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Transmediality as a Transcultural Dialogue: Pasolini between the Other and the Self

Introduction. Towards a Borderless Pasolini

Working on Pier Paolo Pasolini in the international context of Italian studies alongside the context of Italian studies defined by national borders often gives the impression of exploring two different authors. On the one hand, this can be attributed to the specific and original nature of Pasolini's oeuvre, based on the contradictory and often inconsistent thought carried out by the author. On the other hand, Pasolini's case makes evident that there is still a lot of work to be done on the transnational turn often auspicated in the wider and international field of Italian studies, to which Pasolini's work may contribute crucially, highlighting many ways to bridge mainland Italy with the Italies projected abroad¹. Consequently, this contribution follows the inspiration behind this bilingual collection of essays and other recent collective publications². A similar motivation inspired my decision to publish my monograph on Pasolini, which dialogues thoroughly with the international scholarship focusing on the author, in Italian and with an Italian publisher, to contribute to the increase of the circulation of the scholarship written in English devoted to Pasolini in Italophonetic academia³. I believe that it is vital to keep trying to bridge the ocean that seems to divide these two approaches to Italian literature, towards the establishment of a genuinely transnational and transcultural

¹ Cfr E. BOND, *Towards a Trans-National Turn in Italian Studies?*, in «Italian Studies», 69, 3 (2014), pp. 415-24.

² See *Pier Paolo Pasolini: Prospettive americane*, ed. Fulvio Orsitto and Federico Pacchioni, Pesaro, Meauro, 2015; *Pasolini Oggi: Fortuna internazionale e ricezione critica*, Ed. Angela Felice, Arturo Larcati and Antonio Tricomi, Venezia, Marsilio, 2016; *Pasolini's Lasting Impressions: Death, Eros, and Literary Enterprise in the Opus of Pier Paolo Pasolini*, ed. Ryan Calabretta-Sajder, Teaneck and Madison, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2017; *La lezione di Pasolini*, Ed. Enrico Redaelli, Milan, Mimesis, 2020.

³ Cfr F. CHIANESE, *'Mio Padre Si Sta Facendo un Individuo Problematico': Padri e Figli nell'Ultimo Pasolini (1966-75)*, Milan, Mimesis, 2018.

field of Italian studies. Hence, this contribution participates in the challenge to include all projections of Pasolini's oeuvre in just one wider context of studies.

*This opening remark is not to be intended as a generic lamentatio about studies on Pasolini. I rather intend to get straight to the thrust of my argument, which focuses on the possibilities – and the discomforts – of building a transnational discourse on Pasolini's oeuvre. In this essay, I elaborate on the possibilities of levelling the ground by integrating the transnational framework with a transcultural perspective. Due to the specific nature of Pasolini's thought as mentioned above, those approaches generally considered complementary, if not opposite, may encounter unexpected intersections in the textual analysis and interpretation of Pasolini's works. As it has happened in other contexts, so too in this case Pasolini is able to fill gaps apparently unbridgeable, and undermine the hyphen often placed between the phrase “trans” and “national” when we approach Italian culture in this framework⁴. Pasolini's transmediality becomes a resolute tool in this process, as it crosses the borders between single disciplines towards a comprehensive view of a complex world, making him the only Italian writer of his time to provide a reading of Italian culture that is transnational, while at the same time also transcultural. In Pasolini's last poetry collection, *Trasumanar e organizzar* (1971), the verb “trasumanar” translates a transhuman view of experience, resulting from this act of transmediality. It implies the opportunity of enlarging the focus through dialogue across the forms of poetry, fiction, theatre, and cinema, and building a more realistic image of Italy as part of a wider world atlas. Transnational, transmedial, transcultural, transhuman: the use of the prefix “trans” may sound redundant, nonetheless those specific concepts identify four steps in the same path to a border crossing between disciplines and cultures, which allows Pasolini to provide a wider view of the diasporic identity that we consuetudinarily define as Italian.*

Outside academia, in 2015 a special committee was commissioned to evaluate the relationship between the murder of Pasolini and the content of his last and

⁴ Cfr E. BOND, *Towards a Trans-National Turn in Italian Studies?* cit.

*unfinished novel, Petrolio, which was only published for the first time in 1992. The committee was never effectively operative, nonetheless the sole hypothesis of investigating the relations between the novel and the reality of the facts contributed to a reassessment of the political value of Pasolini's oeuvre⁵. Pasolini's work has often bridged reality and fiction, often fictionalizing reality, through the strict realism provided in his work. In a different context, 2015 was a crucial year for migrations, registering the highest peak in the phenomenon of humans seeking refuge in the wealthier European countries – in the group of which, surprisingly enough, Italy is still a part, despite the fact that the number of immigrants is equalized by the number of emigrants, who decided to seek a better life in other countries⁶. Dagmar Reichardt and Nora Moll identified in 2015 a transcultural turn in the political, cultural and social history of Italy and Europe⁷. Metaphorically speaking, in the same year Pasolini's death was remembered for the fortieth time, the same resistance demonstrated by Italian scholars in accepting international contributions on Pasolini were witnessed by Italian culture, government and society towards accepting humans attempting to be included within the Italian physical boundaries. This may appear as an extreme comparison between two radically different phenomena, one addressing culture and the other addressing society, which yet find a common discomfort at the base of Italian identity in accepting an integration in a wider context that Reichardt and Moll describe as “transculturality”⁸. Mixing fiction and reality, once again, Pasolini's case provides unexpected answers and possibilities. In fact, he was one of the first to suggest in the novel *Petrolio* the need to acknowledge a more realistic positioning of Italy in the wider world atlas that was evolving throughout the 1960s and 1970s. To ground my argument on the concrete terrain of Pasolini's text, I will*

⁵ See C. BENEDETTI, M. GRAGNOLATI and D. LUGLIO, *Prefazione*, in “*Petrolio*” 25 anni dopo: (Bio)politica, eros e verità nell'ultimo romanzo di Pier Paolo Pasolini, Macerata, Quodlibet, 2020, p. 10.

