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### **Because the Poet: Pasolini According to Patti Smith**

**Abstract I:** The transdisciplinary dialogue, the rebellious attitude, and the sublimation of dissidence by experimenting new forms as an act of hope are the key features of the relationship between Pier Paolo Pasolini and Patti Smith, who saluted the Italian writer as one of her greatest teachers throughout her entire career, along with Blake, Rimbaud and the Beats. From the poetry of *Babel* to the lyrics of *Easter*, passing through the photographic series *Pasolini es vie*, the eclectic American artist has never ceased to appraise the literary works and movies of this author as a constant source of inspiration, creating a bond that became very important to the audience but was never properly explored by the critics. In terms of reception, one should not forget that this original relationship also led many (especially outside Italy) to discover the figure of Pasolini. This article seeks to investigate Patti Smith's Pasolini and the works that influenced her most, revealing through an intertextual and interdiscursive approach how the poet contributed to shape the imaginary and spiritual vision of one among the most important lyrical voices in the world today.

**Abstract II:** Il dialogo interdisciplinare, l'attitudine ribelle e la sublimazione della dissidenza attraverso la sperimentazione di nuove forme come atto di speranza sono i nodi cruciali del rapporto tra Pier Paolo Pasolini e Patti Smith, che ha sempre considerato lo scrittore italiano tra i suoi più grandi maestri lungo tutta la sua carriera, accanto a Blake, Rimbaud e la Beat Generation. Dalla poesia di *Babel* ai testi di *Easter*, passando per la serie fotografica *Pasolini es vie*, l'eclettica artista americana non ha mai smesso di celebrare le opere letterarie e cinematografiche di questo autore come una costante fonte di ispirazione, creando un legame divenuto molto significativo per il pubblico ma mai debitamente approfondito dalla critica. In termini di ricezione, non bisogna inoltre dimenticare che questa originale relazione ha anche spinto molti (soprattutto fuori dall'Italia) a scoprire la figura di Pasolini per la prima volta. Questo articolo esplora il Pasolini di Patti Smith e i lavori che più l'hanno influenzata negli anni, rivelando attraverso un approccio intertestuale e interdiscorsivo come il poeta abbia contribuito in maniera determinante a plasmare l'immaginario e la visione spirituale di una delle più importanti voci cantautorali del panorama contemporaneo.

**Keywords:** Pier Paolo Pasolini, Patti Smith, literature and music, poetry, lyrics.

### Prologue. New Frontiers in Connecting Arts: Pasolini on Instagram

On December 11<sup>th</sup> 2018, Patti Smith posted on her Instagram account a series of pictures taken at the Pasolini memorial in Ostia, quoting some famous lines from *Una disperata vitalità* and commenting on them with a note to honour the poet's interartistic legacy, so significant for her life and her artistic journey:



Fig. 1. Patti Smith Official – Instagram Account (@thisispattismith). December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018 (<https://www.instagram.com/p/BrPkyegBirF/>).

Followed by more than six hundred fifty thousand people, the profile keeps track of Smith's reflections when she is on tour or perusing her private archive. The songwriter employs the semiotic space offered by the popular new medium in an original way, with the purpose of maximizing the quick communication intended by the social network (which basically consists of a picture or a short video with a caption) as a real "author space" called *thisis...* where she publicly shares photographs, little poems, notes, memories, as well as political statements.

This is, specifically, one of the three posts dedicated by Smith to the Italian author since 2018, under which one can find hundreds of comments from all over the world such as: "Your post introduced me to Pasolini, I did not know of him"; "Pasolini was brilliant and changed my life and thinking when I first saw his work as a young woman. He's an artist who has stayed with me for decades since, also because of you"; "Merci Patti pour cette promenade après PPP"; "Una referencia de sabiduría a un hombre con sus luces con sus sombras, gracias por recordarlo siempre"; "Ho conosciuto l'opera artistica di Pasolini grazie a Patti Smith. [...] Nel 1977 leggendo le interviste mi accorsi che citava continuamente due poeti francesi, Rimbaud e Verlaine, e Pier Paolo Pasolini". If over the years Patti Smith paved the way towards Pasolini for so many people, what is the real bond between the two

artists? The relationship reveals a surprising, long-lasting and transdisciplinary connection; but, before answering this question, we need to take a step back.

