

Adorati Toponimi: Tracking Ideological Space in

Pier Paolo Pasolini

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One of the most evident but least investigated aspects of Pasolini's work is its extensive use of toponyms, that is names of places that physically exist outside the text, regardless of the fictional world they participate in. Through an examination of some typical Pasolinian toponyms, this article will seek to trace the theoretical line that links the Friulan (1940s) to the first Roman (1950s) period of the author's career, attaching particular attention to written sources that have been generally overlooked by the critics, such as his letters and articles. Despite consistent critical claims that Pasolini's move to Rome in 1950 signalled the abandonment of Friulan poetics and the consequent elaboration of a new ideological discourse, very few scholars have attempted to support such claims through a systematic inquiry into the theoretical matrix of Pasolini's *œuvre*. Arguing that both in Friuli and in Rome Pasolini's elaboration of space consistently exploited a utopian perspective, I will show that it is precisely because of this perspective that the author manages to progress to a socially aware interpretation of social reality.

Toponymic space is dealt with very directly by Pasolini. All his texts, both creative and critical, are crammed with articulated references to real urban and rural settings. The first toponym that springs to mind is Casarsa della Delizia, the Friulan village where the author spent most of his youth and elaborated a notion of poetics that he later assessed as aestheticising, that is endorsed by a mystical, elegiac and essentially ahistorical apprehension

of reality.¹ Pasolini's first collection of poems, published in 1942 with the title of *Poesie a Casarsa* (Poems in Casarsa) shows clear evidence of this attitude. The poems of this collection are written in a highly subjective, almost re-invented version of the local dialect, whereby the name of Pasolini's mother's birthplace becomes 'Ciasarsa', and its most famous verse reads: 'my village is of a lost colour'.²

The poetic elaboration of dialect as a channel to a new language not only points to Pasolini's symbolist formation, but also provides the first clue as to what is significant about his treatment of toponymic space. My argument is that the different *topoi* in Pasolini's texts acquire a strong ideological significance, acting as catalysts for two opposing theoretical categories. On the one hand, they function as conventional signs that quite simply participate in a discourse and attain a specific but widely transparent connotation; on the other, they seek to break up the logic *continuum* of the discourse they fall into, pointing towards the utopian possibility of their dissolution as signs and their consequent, equally utopian, reconciliation with the physical space they represent. The opposition will then be between toponyms that obey their conventional status as signs, and 'adorati toponimi' (adored toponyms), whose theoretical value lies in their impossible aspiration to become, through the artist's elaboration, the very object they name.

The theoretical aim secretly underpinning this use of toponyms is revealed by Pasolini in a number of essays on language, literature and cinema written between 1964 and 1971 and published in the volume *Empirismo eretico* (*Heretical Empirism*, 1988) in 1972.³ Particularly in the third and last section on cinema, Pasolini's intention becomes clear. Promoting a provocative and idiosyncratic semiological approach to cinematic language, Pasolini develops a critique of modernity denouncing the lack of theoretical alternatives to

scientific rationalism, and suggests that semiotics can contribute to cultural progress only by raising what he calls the sacred element of reality to the status of sign. Despite the skepticism that greeted this argument,⁴ I believe Pasolini was asserting a highly significant claim: by acknowledging the existence of an oppositional otherness, rationality is constantly urged to dismiss the falsely ontological coherence of its achievements, thus forcing itself into an endlessly progressive, albeit frustrated, search for meaning. At the foundation of this argument, lies the need to promote the physical component of reality to a cultural level. It is only at the empirical level of sensorial experience that, according to the author, utopian otherness manifests itself.

If there is little doubt that 'Ciasarsa' acts as an 'adorato toponimo', and if the poet's favourite toponyms do embody his search for a privileged utopian space, we can now confidently start assessing the nature of the connection between the two main periods of Pasolini's life.

