

# “Un estraneo in una terra ostile”: Exile and Engagement in Pasolini’s Verse Dramas

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## Introduction

This article will concentrate on the brief period of Pier Paolo Pasolini’s career between 1966 and 1969 when he dedicated a significant portion of his energy to the theater. During this time he drafted six verse tragedies—*Affabulazione*, *Orgia*, *Porcile*, *Pilade*, *Calderón* and *Bestia da Stile*. Two plays, *Pilade* (1967) and *Affabulazione* (1969), appeared in the journal *Nuovi argomenti*, as did his programmatic essay “Manifesto per un nuovo teatro” (1968).<sup>1</sup> In November 1968, meanwhile, Pasolini directed an experimental production of *Orgia* at a venue owned by the Teatro Stabile di Torino.<sup>2</sup> The 1966–69 period marks Pasolini’s most direct engagement with bourgeois Italian culture: he largely drops his use of dialect in favor of Standard Italian, he sets his plays in modern urban Italy or in places related to it by analogy or allegory, and he explicitly envisages a public made up of the “gruppi avanzati della borghesia” (Pasolini, *Saggi* 2483). After this theatrical period, Pasolini’s narrative works tend to create their own hermetic environment in which to play themselves out, whether fantastically, as in the *Trilogia della vita* films, or through fragmentation and darkness, as in *Salò* and *Petrolio*. In sum, this period marks a fulcrum in Pasolini’s career, as it does in European culture more generally with the worldwide protests of 1968.<sup>3</sup>

Given this pivotal role, it is surprising to note that critics of Pasolini’s work have largely played down the importance of his theater.<sup>4</sup> In particular, many have asserted that the plays are unstageable.<sup>5</sup> But this claim has been undermined in recent years by his theater’s steadily increasing acceptance among practitioners and theorists of the stage in Italy and internationally.<sup>6</sup> There is therefore space, especially in English-speaking criticism of Pasolini, for a reading of these works that respects their status as stageable texts and asks whether this gives them unique qualities among Pasolini’s works and within the broader cultural context of late twentieth-century Italy.

This article will frame Pasolini’s theatrical interlude by reference to the theme of exile, a central motif in the plays: Pylades is thrown out of Argos by the people in *Pilade* (Pasolini, *Teatro* 397); Jan spends Episode IV of *Bestia da stile* as a partisan fighter in the hills, while his friend

Novomesky advocates exile as the only way to maintain one's integrity as a poet (803); the Father in *Affabulazione* is unable to return to Milan from his country house because of his disfiguring madness, which is also the reason for the Son's flight.<sup>7</sup> I argue that the verse tragedies can be seen to use the intrinsic qualities of theater to advance a characteristically Pasolinian ethos of estrangement from culture and society, albeit in a manner that opens his work to a paradoxical degree of participation.<sup>8</sup> I dub this technique the "exile effect," in honor of Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*—a powerful and yet rejected example for Pasolini's theater.<sup>9</sup> Where Brecht's epic theater brings about an intellectual engagement between the spectator and his texts by recommending an acting style "transpos[ed] into the third person" (Brecht 138), Pasolini's plays provoke a subjective estrangement that refuses a theoretical resolution and calls instead for the solidarity of attention and interpretation.<sup>10</sup>

### Contextualizing Exile: The Plays and Post-War Italian Theater

The key to Pasolini's turn to the theater in the mid- to late 1960s lies in the contemporary rapprochement and occasional polemic between writers and intellectuals in Italy and the theater establishment.<sup>11</sup> The arrival in Italy of the American experimental troupe Living Theatre in 1964 for an extended sojourn marked the symbolic beginning of this theatrical ferment.<sup>12</sup> The subsequent dialogue focused on two issues: first, the highly practitioner-centered nature of Italian theatre and its consequent hostility to author-driven productions;<sup>13</sup> second, the cultural and social power of the theatrical event as a participatory art form. These issues crystallized in 1965, when the periodical *Sipario* carried out a census of Italian authors' attitudes to the stage. The interviews revealed a widespread disenchantment with Italian theater, and yet a significant degree of interest in the medium's potential for collaborative expression.<sup>14</sup>

