# Tracing the Form of the Post-Neorealist City: Rome in the Early Films of Pier Paolo Pasolini – *Accattone*, *Mamma Roma*, and *La ricotta*

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A Thesis

in

The Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema

Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts (Film Studies) at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

January 2005

*Your file Votre référence*
*ISBN: 0-494-04470-5*
*Our file Notre référence*
*ISBN: 0-494-04470-5*

## Abstract

Tracing the Form of the Post-Neorealist City:
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The main purpose of this thesis is to provide a theoretical investigation into how Pier Paolo Pasolini's representations of Rome in *Accattone*, *Mamma Roma*, and *La ricotta* reveal a multi-dimensional relationship between Italian cinema, the national landscape, and urban space. Pasolini's approach to the city in these three films is contextualized here within the aesthetic and ideological evolution of post-World War II Italian cinema, from the years of neorealism (1945-50) to the time of Italy's "economic miracle" (1958-63). Inquiries are also made into the theoretical matrix of Pasolini's literary work (his novels, poetry, and personal writings) as a framework to better understand his artistic approach to Rome and its *borgate*. This study aims to illustrate how images of the city in his early films reflect key political, cultural, and ideological issues within the changing social context of Italy in the 1950s and 1960s. Some key topics of study include: Rome as a cognitive map revealing the relations/tensions of postwar Italian cultural and intellectual life, namely Gramscian politics vs. consumerism, rural vs. urban; the role of mythology (Christian and Pagan) in Pasolini's vision of the center-periphery dichotomy; Rome's resonance as an ideal urban center through which Pasolini could alter iconic imagery (either religious, painterly, or filmic) to provide a critical perspective on modern Italian society; and the influence of Dante Alighieri's lyrical vision of spiritual salvation in *La Divina Commedia* (The Divine Comedy) upon Pasolini's depiction of the poverty-stricken *borgate* of Rome.

## Acknowledgements

I wish to express my gratitude to several people whose invaluable contributions have helped me complete this thesis. First, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Rosanna Maule, for her constant encouragement and guidance throughout all stages of this project. Acknowledgement is also expressed to the faculty and students at the Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema, who have been a constant source of inspiration and influence. I am further indebted to Fuad Alnirabie, whose proof-reading and insightful comments were greatly appreciated. The friendship of Anthony Porrino, Guglielmo Della Serra, and Edgard Jinbachian will never be forgotten. I am especially grateful to the SSHRC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada) for granting me a Canada Graduate Scholarship, which allowed me to travel to Italy, where I studied vital material from the Pasolini archives. My research in Italy could not have been possible without the astute guidance of Fabio Desideri from the Gabinetto Vieusseux in Florence, and the gracious assistance of Loris Lepri and Roberto Chiesi from the "Centro Studi - Archivio Pier Paolo Pasolini" in Bologna. A note of thanks must also go to Dr. Giacomo Manzoli at the University of Bologna. Finally, I wish to thank my family, both here and in Italy, namely my mother and father for their support, my sister Tania for her books, my grandmother for imparting her wisdom, and my cousin Mauro Lo Dico for his tireless advice and editing.

*in memoria di mio nonno,*

*Michele Vesia,*
*1911 - 2004*

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# Introduction

*Quando dico che ho scelto come oggetto di questa trasmissione la forma di una città, la struttura di una città, il profilo di una città, voglio proprio dire questo: voglio difendere qualcosa che non è sanzionato, che non è codificato, che nessuno difende; che è opera, diciamo così, del popolo di un'intera storia, dell'intera storia del popolo di una città. Di una infinità di uomini senza nome* [...] *quello che va difeso è proprio questo passato anonimo, questo passato senza nome, questo passato popolare.*

(When I say that I have chosen as an object of this transmission the form of a city, the structure of a city, the profile of a city, I really want to say this: I want to defend something that is not sanctioned, that is not codified, that nobody defends; which is the creation, let us say, of people from a complete history, a complete history of people belonging to a city. Of an infinite number of nameless persons [...] that which is defended is really this anonymous past, this past without a name, this popular past)

- **Pier Paolo Pasolini (1974)**[1]

Thesis Statement

The main objective of this thesis is to develop a theoretical discussion on the cultural, religious, ideological, and personal factors that inform the representations of Rome and its *borgate*[2] in Pasolini's first three films, *Accattone* (1961), *Mamma Roma* (1962), and *La ricotta* (1963).[3] This study divides Pasolini's artistic career into two periods: a provincial phase (1942-1950), in which themes and motifs related to his

[1] Quoted in P. F. Colusso, F. Da Giau and A. Villa, *Le città del cinema: Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Venezia [Venice]: Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia, 1995), 24. Pasolini originally makes this comment in the TV documentary *Pasolini e la forma della città* (Pasolini and the Form of the City), 1974, dir. Paolo Brunatto. RAI, 7/12/74, 20 mins. All translations in this thesis are my own unless otherwise noted.

[2] "*Borgate*" (plural for *borgata*) is an Italian term that refers to the crowded working-class suburbs and housing estates located in the urban periphery of Rome. Pasolini provides an illuminating argument on the social and cultural history of the Roman *borgate* in his essay "Concentration Camps," in *Stories from the City of God: Sketches and Chronicles of Rome 1950 – 1966*, ed. W. Siti, trans. M. Harss (New York: Handsel Books, 2003), 170-176.

[3] *La ricotta* is a thirty-five minute episode within the compilation film *RoGoPaG*, which includes three other segments; *Illibatezza* (Chastity) by Roberto Rossellini, *Il nuovo mondo* (The New World) by Jean-Luc Godard, and *Il pollo ruspante* (The Free Range Chicken) by Ugo Gregoretti. The title of the compilation is an acronym for the last names of the contributing directors.

upbringing in Friuli predominate, and an urban-centered phase (1950-1975), that coincides with his "exile" to Rome and his involvement in cinema and journalism. The time frame considered spans over a decade, from the early 1950s to the early 1960s, and coincides with Pasolini's artistic transition from creative writing to filmmaking.

My theoretical approach is based on a close analysis and contextualized discussion of primary, as well as secondary sources. The primary sources include a sampling of texts from Pasolini's wide-ranging corpus, mainly films, novels, short stories, literary and film criticism, diary notes, and personal letters. The secondary sources consist of biographies and analytical works that explore Pasolini's personal and artistic relationship to Rome, namely books and articles that provide an interdisciplinary perspective on urbanism, architecture, and cinema. Through an examination of those texts, I will identify and incorporate into a coherent theme the various depictions of Rome and its periphery present in Pasolini's early films. Within the context of Italy's shifting social and cultural situation of the 1950s and 1960s, my study shall offer insight into both Pasolini's personal and artistic connection to Rome.

The research for this project involved a trip to Italy, where I consulted the resources of the "Centro Studi - Archivio Pier Paolo Pasolini" (Study Center – Pier Paolo Pasolini Archive)[4] in Bologna, and of the Gabinetto Vieusseux in Florence. At these two institutes, I undertook a thorough examination of material by and about Pasolini, including documentaries, interviews, articles, books, newspaper clippings, and unpublished scripts. In addition, I had the opportunity to view several films by Pasolini

[4] Formerly the Fondo Pier Paolo Pasolini, managed by the late Laura Betti in Rome.

that are not readily available in North America.[5] The main purpose of my research in Italy was to gain access to a vast amount of material published only in Italian and/or unavailable in North America, and then integrate specific ideas from those texts into my arguments to add further depth to this study.

In terms of structure, this thesis is divided into three chapters, each focusing on themes that relate to Pasolini's depiction of Rome in his films. Chapter I concentrates on the personal and ideological factors which shaped Pasolini's intellectual temperament and creative perspective, highlighting issues of sexual identity and cultural politics. This chapter surveys Pasolini's provincial upbringing in Friuli, along with his academic experiences at the University of Bologna, and his initial foray into regional politics and dialect poetry. Once this background information is established, I present a brief discussion on Pasolini's life in the Roman *borgate*. I then focus on the literary portraits of the city depicted in his Roman novels, *Ragazzi di vita* (The Ragazzi, 1955) and *Una vita violenta* (A Violent Life, 1959), and consider his ideas on the "free indirect discourse," in context with his notion of a "cinema of poetry." I also illustrate the ideological connection between Pasolini's vision of Rome and the cultural concepts of the Italian philosophers Benedetto Croce (1866-1952)[6] and Antonio Gramsci (1891-

[5] These films include, *Sopralluoghi in Palestina* (Location Scouting in Palestine, 1964), *La terra vista dalla luna* (The Earth Seen from the Moon – the third episode of *Le streghe* [The Witches, 1967]), *Appunti per un film sull'India* (Notes for a Film on India, 1968), and *Le mura di San'a* (The Walls of San'a, 1974).

[6] With his theory that art and culture should be kept separate from politics, Croce deeply influenced Italian culture and art during the first half of the twentieth-century. His strong opposition to Fascism motivated many Italian intellectuals during and after the period of Fascist rule. In 1925, the publication of his "Manifesto of Antifascist Intellectuals" established his reputation as one of the major anti-fascist thinkers in Italy, and caused him to live in isolation throughout the Fascist period (Dalle Vacche 20).

1937).[7] Lastly, this chapter highlights the key cultural and social aspects that prompted Pasolini's transition from literature to cinema.

Chapter II examines *Accattone* and illustrates how the film offers a series of aesthetic and thematic counterpoints to both traditional and neorealist depictions of Rome. This chapter concentrates on the film's formal aspects and relates them to Pasolini's mythic vision of the urban center/periphery dichotomy. Michel Foucault's concept of "heterotopias," a term that defines the cultural and social significance of abstract spaces (both public and private),[8] informs my analysis of *Accattone*'s depiction of public locales such as fields, public restrooms, and roads. In my examination of the film, I also draw upon Martin Lefebvre's theoretical distinction between the concepts of *lieu* and *paysage* in the cinema.[9] The chapter ends with a discussion on the intertextual link between the topographic leitmotifs in *Accattone* (*i.e.* roads and rivers) and those also present in Dante Alighieri's *La Divina Commedia* (The Divine Comedy).

Chapter III focuses on *Mamma Roma* and *La ricotta* and proposes that these films mark a change from the representation of Rome present in *Accattone*. This chapter is subdivided into six sections. The first and second sections set up a parallel between *Mamma Roma* and the topographic leitmotifs of *Accattone* discussed in Chapter II. The third part explains how in *Mamma Roma* the characters' interaction with the

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[7] Gramsci, an Italian Marxist and co-founder of the Italian communist party, died in a Fascist prison in 1937, the year he was to complete serving his nine year sentence for being involved in anti-Fascist activities (Landy, 2000: 152). In jail, he wrote *Quaderni del carcere* (The Prison Notebooks), which were published posthumously in 1948 and became an influential text for Leftist-oriented Italian intellectuals and artists. See A. Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*. 2 vols., ed. and trans. J. A. Buttigieg (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

[8] See M. Foucault, "Des Espace Autres," *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité* Oct. 1984. "Of Other Spaces (1967), Heterotopias," *Foucault.info*, trans. J. Miskowiec <http://www.foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/ foucault.heteroTopia.en.html>.

[9] See M. Lefebvre, "Entre lieu et paysage au cinéma," *Poetique* 130 (2002): 131-161.

landscape/cityscape is connected to questions of sexuality and self-identity. In the fourth section, I extend my analysis of *Mamma Roma* in relation to the film's recontextualization of the urban iconography typical of neorealist films. The last two sections concentrate on *La ricotta* and illustrate how its metacinematic division of space reflects Pasolini's thematic concern with religion and Third World societies.

Review of Literature

My research proposes a study on a topic still unexplored by the Anglophone film scholarship: the representation of Rome in Pasolini's early films. Numerous studies in the North-American and, to a lesser extent, Anglo-European areas of Film Studies have addressed Pasolini's creative and theoretical work. However, a mere few of them focus on Pasolini's cinematic portraits of Rome and its *borgate*. In their work on Pasolini's cinema, Naomi Greene, Sam Rohdie, Patrick Rumble, Stephen Snyder, and Maurizio Viano, concentrate on Pasolini's theoretical and practical approaches to cinema, and hardly discuss his images of Rome.[10] David Bass touches upon the portrayal of Rome in Pasolini's films only briefly, while Noa Steimatsky confines her discussion to the "theological" landscapes of Southern Italy depicted in Pasolini's *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* (The Gospel according to St. Matthew, 1964).[11]

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[10] N. Greene, *Pier Paolo Pasolini: Cinema as Heresy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); S. Rohdie, *The Passion of Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); P. Rumble, *Allegories of Contamination: Pier Paolo Pasolini's Trilogy of Life* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); S. Snyder, *Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Boston: Twayne, 1980); and M. Viano, *A Certain Realism: Making Use of Pasolini's Film Theory and Practice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). For some studies that are relevant to (but not focused on) this topic, see B. Allen, ed., *Pier Paolo Pasolini: The Poetics of Heresy* (Saratoga: Anma Libri, 1982); Z. G. Barański, ed., *Pasolini Old and New: Surveys and Studies* (Dublin: Four Court Press, 1999); and P. Rumble and B. Testa, eds., *Pier Paolo Pasolini: Contemporary Perspectives* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).

[11] D. Bass, "Insiders and Outsiders: Latent Urban Thinking in Movies of Modern Rome," *Cinema and Architecture: Méliès, Mallet- Stevens, Multimedia*, eds. F. Penz and M. Thomas (London: British Film

Moreover, much of the existing Anglophone and Italian scholarship on the representation of the city and landscape in Italian cinema privileges the work of Michelangelo Antonioni and Roberto Rossellini, and overlooks the films of Pasolini.[12] Within the English-language literature on Italian cinema and its visualization of national space, Angelo Restivo's *The Cinema of Economic Miracles* (2002) provides the most significant interpretation of Pasolini's depiction of rural and urban settings. The book is divided into four "parts," one of which is devoted entirely to Pasolini's films,[13] yet only reserves three pages to the analysis of *Accattone* and *Mamma Roma,* and makes no mention of *La ricotta.*

Thus far, the majority of the literature about the representation of Rome in Pasolini's cinema has been written by Italian scholars and film critics. The most notable text within this literature is Lino Micciché's *Pasolini nella città del cinema.* In this book, Micciché provides a meticulous shot-by-shot assessment of *Accattone*, *Mamma Roma*, and *La ricotta.* However, his analytical approach lacks a theoretical discussion of the politics of location that inform Pasolini's vision of Rome as a cultural and ideological space, important issues upon which I shall focus in this thesis.[14] Other Italian-language studies on Pasolini's use of the landscape/cityscape within his cinematic *oeuvre*, namely by Gianni Biondillo, Alessandro Cappabianca, Alessandra Castellani, Paolo Federico

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Institute, 1997), 84-99; N. Steimatsky, "Pasolini on *Terra Sancta*: Towards a Theology of Film," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 11.1 (1998): 239-258.

[12] See S. Arecco, *Il paesaggio del cinema: dieci studi da Ford a Almodóvar* (Genova: Le Mani, 2001), 15-29; S. Barber, *Projected Cities: Cinema and Urban Space* (London: Reaktion Books, 2002), 61-106; S. Bernardi, *Il paesaggio nel cinema italiano* (Venezia [Venice]: Marsilio, 2002); A. Easthope, "Cinécities in the Sixties," *The Cinematic City*, ed. D. B.Clarke (London: Routledge, 1997), 137-159; and G. Nowell-Smith, "Cities: Real and Imagined," *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context*, eds. M. Shiel and T. Fitzmaurice (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 99-108.

[13] "Part II: The Nation, the Body, and Pasolini," 43-91.

[14] Micciché also argues that *Accattone*, *Mamma Roma*, and *La ricotta* belong to the first of four periods in Pasolini's cinematic evolution, which he identifies as follows: "Il cinema della borgata" ("The Cinema of the Borgata"), "Il cinema dell'ideologia" ("The Cinema of Ideology"), "Il cinema del mito" ("The Cinema of Myth"), and "Il cinema della vita e della morte" ("The Cinema of Life and Death") (32-35).

Colusso et al., Antonella Licata and Elsa Mariani Travi, Michele Mancini and Giuseppe Perrella, and Sandro Onofri, provide little formal analysis of Pasolini's early films and their depiction of urban space.[15]

Urban Space in Postwar Italian Cinema

Before narrowing my focus to Pasolini and Rome, a brief discussion on the socially determined representations of city spaces in postwar Italian films made during the periods of neorealism (1945-1950) and the "economic miracle" (1958-1962), as well as an overview of the historical and social factors that shaped these representations, is in order.[16] In the years immediately following World War II, Italy's film industry (along with most of the other national cinemas of Western Europe) was in a state of crisis. Understandably, this crisis resulted from the collapse of the Italian Fascist regime, which had risen to power in 1922 and re-organized the nation's film industry into a propagandistic tool. The regime, in an attempt to centralize its power over the industry, founded several film institutions in Rome. In 1924, they established the *Istituto LUCE* (*L'Unione Cinematografica Educativa*/The Cinematographic Educative Union) for the production of propagandistic newsreels and documentaries (Cook 422). The national

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[15] See G. Biondillo, *Il corpo della città* (Milano: Unicopli, 2001); A. Cappabianca and M. Mancini, *Ombre urbane: set e città dal cinema muto agli anni '80* (Roma: Edizioni Kappa, 1981), 27-35; A. Castellani, "Immagini di periferia a Roma: Pasolini e la mutazione del tessuto periferico," *Le giovani generazioni e il cinema di Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Roma: Fondo Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1985), 151-157; Colusso, et al., 6-21; A. Licata and E. M. Travi, *La città e il cinema* (Torino [Turin]: Testo & Immagine, 2000); M. Mancini and G. Perrella, eds., *Pier Paolo Pasolini: corpi e luoghi* (Roma: Theorema Edizioni, 1982); and S. Onofri, "I tre film 'Romani' di Pasolini: rappresentazione epica e rapporto tragico," *Le giovani generazioni e il cinema di Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Roma: Fondo Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1985), 77-80.

[16] I wish to note here that the postwar years were not the only period in Italian film history when cities were used as prominent settings. During the silent film era, for instance, Elvira Notari (1875-1946), Italy's first woman filmmaker, made documentary-style films of street life in Naples. For a study on the cinema of Elvira Notari, see G. Bruno. *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map: Cultural Theory and the City Films of Elvira Notari* ( Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

film school *Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia* (Experimental Center of Cinematography) was opened in 1936 under the auspices of Fascist leader Benito Mussolini, who in the same year also ordered the construction of the famed Cinecittà studios. Mussolini personally inaugurated the studios a year later on April 21, the alleged date of Rome's legendary founding (Cook 422-423). Throughout most of World-War II, however, Cinecittà was closed and used as a military storage facility (Brunetta 1979: 451). Following the war, during the period of Italy's transition from a Fascist state to a "democratic" republic, many filmmakers resorted to shooting their movies on-location in the streets of bombed out Italian cities. These austere conditions shaped the gritty visual aesthetic and documentary-like style that exemplifies neorealist cinema.

Most neorealist films provide seemingly "objective" perspectives on realistic situations and deal with simple storylines set amidst the atmosphere of social and cultural change advocated by the Italian postwar Resistance movement. Many of the films are set in the streets of Italian urban centers and focus on disadvantaged working-class characters; those who had suffered the most during Italy's postwar economic crisis. These characters usually live on the outskirts of cities or in war-devastated environments.[17] The physical interaction between neorealist characters and their bleak urban landscapes illustrates the central function of neorealism as a cinema of national restoration and renewal. As Giovanna Grignaffini explains:

> [Neorealism was] a rebirth of the Italian cinema, a process which relied on the 'rediscovery' of two complementary centralities: landscape and the human presence in it [...] just as the landscape bears the signs of human activity inscribed on it affecting its form and development, so people bear

[17] This is especially the case in Vittorio De Sica's *Sciuscià* (Shoeshine, 1946) and *Ladri di biciclette* (The Bicycle Thief, 1948), as well as Roberto Rossellini's war trilogy: *Roma città aperta* (Rome, Open City, 1945), *Paisà* (Paisan, 1946), and *Germania anno zero* (Germany Year Zero, 1948). *Germania anno zero*, however, is not set in an Italian city; it is set in Berlin and focuses on the story of a young German boy.

> the signs of the landscape in which they live on their faces and bodies and their actions [...] human beings are presented as *operators* of the landscape, in the sense that they both receive and regulate its modulations, the geographical as well as the anthropological. (121)

In this respect, the neorealist city is a predominant setting that represents the problems associated with Italy's postwar social redevelopment. As Marcia Landy affirms, "existing in the mid-point between North and South...the city is the quintessential milieu to portray the dislocations of postwar life and the uncertainty of identity with everyday sights and sounds" (2000: 137-138). The damaged cities and crowded ghettos seen in many neorealist films are symbols for a nation in the process of political and cultural rediscovery.

In opposition to the cultural homogenization imposed by the Fascist government, neorealist filmmakers offered a view of the city that stressed national unity under the aegis of cultural and social heterogeneity.[18] For instance, many of them used dialects to foreground the sense of regional and cultural diversity that existed across the country and within the marginalized communities living on the outskirts of major Italian cities. Moreover, neorealist directors frequently employed the spatial dichotomy between urban centers and their peripheries as a topographical equivalent of social difference and class division.[19] A good example of this binary interplay of center and periphery as a prominent visual and thematic motif occurs in *Ladri di biciclette*. The film follows the story of Antonio Ricci (Lamberto Maggiorani), a working-class family man who desperately scours Rome looking for his stolen bicycle, which he needs for his job

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[18] For years, the Fascist government had assembled mythic and illusory images of national and cultural homogeneity through the suppression of regional dialects in Italian literature and cinema (Torriglia 120-121).

[19] For more on this subject, see M. Bertozzi, ed., *Cinema/Architettura/Città: Le periferie del neorealismo* (Mendrisio: Accademia di Architettura di Mendrisio, 1997).

putting up posters. Ricci lives in the *borgata* Val Melaina, a Fascist housing development built to relocate poverty-stricken families away from the city's center (Sitney 92). The film articulates the center/periphery dichotomy through images of Ricci's recurrent wanderings through the city. In order to search for his bicycle, Ricci undertakes a long journey from his home on the urban margins, where there is no opportunity for social and economic advancement, into the center of the city and its spaces of institutional and economic power (the police station, church, and public marketplace). Without his bicycle Ricci cannot successfully breach the social and spatial divide that separates him from his job opportunity in the city's center and relegates him to a desolate existence on the outskirts of Rome. As Stephen Barber notes, "*Bicycle Thieves* served to initiate a corrosive imagery of suburban space as the site for concentrated human tension – an imagery developed in many disabused city films of subsequent decades" (72-73).

The center/periphery motif also appears in many Italian films made after the neorealist period, particularly in films that depict cities suffering from the effects of consumerism and capitalism through the 1950s, and well into Italy's "economic miracle." One of the most significant examples is De Sica's *Miracolo a Milano* (Miracle in Milan, 1951), made during the final phase of neorealism. The film marks a thematic and stylistic departure from neorealism, and it mixes realistic elements with sheer fantasy and supernatural events, one of which involves people flying around the city on brooms.[20] Nevertheless, like other neorealist films, *Miracolo a Milano* depicts the lives of poor characters living in a city that reflects the Italian postwar condition. In the film, the

[20] The start of the film clearly establishes this fairytale tone with an opening title card that reads, "Once Upon a Time."

protagonist Totò (Francesco Golisano) is an orphan from the countryside who attempts to build a "city of the poor" on the outskirts of Milan as a means of escaping the hostility of the urban center.[21] The center/periphery theme in this film is closely linked to the *strapaese/stracittà* (ruralism/urbanism) dichotomy rooted in classic Italian art, literature, and cinema.[22] Marcia Landy describes the notion of *strapaese/stracittà* as follows:

> In Italy the division between north and south was expressed in the rhetoric of *stracittà* (urbanism and cosmopolitanism) and *strapaese* (ruralism and regionalism). The proponents of *stracittà* identified the popular with technological modernization, while the advocates of *strapaese* were suspicious of modernity and sought to valorize a vision of Italy tied to provincial life and uncontaminated by modernity. (1998: 2)

The sequence in *Miracolo a Milano* that best visualizes this notion of *strapaese/stracittà* is the one in which the young Totò (Gianni Branduani) follows a horse-drawn hearse that is carrying the remains of his foster mother through the streets of Milan. During the course of this funeral procession, Totò is overwhelmed by the grandeur and the verticality of the urban architecture surrounding him. This scene shows the contrast between Milan's rural (*strapaese*) and industrial (*stracittà*) spaces through the movement of the horse-drawn hearse amid the modern spaces of the city's center, with its paved streets, and industrial smoke stacks. At one point, when a man joins the funeral procession as a cover to elude the police, the sequence associates the city with crime. On the level of formal structure, the sequence maintains a distanced and detached perspective from the

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[21] For an interesting study on the archetypal mythic aspects of Totò's founding of the slum city in *Miracolo a Milano*, see H. Wegner, "Pius Aeneas and Totò, il buono: The Founding Myth of the Divine City," *Vittorio De Sica: Contemporary Perspectives*, eds. Howard Curle and Stephen Snyder (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 189-197.

[22] For a discussion on the *strapaese/stracittà* dichotomy and its connection to traditional representations of landscape in classic Italian literature, art, and films from the Fascist period, see M. Landy, *Italian Film* (Albany: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 122-123; and M. Landy, *The Folklore of Consensus: Theatricality in the Italian Cinema, 1930-1943* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 179-184.

funeral procession in order to highlight visually the contrast between the city's rural and urban elements. For instance, the sequence employs long-takes, depth-of-field, and wide-angle compositions to frame the boy and the hearse as they move within the city. This visual style does not stress the presence of the camera; instead, it presents an "objective" gaze, as is usually the case in neorealism. The characters interact within the urban space according to a realist aesthetic that places importance on *what* profilmic spaces and objects are within the frame, as opposed to *how* they are framed.

The mixing of realism and fantasy in other sequences from *Miracolo a Milano* reveals a stylistic departure from the naturalism of the neorealist style. However, the film's images of Milan retain the bleak characteristics associated with the neorealist city. These characteristics are most evident in the aforementioned funeral sequence, as well as other scenes depicting the everyday lives of the poor people living on Milan's periphery. The city in *Miracolo a Milano* appears to be in the process of industrial revival and renewal, yet many of the city's inhabitants are still struggling with poverty and unemployment. This despairing social aspect of the film displays Italian cinema's mounting concern with the cultural clash between the industrial and agricultural worlds. In the 1960s, during Italy's drastic shift from a rural economy to a more neocapitalist system, this concern grew into a harsh critique presented in the work of many Italian filmmakers, especially Pasolini.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Italy experienced an economic "boom" that would ultimately transform the country into one of the world's largest and wealthiest industrial economies. This "economic miracle" resulted in a swift rise in commercial capitalism, which many Italian Leftists viewed as a new form of Fascism that would lead

the nation into cultural homogenization through consumerism.[23] In conjunction with the steady growth of the economy, many Italians from the South immigrated to the North of Italy in search of work (Torriglia 120). Most of these southern immigrants moved into the growing shantytowns on the periphery of major northern cities that had become centers of industry and commercialism. Approximately twenty percent of the Italian population changed residences between 1952 and 1962 (Torriglia 120). Numerous peasants from the South were assimilated into northern urban centers and severed their connections to traditional rituals and cultural ideals. According to Anna Maria Torriglia, the mass immigration of this period created a "linguistic mobility" between North and South, destroying the dialect-based cultural forms of southern Italians who moved to the North and were confronted with northern dialects (122).

