

**'Come una specie di guida':
Pasolini's Reconceptualisation of Dante in his Theory and Practice of Realism**

Maddalena Moretti

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Leeds

School of Languages, Cultures and Societies

February 2021

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

The right of Maddalena Moretti to be identified as Author of this work has been asserted by her in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

Acknowledgments

I wish to express my deepest thanks to my supervisors, Gigliola Sulis and Claire Honess, for the massive support, encouragement, and precious advice they have given me during these years. They have brought the best out of my thoughts and writings. I have been extremely lucky to be guided by them on this journey.

I am also very grateful to the all staff of the Italian Department in Leeds for how they welcomed me and shared their wealth of knowledge and experience. I would like to thank the School of Languages, Cultures and Societies for awarding me a full-time scholarship and for having provided me with a fantastic research environment. In particular, I would like to thank Karen Priestley for her priceless help in all sort of matters and for her fantastic ability to create a wonderful PGR community around her.

I am also very grateful to all the scholars who have shared their knowledge with me, especially Emanuela Patti, as well as to the many colleagues (Dantists, Pasolinists, and Italianists) I have met over the years. Inspiring moments for my research were those created by the group of scholars and researchers at the Pasolini's School in Casarsa and at the many AlmaDante and SIS conferences. A special thanks must go to Giuseppe Ledda, for his immense encouragement and support; I made it to Leeds especially due to him.

Thanks to the many Leeds friends, especially the ones that have passed by Botany House: Serena, Roberta, Alice, Silvia, Francesca, Adrienne, Rachel, Ilya, Nathan, Andi, James, Luca, Cello, Emma. A special thanks goes to my 'partner in film crime', Rachel. Thanks also to Casa Morandi for the endless chats on the sofa and their deep friendship. A very special thanks goes to Nathan for having shared this journey with me. Equally, my thanks go to my best friends across the Channel, especially to Francesca, Lara, Marta, Giulia, Penny, Giugi, Nicola e Visco.

Finally, I am very grateful to my family to which this thesis is dedicated; thanks for the unfailing support and for the trust you have always placed in me. I would also like to thank my grannies. Although from afar, they have been the secret inspiration for my project, one with her philosophy and the other with her philosophy of life.

To my family

Abstract

This thesis investigates the role played by Dante Alighieri's work in helping to shape Pier Paolo Pasolini's approach to the concept of realism. Pasolini's Dantism constitutes a rich and well-established field of literary criticism. However, to date, there has been no systematic study that has explored in depth the contribution of Dante to the question of realism in Pasolini's oeuvre. This research aims to demonstrate that the concept of realism runs through Pasolini's engagement with Dante in the course of his life and changes at different stages of his artistic development. The study follows a chronological approach and uses the lens of twentieth-century Dante criticism to read the dialogue between Dante and Pasolini. The first chapter investigates the influence of Dante's use of the vernacular, mediated by the reading of Gianfranco Contini and Antonio Gramsci, on Pasolini's theories on the relationship between dialect and realism in literature (1950s). The second chapter examines the legacy of Erich Auerbach's reading of Dante's *figura* in Pasolini's cinematic realism at the beginning of his career as a film director (1960s). The third chapter discusses the mid-1960s as a crucial period for understanding Pasolini's relationship with Dante in his future production and approach to realism. The fourth and fifth chapters investigate the influence of Dante's prophetism, mediated by Auerbach's and Contini's later works (1963-65), on Pasolini's new approach to realism in the 1970s. In conclusion, this study shows that Pasolini reconceptualises specific readings of twentieth-century Dante criticism (historical-linguistic, figural, and prophetic) to elaborate ever new theories on realism, in response to the changeable historical context of post-war Italy (1950s-1970s). In addition, with the help of selected case studies, the research also explores how Pasolini puts his theories on realism into practice in his literary and cinematic productions: specifically, the 1955 novel *Ragazzi di vita*, the 1961 film *Accattone*, and the 1970s novel *Petrolio*.

Table of Contents

Abbreviations 7

Introduction 9

I. 'Quell'idea di realismo' from Dante to Pasolini 9

II. Methodological framework 13

III. Critical context 21

IV. Structure of the research 26

1 – Dialect as the language of realism: Dante's vernacular in Pasolini's literary realism (1950s) 33

1.1 – A question of language and realism 33

1.2 – The two anthologies of dialect and popular poetry 38

1.3 – Dante's 'volgare illustre' in Pasolini's theory of 'poesia squisita' 42

1.4 – Dante's plurilingualism in Pasolini's theory of regression 53

1.5 – The case study of *Ragazzi di vita* 60

2 – Rethinking realism from literature to cinema: Dante's *figura* in Pasolini's early cinematic realism (1960s) 68

2.1 – Pasolini's early film theory and the teaching of Auerbach 69

2.2 – Figurality from Dante's *Commedia* to Pasolini's early cinema 75

2.3 – 'Remaking' Dante's Ante-Purgatory: the case study of *Accattone* 84

3 – A new idea of Dante: Pasolini's rethinking of the Dantean influence in the mid-1960s 99

3.1 – 'Anziché allargare, dilaterai': the beginning of a new phase 100

3.2 – Auerbach's and Contini's essays on Dante of the mid-1960s: the theme of prophetism 110

3.3 – The triptych Dante-Paul-Pasolini 118

4 – Revealing reality: Dante's prophetism in Pasolini's new approach to realism (1970s) 127

4.1 – Pier Paolo Pasolini poet-prophet 128

4.2 – Speaking like a prophet: parable, prophecy, allegory, and vision 136

4.3 – Allegory from Dante's *Commedia* to *Petrolio* 141

4.4 – Vision from Dante's *Commedia* to *Petrolio* 150

5 – *Petrolio* after the *Commedia*: the allegorical visions of Pasolini's last novel 160

5.1 – The dissociation of Carlo 160

5.2 – The vision of 'La ruota e il perno' 164

5.3 – The vision of the 'Giardino Medioevale' 167

5.4 – The 'Visione del Merda' 173

Conclusions 180

Bibliography 185

Abbreviations

Pasolini's works

This is a list of Pasolini's most frequently quoted works in my thesis. The texts are taken from the critical edition for the Meridiani series, Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Tutte le opere*, edited by Walter Siti, 10 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1998-2003).

Collections:

RRI and *RRII* – *Romanzi e racconti*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1998)

SLAI and *SLAII* – *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1999)

SPS – *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude (Milan: Mondadori, 1999)

PCI and *PCII* – *Per il cinema*, ed. by Walter Siti and Franco Zabagli, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 2001)

TPI and *TPII* – *Tutte le poesie*, ed. by Walter Siti, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 2003)

Individual texts:

Ragazzi – *Ragazzi di vita* [1955], in *RRI*, pp. 521-771

Divina – *La Divina Mimesis* [1965], in *RRII*, pp. 1069-149

Petrolio – *Petrolio* [1992], in *RRII*, pp. 1159-830

Passione – *Passione e ideologia* [1960], in *SLAI*, pp. 709-1239

'Poesia dialettale' – 'Poesia dialettale del Novecento' [1952], in *Passione*, in *SLAI*, pp. 713-857

'Poesia popolare' – 'La poesia popolare italiana' [1955], in *Passione*, in *SLAI*, pp. 859-993

Empirismo – *Empirismo eretico* [1972], in *SLAI*, pp. 1241-639

'Libero indiretto' – 'Intervento sul discorso libero indiretto' [1965], in *Empirismo*, in *SLAI*, pp. 1345-75

'Volontà di Dante' – 'La volontà di Dante a essere poeta' [1965], in *Empirismo*, in *SLAI*, pp. 1376-90

'Segni viventi' – 'I segni viventi e i poeti morti' [1967], in *Empirismo*, in *SLAI*, pp. 1573-81

Corsari – *Scritti corsari* [1975], in *SPS*, pp. 269-535

'Il vero fascismo' – 'Il vero fascismo e quindi il vero antifascismo' [1974], in *Corsari*, in *SPS*, pp. 313-18

'Genocidio' – 'Il genocidio' [1974], in *Corsari*, in *SPS*, pp. 511-17

Luterane – *Lettere luterane* [1976], in *SPS*, pp. 537-721

Pasolini – *Pasolini su Pasolini* [1992], in *SPS*, pp. 1283-399

Centauro – *Il sogno del centauro* [1983], in *SPS*, pp. 1401-550

Accattone – *Accattone* [1961], in *PCI*, pp. 6-149

Trasumanar – *Trasumanar e organizzar* [1971], in *TPII*, pp. 3-220

Filmography:

Accattone (Arco Film and Cino del Duca, 1961)

Mamma Roma (Arco Film, 1962)

La ricotta (Arco Film, Cineriz, and Société Cinématographique Lyre, 1963)

Il Vangelo secondo Matteo (Arco Film and Lux Compagnie Cinématographique de France, 1964)

Uccellacci e uccellini (Arco Film, 1966)

Teorema (Aetos Produzioni Cinematografiche, 1968)

Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma (Produzioni Europee Associate and Les Productions Artistes Associés, 1975)

Dante's works

Commedia – *La Commedia secondo l'antica vulgata*, ed. by Giorgio Petrocchi (Milan: Mondadori, 1966-67)

Inf. – *Inferno*, in *La Commedia*, ed. by Petrocchi (Milan: Mondadori, 1966)

Purg. – *Purgatorio*, in *La Commedia*, ed. by Petrocchi (Milan: Mondadori, 1967)

Par. – *Paradiso*, in *La Commedia*, ed. by Petrocchi (Milan: Mondadori, 1967)

For commentaries on the *Commedia*, *DDP – Dartmouth Dante Project*, ed. by Robert Hollander, Stephen Campbell, and Simone Marchesi, <<https://dante.dartmouth.edu>>

Conv. – *Convivio*, in *Opere minori*, ed. by Cesare Vasoli and Domenico De Robertis (Milan-Naples: Ricciardi, 1988), I.2

DVE – *De vulgari eloquentia*, ed. by Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo, in *Opere minori*, ed. by Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo and others, 2 vols (Milan-Naples: Ricciardi, 1979), II, 3-237

Ep. – *Epistole*, ed. by Arsenio Frugoni and Giorgio Brugnoli, in *Opere minori*, ed. by Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo and others, 2 vols (Milan-Naples: Ricciardi, 1979), II, 505-643

Mon. – *Monarchia*, ed. by Bruno Nardi, in *Opere minori*, ed. by Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo and others, 2 vols (Milan-Naples: Ricciardi, 1979), II, 239-503

Rime – *Rime*, ed. by Gianfranco Contini, in *Opere minori*, ed. by Domenico De Robertis and Gianfranco Contini, 2 vols (Milan-Naples: Ricciardi, 1984), I.1, 249-552

VN – *Vita nuova*, ed. by Domenico De Robertis, in *Opere minori*, ed. by Domenico De Robertis and Gianfranco Contini, 2 vols (Milan-Naples: Ricciardi, 1984), I.1, 1-247

Introduction

I. 'Quell'idea di realismo' from Dante to Pasolini

My doctoral project consists of an examination of the role played by Dante Alighieri's work in Pier Paolo Pasolini's oeuvre. This analysis focuses on the way in which the concept of realism runs through Pasolini's engagement with Dante in the course of his life and changes at different stages of his artistic development. The question of realism has been a major current in twentieth-century literature and literary criticism. For this reason, it appears in both Pasolini's production and critical reflections, as well as in twentieth-century Dante criticism. Moreover, Pasolini himself declares that Dante had acted as 'una specie di guida' for his approach to realism in the 1950s.¹ Thus, following the key thread of realism, my research constitutes a chronological study of Dante's presence in Pasolini's work, in the context of the medieval poet's reception in twentieth-century Dante criticism and against the historical background of Italian society in the post-war period (1950s-1970s). The focus on some selected case studies will allow me to explore key aspects of this relationship in detail.

Pasolini's realism is a well-established debate for literary criticism: a field of investigation which has drawn and still draws particular attention from Italian and international scholars. Over the last decades, critics have reflected on Pasolini's realism, giving different definitions; among them, those of mimetic realism,² figural realism,³ creatural realism,⁴ mystical realism,⁵ and performative realism.⁶ The point of my research is not to identify which definition is more suitable for Pasolini's oeuvre. Not for nothing, just before he starts working on his first film *Accattone* (1961), does Pasolini write: 'There is no absolute Realism that is valid for all epochs. Every epoch has its own realism'.⁷ In my research project, I rather conceptualise Pasolini's changing relationship with realism throughout his literary and filmic productions by showing how important the dialogue with Dante was to him.

¹ Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'Dante e i poeti contemporanei' (unpublished 1965), in *SLAI*, pp. 1643-48 (p. 1648). For the editions of Pasolini's texts used, see 'abbreviations'.

² Many scholars have talked of 'mimetic realism' see, for instance, Dante Della Terza, 'Il realismo mimetico di Pier Paolo Pasolini', *Italica*, 38.4 (1961), 306-13; Luigi Martellini, *Ritratto di Pasolini* (Rome: Laterza, 2006); Emanuela Patti, *Pasolini after Dante: the 'Divine Mimesis' and the Politics of Representation* (Cambridge: Legenda, 2016), pp. 54-71.

³ Patti, *Pasolini after Dante*, pp. 104-25.

⁴ Silvia De Laude, 'Pasolini lettore di "Mimesis"', in *Mimesis: l'eredità di Auerbach: atti del 35. Convegno interuniversitario (Bressanone/Innsbruck, 5-8 luglio 2007)*, ed. by Ivano Paccagnella and Elisa Gregori (Padua: Esedra, 2009), pp. 467-82 (p. 472).

⁵ Maurizio Viano, *A Certain Realism: Making Use of Pasolini's Film Theory and Practice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 63.

⁶ Luca Barattoni, *Italian Post-Neorealist Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p. 168. Carla Benedetti has referred in general to Pasolini's last production (1970s) in terms of a 'performance' (*Pasolini contro Calvino: per una letteratura impura* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1998), pp. 139-44).

⁷ This is taken from Pasolini's issue 'Intellectualism ... and the Teds' that he writes for *Films and Filming* in January 1961. This is now reported in Viano, *A Certain Realism*, p. 69.

The interest that moves my research is to see how far and how deep the dialogue between a medieval and a contemporary author on a topic such as realism can go, especially when the given authors seem to look towards one another's historical period. The 'modernity' of Dante has been widely underlined by twentieth-century Dante criticism. For Gianfranco Contini the language of the *Commedia* permits Dante to go beyond medieval culture and anticipate modernity: 'l'impressione genuina del postero, incontrandosi in Dante, [...] è [...] di raggiungere qualcuno arrivato prima di lui'.⁸ On the contrary, Pasolini on different occasions defines himself as 'una forza del Passato'⁹ and presents his last novel *Petrolio* (published posthumously in 1992) as an allegory similar to medieval theological works and visionary literature (*Petrolio*, p. 1215). What motivates my research is the opportunity offered by literature to connect different times and to bring new perspectives to our understanding of different historical periods and their cultures; I consider and use literature as a form of non-linear and multi-directional navigation in time.

The question of realism is a crucial aspect for an author such as Pasolini who develops as a writer and achieves notoriety when the post-war Italian cultural scene is animated by the debate on neorealism. Initially, this originates in the 1930s, when critics discuss the new form of realism of a certain Italian narrative, for instance, Alberto Moravia's *Gli indifferenti* (1929) and Corrado Alvaro's *Gente in Aspromonte* (1931),¹⁰ which, stimulated by contemporary American literature, tends to give an analytical representation of people's lives both in urban centres and in the provinces. However, the boom moment of neorealism coincides with the period of Italian Resistance and the immediate aftermath of World War II, between 1943 and 1950. In this time, writers develop a new way of representing people's reality while the neorealist film movement also begins to come to prominence, starting with Luchino Visconti's *Ossessione* (1943) – generally thought to be the first neorealist film. In the Italian cultural scene of this time, the term realism generally indicates the representation of people's reality, which pays close attention to the lower classes and aims at providing a depiction of that world. The circulation of Antonio Gramsci's writings in the 1950s – *Quaderni del carcere* (1948-51) and the selection of notes *Letteratura e vita nazionale* (1950) – contributes to enriching the ongoing discussion about the relationship between writers and the lower classes.¹¹ Gramsci's

⁸ Gianfranco Contini, 'Un'interpretazione di Dante' (1965¹), now in Gianfranco Contini, *Un'idea di Dante: saggi danteschi* (Turin: Einaudi, 1976), pp. 69-111 (p. 111). Dante's modernity has been underlined also by more recent scholars, for example, in relationship to the theme of modern authorship: Albert Russell Ascoli, *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Manuele Gragnolati, 'Identità d'autore. La performance della *Vita Nuova*', in *Amor che move: linguaggio del corpo e forma del desiderio in Dante, Pasolini e Morante* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 2013), pp. 17-34.

⁹ Pasolini, 'Poesie mondane', in *Poesia in forma di rosa* (1964¹), now in *TPI*, pp. 1093-101 (p. 1099). The same line is recited by the film director Orson Welles playing the role of the film maker Pasolini in the film *La ricotta* from 1963; the screenplay of *La ricotta* (1965¹), now in *PCI*, pp. 327-51 (p. 337).

¹⁰ Alberto Moravia, *Gli indifferenti* (Milan: Bompiani, 2016); Corrado Alvaro, *Gente in Aspromonte* (Milan: Garzanti, 2017).

¹¹ Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, ed. by Valentino Gerratana, 4 vols (Turin: Einaudi, 2001); Antonio Gramsci, *Letteratura e vita nazionale* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1975).

notebooks invite Italian intellectuals to engage with the subaltern classes to generate a 'national popular literature'. Gramsci also reopens the so-called 'questione della lingua': the centuries-long debate on which language to use for literary Italian. The debates on neorealism continue until the mid-1950s, when the publication of Vasco Pratolini's novel *Metello* in 1955 provokes a conflict among Italian literary critics.¹² In contemporary Italian literary criticism, the heated debate over Pratolini's novel is read as a sign of the crisis of neorealism and commonly taken as a symbolic end of that artistic period.¹³

Recalling the prominence of the Italian neorealist film movement, alongside the literary debate, is particularly relevant for my discussion of Pasolini's realism. Indeed, after having achieved notoriety as a writer with his Roman novels (*Ragazzi di vita* and *Una vita violenta*),¹⁴ Pasolini approaches the world of cinema. In the second half of the 1950s, Pasolini works on and off as a screenwriter and dialogue consultant with different film directors, and in 1961 he makes his first film, *Accattone*. Thus, the question of realism is at the basis of Pasolini's intellectual formation and early artistic career both literary and cinematic.

Realism is also a major current for twentieth-century Dante critics, who discuss this theme in relation to Dante's *Commedia* like no other had ever done before. In her recent monograph *Pasolini after Dante* (2016),¹⁵ Emanuela Patti draws a list of major critical works published in Italy between 1938 and the 1950s, which stress from different angles the realistic character of Dante's work. In particular, Patti refers to Erich Auerbach's essay 'Figura', which appears in *Archivum Romanicum* in 1938;¹⁶ Gianfranco Contini's introduction to his edition of Dante's *Rime* of 1939;¹⁷ Antonio Gramsci's reading of Canto X of the *Inferno*, published as part of *Letteratura e vita nazionale* in 1950; Contini's essay 'Preliminari sulla lingua del Petrarca' of 1951;¹⁸ and finally Auerbach's essay 'Farinata e Cavalcante', collected in *Mimesis* and published in Italy in 1956.¹⁹ These readings have a very strong influence on the reception of Dante in the Italian post-war cultural scene, which as noted before is

¹² Vasco Pratolini, *Metello: una storia italiana* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1955).

¹³ For the literary category of 'neorealism', I refer to Antonio Russi and others, 'Confronto e scontro sul "neorealismo"', in *Novecento: gli scrittori e la cultura letteraria nella società italiana*, ed. by Gianni Grana, 11 vols (Milan: Marzorati, 1987-88), vii, 5996-6090; Christopher Wagstaff, 'Neorealismo', in *Enciclopedia della letteratura italiana Oxford-Zanichelli*, ed. by Peter Hainsworth, David Robey, and Pasquale Stoppelli (Bologna: Zanichelli, 2004), pp. 539-41. For the most recent update on the argument of neorealism, I refer to Anna Baldini, 'Il Neorealismo. Nascita e usi di una categoria letteraria', in *Letteratura italiana e tedesca 1945-1970: campi, polisistemi, transfer*, ed. by Irene Fantappiè and Michele Sisto (Rome: Istituto italiano di Studi Germanici, 2013), pp. 109-28.

¹⁴ Pasolini, *Ragazzi* (1955¹); Pasolini, *Una vita violenta* (1959¹), now in *RRI*, pp. 817-1193.

¹⁵ Patti, *Pasolini after Dante*, p. 33.

¹⁶ Erich Auerbach, 'Figura', *Archivum Romanicum*, 22 (1938), 436-489, now in Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, trans. by Maria L. De Pieri Bonino and Dante Della Terza (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2005), pp. 176-226.

¹⁷ Gianfranco Contini, 'Introduzione alle Rime di Dante' (1939¹), now in Contini, *Un'idea di Dante*, pp. 3-20.

¹⁸ Gianfranco Contini, 'Preliminari sulla lingua del Petrarca', *Paragone*, 2 (1951), 3-26, now in Gianfranco Contini, *Variante e altra linguistica: una raccolta di saggi (1938-1968)* (Turin: Einaudi, 1970), pp. 169-92.

¹⁹ Erich Auerbach, 'Farinata e Cavalcante', in *Mimesis: il realismo nella letteratura occidentale*, trans. by Alberto Romagnoli and Hans Hinterhäuser, 2 vols (Turin: Einaudi, 2000), I, 189-221. In the thesis I will mainly use Italian translation of critical texts because they are those read by Pasolini.

particularly sensitive to this topic. As pointed out by Patti, it is precisely at that time that a certain representation of Dante as the 'poet of reality' and of the *Commedia* as an example for realistic literature becomes particularly popular among Italian writers.²⁰ This includes Pasolini too, who, in a critical essay of the early 1950s, defines Dante's *Commedia* as '[la] più realistica delle opere poetiche italiane' ('Poesia dialettale', p. 716).

The starting point of my research is a statement made by Pasolini in a radio interview from 1965 entitled 'Dante e i poeti contemporanei'. On this occasion, Pasolini admits the influence of Dante on his approach to the question of realism in the 1950s and describes his past relationship with the medieval poet, precisely, in terms of a literary guide:

C'è stata negli anni Cinquanta, presso un gruppo di addetti ai lavori, molto impegnati in questo, sulla scorta di un ormai famoso saggio di Contini, una specie di assunzione di Dante a simbolo. Il suo plurilinguismo, le sue tecniche poetiche e narrative, erano forme di un realismo che si opponeva, ancora una volta, alla Letteratura. Sicché io, nel mio operare di quegli anni, avevo in mente Dante come una specie di guida, la cui lezione, misconosciuta o mistificata nei secoli, era ricominciata ad essere operante con la Resistenza. Ora quell'idea di realismo degli anni Cinquanta pare ed è superata e con essa si stinge l'interpretazione dantesca della 'compagnia picciola' che dicevo. ('Dante e i poeti contemporanei', pp. 1647-48)

With 'un ormai famoso saggio di Contini', Pasolini is referring to 'Preliminari sulla lingua del Petrarca', which divides Italian literature into two traditions: the monolingual line started by Petrarch and the plurilingual one originating with Dante. The critic defines the language of the *Commedia* in terms of plurilingualism as the co-existence of different languages and registers in the same text. This account reveals that the interpretation provided by Contini's essay, especially the notion of plurilingualism, suggested to Pasolini a 'certain' idea of realism, contributing to his view of Dante as a symbol and a guide for realistic literature. However, Pasolini also states that that specific Dante paradigm and that idea of realism, which was valid in the 1950s, is then over by the mid-1960s. Drawing from this statement, the idea that drives my project is that one can extend Pasolini's dialogue with Dante, mediated by twentieth-century Dante critics, on the topic of realism also to his further productions, to the various stages of his career. The presence of Dante in Pasolini's works actually increases from the mid-1960s onwards. Some of his most Dantean productions, such as *La Divina Mimesis* (1975), *Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma* (1975), and *Petrolio* (written between 1972 and 1975), belong to the late phase of his artistic career. In these works, Pasolini re-elaborates in different ways the Dantean theme of the *descensus ad inferos* to describe his contemporary society. Moreover, it is in the mid-1960s that other important studies on Dante are realised, such as Auerbach's *Studi su*

²⁰ Patti, *Pasolini after Dante*, p. 33.

Dante (1963) and Contini's 'Un'interpretazione di Dante' (1965).²¹ What I will attempt to demonstrate in my thesis is that during his career Pasolini elaborates his own theories regarding realism through a continuous dialogue with Dante, in particular with twentieth-century Dante criticism, which I will argue he then puts into practice in his literary and cinematic productions.

From the radio interview of 1965 comes the title of my thesis: 'Come una specie di guida'. I use Pasolini's word 'guida' in the sense that Pasolini finds in Dante a constant reference, an 'evergreen' interlocutor, when it comes to questions of realism. This is mainly thanks to the studies on Dante published alongside Pasolini's career by twentieth-century Dante critics, such as Contini and Auerbach, of whom Pasolini is a careful reader, and who always offer him new interesting readings of Dante. Pasolini's specific interest in the field of Dante studies becomes evident in 1965. On the occasion of the 700th anniversary of Dante's birth, Pasolini himself plays the role of the Dante critic publishing for *Paragone* a critical essay on Dante, 'La volontà di Dante a essere poeta', followed one year later by a second study, 'Vanni Fucci' (1966).²² Pasolini's reception of Dante is not a re-elaborated reading of the source simply mediated by Dante criticism, but a complex free reconceptualisation. By this, I mean that, starting from some critical readings on Dante, Pasolini reconceptualises Dante in his own terms to build his own theories and practices of realism. Moreover, every new reconceptualisation of Dante permits Pasolini to deal with the problem of realism at different times of his artistic career, when using different forms of expression to literature (for example, cinema), and also in the changeable historical context of post-war Italy. Pasolini lives in a time of strong economic growth and social transformation. The economic boom of 1950s-60s rapidly changes the appearance and customs of society, as Italy becomes a global industrial power, where before the war was still a largely rural country.

II. Methodological framework

I would like to clarify some key terms of my thesis. First of all, realism is the pivot around which my research project on Pasolini's Dantism develops. There is no single generally accepted definition of realism, since each epoch develops its own idea and sense of reality. In literature, for instance, the term realism commonly refers to the realist art movement, developed in Europe in the mid-nineteenth century and interested in an accurate representation of everyday people's reality and familiar things.²³

²¹ Gianfranco Contini, 'Un'interpretazione di Dante', *Paragone*, 188 (1965), 3-42, now in Contini, *Un'idea di Dante*, pp. 69-111.

²² Pasolini, Vanni Fucci' (1966¹), then with the title 'La mala mimesis' in *Empirismo*, now in *SLAI*, pp. 1391-99. The first essay on Dante is also a good example of the importance that Contini's and Auerbach's texts had on Pasolini, because here Pasolini quotes both critics.

²³ Romano Luperini, 'Realismo', in *Enciclopedia della letteratura italiana Oxford-Zanichelli*, ed. by Hainsworth, Robey, and Stoppelli, pp. 657-59.

However, I have already discussed that during the neorealist period, in the Italian cultural scene of the time, realism generally refers to a realistic representation of the lower classes. Moreover, the term realism seems particularly 'slippery' for the case of Pasolini. It is Pasolini himself who raises the ambiguity of this term, in general and in relation to his own productions. In an interview at the end of the 1960s, discussing Italian neorealism, Pasolini says that it is very difficult to define what realism is: 'La parola "realismo" è così ambigua che è difficile mettersi d'accordo sul suo significato' (Pasolini, p. 1353). Then, he states that with his films he has introduced 'un certo realismo' compared with neorealist films, however, he says: 'sarebbe piuttosto difficile definirlo con precisione' (Pasolini, p. 1353). Thus, in my thesis I will not adopt any restrictive definition of this term, but I will refer to it in a general and broad sense as a way to speak of or to represent reality. The difficulty in understanding Pasolini's approach to realism is due to his very personal sense of reality:

La mia filosofia, o il mio modo di vivere [...] non mi sembra altro, poi, che un allucinato, infantile e pragmatico amore per la realtà. Religioso in quanto si fonda in qualche modo, per analogia, con una sorta di immenso feticismo sessuale.²⁴

The interest in reality is presented by Pasolini as particularly important to him, his own philosophy of living. However, his idea of and approach to reality appear to be of a very specific kind. As noted by scholars, there is an irrational, sacred component in Pasolini's notion of reality.²⁵ Maurizio Viano defines it 'mystical' and says that this mystical perspective is 'responsible for the capital "R" which Pasolini often used when referring to "Reality" as an impersonal Being in constant soliloquy'.²⁶ This sacred, mystical idea of reality should not be confused with any specific religious belief. On many occasions, Pasolini defines himself atheist: 'Io sono ateo, ma il mio rapporto con le cose è pieno di mistero e di sacro. Per me niente è naturale nemmeno la natura'.²⁷ The most 'distilled manifestation' of this idea of reality is corporeality, the body, affirms Robert Gordon.²⁸ For Pasolini, a body is never just a body: 'Un corpo [...] rappresenta l'incodificabile'.²⁹ The subject of the body covers the whole of

²⁴ Pasolini, 'Battute sul cinema' (1966-67¹), then in *Empirismo*, now in *SLAI*, pp. 1541-54 (p. 1544).

²⁵ The theme of Pasolini's sacred notion of reality has been extensively discussed by Giuseppe Conti Calabrese, *Pasolini e il sacro* (Milan: Jaca Book, p. 1994); and Fabio Vighi, *Le ragioni dell'altro: la formazione intellettuale di Pasolini tra saggistica, letteratura e cinema* (Ravenna: Longo, 2001). They underline the importance of some specific esoteric and philosophical readings for Pasolini's idea of a sacred reality, for example, Mircea Eliade, Georges Bataille, Martin Heidegger, and the Frankfurt School. For a general discussion on the theme of the 'sacro' in Pasolini's oeuvre, I refer to the collective work *Pasolini e l'interrogazione del sacro*, ed. by Angela Felice and Gian Paolo Gri (Venice: Marsilio, 2013).

²⁶ Viano, *A Certain Realism*, p. 63. For some occurrences of reality with capital 'R', see Pasolini, 'Segni viventi', p. 1574; Pasolini, 'Il non verbale come altra verbalità (1971¹)', then in *Empirismo*, now in *SLAI*, pp. 1592-95 (p. 1592); *Divina*, p. 1106.

²⁷ The quote is taken from an interview published in *La Stampa*, 12 July 1968, which is now reported in Conti Calabrese, *Pasolini e il sacro*, p. 9.

²⁸ Robert Gordon, *Pasolini: Forms of Subjectivity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 240-41.

²⁹ This quotation appears in Pasolini, *La voce di Pasolini: i testi*, ed. by Matteo Cerami and Mario Sesti (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2006), p. 35. The editors report part of an interview Pasolini gave to Tommaso Anzoino.

Pasolini's oeuvre: the young body of the Friulian peasants in *Poesie a Casarsa* (1942);³⁰ the 'full of life' body of the Roman subproletarians in *Ragazzi di vita* (1955); the celebration of the naked body and sexuality in the filmic trilogy made of *Il Decameron*, *I racconti di Canterbury*, and *Il fiore delle Mille e una notte* (1971-74); and the image of the subjugated body of mass society depicted in both *Petrolio* and *Salò* (1975). Because of this focus on the body, Pasolini's contact with reality is charged with sexuality and desire;³¹ he defines his 'contatto con la realtà' as 'un contatto fisico, carnale, [...] addirittura sensuale' (*Centauro*, p. 1413). Pasolini's interest in reality is that of a contact with an otherness (the body of the other), where the author can reconcile with what is different from his own self, especially different from his bourgeois self. Pasolini's hatred for his own social class emerges in the famous line of the poem 'Le ceneri di Gramsci', where he claims to be deeply offended by his bourgeois origins: 'il male borghese di me borghese'.³² Pasolini is indeed interested in the otherness of those marginal cultures (for example, the Friulian peasants; the Roman subproletarians) that are not corrupted by bourgeois ideals, and so maintain a closer relationship with reality.³³ Alongside the mystical approach, scholars have also underlined the importance of Pasolini's Marxism for his interest in reality.³⁴ For Pasolini, reality is also a series of historical, sociological data which, as a leftist artist and intellectual, he analyses in his productions over the years: the precarious conditions of the subproletarians; the transformation of Italian customs and languages; the consumerism that follows the economic boom; the advent of mass society; the beginning of terrorism in Italy; the debates within Italian politics (for example, the divorce and abortion laws);³⁵ the logic of 'il Potere'.³⁶

Finally, his experience of cinema makes him think of reality also in terms of a language; Pasolini speaks precisely of the '*Linguaggio della Realtà*'.³⁷ As we will see when discussing Pasolini's film theory, the objects of reality are all signs of this 'global language', in which everything is a fragment of the whole.³⁸ By conceiving reality as a language we can also explain Pasolini's fascination with the dialect

³⁰ Pasolini, *Poesie a Casarsa* (1942¹), then republished in *La meglio gioventù* (1954), and later in *La nuova gioventù* (1975), now in *TPI*, pp. 1-101.

³¹ Gordon, *Pasolini*, pp. 240-41.

³² Pasolini, 'Le ceneri di Gramsci' (1957¹), in *Le ceneri di Gramsci* (1957), now in *TPI*, pp. 815-26 (p. 819).

³³ On the concept of the 'other' in Pasolini, I refer to Vighi, 'Introduzione: le origini del pensiero di Pasolini', in *Le ragioni dell'altro*, pp. 9-18.

³⁴ Vighi, *Le ragioni dell'altro*, pp. 16-17; René de Ceccatty, 'Pasolini: dialoghi con la realtà', in *Corpus XXX: Pasolini, 'Petrolio', 'Salò'*, ed. by Davide Messina (Bologna: CLUEB, 2012), pp. 96-108 (pp. 96-98). Pasolini joins the Italian Communist Party (PCI) in 1948 when he is at Casarsa della Delizia. One year later, he is expelled from the party as a response to his charges of corruption of minors and obscene acts in a public place – accusations that will never become a real condemnation. After this fact, although remaining a leftist, his relationship with the PCI would always be problematic. In reply to the Udine branch of the PCI, which had acted for his expulsion, Pasolini writes: 'Malgrado voi, resto e resterò comunista, nel senso più autentico di questa parola' (quoted from Marco A. Bazzocchi, *Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Milan: Mondadori, 1998), p. 13).

³⁵ See for example, Pasolini, 'Sacer' (1975¹), then in *Corsari*, now in *SPS*, pp. 380-84; Pasolini, 'Il coito, l'aborto, la falsa tolleranza del potere, il conformismo dei progressisti' (1975¹), then in *Corsari*, now in *SPS*, pp. 372-79.

³⁶ This is Pasolini's own expression to define a new form of power, the neocapitalist, consumerist power, which according to him dominates Italian society in the 1970s. This theme will be extensively discussed in chapter four. For reference, see Pasolini, 'Il vero fascismo', p. 314.

³⁷ Pasolini, 'Il non verbale come altra verbalità', p. 1594.

³⁸ Conti Calabrese, *Pasolini e il sacro*, pp. 73-74.

spoken by the marginal cultures of the Friulian peasants and the Roman subproletarians. As we will see in chapter one, because it is an uncoded language, dialect appears to have a closer relationship to reality than Italian, which has a standardized written system. All these variations of the word reality and their interconnections show how manifold and complex Pasolini's conception of it is; it cannot be contained in one single significance. This is why to answer the issue of Pasolini's realism I engage with all these different notions of reality over the course of the chapters.

Alongside the guiding concept of realism, there are other significant ones which I use to analyse the way in which Pasolini deals with the question of realism at the various stages of his career: plurilingualism (chapter one), figuralism (chapter two), prophetism (chapters three and four), allegorism and vision (chapters four and five). All these concepts belong to twentieth-century Dante criticism and all are related to the discourse around Dante's realism or realistic representation, more generally. As mentioned earlier, my thesis uses the lens of twentieth-century Dante criticism to read the relationship between Dante and Pasolini over the years. I will briefly introduce these concepts and later add further reflections, when discussing the thesis outline, as each concept stays at the heart of each single chapter.

As noted before, plurilingualism is a linguistic notion applied by Contini to the language of the *Commedia*, and refers to the co-existence of different languages and registers in the same text. This also encompasses the use of invented languages, for example, Plutus' 'Pape Satàn, pape Satàn aleppe!' (*Inf.* VII, 1), Nimrod's 'Raphél maì amèche zabì almi' (*Inf.* XXXI, 67), and the many neologisms of the *Paradiso*: 'trasumanar' (*Par.* I, 70), 's'inluia' (*Par.* IX, 73), 's'indova' (*Par.* XXXIII, 138).³⁹ Contini recognises in Dante's specific use of language the element of realism of the *Commedia*. For example, the strong language used by Dante to describe Muhammad's mutilated body in *Inferno* XXVIII (ll. 25-27) is, for Contini, a 'campione di "realismo"'.⁴⁰

In the chapter of *Mimesis* dedicated to Dante, Auerbach identifies the factor responsible for the realism of Dante's characters in the use of figuralism, and indeed speaks of 'realismo figurale' for the case of the *Commedia*.⁴¹ According to the critic, Dante reuses a similar type of figural interpretation to that used by the Church Fathers, whose aim was to show that the people and events of the Old Testament were prefigurations of the New Testament and its history of salvation. For example, in the light of the New Testament, the Moses of the Old Testament is read as a prefiguration of Christ (*figura Christi*). Moses and Christ are therefore related as figure and fulfilment. However, in his being a *figura* of Christ, Moses is no less historical and real, and Christ, the fulfilment, is not an abstract idea, but also

³⁹ For an interpretation of these passages, see the commentary on the *Commedia* by Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi (Milan: Mondadori, 1991-1997), *Inferno* I, 7; *Inferno* XXXI, 67, in *DDP*, <<https://dante.dartmouth.edu>> [accessed 10 March 2020]. For the editions of Dante's texts used, see 'abbreviations'.

⁴⁰ Contini, 'Preliminari sulla lingua del Petrarca', p. 172.

⁴¹ Auerbach, *Mimesis*, pp. 212-13.

a historical reality.⁴² For the case of the *Commedia*, this means that the individual souls are the fulfilment of their lives on earth. The only difference compared to biblical figuralism is that Dante's characters do not refer to someone or something else but only to themselves. The continuation of the characters' personality in the afterlife is what, for Auerbach, makes Dante's characters so memorable and realistic.

Prophetism, allegory, and vision are all concepts that appear in Auerbach's and Contini's works of the mid-1960s. Prophetism is presented as one of the most relevant aspects of the *Commedia* in Auerbach's *Studi su Dante* (1963), and is linked to linguistic discourse in Contini's 'Un'interpretazione di Dante' (1965). In the course of his journey, Dante is invested as a prophet several times; his mission is to reveal what he has seen in order for his poem to have a positive effect on humanity. Considering the term 'prophet' for Dante with the meaning of 'truth-teller',⁴³ I understand prophetism as the practice of revealing truths about reality rather than of predicting future events. With this meaning, prophetism becomes a way to speak about reality, applying to my previous definition of realism.

The essay 'Figura' from *Studi su Dante* expands on the concept of figuralism. Because *figura* is a specific type of allegory (where the two elements, the image at the literal level and the hidden allegorical significance, are both true and historical), Auerbach's reflections mark an important moment in the study of Dante's allegorism. Previously, this had been put aside by Benedetto Croce, who does not consider allegory to be a relevant argument of study.⁴⁴ Unlike figuralism, allegory is commonly understood as a non-realistic form of representation, because the image that stays on the literal level does not need to be true or real.

Finally, the word 'visione' occurs in *Studi su Dante* and in Contini's essay 'Un esempio di poesia dantesca: il canto XXVIII del *Paradiso*' (1965)⁴⁵ with the sense of the real things seen and experienced by Dante in his journey. This term is deeply connected to the theme of prophetism, as Dante's prophetic mission is precisely to reveal that which he sees. In *Studi su Dante*, the word is also recalled with reference to the genre of the mystical vision that, as Auerbach affirms, was very common in medieval times. However, this does not apply to the *Commedia*, says Auerbach, which is presented by Dante as the report of a real journey and not as an out-of-body experience. This choice is read by the critic as a deliberate attempt by Dante to add realism and trustworthiness to the story.⁴⁶ In the course

⁴² Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 83.

⁴³ Teodolinda Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 10.

⁴⁴ Benedetto Croce, *La poesia di Dante* (Rome: Laterza, 1921); Benedetto Croce, 'Sulla natura dell'allegoria', *La Critica*, 21 (1923), 51-56. In his works, Croce considers allegory as 'non poesia' and so as that part of the *Commedia* not interesting for further discussion and analysis.

⁴⁵ Contini, 'Un esempio di poesia dantesca: il canto XXVIII del *Paradiso*' (1965¹), then in Contini, *Varianti e altra linguistica*, now in Contini, *Un'idea di Dante*, pp. 191-213.

⁴⁶ Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, pp. 74-75.

of my thesis, I will show how Pasolini engages with and reconceptualises these Dantean concepts to elaborate his own theories of realism.

Since my research looks at the relationship between Dante and Pasolini in the light of twentieth-century Dante critics and their readings of Dante, the authors, as well as the texts involved in the discussion, are never only two, but at least three. In thinking about these complex relationships and interrelationships, for my study I have drawn on an intertextual approach as defined by Julia Kristeva:

Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least double.⁴⁷

Considering the text as a 'system' of many components, intertextuality is intended as the transportation of one or more systems of signs into another, which is accompanied by new articulation of meanings. 'The literary word', writes Kristeva, is 'an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings'.⁴⁸ Following this method, I read Pasolini's text as a dynamic site, differential and historical, a set of relationships, where the single text is always in relation with a multitude of other texts or literary models, whether it is another text by Pasolini or by Dante or by one or more Dante critics. My analysis of Pasolini's work consists in identifying the 'threads' which form his text and reconstructing their 'story'. They may, for instance, come from a direct reading of Dante or rather they may have been mediated by a specific critical reading of Dante or by a cross-reading of different critical studies of Dante.

I will give a practical example of my use of intertextuality. In chapter one, I will comment on Pasolini's engagement with Contini's notion of plurilingualism as functional for his approach to literary realism in the 1950s. The first thing I will note is that, when Pasolini engages with this notion in his critical essays of the 1950s, he refers to it in terms of 'bilingualism'. This means that Pasolini has already reconceptualised Contini's notion in his own terms as the co-existence of two languages and not many. I will explain this re-conceptualisation by highlighting the prominence of another author alongside Contini in Pasolini's critical works of the time, Antonio Gramsci, and in particular of his *Letteratura e vita nazionale* (1950). In the section where Gramsci discusses the 'questione della lingua' not only does he recall as an example Dante's use of the vernacular, but the problem of a national-popular language is formulated in binary terms as the relationship between two social groups (the intellectuals and the subaltern classes) and so two languages. In conclusion, the intertextual approach will help me to

⁴⁷ Julia Kristeva, 'Word, Dialogue, and Novel', in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. by Toril Moi (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), pp. 64-89 (p. 66).

⁴⁸ Kristeva, 'Word, Dialogue, and Novel', p. 65.

explain Pasolini's bilingualism as a concept which comes from the cross-reading of both Contini and Gramsci.

The concept of intertextuality with regard to the reception of Dante has been further problematised by a recent collective work dedicated to the study of the reuse of Dante in twentieth- and twenty-first-century culture: *Metamorphosing Dante: Appropriations, Manipulations, and Rewritings in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries* (2011), edited by Manuele Gragnolati, Fabio Camilletti, and Fabian Lampart.⁴⁹ In this volume, the concept of 'metamorphosis' expands that of 'reception', breaking the genealogical scheme in which intertextuality is usually placed: it is not only the re-elaborated reading of a source, but heterogeneous and free re-appropriations.⁵⁰ This broadening of the concept of intertextuality proves to be very useful for my case study. It is exactly in these terms that I read Pasolini's reception of Dante: a creative manifold engagement that goes beyond the many cases of mere reception and produces something aesthetically new and very distant from the original pre-text.

Close reading is a crucial part of my methodology too. In my thesis there are specific sections dedicated to a close textual analysis of some of Pasolini's works, which I have chosen as case studies to discuss specific periods of his career. A close reading approach helps to bring evidence to my discourse on Pasolini's creative reception of Dante and twentieth-century Dante critics at the level of the text. Moreover, this approach to the text can also bring to the surface themes which have been overlooked or underestimated in Pasolini's production by previous scholars. In relation to this last point, for example, this methodology has proved particularly useful since it has allowed me to recognise many references to Dante's *Purgatorio* in Pasolini's work, where before this canticle had been deemed less important by the critical works on Dante and Pasolini. The combination of the intertextual approach and close reading has been particularly fruitful for my research, because Pasolini is an artist who gains inspiration from multiple sources, and likes to mix and play with them in the text. Moreover, drawing from the post-structural paradigm that 'everything is a text', I apply these two methodologies also to the analysis of Pasolini's early filmic production in relation to Dante.⁵¹

An important method of understanding Pasolini's relationship with Dante has been provided by Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence: a Theory of Poetry* (1975).⁵² Bloom reads the history of writing in terms of a conflict between contemporary poets and their precursors. Comparing themselves with their great precursors, writers feel what Bloom calls a certain 'anxiety of influence', as they have to admit the importance of their precursors' work to them. However, at the same time they want to prove

⁴⁹ *Metamorphosing Dante: Appropriations, Manipulations, and Rewritings in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries*, ed. by Manuele Gragnolati, Fabio Camilletti, and Fabian Lampart (Vienna and Berlin: Turia & Kant, 2011).

⁵⁰ Fabio Camilletti, Manuele Gragnolati, and Fabian Lampart, 'Metamorphosing Dante', in *Metamorphosing Dante*, ed. by Gragnolati, Camilletti, and Lampart, pp. 9-18 (pp. 11-12).

⁵¹ For reference, see Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

⁵² Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: a Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

themselves to be better than their own precursors, as well as to be able to produce original works. To do so, affirms Bloom, writers elaborate different strategies to ‘wrestle’ against their precursor and, ultimately, ‘kill’ their literary father figure.⁵³ Bloom’s work makes me reflect on Pasolini’s relationship with Dante in terms of a conflict, and on which strategy Pasolini uses towards Dante to win over his anxiety of influence. Dante is definitely a strong precursor for Italian writers in general. As Albert Russell Ascoli notes: ‘looking at Dante’s relationship with authority is a little like looking directly at the sun’.⁵⁴ Actually, Pasolini’s careful, reticent expression ‘come una specie di guida’ could be seen as sort of evidence of Bloom’s anxiety of influence in relation to the ‘heavy’ legacy of the precursor. Indeed, Pasolini does not say that in the 1950s Dante ‘was’ his guide, but he says that he was ‘like a sort of’ guide. The conjunction ‘come’ and the locution ‘una specie di’ create a double barrier between Pasolini and his model. The result is that, while Pasolini says that Dante was his literary guide, he also takes a certain distance from him. This wording is particularly evocative also because it reminds me of the way in which Dante relates to his main literary guide, Virgil. In the *Commedia*, Dante refers to Virgil using a series of expressions which underline his importance and the legacy of his work in Dante: ‘lo mio maestro e ‘l mio autore’ (*Inf.* I, 85); ‘famoso saggio’ (*Inf.* I, 89); ‘guida’ (*Inf.* I, 113); ‘tu duca, tu signore e tu maestro’ (*Inf.* II, 140); ‘padre’ (*Purg.* XXVII, 52). The *Aeneid* is the main literary model of the *Commedia*, and Virgil is literally the character who guides Dante through Hell and Purgatory. However, Virgil will eventually be left behind. This happens in a literal sense, since in the fiction Beatrice will take his role as a guide starting from the Garden of Eden, and in a ‘literary’ sense too, as with his ‘sacrato poema’ (*Par.* XXIII, 62) Dante will produce something that goes beyond the ‘alta tragedia’ (*Inf.* XX, 113) of the *Aeneid*. For Dante’s authorship and literary production, the legacy of Virgil is as necessary as the distance from him that he creates.⁵⁵ Here lies an important similarity between the two authors of my research; positioning themselves in relation to their main literary model seems crucial for both Dante and Pasolini. They both feel a certain ‘anxiety of influence’ in regard to their precursor. Despite choosing their literary father figure as their guide, they must also get rid of him.

There is a passage from the film *Uccellacci e uccellini* (1966) where the character of the crow-Pasolini says to Totò and Ninetto that masters are meant to be eaten: ‘I maestri sono fatti per essere mangiati in salsa piccante’,⁵⁶ which has become particularly famous. Asked to comment on this line from the film, Pasolini then adds: ‘Devono essere mangiati e superati. Ma, se il loro insegnamento ha un valore, ci resterà dentro’ (*Pasolini*, p. 1350). Moreover, this passage has a very Dantean echo as it recalls Cacciaguida’s depiction of the positive effect Dante’s words will have on humanity once

⁵³ Bloom, ‘Introduction’, in *The Anxiety of Influence*, pp. 5-16.

⁵⁴ Ascoli, *Modern Author*, p. 4.

⁵⁵ For the study on the relationship between Dante and Virgil, I refer to Robert Hollander, *Il Virgilio dantesco: tragedia nella ‘Commedia’* (Florence: Olschki, 1983); Ascoli, ‘The author of the *Commedia*’, in *Modern Author*, pp. 301-405.

⁵⁶ Pasolini’s screenplay of *Uccellacci e uccellini* (1966¹), now in *PCI*, pp. 675-805 (p. 802).

understood. They will be a 'vital nodrimento' once they will have been digested (*Par. XVII*, 130-32). Cacciaguیدا's phrase is based on the biblical image of knowledge as nourishment for the soul and so of eating and digestion as the process of knowing.⁵⁷ The account from *Uccellacci e uccellini* describes well the strategy adopted by Pasolini to 'kill' his father figure. Dante is assimilated, incorporated by Pasolini and becomes indiscernible from himself. By this, I mean that Dante is a figure of the self for Pasolini over the course of his life. This results in an identification between Pasolini and his father figure, which allows Pasolini to take on himself features typical of Dante, as well as to project his own characteristics onto Dante. Interrogating Pasolini's positioning towards Dante is very important for my main research question since their relationship is at the basis of my investigation. My argument is that Pasolini's dialogue with Dante on the topic of realism is encouraged precisely by the fact that Pasolini identifies with Dante in the course of his artistic career. *La Divina Mimesis* is the work that best reveals Pasolini's identification with Dante. Conceived as a contemporary re-writing of the *Commedia*, in the text the fictional character of Dante is played by Pasolini himself. As we will see in chapter three, the embodiment of Dante is used by Pasolini as a meta-literary strategy to discuss the legacy of Dante in his past and future productions. Another revealing moment of Pasolini's identification with Dante emerges from Pasolini's last interview (1975). The day before being found brutally murdered in Ostia, Pasolini brings up a link between himself and Dante; he describes his life as 'uno scendere all'inferno', which allows him to see the truth about the world.⁵⁸ I will track more phases of this identification when discussing the outline of my thesis. I will show how this flows in the course of Pasolini's life and how it changes according to time. Drawing from Luis Borges's words: 'every writer creates his own precursors',⁵⁹ I will demonstrate that Pasolini formulates different ideas of Dante or Dante paradigms over the years. These resemble Pasolini's own self at a specific time of his life, and are used as guiding figures and literary models.

III. Critical context

The field of study of the relationship between Dante and Pasolini is quite wide. The strong, often explicit reference to Dante in Pasolini's oeuvre has turned Pasolini's Dantism into a specific research area inside the general field of Pasolini studies. Over the last decades, scholars have paid particular attention to the legacy of Dante's *Inferno*, focusing on Pasolini's reuse of the *topos* of the medieval

⁵⁷ For reference, see the commentary on the *Commedia* by Robert Hollander (New York: Doubleday, 2000-2007), *Paradiso XVII*, 130-132, in *DDP*.

⁵⁸ Pasolini, 'Siamo tutti in pericolo' (1975¹), now in *SPS*, pp. 1723-30 (p. 1726).

⁵⁹ Luis Borges, 'Kafka and His Precursors', in *Labyrinths: Selected Stories & Other Writings*, ed. by Donald A. Yates and James East Irby (New York: New Directions, 1964), pp. 199-201 (p. 201).

descensus ad inferos in his depiction of contemporary hells.⁶⁰ However, this has resulted in a fragmented study of Pasolini's Dantism, since major consideration has been given to those works where the theme of *catabasis* is more explicit, for instance, *La mortaccia* (1965)⁶¹ and *La Divina Mimesis* – Pasolini's two alleged attempts to rewrite the *Inferno* – *Petrolio*, and *Salò*. Ultimately, this has prevented critics from seeing Pasolini's dialogue with Dante against the broader picture of his whole production.

The topic of Dante's realism had been a major trend in the critical studies of Dante of the twentieth century.⁶² Drawing from those readings, in more recent years, Teodolinda Barolini has brought the discourse further, problematising that idea of realism by deconstructing the fiction of the *Commedia*.⁶³ However, in general, contemporary Dante scholars tend to go beyond the study of realism and have re-evaluated the study of Dante as a medieval author. The trend is now to investigate Dante's engagement with specific aspects of medieval culture, such as the prominence of biblical texts, the relationship with religious culture and literature, allegorism, prophetism, medieval preaching and bestiaries.⁶⁴ In contrast, as mentioned before, the topic of realism in Pasolini studies still draws particular attention from scholars.⁶⁵ Some of the most recent critical works on Pasolini take into

⁶⁰ This list is to give an idea of the numerous studies dedicated to Pasolini's engagement with Dante's *Inferno*: Giorgio Barberi Squarotti, 'L'ultimo trentennio', in *Dante nella letteratura italiana del Novecento*, ed. by Silvio Zennaro (Rome: Bonacci, 1979), pp. 263-78; Lidia Bertolini, 'Memoria del viaggio dantesco agli Inferi in Pasolini e in Sanguineti', *Letteratura contemporanea*, 23 (1988), 241-59; Stelio Cro, 'Intertestualità di "Una vita violenta" di Pier Paolo Pasolini', in *La lotta con Proteo. Metamorfosi del testo e testualità della critica*, ed. by Luigi Ballerini, Gay Bardin, and Massimo Ciavolella (Florence: Cadmo, 2000), pp. 739-48; Gabrielle Lesperance, 'Beginning to think about "Salò"', in *Dante, cinema, and television*, ed. by Amilcare A. Iannucci (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), pp. 97-105; Gilda Policastro, 'L'inferno pasoliniano tra mimesi e memoria', in *In luoghi ulteriori. Catabasi e parodia da Leopardi al Novecento* (Pisa: Giardini, 2005), pp. 129-52; Milly Curcio, 'Dante e gli inferni contemporanei', in *Leggere Dante oggi. Interpretare, commentare, tradurre alle soglie del settecentesimo anniversario*, ed. by Éva Vígh (Rome: Aracne - Accademia d'Ungheria in Roma - Istituto Storico "Fraknói", 2011), pp. 349-58; Dario Stazzone, 'Note sul dantismo di Pasolini, da "La Divina Mimesis" a le Bolge della Visione in "Petrolio"', in *La funzione Dante e i paradigmi della modernità*, ed. by Patrizia Bertini Malgarini, Nicola Merola, Caterina Verbaro (Pisa: ETS, 2015), pp. 481-91.

⁶¹ Pasolini, *La mortaccia*, in *Ali dagli occhi azzurri* (1965¹), now in *RRII*, pp. 591-96.

⁶² To the already mentioned works of Contini and Auerbach, one can add Charles S. Singleton, *Dante Studies I: Elements of Structure* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954); Singleton, *Dante Studies II: Journey to Beatrice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958); Leo Spitzer, *Romanische Literaturstudien 1936-1956* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1959).

⁶³ I refer to the first chapter of Barolini's *The Undivine Comedy*, 'Detheologizing Dante: Realism, Reception, and the Resources of Narrative', pp. 3-20.

⁶⁴ Just to mention some of these studies, I would like to recall Zygmunt G. Barański, *Chiosar con altro testo: leggere Dante nel Trecento* (Fiesole: Cadmo, 2001); Lodovico Cardellino, *Dante e la Bibbia* (Bornato in Franciacorta: Sardini, 2007); the many contributions of *La Bibbia di Dante: esperienza mistica, profezia e teologia biblica in Dante: atti del Convegno internazionale di studi, Ravenna, 7 novembre 2009*, ed. by Giuseppe Ledda (Ravenna: Centro dantesco dei Frati minori conventuali, 2011); Nicolò Maldina, *In pro del mondo: Dante, la predicazione e i generi della letteratura religiosa medievale* (Rome: Salerno, 2017); Giuseppe Ledda, *Il bestiario dell'aldilà: gli animali nella "Commedia" di Dante* (Ravenna: Longo, 2019). On the specific theme of Dante's allegorism, I refer to the works of the scholars of the Universidad Complutense de Madrid: Carlos López Cortezo, 'Los similes en la "Divina Comedia"', in *Actas del VI congreso nacional de italianistas* (Madrid: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1994), pp. 31-36; Juan Varela-Portas de Orduña, 'L'allegoria analítica: metodología della scuola dantesca di Madrid', in *Leggere Dante oggi*, ed. by Vígh, pp. 317-26.

⁶⁵ For reference to scholars who have discussed Pasolini's realism, see previous footnotes from 2 to 6.

account the question of realism, by investigating his relationship with postmodern reality and his poetics of representation of 1970s Italian society.⁶⁶

Compared to the previous critical studies on Pasolini's Dantism and on Pasolini's realism, the originality of my project consists of intertwining both fields of research. I use realism as the guiding concept to investigate Pasolini's relationship with Dante and, vice versa, I employ Dante as 'una specie di guida' to understand Pasolini's questions of realism. I will discuss here the critical works on Pasolini, which have been particularly important to me in framing my approach, and show how in various ways my research adds new insights to the studies done by these scholars.

Among the critical works on Pasolini's Dantism, Maria Sabrina Titone's *Cantiche del Novecento: Dante nell'opera di Luzi e Pasolini* (2001) has proved particularly useful for my research.⁶⁷ The scholar traces very thoroughly the presence of Dante in the whole of Pasolini's narrative, poetic, and cinematic production. In particular, Titone notes how the imagery of the *Inferno* and the theme of the *catabasis* prove particularly productive for Pasolini at different stages of his career. Firstly, Pasolini reuses it to depict the world of the Roman *borgate* in his 1950s Roman narrative production (*Ragazzi di vita*, *Una vita violenta*, *La mortaccia*), as well as in some of his early films set in the capital (for example, *Mamma Roma*). Then, he later goes back to it when describing the new society of neocapitalism in his 1970s literary and cinematic productions (*Petrolio* and *Salò*).⁶⁸ Although concentrating mainly on the presence of the first canticle, the scholar also notes references to the *Purgatorio*, suggesting that there is space for a further discussion on the influence of Dante's second canticle on Pasolini's work.⁶⁹ My research brings further precisely this last point, by highlighting Pasolini's engagement with the cantos of Ante-Purgatory, in particular the episode of Buonconte da Montefeltro of *Purgatorio* V, and with the last cantos of the *Purgatorio*, in particular the imagery of the long allegorical procession of *Purgatorio* XXIX.

The works of Marco Antonio Bazzocchi have been useful to track chronologically Pasolini's dialogue with Dante in both his literary and cinematic productions. In particular, I refer to *I burattini filosofi: Pasolini dalla letteratura al cinema* (2007) and *Esposizioni: Pasolini, Foucault e l'esercizio della verità* (2017).⁷⁰ The first of these two works investigates Pasolini's transition from literature to cinema, and dedicates an entire chapter to the legacy of Dante in Pasolini's early films, such as *Accattone*, *Mamma Roma*, and *Uccellacci e uccellini*. My research brings further Bazzocchi's reflections on the presence of Dante in *Accattone*. In particular, it shows the prominence of references to the second canticle over

⁶⁶ I refer in particular to *The Scandal of Self-Contradiction*, ed. by Luca Di Blasi, Manuele Gragnolati, Christoph F. E. Holzhey; *Pasolini, Foucault e il politico*, ed. by Raoul Kirchmayr (Venice: Marsilio, 2016); Marco A. Bazzocchi, *Esposizioni: Pasolini, Foucault e l'esercizio della verità* (Bologna: Mulino, 2017).

⁶⁷ Maria S. Titone, *Cantiche del Novecento: Dante nell'opera di Luzi e Pasolini* (Florence: Olschki, 2001).

⁶⁸ Titone, *Cantiche*, pp. 69-136.

⁶⁹ Titone, *Cantiche*, pp. 100-03.

⁷⁰ Marco A. Bazzocchi, *I burattini filosofi: Pasolini dalla letteratura al cinema* (Milan: Mondadori, 2007).

the first, and suggests seeing the *Purgatorio* as the main archetype for the construction of the film. Focusing on Pasolini's 1970s productions, *Esposizioni* has been important for the last part of my thesis, which deals with Pasolini's last narrative work, *Petrolio*. In particular, my analysis picks up on Bazzocchi's reading of *Petrolio* in terms of a 'sistema allegorico dantesco'.⁷¹ Drawing from this statement, my research investigates systematically the legacy of Dante's allegory in *Petrolio*, also linking Pasolini's reuse of allegory to the ongoing debate on Dante's allegorism among twentieth-century Dante critics.

For understanding Pasolini's varied and complex production of the 1970s other crucial studies have been those by Carla Benedetti; in particular, her introduction to *Petrolio* for the Einaudi edition (1992), *Pasolini contro Calvino: per una letteratura impura* (1998), *Il tradimento dei critici* (2002), and the essay 'Quattro porte su *Petrolio*' (2003).⁷² Benedetti's definition of *Petrolio* as a text where Pasolini experiments with a new form of representation 'beyond realism' has been particularly inspiring.⁷³ Drawing from this statement, my research investigates systematically the structure of *Petrolio* and the idea of realism behind it, showing its engagement with Dante's *Commedia*.

I have already talked of the importance for my methodology of the volume edited by Manuele Gagnolati: *Metamorphosing Dante*. Alongside this, I would like to mention another book edited by the scholar: *The Scandal of Self-Contradiction: Pasolini's Multistable Subjectivities, Geographies, Tradition* (2012).⁷⁴ Although I will not refer to it in my study, I found the approach to Pasolini's works suggested by the volume original, as it uses a visual image to understand Pasolini's production. Drawing from Pasolini's famous line to describe his own self, 'lo scandalo del contraddirmi' ('Le ceneri di Gramsci', p. 820), the book investigates various tensions and contradictions in Pasolini's life and artistic career. The idea at the basis of this volume is to approach Pasolini's work through the lens of 'multistable figures', such as the duck-rabbit image or the Rubin vase (two faces and vase illusion), to understand his attempt to create contradictions which do not end up in any synthesis or reconciliation. For example, looking at the image of the duck-rabbit, we see either the duck or the rabbit, but not both at the same time. Yet the image cannot be reduced to either, it is neither (only) duck nor (only) rabbit, but both of them. The image entails both aspects (duck and rabbit), but it does not form a

⁷¹ Bazzocchi, *Esposizioni*, p. 94.

⁷² Carla Benedetti and Giovanni Giovannetti, 'Prologo introduttivo', in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Petrolio* (Turin: Einaudi, 1992), pp. 4-49; Benedetti, *Il tradimento dei critici* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2002); Benedetti, 'Quattro porte su *Petrolio*', in Mario Martone, *Petrolio: un progetto di Mario Martone a partire da 'Petrolio' di Pier Paolo Pasolini*, ed. by A. D'Adamo (Naples: Cronopio, 2003), pp. 33-47. To this I would also add the many inspiring papers on Pasolini I heard at the conference on 'Petrolio, 25 years after: (Bio)politics, eros and truth in the later work of P.P. Pasolini' (Pisa, 9-10 November 2017) of which Benedetti was one of the organisers.

⁷³ Benedetti, 'Quattro porte su *Petrolio*', p. 44.

⁷⁴ *The Scandal of Self-Contradiction: Pasolini's Multistable Subjectivities, Geographies, Tradition*, ed. by Luca Di Blasi, Manuele Gagnolati, and Christoph F. E. Holzhey (Vienna and Berlin: Turia & Kant, 2012).

synthesis.⁷⁵ Moving between Dante and Pasolini studies, Gragnolati has contributed to enriching both fields of research. Moreover, his work *Amor che move: linguaggio del corpo e forma del desiderio in Dante, Pasolini e Morante* (2013) has brought a comparative approach to the study of the relationship between Dante and Pasolini. The scholar suggests a 'lettura per diffrazione, che fa interagire i testi al di là di ogni legame apparente di parentela e li studia non solo insieme ma anche l'uno attraverso l'altro'.⁷⁶ Although my research does not follow such a methodology, the novelty of his approach has encouraged me to choose an original angle for my analysis, confident a new way of investigating can still bring insights to the field of study of Pasolini's Dantism.

Finally, Emanuela Patti's *Pasolini after Dante* constitutes the latest work entirely dedicated to the study of the relationship between Dante and Pasolini. Patti brings further the discussion of Pasolini's intellectual formation in the 1950s already started by Fabio Vighi in his monograph, *Le ragioni dell'altro: la formazione intellettuale di Pasolini tra saggistica, letteratura e cinema* (2001), by investigating the influence that the reading of Contini, Gramsci, and Auerbach had upon Pasolini. In particular, *Pasolini after Dante* shows how the studies of Dante produced by these critics influenced Pasolini's politics of representation of the Roman subproletarians in the 1950s-60s. She introduces the notion of 'Dantean realism' for Pasolini's 1950s narrative representations of the subproletarians, and of 'figural realism' for Pasolini's 1960s filmic representations of the same social group. Thus, Patti's work has been particularly important to set the basis for my investigation of Pasolini's dialogue with Dante on the question of realism in the light of twentieth-century Dante criticism. However, my analysis of Pasolini's dialogue with Dante in the 1950s-60s takes quite different directions. In relation to the 1950s, if Patti mainly investigates the influence of the critical readings of Dante's *Commedia* on Pasolini's approach to realism in the narrative, I extend the analysis also to Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia* and focus on Pasolini's ideas about poetry. In regard to the 1960s, my reading of Pasolini's engagement with Auerbach's notion of 'figural realism' in his early films is very different from that of Patti. Whereas the scholar uses the *figura Christi* as the key to read Pasolini's films, instead I investigate the systematic reuse of the figural scheme in the filmic construction. Moreover, my research adds to her monograph by applying the dialogue Dante-Dante criticism-Pasolini also to Pasolini's production after the 1960s, in particular to *Petrolio*. Broadening the spectrum of the investigation to the 1970s, my project covers the whole timespan of Pasolini's production.

⁷⁵ Luca Di Blasi, Manuele Gragnolati, and Christoph F.E. Holzhey, 'Introduction', in *The Scandal of Self-Contradiction*, ed. by Di Blasi, Gragnolati, and Holzhey, pp. 7-15.

⁷⁶ Gragnolati, *Amor che move*, p. 11.

IV. Structure of the research

With the aim to provide a comprehensive investigation, my research considers the whole of Pasolini's production from his first poetic collection, *Poesie a Casarsa* (1942), to his last narrative work, *Petrolio* (1992). However, my analysis examines Pasolini's question of realism in three decades: the 1950s (chapter one), the 1960s (chapters two and three), and the 1970s (chapters four and five). This timespan coincides with when he moves to Rome in 1950, entering the Italian literary and intellectual world, until his death in 1975.

Consideration is given to both his fictional and non-fictional productions, such as critical essays, journalistic articles, interviews, and public speeches. Not only was Pasolini a very prolific artist, but his fictional production flows in parallel with a rich corpus of critical essays and journalistic articles. First published in periodicals or newspapers, some of them are later collected and published as books by Pasolini, showing that he really considers his non-fictional works as a fully-fledged part of his literary production. The critical essays are an important paratext to understand Pasolini's fictional production. While discussing some key literary, cinematic, or more generally artistic critical arguments of the time, Pasolini also uses them to justify the stylistic and/or linguistic choices of his own fictional production. For the discussion of the 1950s, I pay particular attention to *Passione e ideologia* (1960), where Pasolini collects his most important 1950s pieces on literary criticism, for instance, the introductions to his two anthologies *Poesia dialettale del Novecento* (1952) and *Canzoniere italiano* (1955). For the 1960s, I look at *Empirismo eretico* (1972), which contains critical essays on language, literature, and cinema. For example, in the literature section, Pasolini collects his two critical essays on Dante 'La volontà di Dante a essere poeta' and 'Vanni Fucci', previously published in *Paragone* (1965-66). Similarly, the cinema section hosts reflections on cinema and semiotics, which are crucial to understand Pasolini's theory on cinema and cinematic realism. Moreover, to highlight some of Pasolini's directorial choices I refer to a series of interviews with Jon Halliday published as a book with the title *Pasolini su Pasolini* (1992),⁷⁷ where Pasolini talks about his own films and reflects on cinema. Other interviews relevant for the discussion of Pasolini's cinema and for his production are those with Jean Duflot in 1969 and 1975, later published as a book, *Il sogno del centauro* (1983).⁷⁸ For the discussion of the 1970s, I instead pay particular attention to his journalistic production, especially the column 'Il caos' (1968-70) and his

⁷⁷ The original edition was published in English in 1969 with the title *Pasolini on Pasolini*, where Jon Halliday presents himself under the pseudonym of Oswald Stack: *Pasolini on Pasolini: interviews with Oswald Stack* (London: Thames and Hudson in association with the British Film Institute, 1969). The quotations of these interviews are taken from *Pasolini*. For more information with regard to the editions, see Walter Siti and Silvia Da Laude, 'Note e notizie sui testi', in *SPS*, pp. 1819-20.

⁷⁸ The original edition was published in French in 1981 with the title *Les dernières paroles d'un impie: entretiens avec Jean Duflot* (Paris: Belfond). The quotations of these interviews are taken from Pasolini, *SPS*, pp. 1341-550. For more information with regard to the editions, see Siti and De Laude, 'Note e notizie sui testi', in *SPS*, pp. 1821-25.

pieces later collected in *Scritti corsari* (1975) and *Lettere luterane* (1976).⁷⁹ This is because, from the mid-1960s, Pasolini starts to invest much of his energy in writing opinion columns on politics and society for different Italian newspapers. His journalistic pieces are therefore a crucial paratext to understand his fictional production and approach to the problem of realism in the era of neocapitalism and mass society.

With regard to Pasolini's fictional production, although taking into account his poetic, narrative, and cinematic (considering also his screenplays) productions in general, I chose as case studies for my discussion three works: his first novel to be submitted to a publisher *Ragazzi di vita* (1955), his first film *Accattone* (1961), and his last literary work *Petrolio* (written between 1972 and 1975). Not only are these three milestones of Pasolini's artistic career, but referring to different decades they can enlighten chronologically the dialogue between Dante and Pasolini. For the last case study, the choice was particularly hard because Pasolini's production of the 1970s is very broad and diverse. The difficulty was also due to the fact that, almost at the same time, Pasolini produces two very Dantean works, *Petrolio* for literature and *Salò* for cinema. The sections of the film draw from the topography of Dante's *Inferno* (the film is divided into three 'gironi') whilst the long section 'La Visione del Merda' of the novel is shaped on Dante's journey through Hell. The two works also present very strong similarities in terms of structure (for example, the reuse of allegory) and themes (for example, the relationship between power and sexuality in 1970s Italian society). Eventually, I decided upon *Petrolio*, which represents Pasolini's last attempt at writing narrative. This is to give a circular structure to my thesis as my first case study is a narrative work too. Although not presenting a close reading of *Salò*, the film is considered in the last part of my thesis (chapters four and five) in relation to the analysis of *Petrolio*.

The selected case studies refer to three different phases of Pasolini's experimentalism, in relation to the general cultural debate and the artistic mainstream trend of the time. The experiment with Romanesque slang in *Ragazzi di vita* sits with a tendency among Italian post-war writers to expand the linguistic standard of fiction. The decision to experiment with the camera is linked to the fact that Pasolini finds himself living in the capital of Italian cinema (Rome and its Cinecittà Studios) at the time of its 'golden age'. Many Italian authors, such as Alberto Moravia and Giorgio Bassani, engage with the world of cinema, collaborating as screenwriter or dialogue consultant. However, Pasolini is the only one who then becomes an internationally acclaimed film director – known more for his films than for his writings outside Italy. Moreover, Pasolini's representation of the Roman subproletarians in both his narrative and cinematic productions adds to the depiction of the lower classes in the artistic panorama of neorealism. Finally, the novelty of *Petrolio* in terms of structure (for example, the reuse

⁷⁹ Pasolini, *Il caos*, ed. by Gian Carlo Ferretti (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1981).

of medieval vision and allegory) responds to a time of crisis and hybridisation of traditional literary genres. In particular, Pasolini's last work dialogues with the experimental novel of the neo-avant-garde writers of the Gruppo 63, such as Edoardo Sanguineti and Nanni Balestrini.⁸⁰ These three milestones of Pasolini's production are also strongly linked to the historical and socio-political background of the time. *Ragazzi di vita* and *Accattone* deal with the social issue of the poor and disreputable Roman *borgate*. Belonging to the era of neocapitalism, *Petrolio* discusses the problem of the cultural homologation of Italian society in the 1970s. The space dedicated to the analysis of each individual case study increases gradually across the chapters, to the extent that the case study of *Petrolio* occupies the whole of chapter five. This is, firstly, because of the complexity of the work – which is also unfinished – and, secondly, because Pasolini's Dantism in *Petrolio* has not been studied systematically by scholars.

The only part of Pasolini's fictional production that I decided not to consider is his theatrical one, which he comes to only in the second half of the 1960s. This is mainly because, requiring the living presence of the audience, theatre implies a completely different setting for the discussion on realism. Moreover, although I take into consideration the poetic production of *Poesie a Casarsa* and some poems from *Trasumanar e organizzar* (1971), and I engage with his critical essays on poetry in *Passione e ideologia* and *Empirismo eretico*, I do not provide a poetic analysis of his corpus. This is because I decided to focus the analysis on his narrative production, as shown by my choice of case studies. What interested me is not poetry *per se*, but rather Pasolini's theorising of poetry in order to think of realism.

In regard to Dante's corpus of works, I pay close attention to the *Commedia*, but also to some of his so-called 'minor' works: I take into account the *De vulgari eloquentia* to discuss Dante's concept of the 'volgare illustre' (chapter one), and both the *Convivio* and the *Epistola a Cangrande* for the topic of allegorism (chapter four).

