

Pasolini, Public Pedagogy, Subjective Presence

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I invoke the post-World-War-II Italian public intellectual Pier Paolo Pasolini, juxtaposing Pasolini's public pedagogy – his subjective presence always attuned to the historical moment - with a 2013 essay composed by contemporary U.S. scholars Jake Burdick and Jennifer Sandlin, who perform what I term discursive engineering, dismissing canonical concepts of education (without argument or evidence), apparently fantasizing that by changing what we say we can change the world. Alas, Pasolini knew better. No securely tenured professor, Pasolini risked his life to teach the Italian public, calling out the catastrophic path humanity has taken, specifically substituting virtuality for actuality, technologization that we imagine leaves us immune to the consequences of unbridled capitalism. Focused on Pasolini's unfinished novel *Petrolio* (petroleum or crude oil) and a 2014 film focused on the final few days before Pasolini was assassinated, I conclude this curricular juxtaposition hoping to carve out what Tetsuo Aoki termed a generative space of difference, wherein we might re-experience – even reactivate – an earlier anthropological moment when we were still – sort of – “human.”

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Introduction

The post-World War II Italian poet, novelist, filmmaker, journalist - Pier Paolo Pasolini - remains a figure of influence not only in scholarship but also among members of the Italian public. In fact, Gordon (2018, p. 227) suggests that while Pasolini may not be exactly “ubiquitous, he is nothing if not uncontainable,” in Italian now even an adjective: “*pasoliniano*” (Peretti & Raizen 2019, p. 3). Pasolini's name and work surface, Peretti and Raizen (2019, p. 3) report, in a “perplexing variety of contexts and discourses,” including those by Matteo Salvini, Italy's 2018 right-wing leader, who “used Pasolini's words on anti-fascism to attack the left.” From the mouth of demagogues to the walls of the eternal city: in May 2015, street art by French artist Pignon-Ernest appeared on walls around Rome, “always the same image: a Pasolinian *Pietà* in which Pasolini holds a corpse of himself” (Peretti & Raizen 2019, p. 3). Beyond Europe, Peretti and Raizen (2019, p. 4) note that “Pasolini was the subject of a comprehensive film retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 2013, as well as a wealth of recent conferences, exhibitions, and publications.”

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What Sartre was to France, Pasolini was to Italy, a public, indeed “prophetic” (Garofalo 2019, p. 167), “organic” (Garofalo 2019, p. 169), “mimetic” (Patti, 2016, p. 43) intellectual. Pasolini appeared on sports as well as literary and film criticism programs, always addressing a wide range of issues, both popular and esoteric, a public pedagogue who used television (of which he was also critical) as a “public tool of knowledge” (Garofalo, 2019, p. 169). By the end of the 1960s, he did seem a more “traditional” intellectual, by then “appearing on TV as a misplaced and obsolete *persona*,” painfully personifying the “inability to be a proper organic intellectual within a mass society” (Garofalo, 2019, p. 169). “Mass society” is a “people” *sans* spirit, dedicated to acquisition, consumption, sensory satiation, customers not citizens. Consumer capitalism, Pasolini complained, compelled a degree of conformity even Mussolini’s fascism failed to command, as not only the bourgeoisie but also the proletariat and the subaltern now “mutated” according to the “dictates of capital” (Williams, 2019, p. 136).

In his efforts to emphasize the organic heterogeneity of the people, including the distinctiveness of working-class culture, and specifically of subproletarian culture – the so-called lumpen proletariat – Pasolini expressed his outrage by eulogizing the loss. Williams (2019, p. 142) worries he was guilty of “reducing that culture and its political formations to a static – and itself ‘timeless’ or ‘ancient’ – essence under threat from a monolithic and incontrovertible force.” Rather than class warfare and the inevitable triumph of the proletariat, Williams (2019, p. 144) argues, the “veracity of *il popolo* (the people) [resided] in what he sees as its obstinate corporality, its fundamental bind to the physicality of human existence,” using “libidinal cathexis – including but not limited to its erotics – as a conduit to the continual activation of historical memory.” Williams’ insight stands, but it decontextualizes Pasolini’s embrace of the subproletarian male body, then a courageous enactment of cross-class solidarity, binding the bodies of old and young in search of sexual-spiritual epiphanies – and, for the boys, profits.

