

PASOLINI'S ANTI-RELATIONALITY

PORCILE AND THE NEGATIVE TURN IN QUEER THEORY

In this article I will propose a reading of *Porcile* which underlines the connections between Pasolini's aesthetics and the so-called negative turn in queer theory, which stems from Leo Bersani's and Lee Edelman's work. In this reading I will take into consideration both versions of *Porcile*: the play, written in 1967, and the movie, released at the Venice Film Festival in 1969. Not only will I analyse some aspect of Pasolini's work in light of contemporary theoretical debates, but I will also underline the potential that Pasolini's work has for solving some of the aporias that emerged concomitantly to the negative turn in queer theory, especially in relation to issues of political viability. Thus, while reading *Porcile* through queer theory might allow us to understand better the complex ways in which aesthetics intersect with politics and sexuality in Pasolini's late work, reading queer theory through Pasolini might allow us to focus on what is really at stake with controversial notions such as anti-sociality and 'no future'.

At the MLA convention in 2005 Robert Caserio organised the now infamous panel 'The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory'.¹ The aim of the panel was to re-assess Leo Bersani's anti-relational argument: that is, the framing of queerness in terms of a 'politically unacceptable' opposition to community, which characterises Bersani's argumentative thread from *The Freudian Body* to 'Is the Rectum a Grave?' and to *Homos*.² More specifically, what animated the idea of this panel was the possibility to explore further Bersani's argument that "'homo-ness [...] necessitates a massive redefining of relationality", and that it instances "a potentially revolutionary inaptitude - perhaps inherent in gay desire - for sociality as it is known".³ In the introductory remarks to the publication of this debate Caserio underlines that, in a time when the LGBT agenda seems preoccupied only with providing a socially acceptable and antiseptic image of itself - the image of the potentially good parent, of the potentially good husband and wife - what remains unexplored is the space for questioning the shortcomings of sociality per se.

Bersani's original aim had been to rediscover a concept of 'homosexuality as truly disruptive - as a *force* not limited to the modest goals of tolerance for diverse lifestyles'.⁴ In Bersani's account, gay ethics lies in the homosexual capacity to disturb the normative constitution of the neo-liberal social order, which is characterised by consensus and normative inclusion. Thus, in an age of the logic of deceitful acceptance of diversity, if anything ethical about gayness should be politically mobilised, it is surely its anti-communitarian mode of relationality, which materialises in gay self-shattering desire and in the marginal positionality of the homosexual within a neoliberal and hetero-normative social order. The occasion for reconsidering Bersani's ideas was offered by Lee Edelman's re-working of the antisocial thesis in *No Future. Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, published in 2004, in which Edelman proposes that queerness should embrace rather than reject the

1 See Robert Caserio, 'The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory', in PMLA, 121.3 (2006): 819-36.

2 See Leo Bersani, *The Freudian Body: Psychoanalysis and Art* (New York: Columbia University, 1986), idem, 'Is the Rectum a Grave?', *October*, 43 (Winter 1987), 197-222, and idem, *Homos* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

3 Caserio, p. 819.

4 Bersani, *Homos*, p. 76.

homophobic stigmatization of the homosexual as non-reproductive.⁵

The panel, whose participants were Jack Halberstam, José Esteban Muñoz, Tim Dean and Edelman himself, focused on the viability of Bersani's anti-relationality as a theoretical and political standpoint. While Edelman reposed the importance of maintaining the queer in a structurally antagonistic position with respect to the constitution of the social, Halberstam proposed a different canon of antagonism, and Muñoz and Dean argued for the necessity to move beyond anti-sociality. Specifically, Halberstam called for an opening up of the 'male-oriented' archive of the antisocial theorists - what he calls 'a well-defined canon of gay male aesthetic production by Genet, Proust, and others'⁶ - while Muñoz and Dean focused on the necessity to relocate queerness on the horizon of the future. More specifically, reiterating his argument in *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz rejects *in toto* anti-relationality, positioning 'queerness as collectivity', and establishes that 'queerness is primarily about futurity'.⁷ Such utopian logic of a 'queer future to come' is then mobilised in order 'to combat the devastating logic of the here and now, in which nothing exists outside the current moment and which naturalizes cultural logics like capitalism and heteronormativity'.⁸ With a slightly different strategic move, while recognising the importance of anti-relationality as a first step in an alternative conception of social kinship, Dean promptly re-affirms futurity and becoming in the following part of his critical model, arguing that 'the second corrective step is to trace new forms of sociability, new ways of being together'.⁹ Thus, from slightly different standpoint (Muñoz from a firm political belief of a queer future to come, Dean on a reformist politics rooted in the desire to 'correct' the social order as we know it) both theorists proclaim the necessity to surpass anti-relationality.

