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Active Passivity? Spinoza in Pasolini's *Porcile*

Manuele Gragnolati and Christoph F.E. Holzhey

Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Porcile* (*Pigsty*) was shown at the Venice Film Festival in 1969 and was harshly criticized for its scandalous and desecrating character.¹ It is indeed a provocative and bleak film, which offers a scathing political critique of ongoing fascism but without seeming to allow for any space for intervention or change. With *Porcile*, Pasolini continues to distance himself from Marxist engagement and revolutionary politics, and while he characterizes its politics in terms of an "apocalyptic anarchy" that can only be approached with distance and humour,² our suggestion is that *Porcile* proposes abandoning (political) activity and hope for a better future as a paradoxical form of both radical political critique and joy.

The film has two seemingly unconnected parts that keep interrupting each other: the first one, shot on Mount Etna, is set in an unknown archaic past and is about a young man (played by Pierre Clémenti) who wanders in a volcanic desert landscape and turns into a cannibal. The man joins forces with others and ravages the countryside. At the end, the 'tribe of cannibals' gets arrested and before their execution (which consists of being bound and abandoned to be eaten alive by wild dogs), the figure played by Clémenti repeatedly recites the only audible words of this part: "I killed my father, I ate human flesh and I quiver with joy" [Ho ucciso mio padre, ho mangiato carne umana, tremo di gioia].

The second part is set in 1967 Germany and tightly links post-war capitalism to the Third Reich, showing that Fascism not only persists but also thrives and expands through the fusion with neocapitalist technocracy. The story concerns Julian (played by Jean Pierre Léaud), who is the young son of the industrialist Herr Klotz. Instead of passing time with his radically politicized *fiancée* Ida or taking part in the students' revolts, Julian prefers to have sex with pigs. His father, a kind of Krupp representing old capitalism implicated in Nazism, tries to solve his rivalry with the neo-capitalist Herr Herdhitze, who underwent plastic surgery in order to escape persecution as a Nazi war criminal. Klotz thought he could exploit Herdhitze's secret past, but Herdhitze knows Julian's swinish secret and the two industrialists end up joining forces. While they celebrate what is called the "Fusion" – *Fusione* in Italian – Julian gets eaten alive in the pigsty.

Our paper focuses on the son Julian as an intriguing figure of abandon in several senses: abandoning himself to the pigs, he abandons not only reason but also any relation with the social world. Julian is critical of his high-bourgeois, fascist father, but also refuses to join the students' movement represented by Ida, which appears to him as just another form of conformism. Julian's dissent does not take the form of an active opposition against either Fascism or the students' movement but, rather, that of distancing himself from both, of withdrawing from the conflict and avoiding it. Although one cannot really say that Julian abandons a recognizably political position – since he never started adopting one – Pasolini arguably presents him as a possible form of protest in a situation where he himself has begun to abandon all hope in organized political intervention.³ At least with respect to his humanist father, who does not know how to deal with a son whom he repeatedly characterizes as "neither obedient nor disobedient" [né ubbidiente né disubbidiente], Julian's abandon seems indeed a temporarily effective strategy.

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However, if this strategy of passive resistance could be likened to that of Melville's *Bartleby*, which has fascinated so many philosophers,⁴ Pasolini radicalizes it by having Julian end in the pigsty and face an unspeakable death. One could perhaps speak of a queer art of failure that is not only *avant la lettre* but also pushed to such an extreme of unintelligibility that as little seems to remain of it as of Julian himself.⁵

In order to understand better Julian's abandon and Pasolini's political take on it, we will turn to the eponymous and less well-known play that Pasolini wrote before the movie and we will look closely at a dialogue between Julian and the philosopher Spinoza, who enters the play in the penultimate episode (X).⁶ This dialogue offers a compact and intense meditation on Spinoza's *Ethics*, and the rest of this paper will try to unpack it and understand its complicated logic or perhaps ultimately non-logic. Interestingly, this episode, which Pasolini highlights in early descriptions of his film project, ends up being left out of the film and seemingly replaced by the cannibals' story, which in turn is absent in the play.