The structure of my thesis follows a chronological approach. This allows me to see better the continuity of Pasolini's dialogue with Dante and how it changes during the years. Each chapter follows a similar structure. It contains the discussion of Pasolini's reconceptualisation of Dante in his theory and practice of realism at a specific time of his career, considering the critical works on Dante published at that time and the broad historical and cultural context of Italian society. In particular, each chapter shows Pasolini's manipulation of Dante criticism to comply with his own discourse on realism, by the analysis of some specific critical concepts: plurilingualism, figuralism, prophetism, allegory, and vision. Moreover, each chapter examines the idea of Dante used by Pasolini as a figure of his own self at a specific time of his career, which encourages Pasolini in his reconceptualisation of Dante criticism. Finally, the examination of each decade terminates with the textual analysis of a specific case study of

⁸⁰ Matteo Di Gesù, 'Manganelli e lo "sgombero delle macerie del romanzo"', in *Palinsesti del moderno: canoni, generi, forme nella postmodernità letteraria* (Milan: Angeli, 2005), pp. 72-78.

his production to see Pasolini's reconceptualisation of Dante in his artistic practice. In this respect, the last two chapters should be taken together as one single unit: chapter four presents the introductory discussion to the 1970s and chapter five contains a close textual analysis of *Petrolio*. Since it is the destination point of my research, I decided to dedicate more space to the analysis of Pasolini's late production in relation to Dante. This choice is also aligned to the fact that the presence of Dante literally 'dilates' over the years inside Pasolini's corpus of work. As noted before, Pasolini's most Dantean works belong to his late artistic career (*La Divina Mimesis*, *Petrolio*, *Salò*). I report here an outline of my chapters to show my workflow and to summarise the main arguments of my research mentioned previously.

In chapter one, I discuss Dante's legacy in the literary theories on dialect and realism that Pasolini develops in the introductions to his 1950s anthologies of dialect and popular poetry, *Poesia dialettale del Novecento* and *Canzoniere italiano*. My argument is that, in the context of the Italian post-war debates on realism and language, the publication of Contini's essay 'Preliminari sulla lingua del Petrarca' (1951) and Gramsci's return to the 'questione della lingua' in *Letteratura e vita nazionale* (1950), and the way in which they comment on Dante in their works, offer Pasolini the basis to think of dialect as the language of realism. This research hypothesis originates from Vighi and Patti's monographs on Pasolini's intellectual formation in the 1950s and cross-reading of Gramsci and Contini.⁸¹ After showing that Pasolini equates his use of dialect to Dante's vernacular, I argue that Dante's texts, especially the *De vulgari eloquentia* and the *Commedia*, become the background of Pasolini's theories regarding dialect and realism. I demonstrate that Pasolini uses Dante's different approaches to the vernacular in the *De vulgari eloquentia* (illustrious vernacular) and in the *Commedia* (plurilingualism) to justify his very diverse experiments with dialect: the lyrical Friulian of *Poesie a Casarsa* (1942) and the Romanesque slang of his narrative production of the time, *Ragazzi di vita* (1955). In the first part of the chapter, I show that Dante's concept of the 'illustrious vernacular' brings Pasolini to a reflection on his use of the Friulian dialect that he then conceptualises in the broader concept of 'poesia squisita', presented in his critical texts of the 1950s. In this operation, Pasolini identifies with the Dante of the *De vulgari eloquentia* and formulates a specific idea of realism behind his refined use of the dialect. In the second part of the chapter, I argue that, beside the discourse around 'poesia squisita', Pasolini theorises a new use of dialect, on the basis of the linguistic variety of the *Commedia*, and puts this into practice in his Roman narrative production of the 1950s. As mentioned before in relation to my use of intertextuality, Pasolini reconceptualises Contini's notion of plurilingualism in terms of 'bilingualism' whilst keeping Gramsci's problem of a national-popular language in mind. Taking as my case study *Ragazzi di vita*, I show how Pasolini applies his theory of a

⁸¹ Vighi, *Le ragioni dell'altro*; Patti, *Pasolini after Dante*.

bilingual language in writing the novel, and comment on the idea of realism behind this use of the language. In this operation, I underline that Pasolini identifies with the Dante of the *Commedia* as an author who moves between different social classes and languages (his own and those of his characters).

In chapter two, I put under examination Pasolini's switch from literature to cinema. Focusing on his early films (1961-66), I investigate his theory and practice of cinematic realism in relation to Dante. Despite the radical change of medium, I show that Pasolini's point of reference remains the literary Italian cultural debate and Dante criticism. The argument I carry on in this chapter is that the reading of Auerbach's *Mimesis*, especially the critic's discourse on Dante's concept of *figura*, makes Pasolini reflect on realism in terms of figuralism in his early filmic production. I argue that Pasolini, influenced by Auerbach's reading of figurality as the main factor in the realism of Dante's characters, reuses a similar figural scheme to that of Dante to add realism to his films. I bring evidence to this argument commenting on Pasolini's directorial choices in his early filmic productions: *Accattone* (1961), *Mamma Roma* (1962), *La ricotta* (1963), *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* (1964), and *Uccellacci e uccellini* (1966). Among these works, I take as my case study *Accattone* to investigate further the legacy of Dante. I show that Pasolini juxtaposes the subproletarian protagonists of his film and some of the characters of Ante-Purgatory as a way to reflect on the world of the Roman *borgate*. This investigation adds to my analysis of Pasolini's cinematic realism by suggesting that the representation of his film characters is strongly influenced by the *Commedia*. In particular, on the basis of the many references to *Purgatorio* V, I suggest reading *Accattone* as a 'remake' of Dante's Ante-Purgatory in cinematic form, where Dante is played by Pasolini – namely by the silent gaze of the film director – and the souls are played by the Roman *borgatari*. In this respect, I also argue that in the film Pasolini continues his identification with the idea of Dante as an author who moves between different social classes, although now he holds a film camera in his hands.

Chapter three focuses on the mid-1960s as a significant turning-point for discussing the relationship between Dante and Pasolini. These are the years in which Pasolini openly reflects on the legacy of Dante in his previous and future productions, and where, as we have seen, new critical works on Dante by Auerbach and Contini are published. The chapter shows Pasolini's 'double movements' in relation to Dante as a guide for the question of realism. On the one hand, he abandons his idea of Dante as the poet who moves between different social classes and languages, which had inspired his Roman narrative production and approach to literary realism in the 1950s. The dismissal of this Dante paradigm is analysed in two different texts of the mid-1960s: the fictional work of *La Divina Mimesis* and the critical essay 'La volontà di Dante a essere poeta'. On the other hand, following Bazzocchi's

suggestion that in these years Pasolini is actually projecting his dialogue with Dante forward,⁸² I argue that Pasolini formulates another idea of Dante to be used as guide for his forthcoming production and approach to realism. Starting from Auerbach's and Contini's reflections on Dante's prophetism in their studies of the mid-1960s, I argue that the critics suggest to Pasolini a new angle from which to look at Dante: that of Dante as a poet-prophet. Considering the term 'prophet' for Dante with the meaning of 'truth-teller',⁸³ I argue that Pasolini starts to identify with Dante as the poet who reads the world as it really is and reports the truth to society. To reinforce my argument on Pasolini's new idea of Dante as the poet-prophet, I discuss the prominence of another model and figure of the self for Pasolini at that time: Saint Paul. I show that the saint enters the dialogue between Dante and Pasolini, contributing to the creation of the new Dante paradigm. The triptych Dante-Paul-Pasolini appears as the key to fully understand the relationship between Dante and Pasolini from the mid-1960s onwards in terms of poetic-prophetism.

The discussion of Pasolini's new idea of Dante carries on in the first part of chapter four. Here I show that, committing himself to the fight against neocapitalism, Pasolini takes on himself some features typical of Dante the poet-prophet (for example, the civic necessity to reveal the truth). This analysis adds to a reading of Pasolini's life in the 1970s in terms of prophetism, which a few scholars have defined 'di marca dantesca'.⁸⁴ Then, I expand on the argument of Pasolini's prophetism showing that, in the last phase of his fictional production (1968-75), Pasolini adopts some prophetic strategies, such as parable, allegory, vision, and prophecy, in order to reveal unspoken truths about Italian society and the new 'Potere' of neocapitalism. For example, the novel *Petrolio* is presented as a medieval allegory and its main episodes are narrated in the form of a vision experienced by the two protagonists. I argue that these strategies raise a question about Pasolini's approach to realism, as these are non-realistic forms of representation. My argument is that the model of Dante the poet-prophet makes Pasolini reflect on realism in terms of prophetism as the act of 'revealing reality'. In the difficult time of neocapitalism, I argue that, for Pasolini, realism is no longer a question of representing reality but of revealing the truth about reality, especially for what concerns the development of a mass society and the role of 'il Potere' in it. The second part of chapter four expands on the discussion about Pasolini's new approach to realism, looking at the case study of *Petrolio*. Pasolini's last novel is a political work which aims to show 'il Potere' using the narrative strategy of allegorical visions. Drawing from Bazzocchi's reading of *Petrolio* in terms of a 'sistema allegorico dantesco',⁸⁵ I demonstrate that

⁸² Bazzocchi, *I burattini*, pp. 45-46.

⁸³ Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy*, p. 10.

⁸⁴ Sandro Bernardi, 'L'allegoria e il "doppio strato" della rappresentazione', in *A partire da 'Petrolio': Pasolini interroga la letteratura*, ed. by Carla Benedetti and Maria Antonietta Grignani (Ravenna: Longo, 1995), pp. 57-70 (pp. 57-63); the quote 'di marca dantesca' is from Daniele Maria Pegorari, 'Il pane dei borghesi "non sa di sale". Dantismo e profezia in P. P. Pasolini', *L'Alighieri*, 26 (2005), 139-47 (p. 140).

⁸⁵ Bazzocchi, *Esposizioni*, p. 94.

the structures of allegory and vision in the novel are a reconceptualisation of Dante's *Commedia*. In the analysis of Pasolini's manipulation of Dante, I highlight the importance of *Studi su Dante* and of the ongoing critical debate on allegorism in Dante studies. Finally, drawing from Benedetti's reading of *Petrolio* as 'una forma che si lascia alle spalle il realismo',⁸⁶ I reflect further on Pasolini's new approach to realism as 'revealing reality'.

Chapter five is entirely dedicated to the textual analysis of the case study of *Petrolio*. I aim to provide a detailed reading of its main allegorical visions, following their chronological order in the novel. This study is twofold. On one hand, it aims to show the legacy of Dante's *Commedia* at the level of the text. Some allusions have been already recognised by scholars,⁸⁷ but to date none has conducted a systematic study of the legacy of Dante. On the other hand, my investigation aims to bring further insights to the reading of *Petrolio* as a case of political allegory, as already suggested by scholars.⁸⁸ Ultimately, this chapter demonstrates that the figurative system of the main allegorical visions is built on various passages of Dante's *Commedia* (for example, the couple of Paolo and Francesca, the Malebolge, the Garden of Eden, Rose of the Empyrean). The strong presence of the *Commedia* at the level of the text in each individual allegorical vision is a further confirmation that Dante is the inspiration model for Pasolini's use of allegory and vision. In addition, I show that the manipulation of Dante's text serves Pasolini to stress the negativity of his contemporary society. By this, I mean that *Petrolio* re-elaborates the rich imaginary offered by Dante's *Commedia* to reveal in a visionary, symbolic way the negative effects that the new 'Potere' has on Italian society (for example, the transformation of customs and sexuality; the cultural homologation).

My project begins with Pasolini's fascination with Dante's language as a guide for realism in literature (mediated by Contini and Gramsci); continues with Pasolini's fascination with Dante's *figura* as a guide for realism in cinema (mediated by Auerbach); and finishes with Pasolini's fascination with Dante's prophetism as way to completely rethink realism in the reality of the 1970s (mediated by Contini and Auerbach). The originality of my project consists in tracing the history of an idea of realism in relation to Dante throughout the course of Pasolini's life. I'm confident that my cross-study of Pasolini's Dantism and Pasolini's realism will bring further insights to both fields of research.

⁸⁶ Benedetti, 'Quattro porte su *Petrolio*', p. 44.

⁸⁷ For example, see Titone, *Cantiche*, pp. 118-36.

⁸⁸ Rino Genovese, 'Manifesto per *Petrolio*', in *A partire da 'Petrolio'*, ed by Benedetti and Grignani, pp. 79-91 (p. 83); Bazzocchi, *Esposizioni*, p. 149.

1 – Dialect as the language of realism: Dante's vernacular in Pasolini's literary realism (1950s)

In this chapter, I will argue that the theories on dialect and realism formulated by Pasolini in his critical production of the 1950s, in particular in the introductions to the two anthologies of dialect and popular poetry *Poesia dialettale del Novecento* (1952) and *Canzoniere italiano* (1955), are a reconceptualisation of Dante's discourse on the vernacular in the *De vulgari eloquentia* and use of the vernacular in the *Commedia*. I will show that Dante's different approaches to the vernacular in those texts become, for Pasolini, the basis to formulate two theories on dialect and realism, which serve to justify Pasolini's two very different experimentations with dialect: his poetic collection written in a lyrical Friulian dialect, *Poesie a Casarsa* (1942), which he republishes in the new edition of *La meglio gioventù* (1954), and his narrative production of the time written in Italian mixed with the Romanesque slang of the *borgate*, such as the novels *Ragazzi di vita* (1955) and *Una vita violenta* (1959). The first section of the chapter will discuss the role of Gramsci's notebooks (1948-51) and of Contini's essay 'Preliminari sulla lingua del Petrarca' (1951) in tightening up the link between the questions of language and realism. The second section will analyse Pasolini's introductions to the two anthologies of dialect and popular poetry as the space where Pasolini discusses dialect and realism and formulates his theories. The third section will investigate Pasolini's reconceptualisation of Dante's notion of 'volgare illustre'¹ in the theory on dialect and realism, which he formulates to justify his use of the dialect in *Poesie a Casarsa*. The fourth section will analyse Pasolini's reconceptualisation of Dante's plurilingualism in terms of bilingualism, which relates to his experimentation with Romanesque slang in his Roman novels. Finally, the last section will investigate Pasolini's bilingualism at the level of the text throughout the textual analysis of *Ragazzi di vita*.

1.1 – A question of language and realism

I would like to return to the subject of the post-war Italian cultural debate on neorealism, which I highlighted in the introductory chapter. Pasolini develops as a writer at a time when the cultural scene is animated by the question of realism. Evidence of how strong is this debate is the translation of the subtitle of Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis* in the Italian edition of 1956, a text which, as I anticipated in the

¹ For reasons of clarity I will mainly refer to Dante's illustrious vernacular using the Italian translation 'volgare illustre', despite the fact that Dante wrote his treatise in Latin. This is because 'volgare illustre' is the way Italian literary critics, such as Contini, refer to it in their essays, and this is how it was and still is commonly known in Italian literary criticism.

introduction, is a key one for my thesis. The Italian translation distances itself from the original, *Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur* (1946). Instead of a literal translation: 'La rappresentazione della realtà nella letteratura occidentale', the Italian edition is entitled 'Il realismo nella letteratura occidentale'.² This creates a semantic ambiguity between 'represented/representing reality' and 'realism', and, ultimately, shows how realism is generally understood in the Italian literary culture of that time – the 'representation of reality'. In particular, starting from the immediate aftermath of World War II, the question of realism revolves around the representation of people's reality, with a specific attention to the lower classes.

In the Italy of the mid-twentieth century, aiming at providing a realistic representation of the lower classes, writers face a language issue, as the majority of the people³ speak dialect in everyday life.⁴ Thus, at that time the problem of realism raises a question of language: how to transport the people's daily language into the literary language, how to recreate stylistically and linguistically their way of speaking. This issue of language is also stimulated by the circulation of Antonio Gramsci's writings in the 1950s, in particular by his return to the 'questione della lingua'. Smuggled out of prison in the late 1930s, Gramsci's *Quaderni del carcere* are published only between 1948 and 1951. A selection of his notes is also published as a separate book in 1950: *Letteratura e vita nazionale*, which, as the title suggests, focuses mainly on literary issues. As a summary of Gramsci's thoughts, *Letteratura e vita nazionale* becomes very popular among Italian intellectuals, including Pasolini.⁵ Considered a highly original contribution to twentieth-century socio-political theory, Gramsci's notebooks cover a wide range of cultural and linguistic topics, such as Italian history and literature, high and popular cultures, the 'national-popular', and the so-called 'questione della lingua'. This latter refers to the centuries-long debate on which language to use for literary Italian, a discussion started by Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia*. In his treatise, Dante suggests using for literary Italian not a single vernacular, but rather the best features of each individual vernacular to create a 'best of the best' language, which he calls

² The English edition is *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1953); the French edition is *Mimésis: la représentation de la réalité dans la littérature occidentale*, trans. by Cornélius Heim (Paris: Gallimard, 1968).

³ In this context, I use the word 'the people' as the translation of the Italian word 'il popolo', although the latter does not have a precise equivalent in English. In Italian 'il popolo' does not mean the people of a country regardless of social class, but specifically the lower classes: 'la parte di una comunità, di una nazione, che vive in condizioni economiche, sociali e culturali modeste, arretrate' ('Popolo', *Vocabolario Treccani* (1994) <<http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/popolo1/>> [accessed 9 Jan 2020]).

⁴ Commenting on some statistical data on the use of Italian and dialect in 1951, Tullio De Mauro reports that two-thirds of Italian population spoke dialect in everyday life. Even though people from lower classes could have a knowledge of Italian language, especially those living in big cities, this did not imply that they were actually using this idiom in everyday life. In the first half of the twentieth century, for many Italians, the Italian language was still a distant reality, separate from daily life, where people used dialect (*Storia linguistica dell'Italia unita* (Bari: Laterza, 1970), pp. 93-99, 128-135).

⁵ Pasolini claims to have discovered Gramsci in the years 1948-49 (*Centauro*, p. 1415). Moreover, as I will say later, in his introduction to *Canzoniere Italiano*, Pasolini mentions precisely the collection of notes *Letteratura e vita nazionale*.

the 'volgare illustre'.⁶ After Dante the debate on the 'questione della lingua' continues through the centuries, for instance, with Pietro Bembo in the sixteenth century and in the nineteenth century with Vincenzo Monti, Alessandro Manzoni, and Isaia Ascoli.⁷ For Gramsci, the re-emergence of the question of language in the cultural debate is the symptom of an upcoming change in society:

Ogni volta che affiora, in un modo o nell'altro, la questione della lingua, significa che si sta imponendo una serie di altri problemi: la formazione e l'allargamento della classe dirigente, la necessità di stabilire rapporti intimi e sicuri tra gruppi dirigenti e la massa popolare-nazionale, cioè di riorganizzare l'egemonia culturale.⁸

Gramsci considers the 'questione della lingua' as a matter of national cultural policy, since its very beginning with Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia*. Dante's evaluation and use of the vernacular is read by Gramsci as a political act against the Latin language of the elite:

Pare chiaro che il *De Vulgari Eloquentia* di Dante sia da considerare come essenzialmente un atto di politica culturale-nazionale (nel senso che nazionale aveva in quel tempo e in Dante), come un aspetto della lotta politica è stata sempre quella che viene chiamata 'la questione della lingua' [...]. Il libretto di Dante ha anch'esso non piccolo significato per il tempo in cui fu scritto; [...] gli intellettuali italiani del periodo più rigoglioso dei Comuni, 'rompono' col latino e giustificano il volgare, esaltandolo contro il 'mandarinismo' latineggiante, nello stesso tempo in cui il volgare ha così grandi manifestazioni artistiche.⁹

The Gramscian idea of considering the question of the language as a national-cultural issue is based on the assumption that 'ogni linguaggio contiene gli elementi di una concezione del mondo e di una cultura'.¹⁰ This idea is shared by many intellectuals of the time, including Pasolini. Indeed, as I will show shortly, in his critical writings of the 1950s, Pasolini refers to the difficulty for a bourgeois author to write in the language of another social class, as they do not share the same culture and view of the world. For Pasolini, this assumption remains valid even in the following years as in an essay of the 1960s he writes: 'in Italia la diversità sociale implica fatalmente una diversità di parole' ('Libero indiretto', p. 1349).

⁶ Claudio Marazzini, 'La speculazione linguistica nella tradizione italiana', in *Storia della lingua italiana*, ed. by Luca Serianni and Pietro Trifone, 3 vols (Turin: Einaudi, 1993-1994), I, 231-330 (pp. 233-37).

⁷ Robert Hastings, 'Questione della lingua', in *Enciclopedia della letteratura italiana Oxford-Zanichelli*, ed. by Hainsworth, Robey, and Stoppelli, pp. 650-52. For further and more detailed information, see Luca Serianni, 'La lingua letteraria', in *Storia della lingua*, ed. by Serianni and Trifone, I, 451-577.

⁸ Gramsci, *Quaderni*, III, 2346; also in Gramsci, *Letteratura*, p. 252. To help my reading and understanding of Gramsci's notebooks I found particularly useful Raul Mordenti, 'Quaderni del carcere di Antonio Gramsci', in *Letteratura italiana: le opere*, ed. by Alberto Asor Rosa, 5 vols (Turin: Einaudi, 1992-96), IV.1, 553-629; and *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916-1935*, ed. by David Forgacs (New York: New York University Press 2000).

⁹ Gramsci, *Quaderni*, III, 2350; also in Gramsci, *Letteratura*, p. 256.

¹⁰ Gramsci, *Quaderni*, II, 1377.

Another argument of Gramsci's notebooks which has a particular echo in the Italian cultural scene is his notion of the 'national-popular'. In post-war Italy, this is mainly treated as a cultural concept and associated with progressive forms of artistic realism of that time.¹¹ According to Gramsci, historically Italy had no such thing as a 'national-popular culture', which he considers as a form of culture where there is an organic relationship between intellectuals and the broad national masses. Gramsci claims that this is because of the age-old detachment of Italian intellectuals from the people, their tendency to create a 'caste' separate from popular life. Expressing the necessity for a national-popular culture, Gramsci invites Italian intellectuals to engage with the people, to be 'organically' linked to the lower classes in order to create a culture representative of them. In his writings, Gramsci promotes the figure of the 'organic intellectual', grounded in everyday life, a social agent responsible for the formulation and spreading of subaltern-class ideologies.¹² To sum up, the discovery of Gramsci's notebooks in post-war Italy contributes to tightening up the link between literary and linguistic theory, political thinking, and the cultural debate on realism.

One year after the publication of *Letteratura e vita nazionale*, another text becomes particularly popular in the Italian cultural scene, Contini's essay on Petrarch: 'Preliminari sulla lingua del Petrarca'. In opposition to Petrarch's monolingual language, Contini defines Dante's language in terms of plurilingualism, as the co-existence of different idioms and registers in the same text:

Dei più visibili e sommarî attributi che pertengono a Dante, il primo è il plurilinguismo. Non si allude naturalmente solo a latino e volgare, ma alla poliglottia degli stili e, diciamo la parola, dei generi letterari. [...] Ecco in Dante convivere l'epistolografia di piglio apocalittico, il trattato di tipo scolastico, la prosa volgare narrativa, la didascalica, la lirica tragica e la umile, la *comedia*. In secondo luogo, pluralità di toni e pluralità di strati lessicali va intesa come compresenza: fino al punto che al lettore è imbandito non solo il sublime accusato o il grottesco accusato, ma il linguaggio qualunque.¹³

As first noted by Zygmunt Barański and later discussed in detail by Emanuela Patti,¹⁴ although Contini's essay is a piece of literary criticism, focusing exclusively on Dante's style, intellectuals interpret Dante's plurilingualism not only as a model of linguistic style, but also as 'an example of social linguistic diversity'. This means that the variety of dialects and Italian regional languages of the 1950s is compared to 'the plurality of languages in Dante's time'.¹⁵ Implicitly Contini's notion of 'plurilinguismo' suggests to post-war writers a way to approach the use of different languages, such as

¹¹ David Forgacs, 'National-popular: Genealogy of a Concept', in *Formations of Nation and People* (London; Boston: Routledge & Paul Kegan, 1984), pp. 83-98 (p. 84).

¹² For further information on the figure of the organic intellectual see Forgacs, 'Intellectuals and Education', in *The Gramsci Reader*, ed. by Forgacs, pp. 300-22.

¹³ Contini, 'Preliminari sulla lingua del Petrarca', pp. 171-72.

¹⁴ Zygmunt G. Barański, 'The power of influence: Aspects of Dante's Presence in Twentieth-Century Italian Culture', *Strumenti Critici*, 1.3 (1986), 343-75; Patti, *Pasolini after Dante*, pp. 36-38.

¹⁵ Patti, *Pasolini after Dante*, p. 37.

dialect, in their writing. The influence of Contini's reading of Dante over 1950s Italian intellectuals is admitted by Pasolini himself twice in 1965. In the already mentioned radio interview 'Dante e i poeti contemporanei' and in the critical essay on Dante 'La volontà di Dante a essere poeta', Pasolini explains the popularity of Dante in the light of the assumption of plurilingualism as a guarantee of literary realism, suggested by Contini: 'la "fortuna" di Dante in Italia [...] è consistita in una "funzione plurilinguistica" come garanzia di realismo' ('Volontà di Dante', p. 1383). Not only is the language of the *Commedia* seen as a possible answer to the problem of literary realism, but plurilingualism becomes a possible answer also to Gramsci's concern for language.¹⁶ The association Contini-Gramsci is made clear by Pasolini later on in the section 'Piccolo Allegato Stravagante' added to the main corpus of *La Divina Mimesis* in 1974:¹⁷

Risulta chiaro ciò che è stupefacentemente vero, cioè che il solo critico italiano i cui problemi siano stati i problemi letterari di Gramsci è Contini [...]. La ragionevolezza vuole che io sappia e faccia sapere che il trattamento di 'tutti' i problemi gramsciani eseguito da Contini avviene in un universo parallelo ma remoto, benché altrettanto potentemente suggestivo ('stimolante'), e che ci vuole una grande forza d'animo a presupporre una possibile integrabilità. (*Divina*, p. 1148)¹⁸

Despite underlining the different context of Contini's discourse compared to Gramsci's – 'un universo [...] remoto' – Pasolini draws a parallel between the two. For Pasolini, Gramsci's concerns for language and national-popular culture have been shared and discussed by Contini, although in the context of literary criticism. This discourse will become clearer in section 1.4, when I will discuss the direct relationship established by Pasolini's between Gramsci's matter of the detachment of Italian intellectuals from the people and Contini's explanation of Italian literature as mainly 'petrarchesca'. For now, Pasolini's statement confirms the 'relocation' of Contini's matter of language and style in the broader cultural debate on language and realism, as mentioned above.

Sensitive to the general debate on realism and stimulated by the reading of Gramsci and Contini, Pasolini starts reflecting on the realistic potential behind the use of dialect, having Dante's use of the vernacular as his main literary model. Moreover, the subject matter of dialect is very personal to Pasolini, who had written his first published work, *Poesie a Casarsa* (1942), in dialect. This parallel with

¹⁶ The presence of both Gramsci and Contini in Pasolini's reflections on dialect and realism was first highlighted by Tullio de Mauro ('Pasolini's linguistics', in *Pasolini Old and New: Surveys and Studies*, ed. by Zygmunt G. Barański (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999), pp. 77-90 (pp. 80-81)) and later by Vighi ('L'attività critica degli anni '50', in *Le ragioni dell'altro*, pp. 113-90). However, it is only Patti who suggests the idea of Pasolini's free self-appropriation of Contini's reading of Dante in relation to Gramsci's linguistic issues, such as the question of the language and the national-popular (*Pasolini after Dante*, pp. 8-9, 44-45, 61-66).

¹⁷ Patti, *Pasolini after Dante*, p. 132.

¹⁸ This association is carried on also in the section of *La Divina Mimesis* called 'Iconografia ingiallita' (pp. 1123-46), where Pasolini composes an imaginary autobiography through pictures. In this series of photographs, the photo of Gramsci's grave is followed by the photo of Contini.

Dante is possible because Pasolini equates the use of dialect in twentieth-century Italy to Dante's use of the vernacular:

Il Latino era insomma come adesso è per noi l'Italiano, e l'Italiano [...] era un dialetto del Latino, come adesso, per noi, l'Emiliano, il Siciliano, il Lombardo.¹⁹

If for Pasolini the dialect is what stands in opposition to the literary Italian language, for Dante the vernacular is what stands in opposition to the Latin language. In the *De vulgari eloquentia*, the vernacular is presented as a 'natural' language – the idiom originally used by the human race (*DVE* I, i. 4) – whereas Latin is an 'artificial' language, what he calls a *gramatica* – a made-up, unalterable, and conventional language created by human beings as a means of communication (*DVE* I, ix. 11). Moreover, it is important to clarify, before getting any further into the discussion, that the term vernacular in Dante can refer either to the 'municipalia vulgaria' (the vernaculars of all the Italian cities) or to 'volgare illustre'. As mentioned before, the latter is an Italian language suitable for use in literature and not associated with any particular city or area, as Dante refers to it as 'volgare latium' (*DVE* I, xix. 1). However, this language does not exist yet and, therefore, the *De vulgari eloquentia* is a call to invent 'volgare illustre', taking the best from the municipal vernaculars.

Because Pasolini equates Dante's vernacular to his own use of dialect, my argument is that Dante's texts discussed by Gramsci and Contini (the *De vulgari eloquentia* and the *Commedia*) become the background for Pasolini's theories regarding dialect and realism. In the following sections, I will show how Pasolini reconceptualises Dante, in particular the notion of the 'volgare illustre' and the concept of plurilingualism, to formulate his theories on realism. To do so, I will take into consideration Pasolini's main critical writings of the 1950s, in particular the introductions to the two anthologies of dialect and popular poetry *Poesia dialettale del Novecento* (1952) and *Canzoniere italiano* (1955).

1.2 – The two anthologies of dialect and popular poetry

In 1951 thanks to his friend, the poet Attilio Bertolucci, Pasolini obtains his first book deal from the publisher Guanda to work with Mario Dell'Arco on the anthology *Poesia dialettale del Novecento* (1952), which concentrates on twentieth-century dialect poetry.²⁰ Then, from 1953 Pasolini works by himself on a second anthology, *Canzoniere Italiano* (1955), which looks at Italian anonymous folkloristic production in dialect: what is generally conceived as 'canti popolari'. What is of interest to

¹⁹ Pasolini, 'Dialet, lenga et stil' (1944¹), now in *SLAI*, pp. 61-67 (p. 65).

²⁰ For a brief overview of twentieth-century dialect poetry in Italy, I refer to Franco Brevini, 'La poesia in dialetto: un caso letterario del Novecento', in *Pasolini e la poesia dialettale*, ed. by Giampaolo Borghello and Angela Felice (Venice: Marsilio, 2014), pp. 11-15.

my analysis are the introductions to the two anthologies. These are strongly ideological texts, in which Pasolini, while presenting his theories on dialect poetry and popular poetry, discusses the relationship between dialect and realism. The fact that the introductions are later republished in the collection of essays *Passione e ideologia* in the 1960s proves how important they are for Pasolini's own literary theory.²¹ Even though the context of the anthologies is poetry in dialect, his discourse on the use of dialect in relation to the notion of realism applies to his literary theory in general. Pasolini's critical reflection on dialect and realism in poetry can be extended also to narrative, recalling that precisely at that time Pasolini is experimenting with Romanesque dialect in his narrative production. In addition, in the introduction to the first anthology, among some canonical nineteenth-century Italian authors who had composed poetry in dialect, such as Carducci, Pascoli, and D'Annunzio, Pasolini mentions Verga, who is better known for being a novelist rather than a poet. Besides, Pasolini does not name them only as 'poets' but also as 'writers' and 'authors', suggesting that he is not interested in their type of production (be this poetry or narrative) but in the fact that they wrote in dialect. To sum up, the two introductions constitute both the critical space to discuss dialect and realism and, at the same time, a theoretical defence of his poetic and narrative productions. It is no coincidence that the publication of these anthologies is immediately followed by the republication of *Poesie a Casarsa* (1942) in the broader collection of *La meglio gioventù* (1954) and by the publication of *Ragazzi di vita* (1955) and *Una vita violenta* (1959).

I would like to highlight some key points raised by Pasolini in his critical introductions. For Pasolini, dialect poetry and popular poetry represent two different poetic traditions. At the very beginning of his introduction to *Poesia dialettale del Novecento*, Pasolini clearly discards a possible overlapping of the two traditions by saying: 'I dialetti posseggono una tradizione non meno colta, anti-popolare di quella della lingua' ('Poesia dialettale', p. 716). For Pasolini, if popular poetry always has a popular origin – 'prodotto come è di un popolo' ('Poesia popolare', p. 881) – dialect poetry is often anti-popular because of its bourgeois origin: 'Nei casi regionali medi [...] la poesia dialettale [...] è la poesia della classe borghese [...]. In essa [...], dalla metrica ai contenuti, non c'è necessariamente nulla di popolare' ('Poesia dialettale', p. 987). In Italy, dialect poetry has been mostly written by bourgeois writers, therefore, it has rarely been 'popolare' but rather 'popolaresca' or 'popolareggiante', as writers have imitated the way in which the 'popolo' speaks dialect and acts ('Poesia dialettale', pp. 718, 759). The first conclusion is that writing in dialect does not mean writing popular poetry but only dialect poetry. This is stated clearly by Pasolini in another essay of the time: 'Sarebbe perciò in grave errore chi pensasse ingenuamente il dialetto come mezzo "immediato" di una poesia popolare'.²² Moreover,

²¹ The introductions to the two anthologies are republished in *Passione* with the title 'Poesia dialettale del Novecento' and 'La poesia popolare italiana', respectively. I refer to them as reported in the 'abbreviations'.

²² Pasolini, 'Dialetto e poesia popolare' (1951¹), now in *SLAI*, pp. 373-75 (p. 374).

reflecting on the popular subject, Pasolini discards the equivalence 'popolare-realistico' in both poetic traditions of popular and dialect poetry:

L'equazione popolare-realistico non ha per nulla un valore assoluto, poiché il popolo [...] non rappresentava nella sua poesia se stesso, privo com'era di coscienza sociale, e quindi, nel nostro caso, di riflessione poetica, ma semplicemente cantava i propri sentimenti. ('Poesia dialettale', p. 717)

Poiché oggetto più o meno immediato di questa poesia [dialect poetry] era il popolo, non mancava un assunto confusamente sociale, un indefinito umanitarismo, e, quindi, un'almeno presunta istanza realistica: che non era realismo. ('Poesia dialettale', p. 718)

According to Pasolini, traditionally the 'popolo' is not able to represent but only to express itself and, therefore, popular poetry cannot be considered realistic *per se*. Similarly, dialect poetry has only rarely provided a realistic representation of the 'popolo', as its authors normally belong to a different social class. The representation of the lives of the members of the 'popolo' by bourgeois poets has often fallen into forms of nostalgia and weak sentimentality:

Tra poeta e parlante rimane sempre un intervallo di scetticismo, di scherzosità che finiscono col trasformare l'autentica, violenta, faziosa (e poetica) fedeltà reazionaria, in quella addomesticata nostalgia che è la costante più negativa delle poesie vernacole. ('Poesia dialettale', pp. 756-57)

The relationships between dialect, realism, and the popular subject make Pasolini's poetic theory intricate. Pasolini takes a strong position by saying that there is no guarantee of realism in writing in dialect, as well as in the popular subject. Despite these premises, where he seems to negate any relationship between dialect poetry and realism, we will see that in his anthologies Pasolini discusses cases where bourgeois poets had been able to produce realistic poetry in dialect. Thus, these critical reflections should be taken as a means to pave the way for his own theories regarding dialect and realism.

With regard to dialect poetry, in the introductions to the anthologies, Pasolini develops two different theories regarding dialect and realism, which correspond to two different branches of dialect poetry: 'poesia squisita' ('Poesia dialettale', p. 803) and the poetry of 'regresso' ('Poesia popolare', p. 813). Pasolini identifies two ways through which a poet can write poetry in dialect: one corresponds to an 'assunzione' of the dialect 'secondo una tecnica squisita', and the other refers to a use of the dialect 'per regresso' ('Poesia popolare', p. 782). As I will explain further in more detail, the term 'regresso' refers to the immersion of the bourgeois poet in the linguistic world of the 'popolo'. In this thesis, I will use the term 'poetics of regression' in this sense. According to Pasolini, the first branch of dialect poetry corresponds to a new trend in dialect poetry, especially common in the North of Italy,

whereas the second, more common in the nineteenth century, is produced more often by poets from central Italy and the South.²³ By identifying these two types of dialect poetry, Pasolini indirectly justifies also his two very different uses of dialect: the lyrical Friulian dialect of *Poesie a Casarsa* and his 1950s experiment with Romanesque slang. The production in dialect that Pasolini puts together from the 1940s to the end of the 1950s has two main phases, distinctively quite different.

Poesie a Casarsa are fourteen poems written in a poetic language inspired by the variety of Friulian dialect of Casarsa della Delizia, where Pasolini's mother is originally from and where Pasolini's family used to spend their summer holidays. Neither Pasolini nor his mother are native speakers of this specific Friulian dialect. Thus, Pasolini approaches this dialect by listening to the local farmers, who were native speakers of that language, and writes his poems with the help of *Vocabolario friulano* by Jacopo Pirona (1871).²⁴ The dialect of *Poesie a Casarsa* is re-created for the sole purpose of being a literary-hermetic language to express the poet's own inner self.²⁵

After moving to Rome in 1950, Pasolini discovers Romanesque dialect and starts experimenting with this idiom. Between 1950 and 1951, he publishes in periodicals many short stories set in the Roman *borgate* (the lower-class suburbs of Rome), depicting their social group of inhabitants, the subproletarians, and engaging with their slang. The first of his Roman novels, *Ragazzi di vita*, originates precisely from these first short narrative productions.²⁶ Romanesque is again a linguistic variety of which Pasolini is not a native speaker, but that he learns on the streets from the subproletarians of the Roman *borgate*. Pasolini uses the *borgatari* as a 'dizionario vivente' (Pasolini, p. 1308), real dialogue consultants when writing his Roman novels.²⁷ As we will see clearly in the section dedicated to the case study of *Ragazzi di vita*, these novels are written in a mix of Italian language and Romanesque dialect. Despite the intention to imitate the idiom of the *borgate*, as Walter Siti points out, Pasolini's Romanesque is sometime approximate.²⁸ Inevitably, the Romanesque of his narrative production is a literary recreation of a spoken language, similar to the Friulian of *Poesie a Casarsa*. However, reflecting back on his use of Romanesque and comparing it with his use of Friulian, Pasolini says that he had used Romanesque dialect as an 'elemento oggettivo e realistico' and not as 'uno strumento estetico-ermetico', which is the way he had used Friulian (Pasolini, p. 1289). Thus, the premises which had

²³ Vighi, *Le ragioni dell'altro*, p. 132.

²⁴ Jacopo Pirona, *Vocabolario friulano*, ed. by Giulio Andrea Pirona (Venice: Antonelli, 1871).

²⁵ Francesca Cadel, *La lingua dei desideri: il dialetto secondo Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Lecce: Manni, 2002), pp. 25-26. For an accurate analysis of the history of *Poesie a Casarsa*, from its first publication to *La meglio gioventù* (1954) and to its last republication inside *La nuova gioventù* (1975), and of the linguistic differences among the three collections, I refer to Cadel's *La lingua dei desideri*, in particular to chapters one, five, and six: 'La linea Pascoli-Pasolini' (pp. 11- 34), 'Un esempio di sperimentalismo linguistico in Pasolini' (pp. 114-45), and 'Per un'interpretazione de *La Nuova Gioventù*' (pp. 146-203).

²⁶ Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, 'Note e notizie sui testi', in *RRR*, pp. 1693-94.

²⁷ 'Dizionario vivente' is the way Pasolini refers to Sergio Citti, the brother of the actor Franco Citti who appears in many Pasolini's films. At the time he meets Pasolini, Sergio Citti is a house painter, and then he starts collaborating with Pasolini as a language consultant and, eventually, becomes a film director himself.

²⁸ Walter Siti, 'Descrivere, narrare, esporsi', in *RRR*, pp. xciii-cxlv (p. cxix).

moved Pasolini to approach these dialects and the resulting productions could not be more diverse. The years in which Pasolini works on the two anthologies coincide with an intermediate phase: while reflecting back on his use of Friulian, Pasolini is already testing himself with Romanesque. Thus, Pasolini's work on the two anthologies is crucial for understanding his literary theories on dialect and the evolution of his thought in relation to the question of realism. Although his literary experiments with dialect are very different, in the following sections, I will try to demonstrate that Dante is the main model for both his reflections on dialect and realism. My aim is to show that Pasolini uses Dante's different approaches to the vernacular, in the *De vulgari eloquentia* and in the *Commedia*, to justify both his uses of dialect (Friulian and Romanesque) and to claim a certain idea of realism for both productions.

1.3 – Dante's 'volgare illustre' in Pasolini's theory of 'poesia squisita'

In this section, I will reflect on the branch of dialect poetry called by Pasolini 'poesia squisita' and associated with the refined, and so 'exquisite', use of the Friulian dialect in *Poesie a Casarsa* (1942). I will argue that the theory of dialect and realism behind this type of poetry is a reconceptualisation of Dante's notion of the 'volgare illustre'. The driving element of my argument is that, from different perspectives, Contini and Gramsci suggest to Pasolini that he should engage with Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia*, when in the 1950s he reflects back on his first production in dialect. One year after its publication, *Poesie a Casarsa* is reviewed by Contini in the journal *Corriere del Ticino* (1943). The critic praises Pasolini's use of the dialect elevating it to the level of 'lingua' and referring to it using precisely the Dantean expression 'volgare illustre':

Sembrerebbe un autore dialettale, a prima vista questo Pier Paolo Pasolini, per queste sue friulane *Poesie a Casarsa* [...]. E tuttavia, se si ha indulgenza al gusto degli estremi e alla sensibilità del limite, in questo fascicoletto si scorgerà la prima accessione della letteratura 'dialettale' all'aura della poesia d'oggi [...]. Tali 'sentimenti' non si possono evidentemente sistemare in un sottoprodotto dell'alta lingua letteraria [...] occorre una dignità di lingua, una sorta di equivalenza. [...] L'esperienza di Pasolini si svolge invece sopra un tendenzialmente pari livello linguistico. [...] Parità, giovi ripetere, di condizioni: volgare illustre.²⁹

Poesie a Casarsa cannot be restricted under the label of dialect poetry, affirms Contini, but should be considered as a product of modern Italian poetry more generally. Such a positive review coming from one of the main literary critics of the time is a source of extreme joy for the young Pasolini. Not

²⁹ Gianfranco Contini, 'Al limite della poesia dialettale', in *Corriere del Ticino*, 24 April 1943; now in Contini, *Pagine ticinesi di Gianfranco Contini*, ed. by Renata Broggin (Bellinzona: Salvioni, 1981), pp. 116-21.

only does he feel accepted in the world of Italian literature, but his poetic language is even associated with the 'volgare illustre' of Dante, one of the fathers of Italian literature. The importance of this moment for his artistic career is recalled years later in the poem 'Poeta delle ceneri' (1966-67). In this composition, which is a sort of autobiography in verse, Pasolini defines Contini's review as 'la gioia letteraria, quella, più grande della mia vita'.³⁰

As noted before, Gramsci also mentions Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia* when discussing the origins of the 'questione della lingua'. Gramsci considers Dante's linguistic operation as a political act against the fourteenth-century elite, which used Latin. The 'volgare illustre' has for Gramsci a high socio-political value, despite it being a literary refined language. The discourse probably sounds very personal to Pasolini, who in *Poesie a Casarsa* had used dialect as a literary refined language. What Pasolini learns from Gramsci's reading of Dante is that it does not matter if the language that he had used was literary and refined – a 'lingua culta' – what matters is the fact that it had been used against the language of the elite.

My argument is that Contini's review and Gramsci's notebooks are a productive suggestion for Pasolini; they invite him to re-read his previous production in dialect in light of Dante's notion of the 'volgare illustre'. I will start by identifying the main features of 'poesia squisita' and will then compare it with Dante's notion of 'volgare illustre'. Before starting, I would like to clarify that the idea of dialect poetry in the medieval context is wholly anachronistic, since at that time all poetry which is not in Latin is 'dialect poetry'. Indeed, in the *Vita nova*, when discussing the poets who write about love, Dante distinguishes only two groups: the love poets who compose in rhymed verse in the vernacular and those who compose poetry in Latin: 'E non è molto numero d'anni passati, che appariro prima questi poete volgari; ché dire per rima in volgare tanto è quanto dire per versi in latino, secondo alcuna proporzione' (VN XXV, 4). My argument is that, clearly aware of this, Pasolini deliberately re-reads the medieval poetic production to create his own Dantean model for his use of dialect.

In his analysis of twentieth-century dialect poetry in Italy, Pasolini identifies the emergence of a new modern stage where the use of dialect is presented as a stylistic choice in opposition to the mainstream literary Italian. Pasolini names this 'poesia squisita', recalling the case of the Piedmontese poet Pinin Pacòt, who writes "'poesia squisija", comprensibile a pochi "squisi"' ('Poesia dialettale', p. 803).

Una nuova poetica dialettale [...] una poetica per cui il dialetto si fa nient'altro che un mezzo d'espressione in certo modo più raffinato della lingua [...] attraverso cui esprimere contenuti puramente lirici. ('Poesia dialettale', p. 786)

³⁰ Pasolini, 'Poeta delle ceneri' (1980¹), now in *TPII*, pp. 1261-88 (p. 1264).

[...] doveva però nascere quella che forse è la più tipica poetica dialettale contemporanea: il dialetto usato come genere letterario, 'atto a ottenere una poesia diversa'. ('Poesia dialettale', p. 857)

The main feature of this new genre is the refined use of dialect, which explains the reason for the term 'squisita', and which gives to this language the same dignity as the Italian literary language. 'Quello che conta', affirms Pasolini, 'è il senso di libertà, la lieta sorpresa sempre presente dell'usare il dialetto con una dignità pari a quella dell'italiano letterario' ('Poesia dialettale', pp. 808-09). Pasolini indicates himself (as the author of *Poesie a Casarsa*) alongside a group of poets who seem to share his use of dialect. However, the dialect they use is not the same, as they come from different regions. This allows him to think of himself as part of a small and elite group of poets:

Da collegarsi a A. Guerra, ai friulani, e in un certo modo anche a Dell'Arco, cioè in genere ai più moderni (qui anche nel senso di attuali nella cronaca e nell'impegno sociale) è il più giovane dei liguri, C. Vivaldi: il suo libriccino (otto poesie in tutto) se non è sufficiente a proporlo per un'antologia, lo è però a qualificarlo tra i più dotati (anche, e forse soprattutto, di coscienza critica) dialettali dell'ultima generazione. ('Poesia dialettale', pp. 811-12)

In collecting the two anthologies and so dedicating himself to exploring the linguistic differences among the Italian regions, Pasolini is actually imitating what Dante did many centuries before with the *De vulgari eloquentia*. In the search for an illustrious vernacular in the Italian area, Dante claims to have found fourteen main vernacular varieties, which he illustrates by giving real examples of the different *vulgaria*: 'in Tuscia Senenses et Aretini, in Lombardia Ferrarenses et Placentini; nec non in eadem civitate aliqualem variationem perpendimus, ut superius in capitulo immediato posuimus' (*DVE* I, x. 7).³¹ Similarly to Dante, Pasolini defines himself as a 'ricercatore', right at the start of the introduction to the first anthology ('Poesia dialettale', p. 756). With this initial likeness, I will like start a comparison between Pasolini's 'poesia squisita' and Dante's 'volgare illustre' with the aim of suggesting the legacy of the latter to the former. Both 'volgare illustre' and 'poesia squisita' are conceived as a type of 'lingua culta'. Dante refers to this highest refined vernacular using the term 'illustre': 'Per hoc quoque quod illustre dicimus, intelligimus quid illuminans et illuminatum prefulgens' (*DVE* I, xvii. 2);³² whereas Pasolini describes 'poesia squisita' as 'più raffinata della lingua' ('Poesia dialettale', p. 786). Dante claims that the 'volgare illustre' is more refined and prestigious if compared with the *vulgaria* of the peninsula and islands:

³¹ 'The Tuscan of Siena is distinguished from that of Arezzo, or the Lombard of Ferrara from that of Piacenza; moreover, we can detect some variation even within a single city, as was suggested above, in the preceding chapter'. The English translation of the *DVE* is by Steven Botterill (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

³² 'Now when we call something "illustrious", we mean that it gives off light or reflects the light that it receives from elsewhere'.

Magistratu quidem sublimatum videtur, cum de tot rudibus Latinorum vocabulis, de tot perplexis constructionibus, de tot defectivis prolationibus, de tot rusticanis accentibus, tam *egregium*, tam *extricatum*, tam *perfectum* et tam *urbanum* videamus *electum*, ut Cynus Pistoriensis et amicus eius ostendunt in cantionibus suis.³³ (*DVE* I, xvii. 3)

Neither 'volgare illustre' nor 'poesia squisita' have a geographical connotation, as they do not coincide with only one dialect. Dante says about the 'volgare illustre' that it is a language which belongs to every Italian city yet seems to belong to none (*DVE* I, xvi. 6). This idiom is used by the 'doctores illustres qui lingua vulgari poetati sunt in Ytalia, ut Siculi, Apuli, Tusci, Romandioli, Lombardi et utriusque Marchie viri' (*DVE* I, xix. 1).³⁴ Likewise, Pasolini mentions as representatives of 'poesia squisita' poets that come from different Italian cities, such as the Roman Mario Dell'Arco, the Romagnol Tonino Guerra, the Triestine Virgilio Giotti, and himself as the author of poems in Friulian. The attempt made by Pasolini to go beyond one local dialect is somehow in the footsteps to Dante's, but with a difference. The 'volgare illustre' is conceived as a potential language to be used all over Italy by poets and the court (if only Italy had one); whereas for Pasolini 'poesia squisita' is not a language itself but the way modern poets use their own dialect. Moreover, both authors present themselves as representatives of the dialect poetry they defend. Dante alludes to himself while talking of Cino da Pistoia and Cino's friend (a thinly disguised reference to Dante himself) as 'vulgare eloquentes' (*DVE* I, x. 2). Pasolini talks of himself in the third person referring to his *Poesie a Casarsa*:

[...] un eccesso di ingenuità (ma l'autore di *Poesie a Casarsa* scriveva i suoi primi versi friulani a diciannove anni) e un eccesso di squisitezza (e infatti egli si collegava ai provenzali antichi come fantasma estetico, per una suggestione esercitata dalle origini: romanze e cristiane). ('Poesia dialettale', p. 856)

I have already mentioned the socio-political value of Dante's illustrious vernacular raised by Gramsci. I argue that this reading has an important impact on Pasolini in his re-evaluation of his exquisite use of the dialect. Indeed, the poetics which lies beneath the notion of 'poesia squisita' is similar to that explained by Gramsci in reference to Dante, since Pasolini relates the use of this type of poetry to a critique of the highbrow Italian literary language: 'una raffinatezza polemica contro la lingua' ('Poesia dialettale', p. 826). Moreover, Pasolini expresses the wish that modern poets had used dialect against the Fascist ruling class, which was overtly against dialects and foreign languages: 'È mancato ai dialetti il poeta che rompesse con la nuova tradizione [...] e usasse il dialetto come arma polemica contro la classe dirigente fascista' ('Poesia dialettale', p. 827). The use of dialect would have

³³ 'That it is sublime in learning is clear when we see it emerge, so outstanding, so lucid, so perfect and so civilised, from among so many ugly words used by Italians, so many convoluted constructions, so many defective formations, and so many barbarous pronunciations, as Cino da Pistoia and his friend show us in their *canzoni*'.

³⁴ 'Illustrious authors who have written vernacular poetry in Italy, whether they came from Sicily, Apulia, Tuscany, Romagna, Lombardy, or either of the Marches'.

been not only a choice against the elite in power but also against its cultural hegemony: 'La polemica contro l'accentramento dello Stato fascista coincide con la polemica contro il centralismo linguistico, l'unità linguistica, e quindi la tradizione' ('Poesia dialettale', p. 827). These quotations from Pasolini are a confirmation of the influence of Gramsci's discussion on language and politics. For Pasolini any 'questione della lingua' – any choice regarding which language to use – is always a socio-political choice which reveals his political ideal together with his poetics.

Another interesting point concerns a certain 'naturalness' which both vernacular and dialect seem to have compared to Latin and Italian. Dante claims the prominence of the vernacular on the basis of its 'naturalness' (*DVE* I, i. 4) – meaning the fact of not being an artificial language.³⁵ As briefly mentioned in the introductory chapter, for Pasolini, dialect has a closer relationship with reality compared to Italian:

Il contadino che parla il suo dialetto è padrone di tutta la sua realtà: il giornalista che parla in italiano allude genericamente a una realtà sempre insicura. ('Dialetto e poesia popolare', p. 374)

In Pasolini's view, there is a direct connection, almost an identity, between the object of reality and its corresponding word in dialect. The reason for this assumption is set out in Pasolini's concept of 'lingua orale'.³⁶ This is the language primitive and indigenous people speak. Because it does not have a graphic transcription, the vocal function permits a closer contact with nature and with the named object. Although the idea of a pure 'lingua orale' exists only in theory, when Pasolini speaks of 'parola orale', he normally refers to dialect language as it is uncodified, not graphic.³⁷ Pasolini's example of 'parola orale' is, indeed, the word 'rosada' [dew], which the author claims to have heard from a Friulian farm boy. On that occasion, Pasolini was moved by the 'vivacità orale' of a word that 'non era mai stata scritta. Era stata sempre e solamente *un suono*' ('Dal laboratorio', pp. 1317-18). The word in dialect reminds him of that ahistorical and utopic moment in the history of humankind where there was a coincidence between word and object, a moment where language was instinctive, driven by needs, and could physically point at the object it refers to. It is based on this assumption that dialect could be seen as having a special relation with reality.³⁸

³⁵ Harum quoque duarum nobilior est vulgaris: tum quia prima fuit humano generi usitata; tum quia totus orbis ipsa perfruitur, licet in diversas prolationes et vocabula sit divisa; tum quia naturalis est nobis, cum illa potius artificialis existat. (*DVE* I, i. 4) [Of these two kinds of language, the more noble is the vernacular: first, because it was the language originally used by the human race; second, because the whole world employs it, though with different pronunciations and using different words; and third because it is natural to us, while the other is, in contrast, artificial].

³⁶ Pasolini, 'Dal laboratorio' (1965⁴), then *Empirismo*, now in *SLAI*, pp. 1307-42 (p. 1319).

³⁷ For an in-depth analysis of the notion of 'poesia orale', I refer to chapter four of Conti Calabrese's *Pasolini e il sacro*, 'Il poeta, il sacro e il linguaggio', pp. 53-72.

³⁸ In the 1950s Pasolini perceives that dialect has a stronger linkage to reality, however he is able to clarify this point only when, due to his experiments with cinema, he starts conceiving of reality in terms of a language. The quoted passages about 'lingua orale' are taken from the essay 'Dal laboratorio', which belongs to the early stage of his career as a film director.

Despite this discourse on naturalness, the literary languages of ‘volgare illustre’ and ‘poesia squisita’ seem a more complex linguistic reconstruction rather than natural and spontaneous languages. Both Dante and Pasolini use the evidence of this certain ‘naturalness’ of the vernacular/dialect to claim it is more greatly to be valued than the traditional literary language. However, they then present a language which is clearly not spontaneous and natural. The reason for this apparent contradiction is that for both authors there is a crucial difference between written and spoken vernacular. Dante affirms that, in general, vernacular poets write ‘at random’, and praises traditional poetry in Latin, since it is written with a language and with a technique governed by rules. The illustrious poet, according to Dante, should therefore try to closely imitate the ‘poeti regolari’ to write poetry more correctly:

Differunt tamen a magnis poetis, hoc est regularibus, quia magni sermone et arte regulari poetati sunt, hii vero casu, ut dictum est. Idcirco accidit ut, quantum illos proximius imitemur, tantum rectius poetemur.³⁹ (*DVE II*, IV. 3)

If Pasolini praises the dialect for its authenticity compared to standard Italian, he also says that this discourse only applies to the ‘parlato’:

La questione è grossa: del resto non è chi istintivamente non pensi a quanto di falso permanga a minacciare la lingua chiamata ‘italiano’ non solo scritta (ché in tal caso si conoscono bene i pericoli della tradizione) ma anche parlata. E a quanto, al contrario, di autentico viva nel dialetto. Bisogna stare attenti, però: perché il confronto (tutto positivo per il dialetto) vale quasi unicamente per il parlato [...]. Per l’uso scritto è diverso: il dialetto in genere è abbandonato all’istinto e all’improvvisazione, in un’assoluta mancanza di coscienza, scade nel sentimentale, nel coloristico; diviene, praticamente, molto più convenzionale della lingua. (‘Dialetto e poesia popolare’, p. 374)

For Pasolini the written transcription of the spoken dialect affects its authenticity to the extent that the poet needs to be very careful not to fall into clichés. Writing always requires for Pasolini a ‘coscienza linguistica’ (‘Dialetto e poesia popolare’, p. 375): the awareness of the distance created by written language between word and reality, the gap between signifier and signified. One can see that for both Dante and Pasolini the naturalness and spontaneity of the vernacular/dialect need to be carefully regulated by the poetic consciousness and experience of the poet. Indeed, the note to *Poesie a Casarsa* reports: ‘L’idioma friulano di queste poesie non è quello genuino [...] inoltre non poche sono le violenze che gli ho usato per costringerlo a un metro e a una dizione poetica’.⁴⁰ Moreover, I will show

³⁹ ‘Yet they differ from the great poets, that is, those who obey the rules, since those great ones wrote their poetry in a language, and with a technique, governed by rules, whereas these write at random, as I said above. Thus, it comes about that, the more closely we try to imitate the great poets, the more correctly we write poetry’.

⁴⁰ Pasolini, ‘Nota’ (1942¹), now in *TPI*, p. 193.

shortly than both authors suggest the illustrious poets and exquisite poets keep a 'safe distance' from the spoken vernacular/dialect.

Looking at the case of the 'volgare illustre', this is a language for which native speakers do not exist. The very terminology seems to confirm this fact. Dante uses the verb 'loquor' [to speak] when talking of the many *vulgaria* of the Italian peninsula: 'sed quamvis terrigene Apuli loquantur obscene comuniter' (DVE I, XII. 8); 'Hoc Romandiolos omnes habet... hii *deusci* affirmando locuntur' (DVE I, XIV. 3).⁴¹ On the contrary, he mainly uses the Latin verb 'utor' [to use] for the 'volgare illustre': 'hoc enim usi sunt doctores illustres' (DVE I, XIX. 1).⁴² Even though the 'volgare illustre' would be spoken in an official contest (if only Italy had a single court),⁴³ it is mainly a bookish and literary language since, around the time Dante is writing, only Italian poets seem to have used it: 'Nonnullos vulgaris excellentiam cognovisse sentimus, scilicet Guidonem, Lapum et unum alium, Florentinos, et Cynum Pistoriensem' (DVE I, XIII. 4).⁴⁴ These poets are not native speakers of this vernacular, but they actually had to break free of their mother-tongue vernaculars to aspire to it. This is made clear in many passages of the *De vulgari eloquentia*.⁴⁵ Particularly exemplary is the case of the Bolognese poet Guido Guinizzelli, who would have never left off using his mother-tongue vernacular, if Bolognese were the 'volgare illustre':

Non etenim est quod aulicum et illustre vocamus: quoniam, si fuisset, maximus Guido Guinizzelli, Guido Ghisilieri, Fabrutius et Honestus et alii poetantes Bononie nunquam a proprio divertissent.⁴⁶ (DVE I, XV. 6)

This discourse also applies to Pasolini's 'poesia squisita'. At the end of his introduction to *Poesia dialettale del Novecento*, Pasolini says that it would be better for the modern exquisite poet not to be a dialect native speaker to be able to use this language with much more freedom:

Allora bisognerebbe forse, per portare il Friuli a un livello di coscienza che lo rendesse rappresentabile, esserne sufficientemente staccati, marginali, non essere troppo friulani, e, per

⁴¹ 'But although the inhabitants of Apulia generally speak in a base fashion'; 'This is spoken by everybody in Romagna... they say "deusci" (God, yes!) when they wish to say "yes"'. Some of the occurrences of the use of the verb *loquor* in relation to the many *vulgaria* of the Italian peninsula and islands are DVE I, IX. 4; I, IX. 7; I, XI. 3; I, XIII. 2; I, XIV. 3. Sometimes Dante also uses the verb *dico* (DVE I, XI. 2; I, XIV. 6) or *profero* (DVE I, XII. 6).

⁴² 'This is the language used by the illustrious authors'. Some other occurrences of the verb *utor* in relation to the 'volgare illustre' are DVE I, XIX. 2; II, I. 2-3; II, II. 1. Dante also uses the verb *cognosco* (DVE I, XIII. 4), which again suggests one to see the 'volgare illustre' as a language that is acquired as it were a second language.

⁴³ 'Si aulam nos Ytali haberemus, palatinum foret' (DVE I, XVIII. 2) [If we Italians had a royal court, it [the illustrious vernacular] would make its home in the court's palace].

⁴⁴ 'There are a few, I feel, who have understood the excellence of the vernacular: these include Guido, Lapo, and one other, all from Florence, and Cino, from Pistoia'.

⁴⁵ See, for example, when Dante talks about the Sicilian language and the language of Apulia (DVE I, XII. 9), the Tuscan poets (DVE I, XIII. 5), the language of the Romagna (DVE I, XIV. 3), and the Venetians (DVE I, XIV. 7).

⁴⁶ 'For it [Bolognese vernacular] is not what we could call "aulic" or "illustrious" language; if it were, Bolognese poets like the great Guido Guinizzelli, or Guido Ghislieri, or Fabrizio or Onesto or many others, would never have left off using it'.

adoperare con libertà e un senso di verginità la sua lingua, non esserne parlanti. ('Poesia dialettale', p. 855)

Actually, this is precisely the case for Pasolini, who wrote *Poesie a Casarsa* without being a native Friulian speaker. This is recalled by Pasolini, talking of himself in the third person: 'Comunque egli si trovava in presenza di una lingua da cui era distinto: una lingua non sua, ma materna, non sua, ma parlata da coloro che egli amava' ('Poesia dialettale', p. 856). The conclusion Pasolini comes up with at the end of the introduction to *Poesia dialettale del Novecento* is that, in terms of linguistic forms, the link between the written language used by the modern dialect poets and their equivalents in spoken language is very weak:

I félibri casarsesi non hanno comunque nessun legame, nemmeno per sfumatura (come avviene per Pacòt, Pezzani, Firpo e gli stessi Dell'Arco e Guerra) con le forme per definizione dialettali: il loro *apprentissage* poetico si compie tutto al di fuori del dialetto, benché coincida strettamente con una educazione sentimentale condizionata quasi morbosamente dall'amore-nostalgia per il loro dialetto e la loro terra. ('Poesia dialettale', p. 856)

Not only do 'volgare illustre' and 'poesia squisita' distance themselves and deviate from the spoken vernaculars/dialects, but they also seem to share some features with the language of the cultural elite of their time – Latin for 'volgare illustre' and standard Italian for 'poesia squisita'. In the process of becoming written literary languages, both 'volgare illustre' and 'poesia squisita' converge in some respects with the established literary language. The illustrious vernacular reveals itself to have quite a few features in common with a *gramatica* such as Latin. According to Dante, a *gramatica* is any made-up, unalterable, and conventional language created by human beings as a means of communication.⁴⁷ If compared to the other *vulgaria* of the Italian peninsula, the illustrious vernacular seems artificial and conventional. This is because the 'volgare illustre', which I have commented on being a written, literary, and refined language, tends to become 'grammaticalised', meaning that it becomes unvarying and conventional, and so similar to an artificial language.⁴⁸ This is a very delicate issue that Dante does not clarify in his treatise. Generally, it is difficult for the poet to describe exactly what the 'volgare

⁴⁷ This is Dante's definition of *gramatica*: 'Hinc moti sunt inventores gramatice facultatis: que quidem gramatica nichil aliud est quam quedam inalterabilis locutionis ydemptitas diversibus temporibus atque locis. Hec cum de comuni consensu multarum gentium fuerit regulata, nulli singolari arbitrio videtur obnoxia, et per consequens nec variabilis esse potest. Adinvenerunt ergo illam ne, propter variationem sermonis arbitrio singularium fluitantis, vel nullo modo vel saltim imperfecte antiquorum actingeremus auctoritates et gesta, sive illorum quos a nobis locorum diversitas facit esse diversos' (*DVE* I, ix. 11) [This was the point from which the inventors of the art of grammar began; for their *gramatica* is nothing less than a certain immutable identity of language in different times and places. Its rules having been formulated with the common consent of many peoples, it can be subject to no individual will; and, as a result, it cannot change. So those who devised this language did so lest, through changes in language dependent on the arbitrary judgement of individuals, we should become either unable, or, at best, only partially able, to enter into contact with the deeds and authoritative writings of the ancients, or of those whose difference of location makes them different from us].

⁴⁸ Giorgio Inglese, 'Nota introduttiva', in Dante, *De vulgari eloquentia*, ed. by Giorgio Inglese (Milan: Rizzoli, 1998), pp. 5-30 (p. 21).

illustre' is and this is the reason why he prefers to opt for a negative approach: by saying what is clearly not 'volgare illustre', he tries to highlight some of its characteristics. In the same way Pasolini's 'poesia squisita' does share some features with the mainstream literary language of that time. The linguistic proximity of the exquisite poets' written dialect to the literary Italian language is made clear by the observation of a Florentine nuance in their writings. Speaking about the Triestine poet Virgilio Giotti, Pasolini talks of a 'calco fiorentino' ('Poesia dialettale', p. 838) clearly visible in some of his poems:

Il lungo periodo fiorentino servirà a dargli [Virgilio Giotti], per analogia, quel senso della castigatezza, della semplicità della lingua che faranno del suo triestino una materia pura, attenuata a un rigido canone unilinguistico. ('Poesia dialettale', p. 835)

A similar case concerns another modern exquisite poet: Mario Dell'Arco. In an article from 1950, Pasolini discusses Dell'Arco's style in depth, stressing the proximity to standard Italian:

Salta subito agli occhi quanto sia minima la distanza dall'italiano [...]. Anche quando [...] il vocabolario si farà più intenso e meno leggibile, ciò avverrà piuttosto per un aumento di preziosità linguistica che per un incupirsi del colore locale: preziosità linguistica proprio italianeggiante, di gusto novecentesco, ricerca di parole rare, antiche, da incastonarsi in un tessuto linguistico assai limpido. [...] La novità di Dell'Arco è proprio in questo suo romanesco colto, in questa sua lingua nazionale mancata, e comunque fiorentineggiante, e naturalmente, tutta patinata di arcaico e di sapore letterario.⁴⁹

The many highlighted similarities between Pasolini's discourse on 'poesia squisita' and the *De vulgari eloquentia* seem to confirm that Pasolini shapes his poetics whilst keeping Dante's reflections on the illustrious vernacular in mind. Pasolini's idea of exquisite dialect as a stylistic choice in opposition to the mainstream literary language, a 'lingua culta' that can produce a new type of literature, comes from a reconceptualisation of Dante's 'volgare illustre'. In addition, in the introduction of the thesis I have noted that Pasolini's reuse of Dante is encouraged by the fact that he identifies with the medieval poet in the course of his artistic career. Commenting on Pasolini's reflections on his early poetic production, one can see the beginning of this identification, in particular with the idea of Dante as the poet of the 'volgare illustre'.

While analysing the modern exquisite poets, Pasolini theorises a specific idea of realism in relation to their use of the dialect. Pasolini defines Tonino Guerra's style as an 'ibrido tra disperato lirismo e disperato realismo' ('Poesia dialettale', p. 825), and speaks of Virgilio Giotti's 'realismo del dolore' as a the 'energia "naturale" della sua lirica' ('Poesia dialettale', p. 838).

[...] una 'individuale' inquietudine, assai in sincronia con l'inquietudine più attuale dell'epoca. Tanto che il 'male' dello scrittore non è facilmente sezionabile dal 'male' collettivo di questo

⁴⁹ Pasolini, 'Romanesco 1950' (1950¹), now in *SLAI*, pp. 341-44 (pp. 341-42).

mondo appena uscito dalla guerra. [...] Questo ripiegare su personali angosce da un mondo socialmente angosciato, è del resto il segno della necessità lirica di Guerra. ('Poesia dialettale', pp. 824-25)

E se per Giotti si dovesse (anche per lui, dialettale) parlare di un 'realismo' come energia 'naturale' della sua lirica, significa che si dovrà parlare di realismo del dolore: del suo dolore così quotidiano, umano, poveramente inspiegabile dentro l'umile cronaca. ('Poesia dialettale', pp. 837-38)

For Pasolini these poets evoke reality by giving voice to the common and collective discomfort people share. Thanks to their exquisite use of dialect, these modern poets give voice to the tragedy of human existence. The discourse moves from the outside world to the inner space, and therefore to the idea of an inner reality:

L'oggetto [...] della poesia dialettale comincia a non essere più rigidamente il mondo esterno, l'ambiente: si sposta piuttosto verso l'interno, si fa sentimentale.⁵⁰

For the poets Pasolini describes as 'more modern' ('Poesia dialettale', pp. 811-12), poetry is the privileged space to express an inner reality that otherwise would remain unsaid, and give it a universal value.⁵¹ One can see that Pasolini forces the idea of lyric poetry, commonly understood as a type of poetry that expresses the poet's own subjectivity, as well as the idea of realism as something that concerns external reality. The modern exquisite poetry is a form of realistic literature, as it expresses the general human existence. The shared sense of tragedy and pain, for Pasolini, gives to this type of poetry a realistic shade. In the light of this discourse, I then define Pasolini's idea of realism in relation to this specific lyrical and refined use of dialect as 'realismo lirico' [lyrical realism].

Before concluding my analysis of 'poesia squisita', I would like to comment further on Pasolini's consideration of his early use of dialect. It is true that, in his critical production of the 1950s, Pasolini discusses the realistic character of the exquisite poets' use of dialect and so of his specific use of Friulian in *Poesie a Casarsa*. However, if one considers Pasolini's reflections on his use of Friulian in the late 1960s and beyond, his judgment is quite different:

Come linguaggio speciale per la poesia io adottati il friulano, ed era l'esatto contrario di ogni tendenza al realismo. Era il massimo dell'irrealismo, il massimo dell'oscurità. Una volta stabilito, tuttavia, il contatto con il dialetto, questo ebbe effetti inevitabili, anche se in origine l'avevo scelto per ragioni puramente letterarie. (*Pasolini*, p. 1289)

Scrivevo queste prime poesie friulane quando era in piena voga l'ermetismo [...] Presi molto ingenuamente il partito di essere incomprensibile, e scelsi a questo fine il dialetto friulano. Era per me il massimo dell'ermetismo, dell'oscurità, del rifiuto di comunicare. Invece è successo ciò

⁵⁰ Pasolini, 'I dialetti' (1952¹), now in *SLAI*, pp. 402-08 (p. 402).

⁵¹ Fernando Bandini, 'Il "sogno di una cosa" chiamata poesia', in *TPI*, pp. xii-lviii (p. xv).

che non mi aspettavo. La frequentazione di questo dialetto mi diede il gusto della vita e del realismo. Per mezzo del friulano, venivo a scoprire che la gente semplice, attraverso il proprio linguaggio, finisce per esistere obiettivamente, con tutto il mistero del carattere contadino. [...] Col passare del tempo avrei imparato man mano a usare il dialetto quale strumento di ricerca obiettiva, realistica. (*Centaurio*, pp. 1411-12)

In these two interviews (from the late 1960s and beginning of the 1970s), when commenting on his use of Friulian dialect in comparison to Romanesque, Pasolini denies any realistic nuance to his earlier use of the dialect: it was actually a case of 'maximum unrealism'. He admits that Friulian had been used only as an obscure language to write hermetic poetry, which was very common at that time. Only later did he realise that dialect could be used as a realistic instrument to write realistic literature. This is the case of the Roman novels, says Pasolini, which were written using dialect in this new realistic way. How can one solve the contradiction between these statements and what was said before with regard to 'poesia squisita'? It is important to remember that the years of the two anthologies correspond to a transitional phase where, leaving behind his earlier use of the dialect, Pasolini is moving towards that new idea of dialect and realism, which characterises his Roman narrative production. This new trend is already visible in the new poems written in Friulian between 1947 and 1953 and added to *Poesie a Casarsa* inside *La meglio gioventù*. Francesca Cadel highlights that these late poems present a more accurate use of the dialect, as between 1943 and 1950 Pasolini lived permanently in Friuli. Moreover, Cadel underlines a change of topic as these poems present a growing attention to the outside world of the Friulian peasants. An example is the poem 'El testament Coran', in which Pasolini narrates the historical event of the killing of a young farmer by German soldiers in 1944.⁵² Thus, Pasolini's second production in Friulian is less lyrical, closer to his experiments with Romanesque. With regard to the growing attention to the outside world in Pasolini's production, it is worth recalling that the years between the late 1940s and the early 1950s coincide with Pasolini's socio-political involvement in Friuli and with the discovery of the Roman *borgate*. In 1945 Pasolini joins the 'Associazione per l'Autonomia Friulana', a group campaigning for the regional autonomy of Friuli, and in 1948 he joins the Communist party; finally, moving to Rome in 1950 Pasolini becomes acquainted with the hard life-conditions of the subproletarians. Thus, when Pasolini decides to republish *Poesie a Casarsa*, he faces the problem of questioning the notion of realism in relation to his first use of the dialect. In the light of the artistic debate on realism and alongside his experience and use of Romanesque dialect, Pasolini feels the need to justify a production in dialect which is lyrical and originally not related to any realistic purpose. That is probably why Pasolini formulates that specific

⁵² I refer to the convincing analysis of Pasolini's late Friulian poems made by Cadel in chapter five, 'Un esempio di sperimentalismo linguistico in Pasolini', *La lingua dei desideri*, pp. 114-40.

theory of exquisite dialect and lyrical realism, which I have commented upon before. Justifying his previous lyrical production is ultimately the reason why Pasolini dedicates so many pages to his analysis of 'poesia squisita', especially in the introduction to *Poesia dialettale del Novecento*. The need for justification ceases only in the late 1960s and 1970s, from which the two above-mentioned interviews date, when the time of the debate on dialect and realism is far off.

1.4 – Dante's plurilingualism in Pasolini's theory of regression

In this section, I will discuss the poetry of regression, outlined by Pasolini in his two introductions of the 1950s. I will argue that the theory of dialect and realism formulated for this type of poetry comes from a reconceptualisation of Dante's use of the vernacular in the *Commedia*. The driving element of my argument is again Pasolini's engagement with Contini's and Gramsci's writings. In particular, I will refer to Contini's 'Preliminari sulla lingua del Petrarca' for the notion of plurilingualism and Gramsci's *Letteratura e vita nazionale* for the concept of national-popular culture. These texts are mentioned explicitly by Pasolini at the beginning of the first and of the second anthology, respectively.