The 1960s was also one of the most prosperous decades in the history of Italian cinema, for it was defined by a re-invigorated level of passion and artistic vision not seen since the neorealist years. In this period, a new generation of Italian filmmakers explored radical themes and ideas,[24] while the previous generation reached its artistic prime (*i.e.* Michelangelo Antonioni, Luchino Visconti, and Federico Fellini). The issues of national and cultural identity became central themes in 1960s Italian cinema dealing with the impact of the neocapitalist "boom" upon the country's traditional values. Italian urban centers became "filmic spaces," a showcase for the changing face of the nation. For

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[23] For insightful studies on the cultural context of numerous Italian films made during this period, see G. P. Brunetta, *Storia del cinema italiano: Dal miracolo economico agli anni Novanta 1960-1993*, 3rd ed. (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1998); and Restivo.

[24] For instance, besides Pasolini a number of other notable Italian filmmakers made their first feature films between 1958 and 1962. Some of these filmmakers include, Francesco Rosi (*La sfida* [The Challenge, 1958]), Vittorio De Seta (*Banditi a Orgosolo* [Bandits of Orgosolo, 1961], Giuliano Montaldo (*Tiro al piccione* [Pigeon Shooting, 1961], Elio Petri (*L'assassino* [The Lady Killer of Rome, 1962]), Ermanno Olmi (*Il posto* [The Sound of Trumpets, 1961]), Bernardo Bertolucci (*La commare secca* [The Grim Reaper, 1962] – with a screenplay by Pasolini), and the Taviani brothers (*Un uomo da bruciare* [A Man for Burning, 1962]). For more on this subject, see Viano 50.

example, Visconti's *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (Rocco and His Brothers, 1960), Antonioni's *L'avventura* (1960), and Fellini's *La dolce vita* (1960) all focus on stories in which an Italian city functions as an altered symbolic space signifying Italy's changing cultural identity. In *La dolce vita*, Rome is the center of decadence and spectacle, while Palermo in *L'avventura* is a metaphysical space reflecting the existential angst of modern man (and woman), and Milan in *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* is the backdrop for a drama about a southern Italian family tackling the social implications of a move to the North.

Film scholar P. Adams Sitney designates the late 1950s and early 1960s as the second period of "vital crisis" in Italian cinema and culture.[25] The first period of "vital crisis" started after the Second World War and considered with the rise and fall of Italian neorealism (Sitney 5-6).[26] The second period of "vital crisis" occurred in conjunction with Italy's "economic miracle" and the release of various films that firmly equated the nation's state of cultural "crisis" with the global rise of urban consumerism and industrialization (Sitney 1). Another significant factor adding to this sense of national crisis was the revelation that since the postwar period Italy's governmental institutions had been restructured according to conventional clerical and petit-bourgeois values. For instance, from the late 1940s to the late 1950s, the Christian Democratic Party (*Democrazia Cristiana*) governing Italy had gradually moved from its reformist origins

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[25] Sitney develops this theory in *Vital Crises in Italian Cinema: Iconography, Stylistics, Politics* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995). In fact, Sitney borrows the term "vital crisis" from Pasolini, who had used it to describe the contradictory relationship of neorealism to the "crisis" state of postwar Italian culture and society. As Pasolini cynically explained, "It is useless to delude oneself about it: neorealism was not a regeneration; it was only a vital crisis, however excessively optimistic and enthusiastic at the beginning" (Sitney 1).

[26] One of the main factors that led to the decline of neorealism was the increase of American capital in the production of Italian films, resulting in numerous artistic limitations for Italian filmmakers. See M. Silverman, "Italian Film and American Capital, 1947-1951," *Cinema Histories, Cinema Practices* (AFI: University Publications of America, 1984), 35-46.

to a more right-wing doctrine, ushering in bourgeois principles and ideals.[27] In view of these central issues affecting Italy, throughout the 1960s Italian films began to present dystopian portraits of national space that were more pessimistic that those created by neorealist films.

*Accattone*, *Mamma Roma*, and *La ricotta* were all made during Italy's second period of "vital crisis," therefore a proper analysis of Pasolini's approach to Rome in these films must be presented within the socio-historical context I have offered here. As this thesis will argue, Pasolini's portrayal of Rome changes with each of these three films, in concurrence with the shifting historical, political, and cultural situation of the Italian nation and its capital in the early 1960s.

[27] In April 1948, the Christian Democratic Party was voted into power with the support of the Catholic Church and the United States, and until 1958 it functioned mainly as a clerically influenced coalition government, composed of Christian Democrats, Social Democrats (right-wing Socialists), Liberals, and Republicans. See F. J.Coppa, ed., *Dictionary of Modern Italian History* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985), 76-80.

# Chapter I

## Towards a Vision of Rome: Pasolini's Intellectual and Artistic Development

Pasolini's Early Cultural Environment

Pier Paolo Pasolini was born in Bologna, Italy on March 5, 1922, the year Fascism rose to power. His father, Carlo Alberto Pasolini, was an infantry officer in the Italian military forces, whose career caused the family to adopt a somewhat nomadic lifestyle. Pasolini spent his childhood in various cities and provincial towns in the regions of Emilia Romagna and Friuli-Venezia Giulia. Between 1923 and 1937, he resided in Parma, Conegliano, Belluno, Cremona, Sacile, and Scandiano, until he returned to Bologna in 1937 (Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, vol. 1: L-LV). He concluded his high school education there and enrolled at the University of Bologna in 1939, majoring in Art History and Italian Literature. In the winter of 1942, the Second World War interrupted Pasolini's studies and forced him to seek refuge in Casarsa, his mother's hometown in the region of Friuli.[28] He later finished his degree at the University of Bologna in the autumn of 1945, with a thesis on the Italian poet Giovanni Pascoli.[29]

Pasolini lived out most of his childhood and adolescence within a petit-bourgeois, urban milieu. He would spend his summer holidays in Casarsa, where he was drawn to

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[28] In Casarsa, Pasolini lived with his mother Susanna and his younger brother Guido, who was subsequently killed in February 1945 by Communist partisans, while fighting in the mountains of Friuli. This tragic event caused Pasolini much grief and had a lasting impact on his political conscience. Six months after his brother's murder, he composed a hymn in Guido's memory entitled "Il martire ai vivi" ("The Martyr to the Living"). The hymn has been translated to English in D. B. Schwartz, *Pasolini Requiem* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 162-163; from P. P. Pasolini, "Il martire ai vivi," *Il stroligut* 1, San Vito: Stameria Primon (August 1945), iv.

[29] Pasolini's earlier thesis on contemporary Italian painters, supervised by the renowned Italian art historian Roberto Longhi, had been lost during the war when German soldiers raided his army barracks after Italy's armistice on September 8, 1943. Pasolini recounts this incident in O. Stack, *Pasolini on Pasolini: Interviews with Oswald Stack* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1970), 19.

the rural customs of his mother, who was a descendant of an old peasant family from the town. The provincial lifestyle of the Friulian countryside stimulated Pasolini's artistic awakening, and offered him temporary refuge from his regular petit-bourgeois existence in the city. From a very young age, he began to use poetry and painting to express his deep infatuation with the historical and social phenomenon of Friuli's peasant culture. Enzo Siciliano notes that Pasolini would often use a mixture of oil paints, herbs, and coffee to create portraits depicting the rural environment of Friuli, as well as his homoerotic fascination with the young plebeian men of the region (103-104). His initial interest in poetry also coincided with his discovery of the distinctive Friulian dialect, which he employed as a lyrical form of expression in numerous poems about the Friulian peasantry and culture.

Pasolini's father was a very strict disciplinarian with Fascist leanings and ancestral ties to a large noble family from Ravenna.[30] The contrast between the bourgeois and peasant origins of Pasolini's parents shaped his intellectual and emotional development. As his biographer Barth David Schwartz explains:

> He assembled the feelings and later forged a linkage: on the one side Casarsa = life = purity = happiness = Susanna = the Friulian dialect of the peasantry. That was good, and on the enemy side urbanism = hypocrisy = moralism = Carlo Alberto = the standard Italian of the bourgoisie [*sic*]. (113)

Pasolini shared a close relationship with his mother until his death, yet had a strained rapport with his father, whose middle-class values and pro-Fascist thinking initiated a guilt complex in Pasolini.[31] This sense of bourgeois guilt greatly influenced Pasolini's

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[30] For a detailed history of the social position and "aristocratic" background of Pasolini's father, see E. Siciliano, *Pasolini: A Biography*, trans. J. Shepley (New York: Random House, 1982), 28-30.

[31] Pasolini was murdered just outside Rome, in the city of Ostia, on November 2, 1975. Pasolini expresses his deep feelings for his mother in the poem "Supplica a mia madre" ("Prayer to My Mother"). The poem

ideological and artistic formation and led him to address Marxist themes of class struggle in his films and literature.[32]

During the Fascist era, Mussolini's regime labelled all regional dialects as forms of "nonofficial" language. This act of cultural suppression provoked Pasolini to use the Friulian dialect as a subversive tool to present the common people of Friuli with a collective voice.[33] In 1942, he published his first book of poetry, *Poesie a Casarsa* (Poetry at Casarsa), which was written entirely in Friulian dialect to expose the regional and social diversity of Italy and its fading rural communities. According to Pasolini, "[M]ixed in with the stylistic furor of that Friulian dialect there was something real, objective, by which the rural world of Lower Friuli somehow emerged through the language" (*Stories From the City of God*, 191). Through his use of vernacular poetry, Pasolini recorded the existence of a rural culture that lacked an "official" documented history. Moreover, his dialect poetry gives the Friulian countryside a lyrical resonance that reflects his personal view of the region and its culture.[34] In a 1969 interview, he explained:

> I took up Friulian as a special language for poetry – i.e. the complete opposite of any tendency towards realism. It was the maximum of

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has been translated to English in P. P. Pasolini, *Roman Poems*, trans. L. Ferlinghetti and F. Valente (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1986), 96-99; and P. P. Pasolini, *Pier Paolo Pasolini: Poems*, trans. and eds. N. MacAfee and L. Martinengo (New York: Farrar, 1996), 109; from P. P. Pasolini, *Poesia in forma di rosa* (Milan: Garzanti, 1964).

[32] Pasolini also openly expressed a personal and artistic interest in the recurrent father-son themes found in Greek tragedies, where "the sons are predestined to pay for the sins of the fathers. It does not matter if the sons are good, innocent, pious; if their fathers have sinned the sons must be punished" (*Lutheran Letters*, 11). The father-son theme of Greek tragedy is prominent in many of Pasolini's films, particularly *Edipo re* (Oedipus Rex, 1967), *Porcile* (Pigsty, 1969), and *Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma* (Salo, or The 120 Days of Sodom, 1975).

[33] Pasolini's dialect poetry did not please his father, who viewed it as a subversion of the Italian language, adding to the tension between father and son. Years later, Pasolini described his father as, "reduced by illness, poisoned by the collapse of Fascism in the country and of the Italian language in the family; destroyed, ferocious, a tyrant without power, made mad by bad wine" (Schwartz 165).

[34] For a study on the narcissistic themes in Pasolini's Friulian writing, see A. G. Meekins, "*Narcís tal Friúl*," in Barański 229-251.

> irrealism, the maximum of hermetic obscurity [...] as soon as I took it up, I realized I had touched on something living and real and it acted like a boomerang [...] once I'd taken this step I couldn't stop and so I started using dialect not as a hermetic-aesthetic device but more and more as an objective and realist element. (Stack 16-17)

Pasolini maintained his creative attachment to Friuli and its peasant culture even after he moved to Rome in the early 1950s. In Rome, as in Friuli, Pasolini's fervent interest in the local dialect inspired him to write poetry using Roman vernacular to convey the hardships of quotidian life in the Roman slums. After living in Rome for several years, Pasolini became nostalgic for his youthful days in Casarsa. In the mid-1950s, an exhibition of Friulian paintings by Giuseppe Zigaina[35] stirred Pasolini to write "Quadri Friulani" ("Friulian Paintings"),[36] a poem that articulates his longing for provincial life. In the poem, he recalls "the Friulian willows / arrayed in barren perspectives / against bare mountain ridges [...] a Friuli expressed in the griefs / and hopes of whole men, made of crude oral experience..." (*Roman Poems*, 125, 137). The poem evokes a sense of mythic lyricism reminiscent of the dialect poetry he had written during his years in Friuli, when he believed that politics was subordinate to literature. As Pasolini once stated, "Those who are on the left in literature are not always on the left in politics" (Siciliano 106).

In Friuli, Pasolini had assumed an idealist and aristocratic stance towards literature that was shared by many Crocean intellectuals at the time.[37] Indeed, the elitist view of art held by Italian critic and philosopher Benedetto Croce influenced much of

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[35] Zigaina was one of Pasolini's close friends, and he illustrated a series of thirteen drawings that accompany a collection of Pasolini's early poems in *Dov'è la mia patria* (Casarsa: Pubblicazioni dell'Academiuta, 1949).

[36] Translated to English in Pasolini, *Roman Poems*, 122-141; from P. P. Pasolini, *Le ceneri di Gramsci* (Garzanti, 1957).

[37] In his essay "The Latent Presence of Crocean Aesthetics in Pasolini's 'Critical Marxism'," Francese provides an informative study concerning the influence of Benedetto Croce's ideas on Pasolini and his work (in Barański 131-162).

Pasolini's early creative writing. Inspired by the Italian classical idealism of the Risorgimento,[38] Croce theorized that the main source of artistic creation rested in the "intuitive knowledge" (*i.e.* emotional intuition) of an artist, as opposed to his/her "logical knowledge" (*i.e.* social and political contemplation) (Croce 15).[39] This Crocean ideal is particularly notable in Pasolini's early Friulian poems, which convey a sense of artistic lyricism in place of rational contemplation. In the early 1950s, Pasolini embraced an aesthetic position based on the ideas of Antonio Gramsci. He was especially drawn to Gramsci's call for "national-popular" forms of literature and art that could culturally educate the masses and create a dialectical relationship between art and society. Despite his interest in Gramsci, Pasolini never fully repudiated his early Crocean idealism, to which he partially returned in the 1960s with his theory on the "cinema of poetry."[40]

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[38] The Risorgimento was a nineteenth-century liberation movement that resulted in the territorial and political unification of Italy in 1870. When the movement began in 1815, Italy was composed of small states governed by various foreign nations (mainly France, Austria, and Spain) and regional authorities that were often in conflict with each other (Robson 6). In the South, the Kingdom of Naples and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies dominated, while Austria ruled over the states of Lombardy (Lombardia) and Venetia (Venice) in the North (Robson 6). The states of Parma, Tuscany, Modena, and Sardinia-Piedmont each managed to hold their independence, whereas most of Central Italy was controlled by the Vatican through the Papal States (Robson 6-7). The aim of the Risorgimento was to unite Italy under one flag and one government and grant it freedom from foreign and Papal domination. The struggle for unity climaxed with a series of state revolutions in 1848-49, which led to the establishment of the Kingdom of Italy as a constitutional monarchy in 1861 (Hibbert 269-271). On March 17, 1861, King Vittorio Emanuele II was elected as the ruler of Italy by a newly formed Parliament in Turin, and on March 27 of that same year Rome was declared the new capital of the Italian Kingdom (Hibbert 271-273). Yet, Rome was home to The Vatican and it remained under papal control until 1870, when the King's army successfully seized the city and therefore officially completed the unification of Italy (Hibbert 273).

[39] Croce was drawn to the idealist philosophy of G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831), who theorized that art is a form of knowledge, whereby "reason" grants us knowledge of general issues, while "intuition" grants us knowledge of personal issues (Croce 298). Following the Second World War, Croce's notions of national unity and historical continuity influenced the development of the Italian postwar Resistance, as well as research into Fascism. According to Croce's notion of historical continuity, Fascism was only a brief "deviation" in the forward movement of Italy's political and social development into a "liberal" state, which had begun with the Risorgimento (Dalle Vacche, 1992: 197). Angela Dalle Vacche writes, "Croce posited a relation of historical continuity between the patriotic values of the political brain of the Risorgimento, Camillo Benso, count of Cavour (1810-1861), and the liberal oligarchy led by Giovanni Giolitti (1842-1928) in early-twentieth-century Italy" (1992: 13). By the 1960s, Croce's notion of national unity (which overlooked class and regional diversity) had gradually been dismissed by many Italian intellectuals, in favour of a more socialist approach to national unity.

[40] For more on this subject, see "The Latent Presence," in Barański.

Cinema allowed Pasolini to expose a wide audience to his ideas concerning the great cultural and political changes occurring in Italy and abroad. Throughout his career as a filmmaker, he constantly experimented with stylistic formats that could accommodate both artistic intuition and social interaction with the masses, to varying degrees. This type of aesthetic synthesis is most notable in his "Trilogy of Life" (1971-74) films, which many critics have condemned for being too accessible and lacking the ideological and political awareness prominent in his other work.[41]

Pasolini's University Years and Involvement in Regional Politics

During his years as a university student in Bologna, Pasolini attended numerous lectures by prominent Italian scholars and art historians.[42] The heightened intellectual mood of university life motivated him to establish the literary magazine *Eredi* (Heirs), with three of his fellow students in June 1942. He also joined the editorial board of the undergraduate journal *Il setaccio* (The Sieve), operated by the *Gioventù Italiana Littoriale di Bologna* (Italian Literary Youth of Bologna). In *Il setaccio*, Pasolini published both Friulian and Italian poems, as well as pieces of literary criticism that demonstrated his early anti-Fascist preoccupation with, in Siciliano's words, "the role of the intellectual and writer in that moment of war and moral crisis" (56).[43] Pasolini's passion for the cinema also flourished during that period, especially when he joined the

[41] The "Trilogy of Life" consists of three films: *Il Decamerone* (The Decameron, 1971), *I racconti di Canterbury* (The Canterbury Tales, 1972), and *Il fiore delle mille e una notte* (Arabian Nights, 1974). Not long before his death, Pasolini publicly disowned his "Trilogy of Life" films, albeit for different ideological reasons than his critics. See P.P. Pasolini, "Trilogy of Life Rejected," in *Lutheran Letters*, trans. Stuart Hood (New York: Carcanet Press, 1987), 49-52.

[42] According to G. Zigaina, Pasolini regularly attended Roberto Longhi's lectures about paintings by Caravaggio, Masolino, and Piero della Francesca (33).

[43] For comprehensive examinations of Pasolini's work in *Il setaccio*, see M. Ricci, "*Il Setaccio*: notazioni e dettagli," in D. Ferrari and G. Scalia, ed., *Pasolini e Bologna* (Bologna: Pendragon, 1998), 67-75; and P. McCarthy, "Pasolini e *Il Setaccio*: alla ricerca di parole politiche," in Ferrari and Scalia 75-86.

*CineGUF*[44] and discovered the work of Charlie Chaplin, Kenji Mizoguchi, and Carl Theodor Dreyer (Stack 28).[45] After graduation, he worked as a grammar school teacher in Casarsa, where he organized a local film club and wrote his first film script, entitled *Lied/I calzoni* (Siciliano 169). His fondness for the town's provincial lifestyle eventually led to his involvement with the postwar struggle for Friulian autonomy. Pasolini co-founded the *Academiuta di Lenga Furlana* (The Academy of the Friulian Tongue) and a local magazine called *Il stroligut* (The Astrologer), which both served as public platforms to endorse postwar regional sovereignty (Schwartz 148-150). The views expressed in those journals initiated controversial debates with local Leftist organizations, as well as the rising Christian Democratic Party, which were opposed to regional independence.[46] Pasolini also established himself as a prominent activist for Friulian autonomy through public lectures, debates, and the publication of articles in several regional newspapers.[47]

Although Marxist theory was at the center of Pasolini's concern with class struggle, much of his Friulian poetry and short fiction expressed a non-politicized approach to culture that ran contrary to Marxist ideology.[48] A complex dialectical

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[44] The *CineGUF* was an organization of university cinema clubs created in the 1930s by the Fascist party. Its name is derived from the combination of "*Cinema*" and "*GUF*" (*Gruppi Universitari Fascisti* / University Fascist Groups). The *CineGUF* was intended to foster an intellectual cinematic climate among Italian university students and inspire a new generation of "national" filmmakers. However, the *CineGUF* eventually became an institution of anti-Fascist sentiment. Its actions became increasingly connected to the *Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia*, where up-coming filmmakers, such as Roberto Rossellini, would develop their filmmaking skills and subsequently launch the neorealist movement (Brunetta, 1979: 350).

[45] At one point, Pasolini had also considered joining the *Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia* in Rome. He remarked, "I had always thought of making films. Before the war I had thought of going to Rome to attend the Centro Sperimentale, if I could" (Siciliano 223).

[46] Schwartz notes that through his "stance for Friulian autonomy [Pasolini] made more potential enemies than friends. Both the emerging Christian Democratic Party and those on the Left opposed regionalization and feared that in the war's aftermath this entity called Italy, barely glued together before the world war and Fascism traumatized it, would fly apart" (150).

[47] For an extensive collection of Pasolini's articles about Friulian sovereignty, see P. P. Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, ed. W. Siti and S. De Laude (Milano: Mondadori, 1999).

[48] For a collection of Pasolini's Friulian poems, see P. P. Pasolini, *Poèmes de jeunesse et quelques autres*, ed. D. Fernandez, trans. N. Castagné and D. Fernandez (n.p.: Gallimard, 1995); and P.P. Pasolini, *Tutte le poesie*. 2 vols., ed. W. Siti (Milano: Mondadori, 1999). In addition to his poems, Pasolini wrote the novel

relationship existed between his art and politics, whereby his art usually held precedence over his political views. Coupled with his outspoken support for Friulian sovereignty, these elitist aspects of his creative writing weakened his relationship with the Leftist organizations of the Friulian region. Furthermore, some of the homoerotic elements in his work, along with his own indiscreet homosexual encounters, resulted in serious repercussions upon his ability to establish and maintain an official political position. He joined the PCI (*Partito Communista Italiano*/Italian Communist Party) of Casarsa in 1946, but after being charged with committing homosexual acts with teenage boys, he was expelled from the party in 1949 "for moral and political unworthiness" (Michalczyk 71). Even though he was eventually acquitted of the charges, the scandal led to his immediate dismissal as a teacher, forcing him to seek work outside of Casarsa. Following that event, he and his mother fled to Rome where they lived for some years in the *borgate*, where Pasolini became enthralled with the social and cultural aspects of the people who populated the Roman slums.

Pasolini had previously visited the Italian capital on several occasions as a young university graduate, attempting to forge connections within the Roman literary world.[49] His impressions of the city during those visits are expressed in several correspondences he kept with his Friulian friends. In a letter addressed to Tonuti Spagnol, the discovery of "another world" below one of the bridges over the Tiber is the subject. Pasolini writes: "I really never thought that in the heart of a metropolis it was enough to descend a staircase

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*Il sogno di una cosa* (Garzanti, 1962), focusing on a close relationship between three boys from the Friulian countryside in 1948-1949. The novel, written in 1949-1950, remained unpublished until 1962, when Pasolini was an established writer and an emerging filmmaker.

[49] At the time, several influential Italian postwar writers were living in Rome, including Giorgio Bassani, Carlo Emilio Gadda, Carlo Levi, Elsa Morante, and Alberto Moravia. For a detailed account of the literary atmosphere in postwar Rome, see W. Weaver, ed., *Open City: Seven Writers in Postwar Rome* (South Royalton: Steerforth Italia, 1999), 1-37.

to enter the most absolute solitude...[...] I did not feel myself near the Tiber of today but that of two thousand years before" (Schwartz 177).[50] In the same letter, he criticizes the superficial middle-class values of the Romans, claiming that they "live too much in the brain and not enough in the heart: The only feelings people have here is the ambition for a better house, and, in general, greed for pleasure and money" (Schwartz 177). As this letter indicates, prior to his permanent move to Rome, Pasolini was already fascinated by the contradictory aspects that became the basis for his artistic and personal relationship with the city.

Pasolini's Experience of the Roman *Borgate*

To contextualize my discussion on Pasolini's representation of Rome, a short summary of the historical events that shaped the city's urban landscape from the late nineteenth century to the postwar period is in order. The complex array of social and class relations that characterize the topographical layout of modern Rome has existed for well over century. The shantytowns surrounding the city initially emerged at the end of the nineteenth century, when an immense influx of peasants increased Rome's population from approximately 200,000 in 1870 to over 460,000 by 1900 (Hibbert 282). Following the Risorgimento, many peasants were drawn to the city by a burgeoning construction industry, financed by wealthy military officers and bureaucrats who were having villas built or renovated in the city (De Guttry 9-11). A stark contrast between social classes emerged, as the peasants and labourers were forced to endure a poverty-stricken existence in the growing slum neighbourhoods on the outskirts of the city, while the families of bureaucrats and army officers enjoyed affluent lives within the urban center

[50] The letter is dated October 25, 1946.

(De Guttry 10). The next significant increase in Rome's population occurred under the Fascist regime (1922 – 1943), when the population rose from 660,000 in 1922 to about 1.5 million in 1943 (Atkinson 13). Peter Bondanella notes that in those years the Fascist regime endorsed "rationalist" methodologies in their urban planning, often mixing modernist and traditionalist elements to form architectural propaganda (192). In one of its boldest projects, the regime demolished an entire residential quarter in central Rome and replaced it with wide monumental avenues meant for Fascist gatherings and spectacles. Most of the residents from the demolished neighbourhoods were relocated to Fascist housing developments on the outskirts of the city. These developments, commonly known as *borgate*, lacked appropriate planning and basic amenities, such as running water, bathrooms, and electricity (Castellani 153).[51]

By the end of World War II, Rome was faced with a serious housing problem that affected many of its working-class citizens, especially the poor southern peasants who had moved to the city after the war. Throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s, the *borgate* became an area populated by underprivileged Italians, some of whom turned to crime and prostitution as a means of survival. Most of these people could not afford to escape the desolate and overcrowded neighbourhoods located on the obscure borders of the city. Even during Italy's supposedly "progressive" period of the "economic miracle," the stark class division that had existed at the turn of the century (between the city center and its periphery) continued as Rome experienced drastic economic transformation and urban expansion.[52]

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[51] Alessandra Castellani explains that in the *borgata* Giordana, for instance, there were only twenty-five bathrooms for over five thousand inhabitants (153).

[52] Throughout the postwar years, Rome's population continued to grow (by 1964 it had grown to 2.5 million people) and this resulted in the development of the eastern part of the city (the areas of Tiburtina,

When Pasolini moved to Rome in the winter of 1949, he and his mother rented a spare room in a house in the Piazza Costaguti, a poor section of the city near the Tiber River. In the summer of 1951, his father joined them and they all moved into a small house in the *borgata* district of Rebibbia at the far edge of the city (Schwartz 231). Pasolini was unemployed for almost two years, until he managed to earn a living as a teacher and freelance journalist. He often described those years in the *borgate* as being very bleak and miserable, but also very inspirational.[53] In his correspondence with friends and family from Friuli, he stressed the profound impact that Rome had upon him. In one of these letters he writes:

> Rome has made me become pagan enough not to believe in the validity of certain scruples, which are typically northern and in this climate don't make sense [...] For two or three years I have been living in a world with a 'different' flavor – a foreign and therefore defined body in this world, I adapt myself to it with a very slow grasp of awareness. (Siciliano 164)[54]

As Pasolini became emotionally invested in the Roman lifestyle and culture, his self-identity as a northern Italian was slowly dissipating. In a letter to his cousin Nico Naldini, he notes, "I am becoming a Roman, not knowing how to spit out a word in Veneto or Friulian and I say *li mortacci tua* [a phrase in Roman slang cursing someone's dead relatives]" (Schwartz 241).[55] As I mentioned above, similar to what he had done in

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Montemario, Magliana, Ostiense, and Monteverde), where new apartment buildings were built to appease the mounting housing crisis (De Guttry 77). Photographer William Klein documented this period of expansion in Rome through a series of photographs, published in his book *Rome: the City and its People* (New York: Viking Press, 1960). The book also contains comments by Pasolini about Rome (pp. 73, 109, 149, 174).

