Pasolini, Croce, and the Cinema of Poetry

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In 1965, at the Pesaro Film Meeting, Pier Paolo Pasolini presented his first major work on film semiotics, the essay "The 'Cinema of Poetry.'" With this essay, Pasolini entered a larger debate, at Pesaro and beyond, about the semiotics of the cinema, a debate including such figures as Christian Metz, Roland Barthes, and Umberto Eco. Many of the semioticians who participated in this debate rejected Pasolini's semiological arguments as unscientific. Recent Pasolini scholars have attempted to explain this dismissal. Some critics, such as Giuliana Bruno and Maurizio Viano, have suggested that Pasolini's semiotic ideas were ahead of their time, looking forward to post-structuralist themes. Other critics, such as Christopher Wagstaff and Sam Rohdie, have suggested that the essay owes an unacknowledged debt to an older aesthetic theory - namely, the expression theory of Benedetto Croce. Certainly, this complicated and often contradictory essay is rich enough to support both readings. In this article, I will explore the Crocean connection in more detail, examining how Pasolini bases his definition of the "cinema of poetry" on ideas from Croce's aesthetic theory. However, this does not mean that Pasolini's theory can be reduced to a set of Crocean themes. Instead, this discussion of Croce should help us to situate Pasolini in a particular time and place. An amateur semiologist engaging with French and Italian professionals, an artist working in the media of poetry and film, and a self-consciously heretical thinker interested in everything from Marxism to myths, Pasolini was always combining ideas and "contaminating" theories. In "The 'Cinema of Poetry,'" Pasolini attempts to combine a more traditional Crocean theory with the newer ideas of semiotics. As we shall see, the combination often results in contradiction; in some cases, however, the ideas turn out to be complementary.

The essay will begin with a brief discussion of Croce's aesthetic theory. After summarizing this theory, I will proceed through Pasolini's argument about the "cinema of poetry" point by point, highlighting several Crocean themes and discussing their relationship to current semiotic thinking. Finally, I will consider how Pasolini's complicated, contradictory theory relates to his own film practice by considering the device of the "free indirect point-of-view shot."

I. Croce's Aesthetic Theory

Croce's best-known work on aesthetics is *The Aesthetic as the Science of Expression and the Linguistic in General*. In brief, Croce argues that intuition is identical to expression. In other words, all authentic examples of intuition are examples of expression, and all authentic examples of expression are examples of intuition. Croce then identifies expression with art, art with poetry, and poetry with form. In his boldest move, he identifies intuition with the linguistic in general.

Since this argument is based on a chain of identities beginning with intuition, we can start to build an understanding of Croce by looking more closely at his definition of intuition. Croce opposes intuitive knowledge to intellectual knowledge on the one hand, and to simple perception on the other. Starting with the first opposition, Croce writes:

Knowledge takes two forms; it is either intuitive knowledge or logical knowledge; knowledge obtained by means of our power to create mental representations, or knowledge obtained by means of the intellect; knowledge of individuals, or knowledge of universals; of particular things, or of the relationships between them; it is, in short, either that which produces representations or that which produces concepts (Croce, 1997: 1).

All knowledge starts with the knowledge of specific objects. From these specific objects, a person moves to general concepts. For example, a person first must gain intuitive knowledge about one tree and then another tree. Only then can s/he develop intellectual knowledge about trees in general.

Since a person needs the knowledge of specific objects to develop concepts, Croce argues that all intellectual knowledge is built on intuitive knowledge:

The connection between intuitive knowledge, or expression, and intellectual knowledge, or the conceptual, between art and science, poetry and prose, can be expressed in no other way than by talking of a connection between the two levels. The first level is expression, the second the conceptual: the first can exist without the second, the second cannot exist without the first. There is poetry without prose, but there is no prose without poetry (Croce, 1997: 28).

With this argument, Croce can claim that every authentic use of language qualifies as poetry.

Croce is also careful to distinguish intuition from simple perception. Intuition is a spiritual activity which gives form to the crude content supplied by perception. However, the form does not need the content to exist. The separation between intuition and perception can, in some cases, be complete. For Croce, there is no difference between an imagined image and an intuited image derived initially from perception (Croce, 1997: 3). This total separation allows Croce to connect expression to pure form: "The poet, the painter whose work lacks form, lacks everything, because he is lacking in what makes him such. Poetic material runs in all our souls: only expression, that is, form, makes a poet" (Croce, 1997: 27). Form can and often does exist with content, but expression itself is ultimately pure form.

