

Perhaps it was because I found myself involved in one way or another, or more probably out of rage because I wanted to tear it from the literal interpretation which has disfigured that (apparently) incomprehensible “strophe of seventy times seven [thousand] violins and one large drum” the author talks of so sarcastically.

How and why Pasolini involved me in his story we shall perhaps discover in the course of rearranging a life (’s work) that—thirty years after his violent death—has already become mythic, despite being rooted in real life. It is a tale that the author served up with wholly unexpected means, as in the way he intimated to the audience in the prologue to *Affabulazione* that his tragedy “has an end but no beginning.” What he didn’t say there and then was that he was not talking about the play, the beginning of which he himself, the “shadow of Sophocles,” was announcing from the stage, but about his own very private story as a man and an artist that would, as initially prophesied, would come to an end on All Souls Day, 1969.¹

In this essay, I should like to relate as simply as possible that at the end of the 1950s Pasolini had resolved to express himself in a language² that was comprehensible to only a very few young people—a strategically constructed language with two or more levels of meaning. After the author’s death, the reader could choose the one that allowed him to coordinate everything from the perspective that the author had determined for his massively autobiographical narrative, which was finally attested by a suicide, presented to the world as *Preghiera su commissione* (Prayer to Order), and also in these

lines dated March 1969: “I have a poetic notion of the grass./And I know poetry’s excess./Which is why I have commissioned lines,/for my consecration (!)/... to pray in this sacred space/(where, to tell the truth, I don’t walk with bare feet).”³

The grass Pasolini talks about is that of the small football ground in Ostia where he “prayed” on the night of Sunday, November 2, 1975, and celebrated the myth of resurrection from death. He was thus following a ritual that he himself had ordered and described in advance: “By constantly making their presence felt, martyr directors [end] by their own choice when they finally get what they aggressively want: to be wounded and killed with the weapon that they themselves offer the enemy.”⁴

The fact is that Pasolini, a “martyr director by choice,” also prophesied when his expressive strategy would be understood as authentic and comprehensible—after he had fixed the year, the month, the day, and the order of events in the “cultural ritual” that would be celebrated in the *spazio sacro* in which he “would enter as Christ without taking off his shoes.” “As long as I am not yet dead, no one can claim to really know me, i.e. make sense of my action, which is, linguistically considered, therefore difficult to ‘decode.’”⁵

A reader who wants to unravel the “project and secret”⁶ of Pasolini’s death now, thirty years after it happened, cannot avoid testing the following three “working hypotheses.” After comparing the consistency of the ascertained facts with each other, he can make his choice. The first two hypotheses have been

¹ Cf. Pier Paolo Pasolini, “Poesie mondane,” *Le poesie* (Milan, 1975), p. 345. In *poesiamondana* (June 12, 1962) Pasolini discovers that he is forty, and prophesies: “And I/in arrears with death, before time/for true life, drink the nightmare/of light like a coruscating wine.” He is a latecomer for whose death? If we take the

thirty-three years of Christ’s life as a reference point, we discover that Pasolini is seven years “in arrears,” and at the same time seven years “before time”—starting from June 12, 1962, the date he wrote the lines—in respect of his “true life,” i.e. life after death (1962 + 7 = 1969). The circumstances that confirm this (admittedly unique)

interpretation of Pasolini’s announcement are numerous, including those compiled in the “Second Book” of *Trasumanar e organizzar* (Milan, 1971). Cf. also Giuseppe Zigaina, “Foreword,” in idem., *Pasolini e il suo nuovo teatro “senza anteprime, né prime, né repliche”* (Venice, 2003).

² Cf. also the introductory words in *Una disperata vitalità*: “Record of the pre-history in the /‘discourse’ of the current ‘jargon’: Fiumicino, the old castle and a /first true idea of death.”

³ Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Medea un film di Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Milan, 1970), p. 113.