As the debate continued, a group comprised mostly of practitioners gathered at a conference in Ivrea in 1967 to propose a "nuovo teatro." This is precisely the term of art that Pasolini's own "Manifesto" would adopt for his own endeavors, but from the perspective of a lone outsider, not an adept.<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, Pasolini's fellow authors had become more involved with the theater, both through dramaturgy and theatrical practice.<sup>16</sup> Pasolini was both ahead of and somewhat behind this trend: he only began to write his first full-length plays in 1966 while convalescing from an ulcer, but at this point he already had some six years of intermittent experience with the professional stage.<sup>17</sup> His attempt to found a new theatrical praxis should therefore be seen in the context of an intellectual milieu that had recently begun to take theater seriously as a locus of cultural expression and contestation, approaching it as an unfamiliar but prestigious medium.

Pasolini's "Manifesto" famously classes his foray into this new genre as a "theater of the word," thereby placing an implicit and novel emphasis on the author of that word. The novelty of this Italian author's theater is matched by an equally unaccustomed, for Pasolini, concentration on the experiences of bourgeois characters. In each play diversity—whether political, social, or sexual—aligns the characters with the poet's characteristic posture of exile. In *Orgia*, for example, the childhood reminiscences of the protagonists, a young married couple living in Northern Italy of the 1960s known only as the Man and the Woman, hark back to a time that seems impossibly far away from their life together in the play. Indeed they begin to doubt whether their memories are truly their own.<sup>18</sup>

DONNA

In momenti come questi  
 io ho delle nostalgie, come sogni  
 fatti tanto tempo fa  
 che tornano in forma di cose reali.  
 Forse sono sogni di mio padre e di mia madre.  
 Io non ho ancora trent'anni!  
 E dunque come posso ricordarmi  
 di quel tempo,  
 di quel tempo lontano,  
 quando qui erano tutti prati,  
 e in fondo, verso il Po  
 non c'era un po' di nebbia?  
 Eppure lo ricordo. E ricordo che i pioppi  
 erano radi – verdi su un'erba più verde.  
 E la loro era una grigia corona  
 intorno all'amore delle dolci scimmie contadine  
 che non guardavano il cielo se non per pregare . . . (Pasolini, *Teatro* 270).

The "exile effect" is at work in this passage in the combination of content which expresses the character's alienation from her social context, with formal devices which alienate the audience from the words that transmit that content. Note the variety of details which fix the Woman in relation to her memory and point to her estrangement from it. She is under thirty, and so must be remembering a time during or immediately after the Second World War, when Italy's social and economic situation differed starkly from that of the 1960s. The reference to the Po suggests that she grew up in northern Italy on the *pianura padana*. The lack of "nebbia" over the river and the rather patronizing description of the "dolci scimmie contadine," meanwhile, imply that the Woman remembers a time before widespread industrialization and moreover that she feels totally apart from that era.

However, we also see that the Woman is also very conscious of the process of her remembrance, and she herself notes its dreamlike

quality, even suggesting her nostalgia may belong to her parents' generation rather than her own. This is an example of what John Gatt-Rutter calls "Pasolini's anti-naturalist scripting," where the characters "directly state their unconscious and define the literary artifact of which they are a part" (153). In this passage the Woman's memories are defined as nostalgic, dreamlike and potentially unreliable even before she has launched into the body of her speech, tingeing her recollections with a sense of unreality and ambiguity. Moreover, the generational doubt over the ownership of this estrangement from a northern Italian childhood opens up the possibility that her memories could belong to an older person, perhaps one of Pasolini's own age (he turned 46 in 1968). In a debate at the Teatro Gobetti after the production of *Orgia* in November 1968, Pasolini alludes to his characters' reflections on the limits of their own expression, describing it as a way of mixing "verità parlata e . . . dizione poetica" (*Teatro* 328). The Woman's speech is a good example of how Pasolini's technique hints at an exilic authorial voice behind the theatrical process of estrangement.