Croce argues that expression does not necessarily involve communication. A person can have an intuition in his/her head, and it will count as an authentic expression even if s/he never tries to communicate it to another person. The intuition must still be concretely formulated, however, in a way that the intuiting person can understand (Croce, 1997: 26).

Of course, Croce's theory is much more complicated than this brief summary can suggest, but we have uncovered five themes which will be relevant to our discussion of Pasolini. For Croce: (1) Intuition is identical to expression. (2) Intuition involves the concrete, as opposed to the abstract. (3) Intuition is pre-rational, in that it occurs before concepts are formed. (4) Poetry is pure form. (5) Expression does not necessarily involve communication. In the next section, I will argue that all five of these themes inform Pasolini's "Cinema of Poetry."

II. The Cinema of Poetry

Several recent Pasolini scholars, such as Zygmunt Baranski and Joseph Francese, have examined Croce's influence on Pasolini's thought. Continuing this line of research, I will

suggest that Pasolini's contribution to film semiotics owes a large debt to the discourse of Crocean aesthetics. At times, Pasolini's semiotic theories complement his aesthetic theories. More often than not, however, the theories produce the numerous contradictions that critics have long argued characterize the essay.

Since "poetry" plays such a large role in Croce's theory, one way to get at the Crocean themes of Pasolini's essay is to ask the question: What is Pasolini's definition of poetry, and how does it compare with Croce's? Although Pasolini never explicitly formulates a definition of poetry, it is possible to reconstruct one. Pasolini's essay tries to answer the question "Can the cinema be poetic?" by examining whether or not the cinema can meet certain conditions. On the basis of these conditions, we can build up the following implicit definition of poetry:

X is an example of poetry if and only if X is (1) a concrete, (2) irrational, and (3) purely formal (4) expression of an individual point of view.

Again, the definition does not appear in the essay itself; rather, it is implied by the essay's argument, since Pasolini asks whether or not cinema meets the definition's conditions. In the first half of the essay, Pasolini considers the first two conditions. He finds that all films meet these two conditions, and suggests that therefore all films are potentially poetic. Pasolini goes on to consider the third and fourth conditions, arguing that these considerations will eliminate most films from consideration as examples of poetry. At the end of the essay, Pasolini considers a technique (the free-indirect-point-of-view shot) which, he believes, will meet all four conditions. A film that uses this technique is, he argues, a concrete, irrational, and purely formal expression of an individual point-of-view, and therefore deserving of the label "cinema of poetry."

To start with the first condition, Pasolini swiftly shows that cinema deals with the concrete. He writes:

> [I]n his search for a dictionary as fundamental and preliminary activity, the filmmaker can never collect abstract terms. This is probably the principal difference between literary and cinematographic works (if such a comparison matters). The linguistic or grammatical world of the filmmaker is composed of images, and images are always concrete, never abstract (Pasolini, 1988: 171).

A writer can use the word "tree" to represent an abstract concept of a tree. However, the filmmaker must represent a tree with the image of a specific tree. Although Pasolini admits that, in the distant future, certain cinematic images may be so over-used that they will take on abstract characteristics, he argues that, at the present time, all cinematic images retain their concrete characteristics.

As we have seen, this emphasis on the concrete has a clear Crocean precedent, for Croce also argues that the poetic is concrete by definition. Of course, Croce is not the only source for this idea. The argument that cinema deals in specifics is also made by "realist" film theorists such as André Bazin. What makes Pasolini's argument peculiarly Crocean is his contention that this revelation of the concrete is inherently poetic.

It should also be noted that Pasolini's filmic practice is more complicated and contradictory than this passage would suggest. In *The Hawks and the Sparrows* (1966), which Pasolini made the year he wrote "The 'Cinema of Poetry,'" the imagery is simultaneously abstract and

concrete. On the side of the concrete, we can note the film's attention to the details of landscape, light, and texture. On the side of the abstract, we can point to the film's obviously allegorical elements, such as the talking Marxist crow. However, Pasolini would probably point out that the crow's abstract qualities do not cancel out its concrete qualities. Just as Croce argues that all intellectual concepts are built on specific intuitions, Pasolini's abstract allegory is built on concrete, specific images.