Pasolini was born in Bologna on March 5 1922, and spent the first years of his life moving from one town to another, as his father Carlo Alberto was a Fascist army officer and was constantly transferred. After Bologna came Parma, Belluno, Conegliano, Casarsa, Sacile, Idria, Cremona, Scandiano, and Bologna again, in 1936, where Pasolini attended first the 'Liceo Galvani' and then the University. Pasolini recollects his various homes in an article entitled 'Il treno di Casarsa' ('The train of Casarsa'), written in 1957: 'Cremona was the first city I saw, and it seemed a metropolis', or 'I was drunk with joy when I saw on the Atlas, my first and most important book, that Bologna was a crossing of small red lines, and that even Casarsa was doing very well, in the midst of the pale green of the Friulan plane'.⁵ Already in section V of his collection of poems *L'usignolo della chiesa cattolica* (The

Nightingale of the Catholic Church, 1948), written between 1943 and 1949 but published in 1958, Pasolini re-elaborates memories of the first years of his life.⁶ But more importantly the young poet invests his Friulan years in Casarsa with the sense of pastoral eroticism that is typical of most of his early poetry: 'It is springtime, in Casarsa, the lamp / swings on the square invaded by breaths / of the new wind, and the whistles of young boys / who walk through the streets embraced / taste like the fresh eastern grass'.⁷ Here the toponym Casarsa is evidently accorded a mythical resonance, being associated with an intimation of nature that pervades the brief appearance of the young village boys.

The same mythical resonance was also prominent in Pasolini's first book of poems, the already mentioned *Poesie a Casarsa*.⁸ We could argue that Casarsa becomes 'adorato toponimo' precisely because of the magic realism that its name evokes, as for the poet the very name of the village seems to establish a utopian perspective, that is the reconciliation between nature and culture. This is even more the case if we consider Pasolini's early visceral attachment to Friuli, a region he conceived as a linguistic and cultural island, somehow detached from the rest of Italy.

This conception of Friuli is a common theme in Pasolini's early writings, coming to particular prominence in a 1948 piece of writing of exceptional importance, *I parlanti* (The Speakers).⁹ The first section of this composite study, halfway between an essay and a short-story, is entitled 'Gli adorati toponimi'. It must be pointed out that by 1948 Pasolini was already a member of the local Communist Party and a fervent political activist. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that he starts this 1948 piece by playing down the romantic ascendancy of his toponymical fascination. In the opening paragraph he refers to his admiration for those toponyms as a 'fatto secondario', a fact of secondary importance. But

as we carry on reading we realise that Pasolini's attraction to the romantic, onirical subject-matter evoked by Friulan toponyms becomes totally overwhelming.

First he quotes from early diaries where he had transcribed his attraction to the 'Eros indigeno e collettivo' ('collective and indigenous Eros') mysteriously incarnated in village names like Castions, Caorle or Villotta. Then he explains that his interest in toponymy stems from the possibility of recognizing a strong link between the physiognomy of the people who inhabit a village and the village itself: 'la fisionomia rientra nel luogo' ('physiognomy is part of the place'). He further asserts that the hair, mouths, chests, laps and other physical features are those 'dimensioni dell'amore' ('dimensions of love'), through which one can trace back the archetypal link between the people and their villages. Despite his current skepticism, he adds, he cannot avoid recording, through his memories, 'inexhaustible traces of mystery crystallised in the name Casarsa. When I pronounce this name, I condense in one word the legend of my childhood, the time when I could not speak [...]'.¹⁰ The toponym here is clearly charged with a paradoxically non-verbal quality so as to express a mythicised sentiment of reconciliation.

The following sections of *I parlanti* develop the toponymical theme by orchestrating a powerfully imaginative combination of geographical, linguistic and physiognomic observations. Pasolini names many villages and small towns of the part of Friuli near Casarsa where he lives, almost always through the recollection of his first contacts with them. Then, with the precision of an entomologist, he distinguishes amongst the various linguistic and physiognomic traits of young native specimen. What contradicts the scientific rigour of his approach is not only the very poetic terminology adopted, but mainly the fact that he invariably tends to amalgamate language (that is dialects or even different accents) with

physical traits, to the extent of suggesting the presence of a mythical component which is at the same time physical and linguistic, and which finds its best, crystallized expression in the ‘adorati toponimi’ themselves. For example, in the section called ‘Paesaggio del romanzo d’ambiente’ he writes:

From Casarsa to San Floreano, hardly two kilometres away, one could recognize, in thread, that local genius [...] perhaps not linguistic anymore, but physical and sensual [...] that in my imagination almost takes the shape of a precious brook carved in the rocky and golden solitudes of the chests, of the throats, or of the hair of those who live along the road from Casarsa to San Floreano.¹¹