[53] In the poem "But It Was a Naked and Swarming Italy," written in the summer of 1966, Pasolini recalls his early days in Rome's *borgate*: "We lived in a house without a roof, without plaster, / A poor people's house at the city's far edge, next to a jail. / A dustbowl in summer, a swamp in winter – / But it was Italy, naked and swarming Italy, / With its boys, its women, / Its smell of jasmine and poor soup, / Sunsets on fields on Aniene, piles of trash – / And as for me, my poetry-dreams intact. / In poetry, a solution to everything. (*Roman Poems*, 111)

[54] For a copy of the complete letter in its original Italian, see P. P. Pasolini, *Lettere 1940-1954*, ed. N. Naldini (Torino [Turin]: Einaudi, 1986), 489-491.

[55] For a copy of the complete letter in its original Italian, see *Lettere 1940-1954*, 429.

Friuli, Pasolini focused on Rome's local dialect to form a bond with the world around him, in both a personal and creative manner (p.19). He turned to poetry and other forms of creative writing as emotional outlets from his poverty-stricken lifestyle in the *borgate*, and worked as a free-lance journalist (sometimes under the pseudonym Paolo Amari) for various local newspapers.[56] Most of his articles explored a range of topics related to Rome. For instance, in *Vie nuove* he conducted a journalistic investigation composed of three separate articles that scrutinize the social and historical configuration of the Roman *borgate*.[57] In other newspapers, he explored a variety of "Roman" topics, such as the distinct qualities of Roman speech,[58] the devotion of A.S. Roma supporters,[59] and the controversial debate about hunting in the Roman countryside.[60]

In Rome, Pasolini became a dedicated *flâneur*,[61] regularly roaming the city's streets at all hours of the day or night.[62] During these strolls, he would often speak to strangers or spend time with the city's street-savvy teenagers, who served as inspiration

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[56] In the mid-1950s, Pasolini also co-founded *Officina*, a literary and political journal based in Bologna. In *Officina*, he published numerous articles exploring the symbiotic relationship between poetry and ideology (Michalczyk 68).

[57] The investigation, entitled "Journey In and Around Rome," was published in *Vie nuove* [Rome] 24 May 1958). For English translations of the three articles, see Pasolini's "The City's True Face," "Concentration Camps," and "The Shantytowns of Rome," in *Stories from the City of God*, 165-182.

[58] See "Roman Slang," in *Stories from the City of God*, 156-160.

[59] See "The Corpse'll Stink All Week Long," in *Stories from the City of God*, 152-155. The A.S. Roma (*Associazione Sportiva Roma*/Roma Sports Association) is one of Rome's professional soccer teams. The society was formed in 1927 and still exists today. Pasolini was himself a soccer enthusiast and amateur player, who enjoyed playing with young men from the Roman *borgate*. He once explained that "soccer is the last sacred ritual of our time" (Schwartz 86).

[60] See "The Disappearing Wild Game of the Roman Countryside," in *Stories from the City of God*, 129-134.

[61] A *flâneur* is a person who wanders the city streets aimlessly and attains voyeuristic pleasure in observing urban life without directly taking part in it. Walter Benjamin studies the figure of the *flâneur* (a term he borrows from the nineteenth-century French poet Charles Baudelaire) as a symptom of capitalist culture and modernity in *The Arcades Project*, trans. H. Eiland and K. McLaughlin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

[62] Pasolini would often use a tape-recorder to capture the vitality of the Roman dialect and register the slang expressions he heard during his walks through the streets of Rome. He would then study those recordings to interpret the colloquial expressions and learn the phonetic qualities of the dialect. Pasolini provides a short glossary of Roman slang terms, with Italian translation, in "Roman Slang," in *Stories from the City of God*, 156-160.

for characters in his novels, short-stories, and later his films.[63] He developed platonic relationships with many young men from the *borgate* and remained friends with them. Some of them also became his artistic collaborators and remained close to him until his untimely death.[64] An example of such collaboration occurred with Sergio Citti, who was living in the *borgate* when he met Pasolini and became his unofficial language consultant.[65] Pasolini frequently checked with Citti on the specificities of Roman terminology, and once referred to him as "[m]y walking dictionary of Roman dialect" (Siciliano 181).[66] The two friends would often spend hours together contemplating the unique aspects of modern Roman society.[67]

Pasolini developed his interest in the Roman subproletariat by experiencing their culture first-hand. He established his own personal myth of the *borgate*, defining it as a pre-Marxist and pre-bourgeois world inhabited by a subproletarian group of people whose lack of historical and political consciousness made them culturally pure. This sense of cultural purity became the main determining factor in shaping his creative approach to the *borgate* in both his writing and filmmaking. As Pasolini notes, his

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[63] Pasolini would often engage in homosexual activities with some of the young men from the *borgate*. He felt a strong erotic attraction to them and would usually give them money or gifts in exchange for sex. In fact, some critics attacked Pasolini's early films for creating a "decadent" portrait of Rome because they recognized the *borgate* as the site of his homosexual encounters (Greene 29).

[64] The most notable are the Citti brothers, Franco and Sergio, as well as Ninetto Davoli, who was a young carpenter with only a primary school education when Pasolini cast him in *Uccellacci e uccellini* (Hawks and Sparrows, 1966). For an insightful look at the relationship between Davoli and Pasolini, see Jean-Andre Fieschi's documentary *Pasolini, l'enragé* (Pasolini, the Enraged, 1991), made for the French TV series "*Cinéma de notre temps*." In the documentary, Davoli explains that he continued to work as a carpenter even after he made *Uccellacci e uccellini*, and Pasolini remarks that Davoli's youthful innocence and his joy in living life without any "intellectual" baggage made him the personification of the *borgata* culture.

[65] Sergio Citti later became a filmmaker. He wrote his first two films, *Ostia* (1970) and *Storie scellerate* (Bawdy Tales, 1973), with Pasolini.

[66] For an insightful essay by Pasolini on his literary methodologies, see "The Periphery of My Mind," in *Stories from the City of God*, 183-192.

[67] Pasolini described Citti as "*un campione filosofico dell'abitante di Roma*" ("a champion philosopher of the Roman inhabitant") (*Mamma Roma*, 134).

artistic depictions of Rome are inspired by two formal and thematic components, the "sensual-stylistic" and the "naturalistic-documentary" (*Stories from the City of God*, 191). The "sensual-stylistic" (*i.e.* intertextual and rational) component surfaces from his background in Art History and interest in painting, while the "naturalistic-documentary" (*i.e.* grassroots and irrational) component is an element of his Gramscian-inspired interest in the political and revolutionary potential of Italy's subaltern groups.

The next section in this chapter concentrates on Pasolini's aesthetic approach to literature, largely inspired by the political and social ideals advocated by Gramsci. Specifically, the section examines how, through Gramsci's theoretical writings about Italian politics and culture, Pasolini identified his own position in Italian society, as an individual, artist, and intellectual.

## The Ashes of Gramsci

Pasolini's ideas and creative work were greatly influenced by the work of Gramsci, whose position on Italian politics and culture was embraced by most members of the Resistance movement and the postwar Left intelligentsia. Most importantly, his ideas on cultural politics, education, and the dissemination of knowledge among subaltern social groups became central issues for the Italian Left and its main political agenda of rebellion against capitalism and hegemonic formations (Landy, 1994: 25-26). Throughout the late 1940s, Gramsci's ideas were at the center of a leftist hope for revolutionary change within the Italian republic. Although Gramsci was a Marxist intellectual, his writings are critical of the "narrow-minded" industrial perspective of Marxism and its failure to fully deal with the relationship between subaltern communities

and political power (Landy, 1994: 21). He believed in the formation of a "national-popular" literature that could educate the masses and heighten their cultural knowledge. According to Marcia Landy, Gramsci's "historico-political analysis" is founded upon the notion that "social and political change involves a rethinking of the composition and history of subaltern groups and the discourses about them" (1994: 158). Unlike Croce, who viewed historical continuity as the basis for national unity, Gramsci argued that Italy's historical continuity rested in the achievement of class unity between the country's northern working-class and southern peasants (Dalle Vacche, 1992: 13).

A Gramscian-inspired sense of class and regional unity is present in many Italian films of the late 1940s and early 1950s. In most films from the 1960s, this sense of unity is replaced by one of social and cultural disharmony that reflects the disillusionment of the postwar generation, vis-à-vis their failure to successfully implement Gramsci's ideals. By the mid-1950s, the conservative Christian Democratic government and the Catholic Church had gained most of the power in Italy, superseding the Gramscian ideas that had fuelled the postwar Resistance movement. In response to this defeatist mood, Pasolini wrote "Le ceneri di Gramsci" ("The Ashes of Gramsci"), a six part poem that conveys the despairing sense of betrayal felt by most progressive-minded Italian intellectuals at the time.[68] Set in the English-Protestant cemetery of Rome, where Gramsci's ashes rest, the poem is written as an ode to Gramsci and structured as a monologue in which Pasolini acknowledges the deep influence the political theorist had on his intellectual and artistic development. In the poem, Pasolini merges personal sentiment with reflections on Italian politics, providing a disquieting view of the nation and its capital. In one section,

[68] With the assistance of Pasolini's close friend and literary collaborator Alberto Moravia, the poem was first published in the Fall 1955 – Spring 1956 issue of *Nuovi argomenti.* See Schwartz 293.

Pasolini describes his relationship to the "corrupted" Italy of the 1950s as "[t]he scandal of contradicting myself" (*P.P.P.: Poems*, 11). He writes, "I survive because / I do not choose. I live in the non-will / of the dead post-war years: loving / the world I hate, scorning it, lost / in its wretchedness—in an obscure scandal / of consciousness..." (*P.P.P.: Poems*, 11). Throughout the poem, Pasolini vents his frustration at being unable to revive the historical moment in postwar Italy when Gramsci's utopian philosophy motivated the progressive aspirations of many Italians. As Francese notes, in "Le ceneri di Gramsci" Pasolini offers a highly subjective interpretation of Gramsci's ideas, and transforms the Marxist intellectual into a mythic icon, "an *alter ego* and affirmation of Pasolini's self-image" (Barański 137).

In a key part of the poem, Pasolini refers to the sounds and textures of Rome, the "ancient" city, which exists outside the cemetery walls. He describes Rome as a "corporeal collective presence" that has allowed him to discover a subaltern world populated by humble people, who embrace life with a sense of innocent vitality. He writes about the "other" Rome "which conceals amid rotten / excavations and dry mounds of garbage / the shadowy nests of whores waiting / angrily atop that aphrodisiac / filth" (*P.P.P.: Poems*, 21). Pasolini fervently articulates his Gramscian-inspired passion for the modern plebeian culture of Rome.[69] He portrays modern Rome from a mythological perspective, defined by his subjective experience of the city and its working-class populace.

[69] "I know I'm attached to it, in the heat / of the instincts and aesthetic passion; / attracted to a proletariat life / that preceded you; for me it is a religion, / its joy, not its millennial / struggle; its nature, not its / consciousness. Only the originating force / of man, which he lost in becoming man, / could give it this intoxicating nostalgia, this poetic light" (*P.P.P.: Poems*, 11).

According to William K. Ferrel, mythic connotations in film and literature often employ elements of "objective" reality to suggest an abstract notion or "subjective" reality (23). In "Le ceneri di Gramsci" and his early films, Pasolini utilizes this mixing of objective and subjective features, to provide mytho-poetic portraits of Rome that infuse the "real" elements of the *borgate* with a lyrical symbolism that denotes the unrealized (abstract) revolutionary potential of the proletarian class and its youths. In Pasolini's Roman poetry and films, he demystifies antiquated and monumental images of Rome by focusing on poor neighbourhoods that have been historically positioned at the margins of bourgeois society. In effect, Pasolini's literary and filmic depictions of these poverty-stricken districts convey an aura of tragedy and violence suggestive of a mythic and sacred world.

Pasolini also drew inspiration from Gramsci's notion of the "organic intellectual," a term aptly defined by Naomi Greene as referring to "one who stood ready to renounce his traditional ivory tower in favor of 'organic' links with the working-class" (54).[70] Pasolini viewed himself as an "organic intellectual" exploring the plebeian groups of Rome through poetry, fiction, and film. He once observed:

> Through Gramsci I came to locate the *petit bourgeois* – by birth or by choice – intellectual between the Party and the masses, a true pivot of class mediation, and above all I ascertained theoretically the importance of peasant society within a revolutionary perspective. (Barański 138)

This perspective is well expressed in his Roman novels, *Ragazzi di vita* (The Ragazzi, 1955) and *Una vita violenta* (A Violent Life, 1959), which portray the bleak atmosphere of the Roman slums, plagued by poverty, prostitution, and crime. Unlike the honest

[70] The "organic intellectual" was meant to articulate the desires and opinions of a mass proletariat moving towards the realization of political revolution. As Greene remarks, "Gramsci urged that a cultural battle, led by organic intellectuals and aimed at the subversion of bourgeois ideology, be fought in certain vital domains: the schools, the media, and the arts" (54).

working-class protagonists often depicted in neorealist films and literature, Pasolini's characters belong to marginalized criminal groups living on the extreme fringes of society. They are characters living within a ritualistic and folkloric cultural system based on an "irrational" (*i.e.* intuitive) approach to life. As Siciliano notes, "[T]hey became the sole example, in Pasolini's imagination, for the concept of a 'people's national literature'" (162). Such characters are central to the Gramscian notion of a "national-popular" literature that can both challenge and embrace the folkloric attitudes held by subaltern communities. Gramsci believed that subaltern folklore lacks a sense of critical self-consciousness; therefore, revolutionary change is only possible if the proletariat learn to develop a critically conscious sense of self in relation to the world (Landy, 1994: 29). Landy points out that for Gramsci "[f]olklore is not restricted to rural and past societies and their ethnographers; it inheres in urban societies and it survives well into the present" (1998: 14). Pasolini developed this Gramscian notion of urban folklore through his depictions of the *borgate*. He notes:

> My view of the world is always, at bottom, of an epical-religious nature: therefore, even in fact above all, in misery-ridden characters, characters who live outside of a historical consciousness and specifically, of a bourgeois consciousness, these epical-religious elements play a very important role. Misery is always epical, and the elements at work in the psychology of a derelict, of a poor man, of a lumpenproletarian, are always rather pure because they are devoid of consciousness, and therefore essential. (Michalczyk 77)

In this respect, Pasolini's literature and films present the Roman slums as the repository of an archaic culture and folkloric society, founded upon a pre-Christian and pre-bourgeois set of values and traditions. Pasolini viewed the urban periphery as a symbol of the tarnished essence of an ancient culture lost in a neocapitalist world of industry and consumerism. Throughout his work, the *borgata* youths are members of an ideologically

"pure" society, rooted in a primitive sacredness that originates from the provincial and folkloric traditions of rural Italy.

Writing the City: The "Free Indirect Discourse"

The social interaction between the urban periphery of Rome and its center is a recurrent theme in Pasolini's creative work, particularly his early films, where the urban milieu and its margins represent the contamination of an archaic past with contemporary life. Noa Steimatsky notes that in Pasolini's filmic representations of the *borgate*, "the landscape of poverty and allusions to the gorgeous riches of Christian art, the contemporary and the archaic, the actual and the phantasmic, intersect rather than negate each other" (241). This geographic fusion of spaces renders the Roman periphery as a plane upon which to criticize the cultural sterility of a consumerist/industrialist society ushered in by Italy's "economic miracle." In the poem "Serata romana" ("Roman Evening"), Pasolini imaginatively captures the essence of a spatial and temporal intersection of cultures which is also dominant in many of his films. The poem ends with the following account of a nocturnal journey through Rome:

> And how the embankment smells
> in a heat so pervasive
> as to be itself a space:
> from the Sublicio bridge to the Gianicolo
> the stench blends with the intoxication
> of the life that isn't life.
> Impure signs that old drunks, ancient whores,
> gangs of abandoned boys
> have passed by here:
> impure human traces,
> humanly infected,
> here to reveal these men,
> violent and quiet,
> their innocent low delights,

their miserable ends. (*Roman Poems*, 39-41)

The poem creates a sensorial depiction of the city in which smells, sounds, and textures bring the reader into an underworld that seeps through the façade of modern Rome. The postwar cultural transformation of Italian national space here is represented within a porous urban environment consisting of two diverse worlds layered upon each other - the archaic world and the neocapitalist world. In a similar manner, Pasolini's Roman films and novels subvert the civilized status often associated with city life and focus on characters from "tribal" gangs that resort to violent rituals for their survival. These characters live according to the rules of a seemingly prehistoric society that recalls the mythic origins of Rome and its legendary founders, Remus and Romulus. As David Bass notes, when watching Pasolini's Roman films one gets the impression that "Rome itself must have started this way. The heroic squalor of the present echoes the mythic origins of a heroic past" (91). From Pasolini's creative perspective, Rome of the 1950s and 1960s is neither historic nor modern; it is a mythic city populated by slum inhabitants who challenge the consumerist and industrialist fascism of Italy. Laura Rice fittingly observes that the signposts of an historic city are usually "cathedrals, palaces, and podiums," which contrast with the modern symbols of the Futurist city, namely highways, trains, and wide avenues (224-225).[71] In Pasolini's Roman novels and films, the city's periphery is devoid of the popular symbols of the historic city, and contaminated by those of the Futurist city. In *Accattone* and *Mamma Roma*, for instance, the *borgate* are presented as neglected suburban districts inhabited by marginalized

[71] Futurism is an artistic movement that occurred in the early-twentieth century. Most Futurist artists had a well-defined social-political agenda, creating artistic works, such as paintings, music, films, and sculptures, inspired by the concepts of speed, motion, and the kinetics of modern technology (Kleiner, Mamiya, and Tansey 802-804).

characters whose only contact with the city's historic center is through motorized transportation and undignified actions, such as thievery and prostitution.

Moreover, Pasolini's novels about Roman characters frequently oscillate between an "objective" and "subjective" writing style, creating what he describes as an aesthetic of "free indirect discourse." Pasolini derives this expression from literary theory, where it refers to fragments of dialogue or descriptive prose that mimic the vocabulary and verbal inflection of fictional characters.[72] He explains that through free indirect discourse a writer "creates the stylistic condition necessary to make himself the narrator through his character" (*Heretical Empiricism*, 80). The Roman dialect and slang expressions in both *Ragazzi di vita* and *Una vita violenta* reflect this notion of free indirect discourse. In these novels, the authentic dialect communicates a subjective sense of lived experience. Pasolini himself stresses that the linguistic inventiveness of the Roman slang emerges from the "historic reality" of an "infantilism that causes the craving for a manner of speech that is attractive, amusing, ironic, treacherous, insolent, blissful, and almost incomprehensible [...] It is the linguistic manifestation of a sub-culture" (*Stories from the City of God*, 157-158). In *Ragazzi di vita* and *Una vita violenta*, Pasolini resorts to colloquial speech patterns to portray the characters' clandestine existence. The use of vernacular expressions in these novels creates what Burton Pike refers to as a "word-city," wherein "a writer can express himself and be understood by his readers only by using the literary conventions, vocabulary, and imagery available to him at his particular cultural moment" (11). Pasolini's creative grasp of the Roman dialect augments his

[72] For a more complete understanding of Pasolini's theories on free indirect discourse and literature, see his essay "Comments on Free Indirect Discourse," in *Heretical Empiricism*, ed. L. K. Barnett, trans. L. K. Barnett and B. Lawton (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 79-101; and Viano 93-95.

literary depictions of the *borgate* as drab, muddy environments that symbolize Italy's disintegrating culture in the mid-1950s.[73]

The non-traditional protagonists of *Ragazzi di vita* and *Una vita violenta* belong to a mythic underworld grounded in urban reality. The blending of "objective" and "subjective" prose in these novels points to Pasolini's desire to transform the real city into a surreal space. Burton Pike identifies three spatial viewpoints through which a writer can portray a city: subterranean level, street level, and aerial level (34-36). The street and aerial views are most commonly found in literature because they are the most effective in providing readers with exact perspectives upon a city. Conversely, the subterranean view establishes a more austere position, which Pike describes as being "closer to the realms of myth and instinct" (36). He explains:

> [t]o see the city from below is to demonize it. One is 'at the roots' in many senses: in the city of the past on which the city of the present is built; [...] in the realm of the dead, whose once living bodies underlie the bustle of present time, and, figuratively, in the world of the subconscious. (36)

Pasolini's Roman novels fluctuate between street level and subterranean views. Although they are not actually set in the subterranean caverns and catacombs beneath Rome, both novels present the *borgate* as a subproletarian underworld demonized by Italy's bourgeois society. The use of vernacular dialogue forms the basis of the subterranean view presented in these novels. As Siciliano remarks, in *Ragazzi di vita* and *Una vita violenta*, Roman slang "illuminated the virgin world of human suffering in the

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[73] Following its publication in 1955, *Ragazzi di vita* was viewed as obscene and pornographic by then Italian Prime Minister Antonio Segni, who promptly brought Pasolini and his publisher to trial for the diffusion of pornographic material, based on the novel's use of Roman vernacular. Siciliano wisely observes that the real motivation for the book being reprimanded rests in the fact that it "carries a disruptive political charge. It lays bare, through the novelty of a highly elaborate style, the existential outskirts of Italian society...still harboring its ancient and inveterate ills" (178). For more details pertaining to the legal charges brought against Pasolini and his publisher, see Schwartz 276-282.

shantytowns, it was a ray of light cast on the darkness of a hydra's lair. From underworld speech, it changed into a functional language that heightened and defined the opposition of a world, an inferno, to the rest of the world" (183). These novels also provide a street level view of Rome, through narrative perspectives that describe the protagonists' excursions across the city and its periphery. For instance, *Ragazzi di vita* explores urban life in and around Rome through an episodic and non-chronological structure, while *Una vita violenta* resorts to a chronological narrative that conveys, with topographical accuracy, the urban meanderings of the young protagonist, Tommaso.[74]

The detailed prose descriptions of the city in *Ragazzi di vita* and *Una vita violenta* reveal Pasolini's progressive movement towards an aesthetic of "objectivity" (or "naturalistic-documentary"), which culminates in his cinematic work. His early films utilize the faces of non-professional actors (usually people from the *borgate*) as authentic elements of the Roman underworld. The "word-city" of Pasolini's creative literature finds its equivalent in the "image-city" of his films. The latter mainly consist of emblematic close-ups of *borgata* characters intermittently juxtaposed to vistas of the *borgata* landscape they inhabit. While the "word-city" places attention upon the specificities of recognizable locations, Pasolini's "image-city" creates a more abstract sense of place.

Pasolini proposes that the cinematic equivalent of the free indirect discourse is the "free indirect point-of-view shot," which he describes as a shot infused with the

[74] The attention to detail is quite apparent in the prose description of Tommaso's walk through the city that opens chapter five of *Una vita violenta*: "At the end of Via Giulio Cesare he turned towards Piazza Cavour, passed Castel Sant'Angelo, and reached Borgo Panico: he crossed Corso Vittorio and was in Campo Dei Fiori. Via dei Chiavari was near there, with its uneven cobbles and its rows of façades, like a maze. Halfway along the street there were some greenish neon lights over a white doorway: the Cinema Vittorio, a flea bag where they had double features" (*A Violent Life*, 273). The spatial precision of the street level perspective provided in this passage would surely allow a reader familiar with Rome of the 1950s to closely recognize Tommaso's movements along the city's streets.

subjectivity of both the director and the character at once.[75] He explains that a free indirect point-of-view shot is technically "objective," but at the same time it is also linked to a character's visual field (*Heretical Empiricism*, 170). Equally, shots that are supposedly "subjective" can also become "objective" when a director melds his/her own personal vision with a character's mode of seeing the world. This type of discursive aesthetic creates a more personal and stylized form of filmmaking, whereby the presence of an "invisible" style is effaced by a "visible" camera that merges the character's perspective with that of the filmmaker. Gilles Deleuze explains the visual symbiosis in the free indirect point-of-view shot as follows:

> [I]t is a case of going beyond the subjective and the objective towards a pure Form which sets itself up as an autonomous vision of the content. We are no longer faced with subjective *or* objective images; we are caught in a correlation between a perception-image and a camera-consciousness which transforms it [...] It is a very special kind of cinema which has acquired a taste for 'making the camera felt'. (74)

Pasolini defines the free indirect point-of-view shot as the key stylistic feature of a "cinema of poetry" that emerged in the 1960s, most notably within the films of Michelangelo Antonioni, Bernardo Bertolucci, and Jean-Luc Godard (*Heretical Empiricism*, 178-179). He argues that in neorealist films the poetry originates from the objects and spaces filmed, whereas in the "cinema of poetry" a greater poetic sense emanates from visual style (*Heretical Empiricism*, 172). He also observes that:

> Classical cinema was and is narrative. Its language is that of prose. Poetry is internal to it...Conversely, the creation of a "language of film poetry" thus implies the possibility of making pseudostories written with the

[75] Pasolini established his theory of the "free indirect point-of-view shot" in a paper entitled "Cinema di poesia" (Cinema of Poetry), which he delivered at a seminar for the 1965 "Mostra Internazionale del Nuovo Cinema" (International Exhibition of New Cinema), held in Pesaro, Italy. Subsequently, the essay was published in various journals in several countries, until Pasolini included it in his anthology of theoretical writings *Empirismo eretico* (Heretical Empiricism) in 1972. The essay has since been translated to English in Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, 167-186.

> language of poetry. The possibility, in short, of an art prose, of a series of lyrical pages whose subjectivity is ensured by the pretextual use of the "free indirect point-of-view shot," and whose real protagonist is style. (*Heretical Empiricism*, 184)

Pasolini's "cinema of poetry" rejects the visual transparency of classical cinema in favour of a style that foregrounds the cinematic means of visualizing space. Therefore, in the "cinema of poetry" the interaction of the characters with their surrounding landscape/cityscape is denaturalized. In *Accattone* and *Mamma Roma*, for instance, the montage and framing styles provide a sense of spatial and temporal fragmentation that renders Rome an unstable and dystopian space.

Pasolini's Transition to Film

When Pasolini began his filmmaking career, in the early 1960s, a number of emerging Italian filmmakers and producers were trying to establish a *cinema d'autore* (*auteur* cinema).[76] The effort never developed into a unitary movement; however, it did initiate the careers of a new generation of Italian directors.[77] The aim of these filmmakers was to re-appropriate some of the stylistic and thematic values of neorealism (namely its bleak, quasi-documentary style, as well its socially and politically committed content) into films that would critique the rise of neocapitalism and expose the spiritual and cultural emptiness of Italy's modernization. Mira Liehm notes, "The situation that had been established fifteen years previously held sway in the sixties: Italian cinema assumed the role of an observer of Italian society, exploring various facets of the nation and penetrating beneath its smiling surface" (181). Although many Italian films from that period borrow elements from neorealist films, they are quite different in tone. In

[76] See Viano 50-52.
[77] See Introduction, p.13 (n.24).

particular, they reflect the rage and the revolutionary spirit of a generation that marked the late 1960s with a series of global protests and events. Mira Liehm comments on the *cinema d'autore* filmmakers as follows:

> Their films were no longer full of compassion for suffering humanity; there were no attempts to capture "the tears shed by things." They were boiling with rage against a society that had developed during the past twenty years and against the older generation that had conformed to the rules—some of them well rooted in the fascist era—thus betraying, in the eyes of their children, the postwar ideals. (188)

Pasolini emerged as a filmmaker during this revolutionary period in Italian cinema, and co-wrote approximately fifteen films between 1954 and 1961, prior to directing *Accattone*. As a screenwriter, Pasolini collaborated with many important Italian filmmakers, including Mario Soldati, Federico Fellini, Carlo Lizzani, and Mauro Bolognini, as well as some of the most respected members of Rome's literary circles, namely Alberto Moravia and Giorgio Bassani.[78] These film directors and their producers would frequently employ him because of his reputation as a solid writer of realistic dialogue, principally in the Roman dialect.

