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Renaissance Art and Film: The Cinema of Pier Paolo Pasolini

The Art Historical and Cinematic Semiotics of Pier Paolo Pasolini and Roberto Longhi

Pier Paolo Pasolini's short career produced numerous films, often known for their controversy, as well as their rich and paradoxical themes. The ideas of Marxism intermingle with those of Catholicism, queerness collides with traditional Italian machismo, creating the complex narratives audiences came to expect from the filmmaker. Though many of Pasolini's thematic features confuse and often contradict one another, the influence of visual art in the films of Pasolini is evident. In 1939, Pier Paolo Pasolini began his studies at the University of Bologna under Roberto Longhi, a famous Italian art historian. [1] The research of Roberto Longhi was centered in Italian Renaissance artwork, and it can be assumed that Pasolini spent time with much of the work Longhi taught. This knowledge of Renaissance artwork is apparent in many scenes of Pasolini's films. The influence of Longhi can also be seen in Pasolini's general approach to filmmaking. The unique approach to writing that Longhi used in his analysis can be construed as an early influence on Pasolini's approach to filmmaking. Both the style of Longhi and that of Pasolini are rooted in the theory of semiotics.

Semiotics is defined by *Merriam Webster Dictionary* as "a general philosophical theory of signs and symbols that deals especially with their function in both artificially constructed and natural languages and comprises syntactics, semantics, and pragmatics."[2] In other words, semiotics is the study of how signs and symbols are interpreted in by humans. These signs comprise all of the languages we have, both the artificial and the natural that the definition

alludes to. The study of semiotics is an academic discipline that became popular in the 20th century, but the theory can be traced back to the third century BCE. A figure named Chrysippus, of the Stoic discipline, was the first to take interest in how the world is represented in signs from one person to another.[3] Daniel Laferrier, in his essay "*Making Room for Semiotics"*, provides us with the understanding that a "word, a sentence, a gesture, a facial expression, a photograph, a diagram, etc. are all signs because we, their interpreters, are more concerned with what they stand for or represent rather than with what they merely are in themselves."[4] Anything that can communicate something different than itself or act as a stand-in for another object is a sign according to this definition. Thus semiotics is the study of all of these things (words, sentences, expressions, gestures, photos, etc.) and how they can act as stand-ins for other objects, concepts, etc. that are in themselves far removed from the thing they represent, which occupies reality.

The writing of Roberto Longhi and the films of Pier Paolo Pasolini are in their mediums, inherently semiotic. However, the semiotic nature of Pasolini and Longhi's works go beyond just what is inherent. The semiotics present in both of their respective crafts, morph beyond what is The stylistic elements of both works allow us to explore the influence that Longhi's style may have had on Pasolini's later work of filmmaking. *A Theory of Semiotics* by Umberto Eco was published in 1971 in English, while an earlier version of Eco's theories was published in Italian four years earlier. In this study Eco discusses the theories of semiotics, stating that "Semiotics studies all cultural processes as processes of communication. Therefor each of these processes would seem to be permitted by an underlying system of significations."[5] Here, Eco is stating how cultural modes are always modes of communication (similarly to what was stated by Leferrier, above), and the disciplines of filmmaking and art history would be included in these cultural processes. The writing of Umberto Eco was being done at a similar period to that which Pasolini

was working in. The writing of Teresa de Laurteis poses that there is a point of contact between the semiotic theories of Pasolini and those of Eco.[6] The theory of semiotics was being revived from ancient philosophy as early as the 19th century, but academics such a Charles Sanders Pierce. Longhi, as an academic working in the early 20th century, could have certainly been familiar with these concepts.

Pasolini's essay, "The Cinema of Poetry," is essential to understanding his perspective on how semiotics and film inherently inform one another. Pasolini believes semiotics is crucial to understanding the art of film. Pasolini states: "I think that henceforth it is no longer possible to begin a discourse on cinema as language without taking into account at least the terminology of semiotics."[7] Pasolini goes on to discuss the significance of semiotics in the practice of filmmaking, as filmmaking is a language without a comprehensive "dictionary." This again references the artificially constructed language touched upon in the definition of semiotics. In this way Pasolini describes the director as differing from the poet. "In compensation, the filmmaker does not have to deal with a centuries-old stylistic tradition, but only with a decades-old one: he has practically no conventions to be contradicted at the risk of an excessive scandal."[8] However the theory of semiotics is as intrinsic to the literary discipline as it is to the discipline of film. In the study of literary semiotics there is a "secondary modeling system, this is based on the primary modeling system of language."[9] Pasolini argues that the director has a more limited frame which to construct his "language" than the poet, who has a structured language to pick and choose from. Through a series of signs, gestures and other visuals, the filmmaker is able to convey a certain meaning to the viewer. However more than a meaning, the filmmaker can also convey a feeling to his viewer, which parallels the discipline of poetry. Pasolini argues that the poetic element is intrinsic to the modern art of cinema, just as semiotics is intrinsic to

cinema. Through the theories modeled we can see the semiotics of literature being transformed by the semiotics of film, taking the secondary modeling system and thus creating a tertiary modeling system.

To again cite "The Cinema of Poetry*"*: "…the cinematic tradition which was formed seems to be that of a 'language of prose,' or, at least, of a 'language of narrative prose'… this is an altogether peculiar and ambiguous prose, insofar as the embedded absurdity of cinema cannot be eliminated."[10] Semiotics is also argued to be an irrational process by Daniel Laferrier: "This process permits the interpreter to make what would otherwise (in a non-semiotic situation) be the absurd assumption that one thing somehow is another thing" [11] Abel Gance, a French filmmaker and writer, also believes that film is inherently semiotic, relating the practice of film to the writing system of hieroglyphics used in ancient Egypt.[12] Gance also references Pasolini's idea that film is not a fully formed language yet: "Pictorial language has not matured, because our eyes have not yet adapted to it." [13]

The traditional idea of filmmaking is to relate some narrative through the use of images, but, Pasolini believes that because film is inherently semiotic, in its own terms, this method of communication is altogether too abstract to convey a simple narrative, and cinema must be a form of poetry rather than prose. The natural absurdity of film is referenced in both Pasolini's and Gances ideas of the visual dictionary, which is not quite complete. The poetry of film is achieved through a version of semiotics Pasolini refers to as "im-signs" or image signs. This theory of image sign is thought to anticipate the later theory of Eco's sign-function.[14] Pasolini states: "But there is more: in man, an entire world is expressed by means of significant images shall we therefore propose, by analogy, the term "im-signs" (imsegni, i.e. image-signs)."[15] These im-signs help to create the oneiric element of film that Pasolini uses so prevalently. Oneiric,

meaning relating to dreams or dreaming, is a feature used within many of Pasolini's films, which instead of obscuring reality, further places it within a realistic setting.[16] Pasolini is able to create a dreamlike, yet not entirely surrealistic world in which his films are placed. Because film is not the literary language we expect to tell a narrative, the im-signs that are used in place are inherently dream-like and abstract. This in turn helps to create the poetic nature that Pasolini theorizes.

