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## Pasolini as Jew

### Between Israel and Europe

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**ABSTRACT:** Pasolini's first turn beyond Europe can be dated to three lengthy journeys to Asia and Africa undertaken between December 1960 and February 1963. The places he visited quickly bring to mind a long series of subsequent projects – poems, screenplays, films realized or unfinished – from throughout the remaining fifteen years of Pasolini's life, during which he pitched himself in a wholly new light as a poet of the Third World.

## PASOLINI AS JEW, BETWEEN ISRAEL AND EUROPE

Robert S. C. Gordon

The geography of Pasolini's poetics in the early phase of his career – from the 1940s to the 1950s – was already migratory and pluralistic, although largely confined to a European atlas. Its focus was threefold: first, the localistic *piccola patria* of Friuli and its dialects, then the extension and literary reinvention of that idiolect through contact with the tradition of Romance lyric poetry from across Europe (from the troubadours to Machado), and finally, following the move to Rome and under the influence of Pascoli in particular, a synthesis of this dialect idiom and aesthetic with a national dimension, in the civic 'umile Italia' of *Le ceneri di Gramsci* (1957). Friuli/Italy/Europe: this was a poetic field already crossed by tensions and surprising harmonies – of language, form, and the geo-politics of centres and peripheries – and much of Pasolini's poetry of this period drew out and built itself on such remarkably dynamic energies. At quite a precise point in his career, however, Pasolini's geo-cultural perspective, his atlas, spilled out beyond the borders of Europe and the effect on his poetics, his ideology, his erotics, and his literary practice could not have been more dramatic. The moment neatly coincided with his equally dramatic shift into film-directing around 1960, which has long been seen as the defining caesura in his career. It may well be, however, that the parallel shift 'beyond Europe' was in fact the more substantial and resonant one, determining the later direction of his *oeuvre* and its extraordinary contemporary resonances.

Pasolini's first turn beyond Europe can be dated to three lengthy journeys to Asia and Africa undertaken between December 1960 and February 1963.<sup>1</sup> Between December 1960 and January 1961, he travelled to India, Kenya and Zanzibar; in 1962, to Egypt, Sudan, and Kenya again (and also Greece: not beyond Europe, but later re-envisioned by Pasolini with alienating, anthropological, and 'de-Europeanizing' eyes); and, in 1963, to Yemen, Kenya for a third time, Ghana, and Guinea. The places he visited quickly bring to mind a long series of sub-

sequent projects – poems, screenplays, films realized or unfinished – from throughout the remaining fifteen years of Pasolini's life, during which he pitched himself in a wholly new light as a poet of the Third World. These 'non-European' works began with the travel articles collected in *L'odore dell'India* (1961), reached a peak of ideological and aesthetic force with works such as the unmade screenplay *Il padre selvaggio* (1975) and the 'note' or 'essay' films *Appunti per un film sull'India* (1967), *Appunti per un'Orestiade africana* (1969), and the film project *Appunti per un poema sul terzo mondo* (1968).<sup>2</sup>

For many of Pasolini's critics, at the time and since, this shift to a form of fashionable *tiersmondisme* or 'Bandung' aesthetics was deeply flawed.<sup>3</sup> This was in part because it felt like – and at times Pasolini himself presented it as – something that was in reductive continuity with his evocations of the peasant-world of Friuli or the excluded peripheries of Rome's *borgate* in his work of the 1940s and 1950s. As Italy modernized, and these pockets of alterity and authenticity faded in Pasolini's perception, he mournfully or desperately projected his search for them onto ever more distant and alien bodies, sites, and cultures. This literalistic analogizing entailed, inevitably, a classically Orientalist and essentialist operation, with the people of the Third World coded as pure body, exotic objects of ideological and erotic desire, outside history or, at best, in Pasolini's repeated formula, part of a 'nuova preistoria'. The African or Indian (and so on) body and landscape frequently became, in Pasolini's treatment, a vast macro-historical, macro-geographical, macro-ideological projection of self and desire, beyond Europe and downwards towards the damned of the earth, 'ogni umanità bandita'.<sup>4</sup>

There is undoubtedly a kernel of truth in these critiques of Pasolini's crude *tiersmondisme*, an indulgence in and a fantasy of a vision of reductive authenticity, in contrast to the corrupt cultures neo-capitalist Italy/Europe. As ever in Pasolini, however, such binary categories, analogies, and mythologizing continuities conceal within them also, on occasion, elements of disturbance, of 'queering', of a more complex, fragmentary and provisional geo-cultural operation, one constructed on a mobile substratum of anxiety, self-recognition and nostalgia, nervously navigating *between* Europe and its Others, *between* Pasolini's 'Third World' and its others. Thus, the *Appunti per un'Orestiade africana* – as well as being poised between an idea for a film, fragments of notes towards a film, and an (impossible, unrealized) *African Oresteia* – are also poised between a founding document of Europeaness (Aeschy-

lus), reinvented as a passage from ‘primitive’ or ‘magic’ culture to so-called ‘civilization’, or bourgeois culture. This tension of betweenness is where Pasolini’s most characteristically transcends his simplistic Third World projections.

The discussion that follows picks out one particular site and figure of queering or betweenness in Pasolini’s work – one not without its simplifications and its deeply problematic and disturbing aspects, as we will see, but one which is, precisely, also poised – in history, in culture and in Pasolini’s projections of aesthetics and desire – between Europe and its beyond. The site is Israel and the figure that of the Jew.

### THREE FIGURES. 1. ISRAEL

Israel is not commonly included in the atlas of Pasolini’s non-European destinations that did so much to shape the latter phase of his *oeuvre*, and yet the encounter with the land of Israel, with the Israeli/Palestinian people and their conflicted histories, was crucial, in political and aesthetic terms, for both Pasolini’s film career and his sense of a threshold between Europe and non-Europe.<sup>5</sup> The reason for the omission of Israel is itself telling and probably has to do with its association, in Pasolini’s work, not so much with *tiersmondisme* as with his film *Vangelo secondo Matteo* (1964), an Ur-text of *European* Christendom, and a film Pasolini shot in the end in and around Matera in Italy. But it is also indicative of the history and geopolitical positioning of Israel itself, which has always been blurred in its relation to Europe and Asia (and indeed, during the 1967–82 occupation of Sinai, Africa).

