in his letter to Himmler regarding high-altitude rescue experiments at Dachau, Physician and SS Lieutenant Sigmund Rascher exclaims: “I believe these experiments would hold extraordinary interest for you, dear Mr. Reich Leader! […] If the experimental results obtained so far are further sustained, they will add up to entirely new conclusions for science, and a radically new set of aspects in aviation will have been created…”; and in his report for Himmler concerning his skull collection, Hirt declares: “By securing the skulls of Jewish-Bolshevist commissars, representing a repulsive but typical species of sub-humanity, we stand to acquire tangible scientific research material” (Mitscherlich and Mielke 7, 81).
tragedies in irony, engendering a much severer, grotesque tone – here all of life becomes a charade. For instance, in speaking about their fascist and capitalist exploits, Klotz, Herdhitze and their spies exchange infinite formalities and witticisms; and in discussing Julian’s love and his father’s industries, Julian and Ida frequently finish statements with “Hurrah!” and “Tra-la-la,” and Ida tells him that the German he speaks is a “joke” (Porcile, TE 621). Van Watson notes that Porcile “does not begin, as do some of the other plays, with a scream, but with a whistle, and Pasolini maintains this ironic tone throughout most of the text” (82). Indeed, Julian’s whistle is no longer the vitalistic one of Affabulazione’s Son, whose voice would announce his desire’s imminent fulfillment at his girlfriend’s house, but it is his ironic defense against his desire’s continual frustration.

In this light, the play recalls the early twentieth-century Italian Grotesque Theater, which Pasolini would undoubtedly categorize as a form of Talk Theater.41 Yet his play drastically intensifies this genre, as his characters make a joke out of not only their lost loves, but also their complicity in some of the twentieth century’s most horrific forms of mass destruction. As Pasolini states, Porcile is his attempt to “[p]aint a pit of Hell with the technique of [Renaissance artist] Giovanni Bellini” (“Note,” PC2 3133). Furthermore, Pasolini mirrors himself in Julian in particular, stating that he identifies with his “ambiguity, elusive identity and, in short, everything the character says about himself in his long monologue addressed to his ‘girlfriend’ [Ida] who goes away” (“Note,” PC2 3132). He prompts the spectator to view Julian’s love of pigs as a “symbolic” one, as

41 For an overview of Italian Grotesque Theater, see Vena 11-42.
representative of radically individual desire (“Il sogno” 1489). In *Atti impuri*, young Pasolini recounts how he used to ride his bicycle and “disappear” every afternoon, on “excursions” in search of homoerotic love with peasant boys along Friuli’s country roads (*Amado mio* 43, 107). His young neighbor Dina was in love with him and, when she realized that he did not reciprocate her desire, she would endlessly interrogate him on his elusiveness. The young author’s regular excursions and tortuous relationship with Dina prefigure Julian’s routine “solitary strolls” on his villa’s grounds to the pigsty and his contentious rapport with Ida (618).

*Porcile* stages the transformation of *Affabulazione*’s old capitalism into a new, more impervious form. The play takes place in West Germany, as it is, in the author’s words, a “limit case” exemplifying the “ambiguous relationship between old and new capitalism” better than any other Western country in the late 1960s (“Note,” *PC2* 3132). In fact, the screenplay explicitly identifies Italy at this time as still a largely premodern country: after Ida returns from a trip to the peninsula, she informs Mrs. Klotz that the Italians are “less poor than usual. But they are not good at exploiting tourism”; and Julian tells Ida that the estate’s peasants would be “real” if they were in Italy (*Porcile*, *PC1* 1136, 1161). The fundamental difference between old and new capitalism, which makes the latter more resistant to the former’s crises, is the new system’s overcoming of the necessity of the male heir for its propagation. In *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse foresees this erasure of the family unit’s importance: that the “father-son conflict no longer remains the model-conflict […] derives from the fundamental economic processes which
have characterized, since the beginning of the [twentieth] century, the transformation of ‘free’ into ‘organized’ capitalism,” in which the “independent family enterprise” is “absorbed into large-scale impersonal groupings and associations” (95-96). Klotz’s description to his wife of their ambivalent bonds with their son evidences the traditional family’s breakdown: “you mother-father, me father-mother. / Tenderness and toughness / surround him on all sides” (590). Porcile’s Consumption Civilization obscures Orgia’s premodern tender mother and tough father, making both of them sources of love-hate. For “West Germany’s new man” Herdhitze, the “father-son conflict no longer remains the model-conflict” (601). He informs Klotz on “organized capitalism”:

**HERDHRITZE**
No, *io non ho eredi*, Sig. Klotz.

**PADRE**
Ah!

**HERDHRITZE**
Lascerò le mie industrie… ai miei tecnici.

**PADRE**
Ah!

**HERDHRITZE**
Il problema del futuro non è individuale. (611-12)

**HERDHRITZE**
No, I do not have heirs, *Mr. Klotz*.

**FATHER**
Ah!

**HERDHRITZE**
*I will leave my industries... to my technicians.*
FATHER
Ah!

HERDHitZe
The problem of the future is not individual.

This new, or advanced capitalism replaces old, or classical capitalism’s proletariat with “technicians,” who no longer work under a distinct businessman, but “impersonal associations.” In his later One-Dimensional Man, Marcuse identifies automation as the cause of classical capitalism’s advancement and, consequently, the system’s greater rooting into culture: production’s increased technological organization augments surplus product, expanding consumerism, replaces the traditionally alienated proletariat with professionalized technicians more incorporated into the system, lessening antagonism, and sees the merger of individual owners into corporate bureaucracies, obscuring the sources of exploitation (24-51). That the “problem of the future [of capitalism] is not individual,” that is, that businessmen are understanding the profits of uniting with former rivals and faithful technicians, renders the father-son conflict, as well as the traditionally antagonistic proletariat, obsolete.

Porcile examines advanced capitalism’s effect on the traditional father-son conflict. The play synthesizes the previous two: like Orgia’s couple, Julian endures the exacerbation of his childhood desire as bourgeoisification; like Affabulazione’s Father, Klotz must confront the return of the sacred in his mysterious son. Their dramas run parallel to one another until they intersect at the merger, which allows Klotz to cut off Julian’s otherness in order to perpetuate his industries in those of Herdhitze, and which
also permits Julian to cut himself off from their society in order to indefinitely recluse into the pigsty. Though Klotz overcomes *Affabulazione*’s father-son conflict by uniting with Herdhitze and leaving Julian to his bestial rituals, he nevertheless loses his son and experiences social death; and though Julian finds a way to indefinitely suspend his culture’s demands, he ultimately becomes another example of self-destructive otherness and false martyrdom. However, Spinoza’s shadow will reopen theorization of the progressive reconstruction of Otherness that the Man’s shadow initiated in *Orgia*. In *Porcile*’s first draft and screenplay, instead simply condoning Julian’s self-destruction, the shadow gives him the task of creating a new Dream Logic – what will be the Logic of Otherness – which would contest Klotz and Herdhitze’s one-dimensional Reality Logic. Considered together, these drafts not only reveal the Consumption Civilization’s increasingly efficient expulsion of Otherness, but, precisely because of this, the imperative at the same time for others to critically engage with its thanatotic logic, contradicting it with a logic of their own.

**The Klotz Estate: A Reservation of Premodernity**

Tucked away in Godesberg’s countryside, Italianate and home to Italian peasants, the Klotz estate is a reservation, a material remnant of premodern Italian cultures. As such, it is a site of the sacred; Julian emphasizes that there is “NOTHING NATURAL” here, that is, that everything has a miraculous physical presence (622). Ida calls the villa the “temple” of Julian’s “Italianate grandfather” (581). The text aligns the classical capitalist Klotz dynasty with Weimar Classicism, specifically with its penchant for the myths of
ancient Greece and pastoral Italy. Julian’s grandfather passed this love to his father through his humanistic education, whose consequences Herdhitze describes to him:

Lei, da grande industriale, figlio di Klotz il Grande, secondo solo a Krupp, ha sempre disdegnato una casa in città, tra i rumori e i veleni: a sua sede ha sempre eletto questa Godesberg goethiana, cara a Adenauer, piena di ville principesche e segrete… […] il sublime amore per la campagna, per i giardini… alla tedesca, pieni di selvaggi ricordi della Grecia… brumosi, soleggiati, cari a Diotima… (614)

You, as a big industrialist, son of Klotz the Great, second only to Krupp, always disdained a house in the city, among the noise and toxins: as your throne you always elected this Goethean Godesberg, dear to Adenauer, full of princely and secret villas… […] the sublime love of the countryside, of the gardens… German in style, full of savage memories of Greece… misty, sunbathed, dear to Diotima…