⁶ See T. FIORE, *Pre-Occupied Spaces: Remapping Italy's Transnational Migrations and Cultural Legacies*, New York, Fordham University Press, 2017.

⁷ Cfr D. REICHARDT and N. MOLL, *Introduzione: Italia transculturale: Quale modello?*, in *Italia transculturale: Il sincretismo italofono come modello eterotopico*, Firenze, Cesati, 2018.

⁸ It also identifies a cultural phenomenon addressed in A. J. TAMBURRI, *The Coincidence of Italian Cultural Hegemonic Privilege and the Historical Amnesia of Italia Diaspora Articulations*, in *Re-Mapping Italian America: Place, Cultures, Identities*, Ed. S. Velucci and C. Francellini, New York, Bordighera Press, 2015.

consider the passage in which the writer asserts, about the protagonist Carlo: «L'Italia gli apparve dunque presto, e quasi naturalmente, come un mondo particolare, una delle parti di un tutto, e non delle più importanti»⁹. With this statement, Pasolini made evident his awareness of the fact that in a map portraying his contemporary world, Italy would not have been at the centre, then rejecting an attitude later recognised as "Italian exceptionalism"¹⁰. Indeed, Pasolini himself considered his viewpoint to be lateral, or eccentric, as in Silvana Disegni's definition of Pasolini's eccentricity¹¹. Likewise, Fulvio Orsitto and Federico Pacchioni pointed out that Pasolini's approach to literature was always suspended between the centre and the periphery, thus it can be more effective to look at him from peripheral perspectives rather than from the centre¹². This attitude is at the base of Giovanna Trento's investigation of Pasolini's works from the perspective of a transnational "pan-meridionalness"¹³, and Robert Gordon's analysis of Pasolini's proximity to Jewishness¹⁴. For this reason, I believe that research into Pasolini may also provide valuable insights within the emerging field of Italian diaspora studies¹⁵.

By following those directions of analysis, my essay focuses on how Pasolini's transmediality becomes a key tool in opening a dialogue with other authors and cultures, not limiting the analysis to just one field of knowledge. Only in this way we can situate Pasolini's oeuvre in the context in which he should be read: the international discussion on literature built up globally, at the cross-roads of transnational and transcultural views of Italian culture.

⁹ P. P. PASOLINI, *Petrolio*, Turin, Einaudi, 1992, p. 36.

¹⁰ The label "Italian exceptionalism" has been applied to different contexts and has produced different and often opposite definitions. For my concept of "Italian exceptionalism", see Simon PARKER, *The end of Italian exceptionalism? Assessing the transition to the Second Republic*, in «The Italianist», 19 (1999).

¹¹ Cfr S. DISEGNI, *Camus/Pasolini. Posture ex-centrique de deux écrivains journalistes engagés du XX siècle*, in «Francofonia», 33, 65 (2013).

¹² Cfr F. ORSITTO and F. PACCHIONI, *Introduzione*, in *Pier Paolo Pasolini: Prospettive americane*, op. cit.

¹³ Cfr G. TRENTO, *Pasolini and Pan-Meridional Italianness*, in *The Scandal of Self-Contradiction: Pasolini's Multistable Subjectivities, Traditions, Geographies*, Ed. Luca Di Blasi, Manuele Gragnolati and Christoph F. E. Holzhey, Berlin, Verlag Turia + Kant, 2012.

¹⁴ Cfr R. S. C. GORDON, *Pasolini as a Jew, between Israel and Europe*, in L. Di Biasi, M. Gragnolati and C. F. E. Holzhey (Eds.) *Self-Contradiction* cit.

¹⁵ For the concept of "Italian diaspora" see Donna R. GABACCIA, *Italy's Many Diasporas*, London and New York, Routledge, 2000.

The Trans-national: Pan-Meridional Italianness and Southern Dawns

*From a specific moment of his career, which for many coincides precisely with his shift to film-making in the Sixties, Pasolini's transmedial effort to reach the transhuman started to follow mostly one direction: South¹⁶. According to Trento, the Southern Question was for Pasolini first of all a national issue. Nonetheless, by following Antonio Gramsci's definition of the Southern Question in his influential essay *Alcuni temi della questione meridionale* (1927)¹⁷ Pasolini applied Gramsci's reflection on subalternity to the possibility of building «a deterritorialized and idealized never-ending South», which Trento calls “Pan-South” or “Panmeridione”¹⁸. This concept of South identifies «a fluid, non-geographical topos where ‘traditional’ values are used in non-traditional and subversive ways with the goal of resisting industrialization, mass media, and late-capitalist alienation»¹⁹. For Trento, this concept of the South, together with other issues, was at the base of “a complementary dichotomy between national and ‘local’ issues related to the building of Italianness and transnational and pan-meridional topoi marked by different – at times antithetic – factors”, which marked Pasolini's aesthetic, poetic and political approach²⁰. It was one of the multiple points on which Pasolini's rhizomatic framework was based, one of the many contradictions – ‘contraddizioni’ – on which his thinking was founded.*

While Trento's focus on Pasolini's concern for the South is not unique, she is one of the few scholars working on Pasolini with a transnational lens – certainly one of the few to explicitly mention the phrase “transnational”. Discussing the issues

¹⁶ Cfr R. S. C. GORDON, *Pasolini as a Jew, between Israel and Europe* cit.

