

tional renown came, however, not from his literary works, but from his activity as a filmmaker, which began in the sixties. Alongside this work Pasolini wrote plays, which were published in 1973 and 1979. The seventies represented the height of his fame. His political and journalistic work found easy entry into the Italian press, stimulating major debates.

On November 1, 1975, Pasolini was murdered at Ostia by a male prostitute with whom he had just had sexual relations. The slayer was a street tough ("ragazzo di vita") of the type he had so often portrayed in his works.

Critical Evaluation. Probably no contemporary author has so fully incarnated the cultural and social contradictions of Italian homosexual life as has Pasolini. Catholic by upbringing and Communist by conviction, throughout life he was tormented by the conflict between a lay and progressive concept of life and a conservative one laced with Catholic sexual guilt.

The 1949 scandal had a major impact on this conflict inasmuch as it forced him to "come out" before he was psychologically prepared to do so, when he was in fact traumatized. From these circumstances stemmed a certain diffidence, sometimes tinged with paranoia, in his relations with society in general and the homosexual world in particular. In fact the homosexuals who appear in such works as *Ragazzi di vita* and *Una vita violenta* are stereotypically effeminate, distasteful caricatures. Their role is to be victims.

The conception of sexuality that emerges from Pasolini's works is a nostalgic one, linked to traditional **Mediterranean homosexuality**, and hence inimical to the sexual revolution that was taking place in Italy as in the rest of the industrialized world. A good example is the famous "trilogy of life" that is made up of the films *Decameron* (1971), *The Canterbury Tales* (1972), and *The Arabian Nights* (1974), in which Pasolini sought to capture an innocent, "pure" sexuality, untouched

by the Catholic conditioning and sense of guilt. He sought it sentimentally in the peasant society of the past, or in Third World countries that remain outside the orbit of Western civilization and Christian morality.

Toward the end of his life Pasolini repudiated this trilogy of films, publicly confessing that the sexuality he had been in search of had no existence—not in the past and not in the Third World. From this crisis came his last, posthumous film *Salò*, which is shot through with desperation. As in the work of Sade which inspired it, sex here is an instrument of power and oppression.

Despite his conflicts, Pasolini several times started debates on sexuality which were discussed throughout Italy, including the famous one on abortion. In these acts of setting forth his position one sees his love of being scandalous and of going against the tide, even at the cost of contradicting himself. His willingness to shock did not prevent him from withholding much of his homoerotic writing from publication, an abstention that reflects his prudery on the subject, together with his diffidence.

With Pasolini's consent, however, theatre works in which homosexuality was important were released, including *Orgia* (performed in 1968) and *Calderón* (1973), to which was added *Affabulazione* after his death (1977). Entirely posthumous were the long autobiographical stories *Amado mio* and *Atti impuri* (both 1982), sensitive evocations of his adolescent turmoil and of Pasolini's first loves for young peasants of the Friuli region. These last are probably the works in which homosexuality is evoked with the greatest serenity, and with a gentle lyricism absent elsewhere.

Although individual love poems appeared in Pasolini's works, his specifically homoerotic production remains unpublished, including for example the cycle known as *L'hobby del sonetto*, written for Ninetto Davoli, the smiling,

curly-haired actor who starred in several of his films.

After Pasolini's death a veil of obscurity descended in Italy to cover the "embarrassment" of his sexual "deviation." Hence the effort some of his friends made to have his murder treated as a political rather than as a sexual crime; though the evidence was flimsy, this hypothesis was considered more respectable. Only recently, however, through the initiative of the Italian gay movement, has an analysis been undertaken of the enormous influence that Pasolini's homosexuality exercised on his achievements.

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Giovanni Dall'Orto

PASSIVE

See Active-Passive Contrast.

PATER, WALTER (1839–1894)

British writer and critic. Born the third child of a surgeon in the London slum of Stepney, Pater lost his father at an early age. He overworked himself to the point of illness to win a scholarship to Oxford. Pater early attempted writing in verse; yet lacking any poetic instinct or command of rhythm, he abandoned poetry to become a master of English prose style, a highly refined, allusive and personal style that gave him a potentially stirring instrument of self-expression. At Oxford he heard lectures by Matthew Arnold, appreciating their wide, topic range of literary references and the author's serious belief in the importance of culture. He learned French and German, studied the literature of both countries, and acquired a combination of French aestheticism and German learning, yet he never became a profound thinker or a conventional scholar.

In 1864 he won a classical fellowship at Brasenose College, Oxford—the

beginning of his career. A discrete essay on the homosexual archeologist J. J. Winckelmann (written for *Westminster Review* in 1867) betrayed to discerning readers a sympathy for Greek *paiderasteia*. Pater's marked preference for the company of young and good-looking men, joined with the intellectual currents in his work and the personality of several of his friends, was enough to win some admirers and make some enemies. Added to this heterodoxy was Pater's rejection of Christianity and affinity for paganism; and over him these aspects of his character cast a shadow that later efforts at hiding his private self never dispelled.

A friendship with Charles Lancelot Shadwell, a former pupil of his who became a fellow of Oriel College in 1864, inspired an essay entitled *Diaphanéité* (1864), and to him was dedicated the fruit of Pater's first visit to Italy, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873). This was not a true history, but a study of a set of chosen personalities whom he recognized as kindred spirits in subtlety, sophistication, and love of beauty. Collected and read together, the essays in the volume sounded a sensuous verbal music, adumbrating a novel view of life that made the tone of the work more fascinating than its contents. But even more provocative to Pater's contemporaries was the Conclusion, ending with the words "To burn always with this hard gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life." Nothing could better have summed up the repugnance provoked by the volume than the pungent characterization of the author—attributed to Benjamin Jowett—as a "demoralizing moralizer."

In the second edition of *The Renaissance* (1877), he deleted the Conclusion, but revised the first chapter by adding passages on *The Friendship of Amis and Amile*, a thirteenth-century French romance centered on male friendship. As part of the plot Amis lays down his life for Amile by taking his place in single combat, while Amile in turn lays down his life