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### De- and Re-Construction of a Myth

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**ABSTRACT:** Pasolini's first visit to a Third World country dates to 1960–61. His impressions and experiences during this journey are told in the collection of articles *L'odore dell'India*, which, in my opinion, also reveals his (perhaps characteristic) tension between being up-to-date and being out of time. This essay can thus be understood as a small journey through the author's travels in and relations with India.

## PASOLINI AND INDIA

### De- and Re-Construction of a Myth

Silvia Mazzini

*Il superamento è un'illusione. Nulla si perde.*<sup>1</sup>

Pasolini's first visit to a Third World country dates to 1960–61. His impressions and experiences during this journey are told in the collection of articles *L'odore dell'India*, which, in my opinion, also reveals his (perhaps characteristic) tension between being up-to-date and being out of time. On the one hand, he showed an interest in what he called 'the fashion' of his time,<sup>2</sup> travelling in the country of Gandhi and Mother Teresa of Calcutta, of yoga and millenary philosophy.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, however, Pasolini was quite literally 'out of time' inasmuch as he turned his attention to the situation of a certain culture (a 'culture of the past') that was disappearing during India's passage from an agrarian to an industrial, an occupied to a free democratic state. It is in this sense that I interpret Pasolini's operation of de-constructing and re-constructing the so-called 'myth of India': focusing not on the aspects of India that fascinated and 'fashionated' the West, but recreating a myth that would increasingly take shape in his later works, known as the 'myth of the barbaric'.

This essay can thus be understood as a small journey through the author's travels in and relations with India – a journey in search of the elements which settled in Pasolini's writings and films after his first visit to India in 1960 and which would accompany him faithfully (transformed, of course, through many interactions with other components of his poetics) until his later productions. These elements lead Pasolini to trace the outline of a 'renewed' myth: what is called, in *Poesia in forma di rosa*, 'la nuova preistoria'. And it is perhaps because India was the first of a long series of Third World countries visited by Pasolini that it served as an emblem of this *new prehistory* – a model for a kind of society based on a "renewed" tradition, an 'enclave' of the authentic, pulsating life which Pasolini ever more desperately sought.<sup>4</sup>

*L'odore dell'India* is a collection of articles that Pasolini wrote for the newspaper *Il giorno*<sup>5</sup> during his journey with Alberto Moravia, and for a period of time with Elsa Morante, between December 1960 and January 1961. Moravia wrote articles for *Il corriere della sera* that were published later under the title *Un'idea dell'India*<sup>6</sup> – a title which, when compared with Pasolini's, shows, like a litmus test, the differences in style and perception between the two authors. In an interview with Renzo Paris,<sup>7</sup> Moravia observed that smell is a constant element felt by a visitor in India,<sup>8</sup> but also that '[...] l'olfatto è il più animalesco dei nostri sensi e questo conferma il neo-primitivismo di Pasolini'.<sup>9</sup> As a matter of fact, Pasolini also stressed his instinctive and somewhat animalistic attitude, his hunger for experience and immersion in the everyday life of India, wandering 'solo, come un segugio dietro le piste dell'odore dell'India'.<sup>10</sup>

An accurate comparative analysis between these two different visions and descriptions of India by two traveling companions, who shared many experiences and certainly discussed them together, would undoubtedly lead to interesting conclusions.<sup>11</sup> In fact, some episodes are described by both authors, but in a completely different way, while others are omitted by one or the other.<sup>12</sup> Here, however, I can only discuss some topics that occur in both books (of course with different accents) with a regular, sometimes obsessive rhythm: the inevitable presence of the crows<sup>13</sup> (which Pasolini would also put in his documentary film *Appunti per un film sull'India*, 1968), whose 'cries' seem to announce the 'enorme Buchenwald, che è l'India'; the theme of death and poverty, an almost unbearable sight for Pasolini and Moravia ('eravamo dissanguati dalla pena e dalla pietà');<sup>14</sup> and, finally, religion: while Moravia gave a clear overview of its philosophical and cultural implications, Pasolini was attracted to something he called 'indifferenza',<sup>15</sup> understanding it as a sort of spontaneous gesture or lack of solemnity. In describing a ritual that he witnessed, Pasolini noted that the Indians were acting 'con grande umiltà e distacco, senza molta preoccupazione, senza visibile devozione.' This reminded him of another religious world with which he had been in contact: the agrarian world of Friuli, the region where his mother came from. This is the reason why he compared these two very different and distant realities, describing an old Indian woman directing the rituals while men obey her without resistance.