One cannot, of course, be a public pedagogue without a public. Especially in our era of social media, the public has fractured, splintered by political polarization, propaganda, economic inequality, social isolation, the latter intensified during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns. What we have now are social media influencers, not exactly public pedagogues but cultist figures who profit from the digitalized attentional economy, figures who have followers because they entertain, stimulating already extant interests not necessarily teaching knowledge of most worth, worth understood not in economic but ethical terms, social ethics in service to the public interest. In our neoliberal – one should say “necro-liberal” (Salecl, 2021, p. 93) – era, “ethics” and “public interest” can seem antiquated ideas, not exactly breaking news for K-12 teachers who find themselves surrounded by students submerged in smartphone screens not school, school itself increasingly structured by screens, certainly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Learning online then turned out to be not learning at all (Mervosh, 2022), learning now under assault in war-torn Ukraine, (Specia, 2023, A6), threatened everywhere by Artificial Intelligence (Huang, 2023, A16), specifically ChatGPT (Roose 2023, B1).

Despite present circumstances, we teachers continue to teach, steadied by resolve. Resolve hovers between hope and despair, a pair Roger Simon knew well (Pinar, 2015, p. 180). It is animated by what we remember – that educational experience can be sublime while contributing to the public interest – and what we foresee, the end of the species if climate calamity isn’t averted, war ended, injustice redressed. The embodied convergence of indi-

vidual life history with History intensifies the embodied immediacy of the moment, our professional-ethical obligation to teach the truth. We may have little time left to attempt to intervene in humanity's ignorance (inadvertent and willed), intervention that requires reactivation of the past, yes literally, as in converting pavement back to wetlands, industrial agriculture to national parks, ending fossil fuel extraction. But also metaphorically, returning to the face of the other, no longer mediated by the Medusa-like screen of the (de) vice. It means a poor curriculum, that is, one with minimal technology (both equipment and mind-set), attentive to the embodied spiritual creatures surrounding and within us, curriculum understood as a verb: *currere* (Pinar, 2023).

Teaching has been replaced by Ted Talks, entertaining, informative, formatted like fast food restaurants, reassuringly the same, never too much seasoning whatever the topic, and absent any calls for contemplation, critique, creativity. Those three require not a profile but a subjectively present person, an at least partially unpredictable creature with an inner life s/he shares, not a hawkler trying to sell us something. The ubiquitous screen substitutes itself for subjectivity when we become fused with it. If bored – our attention spans atrophy – we change channels. The medium is the message, maybe not entirely (as McLuhan implied) but apparently primarily, as cultures of narcissism – including “temporal narcissism” (North, 2018, p. 2) – require constant sensory stimulation, constant but never enough. The culprit is no longer the television; as mentioned earlier, Pasolini loathed TV, it was (after the radio) an iteration of technology which, he worried, threatened the interiority of fiction and poetry, the inner actuality his art referenced. I'm thinking both the size of the TV screen and the distance one sits from it establish some perceptual awareness of watching that discourages fusion. You remember you're watching the TV. But hand-held devices can suck you in, incorporate you within images and information that too often teach nothing, only ensure your absence from yourself and those in your midst. The content can be banal – or not, Pasolini is all over YouTube – but the medium (ah, McLuhan) almost becomes the message, a message that simulates sensory stimulation, even a moment of (illusory) satiation. We keep checking our phones.

