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**ANIMALS AND ANIMALITY IN PASOLINI'S FILMS:
*LA RICOTTA AND UCCELLACI E UCCELLINI***

This paper is concerned with the various manifestations of animals, the animalesque and animality, using as a background platform two films by the Italian director Pier Paolo Pasolini. The texts of French philosophers Henri Bergson and Jacques Derrida constitute the theoretical framework for the aforementioned research. According to the philosophical concepts of the said philosophers, laughter and habitus are perceived as features which primarily differentiate 'humans' from 'animals'.

Furthermore, in the analyzed films *La ricotta* (I, 1963), and *Uccellacci e uccellini* (I, 1966), Pier Paolo Pasolini uses different modes of fictional animal representations, such as metaphors, symbols or allegories, as well as parables, recurring in the above-mentioned philosophers. He also anticipates the more modern, present-day concepts of Georges Didi-Huberman. The hypothesis behind the guiding logic of this paper is that in the films analyzed, animals stand for the human condition in different ways.

Key Words: *Pier Paolo Pasolini, Henri Bergson, Jacques Derrida, Georges Didi-Huberman, La ricotta, Uccellacci e uccellini*

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to depict the animal-like manifestations, animals and animalities, at times perceived as bestialities, in two exemplary films by the Italian director Pier Paolo Pasolini: *La ricotta* (I, 1963) and *Uccellacci e Uccellini* (I, 1966). The ideas elaborated in the text will be supported primarily by the texts of French philosophers Henri Bergson and Jacques Derrida, whereas the theoretical framework will begin with the presumption that the difference between humans and animals is marked mainly by laughter and habitus. In the films taken into consideration in this paper, Pier Paolo Pasolini uses different modes of fictional animal staging, such as metaphors, symbols, allegories and fable-like parables, recurring in the philosophical hypothesis mentioned above, thus anticipating the concepts of Georges Didi-Huberman.

Consequently, this paper examines the methodology behind the animal staging in Pier Paolo Pasolini's films and their correspondences and divergences from the philosophical concepts of Henri Bergson, Jacques Derrida, and Georges Didi-Huberman. The paper's central hypothesis relies on the perception of animals as metaphors or allegories, as well as on the perception of animals as metaphors for deviations from the so-called *conditio humana* in its various manifestations. Pasolini's imagology depends on challenging animal images and aims at revealing the distorted, corrupt, and fragile human environment in which a human-animal is threatened by urban human-animals rather than by animals themselves. As Claire Molloy (2011, 14) in her *Popular Media and Animals* suggests, animals in popular media create illusions of "autonomous, talented, humanized individuals who had transcended their animal state", which is also one of the hypotheses discussed in the present paper.

Yes, animal, what a word!

In his famous speech in Cerisy (1997) on animal discourse and non-human otherness, later published in the book *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Jacques Derrida examines the issues related to human and non-human animals, being absorbed mainly by the peculiarities, sensations, and characteristics that differentiate humans from other animals. The author is interested mainly in the presumptuous (self-)right that humanity granted itself when it decided to define the animal as such (in fact, as an animal!), arguing that the damage was already done "at the origin of humanity" (Derrida, 2008: 32), when the meaning was attributed to the word itself; derived of humanity's simple desire to identify itself, recognize itself better, or simply wanting to distinguish itself, by merely being human. Derrida asks the question regarding

the communicative and verbal capacity, but also the identity of the animal. It seems fitting to quote Bergson¹ (Bergson, 2014), who identifies a unique difference between human and animal.

He recognizes it in laughter, considering it as the exclusive property of humanity. A person laughs and is laughed at. Derrida argues that the animal, although it may have some physical manifestations similar to laughter, is incapable of it, unlike the human animal. Laughter is primarily an expression of feeling in response to a stimulus and represents a way of communicating and interacting with the environment. The natural and built environment that is open to investigation offers us, at the same time, a whole new world by giving us the possibility of understanding the animal's function within it (Bergson, 2014: 14).

There are countless questions about the interrelationship between humans and animals, as well as questions about the reasons for this relationship and, above all, about the significance of the animal in fiction! For example, children's literature clearly divides between good and evil, with stereotypical images of humans and animals. Many examples exist, starting with fairy tales, various stories, or books. The best-known example is that of Mowgli, the son of the jungle. The protagonist, strangely raised in the wilderness by animals, finds a way to adapt well to both worlds and finds a common language and a way of communicating within both worlds. However, it is as if neither accepts him. Kipling laments, therefore, the rejection of otherness. Anyone who is prepared to mediate or compromise runs the risk of being excluded. The theme of otherness is also present in the image of Tarzan, which is a striking example of the rejection of the human in favor of the non-human. In addition to these fictional biographies of so-called wild people, there are accounts of actual cases, most of which are not children's literature. The true biographies of, for example, Victor de l'Aveyron (c. 1788 – 1828) and Kaspar Hauser (c. 1812 – 1833), show a less optimistic and hardly successful didactic of psychological civilization and educational processes of children who did not grow up in a civilized and familiar environment (Blumenthal, 2005; Malson, 1972; Feuerbach, 2000; Newton, 2004; Hörisch, 2008).

