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‘RIACQUISTARE LA CASARSA BUONA’: EXILE, REALISM AND AUTHORSHIP IN
PASOLINI’S *ATTI IMPURI* AND *AMADO MIO**

INTRODUCTION: CHRONICLE, CHRONOLOGY, REALISM

Atti impuri and *Amado mio* are two early unfinished novels about young homosexual love that Pasolini wrote in Rome in early 1950, where he had fled from Friuli in January of that year in the wake of a sexually tinged scandal provoked by the so-called *fatti di Ramuscello*.¹ Previous accounts of these Friulan novels have read them as diaristic, closely linked in time and place to their setting – an understandable attitude given the clear resemblance between their protagonists and the young Pasolini of the Friulan years.² Nonetheless, this

* My thanks to Zyg Barański, Armando Maggi, Robert Gordon, and the reviewers and editors at *Italian Studies* for their valuable comments on drafts of this essay, and also to Charles Leavitt for his wise counsel.

¹ For the novels, see Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Romanzi e racconti*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1998), I, 5-128; 195-265. For the events of 30 September 1949 and Pasolini’s subsequent flight to Rome under charges of ‘public indecency’ and ‘corrupting a minor’, see Nico Naldini, *Pasolini: Una vita* (Turin: Einaudi, 1989), pp. 130-48.

² The critical views of the novels I have found most fruitful are: Rinaldo Rinaldi, *L’irricoscibile Pasolini* (Rovito: Marra, 1990), pp. 77-98; Franco Fido, ‘Pasolini dai sogni alle cose: l’esordio friulano del narratore’, *Yearbook of Italian Studies* 9 (1991), 64-79; David Ward, *A Poetics of Resistance: Narrative and the Writings of Pier Paolo Pasolini* (London: Associated University Presses, 1995), pp. 26-46; Fabio Vighi, *Le ragioni dell’‘altro’: La formazione intellettuale di Pasolini tra saggistica, letteratura e cinema* (Ravenna: Longo, 2001), pp. 71-84; Derek Duncan, *Reading and Writing Italian Homosexuality: A Case of Possible Difference* (Aldershot: Ashgate,

interpretation is misleading: critics have largely ignored the fact that the redactions of the novels we read today were drawn up in Rome, not Friuli; they have therefore misinterpreted the novels' fundamental motif of nostalgia as chronicle.³ Instead, I view the novels' relationship to their setting as analogous to the wistful poetic works on Friuli that Pasolini also wrote in Rome in the early 1950s.⁴ Moreover, my reading sets the novels in the context not only of Pasolini's own career but also of other contemporary Italian narrative, an aspect hitherto ignored almost completely by scholars. This comparison will bring out the formally experimental and metaliterary qualities of the novels, qualities which presage Pasolini's later narrative works of the 1960s and 1970s.

2006), pp. 83-105; Giorgio Nisini, *L'unità impossibile: Dinamiche testuali nella narrativa di Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Rome: Carocci, 2008), pp. 67-106.

³ Enzo Golino, for example, defines *Atti impuri* as 'un diario autobiografico appena velato da schemi narrativi' (*Pasolini: Il sogno di una cosa* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1985), p. 98). Seemingly divergent readings such as Rinaldi and Ward's intertextual studies, and Ricciardi's autobiographical interpretation all hold fast to the notion of a necessary connection to the referent of Friuli in the late 1940s. See Rinaldi on the 'limits' of Pasolini's 'autobiography' (*L'irricoscibile*, p. 79); Ward on the 'gap between text and referent' (p. 43); Ricciardi's description of her work as 'an exploration of Pasolini's Friulan experiences as related in these texts' (Gabriella Ricciardi, *Autobiographical Representation in Pier Paolo Pasolini and Audre Lorde* (Tübingen: Stauffenberg, 2001), pp. 25-66 (pp. 37-38)).

⁴ See 'Appendice (1950-53)' and 'Il Romancero (1953)' in *La meglio gioventù* (now in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Tutte le poesie*, ed. by Walter Siti (Milan: Mondadori, 2003), 2 vols, I, 91-101, 133-58); the unpublished appendix to *L'usignolo della Chiesa Cattolica* from 1950-53 (pp. 559-600); and *Roma 1950 Diario* (pp. 697-713).

The claim that Pasolini largely ceased work on the novels after leaving Friuli for Rome can be traced back to the editorial note to the novels' first edition, by Concetta D'Angeli. D'Angeli dates *Atti impuri* to the Friulan period, although she allows that *Amado mio* must have been revised in Rome because of the existence of a redaction in which the action shifts to the city.⁵ In this, D'Angeli follows biographers such as Nico Naldini who had already associated the trauma of exile with a disjuncture between Pasolini's artistic practices in Friuli and in Rome.⁶ Although it has since been pointed out several times that the author himself reports working on both novels in Rome in 1950, critics have nonetheless continued to treat the novels as written in Friuli.⁷

⁵ See Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Amado mio, preceduto da Atti impuri*, ed. by Concetta D'Angeli (Milan: Garzanti, 1982), pp. 195-202 (pp. 198, 202). For the Roman redaction of *Amado mio*, see Pasolini, *Romanzi*, I, 293-336.

⁶ 'Quando decise ad andarsene, a fuggire, per un po' [Pasolini] non ebbe alcun sentimento o ricordo del Friuli, né rimpianto, né rancore. Il suo tempo friulano era *epoché*, poi divenne mito, poi storia e infine divenne la poesia di *Il sogno di una cosa* e *La meglio gioventù*', Naldini in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Poesie e pagine ritrovate* (Rome: Lato Side, 1980), pp. 68-69. For the many critical misreadings stemming from this supposed disjuncture, see Zygmunt G. Barański, 'Pasolini, Friuli, Rome (1950-1951): Philological and Historical Notes', in *Pasolini Old and New: Surveys and Studies*, ed. by Zygmunt G. Barański (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999), pp. 253-280.

⁷ For Pasolini's account of working on the novels in Rome in his letters, see note 11 and Siti and De Laude in Pasolini, *Romanzi* I, 1672. Naldini's biography contradicts his earlier account of Pasolini's first Roman activities: '[Pasolini] riapre gli "scartafacci" [...]. Lavora a una terza stesura più romanzesca di *Atti impuri* e *Amado*

The Friulan novels indeed began as diaries of Pasolini's time in Friuli: a series of notebooks from the years 1946-47 known as the *Quaderni rossi*.⁸ The author's letters make clear that he worked on a novel based on these notebooks, in effect a precursor to *Atti impuri*, whilst still in Friuli in 1947-49.⁹ *Amado mio* was also conceived in Friuli: an *elzeviro* by that title treating the novel's climactic scene in the cinema at Caorle was published in 1947 and, around the same time, Pasolini worked on a preliminary version of the novel.¹⁰ However, both novels were rewritten completely in 1950 after the move to Rome. At this time Pasolini introduced structural features essential to the nostalgic motif I identify: *Atti impuri*'s use of analepsis, the 'objectivized' third-person narration of *Amado mio*, and the decision to

mio' (*Una vita*, p. 142). Despite these revisions to the record, and others (e.g. Fido, p. 68), acute readers such as Vighi have continued to follow D'Angeli's dating: 'Se ritocchi vi furono, non dovettero mutare di molto la stesura dell'originale [i.e. of *Amado mio*], risalente almeno al 1947' (p. 79).

⁸ These notebooks remain unpublished in full but long sections are quoted in Nico Naldini, "Et m'è rimasa nel pensier la luce", in Pasolini, *Poesie e pagine ritrovate*, pp. 7-72; Nico Naldini, 'Cronologia', in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Lettere*, ed. by Nico Naldini, 2 vols (Turin: Einaudi, 1986-88), I (1986), xi-cxxxii, while a further extract was released in Pasolini, *Romanzi*, I, 131-157. See Siti and De Laude in Pasolini, *Romanzi*, I, 1655-1661 and Nisini, pp. 70-78.