Pasolini visited Israel and Jordan between 27 June and 11 July 1963, looking for locations to recreate the Gospel story in its original, literal setting. He was accompanied by Don Andrea Carraro, a Bible scholar of the Catholic left group Pro Civitate Christiana.<sup>6</sup> The result of the journey was a highly fertile creative failure. In modern Israel, Pasolini found little that could evoke for him the holy land of the New Testament, the pre-modern, early Christian landscape or faces he needed, finding instead a series of interferences and misdirected excesses, textures that were either too ancient or pre-Christian for his purposes, or too colourful and modern, too bourgeois and institutional, ‘o un eccesso di miseria [...] o un eccesso di colore [...] oppure un senso di modernità’.<sup>7</sup> The creative result of this (not unsurprising) impasse was a

two-fold leap in new directions, each of central importance in the arc of Pasolini's oeuvre. First, as noted, Pasolini shifted his attention to Southern Italy and developed an aesthetics of analogy across macro-historical boundaries – the faces and landscape of Matera come to stand, in their texture and in their disturbance of the modernity around them, for the faces of Biblical Palestine but also the disturbance, the radicalism of Christ – that destabilized the early frontal realism of his film style. This new form of analogy is also interestingly distinct from the linear and reductive analogizing, noted above, between all the poor and excluded of the earth that is also circulating here and in all Pasolini's 'migratory' work. Secondly, following his return from Israel, Pasolini edited together, almost incidentally, a short film account of his 1963 location trip, known as the *Sopralluoghi in Palestina per il 'Vangelo secondo Matteo'* (1965), thus inaugurating his extensive series of 'note' films, which were to be crucial, in form and in substance, to his non-European explorations.<sup>8</sup>

Both these two new threads – and their subsequent extension across the canvas of Pasolini's non-European period – suggest that the encounter with Israel and Jordan was of fundamental and disturbing importance for him. There was, further, a third and closely related creative product that derived from the 1963 trip, which has been far less frequently commented on, but which marks an equally crucial moment of transformation, when the figure of the Jew, and Pasolini's strange and ambivalent identification with it, emerges with its full force in his poetry.

The key poems of this thread are to be found in the 1964 collection *Poesia in forma di rosa*, in particular in three poem sequences or cycles towards the end of the book, entitled 'Israele', 'L'alba meridionale', and 'Progetto di opere future' (as well as in other contemporary lyric material excluded from the published collection).<sup>9</sup> 'Israele' reads like a close companion piece to *Sopralluoghi*. It consists of a series of untitled diary poems following Pasolini's travels around Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Tiberias, to a kibbutz and into Jordan; and along the way, there are vignettes of his encounters with Jews and Arabs, men and boys, and his contemplation of Israel's simultaneous modernity and antiquity and of its strange residues of Europeanness. The shortest poem of the nine-poem sequence captures powerfully Pasolini's impulse to identify with the Jews of Israel – the addressees of the poem – and to embrace a set

'Eurocentric' impulses that he sees both in them and in himself, impulses of nostalgia, loss and return:

Tornate, ah tornate nella vostra Europa.  
Un transfert tremendo di me in voi,  
mi fa sentire la vostra nostalgia  
che voi non sentite, e a me dà un dolore  
che sconvolge ogni rapporto con la realtà.  
L'Europa non è più mia! Varsavia,  
Praga, Roma sono lagggiù tolte per sempre  
alla mia vita a continuare una vita  
di cui fui figlio e protagonista  
e che ora pian piano mi sfugge  
nel colore dei giorni d'Occidente  
fatti estranei ai miei occhi!<sup>10</sup>

What is striking about this poem is not so much the characteristic circling and patterned contradictions of Pasolini's style, as what this patterning does to his sense of self-positioning and perspective in relation to place. At the centre of the poem stand the place names of Europe ('L'Europa'), of urban, Judaeo-Christian, Central Europe ('Varsavia, / Praga, Roma'), of the West ('Occidente') – all set with and against the present tense and the present place of Israel. Circling around these named places, real and imaginary, historical and present, are the unnamed persons of the poet and the addressee. And between them, he and they enact a spiral of return ('Tornate [...]'), transference ('transfert'), loss, dispossession and alienation ('tolte', 'mi sfugge', 'estranei'), and finally nostalgia ('la vostra nostalgia'), all terms of exchange, transfer, turning towards and turning away. The poem, in other words, is pivotal: it stages and anxiously repeats a turn in which Israel and its citizens are imagined as vehicles for the evasion of the old Europe, as figures for exile but also for forgetting, for the positive embrace of the loss of a sense of home in Europe, of a shadow of nostalgia overcome by the destructive-creative ('che sconvolge ogni rapporto con la realtà') force of self-alienation. This turning of the self or turning inside-out of the European/Israeli Jew is where Pasolini's identificatory impulse is channelled. As with the new forms of analogy forged in the failed *Sopraluoghi*, so too here, nostalgia is a long way from the literal regret for a lost past or a lost home (a crude nostalgia Pasolini would later play on knowingly with his provocatively contrarian elegies for Italy under fascism).<sup>11</sup> Here, nostalgia is, precisely, a disturbance or a queering of the

relation of past to present, a presence that is immanent but evanescent, that he feels but that his alter egos, the Jews, do not feel but rather embody ('la vostra nostalgia / che voi non sentite').<sup>12</sup>

Another poem in the sequence returns forcefully to this sense of nostalgia for Europe, this time evoked by the bric-a-brac of a central European, bourgeois Jewish culture awkwardly transported over to Israel to tragicomic effect:

... Kafka poi avrà supposto questa scaletta  
che introduce all'hotel, con pedana  
per pianoforte, televisione:  
[...]  
Così, sopra una collina  
siriana, brutta come ciò ch'è restato  
nudo di storia, non più che un cieco  
pezzo di natura, conservate l'aria  
del mondo degli Anni Quaranta. E io  
servito da timidi, inibiti  
camerieri (i capelli dritti sulla nuca,  
i colletti gonfi, quali non possono avere  
giovani del popolo), vedo per allucinazione  
un'ora spaventosa della vostra storia:  
dico la nostalgia dell'Europa.<sup>13</sup>

One dislocation calls up another. The shy waiters, their hair and necks a recurrent erotic marker for Pasolini, and the barren, 'natural' Syrian land – here the figure of the Arab is interwoven with that of the Jew, but as a regression to an essentialist, ahistorical nature in the face of the return of history in the 'Europe-nostalgia' of the Jews – are shadows against which the strikingly declarative and out-of-place opening name, 'Kafka', stands out. Kafka is a figure of a lost world (the Jewish Prague of 'Tornate, ah tornate [...]') and of a literary and petty bourgeois culture whose presence *here* is one of pure bathos.