It seems important to determine whether the intention is to ironize humanity's domination over nature, as Philip Armstrong (Armstrong, 2008) rightly suggests when he (among other things) discusses Daniel Defoe's

¹ For Bergson, the only difference between animal and humanity lies in humanity's ability to express itself through laughter. Even when scientists study individual patterns, laughter is primarily a reaction to provocation within the collective. It is a mode of social communication, a way of publicizing a person's opinion, and even a way of interacting with the environment (Bergson 2014).

Robinson Crusoe, defining this relationship as ‘lordship over nature’, or, to distinguish the rationality behind man’s behavior. But Robinson Crusoe behaves more like an animal than a human in mastering nature. In terms of his habits, his way of dressing *à la savage*, and his attempt to tame Friday, everything testifies in favor of the need to adapt nature and the savage animality that threatens humanity, except for, as Armstrong rightly notes again (Armstrong, 2008: 15), nudity. In Crusoe’s case, nakedness lies in the feet. The bare foot leaves an animalistic imprint, simultaneously suggesting that humanity is preserved precisely by various (albeit primitive) cloth and clothing production processes. This logic only works because there is a clear difference between those who wear clothing, those who produce clothing, and those whose skin becomes clothing. For Pasolini, metaphorically, mastering nature would bring the ultimate artistic confirmation. Furthermore, the above mentioned concept of otherness is a topic *per sé*, that Pasolini is known to frequently speak about, as well.

The critical question that needs to be asked refers to the human unconscious about the animal’s instinctive faculty to act and do things without being aware of it, i.e., the Derridean concept of nudity without nudity. As Derrida explains, if the animal is in truth naked, as opposed to a person who is clothed, then the animal, which perceives nothing but nudity, cannot be considered naked as such, as it does not even know the possibility of being clothed.² Hence, logic is also lost here.

The aim of this paper is not primarily to investigate the ontology or ethics of human behavior as such. Instead, the focus of the research is undoubtedly on the imagology and function of the animal, as well as the subject/object or what is communicated. Thus, the focus of our interest is not how, but what is displayed. This research will concentrate mainly on the concept of the animal figure that comes into existence for a specific purpose, the animal that becomes visible and active, that moves within texts and contexts, and that, as Derrida puts it, not only represents the characters of a story but marks messages that, phenomenologically, become metaphors, symbols or allegories³, in different modes.

² The above mentioned and related issues were taken into consideration also by the painter Lucian Freud. Cf. the exhibition *Lucian Freud und das Tier*, Siegen: Museum für Gegenwartskunst, 01.03.–07.06.2015.

³ Anke-Marie Lohmeier (2007) in *Rhetorik. Ein internationales Jahrbuch*: “Im Film begegnen uneigentliche Bildbedeutungen vor allem in drei metalogischen Formen: als Symbole, als Allegorien und als (symbolisch oder allegorisch strukturierte) Vergleiche.” (p. 2, 4,); “In film, inauthentic pictorial meanings are encountered primarily in three metalogical forms: as symbols, as allegories, and as (symbolically or allegorically structured) comparisons.”

Pier Paolo Pasolini's metaphor of the firefly⁴

One of Pasolini's crucial animal metaphors, and essentially an insect metaphor, is the metaphor of the firefly. At first, this metaphor seems not to be related to humanity's laughter and animals' supposed inability to laugh. And yet, it indicates an essential aspect of Pier Paolo Pasolini's poetics: his understanding of a fundamental relationship between human and animal, both of which he sees as agents of social order to a certain extent. The metaphor⁵ is argued by Pasolini himself in the text *L'articolo delle lucciole* (*The Disappearance of Fireflies*) in 1975, the year of his mysterious death (Pasolini 1975: 156–164; Pasolini, 2024). It was reexamined by Georges Didi-Huberman in 2010 (fr 2010, dt, 2012, en 2014, here quoted as dt, 2012). In the beginning, Pasolini describes a situation:

Nei primi anni sessanta, a causa dell'inquinamento dell'aria, e, soprattutto, in campagna, a causa dell'inquinamento dell'acqua (gli azzurri fiumi e le rogge trasparenti) sono cominciate a scomparire le lucciole. Il fenomeno è stato fulmineo e folgorante. Dopo pochi anni le lucciole non c'erano più. (Sono ora un ricordo, abbastanza straziante, del passato: e un uomo anziano che abbia un tale ricordo, non può riconoscere nei nuovi giovani se stesso giovane, e dunque non può più avere i bei rimpianti di una volta).

Quel 'qualcosa' che è accaduto una decina di anni fa lo chiamerò dunque 'scomparsa delle lucciole'?⁶

⁴ The explanations in the sub-chapter "Pier Paolo Pasolini's metaphor of the firefly" and "*La ricotta* as a metaphor for human existence and resistance" are partly based on the following book (Erstić 2017:22-32) and article (Erstić 2018:157–171).

⁵ Silvia Carolosi (2009: 256), quoting Pasolini's *Empirismo eretico*, argues that Pasolini analyses cinematic languages and explains how it is founded in visual signs, the so called "im-signs" which basically represent archetypes imprinted in the collective memory. The 'cinema of poetry', which undoubtedly is a suitable explanation for Pasolini's cinema, "avails itself of the power of 'im-signs' that function as metaphors, metaphors that make up for the absence of an abstract conceptual lexicon of images.[...]. Accordingly, the cinema of poetry (and Pasolini was a master of both cinematic and poetic expression) would depend on the power of images, which, in our opinion, would mean that images actually represent metaphors apt to convey messages in a more appropriate, poetic way, rather than the words.