⁹ See the letter to Gianfranco Contini from 20 August 1947, which includes a preface to a projected novel called *Pagine involontarie* or *Casarsa* (Pasolini, *Lettere*, I, 320-21; *Romanzi*, I, 186-87). See also Pasolini, *Lettere*, I, 314; 354; 362; 374; 375.

¹⁰ The *elzeviro* can now be found in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Un paese di temporalità e di primule*, ed. by Nico Naldini (Parma: Guanda, 1994), pp. 141-43). For the Friulan redaction of *Amado mio*, see Pasolini, *Romanzi*, I, 272-92.

combine the two novels in a single macrotext.¹¹ These new structural features constitute a substantial change from the Friulan versions, themselves already fictions not diaries, because of the metaliterary qualities they introduce. Any equation of the resulting novels' plots with the biographical data of Pasolini's life is thus highly problematic.

The situation of the novels' final redaction after the very public exposure of Pasolini's sexual encounters with young men in late 1949 has profound implications for one autobiographical theme that previous scholarship has rightly stressed: that of homosexuality. The most convincing reading of these texts in terms of same-sex desire has seen the novels as a performative representation of being gay in 1940s Friuli. The novels' unfinished status is hence explained in terms of the impossibility of publicly and candidly expressing such desires.¹² I hold instead that the novels' poetics of absence, which depends on the author's

¹¹ In a letter to Silvana Mauri, dated 11 February 1950, some two weeks after arriving in Rome, Pasolini describes three separate novels he is planning. For the first time in his letters, Pasolini mentions our two novels by name alongside an account of their structure strongly resembling the redactions we have now. (The third projected novel would become *Il sogno di una cosa*, published in 1962). He also dubs *Amado mio* 'un po' il seguito di *Atti impuri*' (Pasolini, *Lettere* 1, 400-02 (p. 402)). See Siti and De Laude in Pasolini, *Romanzi*, I, 1631-54; 1665-71.

¹² 'Atti impuri and *Amado mio* are about the difficulties of expressing (publicly) homosexuality as a subject position (space) or as a plot (time). Pasolini's texts bring homosexuality into being by the performative nature of their narration' (Duncan, p. 100). For other readings concentrating on the theme of homosexuality, see Ricciardi; Sergio Parussa, 'Reluctantly Queer: In Search of the Homoerotic Novel in Twentieth Century Italian Fiction', in *Queer Italia: Same Sex Desire in Italian Literature and*

exile in the wake of his public and sexually motivated shaming, provides the backdrop for a metaliterary reflection on the authorial practice of narrative realism. This self-reflexivity means that the autobiographical elements correctly identified by prior scholarship are relativized and deployed strategically for literary effect.

Given the critical focus on autobiography, it is surprising that no one has yet examined the Friulan novels' engagement with the lively postwar debate in Italy on realism, the literary movement most closely associated with an ontological connection between the written word and the world of experience. An analysis of the Friulan novels in terms of postwar Italian realism will demonstrate the extent to which, in establishing a homosexual 'subject position' (Duncan, p. 100), Pasolini adopts and adapts to his purposes a posture of the excluded author that is widely established among contemporary Italian authors across genres.¹³ In particular, I believe that certain features of *Atti impuri* and *Amado mio* allude directly to canonical aspects of postwar neorealist narrative: the evocation of a subaltern regional landscape; the thematic importance of the war and of the Resistance; the close concern with plot and narrative process; and the novels' self-authorization via a claim to the

Film, ed. by Gary P. Cestaro (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp 173-186 (especially pp. 175-78).

¹³ Compare Luperini on marginalized female characters in the work of Italian women novelists: 'La donna vittima della Manzini o della Banti [...] non rappresenta solo lo stato femminile in una società sessista; è anche il simbolo di un'estraneazione storica che riguarda tutto il ceto sociale degli intellettuali letterati' (Romano Luperini, *Il Novecento: Apparati ideologici, ceto intellettuale, sistemi formali nella letteratura italiana contemporanea*, 2 vols (Turin: Loescher, 1981), II, 476).

status of testimony.¹⁴ Nonetheless, in their refusal to subscribe to the ‘deliberately antirhetorical’ ethos of neorealism (Re, ‘Neorealist Narrative’, p. 108) and in their problematizing of subjectivity,¹⁵ the novels enact a strategic disavowal of these similarities and situate themselves instead in the context of other literary traditions, especially the lyric anthology – the genre on which Pasolini’s reputation was based at the time he was writing.¹⁶

The importance of the lyric to *Atti impuri* and *Amado mio* is symptomatic of their underlying existentialist poetics, which shows a significant debt to hermeticism’s project of

¹⁴ Pasolini’s familiarity with neorealist aesthetics is apparent from the 1945 Friulan pastiche ‘Cronacuta di Paisdomini’ (*Romanzi*, I, 1290-91, and see Nisini, pp. 46-47). For Pasolini’s narrative and neorealism, see Antonio Vitti, *Il Primo Pasolini e la sua narrativa* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), pp. 1-23. For neorealist narrative more generally, see Luperini, II, 669-682; Bruno Falchetto, *Storia della narrativa neorealista* (Milan: Mursia, 1992); Lucia Re, *Calvino and the Age of Neorealism: Fables of Estrangement* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 7-154; Lucia Re, ‘Neorealist Narrative: Experience and Experiment’, in *The Cambridge Companion to the Italian Novel*, ed. by Peter Bonandella and Andrea Ciccarelli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 104-24.

¹⁵ ‘The crisis of the subject [...] is, with a few exceptions, absent from neorealist literature and film’ Re, *Fables of Estrangement*, p. 19.

¹⁶ This evocation and disavowal of neorealism may well reflect Pasolini’s conflicted relationship with Vittorini and with *Il Politecnico*. See Vighi, p. 168n; Joseph Francese, ‘The Latent Presence of Crocean Aesthetics in Pasolini’s “Critical Marxism”’, in *Pasolini Old and New*, ed. by Barański, pp. 131-62 (pp. 138-39).

communicating alterity via language (Luperini, II, 587-622).¹⁷ Unlike in hermeticism, where the existential drama is resolved before the moment of poetic expression, which refers abstractly to it, Pasolini's anthologies and novels represent the author's search for poetic expression performatively, with their formal and structural incompleteness pointing to the final leap of intuition the reader is required to make in order to share in the author's insight.¹⁸ This incompleteness of the individual work means that hermeticism's selectivity of lexis is reassigned to the canon of the author's *oeuvre*.¹⁹ For example, in Pasolini's two projects of poetic self-anthologization of this period – *La meglio gioventù*, and *L'usignolo della Chiesa Cattolica* – the poet's selection and revision of his pre-existing works creates a sense of overarching authorial intent that is refracted in the multiplicity of lyric expression.²⁰ In the Friulan novels this process is further concretized through the unutterable 'realist' link between the events narrated and the experiences of the author, whose consistent and yet ungraspable presence in the text becomes a cipher for our transcendence of its unfinished

¹⁷ This poetics is visible in Pasolini's Fascist-era critical essays, where he is often in dialogue with major figures of hermeticism, including Anceschi, Luzi, and Ungaretti (Vighi, pp. 19-51).

¹⁸ This reading anticipates the incompleteness and performativity that Carla Benedetti diagnoses in Pasolini's final works, see *Pasolini contro Calvino: Per una letteratura impura* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1998), pp. 9-60. See also Vighi, who, more than anyone, has shown the centrality of intuition to Pasolini's intellectual endeavours.