The poetry of regression is defined by Pasolini as a branch of dialect poetry mainly common among southern and central Italian poets. These poets use dialect by a process of 'regression' into the spoken language of the 'popolo' – 'per un regresso nel pre-mondo popolano' ('Poesia dialettale', p. 813). Pasolini speaks of a 'regresso dentro lo spirito di un popolano', a 'ritorno a un mondo dialettale [...] nel cuore del popolo' ('Poesia dialettale', p. 819). According to Pasolini, 'Il "regresso"' takes place 'dentro il dialetto: da un parlante (il poeta) a un parlante presumibilmente più puro, più felice' ('Poesia dialettale', p. 855). Thus, the term 'regresso' refers to the immersion of the bourgeois poet into the lower social class, which is also a return to a less developed and more pure state. This is because for Pasolini the 'popolo' is a mythical, ahistorical crowd, which has escaped from bourgeois history and still experiences reality in an ingenuous and spontaneous way.⁵³ The poet immerses himself in this otherness and embodies the dialect native speaker of his own town. Pasolini describes the poet's operation as a 'cala[rsi] nel suo parlante' ('Poesia dialettale', p. 740), an 'annullarsi nell'anonimia, farsi inconscio demiurgo di un genio popolare della sua città o del suo paese' ('Poesia dialettale', p. 771). Contrary to 'poesia squisita', the dialect is not used as a 'lingua culta', but rather as an imitation of the

⁵³ Zygmunt G. Barański, 'Pier Paolo Pasolini: Culture, Croce, Gramsci', in *Culture and Conflict in Postwar Italy: Essays on Mass and Popular Culture*, ed. by Zygmunt G. Barański and Robert Lumley (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 139-59 (p. 150). For Vighi, the novelty of Pasolini's discourse about the 'popolo' is precisely the 'recupero della categoria del "sacro"', which he applies to this part of society. Pasolini's idea of the 'popolo' is then much different from Gramsci's, for whom the 'popolo' is an active agent in socio-political history (*Le ragioni dell'altro*, pp. 133, 149). On the link between 'popolo' and *sacrum* see also chapter six of Conti Calabrese's *Pasolini e il sacro*, 'La cognizione del diverso', pp. 87- 110.

people's way of speaking. In addition, this branch of dialect poetry has a popular subject, meaning that it aims at representing the people.

The process of regression is not simply a linguistic action, but also involves a sort of social attitude. The bourgeois poet needs to be emotionally connected to the people to be able to understand and so to represent their world realistically. This engagement with the people, which Pasolini believes fundamental for accomplishing regression, comes from Gramsci, for whom the intellectual must 'sentire ed essere appassionato' to be able to fully understand the 'popolo'.⁵⁴ This is the principle that moves Gramsci to the formulation of the figure of the 'organic intellectual' as someone organically, physically, connected with the people. In the history of Italian poetry in dialect, says Pasolini, there are only a few cases where the poet has succeeded in this operation and provided a realistic representation of the people. In fact, in most cases, the bourgeois poet could not regress into the people successfully. This is, for example, the case of Trilussa '[che] non "regredisce" in quel parlante per definizione che è l'uomo del popolo: egli resta nel romanesco parlato dalla sua classe sociale che è la piccola borghesia, la burocrazia' ('Poesia dialettale', p. 777). Pasolini mentions as one of the few positive examples of 'regression' into the people's world the poetic production in dialect of the Roman poet Giuseppe Gioachino Belli (1791-1863):

Solo in rarissimi casi il ritorno del poeta all'anonimato del parlante ha ricostruito in sede poetica il mondo reale del parlante; anzi, l'unico caso è forse quello del Belli. ('Poesia dialettale', p. 771)

Regardless of his bourgeois origins, Belli regressed into the people and, being physically and emotionally involved in their lives, was able to offer a realistic representation of their world:

Nel Belli l'amore per l'oggetto [...] era stato così violento, autentico e appassionato da abolire ogni dato pregiudizionale nel soggetto: l'immersione nel popolo parlante era stata assoluta. ('Poesia popolare', p. 976)

By showing the example of Belli, Pasolini is saying that it is therefore possible for a bourgeois author to write dialect literature which offers a realistic representation of the 'popolo'. Moreover, the poet chosen as a positive example by Pasolini wrote in Romanesque.⁵⁵ By doing this, Pasolini paves the way to his own narrative experiment with Romanesque dialect. As mentioned before, it is in the same time as the two anthologies that Pasolini works on *Ragazzi di vita*, published in 1955, the same year of *Canzoniere italiano*.

⁵⁴ Gramsci, *Quaderni*, II, 1505.

⁵⁵ Vighi, *Le ragioni dell'altro*, p. 132.

On the different influences that may have inspired Pasolini's theory of regression, Paolo Desogus links the term 'regresso' to Italian Dante criticism.⁵⁶ According to Desogus, there is reason to believe that Pasolini is influenced by Francesco De Sanctis' study on Dante as it is presented in *Storia della letteratura italiana*.⁵⁷ This constitutes the first systematic study of the history of modern Italian literature and is commonly read and used for educational purposes at the time of Pasolini. De Sanctis uses the term 'regresso' to describe Dante's journey through the circles of Hell. The critic presents Dante's *descensus ad inferos* as a descent which is at the same time the necessary precondition to an ascent: 'pare regresso: pure è un progresso'.⁵⁸ Looking closely at Pasolini's use of the word 'regresso', Desogus notes that in the same way Pasolini's notion of 'regresso' implies an ascent:

Al movimento regressivo nell'animo altrui, nell'animo di chi in quanto subalterno non ha voce, corrisponde un processo di elezione letteraria per trasformare i suoi sentimenti disgregati e incompiuti in parola.⁵⁹

Even though not leading to a spiritual ascent, Pasolini's *catabasis* into the dialect speaker of the lower class is an aesthetic-literary ascent, where 'la vita, colta nel profondo dramma umano [...] diviene materia per la scrittura e [...] acquisisce dignità poetica'.⁶⁰ Although I remain unconvinced by Desogus's hypothesis of the Desanctisian origin of this term, there is a very explicit reference to Dante and to the Dante critic Contini right at the beginning of the first anthology. Going back to the very first pages of the first introduction, Pasolini mentions some nineteenth-century Italian authors as positive examples of realistic poetry in dialect:

Poeti forse 'minori', così, meno ufficiali, ma quanto più ricchi e veri, questi Carducci, D'Annunzio, Pascoli e Verga 'provinciali', ritagliati e ripresentati su un terreno comune, ancora criticamente sperimentale, di realismo. In cui (e ci serviamo qui dei termini di un bellissimo studio di Gianfranco Contini, *Preliminari sulla lingua del Petrarca*, in 'Paragone', aprile 1951) un canone monolinguisco, complesso e mediato, di origine petrarchesca, e venuto a comporre la costante più tipica della letteratura italiana – cede in parte alle pressioni di quel bilinguismo (forma stilistica, contro le apparenze che spesso, in autori coscienti, specie moderni, sono di pastiche, immediata, lievitante dagli strati bassi della lingua) che è per definizione una reazione anti-accademica, e compone quella costante minore, ma quanto più felice, forse, che si origina dalla più realistica delle opere poetiche italiane, la *Divina Commedia*. ('Poesia dialettale', p. 716)

⁵⁶ Paolo Desogus, 'La nozione di regresso nel primo Pasolini', *Rivista*, 4 (2015), 107-19 (pp. 108-09).

⁵⁷ Francesco De Sanctis, *Storia della letteratura italiana (1870-71¹)*, ed. by Niccolò Gallo, 2 vols (Turin: Einaudi/Gallimard, 1996).

⁵⁸ De Sanctis, *Storia della letteratura italiana*, I, 195.

⁵⁹ Desogus, 'La nozione di regresso', p. 109.

⁶⁰ Desogus, 'La nozione di regresso', p. 109.

This opening passage reveals that Pasolini reads the Italian production in dialect in the light of the 'dantismo versus petrarchismo' paradigm, presented by Contini in his essay of 1951.⁶¹ In contrast to the 'canone monolingustico', which goes from Petrarch to Manzoni, Pasolini names Verga, Pascoli, Carducci, and D'Annunzio as heirs of a realistic tradition, characterised by a bilingual use of the language and originating with Dante's *Commedia*, which is defined as the most realistic work of Italian literature. The realism achieved by these poets in their works is linked by Pasolini to their 'bilinguismo', described as a stylistic form 'lievitante dagli strati più bassi della lingua'. Explaining this term further, these poets were able to use both the language of their own social class and the dialect of the 'popolo', and it was by moving between these two languages that they produced realistic literature. In this definition of bilingualism, one can see a direct link with the poetics of regression as the capacity for a bourgeois author to move between different languages and to adopt another language that is not his own: the language of the 'popolo'. Thus, Pasolini's concept of regression is strictly bound to Contini's notion of plurilingualism for the case of the *Commedia*; 'Dante was the main model of such regression', affirms Patti.⁶² However, there is a difference that clearly appears in the previous quotation. Pasolini restricts Contini's notion of plurilingualism as he refers to it in terms of bilingualism. Pasolini's personal conceptualisation of plurilingualism is made clear in other passages and can be attributed to the fact that, while Pasolini is reading 'Preliminari sulla lingua del Petrarca', he has in mind Gramsci and his theory on language, politics, and society.⁶³ Thus, I will briefly explain Pasolini's concept of bilingualism in relation to Contini and Gramsci, and then move to question Pasolini's idea of realism in relation to this specific use of dialect.

In Pasolini, there is an overlapping of two paradigms: on the one hand, Contini's 'dantismo versus petrarchismo' and, on the other hand, Gramsci's 'dualismo letterario tradizionale tra popolo e nazione'.⁶⁴ It is important to discuss these paradigms to understand Pasolini's personal conceptualisation and combination of these in his notion of bilingualism. The first paradigm is essentially a matter of language and style: a monolingual and monostylistic use of language – in other words, the use of a single linguistic register and language carefully selected by the author – in opposition to a plurilingual and pluristylistic one, which encompasses the co-presence of different tones, registers, and languages. In 'Preliminari sulla lingua del Petrarca', Contini highlights Dante's linguistic variety by comparing, for example, the coarse, strong language used to describe the horrible mutilation of Muhammad's body in *Inferno* XXVIII (ll. 25-27) – which the critic defines as a 'campione di "realismo"' – with the 'violenza sublime' of *Paradiso* XIV (ll. 91-93), and the 'soavità' of the dawn of

⁶¹ Patti, *Pasolini after Dante*, p. 57.

⁶² Patti, *Pasolini after Dante*, p. 66.

⁶³ Pasolini's cross-reading of Contini and Gramsci has been extensively discussed by Patti's *Pasolini after Dante*. In particular I refer to chapter three: 'Representing the Reality of the 'Other'', pp. 54-71.

⁶⁴ Gramsci, *Letteratura*, p. 70.

Purgatorio I (ll. 115-17).⁶⁵ In Gramscian terms, the dualism between national and popular is a socio-cultural issue rather than a linguistic one. It is basically the problem of the age-old detachment of Italian intellectuals from the people:

In Italia il termine 'nazionale' ha un significato molto ristretto ideologicamente e in ogni caso non coincide con 'popolare', perché in Italia gli intellettuali sono lontani dal popolo, cioè dalla 'nazione' e sono invece legati a una tradizione di casta, che non è mai stata rotta da un forte movimento politico popolare o nazionale dal basso: la tradizione è 'libresca' e astratta e l'intellettuale tipico moderno si sente piú legato ad Annibal Caro o Ippolito Pindemonte che a un contadino pugliese o siciliano. Il termine corrente 'nazionale' è in Italia legato a questa tradizione intellettuale e libresca [...].⁶⁶

In Pasolini's theory, the detachment of Italian intellectuals from the people has a direct relationship with the fact that the Italian literary tradition has been mainly 'petrarchesca'. In this context, Pasolini's concept of 'petrarchismo' is a kind of literature produced by the dominant class, whose language is clearly monolingual because it expresses only one language and one culture. On the other hand, as we have seen, Pasolini defines Dante's linguistic operation as 'una reazione anti-accademica' ('Poesia dialettale', p. 716), and so as a model following which intellectuals can discard the mainstream literary tradition and stop the age-old detachment from the people. Plurilingualism, indeed, permits the combination of high and low language: the bookish language of the traditional Italian national literature with the spoken language of the people, as well as both high and low cultures. Moving between high and low language, Dante is seen as the one who was able to express the feelings of the people and produce a realistic representation of their life. In light of this explanation, only now is one able to fully understand Pasolini's reconceptualisation of the notion of plurilingualism as 'bilingualism', since realistic literature is read as the historical product of the relationship between two social groups, the hegemonic/dominant class and the 'popolo'. Pasolini's 'bilinguismo' should be considered not only as a linguistic notion but, due to the integration with Gramscian terminology and theory, also as a socio-cultural one. As we have already seen for the concept of regression, Pasolini's bilingualism must also be considered as a socio-linguistic concept – recalling the established link between 'regresso' and bilingualism. This appears clearly in a passage of the introduction to the second anthology:

Di questo 'bilinguismo' immanente e complesso noi abbiamo tenuto presente una accezione particolare, il 'bilinguismo sociologico', importandovi una passione non solamente linguistica (se i linguisti continuano a usare il termine 'sociologico' quale corrispettivo scientifico, ma non sinonimo, di 'sociale'). ('Poesia popolare', pp. 892-93)

⁶⁵ Contini, 'Preliminari sulla lingua del Petrarca', p. 172.

⁶⁶ Gramsci, *Letteratura*, p. 127.

However, it will be only later (in the 1960s) that Pasolini will exemplify his reading of Dante's linguistic operation as an 'allargamento lessicale', which is at the same time 'sociale': 'L'allargamento linguistico di Dante [...] non è solo un allargamento dell'orizzonte lessicale e espressivo: ma, insieme, anche sociale' ('Volontà di Dante', p. 1376). To sum up, Pasolini's restriction of plurilingualism into bilingualism is influenced by Gramsci's socio-political analysis of Italian literature. Moreover, Gramsci's discourse is re-read by Pasolini in personal terms: the detachment of the Italian intellectuals from the people becomes for Pasolini the distance between himself as a bourgeois writer and the otherness, represented by the 'popolo'. Ultimately, Pasolini is not interested in the notion of plurilingualism, as he is not interested in the use of multiple languages but only of two: his own language (Italian) and the dialect of the 'popolo'. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, Pasolini conceives of his approach to reality as a dialogue between two entities: his own very personal one – marked by his bourgeois origins – and that of the 'other', where this represents any other culture and social group that stands in opposition to the bourgeois class. Pasolini sees a positive alternative in those marginal cultures, such as the one of the *borgate*, that live outside society, which as noted before represent an ahistorical and sacred crowd. Still not corrupted by consumerist ideals, the 'other' appears to have a closer relationship to reality. Thus, it is by entering into dialogue with this otherness that Pasolini can interrogate the reality around him.⁶⁷ From the 1950s onwards, Pasolini's production is particularly interested in finding and promoting the space of this otherness: first the Roman subproletarians, protagonists of his Roman narrative production and of his first films, and later the poor masses of foreign cultures, such as Africa and India, protagonists of the documentary films *Appunti per un film sull'India* (1968) and *Appunti per un'Orestiade africana* (1970).

In this section, we have seen that Pasolini draws a 'bilingual line' in the history of Italian literature in dialect. Starting from Dante and passing through some canonical nineteenth-century authors and less canonical ones such as the Roman poet Belli, this had produced examples of realistic literature in dialect. With this operation, Pasolini prepares the way for his Romanesque production to be the next representative of this Dantean chain. Alongside his identification with Dante the poet of the illustrious vernacular, Pasolini formulates another idea of Dante as the poet who can move between different social classes and languages, providing a realistic representation of the lower ones. Patti refers to this Dantean model in terms of the 'mimetic intellectual/poet'.⁶⁸ For Pasolini, Dante's plurilingualism

⁶⁷ On the concept of the 'other' in Pasolini, I refer to Vighi, 'Introduzione: le origini del pensiero di Pasolini', in *Le ragioni dell'altro*, pp. 9-18.

⁶⁸ First in Patti, 'Pasolini, intellettuale mimetico', *Studi Pasoliniani*, 7 (2013), 89-100 (p. 93), and later in *Pasolini after Dante*, p. 61. Although the definition 'intellettuale mimetico' does not appear in Pasolini's work until 1965 ('Libero indiretto', p. 1364), according to Patti this is already implied in his 1950s idea of linguistic mimesis (Patti, *Pasolini after Dante*, p. 61 note 26). Basically, Pasolini adopts the word 'mimetico' to describe the linguistic operation of regression only after having read Auerbach's *Mimesis*, which is published in 1956. The word *mimesis* comes from the Greek word *μίμησις* which literally means 'imitation', representation'. In Auerbach's terms, *mimesis* is indeed the representation of reality, the art of imitation.

means essentially '*mimesis* della lingua e della modalità espressive dell'altro attraverso una "regressione/oggettivazione" di sé nel parlante'.⁶⁹ This personal reconceptualisation of Dante is the model Pasolini identifies with when describing the world of the Roman subproletarians, first in his narrative and later in his early cinema, as we will see commenting on *Accattone* in chapter two.

I would like to reflect further on Pasolini's idea of realism in relation to the specific use of dialect. Realism is possible for Pasolini only if the author is able to reproduce both the language and the world of the dialect native speaker. 'Assoluta fedeltà alla lingua' and reconstruction of 'il mondo *reale* del parlante' ('Poesia dialettale', pp. 776, 771) are what made Belli's poetry so exceptional, according to Pasolini. For the poetics of regression, Pasolini formulates an idea of realism as a 'ri-creazione del reale', to borrow his own words ('Poesia dialettale', p. 788): an imitation of the dialect native speaker's language and reality.

Il Porta non ha creato (come il Belli [...]) un proprio parlante: in cui ritornare, e da cui risalire al livello di una coscienza letteraria dove esprimerlo con tutta la sua esperienza popolana, primitiva. ('Poesia dialettale', p. 789)

With regard to the case of Belli's poetry, Pasolini strengthens the importance of the 'creation' realised by the bourgeois author. This idea of realism as a reconstruction could be explained by commenting further on Pasolini's poetics of regression. If the 'popolo' cannot represent itself realistically, as it lacks class consciousness ('Poesia dialettale', p. 717), the operation required of the bourgeois poet is double, writes Pasolini: 'un regresso che il poeta per simpatia compirebbe nell'interno del parlante inconsapevole, e un recupero verso il livello della coscienza' ('Dialecto e poesia popolare', pp. 374-75). The idea of creation is implicit in the action of giving to the dialect a 'coscienza linguistica', a 'riflessione poetica' ('Poesia dialettale', p. 717), as Pasolini describes it in another passage. This implies a conscious use of the dialect and a general class consciousness to avoid cliché and stereotype. In conclusion, Pasolini wants to avoid the idea that representing the 'popolo' is a simple, immediate action; this is actually a highly linguistic operation which also requires a deep social awareness. Moreover, as we will see in the next section, Pasolini is already defending his Roman novels from the accusation of being a simple reportage, a documentary of the Roman *borgate* in the 1950s.

⁶⁹ Patti, 'Pasolini, intellettuale mimetico', p. 93.

1.5 – The case study of *Ragazzi di vita*

In this section, I will show how Pasolini applies the concept of bilingualism in his Roman narrative production. I will do so by taking as a case study the first of his Roman novels, *Ragazzi di vita* (1955), in which Pasolini narrates the life of some young subproletarians of the Roman *borgate* (Ricetto and his friends), who live on petty robberies, prostitution, and violence. Before going deeper into my analysis, I would like to clarify that, in this section, I will not investigate the many references to and direct quotations of Dante's *Inferno*, which give the impression that the regression into the subproletarians' language and world also corresponds to a lower infernal environment. Just to give one example, the chapter 'Il bagno sull'Aniene' reports in the epigraphs a passage from Dante's Malebolge (*Inf.* XXI, 118-123). As noted in the introductory chapter, previous scholars have mainly concentrated on the reuse of Dante's *descensus ad inferos* in Pasolini's oeuvre. I choose to focus on a different aspect of Pasolini's Dantism to show the breadth and diversity of Pasolini's reuse of Dante.⁷⁰

The relationship between the linguistic operation of *Ragazzi di vita* and the critical reflections on dialect and popular poetry of the 1950s have been already recognised by scholars.⁷¹ The theory on dialect and realism formulated for the poetry of regression (in particular the case of Belli) serves Pasolini as a means to reflect on and to justify his experimentation with Romanesque dialect. Moreover, the relationship between the literary theory of the two introductions and Pasolini's artistic practice is shown clearly by a brief critical piece describing his working method:

È chiaro che ogni autore che usi una lingua 'parlata', magari addirittura allo stato naturale di dialetto, deve compiere questa operazione esplorativa e mimetica di regresso – come accennavo – sia nell'ambiente che nel personaggio, in sede, cioè, sia sociologica che psicologica. Vista marxisticamente la cosa si presenta come una regressione più che da un livello culturale a un altro, da una classe all'altra. Io mi sento assolto in questa operazione da ogni possibile accusa di gratuità, o cinismo, o diletterismo estetizzante per due ragioni: la prima, di tipo, diciamo, morale (riguardante cioè il rapporto tra me e le persone particolari dei parlanti poveri, proletari o sottoproletari) è che, nel caso di Roma, è stata la necessità (fra l'altro la mia stessa povertà sia pure di borghese disoccupato) a farmi fare l'esperienza immediata, umana, come si dice, vitale, del mondo che ho poi descritto e sto descrivendo. Non c'è stata scelta da parte mia, ma una specie di coazione del destino: e poiché ognuno testimonia ciò che conosce, io non potevo che testimoniare la 'borgata' romana.⁷²

To describe his work methodology, Pasolini refers to the poetics of regression, using exactly the same terminology I have previously discussed. Pasolini says that he wrote *Ragazzi di vita* following this

⁷⁰ For Pasolini's reuse of Dante's *Inferno* in *Ragazzi di vita*, I refer to the in-depth analysis made by Titone in chapter three, 'Dannata, dolente catabasi: l'*Inferno* di Pier Paolo Pasolini, in *Cantiche*, pp. 69-136 (pp. 69-80).

⁷¹ I refer mainly to De Mauro, 'Pasolini's linguistics', p. 80; Vighi, *Le ragioni dell'altro*, pp. 132, 195-96; and Patti, *Pasolini after Dante*, pp. 67-71.

⁷² Pasolini, 'Il metodo di lavoro' (1958¹), then in Pasolini, *Ragazzi di vita* (Turin: Einaudi, 1972), pp. 209-13 (pp. 211-12).

poetics, and so that he ‘regressed’ into the speaking world and reality of the Roman subproletarians. Referring to the sociological element of this regression, here Pasolini clarifies a psychological component. Indeed, in the characters of his novel he tries to imitate the psychological features and behaviour of the Roman subproletarians. In terms of the style of narration, the embodying of the other person is obtained by using free indirect speech, which reflects the young subproletarians’ psychology and cultural view.⁷³ ‘Questa forma grammaticale [...] serve a parlare attraverso il parlante – e subirne o accettarne quindi la modifica psicologica e sociologica –’, writes Pasolini in a long essay of 1965 entirely dedicated to free indirect speech (‘Libero indiretto’, p. 1345). It is common to Pasolini’s work method to conceptualise ideas in critical essays only after they have been used in his artistic practice – we will see another example of this in the second chapter, discussing Pasolini’s theory of films as life after death. In this essay, drawing the history of the use of free indirect speech, Pasolini says that Dante was the first to use it in Italian literature. According to Pasolini, the language used by Dante to narrate the episode of Paolo and Francesca is a sort of free indirect speech:

Dante si è valso di materiali linguistici propri di una società, di una *élite*: gergali. Che certamente egli stesso non usava, né nella sua cerchia sociale, né in quanto poeta. L’uso è dunque mimetico, e se non si tratta di una vera e propria *mimesis* vissuta grammaticalmente, è certamente una sorta di emblematico Libero Indiretto, di cui c’è la condizione stilistica, non quella grammaticale poi divenuta comune: esso è piuttosto lessicale, e sacrifica l’espressività tipica del Libero Indiretto all’espressività derivante dall’omologazione nel tessuto linguistico di chi narra col tessuto linguistico dei personaggi. (‘Libero indiretto’, p. 1351)

Dante imitates the language of the two lovers by using a specific vocabulary which is not his own, but belongs to their courtly world. This is a sort of first attempt to create free indirect speech through lexicon, comments Pasolini. The expressivity of Dante’s text is described as an inclusion of the characters’ language inside the narrator’s, which is also seen as a linguistic homologation of the first language into the latter one. In this discourse, Pasolini reveals the legacy of Contini’s essay ‘Dante come personaggio-poeta della *Commedia*’ (1957),⁷⁴ where the critic argues that in Francesca’s words the language of courtly poetry echoes, in particular Andreas Cappellanus’s lyrics and his treatise *De amore* (1185). Moreover, writes Contini, the courtly language is also visible in Dante-character’s own words. For example, when Dante asks Francesca to tell him how they had the revelation of their mutual love, he speaks of ‘dubbiosi disiri’ (*Inf.* V, 120), which, for Contini, is a sign of Cappellanus’s language: ‘Questa formula [...] è Cappellano puro’.⁷⁵ The reference to Dante, in an essay where the operation of regression is explained in terms of free indirect speech, is another late confirmation of the fact that

⁷³ Vighi, *Le ragioni dell’altro*, p. 196; Patti, *Pasolini after Dante*, p. 70.

⁷⁴ Contini, ‘Dante come personaggio-poeta’ (1957), then in Contini, *Un’idea di Dante* (1976), pp. 33-62 (pp. 42-48). In ‘Libero indiretto’ Pasolini writes: ‘Uno dei bellissimi saggi del Contini, quello sul Canto di Francesca, è illuminante’ (p. 1351).

⁷⁵ Contini, ‘Dante come personaggio-poeta’, p. 47.

Dante is the main model of Pasolini's regression. Moreover, in the essay, Pasolini uses the expression 'intellettuale mimetico' to describe an author who regresses into another person's speaking world. This shows once again the influence of Gramsci's organic intellectual on Pasolini's reconceptualisation of Dante.

L'intellettuale mimetico in genere, dunque, poteva un tempo rinunciare alla propria lingua e rivivere il discorso di un altro a patto che quest'altro fosse contemporaneo o meglio, molto meglio, preistorico rispetto a lui (le più belle *mimesis* del Libero Indiretto sono quelle dei propri padri borghesi o piccolo-borghesi, di una mitica generazione precedente: o quelle dialettali). ('Libero indiretto', p. 1364).

In different interviews and statements of the 1960s, Pasolini affirms that he used free indirect speech in the composition of the Roman novels. I would like to start from one of these to then move to the analysis of this construct in the text:

Con *Ragazzi di vita* e *Una vita violenta* – che molti idioti credono frutto di un superficiale documentarismo – io mi sono messo sulla linea di Verga, di Joyce e di Gadda: e questo mi è costato un tremendo sforzo linguistico: altro che immediatezza documentaria! Rifare, mimare il 'linguaggio interiore' di una persona è di una difficoltà atroce, aumentata dal fatto che, nel mio caso – come spesso nel caso di Gadda – la mia persona parlava e pensava in dialetto. Bisognava scendere al suo livello linguistico, usando direttamente il dialetto nei discorsi diretti, e usando una difficile contaminazione linguistica nel discorso indiretto: cioè in tutta la parte narrativa, poiché il mondo è sempre 'come visto dal personaggio'.⁷⁶

This interview clarifies Pasolini's linguistic operation in both the Roman novels. The use of free indirect speech had served Pasolini to imitate the 'linguaggio interiore' of the subproletarians. This operation is defined as a difficult linguistic contamination between the author and the character's languages. Thus, free indirect discourse is the space of the author's bilingual operation: this is where he can mix his own language (Italian) with the dialect of the 'popolo'. Indeed, free indirect speech combines some characteristics of third-person with first-person speech. In verbal narrative, a speech representation is conceived in terms of a relationship between two utterances, a framing and an inset utterance, or in terms of an interaction between two texts, the narrator's text and the character's text. In the specific case of free indirect speech these two poles (frame/narrator and inset/character) are harder to distinguish. Free indirect speech handles person and tense as indirect discourse would. However, the sequence of tenses is often not observed, since the verb tenses depend on the use of the character in the *hic et nunc* of the production. Moreover, deictic pronouns and adverbials

⁷⁶ Pasolini, 'Dialoghi con Pasolini' (1960¹), then in Pasolini, *Le belle bandiere: dialoghi 1960-1965*, ed. by Gian Carlo Ferretti (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1977), now in *SPS*, pp. 917-21 (pp. 919-20).

(especially those concerning space-time indications) reflect the character's rather than the narrator's position. Thus, the effects of voice all seem to derive from the quoted character, suggesting the narrator's putative self-effacement and empathetic identification with the character.⁷⁷ I will give some examples of free indirect speech taken from *Ragazzi di vita* in order to show Pasolini's bilingual operation as a mix between his standard Italian and the subproletarians' Romanesque slang.

È vero che il Ricetto per un po' di tempo aveva lavorato: era stato preso a fare il pischello al servizio delle camionette da uno di Monteverde Nuovo. Ma poi aveva rubato al padrone mezzo sacco, e quello l'aveva mandato a spasso. (*Ragazzi*, pp. 529-30)

In this passage, Pasolini inserts some Romanesque expressions into his standard Italian, such as 'pischello' [little boy], 'mezzo sacco' [half sack, where a sack means 1000 lira], and 'mandare a spasso' [to fire someone from a job] – which is now commonly used in informal Italian.⁷⁸

La Nadia [...] era sui quarant'anni, bella grossa, con certe zinne e certi coscioni tosti che facevano tante pieghe con dei pezzi di ciccia lucidi e tirati che parevano gonfiati con la pompa. C'aveva le madonne, perché s'era stufata di stare lì in quella caciara di fanatici, tanto lei il bagno, nel mare, non lo faceva manco per niente. (*Ragazzi*, p. 560)

Pasolini uses Romanesque to describe both the physical appearance and the psychological character of the prostitute Nadia. The use of the Romanesque word 'zinne' for breasts suggests that the character of Nadia is seen through the gaze of the young subproletarians. The word 'caciara' [big mess] conveys how Nadia perceives and judges what the young subproletarians are doing around her. The expression 'c'aveva le madonne' [to be in a bad mood] is used to connote the character's feelings.

Il Lenzetta intanto se ne stava ad aspettare il Ricetto e Alduccio, seduto sulla polvere sotto un muretto, tutto acchittato, coi calzoni di velluto e con l'americana rossa e nera che, secondo lui, spaccava il c... a tutta la Maranella. [...] Sopra il muretto [...] se ne stava la Elina [...] con in braccio il pupo più piccolo che faceva la lagna. Il Lenzetta non la filava per niente, e se ne stava anche lui in contemplazione della vita, dicendo ogni tanto i morti al Ricetto che ancora non arrivava. (*Ragazzi*, p. 629)

'Pupo' means 'baby' in many regional uses; the verb 'filare', normally used in negative phrases, means 'to listen' or 'to pay attention to someone' in Romanesque; the regional (mainly for central and southern Italy) word 'acchittato' means 'dressed up'. Free indirect speech also allows devices such as

⁷⁷ Brian McHale, 'Speech Representation', in *The Living Handbook of Narratology* (2014), <<http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/speech-representation>> [accessed 20 Jan 2020].

⁷⁸ To make the language available to any Italian reader Pasolini attaches to both his Roman novels a Romanesque-Italian glossary. Many of the Romanesque words I am commenting on are included in this glossary. For the explanation of those not included in the glossary, I use Giuliano Malizia, *Piccolo dizionario romanesco: un prezioso vademecum per conoscere e apprezzare il linguaggio popolare della Città eterna* (Rome: Newton & Compton, 1999).

curses and swearwords. Pasolini uses the expression 'spaccava il c...' [here with the sense of 'to be the f...ing greatest'] to indicate Lenzetta's love for his t-shirt. The expression 'dicendo [...] i morti' is Pasolini's literal translation of the Romanesque curse 'li mortacci tua' / 'mortacci tua', a strong insult aimed at the dead relatives of the addressee. This is a very used Romanesque insult, which appears many times in the parts of the novel which use direct speech, and which was also used by Belli in his sonnets.⁷⁹

Un militare che filava con dietro una zozzetta d'una puttarella che gli si attaccava ai calzoni, volle fare il dritto e gridò con una calata mezza napoletana [...]. (*Ragazzi*, p. 640)

To express Riccetto and his companions' opinion about the prostitute, Pasolini uses 'zozzetta', which is the Romanesque variation of the Italian 'sozzo' [dirty]. Then, Pasolini uses the word 'dritto' [wily] – now commonly used in colloquial Italian – to depict the young subproletarians' judgment on the soldier. Even if it does not replicate exactly what the character is supposed to have said, as in direct discourse, free indirect speech allows devices, such as dialect words, curses, and swearwords, to be used in an attempt to reproduce and imitate the young subproletarians' language and psychology ('linguaggio interiore'). Moreover, using this style of narration Pasolini can convey the characters' words more accurately than in normal indirect speech, where the narrator is much more evidently in control. Ultimately, reducing the distance between narrator and character, this construct makes the reader perceive them as a single unit.

Alongside free indirect speech, Fabio Vighi recognises other ways in which Pasolini reproduces the subproletarians' 'linguaggio interiore', such as the strong language in direct discourse, the popular character of some similes, the cheeky and bold Romanesque humour, the attitude to singing, and the many specific references to the topography of the Roman *borgate*.⁸⁰

If bilingualism dominates the parts of the novel written using free indirect speech, direct and indirect discourses are characterised by a different use of the language. Aiming at recreating the lively dialogues between the young subproletarians, the parts which use direct speech are written mainly in Romanesque dialect and are rich in curses and swearwords:

'Ce sei ito mai a Ostia?' domandò a Marcello tutt'a un botto. 'Ammazzete', rispose Marcello, 'che, nun ce lo sai che ce so' nato?' 'Ma li morté', fece il Riccetto con una smorfia squadrando, 'mica me l'avevi mai detto sa!' 'Embè?' fece l'altro [...] 'Me sa che in nave ce sei ito quanto me, a balordo!' fece sprezzante il Riccetto. 'Sto c...', ribatté pronto l'altro, 'c'annavo tutti li ciorni su 'r barcone a vela de mi zzio!' 'Ma vaffan..., va!' fece il Riccetto. (*Ragazzi*, p. 531)

⁷⁹ Giuseppe Gioachino Belli, *Sonetti scelti*, ed. by Piero Gallardo (Turin: UTET, 2013), p. 45.

⁸⁰ Vighi, *Le ragioni dell'altro*, pp. 203-04.

'Aòh', gli fece, 'a Riccetto, prima d'annacce pure te, nun te pare che sarebbe er caso de ofri quarche cosa... Aòh, io mica inzisto sa'... Ma tu ce 'o sai che noi due c'avemo giusti giusti li sordi pe'r treno e 'a cabbina...' 'Ce mancherebbe', rispose il Riccetto. (*Ragazzi*, p. 563)

Pasolini uses both the strong vocabulary of the *borgate* and Romanesque grammar. One can see the variations of the Italian definite articles: 'il' becomes 'er', 'i' and 'gli' become 'li', and 'la' becomes "a"; the use of 'nun' instead of the Italian 'non'; the use of 'de' instead of the Italian proposition 'di'; and the variation of the possessive adjective 'mio' in 'mi'. The many swearwords and vulgar expressions of *Ragazzi di vita* are not positively received by the Italian society of the time. Pasolini is asked by his editor to censor some of them, if he wants his book to be published.⁸¹ Nevertheless, even despite these precautions, the book will be accused of obscenity, for which Pasolini will have to face a trial.⁸² To completely eliminate strong language from his book would have meant, for Pasolini, to fail in his reconstruction of the subproletarians' language and world. This is what he declares in the court:

La parlata in dialetto romanesco riportata nel romanzo è stata un'esigenza stilistica. [...] Nei dialoghi riportati ragiono con la stessa mentalità dei ragazzi che sono i protagonisti del romanzo; anche nei discorsi indiretti, pur essendo io a parlare, cerco di pensare con la mentalità dei ragazzi e riporto in modo indiretto le battute dei ragazzi. Intendevo proprio presentare con perfetto verismo una delle zone più desolate di Roma.⁸³

Coarse language is used to report the way the subproletarians speak and to convey their way of perceiving and reading the world. As noted before, for Pasolini social diversity implies linguistic diversity and vice versa. Strong language was not new to Italian literature. Dante had used vulgar expressions in the *Commedia*: 'di merda lordo' (*Inf.* XVIII, 116); 'puttaneggiar coi regi' (*Inf.* XIX, 108); and 'avea del cul fatto trombetta' (*Inf.* XXI, 139). The use of both high language and low language in the same text is one of those elements that, for Contini, creates Dante's plurilinguism. In contrast, in many parts of indirect discourse Pasolini uses a clear and correct Italian. In other words, in these parts the bourgeois author's own language appears:

Subito non si capacità, credeva che scherzassero; ma poi capi e si buttò di corsa giù per la scesa, scivolando, ma nel tempo stesso vedeva che non c'era più niente da fare [...] nessuno avrebbe potuto farcela. (*Ragazzi*, p. 766)

The language even becomes lyrical in some descriptive scenes, especially those depicting the sky and the time of day:

⁸¹ Siti and De Laude, 'Note e notizie sui testi', in *RRI*, pp. 1700-02.

⁸² More than for strong language, the book is accused of pornography, for dealing with the subject matter of male prostitution. For more information about the trial, see Laura Betti and Fernando Bandini, *Pasolini: cronaca giudiziaria, persecuzione, morte* (Milan: Garzanti, 1978), pp. 59-72.

⁸³ Betti and Bandini, *Pasolini*, p. 65

Il sole stava già un po' calando, e la confusione era ancora aumentata: il mare svolgorava come una spada, dietro il carnaio. Le cabine e i capanni risuonavano di migliaia di grida, e le docce erano piene di giovanotti e di ragazzini. (*Ragazzi*, p. 563)

Cominciava a schiarire. Sopra i tetti delle case si vedevano striscioni di nubi, sfregati e pestati dal vento, che, lassù, doveva soffiare libero come aveva soffiato al principio del mondo. (*Ragazzi*, p. 664)

As one can see from all the quoted passages from *Ragazzi di vita*, the register jumps from a low one to a middle-high one and vice versa, and this constant change of register characterises the novel.⁸⁴ Thus, we can see that Pasolini's reconceptualisation of plurilingualism in terms of bilingualism maintains the original significance as the co-existence of both different languages and registers in the same text. In conclusion, this section has shown the relationship between the theory of regression, formulated in his critical reflections of dialect and popular poetry, and the linguistic operation of *Ragazzi di vita*. The linguistic and sociological bilingualism of the theory of regression becomes, in the artistic practice, the mix of Italian and Romanesque that characterises the free indirect discourse of *Ragazzi di vita*. The figure of Dante as the poet who moves between high and low languages is used by Pasolini as his own model, when in the novel he moves between his own Italian language and the subproletarians' dialect. On the example of Dante who immerses himself in his characters' world, as we have seen for the case of Francesca in *Inferno V*, Pasolini immerses himself in the world of the young subproletarian characters in order to be able to reconstruct both their language and their world. The bilingual line drawn by Pasolini in his critical reflections on dialect and popular poetry, originated in Dante and carried on by Carducci, Pascoli, D'Annunzio, Verga, and Belli, now counts a new representative: Pasolini as the author of *Ragazzi di vita*.

Conclusions

Pasolini's theories on dialect and realism, formulated in his critical essays on dialect and popular poetry to justify his production in Friulian and his experiment with Romanesque, are a personal reconceptualisation of Dante's discourse on the vernacular in the *De vulgari eloquentia* and use of the vernacular in the *Commedia*. On the one hand, Dante's concept of the 'volgare illustre' brings Pasolini to a reflection on his use of the Friulian dialect in *Poesie a Casarsa* that he then conceptualises in the

⁸⁴ Vighi, *Le ragioni dell'altro*, p. 205. The same mixing between the young subproletarians' lively Romanesque slang and the narrator's lyrical language can be found in Pasolini's re-writing of his own screenplays published in the 1965 collection *Ali dagli occhi azzurri*. As Jacob Blakesley underlines, what Pasolini does in his re-writing of the screenplay of *Accattone* is to lower the language of the dialogues between characters and raise the register of the narrative part ('Accattone in tre dimensioni', in *Scrittori inconvenienti: Essays on and by Pier Paolo Pasolini and Gianni Celati*, ed. by Rebecca West and Armando Maggi (Ravenna: Longo, 2010), pp. 25-50 (pp. 31-42)).

broader concept of dialect poetry as 'poesia squisita'. On the basis of Gramsci's reading of Dante's use of the 'volgare illustre' as a socio-political act, Pasolini rereads his literary use of the Friulian dialect as a criticism of literary tradition. Such a re-evaluation of his previous production also brings Pasolini to formulate a certain idea of realism (lyrical realism) in relation to his use of Friulian, despite the lack of a popular subject. On the other hand, Pasolini reconceptualises the Continian paradigm of Dante's plurilingualism in terms of bilingualism, which he applies to his theory of regression. The linguistic operation of this regression is bilingual in the sense that the poet moves between two different languages: the one of his social class and the dialect of the 'popolo'. The idea of realism in relation to the theory of regression is a recreation of the people's language and world, which required both a complex linguistic operation and a deep social awareness. Then, commenting on *Ragazzi di vita*, we have seen that the theory of regression and its bilingual operation appear in free indirect discourse, where Pasolini combines his Italian with the subproletarians' dialect. Finally, I have also shown two important phases of Pasolini's identification with Dante. Encouraged by Contini's review of *Poesie a Casarsa*, Pasolini identifies with Dante the poet of the 'volgare illustre' when discussing 'poesia squisita'. Alongside this operation, Pasolini formulates another idea of Dante as the poet who moves between different social classes and languages. He identifies with this other figure when practising regression in the Roman novels. In summary, this chapter has investigated the complexity behind Pasolini's reflections on dialect and realism in the 1950s, revealing the crucial role Dante plays in it.

2 – Rethinking realism from literature to cinema: Dante's *figura* in Pasolini's early cinematic realism (1960s)

This chapter will investigate Pasolini's dialogue with Dante in relation to the issue of realism in his early filmic production. Pasolini's interest in cinema is important for any discussion on Pasolini's realism, as the audio-visual format represents for him a new way to address reality and its representation after his 1950s literary production. In this chapter, I will argue that even when starting out as a director, Pasolini looks at Dante, through the lens of twentieth-century Dante criticism, as a model to reflect on realism, now in its cinematic form. Since my thesis follows a chronological approach in order to show precisely how Pasolini's dialogue with Dante and Dante criticism changes through his career, I will focus on Pasolini's early productions (1961-1966) to create a continuity with the previous chapter dedicated to Pasolini's productions of the 1950s.¹ Moreover, it is precisely the early stage of his career as a film director that is particularly interesting in this specific context. Having no experience in the new 'language of cinema', Pasolini draws more on literary sources: his point of reference is still his literary culture and his experience as a writer. Thus, the investigation of his early cinematic phase will highlight more his reliance on Dante. In the first section, I will introduce Pasolini's approach to the new medium and explain his theory of cinema as the 'written language of reality'. Then, recalling the publication of the Italian translation of Auerbach's *Mimesis* in 1956, when Pasolini has just developed an interest in cinema, I will discuss Pasolini's dialogue with Auerbach and reflect on the implications of this encounter. Finally, focusing on the chapter of *Mimesis* devoted to Dante, I will analyse Auerbach's reading of Dante's figuralism and explain his idea of the *Commedia* as a case of 'realismo figurale'.² In the second section, I will argue that Auerbach's reading of Dante's figural realism nourishes a specific idea of cinematic realism, which Pasolini elaborates at the very beginning of his career as a film director. In particular, I will show that Pasolini is inspired by the possibility to reuse Dante's figural scheme to achieve realism in his films, so much that he produces a personal reinterpretation of the figural scheme. I will bring evidence to this argument commenting on Pasolini's practice of choosing actors and on his directorial choices in his early filmic production. Dedicated to the analysis of Pasolini's first film *Accattone* (1961), the third section will reveal how strongly Pasolini's early cinematic production is linked to Dante. In particular, I will show that Pasolini juxtaposes the subproletarian

¹ For a general study of Pasolini's filmic production, I refer to Viano, *A Certain Realism*, and Hervé Joubert-Laurencin, *Pasolini: portrait du poète en cinéaste* (Paris: Cahiers du Cinema, 1995). For Pasolini's cinematic adaptations of Greek tragedy, such as *Edipo Re* (1967) and *Medea* (1969), see Massimo Fusillo, *La Grecia secondo Pasolini. Mito e cinema* (Rome: Carocci, 2007). For Pasolini's later filmic production, such as the *Trilogia della vita* (1970-74) and *Salò* (1975), I refer to Armando Maggi, *The Resurrection of the Body: Pier Paolo Pasolini from Saint Paul to Sade* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009) and Bazzocchi, *Esposizioni*.

² Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 213.

protagonists of his film and some characters of Dante's Ante-Purgatory as a way to reflect, and to make his audience reflect too, on the world of the Roman *borgate*. This type of investigation will add to my analysis of Pasolini's theory of cinematic realism in relation to Dante by showing that the representation of his film characters is strongly influenced by the *Commedia*.

2.1 – Pasolini's early film theory and the teaching of Auerbach

In 1950 Pasolini moves from Casarsa della Delizia in Friuli to Rome together with his mother. In the capital he makes his debut into the Italian literary world with the publication of *Ragazzi di vita* (1955), followed by *Una vita violenta* (1959). At that time, Rome is animated by many Italian writers, as well as film directors, since the city hosts the Cinecittà Studios. Very quickly Pasolini develops an interest in cinema. He first works on and off as a screenwriter and dialogue consultant with different film directors, such as Mauro Bolognini and Federico Fellini, then, eventually, becomes a film director himself. Pasolini's first film, *Accattone*, is released in 1961. After that his career as a film director will flow in parallel with his literary production to the extent that outside Italy he is best known for his cinema. Moreover, as proven by the essays of the 1960s, later collected in *Empirismo eretico* (1972), Pasolini dedicates much time to reflecting on film theory.³ Here, he develops and explains his "grammatica" del cinema' ('La lingua scritta della realtà', p. 1527). For Pasolini, cinema is a language of 'im-segni', by which he means non-symbolic signs or sign-objects. In the 'im-segno', argues Pasolini, there is a 'stretto legame di necessità' between signified and signifier, so that 'il significato ('cavallo', 'forca') è il segno di se stesso' ('Dal laboratorio', p. 1335). From this point of view, on a semiotic level, cinema and reality share the same type of language, as both use the 'im-segni' to express themselves. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the experience of cinema makes Pasolini think of reality in terms of a global language. Thus, for Pasolini, cinema is 'the written language of reality', as cinema represents reality through reality itself:

³ Pasolini explains his theories on cinema in a series of essays published in periodicals between 1965 and 1971, later collected in the section 'Cinema' of *Empirismo* (1972), which is now part of *SLAI*: 'Il "cinema di poesia"' (1966¹), pp. 1461-88; 'La sceneggiatura come "struttura che vuol essere altra struttura"' (1965¹), pp. 1489-1502; 'La lingua scritta della realtà' (1966¹), pp. 1503-40; 'Battute sul cinema' (1966-67¹), pp. 1541-54; 'Osservazioni sul piano-sequenza' (1967¹), pp. 1555-61; 'Essere è naturale?' (1967¹), pp. 1562-69; 'La paura del naturalismo' (1967¹), pp. 1570-72; 'Segni viventi' (1967¹), pp. 1573-81; 'La gag in Chaplin' (1971¹), pp. 1582-83; 'Res sunt nomina' (1971¹), pp. 1584-91; 'Il non verbale come altra verbalità' (1971¹), pp. 1592-95; 'Il cinema e la lingua orale' (1969¹), pp. 1596-99; 'Il cinema impopolare' (1970¹), pp. 1600-10; the following ones appear for the first time in *Empirismo*: 'Il codice dei codici' (dated 1967), pp. 1611-21; 'Teoria delle giunte' (dated 1971), pp. 1622-27; 'Il rema' (dated 1971), pp. 1628-32; 'Tabella' (dated 1971), pp. 1633-39. Some of Pasolini's reflections on the language of the cinema appear also in other essays of *Empirismo*, now in *SLAI*: 'Dal laboratorio' (1965¹), pp. 1307-42; 'La fine dell'avanguardia' (1966¹), pp. 1400-1428.

Il cinema altro non è dunque che la lingua scritta della realtà (che si esprime sempre in azioni), significa che non è né arbitrario né simbolico: e rappresenta dunque la realtà attraverso la realtà. In concerto, attraverso gli oggetti della realtà che una macchina da presa, momento per momento, riproduce. ('Battute sul cinema', pp. 1543-44)

According to Pasolini, cinema, like reality, is an infinite sequence shot which reproduces on and on the flow of the present. The discourse changes when the language of cinema is used to make a film. In the essays 'Battute sul cinema' and 'Osservazioni sul piano-sequenza' (1966-67), Pasolini distinguishes clearly between cinema and films. The moment of editing is what turns cinema into a film. Editing synthesises the 'im-segni' and frames them into a specific time and meaning, according to the film director's message. For Pasolini, in the process of film making, the film director combines the 'im-segni' and adds to them an expressive quality, a meaning according to what he wants to express.⁴ Thus, when questioning the notion of realism in cinema, Pasolini reflects on the use of the 'im-segni' (the signs of reality) in the process of film making.

When Pasolini approaches the world of cinema, a new important work of Dante criticism, which would prove hugely influential, has recently been published. This work is the German philologist, Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis: il realismo nella letteratura italiana*, published in Italy in 1956 – already discussed in chapter one in relation to the Italian post-war debate on realism. In Auerbach's analysis of the representation of reality in Western literature, a chapter is devoted to Dante's *Inferno X*, 'Farinata e Cavalcante'.⁵ Here, Auerbach analyses Dante's realism in light of the medieval notion of *figura*, and, ultimately, suggests that the realism of Dante's characters is mainly due to his reuse of figuralism in the *Commedia*.⁶ Auerbach introduces the concept of 'realismo figurale',⁷ which will shortly be analysed in more detail, for the *Commedia* to explain the extraordinary realism of Dante's work – 'il prepotente realismo dell'aldilà dantesco'.⁸

The history of Pasolini's dialogue with Auerbach is useful in this context as a way to reflect on the implications of this encounter especially in light of Pasolini's approach to cinema. The first reference to Auerbach appears in a letter to the periodical *Officina*, dated October 1956.⁹ Here, the critic is only mentioned by Pasolini, who, however, does not clarify which of the critic's works he is talking about. The very first reference to *Mimesis* appears in his account, dated 1957, of a night spent with Fellini on the occasion of his collaboration on *Le notti di Cabiria*:

⁴ Paolo Desogus, *Laboratorio Pasolini: teoria del segno e del cinema* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2018), p. 62.

⁵ Auerbach, *Mimesis*, pp. 189-221.

⁶ Auerbach, *Mimesis*, pp. 212-13.

⁷ Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 213.

⁸ Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 214.

⁹ Pasolini, *Lettere II: 1955-75*, ed. by Nico Naldini (Turin: Einaudi, 1988), p. 237: 'Quanto a Auerbach, se proprio L. [Francesco Leonetti] vuole conservarlo, non insisto: ma lo invito alla prudenza [...] Su Auerbach, L. potrebbe sempre riservarsi di scrivere un pezzo per La "Cultura"'.

Fellini guidava con una mano, e dava arraffate qua e là al paesaggio [...] Mi raccontava trascinandomi per la campagna [...] la trama delle *Notti*. Io, gattino peruviano accanto al gattone siamese, ascoltavo con in tasca Auerbach.¹⁰

As suggested by Corrado Bologna, we should not read this account literally, but as a poetic allusion, similar to when, in the letter 'Ascesa al Monte Ventoso', Petrarch mentions having consulted the *Confessions* by Saint Augustine while climbing Mont Ventoux.¹¹ However, this account does imply some important reflections. The date of the episode reveals that Pasolini reads *Mimesis* hot off the press, since Auerbach's work is published in Italy only one year before, in 1956. Mentioning a work of literary criticism while working on a film project suggests that Pasolini is using the same critical materials and literary guides for doing cinema that he uses when he writes literature. Moreover, because Auerbach's work is an important text for both the field of Dante studies and for the general literary debate on realism, Pasolini's account seems to imply that the reference framework for his approach to cinematic realism is still the literary Italian cultural debate and literary criticism.

If we read the account of *Le notti di Cabiria* entirely, one can see that not only does Pasolini mention Auerbach, but he uses some of Auerbach's critical terminology to discuss Italian neorealist cinema and that of Fellini. For example, Pasolini uses 'stile *humilis*' and '*piscatorius*' when talking about Fellini's *La strada* (1954); 'mescolanza stilistica' and '*mimesis*' to describe the style of neorealism; and the expression 'realismo creaturale' to define Fellini's realism ('Nota su *Le notti*', pp. 701-06). However, for none of these terms does Pasolini explain either Auerbach's notion of them or the way he reuses them in the new context of Italian cinema. The influence of *Mimesis* on Pasolini is also shown by an essay of the same year, 'La confusione degli stili', where he applies Auerbach's notion of mingling of styles to the Italian literary tradition, and where he uses for the first time the concepts of 'integrazione figurale' and 'compimento', for the case of Bassani's narrative characters:

L'integrazione figurale di Bassani è la fine di tutto, un'accorata illusorietà della storia: le sue figure in questo trovano compimento, e quindi prevale in esse un senso meglio patetico che politico della vita.¹²

Pasolini does not give the reader the instruments to clearly understand what he means by 'integrazione figurale' and 'compimento'. However, reading carefully his entire analysis of Bassani, one can perceive a similarity with Auerbach's discourse on the characters of Dante's afterlife as it is

¹⁰ Pasolini, 'Nota su *Le notti*' (1957¹), now in *SLAI*, pp. 699-707 (p. 699). For more reference on Pasolini's collaboration with Fellini, see Franco Zabagli, 'Pasolini per le *Notti di Cabiria*', *Antologia Vieusseux*, 2 (1995), 119-79.

¹¹ Corrado Bologna, 'Le cose e le creature. La divina e umana "Mimesis" di Pasolini', in *Mimesis: l'eredità di Auerbach*, ed. by Paccagnella and Gregori, pp. 445-66 (p. 447). The scholar also suggests that, even before reading *Mimesis* and so before discovering Auerbach, 'Pasolini era già da tempo auerbachiano in potenza', because there was in him a sort of 'auerbachismo trascendentale' (p. 454).

¹² Pasolini, 'La confusione degli stili' (1957¹), then in *Passione*, now in *SLAI*, pp. 1070-88 (p. 1084).

presented in *Mimesis*. As I will comment on soon in more detail, Auerbach reads Dante's characters as the fulfilled, accomplished version of their lives on earth, as in the afterlife they appear in their ultimate destiny: the events of their previous lives have already passed and nothing can affect them any longer. Moreover, these events have also determined how they are now in the afterlife. In Bassani's works in general, although the story is narrated in the present tense, Pasolini says that the events are told as if they had already happened. Therefore, Bassani's characters are perceived as fulfilled/accomplished too in light of this particular temporality, where the events of their lives seem to have already passed.

As Silvia De Laude notes, Auerbach appears as a lens through which Pasolini reads various different artistic facts and works.¹³ Many scholars have, indeed, underlined the legacy of Auerbach in Pasolini's critical essays.¹⁴ Only a few, such as Hervé Joubert-Laurencin and Patti, have started investigating the relationship with Auerbach in Pasolini's cinematic practice, by looking at his earliest filmic production. For example, both scholars have commented on Pasolini's reconceptualisation of Auerbach's *figura*. As already explained in the introduction, *figura* is a specific type of allegory used in the biblical context, where a fact or an event represents another fact and vice versa, and both are real and concrete. According to Joubert-Laurencin, Pasolini reuses the concept of *figura* to create intertextual relationships within elements of his cinema, or between his films and other filmic or literary productions. The scholar presents the example of the 'tear' recurrent in both *Accattone* and *Mamma Roma*. This element, according to Joubert-Laurencin, is used by Pasolini to create strong interconnections between the two films and their characters. Two of the main characters (Accattone in the homonymous film and Carmine in *Mamma Roma*) are played by the same actor (Franco Citti), and both characters cry 'crocodile tears' during the film.¹⁵ According to Patti's reading, Pasolini reuses the concept of *figura* to create a semiotic interconnection between the subproletarian protagonists of his early films such as Accattone, Ettore, Stracci and the figure of Christ. The association with Christ is firstly only suggested by symbolic associations with religious music and Christian artworks (for example, Bach's *St Matthew's Passion* used as soundtrack in *Accattone* and the reproduction of Pontormo's *Deposition* in *La ricotta*), then it becomes clear with the full identification with Christ in person in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*.¹⁶ Joubert-Laurencin and Patti's different perspectives on the subject suggest that the study of the relationship between Pasolini and Auerbach is a complex field that requires further investigation. As far as Auerbach's 'mingling of styles' is concerned, I follow Patti's

¹³ De Laude, 'Pasolini lettore di "Mimesis"', p. 475.

¹⁴ For example, see Bologna, 'Le cose e le creature', pp. 445-66; De Laude, 'Pasolini lettore di "Mimesis"', pp. 467-81; Lisa Gasparotto and Anna Panicali, 'Conversazione su Auerbach e Pasolini', in *Mimesis: l'eredità di Auerbach*, ed. by Paccagnella and Gregori, pp. 483-508; Alessandro Cadoni, "'Mescolanza' e 'contaminazione' degli stili. Pasolini lettore di Auerbach', *Studi Pasoliniani*, 5 (2011) 79-94.

¹⁵ Hervé Joubert-Laurencin, 'Figura Lacrima', in *The Scandal of Self-Contradiction*, ed. by Di Blasi, Gragnolati, and Holzhey, pp. 237-51 (pp. 237, 251).

¹⁶ Patti, *Pasolini after Dante*, pp. 104-25.

reading of Pasolini's mingling of styles as a form of hybridisation of diverse artistic forms, such as painting, music, and literature.¹⁷ For the notion of *figura*, on the one hand, I agree with the idea that Pasolini reuses it to create interconnections between his film characters and extra-textual people or characters. However, I also think that Pasolini reuses the notion of figural realism to answer the question of cinematic realism, when he first approaches this new medium.

In the chapter of *Mimesis* dedicated to Dante, Auerbach identifies the factor responsible for the realism of Dante's characters in the use of the figural scheme.¹⁸ For Auerbach, Dante's *Commedia* is a case of 'realismo figurale'.¹⁹ Dante's figural interpretation is similar to that used by the Church Fathers, whose aim was to show that the persons and events of the Old Testament were prefigurations of the New Testament and its history of salvation.²⁰ This is how Auerbach describes the figural scheme:

L'interpretazione 'figurale' stabilisce una connessione fra due avvenimenti o due personaggi, nella quale connessione uno dei due significa non solamente se stesso, ma anche l'altro, e il secondo invece include il primo o lo integra. I due poli della figura stanno ambedue entro il tempo come fatti o persone vere, stanno ambedue nel fiume scorrente che è la vita storica.²¹

In this interpretative scheme, for example, Moses and Christ are related as figure and fulfilment. If one considers the Old Testament only, Moses is just Moses. Whereas, having read and understood the New Testament, then in the Old Testament, Moses can be seen as a prefiguration of Christ (*figura Christi*). Despite being a *figura* of Christ, Moses is no less historical and real than Christ himself. Similarly, the fulfilment (Christ) is not an abstract idea, but also a historical reality. The figural scheme permits both its poles – the figure and its fulfilment – to retain the characteristics of concrete historical reality so that figure and fulfilment have a significance which is not incompatible with their being real. Auerbach argues that the *Commedia* is based on a figural view of things,²² by which he means that the individual souls are the fulfilment of their lives on earth. The only difference compared to biblical figuralism is that Dante's characters do not refer to someone or something else but only to an earlier version of themselves. This is ultimately the reason for their realism, because only in the afterlife do individual souls reveal themselves as they were/are:

¹⁷ Patti, *Pasolini after Dante*, pp. 105-06.

¹⁸ Auerbach had discussed Dante's *figura* in a previous critical essay, '*Figura*', written in German and published in Italy in 1938 in *Archivum Romanicum*. This essay appears in Italian translation only in 1963, as part of his collection of essays, *Studi su Dante*. Thus, Pasolini approaches the concept of *figura*, firstly by reading *Mimesis* and, then, a second time when reading *Studi su Dante*.

¹⁹ Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 213.

²⁰ Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 212.

²¹ Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 83.

²² Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 212.

Soltanto nell'aldilà esse conquistano il compimento, la vera realtà della loro persona; il loro apparire sulla terra fu soltanto la figura di questo compimento.²³

Another element that adds to the realism of the *Commedia* is that Dante does not represent the whole life of his characters but, for the most part, shows a single moment of reality in relation to their ultimate destiny and perfect order:

Per il fatto che la vita terrena si è fermata, sicché nulla più di essa può aver sviluppo e mutamento, mentre ancor continuano le passioni e gli stimoli che la mossero, senza che si possano scaricare nell'azione, nasce per così dire un'enorme accumulazione; diviene visibile la figura di ogni singola individualità, sublimata e fissata per l'eternità in proporzioni smisurate, quale non sarebbe mai stato possibile incontrare, con simile purezza e rilievo, in nessun momento della trascorsa vita terrena.²⁴

According to Auerbach, given that in the afterlife the character and unity of the individual are preserved and historical ties are dissolved, Dante's characters can manifest their lives with a completeness and an actuality that would never be possible on earth. Ultimately, not only does Dante reuse the figural scheme, but, continues Auerbach, he pushes the concept of figurality even further and eventually causes the destruction of the Christian-figural concept:

L'opera di Dante ha realizzato l'essenza figurale-cristiana dell'uomo e nel realizzarla l'ha distrutta. La potente cornice s'infrange per la strapotenza delle immagini che essa include [...] e in conseguenza delle speciali condizioni del compimento di sé nell'aldilà, la persona umana si afferma ancora più potente, più concreta e singolare che nell'antica poesia.²⁵

The result of this is the manifestation of the individual character in all its force. This means that when we meet Farinata in *Inferno X* he is not just the personification of heresy, but rather a real person:

L'effetto si riversa nel terrestre e il personaggio nel suo compimento afferra troppo gli ascoltatori; l'aldilà diventa teatro dell'uomo e delle sue passioni [...]. Si perviene a un'esperienza immediata della vita, che sopraffà tutto il resto [...]. E in questa immediata e ammirata partecipazione alla vita dell'uomo storico e individuale, stabilita dentro l'ordine divino, si dirige contro quello stesso ordine divino, lo fa suo e l'eclissa.²⁶

Auerbach's reading insists on the continuation of the characters' personality in the afterlife. The greatness of the character of Farinata, argues Auerbach, is due to the 'continuazione della sua personalità', and of Cavalcante is the 'continuazione del proprio essere terreno' in the afterlife.²⁷ In

²³ Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 213.

²⁴ Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 208.

²⁵ Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 220.

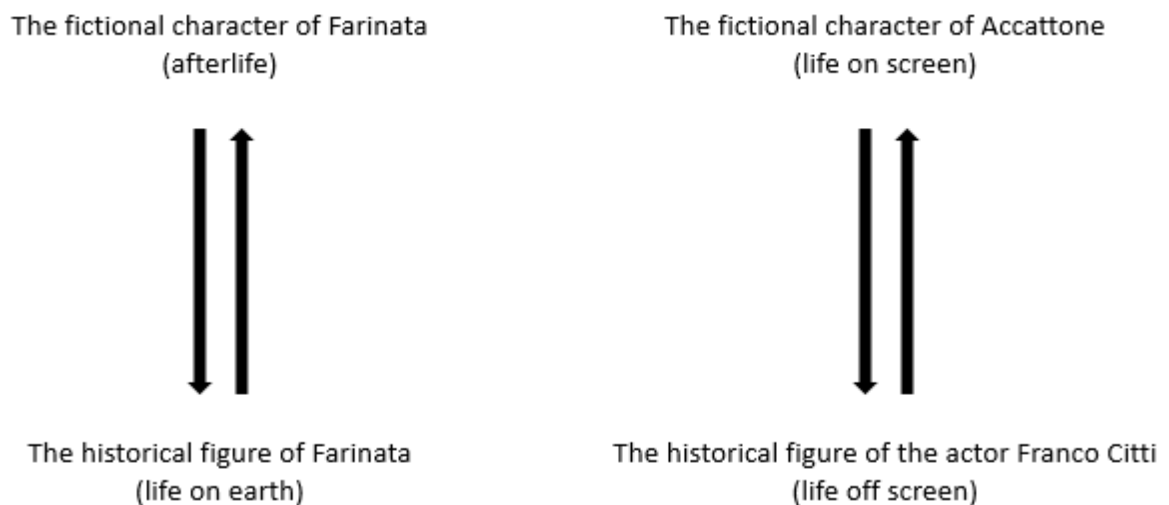
²⁶ Auerbach, *Mimesis*, pp. 219-20.

²⁷ Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 209.

the life after death of Dante’s characters ‘è sempre conservata l’esistenza terrena’, because ‘la loro apparizione nell’aldilà è un compimento della loro apparizione terrena’.²⁸ Dante uses figurality to establish a constant dialogue between afterlife and life on earth, a one-to-one relationship between what the characters really are and what they were. This is, ultimately, for Auerbach, the reason for Dante’s characters’ ‘prepotente realismo’.²⁹ In the next section, I will demonstrate that Auerbach’s reading of Dante’s figural realism nourishes and influences a specific idea of cinematic realism, which Pasolini elaborates at the very beginning of his career as a film director.

2.2 – Figuralty from Dante’s *Commedia* to Pasolini’s early cinema

My argument is that Pasolini is inspired by Auerbach’s reading of Dante’s figural realism, especially by the possibility of reusing Dante’s figurality to achieve realism in his films, so much that he reuses a similar figural scheme to that of Dante:



My contention is that Pasolini establishes a connection between life off screen and life on screen just as, according to Auerbach’s reading, the figural scheme establishes a vertical connection between Dante’s characters’ lives on earth and in the afterlife: the relationship between lives on earth and in the afterlife of Dante’s characters is transported by Pasolini into a similar relationship between the historical lives of the actors and the fictional characters of the film.

²⁸ Auerbach, *Mimesis*, pp. 210, 212-13.

²⁹ Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 214.

My argument is driven by the fact that Pasolini equates editing with death. If cinema is an infinite sequence shot that reproduces the flow of the present, editing introduces the notion of temporality: what before was present, in the cinema, becomes past in the film. Pasolini is clear on this point: *'la morte compie un fulmineo montaggio della nostra vita: [...] il montaggio opera dunque sul materiale del film [...] quello che la morte opera sulla vita'* ('Osservazioni sul piano-sequenza', pp. 1560-61). Thus, as noted by Enzo Siciliano, Pasolini's post-editing characters like Dante's 'parlano post-mortem'.³⁰ Pasolini's critical essays on films as life after death are from the second half of the 1960s. However, it is very likely that he had already started conceiving of films in these terms when shooting *Accattone* in 1961 or, conversely, that shooting his first film was key to developing this theoretical approach. In the article 'I segni viventi e i poeti morti' published in *Rinascita* (1967), Pasolini uses the episode of Buonconte from *Purgatorio* V to present his theory. Not only is this canto quoted in the opening titles of *Accattone* but, as I will explain in the next section, it is a crucial archetype of the whole plot of the film. In the article, Pasolini uses the element of Buonconte's final tear to explain that before death one's life lacks sense and only death can give meaning to life. Until the day we die, the meaning of our life is suspended and ambiguous, says Pasolini: 'finché siamo vivi, manchiamo di senso' ('Segni viventi', p. 1577). If we could live forever, our life would be impossible to judge. However, 'basta una "lacrimuccia"', continues Pasolini, to suddenly give meaning to life.

Osserviamo un momento questa lacrimuccia. Fino a quel punto l'uomo dal cui ciglio quella stenta e sublime lacrimuccia è gocciolata, era stato un peccatore: il suo era stato un esempio di (generico e cattolico) male. Quella lacrimuccia ha rovesciato la sua vita: ha gettato su essa, retrospettivamente, una luce completamente diversa: il male è divenuto un non male, un contrario del bene, una volontà di essere bene, un bene inespresso, ma rabbia di non essere bene, un'impotenza a non volere il bene, una forma aberrante eppure divina del bene. ('Segni viventi', p. 1575)

At the very end of Buonconte's life, his tear of repentance changes God's judgment and saves his soul. Pasolini uses the episode of the 'lacrimuccia' to underline the importance of death as the moment that makes our life understandable. The reference to *Purgatorio* V serves as an introduction to the main argument of the article, which is the parallel between death and editing, and the consequent importance of this operation in the cinematic practice: 'Il montaggio è dunque molto simile alla scelta che la morte fa degli atti della vita collocandoli fuori dal tempo' ('Segni viventi', p. 1577). In addition, commenting on Pasolini's essay, Marco Bazzocchi even refers to Auerbach's discourse on Dante's characters, as he states that Pasolini recalls 'Dante e l'idea di "compimento figurale" dell'esistenza proposta proprio da Auerbach riguardo ai personaggi danteschi'.³¹ Thus, one can conclude that when

³⁰ Enzo Siciliano, 'Pasolini studente poeta', *Corriere della Sera*, 24 December 1977.

³¹ Bazzocchi, *I burattini*, p. 55.

he starts his cinematic career, Pasolini is already thinking of films as life after death and that the reading of Auerbach probably contributes to this idea. The theme of death is also common to Pasolini's early films. Each of his first films ends with the death of the protagonist (one can think of Accattone in the homonymous film, the young Ettore in *Mamma Roma*, and Stracci in *La ricotta*). The reason for this choice may have been because of the association between death and editing. Moreover, as we have seen, it is common for Pasolini to conceptualise ideas in critical essays only after they have been 'experienced' in his artistic practice.³² An example of this has been discussed in the first chapter, where I have shown that Pasolini's 1950s critical writings on the relationship between dialect and realism come after his experiment with dialect in his artistic practice: the Friulian dialect of his 1940s production and the ongoing experiment with Romanesque slang in narrative. Another example also discussed in the previous chapter is the case of free indirect speech, which Pasolini uses to write his Roman novels in the 1950s but analyses in critical essays only in the 1960s.

In light of the equivalence that we have seen between afterlife and films, I will try to validate the above scheme, showing how Pasolini's figurality works. I will bring evidence to my argument commenting on Pasolini's directorial choices in his early films: *Accattone* (1961), *Mamma Roma* (1962), *La ricotta* (1963), *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* (1964), and *Uccellacci e uccellini* (1966). In particular, I will comment on Pasolini's practice of choosing actors as it reveals the idea of tying together the fictional story of the film and the actors' historical, real lives. Pasolini states on many occasions that his choice of actors does not depend so much on their way of acting and/or their previous experience, but rather on who they are and what they do in their real lives.³³ 'Scelgo gli attori per quello che sono e non per quello che devono fingere di essere', says Pasolini, and again he restates: 'lo scelgo gli attori per quello che sono realmente' (*Pasolini*, pp. 1313, 1320). Pasolini chooses his actors on the basis of some inherent features, which, for him, express who those persons are in their real selves (the selves that only the director is able to bring to light): 'lo preferisco lavorare con attori scelti nella vita [...] vale a dire scelti per quanto mi sembrano esprimere a loro insaputa' (*Centauro*, p. 1516). He seems uninterested in actors except when they play the role of actor in his film:

A me gli attori non interessano. La sola volta che un attore mi interessa è quando uso un attore per impersonare un attore [...] Sono interessato all'attore solo se deve interpretare l'attore, non mi interessa in quanto attore. (*Pasolini*, p. 1310)

³² Desogus extensively underlines the constant dialogue between Pasolini's critical theory and artistic practice ('Introduzione', *Laboratorio Pasolini*, pp. 17-34).

³³ This aspect was first pointed out by Robert Gordon, who states that Pasolini's actors 'are displaced from their "professional" capacity as players of fictional roles to connote some perceived inherent, iconic quality or meaning. Orson Welles in *La ricotta*, for example, is used less as an actor than as a director' (*Pasolini*, p. 193). Agnese Grieco also highlights Pasolini's choice of actors and the complicated interaction between actor and director ('The Body of the Actor: Notes on the Relationship between the Body and Acting in Pasolini's Cinema', in *The Scandal of Self-Contradiction*, ed. by Di Blasi, Gragnolati, and Holzhey, pp. 85-103).

Enrolling non-professional actors and especially people of a low socio-economic status to play the 'popolo' was very common among neo-realist filmmakers in post-war Italy. For example, the role of the protagonist (Antonio Ricci) of Rosellini's *Ladri di biciclette* (1948) is played by Lamberto Maggiorani, who had previously worked as a factory worker and, even though only temporarily, went back to his previous job after the film.³⁴ Pasolini's wide use of non-professionals in his films discards the association with the previous tradition of neorealist cinema. First, Pasolini uses non-professionals even for different roles than that of the 'popolo'. Second, not all of them are people of a low socio-economic status. Many are bourgeois or intellectual, and they are often members of Pasolini's circle of friends or even members of his family. For the cast of *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, Pasolini enrolls his own mother, Susanna, and friends, such as Giorgio Agamben, Natalia Ginzburg, Francesco Leonetti, and Enzo Siciliano. The reason why Pasolini is interested in non-professionals is that he wants as part of his cast of actors people who in their real lives resemble, according to Pasolini, the fictional character they are asked to play in the film. This aspect emerges clearly from the investigation of his cast of actors and is confirmed by Pasolini's directorial choices. On a few occasions, Pasolini reveals that he wanted a real film director like Orson Welles to play the role of the film director in *La ricotta*:

[...] scelsi Welles per quello che è: un regista, un intellettuale, un uomo che aveva qualcosa del personaggio che viene fuori ne *La ricotta*. (Pasolini, p. 1320)

Orson Welles is chosen to play a film director because he is a film director in his life. For Pasolini, the fact that Orson Welles is a film director adds to the realism of the fictional character of the director in *La ricotta*.

Orson Welles [...] è entrato molto meglio nel personaggio perché nella *Ricotta* ho fatto fare a Orson Welles in parte se stesso. Ecco, faceva il regista, faceva se stesso.³⁵

I will now analyse a few more examples taken from Pasolini's early cinema. *La ricotta* narrates the shooting of a film about the Passion of Christ. The people who play the extras in the film of the Passion are actors who normally work as extras in cinema. In *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, for the role of the Virgin-Mother Pasolini chooses his own mother, Susanna; for the role of the apostles, he chooses people that for him resemble the Gospel's descriptions of them: for Peter, who belonged to the 'popolo', he chooses a young Jewish subproletarian from Rome, whereas for Matthew, who was from

³⁴ For more reference on the use of non-professional actors in Italian neorealist cinema, I refer to Christopher Wagstaff, *Italian Neorealist Cinema: an Aesthetic Approach* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), pp. 30-35.

