

## Authorial Intertext

*Once the connection between homosexuality and coded references to it was established, the fact of homosexuality had entered, however vaguely, the public consciousness. It was mainly to prevent the focusing and exploration of this awareness that the censors acted.*

Vito Russo

The richness and openness of Pasolini's work is the result of his intellectual piracy—that is, of his highly personal appropriation of different, seemingly contradictory, discourses. As a preliminary step, then, I propose to identify such discourses, to define the role they had, and to manifest the traces they left. I will call the set of discourses that came together and interacted in Pasolini's essays and films his *authorial intertext*. Authorship, from a discursive point of view, is an intersection of texts, a relay of discourses. Every author, every body, incorporates texts and discourses. With the exception of authors drawing their energy from only one discourse (e.g., the work of a dogmatic Marxist), every oeuvre originates in an authorial intertext. Yet an authorial intertext as complex and inherently contradictory as Pasolini's is difficult to find.

The identification of Pasolini's authorial intertext is bound to be partially arbitrary and reductive. One could argue, for example, that linguistics, phenomenology, and cultural anthropology were all somehow present in it. The point, however, is not to determine Pasolini's

familiarity with and occasional borrowings from certain disciplines. Rather, it is a matter of identifying the ultimate and continuous foundations of his texts. While taking responsibility for the arbitrariness of my operation, I invite the reader to think of the strategy implicit in it, the strategy of regarding Pasolini's textuality as the shifting intersection of some key discourses.

As a point of fact, Pasolini himself suggested the composition of his authorial intertext in *Edipo re* (*Oedipus Rex*, 1967), his most explicitly autobiographical film. The last segment of *Edipo re* is set in modern Italy and depicts blind Oedipus's (Franco Citti) final wanderings. Accompanied by Anghelos (Ninetto Davoli), Oedipus plays the flute—Pasolini's symbol for poetic activity—first on the steps of the cathedral in Bologna, and then near a factory in industrialized Milan. The last images of the film show Oedipus returning to the meadow where Jocasta used to take him as a child. Commenting on the significance of this ending, Pasolini remarked, "First Oedipus is a decadent poet, then a Marxist poet, then nothing at all, someone who is going to die."<sup>1</sup> On closer inspection, and in perfect keeping with his contemporaneous interest in allegorical representation (those were the years of *Teorema* and *Porcile*), this brief sequence brilliantly illustrates the five major discourses from which Pasolini's work drew its intriguing complexity: Bologna, the city in which he was enrolled as a university student, and its cathedral indicate both the humanism of his early years and his adolescent Catholicism; the factory represents his Marxism; and the return to his childhood and to the relationship with his mother indicate his interest in psychoanalysis. The concurrent replacement of Antigone with Anghelos as the person who accompanies Oedipus suggests Pasolini's homosexuality.

Humanism, Catholicism, Marxism, psychoanalysis, and homosexuality: the polycentric character of Pasolini's film theory and practice was the result of his participation in these discourses as they circulated in Italian culture during his lifetime. Of course, it was not a matter of a clean slate between different phases, with one discourse replacing the other, as *Edipo re* seems to imply. More often than not they all co-existed, forming an authorial intertext whose nearly infinite permutations gave his work its "volcanic" uniqueness.

Humanism, Catholicism, Marxism, psychoanalysis, and homosexuality endowed him with rational strategies, cognitive gestures, and discursive needs. They provided his theory with epistemological foundations and acted as archives of images and rhetorical figures, representations and self-representations. In addition, these five discourses offered him a multiplicity of different subject positions. One could even say that Pasolini shaped and apprehended his subjectivity thanks

to the tools offered to him by this authorial intertext. This is not to say that he was mechanically determined by these discourses, nor that he was “spoken” by them, as a structuralist account would have it. Rather, Pasolini interacted with them, modifying them, subjecting them to strenuous tensions, provoking ruptures, engineering serendipitous findings.

What follows is a tentative charting of Pasolini’s authorial intertext. As if on the black vault of a planetarium in a museum of science, I will light up the five textual constellations across which Pasolini’s film theory and practice shed their lights and cast their shadows.

## Humanism

There is no doubt that Pasolini’s intellectual development was shaped by the humanism at the core of the Italian school program, indeed of Italian culture *tout court*, at least until the sixties. After the *liceo classico* (a high school which emphasizes the study of the classics through a five-year program in Greek and Latin), he attended the University of Bologna, where he studied Italian literature, Romance philology, and art history. Originally he intended to write his dissertation with Longhi on twentieth-century Italian painting. He eventually wrote it on Pascoli, a “decadent” poet known for his love of rural life, his linguistic experimentation, and his poetics of the *fanciullino* (little child), a poetry that taps the *puer* in our souls.