### **A Poet and a Rockstar, Under the Sign of Blake and Rimbaud**

Patricia Lee Smith was born a poet. As a matter of fact, before becoming widely known by the name of Patti Smith, the 'Rock'n'Roll nigger' or the 'punk poet laureate', and selling billions of copies with albums such as *Horses* and *Wave* that turned her into one of the most influential and critically acclaimed songwriters of the second half of the Twentieth Century, the artist from Chicago started her career with three collections of poems: *Seventh Heaven* (1972), *Early Morning Dream* (1972) and *Witt* (1973). These lesser-known volumes, published at the time as 'limited edition' to become a real memorabilia nowadays, actually hold the primary key to the poetics, the style and the dreamscape *entre les artes* that would legitimise her among the literary minds of contemporary North America. Raised as a writer in New York within Allen Ginsberg and William Burroughs' *milieu*, roaming around Andy Warhol's Factory and the Chelsea Hotel, Smith began to merge her poetry and music in the perspective of a 'performance', as retraced by her most authoritative biographers: "Patti's strongest suit had always been her ability to improvise; [...]. By applying this method with different combinations of poems and songs, she would eventually produce something as original as an Andy Warhol painting, in a different way" (Bockris & Bayley 1999: 105). Unlike other colleagues in the showbusiness, Smith's mass-scale success did not weaken the literary substance of her works but rather fostered it, setting up a constant interconnection between music and poetry whose originality was always guarded by the artist, who never ceased to write books throughout the decades not as a side but as a main activity bound to the music and not divided from it; this was arguably also a way to harmonize the inevitable contradictions between her intellectual authority and her commercial success through the years. Suffice it to recall the publishing success story of the memoir *Just Kids*, that won the USA National Book Award for Nonfiction in 2010 and the Sweden Polar Prize in 2011, being commended by the writer Elizabeth Hand for the *Washington Post* as "one of the best books ever written on becoming an artist; not the race for online celebrity and corporate sponsorship that often passes for artistic success these days, but the far more powerful, often difficult journey toward the ecstatic experience of capturing radiance of imagination on a page or stage or photographic paper" (Hand 2010).

The open disclosure of the literary interlocutors that dwell in her world does not shape up to be a "highbrow" display in order to embellish or to dignify her writings, but it implies a transcendental dialogue between the living and the dead to retrace the path taken by her masters and to establish a new dialogue with them. For this reason, the methodological framework drawn-up to address the question will make use of the studies on Postmodern arts by Frederick Jameson, Julia Kristeva's formulation of intertextuality ("any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another", Kristeva 1986: 37) and Harold Bloom's theory on influence, especially for what concerns the notion of *tessera* ("a poet antithetically 'completes' his precursor, by so reading the parent-poem as to retain its terms but to mean them in another

sense", Bloom 1997: 14). In addition, Walter Benjamin's concept of "dialectical image" (Benjamin 2002: 40) could be precious considering also that "art is derived from other art; stories are born of other stories" (Hutcheon 2012: 2) when the adaptation of a legacy in the present age is at issue.

Poetically speaking, Smith's tutelary deities have been Arthur Rimbaud and William Blake. The impact of the French *maudit* poets on Smith – an American idolization launched by the Beat Generation in the 1950s and brought forward by Bob Dylan and Jim Morrison in the 1960s<sup>1</sup>– was examined in depth by Carrie J. Noland, who pointed out:

[Rimbaud's significance for Smith] lay in the fact that he, perhaps more than any other poet, explored and exploited what is most poetic about poetry, what makes poetry distinct from other linguistic practices, namely, the extensive use of figures displacing elements from one semantic field to another. Poetic figuration is in this sense paradigmatic of the type of cultural displacements, odd juxtapositions, and forced ambiguities promoted by punk subculture (Noland 1995: 603)<sup>2</sup>.