The poetry Pasolini sees as inherent to films is also tangible in how Roberto Longhi approaches his writing on art. In the Translator's Preface to the English version of Roberto Longhi's essays on Piero della Francesca, entitled "Piero, Longhi and the Fields of Color", David Tabbat discusses how Longhi's writing differs from that of other art historians. The primary way that Longhi differs is through his poetic approach to writing. According to Tabbat in Longhi's writing "Metaphors abound, and are generally as apt as they are ingenious; the vocabulary is vast and delicately scented with mannerism; sentences are of nearly Proustian length, variety and rhythmic complexity; the tone of voice soars, drops, exhorts, mocks."[17] Comparing the art critic to Proust is certainly a parallel rarely made in art historical discourse. Yet the writing of Longhi seems to transcend the confines of academic realms. This was not done without criticism, and Longhi was often dismissed for his poetic musings on paintings specifically because art historical writing doesn't often come with a voice. As Tabbat states, these passages were seen as controversial at the time, strongly opposing the often dry art historical narratives that were available. But, regardless of how dry or riveting the writing is, Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson state that "the art historian is always present in the construction she or he produces."[18] The construction Longhi presents to the reader is in this text, Longhi's

passages are referred to as "verbal equivalents" of the Piero della Francesco paintings as well as to 18th century operas divided into recitatives and arias.[19]

In itself, art history and semiotics are inextricable tied together. Not all who read descriptions about art can view the works in person. The closest experience may be reading what a connoisseur of the work can provide in terms of visual analysis. Though not as enlightening as seeing the work in person, it can, along with a photograph or illustration, allow the reader to access a world of the artwork similar to that of the real thing. The act of translating a piece of fine art into writing is morphing one art form into another. The signifiers of the original art in the final product of the latter constitutes the semiotics of art history. However, visual analysis can often read as mechanical and uninteresting. Describing the subject matter, color, impasto, and dimension of a work of art is not usually creative work, but with Longhi, the typically dry technical writing is transformed into a lyrical description of the full artwork. In what Tabbat referred to as "verbal equivalents" of the paintings, Longhi is able to fully bring to mind the painting style of whatever artist he is discussing. We see this with his descriptions of Piero della Francesca's works.

> "Within the encircling, very Italian hills, bearing the signs of agriculture so ancient as to have itself becoming something like a form of spontaneous animal life, in a month so free of warfare or partisan strife that the river bed winding its way through the countryside is unstained by blood, broken lances, or shattered fragments of armor, wandering, instead, clean and dry and bearing only the dun impress of a few weeds, gleams the mortar of a distant city. At this windless hour, the reflecting water sends back a perfect image of the sky and the hills. Against this water, the figure of Christ stands out sharply…"[20]

In this passage we see how Longhi is able to evoke the stillness and tranquility that is often described in the works of Piero della Francesca. The landscape is able to be envisioned by the reader as an idyllic Italian countryside, with rolling hills and bright blue skies, while also

having the clear reflective water of the river at the base of Christ's feet. Attention is paid to the details of the piece but also the overall feeling of the painting, how the viewer would take in the whole of the painting. The translation of the painting into words is a form of semiotics which is the inverse of traditional semiotics of cinema which Pasolini outlines. Instead of taking a narrative and using a series of images to portray that, a narrative is created from a static image. In this instance, looking at the work of Piero della Francesco, as is the case for many artists of the time, the subject matter being depicted is that of a scene which appears in the Bible. Thus, the semiotics of Longhi's writing takes on a more interesting form, as a text translated from an image, translated from a text. Longhi, taking the image of della Francesca's "The Baptism of Christ", is able to transmit the feeling or "aura" of the image, to those who are not able to view it in person. This is where both the poetic nature of Longhi is seen, as well as the semiotic nature of art historical writing. Again, the semiotic nature of the writing is inherent, but Longhi is able to create the tertiary semiotic form of the poetic art historian. In a similar sense, Pasolini is able to create the tertiary from of the poetic and oneiric film maker.

To view both the process of filmmaking and the writing of art historical text through the lens of semiotics allows us to see the similarities in their processes. These similarities within their styles are striking, especially in the poetic nature of both. Pasolini argues that film is poetic, and one could imagine that Longhi might argue the same about art history. As for Longhi's own words on the topic he states: "a little imagination isn't a bad thing in an historian."[21] It's not a declaration of the same urgency as Pasolini, but it gives us insight into what Longhi thought about his own writing. This imaginative form of art history could have easily been imparted his pupils, but in any case, his knowledge of art history was imparted on his pupils, as is evident in Pier Paolo Pasolini.

Artistic Citations in Pasolini's Cinema

From here we can ask ourselves what other influences Roberto Longhi's teaching may have had on the work of Pier Paolo Pasolini? The most obvious of these is Pasolini's references to Italian Renaissance and Mannerist art in his films. Evidence of this early education shows up consistently in Pasolini's films, which tie him back to Longhi and the University of Bologna. The movies which directly cite art in the form of "tableaux vivants" include *La Ricotta* and *Decameron*. The tableau vivant is a phenomenon of recreating a piece of art work with live characters, and it goes by several other names including "poses plastiques," living statuary, or living pictures. Pasolini then shot these compositions on film, but often they were incorporated into performance as well.[22] Within these tableaux vivants, again we are able to see a very literal process of semiotics. A photographer takes a recognizable piece of art which already can evoke in the viewer a number of previously conceived thoughts, feelings, knowledge and opinions. Then the director or photographer bring in the element of human lives, recreating the art through bodies. This brings the viewer almost into the art of theater, where historically tableaux vivants were used copiously. The theatrical and human element of the image separates it from its original context, but what was preconceived by the viewer in relation to the art is still present. Then the piece is redisplayed through a form of media (in Pasolini's case), either photography or video, which is endlessly reproducible, and gives way to something entirely recognizable yet detached from the original. There are also allusions to other Renaissance works in the films, which included *Accattone, Mamma Roma, Teorema and The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*. The allusions seen within these works are less direct citations, but they are still notable. Pasolini cites Renaissance art in two main ways. The first way is through the Tableaux Vivants discussed

previously, or direct citations, the second way is through indirect references and compositional influences. The indirect references are seen more often.

Pasolini was not the only Italian filmmaker of his era to have allusions to art in his film. We can also look to the work of Vittore De Sica in his film *Miracle in Milan.* Here, we see the film open up with the background of Netherlandish Proverbs by Pieter Brueghel the Elder. Though not work of the Italian Renaissance, the painting is a reference to a clear art historical time period, and has distinct subject matter and iconography associated with it. This work was done in a parallel art movement to the Italian Renaissance. One possible motivation for the reference to this work is Breughel's "striking realism".[23] Pieter Breughel renders the life of peasantry with a sincerity that few other artists are able to achieve. De Sica's *Miracle in Milan* also portrays a class comparable to peasantry; that of the extremely poor class in post-war Italy. The film itself has an also merry and jovial quality to it, in line with that displayed in Breughel's painting. The films of De Sica were done in what is referred to as the Italian Neo-Realist style, which values showing real life over a constructed reality, and striving towards a "pure" form of realism.[24] The citation of this specific painting could also refer to the realism of Breughel's painting, as he strayed away from idealization, typical of the Italian Renaissance. Pasolini, though his films come slightly after those of the more popular Neo-Realist films, was still influenced by this style and is often grouped together with the likes of De Sica.