His prolific career as a screenwriter gradually led Pasolini to develop an increased interest in the visual aspects of filmmaking, specifically in relation to the representation of Rome and its periphery.[79] Pasolini first learned the practical aspects of filmmaking

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[78] The sequences Pasolini originally wrote for Fellini's *Le notti di Cabiria* (Nights of Cabiria, 1956) and *La dolce vita* were either completely modified or cut in the final versions of the films. Therefore, he was simply credited as a dialogue consultant on *Le notti di Cabiria*, while his work on *La dolce vita* went uncredited (Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, LXXXIX). Pasolini also provides the voice-over commentary in *La canta delle marane* (1960), which is based on a chapter from *Ragazzi di vita*, and directed by Cecilia Mangini. In 1962, *Una vita violenta* was made into a feature film of the same title, and directed by Paolo Heusch and Brunello Rondi.

[79] For example, in his article "The City's True Face" Pasolini describes the Roman shantytowns using rather cinematic terms. He refers to the *borgate* as a "visual spectacle" that can only be represented through the observational "intuition" of "an infinite number of very particular close-ups, and an infinite number of boundless panoramic shots" (*Stories from the City of God*, 168).

through his collaboration with Bolognini, for whom he scripted five feature films.[80] Two of the films, *La notte brava* (1959) and *La giornata balorda* (1960),[81] deal with young characters from the squalid Roman *borgate*.[82] Bolognini and Pasolini shared an interest in urbanism and city-life that became the basis of their artistic relationship. The thematic and visual structures of the five films they collaborated on are motivated by a series of motifs connected to the city-life.[83] Despite their common interests, Bolognini never allowed Pasolini to be on his film sets, and only granted him access to the editing room, where the inexperienced Pasolini would offer his unorthodox opinions on film montage. Bolognini remembers these creative "interventions":

> He would come to the editing room and say to me: 'Why don't you splice it this way?' And I would answer: 'But Pier Paolo you're quite mad, it just can't be done, there must be a minimum of cinematographic grammar when you're editing'. He would be silent, and then he'd say: 'But why'?' Actually he was invariably right, he was never wrong [...] So, I'd come back on my steps and say: 'Let's try it'. And it was just right. (*Bolognini*, 30)

Bolognini's visual approach to Rome was never particularly faithful to that envisioned by Pasolini. For instance, for the main role in *La notte brava* Pasolini had suggested Franco Citti, a real "*ragazzo di vita*."[84] Instead, Bolognini opted for Laurent Terzieff, a professional actor. Bolognini later remarked, "Personally, I wanted to move

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[80] Those films are: *Giovani mariti* (1957), *Marisa la civetta* (1957), *La notte brava* (1959), *Il bell'Antonio* (1960), and *La giornata balorda* (1960).

[81] Before the filming of *La giornata balorda* had been completed, Pasolini's script for the film had already been brought to the attention of the Italian Parliament for its "obscene language" (Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, vol. 2: 3200).

[82] Bolognini has also admitted that Pasolini's writing for *La notte brava* and *La giornata balorda* greatly influenced his direction of the films (*Bolognini*, 33). In fact, the story of *La notte brava* (1959) is based on Pasolini's novel *Ragazzi di vita*.

[83] For instance, *Giovani mariti* (1957) explores the lives of a group of male friends who are coming to terms with their adulthood and sense of individuality in their hometown, the city of Lucca. The film presents a series of subjective perspectives that reveal how the city impacted each of the young men's lives. One of the most revealing moments in the film occurs in its conclusion, when one of the characters looks out at the city from a train window and remarks, "those streets have lots of ghosts in them."

[84] Franco Citti had worked on the script for *La notte brava*, but he was not credited for his work (*Bolognini*, 28).

away from neo-realism a little, I didn't feel like using young persons off the streets, but established actors" (*Bolognini*, 28). As a result, he opted for a lyrical view of Rome, while Pasolini would have preferred his films to express a much grittier and "truthful" image of the city and its surrounding districts. In 1958, Pasolini stated that one of the reasons why Italian filmmakers lacked the courage to represent the Roman shantytowns "truthfully" was their fear of film critics "perhaps attributing cruelty or psychological degeneration to the person who would treat such subjects openly and without hypocrisy" (*Stories From the City of God*, 178).[85] The validity of that opinion was later confirmed when *Accattone*, *Mamma Roma*, and *La ricotta* were all confronted with censorship issues for their "excessive" realism, and many critics and right-wing groups disapproved of the bleak and unattractive portraits of Rome presented in the films.[86] Even Federico Fellini backed out on his initial promise to produce *Accattone*, after he viewed the first rushes of the film and judged them to be aesthetically unfavourable.[87]

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[85] Pasolini expresses this opinion in his article entitled "The Shantytowns of Rome," in which he writes, "The fact remains that the shantytowns one sees in most more or less courageous Italian films are not the same as the *real* shantytowns. In fact, I don't think that any writer or director would have the courage to fully represent this reality. He would find it too ugly, to [*sic*] inconceivable, and thus would be afraid of dealing with this 'particular,' or marginal, specific phenomenon" (*Stories from the City of God*, 178).

[86] For instance, at the premiere of *Accattone*, a neo-Fascist club initiated a riot in the theatre and the film was then pulled from cinemas, only to be re-released several months later (Schwartz 363). Then, following the premiere of *Mamma Roma*, a complaint was filed against the film for its "offensiveness toward good customs and to the common sense of morality and decency," but the charges were later dropped (Pasolini, *The Savage Father*, 51). Furthermore, *La ricotta* met with the most controversy, which resulted in Pasolini being brought to trial and given a suspended four-month jail sentence for "insulting the religion of the State" (Schwartz 415).

[87] Thereafter, Mauro Bolognini convinced Alfredo Bini to produce *Accattone*, and Bini went on to produce all of Pasolini's films until 1967, when Pasolini began to work with producers Franco Rossellini and Alberto Grimaldi. For a series of diary entries in which Pasolini gives a detailed account of his frustrating attempts at getting *Accattone* completed, see P. P. Pasolini, *Accattone*, (Roma: Edizioni FM, 1961), 1-22; Pasolini, "A Day in the Life," in *Stories from the City of God*, 199-216; and P.P. Pasolini, "Cronaca di una giornata," *Paese Sera* [Rome] 2-3 Dec. 1961. Also, before *Accattone* was even completed, the financial difficulties that were plaguing the film's production were the subject of a newspaper article by M. Argentieri, entitled "Accattone senza lieto fine," that appeared in *Vie Nuove* [Rome] 12 Nov. 1960: 36-37.

Conclusion

As this chapter has tried to demonstrate, Pasolini's departure from Friuli marked a fundamental turning point in his intellectual and artistic development, and was very influential in shaping his vision of Rome. In many ways, his attraction to the Roman subproletariat reflects his desire to recapture the sense of cultural innocence he had experienced during his youthful days in Friuli. Pasolini found an inspirational substitute for that provincial world in the *borgate*, upon which he could impose his ideal vision of a culture and society uncorrupted by modern life and bourgeois hypocrisy. Therefore, his Friulian and Roman works are marked by a sense of continuity rather than divergence. During his time in Rome, Pasolini expanded on a project initiated in Friuli; that of providing marginalized social groups with a voice. The specificities of regional dialect and culture that marked Pasolini's creative writing in Friuli remained central to his work throughout his Roman period, first in his poetry and novels, and later his films.

In the following chapters, I will analyze the manner in which certain thematic and stylistic elements of Pasolini's filmic visualization of Rome and its periphery change from *Accattone* through to *Mamma Roma* and *La ricotta*. I will examine how Pasolini's vision of the city in these films reflects an "intuitive" sense of artistic introspection, as well as a "rational" approach to the shifting cultural and ideological conditions of 1960s' Italy. In addition, I will discuss how Pasolini's knowledge and passion for painting and literature shaped his cinematic approach to the city and its peripheral landscape from a socio-historical perspective.

# Chapter II

## *Accattone* (1961): Filming the "Other" Rome

Location Shooting and the Mythic City

*Accattone*[88] marks the beginning of Pasolini's cinematic foray into re-shaping and updating elements from neorealism, in order to challenge the conventional representations of Rome as a monumental city and a touristic site. The film is mainly set in banal locations and unfamiliar places that reveal an "other" Rome situated on the urban periphery.[89] In reference to the neorealist tradition, *Accattone* focuses on gritty locations that provide an un-romanticized view of the city. The actual places and non-professional actors used in *Accattone* help capture the distinct feel of the real city streets and its people, and create a complex portrait of Rome that both recalls and contradicts the images of Italian cities conveyed in neorealist films. As Geoffrey Nowell-Smith observes:

> [In neorealist cinema] the city is often a ruin, and the film's testimony is to the prior existence of an integral city, prior to war, destruction, and decay, which demands to be restored. Neorealism is above all a cinema of reconstruction, and its aesthetic in this respect follows its politics. (105)

[88] "Accattone" is an Italian expression meaning beggar or scrounger. In his autobiography, Franco Citti explains that the character of Accattone in Pasolini's film was inspired by a real person with the same nickname, who was somewhat of a "legend" in the Roman *borgate* (61-62). For a plot summary of *Accattone*, see Appendix, p.129.

[89] In his article "Insiders and Outsiders," D. Bass employs the term *film cartolina* (film postcard) to describe films that mix narrative action with "non-narrative" snapshots of Rome. According to Bass, the most notable movies that convey a *film cartolina* of Rome are: *Feu Mathias Pascal* (1925), *Roman Holiday* (1952), *Three Coins in the Fountain* (1955), *Seven Hills of Rome* (1957), *20 Million Miles to Earth* (1957), *The Way of the Dragon* (1973), and *National Lampoon's European Vacation* (1985). Bass notes that these non-Italian films provide "outsider" perspectives of the city that highlight its touristic and monumental sites. As a counterpoint to these *film cartoline*, *Accattone*'s main settings are the *borgata* Gordiani, the Prenestino district, the via Portuenese, and the Testaccio Bridge. See Biondillo 69.

*Accattone* is not a film of reconstruction, even if some of its compositions do evoke the war-torn urban landscapes depicted in Rossellini's war trilogy. *Accattone* replaces the neorealist sense of restoration and reconstruction, with a mood of cultural destruction and failed social restoration that reflects the cultural disillusionment felt by many European artists and intellectuals during the 1960s. Specifically, the film reveals Pasolini's displeasure in realizing that Italy had not been successfully restored (especially on a cultural and ideological level) following World War II. Pasolini condemned the rise of consumerism and the bourgeois values propagated by a right-wing government that was decimating the country's genuine moral principles.[90] He viewed the slum landscapes of the Roman *borgate* as signs of the incompatibility between Italy's ancient rural villages and modern industrial cities. In *Accattone*, Pasolini visualizes the social contradictions resulting from the indiscriminate urbanization (and suburbanization) of Italy's landscape, in scenes showing the bland concrete apartment blocks being erected in the Roman *borgate* to replace badly-built and dilapidated shacks.

Pasolini is not the only Italian filmmaker who resorted to urban on-location shooting in the 1960s to express Italy's state of modern alienation. Yet, his treatment of Italy' urban landscape is different from that of Fellini, Antonioni, and Ermanno Olmi, for instance, because he never focuses on the middle-class locales inhabited by bourgeois characters. On the contrary, he presents Rome and its festering *borgate* as a sacred and mythological place steeped in the crude reality of criminals and pimps. He infuses the *borgate* and their inhabitants with a mythic quality that exemplifies the cultural purity

[90] In 1975, Pasolini wrote, "[T]he Italy of today has been destroyed exactly as was the Italy of 1945. Indeed the destruction is still more serious, because we do not find ourselves among the ruins, however distressing, of houses and monuments, but among the ruins of values, humanistic values and what is more important popular values" (*Lutheran Letters*, 57).

lost amidst Italy's industrial and economic modernization. Pasolini viewed the cinematic medium as an ideal device to express the mythic aspects of the city's slums, and he employed cinema as a congenial vehicle to help him establish a closer relationship with the reality of the *borgate*. His early films transform the "reality" of the Roman periphery into a system of visual signs that echo the qualities of an ancient mythic city.[91] According to Pasolini, "*la realtà è un cinema in natura*" ("reality is a cinema in nature") (Colusso, Da Giau, and Villa 3). In *Accattone*, the depiction of the city is founded upon a system of signs that are derivative of real places. As Pasolini notes, "By studying cinema as a system of signs, I came to the conclusion that it is a non-conventional and non-symbolic language [*linguaggio*] unlike the written or spoken language [*lingua*], and expresses reality not through symbols but through reality itself" (Gandy 293). The art of cinema essentially allowed Pasolini to create emblematic and mythic portraits of Rome composed from the city's genuine features.

James Sanders has observed that most artistic depictions of mythic cities are modelled on the qualities of real places, much like the sacred cities of ancient Babylon and Jerusalem, which were the first mythic cities to superimpose real spaces with a second "spiritual" identity (16-17). Throughout history, mythic cities have usually represented an abstract entity that people can connect to a real metropolis. As Sanders explains, "[a] mythic city embodies the *idea* of a city, a powerful thing indeed. An idea can travel, after all, as a city cannot – radiating across land and sea into the minds of millions around the world" (15). Mythic cities are also shaped by the political and historical events of the real places they are modelled on. They stand in contrast to the

[91] Pasolini mainly used a semiotic approach to express his theoretical views on the relationship between "cinema" and "reality." For instance, see Pasolini "The Written Language of Reality," in *Heretical Empiricism*, 197-222.

Renaissance notion of the "ideal" city that is founded upon a utopian vision of urbanism.[92] Sanders observes that "[w]here the mythic city changes and grows, the ideal city is static, timeless" (17). Therefore, the mythic city in the visual arts is often presented as an architectural stage for the playing out of events (both real and imagined), while the ideal city is modeled upon a utopian fantasy of perfection, usually presented through a linear Renaissance perspective.

Modern mythic cities are best exemplified in the literature of Charles Dickens (London), certain paintings by the French Impressionists (Paris), and the films of Martin Scorsese (New York). In their work, modern cities serve as mythic locales that subvert an ideal façade of urban perfectionism, to reveal a seedy underworld populated by criminals, pimps, prostitutes, and beggars. In a similar manner, *Accattone* presents the Roman *borgate* as a modern mythic underworld populated by the city's underprivileged citizens. Pasolini's aesthetic approach in filming the *borgate* in *Accattone* provides a strong contrast to the ideal city of Renaissance art.[93] For instance, he composes many of the shots using either long-lenses or zoom-lenses that flatten the visual perspective, hence eliminating the spatial depth and monumentality that is characteristic of most Renaissance city paintings. In addition to this compressed visual perspective, Pasolini employs several other cinematic techniques to establish his etherealized vision of Rome. In the dream sequence that appears shortly before the film's concluding scene of Accattone's (Franco Citti) death, over-exposed images and a relatively muted soundtrack

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[92] The painting *La città ideale* (The Ideal City), which is believed to have been painted sometime in the fifteenth-century, is one of the best depictions of the "ideal" Renaissance city, and although the painting has often been attributed to Piero Della Francesca, the exact identity of its author remains unknown (Beck 26-27).

[93] Pasolini carefully storyboarded *Accattone*, therefore suggesting that he had a strong visual sense of what every shot and scene should look like. His detailed storyboards for both *Accattone* and *Mamma Roma* are conserved in the "Bibliotèque du Film" in Paris, France. See P.P. Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, vol. 2, eds. W. Siti and F. Zabaglia (Milano: Mondadori, 2001), 3043-3044, 3049-3050.

are used to create a heightened sense of the sacred and the mythic. The sequence begins with a straight cut from a close-up of Accattone, tossing and turning in his sleep, to a long shot of him, in silhouette, walking along the parapet of a bridge. The visual cut, rather abrupt, is enhanced by the soundtrack, which switches from J. S. Bach's *Matthäus Passion* to the sound of Accattone's irregular breathing. After descending from the parapet, Accattone is called over by the four Neapolitan youths who had beaten up Maddalena (Silvana Corsini) earlier in the film. He approaches them, but suddenly discovers that they have been killed by a collapsed wall. Perplexed, he then sees a group of his friends dressed in black and holding flowers. He inquires as to why they are dressed that way, and they inform him that Accattone has died. Then, a jump cut reveals Accattone dressed in a black suit and tie like his friends. He joins them in his own funeral procession, walking along a dusty and debris-ridden road until he reaches the gates of a small cemetery. After being denied entrance through the cemetery gates, he climbs over the walls.[94] Once inside the cemetery, he persuades an old grave digger to dig his grave in a sunny location. The sequence then ends with the camera tilting up from the grave digger to frame the barren and rocky landscape visible in the distance.

The dream sequence is approximately six minutes long and contains forty-four shots. Several of the shots use a sharp depth-of-field to give visual prominence to the debris and rubble strewn terrain which Accattone and his friends cross on their way to the funeral procession (fig. 1). Indeed, this dreary terrain adds a post-apocalyptic tone to the dream sequence, evoking the Holy images of Judgement Day and the afterlife depicted by

[94] Sitney remarks that the scene showing Accattone being denied access to the cemetery recalls the Biblical Parable of the Shepherd (John 10:1): "I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in some other way is a thief and a robber" (182).

some of Pasolini's favourite artists.[95] As the Italian film director Mario Martone notes, "*Pasolini ha fatto come i grandi pittori da lui amati e citati, ha trasformato i paesaggi italiani in luoghi dell'anima*" ("Pasolini has done like the great painters he loved and cited, he has transformed the landscapes of Italy into places of the soul") (Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, vol. 1: xxii).

Pasolini thoroughly scouted Rome and its surrounding areas for a place in which to film this sequence, and finally found suitable locations in the towns of Subiaco and Olevano Romano, located approximately fifty kilometres to the east of Rome.[96] In particular, the landscapes of Olevano Romano reminded him of those depicted in nineteenth-century paintings by Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot. In the introduction to the screenplay of *Accattone*, Pasolini writes, "*Ricordavo le sue montagne leggere e sfumate, campite come tanti riquadri di sublime, aerea garza contro un cielo del loro stesso colore*" ("I remembered his light and faded mountains, fields like frames of the sublime, aerial gauze against a sky of the same colour") (21). He believed that such a "sublime" setting was necessary for the dream sequence because the location had to be suggestive of Accattone's ascent to Paradise (*Accattone*, 21). The slightly over-exposed images and the sharp depth-of-field in this sequence give the landscape an ethereal quality that conveys the "visual" sacredness of both the characters and the environment.

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[95] This apocalyptic tone is established in the opening frames of the film, with the close-up of a gaunt male character exclaiming in Roman dialect, "*Ecco la fine del mondo. Fateve vede bene, nun v'ho mai visto de giorno! V'ho sempre visto a lo scurro*!" ("Here's the end of the world. Show yourselves well, I've never seen you in the day. I've always seen you in the darkness!")

[96] In the screenplay of *Accattone*, Pasolini simply describes the time and setting for this sequence as *luogo irreale* (surreal location) and *ora irreale* (surreal time), respectively. See Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, vol. 1, 130.

*Mise-en-scène*: Pasolini's Painterly Aesthetic

Pasolini's cinematic images of Rome may differ from the ideal cities of Renaissance art, yet they are filled with visual references to paintings by great Renaissance masters like Masaccio (1401-1428), Piero della Francesca (1420/2-1492), and Andrea Mantegna (1431-1506). Pasolini admits that his visual aesthetic is shaped by a mannerist philosophy of "plasticity, particularly the plasticity of the image on the road mapped out by Masaccio: his proud chiaroscuro, his use of black and white" (Pistagnesi 134).[97] Alberto Marchesini notes that the Renaissance paintings and sketches of Masaccio served as a "*filtro mitico*" ("mythic filter") through which Pasolini symbolically admired the "epic-religious" nature of his *borgata* characters (20). For example, Pasolini's images are often characterized by a static and painterly aesthetic that is achieved through the use of "frontal" framing and a telephoto lens. These techniques recreate the flat and compressed backgrounds associated with Masaccio's studies in foreshortening, as well as the technical sacredness of Byzantine art, to create an "*effetto dipinto*" ("painting effect") that characterizes not only his Roman films, but all of his films.[98] Noa Steimatsky appropriately describes Pasolini's flat *mise-en-scène* as a

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[97] Mannerism is a stylistic trend that emerged in late Renaissance art (1520s to early 1600s) and is best exemplified by works produced "in the manner of" a previous artist or work of art (Kleiner, Mamiya, and Tansey 561). Mannerism is mainly based on the direct referencing of previous sources (usually the High Renaissance paintings, sculptures, and architectural works of Michelangelo and Raffaello) to create an aesthetic of artifice and overt stylization that avoids any attempt at naturalism (Kleiner, Mamiya, and Tansey 561-562).

[98] Patrick Rumble borrows the term *effetto dipinto* from Antonio Costa's article "Effetto dipinto," published in *Cinema e cinema* 54-55 (1989): 37-48. According to Rumble, Costa defines the *effetto dipinto* as "a term that describes any trace of the figurative model in a film; from the painting backdrops of Meliès's *Voyage dans la lune* (1902), tinted prints, to the presence of paintings within the diegesis (Vincente Minnelli's *Lust for Life* [1956]), and so on" (29). Rumble provides an interesting shot-by-shot analysis of Pasolini's *effetto dipinto* in specific sequences from *La ricotta* and *Il Decameron* (30-50). For other insightful studies of Pasolini's filmic references to painting, see P. M. De Santi, *Art Dossier 16: Cinema e pittura* (Firenze [Florence]: Giunti, 1987); and F. Galluzzi, *Pasolini e la pittura* (Roma: Bulzoni, 1994). For a general perspective on the aesthetic symbiosis of painting and cinema, see A. Bazin, *What is*

"frontal assault of his camera on the profilmic," and concludes that "Pasolini's sense of a reverential capacity inherent in the camera's relation to the profilmic summons this art-historical context which inflects the plastic properties of his work" (247).

In *Accattone*, Pasolini begins to develop this mannerist film aesthetic through frontal compositions that shape the visualization of space and landscape from a painterly perspective.[99] Similarly, in his other films Pasolini cites Renaissance paintings and provides modern re-interpretations of them, as opposed to accurate reproductions. Most of the compositions in Pasolini's films lack the geometric perspective and spatial logic characteristic of Renaissance paintings, and provide a flattened frontal perspective similar to that found in Byzantine art instead. Sam Rohdie suggests that this unorthodox mannerist style reveals that "[i]t was by the fact of quoting the Renaissance that Pasolini distanced himself from it; the citational image which either copied or quoted Renaissance images was an exact contrast to them. It was a site of linguistic oppositions" (22).

Moreover, Pasolini's "artistic" citations are not limited to Byzantine or Renaissance art; they also include an eclectic mix of paintings from a variety of eras and artistic movements.[100] For instance, the lowly world depicted in *Accattone* evokes images of early-nineteenth-century Paris, populated by beggars, prostitutes, and thieves, regularly depicted in French Impressionist paintings. However, *Accattone* is only similar

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*Cinema?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 164-169; and A. Dalle Vacche, *Cinema and Painting: How Art Is Used in Film* (London: Athlone, 1996).

[99] For detailed discussions on Pasolini's mannerist aesthetic, including extensive comparisons of stills from Pasolini's films and the paintings he cites, see Colusso, et al.; and De Santi.

[100] Pasolini's collage aesthetic is also evident in his use of sound. In addition to his bold use of J. S. Bach's *Matthäus Passion*, Pasolini adds to the plasticity of the soundtrack by dubbing Franco Citti's voice with that of Roman actor Paolo Ferrari. As Pasolini explains, "dubbing, while altering a character, also makes it more mysterious; it enlarges and enriches it. I'm against filming in sync [...] it is part of my taste for pastiche; it raises a character out of the zone of naturalism. I believe deeply in reality, in realism, but I can't stand naturalism" (Stack 39). For an insightful interview with Paolo Ferrari about Pasolini's dubbing techniques, see A. Crespi, "Paolo Ferrari, il doppiatore di Accattone, ricorda il suo incontro con Pier Paolo Pasolini," *Pagine corsare: Vita e opere di Pier Paolo Pasolini*, ed. Angela Molteni, 2003 (23 Jan. 2004). <http://www.pasolini.net/ricordi_paoloferrari.htm>.

to these paintings in theme and subject matter, not visual style. In fact, Pasolini himself once claimed that his visual approach to landscape was very different from that of the Impressionists:

> I cannot be Impressionist[ic]. I love backgrounds, not landscapes. It's impossible to conceive of an altar-piece with figures in movement. So, none of my scenes can start with a 'field' or an empty landscape. There will always be a character, however small. (Pistagnesi 134)

Most Impressionist paintings are defined by a visual aesthetic that merges tonalities of light, colour, and shadow to create visual harmony between figures and landscapes. Conversely, Pasolini's films favour an "altar-piece" aesthetic in which the realities of proletarian life are elevated to a level of visual sacredness. As Pasolini writes, "[t]he sacred is real, it's the only essential reality, the thing that preoccupies me. All my works are concerned with human beings in their dwellings with the sacred, with the presence of the sacred in everyday life" (Gervais 6). In *Accattone*, Pasolini communicates this sanctified reality by framing his protagonist in a prominent position in relation to the Roman landscape/cityscape, so that he appears as a modern sacred figure within a cinematic "altar-piece." In several scenes of the film, Accattone is visually distinguished from the other characters and depicted in a pious frontal style that likens him to the saints portrayed in Byzantine frescoes. This style establishes Accattone as the figurative embodiment of an urban folkloric ideal that is central to the creation of a "national-popular" form of cinema.[101]

*Accattone* manages to link the "sacred" and the "real" at the visual level by alternating frontal "alter-piece" compositions of the main character with an occasional long-shot that emphasizes the landscape. In the latter, the characters seem to blend in

[101] See pp.30-33.

with their surroundings in a manner similar to the "open window" aesthetic utilized by the seventeenth-century school of the *Bamboccianti* painters.[102] A good illustration of this alternation between a frontal "altar-piece" aesthetic and an "open window" aesthetic occurs in the sequence where Accattone is searching for his ex-wife, Ascenza (Paola Guidi), in a *spiazzo miserabile* (miserable clearing),[103] where the woman has a job cleaning discarded glass bottles. At the beginning of the sequence, Accattone is set-off visually from the bottle littered landscape in which he stands, while the women who work there are visually engulfed by it. When Accattone inquires with the women about his ex-wife, his black attire and his proximity to the camera distinguish him from the "sacred" background he is framed against (fig. 2). The counter-shot that follows provides a visual contrast, as it shows the women kneeling by a large pile of empty bottles that share a similar tonality with their clothes (fig. 3). The distance of the women from the camera makes them smaller figures in comparison to Accattone in the previous shot. In addition, the crouched position of the women places them on the same visual plane as the pile of discarded bottles they are cleaning, whereas Accattone's vertical posture sets him apart from the background. Indeed, Pasolini's composition of the women here is reminiscent of the sketches and paintings made by the *Bamboccianti* artist Thomas Wijck, who was renowned for his acerbic "open window" depictions of common women working in Rome's squalid courtyards (figs. 4 and 5). Later in the sequence, when Accattone is speaking to Stella (Franca Pasut), Pasolini maintains a similar "open window" style in

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[102] The *Bamboccianti* was a group of mainly Dutch and Flemish artists based in Rome, who focused on the poor underprivileged inhabitants of Rome as subjects for their paintings and drawings. Their realistic representations of plebeian daily life resulted in their work being described as an "open window" onto the streets of Rome (Briganti, Trezzani, and Laureati 6).