¹⁹ Antonio Tricomi, *Sull'opera mancata di Pasolini: Un autore irrisolto e il suo laboratorio* (Rome: Carocci, 2005) examines in great detail the dialogue between book and *oeuvre* in Pasolini.

²⁰ For this process, see Angela Meekins, 'Pier Paolo Pasolini: Narcis tal Friùl', in *Pasolini Old and New*, ed. by Barański, pp. 229-51.

status.²¹ On this view, Pasolini's nostalgic revising of the novels after his flight to Rome becomes especially relevant because it is during this process of redaction that he shapes his works into performances of his authorial position of sinful exile.

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE: NEGATION AND HYBRIDITY

In 1950, as he was drafting the novels' final redactions, Pasolini wrote an author's preface to the *Atti impuri* and *Amado mio*.²² The preface is significant, first because it provides a critical framework for the novels, and second because it shows that the two texts were to be yoked together as components of a single book, just as *La meglio gioventù* would subsequently bring together pre-existing poetic anthologies.²³ Pasolini makes clear that he intends his treatment of homosexuality as a challenge; it was, after all, a subject on which Italian narrative authors had remained largely silent.²⁴ But his approach to breaking new thematic ground is traditional: he builds on the privileged status that Italian literary culture axiomatically imputed to authorship whether in poetry or prose.²⁵ This assertion of privilege underlies a rhetorical surface of conflicted individuality.

²¹ See Pasolini's 1942 essay on contemporary novels, 'Microcosmo', where he argues that the narrative genre 'trova la sua giustificazione di "racconto" nel rendere validi i propri motivi interiori e accaduti nella realtà, attraverso una *rievocazione poetica*' (Pasolini, *Saggi sulla letteratura*, I, 13, emphasis added).

²² Now in Pasolini, *Romanzi*, I, 269-271. And see Siti and De Laude on p. 1672.

²³ For the novels as a pair, see note 11; Pasolini, *Lettere*, I, 405; Nisini, p. 85. For the editorial history of *La meglio gioventù*, see Siti in Pasolini, *Poesie*, I, 1459-65.

²⁴ For narrative accounts of homosexuality under Fascism, see Duncan, pp. 41-63.

²⁵ For the humanistic respect for artistic endeavour among prose writers such as Vittorini and the neorealists, see Luperini, II, 566, 611-12; Falcetto, pp. 45-48.

Non so se gli argomenti così scabrosi di questi due racconti siano sufficientemente necessari e oggettivati; suppongo addirittura che qualcuno, se io dicessi il nome del peccato... forse non leggerebbe nemmeno la prima pagina del libro. [...] Chiedo in fine al lettore di non farmi cadere troppo dall'alto, se trova che i miei racconti non sono riusciti. Anche questa volta si fa questione di sincerità o ipocrisia: se è dalla mia vita che ho raccolto il materiale di questo libro, vuol dire che non ho avuto paura di farlo... E se ho avuto, al contrario troppo coraggio, prego il lettore di indignarsi contro la violenza, non contro l'anomalia dell'amore. (*Romanzi*, I, 269-70)

We can see from the excerpt above why critics have been tempted to emphasize the autobiographical elements in the novels: Pasolini presents them as fictions explicitly based on his own homosexual experiences. But to concentrate on historical veracity is to miss this passage's phenomenological import: the application of religious terminology to homosexuality establishes the subjective truth of transgressive desire as the issue worthy of consideration. This categorizing of the novels under the rubric of 'confession' to the 'sin' of homosexual love speaks to the influence on Pasolini's aesthetic ideas of existentialism.²⁶ The Kierkegaardian focus on the author's 'sinful' person establishes a universal ethical relevance for his experiences through its reflection of a universal and yet unsayable condition.²⁷ The rhetorical figure of reticence ('se io dicessi il nome del peccato...') plays a performative role here, emphasizing the difficulty of naming the 'fact' of homosexuality and qualifying

²⁶ Pasolini had encountered existentialism in 1943 through an introductory work by Enzo Paci, *L'Esistenzialismo* (Padua: CEDAM, 1943). His enthusiastic report of his readings, dwells on the movement's 'poetico (e ancora vicinissimo a me) concetto di "angoscia", e la sua identificazione esistenza-filosofia', (Pasolini, *Lettere*, I, 171). See Vighi, especially pp. 17, 49-50; Nisini, pp. 34-36, 52n.

²⁷ Compare this passage from the *Quaderni rossi*: 'Non importa se io mi sono riconosciuto e ho acquistato la *divina coscienza* di me proprio attraverso questa mia deviazione naturale. [...] A me non risulta più né come negativa né come positiva: sono le vitali contraddizioni di Kierkegaard' (Pasolini, *Romanzi*, I, 134, emphasis original). And see Nisini, pp. 40-43.

Pasolini's silence as representative of an experience that has brought him insight.

Furthermore, the avowal of identity through sin sets a limit on the process of 'oggettivazione' that Pasolini claims to have carried out on his material; instead, the 'violence' of the love described points towards the affective aspects of the novelistic form as the means that will clarify the epistemological importance of the irrational truths depicted.²⁸

Despite this limiting of objectivity, the utilitarian language Pasolini uses to justify the concentration on his own life ('argomenti [...] necessari e oggettivati') appears to invoke neorealism since it applies the urgency to communicate typical of partisan narratives to his documenting of homosexuality.²⁹ The novels' status as an account of war-era youth from the viewpoint of postwar maturity also fits with the neorealist reading of the Resistance as a rite of passage.³⁰ Finally, there is a hint of neorealist poetics in the overall project of the preface – the binding together of two novels with diverse forms and points of view, resulting in a many-voiced book reminiscent of the 'narrazione insieme unitaria e plurifocale' that Maria

²⁸ Compare Pasolini's call in the 1946 essay 'In margine all'esistenzialismo' for an 'atheistic mysticism' capable of communicating the 'fatto concreto e angoscioso' of human existence (now in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude (Milan: Mondadori, 1999), pp. 29-32 (p. 31)).

²⁹ For the roots in partisan publications of the wartime period of this privileging of eyewitness accounts, as well as of other qualities relevant to *Atti impuri* and *Amadamo* such as fragmentation and brevity, see Giovanni Falaschi, 'Il racconto (e il romanzo)', in *La resistenza armata nella narrativa italiana* (Turin: Einaudi, 1976), pp. 55-80; Re, *Fables of Estrangement*, pp. 76-97.

³⁰ 'Many Italian writers [...] seek a justification for the Resistance that would explain it as a rite of passage into adulthood and political maturity' (Re, *Fables of Estrangement*, pp. 83-84).

Corti has traced from partisan publications to short story collections, such as Calvino's *Ultimo viene il corvo*, and then to the choral novels of Vasco Pratolini.³¹ These salient features of postwar Italian narrative – objectivity, maturation, and chorality – are recruited to the service of a literary project that is avowedly founded in the irrational and the subjective, despite the obvious tensions this causes. This ‘contaminated’ literary praxis is celebrated in the negative comparison of the novels to Pasolini's poems that paradoxically valorizes the prose works by making them an even more accurate performance of their author's ‘sin’: ‘Tutto ciò che ho scritto in queste pagine era già certo implicito nei pochi versi che ho pubblicato, ma con quanta maggiore bontà, solo ora me ne accorgo’ (*Romanzi*, I, 270).³²

A final important aspect of the preface, and one which prefigures the novels themselves, is the use of exotic intertextual allusions, combined with the exclusion of

³¹ See Maria Corti, ‘Neorealismo’, in *Il viaggio testuale* (Turin: Einaudi, 1978), pp. 25-110 (p. 45). In the letter to Mauri of 11 February 1950 (note 11), Pasolini compares the multiple points of view of *Il sogno di una cosa* to the ‘tapestry’ of Pratolini's *Cronache di poveri amanti* (*Lettere* I, 402).