We must then explore why Pasolini chose to cite the artists that he did in his films. What do these artists, or artwork, have to add to the overall narrative or aesthetic of the film? These pieces and artists certainly were not the most famous of the time period, though they were not unknown to those familiar with art. Not a single piece by Leonardo, Raphael, Michelangelo or Donatello is alluded to in these films. However, works of art by Andrea Mantegna, Giovanni

Bellini, Giotto, Vittore Carpaccio, Vincenzo Campi, Jacopo Pontormo and Rosso Fiorento are all made reference to in some way or another throughout the film career of Pasolini. These artists are certainly lesser known than some of their counter parts (yet still major figures, especially Giotto), but are equally interesting figures. Pasolini tends to avoid the art of the high Renaissance and instead included art of the Early Renaissance and Mannerist periods. All of the artists cited Roberto Longhi would have been familiar with, yet, not all of them were paid particular attention to in his writing and research. We cannot know the exact subject matter of the lectures given by Longhi that Pasolini attended in his time at the University of Bologna. Unfortunately, the thesis written by Pasolini under the direction of Longhi in his undergraduate studies at the University of Bologna is also unknown to us. Though done on Italian art of the 19th century, historical influence may have provoked some research of Renaissance art, but, this again can only be speculation. Perhaps the exclusion of the larger names in Renaissance art is similar, in a neo-realist explanation. Later Renaissance artists certainly strived more towards idealized subjects than the artists that Pasolini chose to depict. The inclusion of Mannerist artists could also fit within this theory, as they move toward distortion of the figure, also away from the ideal

We however do know that within Pasolini's writing there are allusions and direct references to Renaissance and Mannerist artists and art works. Several times art appears in the poetry of Pasolini, and he also talks about artwork in his prose in many instances. When discussing the process of shooting *Mamma Roma*, Pasolini cites his love for Renaissance and Mannerist artists and how he uses it as inspiration for composition.

> "*What I have in my mind as a vision, as a visual field, are the frescos of Masaccio, of Giotto- they are the painters I love the most, along with Mannerist artists (for example Pontormo), and I cannot conceive images, compositions of figures, outside of my initial pictorial passion, which has man at the center of*

every perspective. So, when my images are moving, they are moving a bit as if the lens is moving them on a painting."[25]

This direct citation of the influence of Renaissance and Mannerist art on his films is crucial to our understanding of how these artists influenced his style. He does mention that he admired them greatly, yet, he also references many more artists in his oeuvre than the three he mentions here. Later on, he describes how he does not want his films with Christian subjects to have visual content lifted from the compositions of the aforementioned artists. This piece of writing, done in a poetic format, was in relation to an unmade film from 1967 titled *Bestemmia*, yet Pasolini also said something similar in relation to The Gospel According to Saint Matthew.

An idea of Christ

which precedes every style, every twist of history,

every fixation, every development; virgin;

reality reproduced with reality, without

a single echo of poetry or painting;

I want not only to be unaware of Dante, or Masaccio

or Pontormo who have long dominated my eyes, my heart,

my senses: I do not even want to know the language of painting.

I want this Christ to appear as did Christ in reality [26]

In this poem we see that Pasolini wishes to be completely unaware of these visual histories. To separate himself completely from the art of Italian tradition would be an almost impossible task, but especially for an art history student so well versed in art historical narratives.

The research of this thesis is divided into two separate parts, the indirect references and direct citations of art work in the cinema of Pasolini. The indirect citations of Renaissance art will be discussed first. Pasolini takes several compositional references from fine art, which often are used to further the content and themes of his cinema. The insertion of indirect references of

Renaissance art in particular, serves to place many of his films into biblical narratives, and to transform the characters of his films into sanctified beings. The films with indirect references are discussed in chronological order. The films with direct citations, *Decameron* and *La Ricotta*, are examined with more depth than the films with indirect references. These films directly place the viewer into the artwork through the use of "tableaux vivants." Though indirect references are also present in these films, the tableaux vivants provide the most direct way Paolini present art, and are therefore discussed in more depth.

Accattone

The first film Pasolini created (completed in 1961), *Accattone* is the story of a pimp from the Borgata, or Italian slums. The film itself is a meditation on the dualities of contemporary Italy. The poor young man, comes to his demise through his sinful nature. The film is also based on a novel by Pasolini, *The Ragazzi*, published in 1955. The viewer is able to feel at once both hatred and sympathy for the main character. Here the allusions to art are far less direct than in some of Pasolini's other films. However, in relation to *Accattone*, he discusses the ways he is influenced by the works of Giotto and Masaccio. Pasolini compares the use of his directorial techniques to aspects of these artists' works specifically. As mentioned above, Pasolini refers to his compositions as inherently inspired by the works of Giotto and Masaccio, which place the man in the center of the perspective. He goes on to state "I always conceive the background as the background of a painting… and therefore I always attack it frontally."[27] These frontal shots of figures are easily seen within *Accattone*. Even two minutes into the film, this centering of the figure within the shot is visible. Several men sit around tables, joking and discussing a bet; when

talking, each man occupies the entire shot. Further on, we see the main character, Accattone, posed as a central figure on top of a bridge, and he is the only thing within the shot, with no distractions from his figure. This centralizing of the figure persists throughout the entire film, and is very reminiscent of the quattrocento compositions that Pasolini credited for his inspiration. Pasolini also insists that the lack of movement within his films is inspired by the Italian artists he is so fond of.[28] The panning and movement Pasolini uses contrasts with the Neo-Realist style that he is typically grouped within. His goal is not equivalent to that of the Neo-Realists, as Pasolini is not as preoccupied with capturing a realistic sense of time and space. Instead, he slows down the movement, shots are kept as motionless as possible, and only the most important moments are displayed.[29] These three key elements of Pasolini's films could certainly be seen in relation to the act of someone viewing a series of Giotto's frescos. The slow panning seen in *Accattone* and later films of Pasolini's is an important factor to the thematic aspects of the film. The director Antonio Bertini wrote about Pasolini's films that the "panning has an effect of sacredness for its slow progressive motion of 'revelation'."[30] Pasolini speaks similarly of his own work: "…nothing is more sacred, technically, than a slow panorama…. Sacredness, front view. And thus religion."[31] This means that for Pasolini, frontally shooting and slow panning are sacred ways to approach the filmmaking process. However these processes are not only sacred to Pasolini, they are also influenced by early renaissance art. In an interview, cited in *Cittazione Pittoriche Nel Cinema Di Pasolini (Citations of Paintings in Films of Pasolini),* Pasolini says: "And I think for *Accattone* I often thought of Masaccio. Not imitating it for certain shots, but just thinking of it as substance, as a way of seeing certain faces, certain gravity of matter."[32] The gravity of matter can again be traced back to the grounding of figures, centrally and concretely within the shot, as Pasolini often does in *Accattone*. Alberto Marchesini argues that even the

decision to shoot the film in black and white, as opposed to color (which would have been available to Pasolini), was influenced by the style of Masaccio, saying: "Even the choice of black and white, despite the apparent contradiction, is clearly connected to a figurative matrix of pictorial cut and is accompanied by the need to make the material thickness of objects and figures." [33]

Additionally, we must explore the style of Masaccio, which Pasolini asserted greatly influenced the visual language of *Accattone*. Generally, the early Italian frescos and temperas of Masaccio are known to be strongly influenced by those of his predecessor Giotto, who is well known for his development of three dimensional rendering of forms, and creating a realistic sense of space and other naturalistic ideals.According to Vasari, "And as far as good style in painting is concerned, we are primarily indebted to Masaccio, for it was Masaccio who, in desiring to acquire fame, realized that painting is nothing other than the art of imitating all the living things of Nature with their simple colors and design just as Nature produced them, so that anyone who fully follows Nature should be considered a splendid artisan."[34] This quote allows us to understand how the naturalistic style of Masaccio, building upon earlier painting techniques, influenced the trajectory of the Italian Renaissance style. Masaccio's painting, along with Renaissance art in generally, strove to capture a true, naturalism, which could be related back to Pasolini, and his neo-realist roots. Although Pasolini asserted that he did not directly cite his compositions in this film, one could relate certain shots to the compositions of Masaccio. In *Accattone*, there is a character, a young mother whose husband is in prison. Accattone takes this mother and her children in. In the scene displayed, the mother is positioned much as Mary is in the *Casica di Reggello Altarpiece* by Masaccio.