Questa situazione non mi era nuova: anche tra i contadini friulani succede qualcosa di simile, in certe usanze rustiche, sopravvissute al paganesimo: gli uomini, pur ironici, sono come arresi e sospesi: la loro forza e moderatà tacciono di fronte al capriccioso mistero degli dei tradizionali.<sup>16</sup>

In reference to religion, but also to other aspects of daily life, Pasolini often compared elements of Indian life with aspects of the Western world. This could easily be taken for granted, since he wrote an account of a journey in a foreign country; nevertheless, I believe that it also shows an inner process: Pasolini became increasingly convinced that the sub-proletariat all over the world shared the same characteristics. I think that Pasolini compared these worlds not merely because he was anchored to a Western point of view (and was conscious of that). When Pasolini compared the central buildings of Bombay to those of the Roman quarter Parioli<sup>17</sup> and the Indian boy, Sundar, to a Calabrian boy who goes to Rome,<sup>18</sup> when he made an analogy between the suburbs of New Delhi and those of the Italian capital<sup>19</sup> or between the resignation of the Indians and that of the Neapolitans,<sup>20</sup> and so on, Pasolini wanted not only to report what he saw in his own life and his experiences but also to stress some aspects which seemed to him to be the same throughout what he called the intercontinental sub-proletariat.<sup>21</sup> Although these aspects seemed to be foreign, they were at the same time extremely close and familiar to him. This closeness felt by Pasolini can be perceived in many later texts, which may well clarify his feelings about this apparent contradiction. Among other examples, it is interesting to note how he described some of the inhabitants of the Behir, which, although very westernized, was for him 'la regione più esotica che abbia mai visto':

Eppure i loro sguardi, le loro parole, i loro gesti mi erano famigliari, erano troppo prosaicamente umani. Sorridevano dei soliti sorrisi che si vedono alle periferie delle grandi città; con dolcezza, con furbizia, con ansia. E in fondo a loro, a guidare i loro gesti e i loro sentimenti, era una religione degenerata in una superstizione ripugnante per l'uomo moderno [...]. Sporczia, immensità smisurata, disperazione, rassegnazione, rendevano il Bihar un 'altrove' attraverso cui passare irrimediabilmente estranei, pur riconoscendo perfettamente la fraternità di quella gente, il cui antico modo e essere, anzi, la rendeva così famigliare.<sup>22</sup>

In this sense, it can be said that during his trips through India, Pasolini steadily became more convinced of the existence of a transnational sub-

proletariat (a sort of global social class sharing specific elements throughout the world). Seen in this light, the metaphor of Pasolini as a hound on the trail of the smell of India gains even broader importance. Pasolini was not attracted by the trendy, general, and vague odor of India; he was not simply visiting the country as a conventional tourist would do. He was searching for something – following different tracks and paths that, from time to time, India opened in front of him. His attention was particularly drawn to the consequences of the rapid transformation of this nation which, after gaining independence in 1947, was engaged in a huge modernization effort. The transition from a rural to an industrialized country happened very quickly, in a radically disruptive and heterogeneous way. Pasolini noted therefore that in India there were also ‘two worlds’ during the transition to modernization, two main socio-cultural realities: one ‘belonging to history’,<sup>23</sup> i.e. to the classes in power, and one ‘outside of history’, composed of those who were not included in the decision-making process – and who were therefore like the ‘remains’ of the past, the ‘residues’ of a world that was about to disappear but that was still present.

And like *Ragazzi di vita* and *Accattone* (a movie he had just finished shooting), ‘I roghi di Benares’, the final chapter of *L'odore dell'India*, can be seen as Pasolini's sacred hymn to sub-proletarians. In this chapter he tells about his walk with Moravia on the banks of the Ganges: it was cold and they came close to the fires where some Indians were burning their dead relatives. Up close, Pasolini could observe even better the way they carried out this ritual, ‘senza impazienza, senza il minimo sentimento di dolore, pena o curiosità’ – with the same indifference I mentioned before. Thus, foreign and familiar at the same time, the two writers almost felt part of this community, connected through the ancient rituals performed by the men around them. ‘Mai, in nessun posto, in nessun'ora, in nessun atto, di tutto il nostro soggiorno indiano, abbiamo provato un così profondo senso di comunione, di tranquillità e, quasi, di gioia.’<sup>24</sup>

This state of mind must have impressed Pasolini deeply. The images of burial rituals also accompanied the closing scenes of *Appunti per un film sull'India*,<sup>25</sup> a documentary he shot some years later, during another trip to India, between December 1967 and January 1968. This documentary consists of site inspections, ‘un film su un film sull'India’;<sup>26</sup> images of places and persons alternated with the development of the plot of the film that Pasolini ultimately wanted to direct. An

ancient Indian tale served as the inspiration for this plot.<sup>27</sup> A maharaja visiting his lands saw tiger cubs starving. Feeling a deep piety for these animals, he prayed for them and then offered his body (with 'indifference')<sup>28</sup> to feed them. In the second part of the story, the children of the maharaja, now adults, collided with the modernization of the 'new world', which was completely different from that of their father. Obligated to leave their palace with their mother to make a journey, these family members, 'secondo un ritmo preciso ed ossessivo', died of hunger. Their deaths (deaths of individuals belonging to a tradition, a past world) were defined by Pasolini as the arches of a bridge – a bridge symbolizing the moment of transition from a 'preistoria indiana'<sup>29</sup> to the new era of industrialization.