Pasolini dwells more at length on his argument for cinema's link to the irrational. This complicated argument starts with the assumption that there is a language of cinema. Pasolini then contrasts this language of cinema with literary languages:

> [W]hile literary languages base their poetry on the institutionalized premise of usable instrumentalized languages, the common possession of all speakers, cinematographic languages seem to be founded on nothing at all: they do not have as a real premise any communicative language. [...]
>
> If this reasoning were correct, as it would appear to be, cinema would simply not exist; or, if it did, it would be a monstrosity, a series of meaningless signs. Instead, cinema does communicate. This means that it, too, is based on a patrimony of common signs (Pasolini, 1988: 167).

The cinema seems to be founded on a paradox: it communicates, but it seems to do so without the aid of a language.

Pasolini resolves this paradox by suggesting that the cinema produces meaning by relying on pre-existing codes. Specifically, he suggests that the director must "take the im-sign from the meaningless jumble of possible expressions (chaos), make its individual existence possible, and conceive of it as placed in a dictionary of meaningful im-signs (gestures, environment, dream, memory)" (Pasolini, 1988: 169-170). In other words, because the cinema does not have its own patrimony of common signs, it must borrow signs from another language. Pasolini offers four potential candidates: the language of gestures, the language of the environment, the language of dreams, and the language of memories.

It may seem that there is a contradiction here. The cinematic im-sign cannot function grammatically because it does not have a dictionary. For this reason, it must rely on pre-existing visual dictionaries. But if these other image-based languages can have dictionaries (or, at least, hypothetical dictionaries), why can't the language of cinema have a dictionary? Pasolini would probably argue that time plays a role. Unlike the four pre-existing languages, the language of cinema is so young that grammatical conventions have not yet begun to develop. The cinema may eventually become so conventionalized as to have a "dictionary," but until that happens, it must rely on the hypothetical dictionaries of the other languages.

Pasolini then argues that all four of these languages (gestures, environment, dreams, and memories) are irrational. For instance, he suggests that "gestures are an indication of an extremely elementary stage of civilization" (Pasolini, 1988: 169). Concerning dreams and memories, he writes, "dreams take place on the level of the unconscious, as do the mnemonic processes" (Pasolini, 1988: 169). Establishing the irrationality of the language of the environment is a more complicated case. First, Pasolini must explain what he means by the term "language of the environment":

[T]he intended audience of the cinematographic product is also accustomed to "read" reality visually, that is, to have an instrumental conversation with the surrounding reality inasmuch as it is the environment of a collectivity [...]. A solitary walk in the street, even with stopped up ears, is a continual conversation between us and an environment which expresses itself through the images that compose it: the faces of the people who pass by, their gestures, their signs, their actions, their silences, their expressions, their arguments, their collective reactions, [...] and more - billboards, signposts, traffic circles, and, in short, objects and things that appear charged with multiple meanings and thus "speak" brutally with their very presence (Pasolini, 1988: 168).

Pasolini uncovers the language of the environment any time someone finds meanings in an experience of the environment. These experiences include encounters with obviously cultural artefacts (such as billboards and signposts), but they also include experiences with seemingly "natural" objects and events (such as faces and silences). Pasolini groups this language of the environment together with those of gestures, dreams, and the environment, and declares that all four languages "are almost prehuman events, or on the border of what is human" (Pasolini, 1988: 169).

Having linked these four languages to the "elementary," the "unconscious," and the "prehuman," Pasolini is at last prepared to conclude his argument about the irrationality of the language of the cinema: "*The linguistic instrument on which film is predicated is, therefore, of an irrational type*: and this explains the deeply oneiric quality of the cinema" (Pasolini, 1988: 169). A film could borrow from any one of these four languages, but the choice of language is irrelevant. Because all of the candidates are irrational, the language of film must also be irrational.

Since this argument about the irrationality of the language of cinema is unusually complicated, I have included a twelve-point summary of the argument:

1. There is a language of cinema.

2. Communication is always based on a patrimony of shared signs.

3. The language of cinema communicates.

4. Therefore, the language of cinema is based on a patrimony of shared signs.

5. Since films are being made without a dictionary of cinematic signs, the patrimony of shared signs must come from a pre-existing non-cinematic language.

6. Since the language of cinema is a language of images, the pre-existing non-cinematic language must also be a language of images.

7. There are four pre-existing languages of images: the language of gestures, the language of the environment, the language of memory, and the language of dreams.

8. The language of gestures is irrational.

9. The language of the environment is irrational.

10. The language of memory is irrational.

11. The language of dreams is irrational.

12. Therefore, regardless of which language the language of cinema is based on, the language of cinema is irrational.

Although this point-by-point breakdown emphasizes the logic of Pasolini's argument, it is also important to note that this logic hides some revealing contradictions.