Without a public to represent, politicians become pathetic performers, wicked Orwellian collaborators in humanity's spiritual self-immolation. Even scholars succumb, as students demand fast supportive service, accelerated by email, now almost endless feature of our professional lives, taking time away from scholarship, undermining the sensibility prerequisite to conducting careful scholarship. As conceptual products sold on the academic market – ah, www.academia.edu and the obsession with citation counts – there can be little enactment of public pedagogy, in what are still called “public” schools or even outside them, this latter expansive space where two prominent U.S. theorists of “public pedagogy” retreat, as I complain in the subsequent section. Pasolini fought to remain in the public sphere, first against being relegated to the status of an irksome ornament sidelined on the shelf, that before being violently removed altogether, assassinated in 1975. His unfinished novel – *Petrolio* – signaled both the absence of the public while pointing to its possible presencing in the future, a future found not in front of us, but in back, requiring us to restart a present now stalled, a pseudo-present profiled online, thus virtual not material, fantasy not actuality. Virtue is now signaled not enacted, substituting statements for actions, imagining that reality can be transformed by simply depicting it differently. I critique this set of circumstances in the following section – a critique of the Burdick-Sandlin conception of public pedagogy – after which I return to Pasolini and his performance of a subjectively informed public pedagogy, juxtaposing the two topics to carve out what

Tetsuo Aoki (2005 [1995], p. 310) termed a “generative space of difference,” wherein we might re-experience – even reactivate – an earlier anthropological moment when we were still – sort of - “human.”

Public pedagogy

Jake Burdick and Jennifer Sandlin (2013, p. 142) define public pedagogy as education that “operates” in “non-institutional spaces,” as “non-school” (2013, p. 146), thereby assuming that the “public” in “public school” denotes only the source of funding, not what the school was established to help form. And if “non-institutional spaces” are those that can be “counterhegemonic” as Burdick and Sandlin (2013, p. 143) assert, where exactly can these be found, as it is difficult to name a space in (post)modern life that has not already been institutionalized, if now under the guise of governmentality. Inadvertently I should think, it seems Burdick and Sandlin have banished public pedagogy altogether, no longer a possibility in school and without a home outside it.

Next, we learn that “counterhegemonic aspirations” require ridding ourselves of Western conceptions of the self; Burdick and Sandlin reject the proposition that education must focus on “developing individuals’ cognitive capacities,” or even encouraging students’ engagement as citizens, not even learning in service to becoming more fully human (2013, p. 145). Their issue with these canonical conceptions of education (and not only in the West) seems to be their associations with what they term the “archetypes” of “culturally dominant groups” (2013, p. 144).

It is not only “archetypes” and “culturally dominant groups” Burdick and Sandlin are determined to depose, it is the very concept of “human,” as they pledge allegiance to post-humanism, accusing the concept of “human” of rationalism and estrangement from and exploitation of the natural world, two of a constellation of concerns they associate with modernity (2013, p. 146). Many modernists have critiqued modernity of course – I think of the Canadian educator George Parkin Grant (Pinar 2019a) - but Burdick and Sandlin (2013, p. 147) manage to name only one: Henry Giroux.

The category of the post-human, we’re told, is untainted by the “cognitivist, rationalist, and ultimately humanist overtones that have largely funded educational theory” (2013, p.147-148). The post-human “embraces the monstrous,” and in so doing it “ruptures” not only “identity” but any Western conception of “self” (2013, p. 148). Burdick and Sandlin make these claims without evidence or argument, an irrelevant observation one supposes, as those (evidence, argumentation, observation) are among “cognitivist, rationalist, and ultimately humanist overtones” that are being “ruptured.” That everything is now “arbitrary” (2013, p. 148) is precisely what right-wing ideologues assert, making a mockery of ethics or veracity. Never mind that it is an assertion that undermines the veracity of own their assertion: it is, after all, “arbitrary.”