³⁵ Pasolini, 'Una visione del mondo epico-religiosa' (1964¹), now in *PCII*, pp. 2844-79 (p. 2857).

a higher social and intellectual background, Pasolini chooses Ferruccio Nuzzo, who has cultural and intellectual interests.

Scelsi gli apostoli in base alle notizie che si hanno su di loro. Alcuni erano dei popolani, come Pietro che faceva il pescatore, per cui affidai la parte a un giovane ebreo del sottoproletariato romano... circa metà degli apostoli erano persone di umili origini. Altri, come Matteo, avevano una base culturale più evoluta, e quindi per fare Matteo scelsi un intellettuale. (*Pasolini*, p. 1333)

With regard to his choice of Totò for *Uccellacci e uccellini* Pasolini says:

Scelsi Totò per quello che era: un attore, un tipo inconfondibile che il pubblico già conosceva. Non volevo da lui che fosse altro se non quello che era [...]. Totò, quello vero, era manipolato, artificioso [...]. Era un attore costruito da se stesso e dagli altri fino a diventare un tipo, ma io me ne servivo precisamente per questo, per il fatto che era un tipo. Era uno strano miscuglio di veracità napoletana credula e popolare, da una parte, e di clown dall'altra: era cioè riconoscibile, neorealistico e insieme assurdo e surreale. Perciò lo scelsi, e questo era quello che era, anche nei peggiori film di tutta la sua vasta produzione. (*Pasolini*, pp. 1347-48)

Totò is chosen not because of his ability as an actor but rather because, due to his cinematic career, he has become a type recognisable to the general public. In the film, Pasolini does not want him to play any role apart from that type that his cinematic career has created. The 'real' Totò ('quello vero') is, for Pasolini, this type: a mix between 'Neapolitan veracity and a clown', and this is what Pasolini wants to show in his film. That is the reason Pasolini insists that Totò should just play himself: 'Ero costretto a ripetergli: "[...] voglio soltanto che tu sia te stesso"' (*Pasolini*, pp. 1347-48).

If one investigates the lives of the non-professionals enrolled by Pasolini, such as the male protagonists of *Accattone* and *Mamma Roma*, one can see that there is not much difference between the fictional characters and the actors. Franco Citti has a criminal record and so does the fictional character of Accattone, who is a pimp and a thief. Moreover, when Pasolini is asked to comment on Citti's arrest during the shooting of *Mamma Roma* for contempt after a quarrel with a police officer, he seems absolutely unsurprised since the essence of Franco Citti's being was already displayed in the life of Accattone:

Quando mi sono deciso a scrivere *Accattone* e ho dovuto scegliere il protagonista, ho pensato che lui poteva andare benissimo e ho ricostruito il personaggio di Accattone su di lui. In realtà, ora, lui e Accattone sono la stessa persona. Accattone naturalmente portato ad un altro livello, al livello estetico di un 'grave estetismo di morte' come dice il mio amico Pietro Citati, ma in realtà Franco Citti e Accattone si assomigliano come due gocce d'acqua. Quando qualcuno mi ha chiesto, in seguito all'arresto di Franco Citti, che cosa ne pensavo, ho detto che lui era come Accattone, appunto, perché aveva dentro di sé quel 'senso di autodistruzione e di morte' che aveva Accattone.³⁶

³⁶ Pasolini, 'Diario al registratore' (1962¹), in *RRII*, pp. 1833-51 (pp. 1837-38).

Franco Citti and Accattone are the same person, says Pasolini, who has actually modelled the protagonist on Citti. Moreover, Pasolini seems to suggest an 'aesthetic fulfilment' of the real-historical self of Citti in the film, when he says that Citti has a 'senso di autodistruzione e di morte' that only Accattone can bring out clearly. This echoes Auerbach's description of the characters of the *Commedia* as the fulfilment of their lives on earth. As a life after death, the film permits Pasolini to show 'la vera realtà'³⁷ of the actor, which is impossible to see off screen as Citti is not dead yet.

The young male protagonist of *Mamma Roma*, Ettore, was working as a waiter when Pasolini met him. Impressed by some specific features of the young Roman man, Pasolini writes the script shaped on him and wants him for the role of the young male protagonist for *Mamma Roma*. Pasolini decides to give to the fictional character of Mamma Roma's son the real name and surname of the actor playing that role, so that Ettore Garofolo plays Ettore Garofolo. In a specific scene of the film, Pasolini recreates that moment of the young boy's historical life when he used to work as a waiter.

Lui l'ho visto una sera, andando a cena in un ristorante dove faceva il cameriere, da Marco Patacca, esattamente come l'ho mostrato nel film, mentre portava una fruttiera [...]. Scrisi la sceneggiatura modellandogliela addosso, senza dirgli niente, e quando fu terminata andai da lui e gli chiesi se voleva fare il film. (*Pasolini*, p. 1316)

A contrary example is the case of Anna Magnani who plays the role of Mamma Roma:

L'unico errore che ho commesso è stato quello con Anna Magnani, anche se in realtà non è dipeso dal fatto che è un'attrice professionista. La ragione vera è che, se avessi preso Anna Magnani per fare una vera piccolo-borghese, probabilmente ne avrei cavato una buona interpretazione. Il guaio è stato che non l'ho presa per fare questo, l'ho presa per fare una popolana con aspirazioni piccolo-borghesi, e per quanto la Magnani abbia compiuto uno sforzo commovente per fare quello che le chiedevo, il personaggio non è venuto fuori davvero. (*Pasolini*, p. 1315)

Pasolini complains that the figure of Mamma Roma does not emerge from the film because he made the mistake of choosing for the role of a subproletarian Anna Magnani, who instead belongs to the bourgeois class. According to Pasolini, this time the fictional character does not emerge from the film because Anna Magnani does not carry within her that quality of being a 'popolana'; and despite her brilliant acting performance, she could just not achieve that. This argument creates a similarity with the discussion we had in the first chapter about Pasolini's concern with the difficulty for a bourgeois author to represent the reality of the 'popolo'. Pasolini re-applies the same discourse to his

³⁷ Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 208.

early cinematic production, when he says that it is difficult for a bourgeois actor to play the role of someone of a different class.

These examples reveal that the fictional characters of Pasolini's early films have a 'real', historical self. There is an historical and real element in Pasolini's fictional characters which corresponds to what the actors do or are in real life. Pasolini's film characters are not just fictional but actually historical and real, exactly like the characters of the *Commedia*. Just as with biblical characters, Dante's characters are not fictional but they are drawn from real people who really lived or characters from previous works of fiction. Taking as an example *Inferno X*, which is the canto Auerbach uses in *Mimesis* for his case study on Dante, both the characters of Farinata and Cavalcante are real, historical figures: Farinata (1212-64) was a military leader of the Ghibelline faction in Florence and Cavalcante (1220-1280) was an aristocrat of the Guelf faction and, most important, father of Dante's friend and poet Guido Cavalcanti. In light of this discussion, we can say that Pasolini establishes a connection between the on-screen and off-screen lives of his actors, which resembles Dante's figural scheme. Moreover, as for the *Commedia*, in Pasolini's early cinema figurality adds realism to the characters by preserving a living link with reality through the lives of the actors. Figurality is the key to Pasolini's idea of cinematic realism. The actors on screen become a living and speaking body of reality as Pasolini's words also suggest in an interview from 1964:

Ho una preferenza quasi ideologica, estetica per attori non professionisti in quanto che essi sono brandelli di realtà così come brandello di realtà è un paesaggio, un cielo, un sole, un asino che passa per la strada. ('Una visione del mondo epico-religiosa', pp. 2857-58)

As Naomi Greene and Maurizio Viano point out, Pasolini never demands from non-professionals professional acting and, ultimately, wants them to act 'unnaturally'.³⁸ The little importance he ascribes to professional acting is the reason why most of the non-professionals that appear in his films only acted with Pasolini and never started out in a cinematic career (with the exception of Franco Citti and Ninetto Davoli). In a scene from *Mamma Roma*, Ettore even looks inside the camera and Pasolini decides not to re-shoot or cut the scene, but he deliberately leaves it like that.³⁹ Reflecting further on this specific case of bad acting in *Mamma Roma*, it seems to me that the unnatural and grotesque performance Pasolini often requires from his non-professionals could be seen as an attempt to break the fictional story, distract the audience from the fictional character, and move the spotlight onto the real self, the historical figure of the actor. Breaking fictional reality allows the historical reality of the actor to appear: the result is an encounter between the public and the real person of the actor. A

³⁸ Naomi Greene, *Pier Paolo Pasolini: Cinema as Heresy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 41-42; Viano, *A Certain Realism*, pp. 89-90.

³⁹ Viano, *A Certain Realism*, pp. 89-90.

similar argument has been raised by Agnese Grieco, when discussing Pasolini's choice of cast and the complicated interaction between actor and director. For the scholar, Pasolini insists on the body of the actor as a way to introduce a temporal and diachronic element into the film: 'Each actor caught by the camera actually reveals himself or herself as something beyond his or her role in the drama, as an autonomous landscape, a unique world, an original, many-layered reality'.⁴⁰

There are other practices that could be seen as an interruption of the 'narrative flow' which makes the audience aware that what they are watching on the screen are not just actors, but real, historical people. For example, I identify the use of dubbing and the preference for short takes. Dubbing is used by Pasolini to bring an unnatural, almost grotesque performance out of his actors. In Pasolini's films, non-professionals are not dubbed by real professionals but by other non-professionals, or ultimately by themselves (*Pasolini*, p. 1309). Thus, if dubbing is normally used to enhance the performance of non-professionals, Pasolini uses it with the opposite purpose, to stress once again that they are not professional actors. In terms of shooting practice, Pasolini prefers short takes rather than long takes, which were often used by the film directors of the previous tradition of neorealist cinema. His takes consist of close ups or full-length body shots of the character which Pasolini then edited together.

Faccio sempre riprese brevissime [...] non mi servo mai (o praticamente mai) di sequenze lunghe. Odio la naturalezza. Ricostruisco tutto. Non faccio mai parlare un personaggio a lungo in direzione diversa dalla camera, devo farcelo parlare dentro, per così dire. Perciò in nessuno dei miei film vedrà una scena in cui la macchina è messa lateralmente e i personaggi perdono tempo a chiacchierare fra loro. Sono sempre in campo e controcampo. Io giro così: ciascuno dice la sua battuta, e finisce lì. E non giro mai tutta una scena in una sola ripresa. (*Pasolini*, p. 1370)

If the long takes allow a spatio-temporal continuity, on the contrary, short takes make professional acting challenging since actors are not given time to actually act but just to say their lines. This causes quite a few problems and misunderstandings between Pasolini and the professional actors:

Il sistema va bene con attori non professionisti, i quali fanno tutto quello che chiedo loro di fare [...] Devo ammettere che gli attori professionisti restano un po' traumatizzati, perché sono abituati a dover recitare. Inoltre – e questo è piuttosto importante per definire il mio metodo di lavoro – la vita reale è ricca di sfumature, e agli attori piace riprodurle, ricrearle. La grande ambizione dell'attore è quella di incominciare con il pianto per passare, molto gradualmente, attraverso tutti gli stati emotivi intermedi, fino al riso. Io odio le sfumature e odio il naturalismo, per cui è inevitabile che un attore si senta un po' deluso quando lavora con me, in quanto io elimino alcuni degli elementi basilari della sua arte, anzi, l'elemento basilare: mimare la naturalezza. (*Pasolini*, pp. 1370-71)

⁴⁰ Agnese Grieco, 'The Body of the Actor', p. 95.

These last comments on acting stress how difficult it is to define what kind of performance Pasolini has in mind and requires from his actors. Professional actors are used to having to 'recitare', says Pasolini, that is, to perform a realistic imitation or impression of real feelings and emotions, whereas he is not interested in that at all. These last passages also highlight some important reflections on his idea of cinematic realism. For Pasolini, the use of long takes and the imitation of people's feelings through good acting are forms of 'naturalismo', which do not coincide with realism. Once again, as I have noted in the first chapter, Pasolini presents his artistic operation as a reconstruction: 'Ricostruisco tutto', he says about his process of film making (*Pasolini*, p. 1370). In conclusion, in this section we have seen that Pasolini insists on the actor's one-to-one relationship with his fictional character and vice versa. On the model of Auerbach's understanding of Dante's figural realism, the dialogue between life on screen and off screen – between fictional story and real life – is what adds realism to the film. Not imitating reality through good acting, but maintaining a vivid link with reality seems to be the key for Pasolini's cinematic realism. Dante's figuralism becomes, for Pasolini, the key to answer his question of the relationship between cinema and realism. In addition, we have seen that if, on the one hand, the life of the actor is that 'reality-element' that adds to the realism of the film, on the other hand, the film permits an 'aesthetic fulfilment' of the historical figure of the actor in the fictional story. We can then conclude that, for Pasolini, to represent reality in cinema means to represent the fulfilment of the extra-filmic life of the actor. As we have seen for the case of Accattone-Citti, the film, as well as death, adds meaning to the actor's life as it allows those inherent features (for which he was cast) to emerge more vividly. The practice of choosing people to somehow interpret themselves creates an interesting hybrid between fictional film and documentary film, which anticipates Pasolini's further step with the camera. When shooting his very first fictional films Pasolini is already moving forward, towards documentary film. Very soon, indeed, he will start shooting *Comizi d'amore* (1964), and then later he will put himself into other projects, such as the *Sopralluoghi in Palestina per il Vangelo secondo Matteo* (shot in 1963 but released only in 1965), *Appunti per un film sull'India* (1968), and *Appunti per un'Orestide africana* (1970).⁴¹

⁴¹ For a study of Pasolini's documentary production, I refer to Donatella Maraschin, *Pasolini: cinema e antropologia* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2014).

2.3 – ‘Remaking’ Dante’s Ante-Purgatory: the case study of *Accattone*

In this section I will investigate Pasolini’s dialogue with Dante, taking as a case study his first film *Accattone* (1961). In particular, I will show that the representation of the subproletarians and, more generally, of the Roman *borgate* is strongly influenced by Dante’s Ante-Purgatory.

Accattone brings to the screen the subject matter of the Roman subproletarians, already at the centre of Pasolini’s narrative production of the 1950s. The film is named after the protagonist, the subproletarian Vittorio, known as ‘Accattone’ [beggar] since he used to beg for money. After having made a living as a pimp, the encounter with a naive virgin woman, Stella, makes him try to live an honest life. Although he first tries to turn Stella into his prostitute, he then feels remorse and decides to provide for her by loading scrap-iron. Accattone finds this honest job too hard and eventually turns into a thief. Having been caught in the act of stealing a load of meat, he tries to escape on a motorcycle from the police, but he crashes into a car and dies.⁴²

Pasolini’s first and following films, such as *Mamma Roma* (1962) and *Uccellacci e uccellini* (1966), are full of reference to the *Commedia*. To recall just one, in the scene of *Mamma Roma* set in a prison hospital, a Sardinian prisoner recites some lines of *Inferno* XVIII, where pimps and seducers are punished by being immersed in excrement to different degrees.⁴³ In *Accattone*, the bond with Dante is established from the very beginning of the film. The opening titles of *Accattone* report the words of Buonconte da Montefeltro from Dante’s second canticle:

l’angel di Dio mi prese, e quel d’inferno
gridava: ‘O tu del ciel, perché mi privi?
Tu te ne porti di costui l’eterno
per una lagrimetta che ’l mi toglie’.
(*Purg.* V, 104-07)

This appears as one of those epigraphs authors insert at the beginning of their novel or composition to serve as a literary preface, and to link their work to a wider literary canon or tradition. The quote functions as a prelude to the many allusions to the *Commedia* scattered in the film. There are a few references to the *Inferno*.⁴⁴ Accattone’s line: ‘Stella! Indicheme er cammino’ (*Accattone*, p. 50) recalls *Inferno* I (l.1), and Stella’s name alludes to the symbolic value and the importance that stars have in the *Commedia*. Each canticle ends with the words ‘stelle’: the stars, which close the *Inferno*, are the first sign of light, and so of renewed hope, after the darkness (physical and moral) of Hell (*Inf.* XXXIV,

⁴² For a study of *Accattone*, I refer to Viano, ‘Accattone’, *A certain realism*, pp. 68-83.

⁴³ Bazzocchi, *I burattini*, pp. 46-50.

⁴⁴ The references to the *Inferno* in *Accattone* have been recognised by Bazzocchi (*I burattini*, pp. 46-50) and Patti (*Pasolini after Dante*, pp. 109-10).

139: 'E quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle'); on top of the mountain of Purgatory the stars, mentioned by Dante, are the ones he is about to reach in his journey through Heaven (*Purg.* XXXIII, 145: 'puro e disposto a salire a le stelle'); finally the stars, which close the *Paradiso*, are the ones Dante now feels assimilated to in his vision of God (*Par.* XXXIII, 145: 'l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle').⁴⁵ When Accattone is pushing Stella to become his prostitute, the character of Amore quotes Dante's *Inferno* III (l. 9): 'Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'entrate' (*Accattone*, p. 99). There are also a few allusions to the *Purgatorio*, from the reference to Buonconte da Montefeltro's words in the opening titles to the reconstruction of some passages from the second canticle acted by the film characters. The scene set on Ponte Sant'Angelo recalls Dante's *Purgatorio* through the figure of the angel (figure 1). Accattone's challenge to dive into and cross the Tiber under the gaze of the marble angel of Ponte Sant'Angelo creates a parallel with the journey by water of the newly saved souls under the supervision of the angel helmsman. As Casella explains to Dante in *Purgatorio* II (ll. 100-05), the souls destined for Purgatory wait at the mouth of the Tiber before being eligible to enter the angel's boat and being carried to the shore of the mountain. Moreover, when diving into the Tiber from Ponte Sant'Angelo, Accattone performs a swan-dive which in Italian is called 'tuffo ad angelo'.⁴⁶ The angel is a significant figure in the *Purgatorio*. Dante meets many angelic figures on his journey up the mountain, as they serve a variety of ministerial functions: the just-mentioned celestial helmsman who steers souls to the shore; the angels in green garments who at sunset descend into the Valley of Princes to scare off the serpent (*Purg.* VIII, 25-36); the angel doorkeeper of the mountain who etches seven 'P's on Dante's forehead (*Purg.* IX, 103-32), which seven more angels, one for each terrace, will remove (*Purg.* XII, 79; XV, 22; XVI, 144; XVII, 40-69; XIX, 46; XXII, 1; XXVII, 6). The scene of Accattone's face-washing ritual with the water of the Tiber (figure 2) recalls *Purgatorio* I, when Virgil cleans Dante's face on the sea shore: 'porsi ver' lui le guance lagrimose: / ivi mi fece tutto scoperto' (ll. 127-28). Accattone is on a night out with his companions, when a man comes to their table and asks to dance with Stella. At this point of the film, Accattone is pushing Stella to become his prostitute. After the dance, Stella and the man sit at the same table, and he embraces her tightly. Suddenly, feeling guilty for using Stella, Accattone runs to the Tiber shore. He first washes his face as a sort of ritual to cleanse himself from his bad action. Then, seeing his friends coming closer, he rubs his face into the sand and dirties it.⁴⁷ Finally, toward the end of the film, Accattone dreams of his funeral. Following his friends to the ceremony, he is stopped at the gate of the cemetery: he cannot enter. Accattone's prohibition from entering the cemetery

⁴⁵ Chiavacci Leonardi, note to *Paradiso* XXXIII, 145, in *DDP*.

⁴⁶ The 'tuffo ad angelo' seems to be a common trend of the young subproletarians. The practice is mentioned a few times in Pasolini's narrative production, for example, in the short story *La bibita* (1950¹, now in *RR1*, pp. 1387-91) and in *Ragazzi di vita*: 'il Ricchetto [...] si rituffò con un voletto all'angelo' (p. 762).

⁴⁷ This allusion to Dante's *Purgatorio* has been already recognised by scholars such as Bazzocchi (*I burattini*, pp. 47-48) and Patti (*Pasolini after Dante*, p. 110).

resembles the impossibility for the souls of Ante-Purgatory to enter Purgatory before a certain time has passed or equally the prohibition for any soul of Purgatory to move up a terrace before having atoned for the sins of the previous one.



Figure 1: On Ponte Sant'Angelo, Accattone is about to dive into the Tiber



Figure 2: Accattone's face-washing with the Tiber water

Patti reads the references to Dante's first and second canticles as having the function of creating a figural engagement between Accattone and Dante, and therefore interprets the life of Accattone as Dante's journey from Hell to Purgatory.⁴⁸ In my reading, Pasolini wants to juxtapose Accattone and Buonconte da Montefeltro in order to establish a similarity, which stands for a general equivalence between the subproletarians and the souls of Ante-Purgatory, between this part of the second realm and the Roman *borgate*. This is because I read the epigraph taken from *Purgatorio* V as the archetype ('the original model') of the whole film. The opening titles of *Accattone* are quite an important statement if we consider that this is Pasolini's first film. I will first recall the passage of Buonconte in the *Commedia* and then show how its most significant elements, such as the *topos* of death close to a river and the 'lagrimetta', recur in Pasolini's film.

Dante meets Buonconte at the foot of the mountain of Purgatory. This part is known as Ante-Purgatory and is inhabited by excommunicates and negligent souls, who did not repent until the very last moment of their lives.⁴⁹ They all must wait a long period of time before being allowed to enter the gate of the mountain and start their journey of purification. Buonconte, a warrior who died in the battle of Campaldino in 1289, is one of those late repentants who died a violent death. As we know from his words, he was saved by a sudden repentance just before dying; he ended his life with the name of Mary on his lips: 'Quivi perdei la vista e la parola; / nel nome di Maria finì' (*Purg.* V, 99-100).

⁴⁸ Patti, *Pasolini after Dante*, p. 110.

⁴⁹ The cantos of Ante-Purgatory (*Purg.* III-VIII) are those that follow Dante and Virgil's arrival on the shore of the mountain (*Purg.* I-II) and precede their entrance to the gate of Purgatory (*Purg.* IX).

Thus, when both an angel and a devil came to take his soul, the angel prevailed against the devil. Infuriated that one little tear was enough to deprive him of Buonconte's soul, the devil acted cruelly on the warrior's dead body. He sent a terrible storm so that the corpse of Buonconte was dragged away by the waters of the river Archiano and could not have a proper burial. Another sign of repentance is the image of his arms crossed on his chest forming a cross, with which Buonconte ends his story: 'al mio petto la croce / ch'i' fe' di me quando 'l dolor mi vinse' (ll. 126-27).⁵⁰

The film starts with the announcement of the death of the subproletarian Barbarone, who dies of indigestion after having dived into the Tiber with his stomach full of food, and later on it continues with Accattone's same action to challenge death. After having succeeded in his dare of diving into the river Tiber, Accattone and his companions are playing cards when he says: 'Ma lo sai chi è Accattone? Accattone nemmeno il fiume se lo porta via!' (*Accattone*, p. 13). The image of the dead body carried away by the river evoked here recalls the passage of *Purgatorio V*, where Buonconte describes his body dragged away by water. Immediately afterwards, one of Accattone's companion, Sceriffo, makes fun of the death of Barbarone and mimics Barbarone's dead body on the Tiber quay with arms crossed on his chest forming a cross. His positioning resembles Buonconte's last sign of repentance (figure 3):



Figure 3: Sceriffo imitates Barbarone's dead body

Lo corpo mio gelato in su la foce
trovò l'Archian rubesto; e quel sospinse
ne l'Arno, e sciolse al mio petto la croce
ch'i' fe' di me quando 'l dolor mi vinse.
(*Purg. V*, 124-27)

In the following scene, Sceriffo asks another companion, Peppe il Folle, who, whether God or the devil, has taken Barbarone's soul, recalling once more the episode of Buonconte: 'Tu che dici, chi se l'è preso, er Barbarone, Gesù Cristo o il Diavolo?'; and Peppe il Folle replies: 'Se lo staranno a litigà!... Certo era un bel soggetto!' (*Accattone*, p. 13). To sum up, in the first seven minutes of the film Pasolini alludes three times to the episode of Buonconte. Until this point of the film, the episode of Buonconte in the *Purgatorio* is used as the archetype to tell the story of Barbarone's death. In the next episode, Accattone, who has escaped death, unlike the poor Barbarone, has to face another challenge. The

⁵⁰ Chiavacci Leonardi, note to *Purgatorio V*: Introduction, in *DDP*.

Neapolitan business partners of Ciccio come to visit him. Ciccio was the pimp of Maddalena, until Accattone reported him to the police in order to take her over. Ciccio's partners want to know who has reported Ciccio to the police and punish him. Accattone puts the blame on Maddalena and, ultimately, convinces them thanks to a long pathetic bout of crying. While crying on their shoulders, another character appears, Balilla, informing us that when he was young, Accattone used to cry when begging for money. Besides, in many other episodes of the film Accattone seems to cry or mourn to the extent that 'crocodile tears' are a typical feature of his character. Thus, if in the very first scenes of the film, Buonconte functions as the archetype of the dead Barbarone, carried away by the river, now he does the same for Accattone, saved because of a tear. During the film, Accattone swings between being a criminal (a pimp and a thief) and an honest worker, and eventually dies while trying to run away from the police. Although he dies young and suddenly, in the very last moment of his life he looks peaceful and calm as he whispers: 'Mo' sto bene!' (*Accattone*, p. 142).

At the end of the film, the similarities between Accattone and Buonconte have become significant. They have experienced both good and evil, and they have died suddenly, young, and violently, failing to take into account that one does not always know when death is coming. Despite their violent death, they both appear peaceful in the last moment of their lives: Buonconte names the Virgin and Accattone says he is fine. In the stories of both Buonconte and Accattone, the moment of death is crucial and salvific. They must die in order to be saved. If Buonconte had not died, he would have remained a sinner. Similarly, as I will clarify shortly, with his death Accattone can finally save himself from the capitalist world, which Pasolini considers the evil of contemporary society. In addition, although in the eyes of society they are undoubted sinners, they are also victims. Accattone is a victim of society because of his position as subproletarian, an outcast from Italian society. Buonconte is a victim because of the violence he experienced at the moment of his death at the hand of other human beings. The sinner/victim duality is expressed by the crowd of souls in *Purgatorio* V: 'Noi fummo tutti già per forza morti / e peccatori fino a l'ultimo ora' (ll. 52-53). Pia dei Tolomei, who takes the floor after Buonconte, was brutally murdered by her own husband, who, according to the legend, had thrown her out of the window. Similarly, before Buonconte, Iacopo del Cassero reports his assassination at the behest of Azzo d'Este (ll. 64-84). This is also a recurrent theme in the story of many other souls of Ante-Purgatory. For example, in *Purgatorio* III the character of Manfred claims to be a victim of the imperial-papal conflict (ll. 103-435). Son of the Emperor Frederick II, Manfred narrates that after having been buried in the battlefield of Benevento, Pope Clement IV gave orders to unearth his body, which was then thrown on the banks of the river Liri, outside the papal territory.⁵¹ Another element of similarity between Buonconte and Accattone, and strictly related to death, is the *topos* of burial. This is a

⁵¹ Chiavacci Leonardi, note to *Purgatorio* III: Introduction, in *DDP*.

common element of Ante-Purgatory in general, as often the souls complain of lacking a proper grave. Buonconte tells how his body is buried under the debris of the Arno (*Purg.* V, 124-9: 'di sua preda mi coperse e cinse') and Manfred recalls his unburied body exposed to rain and wind: 'l'ossa del corpo mio [...] / Or le bagna la pioggia e move il vento' (*Purg.* III, 127-30). Similarly, in the dream about his funeral, Accattone asks the graveyard keeper to dig the hole for his coffin in the light and not in the shade:

ACCATTONE (*con un po' di coraggio*) A sor mae', perché nun me la fate un pochetto più in là? Nun lo vedete ch'è tutta scura qui, la tera?

Il vecchietto, sempre paziente e benevolo, guarda più in là, e infatti, poco oltre la buca, si stende una vallata, stupenda, invasa da una luce radiosa, sconfinata, che evapora nell'azzurro di una estate piena di sole fermo e consolante.

ACCATTONE Fatemela più in là...poco poco...Per favore, 'a sor mae'... (*Accattone*, p. 133)

If at the beginning of the film the episode of Buonconte works as the archetype of the story of Barbarone, at the end it does the same for the case of Accattone. Ultimately, we can say that the episode of Buonconte is the archetype of the story of any subproletarian who lives in the Roman *borgate*. Pasolini juxtaposes Buonconte and the Roman subproletarians as a way to problematise the soteriological question of the death of the subproletarians – at the beginning of the film Barbarone's death, later on Accattone's, and so in a way the death of everyone who lives such a life. Are the subproletarians good or bad, and, so are they going to be saved or not? By associating Accattone with Buonconte, who despite having been a sinner was saved by God's judgment because of his own genuine repentance, Pasolini wants to redeem the Roman *borgate* and invite his bourgeois audience to a re-evaluation of that world. Accattone is just another Buonconte: a saved soul. In an interview of 1964 Pasolini seems to confirm this reading of *Accattone* and the soteriological question that runs underneath the plot of the film. On this occasion, he describes the main subject of the film as the salvation of a soul: 'Il contenuto reale di *Accattone*, il contenuto elementare, letterale di *Accattone*, è la salvezza di un'anima'.⁵² To fully understand the salvation of Accattone, one must focus on Pasolini's reading of Christian categories of good and evil in Marxist terms. For Pasolini, evil is the consumerist syndrome, consequently good is refusing the capitalist world and the ideals of bourgeois society.⁵³ In this light, Accattone is a positive figure and ultimately a saved soul, as by refusing to work he has

⁵² Pasolini, 'Una discussione del '64' (1977¹), now in *SPS*, pp. 748-85 (p. 751).

⁵³ 'Il consumismo consiste infatti in un vero e proprio cataclisma antropologico', writes Pasolini in 1975 ('Sacer', p. 382). Pasolini's strong attacks on consumerist syndrome and neocapitalism appear especially in his news articles from the mid-1960s onwards. This topic will be discussed extensively in chapter four.

actually refused to adapt to capitalist values.⁵⁴ Moreover, as anticipated previously, his eventual death makes Accattone totally immune to consumerist syndrome. As discussed in the first chapter, for Pasolini the world of the Roman subproletarians represents a sacred crowd, precisely because they have managed to escape bourgeois society. Thus, I agree with Vighi's reading of the film, when he states that 'la caratteristica più appariscente [of the film] è infatti la sacralizzazione, piuttosto che la denuncia, della condizione sottoproletaria, con tutto il suo carico di miseria e corruzione'.⁵⁵ In an article written for the *Corriere della Sera*, on the occasion of the première of *Accattone* on Italian TV in 1975, Pasolini says:

Perché nessun borghese nel 1961, quando *Accattone* è uscito, sapeva in concreto cos'era e come viveva il sottoproletariato urbano e nella fattispecie quello romano [...]. Nel 1961 i borghesi vedevano nel sottoproletariato il male. [...] I personaggi di *Accattone* erano tutti ladri o magnaccia o rapinatori o gente che viveva alla giornata: si trattava di un film, insomma, sulla malavita. [...] Ma [...] io nel film non esprimevo affatto un giudizio negativo su quei personaggi della malavita: tutti i loro difetti mi sembravano difetti umani, perdonabili, oltre che, socialmente, perfettamente giustificabili. I difetti degli uomini che obbediscono a una scala di valori 'altra' rispetto a quella borghese.⁵⁶

This late account of the film confirms that *Accattone* was made in order to acquaint the bourgeois audience with the reality of the Roman subproletarians and to disprove the bourgeois prejudice regarding this class. The subproletarians do not follow the same scale of values as the bourgeois class, but in everyday life they are judged according to that scale and so they are perceived as 'evil'.

The similarity established between *Accattone* and *Buonconte* stands for a general equivalence between the subproletarians and the souls of Ante-Purgatory in general. *Accattone* and *Buonconte* are representatives of their respective groups. Indeed, the victim/sinner and good/bad duality is typical of both the Roman subproletarians and the soul of Ante-Purgatory. Some of the figures of Ante-Purgatory had been great sinners in life, but they have all been saved. Similarly, although they lived on the proceeds of robberies, violence, and prostitution or exploitation of prostitution, for Pasolini, the subproletarians should not be seen as sinners, but as people who have escaped the 'deadly sin' of bourgeois life, capitalist life. The episode of *Buonconte* is not important *per se*, but for the nature of the souls of Ante-Purgatory. The story of their lives better than any other of the *Commedia* shows the revealing power of death, and this serves Pasolini to open up a question about the lives of the Roman

⁵⁴ Greene recalls Pio Baldelli's reading of *Accattone* as 'the itinerary of a sinner' where he identifies four different chronological phases: the first is the *Inferno* of the *borgate*; the second is the meeting with the woman who blesses, Stella; the third is the *Purgatorio* where Accattone is torn between his desire for wealth and his affection for Stella; and fourth the calvary of redemption and death (Pio Baldelli, *Film e opera letteraria* (Padua: Marsilio, 1964), pp. 350-55; later mentioned in Greene, *Pasolini*, p. 27).

⁵⁵ Vighi, *Le ragioni dell'altro*, p. 227.

⁵⁶ Pasolini, 'Il mio "Accattone" in Tv dopo il genocidio' (1975¹), then in *Luterane*, now in *SPS*, pp. 674-80 (pp. 674-77).

subproletarians. The essay 'I segni viventi e i poeti morti' (1967), analysed in section 2.2, brings further evidence to the fact that the episode of Buonconte is representative of the general group of souls of Ante-Purgatory. When recalling the passage of Buonconte to stress the importance of the moment of death, Pasolini blends together the figure of Buonconte with that of Manfred: 'basta una "lacrimuccia" (in "co' del ponte presso Benevento")', he writes ('Segni viventi', p. 1575). Buonconte's 'lagrimuccia' becomes the tears of repentance of Manfred on the battlefield of Benevento.⁵⁷

In light of the association between subproletarians and souls of Ante-Purgatory, a further macro comparison can be suggested between the film and the second canticle in terms of setting, lighting, and the communal atmosphere. In terms of setting, especially the first part of the film goes around the river Tiber and its shore. As discussed earlier, the river is linked to the *topos* of death: the death of Barbarone and Accattone's same action to challenge death. Crossing the Tiber can cause either death or salvation, and this suggests that Pasolini perceives and presents the river Tiber as a watershed of souls, similar to the function that the Tiber and the Acheron have in the *Commedia*. Indeed, the river Tiber is very important for the structure and the organisation of the Purgatory. As recalled earlier in the section, Casella informs Dante that the souls destined for salvation wait at the mouth of the Tiber before reaching Purgatory on the angel's boat:⁵⁸

Ond'io, ch'era ora a la marina vòlto
dove l'acqua di Tevero s'insala,
benignamente fu' da lui ricolto.
A quella foce ha elli or dritta l'ala,
però che sempre quivi si ricoglie
qual verso Acheronte non si cala.
(*Purg.* II, 100-05)

In *Accattone* the presence of a water source and the adjacent shore create a parallel with the setting of the first cantos of Dante's *Purgatorio*. Not only are these set on the shore of the mountain, but the episodes of Manfred and Buonconte tell that they both died near a watercourse – the river Calore near Benevento for the case of Manfred and the Archiano for the episode of Buonconte (*Purg.* III, 127-29; *Purg.* V, 124-26).

With regard to lighting, I would like to draw a parallel between the contrast of light and shadow in some scenes of *Accattone* and some episodes of the *Purgatorio*. After the dark journey through Hell, Dante's second canticle is well-known for being an interplay of light and dark.⁵⁹ There are many

⁵⁷ The variation of Dante's text has been recognised and commented by Titone, *Cantiche*, pp. 101-02.

⁵⁸ In the *Purgatorio*, there is another passage where the Tiber is presented as the shore of the newly saved souls, in opposition to the Acheron, which is where the souls bound for damnation dwell: 'Sanza restarsi, per sé stessa cade / mirabilmente a l'una de le rive; / quivi conosce prima le sue strade' (*Purg.* XXV, 85-87).

⁵⁹ In the cantos of Ante-Purgatory (from *Purg.* I to IX), there are seventeen occurrences of 'sol'/'sole' and eight of 'luce'/'luci'/'lucerna'/'lucente'.

references to stars (*Purg.* VIII, 91: 'Le quattro chiare stelle'), constellations (*Purg.* I, 21: 'velando i Pesci'), planets (*Purg.* XIX, 3: 'Saturno'), dawn (*Purg.* IX, 52: 'ne l'alba'), and sunset (*Purg.* XXVII, 68: 'che 'l sol corcar'); and there are moments of great brightness, for example, when Cato and the angel helmsman appear in front of Dante. Similarly, we can say that *Accattone* is full of light. The strength and the brightness of the sun are clearly indicated in the screenplay and are very visible in the film.⁶⁰ The characters are often facing the sun with the effect of adding to the scene a disturbing brightness and whiteness (figure 4). In a later poem collected in *Trasumanar e organizzar* (1971), 'Proposito di scrivere una poesia intitolata "I primi sei canti del Purgatorio"', Pasolini recalls the light of the first cantos of the *Purgatorio* and demonstrates that he remembers well the fundamental role that light and shadow play in this part of the poem:

Dei primi sei canti del Purgatorio
 So per ora solo che trattano molto di luce
 (nella mia memoria!!!)
 [...]
 So anche che in Dante la luce
 è tutta controluce e di taglio.
 Se qualche momento di luce 'piatta' c'è,
 essa è però radente, con 'le ombre lunghe'
 (la macchina da presa
 portata in spalla di buon mattino,
 anzi, all'aurora,
 per essere sul posto alle otto,
 col freschetto, e in corpo la lietezza)

Le esperienze mattutine medioevali
 tornano artificialmente
 [...]
 Dove canta Filomena, concentrata, ignara,
 piena della sua certezza.⁶¹

According to Pasolini, Dante's light is never homogenous in the first cantos of the *Purgatorio*, but it consists of backlight or side light, and sometimes it produces long shadows. Similarly, in *Accattone* the light is never uniform on the characters, but their faces are often over-exposed to the bright light of the sun (figure 4) or illuminated by a side light (figures 5 and 6). In addition, Pasolini seems to remember that in these cantos Dante's light is an early morning light. When Dante and Virgil arrive on

⁶⁰ The brightness of the setting is underlined in the screenplay of the film: 'Tutto brucia. Il sole tenero della mattina di fine estate, come calce rovente' (*Accattone*, p. 7); 'Sfolgora il potente sole di mezzogiorno' (p. 12); 'Sotto il sole che fulmina' (p. 23); 'Sotto un sole furioso' (p. 44); 'Le quattro facce al sole' (p. 65); 'Il cimitero bianco, desolato e screpolato nel sole accecante' (p. 74); 'Sotto il sole implacabile, Accattone e Pio stanno aspettando' (p. 76); 'Accattone avanza sotto il sole. Eccola laggiù, la casa, immobile e calcinante sotto il sole' (p. 81); 'È lì sotto il sole' (p. 118).

⁶¹ Pasolini, 'Proposito di scrivere una poesia intitolata "I primi sei canti del Purgatorio"', in *Trasumanar*, now in *TPII*, pp. 64-67 (p. 66).

the shore of the mountain, the sun is just about to rise: 'L'alba vinceva l'ora mattutina' (*Purg.* I, 115). In the poem the reference to Philomela is another Dantesque reminiscence of the light in Ante-Purgatory. Her singing alludes to *Purgatorio* IX (ll. 13-15), where Dante describes the pre-dawn moment as the time when the swallow sings sadly in memory of her ancient sufferings. According to critics, here Dante refers to the mythological tale of the two sisters, Procne and Philomela. After being raped by her sister's husband, Philomela is transformed into a nightingale, whereas Procne becomes a swallow.⁶² Although it would be an exaggeration to say that this poem clearly demonstrates the legacy of Dante's *Purgatorio* in Pasolini's taste for interplay between light and dark, it shows how vivid Pasolini's memory is of the very first cantos of the canticle, and therefore how Dante remains a constant reference during his whole life and career. Moreover, the fact that Pasolini reflects on Dante's use of light as if he were a film director shows, on the one hand, Pasolini's contamination between literary reference and cinematic experience and, on the other, how the way he looks at Dante is never the same throughout his life. In light of this discourse and remembering that for Pasolini the subproletarians are a sacred crowd, saved souls, a final parallel can be drawn between the way in which Cato appears in *Purgatorio* I and Pasolini's way of filming his characters. Cato is another example of an alleged sinner (a pagan and a suicide) who in the end has been saved. This is another powerful figure of the *Commedia*, who problematises the soteriological question regarding human beings (in particular the pagans) and gives great importance to the moment of death to understand one's life. In *Purgatorio* I the face of Cato is described as strongly illuminated by the light of the stars. Similarly, many times in the film, the faces of Accattone and of his companions are illuminated by the bright sun so intensively that we can see the difficulty they face in keeping their eyes wide open (figure 4).



Figure 4: Accattone is over-exposed to the bright sun

Li raggi de le quattro luci sante
fregiavan sì la sua faccia di lume,
ch'i' 'l vedea come 'l sol fosse davante.
(*Purg.* I, 39-41)

⁶² Hollander, note to *Purgatorio* IX, 13-15, in *DDP*. For the myth, see Ovid's *Metamorphoses* VI, 412 and onwards (*Le metamorfosi*, ed. by Giovanna Faranda Villa (Milan: BUR, 2016).



Figure 5: Accattone is illuminated by a side light coming from outside



Figure 6: The interplay of light and dark on Stella and Accattone

The last aspect of comparison between the Roman subproletarians of the film and the souls of Ante-Purgatory is the communal atmosphere. Accattone, as well as Manfred and Buonconte are not just single individuals, but they are representatives of a big group and they are always surrounded by their companions. Sharing the same destiny – worldly or otherworldly – creates a complicity between the characters which is manifested in both Dante’s text and Pasolini’s film by scenes where the main character appears and moves in a group.⁶³ The first cantos of the *Purgatorio* are animated by the mass of souls that Dante meets on his way, from which individual characters stand out: the ‘turba’ (l. 52) that got off the angelic boat in *Purgatorio* II and from which Casella stands out; the group of *Purgatorio* III that Dante describes as ‘come le pecorelle’ (l. 79) and that remains behind Manfred’s back; the ‘persone / che si stavano all’ombra’ (ll. 103-04) of *Purgatorio* IV to which Belacqua belongs ; the ‘genti’ (l. 23) of *Purgatorio* V from which stand out the individual figures of Iacopo del Cassero, Buonconte da Montefeltro, and Pia dei Tolomei; the ‘turba spessa’ (*Purg.* VI, 10) of negligent princes which dwell in the Valley of Princes. Similarly, Accattone lives a sort of life in common with the other subproletarians. Because none has a job, the subproletarians kill their time either sitting at the bar playing cards, or going around the city of Rome without any specific purpose in mind. A parallel can be drawn between a scene of the film, where Accattone and his companions are all moving one after the other toward a companion’s house to cook some spaghetti received in charity (figure 7), and the group of excommunicated souls (of which Manfred is part) that Dante describes as a flock of sheep:

⁶³ The communal atmosphere is typical of many cantos of Dante’s *Commedia*. However, in the *Inferno* there is no complicity among the sinners but rather the opposite; an example is given in *Inf.* XXXII, where a sinner reveals to Dante the identity of his fellow, Bocca degli Abati against his will. For more information on Dante’s crowd scenes, I refer to Jonathan Usher, “‘Più di Mille’: Crowd Control in the *Commedia*”, in *Word and Drama in Dante: Essays on the ‘Divina Commedia’*, ed. by John C. Barnes and Jennifer Petrie (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1993), pp. 55-71.



Figure 7: The subproletarians moving one after the other

da man sinistra m'apparì una gente
d'anime, che movieno i piè ver' noi,
e non pareva, sì venian lente.

[...]

Come le pecorelle escon del chiuso
a una, a due, a tre, e l'altre stanno
timidette atterrando l'occhio e 'l muso;
e ciò che fa la prima, e l'altre fanno,
addossandosi a lei, s'ella s'arresta,
semplici e quete, e lo 'mperché non sanno.
(*Purg.* III, 58-60, 79-84)

There are a few late accounts which confirm Pasolini's fascination with the cantos of Ante-Purgatory. In the letter sent to the journal *Paragone* together with his article 'La volontà di Dante a essere poeta' (1965), which will be discussed in chapter three, Pasolini claims to have recently reread the *Commedia* and that his favourite part are the first six cantos of the *Purgatorio*:

Alcuni giorni fa, poiché avevamo recentemente riletto la *Commedia* tutti e due, ho chiesto a Moravia quale gli fosse parso il pezzo più bello del poema: quanto a me, erano i primi sei canti del *Purgatorio*, con speciale riferimento ai racconti che alcune anime fanno della propria morte; soprattutto Buonconte... Anche per Moravia il pezzo più bello era il racconto della morte di Buonconte.⁶⁴

The fascination with Ante-Purgatory appears also in Pasolini's last novel, *Petrolio* (1992). As will be discussed in chapter five, *Petrolio* opens with the image of a dispute between an angel and a devil over the protagonist's dead body, which recalls the dispute over Buonconte's body. This confirms Dante's *Purgatorio* V to be a productive archetype, which Pasolini reuses at different times of his career and in different types of production. Finally, going back to *Trasumanar e organizzar*, initially Pasolini wanted to entitle his poetic collection 'I primi sei canti del *Purgatorio* e altre poesie comuniste'.⁶⁵ Eventually, Pasolini chose another title, but a surviving trace of his first idea is the above-mentioned poem 'Proposito di scrivere una poesia intitolata "I primi sei canti del *Purgatorio*"', which is one of the first compositions written for the collection (in January 1969). Moreover, the definition of Dante's cantos as 'communist poems' adds value to the previous discussion about Pasolini's Marxist reinterpretation of the Christian categories of good and evil for the case of the Accattone-Buonconte. In *Accattone*, Pasolini reworks Dante's Ante-Purgatory and turns it into a sort of anti-capitalist realm, inhabited by

⁶⁴ The letter was published alongside 'La volontà di Dante a essere poeta', now in Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, 'Note e notizie sui testi', in *SLAII*, pp. 2949-50 (p. 2949).

⁶⁵ Walter Siti and others, 'Note e notizie sui testi', in *TPII*, p. 1514.

those victims of capitalist society whose anti-capitalist values have been finally recognised and awarded with salvation.

In conclusion, I read *Accattone* as a 'remake' of Dante's Ante-Purgatory in cinematic form, where the souls are played by the Roman *borgatari* and Dante is played by Pasolini – namely by the silent gaze of the film director. As I have noted with reference to the poem from *Trasumanar e organizzar*, Pasolini speaks of Dante as a sort of film director, who plays with light and shadow in the cantos of Ante-Purgatory. In addition, this reading of the film shows that Pasolini continues to identify with the figure of Dante as the author who moves between different social classes, discussed in chapter one. If, in the Roman novels, Pasolini moves between different social classes through the use of different languages (mixing his Italian with the subproletarians' Romanesque), in the film Pasolini literally moves with his camera between real subproletarians. The interplay between the bourgeois artist and subproletarians as two separate social classes, which is visible at the level of language and register in the Roman novels, is also evident here. The presence of the bourgeois intellectual, Pasolini, is tangible by the choice of literary quotations (the explicit and less explicit references to the *Commedia*) and music (Bach's *St Matthew's Passion* is chosen for the soundtrack). As discussed in section 2.2, Pasolini uses real subproletarians to play the fictional role of subproletarians, real inhabitants of the Roman *borgate*:

Nessuno dei quali [the film characters] – lo ripeto per la millesima volta – era attore: e in quanto se stesso era proprio se stesso. La sua realtà veniva rappresentata attraverso la sua realtà. Quei 'corpi' erano così nella vita come nello schermo. ('Il mio "Accattone" in Tv dopo il genocidio', p. 675)

Pasolini restates the importance for his film characters to be real, historical figures and not just fictional characters. When watching *Accattone*, the bourgeois audience faces real subproletarians and not just fictional characters. Moreover, at the same time, his cultured public may be able to spot the many allusions to Dante's *Purgatorio* and see the resemblance between subproletarians and Dante's penitent souls created by Pasolini. In the eye of a careful audience, the face of a real subproletarian should overlap with the face of Buonconte and lead to a re-evaluation of the Roman *borgate*. Pasolini's film characters appear as something beyond their role in the drama, they are multi-layered figures. On the one hand, they are bound to reality through the historical lives of the actors and, on the other, they resemble the literary characters of Dante's *Commedia*. Recalling Pasolini's own words on his film practice: 'Ricostruisco tutto', now we can clearly see how his fictional characters are proper 'reconstructions'. Finally, the death of Accattone is the climax and most Dantean moment of the film, as it reveals Pasolini's dialogue with Dante in two different ways: the reuse of Ante-Purgatory and the figural scheme. On the one hand, the salvific death and its revealing power are crucial elements for

the juxtaposition between Accattone and Buonconte. On the other hand, death reveals the figural scheme that lies beneath the film: the identity between Accattone and Citti, the fact that they are the same person. Accattone as a character dies, but his real-self brought to light in the fictional story keeps on living in the figure of Citti.

Conclusions

This chapter has shown that Pasolini continues his dialogue with Dante on the topic of realism, already started in his previous literary production, and that he does so especially through the lens of twentieth-century Dante criticism. Auerbach is the way through which Pasolini rethinks Dante as a model of realism from literature to cinema. In the first part of the chapter, I have shown that Auerbach's reading of Dante's figural realism nourishes and influences a specific idea of cinema, which Pasolini develops in the early stage of his career as a film director. On the basis of Dante's figural scheme, Pasolini establishes a link between fictional characters and the real lives of the actors. This is why, in his early films, Pasolini chooses for his cast people who he believes to resemble in their real lives the fictional characters they are asked to play in the film. Thus, like the characters of the *Commedia*, we have seen that Pasolini's film characters are not just fictional but have an historical and real element which corresponds to what the actors do or are in real life. On the one hand, this scheme adds realism to the film because a vivid link with reality is maintained through the film characters' one-to-one relationship with the non-professional actors' real historical lives. On the other hand, in the film, representing reality becomes a way to represent the fulfilment of the extra-filmic lives of the actors. As the characters of Dante's *Commedia* accomplish their destiny (prefigured on earth) in the afterlife, in the fictional story of the film the characters accomplish the lives of the actors who play those roles. In the second part of the chapter, I have discussed the legacy of Dante in the way Pasolini represents the film characters of *Accattone*. Firstly, I have recalled the many allusions to the *Commedia* scattered through the film, in particular those referring to Ante-Purgatory. Through an in-depth analysis of the latter, I have shown that Pasolini juxtaposes Accattone and Buonconte da Montefeltro in order to establish a similarity between the subproletarians and Dante's souls of Ante-Purgatory. Then I have explained this choice as one of the ways in which Pasolini reflects on the world of the Roman *borgate* and, ultimately, invites his bourgeois audience to re-evaluate that world: the subproletarians are positive souls as, living outside the capitalist system of production, they escape the consumerist syndrome. The discussion about Pasolini's engagement with characters, themes, and atmosphere of Dante's *Purgatorio* has brought new insights to Pasolini's Dantism, which, as noted in the introductory chapter, has been mainly investigated with regard to the *Inferno*. Pasolini's reuse of the *Purgatorio* will be

further discussed in chapters four and five, when reflecting on the way *Petrolino* engages with the long allegorical procession of *Purgatorio* XXIX. With regard to Pasolini's dialogue with Dante, the link between the two main sections of the chapter has not only been the notion of *figura*, which as we have seen applied to the case of *Accattone* too, but also the key episode of Buonconte. Indeed, the image of Buonconte's 'lagrimetta' is used by Pasolini in his essays on cinema as a 'device' to reflect on what cinema is compared to life and to explain his theory of films as life after death. In general, this chapter has shown how strongly Pasolini's early film theory and practice engage with Dante: drawing from Joubert-Laurencin's words, one can conclude that Pasolini's early cinema is 'born of a tear',⁶⁶ is born of Dante.

⁶⁶ Joubert-Laurencin, 'Figura Lacrima', p. 239.

3 – A new idea of Dante: Pasolini's rethinking of the Dantean influence in the mid-1960s

This chapter focuses on the mid-1960s as a significant turning-point for discussing the relationship between Dante and Pasolini. These are years in which new critical works on Dante by Auerbach and Contini are published and where Pasolini openly reflects on Dante in critical essays and starts a re-writing of the *Commedia*. In 1963, the year of the publication of Auerbach's new work entirely dedicated to Dante, *Studi su Dante*, Pasolini starts working on a contemporary re-writing of the *Commedia*, *La Divina Mimesis*. In a letter of 1964 Contini asks Pasolini to reflect on the theme 'Io e Dante' in the light of a conference to commemorate the 700th anniversary of Dante's birth, which was to have been held by the Società Dantesca Italiana, of which Contini was the president at that time, in 1965.¹ This project comes to nothing, but Contini's suggestion seems to have been positively received by Pasolini, who in December 1965 spontaneously sends to the literary journal *Paragone* an essay on Dante, 'La volontà di Dante a essere poeta'. This is followed by a second article on Dante, 'Vanni Fucci', published by the same journal in April 1966, as a response to the criticism levelled at the previous essay. Two months before the publication of 'La volontà di Dante a essere poeta', in the same journal Contini had published the essay 'Un'interpretazione di Dante', which Pasolini mentions in his own critical piece.

This chapter aims to demonstrate that the mid-1960s marks an important change in the way Pasolini looks at Dante. I will show that, in these years, Pasolini abandons the idea of Dante as the poet who moves between different languages and classes, which had inspired his 1950s Roman narrative production and approach to the question of realism,² and formulates another idea of Dante to be used as guide for his forthcoming production: that of Dante as the poet-prophet, the 'truth-teller'.³ As will be explained further in the chapter, by this term I do not mean one who can predict future events, but rather one who reads the world as it really is and speaks the truth to society. In the first section, I will discuss Pasolini's dismissal of the Dante of the 1950s by investigating two different texts of the mid-1960s: the narrative work of *La Divina Mimesis* and the critical essay 'La volontà di Dante a essere poeta'. This section will conclude the reflections on Pasolini's dialogue with Dante in the 1950s, initiated in chapter one. That is why the study of Pasolini's texts of the 1960s precedes the analysis of the critical studies on Dante published by the critics around the same time. In the second section, I will

¹ The letter is dated 6th December 1964 and is quoted in Nico Naldini, *Pasolini, una vita* (Alberedo d'Adige: Tamellini, 2014) pp. 353-54.

² Henceforward, I will refer to this idea of Dante, extensively analysed in sections 1.4 and 1.5, as 'the Dante of the 1950s' to prevent any confusion with the new idea of Dante which Pasolini formulates starting from the mid-1960s.

³ Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy*, p. 10.

show that Auerbach's and Contini's works on Dante published in the mid-1960s discuss the prophetic character of the *Commedia* and highlight the figure of Dante poet-prophet, suggesting to Pasolini a new angle from which to look at Dante. In the third section, I will discuss the prominence of Saint Paul in Pasolini's production from the 1960s onwards, arguing that this figure enters and influences Pasolini's relationship with Dante. Thus, I will comment on the triptych Dante-Paul-Pasolini as a key to fully understanding Pasolini's new relationship with Dante in terms of prophetism from the mid-1960s onwards. Ultimately, this chapter will lay the ground for the discussion about Pasolini's dialogue with Dante on the question of realism in the late phase of his career (mid-1960s and 1970s) which will be the argument of chapters four and five.

3.1 – 'Anziché allargare, dilaterai': the beginning of a new phase

In this section, I will discuss Pasolini's discarding of the Dante of the 1950s as a model of literary realism and the beginning of a new literary phase. To do so I will investigate two different texts produced by Pasolini at around the same time: the literary work of *La Divina Mimesis*, initiated around 1963, and the essay on Dante 'La volontà di Dante a essere poeta', published in 1965.⁴ As some recent scholars have suggested, one text can illuminate the other and vice versa; they should be read together to have a broader and better understanding of Pasolini's poetic operation in the mid-1960s.⁵ As noted on different occasions in the previous chapters, Pasolini tends to conceptualise in critical essays what he has previously experienced or discussed in his artistic practice. Thus, I will first analyse *La Divina Mimesis* and, then, move to 'La volontà di Dante a essere poeta'.

La Divina Mimesis is Pasolini's second avowed attempt to rewrite Dante's *Commedia*. In 1959, Pasolini starts working on a rewriting of Dante's *Inferno* with the project of *La mortaccia*, a short story which narrates the metaphorical journey through Hell of a prostitute led by Dante. The text is left unfinished and in 1963 the project is superseded by the start of *La Divina Mimesis*, on which Pasolini works on and off until its publication in 1975.⁶ Running through more than ten years of Pasolini's career, the literary laboratory of *La Divina Mimesis* proves Pasolini's long-lasting engagement with Dante and can help us to understand the change in Pasolini's relationship with Dante over time. In the

⁴ I will not provide an in-depth analysis of Pasolini's second essay on Dante, 'Vanni Fucci'; this is a short piece which Pasolini writes mainly in response to Cesare Segre's criticism and where he restates the same concepts made in his previous essay.

⁵ Davide Luglio, "'Anziché allargare, dilaterai!': Allegory and Mimesis from Dante's *Comedy* to Pier Paolo Pasolini's *La Divina Mimesis*", in *Metamorphosing Dante*, ed. by Gragnolati, Camilletti, and Lampart, pp. 339-53 (p. 346); Gragnolati, *Amor*, pp. 41-42; Patti, *Pasolini after Dante*, p. 130; Simone Invernizzi, "'La spaventosa unità del linguaggio di Dante". Plurilinguismo e monolinguismo nella *Commedia* secondo Pasolini", in *Il Dante dei moderni. La 'Commedia' dall'ottocento a oggi. Saggi critici*, ed. by Joanna Szymanowska and Izabela Napiórkowska (Vicchio: Logisma, 2017), pp. 232-340 (pp. 323-38).

⁶ *La mortaccia* is published unfinished in 1965 as part of Pasolini's collection of 1950s narrative works and screenplays, *Alli dagli occhi azzurri* (now in *RRII*, pp. 591-96).

closing poem of his 1960s collection *Poesia in forma di rosa*, 'Progetto di opere future' (dated 1963), Pasolini briefly mentions his new Dantesque project: "'DIVINA MIMESIS", opera, se mai ve ne fu, da farsi'.⁷ The way in which the end of one work anticipates the beginning of the next is, in itself, a Dantesque reminiscence. It recalls the last chapter of the *Vita nova*, where, aspiring to a new poetry that could better describe Beatrice, Dante seems to refer to the project of writing the *Commedia*:⁸

Appresso questo sonetto apparve a me una mirabile visione, ne la quale io vidi cose che mi fecero proporre di non dire più di questa benedetta infino a tanto che io potesse più degnamente trattare di lei. E di venire a ciò io studio quanto posso, sì com'ella sae veracemente.
(VN XLII, 1-2)

The choice of title of Pasolini's new work is an obvious sign of the sustained dialogue Dante-Auerbach-Pasolini. Starting in 1956 with the publication of *Mimesis*, as discussed in chapter two, this continues in the 1960s with the publication of *Studi su Dante*. As noted before, Auerbach's work is published in 1963, exactly when scholars date the beginning of *La Divina Mimesis*. On the one hand, the title of Pasolini's work recalls Dante's *Divina Commedia* and, on the other, Auerbach's *Mimesis: il realismo nella letteratura occidentale*. Blending these two titles together, Pasolini seems to say that when it comes to *mimesis* (that is, imitating/representing reality), the *Commedia* is the greatest example: the 'divine' example.⁹ Thus, Pasolini seems not to have changed his opinion regarding Dante's work since the early 1950s, when he defined the *Commedia* as '[la] più realistica delle opere poetiche italiane' ('Poesia dialettale', p. 716). Representing contemporary reality is what Pasolini aims to do when he first starts *La Divina Mimesis*. Initially, this was supposed to be a representation of the Italian society of the time on the model of the *Commedia*. Nevertheless, over the years, it then became something completely different. The editors of the critical edition for the Meridiani series recognise three different phases of the 'metamorphosis' of *La Divina Mimesis*, which correspond to the creation of three different levels: a first stage between 1963 and 1965, a second one between 1966 and 1967, a third one in 1975.¹⁰ Between 1963 and 1965, Pasolini works on *La Divina Mimesis* with the idea of writing a new contemporary *Commedia*, including circles, sins, and sinners related to the present time as a way to depict the new reality of neocapitalist society. Interviewed by Alfredo Barberis for *Il Giorno*, Pasolini describes his project saying that it would also have a similar linguistic variety to that of Dante's *Commedia*:

Un 'Inferno' contemporaneo [...]. Un Inferno degli anni Sessanta, popolato di miei contemporanei: amici, personaggi, eroi della cronaca rosa o criminale, capi di governo o di

⁷ Pasolini, 'Progetto di opere future', in *Poesia in forma di rosa* (1964¹), now in *TPI*, pp. 1245-56 (p. 1251).

⁸ Critics have long seen this as a reference to the *Commedia*, although more recent scholars have started questioning whether this can be read as intentional.

⁹ I would like to highlight that, in the title of Pasolini's work, the adjective 'divina' has a capital 'd'.

¹⁰ Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, 'Note e notizie sui testi', in *RRII*, pp. 1985-90.

partito, con tanto di nomi e cognomi [...]. Linguisticamente sarà molto interessante; ci sarà una mescolanza di dialetti, che oggi ormai considero arcaici, e cercherò di inventare un linguaggio per i due 'progetti' di Paradisi: uno neo-capitalistico e uno marxista, che descriverò con una lingua inventata, con una lingua del futuro. Si tratterà di un romanzo apertissimo, di una cosa magmatica.¹¹

Pasolini writes many pages, but struggles to make progress with it. Between 1966 and 1967, Pasolini thinks of publishing his rewriting of the first two cantos of Dante's *Inferno*, presenting them as an edition of a posthumous manuscript whose editor has decided to publish after the death of its anonymous author. This project does not convince Pasolini entirely either, and only in 1975 does he eventually decide to publish the fragments previously composed as a 'documento' with, as an appendix, a biography of the author through pictures ('Iconografia ingiallita').¹² With regard to the three different stages of the composition, I focus exclusively on the first one, as it coincides with that time when, according to my argument, Pasolini rethinks his relationship with Dante.¹³ The section written between 1963 and 1965 is the one born of the ashes of *La mortaccia*: it consists of a rewriting of five cantos of Dante's *Inferno*: I, II, III, IV, and VII. In the first canto Pasolini presents himself as a new Dante of 1960s Italy. By doing this, Pasolini clearly reveals his identification with Dante, previously discussed in chapters one and two. I have noted that Pasolini identifies with Dante as the poet who moves between different social classes, when he depicts the world of the Roman subproletarians in *Ragazzi di vita* and *Accattone*. Here, Pasolini's identification with Dante goes further, and includes also Dante's guide and literary model, Virgil. The Virgil who appears in the first canto of *La Divina Mimesis* is nothing but another Pasolini from the past, the Pasolini of the 1950s:

Non avevo invece davanti a me che lui, un piccolo poeta civile degli Anni Cinquanta, come egli amaramente diceva: incapace di aiutare se stesso, figurarsi un altro. Eppure era chiaro che al mondo – nel mio mondo – non avrei potuto trovare – benché così misera, così, come dire, paesana, così timida – altra guida che questa. (*Divina*, p. 1084)

In the introductory chapter, recalling Harold Bloom's reading of the history of writing in terms of a conflict between writers and their precursors, I have noted that both Dante and Pasolini feel an 'anxiety of influence' towards their own literary guide (respectively Virgil and Dante), and try to overcome their master in their works. Presenting himself as both Dante and Dante's literary father could be seen as Pasolini's way to challenge his precursor in *La Divina Mimesis*. Since Dante had influenced his production until then, the fact that the chosen guide of the character Pasolini is a figure

¹¹ Pasolini, 'Sì, il romanzo è possibile' (1964¹), now in Siti and De Laude, 'Note e notizie sui testi', in *SLAII*, pp. 2940-42 (pp. 2941-42).

¹² Siti and De Laude, 'Note e notizie sui testi', in *RRII*, pp. 1985-90.

¹³ For a literary review of the many critical interpretations of *La Divina Mimesis*, I refer to Luglio, "'Anziché allargare, dilaterai!'", pp. 339-53.

of himself in the past (the Pasolini of the 1950s) and not Dante could be seen as a deliberate choice to overshadow Dante's legacy. As we will see shortly, in the text embodying Dante is Pasolini's meta-literary strategy to reflect on the legacy of the *Commedia* in his past and future literary production.

In the second canto of *La Divina Mimesis*, Dante-Pasolini asks Virgil-Pasolini for help mimicking Dante's doubts in the second canto of the *Commedia*. Dante-Pasolini wants to continue to be a writer, but does not know how to begin: 'Ho bisogno del tuo aiuto [...] non posso sopportare [...] l'idea di non essere più uno scrittore' (*Divina*, p. 1085). Reflecting on his future, Dante-Pasolini says that he wants to carry on writing literature but, at the same time, he expresses the difficulty of writing a comprehensive work like the *Commedia*:

Devo proprio andare avanti con questa Opera Barbarica? [...] Non so se *ti rendi conto*... che questo viaggio l'ha già fatto, per dirla prudentemente, chi 'corruttibile ancora, ad immortale secolo andò'. (*Divina*, pp. 1089-90)

If in the *Commedia*, at this point of the story, Dante doubts his fitness for the journey, in his contemporary *Commedia* Pasolini doubts his capacity to write a text like the *Commedia*. The image of the journey is used as metaphor to discuss Pasolini's writing. Dante-Pasolini's doubt appears to be right, as Virgil-Pasolini advises him to change route: 'Bisogna cambiare strada' (*Divina*, p. 1085), he says – by which he means to change route from writing a text like the *Commedia*. Then later on, Virgil-Pasolini defines the new literary path that Dante-Pasolini should now undertake, and he does so in comparison to the example of the *Commedia*: 'Anziché allargare, dilaterai' (*Divina*, p. 1090). As noted in chapter one, the term 'broadening' ('allargare') is used by Pasolini precisely in relation to the *Commedia*: Dante's work is a case of linguistic broadening (that is, Contini's notion of plurilingualism), which aims at representing the whole of reality. Thus, when saying that the character of Pasolini of the 1960s will take another path to the one of literature as 'broadening', Pasolini seems to distance himself from the idea of plurilingualism, which had inspired his 1950s Roman novels and approach to literary realism. Out of the meta-literary discourse, this passage of *La Divina Mimesis* means that Pasolini doubts that the example of the *Commedia* would still be a valid guide for his future writings. Similar to my reading is Patti's interpretation of this passage. For the scholar, Pasolini's journey through Hell in *La Divina Mimesis* is a metaphor for his commitment to linguistic diversity; therefore, his impossibility to proceed on his journey is a metaphor to express his impossibility to continue his commitment to represent linguistic diversity, to plurilingualism.¹⁴ Eventually, the doubts expressed by the character of Dante-Pasolini will turn out to be true and have a real effect on the work itself. As mentioned before, the initial project of re-writing Dante's *Commedia* stops at the seventh canto of *Inferno* and after 1965,

¹⁴ Patti, *Pasolini after Dante*, pp. 4, 139-40.

for many years until the publication in 1975, Pasolini wonders what to do with the first draft of his work.

To have a clearer understanding of this passage of *La Divina Mimesis*, I will now move to the analysis of 'La volontà di Dante a essere poeta', which Pasolini writes after having read Cesare Garboli's essay 'Come leggere Dante'.¹⁵ This fact shows that Pasolini regularly follows Dante criticism and the new studies on the subject. Published in *Paragone* in 1965, Pasolini's article immediately sparks debate among some Dante scholars because of its arbitrary use of critical vocabulary and, as we will see shortly, for its peculiar reading of Dante.¹⁶ Indeed, in 'La volontà di Dante a essere poeta', Pasolini openly refuses the Continian notion of Dante's plurilingualism. As Simone Invernizzi notes in his in-depth analysis of the essay, 'con il saggio va in scena non solo la ripresa dell'insegnamento di Contini, ma anche la sua problematizzazione e il suo definitivo superamento'.¹⁷ Before seeing how Pasolini does that, we should recall that for him effective linguistic broadening is accompanied by socio-cultural engagement. As extensively discussed in chapter one, Pasolini mixes together Contini's stylistic notion of plurilingualism and the Gramscian ideology of the necessity for intellectuals to be organically connected to the 'popolo'. On the basis of these two readings Pasolini had created his model of the Dante of the 1950s as the poet who moves between different languages and social classes. For Pasolini, the broadening of the *Commedia* is in the direction of both the characters' linguistic and social dimensions. This is restated by Pasolini precisely in his essay on Dante: 'L'allargamento linguistico di Dante [...] non è solo un allargamento dell'orizzonte lessicale e espressivo: ma, insieme, anche sociale' ('Volontà di Dante', p. 1376). Thus, I will show that when discarding the plurilingualism of the *Commedia*, Pasolini denies his idea of Dante's text as an example of linguistic and socio-cultural broadening.

Discussing the language of the *Commedia*, Pasolini does not deny its linguistic variety, but criticises the way in which Dante uses different languages and registers. According to Pasolini, Dante does not make the characters' language his own, as the other's idiom is only used in specific moments of the story. All the different languages, affirms Pasolini, have a 'posizione regolare e in qualche modo preconstituita [...] nel discorso' ('Volontà di Dante', pp. 1387-88). For Pasolini, Dante's plurilingualism is 'ben ordinato' as 'ogni lingua, attinta funzionalmente, sta al suo posto' ('Volontà di Dante', p. 1385). The conclusion is that, for Pasolini, there is no real clash between different registers and languages in the text: 'ogni possibilità di contaminazione linguistica si vanifica nel testo dantesco' ('Volontà di

¹⁵ Cesare Garboli, 'Come leggere Dante', *Paragone*, 184 (1965), 8-42 (p. 37).

¹⁶ Two Dante scholars immediately respond to Pasolini's article in the same issue of *Paragone*: Cesare Garboli, 'Il male estetico', *Paragone*, 190 (1965), 71-79; Cesare Segre, 'La volontà di Pasolini "a" essere dantista', *Paragone*, 190 (1965) 80-84.

¹⁷ Invernizzi, "'La spaventosa unità'", p. 329.

Dante', p. 1388). Ultimately, what creates the linguistic variety of the *Commedia* is, for Pasolini, Dante's meticulous selection of words:

In fondo, ciò che ha reso Dante 'macro', per tanti anni, è stata una terribile operazione di selettività: operata su un numero di parole e modi linguistici che egli stesso aveva reso praticamente innumerevoli. ('Volontà di Dante', p. 1388)

Discussing the sociological aspect of the *Commedia*, Pasolini argues that Dante always maintains a distance from his characters:

Si tratta di una equidistanza rigorosamente mantenuta tra l'autore e gli infiniti aspetti particolari del suo mondo [...]. Tale ferrea legge dell'equidistanza [...] fa sì che [...] l'atteggiamento morale e sentimentale di Dante sia sempre lo stesso verso i suoi personaggi e i suoi fatti. ('Volontà di Dante', pp. 1388-89)

For Pasolini, there is no emotional connection between Dante and his characters, and the reason for this distance is the creation of the figure of Dante-actor:

Dante ha potuto ottenere questo incorporando se stesso nella sua materia, cioè rendendosi protagonista del poema. I sentimenti perciò non sono mai suoi, ma sono del Dante personaggio [...]. Di qui il suo assoluto rigore stilistico: il suo mantenersi assolutamente equidistante, con tutto il resto del poema, dal momento creativo e linguistico dell'autore. ('Volontà di Dante', p. 1389)

Pasolini reuses Contini's reading of Dante's double role in the *Commedia* – he is both the author of the text and the main character of the story –¹⁸ to argue against his own 1950s sociological reading of Contini's plurilingualism. Having denied that Dante's text is a case of linguistic and socio-cultural broadening, Pasolini can finally reject the *Commedia* as an example of plurilingualism. Pasolini is convinced rather that we should speak of monolingualism for Dante's text:

C'è da contrapporre monolinguisimo a monolinguisimo: un monolinguisimo eletto e selettivo (Petrarca) e un monolinguisimo tonale (Dante); un monolinguisimo dovuto all'iterazione infinita del proprio atteggiamento interiore e del proprio rapporto con una realtà cristallizzata (Petrarca) e un monolinguisimo dovuto a un'equidistanza perfettamente invariabile dal proprio atteggiamento interiore e dal proprio rapporto con la realtà, per quanto varia questa sia (Dante); un monolinguisimo come soliloquio eternamente omogeneo (Petrarca), a un monolinguisimo che omologa incessantemente le più diverse finzioni di dialogo (Dante). ('Volontà di Dante', p. 1390)

The Continian paradigm 'dantismo versus petrarchismo' does not work any longer for Pasolini. Dante's *Commedia* is just another case of a monolingual text. Petrarch's monolingual language is

¹⁸ This is discussed by Contini in the 1957 essay 'Dante come personaggio-poeta della *Commedia*'.

'eletto e selettivo' since it is characterised by the use of a single linguistic register and language carefully selected by the author, whereas Dante's monolingualism is 'tonale', for which Pasolini means that there is a constant unity of tone in the poem: 'unitarietà ossessiva del tono del poema' ('Volontà di Dante', p. 1387). What seems to be a variety of tones is actually a case of monotony.¹⁹ If there are different languages and registers, these do not create any stylistic clash, as they are carefully displayed and used by Dante. For Pasolini this 'assoluto rigore stilistico' is possible because Dante-author does not engage with and is not emotionally connected to his characters ('Volontà di Dante', p. 1389). The conclusion of Pasolini's analysis is that the idea of Dante's plurilingualism as a guarantee of literary realism, which had been very popular among some Italian critics in the 1950s, including himself, was actually wrong:

La recente fortuna di Dante, fondata [...] sulla sua visione realistica della società – che produce il plurilinguismo – si rivela dovuta a un esame alquanto parziale. In realtà tutti i versi di Dante [...] sono, nel profondo, fatti di un materiale infinitamente puro: molto più 'eletti' di quelli del Petrarca [...] La contrapposizione di plurilinguismo dantesco a monolinguismo petrarchesco era, almeno nella 'compagnia picciola', errata, o parzialmente errata [...]. Ossia per certa critica marxista italiana, che voleva distinguere poesia da poesia, tutto sarebbe da ricominciare da capo. ('Volontà di Dante', pp. 1389-90)

By dismissing the idea of plurilingualism as a guarantee of realism, Pasolini distances himself from his 1950s literary production, which had been inspired by that idea. For Pasolini, 'La volontà di Dante a essere poeta' – and so the 'stage' of Dante criticism – is the space to openly discuss his own relationship with Dante and reconsider his previous literary production. Indeed, Pasolini presents his essay as 'una specie di esame di coscienza' ('Volontà di Dante', p. 1383), and again, when responding to criticism of his essay, he restates that it was 'un discorso molto "privato"' ('Vanni Fucci', p. 1391). Discussing Pasolini's article, Cesare Segre also underlines the personal character of Pasolini's reflections on Dante: 'Gli anacronismi peggiori sono però le proiezioni d'ideali estetici moderni, anzi pasoliniani, sul povero Dante'.²⁰

If in *La Divina Mimesis* Pasolini doubts that the broadening of Dante's *Commedia* could be a valid literary model for his forthcoming production, in 'La volontà di Dante a essere poeta' Pasolini even refuses the *Commedia* as a case of broadening. As noted by Bazzocchi: 'È proprio la nozione diffusa di plurilinguismo (e implicitamente la stessa formula di Contini) che Pasolini a questo punto vuole correggere'.²¹ As a final confirmation of my analysis, I would like to re-quote the radio interview 'Dante e i poeti contemporanei' (1965), already mentioned in the introductory chapter. Here Pasolini admits

¹⁹ Bazzocchi, *I burattini*, p. 44.