⁶ "At the beginning of the sixties, the fireflies began to disappear in our nation, due to pollution of the air, and the azure rivers and limpid canals, above all in the countryside. This was a stunning and searing phenomena. There were no fireflies left after a few years. Today this is a somewhat poignant recollection of the past—a man of that time with such a souvenir cannot be young among the young of today and can therefore not have the wonderful regrets of those times. The event that occurred some ten years ago we shall now call the 'disappearance of the fireflies'?" (Pasolini 2014:160).

The described disappearance of the fireflies leads Pasolini to Dante Alighieri. In Canto XXVI of the *Inferno*, the first part of Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy* (1983), the author claims that "ogne fiamma un peccatore invola" (209), or that "every little flame of the *luciole* harbors a sinner". The *luciole* of the *Inferno* represent the renowned citizens of Florence, whereas God himself is perceived as *la luce*, or the light. According to Pasolini, 20th-century fascism reverses this principle of the cosmic *luce* and the infernal *luciole*; the fireflies are now the metaphor of resistance, the cosmic light of the *Luce*, a symbol of dictatorship or, as Didi-Huberman argues, the spotlights of propaganda that surround the fascist dictator with a nimbus of dazzling lights (Didi-Huberman, 2012: 15, Erstić 2017: 28, Erstić, 2018: 168). On the other side, resisters of all kinds, whether of active or 'passive' resistance, are transformed into fleeing fireflies. Dante's world was, thus, turned upside down. Hell, with its dubious, overexposed politicians, shine the brightest light. In contrast, the *luciole*⁷ try as best they can to evade the existential threat and damnation to which they are now exposed, explains Didi-Huberman with regard to Pasolini (Didi-Huberman, 2012: 15–16; Erstić, 2017: 27–29; Erstić, 2018: 168–169).

But did everything really change after the end of the Second World War? The belief that the fascism of the 1920s/30s/40s in Italy died with Mussolini in 1945 is, according to Pasolini, misleading and dangerous; instead, new neo-fascism rose again over the ruins of fascism. Pasolini divides this historical process into two phases: that of the Christian Democratic regime, which Pasolini sees as the first and direct continuation of fascism, and the second phase, which is said to have begun when the intellectual forces of the country failed to notice that the fireflies, the *luciole*, were included into the self-disappearance (Pasolini, 1975: 156–158; Didi Huberman, 2012: 24–26; Erstić, 2017: 28, Erstić, 2018: 168)?

Pasolini places an excellent importance on this metaphor, which initially seems to bring ecological awareness because it stands for a damaging social upheaval. The disappearance of the peasantry and the proletariat, which in Italy and Germany started at the beginning of the 20th century (Pasolini, 1975: 160), as well as the above suggested compulsion to consume in the second half of the century, led to a new fascism. The flight from the hinterlands to the cities, from rural to urban, at the beginning of the 20th century, eventually led to the formation of fascist masses, and later, in the second half of the century,

⁷ The connection between the present and the past is constantly present in Pasolini's opus. Since Pasolini launched himself in search of origins, in search of the *luciole*, he proves to be very sensitive to the problems of his favored sub-proletarians, trying to demystify the truth, loaded with elements of post-romantic and decadent European culture, behind its various manifestations (Marić, 2012).

to the compulsive consumption thus leading to the new forms of fascism, or as Pasolini (Pasolini, 1975: 159) argues:

Ho visto dunque 'coi miei sensi' il comportamento coatto del potere dei consumi ricreare e deformare la coscienza del popolo italiano, fino a una irreversibile degradazione. Cosa che non era accaduta durante il fascismo fascista [Il fascismo degli anni 20, 30, 40, ed.] periodo in cui il comportamento era completamente dissociato dalla coscienza.⁸

Didi-Huberman assumes that the compulsion to consume also leads to the control and synchronization of the consciousness of each individual. Consequently, the fireflies have almost disappeared in this era of industrial and consumerist dictatorship, in which ultimately every product is displayed in a shop window, as Didi-Huberman explains. So civilized dignity is exchanged for a spectatorship that can be endlessly converted into money; the spotlights have occupied the entire social space, and, according to Didi-Huberman, no one escapes their 'wild mechanical eyes' (Didi-Huberman 2012: 35). The worst thing is that the whole world seems to be satisfied with this (Didi-Huberman, 2012). But did the fireflies really disappear in Pasolini's lifetime or during his creative work? The question that now arises, among other things, is about the counter-conformist cultural position of the post-war society

***La ricotta* as a metaphor for human existence and resistance**

In Pier Paolo Pasolini's film *La ricotta*, animals are metaphors for human existence and resistance. This film conveys the idea which French filmmaker Robert Bresson correspondingly staged in his film *Au Hasard Balthazar* (FR 1966). It was subsequently thematized also in the movie *Eo* (POL/I, 2022). *La ricotta*, by Pier Paolo Pasolini, is a part of the episodic film *RoGoPaG* (I, 1963). The film title is an acrostic of the names of directors Roberto Rossellini, Jean-Luc Godard, Pier Paolo Pasolini, and Ugo Gregoretti: "Four short films by four different directors dealing with the principles of modern life" ("RoGoPag", 2023).