### Characters or Symbols? The "Exile Effect" and Theatrical Dialogue

The Woman in *Orgia* is far from the only character in the six verse tragedies who undermines her own speeches. Take the passage in *Porcile* where Ida, the potential love interest of protagonist Julian, defines their dialogue in a manner more appropriate to a Marxist critic than a seventeen-year-old.

IDA

Siamo due ricchi borghesi io e te, Julian. [. . .]

E siamo infatti qui, ad analizzarci, COME È NOSTRO PRIVILEGIO  
(Pasolini, *Teatro* 578).

The doubt this casts on the integrity of Ida's character might seem to undo the very fabric of *Porcile's* plot, which focuses on young Germans' desire to protest politically: it is difficult for the audience to empathize with a character's alienation from her context when the text deliberately alienates them at the same time.<sup>19</sup>

And yet, despite the plays' seemingly ambivalent attitude to the theatrical presentation of subjectivity, the audience has no option but to rely on the words of these character/ciphers. The public's engagement with the dialogue is rendered even more essential by the general absence of onstage action, which means that each play's plot has to be gleaned from what is said. For example, we learn of the climax of *Porcile*—Julian's death and consumption by the pigs he used to sate his desires—from the Italian immigrant laborers who discover his body (642–43). The price exacted by this drama of implication is well signified by the fact that Julian's desire for pigs is never made explicit, even though the audience is left in little doubt "*che cosa faceva Julian dei ma-*

*iali*" (Pasolini, *Teatro* 616, italics original). The repugnance of this possibility symbolizes the uncomfortable revelations the act of reading between the characters' lines can bring, despite its necessity to the process of engagement.

Such a line of reasoning has led critics such as Rinaldo Rinaldi to term Pasolini's verse tragedies solipsistic.<sup>20</sup> The plays do indeed appear deliberately to discourage engagement by suggesting that any act of interpretation leads inevitably to horrific realizations. Moreover, there is undoubtedly a tension between the impulse to depict the exiled individual, which requires the reader or spectator's engagement, and the exilic mechanisms built into the texts, which may at first glance seem to discourage such engagement. However, I would argue that these two manifestations of exile need not be in opposition but can in fact be seen as complementary, since this combination of the *topos* of exile with the use of exilic textual techniques invites a new and unorthodox process of reading which stems from the nature of the dramatic text.

### **Dialectics of Identity: Theater, Exile and the Structure of Texts**

One of the innate properties of theater is that it brings the boundaries of subjectivity into question. Erika Fischer-Lichte states in her *History of European Drama and Theatre* that theater is more than mere cultural activity; it is a metaphor for human existence. Fischer-Lichte notes that the "semiotic" use of the actor's body in theater, that is to say the audience's acceptance that an actor's body onstage loses its usual identity and takes on the identity of a character, highlights the malleability and contingency of personal and social identity.<sup>21</sup> With the fixity of identity broken down, theater is free to open up what Fischer-Lichte calls a "liminal space" in which the actors present an image of social reality which may differ significantly from their audience's own image. The acceptance of the fluidity of identity means that, rather than being seen as antithetical, the two images may enter into a dialectical relationship, allowing new concepts of social identity to develop.<sup>22</sup>

It is this dialectic on identity and on social reality between playtext and audience that causes me to assert that theater is peculiarly suited to Pasolini's purposes in the late 1960s. Pasolini's discursive works of that time are anthologized in *Empirismo eretico* (1972; now in Pasolini, *Saggi* 1240–1683).<sup>23</sup> The essays on film in this collection are of particular relevance, not only because of the many similarities that inevitably exist between cinema and theater but particularly because they show a marked emphasis on two points: the importance of creative input from both reader and author in interpreting a text and, consequently, the necessity for an author's texts to be structured in such a way as to remain open to a plurality of interpretations. Moreover, one principal concern of *Empirismo eretico's* cinematic essays is to imbue the medium with a sense of canonicity (cf. the programmatic "Il cinema di poesia,"

Pasolini, *Saggi* 1461–88): hence the lengths to which Pasolini goes to break down the hierarchical divisions between different types of artwork and creators.<sup>24</sup> Pasolini's theater stands in an intriguing relationship to his film theory here: theater is certainly a more canonical medium and yet, we have seen that, in the context of 1960s Italy, it was arguably as difficult for a dramatist as for a filmmaker to establish the kind of transferred literary authorship that Pasolini seeks.