¹⁷ *It may be convenient to refer to Antonio GRAMSCI, The Southern Question, translated, annotated and with an introduction by Pasquale Verdicchio, West Lafayette, Bordighera Press, 1995. Verdicchio has provided a wider re-elaboration of both Gramsci and Spivak in the context of the Italian migrations in P. VERDICCHIO, Bound by Distance: Rethinking Nationalism through the Italian Diaspora, New York, Bordighera Press, 2016. More broadly, those who are familiar with Pasolini's oeuvre know the extent of Gramsci's influence on Pasolini's poetry, in a period at which leftist thought in Italy was witnessing a thorough process of reconsideration. See P. P. PASOLINI, *Le ceneri di Gramsci*, Milan, Garzanti, 1957.*

¹⁸ Cfr G. TRENTO, *Pasolini and Pan-Meridional Italianness*, in L. Di Blasi, M. Gragnolati, C F. E. Holzhey (Eds.) *The Scandal of Self-Contradiction: Pasolini's Multistable Subjectivities, Traditions, Geographies* cit., p. 59.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

*explored by Pasolini as essential for the construction of a sense of Italianness, Trento pinpoints not only the Southern Question, but also the dichotomy between the Italian language and local languages and Fascist propaganda, which distorted a series of national narratives, and the colonial enterprise, which is today analysed mostly through a transnational focus. Trento's focus on Pasolini's tension between national issues and issues that were affecting Italy peripherally in this period, but more crucially in previous moments of Italian history, is at the core of the transnational reconsideration of Italian studies lately, though not many would include Pasolini in the discussion. By outlining a series of case studies from Pasolini's cinema and poetry, Trento demonstrated that Pasolini's Pan-South found its roots in the African question, which anticipated a bigger concern of contemporary Italian politics and has started to be reconceptualized as a new Southern question, concerning countries to the South of Italy. According to Trento, this transnational, pan-meridional perspective is evident in the comprehensive Third World project *Appunti per un poema sul Terzo Mondo* (1968, published in 1981) and in the film *Appunti per un'Orestiade Africana* (1969-70). This last work specifically addresses classic theatre from the perspective of a transnational South, connecting postcolonial Africa to pre-Hellenic Greece, in order to osmotically include and reproduce multiple Souths in a perspective that privileges the focus on subaltern subjects. We might also consider this interpretation of Pasolini alongside Gayatri Spivak's reading of Gramsci's Southern Question, in her most popular essay devoted to the ability of the subaltern to speak²¹. Not only transnational, this way of reading Pasolini's production from the mid-1960s on is also transmedial and transcultural: «Africa, like the suburbs of Rome, Naples, and all the so-called Third World, become for him a variation on the elemental Italian dialectal and rural world, so dearly loved and frequented by the poet in his Friulian youth»²².*

²¹ Cfr G. C. SPIVAK, *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, in C. Nelson, L. Grossberg (Eds.) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1988, pp. 271-313.

²² G. TRENTO, *Pasolini and Pan-Meridional Italianness*, in L. Di Blasi, M. Gagnolati, C F. E. Holzhey (Eds.) *The Scandal of Self-Contradiction: Pasolini's Multistable Subjectivities, Traditions, Geographies* cit., p. 60.

Trento finds early attestations of Pasolini's interest in the Pan-South in essays like La resistenza negra (1961), or earlier poems like Alla Francia, from La religione del mio tempo (1958), and then subsequently refers to a poem from Trasumanar e organizzar (1971), Sineciosi della diaspora. I believe the reading of an earlier poem from Poesia in forma di rosa (1964), L'alba meridionale, also provides valuable insights into this transnational and pan-meridional reading of the author. In this case, the place is not Africa, but Israel, which has been investigated thoroughly by Robert Gordon²³. In Israel the poet meets a group of local "ragazzetti" portrayed as "diseredati" – disinherited – or "straccioni", who are not different from the youngsters living in poor conditions portrayed in other films shot in other regions of Asia, or in Africa: «Questi straccioni, che vanno a dormire, ora,/ all'aperto, in fondo a un prato di periferia»²⁴. They are the Jordanians, terror of Israel, and wipe «l'antico dolore dei profughi» – the ancient grief of refugees: in them, Pasolini recognises a transnational, genuine feeling of love – «un misero sentimento di amore» – against the nationalistic and bourgeois hatred, «odio, già quasi Borghese [...] nazionalismo che sbianca di furore nevrotico»²⁵.

Between L'alba meridionale and Sineciosi della diaspora, the latter part of the collection that interrupted a seven-year gap of silence in Pasolini's poetry, many crucial events occurred. Some of them are related to the growth in transmedial awareness achieved by Pasolini, from the earlier films, still related to his Roman years – in which, nonetheless, we find "ragazzetti diseredati" from the most degraded areas of the Italian capital. Some other events are related to the inexhaustible travel activity undertaken by Pasolini from the 1960s, which enlarged his world in unexpected directions, including a deeper exploration of the United States he had long criticized before. Poesia in forma di rosa introduced a more mature period for Pasolini's cinema and a time of enthusiasm for the world in transformation, approaching the late Sixties, shortly followed by films like Uccellacci

²³ Cfr R. S. C. GORDON, *Pasolini as a Jew, between Israel and Europe* cit.

²⁴ P. P. PASOLINI, *L'alba meridionale*, in ID., *Poesia in forma di Rosa*, Milan, Garzanti, 1964, p. 156.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

e uccellini (1966), Edipo re (1967), Teorema (1968), Porcile (1969) and Medea (1969), those last four identifying a common reflection on myth. Conversely, *Trasumanar e organizzar* was the first step in Pasolini's journey towards his more bitter years, associated with a more certain and complex hybridization between poetry and prose on the written page, which one can also consider as part of Pasolini's transmedial turn. Likewise, *Petrolio* is considered by many scholars to be Pasolini's return to prose and fiction after assimilating the language of cinema²⁶. Nonetheless, one should keep in mind that an experimental poem such as *Una disperata vitalità*, in which Pasolini attempted a hybrid language by mixing poetry and scriptwriting, was already published in *Poesia in forma di rosa*, and that during the Sixties Pasolini kept working in this direction by presenting *Teorema* as a novel and a film, and *Porcile* as a play and a film. Transmediality was the direction Pasolini followed from at least the early Sixties, then, from *Poesia in forma di rosa*, the same moment when his focus directed towards a South that crossed the national borders.

The Trans-Medial as Trans-Human: *Trasumanar e organizzar* as a Tale of Paradise Lost

*My first critical approach to Pasolini's oeuvre has proceeded through a comparative lens, analysing his literature with Philip Roth's fiction through the common topic of fatherhood²⁷. The comparative analysis has guided the evolution of my reading of the author in a transnational perspective when I focused on representation of Sicily in Pasolini's film *Teorema* and Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather* (1972)²⁸. The consideration of Pasolini's transmedial adaption of the*

²⁶ Cfr C. BENEDETTI, M. GRAGNOLATI, D. LUGLIO, *Prefazione*, in "Petrolio" 25 anni dopo: (Bio)politica, eros e verità nell'ultimo romanzo di Pier Paolo Pasolini cit., p. 11.

