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The Representation of Place and Space in Pier Paolo Pasolini's Roman Prose 1950-1959

Darragh Patrick William Mulcahy

A Dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements for award of
PHD in the Faculty of Arts, School of Modern Languages, June 2017.

Thesis Abstract

This thesis seeks to explore the ecological undercurrents of Pier Paolo Pasolini's Roman prose through a close textual reading of his short stories, essays, and two novels. These works, written in and about Rome from 1950 to 1959, include Pasolini's early short stories (1950-51), his first and second novels, *Ragazzi di vita* (1955) and *Una vita violenta* (1959) and his Roman essays published in *Ali dagli occhi azzurri* (1965).

The thesis moves from the premise that Pasolini is an inherently ecological writer and that ecological themes are a concern in his Roman corpus which have not been sufficiently investigated to date. My analysis is centred on a series of chronotopes which investigate the narrative paradigms at the foundation of his Roman prose. In more specific terms, my thesis is divided into five chapters which look at a range of themes including: Pasolini's use of place names; his mapping of his version of the city; the role, the importance, the meaning and agency of bodies, dirt and water in his prose.

Drawing on the recent work of contemporary material ecocritics like Serenella Iovino, Serpill Oppermann and Stacy Alaimo and putting them into conversation with some of the seminal works of Walter Benjamin, Michel De Certeau, Mary Douglas and Julia Kristeva the thesis seeks to develop new readings of the environmental imagination of Pasolini.

The thesis suggests that the ecologies which emerge through a close examination of Pasolini's prose are not merely different shades of green but are diverse and multicolored: blue, brown, and green. This study, therefore, sets out to expand the conceptual apparatus of an existing body of critical scholarship on Pasolini's Roman prose by engaging with a multi-disciplinary, eco-theoretical framework to provide a new reading of his work through an eco-critical lens.

Dedications and Acknowledgements

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Many thanks also to my good friend, Michele in Rome and to my three sisters, Caroline, Jennifer and Rachel and three brothers, Gareth, David and John, and to my late uncle Gerald Mulcahy.

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This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Brian and Ann Mulcahy.

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The Representation of Place and Space in Pier Paolo Pasolini's Roman Prose

Thesis Background

The main objective of this thesis is to develop a new theoretical discussion on the representation of space and place in Pier Paolo Pasolini's Roman prose. My theoretical approach is based on a close analysis and contextualized discussion of primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include a sampling of texts from the author's Roman corpus. These works range from Pasolini's acclaimed and contentious Roman novels *Ragazzi di vita* (1955) and *Una vita violenta* (1959) to some of his lesser-known short fiction.¹ This material also includes Pasolini's Roman essays and journalistic sketches which were published in *Alì dagli occhi azzurri* (1965).² My secondary sources incorporate a wide variety of criticism from sociological, anthropological, cultural geography and eco-critical studies.

Pasolini's move to Rome in January 1950 coincided with a crucial period in the city's development.³ Rome's peripheral expansion was initially driven by a Fascist urban

¹ Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Romanzi e racconti*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, vol. 1 (Milan: Mondadori, 1998), pp. 523-771 and pp. 823-1193. Some of the lesser-known works which I refer to above were written shortly after Pasolini's arrival in Rome in 1950. Pasolini's enormous literary production in the 1950s, which spans prose, essay writing, poetry, cinema, literary criticism and semi-ethnographical surveys of parts the city, bears testimony to the intensity of his engagement with Rome in the 1950s. Many of these short stories were published for the first time in Roman dailies in the early 1950s while some others did not go to press until Walter Siti compiled a collation in 1995 of several Roman short stories pieces of literary criticism and short essays about the city's development which Pasolini wrote in the 1950s. See: Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Storie della città di Dio: Racconti e cronache romane di Pasolini (1950-1966)*, ed. by. Walter Siti, (Turin: Einaudi, 1995). Further details about the contents of these texts and dates of publication are provided in my next section about Pasolini's Rome prose.

² Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Alì dagli occhi azzurri*, in *Romanzi e racconti*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, vol. 2 (Milan: Mondadori, 1998), pp. 329-890. This publication contains prose work and essays spanning a fifteen-year time frame and as well as the scripts of Pasolini's Roman films, *Accattone* (1961) and *Mamma Roma* (1962).

³ The author's arrival in the city was fraught with employment and accommodation problems. His initial eighteen months were spent in a bedsit in Piazza Costaguti, an irregular square tucked away in Rome's Jewish ghetto. He later moved to Ponte Mammolo, a marginalized, peripheral neighbourhood in the city's outlying north-eastern outskirts, to live in slum accommodation 'without a roof'. Barth David Schwartz, *Pasolini Requiem* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), p. 231.

renewal programme which led to the demolition of swathes of the inner city and the coerced relocation of tens of thousands of people to the city's fledging peripheries in the mid-1930s.⁴ The construction of makeshift, hastily built and predominantly one-room accommodation led to the mushrooming of small *borgate* mainly located on the city's eastern axis.⁵ The expansion of these *borgate* was triggered by the arrival of tens of thousands of refugees from Rome's surrounding provinces in the post-war period. Dom Holdaway and Filippo Trentin observe how Rome's post-war period was fraught with a series of problems and how the city's development increasingly featured a centre-periphery cleavage:

After the Second World War, when Italy was integrated into the Western bloc and consequently pressured to conform to a neo-liberal capitalist model, Rome was drastically redefined by the contemporary economic and social upheaval and the growth and expansion that accompanied this period. A general population increase, domestic migrations and a turn away from agriculture accompanied post-war regeneration and a relatively rapid rebuilding of infrastructure, forcing the city to spread far beyond its traditional limits. From the 1920s on, Rome's population multiplied approximately seven times and its surface became ten times larger, encompassing vast directional and commercial areas. This triggered a rupture, a separation of the city into two distinct parts: the historical city centre, within the Aurelian

⁴ David Atkinson observes how 'the regime set about physically remaking parts of central Rome to create streets which would both express the ideological agenda of Fascism and stage rituals and performances of the regime, whilst guaranteeing a more ordered, fertile population'. David Atkinson, 'Totalitarianism and the Street in Fascist Rome', in *Images of the Street: Planning, Identity and Control of Public Space*, ed. by Nicholas R. Fyfe (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 13-30 (p. 20).

⁵ Italo Insolera, *Roma moderna: un secolo di storia urbanistica 1870-1970* (Turin: Einaudi, 1976), p. 128.

Walls, and the modern periphery.⁶

My thesis considers how Pasolini interprets this metamorphosis by looking at his representation of place and space in post-war Rome. I am interested in his interpretation of the city's changing environment and the places and themes he deploys to represent these novel developments. I begin by examining how places in Rome's inner city and fragmented peripheries initially fuelled the author's strong utopian impulse and enabled him to emulate much of the essentialist and mythical spatial configurations depicted in his Friulian prose; I subsequently go on to consider how the gradual assimilation of this Arcadian landscape by the city's ever-expanding sprawl prompted him to observe the city's development from a more incisive and critical perspective. I look, therefore, at how Pasolini represents the gradual and inevitable assimilation of Rome's city centre and subsequently its peripheries into what he saw as a predominately hegemonic, capitalistic society. My reading of Pasolini's city-text – its changing shape, structure and architecture – probes questions about what is being lost in Rome and how identities are being reshaped. I examine, therefore, how Pasolini sees powerful social forces as having caused economic and social loss to individuals, communities and the environment. This raises questions about what is being preserved, what histories are being eschewed, and what political and cultural positions are being articulated. I wish, therefore, to develop an ecocritical inquiry of space and place into Pasolini's Roman prose that I believe can enrich future spatial studies.

Serenella Iovino, in her analysis of parts of Pasolini's artistic corpus, has placed his works under the rubric of what she calls an 'ecology of difference', noting how Pasolini,

⁶ Dom Holdaway and Filippo Trentin, 'Introduction: Rome, Postmodern Narratives of a Cityspace', in *Rome, Postmodern Narratives of a Cityspace*, ed. by Dom Holdaway and Filippo Trentin (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2013), pp. 1-16 (p. 1).

as Margarita Carretero-Gonzalez observes in her review of Iovino, is ‘always keen on celebrating the diversity that is indispensable for the existence of the whole’.⁷ Carretero-Gonzalez goes on to note that:

in Pasolini’s poetics of diversity it is essential that work of art displays a non-homogeneous landscape - nature and culture, centre and periphery ‘the house of the peasant next to the cathedral and the palace (107) [Iovino], tradition and renewal, normative language and dialect’ [...] - because homogeneity implies loss of identity, of that difference which is key to make up authentic, complete landscapes.⁸

These observations about Pasolini’s desire to let diversity thrive are a guiding principle of my thesis. My hypothesis is that when value is placed on the body as a source of knowledge, a more ecologically balanced relationship may emerge between man and nature. My work sets out to break new ground in Pasolini’s Roman corpus, and particularly in relation to his Rome prose, by engaging with a field of theoretical criticism that has not been applied to Pasolini’s work to date.

In more specific terms, my thesis is a broad thematic study, divided into five chapters, which looks at a range of issues including Pasolini’s use of place names, his mapping of Rome, his representation of bodies, the role of dirt, and the importance, meaning and agency of water. My work is influenced by a broad range of disciplines in an attempt to serve as an entry point into the author’s Roman prose through an eco-critical perspective. Its primary aim is, therefore, to move the critical corpus of Pasolini’s Roman prose in

⁷ Margarita Carretero-Gonzalez, review of *Ecologia letteraria. Una strategia di sopravvivenza*, by Serenella Iovino, *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment*, Vol. 1(2), 2010, 144-45 (p. 145).

⁸ Carretero-Gonzalez, p. 145.

new directions. I set out to do this by exploring new and profitable pathways through an ecological reading of Pasolini's work. I argue that Pasolini's prose is inherently ecological as it collapses boundaries between his characters' bodies and their surroundings, showing the inseparability between the human and nonhuman. This relationship between the boys and their environment initially enables the reader to appreciate how the author sees his characters living in a symbiotic rather than ecologically competitive coexistence, where interaction and cooperation replace domination and exploitation. It emphasizes the transaction process between body and space, which consists of a reciprocal relationship between body and environment, where each is responsive towards the other. This initial nurturing relationship is troubled by the displacement of Pasolini's characters to the city's sprawling peripheries. This shift underlines the uncertainty which emerges in the boys' physical presence in this new environment. By looking at themes such as the boys' corporeal exposure and vulnerability and their environment's progressive degradation I seek to show how Pasolini brings Rome's troubled environmental footprint into focus.

My thesis challenges a single, anthropocentric perspective and portrays a diverse system, peopled with human and nonhuman subjects which defy objectification, and are bound by a network of relationships within the one environment. My work, therefore, wishes to put at its centre Pasolini's more direct literary engagement with Rome's urban and peripheral landscapes. It teases out the interconnectedness of the human and non-human and suggests that the key to understanding Pasolini's eco-poetics is through elision and boundary breaking. I argue that a heightened awareness of how human agency depends on and is part of a larger animate world of agencies needs to be recognized and taken on board. My readings of Pasolini's eco-poetics are founded on tropes of symbiosis, repurposing and renewal rather than domination, internment and environmental

degradation or depredation. I claim that his prose can be read and seen as an attempt to defend the integrity of the city's eco-system, by encouraging the equal flourishing of human and nonhuman. Ultimately, I argue that Pasolini's eco-poetics can be read as an invitation to reciprocity. My thesis, therefore, contributes to the body of critical work on Pasolini's Roman prose by engaging with eco-theoretical insights which I believe can be productive in breaking new ground and paving the way for a revised reading of Pasolini's Roman prose and in fostering further debate and research in this direction.

This introduction provides a brief overview of the main ideas and concerns which are at the forefront of existing scholarship on Pasolini's Roman prose and some general trends in Pasolini studies. It also offers a brief outline of the main theoretical ideas I want to adopt and engage with throughout my thesis, before proceeding to an overview of its five chapters.

Pasolini's Roman Prose

This thesis understands Pasolini's Roman prose to be the corpus of narrative work that Pasolini wrote in and about Rome between 1950 and 1959.⁹ It is difficult to classify these works into categories as they vary greatly in style, content and form. While Pasolini's celebrated novels *Ragazzi di vita* (1955) and *Una vita violenta* (1959) are undoubtedly the kernels of this corpus it would be wrong to underestimate the importance of the vast amount of work that Pasolini produced about Rome mainly before the publication of his first novel. The first category of these lesser known and shorter texts can be, as Zygmunt Barański has suggested, grouped into 'thirty-one "creative" fictional

⁹ It may appear obvious to state, given the limited timeframe of Pasolini's Roman corpus, that Pasolini's third novel, *Petrolino* (1992) is beyond the scope of this thesis. See: Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Petrolino, Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 2, pp. 1161-828. Another volume which lies outside remit of this thesis is a collection of essays and articles about several aspects of European and Italian cultural and literary life written by Pasolini between 1950 and 1958 under the title *Passione e Ideologia*. See *Passione e Ideologia*, (Milan: Garzanti, 1960).

pieces and seventeen non-fictional pieces' which were written by Pasolini between 1950-51.¹⁰ A number of these short stories from the first category indicated by Barański were initially published in Roman dailies, such as the Curia-run '*Il Quotidiano*', under the pseudonym of Paolo Amari, as well as in the Catholic-leaning dailies, '*Il Popolo*' and '*La Libertà d'Italia*'.¹¹ While these short pieces of fiction were written soon after the author's arrival in Rome in 1950, some of them were not actually published until Walter Siti brought out a carefully compiled collation of Pasolini's Roman short fiction in 1995.¹²

Among the first category of thirty-one creative fictional texts are a number of essays and semi-ethnographical surveys.¹³ These texts have a particularly hybrid stylistic matrix which ranges from a highly self-reflexive and mannerist style of one of Pasolini's first Roman essays, 'Squarci di notti romane' (1950) which appeared for the first time in *Alì*

¹⁰ Zygmunt G. Barański, 'Pasolini, Friuli, Rome (1950-1951): Philological and Historical Notes', in *Pasolini Old and New*, ed. by Zygmunt G. Barański (Dublin: Four Courts, 1999), pp. 253-80 (p. 255). Giorgio Nisini has more recently contested Barański's classification of fictional and non-fictional works in Pasolini's early Roman prose (1950-51), claiming that some of Pasolini's travelogues written in Puglia have been inappropriately listed among the thirty-one fictional pieces. Other, and perhaps more interesting observations, from this short overview of Pasolini's Rome prose include Nisini's analysis of the wide spectrum of cultural journals in which Pasolini published his essays, particularly the essays which would subsequently appear in *Alì dagli occhi azzurri* (1965).

¹¹ Confirming Barański's observations about the publication of short stories in the Curia-run newspaper Nisini also notes that "un nutrito gruppo di questi testi [...] fu dato alle stampe da Pasolini prima del 1955 su quotidiani e riviste di estrazione ideologica di centro-destra e filogovernativa, soprattutto la testata della curia romana '*Il Quotidiano*' anche se non mancarono escursioni in periodici più strettamente culturali, come la sciasciana '*Galleria*', '*Paragone*', '*Il Caffè*', '*L'Approdo letterario*', '*Orazio*' ecc, o in giornali di diverso orientamento politico come '*Il Mondo*' e '*Botteghe Oscure*'". Giorgio Nisini *L'unità impossibile: Dinamiche testuali nella narrativa di Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Rome, Carocci, 2008). p. 157.

¹² See: *Pier Paolo Pasolini, Storie della città di Dio: Racconti e cronache romane*. ed. by Walter Siti, (Turin, Einaudi, 1995) The title of Siti's collation underlines how he has deliberately divided these short prose works into two distinct categories which fall under the headings of: 'racconti' and 'cronache'. 'Da Monteverde all'Altieri' (1950), a short story which I analyse in my thesis, is an example of one these unpublished texts. Other examples of unpublished short fiction works are: 'Spiritual' (1950-51) and 'Razò' (1954-55). Although these texts were written in Rome their narrative unfolds in Friuli. See 'Note e notizie sui testi', in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1, pp. 1735-37.

¹³ Other essays, written after 1951 and subsequently published in *Alì dagli occhi azzurri* in 1965, which do not belong to Barański's list of thirty-one fictional pieces include: 'Dal vero' (1952-53); 'Mignotta' (1953); 'Storia burina' (1956-57). See 'Note e notizie sui testi: *Alì dagli occhi azzurri*', in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 2, pp. 1953-961.

dagli occhi azzurri (1965) to other essays which evince Pasolini's ethnographic endeavours to survey of some of the most characteristic features of the city's older neighbourhoods (Testaccio) and also some of its burgeoning peripheral ones (Primavalle, Pietralata, Centocelle).¹⁴ Some of the most prominent text among the latter essays are 'Studi sulla vita del Testaccio' (1951) and 'Appunti per un poema popolare' (1951-52); both essays were partially published under different titles in two literary journals in 1951 and 1960.¹⁵ Barański warns how these essays, which were subsequently published in *Ali*, should not be confused with the short stories published in Roman newspapers as the latter sub-group of texts offers a 'more restrained description of Rome [and] tend[s] to deal with less extreme representations of Roman life' while the essays in *Ali* 'are marked by the "scandalousness" of their content'.¹⁶ Although a vast body of literature has already shed light on several works in *Ali*, there is still much scope for a sustained analysis of why so many of Pasolini's essays were only published in 1965. Giorgio Nisini offers a convincing argument which suggests that a rupture, or what Walter Siti has referred to as a crisis in Pasolini's prose, took place in 1965:

¹⁴ Michael Syrimis observes that what he terms 'self-reflexivity' is actually a narrative strategy employed by Pasolini to fashion a private-made-public persona. Syrimis notes how 'what makes "Squarci" unique, however, with respect to Pasolini's other Roman work is its self-reflexivity. The protagonist of the novella, a poet in search of nocturnal encounters with Rome's *ragazzi*, represents Pasolini himself. The novella's most distinct feature is that Pasolini gives his protagonist numerous names [...]. With these alter egos, Pasolini advertises his own role as the aesthetic interpreter of his adored underclass, more than its objective observer, emphasizing the literary craft at the basis of the diegesis and especially those *ragazzi* qualities that allow him to remold the youths into erotic objects'. Michael Syrimis, 'Squarci di notti romane': Pasolini's Early Roman Authorial Confessions', *Romance Notes*, Vol. 52 (1), 2012, 89-96 (p. 89).

¹⁵ 'Studi sulla vita del Testaccio' was initially published on 7th October 1951 in the literary journal '*Fiera letteraria*' under the title 'Testaccio. Note per un racconto' while 'Appunti per un poema popolare' appeared for the first time in the literary journal '*L'Europa letteraria*' under the title 'L'antinferno romano: appunti per un poema popolare' (1952). An extract of the abovementioned essay 'Squarci di notti romane' was published in another short piece of fiction Pasolini wrote and published under the title 'Roma allucinante' in the daily '*La Libertà d'Italia*' in January 1951. Other essays which Pasolini wrote 1950-51 but chose not to publish until *Ali* came out in 1965 are 'Il Biondomoro' (1950), 'Gas' (1950), 'Giubileo' (1950) and 'Notte sull'Es' (1951). See: Note e notizie sui testi: *Ali dagli occhi azzurri*, in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 2, pp. 1953-61.

¹⁶ Barański, p. 263.

Si torna alla conclusione di prima: il racconto, si presenta come il paradigma di un'impasse narrativa, 'maschera' di una difficoltà di 'ricerca neonaturalistica'. Ma ora c'è qualche indicazione in più: il Pasolini che manda alle stampe *Alì dagli occhi azzurri*, e dunque i racconti di un insuccesso, quelli del 50-51, nati da una 'mancanza di esperienza' è il Pasolini del 1965 [...]. È il Pasolini, insomma, che si sta proiettando verso lo sfaldamento definitivo della struttura romanzesca, lo scrittore che presto pubblicherà *Teorema* (1968) e che sta già immaginando un'opera decostruita 'infernale', promissoria come *La Divina Mimesis*. La provvisorietà ora diventa scelta stilistica; o meglio unica possibilità compositiva; è la poetica dell'appunto, del commento paratestuale, del collasso; la poetica su cui si strutturerà *Petrolio*, la sola, cioè, in grado di avvicinare criticamente un mondo (neocapitalistica) su cui nessun naturalismo sembra avere più presa.¹⁷

Nisini highlights how Pasolini's writing gradually develops more and more into a kind a collection of scrapbook entries which creates discontinuous temporalities and defies any systematic chronology of historical progress.

Despite their significant differences in genre – not only between prose fiction but also between essays and articles – these texts share many common features. A thread that links a number of these texts, however diverse their genres, is their endeavour to decompose linear narratives through the accumulation of fragments, repetition and a cyclical structure. These features emerge in Pasolini's first novel, *Ragazzi di vita*. *Ragazzi*

¹⁷ Giorgio Nisini, 'Sulla forma breve nella narrativa di Pier Paolo Pasolini', *Bollettino '900: Electronic Newsletter of '900 Italian Literature*, Vol. 1-2 (2005), <http://www.centrostudipierpaolopasolinicasarsa.it/molteniblog/riflessioni-sulla-forma-breve-nella-narrativa-di-ppp-di-giorgio-nisini/> [Accessed 22 September 2017].

can be loosely termed as a ‘cantiere’, or in other words, a novel which is made up of numerous short pieces of fiction stemming from published and unpublished prose work which Pasolini wrote in the early 1950s.¹⁸

The novel could be said, therefore, to be a complex sum of a whole host of intricate parts which the author re-uses and obviously expands. Indeed, a close reading of his early prose provides clues to the novel’s evolution and helps to navigate its complexities. Its plot is pushed forward by endless movement, and by events taking unpredictable directions which occasionally intersect with each other. *Ragazzi*’s primary focus is on the marginal and more specifically on the city’s peripheries and their inhabitants. Much like the city’s fragmented and boundless territory *Ragazzi*’s structure is also porous. Pasolini succinctly described the motivations which led him to write the novel to his publisher, Livio Garzanti, in 1955, emphasizing how his characters find themselves trapped between a natural and boisterous vitality and the oppressive authority of the city’s ruling class:

La mia ‘poetica’ narrativa (come Lei ha visto in ‘Regazzi di vita’) consiste nell’incatenare l’attenzione sui dati immediati. E questo mi è possibile perché questi dati immediati trovano la loro collocazione in una struttura o arco narrativo ideale che coincide poi col contenuto morale del romanzo.

Tale struttura si potrebbe definire con la formula generale: l’arco del dopoguerra a Roma, del caos pieno di speranza dei primi giorni della

¹⁸ Perhaps the most telling example of this ‘cantiere’ is ‘Il Ferrobedò’ (1951), a stand-alone piece of short fiction published by Pasolini in the cultural journal ‘*Il Paragone*’ in June 1951, and the first chapter of *Ragazzi*, which has the same title. While it is obvious that this text was revised and added to by the time it re-appeared in *Ragazzi* most of its narrative events are essentially the same. It has been observed that one of the most significant revisions to this text regards Pasolini’s clumsy use of *romanesco* in the version of text initially published in *Il Paragone*. Pasolini’s awkwardness has been attributed to his lack of familiarity with Roman dialect at that time in which he wrote this text. See: Luca Serianni, ‘Appunti sulla lingua di Pasolini prosatore’, in *Lezioni su Pasolini*, ed. by. Tullio De Mauro and Francesco Ferri (Ripatransone: Sestante, 1997), pp. 9-19. For an exhaustive account of the ‘cantiere’ leading to *Ragazzi*’s publication see Nisini, *L’unità impossibile*, pp. 156-215.

liberazione alla reazione del '50-51. È un arco ben preciso che corrisponde col passaggio del protagonista e dei suoi compagni [...] dall'età dell'infanzia alla prima giovinezza: ossia (e qui la coincidenza è perfetta) dall'età eroica e amorale all'età già prosaica e immorale. A rendere 'prosaica e immorale' la vita di questi ragazzi [...] è la società che al loro vitalismo reagisce ancora una volta autoritaristicamente: imponendo la sua ideologia morale.¹⁹

While *Ragazzi* is an assemblage of micro-narratives, the structure of Pasolini's second novel is a lot more linear and focuses on the life of the story's protagonist, Tommasino Puzzilli, charting his troubled transition from childhood to adulthood from a variety of social perspectives and themes: social status, sexual and corporeal identity, displacement and violence. A miscellany of descriptions of the social, cultural and urban changes underway in Rome emerges. The novel underscores the importance of some of the architectural developments and building projects while at the same emphasizing the scarred and displaced landscape in which these projects are being constructed.

In order to pull together such a broad, varied and intense corpus of writing I have chosen five macro-themes which I believe can provide new perspectives on Pasolini's Roman prose.²⁰ The choice of Pasolini's texts which I analyse in the chapters that follow has been made in accordance to their pertinence to the themes developed in my five chapters. Each chapter's narrative has a broadly chronological format. I have deliberately chosen to read Pasolini's Roman prose in such a way to enable the reader to gain a better appreciation of how Pasolini's understanding of the themes under investigation in this

¹⁹ *Pier Paolo Pasolini, Lettere (1940-1954)*, ed. by Nico Naldini (Turin: Einaudi, 1986), pp. 703-04.

²⁰ These themes, as already outlined in the previous section, cover the role and use of place names, the map of Pasolini's Rome, the representation and the agency of bodies, dirt and water and have been chosen to pursue an eco-critical reading of Pasolini's Roman prose.

thesis develops over time. While I have endeavoured to make a close critical reading of a broad sampling of text's from Pasolini's Roman corpus certain texts have been deliberately omitted.

Critical Reception of Pasolini's Roman Prose

While Pasolini's Roman novels have been subject to exhaustive criticism by three generations of scholars since their initial appearance in the 1950s, his Roman short fiction and essays have received much less attention. Initial criticism of both novels was marked by a highly ideological debate.²¹ A host of critics vehemently attacked *Ragazzi's* fragmented and inorganic framework and total lack of 'prospettivismo' while reception of *Una vita's* more linear structure and partially more socially mobile message was more measured.²² Carlo Salinari, a Marxist critic, in one of his critical analyses of *Ragazzi* claimed that the novel lacked a historical context and failed to offer its characters any social perspective, highlighting that one of its main weaknesses stemmed from its content, narrative structure and lack of ideological stance: 'il contenuto e la forma della narrativa di Pasolini trovano la loro spiegazione nei limiti del rispecchiamento della realtà nella sua coscienza, nella deformazione a cui la realtà è sottoposta in quel rispecchiamento, nell'inadeguatezza della sua ideologia'.²³

²¹ This debate was initially sparked by a leading cultural spokesperson of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), Carlo Salinari. Salinari's highly critical reading of *Ragazzi* was published in the literary journal *Il contemporaneo*, just three months after the novel's publication in 1955. See Schwartz, *Pasolini Requiem*, p. 282.

²² Joseph Francese has observed that the 'hard-line and strategic harshness of Salinari and others is vitiated by what Lukács, in an interview with *L'Unità's* correspondent during the Congress of the Communist Party of the USSR, calls '*prospettivismo*'. He goes on to note how Pasolini interpreted Lukács's theory: 'Pasolini suggested the implicit presence of an ulterior motive in the literary criticism of the Communists, namely that writers were being encouraged to adopt a certain ideological stance. This 'position' was intended to promote in the writer's creative work the prospect of a better, socialistic future, i.e. "*prospettivismo*". Joseph Francese, 'Pasolini's Roman Novels, the Italian Communist Party, and the Events of 1956' in *Pier Paolo Pasolini: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Patrick Rumble and Bart Testa (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), pp. 22-39 (p. 24).

²³ Carlo Salinari, 'Preludio e fine del realismo in Italia', *Interpretazioni di Pasolini*, ed. by

Two fellow Marxist critics, Gian Carlo Ferretti and Alberto Asor Rosa, writing some years later, disassociated themselves from Salinari's clear-cut position; both authors agreed, however, that the legacy of *Ragazzi* was also evident in *Una vita*.²⁴ Ferretti claimed that: 'sulle novità di *Una vita violenta* rispetto a *Ragazzi di vita* insistette giustamente a suo tempo la maggior parte dei critici di ispirazione marxista, con un gruppo di articoli molto analoghi nei loro motivi di fondo, ma con una accentuazione troppo positivo che finiva per lasciare in ombra le profonde crepe dell'opera e il loro vero significato.'²⁵

While Asor Rosa acknowledged that Pasolini had made a decisive step in developing his thematic strands, he criticized the second novel's ideological credentials, claiming that it was: 'un'operazione tutta intellettualistica e di "comodo": la sua è un'origine ideologica nel senso più restrittivo ed umiliante del termine'.²⁶ Francesco Muzzioli, in conversation with these Marxist critics, has sought to understand better Pasolini's ideological stance:

I critici, come abbiamo visto, gli hanno rimproverato una riproduzione troppa meccanica, come se l'autore si mantenesse impassibile dall'altra parte del suo obiettivo, nella pretesa che le cose parlino da sole. [...] Più che di impassibilità si deve parlare di prospettive parzializzanti che Pasolini

Giampaolo Borghello, Savelli, Rome, 1977, pp. 164-68 (p. 168)

²⁴ Matthew Gandy observes the contemptuous attitude several contemporary Marxists adopted towards Pasolini's understanding of Marxism. He notes that: 'Pasolini's distinctly cultural Marxism was consequently [...] at variance with the more programmatic and orthodox contemporary Marxists, such as Gyorgy Lukács and Asor Rosa, who saw cultural and mythological concerns as largely frivolous and irrelevant to class struggle.' Matthew Gandy, 'The Heretical Landscape of the Body: Pier Paolo Pasolini and the Scopio Regime of European Cinema', *Environment and Planning: Society and Space*, Vol. 14, 1996, 293-309, (p. 297).

²⁵ Giancarlo Ferretti, *Letteratura e ideologia* (Rome: Riuniti, 1964), p. 303.

²⁶ Alberto Asor Rosa, *Scrittori e popolo. Il populismo nella letteratura italiana contemporanea* (Rome: Samonà e Savelli, 1965), p. 460.

assume in determinati casi.²⁷

Returning to the debate over the ideological foundations of *Ragazzi*, Muzzioli makes a close critical analysis of some passages of the novel and concludes that Salinari and Asor Rosa's critical stance were not unjustified:

Queste notazioni ci sembra gettino un ragionevole dubbio sulla imperturbabilità documentaria del romanzo pasoliniano. Piuttosto si tratta di spostare il problema e di vedere con quale tipo di ideologia interviene Pasolini, in pratica qual è il discorso che egli svolge attraverso i fatti e gli ambienti descritti. È in questo senso che puntava la ricerca degli stessi Salinari e Asor Rosa.²⁸

Robert Gordon notes that the critical paths traced by these Marxist critics (to whom he importantly adds Franco Fortini) were 'rather rigid and often ideologically overdetermined categories of interpretation [which] were superseded in the early 1980s by a group of important Italian critical works, which attempted a more detached, analytically objective response to Pasolini.'²⁹ Guido Santato in one of the first posthumous studies to appear on Pasolini's Roman prose revises his Marxist

²⁷ Francesco Muzzioli, *Come leggere Ragazzi di vita* (Milan: Mursia, 1975), p. 55.

²⁸ Muzzioli goes on to conclude that: 'Infatti il mondo pasoliniano non è semplicemente quello del sottoproletariato, ma più esattamente quello dei ragazzi e bambini sottoproletari: gli adulti vengono respinti con connotazioni negative. [...] Dovremmo concludere allora che c'è qualcosa di più (o in meno) di una puntuale ricostruzione storica: che Pasolini sia alla ricerca della verità condotta da un suo mito: la possibilità di una "barbarie" ancora non infetta dalla ipocrisia e dall'artificiosità del dominio capitalistico'. Muzzioli, p. 57.

²⁹ Gordon notes that these works were published in the early 1980s by the following critics: Guido Santato, *Pier Paolo Pasolini, L'opera* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1980); Franco Brevini, *Per conoscere Pasolini* (Milan: Mondadori, 1981); and Rinaldo Rinaldi, *Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Milan: Mursia, 1982). See Robert S. C. Gordon, 'Recent Work on Pasolini in English', *Italian Studies*, Vol. 52, 1997, 180-88 (p. 182).

predecessors' observations about the ideological concerns underpinning *Una vita*'s political message, claiming that:

L'elemento progressivo e la prospettiva politica che animano il romanzo [*Una vita*] furono sottolineati in misura eccessiva dai rappresentanti della critica marxista, in contrapposizione a quelli che erano stati precedentemente denunciati come i limiti e le carenze di *Ragazzi di vita*.³⁰

In a more polemical vein, Rinaldo Rinaldi accused these novels' rhetoric of being primarily bent on capturing the reader's attention:

Ritroviamo dunque nei testi pasoliniani tutta la struttura orale del discorso retorico, il suo privilegiare l'azione immediata sulla memoria: certo, i romanzi restano 'scritti', nel senso più banale e meccanico del termine, ma la loro interna tensione retorica implica uno sforzo continuo di cancellare la scrittura, i suoi effetti di distacco visivo, di raffreddamento della ricezione. Tutto questo tende a scomparire a favore di un impatto 'caldo' sull'uditore [...]. Quella dei romanzi è davvero una retorica totale, che tende a superare (pur restandovi dentro) gli effetti anti-retorici dello scritto mediante una utilizzazione acustica e ipnotica del registro linguistico.³¹

Gordon provides a genealogy of how burgeoning Anglophone criticism, from the mid- 1980s onwards, was strongly influenced by the work of these three Italian critics and how their insights played an important role in leading to a 'critical turn' in Pasolini's scholarly corpus. He cites a fellow critic in Pasolini studies to highlight this sea-change:

³⁰ Santato, p. 212.

³¹ Rinaldo Rinaldi, *Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Milan: Mursia, 1982). p. 149.

in his introduction to his study of Pasolini's narrative works David Ward makes the bold, but not altogether implausible claim that, at some time in the 1980s 'the epicenter of interest in Pasolini, shifted from Italy to the United States, and to a lesser extent, Great Britain'.³²

This more recent wave of studies conducted by Anglo-American and Italian scholars has also re-explored Pasolini's Roman prose from different and less ideological perspectives. Keala Jewell, in a study which carefully analyses Pasolini's Roman poetry collection *Le ceneri di Gramsci* (1957), also alludes to his Roman prose and claims that Pasolini's work on Rome's urbanism goes far beyond any of his neorealist predecessors precisely 'because it addressed the question of the past, of the Roman overlay [...] through a distinctive portrayal of Rome which is at once ancient and modern'.³³ Jewell's study also shows how the ancient and the modern are conflated and the lowly embraces the sublime to transform Rome's grandeur and beauty into 'an oxymoronic city jungle'. She describes Pasolini's version of Rome as a 'splendid palimpsest':³⁴

Pasolini also added his own layer, and we can now describe a certain aspect of the city and its sociological makeup (now largely superseded, another 'Roma sparita' or vanished Rome), as 'Pasolini's Rome'. [...] Pasolini's Rome is a variation on the theme of the sublime and ugly and comes closer to what someone called the sublimely ugly.³⁵

³² Gordon, p. 180. Quotation from David Ward, *A Poetics of Resistance: Narrative and Writing of Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1995), p. 19.

³³ Keala Jewell, *The Poiesis of History: Experimenting with Genre in Postwar Italy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 30.

³⁴ Jewell, p. 23.

³⁵ Jewell, pp. 26-27.

David Ward claims that it is the very real connection which Pasolini establishes between his texts and the city that guarantees their intelligibility. He argues that by separating the boys' experience of the *borgate* in *Ragazzi* from the real world with which the reader is likely to be familiar, the author 'runs the risk of severing the bond that unites the text and human knowledge' but he ultimately recognizes 'that this is a direction in which Pasolini doesn't want to go'.³⁶

The conflation of rural and urban landscapes is taken up by Zygmunt Barański in his essay about the strong continuities running through Pasolini's Friulian and early Roman prose. His analysis underscores 'the equilibrium between the two worlds [Friuli and Rome] in which neither appears to hold sway' in a great deal of his early Roman short fiction.³⁷ This claim is also reiterated by Fabio Vighi in his thorough examination of Pasolini's early intellectual influences and writings on his Roman prose.³⁸ In addition to revealing the coherence of the author's artistic projects and the way his work engages with the dominant political and philosophical ideas of his time, Vighi convincingly demonstrates how the author's Friulian landscapes re-emerge in much of his early Roman prose and overturns suggestions touted by several critics of a fracture with Friuli after the author's self-imposed exile in Rome.

John David Rhodes, in a study mainly focused on Pasolini's Roman cinema, also examines his Roman prose. He treats Pasolini's Rome 'as a kind of material archive, as a record of how the city was used and inhabited – what it looked like and felt like at a particular point in time'.³⁹ He also emphasizes the profilmic particulars of the locations which define Pasolini's prose and convincingly shows how the author uses landscape and

³⁶ Ward, p. 73.

³⁷ Barański, p. 257.

³⁸ Fabio Vighi, *Le ragioni dell'altro: la formazione intellettuale di Pasolini tra saggistica, letteratura e cinema* (Ravenna: Longo, 2001), pp. 86-92.

³⁹ John David Rhodes, *Stupendous, Miserable City: Pasolini's Rome* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p. XV.

buildings to expose how post-war liberal humanism may have done more to delimit the new prosperity than it did to universalize wealth or to democratize resources. Rhodes notes how the Rome Pasolini's represents in his prose and cinematic output is underpinned by oxymoronic entities. Filippo Trentin stretches Rhodes's intuition a little further in his reading one of Pasolini's essays 'Il fronte della città'.⁴⁰ He notes how:

the ambivalence of this description which is based on the dialectal existence of opposite elements in the same space, is emblematic of Pasolini's representation of the city. The description of Rome as both beautiful and ugly, welcoming and miserable, relies on a strategy of contradiction based on the oxymoron [...] which represents a structural element of Pasolini's poetics [...]. In particular, his definition of peripheral Rome as both beautiful and ugly goes beyond traditionalist, dichotomic readings of the city [...]. For Pasolini, Rome should be understood as a dialectical entity in which the degraded and the sublime are strictly intertwined.⁴¹

Giorgio Nisini, in a philological study which carefully charts the lengthy and complex gestation of *Ragazzi*, shows how this novel converges with and is underpinned by a series of different artistic projects which Pasolini was working on in the late 1940s and early 1950s.⁴² Through a comparative reading of his Friulian prose, his early Roman

⁴⁰ In this essay Pasolini denounces the post-war governments' urban regeneration initiatives and underlines how there are aligned with, rather than in discontinuity with, their Fascist predecessors' urban reforms.

⁴¹ Filippo Trentin, *Rome 1945-1975: An Archaeology of Modernity*, (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Warwick, 2013) <http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/63031/>

⁴² Nisini, *L'unità impossibile*. His work is dedicated to reading Pasolini's prose not as a separate project but as one of number of projects that Pasolini was working on in the late 1940s and early 1950s. He carefully analyses how Pasolini revives work he had been previously been working on and builds these pieces of narrative into his Roman short stories, essays and *Ragazzi*.

short fiction and *Ragazzi*, Nisini shows how the author lifts verbatim passages from these earlier works and incorporates them, with a few minor changes, into his novel.

Nisini's work not only highlights the strong continuity of landscapes with a Friulian matrix in Pasolini's early Roman works and his first Roman novel, but also charts how both worlds merge with each other, and endorses Vighi's observations about the coherence and continuity of Pasolini's works. He goes on to observe how *Ragazzi* is constructed around a proliferation of stories and constantly shies away from producing closure:

Ragazzi di vita non è un lavoro chiuso: è piuttosto un pianeta narrativo attorno a cui ruotano decine di racconti satelliti, che a loro volta si completano e si comprendono fino in fondo solo se letti attraverso la rete delle loro interazioni. In tal senso la forma del racconto diventa un metodo non solo di avvicinamento al romanzo, di precisazione del romanzo, ma di analisi del reale, mezzo attraverso il quale restituire il reale nella disorganicità.⁴³

While Nisini's analysis primarily focuses on *Ragazzi*'s open-ended narrative structure, Simona Bondavalli, in a recent analysis of Pasolini's Roman prose, examines these works under the rubric of coming-of-age fiction, and notes a link between the interstitial nature of the novels' settings, adolescence and national development. She observes how, 'by adopting realistic narrative forms centred on adolescence and setting the novels in interstitial spaces on the outskirts of the capital, he focuses on the transitory quality of youth and the ongoing transformation of the country.'⁴⁴

⁴³ Giorgio Nisini, 'Sulla forma breve nella narrativa di Pier Paolo Pasolini'.

⁴⁴ Simona Bondavalli, *Fictions of Youth, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Adolescence, Fascisms* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), p. 83.

As this selective overview of critical works dedicated to Pasolini's Roman prose shows, studies about his Roman prose have experienced a significant transformation over the course of the last twenty-five years. These more recent studies have moved away from the Marxist critique, which accused Pasolini of mythologizing the world of the boys and by the same token urban space, to open up new perspectives, frequently from a wide range of study disciplines, which have provided new accounts of Pasolini's reading of Rome. Robert Gordon confirms how this change of direction has been triggered by the interdisciplinary approaches adopted by a number of Anglo-American critics to the entire corpus of Pasolini's artistic output and by the efforts of American and British Departments of Italian to survive challenges to their literary courses by re-training in film studies:

in this context, not only does Pasolini [...] provide an illuminating path from literature through to cinema in his career trajectory, but he also [...] throws up a series of fundamental questions which, among other things, could be said to reflect and affect the nature of the new interdisciplinary demands of research and teaching. On a broad critical level also, interdisciplinarity – of the critic and of the object of criticism – is the dominant, and perhaps only unifying feature of this corpus of work. Taking on Pasolini means finding some way of taking on all of the following: poetry (including dialect work), prose narrative, literary and stylistic criticism, verse-drama, film, film-theory, journalism of all kinds, and so on.⁴⁵

While much interesting work has been carried out in recent years on the urban in Pasolini's Roman cinema and, to a lesser extent, in his Roman poetry, very little attention

⁴⁵ Gordon, p. 181.

has been afforded to his Roman prose.⁴⁶ Among a variety of new thematic concerns which have been raised and explored in detail in critical scholarship on his Roman cinema, there is now a growing consensus that research into Pasolini's Roman corpus needs to be firmly grounded in an explicit engagement with space, place and landscape. This thesis aims to address this gap in Pasolini's Roman corpus by examining the representation of place and space in Pasolini's prose and by looking at how both concepts are represented and deployed by the author to cultivate narratives of identity, loss, porosity, circulation and eco-poetics. Taking my lead from recent Italian and Anglo-American contributions to scholarship concerning Pasolini's Roman prose, I aim to carry forward a fresh reading of his Roman prose work from a spatial perspective and to build on, and also contest, established readings of these texts. By adopting a new critical axis for Pasolini's Roman prose, I seek to show how a multi-disciplinary theoretical approach which focuses mainly on literary eco-criticism is a fruitful methodology for a revised reading of his Roman novels, essays and short stories.

⁴⁶ The scale of commentary that the themes have prompted from critical circles in relation to Pasolini's Roman prose is in striking disproportion to the prolific research into these themes in his cinematic and poetic output. In addition to the work of John David Rhodes and Keala Jewell already mentioned, other examples of this type of scholarship include: Naomi Greene, *Pier Paolo Pasolini: Cinema as Heresy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); Maurizio Viano, *A Certain Realism: Making Use of Pasolini's Film Theory and Practice*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993); Lino Micciché, *Pasolini nella città del cinema* (Venice: Marsilio, 1999); Angelo Restivo, *The Cinema of Economic Miracles: Visuality and Modernization in the Italian Art Film* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); Sam Rohdie, *The Passion of Pier Paolo Pasolini* (London: BFI Publishing, 1995); Fabio Vighi, *Traumatic Encounters in Italian Film: Locating the Cinematic Unconscious* (Bristol: Intellect, 2006); Michele Mancini and Giuseppe Perrella, *Pier Paolo Pasolini: corpi e luoghi* (Rome: Theorema, 1981); Keala Jewell 'Sexual Commerce and Culture: Pier Paolo Pasolini's Caracalla Poems', *Italica*, Vol. 75(2), 1998, 192-209; and Biancamaria Frabotta, 'Una Lettura de il pianto della scavatrice' in *Lezioni su Pasolini*, ed. by Tullio De Mauro and Franco Ferri (Ripatransone: Sestante, 1997), pp. 67-76; Caterina Verbano 'Il centro esploso'. Roma ne "Le ceneri di Gramsci" in *Pasolini e le periferie del mondo*, ed. by Paolo Martino and Caterina Verbano, Edizioni ETS, Pisa, 2016, pp. 95-115.

Critical Framework

My interpretative methodology is underpinned by a multidisciplinary approach which draws on the work of anthropologists, cultural geographers and social and eco-theorists. Two premises underlie my reading of Pasolini's Roman prose. The first is that the Roman novels and short fiction are embedded in ideologies about spatial practices and theories. My second premise is that Pasolini's literary output constitutes an important site of negotiation between such ideologies and literature. In what follows, the key theoretical perspectives I wish to tease out include ideas from urban studies (De Certeau), narrative theory (Bakhtin) and bodily porosity (Benjamin, Lacis, Kristeva).

Michel De Certeau, in a meditation on urban pedestrianism, equates walking the city to a type of storytelling, where the random or selectively chosen routes of the city walkers create crisscrossed itineraries of 'enunciations' on the urban topography. He claims that: 'their [city walkers] intertwined paths give their shape to spaces. They weave places together. In that respect, pedestrian movements form one of these "real systems whose existence in fact makes up the city"'.⁴⁷ The city walker's itineraries are an ever-changing, entangled series of routes and each route marks a new 'opening of meaning'.⁴⁸ The street assumes the role of a chronotope as it becomes what Mikhail Bakhtin has described as 'the organizing centres for the fundamental narrative events of the novel. The chronotope is the place where the knots of the narrative are tied and untied'.⁴⁹ Walking the city's streets for Pasolini's characters constitutes an act of resistance in which his characters play off the rigidity of authority against the fluidity of practice. Walking initially enables

⁴⁷ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven Rendall (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), p. 97.

⁴⁸ De Certeau, p. 106.

⁴⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel', in *The Dialogical Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas, 1988), p. 250. The chronotope, in Bakhtin's renowned articulation, is a type of image that fuses spatial and temporal concreteness in a manner that is 'saturated' with significance. Bakhtin, pp. 84-85.

the boys to impose themselves kinesthetically on the city and creates proximity between their bodies and their surroundings. The boys' journeys are spatially packed and temporally fast-paced and contribute to Pasolini's chronotopic images. They assume relevance as they centre on arbitrary events that often complement the novels' plot or interrupt it. We can see, therefore, that chronotopes in Pasolini's prose are often used to suppress or redirect parts of the novels' development.

Timo Müller has observed that while chronotopic texts are not necessarily inherently ecological they are underpinned by 'the ecological principles of continuity, flexibility and interconnection'.⁵⁰ He observes that:

Though the chronotope is probably not an inherently ecological category, I would argue that it has both structural and thematic affinities with the ecological approach to literature. Structurally, both approaches can be grounded in Bakhtin's notion of dialogicity (Müller 505-7). Explicitly and implicitly, they regard the literary text as an integral discursive unit that accommodates and perpetuates culturally regenerative principles such as openness and complexity. Whether we call these principles dialogic, as Bakhtin does, or ecological, as most ecocritics would, the underlining assumption seems to be the same: by means of these principles literary texts help sustain the vitality of their discursive, social or even their natural environment.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Timo Müller, 'Notes Toward and Ecological Conception of Bakhtin's Chronotope', *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment*, vol. 1(1), 2010, 98-102 (p. 101).

⁵¹ Müller, p. 98. Müller's idea of chronotopic literature as structurally and thematically influenced by eco-criticism resonates with my approach in the thesis.

Crossing from inside to outside underscores the porous nature of boundaries. Interiority becomes unhinged from the inside and spills outside as the dialectics of inside and outside multiply with diverse nuances. Walter Benjamin and Asja Lacis refer to the concept of porosity to encapsulate their perception of the social, spatial and temporal organization of the city of Naples in the mid-1920s.⁵² Benjamin and Lacis observe how poverty in Naples leads to a stretching of boundaries:

Similarly dispersed, porous, and commingled is private life. What distinguishes Naples from other large cities is something it has in common with the African kraal: each private attitude or act is permeated by streams of communal life. [...] So the house is far less the refuge into which people retreat than the inexhaustible reservoir from which they flood out. [...] Just as the living room reappears on the street, [...] the street migrates into the living room.⁵³

They claim that porosity suggests contingency, indeterminacy and penetration. The collapse of boundaries leads to the merging and intermingling of public and private, nature and culture, the manifest and the hidden. Benjamin and Lacis's understanding of porosity as a model of dissolution which enables access to knowledge and which reveals rather than conceals provides a useful guide to understanding Pasolini's constructions of Rome.⁵⁴ The city is at once the author's raw material, an experimental terrain, and the crossing of boundaries leads to new knowledge and to turning points in his novels'

⁵² Walter Benjamin and Asja Lacis, 'Naples', in *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter, ed. by Walter Benjamin (London: New Left Books, 1979), pp. 167-79.

⁵³ Benjamin and Lacis, p. 174.

⁵⁴ While it is undoubtedly true that Rome's architecture and organisation is significantly different from that of Naples, I find Benjamin and Lacis's essay useful as the concept of porosity emerges very strongly in Pasolini's Rome prose.

development. Andrew Benjamin advances the claim that body and time have a crucial role in Benjamin and Lacis's description of Naples:

Time, space and rhythms of the body work together. If there is a way into the general sense in which porosity figures within Benjamin's writing on Naples, then it resides in its effects. Effects are productive. Porosity, if only as a beginning, provides a way of making space and time work together to define both the urban condition and the body's place within it. Time is integral to understanding the urban affect.⁵⁵

By placing itself as an interface between humanity and nonhumanity, Pasolini's prose can be read in a similar vein to Matthew Gandy's observations about his cinema:

to recognise the dynamic relationship between nature and culture is to affirm a posttraditional order beyond the nature-based categories of race, gender and sexuality. This enables us to 'remap the borderlands' between nature and culture and 'envision a different and less hostile order of relationships among people, animals, technologies and land'.⁵⁶

An echo of Benjamin's thoughts on porosity can be discerned in Serenella Iovino's understanding of bodies and space. She observes that:

As bodies are what they are via their permeable boundaries (membranes that cause the flows of energy and matter), so, too, bigger entities and formations follow the same dynamics. A city, for example, is a porous body inhabited by other porous bodies, a mineral-vegetal-animal aggregate of porous

⁵⁵ Andrew Benjamin, 'Porosity at the Edge: Working through Walter Benjamin's "Naples"', *Architectural Theory Review*, vol. 10(1), 2005, 33-43 (p. 34).

⁵⁶ Gandy, p. 307.

bodies. Following the patterns of intra-action, cities are compounds of matter and energy in mutual transformation with human and non-human beings, living and non-living matter [...].⁵⁷

The collapsing of boundaries and the metamorphosis of bodies are major themes in Pasolini's prose. Ramona Fernandez argues that boundary-busting is a prevalent feature of what she defines as somatopic narratives. The somatope, which is 'the body place', and therefore a specific kind of chronotope, underpins the conceptual foundation of her analysis, which addresses how the body drives our imagination about race, gender and disability, particularly in the era of postmodern transition to a cyborg identity.⁵⁸ While my thesis has a very different focus I believe what Fernandez claims about the importance of bodies in steering narrative can help to gain a further appreciation of Pasolini's representation of his characters' bodies and his narrative's development. She argues that:

in somatopic narratives, the body is the site that makes meaning and directs the plot. For what happens to the bodies in somatopic narratives determines the plot. And bodies in somatopic texts are almost always morphing or under contention. The image of the body is at dead centre of the narrative. The body is the fulcrum of the narrative, and the narrative is enslaved to its representations of the body. [...] The somatope does a tremendous amount of work inside the narrative, creating an ever- varying chain of signifiers.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Serenella Iovino, *Ecocriticism and Italy: Ecology, Resistance and Liberation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), pp. 19-20.

⁵⁸ Fernandez points out that Bakhtin's theory suggests a relationship between the chronotope and the human body, noting that Bakhtin claims that 'the image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic'. Bakhtin, pp. 84-85. Ramona Fernandez, 'The Somatope: from Bakhtin's Chronotope to Haraway's Cyborg via James Cameron's *Dark Angel* and *Avatar*', *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 47(6), 2014, 1122-38 (p. 1124).

⁵⁹ Fernandez, p. 1124.

Pasolini's prose is somatopic as it privileges the dynamic interaction between his characters' bodies and the city. Circulation and interdependence are tropes which are gradually superseded by alienation and isolation, as the symbiotic bond between the boys' bodies and city comes undone.⁶⁰ The tension that emerges between proximity and displacement, and participation and expulsion, places bodies at the centre of Pasolini's prose.

However, Pasolini's bodies are also leaky bodies, produced by their environment. Distancing and relocation policies are employed by Rome's urban authorities to displace bodies, to contain dirt and waste, to enable illegal construction on land, and have inevitable ecological consequences for the surrounding landscape and rivers. Displacement and containment are akin to the self-determining act of walking performed by the boys in Pasolini's early prose as they are also strategies to appropriate and control space. Julia Kristeva describes the abjection of the self as the breakdown of boundaries, being neither object nor other, that which 'disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules'.⁶¹ Pasolini's representation of leaky bodies, filth and dirty and uncontainable water is abject as it troubles and unsettles boundaries. His interest in the abject enables him to convey a sense of squalor and poverty but also provides an impetus which underlines the interdependencies between the human and nonhuman worlds and the vulnerabilities of humans and other nonhuman species.

Literary ecology, as Christopher Martin Schliephake notes, 'is thus not so much concerned with exclusionary concepts or ideologies, but rather highlights openness and

⁶⁰ Peter Bondanella notes how alienation for Pasolini 'derives not just from working in a factory where an exploitative capitalist class controls one's work product (as Marx suggested), but may also be caused by the loss of a sense of mythical identity, a sense of harmony with nature, destroyed by an industrial civilization.' Peter Bondanella, *A History of Italian Cinema* (New York: Continuum, 2009), p. 419.

⁶¹ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 4.

interrelations'.⁶² Pasolini's aesthetics are, therefore, developed by deconstructing dualities. His representation of leaky bodies, water pollution and the city's struggle with waste disposal are underpinned by the impossibility of disentangling purity from pollution, humanity from excrement and past from present. The indeterminacy and ambiguity which Benjamin, Lacis and Iovino allude to is characteristic of how Manuel De Landa conceives of energy and materials. He encapsulates them as 'the unceasing morphing process that involves organisms, structures, genes, languages and ideas'.⁶³ De Landa goes on to claim that 'living creatures and their inorganic counterparts share a crucial dependence on intense flows of energy and materials. [...] Our organic bodies are, in this sense, nothing but temporary coagulations in these flows'.⁶⁴ By acknowledging the fictitious construction of time (i.e. linear history) as a privileged site promoting the dynamics of power of institutions, De Landa problematizes time itself. Pasolini also sees history as being cyclical and destructive rather than linear and progressive. This cyclical perspective evokes notions of everyday routines which secure the boys' presence in the city and subsequently attenuate their displacement in the *borgate*. This perspective gradually dissipates in Pasolini's second novel, *Una vita violenta*, as a linear time framework, which implicates a more stationary position for Pasolini's characters, gains ground. In a nod to De Landa, Iovino claims that:

[...] porosity is not only the basis of change, growth and decay both on a geological and a human level, but the very condition of history: of a history that is not a linear succession of events, but rather a path emerging from the

⁶² Christopher Martin Schliephake, 'Review Essay: Re-mapping Ecocriticism: New Directions in Literary and Urban Ecology', *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment*, vol. 6(1), 2015, 195-207 (p. 199).

⁶³ Manuel De Landa, *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History* (New York: Swerve Editions, 1997), p. 104.

⁶⁴ De Landa, p. 104.

fluxes of matter and energy in which our organic bodies are ‘nothing but temporary coagulations’, as De Landa says.⁶⁵

My thesis reads the above-outlined assumptions against Pasolini’s Roman prose in an attempt to show how the nonhuman environment is present in his work not merely as a framing or temporal device but as a presence which suggests that human history is deeply engaged and implicated with natural history.

Pasolini’s thoughts, therefore, embed what Serenella Iovino has described as ‘non-anthropocentric humanism’ in a broader system of interconnections and interdependencies which include the human and nonhuman world. Pasolini adopts a materially embodied openness to nonhuman nature and endorses a fuller acceptance of our somatic and biological complication in the physicality of the earth’s ecological entirety. Placing a premium on interconnectivity and humanity’s relation to nonhuman nature enables the reader to reach a more nuanced understanding of the collapse of physical and corporeal boundaries, and to appreciate the extent to which bodies and the management of dirt and the use of water are culturally constructed, as well as to re-evaluate dirt and waste’s life cycle and water’s permeability, agency and vulnerability.

Pasolini’s prose, therefore, broaches the difficulties of integrating the human and nonhuman world within the same historical canvas. He is, however, aware that just as there is a historical time, there is also a geographical time that – despite the continuous adjustments of history – changes almost imperceptibly. Geographical time affects and impacts on historical time much more than we may actually imagine. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari have sought to disestablish the primacy of the historical in relation to the geographical. Deleuze observes how ‘the world is made up of superimposed surfaces,

⁶⁵ Iovino, p. 20.

archives or strata. The world is thus knowledge'.⁶⁶ Pasolini seeks to slide consciously between the cracks left open by the combination of these two different concepts of time, in an attempt to bring back, or at least bring to the fore, what has escaped historical changes. A heightened attentiveness to the cracks and crevices, like the porosity of Neapolitan architecture identified by Benjamin and Lacis, illuminates the human relationship with the nonhuman world. Deleuze and Guattari have used the concept of the rhizome to explicate their idea of a paradigm of networks and linkages. Their rhizomatic model breaks down dichotomies by pluralizing, producing differences and multiplicities, making new connections. As a network of multiple threads, the rhizome contests centralized and hierarchal orientation, and 'operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots'.⁶⁷ The structure of Pasolini's prose could be described in Deleuze and Guattari words as 'a collective assemblage'.⁶⁸ I will use this concept of rhizome as a point of entry into my chapters on bodies and dirt.

In line with Monica Seger, my critical outlook sees Pasolini's prose as concerned with interstitial landscapes and how bodies, waste and water engage with such landscapes. Seger claims that:

[...] Pasolini contributes to the study and nurture of an imaginative life for those spaces and subjects somehow left behind. At the same time, he hones in on the largely unspoken physical effects of a particular cultural moment in a particular geographical space. In this he raises concrete environmental concerns while furthering a post-war investigation of the modern Italian landscape and how society might cope with this landscape's distinctly

⁶⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p. 98. Deleuze and Felix Guattari advance this claim most forcefully in their seminal text *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (London: Athlone, 1992).

⁶⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, p. 21.

⁶⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, p. 84.

second nature, albeit in spite of himself.⁶⁹

Bearing in mind the proliferation of critical analyses of Pasolini's general corpus, my thesis endeavours to reflect such diversity by drawing on interrelated theories from a multi-disciplinary perspective. I contend that an eco-critical reading of Pasolini's prose can enliven our understanding of hitherto unexplored issues and put them in dialogue with questions of post-war urban construction initiatives, industrialization, and environmental degradation. It also moves the focus away from long-standing debates about Pasolini's political and ideological positions in an attempt to tap into the potential of Pasolini's prose. By demonstrating how Pasolini engages in forming an environmental consciousness, I suggest that his writing has implications for discussions of issues related to the interconnection of man and the larger environment. Bodies, dirt and water become problematized spaces of subject-object relationships, homosocial masculinity, and identity formation. This ongoing interaction between bodies, dirt and water and space leads to a tactile atmosphere which erodes boundaries and dismantles established dichotomies about human and nonhuman worlds and generates knowledge. My eco-critical reading of Pasolini's prose adds to existing theoretical scholarship by revising previous readings of environment-as-object and acknowledging environment-as-being.

Chapter Outlines

My first chapter examines the way Pasolini uses place names to underscore this symbiotic relationship between characters and material landscape in his early Roman

⁶⁹ Seger goes on to underscore the link between interstitial landscapes and dispossessed people in Pasolini's cinema, noting that: '[...] Pasolini's career-long engagement with interstitial landscapes is directly tied to and underscored by his parallel engagement with interstitial people. Focusing on protagonists who are caught between bare life and that which is modern and, for him, necessarily modern, he consistently directs viewers to the often-indiscernible middle realm in human as well as environmental form.' Monica Seger, *Landscapes in Between: Environmental Change in Modern Italian Literature and Film* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2015), p. 67.

prose. I go on to consider how *Ragazzi*'s street boys employ these names in its opening chapters to mimetically appropriate their spatial environment and to create markers of resistance. The haphazard presentation of place names in other stories is often used by Pasolini to testify the city's unfettered, yet inorganic and sprawling growth and to underpin the text's deliberately programmatic fragmentation. The chapter also considers issues of street nomenclature and how Italy's post-war governments erase place names associated with the Fascists' urban initiatives in Rome's peripheries and promote their own naming strategies. I examine how place names gradually take on socio-political connotations in *Una vita* and are often associated with a more fanciful nomenclature as the onslaught of hegemonic capitalism permeates post-war society and its value system.

In Chapter Two, I look at the map of Rome which emerges from Pasolini's Roman prose. It considers how the porous geographies of Trastevere, 'la città materna', are premised on the collapse of public/private boundaries and the coalescence of its inhabitants' social practices with its vernacular architecture. I argue that these porous spaces provide an interesting setting for Pasolini's exploration of the city, as the fluidity of their boundaries acts a source of knowledge and discovery. I also show how we are presented in *Ragazzi* with the boys' map of the city through their picaresque itineraries. Their chameleon-like ability and cognitive knowledge of the city centre enable them to negotiate its urban space and to establish alternative sites of sociability.⁷⁰ While the haphazard layout of central and peripheral locations runs in conjunction with the programmatic indeterminateness of *Ragazzi*'s narrative the greater linearity of Pasolini's second novel, *Una vita*, allows a more clearly delineated centre-periphery cleavage, and a distinction between public and private space to emerge. I examine how Pasolini's

⁷⁰ This unconventional map of Rome is revised towards the novel's conclusion: the city centre's post-war map can be read as a manifestation of control predicated on exclusionary geographies.

growing engagement with political and social issues concerning the city's development prompted him to represent parts of the metropolis which are undergoing rapid social remodeling. I also consider how the once cut-off *borgate* are gradually assimilated into one another and how this dismantling of spatial arrangements leads to an even greater sense of exclusion from city life for Rome's disenfranchised *borgatari*.

Chapter Three addresses the relationship between Pasolini's characters' bodies and space. The relationship between their young bodies and the city is initially formed by an indissoluble bond, eroding the dividing lines between the city's contours and the boys themselves. The chapter also considers how these characters' incessant movement enables them to assert their agency and to forge spatial relationships in the city and to contest the normativity of space. Walking is used as a tool to appropriate space, a defence mechanism to secure their presence in the city. Movement is, therefore, crucial to the relationship that these street boys have with the city and to Pasolini's prose's construction. I examine how and why this special relationship is gradually eroded, examining how these characters managed to dominate their pre-modern spatial environments in Pasolini's early Roman prose and how subsequently, as his novels unfold, their practical interaction with the city is jeopardized by displacement, motorization and the onslaught of capitalism.

Displacement to the city's *borgate* leads to the boys' alienation in the city's peripheries. This strain leads to a more contentious relationship between the boys and their environment. The material implosion of their bodies can be aligned with the material destruction of their sub- culture. The prominence of their leaky bodies marks them out as inassimilable supplements of the city's burgeoning social tissue. The idea that blood, which is normally seen as life-giving and necessary internal for life to exist, is represented externally, inverts understandings of the human body and instils a sense of threat and pollution.

In Chapter Four, I go on to consider how dirt in Pasolini's prose aestheticizes Rome's war-torn landscape and initially operates as a testimony to and metonym for the city's ruination. I consider the nexus between dirt/freedom and cleanliness/control. The itemization of rubble, debris, wreckage, the smell of gas, the stench of piss and aphrodisiacal scents emerges initially in his early prose, but this specificity gradually wanes as dirt is subsequently channelled into sewerage pipelines, transported to dumps in the city's peripheries. I looked at how urban regeneration initiatives to control various forms of dirt and waste involve a spatial and visual exercise which rearranges its presence in the city but do not eliminate it. Pasolini's trope of sanitation is, therefore, underpinned by themes of visibility and invisibility and dirt is closely tied up with the concept of order.

The chapter considers how Pasolini's privileging of non-modern excremental practices underscores the boys' decision to perpetuate their promiscuous toiletry practices and reject modern toiletry practices. Excrement comes to stand for everything that officialdom has written out of history. I show how Pasolini exposes the flaws and weakness of modern Rome's waste control and containment systems and infrastructure and the threat they pose to its environment's biodiversity. Waste is, in Pasolini's eyes, a protean substance requiring new management strategies.

The chapter also considers how the terminal is often the site of the germinal; cast-offs and scraps frequently become a source of regeneration. Repurposed, revalued and recycled, waste participates in a cultural economy without fixed identities. Pasolini invites us to think about shifting demarcations between waste and resources and the questions that they raise.

Chapter Five argues that the water/place nexus is an essential feature underpinning liminal and homosocial spatial configurations. The chapter underscores water's potential to create recursive and formative relationships between human beings and water and

considers man's somatic and biological co-implication with the element. Water and water-related events shore up *Ragazzi's* repetitive, circulatory structure by providing cohesion to its fragmented structure. Pasolini reveals a strong ecological consciousness through his sustained attention to water sites whose eco-system is threatened by pollution. Water is not merely tied up with themes of interconnectedness, but it also associated with a diminishing capacity to endure waste disposal and capitalist industrialization. The constant metamorphoses of the Roman rivers, their incessant flows and their cyclical nature are tied up in a process of marking and claiming. My chapter argues that water's dynamic and fluid nature and relentless flow metonymically reflect the swarming expansion of the city and enable rivers and riverine landscapes to manifest changes over time more readily than concrete or solid ones.

The chapter also explores the link between liminal sites and water. I consider how the liminal nature of riverbanks, beaches and other aquatic *loci* provide Pasolini with the ideal setting to usher in turning points in his narrative's development and to allow some of his characters to take on new identities. Liminal water sites are often used to organize both his characters' experience of the world and to shape the narrative structure of his prose.

My thesis argues that Pasolini's prose interrogates past social formations and practices and their interconnectedness with their material environment in order to propose possible future outcomes. Rather than embrace a future-orientated myth of progress and perpetual modernization, Pasolini tries to comprehend formations which emerge 'at the periphery'. His emphasis on the marginalized, the discarded, the vulnerability of natural resources and the wealth of diversity both among the human and the non-human worlds can be read as articulating a sociological and ecological discourse about how modernity and urban development imperil the more marginalized members of society and its natural

resources. By exploring the stratification of human history and nature, and how human history and nature are deeply implicated with each other, Pasolini attempts to read the future in the past.

Place Names in Pasolini's Roman Prose

This chapter examines the role of place names in Pasolini's Roman prose. Pasolini's initial interest in place names emerges in an article, 'I parlanti' (1948),⁷¹ which takes the form of a compendium of fragmented notes in which the author expounds his thoughts on language and place in Friuli.⁷² He acknowledges in this study that it is probably his perennial homelessness which has prompted him to question the meaning of Friuli's various place names through the similarities which he claims exist between its inhabitants' physical traits and the region's geographical ones. He also reveals how the colour and the smell of certain places and water enable him to form associations which hone his perception of these locations:

Ricordo per esempio la mia piccola figura di bambino di sei anni, durante un temporale, mentre guardo con i cugini la strada allagata e le pareti della casa di fronte alla nostra macchiate di umido così da suggerirci l'immagine di un orso e di un pesce. Ma quell'emozione di bambino, dovuta agli ultimi rugiadosi scrosci della pioggia, all'odore alpestre delle cene e dell'acqua bevuta dalle cloache, delle ventate fuggiasche, è identica a certe

⁷¹ Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'I parlanti', in *Romanzi e racconti*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia de Laude, vol. 2 (Milan: Mondadori, 1998), pp. 163-96. This article was written in Friuli in 1948 and published in the journal *Botteghe Oscure* in 1951. It was republished in Einaudi's 1979 edition of Pasolini's first novel *Ragazzi di vita* alongside another essay about Rome's peripheries entitled 'La mia periferia'. Although it may seem strange that an essay about places and inhabitants in Friuli should appear as an appendix to a novel that unfolds exclusively in Rome, a closer reading of both texts evinces how place names come to have a highly significant role in Pasolini's understanding of place and the values he attaches to the different places he represents both in his Friulian essay and in his Roman short stories and novels.

⁷² Although born in Bologna, Pasolini's childhood was spent in a variety of different places. His father, a fascist army officer, was frequently transferred from one city or town to another. During his childhood Pasolini's family moved from Bologna to Parma, Belluno, Conegliano, Casarsa, Sacile, Idria, Cremona, Scandiano and back to Bologna again where he attended secondary school. He spent long stretches of his childhood summers in his mother's hometown, Casarsa della Delizia (Friulia) and took up permanent residence with his family in this town in 1943. For further biographical information see Barth David Schwartz, *Pasolini Requiem* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

circostanziate angosce che mi colgono ora, a venticinque anni: la coscienza e la noia possono ora aver spogliato Casarsa dei suoi colori, ma c'è una tinta incancellabile, che, man mano che gli anni passano, nereggia sempre più intensa [...]. C'è, al di là della linea della mia memoria, questa immagine ossessiva di una macchia d'umido.⁷³

Pasolini's understanding of this place hinges not so much on the visual images that this damp patch initially triggers in the author's imagination but rather on olfactory and chromatic associations which become synonymous with this location. This link between place names, water, smells and colours continues throughout Pasolini's essay and underscores how his perception of these features actually creates a sense of place for him. His description of a larger town, Pordenone, draws a distinction between the acute mercenary smell of the town's centre and the immense sense of freedom which one senses in its surrounding hinterland:

Malgrado questa promessa di vitalità e vastità non fosse mantenuta, poiché il centro sarebbe rimasto nella sua memoria di fanciullo tutto raccolto in un'immagine angusta, ombrosa e umida, dove soffiava un acuto odore di mercerie, egli si innamorò di quell'impressione di grandezza che si respirava alle soglie della città.⁷⁴

'I parlanti' also underscores Pasolini's precocious and avid interest in maps and the immense joy he felt as child when he discovered that the town of Casarsa della Delizia was clearly marked out on the Italian atlas.⁷⁵ Pasolini's fascination with maps and with

⁷³ 'I parlanti', p. 165.