[Del] passaggio, cioè, da uno stato sottosviluppato a uno stato di vita che noi consideriamo civile e che comunque è moderno. [...] Insomma, il ritmo del film, scandito quasi geometricamente, simmetricamente da queste morti, che avvengono ad intervalli cronometricamente regolari l'una dall'altra (N.B.: l'idea del film mi è venuta girando la scena dell'uccisione dei soldati da parte di Edipo), si presenta, figurativamente, come un ponte, le cui arcate, regolari, sono le agonie e le morti dei protagonisti.<sup>30</sup>

With the death of the maharaja's family Pasolini represents the moment of socio-economic-cultural transformation in India. In my opinion, this metaphor gains additional significance when we consider that that in Indian philosophy death itself represents the transition from one form of existence to another (except for those who have attained enlightenment and are therefore free from the *samsara*, the chain of reincarnations). I do not know if this corresponds to Pasolini's specific intention. However, he wanted to broaden the perspective of the maharaja and his family into a historical and social dimension, where transition would appear as not merely an individual experience but as the transition of an entire culture and tradition. Indeed, '[il maharaja], vivendo in un luogo che è fuori dalla realtà quotidiana e normale (una reggia) ed essendo nutrito di una cultura antica (che si è perduta e contaminata nel mondo moderno), è in qualche modo fuori dalla storia'.<sup>31</sup> And thus his family is also like many ancient aristocratic Indian families: 'potenti di una potenza antica e fossile (che non hanno niente a che fare con le famiglie della nuova borghesia che sta formandosi)'. The power of these families (a power that in some ways brings to mind the magic power of Pasolini's Medea) does not belong to the modernized India: it is 'irreale

e favoloso: un mondo dove la religione è tutto e coincide quindi con tutti i contorni e tutte le pieghe della realtà [...]'.<sup>32</sup>

In my opinion, Pasolini wanted to show the sub-proletariat's special way of surviving and resisting India's new modern, industrialized culture by filming the burning of the bodies of those who are 'outside of history'. The funeral rites are like 'enclaves' of survival and authenticity, a way to be part of the ancient culture – to which Pasolini himself felt connected in some manner. For this reason, I contend that there is a (conscious?) parallel between the figure of the maharaja who sacrifices himself for the tiger and Pasolini's inner experience. The author wanted to 'offer himself'<sup>33</sup> in the name of the sub-proletariat – i.e. to dedicate his energies and works to it (and in these years poetry still had a civic and emancipatory role for him).<sup>34</sup> In other words, it could be argued that Pasolini had much in common with the figure of the maharaja because he also felt 'pietà' for those who 'die of hunger' (with India serving as an emblem of the underclass in the world), for those who live 'outside of history'. Here 'pietà' has to be understood not as compassion, but, following Gianni Vattimo's definition, as *pietas*: 'un misto [...] di rispetto e discrezione, di cautela, di devozione, gentilezza, persino superstizione, e meraviglia [...] per la capacità di sopravvivenza delle tracce, del tramandato'.<sup>35</sup>

In this sense, Pasolini's 'cinema of poetry' (*cinema di poesia*)<sup>36</sup> might also be seen as a hymn to 'survival' in two different, complementary meanings. On the one hand, his cinema deals thematically with figures and worlds of the past; on the other hand, it 'saves' them in his images, where they are 'conserved'. A telling example of this attitude is Pasolini's documentary *Le mura di Sana'a*, in which he filmed an ancient city with its inhabitants in their everyday life – a city now completely transformed, industrialized, and thus, in this sense, 'disappeared'. But the way in which Pasolini filmed the bodies and the expressions of the characters in many of his films is also entwined with his *pietas*. He was aware that also the sub-proletariat would disappear within a few years – at least in Italy and in Europe – and that is why his cinema was a way to let them survive. In *Appunti per un film sull'India*, the care and attention he gives to this 'survival' can be found not only in the images and shots, but also in his words:

Ecco il villaggio di Bhavarli. Ci siamo entrati quasi clandestinamente, timorosi di rompere chissà quale incanto. Il villaggio era immerso in una pro-

fonda pace meridiana. Una pace preistorica che non è priva di una certa dolcezza, quasi elegiaca. Gli abitanti del villaggio ci hanno accolto sorridendo. Con grande dolcezza e uno spirito di ospitalità addirittura commovente, essi ci hanno accolto e sorriso. Ci hanno mostrato come lavorano, quali siano le loro tecniche, che sono le stesse di due, tremila anni fa. Ma quando abbiamo chiesto loro di parlarci sulla sterilizzazione<sup>37</sup> non hanno voluto saperne. [...] Sono estranei a questo problema.<sup>38</sup>

In the thirty-five minutes of *Appunti per un film sull'India*, Pasolini outlined the subject of the film 'to be shot,' showing the faces of the people he would choose for the role of the maharaja, his wife and their children, showing the buildings in which he would film the different scenes, and so on. These inspections also took the form of an inquiry. In fact Pasolini posed the same question to different people – to a wise, Indian man, to a maharaja and his wife, to workers, and so on: is it realistic to think that someone in India, in the industrial era, would be willing to offer his body, like the maharaja of his story, to feed some tiger cubs? I maintain that this question implicitly contains another one: can the value of *piety*, which in Pasolini's opinion was important in the 'pre-historic' India, survive in the industrialized India as well? If so, how? In this inquiry Pasolini was also interested in the issue of caste and the situation of the untouchables, as well as in what intellectuals, workers, and farmers thought about the process of industrialization and westernization in their country.

In a certain sense, these inquiries became a movie in itself, '[un film] che ha tuttavia questa trama: la trama rimane, la storia rimane, però, appunto, come trama "da farsi"'.<sup>39</sup> The plot of *Appunti per un film sull'India* thus goes beyond the story of the maharaja, because it is the story of Pasolini's travelling around India and preparing his film about the maharaja. The experience of filming in this manner gave Pasolini the idea of expanding his project and creating a film with the Third World as its main topic, which Pasolini planned to make using this technique 'del non finito'.<sup>40</sup> The preconditions of this enlargement of the Indian project are already to be found in *Appunti per un film sull'India*, where Pasolini argues that the two themes of his documentary are the key themes of the Third World: religion and hunger. Once again, the characteristics of the Indian sub-proletariat were similar to those in other countries.

Pasolini never realized this project of an episodic film about the Third World.<sup>41</sup> The only thing that remains of these ideas and thought



experiments is the story Pasolini wrote for *Appunti per un poema sul terzo mondo*.<sup>42</sup> Interestingly, Pasolini never provided a clear separation of episodes and images, of continents and countries, arguing instead for the unity of his topic, which would also have included, 'per es., l'Italia del Sud, o le zone minerarie dei grandi paesi nordici con le baracche degli immigrati italiani, spagnoli, arabi ecc.'. <sup>43</sup> This shows that Pasolini considered the Third World not as a geographic, but rather as a socio-economic and cultural, entity. Here emerges his recurring idea of an international and transnational sub-proletariat, composed of 'the remnants', of minorities (which are not to be understood numerically but in terms of participation: people living at the margins of society are, in fact, not included in political and economical decisions; they do not 'write history').

Pasolini's attention to 'the remains of the past' appears here in all its vigour. I think that this is the result of an ideological crisis for Pasolini – a crisis also documented in his poetical collection *Poesia in forma di rosa* (1964). In these years Pasolini could no longer identify himself with the Marxist legacy<sup>44</sup> and thus developed a kind of 'marxismo delle barbarie'. His film *Uccellacci e uccellini* (1966) can also be seen as an odyssey through the collapse of different ideologies: in particular, 'the raven' (representing the Pasolini of those years) combines his speculations on some elements of different ideological systems with a particular devotion to people like Ninetto and Totò, the two characters who symbolize the sub-proletariat. As Pasolini wrote, the philosophy of 'the raven' is 'un marxismo [...] aperto a tutti i possibili sincretismi, contaminazioni e regressi, restando fermo sui suoi punti più saldi, di diagnosi e di prospettiva'.<sup>45</sup> In the film the raven takes on the role of the intellectual (or the poet?) who still believes in the emancipatory and revolutionary force of the 'world of the past' (the world of Ninetto and Totò) and who tries to educate them about life and morality and (a bit) about politics.<sup>46</sup> But at the end the raven (which was perhaps a little pedantic and boring) will be eaten by Ninetto and Totò. In this case, however, the death of the raven is not a sacrifice comparable to that of the maharaja in Pasolini's film on India, but has different meanings. First, it is an allusion to the role that hunger plays for the sub-proletariat (as in another comic fable of Pasolini's, *La ricotta*).<sup>47</sup> Secondly, it is an allusion to the force (without half measures) and the immediacy of the sub-proletarian way of living – a force that goes beyond words and ideological constructions in order to assure the basic needs of life. (This 'forza

del passato' is also a famous quotation from a poem of Pasolini's, which Orson Welles declaimed in the film *La ricotta*).<sup>48</sup> But there is even more:

il corvo doveva essere mangiato perché, da parte sua, aveva finito il suo mandato, concluso il suo compito, era, cioè, come si dice, superato; e poi perché, da parte dei suoi due assassini, doveva esserci l'assimilazione' di quanto di buono – di quel minimo di utile – che egli poteva, durante il suo mandato, aver dato all'umanità [...].<sup>49</sup>