³² D'Angeli takes this sentence as evidence for dating the preface to Pasolini's Friulan period, assuming it refers to *Poesie a Casarsa* (Pasolini, *Amado mio*, ed. by D'Angeli, p. 195). But, aside from the objection that *Dov'è la mia patria* was published in 1949, not long before the flight to Rome, the comment's principal purpose is surely to reproduce the subaltern relationship that Pasolini sets up, both before and after 1950, between his works on the page and the unutterable poetic word they seek to enunciate. (See, for example, the concluding notes to *Poesie a Casarsa* and to *La meglio gioventù*, Pasolini, *Poesie*, I, 159, 193).

comparisons to contemporary Italian novelists.³³ Instead, Pasolini looks outside Italy for his authorities in the narrative genre and particularly to the paradigmatic figure of Gide, in an operation that presages *Amado mio*.³⁴

Ma era necessaria questa fedeltà al mio decadimento; le stesse fonti del libro, da De Laclos a Peyrefitte, da Gide a Mann, dicono come nel taglio del racconto, tra leggendario e letterario, abbia scelto proprio un'intonazione cattiva (*Romanzi*, I, 270).

Of the writers mentioned, the name of Gide is particularly apposite since he serves not only as the authoritatively homosexual writer that the Italian tradition lacked, but also as an exemplar of narrative writing in which the author's person is ostentatiously present.³⁵ Moreover, there appears to be a direct reference to Pasolini's public explanation of his behaviour during the scandalous evening at Ramuscello that precipitated his exile and public

³³ *Atti impuri* contains numerous references to Italian poets (Ungaretti, Montale, Betocchi, Cavalcanti, Saba, Tommaseo, Tasso, Gozzano, Leopardi, Foscolo), and *Amado mio* many references to European writers (Jiménez, Eliot, Kafka, Cavafy, Goethe, Proust, Gide, Dostoyevsky, Molière), whereas neither refers to works analogous to themselves: contemporary Italian novels.

³⁴ For Pasolini's readings of French prose writers including Gide, Proust, and Sartre see Siti in Pasolini, *Romanzi*, I, CXI; Vighi, pp. 12-14; Nisini, pp. 19, 49-61. Such ostentatious Europeanism is in fact a relatively conservative technique, which recuperates the practice of Fascist-era *critica militante*. See Ruth Ben-Ghiat, 'Fascism, Writing and Memory: The Realist Aesthetic in Italy 1930-1950', *Journal of Modern History*, 67 (1995), 627-65 (pp. 638-40).

³⁵ Gide's status as a model is apparent throughout Pasolini's early writings, for example in the *Quaderni rossi*: 'non mi è successo, come a Gide, di gridare d'un tratto "Sono diverso dagli altri" con angosce inaspettate; io l'ho sempre saputo' (*Romanzi*, I, 157).

opprobrium: he described his actions that night as an imitation of a Gide novel.³⁶

Despite Pasolini's professed unwillingness to name his homosexuality, the invocation of Gide and his fellows at the expense of Italian prose writers provides a means to incarnate his sexuality textually as the primary feature which distinguishes him from his Italian contemporaries, even as he draws on those contemporaries' literary values. This unique status is shared by the novels themselves, which stand in relation to numerous categories of texts – autobiography, the lyric anthology, European modernism, and, *ex silentio*, the Italian novel – and yet belong completely to no grouping but that of the author's *oeuvre*.³⁷

ATTI IMPURI: RETROSPECTION AND DESIRE

Atti impuri is an account of the experiences of Paolo, a young man who moves to Friuli from Bologna with his mother to escape the bombing raids and the civil war which followed the fall of Mussolini in 1943. Paolo and his mother set up a small school to teach the young people of the local villages to read and write Italian. Paolo desires the young men of the

³⁶ Pasolini's Gidian self-fashioning is cited in the police report and contemporaneous newspaper accounts (see *Pasolini: Cronaca giudiziaria, persecuzione, morte*, ed. by Laura Betti (Milan: Garzanti, 1977), p. 42). Ferdinando Mautino invokes 'le deleterie influenze di certe correnti ideologiche e filosofiche dei vari Gide, Sartre, di altrettanto decadenti poeti e letterati' in his article in *L'Unità* of 29 October 1949 announcing the poet's expulsion from the PCI (quoted in Betti pp. 36-37).

³⁷ 'Pasolini, non ancora trentenne, concepisce già l'insieme delle sue opere come un'unica opera, inclassificabile secondo le usuali partizioni di genere' (Tricomi, p. 42). But Tricomi is strangely reticent to accord to the novels themselves the recognition he gives the preface, referring to *Atti impuri* as a 'romanzo autobiografico di un capro espiatorio' and to *Amado mio* as its natural companion (p. 41).

village and starts to have sexual encounters with them that gradually become common knowledge, much to his shame. He falls for one boy in particular, called Nisiuti, and seeks to win him over, with mixed success.

The novel is a frame narrative, beginning and ending in the years 1946-47 with the perspective of a twenty-five-year-old Paolo, who has established a more stable relationship with Nisiuti but finds that Friuli and his lover are starting to pall. The protagonist's experiences of first love are located in an irretrievable past, whose separation from the frame narrator is emphasized by the Proustian technique of analepsis.³⁸

Ho venticinque anni, l'età in cui Gozzano disse addio alla giovinezza. Son tre anni da quando ho visto per la prima volta Nisiuti sul ponte della Vila, due anni e mezzo da quando, in quel terribile casello, egli mi ha ceduto, più di un anno da quando ho osato pensare per la prima volta che il mio amore fosse cessato. Cio non ostante non ho fatto nulla per risolvere in qualche modo il mio stato, e lascio, al contrario che il tempo si consumi, senza la minima pietà se non mentale e messa subito a tacere, per quel ragazzo che ha dovuto sopportare tutto il peso delle mie disperazioni. (*Romanzi*, I, 112)

Paolo's narrative act is rooted in disappointment: he claims that his lack of amorous fulfilment in the present is what allows him to separate himself sufficiently from his first erotic encounters in 1943 and 1944 and the springtime beginnings of his romance with Nisiuti in 1945 in order to write about them. The distancing effect inherent to this 'interplay between two temporalities' dramatizes the narrator's separation from the wartime encounters that form the body of the novel (Nisini, pp. 76-78).³⁹ We can see the author in Rome

³⁸ This technique also characterizes the Roman appendix to *L'usignolo*, mentioned above (note 4). See especially the poem 'Intermittence du coeur', whose title refers directly to Proust (Pasolini, *Poesie*, I, 565-66).

³⁹ Nisini rightly notes that there is also a third temporality – that of the novel's composition – and comments that it must be subsequent to the frame narrative's

projecting his exile back to the period in which he first began work on a novel on the theme of homosexuality set in Friuli, associating the very activity of narrative with retrospection and loss.⁴⁰

The central part of the novel contains the protagonist's reflection on his first sexual experiences in the war years 1943-45; its chronological setting and urgent authenticity of content provide a connection to the genre of partisan memoir mentioned earlier with regard to the preface. (This connection will be made explicit towards the end of the novel by the intervention of a young wounded partisan, discussed below.) In these central chapters, the author presents his protagonist's time in Friuli in a manner familiar to readers of his dialect poetry: a sojourn in a rural idyll apart from modernity. There is also a dialogue with the central themes of his Italian-language lyrics later gathered in *L'usignolo della Chiesa Cattolica* – desire, maturation, the sacred.

In Maggio tutte le sere andai a Rosario: furono momenti soavissimi. La chiesa spopolata, le rare candele, il pavimento umido come di fantasmi primaverili, e il canto nudo, vibrante delle litanie, da cui, un po' alla volta, ero stordito. Appoggiati alla porta e al fonte battesimale, oppure diritti in piedi cantavano, tutt'intorno a me coloro per cui unicamente ero entrato in chiesa... (Pasolini, *Romanzi*, p. 37)⁴¹

fictional date of 22 November 1947 (p. 77). However, he does not clarify whether he accepts a dating of the final redaction to 1950.