Unlike his later struggles with Catholicism, Pasolini never really questioned his humanistic education. To be sure, on some occasions he used the term to describe the stale culture of Italian academics and state bureaucrats. And we shall see that his passage from literature to cinema was, among other things, an attack on humanist ideology. But the foundations of Pasolini’s thought always bore the trace of humanism. More often than not, he gave the term “humanist” a positive connotation, relating it to the idea of history as the continual process of perfecting an abstract humanity. He regretted the advent of technocracy and consumerism with its concomitant loss of humanistic values. Humanism, in other words, was for him a signifier of “human” resistance against the postindustrial nightmare. The role played by humanism in his authorial intertext was varied and is not always acknowledged as such. Pasolini’s humanistic formation brought along a canon, a set of paradigms, to be kept in mind during the discussion of his theory and films.

The word *humanist* belongs to a complex group of words (including *human*, *humane*, *humanity*, and *humanitarian*) derived from the root *homo*, which metonymically signifies both men and women. Not only

is sexual difference effaced from the start, but, since the model for *humanitas* is Western man, ethnocentrism is often part of the game too. In spite of occasional surges of gender awareness, Pasolini used the word *Uomo* (Man) in a way that a feminist critique would find problematic. And, in spite of his declared love for the Third World, he just as often betrayed a Eurocentric perspective.

The acquisition of humanistic cultural “capital” also implies an investment (of time, values, and desire) in the classical tradition and in the “The Great Books.” Pasolini often tried hard to prove the unconditional worth of his cultural capital (for example, by reading contemporary situations in the light of references to ancient Greece), without asking himself the question of whether “The Great Books” might not be “Great” just for him and those like him. This explains his constant adaptation of past “masterpieces” as if they were intrinsically modern and, now and then, his myopic disregard for the avant-garde, modernism, feminism, and situationism, even when these could have been mobilized as allies rather than fought as enemies.

Furthermore, humanist discourse involves subject positions in relation to the past (seen as the locus of timeless achievements), the present (seen as the best of possible worlds—that of liberal humanism), and the future (seen as the teleological site of a progressing Mankind). History becomes evolution. Together with Marxism, humanism provided Pasolini with a sense of history as *telos*, as the progress of *one* collective subject (Man or the proletariat). Fortunately for him (and for us), his authorial intertext harbored a discourse, homosexuality, which countered the belief in *one* perspective by exposing the violence implicit in it.

In the field of psychology, humanism presumes the unity of the transcendental subject of consciousness as well as the rational presence of the self suggested by the Cartesian “*cogito*.” Although Pasolini acted out his contradictions in a way that confirmed *de facto* the hypothesis of a fragmented subjectivity, on certain topics he adamantly clung to the humanist ideal of a subject in total control. Nowhere is this more evident than in his belief in authorship as the expression of individuals who are in control of the meaning they create. Even when he turned to cinema, he underestimated the collective potential expressed through filmmaking and jealously claimed total authorship for his work.

Finally, humanism endowed Pasolini with notions of Beauty and Form which he may have violated at times but which he never forgot. The allegorical ingenuity of Dante’s poetry and the centrality of Man in fourteenth-century Italian painting left lasting impressions on his artistic sensibility, gave rise to formal imperatives, and became aesthet-

ic pathos. Humanism contributed to Pasolini's lifelong self-perception as a "poet" and to his unflinching use, always in positive terms, of the word "poetic." As to his identity as a "poet," one must point out that it underwent three phases, as shown by the last segment of *Edipo re*. Until his encounter with Marxism, poetry was for him an almost sacred territory of refined perceptions and expressions. Leftwing ideology brought him to confront the contradictions inherent in such an attitude, and he bent his poetry to a political, "civil" use. By the mid-sixties, he stopped believing in poetry altogether, and, although he never stopped writing verses, he always maintained the sharpest awareness of the loss of poetry's halo.

Ironically, there is a tendency among critics today to revive the early connotations of the word "poet." By resorting to the formula "Pasolini was a poet," critics somehow wish to carve out a special place for Pasolini *and* for themselves as the happy few in a position to savor the implications of "poetry." Differently put, "Pasolini was a poet" has become a convenient catch-phrase for all those who wish to suggest the nuances that "poet" took on in classical humanism, especially that of belonging to the aristocracy of the spirit.