In calling the cinematic image an "im-sign," Pasolini engages with contemporary debates about the semiotic status of the image. Indeed, Pasolini's argument is similar to contemporary arguments in many respects. However, there are important differences, and these differences suggest the influence of the Crocean tradition. As an example of a contemporary semiotic theory of the image, consider Roland Barthes's arguments about photography in his 1961 essay "The Photographic Message." Like Pasolini, Barthes argues that photographs seem to be founded on a semiotic paradox. In a section entitled "The Photographic Paradox," Barthes writes:

> What does the photograph transmit? By definition, the scene itself, the literal reality. [...] Certainly the image is not the reality but at least it is its perfect *analogon* and it is exactly this analogical perception which, to common sense, defines the photograph. Thus can be seen the special status of the photographic image: *it is a message without a code* (Barthes, 1977: 16-17).

Barthes goes on to suggest that this seemingly innocent level of uncoded meanings serves to hide a web of connotations. These connotations rely on pre-existing cultural codes. As examples of pre-existing cultural codes, Barthes mentions poses, which communicate connotative information about the posing subject, and objects, which often carry conventional associations. This argument is very similar to Pasolini's argument that the cinema relies on the pre-existing languages of gestures and the environment.

So far, Pasolini and Barthes are in agreement. The contradictions appear when we consider the status of these pre-existing languages. For Barthes, the connotative code is undeniably cultural:

> We saw that the code of connotation was in all likelihood neither "natural" nor "artificial" but historical, or, if it be preferred, "cultural." Its signs are gestures, attitudes, expressions, colours or effects, endowed with certain meanings by virtue of the practice of a certain society: the link between signifier and signified remains if not unmotivated, at least entirely historical (Barthes, 1977: 27).

By emphasizing the cultural basis of these connotative codes, Barthes reveals how a photograph's apparent naturalness hides the social nature of the photograph's meaning.

For Pasolini, the language of gestures and the language of the environment have a much more ambiguous status. On the one hand, these seem to be cultural codes: for instance, the

language of the environment includes the language of traffic circles. However, this language also includes the language of faces, and it is not clear to me that Pasolini considers this to be a cultural code. For Pasolini, an individual response to a face may be meaningful in a mysterious and spiritual way; the meanings are not necessarily social. For instance, in his interviews with Oswald Stack, Pasolini says:

> [E]ven a tree is a sign of a linguistic system. But who talks through a tree? God, or reality itself. Therefore the tree as a sign puts us in communication with a mysterious speaker. Therefore, the cinema by directly reproducing objects physically, etc. etc. is substantially poetic. This is one aspect of the problem, let's say pre-historic, almost pre-cinematographic (Stack, 1969: 153).

In direct contrast to Barthes, Pasolini locates the language of the environment outside history. It is not a social code, but a mysterious language spoken by either God or reality.

On the other hand, in his essay "The Code of Codes," Pasolini insists that his desire to treat reality as a language is driven by a desire to show that the facts of nature are actually facts of culture. This seems to contradict the earlier claim that the language of the environment is mysterious and pre-historic.

Of course, the difference in these two arguments is partly the result of contextual factors. "The Code of Codes" is a response to Eco's criticisms of Pasolini's theory. Specifically, Eco had accused Pasolini of reducing cultural phenomena to natural phenomena. Given this context, it is not surprising that Pasolini would emphasize the cultural aspects of his theory. The interview with Stack, meanwhile, focuses on Pasolini's identity as an artist. It is not surprising that his discourse in this context is less scientific and more poetic.

However, even when we take contextual factors into account, it is clear that Pasolini never fully resolved this contradiction. As Christopher Wagstaff has written, "Pasolini manages to hold a mixture of philosophical attitudes towards 'reality' in which elements of religious, phenomenological, realist, materialist and conventionalist positions sit side by side" (Wagstaff, 1999: 225). For instance, in the 1967 essay "Is Being Natural?", Pasolini offers this description of Ninetto Davoli:

> [T]he language of his *general behavior* tells me immediately - through the series of his actions, of his expressions, of his words - his historical, social, and ethnic conditions. But the language of his *specific behavior* precisely defines this positioning in the most extremely concrete manner (much as dialect and jargon do for language). The language of specific behavior is thus constituted, in substance, by a series of ceremonial acts whose archetype belongs unquestionably to the natural animal world: the peacock that fans his tail, the rooster that crows after coitus, the flowers that display their colors in a given season (Pasolini, 1988: 239).