⁴⁰ This ethos also informed an early version of *L'usignolo della Chiesa Cattolica* that Pasolini sent to Bompiani after the *fatti di Ramuscello*, and continued to revise in Rome alongside the Friulan novels (see Siti in Pasolini, *Poesie*, I, 1538-40). One redaction of the version ended with a selection from Pasolini's verse diaries that the poet describes as 'lasciare questo libro aperto su una soluzione che è quella informe e inutile della cronologia' (Pasolini, *Poesie*, I, 1561, and see Tricomi pp. 47-60).

⁴¹ This scene resembles a novelistic gloss on the evocation of a blushing altar boy in the prose poem 'Davide' later published in *L'usignolo* (pp. 406-08).

Paolo's desire is here juxtaposed with and equated to an expression of popular spirituality, uniting these irrational experiences under a rubric of transcendence.⁴² The highly expressionistic quality of this passage makes the carnal desires of the protagonist metaphorically present in the description of the litany's 'naked, quivering chant' and its parapsychic effect on him.

Yet the Edenic quality of the protagonist's desires for his young male acquaintances intertwines with a strong sense of shame and estrangement, as we see when Paolo describes the aftermath of his first, abortive, advances to a local youth.

Questo fatto fu disastroso per me, perché venne risaputo, lentamente, in paese, e apportò un mutamento quasi radicale alla mia vita. È inutile che ora rievochi l'angoscia di quei giorni (una volta, passando per San Lorenzo, sentii dei fanciulli gridarmi dietro: vergognòus – vergognoso; non aggiungo altro). (Pasolini, *Romanzi*, p. 39)

Just as the local Friulans were the arbiters of the sacred in the episode cited above, here they have the power to ostracize Paolo, with one of the few examples of the local dialect in the novels furnishing a dramatic reminder of the gap between the protagonist's cultural identity and that of his fellows. Friuli thus appears in the novels as a place paradoxically suspended between idyllic homeland and foreign country, with homosexual desire serving as the identifying conduit in both instances. These passages exemplify the extent to which Pasolini increases the structural importance of homosexuality in the 1950 redaction of *Atti impuri*, perhaps indicating a greater identification of his sexuality with his outsider status in the wake of his public humiliation.⁴³ The narrator's condition of isolation comes to parallel that of the

⁴² For the irrational and the sacred in Pasolini, see Vighi, especially pp. 9-18.

⁴³ In a passage from the *Quaderni rossi*, the narrator's sense of isolation on arriving in Friuli is attributed not foremost to his desires for the region's young males, but rather

author and the novels themselves as described in the preface: his exclusion lends him a unique status that qualifies his experiences as worthy of consideration through narrative.⁴⁴

The war acts as a second great thematic source for *Atti impuri*, after love: it determines the social conditions of the entire novel, including Paolo's very presence in Friuli. One of the most dramatic moments in *Atti impuri* specifically invokes that touchstone of wartime Italy, the Resistance movement.⁴⁵ While walking with a friend, Paolo hears shots and sees a young man – a partisan he supposes – on a bicycle. They realize the fighter is wounded in the leg and come to his aid.

Si procurarono delle fasce, gli tagliarono con le forbici i calzoncini e lo lasciarono alla meglio. Era ferito nella coscia, vicino all'inguine; soffriva orribilmente. [...] Giunse dopo poco la mamma di Paolo: che pensando all'altro suo figlio partigiano, con una incredibile dolcissima calma, lavò la cucina dal sangue, prese dei cuscini, li distese nella stanzetta dietro il focolare, e li fecero distendere il ragazzo. Intanto Dina e una zia di Paolo erano andate a chiamare il dottore, e tutti stavano ad aspettare nel cortile, dall'altra parte della casa, pregando. (*Romanzi*, I, 108-09)

Paolo's mother's reaction likens the partisan soldier to the protagonist's unnamed brother,

to a more generalized cultural difference from his neighbours, alongside a fear of death inspired by the war (see *Romanzi*, I, 143-44).

⁴⁴ The importance attached to this isolated condition echoes Paci's exposition of the philosophy of Karl Jaspers (*L'Esistenzialismo*, pp. 40-50), which dwells on the limit-situation (*Grenzsituation*): 'the moments in which existence simultaneously reflects, confronts and supersedes both its cognitive and practical boundaries' (Christopher J. Thornhill, *Karl Jaspers: Politics and Metaphysics* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 24).

⁴⁵ Falcetto describes the war and the Resistance as a 'grande dispositivo di straniamento' that wrought not only social but anthropological change on the Italian elite and wider populace alike (p. 78). And see note 54 for Pasolini's dramatic expansion of the Second World War's narrative importance to *Atti impuri* after his arrival in Rome.

and in fact he is strongly reminiscent of Guido Pasolini, Pier Paolo's younger brother who died fighting in the Resistance in 1945. The same kind of sensual and sacralizing prose that elsewhere narrates Paolo's encounters with young men here describes the partisan's wound and Paolo's mother's ministrations.⁴⁶ The local people serve as a form of chorus, guiding our interpretation by their prayerful reaction – a further juxtaposition of the actions of the novel's plot to popular spirituality.

This analysis shows the unacknowledged debt that Pasolini's early novels owe to prose writers from the generation before such as Cesare Pavese and Romano Bilenchi, who also struggled to come to terms with neorealist aesthetics. Like Pavese, Pasolini appears conscious of his lack of participation in Resistance fighting, and this section has something of the air of the final chapter of *La casa in collina*, which describes the phenomenology of war from the point of view of a non-combatant.⁴⁷ Pavese identifies the power to participate fully in the conflict exclusively with the dead of both sides, thus effacing the distinction amongst the living between those who fought and those who did not. Pasolini's personalizing and

⁴⁶ Compare the narrator's similarly external and yet intensely affective viewpoint when Paolo joins his pupils' football match: 'Davanti alla chiesa, su quel lenzuolo d'erba che anche d'inverno manteneva il suo colore, i ragazzi giocavano le loro irruenti partite di calcio. Ad essi qualche tempo dopo, quando ebbero fatto più confidenza, si aggiunse Paolo che si divertiva come loro, accaldato, scattante e pieno di trascinate ardore' (Pasolini, *Romanzi*, I, 69).

⁴⁷ See Cesare Pavese, *Romanzi*, 2 vols (Turin: Einaudi, 1961), II, 128-131. Re notes that Pavese's novel, like *Atti impuri*, 'cannot be ascribed to a hypothetical canon of the neorealist novel, [yet] cannot be understood without relating [it] to Pavese's attempt to come to terms with the imperatives of neorealism' ('Neorealist novel', p. 112).

sacralizing description of the wounded partisan, meanwhile, incorporates him into the universe of *Atti impuri*'s young men. The fighter becomes a hypostatization of the tremendous upheavals of the time, confining the intervention of history in the novel to a personal form suited to the work's orientation towards the subjective. The personalization of history here hints at the model of Bilenchi, whose *Dino e altri racconti* Pasolini cites in an essay from 1943, approving especially of its 'rievocazione' (i.e. absorption of the human faculties in the act of memory) of the Tuscan countryside.⁴⁸

ATTI IMPURI II: AUTO-EXEGESIS AND AUTHORSHIP

The redaction of *Atti impuri* that we have is a combination of six layers of text, written over a number of years and combined after the fact.⁴⁹ Each layer makes different decisions on various technical means of creating a fictionalizing distance between the novel and Pasolini's diaries: personal names and then toponyms are first reduced to initials, then changed entirely: Tonuti becomes T. and finally Nisiuti; Casarsa becomes C., then Castiglione.⁵⁰ In the third and fourth layers (C and C¹), written after the move to Rome, an editorial narrator intervenes to comment on the diary extracts, changing the overall perspective of the work from first person to third; however, in the final two post-1950 layers (D and D¹) the protagonist and

⁴⁸ 'Dino e Biografia ad Ebe', in Pasolini, *Saggi sulla letteratura*, I, 34-39. For

Bilenchi and history, see Joseph Francese, 'Romano Bilenchi's Poetics of an Ethics of Memory', *Italian Studies* 64 (2009), 91-104 (p. 96).