[103] This is the term Pasolini uses to establish the setting of this sequence in all three published versions of the *Accattone* screenplay. See Pasolini, *Accattone*, 62; P. P. Pasolini, *Alì dagli occhi azzurri* (Milan: Garzanti, 1965), 283; and Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, vol. 1: 48.

framing Stella, but repeatedly shows Accattone in close-ups with a shallow background (fig. 6).[104] These "altar-piece" compositions further set Accattone apart from the *spiazzo miserabile* in which Stella and the other women are seen cleaning bottles, therefore visually emphasizing his sense of defiance towards the tedious world of physical labour that surrounds him.

In the same sequence, the bottle littered landscape is a *hommage* by Pasolini to the work of Italian painter Giorgio Morandi (1890-1964), who painted numerous still life portraits of bottles and flowers against bare backgrounds.[105] This visual reference is indicative of Pasolini's aesthetic of contamination, which taints cultural and historical artefacts through stylistic and thematic mediation.[106] Pasolini's films frequently juxtapose elements of high art/culture with elements of low art/culture, in order to elevate the "low" and desecrate the "high."[107] In the bottle sequence of *Accattone*, he employs the landscape as a site of cultural and aesthetic contamination. He frames the poor Roman women amidst the piles of bottles, which are associated with the modern "high" art aesthetic of Giorgio Morandi. The empty bottles are therefore transformed from subjects of modernist art into piles of garbage, the remnants of a consumerist society in cultural distress. They are transported to the "invisible" peripheral space of the city, where the displaced inhabitants living at the margins of modern Roman society clean and

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[104] Pasolini's "frontal" framing of Accattone in these shots aptly reveals the often noted similarities between Pasolini's use of close-ups and Dreyer's use of close-ups in *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (The Passion of Joan of Arc, 1928), which is a film Pasolini often admitted to using as a framework for the visual structure of *Accattone*. See Stack 42-43.

[105] In his lost university thesis, Pasolini had originally devoted a chapter to Morandi, also a native of Bologna (Stack 19).

[106] For further discussions on Pasolini's use of aesthetic contamination, particularly in relation to his non-Roman films, see Steimatsky; and Rumble, *Allegories of Contamination*.

[107] For instance, the opening sequence of *Mamma Roma* depicts the wedding reception of a pimp through a composition that evokes Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper* (1498). This moment of intertextuality elevates the pimp to a sacred level, and desecrates the sacred iconography of *The Last Supper*.

recycle them. This desolate working area actually motivates Accattone to make a rare political comment. As he watches Stella clean bottles, he says, "Lincoln freed the slaves, but in Italy they have put them in place. If I had a machine gun in my hands, not many people would be left standing." In addition, by metaphorically connecting the bottle-covered *spiazzo miserabile* with the modern aesthetic of Morandi, Pasolini manages to set up the landscape as a semi-imagined space. The bottle littered terrain is transformed into a mythic space devoid of any real topographical markers. It is a "contaminated" landscape constructed through an assemblage of real and imagined elements that signify the raw degradation that is present in the city's peripheral areas. The *borgate* in this sequence are portrayed as excoriating spaces in which the characters remain locked within systems of denudation and exploitation.

Time and Space: Heterotopias

The visual pastiche adopted in *Accattone* provides a mannerist portrait of Rome as an apparently fractured city existing within an esoteric temporal and spatial realm. Alessandro Cappabianca and Michele Mancini refer to the Roman location of the film as a *terrain vague*. They write, "*E' assente, se così può dirsi, la forma della città, il suo esistere come organizzazione di spazi, rete di servizi e di scambiatori* [*sic*] *simbolici*" ("Absent, if one can say this, is the form of the city and its existence as the organizer of spaces, the network of services and symbolic exchanges") (27). This sense of "absence" in Pasolini's spatial rendering of the city emerges mainly from his abrupt montage style and "un-natural" compositions, which establish the urban periphery as a site that transcends the coherent limits of an ordered world. In *Accattone*, the *borgate* are similar

to what Michel Foucault defines as "heterotopias." In his essay "Of Other Spaces," Foucault explains that in the seventeenth century the sacred value that had been assigned to space in the Middle Ages was shattered by Galileo's work on infinite space (1). Galileo's innovative concepts about the infinity of the universe resulted in a secular "desanctification of space" and an increased rational understanding that "a thing's place was no longer anything but a point in its movement" (Foucault, 1967: 1). In light of this "desanctification of space," Foucault theorizes that in almost every existing culture there are at least two types of spaces/sites that still manage to sustain an awareness of the sacred and ethereal. The first of these sites are "utopias [that] have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of Society. They present society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down, but in any case these utopias are fundamentally unreal spaces" (1967: 3). The second series of spaces are "heterotopias [...] real places [...] that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society" (1967: 3). Foucault concludes that "[p]laces of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality" (1967: 3). The best examples of heterotopias are cemeteries and churches, because they are real sites that connect the material world with the spiritual world. Foucault identifies museums and libraries as ideal heterotopias because they are spaces where the accumulation of time never stops, due to "the will to enclose in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes" (1967: 6). Heterotopias are essentially real sites that connect the "real" (concrete) world with the "unreal" (abstract) world. The cinematic *borgate* of *Accattone* are representative of such heterotopias, in that they graft certain intangible aspects of political and social marginality onto the tangible aspects of urban topography. The

parallel that I am suggesting here between Pasolini's "contaminated" *borgate* and Foucault's heterotopias is made quite apparent in Restivo's following remark:

> the symbiosis enacted by Pasolini connects "marginality" (in all senses of the word) to a geographic periphery, so that the issue becomes how to narrate a history (the neocapitalist slums) that remains too recent to have been written. Pasolini's contamination of the high with the low, of the center with the periphery, of the text with the margin, is precisely what allows us to enter into history. (54)

The *borgate* function as heterotopias that geographically embody the essence of the Roman subproletariat and their position as social outcasts. The urban slums are therefore a heterotopian meeting place for two worlds – Pasolini's fictional world and the world of historical reality.

The *borgate* of *Accattone* are especially contiguous with the "crisis heterotopias" that Foucault connects to primitive societies. "Crisis heterotopias," Foucault writes, "[are] privileged or sacred or forbidden places, reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis" (1967: 4). He points out that boarding schools, military academies, and brothels are all modern examples of crisis heterotopias because they are places usually reserved for the blossoming of adolescent sexuality and experiences of sexual virility. He also explains that the traditional "honeymoon" suite is a crisis heterotopia in which the deflowering of a young woman occurs outside of the home, in an indefinable place (1967: 4). The shantytowns in *Accattone* function very much like crisis heterotopias linked to crime and deviate sexual behaviour, namely prostitution. For example, the prostitutes depicted in the film do not operate in private brothels, but in the streets and seedy sections of Rome

and its periphery. The *Acqua Santa*[108] clearing and the *via Appia Antica*[109] are recurrent locations in the film where deviant behaviour is practiced. Most notably, the *Acqua Santa* clearing is the setting for the scene in which a gang of Neapolitan youths severally beat Maddalena. Pasolini films the area at night, depicting it as a dark and obscure *terrain vague* that emanates an ethereal quality. The "beautiful" location of the real *Acqua Santa* is cinematically transformed into a crisis heterotopia, and it becomes a forbidden place reserved for nocturnal acts of violence and deviant sexuality. Even Maddalena expresses her dislike of the location and begs the young Neapolitans to take her to a safer place. The setting is indicative of the morally and geographically decrepit "other" Rome described by Pasolini in "Le ceneri di Gramsci," discussed in Chapter I (p.31).

In addition to the *Acqua Santa* clearing and *Via Appia Antica*, the vacant fields situated around the Roman *borgate* further add to the significance of the city's periphery as an area composed of crisis heterotopias. This is most apparent in the sequence where Accattone and Pio (Piero Morgia) buy Stella new clothes in a small commercial district on the city's periphery. After Pio leaves, Accattone and Stella engage in conversation and walk out onto the grassy outskirts of the city. As they move into the *borgata* countryside, the housing developments which were visually prominent at the beginning of the sequence gradually shift to a position in the background. This visual shift highlights the isolated topographical location of the field where Accattone and Stella

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[108] The *Acqua Santa* clearing is part of the *Appia Antica* park, located in the south-eastern section of Rome. Pasolini often visited the *Acqua Santa* clearing and described it as being "*uno fra i luoghi più dolci e riposanti di Roma*" ("one of the sweetest and most relaxing locations of Rome") (*Accattone*, 4). In one of his diary entries, Pasolini describes a visit to the *Acqua Santa* clearing in detail, noting that "*sembra un pezzo dei paesaggi di Ford*" ("it seems like a piece of landscape from [John] Ford") (*Accattone*, 4).

[109] The *via Appia Antica* (Ancient Appian Way) is an ancient Roman highway that is now partly closed to traffic. The section of the road seen in *Accattone* is a small roadway that passes through grassy fields and shady groves, with an occasional ancient statue, crumbling wall, or column visible along the way.

eventually lie down and begin to kiss (fig. 7). As they kiss, the sequence ends with a fade to black, suggesting that Accattone and Stella have sex. The *borgata* countryside acts as an anonymous and impersonal space in which Stella loses her virginity to Accattone, who plans to lead her into a life of prostitution. The grassy terrain is essentially transformed into a crisis heterotopia (much like the "honeymoon suite" described by Foucault) where an act of sexual consummation and deflowering occurs.

The narrative structure of *Accattone* is also shaped by a prison motif closely related to Foucault's concept of the "deviant heterotopia," which he associates with the confined space of the prison where "individuals whose deviant behaviour in relation to the required mean or norm are placed" (1967: 4).[110] Much like a prison, the *borgate* function as deviant heterotopias in which individuals belonging to the "radical" proletarian class are relegated to a marginalized existence at the edges of the city. Throughout *Accattone* several of the main characters are either imprisoned or threatened with imprisonment, due to their socially unacceptable behaviour. For instance, Accattone's troubles begin when Maddalena, the prostitute who supports him, is beaten by a gang of Neapolitans and then imprisoned for sexual solicitation. The Neapolitans beat her as punishment for having earlier denounced their friend (her ex-pimp) to the police, leading to his incarceration. Maddalena is later joined in prison by Amore (Adriana Asti), who informs her about Accattone's relationship with Stella. Out of jealously, Maddalena denounces Accattone to the police, and an undercover agent is then assigned to spy on him. As a result, Accattone gets caught stealing and makes a desperate attempt to avoid going to prison, but dies in the process. Accattone fears the

[110] In addition to prisons, Foucault also lists retirement homes and psychiatric hospitals as "deviant heterotopias," noting that within modern society "deviant heterotopias" have been replacing "crisis heterotopias" at an increasing rate (1967: 4).

disciplined order of prison life, which would crush the innocent vitality that motivates his every thought and movement.[111] This prison motif is a central factor within the film's narrative and visual structure. Restivo aptly points out that the visual juxtaposition of Accattone and the Castel Sant'Angelo (which served as a jail during the Middle Ages) in the opening sequence of the film clearly establishes this motif. He writes that the Castel Sant'Angelo prompts a "*spatial* polarization" between Accattone and the historical site "of the prison that contains those who threaten the order 'from within.' [...] the prison will become a central iconographic element of the film, one that can combine freely with images of the borgata" (55). Restivo's interpretation here suggests the symbolic function of the *borgate* as a geographical jail, a deviant heterotopia in which the socially and economically "deviant" characters are isolated from the "civilized" urban world.

*Lieu, Paysage* and the Urban Periphery

As I have argued thus far, the physical interaction of the characters and the peripheral environment in *Accattone* conveys the unique qualities of the Roman subproletariat. Unlike Antonioni, who often has his camera linger on empty landscapes that are seemingly detached from his characters, Pasolini always keeps his landscapes visually attached to them. According to Martin Lefevbre, the key modernist element of Antonioni's films emerges from his depiction of arid landscapes in lengthy contemplative shots that create a narrative *temps mort* (dead time), whereby the landscape attains extra-diegetic connotations (147). In his essay "Entre lieu et paysage au cinéma" ("Between Place and Landscape in Cinema"), Lefebvre examines the distinction between the terms

[111] Foucault provides an elaborate theoretical discussion on imprisonment, punishment, and the body in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. A. Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977).

*lieu* (place) and *paysage* (landscape) in relation to various uses of landscape/scenery in the cinema. He explains that the term *lieu* best describes settings that establish the narrative action of a film, and the term *paysage* refers to the image of "autonomous" landscapes, independent of any narrative purpose or significance.[112] Lefebvre remarks that a cinematic *lieu* calls for spectators to employ a *mode narratif* (narrative mode) in their viewing of a film, while the cinematic *paysage* calls for a *mode spectaculaire* (spectacular mode) that suspends narrative involvement (139). He refers to certain sequences of *L'avventura* (1960) and *Blow Up* (1966) as examples, noting how Antonioni provides prominent visual shifts between *lieu* and *paysage* (147). For instance, in these films a landscape or setting that acts as a *lieu* at the beginning of a scene will often become a *paysage* by the end of that scene. Such a shift usually results in a sense of narrative *temps mort* that is characterized by Antonioni's camera lingering on a landscape without any clear narrative purpose or motivation.

Although some sequences in *Accattone* do also reveal brief shifts between *lieu* and *paysage*, they are not as evident as those found in Antonioni's films.[113] In the dream sequence discussed earlier in this chapter (pp.48-50), the landscape dominates several shots, yet it is never completely detached from its narrative purpose. Pasolini rarely depicts landscapes that function independently of his characters. On the contrary, the settings in his films often share a strong visual relationship to the bodies of working-class protagonists. On this subject, Pasquale Verdicchio writes, "The uninhibited display of subproletarian bodies one witnesses in most of Pasolini's films is offensive to societal

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[112] For instance, characters within a cinematic *paysage* serve as accessories/*décor* to the landscape.
[113] Shifts between *lieu* and *paysage* become more apparent in Pasolini's later films, namely *Edipo re*, *Teorema* (1968), and *Porcile*. Martin Lefebvre employs the term *lieu symbolique* (symbolic place) to describe the desert landscape that appears as a *leitmotif* in Pasolini's *Teorema* (146).

norms because it offers a code of being that demystifies the ideal body of bourgeois representation and proposes (sub)alternatives to it" (Pasolini, *The Savage Father*, 53). The landscape in *Accattone* mainly acts as a *lieu* in which the characters serve as prominent visual figures. The gritty landscape of the *borgate* becomes a *paysage* only when it is closely linked to the consciousness of the characters, like in the scene where Accattone returns home from the Pigneto bar, after getting drunk with the Neapolitan pimp Salvatore (Umberto Bevilaqua) and his friends. This scene opens with a dissolve to a medium shot of Accattone crouched down at a water fountain, where he is washing his face. The camera then tracks back as he stands up and walks towards his home and looks offscreen in a dreamy daze. This shot is immediately followed by a cut to a point-of-view shot from Accattone's perspective, which pans across a cluster of scruffy-looking rooftops, and ends on a long-shot composition of the small dusty square at the front of Accattone's house, where a young boy stands. The next shot cuts back to Accattone, as he walks across the square and angrily kicks away the young boy, who asks him for money. The shift between *lieu* and *paysage* occurs with Accattone's short point-of-view shot, which provides the spectators with a semi-panoramic view of the poverty-ridden *paysage* surrounding Accattone's home.[114] Pasolini uses this strategy to divert attention away from the narrative action of the scene and allow the spectators to contemplate the *borgata* landscape. This brief shift between *lieu* and *paysage* does not serve any particular narrative purpose, except to further establish the "sacred" relationship between Accattone and the desolate environment. The point-of-view shot suggests Accattone's position as a lost soul roaming the prison-like *borgate*, from which he will never escape

[114] Certainly, this point-of-view shot is a good example of a free indirect point-of-view shot, that is, the cinematic equivalent of free indirect discourse.

alive. The stark *borgata* scenery functions as a heterotopic *paysage*, a *terrain vague* arranged to visually reveal the marginal and subterranean elements of the city and its poor inhabitants. In this sequence, Pasolini focuses on specific "invisible" spaces of the city and brings them into detailed visibility through an inquisitive camera. He depicts the material world of the *borgate* through a meticulous use of framing and editing. Accattone's point-of-view shot exemplifies Pasolini's belief that we can recognize and represent invisible domains only through a rigorously detailed contemplation of the material world and the objects and people inhabiting it.[115]

A Dantesque Journey: Pasolini's Metaphysical Topography

At this point, I have established that Pasolini's cinematic approach to Rome and its periphery is based upon a visual and thematic relationship to space that mixes elements of the "real" world, by way of a semi-painterly aesthetic, with those of a surreal or mythic world. I now wish to examine how some of these elements are shaped by specific themes and motifs relating to Dante Alighieri's poetic masterpiece *La Divina Commedia* (*The Divine Comedy*).[116] The allegorical and highly symbolic significance of Pasolini's Rome shares several aspects with the ethereal topography described by Dante in *La Divina Commedia*. Like Dante, Pasolini converts specific topographical and

[115] On this subject, see A. Bertini, *Teoria e tecnica del film in Pasolini* (Roma: Bulzoni, 1979), 19-30; A. Miconi, *Pier Paolo Pasolini: la poesia, il corpo, il linguaggio* (Milano: Costa and Nolan, 1998), 118-136; Pasolini, "The Written Language of Reality," in *Heretical Empiricism*, 197-222; Pasolini, *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte*, vol. 2, ed. W. Siti and S. De Laude (Milano: Mondadori, 1999), 2294 – 2296; and Viano 47-67.

[116] It is believed that Dante worked on his poem for fourteen years before finally completing it in 1321, the year of his death (Musa xxx). The poem is divided into three parts, each of which follow the journey of a poet across the three realms of the afterlife - *Inferno* (Hell), *Purgatorio* (Purgatory), and *Paradiso* (Paradise). Throughout the poet's journey in the afterlife, he encounters the souls of recognizable historical figures, many of whom are from his beloved city of Florence. It is understood that the protagonist of *La Divina Commmedia* is Dante, however, throughout the poem he is referred to as either "the poet" or "the pilgrim," and never by name. To avoid confusion, I will refer to him simply as the poet.

historical features of a real city to create a mythic portrait of that city. In fact, he frequently referred to the Roman periphery using evocative suggestions to the *Inferno* described in *La Divina Commedia.* In a letter to his friend Silvana Mauri, Pasolini writes, "*Roma, cinta dal suo inferno di borgate, è in questi giorni stupenda*" ("Rome, ringed by its *inferno* of *borgate*, is stupendous these days") (*Lettere 1940-1954*: 490). Before directing *Accattone*, Pasolini had commenced writing a novella entitled *La mortaccia*, in a canto structure similar to that of *La Divina Commedia.*[117] This unfinished novella was to tell the story of a Roman prostitute who descends into Hell and encounters a variety of people, including thieves, pimps, Josef Stalin, and Alberto Moravia (Titone 84).[118] Dante's masterwork became a central factor in shaping the thematic and narrative structure of Pasolini's films. For instance, *Accattone* opens with a quote taken directly from the *Purgatorio* which alludes to the salvation of a soul by way of a late, but effective, act of remorsefulness.[119] The thematic connection between this quote and Accattone's death has been aptly studied by several critics and scholars and I believe it need not be repeated here.[120] Instead, I will focus on how some of the topographical markers of Rome seen in *Accattone* allude to the poetic and metaphysical map of the afterlife portrayed in *La Divina Commedia.*

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[117] There are also strong aesthetic and thematic Dantesque elements in Pasolini's poetry, particularly in his use of the *terza rima* (tertiary rhyme) scheme (invented by Dante) that follows the *aba bcb cdc...* rhyming pattern.

[118] The unfinished version of the novella was published in Pasolini, *Alì dagli occhi azzurri*, 243-248.

[119] Immediately following the credits of *Accattone*, before the first image of the film comes into view, the following quote from *Purgatorio*, V, 104-107 appears: "*L'angel di Dio mi prese, e quel d'inferno / gridava: "O tu del Ciel, perché mi privi?" / Tu te ne porti di costui l'eterno / per una lagrimetta che'l mi toglie*" ("I was taken by God's angel, / but he from Hell cried: 'You from Heaven - why / do you deny me him? For just one tear / you carry off his deathless part). (English translation from D. Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri: Purgatorio*, trans. A. Mandelbaum [New York: Bantam Books, 1984], 43). The soul saved is that of Count Buonconte da Montefeltro, who avoids eternal damnation by simply uttering the name of the Virgin Mary in his dying breath.

[120] See Greene 26-28; Sitney 180-182; and Viano 68-83.

*Accattone* is mostly set within unfamiliar locations, in and around Rome, except for a few key scenes. In these scenes, Pasolini infuses recognizable landmarks of the city, such as parks, churches, rivers, and bridges, with allegorical qualities; the most notable being the metaphors linked to the Tiber River. Similar to Dante's constant references to Florence's Arno River, the Tiber is a recurrent setting in most of Pasolini's Roman work. For Pasolini, the Tiber was a highly evocative element within the city, closely linked to his experience of Rome and its people. In a letter to his cousin Nico Naldini, Pasolini writes, "If you want some geographical knowledge about me, imagine the Tiber, outrageously irrational, amongst solemn cupolas laden with history" (Vighi 10). Historically, the Tiber has been the life spring for the birth and expansion of Rome; however, within Pasolini's films and literary work, the river is repeatedly represented as a metaphoric boundary between life and death.[121] For instance, the first chapter of *Ragazzi di vita* concludes with an anecdote about the young protagonist, Riccetto, saving a swallow from drowning in the Tiber.[122] *Una vita violenta* ends with Tommaso dying from tuberculosis after he has rescued a number of people from a devastating flood, caused by the overflowing of the Tiber. In both novels, the river is depicted as the central aspect of a feral city plagued by death, violence, and floods.

In *Accattone*, the significance of the Tiber as an element associated with the netherworld is introduced early on in the film, during a heated argument between

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[121] According to the Dante scholar John Freccero, the metaphorical connection between rivers and the afterlife has its roots in Greek mythology (32-34).

[122] A similar episode involving a swallow in the Tiber is recounted in a short story by Pasolini entitled "Roman Deaths," in *Stories from the City of God*, 85-98. In this story, Pasolini recounts his idea for a film composed of twenty-one episodes that correspond to the twenty-one bridges of Rome. He notes, "as the Tiber weaves through the entire city, this means there are twenty-one vital points, twenty-one nerve centers, twenty-one stanzas with which to describe different aspects of the city, this city in which life is so complex, in which the social classes are promiscuous and disordered, in which everything is grandiose and baroque, poverty-sicken or rich, and full of sunlight" (*Stories from the City of God*, 86).

Accattone and some of his acquaintances, who believe that indigestion was the cause of their friend Barbarone's death, as he swam across the Tiber. In order to prove them wrong, Accattone bets that he can dive into the Tiber on a full stomach and survive. He seeks to establish his fearlessness of death, and after he survives the plunge from the Ponte Sant'Angelo, he proudly says, "Not even the river can carry [Accattone] away." Following this incident, Il Tedesco (Roberto Giovannoni) characterizes the river as a Dantesque passageway into the afterlife, when he jokingly implies that their friend "Saint" Barbarone was protecting Accattone during his dive. Il Tedesco then further advocates the sacrosanct tone of the event by asking, "Who do you think carried off Barbarone, Jesus Christ or the Devil?" The sequence includes several visual and narrative features suggestive of the poet's sacred journey in *La Divina Commedia.* The most notable are the statues of angels adorning the Ponte Sant'Angelo that dominate the background of several shots and add an allegorical sacredness and celestial quality to the location (fig. 8).[123] Later in the film, a drunken and weeping Accattone again attempts to leap off a bridge and into the Tiber. His friends stop him from jumping, but he rushes down to the sandy edge of the river, wets his face, and then covers it with sand. With this action, it appears that Accattone desires to absorb the Tiber and its sandy banks into his physical identity, allegorically suggesting the fusion of body and territory. The scene recalls a particular section from *La Divina Commedia*, in which Virgil bathes the poet's face after they have risen out of the *Inferno* (*Purgatorio*, I, 124-129):

[123] In fact, the river motif association of life and death is also suggested through the historical background of the Castel Sant'Angelo, which was originally built as a mausoleum for the Roman Emperor Hadrian (AD 76 - AD 138), whose young male lover Antinoos accidentally drowned in the Nile River in AD 130 (Boatwright 251). Hadrian had the Pons Aelius (presently the Ponte Sant'Angelo) built to connect his mausoleum to the city, and after the mausoleum was finally completed (ca. AD 139) it was used as a tomb for several imperial families (Hibbert 324-325).

my master gently placed both of his hands -
outspread - upon the grass; therefore, aware
of what his gesture and intention were,
I reached and offered him my tear-stained cheeks;
and on my cheeks, he totally revealed
the color that Inferno had concealed.[124]

By washing his face and then rubbing it in the sandy bank of the river, Accattone symbolically buries the "true colour" of his cheeks beneath the sands of the *Inferno* that is Rome, and reverses the cleansing ritual described in Dante's *Purgatorio*.

In *La Divina Commedia*, several rivers act as emblematic markers along the poet's journey.[125] The first river he encounters blocks his way into the *Inferno* and he is left weeping at the river's edge, until Beatrice uses her celestial powers to get him across it. He then begins his journey with Virgil, his guide, and they enter the gates of the *Inferno*. According to John Freccero, the poet's failure to cross that first river recalls the Biblical narrative of the Exodus, in which the Israelites complete their journey out of Egypt only after they successfully cross the Red Sea, the desert, and the River Jordan (30-31). Freccero argues that, much like the Israelites who relied on Moses to split the Red Sea and get them across it, the poet must also rely on celestial powers to help him cross the river and begin his journey into spiritual exodus. In *Accattone*, the Tiber attains a similar narrative purpose, for it marks the beginning of Accattone's metaphorical journey into Hell and his eventual ascent to grace. Furthermore, Freccero explains that the first river encountered by the poet in *La Divina Commedia* is a "river of death" because "the *fiumana* [river] is a death which is a prelude to authentic life, but before the barrier is surmounted, a descent in humility, into Hell itself, will be required" (35). As a

[124] English translation from D. Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri: Purgatorio*, 9.
[125] The poet's most important encounters with rivers occur near the beginning and end of his journey. At the beginning, he must cross a river to gain entrance into the *Inferno*. Near the end, in the Garden of Eden at the top of Mount Purgatory, he is immersed in another river before gaining entrance to the *Paradiso*.

result, the poet's crossing of the river is interpreted by Freccero as a symbolic "Baptism 'unto death,' after which the poet embarks on a journey through Hell and ascent to Paradise (35). Similarly, Accattone's dive into the river can be read as a symbolic baptism which begins his physical and spiritual journey "unto death." Accattone learns of Maddalena's accident, an event that initiates his figurative descent into Hell through a series of physical and moral dilemmas, only after he conquers death by surviving his dive into the Tiber.