Here the *genius loci* survives in an intricate blend of physical and linguistic traits that can only be pinned down through toponymical classification. Later on the village is depicted as a kind of animated subject providing its inhabitants with the gift of life: ‘No village can be compared to San Giovanni as to the fresh extroversion with which it organises groups of friends in the shadows of the square, with which it crowds the streets, [...] with which it evokes motives of songs improvised from afar [...]’.¹²

The next section is very much a literary piece of writing where the author talks about himself in the third person. After sketching his genealogical family tree, he declares himself thoroughly competent in topographic matters. He then reverts to his idiosyncratic

physico-linguistic descriptions, combining them as usual with Friulan toponyms. Names such as Valvasone, Malafiesta, Gruaro, Giais, etc., trigger in Pasolini's imagination images of archetypal splendour; the bodies and languages related to each village blend into a single pervasive reminder of a utopian dimension: 'The Valvasone type was dark, of average height but well-built, with olive complexion, dark hair and pervaded with a softness, a shyness and a seriousness that gave away the noble air of his ancient village, like a *city of silence*.'¹³

The first significant shift from this secretly utopian discourse occurs when Paroling attempts the description of a larger town, Pordenone. The writer recollects his first contact with Pordenone, observing that the name of the town 'inevitably suggested an intense sense of respect, almost of panic, perhaps for that augmentative quality of its name, but certainly because it was widely regarded as the most modern and progressive place in the area'.¹⁴ After the Pordenone passage Pasolini reverts once again to his favourite villages, as if to create an oppositional dialectic. It is however significant that for the first time in the text we have encountered a toponym that is not 'adorato' but, rather, secretly resisted. As a modern city, Pordenone seems to embody a concept of urban citizenry and urban community representative of the cultural and psychological patterns of a Western civilisation that Pasolini, through a regress to utopian space, intends to criticise. For instance, he recollects that even before being in Pordenone, the town appeared to him 'as a place where one could buy those useful things that he [Pasolini] despised',¹⁵ and that when he slowly entered the town on his bicycle, its atmosphere seemed 'disincantata' ('disenchanted').

The contrast between the modern industrial city and the ancient rural village, as repositories of incompatible cultural values, returns in practically all of Pasolini's Friulan

texts. Good examples are the novels *Atti impuri* (Impure Acts) and *Amado mio* (My Beloved), written in the mid- to late-40s in Friuli, but published only in 1982.¹⁶ Apart from elaborating the subtending theme of utopian toponymic space, these texts also provide early insights into Pasolini's homosexuality. David Ward has noted how Pasolini gives homosexuality a political role precisely by freeing it 'of conventional ties to institutions and societal forms. [...] For Pasolini, the political valence of homosexuality is contingent on its ability to resist being included in societal codes and practices, even those codes and practices elaborated by the gay community itself. Pasolini's deeply held suspicion is that any contact with conventional systems of codes and practices will empty homosexuality of the essential otherness that is its true political force. Homosexuality, then, can only be "useful" if it destroys society's existing codes and norms, not if it contributes to an expansion of those norms in the direction of a greater tolerance'.¹⁷ Ward's analysis is confirmed by Pasolini's stern and consistent refusal to inscribe his idea of homosexuality in codified categories. What has to be added, though, is that sexuality in general, and not only homosexuality, is invested by Pasolini with a mythical aura, as an empirical receptacle for the utopian swing in his *forma mentis*. As far as our toponymic approach is concerned, the sense of sacredness conveyed by the sexual/homosexual paradigm is invariably linked, in the above-mentioned novels, to the crucial *topos* of the rural village, as the narrative action is faithfully punctuated by a series of 'adorati toponimi'.