⁴⁹ See the account of the text in Pasolini, *Romanzi*, I, 1631-54; see also Nisini, pp. 70-84.

⁵⁰ For the significance of naming in the Friulan novels, see Parussa, pp. 175-77.

narrator are again united in a single 'io'.⁵¹

We do not know precisely how these discrepancies were to be reconciled in a final published version of the novel, and critics focused on philological realities have rightly stressed the chaotic, unfinished nature of the text.⁵² Nonetheless, this should not prevent us from analysing *Atti impuri*'s final redaction on its own terms: the novel as we have it possesses a clear narrative structure and, moreover, one which establishes a very interesting dialogue between narrative time and the text's editorial history. The only material in *Atti impuri* that was written contemporaneously with the events it covers comes in the passages set after the war in 1946 and 1947.⁵³ By contrast, the episodes that narrate instances from the wartime period 1943-45 were largely written in Rome in 1950.⁵⁴ The reconstitution of the novel in Rome highlights the contemporaneously written 1946-47 sections by using this material to begin and end the text.⁵⁵ At the same time, Pasolini completes his analeptic frame

⁵¹ For a full account of the six layers, see Siti and De Laude in Pasolini, *Romanzi*, I, 1633-35.

⁵² See Siti and De Laude in Pasolini, *Romanzi*, I, 1631; Nisini, p. 71.

⁵³ Siti and De Laude call this material 'Layer A' and date its first redaction as part of a novel to the summer of 1947, though much of it had been written a year earlier, in 1946, as entries in the *Quaderni rossi* (Pasolini, *Romanzi*, I, 1633-34). For a full account of the 'layers', see Siti and De Laude on pp. 1634-35.

⁵⁴ Layers C, C¹, and part of D, fully half the novel in total, are set in the years 1944 and 1945 but were drafted in Rome (*Romanzi*, I, 56-111). Only Layer B, which details events from 1945 and 1943, seems to have been drafted before Pasolini left Friuli (pp. 24-56).

⁵⁵ Material from Layer A makes up the lion's share of the first chapter of the novel and the end of the final chapter (Pasolini, *Romanzi*, I, 5-12; 14-23; 117-28)

by writing further pages using the same narrative perspective and chronological setting,⁵⁶ before delving back into the war years in the body of the book. In effect, Pasolini foregrounds the diaristic elements of his novel in the narrative frame, most probably to claim authority for his project in a cultural context that privileged authenticity.

The most significant innovation of the Roman redaction is the introduction of a third narratorial voice in *Atti impuri*, that of the editorial author who is rearranging and rewriting the material.⁵⁷ Take the aside in the first chapter ‘Ma riprendiamo a leggere il suo diario’ (*Romanzi*, I, 14), as Pasolini sutures together Layers C and A. The editorial author translates the voice of the self-anthologizing poet responsible for the epigraphs, translations and concluding notes of the two Friulan collections Pasolini had previously published, *Poesie a Casarsa* and *Dov'è la mia patria* to the new genre, which offers greater space for the contemplation of literary process. Two specific incarnations of Pasolini's authorial figure now very familiar to critics are foreshadowed here: first that of *Passione e ideologia*, *Empirismo eretico*, and the ‘Manifesto per un nuovo teatro’, where the author's critical pronouncements bear on the reception of his creative work in the fields of dialect poetry, cinema, and theatre, respectively;⁵⁸ second the Pasolini of such works as *Teorema*, *La divina mimesis*, and *Petrolio*, where the artistic project itself is predicated on incompleteness,

⁵⁶ The latter part of Siti and De Laude's Layer D and Layer D¹, which were drafted in Rome, (Pasolini, *Romanzi*, I, 94-117).

⁵⁷ Nisini has also treated this third narrator: see above, note 39.

⁵⁸ For the fragmented critical reaction to Pasolini resulting from this liminal role between literary creation and criticism, see Nicola Catelli, Elena Frontali, and Giovanni Ronchini, ‘Gli studi su Pasolini in Italia (2000-2007)’, in *Studi Pasoliniani*, 2 (2008), 123-138 (especially p. 126).

multiplicity of interpretations and auto-exegesis.⁵⁹

The best example of this narrator's activity comes in the opening pages of Chapter VII, which record a textually mediated process of engagement between Paolo and his natural environment.

Rileggo, mettendoli in ordine, alcuni confusi appunti scritti l'anno scorso in questa stagione. Rientro in quel tempo, nel suo corpo

'I monti illimpiditi' scrivevo, 'le campagne, le acque, tutto scintilla al giorno...
Tu nel tuo casolare, tra i peschi, vivi...
Sotto il tetto, inconscio, in qualche gesto d'amore...'

E a queste parole rivivo quei giorni e luoghi 'unici' della mia vita, e forse i più importanti, quelli per cui sono sopravvissuto...

La casa della Ilde era volta al Sud, ed era battuta dal sole per l'intera giornata.
(*Romanzi*, I, 94)

The pages that follow (pp. 94-104) are governed by this interplay between the Paolo who narrates and the Paolo who wrote the notes: auto-citations are interpolated into descriptions of the landscape that the narrating Paolo can see from Ilde's balcony, blurring the line between seeing and reading. Pasolini foregrounds this process by allowing lines from the notes to serve as headings for sections of the prose: '*Dai monti illimpiditi*, giù giù per le pianure alto-friulane, fino alle campagne di Castiglione, fino ai pioppi della Vila, in fondo ai campi dei F., *tutto scintillava*' (*Romanzi*, I, 95, emphasis added). The sensory experiences of

⁵⁹ For Pasolini's disruption of realist representation through self-reflexivity in his later narrative works, see Emanuela Patti's essays: 'Mimesis: Pasolini's Will to Be a Poet', in *Pier Paolo Pasolini: In Living Memory*, ed. by Ben Lawton and Maura Bergonzoni (Washington DC: New Academia Publishing, 2009), pp. 115-29; 'From Dantean Realism to Postrealism: La Divina Mimesis and the Mimetic Project', in *Corpus XXX: Pasolini, Petrolio, Salò*, ed. by Davide Messina (Bologna: CLUEB, 2012), pp. 109-33. Patti will soon publish a book on Pasolini's realism that was not yet available at the time of writing.

the narrator and his newly rediscovered writings are each valorized by the fit that this process reveals. And yet the two elements, text and commentary, resist any open assertion of their own value, depending on each other to determine their meaning, and thereby creating either a cycle of validation or an infinite deferral of meaning.⁶⁰ The result of this autocommentary is a textual symbiosis that incorporates an existentialist poetics of the literary word as figure or cipher of transcendence into the diaristic and plurivocal framework beloved of neorealism. I would therefore dissent from analyses of *Atti impuri* that have noted the auto-exegetical qualities it shares with the author's later prose works such as *La Divina Mimesis* or *Petrolio* but have hesitated to stress these solely because of its unfinished status.⁶¹ Indeed, the novel's analeptic and editorial structure casts doubt on the validity of classing any of Pasolini's performative projects as 'completed', since it shows that their concentration on literary process points to a unity of thought and expression that lies beyond the bounds of textuality.⁶²

AMADO MIO: A NEW AUTHORIAL SUBJECTIVITY

⁶⁰ It should be apparent from this analysis the extent to which *Atti impuri* is, as David Ward has noted, in dialogue with 'probably Italian literature's most self-conscious record of a text's and an author's process of formation' (p. 27): Dante's *Vita nova*.