Passages from two essays in *Empirismo eretico*, both previously published in *Nuovi argomenti*, "Il cinema impopolare" (1970) and "La sceneggiatura come 'struttura che vuol essere altra struttura'" (1965–66), will shed further light on the relationship between the textuality proposed in Pasolini's film essays and that of his verse tragedies.

"Autore". Se un [autore] . . . trova . . . comprensione nella società in cui opera, non è un autore. Un autore non può che essere un estraneo in una terra ostile . . . e il sentimento ch'egli suscita è un sentimento più o meno forte, di odio razziale. . . .

"Spettatore". Lo spettatore, per l'autore, non è che un altro autore. . . . Se dunque parliamo di opere d'autore, dobbiamo di conseguenza parlare del rapporto tra autore e destinatario come di un drammatico rapporto tra singolo e singolo democraticamente pari (Pasolini, *Saggi sulla letteratura* 1602).

"Il cinema impopolare" defines the spectator and the author as "singolo e singolo democraticamente pari." But, just as significantly, it defines an author as "un estraneo in una terra ostile"—an exile—and goes on to assert that the spectator must also take on her own position of author, and so, one assumes, a similarly estranged position with respect to society. The essay thus envisages an author-spectator relationship reminiscent of Fischer-Lichte's description of the theatrical act, whereby Pasolini's obligatorily exiled author invites his spectator to share in his alienated outlook via a dialectic with the canonical view of social reality. Indeed Fischer-Lichte herself recognizes the intrinsically alienating qualities of theater: "the theater symbolizes the human condition of creating identity to the extent to which it makes the distancing of man from himself the condition of its existence" (Fischer-Lichte 5).

"La sceneggiatura come 'struttura che vuol essere altra struttura'" suggests what sort of text this exiled author might create.

La sceneggiatura può essere considerata una "tecnica" autonoma, un'opera integra e compiuta in se stessa (Pasolini, *Saggi* 1489).

La "struttura della sceneggiatura" consiste proprio in questo: "passaggio dallo stadio letterario allo stadio cinematografico". . . . Leggere, infatti, né più né meno che leggere, una sceneggiatura significa rivivere empiricamente il passaggio da una struttura A a una struttura B (Pasolini, *Saggi* 1501).

Here Pasolini shows a profound interest in what he terms the "struttura dinamica" of the film script, which he sees as a genre in its own

right – one that exists between the purely written word of the novel and the more visual signification employed by films. For Pasolini, the reader of a film script, which does not so much tell a story as instruct one how to film one, experiences a personal and dialogical engagement with the text. “La sceneggiatura come ‘struttura che vuol essere altra struttura’ ” seeks to canonize this open-ended manner of engagement, alongside the medium that delivers it.

The text of a play, of course, has a similar liminal status to the film script. In both genres the rhetorical structure of the work demands that its reader behave like a proto-director or actor, as the dialogue is divided between characters without being set in a narrative frame, with the reader left to envisage the physical aspects of the eventual performance based on the didascalia—i.e. stage directions and other non-performed verbiage such as character names. These didascalia, which are the only manifestations of the authorial voice in the playtext, are conventionally muted in performance, and transmitted physically rather than verbally, if they are transmitted at all. Like a director the reader is thus constrained to keep a putative performance or performances in mind, even if she has no intention of mounting one. A film or theatrical production must present one specific interpretation; the reader of a play or film script, however, is free to contemplate all potential performances, allowing her a freedom that a theatrical or film company must forgo in order to create a coherent production. Either genre, playtext or film script, could thus readily be described as a “struttura che vuol essere altra struttura” and theater can again be seen to fit with one of Pasolini's key artistic priorities of the late 1960s, namely the composition of interpretatively open literary texts.

