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## The Guest

### Transfiguring Indifference in *Teorema*

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**ABSTRACT:** In its elusive form between drama, novel and film, *Teorema* marks a 'new turning point in Pasolini's *oeuvre*'. Both the narrative and the style are remarkable, juxtaposing elements of different genres, nourishing the unresolved tensions within the film: the family members are shown in various scenes that follow one another in seemingly random order. Instead of a cohesive narrative unfolding in time, there reigns a sense of timelessness that gives rise to an oppressive feeling of drifting.

# THE GUEST

Transfiguring Indifference in *Teorema*

Claudia Peppel

... and to the bent bow is fitted an arrow that  
must strike the impassive sky in the heart.<sup>1</sup>

Paolo, a successful, good-looking, middle-aged industrialist, is presented in his everyday life, in the seemingly deserted outskirts of Milan: his factory can be made out on the horizon; his villa is grand and elegant, as is his self-possessed wife who is 'in charge of symbolizing the family status'.<sup>2</sup> Lucia is herself an artwork, the perfectly turned-out wife in all her brooding ennui. She has come to terms with her dull but comfortable life; the adolescent children are well brought up and live a life of material ease. Early in the film, the camera pans over the manicured lawn as the maid mechanically rakes leaves. It moves into the villa, past the Louis XV commodes and contemporary lounge furniture and the paintings, which range from cinquecento to pop art. The kitchen – a purely functional, sterile modern built-in kitchen – provides a stark contrast.<sup>3</sup> It is the first premonition of what is to come: no one is taken care of here. In this house, surfaces and appearance reign.

*Teorema* is Pasolini's only film set in a bourgeois Milanese milieu. The screenplay first appeared in March 1968 as a novel. It was suggested for the competition for the *Premio Strega*, but Pasolini withdrew in protest against the culture industry.<sup>4</sup> The film – released six months later – was an immediate surprise success.<sup>5</sup> It was shown at the Venice Film Festival, where it was accused of being obscene.<sup>6</sup>

In its elusive form between drama, novel and film, *Teorema* marks a 'new turning point in Pasolini's *oeuvre*'.<sup>7</sup> Both the narrative and the style are remarkable, juxtaposing elements of different genres, nourishing the unresolved tensions within the film: the family members are shown in various scenes that follow one another in seemingly random order.<sup>8</sup> As soon as we become absorbed in one encounter, it is abandoned in favour of another constellation, another detail of the story or

a close-up of some everyday object of possibly symbolic significance. Instead of a cohesive narrative unfolding in time, there reigns a sense of timelessness that gives rise to an oppressive feeling of drifting. The viewer is required to adopt multiple shifting viewpoints. The opening scene in black and white, in which workers are interviewed after the industrialist gave them his factory, is in the style of a news report or *cinéma vérité*; sober austere scenes of Lucia driving through town recall the *nouvelle vague*; the burial of Emilia is almost surrealist; and recurring shots of volcanic desert landscapes interrupt the main narrative like dream sequences.

The desert realm 'will recur again and again at crucial points throughout the film – fourteen times in all – especially at moments of intense crisis'.<sup>9</sup> It is 'a sort of a place outside history or culture, where all identity is lost'.<sup>10</sup> While the guest is the human other to the members of the family, the desert is the spatial other to the world they inhabit. It is only at the end of the film that the desert is integrated into the narrative, when the father runs out of his life and crosses the threshold into the volcanic rocky wastes. Throughout the film the endless desert is presented as an austere natural counter-world to the sophisticated artificial and tight social spaces of the family.

At first, an air of cool sophistication prevails in the seeming idyll: the father is chauffeured home from the factory; the maid heads to the kitchen; and the son and daughter come home from school. Moments earlier they were joking with their friends and meeting their sweethearts; now they are sitting quietly and stiffly with their parents at the lunch table. We are offered glimpses of everyday life in the family. The camera explores every corner of the villa, lingering on clothes, books and the décor, and evidently relishing the wealth and glamour. This close observation generates an almost hyperreal quality. It is an exploration of the phenomenology of the texture of experience and of the necessary and dramatic alternation between the quotidian world and unsettling encounters with the other.