Another Dantesque element present in most of Pasolini's creative work is the road motif. In his Roman films, Pasolini repeatedly depicts roads as a visual metaphor for the spiritual and ideological journeys upon which his characters often embark.[126] Francis Fergusson explains that in Dante's masterwork, "All the journey-metaphors are based on the analogy, which the human mind finds very natural, between physical movement and the non-spatial action of the soul" (4). Similar to the poet in *La Divina Commedia*, Accattone's journey is less spatial than spiritual. This concept of the "non-spatial" journey is present in two long-take sequences that are organized according to the movement of characters along dusty cobblestone roads.[127] The first of these sequences shows Accattone's unsuccessful attempt at trying to apologize to his ex-wife, so that he can move back in with her. Slightly under two-minutes in length, this long-take consists of a track backwards that follows the two characters as they converse and walk along the road (fig. 9). The camera is positioned directly in front of the characters throughout the shot, therefore resulting in only minimal shifts in framing. The sequence suggests that

[126] For instance, Roman streets are omnipresent in *Accattone* and *Mamma Roma*, as well as *Uccellacci e uccellini* and the short film *La sequenza del fiore di carta* (The Sequence of the Paper Flower – Third episode of *Amore e rabbia* [Love and Hate, 1969]).

[127] In the screenplay of *Accattone*, Pasolini uses the term *strade miserabile* (miserable roads) to describe most of the road settings.

Accattone is not deviating from his immoral "path," as he continues to exploit the people closest to him for his own selfish needs.

The second long-take sequence, shot in a manner identical to the first, shows Accattone speaking to Stella, and lasts approximately two-minutes and twenty-five seconds. The sequence exemplifies the often noted similarity between Stella and Beatrice of *La Divina Commedia*. In *La Divina Commedia*, Beatrice appears to the poet after he ascends the mount of *Purgatorio*. She replaces Virgil and guides the poet through the *Paradiso* which, unlike the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio*, does not exist in a physical sense, but rather within the celestial spheres beyond time and space. As Mark Musa observes, Beatrice is the personification of divine revelation, whereas Virgil is the personification of human reason (xxxv). In *Accattone*, Stella is very much like Beatrice, in that she symbolically functions as a guiding light for Accattone, and leads him towards salvation.[128] From this perspective, the sequence can be interpreted as a visualization of Stella's ability to guide Accattone along a new spiritual "path." To be sure, the sequence also appears to contain a double meaning, for it occurs just before Stella's first night as a prostitute, hence implying that she is the one being led by Accattone onto a road towards damnation. However, won over by feelings of guilt, Accattone is eventually unable to force her into prostitution.

At first, Accattone was an arrogant egoist who spent most of his time slacking around with his swindler buddies, but by the end of the film he has morphed into a desperate and tormented figure. He experiences a Dantesque journey that is visually suggested through the symbolic use of roads and rivers, which connect the "real" Roman

[128] Her role as a guiding light is cleverly suggested by her name, which means "star" in Italian. Also, when Accattone first meets her, he says, "*Eh, Stella, Stella...Indicame er cammino*!" ("O, Stella, Stella...show me the way!").

topography with that of a metaphysical world shaped by specific socio-historical features. As Mancini explains, "*[A]ttraverso le strade il cinema di PPP* [Pier Paolo Pasolini] *traccia mappe, stabilisce e verifica collegamneti – tra i margini metropolitani, il meridione italiano, il Terzo Mondo e i luoghi privilegiati dallo sviluppo neocapitalistico*" ("Across the roads the cinema of PPP [Pier Paolo Pasolini] traces maps; it stabilizes and verifies connections – between the metropolitan margins, the Italian meridian, the Third World and the privileged locations of neocapitalist development") (300). Pasolini figuratively transposes roads and rivers which belong to the genuine topography of Rome onto mythic cinematic maps of the city and its peripheral landscape. These representational maps are not meant to be realistic; instead, they present highly allegorical and mythic spaces that form the core of Pasolini's artistic confrontation with neocapitalism and modernity.

## Conclusion

Infused with Pasolini's deep historical and artistic awareness, *Accattone*'s visual and thematic references to painting and *La Divina Commedia* inform its mythic and sacred tone. In the film, Pasolini points his camera at the outskirts of the city in an attempt to uncover and expose the remnants of an archaic culture distanced from modern civilized society. The characters in *Accattone*, unaware of the cultural genocide occurring around them, live their lives with freedom of spirit and naïve innocence. Pasolini presents them as working-class people who are both epic and real, much like the landscapes they inhabit. They possess a primitive vitality that shapes their quotidian movement towards an obscure and uncertain destiny. The recurrent images of roads,

rivers, and prisons in *Accattone* become visual icons that affirm the mythic origins of the city, its periphery, and the Roman subproletariat. These geographical symbols define the *borgata* landscape as the foundation of Pasolini's cinematic commitment to subaltern societies, be they rural, subproletarian, mythic, or Third World.

The next chapter analyzes topographical and stylistic themes from *Mamma Roma* which illustrate the dichotomy between Rome's subproletarian and bourgeois cultures. I will ague that the urban periphery presented in *Mamma Roma* lacks many of the epic and mythic qualities that define the *borgate* of *Accattone*.

# Chapter III

## *Mamma Roma* (1962) and *La ricotta* (1964)

The Road Motif and the Urban Periphery

*Mamma Roma*'s representation of the center/periphery dichotomy is closely associated to the cultural tensions between rural and urban Italy during the "economic miracle" of the 1960s.[129] Throughout the film, roads act as literal and figurative links between the urban center of Rome and its periphery, establishing a road motif that effectively highlights the contradictory topographical and social layout of the Roman *borgate*. As Alessandra Castellani observes, the *borgate* are "*un pezzo di città in mezzo alla campagna. È una sottospecie di borgo, una manciata di casupole di città buttate tra i campi. È una zona franca tra la città e la campagna*" ("a piece of the city in the middle of the countryside. It is the subspecies of a village, a handful of modest city houses thrown amongst the fields. It is an open zone between the city and the country") (153). The *borgate* in *Mamma Roma* are a suburban sanctuary where the protagonist, Mamma Roma (Anna Magnani), hopes to establish a petit-bourgeois life and escape her sinful past as a prostitute. She hopes to become an honest woman, but her former pimp, Carmine (Franco Citti), tracks her down and forces her back into a life of streetwalking, causing her journey towards social mobility to take a downward spiral. Nevertheless, she does not give up on her progressive-minded aspirations to become a middle-class entrepreneur. She sells her body in the streets of Rome by night and works as a food merchant at an outdoor market by day.

[129] For a plot summary of *Mamma Roma*, see Appendix, p.130.

Mamma Roma's son Ettore (Ettore Garofolo) does not share her middle-class ambitions. During the postwar years, she had sent him to live in the Roman countryside of Guidonia with relatives, in an effort to shield him from her life of prostitution. Sixteen years later, in the midst of Italy's economic "boom," Mamma Roma reunites with her son and tries to "civilize" him. She moves him away from the countryside and into the modern *borgata* housing developments, chastises him for speaking like a "*burino*" (a country hick),[130] buys him a motorcycle, and even finds him a job as a waiter in a respectable restaurant. Through these actions, she unconsciously converts her son into a symbol of her own neocapitalist conformity. This social conversion is mainly presented through the recurrent images of roads, which imply Mamma Roma's sense of social inferiority as she struggles to achieve a petit-bourgeois lifestyle. She and Ettore are frequently seen walking along city streets and country roads. The mother and son move from the countryside to the city and from a low-scale housing project (Casal Bertone) to a more upscale *INA-Casa* neighbourhood (Cecafumo).[131] The movements of Mamma Roma and her son along these roads signify her desire to abandon the folkloric qualities of subproletarian life in exchange for the growing urban materialism and sterile modernity of Italy in the 1960s.

Like *Accattone*, *Mamma Roma* presents an unattractive view of Rome, but it lacks most of the mythic qualities found in the previous film. As Pasolini notes, "Accattone's

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[130] More specifically, "*burino*" is a term that refers to peasants from the region of Lazio.

[131] The neighbourhoods of Cecafumo and Casal Bertone are both part of the *INA-Casa* housing projects developed in postwar Rome. Created in 1949 and situated within Rome's Tiburtino quarter, the *INA-Casa* projects mainly consist of apartment blocks that combine modernist architecture and a vernacular style to reflect the physical layout of a traditional Italian village. See I. De Guttry, *Guide of Modern Rome: Architecture 1870 – 2000* (Roma: De Luca, 2001), 76-78; and D. Ghirardo, "Modern Currents along the Tiber," *AIA.org*, 2003, The American Institute of Architects, 23 June 2004 <http://www.aia.org/cod/01rome.pdf>.

metaphysical projection of his own life into a world beyond is mythic and popular; it isn't petit bourgeois, it's *pre*-bourgeois" (Stack 46). Conversely, he defines the characters in *Mamma Roma* as people who strive for a petit-bourgeois existence founded upon "the petty mundane ideals of a home, a job, keeping up appearances, the radio, going to mass on Sunday" (Stack 46). Mamma Roma's petit-bourgeois dilemmas lack the epic and tragic value of Accattone's subproletarian struggle for survival. Accattone lives in a cramped ramshackle home, while Ettore and his mother live in modern apartment blocks. Unlike Ettore and Mamma Roma, Accattone shares a more tactile relationship with his surroundings, particularly when he is not framed against them in a pious frontal style. His conflicts are closely tied to the materiality of his environment and the un-polished primitiveness of the Roman landscape. He endures the relentless summer heat, fights with his brother-in-law on the dirty unpaved ground of a *borgata*, and presses his wet face into a sandy bank on the Tiber. On the other hand, the characters in *Mamma Roma* appear emotionally detached from their mundane surroundings. On several occasions Ettore finds refuge from the housing developments in the grassy outskirts of the city, where ruins of ancient Roman aqueducts populate verdant fields that remind him of his rural life in Guidonia.

The road motif in *Mamma Roma* traces the evolving relationship between the characters and their environment. The motif is first established in the Guidonia scene where Mamma Roma orders her son to move away with her to Rome. In this scene, Ettore seems comfortable with the rural surroundings, while Mamma Roma appears to be out of her element. She complains that the pebbles on the road are hurting her feet and she sits down on a cement block to remove her high heeled shoes. Interestingly,

throughout the scene Mamma Roma and Ettore are never framed together. She is framed against a background of layered stones and he is framed against the rural landscape of Guidonia. These differing compositions imply the emotional and generational abyss that exists between the protagonists. For example, as Mamma Roma instructions her son to abandon his rural existence in favour of a "better-life" in the city, he is connected visually to the rural scenery of Guidonia. The landscape here acts as an extension of his soul and exposes his plebeian roots. Indeed, this dusty countryside road in Guidonia marks the beginning of Ettore and Mamma Roma's journey together, for it is the first of many roads they will cross (figuratively and literally) during their failed attempt at upward social mobility.

Immediately after the mother and son reunite in Guidonia, we see them walking together along a *borgata* street on their way to their first apartment, located in Casal Bertone. In this scene, Pasolini challenges conventional point-of-view structure by randomly inserting a tracking shot that moves towards the entrance of the Casal Bertone apartment complex, where the mother and son are moving (fig. 10). Similar tracking shots are present in two later scenes: one which shows the mother and son moving to the more "upscale" neigbourhood of Cecafumo (fig. 11); and the other which shows Mamma Roma running towards her Cecafumo apartment after she learns of Ettore's death. These repeated tracking shots create a visual link between the three scenes and direct the viewer's attention to the suburban space and its architecture. The blatant stylistic similarities between these camera movements are not clearly motivated by narrative action; therefore, they highlight Pasolini's authorial presence behind the camera. In all three scenes, the tracking shots are intercut with images of the characters looking in the

direction of the apartment buildings, yet it is unclear whose point-of-view perspectives they are meant to be propose. For this reason, the tracking shots break the "illusion" of classical cinema by means of merging Pasolini's vision with that of his characters, and creating a self-reflexive aesthetic that allows the spectator to question the relationship between the characters and the profilmic space. The objective/subjective characteristics of these shots exemplify the free indirect point-of-view shot that is central to Pasolini's "cinema of poetry."[132] Gilles Deleuze describes Pasolini's free indirect point-of-view shot as follows: "the camera does not simply give us the vision of the character and his world; it imposes another vision in which the first is transformed and reflected" (74). Pasolini further develops the transformative quality of his free indirect point-of-view shots through the use of visual repetition. Some of road settings in *Mamma Roma* (and *Accattone*) are repeated in other scenes, with variations that convey a change in the relationship between the characters and the urban environment. In particular, the repeated tracking shots towards the Casal Bertone and Cecafumo apartment blocks denote significant stages in Mamma Roma's difficult journey. In the first two sequences, the kinesthetic quality of these shots hints at the progressive social movement of the protagonists as they move into newer and bigger apartments. In contrast, the tracking shot in the third and final sequence reveals the fatal consequences of Mamma Roma's petit-bourgeois aspirations.

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[132] I discuss this concept in Chapter I, pp.38-40. Pasolini has explained that he developed his theory on the "cinema of poetry" while filming *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, in order to allow himself (a non-believer) to tell the story of Jesus through the eyes of St. Matthew (a believer) (Bertolucci and Comolli 25). As my example from *Mamma Roma* illustrates, many of the stylistic elements typical of the "cinema of poetry," including the free-indirect point-of-view shot, are also present in films that Pasolini made before *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*. For a discussion on Pasolini's "cinema of poetry" in relation to the issue of cinematic realism in *Mamma Roma*, see Viano 93-98.

Pasolini also uses this technique of visual repetition in the two scenes that show Mamma Roma walking along Rome's nocturnal streets. In each of these scenes, an uninterrupted tracking shot accentuates Mamma Roma's slow movement along the streets, as she speaks to several characters that enter and exit the frame at random intervals. These long-takes (just under five minutes each) are in striking contrast to the rest of the film, which is mainly composed of brief static shots.[133] On a visual level, both scenes are identical, yet their emotional tones are quite different. In the first scene, Mamma Roma is in high spirits because she believes that her lengthy stint as a prostitute is almost over. She speaks about her personal background, explaining that her mother forced her to marry a wealthy sixty-five year-old man when she was only fourteen. In the second scene, she is gloomy and depressed, after her pimp has once again blackmailed her into walking the streets, and threatened to tell Ettore about her "secret" life. Throughout this scene, Mamma Roma complains about her life of poverty and expresses her feelings of hopelessness for the future. The slow camera movement forms a metaphorical link between Mamma Roma's aimless wandering through the dark streets and her spiritual downfall. The allegorical significance of the scene is emphasized by the dialogue, when Mamma Roma tells her friend Biancofiore (Luisa Loiano) "the evil you do is like a highway where also the innocent ones must walk." To which Biancofiore responds, "Of course, when Ettore was born, he didn't want to walk down this road." These remarks reveal the guilt Mamma Roma feels in being unable to direct her son away

[133] In a diary entry written during the filming of *Mamma Roma*, Pasolini describes his aesthetic of brief static shots as follows: "*I miei film consistono in una serie di inquadrature brevissime e ogni inquadratura ha un'origine lirico-figurativa, più che cinematografica*" ("My films consist of a series of very brief shots, and the origin of each shot is more lyrical-figurative than cinematographic") (*Mamma Roma*, 143). Pasolini's filmmaking style created tension between himself and Magnani, who was accustomed to working with lengthier takes that could allow her more freedom to develop her performance. For Pasolini's detailed account of how he and Magnani finally worked out their artistic differences, see P.P. Pasolini, *Mamma Roma* (Milano: Rizzoli, 1962), 146-150.

from a dreadful future. She realizes that despite her desire for social progress, financial independence, and a petit-bourgeois lifestyle, she is destined to commit sinful acts that lead to spiritual corruption. At the end of the scene, she openly questions her relationship to God as she looks up at the night sky and cries out, "Explain to me then why I am a nobody and you're the king of kings." At that moment, Mamma Roma expresses her anguished awareness that she and Ettore will never successfully transcend their proletarian lives.

Transportation and the Modern Italian City

Public transportation (especially trams and buses) and private vehicles (such as cars and motorcycles) play a central role in Pasolini's films and literature. In particular, public transit appears in most of his Roman novels and poetry, while private transportation often appears in his early films set in Rome, namely *Accattone* and *Mamma Roma*.[134] In the previous chapter, I argued that the recurrent images of roads in *Accattone* serve as visual metaphors for the non-spatial journey upon which the characters embark. In this section, I propose that *Mamma Roma* further develops this motif through the representation of public and private transportation, which connects the journey-life metaphor of the characters to the urban and social development of Italy.

[134] For example, the characters in *Ragazzi di vita* often ride trolley-cars and buses around the city, and one of the characters in *Una vita violenta* is seriously injured in a trolley-car accident (caused by his own reckless behaviour) that crushes his hand and leg. Moreover, in poems such as *Ricordi di miseria* (Memories of Misery) and *Serata romana* (Roman Evening), Pasolini describes his personal experiences riding trolley-cars and buses across Rome and its periphery. These two poems have been translated to English in Pasolini, *Roman Poems*, 23-25, 37-41; from P.P. Pasolini, *La religione del mio tempo* (Milan: Garzanti, 1961). Also, see Pasolini's 1951 short story "A Night on the Tram," in *Roman Nights and Other Stories*, trans. J. Shepley (Marlboro: The Marlboro Press, 1986), 43 - 64.

Throughout the twentieth century, motorbikes and automobiles have become fundamental parts of the integration between the city and modern life.[135] In Italy, the modernization of national space began with the Fascist regime and reached its peak during the 1960s, when the motorcycle and the automobile became central factors within Italian urban development. Angelo Restivo notes that Italian print advertisements from the mid-1960s use automobiles to provide a new "postmodern" image of Italy's national landscape (66-76). According to Restivo, one ad series by the Gulf Oil Company uses aesthetic allusions to Futurist art and action painting (such as time-lapse photography) to expose "the futurist ideal of *Velo-città* [...] [and] to inscribe within the Italian city the idea of modernity and 'speed'" (74). Restivo concludes that throughout the 1950s and 1960s in Italy, the automobile was perceived as the main determining force in urban growth, resulting in the construction of improved roads and major highways that cut through the picturesque Italian landscape. These changes altered the design of most Italian cities and greatly affected the daily lives of their inhabitants. Most importantly, the technical improvement and the greater affordability of personalized motorization (such as motorcycles, automobiles, and the popular Vespa motorscooters) led most Italians to discover the pleasure of "journeying."[136] Motorization permitted Italians to move more quickly and affordably from one neighbourhood to the next and from one

[135] M. Wachs and M. Crawford note that this phenomenon is particularly true in the United States where "[a]utomobiles strongly influence the design of our neighbouhoods and individual buildings [...] From the trip to the hospital to give birth to the ride to the cemetery to be buried, the automobile is as central an aspect of our lives as any object can be. It is party to family activities, careers, and leisure activities" (1).

[136] A. M. Torriglia explains that the large increase in the number of privately owned vehicles between the 1950s to the early 1960s significantly altered the role of "leisure time" within Italian society. She writes, "leisure time started to become a privatized commodity that escaped the control of those centralizing agencies – such as the government and the Church – that had controlled it until then [...] Leisure time was of course spent in different ways and according to different budgets – it could consist of a simple window-shopping expedition to the city or a motorcycle ride – but one of these ways became fundamental in the process of piecing together a new cultural image for the country: the journey" (118).

region to the next, hence instilling the Italian populace with a greater sense of geographical freedom.[137]

In *Accattone* and *Mamma Roma*, Pasolini employs private transportation to critique the modernization of Italy's urban spaces. Specifically, he places into question the social and cultural effects that personal vehicles have had in shaping modern Italy, revealing motorization as simply another corrupt aspect of commodity culture. Pasolini once described the negative cultural effects of motorization upon the city as follows:

> When the diaphragm of distance is eliminated, certain societal models also disappear. Today the kid from the outlying areas can hop on his motor-scooter and go 'downtown.' People don't even say, as they used to, 'I'm going into the city." The city has come to them. The adventure is over. The exchange between center and periphery is rapid and continuous. (*Stories from the City of God*, 226)

In this respect, the modes of private transportation used by the protagonists of *Accattone* and *Mamma Roma* serve as icons of social contamination and economic obligation. For instance, in both films automobiles function as mobile spaces that facilitate the selling of sexual favours between prostitutes and their clients.[138] In *Accattone*, the protagonist employs his automobile to carry out his "illegal" duties as a pimp and maneuver the city streets to keep an eye on his girls. Accattone's car is a tool of financial necessity, and when he sells it, due to financial constraints, he is not longer able to fulfill his pimping obligations. The loss of his automobile greatly diminishes his sense of independence, forcing him to borrow cars and motorcycles from his friends. In one scene, he uses his

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[137] Moreover, the concept of journeying influenced the narratives of many Italian films from the late 1940s to the 1960s. Torriglia lists some of these films as follows: *Domenica d'agosto* (A Sunday in August, dir., Luciano Emmer, 1951), *Parigi è sempre parigi* (Paris Is Always Paris, dir., Luciano Emmer, 1951), *Cronaca di un amore* (Story of a Love Affair, dir. Michelangelo Antonioni, 1950), *Le amiche* (The Girlfriends, dir. Michelangelo Antonioni, 1955), and *Il cammino della speranza* (Path of Hope, dir. Pietro Germi, 1950) (118).

[138] For an analysis on the thematic interconnectedness of eroticism, the automobile, and modernity in cinema, see D. Varga, "The Deleuzian Experience of Cronenberg's *Crash* and Wenders' *The End of Violence*," *Screening the City,* eds. M. Shiel and T. Fitzmaurice (London: Verso Books, 2003), 262-283.

friend's car to impress Stella and slowly lure her into prostitution. At the end of the film, he decides to steal a motorcycle in order to escape the police, but his excessive speeding leads to his death. Like the automobile, the motorcycle becomes a destructive tool of modernity once it enters Accattone's possession.

*Mamma Roma* further puts into question the cultural impact of privately owned vehicles and their role in the physical transformation of the Italian city. Ettore's motorcycle is a symbol of the petit-bourgeois ideals that his mother is trying to instill in him. Ironically, Mamma Roma walks throughout most of the film because she cannot afford the luxury of a car. The only time she is seen riding any type of private vehicle is when she and Ettore take his new motorcycle out for a "test drive" on the highway. In this scene, Mamma Roma is exuberant and joyous as she sits on the back of the motorbike and cheers Ettore on while he speeds past a slow moving car. The speed of the motorcycle gives Mamma Roma and Ettore an uninhibited sense of freedom. In purchasing a motorcycle for her son, Mamma Roma naively believes she is completing another step in achieving her dream of a middle-class life. Instead, the motorcycle becomes a social status symbol that has negative implications upon Ettore's behaviour, adding to his deceptive sense of independence. The image of Ettore and Mamma Roma riding the motorcycle along the highway allegorically encapsulates the changing face of Italian culture and daily Roman life. This scene exposes the obsession with technology, speed, and consumer goods that most Italians experienced during the period of the "economic miracle." Moreover, the visual juxtaposition of the motorcycle barrelling down the highway with the vast Roman countryside visible in the background recalls the

*strapaese/stracittà* dichotomy found in many neorealist films.[139] This dichotomy is personified within the two protagonists and their contrasting physical and emotional relationships to the Roman *borgate* and the surrounding countryside. As Gianni Biondillo observes, "*Il quartiere Ina-Case è il correlativo oggettivo della figura di Mamma Roma* [...] *così come la campagna (incorrotta e quindi corruttibile) lo è di Ettore*" ("The *Ina-Case* district is the object correlative of Mamma Roma [...] much like the country (uncorrupt and therefore corruptible) is to Ettore") (72). At the beginning of the film, Ettore is linked to the old rural traditions of Italy that are identified with *strapaese*, while his mother embodies the notion of *stracittà* linked to the growing capitalist/consumerist ideology of Italian society in the 1960s. However, by the end of the film, the characters' relation to the *strapaese/stracittà* dichotomy is reversed: Mamma Roma comes to personify the characteristics of *strapaese*, and Ettore those of *stracittà*.

This reversal is best exemplified in the scene that shows Mamma Roma pulling her vegetable cart on a road that is lined with the ruins of ancient Roman aqueducts. As she walks on the road, she notices a teenage boy drive away on a motorcycle that reminds her of Ettore, who is in jail. The road here provides a visual link between the elements of an ancient culture (*i.e.* the aqueducts and the vegetable carts) and the corrupt elements of technology and consumerism (*i.e.* the motorcycle) (fig. 12). In fact, the presence of the aqueducts is accentuated in a comment made by Piero (Piero Morgia), when he reassures Mamma Roma that Ettore's mischievous behaviour and his recent troubles with the law "*è acqua che passa*" ("is water that passes").[140] Piero repeats this expression four times, therefore highlighting its symbolic importance in stressing the visual connection between

[139] See my discussion of *Miracolo a Milano* in the Introduction, pp.10-12.
[140] The English equivalent of this Roman expression is "It is water under the bridge."

the "pure" past (represented by the aqueducts) and the "corrupt" future/present (represented by the motorcycle). This scene inverts Ettore's earlier association to ruralism and Mamma Roma's connection to urbanism, hence revealing their altered relationship to national space. The image of Mamma Roma rolling her wooden vegetable cart along the peripheral road signifies her connection to *strapaese*, while the motorcycle, a symbol of modernity and *stracittà*, is associated with Ettore. Pasolini employs this visual structure to suggest that Ettore, a former country boy, has become consumed by urban corruption, just as his progressive-minded mother has rediscovered her rustic origins.

Landscape, the Body, and Sexuality

In my discussion of *Mamma Roma* thus far, I have argued that the relationship between the characters and their environment is a central thematic and visual factor within the film. I will now analyze how *Mamma Roma* presents most of its public settings (roads, restrooms, and fields) as abstract spaces that reflect the cultural function of the city, its periphery, and the spiritual condition of its inhabitants. Pasolini described the relationship between public and private space in Roman daily life of the 1950s and 1960s as follows:

> In Rome, due to the housing shortage, people live in the streets more than at home. The street is thought of as a theatre. At home nobody sees you; in the street you have an audience. The worker shows off his wit, the bourgeois his affluence, the aristocrat his love of the sun and the masses, the visiting star her sunglasses. The teen-ager exhibits his sex, the gossip-monger her flabby flesh, the businessman his nose [...] Romans are happy only when walking in the streets. The architectural monstrosities left by fascism and the postwar years have not succeeded in dehumanizing a single street. (Klein 73)

Pasolini here outlines his opinion on the importance of social space within modern Roman society. In *Mamma Roma*, through the visual melding of private and public space, he emphasizes this contradictory function of Roman topography in relation to the characters and their bodies. For example, the pastoral landscape covered with the ruins of ancient aqueducts operates as a "privatized" public space. It is a rural location, an element of *strapaese*, which seemingly exists outside the boundaries of modern society and civilization. Throughout the film, this rural space acts a mythic locale where Ettore can exhibit his folkloric virtues. In one particular scene, Ettore and Bruna are walking among the fields and Ettore identifies several wild animals, simply by recognizing their sounds. Bruna is astonished by this feat and Ettore explains to her that his familiarity with wild animal is a product of his rural upbringing. This incident demonstrates that Ettore shares an intimate connection with nature that enables him to seamlessly interact with the countryside surrounding the *borgate*.