⁷⁴ 'I parlanti', p. 189.

⁷⁵ Pasolini refers in an essay entitled 'Squarci di notti romane' to its protagonist's desire to 'provare per un momento ad andarsene da Roma possedendo dentro di sé, in tutte le sue cellule, la Geografia del ragazzo' [Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'Squarci di notti romane', in *Romanzi e racconti*,

Casarsa della Delizia's topography is immediately striking. It becomes evident that Casarsa and its surroundings are not only places which simply exist 'out there' in the world but are also inside Pasolini's imagination and are charged with highly affective connotations:

Da ragazzo [the article's narrator] si inebbriava sull'Atlante; e benché preferisse perdersi nell'intenso azzurro del Pacifico o nel rosa da calcomania dell'Australia o della Polinesia, chiusi nell'incantevole reticolato dei paralleli e dei meridiani, tuttavia non era raro che si decidesse a sfogliare l'Atlante fino alla figura dell'Italia, e li cercasse con avidità i cerchiolini delle città che gli erano care.⁷⁶

This precocious interest in maps enables Pasolini, as Derek Duncan argues, 'to realize a subjective, but effective, sense of place in the world',⁷⁷ which is not, however, underpinned by a real and concrete material reality but is rather 'a purely geographical fact [...] a place without history.'⁷⁸ In the first part of this chapter I will explore how such marginalized, ahistorical and emotionally charged configurations of place continue to emerge in Pasolini's early Roman narrative.

This chapter is articulated in the following critical and theoretical directions: it initially examines how place names have the primary function of highlighting the visceral

vol. 2, pp. 329-61]. In another story entitled, 'Giubileo', the story's eponymous protagonist's endeavours to map out an 'Atlante Scatologico' of Rome's periphery. As the protagonists of both these texts actually represent the author's alter-ego it seems significant that he sees his linguistic and literary enterprises in Rome's suburbs as having a strong geographical dimension ('Giubileo', in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 2, pp. 383-94). This story was originally written in 1950 and published for the first time in *Alì dagli occhi azzurri*. See Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Alì dagli occhi azzurri*, in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 2, pp. 329-887.

⁷⁶ 'I parlanti', p. 186.

⁷⁷ Derek Duncan, *Reading and Writing Italian Homosexuality: A Case of Possible Difference* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p. 93.

⁷⁸ Duncan, p. 94.

bond and strong physical resemblance which exist between places and their inhabitants in Pasolini's early Roman prose. It considers how the conflation between rural and urban landscapes and their inhabitants initially enables the author to replicate some of his Friulian landscapes in his early Roman fiction and how this phenomenon gradually recedes as the author's interests shift towards the problems of Rome's socio-anthropological development. It also shows how Pasolini uses place names to give form and order to many of his fragmented essays and to his first Roman novel, *Ragazzi di vita* (1955).

I go on to examine how place names are deployed mimetically to reflect Pasolini characters' perception of the city and its peripheries in *Ragazzi*. I show how his proletarian characters employ place names as symbolic markers to re-appropriate space and to resist naming strategies imposed by the city's authorities. I also consider how the novel's initial documentary urgency is underpinned by a host of place names and how this topographic specificity gradually recedes in its final chapters. I claim that the absence of place names towards the end of the novel enables the author to continue exploring themes linking his characters and landscape and at the same time to problematize this symbiotic relationship. I go on to look how Pasolini uses place names charged with allusive meanings from other literary texts.

The final section of the chapter looks at the ways in which place names in *Una vita violenta* (1959) are deployed to evince how both Rome's centre and peripheries are being actively shaped and reshaped, destroyed and rebuilt. I primarily examine how naming strategies are used to construct, mobilise and represent new identities in the city. I also show how the city's underclasses adopt a new and fanciful nomenclature to fuel aspirations towards improved living conditions and reclaim space for themselves in the city's peripheries.

Critical Scholarship

Pasolini scholars have tended to overlook the important role that place names have in Pasolini's narrative works. In an article which deals with Pasolini's concept of ideological space Fabio Vighi refers to Pasolini's article 'I parlanti' and considers how place names in this essay assume 'an ideological significance, acting as catalysts for the opposing theoretical categories.'⁷⁹ He argues that there is a dichotomy between place names which adhere to their conventional status as signs and others, referred to by Pasolini as his 'adorati toponimi', which embody 'a theoretical value which lies in their impossible aspiration to become, through the artist's elaboration, the very object that they name'.⁸⁰ One of these 'adorati toponimi' is the name of his mother's Friulian hometown Casarsa della Delizia. Vighi claims that this place name 'is accorded a mythical resonance' and goes on to argue that:

what contradicts the scientific rigour of his [Pasolini's] research is not only the very poetic terminology adopted, but mainly the fact that he invariably tends to amalgamate language (that is dialect and even different accents) with physical traits, to the extent of suggesting the presence of a mythical component which is at the same time physical and linguistic, and which finds its best, crystallized expression in the 'adorati toponimi' themselves.⁸¹

One of Pasolini's contemporaries, Giuseppe Zigaina,⁸² in a study dedicated to the author's merits as a painter, suggests that Casarsa della Delizia has a 'double and

⁷⁹ Fabio Vighi, 'Adorati toponimi: Tracking Ideological Space in Pier Paolo Pasolini', *New Readings*, Vol. 5, 2000, <http://ojs.cf.ac.uk/index.php/newreadings/article/view/34/29>. [accessed 20 March 2017].

⁸⁰ Vighi, 'Adorati toponimi'.

⁸¹ Vighi, 'Adorati toponimi'.

⁸² Zigaina is a Friulian artist who collaborated in an initiative launched by Pasolini in the 1940s to set up a school for the region's student community. Pasolini subsequently wrote several critical reviews about Zigaina's artistic output in Friulian dailies and assisted in

concomitant meaning' claiming that 'the juxtaposition of 'casa arsa'⁸³ and 'delizia' might stand for the stylistic matrix of his [Pasolini's] work: the oxymoron'⁸⁴ or what the literary critic Giorgio Barberi Squarotti has defined as 'the intimate structure of internal contradiction' which he sees as being the defining feature of all Pasolini's artistic output.⁸⁵ Zigaina argues that 'the antithesis symbolized by the oxymoron could be the "germinating nucleus" of the pastiche, a term to which Pasolini attached very positive meaning and values very early on, even in his first articles of art criticism'.⁸⁶

The Marxist scholar Carlo Salinari's ideological reading of *Ragazzi di vita* takes issue with what he refers to as Pasolini's excessive and exaggerated use of Roman dialect and considers how he reverts to a place name to shore up his folkloristic account of the city's underclass's poverty:

Ma in Pasolini il dialetto occupa uno spazio ancora maggiore e diviene invadente, eccessivo, sbracato e toglie il respiro al lettore con la sua esuberanza. Leggete un periodo preso a caso: 'Per prima partì il Monnezza [...] e anzi Ercoletto, del Vicolo del Cinque, era forse il meglio di tutti: si tuffava correndo [...] come se ballasse'. Non vedete come la frase finale, l'immagine leggera del ragazzo sul trampolino, non riesce a fondersi col precedente periodo, a riscattare l'affastellarsi di nomignoli, scelti fra i più

his first art exhibition in Rome in 1954.

⁸³ Giuseppe Zigaina, *Pasolini between Enigma and Prophecy*, trans. by Jennifer Russell, (Toronto: Exile Editions, 1991), p. 8. Zigaina argues that Casarsa della Delizia most probably refers to Turkish incendiary attacks on the townland's houses in 1499.

⁸⁴ Although the oxymoronic meaning embedded in this place name does not emerge in such an obvious way in Pasolini's prose, it is worth recalling that there is evidence of oxymoronic topographical expressions in Pasolini's poetry collection *Le ceneri di Gramsci* (1957). 'Stupenda misera città' and 'Come era nuovo nel sole Monteverde Vecchio' seem to confirm Pasolini's predilection for dabbling with names charged with double and concomitant meanings.

⁸⁵ Giorgio Barberi Squarotti, *Poesia e narrativa del secolo XX* (Milan: Mursia, 1971), p. 15.

⁸⁶ Zigaina, p. 12.

bulli, e lo *smagare* e le *sette bellezze* e quel tocco finale, il richiamo al Vicolo dei Cinque, che con la sua fame di spavalderia malfamata deve rendere ancora più *greve*, sboccato, romanesco, in senso deteriore o folcloristico tutto il periodo?⁸⁷

The issue of geographical rhetoric has also emerged as a concern for Rinaldo Rinaldi. In his first study on Pasolini's works, Rinaldi argues that the plentitude of topographical detail in the author's Roman novels acts as a rhetorical device to capture the reader's undivided attention.⁸⁸ In a subsequent analysis Rinaldi reinforces this position, arguing that *Ragazzi*'s fragmentary and repetitive structure demonstrates that the author is more interested in reconstructing a cartographic representation of Rome's suburbs than a realistic one:

In questa idea di libro possibile già si profila *Ragazzi di vita*, romanzo fatto di linguaggio ma anche fuori dal linguaggio in quanto fuori dai significati come da ogni realismo rappresentativo. Libro letteralmente 'da guardare', visivo, proprio perché visionario libro-disegno, ma anche libro-cantilena. Per questo ci sembra che il libro futuro di Giubileo prenda più l'aspetto di un atlante che di un libro vero e proprio: raccolta di carte, di figure, di pitture. Ed anche quell'apertura estrema sull'universo inesplorato e misterioso delle *borgate* (la 'grande provincia') pare schiudersi non sulla realtà del territorio bensì sulla sua trascrizione cartografica, e le periferie diventano le linee affascinanti di un disegno, si appiattiscono sopra uno schermo. Il vecchio atlante colorato, tanto amato dal bambino de *I parlanti*,

⁸⁷ Carlo Salinari, 'Preludio e fine del realismo in Italia', in *Interpretazioni di Pasolini*, ed. by Giampaolo Borghello (Rome: Savelli, 1977), pp. 164-68 (p. 166).

⁸⁸ Rinaldo Rinaldi, *Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Milan: Mursia, 1982), p. 165.

non è più uno strumento simbolico per riconoscere la realtà ma si è trasformata in una macchina da affreschi, in un produttore di sogni.⁸⁹

Rinaldi's contentions suggest a chasm between the role of places and places names delineated by the author in 'I parlanti' and the one they assume in *Ragazzi*. While places and place names in Friuli enabled Pasolini to conduct a social investigation, establish links between local people and their physiognomies and to ultimately create a mythical resonance, Rinaldi claims that places and geography in his Roman narrative are relegated to functioning as elaborate stencil designs punctuating a product of extreme artifice.

Pasolini's use of place names and the other extra-textual referents to guarantee *Ragazzi's* ultimate intelligibility has been explored by David Ward. He claims that:

the almost obsessive logging of street names, names of Rome's suburban quarters, bus numbers and routes and cinemas etc., that allows us to follow the meanderings of the *borgatari* on a street map, reminds us that Pasolini wants to establish a very real connection between his text and the city.⁹⁰

Ward argues that Pasolini's representation of places names evinces the author's eagerness to create a city-text 'which is not born out of fantasy but out of historical fact'.⁹¹ He goes on, however, to point out the risk of losing sight of the disparity between the real, historical city and Pasolini's subjective one:

The danger, which seems to me inherent in Pasolini's practice, is that the context we construct to make sense of his strange text, to bring it within modes of order we recognize, may be so bizarre that it opens up a gap

⁸⁹ Rinaldo Rinaldi, *L'irricoscibile Pasolini* (Marra: Rovito, 1990), p. 142.

⁹⁰ David Ward, *A Poetics of Resistance* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1995), p. 73.

⁹¹ Ward, p. 73.

between the Rome of his text and the empirical reality on which it is supposed to be based.⁹²

The almost obsessive topographical precision which emerges through Pasolini's deployment of place names in his first Roman novel, *Ragazzi*, has been briefly taken up by John David Rhodes. Rhodes refers to Pasolini's Adamic ambitions underlying the author's eagerness to be the first person to have documented places in the city's peripheries and to have put them on most people's radar. He argues that the painstaking topographical specificity which emerges in *Ragazzi*'s opening chapters demonstrates how places names are initially deployed by Pasolini not only to bolster his topographical precision but subsequently to underscore the ongoing changes in the city's layout vis-à-vis the boys' movements from the *borgate* to the city centre through an elliptic, proto-cinematic technique. He shows how place names, in one of Pasolini's Roman essays, 'Dal vero', are used to convey an illusion of movement by narrating:⁹³

This preoccupation with places and space, with the geography of an ever-expanding Rome, is a defining feature of Pasolini's literary production across the 1950s. In a story, [...] 'Dal vero' (From life), Pasolini narrates the events inside a long bus ride from Rebibbia toward the center of Rome [...]. Place names and bus stops are announced as the narrator describes, proto-cinematic, the changes in landscape that occur as the bus moves from

⁹² Ward, p. 73. Ward goes on to argue that the specificity of Pasolini's geographical referencing is constructed around a tension between the referential and the self-referential: 'The issue, however, is not so much that of swapping the *invraisemblance* for the *vraisemblance*, but of finding enough common ground within the former for it to be recuperated sufficiently within the latter so as to be at once plausible. [...] The trick, then, would be to find a way of establishing a fruitful tension between the referential and the self-referential, a mode of coexistence in which the two extremes, while still in functional opposition, would also interpenetrate and establish a mutually implicative relationship'. Ward, pp. 73-74.

⁹³ The essay Rhodes is referring to is entitled 'Dal vero' and was initially published in *Ali*. See 'Dal vero', *Romanzi e racconti*, pp. 437-45.

the periphery to the center'.⁹⁴

As this short, selective overview shows, studies which have examined the use of place names in Pasolini's prose have tended to focus on single issues while very little attention has been dedicated to the processes underlying his place naming strategies. I believe that there is much scope for a renewed interrogation of the role of place names in Pasolini's novels and short fiction. The primary aim of this chapter is to tease out, in a spatially informed and theoretically nuanced manner, the complex interrelations between characters, environment and place names in Pasolini's Roman prose in order to gain a further understanding of his work and to reconsider the important role that place names have in his prose.

Theoretical Scholarship on Place Names

The scholarly corpus on place names has traditionally tended to focus on these names' etymological and taxonomic features. Over the last thirty years theoretical studies have broadened their scope significantly and have begun to consider how place names are embedded in a host of different meanings. In an article which provides an extensive genealogy of the main strands of critical scholarly work on place names since the mid-1980s, Rose-Redwood et al. observe that research on place names has occupied a marginal role within geographical studies because of the rarefied and pedantic nature of traditional research on this subject:

[...] skepticism [among geographers] is understandable considering the largely esoteric and encyclopaedic nature of much traditional scholarship on place names. This goes a long way toward explaining why place-name

⁹⁴ John David Rhodes, *Stupendous, Miserable City: Pasolini's Rome* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p. 34.

research has carved out such a marginal existence within the discipline of geography.⁹⁵

They go on to observe how a critical turn in the study of place names has been driven by a switch from the meaning of the name to the process which led to a specific name's existence:

In critical place-name studies, the emphasis has been placed not so much on the name itself but rather on the cultural politics of *naming* – that is, how people seek to control, negotiate, and contest the naming process as they engage in wider struggles for legitimacy and visibility.⁹⁶

Joshua Nash considers the material relationship between man, place names and his surroundings. He claims that:

Toponyms are not arbitrary ephemera that exist in a vacuum; they are culturally embedded and alive, living, existing, making sense only in the minds and the environments of the people who know their meanings [...]; place names not only create realities; these actualities are realised by the names themselves.⁹⁷

The relationship between 'the rhetoric of walking' and street names has been influentially articulated by Michel de Certeau. He conceives of the walker's ramblings in the city as a type of storytelling where their randomly selected routes of city create a

⁹⁵ Reuben Rose-Redwood, Derek Alderman, and Maoz Azarahu, 'Geographies of Toponymic Inscription: New Directions in Critical Place-Names Studies', *Progress in Human Geography*, 34(4), 2010, 453-70 (p. 455).

⁹⁶ Rose-Redwood *et al.*, p. 457.

⁹⁷ Joshua Nash, 'Dudley Peninsula: Linguistic Pilgrimage and Toponymic Ethnography on the Almost- Island', *Shima – the International Journal of Research into Island Cultures*, 10(1), 2016, 109-15 (pp. 112-13).

crisscrossed graph of ‘enunciations’ on the urban topography. He considers how the street walker has the capacity of emptying a street name of its official meaning and of investing it with his/her personal one:

What is it that they [street names] spell out? Disposed in constellations that hierarchize and semantically order the surface of the city, operating chronological arrangements and historical justifications, these words (Borrégo, Botzaris, Bougainville...) slowly lose, like worn coins, the value engraved on them [...] these names make themselves available to the diverse meanings given them by the passers-by; they detach themselves from the places they were supposed to define and serve as imaginary meeting-points on itineraries which, as metaphors, they determine for reasons that are foreign to their original value but may be recognised or not by the passers-by.⁹⁸

De Certeau also sees walking as a repetitive action which has the ability to transform one’s perception of space. Walking as repetitive activity can be aligned with cyclical events. I argue in this chapter that, in Pasolini’s Roman prose, the boys’ manipulation of the city-text through walking is destined to change after their displacement in the city’s peripheries. The boys’ alienation problematizes Pasolini’s initial utopian and cyclical project and ultimately forces them to enter into the stream of history.

Chan *et al.* have considered the way communities use unofficial naming strategies to shore up their attachment and sense of belonging to a given location:

The value of a place name is derived from the level of recognition and usage

⁹⁸ Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven Rendall (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), p. 104.

it holds within a community. A governing voice can only officiate and disseminate terminology, but it is the public that finally decides how they choose to refer to a location. Thus it is possible a geographical space can be assigned a label on a situational basis, usually as a result of terminology socialization. This concept is the combined result of a society attempting to identify with their environment at a more personal level by creating unofficial terms for their own usage.⁹⁹

Rose-Redwood et al. consider how both official and unofficial place naming practices ‘can be interpreted as a conduit for challenging dominant ideologies as well as a means for introducing alternative cultural meaning and narration.’¹⁰⁰ Yvonne Whelan has shown how post- independence Irish governments introduced this kind of alternative cultural meaning and narration through the street naming strategies. She notes that post- independence Irish street names were embedded with symbolic potency:

The naming and renaming of streets that characterized this period in Ireland underscores the symbolic potency of the street name. Not only signs to the city, street names are very much signs of the city, which generate a supply of symbolic capital that cities spend in many different ways and with varying degrees of success [...] In their ability to transmit meaning, street names are integral to the iconography of landscape.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Chun Keith Chan, Maria Vasardani and Stephan Winter, ‘Leveraging Twitter to Detect Event Names Associated with a Place’, *Journal of Spatial Science*, 59(1), 2014, 137-55 (p. 138).

¹⁰⁰ Rose-Redwood *et al.*, ‘Geographies of Toponymic Inscription’, p. 463.

¹⁰¹ Yvonne Whelan, ‘(Inter)national Naming: Heritage, Conflict and Diaspora’, *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, 10(1), 2011, 7-12 (p. 8).

The commemorative role that place names have in society has been taken up by Maoz Azaryahu in his research about toponymy in post-war Germany. He argues that these names' social cohesiveness is determined by their ability to blend in with everyday things:

In their commemorative capacity, toponymic inscriptions become sites of memory that conflate power, remembrance, language and space. [...] The underlying question in this regard is which visions of history are entitled to be inscribed on streets signs. [...] The apparent ordinariness of street names and the everyday contexts of their use support their capacity to render the version of history they represent not only familiar on an everyday basis, but also seemingly self-evident.¹⁰²

Mcebisi Ndletyana, in his study of place names in post-apartheid South Africa, shows that place names are both the containers of memory and a legitimizing tool:

Toponyms are a repository of the past, which satisfy two needs – one existential and the other political. Existentially, toponyms speak to the irrepressible urge within mankind to assert identity. Place names thus become an outward manifestation of how people perceive themselves, both their history and value system.¹⁰³

He goes on to observe how place names are inevitably linked to power and therefore subject to ongoing changes:

Naming, therefore, is not a neutral exercise. It is mediated by power

¹⁰² Maoz Azaryahu, 'Renaming the Past in Post-Nazi Germany. Insights into the Politics of Street Naming in Mannheim and Potsdam', *Cultural Geographies*, 19(3), 2012, 385-400, (p. 388).

¹⁰³ Mcebisi Ndletyana, 'Changing Place Names in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Accounting for the Unevenness', *Social Dynamics: A Journal of African Studies*, 38(1), 2012, 87-103, (p. 89)

relations, depending on the political order [...] In other words, toponymy is reflective of the existing political order, especially its underpinning values and ideology. Place names serve as a public text that both communicate and affirm public identity [...]. Toponyms communicate a public message, whose content is prefigured by the political orientation of the state, [...] This makes toponymy inevitably fluid. Political order is susceptible to persistent change.¹⁰⁴

This public message that place names express is therefore most apparent in the context of a change of political regime: Rose Redwood *et al.* observe how:

Another option is to rename existing landmarks, streets and other places. This phenomenon figures prominently in periods of regime change and revolutionary transformation, when ‘renaming the past’ is a measure of officially promoted historical revision. [...] When conducted in the context of a regime change, the renaming of places is a powerful message in its own right about the new regime’s control over a community’s symbolic infrastructure.¹⁰⁵

Some of the most prominent and recurring features of place naming practices and uses emerging from much of the above theoretical overview concern a strong link between a specific historical period and political power/order. This link makes place names particularly exposed to the ongoing processes of change in the political realm. Vittorio Vidotto shows how street naming priorities in Rome are influenced by the same priorities which I have outlined above:

¹⁰⁴ Ndletyana, pp. 89-91.

¹⁰⁵ Rose-Redwood *et al.*, ‘Geographies of Toponymic Inscription’, p. 460.

The [Fascist] connotation was also applied to toponymy, for example the naming and re-naming of important streets and squares. The Martiri Fascisti [Fascist Martyrs] had dedicated to them a small square and avenue in Rome's Parioli neighbourhood, re-dedicated after Italian liberation to two fallen anti-fascists, respectively Father Giovanni Minzoni and Bruno Buozzi. The Via XXIII Marzo, the date of the foundation of the *Fasci Italiani di Combattimento* [Italian Fasci of Combat] in 1919, was given to the modern street [now via Leonida Bizzolati] that joined Via Vittorio Veneto with Largo S. Susanna. Piazza Montecitorio was re-dedicated to Costanzo Ciano, while the name of Adolf Hitler was given to the square and avenue in front of the Ostiense Rail Station, the Nazi dictator's point of arrival during his visit to Rome in May 1938.¹⁰⁶

Place names' transient nature suggests that they are highly charged from a temporal perspective. I want to show in this chapter that Pasolini's use of place names in his Rome prose can be couched between two different concepts of time: the cyclical and the linear. The application of Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope is particularly useful here as it enables us to appreciate how Pasolini's deployment of place names is acutely sensitive to the issue of time as a controlling force in the human and nonhuman experience.¹⁰⁷ Timo Müller observes the way Bakhtin privileges linear over cyclical time and claims that his novelistic chronotopes are based on the ideal of linear progress:

¹⁰⁶ Vittorio Vidotto, 'Political Public Space in Rome from 1870-2011', in *Perspectives on Public Space in Rome from Antiquity to the Present Day*, ed. by Gregory Smith and Jan Gadeyne (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 251-74 (pp. 261-62).

¹⁰⁷ Bakhtin defines the chronotope as a 'formally constitutive category in literature', one in which time '[...] thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history'. Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes Towards a Historical Poetics', in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982) pp. 84-258 (p. 84).

For much the same reasons, an environmental perspective would seek to reverse another preference of Bakhtin's, namely that of linear over cyclical time. It is the notion of linear progress regardless of the environment in which one progresses that has led to the nature/cultural rift in the first place, and many of the ideologemes connected with it (steady economic growth and cultural expansion, for instance) have widened this rift.¹⁰⁸

My reading of the role of place names in Pasolini's prose examines how naming strategies in the initial chapters of *Ragazzi*, and in some of his early Roman short fiction, have a primarily cyclical function and shore up the repetitive structure of these works and their utopian aspirations in a time framework which is predominantly suspended. I argue that the utopianism that informed this early work is ultimately reconfigured: liminal sites are gradually eschewed from his prose as the novels unfold and his characters are increasingly forced into contact with a world underpinned by a future-orientated myth of progress and perpetual modernization. This chapter shows how place names act as a scaffolding and a heuristic compass which enable us to gain a better understanding of the chronotopic dialectic between cyclical and historical time underpinning Pasolini's work and to get a better appreciation of the thematic coherence and structural cohesiveness of prose which has previously been dismissed as haphazardly structured.

Pasolini's early Roman short fiction

Pasolini's early Roman short fiction was mainly written between 1950-51. Most of these stories were published in daily newspapers under the pseudonym of Paolo Amari.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Timo Müller, 'The Ecology of Literary Chronotopes', in *Handbook of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology*, ed. by Hubert Zapf (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2016), pp. 590-604 (p. 598).

¹⁰⁹ For a more detailed account of these short stories and their publication see Barański's chapter: 'Pasolini, Friuli, Rome (1950-1951), Philological and Historical Notes', in *Pasolini: Old and New: Surveys and Studies*, ed. by Zymunt G. Barański (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999), pp.

The stories reveal the author's initial fascination with micro-geographical areas of Rome and his propensity to see them as microcosms cut off from the rest of society. The first of these short stories, published some months after Pasolini's arrival in Rome, 'Ragazzo e Trastevere' (1950), concerns a nameless protagonist who sells chestnuts on a bridge connecting Trastevere with the centre of Rome.¹¹⁰ Although the story's opening line makes an immediate reference to this character and the place where he sells his wares ('il ragazzo che vende le castagne in fondo a Ponte Garibaldi si è messo d'impegno'), the author's decision to leave his protagonist without a name is evidence of just how much this young man is assimilated to this environment.¹¹¹ This is highlighted by the blurred dividing line between the neighbourhood's physical contours and the boy's corporeal ones. As the narrator says: 'Io, per me, vorrei poter sapere quali sono i congegni del suo cuore attraverso i quali Trastevere vive dentro di lui, informe, martellante, ozioso'.¹¹²

The onomastic anomaly in relation to the character's name confirms the author's difficulties in separating the boy from his spatial environment. His identity, acquired solely through his milieu, Trastevere, and his physiognomy are also at one with the chromatic intensity of Trastevere's environment: 'quel giovane, nero come una viola, nero solo come i ragazzi

252-80. See also 'Appendice a *Ragazzi di vita*', in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1 (Milan: Mondadori, 1999), pp. 1711-14 and pp. 1733-37.

¹¹⁰ Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'Ragazzo e Trastevere', in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1, pp. 1383-86. The original title that Pasolini chose for this short fiction was 'In fondo a Ponte Garibaldi'. This choice of title not only underlines the importance that place names hold in his Roman short fiction but also anticipates the author's interest in bridges, which will emerge more clearly in his Roman cinema.

¹¹¹ 'Ragazzo e Trastevere', p. 1383.

¹¹² 'Ragazzo e Trastevere', pp. 1384-85. Giorgio Nisini links this subject-object dialectic to the author's Proustian influences, claiming that 'Pasolini continua a fare filtrare diverse componenti proustiane anche nei primi racconti (si vedano in particolare i racconti 'Ragazzo e Trastevere' e 'Castagne e crisantemi', in cui si manifesta con la medesima formula una continuità soggetto-oggetto).' Giorgio Nisini, *L'unità impossibile: Dinamiche testuali nella narrativa di Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Rome: Carocci, 2008), p. 124.

di Trastevere sanno essere [...] I suoi due occhi sono come due suggelli: due ceralacche nere impresse sul grigio del viso'.¹¹³

While Pasolini's imagination is fuelled by Trastevere's material reality, his depiction of this male character and his social milieu continue to be loaded with features which are synonymous with the characters and places presented in 'I parlanti'. The indivisible relationship of the story's anonymous protagonist and his environment emerges, however, as being far more challenging for the author to penetrate than the natural and unambiguous bond which exists between the boys and the rural landscape presented in his Friulian essay. Although one of the young men from San Floreano (a village near Casarsa della Delizia) requires a lengthy introduction in this essay before he actually acquires a specific identity, 'quel ragazzo della curva di San Floreano era forse Stefano', his physical and linguistic features are not synonymous with his environment.¹¹⁴ To underline the strong resemblance between his young male Friulian characters and the place they live in, Stefano is presented as being physically different from the other boys living in San Floreano. Stefano's family is not from San Floreano but from a village located in the bordering region of Veneto:

L'incrocio e il trapiantamento, dando a Stefano un aspetto particolare e diverso [...] l'hanno costretto a una specie di introspezione che, a sua volta, l'ha poi spinto a colmare il vuoto di diversità, che si era aperto fra lui e i suoi coetanei, con uno sforzo espressivo. [...] Del resto, la fisionomia stessa dell'ambiente sanfloreanese, la fisionomia comune alle due o tre più importanti famiglie che formano il centinaio di abitanti del borgo [...] è stata respirata e assorbita da Stefano e i suoi fratelli, tanto che rientrano anch'essi

¹¹³ 'Ragazzo e Trastevere', p. 1383-4.

¹¹⁴ 'I parlanti', p. 169.

nell'interpretazione del tipo sanfloreanese.¹¹⁵

The fusion of countryside and the bodies of the young men from San Floreano (even Stefano, an outsider, manages to blend into this environment) is presented in a much more harmonious and definite way than the bond between the anonymous youth from Trastevere and his local habitat. It would appear, therefore, that the emphasis afforded to the blurred division between the Roman youth's corporeal outline and his local environment is actually pointing to a tension in Pasolini's writing.¹¹⁶

The equilibrium between the Friulian boys and their spatial environment is interrupted in 'Ragazzo e Trastevere'. While Friuli's villages and their inhabitants are primarily objects of the author's contemplation in an ahistorical setting, Trastevere is underpinned by a more concrete and historic reality. The references to Trastevere's streets, churches and cinemas and to the boy's physiognomy not only highlight how Pasolini initially sees Roman boys 'as being at one with their physical environment', as Vighi puts it,¹¹⁷ but also show how the author is overwhelmed by the multi-layered and contradictory nature of Trastevere.¹¹⁸ These contradictions are corroborated by the neighbourhood's place names, where splendid medieval churches stand beside some of Trastevere's sordid and narrow alleyways and some of the city's most modern social venues. The boy's own version of Trastevere serves to underscore the overlapping historical associations that place names have in this text:

¹¹⁵ 'I parlanti', pp. 173-74.

¹¹⁶ This point is further corroborated by the author's initial inability to engage in a constructive dialogue with the story's protagonist. The constant dialogue between the author and his male protagonists is a defining feature of 'I parlanti'. The unnamed Trastevere boy's apparently blithe indifference underlines the distance that has been created between the author and his protagonist.

¹¹⁷ Vighi, 'Adorati toponimi'.

¹¹⁸ Regarding Rome's contradictory nature, Renato Nicolini affirms in an essay written shortly after the author's death that 'conoscere Pasolini significa in qualche modo anche conoscere qualche cosa di questa città, delle contraddizioni aperte, delle ferite gravi che oggi offre questa città'. Renato Nicolini, 'Roma e Pasolini', in *Per conoscere Pasolini*, ed. by Luciano Lucignani and Carlo Molfese (Rome: Bulzoni and Teatro Tenda, 1978), pp. 11-14 (p. 12).

Indica [il ragazzo] in Trastevere non certo Santa Maria con le bolse figure del Cavallini, ma, per un'ipotesi, i cinque maschi che iersera se ne stavano all'incrocio di Via della Scala con Via della Lungara, presi da un'allegrezza sporca di sangue come una macelleria, oppure il ragazzo bruno come una statua appena dissepolta dal fango del Tevere, che sosta davanti ai cartelloni del Reale.¹¹⁹

The dichotomy which emerges, between the allure that ancient places have for the author and the appeal of the more essential and contemporary ones for the story's protagonist, underlines the difficult dialogue between both parties. This heterogeneous range of place names also reveals the growing intersection in Pasolini's fiction with places (the river Tiber) which are throwbacks to the mythical and ahistorical places represented in his Friulian prose and with ancient and modern places which punctuate Rome's city-text. The boy's 'undecipherable' itinerary mapped out by reference to a catalogue of cinemas in and near Trastevere towards the end of the story also reflects the author's tensions and signals his desire to look beyond this microcosmic spatial environment: 'Trastevere, dal Cinema Reale al Cinema Fontana ... qualche puntata all'Altieri dove vedi per 50 lire anche il Varietà ... [...] nelle notti di primavera.'¹²⁰

All of these cinemas are located in Trastevere with the exception of the cinema Altieri.¹²¹ The reference to this cinema at the end of this short fiction is not coincidental. This place name appears to have the prescient function of charting the direction in which

¹¹⁹ 'Ragazzo e Trastevere', p. 1385.

¹²⁰ 'Ragazzo e Trastevere', p. 1386.

¹²¹ This cinema takes its name from Palazzo Altieri, one of the neighbourhood's benchmark buildings which stands beside the cinema. Palazzo Altieri, which is located close to Rome's Capitoline Hill, was originally designed by Giovanni Antonio De Rossi in 1650 for one of the city's most important noble families. It is currently the seat of the Italian Banking Association. The fact that this place name actually refers to the cinema rather than this prestigious historical edifice leaves us with little doubt about the direction in which Pasolini's prose is moving and the kind of places he wishes to focus his attention on.

Pasolini's interests are moving. It comes as little surprise, therefore, that the title of another short story, published some months later, 'Da Monteverde all'Altieri' (1950) makes a specific reference to the only place name which is not part of the former story's Trastevere-centred topographical itinerary. This title confirms the author's eagerness both to shift his interests about the city's periphery (Monteverde) and to afford importance to one of the most recent places to punctuate the city-text: the cinema. Names of several cinemas recur in Pasolini's Roman prose and appear to have a twofold purpose: they represent one of most recent and important additions to the city's text and are leisure-orientated public places which are also be constructed as private ones. While this short fiction's protagonist is also nameless, his identity is reinforced by the place name tag of 'il ragazzo di Monteverde'.¹²² The story unfolds inside the cinema Altieri which is in the heart of the city. Pasolini's decision to set this story in one of the most modern venues of Rome's ancient city centre not only confirms how the city's heterogeneous range of places is fuelling his imagination but also suggests his partial, albeit transient, hesitance to shift his attention completely from microcosms located in the city centre.¹²³ Place names, however, presented at the end of this short fiction, renew the author's commitment to focusing his lens towards both the city's central and more peripheral neighbourhoods: 'da Monteverde, dal Ghetto, da Piazza Vittorio, sfogava un'esistenza che se era vicina alla massima complicazione del peccato originale era ugualmente vicina alla sua anonima semplicità'.¹²⁴

¹²² Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'Da Monteverde all'Altieri', in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1, pp. 1396-4000 (p. 1399).

¹²³ Fabio Vighi points out that many of the characters in these short stories, including the protagonist of 'Da Monteverde all'Altieri', appear to come from rural areas and argues that this choice underlines the strong link between these stories and the author's Friulian poetry and prose. In the specific case of *il ragazzo di Monteverde*, Vighi notes that Pasolini presents this character with 'gli zigomi leggermente meridionali'. Fabio Vighi, *Le ragioni dell'altro* (Ravenna: Longo, 2001), p. 96.

¹²⁴ 'Da Monteverde all'Altieri', p. 1399.

‘La passione del fusajaro’ (1951) confirms this ambition to move from the city centre to its peripheries.¹²⁵ While the story primarily unfolds in Campo dei Fiori, its protagonist, Il Morbidone, is from the peripheral neighbourhood of Donna Olimpia (Monteverde). This spatial dichotomy signals how Pasolini has gradually managed to master some of the city’s peripheral landscape. The story narrates how Il Morbidone sets his sights on a blue jersey in a window front in Campo dei Fiori. On his return journey home by tram to Donna Olimpia, Il Morbidone’s mind reels as he dreams of having bought this garment. He imagines going to the seaside (Ostia) and dancing in a nightclub in another peripheral neighbourhood (Il Trionfale) wearing this much-treasured jersey. The imaginary spatial itinerary presented here mirrors the fantasy-driven desire of its protagonist. Place names participate in this make-believe process as the following extract confirms:

Agli spogliatoi, fatta la doccia ridendo con gli amici, aveva indossato il maglione [...] Poi, la domenica, a Ostia, - no, alla partita di calcio. La Roma avrebbe vinto - a dispetto di Luciano e Gustarè - ed egli col maglione azzurro sarebbe andato a ballare in una sala del Trionfale [...]. La fantasia finì al capolinea.¹²⁶

The representation of places which are not geographically interconnected mirrors Il Morbidone’s aimless drifting throughout the story. The irregular pattern of names reflects this phenomenon and articulates how Pasolini’s narrative is evolving methodologically: his focus is no longer restricted to single spatial microcosms but has been extended to a macro-landscape which challenges him to draw on and represent place names in a more

¹²⁵ Pier Paolo Pasolini, ‘La passione del fusajaro’, in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1, pp. 806-10. This short story was written and first published in the daily ‘Il popolo di Roma’ in October 1950. It was subsequently republished in *Storie della città di Dio: Racconti e cronache romani di Pasolini (1950-1966)*, ed. by Walter Siti (Turin: Einaudi, 1995), pp. 24-27.

¹²⁶ ‘La passione del fusajaro’, p. 808.

dispersive way. Reference to the seaside town of Ostia which is approximately thirty kilometers from the city confirms this and reflects Pasolini's predilection for chronotopic waterscapes.¹²⁷

Like some of the *loci* represented in 'Ragazzo e Trastevere', the square of Campo dei Fiori is replete with eclectic landmarks:

Le tre del pomeriggio, in Campo dei Fiori. Sotto la pioggia che rinfrescava l'odore della misera, il Morbidone se ne stava con la spalla appoggiata a uno spigolo nero, aspettando che passasse il tempo: le saracinesche del Borgia infatti erano ancora chiuse. Ma poi si stancò di star fermo, diede un calcio a una buccia di banana, e staccandosi con una camminata da lenza dallo spigolo, si diresse verso la statua di Giordano Bruno, lucida sotto l'acqua.¹²⁸

Reference to the square's benchmark monument, the statue of Giordano Bruno, and one of its most recent additions, the cinema Borgia, confirm how historical and contemporary places find themselves enmeshed. It seems ironic that this benchmark site, which was erected by students from the University of Rome in 1889 to counterbalance the Catholic Church's hegemony in Rome, now stands in front of shops and a cinema which symbolically represent the encroaching hegemony of a consumer and leisure-orientated mass culture. The representation of Rome's peripheral neighbourhoods, however, shows that they remain marginalized settings without historical reference points

¹²⁷ The sea and rivers punctuate spatial constructions in a number of Pasolini's short stories written between 1947-51. Many of these stories belong to a project entitled 'Per un romanzo del mare'. This project included stories such as 'Coleo di Samo' and 'Operetta marina' and was abandoned by the author in the early 1950s. Both of these stories were published posthumously. Another short fiction entitled 'Terracina' (1951), which does not belong to this project, takes its name from the seaside town in which it is set. See Nisini p. 108-30 for further information. I will examine the primary role that water occupies in Pasolini's Roman prose in chapter 5.

¹²⁸ 'La passione del fusajaro', p. 806.

much like the Friulian villages represented in 'I parlanti': 'A Donna Olimpia si conoscono tutti, è come un paese.'¹²⁹

The choice of the place name Donna Olimpia and not Monteverde also accentuates the author's intention of presenting this neighbourhood as a marginalized, rural village. Il Morbidone's decision not to return to Donna Olimpia on the second night of the story but to retreat to the city's highest hilltop, il Gianicolo, to contemplate his much-craved blue jersey reveals the author's desire to alienate his protagonist from his indigenous surroundings. The positioning of the story's protagonist in such a strategically dominant location also suggests the symbolic and imminent victory of an individualistic, consumer mass culture which has already begun to extend its grip over the city and its inhabitants.

The partial shift from the blurred relationship which delineates individual and spatial identities in Pasolini's earliest Roman short fiction also emerges in the short story, 'Castagne e crisantemi' (1951).¹³⁰ In this text the author reveals his protagonist's identity through one of his physical characteristics.¹³¹ His designated appellation, Belli Capelli, derives from his protagonist's hair and not from Campo dei Fiori, the place in which the story unfolds. The author, however, intersperses this story both with old and new naming strategies referring to his protagonist both as Belli Capelli and as 'il ragazzo di Chieti'. The story indirectly deals with the theme of the city's development and introduces places which are both on the outskirts of Rome (Primavalle) and outside the city (Chieti) as well as landmark Roman loci (Trastevere and Campo dei Fiori).¹³² It evinces how Rome's

¹²⁹ 'La passione del fusajaro', p. 808.

¹³⁰ Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'Castagne e crisantemi', in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1, pp. 1424-27. This story first appeared in the daily paper, *Libertà d'Italia*, in April 1951 and was subsequently republished in *Storie della città di Dio: racconti e cronache romane 1950-1966*, ed. by Walter Siti (Turin: Einaudi, 1995), pp. 28-30.

¹³¹ This strong link between place and the young boy's physical features brings us back to 'I parlanti'. As Fabio Vighi already highlighted, there are several elements in these texts which continue to indicate a strong link with their Friulian counterparts (see footnote 9).

¹³² The reference to the peripheral neighbourhoods of Primavalle and Il Trionfale in this short fiction and the preceding one indicates Pasolini's initial interest in Rome's north-western

rapid development threatens the rural identity of Belli Capelli and the partially fossilized identity of the text's second protagonist, an elderly female flower seller from Trastevere. This new topographical itinerary confirms once again Pasolini's decision to shift his lens away from mono-spatial environments in order to focus his attention on characters who embody different physiognomies and even different linguistic features: 'il ragazzino pensava nel suo dialetto alla piccola città distesa al sole tra i fianchi delle montagne [...] il dialetto con cui pensava [la vecchia venditrice] le cose non le ricreava più; il suo vecchio romanesco era inaridito: prosa, vecchiaia'.¹³³

The catalogue of unconnected places, carefully linked together by the aroma of chestnuts and the penetrating fragrance of chrysanthemums, enables the author to create a perception of place. Unlike the smell of dampness or the sensual phallic smells of golden-haired Friulian youths in 'I parlanti', this fiction's place names are associated with the theme of death: 'chi avrebbe detto che quei crisantemi così perfidi e delicati venivano giù da Primavalle? e che non erano invece cresciuti sulle nuvole, o sul cielo nudo e slavato dalla parte di San Lorenzo o del Verano?'¹³⁴ The moribund olfactory associations created by the smell of chrysanthemums and place names alluding to Rome's cemetery evoke and seal the fate of the young chestnut seller and the elderly woman. The 'ragazzo di Chieti's' rural innocence is destined to become engulfed by the ever-expanding city just

peripheries. His interest shifts, however, to the city's northern and south-eastern axes (Pietralata, Ponte Mammolo, Garbatella and Tormarancio) as his prose evolves. This shift is partly motivated by Pasolini's personal associations with these places (he lived in the peripheral neighbourhood of Rebibbia, near Ponte Mammolo from 1951 to 1954 and subsequently moved to Monteverde Vecchio) and partly by the fact that the development of areas around Primavalle and Il Trionfale were often church-funded initiatives. Many of the street names of these north-western suburbs commemorate historical churchmen. Development of the city towards its eastern axis 'was understood as vaguely anti-clerical, since it was oriented away from the Vatican which lay across the Tiber to the west. In this sense, eastern expansion was symbolically progressive'. Rhodes, p. 160. Street names in this eastern axis became primarily imbued with names that commemorated historical figures or events worth remembering by those in power.

¹³³ Castagne e crisantemi', pp. 1424-25.

¹³⁴ 'Castagne e crisantemi', pp. 1425.

as the woman's traditional urban identity also faces extinction. Most of the story's place names are not arbitrary choices but have been deliberately chosen to augment allusively the text's underlying theme. The range of place names also adds an element of disorientation as it becomes more challenging for the reader to conceptualize the spatial environment. Moreover, the appearance of an unofficial place name, 'le Casette', anticipates, albeit in a miniaturized form, the wide range of unofficial place names which will punctuate the author's Roman novels.¹³⁵

With great economy, Pasolini establishes a dual temporal-spatial organization in his prose. The utopian aspirations which inform his early Roman prose are reconfigured around the streets of the inner city. The street, one of these texts main chronotopes, immediately brings into sharp relief the tension which exists in the author's early Roman fiction between cyclical and historical time. Place names play a key role in enabling us to understand these temporal and spatial polarities and to better appreciate these stories' thematic concerns, for example, pre-modern versus modern, urban versus rural and centre versus periphery.

Alì dagli occhi azzurri

The role of place names in *Alì dagli occhi azzurri* (1965) is particularly varied. *Alì* is a mélange of Pasolini's most experimental narrative, poetic and cinematic works.¹³⁶ Place names play a significant role in one of *Alì*'s earliest short fiction, 'Notte sull'Es' (1951).¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Pasolini's single reference to an unofficial place name is also in keeping with his limited use of dialect in this story. Mirella Serri observes that 'nel racconto "*Castagne e crisantemi*" il dialetto è semplicemente una spruzzata, come tante piccole macchie di colore linguistico gettate qua e là'. Mirella Serri 'Il linguaggio "malandrino" di Pasolini da *Storie della città di dio a Ragazzi di vita e Una vita violenta*', in *Lezioni su Pasolini*, ed. by Tullio De Mauro and Francesco Ferri (Ripatronson: Sestante, 1997), pp. 357-67 (p. 360).

¹³⁶ Most of the short stories and essays published in *Alì* date from 1950-54, while its film scripts were written some years later (1960-62).

¹³⁷ Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'Notte sull'Es' in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 2, pp. 395-411. This story was written in 1951 and was published for the first time in *Alì* in 1965. The initials 'Es' in its title are taken from the name of a Roman tram commonly known as 'La Esterna Rossa'.

This story centres around two brothers from Trastevere, Rafele and Remo. The narrative structure of this text is extremely disorderly as it travels back and forward in time. The story's narrative begins by presenting Rafele in post-war Trastevere (1950), but quickly leaps back in time to chronicle his chance encounters with an older man along the Tiber embankments shortly before the outbreak of the war. Its final part unfolds in the city's peripheries in war-torn Rome (1944). In this last section, the story's protagonist, Rafele, is sidelined and Remo finally comes into focus. Remo leaves Trastevere and goes to live in a peripheral Roman neighbourhood. These passages chronicle the events which led to Remo's imprisonment for theft with some local thieves. Their imprisonment coincides with the brutal reprisal conducted by German soldiers at the Fosse Ardeatine (Ardeatine caves) in 1944.¹³⁸ Remo and his companions are among the victims of this retaliatory act.

The sense of place which emerges from the three accounts which make up this story has a determining role over the way place is imagined and inhabited in each specific description. The representation of post-war Trastevere at the story's outset features places which extend well beyond Trastevere's boundaries:

Chi va a lavorare a Piazza San Cosimato¹³⁹ (pesciaroli e fruttaroli), chi va col birroccio a San Paolo, chi a qualche mercatino lontano (al Trionfale, all'Annibaliano), chi resta nel rione dentro le bottegucce color liquerizia dei meccanici, a riempire i vicoli della più elegante volgarità vivente.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ This retaliatory attack by German soldiers was carried out on Hitler's specific orders after thirty-three German policemen were killed by a bomb planted by Italian partisans in the centre of Rome (Via Rasella) on 23 March 1944. Hitler ordered that ten Italians should be shot for each German victim. The mass execution of prison inmates, Jews and other suspected civilians, who were all rounded up randomly, took place the following day at Fosse Ardeatine.

¹³⁹ The market of Piazza San Cosimato is the only market in this short passage that is located in Trastevere, while the others are situated in the city's ever-expanding peripheries.

¹⁴⁰ 'Notte sull'Es', p. 396.

The author's representation of post-war Trastevere through peripheral Roman place names is anchored in a concrete material and social reality. Trastevere's traders are increasingly being forced to move out to the city's peripheral market places to sell their wares. The impact of Fascist urban planning initiatives in Rome in the 1930s, the war and the city's concomitant development and redefinition, have all taken their toll on Trastevere. Moreover, many of its inhabitants have been transferred to the city's peripheries. Rafele, now homeless having lost both parents, has become a social outcast in his own neighbourhood. Place names underline his provisional, makeshift, accommodation and abject poverty.

Se la notte è abbastanza tiepida Rafele va a dormire sotto i ponti (Ponte Sisto o Ponte Mazzini); altrimenti va in giro per i lungoteveri fino alle quattro e mezzo [...] Altre volte passa la notte, fino all'alba, nella Esterna Rossa. La prende verso l'una, in fondo a Ponte Sisto, all'imbocco di Via dei Cappellari.¹⁴¹

These marginalised and impoverished places are strongly at odds with the strong perennial and cohesive bond which had been formed between Trastevere's inhabitants and their local environment in the second part of this story which unfolds almost fifteen years earlier.

Il vicolo di Rafele – e di suo padre, delle sue sette generazioni – in una certa luce radente del crepuscolo, dei giorni incerti, è quasi claustrale; [...]. Breve, intorcinato, tra altri due vicoli – cortile interno, se il passaggio s'ingolfa per Via della Paglia, Via della Scala, e non serve che di transito a chi abita nei

¹⁴¹ 'Notte sull'Es', p. 395.

vicoletti adiacenti (al Mattonato ecc).¹⁴²

Place names which appear in this section of the text evoke Trastevere metonymically as ‘la foresta materna’, a kind of sheltered and primitive alcove, on the banks of the Tiber and at the edge of the city centre proper.¹⁴³ Its place names stand out from the rest of the narrative: they detail streets and places only in Trastevere and are underpinned more by a utopian and imaginary rhetoric of location than by a concrete social reality. This marginalized and mythical spatial setting provides the backdrop to a chance encounter between a ten-year-old Rafele and an older man. Rafele’s meanderings from Trastevere’s alleyways down to the Tiber embankments in the company of his predator unfold in a remote and mainly green landscape. Similarly to ‘I parlanti’, colour is employed to illustrate the oneness between both texts’ young male characters and their environs. In this specific instance, green is the colour which enables Rafele to merge with his landscape:

e si era arrestata intorno a lui la sua vita di ragazzino trasteverino (il colore quasi verdognolo della sua pelle, di un pallore estenuato, squisito, indice quello, come il rossore nella faccia di un contadino, di assoluta, immemore salute; di aderenza abbandonata al suo ambiente; e inoltre la sua distaccata ironia ecc.).¹⁴⁴

This harmonious fusion of Rafele and Trastevere is abruptly interrupted by the onslaught of Fascist urban development initiatives and the outbreak of the war. The storyline switches to war-torn Rome. This temporal leap is bridged by a short paragraph containing a detailed reference to place names:

¹⁴² ‘Notte sull’Es’, p. 402-03.

¹⁴³ ‘Squarci di notti romane’.

¹⁴⁴ ‘Notte sull’Es’, p. 406.

La Esterna Rossa fila via da Piazza Mastai, svolta davanti al palazzo dell'Opera di Don Orione, lascia a destra Porta Portese, imbocca Ponte Testaccio. Comincia la Roma non-Trastevere. I domini lontani della vita di Rafele. (La stazione di Ostia, coi due episodi amorosi più importanti di Rafele: la giudia – Emiliuccia – di Via del Portico d'Ottavia, e la roscia - Franca – che abita a Ponte Bianco.)¹⁴⁵

A strong link exists between this short description and another short story, entitled 'Dal vero' (1953-54), in which Pasolini narrates the events which unfold during a long bus ride from the peripheral Roman neighbourhood of Rebibbia to the centre of Rome:

Su quella visione di Roma, o piuttosto dei quartieri tiburtini, da Monte Sacro, Pietralata, giù giù fino a Tor de' Schiavi, il Prenestino, Centocelle, con migliaia di case come scatole di scarpe, e baracche, e torracce, l'autobus si inchiodò [...]. Alla fermata di Ponte Mammolo l'autobus si riempì di gente. Poi imboccò la Tiburtina, passò sopra l'Aniene, e puntò dritto verso Roma.¹⁴⁶

Pasolini's recourse to what Rhodes has described as an elliptical, proto-cinematic technique, primarily constructed around his deployment of place names, is also incorporated by Pasolini into 'Notte sull'Es' to convey once again this illusory sensation of movement to the reader.

The journey from Trastevere to Rome's peripheries ends in *Borgata Gordiani* (Prenestina), where Remo has taken up residence with his girlfriend.¹⁴⁷ His decision to

¹⁴⁵ 'Notte sull'Es', p. 408. It is worth noting that Rafele is no longer presented as a child but as a teenager in the temporal leap that occurs at this point in the narrative.

¹⁴⁶ 'Dal vero', p. 438.

¹⁴⁷ Borgata Gordiani was one of the Fascist borgate built by the Fascist regime to re-house temporarily in poor quality accommodation mainly lower class Roman residents coming from

leave behind Trastevere, the place he was born into, is marked by failure. His imprisonment in Regina Coeli and subsequent murder by Nazi soldiers takes place at the Fosse Ardeatine. The reference to the Ardeatine caves ostentatiously signals Pasolini's eagerness to bring events of national and patriotic importance into focus.¹⁴⁸ The choice of a place name recalling this massacre also evidences the author's desire to return to the more socially and historically concrete reality represented in the story's outset. By casting the personal story of Remo into a political/historical arena, this place name also prompts the question of how to make the past speak and be visible in the present.

Place names in this short fiction frequently act as signposts which allow the reader to navigate through an extremely disorderly narrative. They go beyond their conventional function of topographical reference points and become time markers which mirror the social reality of the different chronological periods in which the story unfolds. They also show how post-war Trastevere's integrity is threatened by outside elements which challenge its identity and values and augment the myth-making chronicle of the author's imagined version of a bygone Trastevere in the story's second section. The anxiety over space in postwar Rome, and Rafele's entitlement to live in his own neighbourhood, leads Pasolini not only to condemn the war but also much of the city's development.

Trastevere, Testaccio and other Roman neighbourhoods in the late 1920s. The neighbourhood lies on the city's eastern axis and is located between via Acqua Bullicante and Centocelle. Carpaneto *et al* have observed how a parliamentary inquiry, conducted between 1951 and 1953, about the living accommodation in Rome's borgate reported that this neighbourhood was virtually without running water or toilets. See: Rodolfo Carpaneto, Senio Gerindi, Aldo Rossi, *Pasolini e le borgate: storia sociale della casa a Roma* (Rome: Associazione Culturale 'Aldo Tozzetti', 2007). pp. 133-34. Paul Baxa has noted how this neighbourhood was also part of the city's war-scarred landscape: 'the Borgata Gordiani was frequently hit by Allied Bombs forcing inhabitants to take shelter in many underground bunkers beneath the Via Prenestina'. Paul Baxa, Review of *I ragazzi di don Bosco e l'altra Roma del dopoguerra*, by Alessandro Portelli, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 14(3), 2009, 371.

¹⁴⁸ This place name and the commemoration of this tragedy also have an autobiographical significance for Pasolini as his brother Guido was killed fighting in a partisan regiment, in Yugoslavia in 1944. See Schwartz, *Pasolini Requiem*, p. 160.

In 'Appunti per un poema popolare' (1951-52), Pasolini's interest shifts once again from the centre of the city towards its fledgling peripheries.¹⁴⁹ The essay contains eleven separate sections, each one of which is presented as a scrapbook entry, meaning that the themes, characters and spatial references change continuously. The variety of place names and settings in the essay is a testimony to how Pasolini has chosen to construct its narrative scaffold as each fragmented sketch appears to be primarily driven by the author's desire to create an outline of the city's sprawl in a textual form. The irregular pattern of places and the themes dealt with in the various vignettes confirms this observation.

The essay's opening passage introduces characters from a cluster of streets and squares located in the centre of the city: 'Indifferenti al vapore acido come lana bagnata [...], i giovani di Via Arenula, Piazza Giudia, Campo dei Fiori e Santa Maria in Campitelli, sbracati sui rari sgabelli, parapugili, sfottenti e annoiati, urlano con l'asciugamano intorcinato intorno al collo, chiamandosi, cantando pezzi di canzone'.¹⁵⁰ This detailed list of place names is followed by the description of one youth out of a group of young boys playing in this area. Similarly to the protagonist of 'Ragazzo e Trastevere' this young man's identity remains anonymous. The inner qualities of both boys are expressed through the dark, impenetrable colour of their eyes: 'Il viso d'un bruno quasi cinereo, equino, un po' scavato. Espressione di avidità, frigida e scattante; la calma ostentata; la nudità quasi febbricitante della pelle sugli zigomi, e della luce nera e asciutta degli occhi.'¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'Appunti per un poema popolare', in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1, pp. 421-36. This essay, written between 1951-52, was published for the first time in *Alì* in 1965.

¹⁵⁰ 'Appunti per un poema popolare', p. 421.

¹⁵¹ 'Appunti per un poema popolare', p. 422.

The strong relationship which exists between these city boys' physical identity and their neighbourhood is overturned when Pasolini switches his attention to Rome's peripheries. The essay's second section changes location and introduces 'Amerigo...il ragazzo più forte di Pietralata'. Amerigo and his family are among thousands of displaced families from Rome's city centre: 'I Bevilacqua (la famiglia di Amerigo) non è sempre stata a Pietralata; viene dal centro di Roma, forse da Borgo Pio, o Trastevere, o San Lorenzo'.¹⁵² Amerigo is also identified by virtue of his physical strength and his peripheral neighbourhood; Pasolini is quick to point out his character's physical strength and vulnerability: 'È pallido, nerastro in faccia, sotto le sopracciglia, i capelli di statua (la faccia di un "moro" piuttosto barbaro che romano; la faccia del "Gallo morente"). È il ragazzo più forte di Pietralata'.¹⁵³

In a different way, the list of places and squares, which delineates the strong and continuous relationship between space and man in Rome's city centre at the essay's outset, underlines the heterogeneous and aleatory allocation of accommodation to families living in Rome's periphery and emphasizes the plurality of possible places from which Amerigo and other *borgata* dwellers may have originated. The specific spatial-toponomastic identity which is so important for the author's city-centre characters' identity is supplanted as the link between Rome's city-centre boys' physical identity and their environment becomes undermined by the heterogeneous profile and shape of Rome's fledgling peripheries. Much like the representation of Donna Olimpia as an isolated semi-rural village in 'La passione del fusajaro', Rome's peripheries are presented as marginalized microcosms, cut off from one another. By ascribing these neighbourhoods to separate sections in this essay the author deliberately hampers any real

¹⁵² 'Appunti per un poema popolare', p. 423-24.

¹⁵³ 'Appunti per un poema popolare', p. 422.

attempt to create a seamless diegesis and forces the reader to work through a series of separate, short case studies dedicated to different areas on the city's ever-expanding map.¹⁵⁴ Place names allow each of these locations to maintain a separate identity while providing the narrative with contextual signposts. They underpin the text's programmatic fragmentation and to testify to the city's unfettered and yet disorganic and oil stain growth.

Ragazzi di vita

Pasolini's first novel, *Ragazzi di vita*, takes the form of a kind of omnibus version of some of the short stories which appear in both his early Roman short fiction and in *Alì*. The novel is made up of eight highly fragmentary chapters which narrate the picaresque adventures and vicissitudes of street-boys coming from some of Rome's most impoverished suburbs, known as the *borgate romane*. Many of the place names and spatial itineraries in Pasolini's early Roman prose reemerge in *Ragazzi*. The fact that the novel's first and fourth chapters, and several of its excerpts, were written and published some years before its publication is arguably one of the primary reasons why place names in *Ragazzi* bear a strong resemblance to the ones which appear in his early Roman fiction.¹⁵⁵ The novel's opening chapters are also replete with a host of unofficial place

¹⁵⁴ In marked contrast to the programmatic fragmentation that place naming strategies have for Rome's peripheries in this essay is the fictional name of a Roman periphery that appears in Pasolini's second Roman film, *Mamma Roma* (1962). The story's eponymous protagonist, having bid her final farewell to her fellow hustlers, engages in a 'verbal flashback' and shares intimate snippets of her life with some men who casually cross her path. She refers to a failed, fictionalised housing project named 'Pietrarancio' built by the Fascists and now commonly known as Cessonina because all that remains of the original project are endless rows of toilets (*Alì*, p. 381). This fictionalised name is arguably the conflation of two renowned Roman peripheries – Pietralata and Tormarancia – and represents how Pasolini sees the peripheries of Rome in 1962. Unlike the fragmented housing project or neighbourhoods that radiated around the city's borders in an oil stain manner at the time the essay was written (1951-1952), this fictionalized place becomes the embodiment of what Pasolini sees as the repetitive and by then non-fragmented sprawl of a failed suburban plan for Rome's peripheries.

¹⁵⁵ The publication of the first version of *Ragazzi*'s opening chapter appeared under the title 'Il Ferrobedò' in the journal *Il Paragone* in June 1951. This short story includes much of the contents

names, which convey how the tumultuous social upheaval triggered by the Fascists' urban planning program in 1930s, the war and the Nazis' occupation of the city have left their mark on its social fabric.

The novel opens in a Nazi-occupied Donna Olimpia.¹⁵⁶ The frequent absence of the narrator from the story augments the need to foreground its characters' restless movements with multiple topographical details. Through a survey of some of the place names in *Ragazzi* I will show how naming strategies are not attributable to one overarching artistic project but are rather the fusion of a *mélange* of narrative and poetic initiatives which were fuelling Pasolini's imagination in the early 1950s. Several unofficial place names such as I Grattacieli, le Case Nove, I Granatieri and Delle Terrazze refer to either derelict or recently constructed buildings in this area. Topographical nicknames (Il Cupolone, il Fontanone, Il Ferrobedò) are also employed by *Ragazzi*'s sub-proletariat Roman characters as surrogates which enable them to appropriate landmarks of the city's built environment and to gain orientation. This contention between 'rival systems of naming' enables us to understand how place names are endowed with social agency, or as Mona Baker puts it, 'to use a name is at once to make a claim about political and social legitimacy and to deny a rival claim'.¹⁵⁷

The title of this chapter 'Il Ferrobedò' is one of a number of examples of how Pasolini uses a hypocoristic name-shortening technique to add local colour and to enable his

of *Ragazzi*'s first chapter, 'Il Ferrobedò', as well as other sections entitled 'Li belli piscelli' and 'Terracina'. The original version of the novel's fourth chapter was also published in this journal under the title 'Regazzi de vita' in October 1953. Other semi-identical excerpts that Pasolini subsequently incorporated into *Ragazzi* from short stories such as 'La bibita' and 'Domenica al Collina Volpi' were originally published in dailies between 1950-51.

¹⁵⁶ Rome was occupied by the German Army from 8 September 1943 until 4 June 1944. Many of the places have long since been developed and renamed. Monte di Splendore, Monte Casadio and Il Prato were built on shortly after the war and designated a constellation of official street names by Rome's City Council.

¹⁵⁷ Mona Baker, *Translation and Conflict: A Narrative Account* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 123.

characters to re-appropriate places through their language.¹⁵⁸ The deployment of these unofficial and mimetic monikers, which are invested with the same referential status as their official counterparts, mirrors the lack of uniformity of this half-built, rough-and-tumble neighbourhood.¹⁵⁹ Despite its incomplete streetscapes and buildings, Donna Olimpia is presented as a familiar setting which offers a sense of community, adventure and entertainment to its young, disenfranchised city dwellers.¹⁶⁰ The nickname ‘I Grattacieli’ reveals the physiognomic connotations of the disproportionate scale of this cluster of buildings and their failure to blend into the neighbourhood’s embattled fledgling urban landscape. The nickname poignantly evinces how the boys label this dwarfing and obtrusive structure with an ironically pictorial name to re-appropriate it into their world. The deictic ambiguity of place names in the novel’s opening chapters augments the sense of prevailing Babelian confusion. The overlapping of names is deliberately deployed and enables us to appreciate better the boys’ intimate and at times distorted map of their neighbourhood: ‘poi si arriva a Donna Olimpia, detta pure I Grattacieli’.¹⁶¹ Donna Olimpia and ‘I Grattacieli’ are not, however, synonyms: when Ricetto returns to Donna Olimpia towards the end of the novel we discover what ‘I

¹⁵⁸ Kieran Keohane has observed similar playful and subversive renaming dynamics taking place in nineteenth-century Dublin: ‘Indeed, the particularity of Dublin as a modern city may be said to reside to a great degree in Dublin’s *langscape*, an idiom rich in playful and subversive inversions and renaming of monuments and spectacles. Such tactics are classic instances of “the weapons of the weak”, whereby people subject to power register their dissent’. Kieran Keohane, ‘Review of *Reinventing Modern Dublin: Streetscape, Iconography and the Politics of Identity*’, by Yvonne Whelan, *Irish Studies*, 12(1), 2004, 103-05 (p. 104).

¹⁵⁹ I will address this point in more detail further into the chapter.

¹⁶⁰ Pilfering scrap iron from ‘il Ferrobedò’, playing football on Donna Olimpia’s mounds and swimming at ‘Il Ciriola’ are all activities that allow the strong collective experience of these characters to come into focus.

¹⁶¹ Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Ragazzi di vita*, in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1, pp. 523-767 (p. 570). I Grattacieli actually refers to an adjoining block of four high-rise apartments built in Donna Olimpia in the mid-1930s to house families displaced by the Fascist’s urban renewal programme for the city’s centre. Most of these families came from a series of buildings, commonly known as ‘La Spina del Borgo’ standing in front of St Peter’s Basilica, which were demolished in the late 1930s to make way for the construction of Via della Conciliazione, a street commemorating the signing of the Lateran Pacts (1929) between the Fascist regime and the Catholic Church.

Grattacieli' actually are: 'collegati fra di loro, in modo che le file e le diagonali di finestre non avevano interruzioni e si allineavano tutt'intorno per centinaia e centinaia di metri in lungo e largo'.¹⁶²

Similar ambiguity emerges from other place names such as I Mercati Generali which the narrator refers to by its official name while the chapter's free indirect discourse refers to this market place interchangeably as La Caciara and I Mercati Generali: 'Il giorno dopo Il Ricetto e Marcello, che c'avevano preso gusto, scesero insieme alla Caciara, i Mercati Generali, che erano chiusi.'¹⁶³

Place names have a twofold function in the novel's opening chapters: they reveal the narrator's official version of the city and the boys' unofficial one. Rose-Redwood *et al.* claim that the use of unofficial place names by subaltern groups in society is an indication of these groups' desire to shore up their identity:

the use of place naming as resistance is often done more subtly, such as when a subordinate population employs a competing, informal, system of geographical nomenclature rather than the authorized system of naming. The very choice not to use the official place name is a practice of self-determination.¹⁶⁴

Unofficial naming strategies can be seen as a mechanism which both asserts the boys' agency and legitimacy in the city and brings them into a closer relationship with its material environment. They also are cyclical as they separate the boys, albeit temporarily, from developmental time.

¹⁶² *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 724. The official title of *Ragazzi*, 'Il Ferrobedò' is also concealed until the novel's penultimate chapter. The author reveals this factory's official name 'La Ferro-Beton' shortly after making the distinction between Donna Olimpia and I Grattacieli (*Ragazzi di vita*, p. 728).

¹⁶³ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 526.

¹⁶⁴ Rose-Redwood *et al.*, 'Geographies of Toponymic Inscription', p. 463.

Place names immediately evince the author's unflinching attention to topographical specificity and the way he deploys these names to map out and magnify the minute details of adjoining streetscapes in Donna Olimpia:

Da Monteverde Vecchio ai Granatieri la strada è corta: basta passare il Prato, e tagliare tra le palazzine in costruzione intorno al viale dei Quattro Venti: valanghe d'immondezza, case non ancora finite e già in rovina, grandi sterri fangosi, scarpate piene di zozzeria. Via Abate Ugone era a due passi.¹⁶⁵

The novel's initial topographical specificity can, however, be deceptive. The painstaking detail of this account is quickly challenged by deliberately misleading and aleatory itineraries mirroring the chaotic pace of the story. An aerial view of extensive stretches of the city is created through a series of jump shots: 'Lì su alla vasca del Buon Pastore non si sapeva ancora niente. Il sole batteva in silenzio sulla Madonna del Riposo, Casaletto e, dietro, Primavalle. Quando tornarono dal bagno passarono per il Prato, dove c'era un campo tedesco.'¹⁶⁶ Pasolini momentarily leaves Il Buon Pastore in Donna Olimpia and makes a kaleidoscopic shift towards some of the city's north-western peripheries and then returns to the German army camp in Donna Olimpia. This discontinuous spatial sequence is akin to the proto-cinematic editing techniques he deployed in 'Notte sull'Es' and challenges the seamless diegesis of continuous topographical itineraries represented in the novel's opening pages. Other accounts of the boys' peripatetic enterprises confirm how the author uses elliptical editing techniques to map out their itineraries:

Il Ricetto e Marcello avevano trovato Agnolo a Donna Olimpia davanti alle

¹⁶⁵ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 524.

¹⁶⁶ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 525.

scuole elementari Giorgio Franceschi [...]. Poi discesero tutti i tre insieme, per San Pancrazio, giù verso Trastevere, in cerca di un posto tranquillo: lo trovarono in via Manara, che a quell'ora era tutta deserta, e poterono mettersi a lavorare intorno a un chiusino senza che nessuno andasse a rompergli le scatole. [...] Andarono giù per il vicolo dei Cinque, che, tranne qualche ubriaco, era tutto deserto. Sotto le finestre dello stracciarolo, Agnolo si mise le mani a imbuto intorno alla bocca, e si mise a chiamare: 'A Antò'.¹⁶⁷

The journey from Donna Olimpia to Via Manara in Trastevere is at least two kilometres as the crow flies, and yet there is no evidence in this passage which actually suggests that these places are not beside each other. The representation of place names in this itinerary is not plotted to replicate the city's organic layout with the utmost clarity but to convey mimetically the boys' mental map of their city. Place names provide this route with a progressive narrative sense of beginning, middle and end, but do little to inform the reader of the actual distance between the different spatial coordinates. The deployment of place names in this passage enables us to get a refined sense of how Pasolini constructs a series of disjunctions between real and subjective geographies of the city. These different degrees of topographical precision underline how the narrator's attention to all kinds of geographical details greatly differs from the boys' more practical and tactical map of Rome.