Everyday experiences are based on a continual alternation of events and habits that ensures 'that the world is as I have known it until now and will remain so'.<sup>11</sup> Only when everyday life is shaken and interrupted does its originary order come to light. According to Dimitri Liebsch, daily life is constituted by objects and activities 'that everybody shares in a stratum of the unavoidable (sleeping, eating, living, dressing) but that by no means constitute the totality of everyday experience'.<sup>12</sup>

According to Konrad Paul Liessmann, everyday experiences fall into two categories that are mutually constitutive:

*It's already gone again* – These are extraordinary things and events that appear only briefly, that we want to hold onto but that always pass by. [...] The ephemeral and fleeting, that which vanishes, is thus an essential part of the cosmos of aesthetic everyday experiences. [...] *It's still there* – These are continually recurring experiences and perceptions that have become habits and are often accompanied by certain moods.<sup>13</sup>

These two kinds of experience not only permeate daily life, but they also create a crucial tension with the potential for tragedy: 'While we want, in vain, to hold onto the fleeting aesthetic experiences of everyday life, we want to change, renew, or exchange the things that are always there – which, by the way, is usually futile as well.'<sup>14</sup>

The protagonists of *Teorema* are locked in the here and now, in the always-has-been and always-will-be, a condensate of bourgeois values and ideas in an opulent setting.<sup>15</sup> But when a mysterious stranger turns up they will seek to flee from the banality of their life and everyday world.<sup>16</sup> The family are gathered at the dining table when a telegram announces his imminent arrival. It is no coincidence that the unsigned telegram is delivered by an impetuous, cheerful postman, who radiates more vital energy than do all the family members together. Only after the postman's appearance and the subsequent arrival of the stranger do we see members of the family talk. In a long take, the stranger, an extraordinarily beautiful young man, is first presented seated and half-asleep in their garden.<sup>17</sup> Throughout the film and the screenplay the stranger has no name, and is only referred to as the guest or the boy. No preparations for his arrival or welcome are shown or even suggested, and there was no prior relationship between the family and the stranger. The maid Emilia reveres him from the start as if she senses he is a divine figure.<sup>18</sup> In cases of theoxeny, the god does not reveal his identity, and the host does not ask his name or purpose. An early scene, in which she hurries to her locker in the kitchen so that she can kiss a picture of the Virgin Mary, shows that she is a devout Catholic. Her adoration develops into a set of contradictory actions ranging from depressive self-abandonment to erotic subservience. For her, the stranger is both a divine figure who has come to test her piety and virtue and a sexual being.<sup>19</sup>

In a series of very carefully staged frontal shot-reverse shot sequences, moving from close to medium distance and back again, Emilia stares repeatedly at the oblivious figure of the guest – at his body, his face, his crotch. Some intense bond is being forged in Emilia, instinctually, spontaneously, both sexual in nature, but also maternal as shown when she rushes to brush off cigarette ash from his leg.<sup>20</sup>

After his arrival a party is celebrated, but we are not told whether it is held in his honour or for another reason.<sup>21</sup> Someone asks the daughter, ‘Who is that boy?’ and she replies, ‘A boy’. This brief and trifling dialogue buries any hope of clarification. The viewer is left to speculate about who he is. This stranger is friendly to everyone but never initiates contact. He has no history, no place of origin, and no manifest purpose in being there. He appears just to ‘be’.<sup>22</sup> It is the very absence of distinctive attributes that render the stranger a quintessential guest, a guest qua guest. The family members, by contrast, are assigned places, relationships, and purposes. Yet they are remote from one another; neither love nor hate appears to bind them.

At the start, he is a *hospes*: a stranger, visitor and guest in one. Unknown and uninvited, he receives the hospitality of the family without question, as if it were bound by an ancient duty to welcome him.<sup>23</sup> Inherent to the concept of hospitality is the assumption of an everyday habitual world, because only in such spaces can a host welcome a guest and a ‘real coexistence under always restricted and temporary conditions’ be engendered.<sup>24</sup> There can only be a guest if there is a host at the place of welcome, while a visitor can just appear anywhere. The host offers a space to the guest for a certain period of time: being a guest implies the temporary presence in the space of the host. He accords the stranger the status of guest and, as host, enjoys the right to withdraw that status at any moment. The appearance of the guest necessarily involves the temporary suspension of everyday life. Each party encounters the unfamiliar in the other and has to keep in check his ambivalence between fear and trust.<sup>25</sup> Simmel claims that the phenomenon of the stranger involves a particular ‘unity of nearness and remoteness’.<sup>26</sup> The stranger is accepted into a group but at the same time remains a ‘being outside it and confronting it’. This special position permits impartiality and objectivity.<sup>27</sup>