The plot of *La ricotta*, that according to Carlorosi (2009: 258) is an exemplary work of cinepoiesis (e.g. activating the power of cinematic poetry), shows the shooting of a film about Christ, and is centered on the character of the extra Stracci (from It. *stracci* – rags). At the beginning of the film, Stra-

⁸ "I could see with my 'senses' how the power of a consumption-based society modeled and deformed the conscience of the Italian people, finally arriving at an irreversible degradation. This was something that did not occur in the fascist fascism period, during which individual behavior was totally disassociated from the conscience" (Pasolini, 2014:160).

cci almost starves to death because he has to feed his family with his packed lunch. Finally, at the end of the film, he devours so much *ricotta* that he dies afterwards. This happens during the filming of the Passion scene when Stracci is nailed to the cross. When his death is discovered, the film director has just arrived on the set with guests from high society. A richly laid table is ready for the eminent guests. The semi-close-up of the table is the last image of the film. However, the strong pathos of the plot briefly mentioned here, is only seemingly softened by these comic elements.

Although the theme of the film *La ricotta* is, according to Birgit Wagner (2001), the “specific end-time expectation of the 1960s [...] in the mode of a comedy” (81), this film is also self-reflexive (Groß 2008: 213). The episode by Pasolini opens, in fact, on a film project about Christ, a film within a film. This metafilm is shot in color, and Stracci is not to be seen in it; the ‘real’ film is shown in black and white. So Stracci never appears in color, but almost all the other actors and extras do. This choice of color symbolizes the cruelty of everyday life, which seems clear in the story of the protagonist Stracci. As he eats so much soft cheese, he ‘eats himself to death’, in the background accompanied by the laughing of the film crew and, as a clear contrast, a Gregorian Requiem motif. Without the director, the film crew laughs at him as a *bestia* (TC 26:58 – 28:58). He has to compete with a dog for food and finally becomes a complete animal when he almost kills the dog of the diva ‘Maria Magdalena’ in a rage (TC 9:37 – 10:22). More precisely, he “runs, is fed, and eats like a dog” (Syrimis 2013: 13). In one of the previous scenes, even the dog repeats in a human voice, like a parrot, the call of the film director to the set and the invitation to start the new scene (TC 22:45 – 22:47). So he makes it impossible for Stracci to satisfy his hunger for the second time. The first time this happened as the dog ate Stracci’s lunch at the end of the aforementioned time-lapse scene. Then it seems as if even the film formally laughs at him, as Stracci is the only character shot in time-lapse, i.e., in the accelerated mode of film comedy and slapstick seen in, for example, his first attempt to buy and eat soft cheese (TC 16: 42 – 17:46) and before the final laughing at the end of the short film (TC 26:30 – 26:58). Paradoxically, this sequence happens just when Stracci is in what should be a desperate search for food, which symbolizes the survival of all living creatures, whether they be humans or animals. At the end of the film, Stracci dies crucified, while being filmed. The fictional director, played by Orson Welles (who actually plays himself), says after his death: “‘Poor Stracci! To die! He had no other way to remind us that he too was alive!’”⁹ (TC 32:55 – 33:01, transl. A.M. and M.E.). The last

⁹ “‘Povero Stracci! Crepare! Non aveva altro modo per ricordarci che anche lui era vivo’”.

film sequence shows a set table, in other words, a still life, which here represents both culture and hunger. Before this, the film draws a parallel between the character Stracci, who plays the good thief in the *Passion of Christ* movie, and the lapdog of the film diva, who embodies Maria Magdalena.

Michael Syrimis, for example, points out that “after the set is prepared, the director postpones the filming only to satisfy one of the diva’s whims; but still, he orders the actors to remain nailed on the cross” (Syrimis 2013: 562). Moreover, “[w]ith this gesture, the Welles figure – an inflated Pasolini’s alter ego – displays the industry habit of dehumanizing Stracci and his like and, therefore, his moral detachment from the very class that Pasolini deifies”. (Syrimis 2013: 562)

Syrimis also searches for further evidence not only of a critical instance but, more importantly, of the self-irony and self-parody that he attributes to Pasolini and his figure of the film director: “He (film-director) thus casts doubt on the sincerity of the social critique that informs Pasolini’s tale of Stracci. (Syrimis, 2013: 562). Pasolini himself said in an Interview with Oswald Stack,

What a person really is something mysterious and profound. The profound, mysterious feature of this man [...] is his vulgarity, which is basically innocent because he doesn’t realize what he is. He’s just a poor guy who expresses vulgarity from every pore. I don’t think he’s either bad or anything else: he’s a coward and profoundly vulgar – but innocently so. (Stack 1970: 62)

The figure of the ‘poor Stracci’ corresponds to Pier Paolo Pasolini’s perception of sacrifice and represents a continuation of the life (even through death) of Pasolini’s beloved sub-proletarians, whereas the Christian mythology is broken down into social misery¹⁰. Also, the suburbs of Rome have been selected as the filming locations, districts populated by prostitutes and peasants who appear in the project about Christ – the film within the film – as saints. Stracci, on the other hand, dies as one of the two thieves crucified alongside Christ (Erstić 2017:23; Erstić 2018: 163–164).¹¹ This corresponds not only with his following passion film *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* (*The Gospel According to*

¹⁰ Since the film stands as a metaphor for the marginalized and sub-proletarian classes, Stracci’s sacrifice metaphorically resembles rites with animals (goats or rabbits, or the like). This means that Stracci could personify animal innocence vs. human bestiality.