Indeed, Pasolini's game of projection of himself as Jew, which is articulated fully for the first time here, is often distinctly and studiously ridiculous, even monstrous – aware of its jarring tendentiousness (as we will see in 'Progetto di opere future' below) – as well as rooted in dark visions of historical persecution.

The poems of 'Israele' set the scene for a sustained dislocation in Pasolini's conception of self, in the poems that follow immediately on from it in *Poesia in forma di rosa* but also in the larger field of his

explorations beyond the self and beyond Europe. In ‘L'alba meridionale’, the shadow of Israel and the figure of the Jew are strongly present. This comes again through the recurrent topos of return, but here the topos is staged literally in a contemplative description of Pasolini’s flight home to Europe from Israel, on to his new location travels to film his *Vangelo* in the South of Italy. Indeed, ‘L'alba meridionale’ had originally been entitled ‘Effetti di un ritorno in patria’.<sup>14</sup> It consists of nine poems, like ‘Israele’ (although they are longer and more fluid in form), of which the first two are set in Jerusalem and Jordan respectively, the third on an airplane home, and the remainder across the South and Sicily, during and after the filming of *Vangelo*. The Middle East/Europe analogies are apparent in a blurring between provincial Italy and Jerusalem in the first poem, a blurring built on Pasolini’s overlapping experiences of God and Eros: ‘sesso a Gerusalemme, religione a Gerusalemme’. The holy city becomes a Mediterranean provincial centre like Bari or Catania, ‘una vecchia città di provincia sotto il sole. / Una capitale normanna [...]’. The Jordan poem also draws on an erotic Pasolinian topos, a nocturnal encounter with some boys (here Arab boys), which acts as a reprise of the ambiguous doubling of the Jew and/in the Arab in these works, of one half of Jerusalem in the other, and of Pasolini into his dual self (as will be embodied in paroxysmic form in the 1970s in his doppelgänger novel *Petrolio*). There is a cyclical vision of history on display here: the Arabs are in revolt just as the Jews had been. Each has been a victim of different moments of history, and Pasolini is thrust back into his own European history by his encounter with them – a history of the Resistance, of his resistance to his father (evoked in a parody of Christ in ‘L'alba meridionale’), and of his current resistance to his own absurd authority and public fame. Pasolini would develop this Arab-Israeli parallel in the planned Arab episode of his screenplay *Appunti per un poema sul terzo mondo*, in which Moshe Dayan’s son Assi was to play the split role of both a dead Arab soldier Ahmed and himself, Assi Dayan the Israeli actor.<sup>15</sup>

The final poem of the main part of *Poesia in forma di rosa*, ‘Progetto di opere future’, takes up both the absurdity of elements of ‘Israele’ and ‘L'alba’ – it is written in a form of doggerel terza rima – and the cycles of personal and political history, through the figures of Israel and the Jew. A highly self-conscious and self-citing work, ‘Progetto’ includes echoes and fragments of the Israel trip and of the ‘Israele’ poems (‘Tornate, Ebrei [...] Torno con Israele in cuore, / sof-



frendo per i suoi figli-fratelli la nostalgia/ dell'Europa romanza [...]');<sup>16</sup> but more significant here is the extent to which the geographical displacements of the 1963 journey and its located projections of the land and the figure of the Jew are now shifted into a wholesale, universalizing (if half-mocking) evocation of – and identification with – the Jew, the universal Other, the great Synthesizer, the queering extension of Italy/Europe and self outside itself, into another history:

con la modernità  
d'Israele come un'ulcera nell'anima –

dove io Ebreo offeso da pietà,  
ritrovo una crudele freschezza d'apprendista

[...]

Oh Marx – tutto è oro – oh Freud – tutto  
è amore – oh Proust – tutto è memoria –  
oh Einstein – tutto è fine – oh Charlot – tutto

è uomo – oh Kafka – tutto è terrore –  
oh popolazione dei miei fratelli –  
oh patria [...]

Ergo, aspettando che porti  
un nuovo Grande Ebreo, un nuovo TUTTO È  
– a cui il mondo sputtanato si rivolti –

bisogna deludere [...].<sup>17</sup>

### THREE FIGURES. 2. THE LAGER

The unspoken rupture with Europe that overshadows Israel, and the filter for all Pasolini's figuration of the Jews is, of course, the Holocaust. And Pasolini, in his magpie-like appetite for picking up on scraps and fragments of history and ideas, was one of the first literary intellectuals in Italy to integrate a vision and vocabulary of the Holocaust and the Nazi *Lager* into his poetics. The thematics of victimhood, history, and return, of otherness and violence and the disturbing qualities of resistance, were already being worked through in Pasolini before his journey to Israel, with its elaboration of the tension and nostalgia between a lost

Europe and the Jews of Israel. And, as with the pattern of identification and desire with the bodies of the Third World, so here too, in Pasolini's Holocaust projections, we find a line of reductive analogizing running alongside one of more unsettling or queering figuration.