Casica di Reggello Alterpiece,

Masaccio, (1445-1462)

Madonna Misericordia,

Piero della Francesca,(1445-1462)

Though the mother is not seated, she is positioned in a similar way to the Madonna. In the altarpiece, angels are at her feet; in the film her three young children. This could be a simple coincidence, as the character seems to have the intention of evoking the Madonna, but when we view the film with Pasolini's quotes in mind, it is hard not to draw parallels. The composition of the young mother also draws similarities to the early Renaissance paintings of the Madonna della Misericordia (the Madonna of Mercy). This was a visual tradition of displaying the Madonna with a number of small figures being enveloped by her robes. The way in which the children pull at her skirt for the few minutes they are in the film, evokes some thoughts of this historical composition. Though Masaccio did not complete a painting with the same thematical subject, a contemporary of his, Piero della Francesca, did. Working within the quattrocento style that Pasolini admired, Piero renders his forms in a way similar to those of Masaccio and Giotto. The

forms are solid and display a greater level of realism even than some earlier Italian Renaissance works. The potential reference of Piero della Francesca is also important because of the attention Roberto Longhi paid to his work.

Mamma Roma

In the film *Mamma Roma* (1962), the protagonist, known simply to the viewer as Mamma Roma, is played by Anna Magnani. Mamma Roma works as a prostitute within Rome; she is able to escape the poverty imposed upon her, renting out an apartment in an upper class neighborhood of Rome. It is here she brings her teenaged son, Ettore, taking him out of the country, and into bourgeois city life. The influence of the city then serves to destroy her son, and Mamma Roma with him. Here the film alludes to a work by Andrea Mantegna. The last scenes of the film show a feverish Ettore entering a hospital; prompted by his friend, he steals from patients who are too sick to notice, or realize. Ettore is caught, and is put into prison, but still feverish, he has a manic outburst. He is then carried out of the cell, by guards, in a way that almost evokes the Transport of Christ, which is often represented in Renaissance art. However Ettore is not a gentle martyr carrying his crucifix, as he thrashes in the arms of the guards. The scene then cuts to Ettore strapped to a bed, still feverish, the camera is on his face first, then cuts though the grate above his head, the only light within his chamber. The shot returns to his face, and pans down the length of his body, dressed solely in white. The camera then rests at the feet of Ettore's figure. We see the struggling figure of Ettore shouting for help and release. The camera once again shows the grate above his body, and then shows the now still face of Ettore. The camera takes the same slow path down his figure, to end, once again, at the feet. The time, he calmly asks to be let go, asks for his mother, while in a separate scene she laments his poor life. For a final time we are shown the face of Ettore, the camera takes the now familiar path it

has twice previously. Now the body of Ettore is completely motionless, the viewer is aware he has died. It cuts again to Mamma Roma running through the streets of Rome, in an attempt to launch herself out of her bourgeois apartment window, which she had worked so hard to achieve.

How this specific scene alludes to art is in its point of view. Here in his final moments, we see Ettore's body laid out on the table, being shot from his feet. This extreme foreshortening is an odd angle from which to view a supine body, but if familiar with the work of Renaissance art it is immediately recognizable to the viewer. The shot in question is undeniable influenced by Andrea Mantegna's *The Lamentation of the Dead Christ*, 1490. In this painting we see a traditional Renaissance subject matter subverted in a way that was completely unusual for the time period. The subject matter of the Lamentation of Christ is traditionally depicted in an outdoor setting, just as Christ has been taken down from the cross, as for example in the works of Giotto or Lorenzetti, artists who completed their works almost a century prior to Mantegna. Now Christ's body is brought into an indoor setting, laid upon a table. The point of view the artist paints from also sharply contrasts how Christ's body was previously shown in Italian Renaissance painting. To look at Giotto's Lamentation, the classic example of Italian Proto-Renaissance work, we see a Christ lying horizontal in the picture plane, in an outdoor setting, and surrounded by other biblical figures. There are angels in the sky above and a mourning Virgin Mary cradles Christ's body in her lap. In Mantegna's interpretation of the Lamentation, Christ is sharply foreshortened, so much that it is even sometimes known as the foreshortened Christ in contemporary academic work. The viewer of the work is first confronted with the feet of the deceased Christ. At the time Mantegna came under fire for the drastic re-envisioning of this religious scene. This criticism is outlined in Klaus Kruger's essay, "Andrea Mantegna: Painting's Mediality." Here, Kruger discusses the composition of the work "The figure of the

dead Christ, who is laid out on the sepulchral stone for his anointment, is represented as though through the eyes of the beholder, radically subjected to his perspectival ratio. This leaves such a drastic impression that the work has often been regarded as a profanation of its sacred subject."[35] This "de-sacralization" of the subject to favor creative expression was sacrilegious to the viewers of the time. The artist was most likely playing with his ability to render the human form in an extremely foreshortened manner. Operating in a time when linear perspective was a fairly new concept, the artist is not able to create a completely naturalistic subject but from other examples of Mantegna's work; challenging perspective was an undertaking he enjoyed. However, Mantegna was also praised by Vasari in *The Lives of Artists*, "for his ability to foreshorten figures as seen from below", though he quickly discounts the subject matters as "focusing too much on the harshness and suffering" of his subjects in a "somewhat dry manner".[36] According to *Mantegna* by Franca Zava Boccazzi, the artist was not given proper recognition until the turn of the 20th century. With the development of the field of art history, Mantegna was reintroduced as a more than mediocre Italian artist of the early Renaissance. In the writings of Berenson (1897) and Cavalcaselle (1871), and later in those of Fiocco (1926) and Longhi (1934), he received praise.[37] Knowing that Longhi praised the works of Mantegna is important when looking at how Pasolini utilizes the artworks of Mantegna in his own films.

Andrea Mantegna's painting is not directly referenced in the film. The character is still in modern clothes, though his white undershirt and shorts are not too unlike the simple white cloth covering Christs bottom half. The setting of Mantegna's work is unknown to the viewer, but we would assume it is not a prison cell in which Ettore is located. Ettore is strapped down to the table, almost in a way that suggests the crucifixion of Catholic tradition. However, though the position is Christ-like, it is not referenced in Mantegna's work, as here Christ is seen

unrestrained, with arms down by his sides. The two figures in Mantegna's work are also absent from the reference in *Mamma Roma*; Ettore dies alone. Overall, the differences seen between the compositions do not discount the fact that Pasolini was intentionally citing this painting, especially because Ettore suffers a similar fate of execution.