¹¹ The exhibition *Pasolini Roma* in the Martin-Gropius-Bau in Berlin (11.09.2014–05.01.2015) dealt with the localization of scenes in Rome in various films by Pier Paolo Pasolini, as well as by Roberto Rossellini and Federico Fellini. Cf. Jordi Ballò, editor. *Pasolini Roma*. Munich, 2014. Cf also Andrea Paoletta, and Luciano Serra

St. Matthew, 1964) (Mugnai 2014), but also with early films such as *Accatone* (1961) and *Mamma Roma* (1962).¹²

In this context, intermedial relationships are of particular importance. Orson Welles (1915-1985), playing the director who personifies the Jesus in *La ricotta*, quotes from a poem by Pasolini: “Io sono una forza del Passato”¹³ (TC 12:27 – 12:29; 12:53 – 34:33), (Pasolini 1963: 474), which also highlights the role of ancient myths in *La ricotta*.¹⁴ The “power from times past” – the sacrificial tale cited here – is illustrated by the figure of Stracci, whose sacrifice – unlike in Christianity – does not mean redemption for anyone. Mannerist painting, which Pasolini knew about through his studies and his acquaintance with the art historian Roberto Longhi (Ballò 2014: 41–43), is another significant reference here. In *La ricotta*, Pasolini mentions the paintings of Rosso Fiorentino (TC 2:42 – 5:07) and Pontormo (TC 24:11 – 26:16), paintings by two Mannerist painters.¹⁵ Formally, in Mannerist art, the harmony of the Renaissance is destroyed by disruptive elements such as distorted perspectives, labyrinths, and decentralization (Erstić 2017, 25–26; Erstić 2018: 164–166; e.g., Barck 2008:193–198; Chiancone-Schneider 2014:127–128). All such staging forms can be found in Pier Paolo Pasolini’s film *La ricotta*. As a matter of fact, the topographical position of the characters who are supposed to re-

¹² *Mamma Roma* is quoted in *La ricotta*: The book from which the fictional director read the poem during the interview mistakenly bears a cover with a photo of the film poster and title.

¹³ “I am the power from times past/Only in tradition lies my love.”

¹⁴ Regarding the presence of myth in films, one must mention *Cinemathic Mythmaking: Philosophy in Film* by Irving Singer, in which the author does not doubt the presence of myth at all, but instead, he takes it for granted, suggesting that “the art of film supremely lends itself to the transmittance of mythic themes”. Whether the presence of myth is explicit or concealed, it is irrelevant, suggests Singer, because the spectator automatically identifies with it. Actually, it all depends on the “act of identification”, suggests Singer. Films are able to transfer the mythological representation into the realm of nature and society (Singer 2008, pp. 9). This duplication of realities, due to different perception of time and space, was also tackled partly by Henri Bergson in *Creative Evolution* (2008), and argued by Singer, enables the mythic experience. Even though we consider Singers hypothesis applicable to Pasolini’s work, and the presence of myth greatly represented, here we have neither time nor space to enter into a more profound explication of Pasolini’s devotion to the mythic past, to his obsession with tradition, or generally to the presence of myth combinations in his opus. We shall, therefore, limit ourselves to the assumption that the mythic rural vs. urban, the presence of Greek mythology (including not only his films, but his prose and poetical, and in particular his theatrical, pieces), the return to his beloved Friulan language (especially in his poetic works) or the mention of the above-discussed *luciole* as representations of common people, or even the selection of actors in his films (mainly non-professionals and thus non-conformist), meant for Pasolini the return to the primordial, to the true and original, and above all sincere and non-corrupted origins of mythic artistic expression.

¹⁵ Rosso Fiorentino. *Disposizione della Croce / Disposition of the Cross*, 1521 and Jacopo da Pontormo. *Deposizione / Deposition*, 1526–1528.

create the paintings proves to be unstable, the actors fall off the scaffolding, laughing loudly during the filming of Pontormo's painting (a *tableau vivant*, TC 26:00 – 26:37) without reflecting on the social constraints and cruelties to which they are subjected and which they have internalized to such an extent that they also exercise them on Stracci. The laughing protagonists, as already mentioned, fall from the scaffolding. Pasolini thus expresses a sharp criticism of social conditions, implementing religious painting into the critique of the media and of the capitalistic world of the 1960s (Erstić 2017: 44–45; Erstić 2018: 164–165).

Sacrifice is also natural in the film and is symbolized by Stracci's death. Stracci appears against this background not only as a symbol of Christ but also as an allegory of the so-called Third World enslaved by Europe (Erstić 2017:24; Erstić 2018: 165). If laughter and wildly laughing differentiate (as Bergson suggests) humans from animals, it can also show how 'inhuman' and 'bestial' humans, their laughter, and their culture can be.