²⁷ Cfr F. CHIANESE, *Padri e figli nella tarda modernità: Pier Paolo Pasolini e Philip Roth, un'analisi comparata* (Ph.D. Thesis), Naples, Università di Napoli L'Orientale, 2015.

²⁸ For a better understanding of my argument, in the next paragraphs I will summarize some points of my comparative and transnational analysis of Pasolini's and Coppola's views of Sicily. The argument carried out here is radically revised and reconceptualized in the specific transcultural framework, where the focus is

novel Teorema in film paved my shift to the transcultural perspective of analysis I unfold here. The Godfather also become a transmedial project, when it was adapted for the cinema from Mario Puzo's self-titled novel (1969), of which Puzo co-wrote the script with Coppola. The focus on transmediality suggested by this collection of essays underscores that the shift from the comparative to the transnational and the transcultural framework implied a theoretical reconsideration of my analysis from the context of comparative literature to a cultural studies context. It should also be highlighted that, in comparison to Roth and Coppola – pure novelist and pure film director respectively – Pasolini can already be individuated as an original case, the observation of which calls for a plurality of different perspectives of analysis: his transmediality is a feature not very common amongst artists, which Pasolini shares with a small number of authors, not limited to Italy but internationally²⁹. By choosing this approach, Pasolini embraced the totality of the possibilities of human expression, overcoming the boundaries between one discipline and another. It allowed him to master many different skills: writing (poetry, fiction and essay writing, playwriting, scriptwriting); film and theatre direction; painting. Pasolini's intention to pursue all of them was already an attempt towards the transhuman.

Pasolini's works have been interpreted through a comparative lens more frequently than many other contemporary Italian authors. As Fabio Vighi stated, Pasolini's approach to literature and cinema was thoroughly dialectic, which implies a constant dialogue with other authors³⁰. In fact, based on oxymoron, the argument of Pasolini's works constantly seeks a thesis against which to oppose itself³¹. Since Vighi is one of the most convincing readers of Pasolini through Lacan, I believe it is

on Sicily as a transmedial space, rather than on specific representations of Sicily previously provided. See Francesco CHIANESE, Sicily as a Transnational Space of Cultural Resistance against Assimilation to Consumerism in Pier Paolo Pasolini's Teorema (1968) and Francis Ford Coppola's The Godfather (1972), in Sicily and Cinema, Ed. Giovanna Summerfield, Jefferson, McFarland & Company, 2019.

²⁹ *It must also be highlighted that transmediality is a specific feature of modern and late modern culture, as the forms of film and television have become recognised as part of a wider culture recently.*

³⁰ *Cfr F. VIGHI, Prefazione, in F. CHIANESE, "Mio Padre Si Sta Facendo un Individuo Problematico": Padri e Figli nell'Ultimo Pasolini (1966-75) cit. Also see F. VIGHI, Le ragioni dell'altro: La formazione intellettuale di Pasolini tra saggistica, letteratura e cinema, Ravenna, Longo, 2001.*

³¹ *Cfr F. FORTINI, Attraverso Pasolini, Turin, Einaudi, 1993, p. 22.*

*not a coincidence that one of the first comparative works on Pasolini was also one of the first Lacanian readings of the writer: a comparative reading between Pasolini and Cesare Pavese, carried out by Ettore Perrella³². Through Lacanian theory, Perrella has also underlined Pasolini's and Pavese's common attempts to open Italian culture to an international perspective – in that case, the phrases transnational or transcultural had not yet entered the cultural discourse, not in Italy at least. The constant tension explored by Trento recalls Pasolini's wish to enlarge the borders of the South, as underlined by Gordon, who also read Pasolini through Lacan, strengthening the point raised by Perrella by arguing that, from the 1960s, Pasolini opened his world atlas outside of the European borders³³. Gordon maintains that this coincided with the moment Pasolini devoted himself to cinema: transmediality and transnationalization were part of the same process, to perform a process of transhumanization. In *Trasumanar e organizzar*, Pasolini adopts this term directly from Dante Alighieri's *Paradiso*, Canto I – together with other intertextual references to the illustrious poet, this mention opened a wide field of comparative readings between Pasolini and Dante³⁴. *Trasumanar e organizzar* follows Pasolini's work on transmediality. Pasolini's poetry and cinema are interwoven, as in this collection poetry is based on the act of watching, while in the previous films, poetry was integrated in his screenwriting. In fact, Pasolini's poetry did not disappear during this seven-year gap in which no poetry collection was published, but rather appeared directly on screen, in films such as *Edipo re* and *Teorema*. While Pasolini's cinema reached its maturity, and from the ground-breaking *Uccellacci e uccellini*, shifted to a deeper exploration of the social context in which Italy was undergoing radical transformations, his poetry needed to be reconfigured to this new context. The mythical and allegorical cinema of the years 1966-1969 brought Pasolini to the moment of denial that introduced his greatest crisis – «la grande crisi del 1969», as one reads in *Petrolio* – and introduced the darkest and most bitter period of his*

³² Cfr E. PERRELLA, *Distico: Pavese Pasolini*, Milan, SugarCo, 1979.

³³ Cfr R. S. C. GORDON, *Pasolini as a Jew, between Israel and Europe* cit.

³⁴ See *Paradiso*, Milan, Garzanti, 1982.

production, coinciding with the 1970s, in which Italy was also entering one of its darkest ages. Between Poesia in forma di rosa and Trasumanar e organizzar, Pasolini experienced a complete cycle, from his greatest moment of optimism and openness, to his greatest disappointment, which coincided with the great revolution announced by the Sixties and, according to Pasolini, its failure. Not coincidentally, one of the few pieces of poetry Pasolini published in his period of poetic silence, published as an essay on the Italian magazine «L'Espresso», became his most popular poem because it was focused on his disapproval of the student movement: Il PCI ai giovani (1968). Between 1964 and 1971, Pasolini's experience in theatre followed a similar pattern from a great illusion to a great disappointment.