Associating Klotz with Adenauer, Herdhitze highlights the contradiction between his rival’s urban factories and his country villa. Konrad Adenauer was West Germany’s Chancellor who presided over the country’s own postwar “Economic Miracle,” and who had a seemingly paradoxical love of gardening, the countryside and the northern Italian resort town of Cadenabbia.\textsuperscript{42} Herdhitze’s additional association of Klotz with the Classicist Goethe – that of the \textit{Italian Journey} (1816-17, 1829) in particular – reinforces the ambivalence in the dynasty’s classicism.\textsuperscript{43} He cannot purely experience the past’s sacrality, but must possess and consequently remove himself from it in the form of a

\textsuperscript{42} For a history of Adenauer’s preferences, see Williams 114, 225, 447.
\textsuperscript{43} Goethe’s \textit{Italian Journey} is present in Pasolini’s library (Chiarcossi and Zabagli 16).
reservation. In fact, in the screenplay, Julian believes his parents see the peasants as “living museum pieces” (Porcile, PC1 1161). References to a Goethean Italian, and particularly Sicilian journey recur throughout the play. In the first episode, Klotz approves Ida’s wish to travel there: “Ah, Taormina! What a dreamy landscape!” (582). And after Ida returns, Mrs. Klotz states: “If we had won the war / we would have gotten ourselves a villa, down there, in Syracuse” (596). Like her husband, she approaches premodern Italy to dominate it: her nation had to have conquered the peninsula for them to reside there. A Goethean seduction-by-Sicily also surfaces in one of Ida and Julian’s conversations. In the first episode, Ida proposes a game in which they “estrange” themselves, pretending to be Sicilians on the “Ionian’s shores”: she would be “Maria,” he, “Lucio” (579-80). Premodern Sicily’s Eros-orientedness erupts when Ida-Maria exclaims that she would be “precious for her virginity,” and Julian-Lucio adds that, besides kissing Maria, Lucio would surely “climb on top of her” (580). However, Julian abruptly stops Ida’s charade:

Ma io sono Julian: e non voglio baciarti
né montarti sopra. Io non ti amo.
È straordinaria l’idea di essere Lucio.
Ma mio padre è un industriale renano […]. (580)

But I am Julian: I do not want to kiss you
nor climb on top of you. I do not love you.
It is extraordinary the idea of being Lucio.
But my father is a Rhineland industrialist […].

He dissipates their daydream, forcing Ida to recognize the gulf that separates this “extraordinary” culture from their modern German one.
Yet, despite this gulf, since infancy Julian has sought to close it, immersing himself in this premodern world of the body outside of the villa and, unlike his parents, creating more mutual bonds of love with it through his experiences with the nature, peasants and pigs. For him, this world is not a “master’s possession,” but simply a “gift” (623). The text hints at all of the elements of Pasolini’s complex premodern myth he previously laid out in Orgia. Julian tells Ida what lies beyond the villa: “together with nature, here awaits me also / an unforeseen human race: those who cultivate the land. / They do not have anything to do with the rest of humanity” (624). Most of the peasants are southern Italian immigrants, among whom, he explains, there is always a “Beauty / with the big tuft of hair and the broodiness of the son’s stare,” who waits for him and greets him with a “joyful smile” when he passes: Ernesto from Abruzzo, Enzo from Tarquinia and Maracchione from Reggio or Messina (624). There are also German peasants, “servants / children of servants: and therefore noble”: the eldest, Wolfram, is an “authority” and “magician,” with wisdom derived from many generations past who likes to recount his youth in the military to Julian; the youngest, Gustawa, is like a “little loaf of bread / just taken out of the oven,” who is always the last to leave Julian’s side before he goes to the pigsty (624-25). This world gave expression to Julian’s childhood love of pigs. In Herdhitze’s words, it gave him the time and space to experience “sublime love,” as if he were in the scene of Plato’s Symposium where “Diotima” teaches Socrates about love. However, Julian’s love extends beyond the flesh, encompassing the entire premodern world: in the screenplay, he succinctly states that between “that countryside
and that sun and dreams, and sexual pleasure there is no discontinuity” (Porcile, PC1 1160).

Until adulthood, Julian’s bonds of love with the estate’s peasant world preserved his sense of the sacred. Like Affabulazione’s mysterious Son, golden blond hair marks Julian’s presence, which Ida describes as an “angelic broom,” “damp with German holy water” (580, 579). He is another fleeting figure, whom she complains always has a “compelling and infantile desire / to satisfy himself” in some “obscure destination” (578). He is neither obedient nor disobedient, disidentifying both with his parents and with Ida and the protestors. When she becomes frustrated with his refusal to join the March, he tells her:

Adesso sei offesa perché non vengo a Berlino
a fare il buffone con dei cartelli
che oppongono terrorismo di giovani borghesi
a terrorismo di vecchi borghesi?
Mi sentirei fuori posto […]. (586)

Now you are offended because I do not come to Berlin
to act like a fool with signs
that oppose the terrorism of bourgeois children
to the terrorism of bourgeois parents?
I would feel out of place […].

His disidentification with each “terrorism” is his critical form of resistance that seeks to escape his class’ destructive dialectic. When Ida asks him what happened that left him “astonished” in Godesberg, he responds with his refrain of resistance that reiterates a certain nothingness: “a nothing…. a lost leaf, / a creaky door… a faraway grunt” (581). His mysterious existence is “nothing,” not because it resembles bourgeois subjectivity’s
void, but because bourgeois history does not recognize it, like the peasants. His love is a “secret” that lives outside of bourgeois/antibourgeois culture:

[Q]uesto segreto mi immerge nella vita.
Sì, perché senza la vita, esso non potrebbe aver luogo, […]
Io devo entrare nella vita, per evitarla
nei suoi aspetti più meschini, quelli sociali,
quelli a cui io sono legato prima per nascita…
e poi per obbligo politico, conservazione o rivolta…
Esclusi dunque tutti questi aspetti,
mi resta da affrontare una vita pura, solo… bella
o terrorizzante… senza mai mezzi termini,
[…]
Chiamiamola realtà […]. (623)

[T]his secret immerses me in life.
Yes, because without life, it could not take place,
[…]
I must enter life, to avoid it
in its pettiest aspects, the social ones,
those to which I am tied first by birth…
and then by political obligation, conservation or revolt…
Having thus excluded all of these aspects,
what remains for me to encounter is a pure life, only… beautiful
or terrorizing… always absolute,
[…]
Let us call it reality […].

As a “secret,” or taboo, his love “excludes” bourgeois/antibourgeois civilization and its sterility, distilling his existence into a “pure life” from an “absolute” rediscovered, into a radically different “reality” overwhelming in its sensorial, emotional and experiential possibilities.
Julian’s Otherness

Unlike Affabulazione’s Son and Father, Julian is not nineteen but twenty-five years old and now responsible for his father’s industries, and Klotz only ever looks to establish a love-hate relationship with him: he expects to either dominate an obedient son or the attempt to be dominated by a disobedient one. The first nine episodes are their complication, in which Klotz, his wife and Ida, who symbolize their culture’s obligations, demand that Julian take a distinct ideological position vis-à-vis the family business. Their appeals for his obedience/disobedience repress his childhood desire, as he sublimates it to partially identify with each side. In the first episode, he gives an ambivalent response to his parents’ wish that he marry Ida and continue their legacy: “Between our assets and hers / I would certainly become the ruler / of half of West Germany” (583). Though he is interested in neither business nor Ida, he nonetheless outwardly plays with the idea of uniting with the heiress to reign over a sizable portion of the country. In the second episode, he displays his equally ambivalent stance towards the student protestors. After having continually denied Ida’s requests to join the March, he gives in: “Come on, do not cry, you bore. But sure, / I will come and piss with all of you on the Berlin Wall” (588). In a metatheatrical remark, he admits that his “court would lack a main character” without her (581). However, in the following episode, his mother confirms that he decided not to go. They soon pick up on his disorienting ideological oscillating. His refusal to commit to a side pushes Ida to label him as a “disgusting individualist” (586). In a private meeting, his stumped father asks his wife: “Is he with me or is he against
me?" (589). To which she responds with yet another question: “Who knows?” (589). In a similarly metatheatrical aside, Klotz confesses that Brecht would have made him a “bad guy” in one of his plays (589). Their appeals soon intensify into interrogations and investigations. Ida’s relentless questioning starts to consume numerous stanzas and, when Julian’s recalcitrance becomes intolerable, she bursts out: “I never know what you do, what you think, / what you are – never, never, never!” (586). During his three-month catatonia in the fifth episode, Mrs. Klotz reassures Ida that her husband hired a detective to investigate where their son has been and whom he has loved. However, all of their inquiries fail, and their frustration reaches its apex in Ida and Mrs. Klotz’s conversation at Julian’s bedside, during which they attempt to label him in terms that continually contradict one another. Reflecting on his son’s catatonia, Klotz states that he is in a state of “idleness, strike or exile” (600). Evoking Odetta’s corollary in Teorema, catatonia is not only a sign of bourgeois subjectivity in crisis, but also his final effort to resist his parents’ and Ida’s appeals, escalating his contradictory communication into outright noncommunication.