While the poetical magnetic field of Rimbaud orbits for Smith around the pole of the visionary as an "arriver à l'inconnu par le dérèglement de *tous les sens*" (Rimbaud 2016: 141), something really close to the punk legacy of "disorder" or "unknown pleasures" that Ian Curtis would sum up at the end of the 1970s (Curtis 2014: 33-35), the figure of Blake circles around the pole of the visionary as the supreme holiness of poetry, the spiritual act capable of sharing the deepest dreams of life and sublimating sorrow, loss and ultimately death. In her 2007 introduction to one of the most widespread editions of Blake's *Poems*, selected by Smith herself<sup>3</sup>, the artist recalls the days of Allen Ginsberg's passing and reveals her true vision about the London poet, adding that her mother gave her *Songs of Innocence* when she was a child and then her father helped her to properly understand it:

<sup>1</sup> Dylan was probably the first author to ever name Rimbaud directly in a modern Pop-Rock song. Closing the side A of his critically acclaimed *Blood on the Tracks* album, the 5<sup>th</sup> stanza of the ballad *You're Gonna Make Me Lonesome When You Go* recites: "Situations have ended sad / Relationships have all been bad / Mine have been like Verlaine's and Rimbaud / But there's no way I can compare / All them scenes to this affair..." (Dylan 1975). The songwriter from Duluth had previously quoted the French poet also in *A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall* (1963) and in his *poème en prose Tarantula* (1971), as underlined by many critics (Shelton 1986: 333; Carrera 2001: 25, 52). As for The Doors, the reference book remains *Rimbaud and Jim Morrison. The Rebel As Poet* (1993) by Duke Professor of French Literature Wallace Fowlie.

<sup>2</sup> In this respect, it is also worth noting how "aggrieved communities can use the very instruments of their displacement and dispossession to forge a new public sphere with emancipatory potential" (Lipsitz 1997: 14), taking into consideration the state of poverty and hardships in which Smith was raised. For a broader look on these matters, see also Minganti 2002, Chiriaco 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Almost unnoticed by the critics but highly appreciated by the audience, this Smith's curatorship of Blake's poem for Vintage Classics – which followed the philological edition by Geoffrey Keynes – would probably deserve some attention considering that between 2007 and 2016 it was the most popular edition of Blake's verses among the English and North American youth. To testify that, more than ten reprints in ten years and the eyewitness account of who is writing this essay. See also: <https://www.finebooksmagazine.com/blog/patti-smiths-blake> (consulted on 6/05/2020).

When Allen Ginsberg lay dying, I was among those who sat vigil by his bedside. I wandered into his library and chose a book, a volume of Blake in blood-red binding. Each poem was deeply annotated in Allen's hand, just as Blake had annotated Milton. I could imagine these prolific, complex men discoursing: the angels, mute, admiring. William Blake felt that all men possessed visionary powers. He cited from Numbers II:29: 'Would to God that all the Lord's people were prophets'. He did not jealously guard his vision; he shared it through his work and called upon us to animate the creative spirit within us. [...]

To take on Blake is not to be alone.  
Walk with him. William Blake writes 'all is holy'.

That includes the book you are holding and the hand that holds it (Smith in Blake 2007: 11-12).

From prose to poetry, including the tribute of *My Blakean Year* ("So throw off your stupid cloak / Embrace all that you fear / For joy shall conquer all despair", Smith 2004), it is not by chance that the English poet and engraver appears in Smith's lyrics when the call to resistance and reaction becomes explicitly collective, like a hymn or an anthem, which everyone is welcome to join. In this respect, the most notable case is possibly *People Have the Power* (Smith's most well-known song next to *Because the Night*), where the songwriter tries to harmonize "innocence" (represented by the lamb) and "experience" (represented by the leopard, a variation on *The Tyger*) in a vision of universal empathy, love and social justice:

And the leopard

And the lamb

Lay together truly bound

I was hoping in my hoping

To recall what I had found

I was dreaming in my dreaming

God knows a purer view

As I surrender to my sleeping

I commit my dream to you

People have the power (Smith 1988).

In addition to that, taking into account that “the attempt to synthesize the highbrow and the lowbrow varieties of experience in America has always been a constant feature of the national culture” (Kroes 1988: 116) and that the Beat movement carried out the final “desanctification of exalted social institutions through the mixture of high and low culture” (Halasz 2015: 38), Smith’s refunctionalization of her masters’ lessons converges towards a proper Postmodern attitude as Jameson puts it, “fascinated precisely by this whole ‘degraded’ landscape of schlock and kitsch, [...]: materials they (the postmodernisms, A/N) no longer simply ‘quote’, as a Joyce or a Mahler might have done, but incorporate into their very substance” (Jameson 1991: 2-3). In order to provide just one example for this particular *modus operandi*, a telling poem by Smith is *Picasso laughing*:

april is the cruellest month etc. what remains?

brian jones bones, jim morrison's friend jimmi hendrix

bandana. sweatband angel. judies garland. the

starched collar of baudelaire. the sculptured cap of

voltaire. the crusaders helmet like a temple itself.

rimbaud's valise. his artificial limb genuflects (Smith 1973: 30).