²⁰ Segre, 'La volontà di Pasolini "a" essere dantista', p. 84.

²¹ Bazzocchi, *I burattini*, p. 43.

the influence of Contini's reading of Dante's plurilingualism on his idea of realism in the 1950s, but also affirms the end of that paradigm:

C'è stata negli anni Cinquanta, presso un gruppo di addetti ai lavori, molto impegnati in questo, sulla scorta di un ormai famoso saggio di Contini, una specie di assunzione di Dante a simbolo. Il suo plurilinguismo, le sue tecniche poetiche e narrative, erano forme di un realismo che si opponeva, ancora una volta, alla Letteratura. Sicché io, nel mio operare di quegli anni, avevo in mente Dante come una specie di guida, la cui lezione, misconosciuta o mistificata nei secoli, era ricominciata ad essere operante con la Resistenza. Ora quell'idea di realismo degli anni Cinquanta pare ed è superata e con essa si stinge l'interpretazione dantesca della 'compagnia picciola' che dicevo. ('Dante e i poeti contemporanei', pp. 1647-48)

As in 'La volontà di Dante a essere poeta', here Pasolini uses the Dantism 'compagnia picciola' (*Inf.* XXVI, 101-02) to describe those Italian critics who adopted plurilingualism as a guarantee of literary realism. In *Inferno* XXVI, this is the way Ulysses refers to his small group of companions, who, fascinated by his charisma and intelligence, decided to follow him on his last foolish adventure, as together they crossed the limit set by God to the inhabitable world (the Pillars of Hercules on the Straits of Gibraltar) and were punished with death. Comparing Ulysses and his company's venture with Contini and the 1950s Italian critics, Pasolini highlights the strong impact of Contini's linguistic reflections on the broad Italian cultural debate. However, despite praising Contini, at the same time Pasolini claims that believing in that idea of realism was as foolish as believing Ulysses's words and following him in his last adventure.

As scholars generally agree,²² some external factors were decisive for Pasolini's change of poetics in the 1960s. At that time, Pasolini strongly believes that linguistic and cultural variety are disappearing in Italy. This is actually a widespread worry in 1960s and 1970s Italy, especially after the publication of Tullio De Mauro's *Storia linguistica dell'Italia unita* in 1963, which shows how the languages spoken in Italy (Italian, regional languages, and dialects) and their speakers had changed and were continuing to change since the unification (1861). The 1960s are the beginning of that transformation of society which in his journalistic pieces of the 1970s Pasolini will define as the 'mutazione antropologica' of Italians and the 'genocidio culturale'.²³ In his interpretation, the cultural standardisation promoted by consumerist ideology is destroying all sub-cultures, by homologating them to the bourgeois class. For example, Pasolini announces the disappearance of the Roman subproletarians and of their culture, as they are slowly integrated into bourgeois logic:

²² Gragnolati, *Amor*, p. 36; Luglio, "'Anziché allargare, dilaterai!'", pp. 346-47; Patti, *Pasolini after Dante*, p. 136; Invernizzi, "'La spaventosa unità'", pp. 336-37.

²³ Pasolini, 'Studio sulla rivoluzione antropologica in Italia' (1974¹), then in *Corsari*, now in *SPS*, pp. 307-12 (p. 309); Pasolini, 'Genocidio', p. 515. In 1975 Sergio Salvi publishes *Le lingue tagliate: storie delle minoranze linguistiche in Italia*, another influential book regarding the 'genocide' of minority languages in Italy (Milan: Rizzoli). This is another example of how the disappearance of linguistic and cultural variety is a widespread worry of 1960s and 1970s Italy.

I giovani sottoproletari romani hanno perduto [...] la loro 'cultura', cioè il loro modo di essere, di comportarsi, di parlare, di giudicare la realtà: a loro è stato fornito un modello di vita borghese (consumistico): essi sono stati cioè, classicamente, distrutti e borghesizzati. [...] La cultura delle classi subalterne non esiste (quasi) più.²⁴

Pasolini believes that the 'popolo' is abandoning dialect and everyone will gradually start speaking only a standardized Italian language, created by the media and by industry, and therefore bourgeois,²⁵ for which Pasolini coins the expression 'lingua dell'odio' (*Divina*, p. 1090). For Pasolini, this is the new national language of Italy in the neocapitalist era. The concerns for this linguistic homologation and standardisation are briefly mentioned by the character of Dante-Pasolini in *La Divina Mimesis*, who also embodies the Pasolini of the 1960s: 'Tu sai cos'è la lingua colta; e sai cos'è quella volgare. Come potrei farne uso? Sono entrambe ormai un'unica lingua: la lingua dell'odio' (*Divina*, p. 1090). One of Dante-Pasolini's concerns about the possibility of repeating Dante's experience (the writing the *Commedia*) is a linguistic doubt. The distinction between educated, cultivated language (literary Italian) and the language of the 'popolo' (dialect) is disappearing, dissolving into this new middle class Italian language. The disappearance of linguistic variety undermines the concept of plurilingualism. Similarly, the homologation of the 'popolo' to the bourgeoisie undermines Gramsci's ideology of the necessity for intellectuals to engage with the 'popolo'. This discourse adds another level of complexity to the previous discussion about Pasolini's discarding of Dante's plurilingualism, as the worry about the disappearance of dialects and sub-cultures in 1960s Italy cannot co-exist with the idea of literature as a linguistic and sociological broadening. One can then conclude that at this point in time, for Pasolini, Dante's *Commedia* is no longer a case of plurilingualism but of a linguistically selected language. Even if it were plurilingual, given the condition of Italian society at that time, such a literary path would no longer be possible.

In the article 'Lo ripeto: io sono in piena ricerca', published in *Il Giorno* at the beginning of 1965, Pasolini states the necessity to move beyond his 1950s narrative production and claims to be 'in piena ricerca', mentioning the new project of *La Divina Mimesis*.²⁶ It is here that we can see the 'seeds' of Pasolini's new approach to literature. As mentioned before, the character of Virgil-Pasolini indicates to Dante-Pasolini a new literary path, which he describes in terms of 'dilation' ('dilatare'). Dante-Pasolini does not seem sure of what 'dilation' means, although, in order not to disappoint his guide, he improvises a rough explanation: 'Asimmetria, sproporzione, legge dell'irregolarità programmata,

²⁴ Pasolini, 'Le mie proposte su scuola e Tv' (1975¹), then in *Luterane*, now in *SPS*, pp. 693-99 (pp. 696-697).

²⁵ Pasolini, 'Nuove questioni linguistiche' (1964¹), then in *Empirismo*, now in *SLAI*, pp. 1245-70 (pp. 1264-1268). In 1965 Pasolini writes: 'è nata la nuova lingua italiana, quella della borghesia tecnologica' ('Appendice: Un articolo su *L'Espresso*' (1965¹), then *Empirismo*, now in *SLAI*, pp. 1271-75 (p. 1273)).

²⁶ Pasolini, 'Lo ripeto io sono in piena ricerca' (1965¹), now in *SLAII*, pp. 2442-47 (p. 2447).

irrisione della coesività, introduzione teppistica dell'arbitrario' (*Divina*, p. 1090). Out of the meta-literary discourse, in this passage Pasolini is talking about his forthcoming production or how he sees his new approach to literature. I agree with Carla Benedetti's reading of Pasolini's new poetics of 'dilation' as an incorporation of what traditionally has been left outside the aesthetic sphere.²⁷ According to the scholar, in his late production (1970s), Pasolini forces literature, metaphorically dilates its tissues, to include something 'impuro': non-aesthetic objects. Pasolini will no longer make the literary Italian language 'impure' by mixing it with a lower language (dialect) as he did in the Roman novels. His operation will consist of crossing the line that separates art and non-art, the spheres of the aesthetic and of practice: 'aprendo la propria parola artistica a delle finalità pratiche'.²⁸ Pasolini will do this by writing poetry and narrative as if they were journalistic pieces, projects, drafts, fragments, or simply as an open discussion with the readers driven by some specific necessity to accuse Italian politicians or to defend himself.²⁹ For example, in the chapter dedicated to Pasolini's late production (chapter four), I will discuss *Petrolio* as a series of 'appunti', an accumulation of random and sometimes 'impure' (non-aesthetic) materials.

The word 'dilatare' occurs also in the poetic collection which follows the first draft of *La Divina Mimesis, Trasumanar e organizzar* (1971). In the poem already mentioned in chapter two, 'Proposito di scrivere una poesia intitolata "I primi sei canti del Purgatorio"', the word 'dilatare' is used by Pasolini to describe his poetry that, he states, will dilate the tissues of Dante's text like a cancer:

Dei primi sei canti del Purgatorio
so per ora solo che trattano molto di luce
(nella mia memoria!!)

Depositare le mie uova di parassita
nei passi dove ciò è più esplicito,
li dilaterò crescendo nei tessuti come un canchero.
('Proposito di scrivere una poesia intitolata "I primi sei canti del Purgatorio"', p. 66)

Pasolini defines himself as a parasite. He will build a nest in the *Commedia* and modify it from the inside, dilating its 'poetic tissues'. Pasolini suggests that his work can dilate inside Dante's own text – changing it but from within. In chapter five, I will come back to this topic when commenting on the inter-textual relationship between *Petrolio* and the *Commedia* as a sort of 'dilating' of the original text. In conclusion, if in *La Divina Mimesis* 'dilatare' is the word Pasolini uses to describe his new approach

²⁷ Benedetti, *Pasolini contro Calvino*, pp. 149-54.

²⁸ Benedetti, *Pasolini contro Calvino*, p. 153.

²⁹ As we will see better in chapter four, many of Pasolini's 1970s articles are strong accusations towards Italian politicians and the Church (for example, Pasolini, 'L'ignoranza vaticana come paradigma dell'ignoranza della borghesia italiana' (1975¹), then in *Corsari*, now in *SPS*, pp. 368-71) or to defend himself (for example, Pasolini's reply to Maurizio Ferrara in 'In che senso parlare di una sconfitta del Pci al referendum' (1974¹), then in *Corsari*, now in *SPS*, pp. 343-49).

to literature in opposition to the broadening of the *Commedia*, in *Trasumanar e organizzar* 'dilatare' is presented as a poetic action in relation to Dante's text. One can then conclude that 'dilatare' is strongly linked to Dante and, therefore, Pasolini's new approach to literature will still look at the *Commedia*. The dismissal of the Dante of the 1950s does not result in a complete abandon of Dante as a model, but is rather the beginning of a new literary phase somehow still linked to Dante. As Bazzocchi rightly notes, what Segre and the other scholars of the time did not see is that Pasolini's dialogue with Dante in 'La volontà di Dante a essere poeta' more than looking back at his past experience was projected forward, toward his 1970s production.³⁰

3.2 – Auerbach's and Contini's essays on Dante of the mid-1960s: the theme of prophetism

This section will analyse Auerbach's and Contini's essays on Dante published in the mid-1960s. In particular, I will show that in different ways both critics emphasise the prophetic character of the *Commedia* and the idea of Dante as a poet-prophet. My argument is that starting from these new readings Pasolini begins to formulate his new idea of Dante.

The theme of Dante's prophetism has been a recurrent and much-studied theme of twentieth-century Dante criticism, starting from Bruno Nardi's essay 'Dante profeta' (1942).³¹ Dante is a poet-prophet as his poem has the prophetic mission to reveal the truth about what has made the world evil and corrupted, and to denounce it to humankind, by showing everything he has witnessed throughout his journey. His book will therefore provide a moral guide to humanity, which might then leave its state of sin and reach salvation. This is ultimately the reason for Dante's extraordinary journey through the afterlife, which, before him, had been undertaken only by Aeneas and St Paul, as recalled by Dante at the beginning of his journey (*Inf.* II, 31-33). God wills Aeneas's journey through Hell and St Paul's through Heaven, as part of their missions. As narrated by Virgil in the sixth book of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas descends into Hell to meet his dead father Anchises and receive from him the necessary revelation to start the chain of events which would lead to the foundation of the Roman Empire. The Universal Empire is, according to Dante's political thought, the political condition which best facilitates the pursuing of earthly happiness. For Dante, St Paul is caught up to Heaven in order that on his return to

³⁰ Bazzocchi, *I burattini*, pp. 45-46.

³¹ Bruno Nardi, 'Dante profeta', in *Dante e la cultura medievale* (Bari: Laterza, 1942), pp. 293-98. For more recent studies on Dante's prophetism, I refer to Giorgio Padoan, 'La mirabile visione di Dante e l'Epistola a Cangrande', in *Il pio Enea, L'empio Ulisse* (Ravenna: Longo 1977), pp. 30-63; Raffaello Morghen, *Dante profeta: tra la storia e l'eterno* (Milan: Jaca book, 1983); Barolini, 'Detheologizing Dante', pp. 3-20; Robert Hollander, 'Dante "Theologus-Poeta"', *Dante Studies*, 118 (2000), 261-302; Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi, 'Il tema profetico nella "Divina Commedia"', *Vivens homo*, 15/2 (2004), 385-92; Giuseppe Ledda, 'Modelli biblici e identità profetica nelle *Epistole* di Dante', *Lettere italiane*, 60 (2008), 18-42; Giuseppe Ledda, 'Modelli biblici nella *Commedia*: Dante e san Paolo', in *La Bibbia di Dante*, ed. by Ledda, pp. 179-216; Lucia Battaglia Ricci, "'Dice Isaia...": Dante e il profetismo biblico', in *La Bibbia di Dante*, ed. by Ledda, pp. 49-76.

earth he would write the epistles. As noted in *Inferno* II (ll. 29-30), the epistles were intended to reinforce people's faith and make it easier for them to reach eternal happiness (salvation).³² In the text of the *Commedia*, Dante's prophetic mission is introduced first by Beatrice:

Però, in pro del mondo che mal vive,
al carro tieni or li occhi, e quel che vedi,
ritornato di là, fa che tu scrivi. (*Purg.* XXXII, 103-05)

On top of the mountain of Purgatory, in the Garden of Eden, Dante witnesses a series of allegorical scenes, which explain historical political facts: the history of the Church and of its relationship with power, which has eventually caused its corruption. Beatrice's command is clear: Dante must look carefully at these scenes and then report them to humankind. The order to reveal to humanity (*denuntiatio*), what God's chosen one has seen or experienced is a structural feature of biblical prophetism and prophetic literature – 'Quod vides, scribe in libro' (Revelation 1. 11).³³ Reusing this trend, Dante builds his own prophetic investiture. After Beatrice, Dante's mission is solemnly confirmed in Heaven by Dante's ancestor Cacciaguida: 'rimossa ogne menzogna, / tutta tua vision fa manifesta' (*Par.* XVII, 127-28), and St Peter: 'apri la bocca, / e non asconder quel ch'io non ascondo' (*Par.* XXVII, 65-66). As Cacciaguida says, Dante's prophetic words will sound harsh; they will be a 'parola brusca' to those who live in sin, because of their truth-telling message (*Par.* XVII, 126). However, when understood, they will be a 'vital nodrimento' for humanity (*Par.* XVII, 131). Accusatory, harsh, even strong language is another feature typical of prophetism and prophetic literature.³⁴ Dante's poem has a civic value as it aims to sensitise his community to specific socio-political topics – from the denunciation of some uncomfortable truths, to the restoration of some lost past values and traditions. As a poet-prophet, Dante pursues a social mission, as he is actively engaged in his time and presents himself as the guide of his community. Socio-political matters play a crucial role in Dante's prophetism. Civic commitment and political passion are critical aspects of Dante's life and poetry, and politics is a frequently discussed theme in the *Commedia*. In addition, together with the revelation of his prophetic mission, Dante-character also learns the future which awaits him: the political exile. Isolation and solitude are other features typical of the prophet – for example, John the Baptist lives and preaches in the desert. When writing the poem, Dante-author is a political exile and hopes to return to Florence,

³² There is nothing in the biblical account which links Paul's journey to Heaven and the writing of the epistles, but it is Dante who ties the two facts together in the *Commedia*. This is because, as we will see better in the following section, Dante reuses the Pauline model to construct his journey through the afterlife and prophetic investiture. Linking together Paul's *raptus* and the epistles is, for Dante, a way to justify his own journey in the afterlife and the text of the *Commedia* which originated from this experience.

³³ 'Write on a scroll what you see'. The text of the Vulgate is taken from <<http://www.drbo.org/>> [accessed 14 July 2020]. For the English translation, I refer to <<http://www.vatican.va/content/vatican/en.html>> [accessed 14 July 2020].

³⁴ Chiavacci Leonardi, note to *Paradiso* XVII, 129, in *DDP*.

also thanks to the importance achieved one day through his poetic work.³⁵ This creates an inseparable link between personal life and artistic career: the poetic mission and the real life of the author are bound together and become an inseparable unit. To sum up, in the *Commedia* prophetic and political and personal subject matters are all tied up together.

In Auerbach's *Studi su Dante*, the theme of Dante's propheticism is widely discussed and appears as one of the most significant aspects of the *Commedia*.³⁶ As noted in the introduction to the Italian edition of 1963 written by Dante Della Terza, in general Auerbach's corpus of essays highlights the 'carattere profetico' of the *Commedia* by bringing to light the relationship between Dante's work and the Bible.³⁷ An example is the essay 'Figura',³⁸ which expands on the topic of the figural reading of the *Commedia*, already discussed in *Mimesis*. As noted in chapter two, Dante's figuralism is an important topic for Pasolini in the early stage of his career as a film director. In 'Figura', it appears clear that the figural interpretation is linked to prophetic discourse. A *figura* is something real and historical which announces something else that is also real and historical. The characteristic of anticipating something that is yet to come makes a *figura* similar to a prophecy. To define *figura*, Auerbach uses the precise expressions 'profezia figurale' and 'profezia reale'.³⁹ Figural interpretations of the Bible are necessarily prophetic as they rely on how the Old Testament anticipates the New Testament. For example, affirms Auerbach, the Law (Torah) or the history of the Jews are a 'prophetic *figura*' for the appearance of Christ.⁴⁰ When it comes to the *Commedia*, which for Auerbach is based on a figural view of things, the characters of the *Commedia* are the fulfilled prophecy of their appearance on earth. They are God's 'revealed truth' which the reader witnesses through Dante's report of his extraordinary journey.

The closing essay of *Studi su Dante*, 'Gli appelli di Dante al lettore', widely discusses the theme of propheticism.⁴¹ According to Auerbach, the addresses to the reader are among the most significant stylistic models of the *Commedia*. Neither Latin epic poetry nor medieval Western literature before Dante had used formal addresses to the reader. Dante's address to the reader is a 'creazione nuova',⁴² similar, on the one hand, to the invocation to the muses of epic poem and, on the other hand, to the religious apostrophe of medieval sermons, which address worshippers or humanity in general. The novelty of Dante's construct is, for Auerbach, due to the prophetic character of his teaching, which

³⁵ Chiavacci Leonardi, note to *Paradiso XXV*, 1-12, in *DDP*.

³⁶ Pasolini reads Auerbach's *Studi su Dante* when it has just been published. This has been proved by scholars. Reading Pasolini's 'La volontà di Dante a essere poeta', Segre immediately identifies the legacy of *Studi su Dante* and invites Pasolini to quote Auerbach explicitly in his essay (Pasolini, *Lettere II*, p. 594). In recent years, Bazzocchi has also highlighted this point (*I burattini*, p. 41).

³⁷ Dante Della Terza, 'Prefazione', in Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, pp. vii-xix (pp. xv-xvi).

³⁸ Auerbach, 'Figura', in Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, pp. 176-240.

³⁹ Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, pp. 191, 204.

⁴⁰ Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, p. 199.

⁴¹ Auerbach, 'Gli appelli di Dante al lettore', in Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, pp. 309-23.

⁴² Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, p. 313.

inevitably influences his relationship with the reader. In this respect, Dante's readership is not a specific group of people but rather the whole of humanity, present and future.

L'originalità degli appelli di Dante al lettore è un sintomo d'un nuovo rapporto tra i due fondato sulla concezione che Dante ha del suo compito e della sua funzione di profeta. [...] egli agisce come chi è stato ammesso a vedere l'altro mondo, per grazia speciale, dopo Enea e Paolo; come uomo a cui è stata affidata la missione, importante come quella di questi uomini, di rivelare all'umanità l'ordine eterno di Dio e d'insegnare agli uomini, in uno speciale momento storico, ciò che vi è errato nella struttura della vita umana [...] un grande poema in volgare, con un tale contenuto e con un tale atteggiamento dello scrittore, era interamente nuovo. Esso implicava, richiedeva, una sorta di relazione col lettore simile a quella del profeta con i suoi ascoltatori.⁴³

In the light of the revealing power of his poetry, for Auerbach, Dante does not consider himself to be just a poet but rather a prophet. Dante feels himself to be a new St Paul, as God's chosen instrument to fulfil his mission and have a positive effect on society.

Dante aveva raggiunto ormai il punto di vista di chi concepisce la propria funzione come quella d'un 'vas d'elezione', più che come quella d'uno scrittore che solleciti il favore d'un pubblico colto. Del resto, fin dall'inizio, pur aspettando gloria ed immortalità dalla sua opera, egli non ha mai avuto l'atteggiamento d'uno scrittore che cerchi di compiacere il lettore, nello sforzo deliberato di conseguirla; egli è troppo consapevole della forza della sua poesia, troppo compreso delle rivelazioni che il suo messaggio incarna.⁴⁴

The conclusion of Auerbach's analysis is that the figure of the prophet prevails over the poet. The essay ends with the word 'prophet', which is then the final word of *Studi su Dante*: 'Si può legittimamente affermare che egli parlò ai lettori del suo tempo, come a noi tutti con l'autorità e l'urgenza d'un profeta'.⁴⁵

Many passages of *Studi su Dante* highlight the close relationship between prophetic mission, political discourse, and personal matters in the *Commedia* – already mentioned at the beginning of this section. According to Auerbach, the revelation of God's truth and Dante's consequent prophetic mission are inevitably blended with his political ideas:

La lotta politica (uso la parola 'politica' nel suo senso più ampio) è divenuta una lotta per l'interpretazione della volontà di Dio; Dante non fu il primo a presentare la sua interpretazione come autentica essendo l'appello all'autorità divina il modo naturale e normale nella civiltà medievale come ai tempi della profezia ebraica, di esprimere forti condizioni politiche.⁴⁶

⁴³ Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, p. 318.

⁴⁴ Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, p. 315.

⁴⁵ Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, p. 323.

⁴⁶ Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, p. 322.

According to Auerbach, Dante uses the authority he has been given by God – in the form of the journey on which he is sent – to pursue his political beliefs and hopes. The moral restoration of the ‘mondo che mal vive’ (*Purg.* XXXII, 103) could only happen if the political conditions eventually changed in the direction of Dante’s own political beliefs; that is, if Italy and the whole world had a stable central government and the Church focused on its spiritual mission, limiting its involvement in the political scene.⁴⁷ In relation to the socio-political subject matter, Auerbach also highlights Dante’s discomfort over the economic change of his society, especially in relation to the dissemination of a bourgeois mentality, which only looks after its own private economic interests.

Firenze, di tutti i comuni italiani, è l’esempio più evidente di quello che Dante doveva sentire senz’altro come il male. Perché qui per la prima volta era giunto a consapevolezza di sé e a vivo sviluppo il nuovo spirito borghese e affaristico; qui per la prima volta i grandi fattori metafisici del mondo politico erano sottoposti a una valutazione e a uno sfruttamento ormai soltanto politici, secondo un coerente spirito pragmatico, qui per la prima volta prevalse, in modo cosciente e coerente, fino nei più bassi strati del popolo, lo spirito che con freddo calcolo inserisce nel gioco delle forze ogni istituzione terrena, senza riguardo alla sua provenienza ultraterrena e all’autorità.⁴⁸

Auerbach affirms that Dante-author, who writes the *Commedia* when he is already in exile, merges his personal condition and his prophetic investiture in the prophecies addressed to Dante-character: ‘Egli stesso ha fissato nella *Commedia*, nelle profezie di Brunetto Latini e di Cacciaguida, quello che gli è successo e quanto ha sofferto’.⁴⁹ Recalling the poet’s ‘duro destino’ during the composition of the *Commedia*, Auerbach claims that it is precisely this suffering which increases Dante’s self-awareness and reveals to him ‘l’eccezionalità del suo essere’ and of his own mission.⁵⁰ The difficulties Dante encounters in his life have never broken his ‘idea del giusto’ and ‘la sua volontà di compierlo’.⁵¹ On the contrary, they have motivated him even more and, ultimately, they have become the reason for his greatness: ‘la catastrofe politica e le sue conseguenze, procurandogli un destino significativo, formarono ed esaltarono fino alla piena intensità questo lato del suo essere e del suo talento’.⁵²

With regard to Contini’s essays on Dante of the mid-1960s, I will investigate the theme of prophetism in ‘Un’interpretazione di Dante’ published in *Paragone* in 1965, which Pasolini mentions in relation to and in his essay ‘La volontà di Dante a essere poeta’,⁵³ and other contributions released

⁴⁷ With regard to Dante’s political thought, see *Conv.* IV, iv.

⁴⁸ Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, p. 114.

⁴⁹ Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, p. 68.

⁵⁰ Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, p. 73.

⁵¹ Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, p. 75.

⁵² Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, p. 75.

⁵³ From the exchange of letters between Pasolini and the editors of *Paragone* (Anna Balti and Roberto Longhi), it seems that after finding out that ‘Un’interpretazione di Dante’ would be published in the October issue, Pasolini no longer wants to publish his piece on Dante. Eventually, the editors convince him to go ahead with the publication and ‘La volontà di Dante a essere poeta’ is released in the December issue. Here Pasolini mentions Contini’s theory of the two registers of the *Commedia*,

in the same year in newspapers and journals familiar to Pasolini: 'Dante oggi' for *Corriere della Sera* and 'Un esempio di poesia dantesca: il canto XXVIII del *Paradiso*' for *Approdo letterario*.⁵⁴

In 'Un'interpretazione di Dante', Contini links the prophetic character of the text to linguistic discourse. According to the critic, the potential for being a prophetic text rests in the extraordinary nature of Dante's language. Contini emphasises the untimeliness of Dante's words, the fact that they are way ahead of his time and of medieval culture more generally: 'La sua lingua arriv[a] "più in là" della sua cultura'.⁵⁵ Due to the extraordinary nature of his language, affirms Contini, Dante is not only able to go beyond his own culture but also to anticipate posterity: 'l'impressione genuina del postero, incontrandosi in Dante, non è di imbattersi in un tenace e ben conservato sopravvissuto, ma di raggiungere qualcuno arrivato prima di lui'.⁵⁶ Moreover, adds Contini, Dante's powerful language remains fixed in the readers' mind. The phonic aspect and the semantic value of his lines create 'figure ritmiche',⁵⁷ which are easy to memorise and quote and, eventually, become 'detti memorabili'.⁵⁸ Thus, for Contini, Dante is 'linguisticamente [...] un profeta e un classico',⁵⁹ as with his language he is able to go beyond his own medieval culture and to give to his own text a sense of *auctoritas*. Dante's poem is metrically prophetic, affirms Contini; the prophetic aspect prevails over the narrative: 'la prima cosa che la *Commedia* vuole essere è certo una profezia, tant'è vero che ricalca ostentatamente Isaia'.⁶⁰ Finally, Contini also recalls Dante's discomfort about the socio-economic change of his society: Dante is 'nostalgico della piccola città di agrari del tempo di Cacciaguida, avverso all'urbanesimo, alla finanza (detta "usura"), alle attività industriali e commerciali'.⁶¹

Contini's short article, 'Dante oggi', starts with a question about Dante's personal engagement, which a few months earlier a radio journalist had asked the critic:

Qualche mese fa, alla radio di Montreal, un gentile intervistatore volle chiedere il mio parere su Dante come autore 'impegnato', anzi *engagé*. Approfitto di questo ricordo per orientare il discorso sull'aspetto più attuale dell'*engagement* dantesco: quello linguistico.⁶²

For the critic, the linguistic engagement of the *Commedia* lies in the fact that Dante uses different languages and registers (plurilingualism) and that he is not afraid of using any extreme expression.

explained precisely in 'Un'interpretazione di Dante' (p. 1380), and also Contini's essay 'Dante come personaggio-poeta della *Commedia*' of 1957 (p. 1377).

⁵⁴ Contini, 'Dante oggi' (1965¹), then in Contini, *Varianti e altra linguistica* (1970), now in Contini, *Un'idea di Dante* (1976) pp. 63-68; Contini, 'Un esempio di poesia dantesca: il canto XXVIII del *Paradiso*' (1965¹), then in Contini, *Varianti e altra linguistica* (1970), now in Contini, *Un'idea di Dante* (1976), pp. 191-213.

⁵⁵ Contini, 'Un'interpretazione di Dante', p. 110.

⁵⁶ Contini, 'Un'interpretazione di Dante', p. 111.

⁵⁷ Contini, 'Un'interpretazione di Dante', p. 83.

⁵⁸ Contini, 'Un'interpretazione di Dante', p. 77.

⁵⁹ Contini, 'Un'interpretazione di Dante', p. 77.

⁶⁰ Contini, 'Un'interpretazione di Dante', p. 105.

⁶¹ Contini, 'Un'interpretazione di Dante', p. 110.

⁶² Contini, 'Dante oggi', p. 63.

‘Dante non si preclude nessuna possibilità’, affirms Contini.⁶³ If the first part of the article focuses mainly on Dante’s linguistic engagement, further on it refers to Dante’s personal engagement, to his ‘tanta passione ideologica’,⁶⁴ saying that these two aspects are often contiguous. With regard to this discourse, Contini recalls the infernal quarrel between Master Adam and Sinon, which is built on the comic *tenso* and mirrors Dante’s *tenzone* with Forese Donati.⁶⁵ Virgil’s rebuke to Dante-character, who is following the infernal argument, must be read as Dante’s critique and final refusal of that type of poetry, which he used to write in the past. In this case, the choice of a specific linguistic variety and register is functional not so much for realistic purposes but rather to pursue a specific ideology. The conclusion is that the plurilingualism of the *Commedia* is not always meant for realistic purposes but could relate to Dante-author’s personal issues and commitment.

In ‘Un esempio di poesia dantesca: il canto XXVIII del Paradiso’, the topic of Dante’s prophetism is discussed in relation to the specific context of *Paradiso* XXVIII. In this canto, Beatrice describes to Dante the angelic hierarchy. The discourse revolves around the topic of the truth (God’s truth), as here the true ordering of the angelic ranks is revealed to Dante. Over time, affirms Beatrice, different theories on the subject have been reported: that of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, who received it from St Paul after his journey to Heaven, is true, and that of Pope Gregory is wrong. For Contini the main argument of the canto is precisely God’s truth, the ‘vero’ – ‘la parola che qui Dante insegue e ripete’.⁶⁶ The truth discussed in this canto is related to prophetism. It is a prophetic truth, as it is unknown to humanity and unlike the present life of mortals:

Poscia che ’ncontro a la vita presente
d’i miseri mortali aperse ’l vero
quella che ’mparadisa la mia mente. (*Par.* XXVIII, 1-3)

As noted by Contini, the first ‘terzina’ refers to the two prophecies of the previous canto, in which St Peter and Beatrice foretell a new divine intervention (*Par.* XXVII, 37-66, 142-48) and where the saint confirms Dante’s prophetic investiture: ‘Il primo *vero* è dunque un futuro rivelato: l’imminente dispiegamento della vita morale in terra, da san Pietro indirettamente riferito a un nuovo “Scipio” e riconfermato dalla sua fiancheggiatrice Beatrice’.⁶⁷ In the ninth circle of Heaven, Dante contemplates the truth of the angelic hierarchy as it was reported by St Paul to Pseudo-Dionysius. Thus, notes

⁶³ Contini, ‘Dante oggi’, p. 63.

⁶⁴ Contini, ‘Dante oggi’, p. 66.

⁶⁵ *Tenso* (‘tenzone’ in Italian) is a medieval poetic form (originating in Provence and then spread across Italy and other Romance countries) representing a debate between two poets, often polemical and sometimes filled with invectives and personal accusations. The debate is carried out by means of an exchange of poems between the authors. Dante’s *tenso* with his friend and poet Forese Donati consists of set of six sonnets, three by each poet, see Dante, *Rime* 73-78.

⁶⁶ Contini, ‘Un’esempio di poesia’, p. 192.

⁶⁷ Contini, ‘Un’esempio di poesia’, p. 195.

Contini, Dante is the holder of the new *visio Pauli*. Already at the beginning of his journey to Heaven, 'Dante si dispone a essere il nuovo Paolo'.⁶⁸ Then, the critic links the truth with the action of seeing. Heaven is the place where God's truth is revealed by Dante through sight, where truth becomes visible: 'in cielo il ver si vide' (*Par.* XXVIII, 87). To the concept of truth and the act of seeing, Contini adds the term 'vision' as the experience of seeing the truth. Finally, Contini comments on Dante's neologisms, which the poet creates to express God's own ineffable truth and so to pursue his revelatory mission. Among the neologisms of the *Paradiso*, Contini recalls 'trasumanar' (*Par.* I, 70) which Dante uses to define his inner change in the moment he enters Heaven.

The analysis carried out in this section has shown that Auerbach's and Contini's essays on Dante of the mid-1960s stress the prophetic character of the *Commedia* and the idea of Dante as a poet-prophet. If Auerbach's *Studi su Dante* insist on prophetism as one of the main features of the *Commedia*, Contini's essays show that the extraordinary language of the *Commedia* has a crucial role in making Dante a prophet, adding to his 1950s reading of Dante's linguistic variety (plurilingualism) as an example of realism ('Preliminari sulla lingua del Petrarca'). After Aeneas and St Paul, Dante is God's new chosen instrument to fulfil his mission; Dante must pay attention to the vision of divine truths and report the 'vero' to humanity. Aware of the high value of his mission and of the positive effect his words will have on society, Dante addresses his reader like a prophet. The readership of the *Commedia* is not just Dante's contemporaries but the whole of humanity, present and future. The power of his language allows the poet to go beyond his own medieval culture and reaches out to future generations.

My argument is that these works by Auerbach and Contini, whom, as seen in the previous chapters, Pasolini uses as a lens to read and reconceptualise Dante in his own terms, contribute to Pasolini's formulation of a new idea of Dante to be used as a model: Dante as the poet-prophet. We have also noted that the critics highlight some specific aspects of Dante's prophetism: the socio-political character, expressed as discomfort with the contemporary political situation (the lack of a strong imperial political power and the corruption of the Church) and with the economic change of his society (the dissemination of a bourgeois mentality); the personal engagement; the necessity to reveal the 'vero'; the condition of exile; the preaching-like attitude toward the reader; the capacity to speak to future generations; the identification with St Paul. All these aspects of Dante's prophetism will be discussed in relation to Pasolini in chapter four, where I will show that starting from the end of the 1960s Pasolini takes on himself these features of Dante the poet-prophet. The theme of Dante's identification with St Paul for the construction of his own prophetic mission will be further discussed in the next section.

⁶⁸ Contini, 'Un'empio di poesia', p. 197.

3.3 – The triptych Dante-Paul-Pasolini

To reinforce my argument on Pasolini's new idea of Dante as a poet-prophet, in this section I will discuss the prominence of another model and figure of the self for Pasolini at the time: Saint Paul. My argument is that the figure of St Paul enters the dialogue between Dante and Pasolini, contributing to Pasolini's new idea of Dante as a poet-prophet. Although St Paul is not a prophet in the strict sense, many aspects of his life apply to that figure (for example, being called upon to tell the truth, being rejected and persecuted), and Dante uses precisely the Pauline model to build his prophetic investiture. After his conversion, and so having seen the 'truth' (Christ), St Paul undertakes a mission of preaching and evangelisation under Roman persecution. In the Epistle to the Galatians Paul links his mission to the vision of Christ: 'Cum autem placuit ei, qui me segregavit ex utero matris meae, et vocavit per gratiam suam, ut revelaret Filium suum in me, ut evangelizarem illum in gentibus' (Galatians 1. 15-16).⁶⁹ I will argue that the triptych Dante-Paul-Pasolini is key to understanding fully Pasolini's new relationship with Dante from the mid-1960s onwards in terms of poetic-prophetism. I will start by expanding on Dante's identification with St Paul as a way to build his own prophetic investiture, already mentioned in the previous section. Then, I will comment on St Paul as a figure of the self for Pasolini and analyse the presence of the saint in Pasolini's production from the 1960s onwards. In particular, my investigation of the Pauline model in Pasolini's work will reveal that the two figures of St Paul and Dante often occur together and also tend to overlap.

As mentioned in the previous section, St Paul is a crucial model for Dante's journey through the afterlife and prophetic investiture. However, canonical biblical accounts do not report a description of St Paul's journey and vision of the Paradise. In the Second Epistle to the Corinthians while claiming in the third person to have been caught up to Heaven, Paul also affirms that he cannot reveal anything of his heavenly experience: 'quoniam raptus est in Paradisum: et audivit arcana verba, quae non licet homini loqui' (II Corinthians 12.4).⁷⁰ As we can see from the quotation of the epistle, Paul protects the secrets about his *raptus* thought a declaration of ineffability as a prohibition on speaking. Despite Paul's silence, in the fourth century a non-canonical text known as the *Visio Pauli* is composed to report a detailed account of the saint's journey. Well-known in medieval times, the fictional text is used by writers of visionary literature to overcome the problem of ineffability as a prohibition on speaking created by the Pauline epistle.⁷¹ Thus, Dante's reuse of the Pauline model to build his own journey

⁶⁹ 'But when (God), who from my mother's womb had set me apart and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him to the Gentiles'.

⁷⁰ 'Was caught up into Paradise and heard ineffable things, which no one may utter'.

⁷¹ Ledda, 'Modelli biblici nella *Commedia*', pp. 199-208.

through the afterlife and prophetic investiture can be understood in the light of the widespread tradition of the *Visio Pauli*.

The identification with the saint is established from the beginning of Dante's journey: in *Inferno* II (ll. 31-33) the poet recalls St Paul and Aeneas as those who have already undertaken that extraordinary path.⁷² The identification with St Paul becomes stronger in the *Paradiso*, when Dante describes a similar experience to the saint's being caught up to Heaven. The Pauline model allows Dante to discuss some issues related to the experience of Paradise and to build his prophetic investiture.⁷³ As already noted, in Paradise Dante receives his solemn investiture as a prophet by Cacciaguida and St Peter. The first lines of *Paradiso* I echo St Paul's declaration of ineffability regarding his experience of Heaven:

Nel ciel che più de la sua luce prende
fu' io, e vidi cose che ridire
né sa né può chi di là sù discende;

perché appressando sé al suo disire,
nostro intelletto si profonda tanto,
che dietro la memoria non può ire. (*Par.* I, 4-9)

The ineffability of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians is turned by Dante into an impossibility of speaking because of his failing memory. Dante's worry about reporting his heavenly experience is the failure of his human capacity to remember and describe through human language the 'arcana Dei'.⁷⁴ Despite the difficulty of the task, a few lines later Dante promises to reveal all that he has been able to remember:

Veramente quant' io del regno santo
ne la mi mente potei far tesoro,
sarà ora materia del mio canto. (*Par.* I, 10-12)

As noted in the previous section, the obligation to say what he has seen (*denuntiatio*) is a crucial aspect of Dante's prophetic investitures: 'fa che tu scrive' (*Purg.* XXXII, 105); 'queste parole segna a' vivi' (*Purg.* XXXIII, 53); 'tutta tua vision fa manifesta' (*Par.* XVII, 128); 'apri la bocca, / e non asconder quel ch'io non ascondo' (*Par.* XXVII, 65-66).⁷⁵ In *Paradiso* I, the figure of St Paul occurs one more time. When invoking Apollo's help for the difficult act of revealing the 'arcana Dei', Dante asks the god of poetry to make him a 'vaso' of divine virtue (*Par.* I, 14). By this choice of word, Dante recalls the famous

⁷² Ledda, 'Modelli biblici nella *Commedia*', p. 183.

⁷³ Apart from the themes of prophetism and predestination, Ledda underlines that the Pauline model is functional with regard to some specific topics related to the experience of Heaven, such as the corporeal experience of Heaven and blinding as an overcoming of the human faculties ('Modelli biblici nella *Commedia*', pp. 194-216).

⁷⁴ Chiavacci Leonardi, note to *Paradiso* I, 6, in *DDP*.

⁷⁵ Ledda, 'Modelli biblici nella *Commedia*', p. 206.

biblical periphrasis for St Paul: 'vas electionis' (Acts 9. 15); this has already been evoked in *Inferno* II in the words 'lo Vas d'elezione' (l. 28) and will be again in *Paradiso* XXI: 'il gran vasello' (ll. 127-28).⁷⁶ In relation to Dante's prophetic mission, the figure of St Paul is evoked one more time in the *Paradiso*, when St James specifies Dante's mission as the re-instillation of hope in humankind:

Per grazia vuol che tu [...]
[...] veduto il ver di questa corte,
la spene, che là giù bene innamora,
in te e in altrui di ciò conforte. (*Par.* XXV, 40-45)

This passage reaffirms the reuse of the Pauline model, as in *Inferno* II St Paul's mission is said to be the restoration of faith in humankind: 'per recarne conforto a quella fede / ch'è principio a la via di salvazione' (ll. 29-30). The reason why both Dante and Paul are chosen by God is part of the divine project of reinforcing the theological virtues among believers.⁷⁷

The theme of Pasolini's identification with St Paul has been underlined by scholars.⁷⁸ The saint appears as a figure of the author in one of Pasolini's first narrative pieces, *Romans* (1948-49).⁷⁹ Shaped on Pasolini's own life, at the time when he moved from Bologna to Casarsa in 1942, this short novel narrates the encounter of the young priest Paolo with the rural Friulian community during the Second World War. At some point in the story, the priest Paolo reads some passages of St Paul's Epistles to the Philippians to ease his guilt (*Romans*, p. 230).⁸⁰ This relates to his feelings for a beautiful young boy, Cesare Jop. The priest's attraction to Cesare echoes Pasolini's discovery of his homosexuality and first loves in Casarsa. The link drawn by Pasolini between homosexuality and St Paul returns in a few articles of the 1970s,⁸¹ where Pasolini affirms that St Paul too was a homosexual. Although not historically verified, this statement is revealing of Pasolini's projection of his own self – and so of his own homosexuality – onto the saint.

The references to the story of St Paul and to the Pauline Epistles increase in Pasolini's production from the mid-1960s onwards and culminate in the project for a film on the saint, on which Pasolini works on and off from 1968 to 1974.⁸² In 1964, in a letter sent to Don Giovanni Rossi, Pasolini uses an

⁷⁶ Ledda, 'Modelli biblici nella *Commedia*', pp. 198-99.

⁷⁷ Ledda, 'Modelli biblici nella *Commedia*', p. 208.

⁷⁸ Greene, *Pasolini*, p. 178; Gordon, *Pasolini*, p. 202; Emanuela Patti, 'A "poetic idea": (Re-) Sacralizing the Wor(l)d. Pasolini's Project for a Film about St Paul', *Politics and Culture in Postwar Italy*, ed. by Linda Rizzo (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholar Press, 2006), pp. 77-87, then in *Pasolini after Dante*, pp. 124-25; Armando Maggi, 'A Body of Nostalgia: Pasolini's Self-Portrait in the Film Project *Saint Paul*', in *The Resurrection*, pp. 21-106 (pp. 22-23).

⁷⁹ Pasolini, *Romans* (1994¹), now in *RRII*, pp. 197-263.

⁸⁰ Alessandra Grandelis, 'Teorema e San Paolo. Citazioni pasoliniane fra cinema e letteratura', *Parole Rubate*, 5 (2012), 41-59 (p. 53).

⁸¹ Pasolini, 'Sacer', p. 381; Pasolini, 'Cani' (1975), *Corsari*, now in *SPS*, pp. 390-96 (p. 390).

⁸² For a broad analysis of the presence of St Paul in Pasolini's production, I refer to Grandelis, 'Teorema e San Paolo', pp. 50-59. For a recent in-depth analysis of Pasolini's film project about St Paul, I refer to Maggi, 'A Body of Nostalgia', pp. 21-106.

episode from St Paul's life to describe himself. He depicts himself as a Saul who has not completely fallen from his horse on his way to Damascus and so has never properly converted:

Io sono da sempre caduto da cavallo: non sono mai stato spavaldamente in sella [...] sono caduto da sempre, e un mio piede è rimasto impigliato nella staffa, così che la mia corsa non è una cavalcata, ma un essere trascinato via, con il capo che sbatte nella polvere e sulle pietre. Non posso né risalire sul cavallo degli Ebrei e dei Gentili, né cascare per sempre sulla terra di Dio.⁸³

In 1966 Pasolini drafts the project plan for the film on St Paul, then two years later (1968) writes and sends the screenplay to Don Emilio Cordero, director of Sanpaolofilm.⁸⁴ The project stalls, but Pasolini does not abandon the idea of realising the film, and when a few years later, in 1974, other production companies seem interested in making the film, he revises the draft one more time. Eventually, the film comes to nothing; the screenplay, *Appunti per un film su San Paolo*, and the original project, *Progetto per un film su San Paolo*, are published posthumously in 1977.⁸⁵ The film was supposed to be a transposition of St Paul's preaching into contemporary society: 'Il mondo in cui [...] vive e opera San Paolo è dunque il mondo del 1966 o '67' (*Progetto per un film su San Paolo*, p. 2024). In the text, St Paul's and Pasolini's times do not merge into one another but rather coexist one beside the other.⁸⁶ St Paul speaks to an audience which is contemporaneous with Pasolini, and so his words, taken faithfully from the Acts of the Apostles and from the Pauline Epistles, answer twentieth-century questions and doubts.⁸⁷ The reason behind this poetic choice is that, for Pasolini, St Paul's words are current. When interrogated, Paul gives answers which can illuminate contemporary society in a new way.⁸⁸ Pasolini uses St Paul as a prophet to address contemporary time and its issues. Patti too highlights the prophetic character of the film project, commenting on it as a poetic action to re-sacralise the world which had been de-sacralised by neocapitalism.⁸⁹ In the film the saint would have died, brutally shot down, like a modern martyr, a Christ. According to scholars, the film is a last confirmation of Pasolini's long-lasting engagement and identification with St Paul, as the setting and scenario of the film suggest a deeply autobiographical interpretation.⁹⁰ St Paul's solitary preaching in the consumerist era, and the mockery received from critics and intellectuals contemporary with

⁸³ Pasolini, *Lettere II*, pp. 576-77.

⁸⁴ Walter Siti and Franco Zabagli, 'Note e notizie sui testi', in *PCII*, p. 3151.

⁸⁵ Pasolini, *Appunti per un film su San Paolo* (1977¹), now in *PCII*, pp. 1881-2020; Pasolini, *Progetto per un film su San Paolo* (1977¹), now in *PCII*, pp. 2023-2030.

⁸⁶ Francesca Parmeggiani, 'Pasolini e la parola sacra: il progetto del "San Paolo"', *Italica*, 2 (1996) 195-214 (p. 201).

⁸⁷ Pasolini uses a similar device to *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* (1964), where the dialogue is taken directly from the Gospel of Matthew.

⁸⁸ Parmeggiani, 'Pasolini e la parola sacra', p. 204.

⁸⁹ Patti, 'A "poetic idea"', pp. 77-87.

⁹⁰ Luigi Martellini, *Introduzione a Pasolini* (Rome: Laterza, 1989), p. 102; Green, *Pasolini*, p. 178; Parmeggiani, 'Pasolini e la parola sacra', p. 195. In two dedicated studies on the film, Roberto Escobar ('Pier Paolo Pasolini: progetto per un film su San Paolo', *Cinemasessanta*, 121 (1978), 19-25) and Francesca Sanvitale ('Il San Paolo di Pasolini: lo scandalo intellettuale della verità', *Il Ponte*, 11 (1990), 94-102) insist on the identification between author (Pasolini) and actor (St Paul).

Pasolini, mirror Pasolini's lonely fight against neocapitalist society in the 1970s, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Alongside the positive figure of the saint (the one caught up to the Third Heaven, the mystic, the martyr), for Pasolini, Paul also has a negative side: he is also the 'organiser' of the Church. This double nature, affirms Pasolini, would have clearly emerged from his film:⁹¹

Il film è una cosa violentissima contro la Chiesa e contro il Vaticano, perché faccio un san Paolo doppio, cioè schizofrenico, nettamente dissociato in due: uno è il santo [...] l'altro invece è il prete, ex-fariseo, che recupera le sue situazioni culturali precedenti e che sarà il fondatore della Chiesa. Come tale lo condanno; come mistico va bene, è un'esperienza mistica come altre, rispettabile, non la giudico, e invece lo condanno violentemente come fondatore della Chiesa, con tutti gli elementi negativi della Chiesa già pronti: la sessuofobia, l'antifemminismo, l'organizzazione, le collette, il trionfalismo, il moralismo. Insomma tutte le cose che hanno fatto il male della Chiesa sono già tutte in lui.⁹²

As noted in chapter two with regard to the case study of *Accattone*, the theme of the double, expressed by characters who have experienced in life both good and evil, is particularly inspiring for Pasolini. Embodying the split within himself, we can associate Paul with characters such as Accattone and Buonconte da Montefeltro. The theme of the double is also important for Pasolini, as it expresses his own personality. As noted by Gordon, Pasolini projects onto Paul his own duality and his 'absolute, irresolvable schizophrenia',⁹³ evoked, for example, in 'lo scandalo del contraddirmi'⁹⁴ of *Le ceneri di Gramsci* or when in *Trasumanar e organizzar* he defines himself as a 'letterato schizoide'.⁹⁵ The term 'schizophrenia' is also used by Pasolini in relation to Dante, precisely in 'La volontà di Dante a essere poeta'. Insisting on the "'doppia natura" del poema di Dante' ('Volontà di Dante', p. 1380),⁹⁶ Pasolini writes that the final unity of the language of the *Commedia* is something extraordinary caused by a unconscious poetic will, a form of schizophrenia: 'Un'inconscia volontà poetica [...] una volontà anomala e misteriosa, alquanto vicina – diciamo noi utenti di Freud, e molto meno liberi degli avi – a forme di paranoia o di schizofrenia' ('Volontà di Dante', pp. 1383-84). According to Patti, also Dante's supposed 'schizophrenia' should be ascribed to Pasolini; it is once again the result of Pasolini's

⁹¹ This reading of the film is revealed by Pasolini to Don Emilio Cordero: 'Questo non è naturalmente che un bozzettone [...] del nostro FILM TEOLOGICO [...] qui si narra la storia di due Paoli: il santo e il prete. E c'è una contraddizione, evidentemente, in questo: io sono tutto per il santo, mentre non sono certo molto tenero con il prete. [...] Qui, in questa lettera introduttiva accentuo, per onestà, questo punto: nella sceneggiatura, come vedrà, la cosa è trattata con meno schematismo e rigidità, lasciando libero lo spettatore di scegliere e di risolvere le contraddizioni: e di stabilire se questo FILM TEOLOGICO sia un inno alla Santità o alla Chiesa' (Pasolini, *Lettere II*, p. 639).

⁹² Pasolini, 'La perdita della realtà e il cinema inintegrabile' (Pasolini in conversation with G. Bachmann on 13 settembre 1974), in Pasolini, *Cinema in forma di poesia*, ed. by Luciano De Giusti (Pordenone: Cinemazero, 1979), pp. 152-61 (p. 159).

⁹³ Gordon, *Pasolini*, p. 202.

⁹⁴ Pasolini, 'Le ceneri di Gramsci', p. 820.

⁹⁵ Pasolini, 'Patmos', in *Trasumanar*, now in *TPII*, pp. 123-32 (p. 125).

⁹⁶ Here Pasolini recalls Benedetto Croce's reading of the double nature of the text of the *Commedia* as divided into 'poesia' and 'struttura'. Croce's reading is still very popular in the 1960s; for example, it is discussed in Garboli's article 'Come leggere Dante', which in turn inspires Pasolini in writing his own essay.

projection of his own schizophrenic nature onto another figure.⁹⁷ The use of the same connoted word for both St Paul and Dante suggests that they are figures of Pasolini's own self at the same time.

The Paul-Dante pair appears in two major works from the 1970s; that is, *Trasumanar e organizzar* (1971) and *Petrolio* (written between 1972 and 1975). Interviewed about his next poetic collection in 1969-70, Pasolini reveals that its title would be '*Trasumanar e organizzar*', and explains it as the juxtaposition of the 'trasumanar' associated with Dante and the 'organizzar' associated with St Paul as the 'organiser' of the Church:

Vado scoprendo sempre di più [...] man mano che studio i mistici, che l'altra faccia del misticismo è proprio il 'fare', l'agire', l'azione. Del resto, la prossima raccolta di poesie che pubblicherò s'intitolerà *Trasumanar e organizzar*. Con questa espressione voglio dire che l'altra faccia della 'trasumanizzazione' (la parola è di Dante, in questa forma apocopata), ossia dell'ascesa spirituale, è proprio l'organizzazione. Nel caso di San Paolo, l'altra faccia della santità, del rapimento al 'terzo cielo', è l'organizzazione della Chiesa. (*Centauro*, p. 1462)

As we can see from this interview, the Paul-Dante pair seems to be the inspirational model at the heart of the poetic work. Moreover, explaining his own idea of Paul as a two-faced figure (the saint and the organiser of the Church), Pasolini draws a line between the good side of St Paul and Dante as figures who have both had the experience of 'trasumanar' or spiritual ascent. In chapter two, I have already commented on Dante as an inspirational model for some poems of the collection, for example, 'Proposito di scrivere una poesia intitolata "I primi sei canti del Purgatorio"'. On that occasion, I also noted that initially Pasolini wanted to entitle his poetic collection 'I primi sei canti del *Purgatorio* e altre poesie comuniste'. The Pauline model appears clearly in some poetic compositions, such as 'L'enigma di Pio XII', 'Tarso, da lontano', and 'Endoxa'.⁹⁸ Pasolini writes 'L'enigma di Pio XII',⁹⁹ drawing on the discourse on charity of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. The poem aims to be a satirical denunciation of the Church which has become a corrupted institution in league with power (in the poem, embodied by Pius XII) and which lacks precisely the charity of St Paul's epistle.¹⁰⁰ The poem ends with Pasolini's own idea of a two-faced St Paul: 'Potrei parlare di UNO che è stato rapito al Terzo Cielo: / invece parlo di un uomo debole: fondatore di Chiesa' ('L'enigma di Pio XII', p. 25). As mentioned in the previous section, the dislike of the (temporal) power of the Church is part of Dante's political thought and it appears in various cantos of the *Commedia*. For example, *Inferno* XIX is a strong invective against the

⁹⁷ Patti, *Pasolini after Dante*, p. 144.

⁹⁸ Grandelis, 'Teorema e San Paolo', pp. 53-55.

⁹⁹ Pasolini, 'L'enigma di Pio XII', in *Trasumanar*, now *TPII*, pp. 17-25.

¹⁰⁰ Grandelis, 'Teorema e San Paolo', p. 54. St Paul's discourse on charity appears also in some of Pasolini's journalistic pieces: Pasolini, 'Alle soglie di uno scisma?' (1968¹), now in *SPS*, pp. 1121-23; Pasolini, 'Vuoto di carità, vuoto di cultura: un linguaggio senza origini' (19741), then in *Corsari*, now in *SPS*, pp. 302-06. When discussing the state of the Church, Pasolini stresses its lack of charity and the necessity to restore the virtue, which he considers as the most important among the theological virtues.

corruption in the Church. In the canto, through the figure of the simoniac Pope Nicholas III, Dante also predicts the future damnation of both Popes Boniface VIII and Clement V. The poem ‘Tarso, da lontano’ expresses Pasolini’s enthusiasm when he reaches St Paul’s hometown, during the shooting of *Medea* (1969).¹⁰¹ Written around the same time is the poem ‘Endoxa’, in which the Greek heroine of Medea is defined as ‘una Saula credente che cade da cavallo e non crede più’, as she has experienced a ‘conversione alla rovescia’, or a ‘folgorazione negativa’.¹⁰² Here, Pasolini re-elaborates the episode of Saul’s fall on the road to Damascus and turns the positive, religious conversion into a negative one. Finally, the poem ends with a quotation of *Purgatorio* V (16-17): ‘chè sempre l’uomo in cui pensier rampolla / sovra pensier’, which restates the Paul-Dante pair as the inspiration for the poetic work.

As in *Trasumanar e organizzar* also in *Petrolio*, the Paul-Dante pair appears at the level of the title and as an inspirational model within the text.¹⁰³ The original manuscript of the novel reveals that Pasolini thinks of ‘Vas’ as a possible title or subtitle for his work. Among the initial sheets of the folder of the manuscript, one is headed only ‘Romanzo’, one only ‘Vas’, and a third one ‘Petrolio’. According to the editors of the Meridiani edition, ‘Petrolio’ is the original title of the book, to which later on Pasolini adds, as an alternative, ‘Vas’, which however never becomes a real option.¹⁰⁴ On the contrary, in his ‘Nota filologica’ to the first edition of *Petrolio* (1992) Aurelio Roncaglia recalls the accounts of Nico Naldini and Enzo Siciliano, for whom ‘Vas’ would have replaced ‘Petrolio’ as the final title.¹⁰⁵ Although doubts about the title remain, scholars agree that the word ‘vas’ comes via Dante, as it refers to the biblical periphrasis for Paul, ‘vas electionis’, reused by Dante in the *Commedia*. Moreover, the editors of the Meridiani edition note that in *La Divina Mimesis* Pasolini had already re-elaborated in an antiphrastic sense the Dantism ‘vas d’elezione’, turning it into ‘vas di riduzione’ to describe the sin of the petit bourgeois class (*Divina*, p. 1112):

Il nuovo titolo ha una matrice dantesca e riprende il ‘vas d’elezione’ di *Inferno*, II, 28, a sua volta citazione degli Atti degli Apostoli (9, 15), dove ‘vas electionis’ è San Paolo. Un ricordo antifrastico del passo di Dante è già nella *Divina Mimesis*: ‘vas di riduzione’ negli *Appunti e Frammenti per il VII canto* sono quelli che ‘peccano contro la grandezza del mondo’.¹⁰⁶

In the novel *Petrolio*, one can find either brief allusions to the Pauline Epistles – for example, *Appunto 101* (*Petrolio*, p. 1685) quotes the Second Epistle to the Corinthians (II Corinthians 3. 3) – or sections where episodes of St Paul’s life are re-elaborated inside the main story – for example, *Appunto*

¹⁰¹ Pasolini, ‘Tarso, da lontano’, in *Appendice a ‘Trasumanar e organizzar’*, in *TPII*, pp. 241-42.

¹⁰² Pasolini, ‘Endoxa’, in *Appendice a ‘Trasumanar e organizzar’*, in *TPII*, p. 252.

¹⁰³ Here I am only reporting some brief references, as an in-depth analysis of *Petrolio* will be carried out in chapters four and five.

¹⁰⁴ Siti and De Laude, ‘Note e notizie sui testi’, in *RRII*, p. 1994.

¹⁰⁵ Aurelio Roncaglia, ‘Nota filologica’, in Pasolini, *Petrolio* (Turin: Einaudi, 1992), pp. 610-24 (p. 615).

¹⁰⁶ Siti and De Laude, ‘Note e notizie sui testi’, in *RRII*, p. 1994.

34 Bis - Prima fiaba sul potere is a rewriting of the conversion of St Paul in negative. As will be extensively discussed in the following chapters, Dante is mentioned in the list of inspirational models, which appears in the original manuscript of *Petrolio*, and the *Commedia* is extensively reused by Pasolini in the text.

These examples taken from Pasolini's late production have shown that St Paul and Dante often appear together as the inspirational models at the heart of the work. At the same time, they are also both figures of the self for Pasolini, who, projecting his own nature onto them, even describes them by using the same connoted term 'schizophrenic'. These make me conclude that there is an overlapping of these two figures in Pasolini. As implied by Pasolini in his account of *Trasumanar e organizzar*, the positive side of Paul (that is, the mystic, the one caught up to the Third Heaven) overlaps with the Dante, who mirrors himself on St Paul in his afterlife journey. My conclusion is that Paul, who has proven to be so important to Pasolini at this time of his career, enters the relationship between Dante and Pasolini, influencing the way Pasolini looks at Dante as a literary model and figure of the self from the mid-1960s onwards. Pasolini's new idea of Dante is precisely the Pauline Dante, who identifies with Paul in his journey through and vision of Heaven: the poet-prophet.¹⁰⁷ If Pasolini's last novel had been published under the title 'Vas' and his last film had been the one about St Paul rather than *Salò*, not only would our understanding of Pasolini's oeuvre be very different, but also his new way of looking at Dante would have been much easier to see. However, the aim of my thesis is to unveil all these elements, bringing new insights to the field of Pasolini studies: a new understanding of his last artistic phase in relationship with Dante.

Conclusions

This chapter has shown that the mid-1960s is crucial period for understanding Pasolini's changing relationship with Dante. Auerbach's and Contini's new studies on Dante and, more generally, the flourishing time of Dante criticism in the mid-1960s become for Pasolini the occasion to reconsider his previous literary production and to rethink his relationship with Dante. Pasolini understands that he needs to move forward; the Dante of the 1950s can no longer function as a literary model and guide to realism. In the first section of the chapter, we investigated two different works of Pasolini's mid-1960s production (both fictional and critical), where the author presents the dismissal of the Dante of

¹⁰⁷ The link between St Paul, Dante, and prophetism has been briefly underlined by Patti. Commenting on some of Pasolini's late productions as poetic actions to re-sacralise the world (for example, the film about St Paul), Patti argues that Pasolini implicitly re-affirms the role of the Poet *Vates*, 'highly inspired by spiritual vision as deeply animated by civic commitment'. Then, recalling Dante as another 'great icon of the Poet *Vates*', the scholar concludes that at this time of his career Pasolini seems to identify precisely with the prophetic figure of the poet ('A "poetic idea", p. 86-87).

the 1950s as a literary model and guide of realism. In *La Divina Mimesis*, mimicking Dante's hesitation in *Inferno* II, the character Pasolini doubts that the example of the *Commedia* would still be a valid guide for his future writings. In 'La volontà di Dante a essere poeta', the discarding of the Dantean model becomes a strong refusal of Contini's notion of plurilingualism, which at that time provokes a shock among Dante scholars, such as Segre. However, commenting on *La Divina Mimesis*, we have seen that Pasolini's new literary path is still somehow linked to Dante. Through the character of Virgil-Pasolini, the author describes his new approach to literature in comparison to Dante: 'Anziché allargare, dilaterai'. Moreover, a few years later Pasolini even defines it as a 'dilation' of Dante's *Commedia*. I have explained this remaining linkage with the *Commedia*, arguing that the dismissal of the Dante of the 1950s does not result in a complete abandonment of Dante as a model. Influenced by Auerbach's and Contini's new readings on Dante and, equally, inspired by the figure of St Paul, Pasolini develops a new idea of Dante to be used as a literary model and guide to realism in his forthcoming production (1970s). We have identified this new idea of Dante in the figure of the poet-prophet, the truth-teller. In the second section, I have shown that Auerbach's and Contini's new essays underline precisely the prophetic aspect of the *Commedia*. Among some key features of Dante as a poet-prophet, both critics recall the importance of the figure of St Paul: Dante identifies with the saint in his journey through and vision of Heaven, and prophetic investiture. Expanding on this aspect in section three, I have then commented on the prominence that St Paul has in Pasolini's late production too. Moreover, we have seen that in Pasolini's works St Paul is often accompanied by Dante, and that the two figures tend to overlap. My conclusion is that Paul enters the dialogue between Dante and Pasolini, influencing the way Pasolini looks at Dante as a literary model and figure of the self. Pasolini no longer looks at Dante as the poet who moves between different social classes in the secular world – 'il poeta del mondo terreno'¹⁰⁸ or 'il Dante della realtà'¹⁰⁹ – but as the one who was taken to Heaven, experienced a vision, and received a prophetic mission. In the next chapter, I will show how the new idea of Dante as the poet-prophet, developed in the mid-1960s, influences Pasolini's 1970s productions and approach to realism.

¹⁰⁸The first section of Auerbach's *Studi su Dante* is entitled 'Dante, poeta del mondo terreno', pp. 1-161.

¹⁰⁹Contini, 'Un'interpretazione di Dante', p. 110.

4 – Revealing reality: Dante's prophetism in Pasolini's new approach to realism (1970s)

This chapter aims to investigate the legacy of Dante in Pasolini's approach to realism in his late production (1970s). In chapter three I noted that in the mid-1960s, while dismissing the model of the Dante of the 1950s and the idea of plurilingualism as a guarantee of realism, Pasolini develops a new idea of Dante as the poet-prophet. As explained in the previous chapter, by this figure I do not mean one who can predict future events, but rather one who reads the world as it really is and speaks the truth to society (that is, the truth-teller). In this chapter I will show how this new idea of Dante influences Pasolini's late production and his approach to the question of realism. The focus on *Petrolio*, chosen as the case study for this artistic period, will allow me to explore in depth the legacy of Dante's prophetism. The first section will carry on the discussion initiated in the previous chapter adding evidence to Pasolini's new idea of Dante as the poet-prophet. I will show that starting from the end of the 1960s Pasolini takes on himself some features that are typical of a poet-prophet and that, in the previous chapter, I commented on in relation to Dante. Thus, I will argue that Pasolini's new idea of Dante is also supported by the fact that in the 1970s Pasolini identifies precisely with the figure of Dante the poet-prophet. The second section aims to provide an overview of the main works of Pasolini's late literary and cinematic productions (1968-1975), preparing the discussion for the analysis of *Petrolio*. I will show that in general Pasolini seems to prefer narrative strategies that are typical of a biblical context and, more specifically, of prophetism, such as vision, allegory, parable, and prophecy. Then I will underline that the use of these strategies raises a question about Pasolini's approach to realism, as these are all non-realistic forms of representation. The discussions about Pasolini's use of such strategies and of a new approach to realism will be carried on in the last two sections in relation to *Petrolio*. The third and fourth sections are, indeed, dedicated to the analysis of the case study of *Petrolio*, where Pasolini engages with both narrative strategies of allegory and vision. I will demonstrate that this choice is linked to Dante's *Commedia*, and in particular that it is inspired by the new idea of Dante the poet-prophet and mediated by Dante criticism. Finally, I will comment on the idea of realism behind *Petrolio*. The study of *Petrolio* will be carried on in chapter five, which will provide a detailed analysis of the main episodes which illustrate this connection with Dante. As anticipated in the introduction to the thesis, chapters four and five should be taken together as one single unit. Since the 1970s are the destination point of my research, I decided to dedicate more space to the analysis of Pasolini's late works and question of realism in relation to Dante.

4.1 – Pier Paolo Pasolini poet-prophet

In this section I will show that Pasolini mirrors himself on Dante the poet-prophet, perceiving strong similarities between his life in the 1970s and Dante's. This discussion will carry on and support the argument of chapter three regarding Pasolini's new idea of Dante as the poet-prophet. A specific idea of prophetism, as an author who was able to foresee his own death, is well-known in the field of Pasolini studies, suggested by the works of Pasolini's friend and artist Giuseppe Zigaina.¹ To avoid any misunderstanding, I wish to clarify that this is not the way in which I conceive of Pasolini's prophetism, and that I also disagree with Zigaina's reading. As mentioned for Dante in chapter three and also in my analysis of Pasolini's prophetism, by the figure of the poet-prophet I do not mean one who foresees future events but rather one who sees the world as it really is and commits himself to revealing the truth to society. A prophetic nuance in Pasolini's late life and production has already been underlined by scholars, when discussing, for instance, Pasolini's capacity to read and analyse the rapid radical change of Italian politics and society in the neocapitalist era. In addition, with regard to this topic a few scholars have made a connection with the Dantean model.² For example, Daniele Pegorari speaks of 'un profetismo pasoliniano di marca dantesca',³ reading Pasolini's life from the 1960s onward on the model of Dante as a poet-prophet:

Pasolini si trova [...] dinanzi a un nuovo snodo del proprio itinerario, e anche stavolta è soccorso dal paradigma dantesco, non più soltanto per una facile analogia fra lacerazioni sociali contemporanee e il crudo scenario infernale, ma per l'intimo riconoscimento nella vicenda del poeta medievale, l'intellettuale che, dinanzi al bivio del comodo conformismo o dell'ostilità rispetto al proprio tempo, sceglie la seconda e più dolorosa via (inverando la nozione evangelica dell'inaccettabilità del profeta) e sconta, dunque, il suo necessario esilio dalla città, pena la morte violenta dentro le sue mura un tempo protettive.⁴

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, Pasolini is thinking of Dante right at the end of his life. In what is his last interview, the day before being found dead in Ostia, Pasolini implicitly brings up a link between a certain prophetic attitude and Dante:

Ecco il guaio, ho già detto a Moravia: con la vita che faccio io pago un prezzo. È come uno scendere all'inferno. Ma quando torno – se torno – ho visto altre cose, più cose. Non dico che dovete credermi. Dico che dovete sempre cambiare discorso per non affrontare la verità. ('Siamo tutti in pericolo', p. 1726)

¹ Giuseppe Zigaina, *Pasolini tra enigma e profezia* (Venice: Marsilio, 1989); Giuseppe Zigaina *Pasolini e l'abiura* (Venice: Marsilio, 1993).

² Benedetti, *Pasolini contro Calvino*, pp. 32, 144; Tricomi, *Sull'opera mancata*, pp. 413-16. The scholars who have linked Pasolini's prophetism to Dante are Bernardi, 'L'allegoria', pp. 57-63; Pegorari, 'Il pane dei borghesi', pp. 141-42; and Patti, 'A "poetic idea"', pp. 86-87.

³ Pegorari, 'Il pane dei borghesi', pp. 140.

⁴ Pegorari, 'Il pane dei borghesi', pp. 140-41.

Pasolini defines his life as an author in the 1970s precisely in terms of a *descensus ad inferos*, which allows him to see different things compared to his contemporaries. These ‘things’ appear as an irrefutable truth, risky for the author who reveals them and not easily accepted by society. By mentioning the *topos* of the infernal journey accompanied by the act of revealing, Pasolini seems to mirror himself on Dante as the poet-prophet, thanks to the exceptionality of his experience and the responsibility of his mission. This is because, I argue, in the 1970s Pasolini perceives a strong affinity with Dante in virtue of his ‘vision’. If in the *Commedia* Dante’s vision is God’s otherworld, experienced through an afterlife journey, in the 1970s Pasolini’s vision is the new world of neocapitalism, which he experiences in everyday life. Unlike Dante’s, Pasolini’s vision is the realisation of a negative and pessimistic condition of society, but equally it is a vision of truth that must be revealed to society. Pasolini witnesses the rising of the new power of neocapitalism that, according to him, is dramatically affecting the world he lives in:

Questo nuovo Potere non ancora rappresentato da nessuno e dovuto a una ‘mutazione’ della classe dominante, è in realtà – se proprio vogliamo conservare la vecchia terminologia – una forma ‘totale’ di fascismo. Ma questo Potere ha anche ‘omologato’ culturalmente l’Italia. (‘Il vero fascismo’, p. 314)

Pasolini speaks of the birth of the new power of neocapitalism as ‘[i]l nuovo potere totalitario dei consumi’ or ‘Potere consumistico’⁵, for which he often uses the capital ‘P’.⁶ According to Pasolini, the rules of the global market have a strong effect on the logic of domestic politics, changing its dynamics from national to transnational, making it more difficult for people to follow and understand, and encouraging a technocratic leadership.⁷ Moreover, the new consumerist values promoted by the new ‘Potere’ are slowly changing Italian society, turning it into mass society. As already mentioned in chapter three, Pasolini dedicates many articles to the depiction of this transformation,⁸ which he calls ‘mutazione antropologica degli italiani’ (‘Il vero fascismo’, p. 315). For him, this consists of the destruction of any cultural and social difference and in the ultimate cultural homologation of society: ‘la loro completa omologazione a un unico modello’ (‘Il vero fascismo’, p. 315). Living in dark times and with a deep awareness of the situation are the primary conditions for the status of any prophet. Moreover, Pasolini’s deep discomfort with the socio-economic change of his society creates a similarity with Dante’s worry for the dissemination of a bourgeois mentality in Florence, which I underlined in chapter three. For example, in the *Commedia* the accusation of barratry (exchanging

⁵ Pasolini, ‘Cuore’ (1975¹), then in *Corsari*, now in *SPS*, pp. 397-403 (p. 402); Pasolini, ‘L’ignoranza vaticana come paradigma dell’ignoranza della borghesia italiana’, p. 371. Sometimes even just ‘il Potere’, see Pasolini, ‘Ampliamento del “bozzetto” sulla rivoluzione antropologica in Italia’ (1974¹), then in *Corsari*, now in *SPS*, pp. 325-35 (p. 330).

⁶ For reference, see Pasolini, ‘Il vero fascismo’, p. 313.

⁷ ‘Gli uomini di potere democristiani [...] si sono illusi che nel loro regime tutto sostanzialmente sarebbe stato uguale [...] Essi si erano illusi di poter contare in eterno su un esercito nazionalista (come appunto i loro predecessori fascisti): e non vedevano che il potere, che essi stessi continuavano a detenere e a gestire, già manovrava per gettare la base di eserciti nuovi in quanto transnazionali, quasi polizie tecnocratiche’ (Pasolini, ‘L’articolo delle lucciole’ (1975¹), then in *Corsari*, now in *SPS*, pp. 404-11 (pp. 409-10)).