Already in the 1950s and into the early 1960s, Pasolini was using the vocabulary of the *Lager* as a simple but powerful code for the horrors of capitalism, of the modern urban space, of the oppression of the poor. In particular, he used the place name of Buchenwald in several instances to evoke the torture of the *Lager* – not, it should be noted, an extermination camp nor one especially associated with Jewish victims, but more generally with the Nazi genocide, violence and ideology, in keeping with a moment in the 1950s when the specificity of the Jewish genocide was only just beginning to be marked.<sup>18</sup> So we find in 'Picasso' in *Le ceneri di Gramsci* a rapid reference to Buchenwald, as part of a vision of the storm of history – European history specifically, from camps to urban slums to Fascism:

[...] scura  
e abbagliata l'Europa vi proietta  
i suoi interni paesaggi. E matura

qui, se più trasparente vi si specchia,  
la luce della tempesta; *i carnami*  
*di Buchenwald*, la periferia infetta

delle città incendiate, i cupi camions  
delle caserme dei fascismi [...]<sup>19</sup>

And comparable references and analogies proliferate around the late 1950s and early 1960s: in *Accattone* ('Ma che, stamo a Buchenwald, qua!); *Il padre selvaggio* and the 1964 poem 'L'uomo di Bandung' (both of which refer to the Kenyan character Davidson and his home as a 'campo di sterminio'); in the 1965 essay 'Intervento sul discorso libero indiretto' ('un boia del Lager').<sup>20</sup> Most sustained of all is an article of 1958 entitled 'I campi di concentramento', in which the *borgate* are defined as identical to the camps in the fascistic relation of state power to the poor, the victim, that is inherent to them.<sup>21</sup> Looking forward to Pasolini's final writings of the mid-1970s, his disconcerting metaphor of 'genocide' as a term for the destruction and disappearance of the bodies and spaces of the periphery, the non-consumerist kernel of Italy's land-

scape, perhaps finds its origin in the analogies with the *Lager* already present in the 1950s.<sup>22</sup>

Something shifts, however, in the early 1960s in the valency of the *Lager* in Pasolini's imaginary, and it has something to do with the emergence of the figure of the Jew, as part of the turn 'beyond Europe' (including the trip to Israel) of 1960-63. The key date here is 1962 and the key poem – contemporary to the material of *Poesia in forma di rosa* but not included in it – is a work entitled 'Monologo sugli ebrei'.<sup>23</sup>

In June 1962, there was an episode of neo-fascist, anti-Semitic menace in and around the streets of the former ghetto in Rome, at the Portico d'Ottavia – the same streets that had witnessed on 16 October 1943 the notorious round-up of over one thousand of Rome's Jews for deportation to Auschwitz. The 1962 episode was disturbing in its own right, although not without precedent, but it became doubly significant as young Jewish men confronted the violence and set out to protect and retake the streets of the ghetto (refusing the stereotype of passive victimhood that had spread insidiously after the Holocaust). Pasolini, who had lived in the ghetto in 1950–51 on first moving to Rome and whose nocturnal wanderings in Rome in search for sex often passed through the ghetto,<sup>24</sup> witnessed this act of Jewish resistance, and 'Monologo sugli ebrei' was his response.

Pasolini's thought process on the re-evocation of fascist violence and the Holocaust and on the reaction to it by the Jews of Rome in 1962 is complex. The poem at times replays the familiar analogy of the oppressed and the 'other', a powerful, incantatory, if two-dimensional, topos, with Pasolini dreaming of a global alliance between the wretched of the earth, including himself, the Jews, and many other 'others':

Forse la vita comincerà  
quando gli angeli della rassegnazione  
– i poveri di spirito, i miti, i feriti,  
gli infelici, gli Ebrei, i Negri,

i ragazzi, i prigionieri, i vergini,  
i contadini, i popoli perduti  
nel candore della barbarie,

tutti coloro che vivono consacrati  
alla umiliante diversità,  
commetteranno violenza.<sup>25</sup>

The poem becomes more unsettling, however, when Pasolini begins to evoke the *Lager* through the mediation of photography, through a disavowed analogy with the sequences of camp liberation photographs – of Buchenwald, again – which have fixed in his and our cultural consciousness a certain image of the skeletal, abject, meek Jewish survivor/victim of the Holocaust (see Fig. 1).

The analogy is evoked in ‘Monologo’, in the sense that Pasolini jumps from his witnessing of the Rome ghetto streets to these photographs, almost against his will, his thoughts interrupted with this (interrupted) disavowal:

Non penso, no  
a Buchenwald: per quanto ...

But the involuntary connection in his mind from the Jews of Rome to the victims of Buchenwald, once made, opens up an elaborate meditation on the meanings of these images, split between the half-dead surviving Jews and the dead Jews lying in piles of bodies. The strange

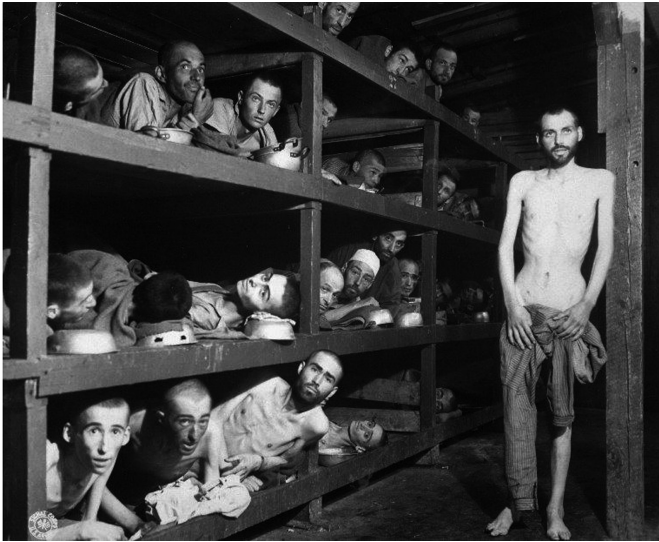


Figure 1. Buchenwald survivors, 16 April 1945 (H. Miller);  
*New York Times*, May 1945. Public domain.

uncertainty of the former is embodied in the ghost of a smile that Pasolini sees in one of the photos, leading to something of an epiphany:

[...] Le fotografie  
sono tranquille testimoni:  
a Buchenwald, guardateli, se vivi,  
come non hanno ancora imparato del tutto  
la vita:

qualcuno ha ancora il coraggio  
di sorridere ... Guardatelo,  
il fetido, piccolo Ebreo  
scheletrito in un tanfo di feci,  
addossato con indecenza ai compagni  
di agonia, che ancora guarda  
verso l'obiettivo, e ha un sorriso!

[ ... ]

Guardateli, se morti,  
non più un gesto di incertezza:  
ognuno sa, subito, come stare.