With the film *La ricotta*, Pier Paolo Pasolini shows again to what extent the insect or animal metaphor can be misunderstood and sometimes even misused in the contemporary (consumer) world, thus making the imperative of the fireflies still highly relevant. The latent fascism in the film *La ricotta* thus becomes visible through the starvation and laughing at Stracci, the extra, who is dubbed a *bestia*. The sacred art of Mannerism cited in the film has a double function. On the one hand, it points to the history of art and the culture of a troubled and fragile time, but it also delineates the limits of culture, abused heavily by its current bearers (here, the director and the crew). Stracci himself feeds his family, does everything he is asked to do, and dies on the cross, as his light goes out. This is the resigned conclusion. The film is, therefore, only apparently told in the mode of comedy, but instead, the film stages the story of the sub-proletarian as the passion of Christ. The animal metaphor also has a double function in this film because, on the one hand, laughing and being laughed at are what distinguishes the human from the animal, as Bergson writes. On the other hand, the exact figure that is laughed at, the *bestia*, is forced into the position of the animal. Even though tempted by hunger, he behaves the least bestially of all, which refer to Derrida's concept. Furthermore, the fact that precisely such a figure, which in Pier Paolo Pasolini's work represents an allegory of the so-called Third World people, holds a revolutionary power, is the sub-context that comes along. Also, in his film *Uccellacci e Uccellini*, Pier Paolo Pasolini questions this assumption and regards his own meta-position in a highly critically manner.

UCCELLACCI E UCCELLINI AS A METAPHOR OF THE (SUB-) PROLETARIANS, RELIGION, AND COMMUNISM

In contrast to the film *La ricotta*, in which animals metaphorically function on the one hand as a gesture of humiliation, and on the other as the possibility of revolutionary liberation, in the film *Uccellacci e uccellini*, a real animal is staged, giving the film the characteristics of a fable and a parable. *Uccellacci e uccellini* was filmed and directed in 1966 by Pier Paolo Pasolini, featuring Totò in his last film appearance, and Pasolini's favourite Ninetto Davoli. The film tells the story of a father, Totò, and a son, Nino, who are accompanied and taught by a Raven, a real, natural, black, talking 'communist' crow. Nevertheless, what appears to be a classical fable, soon becomes a critical parable of society. Metaphorically, it can be perceived as the outbreak from the social norms and constraints, a trial to comment on human condition, and a metaphor for various ideological viewpoints.

Like *La ricotta*, the film *Uccellacci e uccellini* is also set in the surroundings of the eternal city and has inspired scholars, in particular contemporary ones, to consider various aspects of the staged places and non-places (Sartoni 2019:39–42; Matthey and Cantoreggi 2017:399–414; Rhodes 2007, 137; Oster 2006, 26–31), or simply to examine his "certain realism" (Viano 1993), his "ambiguities" in the citations of "Bakhtin's Carnival" (Ours 2009: 418–32), his "ideocomic fable" (Valenzisi 2014: 6) or his 'posthuman identity' (Ferrara 2022: 19–36). Following the latter researcher's approach, the primary concern is with the function of the talking animal or the philosophizing raven. This can be referred to both the classical fable and the enlightenment. As Ferrara said:

Pasolini encouraged viewers to explore and overcome the human-animal divide. In doing so, he aimed to expose the faulty binary premises of Marxist ideology and construct a posthumanist identity that recognized the illusory separation between body and mind, and between the human and its related others. [...] Pasolini considers an exit from anthropocentrism and human exceptionalism via trans-species solidarity. (Ferrara 2022: 19)

We believe that two aspects are essential in both *La ricotta* and *Uccellacci e uccellini*. These are, on the one hand, comedy and laughter and, on the other, philosophy and enlightenment. Both aspects are mirrored, interwoven, and reflected; nothing can be understood and defined in only one way; everything is relative, no matter whether they are ideologies, social inequalities, binary orders, or differences, like high/low, man/woman, human/animal, or even tra-

gedy/comedy. This mannered, even Mannerist, affectations in the second film, are shown in detail in the text below.

The film begins with the Marxist thought, e.g. with a Mao Zedong quote: "Dove va l'umanità? Bah!"¹⁶ (TC 2:14 – 2:18). Shortly afterwards, the references to ideologies and theologies become visible in the words of the Raven. The Raven would come from the land of ideology, more precisely from Karl Marx Street (TC 15:19 – 15:27), and he seeks to instruct humanity, symbolized here by the Father and Son figures. But what does the Raven talk about? Saint Francis of Assisi urges the friars Totò and Ninetto to preach the Christian Gospel to the hawks and sparrows in their language. After some effort, they finally succeed, but nothing in fact changes: the hawks continue to kill the sparrows. Francis of Assisi nevertheless repeatedly asks the friars Totò and Ninetto to continue their efforts, until one day the inequality of classes, nations, and races will no longer exist, quoting Pope Paul VI's words to the United Nations on October 4, 1965 (TC 44:20 – 44:28).

However, the rest of the film shows how fruitless the Raven's efforts are: Totò and Ninetto repeatedly act against the Raven's teachings, including the question of responsibility of men towards women. They also remain fairly uninvolved when they see a funeral procession of proletarians in the city. Eventually, they eat the Raven because they take for granted the Raven's words, that him who eats the professor shall become the professor (TC 1:20:22). Thus they completely misunderstood the true meaning. Nevertheless, the 'cannibalism' in the end also refers to the 'cannibalism' of the Catholic Eucharist, and indirectly to the dialogue between Catholic Christians and Marxists in Italy (Jansen and Schütte 1977:134). Indeed, *Uccellacci e uccellini* is a film that proclaims "the end of the age of Brecht and Rossellini", by which it meant "the age of social denunciation and the great ideological drama of Brecht on the one hand and the denunciation of everyday life in a neorealist manner on the other" (Stack 1969, 109; Jansen and Schütte 1977: 135). Still, what follows after the age of Brecht and Rossellini from the film's point of view? The film title and the monologue of the Raven at the end of the film give little hope. He previously announced, among otherthings, the end of ideologies, and then he continued to talk and talk, all over again: "E il Corvo ricominciò a parlare, parlare, parlare ..." (TC 1:20:54), but obviously without any success and without any positive consequences.