Speaking of the film's scenario, Pasolini explains that "Spinoza is the first rationalist philosopher and he is therefore, in a certain sense, responsible for the bourgeois rationalism that he abjures at this point."⁷ Abjuring reason identified with bourgeois rationalism and all the ills of contemporary neo-capitalism is certainly a central point not only of this scene, the whole play and film, but also of other works by Pasolini in this period – as for instance the play *Pilade*, where Pasolini imagines a continuation of Aeschylus's *Oresteia* and ends with Pylades's long curse against Athena as the symbol of reason inextricably complicit with power, be it fascist, communist, or capitalist.⁸

But why choose Spinoza for such an abjuration? Wouldn't Descartes, for instance, be a better candidate if the point were simply to present and repudiate modern reason? We think that there is more at stake, both in the choice of Spinoza and in the gesture of 'abjuring,' which Pasolini will frequently employ, most famously, when abjuring the trilogy of life several years later.⁹ The aim of this paper is, therefore, not only to understand better the character of Julian and his wish for the pigsty, but also to explore Pasolini's own reading of Spinoza.

Spinoza's appearance comes as a surprise – also to Julian, who would have rather expected a new doctor to meet him in the pigsty. Spinoza begins to explain himself by comparing his life with Julian's. At Julian's age he lived in a bourgeois family and became a libertine: "Nothing has changed, you see: like Ida's friends, I, as a young man, took side against the old" [Non è cambiato niente, / lo vedi: come gli amici di Ida, / io, ragazzo, mi schierai contro i vecchi].¹⁰ While Julian repeatedly senses a reproach, Spinoza keeps insisting that he did not come to condemn him. Instead, he makes clear his non-judgmental stance from the outset: "I let everyone live according to their 'complexion' and I accept that those who wish, die for what they believe to be their own good, given that I have allowed myself to live for freedom" [io lascio ciascuno vivere secondo la sua complessione, e ammetto che chi lo vuole, muoia, per ciò ch'egli crede suo bene, dato che ho permesso a me stesso di vivere per la libertà].

This is an interesting sentence, which Pasolini adapted from a 1665 letter by Spinoza to Oldenburg, and insofar as it allows for self-destruction as a possible, non-reproachable alternative to a life for freedom (or, rather, a "life for truth," as Spinoza actually wrote), it seems to already establish some tension with usual readings of his rationalist ethics.¹¹ However, reason and its abjuration are not yet an issue in this episode. Instead, Spinoza

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continues to identify similarities between his own scandalous life and that of Julian, without forgetting to highlight the cost that scandals entail on a personal level (and here it is also possible to feel Pasolini's reflection upon his own "scandalous" life): "Well, an abjuration (against the fathers and masters of tons of oranges), an attempt at corruption (to stage a fake integration of the rebel son), the son's heresy – the scandal – the persecution. Are we in 1667 or 1967?" [Beh, un'abiura (contro il conformismo dei padri / padroni di tonnellate di arance), un tentativo / di corruzione (inscenare una finta integrazione / del figlio ribelle), l'eresia del figlio – lo scandalo – la persecuzione. Siamo nel 1667 o nel 1967?].

Stressing once again that he is not condemning Julian, Spinoza himself raises the question of why it is he of all people that is in the pigsty with Julian. His answer is rather odd and convoluted. Invoking the fourth part of his *Ethics*, entitled "Of Human Bondage, or the Powers of the Affects,"¹² Spinoza declares that Julian is slave of an affect that attracts him to the pigs: "There is no doubt: it is an affect that draws you among these pigs, and you are slave of it. Whoever acts in this way, 'although he see what is better, is forced, nonetheless, to follow what is worse,' I used to say" [Non c'è dubbio: è un affetto / che ti trae tra questi porci, e quindi ne sei schiavo. / Chi fa ciò 'benché veda il meglio, è costretto, / tuttavia, a seguire il peggio,' dicevo]. Julian proudly confirms that "Never an affect was stronger than this one, which attracts me here among these pigs" [Mai affetto fu più forte di questo che mi attrae tra questi porci]. However, he sees no point in Spinoza's analysis if it's not to contain some sort of condemnation.