⁶¹ 'La situazione storica da cui nasce *Atti impuri* non ha niente a che fare con quella di *La Divina Mimesis*, così come il progetto romanzesco rimasto incompiuto non va confuso con un'opera che dichiara volontariamente la propria progettualità' (Marco Bazzocchi, "'L'opera con la bocca aperta": L'edizione di *Tutte le opere* di Pasolini nei Meridiani', *Studi Pasoliniani*, 1 (2007), 79-88 (p. 82)). See also Siti and De Laude, in Pasolini, *Romanzi*, 1, 1633. But see Nisini, p. 77 for a countervailing view.

⁶² Tricomi's work has highlighted a similar dynamic but again primarily in the post-1965 Pasolini: see the chapter 'Nessun libro più', pp. 209-60.

The passage from *Atti impuri* to *Amado mio* seems to presage the loss of the lyric intellectual ‘I’ in Italian narrative that Italo Calvino notes in his 1955 essay, ‘Il midollo del leone’.⁶³ *Amado mio* is a largely linear, third-person narrative centring on an exemplary figure – an aptly named young bourgeois protagonist named Desiderio who struggles to quell the sexual aspects of his relationship with a local Friulan teenager, Benito, or Iasis as he redubs him.⁶⁴ The absence of *Atti impuri*’s diaristic frame operates a dramatic change in our engagement with the protagonists. In *Atti impuri*, we were party to the inner workings of Paolo’s desires; in *Amado mio*, meanwhile, all of our insight into Desiderio’s emotions comes via a narrator. There is therefore a more immediate claim to the universal significance of the protagonist’s story but at the cost of a less direct access.

Tanto per avere un pretesto su cui sospendere la sua emozione e la sua dedizione, Desi chiese al giovinetto se si fosse lasciato ritrarre. Benito acconsentì, un poco stupito, arrossendo. Allora Desi prese carte e matita e cominciò a disegnarlo.

Gilberto stava leggendo *Le Sabbat* in ginocchioni, coi gomiti puntati sulla sabbia e le guance affondate tra le mani. Leggeva ringhiando, con animazione.

‘No, io non somiglio a Sachs!’ disse ad un tratto.

‘Non ne dubito’, borbottò Desiderio, bianco di emozione.

‘Ma nemmeno tu a Gide’.

‘Tanto meglio’.

‘Sai perché ti faccio il ritratto?’ aggiunse poi rivolto al ragazzo.

‘No’, rispose Benito (ma per quale ragione era così servizievole e felice?).

‘Perché non posso baciarti.’ (*Romanzi*, I, 215)

The opening sentence of this quotation appears to confirm the new narrative situation: the narrator has near perfect insight into Desiderio’s thoughts while

⁶³ Italo Calvino, ‘Il midollo del leone’, in *Una pietra sopra: Discorsi di letteratura e società* (Turin: Einaudi, 1980), pp. 3-18. For Pasolini’s evocation of an existentialist ‘problema della scelta’ in reply, see Vighi, p. 160.

⁶⁴ See note 50.

retaining an identity distinct from his principal character. However, that impression is marred by the irruption of the protagonist's voice in the diegesis – '(ma perché era così servizievole e felice?)' – suggesting that the grammatical distance between the narrator and his protagonist is not absolute. Meanwhile, Desiderio and Gilberto compare and contrast themselves with Maurice Sachs and André Gide, hinting at a similar equation between *Amado mio* and *Le Sabbat* or *L'Immoraliste*.⁶⁵

Although *Amado mio*'s narrative might seem closed and self-contained – a neatly encapsulated *Bildungsroman* in which the outward manifestations of Desiderio's eponymous desire are gradually internalized – in truth we are reminded constantly of the presence of its author and his unfinished and unutterable story, as outlined in the preface. Here the interruption of the protagonist's thoughts combines with the allusion to Gide, an exotic, transgressive figure with whom Pasolini has very publicly identified himself, to emphasize the authorial hand that assembled the text. Despite the third-person narration, we therefore have a sense of intervening subjectivity that is a long way from Calvino's description of a narratorial poetics 'che

⁶⁵ There is also a subtle echo of another literary exemplar of artistic creation substituting for unconsummated eros: Dante's drawing of the angel on the anniversary of Beatrice's death (*Vita nova*, XXXIV. 1). This repeated echo of the *Vita nova* (cf. note 60) suggests a modelling of Pasolini's own hybrid literary project on young love – the two novels combined into to one book – on a work that famously mythologizes authorship via self-anthologization and exegesis.

tend[e] a un'oggettività [...] senza pretesa di giudicare, dimostrare, significare' (p. 12).⁶⁶

This dispassionate narratorial voice with irruptions of free indirect style represents a significant development in Pasolini's prose style – a precursor to the techniques he will use in *Ragazzi di vita*, *Una vita violenta* and later *Teorema* and *Petrolio*. Where before the move to Rome he had largely focused on first-person narratives communicating the protagonist's difficult engagement with his surroundings, now he 'objectivizes' his protagonists.⁶⁷ This decision to write exclusively in the third person comes only in after many revisions and certainly in Rome.⁶⁸ With this in mind, it is instructive to note the willed contrast in narrative technique that operates between *Atti impuri* and *Amado mio*: the shared autobiographical content acts to undermine *Amado mio*'s grammatical distancing of its narrator and emphasizes the artifice of the third-person narrative structure.

Where *Atti impuri* evokes the war and the Resistance, *Amado mio*'s Friuli is a

⁶⁶ Compare Benedetti's description of Pasolini as '[un autore] che si rifiuta di scomparire dietro al testo, dietro le maschere narrative e le rifrazioni d'identità, dietro l'uso ironico della propria voce' (pp. 11-12).

⁶⁷ For the term, see Pasolini, *Lettere*, I, 401-02.

⁶⁸ The original *elzeviro* bearing the title *Amado mio* was in the first person. The 1947 redaction begins in the third person, but Pasolini later rethought this and began to write the narrative from the perspective of Gilberto (*Romanzi*, I, 278-92). An early Roman version of *Amado mio* is in the third person but incorporates diaristic and epistolary passages in a manner similar to *Atti impuri* (pp. 295-303, 303-08). For a fuller account of the various redactions, see Nisini, pp. 84-88.

microcosm of the cultural liberation that occurred with the onset of peace.⁶⁹ The world described in *Atti impuri* is one of tradition and religion, revolving around *sagre*, or festivals; *Amado mio*'s opening scene, set in the midst of one such celebration, uses the *sagra* to emphasize the cultural shift between the two works.⁷⁰

La più bella delle maglie di Marzins comparve verso sera. Erano di certo le sei suonate e il ballo pomeridiano era ancora dimesso, quasi familiare. Si vedeva poca gente intorno e poca gente nella piattaforma; i giovani forestieri assaggiavano il terreno richiamandosi da un angolo all'altro del boschetto, lungo il recinto del ballo, e spingendosi magari in avventurose puntate sopra la 'rosta', alta sul fiume nascosto dietro i cespugli e i vigneti.