Within a typical Beat framework (no capital letters, irregular punctuation, *enumeración caótica*, constant *enjambement*, catachresis) the writer frantically mixes layers of culture, using the opening words from T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* to draw the empty surface of our modern capitalist society and then she inserts elements to cram it, for what remains of the most emotional and creative souls (from Baudelaire to Hendrix) are just fetishes (a bandana, a collar, a valise) as if to say that also poetry has no way out of this reified world we inhabit.

For this reason, in conclusion to this introduction that retraces her poetics, another Smith's feature to highlight is her penetrative strategy of “Intermediality” – see the 1966 manifesto by Fluxus artist Dick Higgins and, of course, Pop Art – with the aim to enhance the message she wants to convey through painting and especially through a renovated concept of photography, whose “new meaning resides in those modes of identification which are associated with the Imaginary” (Kraus 1986: 203). So, in the age of the supremacy of the visual, reading literature can be more than just a private act eventually flowing into intertextuality: photography, fashion and every possible semiotic surface – from album covers to t-shirts – can become functional to convey a literary substance.

### Who's Patti Smith's Pasolini?

Lesser known within this geography of literary formation is the presence of Pier Paolo Pasolini, who turns out to be crucial in Smith's artistic path throughout the years. By her own admission, she has always identified with Pasolini's rebellious attitude, his political

activism and spiritual dissidence sublimated through the art-making process. This dialectic between the arts defines the work of the Bolognese intellectual as seminal in the second half of the twentieth century. Smith has repeatedly told the Italian press the reasons why she considers the author of *Le ceneri di Gramsci* as one of her most relevant teachers:

I think that one of the most important example Pasolini taught me is just not to fear using many different media to express oneself. He used poetry, film, activism and so, even though I don't work on film but music, I found that I lacked fear to express myself in several different ways through art, through poetry, through Rock'n'Roll, and infused activism within art. He was a very great teacher for me, for infusing activism within art and to feel that the art is pure (Smith 2012).

The importance of Pasolini, who was also deeply influenced by Rimbaud, was such that after the poet's death Smith – together with Mapplethorpe – decided to pay a visual tribute to him with an experimental two-piece photo installation called *Pasolini es vie – fuck fascists*, that portrayed her while painting a sun-shaped eye and a graffiti of the sentence on a wall, as a way to salute him as a warrior for freedom of expression<sup>4</sup>.

Before dealing with the literary realm, the core of our study, it is essential to lay emphasis also on the active role of Smith in promoting the work of Pasolini across the world in the last forty years. Indeed, the songwriter has been at the forefront of lectures, exhibitions, TV or radio appearances and events dedicated to the Italian author, among which: the organization of a one-week crosscutting Festival at the Auditorium Parco della Musica in Rome where she allotted many initiatives to Pasolini (including the screening of *Medea* with a commentary by her and Bernardo Bertolucci, and a reading of *La religione del mio tempo* edited by Pierpaolo Capovilla); playing a "Concert for Pasolini" near Udine preceded by a public visit on Pasolini's gravestone in Casarsa; making a pilgrimage to the Idroscalo (Parco Letterario Pasolini/CHM Lipu) in Ostia to pay homage to his memorial. Smith also gave the inaugural lecture at the Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò in New York for the most prestigious American retrospective on the writer, *Pasolini: The Poet of Ashes*, explaining in great depth the reasons behind the decisive importance of Pasolini in her life, an issue she reiterated in an interview for *L'Unità*:

Pasolini, like William Blake, was hugely important to me. He gave a new possibility, he was a good artist to look up to. A mentor, culturally complete because he knew how to build bridges between art, poetry and politics. Deeply spiritual and political at the same time. And then there was a sense of freedom in the way he used language and other means of expression, [...]. See, when I was a young girl, I had a strict religious upbringing and I stood up against it. Pasolini gave me a new interpretation of Jesus. Jesus was a revolutionary, the Jesus of *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* was one of the people, living for the people. I finally figured it out when I wrote *Horses* and the song *Gloria*: Pasolini opened a new road to Christ for me – Jesus as he really is,

<sup>4</sup> The diptych is now visible on *The Patti Smith Blog*: <https://patricialeesmith.tumblr.com/post/14326584492/pasolini-es-vie-fuck-faschists> (consulted on 06/05/2020).

not some kind of portrait imposed by religion. [...] In 1960s' New York Pasolini was considered a master by everyone. Going to see his films was a ritual. I remember once I went to the cinema with my friend Mapplethorpe, and everyone already had a seat in the theatre, Warhol and all the poets like us who studied him and drew inspiration from him (Smith & Boschero 2005: 19).

On the same subject, more recently, Smith made a significant revelation during the Italian Rai TV show *Borderline* about one of her most acclaimed lyrics:

The most important influence Pasolini had on me was to help me having a new perspective on Christ, as an historical and spiritual figure. I rebelled against my own church when I was twelve and, you know, I wrote lines like 'Jesus died for somebody's sins but not mine' because I wanted the responsibility for my own actions. But I didn't sing it because I didn't believe in Christ but because I couldn't find my relationship to him, and when I saw *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, [...], I finally saw Christ in another way: a revolutionary, a man of the people (Smith 2013).

The line Smith mentions, "Jesus died for somebody's sins but not mine" (Smith 1975) opens in fact her debut album *Horses*, defined by the critics as the work responsible for "the remaking of Rock'n'Roll from the Seventies" (Paytress 2010: 3) and ranked number 44 on *Rolling Stone's* list of "The 500 greatest albums of all time", by virtue of "the perfect fusion of poetry and garage band rock and roll [...] that belongs as much to the world of literary and cultural criticism as it does to the realm of musicology" (Shaw 2008: backpage). Given this, the awareness that Pasolini's art and thought have had such a weight on Smith's approach to spirituality and to the figure of Jesus Christ, a recurring central theme in her poems and lyrics from the beginning until today, seems to add another possible layer of depth to the concept of a milestone for what concerns the relationship between poetry and music in our contemporary world.

### ***Babel*, or Descending into the Afterlife with Virgil and Pasolini**

Patti Smith was among the first poets (most likely the first ever) to bring Pasolini into the North American literary debate by means of poetry itself. Indeed, the first significant English translation of Pasolini's poetry, by Norman MacAfee and Luciano Martinengo, dates back to 1982<sup>5</sup>, but as early as the end of the 1970s Smith had already dedicated a threnody to the Bolognese author. The last section of the collection *Babel*, written during the *Radio Ethiopia – Easter* world tour and published in 1978, contains many references to Italian culture and history, from painting to cinema (*florence*), from literature to Opera (*OPERA IS TRUTH AND CARUSO IS QUEEN*) and its final part is entirely devoted to Pasolini. The poetical epiphany of Italy revolves in fact around a rather extended "Rimbaudesque" prose poetry that proves to be relevant for our inquiry right from the very start:

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<sup>5</sup> Previous translations appeared either in periodicals or in an extremely limited number of copies not intended for sale (Healey 1998: 287).





Fig. 2. Patti Smith on Pasolini's tombstone in Casarsa before playing the "Concert for Pasolini" in Codroipo (UD). August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015. Source and credits: Centro Studi Pasolini – Casarsa della Delizia.

and the ruins of the peninsula among castles, "suspicious rivers" and the Neapolitan caves that immediately bring to mind the dark entry to the cave of the Cumaean Sybil, through a word combination which seems to recall the English version of the Latin masterpiece: "So ceased the rivers' uproar, when its grave Sire / Looked o'er th' expanse, and, riding on in lights, / Flung free rein to his winged obedient car" (Virgil 1908: 8). The setting makes way for the entrance of Pasolini, the main character and addressee of these lines, who descends into the Afterlife as a second Aeneas:

what is kinder more flattering than images  
released with a breath? a still? death frozen and flat in  
a dimension of shadow and point. or the final shots of  
pasolini mugging mineo in an alley. [...].