Despite the literary progress he was making, in January 1950 Pasolini had to leave Casarsa. Following allegations of corruption of minors and obscene acts in public, towards the end of 1949 he was expelled from the Communist Party. Today it is widely believed that the charges against him stemmed from political reasons. A respected teacher and intellectual,

his political commitment had come to be viewed with growing hostility by the Catholics and Christian Democrats of the region; although Pasolini was eventually acquitted of his charges, much damage had been done, as he was forbidden to teach in state schools and had to abandon his political affiliation to the Italian Communist Party.¹⁸

As anticipated, many critics have identified in the move to Rome a clear epistemological break with the poetics of the Friulan period, especially in the light of Pasolini's theoretical contribution of the 50s, and more precisely because of its alleged ideological debt to Antonio Gramsci, the founder and most prominent theorist of Italian Communism. The influence of Antonio Gramsci on Pasolini, too often taken for granted, has recently been seriously questioned,¹⁹ and there are now reasons to believe that Pasolini's Gramscian stand was of a very peculiar type. What seems to me the most striking departure from Gramsci's philosophy is Pasolini's unrelentless emphasis on a realism heavily marked by the presence of a sacred or non-rational element, and hence Pasolini's call for a revision of orthodox Marxism which, as a philosophical doctrine, he felt should start considering (as he often put it in the second half of the 50s) the 'question of irrationality'. It is therefore my opinion that the move to Rome did not determine an ideological break, but rather it coincided with the beginning of a period in which the author developed the theoretical potential of his Friulan poetics into a more coherent and socially-oriented framework.

We can now try to follow the development of Pasolini's ideology in Rome through the toponymic approach. In the first instance, it is important to stress how the 'adorati toponimi' survive in the new environment. In other words, after 1950 Pasolini continues to intersperse his narratives with toponyms that transcend their topographic value to attain an exclusively utopian quality. As soon as he sets foot in the capital, despite his extremely

precarious financial conditions, Pasolini starts writing short stories of Roman ambience, consistently based on *in loco* observations. What stimulates his fantasy is a precise type of boy: the *borgataro*, the boy from the slums. From the beginning Pasolini sees this type of boy as someone who is deprived of any possibility of socio-economic integration, cut out from history, and yet extraordinarily rich in existential vitality.

In Pasolini's first short-stories we can already single out various thematic approaches to toponymic space. One of the earliest is *Ragazzo e Trastevere* (Boy and Trastevere, June 1950), a story that from the very title fits perfectly our approach (Trastevere being a central area of Rome identified by Pasolini as a kind of anthropological reserve for the subproletariat that the fascists, before the Second World War, had deported to the shanty towns). In *Ragazzo e Trastevere* the author draws on that extreme convergence of spatial and anthropological attributes already exploited by his Friulan narratives: 'I would like to know through what intimate mechanisms Trastevere lives inside him, shapeless, pounding, languid [...]. In order to communicate the topography of his life, he shouldn't be part of it: but where is the line that separates the boy from Trastevere?'²⁰ The boy is here regarded as a living prolongation of the eccentric topographic universe he belongs to. Just as the Friulan boy was *one* with his physical environment, the Roman boy seems equally *one* with his.

Pasolini's first Roman home is in Piazza Costaguti, in the Jewish ghetto, by the river Tiber. Then in July 1951 he moves to Ponte Mammolo, a borgata inhabited by subproletarian and working-class people. Quite simply, Rome immediately seduces him. He writes to poet Vittorio Sereni about a 'Rome bleeding with absolute novelties',²¹ while to his cousin Nico Naldini he confesses: 'If you want some geographical knowledge about me,

imagine the Tiber, outrageously irrational, amongst solemn cupolas laden with history'.²² But apart from traditionally subproletarian central areas like Trastevere, Borgo Panico, Campo dei Fiori, he is fascinated by the endless unfolding of the borgate, the shanty towns extending north-east of Rome, where he discovers the vitality and sexual freedom of the young subproletarian males.

In 1968, eighteen years after his arrival in the capital, Pasolini recalled that he had thrown himself 'into a socially different world which forced me to be objective towards it. I had to make a Marxist diagnosis of it'.²³ Yet his Marxism was always going to be of an unorthodox nature, precisely because his attraction to the subproletariat clashed with the rational assessment of its socio-economic exploitation. From a strictly political point of view, he publicly denounced this exploitation and never made a secret of his support for the Communist Party; in his artistic and theoretical work, however, I believe he tried to develop (almost subliminally at first, with much more purpose and awareness from the end of the 50s) a critique of Marxism through a rehabilitation of the category of irrationality, a category he could now codify negatively: not the idyllic pastoral world of Friuli, but the violent, anarchic and desperate microcosm of Rome's outskirts.