⁸ For example, the articles published in Italian newspapers and later collected in *Corsari* (1975), such as ‘Studio sulla rivoluzione antropologica in Italia’, pp. 307-12; ‘Genocidio’, pp. 511-17. For a commentary on Pasolini’s journalistic pieces of the 1970s, I refer to Giulio Sapelli, *Modernizzazione senza sviluppo: il capitalismo secondo Pasolini*, ed. by Veronica Ronchi (Milan: Mondadori, 2005).

public office for money) towards Tuscan cities flows in the background of *Inferno* XXI and XXII, dedicated to the punishment of the sin. In his political novel, *Petrolino*, three times Pasolini refers to the negative situation of contemporary Italy using the Dantism 'umile Italia' (*Inf.* I, 106),⁹ suggesting that he perceives a similarity with Dante's life specifically because of the dark times they both experience. Right at the beginning of the *Commedia*, 'umile Italia' is used by Dante with a political meaning with regard to the precarious conditions of Italy still without an Emperor.¹⁰ The scenario depicted by Pasolini in his articles of the 1970s is very pessimistic; for him there has never been such a violent, negative power as the one Italy is facing in the 1970s:

Non voglio fare profezie: ma non nascondo che sono disperatamente pessimista. Chi ha manipolato e radicalmente (antropologicamente) mutato le grandi masse contadine e operaie italiane è un nuovo potere che mi è difficile definire: ma di cui sono certo che è il più violento e totalitario che ci sia mai stato: esso cambia la natura della gente, entra nel più profondo delle coscienze. ('Ampliamento del "bozzetto" sulla rivoluzione antropologica in Italia', p. 327)

The worry about the negative effects that this new 'Potere' has on Italian politics and society leads Pasolini to be significantly involved in the Italian political scene. Although Pasolini has always been interested in the ongoing political debate, his political engagement becomes even stronger from the mid-1960s onwards. The theme of a renewed 'impegno' appears explicitly in the poem 'Poeta delle ceneri' (1966-67). Here Pasolini restates his personal political engagement and makes the firm commitment to be an *engagé* writer in the broadest sense of the term: not only will his writings be politically engaged, but his own life too. In the light of such a commitment, the poet manifests the desire to express himself through exemplary actions, which will then become the topic of his poetry.

Vi ho falsamente abiurato dall'impegno,
perché so che l'impegno è inderogabile,
e oggi più che mai.
E oggi vi dirò che non solo bisogna impegnarsi nello scrivere,
ma nel vivere
[...]
che non solo, l'impegno',
non è finito, ma che anzi, incomincia.
Mai l'Italia fu più odiosa.
Oltretutto con il tradimento degli intellettuali
[...]
Forse, impegnarsi contro tutto questo
non vuol dire scrivere, da impegnati,
direi, ma vivere.
[...]
Perciò io vorrei soltanto vivere
per essendo poeta
perché la vita si esprime anche solo non se stessa.

⁹ Pasolini, *Petrolino*, pp. 1390, 1463, 1658.

¹⁰ Chiavacci Leonardi, note to *Inferno* I, 106, in *DDP*.

Vorrei esprimermi con gli esempi.
Gettare il mio corpo nella lotta.
[...]
Le azioni della vita saranno solo comunicate,
e saranno esse, la poesia,
poiché, ti ripeto, non c'è altra poesia che l'azione reale. ('Poeta delle ceneri', pp. 1261-88)

Pasolini holds this position and commitment for the rest of his life. Reflecting on his late production, Benedetti affirms that it cannot be read separately from the life of the author. His own opinions and beliefs are integral part of his production:

Non sole le sue poesie, i suoi testi narrativi, i film, i testi per il teatro e le sceneggiature, ma anche i suoi interventi giornalistici, le sue dichiarazioni, i suoi appelli, le sue prese di posizione, i suoi processi formano l'opera di Pasolini. [...] L'opera di Pasolini può essere insomma considerata come una grande *performance*, in cui l'oggetto estetico è meno importante della presenza o dell'azione dell'artista. Impossibile leggerla come un testo autosufficiente, senza un riferimento alla persona dell'autore.¹¹

A first aspect of Pasolini's high political commitment is the intensification of his collaboration with Italian newspapers and magazines, which allows him to discuss Italian politics and society with a broad public. Pasolini's journalistic activity has never flourished as much as in these years: the column 'Dialoghi con Pasolini' in *Vie Nuove* from 1960 to 1965; the column 'Il caos' in *Tempo Illustrato* from 1968 to 1970; his pieces of literary criticism again in *Tempo Illustrato* from 1972 to 1975; and other news articles such as the ones published in *Corriere della Sera* and in *Il Mondo* from 1973 to 1975.¹² The tone of his pieces is often harsh, and some of his articles are invectives against political and religious institutions.¹³ His urgent need to comment on Italian politics and his harsh tone bring the collaboration with *Tempo Illustrato* to an early end. Following the direction of the journal, Pasolini should focus mainly on news stories and current debates, and not on politics, whereas, he often uses the column as a platform to write about Italian politics in a very frank and critical way. This firstly causes the censorship of the editorial director Nicola Cattedra of Pasolini's pieces and ultimately the closing of 'Il caos' in March 1970,¹⁴ about which Pasolini complains on the dust jacket of *Trasumanar e organizzar*.¹⁵

Some of Pasolini's poetic compositions are aimed at having an immediate political impact. In *Trasumanar e organizzar* (1971), various poetic compositions take inspiration from recent news reports or political events, such as 'Panagulis', 'Mirmicolalia', and 'Patmos'.¹⁶ These poems are published in periodicals immediately

¹¹ Benedetti, *Pasolini contro Calvino*, pp. 14-15.

¹² A wide selection of Pasolini's articles, debates, and investigations from 1960 to 1970 can be found in Pasolini, *SPS*, pp. 877-1282. For a complete collection of 'Dialoghi con Pasolini', see Pasolini, *Le belle bandiere*, ed. by Ferretti. For a complete collection of 'Il caos', see Pasolini, *Il caos*, ed. by Ferretti.

¹³ See, for example, Pasolini, 'Vuoto di carità, vuoto di cultura: un linguaggio senza origini', p. 302.

¹⁴ Siti and De Laude, 'Note e notizie sui testi', *SPS*, pp. 1804-05.

¹⁵ Pasolini, 'Risvolto di *Trasumanar e organizzar*' (1971¹), now in *SLAII*, pp. 2603-05 (p. 2603).

¹⁶ Pasolini, 'Mirmicolalia' (1969¹) then in *Trasumanar*, now in *TPII*, pp. 26-30; 'Panagulis' (1968¹), then in *Trasumanar*, now in *TPII*, pp. 33-34; 'Patmos' (1969¹). 'Mirmicolalia' discusses the case of the intellectual Aldo Braibanti accused of plagiarisms; 'Panagulis' is about the Greek revolutionary and poet Alexandros Panagulis; and 'Patmos' is about the Piazza Fontana Bombing.

after they were written. This means that Pasolini wants to share them with his audience, when the event that inspired their composition is still fresh, with the idea that they could act upon society. Some of his poems initiate strong political debates, such as 'Il Pci ai giovani!!',¹⁷ published in *L'Espresso* in 1968. Written after the clash of Valle Giulia between the police and the student movement, here Pasolini makes some provocative comments regarding the bourgeois origin of the university students. Commenting on his own lines, Pasolini defines them 'brutti versi'.¹⁸ The ugliness refers to the harshness of the language, the provocation they address toward the student movement. As mentioned in chapter three, the use of harsh language is a feature of the prophet and of Dante as such. Pasolini's 'brutti versi' recall Cacciaguida's definition of Dante's poetic words as a 'parola brusca' (*Par.* XVII, 126). Dante's words will sound 'sharp', affirms Cacciaguida, to those who live sinfully because of their truth-telling message. For both poets, there seems to be a strong connection between style and message, harsh language and truth-telling: sometimes poetic words have to be brutally frank to remain meaningful and functional to society.

The political subject matter involves the whole of Pasolini's late fictional production. Another example is Pasolini's last novel, *Petrolio* (1975), which he defines as a 'romanzo molto politico [...] sulla società dei consumi, una società che finisce con il vendere gli uomini e con consumare se stessa'.¹⁹ As will be discussed further on in the chapter, here Pasolini displays the formation of mass society, discusses the new form of power that is 'il Potere', and engages with contemporary events, such as the suspicious death of Enrico Mattei and the war for oil, the bombings of the Years of Lead, and the financial and political empire of the Italian entrepreneur Eugenio Cefis.²⁰

The theme of 'revealing the truth' to society, commented on in chapter three as the mission of Dante's prophetic investiture, is explicitly discussed by Pasolini in some of his journalistic pieces of the time. A significant example is the account contained in the article that launches the beginning of the column 'Il caos' (1968). Here Pasolini speaks precisely of the 'civic necessity' to intervene in the daily and ordinary fight to proclaim what is for him 'a form of truth':

A proposito di questo impegno settimanale che mi sono preso [...] invoco a giustificarmi la necessità 'civile' di intervenire, nella lotta spicciola e quotidiana, per conclamare quella che secondo me è una forma di verità.²¹

¹⁷ Pasolini, 'Il Pci ai giovani!!' (1968¹), then in *Empirismo*, now in *SLAI*, pp. 1440-46.

¹⁸ Pasolini comments on his own lines in 'Apologia', a short text which follows the poem (1968¹, then in *Empirismo*, now in *SLAI*, pp. 1446-50 (p. 1446)).

¹⁹ This is what Pasolini reveals to his Swedish translator Arne Lundgren in 'Ultimo incontro con Pasolini', *Gotenborgsposten*, 7 November 1975, quoted in Barth David Schwart, *Pasolini Requiem* (Venice: Marsilio, 1992), p. 48.

²⁰ Benedetti, 'Quattro porte su *Petrolio*', p. 42; Bazzocchi, *Esposizioni*, p. 7.

²¹ Pasolini, 'Il perché di questa rubrica' (1968¹), then in *Il caos* (1979), now in *SPS*, pp. 1093-99 (pp. 1093-94). The discourse on the truth appears in another article for 'Il caos', 'Una lettera sgradevole' (1968¹), then in *Il caos*, pp. 37-39 (p. 38).

The love for truth and the necessity to fight for the sake of society appear explicitly as the main motivation behind the writing of various articles from the 1970s.²² In what is probably his most famous piece of the time, 'Il romanzo delle stragi' (1974), Pasolini speaks of his 'coraggio intellettuale della verità' in relation to the terrorist attacks that occurred in Italy from 1969 (the Piazza Fontana bombing) onwards. In the article, despite having no evidence, Pasolini claims to know the names of the people responsible for those tragic events and to have the courage to speak the truth: 'Io so. Io so i nomi dei responsabili [...] Io so perché sono un intellettuale, uno scrittore, che cerca di seguire tutto ciò che succede, di conoscere tutto ciò che se ne scrive'.²³ In another famous article of the time, 'Abiura dalla *Trilogia della vita*' (1975), Pasolini claims the civic duty of his fictional production. In this piece Pasolini recants his filmic trilogy made of *Il Decameron*, *I racconti di Canterbury*, and *Il fiore delle Mille e una notte* (1971-74). He does so because he believes it was exploited by the new 'Potere' and so, instead of being against it, it actually worked in its favour. Pasolini affirms the necessity to speak sincerely without any fear, especially the fear that his words could be manipulated by those in power: 'Bisogna comportarsi come se questa eventualità pericolosa non esistesse. Ciò che conta è anzitutto la sincerità e la necessità di ciò che si deve dire'. If this then happened, as was the case of his film trilogy, it is necessary for the author to distance himself from his work to avoid any collusion with power: '[se] si è stati strumentalizzati [...] io penso che si debba avere addirittura il coraggio di abiurarvi'.²⁴

Commenting on Pasolini's personal engagement in revealing the truth in his journalistic and fictional productions of the 1970s, scholars such as Benedetti and Bazzocchi have referred to the concept of 'parrhesia'.²⁵ Beyond the etymological meaning of 'outspokenness or boldness of speech', the scholars follow Foucault's reading of this term as a freedom to speak that involves the life of the person who makes the claim.²⁶ In this context the *parrhesiastes* is someone who puts his or her own life in danger while speaking the truth, who accepts the 'rischio della parola'.²⁷ Explaining this concept further in relation to Pasolini, Benedetti notes that the truth is no longer only 'un fatto di verità dell'enunciato', but also 'il rischio dell'enunciatore', whose life is personally involved in that discourse.²⁸ This is particularly true in the case of Pasolini: his attitude to commenting on Italian politics and society really puts his life in danger. Especially in

²² For example, see Pasolini, 'Genocidio', p. 516.

²³ Pasolini, 'Il romanzo delle stragi' (1974¹), then in *Corsari*, now in *SPS*, pp. 362-67 (pp. 364, 362-63).

²⁴ Pasolini, 'Abiura dalla *Trilogia della vita*' (1975¹), then in *Luterane*, now in *SPS*, pp. 599-603 (p. 599).

²⁵ For further notes see Benedetti, *Il tradimento dei critici*, pp. 111-34; Bazzocchi, *I burattini*, pp. 161-67, and then in *Esposizioni*, pp. 7-11.

²⁶ One can read Foucault's discourse on 'parrhesia' in his *Discorso e verità nella Grecia antica* (Rome: Donzelli, 2005). For further discussion on Pasolini's 'parrhesia' and Pasolini's relationship with Foucault more generally, I refer to *Pasolini, Foucault e il politico*, ed. by Raoul Kirchmayr.

²⁷ Benedetti, *Il tradimento dei critici*, p. 122.

²⁸ Benedetti, *Il tradimento dei critici*, p. 134.

the last years of his life Pasolini receives threats from far-right groups and his murder is widely accepted as a case of political assassination.²⁹

Underlining Pasolini's involvement in Italian politics and society and the indissoluble link between his personal life and artistic career helps me to introduce another feature which we have seen as typical of a poet-prophet like Dante: exile. If real for Dante, Pasolini's exile has the form of an existential, intellectual exile. In an interview from 1971, Pasolini describes his condition as a poet precisely with the image of the exile: 'a me, che almeno in quanto poeta vivo all'esterno di tutto, esiliato'.³⁰ His sense of existential isolation intensifies with the rising of mass society, as Pasolini starts perceiving a deep distance from society in general. Pasolini feels that the majority of his contemporaries are completely unaware of or, worse, indifferent towards the new 'Potere'. As he writes in his first piece for 'Il caos', not only is solitude the condition of his fight, but also one of the stimuli which has brought him to assume such a spirit of defiance towards power:

E se dunque mi preparo – in questa rubrica, frangia della mia attività di scrittore – a lottare, come posso, e con tutta la mia energia, contro ogni forma di terrore, è, in realtà, perché sono solo. Il mio non è qualunquismo né indipendenza: è solitudine.³¹

His declared solitude and distance from Italian society influence the way Pasolini relates to his reader. Considering his opinion columns from the 1960s onwards, one can perceive a change in the way he addresses his public. In the 1970s his columns cease to be a moment for discussion and debate with Italian readers as much as they were in the early 1960s, and become the space to accuse specific institutions and politicians, as well as to inform, teach, if not preach to, his audience on the socio-political changes of Italian society. A preaching-like, pedagogical tendency prevails over the debate-form that was typical of his first column, 'Dialoghi con Pasolini'.³² Some of his last articles from 1975 are written precisely in the form of a 'trattatello pedagogico'.³³ A similar preaching-like tendency can be also found in *Petrolio*, in which the author constantly addresses his reader directly to mediate the reading of the text. Pasolini does so to explain some passages of the story, to present the main characters, to justify some specific stylistic choices, to drive the reader's reading back and forwards, or to discuss the structure of the text. He uses meta-linguistic forms, interrogatives, dialogic structures, and mostly the rhetorical strategy of direct addresses to the reader. This strategy is new to Pasolini's production. Moreover, the intense use of it – considering that there are over 60

²⁹ Nowadays scholars and journalists broadly agree on a political reading of Pasolini's murder. For more reference, see Carla Benedetti and Giovanni Giovannetti, *Frocio e basta: Pasolini, Cefis, Petrolio* (Milan: Effigie, 2016); Andrea Speranzoni and Paolo Bolognesi, *Pasolini: un omicidio politico: viaggio tra l'apocalisse di Piazza Fontana e la notte del 2 novembre 1975* (Rome: Castelvecchi, 2017).

³⁰ Pasolini, 'Botta e risposta sui fatti che scottano' (1971¹), now in *SPS*, pp. 1689-94 (p. 1693).

³¹ Pasolini, 'Il perché di questa rubrica', p. 1095

³² Bazzocchi depicts Pasolini as a *praeceptor* (*I burattini*, p. 165).

³³ I am referring here to the articles written in 1975 and later collected in *Luterane*. The quote is from Pasolini, 'Paragrafo primo: come ti immagino' (1975¹), then in *Luterane*, now in *SPS*, pp. 551-53 (p. 551).

addresses to the reader in the course of *Petrolio* – makes it a specific character of the work.³⁴ As discussed in chapter three, the address to the reader is a significant Dantesque construct and is linked to Dante's prophetism. For Auerbach, Dante's addresses to the reader imply a new relationship between the poet and his readership based on the poet's awareness of his mission.³⁵ In one of the many addresses to the reader in *Petrolio*, Pasolini refers to his readership as the 'lettore *iniziato*' (*Petrolio*, p. 1732), suggesting a parallel between his readers and the initiators of some mystery religions or cults. Commenting on the relationship between author and readership in the novel and referring specifically to this passage, Antonio Tricomi defines Pasolini as a 'profeta', a 'scrittore-messia', and *Petrolio* as 'un dialogo [...], un esempio di trasmissione, da un profeta a degli eletti di un sapere scomodo e criptico'.³⁶

With regard to Pasolini's relationship with his reader, his late production demonstrates a particular attention to the new generation and also to posterity. As noted in chapter three, the *Commedia* is written to address the whole of humanity, not only the generation contemporary to Dante but future generations as well. Perceiving an increasing distance from Italian society in general, Pasolini does not exclude the possibility of finding a better interlocutor in posterity. Reading his journalistic pieces, sometimes one can have the impression that his audience is yet to come and that, ultimately, Pasolini is addressing a future interlocutor. In the articles from 1975 later collected in *Lettere luterane*, Pasolini addresses exclusively the new generation, embodied by the fictional character of a young Neapolitan, Gennariello.³⁷ His last poetic work, *La nuova gioventù* (1975), is a similar case: its title refers to a new young generation and the closing poem, 'Saluto e augurio', is specifically addressed to one of its representatives – whom Pasolini identifies as a young fascist.³⁸

In conclusion, this section has shown that starting from the end of the 1960s Pasolini takes on himself some features typical of Dante the poet-prophet: the awareness of the radical socio-political change of society, the discomfort with the contemporary political situation, the personal engagement, the civic necessity to reveal the truth, the use of harsh and accusatory language, the inseparable link between personal life and artistic career, the condition of exile, the preaching-like attitude toward the reader, and the attention to posterity. Pasolini's new idea of Dante has appeared to be also supported by the fact that Pasolini sees a strong affinity between his life in the 1970s and Dante's and, ultimately, mirrors himself on Dante the poet-prophet. As noted in the previous chapters, Pasolini tends to project himself onto figures that, seen through the lens of his own experience, resemble his own self at a specific time of his life. In the 1970s committing himself to revealing the evils of neocapitalist society to the point of even putting his own life in

³⁴ For further notes on Pasolini's use of the addresses to the reader, I refer to Tricomi, *Sull'opera mancata*, pp. 241-60; Andrea Rondini, *Lettori: forme della ricezione ed esperienze di lettura nella narrativa italiana da Foscolo al nuovo millennio* (Pisa and Rome: Serra, 2009), pp. 97-102.

³⁵ Although not in relation to Auerbach, Bazzocchi also links the specific attention to the reader in *Petrolio* to Dante. For the scholar the dialogical structure of *Petrolio* is influenced by Philippe Sollers' essay on Dante, which Pasolini explicitly quotes in the text of *Petrolio* (p. 1263). For further notes see Bazzocchi, *I burattini*, pp. 53-54. Bazzocchi refers to Philippe Sollers' essay on Dante, 'Dante et la traversée de l'écriture', which is part of the collection *L'écriture et l'expérience des limites* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1968).

³⁶ Antonio Tricomi, *Sull'opera mancata di Pasolini: un autore irrisolto e il suo laboratorio* (Rome: Carocci, 2005), p. 415.

³⁷ Pasolini, 'Paragrafo primo: come ti immagino', pp. 551-53.

³⁸ Pasolini, 'Saluto e augurio', in *La nuova gioventù* (1975¹), now in *TPII*, pp. 391-520 (pp. 513-15).

danger, Pasolini cannot but feel particularly close to the Dante who writes ‘in pro del mondo che mal vive’ (*Purg.* XXXII, 103).

4.2 – Speaking like a prophet: parable, prophecy, allegory, and vision

This section aims to provide an overview of the main fictional productions of Pasolini’s late career (1968-1975), preparing the context for the discussion of the case study of *Petrolio*. In particular, I will consider how Pasolini’s prophetism, discussed in the previous section, affects his production in terms of style and narrative structure. At the end of the 1960s Umberto Eco defines artistic engagement in these terms: ‘L’artista svolge la propria contestazione nelle strutture stesse della propria opera e non descrivendo minatori sofferenti’.³⁹ This definition seems to be right for Pasolini’s late fictional production. He has indeed abandoned the subject matter of the Roman subproletarians – the ‘minatori sofferenti’ of Eco’s discourse – which was prominent in his past production of the 1950s and early 1960s (for example, *Ragazzi di vita*, *Accattone*). The protagonists of his late production belong to the bourgeois class, as is the case, for example, of the family in *Teorema* and of the protagonist Carlo Valletti in *Petrolio*. Moreover, if we consider his late fictional production as a whole, we can see that Pasolini protests, ‘fights his battle’ within the very structure of the artistic piece. Scholars, like Benedetti, have underlined the novelty of Pasolini’s late works in terms of structure, as a way to challenge artistic convention and produce still meaningful artistic pieces, even at a time when art has been turned into a product for cultural consumption by the market of cultural industry.⁴⁰ In Italy this is also the time of the disintegrating and hybridisation of traditional literary genres, of the crisis of the novel, and of the new experimentalism brought about by the avant-garde. Raised in the first half of the twentieth-century by authors such as José Ortega y Gasset and Walter Benjamin, the discussion of ‘the death of the novel’ becomes prominent in the Italian literary debate of the 1960s and 1970s, thanks especially to the avant-garde literary movement the Gruppo 63.⁴¹ Their 1965 conference, held in Palermo, is dedicated to the experimental novel. Writers such as Edoardo Sanguineti and Nanni Balestrini fight for a new avant-garde novel, non-fictional, essayistic, experimental, to be born from the ‘ashes’ of the bourgeois novel and to replace a genre that was at that time for them lifeless.⁴²

³⁹ Umberto Eco, ‘Il gioco dell’occupazione’ (1968¹), in *Il costume di casa* (Milan: Bompiani, 1973), pp. 299-302 (p. 301).

⁴⁰ For reference, see the sections ‘Pasolini e la distruzione del tempo’ and ‘La forma-progetto’, in Benedetti, *Pasolini contro Calvino*, pp. 139-57, 159-70.

⁴¹ Francesco Campana, ‘The End of Literature’, *The End of Literature, Hegel, and the Contemporary Novel* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 75-125. On the theme of the crisis of the novel, see also Mario Lavagetto, ‘Svevo e la crisi del romanzo europeo’, in *Letteratura italiana del Novecento: bilancio di un secolo*, ed. by Alberto Asor Rosa (Turin: Einaudi, 2000), pp. 245-67; Matteo Palumbo, ‘Questioni del romanzo’, in *Un canone per il terzo millennio: testi e problemi per lo studio del Novecento tra teoria della letteratura, antropologia e storia*, ed. by Ugo M. Olivieri (Milan: Mondadori, 2001), pp. 91-115.

⁴² Di Gesù, ‘Manganelli e lo “sgombero delle macerie del romanzo”’, pp. 72-78. For an overview of the Italian literary panorama in the 1970s, see Marco Belpoliti, *Settanta* (Turin: Einaudi, 2010).

The argument that I will carry on in this section is that the personal engagement in Italian politics and the civic necessity to reveal the truth bring Pasolini to adopt some strategies that are typical of a biblical context and, more specifically, of prophetism. By this, I refer to the use of parable, allegory, vision, prophecy, as well as the reuse of biblical texts, which becomes prominent in the late phase of his production as I will now show by reporting some major examples.

Pasolini defines his novel *Teorema* (1968) as a parable: 'questo non è un racconto realistico, è una parabola'.⁴³ Then, in a later interview on the occasion of the release of *Salò* (1975), speaking about the homonymous film *Teorema*, Pasolini defines it as 'un vero e proprio apologo [...] una favola'.⁴⁴ *Teorema* narrates the story of a bourgeois family, whose life is subverted by a mysterious guest. It is a parable in the sense that the distortion of the family's order should be read as the shocking self-awareness of the bourgeois world and its values provoked by the *sacrum* – here embodied by the body of the guest – when this enters into contact with contemporary bourgeois society.⁴⁵ Moreover, in the appendix, Pasolini refers to three biblical passages, two from the book of Jeremiah (1. 5-9; 20. 7, 10) and one from the book of Genesis (32. 24), as keys to read the text (*Teorema*, 1059-1060). As a comment on the general parable of *Teorema*, the second passage from Jeremiah (20. 7) is used to suggest a parallel between the prophet's experience of God, which in the Bible is expressed in physical terms ('Mi hai sedotto, Dio, e io mi sono lasciato sedurre, mi hai violentato'),⁴⁶ and the real physical contact with the guest's body, experienced by each member of the family – in the story each of them has sexual intercourse with the guest.⁴⁷ The reference to Jeremiah enriches the dialogue between Pasolini and Dante poet-prophet, as in the *Commedia* this book is one of the prophetic models used by Dante to construct his own prophetic investiture. In *Paradiso* XXVII, the prophetic model appears, for example, in the theme of blushing: Beatrice blushes as an effect of St Peter's long invective against the corrupt papacy (ll. 28-36; ll. 21-22). When condemning the false prophets, on many occasions Jeremiah reports their incapacity to blush as a sign of their sin. Blushing is a positive sign because it reveals a sense of shame, whereas its absence denotes shamelessness and stubborn resistance.⁴⁸

One of the major poems of *Trasumanar e organizzar* (1971), 'Patmos', engages with the form of a prophecy to discuss the tragic event of the Piazza Fontana bombing in 1969. Patmos is the island where the exiled St John claims to have experienced the prophetic visions that he then reports in the book of Revelation. As noted in chapter three, the book of Revelation is another model of Dante's own prophetic investiture: Beatrice's order to Dante to reveal his vision (*Purg.* XXXII, 104-05: 'quel che vedi / [...] fa che tu scrivi') is built

⁴³ Pasolini, *Teorema* (1968¹), now in *RRII*, pp. 891-1060 (p. 903).

⁴⁴ Pasolini, 'De Sade e l'universo dei consumi' (1975¹), now in *PCII*, pp. 3019-22 (p. 3019). *Teorema* is both a novel and a film. As Pasolini writes on the book jacket of the first edition by Garzanti, *Teorema* presents a structural ambiguity, so he is not sure which nature, the literary or filmic one, prevails over the other and was born first. For reference, see Pasolini, 'Come leggere nel modo giusto questo libro' (1968¹), now in Siti e De Laude, 'Note e notizie sui testi', in *RRII*, pp. 1978-79.

⁴⁵ Bazzocchi, *I burattini*, pp. 107-18.

⁴⁶ Here in Italian because taken from Pasolini's *Teorema* (p. 1060).

⁴⁷ Grandelis, '*Teorema* e San Paolo', p. 50.

⁴⁸ For further reference, see Rachel Jacoff, 'Dante, Geremia e la problematica profetica', in *Dante e la Bibbia: atti del convegno internazionale promosso da Bibbia: Firenze, 26-27-28 settembre 1986*, ed. by Giovanni Barblan (Florence: Olschki, 1988), pp. 113-23.

upon 'Quod vides, scribe in libro' (Revelation 1. 11). Recalling the example of St John, the event of Piazza Fontana appears as a revelation to Pasolini-St John:⁴⁹

Sono sotto choc
è giunto fino a Patmos sentore
di ciò che annusano i cappellani
i morti erano tutti dai cinquanta ai settanta
la mia età fra pochi anni, rivelazione di Gesù Cristo
che Dio, per istruire i suoi servi
– sulle cose che devono ben presto accadere –
ha fatto conoscere per mezzo del suo Angelo
al proprio servo Giovanni. ('Patmos', pp. 123-24)

Although far from Milan, Pasolini-St John can see the victims of the bombing and describe them, one by one, in the style of a journalistic piece of crime news. Alongside the tragic report, quoting directly from Revelation and using St John's words as if they were his, Pasolini assumes the role of the prophet and makes two predictions about the future awaiting Italy after the tragic event. Explicitly he refers to them in terms of a 'profezia', with the line: 'beati coloro che ascoltano le parole di questa profezia' ('Patmos', p. 124). The first prophecy regards the suicide of the person responsible for the bombing:

Tu ti suiciderai
[...]
tu ti ucciderai, fascista pazzo,
e il tuo suicidio non servirà ad altro
che a dare una disgraziata traccia alla Polizia. ('Patmos', pp. 130-31)

Pasolini predicts the suicide of a fascist, believing that behind the attack there is a neo-fascist group; a hypothesis that will turn out to be right. After many long investigations, the bombing has been attributed to the far-right neo-fascist organisation Ordine Nuovo, which was in collaboration with state structures and authorities.⁵⁰ The second prophecy made by Pasolini-St John is the prediction of a general negative future for Italy. As noted by Speranzoni and Bolognesi, Pasolini understands that the bombing of Piazza Fontana is only the beginning of the 'apocalisse di violenza' which would soon take place in Italy and that we know as the Years of Lead.⁵¹

Scrivi dunque le cose che hai vedute,
e le presenti e quelle che verranno dopo di esse:
l'Italia è in crisi, e la stessa crisi che soffro io
(inadattabilità alle nuove operazioni bancarie)
la soffrono alla loro bestial maniera i fascisti:

⁴⁹ For more information about 'Patmos', see Siti, 'Note e notizie sui testi', *TPII*, p. 1538.

⁵⁰ For the investigation of the Piazza Fontana bombing I refer to Benedetta Tobagi, *Piazza Fontana: il processo impossibile* (Turin: Einaudi, 2019); Paolo Morando, *Prima di Piazza Fontana: la prova generale* (Rome: Laterza, 2019).

⁵¹ Speranzoni and Bolognesi, *Pasolini: un omicidio politico*, p.97.

le ultime 14 vacche! Le ultime 14 vacche!
Ecco il senso misterioso delle sette stelle;
ché se sette erano magre, le altre sette erano ancor grassottelle. ('Patmos', p. 129)

Pasolini builds his prophecy on two biblical references related to prophetism: the seven stars of St John's Revelation (1. 16) and the cows of the story of Joseph from Genesis (41), whom God enables to have prophetic dreams himself and to interpret the dreams of others. The seven stars held by the angel in the book of Revelation become the seven sleek and fat cows and the seven ugly and gaunt cows of the Pharaoh's dreams, which Joseph interprets as seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. Thus, the reference to gaunt cows should be seen as the negative years awaiting Italian society. Moreover, cows also indirectly refer to the event of Piazza Fontana; the bomb exploded at the headquarters of the National Agrarian Bank and so the majority of the victims were farmers.

As discussed in chapter three, in the screenplay for his film on St Paul, *Appunti per un film su San Paolo* (1968-1974), the character of the saint addresses and admonishes contemporary society using words taken faithfully from the Acts of the Apostles and from the Pauline Epistles. According to Pasolini, the novelty of the film would have been precisely in the reuse of religious texts to answer the issues of neocapitalist society. In this regard, I noted that Pasolini uses St Paul as a prophet, called upon to tell the truth in the difficult time of neocapitalism.

Pasolini's last film, *Salò* (1975), engages with the form of political allegory.⁵² The film narrates the kidnapping of a group of teenagers, during the time of the fascist Republic of Salò (1943-45), and the horrible sex tortures they are subjected to by four libertines. Fascist power and the dystopian world of sexual abuse and torture are a plot device to show the negativity of any form of power and of its control over people. Sex is used as a metaphor to describe the modification of people subjected to power: 'Il sesso ha una funzione metaforica [...] è la metafora del rapporto tra il potere e chi è sottoposto al potere'.⁵³ *Salò* is a political allegory; it points at both fascist power and at the new 'Potere', which as we will see in chapter five has made a particular use of sexual mores. Moreover, Pasolini affirms that his work should be read as a medieval, sacred, and enigmatic representation. The point, affirms Pasolini, is not to understand the film but rather to accept it as something deliberately enigmatic and ambiguous: 'il mio è un mistero; è quello che si chiama *mystery*, il mistero medioevale: una sacra rappresentazione, e quindi è molto enigmatico. Non deve essere capita'.⁵⁴

Medieval allegory, mystery plays, sacred representations are also structural elements of *Petrolio*, which has been defined by scholars as the literary counterpart of *Salò*.⁵⁵ As we will see in more detail in the next

⁵² The allegorical nature is underlined by Pasolini in the interview 'De Sade e l'universo dei consumi' (1975) (pp. 3019-22) and later confirmed by scholars (for example, Bazzocchi, *Esposizioni*, p. 149).

⁵³ Pasolini, 'De Sade e l'universo dei consumi', p. 3019.

⁵⁴ Pasolini, 'De Sade e l'universo dei consumi', p. 3020. The mystery play is an early form of play which was developed in medieval times and focused on the representation of biblical stories in churches.

⁵⁵ Bazzocchi, *Esposizioni*, pp. 91-113.

sections, in *Petrolio* Pasolini engages with two structures typical of religious texts (both biblical and medieval): allegory and vision. The novel is presented as a medieval allegory and its main episodes are narrated in the form of mysterious visionary dreams, which appear to the protagonists. As will be discussed further on, in the light of its high political character, *Petrolio* has been read by scholars as a case of political allegory like *Salò*;⁵⁶ the novel aims at revealing the ‘mysteries’ which surround Italian politics in the late 1960s and in the early 1970s.

All these strategies that Pasolini adopts in his major late productions are typical of a biblical context (although his works are not religious in terms of content) and, more specifically, they can be assimilated to prophetism. In fact, the prophet is someone who speaks in a cryptic and not in a straightforward way. Similarly, we have seen that Pasolini does not speak clearly about his contemporary world, but he mystifies reality using such strategies. The meaning of his late works is always hidden and needs to be extrapolated. Besides, parable, allegory, prophecy, and vision are also prophetic forms because their message implies a revelation. Pasolini uses these strategies precisely to reveal something about Italian politics and society which is unknown to the majority of his contemporaries, which can sound harsh for some, and which, ultimately, can get him into trouble. He is critical towards the bourgeois class, fascist groups, and any other form of power: from the new capitalist economic system and anyone who supports it, to many Italian politicians, to State and religious institutions. The message of his works is both revealing of some truths about society as well as accusatory to the institutions in power. For example, ‘Patmos’ reports the tragic event of Piazza Fontana and openly blames the Prime Minister (Mariano Rumor) and the President of the Republic (Giuseppe Sgarbi) in power at that time (‘Patmos’, p. 127); revealing the inauthenticity of bourgeois life, *Teorema* consists of a critique of the bourgeois world and values; *Salò* shows the negativity behind any form of power, from Fascist power to that of neocapitalism, and how it dominates society; depicting the formation of the new ‘Potere’, *Petrolio* deals with the historical political events of 1960s-1970s Italy and denounces the power of specific institutions and people (for example, as we will see further on, Eni and Eugenio Cefis). In addition, we have seen that when using these strategies, Pasolini refers to the same models used by Dante to build his prophetic investiture: the prophet Jeremiah, St John, and St Paul.

A similar reading has been suggested by Sandro Bernardi, according to whom, Pasolini’s late production has ‘sfumature profetiche’. By this, Bernardi means that Pasolini speaks as a prophet would do, adopting rhetoric strategies which allow him to say things which otherwise he would not be able to say, but that at the same time make his own words obscure and difficult to understand:

La profezia è un genere di scrittura [...] fondato sull’uso di figure retoriche particolari, e soprattutto sulla produzione di allegorie. [...] La lingua del profeta è una lingua oscura, che non chiarisce, non spiega, ma critica, condanna, suggerisce, suscita pensieri tormentati. [...] Nella Bibbia il profeta, prima di un veggente, è un critico, un accusatore, un oscuro locutore che parla per sineciosi, ambiguità e

⁵⁶ Genovese, ‘Manifesto per *Petrolio*’, p. 83; Bazzocchi, *Esposizioni*, p. 149.

allegorie, figure problematiche inventate anche per sfuggire alle persecuzioni in cui incorrevano tali accusatori. Attraverso l'allegoria il profeta si sottrae alle chiusure di senso empiriche e determinate, dice nascondendo, e lancia minacce incomprensibili, che possono spaventare i potenti.⁵⁷

To illuminate society on what people cannot see or do not want to see, Pasolini adopts some strategies that are typical of the prophet, as they are both obscure and implying a revelation. Pasolini's political commitment and willingness to speak the truth engage with the artistic work in the very broad sense of the term: its structure becomes 'prophetic' to reveal such an important message, a message of truth. In addition, the preference for these types of strategies raises a question about Pasolini's approach to realism. Vision, allegory, prophecy, and parable are all non-realistic forms of representation. This is pointed out by Pasolini himself for *Teorema* (1968): 'questo non è un racconto realistico, è una parabola' (*Teorema*, p. 903) and restated for *Petrolio*, where he presents visions as a form of narration in opposition to realistic literature: 'Un romanzo, che per di più non realistico, si avvia anzi intrattenibilmente verso le Visioni' (*Petrolio*, p. 1229). Pasolini seems to say that his works are not a realistic representation or a report of reality, and therefore should not be read literally. Nevertheless, as noted before, especially at this time of his career, Pasolini's works are strongly embedded with the reality of contemporary Italian politics and society. My argument is that the model of Dante the poet-prophet makes Pasolini reflect on realism in terms of prophetism as the act of 'revealing reality'. In the difficult time of neocapitalism, I argue that, for Pasolini, realism is not any longer a question of representing reality but of revealing the truth about reality. In the following sections, I will explore this new idea of realism in relation to the case study of *Petrolio*.

4.3 – Allegory from Dante's *Commedia* to *Petrolio*

This section, together with the following one, aims to investigate Pasolini's relationship with Dante around the question of realism in his last narrative work, *Petrolio*. Here, after a brief introduction to the novel, I will try to demonstrate the legacy of Dante's *Commedia* behind Pasolini's use of allegory. *Petrolio* is Pasolini's last and unfinished narrative work. He starts working on it around 1972 and never stops until his murder in 1975. As affirmed by Pasolini, *Petrolio* should have been a gigantic work containing everything the author knows:

Ho iniziato un libro che mi impegnerà per anni, forse per il resto della mia vita [...] è una specie di 'summa' di tutte le mie esperienze, di tutte le mie memorie.

Nulla è quanto ho fatto da quando sono nato, in confronto all'opera gigantesca che sto portando avanti: un grosso Romanzo di 2000 pagine. Sono arrivato a pagina 600, e non le dico di più per non compromettermi.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Bernardi, 'L'allegoria', pp. 57-59.

⁵⁸ These quotes are taken from Roncaglia, 'Nota filologica', p. 617.

In a draft of the project dated 1973, Pasolini writes that *Petrolio* would assume the form of an 'edizione critica di un testo inedito (considerata opera monumentale, un *Satyricon* moderno)' (*Petrolio*, p. 1161).⁵⁹ The reconstruction of the original text would have involved the comparison of different manuscripts, as well as letters of the author, oral testimonies, and illustrations of the book. Moreover, to fill the many gaps and inform the reader about some contemporary political matters, Pasolini would have attached to the text historical documents, news articles, and interviews. It is also known that Pasolini wanted to add some photos of himself naked, taken by Dino Pedriali in his villa in Chia in October 1975.⁶⁰ Of all this, what we have left of *Petrolio* is only a small part: less than 600 pages consisting of a discontinuous series of fragments. These fragments are named 'appunti' by Pasolini and ordered according to a sequential numbering and often (but not always) accompanied by a title. Some of these 'appunti' are completed narrative sections, whereas others are only drafts, or projectual schemes, or just titles.⁶¹ Although not written in verse, many times in the text Pasolini refers to *Petrolio* as a 'poema',⁶² probably in relation to the length of the work, its broad range of subjects, and ultimately the effort of the writer. This choice of word recalls Dante's process of redefinition of the *Commedia*.⁶³ After having referred to it as 'comedia' in the *Inferno* (*Inf.* XVI, 128; XXI, 2), in the *Paradiso* Dante names it 'poema', stressing the difficulty of the subject and effort of the writer: 'lo sacro poema' (*Par.* XXIII, 62); "l poema sacro / al quale ha posto mano e cielo e terra' (*Par.* XXV, 1-2).⁶⁴

Although Pasolini died before concluding his work and submitting it to a publisher, *Petrolio* was published by Einaudi in 1992. The decision to publish such a discontinuous series of fragments is due to the fact that a similar work in terms of structure, *La Divina Mimesis*, was submitted by Pasolini to a publisher just before his death. As noted in chapter three, *La Divina Mimesis* is a stratification of various writings: some fully written and some still in draft form, placed one after the other. Scholars read this specific structure as one of Pasolini's new approaches to writing in the 1970s and name it a 'forma-progetto', 'abbozzo programmato', 'non-finito programmato'.⁶⁵ This means that most of his late works are 'deliberately unfinished'; their form remains at the level of a series of drafts and notes. Given that *Petrolio* would have probably been an intentionally unfinished work like *La Divina Mimesis* (although Pasolini could not actually finish it), the work was published and is considered by scholars as Pasolini's last narrative text.⁶⁶ *Petrolio* sits well in the context

⁵⁹ To explain Pasolini's reference to the *Satyricon* I refer to Paolo Lago, 'Petrolio e l'antico: la presenza e l'influsso delle letterature classiche nel romanzo incompiuto di Pier Paolo Pasolini', in *Progetto Petrolio. Una giornata di studi sul romanzo incompiuto di Pier Paolo Pasolini*, ed. by Paolo Salerno (Clueb: Bologna, 2006), pp. 45-69.

⁶⁰ Marco A. Bazzocchi, 'Tutte le gioie sessuali messe insieme: la sessualità in *Petrolio*,' in *Progetto Petrolio*, ed. by Salerno, pp. 9-23 (p. 18).

⁶¹ Roncaglia, 'Nota Filologica', pp. 625-26.

⁶² For reference, see Pasolini, *Petrolio*, pp. 1306, 1344-1345, 1374, 1379, 1380, 1383, 1391, 1400, 1457, 1481, 1648, 1778, 1782.

⁶³ Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy*, pp. 59.

⁶⁴ The encyclopedism of *Petrolio* and the *Commedia* is a common trend which could be explored in a future research project.

⁶⁵ Benedetti, *Pasolini contro Calvino*, pp. 158-70; Massimo Fusillo, 'L'incipit negato di *Petrolio*: modelli e rifrazioni', in *Contributi per Pasolini*, ed. by Giuseppe Savoca (Florence: Olschki, 2002), pp. 35-53 (p. 45); Tricomi, *Sull'opera mancata*, p. 373.

⁶⁶ Roncaglia, 'Nota filologica', p. 626.

of the hybridisation of literary genres, the crisis of the novel, and the experimentations of the Gruppo 63, mentioned in the previous section. Moreover, the text presents a complex relationship between author and narrator, which should be seen in the light of the international literary debate around Roland Barthes' essay 'The Death of the Author' (1967).⁶⁷ Barthes argues that the readers should separate a literary work from its creator in order to liberate the text from an interpretation that relies on the author's identity, opening up the multiple layers and meanings of the text. The operation suggested by Barthes proves to be impossible for anyone who approaches *Petrolio*. In the text the author-Pasolini is an overwhelming presence: he is always on the scene, with the consequence that the fictional narrator tends to disappear.⁶⁸ As mentioned in the first section of the chapter, Pasolini constantly speaks to his reader to mediate the reading of the text, using different rhetorical strategies, such as addresses to the reader. In the letter to Moravia attached to the manuscript of *Petrolio*, Pasolini claims not to have disappeared behind the figure of a 'narratore convenzionale', but to have addressed his reader as an 'autore reale', and affirms: 'io ho parlato al lettore in quanto io stesso, in carne e ossa' (*Petrolio*, p. 1827).

Within this accumulation of materials, there is an (almost) structured part: the story of Carlo Valletti, the protagonist of the novel.⁶⁹ Pasolini outlines the story of Carlo in the form of a scheme in 1972 and this draft is developed almost entirely in the pages Pasolini left us (*Petrolio*, pp. 1822-25). Alongside the story of Carlo, as anticipated in the previous sections, Pasolini narrates Italian politics at the end of the 1960s and in the 1970s. After the initial separation of Carlo into two persons, Carlo di Polis and Carlo di Tetis, the story of the first Carlo follows and is strictly linked to the political events of the time. Carlo di Polis is an engineer who makes a career in the Italian multinational oil and gas company Eni, which for Pasolini is 'un "topos" del potere' of the time (*Petrolio*, p. 1267). 'Carlo [...] percorre un cammino dentro il potere, resta sempre colluso con potere', notes Bazzocchi.⁷⁰ The political subject matter grows around the story of Carlo. There are entire sections dedicated to the Italian politicians and political groups of the time (*appunto* 97),⁷¹ or to the figure of Eugenio Cefis (in the novel under the name of Aldo Troya) and his financial and economic empire (*appunto* 22 and the following ones).⁷² As Pasolini affirms, Troya/Cefis is 'uno dei personaggi chiave della nostra storia' (*Petrolio*, p. 1268). After the suspicious death of Enrico Mattei, Cefis becomes president of Eni (1967-71) and later of the industrial and financial group Montedison (1971-77).⁷³ The Italian entrepreneur is one of the main

⁶⁷ Roland Barthes, 'La morte dell'autore', *Il brusio della lingua: saggi critici IV*, trans. by Bruno Bellotto (Turin: Einaudi, 1988), pp. 51-56.

⁶⁸ Benedetti, *Pasolini contro Calvino*, pp. 164-65.

⁶⁹ However, it is difficult to speak of *Petrolio* as a novel and Pasolini sometimes seems to deny his work this title (for example, see *Petrolio*, p. 1179). In my thesis, I refer to *Petrolio* also using the word 'novel' as a synonym of narrative work, following the example of other scholars.

⁷⁰ Bazzocchi, *Esposizioni*, p. 151.

⁷¹ Pasolini, *Petrolio*, pp. 1654-64.

⁷² Pasolini, *Petrolio*, from p. 1272 onwards.

⁷³ Eugenio Cefis is believed to have been the founder of the masonic lodge 'P2' according to some reports by SISMI (the military intelligence agency of Italy from 1977 to 2007). Pasolini even thought about dedicating an entire section to Eni. However, he never managed to write it, and today one can only read the title: 'Lampi sull'Eni' (*Petrolio*, p. 1271). For further notes about Cefis and the lodge 'P2', see Benedetti and Giovannetti, *Frodo e basta*, pp. 124-30.

protagonists of 1970s Italian finance; for Pasolini, Cefis embodies the face of the new type of transnational and neocapitalist 'Potere', which was developing in the 1960s and 1970s. As mentioned in the previous sections, *Petrolio* is a work about power: what Pasolini calls the new 'Potere' of neocapitalism and how this is affecting society and politics in the 1960s and 1970s. As noted by Antonio Tricomi, even the division into two parts that Pasolini chooses for *Petrolio* is in a way 'political'. According to the scholar, *Petrolio* is divided into two major parts because the strategy of tension in Italy, according to Pasolini, has two phases: "due sono le fasi delle stragi" di Stato, ripete più volte Pasolini, appunto perché due sono le fasi del Potere, anti-comunista prima e anti-fascista poi'.⁷⁴ The strong political character of *Petrolio* does not contribute to the success of the book. When it eventually came out in 1992, reviews of the novel overlooked the political aspects. They were much more interested in underlining the scandal of the many explicit sex scenes.⁷⁵

As noted in the previous section, *Petrolio* engages with narrative strategies that are typical of prophetism: allegory and vision. *Petrolio* is presented as an allegory, using the capital 'A': 'Questo referto [...] non è essenziale alla nostra Allegoria'; 'Le Allegorie – come la presente – non sono scientifiche' (*Petrolio*, pp. 1658, 1809). The main episodes are narrated in the form of a vision experienced by the protagonists only, for which Pasolini uses the capital 'V'. 'Quale autore e inventore di questa Visione' (*Petrolio*, p. 1462), affirms the author just before writing one of Carlo di Polis' visions. Thus, *Petrolio* consists of a series of allegorical visions experienced by the protagonists and reported to the reader by the author, who informs him or her about everything that is happening to and seen by the protagonists. Being an allegory means that its subject is twofold and the allegorical episodes must conceal a second allegorical meaning. Considering its declared political subject, some recent scholars have read the novel as a case of political allegory.⁷⁶ As we will see in chapter five, the main visions experienced by the two protagonists conceal an historical and political meaning: they try to make visible 'il Potere' and how it affects society.⁷⁷ For example, I will read the initial dissociation of Carlo into two persons as an allegory of the neurosis caused to society by neocapitalism.

The allegorical and visionary character of the text is accompanied by a 'medieval nuance', which Pasolini attributes to his work – however being explicit on what this really means. *Petrolio* is presented as 'almost' a medieval allegory: 'greve allegoria, quasi medioevale' (*Petrolio*, p. 1215), assimilated to medieval theological works, allegorical texts, and even cathedrals.⁷⁸ Furthermore, when mentioning the similarity with theological works and allegories ('Tutto è una serie di fregi o simulacri, al culmine dell'espressività, e, nel tempo stesso, allineati, come nelle Opere Teologiche o nelle Allegorie'), it is said that the work has a certain 'verticalità medioevale' (*Petrolio*, p. 1376). In another part, the author alludes to the form of the story and its

⁷⁴ Tricomi, *Sull'opera mancata*, p. 410.

⁷⁵ This aspect was underlined by Benedetti's paper at the conference '*Petrolio*, 25 years after: (Bio)politics, eros and truth in the later work of P.P. Pasolini', organised by Carla Benedetti, Manuele Gragnolati, and Davide Luglio, Pisa, 9-10 November 2017.

⁷⁶ Genovese, 'Manifesto per *Petrolio*', p. 83; Bazzocchi, *Espozizioni*, p. 149.

⁷⁷ Benedetti, 'Quattro porte su *Petrolio*', p. 35.

⁷⁸ For example, 'Ebbene, io non ho potuto resistere alla tentazione di costruire questo secondo corpo architettonico "simmetrico". D'altronde, Cattedrali e Allegorie, si fondano sulla simmetria, anche quando poi siano magmatiche, sproporzionate e abnormi' (*Petrolio*, p. 1814).

protagonists recalling the disposition in niches typical of medieval churches: 'le azioni e i personaggi si allineano come in una galleria o in una serie di nicchie o di altari' (*Petrolio*, pp. 1383-84). One of the main allegorical visions of the novel appears in a section called 'Giardino Medioevale' (*Petrolio*, p. 1457).⁷⁹ A random note, which Pasolini probably would have added in the body of the text, reports: 'Ogni grande scrittore ama prima di tutto i Centoni. La cultura di ogni grande scrittore è medioevale' (*Petrolio*, p. 1264). The cento is a poetical work, very common in medieval time, composed of a series of passages and extracts from different authors and literary works. The parallel between *Petrolio* and the cento is understandable since, as noted before, Pasolini conceives his last work as a 'summa' of his experiences and memories.⁸⁰ Pasolini's reference to his own culture as a medieval culture is quite significant, considering that he is writing in the 1970s. Before being renamed 'appunti', the fragments forming *Petrolio* were divided into 'misteri' and 'progetti' (*Petrolio*, pp. 1375-76). The term 'misteri' refers to medieval mystery plays, previously mentioned in relation to *Salò*: sacred representations of biblical stories developed in medieval times. The 'misteri' corresponded to the narrative sections of the work, in particular to the visionary dreams experienced by the protagonists.⁸¹ Thus, linked to the mystery plays and so considered as medieval, sacred representations, the visions of *Petrolio* can be associated with the mystical religious visions of medieval visionary literature, such as Catherine of Siena's *The Dialogue of Divine Providence* (1378), which the saint dictates to her disciples while in ecstasy. The 'progetti' corresponded to the projectual sections of text, where Pasolini openly reflects on the nature and the structure of his work, or simply informs his reader on certain matters. These sections do not really bring the narration of the story of Carlo further; they are 'puramente informative, o ancora prologanti', as Pasolini says of one of these projectual parts (*Petrolio*, p. 1376).

All these elements suggest that Pasolini tries to artificially recreate a medieval work. The choice to look back to medieval time may have been inspired by the idea of a future new Middle Age that starts circulating in the Italian cultural scene at the beginning of the 1970s. In 1971, Roberto Vacca publishes *Il medioevo prossimo venturo*, which has a great public success at that time.⁸² Vacca discusses the degradations of systems of the technological era and foretells the regression of human beings to a pre-technological time: a future new medieval time based on poverty and struggle for survival. Taking the cue from Vacca's book, Umberto Eco writes a series of short essays in which he compares his contemporary time with the Middle Age. These appear in the *Espresso* in 1972, and are later collected and published as a book in 1973, *Documenti su il nuovo medioevo* – which also contains essays by Furio Colombo, Francesco Alberoni, and Giuseppe Sacco.⁸³ Now I am about to demonstrate that both concepts of allegory and vision in *Petrolio* do not only

⁷⁹ In chapter five, I will argue that the term 'medioevale' refers to another layer of the text, precisely to the medieval text of the *Commedia*, which lies underneath the letter of this *appunto*. I will show that Pasolini uses different passages of the *Commedia* as an archetype to write his scene.

⁸⁰ Roncaglia, 'Nota filologica', p. 617; Tricomi, *Sull'opera mancata*, p. 403.

⁸¹ Some 'appunti' maintain the initial classification of 'progetto' and 'mistero'. For example, the allegorical vision 'Giardino Medioevale' still reports in brackets 'Dal "Mistero"' (*Petrolio*, p. 1457).

⁸² Roberto Vacca, *Il medioevo prossimo venturo: la degradazione dei grandi sistemi* (Milan: Mondadori, 1971).

⁸³ Umberto Eco and others, *Documenti su il nuovo medioevo* (Milan: Bompiani, 1973).

refer to medieval culture in general, but precisely to Dante's *Commedia*. I will carry on this analysis commenting on Pasolini's allegory, first, and, in the following section, vision.

A few scholars have already underlined the legacy of Dante in Pasolini's use of allegory in *Petrolio*.⁸⁴ 'Pasolini prende a prestito dal Dante dalla *Commedia* [...] il magico congegno dell'allegoria', writes Titone,⁸⁵ and in his latest study on *Petrolio*, Bazzocchi speaks precisely of a 'sistema allegorico dantesco'.⁸⁶ This is because, when defining *Petrolio* as a medieval allegory, Pasolini refers to Dante's *Commedia*: 'Questo scritto doveva per forza essere [...] "un nuovo ludo": tutto in esso è infatti greve allegoria, quasi medioevale' (*Petrolio*, p. 1215).⁸⁷ In *Inferno* XXII (l. 118), 'nuovo ludo' is Dante's way to inform his reader of the new and strange representation that will soon be played out, which concerns the fight between two devils after a sinner fooled them.⁸⁸ With this Dantism Pasolini seems to stress the new and strange nature of his work: a medieval allegory written in the 1970s. Despite the evident link to the *Commedia*, none has systematically investigated the presence of Dantean allegory in *Petrolio*. This section aims to fill this gap in the field of Pasolini's Dantism.

Coming from the union of the Greek words ἄλλος (other) and ἀγορεύω (to speak), and the literary meaning 'to talk with another significance', allegory is commonly understood as a rhetorical device where something abstract is expressed through a concrete image. Allegory requires the presence of two elements: on the one hand, the image that appears on the literal level and that does not necessarily have to be true or real, and, on the other, the non-literal meaning that is hidden under the literal level.⁸⁹ Allegorical texts therefore have multiple significances; in addition to the literal meaning, they also convey other meanings. The Bible had been read by the Church Fathers and medieval theologians as an allegorical text but of a specific kind. Some of its facts and events have multiple allegorical significances but are also true and historical. For example, the Exodus of the Jews from slavery in Egypt is an historical event and also has multiple allegorical (or spiritual) significances; for example, it stands for the freeing of the human soul from the bondage of sin.⁹⁰

⁸⁴ Bernardi, 'L'allegoria', p. 59; Genovese, 'Manifesto per *Petrolio*', p. 83; Titone, *Cantiche*, p. 122; Bazzocchi, *Esposizioni*, p. 94.

⁸⁵ Titone, *Cantiche*, p. 122.

⁸⁶ Bazzocchi, *Esposizioni*, p. 94.

⁸⁷ For an analysis of Pasolini's definition of *Petrolio* as a 'nuovo ludo', I refer to Benedetti, *Pasolini contro Cavino*, pp. 144-49; Rebecca West, 'Da *Petrolio* a Celati', in *A partire da 'Petrolio'*, ed. by Benedetti and Grignani, pp. 39-50 (p. 43); Tricomi, *Sull'opera mancata*, p. 415; Andrea Cerica, '*Petrolio* di Pasolini (Appunti 32, 97e 129c): Il riso che morde il potere, tra salotti, feste e tv', in *La satira del successo: la spettacolarizzazione della cultura nel mondo antico (tra retorica, filosofia, religione e potere)*, ed. by Alberto Camerotto and Stefano Maso (Milan and Udine: Mimesis, 2017), pp. 257-279; Bazzocchi, *Esposizioni*, p. 151.

⁸⁸ 'Ludo' comes from the Latin word *ludus*, which was used to indicate athletic contests or gladiatorial fights. It then means 'game', 'contest', but also 'theatrical play'. Whereas, 'nuovo' means both new and strange. For further reference, see Chiavacci Leonardi, note to *Inferno* XXII: Introduction, in *DDP*; Nicola Fosca (The Dartmouth Dante Project, 2003-2015), note to *Inferno* XXII, 118, in *DDP*.

⁸⁹ For an introduction to the concept of allegory, I refer to Rita Copeland and Peter T. Struck, 'Introduction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, ed. by Rita Copeland and Peter T. Struck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 1-14.

⁹⁰ Biblical events are read not only as twofold but as polysemous: they have multiple allegorical meanings. In the fourth century, John Cassian introduces to the reading of Scripture the quadruple method. It is a fourfold system of scriptural interpretation, which distinguishes between a literal or historical sense and three other allegorical (or spiritual) senses: the 'strictly' allegorical, which concerns the revelation of mysteries prefigured in history; the moral or tropological, which concerns the soul; and the anagogical, which concerns the divine secrets of Heaven (Copeland and Struck, 'Introduction', pp. 4-5).

Dante deals with the notion of allegory in two theoretical statements in the *Convivio* and in the *Epistola a Cangrande*,⁹¹ and also very briefly in the *Monarchia* (III, iv.).⁹² In these, he distinguishes between the ‘allegory of the theologians’ (that of biblical exegesis) and the ‘allegory of the poets’ (that of Latin poetry). The main difference between the two types of allegory lies in the nature of the literal sense in each case.⁹³ As noted before, for the theologians, the literal sense, on which any other allegorical sense is based, is always historical and true. On the contrary, for the poets, the literal sense does not need to be true or historical to convey an allegorical meaning. For the poets the literal sense is just a ‘bella menzogna’, a fiction that hides ‘una veritate’, as Dante writes in the *Convivio* (II, i. 4). If in his treatise Dante claims to use the allegory of the poets to unveil the hidden meaning of some of his *canzoni*: ‘mia intenzione è qui lo modo delli poeti seguitare’ (*Conv.* II, i. 5);⁹⁴ in the *Epistola* he explains that his poem is ‘polysemous’ and refers to the ‘allegory of the theologians’ for its interpretation (*Ep.* XIII, 22).⁹⁵ Dante recognises the differences within the use of allegory and in the *Epistola* he points at the allegory of the theologians because he wants the ‘letter’ of the *Commedia* to be taken as ‘true’ like that of the Bible and not as a ‘bella menzogna’. The episodes narrated in the *Commedia* really happened to him, he claims; these are as true as those of Scripture. Moreover, as underlined by Charles Singleton, by presenting the *Commedia* under the sign of biblical exegesis Dante gives to his journey a spiritual and universal sense. His true historical journey through the realms of the afterlife is, at the same time, the journey of any Christian soul towards God: an *itinerarium ad Deum* of both Dante, *homo viator*, and humanity in general.⁹⁶

Alongside the concept of allegory, the notion of *figura* contributes to the understanding of the system of signification of the *Commedia*. As extensively commented on in chapter two, Auerbach is the first to introduce the figural system to the study of the *Commedia*. I recalled that the figural scheme had been used by the Church Fathers to read the persons and events of the Old Testament as prefigurations of the New Testament. For example, I noted that Moses is a *figura Christi* and, vice versa, Christ is the fulfilment of Moses, and both Moses and Christ are historical and real persons. *Figura* is a specific type of allegory and can be associated with the allegory of the theologians, as it is used in the biblical context, and both its poles (the

⁹¹ Regarding the debate on Dante’s paternity of the *Epistola*, I refer to Teodolinda Barolini, ‘For the Record: The Cangrande Epistle and Various “American Dantisti”’, *Lectura Dantis*, 6 (1990), 140-43; Robert Hollander, *Dante’s ‘Epistle to Cangrande’* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1993); Zygmunt Barański, ‘Comedia: Dante, l’*Epistola a Cangrande* e la commedia medievale’, in *Chiosar con altro testo*, pp. 41-76; Alberto Casadei, ‘Il titolo della *Commedia* e l’*Epistola a Cangrande*, in *Dante oltre la ‘Commedia’* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2013), pp. 14-44.

⁹² For Dante’s discourse on allegory in the *Monarchia*, see Jean Pépin, ‘Allegoria’ in *Enciclopedia Dantesca* (1970) <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/allegoria_%28Enciclopedia-Dantesca%29/> [accessed 8 May 2020].

⁹³ Singleton, *Dante Studies* 1, p. 14.

⁹⁴ Albert R. Ascoli, ‘Dante and Allegory’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, ed. by Copeland and Struck, pp. 128-35 (pp. 132-33).

⁹⁵ Dante’s choice of the allegory of the theologians is implied by the fact that he uses the biblical passage of Psalm 113 [114] *In exitu Israel de Aegypto* to explain how to read the allegory of his poem. Dante links his *Commedia* to biblical exegesis and, therefore, his text should be read according to the allegory of the theologians.

⁹⁶ Singleton, *Dante Studies* 2, pp. 3-12.

figura and the fulfilment) are real and historical.⁹⁷ Following this system of interpretation, I noted that Auerbach reads the characters of the *Commedia* as the fulfilment of their appearance on earth. Dante's characters are not allegories of some abstract virtues, as some commentators had previously interpreted them (for example, Cato was seen as an allegory of freedom), but a *figura* – 'una figura adempiuta, già diventata realtà'.⁹⁸ To sum up, on the one hand there is the allegory of the poets or allegory *per se*: the literal level does not need to be true or historical and conceals a moral or abstract significance. On the other, there is the allegory of the theologians and the specific case of *figura*, in which the literal level is as true as the whole of the allegorical sense it conceals.

The main contribution to the reading of Dante's *Commedia* in light of biblical exegesis was made by twentieth-century Dante criticism,⁹⁹ especially by the studies of Singleton, Auerbach, and Hollander.¹⁰⁰ However, while sustaining the general interpretation of the *Commedia* in light of biblical exegesis, the critics also recognise that in some parts of the poem Dante still engages with the allegory of the poets or allegory *per se*.¹⁰¹ This does not conflict with the general theological allegorical reading of the journey of the *Commedia*, but instead shows that Dante was aware of the complexity that concerns allegory and made the most of its usage. For example,¹⁰² according to Auerbach, there are episodes in the *Commedia* where characters and facts should not be read as real and concrete, as they stand for some abstract meanings. In particular, Auerbach notes that Dante uses allegory *per se* mainly to discuss historical and political facts.¹⁰³ Analysing the historical-political system of the *Commedia*, Auerbach recalls a few historical-political allegories and notes that they also introduce some important political prophecies. For example, in *Inferno* I the allegory of the she-wolf introduces the prophecy of the 'veltro' (ll. 91-111), and at the end of *Purgatorio* the 'allegoria del carro' of the Garden of Eden introduces the prophecy of the 'Cinquecento diece e cinque' (*Purg.* XXXIII,

⁹⁷ 'L'interpretazione figurale pone dunque una cosa per l'altra in quanto l'una rappresenta e significa l'altra, e in questo senso essa fa parte delle forme allegoriche nell'accezione più larga. Ma essa è nettamente distinta dalla maggior parte delle altre forme allegoriche a noi note in virtù della pari storicità tanto della cosa significativa quanto di quella significata' (Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, p. 209).

⁹⁸ Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, p. 220.

⁹⁹ Angelo Jacomuzzi, *Il palinsesto della retorica e altri saggi danteschi* (Florence: Olschki, 1972), pp. 120-21.

¹⁰⁰ Singleton, 'Appendix: Two Kinds of Allegory', in Singleton, *Dante Studies 1*, pp. 84-93, and later *Dante Studies 2*; Auerbach, 'Farinata e Cavalcante', in *Mimesis*, pp. 189-221, and later 'Figura', in *Studi su Dante*, pp. 176-226; Robert Hollander, *Allegory in Dante's Commedia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969). For more recent works on Dante's allegory, see *Dante e le forme dell'allegoresi*, ed. by Michelangelo Picone (Ravenna: Longo, 1987) and the studies on 'allegoria analitica': Lòpez Cortezo, 'Los similes en la Divina Comedia', pp. 31-36; Varela-Portas de Orduña, 'L'allegoria analitica', pp. 317-26.

¹⁰¹ The passages of the *Commedia* generally read as allegory *per se* or allegory of the poets are the three beasts and the 'veltro' of *Inf.* I; the Erinyes, the Gorgon Medusa, and the angel of *Inf.* IX; the Old Man of Crete of *Inf.* XIV; Geryon of *Inf.* XVI-XVII; and the procession of *Purg.* XXIX-XXXII.

¹⁰² According to Singleton, allegory *per se* concerns only the very beginning of the *Commedia*, the prologue scene (for example, the three beasts of *Inferno* I). After that, affirms Singleton, 'we have [...] an action as surely given in terms of the literal and the historical [...]. These events are what they are, these things happened' (*Dante Studies 1*, pp. 12-13). For Hollander, allegory *per se* 'is easier to document in the body of the poem', as he refers to two passages where Dante asks his reader precisely to look beyond the veil of the literal words: 'O voi ch'avete li 'ntelletti sani, / mirate la dottrina che s'asconde / sotto 'l velame de li versi strani. (*Inf.* IX, 61-63)'; 'Aguzza qui, lettore, ben gli occhi al vero, / ché il velo è ora ben tanto sottile / certo che 'l trapassar dentro è leggero' (*Purg.* VIII 19-21) (*Allegory*, p. 239).

¹⁰³ Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, pp. 113-19.

40-45).¹⁰⁴ The topic of allegory *per se* comes back in the essay dedicated to the analysis of the canto on St Francis, in which St Thomas Aquinas narrates the allegorical marriage between St Francis and Lady Poverty. This is an interesting choice, comments Auerbach, since the allegory is brought into the real historical life of Saint Francis: 'Dante presenta una sola persona allegorica [Poverty] e la collega con una personalità storica, ossia concretamente reale [...] egli attira l'allegoria nell'attualità, la connette strettamente alla storia'.¹⁰⁵

What is important about Auerbach's *Studi su Dante* in the general scenario of twentieth-century Dante criticism is that the study does not only contribute to a new and interesting interpretation of the allegorical structure of the *Commedia*, but that it finally re-evaluates the theme of allegory. In the field of Dante studies, the topic had been put aside by the reading of Benedetto Croce. The study of allegory is, for Croce, not worthy for further discussion and analysis, since he considers it as 'non poesia'.¹⁰⁶ *Studi su Dante* brings back the theme of allegory in Italian Dante criticism, contributing to a flowering of new readings on Dante's allegorism.¹⁰⁷ As a careful reader of Dante criticism, Pasolini seems to be sensitive to this rebirth of the concept of allegory as in 'La volontà di Dante a essere poeta' he defines the *Commedia* precisely as an allegory:

Il poema di Dante è un'allegoria, e perciò, proprio in quanto tale, è una coesistenza delle due nature della narrazione figurativa e della narrazione simbolica. ('Volontà di Dante', p. 1380)

Pasolini's reuse of allegory in *Petrolio* should be seen precisely in relation to the new trend in the field of Dante studies, which he seems to be aware of.¹⁰⁸ Further evidence of the legacy of Dante's allegory in *Petrolio* is actually suggested by Pasolini himself. At the beginning of the manuscript, Pasolini lists the literary models of his work. After Dostoyevsky and Gogol, Pasolini writes: 'Dante, ultimi canti del Purgatorio'.¹⁰⁹ These authors then appear in the fiction as a series of books inside a small suitcase at the market of Porta Portese

¹⁰⁴ Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, pp. 116-17.

¹⁰⁵ Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, p. 230.

¹⁰⁶ Croce, *La poesia di Dante* and 'Sulla natura dell'allegoria'.

¹⁰⁷ Jacomuzzi, *Il palinsesto della retorica*, pp. 120-21. Just to quote some of the main studies on the topic published in those years: Bruno Nardi, 'Sull'interpretazione allegorica e sulla struttura della "Commedia" di Dante', in *Saggi e note di critica dantesca* (Milan: Riccardo Ricciardi, 1966), pp. 110-65; Antonio Pagliaro, 'Simbolo e allegoria', *L'Alighieri*, 2 (1963), then in *Ulisse: ricerche semantiche nella "Divina Commedia"* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1966), pp. 467-527; Pompeo Gianantonio, *Dante e l'allegorismo* (Florence: Olschki, 1969). In the 1960s Singleton's studies on Dante's allegory are published in Italy: *Studi su Dante: introduzione alla "Divina Commedia"* (Naples: Scalabrini, 1961); *Viaggio a Beatrice* (Bologna: Mulino, 1968). Moreover, his studies contribute to bringing back the theme of allegory also among American Dante critics.

¹⁰⁸ I would like to add one more element to the study of the allegory in *Petrolio* which could be the starting point of a future project. The topic of allegory also appears in the writings of Walter Benjamin, published in Italy between the 1960s and the 1970s: *Angelus Novus* (Turin: Einaudi, 1962), *L'opera d'arte nell'epoca della sua riproducibilità tecnica* (Turin: Einaudi, 1966), and *Il dramma barocco tedesco* (Turin: Einaudi, 1971) (For more detail on Benjamin's allegory, see Romano Luperini, *L'allegoria del moderno: saggi sull'allegorismo come forma artistica del moderno e come metodo di conoscenza* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1990), pp. 99-110; Francesco Muzzioli, *L'allegoria* (Rome: Lithos, 2016), pp. 144-80). A few scholars have already underlined similarities between Pasolini and Benjamin (for example, see Filippo Trentin 'Allegoria e anacronismo. Crisi della parola e materialismo storico in Benjamin e Pasolini', *Lo Sguardo*, 19 (2015), 33-43). Moreover, Marco Maggi underlines the legacy of Dante in Benjamin's works, because of his friendship with Auerbach (*Benjamin e Dante: una costellazione nello spazio delle immagini* (Rome: Donzelli, 2017), p. 35). A future project could then investigate the triptych Pasolini-Dante-Benjamin and the key role played by Auerbach in Pasolini and Benjamin's reading of Dante.

¹⁰⁹ Siti and De Laude, 'Note e notizie su testi', *RRII*, p. 1993.

in Rome. Inside the 'valigetta piena di libri', there is 'un'edizioncina, anch'essa economica, della *Divina Commedia*, dove c'era solo un indizio, cioè una grande orecchia nella pagina dove cominciava il Canto XXIX del Purgatorio' (*Petrolio*, p. 1263). The last cantos of the *Purgatorio* contain the richest historical-political allegory of the entire *Commedia*. This is one of those few cases, according to Auerbach, where Dante uses allegory *per se* to convey a political significance.¹¹⁰ The 'allegoria del carro',¹¹¹ as Auerbach defines it, starts precisely in *Purgatorio* XXIX and carries on for the next few cantos, finishing in *Purgatorio* XXXII. It all begins with a long procession of allegorical figures and religious imagery (for example, seven golden candelabra, twenty-four elders, a chariot, a griffin) which move towards Dante to accompany the appearance of Beatrice, who sits in the chariot. Each of these characters is not real but stands for a specific meaning (for example, the chariot represents the Church and the griffin pulling it is Christ). Then, the pageant turns into a sequence of allegorical scenes that recall historical political facts; in particular, they explain the history of the Church and its relationship with power. My conclusion is that Pasolini's specific reference to the end of the *Purgatorio* as one of the main models of the novel can be only explained by its content: the political allegory. With this reference, Pasolini affirms that the main model of the allegory of *Petrolio* is the historical-political allegory of the *Commedia*. This will be further confirmed when, in chapter five, I will show that *Petrolio* is specifically a case of political allegory: its allegorical episodes conceal an historical and political hidden meaning. The importance of Dante's 'allegoria del carro' in Pasolini's reuse of allegory has been pointed out also by Titone and Maggi in relation to some specific scenes of the novel. As we will see better in chapter five, Titone defines the Dantean pageant as the 'working drawing' for the allegorical vision of the 'Visione del Merda',¹¹² and Maggi underlines a strong similarity between the allegory of the Garden of Eden and the allegorical vision of the 'Giardino Medioevale'.¹¹³ In conclusion, the allegory of *Petrolio* does not refer to medieval allegory in general but precisely to Dante's *Commedia*. After having reused the specific type of allegory that is *figura* in his early cinema (chapter two) and inspired by the new trend in Dante criticism, Pasolini looks at Dante's use of allegory *per se* to write his own allegorical novel. This shows how constant and, at the same time, manifold is Pasolini's reuse of Dante criticism to comply with his artistic experimentation.

4.4 – Vision from Dante's *Commedia* to *Petrolio*

This section carries on the discussion initiated in the previous one in relation to the legacy of Dante in *Petrolio*. After having investigated the linkage between Pasolini's use of allegory and the *Commedia*, I will now focus

¹¹⁰ Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, pp. 113-19.

¹¹¹ Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, p. 116.

¹¹² Titone, *Cantiche*, p. 121.

¹¹³ Maggi, *The Resurrection*, p. 222.

on the relationship between Pasolini's use of vision and Dante's. Finally, I will comment on Pasolini's approach to realism in the novel.