As for the word "poetic," Pasolini used it to allude to the superior status of any signifier that is not straightjacketed into one signified. In fact, "poetic" was the adjective that according to him best described the language "spoken" by reality and by cinematic images.

### **Catholicism**

Until I was fifteen I believed in God with all my adolescent intransigence, which increased the rigidity and the seriousness of my false faith. I was particularly devoted to the Mother. I would provoke fake effusions of religious sentiment in myself, so much so that several times I convinced myself that I had seen the Holy Mother move and smile. In my brief discussions on religion, I would take clearcut stands. The greatest religious anxiety and my first sins coincided. In Reggio Emilia I experienced libidinal desire in all of its violence and I committed my first "impure acts" (I was only fourteen). I would submit to my tendencies without judging them. At night, before going to sleep, I would repent of my sins, reciting hundreds of Holy Marys. . . . In Bologna, at fifteen and a half years old, I took my last communion, because of my cousin's pressures. But it already seemed useless to me. Since then I could never even conceive the possibility of believing in God.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of this declaration, Catholicism continued to exert its influence over Pasolini's thought. It was ingrained in him. Upon his first trip to India, Pasolini remarked, "It will seem absurd, but for the first

time I had the impression that Catholicism does not coincide with reality; yet the separation of the two entities was so unexpected and violent that it constituted a kind of trauma."<sup>3</sup> This was in 1962, at the peak of his Marxist commitment, some twenty-five years after he ceased to believe in God. It could be argued that Pasolini's artistic and existential itinerary was, among other things, a struggle to extricate himself from the weaknesses of Catholic belief while preserving its originary moment of faith in the face of mystery. Thanks to the presence of secular discourses in his authorial intertext, he explored the heretical margins of Catholicism, so that Christ became a signifier of passion and God Himself became a feeling, a bodily need, for which no appropriate name existed.

The most visible consequence of the Catholic discourse was, perhaps, Pasolini's guilt for his own "sin." In 1944, for instance, when T., a boy whom Pasolini had loved, fell sick, he wrote, "I was so scared that for the first time I was taken by the scruple of God."<sup>4</sup> Pasolini formed the idea of God as an overbearing presence that thwarts an individual's instinctual life—a Master-Super-Ego—and most effectively dramatized it in the short film *La sequenza del fiore di carta* (The Sequence of the Paper Flower, 1968). And just as Catholic guilt was a constant presence in his life, so was guilt's complementary by-product, the desire for transgression. All of Pasolini's work was traversed by the double gesture of both visualizing a limit and wanting to transgress it.

From the standpoint of artistic influence, Catholicism constituted a strong gravitational pull toward certain *topoi*, such as the mystery of death, the representation of rituals, and Christological imagery. Religious painting provided Pasolini with an iconographic storehouse of images, frames, and compositions. In addition, the Catholic taste for baroque rituals intensified Pasolini's penchant for symbolism and for allegorical representation. The graphic emphasis on Jesus' martyrdom, the visions of blood and thorns, were Pasolini's first encounter with images of physical pain and certainly fueled his future tendency toward the imagery of pathology.

Catholicism's messianic fervor prepared the terrain for Marxism, and Pasolini dedicated much time and energy to the reconciliation of the two. From a political perspective, Pasolini's most fertile intuitions came precisely from the combination of a religious outlook with a radical ideology. In the second half of his life, thanks to the beneficial influence of his travels in the Third World and his readings in cultural anthropology, the mystical strand in the Catholic discourse (e.g., the Desert Fathers) emerged powerfully in his work. Especially in his last decade, when Catholicism confronted the pantheism of Oriental religions, Pasolini attempted to create syntheses that are still bearing fruit.

He began to conceive of religious feelings as the authentic antagonist to bourgeois materialism. He was led by his interest in mythology to revive premodern values and broach the discourse of postmodern spirituality. As an enlarged notion of the sacred made him perceive the spiritual bond that connects humans to the Earth, Pasolini came close to articulating his Marxist anger with an ecological consciousness.

Catholicism also nurtured Pasolini's famed myth of innocence, according to which the peasantry, subproletariat, and Third World represent existence outside of Western history. As these subcultures' resistance against cooptation would consist of ignorance rather than knowledge, of indifference rather than struggle, Pasolini's idea of innocence owes much to the Catholic myth of *beati pauperes spiritu*. At its best, this idea caused Pasolini to challenge leftist conformism and to shun the rhetorics of the proletariat. It also enabled him to debunk dialectics, for it suggested that there are only oppositions, theses and antitheses, history and what lies outside of it, and that any synthesis is nothing but the colonization of the margins by the center. Differently put, this idea contained the seed of a non-Marxist form of political opposition. It suggested that the outsider's autonomy is better than a dialectical synthesis, for the latter would effect the reduction of differences to one ruling model.