Porcile exemplifies the discipline and control that bourgeois/antibourgeois discourses and their practices have over the social subject. Though Julian playfully inhabits opposing ideological positions, his charade takes a real toll on his childhood desire. Consequently, the pigsty, hidden in a forest of plum trees, becomes progressively important as a place where he can flee pain and want. It functions as the couple’s bedroom did in Orgia: though he can radically desublimate desire here, it ultimately
becomes the ghetto in his othering, where society marginalizes and pushes his childhood desire towards self-destruction. In fact, the screenplay compares Julian to another concentration-camp prisoner, when Ida states that to touch his blond hair is like meeting the “barbed / wire of the lagers” (*Porcile, PC1 1123*). As he continually renounces his original objectives, sublimating his eros to partially identify with different sides, his Thanatos becomes increasingly unbound, lodging him into a repressed state of resignation, remorse and guilt. He once directly confesses to Ida that when he returns to the villa after making love his heart fills with “remorse and regret” (626). He compares his trek to King Henry IV’s repentance before Pope Gregory VII: “It is thus like my Walk to Canossa, / with Duty’s definitive victory” (627). Though the pigsty may have once been the home of a sustainable childhood sexuality, it has now become the place where his more suppressed adult sexuality explodes into sadomasochistic orgies, as it has been continually sublimated and exacerbated. In the eighth episode, he describes his bestial rituals to Ida:

Tu sai, ottenuto l’orgasmo, sparso il seme, il mondo si presenta sotto un altro colore. Ah, quanto seme io devo gettare! Quanta carne in fondo al mio grembo deve provare lo spasimo nel lurido miracolo meccanico, che per gli altri ha un così circoscritto valore! Dio non mi ha attaccato in fondo al ventre un piccolo piolo, lesto al suo dovere, dal coito rapido come una sparatoria. Ma un palo caldo, dolce, acido e mollemente rigido, che è schiavo della sua enormità: io sono suo schiavo. Dopo l’amore, perciò, i diversi colori del mondo sono colori intollerabili – il cielo dello scoppio
You know, having obtained orgasm, spread my semen, the world presents itself in another color. Ah, how much semen I must toss out! How much flesh at the bottom of my lap must feel the spasm in the lurid mechanical miracle, which for others has such a circumscribed value! God did not attach at the bottom of my belly a short peg, quick at its duty, with a fast coitus like gunfire. But a hot, sweet, sour and softly rigid pole, that is a slave to its enormity: and I am its slave. For this reason, after making love the world’s various colors are intolerable colors – the sky of the explosion of an atomic bomb [...].

In ambivalent terms of love and hate, he relates his childhood desire to feel the sensations of his penis and orgasm, but that desire is increasingly overrun by an adult rapaciousness that leads to his self-objectification and -annihilation. His eros becomes obsessive: “Ah, how much semen I must toss out!” And his Thanatos becomes extremely violent to reach quiescence: “I am its slave.” He calls his penis both “sweet” and “sour,” “soft” and “rigid.” Orgasm is simultaneously “miraculous” and “mechanical.” The language of the body he recreates is an increasingly Thanatos-dictated one, in which lovemaking paradoxically promises the vision of nuclear holocaust.

The Merger and Its Casualties

In the seventh episode, Herdhitze arrives as Klotz’s Messenger, who consolidates his discoveries of his identity and Julian’s secret, and his tragic reversal. West Germany’s new man forces Klotz to recognize himself as an outmoded classical capitalist, showing
him how Klotz the Great’s legacy and his humanistic education are impediments to survival in advanced capitalism. Klotz tells his rival that “he who starts from the already-done must deal with the past, / he who starts from nothing, deals only with the present” (611). Pulled towards the past, Klotz envies his rival’s “purely scientific” education, which the latter stresses is “TECHNICAL” (609). Klotz reveals his intractable humanistic education when he classicizes his factories:

Ah, come sono ingombranti i grandi padri!  
Essi hanno riempito la nostra Colonia  
di complessi industriali maestosi come chiese:  
ciminiere, ciminiere, ciminiere!  
Una Atene di cemento.  
[...]  
Mentre le sue fabbriche… non si vedono nemmeno, Sig. Herdhitze.  
Sono trasparenti? Levitanti? Spariscono nelle ore in cui non si lavora, e riapparono, bianche e dolcemente orizzontali, nelle ore di lavoro? (611)

Ah, what a burden great fathers are!  
They filled our Cologne  
with industrial complexes majestic like churches:  
chimneys, chimneys, chimneys!  
An Athens of cement.  
[...]  
While your factories... one does not even see them, Mr. Herdhitze.  
Are they transparent? Do they levitate? Do they disappear in the hours in which one does not work, and reappear, white and sweetly horizontal, in the work hours?

Klotz’s “Athens of cement” is a metaphor for classical capitalism and its distinct sign of oppression, while Herdhitze’s “transparent” factories stand for advanced capitalism, which, through automation and mergers, obscures and makes the sign of oppression ambivalent. Klotz facetiously concludes that he is an “old hearth” in comparison to the
“ultra-modern radiator” that is Herdhitze (610). Comparing himself to his rival, Klotz identifies his impotence, whose alleviation further necessitates that Julian enter his dialectic. Herdhitze also reveals Julian’s love of pigs to Klotz, underscoring how the young man’s heart has always remained in the “countryside,” amidst the “peasants’ farmhouses, / with stables… manure pits… PIGSTIES” (615). At this point, Julian’s obedience-disobedience simply becomes disobedience, and it appears Klotz will share the reversal of Affabulazione’s Father, destroying his son himself. However, Klotz replaces his son with Herdhitze, merging with him in their new Herdhitze & Klotz Corporation. Though Klotz also knows about Herdhitze’s Nazi crimes, Herdhitze’s knowledge of Julian, along with his ultra-modernity, outweigh those crimes. Herdhitze forces Klotz into the merger, absorbing his former rival. In German, “klotz” means “log,” and “herdhitze,” “hot fireplace.” Thus, in this symbolic name game, Klotz is just another log for Herdhitze’s fire to consume. Resigning himself to the merger, Klotz sublimates his destructive desire towards his son, freeing himself of the father-son conflict and regenerating his degenerate identity. However, this is still his tragic reversal, as he nevertheless experiences social death, metamorphosing from a father and independent entrepreneur, into a childless corporate partner. Indeed, during the ninth episode’s merger celebration, which is his explication, the ex-father must still defend himself from his tragedy with what he calls his “obligation of cynicism” (628). He compares the guests to Communist artist George Grosz’s swinish characters and confesses: “No one shits more
than us Germans… / on the hearts of our puritan children” (629). The text does not even attempt to compare Klotz to a legendary hero; he is simply a Groszian pig.

The merger allows Klotz to cut off Julian’s otherness without humiliation or scandal, and he and Herdhitze likely foresee how Julian will self-destruct if they simply leave him to the pigs. The transformation of the pigsty into a prison cell throughout the play is a metaphor for the way the neocapitalist order creates ghettos from formerly resistant spaces distant from bourgeois civilization. Herdhitze describes his spy Clauberg, who uncovered Julian’s secret, as “omnipresent like God and his truth” (618). His spy’s activities symbolize how modern control mechanisms circulate with a God-like ubiquity. In the final episode, the peasants relate how Klotz, after having discovered Julian’s love, ordered them to deforest the woods surrounding the pigsties. This is yet another metaphor for how modern power desecrates sacred places, leaving them vulnerable to surveillance and control. Simona Bondavalli contends that, once Julian’s desire becomes “acknowledged and accepted by Mr. Herdhitze’s new capitalism, the pigsty ceases to be a locus of resistance. That tolerance negates Julian’s only possibility of rebellion […]” (189). The business partners’ “tolerance” is, more specifically, a repressive one, which permits Julian’s form of life on the condition that it remain in the ghetto which they themselves have shaped.

The merger and Ida’s marriage to a reformist lift the cultural demands off of Julian, consequently propelling his indefinite reclusion into the pigsty and making his demise imminent. While the merger celebration rages at the villa, Julian bids Ida farewell
and takes his final trip to the pigsty. The eleventh episode is his explication, in which the peasants interrupt the party to notify Herdhitze of his death: urged on by Gustawa’s screams, they witnessed the pigs devouring the last pieces of his body. At this point, the “pigsty” is also the party. Klotz foreshadowed Julian’s death when he cynically associated the celebration with Grosz’s images. In this light, the pigs are symbolic of Julian’s parents, both for their insatiability and their status as their possessions. Recalling the myth of Kronos, his parents “digest” him. His violent dismemberment is, unbeknownst to Julian, a refiguration of that of Pentheus in Euripides’ *The Bacchae*. Just as Julian walks from the villa to the pigsty to engage in his bestial orgies, Pentheus travels from Thebes to the Cithaeron to experience the Bacchae’s Dionysian orgies. It was moreover Pentheus’ mother Agave who initiated his dismemberment, afterwards savagely impaling his head on her thyrsus for all of Thebes to see. Pasolini’s decision to refigure Pentheus’ death here registers the family unit’s demise in *Porcile*: whereas *Orgia*’s protagonists put a stop to their orgy to symbolically reunite with parental love and protection in suicide, Julian perishes in the orgy, symbolically encountering only parental love-hate and fury.