Spinoza indeed proceeds by demonstrating the absurdity of his being there. He refers now to the fifth and concluding part of his *Ethics*, which is entitled "Of the Power of the Intellect, or on Human Freedom,"¹³ and which he characterizes as a "hymn to Reason" [Un inno alla Ragione] not dissimilar to that invoked by Descartes. Interestingly, Spinoza proceeds to stress his bourgeois background and identifies the statement "only in the City can man be rational and free" [solo nella Città l'uomo può essere razionale e libero] as the core message of his *Tractatus theologico-politicus*. While one could see here an anticipation of the forthcoming critique of reason and freedom as being premised upon a bourgeois order, Pasolini's Spinoza for now concludes instead with what Spinoza should be telling Julian: "Free yourself, Julian, from the slavery of affects *by means of reason*: and therefore go back among the humans if you want to be a man" [Liberati dalla schiavitù degli affetti, Julian, / *per mezzo della ragione*: e quindi torna tra gli uomini, se vuoi essere un uomo]. And he should be adding, Spinoza states, that Julian should go to the Fusion-party between his father and his new business partner where compromise would await him, to be sure, but also "the freedom of heresy and revolution."

Julian, who rejects these alternatives of compromise, freedom, and revolution by abandoning himself to the affective attraction to the pigs, does not understand why Spinoza is not actually telling him what his *Ethics* should make him say. Instead of answering him directly or simply disavowing his *Ethics*, Spinoza makes another detour.

Spinoza reminds Julian that the last book he read before letting himself become absorbed by his repetitive experience in the pigsty – repeated, he says, like liturgical songs – was precisely Spinoza's *Ethics*, but – interestingly – not the last parts "Of Human Bondage" and "Of the Power of Intellect, or on Human Freedom," but the first few pages on God. Spinoza starts quoting the eighth definition: "By eternity I mean existence itself ..." [Per eternità intendo la stessa esistenza ...], and Julian fills in the rest: "... insofar as it is conceived as necessarily following solely from the definition of an eternal

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thing” [in quanto si concepisce seguire necessariamente / dalla sola definizione della cosa eterna]. Julian remarks that he learned Spinoza’s *Ethics* by heart because he did not understand it. As Spinoza makes no further attempt to explain the passage, the point in quoting it seems to be to suggest that Julian was somehow encouraged to abandon himself to his affects by Spinoza’s *Ethics* itself – perhaps by the themes of the first pages dealing with God, existence, and eternity, perhaps by the rationalist approach of conceiving existence as necessarily following from definition, or perhaps merely by the repetition involved in the process of memorization that may well resemble that of liturgical songs or of Julian’s experience in the pigsty.

Be that as it may, Spinoza proceeds by pointing to a strange contradiction in his thought – in seeking to explain God through reason, which was already scientific and bourgeois – and combining, in an ingenuous, poetic move, Julian’s and his own experience into that of an epoch encompassing the past three hundred years. He suggests that this epoch is still quite young – indeed as young as Julian – and that the whole epoch could well – and perhaps should – take the decision that Julian is about to take.

Whereas Julian contests that he is taking a decision and thereby emphasizes his passivity (“But I am not taking any decision *whatsoever*...” [Ma io non prendo *nessuna* decisione], Spinoza seems to bring Julian’s behaviour into the general purview of his ethics, which privileges activity: he interprets Julian’s self-abandonment into a catatonic state, in which Julian spent three months without speaking, eating, sleeping, dreaming or dying, as the result of actively taking a decision (“But you have taken it. And already some time ago.” [L’hai presa, invece. E da tempo]). The decision is, as Julian himself then suggests, to disappear (“sparire” in Italian). Later they also speak of leaving, exiting the world – we could also say: ‘abandoning’ it, which in terms of the opposition activity-passivity is as ambiguous as ‘disappearing.’