[ ... ]

Ah, le fotografie, ormai,  
hanno tolto ogni dubbio, su questo!  
L'Ebreo vivo a Buchenwald

ancora non sa, lui delicato  
borghese, cos'è la borghesia:  
e ha un sorriso, orribile.<sup>26</sup>

There is a shocking violence to Pasolini's description here – the Jew is 'fetido, piccolo [ ... ] addossato con indecenza ai compagni [ ... ] orribile'. But the ambiguity of the smile is the trope around which this violence and the deep ambivalence of the poem's evocation of the figure of the Jew revolves. As was implicit in the 'Israele' sequence, and as we will see again later when Pasolini confronts a 'Jewish' Pope, ideology returns here, and the Jew is a figure, as Pasolini himself is elsewhere, of the bourgeois, in denial of his and our own bourgeois reality and so of history. The smile is a signal of both horror and innocence, of an intuition of catastrophe but a failure to fully grasp it.<sup>27</sup>

The apparatus is significant here too: the camera, as well as the look and the smile. ‘Monologo’ dwells on the way the lens itself evokes the smile (‘guarda / verso l’obiettivo, e ha un sorriso!’), the photographs themselves are ‘witnesses’ and sources of certainty, indexical residues of historical reality – but only a certainty of the unknown. And photographs here can stand for celluloid elsewhere in Pasolini, with a related interplay of look and stasis. The underlying non-linear analogy here is that of indexicality: the light of photography as a ghostly token of the light of History, one of the structuring tropes of Pasolini’s poetry, his semiotics and his worldview.<sup>28</sup>

### THREE FIGURES. 3. SAUL / PAUL

The third figure of Judaism, or rather Judaeo-Christian identity and history, in Pasolini’s late work, one which synthesizes and develops several aspects of the first two, is the figure of St Paul. Pasolini’s screenplay for a film of *San Paolo* was one of the great subtending obsessions of his final years, a key for understanding his work in myth, ideology, and analogy in the decade following the *Vangelo* in 1964 and his ‘unpopular’ turn of 1966 and after.<sup>29</sup> If ‘Progetto di opere future’ dreamed of finding ‘un nuovo Grande Ebreo, un nuovo TUTTO È’, after Marx, Freud, Proust, Einstein, Chaplin<sup>30</sup> and Kafka, Saul/Paul became something like a new-old Great Jew for Pasolini, and as ever, a new-old and distinctly queering figure for the self. Paul further became a figure for the institutions of both the bourgeoisie and the Party/Church, in his role as the origin and source of the Church and its seat of power, the Roman Papacy. And the Papacy in turn would come up against perhaps its gravest crisis of historical legitimacy in its (non)confrontation with Hitler and the Holocaust.

In an evolved version of the analogy method first developed for *Vangelo*, *San Paolo* was structured as one of Pasolini’s grand transpositions of myth and allegory from ancient canonical texts onto the cities and spaces of modernity. In films such as *Edipo re*, this element forms a framing, muted role, as the fields and porticoes in and around Bologna frame off and code as autobiographical the stylized, mythical core of the film. In *San Paolo* (and in other late projects such as *Porno-Teo-Kolossal*), the transposition is wholesale and structuring, as Paul’s life as both priest and apocalyptic prophet is played out across capitalist

Europe and North America between the 1940s and the 1960s: Ancient Rome becomes New York, Jerusalem becomes Paris and other sites in Judaea are spread across Vichy France of the 1940s, Ancient Athens is modern Rome, Ephesus is Naples, Antioch is London or Geneva, Damascus is Barcelona, and other episodes range across cities of Germany, Italy and France. The presence of Paris and Vichy France ensures a direct link, indeed a blurred overlapping, between Paul's renewal of Judaism and the backdrop of Nazism, occupation, and the Holocaust. The very first episode of the published screenplay ends with Saul/Paul witnessing and collaborating with a Nazi execution squad, followed by round-ups and deportations, scenes Pasolini explicitly models on reportage from documentary films and photographs (recalling the use of photography in 'Monologo sugli ebrei'):

arresti, retate, fucilazioni, impiccagioni, deportazioni in massa, esecuzioni in massa, sparatorie per le strade e la piazza, cadaveri abbandonati per i marciapiedi, sotto i monumenti, penzolanti ai lampioni, impiccati, uncinati.

Partenze di ebrei per i lager; vagoni merci pieni di cadaveri.

Girate nello stesso stile di questi documentari, seguiranno alcune scene, in cui viene mostrato l'intervento di Paolo [ ... ] girerà per la città – tra gli arresti, le impiccagioni, le sparatorie ecc. – tra soldati francesi collaborazionisti e i reparti dell'SS  
[ ... ].<sup>31</sup>

Saul/Paul is a Fascist, the early Christians the Jews; and if Paolo's subsequent conversion will turn him towards the defence of the persecuted, and towards the Jews/anti-Fascists, he will also retain his split vocation as a founder of institutions as well as a preacher of revolutionary radicalism. He will, in other words, embody the split evoking Communist revolution and institutionalization announced in the title of Pasolini's last collection of Italian poetry, *Trasumanar e organizzar*. As with the Jews of Israel, Pasolini sees in Paul an apotheosis of the sacred, but also a residue and an embodiment of the bourgeois law: Jewish Law in synthesis with Christian *agape* or *caritas*.