Michel De Certeau observes how city dwellers' walking practices have the capacity to empty streets names of their official meanings and allow them to take on new meanings:

¹⁶⁷ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 533-34

Linking acts and footsteps, opening meanings and directions, these words operate in the name of an emptying-out and wearing-away of their primary role. They become them, by means of a semantic rarefaction, the function of articulating a second, poetic geography on top of the geography of the literal, forbidden or permitted meaning. They insinuate other routes into the functionalist and historical order of movement. [...] Things that amount to nothing, or almost nothing, symbolize and orientate the walkers' steps: names that have ceased precisely to be 'proper'.¹⁶⁸

To walk through the city is to individually re-inscribe it, to claim it as one's own. The use of informal place names which have a special meaning for the walker or for a group of walkers participates and shores up the same process.

Although place names do little to facilitate the reader's initial access to the novel, they gradually assume the function of linking devices. The topographical itinerary described above provides the backdrop to an episode in which the boys steal lead piping in the middle of the night. They subsequently bring the lead and sell it to 'lo stracciarolo, del vicolo dei Cinque' in Trastevere.¹⁶⁹ After the collapse of 'le scuole elementari Giorgio Franceschi' at the epilogue of *Ragazzi's* second chapter, an orphaned and destitute Riccetto is transferred to Ponte Mammolo, on the city's north-eastern fringe, even though he does not appear in this neighbourhood until almost the end of the novel. The author's apparent reluctance to shift his narrative to this remote 'villaggio arabo' means that the third chapter opens with Riccetto and some of his cohorts in a peripheral neighbourhood (Portonaccio) close to the city's ancient walls. They have been commissioned to deliver two armchairs but resolve to return to Trastevere to dispose of these chairs in order to

¹⁶⁸ De Certeau, p. 105.

¹⁶⁹ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 534.

gain money from ‘lo stracciarolo del vicolo dei Cinque, a cui tre o quattr’anni prima il Ricetto aveva venduto con Marcello e Agnolo i pezzi dei chiusini’.¹⁷⁰ The distance between Il Portonaccio and Trastevere is considerable but this is not important: what is important is that the author has created a pretext through an already established *locus* embedded in the boys’ mental map of the city to steer the story back to where it began. As the novel unfolds, place names increasingly guarantee continuity and coherence to its highly fragmentary structure. The concatenating function that these names assume not only bolsters *Ragazzi*’s structure but also create links between the allusive meanings embedded in a hybrid sequence of events.

The convergence of naming arrangements at the beginning and the end of *Ragazzi* also provides greater unity to its fragmentary structure. Borgo Antico, a name endowed with obvious topographical resonances, appears in the refrain of a song by one of Italy’s popular music singers and is also assigned to one of the novel’s characters.¹⁷¹ It firstly emerges in the novel’s opening chapter when ‘i quattro di vicolo del Bologna’ [Trastevere] sing from a boat on the Tiber ‘Borgo antico, dai tetti grigi sotto il cielo opaco, io t’invoco...’.¹⁷² These boys then hop into Ricetto and Marcello’s rowing boat and witness Ricetto save a drowning swallow from the river. The name re-surfaces in the novel’s closing chapters and is ascribed to the younger brother of the novel’s final victim, Genesio.¹⁷³ Like the four boys from Vicolo del Bologna, Borgo Antico is an

¹⁷⁰ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 583.

¹⁷¹ This song ‘Borgo antico’ was released by Claudio Villa, a popular Roman singer from Trastevere, in 1948.

¹⁷² *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 544.

¹⁷³ Other place names which appear at the outset of the novel reappear in its closing pages. After Borgo Antico’s younger brother, Mariuccio, is bullied and begins to cry, Ricetto recalls how he felt like this young kid when ‘i grossi ai Grattacieli lo menavano, e lui se andava a cicche, disprezzato e ignorato da tutto il mondo, con Marcello e Agnoletto. Si ricordò per esempio di quella volta che avevano rubato i soldi al cieco, e se n’erano andati a fare il bagno dal Ciriola, che avevano preso la barca, e lui aveva salvato quella rondinella che stava a affogare sotto Ponte Sisto’. *Ragazzi di vita*, pp. 761-62.

accomplished singer. This common trait, along with other leitmotifs, re-evokes a similar atmosphere to the novel's opening pages: the Tiber is replaced by the river Aniene and a drowning swallow by a drowning boy.¹⁷⁴ This replication serves to juxtapose Riccetto's spontaneity and magnanimity at the novel's outset with his cruelty and complacency at its conclusion when he resolves not to save Genesio from the Aniene. The redeployment of the name Borgo Antico and several other features of the novel's opening chapter towards its conclusion is plausibly an indication of how the author endeavours to recreate his story by populating it with new characters in a different spatial setting.¹⁷⁵ The subject-object dialectic embedded in this young character's name is not simply a metonymic endeavour to define and assert the boy's identity through his geographical origin.¹⁷⁶ Borgo Antico is arguably a name which erases the distinction between subject and object and allows the boy to embody the space in which he is represented (Ponte Mammolo). The author's initial Proustian difficulty of distinguishing the boundaries between the protagonist and his neighbourhood in 'Ragazzo e Trastevere' continues to initially surface in *Ragazzi*.

Place names are often invested with allusive connotations in *Ragazzi* and serve both as allegorical harbingers of themes and as elements which augment them. Several place names reveal how Pasolini exploits their suggestiveness to predict and inform his characters' actions and destinies. The novel's second chapter opens with Riccetto in via delle Zoccolette, adjacent to the Tiber embankments. Although the etymological origins of this street name are open to debate, the first thing that springs to mind on seeing the

¹⁷⁴ The fact that Borgo Antico's facial appearance is also likened to that of a bird (*Ragazzi*, p. 156) appears to be another throwback to the beginning of the novel when Riccetto saves a swallow drowning in the Tiber.

¹⁷⁵ The introduction of three brothers called Genesio, Borgo Antico and Mariuccio substitute the trio – Riccetto, Marcello and Agnoletto – presented in the novel's opening pages.

¹⁷⁶ Several examples of this technique abound in *Ragazzi*'s opening chapters. The lineage and identity of stock characters from Trastevere such Ercoletto del vicolo del Cinque, Lo stracciarolo del vicolo del Cinque and I quattro del vicolo del Bologna are defined by their place names.

word ‘zoccoletta’ is prostitution. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Riccetto is presented in this street on more than one occasion in the build-up to the chapter’s climax: Riccetto’s first sexual encounter with a forty-year-old female prostitute called Nadia at the seaside in Ostia. The name of the beach in which this encounter unfolds amplifies this event: ‘tutta quella gente che s’era venuta a mettere sulla spiaggia [...] dal Battistini al Lido, dal Lido al Marechiaro, dal Marechiaro al Principe dal Principe all’Ondine’.¹⁷⁷ From this catalogue of places, Marechiaro, provides the backdrop to Riccetto’s encounter. Il Marechiaro’s crystal-clear water is juxtaposed chromatically with Nadia’s cunning and experience as she stands ‘con un costume nero, e con tanti peli, neri come quelli del diavolo.’¹⁷⁸ This encounter is followed by the collapse of ‘le scuole elementari Giorgio Franceschi’ in Donna Olimpia where Riccetto’s family live, an event that leads to the death of Riccetto’s mother and childhood companion, Marcello. Il Marechiaro not only seals Riccetto’s rite of passage from childhood to manhood but also acts as a harbinger of the death. A water-death nexus emerges as a leitmotif in *Ragazzi* and place names play a key role in creating allusive meanings to augment this theme.

Place names also enable us to appreciate how *Ragazzi* often moves in opposite directions. The constellation of place names which emerges during a bus journey through areas which previously formed part of the Agro Romano in the novel’s penultimate chapter map out the direction the city’s ever-expanding vertebra is taking:

E passato Tiburtino, ecco Tor dei Schiavi, il Borghetto Prenestino, l’Acqua Bullicante, La Maranella, Il Mandrione, Porta Furba, il Quarticcio, Il Quadraro. [...] Altre centinaia di centri come quello lì al Tiburtino [...]
Tutto un gran accerchiamento intorno a Roma, tra Roma e le campagne

¹⁷⁷ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 560.

¹⁷⁸ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 560.

intorno intorno, con centinaia di migliaia di vite umane che brulicavano tra i loro lotti, le loro casette di sfrattati o i loro grattacieli.¹⁷⁹

This move towards a representation of space in a more linear timeframe is significant. It is not, however, a unilateral direction. Pasolini steers his narrative away from such built-up environments in *Ragazzi*'s last chapter and posits his story once again in liminal and cyclical waterscapes.¹⁸⁰ The liminal and bucolic environment of Ponte Mammolo constitutes a congenial setting for the novel's final victim, Genesio, to re-embrace his maternal origins by drowning in the Aniene. This Bedouin-like village stranded at the edge of the city allows the author to explore this theme further. Genesio's nimble posture enables him to become enmeshed by this 'villaggio arabo': 'Mariuccio e Borgo Antico guardavano il fratello accucciato laggiù come un beduino: 'Tu non rivenghi a Genè?''¹⁸¹ The neighbourhood's desolate tawdriness and the virtual absence of place names and topographical landmarks offers the author more scope to tamper with the coordinates of its landscape and those who move within it. Pasolini's decision to move away from built-up, densely populated spaces and to shift his focus towards marginal bucolic settings draws consistent parallels with spatial configurations represented in two earlier short stories: 'Santino nel mare di Ostia'¹⁸² and 'Terracina'.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 707.

¹⁸⁰ Place names such as Il Ciriola, the bathing station facing out onto the Tiber, the seaside at Ostia, and the rivers Tiber and Aniene shored up Pasolini's desire to continue associating places with water as he had previously done in 'I parlanti'. The sense of sociality these settings conjure up is intrinsically chronotopic. I take this idea further in Chapter 5.

¹⁸¹ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 763.

¹⁸² Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'Santino nel mare di Ostia', pp. 798-801.

¹⁸³ Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'Terracina', in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1, pp. 775-97. Pasolini's decision to set 'Terracina' in a seaside town bearing this name was not an arbitrary choice. The story's name acts as a harbinger of its dramatic ending: the death of its protagonist, Luciano, off the coast of Circeo. The title's matrix is drawn not simply from the town of 'Terracina' in which most of the story unfolds but is also traceable to the much-celebrated sonnet about death 'Er tisico' by G.G. Belli (see below). In Belli's sonnet the line 'Je vede tutta terracina in faccia' alludes to how its moribund protagonist sees the shadow of death standing over him. *Ragazzi*'s final chapter's title acts, therefore, as a latent harbinger prefiguring the novel's conclusion. See chapter 5.

The absence of place names in *Ragazzi*'s final chapter is partially compensated by a literary place name in the chapter's incipit. Pasolini gleaned this name, La Commaraccia Secca de Strada-Giulia,¹⁸⁴ from one of Gioacchino Belli's most celebrated sonnets, 'Er tisico' in which the reference to this name metaphorically indicates death.¹⁸⁵ This appellation evinces how Pasolini imitates and appropriates an established locus in Belli's repertoire and rewrites it into *Ragazzi*.¹⁸⁶ It also anticipates and seals the novel's ending: Genesio's physical death and Ricetto's existential one. Much in the same way as the reference to Rome's most established cemetery in 'Castagne e crisantemi' serves as a prelude to the dissolution of Belli Capelli's rural identity by the city's ever-expanding metropolis, this place name signals the imminent extinction of the city's *borgatari*. Re-evoking the image of 'La Commaraccia Secca', or rather the Roman Catholic church dedicated to the commemoration of death in the edge-of-city neighbourhood of Ponte Mammolo, is significant. The transposition of a site which formed an integral part of nineteenth-century Rome's city-text to one of the city's remotest and newest peripheries underlines how this interstitial area between the city and countryside continues to be a repository of otherness which attempts to refuse the city's pretensions to rationality and control. Pasolini's investment in this utopian idealism is problematized by the river's degradation. The Aniene river, therefore, becomes a place which condenses memories of an ecological future which has been lost, a chronotope which can never be.

¹⁸⁴ The full appellation is actually 'La commaraccia Secca di Strada Giulia arza er rampino' and is the heading/sub-title to *Ragazzi*'s final chapter.

¹⁸⁵ Giuseppe Gioacchino Belli (1793-1861) wrote this sonnet 'Er tisico' in January 1833. See Marco Teodonio, *Giuseppe Gioacchino Belli: Tutti i sonetti romaneschi* (Rome: Newton Compton, 1998), p. 739.

¹⁸⁶ This place name specifically refers to the Church Santa Maria dell'Orazione e della Morte in Via Giulia, which put on public display the skeletons and bones of people who died in the care of confraternities that operated in the same street during Belli's lifetime. A substantial part of the church was knocked down during the period in which the Tiber's embankments were built.

The matrix of *Ragazzi*'s place names has eclectic and complex origins. Place names enable us to unravel the complex 'cantiere' upon which *Ragazzi* is constructed and to observe how the author's interests swing from the documentary urgency of the city's fledging peripheral neighbourhoods to the more liminal landscapes of its remotest *borgate*. Themes charged with a particular significance are often accompanied by place names which heighten these events' importance and remove them from direct contact with the quotidian. Place names, therefore, serve to augment the significance that rites of passage have in the novel, and shore up utopian themes and the authority of the author vis-à-vis his text.

Una vita violenta

Pasolini's second and last Roman novel *Una vita violenta* (1959) marks a shift in his prose. The focus of this novel goes beyond the social and urban upheaval caused by the Fascists and the war in the 1940's and examines how a new social hegemony begins to assert itself in Rome in the 1950's. The novel's structure is linear and its story charts the progressive social mobility of its protagonist, Tommasino Puzzilli, and his family from living in a one-roomed hovel in the *borgata*, Pietralata, in one of Rome's north-eastern peripheries, to a newly built housing estate in the same area. Although a degree of continuity exists between place names in both novels, the deployment of place names in *Una vita* differs from that in *Ragazzi* in many ways. *Una vita*'s linear structure means that the author no longer needs to resort to place names to guarantee the coherence of his narrative. Moreover, the link between place names, water, colour and smell which primarily defined Pasolini's perception of place in 'I parlanti' and continued to do so, albeit to a lesser extent, in *Ragazzi* almost totally recedes in his final Roman novel. Place names in *Una vita* are also more outward-looking and privilege a linear, future-orientated model of time. This is primarily caused by the burgeoning of the city's new capitalist

hegemony in its outlying peripheries. The outward reach of consumerism and greater access of the novel's *borgatari* to the world at large means that place names in *Una vita* derive from a variety of sources.

Una vita opens in the Roman peripheral neighbourhood of Pietralata. Nicknamed 'La Piccola Shangai', this neighbourhood conveys the poverty and discomfort of its one-roomed slums and scarred landscape.¹⁸⁷ The deployment of foreign place names demonstrates how the author and the novel's characters have begun to use toponymic referents which are not intrinsic to these slum dwellers' mental map of the city or its peripheries to re-appropriate their surroundings. A heated exchange between Tommasino and Zimmìo reveals how they have re-named Pietralata after the Chinese city 'che, a du' anni già nun lo beccavi, forse, a' a Piccola Shangai?'¹⁸⁸ This phenomenon will continue throughout *Una vita* as the author brings his displaced and disenfranchised characters into greater contact with realities which are not only limited to their immediate surroundings or to their quotidian experiences.

The adverbial locution 'dentro Roma' is employed by Pietralata's slum dwellers to describe how they perceive their relationship with the centre of Rome.¹⁸⁹ A univocal centre-periphery dynamic which gradually emerged in *Ragazzi* becomes apparent from the outset of *Una vita*. Commuting to and from the city involves long bus rides: this locution not only underlines the physical segregation between these inhabitants and the city centre but also evinces how they perceive their exclusion and articulate their alienation through a toponymic expression.¹⁹⁰ This expression's socio-political

¹⁸⁷ One presumes that Pasolini ascribed this name to this neighbourhood in thrall to another Roman neighbourhood, Tormarancia, which was commonly known in this period as 'Shangai'.

¹⁸⁸ Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Una vita violenta*, in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1, pp. 823-1183 (p. 837).

¹⁸⁹ This locution appears on a few occasions in *Ragazzi* and the novel's penultimate chapter is entitled 'Dentro Roma'. No reference to this expression appears in the novel's direct discourse, making clear precisely how unaware *Ragazzi*'s characters actually are of their displacement from the city.

¹⁹⁰ Amalia Signorelli, in one of the first empirical studies to be conducted in and about Pietralata

connotations underline how they see themselves as *borgatari*, or rather as an excluded community living on the city's edges. The emphasis on these slum dwellers' point of arrival – dentro Roma – and their continuous commuting to and from the city centre shows how despite efforts to marginalize them from the city they actually reclaim its ancient streets by asserting their presence in places which deny their existence. While place names in *Ragazzi* show how its street boys are unable to conceptualize their displacement from the city, their deployment in *Una vita* reveal its sub-proletariat characters' increasing awareness of their alienation and their spatial environment.

Place names designated by the *borgatari* in *Una vita* to the new INA-Casa high-rise housing developments are surprisingly cross-referential and dense.¹⁹¹ These names have a complex pattern of associations and are evidence of a new trend in naming which is governed by a new set of concerns. These new concerns primarily were associated with a growing desire for privacy and family ties. Stephanie Zeier Pilat in her examination of Italy's post war Christian Democratic government's INA Casa project notes how both policy makers and aspiring housing applicants sought a greater sense of privacy in their new homes:

The predilection for privacy evident in the design of the entry indicates the

in the mid-1970s, found that its inhabitants continued to use this locution 'dentro Roma' and did not consider themselves inhabitants of the city. Signorelli observes that an economic relationship linked the *borgatari* of this peripheral neighbourhood with the city centre: 'il quadro non sarebbe completo se non tenessimo conto del fatto che Pietralata è – e nei fatti è sempre stata – una parte della città. Non è una questione di distanza spaziale; è evidentemente una questione di rapporti e di percezione reciproca; e la borgata è nata in rapporto alla città. [...] il rapporto con la città era tanto necessario quanto precario: in rapporto alla città gli abitanti della borgata si sentivano, ancora al tempo della nostra ricerca, quasi degli occupanti temporanei ed abusivi, tollerati oppure temuti, ma come permanentemente esposti al rischio di essere di nuovo espulsi (Berlinguer G., Della Seta P., 1960, Ferrarotti, 1970)'. Amalia Signorelli, *Antropologia urbana* (Milan: Angelo Guerrini e Associati, 1996), pp. 124-25.

¹⁹¹ The INA Casa housing project was instituted by a law passed in the Italian parliament in 1949 under the name 'Legge Fanfani'. The primary goals of this scheme were to create new accommodation in cities whose populations were growing and to create more jobs in the building sector.

boundaries drawn between space and activities that are public and communal versus private and familial [...]. In general, the designs of INA Casa tended towards the privileging of the family over the connectedness of the community. The focus of the family reflects the political agenda of the Christian Democratic government at that time, which placed the family above both community and the individual. The architecture [of the INA Casa housing stock] reinforced this.¹⁹²

There was, therefore, a strong move away from the collapsed boundaries which were a central feature of housing stock in Trastevere and other areas of Rome's historic centre. A catalogue of names describing these new INA Casa building projects reveals this more superficial nomenclature:

la gente cominciava a chiamare quei caseggiati Alice nel Paese delle Meraviglie, Villaggio Fatato, o Gerusalemme: e tutti ci ridevano, ma tutti quelli che abitavano nelle *borgate* in quei paraggi, cominciarono a pensare 'Aaaah, finalmente anche a me me danno un harem!'¹⁹³

The allusive overtones of these place names suggest the make-believe social fabric of Rome's suburbs – a phenomenon which the philosopher, Henri Lefebvre has termed the defining hallmark of a city's suburbs. He observes that:

Urban order thus decomposes into two stages: individual and owner-occupied houses and housing estates. [...] This opposition tends to constitute a system of significations. [...] Each sector defines itself (by and

¹⁹² Stephanie Zeier Pilat, 'Reconstructing Italy: The INA Casa Neighbourhoods of the Postwar Era' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Michigan, 2009), pp. 190-91.

<https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/64761> [accessed 27 January 2018].

¹⁹³ *Una vita violenta*, p. 1007.

in the consciousness of the inhabitants) in relation to other, against the other.

[...] People represent themselves to themselves by what they are lacking or believe to be lacking. In this relationship, the imaginary has more power.¹⁹⁴

These fanciful place names also underline Pasolini's hostile skepticism in relation to the morphology of these towering developments and the *borgatari's* illusory expectations. There is, therefore, a shift among the residents of the *borgata* in *Una vita* from the cyclical, local and material geographical iconography of *Ragazzi* towards one that is more future-oriented and fanciful. These fanciful names lend a sense of the exotic to processes which shore up the effacement of dispossession and marginalization in the *borgate*. They stand in sharp contrast to the unofficial names used by the boys particularly in *Ragazzi's* opening chapters. While the use of topographic nicknames by Pasolini's inner-city characters depicted in his early Roman fiction enables the boys to shore up their indissoluble links with their local environment, this phenomenon dissipates in the city's sprawling peripheries. Moreover, these names are also designated sporadically to new building projects under construction in various peripheral neighbourhoods. They assume, therefore, an interchangeable value with each other and are used in a totally random manner to generically describe several of Rome's new housing projects. This phenomenon also evinces both the ever-expanding urban sprawl as well as an increasing connection to the world at large.

The renaming of part of Rome's spatial environment also emerges in *Una vita*. Much of the primitive and makeshift accommodation in the Fascist-built Borgata Gordiani was partially demolished by the Christian-Democrat led city council in the 1950s to reflect the aesthetic pretensions and socially hegemonic ambitions of the city's new governing

¹⁹⁴ Henri Lefebvre, *Writing on Cities*, trans. and ed. by Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1996), p. 80. His emphasis.

class. Ascribing this new neighbourhood with a new and more gentrified place name, Villa Gordiani, makes evident how the city's recently-elected Christian Democrat council was eager to distance themselves from the urban segregation programme of the Roman *borgate* initiated by their Fascist predecessors in the city's peripheries and to re-mould its urban landscape.¹⁹⁵ The renaming of peripheral neighbourhoods became an important way of asserting their political identity and programme for the city.¹⁹⁶ This process of renaming of some streets and institutions in postwar Rome also shows how the city's new governing class reclaims and exercises its authority over the city's spaces to assert its ascendant hegemony:

Come arrivarono [la famiglia di Tommasino] a Roma tutti sfiancati, affamati, coi piedi a terra, peggio degli zingari, li buttarono insieme ad altri sfollati a una scuola della Maranella, la scuola Michelazzi, che poi, dopo il fascismo, fu chiamato Pisacane.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ Pasolini did not see any great difference, however, between the one-roomed hovels built in Borgata Gordiani in the 1930s and the constructions built by the Christian Democrats in the mid-1950s. He compared the living conditions of both the former *borgata* and its newly-built substitute erected nearby, Villa Giordiani, with concentration camps in an essay entitled 'I campi di concentramento' (1958) claiming that: 'la maggiore parte degli abitanti di queste casette [in Borgata Gordiani] sono stati trasferiti, dopo un decennio di lotte e di speranza, alla Villa Gordiani e Villa Lancellotti, sulla Prenestina, non lontano dall'antica borgata. Ci siamo andati. Nulla, in realtà, è cambiato [...]; le "borgate" democristiane sono identiche a quelle fasciste, perché è identico il rapporto che si istituisce tra Stato e "poveri": rapporto autoritario e paternalistico, profondamente inumano nella sua mistificazione religiosa'. 'I campi di concentramento', in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1, pp. 1459-62 (pp. 1461-62).

¹⁹⁶ Place names such as Borghetto Prenestino and Borgata degli Angeli that frequently appear in *Ragazzi* are dropped in *Una vita* and replaced by the city's new and more gentrified place names. Both neighbourhoods are referred to as Portonaccio and Torpignattara in Pasolini's second novel. Pasolini's decision to drop any reference to these *borgate* in *Una vita* reflects the city's authorities' eagerness to promote its own naming policy in post-war Rome and to disassociate themselves from the ideological values and segregationist priorities of their Fascist predecessors' naming policies.

¹⁹⁷ *Una vita violenta*, p. 1005. The renaming of the school after the Italian revolutionary and patriot, Carlo Pisacane, (1818-1857) confirms my argument that the new post-war governing class actively worked to shore up a new Italian identity around figures who fought with other revolutionaries and patriots such as Giuseppe Garibaldi, Giuseppe Mazzini and Goffredo Mameli in Italian Risorgimento.

Yvonne Whelan has shown how the renaming of places figures prominently in periods of regime change and suggests that a name change ‘acts as spatializations of memory and power, making tangible specific narratives of nationhood and reducing otherwise fluid histories into sanitized and concretized myths that anchor the projection of national identity onto physical territory’.¹⁹⁸ The rapid development of so many neighbourhoods on pockets of land circulating the city’s borders provided a fresh canvas upon which to inscribe a symbolic meaning. While most of the place names in Pietralata’s burgeoning landscape commemorate prestigious personalities from secular society, names in Garbatella are often invested with religious connotations.¹⁹⁹

In contrast to the careful attention Pasolini affords to new and changing place names in *Una vita*, some street names which had gone officially into abeyance continue to feature as part of the novel’s topographic nomenclature. Viale di Trastevere is referred to as Viale del Re throughout the novel even though this avenue was renamed with its former moniker some years before the story unfolds.²⁰⁰ The most plausible reason why Pasolini continues to refer to this avenue with its previous name is that this street was still commonly known as Viale del Re. Place names, therefore, underscore the transient status of the city and the nation’s political order.

As capitalism extends its grip throughout the city its commodifying forces also permeate its peripheries. The renaming of place names and reorganization of space in

¹⁹⁸ Yvonne Whelan, ‘Mapping Meanings in the Cultural Landscape’, in *Senses of Places: Senses of Time*, ed. by G.J. Ashworth and Brian Graham (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 61-71 (p. 62).

¹⁹⁹ Recurring references to Via Luigi Cesana in Pietralata, named after the journalist and founder of the Roman daily *Il Messaggero*, are one of a number of examples of street names in this area that commemorate prominent secular figures of a united Italy. The most frequently mentioned streets and squares in Garbatella, such as Via delle Sette Chiese, Piazza delle Sette Chiese, Piazza Sant’Eurosia, Via Anna Maria Taigi and Via Maria Adelaide Garbaldi, are toponyms that give a primarily religious and nationalist ambience to this area.

²⁰⁰ Travaglini *et al.* point out that a motion was passed in Rome’s City Council Chambers to rename this avenue on 2 February 1945. Carlo Maria Travaglini, Keti Lelo and Carla Mazzarelli, *Trastevere: società e trasformazione urbana dall’Ottocento ad oggi* (Rome: CROMA, 2007), p. 341.

Pietralata enables us to appreciate how this once marginal and desolate landscape is rapidly changing: ‘Il cinema Lux più sù, aveva cambiato nome, e adesso si chiamava cinema Boston. La fabbrichetta sotto il Monte del Pecoraro aveva chiuso, e al posto suo, nei baracconi, c’era un deposito della Zeppieri.’²⁰¹

The emergence of a place name with obvious American resonances towards the end of *Una vita* reveals the lengthy trajectory which Pasolini’s prose pursues. Place names enable us to appreciate how his narrative moves from the mythical and archetypal naming and associative processes of ‘I parlanti’ and his early Roman prose to the painstaking specificity, informal and allusive naming strategies of *Ragazzi* to conclude with a mix of religious and secular, superficial and gentrified names in *Una vita*.

Conclusion

Place names in Pasolini’s Roman prose are intrinsically chronotopic. Their heuristic efficacy enables them to assume the role of signposts which provide an underlying structure to the overall design of Pasolini’s prose work. A chronotopic reading of Pasolini’s place naming strategies enables us to understand their dual temporalities and appreciate the bifurcated spatial-temporal organization of Pasolini’s early prose. Pasolini’s early representations of streetscapes and waterscapes function as terms around which his work tries to imagine, albeit momentarily, the city’s ecological future from a harmonious perspective. They act as a practical and informal medium which allow his characters to shore up their emotional and physical attachment to the city. Displacement in Rome’s peripheries undermines Pasolini’s initial representation of utopian spatial microcosms and forces his work to re-enter the stream of history. Place names reflect this change of course and begin gradually to support the novels’ thematic inquiries into

²⁰¹ *Una vita violenta*, p. 1102.

alienation and dispossession, reckless urban expansion and environmental degradation. A careful reading of place names makes it possible to appreciate how they function as figures through which the past and the future of the city coincide. In short, place names in Pasolini's prose carry multiple meanings, support the representation of spaces couched in different temporalities and perform a great deal of work inside the narrative, creating an ever-varying chain of signifiers. They also serve as a useful point of entry into Pasolini and eco-criticism.

My next chapter looks at the map of Rome which emerges from Pasolini's Roman prose. I examine the strategies and priorities underpinning Pasolini's map-making endeavours and consider how they both evolve and change throughout the course of his writings.

Mapping Pasolini's Rome.

The representation of Rome in Pasolini's Roman prose provides an invaluable guide to much of the city's urban growth in the 1950s. The map of the city which emerges from this corpus of texts should not be seen as a blueprint of the city's ever-changing contours but rather as a highly subjective and idiosyncratic account of the city's rapid development. While Pasolini's early short fiction, essays and a large part of his first novel, *Ragazzi di vita*, are given over to underscoring the intrinsic uniqueness of some of the city's poorest and oldest inner-city quarters and the inorganic development of its outlying *borgate*, later parts of *Ragazzi* and a great deal of his second novel, *Una vita violenta*, detail how a wave of capitalist hegemony has begun to sweep through Roman society and usher in wrenching changes to the city's traditional fabric. Pasolini's reading of Rome's ever-changing physical configuration shows how marginal repositories of otherness, both in the city centre and in its peripheries, gradually disappear as they become engulfed by the city's sprawling metropolis.

The chapter begins by considering the strong geographical continuity which exists between Pasolini's Friulian prose and his early Roman short fiction and essays and asks if it is possible to identify other spatial features in the author's early Roman prose which go beyond the already observed idea of an unusual commingling of rural and urban landscapes in these texts. It proceeds to look at Pasolini's earliest Roman short stories and essays and shows how several parts of these texts are deliberately organized around separate locations. It examines how the author's fragmented and discontinuous presentation of the dispersive Bedouin-like villages sprouting up outside the city's walls actually shapes the texts themselves and considers how an initial rural-urban divide gradually collapses as Pasolini becomes increasingly familiar with the city's changing geographies and ever-burgeoning urban sprawl. The chapter goes on to address *Ragazzi*

di vita, and looks at how Pasolini's Roman street boys' movements are calibrated around an understanding of spatial tactics required by everyday life in Rome and explores how they carve out sites of sociability for themselves in the city centre. By mapping the boys' ever-changing itineraries, this chapter shows how the novel pulls in two opposing directions: topographies initially underline the primacy of the city centre's centripetal power and the boys' attraction towards this setting; it subsequently considers how the city's development and the characters' future are inevitably orientated in a centrifugal direction. The chapter examines how the dialectic between Rome's centre and peripheries becomes increasingly apparent in *Una vita* and this segregation leads to a sense of disempowerment on the part of the novel's protagonists. This part of the chapter considers how Pasolini's mapping of Rome takes on a more rationalized perspective which allows a more legible city-text to emerge. This enhanced visibility becomes a requisite for a more linear temporal-spatial critique of the city and examines the effects that such increased surveillance has on the characters' presence in the city centre. Finally, the chapter looks at the panoramic perception of the city which emerges from the narration of a joyride from Rome's city centre to places being built in its peripheries.

Critical Scholarship

The extensive volume of research on Pasolini's Roman prose has essentially overlooked the way this body of work actually maps out the city. The few critics who have briefly broached this issue have not been unanimous in their evaluation. One of Pasolini's biographers, Barth David Schwartz, observes how the author's 'freelance work brought him all over the city by bus and tram, putting him into contact with all kinds of people the likes of whom he had never known before. His was a real Rome, not the

superficially picturesque one of the Trevi Fountain or the Spanish Steps'.²⁰² Schwartz sees Pasolini's street boys as an intrinsic and inseparable part of their urban habitat, as they 'merged with their streets, noises, buildings, the trees, the Tiber into a living magma that pulsed'.²⁰³ Schwartz's interpretation of the city's spatial syntax fails to acknowledge the composite development of the author's geographical mapping of Rome. While the street boys are initially presented as being at one with their local environment, this bond, as I will shortly demonstrate, is problematized as the narrative progresses.

Jacopo Benci traces the chronology of Pasolini's encounter with the city's multi-layered palimpsest and explores the particular meanings he grafted onto different settings. Benci begins his essay by providing an informative account of Pasolini's impressions of Rome during his first visit to the city in 1946 and goes on to use these and an extensive range of material from the author's Roman prose, poetry and cinema to make sense of how he engaged with, experienced and represented the city. He describes how Pasolini's initial acquaintance with the city takes place in the city centre and around its waterscapes and subsequently moves out to its peripheries:

Travelling by public transport, Pasolini familiarized himself with the city while discovering the lifestyles of its inhabitants; his encounters with the 'ragazzi di vita', starting in the centre, on the Lungotevere, at the Bagni Ciriola by the river, the 'Cinema Borgia' (i.e. Farnese) in Campo de' Fiori, brought him to the peripheral neighbourhoods – Testaccio, Garbatella, Monteverde, Primavalle. [...] On discovering another Rome within, underneath and outside the centre, Pasolini turned his back on the

²⁰² Barth David Schwartz, *Pasolini Requiem* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), p. 235.

²⁰³ Schwartz, p. 236.

monuments and the ruins of ancient Rome.²⁰⁴

Renato Nicolini's analysis of Pasolini's Rome is one of a number of critical readings that unpack the author's representation of the city. Nicolini looks at the role of myth-making in Pasolini's topographies and suggests that the features of some locations are deliberately exaggerated to bolster his narrative's rhetoric:

Certo nella poesia di Pasolini le immagini che sono immagini al limite del mito abbondano. [...] Questa sua invenzione di un quartiere operaio, Testaccio, come Testaccio non è mai stato, Testaccio doveva essere sì il quartiere delle arti clamorose, delle industrie romane, ma fin da quando hanno cominciato a costruirlo e realizzarlo, l'unica industria che lì si è trovata, è stata quella del Mattatoio, che industria in senso proprio non può definirsi.²⁰⁵

The challenge, Nicolini suggests, is to refocus our critical eye and to look beyond the rhetoric in Pasolini's writings to consider his work on a broader scale:

Un poeta incline al mito, che del mito fa strumento di poesia, ma che proprio per questo noi non possiamo conoscere soltanto in quei termini, sempre che vogliamo, appunto, avere di lui conoscenza integrale, e quindi non fermarci alla risoluzione poetica delle contraddizioni come nelle sue opere si presenta, ma andare oltre la contraddizione intima che c'è in lui, tra

²⁰⁴ Jacopo Benci, 'An Extraordinary Proliferation of Layers: Pasolini's Rome', in *Rome: Continuing Encounters Between Past and Present*, ed. by Dorigan Caldwell and Lesley Caldwell (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2011), pp. 153-88 (p. 156).

²⁰⁵ Renato Nicolini, 'Pasolini e Roma', in *Per conoscere Pasolini*, ed. by Luciano Lucignani and Carlo Molfese (Rome: Bulzoni and Teatro Tenda, 1978), pp. 11-14 (pp. 11-12).

l'impegno poetico e l'impegno civile, per arrivare ai tempi nostri.²⁰⁶

Rinaldo Rinaldi continues some of the threads of Nicolini's discussion about the use of rhetoric in Pasolini's mapping strategies. He contends that the representation of Rome's outlying peripheries in the first essays in *Alì dagli occhi azzurri* are dictated more by aesthetic concerns to shore up the author's chromatic and acoustic aspirations than by a desire for geographic or ethnographic accuracy. Rinaldi claims that:

Subito però la narrazione si sposta su un altro piano, in cui tutti gli apparenti riferimenti sociali e topografici (la Roma delle borgate, la miseria) svaniscono e tutto sfuma in gesti e figure meno consistenti. [...] Il mondo dei ragazzi di vita è volutamente allontanato da ogni possibile rispecchiamento realista e piuttosto avvicinato alla poesia, ai suoi ritmi 'irreali' per definizione: basta pensare a certe pagine di prosa, negli 'Appunti', che si irrigidiscono senza scosse nelle scansioni metriche del verso. Quasi che l'origine e l'aggancio 'poetico' della prosa garantisca contro ogni ritorno rappresentativo.²⁰⁷

Rinaldi sees these locations as being exuberantly utopian inventions and while he considers such an inauthentic decor as an endeavour to capture his readers' utmost attention, he acknowledges a shift in Pasolini's later essays from such aesthetically constructed vignettes to a more realistic picture of the city.²⁰⁸ Michael Syrimis, in his reading of Pasolini's essay 'Squarci sulle notti romane', also questions Pasolini's representation of the city and observes how 'despite the abundance of concrete present-

²⁰⁶ Nicolini, p. 12.

²⁰⁷ Rinaldo Rinaldi, *L'irriconosibile Pasolini* (Rovito: Marra, 1990), pp. 144-45. The full title of the essay that Rinaldi refers to as 'Appunti' is 'Appunti per un poema popolare'; it was initially published in *Alì degli occhi azzurri* in 1965.

²⁰⁸ Rinaldi, pp. 148-49.

day elements, objectivity and naturalism are submerged by subjectivity and lyricism'.²⁰⁹ He goes on to note how Pasolini in this essay becomes a reader rather than an observer of Rome:

critics barely emphasize, however, what I think is the novella's most crucial feature: the astonishing degree to which Pasolini actively unveils his role as subjective reader of this purportedly real Rome. At the opening, Pasolini assaults us with an idiosyncratic critique, which passes as realism as it describes a sociological condition. It will be the task of the discourse to undermine this critique with a systematic counter assault, namely, Pasolini's flaunting of his authorial presence.²¹⁰

Serenella Iovino reiterates this claim, arguing that 'the images of Friuli and Rome are sometimes superimposed, and Casarsa paroxysmally lives again in the [Roman] slum'.²¹¹ And in a similar vein, Fabio Vighi shows how Pasolini's Friulian landscapes re-emerge in Pasolini's early Roman short fiction and overturns suggestions touted by some critics of a fracture with Friuli after the author's self-imposed exile in Rome.²¹²

Gianni Biondillo traces the trajectory of the peripatetic itineraries of Pasolini's street boys throughout the city: 'La Roma di Pasolini non è mai né tipica né ideale ma è sempre fisica e reale. Delle peregrinazioni notturne dei suoi giovani protagonisti si può tracciare

²⁰⁹ Michael Syrimis, 'Squarci di notti romane': Pasolini's Early Authorial Confessions', *Romance Notes*, 52(1), 2012, 89-96 (p. 90).

²¹⁰ Syrimis, p. 91.

²¹¹ Serenella Iovino, 'Ashes of Italy: Pier Paolo Pasolini's Ethics of Place', in *Culture and the State: Landscape and Ecology*, ed. by Gabrielle Zezulka-Mailloux and James Gifford (Edmonton: CRC Humanities Studio, 2003), pp. 70-91 (p. 78).

²¹² Vighi's argument is not only based on the strong similarities that emerge between Friulian and Roman landscapes but is also supported by the fact that Pasolini wrote and published as many as nine short stories with a Friulian backdrop after moving to Rome. Fabio Vighi, *Le ragioni dell'altro: la formazione intellettuale di Pasolini tra saggistica, letteratura e cinema* (Ravenna: Longo, 2001).

l'itinerario'.²¹³ He shows how these itineraries reveal the boys' engagement in an ongoing struggle to carve out their own material and spatial sites of sociability in an attempt to forge identities in and through them:

Pasolini sembra voler tracciare la mappa dell'altra Roma con una pignoleria descrittiva iperrealista. Ma non basta: la città è descritta in movimento, i protagonisti dei suoi racconti vagano nel caos metropolitano cercando come disperati un luogo dove sentirsi appartenuti.²¹⁴

Biondillo reveals how Pasolini's Rome is much like a series of high-resolution photos and is primarily based on the multiple potentiality that the city offers his characters. The boys experience city life as a 'now' rather than as a causal chain of events which fit into a greater historical narrative. Their spatial practices are, therefore, presented as a series of disconnected movements in a matrix of functional sites which they are constantly forced to reconfigure. Biondillo goes on to note how the expansion of the city's footprint stretches out as far as the *borgata* and brings with it a set bourgeois values which sets in train a process of homologation. Nobody will be immune to such a process, not even the *borgatari*: 'ma la trasformazione è in atto: la città borghese cementificherà, con i suoi palazzi tutti uguali, sin nel cuore delle borgate, e cioè (al di fuori della metafora) la neo-cultura tecnocrate imporrà i propri valori omologatori alla cultura proletaria'.²¹⁵

In his extensive study of locations in Pasolini's prose and films, John David Rhodes argues that 'the question of Rome's indeterminate, expansive borders is consonant with Pasolini's depiction of the city in his Roman poems and letters'.²¹⁶ Like Schwartz, he

²¹³ Gianni Biondillo, *Pasolini il corpo della città* (Milan: Edizioni Unicopli, 2001), p. 48.

²¹⁴ Biondillo, p. 49

²¹⁵ Biondillo, p. 50.

²¹⁶ John David Rhodes, *Stupendous, Miserable City: Pasolini's Rome* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p. 35.

contends that ‘the Rome that he [Pasolini] is interested in is not the city’s center, rather the immense city that is ‘unknown to tourists, ignored by the right-minded, and non-existent on maps’.²¹⁷ Rhodes sees Rome’s *borgate* as hanging in limbo:

The borgate figure a miserable limbo. [...] In the borgate, one is not in the ‘here’ of the city center, but neither is one exactly banished to the ‘there’. What is ‘there’, or ‘out there’, is still somehow ‘here’, meaning that the borgate still belong to the orbit of the city as much as they are excluded from its core.²¹⁸

This selective overview of critical observations shows how a variety of thematic concerns have already been explored about Pasolini’s representation and mapping of Rome’s changing topographies. This chapter reads Pasolini’s Roman fiction as a whole, examining the way the author maps out the city from his earliest short fiction through to his second and final Roman novel. My reading is firmly grounded with an explicit engagement with critical theories of place, space and landscape. It is my aim to show how Pasolini’s Roman prose has the potential to recreate the city as text, bringing with it new perspectives on the relationships between text and place and opening up other possibilities for re-imagining urban geography. I look at the various ways in which Pasolini draws on landscape and topographies of Rome both to shape and structure his narratives spatially, through the materiality of the city’s urban and peripheral sites, and to support his analysis of the spatial changes and development which are underway.

²¹⁷ Rhodes, p. 35.

²¹⁸ Rhodes, p.53.

Theoretical Scholarship on Mapping

There has been a tendency among some cultural theorists to treat the concept of mapping less in terms of its specific histories and methodological principles than as a set of concepts that are often employed in explicitly metaphorical ways. David Cooper observes how scholars claim that:

[...] mapping as a term of cultural description in the arts and the humanities has moved beyond the practice of cartography to a broader, metaphorical sense of interpreting and creating images and texts and of making sense of a fast modernizing or post-modernizing of this world (Daniels et al. 2011: XXX).²¹⁹

Other theorists have tended to consider mapping practices as a repressive means of social control from above, a sort of graphic inscription of panoptic authority. David Harvey, for instance, observes that ‘the mapping of the world opened up a way to look on space as open to appropriation for private uses. Mapping also turned out to be far from ideologically neutral’.²²⁰ Maps are, therefore, not simply visual representations of space but are also instruments of power.

In his analysis of J.B. Harley’s seminal article, ‘Deconstructing the Map’, Reuben Rose-Redwood highlights Harley’s assertion that all maps are rhetorical. Rose-Redwood observes that one of the main merits of Harley’s work ‘has been to call attention to the relations of power that shape the map, and are shaped by, mapping practices, both historically and in the present’.²²¹ He goes on to show how Harley questions the illusory

²¹⁹ David Cooper, ‘Critical Literary Cartography: Texts, Maps and a Coleridge Notebook’, in *Mapping Cultures: Place, Practice and Performance*, ed. by Les Roberts (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 29-53 (p. 29).

²²⁰ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1989), p. 228.

²²¹ Reuben Rose-Redwood, ‘Introduction: The Limits of Deconstructing the Map’,

assumption that maps provide an accurate mirror of the places they represent and he re-evaluates the epistemological underpinnings of modern cartography:

For too long [...] historians of cartography and cartographers themselves had uncritically accepted the illusory belief that the map could provide a ‘transparent’ window of the world so long as cartographic representations ‘accurately’ corresponded to, or mirrored, the phenomena they claimed to represent. [...] by viewing maps not as mirrors of nature but rather as *cultural texts* whose rhetoricity could be decoded using strategies and tactics of Jacques Derrida’s (1976) deconstruction combined with Michel Foucault’s (1973, 1987, 1980) conception of discourse [Harley examines] ‘how maps work in society as a form of power or knowledge’.²²²

Taking this point further, Kieran Keohane shows how maps provide us with the critical interpretative tools to decipher and illuminate the network of power:

Urban landscapes are palimpsests, layered texts in which traces of other inscriptions are faintly visible through the new. Urban texts are overdetermined. Every building, every icon represents not just one dominant political power but also a multiplicity of antagonistic powers competing for hegemony, [...] the aesthetic realm is never free from ideology.²²³

Cartographica: The International Journal for Geographical Information and Geovisualization, 50(1), 2015, 1-8 (p. 4)

²²² Rose-Redwood, p. 2. He is citing Harley from ‘Deconstructing the Map’, *Cartographica*, 26(2), 1989, 1-20 (p. 3).

²²³ Kieran Keohane, ‘Review of Yvonne Whelan’s *Reinventing Modern Dublin: Streetscape, Iconography and the Politics of Identity*’, *Irish Studies Review*, 12(1), 2004, 103-04.

Rose-Redwood *et al.* read the authority of maps from a somewhat different perspective. They claim that maps have the power to impose an official version of a country's collective narrative over other ones: 'Maps are more than simply innocent repositories of name data. They work - through their textual authority and repeated use - to normalize certain ways of knowing and naming the landscape over others (Melville, 2006).'²²⁴

The primary role that mapping strategies and place names have in shoring up Israel's national identity in the post-war era has been taken up by Charles Zerner. He considers the central role that maps and place names played in condensing a Jewish sense of memory and legitimizing Israel's sense of nationhood. He notes how the erasure of indigenous Arabic place names from the new nation's map enabled the new Israeli government to fashion narratives which hebraicized and nationalized the landscape:

But renaming was also an act of word magic coupled with political power: the committee changed the names of hundreds of Arabic toponyms to Hebrew homonyms or cognates, erasing Arabic names and inscribing Hebrew names on the map as well as road signs guiding travelers through this recently conquered, newly Israeli landscape. The new map of Israel produced not only an erasure from memory. It was an instrument for the reorganization of the way the land was perceived and governed.²²⁵

²²⁴ Reuben Rose-Redwood, Derek H. Alderman and Moaz Azaryahu, 'Geographies of Toponymic Inscription: New Directions in Critical Place-Names Studies', *Progress in Human Geography*, 34(4), 2010, 453-70 (p. 463).

²²⁵ Charles Zerner, 'Landscapes in Translation: Traveling the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel with Raja Shehadeh and David Grossman', *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment*, 5(1), 2014, 33-53 (p. 38).

Meron Benvenisti in his provocative historical account of the early decades of the Israeli settlement observes that the creation of a national iconography through the Hebrew map was as important as the physical infrastructure underpinning the new state:

Now it was necessary to establish ‘facts on the ground’ and the creation of a Hebrew map was an extremely powerful means of doing so, no less important than the building of roads or the founding of settlements [...] the map infused the sense that a new Jewish-reality had indeed been created in the desolate expanses of the Negev.²²⁶

Michel de Certeau argues that the map does not simply represent but actually ‘colonizes space’, constituting a ‘totalizing stage’ upon which the current state of geographical knowledge is articulated.²²⁷ De Certeau makes a distinction between the two very different kinds of maps. He refers to the ‘map’ which is an official text underpinned by a ‘strategy’, an overarching framework of a ruling institution and its objectives, and the ‘tour’ which is an itinerary, a set of practices played out by the ordinary practitioner. A map, for De Certeau, is a tableau, describing the different elements; each element corresponds to a place and has the purpose of indicating how one place geometrically relates to another in an essentially static way. Tours, instead, are a set of operations which organizes movement.²²⁸ A dialectical relationship emerges, therefore, between the city understood as geometrical space (a map) and the city understood as a site of practices

²²⁶ Meron Benvenisti, *Sacred Landscape: The Buried History of the Holy Land Since 1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 14.

²²⁷ Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 121.

²²⁸ De Certeau makes the same analogy between place and space. He considers place ‘an instantaneous configuration of positions’; in other words, it is ‘an indication of stability’. Place is the antithesis of movement and therefore of change. Space names, for De Certeau, are the medium through which such change is possible. Space is ‘actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it’. De Certeau, p. 121.

performed by ‘ordinary practitioners’ who live and walk their urban environment. The map or, rather, ‘the street geometrically defined by urban planners’ is ‘transformed into a space by walkers’ who through their day-to-day movements contest the topographic strictures established by city planners.²²⁹ The walker

on one hand [...] actualizes only a few of the possibilities fixed by the constructed order (he goes here and not there), on the other he increases the number of possibilities (for example, by creating shortcuts or detours) [...] He thus makes a selection.²³⁰

Michel Foucault emphasizes the heterogeneity of control, incorporating diverse state and non-state actors, and the way in which security practices aspire neither towards total coercion or control, but rather emphasizes the identification and classification of circulatory practices. His lectures on security delineate how undesirable circulation provides a useful frame for understanding the monitoring of suspect mobilities in the modern city. Foucault, in these lectures, moves away from his previous disciplinary theory concerning the panopticon which had the ambition and techniques to ensure saturated territorial control. Security is not about territorial control. Rather it allows things to exist but seeks to intervene and delineate processes of circulation. Foucault defines ‘circulation in a very broad sense of movement, exchange and contact, as a form of dispersion, and as a form of distribution, the problem being: how should things circulate or not circulate?’²³¹ Rather than prohibiting movement, surveillance as associated with security has the aim of identifying and demarcating the more negative flows of

²²⁹ De Certeau, p. 99.

²³⁰ De Certeau, p. 98.

²³¹ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population. Lectures at the Collège De France 1977-1978*, trans. by Graham Burchell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 92.

undesirable or ‘floating populations’, making a clear distinction between good and bad flows and ‘maximising the good circulation by diminishing the bad’.²³²

Metabolisms and circulation mechanisms have been explored by Eric Swyngedouw as ways of conceptualizing the map of the modern city. He notes how language traditionally associated with the proper functioning of the human body was adopted by urban administrators from the mid-to-late nineteenth century onwards to describe the ‘healthy’ functioning of the city:

Like the individual body and bourgeois society, the city was now described as a network of pipes and conduits. The brisker the flow, the greater the wealth, the health, the hygiene of the city would be (Gandy 2004). New principles of city planning and policing were emerging based upon the medical metaphors of circulation and flow. The health of the body became the comparison against which the greatness of the cities and states would be measured. The ‘veins’ and ‘arteries’ of the new urban design were to be freed from all sources of blockage.²³³

Nick Dines points out that the terms used in Italian to define the clearance of the ancient/medieval building stock in Italian cities are invested with somatic associations:

In particular, two somatic terms came to be associated with attempts to modernize the city’s ancient ‘body’: ‘*risanamento*’ (which means ‘building improvements’ but also ‘healing’) and ‘*sventramento*’ (which implies ‘clearance’ but literally means ‘disembowelment’).²³⁴

²³² Michel Foucault, p. 34.

²³³ Eric Swyngedouw, ‘Circulation and Metabolism: (Hybrid) Natures and (Cyborg) Cities’, *Science as Culture*, 15(2), 2006, 105-121 (pp. 111-12).

²³⁴ Nick Dines, *Tuff City: Urban Change and Contested Space in Central Naples* (New York:

Rome's map had been radically reshaped in the decades preceding Pasolini's Roman prose by Fascist demolition and urban planning programmes. Aristotle Kallis points out how these demolition initiatives were seen by Fascist leaders and planners as an 'act of repossession' of liberating the ancient Roman city-text from its surrounding, irregular vernacular building stock:

Mussolini's love for the monumental sacrificed large sections of vernacular architectural tissue. [...] For most of them [Fascist urban leaders and planners] *sventrare* was a liberating and eminently constructive act – in itself 'sacred', in itself constitutive of the 'new order' that was so central to the Fascist discourses of anthropological and cultural regeneration.²³⁵

Broadly sketched, this chapter looks at the city text which Pasolini superimposes on the city of Rome in his Roman prose. Reuben Rose-Redwood *et al.* describe a city text in the following terms 'as a particular geography of public memory, a city text represents not only a version of history but also commemorative priorities and hegemonic discourse of former periods'.²³⁶ I will develop some of the ideas raised above and bring in other critical voices to investigate how Pasolini's street boys manage to secure some form of material presence in a city which they inhabit conditionally. I consider how their journeys through the city in the opening chapters of *Ragazzi* initially feature selected loci of adventure which allow them to find accommodation within the city. The agency of the boys' counter-mapping practices means that the city's official map is subjugated and replaced by their unofficial one. The upshot of this exercise means that certain landmarks are afforded a level of recognition that they are denied in official representations of the

Berghahn, 2012), p. 34.

²³⁵ Aristotle Kallis, 'The "Third Rome" of Fascism: Demolitions and the Search for a New Urban Syntax', *Journal of Modern History*, 84(1), 2012, 40-79 (pp. 41-42).

²³⁶ Rose-Redwood et al, p. 460

city while some historic and symbolic sites are relegated to the background or even erased. While the boys' corporeal acts of resistance allow them to temporarily seep into places and find accommodation within them, these tactics result in only a temporary resolution. Their subsequent alienation from the city and the re-establishment of a new national order in post-war Rome breaks this symbiotic bond and allows the official map of the city to re-surface and to impose itself on its displaced citizens as Pasolini's Roman prose progresses. De Certeau recognizes that occupying permanency in space for ordinary practitioners is problematic:

[...] the map gradually wins out over this figure (the tour describers) [...]; it colonizes space; it eliminates little by little the pictorial figurations of the practices that produce it [...] [and becomes] a totalizing stage on which elements of diverse origin are brought together to form the tableau of a 'state' of geographical knowledge, [and] pushes away into its prehistory or into its posterity [...] the operations of which it is the result or the necessary condition. It remains alone on the stage. The tour describers have disappeared.²³⁷

The meticulous plotting of streets and much more linear itineraries undertaken by the boys through the city centre in *Ragazzi's* penultimate chapter and throughout *Una vita* not only reveal how Pasolini's displaced characters living in the city's edges begin to lose touch with their mother-city but also underscore the ambitions of the state to know about its subjects and to control their movements. The legibility of the city's urban plan in these later texts undoubtedly facilitates our access to the map of Rome but it also reminds us

²³⁷ De Certeau, p. 121.

that circulation and movement in the city are being constantly monitored by the state's extensive network of disciplinary techniques.

'I parlanti'

From his very earliest years Pasolini attached a great importance to precision in the presentation of the physical world. This scrupulous attention to detail emerges in the main corpus of his Friulian novels, short fiction and essay writing.²³⁸ In a series of reflections about his sense and understanding of place in Friuli written shortly before his arrival in Rome, Pasolini reveals how sensory impressions led him to structure his perception of his local territory.²³⁹ Half-way into one of these articles, entitled 'I parlanti', (1948) he confesses his childhood infatuation with atlases and how this passion subsequently prompted him as he grew older to cultivate an avid interest in Friuli's micro-geography. Originally written in the first person and published in a local daily under the title 'Valvasone', Pasolini subsequently opted to narrate his predilection for maps in the third person when he incorporated this short sketch into 'I parlanti'. The grammatical dislocation from the first to the third person suggests the author's desire to underscore the time that has passed between his childhood and the moment in which he writes:

Entrato nella prima strana giovinezza, la mania dell'Atlante si trasformò in una specie di romantica passione per il paesaggio, da cui nacquero le sue corse in bicicletta e le sue emozionanti scoperte. Una di queste prime

²³⁸ I am referring here to Pasolini's autobiographical novels *Atti impuri* (1982) and *Amado mio* (1982), on which he worked intermittently between 1946 and 1950. The first of these novels is set in Friuli while the storyline of the second novel begins in Friuli and subsequently shifts to Rome. Both texts were published posthumously in 1982 by Mondadori and edited by Concetta D'Angeli.

²³⁹ 'I parlanti' (1948), in *Romanzi e racconti* (1962-1975), vol. 2, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude (Milan: Mondadori, 1998), pp. 163-96. I have already used this essay in the first chapter of this thesis to underscore Pasolini's precocious and avid interest in maps and to show how, as a child, he used chromatic and olfactory associations to distinguish the various areas surrounding Casarsa delle Delizie, his mother's hometown in Friuli.

scoperte era stato Valvasone. [...] Entrato poi nel paese dalla porta di ponente, vicino al castello, dopo una cinquantina di metri si voltò di colpo, e vidi davanti a sé, grigio, nero, verde-smeraldo, il più casto paesaggio della terra. Il torrione, con la porta a sesto acuto, le case attigue coi loro portici a nicchie, e davanti, un prato verde cupo, nel cui centro un pozzetto ergeva i ricami della sua pietra lucida e dei suoi ferri battuti.²⁴⁰

Pasolini goes on to describe how the physiognomies and demeanor of the Friulian village's inhabitants actually mirror its physical configuration:²⁴¹

Il tipo valvasonese era bruno, di statura media e aitante, con la carnagione oliva, i capelli scuri, e tutto pervaso di una mollezza, un ritegno e una serietà dove traspirava l'aria nobile, da *città del silenzio*, del suo antico paese. I giovanotti, snelli, coi capelli alti e ben pettinati, avevano qualcosa di esotico, o di molto indigeno, nell'eleganza e nel calore dei loro gesti.²⁴²

The harmonious blend of the boys' familiar and exotic physical traits with this quaint and pristine setting enables us to appreciate how space for Pasolini has both indigenous and extraneous resonances. He perceives such diversity in positive terms: the boys' exotic features are assimilated by their physical environment and augment its allure as both a mythical and uncontaminated place. Friuli represents a fertile breeding ground which allows the author's personal fantasy and political dissidence to find articulate expression. Its marginalization and its inhabitants' exotic features lend themselves to the excesses of

²⁴⁰ This short article was first published in the daily, *Il Mattino del popolo*, in 1947 and subsequently re-published in 1993. See 'Valvasone', in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Un paese di temporali e di primule*, ed. by Nico Naldini (Parma: Guanda, 1993), pp. 222-25 (p. 222).

²⁴¹ 'I parlanti', p. 187.

²⁴² While Pasolini does not explicitly state here that these inhabitants' physiognomies have been shaped by their local environment, this point does emerge from his observations about the relationship between another Friulian village, San Floreano, and its inhabitants.

Pasolini's imagination and enable him to project a self-confessed romanticism formed in childhood onto these surroundings and to express his resistance to Italy's post-war Western acculturation through Friuli's sense of otherness. A close reading of other sections of 'I parlanti' provides insights into how Pasolini parceled his Friulian world up into manageable segments; to these he attributed highly subjective and at times arbitrary evaluations which were primarily based on his degree of familiarity and perception of a given place and its resistance, albeit passive, to conventional standards and expectations. Pasolini's relationship with different Friulian towns and villages was, therefore, strongly influenced by how much a setting lends itself to his cherished values and predilections. As I will now proceed to show, Pasolini initially inscribes and creates specific locations in the city of Rome by following the criteria he had already adopted to map out places in his Friulian prose.

Casarsa dentro Roma?

The wording of this sub-heading, coined by Pasolini shortly after his arrival in Rome, confirms that references and allusions to Friulian landscapes in the author's early Roman prose were not simple adjuncts to a predominantly urban environment but stand rather as a testimony to the strong conflation of Friuli with Rome.²⁴³ The random succession of places and the inchoateness of the city's general layout in Pasolini's early Roman prose is also arguably due to the city's overwhelming array of visual, olfactory and acoustic stimuli. The sensory perceptions which had been instrumental in enabling Pasolini to immerse himself in the corporeal and historical body of Friuli's landscape and to

²⁴³ Pasolini confesses in a letter to his friend, Silvana Mauri, that he wants to settle down in Rome 'Credo dunque che resterò a Roma – questa nuova Casarsa - [...] Ho riletto quello che ti ho scritto finora e ne sono molto scontento [...] Altre frasi non dovrai prenderle alla lettera. Per es. "Roma, questa nuova Casarsa" è una frase che non deve farti cadere le braccia, anche se è un po' odiosa: c'è stata una Casarsa buona, ed è questa che io voglio riacquisire'. *Pier Paolo Pasolini, Lettere (1940-1954)* ed. by Nico Naldini, (Turin: Einaudi, 1986), vol. 1, p. 391-92.

articulate his encyclopedic knowledge of that world are challenged on a visit to a neighbouring Friulian townland. In a short article, ‘Topografia sentimentale del Friuli’ (1949), Pasolini acknowledges that his intimate knowledge of the linguistic traits of the Friulian communities’ inhabitants, and the way they are intermeshed with and moulded by the geomorphic shape of their local territories, was inadequate to encapsulate the configuration of the place. He confesses how this new location leaves him disarmed, almost terrorized:

La zona di questa pianura che ha per centro Casarsa e sul cui perimetro si collocano Spilimbergo, Domanins, Zoppola, Bannia, San Vito, Cordovado, Portogruaro e il Tagliamento, è ormai per me priva di misteri geografici; [...] Oltre a San Vito in direzione di Pravisdomini e di Chions, la cui scoperta io rimandavo da circa due lustri, la campagna presentava quel mutamento impercettibile, ma così significativo, che me la rendeva diversa, ‘altra’ da quella che mi è familiare. Qualcosa del litorale o della palude, qualcosa di troppo spazioso o di troppo recente, non aleggiava forse su quella pianura in verde smeraldo? Con una punta di terrore pensai alla foresta preromana e romanza. [...]. Quando giunsi a Villotta, che stupore! Era un paese fresco e nuovo, un paese della California costruito col gusto cimiteriale di cinquant’anni fa. Tesi l’orecchio: vi si parlava un dialetto che non era veneto benché ne avesse la vena saettante: era la maschera funebre del friulano.²⁴⁴

The sense of anxiety and astonishment which this Friulian town’s modern architecture engenders in the author’s imagination is palpable. Unlike other Friulian

²⁴⁴ ‘Topografia Sentimentale di Friuli’, in *Romanzi e racconti*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, vol. 1 (Mondadori: Milan, 1998), pp. 1346-450 (p. 1348).

landscapes which had successfully resisted the dominant ideology and values of Western culture, Villotta's architectonics actually endorse them. To appropriate and accommodate this unfamiliar and macabre landscape into his neatly mapped Friulian world, Pasolini likens this town to an American state. By confronting it with the status of an outsider and also by producing the connotation implicit in the American place name, he weaves this unfamiliar setting into his spatial world and allows it to become a familiar point of reference for him. A similar autoreferential mapping technique is deployed in the first of a collection of quasi socio-anthropological Roman essays, 'Squarci di notti romane' (1950):

Da Ponte Sisto all'Isola Tiberina si stende un pezzo di Tevere paesano: a sinistra il Ghetto che si mette a cantare improvvisamente, a gola spiegata, in Piazza delle Tartarughe, al Teatro Marcello, in Piazza Campitelli, a destra la foresta materna di Trastevere. Di qua gli orizzonti sono occupati dagli spazi asfaltati del mattatoio, dei Mercati Generali, e, in fondo, del San Paolo, domenicale e tirrenico, incallito nella leggera sporcizia: al di là va a finire in Monteverde, enorme deposito di un Arar eterno, tra muraglioni papali e ferrivecchi, fin che si arriva al Ponte Bianco, area di costruzione spalmata di croste e disgustoso ciarpame fuori uso; è di là che giungono nei lungoteveri civili gli odori più stupendamente afrodisiaci.²⁴⁵

To gain a purchase on this expansive terrain hugging the river Tiber, Pasolini choreographs each place's distinctive geographies. The southward movement of the synoptic overview catalogues the city into a condensed series of segmented constellations. The rural stretch from Ponte Sisto to the Tiber Island evinces how Pasolini

²⁴⁵ 'Squarci di notti romane', in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 2, pp. 329-61 (p. 330).

attempts to re-map a rural landscape onto an urban one. This not only confirms a strong continuity between his Friulian and early Roman works but more importantly reasserts his desire to project previously articulated utopian desires and values onto this new environment.²⁴⁶ The geographical referencing in this passage, however, not only foregrounds locations which are strongly reminiscent of Friulian ones but also focuses on Rome's heterogeneous cityscape. Each place is outfitted with idiosyncratic equations which supply a profusion of pointedly unrecognizable and arbitrary minutiae. The plentitude of local details creates a sense of the sites' familiar unfamiliarity and highlights their irreducible singularity. The analogue of the forest and Trastevere echoes this sense of different urban order and is akin to what Walter Benjamin describes in 'A Berlin Chronicle'. Benjamin reflects on how losing oneself in the city is rather like losing oneself in a forest: 'Not to find one's way in a city may well be uninteresting and banal [...] but to lose oneself in a city – as one loses oneself in a forest – that calls for quite a different schooling'.²⁴⁷ Robert Pogue Harrison observes how the forest is a place which promotes human inclusion within a greater network of kinship and goes on to underline the tension between cyclical and linear time which is associated with this place:

This unearthly openness of linear time within nature's closed cycle of generation and decay is what underlies, at the deepest level, the enduring hostility between the institutional order and the forests that lie at its

²⁴⁶ The scene in which a swallow drowns in the small Friulian lake of Pacher, in a short story written by Pasolini in Friuli but published in Rome under the title, 'La rondinella del Pacher' (1950), is also reproduced with some minor narrative changes along the river Tiber between Ponte Sisto and Ponte Garibaldi in both 'Il Ferrobedò' (1951) and in *Ragazzi*. Another aquatic scene along the Tiber in one of his earliest Roman short stories, 'La bibita' (1950), is also clearly in thrall to an almost identical setting along the Tagliamento river in Friuli in the author's Friulian novel *Amado mio*. See Giorgio Nisini, *L'unità impossibile* (Rome: Carocci, 2008), pp. 164-66. My chapter on place and water analyses these analogies in further detail.

²⁴⁷ Walter Benjamin, 'A Berlin Chronicle', in *One Way Street and Other Writings* (London: Verso, 1979), p. 298.

boundaries. Precisely because they lie beyond its horizon of linear time forests can easily confuse the psychology of orientation.²⁴⁸

By calling attention to certain features of Rome's built environment, these apparently arbitrary signifiers take on the function of describing various types of topographical nuances which emerge in modern Rome despite doing little to facilitate the reader's spatial orientation within the city.²⁴⁹ The association drawn between these places and rock, water and Etruscan sites underlines the city's deep ecological identity. At the same time, it reminds us of the ever-changing quality of the city's natural environment and introduces the concept of the denudation of the city centre's traditional urban housing stock and the displacement of many of its inhabitants to the city's peripheries.

Returning to my analysis about an apparent overlapping between Friulian and Roman landscapes, I would suggest that there has been a tendency to overemphasize the conflation with these landscapes in Pasolini's earliest Roman short fiction and to overlook the divergences which emerge in the way the texts map both locations. Rome's sprawling contours, and its complex architectural and physical configuration make it difficult for Pasolini as his writing progresses to re-apply the spatial schemata he had used in his Friulian writings to his early Roman ones. The vast expanse of ground covered both in the city centre and its outlying peripheries in his early Roman short fiction and the deliberately dispersive and haphazard mapping of the same mark a striking break with the representation of the author's Friulian micro-geographies. While the main body of Pasolini's Friulian prose reveals a clear sense of mapping and an intimate knowledge of

²⁴⁸ Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p.8.

²⁴⁹ The area of Monteverde is likened to an enormous repository of an eternal Harar in this account, while it subsequently becomes 'calcinante Monteverde' in *Ragazzi di vita*. See *Romanzi e Racconti*, p. 528; San Paolo is depicted as being festive and marine and it is subsequently presented as being Etruscan and fantastic in two other sections of this essay. 'Squarci di notti romane', pp. 330 and 360.

the local territory, the representation of the city which emerges in his early Roman short fiction is little more than an embryonic sketch, a crude skeleton outline based on a broad-brush presentation of an ever-expanding city. It also conveys the author's limited familiarity with the city and his initial sense of conceiving Rome as an entirety, without making a clear-cut distinction between its city centre and its peripheries. Moreover, the vast array of peripheral locations on both the city's eastern and western axes suggests that the author has not yet identified what part of the city he wants to map or how he intends to go about it. Neighbourhoods such as Monteverde Vecchio and Primavalle lying on the city's western and north-western axes and La Maranella and Via Casilina on its south-eastern one reflect the breadth and distance of his focus. In one of his first letters sent from Rome to a friend, Silvana Mauri, Pasolini evinces the newness of the city and his poor knowledge of its general layout:

mi sembra che tutto sia rimasto in Friuli, come il paesaggio. Roma si distende intorno a me, come anch'essa fosse disegnata nel vuoto, ma tuttavia ha un forte potere consolatorio; io mi immergo nei suoi rumori senza così sentire le mie note stonate.²⁵⁰

Contrary to his experience in Friuli, Pasolini is initially unable to map the blank expanses of Rome. He therefore resorts to the senses he had already used as a child – in particular the auditory and olfactory – to render the vastness of this space intelligible. Serenella Iovino observes that language was the first tool that Pasolini employed in order to get a firmer grasp of this new and very physical reality. She notes how:

In Rome, Pasolini's first approach was a linguistic one. Entering into a language was for him a creative reading of reality, a necessary operation to

²⁵⁰ *Pier Paolo Pasolini, Lettere (1940-1954)*, p. 400.

frame a ‘photograph’, a place in its socio-cultural language. Accordingly, the Roman dialect sank into the Darwinian dialect of the slums (Golino: 102), exactly as Friulian rose from the life of a rustic world. It was the shouted vitality of the subproletarian boys, the greatness of the past at one with the misery of the slums.²⁵¹

Pasolini’s approximate knowledge of the city’s spatial contours and the sensory cues he deployed to mark out these new spaces become apparent in his earliest Roman prose, which I will now examine.