Spinoza goes on to recall his definition of passivity at the beginning of the fourth part “Of Human Bondage”: “We are passive insofar as we are a part of Nature which cannot be conceived independently of other parts” [Noi in tanto patiamo, in quanto siamo / una parte della natura che non può essere concepita / per sé, senza le altre], and Julian responds with an almost identical formulation from the third part “Of the Origin and Nature of the Affects:”¹⁴ “we are said to be passive when something emerges in us, of which we are only the partial cause” [Si dice che patiamo, quando in noi sorge qualcosa, / di cui non siamo che causa parziale]. Adding “Alright!” [Va bene!], he signals that this definition does not yet entail much, and its application to Julian’s disappearing indeed proves to be ambiguous.

Spinoza thus continues by specifying what he, as “first philosopher of Reason” [primo filosofo della Ragione], should tell him: “Speak, eat, stay awake, work, act, don’t disappear” [Parla, mangia, sta sveglio, lavora, agisci, non sparire]. This pretty much repeats what Spinoza previously said that he should be saying, but how does it relate to the definition of passivity just given? Disappearing here is contrasted with an active engagement with the world and as such seems rather to stand for pure passivity in some general sense. However the continuation of Spinoza’s speech indicates that the injunction not to disappear doesn’t necessarily follow from an ethics seeking to overcome passivity as just defined in a quite precise fashion as being only the partial cause of what emerges in us, but relies instead on another premise. Indeed, Pasolini’s Spinoza proceeds by observing: “But the object of my reason was God. I cannot demand that you live out of hunger for truth. Die then, if that pleases you, exit from the world”

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[Ma l'oggetto della mia ragione era Dio. / Non posso pretendere che tu viva per fame di verità. / Dunque muori, se questo ti fa piacere, esci dal mondo]. There seems to be yet another leap in the argument here, as the play does not spell out how the injunction "Eat, etc., don't disappear" relates to pursuing God and hungering for truth. Spinoza's *Ethics* plausibly provides the missing steps – especially insofar as it insists on the ontological necessity of self-preservation (or *conatus*) – and it seems to us that a case can also be made that the *Ethics* or perhaps rather certain readings of it at some point make a 'decision,' so to speak, that is, a choice that does not follow with necessity from its initial definitions and axioms. The choice would be that of maintaining that passivity can only be overcome by furthering the activity and freedom of mind, and that this is to be done by increasing and expanding, in a quasi empirical or scientific fashion, one's adequate understanding of all things or of what Spinoza calls Nature or God.¹⁵

Having recognized that a life of reason and freedom of mind is the result of a choice (which he made but which he cannot demand also of Julian), Pasolini's Spinoza helps us understand abandoning reason and disappearing from the world in other, less passive terms. The first thing to highlight is that this option, about which Pasolini speculates through the figure of Spinoza and the allegory of Julian in the pigsty, need not involve literal suicide. The subsequent exchange between Spinoza and Julian indeed clarifies that the issue is foremost that of embracing what one could call social or symbolic death by exiting the world not only of Klotz and Herdhitze, but also that of their contrary, that is, of Ida and her revolutionary student friends. While to stop speaking, working, and acting in these opposite worlds at first appeared as a radical form of passivity – albeit one actively embraced – Spinoza now not only does not condemn but actually praises Julian's decision and his coming every day to the pigsty, where he has lost, as Spinoza notes, "like in a masturbation or mystic rapture, all relations to the world" [in questo porcile dove sei venuto tutti i giorni / e dove hai perso dunque, come in una masturbazione / o in un raptus mistico, i rapporti con il mondo]. This certainly brings him to a loss of reason, as Julian acknowledges, but also to that which he takes as his happiness, as Spinoza suggests and Julian confirms: "Yes, indeed, I am the happiest man on earth!" [Sì, infatti, io sono l'uomo più felice della terra!].

What is more, by highlighting that relinquishing Reason and abandoning oneself to one's affects allows for breaking relations to the world, Pasolini's play seems to mobilize the idea of an alternative way of reducing passivity as previously defined in terms of dependence on other parts of nature (that is, of the world) and of being only a partial cause of what takes place within oneself. In other words, as we shall see, abandoning oneself to affects could also be understood not as merely passive but as paradoxically furthering activity – albeit not through reason and understanding.