According to Simmel, ‘objectivity does not simply involve passivity and detachment; it is a particular structure composed of distance and nearness, indifference and involvement.’<sup>28</sup> In *Teorema*, this kind of

engaged indifference on the part of the guest complements the demanding stance of the family members, who all want something from him.<sup>29</sup> Their curiosity is sustained by lack of knowledge about him. He subverts common determinations of identity and is thus an irritant.<sup>30</sup> Interestingly, the guest hardly says a word, nor do the others talk about him. The drama unfolds in silence.<sup>31</sup> On to this indeterminate figure his hosts project at will their desires and their expectations. The irruption of the guest into the order of everyday life awakens the hope of redemption and triggers the dissolution of that order: the members of the family throw off their roles and their clothes. Dressing, undressing, freeing limbs from garments – casting off constraints and breaking free – are recurrent motifs.<sup>32</sup>

Robert Gordon argues: ‘Sexuality – pure, transcendent, both carnal and strangely abstract – is Pasolini’s and the guest’s principal weapon, with which the certainties, the conformities, of this ‘perfect’ family will be destroyed.’<sup>33</sup> The camera keeps the guest, and in particular his crotch, single-mindedly in view; it concentrates on the event of his appearance and his intrusion. His indifference and lethargy contrast with the frequent shots of his – clothed – genitals as the agent of procreation, seat of desire, and symbol of the patriarchal order. Here, someone is full of potential, but will he use it?<sup>34</sup> The indeterminacy of his character can be interpreted as emptiness or as fullness.<sup>35</sup> His sexual intentions are unclear, but his sexual range is catholic. In a rare stage direction in the published screenplay, he is described as both ‘paternal and maternal’.<sup>36</sup> He truly covers all bases. Angelo Restivo points out that ‘the camera’s lingering on the genitals [...] is not constructed as a simple representation of sexual desire but as the very centre of the crisis underlying all the characters’ lives’.<sup>37</sup> Viano argues that Pasolini forces the viewer to adopt the perspective of ‘the erotic longing gaze of the villa’s occupants and to take on their role as alienated and meaningless bourgeois’.<sup>38</sup> Pasolini convincingly stages the double status of the guest as a physically desired object and as an unattainable and indifferent authority.<sup>39</sup> Viano claims that the figure of the guest ‘is perhaps the best representation of passion to be found in Pasolini’s entire work’, but I would say he is rather the best representation of the phantasm of passion.<sup>40</sup> When sexual encounters ensue, they remain oddly abstract, and there is a surprising lack of enthusiasm on all sides: it is more about the idea of transformation and redemption through desire.

These encounters may trigger the transformations that drive the plot, but they certainly do not bring fulfilment. Pasolini does not tell us why: Is the bourgeoisie so damaged it is incapable of passion? ‘Something more stylised, archetypal and also more essential is going on here. Each character is shaken in their deepest being, by the presence of the guest, not simply turned on or confused.’<sup>41</sup> He transforms the family members’ everyday life so that it ceases to be everyday life: he influences everything – their language, movements and behaviour. For a while the guest brings his hosts together and inspires the family members to make renewed, though futile, attempts at engaging with each other. The father, for example, importunes the mother with an unexpected yet indecisive libidinousness; and, when he becomes ill after this failed venture, the daughter remains silently at his bedside to provide him support. When it becomes clear that the guest intends to leave again, the members of the family appeal to him to stay. They start to feel, think and also act. They deliver monologues about their lives, which they now see as un-lived and meaningless, and their uncertain futures. Their confessions resemble those of patients to a psychoanalyst, and the guest seems to inhabit the psychoanalyst’s position.