Short Fiction and Essays

The texts examined in this part of my chapter are a collection of short fiction and quasi ethnographical essays, which Pasolini wrote in Rome between 1950 and 1951.²⁵² The confused sense of place in these stories’ protagonists’ inward and outward journeys within city and its surrounding peripheries mirror the shapelessness and incompleteness of Rome’s urban outlay. It also evinces the representational dilemma Pasolini faces in capturing the city’s essential and idealized character as well as its physical appearance. It becomes obvious that the constraints imposed by the short stories’ reduced format compel the author to streamline his sketches and focus his attention on a handful of sites. To get a sense of both the terms and stakes of this endeavour, it is instructive to consider how Pasolini distils and compresses his representation of Rome through selective mapping strategies. One of his earliest short fiction pieces, ‘Il palombo’, is a fitting example: its protagonist’s itinerary extends from Rome’s General Market in Testaccio to La Maranella, an outlying periphery in the city’s south-eastern fringes:

²⁵¹ Iovino, ‘Ashes of Italy’, pp. 77-78.

²⁵² Most of these short stories were published in this period in the format of *feuilletons* which appeared in Roman dailies, while the essays were first published in *Alì dagli occhi azzurri*.

Romolé entrò di corsa nei Mercati Generali. Pedalava forte, senza guardarsi intorno; [...] dopo dieci minuti lui, i merluzzi e il palombo erano fuori dai Mercati. Ripescò il palombo dal carretto, lo legò coi merluzzi alla sella [della sua bicicletta] e partì. Correva svelto, perché si sentiva contento. La mattina era già inoltrata, l'aria scottava e Testaccio era tutto in fervore. Dopo un quarto d'ora era alla Maranella [...]. Dopo una mezz'ora il palombo fu tutto venduto; Romolé diede una piotta al ragazzo che gli aveva prestato il tavolino e se la batté prendendo la strada di Trastevere.²⁵³

The concatenation of events in this story unfolds in places which are a considerable distance from each other. The deployment of elliptical editing techniques effaces all traces of transitional locations in Romolé's journey from the Mercati Generali, just minutes from the city centre, to the peripheral market, at La Maranella.²⁵⁴ This makes it difficult for the reader to have a sense of orientation or to create a mentally coherent plan of the city. The absence of a cleavage between centre and periphery means that no differentiation emerges between these topographical disjunctions and that a clear image of the city's morphology remains elusive. Moreover, by condensing the distance involved, Pasolini disguises the fact that communication between both locations was actually not quite as neat as it might seem.

This miniaturized mapping of the city as a seamless continuum also emerges in 'La passione del fusajaro'. In this short story we see how its protagonist, Il Morbidone, frees himself from the anxieties of poverty by embarking on an illusory journey, covering several locations as he dreams about a blue jersey he has seen in Campo dei Fiori. Sites

²⁵³ 'Il palombo', in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1, pp. 802-05 (pp. 802, 805).

²⁵⁴ Piazza della Maranella is strategically placed at the intersection of two roads, Via dell'Acqua Bullicante, running eastwards and connecting it with Via Prenestina, and Via di Torpignattara, running westwards connecting with the neighbourhood of Torpignattara.

in this vignette are not chosen to enable the reader to navigate the city but to corroborate the veracity of the author's objective reportage and/or to augment its symbolic meaning. Locations are interwoven with the story's themes not only to provide a marginalized backdrop which demonstrates the author's political and social dissidence against the city's burgeoning social hegemony but also to bolster some of his first ethnographical observations about the city. As a function of miniaturization, certain key locations are invested with totemic importance while many of the interlocking locations along its protagonist's route remain effaced. The conjunction between the renowned commercial venue of Campo dei Fiori and the tangible sense of illusion its merchandise generates in the story's protagonist underlines how the city centre's commercial allure exercises a powerful centripetal influence on its protagonist's geographical itinerary. It also enables the author to foreground the ramifications which the city centre's new consumer culture can have even for its poorest inhabitants:

Il Morbidone stava a guardare le vetrine semibuie, come una camera alla mattina presto, [...]. Ma, ad un tratto, che splendore! [...]. Il Morbidone si era incantato a osservare il capolavoro di Campo dei Fiori [...]. Ritornò a contemplarlo. Era davvero una meraviglia. 'Ammazzalo,' mormorava tra sé il Morbidone, 'c'ha proprio le sette bellezze'.²⁵⁵

The story's focus is not only restricted to Campo dei Fiori but actually covers several peripheral (il Trionfale, il Gianicolo, Donna Olimpia) and seaside (Ostia) locations. The lack of topographical connectedness of Il Morbidone's self-absorbed and at times imaginary itinerary and his relentless desire to purchase the jersey in question serves not only to reinforce Campo dei Fiori as the text's anchor point but, more importantly, allows

²⁵⁵ La passione del fusajaro', in *Romanzi e racconti*, pp. 806-09 (pp. 806-07).

it to become a synecdoche for how the city is gradually changing into an arena of consumption. The protagonist's exploratory path introduces us to some of Rome's recently built peripheries even though their geographical dispersal prevents us from getting any sense of their physical configuration on the city's map. What emerges from the idiosyncratic and subjective nature of Il Morbidone's aimless meanderings through the city is a deliberately sketchy version of Rome that compromises its decipherability.

A more discerning evaluation of Rome's peripheral outline emerges in 'Domenica al Collina Volpi' (1951). The story unfolds on a football pitch in Collina Volpi, in the vicinity of San Paolo. Although the city's general layout continues to remain elusive, a sense of place emerges through the juxtaposition of both teams' identities: 'I monteverdini' have travelled from Monteverde while 'quelli di Collina Volpi' play on home ground. The rivalry between the two teams enables the players' visceral attachment to their local communities to surface. The perceptible difference between these two places and references to San Paolo, the city of Rome and to the area's adjoining housing projects allow a specificity of space to emerge. The more linear connection between the places represented in this text along with a careful balance of topographical details present Collina Volpi as a circumscribed, rather quaint, peripheral place, not unlike some of the rural villages which punctuate Pasolini's Friulian narrative. The parceling of Roman peripheries into distinctive segments enables the author to tap into their potential uniqueness without resorting to previously articulated notions of marginalization or exoticness synonymous with his Friulian prose: 'Dietro di lui [Giannino], oltre il recinto del campo, il quartiere di San Paolo biancheggiava scottato dal sole. Da una radio del Ricreatorio della Collina Volpi si sentiva cantare Messa'.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁶ 'Domenica al Collina Volpi', in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1, pp. 1412-415 (p. 1414). This story was first published in the daily *Il popolo*, in January 1951.

This shift marks a breakthrough in Pasolini's representation of Rome and its peripheries. The explicit references to the city's peripheries and their ongoing development is the first case in which a clear centre-periphery cleavage emerges and a sketch map of spatial relations and of the development of Rome's peripheries is drawn:

I ragazzi si spogliarono all'aperto presso il recinto del campo, sospeso come una terrazza sui quartieri e le aree di costruzioni coi ciuffi di pini. [...] Dopo un quarto d'ora erano rimasti sul Collina Volpi solo i ventidue maschietti, che stridevano insultandosi contro il silenzio delle periferie e del cielo storditi dal sole meridiano.²⁵⁷

The term 'periferie' is not an arbitrary one. It was these peripheral neighbourhoods, commonly known as *borgate* and originally made up of little more than a series of the fragmented housing projects, which would capture Pasolini's attention from 1951 onwards.

La foresta materna di Trastevere

While the mapping of Rome's sprawling peripheries in Pasolini's early Roman prose at times confounds representation, this does not hold true for some of the city's more central locations. Landmarks such as monuments and other important spatial markers highlight the sense of identity and attachment that these areas' inhabitants, albeit subconsciously, forge with their local communities. The combination of a prestigious medieval church, narrow alleyways and cinemas in the first Roman short story to be published by Pasolini in Rome, 'Ragazzo e Trastevere', illustrates these deep and natural ties to locality. At the beginning of this miniature sketch Pasolini attempts to link his

²⁵⁷ 'Domenica al Collina Volpi', pp. 1412, 1415.

protagonist to a specific street in Trastevere while in its epilogue he concedes that such a proposition is pointless as a proper understanding of his protagonist's life can only be achieved by separating him from his local environment: 'Il ragazzo che vende le castagne in fondo a Via Garibaldi si è messo di impegno [...]. Allora (dove immaginarlo? In Via della Paglia? In qualche viale rionale cupamente profumato di primavera?)'.²⁵⁸

Pasolini qualifies this statement, however, claiming that if we observe the convenience of the network of places which are available to the boy we can actually understand his larger relational structure. We can, therefore, only discover his real identity through the places he inhabits and by the way he uses and interacts with them:

Pazienza, Roma non lo interessa. Il suo *baedeker* è pericoloso come una pistola. Indica in Trastevere non certo Santa Maria con le bolse figure del Cavallini, ma, per ipotesi, i cinque maschi che iersera se ne stavano all'incrocio di Via della Scala con Via Lungara, [...]. Che cos'altro può esser contenuto in quel feroce *baedeker* che ha ridotto Roma a un'ossessione di Roma? [...] La porzione utilitaria del Tevere ... l'itinerario utilitario del rione ... Ah, il venditore di castagne ne sa qualcosa; ne sa qualcosa, ma resterà muta come una tomba. Per comunicare la topografia della sua vita, dovrebbe non farne parte: ma dove finisce Trastevere e dove comincia il ragazzo?²⁵⁹

In thrall to his Friulian prose, Pasolini's map of Trastevere is primarily constructed through the chestnut seller's body. Much like the Friulian boys' visceral link with their villages' physical environment, this story's protagonist is strongly at one with Trastevere. The story shows how this young man is in the process of being constituted by his

²⁵⁸ 'Ragazzo e Trastevere', in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1, pp. 1383-386 (p. 1383).

²⁵⁹ 'Ragazzo e Trastevere', p. 1385.

surroundings.²⁶⁰ This chimes with Stacy Aliamo's concept of the transcorporeal body, which she defines as a relationship 'in which the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world'.²⁶¹

The boy's 'anti-Baedeker' is perhaps the earliest example of Pasolini's endeavours to counter-map Rome by underlining this character's indifference towards some of this neighbourhood's most important and iconographic landmarks. A small but important difference emerges, therefore, between these boys and their environments: while the Friulian boys' bodies and ethics are inextricably bound and moulded by the totality of their local environment, those of the Roman boy are only shaped by certain layers of his one. Trastevere, therefore, provides the author with a template on which he experiments and at times grafts some already articulated notions of space and mapping strategies onto this Roman landscape and yet also evinces his readiness to distinguish the differences subtending both contexts. A passage from 'Notte sull'Es', one of a collection of essays written by Pasolini about Rome, reveals even more clearly the bonds between Trastevere's sedimented past and its inhabitants. The storyline is primarily set and organized around Trastevere:

I sassi, le pietre, i tetti, i selciati, il tufo, i cornicioni, gli intonaci, si sono fusi in una sola corteccia, che è la corteccia di un'architettura fissa da secoli, su quello stesso posto, con quelle svolte, quegli spigoli, quelle pareti e prospettive, in modo da aver sostituito una natura campestre di cui è andata interamente perduta la memoria – si sono sfusi nell'aspetto puro della città

²⁶⁰ I will consider this promiscuous mixing of bodies and space in more detail in my chapter on bodies and space.

²⁶¹ Stacy Aliamo, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2010), p. 2.

(della città assoluta che è Trastevere).²⁶²

The deployment of a synecdoche in this passage's opening line reveals how Pasolini selects certain parts of Trastevere's physical architecture which 'replaces totalities by fragments (a less in the place of more). [...] Synecdoche makes more dense: it amplifies the detail and miniaturizes the whole'.²⁶³ The labour of construction here figures as an analogue for writing the city while the patchwork of raw materials become synonymous with Trastevere's proliferating narratives. The absence of linking words underscores Trastevere's essential qualities and showcase it as the embodiment of irreducible singularity. Sealed off from the rest of the city by the river Tiber, the neighbourhood remained safe from outside intruders over the centuries and yet its geographic proximity to the city's centre meant that it has always been at the centre of things. The merging of its rooftops, plastered walls and detailed stonemasonry are synonymous with this community's social collectivity.²⁶⁴ Its porous and forceful architectural configuration, underpinned by a honeycomb of streets and alleyways, both shape and mirror its inhabitants' identity and sociality. Social practices and architecture coalesce with the result that outside and inside, public and private, bleed into one another. The characters' identities are moulded by the streets in which they live, and their interests are confined to their street corners.²⁶⁵

²⁶² 'Notte sull'Es', in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 2, pp. 395-411 (p. 404).

²⁶³ De Certeau, p. 101.

²⁶⁴ Just as the inhabitants of Friuli's villages were described as descending from a few of its oldest families, Trastevere's inhabitants' collective spirit plausibly also derives from similar models of kinship. 'Notte sull'Es', pp. 402-03.

²⁶⁵ Several examples of stock characters whose lineage has been imprinted onto them by the streets and squares of Trastevere can be found in the short fiction 'Terracina', and the opening chapters of *Ragazzi*. Some of these include 'Nadia, che abitava dietro Piazza Mastai', 'Ercoletto del vicolo del Cinque', and 'lo stracciarolo del vicolo del Cinque'. My chapter on place names argues that the naming dynamics associated with Pasolini's city centre's stock characters are actually deployed to reinforce their identity.

While the mapping of Trastevere's micro-geographies in 'Ragazzo e Trastevere' and the early passages of 'Notte sull'Es' privilege the neighbourhood's opaque and pre-modern configuration, Pasolini is also eager as the essay unfolds to showcase its eclectic architectural styles. His lens gradually swings away from Trastevere's congested medieval alleyways skirting the Tiber's embankments at one end to present a nineteenth-century square at its opposite extreme. This square stands as a testimony to one of the most socially progressive chapters in the city's history.²⁶⁶

I muri, così pieni di dignità più ducale, settentrionale (si direbbe modenese o parmigiana) di Piazza Mastai, risuonano accaldati e puri delle note 'offensive' della canzonetta folle di odiernità. Ne bruciano i marciapiedi negli angoli in ombra o sotto le porte a vetri delle pizzerie.²⁶⁷

This promiscuous mix of architectural styles reveals how the neighbourhood's histories overlap with each other and fashion its urban space. These variegated topographies and accretions are homage to how different social interest groups have projected their values onto Trastevere's physical landscape over the centuries and attest to what Kieran Keohane has referred to as a plethora of antagonistic powers jostling for prominence.²⁶⁸ Having carefully traced the architectural legacy of yesteryear hegemonies, the author's attention switches, in the second part of the essay, to the city's peripheries. The story's protagonist, Rafele, sets off on centrifugal tram ride which commences in

²⁶⁶ Piazza Mastai stands as a symbol to the major architectural overhaul and social initiatives launched by Pope Pius IX in Trastevere in the 1850s and 1860s. These included the building of Piazza Mastai; a railway line where the current flea market, Porta Portese takes place; and hospitals, schools and a reformatory. See Carlo Maria Travaglini, Keti Lelo and Carla Mazzarelli, *Trastevere, società e trasformazione urbana dall'Ottocento all'oggi* (Rome: Croma, 2007).

²⁶⁷ 'Notte sull'Es', p. 399.

²⁶⁸ Keohane, 'Review of Yvonne Whelan's *Reinventing Modern Dublin*', p. 103.

Trastevere and rattles round the back of the city passing San Saba, San Giovanni and Porta Maggiore and subsequently heads out towards the city's peripheries:

Comincia la Roma non-Trastevere. [...] Intensificarsi della 'romanità' dopo i quartieri di San Saba ecc. [...]. Dalle accorate, maestose espansioni di San Giovanni, alla leggera penombra che avvolge sempre Porta Maggiore, con le sue muraglie grigie, merlate, accagliate nell'aria che profuma di secoli e di periferia. Infatti da lì partono la Casilina, la Prenestina, verso le borgate.²⁶⁹

The topographical specificity of the tram's itinerary is the first time in which a careful balance of Roman landmarks emerges. This linear plotting technique anticipates a method which Pasolini will use more extensively in *Ragazzi*'s later chapters and in *Una vita*. Even readers who are unacquainted with Rome's general layout can perceive a sense of the city's expanding contours and its intermingled geographies. This switch of location once again points to a turning point in Pasolini's narrative: his focus on these new locations and their inhabitants allows a greater distinction to emerge between the city centre and its outlying peripheries.

Ragazzi di vita

Ragazzi begins in Donna Olimpia, in the west of Rome, where its protagonist, Riccetto, and his companions live in slum accommodation. After a series of passages which over-satiate the reader with a litany of details about Donna Olimpia's topographies, we suddenly discover that we are being moved on and plunged into the city centre. This abrupt move from the geographic unfamiliarity of a peripheral Roman neighbourhood to

²⁶⁹ 'Notte sull'Es', p. 408.

the legibility of its city centre surreptitiously eschews several interlocking stages of the boys' journeys. The effacement of these transitional passages reveals how the narrator only represents the parts of city which are inscribed on his characters' mental map of Rome. The boys' spatial practices of resistance contest the city's conventional and dominant cartographies and enable them to rewrite their own city text. Their detours warp the city's topography and complicate its representation:

Ponte Garibaldi, quando il Ricetto e Marcello c'arrivarono zompano giù dai respingenti, era tutto vuoto sotto il sole africano: però sotto i suoi piloni, il Ciriola formicolava di bagnanti. Il Ricetto e Marcello, soli in tutto il ponte, con la scucchia sulla spalletta di ferro arroventato, si stettero per un pezzo a guardare i fumaroli [...]. Poi dopo aver litigato un po' sull'itinerario, si riattaccarono al vecchio tram mezzo vuoto che scricchiolando e raschiando andava verso San Paolo. Alla stazione di Ostia si fermarono camminando a pecorone tra i tavolini dei bar, presso il giornalaio e le bancarelle o tra le passarelle della biglietteria a raccogliere un po' di mozzoni. Ma già s'erano stufati; il caldo faceva mancare il respiro, e guai se non ci fosse stato quel po' di arietta che veniva dal mare. [...] Dietro il Parco Paolino e la facciata d'oro di San Paolo il Tevere scorreva al di là di un grande argine pieno di cartelloni.²⁷⁰

The way the boys navigate the city allows us to appreciate how they cognitively map out their version of Rome: despite their intersection on route with wider forms of urban sociability, their itineraries remain hermetically sealed off from all forms of external sites and space which have no use value for them.²⁷¹ Their chameleon-like qualities and

²⁷⁰ *Ragazzi di vita*, in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1, pp. 523-767 (p. 530).

²⁷¹ Fredric Jameson has drawn on the urban theory of the planner Kevin Lynch to formulate his

cognitive knowledge of the city centre enable them to negotiate its urban space and to establish alternative sites of sociability. The boys' intimate local knowledge and their strong sense of orientation in the city underlines their integral bond with the city's ecosystem. These informal maps are akin to what Perry W. Thorndyke and Barbara Hayes-Roth term 'an individual's cognitive map' or 'the procedural knowledge of the environment' that a person acquires from navigating through the city.²⁷² While this elliptical editing strategy withholds a series of topographic details from us, it evinces how Pasolini deliberately discards certain topographical details of the city's map in order to enable the boys' version of Rome to emerge with greater clarity. By taking shortcuts and by passing some of the city's central monuments, the boys defy the logic established by urban planners and essentially re-map their city.²⁷³ The focus is on an opaque, partial and horizontal view, centring on the position of the characters in the city, rather than on a transparent, panoramic view of the city. Even though readers are exposed to a great deal of Rome's traditional landscape, many of its landmarks remain invisible. A background glimpse of a drab and claustrophobically enclosed St Peter's Basilica leaning over the Tiber's western bank is recorded by the narrator to metonymically link the reader to Rome but its prominence is dwarfed by the bustling movement, colour and noise emerging from the bathing station on the river's eastern bank, where local and non-local street boys of different religious dominations gather:

conception of cognitive mapping. I am reluctant here to adopt Jameson's ideas as he is writing primarily about postmodern cities. Jameson sees these cities as microcosms of much larger global networks which extend the individual's attempt to grasp the conditions of his/her displacement within urban space to the unimaginable totality of social structures. See Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), p. 416.

²⁷² Perry W. Thorndyke and Barbara Hayes Roth, 'Differences in Spatial Knowledge Acquired from Maps and Navigation', *Cognitive Psychology*, 14, 1982, 560-89 (p. 563).

²⁷³ Another excellent example of how the boys' persistent alternative movements defy the logic established by urban planners is detailed in their night-time cross-country journey from Donna Olimpia to Trastevere. See *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 534.

Dal Cupolone, dietro Ponte Sisto, all'Isola Tiberina dietro Ponte Garibaldi, l'aria era tesa come la pelle d'un tamburo. [...] I primi a arrivare, [...] furono i riccioloni di piazza Giudia. Poi vennero i trasteverini, giù da Ponte Sisto, in lunghe file, mezzi ignude, urlando e ridendo, sempre in campana per menare qualcuno. Il Ciriola si empì, fuori, sulla spiaggetta sporca e, dentro, negli spogliatoi, nel bare, nello zatterone. Era un verminaio. Due dozzine di ragazzi stavano radunati intorno al trampolino. Due dozzine di ragazzi stavano radunati intorno al trampolino. Cominciavano i primi caposotti, i pennelli, i caprioli.²⁷⁴

The incongruity between both locations could not be greater. The privileging of such marginal sites of sociability over some of the city's most iconic sites not only flies in the face of the Fascist *sventramenti* (1926-1932), which had the aim of cleansing the city of its underbelly and clearing its landscape of the dense and ancient housing stock in which this underclass lived, but also serves as a setting from which Pasolini, albeit momentarily, maps out an environment which stands beyond the reach of any conventional social project and allows the possibility of alternative reconfigurations of identity which are open, changeable and reworkable.²⁷⁵

De Certeau's observations about walking as a spatial and social practice which enables a city's 'ordinary practitioners' to render certain places invisible while bringing others into sharp relief have particular resonances here. His notion of the walker as a marginalized figure with the ability to transform loci of constraint into sites of possible adventure is a useful way of conceptualizing how Pasolini's Roman boys carve out spaces

²⁷⁴ *Ragazzi di vita*, pp. 536-37.

²⁷⁵ It is worth bearing in mind that this site of resistance not only stands in direct contrast to Rome's religious and political establishment, but that its heterogeneous makeup of different religious denominations makes it a symbolic locus invested with ecumenical importance.

for themselves within the city. Rebecca Solnit describes ‘the sense of place that can only be gained on foot’, pointing to the walker’s embodied contact with the material.²⁷⁶ She elsewhere observes:

Walking claims land not by circumscribing it and fencing it off as property but by moving across it in a line that however long or short connects it to a larger journey of one’s life, [...] that makes it part of the web of experience, confirmed by every foot that touches the earth.²⁷⁷

The spatial trajectories traced by the boys and the sites of sociability in which they gather give the city new meaning. They achieve this without contesting the normative spatial practices of the city but, rather, by finding accommodation within them. These geographies cohere around an understanding of spatial practices of everyday life which enable them to forge and articulate their identity in the city. De Certeau cites the example of the city street which has been planned by urban authorities in a geometrical fashion but is subsequently re-shaped and ‘transformed by walkers’ in much the same way as the act of reading. Taking his cue from J.F. Augoyard, he likens walking to the *asyndeton*, a figure of speech which suppresses linking words such as conjunctions and adverbs:

In the same way, [as an asyndeton] [...] walking [...] selects and fragments the space traversed; it skips over links and whole parts that it omits. From this point of view, every walk constantly leaps, or skips like a child, hopping on one foot. It practices the ellipsis of conjunctive *loci*. [...] Asyndeton, by elision, creates a ‘less’, opens gaps in the spatial continuum, and retains only

²⁷⁶ Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (New York: Penguin, 2000), p. 9.

²⁷⁷ Rebecca Solnit, *Savage Dreams: A Journey into the Landscape of Wars of the American West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 20.

selected parts of it that amount to relics.²⁷⁸

Walking the streets of Rome not only enables the boys to ease their way around the city and appropriate micro-parts of a hostile macro-territory but also to discern which places are actually of interest to them. By insinuating themselves into another's place, fragmentarily and conditionally, they make a selection or, in De Certeau's words, 'the user of a city picks out certain fragments of the statement in order to actualize them in secret'.²⁷⁹

Destabilizing Identity

Pasolini's continuing search for a popular Rome involves moving his narrative away from its historical centre to its peripheries. The boys' peripatetic journeys, predicated on spatial tactics and a cognitive knowledge of their city, enabled them to move around and to legitimate their presence in Rome's city centre.²⁸⁰ Their relationship with the city is put to the test, however, after the collapse of the primary school housing Riccetto's family in Donna Olimpia. A destitute Riccetto is then evacuated by city authorities from this neighbourhood and relocated in the far-flung eastern periphery of Ponte Mammolo. After a plodding but unsuccessful attempt to re-ensconce himself in the city centre, he ends up at an illegal card game in Pietralata; he later hops on the first bus which comes his way, which brings him to Prenestino, just beside La Maranella:

Passo, passo, morto di debolezza, il Riccetto arrivò sulla Prenestina e si mise a aspettare l'autobus del Quarticciolo. [...] 'E mo?' disse quando l'autobus vuoto lo depose al Prenestino. Si diede una guardata intorno, si tirò su i

²⁷⁸ De Certeau, p. 101

²⁷⁹ De Certeau, p. 98.

²⁸⁰ These tacitly constructed networks were also facilitated by the nebulous presence of institutions and authorities in war-torn Rome and by Donna Olimpia's proximity to the city centre.

calzoni, e vedendo che lì non c'era proprio niente da fare per lui, sbottò a cantare a voce alta filosoficamente.²⁸¹

The emotional geographies which predicated the boys' movements from one part of the city centre to another are completely missing here. The contrast between places in *Ragazzi's* opening chapters and Rome's far-flung *borgate* ground the novel's narrative of geopolitical displacement. Pasolini's map of Rome in *Ragazzi* continues to be shaped by its protagonist's perception of the city but no longer in the way that de Certeau defines it. Riccetto find himself in a Rome in which its urban dwellers wander from non-site to non-site, in a series of fragmented and cut-off peripheries which have yet to find their own self-image. The peripheral Rome chosen by Pasolini in *Ragazzi* becomes the embodiment of an alienated city, a space of unchecked sprawl in which people are unable to map (in their minds) either their own positions or the urban totality in which they find themselves. The city's illegibility is also complicated by these neighbourhoods' inchoateness. Riccetto's mapping of this new area is initially determined by his most primordial necessities. After a short stint at a merry-go-round at La Maranella, Riccetto and his newly befriended companion, Lenzetta, walk down Via dell'Acqua Bullicante to track down a prostitute who hangs out in surrounding fields:

Trovarono la Elina in mezzo alle ombre di cui era la regina, dietro ai praticelli lerci pieni di montarozzi per dove i tram facevano il giro, qualche stradetta tutta buche, in uno spiazzo dominato dalle immense ombre di due o tre grattacieli in costruzione, di dietro, e di fronte da uno già costruito, ma ancora senza strade o cortili davanti, abbandonato tra l'erbaccia e il

²⁸¹ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 612.

pattume.²⁸²

The bleak, abandoned spaces, uneasily highlighting the poverty and sense of alienation in the city's margins stand in stark contrast with the monumental presence of eclectic architecture which form the backdrop to many locations staged by Pasolini on city centre soil. Clearly, we are not among Rome's familiar landmarks or Trastevere's tortuous alleyways and medieval churches. It is indeed La Maranella's unpolished materiality and the absence of iconic Roman architecture which allow it to act as a portal to a much broader and more universal map: the representation of this poverty-stricken peripheral neighbourhood is not only about the unchecked growth of urban space in Rome but is also about broader, global histories of poverty and dispossession. While the political work of documenting this poverty hinges on its obeisance to the specificity of place, an important difference emerges in the mapping of Donna Olimpia at the novel's outset and of La Maranella. The profusion of local details deployed in Pasolini's sketch of Donna Olimpia is at pains to emphasise its local colour and quirks and is grounded on a local sense of belonging and an intense investment in place. The sense of isolation and desolateness which emerges in La Maranella has a function which goes beyond denoting this place as a mere location. This area serves as a historical marker of the shoddy real estate development underway in Rome's peripheries.

Pasolini shortly afterwards takes up this concern again when he returns to the desolate material reality of a neighbouring periphery, Il Mandrione, in an essay entitled 'I tuguri' (1958):

I tuguri sono covi di malattie, di violenza, di malavita, di prostituzione [...].

A Roma i villaggi di tuguri si contano a decine. [...] Il Mandrione è uno di

²⁸² *Ragazzi di vita*, pp. 618-19.

questi. In fondo alla Casilina, poco prima del Quadraro, c'è un acquedotto, sotto i cui archi passa la strada. [...] Contro il [suo] muraglione sono costruiti i tuguri, [...] non sono abitazioni umane, queste che si allineano sul fango: ma stabbi per animali, canili. Fatti di assi fradice, muriccioli scalcinati, bandoni, tela incerata. Per porta c'è spesso una vecchia tenda sudicia. Dalle finestrine alte un palmo, si vedono gli interni: due brandine, su cui dormono in cinque o sei, una seggiola, qualche barattolo. Il fango entra anche in casa.²⁸³

Should the earlier cited passage fail to convince on this point, then this account clearly signals the subject of public housing as centrally important to the novel's meaning. Pasolini's concern with this reality is seen in *Ragazzi* when a destitute and an almost immobilized Riccetto defers dealing with the problem of his accommodation and ends up sleeping rough with Lenzetta in a large rubbish container in Borgata Giordiani. His displacement forces him to re-calibrate his itineraries around La Maranella and its surrounding *borgate*. Such aimless meanderings and the absence of a clear fixed abode lead to his estrangement from society and ultimately to his imprisonment.

Dentro Roma: a Benign Apartheid

Pasolini's decision to return to some already established landmarks such as Campo dei Fiori, the Tiber embankments and Donna Olimpia in the novel's penultimate chapter is both diegetically and spatially textured. It becomes apparent that he is eager to underline the centripetal influence which the city centre continues to exert over the city's dispossessed *borgatari* and to expose the effects that some post war initiatives to re-establish public order in the city centre have had on the boys' version of the city. After

²⁸³ 'I tuguri', in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1, pp. 1463-66 (pp. 1464-465).

encountering a middle-aged homosexual near Campo dei Fiori, Riccetto and two companions seek out a more discreet meeting place along the Tiber embankments. We discover, however, that the long-established geographies of sexual transgression which had been enacted in this location and which are amply sketched in some essays in *Ali*, have recently been suppressed.²⁸⁴

Tra Ponte Sisto e Ponte Garibaldi, non passava più quasi nessuno, e il Riccetto invece si ricordava di quand'era ragazzino, subito dopo finita la guerra, quello che succedeva lì: lungo la spalletta, seduti come lui adesso, ce n'erano almeno venti, di giovincelli, pronto a vendersi al primo venuto; i frosci passavano a frotte [...]. Quella volta sì che si poteva scendere giù per la scaletta, e tra i puncicarelli pieni di fanga e di carte sporche, sotto Ponte Sisto o Ponte Garibaldi, fare tutto quello che si voleva senza paura.²⁸⁵

This micro-geography shows how the spatial reconfiguration of some of the city centre's landmark locations impacted on its disenfranchised dwellers in postwar Rome. While essentially public, this off-the-beaten-track urban niche had offered men the opportunity to forge worlds which were, effectively, private. The almost total absence of controls concerning such behaviour in war-torn Rome had by now been replaced by pervasive surveillance. Such operations performed an important ideological function. Central Rome was both the cradle of Catholicism and the seat of Italy's political capital. The imagined geography of postwar city life demanded modes of policing and surveillance which curbed the existence of such subterranean practices. The boys' ability to navigate the city without drawing attention to themselves is called into question by

²⁸⁴ The geography of the city is portrayed as a circulation of desire primarily around the Tiber embankments in the essays 'Squarci di notti romane' and 'Notte sull'ES'.

²⁸⁵ *Ragazzi di vita*, pp. 720-21.

these exclusionary geographies. Their once untrammelled access to the city and their previously acquired entitlement to traverse and inhabit it at their leisure are now denied to them. Riccetto, his companions and their pickup are, therefore, forced to seek refuge elsewhere. Riccetto resolves to leave the city centre and bring them to Donna Olimpia; on arrival, he has difficulty recognizing his childhood neighbourhood:

Scesero a Piazza Ottavilla, che quando Riccetto abitava da quelle parti era ancora quasi in campagna, voltarono giù a sinistra per una strada che prima non c'era o era soltanto un sentiero in mezzo a dei grandi prati con qua e là in discesa, come sui pendii d'una valletta, dei ciuffi di canne alte tre metri e dei salci: ma adesso c'erano dei palazzi già costruiti e abitati e dei cantieri.²⁸⁶

While his street boy companions entertain their admirer in a nearby cave, Riccetto attempts to come to terms with the radical architectonic changes which have been carried out in Donna Olimpia. He is initially unable to grasp the extent of the neighbourhood's development:

Da quand'erano crollate le Scuole il Riccetto non s'era più fatto vedere in quei paraggi: e quasi quasi faceva fatica a riconoscerli. C'era troppa pulizia, troppo ordine, il Riccetto non si capacitava più. La Ferrobedò, lì sotto, era uno specchio: con le ciminiere alte, [...] con gli spiazzini pieni di file ordinate di traverse accatastate alla perfezione, [...] con le file dei magazzini che, almeno dall'alto, parevano sale da ballo, tanto erano puliti, coi loro tetti rossicci tutti uguali in fila.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁶ *Ragazzi di vita*, pp. 721-22.

²⁸⁷ *Ragazzi di vita*, pp. 728-29.

The new sense of order and cleanliness which pervades Riccetto's childhood neighbourhood is immediately obvious. The proliferation of spatial details which had anchored us in Donna Olimpia at the novel's outset have been wrenched out of their peaceful equanimity of their singularity and plunged into a larger project of postwar urban development. The restoration of the iron factory, 'La Ferrobedò', which had been an emblem of Donna Olimpia's unkempt materiality and reified quotidian authenticity, reminds us how the permanence of a place is ephemeral. Pasolini's surplus of knowledge of this area and his strong investment in it transforms it from a pursuit of real locality into an exposure of its dissolution. Donna Olimpia's initial representation can be read as an unmoored place whose special markers can remain indeterminate as long as this neighbourhood is outside the city. The absorption of this tightly knit peripheral community into a drive towards homologation which was spreading its grip throughout Italian society signals how the many and composite places represented by Pasolini in his initial sketches of the city are now collapsing into one.

Una vita violenta

Una vita's narrative arc unfolds both in postwar Rome's city centre and its outlying *borgate*. The novel's more linear organization also contributes to representing Rome's spatial dimension in a more systematic way. Moreover, just as it is plausible to contend that background sometimes moves into foreground in Pasolini's mapping of Rome in *Ragazzi's* opening chapters, it is equally fair to claim that *Una vita's* more objective reportage allows a more coherent version of the city to emerge. The city's eastern peripheries of Pietralata, Tiburtino and Ponte Mammolo take centre stage in this novel

while the neighbourhoods of Garbatella and Tor Marancia, on the city's south-eastern fringes, become new additions to Pasolini's map of the city.²⁸⁸

The physical segregation of the city peripheries from its centre which gradually emerges but never fully comes to the fore in *Ragazzi* is perceptible from the outset in *Una vita*. The coterie of characters presented in the novel are consciously aware of their positioning on the city's map and their physical detachment from its centre. The two locations are clear opposites, with the consumerism and architectural prestige of central Rome contrasting with the desolate, neglected and at times bucolic landscapes of the *borgate*. The dearth of facilities in the rundown slum accommodation in which the novel's protagonist, Tommasino Puzzilli, lives means that he and his companions are constantly drawn back to the city centre. Much like their counterparts in *Ragazzi*, Tommasino and his companions are forced to negotiate and to recalibrate their itineraries through the city's streets. On a visit to the city, their familiarity with the configuration of the city's labyrinthine streets is put to the test when a small group of neo-Fascists stage a riot near the Pantheon. The protest is quickly quashed by the police but Tommasino and his friends find themselves in close proximity to the protestors and are forced to flee. The difficulty they encounter in taking refuge is palpable:

Le guardie arrivavano da due parti, da Via del Seminario e da Piazza della Minerva: così i missini che erano presi in mezzo, cominciarono a tagliare per gli altri vicoli che restavano. Alcuni furono acchiappati, una decina, altri si beccarono qualche tortorata in testa [...]. Tommasino, il Cagone, Lello

²⁸⁸ Some anchor points in *Ragazzi* such as 'Donna Olimpia' and 'Il Ciriola' disappear from *Una vita*'s topographical landscape, while other areas such as 'La Maranella' and 'Trastevere' become far less prominent. It becomes obvious that Pasolini's mapping of the city moves away from a highly idiosyncratic reading of the city whose primary aim is to tap into its localness and towards the question of how modern urban development and consumer capitalism were creating a culture of uniformity which was predicated on visibility and public order.

[...] correvano tutti allacciati, come vecchie iene, su per Via dei Crescenzi.
[...] Arrivarono a un bivio, tra Via Oberdan e Via del Teatro Valle: ne imboccarono a caso una, e furono a un altro bivietto. ‘Namo de qua’. ‘No, de là’. ‘No, de qua’ insomma si fermarono, sudati che gocciolavano come rubinetti spanati.²⁸⁹

The map that emerges, therefore, in *Una vita* emphasizes how irregular and incidental urban forms and people are increasingly seen as anomalies. Pasolini’s map begins to confront the complex and ever-changing relationship between Rome’s urban space and its institutional authorities. These more legible spaces reflect Foucault’s ideas on circulatory processes and the goals of modern surveillance:

This given [surveillance] will not be reconstructed to arrive at a point of perfection, as in a disciplinary town. It is simply a matter of maximizing the positive elements, from which one provides the best circulation and of minimizing what is risky and inconvenient like theft and disease *while knowing* that they will never be completely suppressed.²⁹⁰

The boys’ alienation in their peripheral housing project, ‘la Piccola Shangai’, close to the eastern periphery of Pietralata, evinces how the sovereignty of the city streets which had been temporarily and informally usurped by a cohort of characters in *Ragazzi*’s opening chapters has now been claimed back by the authorities. The boys’ itinerary in this relatively circumscribed space is not unidirectional and, perhaps more importantly, their presence within the city is not invisible. Tommasino and his cohorts are observers in the city, but they are also subject to observation. We find ourselves positioned in a

²⁸⁹ *Una vita violenta*, in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1, pp. 823-1193 (p. 866).

²⁹⁰ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 19 (emphasis in original).

different scopic regime to *Ragazzi*'s earliest chapters. Pasolini's representation of the city centre in *Una vita* becomes crystallized in more a painstakingly delineated, rationalized and legible map which links these places visually. Moving away from the opaqueness of some of the city's back alleys, Pasolini's focus is directed now to places which allow the city's organic unity to emerge. Shortly after being indirectly caught up in the neo-Fascist riot the boys resolve to go Trastevere:

Non andarono diretti a Trastevere per la strada di prima, ma alle larghe. Andarono a prendere la circolare a Ponte Vittorio, facendosi a sole e tacchi tutta Via del Governo Vecchio. Scesero poi a Ponte Garibaldi, e imboccarono il Viale del Re, dove, poco più su del cinema Esperia, c'era la pizzeria che dicevano.²⁹¹

The spatial linearity of this passage is immediately obvious. Its street layout not only endows the city with visual unity but also allows the idea of a panoptic city with new structures of control to emerge. The inclusion of Viale del Re in this sketch is also significant and remind us of how malleable places actually are.²⁹² Having been erased from *Ragazzi*'s itineraries the recuperation of this street reinforces Pasolini's map of Rome in his second novel as an identifiable and prescribed place.

Da Trastevere a Fiumicino

The boys' urban mobility, urban knowledge and urban agency are faced with the challenge of an endlessly sprawling city, new forms of social control and police surveillance. Residential segregation has distanced them from the city but it does not

²⁹¹ *Una vita violenta*, pp. 866-67.

²⁹² The building of this street in the late nineteenth century led to the destruction of a host of streets and alleyways and housing stock; these architectural changes connected at least a part of Trastevere with the rest of the city. See Travaglini, Lelo and Mazzarelli, *Trastevere, società e trasformazione urbana*.

mean that the city has become an alien territory for them. What it does mean, though, is that they are no longer part of the city and that they are excluded from participating in its social life or benefiting from its cohesive social fabric. This leads to a sense of powerlessness and a lost sense of belonging. The boys react to this sense of de-legitimization through violent acts. The most significant of these for our examination of Pasolini's mapping of Rome in *Una vita* concerns a joyride which Tommasino and his companions engage in. Much like the linearity of spatial trajectories outlined above the boys' journey through the city covers an immense terrain in which a vast array of topographical details from Rome's dense topographic layers emerge. This geometric representation of space is determined by a change in perception, a change in the way things are seen and by the amount of space that can be crossed in remarkably little time. The journey begins by taking some new and some already established sites into consideration:

[...] così attraversarono il piazzale di San Giovanni, e, cammina e cammina, arrivarono alla Via Casilina, al bivio di Torpignattara, davanti all'albergo dei Pellegrini Tedeschi. [...] Arrivarono al ponte sulla ferrovia, imboccarono gli archi di Piazza Lodi, rifurono a San Giovanni, tagliarono per Porta Metronia e la Passeggiata Archeologica, e dopo due minuti erano un'altra volta a Trastevere.²⁹³

This panorama uniformly emphasizes the geographic clarity of the city. The locations chosen here by Pasolini are not the neighbourhoods developed by distinct regimes to produce specific disciplinary effects on the city's ever sprawling environment. They are rather trajectories which have already been traversed albeit with less geographic

²⁹³ *Una vita violenta*, p. 872.

specificity. Speed enables the author to recuperate details he was forced to efface from his earlier narrative.²⁹⁴ While hegemonic struggles had provided an important backdrop against which to deconstruct and interpret the map of Rome, the city's transformation in post war society and its shift away from Fascism and nationalism, to transnationalism, consumerism and mass culture calls for new mapping strategies. The final destination of the boys' joyride enables us to appreciate this point more clearly. The boys' journey finishes in Fiumicino and then they return to Rome. While no apparent reference is ever made to the international airport which was being built at the time in which Pasolini was writing *Una vita violenta*, I believe that this choice of location may well have been premeditated. If the boundaries of the city have been, at least temporarily, eroded by the boys' motorization, the addition of a new airport to the extended urban fabric of the city points well beyond Rome's boundaries and indeed Italy's national borders to foster global simultaneity. Paul Virilio claims that what defines a city in the postmodern era is precisely the erosion of its physical boundaries. He argues that:

If the metropolis is still a place, a geographic site, it no longer has anything to do with classical opposition of city/country nor center/periphery [...]. While the suburbs contributed to this dissolution, in fact the intramural-extramural opposition collapsed with the transport revolution and the development of communication and communication technologies.²⁹⁵

²⁹⁴ I am referring here, in particular, to the journey of the fish vendor, Romolé, which extends from I Mercati Generali near Testaccio to La Maranella, just a stone's throw from Torpignattara, and his return journey back to the city, and more specifically to Trastevere. As I argued at the beginning of this chapter, many neighbourhoods are deliberately effaced along this journey, which seems to anticipate Pasolini's predilection for filmmaking.

²⁹⁵ Paul Virilio, *The Lost Dimension*, trans. by Daniel Moshenberg (New York: Semiotext(e), 1991), p. 12.

This reading of Fiumicino as a location embedded with a primary global importance would arguably also explain why Pasolini chooses to stage much of *Una vita*'s narrative in places already amply sketched in his previous works. By moving the boys' journey from a place like Trastevere, which had been associated with the city's most popular features, quirks and its natural world, to a location which opens Rome up to the world enables us to appreciate the breadth, the vision and the depth of engagement we encounter in Pasolini's Roman prose.

Conclusion

The explicit focus of this chapter on the mapping of Pasolini's Rome begins by illustrating the prominence that selective mapping and counter-mapping strategies have in bringing to light the author's fragmented versions of the city. Pasolini's map of the city is a practiced space contingent upon his male characters' situated experiences, fleeting interactions and fluid pedestrian trajectories. Rather than an absolute grid, the city initially emerges as a performative, partial and incomplete space. By exposing the city's fissures and heterogeneous complexities, Pasolini challenges the idea of an ordered and coherent city-text and invites us to explore the city's urban unconscious. His concern for what has been repressed or elided from the city's official map is presented as a series of metonymies which stand for an unstated and ungraspable whole. Pasolini recognizes, however, that the wrenching changes sweeping through post-war Rome undermine the germ of his more utopian, cyclical city-text and inevitably prompt him, in *Una vita*, to sketch a map of the city which is more linear and amenable to surveillance and control. As his fragmentary sketches gradually recede, new and faster circuits of movement and exchange emerge which facilitate the spread of capitalism and new levels of urban dispersal. Pasolini's critical mappings of this emergent wave of new spatial circulatory practices entails a shift of perspective which renders the city more legible to the reader

but less accessible to some of its most consummate and traditional practitioners belonging to its underclass. The planning, politics and life of the city which are captured in Pasolini's ever-changing maps of Rome makes an important contribution to our understanding of the city's development, its underclass and their changing social practices.

Bodies and Space in Pier Paolo Pasolini's Roman Prose

The Primacy of the Body

Pasolini was a vehement opponent of the positivist narrative which understood the march of modernity as progress from the backward to the advanced, from a pre-modern to a modern world. He viewed primitive social and cultural formations not as residual elements which needed to be contained, or eradicated, by modernity but as practices which needed to be engaged with and even to counterpoint modernity in order to offer alternative ways of living. The sense of belatedness, and at times also nostalgia, which permeates much of his Roman prose decries modern capitalism's desire to subsume such primitive practices rather than to exploit their possibilities. Writing just two years before his untimely and brutal death he explains, in an essay entitled 'Tetis' (1973), how he sees the body as being the most resonant metonym of the pre-modern world:

In un momento di profonda crisi culturale (gli ultimi anni Sessanta), che ha fatto (e fa) addirittura pensare alle fine della cultura - è che infatti si è ridotta, in concreto, allo scontro, a suo modo grandioso, di due sottoculture: quella della borghesia e quella della contestazione a essa - mi è sembrato che la sola realtà preservata fosse quella del corpo. Cioè, in pratica, la cultura mi è sembrata ridursi a una cultura del passato popolare e umanistico - in cui, appunto, la realtà fisica era protagonista, in quanto del tutto appartenente ancora all'uomo. Era in tale realtà fisica - il proprio corpo- che l'uomo viveva la propria cultura.²⁹⁶

²⁹⁶ 'Tetis', in *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude (Milan: Mondadori, 1999), pp. 257-64 (p. 260).

Pasolini's approach to the body and what the body means for pre-modern culture valorizes the body's material form as well as the culturally inscribed practices which animate it. Summarizing this argument in a subsequent passage from the same essay, Pasolini specifies how Italy's underclasses' pre-modern bodies and corporeal practices are the last remaining vestiges of reality: '[...] alle fine degli anni Sessanta l'Italia è passata all'epoca del Consumismo e della Sottocultura, perdendo così ogni realtà, la quale è sopravvissuta quasi unicamente nei corpi e precisamente nei corpi delle classi povere.'²⁹⁷

The existence of such subaltern social realms, created by Italy's particular historical circumstances, enabled Pasolini to explore the irrational elements and primordial drives underpinning the corporeal practices of local populations in a number of Italian regions. It comes as no surprise that Pasolini observes in a much earlier essay, entitled 'Poesia dialettale del novecento: Roma e Milano' (1952), how the absence of a historical consciousness and of the notion of change over time among Rome's under classes hermetically sealed them within their own universe:

'Ma mentre la sua [di Roma] storia entrava nella coscienza degli strati più elevati della popolazione, da una generazione all'altra, in quelli più bassi – l'aristocratico 'sottoproletariato' romano – si ripresentava nuova in ogni generazione e inattiva se non in un comune Inconscio, ma proprio per questo più fertile, più vera, più inconfondibile.'²⁹⁸

In a later essay, entitled 'Roma malandrina' (1957), Pasolini articulates his interest in gaining a more thorough understanding of the social codes and factionalism which

²⁹⁷ 'Tetis', p. 261.

²⁹⁸ 'Poesia dialettale del Novecento: Roma e Milano', in *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte*, Vol. 1, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude (Milan: Mondadori, 1999), pp. 770-802 (p. 771).

shape the psychological mindset and corporeal practices of different Roman communities and neighbourhoods:

Mi piacerebbe scrivere il codice d'onore o comportamento degli ebrei di Piazza Giudìa [...] Oppure mi piacerebbe scrivere il manuale del perfetto malandrino di Trastevere o di Borgo Panico, che sarebbe sicuramente il più rigido e convenzionale: con un certo margine, previsto, all'essere umano e a una certa affabilità aristocratica (c'è infatti un'aristocrazia della plebe), il codice di questi rioni forniti di tradizioni e di coscienza sarebbe in fondo il più retrivo. Basato sul narcisismo e sull'esibizionismo tipico della gioventù romana [...]²⁹⁹

He notes, however, in a series of articles published in a leading Italian broadsheet, *Corriere della sera*, shortly before his untimely death in 1975 that for the first time in history, Italy's sub-proletariat bodies have changed and become, through an ongoing process of homologation, like their middle-class counterparts' bodies:

C'è stata una certa illusione alcuni anni fa - [...] che la 'razza' umana - appunto attraverso la scienza medica e il miglior nutrimento- migliorasse: che i ragazzi fossero più forti, più alti ecc. Breve illusione. La nuova generazione è infinitamente più debole, brutta, triste, pallida, malata, di tutte le precedenti generazioni che si ricordino. Le cause di ciò sono molte [...] una di queste cause è la presenza, tra i giovani, di coloro che avrebbero dovuto morire: che sono in molti; in certi casi (Sud e classi povere) la percentuale è altissima. Tutti costoro o sono depressi o sono aggressivi: ma

²⁹⁹ 'Roma malandrina', in *Romanzi e racconti 1946-1962*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude (Milan: Mondadori, 1998) pp. 1444-447 (p. 1445).

sempre in modo o penoso o sgradevole.³⁰⁰

Bodies become a trope through which Pasolini offers what John David Rhodes defines as ‘an unremitting critique of contemporary Italy and the cultural, anthropological, intellectual and even bodily devastation wreaked on Italians by neo-capitalism (specifically the late capitalism of neoliberal economies in the West).’³⁰¹ They also become an important means of reading the contradictions in Pasolini’s own work. In another *elzeviro*, published two months later, Pasolini claims that bodies have been a misleading influence on him and his work and that they are no longer the measure of all things:

È vero: ma per qualche anno mi è stato possibile illudermi. [...] Ma oggi la degenerazione dei corpi e dei sessi ha assunto valore retroattivo. Se coloro che *allora* erano così e così, hanno potuto diventare *ora* così e così, vuol dire che lo erano già potenzialmente: quindi anche il loro modo di essere di *allora* è, dal presente, svalutato. I giovani ed i ragazzi del sottoproletariato romano [...] se *ora* sono immondizia umana, vuol dire che anche *allora* potenzialmente lo erano: erano quindi degli imbecilli costretti a essere adorabili, degli squallidi criminali costretti a essere dei simpatici malandrini, dei vili inetti costretti ad essere santamente innocenti, ecc. ecc. Il crollo del presente implica anche il crollo del passato. La vita è un mucchio di insignificanti e ironiche rovine.³⁰²

³⁰⁰ ‘Vivono, ma dovrebbero essere morti’, in *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, pp. 587-89 (p. 589).

³⁰¹ John David Rhodes, ‘Watchable Bodies: *Salò*’s Young Non-Actors’, *Screen*, 53(4) 2012, 453-58 (p. 458).

³⁰² ‘Abiura dalla “Trilogia della vita”’, in *Saggi sulla politica sulla società*, pp. 599-603 (p. 601).

This rather dramatic change in position may be explained through a crisis in Pasolini's work. Walter Siti has described this crisis in the following terms:

Ma c'è una data che rappresenta una soglia di non-ritorno, un crinale oltre il quale niente è più come prima. [...] Questa data è il 1965, o forse meglio il periodo compreso fra il 1964 e il 1965. Fino quel momento nel sistema pasoliniano (nonostante tutte le crisi, o magari grazie ad esse) il rapporto tra Poeta e mondo aveva mantenuto una buona differenza di potenziale: il Poeta esprimeva la realtà. Gli uomini la vivevano in purezza - c'era una complementarità tra Poeta e umili che si reggeva sul riconoscimento delle rispettive identità e sull'identificazione di un comune nemico.³⁰³

While Siti's observation about a crisis in Pasolini's work is convincing, I think that we also need to remember that part of Pasolini's interest in the boys' bodies had erotic origins. Giovanni Dall'Orto claims that Pasolini's attraction is fuelled by the fact that the boys belong to another world:

Nel ragazzo del popolo l'omosessuale/Pasolini cerca doti particolari: egli chiede ai suoi partner di essere solari, lineari, aperti, spontanei, almeno quanto la sua sessualità è scura, tortuosa, tenebrosa. La ricerca del 'diverso da sé', anzi, addirittura dell' 'opposto a sé', nel ragazzo proletario, esclude la possibilità di trovare un soddisfacente oggetto erotico in ragazzi di altre classi sociali, o in persone della propria età. Una limitazione a prima vista bizzarra, ma che in realtà ha motivazioni profonde. Pasolini appartiene

³⁰³ Walter Siti, 'L'opera rimasta sola', in *Pier Paolo Pasolini, Tutte le poesie*, vol. 2 (Milan: Mondadori, 2003), p. 1931.

infatti a quella categoria di omosessuale che, per sperimentare i sentimenti proibiti dalla morale borghese, hanno bisogno di ritrovarli in persone appartenenti a un mondo ‘altro’ rispetto a loro.³⁰⁴

Taking account of Dall’Orto’s observations it seems plausible to argue, therefore, that Pasolini’s disillusionment with bodies is primarily motivated by these bodies’ subsumption into a neo-capitalistic model that Rhodes refers to above.

This chapter begins by examining the way Pasolini interprets the modes of sociality and bodily practice of Rome’s alienated under classes in his Roman prose and how their material manifestations—walking, noise, laughter, habits of consumption and defecation, utterances—typify their emotional lability and unruliness. The grain of their non-modern corporeal practices is engendered by a condition of a life-in-common, rehearsed primarily on the street. I consider how such practices initially enabled Pasolini’s street boys to transgress and live on in places of modernity. I consider how the homogenizing drive of capitalism and the complex differentiation of spheres which shape capitalism’s existence and relocation of Pasolini’s narrative in the city’s peripheries ultimately seal the breakdown of way of life—the boys’ way of life in the city centre—and led to the gradual erosion of their corporeal practices.

My chapter examines how Pasolini represents, and even valorizes, the corporeal practices of the lowest stratum of Roman society. I consider the primary role that these characters’ non-modern bodies have in enabling Pasolini to cultivate a utopian environmental imagination in his early Roman prose. I show how porosity nurtures and cultivates a symbiotic relationship between the boys and the nonhuman world. It goes on to look at how these porous bodies’ impulsiveness and undisciplined and leaky orifices

³⁰⁴ Giovanni Dall’Orto, ‘Contro Pasolini’, *Desiderio di Pasolini: Omosessualità, arte e impegno intellettuale*, ed. by Stefano Casi (Turin: Sonda, 1990), pp. 149-182 (p. 167).

expose their vulnerability and penetrability. I show how Pasolini's emphasis on some characters' corporeal fissures and orifices initially shores up these boys' unruly and amorphous corporeal identity but subsequently underscores the instability of this identity. The chapter also considers the gradual dissolution of these characters' bodies and corporeal practices and examines themes such as abjection and corporeal breakdown. Finally, in the last section, I look at how Pasolini sees non-modern bodies and their corporeal practices as one of the primary repositories of a very different social imaginary which continues to live on through and in relation to modernity, coeval with but not, albeit initially, subsumed by it. I consider how some of the bodies in Pasolini's second Roman novel become one of the principal targets of Italy's post-war capitalism's formative disciplinary forces and how the practices of some of this novel's sub-proletarian characters live on in one of modernity's potentially most austere institutions. Taking the hospital as an example, I consider how the design of this institution's orderly and rational environment has much more to do with the inculcation of its patients' moral reform than with their ailing health.³⁰⁵ I try to show how the hospital's repressive topographies create a resurgence of the patients' alternative imaginative and communal strategies and help them to temporally reshape their environment by seizing space through protests and riots. The depiction of the boys' pathological bodies and their corporeal practices constitute a prism through which the world is seen, albeit momentarily, differently.

³⁰⁵ It is important bear in mind how the prison, despite its specialized functions and hermetic spatiality, is in many respects continuous with other forms and terrains of discipline that emerge in the modern city. Several parts of the city are transformed into bio-political sites that organize citizens under conditions of regulated movement, surveillance and architectural surveillance

Critical Scholarship

A number of critics have analysed the representation of bodies in Pasolini's Roman prose. Gianni Biondillo considers the way in which Pasolini's Roman street boys' bodies are likened to stone while a symbiotic relationship is cultivated between their Roman dialect and their surrounding architectonics: 'I ragazzi di borgata vengono descritti come di pietra, l'analogia lingua-architettura è continuamente presente così che le stratificazioni linguistiche dei dialetti vengono continuamente paragonate alle stratificazioni architettoniche.'³⁰⁶

Mirella Serri takes Biondillo's point further by claiming that the boys' earthy sensuality and their performance-orientated corporeal practices actually make up for their hapless linguistic incompetence: 'la sensualità dei ragazzi è nelle mille emanazioni del loro corpo [...] Questi imberbi protagonisti che parlano soprattutto con il corpo, che non hanno parole per esprimersi, sono vittime della storia e della loro condizione di sfruttati e di proletari'.³⁰⁷

In his biography of Pasolini, Enzo Siciliano teases out the theme of the boys' sensuality and goes on to observe the strong relationship between the author's own body and his young male Roman proletarian ones. He notes that:

Pier Paolo, allora, aveva l'aria di un *beatnik* anzitempo. Desiderava piacere ai ragazzi: metteva in gara la propria fisicità con la loro. [...] La 'bellezza' di quei ragazzi costituiva un'effrazione a ogni canone: sia al canone ovviamente borghese, sia al canone decadente. L'invenzione pasoliniana di quella 'bellezza' fu del tutto originale. Era una bellezza fatta di brufoli, di

³⁰⁶ Gianni Biondillo, *Pasolini, Il corpo della città* (Milan: Edizioni Unicopli, 2001), p. 43.

³⁰⁷ Mirella Serri, 'Il linguaggio malandrino di Pasolini da *Storie della città di Dio* a *Ragazzi di vita* e *Una vita violenta*' in *Lezioni su Pasolini*, ed. by Tullio De Mauro and Franco Ferretti (Ripatransone: Sesante, 1997), pp. 357-66 (p. 362).

orecchie e collo sudici, di mosse tenere e sguaiate: fu un'invenzione che aveva dell'espressionistico, una plasticità che pareva colludere in certa iconografia figurative di Renato Guttuso.³⁰⁸

Painting and iconography, as Siciliano observes, played an important role in the genesis of Pasolini's Roman characters' bodies. Dario Trento notes a gradual metamorphosis in his young male characters' bodies. He claims that his Friulian boys' bodies are inspired by ancient Greek influences while the representation of his Roman boys' bodies is conceived from the ancient Roman world:

Ma se il mondo contadino friulano conservava tratti elegiaci che riportavano alla Grecia antica, la Roma del 1950, secondo Pasolini, continua la vita pagana dell'antica Roma imperiale con identica aderenza, cruda ed esteriore, alle occasioni di piacere. [...] Il 'latino' Apollo del Tevere e soprattutto le figure dei barbari della statuaria tardo romana (i 'mori', il 'gallo morente') diventano le sigle per i ragazzi romani delle borgate.³⁰⁹

On a more aesthetic level, Robert Gordon takes his cue from Dario Trento's observations regarding the metamorphosis of the boys' bodies and how their representation is strongly in thrall to artistic influences: 'the figures of the body seen and desired in the 'ragazzi' are often perceived through a (Longhian) 'way of seeing' as

³⁰⁸ Enzo Siciliano, *Vita di Pasolini* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1978), p. 230. Siciliano's reference to Renato Guttuso (1912-1987) is important. Guttuso was an Italian figurative painter who collaborated with Pasolini on a number of cultural initiatives. These include working on the voice-overs of Pasolini's film *La rabbia* (1963) with Giorgio Bassani. See Barth David Schwartz, *Pasolini Requiem* (New York: Vintage, 1992), pp. 431-32.

³⁰⁹ Dario Trento, 'La metamorfosi dei ragazzi pasoliniani', in *Desiderio di Pasolini*, pp. 61-98 (pp. 72-76). Like Siciliano, Trento sees strong artistic influences on Pasolini's representation of bodies. He claims that the representation of his Roman characters' bodies is strongly influenced by the protagonist of Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel *The Marble Faun; or the Romance of Monte Beni*, while he sees strong pictorial influences from Giotto and Masaccio as well as Pasolini's history of art professor, Roberto Longhi, in his Roman cinema.

sculpted or even abstract forms in movement, embodiments of pattern and energy, as much as bodies, irreducible presences'.³¹⁰

These suggestions about Pasolini's reliance on overtly pictorial figurations in honing his representations of his street boys' bodies are taken up more extensively by Rinaldo Rinaldi, who argues that these bodies are not real but can be couched in a tradition of Italian portrait art:

L'intera tipologia dei ragazzi di vita, le loro fisiognomiche descrizioni, rimandano alla tradizione iconografica, da Caravaggio ai Macchiaioli, ad un colorismo affondato nella ritrattistica italiana: fermati, irrealizzati, come quadri, con qualcosa di bloccato anche nella massima scompostezza, i loro volti paiono trattati a lacca, lucidi come un miraggio. [...] *Ragazzi di vita* non si ispira, magari occultamente, alla pittura, ma cita direttamente ed esplicitamente la sua tecnica: la pittura non è un riferimento esterno ma entra nel testo, facendo finta che proprio il testo sia costituito coi colori, coi pennelli.³¹¹

Rinaldi's reading of *Ragazzi's* pictorial representation of bodies is also taken up by Alessandro Cappabianca. He underscores the distinction which Pasolini makes in his representation of places and bodies, and argues that places are evoked through their place names and through the real or arbitrary attributes with which the author invests them, while bodies simply exist in, rather than inhabit, the city:

Nella città (luogo, ora, stagione) come 'struttura che vuole essere altra struttura' (set), abitano, o meglio esistono, senza riuscire veramente ad

³¹⁰ Robert S. C. Gordon, *Pasolini: Forms of Subjectivity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 175.

³¹¹ Rinaldo Rinaldi, *Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Milan: Mursia, 1982), pp. 163-64.

abitare, i Corpi. Loro sì, forniti come sono di Nomi senza storia, che al massimo si riferiscono a difetti o particolarità fisiche (Scucchia, Mosciarella, Belli Capelli) hanno bisogno d'essere evocati a lungo, indugiando, con tutta la sapienza e l'amore di cui la scrittura è capace. La scena, allora, si completa: Il Nome, da solo, evoca il reale urbano, la fisicità delle pietre; la Scrittura, lei, si dà carico del resto: aria; luci; odori; atmosfere; voci e, soprattutto, Corpi.³¹²

Cappabianca goes on to argue that Pasolini's privileging of bodies in a visual sense in his Roman prose should be seen as being strongly linked to his growing interest in filmmaking:

Il trasferimento di larghe quote della creatività pasoliniana dalla letteratura al cinema sarebbe dunque avvenuto (semplificando) sull'onda dell'aspirazione dei Corpi, ormai insofferenti di metafore, ad affermarsi come *reali*. Così, i romanzi dei 'ragazzi di vita', nella seconda metà degli anni Cinquanta, andrebbero collocati nel pieno di questa tensione dei Corpi a farsi reali, almeno nell'esibizione del Parlato.³¹³

Cappabianca's analysis chimes with Rinaldi's regarding Pasolini's desire to mythologize the boys' world. His emphasis on the body language is something that I wish to tease out further later in this chapter.

³¹² Alessandro Cappabianca, 'Pasolini a Roma: dal sogno all'incubo', in *Roma nel cinema*, ed. by Amerigo Sbardella (Rome: Semar, 2000), pp. 27-37 (p. 30).

³¹³ Cappabianca, p. 31. Cappabianca is not the only critic to suggest that Pasolini's Roman prose is a precursor of his cinematic works; I have shown in the second chapter of this thesis, dedicated to Pasolini's map of Rome, how Enzo Siciliano describes his Roman narrative as an 'officina' or 'testing ground' for his prolific future career in cinema.

In a volume examining the construction of male homosexuality in Italian literature, Derek Duncan considers Pasolini's intense interest in male adolescent pre-modern bodies. He claims that Pasolini primarily sought bodies that were uncontaminated by mainstream culture:

From Friuli to the Roman 'borgate' and then to the Third World, Pasolini's poetics and politics sought authentic spaces not yet enveloped by the consumerist ethic he found so pervasive in mainstream Italian culture. In the end, what he seems to have discovered was that there is nowhere left to go [...] Having lauded the residual 'innocence' of the pre-modern body [...] he is forced to concede that 'today the degeneration of bodies and sexes has taken on a retrospective value'.³¹⁴

Duncan goes on to claim that the male bodies which captured Pasolini's attention were all young and lean and his 'inability to move out of the circularity of his thinking is striking'.³¹⁵

Attention has also been given to the evolution of Pasolini's Roman male characters' bodies. Gian Carlo Ferretti sees: 'il sottoproletariato romano come drammatico problema sociale, la reincarnazione "popolare" della mitologia friulano-materna di una "purezza" e "innocenza" insidiata dalla maturità corruttrice'.³¹⁶

Fabio Vighi shows how some of the most explicit references and devices deployed by Pasolini in his early Roman prose to underline the symbiotic relationship between the

³¹⁴ Derek Duncan, *Reading and Writing Italian Homosexuality: A case of possible difference* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2006), p. 100. While Duncan's study primarily focuses on the representation of adolescent Friulian males in Pasolini's Friulian writings, his considerations here also extend to some of Pasolini's work in the 1960s and 1970s.

³¹⁵ Duncan, p. 101.

³¹⁶ Gian Carlo Ferretti, *Pasolini. L'universo orrendo* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1976), pp. 11-12.

Roman boys' physiognomy and their environment were also used by the author in another project which he was working on concurrently.³¹⁷ He endorses Ferretti's observations, arguing that the representation of Pasolini's Roman street boys' physiognomy gradually moves away from the figure of an atemporal and wholesome boy to consider the exhibitionist and ironic traits and even the cruelty of these disingenuous grins, their cajoling and, at times, seditious body language and their outbursts of violence, which are fuelled by their displacement and marginalization in Roman peripheries and alienation from an increasingly capitalist society.³¹⁸

David Ward endorses Ferretti and Vighi's assertions and moves their arguments on by claiming how it is possible to read a gradual evolution in Pasolini's characters through their corporeal practices in his novels:

Time has passed between the two novels, and with it the presence of history has come to take a stronger grip on the consciousness of even these most liminal subjects. That Tommasino, for example, is a different order of *borgatario* than the cast of *Ragazzi* is made perfectly clear. If we take seriously the self-image the *borgatari* have of themselves – ‘semo bulli, belli, ballamo bene, rubbamo bene, mettemo bene’– we get some idea of how Tommasino no longer fits the classic mold. This self-description excludes Tommasino: far from being ‘bello’ and ‘bullo’ his ugliness and

³¹⁷ Fabio Vighi, *Le ragioni dell'altro* (Ravenna: Longo, 2000), p. 89. Vighi draws a strong analogy between a piece of fiction set in Friuli entitled ‘Operetta marina’ and an early Roman short story ‘Castagne e crisantemi’ and compares a phrase from the former (‘non era umano sapere dove la ragazza sacilese avesse termine e cominciassero in lei i muri e l’aria del borgo’) with a question from the latter: ‘Dove terminava il ragazzo e dove cominciava l’odore dei suoi frutti? Erano uno dentro l’altro, solidi e vivi, una sola creatura’. ‘Operetta marina’ is one of a series of fictional pieces written by Pasolini between 1947 and 1951 and forms part of his unpublished and unfinished novel *Romanzo del mare*. See ‘Operetta Marina’, in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1, pp. 369-420 (p. 394) and ‘Castagne e crisantemi’, in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1, pp. 1424-27 (p. 1424).

³¹⁸ Vighi, p. 95.

awkwardness are constantly underlined. [...] He is no longer the fully-fledged *borgataro*, the genuine article like most of the characters of *Ragazzi*, but neither is he the achieved bourgeois.³¹⁹

This overview concerning the reception of Pasolini's representation of bodies in his Roman prose would not be complete without making mention of the physical rivalry and even bullying among the boys themselves. Carpaneto *et al.* observe how some characters in *Ragazzi* pick on one of the weakest members of their local community in an attempt to capture the attention of some local girls:

Lì [Monte del Pecoraro] Pasolini ha ambientato uno dei più begli episodi di *Ragazzi di vita*, la tortura del Piattoletta, bambino debole e povero coinvolto in uno scherzo troppo pesante. Una combriccola di ragazzini voleva giocare a fare gli indiani per attrarre l'attenzione delle bambine lì vicine e impressionarle. A qualcuno venne l'idea di fare una specie di danza del fuoco e, come avevano visto al cinema, presero di forza il Piattoletta, lo legarono a un pilone, il palo della tortura, con le braccia in alto e le mani strette dalla stessa corda che serviva al piccolo per tenere su i calzoncini. Poi ammicciarono sterpi, erba secca e diedero fuoco con un accendino, gridando e ballando intorno.³²⁰

This rather large assemblage of critical observations confirms how a variety of thematic concerns in relation to the role and importance of bodies and corporeal practices have already been teased out about certain parts of Pasolini's Roman prose. My work

³¹⁹ David Ward, *A Poetics of Resistance* (Madison: University of Fairleigh Dickson, 1996), p. 87.

³²⁰ Rodolfo Carpaneto, Senio Gerindi and Aldo Rossi, *Pasolini e le borgate: Storia sociale della casa a Roma* (Roma: Associazione Culturale 'Aldo Tozzetti', 2007), p. 144.

reads Pasolini's Roman fiction as a whole, examining the role of space and bodies from his earliest Roman short fiction through to his second and final novel, *Una vita violenta*. This chapter shows how Pasolini understands the body to be dynamic, evolving and yet also vulnerable. It does this by looking at how he uses the body to reveal a number of telling stories: stories of corporeal engagement and symbiosis, of displacement and resistance, of seepage and mutilation. Its aim is to show how these new entry points into the role and representation of bodies in Pasolini's Roman prose reveal how he uses the body to provide insights into Rome's recent history, and its reckless and ungoverned expansion. It argues that bodies can be seen as texts within a greater text and that they assume an important narrative function which opens up a number of interpretative readings.