In what follows I propose to read Pasolini's *Porcile* both in light of this debate and as a tool for revising some of its short-comings. After reading the late Pasolini as an early champion of aesthetic and political anti-relationality, I will analyse *Porcile* as a text that allows us to glimpse potential forms of life and being that escape the endorsement of queerness in any affirmative or reparative way. What I seek to illustrate is that, far from being the devastating logic of the here and now as suggested by Muñoz, anti-relationality is a strategy which might allow agency and potentiality beyond the limits of an affirmative endorsement of the given. Thus, while Muñoz's and Dean's arguments presuppose a subject who can rationally trace forms of sociability based on a substantive and affirmative conception of queerness, Pasolini's anti-sociality and his negativity suggest the idea that queerness should never define what an identity is, nor endorse the social in an affirmative way, but it should rather aim to disrupt and contest existing identities and normative forms of relationality.

Any discussion of Pasolini's anti-relationality should start from distinguishing an early Pasolini from a late Pasolini. We might note that the residues of a negative thought and of an antisocial ethos emerge with an eruptive force in his work of the late 1960s and early 1970s, especially in *Porcile*, *Scritti corsari*, *Lettere luterane*, *Petrolio*, and *Salò*. Here the rejection of the present - of the historical present of modernised Italy - acquires a precise aesthetic and ideological physiognomy. While his postwar work is scattered with images of the

5 See Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

6 Halberstam in Caserio, p. 823.

7 Muñoz in Caserio, p. 825.

8 Muñoz in Caserio, p. 825.

9 Dean quoted in Caserio, p. 827.

pastoral Friulian countryside and the swarming Roman urbanscape, the violent light of the South, and the sensuous bodies of the sub-proletarian, his late works are characterised by a negative spirit that materialises in thought-images such as ‘void of power’, ‘abjuration of life’, ‘anthropological degeneration’, ‘visions of the Shit’, or the ‘disappearance of the fireflies’. In the *Abiura alla trilogia della vita*, for instance, he opposes the reality of premodern innocent bodies to the degenerate bodies of the new youth. As he writes:

ormai odio i corpi e gli organi sessuali. Naturalmente parlo di questi corpi, di questi organi sessuali. Cioè dei corpi dei nuovi giovani e ragazzi italiani, degli organi sessuali dei nuovi giovani e ragazzi italiani. Mi si obietterà: ‘Tu per la verità non rappresentavi nella Trilogia corpi e organi sessuali contemporanei, bensì quelli del passato’. È vero: ma per qualche anno mi è stato possibile illudermi. Il presente degenerante era compensato sia dalla oggettiva sopravvivenza del passato che, di conseguenza, dalla possibilità di rievocarlo.¹⁰

What collapses for Pasolini in the 1970s is the possibility to affirm the subversive potential of those forms of lives located at the margins of capitalist dominion, in other words those of the ‘ragazzi di vita’ located in the peripheries of the capitalist world, be it Rome, Naples, India, or Africa. Then, in a strategic move, Pasolini proposes a dialectical reading of such collapse, pointing out that, at any rate, ‘la degenerazione dei corpi e dei sessi ha assunto valore retroattivo’, in that ‘il crollo del presente implica anche il crollo del passato’.¹¹ The affirmation of life, of desire and of passion which characterises Pasolini’s aesthetics from *Poesie a Casarsa* to the ‘Trilogy of Life’ turns then into a negative poetics. Thus Rome’s empty and spectral roads captured in *Petrolio*’s ‘Visions of the Shit’ negate the violently bright city of the *Ceneri di Gramsci* and *Accattone*, and in the same way the degradation of the 1970s ‘New Youth’ negates the sensuality of the 1940s ‘Best of Youth’.

