

ALBICELESTE (*White-and-light-blue*)

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Quotation is copying without plagiarism
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In order to think about the work of Alberto Passolini, I would like you to allow me to borrow a concept that does not come specifically from the world of art, but which, I believe, will prove useful to use. I am referring to that of the “empty signifier,” with which we describe semantic structures that have been temporarily emptied of meaning, thus enabling new discursive constructions. This phenomenon, so widely studied in semiotics, adapts very well to the case of art, which does not seek to reason logically or demonstrate anything, but rather to stimulate the imagination, allowing it, each time, to say new things. A refreshing “rain in high fantasy.”

Certainly, to promote this “rain,” it is (Eco would say) as necessary to remember what those signifiers originally meant to us as it is to forget it (Freud would say), in order to be able to fill them with new significations. Thus, in the pulse of systole and diastole that mediates between memory and forgetting, metaphor takes place.

Indeed, to understand what Passolini does, it is essential to have been able to forget what Jacques-Louis David, François Boucher, or Fragonard meant to tell us, in order to suddenly remember it in the insidious quotation of their paintings. To remember, for example, that perhaps there exists only a small number of interesting metaphors to share, and that the challenge for artists consists in introducing arbitrary variations which, not merely because they are arbitrary, cease to amaze us.

Alberto Passolini enjoys playing on the margins of the endless proliferation of images/metaphors in circulation, exploiting their “paraliterary” quality as a space of quotations, betrayals, new associations, and complicities, among which lies that charming “Passolinian” infraction that consists of also appropriating Belgrano and the *fileteadores* of sulkies and Buenos Aires signboards. Paradoxically, all these operations undoubtedly allow him a return to the contemporary, challenging the closure around a single meaning, through that irony on the edge of the trivial, but softly acidic and abrasive, of his strokes.