The final episode dramatizes martyrdom’s falsity in the Consumption Civilization to a new degree, addressing the necessity of the witness and the issue of the power vacuum. Pasolini states that Julian is an “ambiguous saint” (“Il sogno” 1445). In the text, there are numerous foreshadowings of his possible martyrdom. During his metatheatrical catatonia sequence, his mother calls him a “Christ on the cross,” a “Mannerist Saint
Sebastian” (595, 598). In his farewell to Ida, Julian himself becomes aware of the event’s possibility, questioning whether his dream in which a pig bit his fingers was the announcement of his “vocation to martyrdom” (627). And between the merger celebration and his death, Spinoza’s shadow arrives as his Messenger who consolidates his self-discovery as a martyr and his tragic reversal: the shadow tells him that his consumption is like the language of saints, which preaches “without saying a single word – with silence, / with action, with blood, with death” (636). Orgia made clear that an individual becomes a martyr in part by an onlooker who witnesses and has knowledge of the self-sacrifice. In Porcile, the peasants, led by Gustawa, are the only witnesses of his dismemberment.44 A “chorus,” as Julian calls them, the peasants arrive at the villa dressed in black, as if for a funeral, ready to unleash mourning (625). Their arrival evokes The Bacchae’s conclusion, in which the communal sight of Pentheus’ head makes him a martyr, catalyzing collective mourning and his culpable family’s exile. Indeed, Klotz almost breaks through his cynicism when he, now sincerely disconcerted, repeatedly asks his spy Hans-Guenther the reason for the peasants’ solemnity. However, Herdhitze squashes any potential for mourning, negating Julian’s martyrdom. When the peasants arrive, Klotz is sent away, as Herdhitze is now in command of their affairs. The group confirms to him that no traces of Julian – unlike Pentheus – remain, contrary to what one

44 In Doctors of Infamy, Gustawa Winkowska was a prisoner at Ravensbrück who witnessed Nazi medical crimes, later testifying against the physicians at Nuremberg (Mitscherlich and Mielke 140). Retrieving her name for Porcile’s peasant girl, Pasolini endows this character with a similar potential to bring mourning and cultural transformation.

121
Herhitze closes the play by silencing them, reiterating what he said as a Nazi doctor to his collaborators about his skull collection: “Now, shhhhhh! Do not say anything to anyone” (643). Julian’s sainthood is indeed “ambiguous”: the peasants may revolt and expose the truth, or collaborate and remain silent, allowing Julian’s death to fall into oblivion like old Doctor Hirt’s cadavers. The play points to the latter conclusion, as it consistently depicts the peasants in an unrevolutionary light: Julian only dreams that they become Communist revolutionaries, and Hans-Guenther reassures Herhitze that they arrive at the villa in black, without waving “red flags” or agitating their “hoes and shovels” (638). Like Affabulazione’s epilogue and Orgia’s prologue, these final stanzas break the unity of action, reducing the tragicity of the heroic sacrifice and the achievement of martyrdom.

Conversely, some recent interpretations have found cultural significance in Julian’s self-annihilation. Mariniello argues that his death is “history and it transmits itself by the language of the example […]” (182). Filippo Trentin more specifically views the scene as a “performative act of radical political resistance, based on the desire to de-activate or to undo the logic of the symbolic order (the neo-liberal order of production, reproduction, consumption and progressivism)” (222). Though his death may strive to become an historic “example” or a “performative act of radical political resistance,” it never becomes such in this world, nor in that of the audience, because Herhitze negates

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45 Neglecting the text’s stress on Julian’s traceless consumption and consequently arguing for his achievement of martyrdom, Franca Angelini remarks that he “disappears to be reborn, like what happens to leftover human limbs after bacchanals, buried so that men and plants are reborn from them” (181).
the witnessing, knowledge and recording of it. Besides not accounting for the play’s final verses, these interpretations do not consider how Julian’s martyrization is forced upon him by his culture that has exacerbated his death drive. In reality, his death, and his drive towards it always remain within the neocapitalist order’s control. Along these lines, Ward argues that Julian’s “assumed revolutionary practice is only a masked and ultimately sanctioned protest supervised by power” (156). For Di Maio, Julian’s reclusion indicates how “transgression, when not accompanied by a concreate revolutionary consciousness, destroys itself in the silence of society and thus passes unobserved, exhausting itself in the therefore reactionary narcissism of a useless gesture” (253). In the end, Julian’s self-destructive otherness functioned just as the Consumption Civilization wanted: it created a vacuum for that Civilization to fill with itself. The play dramatizes this process, since Julian, in order to be left alone with the pigs, “reactionarily” accepts Herdhitze and his father’s merger, consequently allowing their Corporation to proliferate without interruption. Though Manuele Gragnolati and Christoph F. E. Holzhey argue that Julian is a “figure of abandon, which escapes complicity with Fascism and all-consuming neocapitalism,” it is clear that he is to an extent complicit in propagating these systems (8). In fact, after the merger, he plainly tells Ida that he feels better “thanks to a certain complicity” with his “father” (619). He moreover mentions to her that, when he cuts himself off from their society, he leaves all of his obligations, such as those of his house and family, “formally in function” (623). Oblivious abandonment of and/or self-
destructiveness against the Consumption Civilization are only complicit in that civilization.

**Spinoza’s Shadow and the Logic of Otherness**

The intervention of Spinoza’s shadow as Julian’s Messenger is analogous to that of Sophocles’ Shadow and dramatizes this role’s irony and tragicity to a new degree. Spinoza’s shadow does not even attempt to deliver good news to Julian, as he already understands that his message, his rationalist *Ethics* (1677), fails in the Consumption Civilization, and he has actually come to abjure his magnum opus. The shadow clarifies that he appears before Julian because his life resembles that of the young man and can hence understand his drama. Of all philosophers, it is he, rather than Descartes, who is the most adequate interlocutor for Julian: upsetting the history of philosophy, Pasolini’s Spinoza calls himself the “first philosopher of [the scientific and bourgeois form of] Reason (since Descartes / was already conditioned by it)” (633). He wants to argue that Descartes’ liberal arts education and training in ancient philosophy always conformed his thinking to bourgeois rationality, while his own Orthodox Jewish education and later excommunication as a disobedient follower were antagonistic to this rationality, and therefore, given this particular subject position, he theorized this form of Reason more elaborately than his French predecessor.46 The shadow states that his rationality was “already scientific – and bourgeois,” and that it has dismally sanctioned Klotz and Herdhitze’s destructiveness. Echoing Sophocles’ realization of the corruption and

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46 For a history of Descartes’ and Spinoza’s education, see Clark 6-36; Klever 13-20.
incapacitation of his Oedipal Lesson in modernity, Spinoza describes to Julian what his 

*Ethics* has become today:

[...][C]ome il *Don Chisciotte*  
come la *Monadologia* o come i *Principia mathematica*:  
libri sublimi, se vuoi: eppure opere  
nate da un mondo che avrebbe prodotto, alla fine,  
il tuo padre umanista e il suo socio tecnocrate.  
Anzi, quelle opere non hanno fatto altro  
che dar gloria a *loro*; avallare la *loro* storia. (636)

[...] *[L]ike Don Quixote  
*like Monadology or like the Principia Mathematica:  
sublime books, if you will: yet works  
born from a world that would have produced, in the end,  
your humanistic father and his technocratic partner.  
In fact, those works did not do anything  
but glorify them; validate their history.