Davoli's general behavior is socially coded, but his specific behavior speaks a different language - a language that is also "spoken" by birds and flowers. Far from being a cultural construction, this language is rooted in the natural animal world. Pasolini ultimately answers the question "Is Being Natural?" in the negative, but he does not argue that being is social, either. Rather, he suggests that it is "miraculous" and "mysterious" (Pasolini, 1988: 240).

This passage is particularly interesting because it suggests how Pasolini's theory of language might affect his film practice. If a film becomes irrational by relying on the irrational language of gestures, then Pasolini can make an irrational film simply by filming gestures. And, indeed, Pasolini's cinema does foreground gestures. Much of the charm of *The Hawks and the Sparrows* rests on the contrast between the untrained gestures of Davoli and the highly polished comic moves of the film star Totò.

It is not my intention here to endorse Pasolini's theory of the miraculous, mysterious language of reality. On the contrary, it seems to be one of Pasolini's weakest theoretical positions. However, we should ask: what discursive trends led Pasolini to adopt such a position? Pasolini's lifelong fascination with the "primitive" is undoubtedly one source. I would suggest that Crocean discourse is another. According to Croce, a person can create poetry by forming a pre-rational intuition of a concrete, specific object. This expressive intuition is the basis of language in general. All people have this capacity for expressive intuition; Croce even mentions the notion that "the first men were by nature sublime poets" (Croce, 1997: 28). Pasolini's theory relies on the same terms, with one crucial shift. Whereas Croce's poet is the person who intuits reality in a concrete, pre-rational way, Pasolini's poet seems to be reality itself. Reality, including the reality of specific faces and specific gestures, can "speak" the poetic language. That language has the features of Croce's poetic language: it is based in the irrational and the concrete. When the cinema "writes" the language of reality, it "writes" this irrational, concrete language.

To return to "The 'Cinema of Poetry'" essay, we can summarize the first third of the essay in the following way: Pasolini has argued, in his contradictory way, that the language of the cinema is concrete and irrational, and that these two qualities are essentially poetic. However, Pasolini insists that these two conditions alone are not enough to guarantee a cinema of poetry.

> For now, therefore, the cinema is an artistic and not a philosophical language. [...] This, then, is a third way of restating the dominant artistic nature of the cinema, its expressive violence, its oneiric physical quality.
>
> All this should, in conclusion, make one think that the language of cinema is fundamentally a "language of poetry." Instead, historically, in practice, after a few attempts which were immediately cut short, the cinematographic tradition which has developed seems to be that of a "language of prose," or at least that of a "language of prose narrative" (Pasolini, 1988: 172).

In practice, most films fail to qualify as poetry. Since all films meet the first two conditions, the problem must lie with other conditions. In the next section of the essay, Pasolini spells out his two remaining conditions: a film must be purely formal, and it must express an individual point-of-view. He then argues that most films fail to satisfy both conditions.

To examine these conditions, Pasolini returns to the four image-based languages: gestures, environment, dreams, and memories. Starting with dreams and memories, he writes:

> [W]e see that the linguistic archetypes of the im-signs are the images of our memories and our dreams; that is, images of "communication with ourselves" [...]. Those archetypes thus lay a direct base of "subjectivity" for the im-signs, which consequently belong in the highest degree to the world of poetry. Thus

the tendency of film language should be expressively subjective and lyrical (Pasolini, 1988: 173).

Since dreams are subjective, a film based on the language of dreams would qualify as an expression of an individual point-of-view. This, in turn, would make it more poetic. Pasolini offers the explicitly surrealistic *Un Chien Andalou* (Buñuel and Dali, 1928) as an example of a film "in which the poetic quality of the language is foregrounded beyond all reason" (Pasolini, 1988: 174).

However, the language of gestures and the language of the environment do not meet the condition of being grounded in subjectivity. Instead, these languages are "brutally objective" because "they belong to a kind of 'communication with others'"(Pasolini, 1988: 173). Being objective, these languages cannot express an individual point-of-view, which is necessarily subjective. Apparently, the fact that these languages are irrational does not change their status as objective languages.

Communication with others also violates the third condition, which requires that poetry be purely formal. The poetic language should only involve communication with ourselves, leaving communication with others to prose. Prose languages are concerned primarily with content. This concern for content disqualifies the communicative language because it can never be purely formal.

The commitment to the communication of narrative information has led the cinema to betray its potential for poetry:

> This narrative convention belongs without question, by analogy, to the language of prose communication, but it has in common with such a language only the external manifestation - the logical and illustrative process - while it lacks one fundamental element of the "language of prose": rationality. Its foundation is that mythical and infantile subtext which, because of the very nature of the cinema, runs underneath every commercial film which is not unworthy [...] (Pasolini, 1988: 172).