Beyond the metaphor, Pasolini thought that Marxism was outdated and had to be overcome, incorporated, and 'digested' by a 'New Prehistory' (sub-proletariat), by the force of the 'Third World', which could thereby revisit, twist, and subvert the legacy of Marxist ideology. It may not be a coincidence that Pasolini uses the term 'superato' here ('overcome', in German *aufgehoben* or *überwunden*), recalling Hegel's dialectical movement, which was of central importance in the Marxist philosophy of history. In this sense, it can be said that the crow (the thesis) has to be negated (eaten) to come to a synthesis (the New Prehistory).

As I will try to show in a forthcoming work,<sup>50</sup> however, Pasolini did not really believe in a classical form of dialectic, and in any case certainly not in that of Hegel.<sup>51</sup> His argumentation, as well as his philosophy of history, is lead by contradiction, but this contradiction normally brings either the coexistence of affirmation and negation or the survival of only one of them. In his 'mito delle barbarie', it is quite clear that Pasolini tended more towards the second solution: the successful revolution of the sub-proletariat, which rises to the challenge of eliminating the corrupted society and the idea of progress characteristic of modernity. As he wrote in his famous poem 'Profezia':<sup>52</sup>

[...] deponendo l'onestà  
delle religioni contadine,  
dimenticando l'onore  
della malavita,  
traendo il candore  
dei popoli barbari,  
dietro ai loro Ali  
dagli Occhi Azzurri [...]  
distruggeranno Roma  
e sulle sue rovine  
deporranno il germe  
della Storia Antica.  
Poi col papa e ogni sacramento

Andranno come zingari  
Su verso l'Ovest e il Nord  
Con le bandiere rosse  
Di Trotzky al vento ...<sup>53</sup>

Although his views and the considerations behind them changed, Pasolini did not stop longing for these 'forces of the past' (except perhaps after his 'Abiura dalla *Trilogia della vita*', in the very last phase of his life). This can also be seen in the *Lettere Luterane* he addressed to Gen-nariello, an imaginary young boy to whom Pasolini wrote almost as though he were 'the raven' of *Uccellacci e uccellini*: in some way, he hoped that, if a revolution of the sub-proletariat (described in 'Profe-zia') were not to take place, then at least some 'remains of the past' would resist the complete modernization of society. This hope created more than a few misunderstandings among contemporary Italian intel-lectuals (as a matter of fact, these misunderstandings are still wide-spread today). In a famous article, now contained in *Scritti corsari*, he responded to Italo Calvino's accusation that he longed for the old, con-servative, bourgeois 'Italietta'. Pasolini made clear that the ancient Ital-ian world he missed was not to be understood as the kind of tradition that is fixed in the past and impossible to change (and which could be confused with a Rousseauian nostalgia). Pasolini was looking for a 'trans-national' tradition: the kind of culture which he found in the sub-urbs and throughout the world, which was:

l'avanzo di una civiltà precedente (o un cumulo di civiltà precedenti tutte molto analoghe fra loro). [...] È questo illimitato mondo contadino prena-zionale e preindustriale, sopravvissuto solo fino a pochi anni fa, che io rimpiango (non per nulla dimoro il più a lungo possibile, nei paesi del Terzo mondo, dove esso sopravvive ancora, benché il Terzo Mondo stia anch'esso entrando nell'orbita del cosiddetto Sviluppo).

Gli uomini di questo universo non vivevano un'*età dell'oro*, come non erano coinvolti, se non formalmente con l'Italietta. Essi vivevano quella che Chiantini ha chiamato l'*età del pane*. Erano cioè consumatori di beni estremamente necessari. Ed era questo, forse, che rendeva estremamente necessaria la loro povera e precaria esistenza. Mentre è chiaro che i beni superflui rendono superflua la vita [...].<sup>54</sup>

So this is the 'new myth': the myth of barbarity and the past which Pasolini reconstructed after his trips in India. In order not to fall into a misunderstanding, this myth of the past should not be understood as

traditionalism, conservatism, or a utopian longing for the past. In fact, the tradition here is not permanently closed once and for all; nor is it fixed and relegated to a fossilized past (which would remind us of the 'es war' in Nietzsche).<sup>55</sup> Rather, it is renewed by a 'creative' aspect, which joins together, in an unexpected way, common elements in different cultures.