Burdick and Sandlin (2013, p. 154) seem suspicious of any conception of the so-called “critical” educator who is presumably an “agent” of “systemic transformation” – not because the idea is grandiose (certainly it is that) – but because it positions the educator as “key,” thereby harboring a “humanist, rationalist view.” While I am wary of positioning the educator as even responsible for student learning (Pinar, 2019b, p. 4) - let alone for “systemic transformation” - I can only lament the repudiation of educators’ calling to cultivate reason and transmit knowledge as these are, have always been, crucial to becoming human.

This perversion of public pedagogy proceeds by divestment, as the “critical learning” it presumably provides is, Burdick and Sandlin (2013, p. 157) insist, “free” of the school’s so-called rationalism, surely an unwelcome “freedom” in a society increasingly irrational, racked by right-wing disinformation, conspiracy theories, monstrous lies that would make earlier advocates of the imagination cringe. (Think of Kieran Egan or Maxine Greene.) “Embodied, holistic, performative, intersubjective, and aesthetic” elements are emphasized – Pasolini would approve of that list but not leaving learning “more tentative and ambiguous” (2013, p. 157). Learning that is *only* tentative is the last kind of learning needed in the face of climate catastrophe, right-wing authoritarianism, warfare, systemic racism, heterosexism, ageism, misogyny. Reason is not the only strawman that these advocates of post-human public pedagogy fabricate. Predictably the “modernist subject” has got to go, to be replaced by “interconnectedness” rather than “individualized subjectivity” (2013, p. 157). I wonder how can there be “interconnectedness” without singular subjectivities who are interconnected?

In addition to the individual person, posthuman public pedagogy also rids us of past “critical-theory approaches,” marred by their reliance on a “Freirian-style critical consciousness” dedicated to “rational dialogue and critical reflection” (2013, p. 168). In contrast, post-human pedagogies “rupture” distinctions between the cognitive and the sensory, thereby redefining “what it means to be critically conscious” (2013, p. 168). Burdick and Sandlin (2013, p. 169) assure us that posthuman pedagogy disavows those earlier approaches that still position “the human” at the “center” of “pedagogical relationship,” thereby rejecting “relationships” resting on “identities” or “subjectification.” One wonders what is then at the “center” of the “pedagogical relationship.” Oh, that’s right, there is no center and no relationship, only “interconnectedness.”

One way to understand the Burdick-Sandlin attack on canonical concepts of education is decode it as “largely symbolic, an imaginary resolution of real social problems” (Kindley, 2023, p. 20), an interpretation made also by Philip Wexler in his denunciation of the neo-Marxism of Michael Apple and others almost fifty years ago (Pinar et al. 1995, p. 277). The Burdick-Sandlin repudiation of rationality and dialogue, their embrace of the “monstrous,” could also function as “a surrogate politics”; given our collective inability to constrain capitalism or eliminate racism, critics target concepts they allege are associated with, even causes of, these evils, perhaps even considering this rhetorical tactic as “a sufficient political act” (Kindley, 2023, p. 20). In our era, simulation substitutes for action, virtuality for actuality, presentism over historicity, the latter of which requires sensibilities structured temporally, modes of being enabling subjective presence through reactivation of the past (Pinar, 2019a, p. 14-15). One way to understand such a praxis of presence is Pasolini’s portrayal in a film made about him.

A praxis of presence

Willem Dafoe plays Pasolini in Abel Ferrara’s 2014 film *Pasolini*. In July 2014 Dafoe was interviewed by Maurizio Braucci, who also served as one of the screenwriters of the film. Dafoe’s sense of what was at stake in his portrayal of Pasolini helps specify what I mean by the phrase “reactivation of the past.” As in the quoted passage below, “reactivation” is denoted in the gerund “inhabiting” which, in contrast to a “haunting,” is an act of imaginative agency, a “partaking” of the past (Pinar, 2019a, p. 17) that enables re-experiencing - imaginatively, obviously not empirically - what was. “We imagined the state of mind of

Pasolini on the last day of his life,” Dafoe told Braucci, adding: “So the performance was not an imitation or interpretation of who he was, but more a record of me inhabiting the actions and thoughts of a man that happened to be Pasolini” (quoted in Braucci 2019, p. 223.) Reactivating Pasolini’s past, if threaded through the script and personages portraying it – as Dafoe confirms – “changes your thoughts. That is the heart of the personal transformation that fuels the interior life of the performance” (quoted in Braucci 2019, p. 224).