We must now pose the question why Mantegna's work was so explicitly referenced in this film? And why at such a crucial point in the film did Pasolini choose to cite this painting, as it is the climax of the film. The first, and most obvious answer to this question, is that Pasolini wanted to align the death of Ettore, with the martyrdom of Christ. Obviously this attempt is successful, and it would be hard for the viewer to not grasp the parallel between Ettore and Christ. But as stated before, there are numerous other Lamentation scenes that Pasolini could have cited. Instead he chose an image quite unlike the traditional composition for this work. Another answer for us to consider, is the fact that Roberto Longhi did rather extensive research on Andrea Mantegna. This allows us to assume that Pasolini had thorough knowledge on the subject, including the fact that this is an extreme departure from how the subject matter was traditionally composed. We also must note that not only was the image reference untraditional, it was also deemed to be offensive, and almost sacrilegious. This fact in itself may have drawn Pasolini to it explicitly. At the time, Pasolini was not the scandalous filmmaker he is known as now, yet secularization of a sacred subject could appeal to him. The themes of religion are central to his films, yet Pasolini asserted he was an atheist. This contradiction and blending of the secular, sacred and salacious is fundamental in Pasolini's oeuvre, and some critics could place Mantegna's work within these bounds as well. There is also an explanation for the indirect citing of Mantegna's work as opposed to the direct citations in his later films. According to Jill Murphy's essay, "Dark Fragments: Contrasting Corporal-realities in Pasolini's *La Ricotta*",

"….basing a film on the direct citation of paintings was exactly what he wanted to avoid in Il Vangelo secondo Matteo."[38]

Cristo Morto,
Andrea Mantegna, (1480)

Il Vangelo Secondo Matteo

Although, as stated above, Pasolini wanted to avoid the direct citation of classical Italian art, he did not succeed completely in this task. *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew (Il Vangelo secondo Matteo)* (1964), is a direct film adaptation of the Gospel of Matthew, using the whole text of the book as dialogue for the film. The film was received exceptionally well, being praised by the Catholic Church, as well as generally revered as one of the greatest biblical films. Nick Burton writes in his 1999 review of the film: "Thus, Pasolini stripped his work of the mythology associated with most films of the genre, and of the traditional Christian iconography,

in favor of a grim realism appropriated from neo-realist cinema."[39] The traditional iconography (which is heavily art historically based) is passed by here, according to Burton, and Pasolini himself. Though the citations of art in this film are somewhat elusive, they are still present. The subject matter of the film, however, makes the pictorial references harder to justify. Because the film itself is based on biblical texts, the images are inherently similar to those of Renaissance art, both have Catholic origins. And in certain places Pasolini contradicts himself with his intentions for the visuals of the film, such as in an interview with Oswald Stack, where when discussing *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, he says his intentions were "to do the story of Christ plus 2000 years of Christianity. At least for an Italian like me painting has enormous importance in these two thousand years, indeed it is the major element in the Christological tradition."[40] Thus, we must question how to approach the use of art in this film. Should one view the images as directly inspired by art, or simply part of the "2000 years" that Pasolini is trying to convey?

One reference that the viewer can clearly see as inspired by the past 2000 years of painting is where the film was shot. The film was shot entirely in Italy, not in Jerusalem as one might expect as it is the location of the Gospel. The landscapes themselves evoke those rendered by the quattrocento artists Pasolini has already described as influencing his compositions. We can see these most clearly in the background, which is full of rocky outcroppings. The decision for this filming location may have been taken from the backgrounds of the Early Renaissance artist, Giotto. These backgrounds are especially available for observation in the frescos of the Arena Chapel.

In the film only one specific work of past the is alluded to, that of Piero della Francesca's *The Legend of the Wood of the True Cross/Finding of the Wood and its Verification* (1452). The painting shows a biblical scene, and is part of a series of frescos located in S. Francesco in

Arezzo, Italy. The works of the Arezzo Cycle were intimately studied by Pasolini's professor Roberto Longhi, who described them as "Piero's greatest pictorial undertaking." [41] Located within the image we see several figures who are identified as the Pharisees, or members of an ancient Jewish sect, specifically those who persecuted Jesus in biblical stories. The scene shown is not included in *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, but specific elements of dress of the Pharisees are taken from this piece. The hats which the Pharisees wear throughout *The Gospel According to Matthew* are very directly taken from Piero della Francesca's frescos at Arezzo. The manner of dress throughout the film also seems reminiscent of quattrocento style. The thick robes and cloaks the characters wear is similar to those of the statuesque forms seen in the frescos of della Francesca and his predecessor Giotto. This reference could simply be that Pasolini was unsure of costuming, but, with his background in art history, this seems like a more intentional reference by Pasolini.

Teorema

Again, in *Teorema* (1967), a later film of Pasolini's, we see indirect references to works of Renaissance artwork. The film itself is not biblical, yet in congruence with *Accattone* and *Mamma Roma*, biblical narratives are imposed upon contemporary settings. Here an Italian bourgeois family is paid a visit by a man who is never named. The mysterious visitor encounters

each of the family one by one. This begins with the devout maid, Emilia, who, overwhelmed with lust for the stranger, is prompted to take her own life instead of falling into sin. The visitor saves her from herself, and gives her the physical intimacy which she desires. A similar encounter then happens with the son, Pietro, who lusting after the stranger attempts to look upon his nude form one night. Then the mother, Lucia, the daughter, Isabetta, and finally the father Paolo; each one of the family members seems to become "awakened" after their encounter with the visitor, as he instills in them some enlightenment that was not present before. When the visitor gives notice of his leave, the characters all recount their malaise before he arrived, and how they will surely succumb to a stronger one once he leaves. Yet, with each awakening that they experience, a literal golden light fully illuminates the shot, which was previously dull and dark. Each character has a self-fulfilled prophesy, the daughter falls into a catatonic state, the brother leads the life of a tortured artist, the mother becomes exceedingly lustful, and the maid is martyred. The father however has a very different ending, one that could also be considered sacred. The last two scenes of the film culminate in the father stripping naked in his factory, which he has just relinquished control of to the workers themselves, and then running, naked, through a desert setting. The combination of these two acts, stripping naked and giving up earthly possessions, and the self-imposed exile to the desert certainly make the father's transformation relatable to that of Saint Francis. The Catholic subject matter itself is able to situate the film in relation to Italian Renaissance art, such as Giotto's depiction of *The Legend of Saint Francis* located in S. Francesco in Assisi. Here we see the figure of Saint Francis stripped with a simple cloth around his body. The figure who stands holding his clothing seems taken aback. This is most likely Saint Francis' aristocratic father, shocked that his son would renounce

wealth. However, with the prominent use of unnatural light in the shots, we can deeper explore how the film fits into the art historical representations of Saint Francis.

Saint Francis Renounces His Father, Giotto, (1297-1299)

This ethereal heavenly light is reminiscent of certain Italian painting traditions, such as a gilded sky, to denote a heavenly setting rather than an earthly one. The most significant aspects of this painting include how Bellini renders the color and light in this work. In Giovanni Bellini's painting *Saint Francis in the Desert* an unnatural golden-hued light permeates every corner of the expansive landscape is depicted. In Rona Goffen's interpretation of the piece, she describes the landscape "as expressive of God's presence as the explicitly supernatural rays of light."[42] With this knowledge we can then draw parallels to *Teorema*, which displays an unearthly golden light in every "enlightening" shot. This film is the first of Pasolini's to use mostly color film; while using sepia tone in some scenes, the majority of the shots are in color. The way in which Giovanni Bellini rendered the color in this painting was also highly regarded. Vividly he renders the blues of the sky, and brightens the neutral tones of the earth, allowing for the effect of permeating light throughout the piece. Though the film does not show intensely vivid color throughout, the fact that it was Pasolini's first full color film could relate to Bellini's use of color.