One key intertext for unlocking the allegorical transposition in *San Paolo*, and its link to the Jewish question in Pasolini, is a poem written around the same time as the first extensive draft of *San Paolo* (1968) and later included in *Trasumanar*, a poem built on the same underlying

Pauline principles as the screenplay, but here centred on the fraught figure of Pope Pius XII and his complicity in the Holocaust: 'L'enigma di Pio XII'.<sup>32</sup>

A larger context is relevant here, just as the larger geopolitical movements in the Middle East interacted and interfered with Pasolini's responses to Israel before and after the Six Day War. The political and historiographical scandal of the Church and the Papacy's neglect of the cause of the Jewish victims of the Shoah exploded into public controversy across Europe in 1963 with the first production in West Berlin of Rolf Hochhuth's play *The Deputy* (*Der Stellvertreter*). A failed attempt was made to stage the play in Rome in 1964, disrupted by a police raid, and Pasolini was asked precisely about the 'enigma' of Pius XII's silence in an interview with Ferdinando Camon in 1965.<sup>33</sup> Whereas in 1958 Pasolini had written a vicious epigram on the death of Pius XII, 'A un papa' ('non c'è stato un peccatore più grande di te'),<sup>34</sup> without however mentioning the Holocaust or the Jews, now the Jewish question is central. Pius's parallel response to the Nazis and the Jews presents Pasolini with a compelling image of the Pauline dilemma, caught between the (future) Church and *caritas*, between the (future) Christian and the Jew, between Paul and Saul.<sup>35</sup> But these are not so much binaries, in Pasolini's dramatizing poem, as constantly inverting and mutually reversing categories (again, not unlike the repeated inversions and reversions of Carlo, the protagonist of *Petrolio*).

The poem is set in 1944. It presents Pius's dramatic monologue as he anxiously contemplates a choice he is now forced to make: whom to support, Hitler or the Jews? Pius realizes that the choice is, somehow, a choice between similar things: two parallel expressions of the European bourgeoisie, alternative rational ideologies of lay, urban, post-rural culture, embodying two of the three cardinal virtues, faith and hope, but not the 'greatest of these', charity ('Agli Ebrei. Cioè: a color che vivevano nella Legge, è chiaro / E da lì traevano le loro ragioni: di fede e di speranza').<sup>36</sup> Pius too, in his hypocrisy, is without any sense of 'charity' ('so solo [...] che c'è'). His role, he imagines, is to replay the story of Saint Paul, but not as Paul the prophet, rather Paul – in a phrase that will recur in *San Paolo* – as a 'fondatore di chiese'. In a crucial inversion staged by the poem, Pius understands this to mean the reconversion of Paul to Saul, to the Pharisee, whose very Law or institutions are sacred:

Io so che tradisco la chiesa di Paolo (lo so ora qui per carisma).



Lo so per il semplice fatto *che sono ridivenuto un Ebreo*:  
un Ebreo, si capisce, restato fedele alla Legge.  
Sono dunque codificato Capo  
del Ghetto dove sta tutta l'Umanità,  
*in quanto tutta esclusa rispetto a Dio.*<sup>37</sup>

In this spinning turn of reversal and reconversion, the poem inexorably draws towards its 'rational' conclusion: Pius must choose Hitler over the Jews, because Nazism preserves a residue of its provincial, rural, lapsed 'charity', unlike the Jews of the Law. Hitler is, in the end, 'un uomo di religione'.<sup>38</sup> Hitler and the Nazis are also, in Pius's perverse reasoning, as a result of that residual provincialism, a bourgeoisie born of the West, for which – as in 'Tornate [ ... ]' – we can read Europe ('borghese solo perché / la borghesia è nata in Occidente');<sup>39</sup> unlike the Jews who are grafted on from outside, 'inserito come cuculo nel nido di altri popoli'. If, on the one hand, this image simply replays a familiar racist (and Nazi) stereotype of the Jew as parasite, on the other, it reintroduces into Pasolini's imaginary the sense of the Jew as European but not quite, as a founder of but also an alien part of the European bourgeoisie, just as the Jews of Israel inhabited in Pasolini's imagination the same dualities: European/non-European, institutionalized/excluded, just as Paul was a maker of European Christendom but was also from beyond Europe.

Pius's monologue recalls 'Monologo sugli ebrei' not only in its form but also in the deeply uncomfortable, indeed offensive formulations and images it presents of the 'category' of the Jew, and the distorting identificatory impulses projected onto it by Pasolini, directly or indirectly. Like *San Paolo* and like *Salò* later, it plays on a disturbance created by an apparent historical specificity – 1944, the Papacy, the Jews and the Holocaust – that is constantly supplemented and distorted by both an implicit or explicit contemporaneity ('L'enigma' ends with a sudden list of references to the Kennedy assassinations and the Vietcong) and a larger universalizing discourse which draws on precisely the same vocabularies as the other two layers. The term 'Ebreo' is central to those vocabularies, a vessel for Pasolini's most elaborate and unresolved projections.

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Through a mixture of contingent responsiveness and sustained reflection, in the period following 1962, Pasolini developed three powerful figurations of the Jew, as Israeli (and his ‘brother’, the Arab), as victim of the *Lager*, and as Saul/Paul, the Christian Jew. Each figure is built on a sort of liminality, between European and non-European, between Ancient Judaea and modern Europe, between the histories and site of the *Lager* and of Israel/Palestine, between institutions, ideologies, and identities. This betweenness allows Pasolini to test out and sustain, through the figure of the Jew, the contradictions and tensions of its and his genealogy. One way of describing Pasolini’s positioning of himself through these identifications and these contradictions is as ‘diasporic’.

Pasolini himself used the term, linking it to the figure of contradiction, in a poem in *Trasumanar* called ‘Sinieciosi della diaspora’.<sup>40</sup> And it is perhaps worthwhile, in conclusion, to link Pasolini’s diasporic queering of himself through the figure of the Jew to a cluster of other heterodox explorations of Jewish identity as marginal or liminal in some sense. Three related formulations come to mind. First, there is Isaac Deutscher’s influential analysis of what he called in a 1958 lecture the ‘non-Jewish Jew’. Deutscher identified the ‘emancipatory’ force of generations of secular or humanist Jews, from Spinoza to Heine, Marx to Freud, who had all benefited from being both within and outside Judaism.<sup>41</sup> For the Marxist Deutscher, all his non-Jewish Jews shared certain assumptions – a determinist view of the world, a sense of the relativity of morals, a belief in praxis, and a solidarity with the persecuted – made possible by their liminal position in relation to the orthodox Judaism and to the wider cultures around them. It is at least plausible to re-describe Pasolini’s engagement with Israel and the Jews as that of a ‘Jewish non-Jew’, a mirror to Deutscher’s archetypal ‘non-Jewish Jew’, sharing many of the latter’s liminal qualities.