Spinoza's penultimate speech indeed seems to go in this direction as it attributes to Julian an activity that cannot be explained by reason:

Precisely: inasmuch you are happy, you are. Through your being you express yourself. You can call however you want that mode of yours to communicate, which your father calls "to neither obey or disobey," but the fact is that for example many saints have taught without saying a word – with silence, action, blood, death. Ah, these are certainly not discourses that can be called rational. You have been called to give testimony to this form of language that no Reason can explain, not even by contradicting itself.

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[Appunto: in quanto tu sei felice tu sei.
Col tuo essere tu ti esprimi.
Chiama come vuoi quel tuo modo di comunicare
che tuo padre chiama “ne obbedire ne disobbedire”
fatto sta che per esempio molti santi hanno predicato
senza dire una sola parola – col silenzio,
con l’azione, con il sangue, con la morte.
Ah, non si tratta certo di discorsi
che possano essere definiti razionali.
A testimoniare questa forma di linguaggio
che nessuna Ragione può spiegare, neanche
contraddicendosi, tu sei stato chiamato].

Julian’s self-expression remains opaque, it abandons intelligibility and cannot be integrated into reason – even into a reason that contradicts itself like the fascist and revolutionary worlds that it produced. Nevertheless, Julian still protests, exclaiming that he doesn’t want to be reduced to a guinea pig, not even of Spinoza’s *Ethics*. There is indeed a sense in which the new Spinoza still very much argues on the basis of his *Ethics*, and the passage on Julian’s being, happiness, and self-expression, for instance, resonates with the book’s opening pages “Of God,” which were evoked by the line on the definition of eternity. This would suggest that, according to Pasolini, the *Ethics* opens a space of possibilities, not necessarily proscribing the ethos of reason, truth, and freedom on which it concentrates in the final two chapters, or perhaps rather, allowing for quite different readings of such an ethos.

That the *Ethics* opens such a space of possibilities seems to be confirmed by Spinoza’s letter to Oldenburg that is quoted in the play and that Spinoza wrote while still working on his *Ethics*. However, with the benefit of hindsight, Pasolini’s Spinoza seems to go even beyond advocating the individual freedom to choose within a space of possibilities, which to us now indeed appears an attitude dangerously close to the demands of neo-liberal flexibility. If Pasolini’s Spinoza earlier highlighted in reference to his *Tractatus theologico-politicus* that rationality and freedom have the (bourgeois) city as their condition of possibility, he now responds to Julian’s injunction that he does not want to be reduced to a guinea pig of Spinoza’s *Ethics*, by finally clarifying: “Julian, didn’t you understand? I am here to abjure it” [Julian, non hai capito? Sono qui per abiurarla]. It was a book, he explains, born in a world that would ultimately produce Julian’s humanistic father and his technocratic partner, doing nothing else than adding glory to their story.

This is not to say that Pasolini’s Spinoza simply negates or contradicts the *Ethics*. Rather, it is a very particular, non-conversional kind of abjuration that Pasolini proposes: like reason, the *Ethics* fulfills a task, but it must eventually be abandoned. Strangely enough, scientific, bourgeois reason helped Spinoza in the old problem of explaining God, “But once that, having explained God, Reason has completed its task, it must negate itself: *just God must remain, nothing else but God*. If I have lingered on some points, which are dear to the old Spinoza, it is in order to have you understand the extent to which the new one is right and within you loves the mere, pure presence of a non-consoling God” [Ma una volta che, spiegato Dio, la Ragione / ha esaurito il suo compito, deve negarsi: / *non deve restare che Dio, nient’altro che Dio*. / Se mi sono soffermato su alcuni punti, cari / al vecchio Spinoza, è per farti capire / quanto abbia ragione il nuovo, e quanto esso in te ami / la sola, la pura presenza di un Dio che non consola].