Promoting sacredness where there was poverty, crime and desperation, Pasolini's operation proved from the start extremely problematic, particularly at a time when the Italian Left was pedalling a rigid, uncompromising ideological approach to both socio-political and aesthetic matters. Not surprisingly, Pasolini's positions attracted harshly critical remarks from PCI cultural operators such as Carlo Salinari and Mario Alicata, who repeatedly censured the decadent slant in the author's poetics.

Regardless of the political question, what I would like to stress here is that the way Pasolini's ideology developed in Rome was deeply dependent on the various contacts he enjoyed with the city of Rome itself and its differentiated categories of inhabitants. No other Italian author, I believe, has given evidence of such a strong correspondence between his thought and his existential, corporal, even sensual experience in what is the *hic et nunc* of reality, the coordinates of time and the place marking the unfolding of our existence. I believe that from a theoretical viewpoint this somehow scandalous convergence between the realm of ideas and the realm of physical experience, that we find in most of Pasolini's works, points to what is beyond rationality: a utopian dimension which in the 1960s Pasolini will rescue as a sort of antidote against the entropic, instrumental rationality that was becoming the main cultural feature of Italy's new modernity.

Generally speaking, the trajectory followed by Pasolini's thought with respect to Roman space is easily identifiable. The borgate provide a sort of link between the country and the city, as two opposing ideological signifiers. We could go as far as to say that his existential/literary experience of the Roman slums allows Pasolini to keep in touch with the anthropological substance he had discovered in Friuli. His account of the borgate is revealing because of the significance he attached to them. They are described as 'un fenomeno a sé', a unique, peculiar phenomenon:

The borgate are products of fascist cleansing: the first layer of their population comes from the centre of Rome, Borgo Pio for instance. But then we have to account for other innumerable layers: refugees, peasants [...] and more recently immigrants from all over Italy, but mainly from the most central parts. In this belt of

borgate, from Tufello to Pietralata, from Tiburtino to Quarticciolo, from Quadraro to Tor Marancio, live hundreds of thousands of under-privileged, unskilled workers or unemployed.²⁴

With the slums representing a world apart, a totally different architectonic and anthropological space with respect to traditional Rome, Pasolini is able to carve a realistic niche for the crucial utopian dimension of his thought. But this situation of isolation holds true until the second half of the 50s, when the Christian Democrat government approved a plan of massive urban expansion beyond Rome's traditional confines. As a consequence, traditional urban space starts filling the gap the Fascists had created to ostracise the *borgate* from the *centro*. Not surprisingly, in his articles Pasolini criticises this territorial growth. To him, urban expansion means, first of all, the establishment of an authoritarian and paternalistic rapport between the state and the poor which makes the Christian Democrat politicians identical to their fascist predecessors; but more importantly, he views this expansion as a form of cultural integration through which a neo-capitalist ethos aims at levelling down anthropological differences: 'Little by little, the city is coming closer and closer to these borgate that before the war were still lost in the countryside; the city has absorbed them, is swallowing them up: but they still persist, stylistically and psychologically, like islands'.²⁵ In his mind, urban growth is a threat to what he conceives as one of the last repositories of otherness, both in psychological, existential and theoretical terms.

In conclusion, it is significant that Pasolini's apocalyptic refusal of what he regarded as the fascistic conformity of the new modern Italian society, coincided, from the mid-fifties onwards, with his growing awareness of the contamination of subproletarian space.²⁶ In his

article 'Il fronte della città', ('The city-front'), written in 1958, he delves into a sociological critique of the new, hybridized space created by architectonic contamination:

The hundreds of thousands of inhabitants of these new areas [...] belong [...] to a new type of Roman working class. [...] a more secure standard of life, the strong mixture of northern and southern immigrants, an existence still marginal yet exposed to the Ideological bombardment of the middle-classes, tend to turn the substantial blend of anarchy and common sense into a form of Americanised, standardised indifference, whereby the same human type presents itself hundreds of thousands of times, obsessively repeated.²⁷

NOTES

¹: See O. Stack, *Pasolini on Pasolini* (London, Thames and Hudson, 1969), pp.15-16; F. Camon, *Il mestiere di scrittore* (Milan, Garzanti, 1973), p.95; P.P. Pasolini, *Bestemmia. Tutte le poesie* (ed. by G. Chiarcossi and W. Siti, 2 vols., Milan, Garzanti, 1993), II, p.2060.