Reactivation of the past, then, reanimates – restructures – one’s “performance” of the present moment. It does so subjectively, as Dafoe testifies, reconfiguring what, where, and how one thinks and feels, nothing less than “subjective reconstruction” (Pinar, 2019b, p. 9), an undertaking stimulated by “study” (Pinar, 2023, p. 35-53). Not only was the 2014 film made where Pasolini’s “real-life events” had taken place, the props were real too, as Pasolini’s “personal objects” were strewn about the set; Dafoe even wore Pasolini’s clothes, a little creepy for me, but maybe helpful in reactivating the man and the moment – plus items that “friends and family gave us,” “relics” even “icons” that had, Dafoe tells Braucci, “great power and magic, and help[ed] in making contact with the past. I am like a medium inviting something to appear through my committed actions” (quoted in Braucci, 2019, p. 224-225). Serving as a “medium” implies self-suspension, but Dafoe ends that last sentence reasserting his presence performed through his agency. He may have “inhabited” Pasolini, and Pasolini may have inhabited him, but Dafoe reaffirms himself with the phrase “my committed actions,” and also with the use of “my,” implying there’s a person in the present who takes “actions.”

So the fusion or merging with Pasolini that Dafoe describes is less mystical and more a provocation from the past, as, like Dafoe the actor, one is obligated (unless “possessed”) to return to oneself, to the present moment, to a “now” demarcated by its internal temporal complexity and circumstantial actuality. Asked how he felt “playing him,” Dafoe reaffirmed his reactivation of the past: “I didn’t ‘play’ him. I just tried to be his flesh, his voice, his presence during the last day of his life” (quoted in Braucci, 2019, p. 226). Dafoe’s statement makes clear that reactivation of the past is less recalling what happened before *from* one’s present positioning, in which case the past is confined to one’s memory of it, a past now relocated – recalled – into the present, implying no shift, no reconstruction of that present, only an addition to it. Rather, reactivation implies returning to an earlier moment – in Dafoe’s instance to Pasolini’s last day of life – through immersion in the past, its tone, mood, ambiance, its utter immediacy and singularity. When one returns, the present – specifically one’s present – becomes expanded, altered, possibly clearer, including its call to be present in the present. Dafoe could see Pasolini clearly now:

He was inspiring in his work, courageous in his life and a visionary thinker. He foresaw an anthropological revolution of Italian culture that is still happening. While many of his observations were specific to Italy, they apply to us all. The deadening conformism, homogenization, impotence of peoples brought about by the false freedom of progress – the culprits of television, consumerism, false tolerance, corruption – can now be joined by globalization, the internet, and multinational corporate culture. He fought in his art and life to preserve what is human and beautiful and that fight is still on. (quoted in Braucci, 2019, p. 226)

I focus on the verb “preserve” in that last line, “preservation” a concept that I substituted for “reconstruction” in the third edition of *What Is Curriculum Theory?* (Pinar, 2019b, p. 52), as in the present moment of subjective peril – when “profligacy” replaces sincerity and

authenticity (Pinar, 2023, p. 212) - preservation represents an enactment of reconstruction. As we slide toward humanity's extinction, preservation seems our last desperate (some would say doomed) move to make.