In another sequence, Pasolini renders the architectural space of the *borgate* housing estates as an oppressive backdrop to images of Ettore wandering aimlessly among the grassy fields and ruins of the urban periphery. This sequence continually alternates between shots filmed with a telephoto lens, providing a flattened perspective, and others filmed with a wide-angle lens, which offer a greater depth-of-field. These visual shifts in perspective express Ettore's sense of spatial and emotional fragmentation within the landscape and give the background a heightened visual significance. The grassy periphery and its crumbling aqueducts embody centuries of natural erosion, and are commonly associated with an ancient way of life and an archaic culture.[141]

[141] As Burton Pike points out, the ancient ruins scattered across modern Rome and its countryside convey a sense of temporal overlapping between the city's past and its present. He writes, "Rome presents the

Conversely, the white-walled buildings of the housing estates visible in the background of the shot "contaminate" the visual purity of the landscape (fig. 13). The urban periphery is therefore transformed into an impure space in which the apartment buildings reveal the artificiality of a modern petit-bourgeois urban environment, offset by the ancient ruins of an archaic society. The visual interaction of Ettore's body with this "contaminated" landscape implies that his mother's obsession with middle-class values has led to the gradual decay of his spiritual purity. Like a character from a neorealist film, Ettore feels lost and alienated within his environment. Yet, there is a difference: the neorealist character's alienation is brought about by a nation in economic shambles, whereas Ettore's is brought about by the pressures to conform to a society that is quickly moving into cultural homogenization. Restivo writes that Pasolini's visualization of the urban margins suggests:

> the phantasmatic of the precapitalist space surviving in the midst of neocapitalism. For Pasolini the character and his landscape becomes a space for rethinking the relationship between individual and nation, and using film as an exercise in seeing differently. (10)

In *Mamma Roma*, Pasolini develops a visual discourse between spatiality and the body to reflect the socio-historical issues affecting the economic transformation of Italy. The interplay between the bodies of his characters and the Roman landscape is a defining factor of his visual style, which often conveys ideas directly through images, without any specific attachment to plot.

Pasolini's representations of male and female bodies in *Mamma Roma* connect the issues of sexuality and identity to national space. Essentially, Pasolini provides a

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observer with the image of a living city in the present superimposed on the impressive ruins of a ghostly past. Rome is a living community, but its life rests on the many layers of the dead, who have left visible and grandiose reminders of their former presence" (19).

cinematic exploration into the surrender of the human body as a sexual and consumer commodity within neocapitalist society.[142] As such, Mamma Roma's body is depicted as an object to be purchased and consumed. Like the vegetables she sells in the market-*piazza*, Mamma Roma parades her sexual wares on the streets of Rome, which act as heterotopias wherein her body is perceived as a commodity with an exchange value. Outside of the city, the grassy fields encircling the *borgate* serve as abstract sexual spaces in which Ettore loses his virginity and discovers his sexuality.[143] Ettore's sexual maturity and adolescent desires are externalized within these fields through the phallic dimensions of the crumbling aqueducts (fig. 13). In fact, the physical layout of the area and the phallic shape of the ancient ruins evoke Henri Lefebvre's concept of "contradictory spaces," rather than Foucault's notion of crisis heterotopias. About contradictory spaces, Henri Lefebvre writes:

> Typically, the identification of sex and sexuality, of pleasure and physical gratification, with 'leisure' occurs in places specially designated for the purpose – in holiday resorts or villages, on ski slopes or sundrenched beaches. Such leisure spaces become eroticized, as in the case of city neighbourhoods given over to nightlife, to the illusion of festivity [...] Abstract space is doubly castrating: it isolates the phallus, projecting it into a realm outside the body, then fixes it in space (vertically) and brings it under the surveillance of the eye. (310)

The outlying grassland in *Mamma Roma* functions as a "leisure" space for Ettore and his friends, who often spend time there playing cards, talking, and planning their next theft. The area also becomes an eroticized space when Ettore loses his virginity there to Bruna, in a rather secluded spot where most of the *borgata* youths go to have sex. Ettore forms a

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[142] The issue of sexuality became an increasingly important and visible factor within Pasolini's later films. For instance, in his 1964 documentary *Comizi d'amore* (Love Meetings), Pasolini travels to various regions in Italy to examine the nation's diverse perspectives towards sex. Moreover, his last film *Salò, o le 120 giornate di Sodoma* provides a very bleak and excessively critical exploration of the relationship between sexuality, the human body, and power.

[143] Viano argues that these peripheral spaces are connected to a homosexual subtext in the film (97-98).

bond with this peripheral terrain that differs significantly from the one between Mamma Roma and the nocturnal streets of Rome. The dark streets are deviant heterotopias that allow for anonymous sexual activity, but the verdant terrain acts as a personal space wherein Ettore can free both his mind and body from the social and physical confines of the housing developments.

In addition to the outlying fields that encircle the housing developments, there are various other recurrent locations in *Mamma Roma* that merge private and public space. These sites include the market-*piazza*, the public toilet, the church, the prison, and the hospital. Most of the main action in the film is set within these communal places, especially the public toilet and the prison which are key locations that signify a blurring of private and public space. As in *Accattone*, the public toilet is featured near the end of *Mamma Roma*, shortly before the act of thievery that will result in the death of the protagonist. In *Accattone*, Balilla (Mario Cipriani) enters a partially-shielded sidewalk urinal, and in *Mamma Roma* Ettore steps into a semi- enclosed public bathroom, located just across from the hospital where he steals a radio. In both scenes, the public toilets are converted into places for "illegitimate" actions, namely spying. As Mancini and Perrella observe, in many of Pasolini's films the public toilet undergoes a metaphorical conversion, whereby "*[l]'edificio pubblico viene così trasgredito e rifunzionalizzato da un fare non legittimato*" ("the public edifice is transgressed and re-functionalized by an illegitimate act") (324).

According to social convention, the public toilet is a semi-private space designated for the carrying out of "private" bodily functions. In *Mamma Roma*, a toilet motif is emphasized through Mamma Roma's repeated "public" references to the

"private" acts of defecation and urination. She uses phrases like "*fiore de merde*" ("flower of shit"), "*s'è fatta una piscata di mezz'ora, s'è pisciato il core*" ("he had a half-hour piss, he pissed his heart out"); and "*Ancora te pisci sotto*" ("you're gonna piss yourself").[144] These scatological expressions suggest a violation of the public/private divide that is associated with the toilet, and its function as a space reserved for the self-disciplined control of one's bodily functions and excrement. Ironically, the appearances of the public toilet in both *Accattone* and *Mamma Roma* occur shortly before the protagonists lose power over their bodies, resulting in their untimely deaths in both a public space (Accattone) and a confined space (Ettore).

At the end of *Mamma Roma*, Ettore is placed in a prison hospital due to his high fever. His erratic behaviour then leads prison officials to place him in solitary confinement, where he eventually dies. In his dark dungeon-like cell, Ettore is tied to a wooden table and forcefully denied wilful control over his body. He is completely concealed from the outside world and repeatedly cries out for his mother, but his cries go unanswered. These abhorrent conditions are quite excessive compared to the petty nature of Ettore's crime. In this scene, the cell functions as a deviant heterotopia, an undefinable space in which the "deviant" body is molded into a "docile" body through punishment. On the subject of torture, imprisonment, and the body, Foucault writes:

> in our societies, the systems of punishment are to be situated in a certain 'political economy' of the body: even if they do not make use of violent or bloody punishment, even when they use 'lenient' methods involving confinement or correction, it is always the body that is at issue – the body and its forces, their utility and their docility, their distribution and their submission. (1977: 25)

[144] For an insightful discussion on the scatological motifs present in *Mamma Roma*, see A. Giovanni, "I figli di 'Mamma Roma'," *Il borghese*, 27 Sept. 1962: 129-130.

Pasolini's image of Ettore's tortured and disciplined body exposes how the loss or denial of one's physical capacities always leads to a loss of individuality and self-identity. Like most of Pasolini's protagonists, Ettore can no longer live once he loses power over his body. The image of his lifeless corpse lying on a wooden table evokes the suffering and martyred body usually depicted in Christian art and painting. In truth, this composition presents a direct reference to Andrea Mantegna's *Cristo morto* (Dead Christ, ca. 1501) (figs. 14 and 15). The camera essentially places Ettore's corpse on display and transforms him into an iconic martyred figure representing the irreversible effects of consumerist ideology upon the subproletarian class. His limp body is indicative of the unsuccessful plight of the Italian working-class since the end of the Second World War, when the hope for social equality and cultural heterogeneity was ever present. Ettore's death in *Mamma Roma* insinuates the demise of this postwar hope, which had been overshadowed in the 1960s by the mounting restraints of a commodity culture that was molding Italian society into a numb collective of indistinct bodies and minds.

Re-assessing the Neorealist City

Like many other Left-wing Intellectuals of the 1960s, Pasolini felt that the growth of commercial capitalism in Italy was a form of cultural fascism, resulting from the unsuccessful postwar attempt to rebuild a better country and society. He argued that the liberal ideals for national and cultural postwar reconstruction that had defined neorealist cinema were no longer valid by the 1960s. In 1961, he wrote:

> Neorealism is finished. It was a rational and humanistic movement, inspired by the feelings that Italians lived through during the immediate period following the fall of Fascism. This neorealist creative tendency was gradually abandoned as Italy, instead of maintaining the principles of

> the Resistance, let itself fall into reactionary clericalism. This political retreat was the inevitable cause of a backward step in literature and cinema. ("Intellectualism...and the Teds," 44)

Like many neorealist films, *Mamma Roma* reflects a sense of national disintegration through images depicting the spiritual and cultural desolation of a country in the midst of a "vital crisis."[145] Yet, in the film Pasolini re-inscribes neorealist elements, such as the use of real locations and non-actors, in order to question the neorealist visualization of space and landscape.[146] For instance, he casts Lamberto Maggiorani (the actor who played the main role in *Ladri di biciclette*) as the hospital patient who has his radio robbed by Ettore. The casting of Maggiorani creates a self-reflexive moment that highlights the irony in the fact characters in neorealist films are often the victims of thievery, while Pasolini's protagonists are thieves.[147] Equally, the conclusion of *Accattone*, with the deceitful protagonist stealing a motorbike in a moment of desperation, is structured as a cunning reference to *Ladri di biciclette*. *Accattone* and *Mamma Roma* both demystify the naturalism of neorealist cinema and reveal the iconic images of neorealism to be "false" constructs that can be manipulated and recontextualized to fit contemporary situations.

*Mamma Roma* re-assesses specific images of Rome found in Rossellini's neorealist classic *Roma città aperta*. Maurizio Viano notes the visual link between the closing shots of *Roma città aperta* and those of *Mamma Roma* (92). Both films end with a view of the Roman cityscape dominated by a church dome. In Rossellini's film the

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[145] See Introduction, pp.14-15

[146] Several other Italian filmmakers at the time were re-inscribing the "realist" aesthetic of neorealism in their films. Five of these directors (Mauro Bolognini, Gillo Pontecorvo, Francesco Rosi, Franco Rossi, and Florestano Vancini) discuss their renewed approach to cinematic realism in J. F. Lane, "Five Directors Who are the New Realists," *Films and Filming* Jan. 1961: 20-21, 23-27, 46.

[147] Unlike Magnani, who was a "professional" actress, Maggiorani was a non-professional actor who became an icon of neorealist cinema. In effect, by casting them both in his film Pasolini highlights the use of both "professional" and "non-professional" actors in neorealist films.

dome is that of St. Peter's Basilica, but in *Mamma Roma* we see the dome of a modern church located within the Cecafumo district. As Micciché explains, the view of the Roma-Cecafumo cityscape in *Mamma Roma* is repeated eight times throughout the film, and it is presented through three different focal perspectives in which the dome either appears smaller within the frame or at a greater distance (108-109).[148] For instance, in the closing sequence of the film, Mamma Roma learns of Ettore's death and she runs to her apartment with the intention of committing suicide by leaping out of her son's bedroom window. Her fellow vendors chase after her and prevent her from jumping. As the small group of vendors hold Mamma Roma back in this scene, a point-of-view editing structure is employed to cut from a medium-shot of Mamma Roma's astonished face (as she stares out the window) to a shot of the "domed" cityscape (fig. 16). The image of the dome is followed by a medium shot that shows Mamma Roma being held back by her friends, and another shot of the "domed" cityscape (the film's closing shot), filmed with a shorter focal length (fig. 17). Therefore, at the end of the film the visual boundary separating Mamma Roma (the individual) and Roma (the city) is widened. The more distanced perspective of the city (fig. 17) symbolizes Mamma Roma's physical, spiritual, and ideological isolation, at the margins of a neocapitalist space. The final image of the film reinforces the notion that the city, as the material embodiment of petit-bourgeois ideals, is to blame for Mamma Roma's failed aspirations and dreams.[149]

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[148] Viano (92-93) also makes note of the repetition of these shots and discusses the difference in perspective between them. However, Viano incorrectly states that the shot of the Roma-Cecafumo cityscape is repeated seven times (as opposed to eight), with only two different perspectives (as opposed to three).

[149] This accusatory tone is actually verbalized in an earlier version of the *Mamma Roma* screenplay, which ends with Mamma Roma staring out at the cityscape and yelling, "I responsabili! I responsabili! I responsabili!" ("The responsible ones! The responsible ones! The responsible ones!") (*Per il cinema* 1: 263).

In order to fully comprehend the ideological connection between the endings of *Mamma Roma* and *Roma città aperta*, it is necessary to examine the iconic status that the closing shot of Rossellini's film has achieved over the years. When *Roma città aperta* was released, its closing shot of a group of children walking towards the city, with the dome of St. Peter's Basilica towering over the skyline, offered a sense of retreat from the horrors of war and its aftermath. The image stood as a symbol of postwar Italy advancing into an unsure future, to be shaped by the children who had survived the end of a totalitarian regime. Therefore, the ending of the film remained quite ambiguous, and left audiences questioning whether the future would be bright for the young generation of Italians who had grown up under Fascism. Years later, Pasolini viewed this closing image of *Roma città aperta* with a sense of sadness and disappointment. He perceived it as a symbol of failed hope pointing towards a future that would not be very bright in the eyes of many Italians, especially the Leftist-oriented artists and intellectuals. In the 1961 poem "*Lacrime*" ("Tears"), he interprets the final image of *Roma città aperta* as follows:

> I see them going off, and it's very clear:
> adolescents take the road of hope among ruins,
> absorbed by the almost-sexual whiteness,
> sacred in its misery.
> And their going in the light
> now made me rage and cry.
> Why – because there was no light in their future,
> because there was this weary relapse, this darkness.
> they are adults now, they've lived through
> their appalling postwar corruption
> absorbed in the light,
> and they are all around me, poor little men
> for whom each martyrdom has been useless,
> slaves of time, in these days
> in which awakens the sad stupor of knowing
> that all that light for which we lived
> was only a dream,
> unjustified, unobjective,

source now of solidarity, shameful tears. (*Roman Poems*, 77)

In this poem, Pasolini looks back at Rossellini's iconography of Rome and he is overcome with a sense of despair for the future, the nation, and its youth.[150] The final shot of *Mamma Roma* serves as the cinematic equivalent of Pasolini's poem, for it manages to re-appropriate the closing image of *Roma città aperta*, seventeen years after its first appearance on screen. Unlike in *Roma città aperta*, where the boys approach the center of Rome, in the final image of *Mamma Roma* there is an optical movement away from the city. Pasolini infuses his image of the city with a complete sense of helplessness and existential futility, eliminating any margin of hope for a brighter future. Similar to his inversions of religious iconography and Christian art, here Pasolini modifies an iconographic image of Rome presented in a founding neorealist work.

As my analysis hopes to demonstrate, in *Mamma Roma* Pasolini adapts neorealist imagery to reflect a despairing vision of 1960s' Rome and the nation's bleak future. Like many other cinematic portraits of major Italian cities of the 1960s (most notably in films by Antonioni and Bertolucci), Pasolini's Rome is a dystopian space suggestive of collective despair and alienation.[151] The repeated image of Ettore and Mamma Roma looking out at the Roma-Cecafumo cityscape exemplifies their helplessness amidst the radical cultural and social changes occurring in Italy at the time. As Micciché writes, "*il*

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[150] In a 1960 article entitled "Vengono da lontano per scoprire l'Italia" ("They Come from Far to Discover Italy"), Pasolini described his experience of re-watching *Roma città aperta* in the mid-1950s: "*rivedendo in quei giorni* Roma città aperta *non si potevano trattenere le lacrime, tante erano le speranze e gli ideali che in quel film trapelavano e che il periodo successivo aveva così squallidamente tradito*" ("re-watching, in those days, *Roma città aperta* one could not hold back the tears, as many of the hopes and the ideas revealed in that film were miserably abandoned in the successive period") (*Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte*, 2252).

[151] For example, see Bertolucci's *La commare secca* and *Prima della rivoluzione* (Before the Revolution, 1964), as well as Antonioni's *L'avventura*, *La notte* (The Night, 1961), *L'eclisse* (The Eclipse, 1962), and *Il deserto rosso* (Red Desert, 1964). For more on the subject of the cinematic city of the 1960s, see Barber 75-81; Easthope 129-139; and A. Siegel, "After the Sixties: Changing Paradigms in the Representation of Urban Space," *Screening the City,* eds. M. Shiel and T. Fitzmaurice (London: Verso Books, 2003), 137-159.

*loro sguardo non è* ***degli occhi*** *ma* ***della coscienza****, non è, per così dire,* ***ottico****, ma* ***ideologico*** [...] *l'immagine di Cecafumo è un'****immagine simbolica a forte pertinenza ideologica***" ("their look is not *of the eyes*, but *of the conscience*, it is not, so to say, *optical*, but *ideological* [...] the image of Cecafumo is a *symbolic image of strong ideological pertinence*") (116).[152] In the final shot of *Mamma Roma*, Pasolini represents the city through an iconoclastic use of editing and framing, which deconstructs the symbolism of Rossellini's image of Rome. Pasolini inverts the coherence of naturalized (*i.e.* neorealist) space and foregrounds his authorial ability to alter the spatialization of the cityscape within the frame. He replaces the dome of St. Peter's Basilica presented in *Roma città aperta* with the dome of a small modern church that towers over the facades and rooftops of the bland *INA-Case* housing developments. The contrast between these two domes points to the central role that the church played in promoting the petit-bourgeois ideals ushered in by consumerism in Italy. Religion is not a prominent concern for Mamma Roma and Ettore, who simply attend Mass as a social ritual. Their local church is presented as a place for social networking as opposed to worship. In church, Mamma Roma is usually seen plotting her next "con" or asking the parish priest for advice on issues concerning her achievement of financial stability. Mamma Roma's irreligious actions suggest that Italy's growing neocapitalist world is slowly depriving religion of its sacredness. The same holds true in *Accattone*, where the protagonist's casual religious remarks and behaviour are meaningless rituals that carry no true moral or spiritual value. For instance, Accattone is not aware of the sacred value of the religious pendant he steals from his son, he is only aware of the monetary value that is derived from its weight in gold.

[152] Emphasis is Micciché's.

Pasolini's representation of Catholicism in the Roman *borgate* is influenced by his belief that the slum neighbourhoods represent a pre-historical and pre-religious culture, uncorrupted by bourgeois life and values. In a 1973 interview, Pasolini remarked:

> Rome is the least Catholic city in the world. Naturally I mean the Rome of five or six years ago, which was a great capital of the masses. Proletarian and sub-proletarian. Now, it has become a small, bourgeois, provincial city [...] small-minded, Catholic, full of inauthenticity and neuroses. (*Stories from City of God*, 225-226)

Pasolini's comment here suggests that the Roman proletariat and subproletariat are ignorant of Catholicism because they exhibit a form of moral innocence absent within the same social classes of other urban centers in Italy. Pasolini depicts his proletarian and subproletarian characters as sacred people living in a corrupt and profane world. The particular relationship between religion and the *borgate* is most apparent in *La ricotta*, which I will examine in the next section, where I focus on the film's treatment of the socioeconomic transformations that led to the modernization of Italian society and its eradication of a previous set of archaic principles.

Religion and the Division of Space in *La ricotta*[153]

Pasolini set *La ricotta* in the Roman countryside, mainly to satirize the big-budget costume epics that had used the rural outskirts of the city as "ancient" landscapes to depict stories about the life of Christ. *La ricotta* both repeats and refines the interplay between the sacred (innocent) and the profane (corrupt) values explored in Pasolini's two previous films. In particular, the film creates a clear metacinematic split between the "profane" bourgeois world of the director (Orson Welles) and the "sacred" subproletarian

[153] For a plot summary of *La ricotta*, see Appendix, pp.131.

world of the protagonist Stracci (Mario Cipriani). The bourgeois world consists of the film set and the colour sequences of the film-within-the-film, whereas the subproletarian world consists of Stracci's cave. In *La ricotta*, Pasolini merges these two worlds and produces an interesting dialectal relationship between them. In his cave, Stracci cries and suffers from hunger when his food is stolen by the lead actress' dog. In contrast, on the film set the actors are treated well and the director looks and acts like a king. For instance, his "artistic" command of the landscape is suggested through repeated long-shots which frame him within the rural Roman scenery, as he sits on his throne-like director's chair (fig. 18).

Pasolini's dialectical approach to the Roman landscape in *La ricotta* shares many characteristics with the semi-fictionalized cities described by Italo Calvino in his book *Invisible Cities*.[154] Literary scholar Brian McHale writes, "Calvino's invisible cities place the world of the living in confrontation with the 'other world' of the dead; others confront the sacred world with the profane; still others confront the real-world city with its representation or model or double" (43). Like Calvino, Pasolini proposes intricate city portraits in which two contradictory worlds manage to co-exist on an allegorical level. The visual co-existence of bourgeois and subproletarian spaces in *La ricotta* actually evolves from *Accattone* to *Mamma Roma*. *Accattone* is mainly set within the drab world of the *borgate*, whereas *Mamma Roma* subtly demarcates Mamma Roma's petit-bourgeois world and Ettore's subproletarian world.[155] In *La ricotta*, this spatial divide becomes more apparent through cinematic techniques that differentiate the two social

[154] See I. Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, trans. W. Weaver (London: Secker and Warburg, 1974).
[155] Cinematographer Tonino Delli Colli admits that he used two different visual styles in filming *Mamma Roma*. He used a softer, more "classical" style for the scenes with Mamma Roma, and a more "un-polished style" for the scenes with Ettore, especially those set in the fields on the outskirts of Rome. Delli Colli points this out in a 2003 video interview, available on the 2004 Criterion DVD release of *Mamma Roma*.

spheres. For example, colour film is used to create a series of comic *tableaux vivants* that represent the superficial "bourgeois" visual style of the fictional director, who struggles to recreate two classic mannerist paintings of the deposition of Christ; the *Deposizione di Cristo* (Deposition from the Cross, 1521) by Rosso Fiorentino (fig. 19), and the *Deposizione* (Deposition, 1526-1528) by Jacopo Pontormo (fig. 20). The humble monochromatic world of Stracci and his cave are a stark contrast to the "bourgeois" world of the lavish film and its semi-blasphemous imagery. As Alberto Moravia notes, the story of the Passion that is being filmed in *La ricotta* is a de-Christianized version, it is "*completamente priva di contenuto religioso* [...] *fatta apposta per la comodità di una società, appunto, anch'essa del tutto irreligiosa*" ("completely deprived of religious content [...] done on purpose for the comfort of a society that is, precisely, also completely irreligious") (Ferrero 46). The non-sacred aspects of the Passion film and the pretentious nature of its director are reinforced when a newspaper reporter (Vittorio La Paglia) asks the director what he wishes to express in the film. With a smirk, the director sarcastically replies, "my intimate, profound, and archaic Catholicism." He then launches into a tirade against the uncomprehending reporter, calling him a "conformist average man" with "a hopelessly corrupt nature."

*La ricotta* contains many of the thematic and narrative elements found in Pasolini's two previous films. Most notably, the film presents the Roman countryside as a crisis heterotopia, where aberrant sexual encounters occur between the characters. In one scene, we see Stracci's teenage sons follow a group of male actors (who ironically play "saints" in the Passion film) into a bushy area of the countryside, suggesting that they will engage in acts of "deviant" homosexual behaviour. The scene begins with the

melodic sound of an accordion playing over images of Stracci's family sitting on the grass and eating their lunch together. Then, an actor walks onto the grassy plane and the soundtrack quickly switches to the tawdry circus-like music associated with the Passion film. This abrupt musical swap suggests that the humble world of Stracci's family will soon be contaminated by the bourgeois actors/saints. Essentially, Stracci's sons are drawn to the potential of earning money in exchange for sexual favours; they in fact abandon their family and follow the actors into the bushes, explaining to their mother that they have "business" to attend to. Similar to the Roman countryside, Stracci's cave also serves as a crisis heterotopia in which he can engage in excessive behaviour. The cave is a private subterranean space secluded from public view where Stracci indulges his gluttonous appetite, which Viano aptly describes as an act of "bodily deviance [...] a deviance that is connected to death" (104). Like Accattone and Ettore, Stracci is a thief (in this case a "fictionalized" thief) from the *borgate*, who eventually loses power over his body and dies. In Stracci's case, his death occurs after a gluttonous act of bodily excess that results in a fatal case of indigestion while he is suspended from a cross.

*La ricotta* again articulates the religious themes of martyrdom, bodily sacrifice, and discipline present in Pasolini's earlier films. These themes are clearly present in the film's conclusion, when Stracci mysteriously dies of indigestion, which is presented through a freeze-frame close-up of Stracci's face while his lifeless body hangs from the cross (fig. 21). The stillness of the freeze-frame exudes a rigid sense of motionlessness that recalls the painterly image in *Mamma Roma* of Ettore's bound corpse (fig. 14). Like Ettore, Stracci dies when his body is placed in a position of torture and discipline, preventing him from interacting freely with his environment. The disciplined body is

also present in the scenes that recreate the Rosso Fiorentino and Pontormo paintings of Christ's Deposition (figs. 19 and 20), in which the director gives the actors strict orders to remain motionless. The physical rigidity of the actors' bodies in these scenes is later offset by Stracci's actions of bodily excess, namely his speeded-up movement when he buys some ricotta cheese and then devours it. In addition the obvious reference to silent film comedy, here Pasolini employs fast-motion to hyperbolize the effects of motorization upon the relationship between the human body, time, and space. Stracci's hyper-mechanical movement, through the pasture of grazing sheep and along the country road, highlights the temporal and spatial compression associated with speed and motorization. These scenes effectively juxtapose the mechanical and the organic in a manner that recalls the aforementioned motorcycle scene from *Mamma Roma*, where the mechanical movement of Ettore and his mother on the motorcycle contrasts the organic nature of the rural terrain they are speeding across (pp. 82-83).

## The *borgate* and the Third World

*Accattone*, *Mamma Roma*, and *La ricotta* form a trilogy that traces the social transition of the *borgate* through Italy's period of the "economic miracle." Each film provides an increasingly distanced and self-reflexive perspective towards the physical and spiritual fragmentation of the Roman periphery. In many ways, *La ricotta* sums up Pasolini's *borgata* period and marks the beginning of the end of his lyrical artistic relationship with Rome.[156] The film outlines his growing ideological separation from the Roman *borgate*, which were slowly merging with the middle-class center of the city. In

[156] For example, Pasolini's *Uccellacci e uccellini*, as well as his short film *La terra vista dalla luna*, also focus on Roman characters. However, both films provide more overtly politicized and surreal representations of the Roman periphery.

1975, Pasolini explained that since 1961 the Roman periphery had undergone a transformation akin to "one of those cultural genocides which preceded the physical genocides of Hitler" (*Lutheran Letters*, 102). He continues:

> If I had taken a long journey and had returned after several years, walking through the 'grandiose plebeian metropolis' I would have had the impression that all its inhabitants had been deported and exterminated, replaced in the streets and blocks of houses by washed-out, ferocious, unhappy ghosts. Hitler's SS, in fact. The young boys, deprived of their values and their models as if of their blood, have become ghostly copies of a different way and concept of life – that of the middle class. If I wanted to reshoot *Accattone* today I would be unable to do so. I could not find a single young man who in his 'body' was even faintly like the young men who played themselves in *Accattone*. I could not find a single youth able to say those lines with that voice. Not only would he not have the spirit and the mentality to say them, he would quite simply not understand them. He would have to do the same as a Milanese lady reading *Ragazzi di vita* or *Una vita violenta* – that is, consult the glossary. (*Lutheran Letters*, 102)

Fundamentally, *Accattone*, *Mamma Roma*, and *La ricotta* are the cinematic expressions of a culture, place, and society in the midst of extinction. In *La ricotta*, the freeze-frame of Stracci hanging dead on his cross (fig. 21) provides partial closure to Pasolini's cinematic journey through the *borgate*. The image foreshadows the imminent cultural annihilation of Rome's subproletarian class. At the end of *La ricotta*, the unnamed director stares up at Stracci's corpse and proclaims, "Poor Stracci, he had to die to make us see that he existed." Equally, the *borgate* must also perish in order for the rest of the world to realize that the Roman slums had once existed.