Saint Francis in Ecstasy, Giovanni Bellini, (1475-80)

Il Decameron

The Decameron, the first of Pasolini's trilogy films, is based on Boccaccio's novel of the same name. The viewer is able to see examples of both Pasolini's direct citations and his use of allusions. These citations are seen along with physical art and reference to art historical past with his scenes of Giotto's pupil, only part of which is taken from the writings of Boccaccio, along with showing certain physical works of what are meant to be taken as quattrocento work in this film. Certainly, with the combination of these, this film has the highest number of citations of Renaissance imagery in Pasolini's films.

The first citation to discuss is that of the displays of Italian frescos, votive objects and other artworks that the viewer can see throughout the film. The frescos are seen most prominently and most often throughout the film. None of them are exceptional, nor are they very recognizable. Many which are seen are heavily worn, and none seem to be of the great fresco cycles which art history has devoted so much time to study. They are, however, frescos done

during the time of the artists Pasolini deemed to be great, most likely contemporaries of Masaccio and Piero della Francesca. Another early Renaissance painting is displayed toward the end of the film. Within the shot only part of the painting is visible, but the viewer can clearly see it a representation of the Madonna and Child. There is also the display a votive figure of Christ, which seems to be from an earlier period, situating it in the Medieval or early Renaissance would make sense. The physical representations of art are most likely products of where Pasolini chose to set his films, within real churches and period buildings. The votive sculpture was most likely placed there as a prop to aid in the storytelling. These works are unlikely to be especially purposeful representations, but many of Pasolini's references to art are purposeful.

Purposeful representations by Pasolini are more likely to include compositional influences which include his indirect references to specific works of art. In *Decameron* this could include Vittore Carpaccio's *The Dream of Saint Ursula.* The section of Tingoccio and Meuccio (Decameron 7.10) depicts a dream, where Tingoccio, recently deceased, appears to tell Meuccio about the afterlife.[43] The scene shows a side view of the room, with the door parallel to the bed in which Meuccio is sleeping. The door of the room opens up to a strong wind, and the ghost or angel of Tingoccio appears in the doorway, waking Meuccio from his slumber. He then goes on to tell his friend of the afterlife, and how he is suffering for the sins he committed. Although the room shown in the film is much less lavish than that rendered in Carpaccio's painting, it is set up in similar way. The figure of Meuccio is posed in much the same way as Saint Ursula in Carpaccio's painting, with his head to the right, facing the viewer. The robes of the angel blow about, as if there is a wind that the viewer cannot feel, similarly to the wind which blows open the door in the scene. Carpaccio's painting includes several allusions to marriage, which is an impossibility for the saint, who is dreaming about her impending martyrdom. These allusions to

marriage oppose the dialogue between Tingoccio and Meuccio, as they discuss whether leading a chaste life is important in the afterlife. Again citations here are again not direct, but the subject matter and positioning are close enough to allow us to explore these connections.

The Dream of Saint Ursula, Vittore Carapaccio, 1495

Before the scene previously discussed, the viewer does witness two direct citations of artwork. The first is not of Italian origin, but rather Netherlandish, that of Pieter Bruegel the Elders paintings. Bruegel was a contemporary of the Italian Renaissance painters that Pasolini so greatly admired, but he was working in a drastically different style, that of the Northern Renaissance. This style differed in several ways, including (but not limited to,) non-naturalistic perspective, figures rendered with curving lines rather than shaded forms, use of vivid and rich color, and extreme attention to detail.[44] The subject matter also tends to differ, as it is not always of Christian origin but tends to be based more in the secular. Though Brueghel was working in a style and subject matter unlike the Italian Renaissance, he did have some connections to Italy. Bruegel was a native of Antwerp, which during the 16th century was a hub of both banking and financial enterprises but also the largest port in the Western world.[45] Bruegel was part of the Antwerp Guild of Saint Luke, and like many of his contemporary Flemish artists, took a journey

to Italy to study art. [46] However, instead of returning to Antwerp with fluency in the Italian style, he returned with landscape drawings. [47] It is known that the artist spent some time in Naples, Italy, as works were completed there. In 1553, Bruegel also spent time in Rome, creating connections with important Italian figures of the time.[48]

The paintings cited within this semi-tableaux vivant scene includes parts of *The Battle Between Carnival and Lent* as well as *The Land of Cockaigne.* The first character shown is meant to be the figure of Lent. Here, Pasolini transforms Lent from an extremely gaunt figure, to that of an attractive yet also thin figure. Nevertheless, the dress is similar but the color differs, the head covering and hat are the same, as is the chair upon which the figure sits. Both figures are carrying a long, thin, wooden paddle, except the paddle holds different objects. In Brueghel's, two meager looking fish sit atop Lents paddle, while in Pasolini's, the figure has a skull. Behind both Pasolini's and Bruegel's figures stand pious looking figures, as a reference to the repentance of Lent. A scene of back flipping young men is then followed by the showing of a figure sleeping next to a wagon. These could be generally related to the merriness and gaiety depicted on the right side of Bruegel's painting, which references Carnival.

Another section shows several masked figures sitting atop a barrel, which one can presume from the merriness of the figures is full of alcohol. Figures atop a barrel are seen in Bruegel's painting, but this is the figure of Carnival, a portly man representing the festival that precedes the Lenten season. During Carnival, people are gluttonous, consuming food in drink in plentiful quantities, and this is seen on the left side of the painting, opposing Lent. Several other aspects of the painting are shown in quick succession, including a wagon being dragged with a body inside, a solemn procession of clerical figures, and several crippled figures. In this succession of images a citation from a separate painting is seen, is from *The Land of Cockaigne.*

The painting depicts a fable of a land where everything is edible, and its inhabitants are able to gorge themselves as they wish. The depiction of Pasolini's is fairly exact, but leaves out the background information of Bruegel's piece.

The Land of Cockaigne, Pieter Brueghel the Elder, 1567

The Battle between Carnival and Lent, Pieter Brueghel the Elder, 1559

These direct citations are a break from the stories of Boccaccio, right in the middle of the film. To include them is a little odd, given that Boccaccio was an Italian writer, and as already discussed, Pasolini had a greater affinity for Italian art. However the general theme of *Decameron* is fairly bawdy and humorous, both adjectives that Pieter Bruegel's paintings surely entail. Also discussed previously, Bruegel had ties to the Italy during his time, including a close relationship and Italian miniaturist, and certain scientific figures. However it is not likely these figures had any connection to Boccaccio, as he was active two centuries prior. But this does place Bruegel within certain Italian traditions. This along with his depiction of settings in Naples,

do provide us with a slight connection, as *Decameron* took place within the city of Naples. Overall, the comedic and lewd aspects of the film coincide enough with Bruegel's art to include the citations.

Another work that is directly cited in the film is that of Giotto's *Last Judgement*. This comes toward the final few scenes, in which Pasolini cites Boccaccio's story of Giotto, but expands it quite a bit. In the original *Decameron* tale, Master Giotto and another figure known as Messer Forese da Rabatta meet up while travelling, when caught in a downpour they take cover in a peasants shelter. The peasant allows then to leave with extra rags and caps for cover from the rain. The continued ride leads to muddiness and the dress they are in gives both an unkemptness. Messer Forese looking at Giotto remarks, "Giotto, suppose we met a stranger who had never seen you before; do you think he would believe that you are the greatest painter in the world, as you are?" Giotto replies, "Messer, I think he would believe if, when he looked at you, he could believe that you know your ABC's." [49] The first scene containing this story in *Decameron* is similar, however the figures are travelling together to Naples, the "Giotto" figure is rather a student of Giotto, and the other figure is not named. The story however is continued, as the pair are travelling to Naples for Giotto's disciple to complete a fresco commissioned for the church.