Pasolini is still committed to his claim that cinema meets the first two conditions of his definition of poetry: all films are concrete and irrational. However, most narrative films are too involved with logical illustration to have time for moments of pure form. Furthermore, by relying on the language of gestures and the language of the environment (and not on dreams and memories), these films fail to include a subjective component.

This is the section of Pasolini's argument that seems to be most heavily influenced by Crocean discourse. The distinction between poetry and prose is crucial to Croce's aesthetic theory. As we have seen, the formal qualities of poetic language are explicitly contrasted with the content-oriented nature of prose language. Croce is so concerned to divorce poetry from the task of communication that he suggests that a poet does not even need to write his/her poems down. Merely formulating the poem inside one's head seems to be enough. Similarly, Pasolini aligns the language of dreams with poetry because this language involves "communication with ourselves."

However, Croce is not the only possible source for Pasolini's interest in form, because this is a point on which Croce and contemporary semioticians were probably in agreement. Roland

Barthes, for instance, was becoming less interested in communication and more interested in the play of the signifier. Barthes also shared Pasolini's suspicion of the communicative codes of narrative. On the issue of form, the tension between Croce and semiotics does not result in contradiction.

The same could not be said for Pasolini's insistence that the cinema of poetry be based on the expression of an individual point-of-view. Here, Crocean discourse seems to be a decisive influence. Pasolini argues that a film cannot be poetic if it does not express a subjective point-of-view. Like many philosophers of the early twentieth century, Croce put similar restrictions on photography:

> Even photography, if it has anything artistic about it, has it insofar as it conveys, at least in part, the intuition of the photographer, his point of view, the attitude and the situation that he has worked to capture (Croce, 1997: 18).

Artistic value is linked definitively to individual expression. Compare this philosophy with the more critical position of Roland Barthes. In "The Rhetoric of the Image," Barthes writes:

> [T]he absence of a code reinforces the myth of photographic "naturalness": the scene is there, captured mechanically, not humanly (the mechanical is here a guarantee of objectivity). Man's interventions in the photograph (framing, distance, lighting, focus, speed) all effectively belong to the plane of connotation [...] (Barthes, 1977: 44).

Unlike Croce, Barthes does not valorize "man's interventions" as aesthetic achievements. Rather, he interrogates the ways photography's seemingly neutral denotations naturalize the signifying process. In later years, Barthes would move even further from the Crocean position, finding in "The Third Meaning" an element of photography which is specifically detached from any intentional intervention on the part of the artist. In short, both Croce and Barthes posit the existence of denotative and connotative levels, but Croce privileges connotation because of its power to express the individual point-of-view of the artist. Pasolini is in agreement with Barthes on a number of issues, but here he follows Croce in privileging connotation as a means of expressing a subjective point-of-view.

Pasolini has now spelled out his requirements for the cinema of poetry. Like all cinema, the cinema of poetry will be concrete and irrational. Unlike conventional cinema, the cinema of poetry will also be a formal expression of an individual point-of-view. At this point, one might expect Pasolini to endorse avant-garde films, but he refuses to concede that the only films that can meet all four conditions are fragmented surrealist films like *Un Chien Andalou*. Instead, Pasolini uses the final section of the essay to describe how a narrative film could meet the third and fourth conditions. Turning to the European auteur cinema, he argues that Antonioni, Bertolucci, and Godard have succeeded in creating a cinema of poetry by relying on a technique that Pasolini calls the "free indirect point-of-view shot."

Pasolini based his theory on recent studies of free indirect discourse in literature. Because the idea comes from literature, let us begin our consideration of the free indirect point-of-view shot by considering a brief linguistic example. Consider the following five sentences:

> 1. The man from Texas asked the woman from New York how she was doing.
> 2. She said that she was doing fine. 3. Then the man from Texas approached

the arrogant man from California and said, "How are y'all doin'?" 4. The arrogant man from California frowned at the Texan. 5. What an accent!