According to Simmel, strangers often receive ‘the most surprising openness – confidences which sometimes have the character of a confessional and which would be carefully withheld from a more closely related person’.<sup>42</sup> Because the guest has not come to stay, he inspires temporary, radical openness in the others. The choice they appear to face is between enduring the barrenness of their lives and overcoming their inhibitions and impediments. His exceptional state, which is removed from everyday life and removes others from their everyday lives, is meticulously staged. This state resembles the evenly-suspended attention of the psychoanalyst,<sup>43</sup> open to the unpredictable and seemingly incidental, free of any predispositions. The relationship that develops between the guest and each of his hosts parallels that between analyst and analysand.<sup>44</sup> The therapeutic potential of his mindset is evident. What ensues is the breakdown of each member of the family and the very dissolution of the family as a whole. All the members of the household abandon their assigned roles and move out of their familiar surroundings.

The very presence of a guest qua guest in *Teorema* opens up a space ‘of encounter, exchange and passage’.<sup>45</sup> The penetration into a territory secured by the master of the house is in the spotlight.<sup>46</sup> The

authority of the host and the claims of the guest negotiate borders and border crossings, which results in territorial disputes, new demarcations, and the discovery that 'that which is one's own is alien'.<sup>47</sup>

Firstly, Emilia, 'who has retained a traditional familiarity with the sacred', leaves the house, returns to her roots and, in her village, gives a spiritual meaning to the encounter with the guest.<sup>48</sup> Then the daughter attains distance from her idealized father by means of her adoration of the guest, but then she becomes catatonic and seeks to renounce the world in madness. In one of the last scenes, as if to check that the world is really there, she measures the distance between things. Eventually she is frozen within the confines of her stupor; she refuses to open her fist, trying to hold onto the images and objects of her life. By contrast, the inhibited son tries to free himself from his artistic ideals through action painting but fails because of his inner discord and lack of talent. As for the mother, she escapes into sexual encounters with young men, by whom she hopes to be reawakened or distracted, but remains trapped in apathy and unable to desire. Finally, the father suddenly discovers desire for the boy; the industrialist, the possessor of property and power, becomes sexually possessed.<sup>49</sup> 'Paolo's three key motifs of patriarchal bourgeois power which he has now lost all sense of – order, control of the future and ownership.'<sup>50</sup> He gives his factory to the workers and sets off naked and alone into the desert. His cries seem to express a longing for an archaic condition before language, laws and religion and for the desert as a space without boundaries where the future is open and uncertain.

All the characters break with their everyday routines after the stranger appears – and from their existence after he departs. Their desperate efforts to renew themselves in response to the stranger – in whom the moments of desire and the divine, sexuality and the transcendent are symbolically united – give the film a tragic note.

Pasolini has created a powerful parable about a spiritually empty society, 'which is bereaved of its soul and doomed'.<sup>51</sup> He once described *Teorema* as a 'referto', a medical report, an odd but fitting term, because it implies both pathology and the prospect of healing.<sup>52</sup> A truer life only seems possible in the transcendence of that which is, in the transgression of the everyday order. It is left open whether such existential maladies can be cured.