The point that seems worth underlining here is that, in a Benjaminian move, the abjuration of the present is for Pasolini dialectically connected to the abjuration of the past, and that this ‘cosmical’ abjuration is necessarily accompanied by the incorporation of a negativity that materialises not only as an ideological motif but also as an aesthetic one, as *La nuova gioventù*, *Petrolio* or *Salò* demonstrate. What Pasolini seems thus to realise and actualise in his late aesthetics is Adorno’s remarks that ‘in the face of the abnormality into which reality is developing, art’s inescapable affirmative essence has become insufferable’, and thus that in late capitalism ‘artworks became artworks only by negating their origin’.¹² Pasolini’s consonance with Adorno lies in their shared view of capitalist modernity as an entropic force which integrates every possibility to maintain a thought or an affect of the outside, thus drastically reducing non-normative aesthetic forms. Pasolini therefore suggests the necessity to avoid an aesthetic of affirmation (such as that characterising the *Trilogy of Life*) because affirming a body, affirming a gesture or a life form in the age of late capitalism, means availing those same historical forces which operate to erase the autonomy and the non-integrability of alternative life-forms. In other terms, abjuration is for the late Pasolini a way to abandon his early affirmationism and a manifesto of his late negativity.¹³

In this regard, the first striking overlapping between Pasolini, Bersani and Edelman materialises in their shared rejection of easy affirmationism and on a massive investment in

10 Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Lettere luterane* (Turin: Einaudi, 1976), p. 73.

11 Pasolini, *Lettere luterane*, p. 73.

12 Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. by R. Hullot-Kentor (London: Continuum, 1997), p. 3.

13 For a reading of Pasolini’s figure of abjuration, see Christoph F. E. Holzhey, ‘Recantation without Conversion: Desire, Mimesis, and the Paradox of Engagement in Pier Paolo Pasolini’s *Petrolio*’, in *Mimesis, Desire, and the Novel: René Girard and Literary Criticism*, ed. by Pierpaolo Antonello and Heather Webb, East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2015, pp. 233-52

negativity. This aspect has been distinctively underlined by Christoph Holzhey and Manuele Gragnolati, respectively in the essay 'La vera diversità' and in the monograph *Amor che move*. Analysing Pasolini's theatrical works and in particular *Pilade*, Holzhey argues that 'Pylade's position can be conceptualised in terms of the death drive in the formulation given to that concept in Lee Edelman's book *No Future*'.¹⁴ Gragnolati, on the other hand, focuses on *Petrolio*; in his words:

Nella sua rivendicazione di una posizione generalmente considerata abietta, nel suo ostinato rifiuto del futuro e nella sua paradossale affermazione di una posizione al di là del freudiano principio di piacere, la posizione queer alla Edelman può contribuire a riconfigurare in chiave politica la pulsione di morte che, a partire da Stefano Agosti, è stata riconosciuta come una delle cifre fondanti di *Petrolio* e che si ritrova in diverse opere di Pasolini, soprattutto dell'ultimo periodo.¹⁵

In order to further support this argument, suffice it to consider the complete rejection of any utopian and futuristic thought in Pasolini's late work, which is perfectly embodied in his claim that 'Non bisogna sperare in niente, la speranza è una cosa orribile inventata dai partiti per tenere buoni i propri iscritti'.¹⁶ A similar statement is then re-phrased, as Gragnolati underlines, in *Petrolio*'s Appunto 84: 'Cade però, nell'irrisione, ogni idea precostituita di futuro; anzi, se c'è una cosa che fa sorridere con un maggiore piacere interno è proprio il futuro. L'idea della speranza nel futuro diventa un'idea irresistibilmente comica'.¹⁷

Drawing on these stances, it is crucial at this point to explore the implications that the rejection of affirmative logics and futurity have for Pasolini during this period. More specifically, what is particularly interesting is the possibility to mobilise anti-futurity and anti-utopianism as tools for understanding the complex way in which the aesthetic incorporates the sexual and the political in Pasolini's late work. This move is also necessary in order to propose a revision of the critical reception of the late Pasolini which frame him either as an apolitical and apocalyptic intellectual. In this respect, the questions which I will try to answer are: 1. in what way can we conceive of *Porcile* as a queer text? 2. What does a queer reading of *Porcile* offer us in terms of a critical revision of Pasolini's late politics and aesthetics? 3. Can Pasolini allow us to figure a way out from the closure which seems to characterize queer theory in its dichotomic division between negativity and utopianism?