The shadow is dismayed at how his book’s ethics has laid the foundation for Klotz and Herdhitze’s dehumanizing Corporation. Yet he is equally surprised that it has also paved the way for Julian’s dehumanizing rituals. The *Ethics* was the last book Julian started to read (specifically the first few pages on God) before he indefinitely recluded into the pigsty, and its ethics has also evidently sanctioned his martyrization. Pasolini sees Spinoza, rather than Descartes, as the precursor of modern bourgeois subjectivity because, for him, the Dutch philosopher’s ethics contains a dialectic of total free will and total determinism, total atheism and total pantheism, which is similar to the extremes between which all of his protagonists vacillate in periods of calm and crisis. The shadow states that, in his text, “once, having explained God, Reason / exhausted its task, it must negate itself: *only God must remain* […]” (636). Pure Reason or pure God can equally
explain the universe; there is never a moment of their concrete integration. Pasolini constructs his Spinoza drawing upon the philosopher’s writing and reception history, whose well-known ambivalence the author views as prefiguring the dialectic of modern bourgeois civilization: the bourgeois individual’s reaction against his or her totalizing rationalism is his or her equally totalizing return to his or her religious roots, and vice versa.47

Porcile stages another episode in the Ethics’ ambivalent reception history. On one hand, when read as Reason’s triumph over God, the text leads to Klotz and Herdhitze’s rationality, which accepts only obedience to its objectives, reducing all antagonisms. Marcuse calls this the mid-twentieth century’s one-dimensional “scientific-technical rationality,” which seeks to eliminate the dialecticality of reason as conceived by Plato: he contends that, if “dialectical logic understands contradiction as ‘necessity’ belonging to the very ‘nature of thought’ […] it does so because contradiction belongs to the very nature of the object of thought, to reality, where Reason is still Unreason, and the irrational still the rational,” while, currently, “all established reality militates against the logic of contradictions – it favors the modes of thought which sustain the established forms of life and the modes of behavior which reproduce and improve them” (One-Dimensional 146). The emergent Consumption Civilization in Porcile is precisely this one-dimensional culture that looks to be nondialectical – an uninterrupted line of development. On the other hand, when read as God’s triumph over Reason, the Ethics

47 For an overview of Spinoza’s reception history, see Norris 18.
leads to Julian’s maniacal irrationality, his self-destructive otherness. Julian tells the shadow that he memorized the Eighth Definition of the First Part (“Of God”): “By eternity I understand existence itself, insofar as it is conceived to follow necessarily from the definition alone of the eternal thing” (Spinoza, *Ethics* 2). He also remembers the Second Proposition and Demonstration of the Fourth Part (“Of Human Bondage, or the Powers of the Affects”): “*We are acted on, insofar as we are a part of Nature, which cannot be conceived through itself, without the others* […] We say that we are acted on when something arises in us of which we are only the partial cause […]” (Spinoza, *Ethics* 118). Taken together, these principles can signify that “eternity,” that is, God or the metaphysical, is in human “existence,” over which human beings have only “partial” knowledge and control. Consequently, this Spinozian God is not a transcendental entity beyond the material, but an immanent base of all materiality, which clearly recalls Pasolini’s immanent sacred. Julian’s martyrization is an event of which he is only the partial cause and which makes him “happy” (as it provides an outlet for his death drive), and the shadow cannot but admit that his *Ethics* sanctions these abstract principles. In the Consumption Civilization, the text – in its unmediated form – fails, as its ethics does not bring about affirmative routes to truth, freedom and happiness, but two destructive paths of uncontrollable human desire.

Pasolini’s Spinoza now finds himself within modern bourgeois culture and falls into the same epistemological-ontological trap as Julian: he abandons his reason and

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48 See Pasolini, *Porcile*, TE 634.
49 See ibid. 635.
adopts a fatalism of God. He now abjures his *Ethics* and relieves his philosophical crisis by religious conversion. At this point, the philosopher is indeed a shadow of his former self: he becomes a fanatical bystander to the sacred vision of Julian’s martyried flesh, in whom, the shadow announces, he “loves” the return of his childhood’s Old Testament “God who does not console” (636). The awestruck shadow repeats what his former self once wrote to his friend Henry Oldenburg in 1665 near his *Ethics*’ completion, which glimpses his ethics’ epistemological-ontological extremeness. He acknowledges Reason’s limits and abruptly concludes: “But now I let every man live according to his own ideas. Let those who will, by all means die for their good, so long as I am allowed to live for the truth” (Spinoza, *The Correspondence* 206). Here Spinoza assumes an abjuratory tone, which *Porcile*’s culture then exacerbates, provoking his shadow to actually condone Julian’s (false) martyrdom: “To testify to this form of speech / which no Reason can explain, not even / by contradicting itself, you have been called” (636).

In *Porcile*’s first draft and screenplay, Spinoza’s shadow makes a last-ditch effort to save Julian. He attempts to overcome the shadow of a philosopher he has become and act instead as a fruitful interlocutor in Julian’s drama. In these drafts, the shadow tries to salvage his old reason and proposes Julian unite it with his dreams to escape self-destruction. It is a critical passage at the end of the episode, before, as in the most advanced draft, the pigs devour Julian. The young man breaks through his false consciousness that makes him desire death:

50 See ibid. 631.
JULIAN Ma io voglio vivere, invece! Solo che vivo per una cosa mia, che è solo mia.

SPINOZA Lo so. E questo è il primo passo, diciamo, della logica del sogno.

JULIAN E a cosa mi serve, questa?

SPINOZA A mettere in dubbio la logica della veglia…

JULIAN I macchinismi del signor Klotz e del signor Kulen [(Herdhitze)]?

SPINOZA Non solo quelli; anche la logica di Freud, e quella di Marx…

JULIAN Ero già uscito dal loro intrigo.

SPINOZA Non ci eri mai entrato, vuoi dire. (Porcile, PC1 1167)\(^5\)

JULIAN But I want to live, instead! But to live for something of my own, that is only mine.

SPINOZA I know. And this is the first step, let us say, of the Dream Logic.

JULIAN And what good is this to me?

SPINOZA To contest the Reality Logic…

JULIAN Mr. Klotz and Mr. Kulen [(Herdhitze)]’s machinations?

SPINOZA Not only them; also the logic of Freud, and that of Marx…

JULIAN I had already escaped their schemes.

SPINOZA You had never even stepped foot in them, you mean.

These highly significant lines not only reveal Julian’s false consciousness, but also a path of resistance. The shadow highlights that Julian’s recognition of life’s sacrality is the first step to creating the “Dream Logic,” which would “contest” the “Reality Logic” of not

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\(^5\) For Spinoza and Julian’s exchange in the first draft, see Pasolini, “Porcile: I elemento” 123-24.
only Klotz and Herdhitze, but also those of Freud and Marx. In this sweeping condemnation of teleologizing ideologies, their discourses represent, to varying degrees, the scientific and bourgeois reason responsible for perpetuating Otherness throughout modern history. The shadow gives Julian the task of struggling with the Consumption Civilization’s thanatotic logic: he must renounce his nondialectical stance, his pure negation of the norm, and risk making his otherness dialectical, transforming it into another movement, into another logic, with the potential to change the direction of history. In the new Dream Logic, Otherness – the substance of dreams in all its infinite difference – would become the basis from which subjectivity and culture are reborn and are continually reborn. As the Man’s shadow theorized in *Orgia*, when Otherness disobedys “both the laws of normality, / and those of Insanity,” it becomes the point of departure for a less teleologizing, and thus more multi-dimensional and humanistic rationality because it retrieves the suppressed dialectical criticality of Platonic reason (*Orgia* 248). This Dream Logic, or Logic of Otherness would surpass modern bourgeois culture’s extremism, concretely integrating God and Reason, that is, discursifying (Reason) Otherness (God) and othering discourse as a new ideology of liberation. Thus, Pasolini does not condemn Reason *in toto*, but a specific form of Reason – the one-dimensional Reality Logic. As another logic, the Logic of Otherness could comprehend and critically engage with the Reality Logic, reinsert the contradiction into its one-dimensional universe and open up the possibility to transcend this oppressive state.
CONCLUSION: THE BOURGEOIS TRAGIC IN PRACTICE

The Cultural Rite

When Pasolini’s bourgeois tragedies are produced through his *Manifesto*’s Word Theater practices, this complete Bourgeois Tragic Theater acts to actualize the Logic of Otherness, to realize the critical radical subjectivity and politics that *Orgia* and *Porcile* formulate. His theater opposes Gesture/Scream Theater, its destructive radical subjectivity and politics, whose irrationalistic negation of the hyperrational bourgeoisie at the fringe of society could be incorporated into and utilized by that class to continue to affirm itself. He criticizes it as a “ritual in which the bourgeoisie […] on one hand recognizes itself as its producer […] and on the other takes pleasure in its provocation, condemnation and scandal (across which, in the end, it only obtains the confirmation of its own convictions)” (*Manifesto* 2486). Gesture/Scream Theater is a reflection of the self-destructive otherness of *Affabulazione*’s, *Orgia*’s and *Porcile*’s protagonists: they are ghettoized violent reactions against the bourgeoisie, which that class produces and hence can foresee, contain and neutralize through stigmatization. In *An Essay on Liberation* (1969), Marcuse finds a similar impotence in these “rebellious” artforms: they are a “desublimation [that] leaves the traditional culture […] behind unmastered […] [and] are thus easily absorbed and shaped by the market […] In order to come into their own, they would have to abandon the direct appeal […] which invokes, in the protest, the familiar universe of politics and business, and with it the helpless familiarity of frustration and
temporary release from frustration” (47). To progress beyond its “temporary release from frustration,” antibourgeois culture must reformulate its “desublimation,” critically engaging with and deconstructing the “traditional culture,” and invoking the image of a new, more sustainable universe. Curiously, Marcuse draws upon theater to exemplify his thesis, viewing The Living Theatre, like Pasolini, as unable to “transcend this familiarity,” and Brechtian theater, in contrast, as a more effective “rupture with this familiarity” (47-48). During his second and final trip to New York in 1969, Pasolini attended another performance of The Living Theatre, where he actually found that the group’s popularization and its spectators’ conformism made its protest “codified” and “regress into the norm” (“Incontro” 1205-06). Though The Living Theatre initially interested Pasolini, after having almost certainly attended performances of both Mysteries and Smaller Pieces and The Brig at Rome’s Teatro Eliseo in 1965 – leading to his casting of Julian Beck as Teiresias in Edipo re – by the time of his Manifesto and trip to New York the following year, his judgment of the troupe became almost definitively negative (Casi, I teatri 132-34). According to Marcuse, for art to realize and maintain its potential to radically transform culture, it must become the “union of the new sensibility with a new rationality” (37). As the passing of the antibourgeois protests and movements of the late 1960s made way for the governmental reforms of the 1970s, Marcuse gave increasing importance to art – most explicitly in his late The Aesthetic Dimension (1977)