*Translation by Rett Rossi and Simon Srebrny*

## NOTES

- 1 Ingeborg Bachmann, 'Everything', in *The Thirtieth Year*, trans. by Michael Bullcock (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1987 [1961]), pp. 56–76 (p. 56).
- 2 Maurizio Viano, *A Certain Realism: Making Use of Pasolini's Film Theory and Practice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 207.
- 3 Marion von Osten, 'Gespenstische Stille: Die arbeitslose Küche', in *Die Küche: Lebenswelt – Nutzung – Perspektiven*, ed. by Klaus Spechtenhauser (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2006), pp. 131–47.
- 4 See Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude (Milan: Mondadori, 1999), pp. 151–55 or <[www.pasolini.net/saggistica\\_PPP-e-PremioStrega.htm](http://www.pasolini.net/saggistica_PPP-e-PremioStrega.htm)> [accessed 2 March 2012]. See also 'Teorema', in *Kleines Wörterbuch zu Pier Paolo Pasolini*, ed. by Peter Erismann and Ricarda Gerosa, published to accompany the travelling exhibition 'Pier Paolo Pasolini. Wer ich bin – Qui je suis' (Literaturhaus Berlin, 2009), p. 48.
- 5 Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'Teorema: mi sfogo un po', in *Il caos*, ed. by Gian Carlo Ferretti (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1979), pp. 130–31 (1 March 1969): '[...] *Teorema* è il successo di questi giorni a Parigi. In cinque cinema ci sono le code; è il terzo film della città per incassi, in una delle salette detiene il record delle entrate, secondo solo a James Bond; il vescovo di Parigi, Marty, consiglia il clero ad andarci [...] e le critiche su *Le Monde* sul *Nouvel Observateur*, sul *Combat*, sul *Figaro Littéraire* sono tra le più belle che io abbia avuto [...]. Questa volta, contrariamente al solito, mi sono sfogato di un sentimento di gioia, abbastanza misera, ma dopotutto comprensibile'.
- 6 *Teorema*, dir. by Pier Paolo Pasolini, DVD with audio commentary by Robert S. C. Gordon (London: British Film Institute, 2007), 15:25. '*Theorem*, like almost all Pasolini's films, ran into serious censorship trouble, for moments of nudity, for its sexually explicit story, for its Biblical allusions. It was prosecuted and tried in a court in Venice for obscenity in 1968 and 1969. Like his 1964 *Gospel According to Matthew*, it was awarded a Catholic film prize – the OCIC prize – at the '68 Venice festival, only for the Vatican and even the Pope John VI himself to intervene to denounce the film and for the Vatican newspaper to put it on its 'excluded' list of films.' I thank Robert Gordon for sending me the script of his commentary.
- 7 Friedrich Wolfzettel, 'Pasolinis *Teorema*: Theater der Stille im Schnittpunkt der Traditionen', *Romanische Forschungen*, 118 (2006), pp. 33–49 (p. 37).
- 8 Pasolini himself wrote that the sequence of scenes was arbitrary: 'Questa sera è precedente o seguente al giorno in cui è accaduto il fatto dell'Emilia? Può essere precedente o seguente: ciò non ha alcuna importanza' (Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Teorema*, in *Romanzi e racconti*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1998), II, p. 913).
- 9 *Teorema*, DVD commentary at 1:32. Edgar J. Bauer discusses the Biblical allusions in *Teorema* in his 'Sexuality and the Snares of Patriarchy: On Pier Paolo Pasolini's Parable *Teorema*', <[www2.hu-berlin.de/sexology/BIB/bauer24.htm](http://www2.hu-berlin.de/sexology/BIB/bauer24.htm)> [accessed 3 April 2011].

- 10 *Teorema*, DVD commentary at 1:52.
- 11 Alfred Schütz and Thomas Luckmann, *Strukturen der Lebenswelt*, 2 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979), I, p. 29 (translation by R.R. and S.S.).
- 12 Dimitri Liebsch, 'Aporien des Alltäglichen', <[www.dgae.de/downloads/Dimitri\\_Liebsch.pdf](http://www.dgae.de/downloads/Dimitri_Liebsch.pdf)> [accessed 13 August 2011], pp. 1–10 (p. 8) (translation by R.R and S.S.).
- 13 Konrad Paul Liessmann, *Das Universum der Dinge: Zur Ästhetik des Alltäglichen* (Vienna: Paul Zsolnay Verlag, 2010), p. 29–31 (translation by R.R and S.S.).
- 14 Konrad Paul Liessman, 'Die schönen Dinge. Über Ästhetik und Alltagserfahrung', lecture at the conference 'Ästhetik und Alltagserfahrung', Jena 2008, <[www.dgae.de/downloads/Konrad\\_Paul\\_Liebsmann.pdf](http://www.dgae.de/downloads/Konrad_Paul_Liebsmann.pdf)> [accessed 3 April 2011] (p. 4) (translation by R.R and S.S.).
- 15 See Pasolini, *Teorema*, p. 901.
- 16 A stranger who turns up as a visitor becomes a guest if welcomed and taken in by a host. In this essay, I talk about the mysterious stranger first as a stranger and later as a guest. See Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 83, for the distinction between visitor and guest. For a discussion of the relationship between hospitality and protection in the biblical story of Lot and his daughters, see pp. 151–55.
- 17 Pasolini, *Teorema*, p. 905: 'Straordinario prima di tutto per bellezza, una bellezza così eccezionale da riuscire quasi di scandaloso contrasto con tutti gli altri presenti. Anche osservandolo bene, infatti, lo si direbbe uno straniero, non solo per la sua alta statura e il colore azzurro dei suoi occhi, ma perché è così completamente privo di mediocrità, di riconoscibilità e di volgarità, da non poterlo nemmeno pensare come un ragazzo appartenente a una famiglia piccolo borghese italiana. Non si potrebbe neanche dire, d'altra parte, che egli abbia la sensualità innocente e la grazia di un ragazzo del popolo ... Egli è insomma socialmente misterioso'.
- 18 In his astute essay, Viano warns against concluding that the guest is only to be seen as a divine or messianic figure: 'The abundance of biblical references, for example, is a symptom of Pasolini's idiolectical use of religious material and must not lead one to the categorical conclusion that the mysterious visitor is either God of the Old Testament or the Messiah of Christianity' (*A Certain Realism*, p. 201).
- 19 Incidentally, the messianic expectation is not necessarily the expectation of an incarnate being; it can also entail a more peaceful empire or an altered world and thus embody a utopian idea. See Gerhard Hotze, *Jesus als Gast: Studien zu einem christologischen Leitmotiv im Lukasevangelium* (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 2007), p. 16.
- 20 *Teorema*, DVD commentary at 9:52.
- 21 Festivities also mark the suspension of everyday life. See Odo Marquard, 'Mora-torium des Alltags: Eine kleine Philosophie des Festes', in *Skepsis und Zustimmung: Philosophische Studien* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1994), pp. 59–69.