I would like to start answering the first question by looking at Teresa de Lauretis's attempt to define a queer text in the article 'Queer Texts, Bad Habits and the Issue of a Future'.¹⁸ In this article de Lauretis argues that a queer text is based on a twofold capacity to pose 'aesthetic challenges to intelligibility' and to provide an image of sexuality which goes beyond a normative idea of sex. As she writes, 'a queer text carries the inscription of sexuality as something more than sex'.¹⁹

De Lauretis's argument provides us with a first point of reference for conceiving *Porcile*'s queer textuality. In this respect, her argument should be read in relation to

14 Christoph F. E. Holzhey, "'La vera diversità'. Multistabilità, Circolarità e Abiezione in Pasolini's *Pilade*', in *The Scandal of Self-Contradiction*, ed. by Luca Di Blasi, Manuele Gragnolati, and Christoph F. E. Holzhey (Wien-Berlin: Turia+Kant, 2012), pp. 19-36.

15 Manuele Gragnolati, *Amor che move. Linguaggio del corpo e forma del desiderio in Dante, Pasolini e Morante* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 2013), p. 63.

16 See Pasolini's interview with Gideon Bachmann in *Pasolini prossimo nostro* (dir. by Giuseppe Bertlucci, 2006).

17 Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Petrolio* (Milan: Mondadori, 2005), p. 424. See Gragnolati, *Amor che move*, pp. 64-5.

18 Teresa de Lauretis, 'Queer Texts, Bad Habits and the Issue of a Future', *GLQ*, 17:2-3 (2011): 243-63.

19 De Lauretis, p. 244.

Bersani's discussion of aesthetics in terms of sublimation of sexual pleasures in his book *The Freudian Body*. Not by coincidence, Bersani uses Pasolini's re-working of de Sade in *Salò* as a paradigmatic example of a visual text which reproduces aesthetically the self-shattering pleasure which Freud calls sexuality by constantly replicating and dissipating it. In Bersani's own words,

Pasolini exploits film's potential for a vertiginous passivity (its eagerness merely to register) and then, having allowed his work to abandon itself to all sorts of submissive doublings and pacifying symmetries, he creates a type of nonimitative recognition which is his distance from Sade and sadistic violence. [...] The crucial, perhaps irresistible, and nearly imperceptible move by which art acknowledges its own procedures paralyzes narrative movement and dissolves points of reference in an ironic repetition.²⁰

Here Bersani theorises *Salò's* capacity to visually produce a 'sado-masochistic' aesthetics based on an open dialectic between the spectators's capacity to bear and engage with *Salò's* images. What I would suggest is that this sort of 'subversive passivity' of Pasolini's style is the queer cypher of his aesthetics, and that the onset point of this 'sado-masochistic aesthetics' should be traced back to *Porcile*, which could be considered as *Salò's* ur-text.

To paraphrase Bersani, instead of carrying us along in a sado-masochistic movement, *Porcile* absorbs the sexual within the aesthetic, or better it aestheticizes the sexual in a constant oscillatory movement. *Porcile* could also be described as a film about the the impossibility to escape sovereign forms of power in advanced capitalist society. This impossibility materializes in Julian's incapacity to enter history either on the side of the fathers, or in that of the students' protests. Instead of demonstrating with the students or conforming to his father's will, Julian decides not to undertake either of these possibilities. He rather prefers to disappear in the pigsty located in the forest of his father's villa, performing the unsayable act of having sex with the pigs. While the masochistic act (Julian's sexual intercourse with the pigs) remains un-representable, the film progresses through a constant movement of sexual opening and closing, of *dynamis* and *stasis*, which condenses for example in the continuous oscillation between opposing temporalities. The openness of the archaic desert is thus opposed to the closeness and the narrowness of the classical Palazzo, the silence of the archaic sequence (which, like the unconscious, operates at the level of the pre-linguistic) is opposed to the sinister wordliness of the modern sequence. Most strikingly, Julian reproduces this paralysis of movement in the continuous repetition of the same act: 'Le mie cinquanta parti conformiste sono annoiate. Le mie cinquanta parti rivoluzionarie sono sospese. L'insieme vuole stare fermo a godersi ripetizioni infinite di una sola cosa'.²¹

However, what most strikingly differentiates *Porcile* from *Salò* is the very possibility to conceive a movement from the inside and the outside, which in the latter film is negated. While *Salò* strictly entangles sex and power in a Gordian knot (in that sex is what power ultimately aspires to control after it has gained total control of everything else), in *Porcile* sex is imagined as something which carries the possibility to escape power. Julian's secret, his sexual attraction to the pigs, is described as something which exceeds sexual pleasure as it produces a tension towards an outside. As Julian tells Ida: 'Tu sai, ottenuto l'orgasmo, sparso il seme, il mondo si presenta sotto un altro colore'.²² Such an investment in imagining the existence of an outside from the social as it is known is a crucial aspect for

20 Bersani, *The Freudian Body*, pp. 53-4.

21 Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Teatro*, ed. by Silvia de Laude and Walter Siti (Milan: Mondadori, 2001), p. 587.