52 Though Marcuse’s An Essay on Liberation is not present in Pasolini’s library, he would have had access at this time to its translation: Saggio sulla liberazione, trans. Luca Lamberti, Turin: Einaudi, 1969.
– as a way to maintain movement towards revolutionary change through subjectivity’s continued radicalization.

In the mid- to late 1960s, Pasolini already foresaw Gesture/Scream Theater’s neutralization. By the time of his Manifesto, he expresses the necessity for radical political art to become a “cultural rite,” which would combine, precisely, the “new sensibility with the new rationality,” or, in his terms, would discursify Otherness (2500). In describing his theater as a cultural rite, he stresses its post-performance discussion. His theater functions as “above all debate, exchange of ideas, literary and political struggle, on the most democratic and rational plane possible” (Manifesto 2492). Though he categorizes all forms of theater as different kinds of “rites,” he further distinguishes Talk and Gesture/Scream Theaters negatively, as “rituals” (2485-86). In contrast, he underscores that his theater will be an “exchange of opinions and ideas, in a relation that is much more critical than ritual” (2487). As rituals, Talk and Gesture/Scream Theaters reinforce existing subjectivity and culture, while Bourgeois Tragic Theater acts as a rite that breaks with ritual and attempts to reconstruct this subjectivity and culture. Ward interprets the author’s rather underdefined ritual-rite opposition as the following: while the former indicates the “reproposal and confirmation of what is already acquired and sedimented knowledge,” the latter implies an “ongoing process of exploration and discovery of new ground,” creating the “conditions in which the imaginative leap that Marxism had made possible in the 1950s can once again be taken” (173, 176). Pedagogy will be essential to the radicalizing effect of Pasolini’s theater, as it must counter that of
the established order: in his previously cited final interview, he states that “[p]ower is an educational system that divides us into subjects and subjected” (“We’re All” 236). In a significant review of one of Orgia’s repeat performances in Savona on January 10, 1969, Mauro Manciotti describes the post-performance dialogue’s effect on the radical youth present in precisely these terms of critical pedagogy: in the “implicit generational protest that the discussion ended up registering […] an unusual and interesting fact emerged among the Savonese youth. And that is, not a fanatic contestatory fury, but a strong desire for rationality and logical experience. A [desire that is a] stimulating element to better comprehend the protest’s reasons and its mechanism.” The cultural rite looks to excavate and analyze the West’s transformations, and theorize new forms of life from these inquiries.

Bourgeois Tragic Theater is most indebted to the religious and political institution of ancient Athenian theater. Pasolini plainly states that it “explicitly recreates the theater of Athenian democracy, completely skipping over the entire recent tradition of bourgeois theater, not to say the entire modern tradition of Renaissance and Shakespearian theater” (Manifesto 2484). First, the Greek tragedian’s vital cultural role provided Pasolini with a model for the public artist and intellectual whom he sought to become, one who could forcefully counter bourgeois hegemony. Werner Jaeger confirms that Athenians considered their tragic poets their “spiritual leaders, with a responsibility far greater and graver than the constitutional authority of successive political leaders” (247). The artform presented Pasolini with the opportunity to metaphorically “throw his body into the
struggle” – a Black Power motto that had inspired him to pursue a new, more public and active type of impegno, or intellectual engagement (“Appendice” 1438-39). More than any other medium with which he experimented, his theater most exemplifies what Fusillo calls his oeuvre’s “performative vision of literature, as a direct action on reality” (11).

Second, and more importantly, Athens’ City Dionysia interested Pasolini because it had been a powerful collective event where citizens could have critically reflected on their culture. J. Peter Euben confirms that Greek tragic theater did not simply inculcate existing religious and political values, but that, “given its form, content, exploration of language, and context of performance, tragedy was an institution whose theoretical dimensions were made possible by a democratic culture it helped define, sustain, and question” (24). William Arrowsmith also sees Athenian theater as a critical cultural institution, one composed of dramatists “who used the whole machinery of the theater as a way of thinking, critically and constructively, about their world […] Athenians regarded the theater, not as entertainment, but as the supreme instrument of cultural instruction, a democratic paideia complete in itself” (32-33). What Arrowsmith defines as the “Greek Theater of Ideas” resonates with Pasolini’s theater, where, as the latter emphasizes, “ideas […] are this theater’s true characters” (Manifesto 2484). His theater will also have a “democratic paideia,” one that is open-ended by means of dialogue; it thus unites Greek theater with an image of the Roman “forum” – another term the writer retrieves to define his project (“A Leonardo” 644). For Arrowsmith, Euripides, as opposed to Aeschylus and Sophocles, most fully realizes the Greek Theater of Ideas. In the second
half of the fifth century B.C., the dramatist addressed Greece’s major cultural crisis – the “widening gulf between reality and tradition,” the fact that the “old world order, with its sense of a great humanity and its assumption of an integrated human soul, was irrecoverably gone” – and the “new view of human nature which crisis revealed” (38). This “new view” results in Euripides’ “complex ‘dialectic,’” his “dramatic juxtaposition, of the split in his culture” (40, 55). In this light, Pasolini becomes a twentieth-century Euripides, who registers Italy’s cultural crisis through his “dramatic juxtaposition” of premodern “tradition” and modern “reality.” Arrowsmith outlines several of Euripides’ formal and thematic revisions to classical tragedy, which also appear in Pasolini’s bourgeois tragic: the destruction of propter hoc structure; the disappearance of the hero; the loneliness and contradictoriness of the characters; and the fusion of comic and tragic effects (40-43). Accordingly, Orgia’s Woman evoked Medea (about whom the author also made the previously cited film), and Porcile’s Julian, Pentheus.

**Spaces, Spectators and Actors**

In terms of space, Bourgeois Tragic Theater is to take place outside of both Talk Theater’s teatri stabili and Gesture/Scream Theater’s abandoned buildings, in the everyday places of the bourgeoisie’s advanced cultural groups: factories, schools, cultural centers, political party headquarters, university auditoriums and art galleries (Pasolini,

53 Di Maio also compares Pasolini to Euripides: “Euripides’ thinking relates to that of Pasolini, who held his predecessor in great esteem: the new epoch, the passage from the ancient to the modern, the simplicity of the peasants, the tragic destiny to which humanity is necessarily exposed, the pretext of myth to excavate the human soul in its profundity” (209-10).
In his *Manifesto*’s first draft, Pasolini mentions what seems like another ideal location for his modern *sacre rappresentazioni*: the nude apse of a desecrated church (“Calderon e altri materiali” 17). Though Turin’s Teatro Stabile produced *Orgia*, the majority of its performances took place in the Deposito d’Arte Presente, a gallery space which, situated as it was at the city’s periphery, appeared to embody an air of both premodern and modern Italy the director was seeking: Italo Moscati curiously recalls the evening of the performance he attended with the “smell of workers at the assembly line, former peasants, people from the extreme South” (176).

Bourgeois Tragic Theater most cogently communicates its dramatic contrast, not so much by staging it strictly within the circles of the bourgeoisie’s cultural groups, but within society’s limbos that actually incarnate that contrast’s images and sensations.