Theoretical Scholarship on Bodies

The body has received serious scholarly attention across many areas of critical thought. One key assumption which is broadly acknowledged in contemporary 'body studies' is that there is no essential, fixed or permanent body. Bodies are subject to their cultural environment and formed by the dictates of culture. The work of Michel Foucault has been instrumental in pointing to the importance of the body as an object of power relations and more specifically to the role of medicine in defining bodies and constructing both theoretical and institutional mechanisms for their control. Foucault claims that the body is governed by culture which controls what is appropriate and what is not. He argues that with the emergence of social institutions such as schools, prisons and asylums, the body was reconfigured as an object of empirical, disciplinary, punitive and other corrective interventions. The body thus became a defining matrix of modern governance because it unified the will to govern with the development of social and cultural techniques for disciplining its unruly drives and reordering its productivity.

This chapter initially looks at the receptiveness of Pasolini's sub-proletarian characters' bodies to Rome's city centre environment. It considers how the boys create a rhizomatic network over much of the city centre through the sites they visit. Much like their never ending, rhizomatic movements, the boys' bodies assume a symbiotic valence. The union of the boys' sensory experience with their surroundings and their bodies' porosity enable them to forge an indissoluble bond with the city. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari have used the concept of the rhizome to understand the body: their notion of the rhizomatic body breaks down dichotomies by pluralizing and disseminating, producing differences and multiplicities, making new connections:

A body is not defined by the form that determines it nor as a determinate substance or subject nor by the organs it possesses or the function it fulfills. On the plane of consistency, *a body is defined only by longitude and latitude*: in others words the total sum of material elements belonging to it under given relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness (longitude); the total sum of intensive affects it is capable of at a given power or degree of potential (latitude). [...] Latitude and longitude are the two elements of a cartography.³²¹

These fluid networks of relationality respond to Stacy Alaimo's conception of borders constructed by the humanist tradition. She notes how 'humanism, capitalist individualism, transcendent religions, and utilitarian concepts of nature have labored to deny the rather biophysical, yet also commonsensical realization that we are permeable, emergent beings, reliant on others within and outside our porous borders'.³²²

³²¹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 260.

³²² Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (Bloomington: University of Indiana, 2010), p. 156.

Mary Douglas has argued that the body is used as an analogue of society. Her work is mainly concerned with the concept of dirt which she defines as ‘matter out of place’.³²³ She sees dirt as ‘a by-product of a systematic classification of matter, inasmuch as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements’.³²⁴ A concept which has grown out of Douglas’s theories about ‘matter out of place’ is that of the ‘abject’ – something which appears familiar (a human body, for instance) but which has been cast out or marginalized due to some physical, social or political quality or process. The abject provokes strong feelings of disgust and is often resolved through the creation of ‘spaces of abjection’ in which it can be situated and normalized. The concept of abjection has been extensively explored by Julia Kristeva, who claims that ‘it is thus not lack of cleanliness or health which causes abjection, but what disrupts identity, system and order. What does not respect borders, positions and rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite.’³²⁵

Judith Butler uses the notion of the abject to describe ‘those “unlivable” and “uninhabitable” zones of social life which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject, but whose living under the sign of ‘the unlivable’ is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject [...] The abject constitutes precisely this excess considered as waste by a society which can find an economy with it’.³²⁶ Reading these theories alongside a close analysis of some passages of Pasolini’s

³²³ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966). Douglas offers her interpretation of the preoccupations with body margins and discharges in the pollution beliefs of some African and Indian societies. ‘Ritual protection of bodily orifices’, Douglas claims, is ‘a symbol of the social preoccupations about exits and entrances’. She sees these rituals as ‘enact[ing] the form of social relations and in giving these relations visible expression enables people to know their own society’. Douglas, pp. 127-29.

³²⁴ Douglas, p. 36.

³²⁵ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: University of Columbia Press, 1982), pp. 3-4.

³²⁶ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York & London: Routledge, 1993), p. 3.

novels, I show how the protagonist of *Ragazzi*, Riccetto, forgoes his abject self and identifies with what Kristeva calls the symbolic order.

The chapter goes on to look at how the indissoluble bond between Pasolini's street boys' bodies and their surroundings is transformed by the mutilating experience of alienation and displacement. The intense social ferment and development of the city relegate the boys to overlooked residues of history. Their bodies, sidelined to the city's fringes, are identified by their unrepresentable supplements. I explore what possible meanings the pervasive representation of these bodies' labile and disseminative orifices can have and how blood and other body fluids are used to convey these bodies' abject condition. The boys' bodies undergo a corporeal feminization which has to do with their vulnerability and resistance to a hostile and changing environment. I look at how femininity has conventionally been associated with concepts such as undisciplined and emotional turbulence, pathological impulsiveness and corporeal ungovernability. Robyn Longhurst argues that leaky bodies and body fluids are associated with women:

When geographers speak of the body they still often fail to talk about a body that breaks its boundaries – urinates, bleeds, vomits, farts, engulfs tampons, objects of sexual desire, ejaculates and gives birth. The reason this is significant is that the messiness of bodies is often conceptualised as feminised and as such is Othered. [...] Ignoring the messy body is not a harmless omission, rather, it contains a political imperative that helps keep masculinity intact.³²⁷

Serenella Iovino's careful reading of Curzio Malaparte's novel, *La pelle*, emphasizes how the bodies of his Neapolitan characters are represented as being 'storied bodies' in a

³²⁷ Robyn Longhurst, *Bodies: Exploring Fluid Boundaries* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 23.

material-semiotic reality. Her concept of ‘storied bodies’ concerns the relation of the body to the narrative: how bodies come to be inscribed on the narrative and how the narrative inscribes the body itself. She observes how:

The body is a semiotic agent in its very materiality. It is *in* the body that the formative agencies at work in a place’s life materialize and express themselves. Naples’s bodies are texts, the city itself is a text, and its texture its own narrative. It is a narrative populated by substances, choices, voices, human presences, illness, scars, memory, forgetfulness, natural catastrophes, war, contamination, fear, death, and life.³²⁸

Serpil Oppermann has defined Iovino’s porous bodies of Naples as:

Palpable examples of narrative agency, a ‘storied matter’. These [the lively matter of these bodies] are ‘articulations of meanings in matter’ that contain narrative trajectories, efficacy and unfolding stories for examining the complementary relationships between the human and nonhuman world.³²⁹

Iovino’s assertion about storied bodies bears a strong correlation with Ramona Fernandez’s concept of the somatope. Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin’s ‘chronotope’, Fernandez develops this concept to explore how characters’ bodies influence the narrative and coins the term ‘somatope’ to describe this phenomenon:

His [Bakhtin’s] theory suggests a relationship between the chronotope and the human body [...] In practice, the somatope carries the weight of the

³²⁸ Serenella Iovino, *Ecocriticism and Italy: Ecology, Resistance and Liberation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 38

³²⁹ Serpil Oppermann, ‘From Ecological Postmodernism to Material Ecocriticism: Creative Materiality and Narrative Agency’, in *Material Ecocriticism*, ed by, Serpil Oppermann and Serenella Iovino, (Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2014), pp. 21-37 (p. 29).

obsessions of its narrative. The somatope encodes a host of meanings penetrating and surrounding the image of the body.³³⁰

In broad outline, the prominence of Pasolini's character's in-between corporeal status and nature at the outset of his prose gradually switches towards an ever-increasing emphasis on bodily processes and ungovernable emissions. Pasolini's street boys' inchoate and leaky bodies become semiotic and reflect the ungoverned and reckless expansion of the city. Building on the theoretic framework outlined above I show in this chapter how Pasolini uses bodies in his prose as a chronotope to articulate narratives of inclusion, displacement and imminent destruction.

Short Stories and Essays: A Corporeality of the Street

The indissoluble bond between young male characters' primitive bodies and some of the city's popular architectonic surroundings and natural elements is a standard motif of many of Pasolini's early short stories and essays. The detachment of Rome's underclass from conventional norms and society initially enabled the author to identify and articulate these dispossessed citizens' intense engagement with the city's urban fabric. Areas densely populated by the city's underbelly form the backdrop to a number of vignettes which depict Roman street boys intensely caught up in everyday activities and escapades. Much like some of the protagonists in his Friulian prose, the physiognomies of these Roman street boys blend with some of the city's labyrinthine medieval street pattern and ancient housing stock.³³¹ This indissoluble bond emerges in one of Pasolini's very first

³³⁰ Ramona Fernandez, 'The Somatope: from Bakhtin's Chronotope to Haraway's Cyborg via James Cameron's *Dark Angel* and *Avatar*', *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol.47(6), 2014, 1112-38 (p. 1124).

³³¹ The most convincing example of this dissolution of the boys' bodies in an ecstasy of union with their physical surroundings emerges in the short story 'Ragazzo e Trastevere', which I have already examined in in Chapter 2.

Roman short story, 'Ragazzo e Trastevere' where the similarities of a young chestnut seller's somatic traits and his neighbourhood leaves the author rather baffled:

Io, per me, vorrei poter sapere quali sono i congegni del suo cuore attraverso i quali Trastevere vive dentro di lui, informe, martellante, ozioso [...] Con le ginocchia selvaggiamente allargate addosso alla piccola stufa, e protesa su di essa con il busto, egli si comprime tutto dentro un cerchio che nessuna formula magica potrà mai spezzare. L'intera portata del Tevere, con le foschie cadaveriche intorno all'Isola Tiberina, e il passaggio che pesa sugli occhi con le sue cupole leggere come veli strappati [...] Per comunicare la topografia della sua vita, dovrebbe non farne parte: ma dove finisce Trastevere e dove comincia il ragazzo?³³²

This chestnut seller's body is not discrete or bounded but actually feeds off and becomes shaped by its local environs. Its inherent rhizomatic nature enables the boy to interpenetrate and engage with this neighbourhood's built environment. The human nonhuman interrelatedness which emerges defies any notion of separateness. In another short story, entitled 'Da Monteverde all'Altieri', which charts the journey of a young boy from the neighbourhood of Monteverde to a seedy cinema in close proximity to Rome's Capitoline Hill, this umbilical connection between the young protagonist's physical morphology and his local surroundings is once again palpable:

Plasmato dalla razza che da qualche centinaio di anni assorbe il colore delle rovine e del Tevere, con un viso da Leonardo Cortese, [...] abbronzato com'era quel viso da un sole metallico e insano, la cui luce filtrava attraverso i panni sporchi dei vicoli e andava a premere contro i muri unti

³³² 'Ragazzo e Trastevere', in *Romanzi e racconti*, pp. 1383-87 (pp. 1384-85).

d'immondizia: un sole che nutriva solo la pelle più esterna, divorata all'interno dal vizio e dalla denutrizione. [...] C'erano, è vero, dentro quel ragazzo certe sere d'aprile [...]. Questo aprile atrocemente profumato non era che una doratura, nell'interno del ragazzo, come la sua bellezza trasteverina lo era per il viso.³³³

The city's poverty, ancient ruins, penetrating sun and its intersecting river are internalised by the boy. Pasolini sees how this boy's body unconsciously embodies a collective history; general traces of his ancestors emerge while the bond between the boy and his local environs becomes inseparable. The collective experience of poverty, dirt and constant exposure to natural elements shapes his physical make-up and his facial features. The city and the boy's body are, what Elizabeth Grosz has termed, mutually constitutive; 'the form, structure, and norms of the city seep into and affect all the other elements that go into the constitution of corporeality'.³³⁴

While the primary *loci* which emerge in this vignette are Monteverde and Trastevere, the story actually unfolds inside a dark cinema some distance from both locations. The decision to remove the protagonist from his local community and place him in a site synonymous with the city's social and public sphere appears to be strategic. Roman street boys demonstrate little sense of the city's symbolic geography and their displacement to other parts of the city serves to highlight even further their unconscious attachment to and umbilical connection with their locality and their city.

One way in which critics have tried to make sense of this part of Pasolini's work is by equating the boys' bodies to its local geography. Stefano Baschiera observes that: 'Pasolini seems to give the same importance to the human face as he does to geography

³³³ 'Da Monteverde all'Altieri', in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1, pp. 1396-1400 (p. 1396).

³³⁴ Elizabeth Grosz, 'Bodies-Cities', in *Places Through the Body*, ed. by Heidi Nast and Steve Pile (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 42-51 (p. 43).

itself in order to trace the social and spatial coordinates in which to organise and develop the narratives'.³³⁵ This collapsing of space and body is a recurrent theme in some of Pasolini's early prose where the young characters' corporeal morphology metonymically fastens them to their localities.

The representation of space and the street boy's body in this story is primarily achieved by confounding public and private boundaries. The rapid transition of the boy's emotions underscores his sense of a world without any kind of spatial differentiation:

Andò a finire che il ragazzo di Monteverde, all'Altieri, si mise a piangere. Non c'era da dubitare: contro la sua pupilla nocciola fissa e come succhiata dal palcoscenico, tremolava distintamente una goccia di pianto. [...] Perché dunque ora aveva commesso l'enorme, l'intollerabile ingenuità di piangere all'Altieri? Sempre per uno così pazzo da pensarci quelle lacrime spuntate nella pupilla del lupo avrebbe potuto essere addirittura strazianti. Tutto si poteva sopportare del suo destino implacabilmente previsto, ma quelle lacrime no.³³⁶

The boy's emotional oscillations display an indifference to the division between public and private space and can be seen as one of the earliest manifestations, in these short stories, of these boys' rhizomatic bodies'.³³⁷ The sudden leap in the boy's emotions represents a practice of emotional performance which does not obey the more rigorously demarcated compartmentalization of affective display which characterizes emotional

³³⁵ Stefano Baschiera, 'The Embodiment of the Bourgeoisie: Body and Social Class in Pasolini's *Mamma Roma* and Fassbinder's *Martha*', in *Pasolini, Fassbinder and Europe: Between Utopia and Nihilism*, ed. by Fabio Vighi and Alexis Nouss (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), pp. 65-81 (p. 69).

³³⁶ 'Da Monteverde all'Altieri', p. 1397-98.

³³⁷ I understand the pathological subject as someone subjected to nature and history and to his/her impulses and desires.

comportment in the modern world. The contours of this culture are characterized by its unruly lack of proper boundaries and the singularity of its social practices. The non-differentiation of spatial functions and the contiguity of spaces foster the promiscuous intermingling of primordial bodies and of emotional states. The story ends with another example of abject corporeal seepage which amplifies the protagonist's lust:

Gli occhi [del ragazzo] puntati sulle cosce pallide delle ballerine, cosce da pensioni senza sole, odorose di fritto, vibravano alla gola del sesso– [...] E infine, più che la gola, emanava l'odore del sesso, la pratica, la competenza: quella terribile competenza che è sempre degli altri, una figura inimitabile. Il ragazzo di Monteverde si lasciava succhiare da quell'aria che odorava del gesso con cui i ragazzini fanno delle iscrizioni oscene nei pisciatoi.³³⁸

The boy's sexual desire, aroused by visual and olfactory stimuli, and culminating in an orgasm, provides a further motif of body seepage in this story. This corporeal seepage anticipates the themes of displacement, loss and leaky bodies in Pasolini's later Roman prose.

Much of Pasolini's early Roman prose documents the endless circulation of his characters bodies through the city as an enmeshed process of material interrelatedness. His fascination and fixation with the street boys' bodies and the city becomes enmeshed with his own physical presence in Rome. He appears eager to dissect this indissoluble relationship of the boys' rhizomatic bodies with the city in order to understand it better. His investigation, therefore, does not limit itself to documenting the strong connective tissue between space and these boys' external corporeal features but also considers how they actually lived and felt the dimension of this experience. In one of his earliest Roman

³³⁸ 'Da Monteverde all'Altieri', p. 1399.

essays entitled ‘Squarci sulle notti romane’, (1950), the essay’s protagonist, Villon, one of Pasolini’s aliases, meets Arnaldo, born in Campo dei Fiori and now living in Via della Lungara, Trastevere, while strolling around the city: Arnaldo’s Roman credentials are impeccable; his flippant assessment of some of the city’s monuments underlines how poverty and ignorance occludes his participation in the narrative of his city’s history and implies his absence of a notion of change over time.

Embè – pensava Arnaldo – con torace in rivoluzione, che ca...me frega? ‘un so’ padrone de passeggià in dove me pare? [...] ‘Er Teatro di Marcello, er Colosseo, che d’è, quattro pietre rotte’ aveva detto [Arnaldo] la prima sera, con un’anima perfettamente immobile. Passeggiavamo lungo il Circo Massimo sotto un cielo ovale, sulla cui superficie metallica, tra i vapori rossi e viola che formicolavano compatti sulla città, passavano sottili come coltelli dei bianchi candidi di nuvole. [...] Come avrebbe voluto, Villon, provare per un momento ad andarsene da Roma possedendo, dentro di sé, in tutte le sue cellule, la Geografia del ragazzo.³³⁹

Pasolini’s anthropological inquiry suggests, therefore, that the boys’ bodies and their corporeal practices become the touchstone for their identity; it is only by fully understanding ‘la Geografia del ragazzo’ that the author is able to identify the last vestiges of ‘reality’.³⁴⁰ Yet despite the traces of perennial poverty and misfortune

³³⁹ ‘Squarci di notti romane’, in *Romanzi e racconti (1962-1975)*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude (Milan: Mondadori, 1998), Vol 1, pp.329-361 (pp. 342-43).

³⁴⁰ A primary notion underpinning Pasolini’s understanding of ‘la Geografia del ragazzo’ is obviously the boy’s physical appearance, which clearly beguiles the author. Another notion is the cyclical nature of these Roman sub-proletariat bodies. Pasolini sees them as unique: ‘il popolo, secondo noi, aveva una storia a parte, arcaica, in cui i figli semplicemente, come insegna l’antropologia delle vecchie culture, reincarnavano e ripetevano i padri’. ‘I giovani infelici’, in *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, pp. 541-47 (p. 546). Guido Sapelli observes that the distinguishing trait of Rome’s ahistorical underclass is not that they live in diametric opposition to its more privileged city dwellers

inscribed on their bodies, history has no material meaning for these boys as they live in a perpetual present.

Ricetto: Not an Authentic ‘ragazzo di vita’

The unique relationship between Pasolini’s street boys’ bodies and their spatial surroundings is rehearsed in the opening chapters of *Ragazzi di vita*. Most of the sites in these chapters cover itineraries already broached in his early prose while the boys’ partial invisibility in the city promotes an alternative form of collective life which they gesture towards incompletely. The close proximity of their unruly and dense domestic makeshift dwellings promotes the pressing of bodies in a close-knit community where a sense of mutual dependence among families is immediately obvious. The living quarters of Ricetto, the novel’s protagonist, in Donna Olimpia, are a telling example:

La famiglia del Ricetto non abitava dentro le aule, come gli sfollati o quelli che ci s’erano accomodati per primi: ma in un corridoio, di quelli dove si aprono le aule, ch’era stato diviso con dei tramezzi in tanti piccoli locali, lasciando per il passaggio soltanto una piccola striscia lungo le finestre che davano sul cortile.³⁴¹

Such a picture of sociality is predicated upon a way of life which sustained an alternative ethic and conception of a life-in-common, albeit in impoverished conditions.

living in a linear timeframe, but that they have a totally different value system. He observes that, ‘L’astoricità non è qui intesa come negazione della storia in quanto flusso dei viventi, ma nel senso della fissazione dei riferimenti simbolici da una generazione all’altra, che si attualizza in un universo chiuso, caratterizzato da una trasmissione orale e segnica, prossemica – ossia legata ai comportamenti del corpo –, della cultura. Non vige la cultura scritta, né la civiltà dell’immagine, se non quella endogena.’ Giulio Sapelli, *Modernizzazione senza sviluppo. Il capitalismo secondo Pasolini* (Milan: Mondadori, 2005), p. 45.

³⁴¹ Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Ragazzi di vita*, in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1, pp. 523-771 (p. 565).

These spaces defy a capitalistic logic and the rationalization of space and function which such a logic dictates.

While the boys' atavistic corporeal practices enable them to form a way of life predicated on mutual dependence and to formulate spatial tactics that allow them to move freely around the city, the gradual erasure of spaces coupled with the boys' displacement in the city's peripheries spell the destruction of this matrix of social relations. The collapse of the primary school Giorgio Franceschi, in Donna Olimpia, accommodating families displaced either by the demolition of some of the city centre's poorer housing stock or by the war, brings this way of life to an abrupt end. The upshot of this event is that Riccetto is evacuated to a far-flung Roman *borgata*, in Ponte Mammolo. Spatial alienation prompts him to move away from his new accommodation and meander aimlessly through the city's peripheries; Riccetto's displacement brings the tensions of his and his fellow companions' corporeal needs into sharp relief.

The subjection of the boys' pathological bodies to the bleak conditions of the city's peripheries is articulated through some of the body's orifices and their function as sites of entry and of issue for the body. While Riccetto and Caciotta's digestive needs are satisfied by a visit to a soup kitchen run by friars, close to the city's main transport conurbation, it is Riccetto and Il Lenzetta's subsequent meeting with an older man, il sor Antonio, which showcases the intrinsic characteristics of the rhizomatic subject. The focus on the boys' hunger is supplanted by their intoxication, as they forge ties with their new-found companion, in a hidden away watering hole near Porta Furba. A comic conversation about religion ensues:

Dopo cinque minuti i due malandri già s'erano imbroccati. Cominciarono a parlare di Dio e di religione. [...] Fu il Riccetto, che arrossendo di piacere per la sua originalità, sottopose al Lenzetta una questione [...]: 'dimme na

cosa, tu ce credi a Maria, quella che chiamano la Madonna, llà?' 'Bo, che ne so', rispose pronto il Lenzetta, 'nun l'ho vista mai!' [...] Ma al Riccetto stava a cuore un particolare dettaglio della cosa: si mise una mano a ventaglio contro la bocca: 'Ce lo sai sì' confidò al Lenzetta, 'ch'era vergine e c'aveva un fijo'.³⁴²

The idea of a life in common lives on in this subaltern setting. The tavern provides an alternative space for male conviviality, reciprocity, leisure and community. The practice of drinking provides a critical site for the performance of the boys' masculinity and enables them to postpone, albeit temporarily, their incorporation into civilized society. The mouth becomes the indifferent locus of hunger and intoxication, blasphemy and laughter. The improperly differentiated functions of the mouth as it imbibes drink and speculates nonsensical conjectures are indices of the absence of distinction of the body's orifices and of the unsettling contiguity of social and emotional spaces.

While the impropriety of the boys is located in the laxity of their mouths as sites of consumption, rhetoric and banter, it is actually the focus on another orifice which foreshadows a turning point in the novel. Shortly after the party of three resolves to rob cauliflowers from a vegetable field in the countryside adjacent to the neighbourhood of Quadraro, Lenzetta becomes pressed by the necessities of nature:

Il Lenzetta però fece tranquillo tranquillo: 'Aóh, a mori, aspettate un momento che c'ho da fà un bisogno', e senza aspettar risposta, si slacciò la cinta, si calò i calzoni e si mise spensieratamente a compiere il lavoro di sgancio sull'erbetta bagnata. Pure il Riccetto e il sor Antonio, stando così le cose, l'imitarono, e si misero tutti tre in fila sul solco, coi sederi alla luce

³⁴² *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 645.

della luna, accucciati sotto un gran ceraso. [...] ‘A sor maè’ fece allora il Riccetto approfittando di quel momento confidenziale, mentre che il Lenzetta già si stava tirando su i calzoni, ‘che è fidanzata vostra fija?’³⁴³

From a cursory analysis, the boys’ body waste could be considered an appropriate metaphor for the city’s redundant population. The scandalously abundant dung-like masses, viewed as little more than refuse by the new burgeoning capitalist system, are faced with the alternative of becoming increasingly alienated or of being assimilated into capitalist society. This event could be read as an act of corporeal resistance which challenges and defies a civilizing process which attempts to discipline the human body’s orifices.

This involuted excremental act also registers a greater interaction between inside and outside worlds and arguably foreshadows the boys’ unconscious passage from a pre-modern identity towards a modern one. It is plausible, therefore, to interpret this episode as an unconscious endeavour by the boys to empty their bodies and leave a hollow vessel which is stripped of a socially constructed way of life based on non-modern practices.³⁴⁴ This rejection of their bodily waste demarcates the boys’ corporeal boundaries and enables them to separate from the maternal. Defending the boundaries of their inner body, therefore assumes a wider existential significance. Julia Kristeva argues for the fundamental role of repulsion in the construction of identity. The abject is the place ‘where meaning collapses’ but it is simultaneously the place where, through its repudiation, meaning, identity and culture are able to exist. She argues that ‘excrement and its equivalents (decay, infection, disease, corpse, etc.) stand for a danger to identity

³⁴³ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 650.

³⁴⁴ This passage also prefigures the theme of leaky bodies in Pasolini’s Roman prose, which I will address in the third section of this chapter.

that comes from without: the ego is threatened by the non-ego, society by its outside, life by death'.³⁴⁵

Ricetto's return journey to Donna Olimpia towards the end of the novel seems to confirm the symbiotic connection which centres around excrement and attachment to a specific place. His heightened concern with bodily functions is rooted in a relationship of anxiety with his social environment. The cleanliness and urban regeneration of his childhood neighbourhood leave him baffled and he has great difficulty recognizing anything that is familiar to him other than a small human dung-shed:

Pure la rete metallica, che seguiva lungo la strada la scarpata cespugliosa sopra la fabbrica, era nuova nuova, senza un buco. Solo la vecchia garitta, lì, presso la rete metallica, era sempre tutta fetida e lercia: quelli che ci passavano avanti, continuavano come una volta a farci i loro bisogni: c'è n'era dentro, e anche fuori, tutt'intorno, almeno un palmo. Quello era l'unico punto [del quartiere] che il Ricetto ritrovò familiare, proprio quand'era ragazzino ch'era appena finita la guerra.³⁴⁶

This fact that a dung-shed is the only feature of the neighbourhood which triggers Ricetto's memory should not be disregarded and reinforces my argument that it is his repudiation of his body waste in the cauliflower field which severs his ties with his maternal entity and brings him into what Kristeva calls the symbolic order. To recall his childhood memories in Donna Olimpia, Ricetto turns to a material item which has apparently nothing to do with his return visit and somehow retrieves, in and from this object, that which is most essential to his visit. Judith Butler also describes this process of abjection in very similar terms. She observes how: 'the subject is constituted through

³⁴⁵ Kristeva, p. 71.

³⁴⁶ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 729.

the force of exclusion and abjection, one which produces a constitutive outside to the subject, an abjected outside, which is after all “inside” the subject as its founding repudiation’.³⁴⁷

The conclusion of this expedition of petty thievery in the cauliflower field seems to act as a prelude to Riccetto and Lenzetta’s meeting with sor Antonio’s five daughters. When the boys visit sor Antonio’s slum dwelling we discover their real names in the course of their introduction to these five girls.

‘Te presento sti amichi mia’ fece il sor Antonio. Nadia s’accostò con un sorriso, tutta vergognosa, tenendosi una mano contro la scollatura della vestaglia e l’altra allungata verso di loro. [...]. ‘Mastracca Claudio’ fece il Riccetto, stringendo la bella manina. ‘De Marzi Alfredo’ disse Lenzetta, facendo altrettanto, con la faccia rossastra e liquefatta che aveva nei momenti d’emozione.³⁴⁸

This is the first and only moment in *Ragazzi* that the official names of its characters are revealed. This shift from the boys’ nicknames to their proper names is important as it signals an attempt to inscribe an identity on the boys’ bodies which is beyond their world. As I have argued in my chapters on place names and on mapping, the use of informal place names enabled *Ragazzi*’s characters to re-appropriate places and to rewrite the city-text. The act of naming the boys by their official name and surname brings them into the adult world; it complicates their already tentative and material presence in the city as their corporeal malleability and mobility in the city had been dependent on their invisibility and on their rhizomatic bodies.³⁴⁹ Kristeva argues that naming is an essential step towards

³⁴⁷ Butler, p. 3.

³⁴⁸ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 652.

³⁴⁹ This revelation of the boys’ family names would appear to signal their gradual subsumption into society, or at least Riccetto’s entrance into linear time.

the acquisition of identity and that it erases the permeability of the inside/outside borderline:

In that anteriority to language, the outside is elaborated by means of a projection from within, of which the only experience we have is one of pleasure or of pain. An outside in the image of the inside, made of pleasure and pain. [...] The non-distinctiveness of the inside and outside would thus be unnamable, a border passable in both directions by pleasure and pain. Naming the latter, hence differentiating them, amounts to introducing language, which, just as it distinguishes pleasure from pain as it does all other oppositions, founds the separation inside/outside.³⁵⁰

Ricetto's decision to demarcate the boundaries between his self and his abject other are reinforced through his engagement with sor Antonio's daughter. Lenzetta seems much more hesitant. He reluctantly releases body gas from his innards:

Il Lenzetta, ascoltandole preoccupato, e mettendo tutt'insieme in un mucchio il pensiero della parte di bravi ragazzi che avevano fatto, della famiglia Bifoni e della morte, e sentendosi venire il latte alle ginocchia, stette un momento fermo soprappensiero, come in raccoglimento, poi tirò su una gamba col ginocchio contro la pancia, e mollò un peto. Ma gli venne sforzato, perché non era de core.³⁵¹

³⁵⁰ Kristeva, p. 61.

³⁵¹ Kristeva, p. 659. I suggest in Chapter Four that Lenzetta's fart may well have been inspired by Dante's excremental poetics. I show how Pasolini, like Dante, shows no restraint when it comes to talking about themes of excrement and defecation and I argue that Pasolini's excremental poetics resonate with some recent work in brown studies. Works I have used to ground my argument about the link between Pasolini and Dante's excremental poetics and Pasolini's commitment to exploring ways of managing human waste that go beyond anal-retentive policies of capitalist societies include: Fabian

Identity, as Kristeva points out, depends on nausea, on the rejection of the abject. Lenzetta's hesitance to repudiate his abject self suggests his resistance to embrace the normative social world. Lenzetta's fart is not a liberating act but an act that perpetuates his abject condition.

Ricetto's accession into the symbolic order is also mapped onto his body. His body is the only body in Pasolini's Roman prose to undergo such a metamorphosis. Rather than becoming another cast-off of capitalism's progress and development, Ricetto steps into linear time. He unwittingly transforms from being an autonomous subject into a subject bound to the law. While a coterie of his companions' bodies is marked by injuries or illness, Ricetto's body becomes stronger and healthier. This change is registered through Ricetto's bodily transformation 'Da quando [Ricetto] era stato a Porta Portese era ingrassato e non c'aveva più il pallino di far sempre il diritto'³⁵²; he also starts taking care of his corporeal hygiene and appearance 'Il Ricetto [...] si tolse il pettinino dalla tasca di dietro dei calzoni, lo bagnò sotto la fontanella e cominciò a pettinarsi, bello come Cleopatra'.³⁵³ This representation of an increasingly vain "Ricetto" is also shored up by the attire he begins to sport which is far beyond the reach of the other boys:

Il Ricetto veniva avanti, evidentemente pieno di buon umore, tutto acchittato e camminando con attenzione per non sporcarsi di polvere gli scarpini bianchi a buchi: in mano teneva gli slippi nuovi ben ripiegati, e la camicetta azzurra gli sventolava sopra le chiappe.³⁵⁴

Alfie, 'Diabolic Flatulence: A Note on *Inferno* 21:139', *Forum Italicum*, Vol. 45(2), 2011, 417-27; Marisol F. Cortez, 'The Ecology of Scatology: Excretory Encounters in American Cultural Life' (unpublished doctoral Thesis, University of California, Davis, 2009).

³⁵² *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 732.

³⁵³ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 686.

³⁵⁴ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 756.

Ricchetto also parts company with some of his closet sidekicks, including Lenzetta: ‘Quanto al resto, dormiva ancora col Lenzetta nei bidoni sui prati della Borgata Gordiani: ma questo sistema di vita durò ancora per poco, perché non era più adatto alle nuove condizioni del Ricchetto’.³⁵⁵ Lenzetta, on the contrary, does not access this symbolic order and therefore becomes, like many of his companions, even further marginalized: ‘Col Lenzetta, infatti, chi s’era visto s’era visto: ora stava facendosi un anno di segregazione cellulare, in qualche carcere fuori Roma, a Volterra o a Ischia, perché era stato condannato niente meno di trent’anni.’³⁵⁶ Ricchetto is the only ‘ragazzo di vita’ to assume a clearly defined identity. He is no longer an object of capitalist hegemony but a consumer of this hegemony. Ricchetto’s newly established identity is presented by Pasolini in negative terms.³⁵⁷ Fabio Vighi sees Pasolini’s identification with outcasts from a universal perspective:

Rather than just fighting for the socio-economic and cultural improvement of underprivileged social subjects (the sub-proletariat) and neglected social space (the Roman slums) [...] what is universally valid for Pasolini is the concrete existence of the excremental/particular subject, the subject representing the exception, without a place within the socio-symbolic order.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁵ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 660.

³⁵⁶ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 757.

³⁵⁷ In a letter to the novel’s publisher Livio Garzanti shortly before *Ragazzi*’s publication, Pasolini explains Ricchetto’s transformation, highlighting his indifference towards his companions even in moments of extreme difficulty: ‘Il Ricchetto, nel primo capitolo del romanzo, andando in barca con alcuni amici sul Tevere [...] a un certo momento si getta a nuoto per salvare una rondine che sta affogando sotto Ponte Sisto. Nell’ultimo capitolo, affoga sull’Aniene un ragazzino, Genesio, [...] e il Ricchetto, già quasi giovanotto, non muove un dito per salvarlo’. *Pier Paolo Pasolini, Lettere (1940-1954)*, ed. by Nico Naldini, vol. 1, (Turin: Einaudi, 1986), pp. 704-05.

³⁵⁸ Fabio Vighi, *Traumatic Encounters in Italian Film: Locating the Cinematic Unconscious* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2006), pp. 80-81.

For Pasolini, therefore, the true value of his young male characters' bodies and their corporeal practices lies in the fact that they are unwilling or, perhaps unable, to be incorporated into modernity. Relegated to the city's margins and facing imminent extinction Pasolini sees in this residual population of Rome's abandoned peripheries forms of social intercourse and corporeal practices which remain outside linear time.

Leaky and Disintegrating Bodies

The themes of displacement and corporeal vulnerability emerge as both Pasolini's Roman novels unfold. Within the emergent modernity of post-war Rome, Pasolini's street boys are seen as being unpredictable and unsuitable for public realms and relegated to the city's fringes. Alienation from the city centre means that the boys are deprived of sensorial stimuli which had been instrumental in creating a symbiosis between them and their local environment. Moving from one place to another on foot in the city centre had enabled them to replicate the dynamics of the relationship between child and mother during the formation of self-identity. Michel de Certeau describes how repetitive practices such as walking can be seen as acts of creative resistance. The association between self-city and mother-child relationships is implicitly suggested throughout his essay:

[...] the repetition [...] of a decisive and originary experience, that of the child's differentiation from mother's body. It is through that experience that the possibility of space and of localization (a 'not everything') of the subject is inaugurated. [...] The childhood experience that determines spatial practices later develops its effects, proliferates, floods private and public spaces, undoes their readable surfaces, and creates within the planned city a

‘metaphorical’ or mobile city.³⁵⁹

Walking in the city enables the boys to transgress normative spatial practices and rules and to secure a presence within its social context. The reiteration of this ritual performance enables them to engage in a subtle process of dehistoricification. The boys’ displacement and marginalization in Rome’s peripheries triggers a much more troubled relationship with the city. Performative acts of socialization such as walking and swimming become much more difficult to reenact in the city’s peripheries: the boys’ aimless wanderings around the city’s sprawling peripheries do not appear to have the same effect or meaning; their journeys are seen ‘come un moltiplicarsi dell’assenza, della mancanza di un “proprio”, di un luogo stabile’.³⁶⁰ The painstaking length of their odysseys around these peripheries induces a sense of pain which emanates within their bodies:

Il Ricetto e Alduccio se ne venivano piano piano, perché se l’erano fatta a fette da Pietralata, e strascinavano i piedi come se non fossero i loro, con le schiene dritte sulle gambe rammollite come stracci, mettendo in mostra però con aria fanfaronica la loro fiacca di paraguli. Si dovevano esser fatti almeno quattro chilometri, venendo da via Boccaleone, per la Prenestina, all’Acqua Bullicante, da una prateria piena di m..., a un villaggetto di catapecchie, da un palazzone grande come un monte a una fabbrichetta arruzzonita. E ancora non era finita, il più importante veniva adesso, che si dovevano fare tutta la Casilina.³⁶¹

³⁵⁹ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 109-10.

³⁶⁰ Giuseppe Perella and Michele Mancini, *Corpi e luoghi* (Rome: Theorema Edizioni, 1981), p. 310.

³⁶¹ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 633.

The exacting price of this drudgery is communicated through the boys' sore feet and weary legs. If the porosity of their labile, rhizomatic bodies and their incessant journeys on foot had been instrumental to forging bonds with their 'mother city' and a means of survival and resistance within the city's ecosystem, it gradually becomes the source of these bodies' maximum vulnerability when they are removed from these surroundings. Alienation means that the boys are no longer able to engage in a meaningful relationship with their symbolic order and this complicates their sense of identity. This spatial identity crisis undermines their symbiotic bond with the city and diminishes their capacity to exercise their agency. The boys' itineraries in the *borgate* cover great spatial expanses and their bodies begin to convey a sense of weariness, a dull plodding, a daily grind and a general sense of disorientation. Isolation and displacement in the city's abandoned peripheries are coupled with bodily breakdown, which ultimately leads to the extinction of the boys' corporeal identity and practices. The presentation of carnivalesque, unruly bodies in Pasolini's early Roman prose is replaced by vulnerable, abject and leaky bodies as his novels unfold. The leaky body is abject because the boundary between the symbolic and the abject, always fragile, has been dissolved. Begalone's ailing body is a telling example:

Pure Il Begalone stava a digiuno. [...] Era così debole che nemmeno la febbre riusciva a dargli un po' di colorito: e sì ce ne aveva almeno sei sette linee, come tutte le sere da quando era stato rilasciato da Forlanini; era tubercoloso da due o tre anni, e ormai non c'era niente da fare, gli restava sì o no ancora un anno di vita.³⁶²

³⁶² *Ragazzi di vita*, pp. 704-05.

A constant in Pasolini's later Roman prose is the excessive display of blood. As a highly visceral substance, blood presses itself upon all the senses. Blood becomes a synecdoche of the boys' abject bodies' inassimilable nature and of the impossibility of bringing them into linear time.

Il Begalone non la smetteva di tossire con dei raschi e delle espettorazioni che parevano botti dati con un mestolo dentro un bidone vuoto; la sua pelle gialla era coperta da una mano di rossore che nascondeva i cigolini; [...] Andò a estrarre dalla saccoccia dei calzoni un fazzoletto già tutto spruzzato di macchioline rosse, e tossendo si compresse con quello la bocca. Nessun gli dava retta. E lui tossiva, per conto suo, bestemmiando e dicendo i morti.³⁶³

Begalone's suffering assumes Christological connotations; like Christ he becomes a kingly victim followed by a large procession of onlookers:

Tirarono il Begalone a secco un po' più su sulla riva, e lo lasciarono così disteso, mentre loro si vestivano. Poi, in mezzo al pubblico di ragazzini che assistevano eccitati, rivestirono pure Begalone, che lasciava fare, con ogni tanto qualche nuovo sforzo di vomito. Per portarlo via, il Caciotta lo prese sotto le ascelle e il Tirillo per i piedi, e così cominciarono la marcia verso Tiburtino. [...]. Il Begalone, ch'era stato messo a terra dal Caciotta e dal Tirillo che si riposavano, come un cristo deposto dalla croce, proprio in quel momento cominciò a muoversi, e piano piano, preso subito sotto le ascelle dai compagni, si rialzò in piedi.³⁶⁴

³⁶³ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 754.

³⁶⁴ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 756.

Elaine Scarry's study of the vulnerability of the human body considers how the two most crucial moments in Christ's life have a particular resonance:

In western art and culture, by far the most endlessly visualized moments in Christ's life are his infancy and his hours of dying, the two periods in any life when the body is most prominent in asserting its claim. [...] It is perhaps also inevitable that the single image people again and again name as the most overwhelming, the Pietà, should be a conflation of the two, for it at once pictures Jesus crucified and Jesus in the infant world of his mother's lap.³⁶⁵

The Pietà metaphor used by Scarry brings us back to the symbiotic relationship between the boys and their maternal city. This image of both the infant and crucified Christ and the refractive suffering of the Virgin recalls a state of non-differentiation from the mother. The boys' suffering bodies assume some of the features of Christ's lacerated body. Begone's ailing body, straddling life and death, becomes the source of physical and moral contagion as the blood he coughs up appears to have a contaminating rather than regenerating function. His chaotic flows pose a threat to models of self-controlled, rational identity and remind the modern subject of the precarious basis of his own carefully regulated physicality.

David M. Stone observes how 'martyrdom is often referred to in patristic writings as a baptism through blood.'³⁶⁶ Caroline Walker Bynum endorses this point, arguing that blood has redemptive functions:

³⁶⁵ Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 216.

³⁶⁶ David M. Stone, 'The Signature Killer: Caravaggio and the Poetics of Blood', *The Art Bulletin*, 94 (2002), 572-93 (p. 580).

Patristic writers elaborated these New Testament themes to make blood a central theme in their theories of redemption. Already by the early third century, Tertullian stressed the bloodiness of Christ's death more than gospels had done, connecting *sanguis Christi* to martyrdom as well as the eucharist and baptism. To Tertullian, the spilling of blood was crucial to salvation, but what he emphasized above all were the positive effects of bloodshed: cleansing, sealing, freeing, protecting, restoring, vivifying, inebriating, reinstating, redeeming.³⁶⁷

The removal of the boys from the city causes them to internalize their own abjection and their loss of blood and other fluids causes them to assume a stereotypically female status. Body fluids are implicitly associated with femininity, maternity, pregnancy and the female body. Much like women's bodies of seepage, the boys' leaky bodies become increasingly unreliable, messy vessels which potentially pose a threat to social order. Taking her cue from the work of Mary Douglas, Elizabeth Grosz considers the unsettling nature of body fluids:

Body fluids attest to the permeability of the body, its necessary dependence on the outside, its liability to collapse into this outside (this is what death implies), to the perilous divisions between the body's inside and its outside. They affront a subject's aspiration toward autonomy and self-identity. They attest to a certain irreducible 'dirt' or disgust, a horror of the unknown or the specific that permeates, lurks, lingers, and at times leaks out of the body, a testimony of the fraudulence or impossibility of the 'clean' and 'proper'. [...] Body fluids flow, they seep, they infiltrate; their control is a

³⁶⁷ Caroline Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2007), p. 213.

matter of vigilance, never guaranteed.³⁶⁸

The subversive potential of these boys' leaky and transgressive bodies, however, tends to shore up rather than dismantle dominant forms of modern identity. Their bodies fulfil the function of revealing the violence at the heart of modern subjectivity and the modern subject's reliance on the endless abjection of his/her unruly body to expel what these unregulated bodies epitomize.

For Pasolini, the boys' bodies are not a potentially subversive threat but should be seen as alienated beings under constant threat from the post-war city centre. As the novels unfold, we gradually discover that the city is no longer a site of stimuli for these characters but, rather, becomes a policed centre of capital and commodities. Fast vehicles which collapse the distance between the city centre and these characters' slum dwellings in the peripheries are seen as potentially threatening. Tommaso and Lello's return journey from Rome's centre to their slum accommodation in Pietralata at the crack of dawn, after engaging in a joyride with other sidekicks, is an example of the threat that such modern technologies pose:

Come il tram fu al punto dell'Apollo rallentò, per voltare e infilare l'arco di Santa Bibiana. Tommasino scattò avanti, s'aggrappò al mancorrente, e, zompano sul predellino, entrò nella vettura, tutto bullo. [...] Ma di botto, con uno stridore che fece sudare l'ossa, la vettura diede una frenata così di brutto, che Tommaso fu sbattuto contro la groppa del fattorino. [...] Lello era seduto a terra, sul selciato fradicio, accanto alle rotaie del tram, all'altezza del rimorchio. [...] Lello se ne stava lì, con la schiena rigida e le gambe lunghe in avanti. Una mano la teneva contro i sampietrini bagnati,

³⁶⁸ Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 193-94.

l'altra la teneva sollevata davanti agli occhi. [...] Quello che Lello stava a osservare, era la sua mano: ma ridotta in uno stato che Tomasso, guardandola, divenne bianco come un cencio e cominciò a tremare. Era un mucchietto tutto maciullato d'ossa e di sangue. [...] Pure il piede era frattagliato: la scarpa, la carne, l'ossa formavano tutto una poltiglia rossa di sangue.³⁶⁹

Blood becomes the objectification of an inexpressible pain and of fragmented bodies. The idea that blood—which is normally seen, as Walker Bynum suggests, as life-giving, redemptive, and necessarily internal for life to exist—is represented externally, inverts understandings of the human body and instils a sense of threat and pollution. Blood assumes a contaminating rather than a regenerative function. The extroversion of Lello's mutilated body exceeds a defensive or simply passive resistance; his body breaches corporeal boundaries and bleeds into its surroundings. It assumes agency as a messy body and becomes ungovernable, much like the river Aniene's ungovernable waters.³⁷⁰ This brings us back to the theme of non-differentiation between these boys' bodies and their physical environment. Lello's liquefied, necrotic flesh tragically confirms rather than renegotiates narratives of their amorphous, abject feminine corporeality.

Lello's permanently disfigured body shocks Tommasino when he catches a sighting of him begging on the streets of Rome some months after the accident:

Lello, con la schiena contro il muretto, teneva la gamba infelice stesa sul marciapiede, col calzone tirato su, in modo che si vedeva la cianca senza

³⁶⁹ *Una vita violenta, in Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1, pp. 823- 1193 (pp.901-02).

³⁷⁰ I have suggested in Chapter Five that the river Aniene's agency is to be interpreted not simply because its burst river banks are act of defiance and protest against intensive building and bad urban planning, but also because flooding is an act that claims a role of partnership with the land.

piede: pure la manica era rivolta per mostrare il moncone. Con questo, si teneva stretto contro il petto un ragazzo d'un anno o due: l'altra mano, quella sana, la teneva lunga verso i passanti, per farsi dare l'elemosina. Nemmeno Lello vide Tomasso, perché non vedeva nessuno.³⁷¹

Tommaso feels a sense of shame because of his own apparently healthy body and his unease heightens as he observes Lello's martyred body:

Che razza di cambiamento aveva fatto Lello. [...] S'era sciupato, smagrito, pure i capelli, che una volta ci teneva tanto a curarseli, non parevano più quelli. La barba era di almeno sei o sette giorni, ma era chiara e rada e non si vedeva tanto: ma zozzo sì, era, e c'aveva nella pelle come un unto, qualcosa che gli trasudava, che pareva che non gli dovesse andar via nemmeno con la varecchina, da tanto tempo ormai gli era penetrata dentro, come quasi tutti gli stroppi, gli scianchettati, colleghi suoi.³⁷²

The portrayal of Lello's gaunt, disheveled and abject body, and the bodies of other injured or ailing characters, resonate with Kristeva's account of the dejected subject. Kristeva sees the deject as:

[a subject that] divides, excludes, and without properly speaking, wishing to know his abjections, is not at all aware of them. Often, moreover, he includes himself among them, thus casting within himself the scapel that carries out his separations. [...] A tireless builder, the deject is a sort of *stray*.³⁷³

³⁷¹ *Una vita violenta*, p. 1041.

³⁷² *Una vita violenta*, p. 1042.

³⁷³ Kristeva, p. 8.

Lello's mutilated body is rendered powerless through his emphatic embodiment. Scarry's analysis of the body in pain emphasizes the extent to which mutilation entails powerless embodiment:

[...] to have a body, a body made emphatic by being continually altered [...] is to have one's sphere of extension contracted down to the small circle of one's immediate physical presence. Consequently, to be intensely embodied is the equivalent of being unrepresented and [...] is almost always the condition of those without power.³⁷⁴

Increasingly distressed by their own powerlessness and displacement, these boys vehemently fight against their inevitable obliteration. Their constant need to avoid stasis, even at the cost of corporeal disintegration, brings them into contact with the city's new technologies and networks. I showed in Chapter Two how walking has for Pasolini's characters a creative function and acts a catalyst for story-making; I would also suggest the boys' leaky bodies are another trope which have the same creative role in Pasolini's prose. Such somatopes are like hard kernels in the stream of the narrative, and are not simply 'saturated with significance' as Bakhtin's definition envisages but are also provocations of significance.³⁷⁵ Serenella Iovino proposes that in order to re-open futures that seem to be closed, these wounds and blood loss must creatively 'intra-act' with our imagination and with the places' life. They must be turned into art, poetry and stories:

From a more-than-human and archaeological past to our trans-corporeal and postindustrial present, the narrative agency of Naples's porous bodies conveys the matter and the discourses of their formative histories. In so

³⁷⁴ Scarry, p. 207.

³⁷⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, ed. by M. Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 98.

doing, this agency creates ties of awareness, that, disclosing the processes at work in these bodies' becoming, restore their political imagination. The role of storytelling is essential: when human creativity 'plays' together with narrative agency of matter, intra-acting with it, it can generate stories and discourses that 'diffract' the complexity of our porous collective, producing emergences of meaning that amplify reality, also affecting our cognitive response to this reality.³⁷⁶

In the interplay between city and stories, leaky bodies become another story that injects a formal dissidence into the realm of Pasolini's narrative by interrupting or by changing the novel's development. These stories frame and facilitate the dramatization of the narrative and generate chronotopes. Giorgio Nisini observes how storytelling is the key narrative device underpinning the corpus of Pasolini's Roman prose:

Ma soprattutto il racconto, come propone la sua stessa definizione, racconta storie: e in Pasolini sono storie di ragazzi e di diseredati, di amori eretici e proibiti, di uomini che si muovono in un mondo – quello dell'Italia tra gli anni del dopoguerra e del boom – che la letteratura stenta a riconoscere, nonostante cerchi disperatamente di fotografare e afferrare. Un modo veloce, frantumato a cui la misura rapida e spezzata della forma breve, con i suoi meccanismi spesso difettosi, riesce a dare, forse, delle risposte adeguate. Seppure parziali.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁶ Iovino, pp. 38-39.

³⁷⁷ Giorgio Nisini, 'Sulla forma breve nella narrativa di Pier Paolo Pasolini', *Bollettino '900: Electronic Newsletter of '900 Italian Literature*, Vol. 1-2, 2005. <http://www.centrostudipierpaolopasolinicasarsa.it/molteniblog/riflessioni-sulla-forma-breve-nella-narrativa-di-ppp-di-giorgio-nisini/>

Confined Space in the Forlanini Hospital

The third chapter of the second part of *Una vita violenta* unfolds in the men's Tuberculosis division of Forlanini Hospital. The architectural layout of this division was designed to isolate and confine tuberculosis patients. The putative concern of the patients' health and welfare is counterpointed with the disciplinary and control functions of the hospital. Its purpose-built structure was conceived not only to section off its patients but also emancipate them from their unhealthy collective identity and inculcate a modern, self-disciplined and critical consciousness in place of their arbitrary and violent impulses. Much like the prison cell, the confinement of the patients implies their withdrawal and seclusion as well as their exposure to surveillance. The health conditions of the patients are quite diverse: while some are seriously ill, others are simply convalescent or overcoming a bout of pleurisy. The heightened sense of abjection in this first group is palpable:

Il male li aveva spolpati, gli spigoli sporgevano di sotto gli occhi sgarando quasi la pelle, e tutti s'erano fatti scucchioni, con dei buchi nelle ganasse: così scorticati, rosicati, con quella pellaccia grigia, le zazzette lunghe sopra il colletto dei panni logori e stramiciati che indossavano, sembravano ancora più boia.³⁷⁸

Despite this promiscuous mix of bodies, the patients' mass confinement becomes the means by which they assert a collective status and take a certain degree of control over their living quarters. This situation becomes exacerbated during a strike staged by the eight hundred para-medical and surveillance staff working in the hospital. The emergency, initially dealt with by the arrival of a group of soldiers to guarantee essential

³⁷⁸ *Una vita violenta*, p. 1096.

services, turned into an opportunity for the patients to vent their anxieties and assert their rights:

Gli infermieri, i sanatoriali, [...] armarono lo sciopero. [...] Per rimpiazzo, si presentarono [...] due o tre compagnie di burbe, della CRI, granatieri. [...] I granatieri lavoravano bene bene, ma i malati cominciarono a cioccare, a dare in smanie: lo sapevano che con l'igiene bisognava stare in campana, che bastava poco, specie nella pulizia dei piatti, delle stoviglie, perché il male s'attaccasse: e specie a quelli ch'erano convalescenti o ch'erano soltanto pleuritici non gli ficcava per niente che della gente che non ne masticava, che non aveva pratica, venisse a lavorare al posto degli scioperanti.³⁷⁹

The patients' resistance can be seen in terms of Foucault's concept of 'productive power', with its emphasis on the agency of the suppressed, and the subversion of institutional closure, and the subsequent disruption of historically determined outcomes. This occurs, Foucault contends, because power relations are productive, as they are capable of being exercised by all social agents; ubiquitous, in that they emanate from all points in a social field; and contingent, as the forces of dominance tend to create the conditions for counter-flows of resistance to emerge.³⁸⁰ Foucault understands the acts of power and the acts of resistance as being symbiotic, as the potential for resistance is always present at the frontiers of authority: 'where there is power, there is resistance, and [...] the resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power'.³⁸¹ One of the more contentious parts of Foucault's observations is that while power inevitably creates

³⁷⁹ *Una vita violenta*, pp. 1083-84.

³⁸⁰ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1990), pp. 92-102.

³⁸¹ Foucault, p. 95.

the conditions in which ‘it’ is resisted, resistance itself can only mimic the dominant discourses of power. This analysis, therefore, retains Foucault’s concept of productive power but also takes account of the relational and situated dimensions of the patients’ struggle. The latter are determined not by the struggle between power and counter-power, but by the representation of the patients and by the formation of the hospital conditions. The struggle is spatially and historically determined by the hospital management, which recalls past struggles, and by the agency of the prisoners who respond pragmatically and situationally to the current conditions which contain their practices of resistance. Similarly, the transitory character of domination (and of resistance) ensures the ‘strategic field of power relations’ is on a constantly shifting course.³⁸² While this alludes to the dialectical relationship of power, the cycle of social struggle never comes to a finite conclusion; rather, resistance amounts to pragmatic, incremental shifts or gradual adjustments that do not accomplish radical or long-lasting changes.

The dialectics of the struggle between the patients and the police enable the patients to rediscover a sense of collectivity. This collective experience, captured by the interplay of the patients’ physical vulnerability and ingenuity, between intense moments of gathering and of the tedium of the hospital wards, is the first real and concrete act of defiance in Pasolini’s Roman prose. The patients’ short-lived occupation of the hospital constitutes an attempt not only to question the institution’s hygienic conditions but more significantly the disciplinary regime to which they are subjected. The authorities’ violent reaction to the protest and the undoing of segregated gendered spaces in the hospital underlines the weakness of the hospital’s modern disciplinary mechanisms:

Ormai nei giardini erano pochi ancora quelli che sgambettavano, coi

³⁸² Foucault, p. 102.

poliziotti coi manganelli sempre a ruota: la maggior parte s'erano infilati senza distinzione di reparti, le donne tra gli uomini, gli uomini tra le donne. Impalettarono tutte le porte. I poliziotti tentarono di sbrillarle e d'entrare, per occupare l'interno. Allora i malati acchiapparono tutto quello che gli capitava sotto mano, che si potesse sollevare e buttare [...] Un po' alla volta rifurono tutti millecinquecento duemila, quanti erano, sul piazzale davanti alla direzione, piazzati lungo i cancelli dell'ingresso di Viale Ramazzini: erano soddisfatti, e, nella soddisfazione, si vedeva meglio quanta commozione, quanto pianto, quanto veleno avevano negli occhi.³⁸³

The ways in which the prisoners' oral communication and camaraderie undo the normative forms of subjectivity and their virtual reconstitution of non-modern modes of communication set the seeds for a differently grounded sociality. Their sidestepping, advances and withdrawals as their protests ensue demonstrate how the patients attempt to take control of the hospital and reclaim their bodies from institutional confinement. As they momentarily take control of the hospital, the intimate contiguity of its isolationist architectonics becomes reversed and actually enables a flourishing of carnivalesque anarchy:

Ogni posto era buono, per nascondersi: l'ospedale era diventato un porto di mare, non ci si capiva niente: quelli che si dovevano nascondere per non farsi bere, cambiavano i loro posti con degli amici di altri reparti, cercando di nascondersi la faccia, con delle fasce, con degli occhiali neri: o si buttavano nelle sedie agli sdrai, sulle verande, rannicchiandosi sotto le

³⁸³ *Una vita violenta*, p. 1087.

coperte.³⁸⁴

It seems significant that this protest emerges not in the remote and alien spaces of the city's peripheries but rather in the heart of one of its modern institutions. The patients invent means of communicating by creating provisional but effective forms of oral communication, whose very existence undermines the disciplinary aims of the hospital itself. The struggle can be understood as a counter-modern reactivation of an oral community within the modern structures of an institution which was designed to destroy them. Confinement is seen to convert the hospital's inpatient population into an undifferentiated mass of appendages of a disciplinary regime even though its original intention was to individuate and modernize them.

The violent reaction of the police and their concerted assault on the patients' vulnerable bodies instils a feeling of fear that finally re-establishes order. Even in the wake of police repression, some prisoners attempt to pursue the protest. The practical use of their bodies, in collusion with those of some hospital staff, as means of transport and communication, reveals how they re-imagine their spatial and corporeal relations:

Tommaso s'era messo d'accordo con la burinozza, parlando tutto a segni e allusioni. [...] A ora di cena, la burinozza portò nella camerata di Tommaso due porzioni in più: giobbava, e giobbando faceva vedere a tutti che giobbava. [...] Tommaso aiutato da Lorenzo fece due cartocci, stretti stretti, se li mise sotto giacca e s'avventurò. [...] Gli lasciò il mangiare e se ne andò, guardandosi bene attorno, in campana, ché lì vicino c'era la sala dei sorveglianti.³⁸⁵

³⁸⁴ *Una vita violenta*, p. 1089.

³⁸⁵ *Una vita violenta*, p. 1093.

The conspiracy between Tommaso and the hospital caterer and the invisibility of their actions shelters alternative forms of living which are the seeds of a more humane and dignified way of organizing society. While the patients' potentially contagious alternative sociality may not be sufficiently strong to subvert the hospital's social order it does attempt to deconstruct its disciplinary apparatus. This is not to suggest that the patients are attempting to recompose the earlier non-modern community represented at the beginning of *Ragazzi* and the communal values on which it was predicated. Nonetheless, by deconstructing the hospital's disciplinary organization, the patients forged a life-in-common which peculiarly reconfigures the underlying forms of living rehearsed at the beginning of Pasolini's first novel. It helps to explain how those who passed a substantial stretch of time in an institutionalised structure never failed to engage in compensatory camaraderie. The patients' atavistic impulses, which hospital life had tried to suppress, continue to prevail through close bonding, banter and laughter:

‘Chi è che ha scureggiato?’ Fece il Gaggio, guardando mezzo fuori la finestra. Il Banana, annusando a schifio pure lui, gli batté una mano sulla spalla: ‘Eh, qualche fracicone!’ gridò puntando con la coda dell’occhio le guardie. Tutti erano paciocconi, contenti, ridevano con le ganasse gonfie, guardandosi tra di loro, o fuori la finestra. ‘Eeeeeeh’, rifece di nuovo il Gaggio, battendo forte le mani palma contro palma, con gomiti alti, e poi fregandosele bonaccione, ‘eeeh, bella partita’. ‘Bada’, gridò Il Cecio a un tratto, ‘che so’ sei mesi!’. E si mise a ridere, pacioso, con la lingua tra le labbra, in modo che ridendo si sbrodolava tutto di saliva.³⁸⁶

³⁸⁶ *Una vita violenta*, p. 1096.

The reconstitution of non-modern modes of sociality in modern spaces affirms how this inner community not only breaks down the boredom of confinement and boosts the patients' morale but also confronts the rationale and the spatial logic of the hospital's architectonics and frustrates its aim of producing isolation and individuation:

L'ilarità ormai aveva invaso tutti: un'espressione di contentezza e di ottimismo generale era calata nei loro occhi, e ci s'era piazzata con una luce piena di innocenza e di virtù. Continuavano a ridere, guardandosi, e nel ridere premevano la scucchia contro il collo, oppure facevano no, no, con la capoccia, come per dire: 'Semo forti, semo'.³⁸⁷

The pathological body rather than the disciplined subject becomes the vehicle of a possible alternative society. The resistance staged by the patients undermines the State's endeavour to supersede outmoded or primitive social formations and constitutes an attempt to create spaces which are adjacent rather than 'prior' to the modern State.

Conclusion

Pasolini's street boys' bodies are represented as being in a symbiotic relationship with their non-human world in his early Roman prose. This relationship is predicated on porosity and the mutual interdependence of its characters and their natural settings. Their immersion in these environments is shored up by walking and swimming. This relational equilibrium and utopian environmental imagination are overturned as Pasolini's characters are relocated to the city's peripheries. Resistance towards the constitution of a self-regulated subject are played out through practices of walking, defecating and petty thievery. Displacement, alienation and poverty gradually take their toll on the boys'

³⁸⁷ *Una vita violenta*, p. 1096-97.

bodies. The openness of their rhizomatic bodies which had cultivated recursive relationships with the non-human world in the city centre begins to expose the boys' bodies to the fraught living conditions of the city's peripheries. The boys' bodies gradually emerge as being leaky and abject and stand in opposition to models of the self-regulated modern individual. Their rhizomatic bodies continue to suspend outside linear time.

Their fate is not, however, to participate in a capitalist hegemony which redeems only those who cohere with its unilateral declaration of progress and prosperity but to persist in isolation. Their utopian promise lies within their amorphous bodies, in their difficultly subsumable irregularity. Pasolini's account of these boys' bodies in Forlanini hospital contests the inevitable subsumption of their primitive corporeal practices and promotes the exploitation of the possibilities they offer. The larger direction of Pasolini's novels is intersected by 'corporeal' events which often move the novel in different directions. The boys' bodies are one of a series of chronotopes which Pasolini uses as a catalyst for his storytelling. In the chapter that follows, I turn to themes of dirt and waste with the intention of moving forward and building on themes of porosity, abjection, and displacement which have already emerged in this chapter.

Dirt and Space in Pier Paolo Pasolini's Roman Prose

This chapter looks at the way dirt and pollution are represented in Pier Paolo Pasolini's Roman prose. It considers how Pasolini writes about dirt, which is not to be understood in the negative sense of filth. It begins by considering how dirt is presented as being a natural and indispensable part of the essence of Rome and how the sense of smell is used to conflate Pasolini's characters' bodies with their local environment. It goes on to look at how the presence of waste in Rome's city centre gradually begins to be seen as dangerous and threatening and casts those who are in closest proximity to it into a similar light. It considers how vulgar or obscene traces of dirt assume a variety of figurative guises and narrative functions and focuses on how such dirt and waste are gradually removed from the public realm and put into circulation by urban planners and reformers in their attempt to re-represent the city as a modern, hygienic place which is receptive to capital and investment. This involves looking at the city's post-war urban organizational strategy as an endeavour to flush out of sight all human beings and materials which were seen as dirty and redundant. The chapter concludes by considering the author's holistic view of the city's dirt and waste and by examining the privileged position Pasolini attributes to discarded objects and places which have fallen into disuse; it also evinces his growing concern about toxic and packaged waste which had begun to haunt and contaminate much of post-war Rome's urban landscape.

Pasolini and his 'Poetics of Dirt'

Pasolini engaged with the theme of dirt shortly after his arrival in Rome. His slum accommodation in the abject and far-flung Roman periphery of Ponte Mammolo brought him into immediate contact with the phenomenon. It becomes quickly apparent that dirt

does not stymie Pasolini's fascination, but it actually triggers it. In a letter to his close friend Silvana Mauri he provides an account of his squalid surroundings:

Ho appena aperto i balconi di quella stanza [...] quella triste, muratoriale stanza sospesa nel fango. [...] Aprendo questi balconi e urtando col petto contro il petto della primavera, già adulta, quasi sfatta, la vera, tremenda primavera romana, che sa, e il profumo è come un enorme parafango scottato dal sole, una lamiera, di stracci bagnati e seccati al caldo, di ferrivecchi, di scarpate brucianti di immondizie.³⁸⁸

The significance of images of dirt and confusion which emerge from this passage lies in striking contrast with the received wisdom of post-war Roman city planners and authorities who spoke about progress, order and reason. Pasolini's focus on the city's dirt and degeneration enables him to look with a critical eye on post-war Rome's sanitation project.³⁸⁹ Part of this project envisaged the relocation of thousands of poor families from congested and crowded inner-city neighbourhoods to the city's ever-expanding peripheries.³⁹⁰ This initiative coincided with the arrival of throngs of displaced and destitute peasant migrants from other towns and cities from the region in which Rome is

³⁸⁸ Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Lettere (1940-1954)*, ed. by Nico Naldini (Turin: Einaudi, 1986), p. 473.

³⁸⁹ As regards bourgeois notions of health and cleanliness, in an article dedicated to one of Pasolini's earliest Roman essays, 'Squarci di notti romane' (1950), Michael Syrimis observes that 'one soon realizes that Pasolini wishes to subvert the bourgeois reader's habitual notions of health, since 'healthy' here signifies a vitality nurtured by an environment the sanitary of which negates bourgeois assumptions'. See Michael Syrimis, 'Squarci di Notti Romane: Pasolini's Authorial Confessions', *Romance Notes*, vol. 52(1) 2012, 89-96 (p. 91).

³⁹⁰ In the reformist imagination of urban planners and reformers these inner-city neighbourhoods were 'blots' on the city map that needed to be surgically removed to stop further infection of the city. An initiative to remove poorer families from the inner-city's overcrowded neighbourhoods was launched twenty years previously by Fascist urban planners. The housing projects that Fascist planners designed were known as *borgate* and were built on the city's edges; the main housing projects designed and built in post-war Rome were part of the state-sponsored INA Casa housing scheme. For further information about the INA Casa scheme see Stephanie Zeier Pilat, *Reconstructing Italy: the INA-Casa Neighborhoods in the Postwar Era* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

located (Lazio) and also from the south of Italy.³⁹¹ Much of the housing stock in these peripheries was jerry-built and often lacked the most basic facilities.³⁹² The new neighbourhoods were built on the city's edge and ultimately had the same effect as the Fascist *borgate* which had been designed to isolate the city's poorer classes from wealthier city dwellers.³⁹³ Urban historian Antonio Cederna vehemently condemned the ungoverned expansion of the Rome in the 1950s, observing how the Council of Rome systemically failed to approve a proper plan to facilitate a more organized and thought-out development of the city's ever-expanding borders. In an article originally published in May 1958, Cederna warns that:

[...] se Roma non ha ancora dopo tanti anni una indicazione certa per la sua propria sorte futura, la colpa è anche in gran parte dell'opinione pubblica, della sua orgogliosa ignoranza in materia urbanistica. [...] Che la città sia oggi un tutto unitario in cui ogni minima iniziativa si ripercuote immediatamente in bene o in male su tutta la città e sulla vita di tutti; che la

³⁹¹ Marcella Delle Donne observes that 'from 1951 to 1961 the population of Rome had passed from 1,651, 754 to 2,246,883 inhabitants. In the same decade, Rome had entered a new season of expansion of its urban areas, which started with the Catholic Jubilee of 1950 and ended with the Olympic Games ten years later'. Marcella Delle Donne, 'Rome the Capital: Impending Suburbs and Strategies of Integration and Decentralization', *Journal of Architectural Education*, Vol. 46(1), 1992, 21-27 (p. 22).

³⁹² Italo Insolera refers to the findings of a parliamentary inquiry into living conditions in the Borgata Gordiani conducted between 1951 and 1953 and notes that: 'Le case non hanno acqua e gabinetti: questi ultimi e le fontane (che debbono servire anche come lavatoi) sono sparsi nella zona, e debbono servire ad un determinato numero di abitazioni. [...] Le costruzioni, fabbricate con la massima fretta ed economia, sono deteriorate dall'uso e dal tempo; i tetti non riescono a impedire che l'acqua filtri nei locali sottostanti, generando un'umidità funesta, accresciuta dall'acqua che affiora dal pavimento, data la mancanza di vespai, che trasuda dai muri e rende tutto madido. [...] Sono i 25 gabinetti a disposizione di una popolazione di più di cinquemila persone; su ciascun lato presentano aperture prive del tutto di porte o chiuse da ripari di lamiera: la sporcizia di questi locali è indescrivibile, per il fatto che sono di tutti e di nessuno e vengono quindi raramente puliti. [...] La stessa situazione antigienica presentano i tre lavatoi pubblici dove sono lavati i panni di tutti gli abitanti, data la mancanza di acqua nelle case'. Italo Insolera, *Roma moderna: Un secolo di storia urbanistica* (Turin: Einaudi, 1993), pp. 139-40.

³⁹³ Between 1928 and 1930, the *borgate rapidissime* of San Basilio, Prenestino and Gordiani sprang up; between 1935 and 1940 those of Trullo, Tiburtino III, Pietralata, Tufello, Val Meliana, Primavalle, Tor Maranico, and Quatticiolo arose. See Delle Donne, p. 22.

degradazione di un immenso patrimonio storico, non meno che la congestione del traffico, sia il risultato diretto dal caos che regna in periferia dove la città è stata venduta agli speculatori; che le condizioni incivili in cui vivono centinaia di migliaia di persone siano la contropartita dei miliardi rubati da speculatori, mercanti e monopolisti di aree.³⁹⁴

In an essay entitled 'I tuguri' (1958), Pasolini conveys similar sentiments about the abject living conditions of the displaced and marginalized inhabitants on the city's peripheries:

A Roma i villaggi di tuguri si contano una decina [...]. Il Mandrione è uno di questi [...] si sale, e si entra in una specie di budello: da una parte l'enorme muraglione dell'acquedotto, dall'altra una ferrovia, tra argini fetidi e immondezze [...] Non sono abitazioni umane, queste che si allineano sul fango. Fatti di assi fradice, muriccioli, scalcinati, bandoni, tela incerta. [...] Il fango entra in casa.³⁹⁵

Despite these squalid living conditions and the concern that they raise for Pasolini, his conspicuous investment in the theme of dirt assumes an importance that goes beyond simply bringing issues of social injustice and displacement into relief. In Pasolini's world 'the terminal is often the site of the germinal, the place where a new phase in the cycle begins'.³⁹⁶ The second verse of one of the poet's most renowned poems, 'Sesso, consolazione della misera', elucidates his ideas clearly:

³⁹⁴ Antonio Cederna, *Mirabilia Urbis* (Turin: Einaudi, 1965), p. 22.