Italy (the round)  
for pasolini

pickin thru the ruins with a stick. the wet  
leaves against

my legs and the bottoms of my feet. in  
my pocket the silky

roll of my stockings. my stomach is  
contracting. the stones

are cold and wet. the rein of virgil and in  
the distance

another castle, parted like the scalp of a  
student, by a seizure

of mold. the quaaludes. the fluid muscle  
of the crowd.

the hot lights. action as a blade that cuts  
another slice. history.

limbs. nostalgic ruins in/ruin. the  
suspicious rivers

and the caves of naples. a ripple in the  
water is another rib (Smith 1996: 166).

The short poem opens with a dedication to the poet and an evocation of Virgil, who is depicted almost as a keeper of all the beauty

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the poem/maker film/maker is blinded by the bright night. he has  
gone underground he has gone under. somewhere a slayer  
goes undercover. fascist or lover it doesn't matter. the scenes  
of pasolini remain even as he is lowered. a flag of flies  
unfurl. over there, in the flowers, erect fellows playmate.  
their sticky plumage curdles the blood of observers (Smith 1996: 166).

If Aeneas founded a new city, Pasolini founded a new way of making art, based on his powerful and desperate vitality that consisted also in his *impegno* (not casually, echoes from Dante's *Inferno III* resound in "flag of flies"<sup>6</sup>). As a matter of fact, his legacy should teach us how to be free human beings and free artists, mixing the codes and the expressive media, crossing the borders of the genres and genders, dulling language conventions, risking one's own life to defend one's free – reckless, honest, dangerous – self. The wordplay "the final shots of pasolini" holds here an amphibological value, referring both to his last footage and the wounds inflicted by his unknown murderer. The haunting death of the poet has, then, a central role on the stage, providing the opportunity for a reflection about the eternal worth of real art, beyond the limits of death:

italy. how lovely you are. and how treacherous is your  
makeup. i am an insect, a movie star, where are my shades  
and my boots I am lost. i have taken a lot of speed and  
i can't bear to live outside film [...].  
the actress blows kisses to pierre pa-olo rising from the  
sea. victim of fascist and faggots and the purity of his art.  
waving goodbye. the thrust of his arm. the trust of his  
view.  
pasolini is dead. et morte. shower of petals (Smith 1996: 174).

The funeral scene seems modelled after the last frames of *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (1964) so that initially the poet becomes a sort of *figura Christi* who sacrificed for "the purity of his art" but then he resurrects *triumphans* among a "shower of petals" thanks to that purity.

### **An Underground Resurrection: *Easter***

In the same year Patti Smith published *Easter*, the best-selling record of her career, which was saluted by Dave Marsh of *Rolling Stone* with an article called *Can Patti Smith Walk on Water?: "It is transcendent and fulfilled, and its radiance must be honoured. No one else could have made this record [...]: no one else in Rock'n'Roll would have the nerve to connect Lou Reed, the Bible, Rimbaud, the Paiutes, Jim Morrison, Bruce Springsteen and the MC5"* (Marsh 1978: 33).

<sup>6</sup> The translation into English of the famous *Inferno III*, vv. 52-66, so dear also to T. S. Eliot that Smith was constantly reading in those years, always presents "flag" for *insegna* (v. 52) and very often "flies" for *mosconi* (v. 66). See: Alighieri 2008: 57. Furthermore, a possible reference to Dante here seems to fit perfectly within this Virgilian evocation of the Afterlife.

As the title itself clearly anticipates, spirituality was here meant to be the key theme of the work and in the liner notes of the album Smith decided to reproduce through a cut-up method all the private notes, quotes, references, visual and artistic fascinations that had inspired her for the making of every single track, thus creating a real Postmodern collage. In correspondence to the very opening tune, *Till Victory*, the figure of Pier Paolo Pasolini is once again invoked:

till victory  
 in vienna (wein) there is area that  
 surrounds and circulates thru the hotel de  
 france. the italian bikers. the shoppe of priests.  
 leather jackets made in heaven fashioned from  
 the skin of alain delon. here is the street of the  
 trucks. here is lantern row where hard bucks  
 lean and strut and pose for the passing of  
 pasolini (Smith 1978).