Trasumanar e organizzar was Pasolini's last poetry collection and gathered the poems that Pasolini accumulated throughout those crucial years. It was published in the year Pasolini's film Decameron (1971) introduced the cinematic "trilogia della vita", which, shifting from the tragic to the comic register, can be taken rather as an existentialist moment of defeat when faced with the absurdity of contemporary Italy. During the same years, Pasolini also continued fighting against the process of transformation that Italians were undergoing with his activity as an essayist for the «Corriere della sera» and other Italian newspapers, later collected in Scritti corsari (1975) and Lettere luterane (1976). Including them too, Pasolini's "trasumanar" suggests the possibility that this act can only be expressed by transmediality. Consequently, I believe that Pasolini's process of "trasumanar" implies a fall rather than a rise, recounting his personal experience from the highest point to the lowest: a fall from grace reminiscent of John Milton's Paradise Lost (1674), rather than Dante's Commedia. It suggests a dive from Paradiso to Inferno – a case of katabasis – without the possibility of coming back to reality. One also reads in Pasolini's "transhumanization" a process of transformation through a Christ figure, which is a transmedial occurrence in Pasolini's oeuvre. In the first instance, there is a recurrence of the sacrifice of youth, already introduced in Pasolini's earlier fiction, by characters such as Ricetto, in Ragazzi di vita (1955), Tommaso Puzilli, in Una

vita violenta (1957). So too in Pasolini's earlier cinema, with the death of Accattone's protagonist (Franco Citti, 1961), as well as Ettore in Mamma Roma (1962) and Stracci in La ricotta (1964), the latter two both portrayed as dying on the cross. Other Christ-like figures include the protagonists Julian from the play and film Porcile, and the suicidal protagonist of Pasolini's explicitly autobiographical drama Bestia da stile. Conversely, a different example of sacrifice is provided by the servant Emilia (Laura Betti) in Teorema, while pater familias and industrial entrepreneur Paolo (Remo Girotti) exiles himself in the desert after leaving his factory to his workers. Salò concludes this gallery of martyrs by showing a mythical world in which only hell remains. This transmedial excursus is concluded with the return to the novel in Petrolio, which makes clear that Pasolini's only paradise can be found in his diaries written during his youth in Friuli and published posthumously like Petrolio: Atti impuri (1982) and Amado mio (1982). Those two experiences with (unfinished) fiction frame the transmedial experience and certify that Pasolini's paradise can only be given as a paradise lost. By tracking the evolution of Pasolini's troubled feelings regarding his homosexuality, from youth to maturity, they witness an author that never truly experienced complete happiness. Similarly, there is no hope for his "ragazzetti", as they live in a transnational world of lost innocence, designed to be crushed by consumerist society. No possibility of full happiness is available for them either, in a world where even sex is instrumentalized by consumerist logic. The whole process of transmedial transhumanization eventually turns out to be an act of martyrdom, which once more confirms that Pasolini's works of the 1970s complete a process that was already in progress during the previous decade³⁵.

³⁵ For a Lacanian reading of the topics of martyrdom in Pasolini, see Viola BRISOLIN, *Martyrdom Postponed: The Subject between Law and Transgression and Beyond: Reading Pasolini's Porcile with Lacan*, in «Italian Studies», 65, 1 (2010), pp. 107-22.

Pasolini's Sicily from Trans-Medial to Trans-Cultural Case

The opposition between a nationalistic and bourgeois hatred and a transnational love of the Southern subaltern, evoked in L'alba meridionale, recalls a reading of the South as a space crossed by different cultures and that refers to supranational issues, related to the belonging to a specific group or class. It implies a transcultural reading of this Southern space and requires, at this point, a clarification of the meanings of transnational and transcultural to which I have been referring in my analysis.

Reichardt's and Moll's interpretation of transculturality share the same starting point of Trento's transnational reading of Pasolini: the South, considered as a category related to a space of subalternity³⁶. It is a precise geographical term which also includes an explicit cultural meaning referring to Gramsci's Southern Question – La questione meridionale – mentioned above, which was re-elaborated as a cultural category by Spivak and Pasquale Verdicchio to suggest the possibilities of translating this analysis into a transnational Southern space³⁷. While Trento's reading of Pasolini relies on the concept of the South identified by Spivak's argument as a wider category of subalternity, Reichardt and Moll proceed in a different direction to arrive at a very similar destination: recognising a transcultural space where subaltern cultures meet. Through the transcultural approach, according to Reichardt and Moll, Gramsci's view of the South provides a complementary approach to Edward Said's notion of Orientalism³⁸. Looking at Gramsci alongside Said, especially if one considers Spivak's and Verdicchio's readings of Gramsci, allows us to build a framework that covers all cardinal points and corners of the globe. This is particularly clear when one considers the discourse of the (Western) mainstream suffocating the voice of the subaltern. Addressed in the resulting transcultural framework, any issue of hegemonic Eurocentricity or predominance of

³⁶ Cfr D. REICHARDT, N. MOLL, *Introduzione: Italia transculturale: Quale modello?* cit.

³⁷ Cfr G. C. SPIVAK, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* cit.; and P. VERDICCHIO, *Bound by Distance: Rethinking Nationalism through the Italian Diaspora*, New York, Bordighera Press, 2016.

³⁸ Cfr E. SAID, *Orientalism*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1978.

the global Western culture on spontaneous and local manifestations of independent cultures is problematized.