At its worst, the myth of innocence is a mere projection. It projects an ideal alterity onto the backs of people who do not have the chance to understand, appreciate, negotiate, or refute the role into which they are forced, and thereby creates the impression that radical difference is something falling on us from above and not the result of a choice. In other words, Pasolini's mythology of innocence suffered from his condescending superiority complex so clearly evinced by occasional comments such as this: "Quite incredible is the inner disorder, the unawareness and shamelessness of these peasant kids. Their impure laughter kept resounding amidst senseless words—a bunch of apes."<sup>5</sup> Like the idea of the good savage, the Pasolinian mythology of innocence betrayed its essential Catholic (humanist, intellectual) conceit: the sense that we have been blessed by truth and by the duty to administer it.

All things considered, the presence of Catholicism in Pasolini's authorial intertext had a beneficial influence, for it opposed the secular tendencies of humanism, Marxism, and psychoanalysis. Thanks to his religious leanings, Pasolini became a fierce opponent of the dialectic of the Enlightenment. In fact, the Catholic discourse was perhaps his most controversial, since it led him to emphasize values and cognitive modes for which academic secularism and progressive thinking have no tolerance.

## Marxism

In 1944, under the combat name of Partisan Hermes, Pasolini's younger brother Guido joined anti-Fascist fighters in the mountains. A touching example of a far-gone past, he left home on a clear morning in May carrying a backpack loaded with bread, a hollow dictionary concealing a pistol, and a book of poetry, Dino Campana's *Canti Orfici*. Once in the mountains, Hermes took the side of the non-Communist *Partito d'azione*. As the German defeat seemed more and more inevitable, the disputes among the various factions intensified. And Partisan Hermes was killed, at nineteen, by Communists associated with Tito's army, people who equally opposed the Nazis but had a different view of Italy's future.

Two years later, in the tense climate of postwar reconstruction, Pasolini participated in the struggle waged by Frioulan day laborers against landowners and decided to join the Communist party (PCI), his ideological convictions largely due to the influence of reading Gramsci. His membership ended abruptly in 1949 when he was expelled from the party because of his homosexuality:

Faced with the facts which have determined a serious disciplinary action against the poet Pasolini, we wish to denounce once again the dangerous consequences of certain ideological and philosophical currents by Gide, Sartre and other decadent writers, who pride themselves as progressives but are in fact the catalysts of the most harmful aspects of bourgeois depravity.<sup>6</sup>

In spite of such first-hand experience of what he would later call "leftwing fascism," Pasolini was to stay close to the Communist party throughout his life. In the 1975 elections he gave his vote to the PCI, and the articles that he wrote before his death reiterated his faith in the moral superiority of Italian Communists. Indeed, Pasolini's unorthodox and highly personalized Marxism represented the most prominent discourse in his authorial intertext, the one that provided him with the public subject position from which he couched his ideological views as well as most of his theoretical writings.

Why such dedication to an ideology in the name of which so much harm had befallen him? Perhaps the main reason for Pasolini's clinging to a Marxist identity lies in his conviction that we all must reckon with tradition. And for the politically committed and culturally prominent, Marxism was the tradition. To operate outside a fruitful and, of course, critical relationship with the past was neither possible nor desirable for Pasolini. Hence, he assumed a discursive Marxist identity to ensure that his ideas would end up enriching the most serious tradition we have in cultural antagonism.



Of course there were other reasons. In postwar Italy, the Left had succeeded in forming a cultural bloc that included the most capable intellectuals and artists of the time (Vittorini, Pavese, Fortini, Visconti, and Zavattini, to name but a few) and produced works of undisputed value. It was virtually impossible not to feel the spell of such a collective effort. Moreover, in Marxism, Pasolini found an ideology that gave him the tools to think through the problems of oppression. His Gramscian version of Marxism endowed him with a large umbrella under which even some of the humanistic and Catholic principles dear to him could gather. For example, he often pointed out that by postulating a socialist future, dialectical materialism prevented the disintegration of "History" and thus, like humanism, saved the past of "Man." And just as often, he stressed the contiguity between Marxism and Christianity. Finally, in addition to the promise of a paradise on earth and the offering of a metahistorical episteme legitimizing knowledge, Marxism gave artists and intellectuals an identity and a role. By providing artists with what Fortini called a "mandate," Marxist *engagement* actually offered the best possible answer to the crisis tainting the self-images of those engaged in merely intellectual labor.<sup>7</sup>