In *Il mio cinema*, Pasolini speaks about technical aspects, creative processes, and actors, referring to his intention to make the Raven the narrator in the film. The Raven, which presents solid autobiographical elements, was

¹⁶ "Where is humanity going? Who knows!"

imagined as a Marxist, an intellectual, and a wise spirit, as a moralist, and, finally, also as a philosopher, personified as an intelligent creature seeking an empiric and absolute reality. Eventually, the other leading protagonists, father and son, who are supposed to follow the Raven, prove to be more philosophers in their ingenuity and innocence, naivety and simplicity than the intellectual; due to the somehow “always authentic automatism of simple men” (Pasolini 2015: 104). As mentioned earlier, the walk, the path into the unknown, the allegory, and the didactic elements, could remind us of Dante’s masterpiece. The Marxist Raven symbolizes the rejection of social classes, converted and evangelized, but not yet educated enough to respect each other. Nonetheless, it is also possible to say that father and son, in their simplicity, represent that social force that Pasolini describes as the light of the *luciole*. Perhaps they also represent, being a father and a son, an allegory of Christianity? In this constellation, the raven can only be a thoroughly ironic allegory of the Holy Spirit. Pasolini himself, however, rejects any overly simple explanation and claims:

Considero ‘Uccellacci e uccellini’ un film di prosa [...] è un film raccontato in prosa con delle punte poetiche, cosa che è tipica delle favole. Le favole sono sempre metaforiche, per la natura stessa della loro tecnica, ed è chiaro che il mio film è permeato di metafore. Ora non è detto che una metafora debba per forza essere capita; in Dante ci sono delle metafore sublimi di per sé stesse e non per il significato riportato nelle note; così certe favole sono belle di per sé stesse, anche se alla fine non si pensa o non si capisce la morale. Ecco, io ho voluto fare un film che fosse metaforico, che alludesse continuamente a qualcosa e fosse l’apologo di qualcos’altro e nello stesso tempo avesse un valore di per se stesso. (Pasolini 2015: 111)¹⁷

As Wolfram Schütte points out, Alberto Moravia defined the film *Uccellacci e uccellini* as “a poem”, arguing that Roberto Rossellini wrote a hymn to it

¹⁷ Fragments of an interview with Pasolini, from *Razionalità e metafora di Pier Paolo Pasolini* in “Filmcritica,” n. 174, Jan-Feb 1967. Here is a quote from *Il mio cinema*. “I consider ‘Uccellacci e uccellini’ a film in prose [...] It is a film in prose with some poetic hints, typical of fairy tales. Fairy tales are always metaphorical by the very nature of their technique, and it is clear that my film is permeated with metaphors. Now, it is not said that a metaphor must necessarily be understood; in Dante, there are sublime metaphors perceived as such, and not for the meaning reported in the notes; so confident fairy tales are beautiful as is, even if in the end, you do not think it over or do not understand the moral of the tale. Well, I wanted to make a metaphorical film that continually alluded to something and was the apologue about something else, but at the same time had the value in itself” (trans. A.M. / M.E.).

(Jansen and Schütte 1977: 133). In contrast to Pier Paolo Pasolini's previous films, as well as *La ricotta*, there are "no references to the visual arts and much more clear references to other films" (Stack 1969: 99; Jansen and Schütte 1977:134). "Unique in cinema history is the pre-sung opening credits," according to Hans Ulrich Reck (2010:48). Though the highly philosophical film was unsuccessful, critics praised it, but it hardly won an audience (Schenk 2021:143). Nevertheless, the film *Uccellacci e uccellini* remains an essential document of Pasolinian cinematic thought.

If laughter distinguishes humans from animals, then laughter is reserved for the spectators of this film. Ultimately, the audience must also decide whether the autobiographically motivated, philosophical Raven, or the certainly more straightforward but pragmatic and survivable human being, eventually forms modern society's actual (intellectual) force. Also, in this film, the animal knows more about the people than the people about the animal, which corresponds quite critically with Derrida.

In his philosophical reflections, around the turn of the century, in 1900, Henri Bergson postulated the distinguishing characteristics and the binary order of humans and animals on the basis of laughter. About 100 years later, Jacques Derrida critically questions the assumptions: What is happening with laughter and the habitus of animals and humans? Didi-Huberman, on the other hand, refers mainly to the revolutionary power of animals and insects and quotes Pier Paolo Pasolini, as if Pasolini were the intellectual force that can dissolve this binary order in his works. He also obviously attributes the revolutionary power to animals rather than humans in the 20th century. Here, too, he dissolves the binary order, but in such a way that no solution can ever be satisfactory and final.