³⁹⁵ Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'I tuguri', in *Romanzi e racconti*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, vol. 1 (Milan: Mondadori, 1998), pp 1463-66 (p. 1464).

³⁹⁶ I came across this idea of ability of the terminal to transform into the germinal in Hugh Haughton's article on the theme of garbage in Derek Mahon's poetry. I will take up this argument in the last section of this chapter. See Hugh Haughton, 'The Bright Garbage of the Incoming Wave: Rubbish in the Poetry of Derek Mahon', *Textual Practice*, Vol.

nei rifiuti del mondo, nasce
un nuovo mondo.
nascono leggi nuove
dove non c'è più legge
nasce un nuovo
onore dove onore è il disonore
nascono potenze e nobiltà
feroci, nei mucchi di tuguri
nei luoghi sconfinati dove credi
che la città finisca, e che invece
ricomincia, nemica, ricomincia
per miglia di volte, con ponti
e labirinti, cantieri sterri
dietro mareggiate di grattacieli
che coprono interi orizzonti.³⁹⁷

The redemption of debris and discarded objects is therefore a fundamental strand of Pasolini's 'poetics of dirt'. Cast-offs and scraps frequently become for Pasolini a source of rebirth and assume a sense of new beginnings. Dario Gugliano sums up Pasolini's passion for marginalia thus:

Nothing could be more mortifying for a poetic practice, that on the contrary, tries to make known how all that is peripheral, marginal, humble and last resort 'infamous' [...] is the very centre of history's movement. This does not banally say that history, as we know it, is the history of the humble, but, instead, that it is not possible to understand historical movements if within them is not inscribed all that official narration tends to remove, to marginalize, to make, in the name of progressive theology, peripheral, surpassed, outdated.³⁹⁸

16(2), 2002, 323-43 (p. 330).

³⁹⁷ Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Poesie, La religione del mio tempo* (Milan: Garzanti, 1961), p. 14.

³⁹⁸ Dario Gugliano, 'For an Aesthetics of the Apocalypse: Body, History, Power and Pasolini's Revelation of a Consumer Culture', *Third Text*, Vol. 23(6), 2009, 697-702 (p. 702).

Mary Douglas, in her seminal work on the theme of dirt, *Purity and Danger*, states that dirt is about maintaining good citizenship, where beliefs and practices about dirt and contagion uphold social values about what counts as acceptable and unacceptable. Douglas succinctly defines the essential nature of dirt:

As we know it, dirt is essentially disorder. There is no such thing as absolute dirt: it exists in the eye of the beholder [...] Eliminating it is not a negative moment, but a positive effort to organise the environment.³⁹⁹

Pasolini's poetics of dirt calls for a revision of society's ordered relations. He invites his readers to acknowledge society's redundant population and to re-evaluate his characters' perception of and relationship with dirt. His poetics are also an appeal to reconsider discarded objects and places and to see and use them as the raw material with/through which to imagine a better society.

Critical Scholarship

This chapter analyses the topic of dirt which, although of considerable importance in Pasolini's Roman prose, has curiously remained at the periphery of scholarly attention. One of the first critics to broach this issue in Pasolini's first Roman novel, *Ragazzi di vita*, was the Marxist Carlo Salinari. His critical response to Pasolini's representation of dirt was particularly harsh:

Pasolini sceglie apparentemente come argomento il mondo del sottoproletariato romano, ma appunta il suo interesse – con gusto quasi morboso – sugli aspetti più sporchi, abietti, sordidi, scomposti e torbidi di quel mondo. Il fango, la sporcizia, la polvere, *la zella*, dominano in tutte le

³⁹⁹ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966), p. 2.

sue pagine; il grasso, il sudore, i cattivi odori, la impudicizia ne sono il condimento. [...] L'elemento dominante, cioè, è quel puzzo, quella sporcizia fisica e morale.⁴⁰⁰

Salinari goes on to take issue with the degraded version of Rome that Pasolini represents and accuses him of tainting his interpretation with excessive artifice:

Guardate che cos'è una borgata: 'l'aria era tirata e ronzante [...] le pisciate anche appena fatte, che rigavano il marciapiede erano secche; i mucchi di immondezza si sfregolavano abbrustoliti e senza più odore'. [...] È facile scorgere sotto il falso verismo delle parole il torbido dell'ispirazione. Ma se ci fermassimo a questo punto non avremmo scavato abbastanza, non saremmo arrivati alla matrice sia delle parole che del contenuto, all'asse ideologico dell'ispirazione del Pasolini'.⁴⁰¹

A similar deprecation of the theme of dirt in Pasolini's *Ragazzi* is expressed by Alberto Asor Rosa. While Salinari dubs Pasolini's novel as untruthful and accuses him of resorting to false naturalism and of exposing the city's most unseemly and deviant shades Asor Rosa contends that Pasolini actually prefers the underdeveloped, dirty, war-torn city to the burgeoning, post-war and sanitized one:

C'è un episodio del romanzo che esemplarmente ci indica l'oscillare della posizione pasoliniana: è quando Ricetto ritorna a Monteverde, nei luoghi della sua infanzia, e li trova mutati, non più selvaggi, ma tutti imbiancati e asettici. Come accennavano trattando la vicenda e le sue strutture narrative,

⁴⁰⁰ Carlo Salinari, 'Preludio e fine del realismo in Italia', *Interpretazioni di Pasolini*, ed. by Giampaolo Borghello, Savelli, Rome, 1977, pp. 164-68, (pp. 166-67).

⁴⁰¹ Salinari, p. 167.

viene da pensare che Pasolini preferisca il sottosviluppo al progresso [...] se consideriamo attentamente l'episodio, vediamo che il dato principale è la scomparsa della sporcizia, della 'zella' che già Salinari ha indicato come centro ossessivo di molte descrizioni.⁴⁰²

In a similar vein, Lorenzo Canova describes Pasolini's vision of the city as 'putrefatta e dolente, marchiata prima dalla violenza della guerra e poi dalla miseria'.⁴⁰³ These critics adopt an essentially antithetical reading of the theme of dirt in Pasolini's prose where meaning is implied by the construction of clean *versus* dirty binaries. I do not consider the employment of such binaries as helpful and I propose to analyze Pasolini's deep engagement with the social and environmental realities of post-war Rome's urban renewal programme from a different perspective. My concern regards how Pasolini's interest in dirt is tied up with issues relating to a world of cast-offs and how he looks to dispossessed inhabitants and discarded objects to find new life and to develop a more inclusive society.

Other critics writing about the dirt-related themes in Pasolini's Roman prose have focused their attention on single issues. Mirella Serri shows how smells play a significant role in Pasolini's description of his young Roman characters: 'L'anima delle cose [...] è nell'odore che persiste "legato alle pietre come un'anima, l'odore dell'immondizia e della biancheria sporca riscaldata dal sole"'.⁴⁰⁴ She also evaluates the seductive qualities that

⁴⁰² Alberto Asor Rosa, *Scrittori e popolo. Saggio sulla letteratura popolare in Italia* (Rome: Samòna e Savelli, 1965), p. 63. The term 'zella', which both Salinari and Asor Rosa refer to, was frequently used by Pasolini in his Roman prose. 'Zella' is a Roman dialect term which corresponds to terms such as 'lercio' in standard Italian. Siti and De Laude defined this term simply as 'sporcizia' in their glossary of *Ragazzi*. See *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 771.

⁴⁰³ Lorenzo Canova, 'Per quartieri sparsi di luce e miseria: Pier Paolo Pasolini e Roma tra pittura, cinema, scrittura e fotografia', in *Storie dell'Arte*, vol. 107, 2004, 135-51 (p. 146).

⁴⁰⁴ Mirella Serri, 'Il linguaggio malandrino di Pasolini da *Storie della città di Dio* a *Ragazzi di vita* e *Una vita violenta*', in *Lezioni su Pasolini*, ed. by De Mauro Tullio and Francesco Ferri (Ripatransone: Sestante, 1997), pp. 357-66 (p. 361).

smells have for Pasolini: ‘Il contatto fisico che Pasolini cerca nei tram stracolmi di persone, negli affollatissimi cinema teatro, nell’immagine dei corpi nudi degli adolescenti che fanno il bagno nel Tevere, arriva attraverso l’olfatto’.⁴⁰⁵

In a recent study on the role of smell in Italian literature, Chiara Fabbian shows how Pasolini deliberately employs smell to distinguish his characters, and to set them apart from the rest of society: ‘il puzzo e la impurità sono la dimensione olfattiva non solo dell’animalità ma anche della diversità, dell’esclusione dal tessuto sociale borghese con la sua pretesa purezza’.⁴⁰⁶ Fabio Vighi extends Fabbian’s contention further by claiming that Pasolini’s Roman characters are excremental subjects:

What is universally valid for him [Pasolini] is not the neutral ideals of the Enlightenment inherited by liberal Europe, through which one must comply with social order; rather, in a significant twist, what matters is the concrete existence of the ‘excremental subject’, the subject who contradicts social order by being denied its privileges, exposing as a result the weakness of its abstract formations.⁴⁰⁷

The theme of excrement in *Ragazzi* has also been considered by Francesco Muzzioli. His analysis explores the curious link between human waste and the moon.⁴⁰⁸

La regressione nevrotica procede in vari gradi, fra cui una tappa assai importante è segnata dall’esibizione dell’escremento. L’episodio del furto

⁴⁰⁵ Serri, p. 362.

⁴⁰⁶ Chiara Fabbian, *Naso d’autore. L’odorato nella cultura e nella storia letteraria italiana* (Ravenna: Longo, 2012), p. 152.

⁴⁰⁷ Fabio Vighi, ‘Pasolini and Exclusion: Zizek, Agamben and the Modern Sub-proletariat’, *Theory Culture and Exclusion*, Vol. 20, 2003, 99-121 (p. 102).

⁴⁰⁸ The conflation of excrement and lunar imagery is quite common in Pasolini’s Roman prose. In addition to Muzzioli’s observations it is worth noting the simile between the moon and a rubbish container which appears in *Ragazzi*: ‘una luna grossa come un bidone’ (*Ragazzi di vita*, p. 637).

dei cavolfiori è in questo senso emblematico: qui i tre personaggi (Il Ricetto, Il Lenzetta e il sor Antonio) abbandonano sul luogo del misfatto quel *grumus merdae* che vuol essere compensazione ludico-derisoria degli ortaggi esportati. Tutta l'operazione si svolge poi sotto la candida luce della luna, metaforicamente paragonata a un 'sederino d'argento'.⁴⁰⁹

This theme has also been taken up by Victoria Tillson who focuses on the characters' promiscuous toiletry practices in the author's second Roman novel, *Una vita violenta*:

the author filled the text's pages with expletives, and presented his characters defecating and urinating in the streets as well as publicly engaging in sexual acts. Pasolini's Rome is undoubtedly a lurid, miserable, infernal environment swathed in mud, littered with trash and burnt by burning sun.⁴¹⁰

She goes on to argue how urinating in public becomes a subversive act which the boys deploy in an attempt to secure a place for themselves within the city:

The denial of the right to the city leaves [Pasolini's] protagonist, Tommasino, as well as his companions, the only option of finding alternative and subversive ways of making their presence noticed, such as writing on their school desks or urinating on the streets, miniscule and unremarkable traces of their presence in Rome.⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁹ Francesco Muzzioli, *Come leggere 'Ragazzi di vita' di Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Milan: Mursia, 1975), p. 67.

⁴¹⁰ Victoria G. Tillson, 'Rome's Modern Margins: The Borgate in Pasolini's *Una vita violenta*', *Romance Notes*, Vol. 48(3), 2008, 313-25 (p. 316).

⁴¹¹ Tillson, p. 318.

A series of studies coming from Anglo-American circles has dealt with the issue of dirt in both Pasolini's Roman prose and other works dedicated to the city which he was working on concurrently. Keala Jewell focuses her attention on Pasolini's first Roman poetry collection, *Le ceneri di Gramsci*, observing that: 'the Roman landscapes in his poems are littered with "sporczia afrodisiaca" (aphrodisiac dirt) with "sterri fradici e mucchi secchi immondizia" (soaking holes and dry heaps of filth)'.⁴¹² Jewell goes on to quote observations made by the Italian poet, Alfredo Giuliani, who surmises that *Le ceneri di Gramsci* adopted Papini's provocative view on 'the beauty of garbage'.⁴¹³ In another study, John David Rhodes observes how Pasolini's 'passion for the unlovely' and his poetics of the periphery do not simply reflect the modernist impulse to embrace detritus in order to invert hierarchies. Instead, Pasolini's intimacy with Roman particularity aims to uncover the messiness of geopolitics. He claims that 'the vision of the world that these films provide us with is a sticky sort of vision'.⁴¹⁴

In a more recent study, Monica Seger has highlighted Pasolini's preoccupation with the rapid and ongoing slippage between urban and rural spaces and his interest in interstitial spaces. Seger explains Pasolini's predilection for such in-between places in the following terms:

[...] his work displays a fascination with interstitial spaces between the city and country. [...] Pasolini does not feature landscapes that are fully cemented over and built upon or those that are fully polluted; instead, he explores spaces that are in mid-process, host to emblems of the city as well

⁴¹² Keala Jewell, *The Poiesis of History. Experimenting with Genre in Postwar Italy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 27.

⁴¹³ Jewell, p. 27.

⁴¹⁴ John David Rhodes, *Stupendous, Miserable City: Pasolini's Rome* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2007), p. 55.

as country, culture as well as nature.⁴¹⁵

Pasolini's ongoing interest in what Rhodes has called the unlovely and what Seger has described as interstitial spaces privileges a logic of ambiguity that is apt to call into question themes such as dirt and to re-evaluate their essence and value.

These observations raise several issues which evince the passion which Pasolini conveyed in relation to themes associated with dirt and waste. They are, however, primarily focused on single issues and therefore do not engage fully with dirt as chronotope; the scope of their analysis needs, therefore, to be broadened. This chapter aims to address this gap by interrogating dirt-related themes which I believe have a crucial role in Pasolini's Roman prose. I will look at how Pasolini's interest in dirt and waste is tied up with issues relating to a world of cast-offs: dispossessed and excremental inhabitants; the dumping of domestic, industrial, and toxic waste; the redemption of discarded places and objects. I will do this by engaging further with some of the critical concerns outlined above, using some of them as a starting point from which I will go on to develop my main arguments. I will try to show how Pasolini, through dirt-related issues, questions social hierarchies and proposes new ways of coping with the changes to urban landscape and environment.

Theoretical Scholarship on Dirt

In recent years there has been a proliferation of scholarly literature on the subject of dirt and its related meanings. There are a number of distinct yet related sub-categories which fall under the category of dirt. These include waste, junk, rubbish/trash and pollution. Pasolini's concern with these overlapping phenomena emerges through his

⁴¹⁵ Monica Seger, *Landscape in Between: Environmental Change in Modern Italian Literature and Film* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2015), p. 66-69.

representation of different dirt-related themes. I will look in this chapter at the author's interest in themes of smell, excrement, order, interment and sanitation and finally dereliction and detritus in an attempt to understand his intense engagement with these overlapping phenomena.

Writing on the theme of smell, scholars have argued that bodies that smell often stir up visceral sensations like repulsion and disgust. Anthony Synnott claims that odours can be invested with multiple meanings:

Odour is many things: a boundary-marker, a status symbol, a distance-maintainer, an impression management technique, a schoolboy's joke or protest, and a danger-signal – but it is above all a statement about who one is. Odours define the individual and the group, as do sight, sound and other senses; and smell, like them, mediates social interaction.⁴¹⁶

Mark Bradley claims that 'because smell is so imprecise, and because it is so closely connected to preconditioned ideas about dirt and propriety, it could be a highly versatile and therefore a potent index of social and moral judgment'.⁴¹⁷

In tandem with Bradley, Kelvin Low also focuses on the role of the corporeal olfactory and 'highlights the link between smell and morality'.⁴¹⁸ He argues that 'smell as a social medium is intertwined with issues of olfactory acceptance and hence social and moral approval'.⁴¹⁹ The issue of smell and how it is used to confer social and moral approval has been taken up by Constance Classen. She argues that: 'within this hierarchy

⁴¹⁶ Anthony Synnott, 'A Sociology of Smell', *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, Vol. 28(4), 1992, 437-59 (p. 438).

⁴¹⁷ Mark Bradley, 'Foul Bodies in Ancient Rome', in *Smell and the Ancient Senses*, ed. by Mark Bradley (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 133-45 (p. 141).

⁴¹⁸ Kelvin Low, 'Presenting the Self, the Social Body and the Olfactory: Managing Smells in Everyday Life Experiences', *Sociological Perspectives*, Vol. 49(4) (2006), 607-31 (p. 608).

⁴¹⁹ Low, p. 608.

thus lies an establishment of social boundaries – boundaries which feed back into the reproduction of segregation based on olfactory and identity dissimilarities'.⁴²⁰ She goes on to claim that 'to characterize a certain group as foul-smelling [...] is to render it repellent at a very basic physical and emotional level, not simply at a cognitive level'.⁴²¹

I will take up and tease out some of the assumptions outlined above to look at how Pasolini uses olfactory symbolism initially to highlight the city's underclass's oneness and familiarity with their urban surroundings and subsequently to decry their coerced removal from the city and their social alienation. By employing smell as an intermediary with which to flesh out how the olfactory goes beyond the physiological to the social and moral, I will try to show how smell can be either endowed with integrative or divisive features, depending on the context in which smells are emitted and picked up by social actors.

Mary Douglas's work on dirt and pollution has informed a wide range of disciplines. She refers to dirt 'as matter out of place', and argues that cleanliness and contamination, pollution and prohibition, are part of a classificatory system, used by all cultures, to police boundaries.⁴²² She argues that dirt transgresses established borders, confounds order and disrupts dominant beliefs and patterns. While Douglas tends to underplay the complex identities retained by the detritus of any social system, her structural analysis implies the crucial point that filth and pollution do not exist in static oppositions to cleanliness and purity, but rather that in their quality as categories they are wrought with contradiction.

Douglas's definition is easily extended to Pasolini's representation of the theme of dirt in his Roman prose. He uses the theme of dirt analogically and symbolically in his

⁴²⁰ Constance Classen, 'The Odor of the Other: Olfactory Symbolism and Cultural Categories', *Ethos* 20, Vol. 2, 1992, 133-59 (p. 156).

⁴²¹ Classen, p. 158.

⁴²² Douglas, p. 36.

writing to reinforce and overturn moral and social order, to demarcate and undo categories and also express loss and redemption. Building on Douglas's research, a range of studies has examined how dirt, contamination and disgust are conceptualized within different geographical and social contexts. Julia Kristeva has demonstrated, in her work on abjection, that it is not dirt and disease which instigate abjection, but rather anything that, by being intermediate and ambiguous, troubles identity or order.⁴²³ Kristeva's analysis of the ambiguity of human perception of dirt and abjection finds resonance in Dominique Laporte's *History of Shit*. Laporte observes that 'that which occupies the site of disgust at one moment in history is not necessarily disgusting at the preceding moment or the subsequent one'.⁴²⁴ Laporte's observations suggest that the collapsing of the theme of dirt in a single set of characteristics ignores the gradual shifts and accumulations of meaning that mark it as a crucially temporal rather than an ideal concept.

Despite the taboos surrounding human excreta, Rosie Cox emphasizes how 'the traditions of writing on urban sanitation, squalor and decay have no counterpart in rural studies', which gives rise to intriguing tensions between imaginations of rural spaces as clean, pure and healthy and the actual importance of dirt, sweat and manure in traditional rural contexts.⁴²⁵ Cox contends that in the country, dirt (and shit more specifically) is not 'matter out of place' but is presented as being 'an integral part of how the countryside is constructed, in the imaginations of both rural communities and urban dwellers'.⁴²⁶

⁴²³ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by L. Roudiez (New York: Columbia Press, 1982), p. 4.

⁴²⁴ Dominique Laporte, *History of Shit*, translated by N. Benabid and A. El-Khoury (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2000), p. 32.

⁴²⁵ Rosie Cox, 'Country: Constructing Rural Dirt: Introduction', in *Dirt: New Geographies of Cleanliness and Contamination*, ed. by Rosie Cox and Ben Campkin (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), pp. 153-54 (p. 154).

⁴²⁶ Cox, p. 154.

David Inglis considers how some cultures are more excrementally libidinous than others and how dominant groups use excremental rhetoric to verbally denigrate more excrementally promiscuous minority groups in some societies:

Some cultures are more ‘tolerant’ than others of both the sight of persons defecating and the faeces thus produced. Therefore, we can say with some confidence that attitudes towards faeces, and consequently toiletry practices too, are socio-culturally relative. [...] Faecal symbolism should not be regarded as an unchanging and ahistorical resource for ascriptions of superiority of one group over the other. Rather meanings attached to faecal products vary as the circumstances alter which way the superordinate group deal with *their own* faecal waste.⁴²⁷

Waste’s ontological instability reminds us that there are no definitive points of closure, only formlessness that opens onto renewal and transformation. This image of history as debris echoes and builds on that of Walter Benjamin, who conceived history not as a chain of events but as ‘one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon such wreckage’.⁴²⁸ Reconstruction can only start when such wreckage begins to be seen not as an undifferentiated mass but as things; when it is acknowledged as far from being simply discarded matter, waste has content. Benjamin’s multi-layered reading of the city’s residues and detritus of the past refers to places and things on which each new generation can build its future. Moving from this premise that the past consists of steadily accumulating wreckage, Benjamin rejects the idea of history as progress and calls on ‘collectors’ to preserve the elements of the fragmented past. History, in his view, should

⁴²⁷ David Inglis, ‘Dirt and Denigration: The Faecal Imagery and Rhetorics of Abuse’, *Postcolonial Studies*, Vol. 5(4), 2002, 207-21 (p. 209).

⁴²⁸ Walter Benjamin, ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’, in *Illuminations*, ed. and with introduction by Hannah Arendt (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1955), p. 249.

not seek to create one coherent master narrative, but rather incorporate each generation's residues and debris. A significant point for Benjamin is that, in having been forgotten, the discarded object continues to exist apart from the continuum of time. In being discarded, the object, which had once been part of the historical process, dies a social death. It is, however, precisely at the juncture in which it exists as a 'has-been' that its potential to reveal the 'not-yet' emerges.

A broadly similar bent can be discerned in Pasolini's representation of detritus and discarded objects. I would like to engage with Benjamin's ideas and use them as a methodological compass to consider how Pasolini sees life and value in discarded places and objects.

Benjamin's insights into the persistence of a discarded item have been taken up by Michael Thompson who observes 'that we only notice it when it is in the wrong place. Something which has been discarded, but never threatens to intrude, does not worry us at all'.⁴²⁹ Thompson is interested in the primary relation between rubbish and cultural value, and in particular the process whereby things move from one category to another. His theoretical taxonomy divides all objects into three cultural categories: rubbish, transient and durable. He contends that 'Durability (A thing of beauty lasts forever) equates to Eternity, Transience (Here today, gone tomorrow) is measured out in duration and Rubbish (out sight, out of mind) matches oblivion'.⁴³⁰

Gay Hawkins also presents dirt and waste as an unstable category, dependent on classifications, human relations and value systems:

The shifting and contingent meanings for waste, the innumerable ways in

⁴²⁹ Michael Thompson, *Rubbish Theory: the Creation and the Destruction of Value* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 92.

⁴³⁰ Michael Thompson, 'Time's Square: Deriving Cultural from Rubbish Theory', *Innovation: The European Journal of Science and Research*, Vol. 16(4), 2003, 319-30 (p. 321)

which it can be produced, reveal it not as essentially bad but as subject to relations. What is rubbish in one context is perfectly useful in another. Different classifications, valuing regimes, practices, uses, enhance or elaborate different material qualities in things and persons – actively producing the distinctions between what will count as natural and cultural, a wasted thing or a valued object.⁴³¹

Serenella Iovino writing shortly after the rubbish crisis the city of Naples experienced in 2007 reminds us of waste's relational nature and the complexity of its management. She claims that waste asserts itself as a vital thing and underscores our intimate and ever-changing relationship with it:

Waste is thus not only something that an ecologically functional city should be able to recycle and reutilize, it is also residue that no society will be able to get rid of. It symbolizes the inherent corruption on which every society is built. It brings us back to nature-culture, human-non human, matter-form dualism which ecological culture tries to overcome, although not always successfully. Waste is nature's indifference towards human civilization. In that it brings products of culture back to their biological origin, waste is the non-human mirror of the human. By showing the circular and continuous emerging of the non-human from what was once human, waste gives us an unsolicited lesson in humility.⁴³²

⁴³¹ Gay Hawkins, *The Ethics of Waste: How We Relate to Rubbish* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), p. 10.

⁴³² Serenella Iovino, 'Naples 2008, or, the Waste Land: Trash, Citizenship and an Ethic of Narration' *Neohelicon*, Vol. 36(2), 2009, 335-46, (pp. 340-41).

Drawing and building on these considerations I will explore how Pasolini uses the trope of sanitization as a tool of analysis to reveal the ways in which socially-constructed, value-laden categorizations of cleanliness and dirt have been appropriated for use in strategies of political dominance as well as in strategies of resistance to such dominance. I look at how Pasolini critiques the city's post-war discourse of development or, in other words, its way of narrating differences between communities in order to make transparent the underlying assumptions that the bottom levels of society should be marginalized to its peripheries and encouraged to evolve according to a linear understanding of progress. I will also engage with some of the abovementioned considerations to examine Pasolini's commitment to redeeming places and things which have dropped out of usage in order to restore their meaning and value.

Smell

From a very early age smell formed affective cues in Pasolini's relationship with places and enabled him to organise and mobilize his feelings about a specific location. In an essay entitled 'I parlanti' (1948), Pasolini charts some of his childhood journeys throughout the Friulian countryside and recalls how smell acts a conduit by which he characterizes his experiences in a specific place.⁴³³ The significance of olfactory registers in moulding urban experience also features prominently in Pasolini's Roman prose. Pasolini actively seeks out dirty and odorous places and uses them to critique prevailing views about urban sanitation and renovation.

Body smells and odours initially underline the conflation between characters and their surroundings. The symbiosis created between dirt and the smells emanating from

⁴³³ Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'I parlanti', in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 2, pp. 163-96. In this essay Pasolini uses smell to enable him to understand places that he visits for the first time. One of the main themes examined in this essay concerns the conflation of the landscape of Friuli with the corporeal and linguistic features of its inhabitants.

the body of the protagonist of the short story, 'Da Monteverde all'Altieri' (1950), is a telling example:⁴³⁴

Quella maschera di bellezza [del ragazzo], sfumando nella semi curiosità, pareva pigmentare di pinguedini che alla luce del giorno non esistevano se non appena accennate. [...] Ora, sotto quell'ordine meravigliosamente anonimo che era la sua bellezza appena abbozzata, convenzionale, che cosa viveva? Certo che la lievità di certe creature valica l'immondizia con la grazia delle libellule sul fango. [...] C'erano, è vero, dentro quel ragazzo certe sera d'Aprile, vissute lontano dalla campagna e dal cielo. [...] Questo Aprile atrocemente profumato non era che una doratura, nell'interno del ragazzo, come la sua bellezza trasteverina lo era per il viso'.⁴³⁵

The permeability of boundaries between the character and his surroundings is immediately evident. The boy's 'porous body' blends with its environs, allowing his body odours and Trastevere's smellscape to blend together. It is possible to see here how smells enable the boy and his local environs to affect each other in recursive manner. This relational interaction between the boy's body and physical space is facilitated by predominantly pleasant smells, which confirm the variety of olfactory stimuli in Pasolini's earliest representation of the city. A build-up of sensual smells roams around the river's embankments while unpleasant smells get trapped in Trastevere's narrow streets and around its bridges:

⁴³⁴ This conflation between boys' bodily odours and the odours and the smell of their surroundings confirms a point that I have already discussed in my chapter on bodies. I argue in this chapter that the conflation between the boys' bodies and their local environment gradually recedes when these characters are definitively removed from the city centre and relocated in its cut-off peripheries. Corporeal smells then become increasingly associated with olfactory breaches such as blood loss, excrement, sweat, etc. and are equated with the characters' exclusion and defilement.

⁴³⁵ 'Da Monteverde all'Altieri', in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1, pp. 1396-97.

È di là che giungono nei lungoteveri civili gli odori più stupendamente afrodisiaci: gli odori che tentano ad arrendersi al vizio fino magari al sacrificio della vita [...] e se nel connettivo delle strade nuove e deliziosamente stupide – deliziosamente, se preferite dai giovinetti abitanti nei vicoli luridi – è rado, intermittente, dipanato, ci sono certi posti in cui si concreta, si coagula, si intrica, puzza e marcisce come un ganglio infiammato. Per esempio, intorno all’orinatoio che sorge a Ponte Garibaldi.⁴³⁶

The magnitude of perfumes and odours to which these passages attest, are not, however, their most significant feature. It is the precision with which Pasolini attempts to sort the different smells and trace the scents and miasmas to their source which is more telling.

The characters’ indifference towards the unpleasant odours of foul-smelling places also emerges.⁴³⁷ This indifference downplays any sense of disgust or any real social indictment that urban filth might normally elicit.⁴³⁸ The pervasiveness of smells is, therefore, not presented in a negative light but is generally seen as inviting, sensual and picturesque.⁴²⁹ People and places which emanate strong smells are not what Mary Douglas has called ‘matter out of place’ but are rather an integral part of Rome’s urban fabric. A street scene in Trastevere evinces how odours were transferred from the street

⁴³⁶ ‘Squarci di notte romane’, in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 2, pp. 329-361 (pp. 330-31).

⁴³⁷ On this particular point, Mark Bradley claims that ‘the nose can be trained to be tolerate, and even normalize, bad smells. Olfactory receptor cells in the nose typically detect changes or unusual sensations in the environment; when bombarded by the sensations, these cells become saturated so that they no longer detect these olfactory stimuli or recognize them as a threat.’ See Bradley, p. 141.

⁴³⁸ If Rome’s underclass was totally indifferent to urban smells, the opposite appears to be the case for country folk. Although these so-called ‘burini’ do not figure prominently in Pasolini’s Roman prose, they are associated by Pasolini’s characters with several sources of unpleasant and unusual smells.

to the social: 'C'è puzza di biancheria messa ad asciugare ai balconi del vicolo, di sterco umano sulle scalette che portando al livello del Tevere, di asfalto intiepidito dalla primavera'.⁴³⁹

The idea that these urban odours and traces of dirt may be a source of pollution or threat to the wellbeing of its city dwellers does not immediately figure in Pasolini's early Rome prose. One of the primary vocations that smell assumes is that of capturing more effectively the true spirit of the Roman characters Pasolini observes and the places they inhabit.

The higgledy-piggledy arrangement of public and private spaces is reinforced by promiscuous circulation of drifting odours. Smell moves at will across boundaries and collapses and disturbs distinctions that traditionally enable societies to bestow order and coherence. Smell, therefore, derives its energy from a disruption of all that settles, confines and comforts. The flooding of various kinds of scents and odorous smells in Pasolini's early prose initially makes it difficult to discriminate between places and things. Pasolini even attributes signature smells to some neighbourhoods; places, therefore, become catalogued by the smells they are predominately associated with and this endows them with specific connotations: One of Trastevere's main landmarks, Via della Lungara, is variously 'un viscere madido di urina e sangue nello scrostato inverno [e] ora arrosolava al sole, priva di tutto di mistero e di morbo'.⁴⁴⁰ Monteverde is at once 'calcinante' and 'bucherellato e remoto' while the Tiber is both 'verde marcio' and 'incandescente'.⁴⁴¹ Testaccio is associated with 'i pisciatoi disinfettati e fetidi, sparsi qua e là a indurire l'aria povera e provinciale' and with 'una terra fetente e purificata dal sole

⁴³⁹ 'Ragazzo e Trastevere', in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1, pp. 1383-86 (p.1386).

⁴⁴⁰ 'Squarci di notti romane', in *Romanzi e racconti*, p. 349.

⁴⁴¹ 'Squarci di notti romane', p. 358, and 'Notte sull'Es', p. 396.

come da una tremenda medicina, non è quella di Roma, ma di Testaccio'.⁴⁴² This representation of a sensorial social reality underpinned by a duality of odours emanating from the same places evinces how Pasolini uses smell to accommodate two opposing conditions of truthfulness simultaneously. Smells not only give his prose greater narrative depth but they confer a mythic status on his representation of the city's neighbourhoods.

Despite the widespread belief in the danger of foul smells as a source of disease, Pasolini does not identify the city in these terms. On the contrary, he sees a threat to the city's well-being coming from a totally different direction. A subtle allusion to the city's post-war sanitation project is made through a reference to a washing commodity in 'Squarci di notti romane':

Nell'ondata degli odori, si avvertiva però, in fondo, schiacciato, stretto, lineare, un odore diverso: L'Odore. Era come illato di base di un poligono. Il Je, con sforzo supremo, riuscì ad affermarlo: era odore di Palmolive. Illato di base del poligono divenne un orizzonte di periferia, e tutta Roma ne fu bacata e corrotta. La Comare Secca di Strada Giulia alzò er rampino.⁴⁴³

The symbolic use of a body washing product links this passage of *Alì* with the last chapter of *Ragazzi* where a line from a sonnet by Giuseppe Gioacchino Belli is used in the epitaph to the chapter as a premonitory signal foreshadowing the death of Genesio in the river Aniene's polluted waters. If, as Alain Corbin has argued, the policing of odour is at once a government concern of the centralizing State and a key factor in the separation of deodorized private spaces from the promiscuous and malodorous public sphere, it follows that Rome's filthy underclass, circulating odour and possibly also disease,

⁴⁴² 'Studi sulla vita del Testaccio', in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol.2, pp. 412-20 (pp. 414-15) and 'Storia burina', in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 2, pp. 472-89 (p. 475).

⁴⁴³ 'Squarci di notti romane', p. 351.

became the target that public authorities seek to individuate and subjectify.⁴⁴⁴ To complete such a project meant removing such odours from the city; the foul-smelling bodies of the city's underclass became at once recognized and reviled and their relocation to its peripheries became a priority. Such social alienation perpetuates class divisions, and the smell dichotomies between the foul-smelling *borgatari* and deodorized bourgeois city dwellers become increasingly accentuated.

While Pasolini's characters initially manage to negotiate the city on their own terms, their displacement complicated this relationship. The author's account of the odour typically emanating from 'i borgatari' in 'Appunti per un poema popolare' (1951-52) gives us an insight into this situation:

L'odore di tabacco, dei panni non cambiati per mesi [...] l'odore, acuto e infetto, delle lenzuola, delle pareti, degli stracci della casa, di uno dei lotti della borgata, ecc. formano il sapore anche di un corpo giovane. Negli anziani questo sapore si è incancrenito, mescolandosi a quello del vino; duro, screpolato, calloso, è come una corazza fusa col corpo, un tessuto che ha affondato nella carne le sue radici, succhiandola e indurendola tutta, alterando la voce con delle raucedini grasse, bruciate.⁴⁴⁵

The slum dwellers' olfactory impropriety becomes a social barrier which stigmatizes even further their condition of marginalization. It is possible to observe how Pasolini's initial employment of smell as a social intermediary that confused boundaries is now deployed to reinforce them. Smell switches from acting as an inclusive social intermediary to an exclusive one which conflates poverty with foul-smelling bodies.

⁴⁴⁴ See Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), pp. 57-62.

⁴⁴⁵ 'Appunti per un poema popolare', in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 2, pp. 421-36 (p. 427).

Kelvin Low claims that accentuated olfactory dichotomies between social groups is used by the dominant group to reinforce its differences with and its distrust of ‘the marginalized one’.⁴⁴⁶ He contends that: ‘social actors who emit bodily odours are perceived as committing both odiferous and social defilement and therefore induce rejection.’⁴⁴⁷ He goes on to argue that: ‘Olfactory defilement is not only about smells. Olfactory stigma arising out from judgments on smell is also intertwined with other categories, such as race, class, and nationality’.⁴⁴⁸

The *borgatari*’s fetid odour reinforces their recalcitrance to being assimilated by capitalistic ethics and seals their status as, what Vighi has called, ‘excremental subjects’.⁴⁴⁹ Pasolini is eager, here, to evince the social injustice and the plight of the *borgatari*’s corporeal condition and their physical surroundings. Their foul-smelling bodies become the incarnation of political displacement and social marginalization; they are at once displaced subjects and emblems of unconscious persistence and resistance. Pasolini goes on in the same essay to describe their local environment; it is equally squalid and excremental:

La via Prenestina, poco dietro Centocelle, era già raccolta come se scorresse in un vecchio Lazio malarico; ma le tracce – pur essendo l’erba più precisa, la campagna più respirabile – dell’antinferno non erano disperse: erano mucchi di immondizia – scatolame, garza, boccette di medicinali, orinali, pedalini – cave abbandonate – le cui buche servivano da pozzi neri, inutilmente disinfettate dal tersissimo sole – baracche di latta e mattoni rubati qua e là, nei nuovi quartieri in costruzioni, poco meglio che stabbi per

⁴⁴⁶ Although dominant classes are never represented as deploying smell to reinforce hierarchies, Pasolini clearly uses smell to separate the city’s dominant and privileged class from its underclass.

⁴⁴⁷ Low, p. 617.

⁴⁴⁸ Low, p. 617.

⁴⁴⁹ Vighi, p. 102.

animali.⁴⁵⁰

The ingrained layers of dirt and grime of the slum dwellers' bodies and their surroundings invites the reader to identify with these characters' displacement and uprootedness. The haunting presence of dirt and odour in the city's peripheries reinforces the exclusion of its inhabitants from the city's urban fabric. While their external appearance and body odours may make the slum dwellers alien or excremental subjects, their derogatory olfactory rhetoric emerges in the *borgate* to show how displacement and marginalization has caused social breakdown in communities that had previously stood out for their close-knitted nature. A nickname which conjures up the smell of rank feet is used by one of *Una vita*'s stock characters to denigrate the novel's protagonist:

'A Piedizozzi!' gridò l'altro, alzandosi in piedi, e chiamandolo col nome dato al fratello più grosso, un roscio lenticchioso pure lui, che puzzava sempre come una marana. [...] 'A Piedizozzi' ricominciò 'ma nun lo vedi che te tocca camminà co' 'e gambe larghe? Ma nun lo vedi che perdi come le papere?'.⁴⁵¹

Bianca Decenti shows how Tommaso is ascribed a nickname which undermines his identity and sense of belonging in his community:

Tommaso viene schernito dagli amici più grandi come un 'piedizozzi' in riferimento al luogo dove abita, 'un mucchio di catapecchie tra Pietralata e Montesacro, ribattezzato come Piccola Shanghai, 'la tribù dei piedizozzi'. L'associazione del tralcio di fanghiglia, dimora di numerose famiglie, con una città esotica, sconosciuta [...] apre una parentesi sui modi di relazionarsi

⁴⁵⁰ 'Appunti per un poema popolare', p. 434.

⁴⁵¹ *Una vita violenta*, in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1, pp. 835-36.

tra i ragazzi. La miseria così penetrante in ogni suo aspetto rende aggressivi e discriminatori tra i ragazzi, privandoli di ogni minimo moto solidale.⁴⁵²

This is a significant turning point in Pasolini's Roman prose: while his characters' previously-represented intactness and authenticity had been presented as compensatory factors for their dispossession and dislocation, the collapse of these social ties foreshadows the imminent death of Pasolini's 'ragazzi di vita'.

Excrement

The currency and versatility of excremental imagery account for its functions not simply as a naturalistic detail but also as an important chronotope in Pasolini's Roman prose. The lax and promiscuous toiletry practices of Pasolini's characters serves not only to suggest that strong whiffs linger around a host of public places but also to underline the lack of revulsion these characters display towards their own faeces and their transgression of basic rules of social decorum. Scatological themes are frequently pushed to the forefront of the author's concerns and range from representations of excrement strewn along the Tiber's embankments, through the amusing account of Prof. Giubileo's forays into the city's *borgate* where his coat ends up getting smeared with excrement, to a detailed description of how Cagone experiences bowel troubles towards the end of a joyride which sees him make a return journey with his sidekicks from Rome to Fiumicino in *Una vita*.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵² Bianca Decenti, 'I ragazzi di Pasolini tra grottesco e sublime' (undergraduate thesis, University of Bologna, 2011), p. 17. <http://pasolinipuntonet.blogspot.com/2012/05/pagine-corsare-la-saggistica-tesi-di.html> [accessed 20 March 2017].

⁴⁵³ Pasolini's predilection for scatological themes is confirmed by his very descriptive account of defecating cows in another essay in *Ali dagli occhi azzurri*, entitled 'Storia burina' (1956-65): 'Ma si sa che le vacche son deboli di budella, cianno, si sa, la cagarella eterna! E chi poteva tenerle? Infatti aprivano ogni momento quel coso che hanno sotto la coda, largo come un secchio, li mortacci loro, a pluàf, bluàf, rovesciandolo come un guanto con gli orletti rossi di sangue, pluàf, bluàf, 'ste chiavicone, mo l'una mo l'altra, lasciavano sul prato il ricordo di quel loro passaggio'. 'Storia burina', in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 2, pp. 472-89 (p. 487). The idea here that the cows'

The theme of excrement plays a central role in Pasolini's last film, *Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma* (1975). Shortly before his death, Pasolini acknowledged that his representation of excrement in his last film was strongly indebted to Dante's *Inferno*. In an interview with Gideon Buchmann while making the film, Pasolini lists the Dantesque segments that his version of hell is divided into. They comprise: 'The round of the manias, the round of blood, the round of excrements'.⁴⁵⁴ In relation to *Salò*, Naomi Greene contends that:

Spectators are forced to witness every agony of the adolescent victims who, imprisoned in a villa by wealthy and powerful libertines, descend from one Dantesque circle to the next. From the circle of perversions (or 'mania') they go to that of shit (or coprophagia) and, finally, to that of 'blood' (torture and death). Viewers are not spared the blood that oozes from the victims' mouth when they swallow food laced with nails; or the excrement that smears their lips during the coprophagic banquet; or the final scenes of sadism and torture in which skulls are cut open, eyes slashed and dead bodies sodomized.⁴⁵⁵

The prominence of excrement and blood in Pasolini's Roman prose are attributable to the Dantesque influence to which Greene refers. Fabian Alfie cites Zygmunt Barański's article about Dante and scatology notes how:⁴⁵⁶

excrement reinforces these animals' presence will be discussed further on in this section in relation to Pasolini's Roman underclass's presence in the city of Rome.

⁴⁵⁴ Gideon Bachmann, 'Pasolini on Sade, An Interview during the 120 Days of Sodom', *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 29(2), 1975-76, 39-45 (p. 42).

⁴⁵⁵ Naomi Greene, 'Salò: The Refusal to Consume', in *Pier Paolo Pasolini: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Patrick Rumble and Bart Testa (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), pp. 232-42 (pp. 234-35).

⁴⁵⁶ Zygmunt G. Barański, 'Scatology and Obscenity in Dante', in *Dante for the New Millenium*, ed. by Teodolinda Barolini and H. Wayne Storey (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), pp. 259-73.

Dante typically depicts sexual matters with concision, periphrasis and allusion, all textbook instances of *reticentia*; but when it comes to matters about excrement, Dante showed no such restraint. Dante's openness to scatology is on display in the last line of *Inferno* 21 too. Indeed, Dante goes out of his way to work this fart into his poem. [...] Clearly, Dante places expectation on the readers that they should take note of it.⁴⁵⁷

The prism of scatology and its Dantesque origins harbour an important influence both over Pasolini's Roman prose and his cinematic work. Theorists in their study of scatology all tend to agree on the subversive character of scatological rhetoric and representation for social, political, institutional, religious, artistic discourses. Mikhail Bakhtin provides an ahistorical decontextualised reading of human bodily functions and individual and group attitudes towards them. He highlights how attitudes towards corporeal functions are far from universal but differ according to shifting societal and cultural norms and claims that scatological themes can be used by the subaltern to challenge official or state discourse.⁴⁵⁸ Julia Kristeva in her seminal work, *Powers of Horror*, argues that subjectivity arises and is maintained when the abject is expelled from the body and constructed via loathing as unclean. Excrement, for example, is a discharge from the inside of the body to the outside, becoming 'other' in the process, an otherness cemented by our understanding of waste as an object of revulsion, as abject. Kristeva claims that

⁴⁵⁷ Fabian Alfie, 'Diabolic Flatulence: A Note on *Inferno* 21:139', *Forum Italicum*, Vol. 45(2), 2011, 417-27 (p. 417-18). More specifically, Fabian observes how 'in the final line of the Canto, the commanding devil dismisses the group with a mock-marital sign: he trumpets his anus: "ed elli avea del cul fatto trombetta"'. *Inferno*, 21: 139. Dante's emphasis on the scatological and more specifically on farting emerges also in Pasolini's Roman prose. Lenzetta's spontaneous need to fart is rehearsed in *Ragazzi*, after defecating in the cauliflower field with Riccetto and Sor Antonio's and his subsequent meeting with the latter's five daughters: 'Il Lenzetta [...] stette un momento fermo soprappensiero, come in un raccoglimento, poi tirò su una gamba col ginocchio contro la pancia e mollò un peto'. *Ragazzi*, p. 659.

⁴⁵⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 24.

‘excrement and its equivalents (decay, infection, disease, corpse, etc.) stand for the danger to identity that comes from without: the ego threatened by the non-ego, society threatened by its outside, life by death’.⁴⁵⁹

Pasolini’s interest in the lower end of his underclass’s bodies has already been considered at length in my chapter on bodies and space. Like the grotesque bodies that Bakhtin refers to in his work on Rabelais, the bodies of Pasolini’s characters are initially presented as unfinished, outgrowing themselves and transgressing their limits.⁴⁶⁰ The boys’ inability to enter what Kristeva, after Lacan, calls the symbolic order means the boundaries between inside and outside remain fuzzy. The privileging of faecal matter in much of Pasolini’s prose is significant as excrement is an object which represents the slippery boundary between inside and outside. Marisol Cortez has recently accused cultural theorists of western systematicity of forgetting Douglas’s claim that nothing is inherently dirty. She argues that ‘to see the abjection of the excretory body as the necessary condition of all meaning is to protect from analysis the structures of domination that have *produced* a form of systematicity dependent upon abjection’.⁴⁶¹ Cortez’s contention is what I suggest is at the core of Pasolini’s poetics of excrement. Much like Dante, his interest in excrement is primarily focused on calling into question ‘the structures of domination’ and to contest anal-retentive policy makers whose human-waste-distancing objectives are driven by exclusively capitalist concerns: Cortez describes how human waste infrastructures have been deliberately built to remove us from this process and to strip us of all decision-making power regarding what actually happens to our waste:

⁴⁵⁹ Kristeva, p. 71.

⁴⁶⁰ Bakhtin notes that ‘the stress is laid on those parts of the body which are open to the outside world, the parts through which the world enters the body as it emerges from it, or through which the body itself goes out to meet the world’. Bakhtin, pp. 26-27.

⁴⁶¹ Marisol F. Cortez, ‘The Ecology of Scatology: Excretory Encounters in American Cultural Life’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of California Davis, 2009), p. 19.

Shit becomes ethically important less because it is abject than because its abjection leads to a customary relationship of minimum responsibility for our bodily effects on planet and other people: a relationship of no relation, either to shit or where it ends up. In protecting us from shit, toilets, plumbing and sewers insulate us epistemologically, protecting us from knowing causes, effects and relations that continue to exist whether or not we deny them. In this context, ‘affect *is* relationality’: simply by noticing waste and our responses to it becomes a way to disrupt oppositions like nature/culture, self/waste and human/nonhuman ‘allowing us to see how we are *in* and *of* the world’. This affective openness to waste in turn becomes the basis for a ‘responsibility’ capable of generating new waste relations and practices, ones ‘not characterized by an ethos of disposability or denial’.⁴⁶²

The boys’ symbiotic relationship with their surroundings means that this ‘unforeseen’ contact with the outside world remains blurred. This is primarily achieved by the collapsing of private and public spaces, but it is also facilitated by the characters’ uncontrolled and promiscuous toiletry practices. Modern toiletry practices are underpinned by an infrastructure which flushes out of sight all human waste through modern infrastructure designed to circulate faeces. The boys’ toiletry practices are underpinned by proximity while modern toiletry practices are premised on circulation and distance. Dana Phillips finds an analogy between the displacement of excrement from the human eye and consciousness and the way modern societies both produce and suppress the environment crisis. He goes on to underscore the recalcitrant agency of

⁴⁶² Cortez, p. 35

excrement and modern societies' difficulty in eliminating its polluting presence. He observes how:

Our shit thus provides a home for an impressive number of creatures and is the vector for an equally impressive number of diseases and infections. So not only does it have agency, but it hosts a myriad of agents, along with traces of our own DNA. Speaking of which, [...] the flush toilet probably has a lot to do with the dramatic increase in human life spans since the nineteenth century. Yet this does not mean the flush toilet is a technological wonder [...]. The flush toilet relies heavily on water for its operation, and most people who use one add toilet paper to the mix when they flush, so that the toilet contributes to water shortages and to deforestation.⁴⁶³

Pasolini's privileging of non-modern excremental practices underscores the boys' decision to perpetuate their promiscuous toiletry practices and reject modern toiletry ones. Their excrementary practices much like their walking in the city become, as I argued in my chapter on mapping, acts of resistance. It comes, therefore, as little surprise that references to excrement figure quite prominently in the author's early representations of the city. The opening page of 'Squarci di notti romane' immediately brings the theme into relief:

[...] su quelle spallette dei lungoteveri infebbrati, su quelle scale che conducano al livello del fiume, coi gradini unti di feci, su quei ponti che si stagliano contro il cielo romano [...] il profumo delle notti precocemente

⁴⁶³ Dana Phillips, 'Excremental Ecocriticism, Global Sanitation Crisis', in *Material Ecocriticism*, ed. by Serenella Oppermann and Serpil Oppermann (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2014), pp. 172-85 (pp. 179-80).

primaverili, come un animale ridestato dal caldo, sfoga liberamente i suoi
brividi che scoperchiano i cervelli.⁴⁶⁴

While excrement is endowed with sensationalist overtones it is also a material sign of the city's uneven development and therefore assumes moral and political connotations. Excrement is also a way of acknowledging the body and the interconnected relationship which bodies have with their local surroundings. Similar to his characters' ubiquitous presence in the city, the prevalence of excrement in Pasolini's Roman prose suggests that this is a theme which demands attention. Excrement stands for everything that officialdom has written out of history. Much like Benjamin's discarded and forgotten historical detritus and residues, excrement becomes a metaphor for a world that has been excluded from history that Pasolini would like in some way to recuperate or at least re-use to challenge history's official master narrative and to create possible alternative socialities.⁴⁶⁵ In his view the voices of his excremental subjects can only be regained when they are properly acknowledged by history.

In 'Giubileo' (1950), the story's eponymous protagonist (and Pasolini's alias) is presented as a connoisseur of excremental smells. The smell of public lavatories in a Roman cinema stimulates his scatological impulses:

L'aria [...] aveva poi un'altra spiacevole caratteristica, che era quella di
provenire dai gabinetti, che non erano gabinetti romanzi, ma romani. [...]

⁴⁶⁴ 'Squarci di notti romane', p. 330

⁴⁶⁵ David Ward points out that *Una vita* 'is a text with a sting in its tail, which works to undercut the progress of Tommaso's political itinerary. The recovery of Tommasino into history, into the recognizable world of social and economic forces, as we shall see, is presented as a first step into a historical order that will bring him only to death. [...] Change then, when it points in the direction of the mainstream social order is always regarded with suspicion as a false move which betrays the fundamental nature of the *borgatari*'. See David Ward, *A Poetics of Resistance: Narrative and the Writings of Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1995), pp. 76-77.

Infatti le più trasteverine delle pisciate e il più belliano degli escrementi, avevano spalmato quei pavimenti di un odore ormai irrevocabile.⁴⁶⁶

Giubileo is in thrall to the abject, driven by a fascination with young male Romans. His chance encounter with Fabrizio, in the Borgia cinema, is followed by a fleeting sexual encounter in Rome's peripheries. The theme of excrement emerges immediately afterwards:

Dopo una mezzoretta erano sul posto. [...] Era un'area in costruzione, di tre o quattrocento metri di diametro, in mezzo a un quartiere tutto in costruzione, tra case popolari, ciuffi di pini e montagne di immondizie. [...] Giubileo vide fiori d'ogni colore – ma, come vedremo, anche di ogni odore. Il Moro aveva prescia e fece il fioraio che per pochi minuti [...]. Risaliti a vedere le stelle, o più precisamente i fanali di via Feronia, il Moro intascò e salutò. [...] S'incamminò [Giubileo] verso la prossima fermata del circolare, seguito, seguito sempre da quel filo, da quella scia, da quella catena di odore che gli penzolava dietro. [...] Sul tram era già un baco di seta. [...] I passeggeri del tram parevano accorgersene, come se quel bozzolo di filugello non fosse solo metaforico.⁴⁶⁷

It is significant how Giubileo accidentally stumbles upon excrement in a building site in the city's burgeoning peripheries. The ubiquitous presence of excrement underlines how Pasolini's characters circulate, and how the pestilence and odour of their dung

⁴⁶⁶ 'Giubileo' in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 2, pp. 383-94 (p. 385). Michael Syrimis observes that 'Fabio Pierangeli notes that the statute of Giuseppe Gioacchino Belli, Rome's major nineteenth-century poet, has both symbolic and realist functions. While paying tribute to Belli, Pasolini also diversifies his characters dialect and characterizes Belli as *giallognolo* (jaundiced) because the older poet's dialect is now mixed with different accents in a city that absorbs many races and personalities'. See Syrimis, p. 91.

⁴⁶⁷ 'Giubileo', pp. 386-87.

circulate with them. The association of the novels' characters with their dung becomes an appropriate metaphor for their redundant nature and the foul odour of miasma that their excrement generates. The choice of location is also a way of foreshadowing the future location of these redundant bodies. *Giubileo's* smeared overcoat causes the waft of excrement to spread through the tram and invade the senses of the other passengers. Impurity and disorder are thus synonymous, and excrement becomes part of this disorder and marginalization. I would argue, therefore, that Pasolini is not denying that the excrement may be matter out of place, but he is, however, eager to make it matter. Excrement, once it is separated from the body, cannot be avoided; our bodies embrace a world that is beyond the envelope of our skin. Pasolini's poetics of defecation highlight an affinity among all people and are a critique of the city's post-war sanitation project which is underpinned by retentive toiletry practices which demonize excrement.

The cleverly constructed connection between the theme of excrement and the Holy Year should not go unnoticed. References to excrement, a symbol of spiritual corruption, gesture simultaneously to its opposite – purity. The opening paragraph of the essay clearly brings this association into focus:

Nella Capitale non spirava più aria buona per il prof. *Giubileo*: le strade e le piazze erano spesso attraversate da lunghe processioni con in testa delle nude e semplici croci; letteralmente, ad ogni pisciata di cane si vedeva i vecchi muraglioni medioevali o romani zeppi di ex voto e di immagini della Vergine.⁴⁶⁸

While pilgrims negotiate the figurative filth of their souls, the novels' characters negotiate openly their body waste. Both the pilgrimage, a ritual associated with

⁴⁶⁸ 'Giubileo', p. 383.

purification and spiritual renewal, and excrement, which composts into fertilizer to be useful, involve the process of material and spiritual metamorphosis. Excrement can be read not as a revolting fact of nature but as waste that can be repurposed through recycling. In a similar sense, the pilgrim is not waste yet; he is constantly recycling himself until death through the process of purification and renewal. Giubileo's compulsion to scrub himself, to rid his body of filth might well be read as synonymous with the desire, much like the desire of the pilgrim, to restore himself to his existence before coming into contact with the excremental surroundings of the city's peripheries:

A casa si lavò accuratamente, epicureamente, metodicamente: fu un frenetico abbandono al razionale. [...] né c'era qualcosa di divino nel fatto che le mani, come quelle di Pilato, lavate e rilavate, dessero l'impressione di non potere smacchiare mai più, infatti dietro il candido sapore di palmolive, ecco, dapprima fugace come il lampo, ma intatta, compatta, invincibile, l'Emanazione riguadagnare le poche posizioni perdute e ristabilirsi nel suo perfido equilibrio.⁴⁶⁹

Pasolini's characters' bodies are also involved in an ongoing metamorphosis. In the specific case of Giubileo it would appear that the representation of themes of excrement and spiritual renewal might be likened to Dante's purgatory where souls have been recycled, on the rubbish tip, and are ready to undergo a process of redemption. Excrement can be read not only as a redundant waste but also as redemptive material and a sign of rebirth. Excrement and Pasolini's excremental subjects are real and need to be dealt with in a responsible way. Waste can be valorized, however, only if it is recycled.

⁴⁶⁹ 'Giubileo, p. 388.

By privileging his characters' excremental practices, Pasolini not only reminds us of his characters' bodies' ever-changing nature but also underlines the threat their leaky and porous bodies pose to society. Such leaks disturb the humoral balance of the city's healthy body. To counteract such a risk a thorough regeneration of the city's urban configuration is required. The body of the city becomes regulated and controlled, and the prevalence of dirt in its multitude of forms has to be eliminated. The upshot of this initiative led to the removal of the city's underclass from their maternal habitat. As I have already argued in my chapter on bodies, distance and the alienation in the city's far-flung peripheries causes the breakdown of the symbiotic relationship that these characters had forged with their surroundings. This led to the gradual disintegration of the boys' bodies as the novels progress. The bowel problems that Cagone experiences, while returning to Rome after going on a joyride to Fiumicino, evince the uneasy relationship that exists between the characters and modern technology:

A un tratto il Cagone rifece: 'Ferma, ferma!'. Tommaso diventò una bestia: 'Aoh', gli strillò, 'ma ancora nun ti sei stufato a cagà?'. [...] Lello, calmo, fermò un'altra volta. [...] Il Cagone corse alla disperata, tirandosi giù di nuovo i calzoni, si mise sul ciglio della strada, contro una specie di valle piena di puncicarelli che si alzava su verso il cielo. [...] Il Cagone stette ancora lì, a lamentarsi a denti stretti, col collo tirato per il dolore.⁴⁷⁰

The natural act of defecating becomes a painful experience and stands in sharp contrast with the care free act rehearsed by Riccetto and Lenzetta with Sor Antonio in the cauliflower field in *Ragazzi*, which drew sneers and laughter.⁴⁷¹ Cagone's body becomes incontinent, and unable to govern its corporeal functions: 'Il Cagone scapicollò giù verso

⁴⁷⁰ *Una vita violenta*, p. 882.

⁴⁷¹ See chapter 3 for a detailed analysis of this excremental scene in *Ragazzi*.

la scarpata in pizzo al ponte, tra i cespuglioni gonfi di pioggia, scivolando per la fanga molle molle alta due braccia. [...] Qui si mise a sganciare per la terza volta'.⁴⁷²

The ungovernability of Cagone's body has been caused by displacement and distance and a negative interaction with a stolen vehicle. Much like the prominence which blood assumes in Pasolini's Roman prose and the associations that he makes between blood and suffering, the act of defecation is represented as an inexpressibly painful and uncontrollable experience. Cagone and his sidekicks in *Una vita* are caught up in a process of attempted redefinition of status. This is in strong contrast with Pasolini's holistic view of dirt and redundant bodies. In his social vision, the polluting and productive elements of dirt and redundant bodies need to be embraced and integrated into the city landscape.

The Incontinent City

The removal of dirt and waste from the city centre became essential to forging and maintaining social, psychological and cultural boundaries. Rome's city authorities built new infrastructure and accommodation in order to flush out of the city all unwanted materials and persons and diverted them to its peripheries. What was stagnant needed to be put into circulation and all efforts were concentrated on removing vulgar and obscene traces from the city's public realm. In this section of my chapter I look at how Pasolini looks at urban policies to remove dirt and waste from the city and how he sees coerced movement and circulation as guiding factors behind the city's new spatial reorganization. The juxtaposition of filth and cleanliness is a pervasive narrative trope in Pasolini's prose and highlights ways in which representational practices are employed to construct and maintain political, economic and social relationships. Pasolini's trope of sanitation is also

⁴⁷² *Una vita violenta*, p. 885.

underpinned by themes of visibility and invisibility and ranges from his focus on the city's sewers, the collection of rubbish by *Ragazzi's* protagonist, Riccetto, to the reaction of both novels' protagonists towards the city's endeavours to clean up not only the city centre but also some of its peripheries.

Perhaps no other piece of architectural infrastructure conjures up better than the sewer the modern city's desire to flush out redundant forms of humanity and other redundant materials. The sewer, as a conduit for urban refuse, becomes synonymous with all that is polluting in the city, the containment of the city's most odorous and threatening dirt, mapping a new flow of urban movement to cleanse the city of material and metaphorical associations.⁴⁷³ The sewer is widely acknowledged as a symbol of cultural development and civilization, as it separates humanity as much as possible from its base physical natures. Pasolini draws attention to this purpose-built waterway in both his Roman novels, as typified by this example from *Una vita*:

La strada che portava a Montesacro, con l'asfalto ridotto a qualche pizza sulla polvere brecciolosa e sparsa di sporchie e di rifiuti andava dietro all'Aniene. Il fiume scorreva sotto delle scarpate impuzzolite, specie nel punto dove c'era lo sfocio della cloaca del Policlinico.⁴⁷⁴

The circulatory path of this specific sewer is significant as it carries away waste effluent from an important Roman healthcare institution and disposes its contents in the city's peripheries in Ponte Mammolo. Pasolini exposes the inherent shortcomings of water-borne waste effluent removal as the outflow of this effluent is dumped in the river, Aniene. This flush-and-forget model confirms the sewer as a form of technological

⁴⁷³ Haewon Hwang, *London's Underground Spaces: Representing the Victorian City 1840-1915* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), p. 19.

⁴⁷⁴ *Una vita violenta*, p. 827.

infrastructure which sweeps waste out of sight and therefore out of mind; it does not mean, however, that the hospital deals with the issue of waste disposal in an ecologically responsible way. Quite the contrary: it simply transfers its waste elimination elsewhere. The discharge of waste effluent in the river underlines the contradictions of the city's new infrastructure and policy to circulate and rationalize waste. This displacement of waste from a public hospital, an institution whose mission is ironically driven by public health concerns, to one of city's poorest and most remote peripheries not only pollutes the river's eco-system and Ponte Mammolo's natural landscape but it actually succeeds in linking up metaphorically the *borgata's* banished citizens with the city's urban dwellers. The enormous divide between wealthy and poor city dwellers is bridged as Ponte Mammolo essentially becomes one of the city's most targeted dumping grounds. This connection between an institution with a mission to rehabilitate patients and Ponte Mammolo's marginalized and abject settings troubles Pasolini as he is aware of the imminent threat that this kind of place can have: the assimilation of the *borgata's* inhabitants into a capitalistic logic.

Other urban endeavours to contain dirt are evinced in an account of how the city's rubbish is collected each night. As *Ragazzi's* protagonist, Riccetto, walks aimlessly about the neighbourhood of Re di Roma in the early hours of the morning, one of the collection team spots him and rounds him up. Riccetto readily agrees to help:

Ma non era tanto una disgrazia per gli spazzini: dovevano soltanto scaricare loro i bidoni dentro il camion anziché uno dei piscelli: l'altro, con una faccia da schiaffi, e sporco come uno zingaro, ci stava. E poi, dopo tutto, l'animaccia loro, se alla Borgata Gordiani o al Quadraro non si fossero trovati dei maschi, che, per avere diritto d'andare a capare tra l'immondezza, s'alzavano alle tre del mattino e sfaticavano per quattro o cinque ore, non

l'avrebbero dovuto fare da sé sempre quel lavoro? Ma ormai s'erano abituati male e gli rodeva, poveracci, a ritrovarsi così inguaiati. Il Ricetto se ne stava lì, con le mani già tirate mezzo fuori dalle saccocce, e gli occhi che parlavano.⁴⁷⁵

Like some of the scavengers from the city's peripheries, Ricetto is informally co-opted by one of the City Council's waste collectors. It is worth noting that although these collectors command a wage to undertake this task, they habitually offload their responsibilities on an even more socially ostracized social group. Ricetto and other *borgatari*, some of the city's most excluded social outcasts, momentarily become eradicators of the city's dirt and guardians of order: 'Per tre ore il Ricetto col paraguiletto della Borgata Gordiani scaricò bidoni d'immondezza sul camion, sul mucchio che si faceva sempre più alto e che raschiava sempre più i polmoni con un odore che pareva d'essere in aranceto bruciato'.⁴⁷⁶

On his arrival at the landfill, Ricetto discovers a world that is even new to him: a large group of scavengers await to recuperate discarded objects or food from the freshly dumped waste materials:

Già si vedevano in giro le prime serve con le borse vuote. [...] Il Ricetto e l'altro restarono soli nella tanfa, con sotto il piano della cava e intorno i campicelli slabbrati. Si misero a sedere uno in alto e uno in basso, e cominciarono a cercare tra i rifiuti. L'altro era pratico, e se ne stava tutto curvo e attento, con una faccia seria come se stesse a fare un lavoro di precisione: e Il Ricetto fece come lui [...] e con quello stando accucciato cominciò a spostarsi le carte zozze, i cocci, le scatole di medicinali, gli

⁴⁷⁵ *Ragazzi di vita*, pp. 666-67.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 667.

avanzi delle minestre e tutta l'altra roba che gli puzzava intorno.⁴⁷⁷

Once again Pasolini presents us with another picture of Rome through the study of the city's waste. The scavengers' mundane activity can be seen as a deeply connective task, an act of redemption, as it represents an endeavour to find materials and to repurpose them for life-sustaining reasons. It is also plausible to read the scavengers' toil as a figurative attempt to piece society back together again. Furthermore, it is also possible to see the *borgatari* who help the waste collectors as they do their collection rounds each morning not as purveyors of dirt but rather as guardians of cleanliness.

Guido Zingari, in a study dedicated to the theme of Pasolini and waste, makes reference to the truth that can be unearthed from waste materials and things which have fallen into disuse:

Scarti di un disegno finiti in altri scarti, e infine dispersi. [...] Saranno inguaribili cercatori di conoscenza e di gnoseologie future, quelli che simili a cani festosi tra le immondizie, continueranno ostinatamente a scavare e a rovistare e frugare tra rovine e rifiuti di sapere. [...] È una ricerca affannosa tra i rifiuti, tra gli avanzi di civiltà, nelle sontuose e fatiscenti anticaglie del vero, del giusto e del bello. Una ricerca nelle faglie e di ciò che resta ancora nel respiro di vita di questi segni e detriti, di membra di corpi feriti e di ciò che è irrimediabilmente remoto nel tempo e tuttavia osticamente perenne e presente.⁴⁷⁸

Waste demands reworking and serves as a material medium through which social bonds might be restored, reconciled or reconstructed.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ragazzi di vita*, pp. 686-9.

⁴⁷⁸ Guido Zingari, *L'ontologia del rifiuto: Pasolini e i rifiuti dell'umanità in una società impura* (Rome: Le Nubi Edizioni, 2006), pp. 116-17.

Ricetto's unwitting return to Donna Olimpia in *Ragazzi's* penultimate chapter presents us with a clear account of the city's sanitation project. The hygienic precision of the neighbourhood hides the less tidy elements of life behind a facade of cleanliness. Its antiseptic nature leaves Ricetto bemused as he searches through a mental archive to find something to which he can relate:

C'era troppa pulizia, troppo ordine, e Ricetto non ci si capitava più. La Ferrobedò, lì sotto, era come uno specchio: con le ciminiere alte, che quasi raggiungevano la strada dal fondo del suo valloncetto, con gli spiazzini pieni di file ordinate di traverse accatastate alla perfezione, con i fasci di binari che luccicavano intorno a qualche vagone immobile e nero, che le file dei magazzini che, almeno dall'alto, parevano sale da ballo, tanto erano puliti, coi loro tetti rossicci tutti uguali in fila.⁴⁷⁹

This episode assumes centrality as part of a political discourse: the binary of cleanliness and filth is used to narrate a cultural difference between two different kinds of societies and to organize the environment by constructing power hierarchies that distinguish between developed and ordered and underdeveloped and disordered communities.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁹ *Ragazzi di vita*, pp. 728-29.

⁴⁸⁰ Ricetto's sighting of a dung heap enables him to recall and to fully engage with his childhood stomping-ground. In a letter to *Ragazzi's* publisher, Livio Garzanti, Pasolini explains the purpose of his plan some months before the novel's publication: "Il Ferrobedò" è la storpiatura romanesca della Società di Ferro Beton [...] al tempo della liberazione è il simbolo della devastazione e dell'abbandono [...] La rivedremo poi, verso la fine del romanzo, ricostruita e messa a posto, simbolo del ritorno all'ordine (solo la garitta, lì vicino, è ancora piena di merda, abbandonata)". *Lettere*, p. 704. It is interesting to note that the same phrase in *Ragazzi's* original version is presented in slightly more toned-down terms: 'Solo la vecchia garitta, lì, presso la rete metallica, era sempre tutta fetida e lercia'. *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 729.

Despite his initial hesitation Riccetto is attracted to this sense of order and makes Donna Olimpia a repository of his history. His quest for a sense of historical belonging distinguishes him from the other characters in *Ragazzi* who live in a perennial present.