Various scenes of *Petrolio* are narrated in the form of a vision experienced by either Carlo di Polis or Carlo di Tetis and reported to the reader by the author. These correspond to the main episodes of the story of the two protagonists, such as Carlo's vision of his dissociation (*appunti* 2 and 3), Carlo di Tetis' vision of 'La ruota e il perno' (*appunto* 17), Carlo di Polis' vision of the 'Giardino Medioevale' (*appunti* 65, 65 bis, 66), and Carlo di Tetis' 'Visione del Merda' (from *appunto* 71 to 74a).¹¹⁴ Carlo di Polis' journey to the East on the model of the Argonauts' journey would have been narrated in the form of a vision too, according to a note reported in the manuscript: 'il viaggio è tutto inventato cioè sognato (la realtà è frammentata, visionaria ecc.)' (*Petrolio*, p. 1201). Finally, the two scenes of the massacres in Turin and in Bologna, which Pasolini plans to write but never manages to do, were conceived in the form of a vision. The drafts of these sections report: 'Alla fine della Visione, la stazione di Torino appare come isolata in mezzo al mondo'; 'La bomba viene messa alla stazione di Bologna. La strage viene descritta come una "Visione"' (*Petrolio*, pp. 1652, 1829).

These episodes are visionary dreams – 'sogno visionario' (*Petrolio*, p. 1171) – an experience of seeing things which do not exist physically but are produced by the mind of the protagonist like in a dream or trance. Belonging to the imaginary of the protagonists and so not real *per se*, in these visions non-realistic, bizarre, and sometime even monstrous figures appear (for example, the angel and the devil causing Carlo's dissociation into two persons). In light of the artificial medievalism of *Petrolio*, I have already noted that these visions should be seen in relation to medieval visionary literature. Texts reporting eschatological, mystical visions were indeed very common in medieval times, as in the already mentioned case of Catherine of Siena's *The Dialogue of Divine Providence*.¹¹⁵ In particular, inspired by biblical records and, mostly, by non-canonical texts (such as the *Visio Pauli*), visions of the afterlife had become a very popular genre in medieval literature.¹¹⁶ In a state of febrile illness, trance, or apparent death, the authors of these texts dream of being taken on a journey to see the afterlife. For example, in book IV of the *Dialoghi* – one of the fundamental works of medieval literature – Pope Gregory (approx. 540-604 AD) narrates his vision of the destiny of souls in the afterlife.¹¹⁷ Probably much aware of this widespread genre, Dante deliberately decides to write the *Commedia* as the report of a real journey in the otherworld rather than as a mystical vision. This point is discussed in *Studi su Dante*. According to Auerbach, the structure of the otherworldly journey offers Dante a more realistic, concrete expression of his experience than if he had presented it in the form of a mystical vision:

¹¹⁴ Pasolini, *Petrolio*, pp. 1168-74, 1252-57, 1457-77, 1554-1639.

¹¹⁵ Vincent Truijen, 'Visione mistica' in *Enciclopedia Dantesca* (1970) <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/visione-mistica_%28Enciclopedia-Dantesca%29/> [accessed 4 May 2020].

¹¹⁶ For a general introduction to medieval visions, I refer to Maria Pia Ciccarese, *Visioni dell'aldilà in Occidente: fonti, modelli, testi* (Florence: Nardini-Centro Internazionale del Libro, 1987).

¹¹⁷ Gregorio Magno, *Storie di santi e di diavoli: Dialoghi I-II*, ed. by Salvatore Pricoco and Manlio Simonetti (Milan: Mondadori, 2005).

Il tema della visione e del viaggio nell'oltretomba era un luogo comune nel medioevo [...] se anche egli conosceva visioni medievali dell'oltretomba, in ogni caso non le teneva dinanzi agli occhi e non le considerava come modelli, quando intraprese a scrivere la *Commedia*; se tuttavia qualcosa di esse è trapassato nella sua opera, fu per la via indiretta ed extraletteraria sopra accennata. La forma del viaggio nell'oltretomba offriva alla volontà dantesca di espressione concreta e di ordine metafisico le possibilità di appagamento che egli non era stato in grado di realizzare nelle sue opere precedenti, e che nessuno dei suoi predecessori che avevano dato forma a visioni escatologiche aveva mai neppure tentato di realizzare.¹¹⁸

The main difference between the *Commedia* and medieval visions in general, continues Auerbach, is precisely the poem's realism, the realistic character of Dante's experience:

L'aver conservato e definitivamente fissato l'unità della figura umana nell'aldilà è quello che distingue fundamentalmente la *Commedia* da tutte le precedenti visioni dell'oltretomba; la scena dove si svolge la sua azione è diventata così la fonte del suo valore poetico ed ha prodotto la sua incredibile fedeltà alla realtà, quella immediata e strapotente forza di evidenza empirica che ci fa sentire quanto accade nell'opera come veramente accaduto, credibile e riguardante proprio noi. Nell'oltretomba della *Commedia* è contenuto il mondo terreno.¹¹⁹

However, many times Auerbach refers to Dante's work using the word 'vision' in relation to its content. This is because, as Auerbach notes, Dante himself refers to his work in this way: 'Con una definizione nuova, coniata da lui, lo chiama ivi "il poema sacro" oppure "lo sacro poema" o anche semplicemente secondo il contenuto "la visione"'.¹²⁰ In this passage, Auerbach recalls the well-known line 'tutta tua vision fa manifesta' (*Par. XVII, 128*), where Dante's ancestor Cacciaguida urges Dante to reveal everything he has seen, confirming his prophetic mission. Thus, when Auerbach uses 'vision' in relation to the *Commedia*, he means 'the revealed truth of God's otherworld':

Il contenuto della *Commedia* è una visione; ma quello che si vede in essa è la verità come figura, è dunque tanto reale che razionale [...] il fatto visto nella visione è l'essere, o la verità, ed è ordinato del tutto secondo ragione e fin proprio alla soglia della vera e propria 'visio Dei' è accessibile ad una comunicazione logica saldamente circoscritta. [...] La prima esigenza che la visione della verità pone a colui che la comunica, è quella dell'esattezza. Essa è proprio così com'è, saldamente circoscritta nella sua forma e nei suoi confini, e altrettanto pretende che sia la rappresentazione; precisa e chiara deve essere, e sforzarsi sempre, invece di divagare nel lirico o di abusare di mezzi espressivi retorici, di riprodurre esattamente la cosa contemplata o sentita, nelle sue reali proporzioni.¹²¹

It is important to distinguish between the term vision as a mystical experience and vision as 'la visione della verità',¹²² 'the true things which have been seen', or more precisely the 'visio Dei', 'the revealed truth of God's otherworld', which is the content of the *Commedia*. Both these two meanings appear in the text of

¹¹⁸ Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, pp. 74-75.

¹¹⁹ Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, p. 82.

¹²⁰ Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, p. 84.

¹²¹ Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, pp. 144-45.

¹²² Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, p. 145.

the *Commedia*. Looking at the three canticles, the word ‘visione’ is used ten times by Dante, exclusively in the *Purgatorio* and in the *Paradiso*. In the *Paradiso*, ‘vision’ occurs with the meaning of ‘the things that have been seen’ or, more precisely, ‘the Divine things that have been seen’ (*Par.* III, 7; XIV, 41, 49; XVII, 128; XXIII, 50, XXXIII, 62). In the *Purgatorio* ‘vision’ is used twice with the meaning of dream (*Purg.* IX, 18; XIX, 56) and twice with the meaning of mystical vision (*Purg.* XV, 85; XVII, 34). These last two occurrences are due to the fact that, in the third terrace of the Purgatory, the examples of vices and virtues appear to Dante in the form of mystical visions. In *Purgatorio* XV, Dante speaks precisely of a ‘visione estatica’ (l. 85).¹²³ Using the term ‘vision’ in both these two meanings, Dante shows himself to be familiar with the theme of the mystical vision and claims the difference of his experience by presenting it as a real journey.

Although Dante does not present his journey as a visionary dream, it is actually in these terms that Pasolini reads it. This is proved by the text of *La mortaccia* (dated 1959 but published only in 1965). As briefly mentioned in chapter three, *La mortaccia* is Pasolini’s first attempt to re-write the *Inferno*, as it narrates the journey through Hell of the prostitute Teresa led by Dante. In an interview dated 1960 Pasolini defines *La mortaccia* as a vision similar to that of Dante’s *Commedia*: ‘È una visione analoga a quella dantesca, ricalcata su quella’.¹²⁴ Again, in an article of the same year Pasolini writes: ‘Ne *La mortaccia* [...] la prostituta Teresa, scende all’Inferno, secondo la visione e lo schema dantesco: e l’Inferno è sempre “come visto da lei”’.¹²⁵ In both the projectual scheme and first draft of *La mortaccia* the prostitute Teresa, after having read a comic version of the *Commedia*, falls asleep and starts dreaming.¹²⁶ Her visionary dream is Dante’s *Inferno*:

Come si fu appennicata, cominciò d’acchitto a sognare: mannaggia alla Divina Commedia [...] Il sogno che si fece, l’incubo! A trentacinque anni ancora non c’era arrivata, che non ne aveva manco trenta, ma era come se n’avesse sessanta [...]. E, insomma, dai a questo e dai a quell’altro, in mezzo alla selva dei peccati ci stava, e ecchela là!¹²⁷

This suggests that Pasolini associates Dante’s *Commedia* to the popular medieval genre of the afterlife vision. As mentioned in chapter three, the project of *La mortaccia* is abandoned in 1963 and superseded by *La Divina Mimesis*, where Pasolini himself takes the place of Teresa to narrate his journey through the Hell of contemporary Italian society. The theme of Dante’s *descensus ad inferos* appears one last time in Pasolini’s production, in the longest vision of *Petrolio*: the ‘Visione del Merda’.¹²⁸ As we will see better in chapter five,

¹²³ Chiavacci Leonardi, note to *Purgatorio* XV, 85-86, in *DDP*.

¹²⁴ Pasolini’s interview for *Paese Sera* (1960¹), now in Siti and De Laude, ‘Note e notizie sui testi’, in *RRII*, p. 1964.

¹²⁵ Pasolini, ‘Dialoghi con Pasolini’ (1960¹), now in *SPS*, p. 920.

¹²⁶ The projectual scheme is titled *Requienterna* in the original manuscript and reports the *Inferno* in the form of a dream: ‘Teresa [...] ha letto la “Divina Commedia” a fumetti. Dopo il lavoro, dorme nella sua baracca. Sogna l’Inferno, secondo Dante’ (Siti and De Laude, ‘Note e notizie sui testi’, *RRII*, p. 1967).

¹²⁷ This paragraph of the first draft of the text of *La mortaccia* is quoted by Andrea Dini, ‘Una *Commedia* di borgata. Pasolini, Dante e *La mortaccia*’, *Paragone*, 60-62 (2005), 140-59 (pp. 150-51).

¹²⁸ Scholars have underlined the strict connection between *La mortaccia*, *La Divina Mimesis*, and ‘La visione del Merda’. These are different re-writings of the *Inferno* and show Pasolini’s long-lasting engagement with and constant re-elaboration of the *Commedia*. See, for example, Titone, *Cantiche*, pp. 130-33; Gragnolati, *Amor che move*, p. 35; Maggi, *The Resurrection*, pp. 228-31. The legacy of Dante’s *Inferno* in the specific scene of the ‘Vision del Merda’ will be extensively analysed in chapter five.

the vision can be ascribed to the genre of the otherworldly vision, as the protagonist dreams of being taken on a journey to see another world (the new world of neocapitalist society). The fact that Carlo di Tetis' otherworld journey is a re-writing of Dante's *Inferno* and also a visionary dream shows that the *Commedia* remains for Pasolini a vision, even when he returns to it in the 1970s. Given that the *Commedia* is the main model of the 'Visione del Merda', which is also the longest and the most important vision of the entire novel, we should then extend Dante's legacy to Pasolini's general use of this strategy in *Petrolio*.

The discussion around the title of the novel can add one more piece of evidence to this linkage between the *Commedia* and *Petrolio*. As mentioned in chapter three, the novel could also have been titled 'Vas', with reference to the biblical periphrasis for Paul, 'vas electionis' (Acts 9. 15), which in the *Commedia* Dante reuses to compare his otherworldly experience to that of St Paul and to justify his prophetic mission. 'Vas' points at the figure of the Pauline Dante, the poet-prophet, which I have defined as Pasolini's model and figure of the self in the 1970s. If the concept of the visionary dream is problematic to apply to Dante's *Commedia*, St Paul's experience of Paradise is a proper mystical vision. This is reported in the Acts of the Apostles (22, 17-18): 'Factum est autem revertenti mihi in Jerusalem, et oranti in templo, fieri me in stupore mentis, et videre illum dicentem mihi';¹²⁹ and in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians (12, 1-5), while claiming in the third person to have been caught to Heaven, Paul speaks precisely of 'visiones', doubting that it was a corporeal experience. The influence that St Paul has on Pasolini's new idea of Dante reinforces the visionary character of the *Commedia* and explains its importance in the eyes of Pasolini. Pasolini's use of vision in *Petrolio* is linked to his new idea of Dante the poet-prophet, precisely someone who has experienced an extraordinary vision. In addition, as in the *Commedia* 'vas' is used by Dante with the meaning of God's chosen instrument to pursue specific divine plans,¹³⁰ presenting *Petrolio* as a new vessel, Pasolini seems to stress a particular 'investiture' and mission applied to his work. This will appear clearer in chapter five, when discussing the revealing character of Carlo's visions.

On the model of Dante's *Commedia*, Pasolini writes his political novel as a medieval-style allegory, whose main episodes are narrated in the form of a visionary dream. As mentioned before, the strange and new nature of *Petrolio* ('nuovo ludo') should be seen as a way to challenge artistic convention and yet produce meaningful literature. The specific structure of the novel is described by Pasolini in relation to a certain aversion toward realistic literature: his purpose is actually to write a non-realistic novel. Thus, we can say that Pasolini uses allegory and vision to escape realistic literature, by which he means a literary work that is the 'transposition of reality' or that 'refers to reality', using Pasolini's own words (*Petrolio*, p. 1204), and so that depicts reality as it is, that provides a realistic representation of reality. As noted before, in an allegorical work (of the type of the poets) the letter of the text does not necessarily refer to something real, historical or concrete. According to Pasolini, *Petrolio*, indeed, does not refer to reality but only to itself: 'Fino a questo

¹²⁹ 'After I had returned to Jerusalem and while I was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance and saw the Lord saying to me...'

¹³⁰ Ledda, 'Modelli biblici nella *Commedia*', p. 182.

punto certamente il lettore avrà pensato che tutto ciò che è scritto in questo libro [...] “rimandi alla realtà” [...] invece, questo libro ad altro non rimanda che a se stesso’ (*Petrolio*, p. 1204). The reader must accept this fact: ‘egli deve vincere la repulsione che dà una trasposizione falsa della realtà: falsa perché in effetti non c’è’ (*Petrolio*, p. 1204). In addition, the allegorical nature of the text also causes a sort of illegibility, a difficulty in understanding the hidden meaning of the text (*Petrolio*, p. 1215). Indeed, if the reader is not given the key to interpret the allegory, its hidden significance remains unknown.¹³¹ Moreover, the allegory of *Petrolio* is defined as ‘greve’, which we should read with the sense of a metaphorical heaviness in relation to something painful and grievous – with this meaning the adjective recurs many times also in the *Commedia* (*Inf.* III, 43; VI, 8). This ‘heaviness’ will appear clearer when we unveil the historical and political significance of the allegorical episodes in chapter five. In one of the many short stories inside the novel, which Pasolini uses to reflect on his text within the text, it is said that the reality of the story is precisely ‘simbolica’ (*Petrolio*, p. 1350). The idea of which *Petrolio* consists is an ‘idea simbolico-allegorica’ (*Petrolio*, p. 1375). ‘Io non sto scrivendo una storia reale’ (*Petrolio*, p. 1724), writes Pasolini in the body of the text. *Petrolio* is not a realistic novel, affirms Pasolini, precisely because it is composed of a series of visionary dreams: ‘un romanzo, che per di più non realistico, si avvia anzi intrattenibilmente verso le Visioni’ (*Petrolio*, p. 1229). The world of the vision is by definition not that of reality.

With regard to the non-realistic character of the visionary dream, I would like to add one more reflection. As mentioned before, when working on *La mortaccia* Pasolini seems to read the *Commedia* as a visionary dream and so its re-writing is the account of a vision. Nevertheless, in the final draft of *La mortaccia* there is no mention of Teresa’s visionary dream. Pasolini deletes the short paragraph, which I have quoted before, where the element of the dream is made explicit. As suggested by Andrea Dino, Pasolini omits the reference to the visionary dream to add realism to Teresa’s story.¹³² ‘Se tutto congiura per una visione [...] il viaggio si rovescia sulla terra’,¹³³ writes the scholar; what appears to Teresa are not the gates of Hell but of Rebibbia jail. It seems as if Pasolini perceives the non-realistic character inherent in the form of the visionary dream and deliberately cuts it off to pursue a more realistic representation of Teresa’s journey. Pasolini’s omission of the element of the vision as an attempt to make *La mortaccia* more realistic and his return to the form of the vision in *Petrolio* precisely to avoid realistic forms of representation is an interesting circle. At the centre of this discourse there is Dante’s *Commedia* and Pasolini’s constant and at different times different reconceptualisation of it. Written just after the Roman novels,¹³⁴ *La mortaccia* belongs to that idea of literary realism which, as commented on in chapter three, Pasolini rejects in the mid-1960s and which, therefore,

¹³¹ Illegibility should also be intended as the impossibility to read the text *per se*, since we know that Pasolini wanted to insert some sections in other languages, such as Japanese and Greek, but never managed it (*Petrolio*, pp. 1325, 1814-15).

¹³² Dini, ‘Una *Commedia* di borgata’, pp. 150-51.

¹³³ Dini, ‘Una *Commedia* di borgata’, p. 154.

¹³⁴ Gragnolati points out that the project of *La mortaccia* belongs to the same literary phase as the Roman novels (*Amor che move*, pp. 37-39).

cannot be valid for *Petrolio*. There is a passage in *Petrolio* which can help us understand Pasolini's aversion toward realistic literature, as here the term 'realistico' assumes a negative connotation.

'Qualcosa di scritto' precedentemente aveva raccontato il genocidio operato dal Potere tra la classe operaia e comunque povera, attraverso l'imposizione di nuovi Modelli (i quali, trasformando radicalmente gli operai e i poveri, li avevano fatti sparire letteralmente dalla faccia della terra). Ora, 'qualcosa di scritto' racconta, letteralmente, una iniziativa delittuosa del Potere (anzi, dello Stato, per essere precisi). Ora, l'iniziativa delittuosa [...] consiste appunto in una forma violenta di lotta di classe antioperaia, e per la precisione anticomunista. La domanda del problema è dunque che senso ha tutto questo, se, come nel citato precedente 'blocco di segni' abbiamo visto, la classe operaia, o comunque povera, è in realtà 'scomparsa dalla faccia della terra'? Com'è possibile, anzi, concepibile, lottare contro chi non c'è più? Naturalmente una spiegazione si può sempre dare. In questo caso, da me artificialmente posto – la spiegazione è questa: Il potere è sempre, come si dice in Italia, machiavellico: cioè realistico. Esso esclude dalla sua prassi tutto ciò che possa venir 'conosciuto' attraverso Visioni. Ora, la Visione che descrive la fine violenta della classe lavoratrice si trova in questo romanzo, è inclusa 'nel dominio di questa scrittura': ed è solo qui, dunque, in questa stessa sede, che l'intelligenza del potere deve fare i conti con le Visioni. [...] La posposizione di una serie di delitti (realistici) a una Visione – posposizione che irride la logica del machiavellismo o del realismo politico, rendendola spaventosamente antiquata – è però tuttavia – sia chiaro – un atto di accusa. Perché gli uomini politici, oltre che non essere assassini, devono anche essere in grado di avere delle Visioni. (*Petrolio*, pp. 1732-33)

In this passage, Pasolini restates his intention to describe the socio-political phenomenon of the end of the working class – or, better, the destruction of it by 'il Potere' – through a visionary dream rather than through a realistic representation. Pasolini writes that he has already started this process, when describing the radical transformation of the working class due to the imposition of some new models. "'Qualcosa di scritto" precedentemente' refers to the long passage of the 'Visione del Merda', where Carlo di Tetis sees in a vision the incarnation of the new models promoted by consumerism, which, for Pasolini, have destroyed the working class. Now, Pasolini anticipates that he will continue to unveil the 'iniziativa delittuosa del Potere' by narrating the 'lotta di classe antioperaria' perpetuated by 'il Potere' in the form of a vision. Rather than reporting the series of crimes committed by 'il Potere' in a realistic way, Pasolini claims to prefer the form of the visionary dream. Writing political facts as visions is, affirms Pasolini, an 'atto di accusa' towards 'il Potere', as it makes a mockery of the logic of power, which does not include visions. Moreover, the term 'realistico' acquires here a negative connotation since it is depicted as the style of power or, better, the way in which the new power acts. What happens here is an overlapping of the concepts of realism as 'realistic representation' and 'realismo politico' (Realpolitik). In the word 'realistico' Pasolini merges together a form of political theory and a form of representation. Realistic becomes then a synonym of Machiavellian and, therefore, a realistic representation of facts would be misleading and false. As Benedetti rightly highlights, while working on *Petrolio* Pasolini is searching for a new form of representation which can make visible the new 'Potere' of neocapitalism and, eventually, finds it in the use of visions:

Pasolini è evidentemente alla ricerca di altre forme di rappresentazione e di analisi del potere. [...] Io credo che *Petrolio* sia un tentativo di rendere visibile tutto il potere. E di renderlo visibile attraverso *Visioni*.¹³⁵

According to Benedetti, describing the new 'Potere' in the form of a vision makes it visible in all its forms. If a realistic representation would have made visible only a small part of reality, the device of the vision permits Pasolini to talk about reality as a whole:

È semplicemente un'altra forma di rappresentazione. Una forma che si lascia alle spalle il realismo, con tutta la sua convenzionalità, con tutto il suo illusionismo. Leggendo *Petrolio* si può infatti avere l'impressione che il realismo sia qualcosa di illusionistico, qualcosa che trasforma il mondo in una sorta di teatrino del mondo. [...] Il realismo ci promette la realtà, però ce la dà come dentro a una teatrino. Ci dà un mondo surrogato e semplificato. [...] Per Pasolini la realtà si rivela per *Visioni*. Il reale viene integrato e conosciuto solo nella visione. Essa è la forma in cui si manifesta la realtà non semplificata da schemi, colta nel suo contatto con il tutto, non astratta dalla vivente correlazione col mondo circostante, col presente ma anche col passato. È la realtà con tutto il suo Peso, con tutte le sue datità lancinanti, e in ciò sacra, o anche mitica.¹³⁶

Realism (again with the sense of realistic representation) would have offered a partial and simplified representation of the new 'Potere', whereas the device of the vision allows Pasolini to broaden the picture and shows it entirely. For example, reporting realistically and meticulously a single historical political fact would have provided a partial representation of 'il Potere' and of reality in general. The device of the vision permits Pasolini to connect all the 'strings', all the machinations of the new 'Potere' which, for Pasolini, infects the whole of politics and society. Through this particular structure, *Petrolio* tries to picture the whole of this new 'Potere': the Years of Lead, the hubs of power constituted by the industrial and financial groups of Eni and Montedison, the suspicious death of Enrico Mattei and the war for oil,¹³⁷ the financial and political empire of the Italian entrepreneur Eugenio Cefis, and the brutal transformation of Italian society into mass society.¹³⁸

Allegory and vision are non-realistic forms of representation which Pasolini chooses specifically to represent 'questo nuovo Potere non ancora rappresentato da nessuno' ('Il vero fascismo', p. 314). This means, as suggested also by Benedetti, that these non-realistic forms are Pasolini's new way of representing reality and so of realism. Pasolini does not report an historical fact in a realistic way, does not represent reality as it appears. He depicts an historical fact in an imaginative, visionary way. What matters is not the letter of the text, but the hidden allegorical meaning, which lies behind it and which corresponds to a certain truth about society. For example, in the already mentioned case of the 'Visione del Merda' Pasolini reports the true fact of the transformation of society operated by the new 'Potere' through an imaginative

¹³⁵ Benedetti, 'Quattro porte su *Petrolio*', p. 35.

¹³⁶ Benedetti, 'Quattro porte su *Petrolio*', p. 44.

¹³⁷ The episode of Mattei is only drafted as Pasolini did not manage to write it (*Petrolio*, p. 1298).

¹³⁸ Benedetti, 'Quattro porte su *Petrolio*', pp. 34-38.

representation: Carlo di Tetis' infernal journey. We will see more examples of this in the next chapter, which will provide a detailed analysis of the main allegorical visions. One can conclude that *Petrolio* does not report reality but 'reveals' it. This reading confirms the argument mentioned in section 4.2: Dante the poet-prophet makes Pasolini reflect on realism in terms of prophetism as the act of 'revealing reality'. Realism is no longer a question of representing reality but of revealing the truth about the society. What matters are the fragments of 'revealed reality', using Pasolini's own words, which lie behind the text. The expression 'realtà rivelata' is used once in the novel to define Carlo di Polis' vision: 'Tutta quella gente [...] appariva come in una specie di realtà rivelata' (*Petrolio*, p. 1770). In this specific passage, Carlo sees Italian society under neocapitalism for what it really is, a mass of homologated people driven by the same consumerist interests and bourgeois values.

To conclude I can affirm that Pasolini's new approach to literary realism is again influenced by the dialogue with Dante. Offering him an example of both an allegorical and visionary text, the *Commedia* is the ultimate model of Pasolini's act of 'revealing reality'. Leaving behind realistic literature, Pasolini does not look at the *Commedia* as he used to in the 1950s, when he defined it as '[la] più realistica delle opere poetiche italiane' ('Poesia dialettale', p. 716). What Pasolini seems interested in now is the most 'medieval side' of Dante. In a way Pasolini 'deprives' the *Commedia* of that realistic, almost modern look that Contini's and Auerbach's readings granted it and reads it just as a medieval text. However, it is precisely this new look which allows him to answer the question of realism in the Italian reality of the 1970s.

Conclusions

This chapter has shown that Pasolini carries on his dialogue with Dante's *Commedia* even in the last phase of his artistic career and approach to the question of realism. The first section has continued the discussion initiated in chapter three, adding evidence to Pasolini's new idea of Dante as the poet-prophet. I have shown that in the last phase of his life and artistic career Pasolini takes on himself some features typical of Dante the poet-prophet. Undertaking the huge task of revealing the evils of neocapitalism, Pasolini identifies with the figure of Dante who writes 'in pro del mondo che mal vive' (*Purg.* XXXII, 103). In the second section I have noted that Pasolini's truth-telling is not just a matter of content, but also a matter of structure, which the work takes on to convey such an important message, a message of truth. In the 1970s Pasolini uses prophetic strategies, such as parables, visions, allegories, and prophecies, to talk about politics and society. Having said that these strategies raise a question of realism, since they are all non-realistic forms of representation, I suggested that Pasolini starts considering realism in terms of prophetism as the act of 'revealing reality.' The third and fourth sections have investigated this idea of realism in the case study of *Petrolio*, and shown its linkage to Dante's *Commedia*. I have shown that both strategies of allegory and vision are based on the

example of the *Commedia*. Firstly, I have demonstrated the legacy of Dante's allegory in *Petrolio*, carrying on the hypothesis already made by scholars. In particular, I have argued that the use of allegory in *Petrolio* should be seen in relation to the rebirth of allegorism in twentieth-century Dante criticism. Then, having underlined the medieval character of the visions of *Petrolio*, I have demonstrated that they do not refer to medieval visionary literature in general but precisely to Dante's *Commedia*. We have seen that Pasolini seems to have always read Dante's work as the account of a visionary dream, from his very first re-writing of the *Inferno* (*La mortaccia*) to his last in *Petrolio*, the 'Visione del Merda'. Finally, I have confirmed Pasolini's new approach to realism as 'revealing reality'. *Petrolio* does not represent reality as it is, the historical political facts are depicted in a visionary way which reveals in its allegorical meaning the truth about society. The discussions about the legacy of Dante and the new idea of realism as 'revealing reality' will be carried on in chapter five, which will provide a detailed analysis of the main allegorical visions of *Petrolio*.

5 – *Petrolio* after the *Commedia*: the allegorical visions of Pasolini's last novel

This chapter will provide an in-depth textual analysis of the main allegorical visions of *Petrolio*. As discussed in chapter four, *Petrolio* is an allegorical work whose main episodes are narrated in the form of a visionary dream experienced by the protagonists only. Following their chronological order in the novel, this chapter will analyse Carlo's vision of his dissociation (*appunti* 2 and 3), Carlo di Tetis' vision of 'La ruota e il perno' (*appunto* 17), Carlo di Polis' vision of the 'Giardino Medioevale' (*appunti* 65, 65 bis, 66), and Carlo di Tetis' 'Visione del Merda' (from *appunto* 71 to 74a).¹ This study is twofold. Firstly, it aims to investigate the legacy of Dante's *Commedia* at the level of the text.² Although some references to the *Commedia* have been already underlined by scholars (as in the already mentioned case of the 'Visione del Merda'),³ to date none has conducted a systematic study of the legacy of Dante in *Petrolio*. Secondly, it aims to reveal the allegorical significance of each individual vision as a way to have a better understanding of the general allegory of *Petrolio*. As mentioned in chapter four, the novel has been read by scholars as a case of political allegory. For example, we have seen that Bazzocchi affirms that *Petrolio* is an 'allegoria del potere' and Benedetti claims the political character of the visions, as they reveal the new 'Potere'.⁴ My investigation aims to bring further insights to the allegorical reading of *Petrolio* and confirm its political character. Finally, unveiling the allegorical meanings behind the letter of the text will allow us to see which are the truths about Italian society and politics that Pasolini wants to reveal in his text.

5.1 – The dissociation of Carlo

Petrolio begins with a visionary dream narrating the division of the protagonist, the engineer Carlo Valletti, into two persons: Carlo di Polis and Carlo di Tetis. The narration starts in *appunto* 2, 'La prima Rosa dell'Estate', where Pasolini presents Carlo to the reader, and continues in the following *appunto* 3, 'Introduzione del tema metafisico' (*Petrolio*, pp. 1168-74). As this title reveals, here Pasolini introduces the metaphysical character of the novel. Saying that *Petrolio* deals with metaphysics means that it enters a reality

¹ Pasolini, *Petrolio*, pp. 1168-74, 1252-57, 1457-77, 1554-1639.

² My analysis looks exclusively at the relationship between the two texts of *Petrolio* and the *Commedia*. However, the allegorical visions of *Petrolio* have also been read in relation to other more contemporary works. For example, the imagery of the vision of 'La ruota e il perno' has been read in light of Norman Brown's *Love's Body*, which was very popular in 1970s Italy (Norman O. Brown, *Corpo d'amore*, trans. by Silvia Giacomoni (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1969)). For further notes, I refer to the analysis of Pasolini's visions made by Maggi in chapter three, "'A Diluted Reel of Film in My Brain": To Preach a New "Word of Abjuration" in *Petrolio*', in *The Resurrection*, pp. 157-255.

³ Titone's study has underlined different allusions to the *Commedia* (*Cantiche*, pp. 118-36). With regard to the specific passage of the 'Visione del Merda' see, Titone, *Cantiche*, pp. 130-33; Gragnolati, *Amor che move*, p. 35; Maggi, *The Resurrection*, pp. 228-47.

⁴ Bazzocchi, *Esposizioni*, p. 149; Benedetti, 'Quattro porte su *Petrolio*', pp. 35, 44.

beyond what is perceptible to the senses: that of the supernatural and the transcendent. The visionary dream is the form that opens the text to metaphysics and therefore justifies, as we will see shortly, the presence of supernatural figures and events. Saying that a text has a metaphysical nature also means that it examines the fundamental nature of reality and therefore deals with universal and general meanings. This suggests that we should look for a universal meaning behind the letter of the text. As we will see further on, Carlo should be understood as the representative of his contemporary society, meaning that, in the novel, what happens to him as an individual stands for something that concerns society in general.

Carlo is on the balcony of his house in Rome. While watching the panorama, he reflects on his life. He is discontented about his career, as he has not yet obtained a place of prestige in society. The reason for his failure seems to be linked to a form of 'neurosis', described as a constant inner burden: '[La] nevrosi [...] Cioè [...] quel Peso che egli sentiva da tutta la vita dentro di sé ("nel petto") e da cui non riusciva mai, neppure per un solo istante, a sentirsi sollevato' (*Petrolio*, p. 1169). The use of the capital letter suggests the importance of this inner burden in the story of the protagonist. Only by reading further on will we be able to understand what the neurosis stands for and why it is so important. Suddenly, Carlo has a 'sogno visionario' (*Petrolio*, p. 1171); he witnesses his body falling off the balcony and landing on the terrace below. He is dead. The vision carries on and Carlo sees a dispute over his dead body between two non-human creatures:

Ed ecco che, scendendo probabilmente dal cielo – o forse dalle profondità della terra, accanto a quel corpo supino, Carlo vede venire due esseri, di una natura che non è certamente umana; ma appare tuttavia naturale, inserendosi nella logica della Visione. Si mettono uno di qua e uno di là del Corpo, coi piedi all'altezza della sua testa, e cominciano a parlare. Benché anche il loro linguaggio non sia umano, Carlo lo capisce: non solo, ma la lingua umana in cui esso è percepito da Carlo, è una lingua meravigliosa. Ogni sua parola ha infatti una chiarezza rivelatrice: così che il capire, non è soltanto capire, ma è anche la gioiosa cognizione del capire. Si direbbe, insomma, che quei personaggi parlino in versi o in musica. Certo, è effetto del sogno visionario, perché, riportati al di fuori del suo contesto, quei loro discorsi rivelavano la loro natura priva di mistero che la cultura di Carlo poteva fornir loro, e si riducevano a uno scambio di opinioni, a un battibecco ideologico abbastanza ricorrente (come del resto il lettore vedrà). (*Petrolio*, p. 1171)

The presence of the two non-human creatures appears 'natural' since Pasolini reminds the reader that we are in the logic of the vision. As noted before, the visionary dream is what justifies the presence of non-human figures, opening up the text to the metaphysical. According to the same logic, Carlo is able to understand what the two characters are saying. Their language is described as marvellous and, most importantly, is characterised by a 'chiarezza rivelatrice'. This language does not only say things but actually 'reveals' things making Carlo understand things fully. However, the author informs us that, outside the logic of the vision, the discourse between the two creatures would just sound like an ideological quarrel recurrent at that time. The emphasis on the revealing character of the vision to Carlo adds to the previous discourse about Pasolini's new approach to realism in terms of 'revealing reality'. Visions reveal to the protagonist (and

to the reader) some truths about the reality of contemporary Italy. The allegorical significance carries the message of truth about reality.

Il primo dei due disputanti aveva un aspetto angelico, e Carlo sapeva interiormente che il suo nome era Polis; il secondo, invece, aveva un povero aspetto infernale, di miserabile; e il suo nome era Tetis. Era Polis, che aveva cominciato a parlare: 'Questo corpo è mio, mi appartiene. Esso è il corpo di un buono, di un obbediente...' 'Sì, ma il Peso che ha dentro, invece, è mio...' ribatteva Tetis. Polis lo guardava sorridendo, coi suoi occhi celesti, sicuro di sé. Ricominciò a parlare con pazienza: 'Se questo è il Corpo di un uomo che ha amato nei giusti limiti la madre, e contro il padre ha lottato, sì, ma come doveva, sapendo ben distinguere dentro di sé, le proprie colpe dalle sue – questo Corpo è mio'. 'Va bene – ribatté ostinato il diavolo – ma il Peso che è dentro di lui è mio...'. (*Petrolio*, pp. 1171-72)

We learn the different nature of the two creatures: Polis is an angelic figure and Tetis is a devil. They are debating over the corpse of Carlo about whom that body actually belongs to. This scene clearly recalls the two episodes of Dante's *Commedia* regarding the Montefeltro family.⁵ It refers both to the dispute between St Francis and the devil over the body of Guido da Montefeltro in *Inferno* XXVII, and to the similar one between an angel and a devil over the body of his son Buonconte da Montefeltro in *Purgatorio* V. In chapter two, I commented extensively on the importance of the episode of Buonconte for Pasolini's theory on films as life after death and for the construction of *Accattone*. With regard to this passage of the *Commedia*, I noted that what fascinates Pasolini is the topic of the double human being, divided between good and evil actions. However, the dispute between the angel and the devil over Carlo's body does not end with the victory of one over the other as it does in the episodes of the *Commedia*. There is no winner, but each creature has its own 'slice' of the protagonist. 'Tu prenditi ciò che è tuo, e io mi prendo ciò che è mio' (*Petrolio*, p. 1173), says the devil to the angel. Thus, Carlo is separated into two identical people: one good, Carlo di Polis, and one bad, Carlo di Tetis. As underlined by scholars, Polis represents the public and rational dimension of the human being, whereas Tetis is Pasolini's own term to indicate sexuality and, therefore, corresponds to the sex drive that human beings have hidden inside themselves.⁶ The two bodies are not taken to any otherworldly space by the two creatures, but stay on earth. They become the new protagonists of the novel, now that Carlo as a united identity has died.

Further on in the novel, Pasolini affirms that the initial episode has an allegorical meaning. In *appunto* 40, when discussing Carlo's dissociation, Pasolini defines the implications of this event as 'allegorical' – 'tutte le eventuali implicazioni allegoriche' (*Petrolio*, p. 1345). Then a few pages further on (*appunto* 42), in the *appunto* called 'precisazione' Pasolini reveals to his reader how to interpret the episode, reaffirming the symbolical-allegorical nature of the novel (*Petrolio*, p. 1374). *Petrolio* is not about the dissociation, which is just a conventional motif, but about the obsession with identity and its crushing. The image of the dissociation, writes Pasolini, establishes the symbolic-allegorical idea of which *Petrolio* consists. This means

⁵ Titone, *Cantiche*, pp. 102-03.

⁶ Bazzocchi, *Esposizioni*, p. 12.

that the physical phenomenon that happens to Carlo's body is actually an allegory representing an inner condition: the crisis of identity.⁷

In light of this discourse, the difference between the ending of the episodes of the Montefeltro family in the *Commedia* and of Carlo in *Petrolio* becomes particularly significant. The medieval human being could never have been divided into two: one was either saved as Buonconte da Montefeltro was or rather damned like Guido da Montefeltro. There was a *ratio*, a divine logic, according to which human beings were judged. In Pasolini's contemporary society, with the crisis of certainties that characterises the twentieth century, there is no transcendent *ratio* to define what is right and wrong and to decide if someone is good or bad. Human beings are left to deal with their own selves. This brings a perennial sense of ambiguity and duality inside the human being, which inevitably results in a crisis of identity. For Pasolini, contemporary human beings are obsessed with the idea of having a single identity – 'l'ossessione della identità' – but they do not and so they feel inevitably crushed (*Petrolio*, p. 1375). We are now able to understand the reference to Carlo's neurosis at the beginning of the scene as the premise of his physical dissociation. Neurosis seems to be the psychological effect of the crisis of identity, which is the real meaning of the dissociation. This term appears many times in Pasolini's writings of the 1970s,⁸ and it must be linked to another widely used term of his production, 'schizophrenia', which is used by Pasolini with the same meaning. In chapter three, I have already referred to the term 'schizophrenia' in relation to the duality of oneself. I noted that Pasolini uses this term for St Paul who, for him, is divided into two figures, one good (the saint) and one evil (the founder of the Church) – 'un san Paolo doppio, cioè schizofrenico, nettamente dissociato in due'.⁹ I also affirmed that this duality is the result of Pasolini's projection onto Paul of his own duality as a twentieth-century man. As suggested by Maggi, both these terms (neurosis and schizophrenia) taken from psychoanalysis have been reconceptualised by Pasolini in his own terms to then define 'the condition of modern human being'. Neurosis is not only 'a private illness', argues Maggi, Pasolini 'identifies it with the illness of modernity altogether'.¹⁰ Indeed, neurosis is mentioned many times as the condition of the new humanity of neocapitalist society in the passage of the 'Visione del Merda': 'Una malattia che ha il nome generico di Nevrosi. Essa va dai casi più comuni e leggeri a casi, che fanno quasi paura, di pazzia' (*Petrolio*, p. 1580).¹¹ Because he is depicted as a divided human, a neurotic, Carlo appears as the representative of his contemporary society in the novel.

To sum up, we have seen that the figurative system of the first vision of *Petrolio* is built on the passages of the Montefeltro family in the *Commedia*. The theme of the distinction between good and evil of the

⁷ Rebecca West comments on the centrality of the theme of the 'esasperazione della crisi del soggetto' in *Petrolio* ('Da *Petrolio* a Celati', p. 43).

⁸ See, for example, Pasolini, 'La prima, vera rivoluzione di destra' (1973¹), then *Corsari*, now in *SPS*, pp. 284-89 (p. 289); Pasolini, 'Il coito, l'aborto, la falsa tolleranza del potere, il conformismo dei progressisti', p. 373.

⁹ Pasolini, 'La perdita della realtà' p. 159.

¹⁰ Maggi, *The Resurrection*, p. 167.

¹¹ For other occurrences of neurosis in the 'Visione del Merda' see *Petrolio*, pp. 1602, 1606, 1619.

Commedia is re-elaborated to show the loss of certainties of the twentieth century. Unlike Guido and Buonconte, Carlo cannot be judged as good or bad and, therefore, the angel and the devil share his body in equal parts. The two bodies are not taken to any otherworldly space, but remain on earth; there is neither Heaven nor Hell for twentieth-century society. Then we have seen that the motif of physical separation should be read as an allegory to represent the crisis of identity of the twentieth-century human being and the related neurosis, which for Pasolini is the illness that affects neocapitalist society. In light of this discourse, one can conclude that the first vision of *Petrolio* is a socio-political allegory since it reveals the negative, neurotic inner condition of the human being under neocapitalism. The universal meaning that lies behind Carlo's individual, private fate also explains the reference to the metaphysical character of the episode reported in the title. Finally, I can affirm that the similarity between Carlo's episode and those of the Montefeltro family, together with the crucial difference of their endings highlights even more the difference between past and contemporary society and ultimately shows the negativity of the latter.

5.2 – The vision of 'La ruota e il perno'

The dissociation of Carlo into two persons starts off a double tale, as the novel follows the two protagonists' different stories. Although living different lives and making different life choices, Carlo di Polis and Carlo di Tetis experience the same supernatural event: the change of sex from man to woman and then, eventually, the recovery of their masculinity. Each of these episodes is called by Pasolini 'momento basilare del poema' to stress their importance in the novel.¹² Carlo di Tetis' sex-change from man to woman is preceded by the vision of 'La ruota e il perno', whereas Carlo di Polis' sex-change follows the vision of the 'Giardino Medioevale'. Knowing that these visions result in the sex-metamorphosis of the protagonists will help us understand their allegorical construction. In this section, I will analyse Pasolini's Dantism in the vision of 'La ruota e il perno'. Then, in the following section, after having investigated the vision of the 'Giardino Medioevale', I will provide an allegorical reading of the protagonists' sex-change.

Carlo di Tetis dreams of being tied naked to a wheel. Suspended in the void, the wheel looks like one of those torture devices used by the Spanish Inquisition. Suddenly, the wheel starts spinning. Each time it stops, a different scene appears to Carlo. As it was for the vision of his dissociation, Carlo is both the actor and the spectator of the scene, as he can see from the outside what it is happening to himself. Carlo sees two snakes tangled into one single animal. Then, the wheel starts spinning again and when it stops Carlo sees that the

¹² Carlo di Tetis's sex-change is 'primo momento basilare del poema' (*appunto* 51; *Petrolio*, p. 1391), Carlo di Polis's sex-change is 'secondo momento basilare del poema' (*appunto* 58; *Petrolio*, p. 1481), Carlo di Tetis's recovery of his masculinity is 'terzo momento basilare del poema' (*appunto* 82; *Petrolio*, p. 1648), and Carlo di Polis's recovery of his masculinity is 'quarto momento basilare del poema' (*appunto* 127; *Petrolio*, p. 1178).

two snakes have been separated from one another and lie down dead and dried out. Beside them, there are two supernatural figures, a man and a woman, each one provided with both sex organs.

All'inizio del sogno, Carlo aveva visto [...] un groviglio (anch'esso enorme, barocco) di due serpenti [...]. Essi formavano come un serpente unico attorcigliato su se stesso, con le sue squame secche e violacee, che avevano uno strano risalto nell'aria senza colore. Quando Carlo, trascinato dal suo giro, tornò per la seconda volta al punto, e guardò, i due serpenti si erano staccati l'uno dall'altro e giacevano per terra [...] come senza vita [...]. Ma al loro posto stava in piedi una donna. Era una selvaggia. La sua fronte era piccola: le radici dei capelli le arrivavano fin quasi sul naso camuso, e le cascavano irti, e spalmati di qualche olio repellente, dietro la piccola nuca, sulle spallucce miserabili. [...] Ma la cosa curiosa non era il suo aspetto barbaro, [...] bensì il fatto che un enorme pene le pendesse dal ventre [...]. Essa non era sola [...], un uomo [...] stava accanto a lei [...]. Anche a lui, in fondo alle gambe, penzolava il sesso, ma si trattava di un sesso normale, e, nel naturale pudore della sua nudità, non si notava. Ma, poco più sopra, nell'inguine, si notava invece bene un lungo taglio, una profonda e nera ferita. L'uomo, chino su se stesso, se la teneva un po' larga con le dita, come a volerla mostrare, e se la guardava, alzando ogni tanto gli occhi con un sorriso paziente e protettivo. Carlo sapeva [...] che quel taglio profondo sull'inguine dell'uomo era la vulva. (*Petrolio*, pp. 1253-55)

As noted before, the vision anticipates Carlo's body-metamorphosis. This means that the allegorical significance of the two scenes is related to the topic of body transformations. In this respect, I see a close similarity between their figurative system and the imagery of body transformations and deformations of Dante's Malebolge. Pasolini is indeed familiar with this part of Dante's Hell. I would like to recall that he defines the medieval allegory of his novel as a 'nuovo ludo' (*Petrolio*, p. 1215), which is a quotation from Dante's Malebolge (*Inferno* XXII, 118). In the *Commedia* the expression stands for the strange scene of a fight between two devils. Moreover, Pasolini had already referred to and reused Dante's Malebolge in his narrative productions of the 1950s. For example, the epigraph of chapter six of *Ragazzi di vita*, 'Il bagno sull'Aniene', reports two *terzine* from *Inferno* XXI (ll. 118-123).¹³ I argue that the image of the two snakes as a prefiguration of Carlo's sex-metamorphosis is built upon the myth of the oracle Tiresias' sex-change, narrated by Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and recalled by Dante in *Inferno* XX. In the 'bolgia' of the fortune-tellers and false prophets, Virgil points out to Dante the oracle Tiresias summarizing Ovid's myth:

Vedi Tiresia, che mutò sembiante
quando di maschio femmina divenne
cangiandosi le membra tutte quante

e prima, poi, ribatter li convenne
li duo serpenti avvolti, con la verga,
che riavesse le maschili penne. (*Inf.* XX 40-45)

¹³ For further reference, see Titone, 'Roma 1950 – Un poeta nella città di Dite', in *Cantiche*, pp. 70-85. In addition, Edoardo Sanguineti, whose poetic debates with Pasolini are famous, had discussed this part of the *Inferno* in his thesis, which is published in 1961 (*Interpretazione di Malebolge* (Florence: Olschki, 1961)).

According to the myth (*Metamorphoses* III, 323-38), one day coming upon a pair of copulating snakes, Tiresias hits the pair with a stick and is suddenly transformed into a woman. Tiresias lives as a woman for seven years and, eventually, regains his masculinity, only after having come across the same scene of two snakes and having left them alone. Having experienced sex from both sides, Tiresias is drawn into an argument between Hera and Zeus about who, between men and women, has more pleasure in sex. Having confirmed Zeus's thesis, saying that women have more pleasure in sex, Tiresias is made blind by Hera, who punishes him for having revealed such a secret about female sexuality, and later, because of his honesty, rewarded by Zeus with the gift of foresight. Thus, the two snakes of Carlo's vision, first tangled in one and then separated from one another, and their sex-related meaning, clearly recall this literary model. In addition, *Inferno* XX deals with the theme of body transformations more generally, as the bodies of the fortune-tellers are horribly contorted. Dante describes a terrible contortion of the human form: the sinners have their head twisted around on their bodies, which ultimately forces them to walk backwards. The parallel between Carlo's vision and *Inferno* XX can go one step further. I argue that Pasolini's description of the woman which appears after the snakes recalls Dante's depiction of the sorceress Manto (*Inf.* XX, 52-54), daughter of Tiresias and condemned to the same punishment. The wild appearance of Manto, described with long hair as a sign of her break with the civic customs ('quella che ricuopre le mammelle / [...] con le trecce sciolte'), her nudity, and the reference to her pubic hair ('ogne pilosa pelle') are all elements which return in the naked woman of Carlo's vision depicted as 'una selvaggia' and of an 'aspetto barbaro'.

The association between snakes and body metamorphosis more generally suggests a parallel with the famous cantos of the fraudulent thieves, *Inferno* XXIV and XXV. Here the sinners, among whom the character of Vanni Fucci stands out, are punished by horrible body transformations and, ultimately, turned into snakes. In this regard, I would like to recall that Pasolini is particularly familiar with this part of the *Inferno*. Indeed, as noted in chapter three, Pasolini's second essay on Dante is about the canto of Vanni Fucci (1966). One of the metamorphoses witnessed by Dante consists of a horrible entanglement between a sinner's body and a snake, which creates a third species neither human nor animal:

Fersi le braccia due di quattro liste;
 le cosce con le gambe e 'l ventre e 'l casso
 divenner membra che non fuor mai viste.

Ogne primaio aspetto ivi era casso:
 due e nessun l'immagine perversa
 pareva; e tal sen gio con lento passo. (*Inf.* XXV, 73-78)

In regard to human body transformations, there is one more parallel that could be drawn between *Petrolio* and Dante's Malebolge. The male figure who appears next to the wild woman in Carlo's vision has a terrifying cut on his belly. I argue that this recalls the horrible mutilations of the sowers of discord of *Inferno*

XXVIII. In particular, I see a certain similarity with the body of Muhammad, which Dante describes as ‘rotto dal mento infin dove si trulla’ (*Inf.* XXVIII, 24). As noted in chapter one, this is the exact passage used by Contini to illustrate the linguistic variety and the realism of the *Commedia* in ‘Preliminari sulla lingua del Petrarca’.¹⁴ Like Muhammad who is cut from his chin to his anus, the body of the man of Carlo’s vision shows ‘un lungo taglio’, ‘una profonda e nera ferita’, ‘un taglio profondo sull’inguine’ (*Petrolio*, p. 1255). There are also similarities between the gestures of both Muhammad and the man to show off their mutilation. They both hold their cut wide open with their hands: ‘guardommi, e con le man s’aperse il petto’ (*Inf.* XXVIII, 29); ‘se la teneva un po’ larga con le dita, come a volerla mostrare’ (*Petrolio*, p. 1255).

Carlo’s vision carries on with a series of phallic images, then in one of the last scenes his father appears. Since the vision anticipates Carlo’s sex-change and so the loss of his penis, the appearance of the father should be read in Freudian terms and so as a last image which foresees the future castration. According to Sigmund Freud’s theory any child fears being castrated by his own father.¹⁵ As I will explain further on, the sex-change is not a discovery of female sexuality but only a loss of masculinity. Suddenly, Carlo feels a strong pain in his chest and awakes from his dream. After a few chapters – in the meantime the novel carries on the story of the other Carlo – a similar pain reappears and Carlo di Tetis finds himself turned into a woman: ‘Due grandi seni gli pendevano [...] e nel ventre non c’era niente: [...] allargando le labbra, [...] vide la piccola piaga ch’era il suo nuovo sesso’ (*Petrolio*, pp. 1391-92). As anticipated at the beginning of the section, I will comment on the allegorical significance of the sex-change after having reported also Carlos di Polis’ experience.

5.3 – The vision of the ‘Giardino Medioevale’

The sex-metamorphosis of Carlo di Polis is preceded and foreseen by the allegorical vision of the ‘Giardino Medioevale’, which runs through *appunti* 65, 65 bis and 66 (*Petrolio*, pp. 1457-77).¹⁶ In the previous chapter I demonstrated that Pasolini’s use of vision in *Petrolio* does not refer to medieval visionary literature in general but precisely to the *Commedia*. Thus, here I argue that the term ‘medieval’ of the title could be read in relation to Dante’s work. It could allude to the medieval text of the *Commedia* that lies underneath *Petrolio* and that has been used as a model to construct this vision. A few scholars have underlined a Dantean echo

¹⁴ Contini, ‘Preliminari sulla lingua del Petrarca’, p. 172.

¹⁵ ‘Complesso di Edipo’, *Dizionario di Medicina Treccani* (2010) <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/complesso-di-edipo_%28Dizionario-di-Medicina%29/> [accessed 26 May 2020].

¹⁶ Within this group of *appunti*, there is also an untitled sheet, which is placed between *appunto* 65 and *appunto* 65 bis in the original manuscript (*Petrolio*, p. 1461). The sex-change of Carlo di Polis is narrated in *appunto* 58, which, despite the number, is placed after *appunto* 66 by Pasolini.

in this passage;¹⁷ my intention is to conduct a systematic study of it to unveil the many references to the *Commedia* at the level of the text.

Going home from a dinner party and inebriated by wine, Carlo entered his home garden in Rome and ‘assistette a uno spettacolo prodigioso; o meglio ebbe una visione, il cui protagonista era suo padre’ (*Petrolio*, p. 1461). The father sits at the centre of the garden surrounded by a series of deities and allegorical figures, such as the embodiment of Providence, Happiness, and Violence. The father is depicted as a God-like figure and the other deities are placed all around him in concentric circle defined as ‘celestial’. Among all these figures, one appears as particularly noticeable to the eye of Carlo, Salvatore Dulcimascolo.

In mezzo al giardino era seduto il padre. [...] La luce non era quella elettrica [...]. Si trattava piuttosto di una luce universale, che proveniva direttamente dalle stelle. Il vecchio taceva, come se tutto fosse stato detto, o come se il parlare fosse superfluo. [...] Accanto al padre, seduta sull’erba del Giardino [...] stava la Previdenza. [...] In cerchio, un po’ più indietro, tutte frontali, stavano l’Obbedienza, la Pazienza [...]. C’erano anche degli altri Dei [...] anch’essi facevano parte di quella umile Cerchia Celeste. [...] Su questa Visione – come un accompagnamento musicale – aleggiava un canto: un canto che stava tra un inno nazionale, una melopea liturgica, e un coro di pellegrini. [...] Tra tutte queste divinità che io [...] ho sommariamente rappresentato, ce n’era una che chiamerei eslege o anomala. [...] Questo Dio che se ne vaga con le mani in saccoccia, e mezzo sbadigliando, tra quei Cerchi e Semicerchi celesti intorno al padre [...] è Salvatore Dulcimascolo. [...] La sua razza è chiaramente popolare [...] sottoproletaria. Questa è la ragione per cui egli è così isolato lì in mezzo, non si può fondere né amalgamare con gli altri Dei: ‘segnato’ da una ineliminabile diversità. [...] Tra le cerchie dei Celesti egli si comporta con la stessa naturalezza che in un rione dove i ragazzi poveri vanno al lavoro o si danno alla malavita. (*Petrolio*, pp. 1462-69)

If the term ‘medieval’ of the title refers to the *Commedia*, then Carlo’s garden can allude to some of the green spaces of the medieval poem. There are a few notable gardens among the canticles: the ‘prato di fresca verdura’ (*Inf.* IV, 111) and the ‘verde smalto’ (l. 118) inside the ‘nobile castello’ (l. 106) of Limbo; the Valley of the Princes in Ante-Purgatory (*Purg.* VII-VIII); the Garden of Eden at the top of the mountain of Purgatory (*Purg.* XXVIII-XXXIII); and the Rose of the Empyrean, which at first appears to Dante as a bright spring garden (*Par.* XXX, 61-63). If compared with these passages of the *Commedia*, the vision of *Petrolio* appears to share various evident similarities. These are all transcendental green spaces: Carlo’s home garden is said to be illuminated by a universal light coming from the stars, and the gardens of the *Commedia* all belong to the otherworld. These are all serene, peaceful places inhabited by important figures: the deities of Carlo’s home garden, the ‘spiriti magni’ of Limbo (*Inf.* IV, 119), the ‘grandi ombre’ of the valley of the negligent princes (*Purg.* VIII, 44), the allegorical representations of biblical figures of the Garden of Eden, and the blessed souls of the Empyrean. These green spaces fit both the epic *topoi* of the *locus amoenus* and the catalogue of characters to present their inhabitants, which, for example, we can find in the book VI of the *Aeneid*. The episode from Virgil is also the literary model to which Dante refers in his depictions of Limbo and of the Valley

¹⁷ Gordon, *Pasolini*, p. 273; Maggi, *The Resurrection*, p. 222.

of the Princes.¹⁸ Having reached the Elysian fields in the underworld, where the souls of heroic and virtuous men rest, Aeneas meets his father Anchises, who points out to his son the souls who will be born as his descendants. Like Aeneas, Carlo too encounters his own father and there are also father-like figures in the episodes of the gardens of the *Commedia*. Virgil (in Limbo and in the Garden of Eden before disappearing), Sordello (in the Valley of the Princes), and St Bernard (in the Emyrean) guide Dante across these spaces, pointing out and naming important characters who inhabit those spaces. The allusion to Limbo is also underlined by Gordon, who notes a direct link between Pasolini's re-writing of canto IV in *La Divina Mimesis* and this passage of *Petrolio*. In his previous work, Limbo is precisely named 'Giardino', with a capital letter (*Divina*, p. 1104).¹⁹ The singing accompanying Carlo's vision, described as something between 'una melopea liturgica, e un coro di pellegrini' (*Petrolio*, p. 1466), enriches the linkage to Dante's *Purgatorio*, where the penitent souls sing psalms and prayers on their pilgrimage of repentance up the mountain. Music is the distinctive feature of the second canticle, especially compared to the *Inferno* – 'ché quivi per canti / s'entra, e là giù per lamenti feroci' (*Inf.* XII, 113-14).²⁰ Following this trend, both the episodes of the Valley of the Princes and of the Garden of Eden present some religious singing: "'Salve, Regina'" in sul verde e 'n su' fiori / quindi seder cantando anime vidi' (*Purg.* VII, 82-84); "'Te lucis ante'" sì devotamente / le uscìo di bocca' (*Purg.* VIII, 13-14); 'le voci del cantare "Osanna"' (*Purg.* XXIX, 51); 'Tutti cantavan: "Benedicta tue / ne le figlie d'Adamo"' (*Purg.* XXIX, 85-86).

Among these green spaces of the *Commedia*, in chapter four I noted that Pasolini refers specifically to one of them as the literary model of *Petrolio*: the Garden of Eden. I explained this reference in light of the content of this episode, the richest political allegory of the *Commedia*, and said that Pasolini uses it as the model for his allegory. Now, continuing the parallel initiated above, I can affirm that the allegory of the Garden of Eden is also used by Pasolini to build the figurative system of the specific vision of the 'Giardino Medioevale'.²¹ The first crucial similarity is that both episodes are the account of an allegorical vision experienced by the protagonist only. As recalled in chapter four, Dante sees a procession of allegorical characters and not real people, as they all stand for specific symbolic meanings (for example, the griffin represents Christ). Among them, the only real character is Beatrice, the beloved of Dante's youth. Then, the pageant turns into a mystical vision where Dante sees a sequence of allegorical scenes that recall historical political facts. Similarly, among the many allegorical characters of his home garden, Carlo witnesses the god Salvatore Dulcimascolo, who soon becomes his object of desire. A few pages later, the god takes human form in the shape of the young waiter Carmelo, with whom Carlo di Polis will have his first sexual intercourse as a woman.²² One more similarity can be found in the description of the two gardens. The entry to both the

¹⁸ Chiavacci Leonardi, note to *Purgatorio* VII: Introduction, in *DDP*.

¹⁹ Gordon, *Pasolini*, p. 273.

²⁰ Chiavacci Leonardi, note to *Purgatorio*: Introduction, in *DDP*.

²¹ In this passage of *Petrolio* Maggi also sees an allusion to the end of the *Purgatorio* (*The Resurrection*, p. 222).

²² This is narrated in *appunto* 60 'L'incarnazione di Salvatore Dulcimascolo' (*Petrolio*, pp. 1486-90).

Garden of Eden and Carlo's home garden is characterised by a dense greenery, which almost blocks the view of the protagonist: 'la divina foresta spessa e viva' (*Purg.* XXVIII, 2); 'C'era un gran giardino [...] entrandoci, non si vedevano quasi più intorno le case del quartiere' (*Petrolio*, p. 1461). Allusive to the *Commedia* is also Pasolini's choice of the word 'campagna' to describe the garden: 'pareva di essere piombati nel cuore della campagna [...] un mondo campestre dove la natura riappariva in tutto il suo mistero' (*Petrolio*, p. 1461). In the *Commedia*, depicting the flat land at the top of the mountain, 'campagna' becomes the word to define the Garden of Eden: 'campagna santa' (*Purg.* XXVIII, 118).

Looking at the quotation from the 'Giardino Medioevale' reported above, I would like to reflect on the arrangement of the characters, as this reveals another evident allusion to the *Commedia*. The placement of Carlo's father at the centre of concentric circles of deities, which are described as 'Celestial', alludes to the imagery of the Empyrean of Dante's *Paradiso*, in particular the Rose of blessed souls.²³ The Empyrean is the highest part of Heaven where God is present, surrounded by concentric circles of angels and blessed souls. This circular arrangement appears to Dante in the form of a white Rose whose petals are the blessed souls (*Par.* XXXI, 1-3). As mentioned previously, before being able to focus and see the white Rose, the Empyrean appears to Dante as a bright spring garden crossed by a river and with its banks rich with wondrous flowers (*Par.* XXX, 61-63). The arrangement of the Empyrean also appears in another passage of *Petrolio* (*appunto* 97), which narrates Carlo di Polis' vision of the Quirinale on Republic Day (*Petrolio*, pp. 1654-68). Described precisely as an 'Empireo' (*Petrolio*, p. 1655), the Quirinale appears to Carlo as a series of concentric circles with at its centre the head of the State and all around the multitude of politicians: 'In cerchi concentrici intorno al Capo dello Stato' (*Petrolio*, p. 1656). Carlo is determined to reach the 'cerchio più stretto della Rosa' (*Petrolio*, p. 1654), where the most powerful and prestigious people are located, the so-called 'anime elette' (*Petrolio*, p. 1656). Even the choice of word 'motore immobile' (*Petrolio*, p. 1654), used to depict the President of the Republic Sagarat (1964-71), recalls Dante's periphrases for God: 'motor primo' (*Purg.* XXV, 70), 'che tutto il ciel move / non moto' (*Par.* XXIV, 131-32). The exaggerated parallel drawn by Pasolini between the Quirinale and God's Empyrean should be read as an ironic depiction, a mockery of the Italian State. Alongside the 'heavenly' allusions, the Quirinale is also defined as an infernal 'verminaiio' (*Petrolio*, p. 1656), populated by flatterers and social climbers. I agree with Titone's reading: here Pasolini plays out 'un elegante rovesciamento dell'allegoria paradisiaca'.²⁴ Dante's Empyrean functions as an inspiring model to describe power. In the episode of the Quirinale, it serves to represent political power, whereas in the 'Giardino Medioevale' it depicts the patriarchal power embodied by Carlo di Polis' father.²⁵ As in the analysis

²³ Attilio Mellone, 'Empireo' in *Enciclopedia Dantesca* (1970) [accessed 19 May 2020]; Mario Apollonio, 'Candida rosa' in *Enciclopedia Dantesca* (1970) [accessed 19 May 2020].

²⁴ Titone, *Cantiche*, p. 135.

²⁵ There is an evident Dantism that also links the two visions of the medieval garden and the Quirinale, 'umile italia' (*Inf.* I, 106): 'In fila davanti a lei c'erano quattro piccoli Dei [...] Dei dell'umile Italia, che i contadini, dopo averli visti, usavano riprodurre scolpendo il legno' (*Petrolio*, pp. 1462-63); 'Questo referto, peraltro assai diligente, su uno dei tanti bulicami dell'umile Italia' (*Petrolio*, p. 1658).

of 'La ruota e il perno', here too the image of the father should be read in Freudian terms as the anticipation of the protagonist's future castration.

Carlo di Polis' vision carries on. His eyes are attracted by one specific figure, the god Salvatore Dulcimascolo. Enchanted by the beauty of his young body, Carlo feels a strong attraction towards him. Then, like Carlo di Tetis, Carlo di Polis starts to feel an acute, strange pain in his chest. Finally, having reached his house, Carlo understands the reason for that pain as he finds himself turned into a woman: 'Sul petto sporgevano infatti due enormi seni; e tra le gambe, al posto del pene, c'era [...] una vulva' (*Petrolio*, p. 1481).

The visions of the 'Giardino Medioevale' and 'La ruota e il perno' allude through allegorical images (such as the Freudian father, the snakes, the man with a vulva) and lead to the future sex-change of the two protagonists. As it was for the episode of the dissociation, which, as noted before, established the symbolic-allegorical nature of the novel, I read the sex-metamorphosis in an allegorical way. In this regard, a few recent scholars have read the episode in relation to the discourse around power and sexuality in the new era of neocapitalism,²⁶ extensively discussed by Pasolini in his journalistic pieces of the 1970s.²⁷ According to Pasolini, the new 'Potere' of neocapitalism works according to a new and different logic compared to the previous forms of power. It does not impose bans, but continuously grants new freedoms. 'Il Potere' has made sexuality one of the forms of its control over society, by supporting and promoting sexual freedom. For Pasolini, this means that people think that they are free (sexually free), whereas they are heavily subjected. Managing sexual mores that promote sexual freedom, the new power is secretly controlling people and reducing society to one single type of human (the homologated society of mass culture). Ultimately, the new 'Potere' controls people by controlling their sexuality: it controls their own bodies.²⁸

Il modello che tale potere crea e impone consiste in una moderata libertà sessuale che includa il consumo di tutto il superfluo considerato necessario a una coppia moderna. Venuti in possesso della libertà sessuale per concessione, e non per essersela guadagnata, i giovani [...] l'hanno ben presto e fatalmente trasformata in obbligo. L'obbligo di adoperare la libertà concessa [...]. L'ansia conformistica di essere sessualmente liberi, trasforma i giovani in miseri erotomani nevrotici, eternamente insoddisfatti [...] e perciò infelici.²⁹

If read according to Pasolini's theory on the relationship between power and sexuality, the sex-change of the protagonists appears as a political allegory of the way in which 'il Potere' dominates society through the

²⁶ Genovese, 'Manifesto per *Petrolio*', pp. 83-85, 91; Massimo Fusillo, 'Il protagonista androgino: metamorfosi e ruoli sessuali in *Petrolio*', in *Progetto Petrolio*, ed. by Salerno, pp. 89-102 (p.90); Gragnolati, *Amor che move*, pp. 57-58; Bazzocchi, *Esposizioni*, pp. 110-11.

²⁷ Some of Pasolini's articles on the relationship between power and sexuality are "Il coito, l'aborto, la falsa tolleranza del potere, il conformismo dei progressisti", pp. 372-79; 'Cuore', pp. 397-403; 'Il carcere e la fraternità dell'amore omosessuale' (1974¹), then in *Corsari*, now in *SPS*, pp. 481-86. As noted by Massimo Fusillo, the discourse around power and sexuality is very prominent in the 1970s international panorama, if one considers, for example, the works by Foucault, Barthes (for example, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*), and Sollers ('Il protagonista androgino', p. 95).

²⁸ The well-known article 'Il "discorso" dei capelli' contains a good explanation of how, according to Pasolini, the new power controls people's bodies (1973¹, then in *Corsari*, now in *SPS*, pp. 271-77) On this argument, see also, Bazzocchi, *Esposizioni*, pp. 17-18.

²⁹ Pasolini, 'Tetis' (1975¹), now in *SPS*, pp. 257-64 (pp. 263-64).

control of bodies. As, for Pasolini, there is nothing positive in the sexual freedom granted by the new power, the sex-change imposed on the protagonists is not a liberating act. Rino Genovese notes that the metamorphosis experienced by Carlo di Polis and Carlo di Tetis is no different from that of the protagonist of Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, who turns into a huge insect.³⁰ It is certainly not an act of liberation, but rather the contrary: a form of slavery. The protagonists turn into 'una specie di mostro sessuale'³¹, as sex becomes the driver and the central element of their lives. Because they are dominated by their new sexuality, the two protagonists mirror contemporary society dominated by the new power through sexual mores.³² In addition, as briefly mentioned in relation to the figure of the Freudian father, the sex-change can also be seen as a cruel castration, an act of pure sexual violence that mirrors the violence of the new 'Potere' towards people. This is because the change of sex from man to woman does not imply an openness towards the female universe and the discovery of female sexuality. It remains only a loss of masculinity.³³ The only positive aspect of the sex-metamorphosis, argues Gragnolati, is the acknowledgement by the protagonists of the positivity of the act of being possessed over the act of possessing.³⁴ This is discussed in the text by Pasolini, immediately after the disappearance of Carlo's di Polis lover, the waiter Carmelo (*Petrolio*, pp. 1547-53):

Possedere non è niente in confronto all'essere posseduti, fare violenza non è niente in confronto al subire violenza [...] Ma, ripeto, il coito vero e proprio [...] in quanto possesso, era possesso di qualcosa di fatalmente limitato. Non si può infatti, per definizione, possedere il tutto. Invece l'essere posseduti è una esperienza cosmicamente opposta a quella del possedere. Tra le due cose non c'è rapporto. Non sono semplicemente il contrario l'una dell'altra. Chi possiede non comunica se non illusoriamente con chi è posseduto, perché chi è posseduto fa un'esperienza imparagonabile con la sua: è di tutt'altra specie, ne è, ripeto, cosmicamente lontana. [...] D'altra parte è fuori discussione che il Possesso è un Male, anzi, per definizione, è IL Male: quindi l'essere posseduti è ciò che è più lontano dal Male, o meglio, è l'unica esperienza possibile del Bene, come Grazia, vita allo stato puro, cosmico. (*Petrolio*, pp. 1551-53)

As noted by Gragnolati,³⁵ Pasolini puts sexuality in dialogue with ethics and economics. The sexual possession of another body is assimilated with the economic act of having and therefore it coincides with 'evil'. On the contrary, to be sexually possessed is an experience that liberates the person from the economic desire of having and is therefore associated by Pasolini with a sort of moral 'good'. This discourse can easily be extended to politics. As an act of violence, possessing is the action of power, in particular 'il Potere', which controls people's bodies. Whereas, as an act which liberates from the desire to 'have', to be possessed is an action against capital and so against neocapitalism.

³⁰ Genovese, 'Manifesto per *Petrolio*', pp. 83-84.

³¹ Genovese, 'Manifesto per *Petrolio*', pp. 83. Bazzocchi also agrees on this reading in *Burattini* (pp. 135-37) and later in 'Tutte le gioie sessuali' (pp. 16-17).

³² Bazzocchi, *Esposizioni*, p. 110.

³³ West, 'Da *Petrolio* a Celati', p. 45.

³⁴ Gragnolati, *Amor che move*, pp. 57-58.

³⁵ Gragnolati, *Amor che move*, pp. 57-58. Similar is the reading of Fusillo, 'Il protagonista androgino', pp. 93-95.

In conclusion, I can affirm that the motif of the sex-metamorphosis is an allegory to reveal another truth about contemporary society: 'il Potere' dominates people's sexuality and so their own bodies. After Carlo's dissociation, the 'momento basilare' of the sex-change is another political allegory. With regard to this reading, I want to mention that around the same time Pasolini is working on *Salò*. As noted in chapter four, the film is a political allegory, in which sexual abuse and torture are a plot device to represent the relationship between power and the people subjected to it. The discourse on sex is political for Pasolini and has always been, since for him a body is never just a body: 'Un corpo è sempre rivoluzionario perché rappresenta l'incodificabile [...] Se poi il "corpo" vive una "vita indegna di essere vissuta" [...] è anche manifestamente rivoluzionario. Il corpo non è solo un corpo'.³⁶ Before the rise of neocapitalism, Pasolini sees in the body of the people excluded from society (for example, the subproletarians) a last bulwark against bourgeois life and values. As mentioned in chapter four, in *Teorema* the family realises the inauthenticity of bourgeois life only after having had sexual intercourse with the guest. In *Petrolio*, Pasolini reuses the rich imaginary of the *Commedia*, from the body deformations of Malebolge to the allegorical pageant of the Garden of Eden, to give a visionary representation of what is happening to the human body in the era of neocapitalism.

5.4 – The 'Visione del Merda'

Running for approximately 70 pages (from *appunto* 71 to *appunto* 74a), the 'Visione del Merda' is the longest allegorical vision of *Petrolio*. As mentioned in chapter four, the vision experienced by Carlo di Tetis can be ascribed to the genre of afterlife visions of medieval literature, as the protagonist dreams of being taken on a journey to the otherworld. This is of a very specific kind, as it corresponds to the new world and society of neocapitalism. Since for Pasolini neocapitalism is evil, Carlo's vision has the form of an infernal journey on the model of Dante's *Inferno*. As we will see shortly, the Dantesque infernal atmosphere is indeed very evident. Moreover, in 1974 during a public speech Pasolini affirms himself the re-elaboration of Dante's *descensus ad inferos* in the construction of the passage:

In questi giorni sto scrivendo il passo di una mia opera in cui affronto questo tema [the homologation of Italian society] in modo appunto immaginoso, metaforico: immagino una specie di discesa agli inferi, dove, il protagonista [...] percorre la strada principale di una borgata di una grande città [...] e gli appare una serie di visioni [...]. Ognuna di esse è una specie di *bolgia*, di girone infernale della *Divina Commedia*: all'imbocco c'è un determinato modello di vita messo lì di soppiatto dal potere, al quale soprattutto i giovani, e più ancora i ragazzi, che vivono nella strada, si adeguano rapidamente. Essi hanno perduto il loro antico modello di vita [...] e adesso cercano di imitare il modello nuovo messo lì dalla classe dominante di nascosto. Naturalmente, io elenco tutta una serie di modelli di comportamento, una quindicina, corrispondenti a dieci gironi e cinque bolgie. ('Genocidio', p. 512)

³⁶ Pasolini, *La voce di Pasolini*, p. 35.