In one of his last books, *Freud and the Non-European*, Edward Said drew on Deutscher to undertake a delicate engagement with questions of Jewish identity alongside his own Palestinian identity.<sup>42</sup> Said stretches Deutscher’s terms in ways that chime with our reading of Pasolini, linking Jewish heretics – ‘prophets and rebels who were first persecuted and excommunicated by their own communities’ – to diaspora.<sup>43</sup> Said is nervously keen to posit that this form of creative, diasporic heresy need not be limited to the history of Judaism, but rather applies to any figure (such as himself) who shares this perhaps typically modern marginality and migratory quality:

this needn't be seen only as a Jewish characteristic [ ... ] it can also be identified in the diasporic, wandering, unresolved, cosmopolitan consciousness of someone who is both inside and outside his or her own community.<sup>44</sup>

Such troubling – we might want to say ‘queer’ – figures demand by their awkward presence a particular form of attention, a refusal of easy resolution, ‘not through dispensing palliatives such as tolerance and compassion, but, rather, by attending to it as a troubling, disabling, destabilizing secular wound’.<sup>45</sup> Pasolini’s awkward, disturbing formulations of his own marginality, particularly on display in his deeply ambivalent and compromised projections of the figure of the Jew, again chime with this kind of formulation. And Said allows us to push one stage further, as he probes his own history and the category of the ‘non-European’ proffered in the book’s title.

*Freud and the Non-European* begins as a reflection on Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism* and in particular on Freud’s contemplation of the fact that Moses, the founder of Judaism, the giver of the Law – the forerunner of St Paul for the Christian Church, Pasolini might add – was Egyptian-born, was non-European. This transcultural Moses was, therefore, a figure of heresy and disturbance, of scandal, akin to the scandalous idea of Martin Bernal’s *Black Athena*.<sup>46</sup> Pasolini is closely aligned to this form of scandal in his corpus of non-European work and, in particularly charged form, in his engagement with the figure of the Jew and himself as, precisely, ‘non-European Europeans’ (or, conversely, with Israelis as ‘European non-Europeans’).

One final contemporary point of contact, after and in dialogue with both Deutscher and Said, takes us back to ‘Israele’ and to the strange, half-comic passing presence in Pasolini’s poetry of a barren Middle East of ‘... Kafka’.<sup>47</sup> Judith Butler, in ‘Who Owns Kafka?’, a recent essay prompted by the fraught debates in Israel and Germany over the legal ownership of Kafka’s papers,<sup>48</sup> reflects on Kafka’s ambivalent relationship to Zionism and Israel as well as to his German identity (through language) and his Jewishness. The question is one of cultural belonging, or rather ‘non-belonging’; as Kafka quipped, ‘Am I a circus rider on two horses? Alas, I am no rider, but lie prostrate on the ground.’<sup>49</sup> Even the figure of the fall here could be related to Pasolini’s bathos in relation to the Jew, to the enigmatic motto of ‘Progetto di opere future’, ‘bisogna deludere’.

Butler identifies in Kafka what she calls a ‘poetics of non-arrival’ in his relationship with the reality and the fantasy of Israel, the glimmer of an idea of wishing to emigrate always interrupted by the impossibility of the wish. She sees ‘non-arrival’ captured most crisply in Kafka’s parable ‘My Destination’ (*Der Aufbruch*):<sup>50</sup> asked where his destination is, the protagonist repeats simply ‘away from here’ (*weg von hier*), or, in the form of a place name, ‘Away-From-Here’. Pasolini’s migrations – geographical and identificatory, beyond Europe and beyond himself, towards the figure of the Jew and of the Law and away again – are also movements of (queer) ‘non-arrival’. Indeed, as in ‘My Destination’, the very possibility of the journey without arrival is both lucky and monstrous (*zum Glück eine wahrhaft ungeheure Reise*).

#### NOTES

- 1 See Nico Naldini’s ‘Cronologia’, reproduced in the prefatory material of each volume of Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Opere*, ed. by Walter Siti, 10 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1998–2003).
- 2 *L’odore dell’India*, in *Romanzi e racconti*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1998), 1, pp. 1195–1284; the screenplays or treatments of *Il padre selvaggio* and the note films, in *Per il cinema*, ed. by Walter Siti and Franco Zabagli, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 2001), ad indicem. Compare Giovanna Trento, *Pasolini e l’Africa. L’Africa di Pasolini: panmeridionalismo e rappresentazioni dell’Africa postcoloniale* (Milan: Mimesis, 2010) and the other contributions to this volume.
- 3 See for example Chris Bongie, *Exotic Memories: Literature, Colonialism and the Fin de Siècle* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), pp. 188–228. The 1955 Bandung conference of Afro-Asian nations was fundamental in postcolonial geopolitics for the establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement, independent of both American and Soviet interests.
- 4 Pier Paolo Pasolini, ‘La realtà’, in *Poesia in forma di rosa*, in *Tutte le poesie*, ed. by Walter Siti, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 2003), 1, p. 1116.
- 5 For the affinities this encounter suggests between Pasolini and his near-contemporary (and near-equal as object of cultural mythology and self-mythologizing) Jean Genet, see Sergio Parussa, *L’eros onnipotente: erotismo, letteratura e impegno nell’opera di Pier Paolo Pasolini e Jean Genet* (Turin: Tirrenia Stampatori, 2003).
- 6 On Pasolini and Pro Civitate Christiana, see Barth David Schwartz, *Pasolini Requiem* (New York: Pantheon, 1992), pp. 423–31. On Pasolini and Israel, see Alberto Cavaglion, ‘Il grande viaggio verso la nuova Israele: Pasolini e gli altri alla scoperta del sogno’, *Pagine ebraiche*, 2 (December 2009), pp. 32–33.