After *La ricotta*, Pasolini shifted his focus to subjects outside the *borgate*, as he believed that his depiction of the Roman subproletariat predicament was becoming a useless cause.[157] Also, upon making *La ricotta*, he began to view the *borgate* as a pre-

[157] In a 1962 newspaper interview, Pasolini stated, "*Non è servito a niente* [...] io *ho tentato di proporre all'attenzione e alla meditazione del pubblico un problema. Ma la mia voce è arrivata solo là dove non c'erano porte da sfondare...Gli altri hanno rifiutato il problema e hanno guardato il sottoproletariato, i*

industrial locus defined by the same forms of cultural primitivism and modern underdevelopment found in Third World countries.[158] In 1967, Pasolini stated, "Rome is a pre-industrial city: the people live here as they do in the pre-industrial world, as in Africa, or Cairo, or Algiers, or Bombay" (Rohdie 47). This realization led Pasolini to extend his quest for the primitive and the elemental beyond the outskirts of modern Rome and contemporary Italy. His search for cultural sacredness shifted to the mythic societies of ancient Greece, the Middle East, and Africa,[159] namely through the cinematic adaptation of various ancient and medieval texts, such as *Oedipus Rex*, *Medea*, *The Decameron*, and *The Arabian Nights*.

Ironically, the period costumes, make-up, and special effects used in the Passion of Christ film being made in *La ricotta* could easily belong to one of Pasolini's later period films. Yet, unlike Pasolini's later films, the Passion of Christ movie in *La ricotta* is defined by a heightened aesthetic artificiality that reflects the soullessness of a consumerist society and its utter destruction of the sacred. This sense of cultural devastation is also present within the characterization of Stracci, who is part of a plebeian

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*suoi simboli, con scetticismo e ironia*" ("It did not serve anything ... I attempted to bring to the attention and to the consideration of the public a problem. But my voice arrived only where there were no doors to knock down...The others refused the problem and looked at the subproletariat, its symbols, with scepticism and irony") (Calderoni 37).

[158] In 1966, Pasolini wrote an article entitled "The Other Face of Rome," in which he equates the deteriorating Roman *borgate* with Third World societies. He declares, "I would not be writing yet again on the subject of the slums and shantytowns of Rome if I did not feel that the problem today has changed, so much that it requites a new study in order to be understood" (*Stories from the City of God*, 217).

[159] Although Pasolini developed several scenarios for films with an African theme, he was never able to bring any of those projects to fruition. For instance, in 1963, the same year he made *La ricotta*, Pasolini wrote the script for a film set in Africa entitled *Il Padre Selvaggio* (The Savage Father). However, Pasolini was not able to make the film due to the controversy surrounding the trial of blasphemy brought against *La ricotta* (Murri 39). Moreover, in 1970 Pasolini made the documentary *Appunti per un'Orestiade Africana* (Notes for an African Orestes), which consists of documentary notes for a feature film (that he never completed) that would use contemporary Africa as the setting for Aeschylus' tragic Oresteian trilogy. *Appunti per un film sull'India* is a similar documentary about a film he intended to make in India, but never actually made. Pasolini writes about his first trip to India and the Third World in *The Scent of India*, trans. D. Price (London: Olive Press, 1984).

social class that has lost its mytho-poetic qualities and, similar to a Third World country, is confronted with a "contaminating" desire for economic and industrial progress. Pasolini notes:

> *Stracci è un personaggio più meccanico di Accattone* [...] *è un personaggio meno poetico* [...] *Il solo modo di guardare al sottoproletario romano è di considerarlo come uno dei moltiplici fenomeni del Terzo mondo. Stracci non è più un eroe del sottoproletario romano in quanto problema specifico ma è l'eroe simbolico del Terzo mondo. Senza alcun dubbio più astratto e meno poetico, ma, per me, più importante.*
>
> (Stracci is a more mechanical character than Accattone [...] a less poetic character [...] The only way of looking at the Roman subproletariat is to consider it as one of the multiple phenomenon of the Third World. Stracci is no longer a hero of the Roman subproletariat in terms of a specific problem, but is the symbolic hero of the Third World. Without a doubt more abstract and less poetic, but, for me, more important). (Betti 59)

*La ricotta* courts the negative effects of neocapitalism and modernity upon the archaic purity and innocent qualities that define the *borgate* seen in *Accattone*. In essence, *La ricotta* provides a disheartened and pessimistic portrayal of a primitive culture besieged by a modern social order.

Pasolini believed that economic underdevelopment was less detrimental to the human soul than cultural colonialism, for it is more honorable to live in financial poverty and be spiritually complete, than to be economically and technologically developed and be spiritually barren. In 1962, Pasolini remarked, "*L'Italia sta marcendo in un benessere che è egoismo, stupidità, incultura, pettegolezzo, moralismo, coazione, conformismo: prestarsi in qualche modo a contribuire a questa marcescenza è, ora, il fascismo*" ("Italy is rotting into a state of egoism, stupidity, non-culture, gossip, moralism, coercion, conformism: lending oneself in any manner to contribute to this decay is, at present,

fascism") (Molteni).[160] *La ricotta* functions as a cinematic lament against the cultural destruction wrought by commercial homogenization and bourgeois values. Stracci's willingness to work as an extra on a Hollywood-like epic film is representative of how capitalist corruption corrodes the purity and archaic values of the *borgate* and its people. Like Stracci, other members of the subproletariat are tempted to accept the political-economic values of capitalist materialism, rather than oppose them. At the end of *La ricotta*, Stracci's "crucifixion" symbolizes the impending cultural demise of the Roman subproletariat and the Italian Leftist aspiration for social revolution. Pasolini perceived the Roman *borgate* as a "lost paradise" of cultural and spiritual progress, a fading oasis in the midst of a neocapitalist desert, lined with highways, department stores, bland housing developments, and billboard advertisements. In *La ricotta*, he no longer juxtaposes the modern architecture of the housing estates with the rural landscape and its remnants of ancient Rome, as he did in *Mamma Roma*. Instead, near the end of the film he shows the Roman countryside crowded by the bourgeois "elite," who have come from the city to observe the filming of Christ's Passion (fig. 22). These "corrupt" individuals gather before a lengthy banquet table for a gastronomic feast, and subsequently obliterate the social and physical divide between the city and its outlying grasslands. The visual dominance of these characters over the rural space completely dissolves the *strapaese/stracittà* dichotomy. The mytho-poetic world that Pasolini presented in his two previous films has been vanquished. The *borgata* landscape and its inhabitants have fallen victim to a bourgeois myth of progress that is devoid of spiritual freedom and cultural purity.

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[160] This statement was originally published in *Vie nuove* 36, Sept. 6, 1962.

*La ricotta* functions as the cinematic apex of Pasolini's mytho-historical reflection upon the physical and spiritual transformation of the Roman periphery and its socially marginalized inhabitants. In his subsequent films, Pasolini expands this exploration of folklore and myth, initiated in *Accattone*, beyond the physical and social margins of the *borgate*, focusing on more distinct clashes between ancient social formations and the modern middle-class.[161] In *Uccellacci e uccellini*, for instance, the father and son protagonists (played by Totò and Ninetto Davoli respectively) are property owners who belong to the Roman middle-class. They are portrayed as the oppressors and not the oppressed, exerting their social dominance over their working-class tenants. As this thesis demonstrates, *Accattone*, *Mamma Roma*, and *La ricotta* form a trilogy that extends the poetic and narrative elements developed in Pasolini's literary investigations into Roman life of the 1950s and 1960s. These films present synecdochic portraits of Italy that expose the irreversible cultural effects of the "progressive" modernization ushered in by the country's political and economic agencies of power.

[161] This clash between ancient and modern cultures is most apparent in *Edipo Re*, where Pasolini bookends his adaptation of Sophocles' ancient Greek tragedy *Oedipus Rex* with a prologue sequence set in a northern Italian town during the Fascist era and an epilogue sequence set during the late 1960s in Bologna and Milan. For more on this subject, see C. Casarino, "Oedipus Explored: Pasolini and the Myth of Modernization," *October* 59 (1992): 27-47.

## Summary and Conclusions

The objective of this thesis has been to discuss Pasolini's early films, *Accattone*, *Mamma Roma*, and *La ricotta*, and provide an analytical perspective on their unpopular and unglamorized images of Rome. These three films reveal the "sacred" *borgata* world that once existed at the margins of Rome's monumental center.[162] The films function as cinematic portraits of ordinary people living in an urban wasteland, inverting the popular images of Rome that are regularly disseminated through the mass media and mainstream cinema. Pasolini's film portrayals of Rome are neither beautiful nor aesthetically pleasing; in this respect, they testify to his courage and skill as an artist willing to expose the Roman underworld and delve into Italy's collective subconscious at a time of cultural "crisis." Burton Pike explains that in the essay "Civilization and Its Discontents" (1930),[163] Freud makes the case that the city of Rome can be read as an analogy for the human brain because "[t]races of early stages in the development of the brain still survive in the modern brain [...] in the same way that traces of the history and pre-history of the 'Eternal City' still survive in present-day Rome" (Pike 18). Freud basically uses the city as a reference point to illustrate that the primitive elements of the human psyche are indeed present within the brain of modern man. Similarly, Pasolini employed Rome in his early films to demonstrate that the remnants of a primitive society still survived beneath the modern facade of 1960s Italy. More importantly, he revealed that those

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[162] In present day Rome, this "sacred" *borgata* world has been transformed into common suburbs populated by middle-class Italians living in standardized apartment buildings. In the semi-autobiographical film *Caro Diario* (Dear Diary, 1993), Italian director Nanni Moretti tours these Roman suburbs on his Vespa scooter, making reference to their past "sacred" significance in Pasolini's films.

[163] See S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. and ed. J. Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton, 1962).

primitive elements, which had formed the core of the nation's culture and values for centuries, were actually in danger of being destroyed and completely erased by Italy's modernization. In essence, Pasolini represented the *borgate* as geographical extensions of the national subconscious, that is, in relation to the social and spatial marginalization of the proletarian class.

With Pasolini's writings on the *borgate* as a point of departure, this thesis traced the thematic and stylistic evolution of Pasolini's vision of Rome from literature to film. In Pasolini's Roman novels, poems, and early films, the Italian capital serves as a synecdoche for the nation. Through his literary and filmic portraits of the *borgate*, Pasolini could voice his concerns about the underprivileged working-class Italians who naively suffered from the effects of modernity and capitalism. This thesis has focused on how Pasolini's early films expose the paradoxical nature of 1950s and 1960s Italian society. In particular, his films centre on underprivileged characters who seek to enjoy the urban consumerism that Pasolini himself had so strongly condemned. This social paradox was also a factor that motivated Pasolini to concentration on the Italian subproletariat as a means of distancing himself from the bourgeois world of which he believed himself to be a member.

Chapter I confirmed that although Pasolini had a university education and a middle-class background, his initial artistic and cultural interests rested with the Friulian peasantry. These plebeian interests later influenced Pasolini's early films, through which he endeavoured to display visually the ideal qualities that were a fundamental part of the Roman subproletariat. Like Pasolini's Friulian poetry and prose, which use the specificities of regional language to give life and expression to the peasant culture and

proletarian class of Friuli, his literary and cinematic representations of Rome are structured according to regional specificities, mainly topography, local tradition, and language.

Rome is a city that has been a source of inspiration for many artists and thinkers over the centuries; most notably, the ancient writers Cicero (106 BC - 43 BC), Virgil (70 - 19 BC), and Ovid (43 BC - AD 17), the medieval poet Petrarch (1304 - 1374), and the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Roman dialect poets Giuseppe Gioacchio Belli (1791 - 1863) and Carlo Alberto Salustri, better known as Trilussa (1871 - 1951).[164] The "Roman" literature provided by these writers effectively maps out the existence of the "Eternal City" from the Classical period, to the Middle Ages, and Modern Civilization. In fact, these "Roman" texts were key reference points for Pasolini, particularly during his first years in the *borgate* when he began to establish a personal and creative attachment to the city's poor inhabitants. Most notably, Belli's numerous sonnets, written in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Roman dialect, had a major influence on Pasolini, who upon reading Belli's poetry for the first time in 1952 wrote:

> [m]y most recent discovery is Belli, and it is certainly one of my greatest, given that it has coincided with my discovery of Rome [...] I identify Belli's poetry, like Rome, with a certain mixture of facility and violence: In it, he decants the manner of speaking of common people, who express themselves within certain patterns of linguistic forms. (*Stories from the City of God*, 141)[165]

The vernacular language of Belli's poetry inspired Pasolini to focus on the everyday activities of the Roman subproletariat as a basis for expressing his mytho-poetic vision of

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[164] For a comprehensive study on literary approaches to Rome, see C. Edwards, *Writing Rome: Textual Approaches to the City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[165] Pasolini's brief essay "Rome and Giuseppe Belli," in *Stories from the City of God*, 141-146, examines Belli's poetic use of Roman dialect.

the *borgate*, its people, and its culture.[166] Similar to Belli's poetry, Pasolini's own Roman poetry, novels, and films provide authentic city portraits that respond to the historical and social associations of Rome as much as to its physical presence.

In my analysis of *Accattone*, *Mamma Roma*, and *La ricotta*, I illustrated how Pasolini's eclectic knowledge of the arts (namely painting, literature, and poetry) informed his visual approach to the Roman landscape/cityscape. As a result of this stylistic and thematic intertextuality, Pasolini's films are open to a multitude of interpretations. In Chapter II, *Accattone* was examined in terms of its "mythic" depiction of Rome and its allusions to historical representations of the sacred in art. This linking of the mythic and the sacred in *Accattone* reveals Pasolini's "mannerist" aesthetic, which infuses his cinematic landscapes with a painterly quality. In *Accattone*, *Mamma Roma*, and *La ricotta*, Pasolini's representations of Rome and its peripheral landscape are often imbued with stylistic references to paintings by Giotto, the Bamboccianti, the French Impressionists, Masaccio, and Morandi. As I explained in Chapter II, these visual "citations," combined with thematic allusions to the spiritual landscape of Dante's *La Divina Commedia*, transform the "real" Rome into a mythic space populated with sacred characters. Pasolini effectively used the film camera, much like a pen or paint brush, as a creative tool with which to mould reality into art. Jean Baudrillard once observed: "[There is a] feeling that you get when you step out of an Italian or Dutch gallery into a

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[166] Pasolini once described Belli's dialect poetry in a manner that aptly relates to his own artistic representations of Rome. He noted that in Belli's poems, "*Il romano parlato è effettivamente una lingua di piccoli poeti,* [...] *Roma è dunque, in letteratura, un prodotto popolare: di plebe anarchica, pre-cristiana, cioè stoico-epicurea. Non si potrebbe predicare nessuna funzione borghese a questa letteratura se non una funzione crepuscolare*" ("The Roman spoken is effectively a language of small poets [...] Rome is therefore, in literature, a popular product; of anarchic plebes, pre-Christian, that is stoic-Epicurean. There cannot be any bourgeois function predicated upon this literature, if not a crepuscular function") (*Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte*, 2338).

city that seems the very reflection of the paintings you have just seen, as if the city had come out of the paintings and not the other way around" (Sanders 9). Like the paintings described here by Baudrillard, Pasolini's films provide mythic depictions of a real city that exists beyond the spatial confines of the movie theatre.

*Accattone*, *Mamma Roma*, and *La ricotta* do not offer "realistic" portraits of Rome and its *borgate*. On the contrary, these films mix realism and myth in poetic visions that expose both the sacred and modern aspects of Rome. In the short documentary *Pasolini e la forma della città*, directed by Paolo Brunatto, Pasolini notes that too often the form and style of an ancient or medieval city is "damaged" by modern architecture. He remarks that modern buildings essentially destroy the "natural boundaries" of these cities and drastically alter the relationship between the "form" of the city and its natural surroundings. He also observes that when framing a city or a landscape for one of his films, he would constantly struggle to optically mask any extraneous piece of modern architecture that could ruin the "ancient purity" of these landscapes and cityscapes. Pasolini admits to his use of the film camera as a device through which he could film a city or landscape and eliminate visually any "damaging" trace of modernity. In the film analyses provided in this thesis, it is revealed that Pasolini effectively applied this technique of "visual restoration" to alter Rome and purge it of its recognizable spaces. For instance, most viewers are familiar with popular images that highlight Rome's monumental structures, such as the Colosseum, St. Peter's Basilica, and the Trevi fountain. As I argued in Chapter II and Chapter III, Pasolini's early films lack these recognizable structures (with the exception of the Castel Sant'Angelo in *Accattone*) and instead place attention on the obscure *borgate*, as a visual counterpoint to the historic

center of Rome. Through his "unpopular" imagery of the *borgate*, Pasolini critiqued the visual interaction between the modern aspects of the city and its ancient terrain. His early films go beyond the bricks and marble of Rome and expose the sacred world inhabited by the poor people that abide by a folkloric set of rules and principles. The outskirts of Rome mark the starting point of Pasolini's desperate search for the ideal landscape in his films, which eventually led him away from Rome and towards the arid panoramas of Southern Italy, Africa, the Middle East, and various Third World countries that, in his opinion, embodied the archaic purity of medieval and pre-classical societies.

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# Figures

*Fig. 1* – **A post-apocalyptic landscape**

*Fig. 2* – **The *borgata* as "sacred" backdrop**

*Fig. 3* – **An "open window" onto the *spiazzo miserabile***

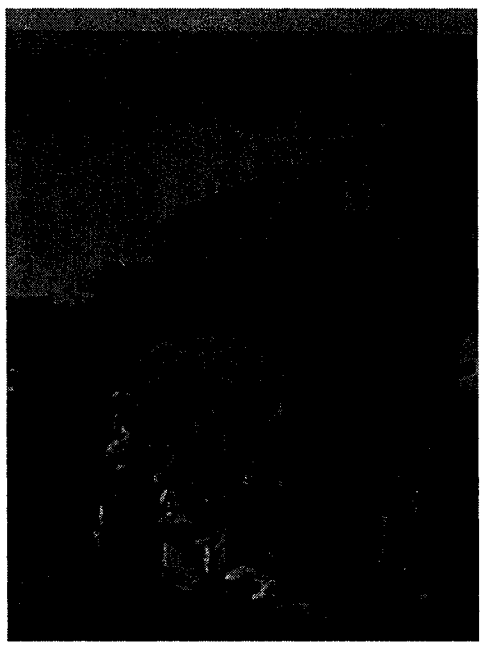

*Fig. 4* – **Thomas Wijck, *Washerwomen in a Courtyard***

*Fig. 5* – **Thomas Wijck, *Courtyard***

*Fig. 6* – **An "altar-piece" close-up of Accattone**

*Fig. 7* – **The field as crisis heterotopia**

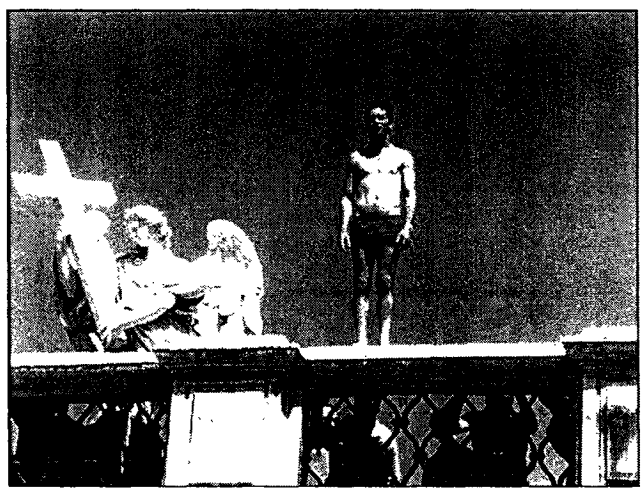

*Fig. 8* – **Diving off the Ponte Sant'Angelo**

*Fig. 9* – **The road of life**

*Fig. 10* – **Casal Bertone**

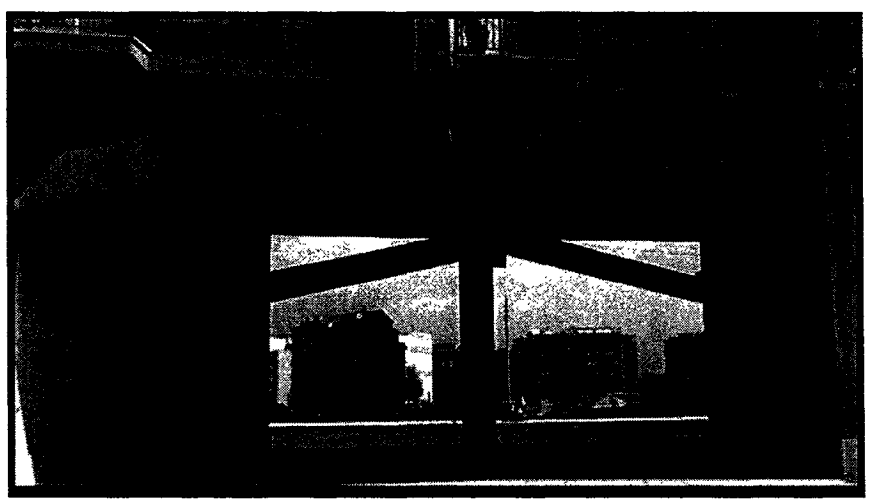

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*Fig. 14* – **The disciplined body within a deviant heterotopia**

*Fig. 15* – **Andrea Mantegna, *Cristo morto***

*Fig. 16* – **A closer view of the cityscape**

*Fig. 17* – **A distanced view of the cityscape**

*Fig. 18* – **The director as king**

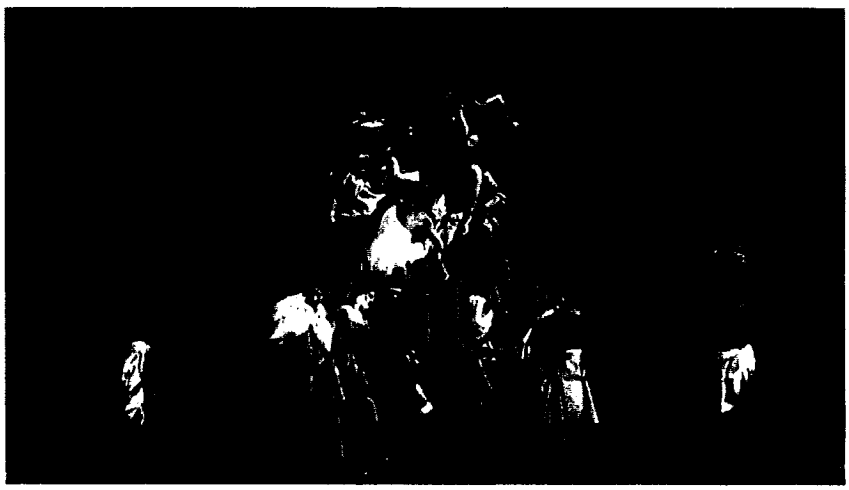

*Fig. 19* – **Recreating Rosso Fiorentino's *Deposizione di Cristo***

*Fig. 20* – **Recreating Pontormo's *Deposizione***

*Fig. 21* – **Stracci dies for his sins**

*Fig. 22* – **Dissolving the *strapaese/stracittà* dichotomy**

# Appendix: Film Synopses

*Accattone*

*Accattone* tells the story of Vittorio Cataldi (Franco Citti), a pimp living in the Roman slums, who bears the nickname '*accattone*' (scrounger) due to his loafer lifestyle. Throughout the film, Accattone is faced with situations that force him to question his criminal way of life. His troubles begin when Maddalena (Silvana Corsini), a prostitute whose earnings are his only financial support, is placed in jail. He turns to his ex-wife Ascenza (Paola Guidi) for help, but she angrily refuses him. His hunger and desperation eventually lead him to court Stella (Franca Pasut), an innocent and virginal girl, whom he plans to turn into a prostitute. Yet Accattone feels remorseful when Stella becomes emotionally distraught on her first night as a streetwalker. As a result, he gives up his pimping lifestyle and finds an honest job transporting scrap-iron, but he soon realizes that he cannot handle the burden of true physical labour. He then returns to his criminal ways and recruits two local thieves with whom he enters the central districts of Rome in search of something to steal. Unaware that they have been placed under police surveillance, Accattone and his two accomplices get caught stealing a consignment of meat. Accattone attempts to flee the police on a stolen motorcycle, but his reckless speeding causes him to lose control of the motorcycle and he is killed in a crash.

*Mamma Roma*

*Mamma Roma*, Pasolini's second film, shares many aesthetic and thematic similarities with *Accattone*. Its storyline follows the struggles of Mamma Roma (Anna Magnani) and her son Ettore (Ettore Garofolo), as they try to build a respectable life for themselves in Rome. The film begins with Mamma Roma leaving her life of prostitution for a job selling vegetables in a market-*piazza* in Rome. She stubbornly convinces Ettore to move away from the Roman countryside in Guidonia, where he grew up. They first move into a small apartment located in Casal Bertone, a poor *INA-Casa* housing district on the outskirts of Rome. After saving some money, Mamma Roma then manages to get them a bigger apartment in the newer area of Cecafumo. In Cecafumo, Ettore quickly befriends a gang of young delinquents, with whom he commits petty crimes. He also loses his virginity to Bruna (Silvana Corsini), a "popular" neighbourhood girl. Mamma Roma dislikes Ettore's friends and she is unhappy about his relationship with Bruna. In an attempt to change Ettore's felonious ways, Mamma Roma blackmails the owner of a Trastevere restaurant into hiring Ettore as a waiter. Ettore eventually finds out about his mother's "secret profession," when her former pimp, Carmine (Franco Citti), returns and forces her back into prostitution. Ettore becomes distraught, quits his job at the restaurant, and returns to his old ways earning money through thievery. One day, while suffering from a very high fever, he gets caught stealing a radio from a patient in a hospital. Ettore is placed in jail and his fever worsens, causing him to launch into a fit of rage. Consequently, he is strapped to a bed and placed in a dark isolation cell, where he dies alone calling out for his mother.

*La ricotta*

*La ricotta* follows the story of Stracci (Mario Cipriani), a poor man from the *borgate* who has been hired to play the role of the good thief in a commercial movie about the Passion of Jesus Christ that is being filmed in the Roman countryside. Stracci's story is intertwined with that of the temperamental and pretentious director (played by Orson Welles) responsible for the lavish film production. Stracci's troubles begin when he is required to give his free lunch to his hungry wife and children. He then manages to disguise himself as a woman and deceitfully attains another lunch. Stracci hides the lunch in a cave and goes back to the film set, in order to remove his disguise. Upon his return to the cave, he discovers that the pet dog of the leading actress (Laura Betti) has eaten his second lunch. Meanwhile, the director gives a sarcastic and condescending interview to a journalist on the set. After this interview, the journalist crosses paths with Stracci, who cons him into buying the leading actress' dog. With this money, Ettore buys some *ricotta* cheese and returns to his cave, where he gorges down his food in a mock banquet scene that includes several members of the Passion film's cast and crew. Stracci is then called back onto the set to film the Crucifixion scene, but before the scene is filmed he suffers fatal indigestion and dies on his cross.