In terms of audience, on one hand Pasolini prescribes open-minded bourgeois intellectuals, who, “despite participating in a class and its defects, have consciousness of those defects and seek new relations with people of other classes” (qtd. in Pozzi 11). On the other, he repeatedly stresses that his spectators need not necessarily be these class-specific intellectuals, only individuals with a real interest in cultural issues (“A teatro” 348). And, in the previously cited quote, Pasolini noted that, as *Orgia*’s tour progressed, he had realized the great number of Italians who fell within this category. Ward points out that his theater provides these diverse potential “intellectuals in search of a role” with an alternative to the falsely revolutionary Gesture/Scream Theater, so that their “energies can be put to more productive use” (177). Pasolini follows Gramsci’s notion of the
organic intellectual, fostering these individuals of varying social extraction who could play a crucial role in their respective circles in making and changing culture. At the time, critics accused Pasolini of “elitism” for his prescriptivism (Pasolini, “A teatro” 350). However, he refuted these accusations, underscoring the democratic nature of the “absolute cultural parity” he demanded between text, actor and spectator (Manifesto 2500). Euben contends that Greek theater, because of its form and content, fosters a notion of what an open-ended “democratic theorizing” – as opposed to a more closed “theory of democracy” – could look like, and Pasolini’s theater presents one way in which this could take place in the modern era (39). He states that, in his case, “to say ‘spectator’ is wrong. You would need to say ‘participant’” (qtd. in Pozzi 11). His theater’s horizontalizing dynamic countered what was for him the falsely democratic nature of mass art, such as television and cinema, which produced a hierarchical and manipulative producer-consumer relationship. In his theater, product and consumption do not take place, but a “dialogue, it is a human thing, it is no longer made in series and hence consumable, it is authentic, hence inconsumable” (“Dibattito” 333). Bourgeois Tragic Theater, breaking mass art’s insidious line of consumption by means of live

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54 Rinaldi misreads Pasolini’s prescriptivism as his desire to “negate” the audience, that is, to eliminate any antagonism between himself and his spectators, to more easily stage a solipsistic theater: “Pretending to search for ‘an’ audience […] in reality Pasolini negates ‘the’ audience, eliminating all distance and reducing everything to himself as producer-recipient” (Pier Paolo 298).
debate fed by his dramas’ purposeful connotative density, becomes Pasolini’s inconsumable artform *par excellence.*

This more human relation – one that is corporeal, egalitarian and critical – between actors and spectators during the play, and between the author, actors and spectators afterwards during the discussion, is of fundamental importance to Bourgeois Tragic Theater’s distinction from mass art’s desensualized, paternalistic and vacuous producer-consumer relationality, and to its radicalizing effect. Pasolini states that his theater will never be a “mass medium” because “it is not ‘reproducible,’ but only ‘repeatable’ […] and it implies the physical presence of all those whose celebrate the theatrical rite: actors and spectators” (“A teatro” 350). His criticism of the lack of a corporeal actor-spectator relation in “reproducible” mediums relates to Benjamin’s argument in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (1936) that the film actor – as opposed to the theater actor – reifies his or her “aura,” or singular physical presence for commodification (229-31). Through the voice of Sophocles’ Shadow in *Affabulazione*, Pasolini reminds the audience that theater “does not evoke the reality of bodies with only words / but also with those bodies themselves” (*Affabulazione* 520). For him, it is vital to maintain the actor’s aura, as the flesh’s sacrality is one of his bourgeois tragic’s thematic pillars. For this reason, Rinaldi argues that Pasolini found the means to

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55 Tricomi also highlights the resistant nature of Pasolini’s verses and of the spectator’s creation of meaning those verses demand: “remaining indecipherable and ambiguous, the artist’s discourse cannot then be immediately, and comfortably instrumentalized […] the texts’ obscurity and deformity […] directly appeal to the reader, forcing him or her to reason on the value of the work he or she is receiving and, in fact, to debate its sense from a distance with the author” (353).  
56 Benjamin’s “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” is present in Pasolini’s library (Chiarocossi and Zabagli 162).
“purify cinema” in theater, which “renders the mysterious ‘stage’ of things exemplary and recognizable, renders the breath of the miracle that traverses them visible, rupturing any commodifying homogeneity in them” (Pier Paolo 292-93). Bourgeois Tragic Theater’s reduction of mise-en-scène to the minimum to intensify the actor-spectator rapport resonates with Grotowski’s Poor Theatre, which departs from the notion that the artform cannot exist without the “actor-spectator relationship of perceptual, direct, ‘live’ communion” (“Towards” 19). Pasolini was aware of Grotowski’s innovations, as he had attended the Polish director’s famous production of The Constant Prince at Spoleto’s Festival dei Due Mondi in 1967, and later included him in his Manifesto as a representative of Gesture/Scream Theater, albeit as a particularly noteworthy example (Casi, I teatri 179). However, Grotowski radically diverges from Pasolini in his conviction that theater can exist without a text, giving the medium over even more completely to the actor’s affectivity and materiality, with which his spectator must come into contact (“The Theatre’s” 32, 41-42). Conversely, for Pasolini, the text is even more indispensable than the actor’s presence, as the spectator must first and foremost grasp the discourse of the actor, who is the “text’s living vehicle” (Manifesto 2496). His theater’s maintenance of the role of both the actor’s corporeality and his or her discourse distances it not only from Poor Theatre, but also from Gesture/Scream Theater’s other representatives – Artaud and The Living Theatre – in whom corporeality increasingly outweighs discursivity.
On one occasion, Pasolini reduces his form of theater to “oral poetry” (“A teatro” 347). In doing so, he evokes the then currently influential poetry readings of Allen Ginsberg, whom Pasolini once affectionately called his “brother poet” (“Poeta” 1267). He first met Ginsberg in New York in 1966 and saw him again in Milan the following year (Naldini 374). He greatly admired Ginsberg’s inventiveness, praising him in his previously cited letter: “you are forced to continually and completely invent – day by day, word by word – your revolutionary language” (“A Allen” 631). In the Duflot interview, Pasolini states that Ginsberg and the Beat Generation’s “poetic protest” actually influenced his tragedies’ themes (“Il sogno” 1476). The American poet’s own readings likely also encouraged Pasolini’s conceptualization of his theater as oral poetry. In the case of Ginsberg’s most famous poem, Howl (1956), his delivery of it as “live poetry” not only accentuated its verses, based as they were on his self-declared “long” breath unit, but it also gave birth to radicalizing sociopolitical events (Ginsberg 230-31). His personal archivist and biographer Bill Morgan describes how Howl’s first public reading at the Six Gallery in 1955 created an “instant buzz in the San Francisco literary community […] it was the first time that new poets had come forward as a group with work that pointed to a possible revolution of political and social consciousness” (209). Ginsberg’s example demonstrated to Pasolini that poetry could give form to radical protest. However, Pasolini’s works are not solely poems, but dramas, which give birth to a much larger spectacle than just a reading. In fact, he ultimately concedes that his theater is a “mix of ‘poetry read aloud’ and ‘theatrical convention,’ however reduced to the
minimum” (“A teatro” 347). He calls for a mise-en-scène that is minimalistic, not inexistent, as some critics have charged.\textsuperscript{57} He acknowledges that a degree of mise-en-scène is indispensable, even for his experiment, and Orgia’s production did indeed employ such elements as scenography, lighting, props, costumes, music and scenic action (Pasolini, Manifesto 2485 and “Note,” TE 1155; Casi, I teatri 241).

Catharsis Suspended

Brecht’s Epic Theatre comes the closest of any other Western theater at the time to Pasolini’s revolutionary intellectual theater. From the late 1950s to the mid-1960s, Giorgio Strehler popularized Brecht in Italy with a series of highly successful productions for Milan’s Piccolo Teatro, and the German playwright and director undoubtedly influenced Pasolini’s dramatic texts and theater practice (Casi, I teatri 105).\textsuperscript{58} Klotz referenced Brecht in Porcile, and Pasolini praises him for his reforms to bourgeois theater in his Manifesto (2481-82). At the same time however, Pasolini sees the need in his era to go beyond Brecht’s reforms, towards a much more radical reformulation of the artform. On one hand, Pasolini’s characters employ Brechtian alienation effects to install a degree of critical distance between themselves and the spectators. And, on a broader scale, their retrieval of both Talk Theater’s ironic language and action, and Gesture/Scream Theater’s ghettoized destructive protest operates as another alienation effect, defamiliarizing the tragedies as classical tragedy. According to Moravia’s previously cited categories,