²: 'il me país al è colòur smarìt', in *Poesie a Casarsa* (see *Bestemmia*, II, p.1208). A recent study by Cornelio Desinan, 'I toponimi friulani nella poesia di P.P. Pasolini', in AA.VV., *Dentro il Friuli di Pasolini* (Udine, Società filologica friulana, 1996), has discovered that in his vast use of toponyms Pasolini follows Italian poets like Carducci, Pascoli and D'Annunzio, whereas Leopardi, Foscolo, Montale and Ungaretti tend to be rather parsimonious.

³: *Empirismo eretico* (Milan, Garzanti, 1972).

⁴ See, amongst others, E. Garroni, *Semiotica ed estetica* (Bari, Laterza, 1968), pp.14-17 and 43-44; U. Eco, *La struttura assente* (Milan, Bompiani, 1968), pp.150-160.

⁵ P.P. Pasolini, *Racconti e romanzi* (Milan, Mondadori, 1996), pp.1439-1440: ‘Cremona era la prima città che vedevo, e mi sembrò una metropoli’ and: ‘M’inebbriavo di gioia, quando, sulle carte dell’Atlante, che è stato il mio primo e più importante libro, vedevo quale incrocio di lineette rosse fosse Bologna, e come anche Casarsa se la cavasse egregiamente in mezzo al verdino della pianura padana.’ All translations are my own, unless otherwise stated.

⁶ See P.P. Pasolini, *Bestemmia*, I, p.383.

⁷ Ibid., p.387: ‘È primavera, a Casarsa, la lampada / oscilla sulla piazza invasa dagli aliti / del vento nuovo e i fischi dei giovinetti / che passano abbracciati per le strade / hanno un fresco sapore d’erbe pasquali.’

⁸ The myth of Narcissus is prominent in *Poesie a Casarsa* (see *Bestemmia*, II, pp.1185-1221), implying the desire of the poetic subject to be part of nature (see Angela G. Meekins, ‘Narcís tal Friúl’, in *Pasolini Old & New*, ed. by Zygmunt G. Baranski (Dublin, Four Court Press), 1999, pp.229-251.

⁹ The article was published in the 1979 edition of the novel *Ragazzi di vita* (Turin, Einaudi), pp.209-238.

¹⁰ *Ragazzi di vita*, pp.215-216: ‘un resto inesauribile di mistero, che si è cristallizzato nel nome: Casarsa. Quando lo pronuncio concentro in una sola parola la leggenda della mia infanzia, degli anni in cui non sapevo parlare [...]’.

¹¹ Ibid.: ‘Da Casarca a San Floreano, due chilometri scarsi di distanza, si potrebbero fissare a voce almeno quattro sfumature diverse nel pronunciare una frase o una domanda:

Sfumature [...] intraducibili ma essenziali per poter seguire quel filo, quel genio locale [...] forse non più linguistico ma fisico e amoroso [...] che nella mia immaginazione prende la figura quasi di un prezioso ruscello inalveato nelle solitudini rocciose e dorate dei petti, delle gole o dei capelli di coloro che abitano lungo la strada da Casarsa a San Floreano.’

¹². Ibid., pp.227-228: ‘Non c’è borgo che possa paragonarsi a San Giovanni per freschezza di estro nel congegnare i gruppi di amici tra le ombre della grande piazza, nel popolare le strade [...] nell’evocare motivi di canzoni accennate da lontano’.

¹³. Ibid., p.232: ‘Il tipo valvasonese era bruno, di statura media ma aitante, con la carnagione oliva, i capelli scuri, e tutto pervaso di una mollezza, un ritegno e una serietà dove traspariva l’aria nobile di quella *città del silenzio*, del suo antico paese.’

¹⁴. ‘non mancava di incutergli una specie di intenso rispetto, quasi di panico, forse per l’apparenza accrescitiva del nome, certo per il livello di maggiore modernità e di maggiore progresso in cui l’opinione comune di tutta la zona lo collocava senza riserve’.