- 22 For a post-colonial theory of the stranger and a discussion of the relationship between alien and stranger, see Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounter: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 3–9. As she notes, '[o]thers are recognised as strangers by those who inhabit a given space, who "make" it their own' (p. 25).
- 23 See Yoshiki Koda, 'Synthese von Nähe und Ferne: Kulturhistorische Überlegungen zu drei Modellen der Gastfreundschaft im europäischen Mittelalter', in *Figuren des Transgressiven – Das Ende und der Gast*, ed. by Kanichiro Omiya (Munich: Iudicum, 2009), pp. 235–51 (p. 240).
- 24 Burkhard Liebsch, 'Inspirierte Gastlichkeit in kulturellen Lebensformen: Levinas zwischen Religion und Politik', in *Theologie und Philosophie*, 82 (2007), pp. 495–514; see particularly p. 514.
- 25 See Burkhard Liebsch, *Für eine Kultur der Gastlichkeit* (Freiburg: Karl Alber, 2008), pp. 144–45.
- 26 Georg Simmel, 'The Stranger', trans. by Kurt Wolff, in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* (New York: Free Press, 1950 [1908]), pp. 402–08 (p. 403).
- 27 *Ibid.*, p. 404.
- 28 *Ibid.*
- 29 As Wolfgang Velleur explains, indifference is a state of mind that does not judge and does not manifest strong emotion, either positive or negative, in response to events, persons or things. See Wolfgang Velleur, *Die Bedeutung der Gleichgültigkeit in der Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Münster: LitVerlag, 1989), p. 11.
- 30 Evi Fountoulakis and Boris Previšić, 'Gesetz, Politik und Erzählung der Gastlichkeit', in *Der Gast als Fremder: Narrative Alterität in der Literatur*, ed. by Evi Fountoulakis and Boris Previšić (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2011), pp. 7–27 (p. 11).
- 31 The hidden domain of the melodrama is mute; character is indicated through silence and positioning in space. See Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama and the Mode of Excess* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 16–22. On Pasolini and the American melodrama, see also Angelo Restivo, *The Cinema of Economic Miracles: Visuality and Modernisation in the Italian Art Film* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 86–87.
- 32 The fashion designer Roberto Capucci designed the costumes for the women in *Teorema*. The sculptural clothes he created were famous for appearing almost independent of the bodies within. See Sylvia Ferino Pagden, 'Aus Capuccis Werkstatt', in *Robe & Rüstung*, ed. by Museum Tinguely (Basel: Kehrer Verlag, 2009), pp. 141–44.
- 33 *Teorema*, DVD commentary at 8:54.
- 34 Pasolini, *Teorema*, pp. 905–06 and 944.
- 35 Pasolini writes of 'il sesso sacro dell'ospite' (the sacred sex of the guest) of 'il suo grembo è immacolato e potente' (his womb is immaculate and potent) (*ibid.*, pp. 907 and 949).
- 36 See *ibid.*, p. 950: 'Ma egli le sorride, paterno e materno [...]'.  
 37 Restivo, *The Cinema of Economic Miracles*, p. 91.