But in what sense did Pasolini mean for tradition to be revolutionary and subversive? In my opinion, it is helpful to think about the example of the figure of Christ in the film *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* (1964). On the one hand, Pasolini presented in his film a Christ who loyally followed tradition (the film also won awards from the Catholic Church).<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, he also stressed a certain element of absolute subversion against the structures and institutions that were present in the old message of the Gospel. For Pasolini, these subversive elements could be rediscovered, reinterpreted, and reactivated by the film's viewer in order to recover the topicality of this revolutionary Christ, finding in his words elements which could lead to the present as well as to the future. We could also consider the figure of Saint Francis of Assisi in *Uccellacci e uccellini* or Pasolini's (never realized) film project *San Paolo* in this way. By maintaining the original speeches of the Saint (as recounted in the Acts of the Apostles and in his letters), as well as the ancient names of people, cities, and so on, but filming them in 'modern times',<sup>57</sup> Pasolini wanted to show the subversive topicality and strength which some messages from the past have for the contemporary world.

Qual è la ragione per cui vorrei trasporre la sua vicenda terrena ai giorni nostri? È molto semplice: per dare cinematograficamente nel modo più diretto e violento l'impressione e la convinzione della sua attualità. Per dire insomma esplicitamente, e senza neanche costringerlo a pensare, allo spettatore, che «San Paolo è *qui, oggi, tra noi*» e che lo è quasi fisicamente e materialmente. Che è alla nostra società che egli si rivolge [...].<sup>58</sup>

Drawing on terms from the German philosopher Ernst Bloch, I would say that Pasolini wanted to bring up some potentialities, which were already present in ancient cultures and traditions but which had not yet been activated, and allow them to manifest themselves.<sup>59</sup> That is why I would call this renewed myth the myth of a *non-traditional tradition* (which, in response to Calvino, Pasolini also described as the 'tradition of the age of bread'). In this subversive, non-traditional tradition Paso-

lini saw the only possible way to resist modern all-consuming power – a power which was for him a ruthless dictatorship, because it brought about the absolute homogenization of a culture, a people, and a way of life. Reducing all differences to unity, this homogenizing power was able to absorb the organizations which tried to oppose them ‘dialectically’ – as happened, in Pasolini’s opinion, in Italy with the student protests of ’68.<sup>60</sup> For that reason, he thought that the only force capable of destroying this kind of dictatorship could be ‘the power of the past’. Why?

If absorbed by the homogenizing force, this ‘past tradition’ would cease to live. For Pasolini there were no possibilities for a synthesis of these two elements or for a dialectical process: this was an *aut-aut*, without compromises. He believed in the authenticity of the past, stressed its importance for contemporary society, and found a value in its different ancient cultures, an identity which was been lost to the homogenized (today we would say: globalized) modern world. This was a myth for Pasolini – maybe a utopia. He knew, admitted, and wrote that it was no longer realistic to believe in it. But he did not stop living for it.

A ‘barbaric’, pre-historical and non-modernized world would also be a poor world (an ‘età del pane’). But Pasolini often argued that the idea of poverty as a great evil had been inculcated by the bourgeoisie. In fact, as the ‘hound’, Pasolini had been searching for something particular and different (if not for himself, at least for the kind of world he always looked for): ‘perché non è la felicità che conta? Non è per la felicità che si fa la rivoluzione?’<sup>61</sup>

## NOTES

- 1 Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Il sogno del centauro*, in *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude (Milan: Mondadori, 1999), p. 1506.
- 2 As he wrote later, on 23 September 1973, in the review ‘*Induismo e buddismo* di Ananda K. Coomraswamy’, in *Descrizioni di descrizioni*, in *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull’arte*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude (Milan: Mondadori, 1999), II, p. 1887.
- 3 Western culture first opened up to India and its traditions in the second half of the nineteenth century, when translations of the great epic *Mah bh rata* and other ancient philosophical texts became available to readers across the world. Many intellectuals and philosophers were influenced by India from this point in time on, and the so-called ‘myth of India’ was reworked in many different ways,

resisting the passage of time with extraordinary force. But India subsequently became even more popular among young people, especially in the sixties, when many artists made a journey there. Among others, Allen Ginsberg went there between 1962 and 1963, as did the Beatles (followed with enthusiasm by the media and fans all around the world) in 1968.