*Reichardt's and Moll's reflection is built on Wolfgang Welsh's concept of "transculturality", which highlights a space determined by a circulation of cultures usually addressed separately, in which the influxes of those cultures increasingly fade, letting them melt into each other through specific phenomena of hybridization and contamination³⁹. This process leads to a final stage, according to which every human being has a transcultural, hybrid identity. Consequently, every individual would be the product of the circulation of all cultures in the space he or she had lived during his/her lifetime. By following this argument, transculturalism and transnationalism may appear at odds, as the first identifies a global and supra-cultural integration tending to a comprehensive view that obliterates cultural differences, while the second attempts to recognise specific cultural features related to a given national culture that circulate beyond its national borders. Conversely, I believe it is in the space where they overlap that we can determine Pasolini's "Panmerdione", with all the consequences this implies. In fact, if one considers Pasolini's view of the South that we defined as Pan-South from a specific case provided, for example his cinematic representation of Sicily in *Teorema*, this Pan-South will be the space where his concept of Sicily meets the transnational representation of Sicily provided by authors sharing an Italian cultural heritage worldwide, as well as transculturally the one provided by authors that have no Italian cultural background. This becomes clearer if we compare the representation of Sicily in Pasolini's *Teorema* – the film and the novel – not only to Coppola's film and Puzo's novel, but for example, to the representation of Sicily in Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz's poetry, as it was transculturally analysed by Dario Prola, so as not to abandon the transmedial perspective⁴⁰. While in the cases of Pasolini, Coppola and Puzo, their representation of Sicily is provided, in their similarities and differences,*

³⁹ Cfr D. REICHARDT, N. MOLL, *Introduzione: Italia transculturale: Quale modello?*, cit.

⁴⁰ Cfr D. PROLA, *La Sicilia come mito privato e modello transculturale: un caso del Novecento polacco*, in D. Reichardt, N. Moll (Eds.) *Italia transculturale: Il sincretismo italofono come modello eterotopico*, Firenze, Cesati, 2018, pp. 45-56.

*by authors who share an affiliation with a transnational concept of Italian identity and culture (Italian and Italian American), Iwasziewicz's case can only be analysed through his representation of the space: Sicily. Nonetheless, in the moment Iwasziewicz's poetry is defined as a private, personal myth of a Polish author, it becomes a space of cultural hybridity, and therefore, a transcultural space, yet not excluding its transnational potential. Prola underlines the possibilities of considering "transculturation" – Fernando Ortiz's concept of *transculturación*, at the base of Welsch's concept of "transculturality" – also in relation to Polish anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski's defence of this concept against the concept of "acculturation" preferred by the American school of anthropology⁴¹. It may be a coincidence that the same concept was criticized and problematized by Pasolini himself, in the essay *Acculturazione e acculturazione*⁴², and has become an object of criticism amongst scholars who approached the study of American literature from an ethnic perspective; or again, it may suggest the possibility of combining the transnational with the transcultural while addressing a category, in this case the South, that works within both frameworks. In fact, Pasolini used the term of "acculturazione" to criticize the cultural policy pursued by the Italian government from the 1950s, to force the assimilation of the Italian regional and local cultures to the Italian mainstream, in particular, the regional and local dialects to standard Italian language. This proposes again a similar policy carried out by fascism but using consumerist propaganda. Similarly, in the ethnic communities in the United States, local cultures – such as Italian culture for Coppola – constituted an operation of cultural resistance against the assimilation to mainstream global culture promoted by the United States. In this specific case, and again, by taking into consideration the example of Sicily for Pasolini and Coppola, the transnational case of cultural resistance held by Sicily opposed a transcultural redefinition of the Sicilian example against the acculturation to the model disseminated by consumerist propaganda in*

⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

⁴² Cfr P. P. PASOLINI, *Acculturazione e acculturazione*, in ID., *Scritti corsari*, Milano, Garzanti, 1975, pp. 22-25.

both the United States and Italy under the Marshall Plan: a complete assimilation to a mainstream, global concept of Western culture in which local and transnational features disappear. Either considering Pasolini, Coppola, Puzo or Iwasziewicz, we are embracing a transcultural view of Sicily, which promotes a common transnational representation of Sicily, regardless of the language they used to represent similar issues of Sicilian culture (Italian, English or Polish)⁴³.

Sicily as a Transitional, Transnational and Transcultural Space (without the Hyphen)

Initially, Pasolini's and Coppola's representations of Sicily seems to be located in a world atlas that does not entirely overlap – like Pasolini's oeuvre as it appeared in the national and the international context of Italian studies. Pasolini and Coppola had their experiences as filmmakers in different parts of the world, from which they landed on the same island while heading in opposite directions. From this viewpoint, Coppola may even appear in the same veins as Polish writer Iwasziewicz, or Goethe, when they represent Sicily in their poetry in a language that is not Italian, nor the Sicilian dialect. Pasolini and Coppola belong to this island in different ways, whilst at the same time not really belonging to it, unless one does not subscribe to a transnational idea of Italy, which sees a worldwide net of places where Italian culture has been flourishing outside of Italy. To understand how one gets to Coppola while starting from Pasolini, and to accept the idea of Sicily as a common ground between the two authors, Sicily must first be considered as a transitional place.

Sicily has been a place of cultural encounter for centuries, and this classifies it as an appropriate transcultural case. It has always been a transitional place for communities migrating around the Mediterranean Sea, from the most ancient times to the most recent, as the tragic episodes of attempts to migrate to Italy by reaching the little island of Lampedusa from the shores of Northern Africa have demonstrated

⁴³ *In this case, I am defending my reading of the possibility of a transcultural concept of Italian culture that goes beyond that which belongs to the Italophonic context.*

many more times that one would like to acknowledge. For this intense crossing of cultures, in relation to Sicily transnationalism is a fruitful term, as much as transculturality turns out to be. Today, the extensive use of the phrase “transnational” in the study of contemporary migrations shows its cultural currency in the aftermath of the collapse of the nation-state era, which has been replaced by another era built on the centrality of border-crossing and interactions between cultures once defined as national. Conversely, it should be underlined that transnationalism, as a context and a concept, existed in empires and colonies centuries and millennia before the affirmation of such an era of nation-states, as human history has been constructed since the beginning upon interactions, exchanges, migrations and the hybridization of cultures. It was only in the age of nationalism and empires that ideologies were conceived to build borders and promote the hegemonic structuring of culture in relation to the other. They justified the distancing and “othering” of different cultures that, from the Western, Euro-Atlantic viewpoint, have historically been identified as inferior. Sicily has been holding its position since long before the affirmation of this process of ideological hegemony. As in the ancient past, today Sicily has again become a door that connects migrants from Africa and Italy, considered the easiest way to access the wider European continent.