Few actors, I suspect, understand their characters as completely as Dafoe understood his. As a teacher, I keep my distance – yes, “non-coincidence” in service to “subjective presence” (Pinar 2019a, p. 99, 204) – but I, too, because I regularly return to the past (as in this essay), am acutely aware that the “fight is still on.” One arena – some would say *the* arena - in which combat occurs is the climate crisis. The Anthropocene accents the “unprecedented nature of the present,” Pinkus (2019, p. 195) points out, but it is “not reducible to a familiar vision of apocalypse or to forms of narrative – comforting in their repeatability, regardless of content.” Pasolini, Pinkus (2019, p. 195) continues, “profoundly anticipates the Anthropocene in his unfinished work titled, precisely, for one of the two major fossil fuels, *Petrolio*.” Over 600 pages when Pasolini declared it not quite half finished, had it been finished, Pinkus (2019, p. 198) suggests, “it would have been an epic and a Great Work, the term for a successful alchemical transformation, from a base to a noble substance,” adding that the “alchemical analogue is crucial for reading this text.” Pinkus (2019, p. 200) notes that in its pre-modern formulations, “alchemical transformations are also supposed to lead to spiritual transformation or redemption of the alchemist.” Likewise, reactivation of the past promises something less sweeping but still significant: temporally attuned subjective presence, one perquisite for public pedagogy.

“[A] rich form of stratigraphy, Pasolini’s *Petrolio* “embodies futurity,” Pinkus (2019, p. 207) suggests, while Luisetti (2019, p. 211) is sure that the novel “evokes a history beyond our comprehension,” a “time in which the archaic and the actual, nature and history, the immortal underworld and contemporary neo-capitalism, ungovernable matter and geopolitical forces [all] enter into unprecedented relations and produce disturbing assemblages.” Such a forecast of “contamination” sounds exactly right, as we experience, in our historical moment, in Luisetti’s (2019, p. 211) words, an “unleashing of mythic violence and archaic rituals, the metamorphoses of humans into uncanny monsters, point[ing] toward an apocalyptic mutation of capitalism and exhaustion of humanism.” The last thing we need now is characterization of that “exhaustion” as welcome, as somehow progressive, as Burdick and Sandlin proclaim. The “post-human” is no new beginning, it forecasts the end.

Certainly Pasolini anticipated “contemporary preoccupations – the centrality of oil [and fossil fuels generally], debates on ‘ancestrality’ in speculative realism, the return of animism in postcolonial anthropologies,” and he employed a “demonic technique” disclosing their “double nature,” Luisetti (2019, p. 213) points out, including those “irrational, oneiric, elementary, and barbaric elements” of cinema which, he (2019, p. 212) adds, renders *Petrolio* a “hypnotic ‘monstrum.’” Luisetti (2019, p. 212) also suggests that Pasolini has “explored, beyond Foucault’s biopower, a new form of power, for which what matters is not the difference between life and death but the articulation of Life and Nonlife, the human and the non-human.” He quotes Pasolini: “As with gestures and brute reality, so dreams and the processes of our memory are almost prehuman events, or on the border of what is human. In any case, they are pregrammatical and even premorphological” (quoted in Luisetti 2019, p. 212). But Pasolini’s tone is not (Luisetti again: 2019, p. 216) “pre- but post-apocalyptic,” one of “emotional detachment from this disfigured and polluted earth,” in contrast to the “redemptory style of most climate change activism and Anthropocenic millenarianism.” It is too late to save many species – mass extinction already well underway (Sengupta,

Einhorn & Andreoni 2021, March 12, A13) - but it may not be too late to save ourselves, that is, if we can somehow dislodge ourselves from this technological black hole that is the pseudo-present, restart time, become subjectively present.