Pasolini questions this order by using animals as motifs, persons, and metaphors. On a formal level, he includes comedy and laughter. This also happens on several levels: as the fictional laughter in the film (about Stracci in *La ricotta* and the philosopher Raven in *Uccellacci e uccellini*); furthermore as the genre of tragicomedy (*La ricotta*), comedy (*Uccellacci e uccellini*), and also as the use of slapstick in both films. Finally, all of the aspects of humor also shed special light not only on Pasolini's reflections on animal-human relations, but also on his reflections about the revolutionary power of fireflies, which are by no means to be understood dogmatically.

And while the earlier fictional representations of animal-human relationships in children's and youth literature cited at the beginning often depicted (Mowgli, Tarzan, or even Robinson Crusoe) a well-functioning animal-human-relationship with the (dressed and laughing) man as 'lord' and 'master' of the wilderness (predominantly at the end of the works), the real-life examples

of the so-called wild humans, such as Victor de l'Aveyron, Kaspar Hauser, show a different picture. In his claim to realism, Pier Paolo Pasolini is, although always poetic-metaphorically, closer to these real examples, and he raises the question about animals and humans again and again in his films. What is the boundary between animals and humans? Does it exist at all, and if so, what does it say about humanity? What role does laughter play, being considered as the distinguishing feature from which both Bergson and Derrida start? What does the human being make of it? Is the distinctive part of humanity really laughing at the other? Or is it instead laughing at oneself? Pasolini asks all these questions in both films but answers them in a kaleidoscopic way, so that the answers permanently change and no solution can ever be satisfactory. Even the revolution, that of the fireflies, that of Stracci (unconscious and unsuccessful), and the Raven (conscious but also unsuccessful), as well as that (for the time being) successful one of father and son, is never final. 'La crisi della ragione' or the 'crisis of reason' and 'pensiero debole' or the 'weak thinking' that Vattimo and Rovatti in 2010 (Vattimo and Rovatti 2010: 7), write about in relation to Pasolini, thus acquire a strong but undogmatic meaning.

Conclusion

The two films presented and examined in this paper use the animal metaphor and the animal differently. In *La ricotta*, the sub-proletarian Stracci is ridiculed as a beast, a *bestia*. However, at his death, he implies Christ himself and thus, in Pasolini's opinion, symbolizes the power of the many oppressed, the many *luciole*. If clothing and laughter distinguish humans from animals, Pasolini shows in his film *La ricotta* how fluid these boundaries can be. One example is the laughter of Stracci's fellow extras, who are almost amused by the Passion of Christ and Stracci's passion. But when the film crew and, on another level, the film (in the slapstick-scenes), are set to laugh; Stracci is anything but a beast. Instead he is a metaphor, and in particular an allegory of Christ in the sense of a sign of the disempowered and oppressed. His nakedness on the cross is also sublimated, as the film represents the nudity of a living being through the nakedness of a victim. His life was by far more sorrowful than the life of the film diva's talking dog in the film. Here Pasolini's critique of society is meant to be transmitted to the spectator. Through reflection, Stracci and the spectator are to become fireflies, community lights.

The film *Uccellacci e uccellini* was supposed to be, at the time of filming, a critical parable of Marxists, of intellectuals, but also of proletarians and sub-proletarians and, thus, a screenshot of the state of communism. This is also one of the interpretative levels of this film. The philosophizing raven, or

better, the Raven, does reflect inequalities; he mediates, clarifies, and tries, but remains a raven. The boundaries he tries to dissolve ultimately cost him his life. The film's ironic or even sarcastic position represents a meta-position in which laughter can only be at the futility of one's philosophical and enlightenment efforts. It almost seems as if it is not the narrator, but the author, who is speaking. The light of the fireflies is thus almost extinguished in *Uccellacci e uccellini*. Or have the fireflies perhaps continuously fed on philosophers? The moral and the didactic efforts of the Raven and St. Francis were in vain. The (educated?) spectator has to take on the role previously assigned by the director to the proletarians of society. And do so again and again and again.

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**TIERE UND ANIMALITÄT IN FILMEN P. P. PASOLINIS:
*LA RICOTTA UND UCCELLACI E UCCELLINI***

Der vorliegende Beitrag befasst sich mit verschiedenen Erscheinungsformen von Tieren, mit dem Animalesken und mit der Animalität im Film, wobei zwei Spielfilme des italienischen Regisseurs Pier Paolo Pasolini näher analysiert werden. Den theoretischen Rahmen für die oben genannte Untersuchung bilden Texte der französischen Philosophen Henri Bergson und Jacques Derrida. Den philosophischen Konzepten der genannten Philosophen zufolge werden das Lachen und der Habitus als diejenigen Merkmale wahrgenommen, die den ‚Menschen‘ vom ‚Tier‘ grundlegend unterscheiden.

Auch Pier Paolo Pasolini verwendet in den hier analysierten Filmen *La ricotta* (I, 1963) und *Uccellacci e uccellini* (I, 1966) verschiedene Formen fiktionaler Tierdarstellungen, wie Metaphern, Symbole oder Allegorien, aber auch Parabeln. Darüber hinaus nimmt er auch die moderneren, gegenwärtigen Konzepte von Georges Didi-Huberman vorweg. Die leitende Hypothese der vorliegenden Arbeit lautet, dass die Tiere in den oben genannten Filmen auf je unterschiedliche Weise auf die *conditio humana* hinweisen.

Schlüsselbegriffe: Pier Paolo Pasolini, Henri Bergson, Jacques Derrida, Georges Didi-Huberman, *La ricotta*, *Uccellacci e uccellini*