On the subject of self-identity, I already remarked that the word Pasolini used most frequently to describe himself was "poet." Not only did the encounter with Marxism subject this self-image to the imperative of engagement, but it also offered him the tools to think and speak of himself as a member of a social class. Thanks to Marxism, Pasolini was able to grasp the basic contradiction at the heart of his social position: He was ideologically against the class to which he belonged and which gave him the means of production. To use Pierre Bourdieu's terminology, Pasolini became aware of belonging to the dominated fractions of the dominant class.<sup>8</sup> He began to see himself as a product of the "petty bourgeoisie." Readers of Pasolini's essays are struck by the frequency with which he employed this term, accusing other directors, writers, and himself of being petty bourgeois. During the last years of his life, Pasolini visualized the end of the humanistic world as he knew it as the transformation of all mankind into a mass of petty bourgeois. At the same time, he often maintained that the fundamental characteristic of the petty bourgeoisie was its idealism. Far from being employed with Marxist rigor, the adjective *petit-bourgeois* was, for Pasolini, an open signifier, a signifier of both idealism and narrow-mindedness, a signifier, above all, of contradictions. Pasolini's reiterated definition of himself as a petty bourgeois should be taken as an indication that for him the term harbored contradictions. He found himself couched in the middle of a vertical social spectrum and was therefore open to the ambivalent tensions of what was above and what was below.

To be sure, the hegemonic role that Marxism had in his authorial

intertext exacted its toll: it acted as guilty conscience (a replacement for God); it forced participation in the game of detecting who was being more politically correct; it set forth a series of obligations to be honored on every discursive outing (e.g., the duty of historical optimism); it even created delusional fantasies whereby perceived Reality was in fact marred by the most unrealistic idealism (such as when militants waste away while attempting to visualize the collapse of capitalism).

Perhaps the best way to picture the toll exacted by Marxism is to call to mind the figure of Valentin, the middle-class revolutionary in Hector Babenco's *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (1984). Since the two epithets used most often to qualify Pasolini in Italy or abroad were "Marxist" and/or "homosexual," it is tempting to understand the interaction between his Marxism and his homosexuality by way of the relationship between Valentin and the "queen" Molina in Babenco's film: revolutionary reason and deviant passion are forced into the same prison cell. *Kiss of the Spider Woman* portrays their mutual lack of comprehension and exaggerates Valentin's inability to accept Molina as a comrade fighting a common enemy in his own way. Because he is incapable of understanding the reality of the struggle in terms other than armed militancy, Valentin fails to appreciate the genuinely subversive quality of Molina's difference. Not only did the Communist party act like Valentin, but Pasolini himself gave voice to an orthodox Marxism like Valentin's in his authorial intertext, a voice that followed the party line on private matters and refused to seek out a common strategy with the homosexual thrown in the same jail cell.

## Psychoanalysis

Toward the end of the linguistic essay "Dal laboratorio" (From the Laboratory, 1965), Pasolini made one of his customary autobiographical detours and recounted a childhood episode. After confessing "a desperate love" for his mother, he wrote,

In that period at Belluno, precisely between three and three and a half years, I experienced the first pangs of sexual love: identical to those that I would then have up to now (atrociously acute from sixteen to thirty)—that terrible and anxious sweetness that seizes the viscera and consumes them, burns them, twists them, like a hot melting gust of wind in the presence of the love object. I believe I remember only the leg of this love object—and exactly the hollow behind the knee with its taut tendons. . . . Naturally I did not know what it was about; I knew only the physical nature of the presence of that feeling, so dense and burning that it twisted my viscera. I therefore found myself with the physical necessity

of “naming” that sentiment, and, in my condition as only an oral speaker, not a writer, I invented a word. This term was, I remember perfectly, TETA VELETA (*HE*, p. 66).<sup>9</sup>

This memory had such a special place in his mind that he referred to it on two other occasions: in *Quaderni rossi* (1946), and during an interview with Dacia Maraini (1971).<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, the 1946 version does not speak of the *teta veleta* feeling as overtly sexual, but merely calls it “sensual,” stressing the melancholy sensation of an unreachable object, the bittersweet emptiness of a desire “for which no name exists as of yet,” a sort of romantic *Sehnsucht*. By 1965, then, two key changes had occurred. The idea of infantile sexuality, the lynchpin of Freudian theory, makes its unquestioned appearance: the *teta veleta* feeling is now redefined as “pangs of sexual love.” And, more important, the recollection of such “pangs” is coupled with the confession of a “desperate love” for the mother. These two changes will be reiterated in the 1972 version, in which Pasolini tells Maraini that the *teta veleta* feeling is the same as that which he felt for his mother’s breast.