All in all, the view of Sicily provided by Coppola does not appear as primitive as in Teorema, or in the following Porcile. One recognises that both directors had in mind an image of Sicily rather different on the surface, while the meaning behind it is similar and follows the same direction: Sicily is portrayed as a place that brings the characters back to the past, which is at the same time also a “paradise lost”. In fact, for both Pasolini and Coppola Sicily represents a space outside of history, allowing a retreat to a time before the affirmation of capitalism and consumerism. Here, Paolo and Michael can express their desire for authenticity outside of their corrupted world and find again their freedom as human beings. More subtly, Coppola sees in Sicily a place where Michael can get back to his roots before they became damaged by

compulsory assimilation to American ideology and culture, by following a journey reproducing a recurrent topic of ethnic-American literature: the quest for authenticity of second-generation American citizens from a specific cultural heritage. Furthermore, in both films not only do we see a metaphorical movement, but also a physical one, which Paolo and Michael accomplish when they arrive in Sicily. An internal migration from Milan, in Teorema, in the opposite direction of the usual emigration from the South to the more industrialized and developed Northern Italy; a transoceanic voyage from New York in the case of The Godfather, which similarly represents a move from the United States to Sicily by reversing the Italian mass migration to America. In both those journeys, we witness Northern viewpoint that sees the South as an underdeveloped place of authenticity.

I am suggesting that Coppola seeks a transcultural dialogue with Pasolini's cinema when on the screen we see a jeep carrying a group of American soldiers past the trio comprised of Michael and the "picciottis", who are peacefully walking in the surroundings of Corleone. Coppola's choice of casting for the role of Calò actor Franco Citti, one of the most recurrent actors in Pasolini's films, despite playing in Coppola's film a role remarkably different from the barbaric characters he mostly played in Pasolini's cinema, is arguably little more than a way for Coppola to cover with a more sophisticated, Hollywood veneer his own representation of Sicily: deep down, Citti brings to his acting the barbaric Sicily portrayed by Pasolini. He shifts Sicily from a barbaric land removed from society to the original land of origin romanticized by Michael, a second-generation Italian American, confirming Sicily's remarkable symbolic potential. In the scene mentioned, an excited Citti welcomes the American soldiers by yelling familiar stereotypes related to consumerist society and American imagery: the little village of Corleone appears no safer from American propaganda than any neighbourhood in New York, as people are acquainted with American cinema and American products. In this context, Coppola also seems to embrace quite literally Pasolini's message about American culture corrupting Italian tradition, which Pasolini addressed more analytically in Scritti Corsari and Lettere

Luterane, *but which was already present in the wider meanings of his earlier cinema*⁴⁴. Calò's fascination for the American soldiers is reminiscent of the evolution of Pasolini's Accattone and his romanticized "ragazzi di borgata", whom in Pasolini's latter essays were described as being transformed by consumerist ideology⁴⁵. At that point, Pasolini started seeking authenticity and resistance to consumerism in places less involved with what Western culture has conceived in terms of modernity, such as Sicily, Africa and the Middle-East, as parts of "Panmeridione"⁴⁶. From a similar perspective, Pasolini's discourse not only approaches Spivak's discourse on subalternity, but also Walter Benjamin's concept of the Neapolitan "porosity", which identifies the possibilities of an alternative civilization that does not equal progress with capitalism⁴⁷.

The Transmedial Other and the Transcultural Self, or the Other Way Around: what Has This to Do with the Italian Diaspora?

In my experience, I learned that attempting conclusions on Pasolini always turns out to be hazardous. Therefore, my conclusion will be provisional, again, and will emphasize the necessity of reading Pasolini's work at the cross-roads of any field of humanities in which it can be placed: comparative literature and cultural studies, but also at the space where transnational and transcultural meet each other, in order to enlarge the view of Italian culture. By considering Pasolini as a specific and original case, for the reasons listed above, I do not exclude the possibility that he can be a specific example of a more general case, but certainly, this approach to Pasolini will extend the opportunities to read many other authors, not necessarily limited to the Italian context.

⁴⁴ Cfr P. P. PASOLINI, *Scritti Corsari*; and ID., *Lettere Luterane*, Milan, Garzanti, 1976.

⁴⁵ Cfr P. P. PASOLINI, *Il mio Accattone in tv dopo il genocidio*, in ID., *Lettere luterane* cit.

⁴⁶ Cfr G. TRENTO, *Pasolini and Pan-Meridional Italianness* cit.

⁴⁷ See W. BENJAMIN and A. LACIS, *Naples*, in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, New York, Schocken Books, 2007; and F. TRENTO, *Organizing Pessimism: Enigmatic Correlations between Walter Benjamin and Pier Paolo Pasolini*, in «The Modern Language Review», 108, 4 (2013).

*By analysing the implications and consequences of the readings of Pasolini's works provided by scholars such as Vighi, Gordon, Perrella and Trento, I recognised transmediality as a key tool to open a dialogue between Pasolini and other authors and cultures, which is not limited to just one field of knowledge. In this way, Pasolini built an integrated and complex system in which the interchange between literature, theatre, cinema and criticism offered for the first time a truly transnational and transcultural view of Italy, as part of a wider cultural world atlas in which all cultures were interconnected. The presence of the most recurrent phrase in the more advanced studies of Italian migrations in a poem like *Sineciosi della diaspora*, in *Trasumanar e organizzar*, confirms that a wider reflection on identities and their possibilities of hybridization was part of the process defined by Pasolini as "trasumanar", as well as transmediality. The poem's title is rather intriguing itself, as it proposes the combination of the words "sineciosi" and "diaspora", which again suggest two apparently opposed meanings. If according to Trento, «Africa and its Diaspora [...] played an essential political and aesthetic role in Pasolini's construction of the Pan-South»⁴⁸, therefore suggesting cultural crossing and contamination, "sineciosi" in Italian defines a process that allows the comparison of antithetical ideas through the use of just one verb: «Procedimento consistente nell'avvicinare idee antitetiche mediante l'uso di un unico verbo»⁴⁹. If "diaspora" suggests the transnational, again, "sineciosi" would be closer to the transcultural. Nonetheless, put together, they confirm the necessity of including every direction of Italian migration – ongoing and incoming – in the same framework, of which Pasolini was already part⁵⁰.*

I recognised the productive possibility of confronting Pasolini and Coppola by employing the word Pasolini has used in the aforementioned poem – diaspora – as it

⁴⁸ G. TRENTO, *Pasolini and Pan-Meridional Italianness* cit.