The resemblance I suggest between playtexts and film scripts only holds true, however, if are both viewed as “strutture dinamiche,” that is to say written texts which, when read, imply a further process of interpretation through performance. As we saw at the beginning of the paper, there was a longstanding critical consensus that Pasolini's plays are not in fact stageable and so, one assumes, should be read more as dramatic poetry than as “strutture che vogliono essere altre strutture.” In common with more recent commentators on the plays, I would contend that such a reading in fact denudes the plays of much of their intricacy and may go some way to explaining their comparatively low critical estimation amongst Pasolini's *oeuvre*.<sup>25</sup>

### Inside or out? Questions of Visuality

As we have seen in our analysis of the speech from *Orgia*, the dialogue of a Pasolini play includes many instances of “anti-naturalist scripting”—conscious reflections by the characters on their own feelings, intentions and textual significance—that create what I have called an “exile effect.” The corollary of this process is that the plays themselves include only the sparsest of stage directions or other didascalia,

usually extending only to characters' names and their entrances and exits.<sup>26</sup> Most other actions taken by the characters have to be inferred from the dialogue, and, as we saw with *Porcile*, frequently occur off-stage in any case. This may be why William Van Watson once held that the director is not a significant figure in Pasolinian theater.<sup>27</sup> Given the analysis of Pasolini's artistic priorities I have advanced, I would argue the opposite. In my view, the exilic mechanisms of the verse tragedies specifically require their reader to act as a proto-director, and so the works cannot be read without first conceiving for them a visual realization that is the necessary complement to their dialogue. Moreover, this visual conception will lead the reader or indeed the spectator to an acute consciousness of the problems involved in conceiving that realization.

In order to illustrate this point, let us look at a speech given by the character known as "lo Speaker" from *Calderón*. *Calderón* follows the fortunes of a girl known as Rosaura who wakes up in a series of different households in 1960s Spain—aristocratic, slum-dwelling and petit-bourgeois—before finally finding herself in a concentration camp; each time she is unsure whether she is awake or dreaming. *Calderón* was drafted in 1967, and Pasolini kept working on it until 1973, when it became the only tragedy published in book form during his lifetime.<sup>28</sup> By then he had long since given up any idea of producing his own plays, and the text we have could best be described as a drama in search of a staging.<sup>29</sup>

#### SPEAKER

La scena che ora vedrete sarà costruita secondo le vecchie regole della scenografia tradizionale. Non è per nostalgia di tali regole, che l'autore si è deciso a progettare tutto questo, e quindi a usare me, in sostituzione della non meno vecchia e commovente didascalia. Anzi, l'autore continua a detestare, con tutta la relativa lucidità della sua ragione, ogni scenografia che non sia solo indicativa: perché se non è tale, altro non è che un elemento di quel rito sociale che il teatro è per la borghesia, e che l'autore quindi non può amare.

Ciò che ha spinto l'autore a immaginare questo episodio come se si svolgesse all'interno del quadro de "Las meninas" di Velázquez . . . è un'ispirazione di qualità misteriosa, che non comporta nostalgia per il vecchio teatro, ma adopera il vecchio teatro, mescolato alla pittura come un elemento espressivo dal senso incerto (Pasolini, *Teatro* 675).

The Speaker's opening declaration places an immediate emphasis on the visual elements of a play in production: the next scene, Episode IV, will take place on a stage set in the fashion of the traditional bourgeois theater yet at the same time resembling the Velázquez painting *Las Meninas*. The reader is therefore constrained to imagine such an unorthodox scene in order to make any sense of the following dialogue, in which Basilio and Lupe speak from the positions of the king and queen in the mirror that appears in the background of Velázquez's painting. The preannouncement of this *coup de théâtre* highlights the demands made by *Calderón* on its producing company.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore,



in line with the theories of Fischer-Lichte examined earlier, the Speaker highlights the ideological nature of all theatrical design. The Speaker celebrates theater's capability of transforming its audience's image of society: traditional naturalistic sets are therefore treated with suspicion since their attempts at realism merely reflect the bourgeois conception of social reality unchallenged, unless, as in *Calderón*, they are put to some alienating purpose.