22 Pasolini, *Teatro*, p. 626.

excavating the political potentiality which is intrinsic in Julian's subversive sexuality.

In order to gain a better grasp of the aesthetic and political implications of this constant sexual oscillation between inside and outside, it is important to evaluate Julian's positionality within the narrative structure of the story. As we know, Julian is at the centre of a series of dynamics which presuppose a choice. He is the son of a very wealthy German industrialist who is expected to enter into business with his father, and to become engaged with and eventually marry Ida, the heiress of another very wealthy German family. Moreover, as an educated young man, Julian is also expected to take a position with regard to the turmoiled historical moment in which the story is set (the beginning of the students' protests in August 1967). Ida is a political demonstrator, and she wants Julian to participate to the students's marches.

However, in spite of these expectations hanging over him, Julian apparently defers the moment of choice, making both Ida and his parents question the reasons of this willingness not to choose. His father reads his son as neither obedient, nor disobedient; such a reading of Julian as 'neither nor' has become common in critical interpretations of *Porcile*, which have tended to focus on Julian's supposedly indecisiveness. What I would suggest, however, is that rather than not choosing Julian performs a masochistic strategy based on deferral of pleasure. In other words, Julian's decision not to choose is a form of 'radical passivity' which becomes a political tool for imagining strategies of resistance which can still escape power²³. Throughout the story, Julian's strategy seems, as in Melville's *Bartleby*, one of suspension of order, which reveals his willingness to not become complicit with power and to reject the logic which supports the social order that he belongs to by birth. The reasons of this choice are revealed, for instance, in the dialogue between Ida and Julian's mother after he falls into catalepsy, in which their respective descriptions of Julian never coincide with each other. As this scene makes clear, the failed attempt to provide a stable and recognizable image of Julian signals the impossibility to think of him within the semantic logic of signification. The failure to share a stable image of Julian demonstrates indeed his own untranslatability within the logic of the narrative, which might be called the 'strategy of the signifier without signification'.

In this respect, Julian's un-integrability in the story should be read as a figure of Pasolini's politics of negativity. Rather than an apolitical form of nihilism, at the end of his career Pasolini seems indeed to shift towards a politics of the not-to-be-integrated, as he suggests in his interview with Gideon Bachmann:

Faccio cinema perché se io credessi che il mio cinema fosse completamente integrato da una società che vuole anche un certo tipo di cinema che faccio io allora forse non lo farei [...] la società borghese amalgama, assimila e digerisce tutto, però in ogni opera in cui l'individualità e la singolarità si afferma con originalità e violenza c'è qualcosa di in-integrabile.²⁴

Pasolini's investment in the 'in-integrabile' provides us with a possible answer to my second question about *Porcile's* queer subtext. Julian's fight for his own singularity and un-integrability could be read in terms of the necessity to imagine a space of existence located at the very margins of the neoliberal progressivist order, that place at the threshold with the symbolic that for Edelman materialises in the death drive. Pasolini's and Edelman's stances overlap in their pressing need to conceive of the outside, which Pasolini represents through Julian's masochistic decision to be eaten by the pigs, while Edelman conceptualizes through

23 See, recently, Manuele Gragnolati and Christoph F.E. Holzhey, "Active Passivity? Spinoza in Pasolini's *Porcile*", in *world picture* 10 (2015), 1-10, also available online on http://www.worldpicturejournal.com/WP_10/Gragnolati_Holzhey_10.html.