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For Pasolini's new Spinoza, the task is still God, but God is, of course, to be understood in a radically immanent sense – “sive Natura,” as Spinoza would famously say, or perhaps reality (*la realtà*) in Pasolini's emphatic sense, which he seeks in an alterity that is not integrable – or consumable – in neocapitalism: the subproletariat, the archaic past, Africa, etc.

This strong sense of reality is indeed invoked in a previous episode of the play (VIII), when Julian has finally reemerged from his three-month catatonic state and tells Ida about his love in paradoxical terms: “The phenomena that this love produces in me can be summarized as just one: a grace that, be it as a plague, has hit me. Do not wonder, therefore, if besides anguish there is a continual, infinite joy” [I fenomeni che questo amore produce in me / si possono riassumere in uno solo: una grazia / che, sia pure come una peste, mi ha colpito. / Non stupirti, dunque, se accanto all'angoscia / c'è una continua, infinita allegria]. In the following part, Julian makes it clear that the joy he feels through his love is related to the possibility to plunge into life, “mi immerge nella vita,” and he continues:

What do I mean with life? That thing that one always thinks to belong to others (while in us it is either incomplete or a guilt). I must enter life, in order to avoid it in its pettiest aspects, the social ones, those to which I am tied first of all by birth... and then as a political obligation, conservation or revolt. Once then all these aspects are excluded, what remains for me is to face/confront a pure life, only... either beautiful or terrifying, without any compromise ever, how can I tell you... not even when it is average ... everyday... **Let us call it reality:** it may be more exact. From reality I have therefore excluded – with the intoxication of restriction – everything that is my duty [...]. What remains? Everything that *does not belong to me*. That is not hereditary, not the possession of a master, not natural dominion, at least of the intellect: but simply *a gift*.

[Cosa intendo per vita? Quella cosa
che si crede eternamente appartenere agli altri
(mentre in noi è incompiuta o è una colpa).
Io devo entrare nella vita, per evitarla
nei suoi aspetti più meschini, quelli sociali,
quelli a cui sono legato prima per nascita...
e poi per obbligo politico, conservazione o rivolta.
Esclusi dunque tutti questi aspetti,
mi resta da affrontare una vita pura, solo ... bella
o terrorizzante... senza mai mezzi termini,
come dirti... neanche quando è media... quotidiana.
Chiamiamola realtà: forse è più esatto. Dalla realtà
io ho dunque escluso – con l'ebbrezza della restrizione –
tutto ciò che è mio obbligo
[...]
Che cosa resta?
Tutto ciò che *non mi appartiene*.
Che non è ereditario, o possesso padronale,
o naturale dominio almeno dell'intelletto:
ma, semplicemente, un *dono*. (Italics in the original, bold added)

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In this passage Julian is explicitly referring to one of Pasolini's most important concepts, that of "reality." As René de Cécatty explains, Pasolini has a double interest for what is real: as a Marxist and as a mystic or, rather, reality can be thought of as something material and objective or as a mystical, sacred, and aesthetic experience that also involves sexuality.¹⁶ In the case of Julian, reality is meant in the latter, mystical sense as the privileged space of intensity and immediate participation from which the bourgeois is usually excluded and which is usually only available to who is precisely "other" than bourgeois but which can sometimes be given as a gratuitous gift. In this case, it is precisely the affect drawing Julian to the pigs that allows him to get in touch with "reality," getting rid of his social ties, his bourgeois position, and his involvement with power.¹⁷

As is proposed in the subsequent episode between Julian and Spinoza, on which our paper has focussed, experiencing life as reality requires abandoning rationality. It is to happen before or beyond reason and must have no purpose or efficacy in order to be inherently meaningful and powerful. With Julian – but arguably also with the cannibals replacing the Spinoza scene in the film as well as with the film's aesthetic resistance to integration and fusion – *Porcile* offers us such a figure of abandon, which escapes complicity with Fascism and all-consuming neocapitalism and leaves us without offering consolation. Outside reason, without hope or purpose, abandon has become the paradoxical way for a new kind of freedom.

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Notes

¹ For a list of early reviews, see Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, ed. by Walter Siti and Franco Zabagli, Milan: Mondadori, 2001, vol. 2, pp. 3316-18.