⁴⁹ F. FORTINI, *Attraverso Pasolini*, Torino, Einaudi, 1993, p. 22.

⁵⁰ See A. J. TAMBURRI, *The Coincidence of Italian Cultural Hegemonic Privilege and the Historical Amnesia of Italia Diaspora Articulations*, in S. Velucci, C. Francellini (Eds.) *Re-Mapping Italian America: Place, Cultures, Identities*, New York, Bordighera Press, 2015; and T. FIORE, *Pre-Occupied Spaces: Remapping Italy's Transnational Migrations and Cultural Legacies*, New York, Fordham University Press, 2017.

*has lately been introduced in the context of Italian studies and of Italian migrations: the Italian diaspora*⁵¹. In his films, Coppola directly addressed the diasporas of the Corleones between Italy and the United States: Michael travels from the United States to Sicily, in the opposite direction than his father Vito, who in his earlier journey moved from Sicily to the United States. The term “diaspora” has lately commonly been used in combination with or as an alternative to the term “transnational”, within studies on Italian migration in the last decades. Both “diaspora” and “transnationalism” have largely circulated in the humanities while seeking a «feasible paradigm to define the migration of the Italian people outside their native land that has occurred since the flight of the exiles of the Risorgimento in the early and mid-nineteenth century»⁵². By acknowledging the fact that none of those terms is «fully applicable as a heuristic device to the case of Italian migrants», as «Italian migration has been less a worldwide diasporic dispersal of people than a continuous inflow and outflow of individuals [...] across the country’s borders», Stefano Luconi suggested that other terms are more reliable, in particular Pietro Bassetti’s notion of “Italicity”⁵³. By identifying a post-ethnic concept, this concept defines «all the people who share a common interest in and a passion for Italy regardless of their cultural, ethnolinguistic, and national belonging» and would include not only Coppola and Pasolini within the same framework, but also original cases such as Jumpa Lahiri’s fiction in Italian, and even Iwasziewicz’s and Goethe’s poetry, written in other languages, as well as the fiction of Sicilian novelists such as Luigi Pirandello or Leonardo Sciascia. In this case, Italicity sounds very close to the meaning of the phrase “transcultural” to which I referred in this essay. In fact, it considers all people interested in issues related to Italy, in movement within or outside the borders of the country, no matter their origins. The aim at the basis of every definition mentioned is basically the same in that they are all concepts that go beyond the nation-state against the backdrop of globalization and investigate the

⁵¹ Cfr D. R. GABACCIA, *Italy’s Many Diasporas*, London and New York, Routledge, 2000.

⁵² S. LUCONI, *The Pitfalls of the Italian Diaspora*, in «Italian American Review», 1, 2 (2011), pp. 147-76: 147.

⁵³ Ivi, p. 164.

*specific issues related to people in a worldwide mobility, in a context in which research and theorization are inevitably affected by the transformations of the world in which those people live*⁵⁴. According to my viewpoint, “transnationalism”, “transculturalism”, “diaspora” and “Italicity” similarly refer to Luconi’s definition of an “overlapping of ‘there’ and ‘there’”, which implies that «communities are no longer defined in terms of members residing within a delimited and bordered space in a single geographical area but are characterized by people sharing the same identity while inhabiting different and often faraway physical Places»⁵⁵.

By using a terminology that is in widespread use in studies on the international flows of people and cultures – migration, diaspora, transnational – Pasolini addressed the question of subalternity by combining the Jewish question and the African question within the same frame as the Southern question, as defined by Antonio Gramsci in the aftermath of World War II⁵⁶. Through the notion of “subalternity” that Spivak reclaimed from Gramsci, Pasolini’s discourse becomes relevant in terms of migrations to the United States and from Italy⁵⁷. It contributed to the theorization of an Italian diaspora as a context in which to consider Italy as an entity that overcomes its national boundaries and takes account of many different realities outside Italy, from the Colonial heritage to the “little Italies” abroad. Hence, Pasolini’s discourses support the possibility of reframing Sicily as a transnational and transcultural space of otherness and subalternity within Italy, from the perspective of the Sicilian identity as the “other within,” then setting the groundwork for the perspective of the other-than-American in Coppola. Pasolini’s discourse carried out in *Sineciosi della diaspora* will then be as equally valid in Italy as anywhere else an identity recognised as “other” must cope with the phenomena of assimilation, refusal and subalternity, as happens in Italy today.

⁵⁴ Cfr D. R. GABACCIA, *Is Everywhere Nowhere? Nomads, Nations, and the Immigrant Paradigm of the United States*, in «Journal of American History», 86, 3 (1999), pp. 1115-34.

⁵⁵ S. LUCONI, *The Pitfalls of the Italian Diaspora* cit., p. 148.

⁵⁶ Cfr A. GRAMSCI, *The Southern Question*, translated, annotated and with an introduction by P. Verdicchio, West Lafayette, Bordighera Press, 1995.

⁵⁷ Cfr G. C. SPIVAK, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* cit.

Overall, I agree with Vighi, Trento, Gordon, as well as with Orsini and Pacchioni, when they highlight that this tension, this dichotomy, this instability between the local and the global, the national and the international, ensures that Pasolini's work remains original and crucial to a deeper understanding of our contemporary times. This reading of Pasolini emphasizes his role as one of the earliest witnesses to a mode of reading Italian culture in a transnational and transcultural light. It vitally contributes to the possibility of identifying Italy through a series of specific and original features in a world where boundaries blur to allow a constant circularity of peoples and cultures.

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