This new perspective reveals the extent to which, by the mid-sixties, Pasolini had enthusiastically subscribed to the Freudianism that had been widely, if superficially, circulating in Italian culture since the fifties. The advantages that Pasolini may have derived from accepting Freudian discourse are obvious. In the first place Freudianism, like Marxism, constituted an attack on bourgeois ideology, so much so that a reconciliation between the two approaches was being thought possible at the time (e.g., Sartre’s *Search for a Method* and Marcuse’s *Eros and Civilization*). Furthermore, Freud’s emphasis on biological drives appealed to Pasolini’s interest in “physical necessities” as the source of cultural phenomena. Grounding the higher functions firmly in the flesh, Freudian psychoanalysis suited Pasolini’s project of giving sexuality and the body their due. In this respect Freud’s theory of the *id* as something to be salvaged from the discontents of civilization runs parallel to the Marxist mythology of the heroic proletariat. Most important of all, Freud offered Pasolini a clear and coherent “scientific” theory of the etiology and phenomenology of homosexuality.

Couched within psychoanalytic discourse, homosexuality stopped being a sin or a decadent vice and became the unfortunate result of a protracted love for/by the mother and a faulty resolution of the Oedipal complex. Although Freud changed his mind several times on the relationship between homosexuality and psychopathology, it is safe to say that he never regarded homosexuals as perverts and that on more than one occasion he showed the utmost respect for their achievements (e.g., in his monograph on Leonardo da Vinci).<sup>11</sup> Still, homosexuality

remained for Freud a matter of inhibited normal functioning, which is precisely the theory that Pasolini assimilated. Indeed, of all the discourses in his authorial intertext, Freudian psychoanalysis is the one in which Pasolini was the least creative, for he accepted it as science.

Pasolini's relationship with the psychoanalytic discourse was not limited to Freud but extended to Jung, especially in the 1965–1975 decade. The 1965 version of the *teta veleta* recollection contains Jungian overtones that partially undermine Pasolini's militancy in the Freudian camp. In the paragraph following the one cited above, Pasolini reports that literary critic and philologist Gianfranco Contini once told him that *teta veleta* "was a matter of a reminder of an ancient Greek word, *Tetis* (sex, be it masculine or feminine, as everyone knows)." As Pasolini himself had noted at the outset of the section on *teta veleta*, this new piece of information casts a Jungian shadow on the entire argument: How can a child utter Greek mnemonics if a collective unconscious is not somehow at work? Not a rigorous thinker, Pasolini may have peacefully reconciled Jung and Freud; but the question then becomes: Just how much Jung is present in Pasolini almost unnoticed, in the background and yet supporting the entire discursive thrust? This is one of the few times in which Pasolini lets himself mention Jung, even though, as his friend and collaborator Zigaina reports, he knew Jung's works extremely well.<sup>12</sup> Zigaina goes so far as to postulate an alchemical secret behind Pasolini's reticence. I content myself with suggesting that because of the ban on Jung imposed by the leftist culture around Pasolini, his fecund appropriation of Jung's ideas took place undercover. In fact, there is a sense in which Jung was more congenial to Pasolini than was Freud. Like Pasolini, Jung never severed his ties with Christianity and always maintained that we need to distinguish between religiousness and organized religion. He was also at some point convinced that the only truly realist perspective is the one afforded by mythology, and he did not regard Thanatos as the perennial opponent of Eros but as the first and last metaphor, the most powerful mythical presence in the psychic underworld. Furthermore, the Jungian theory of *anima* as a feminine component in every man's soul well suited an individual who felt guilty about not living up to masculinity's requirements.