² Pasolini, "Note e notizie sui testi," in *Per il cinema*, vol. 2, p. 3132. On Pasolini's detachment from Marxist ideals, which began in the early Sixties and continued throughout his life, and its eventual connection with irony and laughter, see Manuele Gragnolati, *Amor che move. Linguaggio del corpo e forma del desiderio in Dante, Pasolini e Morante*, Milan: il Saggiatore, 2013, pp. 35-67; Christoph F.E. Holzhey, "Recantation Without

Conversion: Desire, Mimesis, and the Paradox of Engagement in Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Petrolio*," in *Desire, Deceit and the Novel: René Girard and Literary Criticism*, ed. by Pier Paolo Antonello and Heather Webb, East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2015, pp. 233-52; Francesca Cadel, "Politics and Sexuality in Pasolini's *Petrolio*," in *The Power of Disturbance: Elsa Morante's 'Aracoeli'*, ed. by Manuele Gragnolati and Sara Fortuna, Oxford: Legenda, 2009, pp. 107-17; Marco Bazzocchi, "Baubò: la scena comica dell'ultimo Pasolini," in *Corpus xxx: Pasolini, Petrolio, Salò*, ed. by Davide Messina, Bologna: Clueb, 2012, pp. 13-28.

³ The choice very practiced by Pasolini is of course very different from Julian's and more paradoxical in continuing to be very active. For a discussion of the complex engagement with the past, present, and future that continues also in the last Pasolini, see, e.g., Alessia Ricciardi, "Pasolini for the Future," *California Italian Studies Journal*, 2.1 (2011), [ismrg_cisj_8946 <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/8v81z3sg>](http://escholarship.org/uc/item/8v81z3sg) (accessed 17 March 2015). See also Gragnolati, *Amor che move*, pp. 51-67, and Holzhey, "Recantation Without Conversion."

⁴ See, e.g., Gilles Deleuze, "Bartleby; or, The Formula," in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, pp. 68-90; Giorgio Agamben, "Bartleby, or On Contingency," in *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, ed. by Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999, pp. 243-71; Jacques Rancière, "Deleuze, Bartleby, and the Literary Formula," in *The Flesh of Words: The Politics of Writing* (2007), pp. 146-69.

⁵ Indeed, the pigs leave not a trace of Julian, as the technocrat Herdhitze reassures himself before pressing the peasants to remain silent about the unfathomable event they witnessed: "Non c'è rimasto un segno? / Un pezzo di stoffa, / mettiamo, una suola di scarpa? [...] No, niente! Niente di niente. / Allora, sssss! Non dite niente a nessuno." On the (queer) art of failing, see Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC 2011; on Pasolini and failure, see Manuele Gragnolati, "Pier Paolo Pasolini's Queer Performance: *La Divina Mimesis* between Dante and *Petrolio*," in *Corpus xxx: Pasolini, Petrolio, Salò*, ed. by Davide Messina. Bologna: CLUEB, 2012, pp. 134-64, and "Differently Queer: Sexuality and Aesthetics in Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Petrolio* and Elsa Morante's *Aracoeli*," in *Elsa Morante's Politics of Writing: Rethinking Subjectivity, History and the Power of Art*, ed. by Stefania Lucamante. Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2014, pp. 205-18.

⁶ The play, which was published posthumously in 1979, was written around 1967, while the screenplay of the movie, which is based on the play, was probably written in Autumn 1968. See Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Teatro*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, Milan: Mondadori, 2001, pp. 1183-86. On Pasolini's theatre, see Stefano Casi, *I teatri di Pasolini*, Milan: Ubulibri, 2005; on *Porcile* (the play and the film), see for instance: René Schérer, "Le nouveaux Spinoza," in René Schérer and Giorgio Passerone, *Passages pasolinienne*, Paris: Septentrion, 2006, pp. 145-64; Viola Brisolin, "Martyrdom Postponed: The Subject between Law and Transgression and Beyond. Reading Pasolini's *Porcile* with Lacan," *Italian Studies*, vol. 65, No. 1, March, 2010, pp. 107-22; Simona Bondavalle, "Lost in the Pig House: Vision and Consumption in Pasolini's *Porcile*," *Italica*, vo. 87, No. 3 (Autumn 2010), pp. 408-27; Maurizio Viano, *A Certain Realism: Making Use of Pasolini's Film Theory and Practice*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993; Raffaello Palomba Mosca, "Lettura di *Porcile* attraverso le fonti," in *Scrittori inconvenienti. Essays on and by Pier Paolo Pasolini and Gianni Celati*, ed. by Armando Maggi and Rebecca West, Ravenna: Longo, 2009, pp. 51-67.