As well as introducing technical considerations of production values, the Speaker highlights the rhetorical structure of the theatrical text. He claims to function as the authorial voice in *Calderón*, speaking "in sostituzione della . . . didascalia" (675). However, unlike stage directions, his words will be spoken onstage to the audience by an actor, not muted. Indeed, as the Speaker implies, the text of *Calderón* contains very few stage directions. He therefore serves to flag up to the reader the lack of a direct authorial voice in the playtext and the consequent necessity of deducing both the action of the play and the input of the author from the mediated voices of the characters. The reader becomes aware not only of the ideological considerations inherent in the process of bringing a play from a written text to a full realization, but also of the mechanisms by which the play itself participates in and shapes that process.

As this analysis has shown, *Calderón* ties the ordinary role of the reader of theatrical texts as proto-director to a political ethos of exile which extends both to the subject matter and to the rhetorical techniques employed in the work. The result is that every reader of the play must construct a necessarily more theatrically informed reading than they might when reading a playtext with fuller stage directions. Even spectators of the play in a theater will be directly confronted with the realities of its production and the difficulty of arriving at the rendering they are viewing. In effect, Pasolini harnesses theater's inherent anticipation of a secondary creative process subsequent to that of the dramatist in order to communicate his own status as author while leaving the interpretation of his texts as open as possible.

## Conclusion

I have sought to demonstrate here how the apparently thematic evocations of exile in Pasolini's theater reveal a structural feature of the texts: the unorthodox and open form of reading they envisage. By examining the plays' historical context and several issues of theatrical representation, I have sought to show that they are anything but solipsistic, as some have suggested. Instead, the verse tragedies represent one of Pasolini's most ambitious attempts at sharing with the wider world a sense of the exile he saw as inherent to a consumer society.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For the plays, see Pasolini, *Teatro*. The “Manifesto” can be found in Pasolini, *Saggi* 2481–2500. Pasolini did not write any new plays after 1969, but he continued to rework his drafts from 1966–69 into the 1970s, especially *Calderón* and *Bestia da stile*.

<sup>2</sup> Theater also informed many of his other works in this period, such as the film-novel hybrid *Teorema*, which began as a play, and the myth films *Edipo re* and *Medea*, both based on Greek tragedies. See Liccioli 214–16.

<sup>3</sup> Voza suggests an alternative reading, whereby the plays are the first part of Pasolini’s final, decade-long period of magmatic experimentation (11–14). See also Vanhove, who argues for 1968 specifically as the borderline. However, I see a distinction between experimentation of the plays, which provide for the bodily compresence of actors and spectators in pronouncing and hearing the author’s words, and that of *Salò* or *Petrolio*, where the audience witnesses Pasolini’s performance of poesis at an unbridgeable distance. For importance of this physical presence of the actor before the audience in Pasolini’s plays, see Hervé, Katuszewski.

<sup>4</sup> The indispensable guide to all of Pasolini’s theatrical output is Casi, *Teatri*; see also the earlier Casi, *Un’idea*. The state of the art until the end of the twentieth century comprised of studies that sometimes defended the importance of the ’66–’69 period, but which consistently ignored the theatrical aspects of the plays, tending to class them instead as a strange sort of poetry. See Gatt-Rutter; Gropali 11–107; Liccioli; Rinaldi, *Pasolini* 287–325; Rinaldi, *Irriconoscibile* 227–240; Van Watson; Ward 155–178. More recent work, however, has complemented Casi’s efforts to bring the theatricality of the plays to light. See Angelini and Di Maio for the plays as the culmination of Pasolini’s poetics of spectacle and of “arte totale,” respectively. Further relevant bibliography is cited at notes 3, 6, and 25.

<sup>5</sup> “Questo teatro non teatrale non si può concedere, per definizione, alcuna possibilità di messa in scena” (Rinaldi, Pier Paolo Pasolini 299). “The single verse tragedies as performed on stage . . . have tended to be wordy and tedious on the relatively few occasions they have been performed” (Ward 171). “The “teatro di parola” theorized in Pasolini’s “Manifesto per un nuovo teatro” . . . [is] dramatic work envisaged to be read rather than staged” (Gatt-Rutter 154).