Sentences 1, 2, and 4 are all examples of indirect discourse. The narrator communicates story information in a straightforward way. In sentence 3, the section in quotation marks is an example of direct discourse. It includes formal elements (such as the word "y'all") which serve to mark this sentence as the expression of a man from Texas. One could imagine sentence 3 written as indirect discourse, in the manner of sentence 1. It would still communicate the same story information, but it would lack the formal elements that mark it as the expression of a person from Texas. Sentence 3, as a formal expression of an individual point-of-view, is a candidate for poetry under Pasolini's definition. However, if it is poetry, it is the Texan's poetry, not the narrator's poetry, since it is the Texan's point-of-view which is being expressed. Sentence 5, meanwhile, is an example of free indirect discourse. Because it is not in quotation marks, sentence 5 seems to be coming from the narrator, but the sentence also contains formal elements (such as the exclamation mark) which suggest that it expresses the individual point-of-view of the snob from California. It is possible, however, that the narrator endorses the Californian's dismissive view. The result is an ambiguity about the source of the point-of-view. Regardless of the source, the ambiguous formal elements can be said to exist as "pure form," since the story information could be communicated with standard indirect discourse. Sentence 5, as a purely formal expression of an individual (if ambiguous) point-of-view, is an (admittedly ambiguous) example of poetic narration. Pasolini will argue that the free indirect point-of-view shot has the similar potential to introduce poetic qualities to an otherwise prosaic narrative film.

Pasolini begins to map this literary concept onto the cinema by arguing that "[i]n cinema direct discourse corresponds to the point-of-view shot" (Pasolini, 1988: 176). Any shot which is not a point-of-view shot corresponds to indirect discourse. Some indirect shots, however, could contain signs of a character's subjectivity. For example, Antonioni's *Red Desert* (1964) is almost entirely composed of shots that express the neurotic world-view of the protagonist.

If this was all there was to *Red Desert*, then it would not count as an example of the cinema of poetry. The images would express the world-view of Anna, but they would not express the world-view of Antonioni, and so it could not be considered his expression. Pasolini solves this problem by insisting that the presence of the neurotic protagonist is a pretext that allows Antonioni to express his own individual point-of-view in the context of a narrative film.

> By means of this stylistic device, Antonioni has freed his most deeply felt moment: he has finally been able to represent the world seen through his eyes, *because he has substituted in toto for the world-view of a neurotic his own delirious view of aesthetics*, a wholesale substitution which is justified by the possible analogy of the two views. [...] It is clear that the "free indirect point-of-view shot" is a pretext, and Antonioni took advantage of it, possibly arbitrarily, to allow himself the greatest poetic freedom [...] (Pasolini, 1988: 179-180).

Like free indirect discourse in literature, the free indirect shot in film is always ambiguous. *Red Desert* shows the world-view of Anna, but there is "another film" which runs underneath this film, and this other film (visually identical to the first) shows the world-view of the filmmaker. This other film "is completely and freely expressive/expressionistic" (Pasolini, 1988: 182).

The free indirect point-of-view shot allows a director to smuggle a purely formal expression of his/her individual point-of-view into a narrative film by disguising it as the purely formal expression of a character's point-of-view. Standard indirect discourse (such as the efficient narration of a typical Hollywood film) cannot meet the poetry conditions because it is too concerned with the communication of story information. Direct discourse (a point-of-view shot) may meet the poetry conditions, but that would make it the representation of a character's poetic world-view. Information about that world-view would still be subordinate to the needs of the narrative. The free indirect point-of-view shot is the only narrative technique that meets all four conditions for the cinema of poetry. It is concrete and irrational because all cinema is concrete and irrational. It is purely formal because the formal elements are not required to communicate story information. It is an expression of an individual point-of-view, and that point-of-view is the point-of-view of the author (or, at least, identical to the point-of-view of the author). Antonioni's *Red Desert* is thus an authentic example of the Cinema of Poetry.

Unfortunately, Pasolini does not offer a detailed analysis of Antonioni's film, which would give us a better sense of how the free indirect style works in practice. This would be useful because we could then look for the device in Pasolini's own films. However, we can get a better sense of what Pasolini is describing by turning to his next major essay on the cinema, "The Written Language of Reality." In this essay, Pasolini advocates self-conscious stylization, in contrast to the more "invisible" style that is often associated with Hollywood. For instance, by moving the camera towards a subject who is not moving, a director can make the audience aware of the camera's activity. Alternatively, a director could employ unusual rhythms in editing a scene, thereby making the audience aware of the editorial style (see Pasolini, 1988: 209-212).

Pasolini is not arguing that a director should foreground style for style's sake. Rather, a director should foreground stylistic elements to add a level of connotation to the basic denotative level. These connotations work to express the director's subjective response to the profilmic event.