- 7 Transcript of *Sopralluoghi in Palestina per il 'Vangelo secondo Matteo'*, in *Per il cinema*, I, p. 663.
- 8 Also in 1963, Pasolini made his first 'essay' on film, *La rabbia* (1963), although with mixed success. On this genre, see Laura Rascaroli, *The Personal Camera: Subjective Cinema and the Essay Film* (London: Wallflower, 2009).
- 9 For the publishing history of individual poems, and significant variants between the first and second editions of 1964, of *Poesia in forma di rosa*, see *Tutte le poesie*, I, pp. 1702–74.
- 10 Pasolini, 'Israele', in *Poesia in forma di rosa*, in *Tutte le poesie*, I, pp. 1211–23 (p. 1219).
- 11 'Che paese meraviglioso era l'Italia durante il periodo del fascismo [...]!', in *Scritti corsari*, in *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude (Milan: Mondadori, 1999), p. 421, and compare 'Ebreo-tedesco', *ibid.*, pp. 465–68.
- 12 See Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001). Armando Maggi analyzes the thread of nostalgia in Pasolini's late works, especially *San Paolo*, in *The Resurrection of the Body: Pier Paolo Pasolini from Saint Paul to Sade* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2009), pp. 22–107.
- 13 Pasolini, *Tutte le poesie*, I, p. 1217.
- 14 Pasolini, *Tutte le poesie*, I, p. 1742.
- 15 Pasolini, *Appunti per un poema sul terzo mondo*, in *Per il cinema*, II, pp. 2677–86 (see particularly 'Paesi arabi', pp. 2681–83).
- 16 *Tutte le poesie*, I, p. 1256.
- 17 *Ibid.*, pp. 1246, 1253–54.
- 18 See Robert S. C. Gordon, "'Fare testo in materia': Ugo Varnai, *Comunità*, and the Holocaust in 1950s Italian Culture", in *Meneghelo: Fiction, Scholarship, Passione Civile*, ed. by Daniela La Penna, special issue of *The Italianist* (Supplement 2012), pp. 177–92.
- 19 *Tutte le poesie*, I, p. 794 (emphasis added).
- 20 See, respectively, *Per il cinema*, I, p. 127; *Tutte le poesie*, I, p. 1308; *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1999), I, p. 1357.
- 21 *Romanzi e racconti*, I, pp. 1459–62.
- 22 'Il genocidio', in *Scritti corsari*, in *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte*, I, pp. 511–17. The *Lager* recurred as a trope and a scene in several of Pasolini's works from the late 1960s to 1975, including the film *Porcile*, the play *Calderòn*, and of course his final dystopian film *Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma*.
- 23 *Tutte le poesie*, I, pp. 1338–46. Despite its exclusion, the poem was clearly a crucial text for Pasolini, if, as we learn in the 1964 poem/mock-interview 'La disperata vitalità', it was one of three alternative titles he considered for the entire collection. The other two alternative titles were 'La persecuzione' and 'Una nuova preistoria' (*ibid.*, p. 1186).
- 24 See a description in the 1960 poem 'La croce uncinata', in *Tutte le poesie*, I, pp. 1063–64.
- 25 *Ibid.*, pp. 1345–46.

- 26 Ibid., pp. 1338–41.
- 27 The figure of the victims' troubling smile bears comparison with Adriana Cavarero's evocation of it opposite to the 'grinning female torturers' of Abu Ghraib in her *Horrorism: Naming Contemporary Violence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), pp. 106–15.
- 28 See Robert S. C. Gordon, 'Pura luce: A Vision of History', in *Pasolini: Forms of Subjectivity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 114–38.
- 29 For the drafts of *San Paolo* and their composition between 1966 and 1974, see *Per il cinema*, II, pp. 1881–2030, 3151–54.
- 30 Chaplin was, of course, not Jewish, but he was often assumed to be so, as here by Pasolini. See Holly A. Pearce, 'Charlie Chaplin: Jewish or Goyish?', *Jewish Quarterly* (26 November 2010), available online at <<http://jewishquarterly.org/2010/11/charlie-chaplin-jewish-or-goyish/>> [accessed 16 September 2011].
- 31 *Per il cinema*, II, p. 1889.
- 32 'L'enigma di Pio XII', in *Trasumanar e organizzar*, in *Tutte le poesie*, II, pp. 17–25.
- 33 *Tutte le poesie*, II, p. 1520.
- 34 *Tutte le poesie*, I, pp. 1008–09. The scandal caused by the poem was a significant factor in the collapse of the journal *Officina*, which Pasolini had co-edited since 1955 with Francesco Leonetti and Roberto Roversi.
- 35 For further discussion of these highly complex issues and categories linking Pasolini to Paul, see essays by Luca Di Blasi and Bruno Besana in this volume.
- 36 *Tutte le poesie*, II, p. 17.
- 37 Ibid., p. 19 (emphasis in the original).
- 38 Ibid., p. 25.
- 39 Ibid., p. 22.
- 40 Ibid., p. 170. It was Franco Fortini in 1959 who first labelled Pasolini's poetry as built on 'sineciosi', apparently a form of oxymoron, although the term does not appear in standard dictionaries of rhetoric. See *ibid.*, p. 1543.
- 41 Isaac Deutscher, *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 25–41.
- 42 Edward Said, *Freud and the Non-European* (London: Verso, 2003). The process was so delicate in relation to Israeli-Palestinian politics as to lead to Said's lecture, on which the book is based, being banned by the Freud Institute in Vienna, and later given at the Freud Museum in London.
- 43 Ibid., p. 52.
- 44 Ibid., p. 53.
- 45 Ibid., p. 54.
- 46 Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, 2 vols (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987–2006).
- 47 The suspension dots mark the omission of some verses from an earlier version of the poem (*Tutte le poesie*, I, pp. 1738–39), but they can stand here as a form of suspended questioning/queering of the very name 'Kafka' in this strange place.
- 48 Judith Butler, 'Who Owns Kafka?', *London Review of Books*, 5.33 (3 March 2011), pp. 3–8.

49 Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 6.

50 The short text of 'My Destination' is available in English at: <<http://www.kafka.org/index.php?aid=172>> [accessed 16 September 2011]. For the German text, see <<http://www.textlog.de/32080.html>> [accessed 16 September 2011].

Robert S. C. Gordon, 'Pasolini as Jew: Between Israel and Europe', in *The Scandal of Self-Contradiction: Pasolini's Multistable Subjectivities, Geographies, Traditions*, ed. by Luca Di Blasi, Manuele Gragnolati, and Christoph F. E. Holzhey, *Cultural Inquiry*, 6 (Vienna: Turia + Kant, 2012), pp. 37–58 <[https://doi.org/10.25620/ci-06\\_03](https://doi.org/10.25620/ci-06_03)>

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