- 4 As Enzo Siciliano writes in *Vita di Pasolini* (Milan: Mondadori, 2005), 'In India Pasolini viene catturato da una disperazione indomabile: sarà una disperazione storica, sociale, morale.' (p. 305)
- 5 They were published after he came back from the trip, between February and March 1961, and then collected in *L'odore dell'India* (Milan: Longanesi, 1962). My quotation comes from the Mondadori edition: *Romanzi e racconti*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silva de Laude (Milan: Mondadori, 1998), I, pp. 1195–1284.
- 6 See Alberto Moravia, *Un'idea dell'India* (Milan: Bompiani, 1962).
- 7 Published as an appendix in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *L'odore dell'India* (Parma: Guanda, 1992), pp. 113–20.
- 8 As Pasolini wrote: 'Quell'odore di poveri cibi e cadaveri, che, in India, è come un continuo soffio potente che dà una specie di febbre. È quello'odore che, diventato un po' alla volta un'entità fisica quasi animata, sembra interrompere il corso normale della vita nei corpi degli indiani.' *L'odore dell'India*, in *Romanzi e racconti*, p. 1241.
- 9 Moravia, *Un'idea dell'India*, p. 119.
- 10 Pasolini, *L'odore dell'India*, p. 1279.
- 11 See the interesting essay by Mimma Congedo, 'Indian Traces: *Aracoeli*, Pasolini's *L'odore dell'India*, Moravia's *Un'idea dell'India*', in *The Power of Disturbance: Elsa Morante's 'Aracoeli'*, ed. by Manuele Gagnolati and Sara Fortuna (Oxford: Legenda, 2009), pp. 161–76.
- 12 It should not be neglected that Pasolini, in addition to his research as 'bloodhound', can also offer interesting and acute socio-anthropological considerations with more distance and detachment. But in this regard I would like to refer to Moravia's significant observation about this situation: 'La mia posizione è quella di accettare ma non di identificarmi, quella di Pasolini, come del resto in tutta la sua vita, di identificarsi senza veramente accettare.' Pier Paolo Pasolini, *L'odore dell'India* (Parma: Guanda, 1992), pp. 119–20.
- 13 See Pasolini, *L'odore dell'India*, pp. 1232–33, 1247, 1272.
- 14 Ibid., p. 1233.
- 15 Thus lacking any reference to Moravia's novel *Gli indifferenti* (1929).
- 16 Pasolini, *L'odore dell'India*, p. 1215.
- 17 Ibid., p. 1202.
- 18 Ibid., p. 1205.
- 19 Ibid., p. 1212.
- 20 Ibid., p. 1217.
- 21 See Giovanna Trento's essay in this volume, as well as her book *Pasolini e l'Africa* (Milan: Mimesis, 2009), in which she develops her thesis of 'panmeridionalismo' in Pasolini.
- 22 Pasolini, *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte*, II, pp. 1853–54.

- 23 Here can we find an echo of Walter Benjamin's idea of 'history of the winners'.
- 24 Pasolini, *L'odore dell'India*, p. 1284.
- 25 *Notes on a film on India* were shown both on TV7, the 5th July 1968, and then in the documentary section of the Mostra del Cinema di Venezia (where in the same Pasolini year presented his film *Teorema*).
- 26 Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Appunti per un film sull'India*, in *Per il cinema*, ed. by Walter Siti and Franco Zabagli, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 2001), I, p. 1063.
- 27 See *Storia Indiana*, the synopsis Pasolini wrote for the film (ibid., I, pp. 1073–78), as well as the transcription of the voice-over in *Appunti per un film sull'India* (ibid., I, pp. 1061–72).
- 28 *Appunti per un film sull'India*, in *Per il cinema*, I, p. 1063.
- 29 Ibid., p. 1068.
- 30 Ibid., p. 1069.
- 31 Ibid., p. 1076.
- 32 Ibid., p. 1075.
- 33 (Too) many publications about Pasolini's tendency toward sacrifice and his idea thereof treat his enigmatic death as a symptom of this topic. I prefer to mention studies which analyze the topic of 'sacrifice' with a focus on Pasolini's artistic production. See Stefania Rimini, *La ferita e l'assenza: Performance del sacrificio nella drammaturgia di Pasolini* (Acireale: Bonnano Editore, 2006). See also Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'Una visione del mondo epico-religiosa', *Bianco e nero*, 6 (June 1964), now found in *Per il cinema*, I, p. 2846.
- 34 In particular, this idea can be found in many poems of his early period, and diminished slowly and gradually. See, for example, the figure of Tiresias in the film *Oedipus Rex* (1967), who played a flute as a sign of artistic inspiration. In this autobiographical film, Oedipus (alias Pasolini), after his transformation, also plays a flute while wandering in Bologna: at the entrance of a church and in the main squares of the city for the bourgeois; in the suburbs and at the entrance of a factory for proletarians and sub-proletarians.
- 35 Gianni Vattimo, 'Predicare il nichilismo?', *aut aut*, 226–27 (1988), pp. 111–16 (p. 114).
- 36 See Pasolini, *Empirismo eretico*, in *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte*, I, pp. 1461–88. The secondary literature is vast and diverse: see, among others, Luciano de Carolis, *Pasolini e il cinema: Il progetto di una teoria semiotica in 'Empirismo eretico'* (Firenze: Atheneum, 2008); Bernhard Groß, *Pier Paolo Pasolini: Figurentionen des Sprechens* (Berlin: Vorwerk 8, 2008).
- 37 This was an important debate in India at the time, which was also thematized in Pasolini's film.
- 38 Pasolini, *Appunti per un film sull'India*, in *Per il cinema*, I, p. 1068.
- 39 See Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, II, p. 3116.
- 40 This term is usually used in art history to describe the last works of Michelangelo.
- 41 During his trips in East Europe around 1966, Pasolini was shocked by the negative consequences of Communism. During his visits to the United States, he was impressed by the importance of the ideas of democracy and liberty there. He also