Pasolini creates a story in three scenes depicting the completion of the fresco and the artist's time in Naples. In the second scene the artist has a dream, within this we see the representation of Giotto's, *Last Judgement.* Again, Pasolini choses to change certain aspects, including placing the Madonna at the center of the composition instead of a Christ figure. What is included are smaller, yet exact details, including a young figure holding up a structure, the choir of angles, and certain aspects of the dammed being dragged to hell, a crucifix with angles

atop, as well as the layered composition of the piece. The figure of Mary is composed similar to how the Christ figure is in Giotto's piece, including the golden circle that surrounds them both, and the opaque, disc-like gold halo. She is surrounded by a choir of young angles, however instead of floating as like Giotto's piece, they stand atop risers. The hell scape in the lower right register of Giotto's piece is depicted in *Decameron* as demons torturing and physically dragging naked figures into what we can assume is an underworld. We also see a young boy holding up a small replica of the Scrovegni (Arena) Chapel where this fresco is located. This is seen in a slightly different way in Giotto's fresco, as the figure holding it can be identified as Scrovegni himself, who patronized the Chapel. Here he is seen holding the small structure up toward the figure of Christ, as if to say, "I made created this in your honor, I deserve to be saved." The inclusion of this detail surely allows the viewer to place this work as Giotto's Last Judgement even though certain elements are changed.

The Last Judgement, Giotto, 1306.

The inclusion and expansion of Boccaccio's story of Giotto is also indicative of Pasolini's admiration for Renaissance art. *The Decameron* has 100 different stories in it, Pasolini only choses 10 or so stories to depict, this allows us to presume that the figure of Giotto is important to Pasolini. Also allowing presumption is the amount of time that Pasolini allots to the story of Giotto's disciple, giving it four separate sections in the film, more time than any other story. This expansion allows for Pasolini to tell his own story within the framework of Boccaccio's literary history. Pasolini does tell his own story, and inserts himself as an actor into the tale. In *Decameron*, Pasolini the director, casts himself as the part of Giotto's disciple. The attention paid to Giotto's student in the film and the inclusion of himself as an actor again shows the viewer the reverence he has for the early Renaissance artist. Within film we see the character of Giotto's student complete a small fresco in a Naples church. The fresco is not rendered with exceptional skill, as to be expected. But the style is certainly congruent with a potential "disciple" of Giotto. We can see the subject matter is also of religious nature, and because of the dream scene, the viewer may be able to assert it is inspired by the fresco cycle at the Arena

Chapel. Overall the amount of direct and indirect reference to the art historical past, we can confidently assert that Pasolini was heavily influence by artwork when creating this film.

La Ricotta

The final film to discuss when exploring the relationship between Pasolini and art, is that of *La Ricotta* (1963). The origins of *La Ricotta* date back to February of 1962, when Pasolini was approached to write a film with the subject of La Vita é Bella, or the beautiful life. The first time he proposed this to Amorose and Amato (the producer and co-producer), he proposed a take on *The Voyage to Cythera*, which he described as "very dramatic and refined." [50] *The Voyage to Cythera* is a mythic tale, but it is also an artwork by the Rococo artist Antione Watteau. It cannot be determined whether this film was to reference the myth or the painting, but it is interesting that the first version could have also been influenced by visual art. Similarly to *Decameron*, both possess aspects of direct and indirect references to art. However this film included the most direct citations of the art in tableaux vivants or living pictures to be found in any of Pasolini's films. These examples are even more direct than those in *Decameron*, as there are almost no differences from the original works, except that they are being recreated with living models. Though the presence of tableaux vivants are more obvious references to the art historical tradition, they are not the only ones present in the film. The film itself has little to do with art history in terms of subject matter; we follow a man, Stracci (which translates to rags) as he works on a film set. *La Ricotta* displays a film within a film set in biblical times, which allows for the citations of two mannerist works, *The Deposition from the Cross* by Jacopo Pontormo and *The Descent from the Cross* by Rosso Fiorentino. However, Pasolini places biblical narratives within contemporary Italy once again, contrasting the impoverished life of Stracci with that of the bourgeois. In the film, Stracci is struggling to feed his large family with the lunch provided

by working on the film. This is juxtaposed with the lead actress's dog, who "eats like a king." In a turn of events, Stracci sells the dog, and buys an enormous block of ricotta cheese with the money. This then leads to a rather grotesque and voyeuristic viewing of his consumption of the food with the cast egging him on and throwing more food at him. The characters mockingly refer to this display as "The Stracci Show." After this scene the figure of Stracci dies upon the cross, from supposed indigestion.

For the indirect references to art we need not look further than the opening scene of *La Ricotta*. Here we see several figures, both in modern and ancient dress, dancing around a bountiful table full of foods. The table is zoomed in on, showing bunches of grapes, dried meat, sausages, and cheeses, and the cropped scene evokes the compositions of still life paintings. This, along with the jovial atmosphere of the characters, situates the film within the tradtion of genre paintings as well, which frequently included foodstuffs along with merry figures. However this is not the only reference in the film, as the plot and title of the film conjures the work of *The Ricotta Eaters* by Vincenzo Campi. In the painting we see four figures; by the state of their dress we can assume these are lower class figures, similar to the character of Stracci. The leftmost figure stuffs his mouth with ricotta cheese, as does the figure directly behind him. The other two figures look as if they are happily waiting their turn or goading the other two on. If it is the later, then it is very similar to Pasolini's addition of the "Stracci Show" to *La Ricotta*. The painting does show the grotesqueness of unrestricted consumption of food, similarly to the scene in the film, as both characters stuff themselves with huge quantities of cheese. Also as argued in "Vincenzo Campi's Ricotta Eaters (c.1585): viewership and the early modern market", the compressed bodies, and inviting glances allow the viewer to enter the space of the painting, similarly to how Pasolini allows the viewer to be the spectators of the "Stracci Show." 51 In the

"Stracci Show" scene, the camera bounces back and forth between the viewing Stracci's gluttonous consumption and the growing crowd urging him to gorge himself more. Because of how this scene is shot, it places the viewer into the crowd. We are forced to view the carnivalesque and grotesque consumption in both instances. It is easy to presume that Pasolini purposefully included this allusion, as he could have used any food for Stracci to gorge himself on, but ricotta was chosen, and then given more importance in the title. However, this is a much less direct reference than the inclusion of the tableaux vivants.

The Ricotta Eaters, Vincenzo Campi, 1580.

As mentioned previously, Pasolini also includes two direct citations of Mannerist works, by Pontormo and Rosso. The scenes in which these works are recreated are also the only scenes that are shot in color, while the rest is in black and white film, and this is notable for two reasons. First, the color adds a level of importance to the scenes, allowing them to stand out amongst the black and white. Secondly, the palette that Pontormo and Rosso employed is more vivid then their Renaissance counterparts and was distinctly Mannerist. Pasolini also paid particular attention to how the color was seen on film. Pasolini insisted that the costume designer match the fabric color to Pontormo's and Rosso's painting exactly, so that it would appear correct on film.[52] The recreation of these paintings are rather true to the originals, only deviating slightly.