⁷ Pier Paolo Pasolini, “Intervista rilasciata a Gian Piero Brunetta,” in *Per il cinema*, 2001, vol. 2, p. 2945.

⁸ See Christoph F.E. Holzhey, “*La vera diversità*: Multistability, Circularity, and Abjection in Pasolini’s *Pilade*,” in *The Scandal of Self-Contradiction: Pasolini’s Multistable Subjectivities, Traditions, Geographies*, ed. by Luca Di Blasi, Manuele Gagnolati, and Christoph F.E. Holzhey Wien/Berlin: Turia + Kant, 2012, pp. 19-35. Reason is also strongly critiqued in Pasolini’s *Medea*, for instance, but rather than of an abjuration one should here perhaps rather emphasize the complex relation between reason and myth that Astrid Deuber-Mankowsky has highlighted in “Cinematographic Aesthetics as Subversion of Moral Reason in Pasolini’s *Medea*,” in *The Scandal of Self-Contradiction*, pp. 255-66.

⁹ See Holzhey, “Recantation Without Conversion.”

¹⁰ Quotations from the play *Porcile* are taken from Pasolini, *Teatro*, where the dialogue between Julian and Spinoza is found on pp. 630-36. Unless stated, emphasis is in the original. English translations are our own.

¹¹ Baruch Spinoza, “Letter 30: To the noble and learned Henry Oldenburg,” in *Complete Works*, trans. by Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2002), p. 844.

¹² *A Spinoza Reader: The Ethics and Other Works*, ed. by Edwin Curley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 197.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

¹⁴ *Spinoza Reader*, p. 152.

¹⁵ Spinoza is notoriously known for affording radically diverging readings. See, e.g., Christopher Norris, “Spinoza and the Conflict of Interpretations,” in *Spinoza Now*, ed. by Dimitris Vardoulakis (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), pp. 3-37 and references therein. While conflicting interpretations are often due to selective readings of some parts of his work, his monistic, double aspect theory also seems to apply to his own work, which can be read under different aspects ‘without this necessarily entailing any dropouts or distortions’, as Norris writes in reference to Derrida (p. 16). We found particularly interesting Antonio Negri’s argument of Spinoza’s double foundation. The first foundation in the first two parts is interrupted in the third and fourth parts (on which Pasolini’s old Spinoza focuses), but then partially reappears in final part. See Antonio Negri, *The Savage Anomaly: The Power of Spinoza’s Metaphysics and Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008) and *Subversive Spinoza: (Un)contemporary Variations* (Manchester [u.a.]: Manchester Univ. Press, 2004).

¹⁶ René de Ceccaty, “Pasolini: dialoghi con la realtà,” in *Corpus xxx: Pasolini, Petrolio, Salò*, ed. by Davide Messina, Clueb, Bologna 2012, pp. 96–108.

¹⁷ Something similar is also described in *Petrolio*, Pasolini’s last, unfinished novel, where the protagonist, the engineer Carlo, lets himself be sexually dominated by several boys from the lumpen-proletariat and, through that masochistic submission, frees himself of his identity and joins the cosmos in a moment of mystical ecstasy. See Gagnolati, *Amor che move*, pp. 51–67.

|Manuele Gragnolati and Christoph F. E. Holzhey, 'Active Passivity?: Spinoza in Pasolini's *Porcile*', *world picture*, 10 (2015) <https://doi.org/10.25620/rp-19_01>

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