Turning once again to *The Hawks and the Sparrows*, it is not hard to locate examples of heightened stylization. In one scene, four men fight with Ninetto Davoli as he tries to protect Totò. Pasolini edits this scene by employing the "rhythmic (connotative) editing" described in "The Written Language of Reality." Some shots are filmed in fast motion. Other shots are filmed in slow motion. Quick cuts of the fast motion shots are juxtaposed with longer takes of the slow motion shots. These shots are also cut together with Toto's reaction shots. The end result is a dizzying mixture of rhythms. On the one hand, Pasolini's disconcerting montage seems to express the emotional point-of-view of Totò, who is both surprised and confused by the fight. However, the change in the frame rate calls attention to the style of the film, and marks the editing strategy as the expression of Pasolini, who seems to be delighted by the gestures and motions. As we have seen, this ambiguity (do the shots express Totò's feelings or Pasolini's?) is the defining characteristic of the free indirect style.

Of course, not all of the scenes in *The Hawks and the Sparrows* display such an overt level of stylization. For instance, one scene shows Ninetto Davoli flirting with three young women. This scene is covered in shot/reverse-shot, and style never comes to the foreground. Instead, our attention is focused on the faces and gestures of the characters. Has Pasolini reverted to the cinema of prose? According to his own theory, the language of gestures and the language

of the environment are "brutally objective," and therefore unfit for the subjective cinema of poetry. How does Pasolini express his subjectivity in this scene?

We might find an answer to this question by turning to the 1966 interview "Quips on the Cinema." Here, Pasolini describes his subjective response to reality as a "love for reality." He then explains, in typically contradictory fashion, how this attitude affects his filmmaking:

> In fact, the same rash love of reality, translated into linguistic terms, caused me to see cinema as a fluid reproduction of reality while, translated into expressive terms, it immobilizes me in front of the various manifestations of reality (a face, a landscape, a gesture, an object), almost as if they were motionless and isolated in the flow of time.
>
> [...] My fetishistic love of the "things" of the world makes it impossible for me to consider them natural. Either it consecrates them or it desecrates them violently, one by one; it does not bind them in a correct flow, it does not accept this flow. But it isolates them and adores them, more or less intensely, one by one (Pasolini, 1988: 226-227).

To apply this notion to the scene from *The Hawks and the Sparrows*, we could say that Pasolini's shot/reverse-shot strategy "consecrates" each face one by one. Each close-up is an expression of his love for a specific face. This is in contrast to the more traditional use of shot/reverse-shot, in which the technique is subordinated to the flow of narrative information. The narrative significance of Pasolini's flirting scene is minimal; it is the faces that are memorable. This fascination for faces can be found in almost all of Pasolini's films, from *Accattone* (1961) and *The Gospel According to Matthew* (1964) to *Teorema* (1968) and *The Decameron* (1970).

This brief discussion of *The Hawks and the Sparrows* serves to flesh out Pasolini's thoughts on the free indirect style. The account of that style concludes Pasolini's argument about the cinema of poetry. Pasolini writes: "the language used for the interior monologues of pretextual characters is the language of a 'first person' who sees the world according to an inspiration which is essentially irrational" (Pasolini, 1988: 185). By using the free indirect style, a filmmaker overcomes the "objective" qualities of the language of gestures and the language of the environment. A film employing the free indirect style presents a concrete, irrational, formal expression of an individual point-of-view. It therefore meets all the conditions of the cinema of poetry.

Conclusion

All four of these conditions have Crocean precedents: for Croce, poetry is concrete, pre-rational, formal, and expressive. However, this does not mean that Pasolini adopted Croce's philosophy in its entirety. Rather, as I have suggested, Pasolini's theory represents an attempt to fuse an expressive theory of poetry with more recent ideas from semiotics.

This fusion may strike some critics as unsuccessful. Indeed, critics have long commented on the essay's internal contradictions. However, understanding these contradictions helps us to place Pasolini in a wider discursive context, as traditional Crocean discourse was competing with the newer discourse of semiotics. Furthermore, understanding Pasolini's theory helps us to understand Pasolini's films. Although Pasolini himself warned critics not to confuse his

theory with his practice, we have seen that "The 'Cinema of Poetry'" can give us new insight into Pasolini's films, such as *The Hawks and the Sparrows*. With its attention to the concrete details of the environment, its emphasis on the "irrational" language of gestures, its formal play with editing rhythms, and its subjective use of the free indirect style, *The Hawks and the Sparrows* meets Pasolini's prescriptions for a cinema of poetry. Viewed in this light, every frame of this film seems to express Pasolini's poetic love for reality.

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