Almost as a classical Hymn to the Muses, within the same Beat configuration analysed so far, the passage of Pasolini sets the tone for the beginning of a poetic and musical journey. The syntactic overturning creates a hyperbaton and produces an effect of suspense that meanders through the verses until we discover the identity of the subject who causes the action in a Middle-European nocturnal underground atmosphere. This literary suggestion seems reminiscent of many descriptions from Pasolini's realistic novels of the 1950s such as *Ragazzi di vita* (1955) and *Una vita violenta* (1959), that in turn had extensively inspired the scripts of the director's first movies, *Accattone* (1961) and *Mamma Roma* (1962). Indeed, leafing through the pages of the English versions of the novels, translated and edited by Emile Capouya (*The Ragazzi*) and William Weaver (*A Violent Life*), both published in New York in 1968 – Smith's same *milieu*, let us not forget –, one may find such passages: "Meanwhile, Lenzetta was waiting for Riccetto and Alduccio, sitting in the dust by a low wall, dressed to kill in his velveteen pants and his red-and-black striped jersey [...]" (Pasolini 1986: 116). Or:

'I'm leaving. What's the use staying here to watch these punks!' Again laughing loudly, to irritate the others, he left the tent and started wandering among the attractions of the park. There were a few people in the illuminated grounds, some older boys with motorbikes, tough bucks, a bunch of bikers, and even more sailors. They walked in little groups, assuming an idle, menacing air, strutting, humming or trying to pick

up the girls behind the counters of the shooting-galleries. Tommasino imitated them, strolling among the pines [...] (Pasolini 1996: 17).

Furthermore, even though an English translation of *Le ceneri di Gramsci* (1957) would only appear in 1982, Smith's lines pick some poetic strings that resonate within the same frequency of *Il pianto della scavatrice*, especially in its nocturnal opening section:

Annoiato, stanco, rincaso, per neri  
piazze di mercati, tristi  
strade intorno al porto fluviale,  
tra le baracche e i magazzini misti  
  
agli ultimi prati. Lì mortale  
è il silenzio: ma giù a viale Marconi,  
alla stazione di Trastevere, appare  
  
ancora dolce la sera. Ai loro rioni,  
alle loro borgate, tornano su motori  
leggeri – in tuta o coi calzoni  
  
di lavoro, ma spinti da un festivo ardore  
i giovani, coi compagni sui sellini,  
ridenti, sporchi [...] (Pasolini 1976: 93-94).

It is perhaps not a coincidence that in the aforementioned interview for *L'Unità* the American artist mentions this very poem while talking about the dangers of globalised capitalism. Love and empathy are ruled out decreeing the supremacy of greed and indifference, in complete opposition to the concept of "Solo l'amare, solo il conoscere conta" expressed by the Italian poet:

It's true. I'm a moralist as long as I follow some indispensable rules, which are nothing but the basic teachings of Christ: to love each other, help each other, be compassionate

and let freedom rule. [...]. Yet one more lesson from him: he already knew what globalization was going to bring about. He was already frightened by the materialistic drift of our culture. A lesson to remember now more than ever. Our current society totally lacks morality [...] Just as much as it lacks the word “love”, something Pasolini was deeply committed to. “To love and to know count. Not having loved, not having known”, Pasolini said [...] Now the words of the day are: consumerism, materialism, sex, drugs, power, gluttony, greed, voracity. I know it’s easy to say that, but the only word we are really missing today is “love”, that’s the mightiest power (Smith & Boschero 2005: 19).

To conclude by considering also a diachronic specificity, these words show that Smith’s reception of Pasolini has deepened through the years: from a first “punk” reception in which the Italian author was depicted as the anti-establishment nonconformist artist, faithful only to the destructive purity of his poetry just like the French *maudits*, she gradually delved into the keynotes of Pasolini’s peculiar philosophy, his intellectual restlessness about modern times, his visceral spirituality. Accordingly, the powerful interaction between these two artists inevitably morphs into a living demonstration of their own poetry, their own art, and their own passion – a keyword for both –, in their struggle against and within an alienated and reified society. Lacan once wrote “I am not a poet but a poem; a poem that is being written” (Lacan 1979: viii): the artistic journey of Pier Paolo Pasolini and Patti Smith epitomises the very best of that sentence.

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