24 The interview is reproduced in the documentary *Pasolini prossimo nostro* (dir. by Giuseppe Bertolucci, 2006).

his re-reading of the Lacanian death drive. Quoting Edelman:

As the constancy of a pressure both alien and internal to the logic of the Symbolic, as the inarticulable surplus that dismantles the subject from within, the death drive names what the queer, in the order of the social, is called forth to figure: the negativity opposed to every form of social viability.²⁵

Paraphrasing Edelman, we might say that Julian enacts the force of the death drive, rejecting what the social proposes as politically viable. His politics materialises thus in the attempt to break the ontology of the reality which he inhabits by imagining an impossible form of relationality. Or, in Edelman's words, Julian 'refuses the Symbolic logic that determines the exchange of signifiers; it admits no translation of its singularity and therefore carries nothing of meaning, recalling in this letter as the site at which meaning comes undone'.²⁶ In this sense Julian's claim is that of the signifier without stable signification: he refuses to be integrated within the bourgeois world that he belongs to by birth, and within the narrative logic of the story.

At this point we should ask what are the political implications of Julian's refusal of intelligibility. This is what I think remains at the stake both in the critical reception of Pasolini, and in the contemporary debates of queer theory. Common readings of *Porcile* interpret Julian's death in the pigsty as a figure of Pasolini's escape from political commitment. Viano, for example, interprets Julian as 'someone who wants out of ideological commitment' and who is 'disengaged from historical responsibilities'.²⁷ However, once we read *Porcile* drive in relation to Bersani's antisocial thesis and Edelman's *No Future*, we gain the possibility to read Julian's death in the pigsty as a performative act of radical political resistance, based on the desire to de-activate or to undo the logic of the symbolic order (the neo-liberal order of production, reproduction, consumption and progressivism). In other words, Julian's insistence on remaining a signifier without stable signified and his masochistic strategy of deferral of meaning mirror his desire to remain ungraspable from the Symbolic order. This emerges very strikingly in his final monologue in front of Ida, in which he says:

Io devo entrare nella vita, per evitarla nei suoi aspetti più meschini, quelli sociali, quelli a cui io sono legato prima per nascita... e poi per obbligo politico, conservazione o rivolta [...] 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.²⁸

Among the things that he lists as gifts are nature, the peasants, the orgasm, the different colours of the world, light (*la luce*) and the pigsty. Thus, Julian's abandonment of his social position and his subsequent sexual abandonment to the pigsty appear as triggered by the desire to find a space of suspension of normative social forces. As he says in another passage of his last monologue before entering the pigsty: 'questo segreto mi immerge nella vita. Sì, perché senza la vita, esso non potrebbe avere luogo, io non potrei avere rifugi, clandestinità, pretesti, silenzi e tutte queste cose'.²⁹ Or again: 'cerco, lungo l'orlo del marciapiede, e lungo quelle pozzanghere, piene d'una luce di altri luoghi di altre vite [...] qualcosa'.³⁰ This emphasis on refugees, silences and voids, this insistence on undergoing a

25 Edelman, p. 9.

26 Edelman, p. 35.

27 Maurizio Viano, *A Certain Realism. Making Use of Pasolini's Film Theory and Practice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 235.

28 Pasolini, *Teatro*, p. 625.

29 Pasolini, *Teatro*, p. 623.

30 Pasolini, *Teatro*, p. 625.

quest for 'something' which can potentially break through the dense fabric of the social as it is known reveals Julian's antisocial ethics. In other terms, Julian's abandonment to the pigsty represents a way of rediscovering the self outside the self.

Suspension, interruption, silence and void are indeed the terms which Pasolini, Bersani and Edelman all adopt in order to think outside the limits of a political order in which the space for otherness and incoherence seems to have been drastically reduced. The pigsty features then as a 'void of the situation', a term which Edelman uses to define 'the foundational negativity that keeps the symbolic from achieving self-identity',³¹ and Julian's sexual desire for the pigs precisely allows us to glimpse this un-representable void. Julian's abandonment to the pigsty and *Porcile's* negative aesthetics appear thus as visual signatures of this anti-relational inoperativity which converge in Pasolini's aesthetics as modalities of de-activation of sovereign models of relationality and subjectivity. This is a possibility which will always remain unthinkable, Pasolini seems to suggest, unless we allow ourselves to think in subtractive rather than affirmative ways. In conclusion, then, *Porcile's* negative aesthetics and Julian's anti-sociality keep open the idea of an outside even when it seems unconceivable to think about an outside. They point to the existence of 'something' that is still impotential and inoperative which awaits becoming potential and operative, as in a weak and non-teleological form of messianism.

Filippo Trentin
(Ohio State University)

31 Lee Edelman, 'Ever After: History, Negativity, and the Social', in *After Sex? On Writing since Queer Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 496-76 (p. 473).