The themes of cleanliness and order also emerge in *Una vita*. Tommasino's reaction to his family's new house evokes a similar sense of order:

Tommaso s'era fermato a guardare la sua casa [...] Poi, con un nodo alla gola per la commozione, che quasi piangeva, Tommaso entrò dentro, ingrugnato, un poco, per non far vedere quello che provava. Era sempre vissuto, dacché se ne ricordava, dentro una catapecchia di legno marcio, coperta di bandoni e di tela incerata, tra l'immondezza, la fanga, le cagate: e adesso invece, finalmente, abitava nientemeno che in una palazzina, e di lusso, pure, con le pareti belle intonacate, e le scale con delle ringhiere rifinite al bacio.⁴⁸¹

Pasolini unpicks some of the myths surrounding the rationalization and sanitation initiatives launched in post-war Rome. What links these two communities of Donna Olimpia and Pietralata together is their efforts to define themselves through representations of sanitation and hygiene. In other words, by privileging an understanding of hygiene, the planners of these communities make ethical judgments about each other and others based on those sanitary values. Both protagonists construct these communities as being clean. Despite Tommasino's laudatory remarks about his new accommodation, Pasolini himself has a much more suspicious view of this tame and renewed domestic order; his concerns stem from the fact that he sees this sense of order as the fertile grounds

⁴⁸¹ *Una vita violenta*, p. 1015.

on which post-war society will transform from pre-modern model to a consumer-driven, capitalist society.

Dereliction and Detritus

Pasolini sees dirt and waste as a gateway to the infinite. His prose, as we have seen in the earlier sections of this chapter, is concerned with dirt and how it is closely tied up with the concept of order. He is, however, acutely aware of the limits of order and what it excludes and discards. These concerns are also shared by the Belfast-born poet Derek Mahon. In both poets' work the dialectical relationship between order and detritus is immediately evident and the sense of ecological disaster is intertwined with historical disaster. Irene de Angelis notes that 'Mahon shares Pasolini's yearning for "the ideal society, a society which might come to birth/in silence, a society not for us CP 272 [Collected Poems]"'.⁴⁸²

Much of Mahon's poetry looks at the redemptive features of waste and often focuses on forgotten places, such as the disused shed of a burnt-out hotel in his acclaimed poem, 'A Disused Shed in Co. Wexford', where his poetic gift comes together in a great elegy for the lost ones of the world. These lost ones are represented through mushrooms which continue to germinate in bathtubs and washbasins in the dark and forgotten shed. Hugh Haughton observes that Mahon's metaphoric investment in the fungi evokes repression of many kinds:

the mushrooms which have gone on reproducing themselves in the dark are
a luminously baroque incarnation of just that, incongruous emblems of
political suppression and the hidden violence of everyday life, the

⁴⁸² Irene De Angelis, 'Derek Mahon's Homage to Pasolini', *Studi Irlandesi: A Journal of Irish Studies*, Vol. 1, 2011, 89-204 (p. 189).

persistence in the unconscious (in the feverish forms) of apparently ‘forgotten’ or rubbished material, the reactivation of the previous troubles.⁴⁸³

The shared interest that both poets invest in all that has been forgotten or repressed by the violent march of modernity prompts them to see sites of dereliction or discarded items as things that can potentially undergo a process of metamorphosis and be reused. In a nod to Pasolini, Mahon uses one of the most resonant lines from ‘Sesso, consolazione della misera’, as the epitaph of his poem ‘Roman Script’. Mahon credits Pasolini’s ideas as being the true direction that we have lost:

since his corpse showed up on the beach at Ostia
and life as we know it evolved into imagery,
production values, packaged history,
the genocidal corporative imperative
and the bright garbage on the incoming wave
best seen at morning rush-hour in the driving rain:
‘in the refuse of the world a new world is born’.⁴⁸⁴

Mahon’s reference to the bright garbage of the incoming wave is precisely the kind of waste that both poets are interested in. Both poets are committed to a poetics of value in which the theme of rubbish is central. In each poet’s view places and objects which have fallen into abeyance have the potential to become current again. Dirt and waste assume a formless identity, a state of non-differentiation. Serenella Iovino notes that it is waste’s formlessness that makes it an apt symbol of the beginning, of growth and of decay:

There is instead an ontological meaning in the idea of waste which alludes

⁴⁸³ Hugh Haughton, *The Poetry of Derek Mahon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 273.

⁴⁸⁴ Derek Mahon, *Collected Poems* (Meath: Gallery Press, 1999), p. 273.

to pure matter, something that both precedes and follows any formal determination. Here waste is matter intended as the germ of every form. It is the end that always precedes the beginning. In this symbolism lies the conceptual setting of what literature and the traditional iconography described as the underworld, the limb, the islands of the dead. Waste has therefore to be seen as the irremovable side of things, as a reversed *de rerum natura*, a cosmogony that starts with destruction, showing the co-presence of being and nothing: And in that it transcends human meanings and cycles, waste is transcendental. Moreover, and more extensively, waste is the underground destiny of civilization and the city itself.⁴⁸⁵

The ontological instability on which waste is predicated means that waste becomes a protean substance for Pasolini. Sites of dereliction are not to be dismissed as places of waste but function instead as places of renewal; they challenge and undermine normative attributions of value expressed in the spatial ordering and regulated practices of the modern city. The privileging of a derelict scrap iron factory in the opening pages of *Ragazzi* attests to Pasolini's engagement with places of this kind and is in tune with the limitless range of possibilities which Walter Benjamin claims that such kinds of sites offer:

Il Ferrobedò lì sotto era come un immenso cortile, una prateria recintata, infossata in una valletta, della grandezza di una piazza o d'un mercato di bestiame [...] Il Riccetto col branco di gente attraversò il Ferrobedò quant'era lungo, in mezzo alla folla urlante, e giunse davanti a una delle casette. [...] Col giovanotto rientrò nel Ferrobedò e si spinse nei magazzini:

⁴⁸⁵ Iovino, p. 340.

li presero un sacco di canapetti. Poi il giovane disse: ‘Vie’ qqua a incollà li chiodi’. Così tra i canapetti, i chiodi e altre cose, il Ricetto si fece cinque viaggi di andata e ritorno a Donna Olimpia.⁴⁸⁶

The petty act of thievery that Ricetto and his sidekicks engage in adds suspense to the narrative. What is significant here, however, is that a derelict factory site becomes the site of renewal, a place out of which ‘a thought might grow’.⁴⁸⁷ Remnants from the past acquire value and are repurposed and help the boys, albeit momentarily, to sustain a pre-modern way of life which is out of kilter with modernity. Michael Thompson describes the process of how discarded and forgotten items can be rediscovered:

A transient object, decreasing in value with time and use eventually sinks in Rubbish – a timeless and valueless limbo. In an ideal world it would then disappear in a small cloud of dust but often this does not happen, and it lingers on, unnoticed and unloved, until perhaps discovered by some creative and upwardly mobile individual and successfully transferred to the Durable category.⁴⁸⁸

Both Pasolini’s and Mahon’s quest for order is bound up with an acute sense of disorder and is pitched against the reality of wreckage and waste. Mahon’s concern about the appearance of ‘packaged history’ and ‘production values’ which want to tidy away the poet’s numinous bright garbage become the examples of the destructive wastefulness of modern culture. Similar preoccupations are also raised by Pasolini in the closing pages of *Ragazzi*. The city’s post-war industrial production models and infrastructure are about

⁴⁸⁶ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 524.

⁴⁸⁷ Mahon, p. 170.

⁴⁸⁸ Thompson, p. 322.

to usher in a boom which promises to whisk away squalor and poverty. Yet plenitude also creates a new kind of waste. Detritus is no longer decomposed; its stubbornly tangible nature haunts the city's urban landscape by its awkward presence and permanence. The production of new commodities and items which promised to raise city dwellers' standards of living generates astonishing and unprecedented scales of waste. The waste which is dumped by a chemical factory into the river Aniene shows how corporate geographies push their way into Ponte Mammolo's hitherto unspoiled urban landscape:

Passò [Genesio] il correntino che lo trascinò un pezzetto in giù insieme alla zozzeria per qualche metro, [...] sotto la stria bianca degli acidi della varecchina [...]. S'era messo seduto come faceva lui sotto il torrentello della varecchina, sulla melma appastata di bianco. Lì sopra, alle sue spalle, come una frana dell'inferno, s'alzava la scarpata cespugliosa con il muraglione della fabbrica, da dove sporgevano verdi e marroni delle specie di cilindri, di serbatoi, tutto un mucchio di scatoloni di metallo, dove il sole riverberava quasi nero per la troppa luce.⁴⁸⁹

Once again Ponte Mammolo becomes the trash heap to which not only the city's redundant bodies have been relegated but also some of the city's industrial waste. The representation of the damage caused by industrial pollution re-focuses Pasolini's enduring concern about dirt and waste and causes him to question the broader politics of production and of waste disposal. Serenella Iovino has described Pasolini's interest in environmental issues as an ethical proposal:

Tale denuncia si condensa intorno a una proposta etica che potremmo definire 'ambientistica': per Pasolini l'artista deve, attraverso la sua opera,

⁴⁸⁹ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 763.

interpretare, custodire e proteggere un *paesaggio culturale*. In questa prospettiva, il paesaggio non è solo ambiente geografico e naturale, ma anche e soprattutto ambiente storico e umano: un territorio composito e stratificato nel tempo, che è un insieme universo linguistico, identità di luoghi, e patrimonio d'immagini artistiche che questi ambienti elaborano e trasmettono.⁴⁹⁰

The picturesque abandon of a scrap iron factory at the outset of *Ragazzi* is replaced by the haunting presence of toxic waste in its closing pages. The effect of this recurrent preoccupation with waste is not simply to create a palpable atmosphere of urban degradation and ecological disaster but also to demystify the commodity form itself for, as matter out of place, waste is a reminder that commodities are just materials, little combinations of metal, plastics or paper. The toxic waste dumped into the river Aniene is the tangible evidence of the material consequences of burgeoning consumerism and overdevelopment. The prominence of toxic waste disavows commodity culture's promise to eradicate need.

Conclusion

Dirt and waste are used by Pasolini not only to protest about how an economic or political post-war system has disenfranchised some of its citizens but also to enact a platform which calls for just and responsible citizenship and a fairer future. Rome is initially presented as a place where filth is not only present, but also valorized. In its fluidity dirt becomes a shifting spatial locus that engages with some of the crucial

⁴⁹⁰ Iovino goes on to claim that: 'Pasolini cerca di dimostrare la necessità di preservare *nell'ambiente e come ambiente* la memoria del passato; e, insieme, di indicare i luoghi in cui il passato si consegna alla memoria: la lingua, il paesaggio sociale, nelle sue realtà urbane e rurali, la tradizione artistica e figurativa'. Serenella Iovino, 'Lucciole, voci e pale d'altare. Pier Paolo Pasolini e l'etica del paesaggio culturale', *Kainos, rivista telematica di critica filosofica*, Vol.3, 2004, www.kainos.it/nonluogo/iovino.html. [accessed 20 March 2017].

discourses which are involved in changing the shape and image of the city. Pasolini's poetics of dirt subvert and unravel hegemonic notions between cleanliness and filth. By turning the trope of sanitation on its head, Pasolini embraces and contests entrenched cultural assumptions about this binary relationship to illuminate ways in which dominant groups construct narratives of underdevelopment as a way of controlling poor and unruly communities. Pasolini's Roman prose reveals a misplaced obsession by city planners and urban reformers with cleanliness and order and with the domestic and sanitation ideologies they underwrite, which are, in his view at best trivial in face of real social challenges that the post-war city actually faces. Dirt is placed within a framework which privileges considerations of meaning over materiality and the threat of death over the perpetuity of life processes. Pasolini's holistic vision of dirt is a scathing critique of the unnecessary volume of waste that post-war society produces and calls for an alternative way of dealing with mass industrial forms of waste by re-conceiving production models and through recycling.

Water and Space in Pier Paolo Pasolini's Roman Prose

This chapter looks at the way water is represented in Pier Paolo Pasolini's Roman prose. It considers how water in all its physical conditions and manifestations is an integral part of his work. Water in Pasolini's fiction is physical and pragmatic, technical and scientific, social and political, spiritual and mythical and is invested with powers to preserve life or to take it away. Several chapters, short story titles and metaphors refer to the aquatic paradigm.⁴⁹¹ Indeed, water's ubiquitous presence in Pasolini's early Roman prose and, in particular, the sense of its seductive nature for some of Pasolini's young proletarian characters are tropes I will examine initially. I will consider how water sites are initially presented as places which offer alternative settings and shelter from the rhythms of the modern city. I will go on to look at how and why waterscapes, such as rivers and the sea, tend to dominate as these short stories unfold while other human and material references fade into the background.

Alongside these readings of Pasolini's initial attempts to represent water loci as alternative and utopian sites of pleasure and conviviality, I will ask why such places gradually become the location of potential violence, corruption, pollution and death. I will observe, therefore, how water is explored by Pasolini on two antithetical levels: as a giver of life and as the cause of death. The connection between the boys' bodies and water opens a new discursive space which identifies these boys with nature. My chapter will go

⁴⁹¹ A sample of some of the short titles includes: 'La bibita' (1950), 'Santino al mare di Ostia' (1951), and 'Domenica all'Acqua Acquetosa' (1957), while 'Il bagno sull'Aniene' is the title of the sixth chapter of Pasolini's first Roman novel *Ragazzi di vita*. 'Terracina', a short story primarily set in the seaside town on the Tyrrhenian coast, was originally published on two different occasions in the daily *'Il Quotidiano'* in 1951, under the titles: 'Notturmo sul mare di Terracina' and 'Dissolvenza sul mare del Circeo'. Giorgio Nisini, *L'unità impossibile: Dinamiche testuali nella narrativa di Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Rome: Carocci, 2008), p. 168. It is also worth remembering that Pasolini was planning to write in the late 1950s '[...] another novel, entitled *Il rio della grana* to become the third part of a "Roman trilogy" with *Ragazzi di vita* and *Una vita violenta*'. Barth David Schwartz, *Pasolini Requiem* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), p. 424.

on to consider how Pasolini reveals a complex human-nature interrelation through his sustained attention to water sites whose eco-system is threatened by pollution and his representation of the river Aniene as an ecological casualty. My analysis looks at how Pasolini treats the human-water relationship in a context of ever-changing social, political and spatial arrangements in Rome's expanding peripheries. I will attempt to demonstrate how the imaginative potential and capacity of Pasolini's characters enables them to connect and forge human-environmental interactions with their external world and, more specifically, with water.

Pasolini and Water: 'Da una sindrome marina alla scomparsa delle lucciole'⁴⁹²

Water fuelled Pasolini's imagination from an extremely early age and enabled him to assimilate information and to interact more effectively with the outside world.⁴⁹³

⁴⁹² Giorgio Nisini describes how Pasolini explicitly refers to how he is overwhelmed by 'una sindrome marina': 'In questa ottica si comprende anche la ragione per cui l'autore, nell'*incipit* del cap. II [dell'*Operetta marina*, 1951], parli esplicitamente di una "sindrome marina" che l'ha contagiato; una sindrome "chiaramente sensuale" (RR, t. I, p.389) che si riflette nella passione per gli atlanti, per Omero, per i libri d'avventure e che lo spinge a riedificare la sua infanzia non solo come un *cursus proustianus*, ma come un *cursus marinus*.' Nisini, p. 129 (his emphasis). Nisini goes on to explain that Pasolini's first sighting of the sea did not actually take place until he was well into his adolescence and that his '*cursus marinus*' is initially developed through reading Emilio Salgari's prose, Homer's *Odyssey* and atlases. In relation to Salgari, Nisini claims that: 'l'importanza di Emilio Salgari va considerata: se i suoi romanzi non intervengono in qualità di modelli letterari "forti", è innegabile che essi agiscano da filtri catalizzatori di un immaginario su cui Pasolini cerca di costruire la propria opera "marina". Nisini, p. 116. Pasolini confirms that his perception of the sea is entirely based on secondary sources towards the end of the same story: 'Non avevo visto ancora, coi miei occhi, il mare, a Sacile, e non lo avrei neanche visto per tutto il periodo cremonese, ma ne avevo una immagine sfolgorante'. Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'Operetta marina', in *Romanzi e racconti 1946-1962*, ed by. Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, vol. 1 (Milan: Mondadori, 1998), pp. 369-420 (p. 418)

⁴⁹³ In one of his Friulian essays 'I parlanti' (1948) he describes how water helped him to form associations and to develop his cognitive skills. This affective engagement with water enables him to produce a kind of cognitive logic which is founded on a consonance between his sensory experience, the material characteristics of water, and the way these are employed imaginatively to produce meanings about his mother's hometown, Casarsa. Water becomes a medial element which is embedded with deep significance: 'Ma se tento di aprire come un ventaglio questa percezione di umidità, se entro in essa in un labirinto tenacemente profumato di salici bagnati, di fango, di carbone e di campi, ecco un po' alla volta la macchina si informa si dirada come una nebbia, e io entro nel nudo dell'umidità, fino a rasentare quella Verità che ci si nasconde da tanti anni e che mi svelerebbe il senso di Casarsa. [...] Lì è tutto il residuo mistero, lì si riassume il senso di Casarsa'. Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'I parlanti', in *Romanzi e racconti 1962-1975*, ed. by.

Pasolini's engagement with water gradually develops throughout his childhood into 'a syndrome' which is imbued with a mix of intense fascination and fear. He recalls a trip on a lake with his parents and uncle and the mixed feelings he has towards water:

Mi trovo in una barca, sul lago, con mio padre, mia madre, e forse, mio zio.
[...] Sono atterrito dall'acqua scura e diaccia. 'È tanto fonda qui?' chiedo a mio padre. 'Eh, sì, venti metri' risponde egli (per celia?). Il mio orrore aumenta, voglio tornare a riva. Ricorderò sempre l'attrazione di quel gorgo nero, che si mescolava a un indicibile spavento.⁴⁹⁴

In a letter to his cousin, Nico Naldini, just a few weeks after his relocation in Rome at the end of January 1950, Pasolini again uses water as a metaphor to describe his traumatic relationship with the city: 'se vuoi dei cenni geografici su di me, immagina il Tevere, spudoratamente irrazionale, in mezzo alle severissime cupole cariche di storia'.⁴⁹⁵ This visceral encounter has been described by Fabio Vighi in Lacanian terms as: 'a sudden manifestation of the disavowed core of Pasolini's own desire [...] a libidinal fascination with Rome and its inhabitants that *cannot be written* – and yet, inevitably surfaces everywhere in his highly idiosyncratic prose'.⁴⁹⁶

Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, vol. 2 (Milan: Mondadori, 1998), pp. 163-96 (p. 166)

⁴⁹⁴ Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'Dai "Quaderni rossi"', in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1. pp. 131-57. (p. 138). Pasolini confesses in a letter to his friend, Luciano Serra, his childhood attraction-repulsion to water 'Restato solo dentro le acque del Tagliamento, mentre i luoghi erano perfettamente deserti, mi pareva di essere afferrato per i piedi dal feroce e silenziosissimo nume di quei gorgi. Sono scappato fuori, nudo gocciolante con grida appena repressa, e felice'. Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Lettere agli amici (1941- 1945)* (Milan: Guanda, 1976), p. 7. Aldo Carotenuto describes Pasolini's troubled and squeamish relationship with water in the following terms: 'la descrizione del fiume [...] delle sue acque sporche e limacciose sembra riflettere la repulsione delle coscienze per un elemento che è sentito estraneo ai propri valori, anche se comunque oggetto di desiderio'. Aldo Carotenuto, *L'autunno della coscienza* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1985), p. 36.

⁴⁹⁵ Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Lettere*, ed. by Nico Naldini (Turin: Einaudi, 1986), p. 409.

⁴⁹⁶ Fabio Vighi, review of 'Pier Paolo Pasolini, Stories from the City of God. Sketches and Chronicles of Rome', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, Vol. 9(3), 2004, 363-95 (pp. 385-86, Vighi's emphasis). Vighi goes on to add in the same book review that: 'if in Friuli Pasolini had never been able to fully "assume" the object of his desire, once in Rome, faced by the endless unfolding *borgate* (slums) and their sub-proletarian dwellers, away from the petit bourgeois

It is not surprising, then, that Pasolini's thoughts should turn to a more extended reflection on water as a precious and essential natural resource in subsequent years. I believe that his relational, and yet subjective engagement, with water is at the root of his subsequent ecological sensibility towards the element. This connection may appear disjointed and unrelated. I would suggest, however, that Pasolini's perception, alertness, and critical reading of an impending ecological disaster are not only based on material and external facts, but also on imaginary and internal ones. His poignant exposure, in an opinion piece published shortly before his death and later entitled, 'L'articolo delle lucciole', of how the reproductive cycles of some aquatic species have been severely threatened as a result of chemical and industrial pollution is remarkably prescient.⁴⁹⁷ In this article Pasolini singles out the reduction of Italy's 'firefly' population over the preceding decade to emphasize the assault being made on the country's eco-system: 'nei primi anni Sessanta, a causa dell'inquinamento dell'aria, e, soprattutto, in campagna, a causa dell'inquinamento dell'acqua (gli azzurri fiumi e le rogge trasparenti) sono cominciate a scomparire le lucciole. Il fenomeno è stato fulmineo e folgorante'.⁴⁹⁸

The quality of the water in Italian rivers becomes a troubling reminder of the precipitous decline of biodiversity of certain species which had previously populated them. Monica Seger observes the significance of the species that Pasolini uses to argue his thesis:

prejudices of his northern environs, and with nothing else to lose, he truly started to live, and write, as if *under the sway of drive*, the obsessive compulsion to over-identify with the excessive inner kernel of his own desire' (p. 386, Vighi's emphasis)

⁴⁹⁷ Michele Diomede has observed that water became the preferred medium on which Pasolini founded some of his theses about the transformation of Italian society. Diomede notes that: 'Traspare in questa protesta una coscienza ecologica così tormentata e inquieta, che, certo, non poteva non influenzare il patrimonio ideologico-culturale dello scrittore. Negli anni in cui egli iniziava la stesura dei due romanzi, l'acqua, specchio per l'antonomasia, forse rifletteva meglio di ogni altro elemento quel trapasso di civiltà, quello stravolgimento epocale'. Michele Diomede, 'I fiumi romani nei romanzi di Pier Paolo Pasolini', *Studi Romani*, Vol. 41 (1993), 41-49 (p. 48).

⁴⁹⁸ Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'L'articolo delle lucciole', in *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude (Milan: Mondadori, 1999), pp. 404-11 (p. 405).

On a symbolic level, the firefly suggests unexpected brightness, open movement, unstructured and free-form expression – all qualities that Pasolini fears humans lose with full immersion in the worlds of history and capital. On a physical level, fireflies serve as an important measure of the environmental health, a sort of canary in a coal mine. [...] As the general environmental health of a particular area declines, so does the health of its fireflies. Urban development and pollution from chemicals commonly put to domestic use, such as those found in pesticides, are at particular fault for the population decrease.⁴⁹⁹

The firefly may be seen as the emblem of what Alessia Ricciardi has termed Pasolini's 'spectropoetics':⁵⁰⁰

Yet as a tiny, frail, and fleetingly luminous natural phenomenon, the firefly, [...] also may be viewed as an emblem of Pasolini's 'spectropoetics', an art that he practiced in poems such as *The Ashes of Gramsci* and in his films, where he sought to reinvent his chosen media in ways that allowed him to envision past and future at once.⁵⁰¹

She goes on to argue that his apocalyptic firefly metaphor is an essentially forward-looking thesis:

In so doing, they [his more demystificatory or skeptical readers] have

⁴⁹⁹ Monica Seger, *Landscapes in Between: Environmental Change in Modern Italian Literature and Film* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), p. 59.

⁵⁰⁰ Ricciardi defines 'spectropoetics' as a method that Pasolini invented to interpret the future in and through the past in order to read ahead events. In Pasolini's view, water is the meeting place between the material world and the past, from which all future life emerges. Alessia Ricciardi, 'Pasolini for the Future', *California Italian Studies*, Vol. 2(1), 2011, 1-17 (p. 2).

⁵⁰¹ Ricciardi, p. 4

refused to see the Pasolini who, *malgr lui*, stood for the future, albeit for a future achieved through apocalyptic lucidity, through a refusal to accept complacently the given state of affairs, through the repudiation of indifference.⁵⁰²

More recently Fabio Camilletti and Filippo Trentin, in their introduction to four articles which examine the legacy of Pasolini, Fellini and Argento on contemporary Italian cinema, have noted how Pasolini's firefly article, and other works about Rome by the three directors, have been severely overworked as metaphors for general degradation in Italy:

representations of Rome, stemming from legacies of Pasolini and Fellini, often intersect 'apocalyptic discourses' (in Eco's sense) on Italian society, politics and culture, in which the portrayal of Rome can be variously used as a synecdoche for an overall diagnosis of Italy's (apparently incessant) 'decadence' or, conversely, as a site of implicit subversion, through a depiction of marginalized areas and communities.⁵⁰³

In an article which focuses its attention on two of Fellini's Roman films and Pasolini's final novel *Petrolio* (1992) Filippo Trentin moves away from a prescriptive reading of Pasolini's firefly article as an apocalyptic lament for the disappearance of the city's traditional social tissue to embrace a more material interpretation of these works. He claims that *Petrolio* and Fellini's *Toby Dammit* (1968) and *Roma* (1972) should be seen as dystopian imagery which moves beyond the co-habitation of vernacular and

⁵⁰² Ricciardi, p. 14.

⁵⁰³ Fabio Camilletti and Filippo Trentin, 'Introduction' to Special section, 'Have the Fireflies Disappeared? Cultural Legacies and Apocalyptic Imaginary in Twenty-First Century Representations of Rome', *Forum Italicum*, Vol. 50(1), 2016, 162-65 (p. 163).

modern elements which characterized their 1960s works. What emerges is ‘a chaotic and dissociated cityscape that tends towards a state of maximum disorder to the incorporation of diversity into sameness’.⁵⁰⁴ This post-modern is a heuristic process made through a complex set of pictorial scripts which enable us to interpret late twentieth-century Rome as an ‘illegal hieroglyph’:

In this regard, they [*Toby Dammit* and *Roma* as well as the narrative of *Petrolio*] move beyond the purely apocalyptic lament for the disappearance of the traditional city that characterizes urban analyses of 1970s Rome, at the same time providing us with a potential imagery through which to interpret the ‘illegal hieroglyph’ that late 20th century Rome had become.⁵⁰⁵

Literature for Pasolini is akin to archeology and geology. This analogy has already been made by Andrea Ciccarelli in his reading of Claudio Magris’s major prose work. Ciccarelli claims that literature ‘needs to reveal the stratification of history or nature, and must be able to read the future in the past’.⁵⁰⁶ Citing from one of Magris’s most acclaimed works, *Danubio* (1986), Ciccarelli observes how the author claims that: ‘ogni pezzo di realtà esige l’archeologo o il geologo che la decifri e forse, la letteratura non è altro che quest’archeologia della vita’.⁵⁰⁷ The firefly thesis should therefore be seen not simply as an apocalyptic metaphor of an impending ecological disaster which extends from the river’s microcosm to the nation’s greater environment but also as a prescient and intuitive reading of how the diversity of a society made up of a plethora of sub-cultures and substrata is moving towards relentless homologation. I have singled out a number of

⁵⁰⁴ Filippo Trentin, ‘Rome, The Dystopian City: Entropic Aesthetic in Fellini’s *Toby Dammit* and *Roma* and Pasolini’s *Petrolio*’, *Forum Italicum*, Vol. 50(1), 2016, 222-43 (p. 222).

⁵⁰⁵ Trentin, p. 243.

⁵⁰⁶ Andrea Ciccarelli, ‘Crossing Borders: Claudio Magris and the Aesthetic of the Other Side’, *Journal of European Studies*, Vol. 42(4), 2012, 342-61 (p. 350).

⁵⁰⁷ Claudio Magris, *Danubio* (Milan, Garzanti, 1986) p. 297.

references concerning Pasolini's engagement with water in three very different stages of his life to emphasize how he sees humanity's interaction with water as being mutually constitutive. This symbiotic relationship between man and water is one of the primary concerns of this chapter.

Critical Scholarship

Despite the significant topology of water throughout Pasolini's Roman narrative fiction, no critical volume or essay has so far studied the significance of water and water imagery in his work in a systematic way. On a general note, Carpaneto *et al* point out how Rome's rivers became sites of sociality in a city which had few recreation facilities in place for its underclass:

[...] 'il bagno a fiume' era uno dei pochi divertimenti che loro potevano permettersi; andare a Ostia voleva dire fare un vero e proprio viaggio, bisognava prendere la corriera della mattina presto e pagare i soldi del biglietto, perciò molti non avevano mai visto il mare ma avevano imparato a nuotare nel fiume.⁵⁰⁸

Focusing on the important role assumed by the river Aniene in the last chapter of *Ragazzi di vita* Francesco Muzzioli explores the relationship between water and mortality. He argues that the river is strongly coded as the maternal body that pertains to the beginning and the end of life. He goes on to claim that the drowning of Genesisio is a desire to escape from the trauma of birth by the fantasy of self-punishment:

L'acqua infatti, come pure il legno (sia della barca, sia delle cassette) è, nel linguaggio onirico, un evidente simbolo materno: cioè la regressione operata

⁵⁰⁸ Rodolfo Carpaneto, Senio Gerindi, Aldo Rossi, *Pasolini e le borgate: Storia sociale della casa a Roma* (Rome: Associazione Culturale 'Aldo Tozzetti', 2007), p. 147.

dalla nevrosi si condenserebbe attorno a una fantasia intrauterina del ritorno al seno materno. Tale regressione [...] è realizzata con l'immagine dello 'ingoiamento' da parte di qualche animale miracoloso; qui con una semplice trasposizione semantica, l'eroe viene 'inghiottito' dalle acque. Però, anche il senso della morte finale di Genesio potrebbe non essere quello letterale: infatti i simboli, nella psicoanalisi, si interpretano spesso col loro opposto. Allora, 'cadere nell'acqua' potrebbe equivalere ad uscirne fuori, ovvero, una volta ammesso che l'acqua è la madre, a 'nascere'. Se accettiamo questa interpretazione, la nascita è l'evento tragico che, fin dall'inizio del romanzo, viene inseguito, riconosciuto e rimpianto.⁵⁰⁹

Jacopo Benci observes how water and, more specifically Pasolini's descent down a flight of steps, leading to the Tiber's embankments, brings him twenty metres below the level of the city and marks the author's foray into the city's origins, and an expedition into its beginnings.⁵¹⁰

This epiphanic episode introduces some of the elements that will characterize Pasolini's appreciation of what lies below the surface of Rome – the city's most ancient

⁵⁰⁹ Francesco Muzzioli, *Come leggere 'Ragazzi di vita' di Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Milan: Mursia, 1975), pp. 66-67.

⁵¹⁰ Pasolini himself acknowledges that this sensory experience, which took place on his first visit to Rome in October 1946, honed his cognitive abilities and acted as a medium through which he can come into a much more profound and authentic contact with the city's real self. In a letter to his former Friulian pupil, Tonuti Spagnol, he recounts the significance of this event: 'Tuttavia ieri mi è accaduto una cosa commovente. Mentre aspettavo sopra un ponte sul Tevere alcuni amici (era notte), mi è venuta l'idea di scendere lungo una scala che giungeva al livello dell'acqua. Eseguii subito quanto avevo pensato, e mi trovai sopra un lembo di sabbia e di fango. C'era un gran buio; sulla mia testa si distinguevano le arcate del ponte e, lungo le rive, i fanali un numero infinito di fanali. Ero a circa venti metri sotto il livello della città, e i suoi frastuoni mi giungevano sordi, come da un altro mondo. Proprio non credevo che nel cuore di una metropoli bastasse scendere una scala per arrivare alla più assoluta solitudine. Il tram passava stridendo sulla mia testa, ma io ero a quattr'occhi col Tevere, col secolare Tevere, che trascinava le sue onde melmose e i suoi riflessi verso il Tirreno. Ma lo strano era questo, che io non pensavo di essere vicino al Tevere di adesso ma a quello di duemila anni fa, e mi pareva di vedere, con una precisione allucinante, Orazio Coclite che lo attraversava a nuoto.'. *Lettere*, vol. 1, pp. 268-69.

level, 'the age-old Tiber' is a place swarming with life. This descent is not merely physical; it is a movement towards the 'primeval' and the 'low'.⁵¹¹

The strong analogies which exist between Pasolini's Friulian fluvial landscapes and his subsequent Roman ones are considered by Ilaria Lacciscaglia through a close reading of the Friulian short story 'La rondinella del Pacher' (1950) and one of Pasolini's first Roman fiction pieces, 'Il Ferrobedò' (1951). She notes a difference, however, in the quality and the colour of the water: the Tagliamento river is set in a bucolic and natural landscape and its water is clean and limpid while the scenes at the Tiber in his Roman story unfold in a more squalid and jagged environment and its water is dirty and 'yellow as if it was casting up all the garbage it was freighted with'.⁵¹² Lacciscaglia contends that:

Il Tagliamento è limpido, i suoi argini di ghiaia e il panorama che lo circonda rispecchiano la purezza di una natura incontaminata dove gli incontri avvengono con naturalezza e lontano dai paesi: è un luogo nascosto, quasi riservato alla gioventù. Il Tevere scorre invece dentro la città, lo attraversa, la divide ed è teatro di vita notturna e diurna: l'ambiente che non ha l'aspetto bucolico della campagna friulana.⁵¹³

Giorgio Nisini takes issue with Lacciscaglia, observing that Pasolini's Friulian narrative had already broached the problem of pollution, and suggests that the condition of the Tiber's waters in his Roman story may actually be influenced by what he had already begun to denounce in Friuli:

L'analisi di Lacciscaglia è sostanzialmente corretta, anche se si potrebbe

⁵¹¹ Benci, p. 183.

⁵¹² Schwartz, p. 278.

⁵¹³ Ilaria Lacciscaglia, 'Dal Pacher al Tevere' in *Come era nuovo nel sole Monteverde vecchio!*, ed. by Francesco Crispino (Pisa and Rome: Istituti editoriali e poligrafici internazionali, 2000), pp. 49-54 (p. 51).

avanzare un paio di obiezioni. Anzitutto il fatto che nella *Rondinella* il luogo in cui si svolge la vicenda non è ‘il limpido Tagliamento’, ma il ‘Pacher piccolo’, ovvero un laghetto di ‘colore verde torbido, marcio’, tutto altro che cristallino e trasparente, tanto che ‘lì nessuno veniva a fare il bagno’ (RR, t. I, p. 1393). Tenendo presente questo dato, da cui si deduce che la contrapposizione fra i due universi acquatici non è per nulla netta, e tenendo presente che la scena della barca di *Ragazzi di vita* riprende alcuni passi di *Avventura adriatica* e *Amado mio*, in cui compare un altro fiume, il Livenza, descritto come luogo d’immondizie (*Romanzi* p. 257), si potrebbe supporre che la connotazione negativa del Tevere dipende almeno in parte da una suggestione risalente alla produzione friulana.⁵¹⁴

Schwartz endorses Nisini’s observations and goes on to note that the scene of a drowning swallow is lifted by Pasolini from a setting in Friuli along the greater and lesser Pacher rivers and relocated to the Tiber in Rome: ‘For his novel four years later Pasolini kept the drowning swallow incident, simply translated the dialogue from the dialect of Friuli into the slang of *romanesco* and changed the names’.⁵¹⁵

The dirty quality of Roman rivers is discussed by Myrto Konstantarakos, before she considers another recurring theme in Pasolini’s Roman prose, the primacy that the author affords to water and death:

⁵¹⁴ Nisini, p. 206

⁵¹⁵ Schwartz, p. 278. Nisini confirms Schwartz’s observations, pointing out the strong analogies which exist between extracts in *Amado mio* (published in 1982), which are set on the Tagliamento river in Friuli, and Pasolini’s description of the water bathing station ‘Il Ciriola’ on the Tiber: ‘In realtà Pasolini modella la sequenza del Ciriola su un preciso immaginario acquatico: quello ampiamente cristallizzato negli anni friulani, dove le scene di gruppi chiassosi di fanciulli che ruotano attorno a un fiume o a un lago costruiscono la scenografia di base di molteplici squarci narrativi. Ce n’è uno, in particolare, tratto da *Amado mio*, che richiama il passo di *RV* sopra riportato; e non solo per dettaglio tematico dei tuffi, ma anche e soprattutto per il paragone fra il Tagliamento e “un vespaio”, così come il galleggiante del Ciriola era stato paragonato a un carosello (*La bibita*) o a un verminaio (*RV*).’ Nisini. p. 165.

Like streets, bridges punctuate the wanderings of the *ragazzi*. In the short stories and in the novels, the narrator and the characters return continuously to the rivers: the Tagliamento in the Friulian work and the Aniene and the Tiber in his Roman ones, in which the young boys bathe regularly. [...] All the rivers are alike: dirty, like the grass along their banks. [...] Like the streets, the rivers are places of love and death: the swallow which nearly drowns at the end of the first chapter of *Ragazzi di vita* prefigures the end of the novel, when Genesisio drowns in the same place [...] water brings death, reversing its traditional symbolic associations with life.⁵¹⁶

Fabio Vighi expands on Konstantarakos's arguments, claiming that death at sea is a theme by which Pasolini had been fascinated by throughout his childhood and that it is a theme which he incorporates into the prose work he wrote in both Bologna and Friuli. He claims that Pasolini is unable to relinquish this trope after he relocates to Rome:

Similmente costruiti intorno all'intuizione del momento utopico sono 'Santino nel mare di Ostia' e 'Terracina', dove, inoltre, interviene il tema della morte. In entrambi i racconti i protagonisti subiscono una fascinazione del tutto irrazionale, magica e ipnotica, per il mare, simbolo di una bellezza assoluta che insieme attrae e terrorizza l'uomo, balenandogli un'ambigua promessa di morte. [...] Colpisce per esempio il parallelo tra le immagini del mare e del deserto, altro tipico luogo narrativo pasoliniano (cfr. *Storie*, p. 37). Per comprendere a fondo il simbolismo dell'immagine del mare, giova però ritornare su 'Operetta marina'. Qui la scrittura di Pasolini sconfinava nel fantastico, in quanto elabora la metafora del mare come

⁵¹⁶ Myrto Konstantarakos, 'Rome in the Prose Work of Pier Paolo Pasolini', *The Italianist*, Vol. 12, 1992, 59-74 (pp. 64-65).

avventura estetico-erotico che ossessiona la fantasia del poeta sin da tempi dalla scuola e delle prime letture.⁵¹⁷

The fascination with water of some of Pasolini's characters, and how water and water sites are associated with turning points in their lives are themes that Michele Diomede takes up in his essay on the representation of rivers in the author's Roman prose. He considers how rivers condition some of his characters' representations:

Claudio Mastracca, detto Riccetto [...] l'imberbe teppista, lo scaltro e violento ragazzo di borgata, che spesso rimugina sulla propria, amara sorte, si trasforma in un tenero adolescente solo quando sguazza, dimentico e beato, tra i vortici del fiume. È innegabile che il fattore acqua lo condiziona. [...] Non da meno è il comportamento del truce e livido Amerigo. Nel tentativo di sfuggire alla polizia questi non trova altra via, fra le tante possibili, che quella di buttarsi nel fiume. Ovunque si spazia nella narrazione

⁵¹⁷ Fabio Vighi, *Le ragioni dell'altro* (Ravenna: Longo, 2001), pp. 89-90. Ellen Nerenberg observes affinities between the plight of Pasolini's Roman sub-proletariat characters and Italian women's status in postwar Italy. She argues that: 'Like these *ragazzi*, women, too, in postwar Rome wandered in non-linear fashion. Although many social subjects yearned for a return to social order and normalcy following the upheaval of wartime, the way that the adolescents wish for adult privileges [...] betokens the way many throughout Italy aspired to the full complement of social, sexual, and juridical rights that attends the social subject, that is the adult male'. She compares the fatal destiny of Pina, the female protagonist of Roberto Rossellini's film *Roma città aperta* with the drowning of Genesisio in the last chapter of *Ragazzi*. She goes on to claim that '*Ragazzi di vita* ends with one of the boys' swimming expeditions, this time not in the Tevere [...] but, rather, the Teverone, as the Aniene [...] is sometimes known. As if the movement from one riverbank to the other did not represent enough *ambi-valence*, in the very moment that Riccetto draws away from his comrades, Genesisio succumbs to fatigue on his return leg of his swim and drowns. Like Pina's bold rupture of women's (and partisans') proper place, we may see this fatality as a cautionary tale, exhorting to prudence those social subjects wishing to move, as Lazzaro-Weis observed of women writing subjects in Italy, from the margins to mainstream'. Ellen Nerenberg, 'Re/Constructing Domestic Space: INA-Casa and Public Housing in Postwar Rome or Women's Space in a Man-Made World', in *Women in Italy, 1945-1960: An Interdisciplinary Study*, ed. Penelope Morris (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 177-91 (p. 182 and p. 187).

affiora questa esigenza irrefrenabile.⁵¹⁸

War and economic decline are themes considered by Keala Jewell. She observes how the war led to what Bruno Tobia has referred to as ‘il depauperamento del già esile tessuto industriale della città (la Fatme, la Breda, la Viscosa)’.⁵¹⁹ Jewell goes on to note how Pasolini uses the Tiber’s riverbanks to depict this message of degradation:

These works [*Ragazzi di vita* and ‘Studi sulla vita di Testaccio’] lament modernity’s real destructiveness in terms of material and cultural fabrics. The poverty of the Ostiense area, which Pasolini called ‘periferia’ (outskirts), is a historical fact of the 1950s, when the industrial activity of the area declined there and across the river on the Monteverde side of the Tiber.⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁸ Diomede, p. 45. Diomede goes on in his article to note how water is an accomplice in Tommasino’s death. I concur with his observations about water ushering in turning points in Pasolini’s novels. I will look at how water and the beach play a pivotal role in Riccetto’s initiation into the sexual realm in the fourth section of this chapter and into what Julia Kristeva calls ‘the separation of the subject from the maternal entity’. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia Press, 1982), p. 2. I think it is also worth noting how Riccetto and Lenzetta are at another aquatic location, ‘l’Acqua Santa’ when Alduccio relays the news of Ginesio’s death to them: ‘Entravano dietro quattro cespugli scheletrici lungo l’Appia Nuova, salivano su per la scesa incrostata di due spanne di polvere, e tra cave e caverne, crinali, praticelli bruciati, burroncelli, mozziconi di torri e carraie si spingevano dentro la sconfinata e accidentata terra promessa ch’era l’Acqua Santa. [...] Un giorno i due paini – soli soli, però – arrivati alla marana del cancello rosso, trovarono un giovinottello di Tiburtino, che era semplicemente Alduccio. [...] Alduccio se ne stava in mutandine sull’erba sporca nel filo d’ombra d’una frattaccia di canne. [...] Si distesero pure il Riccetto e il Lenzetta sulla proda della marana. “Mbè”, riprese il Riccetto, “che mi riconti de Tiburtino”. [...] Alduccio lo guardò [il Riccetto] con interesse. “Amerigo è morto,” disse. Il Riccetto si alzò a sedere puntando i gomiti e lo guardò in faccia. [...]. “Ch’hai fatto?”. “È morto, è morto”, ripeté Alduccio, contento di dare quella notizia inaspettata’. *Ragazzi di vita*, in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1, pp. 521-771 (pp. 620-22).

⁵¹⁹ Bruno Tobia, ‘Roma da città a metropoli: Gli ardui percorsi di una capitale inventata’, *Studi storici*, Vol. 44(1), 2003, 273-94 (p. 289).

⁵²⁰ Keala Jewell, ‘A Postmodern Gaze on the Gasometer’ in *Rome, Postmodern Narratives of a Cityspace*, ed. by Dom Holdaway and Filippo Trentin (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013), pp. 119-36 (p. 128).

Jewell singles out Rome's gas factory, standing close to Tiber's banks, as a liminal site which is embedded with both living and deathly connotations and teeming with prostitutes:

The gasometer and industrial ruins are a rodent's abode. Importantly, though, city dwellers will travel there because the riverbanks provide a refuge despite of the deathliness. The banks below the factory attract prostitutes and their clients to what Pasolini calls the 'teatro della grande Amata'.⁵²¹

In a similar vein, Maria Laura Mosco notes how the river Tiber and its surroundings become symbols of the city's inchoateness and its most liminal settings:

Colpisce il contrasto dell'acqua, elemento naturale, ma inquinato, distrutto, sfregiato dal progresso, il cui significante sono i piloni di un ponte non finito e di un'architettura industriale abbandonata, e la facciata d'oro della Basilica di San Paolo. Il Tevere, o se vogliamo il cronotopo del fiume, resterà motivo presente in tutto il romanzo, e si conferma spazio dell'indefinito, naturale ma integrato nel tessuto urbano e dove la separazione sociale scompare, perché è uno spazio a cui tutti possono partecipare [...].⁵²²

⁵²¹ Jewell, pp. 128-29.

⁵²² Maria Laura Mosco, *Roma letteraria in D'Annunzio, Moravia e Pasolini* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Toronto, 2013) https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/70115/1/Mosco_Marialaura_201311, p. 158. I will take up this point later in my chapter, arguing that rivers in Pasolini's Roman prose become spaces that are responsive to the movements of time and history. I will show how, on one hand, the intensity of the river Tiber's flows can be aligned with the city's relentless expansion and, on the other, that the threat to the river Aniene's biodiversity and eco-system can be interpreted as a prescient and intuitive reading of an impending ecological disaster in Italy.

The connection between the boys' attempts to rebel against the order and rules of the *borgate* and water has been explored by David Ward. He notes how both Genesisio and Tommasino both die watery deaths as a result of their endeavours to differentiate themselves from other *borgatari*:

But as time passes Riccetto becomes one of the 'grossi' and is admitted as one of the fully fledged *borgatari*. This is not the case with Genesisio. He is not content to wait for his time to come and seeks to overturn *borgata* hierarchy. Despite his age he attempts to prove himself equal to the elder *borgatari* by swimming across the river [...] To pit himself against the river is the rite of initiation that will prove him a fit member of the circle of elder *borgatari*.⁵²³

Ward points out how a similar fate also awaits Tommasino in *Una vita*. He considers how Pasolini is eager to underline water's unpredictability:

Although Tommasino is allegedly different at this stage of the novel, this difference does not spare him from the ravages of the storm, which strikes at the heart of the *borgata*. Indeed, it is Tommasino's difference from his fellow *borgatari* that seems to single him out for special treatment. The storm suggests that there is little one can do when faced with the great, alien immensity of an unpredictable natural order which follows an unfathomable logic the keys of which we do not possess.⁵²⁴

⁵²³ David Ward, *A Poetics of Resistance: Narrative and the Writings of Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1995), p. 84 and pp. 250-52.

⁵²⁴ Ward, p. 82.

The theme of water and dirt is taken up by Victoria Tillson through her assessment of water as the carrier of apocalyptic devastation in the author's second Roman novel, *Una vita violenta*: 'an apocalyptic flood is, thus, sent to test Pasolini's human protagonist [Tommasino], as well as to wash its other protagonist, Rome, of its social, urban and moral squalor'.⁵²⁵ She reads the flooding of the river Aniene as the ultimate assault that Tommasino's body has to face: 'the filthy waters of the river Aniene fatally aggravate his tuberculosis, and the *borgataro* spends his finally resting days between the Policlinico and his home'.⁵²⁶

These critics have looked at the theme of water primarily in relation to single issues. While some of their findings offer useful insights, they fail to fully appreciate the aesthetic heterogeneity of Pasolini's waterscapes. By overlooking the primary importance and the broader role of waterscapes in Pasolini's Roman prose, scholars have not simply ignored one of the most important aspects of these works, but they have missed an opportunity to tap into one of the most potentially fruitful research paths that his narrative offers. My work, instead, reads Pasolini's Roman prose as a whole, and argues that water and waterscapes are mediums through which we can gain further insights into the initial interconnectedness of his male characters with their environment, the agency and the ecology of water as a natural resource and the chronotopic role that waterscapes assume in Pasolini's Roman prose.

Theoretical Scholarship on Water

Water and 'blue cultural studies' have recently emerged as a compelling and heavily theorized area that shares much in common with eco-criticism. Ecocritics collectively

⁵²⁵ Victoria G. Tillson, 'Rome's Modern Margins: The Borgate in Pasolini's *Una vita violenta*', *Romance Notes*, Vol. 48(3), 2008, 313-25 (p. 323).

⁵²⁶ Tillson, p. 323.

agree that they are concerned with humanity's mutual deep and abiding connection with the environment and with developing a critical discourse which speaks of the text's ability to articulate a sense of shared belonging to the natural world. The Australian deep ecologist, Warwick Fox, argues that the 'central intuition' of deep ecology is that:

there is no firm ontological divide in the field of existence. In other words, the world simply is not divided up into independently existing subjects and objects, nor is there any bifurcation in reality between human and non-human realms. Rather all entities are constituted by their relationships. To the extent that we perceive boundaries, we fall short of a deep ecological consciousness.⁵²⁷

Water's permeability disrespects the notion of boundary and hence an easy distinction between inside and outside. The dynamics of water enable a situation which unhinges interiority from an absolute and geometric construction of insideness and exteriority from outsideness. The philosopher, Gaston Bachelard, affords primacy to a living space which is both inside and outside claiming that lived places 'are in us as much as we are within them'⁵²⁸ and as a result 'the opposition of outside and inside ceases to have as coefficient its geometrical evidence [...] Inside and outside are not abandoned to their geometrical opposition'.⁵²⁹ Water is the literal and metaphysical site of mutual entanglement because of its capacity to cross boundaries of difference and of economic, political, spiritual and environmental domains of practice and thought. Water necessitates, therefore, a reconceptualization of the contact zone to encompass more

⁵²⁷ Warwick Fox, 'Deep Ecology: A New Philosophy of Our Time?', *The Ecologist*, no. 5/6, 1984, 194-200 (p. 196).

⁵²⁸ Gaston Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, trans. by Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), p. XXXIII.

⁵²⁹ Bachelard, p. 230.

nuanced and more complex understandings of human relationships than those structured through simple binary categorizations of nature/culture, self/other, self/world, etc.

A more nuanced understanding of the role of water that goes beyond a binary reading of man and water is taken up by Veronica Strang. She underlines water's potential to create a recursive relationship between human beings and water and considers man's somatic and biological co-implication with water: 'water's ubiquitous capacity to flow between articulates most clearly that persons are bio-cultural beings, and that human-environmental relationships are composed of interactions between material and social processes'.⁵³⁰

She goes on to consider water's universal nature as a life-generating and relationally formative element:

Water's core meanings as a life generating, life-connecting source; [...] as a transformative medium; and as a metaphorical base for concepts of movement and flow, recur so reliably in different cultures and historical contexts that there is little choice but to conclude that its material properties are formative.⁵³¹

The connection that humans feel to water, Bachelard argues, is due to its substance – its materiality – and it is this that creates a sense of intimacy. Describing water as 'a sort of plastic mediator between life and death', he claims that water offers the most 'complete' death: 'thus water is an invitation to die; it is an invitation to a special death that allows us to return to one of the elementary material refuges'.⁵³²

⁵³⁰ Veronica Strang, 'Fluid Consistencies: Meaning and Material Relationality in Human Engagements with Water', *Archaeological Dialogues*, Vol 21(2), 2014, 133-50 (p. 135).

⁵³¹ Strang, p. 140.

⁵³² Bachelard, p. 55.

The literal contact zone between human corporeality and nature is vividly enacted in transitional places between land and sea. Coasts, shorelines and beaches are loci where appearance and disappearance are inscribed. Michel Foucault has observed how water produces ‘other spaces’, spaces which can never be occupied – that lie outside the normal parameters of human existence.⁵³³ In his seminal essay, ‘Reading the Beach’, John Fiske argues that the beach as ‘an anomalous category between land and sea is neither one or the other but has characteristics of both’.⁵³⁴ Sophie Jung and Peter Burleigh observe how the beach appears to have a phenomenology:

at its core [the beach is] made up of sand, pebbles, stones, rocks; at its opposing limits the fluctuating intermediary boundary of water, the oscillating borders, make a clear definition impossible: where does the land turn into beach; where beach into sea?⁵³⁵

In her analysis of the beach and queerness in François Ozon’s cinema, Fiona Handyside observes how the beach is a ‘location where the body’s relationship to time and space is (consistently) reconfigured’.⁵³⁶ She goes on to argue that the beach is a liminal site of fluid time between the living and the dead: ‘[it] is perhaps not so much either “past” or “future” as it is both beginning *and* end, idyllic *and* threatening.’⁵³⁷ She goes on to note that, ‘oscillating between being a place of pleasure and freedom or a place of pain, dissolution and death with these differing states imbricated in its very figuration

⁵³³ Michel Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, *Diacritics*, Vol. 16(1) (1986), 22-27 (p. 24).

⁵³⁴ John Fiske, ‘Reading the Beach’, *Reading the Popular* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), pp. 43-76 (p. 43).

⁵³⁵ Peter Burleigh and Sophie Jung, ‘The Beach as a Space of Defamiliarisation’, *Journal of Visual Art Practice*, Vol. 9(3), 2010, 245-57 (p. 246).

⁵³⁶ Fiona Handyside, ‘The Possibilities of a Beach: Queerness and François Ozon’s Beaches’, *Screen*, Vol. 53(1), 2012, 54-71 (p. 55). Her emphasis.

⁵³⁷ Handyside, pp. 60-61.

(the beach constantly shifts in its appearance through the action of wind and waves), the beach reimag(in)es corporeality.⁵³⁸

A broadly similar reading of seaside/riverside settings can be made of Pasolini's Roman prose; beaches and the sea enable his characters to escape into a cyclical and liminal realm in which linear time is interrupted. The sea is invested with immense significance, offering life, passages of initiation and even death.

Man's amphibian nature and how he switches from one element to another is one of the main assumptions of Peter Sloterdijk's theoretical insights. In an interview, he claims that:

Human beings are not mono-elementary creatures. Whoever considers them in that way, is simply wrong. Almost all anthropology is suffering from a mono-elementary bias. It interprets us as creatures who in the end only exist in one element, that is to say, on the mainland, in the so-called real. Against this tendency, I have been developing a theory of moves, a theory of transitions between elements and situations.⁵³⁹

His critique of anthropocentric inquiries is motivated by what he sees as man's 'medial mode of being' in the world, and water is one of the elements underpinning his theory.

⁵³⁸ Handyside, p. 71.

⁵³⁹ Cited in René Ten Bos, 'Towards an Amphibian Anthropology: Water and Peter Sloterdijk', *Environment and Planning, Space and Society*, Vol. 27, 2009, 73-86 (p. 74). Sloterdijk's concept of man's amphibian nature, or what he has defined as man's 'medial mode of being', takes its cue from Martin Heidegger's musing about 'being-in' (In-Sein). This concept is what Heidegger terms 'a primal oneness', through which the four elements—earth and sky, divinities and mortals—belong together in one. Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language and Thought*, trans. by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 147.

This analysis resonates with Serenella Iovino's repudiation of a human-centred view of water and her focus on the element's material agency. She advocates the need to attune our understanding of the sea through a 'cultural amphibian' lens:

The 'amphibian' approach of the Mediterranean eco-criticism – its 'amphibian' culture – is both a form of ethic-cultural criticism and a precautionary practice of life. [...] We have to learn to see the world with the eyes of the castaways, realistically discerning in it 'fewer gardens, and more shipwrecks'. [...] Or we might add, with the eyes of tuna fish, for which these familiar waters may harbor hidden slaughterhouses. In this sense, we have to become 'cultural amphibians': to become aware that *bios*, life – whether terrestrial or aquatic – possesses dimensions that *we are*, even if we *cannot* control them.⁵⁴⁰

What Iovino advocates chimes with Serpil Oppermann's reading of the Turkish writer Cevat Sakir Kabaagach's novel *The Fisherman of Halicarnassus*. Oppermann's analysis of Cevat Sakir's novel underscores the relational equilibrium which emerges from a partnership between human and nonhuman life in the Bodrum peninsula, on the Turkish coast.⁵⁴¹

Epitomizing Mediterranean ecocriticism, his [Cevat Sakir's] emphasis on the ethical partnership between human and nonhuman has immensely contributed to bringing the biological diversity and cultural richness of the region to public attention and in raising ecological awareness about endemic

⁵⁴⁰ Serenella Iovino, 'Introduction: Mediterranean Ecocriticism, or, A Blueprint for Cultural Amphibians', *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment*, Vol. 4 (2), 2013, 1-14 (pp. 11-12). Her emphasis.

⁵⁴¹ The Bodrum peninsula is located on the northwestern corner of the Gulf of Gokova in Turkey.

species of the Bodrum peninsula.⁵⁴²

Writing from a broadly political, ecological and critical geography standpoint, Erik Swyngedouw considers how water and water infrastructures can enable us to gain a greater appreciation of a modern city's social fabric. He claims that:

Water is indispensable 'stuff' for maintaining the metabolism, not only of our human bodies, but also of the wider social fabric. The very sustainability of cities and the practices of everyday life that constitute 'the urban' are predicated upon and conditioned by the supply, circulation, and elimination of water.⁵⁴³

The urban historian Italo Insolera has observed how water catchment areas in Rome's outlying countryside often served as the primary source of urban development. He notes how the city's building construction speculators:

[...] cercano di avere l'acqua e la luce: e spesso ci riescono dato che sia [the public utilities] l'ACEA che l'ENEL non si preoccupano di violare il piano regolatore. A questo punto il più è fatto: cioè il terreno può essere venduto a prezzi di aree fabbricabili, il lottizzatore si mette i soldi in tasca e scompare. Cosa costruiscono gli acquirenti? Per prima cosa un pozzo nero: molte lottizzazioni come abbiamo visto sorgono su zone di captazione degli acquedotti che riforniscono la città.⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴² Serpil Oppermann, 'Enchanted by Akdeniz: The Fisherman of Halicarnassus's Narratives of the Mediterranean', *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment*, Vol. 4 (2), 2013, 100-16 (p. 100).

⁵⁴³ Erik Swyngedouw, *Social Power and the Urbanization of Water: Flows of Power* (London: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 1.

⁵⁴⁴ Italo Insolera, *Roma moderna, un secolo di storia urbanistica 1870-1970* (Turin: Einaudi, 1976), p. 326.

The study of water systems and infrastructures and how their design and development can offer valuable insights into modern societies' troubled passage to modernity is teased out by Matthew Gandy. He notes how:

By tracing the flow of water through the 'urban alimentary system' we can discern a series of tensions that underlie the development of the modern city. Water provides a powerful link between the body and the built environment, within which competing conceptions of public health and spatial order have become entwined. The very fluidity of water as a biophysical and symbolic realm serves to disrupt and challenge simplistic understandings of how complex urban societies function and the degree to which social and spatial order can ever be achieved under the contradictory dynamics of capitalist urbanization.⁵⁴⁵

The way riverscapes have been used by nations to become metaphors for dynamic streams of histories which connect the past, the present and the future has been taken up by Tricia Cusack. She observes how 'the growth of nationalism from the nineteenth century created a demand for the creation and representation of national landscapes in which rivers provided significant points of reference'.⁵⁴⁶ She goes on to argue that rivers

⁵⁴⁵ Matthew Gandy, 'The Paris Sewers and the Rationalisation of Urban Space', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, Vol. 24(1), 1999, 23-44 (p. 36). The theme of water and hygiene (or lack of hygiene) emerges in the *borgate rapidissime* built on the city's outlying fringes between 1930 and 1940 and in postwar building construction projects. I will consider these issues in the second section of this chapter entitled 'Water versus Concrete'. It is worth noting, however, that no dedicated study has been published, to date, about hygiene and social improvement in postwar Rome.

⁵⁴⁶ Tricia Cusack, 'Introduction: Riverscapes and the Formation of National Identity', *National Identities*, Vol. 9, 2007, 101-04. (p. 101). The theme of water, hygiene and nation-building figured prominently ever since Rome became the capital of Italy in 1870. Giuseppe Garibaldi, the foundational figure of Italian unification, was among a number of people from the new nation's establishment to advocate the complete overhaul of the Tiber's fetid banks in the 1880s. Vittorio Vidotto observes how 'l'altro grande problema, quello del disciplinamento del Tevere, cominciò a trovare soluzione dopo le sollecitazioni di Garibaldi. Anche in questo caso le proposte furono innumerevoli [...]; alla fine della storia della città conta la soluzione adottata, quella dei

have been used and adapted to shore up a sense of national collectivity and to merge ‘past, present and future in a single stream of ‘history’.⁵⁴⁷

Like all constructs, national identity has to be first built then maintained, and it needs persistent affirmation. The identification and reification of a national river provides assurances of continuity and a vivid image for the national imagination, but it does not do so naturally and much ideological work is performed by and through the riverscape.⁵⁴⁸

One of the main conclusions which emerges from these critical-theoretical discourses is that man’s constitutive engagements with the world are not underpinned by dialectical relationships, but by emergent, dynamically integrating material relationships. Water assumes a primary role which is underpinned by a constant flux of emergent relations which moves beyond dialectics and dichotomies to become a highly relational element open to alternatives, new formations. I will draw on, tease out and expand on many of notions outlined above to consider how water enables Pasolini to explore and represent a deep connection between his characters and water and waterscapes. I will argue that water sites in Pasolini’s Roman prose are a generative space that participate in the very process of constituting his narrative’s development. I will suggest that water emerges as a chronotope of endless movement and acts as a device which strings stories together and recycles them. I will also use and build on these assumptions to examine Pasolini’s

muraglioni e dei viali alberati, il lungotevere. Fino allora infatti c’era una sola piazza Tevere, quella di Ponte S. Angelo, mentre quasi tutto il resto, fatta eccezione per i due scali di Ripetta a nord e di Ripa a sud, era costruito dal retro di case, casupole, palazzi: un trionfo del pittoresco, ma anche “sfogo di cloache, raccolta di immondezza, mostra di luridume”. Fu una svolta epocale che realizzò gradatamente con tempi molto lunghi: cambiò il volto del Tevere privandolo della sua marginale funzione commerciale, ma aprì squarci, visuali e prospettive, inserì il fiume, o meglio il lungofiume, nella città e nel tessuto vitale della percezione urbana’. Vittorio Vidotto, *Roma contemporanea* (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 2001), p. 70.

⁵⁴⁷ Cusack, p. 101.

⁵⁴⁸ Cusack, p. 102

analysis of water's agency and vulnerability. I will consider how the river becomes both an active agent, uprising against those who fail to nurture it, and a site of diminishing ecology threatened by industrial pollution. My chapter, therefore, sets about putting relevant parts of Pasolini's prose work in conversation with notions coming from eco-criticism and material eco-criticism in order to develop a careful reading of the role of water in his work.

Da una sindrome marina all'immagine del mare come deserto ⁵⁴⁹

In Pasolini's earliest sketches of the city there is a pervading sense of the mutual relationship between water and humanity. In some of the author's earliest vignettes the boys swim, dive in, sail on the Tiber in a leisurely manner and are depicted much like water fowl, moving in their natural environment. Water is not simply a rich chromatic backcloth to the boys' aquatic adventurers but is, as Carpaneto *et al.* have already suggested, a site of sociality and a source of entertainment and engagement:

Ormai il galleggiante di Orazio era un carosello: chi alzava pesi, chi si issava sugli anelli, chi si svestiva, chi oziava e tutti urlavano ironici, strafottenti e tranquilli. Una prima squadra si recò sul trampolino e cominciarono i caposotto, i pennelli e i caprioli.⁵⁵⁰

Water sites serve as generative spaces which participate in the very process of constituting the narrative. The story of Luciano and Marcello in Pasolini's short story

⁵⁴⁹ I have already observed how Fabio Vighi has referred to an analogy that Pasolini makes with the sea and the desert in one of his short stories, 'Santino nel mare di Ostia' (1951). The passage that Vighi is referring to recounts the story's protagonist's emotional experience as he drifts in the sea, further and further from the coastline and reads as follows: 'Per qualche istante ci si sentiva come in una vasca, fuori dal mondo, in un cerchio di solitudine, in un piccolo deserto pieno di dune verdi e malinconiche'. 'Santino nel mare di Ostia', in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1, pp. 798-801 (p. 800).

⁵⁵⁰ 'La bibita' (1950), in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1, pp. 1387-391 (p. 1387).

‘Terracina’ (1950) is a telling example of the seductive qualities that water has for some of his young characters in his early Roman prose. The boys’ journey of escape from Rome and their arrival in the charming fishing town of Terracina on the Tyrrhenian coast has much in common with other stories which form part of an uncompleted project on which Pasolini was concurrently working, known as *Il romanzo del mare*. The boys’ escape on bicycles from Rome is motivated by Luciano’s desire to remove himself from patriarchal confinement. Luciano’s father’s alcohol dependency and abject poverty undermine his patriarchal authority:

Alle prime luci dell’alba si svegliarono e si lavarono a una fontanella. [...] Saltarono in bicicletta e salirono su per la stradina, ma non appena ebbero svoltato per il viale Marconi, deserto e bianco, si imbattono nel padre di Luciano. Restarono impietriti, senza sapere che dire o che fare. Egli li guardò dapprima non meno stupito, poi furioso. Era ancora un po’ ubriaco dalla sera prima, col viso in fuoco e gli occhi fuori dall’orbita.⁵⁵¹

Shortly afterwards, Luciano’s father grabs the handlebars of both bikes and the boys run out of sight; they subsequently gain possession of the bikes again and jump back on them. Luciano’s father notices immediately and runs out on the street cursing at Luciano at the top of his voice: ‘Se te pijo te ammazzo’.⁵⁵²

If Luciano’s departure from Rome coincided with an ominous paternal threat, the description of the sea on the boys’ arrival in Terracina is invested with no less menacing resonances: ‘Il mare si stendeva davanti a loro, color terra,⁵⁵³ solcata qua e là da qualche

⁵⁵¹ ‘Terracina’, in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1, pp. 775-97 (p. 778).

⁵⁵² ‘Terracina’, p. 779.

⁵⁵³ Pasolini’s choice of language here is in thrall to the ninth verse in Giuseppe Gioacchino Belli’s sonnet ‘Er tisico’ which anticipates the death of a person suffering from tuberculosis. The full wording of verse is: ‘Je vede tutta Terracina in faccia’. Pasolini justifies his choice of wording in the following way: ‘Si parla di parole-trauma, ma bisognerà dire che in Belli ci sono interi

bagliore. Stretto tra il promontorio del tempio, il Pescamontano, e il porto, pareva angusto, chiuso, senza orizzonti.⁵⁵⁴ In order to ensconce themselves in Marcello's aunt's house in Terracina Marcello introduces Luciano as an orphan to his deaf aunt: 'Quanto a Lucià, il nipote, [Marcello] le avevo detto, gridando, perché era quasi sorda: "Questo è n'amico mio. Suo padre e sua madre so'morti in guera"'.⁵⁵⁵

Luciano is, therefore, associated with predestined references to death from the story's outset. While Luciano's estrangement from his family home is initially presented through his conflictual and oppressive relationship with his drunken father and Marcello's decision to introduce him to his extended family as an orphan, it is actually the pervasive presence of water in the story which poses a much greater threat to Luciano's existence. After two weeks in Terracina, Luciano becomes fixated by the idea of taking Marcello's uncle's fishing boat and sailing out on the open sea. After a short consultation with Marcello he resolves to put his plan into action:

Lucià si levò la giacchetta e la gettò su un sedile della barca, poi aiutato da Marcello la spinse in acqua. Quando cominciò a dondolarsi sul vivo, come se il legno si animasse, Lucià fece un salto oltre il bordo e Marcello diede un'ultima spinta. [...] Il mare [...] era buono, ma l'aria lo era di meno: soffiava scirocco. [...] Lucià remava con calma: aveva promesso che non sarebbe andato molto fuori, [...] Però, remando, stava naturalmente voltato verso la poppa e vedeva la terra, sempre la terra, che si allontanava, ma non si sarebbe mai allontanata abbastanza da scomparire alla vista.⁵⁵⁶

endecasillabi-trauma: leggi a proposito del tifico che sta morendo [...]. S'intende che qui è in senso traslato di *terra*. Ha la faccia terrea, cadaverica'. *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1, p. 1709.

⁵⁵⁴ 'Terracina', pp. 779-80

⁵⁵⁵ 'Terracina', p. 782.

⁵⁵⁶ 'Terracina', pp. 794-95.

As the story unfolds, the physical topographies of Terracina which Pasolini so deftly conjures up throughout the story slip into the background. The narrator's focus gradually moves from the story's protagonist and the surrounding coastline's spatial attributes to the vastness of the open sea:

Pensò di arrivare, costeggiando il litorale del Circeo, fino alla punta, e doppiarlo, fino almeno ai margini del mare deserto, senza più terre e limiti. [...] A quel punto il mare non aveva davvero altro limite se non il cielo arancione e sereno.⁵⁵⁷

Luciano's desire to move as far away as possible from the coastline and find himself in the open sea not only reveals how sea and land fall into one another and boundaries fail to stay put but also suggests an attraction to a pre-oedipal state of plenitude, reminiscent of that found in the womb. His quest for solitude is partly motivated by his conflictual domestic relationship. In other words, when Pasolini turns specific place into a more abstract space he is also divesting patriarchal space of the specific space it underwrites. Luciano wants to momentarily escape from the patriarchal and wallow in 'a bright nowhere'. Emptiness is tantamount to possibility – the emptier the space, the more complete its potential.

To appreciate Luciano's obsessive desire to be alone at sea it is useful to recall the excitement of the protagonist of another short story, 'Santino nel mare di Ostia' (1951) which has precisely the same theme. Like Luciano, Santino is fascinated by water and its depths and sails out on a small boat as far as he can go:

Santino avrebbe avuto la fantasia di prendersi un moscone, e andarsene al largo; [...] Poco tempo ancora, e sarebbe stata una di quelle vele sperdute

⁵⁵⁷ 'Terracina', pp. 796-97.

nell'intimità del mare, dove l'azzurro era tanto più profondo e fisso. [...] Santino era eccitato. Cominciava a remare un po' meglio, e i remi riuscivano a far presa sull'acqua che si gonfiava e si sgonfiava sotto il moscone. [...] Santino era felice di essere così isolato in mezzo all'acqua. Più bello ancora però sarebbe stato se si fosse gettato a nuoto, e si fosse trovato tutto solo, staccato dalla barca, tra le ondate silenziose.⁵⁵⁸

This passage from 'Santino nel mare di Ostia' enables us to understand how both characters' bond with the sea is physically and emotionally satisfying while the rhythm of its waters seeps into their pores and offers them a totemic release from their everyday and domestic realities. As both stories draw to a conclusion, the sea becomes more intrusive and invasive and dissolves the notion of limit. The open sea settings betoken the fluid line between life and death:

Quasi di colpo, dopo due o tre folate sempre più stanche, lo scirocco cadde e la vela si afflosciò sull'albero. Non c'era più un filo d'aria: ma per poco: con la stessa rapidità con cui era caduto lo scirocco si alzò il libeccio. Nell'ansa tra il Circeo e la pianura, si era scatenato senza che nulla lo trattenesse, impazzendo giù nell'acqua immobile nella bonaccia, fino a colpire con un urto cieco la vela della lancia. Non furono che pochi momenti; poi il mare tornò tranquillo, sotto i soffi divenuti lievi e regolari del libeccio.⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁸ 'Santino nel mare di Ostia', in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1, pp. 798-801 (pp. 798-800).