Subjective presence – being present to oneself and others – takes different forms in different moments in one’s life, in different moments socially, politically, historically. “As an external witness to the [1968] student movement,” Bondavalli (2015, p. 160) explains, referencing Pasolini’s efforts to thread his subjectivity into his public pedagogy, “an intellectual must establish another form of presence in order to fulfil his critical role.” Bondavalli quotes (in 2015, p. 160) Pasolini: “He must somehow try to be present, at least pragmatically and existentially, even if theoretically his presence cannot be proved!” During 1968, Bondavalli (2015, p. 160) continues, Pasolini labored to “establish alternative forms of presence in consideration of the conditions created by the student movement.” It was not only these “conditions” but the youth themselves that mesmerized him; indeed, through cinema he created a “saga of the young,” as Foucault later characterized Pasolini’s cinematographic *oeuvre*, emphasizing with this definition “both the sustained presence of young people in film after film, and the celebratory approach characterizing their representation” (Bondavalli, 2015, p. 123). Initially enraptured, then astonished, Pasolini was finally horrified. Placing the young in front of our eyes – at times entirely naked in his films – astonished and horrified us as well.

By the late 1960s, Testa (1994, p. 183) tells us, Pasolini knew the “rationalist-Marxist vein had run dry and this shook his politics, which caused him to turn to religion,” acknowledging that, as Pasolini puts it: “In me, [ideological] uncertainty took the form of this regression to certain religious themes which nonetheless had been constant in all my work” (quoted in Testa 1994, p. 183). Not only had Marxism run dry, so had subjectivity, now sucked inside technique, inside technology. Pasolini knew:

It is not by chance that conformist and dissenters are equally deaf to poetry ... unless it is technicised, in the products of the avant-garde which says nothing of their existence as producers. If, thus, I can hope for the “restoration” of a true revolutionary spirit, extremist but not fanatical, rigorous but not moralistic, I welcome as a positive sign the appearance of a neo-existentialist poetry, which instead speaks a great deal about the existence of its authors: who are necessarily diverse, and thus a scandal for the conformists and ridiculousness for the dissenters; a crack in the “industrial puritanism” which the directors of Fiat and the young outside-of-parliament communists share in common. (quoted in Rohdie, 1995, p. 171)

Note his depiction of “neo-existentialist poetry” as testifying to “the existence of its authors.” In service to such testimony, poetry – not STEM – might be, in our moment too, knowledge of most worth.

In our era, who has time for poetry? There was no time then, either. Aghast at the accelerating totalizing instrumentalism of his age, Pasolini complained that (in Bondavalli’s words: 2015, p. 165) “action has taken precedence over contemplation, pragmatic goals over visionary ideals: *organizzar* (to organize) prevails over *trasumanar* (to transfigure).” Pasolini pressed for “creative ambiguity” over “revolutionary clarity,” that is, “poetic, rather than, political action” (Bondavalli, 2015, p. 167). For him, “neo-existentialist poetry” *was* political action. “Because poets speak from a marginalized condition,” he explained, “poetry maintains its performative function, even in a world that expects action” (Bondavalli 2015,

p. 168). In contrast to the “action” of 1968 – student protests that produced neo-fascist figures not only in Italy – Pasolini preferred the “absolute confrontation taking place on the screen [that] produces a scandal that destroys the bourgeois family. *Teorema* and *Porcile* indeed destroy the bourgeoisie, but they do so without subscribing to what Pasolini decried as “Fascism of the Left” (Bondavalli 2015, p. 168).

Pasolini knew that the twentieth-century crisis of European culture could not be solved in its self-presented categories. It could not be solved by a Marxist-minded resistance, but maybe by a constantly shifting style of politics, including one that affirmed the “authenticity” of archaic – pre-capitalist – civilizations, the reactivation of which Pasolini perceived to be a “defense against the present” (Rohdie, 1995, p. 100). Anticipating his own assassination, Pasolini declared:

Every volunteer who seeks a meaningful death “as exhibition” must deliberately present himself on the firing line: there is nowhere else where he can so rigorously carry out his course of action. Only the hero’s death is a spectacle; and it alone is useful. Therefore martyr-directors, by their own decision, always find themselves, stylistically, on the firing line, and thus at the front line of linguistic transgressions. By dint of provoking the code (and therefore the world which uses it), by dint of *exposing themselves*, they wind up by obtaining what they desire so aggressively: to be wounded and killed with the weapons they themselves offer to the enemy. (quoted in Greene, 1990, p. 222)

Conclusion and Implications

Subjectively present in his public pedagogy, Pasolini positioned *himself* on the “front-lines” of artistic and of social-political struggle. Each new poem, novel, and film contradicted another configuration of codes and conventions. By creating compelling transgressions which opened those “infinite possibilities of modifying and enlarging the code” (Greene, 1990, p. 222), Pasolini challenged the political limits, indeed the social reality, of his time, prompting protests – sometimes legal, sometimes violent. His artistically distinctive – defiant - emphasis upon missing moral elements of contemporary culture marks him, in Naomi Greene’s view, one of the “central figures” of the twentieth century (1990, p. 222). Solitary, resolute, utterly committed to the public whose absence he abhorred, Pasolini positioned himself, Maria-Antonietta Macciocchi astutely observed, at the intersection of “three great protests against the power of the state: political, sexual, and mystic” (quoted in Greene, 1990, p. 222).

It was Pasolini’s sacralization of sexuality, his divination of the subproletariat, his attunement to History, his compulsion to engage the public pedagogically that converted society into a classroom, defending by revising humanism – as would Kwame Appiah, Paul Gilroy and Edward Said decades later (Pinar 2009, p. 149-150, n. 3) - against its dissolution in neo-capitalism. For Pasolini, today’s post-humanism would hardly represent an advance theoretically or politically, only an admission of the absence of the human. In Pasolini’s cosmopolitan curriculum theory, history, art, and politics – not STEM - are central. In poetic, fictional, essayistic, journalistic and cinematic “lessons” addressed to the public he juxtaposed images exposing both Right and the Left as entangled in the very economic and political systems they claimed to critique. His films provoked viewers to question reality itself (Viano, 1993), in part due to his “incessant” use of “juxtaposition” (Ryan-Scheutz, 2007, p. 222; Rohdie, 1995, p. 123), what he termed contamination. His borgate boys – members of the lumpenproletariat – provided Pasolini opportunities for not only for sexual pleasure

but also for subjective reconstruction, affirming his own peasant past, his commitment to the poor in the present, to art's capacity to both represent and reconstruct reality. In so doing he affirmed our humanity, the significance of subjective presence in pedagogically addressing the public, citizens as educators and students participating in the complicated conversation that is History. The past is paramount, as a defense against the present, prophesy of the future, parole from the involuntary self-enclosure narcissism necessitates.

The prison-house of the present precludes public pedagogy, as we live in a time lacking both a public – in its place a marketplace (for Pasolini a place of pimps and prostitutes) – and pedagogy, replaced by propaganda on the Right, on the Left by conformity of another kind. Subjective presence is replaced by proficity, i.e. persons replaced by profiles on social media (Pinar, 2023, p. 212). In this era of presentism, narcissism, technologization, what's left of us becomes submerged in software, computer codes threatening to interpellate a (supra)national identity accented by avatars, passports replaced by passcodes, soulless yes post-human citizens of nowhere, fleeing the plundered planet for the Cloud. The prescient Pier Paolo Pasolini warned us, his own subjective presence professed pedagogically in poetry, fiction, cinema and journalism, testifying to the crisis of the present, prophesizing the catastrophe to come. "It is the most eternal irony of humankind," Ece Temelkuran (2020, p. 84) points out, "that it's history and evidence is provided by those who are hated most, yet it is those same individuals who refuse to give up believing in humans." Temelkuran (2020, p. 84) is speaking of everyone "who work[s] with words ... who record the definition of the human and therefore build humankind's image for itself," an apt depiction of Pasolini, of subjectively-present public pedagogues everywhere.

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