The figures are each positioned correctly, the colors are strikingly correct and the emotions mimic the figures in the paintings. In the deviations we see figures flanking each side of both paintings, which neither originally included. The inclusion of these figures could be just for the reason of filling space, since the paintings are much narrower in proportion than the frames of the film. Though the compositions are strikingly similar, the way the actors behave in Pasolini's recreation is not what you would expect of those in a religious scene. These are not devout figures carrying the executed body of Christ. Instead, they are rather boisterous and rowdy, laughing, falling and at one point a character even picks his nose. The reason for this chaos in a highly Christian scene is discussed in depth by Pasolini.

The critic Alberto Marchescini posits that rather than being inspired by his professor, Roberto Longhi, Pasolini was inspired by another art historian, Giuliano Briganti. [53] Marchescini argues that Longhi pays little attention to these artists (though falling within the time period and area of interest, Longhi preferred other Renaissance and Baroque artists) and also because on the set of *La Ricotta*, Pasolini is pictured referring to Briganti's book *La Maneria Italiana*, which discusses Italian Mannerism. In Briganti's writing, Pontormo and Rosso are first discussed together, just as they appear in the film of Pasolini.[54] As discussed before, Pasolini did have an affinity for Mannerist painting, and Jacopo Pontormo and Rosso Fiorentino were among the most well-known artists of this period. However, Pasolini was not just simply a fan of Mannerist work, he was also well versed in the subject. Pasolini was included in a round-table discussion on another Mannerist artist, Gerolamo Romanino, in 1965.[55] Here he discussed the work of Romanino and his Mannerist style saying: "There is never a picture of Romanino in which Classicism dominates or in which Mannerism dominates. Why is this? Because Romaino did not want to be a classical or classicizing artist, but he didn't want to be a Mannerist either…"[56] Pasolini

believed that the work of Romanino was in between the styles of Mannerism and the High Renaissance. He goes on to talk about his perceived differences between the Mannerism of Romanino and that of Pontromo and Rosso, stating: "Mannerism was sacrilegious: Pontormo, Rosso Fiorentino painted the cruxifixion, but evidently at heart they were diabolical, they were unbelievers. Romanino was not."[57] Pasolini further ties the two artists together, describing their work as able "to express this tragic imposition of the times on their fate of men in an art disturbed and full of contradictions, in a distortion of the classical world full of irrational, capricious, and subjective effects."[58] This gives us a new way to view the artistic citations within the film. As it is known that Pasolini saw the art of Pontormo and Rosso Fiorentino as sacrilegious, the tableaux viviants can be viewed the same way.

The film itself has a tone satirically mocking the extreme Catholicism that was prominent in Italy at this time, despite the extreme poverty. Pasolini contrasts the wealth of the actors and directors with the poverty Stracci and his family to show this dichotomy. These compositions can therefore be looked at as extremely political, and in some respects anti-Catholic. In 1963, Pasolini was charged with "offense to the Italian State and religion" for the imagery depicted in *La Ricotta*, and he went to trial. [59] Here he also referenced the diabolical nature of Pontormo and Rosso as part of his defense, saying: "I chose the paintings of Pontormo and Rosso because these painters represent in the moment of Renaissance grandeur the beginning of the aridity of painting and are therefore out of classical iconography."[60] For Pasolini, the inclusion of "sacred" Compositions in a humorous way therefore is not heretical, because he does not view these

works as sacred. Clearly these works were not chosen randomly, but with particular intent.

Descent from the Cross,
Rosso Fiorentino, (1521)

The Deposition of Christ,
Jacopo Pontormo, (1525)

Pier Paolo Pasolini includes both direct and indirect references to Renaissance and Mannerist art throughout many of his films. Renaissance art is directly related to one of Pasolini's most admired professors, Roberto Longhi, as it was his main area of study. Several of the artists cited in Pasolini's films were artists that Longhi directly studied. The poetic way in which Pasolini approaches the filmmaking process, can also be seen as influence from his former professor. Longhi wrote many of his studies in an eloquent prose, that scholars have described as operatic. However, as I argue throughout this thesis, Longhi's writing can be seen as immensely poetic. An eloquent and imaginative approach to art historical writing is not ordinary, and it could be posited that Longhi's pupils took inspiration from it. This can be supported by Pasolini's own writing about the cinematic process, in "The Cinema of Poetry." Here he describes cinema as intrinsically tied to both semiotics and poetry. The inclusion of artworks in his films, especially the indirect citations of artwork, furthers the semiotic nature of them as well, because the composition will bring the historical narrative of the painting to the viewer.

The reason for the inclusion of these paintings vary drastically, and for some there is no set answer. The inclusion of Renaissance and Mannerist art allows for the inclusion of Christian iconography in the films, which is able to transform the characters into saintly versions of themselves. It also can stand in for sacrilegious imagery, as with the inclusion of Pontormo and Rosso's paintings, and perhaps even the work of Andrea Mantegna. Regardless, many of the references have multiple meanings, and can change when looked at from different points. This is similar to how Pasolini's films often have several themes and meanings, which out of context seem contradictory in nature. Pasolini is able to use art as a way to further these themes, adding depth to the films he creates.

The indirect references to Renaissance art in Pasolini's films serve to bring a vague art historical narrative to the scene. The compositions of *Casica di Reggello Alterpiece, Madonna Misericodia, The Dead Christ, The Legend of the Wood of the True Cross/Finding of the Wood and its Verification, Saint Francis in the Desert, The Dream of Saint Ursula,* and the *Ricotta Eaters* are all indirectly referenced in Pasolini's films. They are also all Renaissance artworks, some of which Roberto Longhi paid great attention to in his writing. However, the inclusion of these works are not simply a nod to Longhi, as the previous exploration of their citations proved.

The direct citations of art in Pasolini's films are perhaps of more interest, as they wholly evoke the work of art for the viewer. The viewer immediately becomes immersed in the art historical narrative of the work, provided they are aware of that history. However, this history is not entirely congruent with Pasolini's reason for citation. This is seen in his reference of Mannerist art works, which he affirmed were intended to not be religious, despite the fact they depict religious scenes. As with the indirect references of art in his films, these inclusions further his own themes and narratives in his films, and provide the viewer with something to question.

These works serve to further the controversial thematic narratives in Pasolini's oeuvre. Looking back at the artworks cited, the viewer can see that these inclusions are not for simple beautification purposes. Pasolini ofthen cites works that include lower class figures, such Brueghel's pieces or that of Vincenzo Campi's. These works serve to align the art historical past, with the contemporary Borgate (Italian slums), who's inhabitants were often the subjects of Neo-Realist films (Pasolini's included). The inclusion of the Borgate, furthers Pasolini's commentary on the dichotomy of the bourgeois and the poor in post-Fascist Italy. Pasolini is also notorious for his atheist and anti-Catholic themes, while also including explicitly religious works in his films. As Pasolini stated the works of Giotto and Masaccio influenced him greatly, in his

technical style, even describing it as sacred. For Pasolini to assert this, despite his atheism, can serve to place the art and artists as something to be worshipped, rather than the Christian subject matter. With the works of Pontormo and Rosso, Pasolini transforms the meaning of the work completely, shaping the narrative to better align with a critique of the Catholicism. When Pasolini speaks of this work, he describes it as diabolical, because of the extension of Renaissance aesthetics that transforms the figures into exaggerated forms of themselves. Each work that Pasolini chooses to cite has some meaning to him, allowing him to further develop his own theories, critiques and visual imagery in cinema. Overall, the artist representations fit within Pasolini's position in the cinematic avant-gard.

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