⁵⁵⁹ 'Terracina', p. 797. The death of Luciano is described more explicitly by Pasolini in a previous version of the same story: 'Nell'ansa tra il Circeo e la pianura, si era scatenato senza che nulla lo trattenesse, impazzendo giù nell'acqua immobile nella bonaccia, fino a colpire con un urto violento la vela della lancia. La lancia fu ritrovata la mattina dopo, capovolta, da una paranza: andava alla deriva, nel mare sconfinato su cui era da poco tramontata la luna e che si stendeva deserto e tranquillo sotto i primi chiarori del giorno'. Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Storie delle città di Dio*:

The confusion of borders, and Pasolini's deliberate evacuation of space, can be read as both a mode of resistance as well as of outreach. Luciano's death in this open space removes him from the unhealthy social order of patriarchy and capitalism that motivates this act. This detachment from the constricted mores of the quotidian occasions a flight from social responsibility, and, perhaps more importantly, allows Luciano to remain locked in his evolution. Bachelard observes that in the emotional state of tranquility the being 'opens himself to the world and the world opens itself to him'.⁵⁶⁰ He describes the ontologically open state as eternal childhood, which is not a nostalgic repetition of the subject's emotional past, not a regression to a childish way of knowing, but a capacity to live the archetypal child 'under the sign of wonder'. Bachelard's definition of the archetypal child refers to a relational form of being lived in the immemorial. In this state of eternal childhood, knowing is accompanied by not knowing, which he claims, is not ignorance but a primal capacity for creativity. This relational state of openness and receptivity is necessary to facilitate man's creative imagination. Bachelard's notion of water as the means of a temporary death fits in with Pasolini's wish to present the sea as redemptive element, full of promise. Bachelard sees the immersion in water as a symbolic rite of passage:

In fact, more than any other physical event, the jump into the sea revives echoes of a dangerous hostile initiation. It is the only accurate, reasonable image that one may experience of the jump into the unknown; there is no other real jump that can be a jump into 'the unknown'. The jump into the unknown is the jump into water.⁵⁶¹

racconti e cronache romani 1950-1966 (Turin: Einaudi, 1995), pp. 39-59 (p. 59).

⁵⁶⁰ Bachelard, p. 173.

⁵⁶¹ Bachelard, pp. 187-88.

Letting go is not a rejection or a denial of particular emotional states but is an openness to all kinds of possibilities. The drowning of Luciano and Santino makes them simultaneously transient and enduring. As both characters take to the sea, they expose desires that go beyond the bounds of time-limited hetero normative futurity.

Water: Circulation and Repetition

The overwhelming presence of moisture and waterscapes in Pasolini's Roman prose and the interrelated engagement that water has with its surrounding environment immediately emerges from a cursory glance at Pasolini's early Roman prose:

Veduta lontana e nebbiosa della zona portuense, del gasometro. Lotto; strada, muretto, scarpata, fiume. Cinquanta metri a destra, il ponte. Vengono spesso dei pescatori con l'amo, e anche con una piccola rete appesa ad una stanga, come in un posto abbandonato, mentre sul ponte passa con fragore afono la circolare. Lucertole sulla scarpata cotta dal sole; feci, immondizie; erba ancora abbastanza pulita e fresca.⁵⁶²

Allusions and images relating to interconnectivity and cohesiveness abound. The bridge and the loop bus facilitate and intensify circulation and relationality, enabling the near and far to con-join. Pasolini's cataloguing casts an attentive eye on the fragmentary and richly articulated surface of a city which he appears more eager to describe than to explain. This environment of disarray and of displaced materials may appear initially chaotic but I would argue that it actually underscores how water runs in tandem with the human movement and human digestive process. Franz Krause and Veronica Strang observe how:

⁵⁶² 'Studi sulla vita di Testaccio', in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 2, pp. 412-36 (p. 414).

In the process of being ingested water is incorporated, becoming (at 67 %) a major part of the body and thus demonstrating the permeability of the person as an ‘assemblage’ of both internal and external matter. This helps to underline a reality that matter is neither ontologically nor literally distinct: all things – and living kinds – are dynamically composed of flows of condensed matter. In this sense one can ‘think with’ the properties of any material and these contribute to the meanings attached to them.⁵⁶³

Expanding on this theme, the homosocial act of urinating also underlines the relatedness between Pasolini’s characters and their environment. Water is taken from its natural environment, processed by his characters’ bodies and subsequently returned to the environment. Erik Swyngedouw observes how metabolic circulatory flows can be used as entry points to theorize socio-natural things and events:

‘Metabolism’ and ‘circulation’ embody what modernity has been and will always be about, i.e. a series of interconnected heterogeneous (human and non-human) and dynamic, but contested and contestable processes of continuous quantitative and qualitative transformations that rearranges human and non-human in new, and often unexpected ways.⁵⁶⁴

This aspect of inter-relatedness is evinced after Tommasino and his sidekicks return to the city from a joyride to Fiumicino. They enter a small bar and continue the drinking binge they had already begun in the stolen vehicle:

Allora entrarono nel baretto, che stava per chiudere, e gridando come

⁵⁶³ Strang, p. 134.

⁵⁶⁴ Erik Swyngedouw, ‘Circulations and Metabolisms: (Hybrid) Natures and (Cyborg) Cities’, *Science and Culture*, Vol. 15(2), 2006, 105-21 (p. 106).

vecchie cornacchie, si ordinarono una boccetta di liquore per uno, che avevano visto fuori nelle vetrinette. Chi strega, chi whisky, chi mistrà: e se l'andarono a bere tra i pini, urlando nel piazzale deserto, pieno di pantani. [...] Invece, fatalità, arrivarono al Gatto Rosso. Ci si trovarono sotto tutt'a un botto, che, a causa di tutto quell'alcole che avevano succhiato, erano venuti giù di corsa per Via dei Santi Quattro, tutti col pisello in mano, pisciando di corsa a zig zag, per la terza o quarta volta, gridando: 'Guarda che bella calligrafia!'⁵⁶⁵

This burlesque episode is not simply an example of bodily lowliness or the instability of corporeal boundaries. The boys' move from heavy drinking to passing water collectively in the public domain demonstrates both the ritual of homosocial bonding known as simultaneous urination and reminds us of the continuity of the water cycle through the body's ingestive to excretive capacities. It reminds us of Walter Benjamin and Asja Lacis's reading of the human body's porosity and space in Naples and it brings us into conversation with Serenella Iovino's focus on the material agency of natural elements.⁵⁶⁶ She considers how ingestive and excretive processes transform bodies and their surrounding environment:

Like every transformative or metabolic process of the world, thus, corporeality is always already open and trans-corporeal. This trans-corporeality expresses itself in the way material substances interfere and intermingle with each other, determining the world as a site of ongoing hybridizations, from evolutionary processes to environmentally related

⁵⁶⁵ *Una vita violenta*, in *Racconti e romanzi*, vol. 1, pp. 817-1193 (pp. 887-89).

⁵⁶⁶ Walter Benjamin and Asja Lacis, 'Naples', in *A One Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter, ed. by Walter Benjamin (London, New Left Books, 1979), pp. 167-79.

illnesses. Food consumption, too, is a way through which bodies are reciprocally transformed.⁵⁶⁷

While the boys' camaraderie may initially seem significant, it is actually their act of defiance which appears to embed this episode with greater meaning. They attempt, by collectively inscribing their bodily waste onto the urban landscape, to re-appropriate the city from which they have been displaced, albeit for a temporary, fleeting period.

Veronica Strang defines man's inter-dependence on water in the following terms:

As the substance that is essential to all living organisms, water is experienced and embodied both physically and culturally. The meanings encoded in it are not imposed from a distance, but emerge from an intimate interaction involving ingestion and expulsion, contact and immersion. Engagement with water is a perfect example of a recursive relationship in which nature and culture literally flow into each other.⁵⁶⁸

With regard to further themes of circulation/repetition in Pasolini's Roman prose it is worth recalling how Ricetto and Marcello's boat ride on the Tiber at the end of *Ragazzi's* first chapter bears strong resemblances with the journey that Luciano and Santino undertook in the author's short stories 'Terracina' and 'Santino nel mare di Ostia'. Water once again has a materiality which goes beyond its status as a resource, as it creates sites and locations which fascinate and affect Pasolini's lead characters. The

⁵⁶⁷ Serenella Iovino, *Ecocriticism and Italy: Ecology, Resistance, and Liberation* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 19. The term 'trans-corporeality' has been defined by Stacy Alaimo as 'a new materialist and posthumanist sense of the human as substantially and perpetually interconnected with the flows of substances and the agencies of environments'. Stacy Alaimo, 'State of Suspension: Transcorporeality at Sea', *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment*, Vol. 19(3), 2012, 476-93 (p. 476).

⁵⁶⁸ Veronica Strang, *The Meaning of Water* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 4-5.

river Tiber, as Carpaneto *et al.* have previously observed, enables us to get a strong sense of the quotidian social practices of the boys and the socio-natural worlds they produce.⁵⁶⁹ Riccetto's desire to engage with water and to remove himself from the city's urban landscape has strong affinities with Luciano and Santino's desire to sail as far as they possibly can from the coastline:

Finalmente la toccarono, rasentando gli scogli, e siccome lì non c'era quasi corrente, Marcello ce la fece a spingere la barca in su verso Ponte Sisto. Però il remo a mancina, così, andava a intruppare contro gli scogli, e Marcello era tutto occupato a maneggiarlo in modo che non si spezzasse o gli scivolasse via sull'acqua. 'Annamo in mezzo, e cche è,' ripeteva il Riccetto senza badare per niente agli sforzi di Marcello. Gli piaceva d'andare al centro del fiume per sentirsi proprio in mezzo all'acqua, al largo, e gli faceva rabbia che alzando appena un po' gli occhi si vedesse lì a due passi Ponte Sisto grigio contro lo specchio sbarbagliante dell'acqua, e il Gianicolo, e il Cupolone di San Pietro, grosso e bianco come un nuvolone.⁵⁷⁰

Once again Pasolini puts the boys' engagement with water at the very pinnacle of experience – water sites become locations which are overloaded with potential meaning. In the fluidity of these waterscapes, the boys' 'macho' masculinity is dissolved and

⁵⁶⁹ Silvio Parrello, who briefly features as a stock character in *Ragazzi* with the nickname 'il Pecetto' (*Ragazzi di vita* p. 538), recalls how he and other Roman street boys 'andavano a farsi il bagno al Tevere [...] e passavano lì ore piacevoli della giornata a parlare, a sfotterli e a divertirsi'. He goes on to note that there was a pecking order among the boys at the river which meant that they usually socialised in peer groups based on their age profile: 'Di solito, le scorribande al fiume avvenivano per gruppi d'età, e quando si avevano due o tre anni di meno si era automaticamente esclusi dai giochi e allontanati con le buone o con le cattive. [...] Quando seguivamo i ventenni ai piloni, loro non ci volevano perché non ci consideravano ancora pronti a compiere le cose rischiose che facevano, come andare a rubare ai vagoni della stazione Trastevere o fare il bagno in punti dove la corrente era più torbida, tenendoci a distanza e lanciandoci i sassi'. Quoted in Carpaneto *et al.*, p. 55.

⁵⁷⁰ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 542.

subjected to flows which reshape their identities. While each of these three characters may aspire to engaging in a unique and symbiotic relationship with water Pasolini is quick to point out that this relationship is much more fraught than what it may initially appear to be. Water sites are places of flows, currents and turbulence:

La barca pareva ammattita e andava a caso un po' su e un po' giù, un po' verso Ponte Sisto, un po' verso ponte Garibaldi. Ma la corrente la trascinava a sinistra verso Ponte Garibaldi, anche se per caso la prua si voltava dall'altra parte, e il Guaione, comparando alla ringhiera del galleggiante, cominciò a gridare qualcosa con le corde del collo che gli scoppiavano.⁵⁷¹

The boys' boat ride on the Tiber quickly forces them to engage with the complex spatialities and rhythms of the river and to develop an understanding of its patterns: 'ma sotto il pilone la corrente era forte, e la barca era carica. Per fare quei pochi metri ci volle più d'un quarto d'ora. [...] La barca, troppo piena, andava avanti affondando nell'acqua fino all'orlo'.⁵⁷²

The detailed specificity of Pasolini's water-sites grounds the river in the realities of its course and offers interesting insights into the city's increasingly rapid development. The river assumes the role of the chronotope discussed by Maria Laura Mosco, a place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied, a site where events and phenomena potentially take on new meanings. Bakhtin reminds us that the chronotope is a constitutive category which:

makes narrative events concrete, makes them take on flesh, causes blood to flow in their veins [...] It serves as a primary point from which 'scenes' in

⁵⁷¹ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 541.

⁵⁷² *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 544.

a novel unfold [...] Thus the chronotope, functioning as the primary means for materializing time in space, emerges as the centre for concretizing representation, as a force giving body to the entire novel.⁵⁷³

The chronotope has the function of binding seemingly unrelated temporal and spatial narrative events together. Pasolini's characters' strong engagement with the river and their incessant movements enable the reader to follow the course of the river as it flows past the city centre and makes its way out to the San Paolo neighborhood before emptying into the sea in Fiumicino.

San Paolo's landscape fluctuates between construction and decay:

Dietro il Parco Paolino e la facciata d'oro di San Paolo il Tevere scorreva al di là di un grande argine pieno di cartelloni [...] Proprio lì sotto c'erano i piloni di un ponte non costruito con intorno l'acqua sporca che formava dei mulinelli; la riva verso San Paolo era piena di canneti e fratte. Il Ricetto e Marcello vi scesero in mezzo di corsa e arrivarono sotto il primo pilone, sull'acqua. Ma il bagno se lo fecero più a mare, un mezzo chilometro più in giù, dove il Tevere cominciava una lunga curva.⁵⁷⁴

The trajectory of forward movement which characterizes the boys' endless journeys through the city and the constant of flow of the Tiber can be aligned with another relentless phenomenon: the pace of the city's expansion, and more specifically its expansion in the direction of the sea. Antonio Cederna has noted how the Tiber became the backbone of the city around which sprawling stretches of development initially sprang up on the south-eastern side of the river in the mid-to-late 1950s:

⁵⁷³ Bakhtin, pp. 250-52.

⁵⁷⁴ *Ragazzi di vita*, pp. 530-31.

Questo ordine del giorno [del 17 novembre 1955] diventava la base comune di orientamento per gli studi ulteriori del piano regolatore. Concetti fondamentale: [...] massima espansione della città non più solamente a est, ma nel ‘semicerchio ad oriente della valle del Tevere’. [...] Il primitivo indirizzo del comitato tecnico subiva così una sterzata verso il sud, espansione a oriente veniva ampliata a tutto il settore a est del Tevere.⁵⁷⁵

Cederna goes on to observe how these plans were subsequently revised to envisage construction in south-western side of the river in 1959: ‘Si era raggiunto l’accordo, anni fa, sullo sviluppo predominante di Roma al sud e al sud-est, oggi viene progettata l’espansione unicamente verso il mare, cioè al sud-ovest’.⁵⁷⁶ The Tiber’s relentless and irrational flows metonymically reflect the swarming expansion of the city.

It is also worth recalling how Pasolini uses rivers to underline the spontaneity of *Ragazzi*’s protagonist, Riccetto, in its opening pages and his worldly indifference in its closing ones. Moved by the sight of a drowning swallow, Riccetto jumps off the boat he and his companions had rented from Orazio at the renowned bathing station ‘Il Ciriola’ on the Tiber:

Il Riccetto guardò verso la rondine, che si agitava ancora, a scatti, facendo frullare di botto le ali. Poi senza dir niente si buttò in acqua e cominciò a nuotare verso di lei. [...] Il Riccetto s’allontanava, trascinato forte dall’acqua: lo videro [Marcello and his other sidekicks] che rimpiccioliva, che arriva a bracciate fin vicino alla rondine, sullo specchio d’acqua stagnante, e che tentava d’acchiapparla. [...] Il Riccetto cercava di acchiappare la rondine, che gli scappava sbattendo le ali e tutti due ormai

⁵⁷⁵ Antonio Cederna, *Mirabilia Urbis: Cronache romane 1957-1965* (Turin: Einaudi, 1965), p. 6.

⁵⁷⁶ Cederna, p. 33.

erano trascinati verso il pilone dalla corrente che lì sotto si faceva forte e piena di mulinelli.⁵⁷⁷

The novel's repetitious circulatory structure becomes apparent when Riccetto finds himself before a drowning boy, Genesisio:

Il Riccetto [...] si fermò a guardare quello che stava succedendo sotto i suoi occhi. Subito non si capacitò, credeva che scherzassero; ma poi capì e si buttò di corsa giù per la scesa, scivolando, ma nel tempo stesso vedeva che non c'era più niente da fare: gettarsi al fiume lì sotto il ponte voleva proprio dire esser stanchi della vita, nessuno avrebbe potuto farcela. [...] Genesisio ormai non resisteva più, povero ragazzino, e sbatteva in disordine le braccia, ma sempre senza chiedere aiuto.⁵⁷⁸

The Aniene's unremorseful and polluted waters swallow up Genesisio and return him to his uterine origins:

finalmente quand'[Genesisio] era già quasi vicino al ponte, dove la corrente si rompeva e schiumeggiava sugli scogli, andò sotto per l'ultima volta, senza un grido, e si vide solo ancora per un po' affiorare la sua testina nera.⁵⁷⁹

John David Rhodes observes *Ragazzi's* deliberately fragmented narrative structure:

[...] much of the novel seems to move forward as a nearly meaningless accumulation of events that, in its seeming directionless-ness or lack of obvious moral or narrative telos, both fulfills and undermines the nature of

⁵⁷⁷ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 545

⁵⁷⁸ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 766.

⁵⁷⁹ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 766.

narrative fiction as such.⁵⁸⁰

Despite the author's decision to rebel against the notion of narrative sequence, as Rhodes points out, it can be argued that water and water-related events provide Pasolini's first novel with a repetitive circulatory structure. This circulatory trope not only returns the reader to the beginning of the novel, but it gives the narrative's structure greater cohesion. Memories and glimpses of childhood contentment are triggered in Riccetto's mind shortly before Genesisio's drowning. Riccetto experiences a desire to recapture his past, entering almost into a state of melancholia in *Ragazzi*'s closing pages. Once again, the scene of the drowning swallow shores up the novel's narrative circulatory:

Vedendolo [Mariuccio] piangere il Riccetto lasciò perdere [...] Però gli faceva pure un po' pena: gli era venuto in mente di quand'era come loro, che i grossi ai Grattacieli [Donna Olimpia] lo menavano, e lui se ne andava a cicche, disprezzato e ignorato da tutto il mondo, con Marcello e Agnoletto. Si ricordò per esempio di quella volta che avevano rubato i soldi al cieco, e se n'erano andati a fare il bagno dal Ciriola, che avevano preso la barca, e lui aveva salvato quella rondinella che si stava a affogare sotto Ponte Sisto...⁵⁸¹

Riccetto's memories serve not only as a prelude to Genesisio's death but also to enable us to appreciate how much Riccetto has changed over the course of the novel. Riccetto is the only character in *Ragazzi* who has embraced linear time and who, has by virtue of this fact, a conception of the past. By simultaneously associating water with scenes of rebirth and scenes of death Pasolini exacerbates the amphibology of the theme of water. This

⁵⁸⁰ John David Rhodes, *Stupendous, Miserable City: Pasolini's Rome* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p. 31.

⁵⁸¹ *Ragazzi di vita*, pp. 761-62.

essential ambivalence assumes greater meaning when it is introduced into a broader context in Pasolini's prose: a place where water and water sites have to confront the relentless growth of the cities and its peripheries.

Water versus Concrete

Pasolini treats the whole gamut of human-water relationship in a context of ever-changing social, political and spatial arrangements in Rome. As themes of hygiene, order and surveillance increasingly emerge in his prose the natural environment gradually recedes. If water and water sites seep into the fabric of *Ragazzi* they are gradually written out in *Una vita* to lend increasing emphasis to the rapid growth of the city's constantly expanding built environment.⁵⁸² Water's key use, therefore, for a large part of Pasolini's second Roman novel is actually revealed in its very absence.⁵⁸³ From the author's physical description of Tommasino's new housing estate it is possible to glean that the new watchwords for the burgeoning *Borgata* of Pietralata are aridity, cleanliness and visibility.

Le strade nuove nuove entravano in curva in mezzo alle case, rosa, rosse, gialle, tutte sbilenche esse pure, con mucchi di balconi e abbaini, e sfilati di parapetti. Arrivando con l'autobus, a vederlo, quel quartiere

⁵⁸² Pasolini's representation of concrete and essentially arid places is not restricted to the construction of new *borgate* or new buildings to accommodate the increase in population caused by people moving to postwar Rome. The neutral atmosphere of the Forlanini hospital, surrounded by high walls and gates and a sterile internal architecture, is another telling example.

⁵⁸³ It should be noted that while there is a deliberate move away from water sites as the novel develops, this does not mean that Pasolini completely abandons water imagery per se. Michele Diomede observes how heavy showers frequently accompany Tommasino and his sidekicks' acts of thievery and bravado: 'Anche Tommasino, alla pari di Riccetto, deve fare i conti con il proprio destino fatto di miserie ed espedienti. E anche per lui il fattore acqua ha una forte valenza simbolica. Le gesta che questo personaggio compie, d'intesa con i compagni a delinquere, sono accompagnate regolarmente da violenti piovvaschi. Lo sfondo, per lo più notturno, delle bravate di Tommasino è di solito una campagna romana gonfia d'acqua, illividita, da furiosi e scroscianti acquazzoni'. Diomede, pp. 45-46.

pareva davvero Gerusalemme, con quella massa di fiancate, una sopra l'altra, schierate sui prati, contro le vecchie cave, e prese in pieno dalla luce del sole.⁵⁸⁴

The novel's protagonist, Tommasino, is struck by how clean and orderly his new house appears:

Tommaso s'era fermato a guardare la sua casa, che era una delle due o tre palazzine pitturate di color rosa scuro: si alzava quasi in pizzo alla via, contro le praterie, tutta bella pulita e nuova. [...] Era sempre vissuto, dacché ne se ricordava, dentro una catapecchia di legno marcio, coperta di bandoni e di tela incerata, tra l'immondezza, la fanga, le cagate: e adesso invece, finalmente, abitava nientemeno che in una palazzina, e di lusso, pure, con le pareti intonacate, e le scale con le ringhiere rifinite al bacio.⁵⁸⁵

The 'hovel made of rotten wood' that Tommasino had grown up in was part of a series of make-shift accommodation built close to the Aniene river and commonly known as 'Il Piccolo Shangai'.⁵⁸⁶

Matthew Gandy has observed how water played a pivotal role in modern society's hygienist revolution:

⁵⁸⁴ *Una vita violenta*, p. 1013.

⁵⁸⁵ *Una vita violenta*, p. 1015.

⁵⁸⁶ 'Il Piccolo Shangai' is an example of the *borgate rapidissime* built by the Fascists in the 1930s. Amalia Signorelli notes how these hastily and cheaply built constructions were often built in low-lying areas of the city's outlying countryside and frequently near to semi-stagnant water: 'Dal 1934 al 1939 se ne costruirono una decina (Insolera 1962) [*borgate rapidissime*]. Erano tutte poste a qualche centinaio di metri da una delle grandi strade statali consolari che partono da Roma, ma erano situate quasi sempre nelle cosiddette vallate, cioè in affossamenti caratteristici dell'Agro romano, profonde conche situate al di sotto del piano della campagna e in fondo alle quali c'è quasi sempre dell'acqua semi-stagnante, la cosiddetta marana. In questo modo, benché da tutte le borgate si potesse raggiungere una strada statale, la borgata stessa, essendo nascosta nella vallata, era invisibile per chi passava sulla strada'. Amalia Signorelli, *Antropologia urbana: Introduzione alla ricerca in Italia* (Milan: Guerini Studio, 1996), p. 121.

The hygienist emphasis on the purification and ordering of space has radically altered the relationship between the body and the city to produce a new socio-technological nexus extending from the interior space of the modern home to the territorially bounded managerial modes of urban governance.⁵⁸⁷

Rome's sprawling peripheries and high-rise concrete blocks are diametrically opposed to Pasolini's aquatic symbolism. This opposition between mineral and organic is constructed on a number of levels. His aquatic universe is fluid and creeps with life and never ceases to renew itself, while his concrete universe is solid and lasting. This immutability of the concrete is shored up by themes such as sanitation, order and surveillance and is essentially sterile. Through his symbolic imagery, Pasolini conveys how modern society is attempting to escape mortality by immortalizing its built environment and separating itself from nature's more pro-creative potentialities. The upshot of such an endeavour is the mummification of a burgeoning society which narrows the diversity of its human world, just as modern society's industrial pollution and waste management policies narrow the biodiversity of its waterscapes. Although the disorder, fluidity and movement of the author's waterscapes are deliberately erased for a substantial part of *Una vita* they are never far away. Indeed, water resurfaces towards the end of the novel and focuses on how the ecology of the river Aniene is being threatened by pollution:

⁵⁸⁷ Matthew Gandy, 'Rethinking Urban Metabolism: Water, Space and the Modern City', *City*, Vol 8(3), 2004, 363-79 (pp. 367-68). Stephanie Pilat observes how the modern facilities offered by the INA Casa project had significant effects on its new residents' behaviour patterns. She notes that: 'throughout the 1950s, hundreds of Italian families moved from shanty-towns, caves and barracks into their new INA Casa homes. Their interiors implied new behavioral expectations for the family through the provision of certain amenities and utilities as well as new kinds of arrangements for semi-public and private spaces. [...] The provision of indoor plumbing, for example, demanded a new type of personal hygiene ritual, while rooms separated from the kitchen and dining area suggested time for leisure'. Stephanie Pilat, *Reconstructing Italy: The INA Casa Neighborhoods of the Postwar Era* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2014), p. 8.

L'Aniene arrivava a Tiburtino scendendo giù dai Castelli: arrivato lì, passava sotto un ponticello vecchio di mattoni, dove c'era una draga e un'osteriuccia antica, una catacomba. [...] Passava poi sotto la fabbrica della varecchina, un accrocco di serbatoi, di ballatoi, di terrazzette marziane, che spurgava un ruscelletto bianco di acidi sulla corrente: imboccava l'archetto del ponte sulla Tiburtina, scompariva sotto una galleria di canne, e se ne andava giù, verso Montesacro, a buttarsi nel Tevere.⁵⁸⁸

Water unsettles the *Borgata* of Pietralata. The river Aniene is represented as being 'spudoratamente irrazionale' like the Tiber was in Pasolini's earliest recollections of Rome.⁵⁸⁹ The bursting of this river's banks and the subsequent flooding of Pietralata is a reminder of how water can assert its agency as it grapples with the changes to its natural habitat. By endowing the river with agency, Pasolini enables the Aniene to reclaim a relational partnership with its surrounding lands and with Roman building constructors rather a relationship of domination.⁵⁹⁰ The flooding of the *borgata* evinces how the Aniene's riverbanks should not be perceived as static but as transitory, permeable and geographically contingent. Water contests a linear reading of urban development and expansion and reminds us how time and nature are also cyclical. The river and the threatened ending of cyclical trajectories gradually emerges as a metaphor for the impact of the changes underway in post war Rome.

⁵⁸⁸ *Una vita violenta*, pp. 1151-52.

⁵⁸⁹ This definition harks back to Pasolini's depictions of Tiber in the letter to his cousin shortly after arriving in Rome in 1950 (see footnote 5). It appears that he admires the river Aniene's traits of turmoil and resilience and the hope it offers to challenge and to mend unsatisfactory social relations. The river Aniene arguably fuels Pasolini's imagination even more than its parent river, the Tiber, as unlike its parent the Aniene's watercourse has never been subjected to substantial human fashioning.

⁵⁹⁰ This notion of a relational partnership returns us to Serpil Oppermann's reading of the Turkish writer Cevat Sakir Kabaagach's concept of 'ethical partnership between human and nonhuman' in the Bodrum peninsula. Oppermann, 'Enchanted by Akdeniz', p. 100.

Tommasino has difficulty believing his companions when they inform him that the river's banks have burst, and that people have been drowned by water in the tenement dwellings or *baracche* built close to the river's banks where he had grown up:

Si vedevano le luci bianche che schizzavano qua e là, sui pezzi d'acqua marrone. 'Chi era aóh chi era?' chiese Tommaso a Lello. 'Quelli del partito [comunista], llà' cianciò Lello. 'E ch'hanno detto?' 'Che giù alla Piccola Shangai se stanno a morì affogati!' fece Lello. 'Come morì affogati?' 'Che ne so!' 'Ce sta l'innondazione', fece Sciacallo. 'Der fiume, che?' fece Tommaso. 'No, de 'sto ca...!' 'A stronzo!', urlò Tommaso, che si ricordava [Tommasino] che una volta, quando abitava là, spesso e volentieri, come pioveva, l'acqua scendeva giù dai montarozzi intorno al villaggio. La scarpata del fiume era una quindicina di metri alta, era impossibile che il fiume avesse dato fuori.⁵⁹¹

Water operates as a synecdoche for all nature, which seems to be rebelling against modernization's attempts to alter its eco-system and change its surrounding physical environment. As it swirls around the neighbourhood it becomes an alien element, an enemy of humans. Pasolini's description of the ensuing chaos in the *borgata* confirms this point:

Tutto questo pezzo di pianura, quella domenica, era trasformato in un mare. Fin dove l'occhio poteva arrivare, da una parte verso i monti di Tivoli, dall'altra lì presso, verso Tiburtino, non c'era altro che acqua. Tiburtino sorgeva come un porto, con le sue file tutte uguali di lotti, come magazzini, che avevano una facciata bianca illuminata dal sole, e l'altra in ombra, nera.

⁵⁹¹ *Una vita violenta*, p. 1167-68.

[...] Ormai il mare su cui sorgeva Tiburtino, e si stendeva tutt'intorno sopra le campagne, era color nero: si distingueva ch'era acqua solo per il luccicare confuso delle cresse.⁵⁹²

The river's turbulent flow highlights its fluid and unpredictable nature and emphasizes the changes constantly underway in water sites. Water is no longer represented as a relationally formative element or as a source of sociality, solace and reverie. It is represented as being sullied, polluted and the menacing carrier of dirt and disease that dispenses its poisonous effects beyond its natural boundaries. This representation of the river as both as a restorative and destructive site in Pasolini's Roman prose is akin to what Bachelard refers to as a symbol's reversibility. He claims that any symbol is necessarily reversible for it is the sign of reversibility, of the innate ambiguity of its materiality:

A matter which imagination cannot make live doubly cannot play the psychological part of an original matter. A double participation is necessary – the participation of good and evil, the quiet participation of white and black.⁵⁹³

While the river will eventually return to its natural confines, the purchase for freedom and recognition that the river makes vis-à-vis the floods reminds us of water's agency. The river's broken banks can be aligned with the boys' messy and ungovernable bodies and also underscore how the chronotope of the river is an integral part of Pasolini's prose. Water's materiality comes to the forefront as it spills out into places. Serenella Iovino and

⁵⁹² *Una vita violenta*, p. 1152-54.

⁵⁹³ Bachelard, p. 19.

Serpil Oppermann have shown how bodies' materiality play a vital role in storytelling.

They argue that:

If matter is agentic, and capable of producing its own meanings, every material configuration, from bodies to their contexts of living, is 'telling', and therefore can be the object of critical analysis aimed at discovering its stories, its material and discursive interplays, its place in a 'choreography of becoming (Cooke and Frost 10)'.⁵⁹⁴

It is arguable, here, to suggest that the river's threatened ecology also protests like the boys' leaky bodies to tell its story of peril:

La massa d'acqua si spingeva giù, gialla e densa, coi ribolli che s'intorcinavano, fino contro l'argine della Tiburtina, schiumeggiando: lì si fermava, rabbiosa, rinculava, s'incanalava un'altra volta sul letto solito del fiume, e ammucchiandosi in cavalloni lividi, passava come una furia sotto il ponte: di là si riallargava un'altra volta nella campagna: e i quattro o cinque casali erano là in mezzo come tante arche di Noè.⁵⁹⁵

Pasolini's conflation of a handful of Roman farmhouses with Noah's Ark brings us back to the apocalyptic claims put forward by Victoria Tillson. The farm houses, like the biblical vessel, appeared to be spared from the flood's more devastating consequences. The equation of this well-known biblical event with these Roman farm houses metonymically suggests the flooding has been caused by excessive growth and greed. This environmental catastrophe enables Pasolini not only to explore the fragility of

⁵⁹⁴ Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann, 'Material Ecocriticism: Materiality, Agency and Models of Narrativity', *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment*, Vol.3, 2012, 75-91 (p. 79).

⁵⁹⁵ *Una vita violenta*, p. 1152.

Rome's modernity and its riverine systems but also to examine the clash over land and property rights in the Agro Romano. Given that the apparent order of modernity is sustained by accepted codes of behaviour, sanitation and modern infrastructural systems, the absence of any kind of flood protection infrastructure in the city's *borgate* and even at times the most basic plumbing infrastructure highlights how Rome's post-war reconstruction project was characterized by excessive and reckless planning and development, property speculation and a lack of accountability.⁵⁹⁶ This situation reinforced the *borgate* as sites of social exclusion. Marcella Delle Donne attributes this situation to three main factors:

Beginning in the fifties, two cities developed in Rome. The first was the official city [...] the other city, built illegally, was the consequence of the three factors interacting and reinforcing each other. The first was related to a lack of public works. In spite of strong support from the state in the building sector, only minimal public building was carried out. [...] The second factor was determined by the presence of belts of low-income population, most originating in poorer areas of the country. These people sought alternative solutions to housing, usually by building illegal dwellings themselves, because the housing market in the private sector was beyond their reach. The third factor was generated by the interests of landowners and by their connivance with the public administration.⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹⁶ The absence of flood protection brings us back to Monica Seger's notion of interstitial places. The *borgata* of Pietralata is in constant expansion but the absence of flood protection exposes its lack of infrastructure and enables the river Aniene to actively revivify her watershed and to defend her eco-system, albeit temporarily.

⁵⁹⁷ Marcella Delle Donne, 'Rome the Capital: The Impending Suburbs and Strategies of Integration – Decentralization', *Journal of Architecture*, Vol. 46, 1992, 21-27 (p. 21). Delle Donne expands on her first point by adding that landowners with swathes of land in the Agro Romano frequently handed over part of this land to the City Council in order to reduce the cost

If, as Veronica Strang argues, ‘the impoundment of water is the most basic application of human agency’, it is possible to observe that the delicate balance between human-water agency has not been properly thought out or managed by Rome’s city planners.⁵⁹⁸ Carpaneto *et al.* have already observed how the *borgata* of Pietralata was built below the river’s water level and often flooded. They quote Bruno Ciccacci, a housing rights activist in Rome’s peripheries, to that effect:

‘nel 1950 ci fu la prima alluvione a Pietralata [...] La seconda invece fu causata proprio dalle troppe piogge, si allagarono tutte le casette e per questo ci hanno mandato a Villa Gordiani’ [...] L’alluvione provocò danni notevoli, abbattendosi su della gente povera, che rimase senza più risorse.⁵⁹⁹

Ultimately, the flooding in the *borgata* also enables us to gain a greater insight into the economic, social and psychological changes that its inhabitants were forced to contend with. Pasolini sums this up succinctly in a rescue operation in which an ailing Tommasino courageously participates:

Una donna, che c’abitava lì, ci s’era inchiodata, forse con la speranza di salvare un po’ di roba [...] Poi però un po’ alla volta la fanga era sempre più cresciuta, e lei era rimasta bloccata là, sola, nella sua capanna, e chiamava aiuto. La sua voce non si sentiva quasi per niente, col rumore della pioggia, del vento, della corrente del fiume.⁶⁰⁰

of infrastructure and services in adjacent lands which they owned. These public investments in roads, electricity, sewers and water served as what she terms ‘bridgeheads; for building speculation in contiguous areas of the Agro Romano. *Delle Donne* p. 23.

⁵⁹⁸ Strang, p. 143.

⁵⁹⁹ Carpanato et al., pp. 157-58.

⁶⁰⁰ *Una vita violenta*, p. 1173.

The city's rescue authorities arrive on the scene. They are intercepted by Tommasino who makes himself available:

I pompieri avevano delle corde, e si davano da fare per andarla a prendere: Tommaso, accanito, ci si mise in mezzo, facendo tutta una manfrina, svociandosi per farsi dar retta 'Voi nun sete pratici', gridava, 'nun conoscete er fondo!' [...] 'Fatemece annà a me, che io la so la strada!'.⁶⁰¹

Tommasino's ailing body could be in a certain way compared to the river's precarious ecology. *Una vita* ends on a poignant note: floods swamp various neighbourhoods and more specifically Pietralata. An already ailing Tommasino offers help to the official rescue team and in doing so jeopardizes his health definitively. Shortly afterwards he dies. This is one of the many moments in Pasolini's Roman prose which concerns itself with water, but it is arguably the most political for its concern for the increasing exploitation of this natural resource and society's diversity.

Liminal Sites

Physical estrangement and emotional dislocation are inherent to the liminal experience. The structural fecundity of the liminal lies in its diversion from the forms of the everyday. This section looks at how a number of Pasolini's characters undergo liminal experiences which occasion change in their familial relationships and in their individual identity in aquatic settings. These waterscapes are also liminal as they are subject to ongoing change through their constant flows and their gradually changing boundaries. The anthropologist, Victor Turner, sees liminal experiences as:

A stage for unique structures of experiences [...] in milieus detached from

⁶⁰¹ *Una vita violenta*, p. 1173.

mundane life [...] characterized by the presence of ambiguous ideas, monstrous images, sacred symbols, ordeals, humiliations [...] anonymity and many other phenomena.⁶⁰²

Liminal sites in Pasolini's Roman prose are frequently represented as places where his characters seek, albeit unconsciously, moral and emotional redemption. Such water sites momentarily provide comfort and security, but they are also places of loss and corruption, dysfunction and death. The site of the beach in Pasolini's Roman prose is depicted as a transitional location where both the physical site of the beach and its indeterminate boundaries are likened to the boys' corporeal incompleteness. The author chooses Ostia as a location to introduce us to one of his stock characters, Arnaldo, and his pubescent body:

Dove siamo? no, non a Roma, non nella Lungara, ma a Ostia [...] Fesso d'un Arnaldo. Avevi quattordici anni eh? Non ti pare nulla? Non soltanto NUDO, scoperchiato, messo in mostra, con la brezza del Tirreno allappata e circolante tra la peluria appena spuntata, sulla pelle del sesso rabbrivito, angosciato e offerto come un martire: ma addirittura fotografato, filmato.⁶⁰³

An image of reciprocity is suggested here between Arnaldo's fluid and growing body and the interstitial location of the beach. The setting evokes a shared participation where the threshold between Arnaldo's incomplete corporeality and its unstable surroundings are brought together.⁶⁰⁴ His body, therefore, becomes intertwined with the beach's liminal

⁶⁰² Victor W. Turner, 'Dewey, Dilthey and Drama: An Essay in the Anthropologic Experience', in *The Anthropology of Experience*, ed. by Victor W. Turner and Edward M. Burner (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), pp. 33-44 (p. 41).

⁶⁰³ 'Squarci di notti romane', in *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 2, pp. 329-61 (p. 353).

⁶⁰⁴ As I observed earlier in this chapter, Peter Burleigh and Sophie Jung have considered the inchoateness of the beach and the difficulty involved in defining its borders and nature: 'What is the beach? It is not exclusively sand and it is not exclusively water [...] In sum, then, because of

and indefinite landscape. Simona Bondavalli considers Pasolini's interest in his male characters' ephemeral physical status and interstitial locations:

It is not the boys' growing up that is significant, but rather *their* being young. Fleeting and undefinable, youth is interesting as an ontological status, as an indicator of difference. It is the liminal position *par excellence*, enhanced by the interstitial geography of the *borgate* and by the period of historical transition, for the city and the nation.⁶⁰⁵

Liminal water sites are often used by Pasolini to organise both his characters' experience of the world and to shape the narrative structure of his prose. *Ragazzi* exhibits a series of transformational crises in its characters' destinies which energize the author's narrative and lend it momentum. Each crisis appears to raise the collapse of the narrative's continuity but in retrospect each crisis functions as a means of providing continuity to its progression.

Returning to the site of the beach, it is possible to observe how Riccetto's identity is radically altered in *Ragazzi* after his encounter with a forty-year-old prostitute named Nadia. Pasolini initially presents the beach as a carnivalised space, a site of sociality and leisure which has much in common with his riverscapes.⁶⁰⁶ Rob Shields has observed that

its unfixed and indeterminate borders, and a transient nature cast within large-scale geological time, the beach transcends specificities and it is nigh impossible to impose order, to stipulate description, to demand compliance'. Burleigh and Jung, p. 247.

⁶⁰⁵ Simona Bondavalli, *Fictions of Youth: Pier Paolo Pasolini, Adolescence and Fascisms* (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 2014), p. 66. Her emphasis.

⁶⁰⁶ Carpaneto *et al.* have previously considered the river as a site of sociality and recreation, noting that a trip to Ostia meant getting up early to catch a coach and paying for a return ticket. Pasolini makes no reference to how Riccetto actually gets to the beach, but he does provide some topographic details of his return journey as it coincides with the collapse of the school at the end of chapter two. It seems interesting to consider that burst drain pipes were apparently the cause of the school's collapse. Silvio Parrello recalls how '[...] la causa del cedimento fu la confluenza delle acque di scarico che da Villa Pamphili passava, attraverso dei tubi guasti, sotto la scuola. All'epoca, tra la fine di via Ozanam e l'edificio in questione, sorgeva la cosiddetta Valletta de' Tiradiavoli: una marana che nei mesi piovosi si gonfiava incredibilmente e diventava un'enorme pozza di fango, impossibile da attraversare'. Carpaneto *et al.*, p. 53.

mass seaside holidays in Brighton from the mid-nineteenth century transformed beaches into a ‘still liminal but more chaotic zone’.⁶⁰⁷ In the Italian context, Natalie Fullwood in her study of the representation of the beach in the *commedia all’italiana* notes how many post-war films shot in this location were depicted as ‘overcrowded spaces crammed with bodies’ and are a testament to a burgeoning leisure culture.⁶⁰⁸ Nadia’s initial introduction is also set against a backdrop teeming with people:

Nadia stava lungo sulla rena, ferma, con una faccia piena di odio contro il sole, il vento, il mare e tutta quella gente che s’era venuta a metter sulla spiaggia come un’invasione di mosche s’una tavola sparecchiata. [...] i giovani, i maschi con le mutandine a sbragalone oppure attillate che si vedevano tutte le forme, le femmine, quelle sceme, coi costumini stretti stretti e tutte capelli – passeggiavano su e giù senza fermarsi mai, come se c’avessero il ticchio nervoso.⁶⁰⁹

It appears significant that Riccetto’s trip to the beach was preceded by a tight scrape with the police which led to the arrest and imprisonment of a Neapolitan sidekick he had recently befriended and with whom he had illegally raised money through a card trick. Riccetto arrives at the beach with a bundle of money in his pocket but his new-found

⁶⁰⁷ Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 89.

⁶⁰⁸ Natalie Fullwood, *Cinema, Gender and Everyday Space* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 68.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 560. Pasolini’s description of both Nadia’s and the boys’ semi-naked bodies appears to dedicate equal attention to both sexes. This would appear to be in contrast with cinematic representations in the same period. Natalie Fullwood notes that there is a gender imbalance in most films located at the beach in the late 1950s and early-to-mid 1960s. She claims that ‘If the beach is a site where [a] new social totality is imagined, the differently gendered bodies that make up this totality are not represented in the same way. Within these films themselves [of the *commedia all’italiana*], the gendered imbalance lying behind the politics of looking in beach space is rarely critiqued in the same way as the mass tourism experience. Yet men looking at women is the single most overwhelming trope of the space’s representation in the genre; the space of the beach and the objectivity of the female body go hand in hand’. Fullwood, pp. 72-73.

economic status is swiftly overturned during a sexual encounter with Nadia, in a sweltering beach hut:

Il Riccetto era lì in mezzo, col cappello messicano in testa. Lei [Nadia] zitta zitta si slacciò il reggipetto e le mutandine del due pezzi, se li tolse dalla carne sudata, e pure il Riccetto, vedendola, si tolse gli slip. ‘Lavora, daje,’ le ordinò sottovoce. Ma mentre facevano quello che dovevano fare [...] piano piano con una mano, [Nadia] scivolò su lungo i calzonni appesi contro la parete, la infilò nella saccoccia di dietro, levò il pacco dei soldi e lo mise dentro la sua borsa che pendeva lì appresso.⁶¹⁰

Riccetto's initiation from childhood to manhood through a sexual encounter is accompanied by an act of thievery. This ordeal is immediately compounded on Riccetto's return to his Roman neighbourhood, Donna Olimpia. As he approaches the neighbourhood he discovers that it is cordoned off due to the sudden collapse of the school, Giorgio Franceschi, where he lived with his mother. These events are particularly rich in liminal images: Riccetto suddenly finds himself plunged into a string of emotional and physical ordeals which begin with the loss of his money and culminate with the loss of his mother, his best friend Marcello and his accommodation. In his new status as an orphan and a destitute *Ragazzi*'s narrative dynamic emerges as one of structure and anti-structure or structure and liminality. The fact that these ordeals begin in such an interstitial location as the beach is, appears significant. While each liminal event is ushered in by excess or extremity it is also the location of the beach which provides the author with the perfect context through which he can redirect the course of events in his novel. Such spaces induce crossings and become a place where identities can evolve. Fiona Handyside

⁶¹⁰ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 564.

observes that: ‘the beach is a different kind of spatiotemporal location and allows for the reconfiguration of the body compared to other sites. It is a place where corporeality and the sensations of the body come to the fore’.⁶¹¹

The beach is a meeting point between land and sea and at the same time reflects the blurred and uneasy divide between both locations. Despite being conceptualized as a fixed site it is actually in constant evolution as tides rise and ebb. The beach, therefore, becomes the ideal site to stage Riccetto’s initiation from childhood to manhood. The reduction of his sense of wonder in water is immediately palpable as his attentions are deflected from water to Nadia’s body. Riccetto’s reluctance to engage with water as he waits for his turn to spend some time with Nadia is strongly at odds with the way water and water sites captured his undivided attention in *Ragazzi*’s opening pages:⁶¹²

‘Io me lo fo, sa’ disse Riccetto, deciso, e con un po’ d’emozione. Si tolse il sombrero, e corse verso il frangente. Stette lì a pensarci mezz’ora, mettendo prima un piede in acqua e levandolo, poi l’altro e levandolo, poi andando avanti fino a che l’acqua gli arrivava ai ginocchi [...] Finalmente si decise e si buttò tutto dentro come una paperella. Il bagno che fece, consistette nello starsi a guardare tutto infreddolito, all’impiedi, con l’acqua fino ai caporelli, dei maschi che s’arrampicavano scorticandosi sopra un paletto e da lì in

⁶¹¹ Handyside, p. 56.

⁶¹² Francesco Muzzioli shows how water can be a connective device which emphasises Pasolini’s first novel’s protagonist’s most recurring features, despite the author’s change of heart towards Riccetto after his protagonist settles down, finding both a girlfriend and a job: ‘[...] proprio quando il Riccetto trova una sorta di sistemazione e adattamento nel contesto sociale, automaticamente perde la funzione di preminenza che aveva nel tessuto del romanzo: viene respinto sullo sfondo, con apparizioni sempre più sporadiche e di raccordo, nei successivi episodi. Lo stesso atteggiamento del narratore nei suoi confronti, da affettuoso e dolente, si fa critico e spietatamente ironico: così mentre nel secondo capitolo lo avevamo visto “nuotare come una paperella”, lo ritroviamo ancora in acqua, nell’ottavo capitolo, tirare “su il sedere e le cianche come una papera” (il paragone è rimasto uguale ma è evidente il mutamento di prospettiva).’ Muzzioli, p. 26.

pizzo facevano le spanzate.⁶¹³

It follows that if we return to Bachelard's observations about the archetypal child, Ricetto is the only character in Pasolini's Roman prose who comes into historical time. His coming-of-age gradually undermines and will ultimately disavow the homosocial bonds and dynamics which had underpinned *Ragazzi* in its early chapters; it also enables the novel to move on and branch out into different locations and open up new and different perspectives.⁶¹⁴

Pasolini's water sites are liminal as they provide the ideal setting for some of his characters to take on new identities.⁶¹⁵ Returning to the banks of the Aniene and to the scene in which Genesio also makes an initiatory crossing in order to make a passage from childhood to adulthood, it is possible to note that his somatic immersion in the river, in the unfamiliar, or, in areas of reconfiguration and submersion is a liminal act.⁶¹⁶ Turner observes how the liminal is 'frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to

⁶¹³ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 562-63

⁶¹⁴ Giorgio Nisini argues that *Ragazzi's* fragmented nature is actually its greatest strength: 'L'elemento rivelatore sta nel fatto che proprio la struttura frammentaria di *Ragazzi di vita*, la sua radice antiromanesco, rappresenta la più autentica ragione di forza narrativa, che al contrario non troviamo in un'opera così attentamente organizzata come *Una vita violenta*, senza dubbio più organica, più coesa, ma allo stesso tempo inevitabilmente più rigida, anche dal punto di vista ideologico'. Giorgio Nisini, 'Racconti, anti-racconti, romanzi fallimentari: riflessione sulla forma breve nella narrativa di Pier Paolo Pasolini', *Bollettino '900: Electronic Newsletter of '900 Italian Literature*, Vol. 1-2, 2005. <http://www.centrostudipierpaolopasolinicasarsa.it/molteniblog/riflessioni-sulla-forma-breve-nella-narrativa-di-ppp-di-giorgio-nisini/> [accessed 20 March 2017].

⁶¹⁵ Franco Citti recalls how despite the Aniene river's waters being already dirty in the early 1950s they were part of a liminal and liberating landscape and experience: 'Era acqua sporca l'Aniene, anche in quei tempi, con tutto che non c'erano scarichi e le fabbriche di oggi. Ma lì, che ne so, la vita sembra diversa. A me, a Paolo, agli altri amici. Lì ti dimenticavi un po' chi eri, lì ti sentivi fuori dal mondo, lontano dalle baracche, dalla polvere, dalle lamiere'. Franco Citti and Claudio Valentini, *Vita di un ragazzo di vita* (Rome: Sugaro, 1992), p. 37.

⁶¹⁶ Sergio Taglione recalls in an interview published on the Italian daily *L'Unità* how crossing the river Aniene was a trial of strength and an indication of one's coming-of-age: 'E che facevamo noi? Noi ci facevamo il bagno, nudi, inoltre qualcuno faceva la gara per attraversare il fiume. Solo quelli che si sentivano più forti, perché se uno attraversava il fiume era "qualcuno", non era uno come me che faceva il bagno qui sulla riva e poi mi stendevo sulla spiaggia a prendere il sole'. Quoted in Enzo Lavagnini, *Pasolini: la prima Roma di Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Rome: Sovera, 2009), p. 92.

invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, to an eclipse of the sun or moon'.⁶¹⁷

The river with its dimensions of life and death is strongly coded as a maternal womb that pertains to the beginning and the end. Genesio is primarily motivated in crossing the river by the disintegration of his relationship with his violent and drunken father. He aspires to running away with his mother and two younger brothers. Genesio fragile and troubled identity could be arguably likened to that of the river. Industrial pollution has begun to have detrimental effects on the river's ecology and biodiversity:⁶¹⁸

Genesio invece se n'era rimasto solo sull'altra riva. S'era messo seduto come faceva lui sotto il torrentello della varetchina, sulla melma appastata di bianco. Lì sopra, alle sue spalle, come una frana dell'inferno, s'alzava la scarpata cespugliosa con il muraglione della fabbrica, da dove sporgevano verdi e marroni delle specie di cilindri, di serbatoi, tutto un mucchio di scatoloni di metallo, dove il sole riverberava quasi nero per la troppa luce.⁶¹⁹

Genesio's yearning to cross the river at all costs underlines an unconscious desire to return to the irrational, natural realm where patriarchal norms are almost non-existent.

⁶¹⁷ Victor W. Turner, 'Liminality and Community', in *Culture and Society: Contemporary Debates*, ed. by Jeffrey C. Alexander and Steven Seidman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 147-54 (p. 147).

⁶¹⁸ Sergio Taglione goes on in the same article to recall how a chemical factory pour edits effluence into the river Aniene and its attendant consequences: 'La Società Chimica gettava al fiume tutti i residui delle lavorazioni, non c'erano controlli da parte di nessuno allora, con bocchettoni da cui fuoriuscivano acqua putrida e scarichi. Alcuni ragazzi, amici nostri, me ne ricordo almeno un paio, sono rimasti affogati in questo fiume non perché non sapessero nuotare ma perché, stanchi per l'attraversamento, trasportati dalla corrente, avevano ingoiato delle boccate d'acqua putrida, acqua marcita, e quindi rimanevano intossicati e si affogavano, dopodiché li ripescavano più giù i vigili del fuoco o i cosiddetti "fumaroli"'. Lavagnini, p. 93. I would argue that it is possible to claim that the river Aniene, and the threat from industrialized waste, becomes the perfect example of what Bakhtin had in mind when he defined the chronotope, or more specifically, the inseparability of time and space in the novel. The river becomes the synecdoche of all natural eco-systems in Italy in the mid-to-late 1950s and the impending ecological disaster that they face.

⁶¹⁹ *Ragazzi di vita*, p. 763.

The Aniene's polluted waters may put an end to Genesio's utopian and liminal desire but they also consign him to a permanent liminal state which is potentially full of possibility in an alternative setting. The common threads which link the deaths of Genesio, Luciano and Santino include a desire to contest and escape from patriarchy, by engaging in a symbiotic relationship with water. Riccetto's evolution and coming-of-age throughout *Ragazzi* sees him gradually disassociate himself from these desires and states. It is possible to conclude, therefore, that Riccetto gradually moves towards a post-liminal condition at the novel's close. The death of Genesio in water is arguably embedded with also other meanings which go beyond Luciano and Santino's desire to engage with water. On one hand, his death suggests his return to a permanent liminal state, a storehouse of alternative possibilities while, on the other, it anticipates Pasolini's move from a utopian perspective towards a more dystopian one. This shift involves what Filippo Trentin has observed in his reading of *Petrolio*, 'the incorporation of diversity into sameness'.⁶²⁰ Genesio can, therefore, be read as an anticipation of Pasolini's subsequent 'firefly thesis' regarding the threat to the biodiversity of aquatic species in Italian rivers in the 1970s. On this point Veronica Strang has noted more recently how the alteration of seasonal flows in water cycles alters the reproductive cycles of a river's species:

sustainability relies on the orderly movements of things, i.e. at a rate which permits the material renewal not just of resources themselves, but also the other elements of the social and ecological systems upon which their production and use depends. As well as being an 'orderly system' in Douglas' terms (1975), the flow of material things is also a system with its own agentive order, a set of adaptive reciprocal relations that has evolved

⁶²⁰ Trentin, p. 222.

over evolutionary time. This temporal stability is now being anthropogenically disrupted, leading to unpredictable emergent effects on all scales.⁶²¹

There is a very strong affinity between Pasolini's 'firefly thesis' and his 'cultural genocide' thesis.⁶²² Both theses refer to Trentin's observation about 'diversity into sameness'. Genesisio's death in the river Aniene's polluted waters can be read as the seeds of an eco-critical inquiry that Pasolini became actively engaged in the early 1970s. Danielle Hipkins also notes how Pasolini used the firefly to denounce a gradual waning in Italy's sub-proletariat and peasants' spirit of resistance:

For Pasolini the firefly provided the means to articulate his disillusion with the humble people of Italy, the disenfranchised, the subproletariat, the peasants, and what he saw as the disappearance of their resistant spirit into the homogeneity of consumer culture in Italy's boom of the 1960s.⁶²³

Genesisio's death plausibly signals a turning point in Pasolini's prose. It represents a shift away from the 'tragedia dell'infanzia' in water, rehearsed in 'Terracina' and 'Santino nel mare di Ostia', which shores up a counter-cultural consciousness and a message of alternative possibilities, and moves towards themes which anticipate his

⁶²¹ Strang, p. 149.

⁶²² Pasolini launched both theses in the Italian daily *Corriere della sera* in 1975. Pasolini wrote his genocide thesis on the occasion of Italy's public broadcaster RAI's first screening of *Accattone* in February of that year. He claimed in that article that it would have been impossible for him to re-shoot *Accattone* in 1975 because of a relentless drive of homologation which had wiped out Italy's underclasses over the intervening fourteen-year period. He observed that: 'tra il 1961 e il 1975 qualcosa di essenziale è cambiato: si è avuto un genocidio. Si è distrutto culturalmente una popolazione. [...] Se io oggi volessi rigirare *Accattone* non potrei più farlo. Non troverei più un solo giovane che fosse neanche lontanamente simile ai giovani che hanno rappresentato sé stessi in *Accattone*'. Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'Il mio *Accattone* in TV dopo il genocidio', in *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, pp. 674-81 (pp. 676-77).

⁶²³ Danielle Hipkins, 'Of Postfeminist Girls and Fireflies: Consuming Rome in *Un giorno speciale*', *Forum Italicum*, Vol. 50(1), 2016, 166-82 (p. 167).

denunciation of a society in which consumerism and industrialization had begun to extinguish the spirit of a pre-modern sub-proletariat which remains outside the logic of labour and capital. The river is no longer represented as a site of riparian ecology which nurtures a special relationship with Pasolini's characters but as a river-sewer, a site of rapidly diminishing ecologies. Pasolini's representation of water, therefore, does not merely alert us to its planetary interconnectedness with the element, but it also underscores its vulnerability and its diminishing capacity to endure waste disposal and capitalist industrialization. The constant metamorphoses of the Roman rivers, their incessant flows and their cyclical nature, show how rivers become dynamic streams of histories connecting the past, the present and the future. Water's dynamic and fluid nature and relentless flow metonymically reflect the swarming expansion of the city and enable rivers and riverine landscapes to manifest changes over time more readily than concrete or solid ones.

Conclusion

Water-related encounters are important affective events and are crucial to how Pasolini's Roman characters make sense of place and space and their position within the city as a whole. Water sites in Pasolini's Roman prose are places of intense movement and provide a fitting metaphor for the relentless expansion of the city. What immediately emerges from Pasolini's representation of water and water sites is his eagerness to bring the materiality of humans and water to the forefront of his analysis. Water and water sites for Pasolini are never static, never assume a fixed identity, and do not respect boundaries; these distinctive characteristics mean that they are invested with a relational and formative agency which enables them to materially engage and interfere with cultural production. Water sites, like the organic world which accompany them, are the source of life but they are also the reminder of its violent end. They become, therefore,

active agents in the production of space and assume a constitutive role in the narrative structure of Pasolini's prose. They are permeable as the use of surrounding land has an impact on water; this reciprocal relationship between land and water evinces water's potencies and vulnerabilities and the positive and negative impacts it can have on its surroundings. Water symbolism and water events support his novels' development and reinforce their structure by broadening their perspectives. They also provide fodder to Pasolini in teasing out themes such as speculative building construction, reckless urban development, hygiene and eco-criticism.

Fostering such a range of perspectives, his prose works seek to both restore a sense of wonder to water and to instill a heightened sense of awareness of water's role and importance in modern society. His ecological farsightedness invites the reader to reorient his/her relationship with this element and more broadly with the natural world. Pasolini juxtaposes the city's modern environment and infrastructure and the primitive environment of his aquatic world in an attempt to rethink modern capitalist expansion.

Afterword

My thesis has argued that Pasolini's Roman prose is deeply engaged in representing and reimagining the complex set of relations underpinning the ecological foundations of the city of Rome in the 1950s. I have read a part of Pasolini's work as a coherent and consistent project despite its fragmented narrative structure. My thesis's five chapters have been presented in a deliberately 'porous' format in order to expose the interconnections that I believe Pasolini wanted to underscore in his prose through themes such as corporeal seepage and messiness, repetitive events, cyclical patterns, movement and flow. My work has shown how 'imaginative literature *acts like an ecological force* within the larger system of culture and cultural discourses'.⁶²⁴ Pasolini's eco-critical reading of Rome is not simply shrouded in many 'shades of green', as Byron Caminero-Santangelo suggests in his ecocritical reading of African literature.⁶²⁵ The ecologies that emerge in Pasolini's work are diverse and multicoloured: they span blue, brown and green eco-readings.

My thesis explores the ways in which the city of Rome becomes a generative space in Pasolini's Roman narrative, and how it contributes to the process of constituting the novels' structure. Pasolini's story-telling approaches Rome as a multiple construct: it is at once urban, rural, religious, profane, ancient, modern. This means that the city emerges as a phenomenological and temporary construction, which is made and unmade every day by a coterie of characters who people these texts and by a series of events in which they find themselves engaged, albeit unwittingly. Spaces are not geographically separate but overlapping, superimposed upon each other. Pasolini's Rome is, therefore, a city in which

⁶²⁴ Hubert Zapf, *Literature as Cultural Ecology: Sustainable Texts* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 27.

⁶²⁵ Byron Caminero-Santangelo, 'Different Shades of Green: Eco-criticism and African Literature', in *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*, ed. by Tejujola Olaniyan and Ato Quayson (New York: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 698-706.

different layers of history coexist. And Pasolini himself, as Keala Jewell has observed, adds his own layer to the city too.⁶²⁶

I have read Pasolini's Roman prose as a city-text that articulates a particular representation of time-space. To gain a better insight into how Pasolini constructs this city-text, I found it useful to disentangle his complex representation of the city through identification of a series of knots. These knots, which are also prominent tropes, are the titular terms of each chapter of my thesis: place names, maps, bodies, dirt and water.⁶²⁷ I have adopted Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope as an analytical tool to understand the dynamics of space and time in Pasolini's prose. I have shown how the identification of this series of chronotopes can help the reader to gain a more in-depth understanding of the representation of spaces and historical events. The chronotope's representational potentiality, dialogic capacity and generative energy becomes a useful interpretive framework to understand the narrative paradigms at the foundation of his work and gain further insights into how Pasolini's Roman prose is structured. Emphasizing the representational significance of the chronotope, Bakhtin observes that it is precisely the chronotope that provides 'the ground essential for the showing-forth, the representability of events. [...] All the novel's abstract elements [...] gravitate towards the chronotope and through it take on the flesh and blood, permitting the imagining power of art to do its work. Such is the representational significance of the chronotope'.⁶²⁸

Places and spatial elements assume, therefore, an intrusive role and provoke and initiate turns, interruptions and restarts in the narrative's development. Chronotopes are

⁶²⁶ Keala Jewell, *The Poiesis of History: Experimenting with Genre in Postwar Italy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 26.

⁶²⁷ I have added two additional tropes to these five 'key tropes' in Pasolini's narrative: the act of walking and the chronotope of the river.

⁶²⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes Towards a Historical Poetics', in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. by Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), pp. 84-258 (p. 250).

also deployed to articulate a counter-hegemonic narrative. Walking and immersion in water become forms of resistance, actions that force Pasolini's street boys to shore up and measure their engagement with the city. The boys' intense movements mean that their being is in flux, never fixed; it also enables them, albeit provisionally, to avoid a linear trajectory being imposed on their lives.

My eco-critical reading of Pasolini's Rome started by focusing on his characters' lived experience in their city and their privileged relationship with its physical environment. I examined the symbiosis between the boys and their environs in Pasolini's early Roman prose, showing how this reciprocal and mutually sustaining relationship was based on a porous relationship, much like the relationship Benjamin and Lacis identified in Naples in the mid-1920s. I have teased out 'the ways in which nature, the environment, and the material world itself signify, act upon, or otherwise affect human bodies, knowledges or practices'.⁶²⁹ The city is experienced sensuously through visual, olfactive and tactile stimuli and the boys are presented as being dependent on and responsive to their local landscapes.

The environmental imagination that underpins Pasolini's early Roman prose erases dichotomies between human and non-human. I showed how the displacement of *Ragazzi's* protagonist, Riccetto, relocates the narrative in a peripheral setting which has a very different ecological make-up. The filthy and provisional nature of the *borgate* forces Pasolini to re-consider the utopian environmental dimensions that he was able to generate in the city centre. This change prompts Pasolini to broaden the terms of his ecological reading of the city. A very different environmental imagination then emerges. The reader quickly finds him/herself plunged into an ecological community whose

⁶²⁹ Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), pp. 7-8.

foundations are, at the very least, precarious. Alienation in the *borgate* turns Pasolini's attention to diseased and leaky bodies and the various kinds of waste they produce, to general squalor, filthy accommodation and a river with diminishing ecologies.

As I suggested at the outset of my thesis, I view Pasolini as an inherently ecological writer. The shift in his ecological message as he explores Rome's poverty-stricken *borgate* involves an abrupt abandonment of his initial, utopian environmental project based on porosity and cyclical patterns, to engage in a broader spectrum of eco-critical concerns.⁶³⁰ Both the landscape and the boys are seen to participate in a common fate of struggle and pain, threatened by linear progress.

In defining Pasolini's eco-critical reading of Rome as multicoloured, I have tried to show how Pasolini broadens the terms of his eco-critical reading of the city. I have demonstrated that the prevailing critical framework in brown studies is premised on a theory of the abject that assumes a clear-cut separation of excrement and self. I have argued that the prominence that Pasolini affords to the theme of excrement in his work is not for the purpose of provoking disgust, nor is he seeking in this way to transvalue human waste; instead, it serves to unsettle norms, to look and think beyond dichotomies, and – most significantly – it calls attention to the question of how we want to treat excrement and the excremental subjects associated with it. Do we want to continue distancing ourselves from excrement as anal-retentive policymakers have invited us to do? Do we want to continue dumping our waste in rivers or in other natural environments? These are just some of the many ecological issues that Pasolini raises in his Roman prose.

⁶³⁰ Stacy Alaimo's citation of Elizabeth Grosz's notion of an evolutionary narrative appears an effective way of summing up Pasolini's concept of cyclical time. Alaimo notes that this narrative 'pushes towards a future with no real direction, no promise of any particular result, no guarantee of progress or improvement, but with every indication of proliferation and transformation'. Alaimo, p. 157.

I have shown that the boys' initial interaction with the non-human world defies notions of separateness. The river is initially presented as a site of sociality that enables Pasolini to develop and articulate a utopian environmental project predicated on the mutual implication of his characters' bodies with the city's waterscapes. I have used Pasolini's firefly essay and a number of theoretical analyses coming from blue cultural studies to show how the complementary relationship between the river and the boys' bodies also extends to the river's life cycle and to the promotion and safeguarding of its biodiversity. The primary importance of the river as a site of sociality gradually recedes as *Ragazzi's* narrative development is relocated in the *borgate* and the river becomes a site of diminishing ecologies threatened by industrialization and modernity. I have also argued that Pasolini endows the river Aniene with agency through its extensive flooding. I have suggested that this episode can be read as the river's attempt to reject a relationship of domination and exploitation and to reclaim an ethical and relational partnership with its surrounding lands and with Roman property developers.

My thesis has also looked at how Pasolini's eco-poetics reject binary divides and call for new ways of managing and repurposing waste. I have argued that Pasolini's reading of the city as a series of ongoing flows and networks questions the idea of the city as an autonomous entity whose ecological health can be ensured through the building of extensive physical infrastructures of containment. He sees the internment of waste and the displacement of the city's underclasses in the *borgate* as counterproductive policies that work to remove important parts of the city from the broader context. Embracing accounts of the nonhuman world in his accounts of the city enables us to get a better insight into the priorities and processes of capitalist urbanization. This means that Pasolini is not merely interested in the nonhuman as a material element in urban space but is also

eager to understand further the dynamics and rationality underpinning modern infrastructure in capitalist societies.

The ideas I have raised and teased out in my thesis provide a fertile ground for pondering future research and productively expanding on the research path I have set in train. While Pasolini's Roman poetry has been outside the scope of my work, I believe that my thesis provides a stimulating and new theoretical framework that future researchers can look to as a starting point for research into the eco-critical dimensions of Pasolini's Roman poetry and can also help to broaden the terms of studies that have broached environment issues in his cinema.⁶³¹

My research into the narrative dynamics and framework of Pasolini's Roman prose could also prove particularly useful for further research into *Alì dagli occhi azzurri*'s highly fragmented narrative structure and hybrid style and content. Although a large body of literature has already been published about the many varied works collected in this copious volume, there is still much scope for a sustained analysis of why so much of Pasolini's Roman prose was only published in 1965. There is, therefore, space for a more profound examination of what Giorgio Nisini has defined as Pasolini's 'romanzo mancato'.⁶³²

⁶³¹ Existing critical work on Pasolini's Roman poetry includes Keala Jewell, 'Sexual Commerce and Culture: Pier Paolo Pasolini's Caracalla Poems', *Italica*, Vol. 75, 1998, 192-209; Biancamaria Frabotta, 'Una Lettura de il pianto della scavatrice', in *Lezioni su Pasolini*, ed. by Tullio De Mauro and Franco Ferri (Ripatransone: Sestante, 1997), pp. 67-76.

⁶³² More specifically Nisini describes *Alì* in the following terms: 'Quando *Alì dagli occhi azzurri* viene dato alle stampe, non solo si configura come un libro dallo statuto formale ibrido, dal momento che simultaneamente raccoglie poesie, racconti, rielaborazioni di sceneggiature, "ballate", esperimenti in *prosimetron*, ma anche e soprattutto come un romanzo mancato'. Giorgio Nisini, 'Sulla forma breve nella narrativa di Pier Paolo Pasolini', *Bollettino '900: Electronic Newsletter of '900 Italian Literature*, Vol. 1-2, 2005. <http://www.centrostudipierpaolopasolinicasarsa.it/molteniblog/riflessioni-sulla-forma-breve-nella-narrativa-di-ppp-di-giorgio-nisini/> [Accessed 22 March 2018].

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