¹⁵. Ibid., p.232: ‘quale luogo fornito di quelle cose utili che lui disprezzava’.

¹⁶. *Amado mio preceduto da Atti impuri*, ed. by C. D’Angeli (Milan, Garzanti, 1982).

¹⁷. D. Ward, *A Poetics of Resistance* (Rutherford, Fairleigh Dickinson, 1995), pp.19-20.

¹⁸. *L’Unità*, the official Communist Party paper, referred to the Pasolini’s scandal in an article that denounced ‘the deleterious influence of certain ideological and philosophical currents represented by Gide, Sartre, and other decadent poets and men of letters who try to seem progressive but who, in reality, take on the most harmful aspects of bourgeois degeneration’ (translated from Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Lettere*, 2 vols, Turin, Einaudi, 1986, I, p.cix).

¹⁹. See Z. Baranski, 'Pier Paolo Pasolini: Culture, Croce, Gramsci', in *Culture and Conflict in Postwar Italy*, ed. by Z. Baranski and R. Lumley (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1990), pp.139-159.

²⁰. *Romanzi e racconti*, pp.1384-1385: 'Io, per me, vorrei sapere quali sono i congegni del suo cuore attraverso i quali Trastevere vive dentro di lui, informe, martellante, ozioso [...]. Per comunicare la topografia della sua vita, dovrebbe non farne parte: ma dove finisce Trastevere e dove comincia il ragazzo?'

²¹. *Lettere*, I, p.411: 'Roma sanguinante di assolute novità'.

²². *Ibid.*, I, p.409: 'Se vuoi dei cenni geografici su di me, immagina il Tevere, spudoratamente irrazionale, in mezzo alle severissime cupole cariche di storia'.

²³. Stack, *Pasolini on Pasolini*, p.26.

²⁴. *Romanzi e racconti*, pp.1446-1447: 'Le borgate sono nate dagli sventramenti fascisti: il primo strato della popolazione proviene quindi dal centro di Roma, da Borgo Pio, per esempio. Ma poi vi si sono aggiunti altri mille strati: profughi, "burini inurbati", [...] e più recentemente immigrati da tutte le parti d'Italia, ma con tradizionale prevalenza delle parti più italiche. In questa cintura di borgate, dal Tufello a Pietralata, da Tiburtino al Quarticciolo, dal Quadraro a Tor Marancio, vivono centinaia di migliaia di diseredati, manovali o disoccupati.'

²⁵. *Ibid.*, p.1460: 'Un po' alla volta la città si è avvicinata a queste borgate che prima della guerra erano perdute nella campagna, le ha inghiottite, le sta inghiottendo: ma esse vi persistono, stilisticamente e psicologicamente, come isole'.

²⁶. His two accomplished novels of the fifties, *Ragazzi di vita* (*The Ragazzi*, 1968) and *Una vita violenta* (*A Violent Life*, 1992), as well as his first two films of the early sixties,

Accattone (*Beggar*, 1961) and *Mamma Roma*, all provide clear evidence for my claim.

First of all, the four of them are actually set in Rome. More precisely the first novel, *Ragazzi di vita*, published in 1955, and the first film, *Accattone*, 1961, emphasise the spatial-anthropological uniqueness of the borgate; whereas the second book, *Una vita violenta*, published in 1959, as well as the second film, *Mamma Roma*, 1962, represent a critical and pessimistic appraisal of the contamination between middle-class, bourgeois values within traditional Roman space, and the a-historic, utopian space of the borgate.

²⁷. *Romanzi e racconti*, pp.1456-1457: ‘Le centinaia di migliaia di abitanti dei quartieri nuovi [...] appartengono [...] a un nuovo tipo di classe lavoratrice romana. [...] il tenore di vita più regolare, la fortissima mescolanza con immigrati del Nord e del Sud, la vita marginale ma particolarmente esposta al “bombardamento ideologico” borghese, tendono a mutare la sostanziale mescolanza di anarchia e buon senso, in una forma di qualunquismo di tipo americanizzante, di “standard”, di ripetizione ossessiva [...] se si ripresenta per centinaia di migliaia di volte in uno stesso tipo umano.’