## Homosexuality

I want to *kill* a hypersensitive and sick adolescent who is also trying to contaminate my life as a man; he is almost moribund, but I shall be cruel, even though at bottom I love him, because he has been my life until today. As to girls, I spend hours of desire and vague dreams alternat-

ing with inane, or, better, silly attempts at action as well as with periods of extreme indifference: three days ago Paria and I walked to the threshold of a brothel, where the bad breath of naked, fat forty-year-old mamas made us look back at innocent childhood with nostalgia. We then urinated hopelessly.<sup>13</sup>

As this excerpt from a 1941 letter to his friend Farolfi makes clear, nineteen-year-old Pasolini was still trying to pass for straight and “to kill” his “sickness.” He knew, however, that this was not possible: “In my individual development I have been very precocious; and I was not like Gide who suddenly screamed ‘I am different from anyone else!’ with unexpected anguish. I have always known.”<sup>14</sup> By 1949 his closest friends were informed of his homoerotic tendencies and he himself thought he had overcome, “all bloody and scarred,” the trauma of his “rot.” Still, he certainly was not ready to come out of the closet.<sup>15</sup> But on October 15, Pasolini, then a teacher and a political activist, was accused by the carabinieri of Corcovado of having enticed minors on the occasion of the feast in Ramuscello, a hamlet at the outskirts of San Vito al Tagliamento. As a result of the scandal, he was fired from his job and had to leave Friuli. He moved to Rome, where he did not know anybody. With his homosexuality forced out of the closet, what had thus far been a soliloquy nurtured by guilt and secret wishes became a public discourse. From then on Pasolini had to defend and explain his sexuality before the state, his family, his friends, and his actual readers as well as the readers in his head. He also had to renegotiate his self-image, for he no longer had the relative protection of invisibility. He was now more vulnerable to the concerted attacks of an opponent whose overwhelming majority cast him against nature, against himself, and on the road to self-loathing. All this was standard fare for many homosexuals who grew up before the days of the gay liberation movement, and Pasolini’s adventure was less personal than it sounds. In fact, his was a personal way of living a preordained text, a discourse which ran in the interstices of Italian culture much like Marxism and Catholicism, albeit with much less legitimacy and visibility.

According to so-called social constructionists, the categories homosexual/heterosexual are not rooted in some universal syntax of sexual desire but are the product of a recent conceptual turn in thinking about sex and deviance. Sexual activity among members of the same sex has of course always existed, but the term “homosexuality,” argues David Halperin in the wake of Foucault, is only one hundred years old.<sup>16</sup> Although it is a seemingly bland clinical term, homosexuality as a discourse carries along an ideological baggage, that is, a network of pseudomedical representations and self-representations. Active

participation in the homosexual discourse involves a subject position and a scopic regime, a way of being and seeing that is historically specific and is located at the intersection of individual responses on one side and the constraints of a sociocultural grid on the other.

The homosexual discourse in Pasolini is a hard one to trace in all of its manifestations, and the critical apparatus has not helped much. There is no agreement as to the importance that the homosexual discourse had in his authorial intertext. On the one hand, the majority of straight critics, especially the Italian ones, chose to downplay the issue, either through recourse to a few psychoanalytical formulas or through euphemisms. Paradoxically, in Italy it was the district attorney, the criminal anthropologist, the sensationalist tabloid who emphasized the importance of Pasolini's homosexuality. It is as if those in the ranks of high culture were afraid of diminishing the "artistic" status of Pasolini's work. More important than being a homosexual, Pasolini was "a poet." In a sense, by purifying his image, many critics robbed him of an essential part of himself. This is nowhere clearer than in the attempt to see a fascist plot in his murder. Pasolini's murder was political in that the condition in which homosexuals in Italy were (and are) forced to live their sexual lives is part of a sociosexual structure. But, as Dario Bellezza has knowingly pointed out, the murder carried all the marks of a specific subculture.<sup>17</sup> One must have the courage to see that Pasolini was a great artist, not in spite of his homosexuality but in part because of it—because of what he saw from his particular position inside the homosexual discourse.

In open contrast to all this, gay critics gave his homosexuality the utmost importance. They acknowledged Pasolini as yet another one of their martyrs while voicing reservations about his lack of gay awareness and pride. As Richard Dyer noted, Pasolini's homosexual discourse "is deeply scarred" by the fact that he "tried to think and feel" his "gayness in terms of heterosexual norms, which means in terms of guilt, sin, sickness, inadequacy, perversion, decadence."<sup>18</sup> Pasolini internalized many of the norms of heterosexist patriarchy and conceptualized his homosexuality within the restrictions and shadows imposed by the other discourses in his authorial intertext. While this could be the subject of a book in itself, it is worth at least outlining the effects of the homosexual discourse in Pasolini's authorial intertext.