- 38 Malte Krüger, 'Teorema – Geometrie der Liebe', undated <[www.filmzentrale.com/rezis2/teoremamk.htm](http://www.filmzentrale.com/rezis2/teoremamk.htm)> [accessed 2 September 2011].
- 39 I would argue that this noncommittal state of mind and the motif of the guest relate to a strand in modern literature and film. See, for example, Albert Camus, 'L'hôte' in *L'Exil et le Royaume* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973 [1957]), and Matilde Nardelli, 'Between Stillness and Movement: Boredom, Photography and Time in Michelangelo Antonioni's *L'Eclisse*', *Object*, 7 (2004–05), pp. 82–95 (p. 84).
- 40 Viano, *A Certain Realism*, p. 202.
- 41 *Teorema*, DVD commentary at 9:31.
- 42 Simmel, 'The Stranger', p. 404.
- 43 Fountoulakis and Previšić, 'Gesetz, Politik und Erzählung der Gastlichkeit', p. 10.
- 44 See Sigmund Freud, 'Recommendations to Physicians Practising Psycho-Analysis (1912)', in *Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. by James Strachey, 24 vols (London: Vintage Books, 2001), xii: *Case History of Schreber, Papers on Technique, and Other Works (1911-1913)*, pp. 111–13: 'The technique however is a very simple one. As we shall see, it rejects the use of any special expedient (even that of taking notes). It consists simply in not directing one's notice to anything in particular and in maintaining the same 'evenly-suspended attention' (as I have called it) in the face of all that one hears. In this way we spare ourselves a strain on our attention, which could not in any case be kept up for several hours daily, and we avoid a danger, which is inseparable from the exercise of deliberate attention. For as soon as anyone deliberately concentrates his attention to a certain degree, he begins to select from material before him; one point will be fixed in his mind with particular clearness and some other will be correspondingly disregarded, and in making this selection he will be following his expectations or inclinations. This, however, is precisely what must not be done. In making the selection, if he follows his expectations he is in danger of never finding anything but what he already knows; and if he follows his inclinations he will certainly falsify what he may perceive. It must not be forgotten that the things one hears are for the most part things whose meaning is only recognized later on' (pp. 111–12).
- 45 Michael Wetzell, 'Die Figur des Gastes als Erscheinung und Heimsuchung: Jenseits von Feind- und Freundschaft', in *Figuren des Transgressiven – das Ende und der Gast*, ed. by Kanichiro Omiya (Munich: Iudicum, 2009), pp. 135–55 (p. 135).
- 46 See *ibid.*, p. 135.
- 47 *Ibid.*, p. 155.
- 48 *Kleines Wörterbuch zu Pier Paolo Pasolini*, p. 48 (translation by R.R and S.S.).
- 49 The guest is constituted not as an identity but as an alterity; this resonates with Pasolini's ideas about homosexuality.
- 50 *Teorema*, DVD commentary at 42:40.
- 51 See *Kleines Wörterbuch zu Pier Paolo Pasolini*, p. 48 (translation by R.R and S.S.).
- 52 Pasolini, *Teorema*, p. 901: 'il nostro, più che un racconto, è quello che nelle

scienze si chiama “referto”: esso è dunque molto informativo; perciò, tecnicamente, il suo aspetto, più che quello del “messaggio”, è quello del “codice”.

Claudia Peppel, 'The Guest: Transfiguring Indifference in *Teorema*', in *The Scandal of Self-Contradiction: Pasolini's Multistable Subjectivities, Geographies, Traditions*, ed. by Luca Di Blasi, Manuele Gragnolati, and Christoph F. E. Holzhey, *Cultural Inquiry*, 6 (Vienna: Turia + Kant, 2012), pp. 105–16 <[https://doi.org/10.37050/ci-06\\_06](https://doi.org/10.37050/ci-06_06)>

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