As mentioned before, scholars have read the 'Visione del Merda' as Pasolini's last re-writing of the *Inferno* after *La mortaccia* and *La Divina Mimesis*.³⁷ This section aims to bring further insights to the investigation of Pasolini's Dantism in this specific passage of *Petrolio*, adding to the existing critical studies. Commenting on the meaning of this allegorical vision, in chapter four I noted that with this scene Pasolini wants to display Italian society transformed and homologated by the new consumerist values. As we will see shortly, this reading is not difficult to grasp from the text and is also reported clearly by Pasolini himself in the speech just mentioned. This section will then expand on that, confirming the socio-political character of the allegory.³⁸

The setting of the scene is Via Torpignattara in Rome, whose cross streets create a series of 'gironi' and 'bolgie'. Carlo di Tetis travels this urban hell on a chariot moved by three deities, whom he cannot see, although he can hear their voices. Throughout the course of the vision, the deities explain to Carlo each circle, functioning as a sort of Virgil:

Gli Dei stanno già, con la premura del buon Virgilio, spiegando a Carlo il senso della Bolgia di turno (da cui giunge un rumore – è il caso di dirlo – infernale), anticipando anche come continuerà il presente Inferno. (*Petrolio*, p. 1631)

The protagonists of Carlo's vision are a young couple of Roman subproletarians, il Merda and Cinzia. They walk Via Torpignattara and Carlo, who is halfway along the street, looks at the couple coming towards him. Following with his eyes il Merda and Cinzia approaching, Carlo sees the infernal 'gironi' and 'bolgie' as the couple is passing by. Il Merda and Cinzia have no agency in the narrative of the scene. As Roberto Chiesi notes, they just appear as a 'moving picture': 'la figura di un quadro in movimento [...] mentre effettua un percorso allegorico come una processione'.³⁹ The theme of the allegorical pageant of the two lovers and the image of Carlo's chariot surrounded by mysterious deities recall the procession of *Purgatorio* XXIX, which Pasolini lists among his literary models. As mentioned in chapter four, this reference has been also underlined by Titone: 'il ventinovesimo canto del *Purgatorio* e la sua processione mistica sono sinopia "stropicciata" delle *visioni del Merda*'.⁴⁰

As each circle of Dante's *Inferno* is dedicated to a specific sin, each circle of the vision represents one of the new models imposed on society by neocapitalism, for example, conformism, self-righteousness, the celebration of the bourgeois, cowardice, and free love. The atmosphere of the circles is mysterious and sacral; the personification of each model resides in a tabernacle, upon which is located a little statue reproducing

³⁷ Titone, *Cantiche*, pp. 130-34; Gragnolati, *Amor che move*, pp. 51-67; Maggi, *The Resurrection*, pp. 228-31; Bazzocchi, *Esposizioni*, p. 108.

³⁸ The historical and political character of the passage has been extensively commented on by scholars. See, for example, Walter Siti, 'Descrivere, narrare, esporsi', p. cxxviii; Benedetti, 'Quattro porte su *Petrolio*', pp. 41-42; Emanuele Trevi, "'Qualcosa di scritto": dieci anni di *Petrolio*', in Martone, *Petrolio: un progetto*, pp. 91-97 (p. 92); Mario Pezzella, 'Allegoria e mito in *Petrolio*', in *A partire da 'Petrolio'*, ed. by Benedetti and Grignani, pp. 71-77 (pp. 73-74); Roberto Chiesi, 'Il corpo sognato e il corpo degradato: forma della corporeità pasoliniana dalla *Trilogia della vita* a *Petrolio*', in *Progetto Petrolio*, ed. by Salerno, pp. 25-43 (pp. 38-43); Bazzocchi, *Esposizioni*, p. 108.

³⁹ Chiesi, 'Il corpo sognato', p. 41.

⁴⁰ Titone, *Cantiche*, p. 121.

its features. All around are the people who religiously follow that role model and live according to it. Because the setting of the scene is the Roman *borgate*, these people are the Roman subproletarians, the subject of Pasolini's 1950s narrative production. The choice is not casual; Pasolini wants to show how 'il Potere' is changing precisely this part of society, homologating it to the bourgeois consumerist values. Just to give an example, I will report here a passage from the circle whose model is free love. Homologated to this role model, the young subproletarians exhibits their masculinity in an extreme and unnatural way:

Ora, questi qui della Visione – IX Girone – effettivamente sono tenuti a mettere in mostra la loro maschilità di fronte alle donne. [...] Se ne stanno in piedi o appoggiati al muro, o distesi sulle seggiolette dei bar: e tutti, indistintamente, mettono in mostra il loro sesso: ma non metaforicamente. Si tratta proprio del loro cazzo e delle loro palle. I calzoni infatti sono strettissimi, alla vita e sul cavallo, e qualunque cosa essi abbiano lì sotto prende un rilievo oggettivamente indecente. (*Petrolio*, p. 1592)

Having given some examples of the legacy of Dante's infernal journey, I would like to bring the parallel further. Apart from the general Dantesque infernal atmosphere, I argue that Pasolini alludes to a specific passage of the *Inferno*. I would like to draw a parallel between the young couple of il Merda and Cinzia and the couple *par excellence* of the *Inferno*: Paolo and Francesca. *Inferno* V is particularly familiar to Pasolini who, as noted in chapter one, refers to it when discussing his theory on free indirect speech. Drawing from Contini's analysis of the language used by Dante to narrate the episode of the two lovers,⁴¹ Pasolini affirms that in this canto Dante adopts a sort of free indirect speech ('Libero indiretto', p. 1351). Echoing courtly language and poetry, the episode of Paolo and Francesca is an example of Dante's plurilingualism, which had inspired Pasolini's use of the subproletarians' dialect in the Roman novels. In *Petrolio*, I argue that what Pasolini recalls of this iconic canto is no longer the importance of language – il Merda and Cinzia do not even speak – but the episode *per se*.

Il Merda and Cinzia represent the model of the modern couple of neo capitalist society – which for Pasolini is the heterosexual couple. Both come from the 'classe popolare' (they are indeed familiar with walking around the Roman *borgate*), but they have bourgeois aspirations, because they have been corrupted by the new values of neocapitalism.⁴² Il Merda and Cinzia are not truly in love; they only play the role that society has given them. Their inauthentic relationship is revealed by the ostentation of their being together. The way in which il Merda and Cinzia show off their relationship in front of their peers is through a continuous unnatural embrace; they walk 'sempre strettamente allacciati' (*Petrolio*, p. 1564).

Di tutta questa Apparizione il fatto più importante e significativo è che i due camminano abbracciati. Cioè il Merda ha passato un braccio sotto il fianco di Cinzia, fino a stringerle la spalla opposta con la mano. Ora, dato che il Merda è un po' più basso di Cinzia, è costretto a tenerla ripiegata sopra di lui, e quindi a dare l'idea, a chi lo guardi, di camminare sorreggendola, come se fosse ammalata o impedita.

⁴¹ Contini, 'Dante come personaggio-poeta della *Commedia*', pp. 42-48.

⁴² Bazzocchi, *Esposizioni*, pp. 93-94.

I due vengono avanti in silenzio, nascondendo nel modo più disinvolto [...] la scomodità di quella loro posizione: in silenzio, perché tra loro [...] tutto è stato detto, e per quanto riguarda gli altri, la loro presenza basta a dire tutto. (*Petrolio*, pp. 1560-61)

There is nothing natural or spontaneous in their embrace, which is actually painful for il Merda. Hugging Cinzia tightly is rather a way for il Merda to prove his masculinity and his control over the body of his fiancée: ‘si vedono il Merda e Cinzia, sempre strettamente allacciati, e lei sostenuta dal suo uomo, come se fosse “malata o impedita”, cioè, praticamente come un sacco di patate’; ‘tenendosi stretta Cinzia, che per carità non gli scappi, il Merda cammina lemme lemme – bianco come un lenzuolo per la stanchezza’; ‘non manca inoltre di dare un’ulteriore stretta a Cinzia, come per rassicurarla e confermarla nella sua protezione’; ‘proteggendo e sorreggendo la sua innamorata’ (*Petrolio*, pp. 1564, 1591, 1600, 1602). The unnatural pose of the young couple is emphasised many times in the course of the vision, and each time the hug appears more painful and il Merda more sweaty and tired.⁴³ ‘È bianco come un morto. Ma il suo braccio continua a stringere la quadrata Cinzia, come fosse incollato’, writes Pasolini at the beginning of the third ‘bolgia’ (*Petrolio*, p. 1621). Finally, because of the immense effort required by the embrace, il Merda dies suddenly, interrupting Carlo’s vision:

Il Merda improvvisamente si ferma. [...] I suoi occhi sono appannati, anzi, quasi strabuzzati, tanto che si vede il bianco; un pallore di morte gli copre la faccia, con una patina di sudore che deve essere ghiacciato. Il male che gli fa il braccio con cui stringe e regge su di sé come un sacco la sua donna, deve essere ormai insostenibile. Egli cerca di sorridere con aria paziente e indifferente; ma poi invece, di schianto, cede. Sbarella col viso una smorfia di dolore disumano, il braccio si stacca dalla spalla della mecca, restando però stecchito, e, sturbandosi, il Merda ‘cade come corpo morto cade’. (*Petrolio*, p. 1631)

Pasolini describes the moment of il Merda’s death quoting the last line of *Inferno* V (reported in quotation marks in the text), where, deeply moved by Francesca’s story, Dante faints ending the canto suddenly (*Inf.* V, 142). This is not just a random scholastic quotation.⁴⁴ I read the Dantism as Pasolini’s way to reveal that the literary model which lies behind il Merda and Cinzia is the episode of Paolo and Francesca. Through the centuries the notoriety acquired by Dante’s passage has transformed them into the love couple *par excellence* of Italian literature, despite the fact that in Dante’s Hell they embody lust rather than true love. Thus, like il Merda and Cinzia, Paolo and Francesca constitute a certain model of love. Moreover, the most remarkable feature of their appearance to Dante is that they stay close to each other: ‘quei due che ’nsieme vanno’ (*Inf.* V, 74). This is quite an exceptional fact compared to the other souls of the second circle of Hell, who normally proceed alone. It is exactly for this reason that Dante is attracted to them and decides to speak to them. As Virgil says, what makes them stay so close to each other is the passionate love that they still feel for one another: ‘per quello amor che i mena’ (*Inf.* V, 78).

⁴³ For more reference, see *Petrolio*, pp. 1578, 1581, 1582, 1587, 1589.

⁴⁴ Gragnolati also underlines the Dantism (*Amor che move*, p. 53).

My conclusion is that Pasolini reuses the most famous love couple of Italian literature as a model for the representation of the new love couple of neocapitalism. The medieval couple's main feature and vivid sign of their love, the embrace, is used to depict il Merda and Cinzia. However, because their love is inauthentic, they embrace each other unnaturally and eventually the hug turns into a 'deadly embrace'. If Paolo and Francesca died because of their passionate love, il Merda dies for performing his fake love, and not for loving Cinzia. The element of the embrace is distorted from the medieval archetype and ridiculed to make a mockery of love relationships in the era of neocapitalism and to show their inauthenticity. The way in which Pasolini reuses *Inferno V* is very similar to what I have discussed in the first section, in relation to the dissociation of Carlo. There I have shown that Pasolini adds a different ending to the Dantean dispute between the angel and the devil. I have commented on this choice saying that the similarity drawn with Dante's *Commedia* and the alternative ending serve Pasolini to stress the difference between past and contemporary societies and to show the negativity of the latter. In the 'Visione del Merda', the allusion to the medieval couple and the difference that emerges from the comparison of the two episodes serve Pasolini to show the negative transformation of love in contemporary society. The idea of passionate everlasting love traditionally represented by Paolo and Francesca no longer exists; il Merda and Cinzia are only a simulacrum of the medieval couple's love.

I would like to place Pasolini's way of re-elaborating and twisting Dante's text in relation to the term 'dilatare', which I commented on in chapter three. I noted that in *La Divina Mimesis* Pasolini uses the word 'dilatare' to describe his new approach to literature in opposition Dante's *Commedia*, which for him is an example of literature as 'allargamento'. Then, I showed that, a few years later, the same term returns in a poem of *Trasumanar e organizzar*, where Pasolini claims that his text will 'dilate' Dante's lines, changing them but from within – 'li dilaterò crescendovi nei tessuti come un canchero' ('Proposito di scrivere una poesia intitolata "I primi sei canti del Purgatorio"', p. 66). I read the text of *Petrolio* as the 'realisation' (in the sense of becoming true) of Pasolini's poetic accounts at the end of the 1960s. Episodes like Carlo's dissociation and the pageant of il Merda and Cinzia are a 'dilatation' of the passages of the Montefeltro family and of Paolo and Francesca, as they add elements to and, ultimately, change significantly their Dantean archetype. This confirms my conclusions of chapter three; Pasolini's questioning his relationship with Dante in his poetic works and essays of the mid-1960s is not a way to look back at his past experiences but rather to foresee a future dialogue with Dante. Having seen the re-elaborations of Dante's text in *Petrolio*, I can affirm that with the term 'dilatare' Pasolini seems to foretell his last 'confrontation' with the *Commedia*.

I would like to conclude by commenting on the allegorical reading of this passage of *Petrolio*. From the analysis of the text, I can confirm that the historical and political significance of the 'Visione del Merda' is not difficult to grasp, as anticipated at the beginning of the section. In this long allegorical passage Pasolini shows how 'il Potere' is homologating society, especially the subproletarians, to the new consumerist values. This drastic transformation of society is what Pasolini defines in his articles of the 1970s as the 'mutazione

antropologica' of Italians and the 'genocidio culturale'.⁴⁵ According to Pasolini, the new 'Potere' is destroying all sub-cultures, by turning everyone into a bourgeois. As Bazzocchi rightly notes: '[con] la sfilata del Merda [...] Pasolini dà una forma allegorica e dantesca a tutto il sistema di pensiero che ha appena esposto negli articoli che diverranno *Scritti Corsari*'.⁴⁶ I can therefore add the 'Visione del Merda' to the other political allegories that I have discussed in the course of this chapter.

Conclusions

This chapter has studied in detail the main allegorical visions of *Petrolio*, privileging two aspects: the investigation of the legacy of Dante's *Commedia* at the level of the text and the allegorical reading of each vision. With regard to the first aspect of the research, I have shown that the main allegorical visions of *Petrolio* are built on different passages of the *Commedia*. Dealing with the subject matter of the duality of the human being, in the vision of Carlo's dissociation Pasolini reuses the episodes of the Montefeltro family, in particular the debate between two non-human creatures over the dead body of the character. Then, we have seen that the figurative system of the vision of 'La ruota e il perno', whose meaning is to foresee the sex-change of Carlo di Tetis, re-elaborates the imagery of body deformation and distortion of Dante's Malebolge. In particular, I have read the image of the two snakes in relation with the myth of Tiresias, recalled in *Inferno* XX, and with the sinners-snakes of *Inferno* XXIV and XXV, and shown the similarities between the wounded man of Carlo's vision and Muhammad's injured body of *Inferno* XXVIII. For the vision of the 'Giardino Medioevale', I have shown that, evoking the literary *topoi* of the *locus amoenus* and the catalogue of characters, the figurative system of the vision shares similarities with the many green spaces of the *Commedia*, such as Limbo (*Inf.* IV), the Valley of the Princes (*Purg.* VII-VIII); the Garden of Eden (*Purg.* XXVIII-XXXIII), and the Rose of the Empyrean (*Par.* XXX, 61-63). In particular, I have focused on the comparison between the 'Giardino Medioevale' and the passages of the Garden of Eden and the Rose of the Empyrean. Finally, recalling the clear re-elaboration of the theme of Dante's *descensus ad inferos* in the 'Visione del Merda', I have underlined a specific reference to Dante's *Inferno*. I have shown that Pasolini reuses the passage of Paolo and Francesca as a model to depict the couple of il Merda and Cinzia. The conclusion of my investigation is that the reuse of the *Commedia* is systematic in *Petrolio*. The strong presence of the *Commedia* at the level of the text in each individual allegorical vision is a further confirmation that Dante is the inspiration and model for Pasolini's approach and use of allegory and vision. The *Commedia* is a model in both 'macro' terms – it is an example of an allegorical text and of a visionary dream, as discussed in chapter four – and in 'micro' terms – it is the literary model for the figurative system of each allegorical vision. What

⁴⁵ Pasolini, 'Studio sulla rivoluzione antropologica in Italia', p. 309; Pasolini, 'Genocidio', p. 515.

⁴⁶ Bazzocchi, *Esposizioni*, p. 108.

I have discussed in this chapter is a 'metamorphosis' of the *Commedia* operated by *Petrolino*, with the meaning of a free and heterogeneous re-appropriation of the original pre-text. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the collective work *Metamorphosing Dante* has used the concept of 'metamorphosis' in this sense, as a way to problematise the concept of intertextuality with regard to the reception of Dante in twentieth- and twenty-first-century culture.⁴⁷ This chapter has shown that it is exactly in these terms that we should read Pasolini's reception of Dante: a creative manifold engagement that goes beyond the many cases of mere reception and produces something aesthetically new and very distant from the original pre-text.

With regard to the second point of the investigation, unveiling the historical and political significance behind each individual vision has confirmed the general reading of *Petrolino* as a case of political allegory. We have seen that Carlo's physical dissociation into two persons is an allegory of the crisis of identity of twentieth-century human beings and of the neurosis which affects neocapitalist society. Commenting on the monstrous sex-changes of the protagonists in light of Pasolini's journalistic pieces on the relationship between power and sexuality, I have affirmed that the sex-change is a political allegory to display the way in which 'il Potere' controls society. Finally, we have seen that the 'Visione del Merda' too is a political allegory, as it reveals the way in which, according to Pasolini, the new power is transforming society, homologating it to the same bourgeois values. The significance of each individual allegory collaborates to the general understanding of *Petrolino* as a political allegory: an allegory of the new 'Potere' and its relationship with society. Moreover, I have noted that the free re-elaboration of Dante's text serves Pasolini to stress the negativity of his contemporary society. In the episodes of the dissociation, the Quirinale, and il Merda and Cinzia, Pasolini twists Dante's text to make a mockery of contemporary society and show its evil. In chapter four, recalling Singleton, I noted that by presenting the *Commedia* under the sign of the allegory of the theologians, Dante gives to his journey a universal sense. The journey of Dante-character through the realms of the afterlife is the journey of any Christian soul towards God. Similarly, I can say that in *Petrolino* the allegorical nature of the text (although not biblical but historical and political) gives to Carlo's story a similar universal meaning. Carlo is the figure of any twentieth-century human being living in the new era of neocapitalism, affected (as shown by the neurosis) and dominated (as shown by the sex-change) by the new 'Potere'. Finally, the study of the allegorical meaning of the visions confirms the prophetic, revealing character of the text. This adds to the discussion of chapter four about Pasolini's new approach to realism as 'revealing reality' in *Petrolino*. To sum up, placing side-by-side the two lines of the investigation, I can conclude that *Petrolino* is a political allegory which reuses the rich imaginary offered by Dante's *Commedia* to reveal in a visionary and symbolic way the new 'Potere'.

⁴⁷ *Metamorphosing Dante*, pp. 11-12.

Conclusions

The question I have tried to answer in this thesis regards Pasolini's relationship with Dante on the topic of realism: is the dialogue with Dante, mediated by twentieth-century Dante criticism, a constant stimulation for Pasolini to interrogate realism and to elaborate ever new answers? Such a question was inspired by Pasolini's own statement from 1965, when he affirms that, in the wake of Contini's highlighting of the poet's plurilingualism, Dante had acted 'come una specie di guida' upon himself, influencing his approach to literary realism in the 1950s ('Dante e i poeti contemporanei', p. 1648). My research has interrogated whether one could extend this statement to the whole of Pasolini's artistic career. The result of this investigation is that Pasolini elaborates his own theories on realism through a continuous dialogue with Dante, mediated by the readings of Contini, Gramsci, and Auerbach. With the help of selected case studies, I have also explored how Pasolini puts those theories into practice in his literary and cinematic productions. In summary, by intertwining the study of Pasolini's Dantism and Pasolini's realism, my research has revealed the close interrelation between the two fields of research, while bringing significant insights to both spheres.

Following a chronological approach to the study of Pasolini's oeuvre, my analysis has focused on a series of critical concepts taken from twentieth-century Dante criticism, with which Pasolini engages over the years, such as plurilingualism, figuralism, prophetism, allegory, and vision. I have shown that, through a reconceptualisation and personal use of this terminology, Pasolini is able to find new answers to the question of realism at different times of his career and in the changeable historical context of post-war Italy. In the 1950s, considering plurilingualism as a guarantee of realism, Pasolini's idea of realistic literature implies social linguistic diversity. In the Roman novels, this idea of realism is put into practice through the reconstruction of the Roman subproletarians' slang, alongside the use of standard Italian. At the beginning of his career as a film director (1961-66) and inspired by the Auerbachian notion of figural realism, Pasolini conceives realism in cinema as the representation of the fulfilment of the extra-filmic life of the actor. Like life after death, film adds meaning to the actor's life, who in the fictional story is asked to play himself. Finally, in the 1970s, Pasolini reflects on realism in terms of prophetism as the act of 'revealing reality'. In the difficult time of neocapitalism, realism is no longer a question of representing reality but of revealing the truth about reality. Looking at the case of *Petrolio*, we have seen that the fragments of 'realtà rivelata' (*Petrolio*, p. 1770) lie behind an allegorical and visionary representation, which has the *Commedia* as its main model. In summary, I started my analysis discussing the influence of Contini and Auerbach's readings of Dante's realism (1950s), which had granted a certain modern character to the *Commedia*, on Pasolini. I finished with Pasolini who in the 1970s deprives the *Commedia* of that realistic and modern look, reading it as a medieval work: an example of medieval vision and allegory. Leaving behind the image of Dante as 'il

poeta del mondo terreno'¹ and 'il Dante della realtà',² Pasolini reclaims the most medieval side of Dante: the visionary prophet, the writer of allegory.

In my study, I have clearly shown that the Dantean model is subjected to a constant rethinking and remodelling, from literature (*Ragazzi di vita*, *La mortaccia*, *La Divina Mimesis*, *Petrolio*) to cinema (*Accattone*, *Salò*), from poetic and literary theories ('poesia squisita', 'regresso', 'libero indiretto') to film theory (films as life after death). Moreover, Dante also functions as Pasolini's role model of an *engagé* writer and intellectual. In the 1950s, for Pasolini, Dante embodies a kind of Gramscian organic intellectual, who moves between different social classes and languages. Then in the 1970s, Pasolini sees Dante as the truth-teller, the exiled poet-prophet, who take upon himself the civic duty to reveal unspoken truths about society. We have seen that Pasolini identifies himself with all these different figures of Dante over the course of his life, revealing that Pasolini's Dantism is also a case of identification with the model.

The same episodes of the *Commedia* are re-elaborated in different contexts, in fictional as well as in non-fictional works. For example, the episode of Buonconte da Montefeltro of *Purgatorio* V is reproduced in visual terms in *Accattone* (1961); is used to explain the theory of films as life after death in the essay 'I segni viventi e i poeti morti' (1967) of *Empirismo eretico*; and finally is re-elaborated in the episode of Carlo's dissociation in *Petrolio*. I have noted an interview from 1965 where Pasolini affirms his preference for the first six cantos of *Purgatorio*, especially the episode of Buonconte.³ In this respect, I have recounted that in *Trasumanar e organizzar* there is a poem entitled precisely 'Propositi di scrivere una poesia intitolata "I primi sei canti del Purgatorio"' and that, initially, Pasolini wanted to call the entire collection 'I primi sei canti del *Purgatorio* e altre poesie comuniste'.⁴ Tracking the recurrence of Dante's Ante-Purgatory in Pasolini's works has also revealed Pasolini's own way of conceiving the second realm as an anti-capitalist Marxist world. Moreover, I have unveiled key connections between the use of some Dantisms in Pasolini's works. For example, significant words of *Paradiso* I, such as 'vaso' (l. 14) and 'trasumanar' (l. 70), are reused by Pasolini in the title of his own works of the 1970s: *Trasumanar e organizzar* and 'Vas', the alternative title Pasolini thinks of for *Petrolio*. Finally, my investigation has also enriched the field of Pasolini's Dantism by showing the importance that all the three canticles of the *Commedia* have in Pasolini's production. If over the last few decades scholars have mainly focused their attention on the legacy of Dante's *Inferno* in Pasolini's oeuvre, I have highlighted Pasolini's creative engagement with the *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*.

My research has shown how far and how deep the dialogue between a medieval and a contemporary author can go. It has provided 'intra-cultural' reflections between writers who belong to the same literary tradition, despite being distant in time. In particular, the section on the 1970s has

¹ The first section of Auerbach's *Studi su Dante* is entitled 'Dante, poeta del mondo terreno', pp. 1-161.

² Contini, 'Un'interpretazione di Dante', p. 110.

³ Siti and De Laude, 'Note e notizie sui testi', in *SLAll*, pp. 2949-50.

⁴ Siti and others, 'Note e notizie sui testi', in *TPII*, p. 1514.

revealed Pasolini's strong engagement with medieval culture and forms of representations. *Petrolio* is Pasolini's attempt to write his own 'medieval' work. At that time, he also presents himself as a truth-teller. In 1975, Pasolini describes his life as 'uno scendere all'inferno', which allows him to see the truth about contemporary society ('Siamo tutti in pericolo', p. 1726). 'Io so... Io so', repeats Pasolini in his famous article for the *Corriere della Sera*, claiming to know the truth about Italian politics, specifically the terrorist attacks of the 1960s-1970s.⁵ Thus, if Dante goes down in history as the poet 'che dice "io"',⁶ as noted by Contini, Pasolini is best remembered for his 'Io so'. He is the only Italian writer who dares to speak about 'the truth' in postmodern reality. In this respect, Pasolini is really 'una forza del Passato', as he likes to call himself.⁷ Besides, he presents himself alone in this role, by taking on himself the figure of the exiled prophet, the martyr. This is a more romanticised than realistic image. At the time, Pasolini was writing articles for the most-read Italian newspapers – he was not an unheard voice – and in Rome he was surrounded by a rich group of authors and intellectuals friends – just to name a few, Alberto Moravia, Elsa Morante, and Laura Betti. The image that Pasolini creates around himself in the 1970s, together with the circumstances of his death, has made him stand out as a *unicum* in the Italian cultural panorama of that time. Thus, at the end of his career not only did Pasolini create his own 'medieval' work in alternative to the *Commedia*, but he also contributed to the creation of another strong role model, shaped on himself, for posterity in alternative to Dante.

More than any other twentieth-century author, Pasolini has represented and still represents an inspirational model for Italian writers and film directors. In his non-fictional investigative book on the Camorra, *Gomorra* (2006), Roberto Saviano paraphrases Pasolini's 'Io so' to strongly affirm that he knows how the criminal organisation operates over and controls some area of business.⁸ According to Emanuela Patti, *Petrolio* has become a literary point of reference for works such as *Asce di guerra: oggetto narrativo* (2005) by Vitaliano Ravagli and Wu Ming, *Sappiano le mie parole di sangue* (2007) by Babsi Jones, and *Italia De Profundis* (2008) by Giuseppe Genna.⁹ As noted by Patti, Genna quotes a specific passage of *Petrolio* in the epigraph of his book with the aim to establish a connection between his novel and Pasolini's experimental narrative.¹⁰ I would like to emphasise that Pasolini makes a brief appearance as a character in *Storia del nuovo cognome* (2012), the second volume of Elena Ferrante's world-famous Neapolitan series. In the fictional story, Lila and Nino go to see Pasolini speaking in a public meeting in Naples and, later, quarrel among themselves because of their different opinions

⁵ Pasolini, 'Il romanzo delle stragi', pp. 362-67.

⁶ Contini, 'Dante come personaggio-poeta della *Commedia*', p. 33. In comparison with classic epic poems, the novelty of Dante's *Commedia* is the identity between the poet-narrator and the protagonist of the story; the fact that it is written in the first person.

⁷ Pasolini, 'Poesie mondane', p. 1099.

⁸ Roberto Saviano, *Gomorra* (Milan: Mondadori, 2006), p. 234.

⁹ Vitaliano Ravagli and Wu Ming, *Asce di guerra: oggetto narrativo* (Turin: Einaudi, 2005); Babsi Jones, *Sappiano le mie parole di sangue* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2007); Giuseppe Genna, *Italia De Profundis* (Rome: Minimum fax, 2008).

¹⁰ For reference, see Emanuela Patti, 'Petrolio, a model of UNO in Giuseppe Genna's *Italia De Profundis*', *Journal of Romance Studies*, 10 (2010), 83–95.

about the author.¹¹ This is to say that in a representation of 1960s-1970s Italy, even though fictional, Pasolini cannot be missed: he is at heart of that period of Italian history. Claudio Caligari's posthumous film *Non essere cattivo* (2015) depicts the Roman *borgate* of the 1990s by recalling elements of *Accattone* (for example, one of the protagonists is named after Accattone's real name: Vittorio).¹² Film reviewers often use the adjective 'Pasolinian' for contemporary Italian films. This term was used, for example, to define *Favolacce* (2020), the last film by Damiano and Fabio D'Innocenzo, despite the two brothers admitting that they had never really engaged with Pasolini's cinema.¹³ Moreover, the mysterious circumstances of his murder inspired many films, such as Aurelio Grimaldi's *Nerolio. Sputerò su mio padre* (1996); Federico Bruno's *Pasolini. La verità nascosta* (2013); Abel Ferrara's *Pasolini* (2014); and David Grieco's *La macchinazione* (2016).¹⁴ Some musicians produced art-works as a result of their encounter with Pasolini (metaphorically speaking) and discussed his legacy. In 2007, the pianist Stefano Battaglia released the double album *Re: Pasolini* (ECM), dedicated to the figure of artist. In 2011, the Friulian indie band *I tre allegri ragazzi morti* toured 'Pasolini. Un incontro', a performance that mix together music, recited words, and graphics.¹⁵ It was inspired by the graphic novel *Pasolini* (2005) previously written by the singer and guitarist of the band, Davide Toffolo.¹⁶

In the long list of artists inspired by Pasolini there are also international ones. The Russian intellectual, author and political activist Eduard Limonov (1943-2020) listed Pasolini among his role models and wrote a portrait of him in the collection of essays *Sviaschennye monstry* (2003).¹⁷ Patti Smith mentions Pasolini as an influence; there are a series of well-known photos of her after she had spray-painted Pasolini's name on a wall. Smith's poem 'Italy (the round)' is subtitled 'For Pasolini' and mentions the author in different passages.¹⁸ Her Italian tour in 2015 ended in Friuli with a 'Concert for Pasolini' to celebrate the 40th anniversary of both her album, *Horses*, and Pasolini's death.¹⁹ Indeed, that year saw a series of different initiatives to pay homage to the author, that is, conferences, publications, film retrospectives, reprints, and live performances. These put other literary anniversaries that occurred in the same year in the shade; for example, the 30th anniversary of Calvino's

¹¹ Elena Ferrante, *Storia del nuovo cognome* (Rome: E/O, 2012), p. 357.

¹² Centro Studi Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'Nelle sale "Non essere cattivo", il film pasoliniano di Claudio Caligari', 17 September 2015 <<http://www.centrostudipierpaolopasolinicasarsa.it/notizie/nelle-sale-non-essere-cattivo-il-film-pasoliniano-di-claudio-caligari/>> [accessed 27 January 2021].

¹³ Nicola Villa interviewed Damiano and Fabio D'Innocenzo, 25 February 2020 <<https://gliasinirivista.org/le-nostre-favolacce/>> [accessed 27 January 2021].

¹⁴ Many investigative books have been produced on the 'caso Pasolini' since 1975; the latest one was published in 2020: Simona Zecchi, *L'inchiesta spezzata di Pier Paolo Pasolini: stragi, Vaticano, DC: quel che il poeta sapeva e perché fu ucciso* (Milan: Ponte alle Grazie, 2020).

¹⁵ Enrico Molteni, 'Pasolini, l'incontro', 1 March 2011 <https://www.treallegriragazzimorti.it/2011/03/01/pasolini_incontro/> [accessed 27 January 2021].

¹⁶ Davide Toffolo, *Pasolini* (Bologna: Coconino press, 2005).

¹⁷ Eduard Limonov, *Sviaschennye monstry* (Moscow: Ad Marginem, 2003).

¹⁸ Bob Farace, 'Pier Paolo Pasolini' <<http://www.oceanstar.com/patti/bio/pasolini.htm>> [accessed 27 January 2021].

¹⁹ Centro Studi Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'A Villa Manin (Ud) Patti Smith in "Concert for Pasolini"', 28 July 2015 <<http://www.centrostudipierpaolopasolinicasarsa.it/notizie/a-villa-manin-ud-patti-smith-in-concert-for-pasolini/>> [accessed 27 January 2021].

death and the 25th of Moravia's did not receive the same public interest.²⁰ 2015 was also when Ernest Pignon-Ernest's murale, *Pietà*, appeared on the streets of Rome. It depicts a living Pasolini holding his own dead body in his arms, like the mother Mary holds Christ's body in Michelangelo's *Pietà*.²¹ As Angela Felice points out, this piece of street art represents the new life of Pasolini in the contemporary Italian cultural panorama, and the rich public attention the poet has received in the past few years.²²

As Harold Bloom notes, the history of literature is a conflict between contemporary writers and their precursors. Drawing from Bloom, my research has shown that Pasolini 'wrestled' against Dante all his life. By the encounter-confrontation with Dante, Pasolini produced some of the foremost and original works of the twentieth-century and, inevitably, became himself a strong precursor for future generations of authors. Some of his expressions of the 1970s – 'lo so', 'mutazione antropologia', 'sviluppo senza progresso', 'scomparsa delle lucciole' –²³ have become popular proverbs in everyday discourse. In this respect, Pasolini's words have had a similar history to that of the *Commedia*. As noted by Contini, in the poem Dante produced a series of 'detti memorabili' – 'nel mezzo del cammino', 'selva selvaggia', 'bianco per antico pelo', 'l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle' (*Inf.* I, 1; I, 5, III, 83; *Par.* XXXIII, 145) – which are now part of Italian national memory.²⁴ New critical studies should now be conducted to investigate the legacy of Pasolini in contemporary Italian authors and, more generally, in Italian culture. It also seems necessary to try answering the question of what 'Pasolinian' means in contemporary discourse. Recalling one of his most famous mottos, I can conclude that Pasolini is now one of those 'maestri [...] fatti per essere mangiati in salsa piccante', just like Dante (*Uccellacci e uccellini*, p. 802).

²⁰ Angela Felice, 'Pasolini 2015: tra icona pop e autore da (ri)studiare. Appunti per un censimento ragionato', in *Pasolini oggi: fortuna internazionale e ricezione critica*, ed. by Angela Felice, Arturo Larcati, and Antonio Tricomi (Venice: Marsilio, 2016), pp. 245-64 (p. 252).

²¹ Centro Studi Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'Pietà per PPP sui muri di Roma con la street art di Pignon', 2 June 2015 <<http://www.centrostudipierpaolopasolinicasarsa.it/approfondimenti/pieta-per-ppp-sui-muri-di-roma-con-la-street-art-di-pignon/>> [accessed 27 January 2021].

²² Felice, 'Pasolini 2015', p. 260-61.

²³ Pasolini, 'Il romanzo delle stragi', p. 364; 'Il vero fascismo', p. 315; 'Genocidio', p. 514; 'L'articolo delle lucciole', p. 405.

²⁴ Contini, 'Un'interpretazione di Dante', pp. 77-79.

Bibliography

Works by Pier Paolo Pasolini

Collections:

Tutte le opere, ed. by Walter Siti, 10 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1998-2003)

Romanzi e racconti, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1998)

Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1999)

Saggi sulla politica e sulla società, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude (Milan: Mondadori, 1999)

Per il cinema, ed. by Walter Siti and Franco Zabagli, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 2001)

Tutte le poesie, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, 2 vols (Milano: Mondadori, 2003)

Individual texts:

Poesie a Casarsa [1942], in *La meglio gioventù*, in *Tutte le poesie*, ed. by Walter Siti, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 2003), I, 1-101

La bibita [1950], in *Romanzi e racconti*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1998), I, 1387-91

Poesia dialettale del Novecento: con traduzioni a piè di pagina, ed. by Mario Dell'Arco and Pier Paolo Pasolini (Parma: Guanda, 1952)

La meglio gioventù [1954], in *Tutte le poesie*, ed. by Walter Siti, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 2003), I, 1-159

Canzoniere italiano. Antologia della poesia popolare, ed. by Pier Paolo Pasolini (Parma: Guanda, 1955)

Ragazzi di vita [1955], in *Romanzi e racconti*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1998), I, 521-771

See also: *Ragazzi di vita* (Turin: Einaudi, 1972)

Le ceneri di Gramsci [1957], in *Tutte le poesie*, ed. by Walter Siti, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 2003), I, 815-26

Una vita violenta [1959], in *Romanzi e racconti*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1998), I, 817-1193

Passione e ideologia [1960], in *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1999), I, 709- 1239

Accattone [1961], in *Per il cinema*, ed. by Walter Siti and Franco Zabagli, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 2001) I, 6-149

'Intellectualism ... and the Teds', *Films and Filming*, January (1961)

Poesia in forma di rosa [1964], in *Tutte le poesie*, ed. by Walter Siti, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 2003) I, 1093-101

Ali dagli occhi azzurri [1965], in *Romanzi e racconti*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1998), II, 327-890

La mortaccia [1965], in *Romanzi e racconti*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1998), II, 591-96

La ricotta [1965], in *Per il cinema*, ed. by Walter Siti and Franco Zabagli, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 2001) I, 327-51

Uccellacci e uccellini [1966], in *Per il cinema*, ed. by Walter Siti and Franco Zabagli, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 2001) I, 675-805

Teorema [1968], in *Romanzi e racconti*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1998), II, 891-1060

Trasumanar e organizzar [1971], in *Tutte le poesie*, ed. by Walter Siti, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 2003), II, 3-220

Empirismo eretico [1972], in *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1999), I, 1241-639

La Divina Mimesis [1975], in *Romanzi e racconti*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1998), II, 1069-149

La nuova gioventù [1975], in *Tutte le poesie*, ed. by Walter Siti, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 2003), II, 391-520

Scritti corsari [1975], in *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude (Milan: Mondadori, 1999), pp. 269-535

Lettere luterane [1976], in *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude (Milan: Mondadori, 1999), pp. 537-721

Appunti per un film su San Paolo [1977], in *Per il cinema*, ed. by Walter Siti and Franco Zabagli, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 2001) II, 1881-2020

Le belle bandiere: dialoghi 1960-1965, ed. by Gian Carlo Ferretti (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1977)

Progetto per un film su San Paolo [1977], in *Per il cinema*, ed. by Walter Siti and Franco Zabagli, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 2001) II, 2023-30

Il caos, ed. by Gian Carlo Ferretti (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1981)

Il sogno del centauro [1983], in *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude (Milan: Mondadori, 1999), pp. 1401-550

For the original edition, see also: *Les dernières paroles d'un impie: entretiens avec Jean Dufлот* (Paris: Belfond, 1981)

Lettere I: 1940-1954, ed. by Nico Naldini (Turin: Einaudi, 1986)

Lettere II: 1955-1975, ed. by Nico Naldini (Turin: Einaudi, 1988)

Pasolini su Pasolini [1992], in *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude (Milan: Mondadori, 1999), pp. 1283-399

For the original edition, see also: *Pasolini on Pasolini: Interviews with Oswald Stack* (London: Thames and Hudson in association with the British Film Institute, 1969)

Petrolio [1992], in *Romanzi e racconti*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1998), II, 1159-830

See also: *Petrolio* (Turin: Einaudi, 1992)

Romans [1994], in *Romanzi e racconti*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1998), II, 197-263

Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma, in *Per il cinema*, ed. by Walter Siti and Franco Zabagli, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 2001) II, 2031-60

La voce di Pasolini: i testi, ed. by Matteo Cerami and Mario Sesti (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2006)

Filmography:

Accattone (Arco Film and Cino del Duca, 1961)

Mamma Roma (Arco Film, 1962)

La ricotta (Arco Film, Cineriz, and Societé Cinématographique Lyre, 1963)

Comizi d'amore (Arco Film, 1964)

Il Vangelo secondo Matteo (Arco Film and Lux Compagnie Cinématographique de France, 1964)

Sopralluoghi in Palestina per il Vangelo secondo Matteo (Arco Film, 1965)

Uccellacci e uccellini (Arco Film, 1966)

Appunti per un film sull'India (RAI Radiotelevisione Italiana, 1968)

Edipo Re (Arco Film and Somafis, 1967)

Teorema (Aetos Produzioni Cinematografiche, 1968)

Medea (San Marco, Les Films Number One, and Janus Film und Fernsehen, 1969)

Appunti per un'Orestiade africana (IDI Cinematografica, I Film Dell'Orso, and RAI Radiotelevisione Italiana, 1970)

Il Decameron (Produzioni Europee Associate, Les Productions Artistes Associés, and Artemis Film, 1971)

I racconti di Canterbury (Les Productions Artistes Associés and Produzioni Europee Associate, 1972)

Il fiore delle Mille e una notte (Produzioni Europee Associate and Les Productions Artistes Associés, 1974)

Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma (Produzioni Europee Associate and Les Productions Artistes Associés, 1975)

Works by Dante Alighieri

Convivio, in *Opere minori*, ed. by Cesare Vasoli and Domenico De Robertis (Milan-Naples: Ricciardi, 1988), I.2

De vulgari eloquentia, ed. by Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo, in *Opere minori*, ed. by Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo and others, 2 vols (Milan-Naples: Ricciardi, 1979), II, 3-237

See also: *De vulgari eloquentia*, ed. by Giorgio Inglese (Milan: Rizzoli, 1998)

For the English edition, see also: *De vulgari eloquentia*, trans. by Steven Botterill (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

Epistole, ed. by Arsenio Frugoni and Giorgio Brugnoli, in *Opere minori*, ed. by Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo and others, 2 vols (Milan-Naples: Ricciardi, 1979), II, 505-643

La Commedia secondo l'antica vulgata, ed. by Giorgio Petrocchi (Milan: Mondadori, 1966-67)

Monarchia, ed. by Bruno Nardi, in *Opere minori*, ed. by Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo and others, 2 vols (Milan-Naples: Ricciardi, 1979), II, 239-503

Rime, ed. by Gianfranco Contini, in *Opere minori*, ed. by Domenico De Robertis and Gianfranco Contini, 2 vols (Milan-Naples: Ricciardi, 1984), I.1, 249-552

Vita nuova, ed. by Domenico De Robertis, in *Opere minori*, ed. by Domenico De Robertis and Gianfranco Contini, 2 vols (Milan-Naples: Ricciardi, 1984), I.1, 1-247

For commentaries on the *Commedia*, see *Dartmouth Dante Project*, ed. by Robert Hollander, Stephen Campbell, and Simone Marchesi, <<https://dante.dartmouth.edu>>; Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi (Milan: Mondadori, 1991-1997); Robert Hollander (New York: Doubleday, 2000-2007); Nicola Fosca (The Dartmouth Dante Project, 2003-2015)

Critical bibliography

Alvaro, Corrado, *Gente in Aspromonte* (Milan: Garzanti, 2017)

Ascoli, Albert R., *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008)

---, 'Dante and Allegory', in Copeland and Struck (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, pp. 128-35

Auerbach, Erich, 'Figura', *Archivum Romanicum*, 22 (1938), 436-489

---, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1953)

---, *Mimésis: la représentation de la réalité dans la littérature occidentale*, trans. by Cornélius Heim (Paris: Gallimard, 1968)

---, *Mimesis: il realismo nella letteratura occidentale*, trad. by Alberto Romagnoli and Hans Hinterhäuser, 2 vols (Turin: Einaudi, 2000)

---, *Studi su Dante*, trad. by Maria L. De Pieri Bonino and Dante Della Terza (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2005)

Baldelli, Pio, *Film e opera letteraria* (Padua: Marsilio, 1964)

Baldini, Anna, 'Il Neorealismo. Nascita e usi di una categoria letteraria', in Irene Fantappiè and Michele Sisto (eds), *Letteratura italiana e tedesca 1945-1970: campi, polisistemi, transfer* (Rome: Istituto italiano di Studi Germanici, 2013), pp. 109-28

Bandini, Fernando, 'Il "sogno di una cosa" chiamata poesia', in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Tutte le poesie*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, 2 vols (Milano: Mondadori, 2003), I, xiii-lviii

Barański, Zygmunt G., 'The power of influence: Aspects of Dante's Presence in Twentieth-Century Italian Culture', *Strumenti Critici*, 1.3 (1986), 343-75

---, 'Pier Paolo Pasolini: Culture, Croce, Gramsci', in Zygmunt G. Barański and Robert Lumley (eds), *Culture and Conflict in Postwar Italy: Essays on Mass and Popular Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 139-59

---, *Chiosar con altro testo: leggere Dante nel Trecento* (Fiesole: Cadmo, 2001)

Barattoni, Luca, *Italian Post-Neorealist Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012)

Barberi Squarotti, Giorgio, 'L'ultimo trentennio', in Silvio Zennaro (ed.), *Dante nella letteratura italiana del Novecento* (Rome: Bonacci, 1979), pp. 263-78

Barolini, Teodolinda, 'For the Record: The Cangrande Epistle and Various "American Dantisti"', *Lectura Dantis*, 6 (1990), 140-43

---, *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992)

- Barthes, Roland, 'La morte dell'autore', in *Il brusio della lingua: saggi critici IV*, trad. by Bruno Bellotto (Turin: Einaudi, 1988), pp. 51-56
- Battaglia Ricci, Lucia, "'Dice Isaia...": Dante e il profetismo biblico', in Ledda (ed.), *La Bibbia di Dante*, pp. 49-76
- Bazzocchi, Marco A., *Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Milan: Mondadori, 1998)
- , 'Tutte le gioie sessuali messe insieme: la sessualità in *Petrolio*,' in Salerno (ed.), *Progetto Petrolio*, pp. 9-23
- , *I burattini filosofici: Pasolini dalla letteratura al cinema* (Milan: Mondadori, 2007)
- , *Esposizioni: Pasolini, Foucault e l'esercizio della verità* (Bologna: Mulino, 2017)
- Belli, Giuseppe Gioachino, *Sonetti scelti*, ed. by Piero Gallardo (Turin: UTET, 2013)
- Belpoliti, Marco, *Settanta* (Turin: Einaudi, 2010)
- Benedetti, Carla, and Giovanni Giovannetti, 'Prologo introduttivo', in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Petrolio* (Turin: Einaudi, 1992), pp. 4-49
- , and Maria A. Grignani, eds, *A partire da 'Petrolio': Pasolini interroga la letteratura* (Ravenna: Longo, 1995)
- , *Pasolini contro Calvino: per una letteratura impura* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1998)
- , *Il tradimento dei critici* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2002)
- , 'Quattro porte su *Petrolio*', in Martone, *Petrolio: un progetto*, pp. 33-47
- , and Giovanni Giovannetti, *Frocio e basta: Pasolini, Cefis, Petrolio* (Milan: Effigie, 2016)
- Benjamin, Walter, *Angelus Novus* (Turin: Einaudi, 1962)
- , *L'opera d'arte nell'epoca della sua riproducibilità tecnica* (Turin: Einaudi, 1966)
- , *Il dramma barocco tedesco* (Turin: Einaudi, 1971)
- Bernardi, Sandro, 'L'allegoria e il "doppio strato" della rappresentazione', in Benedetti and Grignani (eds), *A partire da 'Petrolio'*, pp. 57-70
- Bertolini, Lidia, 'Memoria del viaggio dantesco agl'Inferi in Pasolini e in Sanguineti', *Letteratura contemporanea*, 23 (1988), 241-59
- Betti, Laura, and Fernando Bandini, *Pasolini: cronaca giudiziaria, persecuzione, morte* (Milan: Garzanti, 1978)
- Blakesley, Jacob, 'Accattone in tre dimensioni', in Rebecca West and Armando Maggi (eds), *'Scrittori inconvenienti': Essays on and by Pier Paolo Pasolini and Gianni Celati* (Ravenna: Longo, 2010), pp. 25-50
- Bloom, Harold, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975)

- Bologna, Corrado, 'Le cose e le creature. La divina e umana mimesis di Pasolini', in Paccagnella and Gregori (eds), *Mimesis: l'eredità di Auerbach*, pp. 445-66
- Borges, Luis, *Labyrinths: Selected Stories & Other Writings*, ed. by Donald A. Yates and James East Irby (New York: New Directions, 1964)
- Brevini, Franco, 'La poesia in dialetto: un caso letterario del Novecento', in Giampaolo Borghello and Angela Felice (eds), *Pasolini e la poesia dialettale* (Venice: Marsilio, 2014), pp. 11-15
- Brown, Norman O., *Corpo d'amore*, trans. by Silvia Giacomoni (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1969)
- Cadel, Francesca, *La lingua dei desideri: il dialetto secondo Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Lecce: Manni, 2002)
- Cadoni, Alessandro, "'Mescolanza" e "contaminazione" degli stili. Pasolini lettore di Auerbach', *Studi Pasoliniani*, 5 (2011) 79-94
- Camilletti, Fabio, Manuele Gragnolati, and Fabian Lampart, 'Metamorphosing Dante', in Gragnolati, Camilletti, and Lampart (eds), *Metamorphosing Dante*, pp. 9-18
- Campana, Francesco, *The End of Literature, Hegel, and the Contemporary Novel* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019)
- Cardellino, Lodovico, *Dante e la Bibbia* (Bornato in Franciacorta: Sardini, 2007)
- Casadei, Alberto, *Dante oltre la 'Commedia'* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2013)
- Cerica, Andrea, 'Petrolio di Pasolini (Appunti 32, 97e 129c): Il riso che morde il potere, tra salotti, feste e tv', in Alberto Camerotto and Stefano Maso (eds), *La satira del successo: la spettacolarizzazione della cultura nel mondo antico (tra retorica, filosofia, religione e potere)* (Milan and Udine: Mimesis, 2017), pp. 257-279
- Chiavacci Leonardi, Anna Maria, 'Il tema profetico nella "Divina Commedia"', *Vivens homo*, 15/2 (2004), 385-92
- Chiesi, Roberto, 'Il corpo sognato e il corpo degradato: forma della corporeità pasoliniana dalla *Trilogia della vita a Petrolio*', in Salerno (ed.), *Progetto Petrolio*, pp. 25-43
- Ciccarese, Maria Pia, *Visioni dell'aldilà in Occidente: fonti, modelli, testi* (Florence: Nardini-Centro Internazionale del Libro, 1987)
- Conti Calabrese, Giuseppe, *Pasolini e il sacro* (Milan: Jaca Book, 1994)
- Contini, Gianfranco, 'Preliminari sulla lingua del Petrarca', *Paragone*, 2 (1951), 3-26
- , 'Un'interpretazione di Dante', *Paragone*, 188 (1965), 3-42
- , *Varianti e altra linguistica: una raccolta di saggi (1938-1968)* (Turin: Einaudi, 1970)
- , *Un'idea di Dante: saggi danteschi* (Turin: Einaudi, 1976)
- , 'Al limite della poesia dialettale', in Renata Brogginì (ed.), *Pagine ticinesi di Gianfranco Contini* (Bellinzona: Salvioni, 1981), pp. 116-21

Copeland, Rita, and Peter T. Struck (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

Cro, Stelio, 'Intertestualità di "Una vita violenta" di Pier Paolo Pasolini', in Luigi Ballerini, Gay Bardin, and Massimo Ciavolella (eds), *La lotta con Proteo. Metamorfosi del testo e testualità della critica* (Florence: Cadmo, 2000), pp. 739-48

Croce, Benedetto, *La poesia di Dante* (Rome: Laterza, 1921)

---, 'Sulla natura dell'allegoria', *La Critica*, 21 (1923), 51-56

Curcio, Milly, 'Dante e gli inferni contemporanei', in Vigh (ed.), *Leggere Dante oggi*, pp. 349-58

De Ceccatty, René, 'Pasolini: dialoghi con la realtà', in Davide Messina (ed.), *Corpus XXX: Pasolini, 'Petrolino', 'Salò'* (Bologna: CLUEB, 2012), pp. 96-108

De Laude, Silvia, 'Pasolini lettore di "Mimesis"', in Paccagnella and Gregori (eds), *Mimesis: l'eredità di Auerbach*, pp. 467-82

De Mauro, Tullio, *Storia linguistica dell'Italia unita* (Bari: Laterza, 1993)

---, 'Pasolini's linguistics', in Zygmunt G. Barański (ed.), *Pasolini Old and New: Surveys and Studies* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999), pp. 77-90

De Sanctis, Francesco, *Storia della letteratura italiana*, ed. by Niccolò Gallo, 2 vols (Turin: Einaudi/Gallimard, 1996)

Della Terza, Dante, 'Il realismo mimetico di Pier Paolo Pasolini', *Italica*, 38.4 (1961), 306-13

---, 'Prefazione', in Erich Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, trad. by Maria L. De Pieri Bonino and Dante Della Terza (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2005), pp. vii-xix

Derrida, Jacques, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997)

Desogus, Paolo, 'La nozione di regresso nel primo Pasolini', *Rivista*, 4 (2015), 107-19

---, *Laboratorio Pasolini: teoria del segno e del cinema* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2018)

Di Blasi, Luca, Manuele Gagnolati and Christoph F. E. Holzhey, eds, *The Scandal of Self-Contradiction: Pasolini's Multistable Subjectivities, Geographies, Tradition* (Vienna and Berlin: Turia & Kant, 2012)

---, Manuele Gagnolati and Christoph F.E. Holzhey, 'Introduction', in Di Blasi, Gagnolati, and Holzhey (eds), *The Scandal of Self-Contradiction*, pp. 7-15

Di Gesù, Matteo *Palinsesti del moderno: canoni, generi, forme nella postmodernità letteraria* (Milan: Angeli, 2005)

Dini, Andrea, 'Una *Commedia* di borgata. Pasolini, Dante e *La mortaccia*', *Paragone*, 60-62 (2005), 140-59

Eco, Umberto, *Il costume di casa* (Milan: Bompiani, 1973)

- , and others, *Documenti su il nuovo medioevo* (Milan: Bompiani, 1973)
- Escobar, Roberto, 'Pier Paolo Pasolini: progetto per un film su San Paolo', *Cinemasessanta*, 121 (1978), 19-25
- Felice, Angela, and Gian Paolo Gri, eds, *Pasolini e l'interrogazione del sacro* (Venice: Marsilio, 2013)
- , 'Pasolini 2015: tra icona pop e autore da (ri)studiare. Appunti per un censimento ragionato', in Angela Felice, Arturo Larcari, and Antonio Tricomi (eds), *Pasolini oggi: fortuna internazionale e ricezione critica* (Venice: marsilio, 2016), pp. 245-64
- Ferrante, Elena, *Storia del nuovo cognome* (Rome: E/O, 2012)
- Forgacs, David, 'National-popular: Genealogy of a Concept', in *Formations of Nation and People* (London; Boston: Routledge & Paul Kegan, 1984), pp. 83-98
- , ed., *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916-1935* (New York: New York University Press 2000)
- Foucault, Michel, *Discorso e verità nella Grecia antica*, ed. by Adelina Galeotti (Rome: Donzelli, 2005)
- Fusillo, Massimo, 'L'incipit negato di *Petrolio*: modelli e rifrazioni', in Giuseppe Savoca (ed.), *Contributi per Pasolini* (Florence: Olschki, 2002), pp. 35-53
- , 'Il protagonista androgino: metamorfosi e ruoli sessuali in *Petrolio*', in Salerno (ed.), *Progetto Petrolio*, pp. 89-102
- , *La Grecia secondo Pasolini. Mito e cinema* (Rome: Carocci, 2007)
- Garboli, Cesare, 'Come leggere Dante', *Paragone*, 184 (1965), 8-42
- , 'Il male estetico', *Paragone*, 190 (1965), 71-79
- Gasparotto, Lisa, and Anna Panicali, 'Conversazione su Auerbach e Pasolini', in Paccagnella and Gregori (eds), *Mimesis: l'eredità di Auerbach*, pp. 483-508
- Genna, Giuseppe, *Italia De Profundis* (Rome: Minimum fax, 2008)
- Genovese, Rino, 'Manifesto per *Petrolio*', in Benedetti and Grignani (eds), *A partire da 'Petrolio'*, pp. 79-91
- Gianantonio, Pompeo, *Dante e l'allegorismo* (Florence: Olschki, 1969)
- Gordon, Robert, *Pasolini: Forms of Subjectivity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996)
- Gagnolati, Manuele, Fabio Camilletti and Fabian Lampart, eds, *Metamorphosing Dante: Appropriations, Manipulations, and Rewritings in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries* (Vienna and Berlin: Turia & Kant, 2011)
- , *Amor che move: linguaggio del corpo e forma del desiderio in Dante, Pasolini e Morante* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 2013)
- Gramsci, Antonio, *Letteratura e vita nazionale* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1975)

- , *Quaderni del carcere*, ed. by Valentino Gerratana, 4 vols (Turin: Einaudi, 2001)
- Grandelis, Alessandra, 'Teorema e San Paolo. Citazioni pasoliniane fra cinema e letteratura', *Parole Rubate*, 5 (2012), 41-59
- Greene, Naomi, *Pier Paolo Pasolini: Cinema as Heresy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990)
- Gregorio Magno, *Storie di santi e di diavoli: Dialoghi I-II*, ed. by Salvatore Pricoco and Manlio Simonetti (Milan: Mondadori, 2005)
- Grieco, Agnese, 'The Body of the Actor: Notes on the Relationship between the Body and Acting in Pasolini's Cinema', in Di Blasi, Gragnolati, and Holzhey (eds), *The Scandal of Self-Contradiction*, pp. 85-103
- Hainsworth, Peter, David Robey, and Pasquale Stoppelli, eds, *Enciclopedia della letteratura italiana Oxford-Zanichelli* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 2004)
- Hastings, Robert, 'Questione della lingua', in Hainsworth, Robey, and Stoppelli (eds), *Enciclopedia della letteratura italiana Oxford-Zanichelli*, pp. 650-52
- Hollander, Robert *Allegory in Dante's Commedia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969)
- , *Il Virgilio dantesco: tragedia nella 'Commedia'* (Florence: Olschki, 1983)
- , *Dante's 'Epistle to Cangrande'* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1993)
- , 'Dante "Theologus-Poeta"', *Dante Studies*, 118 (2000), 261-302
- Inglese, Giorgio, 'Nota introduttiva', in Dante Alighieri, *De vulgari eloquentia*, ed. by Giorgio Inglese (Milan: Rizzoli, 1998), pp. 5-30
- Invernizzi, Simone, "'La spaventosa unità del linguaggio di Dante". Plurilinguismo e monolinguisimo nella *Commedia* secondo Pasolini', in Joanna Szymanowska and Izabela Napiórkowska (eds), *Il Dante dei moderni: la Commedia dall'Ottocento a oggi: saggi critici* (Vicchio: Logisma, 2017), pp. 232-340
- Jacoff, Rachel, 'Dante, Geremia e la problematica profetica', in Giovanni Barblan (ed.), *Dante e la Bibbia: atti del convegno internazionale promosso da Biblia: Firenze, 26-27-28 settembre 1986* (Florence: Olschki, 1988), pp. 113-23
- Jacomuzzi, Angelo, *Il palinsesto della retorica e altri saggi danteschi* (Florence: Olschki, 1972)
- Jones, Babsi, *Sappiano le mie parole di sangue* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2007)
- Joubert-Laurencin, Hervé, *Pasolini: portrait du poète en cinéaste* (Paris: Cahiers du Cinema, 1995)
- , 'Figura Lacrima', in Di Blasi, Gragnolati, and Holzhey (eds), *The Scandal of Self-Contradiction*, pp. 237-51
- Kirchmayr, Raoul, ed., *Pasolini, Foucault e il politico* (Venice: Marsilio, 2016)
- Kristeva, Julia, 'Word, Dialogue, and Novel', in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. by Toril Moi (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), pp. 64-89

Lago, Paolo, 'Petrolio e l'antico: la presenza e l'influsso delle letterature classiche nel romanzo incompiuto di Pier Paolo Pasolini', in Salerno (ed.), *Progetto Petrolio*, pp. 45-69

Lavagetto, Mario, 'Svevo e la crisi del romanzo europeo', in Alberto Asor Rosa (ed.), *Letteratura italiana del Novecento: bilancio di un secolo* (Turin: Einaudi, 2000), pp. 245-67

Ledda, Giuseppe, 'Modelli biblici e identità profetica nelle *Epistole* di Dante', *Lettere italiane*, 60 (2008), 18-42

---, ed., *La Bibbia di Dante: esperienza mistica, profezia e teologia biblica in Dante: atti del Convegno internazionale di studi, Ravenna, 7 novembre 2009* (Ravenna: Centro dantesco dei Frati minori conventuali, 2011)

---, 'Modelli biblici nella *Commedia*: Dante e san Paolo', in Ledda (ed.), *La Bibbia di Dante*, pp. 179-216

---, *Il bestiario dell'aldilà: gli animali nella 'Commedia' di Dante* (Ravenna: Longo, 2019)

Lesperance, Gabrielle, 'Beginning to think about "Salò"', in Amilcare A. Iannucci (ed.), *Dante, cinema, and television* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), pp. 97-105

Limonov, Eduard, *Sviaschennye monstry* (Moscow: Ad Marginem, 2003)

López Cortezo, Carlos, 'Los similes en la "Divina Comedia"', in *Actas del VI congreso nacional de italianistas* (Madrid: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1994), pp. 31-36

Luglio, Davide, '"Anziché allargare, dilaterai!": Allegory and Mimesis from Dante's *Comedy* to Pier Paolo Pasolini's *La Divina Mimesis*', in Gragnolati, Camilletti, and Lampart (eds), *Metamorphosing Dante*, pp. 339-53

Luperini, Romano, *L'allegoria del moderno: saggi sull'allegorismo come forma artistica del moderno e come metodo di conoscenza* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1990)

---, 'Realismo', in Hainsworth, Robey, and Stoppelli (eds), *Enciclopedia della letteratura italiana Oxford-Zanichelli*, pp. 657-59

Maggi, Armando, *The Resurrection of the Body: Pier Paolo Pasolini from Saint Paul to Sade* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009)

Maggi, Marco, *Benjamin e Dante: una costellazione nello spazio delle immagini* (Rome: Donzelli, 2017)

Maldina, Nicolò, *In pro del mondo: Dante, la predicazione e i generi della letteratura religiosa medievale* (Rome: Salerno, 2017)

Malizia, Giuliano, *Piccolo dizionario romanesco: un prezioso vademecum per conoscere e apprezzare il linguaggio popolare della Città eterna* (Rome: Newton & Compton, 1999)

Maraschin, Donatella, *Pasolini: cinema e antropologia* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2014)

Marazzini, Claudio, 'La speculazione linguistica nella tradizione italiana', in Serianni and Trifone (eds), *Storia della lingua italiana*, 1, 231-330

Martellini, Luigi, *Introduzione a Pasolini* (Rome: Laterza, 1989)

---, *Ritratto di Pasolini* (Rome: Laterza, 2006)

Martone, Mario, *Petrolio: un progetto di Mario Martone a partire da 'Petrolio' di Pier Paolo Pasolini*, ed. by A. D'Adamo (Naples: Cronopio, 2003)

Morando, Paolo, *Prima di Piazza Fontana: la prova generale* (Rome: Laterza, 2019)

Moravia, Alberto, *Gli indifferenti* (Milan: Bompiani, 2016)

Mordenti, Raul, 'Quaderni del carcere di Antonio Gramsci', in *Letteratura italiana: le opere*, ed. by Alberto Asor Rosa, 5 vols (Turin: Einaudi, 1992-96), IV.1, 553-629

Morghen, Raffaello, *Dante profeta: tra la storia e l'eterno* (Milan: Jaca book, 1983)

Muzzioli, Francesco, *L'allegoria* (Rome: Lithos, 2016)

Naldini, Nico, *Pasolini, una vita* (Alberedo d'Adige: Tamellini, 2014)

Nardi, Bruno, 'Dante profeta', in *Dante e la cultura medievale* (Bari: Laterza, 1942), pp. 293-98

---, *Saggi e note di critica dantesca* (Milan: Riccardo Ricciardi, 1966)

Paccagnella, Ivano, and Elisa Gregori, eds, *Mimesis: l'eredità di Auerbach: atti del 35. Convegno interuniversitario (Bressanone/Innsbruck, 5-8 luglio 2007)* (Padua: Esedra, 2009)

Padoan, Giorgio, *Il pio Enea, L'empio Ulisse* (Ravenna: Longo 1977)

Pagliaro, Antonio, 'Simbolo e allegoria', *L'Alighieri*, 2 (1963)

---, *Ulisse: ricerche semantiche nella 'Divina Commedia'* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1966)

Palumbo, Matteo, 'Questioni del romanzo', in Ugo M. Olivieri (ed.), *Un canone per il terzo millennio: testi e problemi per lo studio del Novecento tra teoria della letteratura, antropologia e storia* (Milan: Mondadori, 2001), pp. 91-115

Parmeggiani, Francesca, 'Pasolini e la parola sacra: il progetto del "San Paolo"', *Italica*, 2 (1996) 195-214

Patti, Emanuela, 'A "poetic idea": (Re-) Sacralizing the Wor(l)d. Pasolini's Project for a Film about St Paul', in Linda Risso (ed.), *Politics and Culture in Postwar Italy* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholar Press, 2006), pp. 77-87

---, 'Petrolio, a model of UNO in Giuseppe Genna's *Italia De Profundis*', *Journal of Romance Studies*, 10 (2010), 83-95

---, 'Pasolini, intellettuale mimetico', *Studi Pasoliniani*, 7 (2013), 89-100

---, *Pasolini after Dante: the 'Divine Mimesis' and the Politics of Representation* (Cambridge: Legenda, 2016)

Pegorari, Daniele M., 'Il pane dei borghesi "non sa di sale". Dantismo e profezia in P. P. Pasolini', *L'Alighieri*, 26 (2005), 139-47

- Pezzella, Mario, 'Allegoria e mito in *Petrolio*', in Benedetti and Grignani (eds), *A partire da 'Petrolio'*, pp. 71-77
- Picone, Michelangelo, ed., *Dante e le forme dell'allegoresi* (Ravenna: Longo, 1987)
- Pirona, Jacopo, *Vocabolario friulano*, ed. by Giulio Andrea Pirona (Venice: Antonelli, 1871)
- Policastro, Gilda, 'L'inferno pasoliniano tra mimesi e memoria', in *In luoghi ulteriori. Catabasi e parodia da Leopardi al Novecento* (Pisa: Giardini, 2005), pp. 129-52
- Pratolini, Vasco, *Metello: una storia italiana* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1955)
- Publio, Ovidio Nasone, *Le metamorfosi*, ed. by Giovanna Faranda Villa (Milan: BUR, 2016)
- Ravagli, Vitaliano, and Wu Ming, *Asce di guerra: oggetto narrativo* (Turin: Einaudi, 2005)
- Roncaglia, Aurelio, 'Nota filologica', in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Petrolio* (Turin: Einaudi, 1992), pp. 610-24
- Rondini, Andrea, *Lettori: forme della ricezione ed esperienze di lettura nella narrativa italiana da Foscolo al nuovo millennio* (Pisa and Rome: Serra, 2009)
- Russi, Antonio, and others 'Confronto e scontro sul "neorealismo"', in Gianni Grana (ed.), *Novecento: gli scrittori e la cultura letteraria nella società italiana*, 11 vols (Milan: Marzorati, 1987-88), VII, 5996-6090
- Salerno, Paolo, ed., *Progetto Petrolio. Una giornata di studi sul romanzo incompiuto di Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Clueb: Bologna, 2006)
- Salvi, Sergio, *Le lingue tagliate: storie delle minoranze linguistiche in Italia* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1975)
- Sanguineti, Edoardo, *Interpretazione di Malebolge* (Florence: Olschki, 1961)
- Sanvitale, Francesca 'Il San Paolo di Pasolini: lo scandalo intellettuale della verità', *Il Ponte*, 11 (1990), 94-102
- Sapelli, Giulio, *Modernizzazione senza sviluppo: il capitalismo secondo Pasolini*, ed. by Veronica Ronchi (Milan: Mondadori, 2005)
- Saviano, Roberto, *Gomorra* (Milan: Mondadori, 2006)
- Schwartz, Barth D., *Pasolini Requiem* (Venice: Marsilio, 1992)
- Segre, Cesare, 'La volontà di Pasolini "a" essere dantista', *Paragone*, 190 (1965) 80-84
- Serianni, Luca, and Pietro Trifone, eds, *Storia della lingua italiana*, 3 vols (Turin: Einaudi, 1993-1994)
- , 'La lingua letteraria', in Serianni and Trifone (eds), *Storia della lingua italiana*, I, 451-577
- Siciliano, Enzo, 'Pasolini studente poeta', *Corriere della Sera*, 24 December 1977
- Singleton, Charles S., *Dante Studies I: Elements of Structure* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954)

- , *Dante Studies II: Journey to Beatrice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958)
- , *Studi su Dante: introduzione alla 'Divina Commedia'* (Naples: Scalabrini, 1961)
- , *Viaggio a Beatrice* (Bologna: Mulino, 1968)
- Siti, Walter, 'Descrivere, narrare, esporsi', in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Romanzi e racconti*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1998), I, xciii-cxlv
- , and Silvia De Laude, 'Note e notizie sui testi', in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Romanzi e racconti*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1998), I, 1625-744
- , and Silvia De Laude, 'Note e notizie sui testi', in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Romanzi e racconti*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1998), II, 1927-2008
- , and Silvia De Laude, 'Note e notizie sui testi', in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude (Milan: Mondadori, 1999), pp. 1731-831
- , and Silvia De Laude, 'Note e notizie sui testi', in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1999), II, 2865-3033
- , and Franco Zabagli, 'Note e notizie sui testi', in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, ed. by Walter Siti and Franco Zabagli, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 2001), II, 3033-249
- , and others, 'Note e notizie sui testi', in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Tutte le poesie*, ed. by Walter Siti, 2 vols (Milano: Mondadori, 2003), II, 1507-800
- Sollers, Philippe, *L'écriture et l'expérience des limites* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1968)
- Speranzoni, Andrea, and Paolo Bolognesi, *Pasolini: un omicidio politico: viaggio tra l'apocalisse di Piazza Fontana e la notte del 2 novembre 1975* (Rome: Castelvecchi, 2017)
- Spitzer, Leo, *Romanische Literaturstudien 1936-1956* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1959)
- Stazzone, Dario, 'Note sul dantismo di Pasolini, da "La Divina Mimesis" a le Bolge della Visione in "Petrolio"', in Patrizia Bertini Malgarini, Nicola Merola, and Caterina Verbaro (eds), *La funzione Dante e i paradigmi della modernità* (Pisa: ETS, 2015), pp. 481-91
- Titone, Maria S., *Cantiche del Novecento: Dante nell'opera di Luzi e Pasolini* (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 2001)
- Tobagi, Benedetta, *Piazza Fontana: il processo impossibile* (Turin: Einaudi, 2019)
- Toffolo, Davide, *Pasolini* (Bologna: Coconino press, 2005)
- Trentin, Filippo, 'Allegoria e anacronismo. Crisi della parola e materialismo storico in Benjamin e Pasolini', *Lo Sguardo*, 19 (2015), 33-43
- Trevi, Emanuele, "'Qualcosa di scritto": dieci anni di *Petrolio*', in Martone, *Petrolio: un progetto*, pp. 91-97
- Tricomi, Antonio, *Sull'opera mancata di Pasolini: un autore irrisolto e il suo laboratorio* (Rome: Carocci, 2005)

Usher, Jonathan, “‘Più di Mille’: Crowd Control in the *Commedia*”, in John C. Barnes and Jennifer Petrie (eds), *Word and Drama in Dante: Essays on the ‘Divina Commedia’* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1993), pp. 55-71

Vacca, Roberto, *Il medioevo prossimo venturo: la degradazione dei grandi sistemi* (Milan: Mondadori, 1971)

Viano, Maurizio, *A Certain Realism: Making Use of Pasolini’s Film Theory and Practice* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1993)

Vígh, Éva, ed., *Leggere Dante oggi. Interpretare, commentare, tradurre alle soglie del settecentesimo anniversario* (Rome: Aracne - Accademia d'Ungheria in Roma - Istituto Storico "Fraknói", 2011)

Vighi, Fabio, *Le ragioni dell’altro: la formazione intellettuale di Pasolini tra saggistica, letteratura e cinema* (Ravenna: Longo, 2001)

Juan Varela-Portas de Orduña, ‘L’allegoria analitica: metodologia della scuola dantesca di Madrid’, in Vígh (ed.), *Leggere Dante oggi*, pp. 317-26

Wagstaff, Christopher, ‘Neorealismo’, in Hainsworth, Robey, and Stoppelli (eds), *Enciclopedia della letteratura italiana Oxford-Zanichelli*, pp. 539-41

---, *Italian Neorealist Cinema: an Aesthetic Approach* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007)

West, Rebecca, ‘Da *Petrolio* a *Celati*’, in Benedetti and Grignani (eds), *A partire da ‘Petrolio’*, pp. 39-50

Zabagli, Franco, ‘Pasolini per le *Notti di Cabiria*’, *Antologia Vieusseux*, 2 (1995), 119-79

Zecchi, Simona, *L’inchiesta spezzata di Pier Paolo Pasolini: stragi, Vaticano, DC: quel che il poeta sapeva e perché fu ucciso* (Milan: Ponte alle Grazie, 2020)

Zigaina, Giuseppe, *Pasolini tra enigma e profezia* (Venice: Marsilio, 1989)

---, *Pasolini e l’abiura* (Venice: Marsilio, 1993)

Online resources

Centro Studi Pier Paolo Pasolini, <<http://www.centrostudipierpaolopasolonicasarsa.it/>>

Dartmouth Dante Project, ed. by Robert Hollander, Stephen Campbell, and Simone Marchesi, <<https://dante.dartmouth.edu>>

Dizionario di Medicina Treccani, <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/elenco-opere/Dizionario_di_Medicina>

Enciclopedia Dantesca, <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/elenco-opere/Enciclopedia_Dantesca>: Mario Apollonio, ‘Candida rosa’; Attilio Mellone, ‘Empireo’; Jean Pépin, ‘Allegoria’; Vincent Truijen, ‘Visione mistica’

Latin Vulgate, <<http://www.drbo.org/>>

Roman Catholic Bible, <<http://www.vatican.va/content/vatican/en.html>>

The Living Handbook of Narratology, < <https://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/>>: Brian McHale, 'Speech Representation' (2014)

Vocabolario Treccani, <<http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/>>

Other websites: <<http://www.oceanstar.com/patti/bio/pasolini.htm>>; <<https://gliasinirivista.org/le-nostre-favolacce/>>; <https://www.treallegiragazzimorti.it/2011/03/01/pasolini_incontro/>