<sup>6</sup> “This view [that the plays are ‘intellectually stimulating, but incoherent and insensitive to the actual workings of the stage’] began to change in the years following [Pasolini’s] death, and in the 1990s, several successful and imaginative stagings of his plays took place, both within and beyond Italy” (Gordon 349). See also Casi 284–318; D’Amora; Possamai, *Orgia*; Puppa, *Teatro* 142–47.

<sup>7</sup> For exile as the theme *par excellence* of the verse tragedies, see Ward 162, 177. Hervé usefully compares Pasolini’s stage to a Foucauldian heterotopia: a concrete realization of space that is desired and yet other (18–19). This fits well with Pasolini’s first idea for staging the plays, which was to have them translated and put on abroad (*Lettere* 611).

<sup>8</sup> Pasolini famously underwent an internal exile from Casarsa to Rome in early 1950, in the wake of allegations of sexual misconduct with a young male pupil in late 1949 (see Naldini 133–141). Even before this undoubtedly formative event, however, the Pasolinian poet/author figure is always cast as excluded from an Edenic locale which his works seek to regain. As Guido Santato puts it: “la poesia è ritorno alla patria perduta, al sacro, all’originario” (8).

<sup>9</sup> For example: “In tutto il presente manifesto, Brecht non verrà mai nominato” (Pasolini, *Saggi* 2482). For Pasolini and Brecht, see Casi, *Teatri* 105–117, 122–131. For the Alienation Effect, see Brecht 91–99, 136–47.

<sup>10</sup> See Badiou’s excellent reading of “Vittoria” (Pasolini, *Poesie* 1: 1259–70), a poem written not long before the verse tragedies that dwells on one of their central themes—intergenerational strife. The French philosopher argues that Pasolini’s poetic language succeeds in affirming and transmitting a desire for truth precisely by contemplating that truth’s connection to alienation and violence.

<sup>11</sup> My account of this period of theatrical polemic draws principally on Casi, *Teatri* 132–42, 201–212. See also Liccioli 79–171; Di Maio 47–69.

<sup>12</sup> For Pasolini and the Living Theatre, see Vanhove, although he dismisses the importance of the Italian theatrical scene (34), focusing instead on American influences encountered on the poet’s trips to the USA in 1966 and 1969.

<sup>13</sup> For a synthetic account of this problem, see Puppa, “Contemporary Scene.”

<sup>14</sup> See Rusconi. Pasolini’s response attacks the lack of an authentic national language in which to perform on the Italian stage (10–11).

<sup>15</sup> See Sapienza. The documents from the conference at Ivrea are now in Quadri 132–48.

<sup>16</sup> In 1966, for example, Enzo Siciliano, Alberto Moravia, and Dacia Maraini set up the *Teatro del Porcospino* in Rome in order to stage works by contemporary literary authors such as Gadda and Wilcock. Pasolini writes to Livio Garzanti in support of a request for funding by this “nuova impresa teatrale, di cui facciamo parte Moravia, io e un gruppo di altri scrittori” (*Lettere* 607).

<sup>17</sup> Famously, Pasolini would backdate both the plays and his ulcer to 1965 in many subsequent accounts of their composition (for example, the program notes to *Orgia: Teatro* 318). His first involvement with professional theater came in 1960, when he translated Aeschylus’s *Oresteia* for Vittorio Gassman’s production at the Greek Theater in Syracuse. A further translation of Plautus followed in 1963, and then the inclusion of the short Brechtian farce *Italie magique* in the revue *Potentissima signora* in 1964. Finally, 1965 saw the production of his juvenile play *Nel ’46!* Casi has convincingly shown (*Teatri* 19–131) that Pasolini’s engagement with the theater as a writer, performer, and director was lifelong and profound, with only a few years of hiatus after arriving in Rome in 1950. However, it is fair to say that, before 1966–69, theater had never been at the center of Pasolini’s artistic program, but was rather one avenue among many that he explored.