La 'maglia' comparve sopra un rullo di cemento, di quelli che servono per livellare il gioco delle bocce, tra due ontani spioventi sulla piattaforma. Desiderio, verso quell'ora stava ballando con una ragazza di San Vito, la quale, indossando una mantellina blu con un mazzetto di rose sulla spalla, veniva osservata con silenziosa ammirazione dai ragazzi di Marzins, come se si trattasse di una 'signora'. Ma Desiderio, al contrario, non le badava affatto e, se provava qualcosa per lei, non era che uno stringimento al cuore a causa di quella sua mantellina e di quel suo mazzetto di rose; egli, piuttosto, scrutava inquietamente dietro il recinto della piattaforma, dove alcune delle 'maglie' osservate il pomeriggio, scomparivano tra la folla. (*Romanzi*, 1, 197)

The conspicuous use of synecdoche to represent Desiderio's fervid glances at the young male dancers, or 'shirts' underlines the absence of the speaking 'I' in *Amado mio* and the concomitant introduction of a narratorial voice. The rhetorical figure stands out further because the noun 'maglia' is feminine; the young men eyed by Desideiro are therefore described using feminine adjectives and pronouns throughout the opening paragraphs of the novel, resulting in a strong dissonance with the unwanted attentions of the 'ragazza di San

⁶⁹ Pasolini wrote but then discarded a section set in Rome and Paris (see notes 5, 68), and opted instead for an exclusively Friulan environment that makes the novel a closer counterpoint to *Atti impuri*.

⁷⁰ The opening of *Amado mio* on a *sagra* may well allude to the events of 30 September 1949 in Ramuscello, which occurred at the celebration of the feast of St Sabina (see Betti, pp. 40-41).

Vito' with whom the protagonist is dancing.⁷¹ The term 'maglia', moreover, connects Desiderio's urges to the literary model of Juan Ramón Jiménez, quoted in the epigraph – '...la maglia azzurra, e la fascia / miracolosa sopra il petto' (Pasolini, *Romanzi*, I, 197). The overall effect is to emphasize *Amado mio*'s artificial status in contrast to *Atti impuri*'s greater recourse to documentary authenticity.

The fronting of artifice is matched thematically by a shift from nature to culture and from sacred to sexual. The bucolic setting of *Atti impuri* is still present in the bushes, grapevines and alder trees that frame the scene, but it is tempered now by suggestions of socioeconomic development: the levee along the river; the ease with which young people from different villages now mingle, in contrast to the fractured communications of wartime. Unlike in *Atti impuri*, where multiple generations are represented, *Amado mio* will concentrate almost exclusively on young people coming of age in the postwar period. The focus on youth replaces the popular spirituality of *Atti impuri* with the 'shirts'' innocent expressions of sexual desire on the levee and glances towards Desiderio's dancing partner. The *sagra* itself now has little to do with piety and has become a festivity of dancing and drunkenness for the young people of the various villages.⁷² In tone and content, we have

⁷¹ This overturning of physical gender through grammar to suggest a desire that is beyond or prior to biological divisions between the sexes is a rhetorical device to which Pasolini will return later in his career, first in *Alì dagli occhi azzurri* and later in *Petrolino*, where he makes the anatomical term *glande* ('glans'), normally masculine in Italian, into a feminine noun (*Romanzi*, II, 340; 1391; and see Siti and De Laude on pp. 1973; 2001).

⁷² *Atti impuri*'s postwar narrative frame even appears to refer proleptically to *Amado mio*'s decadent *sagra*: Paolo confesses to getting up on Monday still drunk from the Sunday festivities (Pasolini, *Romanzi*, I, 113).

taken a significant step towards the narrative texture of *Ragazzi di vita* and *Una vita violenta*.

Central to *Amado mio*'s artificiality is the novel's celebratory exposition of the influx of an exotic, imported culture in Italy during the immediate postwar period.⁷³

The emblematic example is the work's title, taken from a song appearing in the motion picture *Gilda*.⁷⁴ The novel's climactic scene in which Desiderio makes up his mind to deny himself Iasis's love takes place during a screening of the film at a cinema in the seaside town of Caorle, with Rita Hayworth onscreen, singing the song for which the novel is named.⁷⁵

Rita Hayworth con il suo immenso corpo, il suo sorriso e il suo seno di sorella e di prostituta – equivoca e angelica – stupida e misteriosa – con quello sguardo di miope freddo e tenero fino al languore – cantava dal profondo della sua America latina da dopoguerra, da romanzo-fiume, con un'inespressività divinamente carezzevole. Ma le parole di *Amado mio* la evocavano, con la sua bellezza di contadina, quasi in uno stato di estenuazione o di post amorem, accovacciata presso un suo indicibile muchacho... Visti da un'avenida di Montevideo o dal Plata quel cinema di Caorle e quel ragazzo seduto al suo fianco, cos'altro erano divenuti per Desiderio se non le figure di una sua tragica rassegnazione? (*Romanzi*, I, p. 263)

The interaction in this scene between the protagonist, the novel itself – invoked implicitly in the song's title – and the exotic American filmstar marks the end of a

⁷³ *Amado mio*'s exotic cultural references should not blind us to the fact that both novels use frequent intertextual allusion to a corpus of fundamentally other texts and authors to claim both canonicity and uniqueness (see notes 33, 34). Critics have obscured this important similarity between the two novels in their repeated insistence that *Amado mio*'s allusions are more numerous or at least more significant than *Atti impuri*'s. (See Golino, pp. 108-109; Rinaldi, *L'irricoscibile*, p. 93; Fido, p. 73; Ward, p. 44; Duncan, p. 98; *sed contra* see Nisini p. 77.)

⁷⁴ *Gilda*, dir. Charles Vidor (Columbia: 1946).

⁷⁵ For Pasolini's multiple rewritings of this scene, see Nisini, pp. 93-99.

metanarrative of literary process that moves from *Atti impuri*'s assertion of the value of Paolo's experiences via autocommentary to this stylized vision of a quasi-autobiographical protagonist from the vantage point of an exotic cultural referent – Rita Hayworth's character in *Gilda*.⁷⁶ The change in literary approach only serves to underline the one constant presence in this metanarrative: Pasolini's subjective point of view, which is always that of an outsider excluded from a sacred zone, be that the acceptance of his Friulan neighbours or, in this case, Desiderio's amorous logic at the point where protagonist and narrator part ways for good. The pairing of the two novels establishes that this outsider status is extremely malleable, allowing the authorial self access to a great variety of textual processes and discourses, without allying himself fully with any of them.⁷⁷

CONCLUSION

In *Atti impuri* and *Amado mio*, the ontological link between written word and exterior world asserted by autobiography and posited by realism is relativized and subordinated to Pasolini's metanarrative of authorship. The strategic deployment of realist techniques such as chronicle and 'objectivization' creates a dialogue with contemporary neorealist narrative that places the Friulan novels in relation to this canon while at the same time declaring their independence from it. The novels' nostalgic pre-exilic dating of 1946-47 takes neorealism at its word and

⁷⁶ Rinaldi, *Pier Paolo Pasolini*, (Milan: Mursia, 1982), p. 55.

⁷⁷ For the status of outsider as Pasolini's 'broadest vocation', see Robert S. C.

Gordon, *Pasolini: Forms of Subjectivity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), especially p. 79.

depicts a present irreversibly divided from an authoritative but sublimated wartime period.⁷⁸ The author's reaction to his fallen epoch draws on his outsider status as a homosexual writer in order to construct channels of subjective engagement with his reader via metaliterary reflections on narrative process – a technique that prefigures the narrative texts of the latter part of Pasolini's career. These metaliterary and subjective connections between author and reader erode the autonomy of the individual texts in which they reside, suggesting that each work has meaning only the context of the overarching, and unresolved, story of the author's career.

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⁷⁸ This highly subjective privileging of the *dopoguerra* as historical *svolta* will return in *Ragazzi di vita*, also set immediately after the war, as well as in the final section of *La meglio gioventù*, 'Il vecchio testamento' (Pasolini, *Poesie*, I, 151-58), where the social freedom and economic development associated with peace are depicted as a degrading of Friuli that exiles its young men.