- thought that the condition of black people and poor sub-proletarians in districts like Harlem or the Bronx (at that time) was comparable with that of the inhabitants of countries in the Third World.
- 42 It was written in 1968: see Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, II, pp. 2680–86. The film *Appunti per un'Orestiade Africana* (1970) was directed in an analogous style, but with a different story.
  - 43 Ibid., p. 2680.
  - 44 Although his faith in Marxism had developed cracks since the time of *Le Ceneri di Gramsci* (1957).
  - 45 Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, I, p. 825.
  - 46 In connection with this contribution to the myth of India, it is interesting to note that the raven presents Gandhi as an example whom Toto and Ninetto should follow.
  - 47 The third episode of the film *Ro.Go.Pa.G.* (Rossellini, Godard, Pasolini, and Gregoretti), 1963.
  - 48 'Io sono una forza del Passato. / Solo nella tradizione è il mio amore. / Vengo dai ruderi, dalle Chiese, / dalle pale d'altare, dai borghi / dimenticati sugli Appennini o le Prealpi, / dove sono vissuti i fratelli.' See also *Romanzi e racconti*, I, p. 845.
  - 49 Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, I, p. 826.
  - 50 A broader analysis of this interesting aspect of Pasolini's thought will appear in my upcoming book *The Coherence of Contradiction in Pier Paolo Pasolini*, a study of the different phases of the figure of 'contradiction' in his works, which will be published in 2012–13.
  - 51 See, for example, Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Il sogno del centauro*, pp. 1474–75. See also Manuele Gragnolati's essay in this volume.
  - 52 In *Poesia in forma di rosa*, in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Tutte le poesie*, ed. by Walter Siti (Milan: Mondadori, 2003), I, pp. 1285–91.
  - 53 Ibid., p. 1291.
  - 54 Pasolini, *Scritti corsari*, in *Saggi sulla politica e la società*, p. 321.
  - 55 See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, ed. by Daniel Breazeale, trans. by R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
  - 56 It received the Premio OCIC (Office Catholique International du Cinéma), the Premio Lega Cattolica per il Cinema e la Televisione della RFT, and the Gran premio OCIC at Assisi on 27 September 1964.
  - 57 Pasolini, *Appunti per un film su San Paolo*, in *Per il cinema*, II, p. 2023.
  - 58 Pasolini worked on this project at different times. The first draft is dated May 1968, but he worked on it again in 1974, when some production companies had shown interest in filming it. Following the principle of analogy (ibid., p. 2024), Pasolini transposed the events of the life of St Paul not only in time but also in space. In particular, he intended to replace the cities through which St Paul travelled with other cities which, in his opinion, corresponded to them in virtue of their political or cultural importance from the thirties to his own time. See specifically Luca Di Blasi's essay in this volume.
  - 59 In this respect, see, for example, Ernst Bloch, *Tendenz Latenz Utopie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978), p. 293.



60 As Pasolini argued in many of his writings. See, for example, the famous 'Discourse on Long Hair', which opens with sabre-like sharpness, in his 'Corsair Writings' (*Scritti corsari*, in *Saggi sulla politica e la società*, pp. 271–83).

61 *Ibid.*, p. 397.

Silvia Mazzini, 'Pasolini and India: De- and Re-Construction of a Myth', in *The Scandal of Self-Contradiction: Pasolini's Multistable Subjectivities, Geographies, Traditions*, ed. by Luca Di Blasi, Manuele Gagnolati, and Christoph F. E. Holzhey, *Cultural Inquiry*, 6 (Vienna: Turia + Kant, 2012), pp. 135–50 <[https://doi.org/10.25620/ci-06\\_08](https://doi.org/10.25620/ci-06_08)>

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