<sup>18</sup> Paul Ginsborg points out that Italy’s dramatic postwar economic expansion made the new social norms seem especially alien: “in less than two

decades Italy ceased to be a peasant country and became one of the major industrial nations of the West. The very landscape of the country as well as its inhabitants' places of abode and ways of life changed profoundly" (212). Certain minor characters in the plays incarnate this issue of economic migration, both within Italy and abroad: Maracchione, the "immigrat[o] italian[o]" who brings the news of Julian's fate in *Porcile* came to Germany in search of work (Pasolini, *Teatro* 640); while *Orgia* contains repeated references to a "giovane bruno, / che viene certo dalla Sicilia" (266) who appears in the Woman's fantasies and may or may not be the same as the Girl's most recent lover, "un ragazzo siciliano, / che sta a Bologna a fare il soldato" (298).

<sup>19</sup> Many of the questions to Pasolini from the audience of the debate at the Teatro Gobetti raise this issue of the play's uncompromising attitude to its spectators' comprehension (see Pasolini *Teatro* 318–51).

<sup>20</sup> Rinaldi calls the verse tragedies "questo progetto solipsistico, che distrugge il teatro come tale" and notes that their intended public (as defined in the "Manifesto per un nuovo teatro") is "talmente selezionato da trasformare il dibattito in una riflessione metalinguistica dell'autore sul proprio testo" (Rinaldi, *Pier Paolo Pasolini* 299).

<sup>21</sup> Umberto Eco terms this "ostension" and notes its alienating quality: "There is a way in which [an actor's] presence is different from the presence of a word or of a picture. It has not been actively produced (as one produces a word or draws an image)—has been *picked up* among the existing physical bodies and it has been shown or *ostended* . . . Ostension is one of the various ways of signifying, consisting in de-realizing a given object in order to make it stand for an entire class" (Eco 110, emphasis original).

<sup>22</sup> "Through actions carried out by the actors with their bodies and language, and through the role being played, the actors stage aspects and scenes which the spectators perceive and understand as representative of society in terms of their identity as members of a particular society and as themselves. . . . Regardless of what actions are involved, it is *always* a matter of certain aspects and factors which allow a person to say 'I' . . . The fundamental theatrical situation therefore always symbolizes the *conditio humana*" (Fischer-Lichte 3).

<sup>23</sup> The two bodies of work, essays and plays, took shape at the same time, as the letter to Garzanti of January 1967 attests (*Lettere* 624–25). Pasolini's program notes for his production of *Orgia*, moreover, explicitly point to a cross-fertilization between his essays on the semiotics of film and his *teatro di parola* (*Teatro* 318–19).

<sup>24</sup> Pasolini's film director is, of course, an "author," and he explicitly denies any difference in role between filmmakers and creators of other types of artwork: "'Autore'. Se un *facitore di versi, di romanzi, di films* trova omertà, connivenza o comprensione nella società in cui opera, non è un autore" (*Saggi sulla letteratura* 1602, emphasis added).

<sup>25</sup> See especially Angelini; D'Amora; Hervé; Katuszewski; Maggi; Pisanelli; Possamai, "L'éspace;" "Orgia;" and Sapienza.

<sup>26</sup> See Possamai, "L'éspace" for a consideration of didascalia and other opportunities for directorial discretion in Pasolini's plays.

<sup>27</sup> "[In Pasolini's theater], the role of the director . . . fades into relative unimportance" (Van Watson 109).

<sup>28</sup> For the composition history of *Calderón*, see Pasolini, *Teatro* 1189–94.

<sup>29</sup> Although Pasolini had no intention of staging *Calderón* himself, he nonetheless defended its potential to be staged. See the poem "Esibizione di vitalità," which imagines "fare il *Calderón* su un piatto / Ricostruendo in teatro naturalmente solo *Las Niñas*." (*Poesie*, 2: 305).

<sup>30</sup> See Maggi for a consideration of visuality in *Calderón* with detailed references to the use of Velázquez.

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