\textsuperscript{57} Enrico Groppali claims that Pasolini’s “mise-en-scène is to be abolished” (35); and Rinaldi alleges that Pasolini’s dramas “negate every possibility of mise-en-scène” (L’iriconoscibile 235).
\textsuperscript{58} Many of Brecht’s works are present in Pasolini’s library (Chiarocossi and Zabagli 12, 111, 211, 247).
Bourgeois Tragic Theater would fall beside Epic Theatre as another instance of the ideologically driven Dialectical Theater. However, in the Duflot interview, Pasolini explicitly differentiates his project from that of Brecht, precisely in terms of its ideology and effect. He clarifies that his theater’s suspension of meaning is not simply another Brechtian alienation effect: “Brecht hammers his ideological conclusion all the way down. In him, the ambiguity is only temporary, it does not refer back to the realm of existence, it often resolves itself in history […] [Mine] is a suspension of an existential character; it is theoretically something that one could define as the abstention from judgement before the mystery of existence” (“Il sogno” 1524). Pasolini argues that Epic Theatre distances the spectator to inculcate a specific ideological moral and practical attitude in him or her. And Brecht, in fact, admits this much himself: the “object of our inquiries was not just to arouse moral objections to such [barely tolerable] circumstances […] but to discover means for their elimination” (75). His great innovation lies in his approach to what Aristotle identifies as classical tragedy’s cathartic effect, in which the spectator identifies with the hero, recognizes his or her potential fate, feels fear and pity and, by the end, purifies these emotions (Aristotle 23). Stephen G. Salkever describes catharsis as Greek tragedy’s potentially open-ended pedagogy that expands the spectator’s consciousness and transforms his or her subjectivity to cultivate a freer world: the “transformation the audience undergoes resembles the effect of Socratic elenchos, which encourages inquiry and gentleness indirectly by removing the ignorance that arises from pleonexia and turning one’s anger toward oneself” (300). Brecht’s theater maintains
a pedagogy, provoking it, not through Aristotle’s catharsis, but through a rather more determined process of alienation: the spectator’s alienation from the characters prevents identification and pushes him or her to raise “moral objections to such [barely tolerable] circumstances” on stage, recognize the world as historical and, ideally, leave with the practical “means for their elimination.” Pasolini, on the other hand, working decades later in the Consumption Civilization with the crisis of Marxism and the Church, and even that of the Student Movement, does not have any readily available praxis to offer his audience: his works not only bring out the closure of orthodox class struggle and hence of history, but also the much broader existential dilemma of the erasure of mystery from human experience, which that class struggle on its own would be unable to adequately confront in any case.

Though Bourgeois Tragic Theater also maintains a pedagogy, it does not provoke it through Brechtian alienation, but through a reformulation of Aristotle’s catharsis. In his Manifesto’s first draft, Pasolini plainly calls his theater a neo-Aristotelian one (“Calderone e altri materiali” 16). His plays incite identification between the characters and his prescribed spectators, who recognize their potential fate, and feel fear and pity. However, his dramas do not end with the purification of these emotions and catharsis’ realization. Rather, his plays suspend catharsis, and hence meaning, as his protagonists repeatedly fail to achieve martyrdom. In the three works, the bourgeois protagonists and their society reduce their heroic sacrifice, leaving their example’s meaning in ambiguity. In Affabulazione and Orgia, the Father’s and Man’s destruction sets off their closeted
questioning of their fate – of their relation to the sacred and of their sense of Otherness in life. The texts further suspend catharsis by eliminating the classical chorus, which could comment on the drama and pedagogically guide the spectator. In Porcile, Herdhitze significantly silences the “chorus” of peasants, leaving the creation of the play’s meaning to the audience. Each conclusion, or non-conclusion, leaves spectators with unpurified fear and pity, and, if there is ever catharsis, a radicalizing pedagogic moment, then it will take place among the spectator-participants in their post-performance interactions with one another.

Giving its spectators the task, along with the time and space, to realize their own catharsis, Bourgeois Tragic Theater unlocks and amplifies the latent “Socratic elenchos” in Aristotelian tragedy. Pasolini’s rereading of the Platonic dialogues during his convalescence was a catalyst for his playwrighting and instilled a Platonic pedagogy in his theater. Using Plato for, rather than against theater, Pasolini uncovers the irony in the Greek philosopher who, despite his condemnation of the artform, nevertheless philosophized by dramatic dialogue. In a description of Calderòn’s politics that applies to the three tragedies, the author states that it is a “Platonic politics, that of the Symposium or Phaedrus” (“Calderòn” 1932). This “Platonic politics” is his theater’s radicalizing pedagogy: the spectator’s intervention in the construction of the work’s meaning through rigorous dialogue among multiple perspectives without any predetermined direction or limit. Casi argues that Pasolini’s theatrical event operates like

59 For Plato’s condemnation of theater in The Republic, see Plato 479-83.
a Platonic dialogue in that it presents a “dialectic that presupposes a third ear […] the listener discovers with the protagonists, across an absolutely subversive logical-deductive experience, what in reality is happening and the evolution or involution of their thinking, reaping points of reflection and invitations to epistemological, ethical and political action from it” (I teatri 175-76). Leaving the spectator with its non-conclusion, the play pushes him or her to take up these “reflections” and “invitations” in the post-performance dialogue, transforming the event into its own “symposium.” The motivating force in both the plays’ and the audience’s dialectic is premodern Italy. For both themselves and the audience, Pasolini’s characters recall this world to consciousness which contradicts current reality and with which these various players are now capable of evaluating that reality. Like a Platonic Form, this image of premodernity is both superhistorical and historical, a mythification necessarily derived from experience; yet it is less a simple idealization than it is a complex reminder of both the potential beauty and brutality of the human experience. As such, to effectively discursify this otherness as a new ideology of liberation, the plays demand that spectators in their own symposium not only assess their present by this past, but that they take a second critical leap and assess this past itself to avoid the blind embrace of it and the fall into regressive nostalgia. Haunting the spectator’s consciousness, this reminder informs his or her praxis in current reality, how he or she cathartically recreates that past’s beauty, and at the same time remains wary of reproducing its brutality. It is this critical and constructive transformation of Pasolini’s
Premodern Form in Bourgeois Tragic Theater that envisages a viable renewal of the sense of the sacred in modernity.
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INDEX OF NAMES

Adenauer, Konrad, 109, 110, 156
Adriatico, Andrea, 73
Aeschylus, 6, 9, 137
Albee, Edward, 25
Anouilh, Jean, 33, 34, 149
Ariosto, Ludovico, 62
Aristotle, 27, 144, 145, 149, 155
Artaud, Antonin, 26, 142
Baudelaire, Charles, 29, 95
Beck, Julian, 134
Beckett, Samuel, 26
Bellini, Giovanni, 105
Bene, Carmelo, 7, 72
Benjamin, Walter, 15, 139, 151
Bertolucci, Attilio, 44
Betti, Laura, 7, 70, 73
Brecht, Bertolt, 27, 115, 143, 144, 145, 149
Calderón de la Barca, Pedro, 10
Cervantes, Miguel de, 62
Chekhov, Anton, 25, 26
Cutrufelli, Giovanni, 9
Davoli, Ninetto, 51
De Filippo, Eduardo, 7
De Sade, Marquis, 65, 150
Descartes, René, 125, 126, 127, 150
Durkheim, Emile, 93, 150
Euripides, 37, 94, 121, 137
Federci, Mario, 31, 32, 53, 150
Fo, Dario, 6
Franco, Francisco, 10
Freud, Sigmund, 17, 18, 19, 46, 47, 48, 130, 131, 150, 152, 154
Gassman, Vittorio, 6, 44
Genet, Jean, 27
Giammarco, Nelide, 70
Ginsberg, Allen, 36, 142, 143, 151, 152, 153
Ginzburg, Natalia, 6
Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, 110
Gramsci, Antonio, 15, 139, 151
Graziani, Sergio, 7
Gregory VII, 116
Grosz, George, 120, 121
Grotowski, Jerzy, 26, 141, 151
Guicciardini, Roberto, 102
Guttuso, Renato, 4
Henry IV, 116
Himmler, Heinrich, 104
Homer, 60
Ibsen, Henrik, 27
Ionesco, Eugène, 25, 26
Jung, Carl, 47
Khrushchev, Nikita, 4
Lenin, Vladimir, 9
Lotschak, Peter, 10, 12, 44
Lucignani, Luciano, 6
Malcolm X, 9
Manzoni, Alessandro, 44, 62
Maraini, Dacia, 6, 154
Marcuse, Herbert, 18, 19, 38, 39, 40, 75, 93, 106, 107, 127, 133, 134, 152, 153
Marx, Karl, 130, 131
Mezzanotte, Luigi, 70
Missiroli, Mario, 8, 73
Moravia, Alberto, 6, 9, 13, 26, 27, 34, 35, 144, 151, 152
Mussolini, Benito, 3
Oldenburg, Henry, 129
Panagoulis, Alexandros, 36, 37
Parise, Goffredo, 6
Pirandello, Luigi, 27
Plato, 8, 112, 127, 146, 155
Poullain, Philippe, 102
Ronconi, Luca, 28, 44, 155
Sartre, Jean-Paul, 27
Sciascia, Leonardo, 6, 153
Shakespeare, William, 66, 94
Socrates, 112
Sophocles, v, 6, 33, 37, 44, 49, 50, 58, 60, 101, 125, 137, 141
Spinoza, Benedict de, vi, 38, 40, 41, 43, 101, 103, 108, 122, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 151, 152, 155, 156
Stalin, Joseph, 4

Sreher, Giorgio, 143
Swinarski, Konrad, 10
Testori, Giovanni, 6
The Living Theatre, 26, 72, 133, 142
Togliatti, Palmiro, 4, 6
Valeri, Franca, 7
Weiss, Peter, 27