Pasolini was keenly aware of the importance of the body and sexuality. This had momentous consequences for his film theory and practice. It led him to downplay the role of the mind and to counter the rationalist tendencies of the other four discourses in his theoretical writings. If psychoanalysis provided him with the tools to talk about the body *rationally*, homosexuality gave him the certainty that the

body is a purveyor of knowledge. Moreover, the homosexual discourse had inevitable repercussions on the way Pasolini regarded the oppressor/oppressed dialectic. It exposed Marxism's inadequacy in addressing sexual oppression and led him to highlight the private sphere as a terrain for struggle. As to his film practice, the emphasis on sexuality and the body resulted in the frequent depiction of sexual encounters and, more generally, in what goes by the name of the "physicality" (*fisicità*) of his images.

Marked for life by the events of 1949, he engaged in a tireless struggle with state censorship, striving to transgress the limits imposed by the existing codes of what was representable. He thus had to face the humiliation of being brought to court because of the allegedly "obscene" quality of virtually all of his novels and films. He was tried thirty-three times—once even after his death—in a grotesque ritual in which power merely aimed at reinforcing its (self)image as power.<sup>19</sup>

The homosexual discourse forced him to occupy an ambivalent position in gender relations. Extending Bourdieu's definition of the lines of power traversing and overdetermining each individual's life, we can say that Pasolini belonged to the dominated fraction of the dominant sex. As a result, his position in both economic (petty-bourgeois) and sexual (homosexual) relations bore the mark of ambivalence, of a simultaneous participation in what is "above" and what is "below." This in turn explains why Pasolini so often chose to situate his art in the middle ground between "high" and "low," a mixture of high art and low imagery, of high culture and subculture.

But the most crucial consequence of the homosexual discourse lay elsewhere. As Pasolini's homosexual self was practically coerced into a situation of obligatory silence, he could refer to his sexual oppression only by allusions and circumlocutions. This, in turn, fostered a metaphorical tendency in his works through the desire to find groups or individuals whose condition could function as an analogical correlative to his own. Hence arose his identification with those who are outside history (peasants and the subproletariat), those who are the victims of history (Jews and Blacks), and those who are in the margins of society (thieves).

Finally, it is tempting to see Pasolini's lifelong obsession with reality in light of his homosexuality. The constant experience of the real Pasolini (what he felt he was), as opposed to the Pasolini as perceived by others, convinced him of the existence of a gap between reality and representation, reality and the mask. Inevitably this led to the desire to pursue reality as what lies beneath the mask. Critics have often pointed out that Pasolini's conception of reality was quite undifferentiated and visceral. They sensed that the word "reality" did something

for him which exceeded the boundaries of theoretical discourse. Perhaps they felt that in some obscure, emotional way Pasolini's use of the word "reality" was not pure, but carried with it the weight of a vague allusion to his homosexuality. What is certain is that while Pasolini openly and publicly situated himself in relationship to the other four discourses, he rarely spoke of his homosexuality. He relegated his homosexual discourse to the bottom, as it were, of his multilayered authorial intertext. As with dreams, where the latent content surfaces after the requirements of representation have been satisfied (through displacement, condensation, and censorship), homosexuality surfaced by means of "poetic" signifiers, those which were capable of carrying a surplus of personal signification. It is therefore plausible to assume that "reality" became one of such signifiers through which the homosexual text would emerge from the depths. Pasolini himself suggested the psychosexual tensions implicit in his treatment of "reality" through frequent allusions to his "hallucinated, infantile, and pragmatic love for reality" as something that is "religious in that in some way it is fused, by analogy, with a sort of immense sexual fetishism" (*HE*, p. 225).

The hypothesis of a connection between the mask and what lay behind it on the one hand, and the problematic of reality and representation on the other, is confirmed by a 1946 entry in his diary.

Once I entered puberty, drawing acquired another meaning: the "average" aspirations instilled by family and teachers merged together with the fantastic ones deriving from the reading of Homer and Verne. Together, they would offer me a world, *another* world, which I, totally anguished, would try to comprehend on those ugly drawing sheets. Here I should talk about Achilles' shield, about how much I suffered because of that tremendous shield. In fact, that was the first time in which I felt anguished because of the difference between reality and representation.<sup>20</sup>

The advent of puberty, that is of sexuality, brought along an anguish related to the representation of a reality that could not be totally contained. Pasolini felt the need for a more realistic representation. But more than informing us about what he actually thought when drawing as a boy, this 1946 recollection indicates that twenty-four-year-old Pasolini still thought of reality and representation in terms of anguish. Let us not forget that these were the years of his passing as a heterosexual and of his struggle against the dominant representations of homosexuality: the years of the mask. The desire for realism would then be primarily inscribed as an effect of the homosexual discourse.

Existing outside a visible and open social text, Pasolini's homosex-